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September 2026
Volume 23, Issue 8



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ON THE COVER



*William Atwood's pen
creates with style-us.*

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WRITING WORLDS

— By Adam Walker

William Atwood had a story to tell, so he just did it. This homeschooled teenager has always loved stories. "Growing up, I read a lot and watched a lot of movies. Narnia, The Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit were favorites." He had started stories off and on, over the years. "I wrote just for fun, but I never finished anything. Then last year, I took a self-development class through my co-op and decided that I wanted to see if I could finish something. My parents didn't even know I was doing this until I started looking for an editor. I wrote a fantasy book because I feel like there's more room for me to explore in fantasy.

William, who publishes under the name W.M. Atwood, believes stories are important. "Personally, I believe God gave us stories. Stories connect us to people. We all tell stories every day. We meet a friend, and we tell stories. 'Did I tell you about that one time I did so-and-so?' Kids learn lessons about sharing and kindness through stories. Jesus used parables to teach us that everyone is our neighbor. *Animal Farm* shows the dangers of the Soviet system. Sometimes straight up telling doesn't come out right. But when it's a story, you have to listen. So, I decided to give it a shot."



Daniel Wright and the Writer's Stylus is a story about a boy who finds a magic pen that can write or draw inanimate objects into existence. When William sat down at his kitchen table to start writing, he discovered what many writers before him have learned — some parts of the process are easier than others. "The easy part was coming up with the beginning. But then you get to chapter three, and your mind blanks!" he said. "I couldn't go on until I realized that whatever happens, happens, and I can edit the story later. One time, I had to cut three chapters, because it didn't flow right. Some of that material I had to cut will come back in another book. I knew from the start that I had to keep organized. I'm a lore guy. I want to see how everything connects. I didn't throw anything away. I write everything down, so it all stays consistent."

That's the only way to go when you're writing a story that involves multiple worlds. "The hardest part was figuring out how to go on after the beginning and how to introduce the concept of multiple worlds and this magic stylus, without making it boring. Stories have to be entertaining," William said. "I don't want to read a story that gets boring halfway through. It has to keep moving for the reader."



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A lot of modern stories have forgotten how to write villains. I like a real villain, not just somebody who's misunderstood. It's fun when the villain has a reason for being bad." The villain in William's story is after a magic stylus that comes into the possession of the hero, Daniel. "Daniel is a typical teenager. He's not 'the chosen one.' Well, he is and he isn't. You'll have to wait and see. But he's not Harry Potter. There's no prophecy to fulfill."

The tale involves multiple worlds. "Daniel's world is called Admar, and it's the most like our world," William explained. "Bendara has elves and is kind of like Tolkien's



Middle Earth. Elderglen is a peaceful village world. Dustreach is like the Old West. Then there are Lyora and the Smudge Lands. All of the different worlds are connected through Marginalia De Mundis, the library of worlds. The ways the worlds are connected are not random. They aren't completely,

physically, different places in space and time."

Writing such a huge universe can be exhausting, so William is taking a little break before plunging headlong into book two. But that doesn't mean he's putting creative pursuits on the back burner. "I'm going to try out for the Waxahachie Community Theatre production of *Mary Poppins*. There are a lot of good roles in that play." His experience in previous local productions should stand him in good stead, and give him even more experience, both literary and real-world, to draw on as he continues writing worlds into existence.

William wants the stories he tells to keep readers entertained and guessing. "The purpose of storytelling is to convey some idea to the reader," he said. "But it's no good if the idea takes over the story. You want to read it first. Then, at the end, you know what the message is, not at the beginning or in the middle." **NOW**

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

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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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Zoomed In: Carole Craig and Angela Thompson

By Becky Walker

According to Waxahachie Kiwanis Club member Carole Craig, "Each club has its own service project that is unique to their community."

Since 2022, the Waxahachie Kiwanis have held their Christmas in July Clothing Drive, collecting new clothing to benefit WISD students in need. Local businesses set up trees with tags listing needed items for people to select and purchase. "The school district gave us space for the clothes closet," Angela Thompson said. "Last year when we held our shopping day, we had about 111 kids come through, and all of them walked out with three outfits."

"The kids enjoyed it because these are brand-new clothes, not hand-me-downs," Carole added.

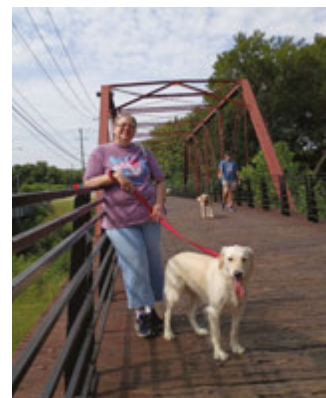
"We are trying to get our name out there so people know who we are," Angela said. "We meet the third Tuesday of each month at 6:00 p.m. at Coleman."



Gary Fox spends a warm Saturday afternoon sharing country music with downtown shoppers outside Maxwell Jewelry.



Waxahachie Cheer holds a car wash to fund programs throughout the year.



NOW Magazines' managing editor, Becky Walker, takes Abigail for a walk in Downtown Waxahachie.



Baylor Scott & White Medical Center holds a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new East Patient Tower.



Melody Holmes and her children, Ezekiel and Gabrielle, make lava lamps during story time at Paper Leaves Shop.

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BALANCE GSK



Zoomed In:
Dejanae Gonzales
and Rick Garner

By Becky Walker

Waxahachie Animal Services’ Dejanae Gonzales and Rick Garner, owner of Waxahachie’s Pet Supplies Plus and Mansfield’s Wag N’ Wash, welcomed visitors to a pet adoption event held at Pet Supplies Plus. “We’ve been collaborating for four years,” Rick informed. “I’ve been working with pets all my life, and we work with all of the different shelters and municipalities to host adoption events.” “I’ve always been an animal person,” Dejanae smiled. “Before I worked here, I worked at the Animal Hospital of Ovilla.”

Waxahachie Animal Services’ mission is to find new loving homes for the animals in its care. “Our next adoption event will be the Bark & Brew at Railport Brewing Company,” Dejanae said. If you’re looking for a new fur baby, they hope you will give one of their animals a second chance at the good life.



The Summer Soul Affair draws crowds to Railyard Park for an evening of music and fun.



Heating + Air Paramedics, a locally-owned and -operated HVAC company holds its ribbon-cutting ceremony.



Jossef Rosmon wins Best in Show at the Ellis County Art Association’s Sizzling Summer Art Show.



Fire Station No. 1 and the Waxahachie Police Department volunteer at H-E-B’s Kids’ Day.



Shirley Jones of Jams, Jellies, and More and her grandsons, Jordan Brown, Justus Brown and Myles Jones, sell vegetables at the Waxahachie Farmers Market.

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WaxahachieNOW

September 2026



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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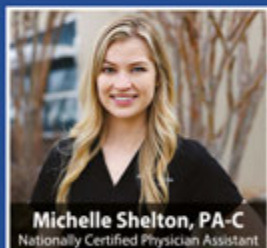
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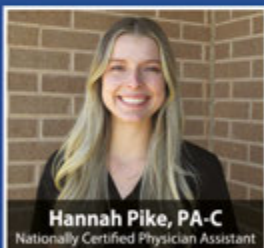
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Breakfast Hash

- 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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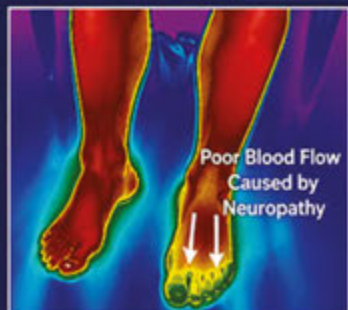
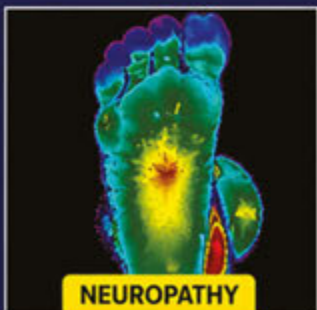
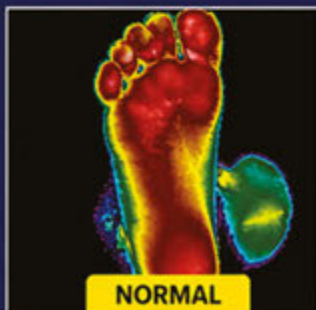
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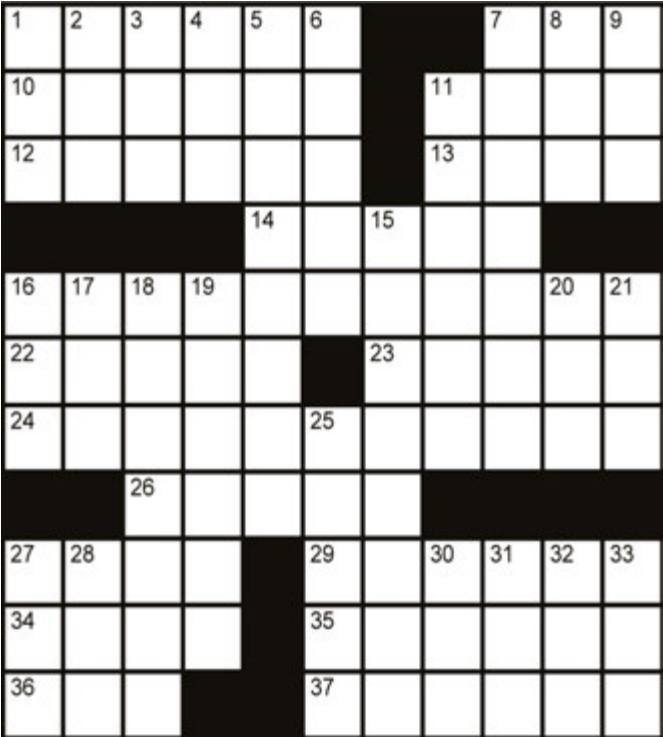
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Crossword Puzzle



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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
- Down**

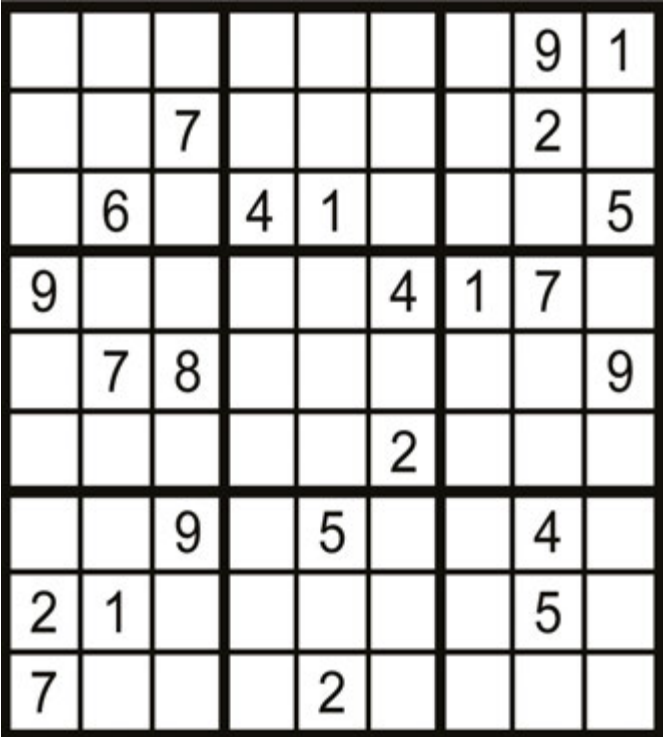
 - 23 Celtic whiskey
 - 24 Oaf stated he busted a ruler
 - 26 Of the kidneys
 - 27 Travel on
 - 29 Already committed
 - 34 Commentators' piece
 - 35 From square one
 - 36 Impair
 - 37 Chartered
- Down**

 - 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
- Down**

 - 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

Sudoku Puzzle

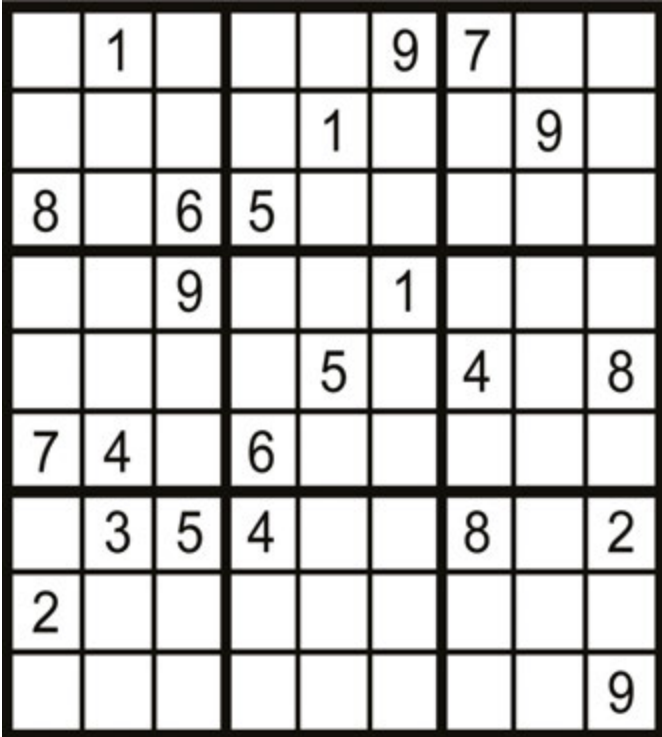
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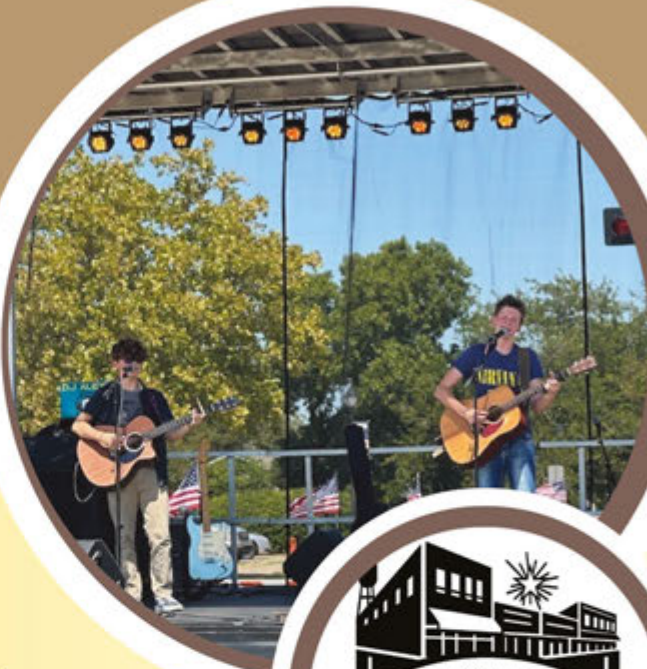
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C	H	A	I	N	S					B	E	D				
10	T	A	R	M	A	C				11	C	O	L	A		
12	S	T	E	P	P	E				13	O	H	M	Y		
							14	O	N	T	H	E				
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22	P	R	O	N	E					23	I	R	I	S	H	
24	H	E	A	D	O	F	S	T	A	T	E					
			26	R	E	N	A	L								
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
9	3	5	4	7	6	8	1	2
2	6	8	1	9	5	3	4	7
1	7	4	2	3	8	5	6	9

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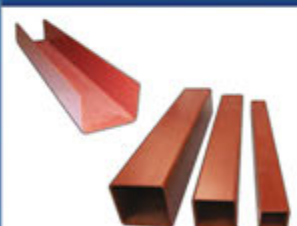


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