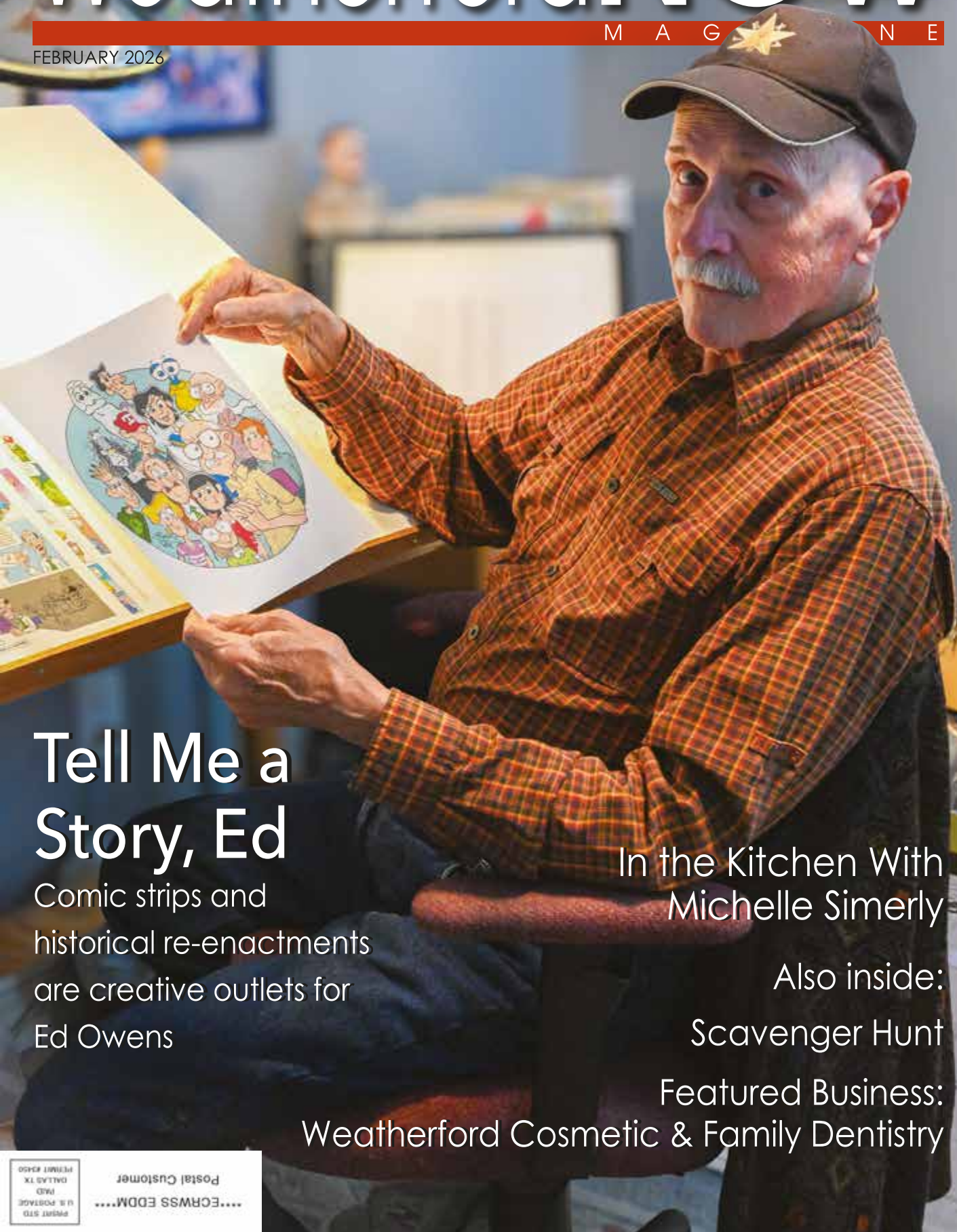


15-YEAR ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

WeatherfordNOW

M A G A Z I N E

FEBRUARY 2026



Tell Me a Story, Ed

Comic strips and historical re-enactments are creative outlets for Ed Owens

In the Kitchen With Michelle Simerly

Also inside:

Scavenger Hunt

Featured Business:

Weatherford Cosmetic & Family Dentistry

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Are you suffering from back pain, arm or leg pain, numbness, tingling, or weakness in your arms or legs? Then it's likely you're suffering from a bulging disc. That's when one of your spinal discs is bulging and causing these, sometimes severe, symptoms because of the effect it's having on your nervous system.

You may have already had this diagnosed on an MRI and thought that there is little that can be done about it. Bad information is a major problem because, in the right hands, a lot can be done for you. To end the misery caused by bulging discs, you must have the right information.

Pay close attention because I'm going to destroy some important myths and give you the facts.

MYTH: Bulging disc problems will just "go away" with some rest.

FACT: If you are dealing with back pain, buttock pain, or leg pain, then you must seek help from a bulging disc specialist immediately. If left untreated, the problem can lead to permanent nerve damage and lifelong pain.

MYTH: Pain is the only problem associated with bulging disc issues.

FACT: In severe cases, this problem can lead to the inability to control your bowels, bladder, and sexual potency, resulting in embarrassing situations.

MYTH: You must take pain medications to deal with bulging discs.

FACT: Drugs like muscle relaxants, painkillers, narcotics, antidepressants, and anti-seizure medications have serious potential side effects and do not cure bulging discs.

MYTH: Stop exercising and get several weeks of bed rest to let the bulging disc recover.

FACT: Staying active can help relieve the pain and prevent it from getting worse. Staying inactive in bed could be the worst advice, based on a recent study in the Netherlands.

MYTH: "I must have done something wrong to damage my disc."

FACT: Physical work or simply sitting at a desk for long periods can lead to bulging discs. Accidents and trauma can also be culprits. Pregnancy can cause damage as well. Disc bulges can happen to anyone, including super-fit celebrities like Tiger Woods, Sylvester Stallone, and British Olympic medalist Ian Wynne.

MYTH: Disc bulges or herniations require surgery.

FACT: No! There's been a huge breakthrough in the treatment of bulging discs.

MYTH: "There's nothing anyone can really do. I'm just stuck with this for the rest of my life."

FACT: With the correct treatment from a healthcare professional who specializes in bulging discs, you can find relief from the core cause and the symptoms.

MYTH: Getting a bulging disc properly diagnosed is expensive.

FACT: Not true. Dr. Carl McAfee and his team of doctors in Weatherford are currently offering an initial consultation with one of their specialists for just \$29.

Dr. Carl McAfee, DC, and his team of doctors are bulging disc experts in Weatherford. This procedure does not require a hospital stay, and in most cases, you'll be able to continue with your normal daily activities with little interruption. The focus is on finding—and correcting—the original cause of the bulged disc.

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February 2026
Volume 16, Issue 2



Amber D. Browne
WeatherfordNOW Editor
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ON THE COVER

*This Weatherford
resident entertains
and educates
through quips
and truths.*



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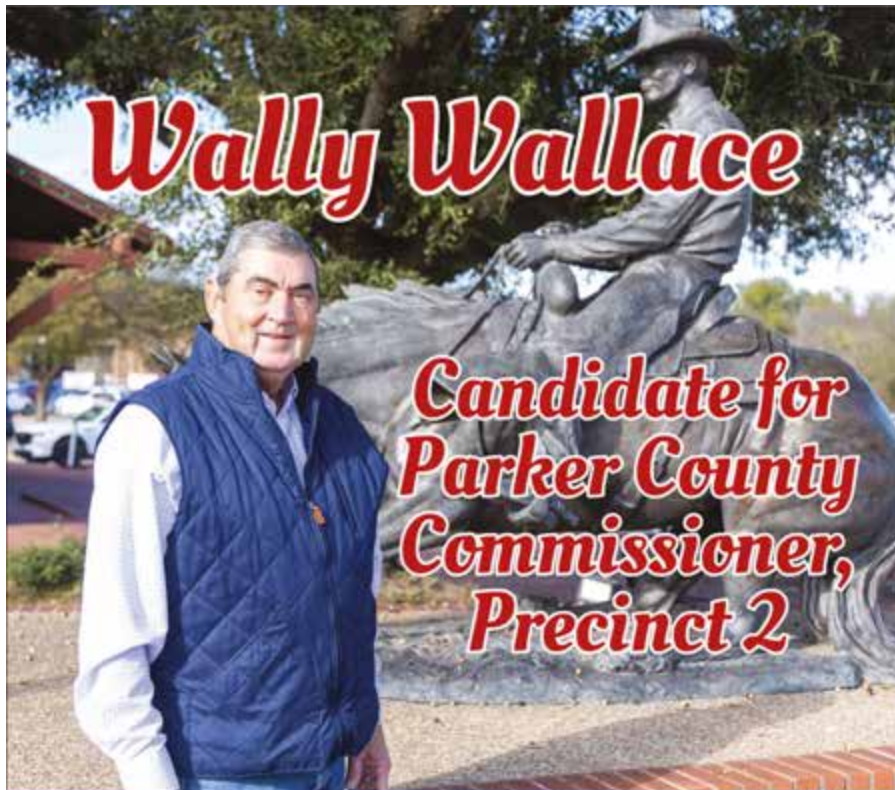
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The art of storytelling exists in many forms. Authors use the written word to recite plot details to intrigued readers, while actors share tales via the screen or stage. Weatherford resident Ed Owens adds to the written form with creative character artwork to share quips in gag-a-day cartoons. His other passion is teaching history to the younger generations through re-enactments. With the combination of these storytelling art forms, Ed occupies his time entertaining and educating others.

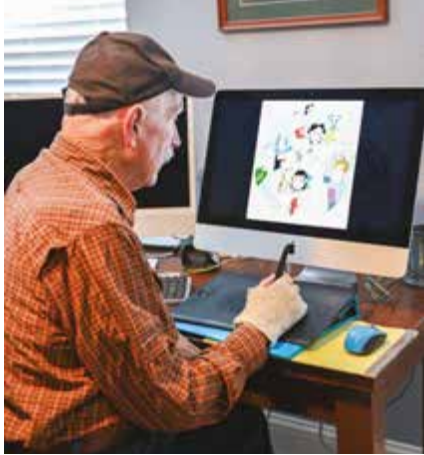
A cartoon drawn by Ed when he was 6 years old is a reminder of his love for art. His mother would show him the piece every now and then, and since junior high, Ed shared with others his dream of becoming a cartoonist. "I've been lucky enough to have been able to work at it in different ways," he said.

Ed's first official gig as a cartoonist transpired at his school newspaper. After high school, he majored in art at the Oklahoma Military Academy and was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1970. Ed worked as a technical illustrator while stationed in Missouri and drew training manuals and cartoons for the post's newspaper. After serving in the Army, Ed attended the Art Institute of Dallas, where he majored in commercial art. He learned the equipment and technology, giving him experience for the "real" world. He honed his craft creating artwork for Dallas advertising studios, and in 1976, an illustration position enticed him to the art department at *The Dallas Morning News*, where he worked in graphic design and drew cartoons, maps and illustrations.

Over his nearly three decades at *The Dallas Morning News*, Ed experienced technological advances firsthand. To print text, a linotype machine used molten lead to create plates, which then stamped the newspaper. For artwork, Ed employed a crow quill pen and ink to create gag-a-day comic strips and other illustrations. To add color to the drawings, Zip-A-Tone was used. Artists pressed the overlays onto the paper to add different colors to specific areas in the art.

In 1984, computers became the mainstay. At first, Ed used a mouse to create simple artwork. "It was like trying to do art with an Etch A Sketch. It didn't work," he remembered. Hand-drawing created the final product. Artists later implemented tablets, so they could draw on the screen. After scanning the artwork into Photoshop, artists finalized the piece. "The whole thing changed. All of the sudden, we were cranking out everything by computers." The digital age eventually led to the downfall of many print publications, and after 28 years, Ed found himself part of a workforce reduction at the newspaper.

Ed's love of cartooning spilled into teaching and volunteering. He taught students at Dallas County Community College and Southern Methodist University, and he wrote articles and drew cartoons for the Dallas Historical Society newsletter. After moving to Parker County, he continued teaching, but interest in the art form fizzled.



BLUEBONNETS.” In **BLUEBONNETS**, Ed brought those characters into the 21st century. “It’s about a family who lives in a small North Central Texas town. It was featured for a while in GoComics Universal Press Studios,” he explained. The comic strip is no longer online, so Ed draws for himself and considers his artwork a hobby, posting his work on personal social media pages.

Although outlets for these gag-a-day comic strips are dwindling, some names stand the test of time such as *Peanuts* and *Garfield*. “Cartooning is the very American art form,” he said. Creating a comic strip that includes a joke each day can be taxing, but Ed looks for story ideas in everyday life. “Life in itself is kind of funny. It’s just day-to-day stuff.”

For Ed, cartooning is about observation. “It’s family dynamics, sibling rivalry, old people trying to relate to young people,” he said. “I listen to people talk. I can twist that a little bit and make it into something funny.”

Once Ed settles on a subject, he adds humor in threes. “For example, Mark Twain said, ‘A boy will learn three things from a dog: loyalty, bravery and turn around three times before he lays down.’ So, you look for little things like that that you can build on.”

Ed often finds humor in things that worry him, and he considers cartooning a therapeutic hobby. “I’m a naturally depressed, miserable person by nature, so I spend a lot of time working on not doing that,” he said, grinning. “Even in miserable times, life can be funny.”

In addition to his comic strips, Ed volunteers at Doss Heritage and Culture Center sharing history with students in education sessions and visitors at the Pioneer Heritage Festival. He dresses in Civil War gear or cowboy clothing for various lessons at The Doss. He often asks students why history is important. “The best I could ever come up with is history and storytelling are like memory,” he said. “Why is slavery bad? If you don’t have any context for it, history explains to us why it is bad. History tells you where you’ve been and tells you, ‘Don’t go there again,’” he said.

Storytelling is important to Ed. “It’s just a very human thing to do.” Whether he is dressing the part to share stories of the past or writing jokes constructed from the normalcy of life, Ed continues to share his creativity with others. His historical storytelling educates, but he always hopes to spark a smile with his gag-a-day cartoons. **NOW**

Freelance cartooning kept him busy, however. “As a cartoonist, it’s an outlet we must have,” he admitted. “If someone reads your comic strip and whenever it’s done, they say, ‘I wish I would have said that,’ or they smile, then it’s a successful comic strip. That’s what I shoot for.”

Ed’s comic strip, *Cows and Stuff*, was published online at Comics Sherpa for a decade and featured Texas cowboys and funny cows. The strip gained a fan following. “It got hard to write modern jokes for cowboys. I liked the characters so much, but I couldn’t cowboy them all the time,” he said. “So, I came up with this online comic strip called



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For more than six decades, Weatherford Cosmetic & Family Dentistry has provided area residents with dental services featuring the latest in technological advances. The doctors and staff pride themselves on offering big-city benefits with a small-town feel. “When you come into our practice, it feels like small town. It’s like coming to see your friend. We have that relationship with our patients,” explained Ashley Decker, DDS, who joined longtime practitioner Garrett Mulkey, DDS, at Weatherford Cosmetic & Family Dentistry six years ago.

Dentistry is quickly evolving, and Weatherford Cosmetic & Family Dentistry’s doctors, hygienists and dental assistants continue to educate themselves on new technology and other advancements including the implementation of three-dimensional X-rays, lasers and Bioclear. With available services ranging from general dentistry and orthodontics to cosmetics and trauma care, co-owners Drs. Decker and Mulkey, along with associate dentist, Deborah Romack, DDS, provide a one-stop-shop for dental needs. “We’re a very good team,” Dr. Decker shared.

A commitment to total dentistry allows the doctors to find the root cause of problematic issues in the mouth, which could be related to

high blood pressure or diabetes. Using a 3D scan of the teeth, jaw and sinus cavities, they can also identify signs of sleep apnea, which is treated by Dr. Romack.

The dental practice treats patients as young as infants for issues including lip and tongue ties, which can affect latching during breast feeding. A laser is used to release the tissue and alleviate the problem. A laser can also be used to manage pain during a procedure.

If a child has a narrow dental arch, or high palate, the patient could exhibit dark circles under the eyes, bedwetting, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and mouth-breathing. “Mom doesn’t understand why, and it’s because they’re not getting the oxygen they need at night to replenish them,” Dr. Decker explained. Orthodontic treatment can fix the underlying issue providing relief to the patient in multiple areas.

Weatherford Cosmetic & Family Dentistry provides same-day crowns, Invisalign and treatment for trauma cases, which are typically sports-related. Root canals, implants, simple extractions and teeth whitening are other services.

The dental practice promotes the use of Bioclear, which is a minimally invasive procedure that includes a composite veneer shaped and polished for each individual tooth. Bioclear allows for the patient’s teeth to remain intact while achieving a cosmetic result. “We don’t want to drill on the teeth because that can lead to the downfall or the death of the tooth,” Dr. Decker explained. Following a Bioclear smile makeover, the patient can return for any adjustments to the shape or thickness of the teeth. “It’s composite, so we can make those adjustments. Whereas once you shave that tooth down, and you have that veneer or crown, and you hate it, then you have to replace a very expensive restoration. The main goal is preserving what’s there.”

Dr. Decker focuses on making patients feel comfortable when in the dental chair. “It’s totally normal to feel scared and to maybe feel like you might be judged. But my philosophy is that I want to help you. I want to provide quality care in the most comfortable and nonjudgmental environment.” Oral sedatives and nitrous oxide are available for anxious patients, and ear plugs, stress balls and blankets provide additional comfort.

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Parker County 4H students West Austin, Emma Houprich, Finley Van Dyk and Henry Kimball pose for a picture after presenting at the Weatherford Rotary Club meeting.

Zoomed In: Greg Neeley and Reggie Tennison

By Amber D. Browne

High school buddies Greg Neeley, of Aledo, and Reggie Tennison, of Burleson, joined forces to co-author an adult science fiction adventure book, *Then the Night Got Weird*. They recently hosted a book signing at The Full Cup in Weatherford. "I would like to thank those who took a copy and are giving us a chance," Greg shared.

The book, available on Amazon, follows three 20-year high school reunion attendees who travel back in time after rediscovering a crystal from their youth. The men must navigate adolescent trauma and find a way to return to present day.

"It has been a fun ride writing and self-publishing this book with such a dear friend," Greg said.

Greg and Reggie are now halfway through their next project. It's a psychological horror novel tentatively titled *The Tunnel*.



Anne Feriend takes first place, Wendy Ray second and Mark Cook third in Weatherford Art Association's November-December Artists of the Month competition.



Local business leaders join Aledo High School Career and Technical Education teachers for an afternoon of professional development.



Weatherford College faculty and staff are recognized for their dedication and years of service at an annual employee awards dinner.



Local women gather for a holiday lunch at Shep's to encourage and celebrate teenagers who participate in the WOW Girl Initiative.



The McEntire family spends an afternoon in downtown Weatherford.



Weatherford High School wrestler Mackenzie Williamson takes gold at the Lamar Invitational.

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Michelle's Famous Creamy
Green Enchilada Soup



CookingNOW

IN THE KITCHEN WITH MICHELLE SIMERLY

— By Amber D. Browne



Traveling the world serving in the military provided Michelle Simerly with a vast insight into different cuisines. “Food was such an inspiration to explore. For us, it showed the host countries that we appreciated them and wanted to embrace the culture,” she said.

A meal choice shared with family and friends depends on the mood, and Michelle often invents her own dishes by expanding on a flavor profile. From Korean to Southern dishes learned from her Alabama upbringing, she enjoys making simple recipes that taste more complex.

When she is not trying to find locals their ideal homes as a Realtor, Michelle and her husband give back to the community by volunteering with veteran organizations. They also love to travel. “We try to get ocean therapy a few times each year.” **NOW**

Michelle's Famous Creamy Green Enchilada Soup

- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 small white onion, finely chopped
- 5 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 rotisserie chicken, deboned and shredded
- 2 10-oz. cans green chile or red enchilada sauce
- 1 32-oz. box chicken broth

- 1 10-oz. or 16-oz. bag frozen corn
- 12 oz. cream cheese, softened
- Salt, to taste
- Pepper, to taste
- Tortilla strips or chips, to taste
- Sour cream, to taste
- Cilantro or green onion, chopped, to taste

1. In a Dutch oven, add the olive oil, onions and garlic. Sauté for about 5 minutes.

- 2. Add the shredded chicken; combine. Add the enchilada sauce and chicken broth; stir well.
- 3. Bring to a boil; add the frozen corn. Add the cream cheese; stir until melted. Salt and pepper, to taste.
- 4. When serving, top with tortilla strips or crushed tortilla chips, sour cream and cilantro or green onion.

French Onion Soup

- 6 large yellow onions
- 3 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 32-oz. box beef broth
- Salt, to taste
- 3 Tbsp. black pepper
- 1/4 cup Worcestershire sauce
- 1 stick butter
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 loaf French bread, sliced and toasted
- 8-oz. Gruyère cheese, shredded

- 1. Slice the onions into rings; cut the rings in half. Add the olive oil to a Dutch oven on medium heat. Add the onions; sauté for about 45 minutes until golden brown.
- 2. Add the beef broth, salt, pepper and next three ingredients to the Dutch oven. Mix well; bring to a boil. Reduce the heat; simmer for about 1 hour.
- 3. Remove the bay leaves. Ladle the soup into oven-safe ramekins or bowls. Float a piece of bread on top. Add the cheese; broil for about 2-3 minutes to quickly brown.

Corn Casserole

- 2 15.25-oz. cans whole kernel corn
- 2 14.75-oz. cans cream style corn
- 8-oz. sour cream
- 1 stick butter, slightly melted
- 1 8.5-oz. box Jiffy Corn Muffin Mix

- 1. Preheat the oven to 350 F. Grease a 9x12-inch baking dish.
- 2. In a large bowl, mix together all the ingredients. Pour into the baking dish; bake for 1 hour or until the top is lightly golden and bubbly.

Best Baked Beans Ever

- 1 16-oz. tube Jimmy Dean Sage Sausage, cooked and drained
- 1 114-oz. bulk can Van Camp's Baked Beans (or your favorite brand)
- 1-2 cups dark brown sugar

- 1. Preheat the oven to 350 F. Add all the ingredients to a greased 9x13-inch baking dish; mix well.
- 2. Bake about 30 minutes or until bubbly.



WeatherfordNOW Scavenger Hunt



Find 5 hidden Valentine Cookies

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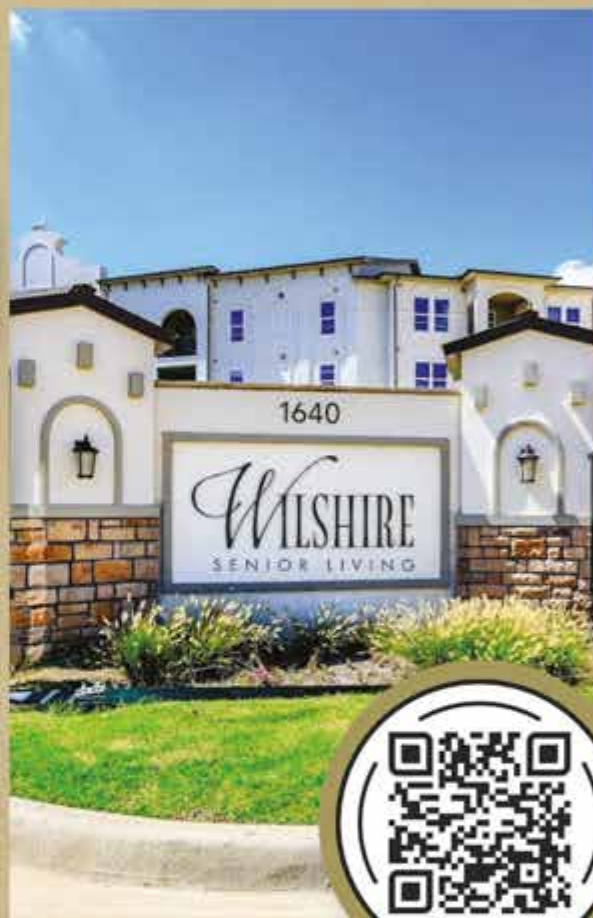
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






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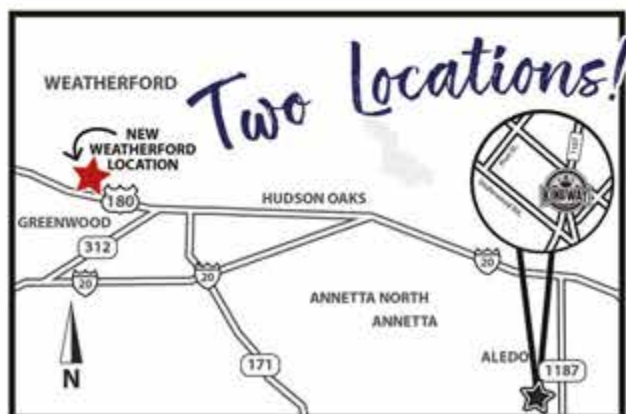


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