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Sandra Walters
MansfieldNOW Editor
sandra.walters@nowmagazines.com
(682) 554-1743

ON THE COVER



Steven Martinez had the courage to keep going.

Photo by
Lori Baur.

Founder, Connie Poirier
Publisher/General Manager, Bryan Frye

EDITORIAL

Managing Editor, Becky Walker
Mansfield Editor, Sandra Walters
Writer, Virginia Riddle
Editor/Proofreader, Virginia Riddle

GRAPHICS DESIGN & SOCIAL MEDIA

Artists, Kristin Bato . Beth Davis
Martha Macias

PHOTOGRAPER

Lori Baur

ADVERTISING

Advertising Representatives,
Dianne Banks . Dustin Dauenhauer
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Karen Schaefer . Jeremy Young

Office/Billing Manager, Angela Mixon

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A Challenge Worth Taking



Steven Martinez never approached learning casually. As a child, he began reading his mom's Merck Manual of Medical Information. "Initially, I was drawn to the pictures, so I sat on the floor and explored the pages. I couldn't read all of the words, but the pictures kept my attention. My grandpa used to call me 'Dr. Martinez' in his thick Mexican accent, and I smiled.

— By Sandra Walters



"However, as I grew older, my favorite subjects became math, physics and chemistry," Steven recalled. He liked the challenge of solving problems. There was only one right answer, and he enjoyed figuring it out. That mindset was his guide through multiple degrees, a demanding career and, ultimately, a life-changing decision to consistently advance.

After high school, he enrolled at Colorado State University-Pueblo, where he earned his bachelor's degree. Later he earned a Master of Science in Social Work from The University of Texas at Arlington. While many people spend years searching for the right career path, he found purpose early in helping others navigate difficult moments in their lives.

His professional journey started with treating adult mental health issues, followed by long-term care for senior citizens. Over time, he developed an expertise in geriatrics and, eventually, became involved in care transition programs. "At the Center of Geriatrics, I worked with older adults," he stated. "Once patients were discharged, I connected them with resources that allowed them to return to their homes and communities safely."

The work was meaningful, but his story is about more than professional accomplishments. It's also about partnership, encouragement and finding inspiration in unexpected places. One of the most important chapters of his life began when a mutual friend introduced him to Kathalyn, and they agreed to meet for a double date.

"We had dinner, and after that we just kept talking," Steven remembered. "The date never really ended." As the evening continued, they found themselves going to North Park Mall, where they jokingly stopped to look at the largest diamond ring displayed at a jewelry store. "We

were on our first date, and here we were staring at rings. I found it intriguing because my mom had recently shopped at that store to find a new wedding ring. Looking back, it feels almost prophetic."

Not long afterward, the couple married and started building a life together. Kathalyn's career would later play a significant role in shaping her husband's future. She worked in the admissions office for the School of Pharmacy at University of North Texas Health Science Center and spent years learning about a wide range of careers. While working there, she supported physicians and health care providers. Through that work, she gained a close-up view of the physician assistant position and thought Steven should look into it.

"I researched the job, and my interest grew. To my surprise, it was far more affordable than graduating with hundreds of thousands of dollars of debt. The cost was approximately half of what many medical schools demanded for a doctorate, and I wouldn't have to attend college for 10 more years. The possibility began to feel real," he said.

So, to qualify for school, he needed to complete a series of science prerequisites. "It wasn't easy," he admitted. "But once I made the decision, I was committed." Class by class, semester by semester, he worked through the requirements. Eventually, the moment arrived to apply. The competition alone was intimidating. Sometimes more than 2,000 applicants applied, and the school would accept only about 50 students. "I remember thinking how daunting that was," he said. "The odds weren't exactly encouraging."

Many prospective students might have been discouraged by those statistics, but Steven focused on what he could control: his preparation, his application and his determination. Then came the waiting. Weeks stretched into months and years, as admissions committees reviewed applications and selected candidates. Like



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every aspiring medical student, he wondered whether his dream would move forward. When the acceptance finally arrived following four years, relief quickly gave way to excitement. "I was thrilled," he said. "Glad I didn't give up!"

Today, Steven sees his story as proof that it is never too late to pursue a new direction. He is currently a physician assistant at Methodist Orthopedic Specialists of Mansfield. He diagnoses, treats, recommends surgery and assists physicians in the operating room. Despite the demands of his profession, he also makes time each year to travel to Kenya on a medical mission trip, volunteering his skills to provide care for people who often have little or no access to health care. Patients travel long distances seeking treatment. Some simply need an injection that restores hope, while others require life-changing surgeries performed during the team's two-week mission. "It reminds



me of why I chose medicine in the first place," Steven said. "I forget about charting, insurance and schedules because I get to focus on taking care of another human being with the skills I've been given."

Those experiences have transformed him as much as they have helped his patients.

"Mission work has taught me that dignity is universal," he reflected. "I've learned gratitude from people who have less than I do and witnessed incredible joy in people facing overwhelming challenges." Each trip leaves him with remarkable stories, a renewed perspective and a deeper appreciation for his education. "I go thinking I'll change lives," he said, "but every time I come home, I realize my own life has been changed just as much."

Looking back, Steven sees a common thread woven throughout his life: Every challenge prepared him for the next opportunity, so his advice is straightforward: "If you're passionate about something, find a mentor or coach who can guide you, and don't give up," he said. He credits his parents and wife for encouraging him every step of the way. His journey serves as a reminder that the most meaningful accomplishments often begin with the courage to embrace a challenge worth taking. **NOW**

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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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Mansfield Celebrates Public Art Unveiling and a New Facility for Animal Care & Control

The City of Mansfield had plenty to celebrate on Saturday, Aug. 8. The community came together for two milestone moments: the unveiling of the City's first large-scale public art installation funded by the City's Percent for Art Program and the grand opening of the new facility for Animal Care & Control.

With more than 1,000 people joining the celebration throughout the day, there was something for everyone. The day featured local vendors and activities including free microchipping, nail trims for the four-legged attendees, and of course, adoptions! Over the course of the day, 20 animals found their new fur-ever home.

A New Home for Animal Care & Control

Following the groundbreaking in September 2024, this facility has been a much-anticipated addition to the community. The original animal shelter, having been built in 1996, was created for a much smaller Mansfield population with additions being made in 2005 and 2015. As Mansfield has grown, so has the need for a facility that can better support the Animal Care & Control team and the animals they care for.

This new state-of-the-art facility brings Animal Care & Control into a space the whole community can be proud of and is centered on providing **Remarkable Experiences** for all guests. Featuring

130 runs for dogs and 135 cat kennels, there is not only more room, but also dedicated "get-to-know-you" areas to help adopters bond with future pets. Additional spaces include on-site medical suites with extra recovery kennels and dedicated live-stock yards.

"This landmark facility is a direct response to the clear voice and needs of our community. By investing heavily in our dedicated staff and the welfare of the animals they protect, we are strengthening our civic infrastructure. This modern facility ensures that Mansfield remains resilient, compassionate, and fully equipped to meet the demands of tomorrow," said City Council Member Juan Fresquez.



Mansfield City Council, Staff & Project Partners - Grand Opening - August 2026



Public Art Unveiling - "Paw in Paw" Unveiling by Vito DiBari - August 2026

Bringing the Percent for Art Program to Life

In 2023, Mansfield's first Cultural Arts Master Plan was adopted alongside a Percent for Art Program. What this means is that public art found a permanent place within the community, as a percentage of eligible City project funds is now dedicated to incorporating art into public spaces. This installation is

also eligible for a 1:1 matching reimbursement grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

On Aug. 8, the city unveiled "Paw in Paw" by Vito DiBari as the first large-scale installation funded through this program. This piece is meant to celebrate the bond between humans and their animal companions through a larger-than-life sculpture of a dog and cat, standing at 16 feet

tall at its highest point. It serves as a wonderful welcome to the new Animal Care and Control facility.

Animal Care & Control and the "Paw in Paw" installation are located at 612 S. Wisteria St. The shelter is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on the second Saturday of the month from noon to 4 p.m.



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Zoomed In: Hallee Smart

By Sandra Walters

Hallee Smart is celebrating a remarkable achievement, earning her high school diploma. Beaming with pride, she posed for a photo with a congratulatory cookie held above her head, capturing the joy of reaching this important milestone. Hallee’s aunt, Breeanna McGowan, reflected on the journey, saying, “Like many students, she experienced moments of self-doubt and wondered if she would ever reach this point. Instead of giving up, she kept moving forward until she achieved her goal. Because her educational journey looked different, she missed many friendships that often come with a traditional school experience.” Despite the challenges, Hallee persevered with determination. Surrounded by love, encouragement and the unwavering support of her family, she is now celebrating a well-earned accomplishment and an exciting new chapter ahead.



State Farm Agent Don Burkett stops for a photo after his Mansfield Business Alliance ribbon cutting.



Caden Rhoden and Rachel Barzyk attend the North Texas SC game.



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Zoomed In:
Chloe Fox and
Chelsea Guardiola

By Sandra Walters

Families gathered at the Fieldhouse to celebrate the DFW Mom Society's End of Summer Celebration. The family-friendly event provided opportunities for parents and children to enjoy activities, connect with one another and create lasting memories. Officer Chelsea Guardiola shared, "Families had the opportunity to have fun, enjoy each other and engage in friendly conversations in a relaxed atmosphere. Children especially loved visiting with Chloe and me as we handed out coloring sheets and stickers while encouraging positive community connections." The welcoming presence of the police staff helped create a safe environment where families could focus on enjoying the celebration. Their commitment to community engagement and public safety made the event both memorable and reassuring for those who attended.



A group of friends ends the summer at the movies.



Kay Davidson represents Academy 4 as she mentors an Imogene Gideon Elementary student.



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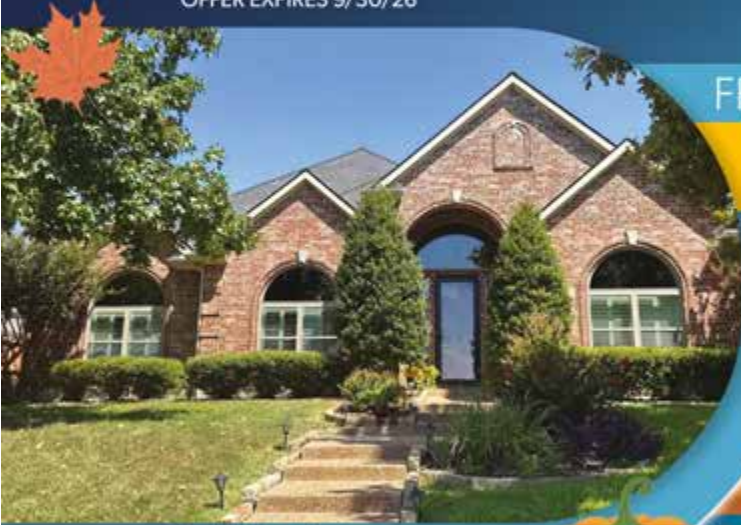
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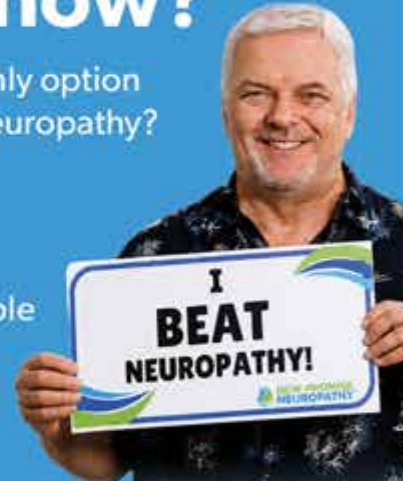
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There's something magical about cooking over an open flame under the stars. But campfire cooking doesn't have to just be a hot dog. Whether you're an experienced camper or trying outdoor cooking for the first time, these dishes will elevate your camping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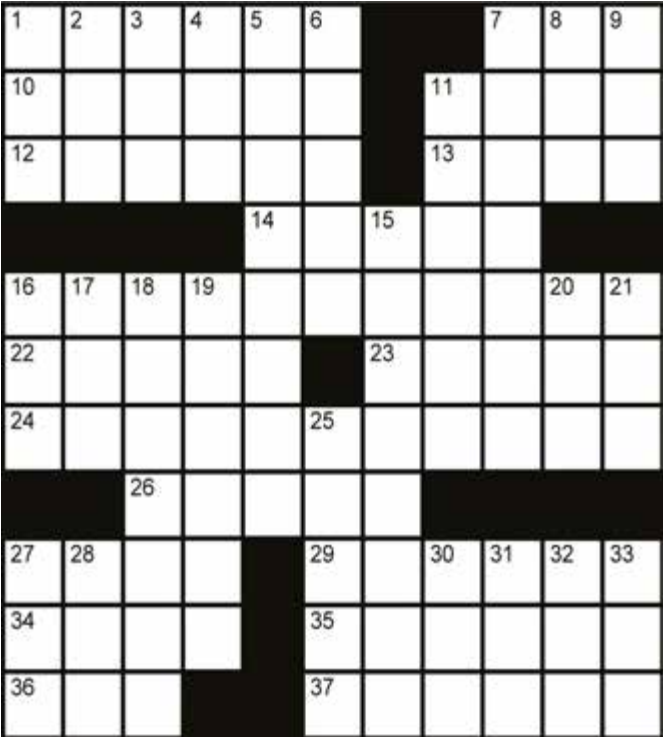
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Crossword Puzzle



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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

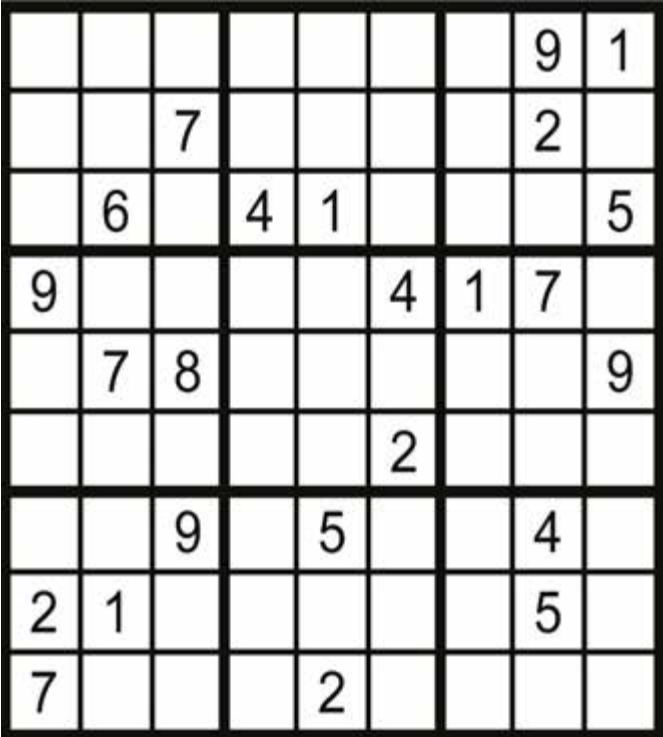
Down

- 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.

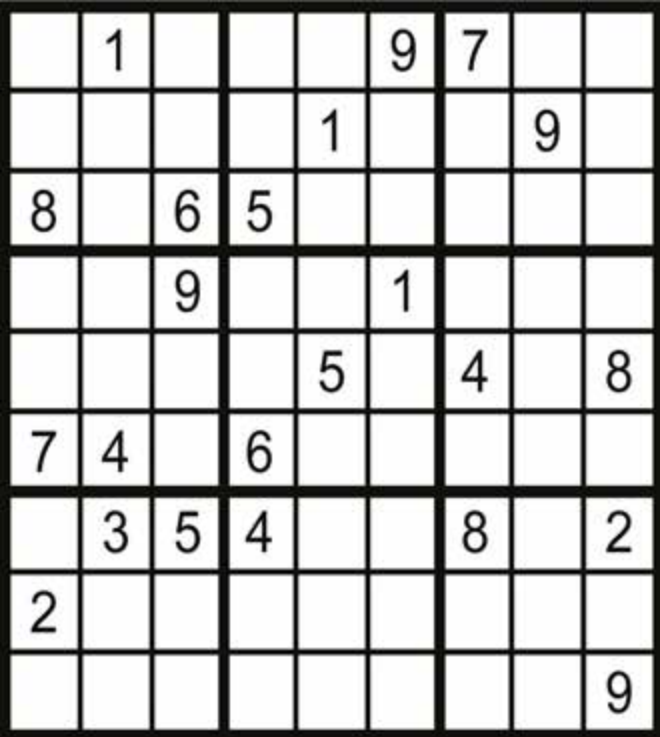
Sudoku Puzzle

Easy



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Medium



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Crossword - Sudoku Solutions

1	2	3	4	5	6			7	8	9		
C	H	A	I	N	S			B	E	D		
10	T	A	R	M	A	C		11	C	O	L	A
12	S	T	E	P	P	E		13	O	H	M	Y
						14	O	N	T	H	E	
16	17	18	19					20	21			
M	O	B	I	L	E	H	O	M	E	S		
22	P	R	O	N	E		23	I	R	I	S	H
24	H	E	A	D	O	F	S	T	A	T	E	
						25						
		26	R	E	N	A	L					
27	28					29		30	31	32	33	
R	I	D	E			T	I	E	D	U	P	
34	O	P	E	D		35	A	F	R	E	S	H
36	M	A	R			37	L	E	A	S	E	D

Easy

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

Medium

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

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Ovi attended high school in Edinburg, Texas, before attending the University of Texas at Arlington, where he met his wife, Susan. Together they have built a wonderful life centered around faith, family, and community while raising their three children. Dedicated to making a positive impact beyond banking, Ovi currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Mansfield Area Chamber of Commerce.

Contact Ovi Ozuna today to learn how PlainsCapital Bank can help meet your business banking needs!

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