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## ON THE COVER



Bound for A&M, Travis Decker swims his way to an award and scholarship.

**Photo by**  
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# EDITOR'S NOTE



*Lisa*

Lisa Bell  
WeatherfordNOW Editor  
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*September dawns ...*

With the turn of a calendar, we celebrate Labor Day, and so we should. An annual day set aside to recognize American workers often marks the end of summer in our minds. As a child, Labor Day represented my last day of freedom before school started for the year, mingling excitement with angst. Soon after the first weekend, our minds drift to the infamous day, September 11. Babies born in 2001 entered legal adulthood this year, and I wonder if they understand the significance of their birth year.

That day most of us remember followed a long list of historic September dates. As I scanned [www.thehistoryplace.com](http://www.thehistoryplace.com), I marveled at many wartime memories during the month. I couldn't overlook September 5, 1774, when the first Continental Congress convened. Two years and four days later, they renamed our country the United States. They took until September 17, 1787, to approve the U.S. Constitution. Then, on September 25, 1789, congress proposed 12 amendments. Ten of them were ratified and became our Bill of Rights. Interesting that we celebrate the birth of our country in July when so much of our nation's birth happened in September.

Winston Churchill said, "Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it." While we move forward and leave the past where it belongs, may we study and take lessons with us into the future. Read or seen any good history lately? Perhaps we all need to return to some form of school and relearn what happened in the past.

*Enjoy an insightful September!*



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# EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS

— By Lisa Bell

*“Deckers do hard things.” Travis Decker knows the family motto well. When tempted to give up, he pushes through and sees every day as the best. Born with Down syndrome, Travis and his family never let that become an excuse for failure to achieve the best he can. His mother and father, Tammy and Andrew Decker, said, “We are surprised by how much he can do. He continues to surpass expectations and sees himself as just another kid. He works harder to learn, but he can.” His bright attitude leads Travis to declare every day the best, no matter what did or didn’t happen.*

Because the family has a swimming pool in their backyard, Travis learned to swim by the time he turned 2 years old. Like many with Down syndrome, Travis endured open-heart surgery three months into his life. Fortunately, he doesn’t have many of the physical issues associated with the condition.

Dr. Carol Brennan, his pediatrician, always pushed exercise and nutrition to keep Travis healthy. During fifth grade, she told them to go see Coach Bugg in Benbrook to become part of a swim team. While she intended it for exercise, Travis took the competition seriously. His first time in the pool took Travis

six-and-a-half minutes to cross. Within three months, he swam during the entire practice. In the summer after fifth grade, he entered his first swim meet. With a tendency toward loss of muscle tone, staying active proves critical. “Swimming has kept him healthier,” Tammy shared. “That and an awareness of limiting sugar.”

By the time Travis entered ninth grade at Aledo High School, the coach knew him well. He became part of the varsity swim team as a freshman and competed all four years of high school. Travis prefers backstroke and butterfly stroke races. Besides doing well at the meets, he simply loves the competition and being in the pool. The swim boosters chose him as a scholarship recipient, giving only one per year. His swim mates awarded him a special medal because of his efforts. “He won a lot [of medals]. No way to count them all,” Tammy said.

With graduation approaching, the 19-year-old faced an important decision — whether to attend Texas A&M University or University of North Texas. Both have specialized programs with limited enrollment.

Eighteen months ago, Tammy and Andrew helped Travis investigate the only two four-year college, continuing education programs in the state for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. “We prayed if this wasn’t for him that either the directors or God would throw up red lights,” she said. “We got nothing but green lights from both programs.” Travis chose A&M, one of only 10 students accepted into the Aggie Achieve Program, which ends with a Certification in Interdisciplinary Studies.

He looks forward to an exciting fall. “I look forward to making new friends, classes, riding the bus and things like





going to football games, new classes and new foods,” Travis said. After an intense process that included making a video, doing a Zoom interview and a campus interview, the entire family supports Travis in his decision. With a swim club, he plans to continue swimming and competing while away, but he also looks forward to college life. With cousins and an aunt living in College Station, he will have local support during the next four years. “The college has safety nets, but they aren’t there to babysit,” Tammy explained. “He must be his own legal guardian.”

While living in a dorm with degree-seeking students, Travis will experience normal college life and interactions. His classes include academics, independent-living courses and employment and social skills. Each year, he can receive micro-credentials focusing on key domains of the program. During his junior and senior years, the college also provides internship opportunities to enhance the classes that focus on job-related skills.

During last summer and again this year, Travis worked with the Texas Workforce Commission to find a job and earn some money, so working isn’t new to the young man. While he looks forward to forging many new friendships, like most college students, he has future aspirations. “Someday, I want to have a wife and kids. And I’d like to work in a restaurant or with kids,” he said.

Tammy admitted, “As a mom of two boys, you have to push a little. Lean into the things they love.” At the same time, she tried to adopt the attitude of Travis’ preschool teacher who encouraged over pushing.

Tammy, Andrew and Travis attribute much of his success to the Aledo ISD. Travis especially enjoys the companionship of his best friend, Colby Tiberg. The two boys met as preschoolers during their time at Texas Christian University’s Kinderfrogs and quickly became inseparable allies.

At the end of each day, the Decker family enjoys discussing personal events. Travis always says, “This was the best day ever.” Perhaps with that attitude and constant smile, he will not only continue exceeding expectations, but will also point others to do the same. **NOW**

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## Zoomed In: Leah Flippin

By Lisa Bell

Not new to Weatherford Public Library, Leah Flippin worked part time there while homeschooling her children. When her youngest child graduated, she pursued the full-time public services librarian job in January 2022. “My creativity is in music. My mom was an art major, so she encouraged crafts,” Leah, who has a piano performance major with a minor in voice, said.

For about 10 years, Leah taught music through Ms. Leah’s School of Music and then substituted around town, as well. With babies, juggling music students became a challenge. A little over a decade ago, she took the library’s part-time job, working hours when her husband could be home with their children. Now she looks forward to bringing fun, in-person events back to the library, something many missed over the past two years.



*Ricky Collins, owner of Collins Custom Interiors, opens in Weatherford — ready to serve all upholstery needs.*



*Weatherford College names Dr. Scott Tarnowiecky as new assistant vice president of student services.*



*Weatherford Library patrons enjoy a craft evening making nautical wreaths.*



*Betty Mills, Robyn Coffey and Linda Smith regularly enjoy hot tea and fun at The Full Cup.*





Stephanie Dial welcomes Weatherford Chamber visitors with a smile.



Trevor Graeber celebrates publication of *Unrestrained*, a book about living free.



Dr. Stephen Duarte joins Weatherford College as director of a third bachelor's program, *Applied Technology in Medical and Health Services Management*.

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BusinessNOW

# Oxi Fresh Carpet Cleaning — Weatherford

— By Lisa Bell



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When Jonathan Barnett launched Oxi Fresh Carpet Cleaning in 2006, Rob White joined the company at the Oxi Fresh Home Office. In addition to owning the Weatherford franchise, Rob works as the director of cleaning systems. He not only keeps up with the technology, but also coaches new franchisees and provides onboarding support for them.

A soccer player in childhood, he shot to 6' 4" in one year,

switching to basketball. After college, he played professional basketball for the Houston Rockets. He attended a mini camp with the Dallas Mavericks but didn't make the team. For the next seven to eight years, he played international basketball.

Enjoying that career, he admitted, "It was a good opportunity to see the world." But he always wanted to own a business that provided service to customers and allowed him freedom for volunteering. He learned that from his grandfather, who had a carpet-cleaning business. Rob voluntarily coaches basketball and mentors young men. "My parents and grandparents laid a great foundation of standards and principles," he said.

Raised in Texas, Rob spent much of his adult life outside the state, but he looks forward to returning and settling in the community. He and his brother talk about expanding the business.

Oxi Fresh merges low-moisture cleaning technology with specialized products to get the best possible results. "Most homes don't need heavy water cleaning," Rob advised. "By using



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Although Rob enjoys his job and business, he has a different perspective. "We're a tech company that cleans carpets," he shared. "I strive to create experiences that obtain lifetime customer relationships."

When considering carpet cleaning, Rob recommends following EPA standards. "Carpets are the largest filter in the house," he said. To lessen allergens trapped in carpet, the EPA recommends deep cleaning every 12-18 months. Rob advised that high-traffic areas and homes with pets, clean every six to nine months instead.

He also suggests being careful with over-the-counter spot cleaners. Some have chemicals that, when used improperly, can lock in stains or alter the color. In some instances, not even a professional can correct these issues. Oxi Fresh strives to give people honest opinions if a carpet needs more than cleaning.

Finally, Rob advises customers to reapply carpet protectant when needed. Although most carpets come with the standard application, it breaks down over time with normal vacuuming and usage. By training employees well, they can often see the abrasion before a spill stains the carpet because the protectant no longer works.

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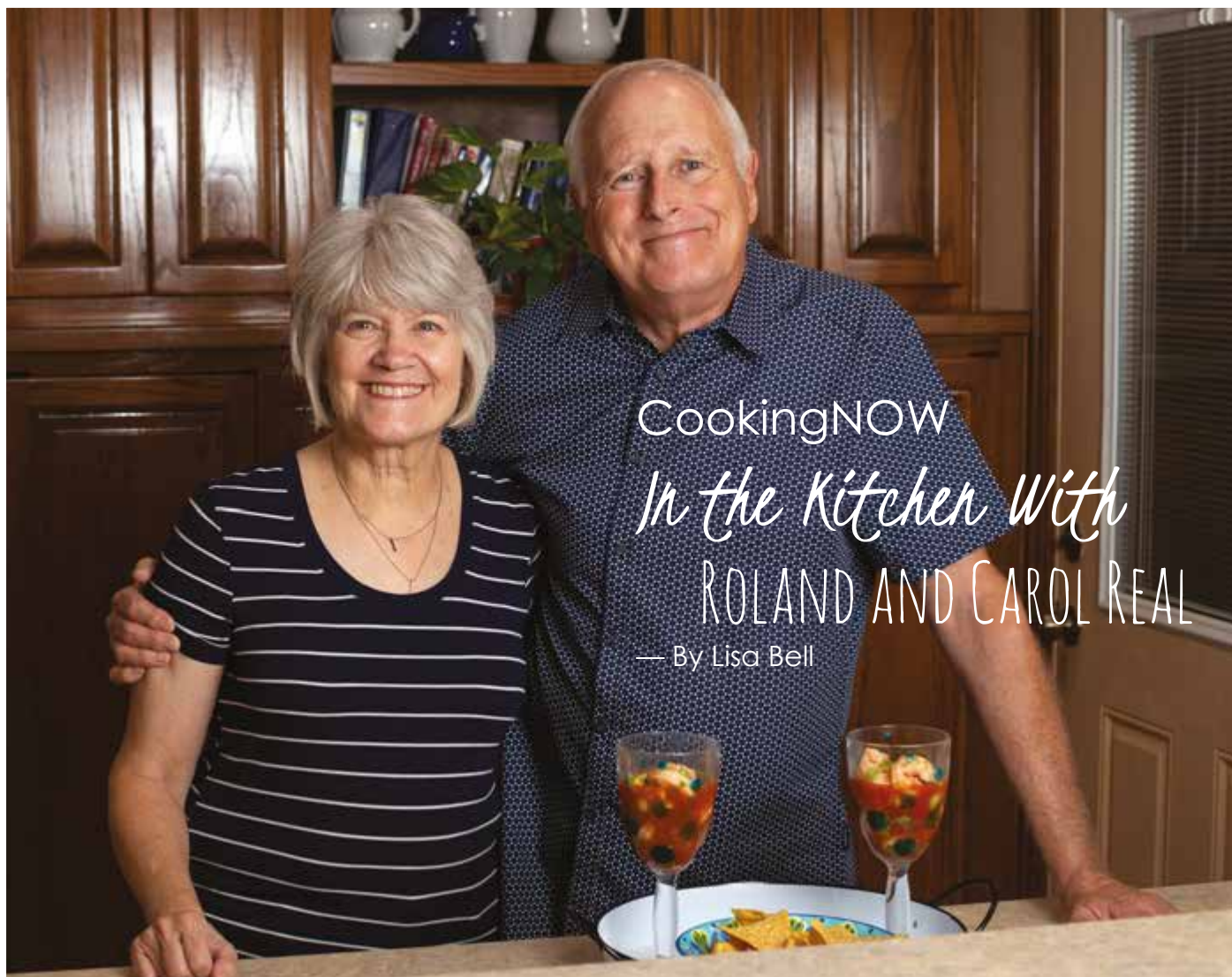
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CookingNOW

*In the Kitchen With*

ROLAND AND CAROL REAL

— By Lisa Bell

During 47 years of married life, Roland and Carol Real always enjoyed eating great meals together. A former Parker County DPS sergeant, Roland rarely cooked before retirement. Trying new dishes became a hobby for him, and Carol gladly turned over a great deal of the family's food prep. "I enjoy being the sous chef, now," she said.

Many of their recipes have a Tex-Mex flair — not surprising since both come from San Antonio. "We both had grandmothers who were not only excellent cooks, but also handed down recipes and lots of encouragement," Roland shared. He gets ideas online but changes them according to family preferences and available ingredients. His favorites include smoked meatloaf and Bananas Foster, complete with igniting the flame at the end. **NOW**

### Fiesta Breakfast Casserole

1 lb. hot breakfast sausage  
3 4-oz. cans chopped green chiles  
6 corn tortillas, torn into strips  
2 cups Monterrey Jack cheese, grated  
8 eggs  
1/2 tsp. each cumin, garlic powder,  
onion powder, salt and pepper

2/3 cup milk  
2 Roma tomatoes, sliced  
Paprika, for garnish

1. Spray a 9x13-inch casserole pan with cooking spray. Brown the sausage, pouring off the grease.  
2. Layer the chiles, tortilla strips, sausage and cheese. Do about 3 layers. Mix the eggs,

spices and milk with a whisk. Pour over the layered ingredients. Arrange sliced tomatoes and sprinkle the paprika on top.

3. Cover; refrigerate overnight.

4. The next morning, preheat an oven to 350 F. Bake, lightly covered, for 1/2 hour. Remove the cover; bake for another 1/2 hour.

### Smoked Meatloaf

1/2 lb. bacon  
1 yellow onion, diced  
1/4 cup ketchup  
3 Tbsp. yellow mustard, plus extra  
(divided use)  
1/2 cup barbecue sauce  
2 Tbsp. Worcestershire sauce  
1/2 cup brown sugar  
2 lbs. ground beef  
1 lb. hot breakfast sausage  
3 eggs  
2 cups breadcrumbs  
3 medium-sized disposable foil loaf pans  
3 Tbsp. meat rub (optional)



1. Slice the bacon and fry it in a skillet. Remove the bacon from the pan, but keep the grease; use it to sauté the diced onions until translucent.
2. Combine the onions and bacon in a large bowl; let cool for a little while. Add the ketchup, 3 Tbsp. mustard, barbecue sauce, Worcestershire sauce and brown sugar; combine well.
3. Add the beef and sausage; lightly mix. Add the eggs and breadcrumbs; mix thoroughly.
4. Line the loaf pans with plastic wrap, leaving enough excess to wrap the loaves. Divide the mixture between the 3 loaf pans. Fold the excess wrap over the loaf pans; freeze for several hours.
5. About 1 hour prior to cooking, bring the pans out of the freezer. Let the mixture partially thaw, to about 1/8-inch deep.
6. Unwrap completely; slather with mustard and season with meat rub, if desired.
7. Place on a smoker preheated to 280 F. Cook to an internal temperature of 165 F. (It takes about 2 hours on our smoker.)
8. Pull off the heat; top with more barbecue sauce, if desired. Let rest for 15 minutes. Slice and enjoy.

## Texas Caviar

- 1 15.5-oz. can black-eyed peas, drained
- 1 15-oz. can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1/2 cup red onion, chopped
- 1 small bell pepper, chopped
- 1 10-oz. can Ro-Tel
- 1 avocado, peeled, pitted and chopped
- 1/2 cup corn, cooked
- 3/4 cup bottled Italian dressing

1. Mix all ingredients together. Chill and serve with your favorite chips.  
*Note: The dressing preserves the avocado.*

## Mexican Brownie

*Makes about 18 brownies.*

- 2 sticks unsalted butter, plus extra for greasing pan
- 2 cups sugar
- 4 large eggs
- 2 tsp. Mexican vanilla
- 2/3 cup unsweetened cocoa
- 1 cup flour
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 tsp. chili powder
- 1/2 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/2 tsp. baking powder

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F. Line a 9x13-inch baking dish with parchment paper, leaving an overhang on two sides. This helps get brownies out of the pan. Grease the

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Mexican Shrimp Cocktail

4. Cool in the pan on a rack, and then use the parchment paper to lift out the brownies before slicing. (Use a plastic knife for cutting.)

## Mexican Shrimp Cocktail

2 lbs. cooked shrimp, peeled and deveined  
 1 Tbsp. crushed garlic  
 1/4 cup red onion, finely chopped  
 1/4 cup fresh cilantro, chopped  
 1 1/2 cups tomato and clam juice cocktail  
 1/4 cup ketchup  
 1/4 cup fresh lime juice  
 1 tsp. hot pepper sauce, or to taste  
 Salt, to taste  
 1/2 cup celery, chopped  
 1/2 cup cucumber, chopped  
 1 ripe avocado, peeled, pitted and chopped

1. Place the shrimp in a large bowl. Stir in the garlic, red onion and cilantro.  
 2. Mix in the tomato and clam juice cocktail, ketchup, lime juice, hot pepper sauce and salt.  
 3. Gently stir in the other vegetables; cover and refrigerate 2-3 hours. Serve in one large bowl or ladle into individual bowls.

## Sour Cream Coleslaw

Coleslaw:  
 1 bag slaw mix

1 small bell pepper, chopped  
 1 small onion, chopped

Dressing:

1 cup sour cream  
 1 cup mayonnaise  
 3 Tbsp. vinegar  
 1 tsp. celery seed  
 1/2 cup sugar

1. For coleslaw: Mix all ingredients; set aside.  
 2. For dressing: Mix all dressing ingredients. Pour over the slaw when ready to serve.

paper-lined pan with a little more butter.  
 2. Melt the 2 sticks of butter in a nonstick saucepan over medium-low heat; do not boil. Remove from heat; let cool slightly. Add the sugar, eggs and vanilla to the saucepan; stir with a wooden spoon until combined.  
 3. Add the cocoa, flour, cinnamon, chili powder, salt and baking powder. Mix until smooth. Spread the batter in the prepared pan; bake for 20-25 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out fudgy.

To search for more  
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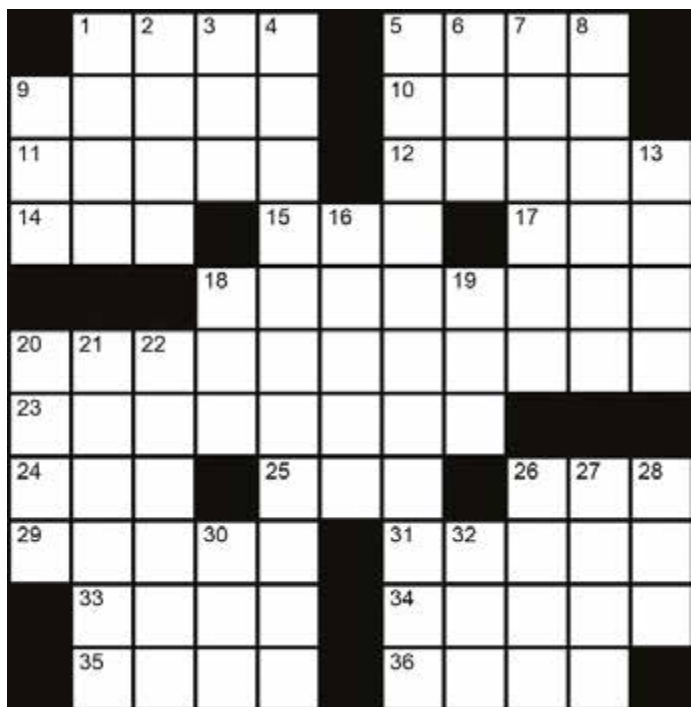


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# Crossword Puzzle



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## Across

- 1 It's good from a crow's nest
- 5 Young ceremonial attendant
- 9 Spiny desert features
- 10 Wickedness
- 11 Oscar winner Tatum ---
- 12 Celebrate noisily
- 14 Affirmative reply
- 15 You have one only when seated
- 17 Gabrielle Solis player Longoria
- 18 Called the shots
- 20 Concise explanations
- 23 --- to (concerning)
- 24 Not-for-profit TV spot
- 25 Edward Snowden's former employer
- 26 Bolt's partner
- 29 The Everlys woke her
- 31 Tantalize
- 33 Cabernets, for example
- 34 Versifier Nash
- 35 Times which include periods
- 36 Laugh loudly

## Down

- 1 Arrow tailfeather
- 2 Cold confections
- 3 7th Greek letter
- 4 Biddability
- 5 Criminal
- 6 Madison or Lexington, in NYC
- 7 "But to --- you and to --- me, ..." (Cole Porter, "High Society")
- 8 Craps natural
- 9 Bashful
- 13 Young 'uns
- 16 Divas' solos
- 18 Croak
- 19 El --- (Charlton Heston role)
- 20 Pickpockets
- 21 Make certain
- 22 "The Mummy" star
- 26 Nothing
- 27 Employer
- 28 Maximum Scrabble tile value
- 30 First Lady McKinley
- 32 Self-esteem

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# IT'S GAME TIME!

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# SEPTEMBER

9/1

## Homeschool Hour:

STEAM project workstations  
hosted by Weatherford  
Public Library. 2:00 p.m.,  
1014 Charles St.  
[www.weatherfordtx.gov/142/Library](http://www.weatherfordtx.gov/142/Library).

9/2, 9/13, 9/22  
and 9/24

## Spirit of the West Art Show:

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9/3-9/4

## Annual Train Show:

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9/9-9/10

## 2022 Ranch Rodeo and Dance:

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9/10

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9/12-9/15

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1302 S. Main Street #114 | Weatherford, TX 76086

Walk-In Vaccine Hours: Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Bring ad in for a  
**FREE**  
dewormer!\*

\*Valid for one free general dewormer (Strongid-T) with the purchase of a basic set of vaccines for a cat or dog. Limit one per household. Cannot be combined with any other TCAP coupons or discounts.

REDEMPTION CODE:





# PiNK

LUNCHEON

*Featured speaker*

**CAITLIN BRODNICK**

**AUTHOR, COMEDIAN, AND HEALTH ADVOCATE**



*Sponsorship Opportunities*

**TITLE SPONSORSHIP: \$10,000 | BAG SPONSORSHIP: \$5,000**  
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**OCTOBER 7, 2022 | 11:30 AM**

**WILLOW PARK BAPTIST CHURCH**

**129 S RANCH HOUSE ROAD, WILLOW PARK, TX 76008**

REGISTER AT [PARKERCOUNTYHEALTHFOUNDATION.ORG/PINK-LUNCHEON](https://PARKERCOUNTYHEALTHFOUNDATION.ORG/PINK-LUNCHEON)  
OR CALL 817-550-8998

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