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Created by David Grapes & Todd Olson
Book by Todd Olson
Directed by Elisa Guse
May 7-10 & 14-16

May 2026
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ON THE COVER

Vanessa Alonzo spends some quality time with a little goat.



Photo by
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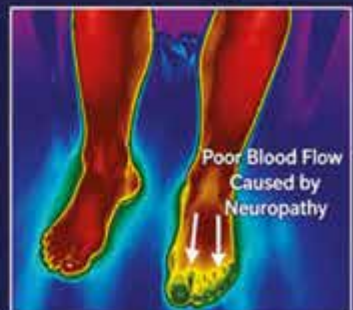
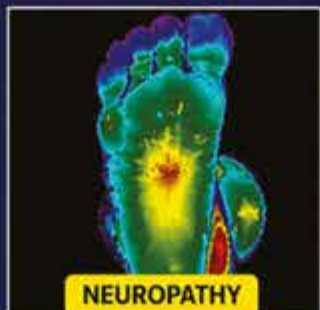
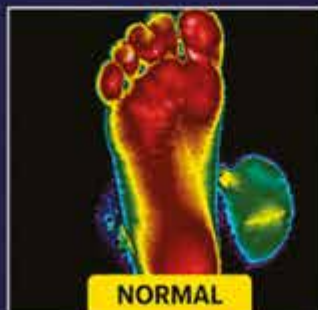
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HARVESTING COMMUNITY

— By Adam Walker

Six years ago, Justin Shaefer had the idea that Cedar Hill needed a farmers market. He was on the board of the Cedar Hill Chamber of Commerce, so he got it started on the Chamber's parking lot. Vanessa Alonzo is the current executive director of the Chamber, and she's overseen the growth and expansion of the Farmers Market into what it is today.

"I started it because I wanted to increase opportunities for local entrepreneurs, without a brick-and-mortar store, to get their products in front of the community," Justin remembered. "We have a lot of talent in Cedar Hill."

"We had at least 80 different vendors last year," Vanessa added. "I manage the Farmers Market, coordinate the schedule for our different vendors and lay out where the booths will be. I coordinate with the city. They shut down the street in front of Babe's for us to hold the market there now. I also handle the social media promotion and make sure every market day has a variety of different kinds of vendors. We don't want to have too many vendors offering the same kind of products on any one week. One thing many people don't know is that we're the only farmers market in the area that's set up to take SNAP and WIC benefits. I issue the 'Market Bucks,' so you can use your benefits to buy fresh vegetables from our vendors. I also man the admin booth and make sure everything runs smooth on the day."

Justin is one of the actual farmers at the market. Somehow in the midst of getting the market going, he became a part-time farmer himself. He even invested in a trailer that can keep eggs and meat refrigerated. "The trailer helps keep the produce from getting too warm and wilting in the sun. A lot of farmers in the area don't have the time to man their own booths, so we help them sell their stuff if we can. I have a farm right here in Cedar Hill. We raise chickens and sell the eggs. Our Silkie chickens have won a couple of first place ribbons at the State Fair. We also keep bees and sell local honey. As a father, I felt like it was important. I wanted my daughters to have the opportunity to interact with people they didn't know. They help harvest and sell the produce. It's an opportunity to give them real-world skills that are hard to develop in a classroom. They also share about the goats



and chickens in the petting zoo, which my wife, Kelly, runs. We call it the Farm Animal Experience. You see children, who've never interacted with a goat or a chicken before, overcome their fear and go from asking, 'Is that a chicken?' to approaching with a smile on their face."

"We have all kinds of vendors at the market: baked goods, foods and snacks, jellies, soap, artisans and crafts, custom sneakers," Vanessa informed. "We have a designated youth booth that's for entrepreneurs under the age of 12. I've seen

kids selling horchata, jewelry and crafts. We have one boy who 3-D prints toys. My favorite thing about the market is how it supports local businesses. And not just the vendors with booths in this week's market, but because it's downtown, it drives traffic to all our downtown businesses as well. The city councilors and the mayor come out. And it's a pet-friendly environment. Lots of people bring their dogs. Camp Bow Wow and Love Your Pets frequently have booths. We always have at least one booth designated for a local nonprofit, so they can connect with more people."

Justin agreed. "When I started this during COVID, it was one of the few things we could do, because it was outside, and we could manage the flow and spacing. It was an opportunity for local cottage goods and produce. The first four years, we were on the parking lot, but we reached capacity. Moving to the front of

downtown gave us more room and visibility. We needed a regular event like this. I love the neighborly feeling. Vanessa has really taken it to the next level."

"I just celebrated two years as the executive director. I want to invest in this community any way I can. I respect what was already started here. We're in our sixth year, and we have some booths that have been with us from the beginning. I want to make this beneficial to them and help them grow. One of our vendors just bought their own trailer. I love seeing their development. We get to be a part of joining with them and watching them grow."

The Farmers Market is open from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., every second and fourth Saturday from May to October, except the week of Country Day on the Hill. Justin and Vanessa want you to see all the unique vendors Cedar Hill has to offer from farm-fresh produce to whatever you can imagine! **NOW**



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Dr. Allala graduated from Baylor College of Dentistry in 2016 and completed her Bachelor of Science



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from The University of Texas at San Antonio in 2012. Since opening her practice, she has built a loyal following of patients who have followed her from her previous office, drawn by her gentle approach and commitment to patient care.

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"We are not a corporation," Dr. Allala said. Unlike larger corporate dental practices, Serenity Advanced Dentistry remains independent, allowing Dr. Allala to focus on building genuine relationships with patients. All assistants are bilingual, ensuring Spanish-speaking patients feel comfortable and fully understand their treatment options.

Dr. Allala lives in DeSoto, just 10 minutes away from her office, keeping her deeply connected to the community she serves. She gives back by supporting the Friends of Tri-City Animal Shelter through monthly contributions, a cause close to her heart as a devoted pet lover. For families seeking personalized dental care in a welcoming, professional environment, Serenity Advanced Dentistry offers an alternative to corporate dental chains. **NOW**



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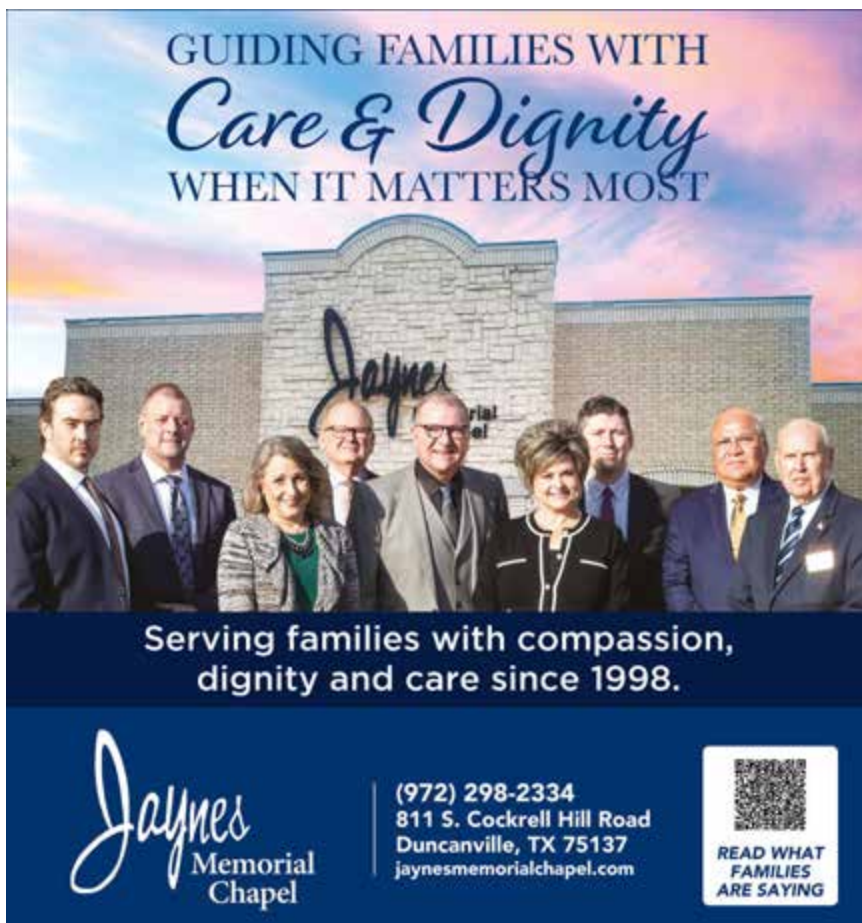
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Zoomed In: Zahraa Alkinani

By Adam Walker

On a recent afternoon in Cedar Hill, Zahraa Alkinani was relaxing at a table for one, caffeinating with an iced matcha frappuccino, in the café at Barnes and Noble. She was taking it easy and unwinding amid the swirl of conversation and activity. "I'm having a self-care day," she explained. "I love to read, especially sci-fi. I really enjoy books by Sarah J. Maas and Cassandra Clare. They're some of my favorite authors." Enjoying such popular authors, she was sure to find some of their books on the shelves, provided she hadn't already read them all. "I really enjoy shopping for books," she added. She went back to sipping her drink and checking her phone, before returning to browsing, while the café continued to buzz.



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The Cedar Hill Chamber and 12 woman-owned businesses stand together for Mayor Stephen Mason's proclamation declaring March Women's History Month.



Clint Woodward, Amanda Skinner, Hilda Cabrera and Vanessa Alonzo connect and build relationships at a Duncanville Chamber of Commerce networking event at Take Out Burgers.



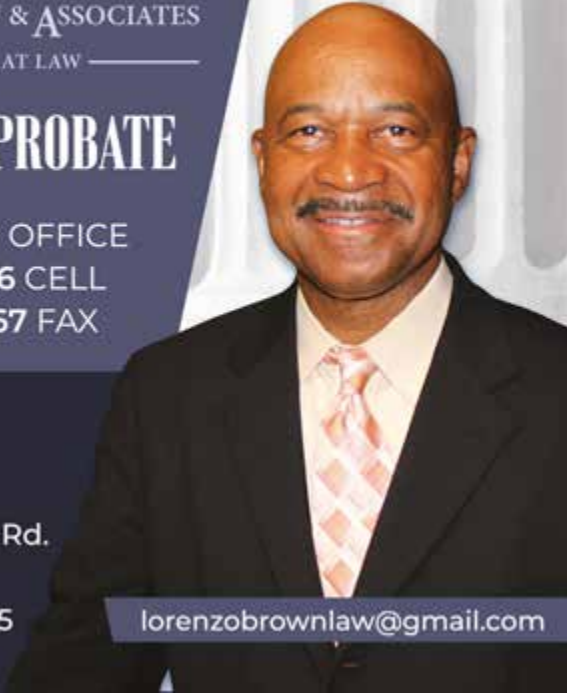
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Zoomed In: Benjamin Pearson

By Adam Walker

Benjamin Pearson loves words. He's on his way to the Scripps National Spelling Bee, after winning the DeSoto ISD spelling bee and qualifying at the regional bee in Dallas. "I qualified with the word *hariolation*. It means guesswork. My favorite word that I spelled is *carnet*. I like it because it's French, and I want to learn that language. I haven't started learning it yet, but I may try to start over the summer. I enjoy spelling bees. I guess it's because it teaches me about languages and how they're structured. I like learning different words. The Scripps National Spelling Bee will be Memorial Day weekend. This will be my first trip to Washington, D.C. I'm really looking forward to it."



Angie Lopez takes good care of her tables at Ojeda's, where they're celebrating 57 years in the community.



Kay Crelia-Clark watches her kids play at Kidsville.



DeSoto ISD Interim Superintendent Brent Mitchell meets with alumnus Corey Borner.



The women of the Lewis family get in some sister time.



Friends Carolyn Campbell, Precious Davis and Aicha Davis hang out with Ben Abbott at IBOC.



SouthwestNOW Scavenger Hunt



Find 5 hidden Watering Cans

in 5 different ads in this issue (not counting the one above).

Email the page numbers and specific ads where they are found, plus your phone number, by May 15th. To ensure your Scavenger Hunt answers go in the drawing, you must use the

Scavenger Hunt Email

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One entry per person.

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Winner must pick up prize within 30 days of drawing.

Yellow Birds were found on pages 1, 4, 7, 19 & 23.

April winner is:
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MAY 22-24

ENNIS



While Cinco de Mayo (the commemoration of Mexico's victory over French forces at the Battle of Puebla in 1862) is a relatively minor holiday in Mexico, it has become a vibrant celebration of Mexican culture and cuisine in the United States. These authentic recipes showcase the bold flavors that make Mexican food so beloved around the world. **NOW**

Homemade Guacamole

- 4 ripe avocados
- 1 lime, juiced
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 cup onion, diced
- 3 Tbsp. fresh cilantro, chopped
- 2 Roma tomatoes, diced
- 1 tsp. minced garlic
- 1 jalapeño pepper, minced
- 1 pinch ground black pepper

1. Cut the avocados in half. Remove the pits; scoop the flesh into a mixing bowl. Mash with a fork until the desired consistency is reached, leaving some chunks for texture.
2. Immediately add the lime juice and salt, stirring to prevent browning.
3. Fold in the onions and cilantro; mix well.
4. Add the tomatoes, garlic and jalapeños; stir gently to combine.
5. Season with black pepper; adjust the salt to taste. Serve immediately with warm tortilla chips.

Chicken Tacos With Fresh Salsa

- 2 lbs. boneless chicken breasts
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil

- 1 tsp. chili powder
- 1 tsp. cumin
- 1/2 tsp. paprika
- 1/2 tsp. garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 4 medium tomatoes, diced
- 1/2 cup white onion, chopped
- 1/4 cup fresh cilantro, chopped
- 1 jalapeño, seeded and minced
- 2 Tbsp. lime juice
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 12 corn tortillas
- 1 cup lettuce, shredded
- 1 cup queso fresco, crumbled

1. Brush the chicken breasts with the olive oil on both sides.
2. In a small bowl, combine the spices; rub the spice mixture generously over the chicken.
3. Grill or pan-sear the chicken over medium-high heat for 6-7 minutes per side until cooked through.
4. While the chicken cooks, prepare the salsa by combining the tomatoes, onions, cilantro and jalapeños in a bowl.
5. Stir in the lime juice and salt; mix well.
6. Once the chicken is done, let it rest for 5 minutes before slicing into thin strips.
7. Warm the corn tortillas in a dry skillet or over an open flame until pliable and slightly charred.

8. Assemble the tacos by layering sliced chicken onto each tortilla and topping with fresh salsa, shredded lettuce and queso fresco.

Mexican Cinnamon Ice Cream

- 2 cups heavy cream
- 1 cup whole milk
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 4 large egg yolks
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon

1. In a saucepan, heat the cream, milk, sugar and cinnamon sticks over medium heat until steaming.
2. Remove from heat; let steep for 30 minutes, then remove the cinnamon sticks.
3. Whisk the egg yolks in a bowl. Slowly add the warm cream mixture while whisking constantly.
4. Return to the saucepan; cook over low heat, stirring constantly, until thickened.
5. Stir in the vanilla extract and ground cinnamon; chill completely.
6. Churn in an ice cream maker according to the manufacturer's instructions. Freeze until firm.



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