



– Photos by Alfredo Vasquez

**STILL A LONG HAUL** – The Pellicano Drive expansion project, above, in East El Paso County is scheduled to resume after a more than two-year hiatus. The project includes medians, sidewalks, landscaping, safety lighting, concrete pavement, and storm drainage for a six-lane divided roadway. Construction will still take years to complete.

## Pelicano Drive expansion project is back on track

By Alfredo Vasquez  
*Special to the Courier*

EL PASO COUNTY – After more than two years of inactivity on the expansion work to Pelicano Drive, El Paso County officials recently announced that an agreement had been reached with United States Fire Insurance Company, the bond company that was secured by J.A.R. Construction, Inc., the initial project contractor that was unable to complete the job and eventually filed for bankruptcy.

Officials with Camino Real Regional Mobility Authority (CRRMA), which is overseeing the Pelicano roadway expansion project for the county, stated that the work is back on track and the first phase, westbound work from Loop 375 to the Air Coupe Way intersection, should be completed by fall of next year. The entire project is expected to widen the thoroughfare between Loop 375 up to South Darrington Road.

The recent agreement – between CRRMA and J.A.R.’s bond company – designated Hawk Construction, a local contractor, to complete the road project. A new timeline for resuming the work was determined after a walk-through and discussions with the new contractor.

The work on the westbound portion of the road from Loop 375 to Air Coupe Way should take about a year to complete, according to CRRMA officials. That includes construction of a new transition to the existing roadway at Air Coupe Way and two drainage ponds. However, the second phase that includes the eastbound lanes with amenities will still be under construction.

“We have worked with the Hawk Construction company on a number of occasions, and we’re happy with its work. In fact, the company has two projects with us right now,” said Raymond Telles, executive director of the CRRMA.

Hawk Construction Owner Jorge Ojeda said that he has a good working relationship with CRRMA and that his company has extensive experience with highway projects, which will help his team finish the work on Pellicano Drive. He stated that the work will be designed to minimize the impact on drivers who have endured the construction delay for quite a while.

Ojeda noted that he is aware of the long delay and that a lot of eyes will be watching. “We’ll do our best to perform and deliver like we always do,” he added.

Telles said that the first phase of the work that Hawk will complete will cost about \$7 million. The work will be paid with funds from the existing project balance from federal, state and local dollars and from the \$6 million the county agreed to contribute from funds that are raised through vehicle registration fees.

The primary contract for the entire project was set at \$21.6 million, of which J.A.R. was paid about \$10 million for the work it completed, which is estimated to be about 47 percent. Currently, CRRMA officials are trying to determine if there are any additional costs due to the long delay.

Also, the cost estimates for the work in the second phase have not been determined. That work – from Air Coupe Way east to South Darrington Road – includes completing the eastbound and westbound



**DEFINITELY A PAIN** – The work to improve Pellicano Drive, above, began in 2020 and was expected to be finished in two years. Construction began to stall in July 2022 and came to a full stop in 2023, in part, because the contractor filed for bankruptcy.

See PELICANO, Page 5



# Yes, we should test our nukes

Donald Trump has trampled on another taboo, and it's a good thing.

The president said in a Truth Social post that the United States will begin "immediately" testing our "nuclear weapons" on "an equal basis" with Russia and China. It's not clear what this means exactly. Trump could be referring to the delivery systems that carry nuclear weapons or the weapons themselves.

If it is the latter, as most news accounts assume, it will represent an advance for the U.S. nuclear deterrent and a victory of common sense over superstition.

The United States conducted more than a thousand explosive nuclear tests during the Cold War, but gave up the practice in 1992. Since then, it's come to be considered a moral imperative that we don't test, for no good reason.

Obviously, we aren't going to conduct atmospheric tests again at Bikini Island in the Pacific or the Las Vegas Bombing and Gunnery Range. Beginning in the 1960s, though, we carried out explosive tests deep underground, mostly at the Nevada Test Site. Assuming that tests are safely controlled and contained, there is no good argument for not conducting them as warranted.

There is nothing immoral about testing, and testing a bomb doesn't necessarily lead to using it, or we wouldn't have conducted hundreds of tests – including nearly 30 a year during one stretch – and only dropped the atomic bomb twice at the very outset of the nuclear age.

We have an extensive, sophisticated program to continually kick the tires of our nukes through

the Stockpile Stewardship Program. It uses computer simulations and the like to establish that everything is in working order. But there is no substitute for explosive tests to ensure that the computer models aren't missing anything and to make it possible to adjust them with explosive data, especially as our arsenal has changed over the last 30 years.

We should have 100% certainty about the safety, security and reliability of our nuclear arsenal, upon which so much of our national security depends.

The claim that testing will raise international



See LOWRY, Page 7

## Food for thought By Dr. Glenn Mollette

# Thanksgiving – take time to give thanks

We can and should celebrate Thanksgiving every day. Jesus told the story about the man cleansed of leprosy who returned to give thanks. He pointed out there were nine who experienced the same healing of their physical problem, but did not return to give thanks.

The Pilgrims celebrated Thanksgiving. They gave thanks for the rain, their harvest, health and the kindness of the local native Americans. They also gave thanks to God for their new life in America.

We know the difference between a thankful person and someone who complains all the time about anything and everything. It's more fun to be around a grateful person than someone who can find something bad to say about anything and everything that

is good.

There is a painting I love that displays a man with a bowed head, hands clasped and before him what appears to be a bowl of soup. In the painting he is giving thanks.

Our children and grandchildren all have a lot to learn in life and so do all of us adults. Two words that seem to be absent from many vocabularies are "thank you."

We should say "thank you," a lot. Say thank you to God and to all those who do even the smallest things for us and around us. It doesn't hurt to say thank you two or three times.

Where did you learn to say thank you? Did your parents teach you? Did you learn it in school? Did you learn it from hearing someone else say it often? Or, have you yet to learn the importance of those

two special and sacred words. Thank you goes a long way. Saying thank you builds bridges, tears down walls and overcomes a lot of sin, evil and bad feelings. Thank people for being your friends, for their kindnesses, for their service, their faithfulness, their patriotism and all the big and small things from A to Z.

Don't wait until Thanksgiving to say "thank you." Give thanks to God, our public servants, your family, co-workers and more today and as often as possible.

I've already had several days

See MOLLETTE, Page 5



1973  
52  
Years  
2025

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# Chavez receives Raiz grant

By Sofia Maciel  
Special to the Courier

FABENS—Santiago Chavez, an educator with Fabens ISD has received a Raiz Up Professional Development Grant from Raiz Federal Credit Union. He was honored during the Raiz Scholarship and Grant Award Presentation last Saturday at Region 19 Head Start.

Chavez was very happy. He said, “I was awarded \$3,500 from Raiz Federal Credit Union to attend a staff development for teachers, which I will be using at the end of February for a special education inclusion staff development training. I’m excited. I get to go out there, get some training, get some feedback, bring it back, and provide it to my fellow coworkers as well. Thank you, Raiz Federal Credit Union, for always being so supportive.”

Raiz Up Professional Development Grant go up to \$3,500 for K–12 educators to support participation in professional development conferences. This program allows teachers to expand their expertise, learn new instructional strategies, and bring enhanced knowledge back to their classrooms and campuses. Chavez was received the full \$3,500. He will use the grant attend a special education inclusion staff development training in late February.



– Photo by Sofia Maciel

**IT CAME WITH A PLAQUE – Santiago Chavez Has received \$3,500 to get professional development training in February.**

## King Crossword

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11
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47					48	49	50					
51					52					53		
54					55					56		

- Average Solve Time 25 Minutes**

**ACROSS**

1 Ella's style

5 Haydn nickname

9 Oklahoma city

12 "Hell \_ no fury..."

13 Pitcher

14 Goose egg

15 Long-snouted mammals

17 "Mazel \_!"

18 Actress Ryder

19 Puccini work

21 ICU worker

22 Tablecloth material

24 Broadway production

27 Silent
- 28 Pesky insect

31 Poetic dusk

32 Khan title

33 "Hail, Caesar!"

34 Evening, in an ad

36 Rep.'s rival

37 Blue shade

38 "It's nobody \_ business"

40 Yes, to Juan

41 Least desirable

43 Iraqi currency

47 "Entourage" character

48 South Pole region

51 Corp. boss

52 Leeway

53 Bandleader

54 Lith., once

55 Art Deco master
- 56 Leftovers recipe

**DOWN**

1 "Candida" playwright

2 Kid's plea

3 Envelope abbr.

4 Supposition

5 Anti-fur org.

6 Shock partner

7 For each

8 Incendiary crime

9 Feelers

10 Couturier Christian

11 Thomas \_ Edison

16 Raggedy doll

20 Identify

22 Olympic sleds

23 Mosque leader

24 Stock holder

25 Maui souvenir
- 26 Toward the front

27 Constructed

29 Director DuVernay

30 Aviv preceder

35 Golf's Ernie

37 Colors lightly

39 Intent look

40 \_ Lancelot

41 Some WWII vets

42 Unrefined metals

43 Title for Judi Dench

44 Bickering

45 Bar mitzvah, e.g.

46 Garbage barge

49 Neither here \_ there

50 Preschooler

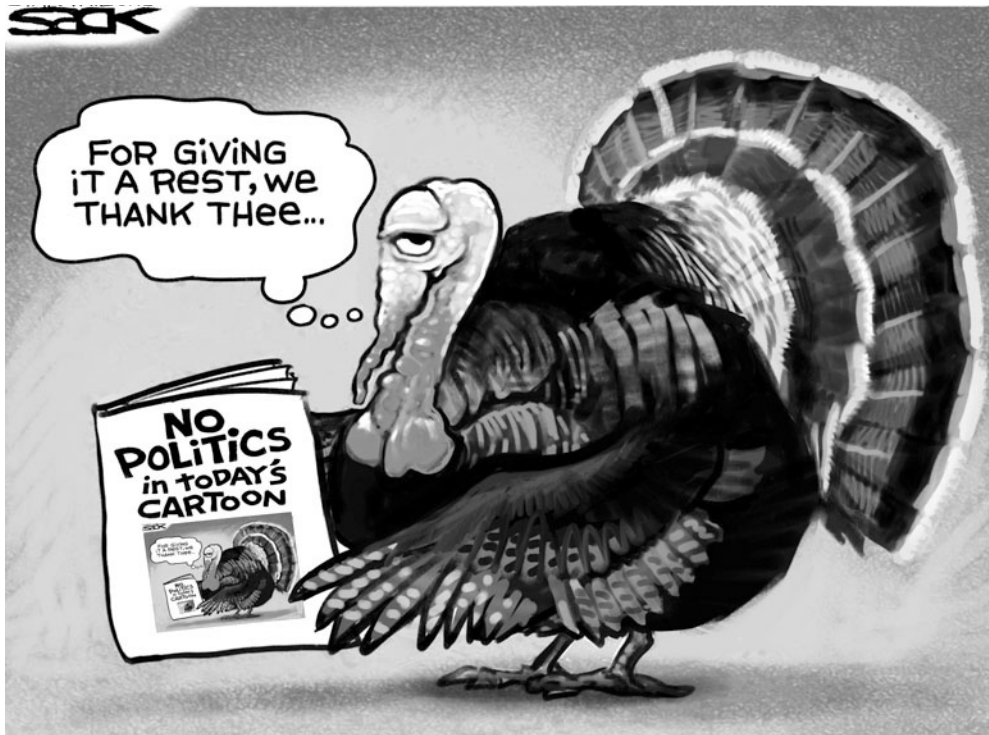
Answer Page 4

### 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 2026 will be January 1.

The *West Texas County Courier* office will close beginning Monday, December 8, 2025. The office will open again on Friday, December 26, 2025.





RaisingDad

The joke man

Living with my father has never been easy.

When it came to communicating, he went by the 90’s motto: Don’t Ask/ Don’t Tell. He didn’t ask me anything, so I didn’t tell him anything. He was of the belief that children (especially his) should be seen, not heard. And, preferably, not even seen. It was enough for him to know we were around.

It was a different time. Let’s leave it at that.

And then my parents grew old, my mother passed away, and my father was diagnosed pre-Alzheimer’s. When my family and I asked him to move in with us, I thought maybe things would be different. They weren’t. His first words when I tried to engage him in conversation were practically, “Don’t bother.”

Not too long ago, I walked into the den and sat down. Not in my favorite chair, because my father claimed it the day he moved into my house, but in the sofa next to it. He was watching baseball on the MLB channel we got him. Sometimes I’ll watch baseball, too. Usually when I’m in the mood for a nap. He didn’t seem interested in conversation, so I pulled out my phone and went to @JackieMartling. It’s the X, formerly Twitter, account of Jackie “The Joke Man” Martling.

That’s where something caught my eye.

“Hey, dad,” I said, “did you hear about the cannibal’s son?”

My father reluctantly turned my way.

“The cannibal’s son?” he repeated, probably wondering if I was nuts.

“Yeah, he got kicked out of school for buttering up the teacher.”

My father let out a chuckle.

“That’s a good one,” he said. “Now let me finish watching the game.” Only he didn’t say that last part. What he said was, “Tell me another one.”

That caught me by surprise, so I quickly looked for another joke I could tell him.

“How is marriage like a hot bath?”

“How?”

“Once you get used to it, it ain’t so hot.”

My father chuckled again. Heck, this time he outright laughed. Since I had his attention, I thought I’d push my luck.

“What does it mean when a tombstone reads: ‘Here lies a lawyer and an honest man?’”

“What?”

“It means they buried two people in the same grave.”

Laughing, my father told me, “You’re a pretty funny guy.”

Now, how did I manage to squeeze such an unexpected compliment out of my father? Is it because I’m a natural-born comedian? Is it because I keep my funnybone where my backbone should be? No, I couldn’t tell a joke to save my ex-wife’s life, even if I wanted to, but I can read and I can listen. Although, if you were to ask that very same ex-wife, she’d tell you otherwise. About my listening, I mean. Toward the end of our marriage, her conversations with me usually began, “You haven’t heard a word I’ve said, have you?”

No, I’m not a joke teller, but Jackie Martling is. Not only that, but he’s a mighty fine actor, too. If you’ve seen him in Elias Plagianos’ award-winning TV show “Shoot Me Nicely,” then you know what I mean. And if you’ve listened to any one of his comedy CDs, then you’ve probably busted a gut laughing. I know I have.

Before I retired, when I was at work pretending to be productive on my computer, I was often at his website instead because I’m a sucker for a good joke. I’m also lazy. I’m so lazy I stick my face out the window and let the wind blow my nose. That’s why I got on his mailing list, where every month he sends out an email stuffed with jokes (although, to tell

the truth, I haven’t gotten one in awhile). It was easy to get on. I just sent him an email at jokeland@aol.com. That’s right, AOL. It’s right there, next to the dodo bird. Best of all, it’s free, and free just happens to be my favorite price-point.

Why are you looking at me that way? What do you want me to do, *pay* for my entertainment? Don’t make me laugh. Jackie’s already got that covered.

Besides being lazy, I’m cheap. I’m so cheap, I go to Kentucky Fried Chicken and lick *other* people’s fingers.

When Jackie came out with his autobiography (“The Joke Man: Bow To Stern”) I couldn’t wait to get my hands on a copy. I don’t usually pre-order books because, like I’ve already told you, I’m cheap, but I did just that, because I saw the book as a good investment in building a relationship with my father.

Just today, I walked into the den (I guess I do a lot of walking into the den), and, as always, my father was watching baseball. Personally, I’m not into baseball. There might be someone with even less interest in baseball than me. If there is, I haven’t met him. I sat down in my usual spot.

“Hey, son,” my father said before I could pull out my phone.

“Yeah, dad?” I answered, thinking he was going to tell me I was being quiet too loudly.

“Why do gorillas have such big nostrils?”

“I don’t know. Why?”

“Because their fingers are HUGE.”

He laughed.

So did I.

“Good one, dad,” I said.

And it was.

*RaisingDad is a a humorous, sometimes biting, look at the issues faced by home caregivers. It is reader-supported. Visit [raisingdad.substack.com](http://raisingdad.substack.com) to receive new or support the posts.*

Mollette

From Page 2

soupandsloppyjoesandwiches and casually hanging out as family. They were precious hours of Thanksgiving. My wife and I spent an hour or so another day with my sister, her husband and son eating some early turkey, dressing mashed potatoes and pumpkin pie. You don’t have to wait until Thursday to have turkey and family fellowship. One evening we

sat with my brother and his son and family just talking around the table while they were having hamburgers. It was a nice time of fellowship. On another day we got to volunteer with others to distribute Thanksgiving food to over 800 people and again we experienced a blessed time of Thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving can be any day, with any meal and a variety people. Whatever the day, meal or occasion, see the blessing of the moment and give thanks.

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MEANT	SNOWCAP	STOWAGE
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JANEALEXANDER	RIDDLES	
ONS	COL	ACETIC
REALBAD	KEITHURBAN	
RICKYMARTIN	NEIN	
ABOO	RALLYING	IRATE
MES	ASAN	ALLYSONFELIX
ARTBRUT	STOLE	MAYBESO
DIALUP	COFNS	MIN
AARONPAUL	ELTONJOHN	
ODE	WATTS	BOOBOO
ESPOUSE	MIREO	HOBBITS
DIRKBENEDICT	CUTS	SCI
SPODE	ALGERIAN	APAL
RIGG	DICKGREGORY	
MELISSALEO	SEERESS	
UPON	ORELSE	YAH
SCROLLS	CONNIEFRANCIS	
TORNADO	ALIENTO	REUNE
STEEPEN	REDDEER	POPE

SCAT	PAPA	ADA
HATH	EWER	NIL
ANTEATER	S	TOV
WINONA		OPERA
	RN	LINEN
PLAY	MUM	GNAT
EEN	AGA	AVE
NITE	DEM	TEAL
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CryptoQuip Answer

A thieving admirer of French artwork walked into a gallery and cried “Give me all your Monet!”

Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

- The home team must provide the referee with 36 footballs for each National Football League game.
- Only three countries in the world are entirely surrounded by one other country.
- Research has shown that individual breathing patterns, including the timing, volume and rhythm of chest movements, can be used to identify people with up to 97% accuracy.
- The world’s rarest hair and eye color combo is red and blue, respectively.
- Scientists trained rats to drive cars (custom-made from plastic cereal containers and small wires), and while the rodents’ original motivation was Froot Loops, they surprisingly appeared to love going for joy rides as well.
- People spend roughly 10% of their waking hours with their eyes closed.

Hydrothermal vents created by fissures on the sea floor in areas of significant tectonic plate activity can pump out fluids at temperatures hot enough to melt lead.

The human brain runs on less power than a 60-watt light bulb.

Bagels were once given to women as gifts after childbirth. Some pregnant women even wore bagels on necklaces as protection, or ensured that bagels would be present in the room where they would deliver.

There is cellphone service at the summit of Mount Everest.

Pixar technical director Galyn Susman, while on maternity leave, was notified that 90% of the movie “Toy Story 2” had accidentally been deleted, and the studio’s on-site backup had failed. Fortunately, she had copies of the film on her laptop, which was wrapped in blankets and carefully carried back to the studio.

In Iceland, there are 13 mischievous “Yule Lads” rather than one Santa, who leave either gifts or rotten potatoes in children’s shoes,

Thought for the Day: “When you’re happy you enjoy the music, but when you’re sad you understand the lyrics.”  
– Frank Ocean

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- On Nov. 24, 1947, the House of Representatives voted 346 to 17 to approve citations of contempt against 10 Hollywood writers, directors and producers who'd refused to cooperate at hearings dealing with communism in the movie industry held by the House Un-American Activities Committee. The men were sentenced to one year in jail.
- On Nov. 25, 2000, after passing a resolution earlier in the year, the United Nations General Assembly recognized the first International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. The resolution marked the anniversary of the death of three sisters – Patria, Minerva and Maria Teresa Mirabal – who were murdered in the Dominican Republic in 1960.
- On Nov. 26, 1968, Air Force 1st Lt. James P. Fleming and four other Bell UH-1F helicopter pilots received an urgent message from an Army Special Forces team pinned down by enemy fire. While the first rescue effort failed, Fleming, accompanied by a second pilot, managed to land and pick up the team before discovering upon return to his base that he was nearly out of fuel. He was eventually awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions.
- On Nov. 27, 2015, Pope Francis released a progressive-rock album titled "Pope Francis: Wake Up!" featuring excerpts of the pontiff sermonizing on subjects including peace, the environment and family, and hymns rearranged with guitar and synthesizer.
- On Nov. 28, 1929, a month after the stock market crash, Ernie Nevers, of the Chicago Cardinals, scored a record 40 points in a single game, playing against the Chicago Bears.
- On Nov. 29, 2004, Japanese movie monster Godzilla, a mutant born of nuclear radiation fallout, got a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame -- quite a present on his 50th birthday.
- On Nov. 30, 1965, attorney Ralph Nader published "Unsafe at Any Speed: The Designed-in Dangers of the American Automobile." An immediate best-seller, it also launched the passage of the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966, seatbelt laws in 49 states and other road-safety initiatives.

# EPCC, HOME partner to deliver Thanksgiving turkeys

By Beau Bagley  
Special to the Courier

EL PASO COUNTY – For the second straight year, El Paso Community College (EPCC) Culinary Arts Program collaborated with the Housing Opportunity Management Enterprises (HOME) to deliver turkey dinners to HOME elderly residents throughout this week.

EPCC Culinary Arts students prepared 22 turkeys this week for a Thanksgiving Social Event for HOME residents of the Hervey Apartments on Tuesday, November 18; residents of the Henderson Heights community on Wednesday, November 19; and Thursday, November 20, residents of Muñoz and Tays North communities in Northeast El Paso.

“It’s really rewarding feeling. Knowing the food is going to go to people who really need it and fully appreciate it for what it is, it’s great to give back,” EPCC Culinary Arts student Rafael Rodriguez said.

EPCC’s Culinary Arts program gives back to the community through hands-on projects like preparing and serving meals for the elderly and supporting local food drives. The program also partners with other organizations for community outreach and educates local students on career opportunities. Green partnerships include Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, New Mexico State University, Local School Districts, and Tech H20. Additionally, the program holds fundraisers, like the Dueling Chefs events and Fajitas & Margaritas for Scholarships, to support scholarships EPCC Culinary Arts students.

Gloria Vidal, HOME Service Coordinator, was elated at partnering up with EPCC Culinary Arts once again, and has turned this holiday dinner event into parties at their communities.

“More than a collaboration, it’s something meaningful to the residents,” Vidal said. “Most residents are seniors and do not have any family. This might be the only time of the holiday to sit down, share laughs, and have a wonderful meal. This is a day they wait all year for and



– Photo courtesy El Paso Community College

**COMMUNITY MINDED – HOME Service Coordinator Gloria Vidal, left, EPCC Chef Jesus Lugo, and HOME Service Coordinator Grace Quijas combined to supervise food preparation and distribution to local residents.**

really enjoy.”

“It’s a blessing, it brings unity, and the need is high right now with families. We have several communities with families and children, so we decorate, have music, it’s a lot of fun, and we appreciate EPCC so much,” HOME Resident Service Coordinator Grace Quijas added.

“We always try to do as much as we can to help in the community,” EPCC Culinary Arts Program Coordinator Chef Jesus Lugo said. “When we know there is an organization that needs our assistance, it makes it even better, knowing that not only do we have the capacity, but also the ability to inspire our students when we help in the community.”

HOME was created in 1938, and their mission is to improve the quality of life for economically challenged families by providing quality, affordable, subsidized, transitional housing, and opportunities to achieve self-sufficiency.

Visit [www.epcc.edu/Academics/CulinaryArts](http://www.epcc.edu/Academics/CulinaryArts) for more on the EPCC Culinary Arts Program.



**A STEADY HAND – EPCC culinary student Rafael Rodriguez carves a freshly baked turkey.**

## Pelicano

From Page 1

segments of Pellicano Drive.

El Paso County Commissioner Illiana Holguin, whose precinct includes the Pellicano Drive area, stated that she expects timely updates on the project. “Now that all of the agreements have been signed, we expect to receive a timeline for construction, and we will share that information with residents as soon as we have it,” she said.

The county originally signed the contract with the CRRMA in 2017 for the multi-million-dollar Pellicano Drive project, which consisted of reconstruction and improvements. Subsequently, J.A.R. was hired by CRRMA to do the work, but the J.A.R. contractor ran into complications, including bankruptcy proceedings and appeals that led to the frustrating delays.

Once completed, the 3.1-mile stretch of Pellicano Drive from Loop 375 to Darrington Road will have a six-lane



– Photo by Alfredo Vasquez

**LIGHT TRAFFIC – Vehicles on Pellicano Drive moving west toward Loop 375, above, are usually bumper to bumper. The eastbound lane is also normally jammed up weekdays from early morning to late evening.**

divided roadway with medians, concrete pavement, curb and gutter, sidewalks, landscaping, safety lighting, storm drainage, signage, and lane striping.

Meanwhile, local area commuters, including a whole slew of 18-wheelers, will continue to maneuver along a two-mile stretch of Pellicano Drive from Loop 375 to Air Coupe Way in single lanes going both east and west.







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

tensions doesn’t make much sense. What is Russia going to do if we conduct a nuclear test? Invade Ukraine? Certainly, Pakistan and North Korea haven’t been dissuaded from getting nukes. “Please, you should like us – and forswear your own nuclear weapons – because we don’t do tests” isn’t a compelling argument for any of our adversaries overseas. Otherwise, we wouldn’t have had to bomb Fordow and Natanz.

China and Russia may already be conducting their own nuclear tests. In recent years, reports from both the State and Defense departments have said that Russia has violated the so-called zero-yield standard that it is supposed to be honoring by conducting supercritical nuclear tests. (Since Russia routinely cheats on all its commitments, this is not a surprise.)

More to the point, both Russia and China have been developing new warheads and delivery vehicles. In other words, they acquired new weapons while we were testing, and have been acquiring new weapons while

we haven’t been testing. The consistent thread is developing systems to project their power and threaten us. These are cold-eyed countries that will do whatever they consider in their interest, regardless of how much we might like to think our moral example is affecting them.

Now, there’s no doubt that getting our capacity to conduct an explosive test back up and running will take time, even if Trump and his team remain committed. The president might finish the new White House ballroom before any renewed testing, and Nevada, no doubt, won’t be thrilled by once again hosting underground nuclear explosions.

Yet, Trump is acknowledging an important reality. We have nuclear weapons and they are a central part of our defense and, by extension, that of many of our allies. To not test them – prudently and safely – is an asinine leftover from the immediate aftermath of the Cold War that doesn’t serve our interests or make the world safer.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review. ©2025 by King Features Synd., Inc.

PCSK9i drugs work, but the cost is high

DEAR DR. ROACH: In a recent column, you wrote about reducing cholesterol levels with the help of statins along with a PCSK9i, such as Repatha or Praluent. My question is: Are these PCSK9is at all beneficial if one cannot take statins? – D.C.S.



Yes, PCSK9 inhibitors are very effective at lowering cholesterol and reducing the risk of heart attacks in high-risk people. Because these drugs are given by injection and are quite expensive, they are not usually the first-line treatments. We have decades of experience using statins, so they remain the first choice for most.

However, if a person cannot take a statin, or one of the alternatives such as bempedoic acid, then PCSK9i drugs are a very reasonable choice. In people with familial high cholesterol and extraordinarily high levels of cholesterol, combination therapy with two or three drugs (a statin, a PCSK9i and sometimes ezetimibe) is frequently used.

DEAR DR. ROACH: My wife had COVID and has lost most of her smell and taste. This has lasted for two years. She is in her late 70s. Strong flavors like barbecue sauce and onions can be detected. Is there any hope that her condition will improve? – P.M.

Most people recover their loss of smell after COVID. Having had this for two years is a bad sign; however, the fact that she does have some sense of smell is a good sign.

The most effective treatment for the loss of smell after a viral infection is olfactory training. The same scents that were used in clinical trials can be purchased online. Recent evidence has shown that a supplement combination, ultramicronized palmitoylethanolamide and luteolin, along with olfactory training, led to greater improvement. The dose used in studies was 770 mg.

DEAR DR. ROACH: My adult daughter (62) was diagnosed about three years ago with a skin disorder called prurigo nodularis. Her dermatologist has tried three different injections, but they’re not working. She still gets very itchy breakouts. Please give me your thoughts and more information about this. – K.M.A.

Prurigo nodularis is an uncommon disease that affects about one person per 1,000. I have seen a handful of cases, and fortunately the cases I’ve seen have responded well to potent steroid creams.

Regular use of skin lotions, avoiding scratching especially at night (I recommend cotton gloves), and sometimes antihistamines like Benadryl are also the first-line therapies.

If a patient needs more effective treatment and only has a limited area of itching, then a dermatologist will often inject the area with a high-potency steroid. Since it sounds like this hasn’t been successful for your daughter, there are other options.

One is a topical cream called ruxolitinib. About 45% of people responded to this treatment, compared to 20% who responded to a cream without an active drug. Ultraviolet light (narrowband ultraviolet B) showed about 80% effectiveness.

For people in whom none of these therapies work, a very expensive injection treatment, dupilumab (Dupixent) or a similar drug called nemolizumab (Nemluvio), can be used, although the response rate is not as good as desired (roughly 40%).

Since many people with prurigo nodularis have other skin diseases, and some may have (or develop) depression or obsessive skin-picking, these conditions may also need to be treated to successfully improve symptoms.

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). ©2025 North America Synd., Inc. All Rights Reserved.





**Moore Texas** by Roger Moore  
Texas’ first Thanksgiving feast was likely hosted by Spaniard Juan Onate near present day El Paso in 1598.

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: L equals T

H LERSQRCF HJYRMSM PI  
IMSCXE HMLVPMO VHDOSJ  
RCLP H FHDDSMW HCJ XMRSJ  
“FRQS YS HDD WPNM YPCSL!”

Answer Page 4

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Don’t believe every rumor



by Freddy Groves

The numbers are small – only 100 or so veterans come down with it every year – but this cancer is especially deadly: male breast cancer. Beginning in 2024 it was added as a presumptive on the VA’s list of illnesses that were automatically covered, courtesy of the PACT Act, due to toxin exposure.

And now it’s been yanked off that list, per a couple of internet websites and street rumors that are flying fast and furious.

Word is that any veteran with a diagnosis of male breast cancer is going to have to scramble and fight to get the VA to accept that it was caused by exposure to toxins and provide treatment.

Except... is it really true, that it’s been deleted from the list?

Apparently not.

People were asleep at the switch when male breast cancer was classified as a

“reproductive” cancer when it was first added to the PACT list of presumptives. That kind of error left the door open to deleting it from the list of presumptives – just when it’s needed most. Historically, only 1% of breast cancers have been in male patients, but in recent years that number has doubled.

So no, it’s not true. Male breast cancer is still on the list of presumptives. Only the category of the illness has changed, moving it away from considering it a “reproductive organ,” which it is not.

And yes, I have a special interest in this topic. Several years ago a close relative died of male breast cancer. He’d been a Marine, a forward radio operator, in Vietnam where he was sprayed too many times with Agent Orange. When he came back he was stationed at Camp Lejeune with its contaminated water. A double whammy if there ever was one.

If you need to apply for VA health coverage, go online to [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) and click on

“Health Care.” Look for VA Form 10-10EZ. If you need help getting started, call the health benefits hotline at 877-222-8387.

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• When hammering a nail, try this save-your-finger trick: Use a clothespin to hold the nail steady, and then use your hammer to drive it in. Hammering into the wall? Push the nail through a strip of cardboard, and hold the cardboard over the right spot. No more banged up fingers or thumbs!

• “Exfoliation can be easy if you already have a bag or jar of Epsom salts. Soak in a warm bath and rub the salts over your skin to gently scrub dead skin away. A little essential oil might help, too!” – D.D. in FL

• Got plastic packaging that is a pain to get open? Use your can opener, run along the sides, to break into your packages. It works!

• To get keys on a keychain easily, use a staple remover to create an opening to slip the keys on. It is very effective and will keep you from being frustrated.

• A great use for those old knee high stockings (no runs!): Stuff with a mix of crystalized kitty litter and scent boosting beads you find in the laundry aisle. You can stuff these in stinky shoes to freshen and deodorize. The litter wicks away moisture from sweaty feet, and the scent boosters last for a good long while.

• “Need a new look for a favorite sweater? Change out your buttons. It’s such a small thing and a big change in look!” – E.L. in MA

• Skunk run-in? Try this mix before you buy pricey de-stink shampoos at the pet store. Mix a quart of 3% peroxide, a teaspoon or two of dish soap, 1/4 cup of baking soda and quart of room-temp water. Apply to pet, and work deep into the fur. Massage in for five minutes and rinse thoroughly.

Send your tips to *Now Here's a Tip*, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803. ©2025 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.

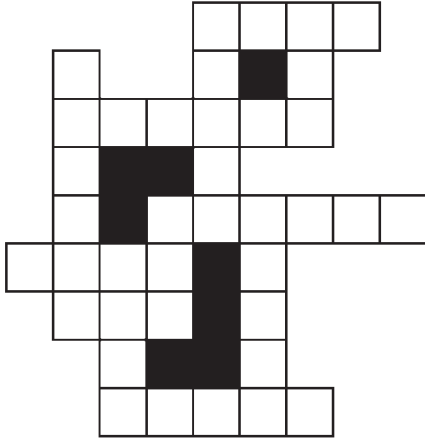
Answer Page 4

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	-		÷		= 1			
+		+		-				
	+		÷		= 11			
÷		÷		×				
	+		-		= 3			
=		=		=				
3		3		6				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9



LEL  
OUTPOR  
CWASH  
♥ACLO  
♥GONSIL  
♥OWT  
WRGE  
♥NECOA  
♥WLA  
AMPLIR  
OMGBU  
GLOO



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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Weekly SUDOKU

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

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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