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September 2026

Volume 23, Issue 9



Bill Smith

EnnisNOW Editor

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ON THE COVER



Cara Castellow is surrounded by some of the Cara Caters volunteers.

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Making a Difference

— By Bill Smith



Recognizing a costly need in the community and having a family legacy of caring for students led Cara Castellow to create Cara Caters. "My mother is retired and serves on our board of directors now, but she was in education for 47 years. She saw children who just were not making it socioeconomically. She began a program in Hallettsville, Texas, where I was raised," Cara said. "I've had the motivation to continue that mission since moving to Ennis in 2016."

The home of Cara Caters as well as Cara's State Farm Insurance Office is the historic Raphael House on Ennis Avenue. "Harriett Adams was selling the house, and my friends, Michael and Michelle Coulter, told me that it was a house that the community loved; it would make a great office; and it was a wonderful place for people to gather. It has proven to be all of those things.

"I came to Ennis when Mike Moreland retired from State Farm. I had been with the company since 2006, and Ennis has been great! My father was an agent in Hallettsville, which is also a community with a lot of Czech and German heritage. We have a parade watch party every year during the Polka Festival."

Cara studied journalism and public relations at The University of Texas. Her career started with a public relations firm. "I spent some time working with Jack Ferris of the NFIB, and I fell in love with the idea of owning my own business. I bought a retail store and found myself working 90 hours a week for very little return. I soon decided to follow my father's career in insurance."

Cara Caters began with a vision during a time when Cara took a sabbatical to find some direction during a transition in her life. "I rented a bed-and-breakfast, downloaded the Bible and got away for a while. I was reading the very first day in Genesis where the Bible says, 'Let there be light.' I looked up at the sky, and it was lit up in a way I had never seen. I just knew it would be healing for me to start something like what Cara Caters has evolved into."

When Cara returned home, she spoke with Marty Nelson, who was very involved with the students' backpack program. She also spoke with the EISD superintendent. "I wanted to provide more substantial meals for the students who need them. That was in February of 2023. I was ready to get started right away, but my friend, Suzy Agar, convinced me that we needed to slow down and plan a little first, so we actually launched in October," she continued. "Our first week, we prepared 87 bags. Today, we fill 537 bags each week and serve schools in Ennis and Palmer." During the 2025-2026 school year, Cara Caters distributed 16,968 bags, which equals 50,904 meals.

Community support for the efforts of Cara Caters is indispensable. A nine-member board oversees the

operations of the organization, and Cara was quick to point out the work of Lexi Rendon, who serves as operations manager and secretary. The website for Cara Caters quotes Lexi, "I wanted to be a part of Cara Caters because I believe every child deserves to just be a kid — free to play, learn, and grow without the weight of wondering where their next meal will come from."

Each October, the charity has a fundraiser at the Raphael House. Cara pointed to the generosity of Ennis when she mentioned, "We had a live auction last year that raised \$105,000 in an hour. We also have individuals that support us regularly, and corporate sponsors with matching gifts programs." About 20 corporate sponsors are shown on Cara Caters' website. Regular updates of volunteers and corporate gifts are also shown on the charity's social media presence on Facebook and Instagram. There is a link on the website that outlines volunteer opportunities



as well as making one-time or recurring gifts.

"We started in Michael and Michelle's warehouse, and now we pack the bags at The Avenue Church. Pastor David Brown has been amazing. Volunteers show up at 6:00 on Tuesday evening to fill the bags and put the bags in crates. Members of the EHS National Honor Society come on Thursday morning to deliver the crates filled with bags to the schools in Ennis and Palmer. The teachers pass the bags out on Friday.

"We have some specific foods we use for each bag, so we do

not accept food donations. We order the food in bulk, and our volunteers know how to pack each bag. We can always use more volunteers. We started with a core group of friends that responded to my plea, 'Can you please help me?' Later, Lexi started calling businesses and churches, and the response has been encouraging."

Cara's vision for Cara Caters continues to expand. "I want people to know we want to serve other surrounding communities, like Italy, Avalon and Waxahachie. Our vision is to put an end to childhood hunger in small communities. I want people to know how big the need is." **NOW**

Editors' Note: Visit www.caracaters.com to learn more, donate and volunteer, or scan this QR code:



National Voter Registration Day Tuesday, September 15, 2026

Ellis County Volunteer Deputy Registrars will be at each location to register any voter in Ellis County, Texas. Complete a new application, change of address, or change of name... they will be ready for you!

- 7:00 AM - 7:00 PM - Ellis County Elections Office, 204 E. Jefferson Street, Waxahachie, TX 75165
- 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM - Italy City Hall, 161 W. Main Street, Italy, TX 76651
- 9:00 AM - 5:30 PM - Ferris Public Library, 301 E. 10th Street, Ferris, TX 75125
- 10:00 AM - 6:00 PM - Ennis Public Library, 501 W. Ennis Avenue, Ennis, TX 75119
- 10:00 AM - 6:00 PM - Midlothian Public Library, 215 N. 8th Street, Midlothian, TX 76065
- 10:00 AM - 6:00 PM - Red Oak Public Library (Community Side), 101 Live Oak Street, Red Oak, TX 75154
- 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM - Nelson University (Barnes Student Center), 720 Highland Avenue, Waxahachie, TX 75165
- 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM - Navarro College (Building 1 Lobby), 899 Mt. Zion Road, Midlothian, TX 76065
- 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM - Navarro College (Building A Commons Area), 1900 John Arden Drive, Waxahachie, TX 75165



Check your voting status by calling the Elections Office 972-825-5195.

October 5th is the deadline to register to vote in order to be eligible to vote in November.

Get a voter registration application at a local Post Office, Tax Office, Election Office or election website.

General & Special Elections—Tuesday, November 3, 2026

Early Voting begins October 19-30, 2026

Main Early Voting site: **Waxahachie ISD Old High School (Library)** 1000 N. Hwy 77, Waxahachie, 75165

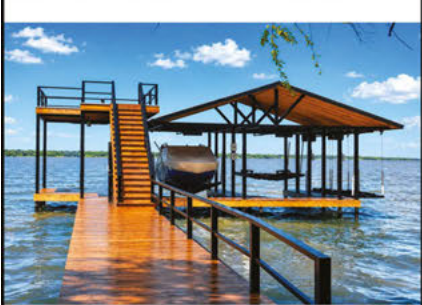
****New Location**** Election Day polls will be open from 7am – 7pm

Visit the website for a complete listing of polling locations, sample ballots and more.

Elections Department: 204 E. Jefferson Street, Waxahachie, Texas 75165 Phone: 972-825-5195
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10:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. *Short program begins at 11:00 a.m.*

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Photos with Virgil from 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

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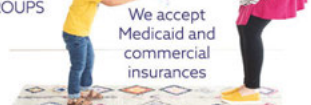
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ROOM TO EXPLORE

— By Virginia Riddle

Some cities boast glass-bottomed boats, but the not-to-be-missed experience when visiting Celebration Plaza in downtown Sulphur Springs, Texas, are the only see-through, glass-walled public restrooms in the United States. People can see out from the inside but not inside from the outside. The mirrored sides are one-way glass! In addition to the famed restrooms, Celebration Plaza, which surrounds the historic Hopkins County Courthouse, boasts tree-shaded pathways, interactive checkers/chess games and a Texas star-shaped fountain. It's a great family-oriented place to spend a few hours playing and strolling through the shops and restaurants lining the streets that feed into Celebration Plaza.

Buford Park offers a castle playground named Kids Kingdom. The park has walking/jogging trails through a wooded area, Peavine Pinon Pond and a skateboard and basketball court. Have a picnic in one of the gazebos or at the pavilion. Coleman Park offers a walking trail that passes waterfalls and winds through a tunnel. Fishing is a favored activity in this park.

Other places to visit include the Heritage Park and Museum. The park features a town of turn-of-the-century buildings. The museum, located in the George H. Wilson House, circa 1910, features a doll collection, Civil War memorabilia, Caddo Indian relics and more. The Leo St. Clair Music Box Collection, located in the Sulphur Springs Public Library, houses the largest of its kind collection of music boxes. Another collection located at the library is the Sinclair WWII Collection which is T-Patchers (Texas National Guard) memorabilia from that era.

Sulphur Springs was settled in the late 1840s by pioneers who enjoyed the more than 100 natural springs in the area. By 1871, the town had gained its current name and, in the previous year, its county seat designation. The town became a health resort for those wanting to "take the waters." In that same decade, the town gained its railway from Jefferson, Texas.

In 1937, the Carnation Milk Company opened a milk processing plant, and large-scale dairy farming was added to the list of farm products produced in the area. Home to 600-plus dairies, Hopkins County is the official "Dairy Capital of Texas." The Southwest Dairy Museum and Education Center, near the Expo facility, chronicles that industry's history. After a docent-led tour, enjoy ice cream treats in The Creamery, an old-fashioned soda fountain.

Along with the dairy industry, this town of approximately 16,000 residents, is becoming an equine breeding center, and the springs, once forgotten, are beginning to be revived as an attraction. Sulphur Springs enjoys the arts through the Community Players Main Street Theatre productions and the North East Texas Symphony.

Nearby Cooper Lake State Park offers fishing, boating, water-skiing, horseback riding, hiking, picnicking, swimming, biking, birding and 25 miles of shoreline, part of which are two beaches. Nature and educational programs conducted by park rangers are regularly scheduled. Kayaks are available for rent.

Divided into two sections, Doctors Creek and South Sulphur, cabins, cottages, tent sites and RV sites can be reserved. Day-use shelters, screened shelters, a playground, fishing pier and fish-cleaning tables make this a fun and functional time for all ages.

Only about a 90-minute drive from the Metroplex, Sulphur Springs is a great go-to. Relax in the shade, and drink in nature in a park. Play a game of checkers/ chess or attend one of the area's many festivals. And don't forget to watch the crowd stroll by from inside the glass bathrooms! **NOW**

Photos by Virginia Riddle, LLC.

Sources:

1. Texas State Park brochures/maps.
2. www.sulphurspringtx.org/visitors/cooper_lake_state_park.

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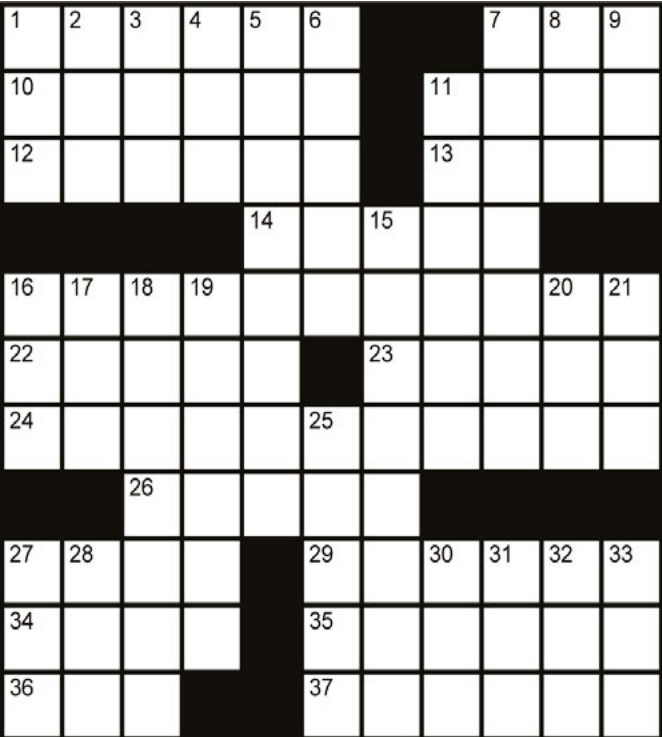


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The investigational study drug is not approved by health authorities such as the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and is still under investigation for the treatment of COPD, so its effectiveness and safety have not been established

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Crossword Puzzle



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Across

- 1 "Take These -- - from my Heart ..."
- 7 Plot of ground in a garden
- 10 Blacktop
- 11 Carbonated canful
- 12 Eurasian grassland
- 13 "Good heavens!"
- 14 "--- Q T"
- 16 Rolling residences
- 22 Lying flat
- 23 Celtic whiskey
- 24 Oaf stated he busted a ruler
- 26 Of the kidneys
- 27 Travel on
- 29 Already committed
- 34 Commentators' piece
- 35 From square one
- 36 Impair
- 37 Chartered

Down

- 1 Pennies
- 2 "The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a ---" (Oliver Sacks)
- 3 119.6 square yards metrically
- 4 Gremlin
- 5 Failure broke down on one lap
- 6 Part of an act
- 7 Artsy area
- 8 Boston's Liberty Tree, for example
- 9 Light time
- 11 One tenth of a Roman legion
- 15 Autobiography of Sidney Poitier
- 16 Measure of tennis serving speed
- 17 Metal-bearing mineral
- 18 Paying guest
- 19 Undeniably
- 20 Savannah setting
- 21 --- who must be obeyed
- 25 Deadly
- 27 CD- ---
- 28 Kind of beer, briefly
- 30 It contains periods
- 31 --- Moines, IA
- 32 Exploit
- 33 College prof.'s degree

Find puzzle answers within this magazine. Online versions and solutions are also available at www.nowmagazines.com.



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Zoomed In:
Cason Key

By Bill Smith

Cason Key moved to Ennis three years ago to assume the role of student pastor at Tabernacle Baptist Church. “I was called to the ministry in high school but considered another path while I was in college at Alabama University. I studied sociology and history and considered pursuing education, possibly as a teacher/coach with a future as an athletic director,” he recalled.

“During my senior year, I knew I would go into full-time ministry.” After graduating from Alabama, Cason completed his education at New Orleans Seminary. “I enjoy working with the students in Ennis,” he continued.

Cason has been married for five years, and he and his wife will be parents for the first time in January. In his spare time, he enjoys running and CrossFit workouts.



Jonathan Andreas demonstrates ax and knife throwing downtown.



Rebecca Jones and Bonnie Phillips receive service awards for being members of NARFE for over 20 years.



The Kids Summer Reading Program is entertained by Mr. Blue Shoes at Ennis Public Library.



These new Lionettes complete the second day of rookie camp.



Greg Brown swears in Kristi Leal as Rotary Club President Elect.



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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Zoomed In:
Hershell Williams and
Sada Baker

By Bill Smith

Hershell Williams and Sada Baker won the titles, "King and Queen" at the 2025 Golden Circle Senior Prom. The Prom is the major fundraiser for the Golden Circle each year.

Hershell said, "I came to Ennis from Cleburne just a couple of years ago because my stepson found a house we could rent together here. I think Ennis is a great small town."

Sada came to Ennis from Las Vegas. "Yes, I worked in the casinos," she mentioned with a smile. "At the Golden Circle, we enjoy the table games, the food and all of the other activities."

This year's Senior Prom has a '60s theme and will be held September 12th from 5:00-8:00 p.m. at Polyguard. Hershell and Sada hope to see you there!



Sisters Marley and Harper Glaspy celebrate Marley's birthday rolling out pizzas!



Kevin Strength is introduced by Dewey LaRochelle at the recent NARFE meeting.



Arya and Sarah Schriver cool off at the Rotary Park splash pad.



Seth, Kristin and Clay Rizer enjoy the shade at Minnie McDowal Park.



Principal Alex Rendon of Alamo Middle School, EHS 2008 graduate Michelle Miller of Tangram Interiors and Superintendent Dr. Greg Bradley participate in an EISD team building exercise.



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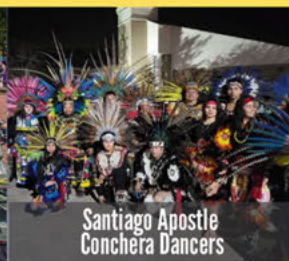
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Friday Night



Peter Sinclair Band



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CAMPFIRE COOKING



There's something magical about cooking over an open flame under the stars. But campfire cooking doesn't have to just be a hot dog. Whether you're an experienced camper or trying outdoor cooking for the first time, these dishes will elevate your camping experience. **NOW**

Breakfast Hash

- 4 slices bacon, chopped
- 4 medium potatoes, diced
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- 1 green bell pepper, diced
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper
- 1/2 tsp. paprika
- 6 large eggs
- 1 cup cheddar cheese, shredded
- 2 Tbsp. fresh parsley, chopped

1. Heat a large cast-iron skillet over the campfire until hot.
2. Add the bacon; cook until crispy, about 5-7 minutes. Remove the bacon with a slotted spoon; set aside, leaving the drippings in the skillet.
3. Add the potatoes; cook for 10-12 minutes, stirring occasionally, until golden and tender.
4. Add the onions and red and green bell peppers. Cook for 5-6 minutes until the vegetables are softened.
5. Return the bacon to the skillet; stir to combine. Add the spices; mix well.
6. Make six wells in the hash; crack an egg into each well.
7. Cover the skillet with foil or a lid; cook for 5-7 minutes until the eggs are

cooked to your desired doneness.

8. Sprinkle cheese over the top; cover for 1-2 minutes until melted. Garnish with parsley; serve hot.

Campfire Chili

- 1 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1 lb. ground beef
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 15-oz. cans kidney beans, drained
- 1 28-oz. can crushed tomatoes
- 2 Tbsp. chili powder
- 1 tsp. cumin
- 1 tsp. paprika
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper
- Shredded cheddar cheese, for serving
- Sour cream, for serving

1. Heat the vegetable oil in a large cast-iron pot or Dutch oven over a campfire.
2. Add the beef; cook, breaking it apart with a spoon, until browned completely.
3. Add the onions; cook until softened, about 5 minutes. Stir in the garlic; cook for 1 minute until fragrant.
4. Add the kidney beans and

tomatoes, stirring to combine.

5. Add the spices. Stir; bring to a simmer.
6. Move the pot to a cooler spot over the fire; let it simmer for 30-40 minutes, stirring occasionally.
7. Serve hot in bowls topped with shredded cheddar cheese and sour cream.

S'mores Banana Boats

- 4 ripe bananas, unpeeled
- 1/2 cup chocolate chips
- 1 cup mini marshmallows
- 1/4 cup graham cracker crumbs

1. Make a lengthwise slit in each banana, cutting through the peel but not all the way through the fruit.
2. Gently open the slit to create a pocket in each banana.
3. Stuff each pocket with chocolate chips, distributing them evenly. Add marshmallows, filling the pocket generously. Sprinkle graham cracker crumbs on top.
4. Wrap each banana in aluminum foil. Place on the campfire grate or directly on hot coals. Cook for 5-7 minutes until the chocolate and marshmallows are melted.
5. Carefully unwrap the foil; serve with spoons.

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