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EDITOR'S NOTE

March madly into spring!

Ready or not, here comes the change from winter to spring. March is certainly a month of transition. We like to say March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb, but it is hard to trust that lamb. The weather seems to be so unpredictable during this month. I think this is the month when most of the TV meteorologists' hair turns gray!

We look forward to the change in seasons. Our camper has been idle for most of the winter, but March is the month for planning trips, not taking trips, at least it is for me at this stage of the game. I've been rained out too many times trying to travel in March. Whoever said, "Beware the Ides of March!" was right. (It was actually stated several times in Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*. Traditionally, it was the day Caesar was assassinated.) But, instead of just worrying about the 15th day (ides), I think we have to watch out during the entire month of March.

Of course, it is time for the NCAA basketball playoffs. It is so appropriate that this tournament is referred to as "March Madness." Teams from all over the country will be vying for the opportunity to cut the net from the goal at the end of the final game. I once had a trip planned to attend one of the final four tournament games that was scheduled to be played in Indiana. I was going to fly up there and meet my brother as he had somehow managed to secure the coveted tickets. Unfortunately, I had to cancel the trip. It was a perfect example of March Madness for me!

Beware!

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ECLIPSE OVER ENNIS

— By Bill Smith



Becky McCarty serves the city of Ennis as tourism director and downtown development director, and Ashley Colunga is the marketing and communications director. For several months, they have been working closely with most all of the other city departments to prepare for what is expected to be the largest event ever to be hosted in Ennis — a total eclipse of the sun that will take place on April 8, 2024. Ennis is a prime location to view the eclipse, as the sun will be completely blocked for 4 minutes and 23 seconds, one of the longest totalities in the United States.

“I was amazed at the response to the eclipse that occurred in 2017, and when I learned that the next total eclipse would travel directly over Ennis, I put it on our calendar,” Becky related. “Last April, during Bluebonnet Trails 2023, I received a call from AstroNerd. (AstroNerd is a well-known amateur astronomer and can be found at www.astronerd.net.) He called to tell me about the 2024 eclipse that would be coming over Ennis. I was right in the middle of all that goes into the Bluebonnet Trails and Festival, and not really ready to divert from the task at hand. AstroNerd seemed concerned that I was not taking his call as seriously as he thought it was, but he just caught me at the wrong time. He was emphatically trying to warn me about what to expect as crowds of people would be flocking to Ennis to view the eclipse.”

Ashley interjected, “We were already aware of what we might expect, and we have been making preparations for over a year. Tourists go to great lengths to see a total eclipse. We have received correspondence from eclipse followers from Alabama to New Zealand who have all chosen Ennis as their watch party destination.”

Annie and Ant Sharp from Auckland, New Zealand, met Ennis residents, John and Nicole Kazee, in Houston about five years ago. “The total eclipse is such a rare event and will probably only happen once in our lifetime, so what better way to



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plan a trip [than] to stay in a city where the epicenter is?" Annie wrote. John and Nicole offered to let the Sharp family stay with them for the event. "So, from Auckland to Ennis will be 7,786 miles traveled," Annie concluded.

Pierre Campet has made plans to come to Ennis from France. He indicated that he has seen total eclipses in the past, traveling to Zambia in 2001 and Idaho in 2017. He has also experienced one in France in 1999. "My home is about 5,000 miles from Ennis, so about 10,000 miles round trip. We chose Texas because of the probability of clear sky on the day of the eclipse, the duration of totality. ... We chose Ennis because this city is located not far from Dallas. Also, I attach importance to the fact that Ennis is a charming town."

Estimates of visitors to Ennis for the eclipse range from 50,000 to 200,000.



Becky said, “The 50,000 estimate is what might be expected if the day is cloudy and raining. We are preparing for a much larger number of guests to the city.”

Ashley mentioned, “When the total eclipse went over Sweetwater, Tennessee, in 2017, reports from city staff say it took up to three hours for the guests to exit the city because of the crowds. Besides the promotion of tourism, we have been working hard to provide information for our local businesses and residents about preparing for the crowds. We are getting all of the press we need, so

there is not a big media push to try to draw more people. All of the local lodging has been reserved for some time from people all over the world coming to Ennis for this experience. We set up a website specifically for the event, www.eclipseoverennis.com. There is a lot of information there, such as, ‘Businesses should review their business hours, staffing needs, business supplies and any road closures and traffic information.’ With the number of people we expect, traffic will be an issue, and there will be times when getting from one side of town to another could come with significant delays. Our local residents should be aware of these concerns.” On March 21, there will be a Townhall meeting at 5:30 p.m. at the Welcome Center to provide additional information.

Ennis will have a number of watch parties including The Downtown Watch Party, where there will be live music featuring Le Freak, food trucks, kids’ activities, souvenir merchandise including protective glasses and, of course, 4 minutes and 23 seconds of totality. The Ranch Radio FM 106.9 will

be broadcasting live from downtown. The Chamber of Commerce will have car, tent and RV options available at the KJT, along with live entertainment and food trucks. Sugar Ridge Winery will have a ticketed event featuring a wine tasting and a plated BBQ lunch. The Texas Motorplex is hosting “Camp Cosmic.” For more information about these special events and additional events and parking options, visit eclipseoverennis.com.

“I’m so excited!” Becky exclaimed. We see return visitors to Ennis from the Bluebonnet Trails, the Polka Festival, Autumn Days and other events. The eclipse will draw a huge crowd, and many of them will revisit Ennis in the future.” For most of us, the opportunity to view a total solar eclipse is a once-in-a-lifetime event. They only occur over the same path once every 360-510 years. The Eclipse Over Ennis website says, “You do not simply see a total eclipse. You experience it. You are immersed in it. You are completely overwhelmed by it. Many people say the experience of totality changes their lives.” **NOW**



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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

newest techniques and technology. I'm also a native Spanish speaker. I grew up speaking both languages. Our YouTube videos explaining procedures are available in both English and Spanish."

Dr. Allala is proud of the service they provide at Serenity Advanced Dentistry. "I think we give five-star service. And I know my staff is five-star. We know what works and what doesn't. I know it sounds corny, but this is my life's work. Most of my staff have been with me for years, at different locations around DFW, before I came to Cedar Hill. I met Mariela seven years ago, in Pleasant Grove. It was my first job out of school. Racine has been with me four years, and Jazmine three years, both in Red Oak. Our newest team member is Jessica. She found us three months ago when she emailed me looking for an opportunity to shadow a dentist."

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Zoomed In: Randy Dixon

By Bill Smith

Randy Dixon was originally from Ada, Oklahoma, but he met his wife, Selena, a native of Ennis, while they were both attending college at The University of Texas at Arlington. After Randy finished law school at Baylor University and a three-year stint with a firm in Lufkin, Ennis became home.

Playing chess has been a hobby for Randy for several years. He has even arranged for his friend, Jason Howell, a tournament director with the U.S. Chess Federation, who hosts tournaments at his home in Waco, to hold one at Baylor Baptist Church in Ennis on March 23. Randy said, "Jason is a good friend and a great chess player. I drive to Waco regularly for tournaments, so it will be good to have one here."



Ignacio Aguinaga loads his truck after servicing another winter yard.



Dr. Mack Boyd volunteers in Kenya with Christian Veterinary Mission.



A great crowd attends the EISD Education Foundation Dinner.



Bob and Janet Thomas enjoy the Mark Lowry concert.



Lisa Rosewell and Rich Raymond rehearse *The Last Romance* at Theatre Rocks!



Rick Ivey presides over the program at the Ennis Host Lions Club meeting.



Cannon Montelongo receives the Sammy McBriety Award from coaches Steve Morrow and Paul Willingham.



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— By Bill Smith

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Brothers Corey and Cody Navarro come from a long-established and well-known Ennis family, and they make it clear that there is no place they would rather be than in their hometown. Their work reflects the pride that they have serving their family and friends in the local community. Corey got the Navarro Contracting business started in 2010 after graduating from Ennis High School in 2004 and



furthering his education while playing baseball at Navarro College. He then transferred to UTA to complete his undergraduate work. His construction experience began as he traveled, following storms and enlisting clients for a roofing company. “I had two daughters in Ennis, and I knew traveling was not for me,” he recalled. “I started roofing and remodeling here. Cody was still in high school and would help when he could after school. Our parents wanted us to go to college, and Cody went to school in Louisiana before joining the business full time. “Cody can do everything we do, and he oversees our crews and production,” Corey continued. The business has expanded over the years to include six full-time employees, and the subcontractors they use are directly supervised. The remodeling subcontractors work exclusively for Navarro Contracting. Today, they not only provide roofing and remodeling services, but they also add on to existing structures and

build swimming pools and outbuildings, such as pergolas and outdoor kitchens. “We do turnkey projects,” Cody added. “Our clients hire us, and we make sure the job is completed to their specifications. As we expand the services that we have to offer, it makes us love this work even more.”

The brothers indicated that they are constantly looking at new things, like what is in style today and what is on the way out. “We can do 3-D renderings to show what the finished construction will look like,” Corey mentioned. The company Facebook page shows a number of projects that have been completed or are in various stages of progress. Some projects seem to come alive with simple changes, such as new paint, shingles and gutters. A shower remodel may have a dramatic effect on the appearance of an existing bathroom. A room addition will make a meaningful change to the floorplan and living space.

The brothers appreciate the support they receive from the community and show their appreciation by giving back. “We know we are blessed. We are a baseball family,” Corey said with a smile. “We played baseball, and we believe the game helped us grow up and made us what we are. We support the high school team, and one of the things we have done is provide pullovers for the team with our logo on them.

“We are also big Rangers fans, and that goes all the way back to our childhood. We got to take our dad to see the Rangers in the World Series last fall. That was exciting for all of us!” Corey continued. “How we run our business is a reflection of our parents. We are a really close family, and our wives and family support what we do. They expect us to be good people.”

Navarro Contracting is proud of the fact that much of their business comes from referrals and repeat customers. “We recognize that things have gone up, and we work very hard to provide the value our customers expect,” Corey assured. “We don’t stop working until the customer is completely satisfied.” **NOW**

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MORE THAN A CROSS

— By Bill Smith



Travel Interstate 40 east from Amarillo, and in just about 45 minutes, a tall beacon will appear on the south side of the highway. You have been driving along what has been known as “The Mother Road” — or the iconic Route 66. There are a lot of things to see along the way — some historical, some quirky and some inspiring. Without a doubt, The Cross at Groom falls into the inspiring category.

Route 66 met the fate of becoming a decommissioned highway as recently as 1985, and the route was largely overlayed by Interstate 40 across the Texas Panhandle and beyond. Though many of the towns along the way have turnouts from the highway where you can still travel on the road with the Route 66 designation, a desire to reach destinations with the most expedience tends to make drivers bypass the two-lane routes through the small towns in favor of the interstate. Travel guides for the Route 66 trip still exist, and most of them will mention pulling off the highway at Groom.

The reason the cross stands out so prominently to the passing motorist is the notoriously flat terrain across this part of the Panhandle, as well as the magnificent height of the cross, upwards of 19 stories. Made of steel, the cross weighs 2.5 million pounds, took eight months to build and required the work of more than 100 welders. It was erected in 1995 and is visible for 20 miles.

As significant as the huge cross is, it is only the beginning of the attraction if you take the exit from the big highway. The formal name of the exhibition is The Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ Ministries. The official website has the mission statement, which reads in part: “Our mission is to serve people from all walks of life by creating an environment that is filled with peace, compassion and spiritual direction. We believe in cherishing and strengthening the institution of the family, which we feel is a vital part for establishing a culture that flourishes.”

The exhibit welcomes more than 1,000 visitors per day, and while that sounds like a lot, the parking area is large enough for a significant number of cars and can accommodate large RVs. The outside exhibits are spaced well apart, and the interior gift shop and exhibits are more than adequate for the traffic. The numerous bronze sculptures depict the stations of the cross — that is, the events leading to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ — and continue with an exhibit of the empty tomb, celebrating His resurrection. Each station is accompanied by Scripture that explains the sculpture.

At the top of the steps that represent the climb up Golgotha’s Hill are three crosses with bronzes representing the scene of the crucifixion. Another large, yet unfinished, sculpture represents the Last Supper.

The Cross at Groom is obviously more than a place to take a break from your drive down the highway. It’s a place to pause — a place of spiritual reflection. The exhibits are extremely well done, creating an unforgettable destination. There is no cost to view the exhibit, and it is available for viewing 24 hours daily. **NOW**

Sources:

1. <https://www.audleytravel.com/us/usa/country-guides/route-66>.
2. <https://www.roadsideamerica.com/story/12568>.
3. <https://crossministries.net>.



CookingNOW *In the Kitchen With*

MELISSA BROWN

— By Bill Smith



Melissa Brown said her mom was her inspiration for cooking and baking. “She always made our birthday cakes when we were kids, and has made cakes for most of her grandchildren,” she fondly recalled. “When I was growing up in a household of six, it was just too expensive to eat out. Mom would try to incorporate things into our meals that each one of us kids liked.”

Cooking shows and cookbooks are favorites of Melissa. “My favorite cooking show is *The Great British Bake Off*. My daughters and I started watching it a few years ago. I love both Joanna Gaines and Ina Garten’s cookbooks. I do follow recipes, but sometimes I will experiment, and some of the final recipes never get written down!” **NOW**

7UP Cake

3 cups white sugar
1 1/2 cups butter, softened
5 eggs
3 cups all-purpose flour, sifted
2 Tbsp. lemon extract
1 cup lemon-lime carbonated beverage such as 7UP

1. Preheat the oven to 375 F. Generously grease a Bundt pan.

2. Using an electric mixer, beat the white sugar and butter together in a bowl until creamy and smooth.
3. Add the eggs, one at a time, mixing well after each addition.
4. Stir in the flour, 1 cup at a time, blending well after each addition until the batter is smooth.
5. Stir in the lemon extract.
6. Mix the lemon-lime beverage into the batter; pour the batter into the prepared pan.
7. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the

center of the cake comes out clean, about 1 hour and 15 minutes. Remove the cake from the pan immediately.

Rustic No Yeast Bread

2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 tsp. sugar
1/2 tsp. salt
2 tsp. baking powder
3/4 cup lukewarm water

1. Preheat the oven to 425 F. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar, salt and baking powder.
3. Add the water; mix together with a fork or a spatula.
4. Sprinkle a flat surface with a little flour. Place the dough on top of the flour; gently knead it for 1 to 2 minutes until smooth.
5. Gently flatten the dough into a small rectangle with the palm of your hand; then fold it like an envelope. Sprinkle the dough with more flour, if needed.
6. Form the dough into your desired shape. Score the top; place the dough on the prepared cookie sheet.

- 7. Bake for 15 minutes; lower the oven temperature to 350 F for another 10 minutes.
- 8. Let cool on a wire rack.

Chicken Pot Pie

- 1 14.1-oz. box refrigerated piecrust (2 count), softened as directed on the package
- 1/3 cup butter or margarine
- 1/3 cup onion, chopped
- 1/3 cup all-purpose flour
- Salt, to taste
- Pepper, to taste
- 1 3/4 cups chicken broth
- 1/2 cup milk
- 2 1/2 cups chicken, cooked and shredded
- 2 cups frozen mixed vegetables, thawed

- 1. Heat the oven to 425 F. Prepare the piecrusts as directed on the box using a 9-inch glass pie pan.
- 2. In a 2-qt. saucepan, melt the butter over medium heat. Add the onions; cook 3 minutes, stirring frequently, until tender. Stir in the flour, salt and pepper until well blended. Gradually stir in the broth and milk, cooking and stirring until bubbly and thickened.
- 3. Stir in the cooked chicken and the mixed vegetables; remove from heat.
- 4. Spoon the mixture into the crust-lined pan. Top with the second crust; seal the edge and flute it. Cut slits in several places on the top crust.
- 5. Bake for 30 to 40 minutes, or until the crust is golden brown. During the last 15 minutes of baking, cover the crust edge with strips of foil to prevent excessive browning.
- 6. Let stand for 5 minutes before serving.

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



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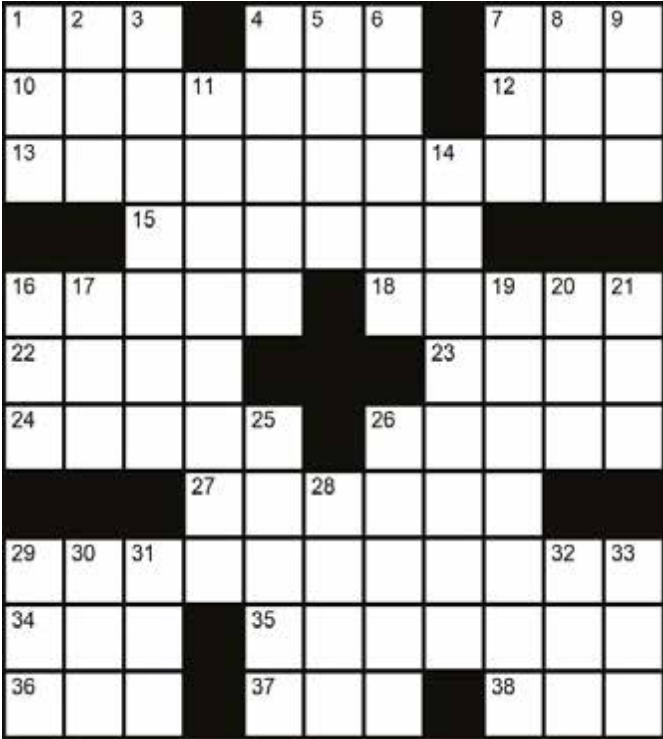
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Crossword Puzzle



Crosswordsite.com Ltd

- Across**

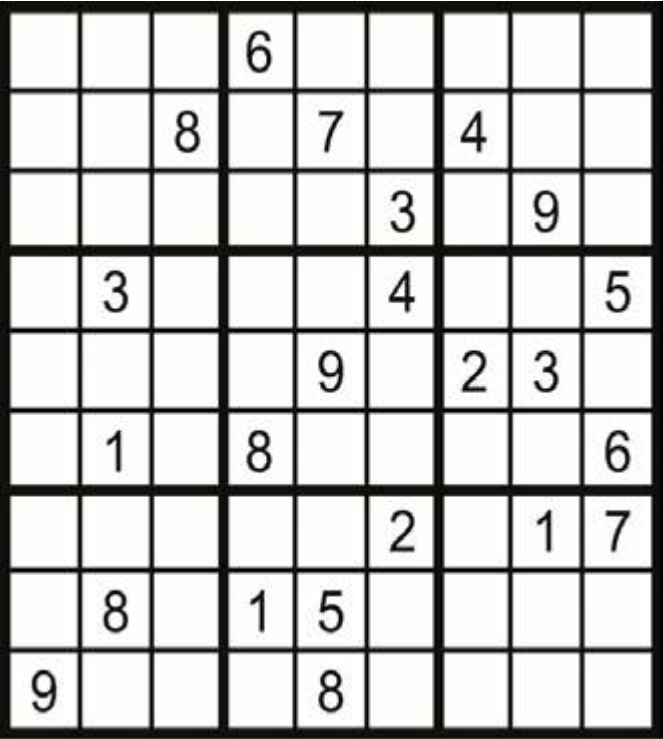
 - 1 Dad, in the boonies
 - 4 TV forensic drama
 - 7 Chinese life force
 - 10 Made self-conscious
 - 12 Strike lightly
 - 13 Competitor
 - 15 Hawk or eagle for example
 - 16 Often split in argument
 - 18 Oklahomans originally from the Midwest
 - 22 Jogger's companion, often
 - 23 Family
 - 24 Blood fluid
 - 26 They're outstanding
 - 27 NASA to shake up composition
 - 29 Concert Ivan arranged for a dodge
 - 34 Arrest
 - 35 Mad Goneril's show with no men and a solitary actor
 - 36 Presidential advisory group created under HST
 - 37 No way, old-style
 - 38 Opposite to 37 Across
- Down**

 - 1 Baby food
 - 2 Lawyers' group
 - 3 Golden State cager
 - 4 Poker pile
 - 5 Religious splinter
 - 6 "Walls have ears" or "in the soup"
 - 7 Bean counter
 - 8 Chinese dynasty of Christ's time
 - 9 "Addams Family" cousin
 - 11 Hoagy Carmichael standard
 - 14 Cause of sticker shock
 - 16 "--- Dark Materials" (Philip Pullman)
 - 17 Take off
 - 19 Its capital is Tirana
 - 20 Floor covering
 - 21 Connections
 - 25 Doofus
 - 26 Goliath's master of old TV
 - 28 Simone of jazz
 - 29 "The Situation Room" station
 - 30 It replaced the Pan-American Union
 - 31 "Superstore" network
 - 32 "--- 'Havoc!' ..." (Shakespeare, "Julius Caesar")
 - 33 Catastrophic occurrence

Online versions and solutions available at www.nowmagazines.com. From our Homepage, click on the Crossword-Sudoku tab. Click on a puzzle. Click on the See All button to view solutions.

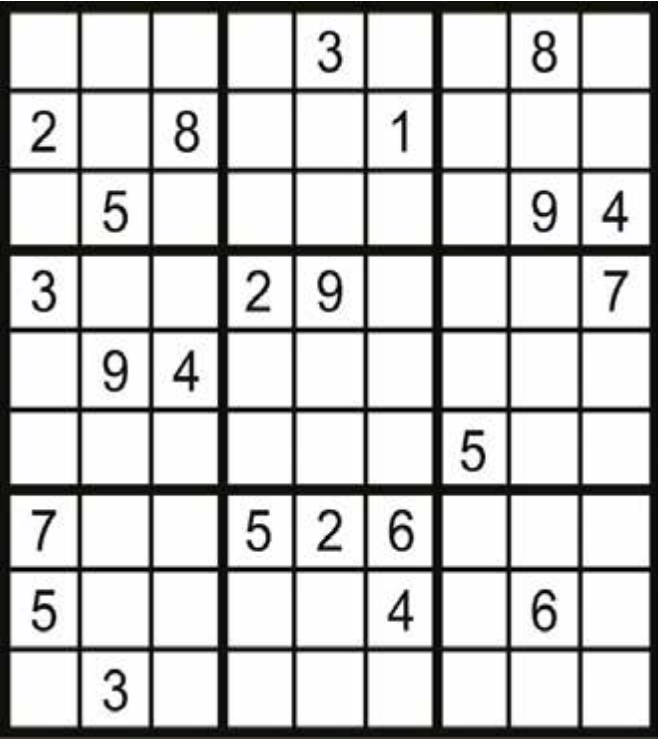
Sudoku Puzzle

Easy



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Medium



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- Virginia Woolf

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MARCH

3/2

Sokol \$10K Giveaway:

Annual building fund event. 20 cash prizes, including the \$10,000 first prize! Live music with Brad Ackland, the May Brothers and David Slovak & Friends. \$150 donation admits two and includes steak dinner, drinks and dancing. Doors open: 5:30 p.m.; dinner: 6:00-8:00 p.m.; open bar: 6:00-11:30 p.m.; drawing: 9:00 p.m., Sokol Hall, 2622 E. Hwy. 34. For tickets and information, call the Sokol clubroom at (972) 875-7959. fundraising@sokolennis.com.

Big Dreams Little Tables:

Hosted by Ennis Bluebonnet Market. For budding child entrepreneurs. Free. 10:00 a.m., Ennis Welcome Center, 201 NW Main St.

3/4

Ennis Fire Department Blood Drive:

8:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Public Safety Facility Training Room, 1700 Lake Bardwell Dr. To schedule an appointment, visit <https://www.redcrossblood.org/give.html/donation-time>.

3/7

Ennis Fire Station No. 2 Open House:

Come see the newly renovated fire station, and enjoy light refreshments.

5:00 p.m., 901 E. Martin
Luther King Dr.

3/9

Keep Ennis Beautiful Workday at Ennis Memorial Cemetery:

10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. The cemetery is located behind Lummus Intermediate School, 501 N. Clay St. For more information, see the Keep Ennis Beautiful Facebook page or www.keepennisbeautiful.com.

3/15

Sabrina Knight Scholarship Foundation Fish Fry Fundraiser:

\$12 per plate. 5:00 p.m., Sokol Patio, 2622 TX-34.

3/21

Townhall Meeting:

Get information and answers to your questions about the upcoming eclipse. 5:30 p.m., Ennis Welcome Center, 201 NW Main St.

3/22-3/23

Sokol Spring Market:

Come shop 'till you drop! **Friday:** 5:00-9:00 p.m. (Our Fish Fry is this night, too!) **Saturday:** 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., Sokol Hall, 2622 E. Hwy. 34. For more information, call (972) 875-7959.

3/25

Creative Quilters of Ellis County Guild Meeting:

Social time: 6:00 p.m.; meeting begins: 6:30 p.m., Waxahachie Bible Church, 621 Grand Ave., Waxahachie, TX 75165. For more information, contact Kathy Bright at klbright53@gmail.com.

Tuesdays

Rotary Club of Ennis Meeting:

Lunch, club business and program. Noon, First United Methodist Church, 300 N. Sherman St.

Second Tuesdays

Ennis Masonic Lodge #369 Meeting:

7:00 p.m., 209 North Dallas St.

National Active and Retired Federal Employees Chapter 1191 Meeting:

11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., rotating between Corsicana, Ennis and Waxahachie. For more information, contact (972) 775-2463 or rjcarey1@gmail.com.

Wednesdays

Ennis Host Lions Club Meeting:

Noon, Tabernacle Baptist Church, 1200 Country Club Rd.

First Thursdays

Sip, Shop & Stroll:

Come enjoy some sips, bites and special deals with our wonderful downtown merchants. 5:00-8:00 p.m., Downtown Ennis. Call the Ennis Welcome Center at (972) 878-4748 for more information.

First Thursdays, Every Other Month

Ennis Retired School Personnel (ERSPA) Meeting:

This group meets on even numbered months. New EISD Transportation Building, 3105 Ensign Rd. For more information, contact BettyAnn Blazek at blazek2@sbcglobal.net.

Saturdays

Ennis Bluebonnet Market:

Come see the variety of fresh produce, handcrafted items and unique products from area farmers, craftsmen, artists and specialty vendors. 8:00 a.m.-noon, downtown on North Dallas Street. For more information, visit <https://ennistx.com/choose-ennis/farmers-market>.

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



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