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ON THE COVER



Volunteers join Mary Brodie to spruce up Rogers and Maise Park.

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Mary Brodie has a great love and appreciation for everything outdoors, and she remembers vividly when the infatuation began. "I recall, as a young child, being in the car with my mom and dad, hanging out the window, and I saw what appeared to be a stick on a tree, but it was not just a stick. It was a stick bug. Dad retrieved it and brought it to me. I remember touching it and not being scared. That's when I knew I would always be involved with trees and the great outdoors," she reminisced.

"My adopted family was Seventh-day Adventist, and they had a youth program called Pathfinders that I was heavily involved with." The Pathfinder Club is a youth organization for ages 10-15 that ministers to youth through camping, community service, nature studies and leadership — similar to scouting. While Mary lived in several different areas of the United States, she has been in Ennis for 15 years and happily calls this home. She has two children and two grandchildren, and while they probably do not enjoy the outdoors as much as she does,

they have joined her for tent camping in the past.

Mary continued to pursue her passion by serving on the board of Trinity Blacklands Urban Forestry Council and achieving certification from Texas Tree School. She served as a park ranger at Dinosaur Valley State Park, a job she referred to as a bucket-list position. "I dreamed of being a park ranger since my early 20s, and Dinosaur Valley was my first choice. It was a long drive each day from Ennis, but it was absolutely worth it!" she exclaimed.

She works today in the city's Parks and Recreation Department as administrative assistant and Keep Ennis Beautiful manager. "We recently moved to the front of our building, and I knew my office was complete when I noticed I have a window that is easy to see out of from my desk."

Keep Ennis Beautiful was started in 2018 and became affiliated with Keep Texas Beautiful in 2019. Mary inherited the manager's position from Ginger Gonzales last year. "Ginger had been prepping me for the role. She did a great job getting it off the ground, and the city received the Gold Star award from the state every year since 2019," she proudly stated. It was recently announced that Ennis received the award again for 2026. In addition, the city of Ennis consistently competes for the Governor's Community Achievement Award, receiving third place in 2020 and second place in 2022 and 2025 for cities with a population of between 15,001 and 25,000. In 2022 and 2025 the city also received Awards of Excellence for receiving scores of 90 or higher. "We are very proud to announce that we won first place in our population

Loving the Great Outdoors

— By Bill Smith



category in the Governor's Community Achievement Award for 2026!" Mary said. "This reflects the dedication and pride of our residents, volunteers, businesses and community partners who take pride in our community.

"Volunteers are our greatest asset," Mary continued. "They are what keep the organization going. We could not do what we do without our board and volunteers implementing the programs and being our hands and boots on the ground.

"I'm still recruiting volunteers. We had a booth at the Bluebonnet Market early in the season where we signed up willing workers and performed a litter clean up. I picked up over 150 cigarette butts myself. People don't really realize how much of a problem even a small amount of litter can be. It matters what people throw on the ground. Part of our job is to help them see that what they do makes a difference. During the market, Mayor Lynda Isbell and Mayor Pro

Tem David Espedal had a contest to see who could pick up the most trash. We called it a tie!"

Mary looks to the future, knowing efforts such as Keep Ennis Beautiful will keep going for years to come. "We will continue to promote environmental education. There is no doubt that our environment has been harmed. I look forward to more education with the youth of Ennis. I want to see more native gardening, including native plants in neighborhood yards. We also work on maintaining wild spaces. We could improve our tree canopy with more native trees such as burr oak, red oak, bald cypress, pecan and cedar elm.

"The Parks and Recreation Department partnered with the Ennis High School Horticultural Department starting Tree Grow 101. The program includes how to collect and plant native seeds. They now have over 100 native trees growing. They will be moving to bigger pots, with the vision of

planting many of them on EISD properties and some in city parks."

Keep Ennis Beautiful has a youth advisory board, and the EHS National Honor Society has also participated in projects around town. Some recent projects include the Lake Bardwell Habitat Restoration and a one-hour cleanup at Bluebonnet Park. During Freedom Fest the city participated in the 250th anniversary of America and the emphasis on Keep America Beautiful.

Mary mentioned that the Kachina Prairie is one of Ennis' amazing assets. "It is an absolute treasure," she said. "I would love to see it be as popular throughout the year as Meadow View Nature Area is during the bluebonnet season."

The Keep Ennis Beautiful website indicates: "Keep Ennis Beautiful is the movement that says: We're done waiting. We're rolling up our sleeves. We're hitting the streets. We ARE the change!" **NOW**

Editor's Note: Learn more at KeepEnnisBeautiful.com.

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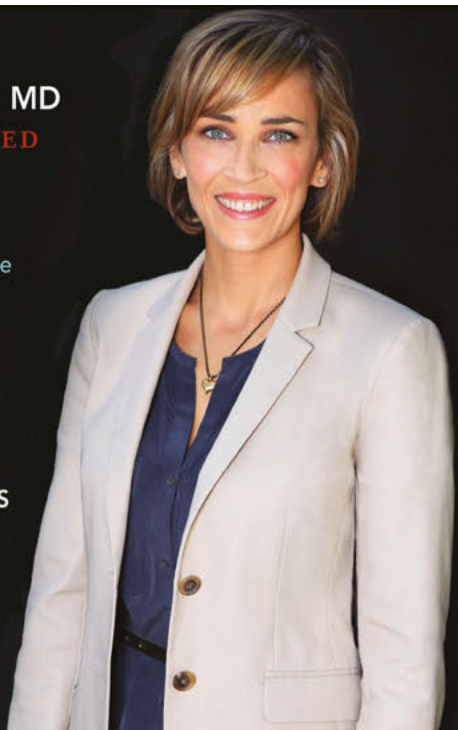
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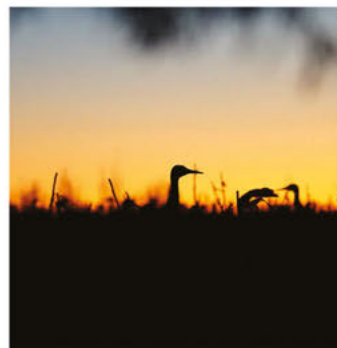
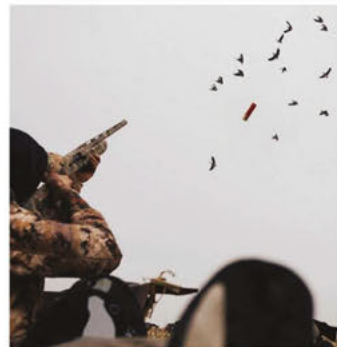
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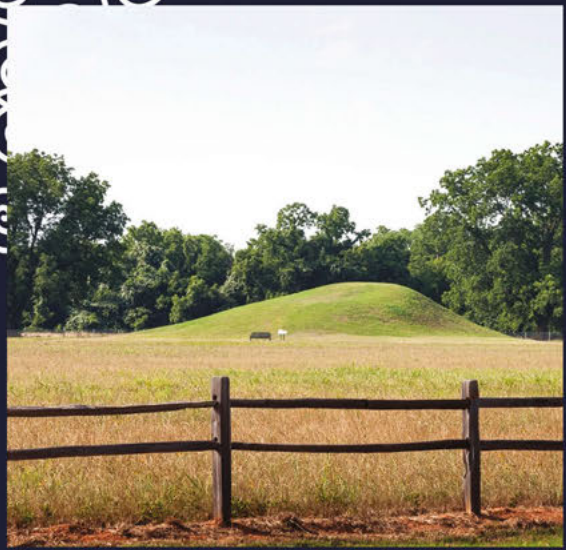
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TALES OF TEXAS

The Early Entrance to Texas

— By Bill Smith



For 20 years, a visitor to the Six Flags over Texas amusement park could enjoy a 10-minute river boat excursion known as La Salle's River Adventure. The ride commemorated one of the six flags, that of the French. The flag of France briefly flew over Texas in the late 1600s, when the French explorer René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, got lost looking for the mouth of the Mississippi River. La Salle had sailed from French-occupied Florida and overshot his goal, landing somewhere near today's Garcitas Creek.

The Spanish were not at all pleased with the possibility of a French settlement in the territory and sent numerous expeditions in search of the French fort. Their early ventures were unsuccessful, until ruins of the fort were found. In 1722, historians believe, Garcitas Creek was likely the stream along which La Salle established Fort St. Louis, and upon the remains of the fort, the mission Nuestra Señora del Espíritu Santo de Zúñiga, also known as La Bahía, was constructed.

However, this was not the first Spanish mission to be built in Texas, as soon after the French colony was discovered, word was delivered to the Spanish that the Tejas Indians were seeking Christianity. The legend of "The Lady in Blue," who seems to have been a miraculous incarnation that visited the Tejas, led the Spanish in 1690 to send a military and evangelical expedition to establish missions among the Tejas. Soon after, the foundation for San Francisco de los Tejas mission was laid, and the first mass was celebrated. This would be the beginning of the

establishment of El Camino Real de los Tejas.

"El Camino" translates to "the way" or "the road" in English. One of the earliest recorded uses of the road by a citizen of the United States was Moses Austin, as he traveled along the way westward to San Antonio, with plans to establish a colony. Of course, we know that Austin died before his plan could come to fruition, although he did meet with Baron de Bastrop, and soon after his meeting, Governor Antonio María Martínez endorsed the idea. His son, Stephen F. Austin, picked up his father's mantle and traversed the path to San Antonio to complete the contract with the Mexican government.

Settlers coming to Texas from the east typically crossed the Sabine River at Gaines Ferry and then continued on through Nacogdoches and along El Camino Real de los Tejas to the interior of the southern part of the state. As the colonies expanded and relations between the settlers and the Mexicans deteriorated, the road was a valuable route for the volunteers who came from the United States to the various battles around San Antonio de Béxar, including San Antonio de Valero, better known as the Alamo.

Texas heroes Sam Houston and David Crockett would certainly have followed the road when they came to Texas. *The Handbook of Texas Online 2001* indicates Crockett's route "was ... across the Red River, through Clarksville, to Nacogdoches and San Augustine; and on to San Antonio." Had Crockett not met his fate at the Alamo, history records that his plans included traveling farther down the road to the Rio Grande.

Today, one can travel El Camino Real de los Tejas and see a number of historic sites along the National Historic Trail as designated by the National Park Service. Villa Antigua Border Heritage Museum in Laredo showcases the region's history, culture, industry and populations through a series of changing exhibits and educational seminars. The NPS.gov website states, "This restored two-story brick building was once home to two early Laredo merchant families. With its size and pivotal location on the banks of the



Rio Grande, this Italianate-style residence is representative of the grand houses that populated the San Agustín District in the early 20th century."

The Stone Fort Museum in Nacogdoches previously served as a trading post, private home, church, jail and saloon. While the original structure was torn down in 1902, the Texas Centennial Commission built a replica in 1936 on the Stephen F. Austin University Campus.

Other sites along the way include Caddo Mounds State Historic Site near Alto, Mission Delores State Historic Site at San Augustine, Mission Tejas State Park at Grapeland and McKinney Falls State Park near Austin. You would be hard pressed to visit all these historic sites in one trip, but there is a lot of Texas history scattered along El Camino Real de los Tejas. Every piece is a state treasure Texas has proudly preserved. **NOW**

Sources:

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'26 JULY

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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July 28-31 - New Employee Orientation
July 4 - Independence Day
(Observed July 3)

'26 AUGUST

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August 3-11 - Staff Development Day
August 12 - First Day of School

'26 SEPTEMBER

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September 7 - Labor Day
September 21 - Staff Development Day

'26 OCTOBER

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October 9 - Staff Development Day
October 12 - District Holiday

'26 NOVEMBER

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November 6 - Staff Development Day
November 23-27 - Thanksgiving Break

'26 DECEMBER

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December 18 - Student Early Release
December 21-31 - Winter Break

'27 JANUARY

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January 1 - Winter Break
January 4 - Staff Development Day
January 18 - MLK Day

'27 FEBRUARY

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February 12 - Staff Development Day
February 15 - Presidents' Day

'27 MARCH

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March 12 - Staff Development Day
March 15-19 - Spring Break
March 26 - District Holiday

'27 APRIL

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May 19 - Student Early Release
May 20-21 - Bad Weather/PD
May 24-25 - Staff Development Day
May 31 - Memorial Day

'27 JUNE

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June 19 - Juneteenth
(Observed June 18)

● District Holiday
● Staff Development Day

● Early Release
● Bad Weather/PD

■ First Day of School
[] Grading Period Ends/Begins

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As an added safety measure, EISD has a Tip Line. This Tip Line is posted on the home page of the EISD website, on each campus website, and on the district mobile app. If anyone were to suspect or become aware of any students or adults in a school who are planning or acting in an unsafe manner, they can report it. This includes, but is not limited to, the use or possession of drugs or weapons, and/or threats to injure or bully others. It is a fast, effective, and safe way to let us know about any unsafe situation. If they choose, tips can be submitted anonymously, without the worry of being identified as the source of the information. The Tip Line is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Tips will be referred to school and/or law enforcement authorities as deemed appropriate.

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Phone: 972-825-5195 Email: Elections@elliscountytexas.gov

New to Ellis County or recently moved? Be sure to register to vote or update your voter registration by October 5, 2026, to be eligible for the General Election.



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NexGen Seamless Gutters and Roofing

As a youth, Joshua Toth had something most aspiring contractors only dream about — a family full of experienced mentors who were more than willing to share everything they knew. “My father, Eric Toth, was a framer and custom home builder for many years. Uncles Kenny Davis and Kevin Davis are both contractors, so I learned the ropes of the trades from an early age. It was a reasonable



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step for me to start my own contracting business.” Today, Joshua brings that same hands-on expertise and family-rooted work ethic to every single project through NexGen Seamless Gutters and Roofing.

Joshua is the father of three children, and about three years ago, he took up flying “just because it was something I always wanted to do!” In addition to his contracting business, he is also a flight school owner. “When I was taking lessons, no one was offering them in Ennis.”

Based in Ennis, NexGen serves both residential and commercial customers with a full lineup of exterior protection services. The company specializes in seamless gutter installation, gutter replacement and repair, leaf guards, residential and commercial roofing,

roof repairs, full roof replacements, storm damage inspections and insurance claim assistance. With more than 10 years in construction and six years as a business owner, Joshua has built a strong reputation for doing the work right and standing firmly behind every job he takes on.

NexGen is committed to custom craftsmanship and honest customer service. The company offers custom fabricated gutters that are available in an array of color options, designed to fit each home precisely. This custom approach reduces leaks and long-term maintenance, while giving properties a clean, finished appearance. "Every project is tailored to the customer's needs from start to finish, and we pride ourselves on treating customers fairly," Joshua said.

NexGen's roofing services are equally thorough. Whether a homeowner is dealing with storm damage, aging shingles or are in need of a complete roof replacement, the company delivers quality materials and reliable workmanship backed by strong industry credentials. Joshua is both a Tamko Pro Certified Contractor and a GAF Certified Contractor, certifications that reflect his dedication to professional standards and ongoing training in the latest roofing systems available.

The company's broader mission is clear: provide reliable service with a strong emphasis on integrity, quality materials and customer satisfaction. NexGen's goal is to deliver long-lasting solutions that protect homes and businesses for years to come.

NexGen supports local causes as often as possible. "We make donations to various local groups around Ennis when the opportunity arises," Joshua added.

For homeowners and business owners looking for a contractor who will treat them fairly and deliver results they can count on, NexGen Seamless Gutters and Roofing is ready and eager to help. Reach out by phone or email, or visit the website to learn more and get started right away. **NOW**

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Zoomed In:
Apekshya Dawadi

By Bill Smith

Apekshya Dawadi is happy to be in Ennis, and she admitted that she is a long way from her family and her native country, Nepal. "I came to the United States two-and-a-half years ago to study fashion at the University of Central Oklahoma," she mentioned. "Some day, I hope to work in fashion design. My vision is to combine the styles I see here with those of Nepal."

After completing her studies in Oklahoma, Apekshya moved to Euless to be near some friends she had there. She saw the need for a fresh start and mentioned to her mom that she might move to Waxahachie. Her mother knew the owner of Tom's Food Market here, and that led to the move to Ennis. "I've only been in Ennis for a few months, but it has been good," she said. "I like the bluebonnets and the people!"



Sarina and Kaisley Dominguez are ready for the Red, White & Bike parade.



Dollie Houdek relates a Bible Story at Vacation Bible School.



Kevin Slovak puts the final touches on wooden crosses he helped create.



Renee Sosa, Joy Duarte and Tiffany Butler from Foundation of Life Church volunteer at Make it at Minnie.



The physicians at Ennis Doctors Center celebrate Merle Felicia, FNP's retirement.

"It's nice to live here and I like all of the residents!"
Donna Miller



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Zoomed In: Jerry Wyman

By Bill Smith

Jerry Wyman came to Ennis three years ago after retiring from full-time ministry in San Antonio. "Ministry is not something you really retire from," he reflected. "I had to leave the church we started in San Antonio for health reasons, but I think I will always be involved in serving the Lord wherever I am."

A native of Indiana, Jerry's journey to Ennis took him through youth ministry in Alabama and Florida with both small and large churches. "We were happily serving bi-vocationally but eventually were serving full-time in some large youth ministries, including a trip to Russia with Josh McDowell.

"Ennis has been a blessing to us, and it is a very special place. Our son-in-law, Zach Crook, is pastor at Tabernacle, and we are active there and in other community ministries. The real bonus is we get to be closer to our children and grandchildren!"



Bobby and Irene Kubin sell pastries during the Polka Festival.



Pam Stokes and Hailey Hagler help Cara Caters fill food bags.



Carlyle and Bob Locke run the Polkafest 1 mile fun run with their kids.



Polyguard employees gather in support of the Boys & Girls Club.



Ennis Golden Circle Board gathers to celebrate their Grand Re-Opening.

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Refreshing Summer Recipes

Summer calls for light, refreshing dishes that celebrate the season's bounty of fresh produce and bright flavors. These recipes are designed to keep you cool and satisfied, featuring crisp vegetables, juicy fruits and vibrant herbs that capture the essence of warm-weather dining at its finest. **NOW**

Watermelon Feta Salad

- 6 cups seedless watermelon, cubed
- 1/4 cup fresh lime juice
- 2 Tbsp. honey
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1 cup crumbled feta cheese
- 1/2 cup fresh mint leaves, chopped
- 1/4 cup red onion, thinly sliced
- 1/4 tsp. black pepper

1. Place the watermelon cubes in a large serving bowl.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together the lime juice, honey and salt until well combined.
3. Drizzle the lime dressing over the watermelon cubes.
4. Sprinkle the feta cheese evenly over the watermelon. Add the mint leaves and onions.
5. Gently toss all the ingredients together until evenly distributed. Season with black pepper.
6. Chill in the refrigerator for 15-20 minutes before serving for best flavor.

Lemon Herb Grilled Chicken Skewers

- 2 lbs. boneless chicken breast, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1/4 cup olive oil

- 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 Tbsp. fresh oregano, chopped
- 1 Tbsp. fresh thyme, chopped
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper
- 1 red bell pepper, cut into chunks
- 1 yellow bell pepper, cut into chunks
- 1 red onion, cut into chunks

1. Place the chicken cubes in a large bowl.
2. In a separate bowl, whisk together the olive oil, lemon juice and garlic.
3. Add the oregano, thyme, salt and black pepper to the marinade.
4. Pour the marinade over the chicken cubes; toss to coat evenly.
5. Cover; refrigerate for at least 1 hour or up to 4 hours.
6. Soak wooden skewers in water for 30 minutes to prevent burning.
7. Thread the marinated chicken onto the skewers, alternating with chunks of red bell pepper, yellow bell pepper and red onion.
8. Preheat a grill to medium-high heat; oil the grates.
9. Grill the skewers for 10-12 minutes, turning occasionally, until the chicken is cooked through and the vegetables are slightly charred.
10. Remove from the grill; let rest for 3 minutes before serving.

Strawberry Sorbet

- 2 lbs. fresh strawberries, hulled and halved
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
- 1 tsp. lemon zest
- Pinch of salt

1. Place the strawberries in a blender or food processor.
2. In a small saucepan, combine the sugar and water over medium heat, stirring until the sugar dissolves completely.
3. Remove the sugar syrup from the heat; let it cool for 10 minutes.
4. Pour the cooled syrup over the strawberries in the blender.
5. Add the lemon juice, lemon zest and salt.
6. Blend on high speed until completely smooth and no chunks remain.
7. Pour the mixture through a fine-mesh strainer to remove any seeds, if desired.
8. Transfer to a shallow container; freeze for 1 hour, then stir with a fork.
9. Continue freezing, stirring every 30 minutes, for 3-4 hours until the sorbet reaches a scoopable consistency.
10. Serve immediately or store in an airtight container in the freezer for up to 2 weeks.

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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

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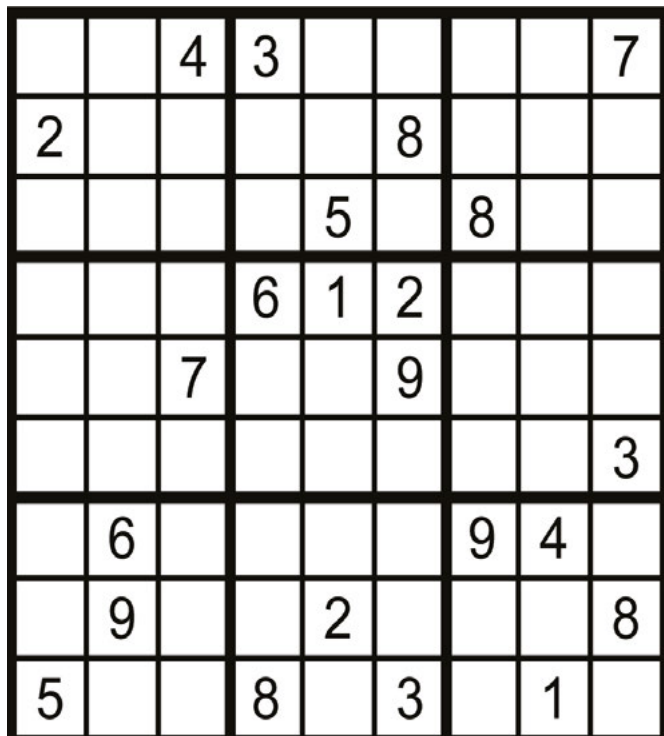
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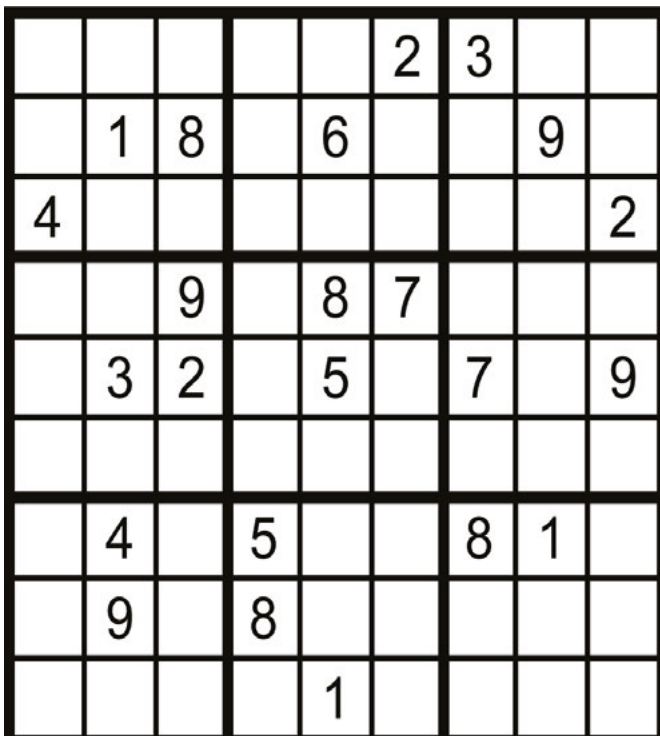
1 "Brave --- World"	23 Getting going
4 Outfits	25 47 for silver or 79 for gold
9 Bean in Peru?	26 Cipher
10 Crosswise, nautically	30 Sun-dried brick
11 Prince Charles or Tony Blair, for example	32 Bandit's refuge
12 Auntie's other half	33 Thin cookie
13 Grave	34 Supporter
15 Cash box	35 Slashed seats for something valuable
17 Legible	36 Informer
19 Momma's partner	
22 Occupied	

1 Iron out actor's last name	9 A kg. is about 2.2 of these
2 "--- and the Detectives" (1964 Disney movie)	14 Flesh
3 Makes impervious to the rain	16 Downwind
4 The animal kingdom	18 "Saw" actress - -- Meyer
5 "Son of" in Arabic	19 Snappers' org.
6 Urgent! Clara must organize shape	20 Capital where Senators skate on thin ice
7 Coconut liqueur	21 Bamboo-eaters
8 Bouquets	24 Lifeless
	27 Festive occasion
	28 Fencer's grip
	29 Have a go
	31 Gathering for a specific purpose

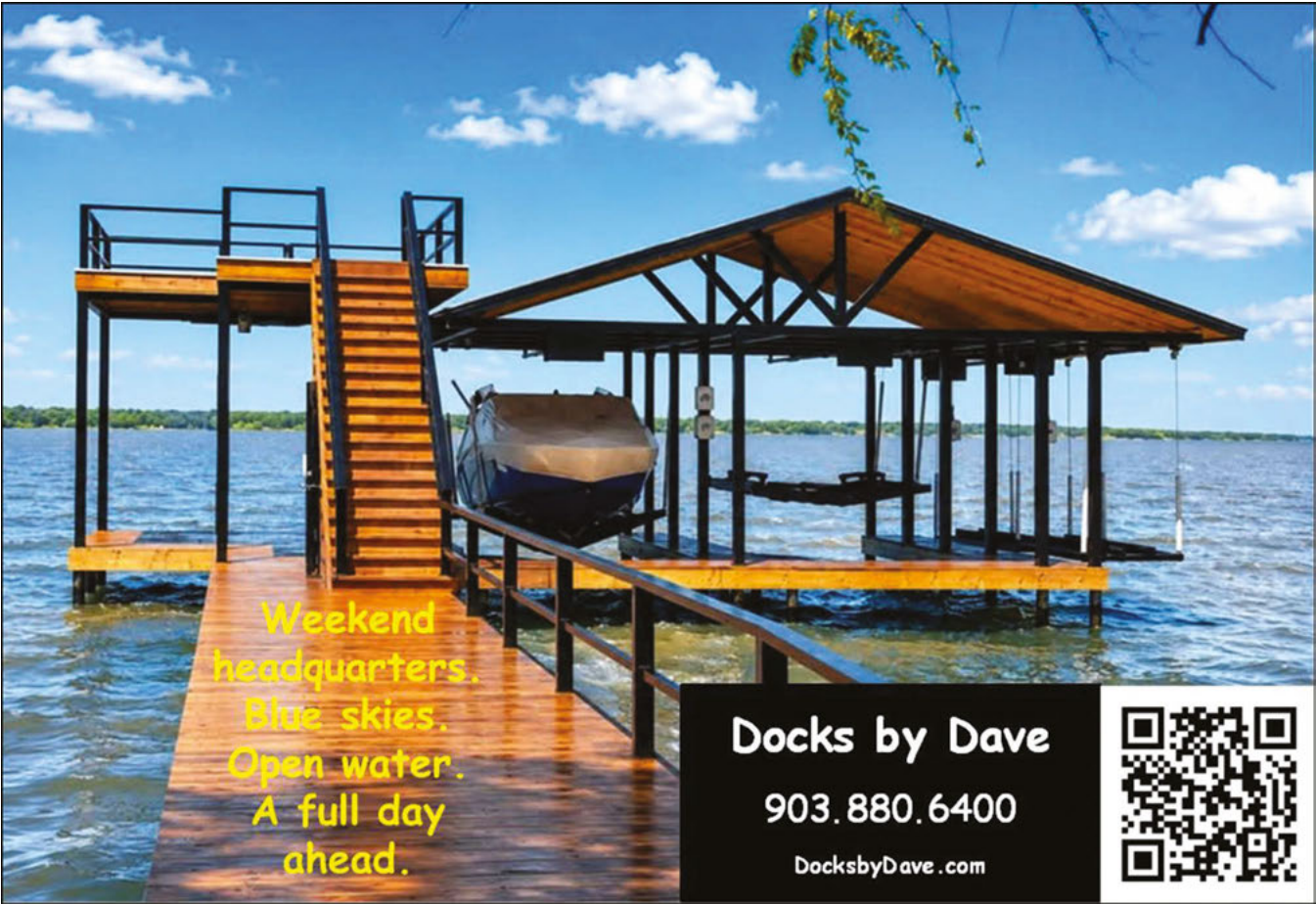
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Crossword - Sudoku Solutions

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					17	R	E	A	18	D
										A
19	P	O	P	P	A		22	I	N	U
23	S	T	A	R	T		24	I	N	G
25	A	T	N	O		26	N	A	U	27
									28	H
									29	T
	30	A	D	O	B	E		32	L	A
		33	W	A	F	E	R		34	A
										L
										Y
	35	A	S	S	E	T		36	R	A
										T

Easy

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

Medium

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



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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Dr. Cristina Allala
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