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BBQ Posse picks

The Texas BBQ Posse hits the road in search of fabulous barbecue. Find out which six Texas places made the list.
Travel, 1K



VIDEO: Posse members tell what they look for in a plate of barbecue. **Plus:** 360-degree shots of all their picks. dallasnews.com/lifestyles

DALLAS COUNTY

Court tests political friendship

Wealthy Democratic donor, DA go way back but now face fallout from Hill case

By ED TIMMS and KEVIN KRAUSE
Staff Writers

He was the unlikely candidate who won an upset victory — and then became a national celebrity for freeing the wrongfully convicted.

She was a wealthy political benefactor — on a mission to turn a red state blue.

And from those origins, Dallas County District Attorney Craig Watkins and prominent Dallas lawyer and Democratic benefactor Lisa Blue began a political, professional and personal relationship.

But what was a storybook political union is now more J.R. Ewing

DALLAS attorney Lisa Blue responds via email. **29A**

than Cinderella.

After defense attorneys accused Watkins of pursuing mortgage fraud charges against Al Hill III, the great-grandson of a Texas oil legend, as a favor to Blue, a state district judge dismissed the case.

Before that happened, Blue pleaded the Fifth. Watkins was held in contempt. And her attorney said in court that federal authorities are investigating Watkins' and Blue's dealings in the Hill case.

What happens next could have a profound impact on the struggle between Republicans and Democrats

See **BLUE** Page 28A

Decreasing clouds



H 59
L 52

Metro, back page



McClatchy-Tribune

Did you remember to spring forward?

Daylight saving time began today. Your clocks should be set one hour ahead.

WORLD

Syrian rebels free U.N. peacekeepers

Rebels in Syria freed 21 U.N. peacekeepers after holding them hostage for four days. They drove them to the border with Jordan after accusations from Western officials that the group had tarnished the image of those fighting President Bashar Assad. **30A**

NATION

Rice is front-runner to become national security adviser

Susan Rice, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations who lost out in a bid to become secretary of state, has emerged as the front-runner to become national security adviser later this year. **6A**

POINTS

The new feminists?

What should we learn from criticism of Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg and Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer? **1P**

INSIDE

Lottery	2A	Classified	7-9D
Texas	3-5A	Movies	2E
Nation	6-10, 13-18A	Puzzles	12, 14-15E
World	20-22, 27, 30A	Homes	Sec. H
Obituaries	16-19B	Jobs	Sec. J
Sports TV	2C	Travel	Sec. K
Market Week	6D	Editorials	2P
Jumble	8D	Letters	2-3P

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EQUINE THERAPY | INSURANCE FIGHT

A trail of frustration



Kye R. Lee/Staff Photographer

Kaitlyn Samuels, 16, lights up while riding Uno at Rocky Top therapy center in Keller, aided by Evie Bishop (left), Stacie Standerfer and Jared Bogue. Kaitlyn was born with a brain abnormality and has scoliosis and physical disabilities.

Insurer calls treatment unproven, so parents push for law

By LESLIE MINORA
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KELLER — Jennifer Samuels lifts her teen daughter from her car seat, places her on her feet and wraps her arms around her. Mother behind child, they tread step by step into Rocky Top horse therapy center.

Kaitlyn, 16, was born with a brain abnormality, and her mental capacity has

not developed beyond a toddler's. She has severe scoliosis and physical disabilities, and will need physical therapy her entire life. Untreated, her scoliosis could kill her.

But her insurance — which comes through Tricare, the U.S. Department of Defense's health care provider — will not cover her physical therapy on a horse, or what some refer to as "hippotherapy" or "equine therapy."

Jennifer and her husband, Mark, an active-duty Navy captain based at the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Fort Worth, are advocating for Kaitlyn's Law, a federal measure to require coverage of her treatment. They are seeking the support of key local lawmakers. They are fighting against what they view as deep systemic flaws in the

See **PARENTS** Page 12A

UPDATE | PLANE PROPELLER ACCIDENT

Scruggs finds sister of strength

Injured writer builds bond with physical therapist who overcame own scars

By SARAH MERVOSH
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She reveals her vulnerabilities for all to see.

The jagged scar that runs down her left cheek. The eye that lags a beat behind the other. The shrunken end of her "little arm."

Lauren Scruggs bares all of

this in the middle of a bustling Frisco gym. She lies on a table, visible to everyone, during scar tissue massages at physical therapy. Her trainer's fingers work their way along the scars — the same path a plane propeller took when it sliced off her left hand and eye more than a year ago.

That horrific accident gar-

nered national attention, forcing the Plano native into the public eye. Everywhere, people latched onto Scruggs' story. Some used her resilience as motivation to push through their own trials. Last year, the 24-year-old shared her experience in a book, *Still LoLo*, ti-

See **SCRUGGS** Page 31A



Vernon Bryant/Staff Photographer

Lauren Scruggs, who lost her left hand and left eye, credits physical therapist Sheri Walters for much of her recovery.

IN DEPTH | EDUCATION

Sex ed is latest culture battle

Texas, with high rate of teen births, continues to restrict courses

By CHRISTY HOPPE
and DANIELLE ABRIL
Staff Writers

The culture wars are spilling into the classroom, where social conservatives are invoking abortion as a battle cry to place more restrictions on sex education.

Texas has lurked at the bottom of all states in preventing teen pregnancy, and what might be awkward for parents to discuss becomes even more fraught in the mix of schools and politics.

Half of the state's 1,028 school districts don't have sex ed instruction, and many of the rest teach abstinence-only.

In North Texas, abstinence-only curriculum dominates in districts that do present sex education programs.

But in a bipartisan poll of registered voters last month, 84 percent of Texans said they favor teaching not just abstinence, but also teaching high school students about condoms and birth control.

If there is such an overwhelming sentiment for more

See **SEX ED** Page 4A

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Michael Ainsworth/Staff Photographer

Left: Lauren Scruggs, with fellow amputee Jason Koger of Owensboro, Ky., has discovered a deepened joy since her accident. "There's a light to her," her physical therapist said.

Below: Scruggs (background), with Koger (right) and Rob Dodson, had to overcome her biggest fear — allowing the world to see her without her prosthetic arm.



Michael Ainsworth/Staff Photographer

Scruggs finds sister of strength

Continued from Page 1A

bled for her nickname.

As inspiring as Scruggs has been to her fans, her greatest impact has been on a woman who was initially skeptical. Her physical therapist, Sheri Walters, didn't expect to hit it off with Scruggs, but over the past year, the two women have formed a special connection. And through devastating challenges, their relationship has sustained them.

"We've become like sisters," Scruggs says.

In suffering, we have a choice: Shut down and hole up, or open ourselves to the possibilities of life again. Scruggs has discovered a deepened joy since her accident because she's found the strength to let herself be vulnerable — a strength she nurtures in physical therapy sessions, where Walters examines Scruggs' deepest insecurities and massages them away.

In an instant

On Dec. 3, 2011, a pilot Scruggs knew through a family friend took her up in a single-engine plane to look at Christmas lights. After they landed, Scruggs stepped through the small aircraft's only door and onto the tarmac. She never saw the propeller, whirring so fast that it was invisible against the dark and drizzly night.

When the blades struck Scruggs, just one-sixteenth of an inch of metal touched her. That's all it took to unleash a bloody chaos, slicing her skull, eye, cheek, shoulder and arm. She lost her left eye and hand, but didn't suffer the brain damage that doctors initially feared.

While she spent nearly a month in Parkland Memorial Hospital, news crews camped outside her parents' home. To protect her privacy, nurses resorted to calling her by a code name, "Sky." After she was discharged, paparazzi followed her from rehab and Whole Foods. *Dancing with the Stars* wanted her as a contestant, but she declined — she was still on 12 pain pills a day.

With the attention came some mean-spirited comments and shoddy reporting. Scruggs — a fashion journalist who is tan and petite with long hair and striking green eyes — was incorrectly identified as a model. Some concluded that only a "dumb blonde" could walk into a moving airplane propeller. Some speculated, falsely, that she was drunk at the time of the accident.

But others heard Scruggs' story and found inspiration. Strangers often approached her — cancer patients, mothers of sick or injured children, fellow amputees.

Stacy Kirkwood, a Lewisville nurse whose 8-year-old son was in the hospital with kidney problems at the time of the propeller accident, says the Scruggs family helped her stay strong.

"I hung on their incredible faith," says Kirkwood, who attended Scruggs' book signing this winter. "I needed to model their response or I just felt like I was circling the drain."

For Scruggs, the inspiration has been reciprocal.

"I didn't ever realize how much pain and suffering was going on in the world, in America, in my backyard," she says. "This is way bigger than myself."

Meanwhile, a mutual friend had approached Walters and asked her to take on Scruggs as a client. Walters hesitated. She had been battling health problems of her own. She barely had the will to get out of bed on



Vernon Bryant/Staff Photographer

Sheri Walters, working with Scruggs, wasn't sure the two would get along when she was asked to help the injured writer. But over many meetings at Athletes Performance gym in Frisco, Walters realized she had been wrong. "I just think of myself as an older, much wiser sister," Walters said.

some mornings.

But something inside told her to say yes.

'Don't stop, Grandma'

At a physical therapy session, Scruggs wears pink boxing gloves and attacks the thick, handheld punching pad that Walters holds. In the flurry of pink, it's hard to tell which punches come from a real fist formed with fleshy fingers, and which come from a mechanical prosthesis.

As Scruggs doles out roundhouse kicks, Walters eggs her on. "Keep going, Shirley," the name of Scruggs' grandmother. "You're wanting to quit. Don't stop. Don't stop, Grandma."

Between sets, Scruggs kicks like a cheerleader and spins like a dancer with mock seriousness. Walters stands nearby with her dirty-blond hair pulled back into a low ponytail, accentuating a fair, doe-eyed face that is dusted with freckles. When Scruggs' bangs fall into her face, Walters slips her hand under Scruggs' powder blue Lacoste hat and tucks them away.

They're an unlikely pair: Scruggs is a breezy woman who hugs strangers, speaks freely about her faith in God and paints her nails in alternating shades of pink for Valentine's Day. Walters is more reserved, prefers empirical evidence to emotion and wears track suits to work.

With all their differences, Walters hadn't expected to get along with Scruggs. She'd bought into the idea that Scruggs was the empty-headed pretty face portrayed in the media. But over many meetings at Athletes Performance gym in Frisco, Walters realized she'd been wrong.

Now, the women are close friends. They gossip about *The Bachelor*. They laugh when Scruggs' artificial arm flies off during a workout. They bicker

when Scruggs arrives to an appointment just in time, which Walters considers late.

"I just think of myself as an older, much wiser sister," Walters, 33, jokes as she flicks Scruggs with a resistance band.

Walters has helped Scruggs regain the ability to drive, chop vegetables and blow-dry her hair. She's encouraged Scruggs to defy expectations, pushing her to do 12 pull-ups and 43 push-ups. She's taught Scruggs to diminish the visibility of her facial scar by applying Scarguard, a liquid that resembles clear nail polish. It's a technique Walters knows firsthand after surgery left her with a scar that runs down her right cheek.

"She's saved my life this year," Scruggs says.

During physical therapy, Scruggs takes off her prosthetic arm. She lies on a massage table and allows Walters to rub the end of her arm in front of the entire gym. It is intimate, tender work. And when Walters leans over Scruggs to examine her, hovering face to face, the scars on their cheeks align.

'It was very freeing'

It was Walters who persuaded Scruggs to confront her biggest fear and allow the world to see what's left of her arm.

Scruggs, in a lime green sleeveless shirt, ventured onto the Katy Trail on a warm Saturday morning last April. She ran three miles with Walters at her side.

Scruggs had worried that the sight of her little arm would freak others out. But no one stared — at least not in a bad way. "It was very freeing," she says.

Walters has refused to let fear define her patient's life. And Scruggs credits her physical therapist for

much of her recovery.

"She has challenged me to walk outside of my comfort zone," Scruggs says. "The friendship I have built with her is one of the reasons I say that I would never reverse this accident."

After that run along the Katy Trail, Scruggs went to Luke's Locker in Plano to get a pair of shorts. She still had on the sleeveless green shirt when paparazzi snuck up on her, catching her at her most exposed.

Walters worried that the encounter would set her friend back. Instead, Scruggs used it as another opportunity to work through her fears.

'Follow the light'

As Walters helped Scruggs overcome her insecurities, she slowly found herself opening up in return.

"There's a light to her," Walters says. "That light just kind of welcomes people in."

Walters grew up poor on a ranch in Wapanucka, Okla., a town of about 430 people. As a young girl, she watched her father use an artificial leg in place of the limb he'd lost in a car accident as a teenager. After becoming the first in her family to graduate from college, she became a physical therapist, and her job became her life.

Then, in 2008, Walters was diagnosed with a serious form of melanoma. The scar on her right cheek is the result of an operation to remove the cancer. But the malignancy only slowed her down temporarily; by early 2012, she'd slipped back into a workaholic lifestyle.

As she grappled with her diagnosis and pondered her mortality, Walters found herself wanting more out of life. She searched for a purpose.

When she met Scruggs, she found one.

Her experiences — growing up

with a father who was an amputee, the melanoma, the scar on her face — suddenly made sense.

"There was a purpose for those things in my life: To be able to take what I learned and help someone else," Walters says. "That was my purpose — to get out of bed and go help her get better."

As their friendship grew, Scruggs invited Walters to church. The trainer had been raised as a Christian, but she'd buried her faith somewhere deep inside. She hadn't attended services in 10 years.

"I knew she was going to push those buttons, make me face my issues," Walters says. "Follow the light or remain hidden in the darkness ... Ultimately, that's the choice we all have."

Renewal

She reveals her vulnerabilities for all to see.

The faint scar that trickles down her right cheek. The decade she spent away from God. The melanoma, and whatever time she may have left.

Walters bares all of this as she stands in the water of a blow-up swimming pool. Thousands watch on a scorching July day as Scruggs baptizes her therapist at an outdoor park in Lewisville.

As they wade into the inflatable pool in athletic shorts and tank tops, Scruggs' arm is visible for all to see. Walters plunges beneath the surface of the water and Scruggs welcomes her "sweet friend" into The Village Church, a gospel-centered church where they are both members.

"In that moment, you feel the best that you've ever felt — just light, free," Walters says.

In suffering, we have a choice: Shut down and hole up, or open ourselves to the possibilities of life again.