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MARCH 2025

## Living Like a Lion

Belyne Bland-  
Xochihua focuses  
on making her  
community better

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Scavenger Hunt

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Belyne Bland-Xochihua knows the value of working together.

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*Publisher, Connie Poirier  
General Manager, Rick Hensley*

**EDITORIAL**  
*Managing Editor, Becky Walker  
Southwest Editor, Adam Walker  
Office Assistant, Kristin Bato  
Writer, Aura Vasquez  
Editors/Proofreaders, Rachel Rich  
Virginia Riddle*

**GRAPHICS AND DESIGN**  
*Creative Director, Chris McCalla  
Artists, Jerri Akers . Kristin Bato  
Martha Macias . Anthony Sarmienta*

**PHOTOGRAPHY**  
*Photography Director, Chris McCalla  
Photographers, Shane Kirkpatrick  
Anthony Sarmienta*

**ADVERTISING**  
*Advertising Representatives,  
Dustin Dauenhauer . Bryan Frye  
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Subscriptions are available at the rate of \$35 per year or \$3.50 per issue. Subscriptions should be sent to: NOW Magazines, P.O. Box 1071, Waxahachie, TX 75168. For advertising rates or editorial correspondence, call (972) 283-1170 or visit [www.nowmagazines.com](http://www.nowmagazines.com).





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# EDITOR'S NOTE

*Mashed potatoes ...*

It's a humble dish. It's just potatoes, boiled and then mashed, in its most basic form. But there's a lot of variety, and a lot of ways to mess it up. I'm Irish, so this is important!

What kind of potatoes do you use? Is it the big brown Russets, or those little round red ones? Or do you get exotic and use Yukon Gold or those interesting blue potatoes? They look really different, but taste just the same.

Do you peel the potatoes before you boil them, or leave the skins on? I really only like the skins in the mashed potatoes if you're using the red potatoes.

Then there's the matter of consistency. How lumpy do you want your mashed potatoes? Should they be as chunky as potato salad? Maybe they only need a few small lumps. Or maybe you like the instant potatoes made so runny they're practically a soup.

Do you use water, milk or cream as the liquid when you're mashing them? Do you add cheese? What about sour cream? Or bacon? I like to use milk or cream and tons of butter. And cheese. Lots and lots of cheese. One strange thing I like to add to my mashed potatoes is paprika. Yes, that's weird. So sue me!

That brings us to gravy. Do you want gravy on your mashed potatoes? (*Stop singing that song!*) Or do you want them plain? If you want gravy, what kind? Is it always brown gravy and nothing else for you? Are you a fan of white gravy, made with sausage grease, of course, and maybe with some of the sausage crumbled up in it?

*That's about all I know about the potato-ing business.*

*P.S. If you like to cook potatoes — mashed or otherwise — let's talk about getting your recipes in the magazine!*



*Adam*

Adam Walker  
SouthwestNOW Editor  
adam.walker@nowmagazines.com  
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# Living LIKE A Lion

— By Adam Walker

Belyne Bland-Xochihua grew up believing in service. Her parents were members of their local Lions Club in South Texas. “I moved to DeSoto, after Hurricane Katrina, and I fell in love with this area. When I was working for the DeSoto Area Chamber of Commerce, they needed someone to represent them at the Lions Club. I had been a member of Lions Club in other states where I had lived, so it was a perfect fit. I’m a social worker, so I’m a servant. Lions Club believes in the same things,” Belyne recalled.

“Right after I joined Lions Club, I got volunteered as the community service coordinator and to organize our efforts for the Lions Club International Foundation, which is the part of Lions Club that focuses on providing eye exams, collecting eye glasses and distributing them to people in need. Every year, we assist parents in getting eye exams for their children.”

A project that Belyne devotes a lot of time to is the Lions’ commitment to keep Ernie Roberts Park clean. “We adopted Ernie Roberts Park and clean it every Saturday,” she said. “After weeks when it’s been cold or rainy, cleanup is easy, because there weren’t that many people in the park that week. But during good weather, it gets really dirty. I like cleaning it up, but I don’t like the fact that people, especially adults, are so negligent. But I’m a person who fixes things. I provide resolutions. I can’t fix the way people behave, but I can provide a resolution by cleaning the park.”

A few years ago, Belyne came down with a bad case of COVID-19. She even died briefly. It was a long, hard recovery. “Lions became part of my family. They were very sympathetic through my recovery and brought food to help out,” she shared. “They even saw that my daughter got her eye exam while I was recovering. I work in hospice care as a grief and trauma specialist. Some people don’t have family nearby, or they’re isolated. Groups like Lions Club, other civic organizations and churches provide a kind of community to support you when you’re in need. I’m the kind of person who has to meet people. I want to be in front of people, talking to them, so I cast a wide net. My purpose in life is to be a servant, to reach out and connect people. I see it as part of my Christian







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Belyne said. “I want to connect with my community and give back. The DeSoto Lions Club was established the same year as the city of DeSoto, 1949. We’re one of the city’s top supporters, and Mayor Proctor recently recognized that by awarding the club for our 75 years of service to the city. We’re a small club, but we’re trying to grow. The more members, and the younger members we have, the more we can do. We’re a diverse group, but we need more women in our local club. There are only five or six of us women right now.”

In addition to their work with eye exams and eyeglasses, and their continuing effort to keep Ernie Roberts Park clean, the DeSoto Lions Club is involved in other projects to improve the lives of their neighbors. “We always support our school system. DeSoto ISD is important to us. We provide scholarships so our graduates can go on to college. And we have partnered with the city on a number of projects over the years,” Belyne explained. They continue to work with the city to make life better every way they can. “We’re also involved in the Build a Bed Project,

which believes children deserve a comfortable place to sleep, so we help them build beds for kids in foster care. I was a foster parent for six years. We had 18 children through our house in those years — 15 girls and three boys. It’s sad to think about any of those kids sleeping on the floor, because they don’t have a bed,” she said.

“Lions Clubs International is trying to add more programs that are attractive to younger members,” Belyne said. “We would like to plan different things here as well, but it’s challenging when we need more and younger members to do some of these things. Lions Clubs do projects that mean something, projects that make a difference, that change somebody’s life. Half of the things we do, nobody ever knows about. I fell in love with DeSoto after I moved here, and I’ve always wanted to be a part of solutions.” **NOW**

*Editor’s Note: The DeSoto Lions Club meets every second and fourth Tuesday at noon inside Acapulco Restaurant, 200 E. Belt Line Rd.*

duty. When I got sick, there were a lot of people praying for me, reaching out and helping with all the things I couldn’t do for myself. The Lions Club helped me a lot.”

Belyne isn’t a Pollyanna. She sees the bad stuff that happens. She’s just convinced she can make a difference. “We live in a world where people feel entitled. I’m not one of those people,”

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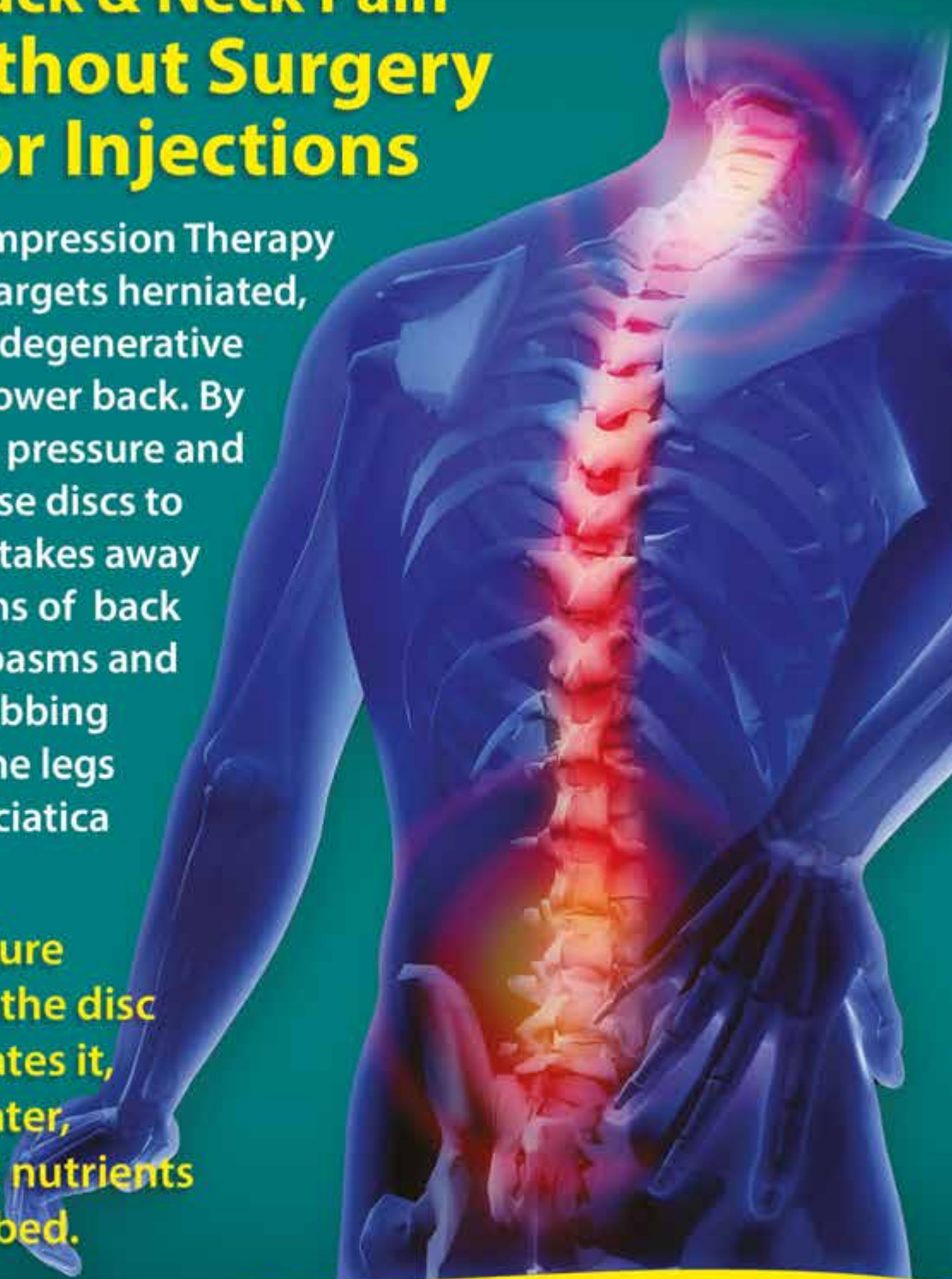
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Zoomed In:  
Eric Terry

By Adam Walker

Eric Terry is the IT librarian at Duncanville Public Library. “I started here in April of 2020, but I’ve been working in libraries since the ’90s,” he shared. “I enjoy serving the people of Duncanville so much that I drive 100 miles, round trip, every day to do it. I make sure the library computers are functioning and all the programs on them are working. I also help with the classes and events we offer at the library. And I created our new maker space. This resolution board has been popular since the new year. People put all kinds of stuff on here, from getting BTS tickets to stopping getting suspended at school!” He’s known for his quirky neckties, with lobsters and such, and his glow-in-the-dark eyeglasses.



Trappin Ink Tattoos cuts the ribbon on their business in Duncanville.



Scarlett Johnson receives recognition from Mayor Rachel Proctor for her entry in DeSoto’s MLK art and essay contest.



CHHS senior, Henderson Brenner IV, celebrates with his parents as he signs with Regent University.



Fernando Reyes takes a walk with Ranger.





Carolyn Campbell runs into her old friend, Mr. Bill Walker, manager of the old Albertsons, at the current Tom Thumb in DeSoto.



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Thomas Billups (3rd place), Dominic Delley (1st place) and Jaylen Demery (2nd place) succeed in the CHISD spelling bee. Dominic won by spelling tabulate.



Darius Ling learns to make elephant toothpaste at the DeSoto Library.

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BusinessNOW

# We Roof Dallas (formerly StormShield)

— By Adam Walker



We Roof Dallas has been installing and repairing roofs in the Metroplex since 2010, under the name StormShield. “We’re rebranding as We Roof Dallas to better represent what we do,” Pius Coles explained. “My co-owner, Shelby Byrd, who grew up in Duncanville, and I run the company. He handles most of our jobs in the north end of the Metroplex, and I cover more of the southern part of the Metroplex from our office here in Duncanville. When we started, about 95 percent of our business was residential reroofing after insurance claims, after hail storms and such. So, we’re experts at walking you through the insurance claims process. We restore your roof to pre-storm condition or better.

“Now our business is about 50/50 residential and commercial,” he continued. “With all the home building in the Metroplex, we’re also doing a lot of roofs on new construction. We can handle anything from small repairs to large roofs.

“We offer a plethora of products. If it’s anything to do with roofing, we’ve done it. Probably 90 percent of residential

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"I love living in Duncanville," Pius said. "I'm from Toronto, Canada. I tell people I wasn't born in Texas, but I got here as fast as I could. As a Canadian and a Texan, I love both hockey and football. I graduated from Coppell High School, and then got a job in Cedar Hill, where I bought a house. I've been in Duncanville since 2006. I'm married and raising five daughters here. I started our neighborhood watch and enjoy throwing block parties, though it's been a while since the last one. Five kids keep you busy!"

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"We pride ourselves on our online presence," Pius said. "These days, you can't be a bad contractor without getting blasted on social media. We have over 175 5-star reviews. We do everything in our power to get nothing but 5-star reviews."

And Pius is serious about responding to customers. "I answer the phone. We'll be there when we say we'll be there. I'm going to be on time, and if I can't, I call to let you know why and when. The main point of being a good business owner is literally — care! I love being in this field, because I'm helping my neighbors." **NOW**



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Graham Cracker  
Nut Torte

# CookingNOW

## IN THE KITCHEN WITH DIANA D'AMARI

— By Adam Walker



Diana D'Amari loves cooking to entertain friends, especially for Christmas Eve. "It was my grandmother's tradition to host the night before Christmas, and I always cherished it and carried it on throughout the years. My Jewish friend, Ilene, whom I grew up with in Cleveland, Ohio, lives here in the Dallas area and loves my Allege recipe. She threatens not to come for Christmas Eve dinner unless I serve it. No worries! I always serve it."

As a self-taught cook, she's had some adventures. "My worst experience with cooking was my first attempt to cook pork. When I asked my mother how, she briefly explained that I had to cook pork 'long.' So I cooked the pork chops for a long time, on high ... resulting in portions of ash!" **NOW**

### Grandmother's Sicilian Christmas Eve Allege

4-6 cans anchovies (without capers), do not drain  
2 cups water  
Pepper, to taste  
Garlic cloves, mashed, to taste  
1/4 to 1/2 cup olive oil  
1 bunch parsley, chopped  
Linguini, cooked according to pkg. directions  
Parmesan cheese, freshly grated

1. Mash or liquify the anchovies.
2. In a saucepan, bring the water, anchovies, pepper, garlic, olive oil and parsley to a boil. Simmer about 1 hour.
3. Pour over the linguine. Top with Parmesan cheese.

### Diana's Chicken Stew Soup

*This is very good the same day, however I like it even better when it has a chance to soak up the flavor overnight.*

1 pkg. fresh carrots, with skins on  
1 bunch celery  
4-5 chicken thighs, boneless, skinless  
Black pepper, to taste  
Basil, to taste  
Fresh parsley, to taste  
3-4 Vidalia onions, quartered  
Fresh garlic, crushed, to taste  
Weber Roasted Garlic and Herb seasoning, to taste  
1 14.5-oz. can low-sodium chicken broth  
1/4 to 1/2 cup barley (optional)

1. Chop the carrots and celery into 1/2-inch to 1-inch pieces. Season the chicken with black pepper, basil and fresh parsley.
2. Add all the ingredients, except the barley, to a pot. Cover; bring to a boil. Simmer for about 3 hours on the stove, or put in a slow cooker overnight. Stir in the barley 15-20 minutes before done.
3. Top individual servings with freshly grated Parmesan cheese.

### Tilapia With Lemon Dill Sauce and Capers

1/2 cup flour  
Cajun seasoning, to taste  
8 tilapia fillets  
1/2 cup butter (divided use)  
4 Tbsp. lemon juice  
2 tsp. lemon zest  
4 Tbsp. capers  
4 Tbsp. fresh parsley, chopped  
Dill weed, to taste

1. Combine the flour and Cajun seasoning. Coat the fish in the seasoned flour, shaking off the excess.
2. In a heavy based pan, on medium high, heat half of the butter to foaming.
3. Cook the fish to your liking; remove to serving plates.
4. Add the remaining ingredients to the pan. Heat for a



minute; serve over the fish, sharing the capers between the plates.

### Strawberry Pretzel Delight

- Nonstick spray
- 2 cups pretzels, coarsely crushed
- 3/4 cup melted butter
- 1 cup, plus 3 tsp. sugar (divided use)
- 1 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese
- 1 9-oz. tub whipped topping (not whipped cream)
- 1 6-oz. pkg. strawberry Jell-O
- 2 cups boiling water
- 20 oz. frozen strawberries, sliced

1. Preheat the oven to 400 F.
2. Spray a 13x9-inch pan with nonstick spray.
3. Mix the pretzels, butter and 3 tsp. of the sugar. Spread in the pan; bake for 8 minutes. Refrigerate until cool.
4. Mix the cream cheese, remaining sugar and whipped topping. Spread on the crust. Chill for 15-20 minutes.
5. Dissolve the Jell-O in boiling water. Add the strawberries. Stir until mixture begins to thicken. Drop from a spoon onto the creamy layer. Chill overnight.

### Graham Cracker Nut Torte

- 1 cup finely blended nut meats
- 2 cups (30 squares) graham crackers, blended to crumbs
- 1 Tbsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. salt
- 3/4 cup soft butter
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 3 eggs
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1 1/2 cups milk
- 1 tub whipped topping

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F.
2. In a mixing bowl, combine the nuts, crumbs, baking powder and salt; set aside.
3. Into a blender, add the next 4 ingredients. Cover; blend for 30 seconds on "Mix." After 20 seconds, remove the cover; gradually add the milk.
4. Pour into the dry ingredients; stir until mixed.
5. Divide the batter into 2 9-inch round cake pans lined with parchment paper. Bake 30-35 minutes. Cool.
6. Assemble layers; frost with the whipped topping.

To search for more great recipes from any of the 9 NOW Magazines publications, visit [www.nowmagazines.com](http://www.nowmagazines.com).

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# Essential Tips for Your Q1 Financial Check-Up

As we settle into the first quarter of 2025, now is a great time to review your financial health plan and ensure you're on track to meet your goals. Think of it as an annual physical for your finances — a proactive step to build and protect your wealth.

Here are five tips to guide your first-quarter financial review.

**1. Review and Adjust Your Financial Goals.** Whether you've switched jobs, experienced a significant life event or refined your priorities, these changes may require updates to your financial goals. Set clear objectives and re-evaluate your savings strategies to ensure you're building a financial foundation for present and future goals.

**2. Revisit Your Retirement Plan.** Significant career changes, such as switching jobs or adjusting your income, may require updates to your contributions and strategy. Make sure your asset allocation still matches your investment objectives and risk tolerance. And if your income has changed, ensure your retirement savings reflect your current financial reality.

**3. Strengthen Your Cash Flow and Emergency Fund.** Having a strong financial foundation now is just as important as planning for the future. Assess your cash flow and ensure your emergency fund is held in a liquid, accessible account and can cover three to six months of living expenses to handle unexpected situations.

Additionally, consider leveraging debt strategically, such as using home equity to invest in your business or renovate your home for long-term benefits.

**4. Optimize Your Insurance Coverage.** Insurance is your financial safety net, but it requires regular upkeep to meet your evolving needs. Schedule a review with your risk advisor to make sure that your financial assets are protected from unforeseen life events.

Consider adding or updating an umbrella policy to protect against excessive liability, and reassess your life insurance to adequately support your loved ones. Additionally, ask your risk advisor about long-term care insurance to safeguard your family from the financial strain of assisted living expenses.

**5. Update Your Estate Plan.** Verify that all listed beneficiaries on financial accounts and insurance policies are accurate. Review your will, powers of attorney and family trusts to ensure they reflect your current wishes. With the estate and gift tax exemption law set to sunset at the end of this year, consult your wealth advisor and CPA to explore strategies for tax minimization.

*Investment management services and trust services are offered through Frost Wealth Advisors of Frost Bank. Investment and insurance products are not FDIC insured, are not bank guaranteed, and may lose value. Brokerage services offered through Frost Brokerage Services, Inc., Member FINRA/SIPC, and investment advisory services offered through Frost Investment Services, LLC, a registered investment adviser. Both companies are subsidiaries of Frost Bank. Additionally, insurance products are offered through Frost Insurance. Deposit and loan products are offered through Frost Bank, Member FDIC. Aura Vasquez is assistant vice president of Frost Bank in Duncanville. (214) 515-4783.*

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# Happy ST. PATRICK'S DAY 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.

2/5-4/9

## AARP Tax Help:

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211 E. Pleasant Run Rd.

Call (972) 230-9661 to

schedule. **Duncanville**

## Public Library,

201 James Collins Blvd. Call  
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3/7

## Sneaker Ball 2.0

## Masquerade Party:

The Senior Senate presents this annual event. \$50. 6:00-10:00

p.m., Sims Recreation Center,

310 E. Parkerville Rd.,

Cedar Hill.

3/8

## Blood Cancer in the Black Community:

The Leukemia and Lymphoma

Society hosts this educational

event. Free. 10:30 a.m.-2:00

p.m., Traphene Hickman Library,

450 Pioneer Trl., Cedar Hill.

## Princess Tea Party:

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princesses and some of the

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per adult. 11:00 a.m.-1:00

p.m., Duncanville Rec Center,

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3/11

## Skulls and Furs With Cedar Hill State Park:

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the wildlife in your backyard

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3/15

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3/22

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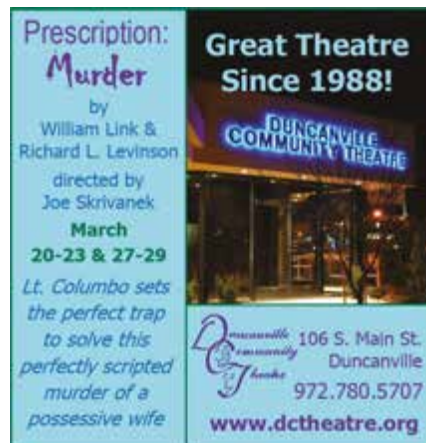
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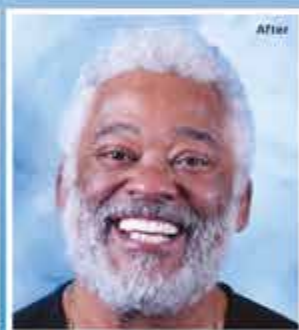
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