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MAGAZINE

JULY 2026

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Lonnie Redning teaches the ongoing experiment of democracy

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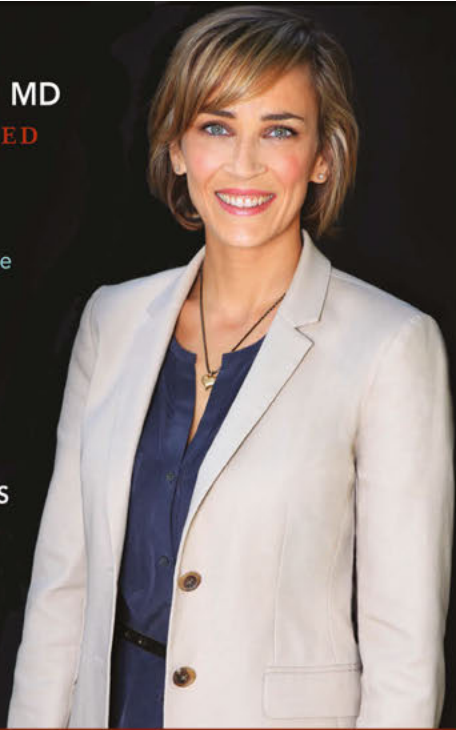
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**ON THE
 COVER**

*Lonnie Redning
 explains what
 we celebrate
 this month.*



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Happy Birthday AMERICA!

— By Bill Smith

It is time to celebrate! Whether you use the term semiquincentennial, bisesquicentennial, sestercentennial or perhaps the quarter millennium, we are having a party to commemorate the 250th anniversary of our Declaration of Independence. July 4, 2026, will be the day to fire up the backyard grill for hamburgers and hot dogs.

There will be fireworks galore. Ennis got the party started with our annual Freedom Fest last month including the Red, White and Bike Parade and the "Most Beautiful Fireworks Display in all of Texas!" Similar displays will be all over the country, including the annual event in Washington, D.C.

As a teacher of American History and Economics at Ennis High School, Lonnie Redning instructs his students about how we have come this far in the democratic experiment, and perhaps where we might be going from here. The Constitution provides for a democratic republic, where the people are self-governed, and the power of government comes from the people, that is, it is elected by its citizens.

"We have the longest running democracy in the world," Lonnie commented. "But it is still an

experiment. In the news today, a legislator may be quoted as saying, 'Our democracy is under attack,' or, 'Our democracy is threatened.' Is it threatened or just being transformed?

"Did the framers of the Constitution expect the country to remain just as it was, or did they envision that it would evolve? Change is inevitable. For instance, most of the writers would have been around for the invention of the cotton gin in 1793. There have been so many other inventions since then. Things do change, so the framework has to change with it. The Constitution is showing its age, as evidenced by how involved the Supreme Court is today in ruling on the arguments of interpretation."

Lonnie's pursuit of education, military service, family and vocation have led him to reside in Ennis for about 30 years. "I grew up in Saint Peter, Minnesota. After graduating from high school in 1986, I spent eight years in the Air Force, then pursued my college degree in social studies and education at Mankato State University in Mankato, Minnesota. I had always intended to coach also. After I graduated, I went to Fort Walton Beach, Florida, for a while, but a hurricane convinced me to relocate.

"I have relatives in Corsicana, and that's what brought me to Texas. My wife, Lori, was also with the school district. She retired in 2005. We have a blended family of a son and two daughters."

Don Walker was superintendent of EISD when Lonnie came to Ennis. Lonnie has always taught

history, and he has also taught in the district's alternative education program. In addition to American history, he has taught Texas history and currently also teaches economics, as well as dual credit American history with Navarro College. He is still coaching track and cross-country as well.

"History and economics go together," Lonnie indicated. "One of the things I encourage my students to do as they consider what they will do after high school is to pursue a career that is 'AI proof.' I used to resist AI, but since the end of last year, I have encouraged my students to embrace it and learn how to manipulate it to their advantage. I'm encouraging them to take it to the next level, beyond writing a paper to creating a logo that describes a product or an idea. That is certainly a change that the original Constitution could not have considered. Those entering the workforce today need to be able to work with their minds and



their hands." He considered a word to describe the era that the country has entered and suggested a 'technocracy.'"

Lonnie's hobby as a numismatist helps his students in the study of economics, and he pointed out that the U.S. Mint announced earlier this year that special commemorative coins are being minted for the 250th anniversary of America. "I teach about how money has changed over the years. It's not just what it looks like today compared with old coins

and bills, but the different designs on the coins make it interesting. A lot of people remember when the state quarters came out and collected one of each." The Mint is celebrating the 250th anniversary of America with new patriotic designs. The 2026 American Buffalo and American Eagle coins will show the Liberty Bell with 250 inscribed on it, and the 1776-2026 dates.

The average lifespan for a democracy has been cited as 200 years. America has already exceeded that by 50 years. "Democracy is what the people of the time want it to be. When the Constitution was written, we limited government. A lot has changed, but I am very optimistic. This is still America, after all. We are like a rubber band. We stretch and spring back. We are resilient. The act of voting is still important in our country."

What will your celebration look like this month? Let's plan now for another 250 years. **NOW**

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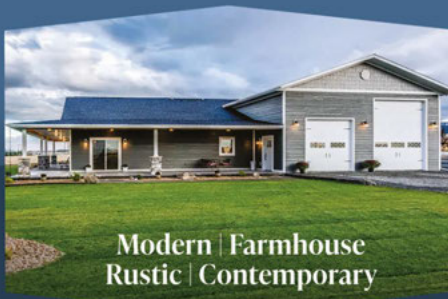
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After shadowing different careers in college, Dr. Cristina Allala discovered her calling in dentistry. Ten years later, she brings specialized expertise and a spa-like atmosphere to Cedar Hill through Serenity Advanced Dentistry, a solo, minority,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

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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.

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Lott Physical Therapy

There is a moment that happens in physical therapy that most people never expect. It is not when the pain finally stops, though that is certainly welcome. It is the moment a patient realizes they have gotten their life back. For Dr. David Lott, PT, DPT, that moment is what has fueled him for more than 30 years.

“The human body is endlessly



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fascinating to me,” Dr. Lott said. “I am still curious about how it works, how it heals. That curiosity never goes away, and neither does the joy of watching someone do something they thought they’d never do again.”

In 2026, Lott Physical Therapy celebrates 25 years of serving the community, and for the Lott family, it is far more than a business milestone. It is a testament to what happens when passion, purpose and community come together.

When David and Lisa Lott opened their first location in Fairfield in 2001, they had no corporate playbook — just a shared belief that people deserved more genuine care.

They opened the doors just weeks before their own wedding, and the practice has been a family endeavor ever since. “This has always been a labor of love,” Dr. Lott said. That



spirit extends to every person who walks through the door. Patients are greeted by name. Progress is celebrated together, and the philosophy remains unchanged: patients first, always.

Dr. Lott was drawn into physical therapy. "I have always been the kind of person who wants to know why," he explained. "Why is this person in pain? What does this person need, not just physically, but in their life, to get back to where they want to be?" That curiosity has translated into an extraordinary standard of care. He holds the Board-Certified Orthopedic Specialist (OCS) designation, which is one of the highest credentials in the profession, and the practice has earned the American Physical Therapy Association's America's Practice of the Year Award and recognition as a Top 5 Provider in Texas by *Healthcare Business Review* in 2023.

But ask Dr. Lott what he is most proud of, and he will not reach for a trophy. He will tell you about a patient who came in barely able to walk and left training for a 5K. "Those are the things that matter and why I still love doing this," he said.

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"After 25 years," Dr. Lott reflected, "the people of this community are not just our patients. They are our neighbors, our friends and our family. That trust means everything to us. We do not take it lightly." To learn more or request an appointment, visit their website or give them a call!

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- **Earn your employer's match.** It's a good idea to contribute as much as you can afford to your 401(k) plan. (In 2026, you can put in up to \$24,500, or \$32,500 if you're 50 or older. If your plan allows, there's also a "super catch-up" contribution of \$11,250 for people aged 60 to 63, for a total contribution limit of \$35,750.) At least put in enough to earn a matching contribution if one is offered. Otherwise, you're shortchanging yourself. For example: Your employer matches 50 percent of your contribution up to \$5,000. If you put in \$8,000, your employer's 50 percent match is \$4,000, and you're leaving \$1,000 "on the table."

- **Give your plan a raise.** When your income increases, consider increasing contributions to your 401(k). When you get a bonus or a tax refund, you could use some or all of that to boost your retirement savings.

- **Evaluate the Roth option.** When you invest in a traditional 401(k), you contribute pre-tax dollars, lowering your taxable income that year. Your earnings grow tax-deferred and are taxed when you withdraw. If your employer offers a Roth 401(k), you contribute after-tax dollars, so your taxable income doesn't drop that year. However, withdrawals in retirement, contributions and earnings

alike, are generally tax-free. (Employer matching contributions and related earnings remain taxable.) If you expect a higher tax bracket in retirement or want to diversify tax treatment for flexibility in retirement, consider the Roth option. In 2026, the Roth option will be used for catch-up contributions if you earn more than \$150,000 and you are 50 or older. Consult your tax advisor before deciding.

- **Build an appropriate investment mix.** You may have multiple investment options in your 401(k). The driving principle early on is growth so your plan can fund a long retirement. But growth-oriented investments are naturally riskier than fixed-income vehicles. When starting your career, you may prefer a portfolio weighted toward aggressive growth, as you have years to recover from downturns. Nearing retirement, though, consider shifting to a more conservative mix. A financial advisor can help you choose an appropriate mix at different stages, based on your risk tolerance, time horizon and goals.

- **Keep your plan intact.** At times, you may feel a financial pinch that leads you to consider taking out loans or early withdrawals from your 401(k). However, this can cause you to incur taxes and penalties and will likely slow the growth needed to help reach your retirement savings goals. Taking steps to prepare for unexpected expenses, such as building an emergency fund containing three to six months' worth of living expenses, can help you avoid dipping into your 401(k). You may also be able to find other ways to access cash.

By following these steps, you can unlock the full potential of your 401(k) and position it as a cornerstone of your retirement income. **NOW**

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Edward Jones, Member SIPC.

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Jeff Irish is an Edward Jones representative based in Ennis.

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Zoomed In: Keith Currens

By Bill Smith

Keith Currens originally hails from Richardson, and he mentioned, “When I lived there, Richardson was a smaller town than Ennis. That should give you an idea of how long ago it was!”

After moving to Ennis 40 years ago, Keith has enjoyed his time here, having one son who graduated from Ennis High School. “He lives in Azle now, and I also have two grandchildren there.”

Keith is retired from his career as human resources manager for Lowes. He continued, “Ennis is a nice size town, and I enjoy the Bluebonnet Trails and Festival and the Polka Festival. I have friends that come down from Lake Highlands every year to enjoy the festivals with me.”



Charlie Patak plays his accordion for the Lions Club.



Men from Barbershop Bible Study fill bags for Cara Caters.



Jim and Vicki Carlile stroll through the downtown vendors.



Jennifer Wilson, Seth Rizer and Geoffery Williams welcome guests to the Chick-fil-A ribbon cutting.

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Zoomed In: Jordan Hughes

By Bill Smith

Jordan Hughes is a native of Ennis, and his enthusiasm for the community makes it clear that there is no place he would rather be. "I was born here and graduated from Ennis High School in 2007," he stated proudly.

His sense of community carries over into his occupation as community reinvestment act coordinator for Trinity Capital Bank. "I just love people," he said. "I think Ennis is relatively young in its development, and there is great opportunity here. We have people who are committed to Ennis and its future."

When Jordan is not working, he can usually be found at the gym. "That's my hobby, working out," he related. He also serves the community through his membership in the Ennis Host Lions Club.



KBEC Radio interviews Ennis Mayor Lynda Isbell and City Manager Andrea Weckmueller-Behringer.



Ballet Folklorico dancers celebrate Cinco de Mayo.



Pat Warren welcomes guests to the Bluebonnet Trails.



Pastors Raymond Richardson, EPD Sgt. Rodney Rickman and Darrel Nelson prepare for the National Day of Prayer recognition downtown.



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