

SouthwestNOW

MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY 2026



Cleaning a City

Keep DeSoto Beautiful
cares about the
environment and
property values

Featured Business:
Friends Place
Adult Day Services

Also inside:

Scavenger Hunt
Sudoku

In the Kitchen With
Jerry Prater



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Adam Walker
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ON THE COVER

Nate Busby and Amen Kamau show their work to make their city a great place to live.



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You think it's hard keeping your house clean? Try keeping a city clean. Keep DeSoto Beautiful is a group of concerned citizens and city officials who announce their goal in their name. "We're connected to Keep Texas Beautiful. Most cities have a chapter. We operate through the city manager's office, and each city council member appoints one board member, so each place is represented," explained DeSoto Parks Superintendent Nate Busby.

"We're a community-based nonprofit, here to improve the appearance and quality of life in DeSoto," Amen Kamau, the current president of the Keep DeSoto Beautiful board added. "We work on litter prevention, and organize cleanup efforts, beautification projects, environmental education and volunteer engagement."

One of their big projects is organizing a tree giveaway for Texas Arbor Day. "We typically hand out about 100 trees, mostly varieties of oak. Citizens come and pick them up. It's surprising how many people are interested in trees," Amen informed.

"We start giving the trees out at 9:00 and stay until noon, but this year, we had given out all of the trees by 10:01," Nate remembered. "We always have a representative from the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service there to talk to the people when they come to pick up the trees. The ones we give out are 18 inches tall, so they fit in people's cars. People tag us in pictures of their trees after they plant them."

Cleaning a City

— By Adam Walker

Another ongoing project of KDB is their two annual cleanup days. "We hold one in April and one in September," Nate explained. "It's all volunteers. We get local businesses to sponsor the cleanups. We average 80 to 100 participants each time. The city litter crew is seven people. They help pinpoint hot spots and choose the locations for the event crews to work."

"KDB promotes civic pride and environmental respect," Amen added. "We make our community more attractive, and it helps our property values. The way your street looks represents your community. It is safer, healthier and more positive in the long run. We want KDB to be a household word. We want people to know we're here and volunteer their time to keep DeSoto beautiful."

"For our April cleanup, we will meet together and assign teams of volunteers to each chosen location," Nate explained. "We give them all the supplies — trash bags, pickers, safety vests. We even let the volunteers take that stuff home with them at the end, so they have the





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tools they need to organize their own events in their own neighborhoods. All the litter is collected at established pickup locations. And we collect data on the impact we had."

"The most important part of our mission is education," Nate continued. "We want every citizen to take care of their own property. We go to the schools to talk about the benefits of trees and a clean environment. We encourage recycling. We nominate a school campus for recognition when they're doing a great job of keeping the school and its grounds clean. We also recognize local businesses that go above and beyond making their location beautiful. All of the things we do work together, but education is most important."

As part of the education process, and to get the word out about who they are and what they do, KDB shows up at city events. "We sponsor a table at the Fourth of July celebration, where we give out goodie bags," Amen shared. "We do the same thing at Juneteenth and Easter."

"Another thing we do is partner with



the Youth Advisory Council to host a movie night," Nate added. "At the movie night, we ask questions about the environment and about DeSoto. We have gift cards as prizes."

One KDB initiative was to put trash cans at certain intersections. "This was brainstormed at a KDB meeting," Nate remembered. "We started with 12 cans. It's made a difference, so we're expanding to more intersections."

Amen was asked to serve on the KDB board by Councilor Chism. "When she asked me to serve, I didn't know what Keep DeSoto Beautiful even was. So, I looked it up online and found out. It looked like a good fit. It's turned out to be pretty cool. We've been able to get the word out about ways we can all improve life in DeSoto. We've

sponsored different projects. There's always something new to be added or different to do."

Nate grinned. "He's being humble. He organizes our community volunteers. He's very active in the community. Amen is the current president of the KDB board. The members are appointed for two years, which can be renewed. But if there are others waiting to serve, they have to step down for one year before they can be reappointed. Each city department assigns a staff liaison. My position as parks superintendent oversees the board, so I've been involved for four years now. The other six members of the KDB board currently serving are: Shelonda Weaver, Richard Rogers, Rhetta Washington McCoy, Mary Davis, Jonette Hutchinson and Debbie Hicks."

"It would be great to have even more members to help get the job done," Amen confessed. "It's not about a title. It's about doing the work. Some people really like titles. I say to those people, 'That's your title, but what do you do?' We need more awareness of how litter affects the community." **NOW**



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Zoomed In: Jennifer Mendez

By Adam Walker

Jennifer Mendez enjoys working with the dogs, cats and other animals at Tri-City Animal Shelter. "I've been working here for about a year now," she informed. "This boy is Barney. He's been here since he was surrendered in November. He's a 4-year-old, 77-pound, mixed breed."

Barney was as sweet as could be and very friendly. He greeted nearby humans and made sure he got some pats on his big old head. He calmly stood and soaked up some winter sun, making the most of his outdoor time. He seemed very comfortable with his leash.

"Working here is a new experience every day," Jennifer cheerfully explained, while stroking Barney's head and sides. "You're always learning something new. Every day is something different."



Jaziah Washington and Shani Ajayi of Canine Comrades for Veterans and First Responders bring treats for both human and doggie officers on Law Enforcement Appreciation Day.



Cohen and Dulce Lopez enjoy some activities and reading at the Duncanville Library.



The Cedar Hill ISD Education Foundation surprises educators with \$41,700 in grants.



Kryzra Holmes uses the DeSoto Rec Center to stay healthy.

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BusinessNOW

Friends Place Adult Day Services

— By Adam Walker

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"Our program changes with the times," said Marylynne Henry, founder of the DeSoto location. "Our main focus is helping people who have opted to keep their loved one at home."

Ryan Henry, Marylynne's son, agreed. "I recently gave a talk at UT Southwestern about how dementia patients who stay at home live longer and have better health outcomes."

Staying at home keeps your loved one in a familiar environment, surrounded by people who love them and share memories with them. It's also more cost effective. Full-time caregivers, in-home caregivers and residential skilled nursing facilities cost far more than the \$95 a day to entrust your loved one to the professionals at Friends Place. "We cost less than a quarter of what the cheapest of the other options cost. Our program provides a social aspect that you don't get when you're at home all day. Our members become friends. Recently, when one of our members spent time in the hospital, several of our members went to visit him," Marylynne remembered.

"It isn't uncommon for our members to exchange phone numbers, so they can call each other when they're at home," Ryan added.

"We run a quality program," Marylynne explained. "We train our staff extensively on how to interact and communicate with dementia patients."

"It takes a lot of patience," Ryan added. "Sometimes, it's almost like detective work, because they aren't always reliable narrators of their own experiences. Instead of the 1-to-12 or 1-to-15 ratio of staff to patients that you get at a nursing facility, we have a 1-to-3 or 1-to-4 ratio. So, we can offer more individualized care than is possible in a nursing home setting."

"Our program provides a social aspect that you don't get when you're at home all day. Our members become friends."

Friends Place provides an environment more like a social club. "We have salon days when a beautician who knows how to communicate with our members takes the time to find out what they really want. She also helps them maintain their nails. We have frequent outside entertainers. There's tai chi twice a month, and chair yoga, also twice a month, as well as daily chair exercise. They have a book club, with lively discussion. An art teacher provides classes in painting, yarn art and other media. We have a weekly cooking class. Therapy dogs come every month. And Dora Franklin brings the Gospel Good News Story Hour twice a month. We have live music two or three times a month."

Friends Place ADS is part of a Medicare pilot program — the GUIDE Program for people with Medicare Parts A and B to receive 25 days of care at facilities like Friends Place. "We provide this in conjunction with Healing Hands Health Care. Medicare added respite care in 2025, and we're their respite care partner. The VA also provides money for some days of respite care."

In addition, Friends Place hosts a support group for people caring for loved ones with dementia. "It meets every second and fourth Tuesday from 2:00-3:30 p.m.," Marylynne explained, "and is open to anyone in the community caring for a loved one with dementia." **NOW**



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WINTER 2026 FASHION TRENDS FOR WOMEN

— By Amber D. Browne

As seasons change, so do fashion styles. New trends emerge to incorporate with favorites of the past, and popular color choices combine with classics. The winter 2026 season allows all generations of women to integrate current fashion front-runners into their wardrobes.

The new year brings bold styles featuring silhouettes of volume and elongated lines. Puffy bomber jackets, which can be worn for warmth or as a top according to Dallas fashion blogger, Heather Anderson, are all the rage this winter. “I love this trend because it feels modern, confident and very fashion-forward, but it’s also incredibly flattering,” Heather shared in an article, *8 Fashion Trends That Look Expensive But Aren’t* (2026 Style Guide). She suggests zipping up the jacket and slightly tucking it under for a more streamlined silhouette.

Another trend this winter is popping the collar of the jacket. Some designs include their own stand collar for a sophisticated look. Basic black leather jackets are a must-

have. Utility jackets paired with wide-leg cargo pants popped up throughout winter 2026 collections, according to the *Marie Claire* article, *The Best Winter 2026 Fashion Trends Are Both Weatherproof and Party-Proof*.

Although wide-leg pants are trending, the skinny jean look continues to hold space in the fashion world providing a slim-fitting silhouette. In 2026, high-waisted wide-leg pants, leggings and ankle-length pants in black or dark neutral colors pair well with tucked in or waist-length tops. Maxi dresses are also must-haves and can be layered with neutral jackets. Dress up the look with knee-high boots or wear ballet flats or skinny sneakers for a more casual feel.

Scarves are making a comeback this winter, according to the *Marie Claire* article. “It’s not just a winter add-on or afterthought,” the article stated. “Just as a great coat can be the whole look, the right scarf can offer enough drama and intrigue to be the grounding factor of an outfit.” Ivory faux fur stoles, skinny scarves and tops with built-in shawls are some examples of this winter’s women fashion accessories.

Trending shoes include slimmer boot silhouettes. According to the article *Winter 2026 Fashion Trends: Simple, Stylish Updates for Your Wardrobe* on jolynnshane.com, boots are a foundation to most winter wardrobes. The article



suggests this winter, the style shifts from a chunkier, heavier boot to boots with “cleaner lines, sleeker profiles and a more refined overall shape.” Almond-shaped or softly rounded toes and low or block heels are popular in ankle boots and knee-high styles. The article continued, “Decorative buckles, cutouts, and other extra details aren’t as prominent this year; the most modern boots feel streamlined and minimal.” Ballet flats, pointed-toe heels, leather lace-up shoes and skinny sneakers are also in style this winter.

Sherpa is a popular texture this season for vests and accents in shoes and boots. “It adds warmth and texture without overwhelming your outfit, which makes it an easy trend to incorporate even if you prefer a more understated vibe,” according to the jolynnshane.com article. Additional trending textures include organic cotton, velvet and faux fur.

Now onto color. The Pantone Color of the Year 2026 is PANTONE 11-4201 Cloud Dancer. According to pantone.com, this shade of white “serves as a symbol of calming influence in a society rediscovering the value of quiet reflection. A billowy white imbued with serenity, PANTONE 11-4201 Cloud Dancer encourages true relaxation and focus, allowing the mind to wander and creativity to breathe, making room for innovation.” This light, neutral shade allows other

colors of pastels and deeper hues to hold the spotlight. Other color trends this winter are deep navy blue as an alternative to black, camel brown, teal, powder pink, pale pistachio and winter citrus, according to the *Marie Claire* article.

As fashion trends come and go, tried and true styles can last a lifetime. Essentials to incorporate into any woman’s wardrobe this winter include a puffy bomber jacket, black leather jacket, scarves, ballet flats and sleek, almond-shaped ankle boots. Think about incorporating neutral colors when shopping for winter clothing this year. Incorporating some newer favorites into the closet this season can create a fresh and sophisticated wardrobe. **NOW**

Sources:

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CookingNOW IN THE KITCHEN WITH JERRY PRATER

— By Adam Walker



Jerry Prater cooks for fun and flavor and to express his creativity. "I grew up in Dallas, learning soul food from my great-grandma, Johnie Mae Anderson. I started experimenting in the kitchen as a preteen. I like remixing the classics, like chicken and waffles. Down-home soul food is my heart, but I love grilling, experimenting and flipping flavors."

When he isn't expressing himself in the kitchen, Jerry finds plenty to keep himself busy. "I love watching and playing sports with my sons, vibing to R&B music with my wife, watching horror movies and embracing life. I thank Chris Thurman, Tiffany Washington, Glenicia Gowans and fitness coach Sabrina Price for inspiration." **NOW**

Cast-Iron T-Bone Steak & Over-Easy Eggs

Steak:

2 thick T-bone steaks

Badia Complete Seasoning, to taste

Chef Merito Steak and Meat Seasoning, to taste

Black pepper, to taste

Garlic salt, to taste

3 cloves fresh garlic, smashed

3 sprigs fresh rosemary

Butter, to taste

Eggs:

Butter or oil

Eggs

Salt, to taste

Black pepper, to taste

- For the steaks:** Pat the steaks completely dry with paper towels to ensure a proper sear.
- Combine the complete seasoning, meat seasoning, black pepper and garlic salt. Season both sides of the steaks evenly. Let rest 15-20 minutes.
- Preheat the oven to 400 F. Heat a cast-iron skillet over medium-high until very hot.
- Place the steaks in the skillet; sear 2 minutes per side without moving. Add the smashed garlic and rosemary to the pan.
- Add a generous amount of butter; quickly baste the steaks. Transfer the skillet to the oven; cook about 4 minutes for medium doneness, adjusting time as needed.
- Remove the steaks; rest 5 minutes.
- Slice from the bone, if desired; serve immediately.
- For the eggs:** Heat a nonstick or cast-iron skillet over medium-low heat with butter

or oil.

- Crack the eggs into the pan; cook until the whites are set but the yolks remain runny.
- Gently flip; cook 10-15 seconds more.
- Season lightly with salt and pepper; serve immediately.

Jerry's Southern Fried Chicken & Waffles

Fried Chicken:

- 3 Tbsp. seasoned salt**
- 3 Tbsp. Chef Paul Prudhomme's Poultry Magic Seasoning**
- 3 Tbsp. lemon pepper**
- 3 Tbsp. onion powder**
- 3 Tbsp. garlic powder**
- 3 Tbsp. Creole seasoning**
- 3 Tbsp. paprika**
- 1/2 tsp. cayenne (optional)**
- 3-4 lbs. whole chicken wings**
- Hot sauce, to taste**
- 4 large eggs**
- 3-4 cups all-purpose flour**
- Peanut or vegetable oil**

Waffles:

- 1 cup all-purpose flour**
- 4 tsp. sugar**
- 2 tsp. baking powder**
- 1/8 tsp. baking soda**
- 1/2 tsp. salt (1 tsp. if kosher)**
- 1 large egg, separated (divided use)**
- 1 cup milk**
- 2 Tbsp. unsalted butter, melted**
- 1 Tbsp. canola oil**
- Powdered sugar, to taste**
- Warm syrup, to taste**

- For the chicken:** Combine the seasonings into a blend; reserve half.
- Season the chicken with the remaining blend; massage well. Add the hot sauce; marinate 30-60 minutes.
- Whisk the eggs in a bowl. Combine the flour with the reserved seasoning in a covered container; shake to mix.
- Dip the chicken in egg, then flour; shake to coat. Repeat for extra-crispy breading if desired.
- Heat the oil to 320 F. Fry the chicken 12-15 minutes, turning as needed, until golden and fully cooked.
- Drain on paper towels or a wire rack and rest briefly.
- For the waffles:** Preheat a waffle iron to medium.
- Mix dry ingredients in a bowl.
- Add the egg yolk and milk; mix until smooth. Stir in the butter and oil.
- Beat the egg white until fluffy; gently fold into the batter.
- Cook in the waffle iron until golden.
- Dust the waffles with powdered sugar. Top with fried chicken. Finish with warm syrup and preferred toppings.



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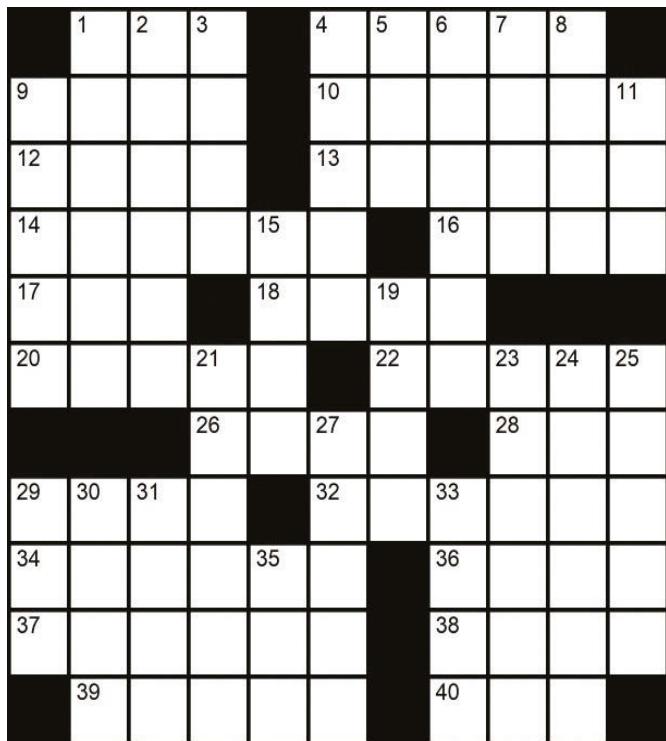
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Across

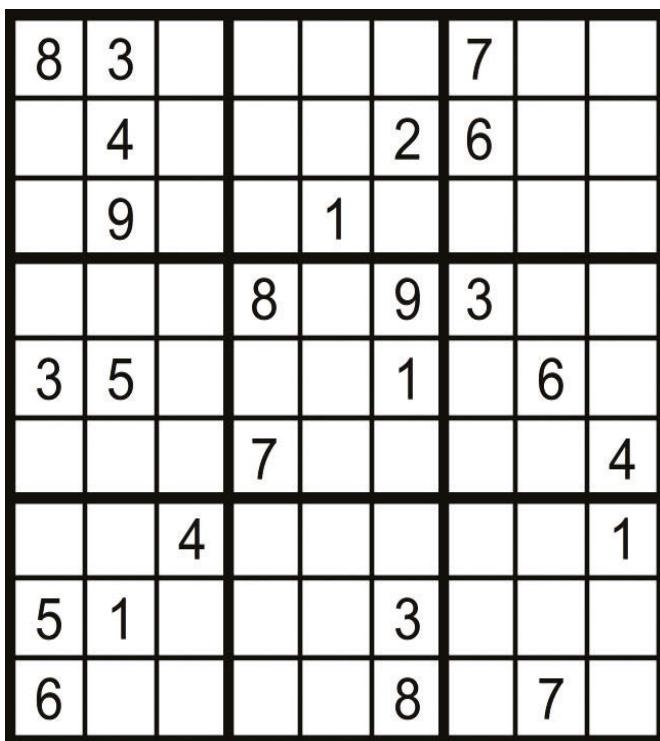
- 1 Subject of "Take Me Home, Country Roads" (John Denver)
- 2 Mature
- 9 Yoko Ono's son
- 10 Dry up
- 12 Saber handle
- 13 Third sign of the zodiac
- 14 Instead
- 16 "... and make it snappy!"
- 17 Sum charged
- 18 Peruse
- 20 "..." Remember" (Song from "The Fantasticks")

- 22 Hat he tweaked for a British Prime Minister
- 26 "Got it!"
- 28 Auto club, up north
- 29 Bridge, in Bordeaux
- 32 Fishing vessels
- 34 Schools
- 36 "The Outcasts of Poker Flat" reporter --- Lane
- 37 Uncivilized
- 38 Enticement to a trout
- 39 China brand
- 40 "Count me in!"

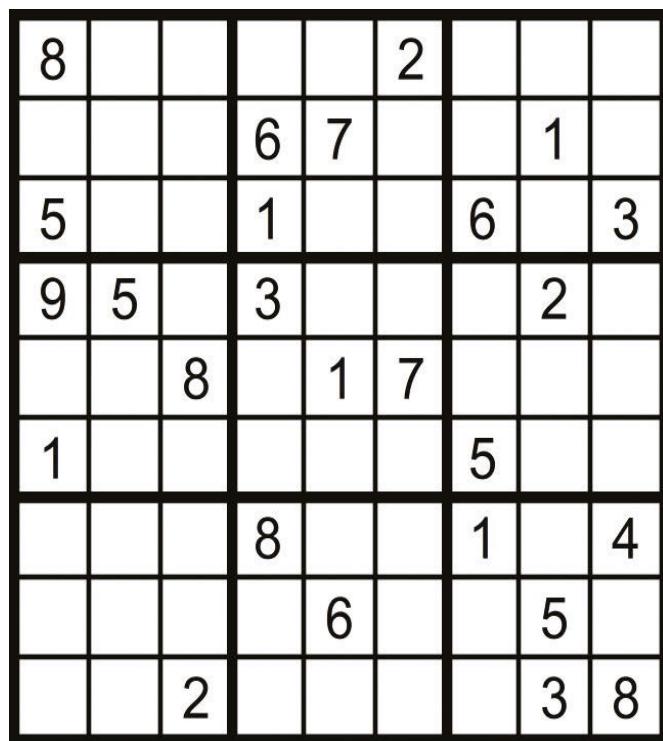
Down

- 1 "Mad Men" creator Matthew ---
- 2 Depression between hills
- 3 Against
- 4 Dispute
- 5 Owing
- 6 Like a teenager's bed?
- 7 "Daily Planet" reporter --- Lane
- 8 Albacore, for example
- 9 Loose dress
- 11 Apex
- 15 Greek love god
- 19 "Attention please ..."
- 21 Venetian art master
- 23 Gather
- 24 Skater all over the place for willing participants
- 25 Careless speed
- 27 Hudson automobile replaced by the Terraplane
- 29 Points
- 30 Spoken
- 31 Congregational part of a church
- 33 With skill
- 35 Save the Children, for example

Easy



Medium



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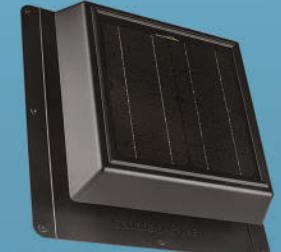
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Dr. Allala is a graduate of the Texas A&M School of Dentistry. "When I started there, it was still Baylor. My diploma has both names on it," she recalled. "I specialize in oral surgery, and we're really good at it. I'm nothing without my team. We do everything in dentistry. I like being well rounded. I enjoy being an overachiever, so I'm constantly taking continuing education, keeping up with all the

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