



NEWSBRIEFS

Sale

The Oz Glaze Senior Center is having a Garage Sale April 16 at 7:00 am. Tables can be rented for \$10.00. Call 581-2994 for vendor information.

– Judi Verslype

Taxing work

If you are receiving Social Security and have extra income, you may wind up having to pay taxes on a portion of your benefits, according to the Association of Mature American Citizens. AMAC says that you can work with your tax preparer to determine the exact amount of taxes you must pay using your Social Security Benefit Statement (Form SSA-1099/1042S). The Social Security Administration automatically sends that statement out to all benefit recipients each year.

– John Grimaldi

The biggest Loser

Police in the California town of Murrieta have arrested the burglar who's been targeting big box stores in the area and apparently he's a real Loser, according to the Association of Mature American Citizens. The thief, Brady Loser, has been charged with possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of a controlled substance, commercial burglary, grand theft and possession of stolen property.

– John Grimaldi

Wanted

A Westside home was burglarized and surveillance cameras captured images of the vehicle, and the suspects. Investigators from the El Paso Police Department are asking for the public's help in identifying these burglars, through the Crime Stoppers, "Crime of The Week." The burglary is believed to have taken place between 6p.m. and 8p.m., on the evening of Friday, March 11th, 2016. The home that was burglarized is located on the 3900 block of Flamingo. Investigators learned that a Chevrolet Malibu had been seen by residents in the area and it appeared to be out of place. Surveillance cameras captured the vehicle and the three suspects go to the home that was burglarized. The suspects forced the door open to the home and took various items of value

See BRIEFS, Page 5

The biggest need in auto safety is the recall of a few million defective drivers.

– Quips & Quotes



– Photo courtesy El Paso County

EL PASO ECONOMICS – El Paso County Commissioners, from left, are Vince Perez, Precinct 3; Carlos Leon, Precinct 1; Veronica Escobar, County Judge; David Stout, Precinct 2; and Andrew Haggerty, Precinct 4. Stout said that the purpose of the economic development plan is to create a better quality of life for the people, including those who live outside the city limits. "The end game is for El Paso to provide good paying jobs, stop selling El Paso as a place where you can come for cheap wages and cheap labor," he said.

Commissioners mull over economic development plan

By Alfredo Vasquez
Special to the Courier

EL PASO COUNTY – Wanting to play a stronger role in this region's future the economic development plans, El Paso County Commissioners Court is currently taking steps to develop its own strategic plan. County officials said that the plan is initially focusing on five strategic areas.

A key step in the plan is the creation of a county economic development department, county officials said. Having a professional economic development staff on board would allow the county to be a stronger economic partner in the

region and be able to advocate more effectively for county-proposed projects, they stated.

County officials are considering hiring a director and between three to five people to serve as the economic development department staff. The approximate cost of hiring a director is about \$126,000 a year with benefits, County Human Resources Director Melissa Carrillo stated in a recent news report.

The director's main role would be to carry out the economic development plan, officials related.

They said that the county would redirect the \$150,000 that previously went to pay for federal lobbyist services

and instead channel those monies to the new department. However, the county would still have to come up with a source of funding to pay for the additional staff, officials pointed out.

Mac Holladay, who represents Market Street Services- the company that is helping the county develop its economic development plan- suggested that the county utilize about \$700,000 in revenue from the El Paso County Coliseum to pay for any additional staffing. The county is paying Market Street Services about \$25,000 to help in the development of the plan.

The second area commissioners are looking to incorporate into their economic plan is the development of the lower valley's mission trail sites. This would be done to enhance tourism, which commissioners consider to be a top priority.

The mission trail development would focus on preserving historical landmark sites that date back to the 16th century when the Spanish explorers arrived to this region. The trail's enhancements would strengthen the county's identity and heritage, according to the proposed plan document.

County Commissioner David Stout said heritage tourism can help the county increase its hotel occupancy tax revenue, which can be used to promote El Paso in other areas, like in New Mexico. Stout said that as part of the plan, commissioners court would have to re-evaluate the use of the hotel occupancy tax.

Presently, 75 percent of the county's hotel occupancy tax revenue goes to the El Paso Sports Commission, which operates the coliseum. A management contract for the use of the El Paso County Coliseum between the sports commission and the county expires in 2021.

A third area of interest that is addressed in the plan is the proximity of the Fabens County Airport to the new Tornillo-Guadalupe Port of Entry. "Maximizing the development efforts between the nine

Socorro schools win prestigious award

*Mission Early College,
Hernando Middle honored for
high-achievement, engaging
instruction*

By Christina Flores-Jones
Special to the Courier

EL PASO COUNTY – Two Team SISD schools have earned 2016 National Excellence in Urban Education awards from the National Center for Urban School Transformation (NCUST) at San Diego State University for being outstanding and high-performing urban schools.

Mission Early College High School won the silver award and SPC Rafael Hernando Middle School earned a bronze award. They are two of 15 schools nationwide that will be recognized at the 2016 National Symposium on High-Performing Urban Schools on May 24

in San Diego.

"The faculty and staff at Mission Early College High School and Hernando Middle School are doing a phenomenal job providing a rigorous and relevant education for students and raising the bar for our commitment to academic excellence," said SISD Superintendent José Espinoza. "We are extremely proud to have two schools recognized for this prestigious award. It is truly a team effort and these two schools are excelling by providing a high quality education to all students and engaging parents in their school community."

Mission Early College and Hernando Middle, which received on-site visits during January, earned the awards for presenting the evidence of high achievement, rigorous content, engaging instruction, positive relationships among students, teachers, parents and administrators and continuous

See AWARD, Page 3

See PLAN, Page 3

Finances By Nathaniel Sillin

Is a budget-billing plan from your utility company a good idea?

During a particularly cold winter or hot summer, you open your utility bill with a sense of dread. Is it time to consider your utility company's budget-billing plan?

Maybe so, but do your homework first.

Here's how a utility company's budget-billing plan generally works. Your chosen utility company considers your energy usage patterns over a given period, adds in projections for their wholesale energy costs and your region's

future weather patterns. Based on those calculations, your utility company comes up with an average monthly payment that allows a customer to even out monthly utility payments over a specific time period, usually a year.

It may sound good, and for many customers, it adds some stability to their monthly bill payments. However, here's where a budget-billing plan can go wrong. If you see that fixed monthly payment and think you don't have to watch your energy usage at all, think again. After all, your utility is still reading your meter and you might be in for a rude awakening when your budget-billing period ends. You might owe extra money.

Here are some questions to ask before you sign up for any budget-billing plan:

How well do you understand your current bill? Every utility company designs its bills somewhat differently based on state regulations and the type of energy product being sold. Depending on the community, a variety of utility companies might be competing for your business. Still, many of us rip open our gas, electric or other energy bills without understanding the basics of what we're being charged and why. But it's important to try. It makes sense to study your local utilities company's charging practices in general – including those specific to competing providers. Also, if there are qualified energy advocacy groups in your state or community, see whether they offer any specific advice on local utility company practices and how to keep your

cost of service low.

Evaluate the budget-billing plan closely. Ask the following questions:

- What happens if my actual utility costs exceed the amount I'm paying each month on my billing plan? As mentioned, your utility company will continue to measure your usage on its metering system. If your usage exceeds that budget estimate for any reason, you could face what amounts to a balloon payment covering what you still owe at yearend. If so, your budget-billing plan could put you in debt.

- Are there monthly or annual fees in connection with this plan? What are they and what do they cover? Paying anywhere from \$5 to \$10 a month to be on a "budget" plan should give you pause. Understand any and all fees before you pay them.

- What factors go into setting my monthly average? How many years of payments go into that calculation, and what other factors apply to set the amount you want me to pay? In the way many normal utility bills can be a mystery, so can your budget-billing payment. See how well your utility can explain how they would set your bill.

- If my budget bill and actual utility cost are getting seriously out of whack, do you let me know, or is there a way I can check that? If your budget-billing payment is actually putting you in the red due to a cold or heat snap or some other factor, it's best to know that before the end of your term.

- Are you building any weather forecasting into my budget-billing estimate? Are you

projecting any weather extremes in the coming year?

- Say I manage to come in under your monthly budget-billing estimate. Do I get my money back?

Consider an alternative – your own budget plan. Locate your bills for the last year or two and average your payments, plugging them into your monthly household budget. On the months where your costs come in below your average, deposit the difference into a savings or money market account to cover future months where there could be overages. It's clearly an experiment – after all, no one knows whether the years ahead will bring mild or ferocious weather or how world events might affect wholesale energy prices. But you'll be in control of every dime and potentially earning a little interest on anything you don't spend. Your utility's budget plan probably won't do that for you.

Bottom line: Utility budget-billing plans might be a good idea for homeowners and renters who want a little more predictability in their monthly payments. But before you sign, you really need to understand how your utility company's plan works.

This article is intended to provide general information and should not be considered legal, tax or financial advice. It's always a good idea to consult a tax or financial advisor for specific information on how certain laws apply to your situation and about your individual financial situation.

Veterans Post By Freddy Groves

Eligibility by phone

If you're a combat veteran, you no longer have to fill out and sign papers to sign up for health care. As of right now, you can do it by phone.

This is part of the Department of Veterans Affairs push to get all incomplete applications of combat veterans reviewed and reworked. There are currently 31,000 combat veterans with incomplete applications.

Other veterans will be able to enroll this way as of July 5, 2016.

This now makes three ways to enroll. You can do it online, you can do it on paper with the VA Form 10-10 EZ. And now you can just pick up the phone.

If you've enrolled since July 1, 2015, you've gotten extra goodies. You got a phone call from the Health Resource Center for one thing, welcoming you to the VA and introducing you to all that's available to you, as well as information about resources and programs. You got a personal letter and handbook

and help getting your first appointment scheduled.

If you want to know more, call the Health Eligibility Center Enrollment and Eligibility Division at 1-855-488-8440.

Additionally, if you're one of the 545,000 veterans who currently have incomplete applications pending, you now have a year to complete the paperwork. (They also discovered, while hunting for those files, an additional 288,000 pending applications for veterans who are now deceased.) As part of the Veteran Enrollment Rework Project, the VA is required to notify you about pending and incomplete applications and to take another look to see if you should have actually been enrolled already. The "one year" meter starts running once they contact you.

If you want to know more about VA benefits you also can call 1-877-222-8387.

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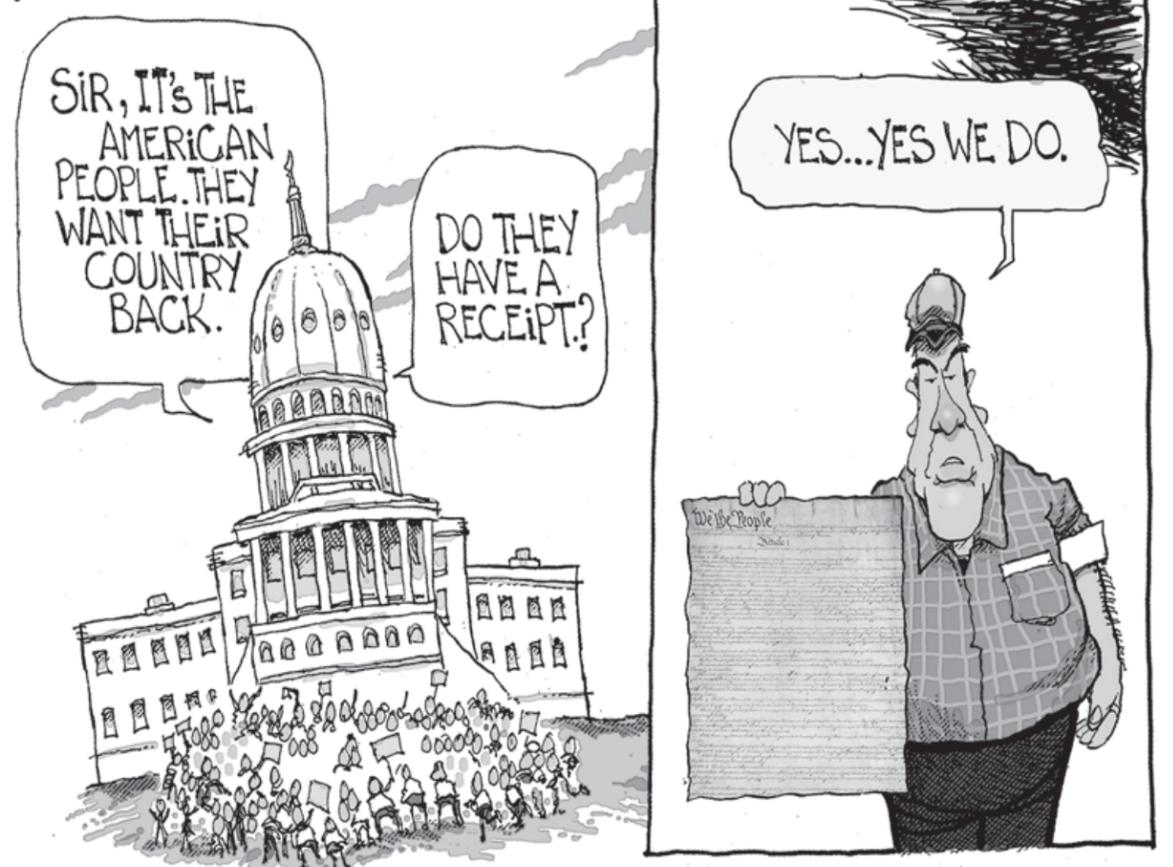
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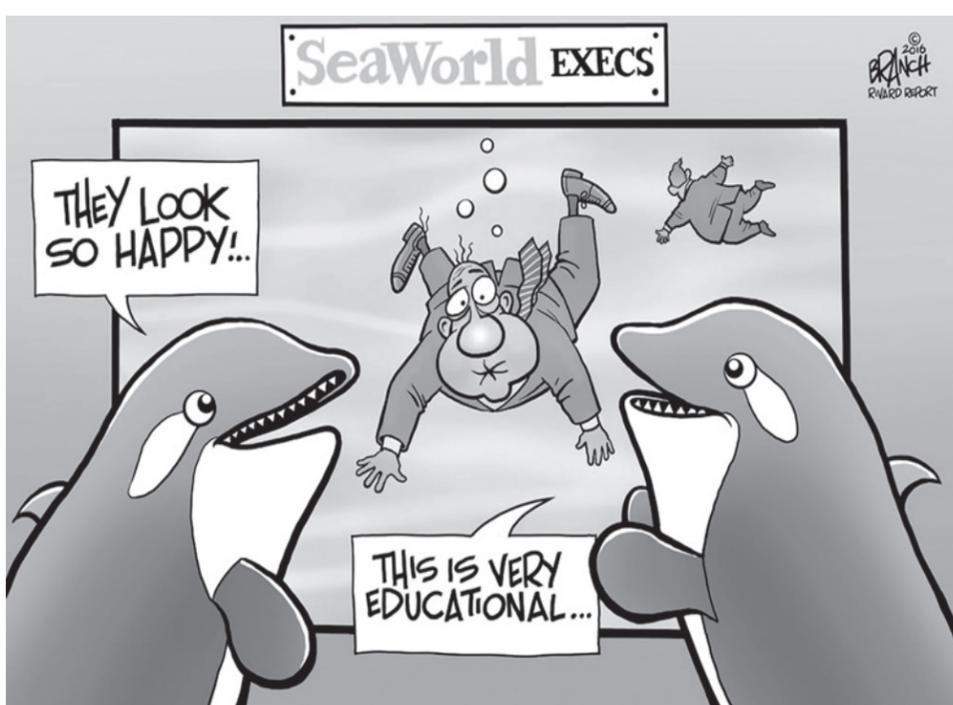
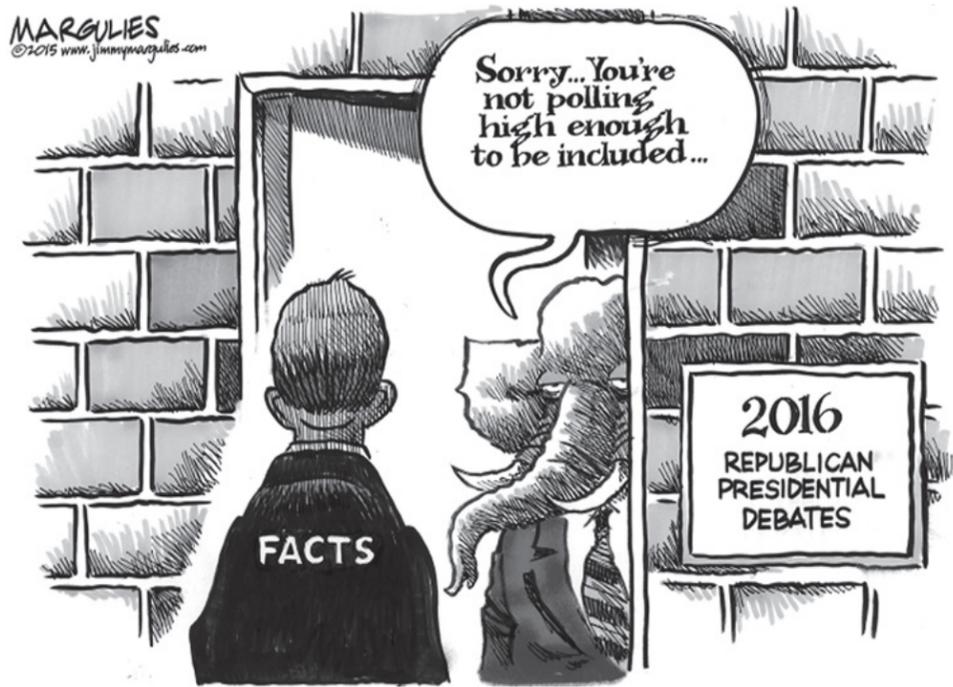
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Professor presents Chihuahuan Desert habitats survey data

Chihuahuan Desert is one of the most biologically diverse deserts in the world

By Alfredo Vasquez
Special to the Courier

EL PASO COUNTY – El Paso Community College (EPCC) Biology professor Dr. Gertrud Konings will give an illustrated presentation of recent survey findings that highlight the uniqueness of the Chihuahuan Desert, in which El Paso County is situated right smack in the middle of.

Konings' local desert habitats report will be given, beginning at 6 p.m., Tuesday, April 5, at the Garden Center at Memorial Park (3105 Grant Avenue), which is located in central El Paso. The evening event is being hosted by the Chihuahuan Desert Education Coalition (CDEC).

Using a PowerPoint presentation, Konings will provide a visual overview of the different habitats of the Chihuahuan Desert. One of North America's largest deserts; it encompasses most of west Texas, all of southern New Mexico, a part of southeastern Arizona, and a major portion of the sprawling plains of

northern Mexico.

Learning about this desert region is necessary because, according to the professor, "protecting desert habitats is important for combating climate change, as desert plants help to capture CO2 gases from the atmosphere and in a harsh environment where few plants can survive".

Konings' informative program is open to the public, with proceeds from the event (\$5 per person) going towards a handicap accessible nature walk installation in the Tom Mays area which is located on the western side of Franklin Mountains State Park, event organizers stated.

Fest hosts, the CDEC members, are an association that serves as a resource regarding information about the Chihuahuan Desert, according to a CDEC report. The report also stated that the CDEC group encourages lifelong learning about the Chihuahuan Desert and collaborates activities with educators, individuals, and organizations who are interested in its endeavors.

For more information about CDEC, visit its website, at chihuahuandesert.org. For more information about the Tuesday evening (April 5) Chihuahuan Desert Habitats survey presentation, call Konings at (915) 845-1476 and leave a message.

Plan

From Page 1

to ten mile radius between the airport and port of entry will provide significant economic opportunity in the long-term," the proposed plan stated. The plan encourages the county to partner with the private sector in order to redevelop the area into an aerospace and technology hub.

The county's economic plan also calls for the creation of a strong business retention and expansion program, which would encourage the county to work with the El Paso Chamber of Commerce to create a retention and expansion effort that would include the role of the county in the region's healthcare system.

Stout said that the health care sector is important to continue to move the economy forward, and as part of the plan, the county would need to look at ways in which it can be involved.

The fifth aspect of the proposed plan recommends that commissioners consider redeveloping the El Paso County Coliseum. The plan calls for a study of options for the facility, which could range from repurposing the facility to the sale of the building and land.

County Judge Veronica Escobar said that the proposed economic development plan document is a work in progress and that there are a lot of things that need to be determined before making a final decision. She stated that since she first joined commissioners court almost 10 years ago, this is the first time the court works on an economic development plan.

Escobar stated during a recent commissioners' meeting that each one of the goals has the potential to create jobs, to strengthen the economy, and to grow the economic pie for this community. So, she said that the pay off for a new economic development department and proposed plans would be tremendous for the community.

Award

From Page 1

improvement efforts. Both demonstrated that their schools are achieving impressive academic results for every demographic group they serve, according to NCUST officials.

Finalists were selected from a large pool of applicants, including many schools that have earned recognition as National Blue Ribbon Schools, National Title I Distinguished Schools, and winners of many other state and national awards.

Mission Early College will receive \$2,500 for its silver award and still has an opportunity to earn a gold medal. All silver award winners are in the running for the gold (\$5,000) award, which will be announced at the May ceremony, said Meya, Egan, an administrative support coordinator for NCUST.

At the May event, administrators from the schools and district will share processes and practices on their success. SISD leaders will describe their efforts to support and sustain these high-achieving urban schools. For more information visit www.ncust.org.

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Canutillo ISD fills two key administrative positions

Vasquez named Executive Director of Facilities and Transportation

By Shane B. Griffith
Special to the Courier

CANUTILLO – Bruno Vasquez has been appointed Executive Director of Facilities and Transportation for the Canutillo Independent School District (CISD). Vasquez is a Registered Architect and a member of the American Institute of Architects with more than 15 years of experience in the education, government and healthcare sectors. In this role, Vasquez is responsible for all facets of CISD’s facility maintenance, bond construction projects, energy management, student transportation and fleet maintenance.

“Mr. Vasquez’s systematic approach to project management, architectural design and construction management make him the ideal candidate for this important position,” said Dr. Galaviz, Superintendent of CISD. “He will no doubt help take CISD to new heights to ensure our students, faculty and staff continue to learn and work in some of the best quality facilities anywhere in the State.”

Vasquez is a native to the greater El Paso region and has spent his professional career designing well-known projects in El Paso, including two branch offices of TFCU. He most recently served as Senior Architect/Project Manager with HDR, Inc., in the construction of the new hospital on Fort Bliss. Prior to this, he was an Architect with Carl Daniel Architects, Inc., where he managed more than 25 design and construction projects, some of which included complex and sophisticated HVAC and electrical systems. He also served as an Intern Architect/Project Manager with C.F. Associates, Inc., where he managed more than 50 design and construction projects.

“I am very excited to join Team Canutillo and to serve the best interests of our students,” said Vasquez. “My team and I will be using the data and detailed condition assessments from the Facilities Master Plan to confidently invest and maintain all of our publicly-funded buildings and assets to provide the highest quality educational environments.”

Vasquez earned his Bachelor of Architecture from the Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez and studied graduate-level courses at the Universitat Politecnica de Catalunya in Barcelona, Spain. He is also a member of the Texas Society of Architects and an Executive Committee Member of the AIA El Paso Chapter. He is bilingual in English and Spanish and enjoys mountain biking and running.



– Photo courtesy Canutillo ISD
Bruno Vasquez

Vijil named Associate Superintendent

By Shane B. Griffith
Special to the Courier

CANUTILLO – Dr. Veronica Vijil has been appointed as an Associate Superintendent for the Canutillo Independent School District (CISD). An experienced leader in education, Vijil returns home to El Paso County after serving the past 19 years as an educator in the Spring ISD within the Houston metropolitan area. Vijil succeeds longtime educator Ms. Annette Brigham, who retired as Associate Superintendent last month.

“Dr. Vijil’s deep educator experience coupled with her knowledge of data management and compliance will be invaluable to our students, faculty and staff,” said Dr. Pedro Galaviz, Superintendent of CISD. “She is a warm person with high expectations and demanding standards of excellence. She is the best person for this position and will make a great fit to Team Canutillo.”

Vijil is a graduate of Burgess High School and began her educational career as an English teacher at Riverside Middle School. After a seven-year teaching position in Indianapolis, Vijil relocated to the Houston area where she served as a science teacher, Assistant Principal, Principal, and most recently Executive Director of Data Management & Compliance for Spring ISD. Since September 2012, Vijil has also served as an Adjunct Professor at Sam Houston State University where she taught a Campus Business Management course as part of the Master of Education in Administration and the Principal Certification programs.

“When I arrived, the first thing I noticed is just how warm and friendly everybody is here at the Canutillo school district,” said Vijil. “I’ve already had the wonderful opportunity to meet many staff and students who welcomed me with open arms, and I look forward to getting to know everyone so we can take Canutillo ISD to even greater heights of accomplishment and student success.”

Vijil earned her Bachelor of Science in Education from the University of Texas at El Paso and a Master of Education from Indiana Wesleyan University in Indianapolis. She later earned her Doctorate of Educational Leadership from Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas, after completing her dissertation entitled, “Experiences of High School Hispanic Girls in Pursuit of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics-Related Coursework and Careers.” She has also earned five Texas Educator Certificates and is the recipient of numerous accolades including the Spring ISD Secondary Principal and Teacher of the Year and two-time state semi-finalist in the HEB Excellence in Education Award. Vijil is bilingual in English and Spanish and enjoys cycling and running.



– Photo courtesy Canutillo ISD
Veronica Vijil



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State law now requires both adults and children to be buckled up in the front or back seat. A child less than 8 years old, unless taller than 4 feet 9 inches, must ride in a child safety seat. Most children between 4 and 8 years old will need a booster seat to be safe and comply with the law. Fines range from \$25 to \$250, plus court costs. TexasClickItorTicket.com



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CryptoQuip Answer

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STRANGE BUT TRUE

By Samantha Weaver

• It was 19th-century Russian playwright and short story writer Anton Chekhov who made the following sage observation: "Love, friendship, respect, do not unite people as much as a common hatred for something."

• If you suffer from galeophobia you're certainly not alone; Steven Spielberg's 1975 film "Jaws" may have popularized the fear of sharks, but it certainly didn't start it. Logically, though, swinophobia makes more sense – pigs kill more people every year than sharks do.

• You might be surprised to learn that Harriet Tubman – famous for her work as a conductor on the Underground Railroad – also served as a Union spy during the Civil War, providing key intelligence that aided in the capture of Jacksonville, Florida. She also was the first woman to lead an armed assault during the Civil War; the Combahee River Raid freed 750 South Carolina slaves. She even continued her humanitarian work after the war, opening the Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged and Indigent in Albany, New York.

• According to the nuns who worked with her, Mother Teresa's last words were, "Jesus, I love you. Jesus, I love you." According to her doctor, the last thing she said was actually, "I can't breathe."

• If you wanted to erect a building in Colonial times, you'd go to an undertaker; that's what building contractors were called back then.

• Ancient Romans recognized three distinct forms of kissing: The word "basium" denoted a kiss between acquaintances, "osculum" was used for a kiss between close friends, and "suavium" described a kiss between lovers.

Thought for the Day: "Catch-and-release – that's like running down pedestrians in your car and then, when they get up and limp away, saying, 'Off you go! That's fine. I just wanted to see if I could hit you.'"

– Ellen DeGeneres

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Clint ISD school board rejects single-member districts proposal

By Alfredo Vasquez
Special to the Courier

EL PASO COUNTY – Clint Independent School District (CISD) Board of Trustees is again holding on to its position of at-large trustee representation instead of single-member districts by voting 5-2 to reject the proposed change during a March school board meeting.

The attempt to move to single-member districts was meant to provide more representation for other areas of the Clint district that parents and community members have said are underrepresented on the board, CISD Trustee Hilda James stated publicly.

James, who placed the item on the board's agenda, and Trustee Patricia Randleel were the two board members who voted in favor of changing to single-member districts.

James' motion at the meeting was to make the three seats up for election in November single-member trustee positions and continue the transition until the entire board is made up of trustees from single-member districts.

Currently, CISD trustees are elected to at-large positions and do not represent any particular area in the district. Six of the seven trustees serving on the board currently live in the town of Clint.

The remaining trustee, Randleel, resides in Horizon

City.

In a public statement, Randleel said that it is difficult for people interested in running for the board to raise enough money for a district-wide campaign, which she said is a key factor that is stopping people in other areas from running. She said that single-member districts could help solve that problem.

"It is very simple," Randleel stated. "It costs money to run in any kind of election, even a school district election, and if you have to get campaign materials and take time off from work to visit the different areas, not everybody can do that. Everybody does not have the finances or the ability to go

from one end of the district to the other to knock on doors." She added, "Everyone needs to have a voice and the way we have those voices is to have people who represent us."

The discussion over the effectiveness of the current at-large system was brought up after a lawsuit was filed in August 2012 by a group of parents claiming that the district was inequitably funding schools outside of the Clint area.

The lawsuit claims that the CISD Board of Trustees is allocating more money and opportunities to schools in the Clint area than it is to schools in the Horizon City or Montana Vista areas. Schools in Montana

Vista, Horizon City and the town of Clint are all within the CISD school boundaries.

The lawsuit was originally dismissed by a district court in February 2013 when a judge ruled that the parents must go through all available avenues the district has to address the issue. The parents appealed the judge's decision and won when the Texas Eighth District Court of Appeals ruled in October 2014 that the funding discrepancies violated the Texas Constitution.

The district appealed the ruling, and the case is now being heard by the Texas Supreme Court. A decision by the court could take weeks or months.

Briefs

From Page 1

including a television. One of the suspects was described to be wearing a yellow colored baseball cap. The vehicle used by the suspects is believed to be at least a 2011 Chevrolet

Malibu with tinted windows, had New Mexico license plates. Anyone with information on the identity of the men involved in this burglary is asked to call Crime Stoppers of El Paso immediately at 566-8477 (TIPS), on-line at www.crimestoppersofelpaso.org or you can send a text message

by entering the key word "CRIME1" (no space and include the quotation marks) plus your tip information, and text it to CRIMES (274637). You will remain anonymous and, if your tip leads to an arrest, you can qualify for a cash reward.

– Javier Sambrano

Classified Ads

LEGALS

VILLAGE OF VINTON, TX

PUBLIC NOTICE

Request for Qualifications

The Village of Vinton, Texas, in accordance with Section 2254.004, Texas Government Code, is requesting qualifications for engineering services for a variety of projects the city may undertake and for services necessary for adhering to and enforcing the local ordinances and state laws with respect to the following subject areas:

- Zoning, Subdivision and Development Plats;
- Streets, Stormwater; and Parks, Trails and other Recreational projects.

In order to be considered proposals must be submitted prior to 4:30 PM on the 14th day of April, 2016.

A complete request for proposals is available on our website: <http://www.vintontx.gov/office2.com>

The City Council may select 1 or more firms for services in specific areas based on qualifications. City Council reserves the right to negotiate with any and all individuals or firms submitting proposals, in accordance with the Texas Professional Services Procurement Act and the Uniform Grant and Contract Management Standards Act, and may choose to retain services for three consecutive years. The locality reserves the right to reject any or all proposals.

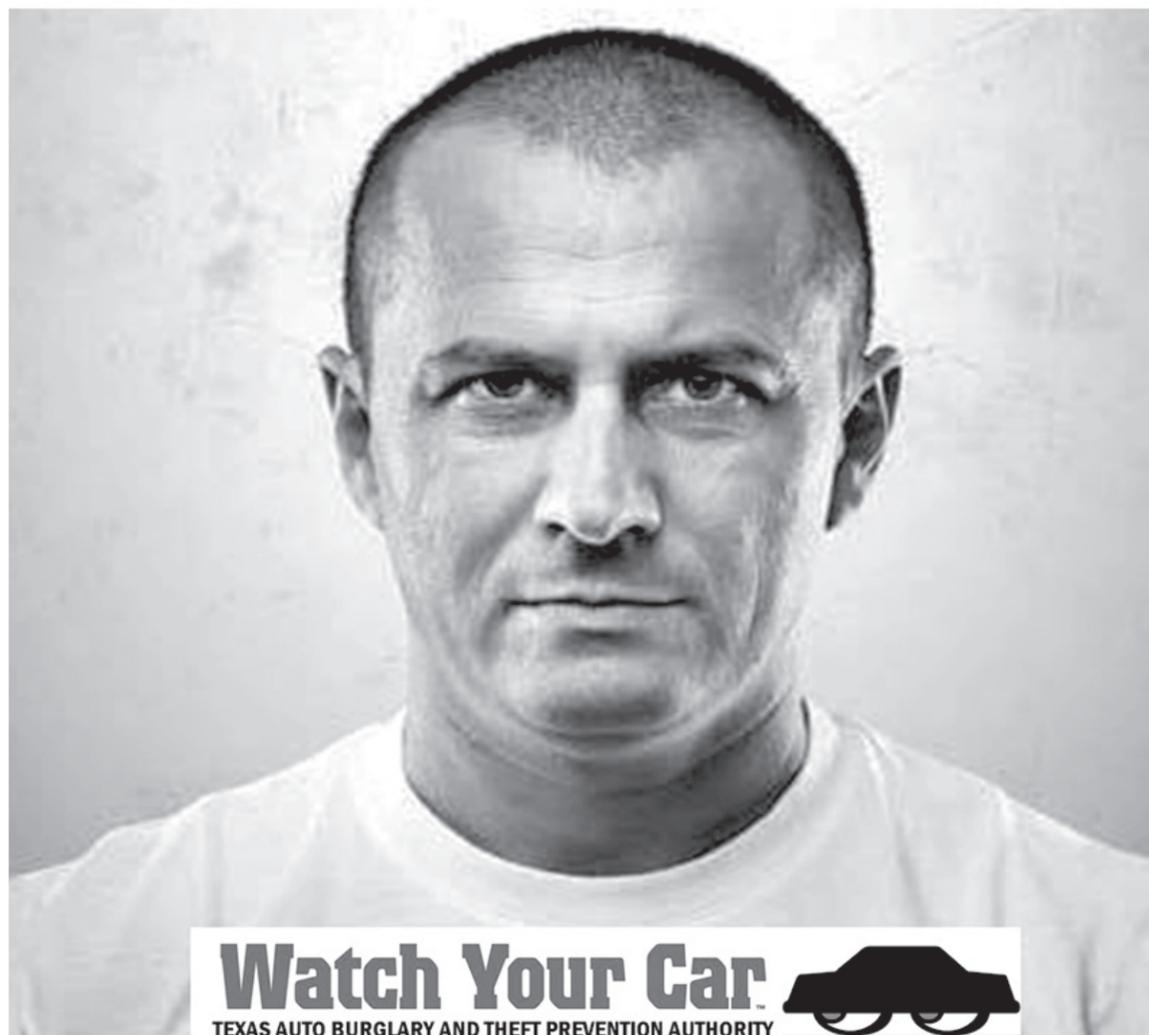
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Three and a half years and counting for project to start

By Steve Escajeda
Special to the Courier

The way I look at it, there are three great mysteries of the modern era; who really shot John F. Kennedy, what really happened to Jimmy Hoffa's body, and what is going on with El Paso's multi-purpose arena?

You remember the arena don't you? It was approved by the voters back in November of 2012.

The arena, otherwise known as the \$180 million Multi-Purpose Cultural and Performing Arts Center, is the grand jewel in the multitude of quality-of-life projects approved by El Pasoans nearly four years ago.

But in keeping with the usual El Paso City and County projects, the arena's progress has seemed to grind to a halt.

It's been so long that if you ask locals about the arena, many have forgotten that it was ever approved.

Don't get me wrong – we all know that Rome wasn't built in a day. But we do know that the Chihuahua's state-of-the-

art Southwest University Park was built in less than a year.

It's been nearly four years and the City of El Paso hasn't even agreed on a location for the arena yet.

Really? What's taking so long? Decide on a location already!

All we know – and I could have told you this four years ago – is that it's going to be built in the downtown area.

If it's taken this long to decide on a location, can you imagine what nightmares surrounding its construction are yet to come.

The dollar amount allocated for the construction of this arena is finite. Of course there will be cost increases like there are in any building project so the City will have to get creative to raise the additional funds.

But one undeniable truth is rearing its ugly head with each passing day. The costs of building materials and labor and utilities and land and anything else associated with this project is more expensive now than it was a year ago, two years ago, three years ago.

The longer the City takes to make

any decisions, the more watered-down an arena we're going to get because it's going to cost too much for the amenities that differentiate a first-class structure from a normal one.

And I probably speak for many El Pasoans who, after seeing Southwest University Park, don't want to settle for second-rate ever again.

Another unsettling little tidbit concerning the arena is the amount of seats it will hold. The City has announced that it will seat between 10,000 and 13,000.

Really? I thought the whole idea was for El Paso to compete with Albuquerque and Phoenix and San Antonio and Austin; and for top acts and performers to view the city as more than just fly-over territory.

Albuquerque's Pit seats over 15,000, Phoenix and San Antonio's arena each seat over 19,000 and Austin's Frank Erwin Center seats nearly 18,000.

Even the Pan American Center in little Las Cruces seats nearly 13,000.

With the growth in El Paso and the surrounding area, a new arena in this city should seat at least 16,000.

El Paso has shown over and over that it will easily support major events if just given the opportunity. This city is thirsting for things to experience.

That's why El Pasoans love to travel to Los Angeles and Phoenix and San Antonio and Dallas and San Diego. We go to places where things are happening.

El Paso is a beautiful city, but unless they have relatives here, who is going to choose it as a vacation destination?

Where is the leadership?

Just like the previous administration stepped up and did what it had to in securing the Triple-A baseball franchise, the current administration has got to take a leadership role and move on this project.

After all, the citizens of El Paso are paying for it. We'd like to get our money's worth.

The national success the Chihuahuas have enjoyed, should give the City leaders some confidence that El Paso is ready for a significant change.

But first things first, I'm begging you, choose a location so that the rest of the dominoes can begin to fall – before you start running out of dominoes.

A sporting view By Mark Vasto

Play ball, Cubanos

The seven men, most wearing tailored suits and dress shoes, boarded the plane the old-fashioned way. Walking across the tarmac, careful not to walk over the line that separated passenger traffic from the

earmuff-wearing air traffic controllers, they boarded the plane one by one, strapped in and flew off to a place few travel to from America: Havana, Cuba.

A scene from Obama's latest visit to Cuba? Or was it a team

sent from President Eisenhower's administration? Neither. This was during the days of George W. Bush, when it was still illegal to conduct commerce on the island if you were a U.S. citizen. Besides? Who wanted to go to a place that people were literally dying to leave? Shouldn't the traffic be going the other way?

They came in on a technicality, as religious humanitarian relief workers. Once in Havana, the

six men with their jackets draped over their arm waved the other gentleman, clad in jeans and a white safari shirt, through the customary screening room first. "Separate parties," explained one of the men.

The man had his papers examined as a close-talking guard asked for his plans and purpose for visiting Cuba.

"I'm here on a humanitarian mission."

"Here?" asked the Cuban official. He seemed stunned. "What makes you think Castro and Cuba need your help?" Before the man could answer, the official ordered him off to a separate waiting room, told to sit

and wait so they talk more "in a bit."

The official waved the other men over.

"And what is your reason for visiting Cuba?"

One man took the lead, stood straight in front of the guard, held his chin up and flashed a genuine smile.

"We are here to drink your rum and smoke your cigars, sir."

The guard stared back at him with a stern face that gradually lit up into a return smile.

"My friends... welcome to Havana, Cuba."

Last year, more than 150 men

See SPORTS, Page 8

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Comix

Your good health By Keith Roach, M.D.

OUT ON A LIMB By Gary Kopervas



AMBER WAVES By Dave T. Phipps



THE SPATS By Jeff Pickering



R.F.D. By Mike Marland



DEAR DR. ROACH: I always try to accompany my husband when he goes to the doctor. I feel that two sets of ears are always better than one. When his vitals are taken (e.g., weight, blood pressure), I have to ask what they were, as they never seem to volunteer this information. I mention this because the last time we were at the doctor's office, I asked what his weight was, because he had just lost 10 pounds. The nurse said it was 165, and I said "really," that was odd, as his shorts were very loose on him. We took it again, and she had transposed the numbers. It was 156. This is a wake-up call to all patients: They need to be aware to ask these questions for their health and well-being. — C.W.

I agree with you completely, for several reasons. Doctors and nurses make mistakes, but we also don't communicate as effectively as we should some of the time. We use words that people don't understand, talk too fast or too quietly, and don't spend the time we need to making sure people know what they should do to help themselves get better. I think having a family member there is a great idea. So is taking notes, and so is going over what YOU understood the doctor to say, to make sure you are both on the same page.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I have an eye question. I am 84, and I have mild hemorrhages in my left eye. My doctor said this is due to old age, and to just wait and see if it gets worse. He did say that it could indicate a prelude to a brain stroke-type hemorrhage. What can I do about this? I am very concerned. Why are my blood vessels so fragile? Does every old person have this problem? — J.I.

I assume you mean a hemorrhage in the white of your eye, called a subconjunctival hemorrhage. These are very common, can be seen easily in the mirror, and they usually do not indicate increased stroke risk. They are more likely in people taking aspirin or other anti-inflammatory drugs. They also can come from even minor trauma, as people in their 80s do typically have somewhat more fragile blood vessels.

If you have a retinal hemorrhage, which he would see with an ophthalmoscope in the back of the eye, that indicates a more substantial risk for stroke. Since the blood vessels in the retina are essentially the same as inside the brain, hemorrhage in the retina predicts stroke. In that case, your doctor would recommend very careful control of any risk factors you may have, especially blood pressure, diabetes and smoking.

The booklet on stroke explains this condition that is deservedly feared by all. Readers can obtain a copy by writing: Dr. Roach – No. 902, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803. Enclose a check or money order (no cash) for \$4.75 U.S./\$6 Canada with the recipient's printed name and address. Please allow four weeks for delivery.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual letters, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu. To view and order health pamphlets, visit www.rbmamall.com, or write to Good Health, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803. (c) 2016 North America Synd., Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Super Crossword

- DISCARD PILE**
- ACROSS**
- 1 Merchandise taken back, briefly
 - 5 London or Manhattan area
 - 12 Divs. of dollars
 - 15 Leaf support
 - 19 Mimicry pro
 - 20 Angle units
 - 21 Girls' night out, perhaps
 - 23 Small-scale golf variety
 - 25 Massive
 - 26 Fr. holy woman
 - 27 Pop artist Warhol
 - 28 Utter fibs
 - 29 To be, in Québec
 - 30 Wedding chapel vow
 - 31 Like _ of sunshine
 - 33 Draft lottery org.
 - 35 Insult-hurling sort
 - 38 Conversed with
 - 40 Settle a debt
 - 42 The, in Québec
 - 43 Stop
 - 44 Food cart's counterpart on a ranch
 - 46 Bummed out
 - 47 "I get it!"
 - 48 FDR's follower
 - 49 Grill master's cover-up
 - 50 Opera parts
 - 52 Actor Jack of "Barney Miller"
 - 55 Wichita resident
 - 57 Execute a long
 - slap shot, maybe
 - 60 Snooping (about)
 - 63 Juan or Eva of Argentina
 - 65 Exact copy
 - 66 Backed _ corner
 - 67 Phrase with synonyms starting this puzzle's eight longest
 - Across answers
 - 70 Indonesian skewered meat dish
 - 71 Less quiet
 - 73 Analyze the makeup of
 - 74 Clan emblems
 - 75 Expert witnesses' unproven theories, say
 - 78 Kia minivan
 - 80 Noah's craft
 - 81 "L'shanah _!" (Hebrew "Happy holidays!")
 - 82 Shoulder lift
 - 83 Bee chaser?
 - 86 Bygone Olds
 - 88 Eden woman
 - 89 Beanbag tic-tac-toe game
 - 92 Stand by for
 - 95 Medical scan, briefly
 - 96 _-Puf (body sponge)
 - 97 "Billy Budd" star
 - 98 Worker in the trenches?
 - 101 Antitrust org.
 - 103 Old Cuzco native
 - 104 Portuguese for "year"
 - 105 Tony winner Carter
 - 106 Plant pouch
 - 108 "Woe is me!"
 - 110 Pollution-fighting org.
 - 112 Ally of Rodan
 - 114 Bit from a shredder
 - 117 Charged
 - 118 Trip for nature lovers
 - 119 _-Alt-Del
 - 120 Kiln used for drying hops
 - 121 Modern art?
 - 122 "Ain't gonna happen"
 - 123 Former U.S. gas brand
- DOWN**
- 1 Smart blows
 - 2 Tombstone inscriptions
 - 3 Dwindle
 - 4 Tolkien monster
 - 5 Ocean Spray prefix
 - 6 Dial, Zest and Coast
 - 7 Arnold, Duchin and Merckx
 - 8 Rim
 - 9 Writer Bellow
 - 10 Actual thing
 - 11 Daisy's kin
 - 12 Common crudités
 - go-with
 - 13 Fractions for many agents
 - 14 Bull's sound
 - 15 Sleuth Spade
 - 16 Russian carriage
 - 17 Chopin's 27
 - 18 Southern Indian city
 - 22 Moralize from a pulpit
 - 24 Actress Salma _
 - 32 Dog show gp.
 - 34 Sound-swapping reverend
 - 36 Eye-opener?
 - 37 Grazing area
 - 38 Educ. inst.
 - 39 Nashville nasality
 - 41 The Atlantic's Cape _
 - 45 Pictorial plot
 - 46 Sweatboxes
 - 47 Tennis pro Arthur
 - 51 Give it _
 - 52 Set of rooms
 - 53 William of _ ("razor" philosopher)
 - 54 Green-lights
 - 55 Newsstand
 - 56 Novelist Nin
 - 57 Seek water with a divining rod
 - 58 Printer brand
 - 59 "Oro y _"
 - 60 Martial-arts mercenary
 - 61 "God is _ side"
 - 62 Smell nasty
 - 64 "Law & Order"
 - actor Linus
 - 67 Common jazz combo
 - 68 Rinse
 - 69 Australia's _ Rock
 - 72 Prefix for "outer"
 - 74 Old Roman wraps
 - 76 Marshy tract of land
 - 77 What GPS aids in: Abbr.
 - 79 Nebula, in part
 - 82 Bassist Sutcliffe
 - 83 Notions
 - 84 Performers like Houdini
 - 85 Suffix with journal
 - 86 Rock's Ocasek
 - 87 Cultural
 - 90 Brittle
 - 91 Stimp's cartoon bud
 - 92 Slow, to Solti
 - 93 Ryder of film
 - 94 In conflict
 - 95 "Lite" beer
 - 96 Lorraine of "The Sopranos"
 - 99 D, in Greece
 - 100 Ruhr hub
 - 102 Knock at gently
 - 107 Nile critter
 - 109 Retro hairdo
 - 111 Guthrie with a guitar
 - 113 Facial flaw
 - 115 _ distance
 - 116 Star pitcher

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Moore Texas by Roger Moore Mar. 16, 1894:
Notorious killer John Wesley Hardin is pardoned.
While in jail he passes the bar to become a lawyer.



Social Security Q&A By Ray Vigil

Women's history and Social Security

March is Women's History Month – a time to focus not just on the past, but on the challenges women continue to face in the 21st century.

Ida May Fuller, born on September 6, 1874, was the first American to receive a monthly Social Security benefit check. Along with Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins – who was instrumental in the creation of the Social Security Act – Ida May Fuller was one of the first famous women of Social Security. She received the check, amounting to \$22.54, on January 31, 1940. Back then, people understood that she would be one of millions that would be positively affected by retirement benefits.

Seventy-six years after that first check, Social Security continues to play a vital role in the lives of women. With longer life expectancies than men, women tend to live more years in retirement and have a greater chance of exhausting other sources of income. With the national average life expectancy for women in the United States rising,

many women will have *decades* to enjoy retirement. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, a girl born today can expect to live more than 80 years. As a result, experts generally agree that if women want to ensure that their retirement years are comfortable, they need to plan early and wisely.

What you can do

“The best place to begin is by knowing what you can expect to receive from Social Security, and how much more you are likely to need to enjoy a comfortable retirement,” said Carolyn W. Colvin, Social Security’s Acting Commissioner and a Social Security pioneer woman in her own right.

You can start with a visit to Social Security’s *Retirement Estimator*. There, in just a few minutes, you can get a personalized, instant estimate of your retirement benefits. Plug in different scenarios, such as retirement ages or projected earnings, to get an idea of how such things might change your future benefit amounts. You can

find it at www.socialsecurity.gov/estimator.

You should also visit Social Security’s financial planning website at www.socialsecurity.gov/planners. It provides detailed information about how marriage, widowhood, divorce, self-employment, government service, and other life or career events can affect your Social Security.

Your benefits are based on your earnings, so you should create your personal *my Social Security* account to verify that your earnings were reported correctly.

If you want more information about the role of Social Security in women’s lives today, Social Security has a booklet that you may find useful. It is called *Social Security: What Every Woman Should Know*. You can find it online at www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10127.html.

GO FIGURE! by Linda Thistle

The idea of Go Figure is to arrive at the figures given at the bottom and right-hand columns of the diagram by following the arithmetic signs in the order they are given (that is, from left to right and top to bottom). Use only the numbers below the diagram to complete its blank squares and use each of the nine numbers only once.

	-		x		4
+		x		x	
	-		+		11
÷		-		-	
	+		-		11
5		11		13	

DIFFICULTY: ★

★ Moderate ★★ Difficult
★★★ GO FIGURE!

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 9 9

Answer Page 4

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Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

		4	2					1
	2				9			3
6				7		5		
	6			1				4
		5	6					7
9			4		7	1		
		1			3	2		
	8		5					6
3				8				9

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ★

★ Moderate ★★ Challenging

Answer Page 4

★★★ HOO BOY!

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CryptoQuip

This is a simple substitution cipher in which each letter used stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Solution is accomplished by trial and error.

Clue: E equals O

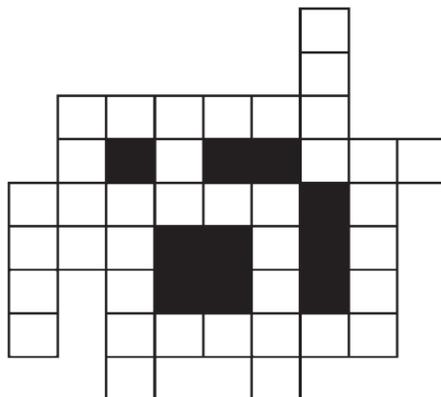
QPX NE XEH VPFZT VPU MEET
BFJPV QUGG WU MEZDFMVUN IZN
RUCDU VFBU? WUMIHRU PU'R IZ
UJJ WUIVUC.

Answer Page 4

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- MEL
- MELOPY
- ♥ TAXLE
- ♥ ELPA
- SEXLUP
- ♥ EIL
- ♥ ULEF
- MYTIA
- XAP
- MEFLAB
- ♥ ALDIE
- ♥ PISL



Answer Page 4

Unscramble these twelve letter strings to form each into an ordinary word (ex. HAGNEC becomes CHANGE). Prepare to use only ONE word from any marked (♥) letter string as each unscrambles into more than one word (ex. ♥RATHE becomes HATER or EARTH or HEART). Fit each string's word either across or down to knot all twelve strings together.

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Sports

From Page 6

came the other way... they fled Cuba by any means possible, though most ran from the team hotels whenever they had the chance to play baseball off the island. They defect for a dream, and they wish to make it in the big leagues, just like Minnie Minoso, Tony Perez, Tony Oliva, Luis Tiant, Jose Canseco, Rafael Palmeiro. They want to walk through the big ball orchards in the Bronx, LA or Chicago... anywhere they can play the game they felt they were born to play.

Most players in the majors remember different times, times the rum and cigars couldn't possibly compare to the life those travelers had left in America. They remember their teachers telling them to shut their eyes and ask God to provide them with lunch that day, only to open them and see an empty plate staring back up at them. The plate would remain empty until they were instructed to do the same thing, only this time to ask Castro for food, opening their eyes to a plate full of black beans and rice.

They remember playing under spotty light, the watchful eyes of fans and Castro's men. They escaped on makeshift rafts, hid under trucks and buses, spent everything they had. They, too, had a mission... just a chance to walk in through a gate and hear the stern-looking official bark the following command to them: "Play ball!"

Welcome to America.

Mark Vasto is a veteran sportswriter who lives in New Jersey. (c) 2016 King Features Synd., Inc.

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