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September 2026
Volume 22, Issue 9



Angel Morris
MidlothianNOW Editor
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ON THE COVER



The Ellis County Homeless Coalition is an all-volunteer organization led by Kimberly Fuller (far left).

Photo by
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Publisher/General Manager, Bryan Frye

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Subscriptions are available at the rate of \$35 per year or \$3.50 per issue. Subscriptions should be sent to: NOW Magazines, P.O. Box 1071, Waxahachie, TX 75168. For advertising rates or editorial correspondence, call (972) 937-8447 or visit www.nowmagazines.com.

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to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring; and to raise awareness of the need for affordable housing in Ellis County."

Achieving this vision requires a robust internal support network, which Kimberly steers alongside a leadership team including Vice President Rhonda Miller, Secretary Julie Mendenhall and Treasurer Ralph Grambusch. Together, they guide an organization that operates on a grassroots framework.

Operating a regional nonprofit without institutional backing comes with systemic hurdles. The largest obstacle the coalition faces is financial sustainability. "Our biggest challenge is funding since we do not receive any government funding, but rely solely on private donations from individuals and businesses in our community," Kimberly explained.

Furthermore, ECHC is an all-volunteer organization. Without paid staff, every single phone call, resource drop-off and logistical arrangement relies entirely on the altruism and free time of local residents.

The demanding nature of grassroots advocacy brings a mix of emotional trials. "There are certainly high and low times working or volunteering in a nonprofit," Kimberly noted. "Three things that make it rewarding and memorable for me are the success stories of our clients; the collaboration of nonprofits, law enforcement and government offices in Ellis County; and working with our volunteers."

This spirit of collaborative unity was put to the ultimate test during the January 2026 ice storm, when severe winter weather swept through Texas, putting unsheltered individuals in immediate, life-threatening danger. The ECHC team sprang into action, successfully placing nine vulnerable clients into local hotels for a nine-day period to escape the freezing conditions. Among those rescued from the ice were three senior citizens who had been surviving in a makeshift shed with no running

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The intervention did not stop when the weather cleared. ECHC partnered closely with the "Our Community" project in Ferris, to secure a lasting resolution. "Then we were able to work with Our Community to get two of these into permanent housing," Kimberly shared. "A huge blessing for these two individuals!"

This victory highlights a broader, encouraging trend that Kimberly has observed. "In the last three to four years, all these different facets in our community have really been coming together and working to assist those experiencing homelessness, food instability, mental health issues and more," she reflected.

While success stories offer hope, the sheer volume of those in need serves as a stark reminder of the work ahead. Many residents are surprised to learn about the specific demographics driving local assistance requests. The largest single group seeking help from

the coalition is not chronically unsheltered adults, but single mothers with children living out of their vehicles.

The statistics gathered by ECHC paint a sobering picture of the local housing crisis. In 2025 alone, the coalition handled crisis calls involving 952 unique individuals, and 382 of those individuals were children. "Sadly, the number of children involved in our calls is consistently 40 percent," Kimberly calculated.

These figures drive the organization's strategic vision for the future. Looking forward, Kimberly and the board are focused on establishing a low-profile emergency sheltering option within the county. "This model would provide a safe, temporary environment to transition people off the streets or out of their cars for a few crucial days. This short-term breathing room gives families the stability they need to work directly with outreach volunteers to map out concrete next steps

toward long-term self-sufficiency," Kimberly stated.

ECHC stands as a testament to what happens when locals decide to look out for their neighbors. Whether through a financial donation or volunteerism, the community has the power to change the trajectory for hundreds of children and families.

For those hesitant about whether they have enough time or experience to contribute, Kimberly offered an open invitation. "If anyone has a heart to help those who are struggling, we would love to have you on our outreach team," she said. "A few hours or a few days a week can make a big difference for those we serve. There is an impact that is waiting for you to make." **NOW**

Editor's Note: To join the outreach team, make a financial contribution or learn more about current initiatives, email info@elliscountyhomelesscoalition.org or call (469) 864-6240.

www.nowmagazines.com 8 MidlothianNOW September 2026



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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.

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**

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

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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

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

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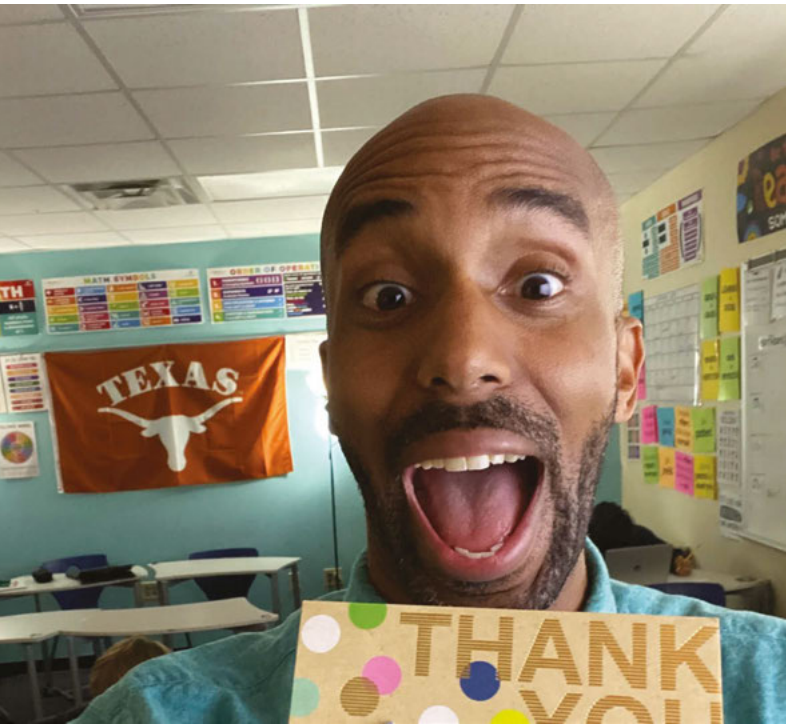
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Zoomed In: Tony Robinson

By Angel Morris

Entering his sixth year in education — all of which have been in Midlothian ISD — Tony Robinson teaches Algebra and AP Pre-Calculus to sophomores, juniors and seniors at Midlothian High School. “The best part of my job is inspiring students to be kind, stay curious and know their worth,” he said.

Tony said his personal goal is “to be better than [he] was the day before and never stop growing,” and his professional goal is “a 100 percent pass rate for students on their STAAR and AP exams.”

Outside the classroom, Tony has a range of interests. “I enjoy anything sports-related, and anything involving music and dancing,” he listed. “Also, hearing someone’s story through ministry, movies, shows or books.”



Daesha and sons, Korben and Ezekiel, enjoy music and treats during a Summer Beats city concert.



Matt Rushing, as Plankton, and Carter McClung, as Mr. Krabs, perform in The SpongeBob Musical by Back Porch Theatre.



Midlothian Public Library accepts a \$2,500 Collection Development Grant from the Texas Book Festival.



Heritage Varsity Cheerleaders receive numerous awards at the cheer camp held at Great Wolf Lodge.



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Zoomed In:
Joanna Kidder

By Angel Morris

Camp at FBC Midlothian Community Church brought joy to 7-year-old Joanna Kidder. "My favorite things were face paint, cheer-offs, and Chaos Bear," she listed. A second-grader at Longbranch Elementary, Joanna also shared her favorite lesson from the week: "Jesus came back to life in three days," she explained. Among Joanna's other interests are doing cartwheels, blowing bubbles and, most importantly, she said, "Playing with friends."



Brooke Morrison joins Ron Bland at the Mayor's Back to School Bash.



Scout Dvorak and Jenna Addicks participate in a Back Porch Theatre camp for kids.



Midlothian Lions Club member Judith Yarborough helps co-host the first cabinet meeting for Lions District 2-X1.



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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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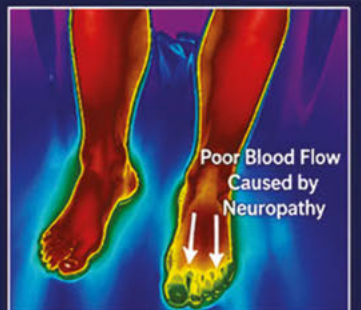
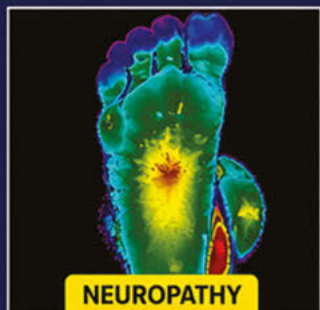
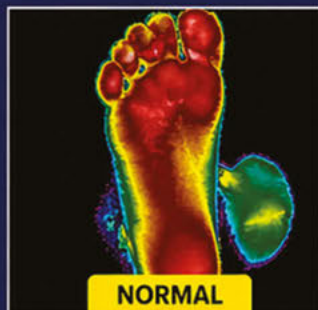
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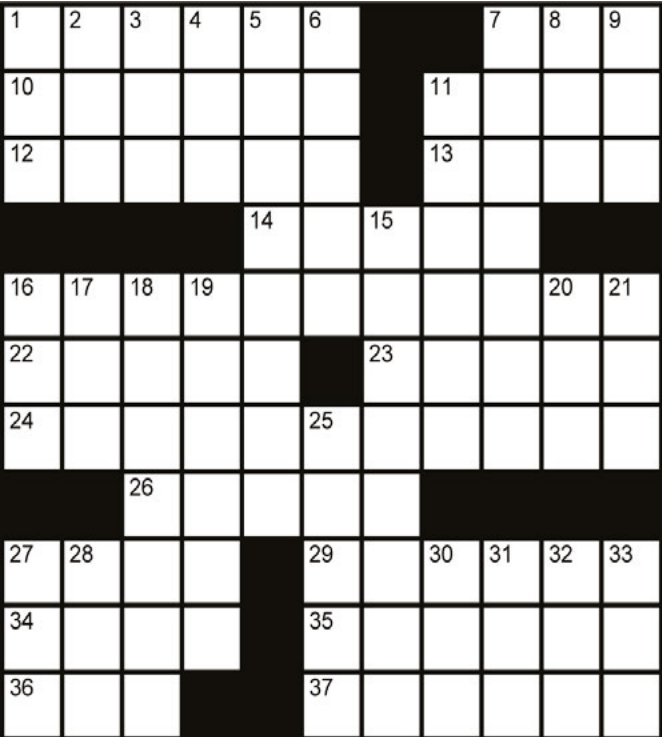
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Across

- 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

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

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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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