



## NEWSBRIEFS

### Taxing places

Each year, the average American household spends \$2,690 on real-estate property taxes plus another \$444 for residents of the 26 states with vehicle property taxes. With such high costs, it's no surprise that more than \$14 billion in property taxes go unpaid each year, according to the National Tax Lien Association. In order to determine who pays the most relative to their state, the personal-finance website WalletHub has released its 2023's *Property Taxes by State* report, as well as expert commentary. The report compares home and vehicle taxes across the nation and features insights from a panel of experts. Texas was rated with the 46th highest property taxes in the report. Texas was rated with the 46th highest property taxes in the report. Other stats (1=Lowest; 25=Avg.):

- Real-Estate Property Tax Rank: 46;
- Vehicle Property Tax Rank: 1;
- Real-Estate Tax on Median State Home Value: \$4,255; and
- Real-Estate Tax on Median U.S. Home Value: \$3,520.

Visit <https://wallethub.com/edu/states-with-the-highest-and-lowest-property-taxes/11585> for the full report.

— Diana Polk

### Happy cities

With March 20 being International Day of Happiness and 83% of American adults feeling stressed out by high inflation, the personal-finance website WalletHub has released its report on 2023's *Happiest Cities in America*, as well as expert commentary. In order to determine where people in America are most content with their lives, WalletHub compared more than 180 of the largest U.S. cities across 30 key indicators of happiness. The data set ranges from depression rate to income-growth rate to average leisure time spent per day. El Paso was rated 118th in the report. Other stats:

- Fremont, CA has the lowest depression rate, 11.90 percent, which is 2.5 times lower than in Huntington, WV, the city with the highest at 30.10 percent.
- Newark, NJ has the lowest number of suicides per 100,000 residents, 4.93, which is 7.9 times

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— Photo courtesy Socorro ISD

The Pebble Hills High School Mariachi Los Guerreros.

## Socorro ISD mariachi groups earn highest State UIL honor

By Christy Flores-Jones  
*Special to the Courier*

EL PASO COUNTY – The Americas High School Mariachi Los Pioneros and Pebble Hills High School Mariachi

Los Guerreros won coveted Superior Rating Division 1 trophies at the 2023 Texas UIL State Mariachi Festival.

Both ensembles gave extraordinary performances to earn the highest rating possible at the contest Feb. 25 in Seguin, Texas, where the ensembles

competed among the top mariachi groups in the state.

The groups showcased their outstanding mariachi programs with student musicians who have exemplary

See HONOR, Page 4



— Photo courtesy Star Central Studios

STAGE CENTER – From left, Joshua Ruiz, Jennifer Cedillo, Gilbert Jorgenson, Ricardo Herrera, Cesar Cardona visited Senator Cesar Blanco at the Texas State Capital during El Paso Days in Austin.

## Star Central Studios launches non-profit center

By Jennifer Cedillo  
*Special to the Courier*

EL PASO COUNTY – Star Central Studios has created a new, donor-supported non-profit organization. Star

Central Studios Learning Center (SCSLC) is dedicated to encouraging and enriching the community for filmmakers in West Texas and beyond. The mission of the non-profit is to support local filmmakers in producing their own content

See STUDIO, Page 5

*We had complete confidence in reaching the moon. Now if we could only feel that way about getting across the street.*

— Quips & Quotes

# We shouldn't cut off Ukraine

More and more Republicans are beginning to see the wisdom of John Lennon, and think we need to give peace a chance in Ukraine.

Donald Trump is offering himself as the peace candidate and says he could broker a Ukraine-Russia deal.

The populist and realist right are banging the drums for a negotiated end to the war, and they aren't wrong. The conflict comes with an enormous humanitarian and economic price and is profoundly destabilizing.

So, by all means, let's hope for a deal. The secret to unlocking a potential agreement, though, isn't leaving Ukraine in the lurch and hoping that Vladimir Putin – just as he begins to make gains – decides to prudently and modestly stand down because dominating Ukraine isn't so important to him after all.

The only way there will eventually be a (flawed, unsatisfactory, and probably temporary) bargain is if Putin realizes that he has no hope of getting what he wants out of the war.

There are a number of objections and arguments that populist and realist opponents make against current levels of aid to Ukraine:

We've ended up in a proxy war with Russia. True enough. Yet, this is not the situation we sought out. It's not as though we encouraged Latvia to invade Russia, and then began lavishly supplying and training its forces.

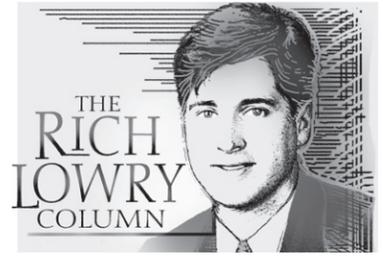
The advantage of this proxy war is that the Russians are direct participants, and paying a heavy price, while our role is limited and indirect. We are in the role comparable to the Russians during

the Vietnam War or the U.S. during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan – supporting a highly motivated indigenous force that is doing all the

fighting against a bitter geopolitical adversary.

The war is expensive and drawing down our stocks of weapons. This, too, is true. By any measure, the roughly \$30 billion, and counting, that we've spent on Ukraine is real money. It is a fraction of a fraction of the defense budget, though.

The drawdown of weapons has created shortages in U.S. stocks, but this is more exposing a vulnerability than creating one. If we are strained merely arming



THE RICH LOWRY COLUMN

See LOWRY, Page 7

## View from here By Dr. Glenn Mollette

# America's wars: Who are the winners?

America was involved in Vietnam for 20 years. Our presence started small but by 1965 had significantly escalated. 3.1 million troops saw combat and at least 58,300 were killed. We spent over \$120 billion from 1965 to 1973 which led to an oil crisis and rampant inflation. Are you better off today because America fought in Vietnam? Are you safer?

America spent over \$2 trillion fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. Then, we hurried and pulled out of Afghanistan leaving hundreds of millions of dollars in vehicles, buildings, bases, and weapons to be used by the Taliban. The country is now in shambles. Girls are not allowed to go to school beyond the sixth grade. Women are treated horribly by the Taliban. What did we do to help Afghanistan? Are

they better off now? Are we better off for our 13 years in that country?

We invaded Iraq. We lost over 15,000 active service members and contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan. Take a look at Iraq and Afghanistan today. What did we accomplish?

We approved \$113 billion in aid to Ukraine in 2022 alone. Most Americans do not want Russia to succeed in conquering Ukraine. Efforts to help Ukraine have been supported by most Americans. How far do we go? How much can we afford? How long are we able to keep this up? Does this become another Afghanistan? American troops are not there, yet. When will this happen?

When do we start fighting in Taiwan? China wants to control Taiwan. Taiwan is rich

in resources and technology. Like Russia wanting Ukraine because of its proximity and resources, China figures it just makes sense for them to control neighboring Taiwan.

China is reportedly on the verge, if not already sending military arms to Russia. As America depletes our own defense stockpile of missiles, tanks and more, China knows we will have less to send to Taiwan. We have recently sent 200 soldiers to Taiwan and more will be going. It is scary to ponder how many more will be going in the next year or two.

In the middle of all this, who is really profiting from America's forever wars? The Military Industrial Complex

will continue to make hundreds of millions of dollars with no end in sight. Manufacturers of mass weapons used in war have no end to their financial gains. Politicians who own stock in these massive companies only stand to get richer and richer. How many thousands of shares of stock in these companies do our long-term Senators and Representatives own? Stopping or slowing our military aggressions around the globe would mean their stock would go down and their massive financial fortunes would be diminished.

Politicians should not be allowed to buy stock while in office. Before running for a political office they should be required to cash their stock

out so they are not financially persuaded to promote the success of certain industries.

We don't want Ukraine to fall to Russia or Taiwan to China. However, what will our country have left to fight with after we have spent billions of dollars defending them? If your livelihood comes from investments in the massive military weapon sales industries, then you are probably spending most of your time counting your money.

Glenn Mollette is a graduate of numerous schools including Georgetown College, Southern and Lexington Seminaries in Kentucky. He is the author of "Uncommon Sense" and 12 other books. His column is published weekly in over 600 publications in all 50 states. Learn more at [www.glenmollette.com](http://www.glenmollette.com) or [www.facebook.com/glenmollette](http://www.facebook.com/glenmollette).

## Senior moment By Matilda Charles

# Is it taxable?

After preparing my own taxes annually for over 40 years, I'm about to have someone else do them for me for the first time.

This is not without concerns, of course, but the people who volunteer to prepare taxes at the senior center are trained. They're part of the AARP income tax assistance program, which means they're IRS-certified and therefore will know about any recent changes to tax law... which will be handy at this point.

As of this writing, the IRS is telling people to hold off sending in their tax returns for 2022. The reason: So many states handed out so many types of money during the pandemic that the IRS isn't sure yet what is and isn't taxable. For example, checks designated as "rebates" might or might not be taxable. A Covid disaster emergency relief check is not. However, in some cases, the issue is complicated by whether

you do or do not itemize. People in at least 22 states are caught in this dilemma.

If you haven't done your taxes yet and want help, or if you want to make a note for next year, do an online search for "AARP Foundation Tax-Aide Locator." Once on the site, scroll down and enter your ZIP code or town in the search field to find the locations near you.

Be sure to ask about the forms you'll need to pick up and fill out before your appointment, and whether you'll be going inside or waiting in the parking lot.

The other good news is that this AARP service is free. For me it means I don't need to spend \$50 once again to buy the computer software and do it myself and hope I haven't made an error somewhere... perhaps with guessing wrong about whether that state check I received is or isn't taxable.

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## Briefs

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lower than in Casper, WY, the city with the highest at 39.05.

• Fremont, CA has the lowest separation and divorce rate, 9.02 percent, which is 4.6 times lower than in Cleveland, OH, the city

with the highest at 41.59 percent.

• Missoula, MT and Juneau, AK, have the lowest average commute time, 15.50 minutes, which is 2.7 times lower than in New York, NY, the city with the highest at 41.40 minutes.

Visit: <https://wallethub.com/edu/happiest-places-to-live/32619> for the full report.

— Diana Polk

# Mom surprises sons after long deployment

By **Adriana Candelaria**  
*Special to the Courier*

ANTHONY, TX – Some people know Samantha Romero as a U.S. Army sergeant. Others have witnessed her leadership running a medical clinic for Afghan refugees in Qatar. But for two Anthony Middle School students, Sgt. Romero is simply Mom.

After her nine-month deployment to Qatar, Sgt. Romero arrived at Anthony Middle School February 20th to surprise her sons, Dylan and Aiden Romero.

“I was nervous seeing how they would react and being able to give them a hug in what feels like forever,” Sgt. Romero said.

Sgt. Romero surprised Aiden by walking up behind him during math class and tapping him on the shoulder.

“It took me a second to realize who it was,” Aiden said.

“I was very happy to see her because, like she said, being away from her for nine months when I’m so used to seeing her every day – I missed her a lot.”

After the heart-warming reunion, it was Dylan’s turn to see his mom again. His teacher told students to turn their attention to the door for a special guest before Sgt. Romero walked through to door and went straight for a hug with her son.

The boys knew their mom would return home during the month of February, but they had no idea she would walk into their classrooms just one day before Dylan’s 13th birthday.

“It’s nice because she has been here for every other birthday. I didn’t think she’d make it to this one, but I’m happy she’s here now,” Dylan said.

This is the second time the boys experienced having their mother deployed, but the first deployment happened when they were too young to remember, Sgt. Romero said.

Anthony Middle School is a Texas Education Agency Purple Star Designated Campus. The designation is awarded to schools that show a commitment to supporting the unique needs of military-connected students and their families.



– Photo courtesy Anthony ISD

**REUNITED** – Aiden, left, and Dylan Romero are back together with their mom – U.S. Army Sergeant Samantha Romero – after she returned from deployment in Qatar.

The school earned the recognition in the summer of 2022 for offering resources to military students, such as a military liaison and student ambassadors that welcome military students when they are new on campus.



EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN.



"GOT ROOM FOR ONE MORE?"

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– Photo courtesy Socorro ISD

The Americas High School Mariachi Los Pioneros.

**Honor**  
From Page 1

vocal and instrumental talents. “We are extremely proud of Los Pioneros and Los Guerreros on their Division 1 rating,” said Armando

Martinez, Fine Arts director for the Socorro Independent School District. “We are blessed to have exceptional teachers and students in our district, and their hard work has paid off. We hope to continue this high level of excellence and are excited for the future

of mariachi education in our district.”

Jose Luis Rios directs Los

Pioneros. Daniel Reyes directs Los Guerreros. Both men are mariachi instructors.

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**CryptoQuip**  
**Answer**  
What phrase would properly describe both dog food and the cost of a bus ride?  
Greyhound fare.

**Strange BUT TRUE**

By Lucie Winborne

- In 2015, a study found that having more than 10 trees on their block made folks feel as healthy as if they were seven years younger or made an additional \$10,000 a year.
- In the NHL, if both the goalie and backup goalie are unable to play, the team can substitute any available goalie who isn't bound by a professional contract with another team. To date, such replacements have included an accountant, a facilities manager and an equipment manager.
- A course called The Science of Batman was offered at the University of Victoria in Canada in 2016, with the design of examining “how the human body can be adapted and improved based on the metaphor of the caped crusader himself.”
- While still a teenager, Dasia Taylor used beet juice to develop surgical sutures that change color to indicate an infection.
- An Arizona man didn't realize he was a big winner at a Las Vegas slot machine because its lights and buzzers never went on. Fortunately, an investigation by the Nevada Gaming Control Board resulted in a happy ending and the bestowal of the gentleman's \$230,000.
- The ant-eating assassin bug piles its victims onto its body to scare predators.
- In 1829, some Victorians were gripped with pteridomania, or “fern fever,” and began eagerly collecting the plants after botanist George Loddiges spread the (quite unsubstantiated) claim that they could not only improve mood, but increase both intelligence and virility.

• Asia is bigger in surface area than the moon.

• Ever heard that old claim that watching scary movies will help you burn calories because they get your heart racing? Sorry, but the “study” that produced this finding was meant more for publicity than to be taken seriously. You're more likely to burn the same amount just by lounging on your sofa... and watching something like, say, “Bambi.”

Thought for the Day: “Action speaks louder than words but not nearly as often.”  
– Mark Twain

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**Moments in time**  
THE HISTORY CHANNEL

• On March 6, 1986, American painter Georgia O’Keeffe, whose work included large-format paintings of natural forms, especially flowers and bones, died at age 98. She had continued painting, with the help of assistants, into her last years, even though nearly blind from macular degeneration.

• On March 7, 161 A.D., Marcus Aurelius became emperor of Rome at the age of 39, after the death of his predecessor, Antoninus Pius, and after patiently waiting more than 20 years to assume that role. He was extremely popular, and his reign would later be recalled as a “golden age.”

• On March 8, 1941, Hugh Mulcahy, a pitcher for the Philadelphia Phillies, gained national attention when he became the first major league baseball player to be drafted into the Army. He continued to pitch during his service, which lasted for four years, before he returned to his old team.

• On March 9, 1562, kissing in public was banned in Naples, Italy, and actually punishable by death, but not for reasons of morality. Rather, it was part of an effort to halt the spread of a plague throughout Europe. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the legislation failed to achieve its goal.

• On March 10, 1927, engineer Robert Kearns is born. Kearns patented a design for a windshield wiper and later won multi-million dollar judgments against Chrysler and Ford for using his concept without permission.

• On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared that the COVID-19 outbreak was a pandemic, citing more than 118,000 cases of the coronavirus illness in over 110 countries and territories around the world.

• On March 12, 1933, eight days after his inauguration, President Franklin Roosevelt gives his “fireside chat,” a radio address directly from the Whitehouse. Roosevelt explained his decision to close the nation’s banks to stop mass withdrawals.

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**Studio**

From Page 1

in El Paso and providing the tools and resources essential to give voice and visibility to their bodies of work.

SCSLC will pair student filmmakers with professionals, and give access to the same equipment used on big productions all over the world. It is the only facility in West Texas and Southern New Mexico that features an operational movie set where students and professionals can access high end cameras, lenses, and lights. The goal is to give local filmmakers access to the same equipment used on big productions all over the world.

Founding members of its Board of Directors include Gilbert Jorgenson (President), Joshua Ruiz (Secretary), Jennifer Cedillo, Ricardo Herrera, and Cesar Cardona (Treasurer). Key priorities of the nonprofit will be fundraising for the new screening room, working with area students on training programs, and providing producing opportunities for filmmakers to showcase their work.

The longterm goal of SCSLC is to create a larger film industry, bringing with it growth, job creation, a film district, and economic development.



– Photo courtesy Star Central Studios

**PICTURE PERFECT – Star Central Studios Learning Center has an operational movie set with high end cameras, lenses, and lights.**

On February 15th, SCSLC, and several other community leaders, were recognized at the Texas State Capitol by Senator Cesar Blanco, as part of El Paso Days in Austin. The week long event, organized by El Paso Chamber of Commerce, brought El Paso community leaders together to advocate on behalf of education, healthcare, small business, and film.

Star Central Studios is led by Gilbert Jorgenson,

an award winning photo business partner, Ricardo journalist and advertising Herrera, a 30-year veteran in principle with over 20 filmmaking and worldwide years of experience, and his motion picture production.

**Socorro ISD earns 34 statewide awards**

By Christy Flores-Jones  
*Special to the Courier*

EL PASO COUNTY – The Socorro Independent School District has been recognized with 34 awards from the Texas School Public Relations Association for outstanding communication, public relations and marketing projects during the 2021-22 school year, including three Best of Category awards.

The awards were presented at the 2023 TSPRA Annual Conference on Feb. 23 in Fort Worth, Texas.

The district won Gold Star and Best of Category awards for the article “Developing a shared vision of success with meaningful community connections” and for its Socorro ISD 2020-21 Annual Report. A third Best of Category award was presented for the Socorro ISD Academic Technology Showcase Poster. Best of Category awards are given to entries that stand out from all the others in the same category and division for their exceptional creativity and quality.

The SISD PR team won a total of 19 Gold Star awards, 10 Silver Star awards, two Bronze Star awards, and three Crystal Commendation Certificate of Merit awards for outstanding writing, communication, photography, videography, posters, and special events.

Each year, TSPRA recognizes exceptional communicators in public school districts, education foundations and educational organizations throughout the state of Texas for their outstanding work in print, photographic and electronic media. Independent, impartial judges evaluate each work and project based on set criteria and they award Gold, Silver and Bronze Star Awards, as well as Best of Category, Crystal and Platinum Certificates of Merit, Crystal Commendations and the Platinum Award for an all-encompassing, yearlong communications project. More than 1,600 entries from school PR teams across the state were evaluated in the awards program.

**Classified Ads**

**LEGALS**

**Village of Vinton, TX**

**Public Notice**

**Invitation to Bid**

**Wastewater Connections**

**GENERAL NOTICE**

Village of Vinton (Owner) is requesting Bids for the construction of the following Project:

**Vinton Wastewater Connections Bid No. 2023-1**

Bids for the construction of the Project will be received at the Village Hall located at 436 E Vinton Rd, El Paso, Texas 79821, until Thursday, April 6th, 2023, at 3 pm for receipt of Bids local time. At that time the Bids received will be publicly opened and read.

The Project is being partially financed by the North American Development Bank (NADB), through its Border Environment Infrastructure Fund Program (BEIF) which is funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). EPA-funded or assisted Projects must comply with the Civil Rights Act, Equal Employment Opportunity requirements, and promote Small, Minority and Women-

owned Businesses participation through EPA’s Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program. Bidding for Contracts to be financed with the proceeds of a NADB grant are open to firms from any eligible country.

Small, minority and female-owned firms are encouraged to submit bids for this Project.

The Project includes the following Work: Install 466 sewer service connections from new sewer line to existing dwelling, decommissioning of 466 existing septic systems, video recording of Project area and any miscellaneous items needed to complete Project. This Project includes providing a sketch for each property on the location of the septic tank.

This form will be provided by the Village of Vinton for each property and will need to be turned back into the Village.

Bids are requested for the following Contract: Vinton Wastewater Connections.

**OBTAINING THE BIDDING DOCUMENTS**

Information and Bidding Documents for the Project can be found at the following designated website:

<https://parkhill.com/projects-for-bid>

The designated website will be updated periodically with addenda, lists of registered plan holders, and other information relevant to submitting a Bid for the Project. All official notifications, addenda, and other Bidding Documents will be offered only through the designated website. Neither Owner nor Engineer will be responsible for Bidding Documents, including addenda, if any, obtained from sources other than the designated website.

Documents, including addenda, if any, obtained from sources other than the Issuing Office. Copies of the Contract Documents may be secured at the Parkhill, 501 West San Antonio, El Paso, TX 79901, (915) 533-6811 as follows:

**PRE-BID CONFERENCE**

A pre-bid conference for the Project will be held on Thursday, March 16th, 2023, at 2:30 pm at Village Hall, 436 E. Vinton Rd., Vinton, Texas 79821. Attendance at the pre-bid conference is encouraged but not required.

The Issuing Office for the Bidding Documents is: 501 West San Antonio El Paso, TX 79901 (915) 533-6811

Prospective Bidders may obtain or examine the Bidding Documents at the Issuing Office during normal business hours (call Issuing Office to verify normal business hours) and may obtain copies of the Bidding Documents as described below. Partial sets of Bidding Documents will not be available from the Issuing Office. Neither Owner nor Engineer will be responsible for full or partial sets of Bidding Documents.

Documents, including addenda, if any, obtained from sources other than the Issuing Office.

Copies of the Contract Documents may be secured at the Parkhill, 501 West San Antonio, El Paso, TX 79901, (915) 533-6811 as follows:

Download documents (PDF file extension format) from the Parkhill Info Exchange website after registering as a Plan holder with issuing Parkhill office. No cost or deposit required for this option.

**INSTRUCTIONS TO BIDDERS**

For all further requirements regarding bid submittal, qualifications, procedures, and contract award, refer to the Instructions to Bidders that are included in the Bidding Documents.

Andrea N. Carrillo  
Village Administrator

WTCC: 03-02-23  
03-09-23

**Send Your Newsbrief To:**  
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# The good, the bad, and the ugly of the NCAA year

By Steve Escajeda  
Special to the Courier

This has been an exciting college sports year with Georgia dominating the football season and the upcoming NCAA Basketball Tournament seems to be totally up for grabs.

But don't get me wrong, things have not all been chocolates, unicorns and roses. There have been some troubling issues that have put the NCAA in a bad light.

One involves a controversial rule and three involve players and coaches who may be facing more than just a slap on the wrist.

First of all, the NCAA has got to do something about all the money surrounding the payment of athletes through their Name, Image and Likeness (NIL).

The idea of treating amateurs like

pros came from pressure brought on years ago by athletes and the media to pay players who were making all the money for their colleges, but weren't seeing a single penny of it.

At the time, regular college students could work at the school or outside the school with no problem. Sports athletes were not permitted to work because they were already receiving a scholarship.

But in the United States there are laws that give young adults the right to get paid for their work. They can be compensated for commercials or selling apparel with their name or number on it.

Of course like almost everything concerning money, things have gotten totally out of control.

Millions and millions of dollars are being collected from fans, big name donors and corporations to recruit athletes. And it doesn't take a financial

expert to see that the colleges with the most money will outbid the smaller schools for the best athletes.

If UTEP offers me \$10,000, but the Texas Longhorns offer me a million – I'm packing my bags for Austin. Aren't you?

But is that fair? Is that what the rule was intended for? Of course not.

Believe it nor not, there are some guys in college who are making more than guys in the NFL or NBA. It's complete madness.

And with these millions rolling in, who is keeping track of any money getting "lost" along the way?

Anyway, let's take a peek at the three biggest scandals the NCAA has to answer to.

As you may have heard, the NMSU basketball program was shut down a few weeks ago because of not one, but two incidents involving their basketball players doing horrible

things.

Let's see, there were some players who were physically and sexually abusing a fellow player and, oh yeah, there was another player who shot and killed a U of New Mexico student.

Though the police later said that was in self-defense, the shooter did call some of his teammates to drive over that night and take the gun and his phone from the scene before the police arrived. They gave the gun to an assistant coach who stored it away in the team hotel.

This stuff may set the NMSU athletic department back for years.

Then there is the ridiculous situation involving a player projected to be selected high in next month's NFL draft, Georgia defensive tackle Jalen Carter.

Carter has been charged with reckless driving and racing which resulted in the crash that killed offensive lineman Devin Willock and a staff member.

I know Carter is out of school now but Georgia has had a few incidents involving football players recently and the NCAA may have to find out what is in the water down there.

Very close to Georgia is Alabama. The Crimson Tide is enjoying a great basketball season, spending almost the entire season ranked in the top five.

That is mostly thanks to a phenomenal freshman named Brandon Miller.

Miller may end up being named the Player of the Year. He was also involved in delivering a gun to a friend who used it to shoot a kill a woman.

Though Miller just drove the car with the gun in it, there's still a question of whether he knew what was about to go down. In the meantime, Miller is still playing basketball and Alabama officials aren't doing a thing.

Don't you get the feeling that in all these situations, the only ones who will end up paying a steep price will be those who were killed.



## Super Crossword

### TOTALLY OUT OF IT ACROSS

- 1 Four-string guitar
- 5 Bits of land in el agua
- 10 Luca Brasi in "The Godfather," e.g.
- 16 Soft infant food
- 19 Life \_ know it
- 20 New Mexico or Colorado county
- 21 Useless
- 22 Division of history
- 23 Start of a riddle
- 26 Mantra syllables
- 27 Old-time cleaning cake
- 28 Tennis' Safin
- 29 Not skilled in at all
- 31 Heavy weight
- 32 All \_ sudden
- 35 Spoken
- 37 French movie theater
- 38 Riddle, part 2
- 44 President Biden
- 45 Speaks
- 46 Singer Turner
- 47 Tell el \_ (Nile excavation site)
- 50 It fills la mer
- 51 Riddle, part 3
- 57 Becomes familiar with anew
- 59 Per-unit price
- 60 Mortise insertion
- 61 Ambulance VIPs
- 62 Decorative dashboard finish

- 66 Chain in biology
- 67 Riddle, part 4
- 73 China's Chou En- \_
- 74 Like many soda bottles, volume-wise
- 75 Purposely ignore
- 76 Book of charts
- 79 IRS form IDs
- 80 " \_ is a virtue"
- 84 Riddle, part 5
- 87 In honor of
- 89 Small river
- 90 \_-mutuel betting
- 91 Oxygen-requiring bacterium
- 93 Start for center or Pen
- 94 End of the riddle
- 102 Square yardage, e.g.
- 103 Instant replay option
- 104 Expressive rock genre
- 105 \_ Leppard (rock band)
- 106 Mythical man-goats
- 109 "In the red," e.g.
- 111 Division of history
- 115 Concorde, e.g., in brief
- 116 Riddle's answer
- 120 Grassland
- 121 Henner of "Taxi"
- 122 \_ Island (Providence's state)
- 123 Old TV's \_ May

- Clampett
  - 124 Work unit
  - 125 Workout wear
  - 126 Planted
  - 127 Some deli loaves
- ### DOWN
- 1 Cry noisily
  - 2 Ghostly pale
  - 3 Real bargain
  - 4 Electric eye, e.g.
  - 5 "The Tall Corn State"
  - 6 Leave for a short time
  - 7 Spy novelist
  - 8 Exhibit works
  - 9 "... or \_ told"
  - 10 Drag racer
  - 11 New York home of Cornell
  - 12 Relative of a stickpin
  - 13 Raging crowd
  - 14 PDQ's cousin
  - 15 Emperor after Claudius I
  - 16 City on the Illinois River
  - 17 Ralph Lauren competitor
  - 18 Pale hue
  - 24 Actress Skye
  - 25 Main parts of churches
  - 30 Fuel rating
  - 33 Galas
  - 34 On the Red, e.g.

- 36 Former senator
- Trent
- 38 Open slightly
- 39 City in Alaska
- 40 Four-piece band
- 41 Writer Capote, to pals
- 42 Org. in many spy novels
- 43 Make a ski mask, maybe
- 48 Lagoon surrounder
- 49 Christen
- 51 Core group
- 52 Frisky swimmer
- 53 Uncool sort
- 54 About
- 55 Lower-class, to Brits
- 56 Growl threateningly
- 58 Warning initials above an internet link
- 59 Hair bases
- 62 Actress Kate of "Grey's Anatomy"
- 63 Of sheep
- 64 "Casablanca" woman
- 65 Prized buy for a coin collector
- 67 Nail on a paw
- 68 Pledge
- 69 Brand of sneakers
- 70 Didn't win
- 71 Hang it up
- 72 App that asks "Where to?"
- 77 Frolicking

- 78 Move back and forth
- 80 Open tourney, often
- 81 Necessarily
- 82 Sleeveless cloak
- 83 Arabian chief
- 85 Pooch noise
- 86 Misters
- 87 Agent's cut
- 88 "... there \_ square"
- 91 Something hilarious
- 92 Fabric with raised designs
- 94 Grapple with, slangily
- 95 Slate clearer
- 96 Attachment to a dog or cat collar
- 97 "House" actress Wilde
- 98 Old-time Ford
- 99 NASA countdown term
- 100 Ferber of fiction
- 101 \_ regions (Hades)
- 107 Crater edges
- 108 Novelist Irwin
- 110 Corp. VIPs
- 112 Squeezed (out)
- 113 Be in power
- 114 Jubilant cries
- 117 Exist
- 118 "So that's your trick!"
- 119 Wrecker's job

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120						121							122						123	
124						125														127

# Comix

## OUT ON A LIMB By Gary Kopervas



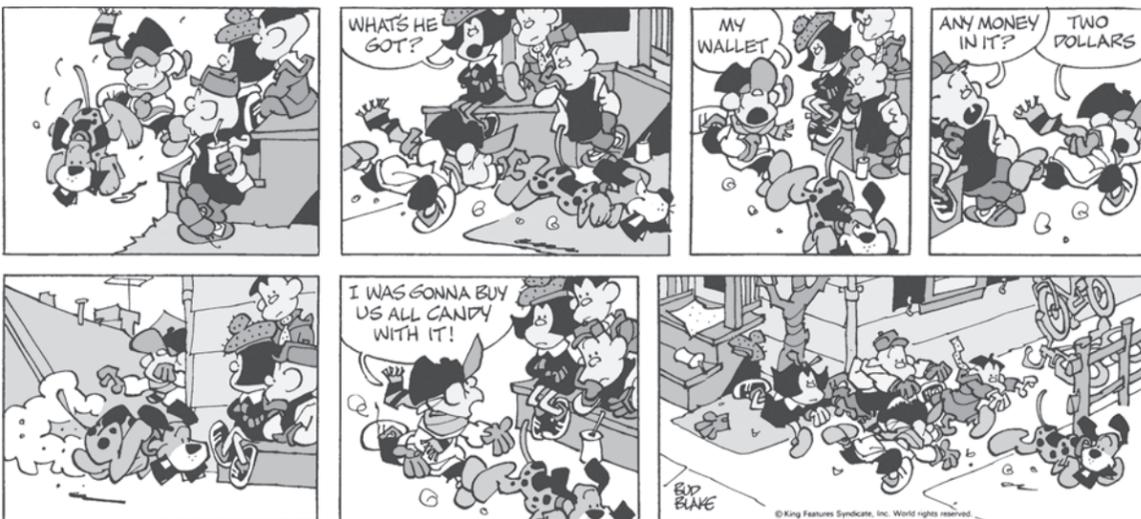
## AMBER WAVES By Dave T. Phipps



## THE SPATS By Jeff Pickering



## TIGER By Bud Blake



## Lowry

From Page 2

Ukraine, we'd quickly reach a breaking point in a direct conflict with China. The answer is to build up our defense industrial base in a way that'd be necessary one way or the other.

NATO expansion provoked the Russians. Everyone knew that Ukraine wasn't going to actually join NATO anytime soon (or probably ever), and Russia didn't rationally have anything to fear from the alliance – when Russia invaded Ukraine the first time in 2014, the U.S. had brought home all its tanks from Germany. Putin has made it clear that his ideological and geopolitical goal is to reestablish a version of the Russian empire. This is a deeply held ambition that would very likely be the same if NATO had never expanded and if all the Baltic and Eastern and Central European states were blandly neutral and entirely disarmed.

Putin is only pursuing a traditional Russian foreign policy. Well, yes. But just because

Russia occupied Poland for 100 years or so or gobbled up various nations of Europe during World War II, doesn't mean similar projects today would have any legitimacy. Yes, Russia has always been concerned with securing and maintaining access to the Black Sea. It should be noted, however, that it already had an agreement with Ukraine to base its Black Sea Fleet at Sevastopol. For good measure, in 2014, Russia grabbed all of Crimea. Invading Ukraine and trying to take Kyiv is oversaucing the goose and isn't about the Black Sea but destroying a model of (imperfect) democracy on its border.

In short, cutting off the Ukrainians in the hopes of jump-starting negotiations would be folly and only benefit a Vladimir Putin who, if he had his druthers, would bring a bloody-minded peace of repression and vastation to Ukraine.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review. (c) 2023 by King Features Synd., Inc.

# Extra vitamins lead to vitamin toxicity

**DEAR DR. ROACH:** I have been diagnosed with vitamin D toxicity, according to the blood work from a month ago – my result was 122 ng/mL. I was taking high doses of vitamin D3 in pill form (15,000 IU a day for three years) bought from a drugstore. I have stopped taking it, but I need to know how long it will take to have a normal amount in my body. (Weeks, months?) Can you shed any light on this question? I would like to take it again when my level comes down, but in a lower amount. Also, by any chance, would the high amount of D3 in my system have any correlation to a diagnosis of stenosis of the aortic valve? – C.I.



Vitamin D toxicity is not common. I have seen one case in my career requiring hospitalization, due to a very high elevation of the blood calcium level. Vitamin D increases absorption of calcium from food through the intestines.

In addition, calcium can come out of bones in people with very high levels of vitamin D. With high vitamin D levels, calcium levels can also become dangerously high. Common symptoms of very high calcium levels include constipation, nausea and vomiting, muscle weakness, kidney stones, and neurological symptoms, including poor concentration and fatigue. These symptoms tend to happen at levels higher than yours, above 150 ng/mL. Years of high calcium levels can absolutely cause existing heart valve disease to worsen quickly.

In cases of acute intoxication from vitamin D, available treatments include steroids and pamidronate (an injectable medicine similar to alendronate and other drugs used to treat osteoporosis), which can quickly bring the calcium levels back down to normal.

Without this kind of intervention, a vitamin D level will still come down on its own, only more gradually. Vitamin D3 is removed slowly from the body, because it can go into fat tissue. It takes about two months for half the excess to be removed from the body, but because the active forms are removed more quickly, toxicity from excess vitamin D3 usually only lasts for weeks, not months. Still, you are likely not to need any vitamin D for many months, and if you do take it again, do not exceed the safe dose of 5,000 IU a day. I recommend you also get your blood levels tested. Recent studies have questioned the benefit of supplemental vitamin D for most people, although some people, such as those with osteoporosis and low vitamin D levels, probably still benefit.

I'm very glad you wrote. Many people still don't know that excess of some vitamins can occasionally be dangerous. Vitamin A is the other vitamin where high levels can be very dangerous.

**DEAR DR. ROACH:** I am a 67-year-old female who has been unable to tolerate both liquid and pill forms of colonoscopy preparations. Therefore, my gastroenterologist has been unable to complete a colonoscopy on me. What are my other options? – F.K.

I would consider an alternate form of colon cancer screening. Home stool tests look for blood and DNA for colon cancer, or both. The data on Cologuard (a commonly available brand) show that it isn't quite as good as a colonoscopy, but much better than not receiving a screening. However, if the result is positive, you will certainly need additional testing, which calls for preparation, possibly requiring you to get the preparation done under supervision.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to [ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu](mailto:ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu). (c) 2023 North America Synd., Inc. All Rights Reserved.



**Moore Texas by Roger Moore**

31 days after getting his ankle shattered by a bullet at San Jacinto, Sam Houston sees a surgeon in New Orleans.

**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: R equals W

RVFZ YVHFIA REGDN YHEYAHDX  
 NAIUHKJA JEZV NES CEEN FWN  
 ZVA UEIZ EC F JGI HKNA?  
 SHAXVEGWN CFHA.

Answer Page 4

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**Weekly SUDOKU**

by Linda Thistle

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

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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**A 48-Year theft**



by Freddy Groves

Forty-eight years is a long time to pull off a scam, but one woman managed to keep it going for that long. The crime: forging her mother's signature on the back of checks for widows' benefits... for 48 years.

During all those years she continued to send in fraudulent paperwork while impersonating her mother – who died in 1973 – and continued to collect the money. Her excuse, when finally caught, was that her abusive husband told her to keep cashing the checks. She divorced him and was then out from under his control, yet she continued to cash the checks.

Yes, when her mother died she had to take in and raise her younger siblings, so it's possibly understandable that she assumed she could take the money that had been meant for her mother. But eventually those children

grew up and were no longer minors living at home.

In the middle of the decades-long theft, she filed for bankruptcy and claimed she had no income, even though she was receiving the Department of Veterans Affairs benefits checks all along.

She'll need to repay the \$416,000 that she stole (not likely to happen), but there's no jail sentence, only a year of home confinement, because the perp in this case is now 76 years old.

Why, inquiring minds want to know, does the VA not demand proof of life or some type of verification about where the money is going when benefits are paid year after year, decade after decade?

Surely someone could have done the math. If the mother was X years old when she started collecting the widow benefits, what were the odds she was still living 20 years, 30 years or 40 years later? Couldn't someone have asked for verification? Or gone to the door? Just receiving

handwritten forms over the years doesn't seem like much of an effort to safeguard the funds that are sent out.

That \$416,000 (that they'll likely never see again) is a lot of money.

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• "It can be tricky to add new keys to a key ring, especially if you don't have much of a fingernail. I have found a foolproof way to get the key started. Just use a staple remover. It works wonders!" – T.R. in Indiana

• "Revive the look of indoor plant leaves by rubbing the leaves with mineral oil on a soft cloth. Just wipe nicely, and it makes a big difference. Through the years, I have used this tip for both my real plants and plastic plants." – J.D. in Alabama

• Lime juice and vinegar both make good meat tenderizers. You can purchase tougher cuts of meat, season with spices and lime/vinegar and marinate for 10-15 minutes before cooking. It is a great way to ease your meat budget. Steaks are getting expensive!

• "To make onion rings easier to cut (less stinging eyes) and to have the layers separate better when making onion rings, I put my onions in the freezer for about 10 minutes before peeling. They don't freeze, but they do get nice and cold." – O.F. in Florida

• Looking for a more natural way to clean? Here's two for the bathroom: Clean chrome with baking soda on a soft, damp cloth. Follow up with vinegar for some shine. Spray lightly and wipe away with a clean cloth.

• "Men: Make your own after-shave. Thin a bottle of baby lotion with a little rubbing alcohol. Put in a hand lotion bottle, and use half a squirt. No sting, and soft, smooth skin." – T.G. in Illinois

• Add a single teaspoon of rice to the saltshaker in order to keep too many grains of salt from coming out at a time.

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803. (c) 2023 King Features Synd., Inc.

**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		21
x		x		x	
	-		x		21
+		-		-	
	-		x		25
17		26		16	

1 3 4 5 5 6 7 8 9

**DIFFICULTY: ★**

★ Moderate ★★ Difficult

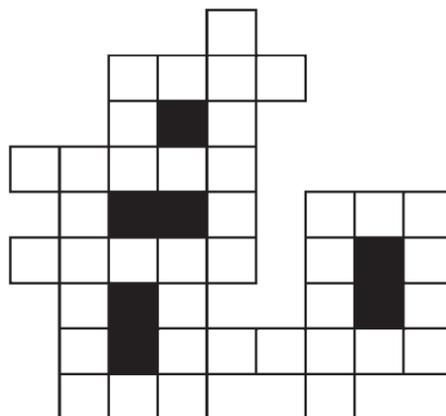
★★★ GO FIGURE!

Answer Page 4

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- OHD
- ♥RESHCA
- ♥TARHE
- EGLA
- GUDLEE
- ♥ERO
- ELHE
- DRALE
- ♥ALG
- ♥ALEROD
- SCOUL
- ♥ETDI



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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