



VOL. 53, No. 5

SERVING ANTHONY, VINTON, CANUTILLO, EAST MONTANA, HORIZON, SOCORRO, CLINT, FABENS, SAN ELIZARIO AND TORNILLO

FEBRUARY 5, 2026



– Photo courtesy Fabens ISD

GANG'S ALL HERE – 2026 Gatos Salvajes Group, with Director Natalie Carrasco (right), gathered for a picture after performing their way into the UIL State Mariachi Festival.

Fabens HS mariachi group earns trip to State UIL

By Sofia Maciel
Special to the Courier

FABENS – Mariachi los Gatos Salvajes earned a Division I rating for the fourth consecutive year at the West Texas Mariachi Festival. The event took

place January 31, 2026 at Eastwood High School. Their performance qualified the Fabens High School ensemble for the UIL State Mariachi Festival. They will travel to Seguin, TX, from February 18-20, 2026, to compete at the state level.

The program, directed by Natalie Carrasco, was established just four years ago and has advanced to

the state competition every year since its inception, marking a remarkable and consistent level of excellence for the young ensemble.

Senior violinist and Mariachi President Antoinette "Anti" Ogaz reflected on the moment and the

See MARIACHI, Page 5



GETTING BUSY – The recent groundbreaking by Village of Vinton officials marked the start of construction on the Valley Chile Road infrastructure project. Community members, government officials, and media representatives joined Village officials for the event.



– Photos courtesy of the Village of Vinton
WELCOME – Village of Vinton Mayor Rachel Quintana greeted groundbreaking ceremony attendees.

Village of Vinton breaks ground on water and sewer projects

By Alfredo Vasquez
Special to the Courier

VINTON – Village of Vinton officials

recently held a groundbreaking ceremony to herald the beginning of the Valley Chile Road reconstruction work and the water and sewer phase 3 project. Joining Village of Vinton officials in the groundbreaking celebration were representatives from Camino Real Regional Mobility Authority (CRRMA), Jordan Foster Construction Co., as well as Congresswoman Veronica Escobar and El Paso County Commissioner Sergio Coronado. The \$12.5 million investment,

See VINTON, Page 5

While good fences make good neighbors, fences don't keep loud sounds inside your property lines or out of other people's homes. – Quips & Quotes

Trump may need a portrait of James Polk

Donald Trump has a painting of Andrew Jackson in the Oval Office, but as he tries to browbeat Denmark into coughing up Greenland, maybe he should add a portrait of a Jackson acolyte – James K. Polk.

If cold-eyed American expansionism is the theme, there are few better representatives than the 11th president.

He added more than 1 million square miles to U.S. territory and extended the country all the way to the Pacific, making him the most successful president not celebrated as part of the American pantheon.

Trump's impulse to throw his weight around and assume control of sparsely populated, strategically desirable territory recalls Polk.

A thoroughgoing Jacksonian populist, he unexpectedly won the Democratic nomination for

president in 1844 (much of what I relate here, by the way, is drawn from my book, "The Case for Nationalism"). He ran on a platform urging what Democrats called the "re-annexation" of Texas and the "re-occupation" of Oregon.

Texas was a flash point. Anglos settled there when it was a province of Mexico, rebelled against the dictatorship of Santa Anna, and won independence. Texans wanted to be part of the U.S., but a Mexican threat to fight over annexation helped stay our hand. When we eventually moved, Mexico was furious. It also insisted that its border with Texas was at the Nueces River, two hundred miles north of the Rio Grande.

When Polk sent troops into the area between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande, Mexican cavalry

ambushed a party of U.S. dragoons.

We ended up

occupying Mexico

City and forcing

a deal. Mexico conceded to the United States a border at the Rio Grande, running all the way to the Pacific, giving us California, inclusive of San Diego, in exchange for the assumption of Mexico's debts and the price of \$15 million.

There's no doubt that Polk had been spoiling for a fight. The view of the war as simple U.S. plunder is much too simplistic, though. We were within our rights to deal with an independent Texas, which had



See LOWRY, Page 7

View from here By Ovidia Molina, President, Texas State Teachers Association

Tax dollars spent on religious and other private schools is poor public policy

Texas parents who want to send their children to private schools at every taxpayer's expense can start applying for vouchers this week. TSTA is marking the occasion with a commitment to continue working to kill this expensive and discriminatory program.

Gov. Greg Abbott's and his billionaire supporters' success in forcing the creation of the voucher program last year does not change the fact that spending tax dollars on religious and other private schools is poor public policy, especially for a state like Texas that grossly underfunds public schools, where most Texas students are and will continue to be educated.

According to the National Education Association's annual survey of state education spending, the average public school teacher salary in Texas trailed the

national average by more than \$10,000 in the 2024-25 school year. The average per-student expenditure in average daily attendance (ADA) was more than \$5,500 less than the national average. Only three states – Utah, Oklahoma and Idaho – spent less per student. The new funding the Legislature set aside last year for public education, including teacher pay raises, wasn't enough to close these gaps.

Meanwhile, the \$1 billion lawmakers spent on the first year of the voucher program will increase to about \$4 billion a year by 2030, the Legislative Budget Board has predicted – and who knows how much after that. If Texas follows the example of many other voucher states, spending on private schools will soon increase at a higher rate than per-student spending

on public education.

Any family can apply for vouchers that will be \$10,000-plus for most students, including pre-K kids, as much as \$30,000 for special education children and \$2,000 for home-schooled students. But many low-income families, even with vouchers, will be unable to afford private school tuition and related costs for their children. Most

private schools don't accept special education students.

Most of the religious schools that the state has approved for the program are Christian, many of which restrict admission or give preference to children of their own faith. Some of these schools refuse admission to LGBTQ students. These schools will use public tax dollars to discriminate against children

whose families pay these tax dollars. Public schools do not discriminate. They accept every student who lives in their district, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender identity, religion, family income or whatever, and only public schools should receive our tax revenue. As the annual survey of state education spending shows us, they need more of it.



– Photo courtesy: El Paso Community College

ARTISTIC EXPRESSION – Max Valenzuela, center, stands with students and volunteers that participated in painting the mural behind them. They are from left Dela Castaneda, Christina Delgado, sister Angelina Delgado, their nephew Elijah Delgado and Erin Eslinge.

EPCC students paint mural at Mission del Paso

By Beau Bagley
Special to the Courier

EL PASO COUNTY – El Paso Community College (EPCC) Mission del Paso campus held a mural dedication on Wednesday, January 28, 2026, in Building R Flexitorium on the Eastside campus.

Designed by EPCC Art Professor Max Valenzuela, the mural titled "Who We Were, Who We Became" references the many first-year students at the Mission del Paso Campus, along with many of which are first-generation college students who come from families of migrant workers. After the project

began under local artist Cesar Inostroza in 2021, the 42-foot-long mural was completed by art faculty and students last year. The mural depicts students at the start of their educational journey to a symbolic graduation. EPCC Art Instructor Max Valenzuela called the art piece a 'growth process, coming in to EPCC as one person and ending up as another person, fulfilled in many ways.'

"Art for me is a very important aspect of everyday life," Valenzuela said. "Art is much more than a 3-d element, sculpture, painting, a mural, but it's what is behind the work of art. It's about what does the element offer us, starting

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WEST TEXAS COUNTY COURIER

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2026

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Rodriguez is Texas VFW Middle School Teacher of the Year

By Christy Flores-Jones
Special to the Courier

EL PASO COUNTY – William D. Slider Middle School teacher Jennifer Rodriguez has been honored as the Texas VFW Middle School Teacher of the Year for her exceptional dedication to promoting citizenship, patriotism and student leadership.

Rodriguez was presented with the award during the Texas Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Mid-Winter conference on Jan. 17 in Corpus Christi. As the state winner, Rodriguez will now advance to the National VFW Teacher of the Year selection process. The Texas VFW Teacher of the Year award honors outstanding educators in grades K-5, 6-8, and 9-12.

"Every year, I make sure I incorporate something for my students in my classroom that makes my country proud because, like I said, I have pride," Rodriguez said during her remarks at the conference.

Slider Middle School celebrated her achievement in a January faculty meeting.

An educator for 23 years, Rodriguez, a reading and language arts teacher, has taught at Slider for 10 years. She was nominated for the honor by VFW District 10 Post 2451 and selected from over 200 middle school applicants across Texas.

During the school's celebration, District 10



– Photo by Acavius Largo/SISD

Jennifer Rodriguez

Commander Michelle Crittendon recognized Rodriguez's accomplishments by presenting her with a challenge coin. Crittendon emphasized the importance of acknowledging educators like Rodriguez for their dedication to preparing students for the future.

"And they do it from the heart," Crittendon said. "And I say people who volunteer or teach or just do things from the heart are the most valuable people or assets that we have today."

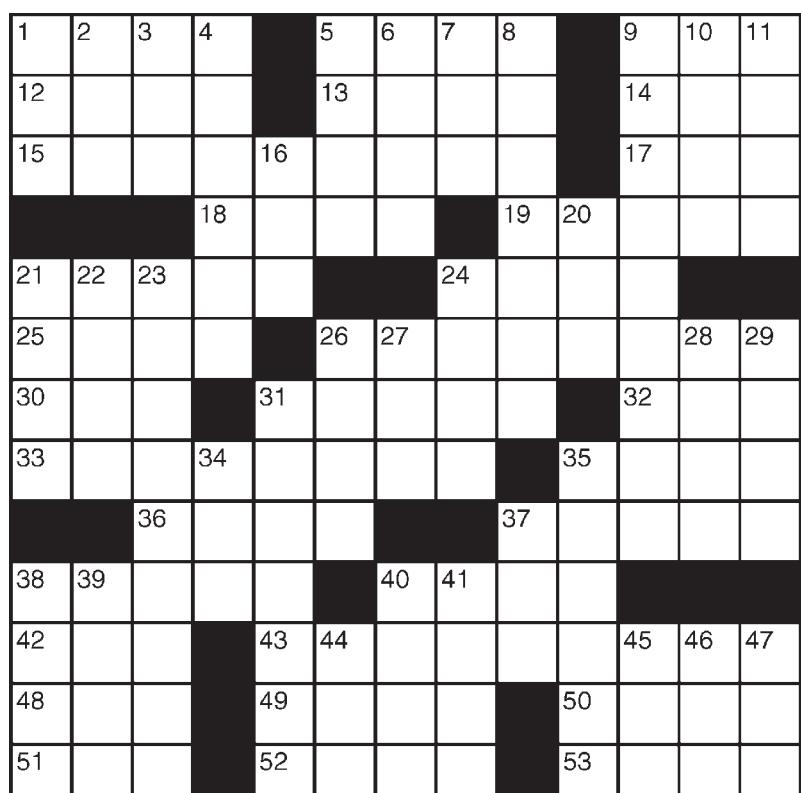
To promote patriotism in her classroom, Rodriguez has students read stories about Veterans Day and Memorial Day. She also organizes events celebrating veterans and encourages her students to participate in writing contests to express their love for their country.

Although Rodriguez had always been a proud American, it wasn't until her daughter, Hazel Acosta, was accepted into the U.S. Air Force Academy Prep School last year that her connection to the military deepened.

In May 2025, Rodriguez organized the district's first military signing ceremony at Pebble Hills High School to honor seniors who enlisted in the military or planned to attend military schools.

"I've never been part of this world," Rodriguez said. "I didn't realize how big these academies were. But either way, academy or not, it's military. These soldiers are taking an oath for you and I to go defend something that some of us take advantage of – freedom."

King Crossword



Average
Solve Time
23 Minutes

ACROSS

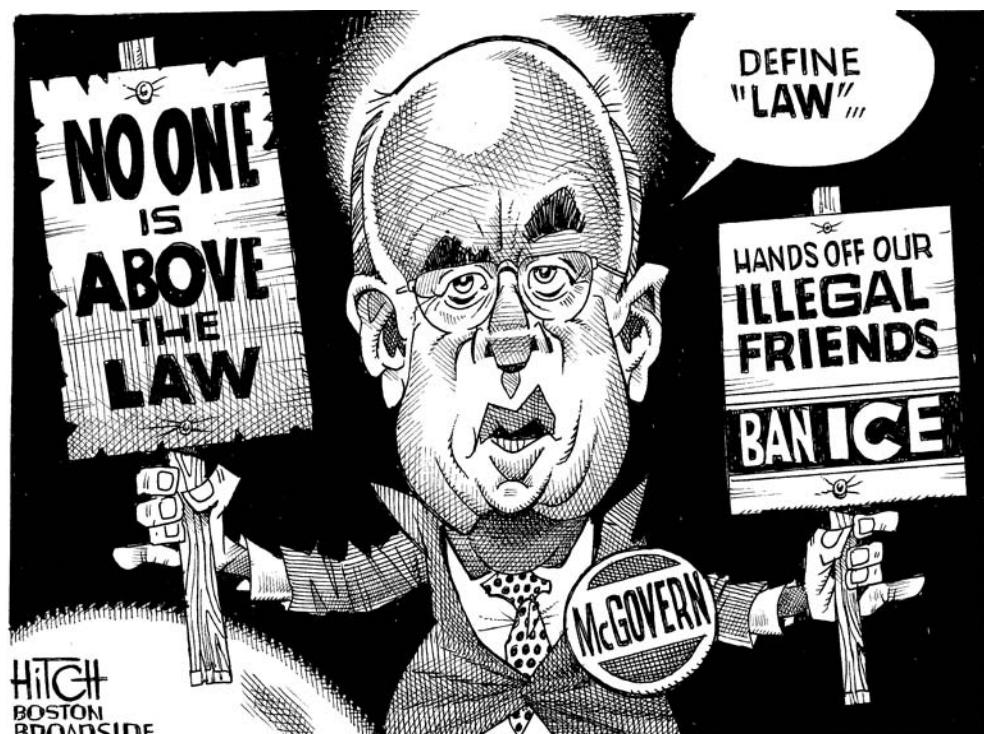
- 1 Melville captain
- 5 Bottle part
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- 12 Petty of "Tank Girl"
- 13 Jai _
- 14 Navarro on "The View"
- 15 Tangy fruit pie
- 17 White wine cocktail
- 18 Night light?
- 19 Comic Chase
- 21 Prove untrue
- 24 Converse
- 25 With (Fr.)
- 26 40 Stated
- 27 Jargon suffix
- 28 Small digit
- 29 "Caught ya!"
- 30 Rule, for short
- 31 Ohio's "Rubber Capital"
- 32 Crone
- 33 Genius
- 34 Speck
- 35 Fireplace fuel
- 36 Golf great Sam
- 37 "Untrue!"
- 38 "Flair"
- 39 "Lot vehicle"
- 40 "Chef's workplace"
- 41 "Sierra Nevada resort"
- 42 "Post-WWII alliance"
- 43 "Grier of 'The L Word'"
- 44 "Really pesters"
- 45 "Male deer"
- 46 "Job-safety org."
- 47 "Male deer"
- 48 "Prof's employer"
- 49 "Actor Sinise"
- 50 "Journalist Tarbell"
- 51 "Born abroad?"
- 52 "Biting remark"
- 53 "Always"
- 54 "Defendant's"

30 Rule, for short
31 Ohio's "Rubber Capital"
32 Crone
33 Genius
34 Speck
35 Fireplace fuel
36 Golf great Sam
37 "Untrue!"

DOWN

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- 17 Tide type
- 18 Job-safety org.
- 19 Male deer
- 20 \$ dispensers
- 21 Journalist Tarbell
- 22 Pair
- 23 Feedbag bit
- 24 USN rank

Answer Page 4





– Photos courtesy Fabens ISD

BELT IT OUT – Sophomore Jada Reyes, above, sings with the group. She also plays violin. At right President Antoinette 'Anti' Ogaz, a senior, holds the Division I trophy.

Mariachi

From Page 1

journey of the group. "It feels great. All I have to say is, lock in, and I wish good luck to the future mariachi generations that are coming up. I'm very proud of this group and all the journeys we've been through, including the hard times. They work so hard to get here, and this is the strongest group I've been with. I'm glad I get to end my final year with them."

Senior trumpet soloist Jesse Ortiz shared his personal growth and gratitude following the performance. "I am really happy and proud of everyone who has helped me throughout this entire journey. I honestly shocked myself because every time I had a solo before, I was

always worried and nervous. Today, I just let it all loose. I didn't feel scared – I felt peace. I'm proud of every single person in this group because I've seen everyone put in their own effort to make this ensemble strong. This is our best and strongest year, and I'm grateful I get to finish my final year with this group. I also want to thank God through it all. He gave us the talents and strength to play our instruments, and all the glory goes to Him."

Mariachi Director Natalie Carrasco emphasized her students' spirit and growth throughout a demanding year. "This year has been one of the most challenging years, but it's also the year where the ensemble has grown the most. The students are ready

for another challenge, they're excited, and we're going to roll with it and see where it goes. Seeing my students grow is very emotional for me. Some of them have been with me all four years, and it's incredible to see how they've grown not only as musicians, but as young adults and as people."

Fabens ISD Superintendent Dr. Rogelio Segovia praised the program's continued success. "Mariachi Los Gatos Salvajes' fourth trip to the state competition is a powerful reflection of excellence, dedication, and corazón. Alongside the Fabens ISD School Board, I am incredibly proud. Director Natalie Carrasco and our talented students continue to raise the bar and make us all proud."



Fabens High School Principal Roxana Amador also celebrated the achievement.

"Watching our Mariachi Gatos Salvajes students qualify for state is nothing short of extraordinary. Their talent,

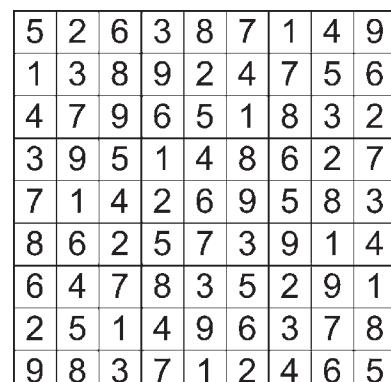
discipline, and passion for this art form shine through every performance. I am incredibly proud of their hard work and honored to lead a campus that celebrates culture, excellence, and heart. ¡Vamos a state!"

Moments in time

THE HISTORY CHANNEL

- On Feb. 2, 1925, musher Gunnar Kaasen and his 13 dogs successfully delivered an antitoxin serum to Nome, Alaska, which was dealing with a widespread diphtheria outbreak, in a relay spanning 674 miles in five and a half days and in temperatures as low as 85 degrees below zero.
- On Feb. 3, 1780, Barnett Davenport murdered Caleb Mallory, in whose house he was a boarder, along with Mallory's wife, daughter-in-law and two grandchildren, in their home. One of post-Revolution America's most famous crimes, it contributed to a change in the way the country viewed lawbreakers.
- On Feb. 4, 1703, 47 samurai were forced to display the ultimate act of loyalty to the regional Japanese lord they had followed by committing seppuku – ritually disemboweling themselves – for the crime of killing the official who had ordered the forced suicide of said lord.
- On Feb. 5, 2003, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell gave a speech to the United Nations outlining America's case that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction and
- making an argument for the invasion that would take place the following month. Unfortunately, some of his talking points were either incorrect or misleading, and Powell later described the speech as a blot on his record.
- On Feb. 6, 1998, a judge reinstated schoolteacher Mary Kay Letourneau's suspended sentence and returned her to prison for seven years after she was caught violating a no-contact order with her former student, Vili Fualau, when she was found in a parked car with the boy.
- On Feb. 7, 1984, Navy captain Bruce McCandless II became the first human to perform an untethered spacewalk while in orbit 170 miles above the earth, maneuvering freely with a jet pack of his own design after exiting the Challenger space shuttle.
- On Feb. 8, 1994, actor Jack Nicholson approached Robert Blanks car while they were stopped at a red light in North Hollywood, accused Blank of cutting him off in traffic, and then bashed Blank's roof and windshield with a golf club. Charges were dropped after Nicholson apologized and the two reached an undisclosed settlement that included a reported \$500,000 check from Nicholson.

Archives: www.wtxcc.com



Vinton

From Page 1

developed in partnership with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), El Paso County, and CRRMA, will completely revamp Valley Chile Road, located in west side of the Upper Valley community, and will install critical water and sewer infrastructure, according to town officials.

With monies provided by the Federal Highway Administration and HUD Congressional Community Project Funding, the improvements will expand utility access, improve system reliability, enhance public safety, and spur economic development in Vinton's commercial area, Village of Vinton officials asserted.

"This groundbreaking marks a major investment in Vinton's commercial corridor," said Mayor Rachel Quintana, who was recently

re-elected for a second four-year term. "By rebuilding Valley Chile Road and upgrading our water and sewer systems, we are creating safer, more reliable infrastructure that supports local businesses, attracts new investment, and strengthens our community's economic future. Partnerships like this show what we can accomplish when we work together for Vinton," the mayor stated.

The Village of Vinton mayor acknowledged that the new projects were made possible with the El Paso County commissioners court for grant match assistance, from Congresswoman Veronica Escobar for water and sewer funding, and CRRMA for project management.

Mayor Quintana also recognized the participation of the Valley Chile company and support of other Village of Vinton businesses in this endeavor. She stated that these business owners' engagement is vital to the success of this project.

Mural

From Page 2

a thought process, stimulating our mind. Hopefully they begin to see that through this work."

The art installation and dedication have been a shared journey at the EPCC Mission del Paso campus, shaping learning, growth, collaboration, culture, and community, says Dean Joshua Villalobos. "This mural represents the heart of EPCC and our Mission del Paso campus," Villalobos told

the crowd. "It speaks to the journey each student begins when they walk through our doors, and the transformation that takes place through education, perseverance, and community support." The art piece depicts three sections: Your Attitude is Everything, Soaring Like a Bird is the Goal and Move Towards Your Future.

"The support from EPCC administration has been wonderful, much more than just funding, but so many people were involved from so many different departments, the students, and it was so

great working with everyone," Valenzuela added. "Students were amazing. We had about 50 students participate in this one here at Mission, and the participation is the most important aspect."

"A lot of work went into the mural, we enjoyed the brainstorming, talking about putting it to fruition, and the physical part of painting was a lot of fun," EPCC Art student Erin Eslinger said. "We put more and more thought into each piece, and hopefully students will notice and get inspired, incorporating art into everyday life."

Canutillo Independent School District Public Notice

Canutillo Independent School District will hold a public hearing to discuss the District's 2024-2025 Annual Academic Performance Report, including TAPR, as part of a regular School Board meeting which is scheduled for 6:00 p.m. Friday, February 20, 2026, at the Canutillo Administrative Offices Board Room, 7965 Artcraft, El Paso, TX 79932.

The annual report will also be available for review after the hearing within the Canutillo ISD Testing and Accountability webpage:

www.canutillo-isd.org/departments/testing-accountability-research-department

For more information, call 915-877-7481.

Distrito Escolar Independiente de Canutillo Junta Pública

El Distrito Escolar Independiente de Canutillo llevará a cabo una audiencia pública para discutir el "Reporte de Rendimiento Académico de Texas" 2024-2025 del Distrito, incluido TAPR, como parte de una reunión regular de la Junta Escolar que está programada para las 6:00 p.m. viernes, 20 de febrero de 2026, en la sala de juntas de las oficinas administrativas de Canutillo, 7965 Artcraft, El Paso, TX 79932.

El informe TAPR también estará disponible para su revisión después de la audiencia dentro de la página web de Canutillo ISD Testing and Accountability:

www.canutillo-isd.org/departments/testing-accountability-research-department

Para mas información, llamar al 915-877-7481.

WTCC: 02-05-26

Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

• The Statue of Liberty was originally brown.

• Parrotfish are among the sleepiest of sea creatures, averaging around a good 13 hours of rest per night. When not dozing, they spend as much as 90% of their time eating algae that grows on coral reefs.

• Reindeer eyes change color according to the seasons – they're golden in the summer and blue during winter.

• The at symbol was invented more than four centuries before email was.

• The U.S. Postal Service employs a sharp-eyed group of folks whose job is to determine where to send letters and packages with illegible addresses. They work their magic at the USPS Remote Encoding Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, the first facility of its kind and now the only one still standing.

• Just 43 people have been known to have "golden blood," the rarest of blood types.

• Michelangelo may have accidentally left a thumbprint on a wax sculpture's butt.

• Tomatoes are potato plants that also grow tomatoes. The hybrid occurs when a tomato plant is grafted onto a potato plant, a relatively easy thing since they're both members of the solanum genus of the nightshade family.

• Leonardo da Vinci's famous painting "The Last Supper" originally included Jesus' feet.

• Portland, Oregon, was named in a coin toss in 1845 between Asa Lovejoy and Francis Pettygrove when the two couldn't agree on a suitable moniker for their new land claim.

• The human stomach can expand to hold as much as a 2-liter soda bottle, since its inner surface, the mucosa, is lined with folds called rugae that unfold and stretch out to accommodate food as it arrives.

Thought for the Day: "If you break your neck, if you have nothing to eat, if your house is on fire, then you got a problem. Everything else is inconvenience."

– Robert Fulghum

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FEBRUARY 1-14

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They're back: The Pats and Seahawks meet on Super Sunday

By Steve Escajeda
Special to the Courier

Well, the National Football League season will come to its official end this Sunday in Santa Clara, California, when the Seattle Seahawks and the New England Patriots meet in Super Bowl LX.

For those of you who haven't kept up with your Roman numerals, that means number 60.

The Seahawks and Patriots are both young teams and probably a little ahead of schedule, but they are no stranger to success.

It was just 11 years ago that the Seahawks and Patriots were powerhouses in the league.

In fact, they met in the famous "interception at the goal line" 2015 Super Bowl that the Patriots won in a thriller, 28-24.

However, a lot has changed since then.

This is not the Tom Brady, Rob Gronkowski, Randy Moss and Bill Belichick Patriots, and this is not the Russell Wilson, Marshawn "Beast Mode" Lynch, Richard Sherman and Pete Carroll Seahawks.

This is an entirely new cast of characters which have brought these two franchises back to life.

But let's be honest, it's a little tough to get excited about this game because there are really no big superstars to speak of. And almost nobody knows many, or any, of the players involved.

And nobody saw this particular Super Bowl matchup coming.

Before the season started, it was believed that the Kansas City Chiefs or the Buffalo Bills or the Detroit Lions or the Baltimore Ravens or the Philadelphia Eagles of the Green Bay Packers or the Minnesota Vikings or the Tampa Bay Buccaneers or the Los Angeles Rams would make it to the big game.

But the big boys with the big names didn't make it.

And that's why this game is a little different. There is no Cinderella to fall in love with, and there is no long-time NFL bully to hate.

This is like vanilla ice cream taking on vanilla bean ice cream.

These teams are the same. They are both teams who were once dominant for years, then their best players eventually left or retired, both coaches left the NFL, they each suffered through losing seasons and weren't expected to get back to their winning ways for maybe another 10 years or so.

But they're both back – faster than anyone thought.

The one big difference in these two teams is at quarterback. Oh, don't get me wrong, they're both trying to prove they can win the big one, but their journeys here are completely different.

While the Patriots' 23-year-old Drake Maye is only in his second NFL season, the Seahawks' 28-year-old Sam Darnold is in his eighth year as an NFL quarterback, but just his first with Seattle.

And while Maye has been an instant success with New England, it's taken Darnold, who had been considered a first-round NFL draft bust, years to figure the league out and he's finally playing like everyone thought he would after playing at USC.

As far as on the field, both teams are very similar, both have good defenses, both have good running games and both can obviously throw the ball.

I guess the biggest difference will be the quarterbacks. This is the Super Bowl with the whole world tuning in and reporters from all over the planet converging on Santa Clara with question after question, reminding the players how important this game is.

With all that pressure, there's always

a chance that the new guy, the Patriots' Drake Maye could develop that "deer in the headlights" mentality by the time they kick it off this Sunday.

Darnold, though not always successful, is the one that has been in the league for almost a decade and should be more relaxed and ready for the moment.

So, every year I sit down and predict who is going to win the big game.

Am I always successful? No comment.

Because of the quarterbacks, I think the Seahawks will take this one by the tune of 24-16.

But I do believe we're going to see a new Patriots dynasty starting with this game, and after all, Tom Brady won his first Super Bowl in his second year in the league.

The Seahawks will win; I guarantee it.

Just like I guaranteed the Chiefs would beat the Eagles last year.

Senior moment By Matilda Charles

When it's time to change doctors

Now and then, not too often but sometimes, you hear that audible click and come to the realization that you need to change doctors.

Maybe it's because once again you don't feel like your doctor is really listening to your concerns. Maybe it's because once again tests are ordered without you getting a clear explanation about why they're necessary. Maybe it's because your health concern doesn't seem to be getting better. Maybe it's because you see the physician assistant (PA) when you expect to see the doctor. Or maybe it's just because you have a gut feeling you should go elsewhere.

Whatever the reason, if the time comes to make a change, it won't be easy if you've been with your current doctor for a long time.

Your first step, once you've decided to do this, is to "interview" another doctor. You'll need to call around to see who's taking new patients or inquire among friends for recommendations. Then check out the doctor online with reviews by other people. Look at Healthgrades

(www.healthgrades.com). Or do an online search with the doctor's name.

Be sure the doctor is in your insurance network and make an appointment. Go in with a written list of questions and make notes.

When you find a doctor you'd like to see in the future, you'll need to have your records transferred from the old doctor.

And that's where I part company with advice I was given. I'm told that it's best to transfer your records to a new doctor before you go to the first appointment. You'll need to decide for yourself. My preference was to meet the doctor first before records were transferred, and to not let the current medical practice know I was leaving until I was certain.

If you find the right doctor, the difficulty will be worth it.

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Super Crossword

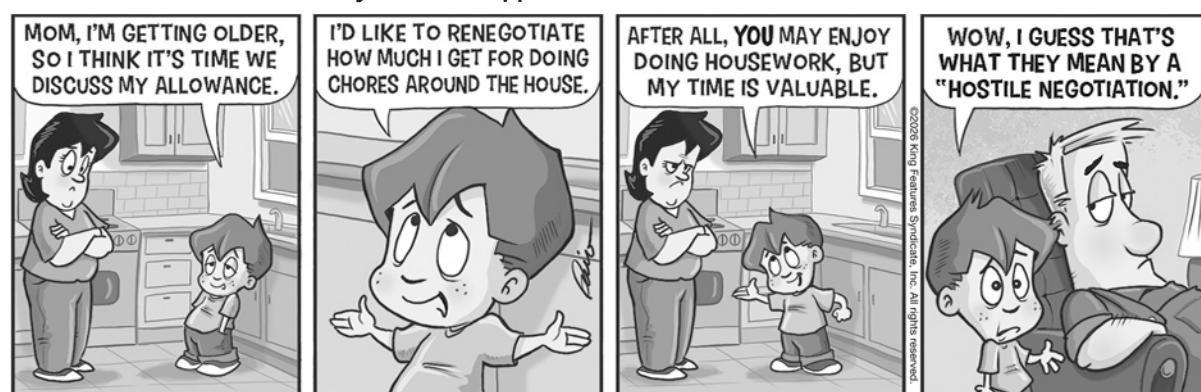
THE THIRD PERSON																	
ACROSS																	
1	Go to	63	"Eww, mice!"	64	Harry Potter's skill	65	a radio signal	66	Trade blows	67	Irrefutable	68	Color shade	69	Bus. entities	70	21
7	Stooge who sometimes replaced Curly	68	"Play It as It Lays"	69	"Cheers" actress	70	years?	71	Accrued qty.	72	Indian bread	73	Other, to Jorge	74	22	23	24
12	Sauna locale	72	"Middle Child"	73	Setting fire to	74	Shire of film	75	"Apparently!"	76	wester	77	Snooky type	78	Oval portion	79	25
15	Defeater of Gore	77	rapper	78	Throw easily	79	Golf gadget	80	Subsidiary	81	Sumac	82	Pre-2001 space	83	station	84	26
19	Time: Prefix	79	In the past	80	Spain's El _	81	130	theorem	82	Singer Sumac	83	It fills la mer	84	1921 Karel Capek	85	27	
20	On the briny	80	Really annoy	81	132	133	"Geez, that's	82	Officeholders	83	Singer Des'_	84	play	85	33	34	
21	Retained	82	"Broadcast News"	83	134	135	rough"	84	Munich Mrs.	85	Beetles and Golfs,	86	Cravings	87	36	35	
23	Old foxtrot dancer makes a two-in-one chess move?	85	co-star feels sore?	86	Dirt Devil or	87	136	in brief	88	in brief	89	Famed flag-raising	90	Pet pests	91	37	
25	Makes lively	87	DustBuster, for short	88	"Botch-_" (1952 song)	89	137	site of 1945	90	Orbiting body, e.g.	91	Artist Yoko	92	WikiLeaks founder Julian	93	38	
26	Flow blockers	90	80	80	82	83	84	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	39	
27	Oct. preceder	91	81	81	82	83	84	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	
28	"All I Wanna Do"	92	85	85	86	87	88	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	
singer boasts?	93	86	87	88	89	90	91	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	
30	Prefix with propyl	94	89	89	90	91	92	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	
31	Winter hrs. in Philadelphia	95	90	90	91	92	93	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	
33	Lawman Wyatt	96	91	91	92	93	94	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	
34	Falsehood	97	92	92	93	94	95	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	
35	"The Finest Hours"	98	93	93	94	95	96	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	
co-star yearns deeply?	99	94	94	95	96	97	98	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	
40	America's first female astronaut takes a bus?	100	95	95	96	97	98	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	
45	Top-secret U.S. org.	101	96	96	97	98	99	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	
46	Starting on	102	97	97	98	99	100	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	
48	Sanaa locale	103	98	98	99	100	101	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	
49	"Samson and Delilah" co-star develops fully?	104	99	99	100	101	102	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	
55	Conductor	105	100	100	101	102	103	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	
59	Big 20th-cen. conflict	106	101	101	102	103	104	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	
60	Actress _ de Armas	107	102	102	103	104	105	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	
61	Universal rule	108	103	103	104	105	106	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	
		109	104	104	105	106	107	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	
		110	105	105	106	107	108	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	
		111	106	106	107	108	109	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	
		112	107	107	108	109	110	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	
		113	108	108	109	110	111	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	
		114	109	109	110												

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

achieved independence via a just revolution, and Mexico – in the grips of a foolish war fever – fired the first shots.

In his book on the war, “A Country of Vast Designs,” Robert W. Merry describes the underlying dynamic. Mexico, he notes, “was a dysfunctional, unstable, weak nation whose population was insufficient to control all the lands within its domain.” The United States, on the other hand, “was a vibrant, expanding, exuberant experiment in democracy whose burgeoning population thrived to the notion that it was engaging in something big and historically momentous.” This created a drive “toward expansion into largely unpopulated lands that seemed to beckon with irresistible enticement.”

Today, it is Trump personally, rather than the nation at large, tempted by historic acquisitions of territory. He, too, could be a Thomas Jefferson, or a William Seward – or a Polk, although hopefully without the war.

But there’s a difference between a young 19th-

century country surging into loosely governed territory around its perimeter – or buying territory that European nations are eager to sell – and a mature 21st century world power invested in stable borders and important alliance systems.

Mexico circa 1846 wasn’t a treaty ally of the United States, and there were enormous benefits to actually acquiring the Southwest, whereas we can presumably get the military bases and mineral extraction we want out of frozen Greenland without formal ownership.

If Trump is going to look to Polk, a more apt antecedent is his handling of the dispute with the Brits over the Oregon territory. After making maximalist demands, Polk agreed to an equitable compromise at the 49th parallel.

Polk’s example is worth marking in another respect. He really did play 3D chess. There’s no way he’d let ego or emotion get in the way of pursuing the national interest, which in this case includes not needlessly alienating long-time allies when other means are available to achieve our strategic ends.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review. ©2026 by King Features Synd., Inc.

CT scan may have kicked up thyroid symptoms

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am a male who is 58 years of age. I recently had an MRI of my cervical spine, and just this month, I had a CT scan of my whole abdomen. Since then, I have had symptoms of dry eyes, weight loss and insomnia. I wondered if the contrast dye used for the MRI or CT scan can cause hyperthyroidism, as these are common symptoms for excess thyroid hormone. Do you think that I have hyperthyroidism? – G.L.



You are quite right that all these symptoms are commonly seen in people with excess thyroid. The weight loss is due to the increased metabolism of people with excess thyroid hormone. Insomnia is also common for similar reasons. Palpitations, tremor, anxiety, frequent bowel movements, and heat intolerance are all classical symptoms of excess thyroid hormone.

You are also right that the iodine-containing dye from CT scans can precipitate hyperthyroidism in a person who is destined to get it. However, the risk of this occurring is low. There is no increased risk of thyroid disease with MRI dye.

You could, indeed, have hyperthyroidism, and if you saw your doctor, you would very likely be tested. (I would certainly do so if I had a patient with these symptoms.) My experience is that these symptoms are not specific to thyroid disease, and it is probably some other cause. So, I would not be surprised if your thyroid tests were normal.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I recently got married again after being single for six years and have had five urinary tract infections (UTIs) in 14 months. My primary care doctor, a urogynecologist, and a urologist have all agreed on estradiol cream. I was basically put on this treatment for a prolapsed bladder and to build up my vaginal walls since I am sexually active again. After reading your recent column about hormone replacement therapy (HRT) in older women, I am concerned since I underwent menopause 20 years ago (instead of under 10) and just started this treatment two months ago. I might add that I had not had a UTI for 50 years prior, but vaginal dryness may be contributing to these UTIs. My doctor has not recommended a progestin, but I have also been introduced to taking a cranberry supplement once a day in tablet form to keep bacteria from multiplying. Would you have recommended the same treatment knowing that I have not had a period for 20 years? – L.E.

The risks from estrogen replacement in postmenopausal women are from systemic estrogen – meaning estrogen that gets absorbed into the blood. This includes estrogen pills and patches.

Topical estrogen, such as vaginal creams, rings and gels, are not well-absorbed in the body and do not significantly increase the risk of heart disease, which is the major reason that I recommended caution to women who underwent menopause more than 10 years ago.

Similarly, progestins need to be used in women with a uterus when they’re taking systemic estrogen – but not topical estrogen. (Topical estrogen is absorbed slightly in women with atrophy of the vaginal lining, so it is always worth a consultation with an oncologist for women with estrogen-sensitive tumors, such as breast cancer.)

I don’t generally advise systemic HRT more than 10 years postmenopause, but there still may be some times when it’s appropriate after a thorough discussion between a woman and her doctor. In your case, however, the risk of heart disease, breast cancer or blood clots is negligible from topical estrogen.

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. ©2026 North America Synd., Inc. All Rights Reserved.



Moore Texas by Roger Moore
Texas was the birthplace of the FRITO PIE.

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 U

HTBI RUL GBXMLDCB ADIR
GBUGQB WU AUOB WU
LVXDEIB'M JDGEWDQ, HTDW
CU RUL CU? WTEJVBI VEBO.

Answer Page 4

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Weekly SUDOKU

5			8	7	1	4		
	3	8		2	4		5	6
4	7		6			8		
						6		
1			6			8	3	
	2	5		3			4	
4			3		2	9	1	
	5	1			6	3	7	
8	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
♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

Answer Page 4

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Thieves don't always do prison time

VETERANS POST

by Freddy Groves

The reports from the VA's Office of Inspector General are mind-boggling outlines of just how low scammers will go to steal money, and just how much they are able to take. Not all of them, however, will do prison time.

A recent report indicates that one man was able to scam over \$1 billion by creating fake medical drug and device claims. This scheme used telemedicine as well as phone calls, the internet and junk mail to con vulnerable people into handing over their personally identifiable information. Armed with that information, the thieves were able to generate fake doctor orders and use their partner pharmacies, telemarketers and equipment suppliers to ship out unneeded medicine and medical items – and get paid for it all to the tune of \$1.45 billion.

The head thief, CEO of the

medical software company behind all the fraud, is not likely to have time to enjoy the fruits of his ill-gotten cash because, at age 79, he's been sentenced to 15 years in prison and fined over \$452 million in restitution.

Then there is the guy who stole VA grants to the tune of \$1.3 million (and DOL grants for half a million) while pretending to run a nonprofit homeless veterans shelter. He didn't just apply for grants once, he did it multiple times. And not only did he spend some of that cash on himself, but he pretended to provide counseling services that the veterans never received.

While he could have received up to 10 years in federal prison, he was only sentenced to 42 months, followed by supervised release.

On the other hand, there is the pain doctor who is managing to not go to prison even after knowingly billing for multiple tests on the same patient on the same day. Instead, it's been called civil, not criminal,

but he does have to pay \$13.6 million under the False Claims Act.

How is it the theft of that amount of money doesn't result in prison time?

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by
Jo Ann
Derson

• "For pastry cooking, try grating frozen butter into the flour. It cuts in better and will stay cool longer. This helps when I am making shortbread, as the flour and butter need to be combined. I don't end up having to put it in the fridge to cool it back down." – C.S. in South Carolina

• "Schedule important doctor's checkups, like your annual physical and dental cleanings, in the same month each year, so you will know when they are coming up. I use my birth month. My mom always has hers done in February." – E.D. in Massachusetts

• Here is an ingenious way to store markers: Collect enough toilet paper rolls to fill a shoebox standing upright. Paint or decorate the outside of the shoebox with brightly colored paper or paints. Fill with the rolls. The markers stand upright in the toilet paper rolls and they are kept standing uniformly across the box. Much better than a messy bin, where you can't see the colors that are on the bottom.

• When you are finished pan frying something, add a bit of water to the pan and put it back on the still-warm burner while you eat. When you come back to clean up after dinner, the pan drippings will slide right off!

• If you've been decluttering as a part of your New Year's resolutions and you came across old pairs of eyeglasses, know that you can donate them to any Lions Club in your area. They redistribute the glasses to those who cannot afford them. You don't have to know the prescription, and they take reading glasses too!

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803. ©2026 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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+	-	=	15
+	+	+	
+	×		= 39
÷	×	÷	
+	÷	=	= 1
=	=	=	
15	60	1	
1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8
9			



By: rj johnson

TM

DOUBT? ... OR DARE!

ERD

EIDREV

♥ TERHA

♥ ERHA

NCRTHE

ZAD

CEHT

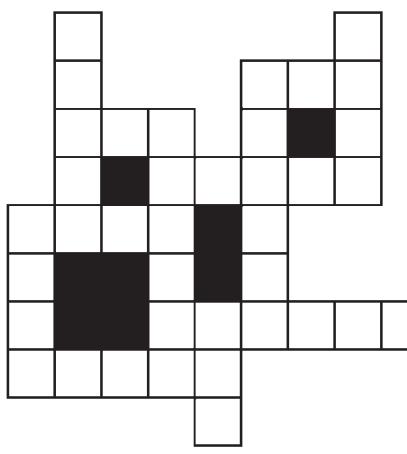
HITLE

♥ OTD

TREZHO

♥ AKDER

♥ AHEL



Answer Page 4

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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.