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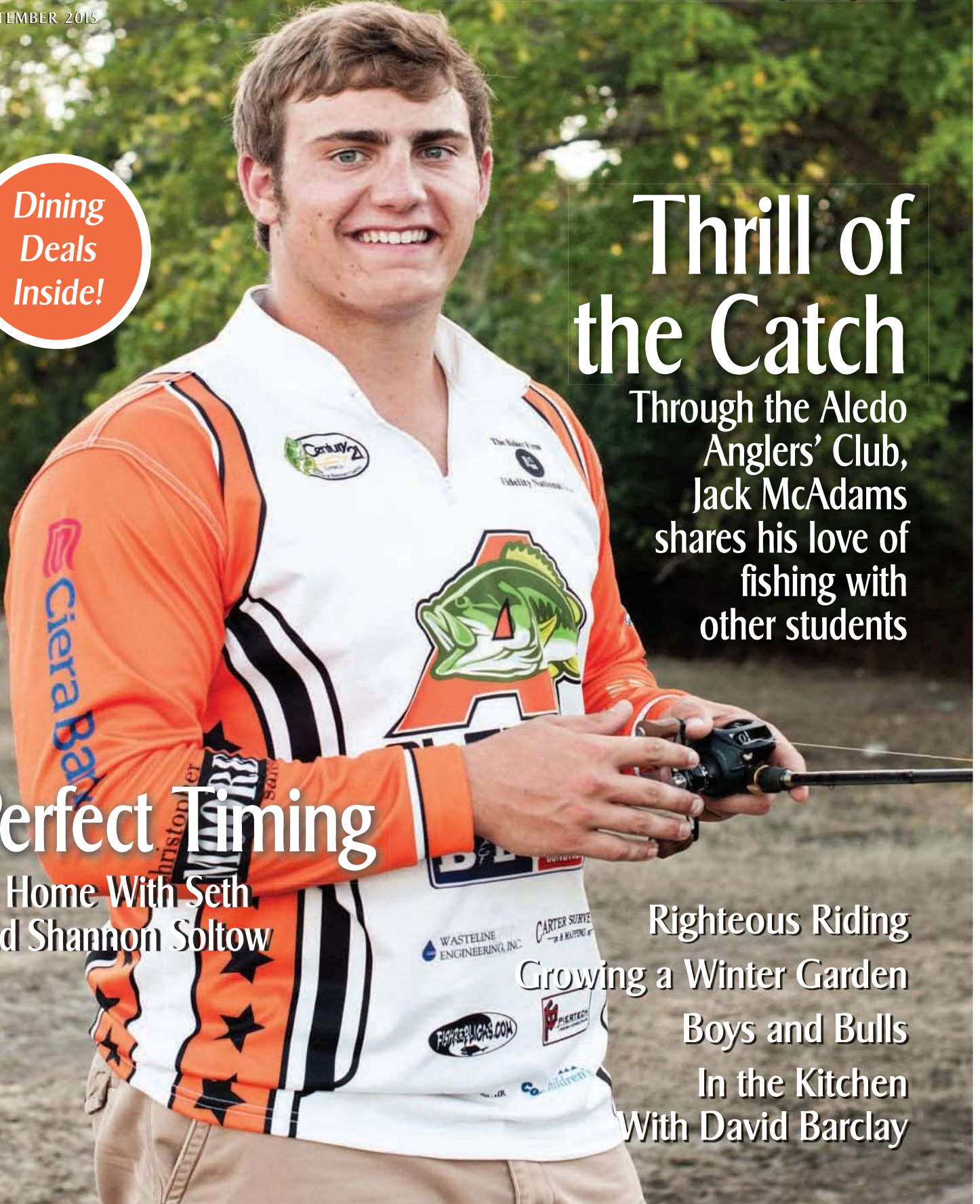
Thrill of the Catch

Through the Aledo
Anglers' Club,
Jack McAdams
shares his love of
fishing with
other students

Perfect Timing

At Home With Seth
and Shannon Soltow

Righteous Riding
Growing a Winter Garden
Boys and Bulls
In the Kitchen
With David Barclay



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ON THE COVER



As a senior at Aledo High School, Jack McAdams plans to spend time fishing local lakes for the big one.

Photo by Jen Thompson.

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Editor's Note

Happy September, WeatherfordNOW Readers!



Although the temperatures may allow us a few more weeks of swim time, the official start of fall will be here soon. Autumn is my favorite season, and I can't wait to enjoy the cooler temperatures and soak in the multitude of earthy colors as the leaves change. Students are back in school, and I plan to make the most of our free time on the weekends with my children. We will roast a few marshmallows and assemble s'mores around the campfire during the cooler months.

Labor Day falls on September 7 this year. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the day was first observed as a national holiday in 1894 to celebrate the social and economic accomplishments of the American workforce. Labor Day recognizes all that American workers have contributed to benefit the prosperity of the United States.


Enjoy yourselves!


Amber

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THRILL OF THE CATCH



— By Amber D. Browne

Young and old alike have delighted in sitting lakeside or out on the waves, casting their lines in hopes of hooking the fish that will become the subject of retold tales. The big catch is always in the back of a fisherman's mind as he or she waits patiently for a tug on the rod's line. Jack McAdams, a senior at Aledo High School, has been fishing since he could hold a rod, and the thrill of each cast sustains his love of the sport. He becomes animated as he speaks about hooking a big fish — any fish for that matter. "It's awesome. You never know whenever you cast if you're going to catch that fish because you can't see him."

Jack wanted to share his love of fishing, and with the help of his mother, Leigh McAdams, his dream has become a reality. After a lot of legwork and research, Jack founded the Aledo Anglers' Club at Aledo High School in 2013. Coach Brad McCone signed on as the faculty advisor, and Leigh assists him with the administrative side. "We decided to form a club and compete in these tournaments for scholarship money," Jack explained, "and maybe a chance to fish beyond the high school level."

Sanctioned high school fishing tournaments have become popular in recent years. "I think it's gotten so big because there's

no gender bias, there's no tryout process or certain level of athleticism involved," Leigh shared. "I call it the great equalizer." The Aledo Anglers' Club is part of the West Division of the Texas High School Bass Association, which also includes East, Central and Houston Divisions. Five tournaments are held throughout the year in each division to qualify for the regional championship, which includes a chance to win scholarships. In the 2014 Regional Championship, Jack and his partner, Carson McCone, placed 58th and each won a \$30 Bass Pro gift card. Student anglers can also win scholarships and prizes at the Lake Fork Open each July.

Aledo Anglers' Club members fish in the qualifying tournaments, but they also fish recreationally. Before each tournament, members prefish the lake to determine the best spots for bass fishing and learn what the fish are biting. Each tournament includes about 80-100 boats, which hold two club members and a boat captain from area schools. Most of the Aledo captains are fathers of student anglers and provide their personal watercraft for tournaments. "They're out there for safety reasons. They have a phone handy in case there is a problem," Jack explained. The captain is the only person authorized to operate the combustion engine, but the student anglers make the decisions as to where the captain takes them. Anglers can use electronic devices, such as radar and GPS, but they are banned from using the devices for social media or communication during a tournament.

The Aledo Anglers' Club boasts nearly 60 members, with the tournament team comprised of more than 20 students. Weekend tournaments are a commitment and require teams to check in as early as 5:00 on Saturday mornings. "The Sunday after that, you're just sleeping," Jack smiled. Leigh is at every



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tournament, even if Jack isn't competing. She is on the THSBA board, so she helps with registration.

The THSBA tournaments are catch and release, and organizers stress conservation and fish health. Jack thinks the tournaments are beneficial to the fishing industry and local communities. "It gets people out there," he shared. "It makes people aware to help clean up the lake and take pride in their area."

Each team of two turns in the five best fish at their specified weigh-in time. Penalties are given for dead fish, and points are deducted if the team is late. "When you go to the tournaments, you realize that people are very competitive," Leigh said. Many times, student anglers won't divulge what type or brand of bait they are using to catch the fish.

The top team overall wins the tournament, and points accumulate for each school's teams for an overall school winner. Jack has high hopes for the Aledo Anglers' Club in 2015-16. "It's our last chance to leave our mark in Aledo," he said. "We have a huge senior fishing class, so we really want to go out with a bang and leave a legacy."

Fishing is a hot topic for Jack and his friends. "We have a little competition amongst ourselves. We have a good time and make new friends," he shared. "I hope it continues when I graduate. I think that we have people who will step up and do that." Fishing isn't the only activity Jack is involved with at the high school. He plays defensive tackle in football, throws discus and shot put for the track team and is a member of the National Honor Society.



It's been a busy road, but Leigh has enjoyed her time volunteering with the club. "It's fulfilling, as a mother, that Jack is getting to pursue something he loves," she said. Jack is looking at several universities, and one of his deciding factors is that the school is near a lake. Although Leigh will be sad to see Jack leave next year, she is encouraging him to move off to college. "It's a big world out there. He's ready. I'll miss him like crazy. I'll cook him hamburgers, so he'll come back and see me," she smiled.

Jack appreciates how supportive his mother has been in founding the club and volunteering with the THSBA. "She



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helps out a ton. She does a lot of behind-the-scenes work that doesn't really get noticed," he said. "Her work is very crucial to the club. It wouldn't be what it is without her."

Jack's father, Gordon McAdams, is able to captain two other anglers at tournaments, occasionally. Coach McCone, a seasoned tournament fisherman, is the boat captain for Jack and his son, Carson. "Coach McCone gives great advice on fishing. He's a great coach and mentor," Jack shared.

The Aledo Anglers' Club has gained numerous local sponsors since its inception, including Jerry's GM as the primary sponsor. "They believed in us at the very beginning," Leigh shared. The anglers have also gained a few fans, including Donna Young. "She is our biggest cheerleader," Leigh grinned. "She loves fishing. She even has a necklace made of lures — without the hooks on them."

Jack showcases a \$30 Topwater lure in his room and has discovered \$400, hand-painted lures online. "I don't know why anyone would want to throw that in a lake," he grinned. As Jack shares his fishing stories, he smiles and becomes bright-eyed. "You never know — the fish you catch might be the lake record. You won't catch that fish of a lifetime if you don't go out and fish." **NOW**