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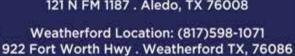
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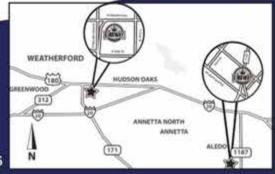


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#### ON THE COVER



Chickens are a priority for the Yates family.

Photo by Sarah Brown.

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#### **EDITOR'S NOTE**

Happy spring!

A clear evening in April is the perfect time to stargaze. Area residents can delight in the vastness of space above while lying on a blanket in the backyard or viewing celestial bodies through a telescope. Although the brightness of the sun inhibits the visibility of other stars during daytime hours, space lovers and other interested parties will have the opportunity to view a total eclipse of the sun this month. According to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the total solar eclipse will stretch from Mexico through the United States and into Canada on April 8.

On this day, the moon will pass between the sun and Earth, darkening the sky. According to NASA, the solar eclipse will begin in the local area around 12:20 p.m. The eclipse will end shortly after 3:00 that afternoon. If you plan to view the solar eclipse, wear special eye protection for safety or look to the ground to see the shadowy effects through the tree leaves.

On April 22, community members will have the opportunity to favor another astronomical object during Earth Day. To honor this planet of ours, you might choose to plant a tree, start recycling, pick up trash along an area roadway or conserve water by turning off the faucet while brushing your teeth. Earth Day is also a great time to plant a seasonal garden, install a flower bed for pollinators or create a bird habitat. When celebrating Earth Day, the sky is the limit!

Have fun out there!



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As our community continues to grow, so are we. Texas Health Family Care is proud to welcome Dr. Rachel Wai to the team. Board-certified in family medicine, Dr. Wai focuses on women's health services, therapeutic lifestyle interventions for chronic conditions, and prioritizing preventative health and self-care education. She earned her medical degree and completed her family medicine residency at Texas Tech University. She is accepting new patients.



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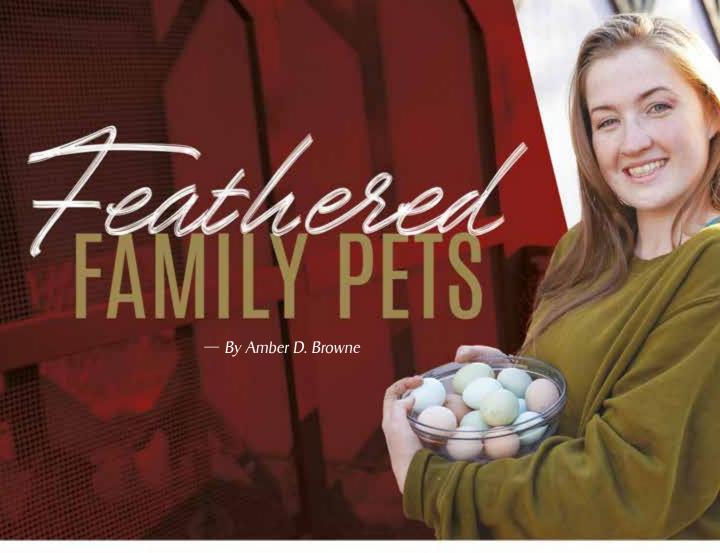






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During the COVID-19 Pandemic, self-sufficiency became an advantageous idea. Growing a vegetable garden, planting several fruit trees and buying a few chickens for egg production were the next steps for those pondering the plan. As food prices skyrocketed including the jump in the cost of eggs to nearly \$5 per dozen in late 2022 and early 2023, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the popularity of chicken ownership increased. For Weatherford resident Peyton Yates, the desire to purchase backyard fowl started as a child when her family owned a few chickens. In early 2023, she set her plan in motion, and her backyard is now home to several breeds.

"To me, it was the first tiptoe into finally being able to self-sufficiently homestead," Peyton explained. "I have a sour dough starter, stuff to make cheese out of milk, chickens for self-sustainability and, eventually, [I will have] the gardens." Her home sits on just over an acre of land. A creek runs through the property, and mature trees house a variety of birds. "A hawk lives here, and we have a pair of Barred owls. We have Mississippi kites, and then we have a pair of falcons, too." Because of the predatory nature of the birds, as well as stray cats in the neighborhood, a coop was a necessity for chicken ownership.

Coop construction kicked off in early February 2023. Peyton and her husband, Arik, purchased all of the supplies and got to work building the coop. "He's my tall, strong boy, so I would cut stuff and be like, 'Please, hold this here," Peyton shared, smilling. The 10x24-foot wooden structure cost just over \$2,000 to construct, which is less expensive than other coops that size. Sand was the initial flooring, but heavy rains forced Peyton to make some adjustments. She incorporated the deep litter method with pine bark, which is added when the bedding is soiled. The chickens stir the bedding, and it can later be used as garden fertilizer. Hardware cloth is used instead of chicken wire because it is a sturdier material. They installed skirting underground to protect the chickens from burrowing animals. "It is totally proofed. Hawk proof, fox proof, snake proof. And it had to be that way before I put them out there," Peyton explained.

She initially began purchasing chickens in January of last year and housed them in the garage until the coop was complete. "I only wanted one kind of chicken when I started this. I wanted Lavender Orpingtons." However, during each visit to the local

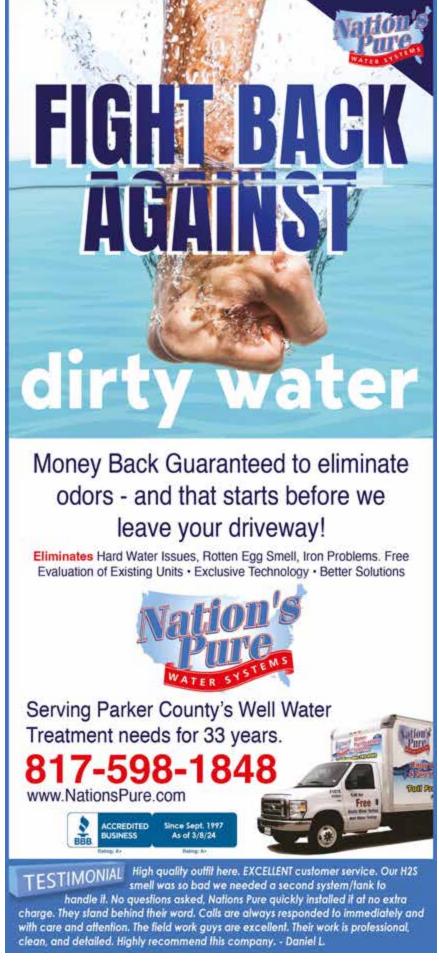


feed store. Pevton was unable to locate Lavender Orpingtons. She purchased other breeds on her short list including Lavender Ameraucanas and Blue Laced Red Wyandottes. She returned each week until her first choice was available. "I think they look elegant, and they look kind of purple when they go outside."

Peyton considers the chickens family pets, each with their own personality. One of her favorites is Lady Gray, an Australorp who loves to cuddle. "Everybody's friendly. Not everybody is cuddly."

Most of her chickens are mature enough to lay eggs. She collects about a dozen colorful eggs each day. "I don't eat eggs," she admitted. A previous keto diet involved eating a lot of eggs, so she no longer adds them to her meals. Her husband and their son, Atticus, enjoy the eggs, and friends and family are often gifted with extra dozens.

Everything she has learned about chickens is self-taught. "Before I



get into anything, I want to know everything about it, so that I fail as little as possible. So, I am prepared for it." Before purchasing the chickens, she bought medication for common ailments such as bumblefoot, water belly, sour crop and fowl pox. "My chickens have been relatively healthy."

Peyton allows her chickens to free range if she is outside monitoring them,



but they primarily live in the large coop. She names the chickens, many after characters in literary works — The Lady Galadriel and Gandalf from The Lord of the Rings, Black Beak, Doll Face and Bright Feathers, to name a few. Her neighbors have even named some of their favorite feathered friends.

Atticus has taken to the birds. too. "He loves the chickens, pets the chickens, picks up the chickens, chases the chickens. He is crazy about the chickens and the cats. He loves everything," Peyton shared. Peyton trained their cats to live in harmony with the chickens, as well as their two Blue Slate turkeys.

Having multiple pets is a new experience for Arik. "I come from a family where we had dogs and an outside cat. Animals were seen as something cool to have, but you never had a whole bunch of them," Arik said. "I like it. It's fun."

The chicken coop is painted lavender — a shade of her favorite color — and features an abstract mural by Peyton. "That's what I like to do. It's

my freestyle." As a professional artist, Peyton paints production art and pet portraits. "I have been doing art my entire life since my mom gave me a pencil. She was like, 'We're going to do letters.' And I was like, 'No, I'm going to draw a cat," she laughed. "I always had a sketchbook with me. I was always doing art. It's just part of me."

In the future, they plan to add raised gardens to provide fresh vegetables to the household and additional feed for the chickens. They are also adding a French drain to keep water away from the chicken coop, as well as master gardens and fruit trees at the back of the property. "I'm very excited about it."

Although Peyton originally purchased the chickens purely for her enjoyment, she considers them an investment into homesteading, "If the world goes to garbage, we're always going to have a protein source. It's a commodity that not everybody around here has, so we can trade eggs for anything else we need." For now, the chickens will be adored as family pets with a purpose. "I love them so much. They're so cute!" NOW





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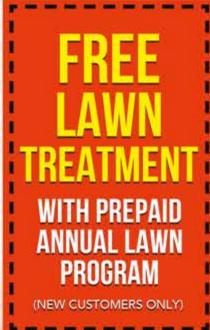
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#### **Around Town**





By Amber D. Browne

#### Kit Marshall and Zan Prince

Two Parker County women were recently honored for their achievements at the DFW American Business Women's Association HERStory 2024 event. Kit Marshall and Zan Prince were recognized for their contributions in their respective fields.

Kit served as Aledo's mayor for 16 years and is a founding member of the Rotary Club of Aledo and the Parker County Chamber of Commerce. "Meeting other women from across the Metroplex who have accomplished much in a variety of arenas was a blessing," Kit shared, adding it was heartwarming to be an honoree at the event.

Zan has served in a variety of roles with local charitable and civic organizations. At the event, Zan encouraged others to be difference makers, "to know that you can change the world one relationship, one touch at a time."



Dr. Kella Price, president of the Rotary Club of Aledo, speaks at the 4-Way Test Business Awards at Sunny Street Cafe in Willow Park.



The staff at Nothing Bundt Cakes in Hudson Oaks is ready to serve some tasty treats for any celebration.



The Weatherford High School Varsity Softball team takes a break between games at the Turf Wars tournament.



These Aledo High School seniors peruse the Spring Fling Craft Show and Prom Expo after showcasing prom dresses and tuxes in a fashion show.



Brock High School Varsity Baseball gets the win against Brownwood High School.



Life Line Screening staff perform preventative health services for area residents.



The Weatherford Chamber of Commerce team stands ready to support the community.



Cindi Neverdousky (1st), Karel Thome (2nd) and Carmen Davailus (3rd) are recognized as the Weatherford Art Association's Artists of the Month for March.

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## Closets by Design

By Amber D. Browne

Closets by Design

Hours: Monday-Friday: 8:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. Saturday: 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Sunday: Closed

For some, organizational projects within the home can be overwhelming. Whether it is finding available time, the organizing process, the space or all three, these types of home improvement projects can get pushed to the back of the to-do list. Fortunately, Closets by Design offers free, in-home consultations to area residents to create a comforting and organized space.

"Our tag line is, 'Imagine your home totally organized," said Jay Hemby, president of Closets by Design. "Your closet, your garage, your home office, your pantry — if they're organized and efficient, you can easily find what you are looking for. It improves your quality of life, makes your home more functional and gives you a better peace of mind. It also improves the value of your home."

Jay and his wife, Lisa Hemby, vice president, purchased the Dallas-Fort Worth franchise location in 2019. "It was a good fit for us personally with our backgrounds, as well as entrepreneurial criteria like the ability to grow within the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, a good business model and something that had an outstanding track record with success and customer service," he shared.

Designers with Closets by Design bring the showroom to residential customers as far west as Abilene. Homeowners can get a hands-on experience with a mini closet, as well as samples featuring different textures and colors. Catalogues and online examples are also available for customers to peruse.

Some repeat customers have an idea of what they want, while others are reaching out for help from the experts to organize and improve their space. "What are their goals? What's important to them? What are they trying to accomplish. We take that information, and we design a personalized, custom space for them, reflecting both their needs and their own individuality," lay said.

The designer spends ample time with the client during the free in-home consultation. "During their visit, they can create/draw the new space, price it out and even sign the contract in one visit," Jay said. Discounts are often available, as well as financing through Wells Fargo for qualifying customers.

The organizational systems are floor-based, meaning that they rest on the floor and are also attached to the wall. "The design maximizes your storage capacity, while also being able to hold more weight. It's definitely more stable and secure," Jay explained.

The storage products are custommade at the Closets by Design factory in Farmers Branch. "We manufacture in-house, which is a huge advantage. Our products are amazing. The whole company, from designer to installation, is top-notch in the industry," Lisa said.

The homeowner typically clears the space before installation, but several choices are offered for tear-out and preparation. The homeowner can tear out existing storage, patch and paint the space, hire an outside company or have Closets by Design take care of tear-out before installation. Once the space is prepped, the average installation process takes only one day. "Our goal is to make a customer's closet or space personal and totally organized," Lisa said.

"We are the largest closet company in Dallas-Fort Worth with total manufacturing capability all in one local space," Jay said. Because the storage products are built locally, Closets by Design can respond quickly if a client would like to add components or make any modifications after installation. Popular additions include jewelry tray inserts, pullout hampers, valet rods and lighting for shelves, vanities and countertops. "There are a lot of options," Jay said. "It really adds a 'wow' factor." NOW





# THE LOCAL TABLE

One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well.

- Virginia Woolf

















For as long as she can remember, 17-year-old Jenna Oesterle has had a passion for baking. "When I was a little girl, my grandma and my mom always got me involved in the kitchen, and that is where my love for baking began," she said.

Jenna sells custom cakes at her small business, Jenna's Cakery, and works as a cook at Fire Oak Grill. A soon-to-be Weatherford High School graduate heading to Oklahoma State University this fall, Jenna is also a Blue Belles senior line member and serves as vice president of Family, Career and Community Leaders of America.

Learning to balance her responsibilities has given Jenna the tenacity to try new things and to keep going, even when times get stressful. "These are skills that have helped me so much with my baking." NOW

#### Soft and Gooey Chocolate Chip Cookies

- 1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 3/4 tsp. salt
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, melted and cooled
- 1/2 cup light brown sugar, packed
- 1/3 cup granulated sugar
- 1 large egg

- 2 tsp. vanilla extract
- I Ghirardelli semi-sweet chocolate bar, chopped
- I Ghirardelli milk chocolate bar, chopped Ghirardelli milk chocolate, to taste (optional)

#### Sea salt, to taste (optional)

- **1.** Preheat the oven to 350 F. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.
- **2.** In a medium-size bowl, whisk the flour and the next 3 ingredients; set aside.
- 3. In a large mixing bowl, add the butter

and sugars. Whisk vigorously for 1-2 minutes until it is a paste-like consistency. Whisk in the egg and vanilla until smooth.

- **4.** Add the previously combined dry ingredients to the wet ingredients. Using a rubber spatula, fold to combine leaving a few streaks of flour. Add the 2 chopped chocolate bars; fold the dough until the chocolate is dispersed and the flour is completely blended. Do not overmix.
- **5.** Using a 2-oz. cookie scoop, drop 9-12 cookies onto the baking sheet. Bake at 350 F for 12-15 minutes, or until the cookies have a golden ring around the edge but are still pale and puffy in the center. Remove from the oven; top with extra chocolate and a sprinkle of sea salt, if desired. Transfer to a cooling rack; cool for 20 minutes. Enjoy!

#### Super Moist Chocolate Buttermilk Cake

- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 3 cups granulated sugar
- 1 1/2 cups unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 Tbsp. baking soda
- 1 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 1/4 tsp. salt

4 large eggs, room temperature 1/2 cup canola oil

1 1/2 cups buttermilk, room temperature

1 1/2 cups hot water or brewed coffee 1/2 Tbsp. vanilla

- 1. Preheat the oven to 350 F. Lightly grease three 9-inch cake rounds and dust them with flour or cocoa powder.
- **2.** Using a stand mixer, combine the flour and the next 5 ingredients on low speed.
- **3.** Add the eggs and the remaining ingredients. Beat on low until smooth. scraping the bowl sides and bottom to ensure everything is mixed.
- **4.** Divide the batter evenly among the three prepared pans, about 3 cups per pan. Tap the cake pans gently on the counter to allow any bubbles to escape.
- **5.** Bake at 350 F for 30-35 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Cool the cakes on wire racks for 15 minutes; remove from the pans; place on wire racks to cool completely. Frost with your favorite frosting.

#### My Delicious American **Buttercream Frosting**

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened 1 Tbsp. vanilla extract 2 cups powdered sugar

- 1. In a stand mixer with a paddle attachment, beat the butter on mediumhigh for 6 minutes until it becomes white and fluffy.
- **2.** Mix in the vanilla, and slowly add the powdered sugar, a little at a time, until the buttercream is smooth and airy.





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#### 4/3

#### **Career Fair:**

The public is invited to attend.
11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Emerging
Technologies and Workforce
Building, Weatherford College, 225
College Park Dr. Contact Brandy
Grotts at (817) 598-6302 or
bgrotts@wc.edu.

#### 4/6

#### **Keep Weatherford Beautiful Trash Off:**

Teams of 10 collect trash. Event offers free lunch and awards to volunteers. 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Heritage Park Food Park, 317 Santa Fe Dr. Register at pond@weatherfordtx.gov. Call (817) 598-4124 for info.

#### Opus Nova Chamber Music Series:

The "Stellar Sounds" concert celebrates the beauty of nature two days before the solar eclipse. \$55 ticket includes light appetizers and wine/beer. 7:00 p.m., Chandor Gardens, 711 W. Lee Ave. chandorgardensfoundation.org.

#### 4/8

#### Total Eclipse of the Park:

Only the easternmost parts of the county will be in the path of totality! Food trucks will be on-site, and eclipse glasses provided. Bring a lawn chair and your appetite Gates open: noon; totality: 1:40 p.m., Aledo Athletics, 9001 W. Bankhead Hwy., Aledo.

#### 4/11

#### Sky's the Limit Awards Gala:

Presented by the Parker County Chamber of Commerce. VIP reception: 6:00 p.m.; gala: 7:00-9:00 p.m., Dove Ridge Vineyard, 6000 Tucker Dr., Weatherford. www.parkercountychamber.com.

#### 4/12-4/14 and 4/26-4/28

#### AUsome Allen Benefit Softball Tournaments:

Support special needs heroes while enjoying yard games, vendor shopping and more. 4/12-4/14: Men & Women; 4/26-4/28: Co-Ed. Holland Lake Park, 1200-1486 Holland Lake Dr. ausomeallen.com.

#### 4/13

#### Master Gardener Plant Sale:

Peruse pollinator plants, perennials and more. Cash or check only. Bring a cart or wagon to stock. 8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Heritage Park Pavilion, 317 Santa Fe Dr. Call (817) 598-4034 or visit pcmgtexas.org for details.

#### 4/18

#### **Taste of Parker County:**

Enjoy tastings from local businesses to benefit Weatherford College Foundation. Tickets: \$40 through 4/17; \$45 on 4/18. 4:30-7:30 p.m., Heritage Park,

317 Santa Fe Dr. wc.edu/about/foundation/taste.php.

#### 4/19-4/20

#### The Merry Wives of Windsor:

Shakespeare's merry comedy of marriage, wealth, jealousy and lies by Theatre Off The Square. Tickets: \$10 at the gate. Friday and Saturday: 7:00 p.m.; Saturday: 3:00 p.m., Chandor Gardens, 711 W. Lee Ave. chandorgardensfoundation.org.

#### 4/20

#### April Pool's Day Parker County:

Fun and food trucks. 11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Heritage Park, 315 Santa Fe Dr. (817) 599-7946, theswimlessonpeople.com.

#### 4/27

#### **Spring Fling:**

Join the Parker County Extension Education Association fundraiser for a picnic-style lunch, vendors and a presentation by the Willow Park Garden Club. Cost \$15. 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Central Christian Church Fellowship Hall, 1602 S. Main. (817) 598-6168.

#### Wednesdays

#### VFW Post 4746:

Join to support local veterans. Burger night: 6:00-8:00 p.m., cost \$5. 1st & 3rd Fridays: Steak night: 6:00-8:00 p.m., cost \$20. 224 Zion Hill Rd. (817) 594-7356.

#### Second Thursdays

#### Gardeners' Club of Parker County Meeting:

10:00 a.m., St. Francis Church, 117 Ranch House Rd., Willow Park. (817) 919-6280.

#### Parker County Camera Club Meeting:

All photography levels are invited. 6:00 p.m., Barlow Hall, 125 S. Waco St. theparkercountycameraclub@gmail.com.

#### Third Thursdays

#### Quilter's Guild of

Parker County: Socialize: 6:15 p.m.; meeting: 6:45 p.m., Lakeshore Drive Baptist Church, 200 S. Lakeshore Dr., Hudson Oaks. quiltersguildofparkercounty.org.

#### Second Fridays

#### Parker County Women's and Newcomers' Club:

Social hour: 9:30 a.m.; meeting: 10:30 a.m.; lunch: noon, Weatherford College Emerging Technologies and Workforce Solutions Building, 225 College Park Dr. pcwnc.org/monthly-meeting.

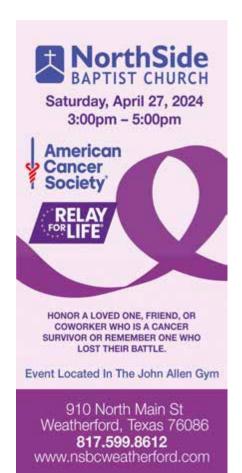
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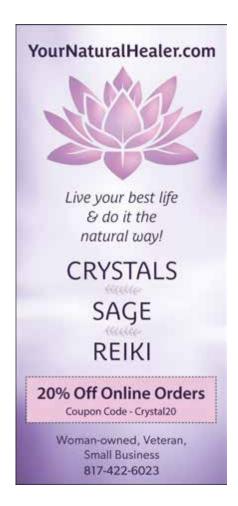
























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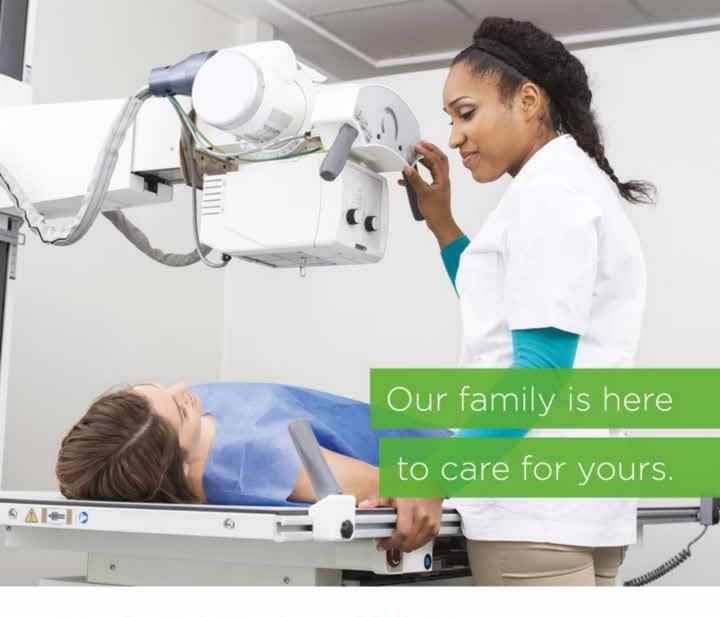
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