

15-YEAR ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

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M A G A Z I N E

APRIL 2021

## A Mighty Marvel

Evan Zackery beats the odds with autism

Also inside:

Scavenger Hunt

Crossword/Sudoku

Featured Business:

Animal Hospital of Ovilla

In the Kitchen With  
Nicole Bonneau

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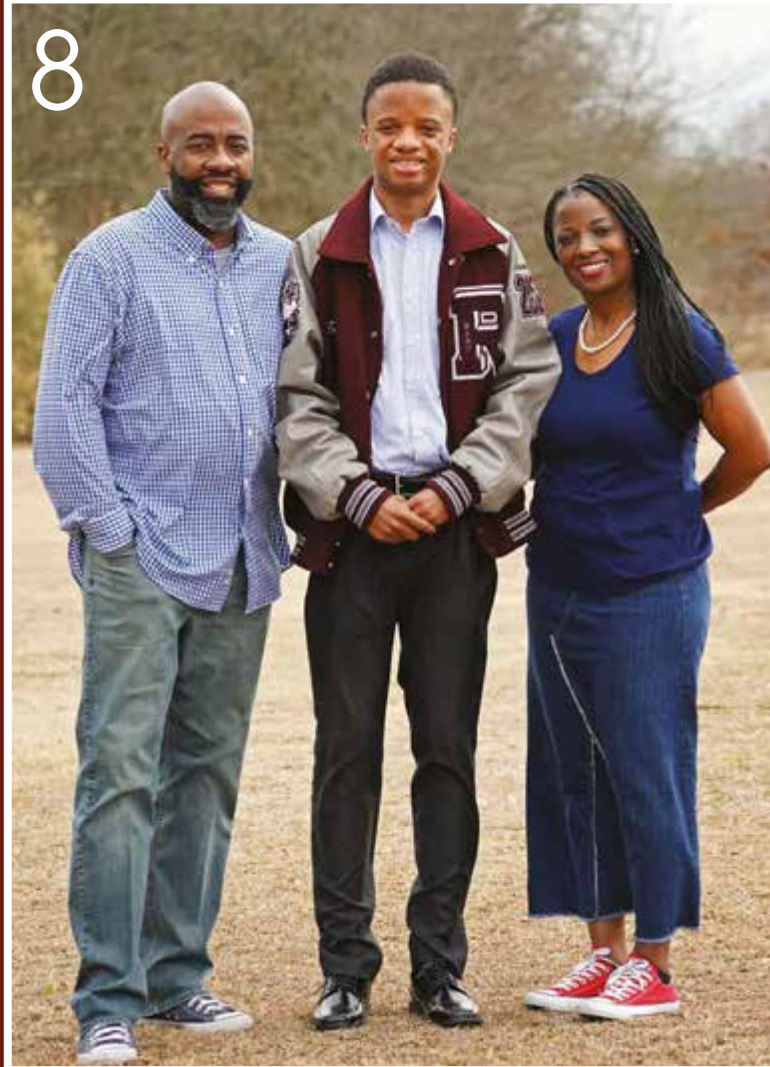
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Publisher, Connie Poirier | General Manager, Rick Hensley

## EDITORIAL

Managing Editor, Becky Walker | North Ellis County Editor, Angel Morris  
Editorial Assistant, Lori Widdifield | Writer, Rachel Rich  
Editors/Proofreaders, Lisa Bell . Rachel Rich . Virginia Riddle

## GRAPHICS AND DESIGN

Creative Director, Chris McCalla | Artists, Kristin Bato  
Martha Macias . Anthony Sarmienta . Jennifer Spence

## PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography Director, Chris McCalla  
Photographer, Shane Kirkpatrick

## ADVERTISING

Advertising Representatives, Cherise Burnett . Linda Roberson  
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## ON THE COVER

School and church activities are some of Evan Zackery's favorite ways to connect with others.

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# EDITOR'S NOTE



*Angel*

Angel Morris  
North Ellis Co. NOW Editor  
angel.morris@nowmagazines.com  
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*Travel far, pay no fare ...*

This time last year, folks were starting to realize that summer vacations would be very different, if they even happened at all. Now that we're face-masked, social distance experts, perhaps we're letting ourselves consider the possibility of some type of trip this year. While I can enjoy traveling, I'm a homebody at heart. In fact, I'm writing this while parked in my favorite armchair, where you'll often find me when more pressing matters aren't at hand.

Sometimes, I feel guilty that I'm not taking advantage of the great wide world, but given a choice, home is where I'd rather be. On the rare occasion I do travel, I enjoy myself. I like to experience the sights and sounds of new places, but I'm always, always glad to be home at trip's end. Like the Red Oak hawk, I'm happy to return to my oh-so-cozy nest.

For me, familiarity does not breed contempt, but rather contentment. If you are a traveler, a wanderer, an adventurer, I applaud you! But if you prefer home fires over frequent fliers, you are my people. Akin to being comfortable in your own skin, what a blessing to believe there really is no place like home. Give me my comfy corner chair and a good book, in fact, and I can travel anywhere I desire without packing a suitcase. In the words of author and aviator Anne Morrow Lindbergh ...

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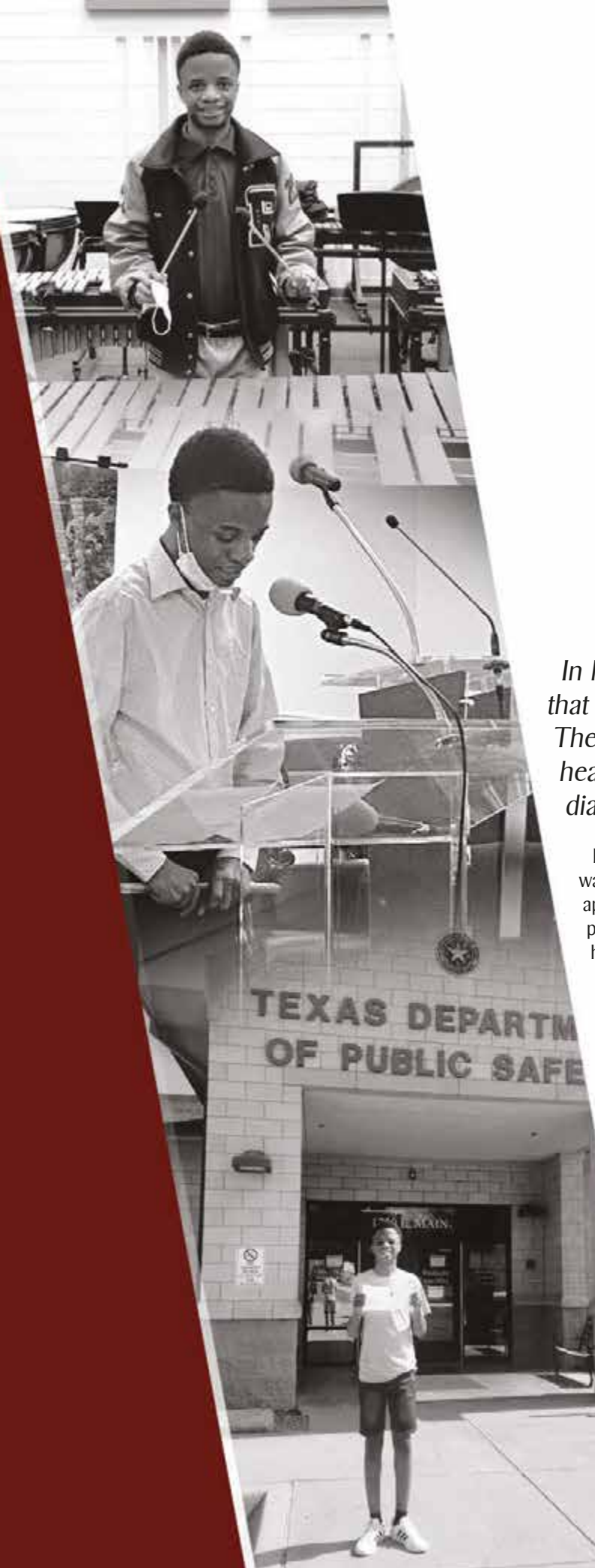
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# A MIGHT MA

— By Rachel Rich

*In life, everyone faces obstacles along their paths that can hold them back or make them stronger. The Zackery family decided to take their obstacles head-on, as Evan Zackery, their bright son, was diagnosed with autism at only 3 years of age.*

Ernest and Effie, Evan's parents, devoted themselves to finding a way to connect with him when they first saw signs of autism. "Evan appeared to have some developmental delays when compared to peers his age," Effie explained. "At the age of 1 1/2, we noticed that he was very quiet and did not interact with other kids. He received services from ECI [Early Childhood Intervention] at 2 and was officially diagnosed with autism at the age of 3. He was enrolled in a preschool program for students who had special needs. Evan received in-home, ABA therapy, speech therapy and occupational therapy." Early intervention helped Evan to thrive socially and academically. To adjust to his needs, Evan's parents maintained a consistent schedule for him and outlined his day, so there were minimal surprises.

A journey involving autism isn't without struggle, but Evan takes the bull by the horns when facing his deepest challenges. Today, he is thriving as a sophomore at Red Oak High School and staying involved through band, student council and spending time with his friends. As an A/B student, he stays focused on his studies and puts forth great effort to succeed at everything he pursues. "I am currently learning to drive," Evan shared. "I will receive my driver's license this year!"

"We keep Evan active as much as we can to help him develop the needed skills to be independent," Ernest and Effie added. "He has shown so much growth since we received his diagnosis of autism." As the Zackery family continues to focus on his abilities, the more he grows and amazes them.



# Y RVEL



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"Evan took piano lessons for three years when he was in elementary school," Effie said. "When he first enrolled in Red Oak Middle School, the band director gave him the opportunity to audition and try out for band and was amazed at his abilities. That was when he started his journey as a percussionist." While he learns a great deal from every aspect of music, Evan enjoys the marching season, playing at football games, the most. "I feel excited to be part of band. It's fun and enjoyable, and it is like I'm part of a family there," he admitted.

His activity in band has positively affected his life. "I was recognized as Percussionist of the Week two years in a row during a football game," he recalled. "I was awarded a letterman's jacket this year because of my accomplishments and participation in band." Participating in the Symphonic Band his freshman year, Evan has moved up to Wind Ensemble this year, having experience in the marimba, a deep-toned xylophone; the guiro, a hand instrument that makes a rasping-style sound when scraped across a stick; and the vibraphone, similar to a xylophone and a snare drum.

Evan has grown into a wonderful young man, but his parents still enjoy looking back at the amazing moments they've had with him. "Our favorite memory of Evan is when he would sing 'This Little Light of Mine,'" Ernest and Effie beamed. "Evan has been shining ever since. We remember his participation in a Christmas play, and he recited poetry at our church. Our faith in God has kept us going and remaining positive through his journey. Evan is truly a gift from God, and we are so blessed to have him as our son."

Evan is considered a devoted member



of the Red Oak student council. He has enjoyed various council activities, such as creating Christmas cards for nursing home residents, creating posters for Breast Cancer Awareness Month and helping to distribute food for foster children. "I also worked at the Red Oak Library as a library assistant during the summer of 2019," he said. "It was my first job."

He assisted in maintaining books on the shelves, collecting returned books, helping set up for the summer reading program and maintaining the summer reading database for the reading program. Evan got the opportunity to learn how to work with others, take responsibility and serve others — not to mention learning how to communicate with others, be punctual, dress appropriately for a job and follow policies and procedures. "One day, I mentioned to Evan to keep his phone on while at work, so we could reach him," Effie said with a laugh. "Evan's response was, 'No phones while working.'"

Among all the ways Evan stays connected with others, his most valued way is through the church, as a faithful member of the youth department at Canaan Baptist Church in Dallas. He participates in the youth choir and usher ministry and attends outreaches. But that's not all that tickles his fancy. Evan enjoys helping with household chores and assisting with the family business from time to time. He also loves watching *America's Funniest Home Videos*, playing games, listening to music, playing drums and spending time with his family and friends, who all care for him deeply and accept him for who he is.

Upon Evan's graduation from high school, he hopes to attend Baylor University or The University of Texas at Arlington to study music. His goal in life is to give others the opportunity to be part of the band family he had, by becoming a music/percussion teacher.

"We continue to shower Evan with our love and support and treat him no differently," Ernest and Effie expressed. "We focus on his abilities and not his disability." As Evan's success shines through his challenges, he is a beaming example for countless others fighting the same battle to not let the challenges hold them back. **NOW**

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# Animal Hospital of Ovilla

— By Rachel Rich

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Owning a pet is one of life's most valuable experiences, and those precious fur babies, which give us such joy, deserve the best care. Dr. Mark Stanfill and his staff at the Animal Hospital of Ovilla set out to improve the quality of life for all his furry patients, with his personal care and top-notch line of medicine. "We treat each pet like it's part of our family," Dr. Stanfill



expressed. "We love to see the joy that pets bring to their owners, and love that we can help that joy last a long time by keeping the pets healthy."

With 28 years under his belt, Dr. Stanfill is qualified to treat most animals with almost any need they encounter. Although he has experience in helping cats and dogs, he has been known to help exotic animals, like reptiles, birds, rodents and other small mammals. "We are known for our diagnostic and treatment skills — other clinics often refer to us," he said.

"We have grown throughout the years," Dr. Stanfill enthused. "Last year, we added three more exam rooms, totaling six rooms, an ICU, a dental suite, more treatment space and more cages and runs." They've also added doctors and staff, bringing their employee count to 25 hardworking animal lovers — some being with the hospital for more than 20 years. Then, COVID-19 hit, and the exam rooms stayed emptier than anticipated, but they haven't let the virus keep them from their patients.



When COVID-19 restrictions began, they took all the necessary precautions. As they wish to keep everyone safe, their new protocols consist of the staff meeting clients at their cars before admitting the patient into the hospital, helping reduce the spread of the virus. "We provide exceptional veterinary care with compassion and honesty," Dr. Stanfill admitted. "We know our clients and their pets. Clients tell us their pets are excited to come see us! We take the time to explain treatments and educate clients on pet care."

**"We love to see the joy that pets bring to their owners, and love that we can help that joy last a long time by keeping the pets healthy."**

As excited as the animals are to come see the staff at Animal Hospital of Ovilla, the staff is more excited for a new program coming to their location, providing meals for shelter pets. "For each wellness exam we do," Dr. Stanfill explained, "we are going to donate a dog or cat meal to a local shelter. While our clients are keeping their own pets healthy, they're also providing food for pets waiting for forever homes!"

Dr. Stanfill and his staff do what they can for animals, but there's more to this dedicated doctor than meets the eye. A Red Oak High graduate, he wanted to come back to the area to open a veterinary hospital after finishing his doctorate. He also currently serves as mayor in Red Oak. "Our other vets also live in Red Oak and Midlothian, so we are part of this community that we serve," he beamed.

He is also more than a community man. He's a family man, too. His wonderful wife, Karen, works alongside him as the practice administrator. "And our practice manager, Amy Boldt, helps us keep everything together," Karen said.

Is it time for vaccines or surgery for your little fur baby? Or, are you wanting to support other pets in need through a wellness visit? The Animal Hospital of Ovilla is ready to give your pet a "pawsome" experience with their amazing care. **NOW**

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*Kennedy Hegna greets customers with a smile at Ovilla's newest coffee shop, Cup of Alaska.*

## Zoomed In: Elizabeth and Payton Buchert

By Angel Morris

Payton Kennady Buchert joined Girl Scouts to spend time with friends and experience camping. Her plans for tackling the organization's annual cookie sales program exceeded expectations. "My goal was to sell the most cookies in the troop," Payton explained. To do so, she asked her teachers and went to her mom's and dad's workplaces.

Payton was excited to participate in the cookie program, which is considered the world's largest girl-run business. Learning goal setting, money management, people skills, decision making and business ethics interests 9-year-old Payton, who also enjoys math and softball. At age 5, she went to state competition in the sport, in which she plays catcher, pitcher, shortstop and even first base. Her mom, Elizabeth, cheers for her and her dreams.



*Taylor Mikulas earns a first-place medal for Red Oak High School tennis.*



*Red Oak Mayor Mark Stanfill practices for his online storyteller session that recognized Love Your Library Month.*



*ROHS graduate Emily King and her husband, Brian, serve on the Texas Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Rancher Committee.*





PE Coach, Dorthea Herndon, receives the Shields Elementary Heart of a Teacher Award.



Members of Red Oak Fire Rescue pre-deploy through TIFMAS to the Texas Panhandle in anticipation of dangerous wildfire conditions.



Julie Minialoff volunteers to assist Ellis County seniors get their COVID-19 vaccines.

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CookingNOW

## *In the Kitchen With* NICOLE BONNEAU

— By Rachel Rich

At only 8 years of age, Nicole Bonneau's passion for cooking was sparked by television programs. "I watched baking shows and thought it was so interesting to watch everything come together and how happy it made people," she shared.

As Nicole tried out new recipes, her mother oversaw the process, until she was ready to take on challenges by herself. But she learned from her early mistakes. "I was baking brownies to take to a friend's house," Nicole recalled. "I made them during the day, but I didn't think to check the middle with a toothpick. When we opened the trunk, there were brownies everywhere because the brownies were not cooked all the way through. I learned to always check their doneness before taking them anywhere!" **NOW**

### Oatmeal Cookies

2 sticks butter softened  
1 cup granulated sugar  
1 1/2 cups light brown sugar  
2 eggs  
1 tsp. vanilla extract  
2 cups all-purpose flour  
1 tsp. baking soda

1 tsp. salt  
1 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon  
3 cups rolled oats

1. Mix together the butter, granulated sugar and brown sugar until creamy. Beat in the eggs, one at a time. Beat in the vanilla extract.  
2. Combine the flour, baking soda, salt and cinnamon; slowly add the flour mixture to

the butter mixture. Fold in the oats. Let the mixture chill for at least 1 hour.

3. Preheat the oven to 375 F. Roll into tablespoon-size pieces; place on baking sheets.  
4. Bake for 9 minutes; let cool before serving.

### Double Chocolate Butterscotch Cookies

2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour  
1/2 cup baking cocoa  
1 tsp. baking soda  
1/2 tsp. salt  
2 sticks butter, softened  
1 cup light brown sugar  
3/4 cup granulated sugar  
1 tsp. vanilla extract  
2 eggs  
2 cups butterscotch chips

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F. Combine the flour, cocoa, baking soda and salt in a small bowl.  
2. Beat the butter, brown sugar, granulated



sugar and vanilla extract in a large bowl until creamy.

3. Beat in the eggs until light and fluffy. Gradually beat in the flour mixture until well combined. Fold in the butterscotch chips.
4. Place tablespoon-size pieces of the dough on a baking sheet.
5. Bake for 9 minutes, or until fluffy.

## Chocolate Chip Cookies

- 2 sticks butter  
 1 cup dark brown sugar  
 1/2 cup granulated sugar  
 2 eggs  
 1 egg yolk  
 1 tsp. vanilla extract  
 2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour  
 2 tsp. baking soda  
 1 tsp. espresso powder (optional)  
 1 tsp. salt  
 2 cups chocolate chips

1. Melt the butter on medium heat until brown; let chill.
2. To a bowl, add both sugars; mix. Gradually add in the eggs, egg yolk and vanilla extract. After mixing, add in the flour, baking soda, espresso powder and salt; mix until well combined. Fold in the chocolate chips.
3. Put the dough in the freezer until solid. Preheat the oven to 375 F.
4. Place tablespoon-size pieces of dough on the baking sheets.
5. Bake in the oven for 9-15 minutes.

## Chunky Monkey Breakfast Bars

- 2 bananas  
 2 cups oats  
 1/2 cup peanut butter  
 3 Tbsp. maple syrup  
 1 tsp. cinnamon  
 1/4 cup walnuts (optional)  
 1/3 cup chocolate chips

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F. In a medium-sized bowl, mash the bananas.
2. Add the oats, peanut butter, syrup, cinnamon, walnuts and chocolate chips; mix together.
3. Add parchment paper to an 8x8-inch pan. Pour the mixture into the pan; spread evenly.
4. Bake for 25 minutes; enjoy!

## Cinnamon Half Knots

- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour, or more as needed  
 1 pkt. instant yeast  
 1/4 tsp. kosher salt  
 1 cup warm milk  
 2 tsp. honey



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**7 Tbsp. softened salted butter**  
(divided use)  
**1/4 cup granulated sugar**  
**3 tsp. cinnamon**  
**1/2 cup brown sugar**

- 1.** Mix the flour, yeast, salt, milk, honey and 1 Tbsp. butter; knead away from the bowl. Cover; let rise for 30 minutes to 1 hour.
- 2.** Preheat the oven to 375 F; line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
- 3.** On a floured surface, roll the dough out into a 1/4-inch rectangle.
- 4.** Spread the dough with 4 Tbsp. butter. Make cinnamon sugar by combining the cinnamon and brown sugar. Sprinkle some of the cinnamon sugar over the butter.
- 5.** Fold the dough in half; cut into 12 strips. Twist each strip, and then tie a couple into loose knots.
- 6.** Melt the remaining 2 Tbsp. butter; stir with about 3/4 of the cinnamon sugar. Brush on top of each knot. Bake for 9 minutes.
- 7.** Take out of the oven; place any sugar that has fallen off during baking back onto top of each knot; bake for another 9 minutes.

### Chocolate Espresso Bread

**1 1/2 cups flour**  
**1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder**



Double Chocolate  
Butterscotch Cookies

**1 Tbsp. espresso powder**  
**2 tsp. baking powder**  
**1/2 tsp. salt**  
**2 eggs**  
**1 cup granulated sugar**  
**1/2 cup olive oil**  
**1 cup sour cream**  
**1 tsp. vanilla extract**  
**3/4 cup pistachios**

- 1.** Preheat the oven to 350 F. Grease a 9x5-inch bread pan.
- 2.** In a medium bowl, mix the flour, cocoa powder, espresso powder, baking powder and salt.
- 3.** In a mixer, whisk together the eggs

and sugar until light and smooth. Add in the oil, sour cream and vanilla; mix until well combined.

- 4.** Add the flour mixture into the butter mixture; fold in the pistachios. Pour the mixture into the prepared pan. Bake for 50-60 minutes, or until a toothpick comes out clean.

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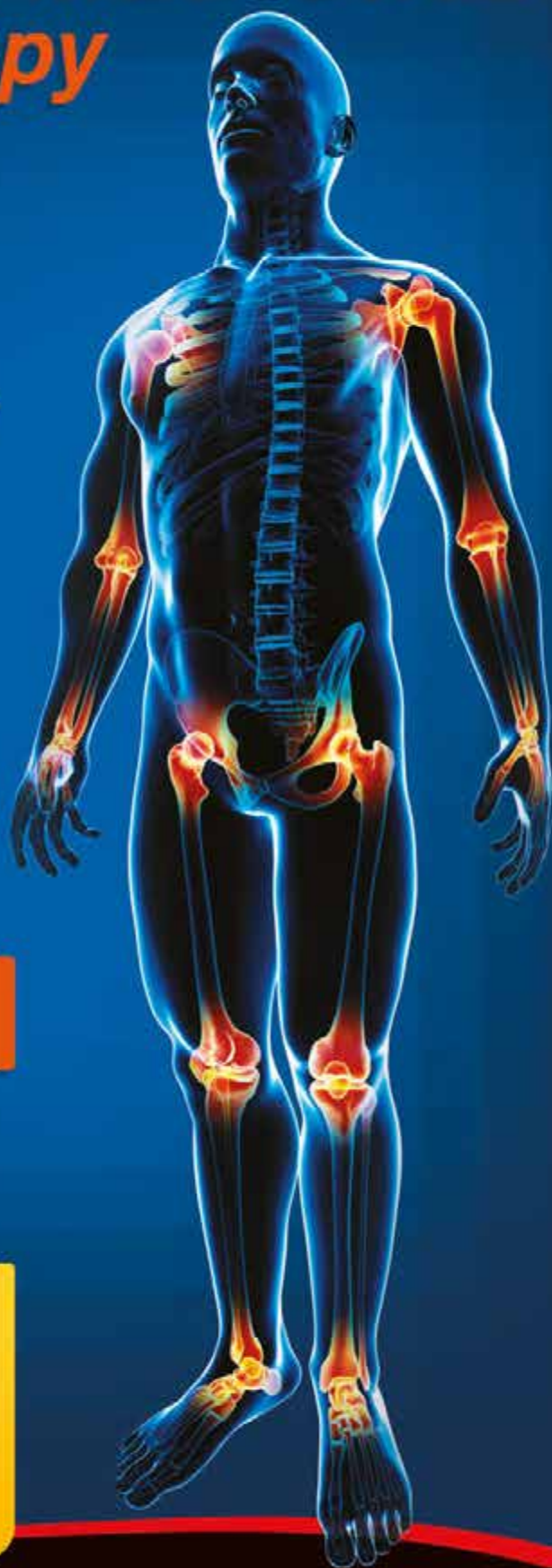
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*Welcome Spring With an*  
***Easter Wreath***

— By Angel Morris —





*From florals to faux eggs, decorating an Easter wreath is a simple way to usher springtime into your home. While tulips and speckled eggs are traditional Easter wreath add-ons, you can count on DIYers to get more creative and craftier. Whether emphasizing the religious significance or using all things bunny-themed, an Easter wreath lets you put your stamp on the holiday, which falls on Sunday, April 4, this year.*



If you don't want to invest in a pre-made wreath but you're a first-time DIYer, starting with a simple grapevine wreath may be for you. These can be pricey at craft stores, but they can often be found for half the price, or cheaper, at yard sales and thrift stores.

Very few supplies are needed to transform a grapevine wreath into a holiday- or season-specific piece of decor. Dollar stores have really upped their floral game, and are a great place to find everything you need to create your springtime door decor.

#### Supplies:

- Grapevine or willow wreath in the size of your choice
- Florist wire (Pipe cleaners or bread ties work, too.)
- Wire cutters
- 2-3 faux flower stems (Tulips are used here, but any spring flower will do.)
- 2-3 stems of smaller flowers or greenery (optional)
- Item to cover where stems meet (A wicker butterfly is shown, but you could use a bird's nest, a crafted bunny, a wooden monogram letter, a bow made of ribbon, etc.)



#### Easy Approach —

**Step 1:** Separate each flower from your flower stem, so that they are individuals. Starting at the right (where our image shows a butterfly), space your stems one by one curving around the wreath toward the opposite side.

**Step 2:** Use your floral wire to secure each flower to the point

where you want it to sit on the wreath. (Some crafters prefer hot glue to floral wire. It's your choice, but using wire allows you to swap out florals from season to season with the same grapevine wreath as your base!)

**Step 3:** Fill in vacant spots with your second set of stems, using leafy greenery to help hide floral wire.

**Step 4:** Place your focal item (wicker butterfly, bow, monogram letter, etc.) at the point where your floral stems first meet on the right side. Secure it with floral wire or hot glue.

**Step 5:** Wrap a wire or pipe cleaner into a circle atop the back of your grapevine wreath, twisting the ends together through a good portion of the wreath's stems for security. This is how you will hang your wreath, either to a nail, hook or wreath hanger made for doors.



#### Easier Approach —

A twist on this first approach to an Easter wreath is to simply encircle the top of your grapevine wreath with your tulips, leaving no portion of your wreath uncovered. In this case, you follow the same steps, but completely cover the wreath's surface.

While there is no need for a ribbon or decorative item to cover where the floral stems started, anything could still be added directly atop the flowers, if desired. Speckled craft eggs could easily be tucked around this type of wreath, either by gluing them to floral sticks, or gluing them directly to the wreath itself.



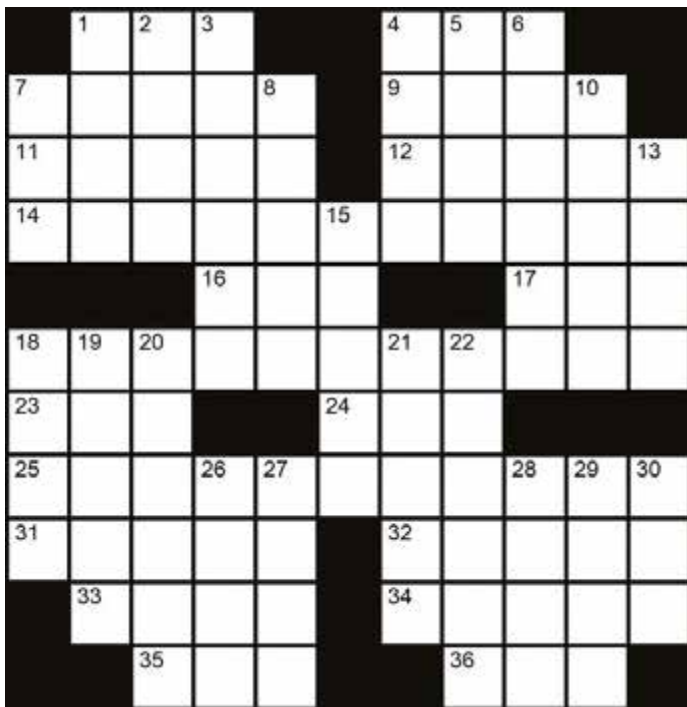
**Easiest Approach —** Perhaps the simplest take on a springtime Easter wreath is to take your two stems of flowers, without cutting each flower off, and place them end to end, so that the stems overlap and one set of buds is on the right, the other on the left.

Secure the stems atop one another with one wire, then secure the entire bundle to your grapevine wreath with a second wire. Bend the stems so the flowers are angling around the wreath, and cover the stems with a large bow. You can even just secure a single set of stems to your wreath for the simplest approach of all.

There are, of course, countless options when it comes to ringing in spring with an Easter wreath that depicts your style. Whimsical or modern, religious or secular, have fun creating a minimalist or over-the-top crafty piece that says, "Happy Easter, Happy Spring" to you! **NOW**



# Crossword Puzzle



Crosswordsite.com Ltd

Solutions on page 28

## Across

- 1 Nickname
- 4 Engine speed measure
- 7 Kind of farm
- 9 Panache
- 11 Much the same
- 12 B vitamin acid found in spinach
- 14 Lebensraum, a driver of Nazism
- 16 Zilch
- 17 "The Man --- Would Be King" (Kipling)
- 18 They precede deliveries
- 23 Slender pussycat
- 24 John or Jane - could be anyone
- 25 Vision tester
- 31 Largest Flickertail State city
- 32 Thomas Edison, the Wizard of --- Park
- 33 Folk tale
- 34 Dissipate
- 35 Ready
- 36 Enterprise's Captain kept one

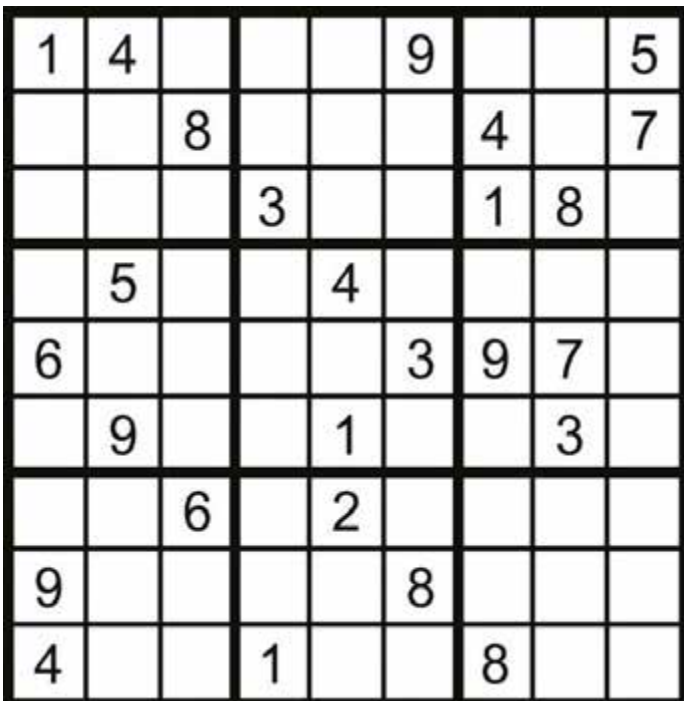
## Down

- 1 Pickle parlor
- 2 Such as Yale or Princeton
- 3 Sweltering
- 4 Zebras
- 5 Stone-in-pond sound
- 6 Formerly Nyasaland
- 7 Amigo
- 8 Big Red?
- 10 Corner of the market
- 13 Corporate big cheeses
- 15 Forest open space
- 18 College "Teach"
- 19 Settle up
- 20 Unspeaking actors
- 21 Possible response to "Who did this?"
- 22 Grain
- 26 Big brute
- 27 Pyrenean peak
- 28 Keen on
- 29 Slimy pest
- 30 Eclipse

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# Sudoku Puzzle

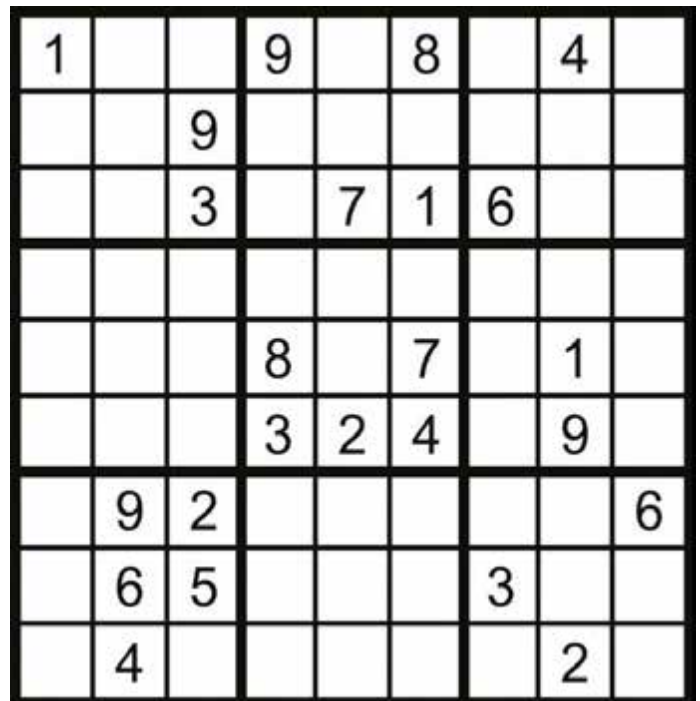
Easy



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Medium



Solutions on page 28



# Hello, Spring!

Due to COVID-19, 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.

## APRIL

### 4/10-5/31

#### Scarborough

##### Renaissance Festival:

Features 16th-century performances, exhibits, entertainment, rides, crafts and artisan demonstrations.

**Saturdays, Sundays and Memorial Day Monday:** 10:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m., 2511 FM 66, Waxahachie. Learn more at [www.srfestival.com](http://www.srfestival.com).

### 4/10

#### Ellis County Market:

More than 200 vendors offering wares at this partnership event of the Midlothian, Red Oak, Ennis and Waxahachie chambers of commerce.

Boutiques, kids' zone, food and drink. 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., Ellis County Expo Center, 2300 Hwy. 287, Waxahachie. Learn more at <https://www.redoakareachamber.org/>.

### 4/16

#### Designer Bag Bingo:

Join CASA of Ellis County and Ellis County Children's Advocacy for dinner, bingo, auction and prizes including designer handbags. 6:00-10:00 p.m., Ellis County Youth Expo Center, 2300 Hwy. 287, Waxahachie.

### 4/23-4/25

#### Vintage Market Days of Ellis County:

More than 500 vintage-inspired vendors, plus live music and food. **Friday and Saturday:**

10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.;

**Sunday:** 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., Ellis County Expo Center, 2300 Hwy. 287, Waxahachie.

### Tuesdays

#### Children's Virtual Story Time:

The library may be closed, but stories, songs and more are still happening on Facebook @redoaktx.org. 10:00-10:30 a.m. For more details, message [librarian@redoaktx.org](mailto:librarian@redoaktx.org).

### Third Wednesdays

#### Ellis County Christian Women's Connection Meeting:

Cost is \$13. Reservations due **Sunday** before the meeting. 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Waxahachie Country Club. Contact Barb at (214) 463-5064 or [barb.jacobs19@yahoo.com](mailto:barb.jacobs19@yahoo.com).

### Fridays

#### Virtual Book Chat:

Book summaries and recommendations on Facebook @redoaktx.org. 4:00 p.m. For more details, message [librarian@redoaktx.org](mailto:librarian@redoaktx.org).

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## Crossword - Sudoku Solutions



Easy

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

Medium

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



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