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JUNE 2026

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Robyn Stroup finds joy in serving at The Golden Circle

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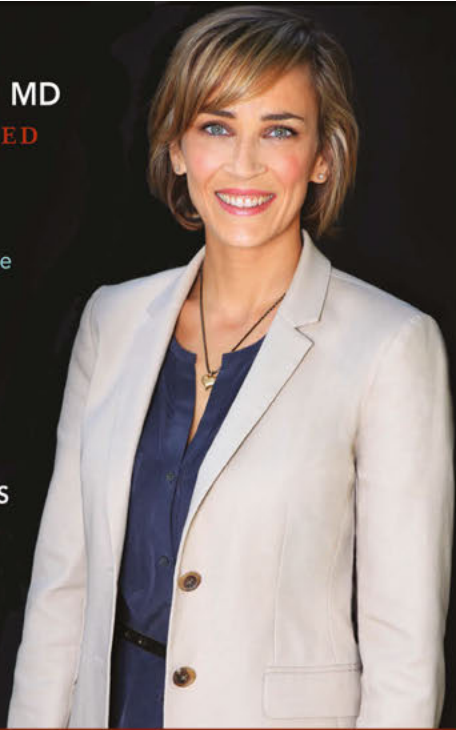
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June 2026
 Volume 23, Issue 6



Bill Smith
 EnnisNOW Editor
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**ON THE
 COVER**

*Working
 with seniors
 resonates with
 Robyn Stroup.*



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A PLACE FOR ACTIVE SENIORS

— By Bill Smith



"We felt a change was coming in our ministry in California, and we prayed to see where God would lead us," Ennis Golden Circle Director Robyn Stroup said. "My husband, Tim, and I were pastors of a church there. He continues to commute back there every two weeks to help with the transition to a new pastor, but I am happy to be here full time."

The Stroups have four children and eight grandchildren, and the move to Ennis brought them close to their youngest daughter and some of the grandchildren. "We still have two children in Northern California and a daughter in Los Angeles," she mentioned. "Our daughter here doesn't move around as much as some of the others," she said with a laugh. "That's part of the reason we chose Ennis."

"We started looking at Ennis a couple of years ago and actually bought a home here in 2024. We thought it might be our retirement home, but we got here early! One of the things that influenced our move was bringing my mother here. It has been good, and she gets to come to the Golden Circle also."

Robyn and Tim have been in Ennis for just over a year now, so they were able to enjoy the Polka Festival, Blues on Main and the Christmas parade last year. "We missed the Bluebonnet Festival and Trails last year, but we heard a lot about them and were here for them this year. We also enjoyed spending some Saturday mornings at the Farmers Market downtown. California was a lot busier," she said. "We are really enjoying the small-town community that Ennis provides."

The Golden Circle recently underwent a complete remodel of their building at 1700 Floyd Street, just a block off of North Kaufman Street, and it is as beautiful as it is functional. "I've just seen pictures of what the building was like before the remodel, but anyone who has ever visited will notice the changes. We took out some walls to open up the space. The kitchen remodel is a dramatic change! All of the plumbing had to be replaced [which she admitted was costly], so everything in the restrooms is new also. The new floors were a welcome addition, and now there is a room set aside for crafts and Bible studies, and a new shed has been set up for additional storage."

The Golden Circle currently has about 40 members, and they have room for many more. "The cost is only \$5 per month, and we serve breakfast and lunch every day we are open. Our hours are 9:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. We have some very busy days when it seems like all 40 of our members are here. Donna Harrington brings craft activities from Midlothian on one Wednesday each month and stays all day. The members love her. Connie Armstrong comes and calls bingo on Fridays, and that is another fun day with high attendance. We have some prizes that are donated for the winners.

"We go on some field trips that are enjoyable, too. We recently went to The Welcome Center downtown to view the Black History Art Exhibit. We also went to Bill Watkins' model train exhibit on Hwy. 34 just east

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of town. Bill even indicated he would add a new building to his display, The Ennis Golden Circle! We have a van for transportation, and we often have to make two trips to carry the members who want to go on our outings."

The mission statement of Ennis Golden Circle Senior Activity Center is on their website:

"Our mission is to keep the senior citizens of Ennis mentally, physically and spiritually active." Robyn indicated that they used to exercise twice a week, and now they exercise every day. The organization encourages healthy living including stretching and drinking plenty of water daily.

Robyn has a lot of passion and dreams for the Golden Circle. "I remember watching my grandmother enjoy her assisted living facility," she said. "Our people just love being here. They still have so much to contribute, and I am the beneficiary of so much wisdom that is poured out here."

The facility has plenty of room for



more members right now, and there is room to expand the building in the future. There are also plans to erect an awning in the back so members can enjoy the outdoors when the weather is pleasant.

"On Tuesdays, Pastor Darrell Nelson and Gene Wilcox lead the group in a time of praise and worship. Gene leads the music, usually starting around 11:00, then Pastor Nelson will preach. He typically stays until we close," Robyn said.

In addition to the programs that the visitors bring, they have puzzles and games like Uno and dominoes.

Robyn indicated that sometimes, the games get pretty competitive and spirited!

"We had a grand reopening this spring, and our new signage is an attractive upgrade for the remodeled facility. We do not want to be the best kept secret in town," Robyn concluded. The Golden Circle is a warm, inviting place for our seniors to enjoy an active community. **NOW**

Editor's Note: For information on sponsoring a senior's membership, meals and programs, visit www.ennisgoldencircle.org.



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After working as a speech-language pathologist in public schools for 21 years, Darla Gardner noticed a troubling trend. Children were arriving in prekindergarten and kindergarten with fewer communication and social skills each year. Then COVID hit, and the deficits drastically increased.

“Children were not able to pay attention to instruction, understand basic concepts for classroom rules and



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expectations, and they demonstrated behaviors and emotions that they were not able to regulate. Their needs and wants were not able to be effectively communicated,” Darla explained. Her goal for opening the clinic in Ennis was to reach children prior to starting school and connect with parents before beginning the educational process.

Darla holds a master’s degree in Communication Disorders and her Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology. Her clinic offers pediatric speech therapy for children ages 0-18, addressing not only pronunciation but also early language development for late talkers or children with developmental delays, social skills and play skills affected by communication deficits, stuttering therapy, reading and phonemic awareness, phonological processing



related to speech/sound disorders and feeding disorders.

Out of eight speech therapy staff members, five are bilingual in Spanish and English. The clinic also offers reading and math tutoring from two certified teachers with more than 25 years of experience in early childhood and elementary education. Occupational therapy will be added in the coming months.

"We have licensed speech-language pathologists and speech therapy assistants who are trained in the evaluation and treatment of communication and swallowing disorders," Darla shared. The clinic does not have a waiting list and offers private 30-minute sessions, typically twice a week, with goals specifically tailored to each child's deficits as identified on standardized testing.

Wonderfully Made Therapies accepts major insurance plans and Medicaid. "Our cash pay options are reasonably affordable, so that no children are excluded from our services," Darla said.

Her goal was to reach children prior to starting school and connect with parents before the educational process begins. "Families have more distractions in their homes now more than ever before," she noted. "With the new age of technology, driven by online education and virtual experiences, children are losing the face-to-face interaction with adults, siblings and peers that they had before." The clinic helps parents learn to be intentional communicators with their children, explaining daily routines, teaching vocabulary, helping them experience new things and preparing them for a successful start in school.

Because of the clinic's growth, Darla has been able to support many nonprofits serving children. Last year, Wonderfully Made Therapies contributed to The Greater Ennis United Way, Cara Caters, Mentors Care, the Ennis ISD Education Foundation, Runnin' Free Ranch, Campfire Creek Therapeutic Riding Center, Ennis Cares, A-CROSS and elementary school PTO fundraisers in both Ennis and Palmer. The Greater Ennis Chamber of Commerce awarded the clinic the 2026 President's Community Champion Award. Readers of the *Waxahachie Daily Light* named it the Best Speech Therapy Clinic in Ellis County. **NOW**

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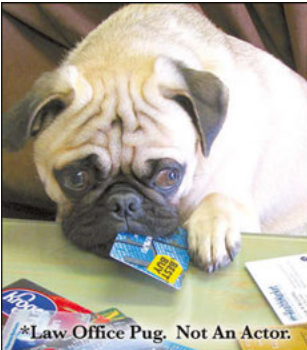
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Zoomed In: Todd Hood

By Bill Smith

Todd Hood was born in Sherman and moved to Ellis County with his family at age 4. After completing high school and barber college, he started his career.

Todd and his wife will celebrate their 25th anniversary this month. They have two children — a son and a daughter. Todd said that he enjoys fishing and duck hunting, and he loves spending time with his family.

“I also enjoy the group of men that I engage with in Bible study every Tuesday morning for what we call ‘Bible Study and Guy Talk.’ Adam Segura helped me get the group started with just four guys, and now we have about 25 men meeting every week.”



Ennis resident Charlie Peek helps open a new H-E-B store in Fomey.



The Lionettes prepare for their dance competition in Waco.



Brooke Anderson speaks to the Lions Club about Ennis Regional Medical Center.



Charles Ray and Jerry Wyman entertain the men and their wives from the Bible Study they attend.

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Zoomed In: Carisma Cruz

By Bill Smith

Carisma Cruz is the pleasant person one is most likely to meet first at Trinity Capital Bank in Ennis. “I have been the new accounts representative at the bank for about a year-and-a-half,” she mentioned.

“I graduated from Red Oak High School and went to work for Wells Fargo Bank,” Carisma related. “We were looking for a home to purchase, and our Realtor suggested one in Ennis. We thought it was just what we were looking for!”

“I was expecting our fourth child at the time, so I was a stay-at-home mom for a while before joining Trinity Capital. We really like Ennis. We had not had a chance to enjoy the spring festivals until this year. I love the small-town feel Ennis offers and our kids enjoy the Boys & Girls Club.”



Caden Hensley and her parents, Pastor Chet and Tia Hensley, celebrate TWU Dance National Championship.



Caroline Brown sells her baked cookies at Bluebonnet Market.



Jack Williamson, Robbie Tennyson, Johathan Dixon and Forrest Marler contemplate their next move at the chess tournament.



Herb Baumgartener shapes pottery on his wheel.

FIVE NONPROFITS WE ARE LOVING RIGHT NOW!

1

GREATER ENNIS UNITED WAY

The mission of the United Way is to improve the quality of life of all people by responding to priority health and human service needs through gathering and distributing community resources in an efficient and accountable manner. The United Way funding goes to their partner agencies that serve the Ennis community.
johna@ennisunitedway.org, P.O. Box 639, Ennis, TX 75119.

2

CARA CATERS

Cara Caters is dedicated to providing children with the food they need to thrive. Their mission is to help feed hungry children on weekends and holidays with dignity. Their vision for the future is to put an end to childhood hunger in small communities. 500 W. Ennis Avenue, Ennis, TX 75119, (945)542-1090.

3

ENNIS CHILDREN'S CHARITY FOUNDATION

The focus of this charity is, and always will be, on children — locally in Ennis and the surrounding areas, and beyond through their hospital partners. They are not motivated by monetary gain, but by a desire to leave the world better than they found it, ensuring the next generation has more opportunities, more support and more hope. info@ennisccf.org.

4

GIVE A KID A CHANCE

Ennis Give a Kid a Chance is a faith-based community organization that helps local families get ready for the new school year. They strive to meet the immediate needs of students whose families are struggling with economic challenges by providing back-to-school supplies and connecting those who are willing to local service and faith providers. ennisgiveakidachance@gmail.com, P.O. Box 8842, Ennis, TX 75119.

5

HOPE CLINIC

Hope Clinic is a faith based, not-for-profit Federally Qualified Health Center. They care for the whole person by providing quality, patient-centered health care that is affordable for those they serve in the community. They treat the whole person, regardless of ability to pay, because they believe God cares about each individual's physical, mental and spiritual health. info@hopehealthtx.org. 805 W. Lampasas St., Ennis, TX 75119, (972) 923-2445.



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The study drug is being tested to see if it can reduce the activation of nerves in the gut that trigger abdominal pain, stool irregularity, and other IBS symptoms. During the study, camlipixant or placebo is taken as a tablet twice each day and it is hoped that camlipixant will help improve the quality of life of people affected by IBS-D and IBS-M.

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- Are willing to hold off certain IBS medications for the study
- Can use an electronic diary to track your symptoms daily

There are other requirements for taking part in this study. The study team will discuss these other criteria with you.

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YOUR KIDS'



— By Bill Smith

BACKYARD BEACH

Imagine your children building sandcastles in their own backyard or creating a mini-construction site with their toy dump trucks and bulldozers. Kids like to play in the sand, and a simple weekend do-it-yourself sandbox may keep them entertained for hours.

For many of us, the first thing we ever built out of wood was a simple square or rectangular box, and on the most basic level, that's all there is to it. However, with just a little more effort, we can add a ledge that not only helps keep the sand where it belongs but also serves as a bench for sitting with just your feet in the sand!

Use either cedar or pressure-treated lumber for the majority of the project for the best weather protection. If you choose pressure-treated lumber, make sure it is safe for use around children, pets and plants.

First, locate where to place the sandbox in your yard. Since this project will include a lid, there won't be a big concern about getting leaves or other debris in the box when it is not being used, but some may choose to keep the project a little simpler and avoid overhanging trees. In that case, it would be a good idea to place the box where it can be shaded by the house or an outbuilding. Once you've selected the location, dig out enough soil so the bottom edge of the sandbox will be below the surface to help keep the vertical walls in place.

Start construction by building the 5- or 6-foot-square main box out of 2x8 lumber. Two 12-foot 2x8s are all you will need for the basic box. Cut them to length, and screw them together by predrilling four holes about 3/4 inch from the end of the boards for 3-inch screws. Use a framing square to assure the corners are at 90 degrees. Using a tape measure, measure from each corner diagonally to assure the box is square.

Adding a ledge attached to two parallel sides of the box will not only help brace the box, but it will also provide a place to sit and keep some of the sand from being "splashed" out of the box during vigorous play, or if one of the toy bull dozers should run amuck. The ledge should be attached to the box along the full length of the sides and overhang into the box. Drill pilot holes, and attach it with 3-inch screws just as you attached the box ends.

Now, staple landscape cloth to the interior of the box an inch or two from the bottom. The landscape cloth will help prevent the sand from leaching out from under the edges of the box, as well as prevent grass from growing up through the sand.

Now it's time to fill the box with sand. There are many different kinds of sand to choose from, as well as a product called "play sand" that is smooth and clean. It is sold in 50-lb. bags. There are other choices as well, but if you choose bulk sand, inspect it carefully to remove rocks and other potential debris.

The sandbox cover can be as simple as a tarp attached with bungee cords. If you use a tarp, make it large enough to put a 5-gallon plastic bucket in the center of the box so water will run off rather than pool on the tarp. Another option is a screen made of wood or plastic lattice to keep larger animals out of the sand, or a metal screen made of hardware cloth or chicken wire attached to a wooden frame might be your choice. Making a solid wooden cover that remains attached with hinges might be your final choice.

Now, bring on the sunny, summer days. It's time to hit the beach! **NOW**

Sources:

1. <https://www.hgtv.com/design/make-and-celebrate/handmade/how-to-build-a-sandbox>.
2. <https://www.lowes.com/n/how-to/build-a-sandbox>.

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Father's Day is the perfect occasion to fire up the grill and treat Dad to a special meal that shows how much you appreciate him. These smoky, savory recipes will give you the chance to take over the grill, and make his day truly memorable. **NOW**

Grilled Jalapeño Poppers

- 8 oz. cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1/2 tsp. garlic powder
- 12 jalapeño peppers, halved and seeded
- 12 bacon strips, halved

1. Mix together the cream cheese, cheddar and garlic powder.
2. Fill each jalapeño half with the cheese mixture.
3. Wrap each pepper with a half strip of bacon; secure with a toothpick.
4. Grill over medium heat for 15-20 minutes until the bacon is crispy.

Grilled Shrimp Skewers

- 3 Tbsp. olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp. paprika
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. black pepper
- 2 lbs. large shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 2 Tbsp. lemon juice
- 2 Tbsp. fresh parsley, chopped

1. Soak wooden skewers in water for 30 minutes to prevent burning.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together

the olive oil, garlic, paprika, salt and pepper.

3. Add the shrimp to the bowl; toss to coat evenly.
4. Thread the shrimp onto the skewers, about 5-6 shrimp per skewer.
5. Preheat the grill to medium-high heat; oil the grates.
6. Grill the shrimp skewers for 2-3 minutes per side until pink and opaque.
7. Remove from the grill; drizzle with lemon juice. Garnish with parsley; serve immediately.

Grilled Steak With Herb Butter

- 4 1-inch ribeye steaks
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 2 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. black pepper
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, softened
- 2 Tbsp. fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 Tbsp. fresh rosemary, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp. lemon zest

1. Remove the steaks from the refrigerator; let them come to room temperature for 30 minutes.
2. Brush both sides of each steak with olive oil; season generously with salt and pepper.

3. In a small bowl, mix together the butter, parsley, rosemary, garlic and lemon zest until well combined.
4. Preheat the grill to high heat (450-500 F). Place the steaks on the grill; cook for 4-5 minutes without moving them.
5. Flip the steaks; cook for another 4-5 minutes for medium-rare.
6. Remove the steaks from the grill; let them rest for 5 minutes.
7. Top each steak with a generous dollop of herb butter; serve immediately.

Grilled Pineapple With Cinnamon Sugar

- 1 fresh pineapple, peeled and cored
- 2 Tbsp. melted butter
- 3 Tbsp. brown sugar
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- Vanilla ice cream, for serving

1. Cut the pineapple into 1/2-inch thick rings. Brush both sides of each ring with melted butter.
2. In a small bowl, mix together the brown sugar and cinnamon. Sprinkle the cinnamon sugar mixture over both sides of the pineapple rings.
3. Grill over medium heat for 3-4 minutes per side until caramelized with grill marks.
4. Serve warm with vanilla ice cream.



EnnisNOW Scavenger Hunt



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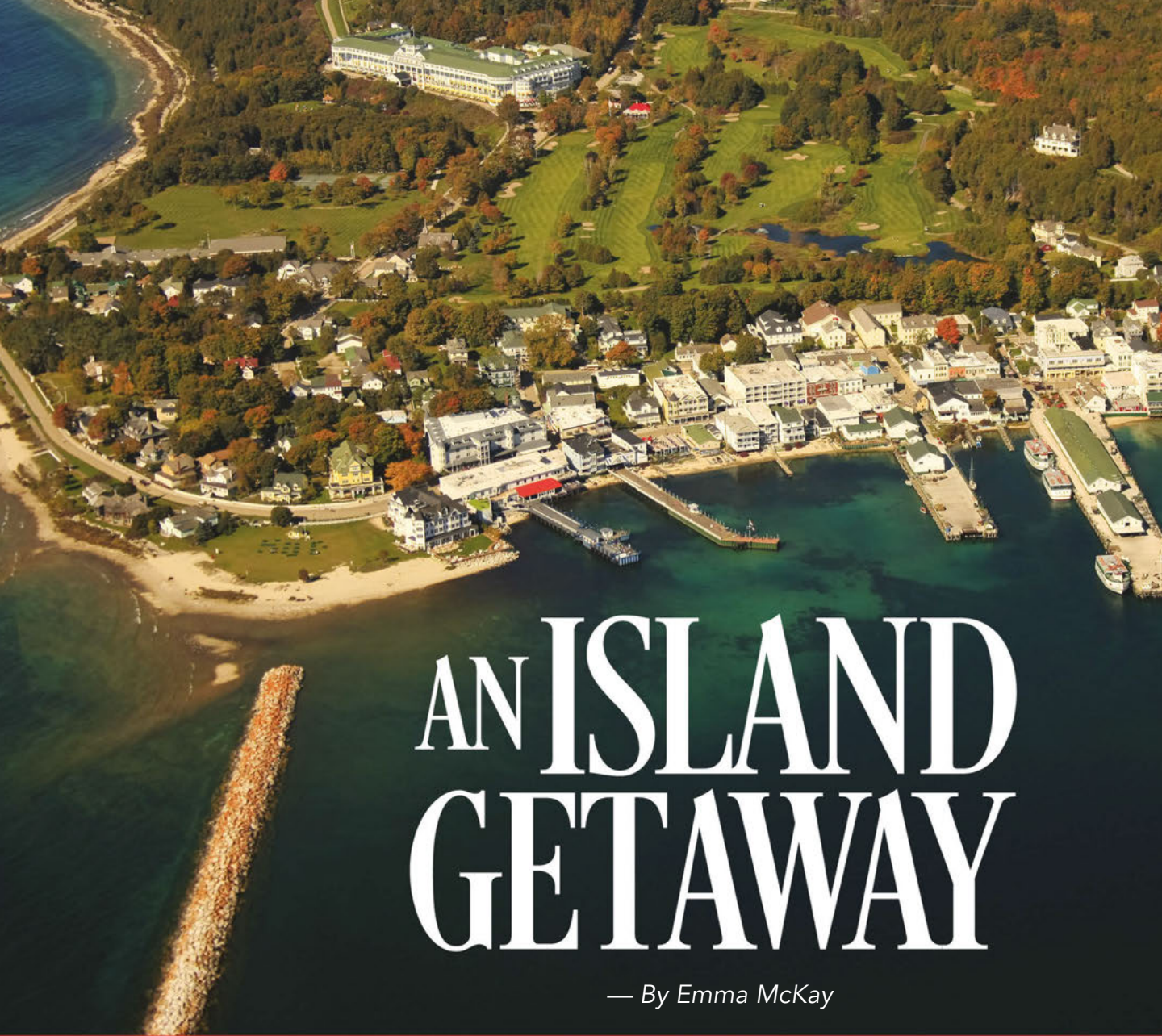
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SCAN TO BOOK



AN ISLAND GETAWAY

— By Emma McKay

Nestled just off the coast of Michigan in Lake Huron lies Mackinac Island. For centuries prior to European settlement, the indigenous tribes of Odawa, Ojibway and Potawatomi lived on this 3.8-square-mile destination and named it “Great Turtle” in their own languages. These days, the island’s 500 year-round residents welcome tourists from all over to experience their quaint little island.

When traveling to Mackinac Island, visitors step back in time to the Victorian era, thanks to the community’s preservation of its history. Visitors may only traverse the land via bicycle, horse-drawn carriage or by foot, since the island is completely car-free. Exhibits at Fort Mackinac, home to the

oldest building in Michigan, teach visitors about military history. It also functions as the headquarters to Mackinac Island National Park, which covers 80 percent of the island.

Lovers of the arts can visit the Pointe of View Art Gallery and The Richard & Jane Manoogian Art Museum to learn more about the island’s history through its masterpieces. Watercolor Cafe lets visitors exercise their creative sides through art classes or their open studio hour. The McCartney Years, the longest running production of Paul McCartney’s discography in the world, allows music lovers to experience the legend’s music live. At Mission Point Theater, film fanatics can watch free showings of movies filmed on Mackinac Island on Wednesdays and Thursdays during the summer, or watch ticketed new and classic films throughout the year.

The outdoorsy travelers appreciate Mackinac Island’s 70 miles worth of hiking trails. Sights to see while hiking include the massive Arch Rock, the historic Skull Cave and the breath-taking coastal views. Nocturnal Excursions caters to the night owls, providing a walking tour lit by the moon’s glow (and



aided with night vision goggles). Fishing, boating and parasailing opportunities let visitors get out on Lake Huron.

No vacation can be complete without eating some fudge, and Mackinac Island's downtown houses plenty of options to choose from. Between the many shops located in downtown, 10,000 pounds of fudge is made each day. Fudge-lovers can even watch the fudge-making process to experience the magic that goes into concocting their favorite treat. Toward the end of the year, vacationers can attend the annual Fall Fudge Festival and indulge in sweet treats while taking in the luscious autumnal scenery.

In June, the island hosts its annual Lilac Festival. This 10-day event began in 1949 to honor the beautiful lilacs blooming all over the island. Festival goers can participate in walking tours, a cornhole tournament, a 10K Fun Run, lilac planting seminars and more! The event culminates in the Grand Parade, one of the last horse-drawn float processions in the United States.

When booking a place to stay, travelers will notice that every hotel, resort, bed-and-breakfast, inn

and condo is locally owned and full of character. With over 1,600 available rooms, there's an option for every traveler. The many American-style cafés, pizzerias, upscale steak houses and Irish pubs, among other eateries, will keep even the pickiest of eaters content during their stay.

With so many modern and trendy vacation spots being created or updated every year, it's easy to follow the crowd when planning a vacation. Mackinac Island gives visitors a chance to step out of their lives and experience life in a simpler fashion, allowing them to feel truly relaxed when they step back into their everyday lives. **NOW**

Sources:

1. mackinac.com/about-mackinac-island.
2. mackinacartscouncil.org/movies.
3. mackinacisland.net/movie-theater-mission-point-resort.
4. mackinacisland.org.
5. watercolormackinac.com/art-classes.

Sudoku Puzzle

Easy

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

Medium

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

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Serenity

Advanced Dentistry

After shadowing different careers in college, Dr. Cristina Allala discovered her calling in dentistry. Ten years later, she brings specialized expertise and a spa-like atmosphere to Cedar Hill through Serenity Advanced Dentistry, a solo, minority, woman-owned private practice.

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

What sets her practice apart is her advanced certification in Level 2 moderate sedation — a qualification most dentists do not have. This certification requires at least 60 hours of specialized instruction and successfully administering sedation to at least 20 patients under supervision. For patients who experience dental anxiety, this option can transform their experience, making procedures like extractions comfortable and stress-free.

"Another thing that sets our practice apart is our skill with dental surgeries," Dr. Allala said. "Here are some of my favorite quotes from patients:

"Regarding implants: 'My implant surgery went smoothly. They explained everything, kept me relaxed, and I had very little discomfort afterward.'

"Regarding tooth extractions: 'I had oral surgery done and was extremely nervous, but the doctor and team made me feel comfortable the entire time. The procedure was painless, and recovery was easy.'

"Regarding tooth fixed dentures: 'My experience with fixed dentures was great. Dr. Allala planned everything digitally, the surgery went smoothly, and I had no complications. I can eat comfortably now, and they feel like my own natural teeth.'"

Serenity Advanced Dentistry offers most dental procedures under one roof, including sedation dentistry, dental crowns, dentures, emergency treatment, oral surgery, dental implants, root canals, teeth whitening, extractions, clear aligners, gum grafts and periodontal therapy. The practice emphasizes privacy and comfort. The office features private treatment rooms that allow honest conversations between doctor and patient without worry of being overheard. The modern facility incorporates the latest dental technology while maintaining a calming, spa-like environment.

"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.



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

Medium

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

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