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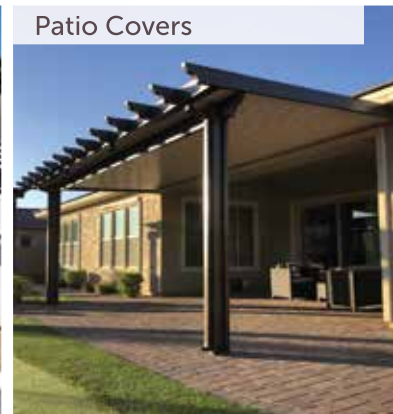
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A gesture of LOVE



This is the time of year when blood donations are needed most. In the winter months, hospitals are faced with a two-fold problem: less blood is donated than in other months, and surgical procedures requiring blood transfusions are more numerous.

What can you do?

In most states, if you're 16 or over, weigh at least 110 pounds and are in good health, you're eligible to give blood. You can do so simply by making an appointment with a local blood donation center. For more information, visit redcrossblood.org.

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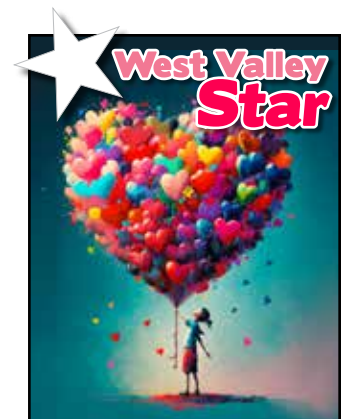
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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Celebrity Extra.....	10
Senior Newsline	12
Your Good Health	13
Recipe	14
Veteran's Post.....	16
Paws & Claws	17
Games.....	23 & 24
Service Directory	28 & 29
Green Living	29
Hollywood	31

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info.westvalleystar@gmail.com
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"We love because
He first loved us"

— 1 John 4:19

10 tips for keeping your family healthy



Do you want to ensure everyone in your family is living their best, healthiest life, no matter their age? Try these 10 valuable tips:



EAT WELL. Reserve ultra-processed foods and junk food for special occasions. Make sure half your plate is plant-based.



GET ENOUGH SLEEP. Establish a sleep routine by going to bed and waking up at the same time every day. Avoid screen time and stimulating activities before bedtime.



EXERCISE. Do regular stretching, cardio and strength training to increase your strength, flexibility and energy levels.



SPEND TIME OUTDOORS. Get fresh air! It's good for both your physical and mental health. If you're lucky enough to go for a walk in the woods, even better.



VISIT HEALTH PROFESSIONALS. Schedule annual appointments with your doctor, optometrist, dentist and other health professionals. Make sure your vaccinations are up to date!



STAY HYDRATED. Drink water regularly, even when you don't feel thirsty. Treat yourself to a cool reusable water bottle to keep you motivated.



BE SAFE. Avoid injury during your outings and sporting activities. Protect yourself with sunscreen, a bike helmet, a mouth guard and safety glasses when needed. Don't take any chances!



REDUCE SCREEN TIME.

Set limits to avoid spending your free time playing video games, watching TV or scrolling on social media.



MANAGE STRESS. There are many ways to reduce your stress levels, like talking to someone close to you, listening to music and meditating. Find out what works best for you.



PRACTICE GOOD HYGIENE. Keep infections and illnesses at bay by washing your hands often and brushing your teeth at least twice a day. A daily shower or bath is also a good idea!

Consult with your local health professionals for personalized advice.

Would you like to live in an intergenerational home?

Buying a home is becoming increasingly challenging. While many people may be giving up on owning a home, others are coming up with creative strategies to make it work. This is particularly true of families choosing to buy or build intergenerational or bigenerational homes.

It's a win-win situation

Sharing a property—and a mortgage—has many advantages. The first is obviously financial, an aspect that may benefit grandparents, parents and children alike. Multiple generations contributing to the household can spread out the financial responsibility, making it easier to manage living expenses and leading to savings on housing, utilities, and even food.

Increased Support and Care

Grandparents or older relatives can often help with childcare, allowing parents to work or take time for themselves. This can ease the financial and emotional burden of childcare.

Having elderly relatives at home can ensure that they receive the care and attention they need as they age, reducing the need for outside caregivers or nursing homes.

Multigenerational households can provide emotional stability for all members. The presence of multiple generations fosters a sense of belonging and mutual support.

Stronger Family Bonds

Living together allows family members, from grandparents to grandchildren, to form deeper connections. Children benefit from the wisdom and experience of older generations, while older adults get to experience the energy and excitement of younger ones.

The chance to create shared memories across different age groups can strengthen the sense of family unity. Older generations have valuable life experience and wisdom that they can pass down to younger family members, important skills like cooking, gardening, or basic life lessons.

Living together also allows younger generations to better



understand their family's history, traditions, and values, preserving cultural heritage across generations.

Better Socialization for Older Adults

Older adults, especially those who live alone, may experience loneliness. Having family members around regularly can combat this and improve mental and emotional well-being, helping seniors stay mentally and physically active, reducing the risk of cognitive decline and boosting mood.

The sense of interdependence can benefit everyone's mental health. Children, for example, may feel more secure knowing their grandparents are around, and adults can benefit from the wisdom and stability older family members offer.

Multigenerational living is relatively common in Southern European countries like Italy and Spain, where it's often considered the norm for families to live together across multiple generations. Living with several people under the same roof means everyone can contribute based on their strengths and abilities. For example, one family member could take care of the yard, another could handle renovations and another could do the grocery shopping. In short, despite its challenges, this lifestyle offers a fantastic chance to save time and money while enhancing everyone's overall well-being.

Who was Cupid?



Cupid is an important figure in Roman mythology. He's the son of Venus, the goddess of beauty, and Mars, the god of war. Cupid is also—as you've probably guessed—the god of love. Legend has it that whoever was struck in the heart by one of Cupid's arrows would instantly fall in love with the next person they laid eyes on. That would explain the phenomenon of love at first sight.

According to the myths, young Cupid was so handsome that it enraged Jupiter, his grandfather. To keep her son safe from Jupiter's anger, Venus took Cupid to the woods, where he honed his archery skills and learned to craft his own arrows. The god of love is powerful. He can make people fall in love, force them to confess their feelings and uncover hidden romantic desires. He can also become invisible, except when he's asleep.

CUPID'S CALLING!

10 DIY gift ideas for Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day customs have evolved over centuries, blending both ancient traditions and modern practices. The holiday originally stemmed from Roman and Christian influences, including the feast day of St. Valentine, a martyr associated with love and affection. In the Middle Ages, courtly love flourished, with poetry and romantic gestures becoming common on February 14th. By the 18th century in England, the tradition of sending handwritten notes, flowers, and chocolates became widespread. Today, mass production and commercialism have further shaped the holiday, making it a global celebration of love with gifts, cards, and elaborate romantic gestures.

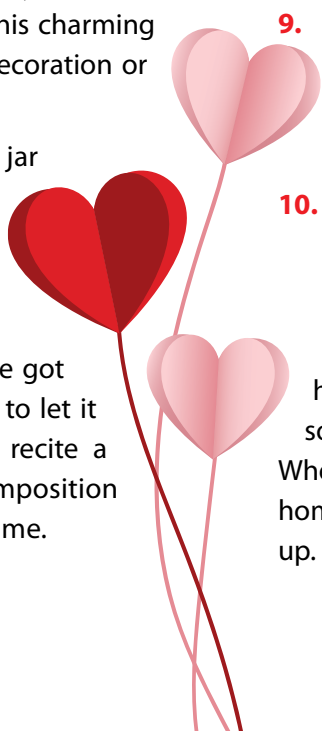
Maybe elaborate romantic gestures aren't your thing, but surprising your significant other with a Valentine's Day gift is a sweet and appreciated gesture. Here are some easy DIY gifts that will show your sweetheart they're still your special someone.



1. **Painted stone.** Find a pretty stone and paint it. You could paint a classic heart, your initials or a meaningful symbol or word. This charming little creation can serve as a decoration or paperweight.
2. **Candy jar.** Fill a beautiful glass jar with your partner's favorite sweets. Add a pretty ribbon and label for the finishing touch.
3. **Artistic performance.** If you've got an artistic flair, now's the time to let it shine. Sing an original song, recite a poem, or play a musical composition that includes your partner's name.

4. **Love poem or love letter.** What could be more romantic than receiving a heartfelt poem or letter? Use elegant paper and a fountain pen to really make an impact. Not confident in your writing skills? Worried about finding the right words? Ask a friend who has a way with words for some help.
5. **Greeting card.** Draw, paint or glue pictures onto a sturdy piece of cardstock and fold it in half. Then, write a personalized message inside. Let your creativity flow!
6. **Dessert.** Prepare a themed treat that incorporates your partner's favorite flavors. Heart-shaped cookies or cupcakes, chocolate-dipped strawberries and chocolate-raspberry mousse are winning ideas.
7. **Bookmark.** If the love of your life is a bookworm, make them a bookmark. Embellish it with a quote, a thought or a word that represents your unique bond.
8. **Photo collage.** Gather photos of your happiest moments together. Create a stunning display by framing them, designing a poster or pinning them on a corkboard. Add captions and motifs to further personalize your masterpiece.
9. **Memory box.** Curate a pretty box of objects, like show tickets, photos and notes, that celebrate your most unforgettable moments with your special someone. Your partner's eyes will sparkle with joy!
10. **Playlist.** Prepare a playlist of songs that remind you of your soulmate. Listen to them together in your living room or on a romantic road trip.

This Valentine's Day, surprise your loved one with a heartfelt gift that's sure to bring a smile. Making something yourself adds a special, personal touch! Whether you're good with your hands or not, a homemade gift can truly make your partner's eyes light up. Let these ideas inspire you.



5 ideas for Valentine's Day activities with kids



This year, celebrate Valentine's Day as a family. Try one of these five activities to celebrate love and friendship with your adorable kiddos:

Write messages. Encourage your kids or grandkids to write kind words for their parents or grandparents, classmates or cousins. Hand-deliver the notes, if possible, and savor the smiles.

Decorate cookies. Bake heart-shaped cookies, like shortbread or sugar cookies. Decorate them with your kids or grandkids using icing, candy or edible glitter. It's a tasty way to create beautiful memories.



Cook a colorful meal. Concoct a tasty Valentine's Day meal together with dishes featuring pink and red. You could incorporate foods like radishes, shrimp, salmon, strawberries, raspberries or tomatoes. Bon appetit!

Make slime. Find an easy slime recipe online and have fun making your own in classic Valentine's Day colors. Add some glitter for a sparkly effect.

Read themed books. Visit your local library or bookstore and pick out a few books on friendship or love. Read them with your kids or grandkids to spark meaningful conversations.

Happy Valentine's Day

to you and your little sweethearts!

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Scarves are worn close to the mouth and nose. They act like a magnet for all kinds of things, such as saliva, food crumbs, traces of make-up and skin care products, dead skin cells, mucus, pollution particles, microscopic bacteria and fungi. Wearing a scarf or neck warmer that's unclean—even if it doesn't look like it—can lead to skin problems like pimples. If you have a virus like the flu, you should wash your scarf after every use. As older adults, we've got to do everything we can to protect our health!




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Celebrity Extra

by Dana Jackson

Q: Is Mark Wahlberg really bald in his new movie "Flight Risk," or is he wearing a bald cap? -- N.W.

A: That's no bald cap or special effects. Mark Wahlberg really did shave off the top of his hair for his latest movie role as a pilot who transports a prisoner (Topher Grace) cross-country to testify against a mafia group. It was Wahlberg's idea to fully commit to the role with daily shavings and leaving "the horse-shoe around the sides."

Wahlberg told People magazine that the best part about his temporary look was seeing his wife's face the first time he took off his hat. The movie, which was directed by Mel Gibson and also stars Michelle Dockery ("Downton Abbey"), was originally set for release in 2024 but got moved back to Jan. 24.

★ ★ ★

Q: Will there be some kind of benefit concert to help the victims of the California Wildfires? -- K.K.



PHOTO CREDIT: COURTESY OF LIONSGATE

Mark Wahlberg stars in Mel Gibson's "Flight Risk."

A: Yes, there is a concert in the works that is expected to air live on Jan. 30 at 6 p.m. PT (3 p.m. ET) from two different venues: the Kia Forum and the Intuit Dome. Details can be found at FireAidLA.org, but artists who are scheduled to perform include Olivia Rodrigo, Billie Eilish, No Doubt, P!nk, Sting, Stevie Nicks, Rod Stewart, Joni Mitchell, Lady Gaga, Jelly Roll, Earth, Wind & Fire, plus many more!

★ ★ ★

Q: I read that a man is going to replace Hoda Kotb on the "Today" show, but who will be Jenna Bush Hager's co-host on their show? -- K.E.

A: Craig Melvin is familiar to "Today" show audiences as he's been a co-host of "Weekend Today" since 2016, so it was natural to name him as Kotb's replacement opposite Savannah Guthrie. However, the fourth hour of "Today" is taking its time finding a host who has the right chemistry with Jenna Bush Hager. They plan to have a series of rotating guest hosts to find the right pick.

The newly rebranded "Today with Jenna & Friends" kicked off on Jan. 13 with Taraji P. Henson ("Empire"), followed by Eva Longoria ("Desperate Housewives") and Keke Palmer ("Nope"). The three actresses (as well as the future co-hosts) will spend anywhere from one episode up to a week's worth in the chair alongside Hager.

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Here's a Tip

by JoAnn Derson

Many people have written in the tip to use two similarly sized bowls, one larger than the other, to serve cold salads at picnics. Add a few cups of crushed ice to the larger bowl, then nestle the smaller bowl into it to keep your salad chilled. But remember: Don't leave food out longer than two hours.

If you are making food platters for a barbecue, consider making several smaller platters instead of one large dish. The large ones are harder to store when you're prepping, but a better reason is that the items will not go stale/too warm/too cold quite as fast, and it's easy to switch out plates throughout the party.

"Using plastic cups for a crowd? Remember to put out a permanent marker or some other way to mark everyone's glass. It's hard to keep track when they all look the same."
-- C.L. in Pennsylvania

"For serving utensils used during picnics, label two large zip-top plastic bags 'clean' and 'dirty.' Anything used to touch raw meat goes in the 'dirty' bag. And serving spoons that can be used again to serve are in the 'clean' bag."
-- M.A. in Arizona

A bit of bit of advice for first time parents: Assemble and try out complicated items right away while you have the time to learn how to work them. New dad Dan had a heck of a time trying to load bags into his brand-new Diaper Genie in the middle of the night.

Toothpaste works well as a silver polish. Wet your silver, plop a little non-gel toothpaste on it and rub gently with a damp, clean rag. Rinse well with a separate rag, and buff dry. Then just step back and let it shine.

If you've ever oversalted soup, don't worry; here's a great tip to recover your meal. Just cut a single potato into several large slices. Add them to the soup, and they will soak up the extra salt. Remove before serving.

S.W. of South Carolina has this tip to share: "If you can't seem to keep track of your keys, make an extra set for those times when you're running late and can't spare the time to look for them. It has saved me a lot of stress, for sure."

"Plant banana skins in your garden, just below the surface. They rot quickly and provide nutrients for growing plants."
-- A.R. in Ohio

To ripen a green tomato, wrap it in a sheet of newspaper or place it in a paper bag. It can then be left on the counter for several days to ripen.

"To keep those ice crystals from forming on the top of your quart of ice cream, just cut a square of plastic wrap and push it down onto the surface of the ice cream each time you scoop a bowlful out. It peels off easily when you're ready for another helping, but there's no ice! Works for me!" -- T.D. in Nebraska

Heavy metals in our dark chocolate

It appears that dark chocolate -- the dark chocolate we intentionally choose for its health benefits like lower blood pressure and antioxidants that protect cells from damage -- can contain dangerous amounts of lead and cadmium.

Consumer Reports did research to test the levels of lead and cadmium in dark chocolate candy bars, and of the 28 different dark chocolate bars they tested, all of them had lead and cadmium. Specifically, their tests were to look for mercury, lead, cadmium and arsenic, all heavy metals. The result: 23 of the dark chocolate candy bars had enough heavy metal in them that eating just one ounce of the candy would be harmful.

For those of us who've believed that a little dark chocolate would benefit our health, it turns out all that heavy metal could lead to immune system suppression, kidney damage and more.

Later tests on an additional 48 chocolate products in several categories: chocolate chips, cocoa powder, brownie mixes, cake mixes and hot chocolate mixes revealed that of 48 products, 16 had concerning amounts of heavy metals. However, they did find safer options for each item.

By far the best known brand that Consumer Reports found to have lower levels of both cadmium and lead is Ghirardelli. It made the safer choices list with two of its bars -- Intense Dark Chocolate and Intense Dark Chocolate Twilight Delight. Valrhona's Abinao Dark Chocolate also made the list.

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Guard yourself against AI tricks

The year is off to a roaring start when it comes to scams. To hear the experts tell it, we have AI to thank for a lot of it. AI, or artificial intelligence, is enhancing some of the scams that were already out there and creating more as the technology increases.

Our goal: to get through 2025 without losing a single dollar to the crooks.

Last month the FBI put out an alert focusing on scams created by artificial intelligence and ways to protect ourselves.

AI-generated text creates fake social media profiles, emails, websites and texts that push financial frauds like investment and romance schemes to trick us into sending money or disclosing personal information.

AI-generated pictures can include fake driver's licenses or credentials for fake law enforcement. As an indication of how low they'll go, AI can even create fake pictures of natural disasters that tug at our heartstrings and convince us to open our wallets and send money.

AI-generated audio can impersonate public figures or our loved ones and, again, the purpose is to make us believe something ... and open our wallets.

It's the same with AI-generated videos: to make us believe something is real when it isn't.

No. 1 on the FBI's list of ways to protect ourselves is to have a secret word or phrase with family so we can verify our identity.

As always, if you're suspicious about a call you receive, hang up.

Don't send anyone you don't know any cash or gift cards. Don't post your photos online. If they're online now, take them down.

As a start in staying safe from AI, search online for "how to spot AI text" so you can learn to recognize it. Then look for images and audio. Get up to speed on the different ways AI can fool you. Sadly, we need to be wary at all times now.



Despite their sophistication, AI-generated phishing emails still leave subtle clues that can alert a discerning eye:

Unusual sender email addresses:

Always verify the domain name. AI might create convincing sender names, but domain spoofing can often be spotted if you look closely.

Too-good-to-be-true offers:

Be skeptical of emails making incredible offers or claims. If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

Mismatched URLs:

Before clicking on any link in an email, hover over it to see the actual URL. Phishing links may lead to websites that mimic legitimate ones but have slight variations in spelling or domain type.

Requests for confidential info:

Legitimate organizations will not ask for sensitive information like passwords or PINs via email.

Urgent and threatening language:

Phishers often try to create a sense of urgency to provoke immediate action. Be wary of emails pressuring you to act quickly.

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Steroid Injections Provide Amazing Relief From Shingles Pain

DEAR DR. ROACH: I read your recent column on shingles. I am 66 and in fairly good health. I had both Shingrix shots about five years ago and take hydroxyurea for polycythemia vera (PV).

I noticed some spots on my forearm that appeared to be a spider bite. I went to my family doctor, and she immediately diagnosed me with shingles and put me on gabapentin, which didn't help much. The next month was complete misery.

I never really had itching or an extensive rash, but intense pain and burning developed from the top of my neck down to my left thumb and forefinger. My wife read that hydroxyurea lowers your immune system, which is probably why I had such a bad case of shingles despite the Shingrix shots.

My cousin is a retired anesthesiologist and recommended an epidural steroid injection (ESI) that would help me immediately. I had the injection, and within 24 hours, I had an 80% improvement in my pain level. Over the next month, the pain decreased another 10% to 15%. I went from being almost incapacitated to being able to live again in 24 hours. The outcome was life-changing!

It seems that doctors need to be brought up to date on ESIs for shingles. I understand that the studies are inconclusive, but

the on-the-ground results seem to show that it is effective. The pain from shingles has to be experienced to really understand how debilitating it can be. ESIs are fairly inexpensive, and even if they only helped slightly, they would be worth the cost. To have the improvement I found is priceless. -- Anon.

ANSWER: I often recommend the vaccine to prevent shingles, but as your case shows, the vaccine isn't perfect. I agree that your PV and its treatment with hydroxyurea may have predisposed you to the complication of shingles you had, called postherpetic neuralgia (PHN). You are quite right that the pain can be extraordinarily severe.

I am glad you wrote because steroid injections are not a treatment that I have written about before. As you say, not all trials found a benefit, but the largest trial found that intrathecal injections (which are similar to epidural injections but are found to be more effective in a small trial) led to excellent or good pain relief in 90% of people with intractable PHN, compared to 4% in people who didn't receive treatment.

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.

Shingles is a viral infection that causes a painful rash with blisters. It's caused by the varicella-zoster virus (VZV), the same virus that causes chickenpox. After a person has chickenpox, the virus remains dormant in the nerve cells. It can reactivate later in life, causing shingles.

The most common symptoms of shingles include pain, burning, or tingling sensations in a specific area of the body, usually on one side. a red rash with fluid-filled blisters, fever, headache, and sensitivity to light.

If you think you have shingles, or you were exposed to someone with shingles or chickenpox, you should contact your primary care physician as soon as possible. You should see a doctor within three days of the rash starting.

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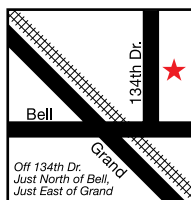
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Creamy Parmesan Italian Sausage Soup

INGREDIENTS

1 lb Italian sausage
(or turkey or chicken sausage)
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 small onion, diced
3 garlic cloves, minced
2 medium carrots, sliced
2 celery stalks, chopped
4 cups chicken broth
1 cup Ditalini pasta
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
1/2 teaspoon dried basil
1/2 cup heavy cream
1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
2 cups fresh spinach, chopped
Salt and pepper to taste
Fresh parsley for garnish (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

Cook the Sausage: In a large pot, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add the sausage, breaking it into small crumbles, and cook until browned. Remove the sausage from the pot and set aside.

Sauté the Vegetables: In the same pot, add diced onion, minced garlic, sliced carrots, and chopped celery. Sauté until the vegetables are softened, about 5 minutes.

Add Broth and Herbs: Pour in the chicken broth, then stir in the oregano and basil. Bring the mixture to a boil.

Cook the Pasta: Add the Ditalini pasta to the boiling broth. Cook for about 8 minutes, or until the pasta is tender but still firm.

Make it Creamy: Lower the heat to medium. Stir in the cooked sausage, heavy cream, and grated Parmesan cheese. Simmer for 5 minutes, allowing the soup to thicken slightly.

Add Spinach: Stir in the fresh spinach until it wilts into the soup. Season with salt and pepper to taste.



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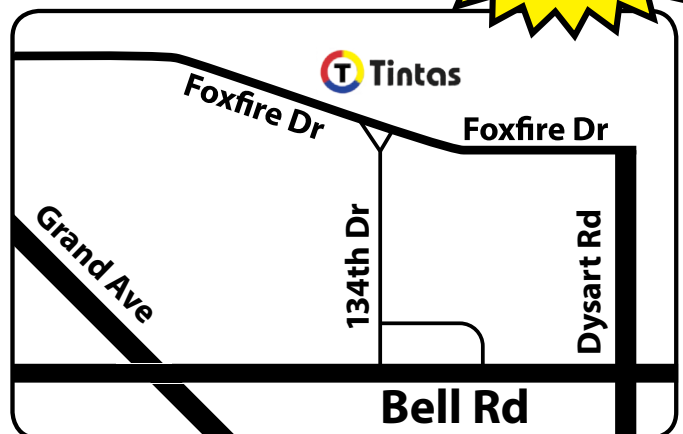
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New presumptives added to the list

In January the Department of Veterans Affairs added several illnesses to its list of presumptives, courtesy of the PACT Act. Done in two batches, the new additions to the list make it easier for veterans to get the care they need without the dragged-out process of proving that where they were stationed was the cause of their current condition. The illnesses are now considered service-connected, which gives veterans free health care for those conditions.

The first batch of conditions (in effect on Jan. 2) included urinary bladder, ureter and related genitourinary cancers. The second batch (Jan. 10) included acute and chronic leukemias, multiple myelomas, and myelodysplastic syndromes and myelofibrosis.

Locations matter, and these presumptives are covered for veterans who served in Somalia, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the neutral zone between Iraq and Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, the Gulf of Aden, the Gulf of Oman, the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea or the Red Sea on or after Aug. 2, 1990.

After 9/11, the covered locations are for those who served in Afghanistan, Iraq, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen or Uzbekistan.

K2 veterans, you haven't been forgotten. In fact, those serving at Karshi-Khanabad have been recipients of a major push by the VA to get you the health benefits you should have. Too many K2 veterans have undiagnosed illnesses and multi-symptom illnesses, likely from what was in the toxic environment while you were there: jet fuel, asbestos roof tiles, volatile organic compounds, depleted uranium, open burn pits, and more. A recent VA news release says that of the 16,000 K2 veterans, 13,000 are enrolled in VA care. Of those, 11,800 have at least one service connected condition, with the average having 14.6 service-connected conditions.

If you're K2 -- and even if you aren't -- and haven't signed up for health care, call the VA at 1-800-MYVA411 (800-698-2411). Get the benefits you're supposed to have.



4 great ways to give back to your community

1. SHARE YOUR COOKING

When cooking for yourself, make extra portions to offer to a homeless person or a low-income family in your neighborhood. Or, alternatively, when getting take-out buy an extra portion to share with them.

2. ORGANIZE A NEIGHBORHOOD CLEANUP

Share your love for the environment with your friends and neighbors. Gather a group of four or five people to pick up litter in your area. Make an event of it by finishing with a barbeque or potluck.

3. COLLECT FOOD BANK ITEMS

Set out a bin at your workplace that you and your coworkers can fill with non-perishable food items for the poor. Bring the donations to a food bank in your area every week or two.

4. DO SOME YARD WORK

Help around the yard for an elderly person who lives alone, is sick or has reduced mobility. Next time you mow your lawn, check on your elderly neighbor's lawn and pick up dropped fruit. Always ask first, just to be sure it's something they want done.

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Paws and Claws



Holidays are a popular time to adopt a pet for someone else, though it happens any time of year. Let's consider the pitfalls of adopting pets for other people.

Yes, there are instances when adopting a pet as a surprise for someone is successful: A parent adopting a kitten for their child who lives in the same home and they are aware that, as the parent, they will have ultimate responsibility for the care and maintenance of the pet. Likewise, someone may adopt a cat or small dog as a companion for an elderly parent. If there are others in the home able and willing to take responsibility for the care of the pet, that seems to work out just fine.

Situations that don't go so well are when well-meaning individuals decide for someone else that having a pet is in their best interest, without getting permission or considering if that person is able to care for a pet on their own. When these adoptions don't work out, what happens to the pet? If there isn't a family member willing to care for it, it is usually surrendered to a shelter. It may be a lovely and thoughtful impulse, but if a person is not ready for a new pet, it's the animal that suffers.

If you think someone is truly in need of some joy

and comfort, take one of your pets to visit with them or go with them to a local animal shelter to volunteer. You can get a good "fur fix" petting cats and walking dogs without having the responsibility of a pet in the home.



Always make sure a pet is wanted, and allowed where the person is living. Does the person have the support needed to care for a pet, and is there someone willing to take responsibility for the pet if it proves too much for the person to handle or if something happens to them? Pets are living creatures, and their needs and care must be considered, as well as the person who will be caring for them.

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6 Feet Under

Death doesn't have to be morbid. It's inevitable, so you might as well make things easier on your loved ones by planning ahead. Delve into the world of unconventional burials and reflect on bizarre traditions of the past:

"Close to Death" -- Learn about options besides traditional burials and cremation, like a "green" burial site and a company that will shoot your remains into outer space! In "Home Funerals," a death doula walks producer Greg through a "practice run" of his end-of-life celebration. (ART19.com)

"Death in the Afternoon" -- The trio of hosts speak with those who are "working to change the future of death care." Special episodes about cadaver dogs, crematory "whoopsies," and an interview with the author of "Will My Cat Eat My Eyeballs?" (DeathInTheAfternoon.Libsyzn.com)

"Obituary" -- "Outlandish, hilarious and sometimes scathing obituaries." Bizarre tales throughout history involving the dead, as well as strange funeral traditions. Each episode is also capped off with a "Dumb Criminals" segment, which is always good for a laugh. (Wondery.com)



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Strange But True

by Lucie Winborne

Shonda Rhimes got the idea for the TV series "Grey's Anatomy" after a doctor told her how hard it was to shave her legs in the tiny hospital shower.

A website called Myfridgefood.com lets you enter whatever ingredients you have in your fridge and tells you what you can make with them.

One of the reasons your lungs feel refreshed when walking through a pine forest is because of an anti-inflammatory compound called α -Pinene, found in conifers. It is used as a bronchodilator in the treatment of asthma and is abundantly present in marijuana.

An estimated 10% of Europeans are immune to HIV infection because they have an ancestor who survived bubonic plague, or "Black Death."

If you're a man and pee on a pregnancy test and it's positive, you could have cancer.

Because of the amount of granite in its construction, Grand Central Station produces more radiation than is allowable at a nuclear power plant.

In India, a statue of Jesus had "holy" water mysteriously dripping from its toes, which worshipers would collect and sometimes drink. A man traced the fluid's source to a clogged toilet behind the wall, condensing on the statue.

There is a Guinness World Record for "most matchsticks extinguished with the tongue."

Medical students in 18th-century Scotland could pay their tuition fees in corpses.

A statement in the end credits of the movie "Frozen" claims that Disney does not support the consumption of boogers.

An IKEA in the Netherlands had to cancel its one-euro breakfast special because it attracted too many customers and caused highway traffic jams.

Thomas Edison invented the tattoo pen.

Rolex replaced, without charge, all the watches that had been seized by the Germans from shot-down Allied pilots during World War II.

In its lifetime, the International Space Station will be hit by 100,000 meteoroids.

During the Columbine High School massacre in 1999, two 20-pound propane bombs that were planted in the cafeteria failed to detonate. If they had, it is estimated that up to 488 students would have been seriously injured or killed.

Every year, Iceland gets wider by 2 centimeters.

The U.S. Embassy in Kathmandu, Nepal, has guidelines on what to do if you should stumble across a yeti (and no, we are not talking about the cup!).

The first mention of the word "pizza" was in a Latin text written in southern Italy in 997 CE.



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Water leaking from the tubing to your ice maker or a broken valve in your bathroom can cause extensive damage to your home. Older adults experience a significantly higher rate of home fires compared to the general population. And we've all seen the roof damage an Arizona monsoon can cause.

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Take good care of your feet!

Did you know that three out of four people develop serious foot problems over time, with a high percentage of these being seniors? Discover why foot health becomes even more crucial as you age.

Age-related changes

As you age, it's common to encounter challenges like arthritis, decreased mobility and fragile skin, all of which can impact the health of your feet. Dealing with foot pain can make it tough to maintain proper hygiene and limit your ability to stay active.

If you can't manage your foot care on your own, it's important to seek professional help.



Care options

If you're an older adult, you can visit several health professionals for support. For example, podiatrists specialize in treating foot diseases and can perform surgical procedures to alleviate discomfort. Additionally, orthotist-prosthetists create custom devices tailored to the unique needs of older individuals, whether it's to address orthopedic issues or replace a missing limb.

Older adults can also benefit from the expertise of a specially trained nurse who can provide professional podiatric care. They can clean and trim nails, correct their curvature to prevent ingrown toenails and provide other therapeutic care. These services are essential for maintaining optimal foot health, especially for seniors.

Do you need to consult a professional? Talk to your family doctor to find the appropriate resources.



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Sign up now!

Registration for the 2025 National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic is now open. Scheduled to take place in San Diego this summer August 23-30, veterans who want to go should get started now on the application process. Those who are eligible could get a free round-trip plane ticket, so it's worth the time to get started on your application. Registration cuts off on March 1. Go online to va.gov and search for "National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic 2025."

You'll need the 2025 NVSSC Veteran Registration Packet, and your primary care doctor needs to sign off on the physical exam form (VA Form 0928c). If you're over 40, you'll need a recent EKG strip. Make your VA medical appointment now to make sure there are no delays.

Click the "Forms Submission" link to upload your medical docs.

Then wait. It might take 45 days after the March 1 deadline for you to be notified (via email) whether you are approved to attend.

Who qualifies for the clinics? Veterans who have traumatic brain injury, spinal cord injuries, amputations, PTSD, visual impairments and more. See the sports clinic webpage for the details. If you're actively engaged with the VA for care, you'll likely qualify.

Fine print includes items such as weight limit of 250 pounds if you're dependent or 300 pounds if you move independently. If you bring a caregiver, they pay their own way. If you need help with ADL, your caregiver needs to come along. You'll be expected to stay for the whole week and participate in everything, and you'll need to pay for your own lodging (but they get a group discount).

Priority goes to veterans who've never attended, followed by veterans who've attended one or two clinics. For a third year, you'll need a recommendation. (It still can't hurt to apply. Each application is reviewed individually.)

While the application steps might be a bit daunting, for the rehab, fitness experience and everything you'll learn, the VA sports clinic can't be beat.

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Is it a good idea to co-sign a bank loan for a family member?

Are you in a situation where someone is asking you to be their co-signer for a bank loan? It's common for people to turn to family members for this kind of support. Take the following considerations into account before deciding whether to co-sign for a loved one:

- Co-signing a loan for someone else can impact your finances. Until the loan is fully repaid, it may be harder for you to get credit for yourself.
- If the family member you're endorsing falls behind on payments, your credit rating is affected just as if you were solely responsible for the debt.
- If payments continue to fall behind or the person declares bankruptcy, you could be held accountable for repaying the entire loan.

What should you do? 

Before agreeing to endorse a family member, find out about the potential penalties associated with the loan. Above all, make sure that the person you're dealing with is serious and financially responsible.

Talk to an expert for more advice.



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Strange But True

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There was a Russian game show that would have you steal a car, and if you didn't get caught by the police within 35 minutes, you'd win the car. Otherwise, you would be arrested.

Benjamin Franklin invented a mechanical arm for reaching books on high shelves.

Sulfhemoglobinemia is a condition that causes a person to develop green blood.

Translated literally, the Japanese words for wrist and ankle are "hand neck" and "foot neck."

In 2015, two brothers from Spain attempted to sell a fake portrait by Francisco de Goya to a sheikh for a cool 1.5 million euros, only to discover that he'd paid them in photocopied money. The pair were arrested when they tried to deposit their ill-gotten gains in a Geneva bank.

A study done by the University of Glasgow found that dogs appear to prefer reggae and soft rock over other genres of music.

The eponymous character in Dolly Parton's hit song "Jolene" was based on a bank teller who flirted mercilessly with Dolly's husband.

Porsche's first car, in 1898, was electric.



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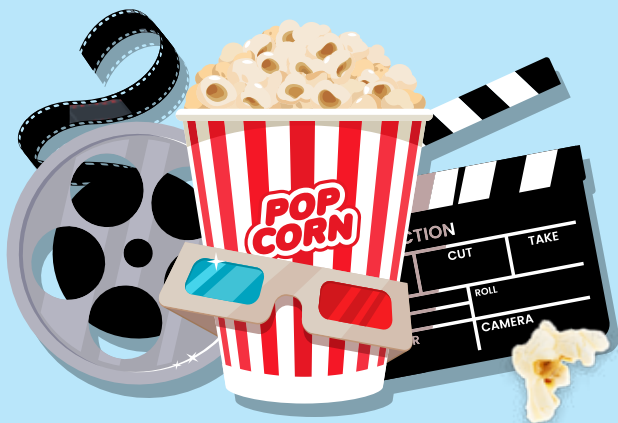
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- **CAPE VERDE.** Escape to the heart of the Atlantic Ocean in this breathtaking archipelago with its heavenly beaches. Don't miss the chance to experience the vibrant Afro-Portuguese Creole culture that adds an extra layer of magic to your stay.
- **MOROCCO.** Immerse yourself in a country bursting with beauty and excitement. Explore archaeological sites, visit bustling cities and wander through lively markets with an array of spices and exquisite handicrafts.



- **VIETNAM.** Marvel at unique landscapes, taste delicious cuisine and experience the legendary hospitality in this amazing destination. Whether you're an avid hiker or a water sports enthusiast, this is the perfect place for you.
- **SPAIN.** Whether you like lounging on the beach, delving into history or going out late, you'll love this country, guaranteed! Culture, architecture and delicious eats — your stay will be anything but boring.

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— W.C. Fields

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Secondly, e-readers are lightweight and easy to handle. You can read longer without tiring or developing aches and pains. If you love reading hefty tomes of 500 pages or more, this is definitely something to consider.

Additionally, e-readers have a matte-finish touch screen and built-in backlighting so you can read in the dark at night without having to turn on a lamp. You can also dim or brighten the screen to suit the ambient light in your surroundings—ideal for preventing eyestrain and glare.

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PRESIDENT'S DAY QUIZ Do you know your history?

The United States has had 45 presidents, each leaving their unique mark and shaping American history.

Can you place the following PRESIDENTS in the right place in the list?

1. William Henry Harrison
2. Dwight D. Eisenhower
3. Ulysses S. Grant
4. Theodore Roosevelt
5. Abraham Lincoln
6. Calvin Coolidge
7. James Madison
8. George H. W. Bush
9. Grover Cleveland
10. Millard Fillmore



1789-1797: George Washington

1797-1801: John Adams

1801-1809: Thomas Jefferson

1809-1817: _____

1817-1825: James Monroe

1825-1829: John Quincy Adams

1829-1837: Andrew Jackson

1837-1841: Martin Van Buren

1841: _____

1841-1845: John Tyler

1845-1849: James K. Polk

1849-1850: Zachary Taylor

1850-1853: _____

1853-1857: Franklin Pierce

1857-1861: James Buchanan

1861-1865: _____

1865-1869: Andrew Johnson

1869-1877: _____

1877-1881: Rutherford B. Hayes

1881: James A. Garfield

1881-1885: Chester A. Arthur

1885-1889 / 1893-1897: _____

1889-1893: Benjamin Harrison

1897-1901: William McKinley

1901-1909: _____

1909-1913: William Howard Taft

1913-1921: Woodrow Wilson

1921-1923: Warren G. Harding

1923-1929: _____

1929-1933: Herbert Hoover

1933-1945: Franklin D. Roosevelt

1945-1953: Harry S. Truman

1953-1961: _____

1961-1963: John F. Kennedy

1963-1969: Lyndon B. Johnson

1969-1974: Richard M. Nixon

1974-1977: Gerald R. Ford

1977-1981: Jimmy Carter

1981-1989: Ronald Reagan

1989-1993: _____

1993-2001: William J. Clinton

2001-2009: George W. Bush

2009-2017: Barack Obama

2017-2021: Donald J. Trump

2021-2025: Joseph R. Biden Jr.

Present: Donald J. Trump

1809-1817: James Madison
1841: William Henry Harrison
1850-1853: Millard Fillmore
1861-1865: Abraham Lincoln
1869-1877: Ulysses S. Grant
1885-1889 / 1893-1897: Grover Cleveland
1901-1909: Theodore Roosevelt
1923-1929: Calvin Coolidge
1953-1961: Dwight D. Eisenhower
1989-1993: George H. W. Bush

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What is a net zero home?

A "net zero home" is a residential building that produces as much energy as it consumes over the course of a year, resulting in a net zero energy consumption, meaning it essentially has no energy bill due to its efficient design and renewable energy generation, like solar panels, offsetting its energy usage completely.



Net zero homes are composed of high-quality, energy-efficient materials and integrate sources of renewable energy into their designs. For a building to have a net energy consumption of zero, it has to be extremely well designed and constructed. Its walls, doors and windows must be highly insulated, airtight, and the house must utilize energy-efficient appliances and lighting to minimize energy needs. Its foundation has to be properly sealed with a product that has a high R-value (an indicator of a material's resistance to heat flow).

In addition to the above, the house must generate its own renewable energy. Most net zero homes have solar panels installed that produce energy for the home to offset consumption. Others use geothermal heating or cooling systems, which use the temperature of the ground to regulate the temperature inside the house. Net zero homes significantly reduce their carbon footprint by minimizing reliance on fossil fuels and homeowners benefit from lower energy bills due to reduced energy consumption.

If you're planning to build your next home, consider the advantages of a net zero home. It benefits the environment and guarantees long-term savings when it comes to your energy bills. Plus, you can often sell extra solar energy that you produce back to the grid.

PUZZLE ANSWERS

Answers to Puzzles on Page 22

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

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



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People are still talking about Demi Moore's wonderful speech at the Golden Globes after she won for "The Substance." I met Demi in 1982 when she was Jackie Templeton on "General Hospital" before she starred in "Blame It on Rio" (1984), "St. Elmo's Fire" (1985), "About Last Night" (1986), and her superstar-maker "Ghost" (1990).



PHOTO CREDIT: INSTAGRAM

Demi Moore

During her speech for "The Substance" (which cost \$17.5 million and grossed \$76.5 million), she said "I've been doing this a long time -- over 45 years. This is the first time I've ever won anything as an actor." Next, she'll star in the sci-fi comedy "I Love Boosters" with "Password" host Keke Palmer and Will Poulter.

★ ★ ★

Sebastian Stan was another Globe winner for "A Different Man" (which he also produced), but the film only grossed \$1.3 million. He fared better with "The Apprentice" (yes, as TV host Donald Trump), which cost \$16 million and grossed \$17.3 million.

His next film should fare even better. It's the Marvel superhero film "Thunderbolts*" with Florence Pugh, Wyatt Russell (Kurt Russell's son), David Harbour, and Julia Louis-Dreyfus. It's due on May 2.

★ ★ ★



PHOTO CREDIT: FACEBOOK

George Clooney

Imagine when I met George Clooney on the set of "The Facts of Life" in 1985 and talked him into an at-home photo shoot for TV Radio Mirror Magazine (because he was handsome, a nice guy, and had "TV star" written all over him). I never envisioned that he'd become the superstar icon he is today. His next film is the Netflix coming-of-age comedy "Jay Kelly" with Adam Sandler, Laura Dern, Billy

Crudup, Riley Keough, Jim Broadbent, Isla Fisher and Greta Gerwig.

Who better to help "Jay Kelly" come of age than Clooney, who had four young girls teach him "The Facts Of Life"?

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