



EPCC and El Pasoans Fighting Hunger team up

By Beau Bagley
Special to the Courier

EL PASO COUNTY – El Paso Community College (EPCC) and El Pasoans Fighting Hunger hosted a ‘Grocery Giveaway’ on December 6 at the Rio Grande Campus.

Campus Life

Campus Life provides activities throughout the academic year. These activities are intended to motivate and increase student understanding of arts, athletics, culture, current events and the community; and most of all, enjoyment. These experiences are provided to the students through special programs, art exhibits, lecture series, film and much more.

How does a student participate? Just show up. All of the activities are free to the students with a valid ID card. To get an ID or validate ID card, just visit one of the Campus Life offices located at each campus. Activities are posted at each campus. Visit www.epcc.edu/Services/CampusLife for more information.

This is the third partnership between EPCC and El Pasoans Fighting Hunger.

El Pasoans Fighting Hunger provided food for 250 people, open and free to all students, faculty, staff, and the overall community.

“Food insecurity is a very big issue in our community... and to be able to bring food and make it available to anyone who needs it at that particular time is a priority,” Karmela Galicia, Director of Programs for El Pasoans Fighting Hunger, said. “Right now, it’s the season of gatherings and meals, and to be able to help in those situations is

part of what we do. This also addresses college food insecurity for students, so to be able to partner with higher learning institutions and able to make sure that our local students are getting access to what



– Photo courtesy El Paso Community College

FILLING UP – Neighborhood resident Sonia Jaquez receives a box full of groceries at the EPCC Rio Grande Campus.

they need and where they are is important.”

EPCC and El Pasoans Fighting Hunger have partnered in the past, the first being in July 2024 at the Valle Verde campus, and the second was in October at the Mission del Paso campus. This is part of a broader effort to address food insecurity on college campuses.

This initiative is made possible through a partnership with El Pasoans Fighting Hunger, EPCC Student Leadership and Campus Life, New Student Orientation and the EPCC Student Government Association.

According to the Trellis Strategies Student Financial Wellness Survey, 45% of EPCC students experienced food insecurity in Fall 2023.

Third U.S. Army MEDCOM, EPCC hold graduation ceremony

By Beau Bagley
Special to the Courier

EL PASO COUNTY – El Paso Community College (EPCC) Department of Emergency Medical Services Paramedic (EMSP) Program held a Completion Ceremony for its third U.S. Army Medical Command (MEDCOM) Cohort II Paramedic course at EPCC on December 3. This collaboration with the U.S. Army began in April 2023 with 15 graduates, and this year, the Accelerated Paramedic and Advanced EMT courses graduated 16, at a ceremony held at the Mission del Paso Campus Flexitorium.

EPCC provides paramedic education to medical Soldiers utilizing this model (Accelerated Paramedic Program). Soldiers completed the program in 171 days.

The ceremony featured U.S. Army Medical Readiness, Colonel Lee Freeman and Command Sergeant

Major James Musnicki leading the MEDCOM Delegation. Also included are EPCC EMSP Instructors, Dr. Jose Crespo and Tony Ayub, EMS Ambulance Clinical Coordinator and Lead Instructor Tim Groover, along with EPCC Board of Trustee Mr. John Uxer, a graduate of the U. S. Army Command and General Staff College (US Army CGSC), was also on hand to present the certificates of completion.

Karla Torres was named Valedictorian, and Michael Powell was named the Outstanding Student, and the presentation included certificates from U.S. Congresswoman Veronica Escobar representatives and awards from the U.S. Army.

“We did it! I am so thankful for the support,” Valedictorian Karla Torres said. “It was a long six months, but worth it. Congratulations graduates!”

“We are extremely thankful for this partnership,” Command Sergeant



– Photo courtesy El Paso Community College

FIRST IN CLASS – Valedictorian Karla Torres is recognized by Command Sergeant Major James Musnicki, left, and Colonel Lee Freeman, right.

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The intellectual collapse of DEI

DEI is a bad idea whose time came with a vengeance several years ago, but now its continued ascendancy is in doubt.

Perhaps the most important event this year outside of the presidential election is the intellectual collapse of so-called diversity, equity and inclusion, which is poisonous hokum that is finally being exposed as such.

DEI has been one of the most morally perverse and damaging fads in recent American history.

We've been spending an estimated \$8 billion a year telling Americans in training sessions, workshops and educational material that they are, depending on their race or gender, victims or oppressors, and that the country is shot through with white supremacy. The DEI mindset is dominant in human resources

departments and on college campuses.

Common sense says that this racist hectoring – often administered by people who brook no dissent – must be unhealthy, and, sure enough, evidence is beginning to pile up.

Research has suggested that DEI can create negative feelings or make people afraid to speak their minds. Now comes a compelling new study from an outfit called the Network Contagion Research Institute and Rutgers University Social Perception Lab. It found that DEI amplified “perceptions of prejudicial hostility where none was present and punitive responses to the imaginary prejudice.”

In other words, if its goal is to create illiberal racial paranoiacs, DEI is succeeding brilliantly.

In one experiment, the study's architects gave one

group of students an anodyne essay about U.S. corn production to read while another got an essay drawn from the work of DEI superstars

Ibram X. Kendi and Robin DiAngelo. Then, the students were asked to evaluate a simple, racially neutral scenario involving a college applicant getting rejected by an East Coast university.

The students who had read the DEI material were more likely to believe that the hypothetical admissions officer in the scenario was more discriminatory, more unfair, and more harmful, as well as guilty of more micro-aggressions – again, even though nothing in



See LOWRY, Page 7

Dimel remembered for more than coaching football

By Steve Escajeda
Special to the Courier

I've been covering UTEP football games for nearly 30 years now and over those years, I've had a chance to interview and interact with every head coach from Charlie Bailey to Gary Nord to Mike Price to Sean Kugler to today's Scotty Walden.

Of course, in the six years before the arrival of Walden, there was Dana Dimel.

All the coaches stood out for different reasons, some were easy to get along with, some were a little more difficult, some made history – he wasn't. time for media, some you

could never find.

And then there was Dana Dimel.

I was shocked on Tuesday morning (December 3rd) when I was notified that the coach had passed away in his sleep earlier that same day.

It took me a while to process the news. There had been no talk about him being sick or in any diminishing health. It came as a complete surprise to everyone.

The news of Dimel's passing not only surprised me, it genuinely affected my whole day.

Not because he was one of the most successful coaches in UTEP

Not because he was here as

long as Don Haskins was – he wasn't.

It's because coach Dimel was undoubtedly one of the nicest guys I've ever met. Forget about him being a coach, he's the sweet grandfather you'd like everyone to have.

Dimel didn't do a lot of winning as UTEP's head football coach. His teams were 20-49 during his tenure and enjoyed only one winning season, in 2021 where they finished 7-6.

But I've got to be honest, I've never rooted for a coach to win as hard as I did for coach Dimel, because of how genuinely nice he was.

It seemed like I always walked away from speaking to him amazed at how upbeat and forthcoming he was when I know he was under tremendous pressure because the team was struggling to win games.

There were times that fans were angrily calling for his firing and I know it had to get to him, it would get to anyone. But Dimel never showed that it did. He would make time for us media types and answer every question with his soft-

spoken calming voice.

His voice reminded you of the painter Bob Ross or even Mr. Rogers, someone you could trust to steer you in the right direction.

I can't tell you how many players and coaches and reporters who were all saying the same thing that Tuesday; all the talk surrounded the shock of his sudden passing and how nice he was and what a gentleman he was.

I had the chance to talk to UTEP quarterback Cade McConnell who went on and on about how coach Dimel gave him the opportunity of a lifetime and about how kind and giving the man was.

I have to admit, there were times that I had to write about how badly the team was doing under Dimel. And ordinarily, that wouldn't be a problem for a journalist, you have to write about the facts.

But it really bothered me when I had to write anything negative about Dimel because he was such a nice man. I always tried to put a not-so-negative spin on him because I liked and respected him so much.

Former Dallas Cowboys backup quarterback Babe Laufenberg's son Luke was going to play for UTEP back in 2019, but the cancer he suffered from earlier, returned and he died before playing a single game with the Miners.

But coach Dimel honored Luke and the Laufenberg family by keeping his #2 jersey (with "Laufenberg" on the back) on the team and choosing a current player to wear it for the season, to keep Luke's memory alive.

Who does that? Who even thinks of that?

There have been other coaches who won more games at UTEP. There were other coaches whose teams were more exciting to watch at UTEP. But there were no coaches at UTEP who had more of an impact on the lives of their young athletes than Dana Dimel.

His passing last week was sudden, but the impression he left on the hundreds of young men he coached through the years will last for decades to come.

Rest in Peace coach.



Photo courtesy UTEP
Dana Dimel



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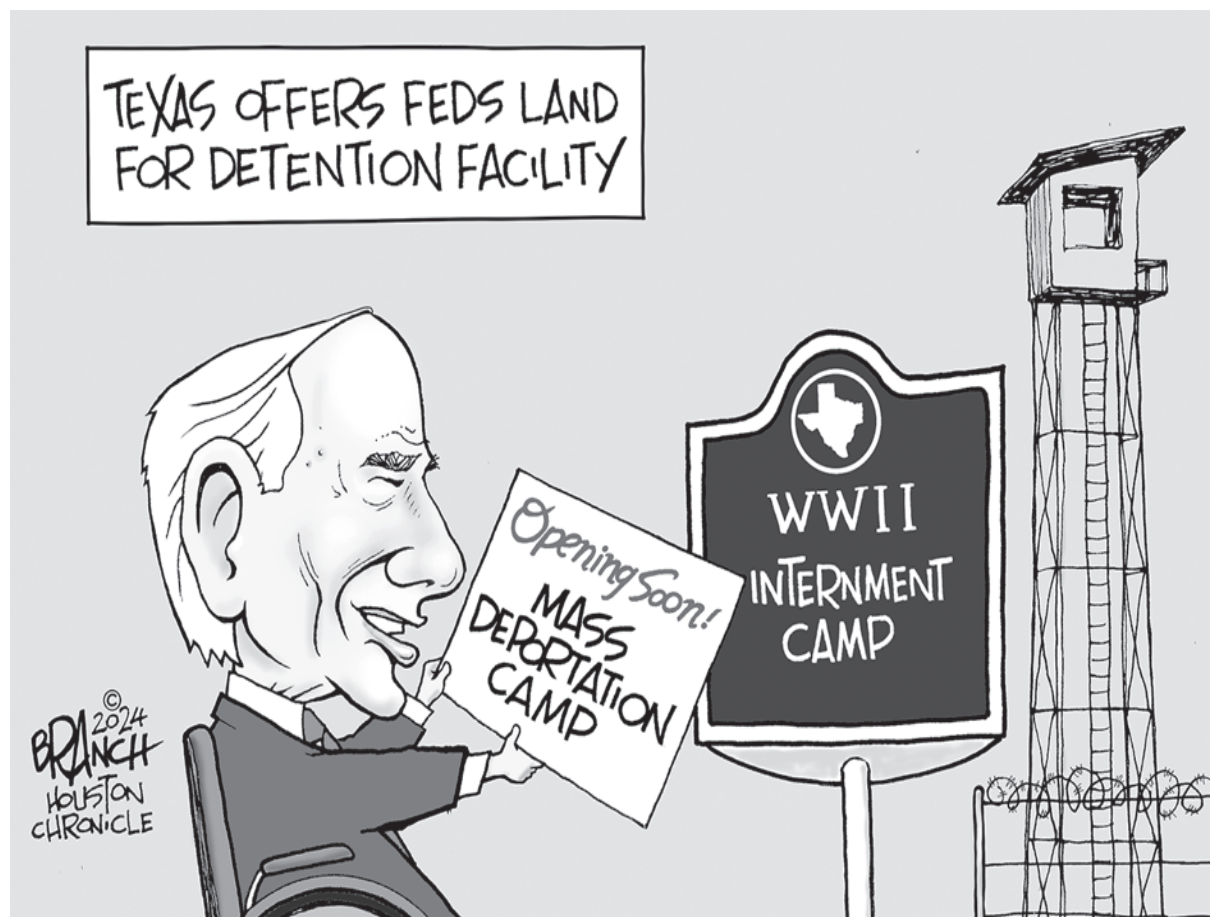
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Senior moment By Matilda Charles

Saving money in 2025

In a few weeks, those of us on Social Security will be getting approximately 50 extra dollars in our monthly benefit. Minus the \$10 increase in Medicare Part B, that brings the average increase down to \$40 per month.

How shall we spend our windfall? If food prices are going to come down after the recent election, it won't be instantly. We need to continue to shop carefully and get the best possible deals for our dollar. Look for senior discount days, coupons, loyalty perks and, yes, the food bank.

If you can spring for a Walmart+ membership (\$98 per year, minus \$20

if you're also an AARP member), each time you shop you can end up with rewards dollars added to your account for buying certain products. Look for other benefits such as free shipping, discounts on fuel if your local store has a gas station, access to the TV streaming service Paramount+, prescription delivery and a lot more.

For the first time in 15 years, the membership cost of AARP is going up in 2025. The new price of \$20 will take effect after your current membership expires. If you extend your membership now, it will be at the current rate. Meanwhile, take advantage of AARP's

savings and discounts on a wide variety of products and services, ranging from dining out; insurance; travel, including car rental and vacation packages; gym memberships; and so much more.

Ask your cable and internet provider for a reduced fee. It could be that by dropping down one plan level, you could save considerable money by cutting out the channels you never watch anyway.

Investigate Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) for help with fuel and heating costs, one of our biggest expenses. Start by calling the Community Action Agency in your state or the Area Agency on Aging.

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Athletic Trainer, Clint I.S.D., El Paso, TX. Req. min. Bach's deg. in Athletic Training, Kinesiology, or rel. field. Must poss. Athletic Training License from TX Advisory Board of Athletic Trainers and TX Educator's Certificate. Req. WTC 12-12-24

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MEDCOM

From Page 1

Major James Musnicki said. "El Paso Community College is a great partner with the U.S. Army, to Fort Bliss and our medics."

The accelerated paramedic course combined classroom, clinical, and field experience to prepare students for careers and skills in out-of-hospital emergency medical care. "El Paso Community College and the U.S. Army have had a long-standing relationship in Educating Army Medics to the Paramedic level. This has evolved to a new model of accelerated training allowing

Soldiers to be prepared to function as a paramedic and meet the needs of the U.S. Army," Tony Ayub, Coordinator of the EPCC Emergency Medical Services Paramedic program, said.

Soldiers from across the country trained six days a week, including some 12-hour days, in this six month, rigorous and accelerated training to become certified paramedics with 41 college credit hours. Completing this program opens the door so that with additional education and earned credit, these soldiers could easily obtain an Associate of Applied Science-Paramedic degree and earn points to a promotion.

EPCC has a long history of serving the military and veteran community

since its founding in 1969. The college has numerous programs to assist and train soldiers and their families to further their careers while on active duty and after. "EPCC has

partnered with the United States Army for over 15 years in paramedic training," Ayub said. "This program will increase the number of paramedics at a national level."

AMERICAN LUNG ASSOCIATION of Texas

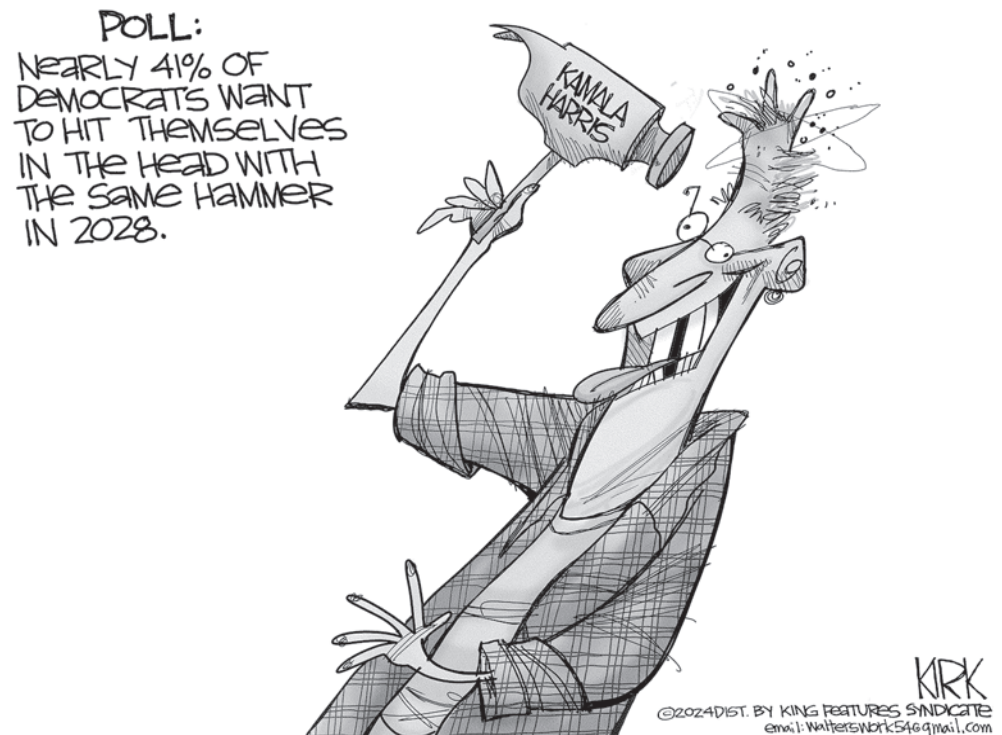
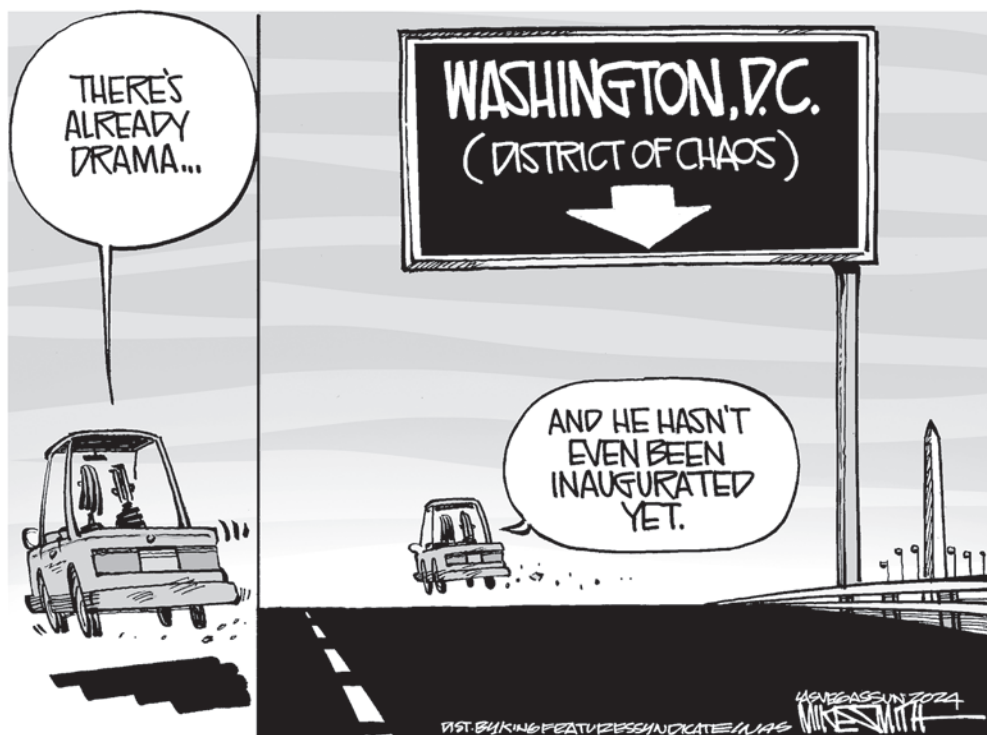
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PUBLIC NOTICE TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS AND PARTIES:

The *West Texas County Courier* will not publish the last two weeks of December. The first issue of 2025 will be January 2.

The *West Texas County Courier* office closed beginning Monday, December 9, 2024. The office will open again on Friday, December 27, 2024.

Canutillo Independent School District Statement of Revenues, Expenditures and Changes in Fund Balance Governmental Funds For the Year Ended June 30, 2024

Data Control Codes	General Fund	Debt Service Fund	Other Funds	Total Governmental Funds
REVENUES:				
5700 Total Local and Intermediate Sources	\$ 24,833,899	\$ 13,191,035	\$ 873,300	\$ 38,898,234
5800 State Program Revenues	37,031,900	1,128,885	675,957	38,836,742
5900 Federal Program Revenues	6,311,879	-	5,800,824	12,112,703
5020 Total Revenues	68,177,678	14,319,920	7,350,081	89,847,679
EXPENDITURES:				
Current:				
0011 Instruction	39,101,115	-	4,272,468	43,373,583
0012 Instructional Resources and Media Services	817,845	-	199,262	1,017,107
0013 Curriculum and Instructional Staff Development	916,290	-	1,051,498	1,967,788
0021 Instructional Leadership	1,108,440	-	323,577	1,432,017
0023 School Leadership	4,002,004	-	148,414	4,150,418
0031 Guidance, Counseling and Evaluation Services	2,621,729	-	62,780	2,684,509
0032 Social Work Services	168,039	-	37,581	205,620
0033 Health Services	1,037,326	-	3,326	1,040,652
0034 Student (Pupil) Transportation	2,087,440	-	-	2,087,440
0035 Food Services	5,642,627	-	-	5,642,627
0036 Extracurricular Activities	1,560,793	-	212,763	1,773,556
0041 General Administration	3,901,284	-	7,501	3,908,785
0051 Facilities Maintenance and Operations	7,170,120	-	259,974	7,430,094
0052 Security and Monitoring Services	1,378,951	-	259,580	1,638,531
0053 Data Processing Services	2,654,866	-	120,358	2,775,224
0061 Community Services	17,840	-	332,964	350,804
Debt Service:				
0071 Principal on Long-Term Liabilities	1,647,048	10,955,133	-	12,602,181
0072 Interest on Long-Term Liabilities	324,036	2,030,929	-	2,354,965
0073 Bond Issuance Cost and Fees	-	108,950	-	108,950
Capital Outlay:				
0081 Facilities Acquisition and Construction	1,780,503	-	-	1,780,503
Intergovernmental:				
0099 Other Intergovernmental Charges	498,988	-	-	498,988
6030 Total Expenditures	78,437,284	13,095,012	7,292,046	98,824,342
1100 Excess (Deficiency) of Revenues Over (Under) Expenditures	(10,259,606)	1,224,908	58,035	(8,976,663)
OTHER FINANCING SOURCES (USES):				
7915 Transfers In	10,081	-	-	10,081
7949 Other Resources	746,181	-	-	746,181
8911 Transfers Out (Use)	-	-	(10,081)	(10,081)
7080 Total Other Financing Sources (Uses)	756,262	-	(10,081)	746,181
SPECIAL ITEMS:				
7918 Special Item - Sale of Real and Personal Property	9,816,365	-	-	9,816,365
1200 Net Change in Fund Balances	313,021	1,224,908	47,954	1,585,883
0100 Fund Balance - July 1 (Beginning)	19,592,896	13,110,424	660,688	33,364,008
3000 Fund Balance - June 30 (Ending)	\$ 19,905,917	\$ 14,335,332	\$ 708,642	\$ 34,949,891



By Lucie Winborne

- In 1674, the Women's Petition Against Coffee claimed the beverage was turning British men into "useless corpse[s]" and proposed a ban on it for anyone under the age of 60.

- Eugene V. Debs ran for president in 1920 while serving a prison sentence in Atlanta Federal Penitentiary for his protests against World War I. He still captured nearly 1 million votes.

- The plot of "The Nightmare Before Christmas" was partly inspired by the collision of holiday store decorations.

- Cotton candy was invented in 1895 by candy maker John C. Wharton and dentist William Morrison, who called it "fairy floss" and sold thousands of servings at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904. It was renamed "cotton candy" in the 1920s by Josef Lascaux - another dentist - who sold the saccharine confection to his patients. Hmm, sounds a little bit suspicious to us.

- In a study by the Smell and Taste Treatment Research Foundation, the scent women found most arousing was Good & Plenty candy mixed with cucumber.

- Arachibutyrophobia is the fear of peanut butter getting stuck to the roof of your mouth.

- Lancaster, PA was the U.S. capital for the shortest period of time, a mere day, on Sept. 27, 1777.

- Aretha Franklin's voice was declared a "natural resource" of the state of Michigan.

- In 1967, supermodel Twiggy became the first celebrity to be immortalized as a Barbie doll. Other celebrity Barbies have included Cher, Elizabeth Taylor, Elvis and Priscilla Presley, and Nicki Minaj.

Thought for the Day: "Life is a great big canvas, and you should throw all the paint on it you can."

- Danny Kaye

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CryptoQuip Answer

What do you call somebody who stops using an illness-treating substance?
A medicine dropper.

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Moments in time
THE HISTORY CHANNEL

• On Dec. 9, 1990, Lech Walesa, founder of the Solidarity trade union, won a landslide election victory, becoming the first directly elected Polish leader.

• On Dec. 10, 1690, a failed attack on Quebec and subsequent near-mutiny forced the Massachusetts Bay Colony to issue the first paper currency in the Western Hemisphere's history. It was initially unpopular for anything except paying taxes and was phased out, but reappeared in Massachusetts just a few years later.

• On Dec. 11, 1946, the General Assembly of the United Nations voted to establish the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), an organization designed to help provide relief and support to children living in countries that had been devastated by World War II.

• On Dec. 12, 1970, "Tears of a Clown," penned by William "Smokey" Robinson, became the first No. 1 hit for Robinson and his band the Miracles after more than a decade of hits that had failed to reach that coveted position. Bob Dylan would later call Robinson America's "greatest living poet" in recognition of his skill as a composer and lyricist.

• On Dec. 13, 2000, seven convicts (the "Texas Seven") overpowered civilian employees and prison guards in the maintenance shop where they worked at a maximum-security prison in South Texas and made off with clothing, guns and a pickup truck, triggering a six-week manhunt. The men left a note saying, "You haven't heard the last of us yet," which proved true the following year when six of them were recaptured (one committed suicide).

• On Dec. 14, 1982, actor Woody Harrelson's father, Charles Harrelson, was convicted of murdering Judge John Wood outside his home in San Antonio, Texas, as he bent down to look at a flat tire on his car. Wood was the first federal judge assassinated in the 20th century, and the FBI's three-year investigation into his murder was one of the most extensive since John F. Kennedy's assassination.

• On Dec. 15, 1974, the Oakland A's Jim "Catfish" Hunter was ruled a free agent by arbitrator Peter Seitz, becoming the first free agent in modern baseball

history, after the team's owner, Charles O. Finley, failed to live up to the terms of his star pitcher's contract.

• On Dec. 16, 1938, Adolf Hitler instituted the Mother's Cross, a medal awarded as part of an initiative designed to encourage women of "pure" German origin to grow the Third Reich's population. Each year between 1938 and 1944, gold medals were given to women with eight or more children, silver medals to women with six to seven, and bronze medals to women with five.

• On Dec. 17, 2010, a struggling street vendor named

Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire outside the governor's office in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia. That morning, his merchandise had been confiscated by a municipal inspector, as Bouazizi was operating without a government permit. His act was considered the start of the Arab Spring, a period of pro-democracy uprisings throughout North Africa and the Middle East.

• On Dec. 18, 1972, future American president Joe Biden's first wife, Neilia, and 13-month-old daughter, Naomi, were killed in a car accident while shopping for a Christmas tree when their car was struck by a tractor-trailer.

• On Dec. 19, 1843, Charles Dickens' beloved classic novella "A Christmas Carol" was published in London by Chapman and Hall. The first edition sold out in just five days, and the book not only has been adapted countless times in multiple media, but it has never gone out of print.

• On Dec. 20, 1940, superhero Captain America, aka Steven "Steve" Rogers, a frail man enhanced to physical perfection after drinking an experimental serum, made his debut in "Captain America Comics" No. 1.

• On Dec. 21, 2012, Korean rapper Psy's music video for "Gangnam Style" became the

first YouTube video to garner a billion views.

• On Dec. 22, 2001, British citizen and al-Qaida member Richard Reid attempted to detonate homemade bombs in his shoes while aboard American Airlines Flight 63 headed to Miami from Paris. A flight attendant smelled sulfur and saw what he was doing, and fellow crew members and passengers restrained him until he could be sedated and strapped down with belts, after which the plane was diverted to Boston's Logan International Airport, where he was taken into custody.

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**Socorro Independent School District
Statement of Revenues, Expenditures and Changes in Fund Balance
Governmental Funds
For the Year Ended June 30, 2024**

Data Control Codes	General Fund	Debt Service Fund	Formerly Major Capital Projects Fund	Other Funds	Total Governmental Funds
REVENUES:					
5700 Total Local and Intermediate Sources	\$ 106,706,631	\$ 70,786,960	\$ -	\$ 4,003,301	\$ 181,496,892
5800 State Program Revenues	341,669,414	12,781,836	-	4,300,249	358,751,499
5900 Federal Program Revenues	18,476,612	-	-	90,589,564	109,066,176
5020 Total Revenues	466,852,657	83,568,796	-	98,893,114	649,314,567
EXPENDITURES:					
Current:					
0011 Instruction	304,749,400	-	-	27,328,889	332,078,289
0012 Instructional Resources and Media Services	6,319,427	-	-	889,430	7,208,857
0013 Curriculum and Instructional Staff Development	3,500,935	-	-	5,676,702	9,177,637
0021 Instructional Leadership	6,500,467	-	-	743,490	7,243,957
0023 School Leadership	31,627,945	-	-	429,464	32,057,409
0031 Guidance, Counseling and Evaluation Services	14,548,161	-	-	5,309,238	19,857,399
0032 Social Work Services	646,452	-	-	1,213,318	1,859,770
0033 Health Services	2,751,536	-	-	4,816,603	7,568,139
0034 Student (Pupil) Transportation	27,941,784	-	-	16,424	27,958,208
0035 Food Services	735,023	-	-	33,718,984	34,454,007
0036 Extracurricular Activities	12,862,012	-	-	1,146,455	14,008,467
0041 General Administration	13,379,803	-	-	188,694	13,568,497
0051 Facilities Maintenance and Operations	51,927,585	-	-	6,479,738	58,407,323
0052 Security and Monitoring Services	14,411,820	-	-	1,904,252	16,316,072
0053 Data Processing Services	11,002,070	-	-	1,111,605	12,113,675
0061 Community Services	1,323,017	-	-	1,573,891	2,896,908
Debt Service:					
0071 Principal on Long-Term Liabilities	5,826,208	33,769,020	-	363,528	39,958,756
0072 Interest on Long-Term Liabilities	407,263	33,747,435	-	115,837	34,270,535
0073 Bond Issuance Cost and Fees	-	87,229	-	-	87,229
Capital Outlay:					
0081 Facilities Acquisition and Construction	4,029,916	-	-	32,649,695	36,679,611
Intergovernmental:					
0099 Other Intergovernmental Charges	2,563,868	-	-	-	2,563,868
6030 Total Expenditures	517,054,692	67,603,684	-	125,676,237	710,334,613
Excess (Deficiency) of Revenues Over (Under) Expenditures					
1100	(50,202,035)	15,965,112	-	(26,783,123)	(61,020,046)
OTHER FINANCING SOURCES (USES):					
7913 Right-to-Use Lease and SBITA Proceeds	6,470,322	-	-	42,503	6,512,825
7914 Non-Current Loans	6,547,290	-	-	-	6,547,290
8911 Transfers Out (Use)	(8,832,201)	-	-	-	(8,832,201)
7080 Total Other Financing Sources (Uses)	4,185,411	-	-	42,503	4,227,914
1200 Net Change in Fund Balances	(46,016,624)	15,965,112	-	(26,740,620)	(56,792,132)
0100 Fund Balance - July 1 (Beginning), As Previously Reported	96,971,214	69,547,967	30,194,599	8,615,085	205,328,865
1300 Restatements and adjustments	(522,836)	-	(30,194,599)	30,194,599	(522,836)
Fund Balance - July 1 (Beginning), As Restated or Adjusted	96,448,378	69,547,967	-	38,809,684	204,806,029
3000 Fund Balance - June 30 (Ending)	\$ 50,431,754	\$ 85,513,079	\$ -	\$ 12,069,064	\$ 148,013,897

When it comes to college football, the more the merrier

By Steve Escajeda
Special to the Courier

A couple years ago, the NCAA decided to do something radical and expand its football playoffs from just four teams to twelve.

College football fans have been waiting two years for this to become a reality and this weekend, they are going to pick the 12 teams who will participate.

Let's be honest, a lot of fans were growing tired of watching the same teams battle for the title every year. It always seemed like either Alabama, Georgia, Ohio State, Clemson, Michigan or LSU.

And that was it. All the other over 100 schools didn't have a chance with only four teams being selected.

But this year it's finally happening. Teams like BYU and Boise State and Indiana and Arizona State and SMU were given a chance. And that makes the tournament so much better than it's been.

Of course, they'll have to get by Ohio State and Oregon and Penn State and Texas and Georgia and Notre Dame. But at least they'll get their chance.

And how many times have we sat there glued to our seats during the NCAA Basketball Tournament, watching a little guy either upset, or scare the bigger school silly.

Everybody loves the little guy. The guy who most believe has no business being there, except themselves.

After last weekend's conference championship games, the 12-team bracket was filled out. Four teams will receive byes straight to the second round, four other teams will play home games in the first round.

The system is quite complicated but it's still much better than the old four-team structure.

The only thing I don't like about the format is that some teams are getting byes, and some teams are getting home games.

I think the best playoff system in all of sports is what they do during March Madness.

The NCAA has 68 teams battle it out for the basketball championship. There are 32 conferences, and every single conference champion automatically qualifies for the tournament.

It doesn't matter whether it's the Big 12 Conference with Kansas, Houston or Arizona, or it's the much-smaller

Colonial Athletic Conference with Hofstra, Elon or Stony Brook, both conferences will send a champion.

The other 36 teams will be made up of the best remaining.

And the best part of the basketball playoff is that there are no byes. Every team has to play the same amount of games, whether they are ranked first or dead last. Another great thing is that nobody plays a home game. Every team plays at a designated site, giving most teams an equal chance.

Let's face it, I don't think the football guys in charge at the NCAA completely thought everything through when they decided to go with such an awkward number like 12 teams.

Twelve doesn't work out for a tournament mathematically.

That's why they have to give four teams a bye in the first round to make it work.

The best thing, and there's already talk about them changing to this in a couple years, is to go with 16 teams.

This way the first round there are eight games, second round there are four games, then two, then one.

Pretty simple.

No byes, no home games, everybody playing the same number of games.

Don't get me wrong, having a 12-team playoff is better than four teams, but 16 teams would be perfect.

Speaking of the 12-team playoff, which team will win it all?

Right now, it looks like the best team in the country might be Oregon.

But the favorites to make the final four might be Oregon, Ohio State, Texas and Notre Dame.

But with teams like Georgia, Penn State and Tennessee in the mix, this tournament is wide open.

And that's what everyone wanted, for plenty of other teams to root for.

I don't know if there'll be any big upsets in this year's tournament, but just giving the little guys a chance is all you can ask for.

Teams like Boise St. and SMU and Indiana would never have a chance under the old system. They just don't sound big enough.

This year should be lots of fun. And if 12 turns out to be awesome, just imagine what 16 will be like.

Publisher's note: Steve Escajeda submitted this column before the NCAA playoff bracket, below, was officially announced.

Dates, games, times and networks for the NCAA College Football Playoff

First round (Dec. 20-21)

- Friday, Dec. 20: No. 10 Indiana on No. 7 Notre Dame at 8 p.m. on ABC/ESPN
- Saturday, Dec. 21: No. 11 SMU on No. 6 Penn State at 12 p.m. on TNT/MAX
- Saturday, Dec. 21: No. 12 Clemson on No. 5 Texas at 4 p.m. on TNT/MAX
- Saturday, Dec. 21: No. 9 Tennessee on No. 8 Ohio State at 8 p.m. on ABC/ESPN

Quarterfinals (Dec. 31-Jan. 1)

- Fiesta Bowl: No. 3 Boise State vs. No. 6 Penn State/No. 11 SMU winner at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 31 on ABC/ESPN
- Peach Bowl: No. 4 Arizona State vs. No. 5 Texas/No. 12 Clemson winner at 1 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 1 on ABC/ESPN
- Rose Bowl: No. 1 Oregon vs. No. 8 Ohio State/No. 9 Tennessee winner at 5 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 1 on ABC/ESPN
- Sugar Bowl: No. 2 Georgia vs. No. 7 Notre Dame/No. 10 Indiana winner at 8:45 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 1 on ABC/ESPN

Semifinals (Jan. 9-10)

- Orange Bowl: 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 9 on ESPN
- Cotton Bowl: 7:30 p.m. Friday, Jan. 10 on ESPN

CFP National Championship

- 7:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 20 on ESPN
- Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, Georgia



Information and artwork courtesy NCAA

Super Crossword

- | | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| <p>"TAKE THAT!"
ACROSS</p> <p>1 Printed news sources</p> <p>7 Rival of Nike</p> <p>13 More potent, as liquor</p> <p>20 Supposed evil repeller</p> <p>21 Stephen King's "Lot"</p> <p>22 Grow bigger</p> <p>23 "The Client List" actress Shepherd</p> <p>24 Result of vandalism</p> <p>26 Match draw</p> <p>27 "Them's fightin' words!"</p> <p>28 Suffix with Canton</p> <p>29 Right fielder</p> <p>Slaughter</p> <p>30 Officials at first or third</p> <p>34 Inner self, to Jung</p> <p>36 Quarterback</p> <p>Manning</p> <p>37 Eight minus two</p> <p>38 Nav. officer</p> <p>40 Sweater with a pattern of raised bands</p> <p>45 Ripens</p> <p>47 Auto exhaust and such</p> <p>52 River craft</p> <p>54 Nav. officer</p> <p>55 Rainbow, e.g.</p> <p>56 Incentive</p> <p>57 Cardiologist</p> <p>62 Return to 000</p> | <p>63 Digital holiday greeting</p> <p>64 Shipping box: Abbr.</p> <p>65 Digital color inits.</p> <p>67 Suffix with host</p> <p>68 Kuwaiti royal</p> <p>71 Peck upon parting</p> <p>75 Italy's Villa d'_</p> <p>76 Prefix with partisan</p> <p>77 Singer Des'_</p> <p>78 English lav</p> <p>79 Have an _ mystery</p> <p>81 Peter out</p> <p>83 Belief that people are noticing you more than they really are</p> <p>90 Total up wrongly</p> <p>92 Source of 24/7 \$20 bills</p> <p>93 Hot tub site</p> <p>94 More subtle, as a point</p> <p>95 Presidential</p> <p>hopeful's bid</p> <p>100 Old Icelandic literary work</p> <p>101 Dais stand</p> <p>102 Suffix with cannon</p> <p>103 "Oh, gross!"</p> <p>105 President pro _</p> <p>106 Fighting it out</p> <p>108 Thor and Indra</p> <p>113 Spanish for "hand"</p> <p>117 Forbid</p> <p>118 "Symposium" philosopher</p> <p>119 Peter out</p> <p>120 Personal</p> <p>psychosocial conflict</p> | <p>123 Subsidies</p> <p>127 Pop flop of 1985</p> <p>128 Catalog again</p> <p>129 Manorial home</p> <p>130 Whole number</p> <p>131 Unlocked</p> <p>132 What the starts of nine answers in this puzzle might be</p> <p>DOWN</p> <p>1 Lobby gp.</p> <p>2 Comedian Poehler</p> <p>3 Saloon</p> <p>4 Upper crust</p> <p>5 Holy artifacts</p> <p>6 Canonized ninth-century pope</p> <p>7 Savory jelly</p> <p>8 _ Vader</p> <p>9 "You beat me this game"</p> <p>10 Removal from office</p> <p>11 Prayer ender</p> <p>12 Russ. or Ukr., formerly</p> <p>13 Prompt for the iPhone's personal assistant</p> <p>14 Nativeness to a certain region only</p> <p>15 In the style of</p> <p>16 Agatha Christie's title</p> <p>17 Tehran locale</p> <p>18 Kellogg's waffle</p> <p>19 "Cheers" actor</p> <p>Roger</p> <p>25 Eight plus two</p> | <p>30 Ocean liner?</p> <p>31 Pond slime</p> <p>32 Tuscan city</p> <p>33 Wood splitter</p> <p>34 Oto or Hopi</p> <p>35 Sponge up</p> <p>39 Give a poker hand, e.g.</p> <p>41 Toy with a tail</p> <p>42 Sounds</p> <p>43 Build a financial portfolio</p> <p>44 Fly of Africa</p> <p>46 More miffed</p> <p>48 Gives ear to</p> <p>49 "Ltd." cousin</p> <p>50 15-season CBS series</p> <p>51 They often work with DJs</p> <p>53 List-limiting abbr.</p> <p>58 "For heaven's _!"</p> <p>59 Snoops</p> <p>60 Keep _ head (stay calm)</p> <p>61 "Have a bite"</p> <p>66 Richard of "Primal Fear"</p> <p>68 Nail coating</p> <p>69 Item hanging above a crib</p> <p>70 "Be there shortly"</p> <p>72 Small racer in a groove</p> <p>73 Grew irate</p> <p>74 Religion in 17-Down</p> <p>75 Escort in "The Hunger Games"</p> <p>77 Brew colored from</p> | <p>oxidation</p> <p>80 Slightly amiss</p> <p>82 Social skill</p> <p>84 Pot's partner</p> <p>85 EarthLink or MSN</p> <p>86 High no. for a valedictorian</p> <p>87 "Is there no _ this?!"</p> <p>88 Handed over</p> <p>89 Trolleys</p> <p>91 All-terrain motorcycle</p> <p>96 How Jesus walked, miraculously</p> <p>97 Aetna alternative</p> <p>98 What a H.S. dropout may earn</p> <p>99 Syringe parts</p> <p>104 Most crooked</p> <p>107 At least one</p> <p>109 Welcomes to one's home</p> <p>110 Of service</p> <p>111 Snooped (around)</p> <p>112 Arrive at</p> <p>113 Skirt style</p> <p>114 Yemen city</p> <p>115 Pond wriggler</p> <p>116 Previously</p> <p>118 Job of some cooks</p> <p>121 Dress fancily, with "out"</p> <p>122 _Magnon</p> <p>124 Maglie of the old Giants</p> <p>125 Adaptable truck, in brief</p> <p>126 Corral</p> |
|---|--|--|---|--|

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19				
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127										128								129				
130										131								132				

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

the scenario suggested as much.

The Kendi-DiAngelo students were also more likely to want to require DEI training for the admissions officer, to suspend the officer for a semester, and to demand a public apology. Why let an absence of facts stand in the way of punitive measures?

Meanwhile, a report in the New York Times Magazine found that the University of Michigan's decade-long, roughly \$250 million experiment in making DEI part of the warp and woof of the school's life has been a failure.

"In a survey released in late 2022," the Times notes, "students and faculty members reported a less positive campus climate than at the program's start and less of a sense of belonging. Students were less likely to interact with people of a different race or religion or with different politics."

Ordinary campus disputes have become five-alarm DEI crises, administrators complain about all the new DEI-created paperwork, and students and faculty are afraid to say anything

that might offend anyone.

It'd be one thing if it were only the University of Michigan that had sunk itself in this mire, but this dynamic has been duplicated throughout corporate America and our education system. There are signs, though, that the wave has crested. Walmart just announced that it will stop using the term "diversity, equity, and inclusion" and end various DEI-related initiatives. Other companies have been pulling back, as well. The trend will presumably only accelerate with a new Trump administration hostile to DEI.

The end of DEI would be a net addition to our collective life. It would avoid, at best, a waste of time and, at worst, a gratuitous source of conflict and mutual suspicion. It would roll back the undue power given to fatuous martinets. It would stop the spread, under the guise of inclusion, of lies about American society.

The old saw is that socialism hasn't failed, it just hasn't been tried. Well, DEI has been tried, and the dismal results are now becoming known.

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

Twisted colon is a surgical emergency

DEAR DR. ROACH: This past weekend, during my son's wedding festivities, I experienced a sigmoid volvulus. Doctors recommended surgery, but I opted for a colonoscopy, which was performed successfully. Thank goodness. I was immediately a new woman, and no one would have dreamed I went through this emergency. The surgeons recommended I have my sigmoid colon removed in order to decrease the risk of recurrence. Ideally, this would happen as soon as possible. What could have prompted the sigmoid volvulus? Is it an absolute that I must have my sigmoid colon removed? What are the odds of it recurring? If I do need the surgery, how can I best prepare for it, and what are the side effects? – M.B.



A volvulus is the twisting of a hollow structure in the body around its long axis (imagine holding one end of a sock in each hand and flipping the middle so it twists on itself). The sigmoid colon is the most common location. It is a surgical emergency, as tissue death and gangrene may follow.

The biggest risk factor for volvulus is chronic constipation, but some people just have anatomy that predisposes them to get a volvulus.

Surgery is the definitive treatment, but colonoscopy or sigmoidoscopy may be used to untwist the colon; medical professionals use the term "reduce." However, your surgeon was right that you are at risk for this happening again. In those people with a history of volvulus, 50% to 60% will get another, and if you have two, the recurrence rate is even higher.

For a person in generally good health, I would recommend definitive surgery to prevent recurrence of volvulus. There are no specific instructions to prepare for surgery, beyond taking good care of yourself and following your surgeon's instructions about your medications (if any).

Any abdominal surgery has the risk of bleeding, infection and adhesions (connections between loops of bowel that can lead to painful obstruction later); however, these risks are quite small.

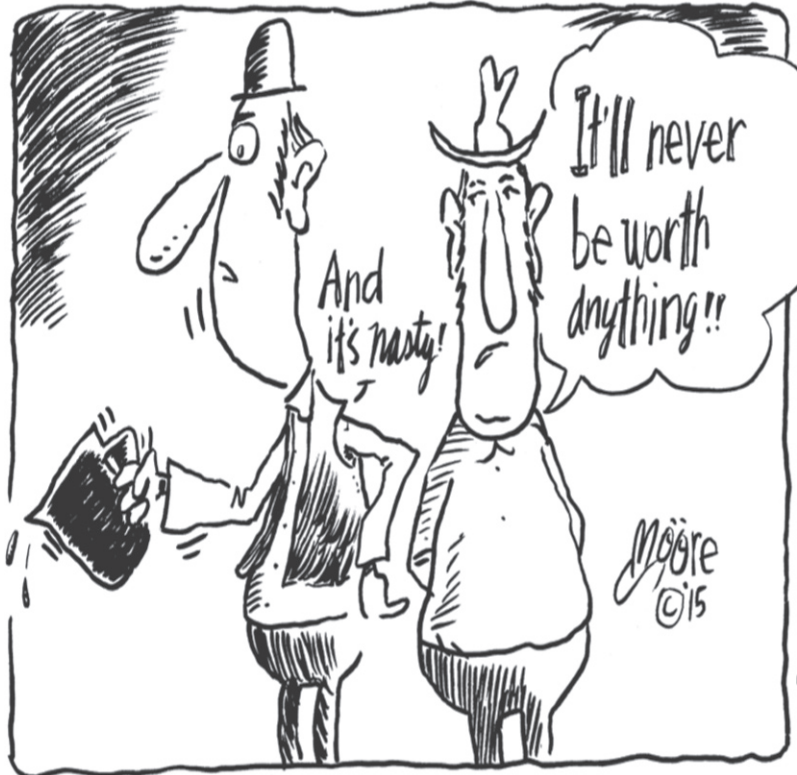
DEAR DR. ROACH: I'm a 71-year-old male who just underwent surgery for tongue cancer. It was diagnosed as an invasive squamous cell carcinoma with strong P16 staining consistent with human HPV. We've never been vaccinated for HPV. Is it advisable for my wife (66 years old) and me to be vaccinated with Gardasil 9? She was tested by her gynecologist and does not have HPV at this time. – R.L.

Human papillomavirus is an increasing cause of cancer in the head and neck, and it is believed that vaccination is likely to prevent most cases of this type of cancer, which mostly occur in men. Although there are clinical trials ongoing now to see whether vaccination may help treat existing HPV-related cancers, it is not routinely recommended for people with HPV-related cancers.

Your wife was wise to get tested for HPV. Given her age, she would not normally be considered a candidate for the vaccine. Odds are she has already been exposed to the virus during your marriage and has successfully resisted the infection. Some people in her situation might consider the vaccine, given its low risk of side effects, despite lack of proven effectiveness in this situation. However, it would be three doses of the vaccine, which would not normally be covered by insurance in the U.S.

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
1902: A barrel of oil was only 3¢ ... may get there again, huh?

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: N equals S

IPJF MW OWT LJBB NWGUSWMO
IPW NFWZN TNRVK JV RBBVUNN-
FXUJFRVK NTSNFJVLU?
J GUMRLRVU MXWZZUX.

Answer Page 4

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Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

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

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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Lead paint in veteran housing



by Freddy Groves

It's one thing to send phony bills to the Department of Veterans Affairs or claim to be a small business – and quite another to put veterans and their families in danger.

An abatement/mitigation company was nailed for saying it had done the work to clear the lead paint in housing units rented to veterans when it had not.

Being in an environment with lead-based paint can be extremely dangerous to everyone, especially to children. Whether it's from the dust or chipped paint, the damage can be permanent.

The homes in question, 42 in all, are set up as affordable units for veterans and their families. The work the company had agreed to do involved using special paint to cover lead-based paint.

This is serious stuff: The company was not certified, their employees were not

certified, and they didn't apply the special paint correctly. Additionally, the company knew in advance that they wouldn't actually do the work properly.

The company, after their guilty plea, could face a fine of \$500,000 plus restitution.

The story gets worse and worse. At that same location, a real estate agent didn't disclose to veterans that there was lead-based paint in the rental housing units.

The arrogance in this case is astounding. The agent claimed that the disclosure laws didn't apply because the property was built after 1978 – while knowing that the properties were built in 1895 and 1905.

The problem with lead-based paints in the units came to a head when a toddler, after eating flaking paint chips, was tested and found to have very high blood lead levels and had to be treated.

In this case, the real estate agent faces up to 15 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

If you live in a home built before 1978 and suspect

you might have lead-based paint, get it tested. Avoid the at-home lead tests you can buy. Instead, have it done with X-ray fluorescence (XRF) or paint chip testing.

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• Need a quick batch of cookies? Keep a box mix of cake on hand. Instead of the listed ingredients, add two eggs and a half-cup of oil to the mix. Mix and shape, then bake at 350 degrees for 10 minutes. They are really good, and you can get pretty creative.

• Inexpensive gift idea: A cute holiday coffee mug with a bar of chocolate, a packet of hot cocoa or instant coffee, a peppermint stick and a holiday pick. Place inside a gallon-size zipper-top bag, tie with a ribbon, then trim off the zipper-top, leaving just the plastic. Looks nice.

• Instead of going out and buying extra items to have on hand for guests, just borrow from your neighbors. Extra towels, place settings, silverware, kitchen appliances: It's a pretty good bet that someone on your street has it for you to borrow. If you don't know your neighbors well enough to ask, maybe you should start planning a get-to-know-you party right now.

• Inexpensive gift idea: On the front of an empty photo album or scrapbook, print out and arrange color photos of your recipient in a collage. Glue the photos to the front of the album and cover with a decoupage glaze, like Mod Podge. Let dry and glaze again. You've just made a one-of-a-kind gift!

• When holiday cookie time comes, I keep a plastic pitcher of hot water in the sink. I toss cookie cutters into it when I am done with them, so the corners are soaking. They really seem to only need a rinse and a quick brush-off afterward. Mine don't get caked up with dough.

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!

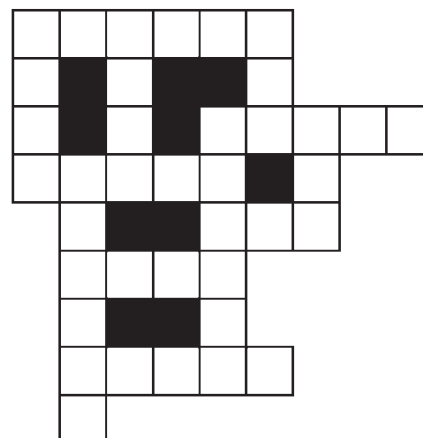
Answer Page 4

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

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- DRO
- WODNAR
- OHIRN
- UDEC
- ♥ HANCRO
- ♥ EWD
- HWSI
- ♥ ORDEW
- OWC
- ♥ HARESC
- ♥ RDADE
- ♥ NWEA



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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