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Healing Hobby

Nadine McNally
rescues ailing wildlife

Also inside:
Scavenger Hunt
Crossword/Sudoku

Featured Business:
Fuego Church

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ON THE COVER

*Nurturing injured animals
has become one local
woman's life's work.*



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EDITOR'S NOTE



Angel

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Ordinary moments ...

Sometimes I make a big deal of little things. Who am I kidding? I *often* make a big deal out of little things. I'm not talking about sweating the small stuff or making mountains out of molehills (although, if I'm being honest, I may be guilty of each of those idioms, too). What I mean is, I like to commemorate everyday stuff in at least some little way. My husband calls it "going overboard," but I believe finding cause for celebration in routine things reminds us to be grateful.

I'm as guilty as the next person of not making time for the most important people in my life — of letting jobs and chores and projects consume me. Some people juggle those things and take time out for big occasions in meaningful ways, like family vacations and holiday events. I love those activities, but for me, the truly special memories are made marking everyday moments. At the height of the pandemic, Sunday drives became our thing. Traveling around our community recognizing places we loved and missed; discovering new areas we'd overlooked; and, most importantly, sharing whatever thoughts popped in our heads. I looked forward to those drives all week.

When my son was young, he and his dad would randomly have indoor campouts, tossing out sleeping bags and reading by flashlight for no reason other than it being Friday. We have special desserts for half birthdays and traditional meals the night *before* holidays. The list goes on, but it's not set in stone. Because sometimes you realize it's the first day of spring, and that calls for finding a playground and enjoying the swings.

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Healing HOBBY

— By Angel Morris

With a heart for helping those who can't help themselves, Nadine McNally first thought she'd have a career with Child Protective Services. She earned a bachelor's degree in that field from Cedar Valley College, but life had something else in store for Nadine's nurturing spirit.

Attending local schools since fifth grade, Nadine considers herself a lifelong Red Oakian. "When I was young, Red Oak was all country. Everybody knew everybody. I'm a people person, and I liked knowing everyone and doing things for the community," she reflected about her hometown.

While Nadine and her husband, Robert, are happy to stay in Red Oak for years to come, eventually they plan to retire to the 40-acre farm they own in Bynum, Texas. "We just love Red Oak, but my latest career is better suited for the farm," Nadine explained.

Before finding the way to her current passion, Nadine worked as a waitress and then manager for area restaurants including the Beckley Grill and Metro Diner. "It was another way I enjoyed helping people," Nadine admitted. "Plus I got my picture taken with all the Dallas Stars hockey team, which was pretty cool."

Something cooler, however, began to interest Nadine, and she left her restaurant work behind. "My husband owns his own home improvement business, and a client of Robert's knew he and I were old-school country," Nadine recalled. "The client discovered two baby raccoons in his basement and called us to find out what to do."

The McNallys urged the client to see if the babies' mother would return. When that didn't happen, the couple agreed to try to care for the raccoons. "I knew nothing about raccoons then, and the baby boy died that night. But I got the baby girl to drink Pedialyte, and I ended up wearing her in a harness on my chest for the next six weeks," Nadine remembered.

"This was when hospitals were beginning to encourage people to have skin-to-skin time with newborn babies, and I figured if it worked for humans, it might help a baby raccoon to stay near me, too," she said.

Willow the raccoon would live with the McNallys for the next five years until she passed — a long life for a raccoon. During that time, Nadine began her career in wildlife rehabilitation.

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Today, she has nursed hundreds of animals, from skunks and squirrels to possums and rabbits, back to health. "After Willow, I was hooked and couldn't turn away a hurt animal," Nadine admitted. "Someone sent me a goat that was less than a day old, and she almost died several times. Its mom had three babies and for some reason wouldn't let that one eat."

Before she knew it, Nadine became the go-to person for sick or injured wildlife. "The Ellis County game warden will reach out to me when he hears of one who needs my care," Nadine noted. "It's not something just anyone would want to do. You never know what that baby animal will need or why it's been abandoned. You have to learn to hydrate them, give animals IVs, things you'd never think of."

To that end, Nadine is applying for a wildlife rehabilitation license, which will allow for her to better care for more animals. "Right now I care for them in my home, with some cages and playpens. The goal is always to rehab them, and then release them back into the wild," she noted.

This is where the family farm becomes important, as the new home to Nadine's patients. "My favorite thing is when an animal takes to you as if you're its mom. Then you try with all your heart to save it, only to let it go back to its natural home again," she described. "Rehabbing can be really challenging, but ultimately, it's about helping a helpless animal go home."

Nadine noted that anyone wishing to help in her mission is welcome to reach her through Facebook at NadineMcham. Donations of baby blankets, bottles,





pacifiers, Cheerios, dog food and racoon formula are welcome, as are any monetary gifts to local vets who might assist with care.

"My 12-year-old granddaughter, Gwenith, wants to be a veterinarian, which is a big part of what motivates me to keep doing this," Nadine said. "I always find a way to help the animals that come to me, but others who want to help would certainly be welcome."

To others who may discover a sick animal, Nadine offers advice. "Get them into a cardboard box that has only a blanket inside. No food or water. Then contact the local game warden to help from there."

Nadine's rehab process involves evaluating each animal's condition and stabilizing their temperature before determining the best course of care, if there is one. "The hardest part is when you have a baby that is sick, but you know there's nothing you can do. Those times you just hold it and love it until it passes away."

When not expanding her rehabbing efforts, Nadine enjoys genealogy and has another unique way of helping others. "I take pictures of headstones and post them on findagrave.com," she explained. "After my father's death, it became a way of finding peace at the cemetery. Now I often get requests from others to find a grave and send them a photo."

Whether it's rehabilitating animals or connecting people to a lost loved one, Nadine proves her calling is kindness. "I feel like sometimes all people need is a friend or a kind word — just someone to listen," she said. "Whether it's with animals or people, it's always been important to me to be there for others. I've just always done that." **NOW**

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Zoomed In: Gabriel Ratliff

By Angel Morris

Gabriel Ratliff recently performed on the drums during a Zackkeys Productions recital at Red Oak's Ardent Church. The kindergartner began learning to play at the start of the school year, and he chose the drums because "they are the most fun, and I like wearing the headphones when I play," he said.

Gabriel was inspired by his father, a musician who plays many instruments, to try his own hand at music. "I also like the guitar but haven't learned how to play it yet," Gabriel admitted. When not taking music lessons at Zackkeys, Gabriel likes to read, play baseball and do anything outside.



Brittney Norwood and her children huddle up for a snow-day photo.



Raleigh Wilcox and Lauren Tenny enjoy Scoops Ice Cream in Red Oak.



Montana-born Robyn Hall shows pure excitement over getting mommy outside to see Texas snow again.



Lily Corbitt sets up for Girl Scout Cookie sales with the help of her mom, Dawn Corbitt.



Lucas Nacianceno sleds in the icy snow that hit Ellis County last month.



Red Oak ISD Education Foundation Executive Director Karen Anderson shows an auction item for the Handbags for Hawks fundraiser set for March 5.



Finley Mayfield tests the winter weather in her favorite dinosaur slippers for traction.



Parent Joana Estrada puts finishing touches on tables at the Daddy Daughter Dance hosted by Red Oak High School Choir Booster Club.

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— By Angel Morris

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Husband-wife team Joshua and Lavan Rivera's enthusiasm comes alive in their appropriately named Fuego Church. The duo entered ministry more than 11 years ago. "Joshua was studying at Southwestern Assemblies of God University in Waxahachie, and we were preparing to be married and move back to his hometown when



he graduated," Lavan recalled. "Before we moved, I wanted to be sure my family was settled in church."

Joshua, whose father had ministered more than 30 years, was well liked by Lavan's family, and Lavan asked for his help guiding them to church. "We drove 40 minutes to their home every week, and Joshua would share the gospel," Lavan explained.

By their second gathering, Lavan's mother and sister asked Joshua to lead them in the Prayer of Salvation, and each week that followed they invited more folks to listen to Joshua. "Our plan was still to find a local church for them, so we began visiting churches," Joshua noted.

During those visits, however, Joshua felt a calling. "He shared that God was calling us to shepherd this group of people," Lavan remembered. "Joshua was 27 I was 22, and I had no ministry background. I told Joshua, 'No!'"

Joshua asked Lavan to pray about it. "I felt scared and underqualified, but a month later, the Lord confirmed to me to take the plunge," Lavan admitted.

The couple began their church plant. They rented a chapel at Ferris Heights Methodist Church in Waxahachie from September 2010 through February 2011. Then, they found their first office space on Brothers Boulevard in Red Oak, but it, too, quickly filled up to capacity. "It was a good problem that geared us to find a building to purchase," Joshua said.

That led to Fuego Church's first campus in DeSoto in 2013. "We attracted families from all over Dallas — still by word-of-mouth from people who were saved in Lavan's family's house," Joshua described. "We quickly became a regional church and were exhausting our DeSoto space."

In 2019, the Assemblies of God North Texas District asked the Riveras if they would adopt a church in Red Oak that was looking to merge, and that location became the second Fuego campus. "With two locations, we are serving more than 600 people. This has prompted us to look for land or a building where we can combine the two congregations and anticipate welcoming 1,000 people or more," Joshua estimated.

In the meantime, Fuego Church continues to offer bilingual services at both locations. "We don't define ourselves as a Hispanic, Black or White church. We're multiethnic, multicultural and multigenerational as a representation of what heaven will look like," Joshua promised.

Lavan promised their mission emphasis will continue, with monthly assistance for local organizations and school districts. "We're hands-on in the community, encouraging faith through outreach and activities," Lavan noted.

While they are a young church in years, Fuego has a well-established youth, young-adult and family ministry, including people who are still with them from that first home Bible study. "We are here to love God, love people and be the church. Our goal is to be a church that collectively reaches the community and individually impacts the world around us," Joshua outlined.

And, as the name suggests, Fuego Church wants to ignite spirits and light the world. "When we 'Belong' to a healthy church and 'Believe' the word of God, we can 'Become' the person God has called us to be," Joshua said. "Come join us as we fulfill the motto, The Best is Yet to Come!" **NOW**



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CookingNOW

In the Kitchen With

KARMIN GAFFNEY

— By Amber D. Browne

“Cooking is a work of heart,” said Karmin Gaffney, who learned how to cook at the direction of her mother and grandmother while growing up on the East Coast. “Cooking is my therapy. When I am in the kitchen, that is my space to create and try new things,” Karmin said.

When visiting restaurants, Karmin likes to order different dishes, so she can recreate them at home. “I try and figure out the ingredients by all the flavors I taste in the dish.”

Karmin enjoys grilling, soul food, specialty recipes and baking, as well as incorporating fresh herbs and vegetables into her dishes. “I would fish and crab all day if I could, then I would go home and cook using all the fresh ingredients to have a tasty seafood dinner.” **NOW**

Awesome French Toast Casserole

Casserole:

- 1 loaf French brioche, sliced into 1-inch slices
- 8 eggs
- 2 cups half-and-half
- 1 cup milk
- 3 Tbsp. sugar
- 1 Tbsp. vanilla
- 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. nutmeg

Praline Topping:
2 sticks butter

- 1 cup light brown sugar
- 1 cup nuts, chopped
- 2 Tbsp. light corn syrup
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 tsp. vanilla

1. *For casserole:* Arrange the bread slices in 2 rows in a 9x13-inch pan, overlapping them if necessary.
2. In a large bowl, mix the eggs and remaining casserole ingredients until well blended. Pour the mixture over the bread ensuring all the bread is covered. Spread the mixture between the overlapped slices. Cover with foil; refrigerate overnight.
3. *For praline topping:* The following

day, preheat the oven to 350 F. In a small bowl, mix together all the praline topping ingredients; spread the mixture over the casserole. Bake for 45 minutes until golden brown and puffy.

Mango Habanero Hennessy Glazed Wings

Wings:

- 1 5-lb. bag party wings, rinsed and dried
- 3 Tbsp. garlic salt
- 2 Tbsp. black pepper
- 2 Tbsp. kosher salt
- 2 Tbsp. onion powder
- 2 Tbsp. Cajun seasoning
- 2 Tbsp. cornstarch
- Favorite oil for frying

Glaze:

- 1 cup pineapple juice
- 1 cup light brown sugar
- 2 cups Hennessy
- 2 cups fresh mango
- 2-3 habanero peppers
- 2 Tbsp. cornstarch
- 1/2 cup water

- 1. For wings:** In a large bowl, add the wings, garlic salt and next 4 ingredients; mix well. Lightly dust the wings with cornstarch.
- 2.** In a large pot, add enough oil to cover the wings; heat to medium-high. Fry the wings until they float to the top of the oil and are crispy and brown in color. Cook an additional 2 minutes for desired color. Remove; place on paper towels to remove excess oil.
- 3. For glaze:** In a large pan, add the pineapple juice, brown sugar and Hennessy. Simmer; stir occasionally until the alcohol burns off. Set aside but keep warm.
- 4.** In a food processor, blend together the mango and habaneros, for desired heat. Add the mixture to the pan with the glaze; slightly boil.
- 5.** In a small bowl, add the cornstarch and cold water; mix well. Add the cornstarch mixture in small amounts to the pan of glaze, combining until desired thickness. Remove from heat. Toss the wings in the sauce; enjoy with favorite dipping sauce and fries.

Shrimp and Grits

Grits:

2 cups water

1 14.5-oz. can chicken broth

1 12-oz. can evaporated milk

Salt, to taste

Pepper, to taste

1 cup grits

3/4 cup cheddar cheese

1/4 cup Parmesan cheese

Shrimp:

3 slices bacon, cut into 1-inch pieces

1 lb. large shrimp

Salt, to taste

Pepper, to taste

1 Tbsp. Old Bay seasoning

1/4 cup flour

2 Tbsp. butter

1/2 cup green onions, chopped

2 cloves garlic, minced

1/2 cup chicken broth

1/2 tsp. hot sauce (optional)

1. For grits: In a large bowl, add the first 5 ingredients; combine. Stir in the grits in small amounts until desired consistency. Add cheeses and combine; remove from heat.

2. For shrimp: In a skillet, fry the bacon until crispy. Remove; drain on a paper towel. Reserve 1 Tbsp. of the bacon grease.

3. Season the shrimp with salt, pepper and Old Bay seasoning; coat with flour. In a skillet, add set-aside bacon grease, butter and green onions; sauté. Add the garlic and seasoned shrimp. Cook for 5 minutes until



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Shrimp Spinach and Bowtie Pasta Medley

the shrimp turns pink. Add the broth and hot sauce, if desired; mix well.

4. Arrange the grits on a plate; spoon the shrimp over the top. Top with cooked bacon; enjoy.

Shrimp Spinach and Bowtie Pasta Medley

2 cups bowtie pasta
2 Tbsp. butter
1 lb. shrimp
1/2 Tbsp. garlic salt
1/2 Tbsp. onion powder
Salt, to taste

Pepper, to taste
1 1/2 cups milk
1 1/2 cups heavy cream
1/2 cup Parmesan cheese, shredded
1/2 cup Romano cheese, grated
1/2 cup cream cheese
1/4 cup cooking sherry
2 cups fresh spinach
1 Tbsp. parsley
1/4 tsp. red pepper flakes (optional)

1. Cook the bowtie pasta to an al dente consistency; drain and set aside.

2. In a large skillet, add the butter and shrimp; sauté until the shrimp turns

pink. Add the garlic salt, onion powder, salt and pepper.


3. In a small bowl, mix together the milk and heavy cream. Add the mixture to the skillet with the shrimp. Once boiling, add the cheeses and sherry; mix well. Add the spinach, parsley, optional red pepper and cooked pasta. Combine well; serve with salad and breadsticks.

Strawberry Pie

1 cup sugar
1/4 cup cornstarch
1 1/2 cups water
1 3-oz. pkg. strawberry Jell-O
1 lb. fresh strawberries, rinsed and dried
1 10-inch frozen pie shell
Whipped topping (optional)

1. In a saucepan over medium heat, combine the sugar, cornstarch and water; whisk until the mixture thickens. Remove from heat. Add the Jell-O mix; mix until dissolved. Cool slightly.


2. Cut the tops off the strawberries and halve; fold the strawberries into the sugar and Jell-O mixture. Bake the pie shell according to package instructions. Spoon the mixture into the baked pie shell; cool. Serve with whipped topping if desired.



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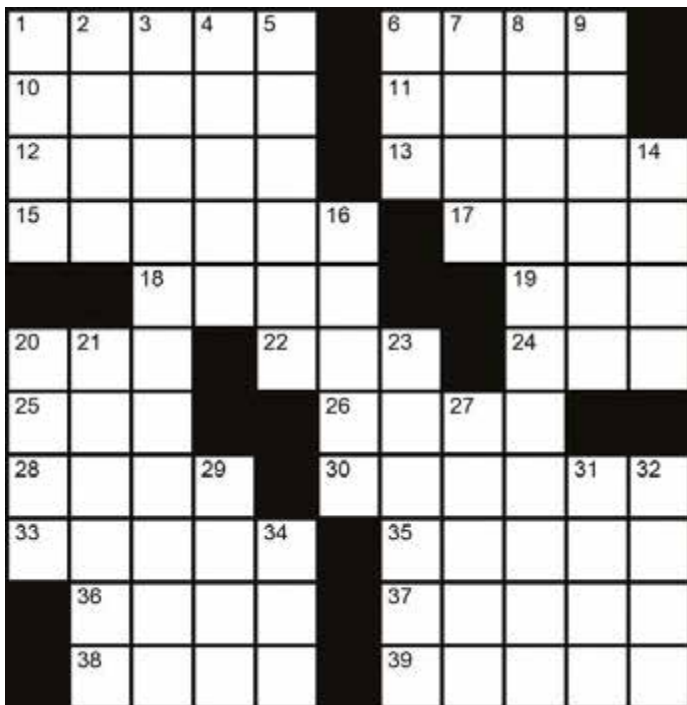
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Crossword Puzzle



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Across

- 1 Andrew Carnegie and Alexander Graham Bell
- 6 Bonny girl
- 10 Case place
- 11 Fairy tale opener
- 12 Rite site
- 13 Like the "sisters" in "Macbeth"
- 15 Flunky
- 17 "... Only Just Begun" (Carpenters hit)
- 18 "Render --- Caesar ..."
- 19 Mint
- 20 Federal public lands agency
- 22 Assist
- 24 Exclamation
- 25 Stick up
- 26 Where the pews are
- 28 Unreturned opening shots
- 30 Evinces disdain
- 33 Challenged
- 35 19th century pianist --- Schumann
- 36 Suggestive grin
- 37 Professional wrestler a k a Jeffrey Sculio
- 38 Small whirlpool
- 39 Tapered tucks in dressmaking

Down

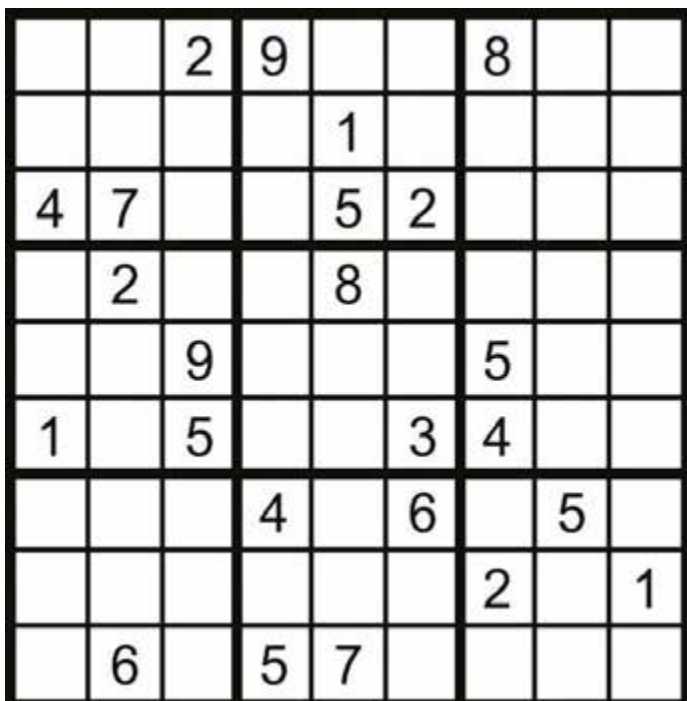
- 1 Con game
- 2 "Anything Goes" composer --- Porter
- 3 Facing a bigger army
- 4 Work out
- 5 Levels of society
- 6 Down in the dumps
- 7 Once again
- 8 Showcase for more analytical students
- 9 Waitron
- 14 Innocent
- 16 Lower part of the abdomen
- 20 Thin nail
- 21 Spot
- 23 Twisted?
- 27 Mexico's Pancho ---
- 29 He/she might fire off a lot of 28
- 31 Brotherhood
- 32 Impertinence
- 34 Teetotal

Solutions on page 28

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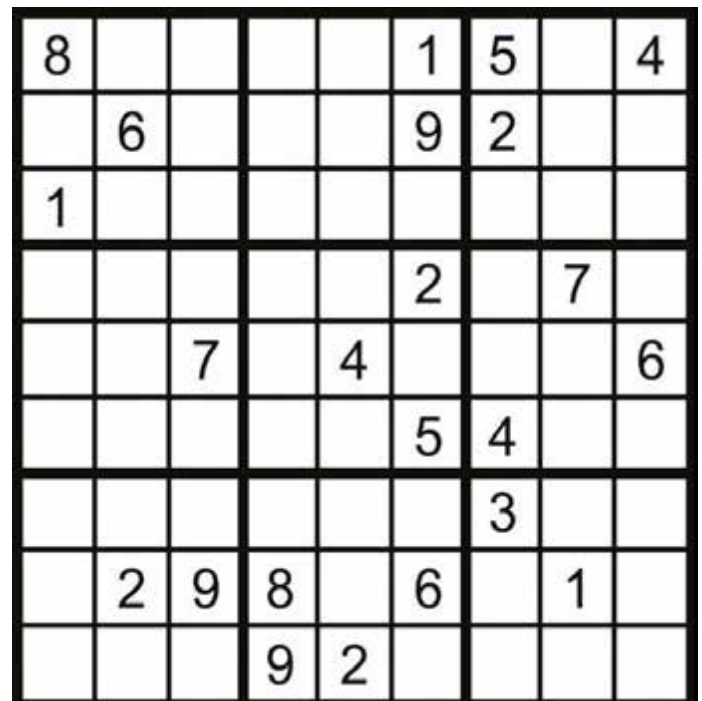
Sudoku Puzzle

Easy



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Medium



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Solutions on page 28

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3/5

Handbags for Hawks:

Red Oak ISD Education Foundation fundraiser. Door prizes, silent auction, gift card pull and raffle for a Louis Vuitton handbag. Snacks, desserts and non-alcoholic beverages provided, and each participant

will receive tickets for wine. Doors open: 6:00 p.m.; bingo begins: 7:00 p.m., Midlothian Conference Center, 1 Community Circle. Learn more by calling (972) 617-4320, emailing foundation@redoakisd.org or visiting <https://e.givesmart.com/events/p5B/>.

Third Mondays

Book Club:

New members are always welcome. 6:30-8:30 p.m., Red Oak Library, 200 Lakeview Pkwy. For more information, email redoakbookclub@gmail.com.

Third Wednesdays

Lancaster Women's Connection:

Welcoming all women in Ellis County to its once-a-month event. Cost is \$15, which includes lunch, a special feature and a Stonecroft speaker. Reservations due **Thursday** prior to the monthly meeting. 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Country View Golf Course, 240 W. Belt Line Rd., Lancaster. Contact Dee Ann Ellis at deeannellis@sbcglobal.net or (972) 921-6221.

Second Thursdays

Cocktails and Canvases:

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Second Saturdays

Red Oak Opry:

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1	S	C	O	T	S	6	L	A	S	S
10	C	O	U	R	T	11	O	N	C	E
12	A	L	T	A	R	13	W	E	I	R
15	M	E	N	I	A	L	16	W	E	V
18	U	N	T	O	19	N	E	W		
20	B	L	M		22	A	I	D	24	C
25	R	O	B		26	N	A	V	E	
28	A	C	E	S	30	S	N	I	F	S
33	D	A	R	E	34		C	L	A	R
36	L	E	E	R	37	E	L	I	A	S
38	E	D	D	Y	39	D	A	R	T	S

Easy

3	1	2	9	6	4	8	7	5
9	5	6	7	1	8	3	4	2
4	7	8	3	5	2	1	9	6
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2	6	3	5	7	1	9	8	4

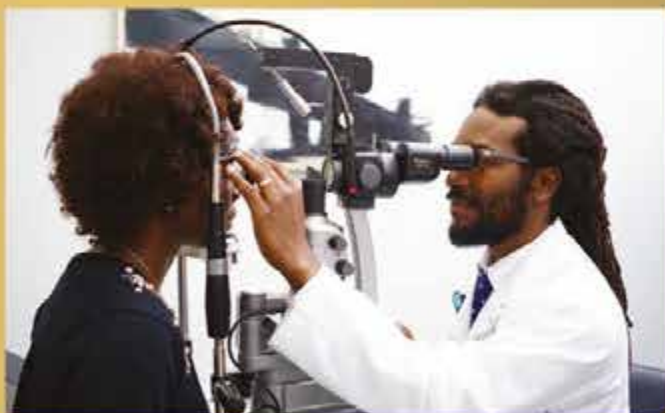
Medium

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6	7	8	1	5	4	3	2	9
4	2	9	8	3	6	7	1	5
3	5	1	9	2	7	6	4	8



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