

*Gainesville*

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## PLAY BALL

BOYS BASEBALL OF  
COOKE COUNTY IS ALIVE  
AND WELL

## LOCAL

### Q&A

PAULINA  
SCHUTT-SWIATKOWSKI

# Fun outdoors with the family

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Summer Cammp Options Abound  
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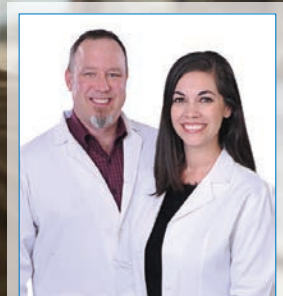
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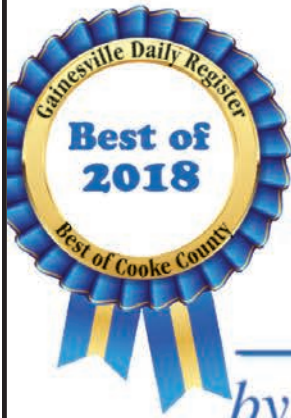
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### On the Cover

On the Cover credit to  
Tony Avila/Avil' Art. Photo  
taken at Gainesville  
Farmers Market during the  
first Movie Night for 2024.

**PUBLISHER** — Lisa Chappell  
**EDITOR** — Mike Eads  
**EDITORIAL CONTENT** — Anna Beall, Mike Eads  
**ADVERTISING** — Mona Burkhart  
**DESIGN & COMPOSITION** — Ashley Garey

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information

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Register advertising department by calling 940-665-  
5511 or visiting [www.gainesvilleregister.com/site/  
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# SUMMER CAMP OPTIONS ABOUND

*Special to Gainesville Living*

Summer camp season will be here before parents know it. While children anxiously await the last day of school, adults know that it can be challenging to keep kids occupied and mentally stimulated when they aren't in the classroom. Although it may be alright to enjoy a few days lounging around and playing video games, too much sedentary behavior is not good for anyone, even children. Families turn to summer camp to provide children with activities to occupy their time when school is not in session.

Camps catering to a variety of interests are open to youngsters, so there's likely one out there to excite every child. Each year, more than 25 million children and adults take part in the camp experience, says the American Camp Association. Summer camp gives kids a chance to spread their wings and enjoy new adventures. When seeking camps, families can consider interests, proximity, cost, and other variables. Here are some of the different types of camps families can consider.

## Day camp

Day camps are a popular choice. Day camps tend to be general recreation camps that

offer an array of activities. Campers are dropped off (or bussed) in the morning, and arrive home early evening. These camps are readily accessible and run by various organizations. Some camps enable you to pay by the week, rather than committing to an entire season.

## Sleep-away camp

Like the name implies, sleep-away camp hosts campers overnight, typically for several weeks. This may be children's first extended time away from home, and there's bound to be a few nerves that spring up. Round-the-clock activities and chances to bond with their peers can help kids overcome fears of being away from home.

## Academic camp

Academic camps focus their attention on various subjects, putting like-minded children together. Academic summer programs ensure children's brains stay active, helping students avoid that dreaded "summer slide." Some of these camps mimic a school day so they are familiar to kids. Academic focus may vary from general academia to specific subjects like

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) to astronomy to the arts.

## Scout camp

Boys and girls participating in scouting programs often have the option to attend summer camp. During camp kids will have an opportunity to earn badges and advance their rank. Many scout districts have relationships with a specific scout campsite where troops from all over live and advance together for a week or so during the summer.

## Fitness and sports camps

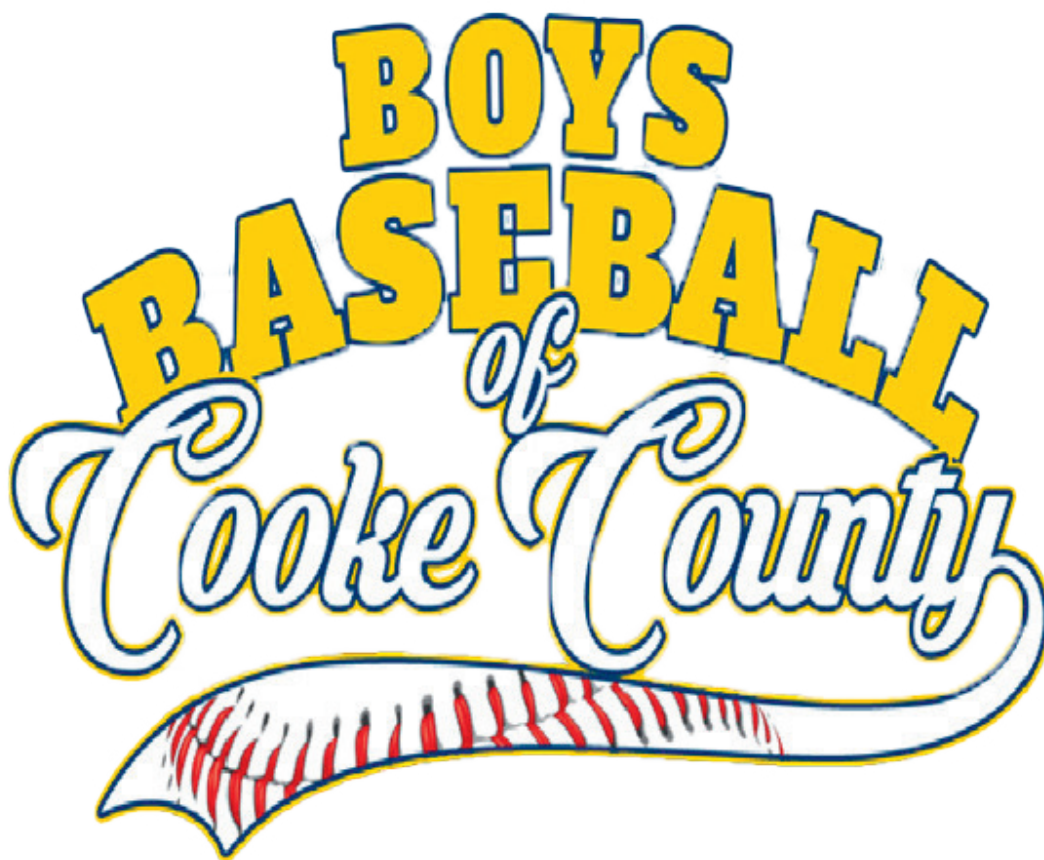
Fitness-minded campers or those who play particular sports can investigate camps that focus on fitness and sports performance. These may be more rigorous than other types of camps since they involve lots of physical activity. Wilderness preparation camp is another type of camp that may fit into this category. It will highlight survival training and help mold active hikers and campers.

Summer camp options abound. It's only a matter of identifying a path for children and then seeking a camp that offers the desired program.

# PLAY BALL

Little League Baseball is alive and well in Cooke County

*Mike Eads, Editor*



It is fashionable these days for people to claim that baseball — heralded as the National Pastime for most, if not all, of the 20th century — is no longer the big deal it once was. Fans and media alike blame three-hour-plus games, declining television ratings and seemingly stagnant action on the field for driving fans to basketball, football and other sports.

It appears to be alive and well in Cooke County, however.

Boys Baseball of Cooke County is celebrating its 70th year of competition this year, with boys from Gainesville, Muenster, Valley View, Callisburg and other towns competing in eight-, 10- and 12-under leagues. The league also started up

Girls Softball of Cooke County a few years ago at its Leonard Park complex in Gainesville a few years after the Boys & Girls Club ended its leagues.

League president Jeff Threadgill said participation has improved steadily since COVID claimed the 2020 season. All told, there are 700 boys and girls playing at the complex this spring, in the aforementioned three age groups.

Donnie Stradley, 52, is a blue fixture behind the plate at most games. The Gainesville High School graduate played in the league in 1970s and 80s, when it was packed with teams from the county seat, and the surrounding towns struggled to keep up. He's been coaching and umping for Boys Baseball of





Cooke County for 35 years.

"I just enjoy it," said Stradley. "I grew up playing ball here and wanted to get back to the community."

Stradley sees a lot of love for the game in the kids who roam their ball fields every spring and fall; however, he did acknowledge that it's different today.

"They (today's kids) would rather be on the video games, whereas in the summertime when you and I were playing, we were outside playing all day," he said.

They do have some of the habits of kids of yesteryear, though.

"They see all the chewing, the bubble gum and the batting stances are all different and that kind of stuff, and they're trying to mimic what they see on the major leagues and try to reenact it through the fields and stuff, and it's fun," Stradley said.

Another tradition that's alive and well is parents arguing balls-and-strikes from the stands.

"You know what? The parents are the worst critics that know the least about the sport," Stradley quipped. "In T-Ball, the parents are the worst. They

live vicariously through their kids and think their kids are signing major league contracts at six years old.

"But as they get older and the age groups go up, the parents get more laid back and understand that this is a recreational league and it's a learning experience for these kids," Stradley was quick to add "And that's what all these coaches down here are trying to do, is to teach the kids to better the programs at the high school level and that kind of stuff."

The other towns' teams are more



competitive than they used to be, Stradley noted, while Gainesville's talent pool has waned. It's a long term goal for him to restore Gainesville's place atop the heap, and he's working with GHS Athletic Director Neil Searcy to breathe some life in Gainesville's ISD's baseball programs.

He said Whitesboro has been strong in recent years, and sports a fan base which routinely packs the stands.

"They're driving 15 miles each way — parents, grandparents, everybody — just for the game," Stradley marveled.

That support shows up in other ways, too. Threadgill said there is strong volunteer support, with plenty of help to man the concession stand, maintain the fields and do the other drudge work necessary for the kids to go out and have a good time.

## CHANGING NARRATIVE?

Major League Baseball has taken heed of criticisms about overly-long games and boring play in the last few years by changing rules to encourage more base-stealing, ban the shifting of players to one side of the field to take away hits and compel pitchers to pitch to hitters quicker. The changes showed results in 2023, with Major League game times dropping well-below three hours for the first time in decades.

It has also invested heavily in the last two decades in cultivating more youth participation in baseball and softball, targeting both rural and urban kids.

"These days, the 'baseball is dying' narrative is what's actually dying. The rule changes that brought about a dramatically improved pace and helped usher in a 9.6% attendance uptick got a lot of ink in 2023. But beneath the surface, MLB also saw the benefits of its grassroots efforts to embed itself in the hearts







and minds of youngsters by getting bats and balls in their hands at an early age,” wrote Anthony Castrovince for MLB.com last month.

Castrovince, a veteran baseball writer, went on to note: “In the Sports & Fitness Industry Association’s (SFIA) recently released Topline Participation Report for 2023, baseball participation nationwide was calculated at 16.7 million -- the highest officially recorded level since SFIA’s survey of more than 120 sports began in 2008.”

The SFIA represents over 700 sporting goods and fitness brands, manufacturers, retailers, governing bodies and sports leagues across the U.S.

## PAYOFF

So is all of this effort on the local and national levels to promote the National Pastime paying off? Threadgill and Stradley think it’s worth it. And the ones whose opinions really matter seem to agree with them.

Banner Reese and Cord Winters were loosening up on the ball field on a warm early evening before Callisburg’s eight-and-under matchup with the undefeated Whitesboro squad.

Callisburg’s record wasn’t quite so impressive, Winters and Reese acknowledged, but they were confident ahead of the first pitch. Both were particularly itching to get their chances at the plate — they both profess to being good hitters.

“Baseball is my favorite sport,” said Winters, a second-grader. “My brother played it and my whole family played it. I tried it and I liked it so much.”

Reese noted his team’s slow start to the season, but he reiterated that he thought a win was in the offing.

“Well, maybe. I just hope so,” said Reese, who then turned around and finished his warmup tosses.

A few minutes later, the umpire barked, “Play ball.”



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# MAKE IT AN ACTION-PACKED SPRING

How to make the most of beautiful spring weather

*Anna Beall, Staff Writer*



Since 2019, Gainesville Farmers Market has been the home of movie nights. At these movie nights, people from all over Gainesville and Cooke County gather to have a good time watching movies together.

"It's great to get out and all enjoy the movie together," said Dan Doss at the April 13 movie night, "Wonka" hosted by The Candyman Co.

The inflatable screen and usually a bounce house is provided by Triple C Bounce Houses.

"I love all the kids playing, the atmosphere,

and being around everybody," said Brittany Camp. "It's the community; it's so good."

While things are set up through the Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce, it wouldn't be possible without the sponsors that keep it going.

"It's a way to give back to the community," said Ashley Collett, the Chamber's Membership and Events Coordinator. "We can facilitate it, but our sponsors are the ones that help us make it possible and make it as great as they are."



## 2024 Movie Nights

"A Bug's Life" on May 11, hosted by Dermatology and Skin Cancer Surgery Center

"Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Mutant Mayhem" on June 8, co-hosted by Susan Wells Realtor, Century 21 and AmeriDream Mortgage Group

"Trolls: Band Together" on July 13, hosted by Triple C Bounce Rentals

"Migration" on Sept. 14, hosted by Safran

"Hocus Pocus" on Oct. 19, hosted by Kayson's Candy Company

"The Goonies" on Nov. 9, hosted by Pecan Tree

Movies begin at sundown.

There's a lot more family fun to be had before it gets too hot this summer:

## Spring Fling

May 4 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Gainesville Farmers Market

This 25th annual event will feature some of the best Gainesville and Cooke County has to offer, from vendors to music to food trucks to the F100 truck show to so much more. There's also a full roster of special events, including performances from Dance Fever, a Tug o' War Tournament, a Hot Dog eating contest and a Jalapeño Eating Contest. For more information, visit <https://fb.me/e/g8OU-2GI7I>.

8-9:30 a.m.: Jazzercise

10-11:30 a.m.: Dance Fever

Noon: Hot Dog Eating Contest

1 p.m.: Jalapeno Eating Contest

2 p.m.: Baby Crawl

2-4 p.m.: Foam Party

2:30 p.m.: Tug o' War Tournament

## Farmers Market

May 11, June 8, July 13, August 10, Sept. 14, Oct. 26, Nov. 9 and Dec. 14 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m at the Gainesville Farmers Market

Each month, come on out for a nice day outside while supporting local businesses. Vendors with homemade foods, crafts and more set up to sell and have a good time with the community. For more information, contact Karley Simmons at [KSimmons@cogtx.org](mailto:KSimmons@cogtx.org).







### Summer Sounds

May 31, June 28 and July 26 from 7 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. at the Gainesville Farmers Market

The 17th annual Summer Sounds is gearing up for a rocking time this summer. Since Summer Sounds began, it has been a time of community and having good food with some good music. Things kicks off the last day in May with Desperado Eagles Tribute and Elevation Band. Then on June 28 Lover and and Cameron Hobbs take to the stage, and the season ends with July 26 with Infinite Journey and Blackout Betty.

### Cooke County Library

200 S. Weaver St. in Gainesville

The library is starting up its summer reading programs, encouraging people of all ages to read more, especially when kids are out of school and are less likely to be reading daily.

First up, the main Summer Reading Program allows kids to fill out a reading list of all the books they read over the summer to win some prizes. Sign up is June 1 through 15, and all reading lists have to be turned in by July 15.

Then there's other events throughout the summer, including Art in the Stacks, S.T.E.M.ed Up and Literary Legos, where kids can learn about art, science and more. To sign up and to see the full schedule, visit [cookecountylibrary.org](http://cookecountylibrary.org). For more information, contact the program coordinator Kimberly Reiter at [krater.cookectylib@gmail.com](mailto:krater.cookectylib@gmail.com).

### Shop the Farm

June 8, July 13 and August 10 from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Smith Farms 690 County Rd 241, Valley View

Come get fresh food, right from the farm on the second Saturday of each month. Get to know the farmer and learn a bit more about where our food comes from. For more information, visit the farm Facebook page at [Facebook.com/SmithFarmsValleyView](https://www.facebook.com/SmithFarmsValleyView).

### Giraffe 5K

June 22 at 7:30 a.m. at Leonard Park in Gainesville

The Frank Buck Zoo will host its third annual Giraffe Day 5K as part of a worldwide effort to raise money and awareness for the Giraffe Conserva-

tion Foundation (GCF). The event is scheduled to be near World Giraffe Day, which is the day before. As the event gets closer, more information will be available at [frankbuckzoo.com](http://frankbuckzoo.com) or on the zoo's Facebook page, [facebook.com/FrankBuckZoo](https://www.facebook.com/FrankBuckZoo).

### Splash Bash

July 13 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. at the Gainesville Farmers Market

Triple C Bounce Rentals is bringing water slides, games and more to the Gainesville Farmers Market. This event will be fun for all ages and will end with movie night, "Trolls: Band Together." For more information, visit <https://fb.me/c3mNM5SRQ>.

### All You Can Eat barbecue

August 10 at 6 p.m. at Muenster Heritage Park

This barbecue hosted by the Muenster Volunteer Fire Department promises a good time with an auction, raffle and plenty of activities for the kids. Tickets for adults are \$15, kids four years old to 10 are \$10, and kids 3 and younger get in for free.



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# Landscaping to help protect from wildfires





**M**any landscapes were lost in the fires that burned rampantly throughout the Texas Panhandle, leaving some homeowners wondering what trees, shrubs and other plant materials to remove or replace to create a more fire-wise landscape for the future.

### **ASSESSING TREES AND SHRUBS AFTER A WILDFIRE**

“The main thing you want to check for after a tree or shrub has been through a fire is if it has live buds and living cambium,” said Christina Reid, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service horticulturist for Lubbock County. “If it doesn’t have either of these living tissues, it’s time to start the removal process.”

Cambium tissue provides unspecialized cells to promote growth, and the cambium layer can be found between the xylem and phloem structures of the plant.

“Look for moist, green or cream-colored inner bark,” Reid said. “If the inner bark is dried and brown, it likely has been killed by heat. But if your

trees and shrubs have live buds and living cambium throughout much of their canopy, they have a better chance of survival. Water them and add compost back to the soil as soon as safely possible.”

She said if the trunk of the tree or shrub has been burned and bark is gone, wrapping it will help prevent pest pressure.

According to Texas A&M Forest Service, partially burned but otherwise healthy deciduous trees may still be able to produce new leaves and stems – sometimes even producing sprouts at their base. Most tree species are not likely to survive if more than 50% of their circumference is damaged, but hardwoods and pines often recover from 100% crown scorch in periods of normal rainfall if the roots, the stem and the buds in the crown are uninjured.

However, significant destruction of the vascular tissue in one of the tree’s three main parts – the roots, stem or crown — will usually be lethal.

More information on how to assess trees after a fire can be found in the Texas A&M Forest Service publications *Post-Fire Evaluation of Hardwood Trees* and *Post-Fire Evaluation of Pine Trees*.



## CHOOSING THE RIGHT FIRE-RESISTANT PLANT MATERIALS

Whether it's replanting after a fire or just landscaping in general, one of the most important things to remember is to plant trees, shrubs other plant materials that are suitable to your land and region. A healthy, well-maintained landscape that includes fire-resistant plant materials is important to the survival of a home during a wildfire.

"Plants with a high moisture content do not readily ignite and can withstand higher temperatures, while plants that have resins, oils and volatiles are highly flammable and should be kept away from the home," said Ethan Law, Texas A&M Forest Service woodland ecologist serving 26 Panhandle counties. "Highly combustible plants produce more heat as well as greater flame lengths."

He said slower-growing plants reduce the amount of maintenance time and low-growing plants help maintain the vertical separation of fuels.

"Less dense plants produce less material to burn, while more compact plants produce more fuel to burn," Law said. "Generally, deciduous trees are preferred to evergreen trees as some evergreens are very high in volatile compounds."

He suggested choosing trees that have minimal branching down low, as that will help keep them from igniting during a wildfire.

Seedling trees are typically an economical and efficient way to handle planting multiple trees as they are more cost effective at scale and reduce handling issues that arise with larger trees. When replanting trees, it's best to use a mixture of bareroot and containerized hardwoods.

"The benefits of bareroot seedlings are that they are lighter and easier to handle and have been grown outside in native soil," Law said. "Containerized seedlings are typically in tree tubes and will have soil and more fine roots."

In Texas, it's best to wait until fall



to replant trees when there is typically more rainfall, which means the soil will have sufficient moisture and nutrients. Moist soil makes it easier for newly planted trees to take root and absorb the nutrients needed to thrive.

Law said some of the more fire-resistant trees for the Panhandle include pecan, Texas redbud and Texas red oak.

Reid added that other species of fire-adapted or fire-wise trees that grow well in the Panhandle include bur oak, desert willow, Chinese pistache and golden rain tree. More fire-resistant native tree species for the area include net-leaf hackberry, willow and western soapberry.

More information on trees that grow well in the Panhandle can be found using Texas A&M Forest Service's tree selector feature or by visiting AgriLife Extension's Texas Tree Plant-

ing Guide.

Some fire-wise shrubs and perennials for the area include primrose, aster, columbine, liatris, lantana, Turk's cap, beauty berry, crape myrtle, abelia, agarita and boxwood.

"When planting close to the home, forb species are preferred over full shrubs for fire resistance," Law said.

Tansy aster, gay feather and other wildflowers are fire-resistant and typically do well in the Panhandle climate. Some of the shrubs that do well include Texas lantana, four-wing saltbush and buttonbush.

## FIRE-WISE LANDSCAPING AND A DEFENSIBLE SPACE

Fire-resistant landscaping creates a separation between the fuels a fire





needs to continue burning. Those fuels may include the trees surrounding your property, the plants used for landscaping and even the home itself.

“The goal of fire-resistant landscaping is to lower the intensity of a wildfire as it approaches your home, and the first 30 feet from your home in all directions is called the defensible space,” said Juan Rodriguez, wildland-urban interface coordinator, Amarillo, with Texas A&M Forest Service’s Panhandle Branch incident response.

“Maintaining defensible space around the home greatly improves its chance of surviving a wildfire.”

Rodriguez said in an environment with low humidity, high temperatures and high winds, fire intensity can be very extreme. “Even here in the High Plains where our primary fuel is grass,

we have seen flame lengths of 20-30 feet,” he said.

When we have structures surrounded by heavier, more volatile fuels that go untreated or unmaintained, they can be at higher risk to heat and flame exposure. Embers carried in the wind and settling into openings around the home can sit and smolder, going unnoticed and ultimately catching the home on fire.

Rodriguez said to help your landscape become more fire resistant, plant along the contour of your property and avoid any straight lines of disturbed soil as water will follow that groove.

Erin Jones, AgriLife Extension horticulturist for Randall County, recommends reducing the amount of flammable material near homes and structures by pruning any dense

branches or shedding tree bark.

“Removing fallen leaves as well as tall, dry grasses while using non-combustible materials, such as rocks, turf grasses and flame-resistant mulches, can also help prevent the spread of fires,” she said. “Additionally, hydrated plant materials don’t readily burn so keeping plants well-watered can help.”

To develop a defensible space around the home, Texas A&M Forest Service suggests designing a landscape based on home ignition zones. These are: the immediate zone, 0-5 feet from the home; the intermediate zone, 5-30 feet from the home; and the extended zone, 30-100 feet from the home.

- The immediate zone — Xeriscaping is encouraged, but if there are plants, they should be green, healthy and low to the ground. They should also be spaced well apart and not located too close to any windows. For the house, seal any openings where embers can get in, repair loose or damaged window screens, install metal mesh over vents and clear debris under porches, in gutters or in any openings around home.

- The intermediate zone — Landscaping or hardscaping here can create breaks to help influence and decrease fire behavior. The landscaping in this zone should typically consist of more fire-resistant trees, shrubs and grass. Well-maintained lawns or short grasses, even wildflowers, can be used. After that, incorporate fire-resistant shrubs and trees.

- The extended zone — Here the goal is to interrupt the fire’s path and slow down the speed and intensity of the fire. Trees and vegetation can still be present, but it’s important to have good tree spacing and proper limbing to reduce torching. Consider practices such as shaded fuel breaks consisting of well-spaced, thinned-out trees.

The Texas A&M Forest Service provides additional information related to post-fire recovery, including preventing soil erosion, reforestation, tree planting, brush control and landscaping considerations.



# PAULINA SCHUTT-SWIATKOWSKI

## ***Q. Who are you?***

My name is Paulina Schutt-Swiatkowski. I am a communication professional who has a diverse background in communication, advertising, and public relations at various levels. I have my PhD in Communication with a minor in Family Studies and Human Development from the University of Arizona.

Most recently, I was a professor in Communication Studies at Northern Arizona University. I have taught classes like organizational communication, research, public speaking, and interpersonal communication.

I have also worked with various clients on their communication needs, both as an independent contractor and within various agencies.

## ***Q. How did you wind up here in Gainesville?***

Honestly? I saw the job ad pop up in Indeed.com and thought it sounded like a great opportunity to do things I'm good at in a new (to me) environment (both in terms of city government work and in the state of Texas). I'm a life-long learner so this seemed like a great way to lean into that in a new way, using my skills while continuing to fulfill a more broad life-long purpose of helping people become informed and engaged citizens. I taught college students how to do it as a professor, and now I get to make information more accessible and approachable to the citizens of Gainesville, TX as the Communication and Outreach Specialist.

## ***Q. What were your marching orders when you got this new job?***

Centralize the communication for the city internally, work on making more intentional connections between the city and the citizens, and help the city fulfill its various plans for development, improvement, and

overall growth by helping the city and the citizens understand each other.

## ***Q. The city already has a Facebook page and a website, plus the local papers cover the council. Why does it need a PR/Marketing person?***

Communication isn't just about the tools like a Facebook page or a website. It's about how those tools are used. Anyone can create a Facebook page, but how can that page be used as a way to help facilitate communication? How can technical and often frustratingly complex city legal jargon be translated into a language that we can understand without having an MBA or a legal degree?

We want the City of Gainesville citizens who are CPAs, grocery store employees, public service workers, waiters, care providers, medical professionals, stay-at-home parents, and everyone in between to have the same opportunity to understand what the city is doing to help them. Everything that happens behind the scenes is FOR the citizens. We want to help develop a good, prosperous, safe community that our citizens can be proud of. More importantly, we want to make sure we maintain the transparency and accessibility that a government entity should-- we work for our citizen and we want them to understand what we are doing as much as possible. That's where I come in. I may not have all of the answers, but I have the training and experience to ask the right questions and figure out where to go for the answers.

It's not about the channels and information — it's about how we use the channels and information to build the relationship between the city and the citizens.

## ***Q. Will you represent all city departments or just certain ones?***

I represent all of the city departments. Each department does something unique

for the city and its citizens. Each department offers their own service to our citizens that needs to be highlighted and potentially explained. We want our citizens to know what's going on and how it can impact them and it's my job to work with every department to help them communicate their activities, projects, and plans to our citizens as best as we can.

## ***Q. What sorts of city services are available to local folks that they aren't aware of?***

There are so many services that our citizens could be more aware of. Here are a few: ability to see/pay their utilities bill online, transfer station is open on Saturdays, there is a form to report a crime to the Police Department online, there's also an online form to send to Public Works to report a pothole, there's a link on our website where you can report a street light issue to Oncor, information about Moss Lake boat permits, how many activities there are at the Civic Center, you can rent the Depot and various structures in our parks, and you can schedule a solid waste pick up with Solid Waste.

## ***Q. What do you do in your spare time?***

Currently I do a lot of baby chasing with two little boys. But when I get some time to myself, I also enjoy working out, being outside even if it's just a walk around the neighborhood, reading, and watching reality TV is my guilty pleasure.

I'm also a bit of a foodie in that I try to patronize local restaurants when I go somewhere new to try to get a sense of the community — food can tell you a lot about an area. And my parents are business owners so I try to support small/local businesses in general as much as possible to sort of pay-it-forward, but especially when it comes to food.





Paulina  
Schutt-Swiatkowski



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## SUMMER FRUIT SALAD WITH HONEY LEMON DRESSING

Sam Hu | Ahead of Thyme  
Total Time: 45 minutes  
Yield: 8 medium tacos (8-inches)

Chicken tacos are juicy and tender, loaded with flavor, delicious, and so easy to make. They are perfect for Taco Tuesday or a Cinco de Mayo Mexican fiesta.

### INGREDIENTS

#### For the chicken:

- 4 boneless and skinless chicken breasts (about 2 pounds)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 1 tablespoon lime juice, freshly squeezed
- ½ teaspoon garlic, minced
- ½ teaspoon chili powder
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper

#### For the tacos:

- 8 medium flour tortillas (8-inches in diameter)
- ½ cup yellow onions, diced
- ½ cup fresh cilantro, finely chopped

### INSTRUCTIONS

#### Cook the chicken:

In a large mixing bowl, combine chicken breasts with 1 tablespoon oil, lime juice, garlic, and all seasoning including chili powder, cumin, paprika, oregano, salt, and pepper. Toss well to coat. Let it marinate for at least 20 minutes or overnight in the fridge. You can also combine everything into a large Ziploc bag and press the seasoning around the chicken to coat.

When ready to cook, heat the remaining 1 tablespoon oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat until the hot oil sizzles, about 1 minute. Add chicken breasts and cook until golden brown, about 6-8 minutes per side. The internal temperature for the chicken should reach 165F as read on a meat thermometer.

Air fryer instructions: You can also cook the chicken breasts in the air fryer at 350F for 30 minutes until the internal temperature reaches 165F as read on a meat thermometer.

Oven instructions: You can bake in a preheated 375F oven for 30-35

minutes until the internal temperature reaches 165F as read on a meat thermometer.

Transfer the chicken breasts onto a cutting board and dice into small ½-inch pieces. Return the diced chicken to the skillet and toss in the pan juices to coat. Set aside.

#### Assemble the tacos:

Heat the tortillas according to the package instructions, or heat in an ungreased cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat for 30 seconds per side. You can also heat it directly on a gas burner for a few seconds to get char marks on the edges. Repeat with all tortillas.

Divide the chopped chicken into each tortilla and top with chopped onions, cilantro, and a squeeze of lime juice. You can also top chicken tacos with Pico de Gallo, Lime Crema, Creamy Cilantro Lime Dressing, or Mango Salsa.







## EASY SKILLET NEAPOLITAN MARGHERITA PIZZA

Sam Hu | Ahead of Thyme

Total Time: 13 minutes

Yield: 1 (8-inch) pizza

Diet: Vegetarian

Quick and easy skillet Neapolitan margherita pizza has an iconic thin and soft crust with a perfectly crisp exterior, and simple and fresh toppings.

### INGREDIENTS:

250 grams pizza dough

1/4 cup pizza sauce

1/4 cup fresh mozzarella cheese, sliced

4-5 fresh basil leaves

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Turn the oven broiler to high. Heat a cast-iron skillet on the stove, over medium-high heat.

Transfer pizza dough onto a floured surface. Gently press the pizza dough with your fingers into an 8-inch circle. Sprinkle some flour if needed to prevent stickiness.

Have your pizza sauce and ingredients prepped and ready close by. Once the skillet is hot, place the flattened dough onto the skillet. Stretch out the dough a bit more to let it spread over the entire skillet. Quickly add the pizza sauce and spread evenly over the pizza crust. Place sliced fresh mozzarella cheese and basil leaves evenly on top.

Leave the pizza to cook on the skillet for 5 minutes or until the bottom of the crust starts to brown.

Transfer the cast-iron skillet to the preheated broiler and cook for 3 minutes or until the crust is blistered and slightly charred. Keep your eye closely on the broil, because the intense heat can make pizza crust burn quite quickly.

Remove the skillet and transfer the pizza onto a parchment lined cutting board. Slice pizza into 4-6 pieces with a knife or pizza cutter and serve.



## GREEK CHICKEN GYROS WITH TZATZIKI

Sam Hu | Ahead of Thyme

Total Time: 1 hour 34 minutes

Yield: 6 gyros

This refreshing and light, easy Greek chicken gyros is packed with tender souvlaki chicken, Greek salad, and homemade tzatziki sauce, all wrapped in a pita.

### INGREDIENTS:

#### Chicken Souvlaki Marinade:

- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic, crushed
- juice of 1 lemon
- 3 tablespoons fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 + 1/2 tablespoon dried oregano
- 1/2 tablespoon dried mint
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 3 bay leaves

#### Chicken:

- 2 pounds chicken breast (approximately 3 chicken breasts), cut into 1.5-inch cubes
- 1 tablespoon olive oil

#### Tzatziki Sauce:

- 1/2 large cucumber, unpeeled
- 1 cup plain Greek yogurt
- 2 cloves garlic, pressed or finely minced
- 1/2 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 2 teaspoons freshly squeezed lemon juice (juice of 1/4 lemon)
- 1 + 1/2 tablespoon fresh dill, chopped
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- pinch of ground black pepper

#### Toppings:

- 1 + 1/2 cup romaine lettuce, chopped
- 1/2 cup cherry tomatoes, quartered
- 1/2 cup red onion, chopped (roughly 1 small red onion)
- 1/2 cup cucumber, sliced and chopped into quarters (roughly 1 medium cucumber)
- 2 tablespoons feta cheese, crumbled
- salt and pepper, to taste

#### Gyros:

- 6-8 pita breads

### INSTRUCTIONS:

In a large serving bowl, add romaine lettuce, tomatoes, black beans, corn, avocado, red onion, yellow cheddar, and sliced chicken (if using).

Drizzle southwest salad dressing over the salad and serve or toss to coat. Serve immediately.





## GREEK SALMON

Sam Hu | Ahead of Thyme

Total Time: 20 minutes

Yield: 3-4 servings

Diet: Gluten Free

Greek salmon is delicious, flaky, and tender. This healthy oven-baked salmon is packed with Mediterranean flavors and is ready in just 20 minutes.

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb. salmon, cut into fillets
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice, freshly squeezed
- 1 tablespoon fresh dill, chopped
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 clove garlic, grated or minced
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper

### INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Pat dry salmon fillets and place skin-side down on a lined quarter sheet baking pan.

In a small mixing bowl, stir to combine olive oil, lemon juice, dill, oregano, garlic, salt, and pepper. Brush or pour the marinade over the salmon and let it sit while the oven is preheating.

Bake for 15 minutes. Let rest for 5 minutes, then serve with an extra squeeze of lemon juice on top, if desired.



## EASY GRILLED SHRIMP BOIL

Sam Hu | Ahead of Thyme

Total Time: 45 minutes

Yield: 4-6 servings

Diet: Gluten Free

Easy, garlicky and buttery grilled shrimp boil with prawns, corn, baby potatoes and sausage, seasoned and tossed with parsley takes just 20 minutes to cook.

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 lb. tiger prawns (or jumbo shrimp), peeled and deveined
- 2 tablespoons old bay seasoning, divided
- 2 medium ears of corn, husks removed and cut crosswise into 2-inch slices
- 10 baby potatoes, halved
- 2-3 sausages, sliced
- 1 lemon, quartered
- 5 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1/4 cup melted butter, divided
- 3 teaspoons parsley, freshly chopped, divided
- 1 tablespoon olive oil

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Turn the oven broiler to high. Heat a cast-iron skillet on the stove, over medium-high heat.

Transfer pizza dough onto a floured surface. Gently press the pizza dough with your fingers into an 8-inch circle. Sprinkle some flour if needed to prevent stickiness.







## MEDITERRANEAN TURKEY BURGERS

Sam Hu | Ahead of Thyme

Total Time: 50 minutes

Yield: 4 turkey burgers

Mediterranean turkey burgers are tender, juicy, and delicious, loaded with garlic, fresh dill, and lemon juice. The perfect summer weeknight meal.

### INGREDIENTS

#### For the turkey burger patties:

- 3 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 1 tablespoon garlic, minced
- 1 lb. ground turkey
- 1/2 cup breadcrumbs
- 2 tablespoons fresh dill, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice (from half a lemon), freshly squeezed
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper

#### For the burger toppings:

- 4 hamburger buns, sliced in half
- 4 pieces of lettuce
- 4 slices tomato, 1/4-inch thick
- 1/2 cup tzatziki sauce

### INSTRUCTIONS

#### Prepare the Turkey Patties:

In a large skillet, heat 2 tablespoons oil over medium-high heat for 2

minutes until sizzling hot. Add onions and garlic and sauté until tender and nicely browned, about 2-3 minutes. Set aside on a plate for 5 minutes to cool down slightly.

In a large mixing bowl, add ground turkey, sautéed onion and garlic, breadcrumbs, dill, lemon juice, cumin, salt, and pepper. Stir well with a spatula to combine everything together (or use your hands to press the ingredients together to evenly combine).

Shape the ground turkey mixture into a firm ball. This helps the mixture bind together to yield firm patties. Cover the bowl with plastic cling wrap and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes, up to overnight.

Divide the turkey mixture into 4 equal parts and use your hands to roll them into balls. Then, shape them into patties by flattening them in the palm of your hand until they are about 1/2-inch thick.

#### Cook the Turkey Patties:

Heat the remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil in a cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat until sizzling hot, about 2 minutes. Place patties on the skillet and cook for 3-5 minutes until nicely seared and starting to brown up the sides. Flip the patties over and cook for another 3-5 minutes, until the internal temperature for the patties reaches 165 F as read on a meat thermometer.

#### Assemble the Turkey Burgers:

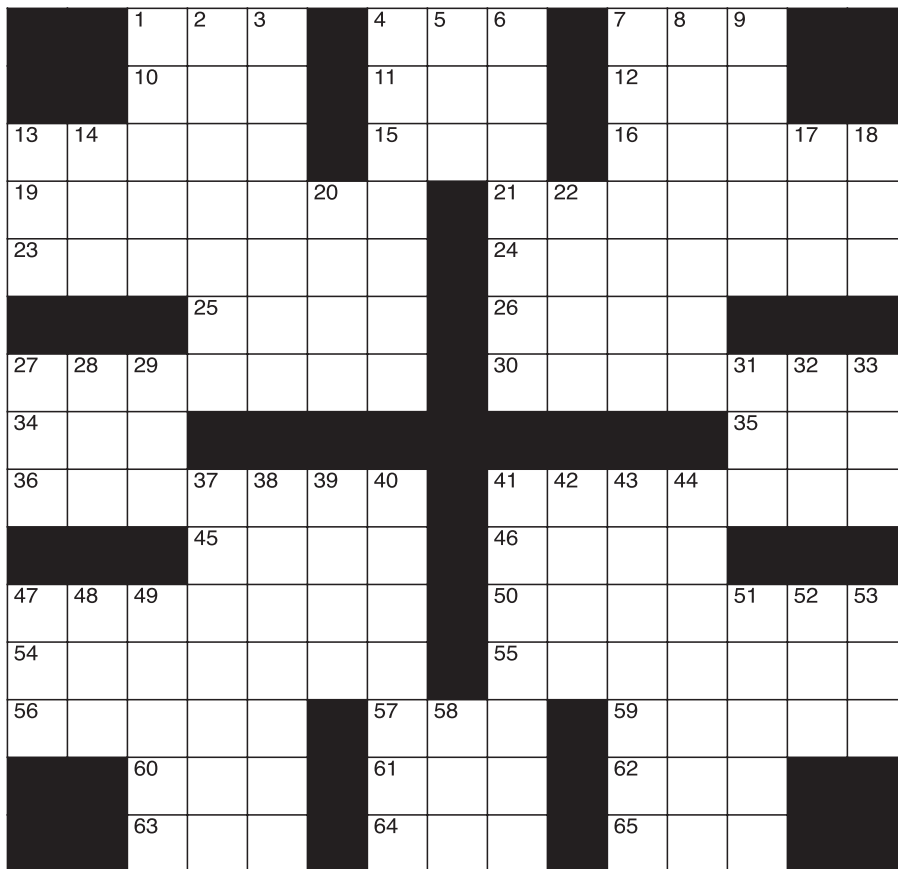
Slice the hamburger buns in half and toast them on the grill, if desired.

On each hamburger bun, add a piece of lettuce and a turkey patty. Drizzle 1 to 2 tablespoons of tzatziki sauce on top, and top the patty with a slice of tomato. Place the top half of the bun on top to assemble the burger.

Serve with a side of crispy french fries or a side salad such as coleslaw or macaroni salad.



# Crossword Puzzle



## CLUES ACROSS

1. Midway between south and southeast
4. For each
7. Airborne (abbr.)
10. Photographs
11. They —
12. It's important in respiration (abbr.)
13. Monetary unit
15. Cool!
16. A son of Jacob
19. Cut off
21. Devour
23. Agent of one's downfall
24. Best
25. Network of nerves
26. Partner to "oohs"
27. Origins
30. Sewing utensil
34. Alias
35. Swiss river
36. Greek mythological figure
41. Type of whiskey
45. Lay to rest
46. "Rule, Britannia" composer
47. Select jury
50. Feeling
54. Action regarded as morally wrong
55. Makes angry
56. Act incorrectly
57. Defensive nuclear weapon
59. Class of escort aircraft carrier
60. To what degree
61. Buzzing insect
62. The human foot
63. "The Leftovers" actress Dowd
64. A place to stay
65. Sun up in New York

## CLUES DOWN

1. An involuntary muscular contraction
2. Earnest
3. Cuts out surgically
4. Can't move
5. Baseball stat
6. British soldier
7. Traditional medicine plants
8. Political party controlled by managers
9. Hebrew prophet
13. Supporter
14. Relative biological effectiveness (abbr.)
17. Liberty Mutual mascot
18. Georgia rockers
20. A place where building is done
22. Large, deep-bodied fish
27. Clothing retailer
28. Supplement with difficulty
29. Annoy constantly
31. Founder of Babism
32. Indigenous person in parts of Asia
33. Sea eagle
37. Leave behind
38. Time of day
39. Colorless crystalline compound
40. They lay out course requirements
41. A diamond has three
42. Algerian coastal city
43. Remove cover
44. Rechristened
47. Distinctive practice
48. Defunct phone company
49. Turkish officer of high rank
51. Eliminate from the body
52. Witness
53. Soviet Socialist Republic
58. Founding Father Franklin





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