

FEATURES



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RUNNIN' THE ROUTE

SHAMROCK

by Mike Flores

From the iconic U-Drop Inn to an unexpected piece of the Blarney Stone, Dr. Mike Flores kicks off the Texas leg of his Route 66 journey in Shamrock. Along the way, he blends history, legend, and personal reflection — plus a kitschy soundtrack — inviting readers to experience the Panhandle through curiosity, movement, and a runner's eye for the stories hidden just off the road.



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DESTINATION

SOUTH AFRICA

by Michele Agostini

A journey into the wild — and the self. From sunrise safaris in the Greater Kruger National Park to unforgettable encounters with the "Big Five," Michele Agostini reflects on a bucket-list journey through South Africa that became far more than a destination. Fourteen days of awe, beauty, and deep personal reflection unfold across pristine reserves, luxury safari camps, and moments that forever changed her perspective on nature, humanity, and wonder.



2025 IN REVIEW & A 2026

ECONOMIC FORECAST

A look back at the forces that shaped 2025 — and what regional financial leaders expect in the year ahead, from agriculture and energy to housing and growth across the Texas Panhandle.



KAREN ROBERTS — GET FIT

by Callie Holton

After personal loss led her to lace up a pair of running shoes at age 38, Karen Roberts discovered more than a fitness routine — she found a calling. From her first walk-run workouts to building Get Fit into a thriving Panhandle institution, Roberts' story is one of grit, consistency, and community. As Get Fit opens a second location, her journey reminds readers that big transformations begin with small, faithful steps.

DEPARTMENTS

6 Buzzwords: Business news on people, promotions, moves, and milestones shaping our region.

8 Calendar: Concerts, comedy, theater "The Cottage", hockey, indoor soccer, and more — what's happening across the Panhandle this month.

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Thoughtfully prepared, beautifully presented. A fresh look at spaces, flavors, and experiences that bring people to the table.

50 Chomp: Resolve to enjoy more meals prepared by your favorite local restaurants — because good food belongs in a good year.

EVENT RECAP

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18 Legacy: National Philanthropy Day celebrated the individuals and organizations whose generosity strengthens our community.

21 Festive: The Lighting of the Olivia's Angels Hospice Tree offered a moment of reflection, remembrance, and hope during the Christmas season.

42 Artistry: The Hutchinson County Historical Museum's Quilt Show showcased artistry, tradition, and one of Texas' longest-running quilt exhibitions.

44 Saddle Up: WRCA kicked off the World Championship Ranch Rodeo with a high-energy celebration of Western heritage.



On the cover:

What will 2026 bring for the Texas Panhandle? See our economic outlook and editorial beginning on page 22.