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Shopping for gifts online? Avoid these common mistakes!

Doing your holiday shopping online definitely has its advantages. It helps you escape those crowded malls and avoid driving in snowy conditions. If the online option appeals to you, make sure to avoid these pitfalls.

DON'T WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE

Online shopping and procrastination don't mix well during the holidays. Start your search early to ensure your gifts arrive on time. Check estimated delivery dates and, ideally, give yourself some extra time in case of delays. If you're running behind, be prepared to pay for express shipping.

DON'T FORGET TO READ PRODUCT DESCRIPTIONS CAREFULLY

Pay attention to dimensions, materials, sizes, language and other important details specific to the product you're buying to avoid disappointment. Whether it's furniture, clothing or electronics, vague descriptions may be a sign that the website isn't legitimate, so be cautious.

DON'T BLINDLY TRUST AN UNKNOWN WEBSITE

Use secure and reliable websites that provide thorough information, including full contact details and clear

exchange and refund policies. Do the prices seem too good to be true? Are there exorbitant extra fees? Is the site cluttered with broken links and buttons? If so, it's best to click away. Stick to websites you're familiar with, especially those of local retailers.

DON'T NEGLECT TO READ THE RETURN POLICY

Before making a purchase, take the time to understand the return policy. Ask yourself: can you get a refund, or is it an exchange-only situation? How long is the return period? Is the product a final sale? Do your homework to avoid any unpleasant surprises.

Happy online shopping!



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"I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him."

—Romans 15:13

Inviting someone to join your holiday dinner is a wonderful gesture!



There are many reasons why someone might find themselves alone on December 24 and 25. If you have a colleague, neighbor or friend who has no plans for these days, open your heart and your home by inviting them to celebrate with you.

The person may hesitate, fearing they'll be intruding or feel out of place at a family gathering. Tell them you understand their feelings, but that you would be delighted to have them join you. Remind them that the more, the merrier, and that you're sure they would do the same for you.

Before extending the invitation, be sure

to consult your partner and other family members. Chances are they'll empathize with your guest and welcome them with open arms.

Here's a tip: get your guest involved in the party planning by asking them to bring a vegetable tray or board game. When they arrive, introduce them to your loved ones. Are you expecting a large group? To help your guest feel more comfortable, focus on connecting them with the people they're most likely to get along with.

This year, open your doors and create a warm and welcoming Christmas celebration!



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Tips to celebrate Christmas remotely with your loved ones

Is your sister studying abroad? Do you have a friend in the hospital? Is one of your parents stuck at home with a nasty bug? There are many reasons why someone might have to celebrate the festive season from afar. Here are a couple of tips for sharing special moments despite the distance.

- **A virtual get-together.** Video conferencing software is more accessible and effective than ever. Why not use it to connect with your loved ones? You can enjoy drinks, dinner, a board game or simply sing, laugh and chat together.

- **A gift in the mail.** Send your loved ones a gift through the mail. Get creative with a personalized delivery or consider using a singing telegram service.

No matter how far apart you are, you can still share special moments and create wonderful memories this holiday season. This Christmas, stay close to the people you love, whether you're physically together or not.



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Beloved

Holiday Traditions

from the 1950s–1980s

For many of today's older adults, the holidays are as much about memories as they are about celebrations. Between the 1950s and the 1980s, families across America created traditions that still warm hearts today—and often feel like they came from a simpler, more magical time.

In the 1950s, Christmas often began with the arrival of the Sears "Wish Book." Children spent hours circling toys while parents planned holiday menus filled with Jell-O salads, glazed hams, and homemade fudge. Aluminum Christmas trees—complete with rotating color wheels—became symbols of mid-century modern cheer. Families gathered around black-and-white TV sets to watch "A Christmas Carol," "The Ed Sullivan Show," or the original broadcasts of "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," which premiered in 1964 and remains a staple to this day.

The 1960s and '70s ushered in new rituals. Tree tinsel shifted from lead strands to the plastic icicles many of us remember untangling every December. Holiday cards filled mailboxes, often tucked with family newsletters typed on the kitchen typewriter. Hanukkah celebrations featured hand-spun dreidels, homemade latkes, and menorahs passed down through generations. Vinyl records from Bing Crosby, Perry Como, and later the Carpenters provided the soundtrack to bustling kitchens and festive living rooms.

By the late 1970s and into the 1980s, the camcorder era arrived. Families began filming Christmas mornings, capturing bed-head children unwrapping Cabbage Patch Kids, Atari consoles, and Easy-Bake Ovens. Holiday décor grew brighter, too—think oversized outdoor lights, ceramic Christmas trees with glowing bulbs, and the steady beep of microwaves warming hot cocoa.

Through all the decades, one thread remained constant: people gathering with loved ones to share food, laughter, faith, and stories. These traditions—from the quiet glow of menorah candles to the bustle of holiday baking—continue to anchor us, reminding us that the best parts of the season often come from the memories we carry forward.



Here's a Tip

by JoAnn Derson

If you're traveling with pets, you know to bring something for them to drink out of. If you have ice in a container, they can lick the ice to stay hydrated, but it doesn't slosh around or spill easily.

For moister and softer cookies, use honey as a substitute for a third of the sugar in your cookie recipe.

"At a party, a cup of red wine spilled on one of my throw pillows. I love the pillow, but I could not get the stain out. So I covered it with a new fabric. I ended up doing all the assorted pillows in the same fabric, and it made a big change in the room. I wish I had done it sooner." -- I.F. in Pennsylvania

"Have a headache? Try drinking a couple of glasses of a sports drink. This works for me and my friends. Maybe we just need to be drinking more water, but the sports drinks get us back on track more quickly than medicine most times." -- E.L. in Colorado

Use Styrofoam packing peanuts in the bottom of pots when potting plants. They aren't as heavy as rocks, and they do just as good a job. The pots will be easier to move around should you need to move them.



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Celebrity Extra by Dana Jackson

Q: When is the new "Yellowstone" series focusing on Kayce Dutton premiering? — *M.M.*

A: "Yellowstone" creator Taylor Sheridan recently signed a massive deal with Peacock, where the flagship series now resides. Its prequel spin-offs, 1883 and 1923, continue to stream on Paramount+.

Kayce Dutton's story (played by Luke Grimes) will pick up on network television. The new series, Y: Marshals, premieres Sunday, March 1, 2026, on CBS. The drama follows Kayce as he joins an elite team of U.S. marshals, with a case-of-the-week format typical of network procedurals. Returning from the original series are Brecken Merrill as Kayce's son, Tate, and Gil Birmingham as Thomas Rainwater.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CBS

**Luke Grimes as
Kayce Dutton in
"Yellowstone"**

New cast members include Logan Marshall-Green ("And Just Like That...") as Pete, Kayce's old friend; Arielle Kebbel ("Rescue: HI-Surf"); Ash Santos ("Pulse"); and Tatanka Means ("Ransom Canyon") as fellow marshals. Brett Cullen plays the unit's chief.

★ ★ ★

Q: How is Dolly Parton's health? Her sister hinted that she wasn't well. — *N.F.*

A: Dolly is recovering well after being hospitalized in October for an infection related to kidney stones. Her sister, Freida, had posted that Dolly "hasn't been feeling her best" and asked for prayers, prompting widespread concern. Dolly reassured everyone with a video appearance, quashing rumors — including an AI-generated photo of Reba McEntire at her bedside. She explained that she hadn't been taking proper care of herself following the death of her husband, Carl Dean, earlier this year.

Although she's doing better, she did postpone her Las Vegas shows from December 2025 to September 2026.

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Stay calm to foil scammers

This is a new scam, but then it's what we expect from thieves -- yet another way to steal from us. This one involves our innocent-seeming bank debit card, a scammer and a pair of scissors. Here's how it works:

You'll get a call from someone claiming to be from your bank who says there is fraudulent activity happening on your account, and they need your help. You'll be told that you need to act fast before you lose all your money.

The scammers will tell you to cut up your debit card, but not to cut up the little microchip on the card. Put all the pieces, they'll say, in an envelope and leave it at your door, because a bank "official" is going to rush over to take possession of the evidence. Oh, and there will be one last little detail they'll need -- your bank PIN. By that time, if you're sufficiently rattled, you'll willingly tell them the number.

A scammer will quickly show up at your door to grab the envelope. Armed with that little card chip and your PIN, they can quickly empty your account.

The key is for you to not get rattled, to not let scammers direct your actions.

If you're suspicious about any call, hang up! It's OK (even preferable in this case) to be rude! Call the bank or company on their official number and ask if they were trying to contact you about fraudulent activity on your account.

If your debit card (or any card) expires and the bank or company sends you a replacement, cut up the old one. Be sure to cut through the chip, the magnetic strip on the back and the numbers as well as your name. Divide them up in multiple trash bags to keep the pieces apart.

Remember: Stay calm to defeat the scammers.

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VETERAN'S POST *by Freddy Groves*

Errors in benefits decisions

I'm all in favor of processing veterans benefits claims as fast as possible, but not like this. It appears that a senior VSR (veterans service representative) was authorizing claims decisions at such a fantastic rate that it came to the attention of the VA Office of Inspector General.

In a legitimate decisions process, there are several steps involved in handling a claim, including doing interviews, looking at the issues, checking the evidence and so forth. After all the steps are correctly completed and a decision is made about an award (which includes granting or denying claims), the whole file is sent to a senior VSR to review for accuracy and to authorize.

That senior review, one assumes, involves actually looking at a file, at the data and evidence involved, and at the claims processor's conclusion. This is where the senior VSR skipped steps -- and managed to process 19 times more claims than anyone else in the country. He did this by spending less than five minutes on each file,

where others across the country averaged 21 minutes per file. When queried about that, directors said it was "not physically possible" to do that many claims and have them be correct. During one period, it was learned that the VSR was processing a claim every one to three minutes, meaning that files weren't being opened at all.

OIG reviewed a sample of claims done by that VSR over a six-month period and estimated that 84% of the claims had errors. And errors, when it comes to disability claims, mean granting claims, denying claims and awarding money. In this case, the errors came to an estimated \$2.2 million in wrong payments.

There are too many questions at this point to know how the situation will conclude. But we want to know: Is that VSR still employed? Will denied claims automatically be reviewed? And will overpaid benefits need to be repaid? Veterans deserve better than this.

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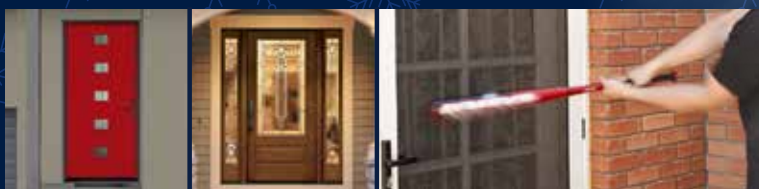
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The Heart-Smart Plate

What to Eat as You Age

A healthy heart is essential to maintaining your active, independent and vibrant lifestyle as you get older. But did you know that nearly half of the average American's calories come from foods that are detrimental to your heart health? Instead of choosing ultra-processed foods containing poor-quality fats, high sugar and excessive salt, try these nutrition tips to help you keep your heart healthy.

FOCUS ON FIBER

Fiber helps slow down sugar absorption and contributes to lowering bad cholesterol and blood pressure. Aim to "eat the rainbow" at every meal by including a variety of vegetables, fruits, whole grains and legumes.

REPLACE SATURATED AND TRANS FATS

Swap saturated and trans fats for healthier options like olive oil and avocado. You should also include foods like freshly ground flax seeds, chia seeds and natural nut butters. These healthy fats help maintain healthy cholesterol levels and reduce the risk of arterial plaque buildup.



GET ENOUGH LEAN PROTEIN

Incorporate skinless poultry, beans and lentils into your diet as heart-friendly choices. Fatty fish such as salmon and mackerel are especially beneficial due to their omega-3 fatty acids, which help reduce inflammation and lower the risk of heart disease.

Lastly, make sure to stay hydrated and limit sugary drinks and alcohol. Talk to a dietician or nutritionist for personalized recommendations.

Thought for the Day

"A strong nation, like a strong person, can afford to be gentle, firm, thoughtful and restrained. It can afford to extend a helping hand to others. It's a weak nation, like a weak person, that must behave with bluster and boasting and rashness and other signs of insecurity."

— Jimmy Carter

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YOUR GOOD HEALTH

by Dr. Keith Roach

DEAR DR. ROACH: I have a "trigger thumb." My thumb no longer bends at the middle joint and hurts. Exercise doesn't seem to work. I tried physical therapy, too, without results. -- A.M.

ANSWER: **ww** Stenosing flexor tenosynovitis, aka trigger finger, is a common issue that I see very frequently in my clinical practice. Symptoms usually start with some "catching" or locking of the fingers while flexing and extending one or more of them. This may progress to discomfort or pain, and it can progress to the point where a finger or thumb is locked in place and needs to be bent by the other hand.

Initial treatment includes rest and anti-inflammatories. Some experts use a splint to reduce the trauma from

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repetitive movement in the pulley system of the hand. If conservative treatment isn't effective, most hand experts will try an injection of a steroid into the area of the pulley and tendon. Surgery is an option if two or three injections haven't solved the problem.

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.

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Hollywood by Tony Rizzo

Anthony Hopkins will be 88 on New Year's Eve, but he isn't letting his age slow him down. He's completed the sci-fi thriller "Eyes in the Trees" with Jonathan Rhys Meyers and Ashley Greene. He will also star in Guy Ritchie's black comedy "Wife & Dog" with Benedict Cumberbatch, Rosamund Pike and James Norton.



PHOTO CREDIT: DEPOSITPHOTOS

Anthony Hopkins
(Upcoming in
"Eyes in the Trees")

Hopkins is currently filming the sports biography "Maserati: The Brothers" with Andy Garcia, Jessica Alba and Al Pacino. In addition, he just released his biography "We Did OK, Kid: A Memoir." Who needs sleep?

★★★

Do we really need a new "A Christmas Carol"? There have been over 100 adaptations, most notably Alistair Sim's "A

Christmas Carol" (1951) that we get every Christmas; the 1984 TV movie starring George C. Scott; a 1988 version called "Scrooged," starring Bill Murray; and even "The Muppet Christmas Carol" in 1992.

In "Ebenezer, A Christmas Carol," Emmy winner Tramell Tillman ("Severance") and Ian McKellen will be two of the three ghosts. Oh, yes, Johnny Depp plays the title role of Scrooge! It'll be competing with a second remake that stars Willem Dafoe as Ebenezer.

★★★

Miss Piggy is ditching the Muppets after 50 years to star in her own film. Oscar winners Emma Stone and Jennifer Lawrence are developing the film, for which Cole Escola ("Oh, Mary!") is writing the screenplay. It's likely that Stone and Lawrence will be Miss Piggy's co-stars!

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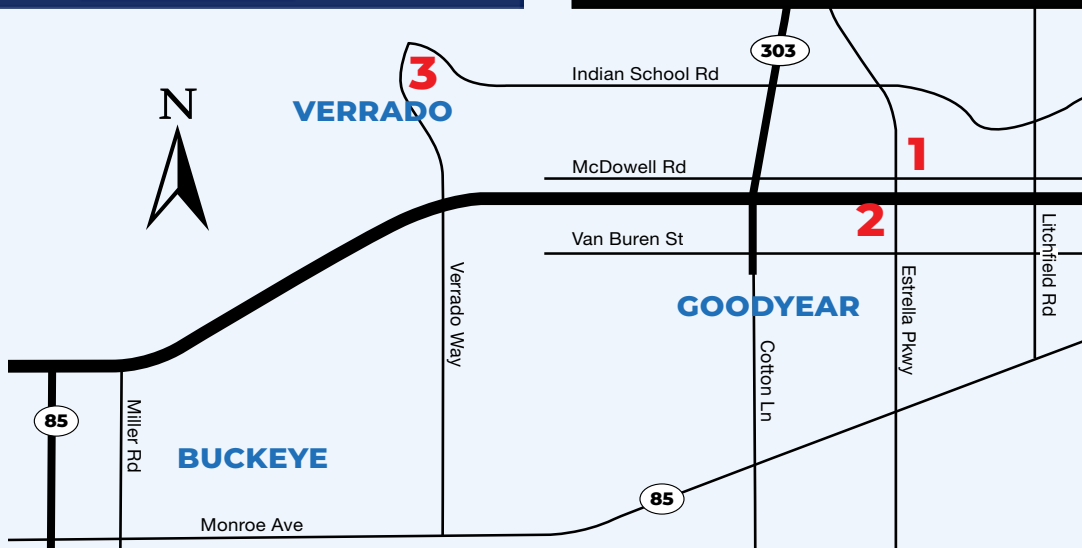
*Limit one offer per visit per table. Valid Monday thru Friday 7am - 3pm. Excludes taxes, and gratuity. Not valid with any other offer, HH items, discount, or on holidays. No cash value. Void if altered. EXPIRES Jan 30, 2026


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CELEBRATE RESPONSIBLY DON'T DRIVE IMPAIRED

Do you have a few Christmas or New Year's parties to attend this year? Will you be driving yourself—and possibly others—late at night? To ensure your festivities don't turn into a tragedy, make it a priority to keep yourself and those around you safe by never getting behind the wheel after consuming alcohol or drugs.

MULTIPLE EFFECTS

Driving under the influence poses serious risks:

- Slowing your reaction time
- Reducing your field of vision
- Impairing your ability to maneuver
- Decreasing your concentration
- Affecting your short-term memory

Before you hit the road this holiday season, make sure you're completely fit to drive.

Stay safe and enjoy the festivities!

These impairments can lead to serious accidents and significant legal consequences, including losing your driver's license.

SENSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Fortunately, you can easily avoid risky situations. If possible, consider staying overnight. If that's not an option, plan your return trip with a designated driver, share a ride, or use Lyft or Uber.

Even small amounts of alcohol can impair your judgment. Just because you feel fine doesn't mean you're fit to drive. Although, in most states, the law permits a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.08 percent (0.8 grams of alcohol per liter of blood), this doesn't guarantee your safety behind the wheel.

Strange But True

by Lucie Winborne

Manhattan, New York's most popular transportation hub, Grand Central Terminal, is radioactive.

The tradition of serving ham at Christmas comes from the Norse festival of Yule, where a boar was sacrificed to honor the deity Freyr.

Ancient Romans gave a hard "no" to the practice of eating butter, with Pliny the Elder referring to butter as "the choicest food among barbarian tribes." Why? Mainly because they used it for treating burns and thus thought of it as a medicinal salve rather than food.

Pencils have never been made from lead.

The leather diamond patch on the outside of backpacks, called a "lash tab," was initially used by mountaineers to secure their gear.

Harvard University is older than calculus.

The blocks of the Washington Monument are held together by gravity and friction, rather than mortar.

"Watching paint dry" is an actual occupation for some folks, requiring an observation of the changing colors and particles of the substance as it dries, both on walls and under a microscope.

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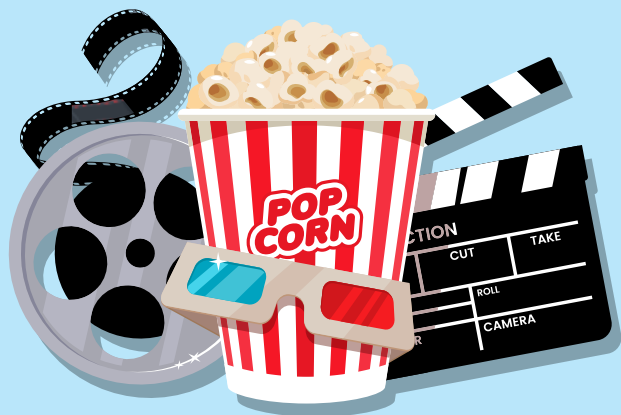
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Solve the crossword puzzle and mail it in to win.

Answers to the clues can be found in this month's West Valley Star ads.

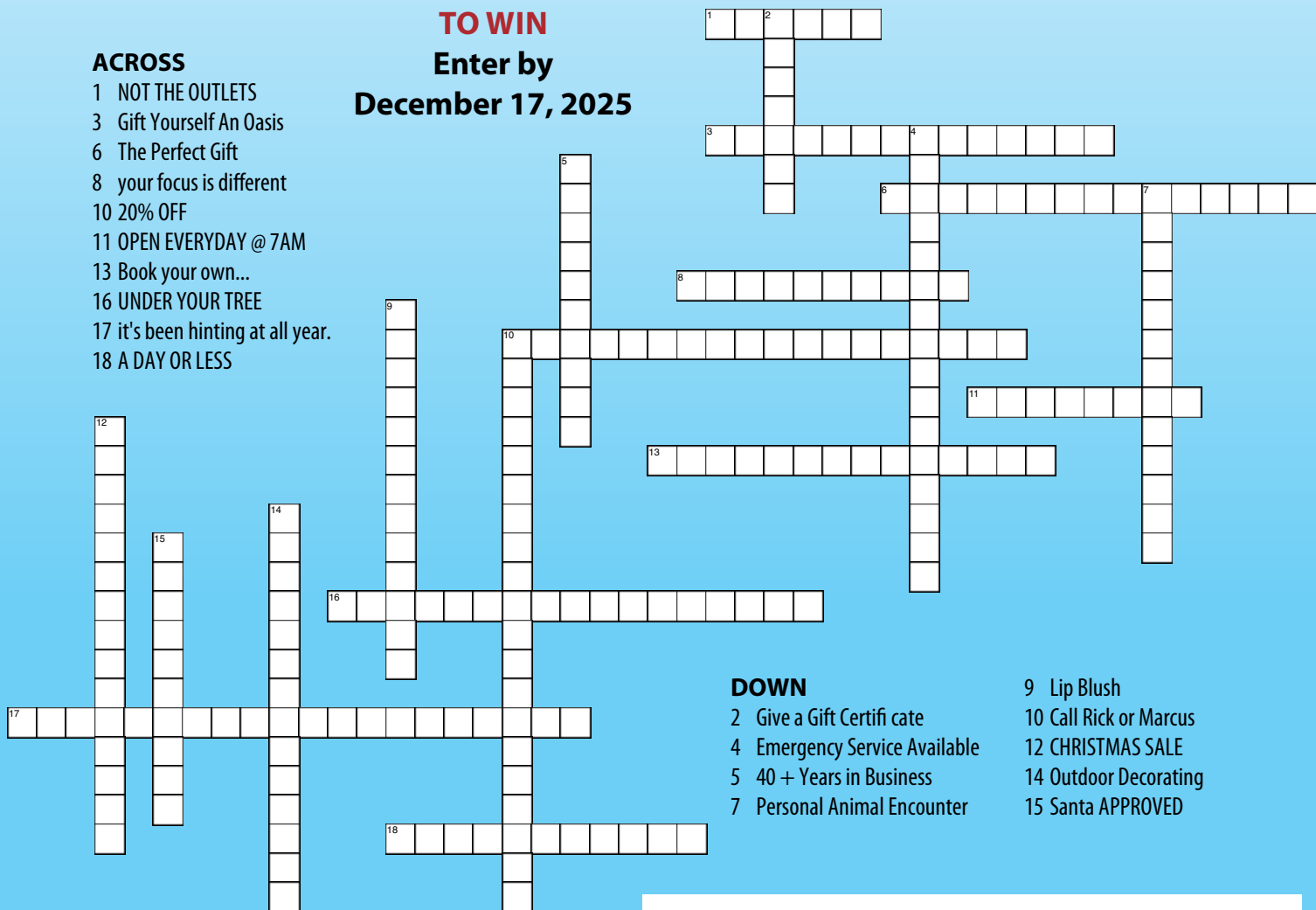
TO WIN

Enter by

December 17, 2025

ACROSS

- 1 NOT THE OUTLETS
- 3 Gift Yourself An Oasis
- 6 The Perfect Gift
- 8 your focus is different
- 10 20% OFF
- 11 OPEN EVERYDAY @ 7AM
- 13 Book your own...
- 16 UNDER YOUR TREE
- 17 it's been hinting at all year.
- 18 A DAY OR LESS



DOWN

- 2 Give a Gift Certificate
- 4 Emergency Service Available
- 5 40 + Years in Business
- 7 Personal Animal Encounter
- 9 Lip Blush
- 10 Call Rick or Marcus
- 12 CHRISTMAS SALE
- 14 Outdoor Decorating
- 15 Santa APPROVED

OFFICIAL CONTEST RULES. Solve the crossword puzzle and mail it in to win. The answers to all crossword clues are found in ads appearing in this edition of West Valley Star. The answers may contain ALL OR PART of a company name. When entering an advertiser's name, there are no spaces, no LLC, or Corporations. Must be 21 or older to enter the contest. Employees of the West Valley Star or its advertisers are ineligible. A drawing will be held from all correct entries. One winner will receive dinner for 2 and 2 movie passes. One winner will receive a consolation prize of 2 movie passes. Winners will be notified by phone, and prizes will be sent by mail.

**Check www.westvalleystaraz.com
for any corrections or announcements.
Scan and email completed puzzles to
info.westvalleystar@gmail.com or...**

Name _____

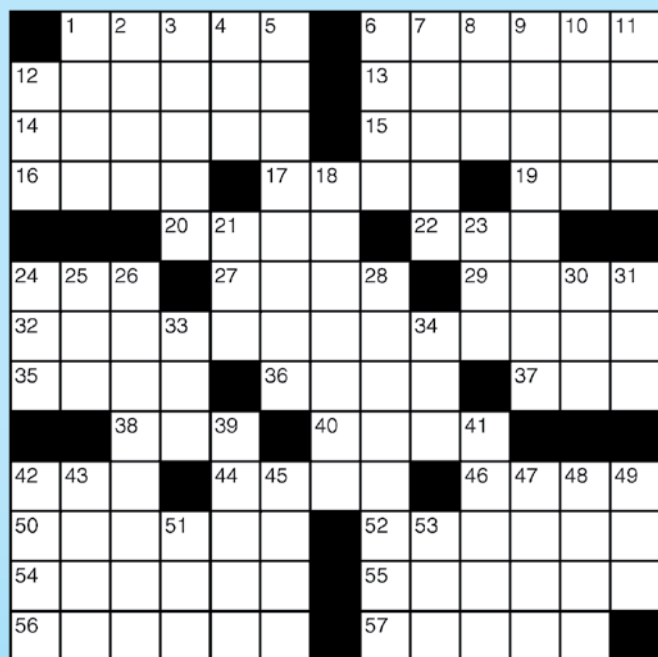
Address _____

Phone _____

email _____

Mail puzzle with answers to:

West Valley Star Puzzle, P.O. Box 5731, Sun City West, AZ 85376



ACROSS

- 1 Novelist Carr
- 6 Posture
- 12 Criminal's "why"
- 13 Tribulation
- 14 Small beard
- 15 Japanese automaker
- 16 Queue after Q
- 17 500 sheets
- 19 Pot brew
- 20 Elite alternative
- 22 Standard
- 24 Non-Rx
- 27 Yoga class pads
- 29 Modern "carpe diem"
- 32 No. 1 hit by Men at Work
- 35 Wife of Jacob
- 36 Rebuff
- 37 Sean, to Yoko
- 38 Ultra-modernist
- 40 Recipe meas.
- 42 Paper Mate rival
- 44 Amorphous mass

- 46 "House" actor Omar

- 50 Surround with light
- 52 Woodwind player
- 54 Radio components
- 55 Tourist's vehicle
- 56 Fancy fiddles
- 57 Birds' homes

DOWN

- 1 Dove calls
- 2 Rat- --
- 3 Illuminated
- 4 Prior night
- 5 Six-pack units
- 6 Slugger Sammy
- 7 Surpass
- 8 Wood-shaping tool
- 9 Uncharged particles
- 10 Birthday cut-up?
- 11 Director Kazan
- 12 Store boss (Abbr.)
- 18 Corrode
- 21 "-- Believer"
- 23 Sailor's assent
- 24 Barn bird
- 25 Commonest English word
- 26 One of a news show pair
- 28 Unwilling to budge
- 30 Privy
- 31 Have
- 33 "Evita" narrator
- 34 Small ammo
- 39 Gawked at
- 41 Drudges
- 42 Hotel furniture
- 43 Monogram pt.
- 45 Privation
- 47 Brad of Hollywood
- 48 Unpaid TV ads
- 49 Cardinal cap letters
- 51 Nabokov novel
- 53 Spelldown

Answers on Page 29

Time to beat: 21 minutes

Sudoku

by Linda Thistle

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

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.

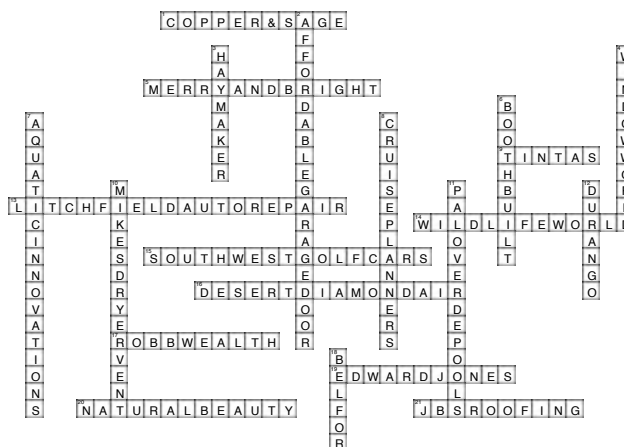
DIFFICULTY: ★ ★

★ MODERATE ★ ★ CHALLENGING ★ ★ ★ HOO BOY!

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Answers on Page 29

Dinner and A Movie NOVEMBER SOLUTION



NOVEMBER WINNERS



Grand Prize
Cathleen Guerriero

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Carolyn Mattern

GOODYEAR

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- ★ Belfor has received the Golden Hammer Award for Excellence, Quality of Work, and Professionalism—not once, but twice!
- ★ We were honored with Alacrity Services' Award of Excellence. As a national leader in property-casualty claim solutions, Alacrity awards companies with exceptional service and restoration results.
- ★ Belfor is a Top Performer on the Mountain States District Contractor Performance Report.

ENABLING RESILIENCE TO REBUILD RESTORING MORE THAN PROPERTY

Our comprehensive fire damage restoration includes:

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2. Smoke Damage Cleanup: Removing smoke and soot from your home.
3. Water Restoration: Addressing any water damage caused by firefighting efforts.
4. Contents Restoration: Repairing or replacing personal belongings affected by the fire.

We work quickly to restore your home and bring back its comfort and safety.

RECIPE

Festive cupcakes

INGREDIENTS

Makes 12 cupcakes

- 1 ½ cups flour
- 1 ½ teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract, divided
- 2 eggs, at room temperature
- ¾ cup milk
- 2 tablespoons white sugar
- 2 cups 35% heavy whipping cream
- 1 cup fresh cranberries
- A few sprigs of fresh rosemary

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350 F. Line 12 muffin cups with paper liners.
2. In a bowl, combine flour, baking powder and salt. Set aside.
3. In another bowl, cream the butter and powdered sugar together with electric hand mixer until light and fluffy (about two to three minutes). Add the vanilla. Incorporate the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition.
4. Gradually add the dry ingredients and milk to wet mixture, alternating between the two. Pour the mixture into prepared muffin cups.
5. Bake for 20 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center of a cupcake comes out clean. Let cool completely before decorating.
6. Meanwhile, pour the white sugar into the cream and beat with an electric hand mixer until stiff peaks form. Top cupcakes with whipped cream, cranberries and rosemary, arranging the rosemary to resemble holly.



Strange But True

America's first dentist, John Baker, trained Paul Revere to be a dentist.

A German word for nightmare is "alptraum," or "elf dream." In German folklore, elves were dangerous figures who could control dreams and create nightmares.

Canadians eat more macaroni and cheese than any other nation in the world.

No matter how badly fingerprints are damaged, they will still grow back in their original pattern.

Eggnog originated from the medieval hot, milky ale-like drink known as a posset.

Though dragonflies have six legs, they cannot walk.

Ancient pagan cultures such as the Celts believed that benevolent, helpful spirits lived in trees. Knocking on tree trunks roused a spirit for protection, which led to the saying "knock on wood."

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Social Security increase... not much

How will you spend the approximate \$56 increase that we Social Security beneficiaries will be receiving as of January when the new COLA kicks in.

That 2.8% increase in the average Social Security benefit (\$2,071 for individuals, \$3,208 for couples) won't get us much when compared to increasing costs in grocery stores -- and everywhere else.

It's been a complaint for years. The Cost of Living Adjustment price index (CPI-W) that's used to calculate Social Security increases doesn't apply to us. Instead, we keep saying, they should use the Research Consumer Price Index (R-CPI-E), which is more in line with how seniors over the age of 62 actually spend money.

And then there's the wee problem of Medicare Part B also increasing -- again -- from \$185 this year to \$202 for 2026.

That amount has to be subtracted from the \$56 increase, which means it's actually a \$38 increase in Social Security.

There is, however, a movement afoot in Congress to give us a temporary (six months) increase of \$200 per month from January to July 2026. Called the Social Security Emergency Inflation Relief Act, the proposal is being batted around in Congress at this point. The bill (S.3078) text says it would provide payments to "recipients of social security, supplemental security income, railroad retirement benefits, and veterans disability compensation or pension benefits."

I asked friends in an informal poll, what they would do with that extra \$200 per month should the proposal pass: stick it in savings for an emergency... pay off a medical bill... turn up the thermostat? The responses ran the gamut of possibilities, which says one thing: We need that money.



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Christmas the Arizona Way

Christmas in Arizona brings its own kind of magic—one painted in sunshine, desert colors, and crisp evenings perfect for gathering with friends and family. Instead of snowy sidewalks, Arizonans enjoy twinkling lights wrapped around saguaros and glowing luminarias lining neighborhood paths. By mid-November, light displays begin popping up across the state, from front-yard cactus arrangements to entire streets transformed into glowing holiday trails.

Tamales, pozole, and enchiladas often appear alongside traditional Christmas dishes, creating a festive blend of flavors. And while the days stay bright and mild, evenings offer just enough chill for a cozy sweater and a warm cup of cocoa.

Whether you're admiring a desert sunset or enjoying the holiday lights, Christmas in Arizona shines in its own beautiful way.

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Green living

10 tips for a greener Christmas and New Year

The holiday season will soon be here! When you think about this festive time of year, the word “abundance” often comes to mind—hearty meals, endless drinks, generous gift exchanges, dazzling decorations, shopping sprees and road trips galore. Large gatherings can have a significant environmental impact. Try these 10 tips to have a greener party this winter:

1. Buy food for your feasts from local shops
2. Choose reusable or recycled wrapping for your gifts
3. Take public transportation or carpool to get from point A to point B
4. Avoid disposable or fragile decorations, like helium balloons and paper lanterns
5. Sort your waste carefully
6. Prevent food waste by preparing smaller portions and using containers for leftovers
7. Use washable dishes and utensils
8. Give practical, second-hand gifts from Christmas markets or opt for non-material presents like show tickets or outings
9. Select your outfits from local thrift stores, rent them or support local designers and boutiques
10. Serve your guests locally made alcoholic or non-alcoholic beverages

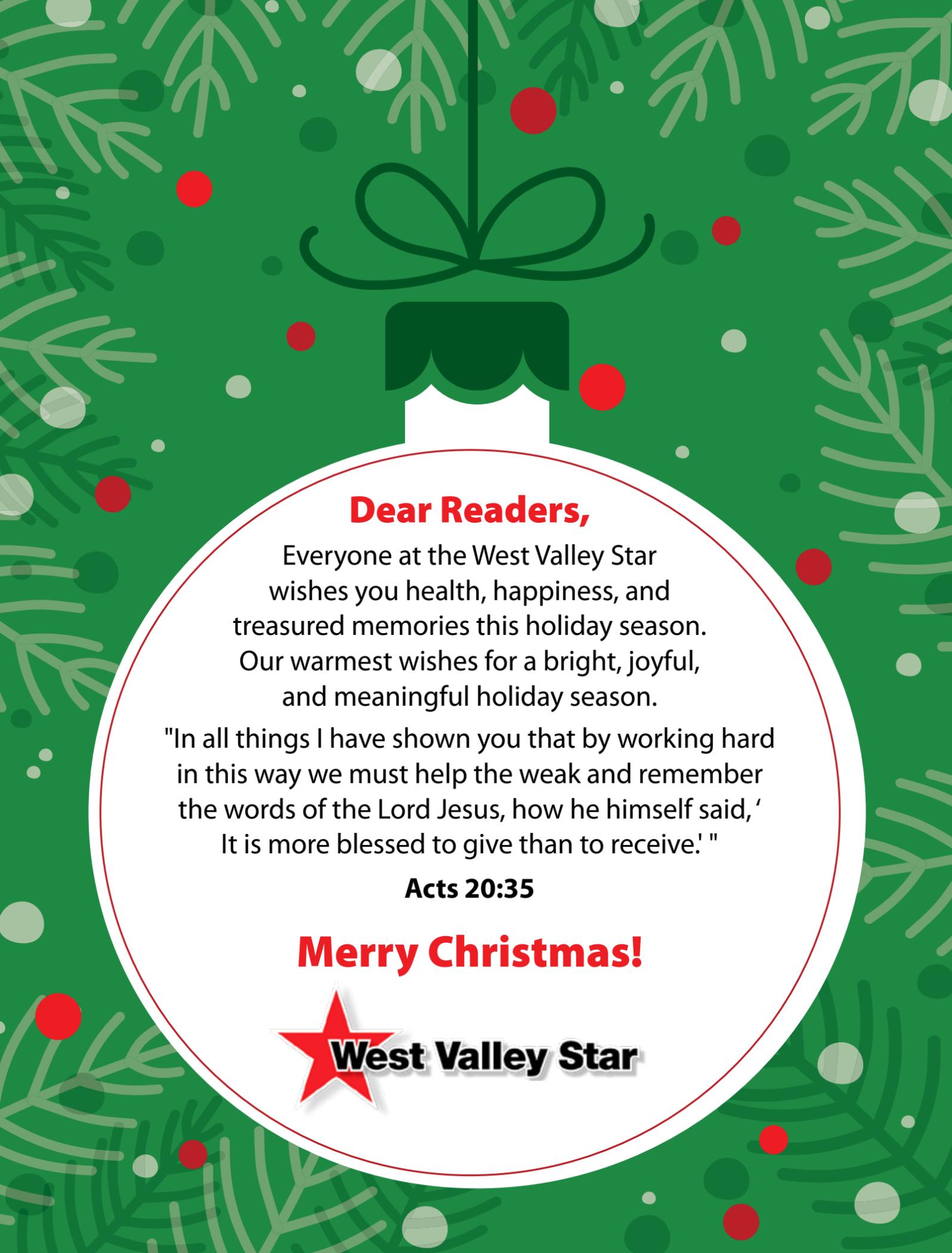
This year, proudly join the global movement of eco-friendly celebrations—our planet will thank you!

PUZZLE ANSWERS

Answers to Puzzles
on Page 22

C	A	L	E	B	S	T	A	N	C	E
M	O	T	I	V	E	O	R	D	E	A
G	O	A	T	E	E	S	U	Z	U	K
R	S	T	U			R	E	A	M	T
			P	I	C	A	P	A	R	
O	T	C		M	A	T	S	Y	O	L
W	H	O	C	A	N	I	T	B	E	N
L	E	A	H		S	N	U	B		S
		N	E	O		T	B	S	P	
B	I	C		G	L	O	B		E	P
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D	I	O	D	E	S		R	E	N	T
S	T	R	A	D	S		N	E	S	T

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



Dear Readers,

Everyone at the West Valley Star
wishes you health, happiness, and
treasured memories this holiday season.
Our warmest wishes for a bright, joyful,
and meaningful holiday season.

"In all things I have shown you that by working hard
in this way we must help the weak and remember
the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said,
It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

Acts 20:35

Merry Christmas!





AQUATIC INNOVATIONS



I've been relying on Justin's crew since 2023 after the fumbings and miss-directions of a handful of other aquarium service providers. Justin and Bobby have been, hands down the most consistently professional, easiest to work with, available for emergencies, and overall most technically competent of all aquarium retailers and service providers in the greater Phoenix Area. I have been keeping reef aquaria for over 50 years, since the days of dolomite and undergravel filters, when the concept was a novelty. I am particular, I know a bit, and I need a crew to partner with that can match wits with me to figure out the more challenging stuff. The Justin-Bobby Team matches my needs, is patient with my sometimes old-school thinking, and always is keen to make sure I am satisfied. They are as interested in the success of my reef as I am!!

I cannot give Aquatic Innovations a recommendation too high. If you are struggling with your salt aquarium and you still haven't contacted Justin, then its your own damn fault...

— *Steve S. Goodyear, AZ*
July 2025

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