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M A G A Z I N E

MARCH 2023

Brooklyn's Brush

Art class prompted an
unexpected passion

Pallets of Living Color

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plants, discarded wood
and a few tools

In the Kitchen With
Jordy Jordan



Also inside:
Scavenger Hunt

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ON THE COVER



Brooklyn Gratton's art can be seen around Ellis County as she continues to grow her skill.

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Angel

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MidlothianNOW Editor
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EDITOR'S NOTE

A long, long time ago, I can still remember ...

What better month than that of one's birth to reflect on all the things that make you feel old? For starters, those videos of "Songs Turning 40 This Year" that you remember moving and grooving to at your very first junior high dance. Turning 53, that means bangers like Cyndi Lauper's "Girls Just Want to Have Fun," Def Leppard's "Photograph" and "Every Breath You Take" by The Police. As classic as those remain, I can't help but think how the lyrics might sound if written today: "Girls just wanna have social media followers?" "All I've got is a picture on my iPhone?" And, sorry Sting, but you'd have a restraining order with your name on it instead.

Even though anniversaries of songs from your youth may age you, there's also nothing like music to remind you of what it's like to feel young. What song caused you and your BFF to break out in harmony every single time? It was The Judds' "Rockin' with the Rhythm of the Rain" for me. The Jets' "Crush on You" aptly reminds me of my first radio dedication, while Berlin's "Take My Breath Away" still makes it a little hard to breathe recalling love lost.

The No. 1 song the year of my birth was Simon & Garfunkel's "Bridge Over Troubled Water" while "Your Song" by Elton John, is the tune I most associate with childhood — each melancholic yet uplifting. And isn't that the magic of music ... able to bring joy and sadness, get us moving or stop us in our tracks, make us feel young and old in a matter of chords? Oh, the gift of song.

How that music used to make me smile!

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A class Brooklyn Gratton would have never chosen for herself turned out to be the spark that ignited her hidden talent. “I’ve always had a passion to be creative and to express myself. I enjoyed art class but never thought of it as something I could eventually grow to love. I took the class because it was required to graduate,” Brooklyn recalled. “I do remember one time in high school when we had to replicate a portrait as best we could. I never thought I was any good, but when I took my time and really focused, the art began to speak for itself. So much so, that the teacher gave me an extended due date because it was the first time I’d actually given it my all, and it was really good.”

Brooklyn and her family moved to Midlothian in November 1998, when she attended J.R. Irvin Elementary, J.A. Vitovsky (when it was an intermediate school), and then later Midlothian Middle School/Frank Seale Middle School. “I moved to Venus for high school, but my family moved back to Midlothian after I graduated,” she noted.

Since that time, Brooklyn has become a self-taught artist. “Sometimes, I wish I’d taken those school art classes more seriously, but they are my foundation. Since then, it has been mainly YouTube videos or advice from other artists that has helped shape me into the artist I am,” she explained.

Brooklyn’s preferred medium is acrylic paints. “They’re something I’m comfortable using, and I love how the colors blend together no matter what consistency I’m searching for. I’m making an effort to branch out and dabble with oil paints this year,” she admitted.

Trying new things has helped Brooklyn grow as an artist. “It’s so funny looking back at old pieces. At the time, I thought they were amazing, and to this day, in their own way, they are. But you can see the growth between pieces that were completed last month and pieces that I’ve done years ago,” she noted. “My proportions are so much better. They’re still something I am trying to perfect as much as possible, but at least now they’re more spot on. My blending has a gradual fade instead of hard lines transitioning from one color to the next.”

One of Brooklyn’s favorite pieces is her 16x24 canvas portrait of Tejano superstar Selena Quintanilla. “She’s always been one of my favorite musical artists, and to translate that to art was so much fun. I included little rhinestones on her outfit to give her a little pop of bling. I even painted her lips with her signature red lipstick,” Brooklyn depicted. “She was beautiful and would still be hanging in my personal space, but she has a new home. If you would like to see her, just ask your local Ellis County weatherman about her!”



oklllyn's *Brush*

— By Angel Morris





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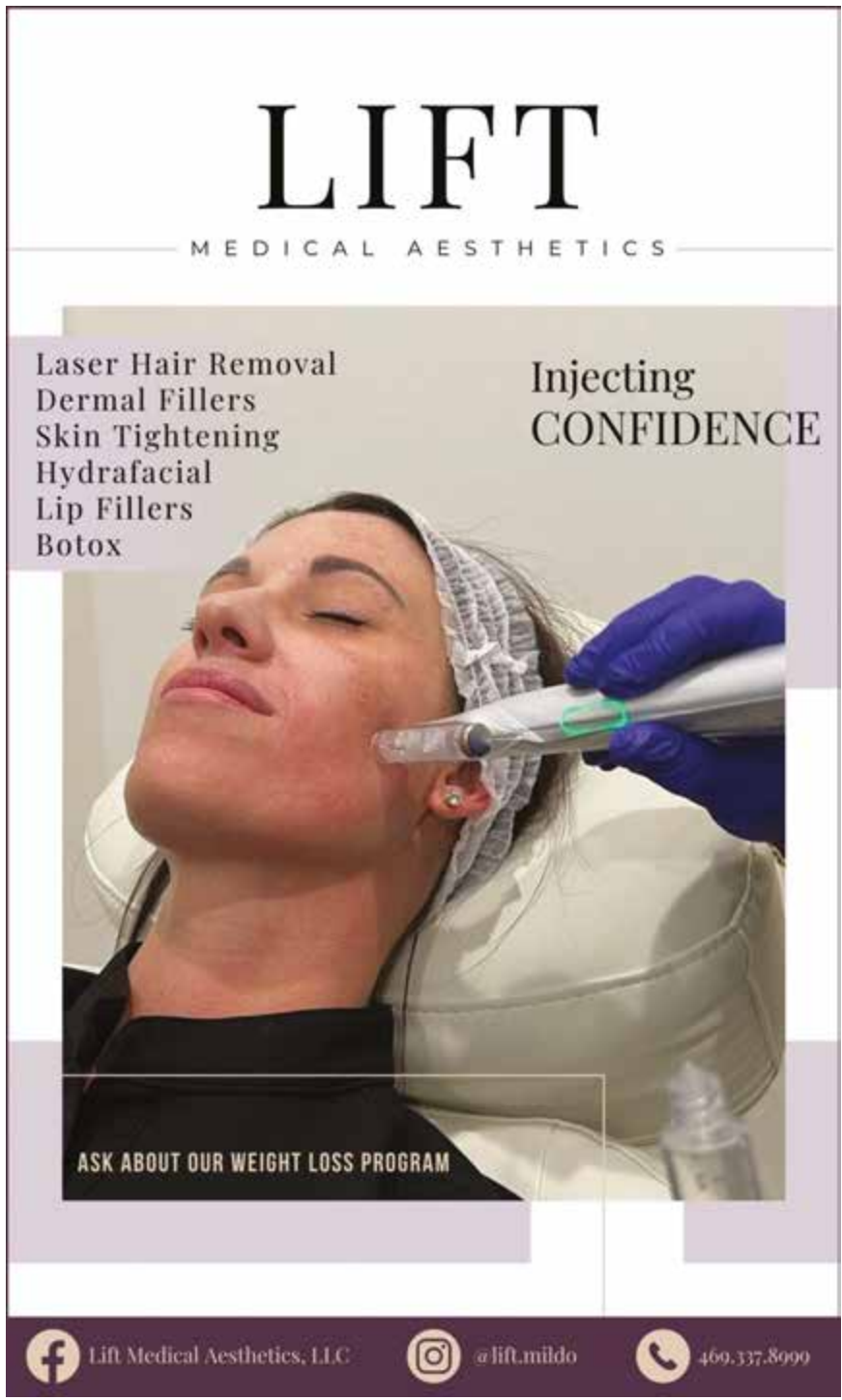
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Currently, Brooklyn works with local businesses and has pieces scattered all over Ellis County. “When Woodrow’s Coffee Shop was open in Midlothian, I had pieces hanging there, but currently I have works at Railport Brewing Company, The Man Cave Hair Parlor and The Arcade in Waxahachie,” Brooklyn explained, noting that her work is on social media and that is where she announces events and promotions in which she takes part.

Although Brooklyn is employed full time at Deloitte Dallas, her side gig in art continues to be her passion. “When we had an idea to start the art business, we originally named it Alfred Alexander Art Co. Alfred and Alexander are the middle names of my two oldest sons. When we found out I was pregnant with my youngest we thought it would be too much to try and squeeze his middle name into the company name, so this prompted us to simplify it down to Gratton Art Unlimited,” Brooklyn said.

Since then, husband, Donnie, and sons, Riley Wilson (11), Jackson Gratton (7) and Cory Gratton (22 months), along with parents Norma and Craig Belcher, have continued to support Brooklyn’s artistic endeavors. “Everything I do is influenced by my husband and kids. Sometimes, Donnie has a crazy idea that he thinks would look cool, and every single idea he has given me has sold,” Brooklyn admitted. “All of my family inspires me. My siblings and the mother of my two oldest boys are also my go-to people for honest, constructive criticism as they know my potential and challenge me where they feel I can do better. They push me to be the best version






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of myself and inspire me to reflect that version of myself into my work.”

Now Brooklyn does commissioned pieces for those who are interested. “It wasn’t until someone was interested in purchasing a piece that I finally felt confident enough to put a price on my artwork and display it for the world to see,” she commented. “Every piece I create I put all of my heart, soul and passion into because I know that commission will be used to better life for my children.

“My life is centered around my children,” Brooklyn continued. “Currently our weekends are filled with hockey practice and games. When we’re not doing that, I definitely take advantage of our family time at home and Netflix!”

As a former Manna House employee, Brooklyn also continues to volunteer throughout the year. “The kids love it because they get to be a part of something greater and see their grandparents at the same time,” she said.

From the class she only took because she had to, to finding fulfillment through art, Brooklyn Gratton said there is more to her commissions than money. “I would eventually love to have a studio and strictly focus on art, but until that day comes, I have fun with the commissions and putting ideas on canvas,” she stated. “My everything goes into making one-of-a-kind art, and my goal as an artist is to make as many people happy as possible. They don’t have to purchase anything from me. If they see my work and it makes them feel something, then I’ve done my job.” **NOW**



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SCAVENGER HUNT WINNER!



Congratulations to Jerrel Hyde on being our January scavenger hunt winner and receiving the \$50 prize money. Thanks to the help from his daughter, they found & submitted correctly all 5 hidden images.

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PALLETS OF LIVING COLOR

— By Lisa Bell

For years, do-it-yourself enthusiasts have searched for ways to turn discarded wooden pallets into furniture, signs or even backsplashes for kitchens. Available for free or at a low cost, they are ideal to use as the base for a backyard garden.

After acquiring your wooden pallets, remove nails and any broken boards. Clean and sand the pallets, and then varnish or paint them to protect the wood from rotting. For a more colorful option, consider a rainbow of colors as a fantastic way to use leftover paint from other projects.

Of course, you can always deconstruct the pallet and simply use the boards to create a standard planter. But if you want to employ creativity, here are a few ideas to wow your friends.

Wall Pallet Plant Holders

Prepare your pallet as instructed above, and carefully remove the back and side slats. If desired, use a jigsaw to cut the boards into a shape. Paint the pallet to match or contrast a wall or fence. Add eye hooks or S-hooks to the bottom for small hanging plants. If hanging the pallet on wood, be sure to locate the studs and screw it in place. For brick walls, use a mortar drill bit and an all-in-one screw and anchor (Walldog) with a metal washer to secure the pallet. Drill a hole in the mortar, not the brick. Repeat for additional Walldogs to secure the hanging. Then measure, mark and drill holes in the pallet. Thread the screw through the washer, drill through the pallet, and attach to the brick wall using pre-drilled holes.

After attaching the hanger to the wall, add lightweight planters and decorations using S-hooks. If desired, purchase decorative S-hooks to give the hanging garden more character. Fill the planters with soil and plants as desired.

Free-standing Vertical Wall With Attachments

After preparing your pallet, turn it so the slats run horizontally. If desired, secure the pallet to an external wall, fence or other stable object. You can build an A-frame to hold the wall vertically or use stabilizers.

Drill holes and screw hose clips into the boards. Add as many or as few as desired. Fill recycled jars, cans or small traditional pots with gravel, soil and plants. Place the jars inside the clips and tighten them to hold the jars securely in place. For an added touch of flair, paint, stencil or burn the names of the plants on the wood, or you can use chalkboard paint that allows you to write names.

Raised Pallet Garden

Prepare your pallets as previously instructed, and then turn them over so the bottom side faces up. Lay out and cut a sheet of garden fabric to cover the bottom and sides with a few inches to overlap



the top. Using a staple gun, secure the fabric to the pallet's bottom. Turn the pallet over, and staple the overlapping fabric to the top. Place the pallet in its preferred location, add topsoil and add your plants or seeds.

The boards separate the plants, allowing for a variety of flowers or vegetables. Identify the plants with a brightly painted word or picture — or add a purchased bright stake identifier. Stacking various sized pallets at angles creates a tiered garden. With the sturdiness of the base material, stacking works well.

Vertical Wall Garden

Prepare your pallet and stand it up with the boards in a horizontal position. The front and back create the sides of your “planters.” Remove some boards for a deeper planter and nail them in place as the “bottom” of each planter. Pre-drill holes to avoid splitting the wood. Add garden fabric to the back to avoid soil from spilling.

Position the garden wall and secure it in place to a wall or fence, or stabilize the bottom with A-frames, wedges or other stabilizers. For free-standing wall gardens, make sure to secure it well, so it remains upright. Pea gravel or drainage rocks in the planter's bottom increases drainage, or you can drill small holes in the bottom before adding soil. Add topsoil and place plants in each planter box. Plants with trailing flowers or herbs work best in the vertical wall garden.

Get creative and enjoy your pallet gardens for years. With a variety of styles, adding color to your yard won't take much effort or a ton of money. **NOW**

Sources:

- 1. J. L. (2016, April). 17 Creative DIY Pallet Planter Ideas for Spring. Retrieved from DIY Projects: www.diyprojects.com/pallet-planter-ideas/?msclkid=791f93ffcf e011eca2254d07b86fba36#raised.
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Ariana Pacheco poses amongst the wintry mix that blanketed Midlothian last month.

Zoomed In: Beckett Nickle

By Angel Morris

Beckett Nickle and his mom, Erin, are reminding people that March is National Cerebral Palsy Awareness Month. “Beckett has hypotonic cerebral palsy, the rarest form of CP, only affecting 2.6 percent of all cases. HCP differs from all other forms in that it causes low muscle tone, whereas most CP presents in spastic/overly tight muscles,” Erin explained. “We’ve faced an uphill battle for diagnosis, services and support because Beckett ‘looks normal.’ Invisible disabilities are such an overlooked community. It’s heartbreaking, but I’ve found passion helping others that are on their own diagnostic journey.”

While Beckett’s journey is challenging, Erin said, “You’d never tell from his tenacity and goofy demeanor. He has a great support system, and you’ll usually find him in his favorite place in the world: with his LEGOs.”



Melissa Shook recognizes Jermaine Rodriguez, of Solution Engine IT Services, with the 2022 Midlothian Chamber President’s Award.



The National Charity League Southern Star Chapter co-hosts The Bridges Winter Ball.



Cross Timbers ENT & Med Spa receive their Midlothian Chamber membership plaque and celebrate their new location in Midlothian.



Elsie Eilers, a resident at Midlothian Healthcare Center, poses in front of a frozen fountain during a winter cold snap.



Kylar and Knox Moore bundle up for another snow day of fun.



Adelynn and Ailani Esquivel prepare to make snow angels following February storms.

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BusinessNOW Leasing Impressions Properties/ Founders Row

— By Angel Morris

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Where others saw old homes in the way of new construction, developer Stephen Hidebaugh saw opportunity. As a result, his vision for Founders Row was born, resulting in a gathering destination for Midlothian. Transporting historic homes from Cleburne, Ennis, Italy and Waxahachie, Stephen, joined by Logan Gaddis, planted them on Avenue G near downtown Midlothian and set out to renovate them. “The vision for Founders Row is to be a gathering destination for the community. The unique development will capture the spirit of Midlothian’s history and friendly, small-town lifestyle in a way that makes it a great place to dine, shop, work, relax and enjoy life,” Stephen explained.

The first three historic buildings were originally built between the 1890s to 1920s. The design duo saved the buildings from the bulldozer, using renowned historic home relocation experts at McMillan Movers, beginning in October 2015. Skilled craftsmen returned them to their former glory, and the homes now house Relic & Root Interior Design and Home Decor, The Porch Pour Restaurant and Wilson’s Seafood.

Plans are underway to renovate additional buildings, using salvaged materials of other historic structures. "At completion, this project will encompass an entire block intersected by a brick lane in a park-like setting that is sure to be a favorite place to host events and for people to gather," Logan anticipated.

Leasing Impressions owns and leases a number of real estate properties in and around downtown Midlothian ideally suited for retail stores, restaurants, personal services providers, salons and other small business offices. Leasing Impressions designers blend top-tier design talent generally associated with big firms, with the easy-to-work-with personality of small firms.

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Stephen first invested in Midlothian in 1997, purchasing a small home for an employee who needed affordable housing. The Founders Row project kicked into gear somewhat by accident, when he and Logan learned of the planned demolition of the Ennis property, followed shortly thereafter by the other two homes. "We had the empty property in Midlothian, and it was a place to put the homes temporarily," Logan recalled.

"Typically, several years are spent on a development plan, but we kind of worked backward on this project since the homes had to be saved. That means we were doing things after the fact that usually happen on the front end," Logan explained.

Over the last several years, passersby watched as the historic buildings took on new life. "Midlothian is a growing, prosperous community that's well-positioned to grow businesses, both big and small. It's friendliness and hometown feel made it the perfect location for Founders Row," Stephen noted.

No matter what businesses are to come, Founders Row will remain a place that feels like home. "This not only offers a way for visitors to experience Texas history and architecture in a whole new way, but it repurposes history for the next generation," Stephen said. "Stay tuned as we rewrite the history of these incredible homes and bring more updates to Midlothian." **NOW**

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CookingNOW

In the Kitchen With

JORDY JORDAN

— By Angel Morris



A Midlothian resident for 20 years, Jordy Jordan and his wife chose the city “because it was a small community that was a great place for family,” he said. As owner of Big D BBQ, he’s long had an interest in cooking. “My mom would teach me how to cook simple, good soul food. Time in the kitchen with my grandmothers are favorite memories, too,” Jordy reflected. “I grew up in a family that loved spending time with each other at the table. My mom has four sisters, so when we would get together as a family everyone would bring something.”

Known to always be cooking peas, some type of greens, brisket or roast, Jordy’s barbecue interest began with family, too. He said, “My dad, uncle and I used to spend time around a barbecue pit they built from an old Jeep.” **NOW**

Chicken Avocado Lime Soup

1 Tbsp. olive oil
1 cup green onions, chopped (including whites; mince the whites)
2 jalapeños, seeded and minced
(Leave the seeds if you want it spicy; omit if you don’t like heat.)

2 cloves garlic, minced
4 14.5-oz. cans low-sodium chicken broth
2 Roma tomatoes, seeded and diced
1/2 tsp. ground cumin
Salt, to taste
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
1 1/2 lbs. boneless skinless chicken breasts

1/3 cup cilantro, chopped
3 Tbsp. fresh lime juice
3 medium avocados, peeled, cored and diced
Tortilla chips, to taste
Monterrey Jack cheese, to taste
Sour cream, to taste (optional)

1. In a large pot, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Once hot, add the green onions and jalapeños; sauté until tender, about 2 minutes, adding the garlic during the last 30 seconds of sautéing.
2. Add the chicken broth, tomatoes and cumin; season with salt and pepper to taste before adding the chicken breasts. Bring the mixture to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to medium; cover with a lid. Allow to cook, stirring occasionally, until the chicken has cooked through, about 10-15 minutes. (Cook time will vary based on the thickness of the chicken breasts.)
3. Reduce the burner to a warm heat; remove the chicken from the pan. Let it rest

on a cutting board for 5 minutes. Shred the chicken; return it to the soup. Stir in the cilantro and lime juice. Add the avocados to the soup just before serving. (If you don't plan on serving the soup right away, I would recommend adding the avocados to each bowl individually, about 1/2 an avocado per serving.) Serve with tortilla chips, cheese and sour cream, if desired.

Bing Cherry Salad

- 1 15-oz. can dark bing cherries, seeded, diced and drained (reserve juice)**
- 1 8-oz. can crushed pineapples (reserve juice)**
- 2 3-oz. pkgs. black cherry Jell-O**
- 2 cups Coca-Cola**
- 1 cup nuts**

- 1.** After adding boiling water to the juice that was drained from the cherries and pineapples to measure 2 cups, pour the liquid over the Jell-O. Stir thoroughly and cool.
- 2.** Add the Coca-Cola; place the mixture in the refrigerator until it begins to congeal.
- 3.** Mix the pineapples, cherries and nuts into the congealed mixture. When ready to serve, place on a lettuce leaf with the salad dressing of your choice.

Goulash

- 2 lbs. lean ground beef**
- 1 medium onion, diced**
- 2 cups diced tomatoes**
- 1 32-oz. can tomato juice**
- 2 cups elbow macaroni**
- Salt, to taste**
- Pepper, to taste**
- 1/4 cup Parmesan cheese**

- 1.** In a skillet, brown the ground beef until done.
- 2.** Add the onions, tomatoes, tomato juice and macaroni to the browned beef. Salt and pepper to taste. Cook on medium/low heat for 45 minutes. Serve with Parmesan.

Hot Water Cornbread

- 1/2 cup, plus 2 Tbsp. flour**
- 1 1/4 cups cornmeal**
- 3 Tbsp. sugar**
- 2 tsp. baking powder**
- 1/2 cup boiling water**
- Cooking oil, enough to cover skillet to 1 inch**

- 1.** Mix all the ingredients, except the boiling water and oil. Pour the oil in a large cast-iron skillet heating on medium. Pour the boiling water over the dry ingredients. Stir rapidly to form a soft base to spoon out by hand, making 2-inch long and 1/4-inch-thick patties.

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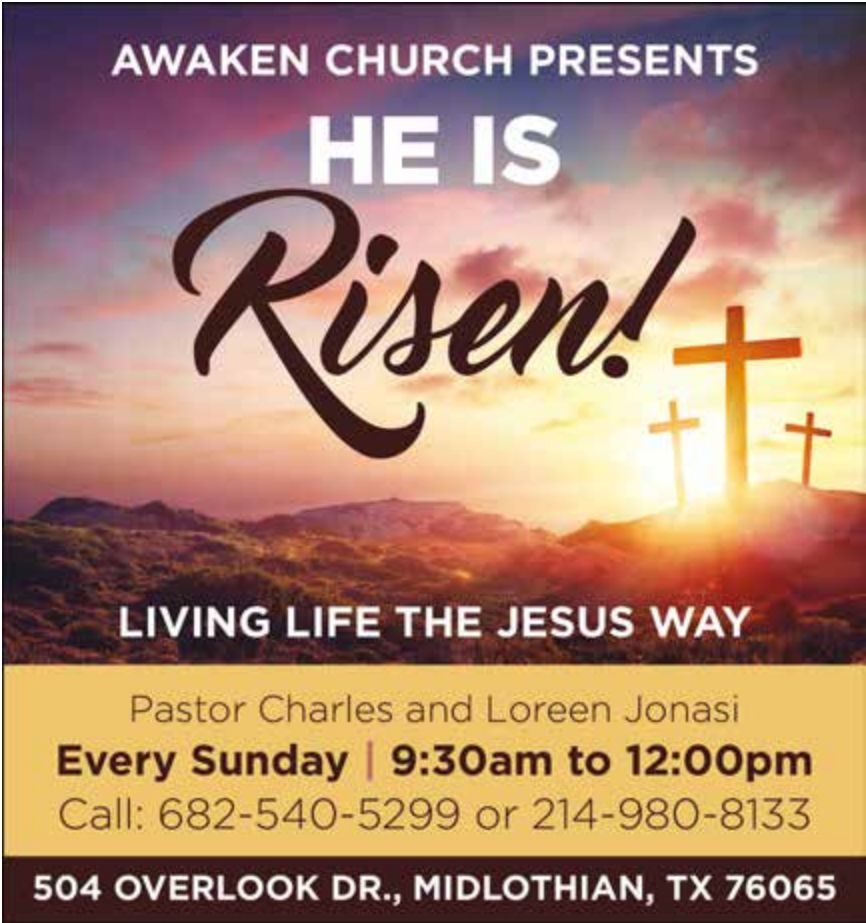
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2. Put the patties in the hot oil; fry until golden brown on each side. (Have a small pan of water to dip your hands into after forming the patties, as the mixture will be very hot.) Drain on paper towels and enjoy.

Country Style Ribs

- 1 whole pork shoulder, trimmed off the bone
- 1/4 cup garlic powder
- 1/4 cup salt
- 1 Tbsp. crushed red pepper
- 2 cups brown sugar (divided use)
- 1 stick butter

1. Cut the pork shoulder into strips about 2 inches thick.
2. Mix the garlic powder, salt, red pepper and 1 cup of the brown sugar; rub the mixture on the pork.
3. Place the pork on a smoker, cooking at 250 F until done.
4. Heat the remaining cup of brown sugar and butter in a pot. Once melted and mixed, glaze the strips; serve hot.

BLB — Big Lane Borracho Beans

- 3 cans Ranch-style beans
- 1 can beer of your choice



BLB — Big Lane Borracho Beans

- 1/2 onion, chopped
- 2 jalapeños, chopped (less or none, to taste)
- 3 garlic cloves
- 1 lb. breakfast sausage

1. In a pot, warm up the beans with the beer.
2. In a pan, cook the onion, jalapeños and garlic for about 2 minutes. Once cooked, add the breakfast sausage and brown. Right before done, add 2 ladles of the juice from the pot of beans. Cook until most of the liquid has disappeared.
3. When done, add the sausage mixture to the pot of beans. Leave on low for 30 minutes. Serve in a bowl with Hot Water Cornbread.

Baked Brisket

- Adolph's Meat Tenderizer, to taste
- Garlic salt, to taste
- Course ground pepper, to taste
- 1 brisket flat (weight of your choice)

1. Sprinkle the seasonings generously to cover both sides of the brisket. Wrap the brisket tightly in a heavy-duty foil with the fat side turned up.
2. Preheat the oven to 400 F; bake for 1 hour per pound.

To search for more great recipes from any of the 9 NOW Magazines publications, visit www.nowmagazines.com.



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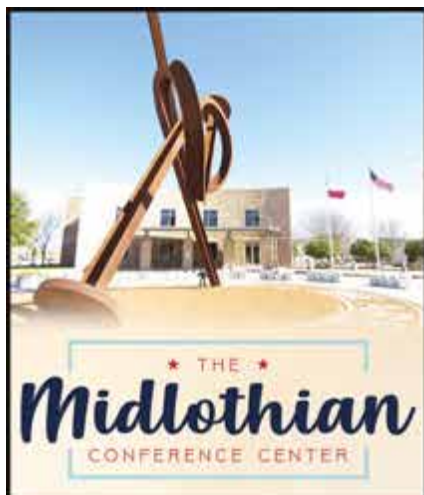
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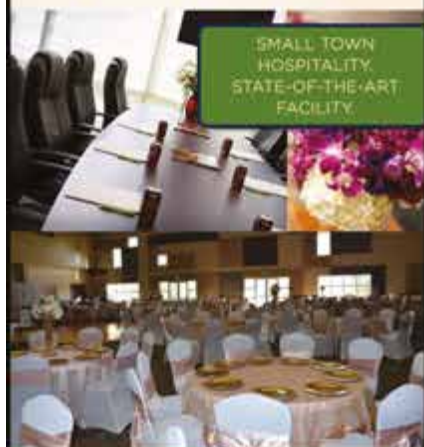
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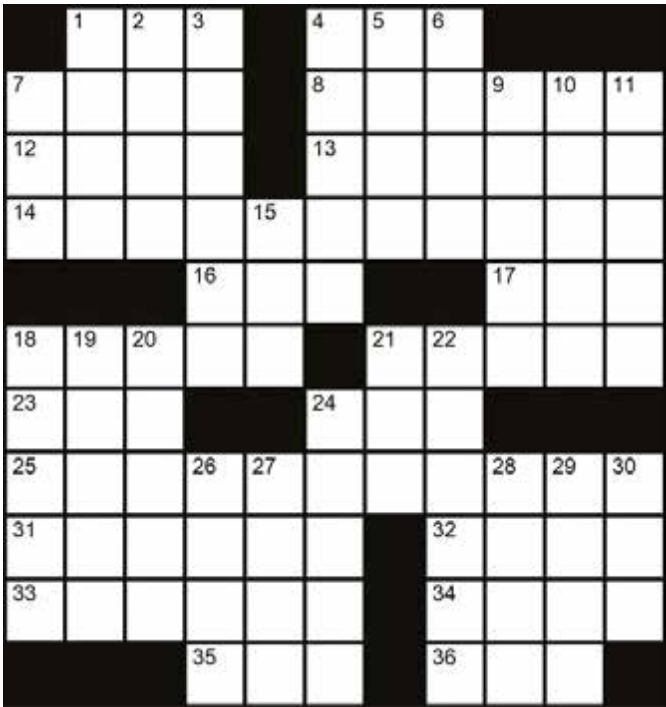
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Across


- 1 L runners
- 4 Viper
- 7 "Chinatown" film genre
- 8 Hits it off
- 12 All time
- 13 Auto garage service
- 14 Concept in economic theory
- 16 --- Harburg, "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" lyricist
- 17 Maxim
- 18 Enjoy with relish
- 21 Consumers
- 23 "Halt! --- fire!"

- 24 Powdery residue
- 25 British Fox News contributor and Trump supporter
- 31 Skilled with
- 32 Supercelebrity
- 33 Work hard battering rivets
- 34 Temperate
- 35 Sailor
- 36 Shareable computer file


Down

- 1 Sheltered inlet
- 2 Cake layer
- 3 Gully
- 4 Be a brat
- 5 Run-down part of a city
- 6 Engine knock
- 7 --- Percé (Northwest Native American)
- 9 Discontinue
- 10 "Harold & --- go to White Castle" (2004 movie)
- 11 Ejects forcefully
- 15 Respectful form of address
- 18 Vocal music
- 19 Very funny
- 20 Forceful exertion
- 21 Where you are now, probably
- 22 Bubba Gump offering
- 24 Hunting
- 26 Prepare for publication
- 27 Kind of lamp
- 28 Sour
- 29 "A good walk spoiled" (Mark Twain)
- 30 Conclusion


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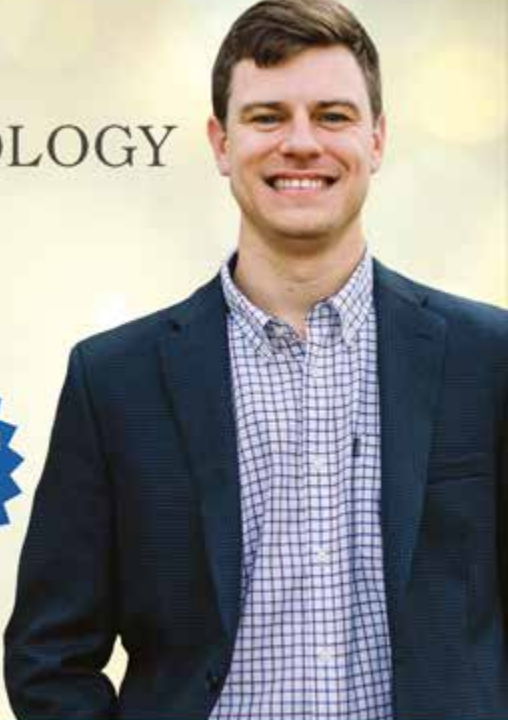
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MARCH

Some events may have been cancelled or rescheduled while we were at press. Check with individual organizations or your city or Chamber websites to verify dates and times.

3/18

Spring Craft Show & Market:

Benefiting the MHS Class of 2023 Project Graduation. 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Midlothian Civic Center, 224 S. 11th Street.

3/23-4/1

Ellis County Stock Show & Rodeo:

Supporting the 4-H and FFA youth of Ellis County. Multiple events scheduled daily. 2300 Hwy. 287 N., Waxahachie. ecyexpo.com.

3/24-3/25

Midlothian's Got Talent:

Sponsored by the Midlothian High School Choir Boosters and showcasing local talent. 7:00-10:00 p.m., MHS Auditorium, 923 S. 9th St. For details, email midlothiansgottalent@gmail.com.

3/25

22nd Annual Lawn & Garden Expo:

Hosted by Ellis County Master Gardeners. 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., Waxahachie Civic Center, 2000 Civic Center Lane, Waxahachie. Visit <https://ecmga.com/> or follow on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/ECMG> for ticket locations.

2nd Annual Play Day!

Bring your fishing poles, racquets and balls for a day of fun. Free refreshments and prizes. 6:00-10:00 p.m., Community Park Phase 2, 3601 S. 14th St. Enjoy the pop sounds of Mars Hill Band at the amphitheater at 8:00 p.m. Find more information at <https://www.midlothian.tx.us/specialevents>.

3/30

Denim and Diamonds Concert and Auction:

Gala benefiting Midlothian ISD Education Foundation. Tickets \$75. 6:00-10:00 p.m., Bella Woods, 1888 N. 9th St. For more information, call (817) 689-8461 or email misddefound@gmail.com.

4/1

Spring Craft Fair:

Vendors hosted by Midlothian Band Boosters. 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., MHS Cafeteria, 923 S. 9th St. midlothiancraftfair@gmail.com.

Community Egg Hunt:

Hunting by age groups plus photos with the Easter Bunny. A new inclusive hunt area has been added for this year. 10:00 a.m., Midlothian Community Park Baseball Fields, 3601 S. 14th St. Rainout date 4/7.

Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your current event details to angel.morris@nowmagazines.com.



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