



## NEWSBRIEFS

### Travel planning

With nearly 82% of Americans planning to take a trip this summer, the personal-finance website WalletHub has released its report on the Best Summer Travel Destinations in 2024, as well as expert commentary, to supplement its Best Travel Credit Cards picks and help people maximize their savings. To help travelers plan the perfect summer getaway, WalletHub compared 100 metro areas across 41 key indicators of an affordable and fun vacation. The data set ranges from the cost of the cheapest flight to the number of attractions to the average price of a two-person meal. El Paso was rated 9th in the report.

- The average flight to a popular summer destination costs \$377, lasts 3 hours and 59 minutes and has 0.4 connections.
- The Los Angeles metro area is the most attractive destination on the West Coast and the Washington, D.C. metro area is the most attractive destination on the East Coast.
- The San Antonio metro area has the lowest nightly rate for a three-star hotel room, which is 5.2 times less expensive than in Oxnard, the metro area with the highest.

“When picking a summer travel destination, it’s easy to focus just on the types of activities you want to do or certain cities you’ve always wanted to see. However, choosing a destination that’s not only entertaining but also affordable is important when travel, dining and activity costs have surged so much in recent years. It can also allow you to have a longer, more relaxing trip. The Atlanta metro area is the best summer travel destination, in part because the cheapest flights from major cities don’t require any connections and can cost as little as \$278. In addition, Atlanta has a lot of diversity when it comes to attractions. The city has a lot of amusement parks, shopping centers, ice cream shops and swimming pools, so there are plenty of places to have fun and cool off.”

– *Cassandra Happe*  
*WalletHub Analyst*

Visit <https://wallethub.com/edu/best-summer-travel-destinations/3792> for the full report.

– *Diana Polk*

***It’s ironic to hear that cemeteries are raising burial fees based on the cost of living.***

– *Quips & Quotes*

## Plaza Classic Film Festival streams podcast

By Rudy Vasquez  
*Special to the Courier*

EL PASO COUNTY – The El Paso Community Foundation’s Plaza Classic Film Festival is now in the podcast business. The *Plaza Classic Podcast* is now streaming on the Plaza Classic Film Festival website and major streaming platforms.

The *Plaza Classic Podcast* is hosted by KVIA news anchor and three-time Regional Edward R. Murrow Award-winner Borderland Crimes podcaster Stephanie Valle and EPCC Mass Communication Professor Lisa Elliott. Valle and Elliott are members of the Plaza Classic Film Festival Program Advisory Committee. The podcast is produced in partnership with El Paso Community College and the El Paso Community Foundation.

Each episode features guests ranging from committee members to filmmakers who delve into a different aspect of the city’s No. 1 feel-good summer event, including this year’s schedule, the Local Flavor showcase, screenwriting competition, and more.

Episode 1, which examines the history of the festival and the popularity of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, is streaming now. The second episode features committee member and University of Texas-El Paso administrator Jaime Mendez was posted May 30. Episodes will be posted weekly



– Image courtesy El Paso Community Foundation

**ON AIR – The Plaza Classic Podcast is now streaming on the Plaza Classic Film Festival website as well as other streaming platforms.**

through the end of the Plaza Classic. Future episodes feature El Paso filmmaker Josh Pulido, screenwriting competition coordinator Austin Savage, and 2023 screenwriting winner

See **PODCAST**, Page 2

## Anthony ISD teachers receive TEA bonus

By Adriana Candelaria  
*Special to the Courier*

ANTHONY – Five Anthony Independent School District teachers are being rewarded for their impactful work by being selected for the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) program, a state initiative for teachers to earn a significant financial incentive based on effective student outcomes.

TIA was established during the 86th legislative session through House Bill (HB) 3 to recruit, retain, and reward highly effective teachers. To qualify for TIA, school districts must implement a system based on teacher observations and student growth measures. The qualification system must be reviewed and approved by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Once teachers meet eligibility requirements, they generate a TIA funding allotment for the district. The funds are provided by TEA. Annual funding allotments are based on designations, rural status of the campus and level of student economic need. Teachers can receive the following three designations: Recognized (\$3,000-\$9,000), Exemplary (\$6,000-18,000), and Master (\$12,000-\$32,000).

At the end of the 23-24 school

See **TEACHERS**, Page 2



– Photos courtesy San Elizario ISD

**ON BOARD – Sandra Licon, left, and Lorenzo Luevano both have been elected to Far West Texas School Board Association offices.**

## Licon, Luevano serve on FWTSBA

By Jeannie Meza-Chavez  
*Special to the Courier*

SAN ELIZARIO – Trustees Sandra Licon and Lorenzo Luevano of the San Elizario Independent School District were both elected to key positions during a Far West Texas School Board Association (FWTSBA) training session. This is the first time two representatives from San Elizario have been chosen simultaneously. Licon was

elected chair while Luevano assumed the role of secretary/treasurer.

Held in El Paso, trustees from across El Paso and Hudspeth Counties attended. “It is wonderful to have a seat at the table and work in unison with fellow trustees in the region to advocate for our respective districts and collectively for the students in our beautiful region,” said Licon.

Luevano is committed to serving in

See **FWTSBA**, Page 2

# Biden has multiple job, image issues

President Joe Biden has suffered a collapse in his standing generally, but, fundamentally, it's because so few people think he's doing a good job that he's in such a perilous state.

Other than that, it's going great.

It's hard to exaggerate how abysmal Biden's polling has been lately.

No incumbent president should ever want to be near 43% in a head-to-head ballot test. Yet here is Joe Biden at 43% in the latest CNN poll, 43% in the latest Morning Consult poll, 43% in the latest Economist/YouGov poll, and 43% in the latest Harvard/Harris poll. (NB: Biden ticked up to 48 when Harvard/Harris pushed respondents

to choose between Trump and Biden, and the Economist/YouGov poll had RFK Jr. in the mix.)

Detect a trend? It's no mystery why Biden's polling is at crisis levels.

An incumbent president's level of support in a reelection bid is typically tethered closely to his job approval. It's hard to get much more than a couple of points above it. Biden's job approval is at 40% in the RealClearPolitics polling average and at 39.3 in the 538 polling average.

The CNN poll has Biden's job approval right there at 40%, where it's held steady for about a year, with 60% disapproving. The Harvard/

Harris has his approval rating a little higher at 44%, even though he's at 43% in the ballot test.

It's not just that Biden's job approval is low; he's trailing Trump on the rather crucial metric of who was or is a successful president.

According to the CNN poll, 55% of the public now considers the Trump presidency a success and 44% look at it as a failure. Biden, in contrast, is upside down. Only 39% say his presidency has been



See LOWRY, Page 7

## Food for thought By dr. Glenn Mollette

# Does everyone have the right to know when you are sick?

Some people want you to know when they have a cold, bad hair day, gout or hemorrhoid flare up. Many of us have seen pictures of wounds, sores, legs in casts, people on ventilators and much more. Many of us have seen a lot of dead bodies on social media. Numerous funerals of people you may have known have appeared on social media. Maybe this works out for people who can't attend the funeral. I'm not being critical. If this works for the family, then it's no one else's business. If the deceased person was a private kind of person and would not have appreciated such a public display then the family should honor the deceased's wishes and disposition.

Some folks are more private. Take for example Catherine Middleton, Princess of Wales who is married to Prince William, apparent heir to the

throne of England. She has been diagnosed with cancer. Anyone diagnosed with cancer knows it's a mental punch in the gut. The media has gone overboard harassing her about being more public about all the details and going on with life as the British press and perhaps some of the public expect.

King Charles was diagnosed with cancer. He had a procedure done. We probably don't really know for certain the state of his health but he is working and giving an overall impression that he is okay. His health will always be in the news.

Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin hid his cancer diagnosis for a while and his non-disclosure was not received well by fellow government officials or the general public. What if there had been some kind of national defense crisis? I concur that The White

House and his fellow chiefs of staff needed to be on full alert because of the nature of his job. However, did his health crisis need to be in the news?

What if Joe Biden really does have some form of dementia? Would we be told at this stage of the Presidential campaign and do we have the right to know? Would you vote for him if such a diagnosis were made public? What if Donald Trump had a health issue that became public? Would this impact your vote?

There are times when it's best to simply let it all hang out. If you have a problem, then simply say what it is and move forward, right? It's never that easy because people always want to know more. They want to know what the doctor is saying. They want to know how often you have to go to the doctor. They want to know what medicine you are taking and how often you take

the medicine. They want to know if you are feeling better or feeling worse, and what is the long-term prognosis? They want to know how it makes you think, talk, walk, and feel. It seems like it's never enough.

I lean toward the side of privacy. I believe a health issue is between a person and his or her doctor. Every individual deserves the right to either disclose their sickness or suffer with it privately. Most of the time people tell what they feel they need to tell. Many people want to tell it all and it helps them to work through the situation. That is okay. Many others don't want the hassle of having to rehash their illness over and over again. They don't want their illness to define their lives. That is also okay.

If it is impacting your job, regardless of whether it's being The President of the

United States or a delivery person for Uber, then you have a responsibility to let others know and then move forward accordingly. Sometimes this means giving up a job. Often it may mean gaining support from others who will support you a hundred percent because they respect your honesty, work ethic, and integrity.

On some level we all have or will face this in life. May God help each us as we all handle life differently and try to be understanding of those who do not necessarily respond to such life challenges as we think they should.

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

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## Teachers

From Page 1

teachers as the district's first cohort of TIA educators:

- Nicole Stokes, Exemplary Designation, Anthony Elementary School;

year, Anthony ISD proudly recognized the following

- Crystal Cammon, Recognized Designation, Anthony Elementary School;
- Ilene Chavez, Recognized Designation, Anthony Elementary School;
- Gerardo Martinez, Recognized Designation, Anthony Middle School; and
- Magdalena Hernandez, Recognized Designation, Anthony Middle School.

## Podcast

From Page 1

Carrie Silva. "The Plaza Classic Film Festival is a gift to El Paso. We wanted to share behind-the-scenes details and introduce the people involved in the process," Valle said. Elliott adds, "There's also more to say about the films featured than can be covered in our introductions before screenings. A podcast was a natural way to do that."

The 17th annual Plaza Classic Film Festival will be July 18-28, 2024, in and around El Paso's historic Plaza Theatre. The festival will include movies based on Stephen King stories, a film noir thread, the Local Flavor Showcase and Awards, and movies such as Sunset Boulevard, The Shawshank Redemption, and our 16th annual free outdoor showing of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. Passes are on sale at [plazaclassic.com/tickets](http://plazaclassic.com/tickets). Individual tickets are now on sale.

"Our talented and seasoned teachers admitted to the TIA program embody the excellence and dedication that we strive for in our district," said Superintendent Dr. Oscar A. Troncoso. "This achievement recognizes their dedication and expertise but also provides them with additional compensation."

Anthony ISD received \$46,520 for its TIA program. Teachers in the district's first TIA group are eligible for amounts between \$7,737 and \$27,791 in addition to their annual salary and stipend opportunities. Designated teachers are expected to receive their payout at the end of May.

## FWTSBA

From Page 1

the FWTSBA and wants to strengthen the individual districts and region through collaboration and community engagement. "I strongly believe in building communities because that is where everything starts. Strong and united communities create a wonderful culture and pride," he said.

# Retired teachers give books to 1,000 children

By Carlisle Navidomskis  
Special to the Courier

HORIZON CITY – Approximately 1,000 children, from 3-year-olds through 5th graders, at Frank Macias Elementary in Horizon City received free books on May 17th, thanks to members of the El Paso Lower Valley Chapter of the Texas Retired Teachers Association (TRTA). TRTA recently announced this year’s Children’s Book Project, a statewide effort to place books into the hands of children who might not otherwise have their own.

“This is a fun undertaking, and as lifelong educators, we love encouraging children to read,” said Julie Calderon, president of EPLVRTA. “Reading fosters knowledge and opens up the imagination. Every child should have books to call his or her own.”

TRTA has sponsored the book drive every year since 1998, receiving book donations from its own members and community partners. Each year EPLVRTA delivers books to one school in the Clint, San Elizario, Fabens or Tornillo school districts on a rotating basis.

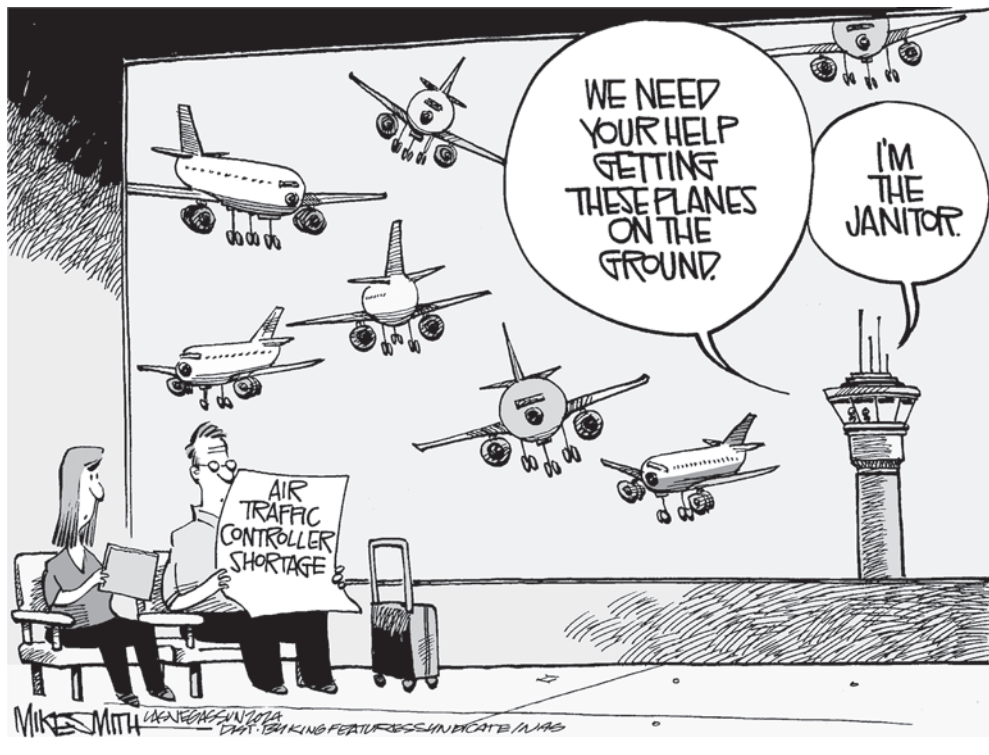
TRTA is the nation’s largest organization of retired public school employees. The association is always accepting new members. For more information on TRTA, its membership opportunities and projects in the community, visit [www.trta.org](http://www.trta.org) or call (800) 880-1650. For membership in EPLVRTA, especially for active employees and retirees of El Paso’s Lower Valley school districts, call the membership chair at (915) 433-0057.



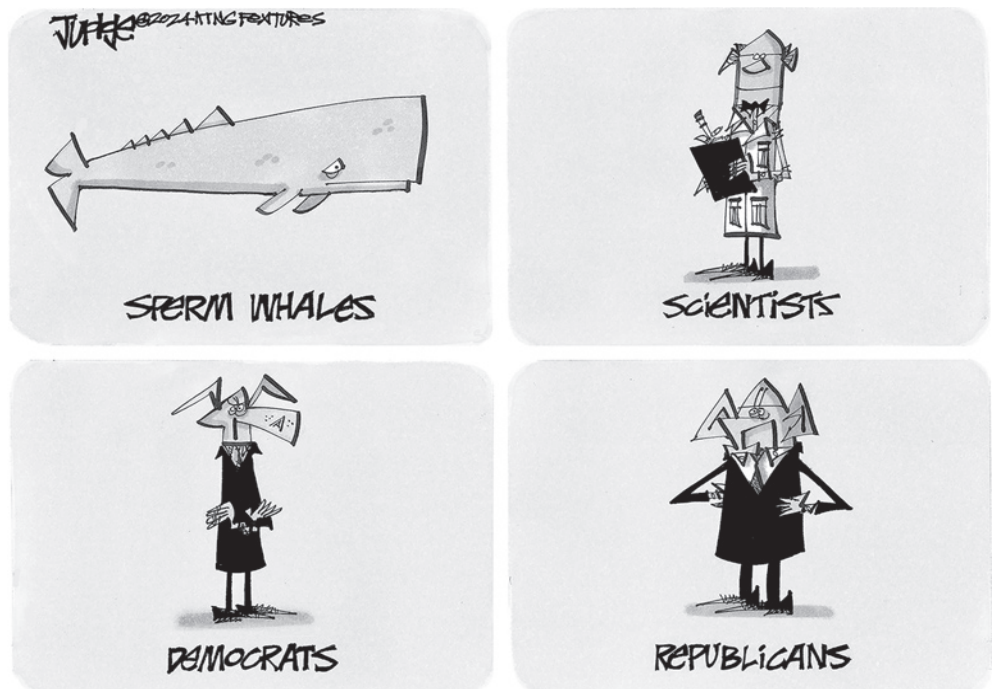
– Photo by Carlisle Navidomskis

YOU GET A BOOK... AND YOU GET A BOOK... AND YOU GET A BOOK – Stacy Macias, left, counselor aide, and Eden Tabbutt, right, help a roomful of Frank Macias students select books to take home.

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Former President Donald J. Trump was found guilty in New York on 34 felony counts in his “hush money” trial. His sentencing is set for four days before the Republican National Convention begins. Trump has appealed to the Supreme Court for relief in this case, it’s timing and a ruling on his claim of immunity. The verdict did not change public opinion.



PICK THE TWO WHO ARE LEARNING TO COMMUNICATE.



# CORRECTION TO NOTICE

Three schools in the 2024 Clint ISD Summer Meal Program Notice had the wrong dates of service. The correct dates appear below.

**Clint High School**  
13890 Alameda Ave.  
Clint, TX 79836  
June 3 to June 13, 2024  
Monday to Thursday  
**Breakfast:** 8:30 a.m. - 9:15 a.m.  
**Lunch:** 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.  
*Junio 3 a Junio 13, 2024*  
*Lunes a Jueves*  
**Almuerzo:** 8:30 a.m. - 9:15 a.m.  
**Comida:** 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

**Horizon High School**  
14651 Horizon Blvd.  
El Paso TX 79928  
June 3 to June 27, 2024  
Monday to Thursday  
**Breakfast:** 8:00 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.

**Lunch:** 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.  
*Junio 3 a Junio 27, 2024*  
*Lunes a Jueves*  
**Almuerzo:** 8:00 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.  
**Comida:** 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

**Ricardo Estrada Middle School**  
851 South Darrington Rd.  
El Paso, TX 79928  
June 3 to June 13, 2024  
Monday to Thursday  
**Breakfast:** 8:30 a.m. - 9:15 a.m.  
**Lunch:** 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.  
*Junio 3 a Junio 13, 2024*  
*Lunes a Jueves*  
**Almuerzo:** 8:30 a.m. - 9:15 a.m.  
**Comida:** 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

# Classified Ads

**LEGAL PUBLIC NOTICE**

**DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY**

**Proposed Flood Hazard Determinations for El Paso County, Texas and Incorporated Areas**

The Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has issued a preliminary Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM), and where applicable, Flood Insurance Study (FIS) report, reflecting proposed flood hazard determinations shown on the preliminary FIRM and/or FIS report for the aforementioned communities. These flood hazard determinations are the basis for the floodplain management measures that your community is required to either adopt or show evidence of being already in effect in order to qualify or remain qualified for participation in the National Flood Insurance Program. However, before these determinations are effective for floodplain management purposes, you will be provided an opportunity to appeal the proposed information. This appeal period will commence on the second publication date of this notice scheduled on or about June 6, 2024. For information on the statutory 90-day period provided for appeals, as well as a complete listing of the communities affected and the locations where copies of the FIRM are available for review, please visit FEMA's website at [https://www.floodmaps.fema.gov/fhm/BFE\\_Status/bfe\\_main.asp](https://www.floodmaps.fema.gov/fhm/BFE_Status/bfe_main.asp), or call the FEMA Mapping and Insurance eXchange toll free at 1-877-FEMA MAP (1-877-336-2627).

WTCC: 05-30-24  
06-06-24

# NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING TO DISCUSS BUDGET AND PROPOSED TAX RATE

The San Elizario Independent School District will hold a public meeting at 5:30 P.M. on Tuesday, June 25, 2024 in the SEISD Administrative Office, 1050 Chicken Ranch Rd., San Elizario, Texas. **The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the school district's budget that will determine the tax rate that will be adopted. Public participation in the discussion is invited.**

The tax rate that is ultimately adopted at this meeting or at a separate meeting at a later date may not exceed the proposed tax rate shown below unless the district publishes a revised notice containing the same information and comparisons set out below and holds another public meeting to discuss the revised notice.

<b>Maintenance Tax</b>	\$0.715600/\$100 (Proposed rate for maintenance and operations)
<b>School Debt Service Tax</b>	
<b>Approved by Local Voters</b>	\$0.169700/\$100 (Proposed rate to pay bonded indebtedness)

### Comparison of Proposed Budget with Last Year's Budget

The applicable percentage increase or decrease (or difference) in the amount budgeted in the preceding fiscal year and the amount budgeted for the fiscal year that begins during the current tax year is indicated for each of the following expenditure categories:

<b>Maintenance and Operations</b>	4.35%	Decrease
<b>Debt Service</b>	0.25%	Increase
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	4.17%	Decrease

### Total Appraised Value and Total Taxable Value (as calculated under Section 26.04, Tax Code)

	Preceding Tax Year	Current Tax Year
Total appraised value* of all property	\$ 644,381,950	\$ 719,196,671
Total appraised value* of new property**	\$ 9,173,086	\$ 8,721,025
Total taxable value*** of all property	\$ 291,908,505	\$ 337,984,881
Total taxable value*** of new property**	\$ 8,464,304	\$ 8,425,049

\* "Appraised value" is the amount shown on the appraisal roll and defined by Section 1.04(8), Tax Code.  
\*\* "New property" is defined by Section 26.012(17), Tax Code.  
\*\*\* "Taxable value" is defined by Section 1.04(10), Tax Code.

### Bonded Indebtedness

Total amount of outstanding and unpaid bonded indebtedness\* \$23,620,000

\* Outstanding principal.

### Comparison of Proposed Rates with Last Year's Rates

	Maintenance & Operations	Interest & Sinking Fund*	Total	Local Revenue Per Student	State Revenue Per Student
<b>Last Year's Rate</b>	\$ 0.721900	\$ 0.169700*	\$ 0.891600	\$ 943	\$ 11,582
<b>Rate to Maintain Same Level of Maintenance &amp; Operations Revenue &amp; Pay Debt Service</b>	\$ 0.757060	\$ 0.159600*	\$ 0.916660	\$ 1,085	\$ 11,445
<b>Proposed Rate</b>	\$ 0.715600	\$ 0.169700*	\$ 0.885300	\$ 1,051	\$ 11,463

\*The Interest & Sinking Fund tax revenue is used to pay for bonded indebtedness on construction, equipment, or both.  
The bonds, and the tax rate necessary to pay those bonds, were approved by the voters of this district.

### Comparison of Proposed Levy with Last Year's Levy on Average Residence

	Last Year	This Year
Average Market Value of Residences	\$ 145,700	\$ 153,556
Average Taxable Value of Residences	\$ 14,518	\$ 23,724
Last Year's Rate Versus		
Proposed Rate per \$100 Value	\$ 0.891600	\$ 0.885300
Taxes Due on Average Residence	\$ 129.44	\$ 210.03
Increase (Decrease) in Taxes		\$ 80.59

**Under state law, the dollar amount of school taxes imposed on the residence homestead of a person 65 years of age or older or of the surviving spouse of such a person, if the surviving spouse was 55 years of age or older when the person died, may not be increased above the amount paid in the first year after the person turned 65, regardless of changes in the tax rate or property value.**

**Notice of Voter-Approval Rate: The highest tax rate the district can adopt before requiring voter approval at an election is \$0.885300. This election will be automatically held if the district adopts a rate in excess of the voter-approval rate of \$0.885300.**

### Fund Balances

The following estimated balances will remain at the end of the current fiscal year and are not encumbered with or by a corresponding debt obligation, less estimated funds necessary for operating the district before receipt of the first state aid payment:

Maintenance and Operations Fund Balance(s)	\$ 10,841,681
Interest & Sinking Fund Balance(s)	\$ 416,778

A school district may not increase the district's maintenance and operations tax rate to create a surplus in maintenance and operations tax revenue for the purpose of paying the district's debt service.

Visit [Texas.gov/PropertyTaxes](https://Texas.gov/PropertyTaxes) to find a link to your local property tax database on which you can easily access information regarding your property taxes, including information about proposed tax rates and scheduled public hearings of each entity that taxes your property.

The 86th Texas Legislature modified the manner in which the voter-approval tax rate is calculated to limit the rate of growth of property taxes in the State.



# CLASSIFIED AD FORM

25 words - \$15 per week; 40 words - \$20 per week

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	27	28
29	30	31	32
33	34	35	36
37	38	39	40

Deadline: Monday, 4 p.m.  
Please print. Send form and payment (no cash) to:  
**West Texas County Courier**  
15344 Werling Ct.  
Horizon City, TX 79928

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Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

# It's down to the dynamic duos of the Celtics and Mavericks

By Steve Escajeda  
Special to the Courier

As a kid I used to watch the old quirky Batman series with Adam West playing the caped crusader and Burt Ward playing Robin.

"Holy Hysterical," that old TV show was awesome.

Batman and Robin would always come around and save the day. They always came up big by winning the battle against their opponents.

And though they worked as a team, you always knew that Batman was in charge and Robin was second in command.

Well, there are a couple of Batman-Robin-led teams that will clash in the NBA Finals, but for these two teams, the player who plays Batman and the player who plays Robin changes from game to game.

The Boston Celtics and the Dallas Mavericks will start their best 4-out-of-7 championship series this week.

The Celtics (64-18) were expected to represent the Eastern Conference because they were in first place almost the entire year.

The Mavericks (50-32) however, are a bit of a surprise. They finished fifth in the West and upset the Los Angeles Clippers, the Oklahoma City Thunder and the Minnesota Timberwolves to get to the Finals.

The mighty Celtics have "POW," "BAM," and "BOOMED," their way through the playoffs thanks to their dynamic duo of Jayson Tatum and Jalen Brown.

Tatum averaged 26.9 points per game this season, Brown had 23.0.

Yes, Boston has other talented players like Kristaps Porzingis (20.1) and Derrick White (15.2), but they'll go as far as Tatum and Brown can take them.

The other dynamic duo, that plays for Dallas, may be ever more important to their team's success.

Luka Doncic and Kyrie Irving

are the Maverick's Batman-Robin combination, but Irving can play Batman on almost any other NBA team.

Doncic (33.9) led the league in scoring this season while Irving chipped in another 25.6 per contest.

Like Boston, Dallas has other players they can count on like big men Daniel Gafford and Dereck Lively, who are great rebounders and shot blockers around the basket.

Through the first three rounds of the playoffs, the Celtics are 12-2, while The Mavs are 12-5.

Like we said earlier, before the playoffs started, the Celtics were picked to make it this far. In the West, the Timberwolves, the Thunder, the Clippers, the Phoenix Suns, and the defending champion Denver Nuggets were all favored to make the Finals before the Mavericks were.

But Dallas made it and it has been mostly due to the Batman-Robin

combination of Doncic and Irving.

And though Boston may be the heavy favorite on paper, Dallas is peaking at just the right time, which suddenly makes this a very intriguing series.

The Celtics have tradition on their side, having won the most NBA titles (tied with the Lakers at 17) in history. The Mavericks won their first and only title back in 2011, led by Dirk Nowitzki.

The Celtics were dominant this season, leading the NBA in 3-pointers made, they were second in total offense and second in defense.

They have a great bench that can go eight or nine players deep.

There's no doubt that the Mavericks are top-heavy, with most of the scoring coming from Doncic and Irving, but they are averaging nearly 60 points a game between them and that will be hard to stop.

And don't forget that Kyrie Irving played for the Celtics during the 2017-18 and 2018-19 seasons. Irving's

departure from the Celtics wasn't the happiest of divorces so that will be something to watch during the series.

Boston will have the home court advantage in the series. The Celtics were 37-4 at home this year while the Mavericks were an impressive 25-16 on the road.

Except for Doncic, Irving, and Tim Hardaway Jr., Dallas has a very young and inexperienced team and that will probably hurt them in the all-important Finals.

Of the top 100 current NBA players who have played the most playoff games, Boston has six of them for a total of 612 games. Dallas has three players who have combined for 186 (and 136 of those come from Doncic and Irving).

The home court advantage, the experience, the tradition and the talent make the Boston Celtics a clearcut favorite to win it all.

I'm picking Boston to win it four games to one... but no money on it.

## Senior moment By Matilda Charles

# Information sources for food safety

At this writing we're being told on the news that the bird flu that's popping up across the country is being found in milk we buy. Then days later, no, it's not. It's only in raw milk, not the pasteurized we buy at the store. Except yes, there are "viral fragments" in pasteurized milk.

How do we stay safe with conflicting information?

Various agencies in the government release alerts and recalls about our food safety. Sometimes they find an undeclared allergen in a food product or an item has not been inspected. Then there are the adulterants such as tiny pieces of plastic found in food.

Sometimes, however, what's found is quite serious, such as listeria, E. coli or salmonella, which can make people (especially seniors) extremely ill.

Receiving alerts about these can help us avoid foods that can make us sick. There are several alert/recall sources, but the one with the best information is at [www.foodsafety.gov](http://www.foodsafety.gov). You can either check the site on your computer or phone, or have the alerts sent to you. The website also has information on safe food storage and food poisoning.

The CDC has information on alerts as well at [www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/outbreaks/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/outbreaks/index.html). One recent recall warned of metal fragments in ice cream.

The FDA has a wider selection of alerts, covering shellfish, baby food products, beverages and dietary supplements. See [www.fda.gov/food/recalls-outbreaks-emergencies/alerts-advisories-safety-information](http://www.fda.gov/food/recalls-outbreaks-emergencies/alerts-advisories-safety-information). One recent alert concerned elevated levels of lead in several cinnamon products.

The Food Safety and Inspection Service ([www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls)) recently recalled ham products that made it into the country without being inspected and ground beef with E. coli.

Sign up for as many (or as few) alerts as you need to feel safe about your food. If you sign up for more than one, you may get duplicate information, as they often share between agencies.

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- UNSPOILED EXPANSES ACROSS**
- 1 Choco-coffee flavor
  - 6 Low bow of respect
  - 12 Global rivalry concerning weaponry
  - 20 Customary
  - 21 Last pope of the 1700s
  - 22 Bishops' jurisdictions
  - 23 Iconic logo of McDonald's [Utah]
  - 25 Proceeds forward
  - 26 Long, thin cut
  - 27 Three, in Germany
  - 28 Sgt., say
  - 30 Poet's "always"
  - 31 Suffix with percent
  - 32 "\_ Holmes" (2020 Millie Bobby Brown film)
  - 34 Biblical metaphor for Jerusalem [Utah]
  - 38 Drs.' org.
  - 39 Slimy veggie
  - 41 "Swell!"
  - 42 Hush-hush U.S. org.
  - 43 Original thing
  - 45 Regal name of Norway
  - 47 Erwin of old Hollywood
  - 49 Dozes
  - 53 Full-size SUV introduced in 2000 [California]
  - 58 It's between tau and phi
  - 60 Curbside cry
  - 61 Not given an assessment
  - 63 Very, in slang
  - 64 Scottish cap
  - 67 "Star Wars" royal
  - 69 Opaque quartz with banding [Alberta]
  - 71 Nervous
  - 74 Pol who was John-John's uncle
  - 76 Coll. in Columbus
  - 77 Big name in train travel
  - 78 Mac computer platform released in 2014 [California]
  - 81 Actor Neeson
  - 83 \_ 10 (acne medication)
  - 84 Strong string
  - 85 Actress Redgrave
  - 87 "Ooh" or "tra" follower
  - 90 British spy novelist John
  - 92 Ice mass descending a mountain valley [British Columbia]
  - 97 Love god
  - 98 Magnate Onassis
  - 100 High volcano in Sicily
  - 101 Society for brainiacs
  - 102 Bronze-hued
  - 104 "Sheena" star Gena Lee \_
  - 108 Action word
  - 110 "ASAP!"
  - 111 Full-size SUV
  - introduced in 1998 [Alaska]
  - 116 Natty necktie
  - 118 OPEC supply
  - 119 Type of 35 mm camera
  - 120 Part of USSR: Abbr.
  - 121 Torah cabinets
  - 123 Rd. crossers
  - 125 Like Attu's island chain
  - 128 What each of seven key words in this puzzle is the name of
  - 131 Really rant at
  - 132 "Beats me"
  - 133 Shaw of jazz clarinet
  - 134 Vaccine injectors
  - 135 Abhor
  - 136 Game token

- DOWN**
- 1 Coffee holders
  - 2 Italian encore song, often
  - 3 Concerning cooking
  - 4 Couldn't help but
  - 5 Beer for a Brit
  - 6 Box lightly
  - 7 Terrier breed
  - 8 Saint \_ (island country)
  - 9 Hearth waste
  - 10 Get back at
  - 11 Violinist Elman or actor Auer
  - 12 Computer pioneer Lovelace
  - 13 Person on a bus, e.g.
  - 14 Classic soul song by Curtis Mayfield
  - 15 Wolfs (down)
  - 16 Sidekick of Stimpy
  - 17 PC character set acronym
  - 18 Singer Green formerly on "The Voice"
  - 19 Ruhr city
  - 24 Its cap. is Bismarck
  - 29 Ex-Giant Mel
  - 33 Ton of, casually
  - 35 Not pleasurable, colloquially
  - 36 Aurora, to the Greeks
  - 37 Most wacky
  - 38 Astern
  - 40 TV's O'Donnell
  - 44 Mayberry's Otis, e.g.
  - 46 Brand of bottled water
  - 48 Sassy quality, for short
  - 50 Elite NFLer
  - 51 Medieval war weapon
  - 52 Catty
  - 54 Wheel bars
  - 55 Singer Rita
  - 56 "Othello" role
  - 57 Sloping
  - 59 Counterfeit
  - 62 Needle case
  - 64 Flute sound
  - 65 Respond to
  - 66 Toluca locale
  - 68 Rombauer of cooking
  - 70 Actor Malcolm\_ Warner
  - 72 Line of family rulers
  - 73 Attendee
  - 75 "Hooked on Classics" label
  - 79 At any time
  - 80 Seer's skill
  - 82 Pool growth
  - 86 Tuscany city
  - 88 Baby sheep
  - 89 Top pilot
  - 91 Irritating
  - 93 Outskirts
  - 94 Be a pioneer
  - 95 Arcane
  - 96 Uncooked
  - 99 B&B, e.g.
  - 103 Big Texas city
  - 105 Has too much, with "on"
  - 106 Brezhnev of the USSR
  - 107 Enter forcibly
  - 109 Tabula \_
  - 111 Bleating beasts
  - 112 Singer Cyrus
  - 113 Not fuzzy
  - 114 Talk formally
  - 115 Singer Cleo
  - 117 Italian isle
  - 122 Make tangled
  - 124 \_Ball
  - 126 Geller of the paranormal
  - 127 Denials
  - 129 "For shame!"
  - 130 Indy circuit

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					27				28		29		30				31			
	32			33			34		35			36				37				
38					39		40			41			42							
43			44			45		46				47	48			49	50	51	52	
53					54					55	56	57		58			59			
				60				61				62			63					
64	65	66			67		68			69				70						
71			72	73			74		75		76				77					
78							79			80		81		82				83		
84							85				86			87		88	89			
90						91			92				93				94	95	96	
97					98			99							101					
				102	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		128		129				130				
131										132						133				
134											135						136			

# Comix

## OUT ON A LIMB By Gary Kopervas



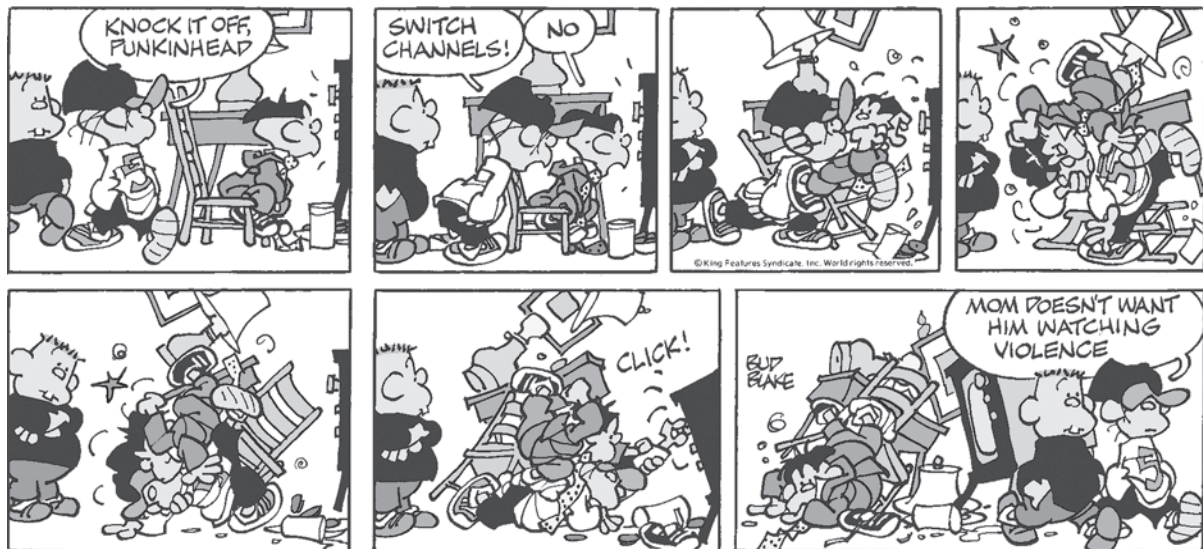
## AMBER WAVES By Dave T. Phipps



## THE SPATS By Jeff Pickering



## TIGER By Bud Blake



## Lowry

From Page 2

a success, while 61% say it's been a failure. People may have all sorts of expectations for presidents – that they not get indicted, that they not post on TruthSocial in ALL CAPS, that they accept the results of elections, etc., etc. – but the most important one, surely, is that they succeed at the job. Being considered a failed president is not, needless to say, a status consistent with winning reelection. Of course, the economy is the biggest anchor on Biden. His numbers there are in the tank. CNN has his approval on the economy at 34% and inflation at 29%. The Economist/YouGov poll found the same thing – 39% approval on the economy and 29% on prices. In a normal election, these numbers simply wouldn't be survivable. But with two extremely well known, unpopular candidates, this is not a normal race. Trump's history and personal radioactivity give Biden a lot of material to work with. And it's a boon to him that his opponent is locked

down in a courtroom several days a week. The problem for Biden is that many of the attacks on Trump – especially those based on his legal prosecutions – feel besides the point compared to the bigger questions in the race. Are more people going to care that Trump has been convicted of felonious bookkeeping related to a payment to a porn star eight years ago or that they think he can do a better job handling inflation? And there's more bad news for Biden: Besides disapproving of his job performance and his economy, people don't particularly like him, don't think he's a strong leader, and don't think he's fit to be president. If all that represents trouble for the incumbent, the biggest problem, again, is that he's failing at his job. The most direct way for Joe Biden to improve his chances in November would be to become a good president – although it's unfair to place such unrealistic expectations on him at this juncture in his presidency and career.

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

# Low iron levels might affect blood donor's depression

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am wondering if there is any link between low iron and depression/anxiety. I am a 37-year-old woman, and I started taking Lexapro a few years ago. I upped my dose last year because I wasn't feeling great, and my doctor and I decided that it was a good step to take. During the years that I have been taking Lexapro, I have also been a regular blood donor. I am CMV-negative, so I have blood suitable for newborns. The Red Cross says I am a "hero for babies," and I enjoy doing something good. I haven't donated in about five months, and I am feeling significantly better regarding my depression. I know that donating blood affects iron levels, but does it also affect the concentration of Lexapro in my body? If not, can low iron be contributing to my depression? I would love to know the answer so that I can possibly continue to donate, perhaps less frequently. – J.M.



First, thank you for donating so regularly. CMV is a virus most people have been exposed to, and like most herpes viruses, it stays in the body forever. Newborns and premature babies, as well as organ transplant recipients, need CMV-negative blood, and there aren't many CMV-negative people who can donate. Depression and anxiety are both tightly linked to the neurotransmitter serotonin. Lexapro doesn't increase serotonin, but it does make the transmission of serotonin from one nerve cell to another more effective by reducing the reuptake of serotonin at the nerve junction. Low iron levels have been shown to reduce serotonin levels, so this may be part of the reason why your depressive symptoms have been worse. However, there are many other reasons, both inside and outside of your body, that can make depressive symptoms worse. Still, if you do have low iron levels, you can replace iron faster and keep it normal, despite blood donation and menstruation, with an iron supplement. (It would be best to check with your doctor on this.) If your depression gets better, then this would be pretty good evidence that low iron does affect your mood. (Note: You can have low iron and not have anemia at all.) Find the right donation frequency so you can still help without putting your mental health in danger.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am an 86-year-old male in good health. Several years ago, I had about 1/3 of my prostate removed because I couldn't pee. After the surgery, all was well with a steady stream until about two weeks ago. During one of my many trips to the bathroom, I noticed that I had a hard time when starting to urinate, and the stream was stop-and-go. This continues to this day, but it isn't a problem during the day. Any thoughts on my sudden change in urinating? – D.S.

A sudden change in urination should prompt an evaluation for a urine infection. These are quite common with men in their 80s, especially those with prostate problems, even if they have undergone surgical treatment. Your first stop should be your regular doctor for a urine test, and if this doesn't reveal the problem, it is time to visit your urologist. Some medicines can dramatically worsen the ability to urinate in men, especially decongestants and antihistamines. Some people use these at night, which might explain why you only experience problems at that time.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to [ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu](mailto:ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu). ©2024 North America Synd., Inc. All Rights Reserved.

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**Moore Texas by Roger Moore**

Albany, Texas 1980: The city turns their 1878 jail into a fine art gallery called the Old Jail Art Center... incarcerated art I reckon.

**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: P equals M

T SAWUORY PWARVC IS CQN  
PW FRRFO UVRHMTMX VHFRN  
FQYHW. T XIRAA T'P YRMFHVW  
PRMFHVW SNRSHNRY.

Answer Page 4

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**Fighting back against the drug companies**



by Freddy Groves

You have to love it when a drug company gets nailed for their role in the opioid drug crisis.

In this case, our favorite government department, Office of Inspector General for the VA, was involved in bringing down a huge drug manufacturer for distributing a misbranded opioid. The result: The drug company was hit with the second largest penalty ever against a pharmaceutical manufacturer: \$1.536 billion (that's billion, not million) in fines and forfeiture.

The manufacturer's list of crimes and deceptive business practices is long. Among other things, they declared that the drug was tamper- and crush-resistant. Sales reps went so far as to hit pills (although not the drug in question) with hammers to prove they were crush-proof

and therefore did not have an abuse potential. (Being crush-proof is key when prescribing opioids because there is a risk of misuse such as snorting crushed pills.) They hid the effects of their drug and the fact that it was highly addictive. Additionally, the label that went out with the drugs didn't give correct directions for usage.

To make it even worse, the manufacturer targeted medical providers they knew were prescribing the drug off label (for non-medically accepted reasons), thereby adding to the opioid drug crisis, all in the name of greed. They even held sales contests so the sales reps would be sure to target for sales those who were prescribing the highest level of opioids.

Part of that \$1.5 billion includes \$450 million that will go to state, municipal and Tribal groups to fund drug programs. On top of that is a fine of \$475.6 million for civil liabilities.

Now the VA will be able to

recoup some of its expenses (\$8.5 million) for all the drug interventions and treatment they had to do over the years because of that drug – and the OIG was right there in the middle of it.

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• Want to pump up a dying fire? Never use lighter fluid. Even if the coals look really gray, they could be hot on the inside. The stream of fluid CAN catch fire. It's too dangerous. Put new briquettes in with the old, and light those up using a long-stick match.

• "Keep flareups from unintentional blackening: Keep a clean spray bottle filled with plain water next to the grill. Long after you're done cooking and you're ready to clean up those ashes from briquettes, mist the ashes first, and it will keep them from making a dust cloud." – U.L. in Georgia

• From charcoal grilling expert Kingsford, here's a great tip to use when grilling chicken: "When applying a dry rub to chicken pieces, it's often hard to keep the rub affixed and it's even more difficult to keep the chicken's original, golden color. Try painting chicken pieces with yellow mustard prior to applying the rub. Not only will the rub stay in place, your final product will be visually appealing - without any trace of mustard flavor."

• When wrapping vegetables in foil packets to grill, make the seams on the sides. This way, the veggie packets can be turned over for even cooking and to avoid burning on one side. You can even label the outside of the foil in permanent marker. It won't affect the taste of the food.

• To cover a picnic table in windy conditions, choose a fitted bed sheet. An alternative that is kid-friendly is to cover a table entirely with white butcher paper, taped at the seams and secured underneath with strong tape such as duct tape. The kids can busy themselves drawing placemats and decorations for everyone in crayon while the adults do the grilling.

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.

	-		+		=	9		
+		+		+				
	+		×		=	56		
÷		+		×				
	+		+		=	17		
=		=		=				
9	13		117					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

DIFFICULTY: ★

★ Moderate ★★ Difficult

★★★ GO FIGURE!

Answer Page 4

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**Weekly SUDOKU**

by Linda Thistle

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

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

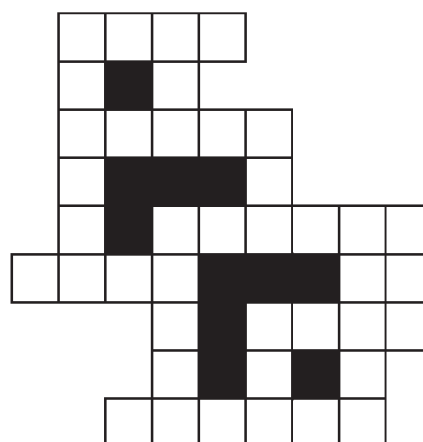
Answer Page 4

◆◆◆ HOO BOY!

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- IXM
- FISEOT
- ♥IDFNE
- ♥AMDE
- SNUPHI
- ♥ELI
- ESIM
- ♥TISRA
- ♥ODN
- OXFERL
- XIPLE
- ♥ASTL



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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