



NEWSBRIEFS

Fabens bridge

The Fabens bridge was constructed in 1960 and as can be imagined, repairs became necessary, but also the need to be brought up to new standards; this led to the replacement of the bridge. The new structure has four columns instead of two per bent to assist with structural redundancy if the bridge is ever hit. The new facility's vertical clearance increased from 17 feet to 19 to allow larger oversize loads to pass under without an issue. There are additional safety features: the new bridge will include shoulders on both sides and railing will be concrete instead of metal. The construction of this project was accelerated to minimize the impact of the detour to the community. Demolition of the bridge happened on January 20th, the beams were placed February 16th, and the bridge deck was poured on February 29th. While the bridge is open to traffic, construction is not complete. Crews will work on additional features like striping and concrete grooving before it's opened at its final configuration by the end of this month. Drivers will also see some additional overnight and alternating closures on I-10 for the rest of the month.

— TxDOT

Jackpot

A jackpot-winning ticket worth an estimated annuitized \$17.5 million for the Lotto Texas® drawing held on March 9 was purchased at Heifer's N Convenience Store, located at 6301 N. Dixie Blvd., in Odessa. The winning ticket with player-chosen numbers matched all six of the numbers drawn (17-23-26-32-38-45). The cash value option was selected at the time of purchase and the claimant will receive \$10,081,454.18 before taxes. The prize has not yet been claimed. The winner has 180 days from the draw date to claim the prize.

— Texas Lottery Commission

Madness

With basketball lovers gearing up for March Madness and the NCAA generating over a billion dollars in

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The object of a political primary is to choose the one candidate that will outpromise the others.

— Quips & Quotes



— Photos by Alfredo Vasquez

TEAR IT UP – The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) contractor is removing the road surface along I-10 in El Paso County's westside. The job has pushed I-10 travelers into one lane on the busy highway. The roadwork is part of a four-year expansion project that is expected to be completed by the end of 2025.

I-10 roadwork tries motorists' mettle

By Alfredo Vasquez
Special to the Courier

EL PASO COUNTY – Interstate-10 motorists driving through El Paso County's westside – in particular from the Redd Road overpass to the Vinton Boulevard exit ramp – have endured patiently, for the most part, the big traffic changes that are part of the ongoing \$284.3 million I-10 West widening project.

Westside commuters have to put up with closures of portions of the highway, mostly on weekends, as traffic is detoured through the frontage roads so that work crews can relocate concrete barriers, Jennifer Wright, Texas Department of Transportation's (TxDOT) El Paso office spokesperson stated recently.

Consequently, traffic frequently backs up so acutely that law enforcement officers have been helping direct traffic through the main intersections. That is why TxDOT officials recommend that drivers – who want to access the West Towne Marketplace, at Paseo del Norte Boulevard /Artcraft Road, and nearby areas – use an alternative route.

The new traffic detours are significant changes that motorists should be aware of because they bring major shifts in traffic patterns in the area, TxDOT officials pointed out. And some of changes will be in place for at least a year, they added.

Project officials stated that plans are to expand I-10 from two lanes to three lanes in each direction from North Mesa Street to Vinton Road, rebuild 22 bridges, and reconfigure 26

entrance and exit ramps.

The massive project, which started in 2022, is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2025. The westside roadwork initially had a \$174.3 million price tag, but because of a substantial increase in construction costs the revised fee is an additional \$110 million, according to Wright.

The supplemental funds will augment the El Paso state highway district's funding allocation that is provided by the Texas Transportation Commission for highway projects in the three-county area. El Paso County alone received \$326.2 million which is earmarked for projects on TxDOT's ten-year plan, known as the 2024 United Transportation Program (UTP).

Four other major El Paso County projects received funding through the newly implemented UTP initiative. One of them is the U.S. Highway 54 expansion project in the county's northeast region. This project received nearly \$52 million. Plans are to extend the highway from where it currently ends at Kenworthy Street

and continue the highway to McCombs Street. Another project, the Montana Freeway expansion, got about \$30 million more to continue the freeway and its frontage roads from Tierra Este to Zaragoza roads in the county's far east area.

Also, the proposed downtown I-10 expansion project received another \$83 million to add to its account, which now has about \$388 million in funding allocations, according to news reports. These funds are intended for

See ROADWORK, Page 5



BIG MOVER – The Caterpillar 336F Excavator weighs 88,400 lbs. – depending on the configuration and attachments. It burns about 8 gallons of deisel an hour. The boom can reach out 38.7 feet on level ground and the bucket can hold an impressive 70.5 cubic feet of material.

Russia really is a Western adversary

The poet Robert Frost once said that a liberal is someone too broad-minded to take his own side in a fight. What would he say about those on the right who seem to be confused about the same question?

Over the last few days, Donald Trump told a rally about how he'd supposedly warned the leader of a NATO nation that he'd encourage the Russians "to do whatever the hell they want" against countries that weren't spending enough on defense, while the former Fox News personality Tucker Carlson broadcast videos from Moscow praising its grocery stores and subways as superior to those in the United States.

For its part, the Republican-controlled House of Representatives is refusing to approve another tranche of aid to Ukraine as it runs short of artillery shells in a defensive war against Russia.

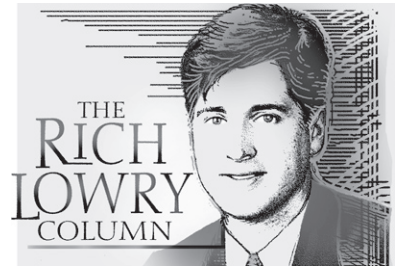
What's notable about all of this is that people who, in other contexts, are fierce about the need to defend Western civilization are unenthusiastic about a core institution of the modern West – namely, NATO – and feel little urgency about checking the aggression of a Russia that is an avowed and long-time civilizational adversary of the West.

There are legitimate policy disagreements about NATO and the Ukraine war, but there shouldn't be any doubt about the larger significance of Vladimir Putin's challenge to the West's interests, values and resolve.

In his classic book "The Clash of Civilizations," the late social scientist Samuel Huntington wrote of an "Orthodox civilization, centered in Russia and separate from Western Christendom as a result of its Byzantine parentage, distinct religion, 200

years of Tatar rule, bureaucratic despotism, and limited exposure to the Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment, and other central Western experiences."

There's some ambiguity about this, as Russia has always had a conflicted relationship with the West. In the early 18th Century, Peter the Great grabbed his country by the neck and forced it to adopt more Western ways. He built St. Petersburg as a European-style city, and pursued a dizzying array of military, administrative, educational, legal and cultural reforms. Peter's mode of Westernizing,



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Fabens TAFE finalists heading to Washington DC

Texas Association of Future Educators finalist to compete nationally

By Sofia Maciel
Special to the Courier

FABENS – Fabens High School seniors Kaitlyn Dettman and Deven Gutierrez will represent the newly formed Texas Association

of Future Educators (TAFE) chapter nationally. The local chapter was formed this academic school year.

"Starting a TAFE chapter at Fabens High School has been a journey! My expectation was to encourage a couple of students to join,

but to our great surprise, we had twenty sign up. We took 19 to area competition, with 11 qualifying for state competition. It has been a learning experience for me, and I have really enjoyed it because of the students who joined – it is easy to love it because of them," stated Fabens High School teacher and TAFE mentor Juanita

Sotelo. She added she is extremely excited for both students and is confident they will do great.

Senior Kaitlyn Dettman said, "I feel so honored to represent Fabens ISD at nationals in Washington DC. Every accomplishment we have received would not have been possible without the enormous support from our very own teachers, pushing us to encourage a

new generation of education in our world."

Senior Deven Gutierrez stated, "Coming from a small-town school and competing in this event for the first time ever in Fabens history shows that no matter what, anything is possible, no matter where you come from."

Dettman and Gutierrez will head to Washington DC this summer on June 28 to represent Fabens ISD.

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SET TO TRAVEL – Deven Gutierrez and Kaitlyn Dettman show off their medals and certificates. They are set to go to Washington DC in June.

– Photo courtesy Anthony ISD

Anthony HS Speech and Debate Team makes their point

By Adriana Candelaria
Special to the Courier

EL PASO COUNTY – In just three short months since its inception, members of the Anthony High School Speech and Debate team have racked up coveted accolades and earned a spot in the Texas Forensic Association State Tournament.

The team was formed in December with Armand Chuca, U.S. History and Economics teacher, and Joanna Marie Grier, Anthony High School senior; the team recruited at least 10 other students who were attracted by the multifaceted learning experience.

“I like to think that I have strong writing skills, but I’m also a shy person. I wanted to get over that, especially being my last year in high school,” Grier said.

Grier – who competed in the UIL Lincoln–Douglas Debate in 2023 – was eager to further cultivate her skills.

“I really like that being in speech and debate has helped me become better at communicating, speaking, researching and advocating for topics. I’ve learned a lot, and having a team makes it even better,” Grier said.

As the team’s mentor and coach, Chuca has been instrumental in shaping the students’ success. Upon being hired for his first teaching job at Anthony ISD, Chuca says he dreamt of forming his own speech and debate team.

During the Horizon High School Debate Competition in December, Chuca was in awe of the students taking first and second places in Public Forum Debate and placing in Informative Speaking.

Grier also competed at the Horizon High School Speech and Debate tournament where she received second place. With her victory at the Eastlake High School Speech and Debate tournament, Grier impressively qualified to compete in Lincoln – Douglas Debate for the upcoming Texas Forensic Association State Tournament.

“It blew my mind, because as a first-year teacher and new debate coach, I didn’t see myself taking anyone to state this year. The fact that it’s happening, and we just created this team in December, it’s pretty amazing,” Chuca said.

The team’s rapid success was also recognized by other local coaches. In late



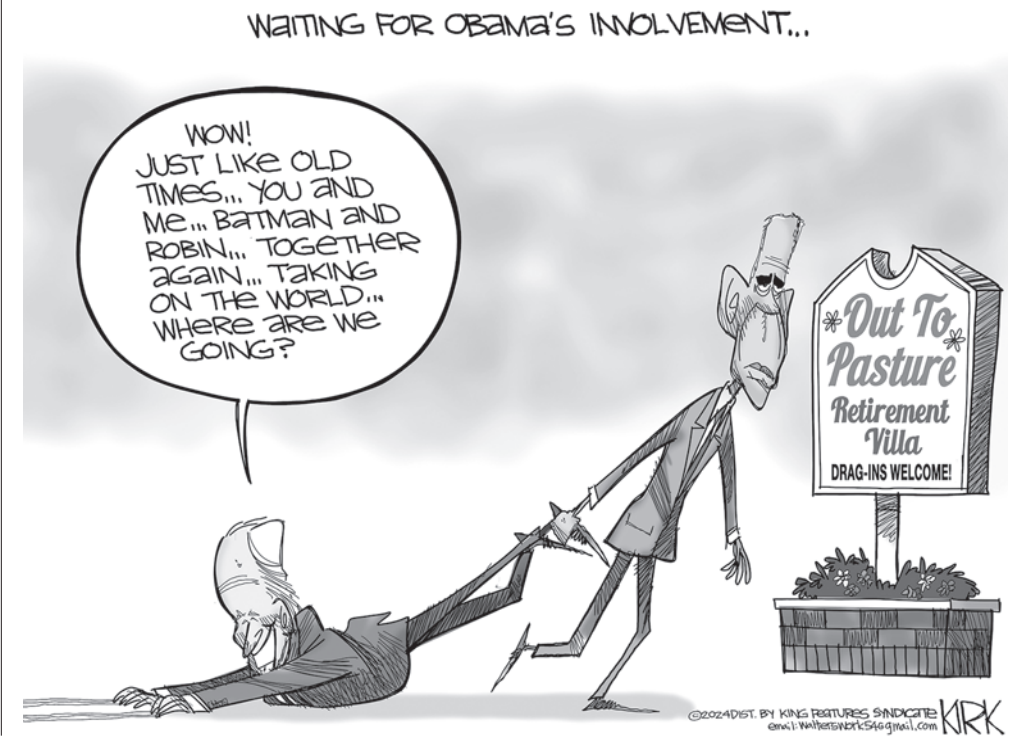
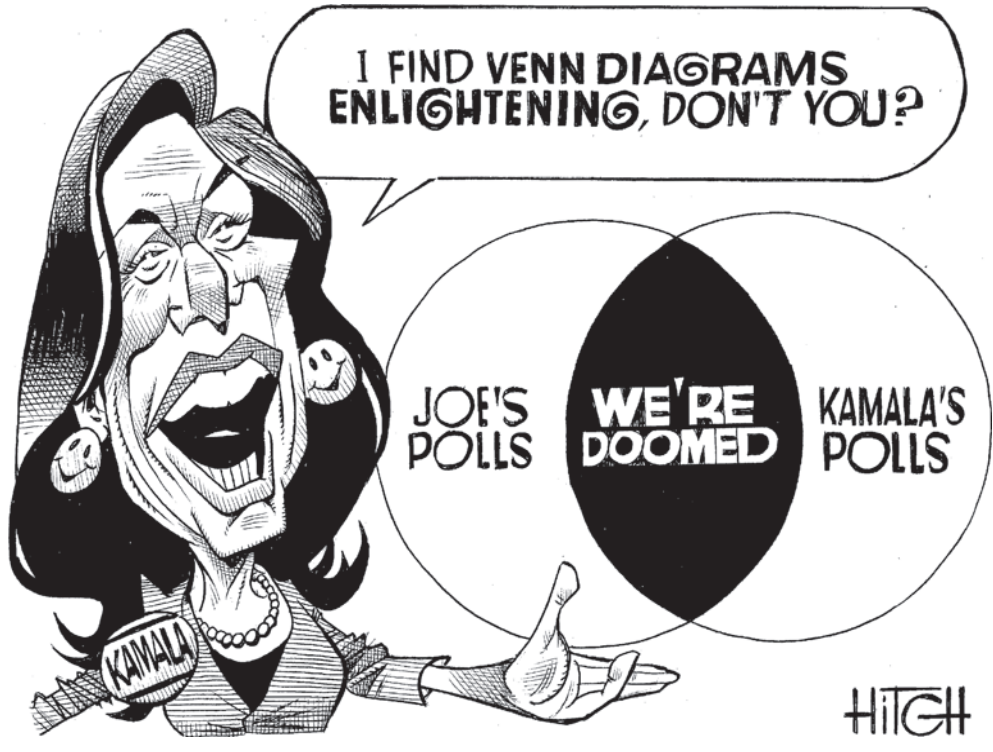
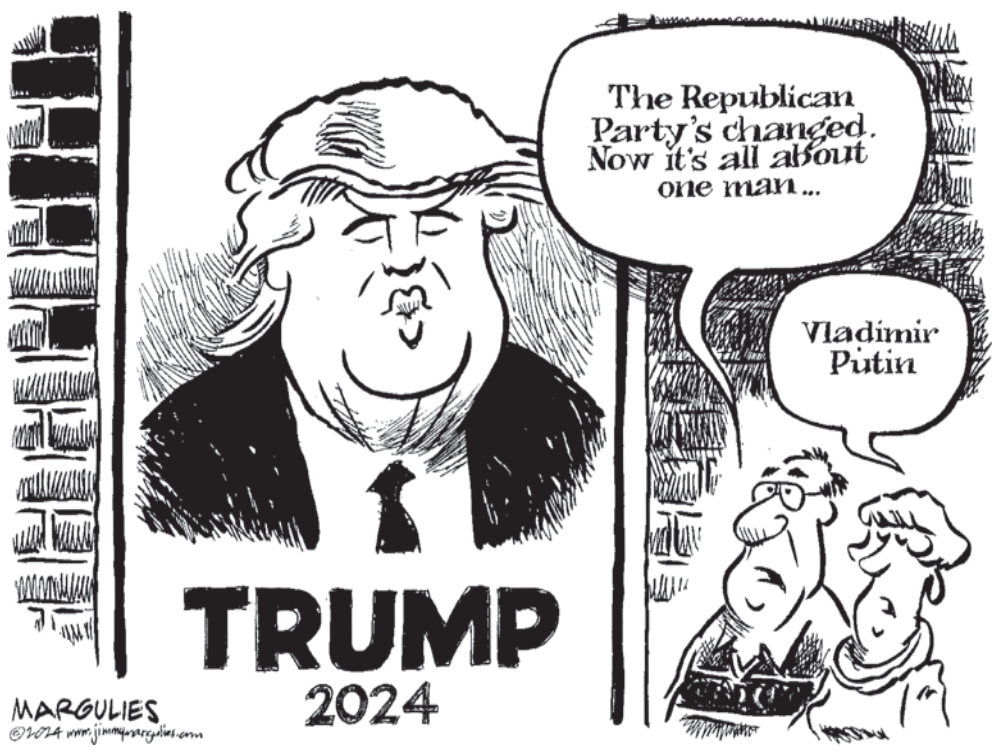
– Photo courtesy Anthony ISD

HARDWARE – AHS Speech and Debate Coach Armand Chuca and AHS senior Joanna Marie Grier display their hard earned trophies.

February, Chuca was presented with the District New Coach of the Year Award for the West Texas district of the National Speech and Debate Association.

“It feels unbelievable, but also amazing,” Chuca said.

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Briefs

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yearly revenue, the personal-finance website WalletHub has released its report on *2024's Best Cities for College Basketball Fans*, along with expert commentary, to help get hoops lovers psyched for this magical time of year. To find 2024's top spots for NCAA basketball, WalletHub crunched the numbers on more than 290 cities using nine key metrics. They range from the number of teams per city and the winning percentage of each to stadium capacity and social-media engagement. El Paso was rated 185th in the report. Best vs. Worst:

- The Gonzaga Bulldogs have the highest current winning percentage among college basketball teams, which is 8.6 times higher than the winning percentage of the Delta Devils, the team with the lowest.
- Athens, Ohio, has the least expensive season tickets, which is 24.3 times less than a season of hoops in Lexington, Kentucky.
- Thanks to John Wooden and UCLA, Los Angeles is home to the country's most national championship banners, while Philadelphia has the most regular season titles.

"March Madness is one of the most exciting times of the year for sports fans, with 67 games packed into 21 days. You can enjoy the action from anywhere with a TV or an internet connection, but a good environment enhances the experience. The best cities for college basketball have high-performing teams, affordable and accessible games, and strong fan engagement. Los Angeles is the best city for college basketball fans, and it has four different Division 1 NCAA teams, the UCLA Bruins, CSU Northridge Matadors, Loyola Marymount Lions and USC Trojans. L.A. has the largest number of NCAA championship wins since 1938, at 11 total, all of which belong to the UCLA Bruins. Los Angeles also has had four Hall of Fame coaches, which is more than any other city."

– *Cassandra Happe*
WalletHub Analyst

Commentary

What, in your mind, makes a good college basketball fan?

"I believe a good college basketball fan is a fan of the entire game, meaning that they are engaged in reading, conversations, watching, and perhaps even attending games from a wide array of institutions. You will always have fans' support from alumni and those who have a favorite team, but what has been exciting about the women's game is that

women's basketball fans are invested in women's college basketball at large (in knowing and watching the best teams and players)."

– *Dr. Allison*
University of Massachusetts Boston

"Personally, I believe a good college basketball fan is someone who is loyal to their team, supports them and is passionate. A good college basketball fan can also attend various home and potentially some away games, if possible, but if they live too far away, watching the game together with friends at a bar or at home is also showing support. A good basketball fan cheers on their team and sticks with them through the highs and lows, especially throughout the years in which the team might not be as successful. Now, this is essentially describing any general sport fan so let's get a little bit more specific. What makes a good college basketball fan in addition to the already mentioned aspects is that the fan should know details about the team as a whole, but also have an understanding about leading teams in other major conferences. It is also important to be familiar with the rules and regulations. Given that social media has grown exponentially, a good college basketball fan could also follow their team and maybe specific players on various social media platforms to stay informed and up to date. Lastly, any good college basketball fan will take an interest in March Madness, even if the tournament does not include their team."

– *Marcella G. Otto-Dorenkott, Ph.D.*
Assistant Professor
Northern Illinois University

Do you have any tips for how basketball fans can enjoy the sport without breaking the bank?

"It has gotten very expensive to attend games and the availability of tickets in many locations is limited. However, a majority of games can be found on regular and cable television, along with streaming services. And the great thing for college basketball fans is every game in March Madness is available on television and streaming on the NCAA app."

– *Brian A. Turner, Ph.D.*
Professor; Member, Athletic Council
Ohio State University

"Watching the games from home is going to be the cheapest option as you do not have to worry about buying a ticket, [paying] for parking, or any concessions. Something I would suggest is having friends over and [having] a potluck where everyone brings something to eat. This is an easy to create, exciting atmosphere with those who support the same team. Another way to potentially save some money is by going out to a sport bar

as they might have some specials during game time. Additionally, being active on social media and following the team or accessing different platforms that show the game, or even game highlights, might be helpful. Of course, none of those compare to actually being in the arena, but it still allows a fan to feel part of their team's community knowing they did not break the bank."

– *Marcella G. Otto-Dorenkott, Ph.D.*

What are the challenges, if any, of college basketball in America?

"Scheduling is difficult for college basketball because the first half of the season is overshadowed by college and pro football. NIL and the transfer portal are additional challenges as student-athletes are now incentivized to choose a school mainly based on financial reasons. This makes it harder for coaches to recruit and for the schools to market these players. It can also deny these young men and women an important learning opportunity for overcoming obstacles and keeping their commitments."

– *Brandon Podgorski*
Director of the Center for Sports Studies
Trine University

"There are many challenges in college athletics in general, including basketball. Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) and the transfer portal have drastically changed college athletics. Also, conference realignment, while driven by football, has and will affect college basketball in America."

– *Brian A. Turner, Ph.D.*

Visit <http://wallethub.com/edu/best-cities-for-college-basketball/32944> for the full report.

– *Diana Polk*

Taxes

With Tax Day looming and over 3 in 4 Americans more worried about inflation than taxes, WalletHub has released its *2024 Taxpayer Survey*, as well as its yearly report on the States with the Highest & Lowest Tax Rates, to help people better understand this confusing time of year. You can find highlights from both below, followed by the full list of WalletHub's 2024 taxpayer resources. Texas was rated 42nd in the report(1-Lowest; 25-Avg.):

- 42nd – Overall Effective State & Local Tax Rate
 - 45th – Real-Estate Tax
 - 45th – Sales & Excise Taxes
- 2024 Taxpayer Survey
Over 3 in 4 Americans are more worried about inflation than taxes right now.
- 72% of Americans think their current tax rate is too high.
 - 28% of people say getting audited

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By Lucie Winborne

- A double rainbow occurs when sunlight is reflected twice inside a raindrop. Look closely, and you'll see that the colors of the secondary rainbow appear in reverse order.

- In an 897 A.D. event known as the Cadaver Synod, Pope Stephen VI had the corpse of a previous pontiff, Formosus, exhumed, perched on a throne and questioned about his "crimes," which were mostly about being on the wrong side of a political struggle.

- Blood makes up about 8% of your total body weight.

- Floccinaucinihilipilification – one of the longest words in the English language – is the act of estimating that something is worthless.

- According to a Japanese study, looking at cute animal pictures can boost your focus.

- We hate to break it to you, but Wendy's chocolate Frosty is actually half chocolate and half vanilla, because owner Dave Thomas thought an all-chocolate treat would be too overpowering when paired with the chain's burgers and fries.

- At the Gettysburg reunion in 1913, two men purchased a hatchet, walked to the site where their regiments had fought, and buried it.

- An Oscar trophy has a raw value of about \$600.

- In a move that many may appreciate, if not take the trouble to emulate, a British man changed his name to Tim Ppppppppprice to make it harder for telemarketers to pronounce.

- A 1907 ad campaign for Kellogg's Corn Flakes offered a free sample of cereal to any customer who would wink at their grocer.

Thought for the Day: "Very often, a change of self is needed more than a change of scene."

– A.C. Benson

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CryptoQuip Answer

If you crossed a centipede and a parrot, I wonder if you'd end up with a walkie-talkie.

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Moments in time
THE HISTORY CHANNEL

• On March 11, 2021, England's Prince William made a public statement declaring that the British royal family was not a racist one. The announcement came on the heels of allegations from his sister-in-law, Prince Harry's wife Meghan Markle, that she had experienced racism from some of the Windsors.

• On March 12, 1999, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland formally joined NATO, endowing the nations with a level of political and military security that had been lacking for much of the 20th century. The move was said to signify the beginning of a united Europe.

• On March 13, 1942, the U.S. Army promoted Julia Otteson Flikke, who served as a nurse during both world wars, to the rank of its first female colonel. Her second-in-command, Captain Florence A. Blanchfield, was appointed lieutenant colonel by Dwight D. Eisenhower and became the first woman in American history to hold permanent military rank.

• On March 14, 2022, singer-songwriter, actress Dolly Parton initially refused a Rock & Roll Hall of Fame nomination. The Hall nevertheless kept the nomination in place, and she was ultimately voted in. Parton finally accepted her induction because it was something her fans were eager for.

• On March 15, 1959, Robert Foster created a new world record by holding his breath underwater in a California swimming pool for an astounding 13 minutes and 42.5 seconds. He would hold this record for the next 48 years.

• On March 16, 1876, 20-something variety show dancers Nelly Saunders and Rose Harland fought in America's first public women's boxing match at Harry Hill's gambling resort in New York, for a prize of \$200 and a silver plate. After Saunders won by a single point, the pair "left the stage arm in arm."

• On March 17, 1905, Albert Einstein submitted his first paper on the quantum theory of light to the journal *Annalen der Physik*. It was the only one of his papers that year that he himself described as "very revolutionary," and the theory would become a cornerstone of modern physics.

Briefs

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is their biggest Tax Day concern, while an equal percentage is concerned about not having enough funds to pay taxes.

- 39% of Americans think charities would make better use of their tax dollars than government or religious groups.

- More than 2 in 5 Americans know someone who has cheated on their taxes.

- Nearly 2 in 3 people describe companies that advertise free tax filing services as bait-and-switch schemes.

- 90% of Americans think filing taxes should be free.

Are people more worried about inflation or taxes?

Over 3 in 4 Americans are more worried about inflation than taxes, which shows that the government has not done enough to alleviate the impact of heightened prices on people's lives. While tax season is a dreaded time of year for many people, the effects of inflation can persist year round, and they're obvious every time you go shopping," said Cassandra Happe, WalletHub Analyst. "On the other hand, if people's employers handle their taxes correctly, most don't end up owing much extra at tax time – in fact, the majority of people actually get refunds.

What do people think about their current tax rates?

Around 72% of Americans think their current tax rate is too high, according to a new WalletHub survey. Less than 27% of people think their rate is just right, while a mere 1.5% think that it is too low," said Cassandra Happe, WalletHub Analyst.

Roadwork

From Page 1

an undertaking that is expected to cost over \$750 million, and this amount does not include the cost TxDOT would incur from acquiring the needed properties.

Additionally, an innovative Artcraft Road interchange project received \$40 million. These funds will go towards the estimated \$208.5 million cost for remaking the intersections at Artcraft Road/Paseo del Norte Boulevard and at Artcraft Road and the

"These statistics demonstrate that people don't feel the value they receive from government services is equal to the amount they pay in taxes. In addition, there's a prevailing attitude that taxes are used inefficiently, and people whose favored political party is not in power will always feel like their tax dollars are being used for things they don't want.

Who do Americans believe would make the most efficient use of their tax dollars?

Nearly 39% of Americans believe that charities would make the most efficient use of their tax dollars, according to WalletHub's latest survey, which is understandable because the money would be going directly to causes they care about," said Cassandra Happe, WalletHub Analyst. "When it comes to governing authorities, people think local governments will use the money more efficiently than state governments, with the Federal government coming in last place. Local governments address the issues that are most directly applicable to people's everyday lives, and the state and federal governments are more detached and often spend money on things people have no interest in or do not feel the impact of.

What should taxpayers be worried about on Tax Day?

The biggest things that Americans fear on Tax Day are getting audited and not having enough money, with making math errors coming in at third place. What people should be most concerned about is having the funds to pay what they owe, as trying to come up with extra money on short notice is especially difficult in the midst of inflation. The fear of getting audited or making math errors is legitimate,

New Mexico state line.

These El Paso County project allocations were included in the Texas Transportation Commission's 2024 budget that totaled over \$142 billion and that was approved last summer.

"It's a big mess," declared one westside resident about the I-10 West construction work. "I avoid using that part of the freeway, it is always backed up with semi-trucks," he averred. "I really hope that they don't run into any delays and that they finish on time, which is still two years away," he added.

but taxpayers can avoid having issues with their tax returns by completing them early and reviewing them thoroughly for mistakes before submitting. People can also take advantage of free tax-prep resources that can help make sure their math is correct, in addition to paid filing services that will help make sure things are in order if you do get audited.

– Diana Polk

Credit cards

Americans have nearly \$1.3 trillion in credit card debt, and the personal-finance website WalletHub has released its report on the *Cities Adding the Most Credit Card Debt*, to help illustrate where people are struggling the most. This report comes on the heels of our recent analysis of the Credit Card Debt Study. Consumers racked up \$108 billion in credit card debt during 2023, which is a 7% reduction compared to the prior year but 168% above the average for the past 13 years. Credit card debt rose by \$82 billion during Q4 2023, which is 8% less than we added in Q4 2022. The average household credit card balance was \$10,848 at the end of 2023. That's \$1,577 below the record set in Q4 2007. WalletHub projects that credit card debt will increase by

another \$120+ billion by the end of 2024, putting us very close to a record on an inflation-adjusted basis. El Paso was rated 44th in the report.

"It's hard to look at a number like \$1.3 trillion in credit card debt and truly understand the impact it has on individual Americans. Comparing the residents of cities based on how much debt they're adding at the household level and what their average balance is puts things in perspective. Many people's debt is in danger of becoming unsustainable, which means their financial future is in jeopardy. Rancho Cucamonga, CA, is the city adding the most credit card debt. Between Q4 2022 and Q4 2023, the average household added \$3,360 to its credit card debt, bringing their total balance to \$18,326. Despite their large amount of credit card debt, people in Rancho Cucamonga have an average credit score of 683, which is in the fair credit range and pretty close to good credit, which indicates that they are still using their credit accounts relatively responsibly."

– John Kiernan
WalletHub Editor

Visit: <https://wallethub.com/edu/cities-adding-the-most-credit-card-debt/133323> for the full report.

– Diana Polk

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VILLAGE OF VINTON, TX

PUBLIC NOTICE

Request for Proposals Environmental Cleanup #2024-001-475

Competitive Sealed Proposal Village of Vinton 2024-001 475 Vinton Rd. Environmental Cleanup

The Village of Vinton is seeking to secure the services of a qualified environmental professional (QEP) to oversee the environmental remediation of 11.3 acres of undeveloped land located at 475 East Vinton Road, Vinton, Texas. The QEP will be responsible for implementation of technical activities and compliance reporting to the TCEQ and USEPA at the direction of the Village's project management. Please go to:

<https://vintontx.gov>

govoffice2.com/vertical/sites/%7B9571B011-F39E-4B6F-A49E-0B16AB6056A3%7D/uploads/Village_of_Vinton--RFP_for_Environmental_Services_-3.4.2024.pdf

to access the Competitive Sealed Proposal package which sets forth the scope of services, requirements, and selection criteria. It is anticipated that the Village of Vinton will enter a contract with the selected QEP for an initial term ending four (4) years from the date of its execution, with four (4) one-year renewals available at the option of the Village.

Proposals must be delivered sealed to: Village Administrator, Village of Vinton, 436 E. Vinton Rd., Vinton, TX 79821. Proposals must be received by April 2, 2024 at 5:00 pm MDT. Proposals must be sealed in an envelope or box clearly labeled "2024-001

475 Vinton Rd. Environmental Cleanup." Proposals arriving late will be returned unopened.

All interested respondents are required to register with the Project Manager, Daniel Bueno Jr., to receive updates, addenda or any additional information. The Village is not responsible for any failure to register.

Attending the pre-proposal meeting is required for a response to be considered for award. The meeting will be held at the Council Chambers at 436 E. Vinton Rd. TX 79821. The meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 20, 2024 at 3:00 pm MDT.

Inquiries to the Village requesting clarification regarding this Competitive Sealed Proposal request must be made via e-mail to Daniel Bueno, Jr. Project Manager at

dbueno@vintontx.us. and must be received prior to the end of the business day on March 27, 2024.

Respondents shall designate a contact person to address any questions concerning a proposal. Respondents shall also state the name and title of individuals who will make final decisions regarding contractual commitments.

Proposals will be opened at the Competitive Sealed Proposal Committee Meeting to be held on April 3, 2024 at 8:30 am MDT, in the City Council Chamber, 436 E. Vinton Rd. Vinton, TX 79821.

The Village of Vinton, Texas is an Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Employer.

Andrea N. Carrillo
Village Administrator

WTCC: 03-14-24
03-21-24

Miners suddenly look like a CUSA Tourney contender

By Steve Escajeda
Special to the Courier

After a long and often frustrating up-and-down season, the UTEP Miners finally know where they stand in the Conference USA basketball tournament.

Finishing with a 16-15 record, the Miners are seeded 5th and will take on #4 Liberty in the opening round of the postseason tourney this week in Alabama.

Ending a season ranked fifth in a nine-team league doesn't sound very encouraging, but it's how the Miners finished the season that gives them a little hope of making some noise.

UTEP looked totally done after losing four straight games to go 13-15 with just two weeks left in the regular season. And another thing, those losses left them tied for last place in the league.

Let's just say things weren't exactly looking good for the orange and blue, or their coach Joe Golding.

In case you've forgotten, the Miners started the season 5-0 and were looking like a real contender for a conference title, especially when you consider the competition.

UTEP used to view teams like Sam Houston St., Liberty, Jacksonville St. and Florida International, as early-season warmups to get ready for the tough teams they'd face later.

So how hard could winning this conference be?

After that quick start, the Miners began looking like last year's team. You remember, the team that ranked near the very bottom of the nation in shooting. They couldn't make 2's, they couldn't make 3's, and amazingly, they couldn't make free throws.

Although this year's team shot free throws better than last year's, they were terrible on offense. Things got so bad that they actually lost to smaller

programs like Texas A&M Corpus Christi and Abilene Christian.

At times, the Miners looked totally lost on offense, never getting into any kind of a rhythm. They looked like they didn't know where to be on the court, like they didn't know their assignments, like they didn't trust each other.

Though people around the city like him personally, callers on local talk radio shows started questioning whether Joe Golding really had what it took to return the Miners to their former glory.

With two weeks to go in the season, the answer to almost everyone was a definite NO.

Especially when you consider they were tied for last place, and they had two road games against Jacksonville St. and Liberty in front of them – both were expected to be losses. And why not expect losses? The Miners hadn't won a game on the road all season.

However, the one thing the Miners

did excel in was defense. How about this, UTEP leads the nation in forcing turnovers and stealing the basketball.

You may ask, how in the world can a team who leads the entire nation in those two defensive categories still have a losing record? Simple – they don't put the ball in the basket enough.

What's the point of holding a team to 60 points, when you can only score 55? The Miners need to put up points.

But UTEP finally broke through and defeated Jacksonville St. on the road – 72-67 – thanks to the number 24. That's how many points Otis Frazier scored for the Miners, and that's how many turnovers they forced the Gamecocks into.

Two days later, the Miners took on Liberty, one of the better teams in the conference. UTEP may have played its best game of the season in dominating the Flames 67-51. Corey Camper and Zid Powell led the Miners with 21 and 19 points, and that stubborn Miners' defense held

Liberty a whopping 23 points below their scoring average.

In their season finale at home, the Miners raced out to a 26-point lead and cruised to an 83-76 win over Florida International, to finish the season on a three-game winning streak.

They say the key to winning any playoff series is to be playing your best at the end of the season. The Miners are certainly doing that.

And that's why this CUSA Tournament is being looked at very differently by UTEP fans than it was a couple weeks ago.

The Miners are starting to look like the team we all thought they could be.

When the Miners open the tournament this Thursday against Liberty, they can either be the Kansas City Chiefs or the Dallas Cowboys.

Their up-and-down season proves they can be either.

But thankfully, lately they've been more Mahomes than Prescott.

Senior moment By Matilda Charles

Playing piano good for brain health

I've been reading in too many places about taking steps to hold off memory and cognitive impairment, so I've paid attention to some of the ideas we can use to keep our brains active.

One idea that's been very enticing is playing the piano and using that as a protective factor against dementia and impairment.

When I began my hunt for a piano, I quickly realized that space would be a major consideration, never mind the expense of a real piano. However, there are smaller electronic pianos, and I bought one: a Yamaha Piaggero NP-12. I've placed it on a board between two two-drawer file cabinets to avoid the additional cost of the metal stand and seat. It only has 61 keys, rather than the standard 88, but it's enough and fits into the space I have and only weighs 11 lbs.

It's a great little piano even for those who've played before (it's touch sensitive, for those who know about these things). It has buttons to select between the sound

of piano, electronic piano, organ, strings and harpsichord, with a built-in metronome and volume dial.

If you're interested in such a piano, hunt around the internet or call music stores in your area. Be sure to order the wall plug adapter as well, so you don't have to worry about batteries.

If you don't already play, consult YouTube online for beginner lessons for seniors on video. Ask at a music store, rec center or college music department about signing up for beginner lessons to get you started. If you don't have sheet music, look on the internet for free music you can print out (try pianosongdownload.com), or check garage sales or even the library.

Even if the first songs you learn are along the lines of *Mary Had A Little Lamb*, it's a step in the right direction for brain health.

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INTERPRETING ALL

THE SIGNS

ACROSS

- 1 Friendly and cheerful
- 7 Custard apple relative
- 12 Peevish state
- 16 Air gun ammo
- 19 With no secrecy
- 20 Caribbean resort island
- 21 Physiques, for short
- 22 Suffix with east
- 23 Door-bashing device
- 25 Working hard
- 26 Grazing field
- 27 Politician
- Alexandria _Cortez
- 28 Bud Light mascot
- Spuds MacKenzie, for one
- 31 A verb often follows it
- 34 Vex
- 36 Winning tic-tac-toe row
- 37 "Hoarders" channel
- 38 "Full House" acting pair
- 41 Sideways-moving arachnid
- 43 Judo teacher
- 44 Test taker
- 46 Sailors, informally
- 47 "The Villain" actor
- Jack
- 50 Gain's offset
- 51 Ignited

DOWN

- 53 "If I Only Had the Nerve" singer
- 59 "Ka-POW!"
- 60 Me, in Lyon
- 63 On _ with (equal to)
- 64 One of the Kennedys
- 65 Org. with merit badges
- 67 Leaning
- 69 Mother of Jesus
- 71 Things to step on in washrooms
- 73 Moon that's home to the Ewoks
- 74 Top-secret U.S. org.
- 75 Dialect of Aramaic
- 76 Ad biz award
- 77 French article
- 78 CEO's deg.
- 80 Flashy, diving soccer move
- 82 Put a flaw in
- 83 Dog in "The Thin Man"
- 85 Hockey's Phil, to fans
- 86 Manufacture
- 89 Leaned back
- 93 Negev's land
- 98 "Fatal Attraction" Oscar nominee
- 100 Feta, for one
- 103 Official order
- 104 Prevarication
- 105 Spiral-shelled mollusk
- 106 Rep on the street
- 107 Luxury writing implement

DOWN

- 1 Dollop
- 2 Clean air org.
- 3 Court divider
- 4 Chants
- 5 Actor Baldwin
- 6 Vega's constellation
- 7 Grill-marked sandwiches
- 8 French forest region
- 9 Brand of faucet filters
- 10 Cry like _
- 11 Bank bought by Chase, for short
- 12 Govt. advances for mom-and-pops
- 13 Opposite of destined

DOWN

- 14 "And When _" (1969 hit)
- 15 Certain high-heel feature
- 16 Go-Go's singer
- Carlisle
- 17 Offspring producer
- 18 Ones entrapping
- 24 "Vidi," in English
- 29 "Slow" primate
- 30 Bonnie of blues rock
- 31 Antis' votes
- 32 Corrida cry
- 33 Sailor's org.
- 35 It runs on a 52-Down
- 39 _do-well
- 40 Bill of tennis
- 41 "Hurry it up!"
- 42 Actress Ward
- 45 Balm additive
- 48 Female grad
- 49 Chatty birds
- 52 Apple buy
- 53 Went spelunking
- 54 Think aloud
- 55 Prison units
- 56 2012 Ben Affleck thriller
- 57 Turkish money unit
- 58 Bitterly cold
- 59 Adherents of an Iranian religion
- 60 Thousand: Prefix
- 61 _ acid (fat product)
- 62 "There, there"
- 65 Georgia politician
- Bob
- 66 Michael of the band R.E.M.
- 68 Small nail

DOWN

- 70 " _ la Douce"
- 71 Drink-related party abbr.
- 72 Suffix with micro- or kaleido-
- 75 Read quickly
- 79 "I'm c-c-cold!"
- 80 Start to wake
- 81 Light snack
- 82 Small rodents, jocularly
- 83 Sore feeling
- 84 Slumber
- 86 Star of "I'm No Angel"
- 87 Slower than allegretto
- 88 Like booties
- 90 Cream-filled pastries
- 91 Big head
- 92 Contributor
- 94 Covered anew, as a book
- 95 _ Lingus
- 96 Suffix with Senegal
- 97 Guided
- 99 In harm's way
- 101 Transversely
- 102 Those people
- 105 100-buck bill
- 108 Roman 1,052
- 109 Auction website
- 111 "The Wizard _"
- 112 Celeb's ride
- 116 Radio host
- Charlamagne _ God
- 117 "Bali _"
- 118 Epoch
- 119 Small pouch

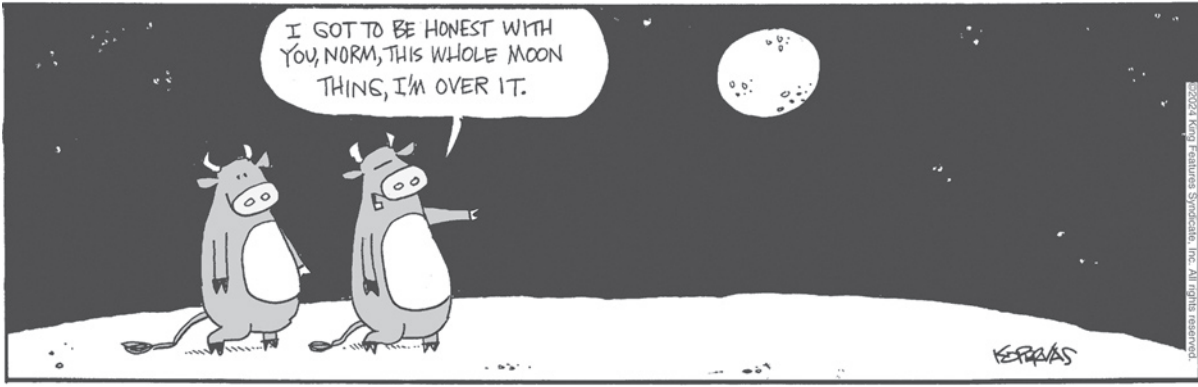
Answer Page 4

Super Crossword

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18			
19						20					21				22					
23					24						25				26					
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43								44	45						46					
				47		48	49		50				51	52						
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69					70						71				72					
73							74				75						76			
77						78	79				80					81				
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103							104				105						106			
107									108			109			110			111	112	
113						114					115		116					117	118	119
120						121					122				123					
124						125					126				127					

Comix

OUT ON A LIMB By Gary Kopervas



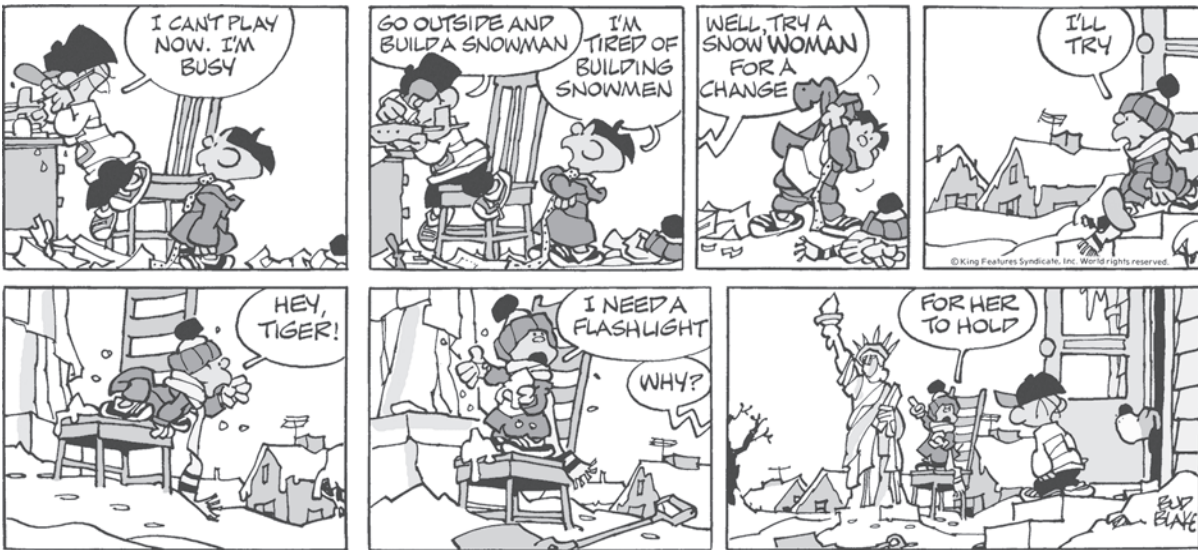
AMBER WAVES By Dave T. Phipps



THE SPATS By Jeff Pickering



TIGER By Bud Blake



Lowry

From Page 2

though, was profoundly Russian – an exalted ruler wielding brutish, centralized power.

It also caused an anti-Western reaction – as the historian Orlando Figes points out in his book “The Story of Russia” – among the so-called Slavophiles who believed Russia had turned away from what should be its true, distinctive path.

For his part, Putin made a nod toward the Petrine tradition initially upon taking power. He stated his ambition to become “part of western European culture.” But this gave way, under the pressure of NATO expansion and of Russia’s traditional resentments and insecurities, to a determinedly anti-Western view that draws on Slavophile thought.

Putin believes in authoritarianism, in a strong Russian state, in the rehabilitation of the country’s Soviet past, and in a Russian civilization that is superior to a West corrupted by secularism and individualism.

He seeks to reunite “the Russian world,” a concept, according to Figes, he got from the

patriarch of the Orthodox Church. He wants to protect the “family” of Slavs and the “tens of millions of our citizens” lost to the Russian state after the supposed disaster of the fall of the Soviet Union.

It’s the misfortune of Ukraine, which straddles the line of Western and Orthodox civilization, to use Huntington’s terms, to be in the firing line of these grandiose ambitions. Ukraine’s desire to be a sovereign state of its own and, in particular, to align itself with the hated West is intolerable for Putin. He’s explained at great length why he believes Ukraine has no legitimacy as an independent nation, and his model of a neo-tsarism where elections are fake and opposition leaders die in Arctic prisons would be threatened by a Ukraine that successfully embraced a version of the Western model.

Give Putin this – at least he’s defending what he considers his civilizational birthright of despotism and illiberalism. Any true friend of our own should be appalled.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review. ©2024 by King Features Synd., Inc.

High troponin levels can have many causes

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am a 77-year-old male who apparently suffered a case of food poisoning. I say apparently because no cause was ever discovered for the uncontrollable vomiting and diarrhea that lasted for a whole day and recurred briefly the following morning. A trip to the emergency room involved many tests, but nothing turned up except a troponin level well over 0.04 ng/mL, which prompted an angiogram that didn’t reveal any problems with my heart. What else might have caused my high troponin level? – Anon.



A troponin level is a standard blood test usually used to evaluate patients for heart attacks. However, newer, highly sensitive assays have proven that tiny levels of troponin may be detected in nearly everybody.

A level above 0.04 ng/mL is often used as the cutoff for the “normal” range, but depending on the assay and population studied, a few healthy people may have levels above this. People with heart attacks may have troponin levels in the hundreds or thousands. The higher the troponin level, the more muscle damage there is.

The fact that your coronary arteries don’t show any blockages is very good news. Other types of heart damage may also cause a high troponin level, including inflammation of the heart (myocarditis) and heart failure. Also, critical illnesses can cause high troponin levels (at much higher levels than you may have had) in people who don’t have heart blockages. (A median of 0.57 ng/mL was found in people with septic shock.)

I found a long list of reported causes behind elevated troponin levels, but gastroenteritis was not on the list. I suspect your body was working so hard to fight off the infection without enough fluid that your heart needed more oxygen-carrying blood than it got, leading to tiny amounts of injury to the heart muscle despite normal heart arteries. You can lose a lot of fluid with vomiting and diarrhea, and people at age 77 don’t have as much reserve as they did when they were younger.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I’m a 56-year-old male who never had the chicken pox. When the first of my children was born, I had blood tests done to see if I’d ever been exposed. I had not, so I received the chicken pox vaccine in case my children were to expose me. Twenty-five years later, many friends and colleagues have either received the shingles vaccine or have had a shingles outbreak. My question to you is: Since I’ve never had chicken pox, do I still need the shingles vaccine? – D.S.S.

Yes, the shingles vaccine is still recommended. Shingles is a recurrence of the chicken pox virus. The vaccine you got was a live but weakened form of chicken pox. It has a lower risk of causing shingles than getting the actual chicken pox, but there is still a risk.

Shingles is so bad that the vaccine is absolutely worth it, in my opinion. Even people who have had the old one-shot vaccine (Zostrix), as well as those who don’t recall having had chicken pox, should get the new two-dose vaccine (Shingrix), which is not a live virus. It’s better to just get the vaccine than doing blood testing in people who don’t recall getting chicken pox as a child.

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. ©2024 North America Synd., Inc. All Rights Reserved.

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Moore Texas by Roger Moore

March 19, 1840: Peace talks in San Antonio between Comanches and the Texas Government ends in a fight.

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: **G** equals **R**

WY ZJH AGJKKIL V
 AIMQWSILI VML V SVGGJQ,
 W UJMLIG WY ZJH'L IML
 HS UWQN V UVROWI-QVROWI.

Answer Page 4

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Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

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

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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Housing grants for special needs veterans



by Freddy Groves

The Department of Veterans Affairs has done the final math for 2023, and the number of homeless veterans who found permanent housing has passed the initial goal. The total now stands at 46,000 veterans who were helped.

At the same time, the VA hooked up with 40,000 veterans to get them the resources they need to find housing and worked to ensure that 95% of housed veterans can stay that way.

All this is part of the Housing First program. The theory is that getting a veteran into a home first is crucial, then to be followed up with the services needed to ensure the continued housing. Part of that includes education, legal help, health care and jobs training. Veterans who are part of

the Housing First program generally find housing more quickly, in 35 days as opposed to 223 days on average.

Now, having the final 2023 number of 46,000 veterans put into housing, the VA has announced funding in the amount of \$5 million in grants (renewable for a second year) to help the special needs group of homeless veterans (mentally ill, the elderly, women, the terminally ill and those with children). The Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program gives the cash to community groups that handle both temporary transitional housing and case management, hooking them up with services, permanent housing and access to VA benefits.

There are only 16 of the special needs grant recipient groups that can apply for a share of that \$5 million. The list of grantees indicates that each group concentrates on only one category of the special needs list, with the Chronically Mentally Ill

group having a slight edge over the other categories. The actual awarding of the funds will run from October 2024 to September 2026, with applications needing to be received by April 15, 2024.

Veterans who are either homeless or in danger of becoming homeless can go online to www.va.gov/homeless or call 877-4AID-VET (877-424-3838) to get help.

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- Soak your metal tools in Coca-Cola when they get gummed up. It does a great job of loosening the gunk, and after a few hours in a Coke bath, you can almost just brush stuff right off. Makes you wonder about drinking it, but whatever works!

- To make a cottage cheese dip, blend it in your food processor until smooth and add your dip flavoring packet or season with flavors as you would sour cream.

- "You can use a thermos to keep soup warm as a lunch option. Just get a clean funnel for use in the kitchen. You can use it to add soup to the thermos. It makes a good alternative to mix up your lunch options, especially in cold weather. Before you fill the thermos with your hot food, fill it with boiling water and let it sit for a good five minutes. Then empty out the water just before filling. The food will stay hot longer." – E.D. in Wisconsin

- If you have a smartphone (or just a cellphone that takes pictures), here's a novel way of keeping track of printed information: Snap a quick pic. This works for store hours (get the store name in the picture with the hours), receipts, sales advertisements for reference when shopping and much much more. You can delete the photo when you are done.

- If you have a tablecloth that is stained, you might be able to salvage it into napkins or a table runner. You can edge it with a pretty and complementary fabric to spice things up a little.

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803. ©2024 King Features Synd., Inc.

GO FIGURE!

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.

DIFFICULTY: ★★

★ Moderate ★★ Difficult

★★★ GO FIGURE!

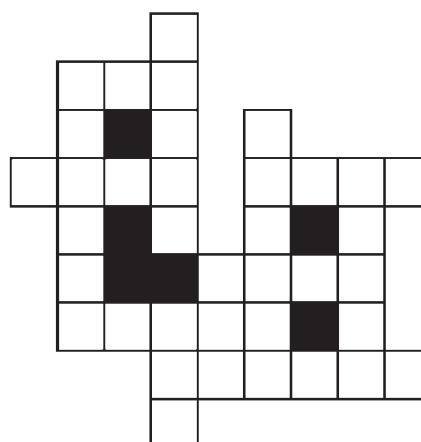
Answer Page 4

	+		÷		=	14		
+		-		+				
	-		+		=	12		
+		÷		-				
	+		+		=	14		
=		=		=				
14		1		5				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

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- OFB
- NFLUUR
- ♥ARBLO
- UBMN
- ALEBAT
- ♥DSO
- DFNU
- TMSID
- ♥ANB
- ♥LEDSEI
- ♥DESIA
- ♥EDBA



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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