



NEWSBRIEFS

Elections

Three El Paso County elections will take place on May 4, 2024.

- The Canutillo Independent School District (District) will hold a bond election to authorize the District to issue and sell bonds of the District not to exceed \$378,955,000. The bonds would finance “designing, constructing, renovating, improving, upgrading, updating, acquiring, and equipping school facilities (and any necessary or related removal of existing facilities), and the purchase of necessary sites for school facilities.”

Also on the ballot is a proposition to authorize the District to issue and sell bonds of the District in the principal amount “not to exceed \$7,285,000 for the purposes of refunding all or a portion of the principal, interest, and redemption premium on previously issued maintenance tax notes of the District.”

- The Lower Valley Water District will hold a bond election totaling \$35,000,000 for projects throughout the District.

- The City of San Elizario will hold an election for the offices of Mayor, Alderperson Place No. 4 and Alderperson Place No. 5.

—Rick Shrum

Small businesses

With National Small Business Week approaching and 20% of new businesses failing within the first year, the personal-finance website WalletHub has released its report on *2024's Best Small Cities to Start a Business*, as well as expert commentary, to help entrepreneurs find a place where their startup can not only survive but thrive. To determine the most business-friendly small markets in the U.S., WalletHub compared more than 1,300 cities with fewer than 100,000 residents across 18 key metrics. The data set ranges from small business growth rates and the accessibility of financing to investor access and labor costs. Socorro, TX was rated 334th in the report. Other stats:

- Bozeman, MT has the highest number of startups per 100,000 residents, which is 8.5 times higher than in Galesburg, IL, the

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There is much more hope for a confessed sinner than a concealed saint.

— Quips & Quotes



— Photo courtesy Texas Education Agency

RISE OF THE MACHINES – Students, from third grade through high school, recently took the STAAR tests. This spring for the first time, the Texas Education Agency’s (TEA) will use a computer-generated scoring engine. The new method has generated worry among educators and parents who are leery of the influence of machine learning, automation, and AI (Artificial Intelligence).

Written answers on STAAR test being graded by computer

By Alfredo Vasquez
Special to the Courier

TEXAS – With computer scoring now a part of the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) exams, Texas school districts are looking for automated scoring tools that could help teachers become comfortable with the new system as they prepare their students for the high stakes tests.

Students who took the STAAR exams this month were part of the new computer method of evaluating written answers on the state’s standardized tests, as the Texas Education Agency (TEA) introduced its “automated scoring engine” for open-ended questions of the recent STAAR reading, writing, science, and social studies tests.

According to TEA officials, the technology, which uses natural language processing technology like artificial intelligence chatbots such as GPT-4, will save the state agency about \$15-20 million per year that it would otherwise have spent on hiring human scorers through a third-party contractor.

The change comes after the STAAR test, which measures students’ understanding of state-mandated core curricula, was redesigned in 2023. The test now includes fewer multiple-choice questions and more open-ended questions, known as constructed response items. After the redesign, there are six to seven times

more constructed response items.

“We have wanted to keep as many constructed open ended responses as we can, but they take an incredible amount of time to score,” said Jose Rios, TEA’s director of student assessment, in a recent news report. In 2023, TEA hired about 6,000 temporary scorers, but this year, it will need under 2,000, Rios asserted.

TEA officials related that they gathered 3,000 responses that went through two rounds of human scoring to develop the new scoring system, and that from this field sample, the automated scoring engine learned the characteristics of responses and was programmed to assign the same scores a human would have given.

With this latest round of testing, the computer will first grade all the constructed responses. Then, a quarter of the responses will be re-scored by humans, TEA officials explained. And when the computer has “low confidence” in the score it assigned, those responses will be automatically reassigned to a human. The same thing will happen when the computer encounters a type of response that its programming does not recognize, such as one using lots of slang or words in a language other than English, they stated.

“We have always had very robust quality control processes with humans,” said Chris Rozunick, TEA’s division director for assessment development. “With a computer

system, the quality control will look similar,” he maintained.

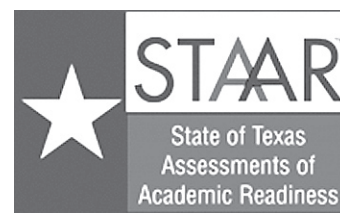
Rozunick stated that he and other testing administrators would review a summary of results to check that they match what is expected. He added that in addition to “low confidence” scores and responses that do not fit in the computer’s programming, a random sample of responses would also be automatically handed off to humans to check the computer’s work.

TEA officials are reluctant to suggest that the scoring engine is artificial intelligence (AI). It may use similar technology to chatbots such as GPT-4 or Google’s Gemini, but the agency stressed that the process would have systematic oversight from humans. “It won’t learn from one response to the next, but always defer to its original programming set up by the state,” they acknowledged.

Some educators across the state said they were caught by surprise at TEA’s decision to use automated technology – also known as hybrid scoring – to assess responses.

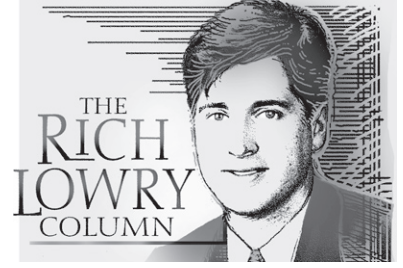
TEA officials said that the topic of an automated scoring process was first mentioned in testimony to the Texas House Public Education Committee, in August 2022. Then the agency announced the move to hybrid scoring at a conference in the fall of 2023, and by last December details were released during test coordinators training sessions.

The STAAR test results are a critical part of the accountability system because TEA uses them to grade school districts and individual



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Colorblindness is America's most transgressive idea



Writer Coleman Hughes went on "The View" and was greeted almost as though he had shown up wearing a white hood.

Hughes, a soft-spoken black intellectual who is a political independent, was talking about his new book, "The End of Race Politics: Arguments for a Colorblind America."

Once upon a time, colorblindness was an uncontroversial idea. It was considered a core American ideal and worth aspiring to, even if we were failing to live up to it. In recent decades, though, it has run into a buzz-saw of opposition. It clashes with the Left's near-theological commitment to racial preferences, especially on college campuses, and with fashionable new forms of left-wing racialism.

So it is naive, out-of-date, and, worse, even a

tool of oppression used by sneaky racists to hide their malignant designs in lofty rhetoric. This was the attitude of co-host Sunny Hostin when Hughes showed up on set. She declared that colorblindness has been "co-opted" by conservatives and that the widely respected Hughes is a "charlatan." For the offense, mind you, of arguing that people should be treated equally regardless of their race.

Thoughtless even by the standards of a panelist of "The View," Hostin was easily outmatched by Hughes, who pushed back without getting flustered or raising his voice. He even won occasional applause from the studio audience for ideas that still, despite all that has been done to belittle them, have strong common-sense appeal in America.

As Coleman notes in his book, a devotion to colorblindness runs through some of the most

honored writers and activists in American history, the likes of Frederick

Douglass, Wendell Phillips, Zora Neale Hurston, A. Philip Randolph, Bayard Rustin and, of course, Martin Luther King Jr.

The Left always wants to retroactively enlist MLK for woke racial causes and thinking, but Hughes convincingly locates the great civil rights leader firmly within the colorblind tradition.

In a statement that might now earn him an unfriendly reception on college campuses (or on the set of "The View"), King maintained, "Black

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Briefs

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city with the lowest.

- Bethesda, MD has the highest share of the population with at least a bachelor's degree, which is 19.1 times higher than in Coachella, CA, the city with the lowest.
- Kentwood, MI has the most affordable office spaces, which is 6.8 times lower than in Mountain View, CA, the city with the least affordable.
- Isla Vista, CA has the lowest labor costs (median annual income), which is 10.8 times lower than in Los Altos, CA, among the cities with the highest.
- Fort Hood, TX has the longest work week, which is 1.9 times longer than in Isla Vista, CA, the city with the shortest.

"The benefits of starting a business in a small city include lower overhead costs, stronger relationships with customers and the potential to become a big fish in a little pond. But there are drawbacks, too. Entrepreneurs who want to build a large professional network aren't likely to make as many connections in a town with fewer residents. Other restrictions might include limited industry options,

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PUBLISHED:
Published each Thursday (minimum 50 issues) by Homesteader News, Inc. Office open Monday through Thursday.

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Warner named Pebble Hills HS head football coach, athletic coordinator

By Laura Acosta
Special to the Courier

EL PASO COUNTY – Pebble Hills High School in the Socorro Independent School District has named Ryan Warner as the head coach of the school’s football team and athletic coordinator for the school. Warner is the second head football coach in the history of the school.

During the announcement on April 12, Warner said he expected to uphold the football program’s high standards with school and community assistance. The school won its first District 1-6A championship in 2022.

“I look forward to the opportunity to continue to push the standards and expectations of Pebble Hills High School with the community’s support,” Warner said.

Warner, a graduate from Chapin High School and Eastern Oregon University, was named head coach of Chapin’s Huskies football team in 2020. During his four-year tenure, Warner achieved an overall record of 22-19. He led the team to a bi-district title in 2021.

Warner began his coaching career at Franklin High School, where he coached for 10 years. He was appointed the Franklin Cougars’ offensive coordinator in 2015.

Warner said fans of the Pebble Hills Spartans can expect the team to play physically, gritty football under his leadership.

“I do guarantee the pride and winning tradition of Pebble Hills High School will not be trusted to the weak nor the timid,” Warner said. “If you come, and you watch us play, you will realize we’re going to play physical, we’re going to play disciplined, we’re going to play detailed, and we’re going to play with grit.”



Ryan Warner

– Photo by Acavius Largo

Moe chosen for Aspen program

By Jim Heiney
Special to the Courier

EL PASO COUNTY – Dr. Keri Moe has been selected by the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program (Aspen) as one of 40 leaders selected for the 2024-25 Aspen Rising Presidents Fellowship. She is the Associate Vice President of External Relations, Communication and Development at El Paso Community College (EPCC).

The Aspen fellowship aims to select and prepare the next generation of presidents who can lead institutions to higher and more equitable levels of student success. Many sitting community college presidents plan to retire in the next decade, creating an opportunity for college trustees and system heads to select leaders who have the skills and knowledge to lead learning institutions.

This incoming class of Aspen Rising Presidents Fellows is 58 percent women, and 55 percent are people of color. The institutions they represent are also diverse, located in 20 states, from small rural colleges to large urban campuses. The fellows – selected through a competitive process – will work closely with highly accomplished community college presidents and thought leaders over ten months.

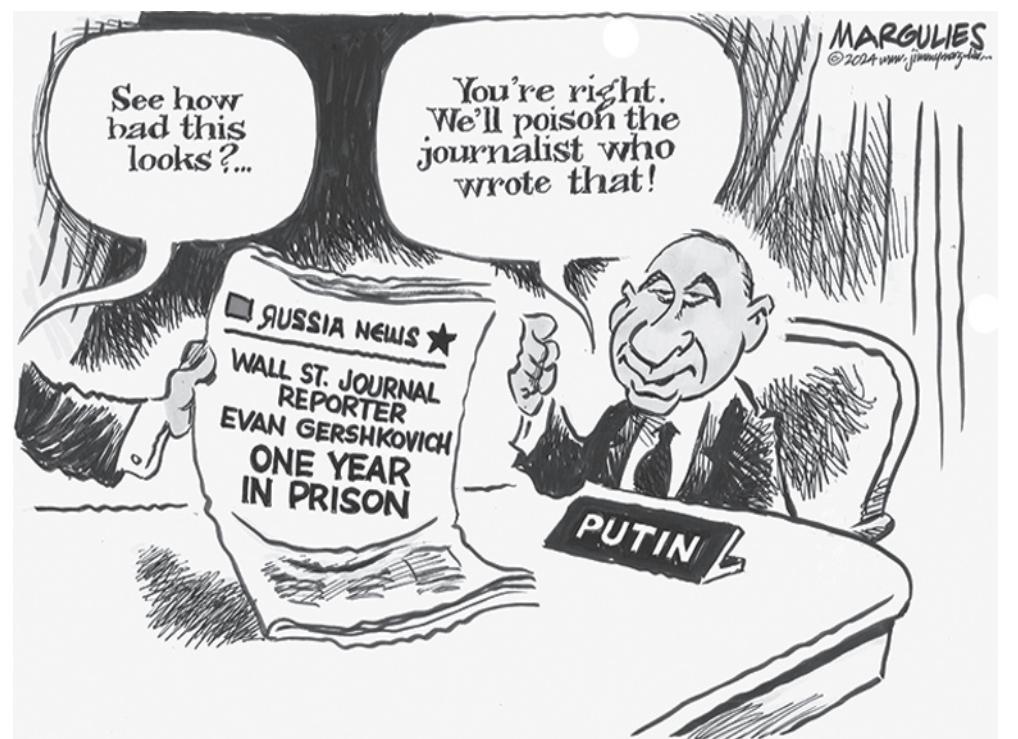
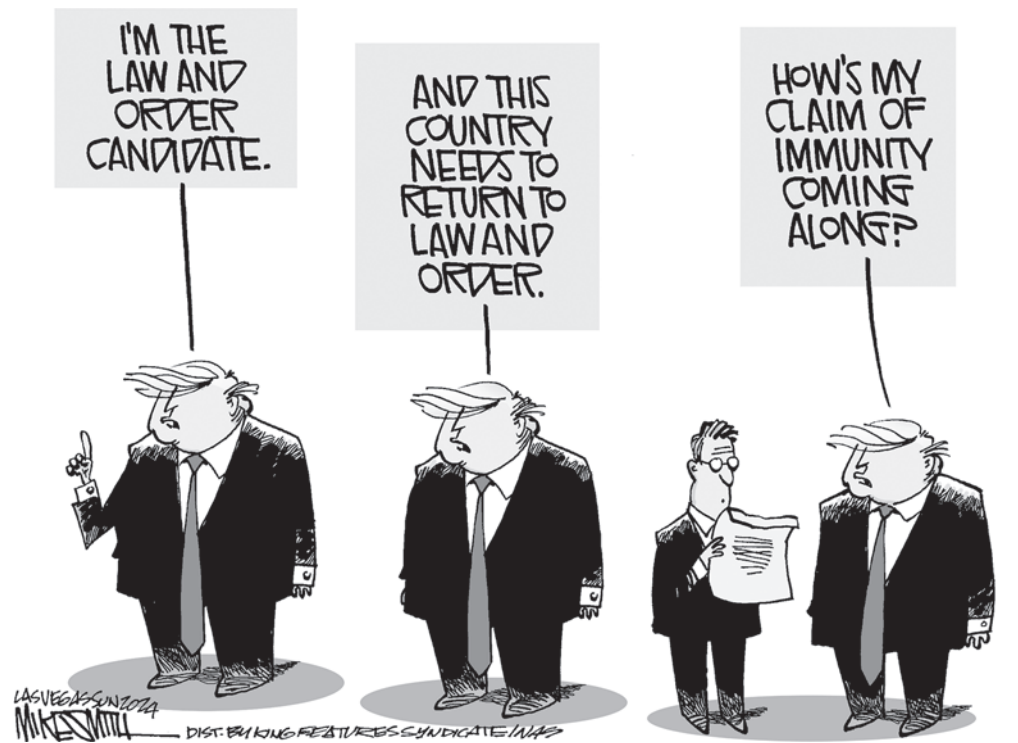
“Dr. Moe’s diverse experience in education combined with her leadership skills make her a strong addition to the next group of Aspen Rising Fellows. She is passionate about higher education, is committed to leading transformative change and contributing to advancements in the community college sector and our region,” Dr. William Serrata, EPCC, President said.



Dr. Keri Moe

– Photo courtesy EPCC

Archives: www.wtxcc.com



Briefs

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a less diverse customer base, and difficulty attracting and keeping top talent. Cedar City, UT, is the best small city to start a business, with one of the highest rates of startups per capita, as well as the fourth-highest growth in the number of small businesses between 2015 and 2021, at over 33%. This growth is significant because it shows that the city has the conditions to keep small businesses afloat even during this period of economic difficulty. Cedar City has the fourth-lowest average commute time, too.”

– *Cassandra Happe*
WalletHub Analyst

Commentary

What are the pros and cons of starting a business in a small city?

“There are a lot of opportunities in smaller cities like lesser competition, lower costs, and stronger community ties, that are often overlooked so indeed quite a few pros to starting a business in this setting. But the most significant I think would be the community and cost aspects. It is usually much cheaper to rent space and utilities tend to be much cheaper too. So, it is much more cost-effective if you need large physical spaces like a storefront, office space, or storage space. Salaries tend to be much lower too as often the cost of living is lower, so workers expect and are satisfied with a lower salary than typically seen in large cities. A strong sense of community is another major benefit of starting a business in a small city. Positive word-of-mouth can spread rapidly, and it is easier to build closer relationships with customers and capture that elusive customer loyalty all businesses seek. In terms of cons, sometimes it can be hard to find specialized talent or skills as the talent

pool can be limited. All the businesses are competing for the same limited pool of employees so it can be challenging to get the people you need. To some degree, if there is the opportunity for remote work for certain positions, this issue can be mitigated.”

– *Vallari Chandna, B.A.*
LL.B, M.B.A, Ph.D.
University of Wisconsin-Green Bay

“**Pros:** Many small cities have funding initiatives for new businesses. Many small cities have established business and commerce organizations that welcome new businesses. You will get lots of advice and recommendations. Small cities want new businesses that will attract new residents and growth. You will have less red tape to do the legal work for setting up the new business. Less competition. **Cons:** Fewer potential customers. Preconceived ideas in residents of ‘this is where we shop/do business/etc.’ You will have to do a lot more local networking and friend-building than you may have to do in a larger city.”

– *Susan L. Luck, Ph.D*
Professor
Graduate Schools of Business
Pfeiffer University

Visit <https://wallethub.com/edu/best-small-cities-to-start-a-business/20180> for the full report.

– *Diana Polk*

Green states

With Earth Day around the corner and the U.S. having experienced \$92.9 billion in damage from weather and climate disasters during 2023, the personal-finance website WalletHub has released its report on *2024’s Greenest States*, as well as expert commentary, in order to showcase the states that best protect our environment. WalletHub compared the 50 states in terms of 25 key metrics that speak to the current health of the environment and residents’ environmental-friendliness. The data set ranges from green buildings per capita to the share of energy consumption from

renewable resources. Texas was rated 38th in the report, ranking (1-Greenest, 25-Avg.):

- 35th – Air Quality;
- 38th – Soil Quality;
- 38th – Water Quality;
- 26th – LEED-Certified Buildings per Capita;
- 32nd – % of Renewable Energy Consumption;
- 45th – Energy Consumption per Capita; and
- 38th – Gasoline Consumption (in Gallons) per Capita.

Commentary

What policies can state and local authorities pursue to make their communities more environmentally friendly?

“States can commit to making polluters pay the true cost of the emissions that drive climate change. They can also facilitate the green infrastructure needed by the electricity and transportation systems. Cities can make it easier to build housing in areas that

require less transportation and can make it easier to choose non-car modes of transportation.”

– *Derek Lemoine*
Professor
University of Arizona

“Increasing public investments in local infrastructure, including providing fossil-fuel-free low-income housing options, investing in renewable energy for all households, supporting local food, and investing in public education – are all needed to support communities to be environmentally friendly. Policies are needed to ensure families and households are not struggling with the basics so that people can make environmentally friendly choices including reducing reliance on fossil fuels and plastics.”

– *Jennie C. Stephens, Ph.D.*
Professor
Northeastern University
 Visit <https://wallethub.com/edu/greenest-states/11987> for the full report.
 – *Diana Polk*

STAAR

From Page 1

campuses on an A to F scale. Students take the test every year from third grade through high school. When campuses within a district are underperforming on the test, state law allows the Texas education commissioner to intervene.

The commissioner can appoint a conservator to oversee campuses and school districts. State law also allows the commissioner to suspend and replace elected school boards with an appointed board of managers. If a campus receives failing grades for five years in a row, the commissioner is required to appoint a board of managers or close that school.

Because the stakes are so high for districts and campuses, a sense of uneasiness about a computer’s ability to score responses as well as a human still prevails among public school educators.

As a former teacher pointed out, even if the automated scoring engine works as intended, it is not something parents or teachers are going to trust unquestionably. School districts – including students, parents, and teachers – simply have not been given enough details about how the programming works.

That is why even with layers of quality control, some educators still worry that a computer could “miss certain things that a human being may not be able to miss,” and that room for error will impact students who are trying to do their best.

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By Lucie Winborne

- While death by guillotine might seem like an ancient ritual, the practice was still in use in France up until 1977 – when the original “Star Wars” was in theaters.

- Sleeping through summer is called estivation.

- The Museum of Bad Art in Somerville, Massachusetts, is pretty much exactly what it sounds like – a collection of really bad art! But then again, who’s to judge?

- The American Psychiatric Association’s DSM-5 handbook classifies caffeine withdrawal as a mental disorder.

- Humans invented booze before the wheel.

- When swallowed by toads, bombardier beetles project hot, noxious chemicals from their anuses, which sometimes forces the predators to puke the beetle back up.

- The town of Baarle straddles the Dutch-Belgian border. In some places, the official borderline cuts through houses and cafes.

- The second-half kickoff in Super Bowl I had to be done twice, as NBC didn’t cut back from a commercial break in time to catch the first one on camera.

- The Mobile Phone Throwing World Championships are held in Finland. One winner said he prepared for the event by “mainly drinking.”

- Sometimes it snows on Mars, but the flakes are made out of carbon dioxide, not water.

- After the band OutKast sang “Shake it like a Polaroid picture,” Polaroid released a statement warning that “shaking or waving can actually damage the image.”

Thought for the Day: “The stupid neither forgive nor forget; the naive forgive and forget; the wise forgive but do not forget.”

– Thomas Szasz

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**Moments
in time**
THE HISTORY CHANNEL

• On April 22, 2000, 6-year-old Elián Gonzalez, who was the sole survivor of an abortive attempt by 13 other Cuban citizens to enter America as illegal immigrants, was taken by a S.W.A.T. team from his Miami relatives. Following a number of court battles, the child was returned to his father, Juan Miguel Gonzalez.

• On April 23, 1898, Spain declared war on the U.S. after rejecting its ultimatum to withdraw from Cuba. Following the declaration, the American Asiatic Squadron, under Commodore George Dewey, engaged the Spanish Pacific squadron under Admiral Patricio Montojo y Pasarón in the Philippines' Manila Bay, and decimated the Spanish squadron.

• On April 24, 1942, singer/actress/film producer Barbra Joan Streisand was born in Brooklyn, N.Y. Considered "the girl on the block with the good voice" in her youth, and determined to be a star, her breakthrough came with the lead role in the 1964 Broadway musical "Funny Girl." In 1968, the movie version of the role earned her an Academy Award for Best Actress. To date, Streisand has sold more than 140 million albums and won 10 Grammys.

• On April 25, 2006, Iran's

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said that his country was happy to share its nuclear technology with other nations, during a meeting with the visiting Sudanese president. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice condemned the comments, and Iran's top nuclear negotiator threatened to suspend its cooperation with the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog if the country was threatened with sanctions.

• On April 26, 1928, Filipino immigrant Pedro Flores opened the Yo-yo Manufacturing Company in Santa Barbara, CA. By November 1929, he was operating two additional factories in Los Angeles and Hollywood, which together produced 300,000 yo-yos daily.

• On April 27, 1971, eight members of the Welsh Language Society were accused of conspiring to damage, remove or destroy English-language road signs in Wales.

• On April 28, 1789, Fletcher Christian led a mutiny against William Bligh aboard the HMS Bounty and set him and 18 loyal crew members adrift in a 23-foot open boat, but the men survived a 47-day voyage to the Dutch East Indies and returned to England to report the mutiny. Christian and the rest of the crew eventually settled on Pitcairn Island and Tahiti.

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**PUBLIC NOTICE
VILLAGE OF VINTON, TEXAS**

FAIR HOUSING STATEMENT

The Village of Vinton hereby declares its support of fair housing practices. It is hereby declared to be the policy of the locality to bring about, through fair, orderly, and lawful procedures, the opportunity of each person to obtain housing without regard to race, color, creed, religion, sex, national origin, physical or mental handicap, marital status, parenthood, or age.

It is further declared that such policy is established upon the recognition of the inalienable rights of each individual to obtain housing and further, that denial of such rights is detrimental to the health, safety, and welfare of the inhabitants of the locality and constitutes an unjust denial or deprivation of such inalienable rights which is within the power and the proper responsibility of government to prevent.

The locality has a Fair Housing Policy that may be examined and copied by interested groups or individuals during office hours. The month of April has been proclaimed "Fair Housing Month"; copies of the official proclamation are available at the Village of Vinton Hall between the hours of 8:00 A.M. and 6:00 P.M., Monday through Thursday.

**POLICY STATEMENT ESTABLISHING NONDISCRIMINATION
BASED ON HANDICAPPED CONDITIONS**

The Village of Vinton announces that it has adopted a policy of nondiscrimination based on handicapped conditions concerning access, participation, and benefit of programs and activities operated or conducted by the locality. This policy is in compliance with the requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended in 24 CFR, Part 8, "Non-discrimination Based on Handicap in Federally-Assisted Programs and Activities of HUD," dated June 2, 1988. Interested individuals or groups may obtain copies of this policy statement by calling the Town Clerk, who has been assigned to coordinate compliance with this policy and may be contacted by telephone at (915) 886-5104.

**POLICY STATEMENT ON PROHIBITING THE USE OF
EXCESSIVE FORCE BY LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES**

The Village of Vinton announces that it has adopted a policy prohibiting the use of excessive force by law enforcement personnel within its jurisdiction against an individual engaged in non-violent civil rights demonstrations. This policy is in compliance with Section 519 of Public Law 101-44, 1990, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Act. Copies of this policy statement may be obtained upon request by telephone at (915) 886-3944.

COMPLAINT AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

In order to comply with the requirements of the Texas Community Development Block Grant Program (TxCDBG) and of 10 T.A.C. Section 178.1 and Section 178.2, the locality has citizen complaint procedures intended to provide a timely written response to all complaints made against its proposed or completed TxCDBG efforts.

Responses to complaints will be made within no more than ten (10) working days. A copy of the complaint procedures can be obtained upon request by telephone at (915) 886-5104. The established complaint procedures are an element of the local Citizen Participation Plan, and meet the requirements of USHUD Section 504 (24 CFR) concerning nondiscrimination based on handicapped conditions.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY / AFFIRMATIVE ACTION STATEMENT

The Village of Vinton is an Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Employer and does not discriminate on the basis of color, race, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability, in employment or in the provision of services.

LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY POLICY

The locality has adopted a Limited English Proficiency Plan and Policy, and supports the requirements therein.

Copies of this entire Public Notice, in English and in Spanish, are available upon request at the Village of Vinton Hall. Copias de este "Public Notice" aviso entero, en ingles y en espanol, se pueden conseguir en la Oficina Municipal de Vinton.

Rachel Quintana
Mayor, Village of Vinton, TX

West Texas County Courier
April 25, 2024

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UTEP hoping to get by next opponent - the transfer portal

By Steve Escajeda
Special to the Courier

The UTEP basketball season was struggling along last season, taking a disappointing 13-15 record into the month of March.

Most fans around the city were just happy the dismal season was coming to an end. Just three more games and it will all be over.

But then suddenly, for some unexplained reason, the Miners caught fire and won those final three games.

Then they went out and won the next two playoff games to advance to the championship of the Conference USA Tournament. A win there and the Miners were in the Big Dance.

Well, most of us know how that game ended. UTEP had a seven-point lead over Western Kentucky with nine minutes left to play but couldn't hold it and eventually lost 78-71.

Usually, an 18-16 record isn't anything to get excited about. And before the season started, if you told coach Joe Golding his team would finish the season 18-16, he wouldn't be happy either.

But the way the Miners fought back, beating top-seeded Sam Houston St. in the tournament, coming back from far behind in every game, getting El Pasoans thinking about championships again, the future is looking brighter than it has in quite a while.

But there is a dark cloud the program still has to navigate through.

The dreaded "Transfer Portal." Like a dangerous life-threatening stargate out of a science fiction movie, the transfer portal has not been kind to the UTEP basketball program.

Snatching players left and right over the years, the portal has seemingly always left the Miners in catch-up mode, frantically trying to replace the

guys they lost with guys that other teams lost.

But this year may be different for the Miners. At least that's what Joe Golding thinks.

The UTEP coach has said that as far as he knows, every player is coming back for next season for as he puts it... "finishing the job they started at the end of this year."

Of course, anything can happen, and players can still change their minds. But in the past, players have left the program immediately after the season ended.

It's been a month since UTEP's final game against Western Kentucky, and no player has taken that leap into the transfer portal.

And if it turns out that guard's Corey Camper, Otis Frazier, Trey Horton and David Terrell, and big guys' Derick Hamilton, Elijah Jones, Kevin Kalu and the 7-footer who redshirted last season, Babacar Mbengue, all return, UTEP could be the favorite to win

CUSA next year.

Don't forget that UTEP has already signed 3-star point guard JK Thomas, out of Canyon Randall High School for next season. Thomas averaged 23 points and nearly six assists a game this year.

Coach Golding says the way you win in college basketball is by getting older. In other words, keeping guys in the same system until their junior and senior seasons. This way they are more mature, they know the system and they are role models for the younger guys coming in.

And ironically, for UTEP, getting older starts with the freshman.

Three of the five players who made the CUSA All-Freshman team are Miners (David Terrell, Elijah Jones and Trey Horton), with Terrell being named Freshman of the Year.

Those are the young guys that Golding hopes will stick around for years and help the Miners be what they used to be, NCAA Tournament

contenders every year.

According to Golding and a few of the players, it was that five-game winning streak at the end of the season that changed the whole program. They all say that there's an elevated confidence and trust level they enjoy now.

They say that instead of hoping and wishing, they've actually done it (getting to the championship game) and now have the confidence to go ever farther in 2024-25.

The Miners had one of the best defenses in the country last season. They only thing that kept them from having a great season was their offense, which lacked good outside shooting.

The guys coming back are much better shooters than those who graduated. With a year's experience behind them, they can only get better.

There's no doubt that UTEP basketball is back... as long as it avoids the transfer portal.

Senior moment By Matilda Charles

What seniors worry about

It's very helpful to have friends and acquaintances scattered across the country when I need to do another informal poll. This time my questions to them concerned what seniors worry about.

I got them started with a list of suggestions on a page, to be ranked in order, with a blank place under each one for comments, and space below for their own contributions.

And I wasn't surprised.

The number one concern was about money. Is there enough to last the rest of our life? Will grocery prices ever come down again?

We're concerned about having to go back to work to keep from burning through our savings, running up medical bills, losing the house because of not being able to pay the mortgage and having the rent raised to an amount we can't pay.

Health was the second biggest concern, with loss of independence topping that list. We fear getting dementia, losing muscle strength, falling and breaking a limb,

having to go into the hospital or rehab for an extended stay, catching Covid or a bad flu. This was a very long list with everyone adding comments.

Concerns about safety was surprisingly high in the rankings. We worry about crime on the streets, not being able to trust our financial advisers and that we might need to give up driving.

Other topics ranked lower, but they're concerns just the same. We worry about identity theft and not being able to recover from it if we lose money. Tied with that are concerns that we might not recognize scams. We worry about needing to ask others for help with things we used to be able to do.

But the one topic that garnered the most comments was loneliness. We fear losing all our friends when they die. We fear being the last one standing.

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Answer Page 4

Super Crossword

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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

supremacy is as dangerous as white supremacy, and God is not interested merely in the freedom of black men and brown men and yellow men. God is interested in the freedom of the whole human race."

Such a majestic belief in what unites us as persons and Americans can only scandalize today's so-called "anti-racists," whom Hughes deems, more accurately, "neo-racists." They have much in common with the white supremacists that they array themselves against. "They both deny our common humanity," Hughes writes. "They both deny that all races are created equal. They both agree that some races are superior to others, and they both agree that not all people deserve to be treated equally in society."

The neo-racist project is nonetheless ascendant in America's elite institutions, and a narrative of racial conflict has gained more traction in recent years. Hughes attributes the sense of worsening race relations since 2013 to the rise of social media and the accelerated

spread of racially charged false stories and myths. We've talked, and clicked, our way into believing we are in a state of racial crisis.

The neo-racists fan the dissension by attributing any racial disparity in America to racism and ignoring the influence of demographics, geography and especially culture. They disregard, or disparage, all the indicators of racial progress, which are inconvenient to their simplistic condemnations of American society as fundamentally and irredeemably racist.

For Hughes, the alternatives are "a grim world in which whites and non-white eternally swap the roles of the oppressor and the oppressed," or a world where we "recommit ourselves to the principles that motivated the civil rights movement." This wouldn't seem a difficult choice. Yet, the very notion of colorblindness is now anathema to much of progressive America. Sunny Hostin is sadly representative in her reflexive hostility to the belief that we should – and can – treat one another without regard to race. So much the worse for her.

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

Taking too much NSAID can cause organ damage

DEAR DR. ROACH: My husband, age 70, had been diagnosed with osteoarthritis in his neck, for which he would take Aleve to relieve his discomfort when needed. Just before Christmas last year, his back began hurting so much that he went to his doctor, who said to get up and move more. (We have always exercised and remained active in life, but he did slow down due to his pain.)



My husband then added ibuprofen to the Aleve he was already using. His doctor said that the pain is due to osteoarthritis in his mid-back area. Apparently, there is nothing to do for it but take Extra Strength Tylenol at the recommended dose. Ibuprofen or Aleve isn't recommended because it causes liver and kidney damage. So, we bought Tylenol, and he used this medication instead of his usual. But his pain only got worse.

So, this morning, he switched back to Aleve and ibuprofen. It is what helped before and is helping again now. In addition, he is using a drug-free Aleve Direct Therapy pad that uses waveform technology. He also uses Icy Hot pain relief cream and a heating pad. These reduce his pain, but his back continues to hurt since before the holidays.

Our question is, should he use Aleve and ibuprofen instead of the Tylenol that doesn't seem to help? He has actually used Aleve for a very long time. He just had his blood tested, and the doctor said his liver and kidneys are good. Is there anything more we can do to relieve his osteoarthritic pain? It is hard to see my husband in so much discomfort when he was previously a very active, pain-free man. – S.F.A.

Osteoarthritis in the neck is a common and painful condition, and there are not always good treatment options. In terms of medicine, anti-inflammatory medicines, like Aleve or ibuprofen marketed as Advil and other brands [known as NSAIDs – non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs], can be very helpful for some people.

However, taking both doesn't improve pain relief. It does increase the risk of toxicity, so he should never take two anti-inflammatory medicines – choose just one. Tylenol helps some people, but in my experience, most people do better with anti-inflammatories instead of Tylenol. Tylenol does have a smaller risk of side effects.

In addition to liver and kidney problems, Aleve and similar medicines can cause stomach problems, ranging from mild upset to life-threatening ulcers; though, this is uncommon with over-the-counter doses. I often recommend a trial of Tylenol to see if it is as good as the anti-inflammatories. Since it's not for your husband, he should tell his doctor this, and it seems reasonable for him to go back to taking Aleve alone. However, I can't tell you to disregard his physician's advice. Some people benefit from Tylenol on top of Aleve.

Beyond pain medicines, the Aleve Direct Therapy pad uses electricity to relieve pain without medicine. It's fine to combine this therapy with medicines. Creams – whether they are anti-inflammatory, menthol and camphor, or topical anesthetics – provide some relief, but they tend to be better on the hands, wrists and knees than the neck. Though, they still may be worth trying in combination with medicines.

In more severe cases, injections can be used before considering surgery.

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

April 23, 1883: The Texas Legislature appropriates \$20,000 to purchase the ruins of the Alamo.

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: Z equals R

FN E LZEKH DN OMFKEPEZU
 FB JKDPK RD LU ZUBFBREKR
 RD LZUEJFKC, FR MEB E
 CDDH OZEOJ ZUODZH.

Answer Page 4

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Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

	5			8				9
7						6	5	
		2	7					4
	2				1			8
1				7				9
		7	3				6	
3				1				6
		4			5	1		
	6		9					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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VA by the numbers



by Freddy Groves

The Department of Veterans Affairs has been going all out to provide expanded access to care to veterans. They're calling it Access Sprints, and it means they're scheduling more appointments at night and on weekends, as well as scheduling more veterans into their daily schedule.

The effort seems to be showing progress. Just this year so far the VA has had 25,000 more new patients than they did during the same period last year. Appointments increased by 11%.

Per the stats, 12% fewer new patients had to wait over 20 to 28 days to get an appointment, and 14% fewer new patients are having to wait to see community providers because of wait time eligibility.

This is on top of the care they provided in 2023 in over 116 million appointments.

Other 2023 stats are equally impressive. The crisis line took over 1 millions calls, over 33,000 veterans received emergency care in suicide crises and 5.5 million dental procedures were completed for over 560,000 patients.

Nearly 5 million veterans were screened for toxin exposure, an important step in monitoring their health. (As of March 5, 2024, veterans exposed to toxins and meeting other requirements have become eligible for VA health care, even before enrolling for other VA benefits. This means those who were in the Vietnam War, Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Global War on Terror or any other combat zone since Sept. 11. Any who weren't deployed but who trained and were exposed here in the U.S. are included in eligibility.)

Even the non-medical efforts saw success: Ten million veterans have individual pages in the online digital Veterans Legacy Memorial website, with over 5 million of those being created in the last year, and

5.6 million policyholders got life insurance coverage.

The VA was able to hire over 61,000 staffers to provide care to the increased number of veterans seeking health care, bringing the total to over 400,000.

Not a bad year for the VA... and veterans.

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• A topcoat a day keeps the manicurist away! Revive your polish by giving the ends a quick coat of clear topcoat daily to extend the life of your manicure.

• "I like to cut out and save comic strips. I used to put them in photo albums with the plastic sleeves, but the pages were a little small. Now I use scrapbook pages, which are much wider. I just glue them to a coordinating color paper. They look much nicer, too." – A reader in Virginia

• The hardware on my favorite purse started to look very banged up and flaking. I found a silver leaf pen at the craft store, and it was very easy to spruce my bag up again.

• To keep spring boots looking tall and smelling pretty good, loosely roll a thin stack of newspaper, stick it down the leg portion of your boot, then fill it with a stack of balled-up newspapers. It will support the leg, which will not flop over, causing cracks. And the newspaper absorbs any smells.

• If you have trapped hairs, try this trick: Wet an old, clean toothbrush and dip it in baking soda or body scrub. Gently exfoliate the area once a day for several days, and it should work itself right out.

• If you have too many suds in the sink (or the tub), try pouring salt on the suds. They die down and can be washed away without creating more suds.

• Bar soap is much more concentrated and eco-friendly than liquid body washes. These days, they are just as moisturizing as any liquid soap. Look for ingredients like shea butter or the words "ultra-moisturizing" and "added emollients."

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

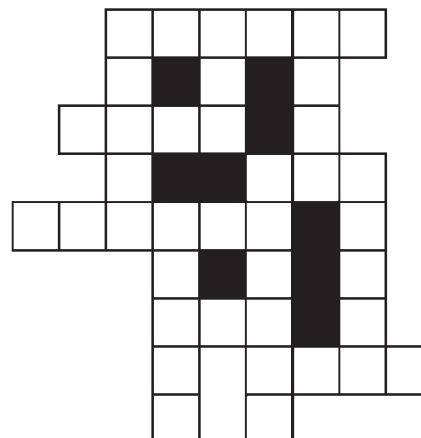
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By: rj johnson

- LEK
- DILMED
- ♥ENDKA
- EDML
- ♥ILKDN
- AGJ
- NOTI
- LDEWL
- ♥OND
- RENJIK
- UGTAM
- ♥IRLA



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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