

The Ranchos Independent



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50¢

**Who's Using
the MOST
Water ...**

**... in
Madera
County?**

by DJ Becker

In This Issue

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Classifieds • Page 22 / Fun Pages • Pages 26 & 27*



When an acre of almond trees use 1.4 million gallons of water a year, is there still really any doubt about where our local groundwater is going? It's an awkward and uncomfortable question posed in an agricultural community.

In addition to failing wells, Madera crop fields could soon face faltering or failure if a better water balance isn't achieved soon according to University of California, Central Valley, Water Use Expert and Soils Farm Adviser, Dan Monk. And putting the brakes on ag use may be the only real solution, if the water tipping point hasn't already been reached, according to Monk. Increasingly, county residents

doubt the Madera County Board of Supervisors have the inclination or abilities necessary to stand up to powerful farming interests.

"The only way to achieve water balance now is to reduce the number of acres in production," Monk said. "Madera County is currently pumping more than can be sustained, creating long term water deficits." He further stated that with nothing coming back the result is widely declining water levels.

Estimating Water Use

Monk estimated that overall

Please see **USERS** on P. 10

Major Drug Bust on 99 at Ave. 12

After a single traffic stop on Highway 99 near Avenue 12 on Tuesday, Aug. 12, 18 kilograms of cocaine, 16 pounds of methamphetamine and 8 pounds of white-powder heroin, with a wholesale value of nearly \$700,000, is off the streets and two Sacramento men are behind bars facing felony drug charges.

A California Highway Patrol K9 Officer, working with MADNET, pulled a 2008 Dodge Nitro over at around 1:30 p.m. on Aug. 12. Both Juan Carlos Esparza, 39, and Raydel Estrada Gomez, 29, appeared nervous and would not make eye contact with the officer which led him to ask



Nearly \$700,000 worth of drugs were seized during a traffic stop on Highway 99 near Avenue 12.

if they had anything illegal inside the SUV. The officer was given permission to search the vehicle and his K9 partner became very interested in two cardboard boxes in the Nitro. It turned out that they were stuffed with 13 kilograms of packaged cocaine, 15 pounds of packaged methamphetamine and almost \$7,000 in U.S. currency. But the search didn't end there. The K9 also found another 5 kilograms of packaged cocaine and 8 pounds of packaged white-powder heroin stashed inside the car's roof liner.

Please see **BUST** on P. 15

"Water Hose" Offered to MD-10A

GVUSD Board Considers Connection from School Well

By Karen Petryna

After lengthy discussion between residents of the Madera Ranchos, Madera County's Public Works Director and members of the Golden Valley School Board, a decision was made at the Aug. 19 school board meeting to go forward to study the feasibility of connecting Liberty High School's well and 1 million gallon holding tank to the water-strapped residents of the Ranchos' water district, MD-10A. At the same meeting it was also learned that a \$10 million grant from the State Environmental Health Department that the County had applied for to renovate MD-10A's aging water delivery sys-



tem had been accepted and was complete. The grant will cover new water lines and water meters.

Approximately 35 or so people showed up for the Golden Valley Unified School District (GVUSD) school board meeting on Aug. 19 at the Liberty High School Library. Many were there in response to Board President Mona Diaz's request, via Facebook, as the result of a meeting she had with Pete Cercone, owner of Pete and Maria's Italian Bistro on Avenue 12. Cercone had called her and asked about the possibility of MD-10A tapping into the High School's water

Please see **HOSE** on P. 3

MD-10A Water Conservation At Stage 4 Since August 14

Due to the unprecedented drought conditions this year and sole reliance on groundwater to meet the Valley's water demands, the groundwater table has significantly declined in the vicinity of the Madera Ranchos. The Madera Ranchos' Water System currently relies on three wells to meet its water demands. The declining water table is causing these wells to lose production. The system is unable to maintain adequate system pressures at current demand levels. It will be necessary to temporarily implement Stage 4 water shortage contingency measures in the Madera Ranchos (MD-10A) until further notice.

On January 17, 2014, the Governor of California proclaimed a state of emergency due to the current drought conditions. On January 28, 2014, the Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution No. 2014-009, proclaiming the existence of a local drought emergency in Madera County. The Governor's proclamation called upon local urban water suppliers and municipalities to implement their local water shortage contingency plans immediately.

On March 4, 2014, the Board of Supervisors adopted the Water Shortage Contingency Plan for Special Districts.

The Board also voted to increase water conservation efforts in response to the prolonged drought to ensure adequate water supply and reliability to all its customers:

- *The target reduction in water usage for this stage is 25% to 50%.*
- *Outdoor water use shall be prohibited.*
- *Hot tubs and pools shall be filled only with water transported from outside the Service Area or Maintenance District.*
- *Increase enforcement of the Water Conservation Ordinance.*
- *Violations are \$75 (first violation), \$125 (second violation), \$175 (third violation)*

For water conservation tips please visit www.saveourh2o.org. Please repair any dripping faucets or leaks in your house or yard. Call Special Districts at 559-675-7820 to report any water mains or service line leaks.

County offices can be found at 2037 W. Cleveland Avenue, Madera. Department phone numbers are:

- Road Department 559-675-7811
- Engineering Department 559-675-7817
- Special Districts Department 559-675-7820

HOSE cont. from P. 3

tank. Diaz was able to get the issue on the school board meeting agenda for the Aug. 19 meeting and she asked Madera County's Road Commissioner and new Public Works Director, Johannes Hovertsz, to come to the meeting and address the issue.

The Resumé

Hovertsz, who has worked with both Madera and Fresno County Road Departments for the last 14 years, as-

sumed the new position of Public Works Director after the departure of three other County engineers, including County Engineer Kheng Vang. Hovertsz said he would be relying on Associate Engineer Christina Knudsen for support with water and wastewater issues, having already gained experience in Parkwood when their groundwater well went out last month and a temporary water line was connected from the City of Madera.

Hovertsz was able to answer ques-

tions from the school board to the effect that it was both possible and legal, just as with Parkwood, to create a connection between the County system (MD-10A) and the GVUSD system, although State approval would be required. Hovertsz estimated that it would take approximately four months and cost \$60,000 to complete the project, which would also require a feasibility study, which he would begin with "buy-in" from the school board. He said the water would be metered so that MD-

10A could be charged for the water and all expenses associated with the hook-up, with the exception of what GVUSD wanted to pay its legal counsel to review an agreement that would be based off of the City of Madera-Parkwood agreement.

Hovertsz further explained that water from the school would only be provided to MD-10A while it was under Stage 4 Water Conservation require-

Please see **HOSE** on P. 16

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Letters

Dear Editor:

Water – it’s easy to take it for granted. We take our showers, use it to make our cup of coffee, wash our hands, water our lawns, and of course, drink it.

What’s more, our state depends on water for economics, with our agricultural communities creating thousands of jobs for our friends and neighbors, creating millions of dollars in revenues and producing food resources not only for California, but our nation and the world.

Bottom-line, we expect and need water to be available at all times and when we don’t have it, the realization hits that we really do, in fact, depend on it.

And in the midst of the worst drought in California history – with no signs of relief in sight – if we don’t act immediately, we will learn a very hard lesson sooner than later how much we depend on water as individuals, communities, cities, and ultimately, a state.

Last week, the Legislature and the Governor came together to craft a new \$7.5 billion water bond for the November ballot. The bill passed the Senate unanimously and only had 2 no votes in the Assembly.

It’s rare that we can all agree on an issue so controversial.

This new bond was a long time coming. In March, I joined the Senate working group to renegotiate the 2009 \$11.1 billion bond. It seemed that it was a bond that everyone had come to hate. It had billions in pork projects and the media had largely turned against it. The Assembly also had proposals, but neither side was able to come to an agreement.

Two weeks ago, Governor Brown weighed in with a \$6 billion bond. As a fiscally-responsible legislator, I understood the Governor’s apprehension in supporting a larger bond, on the other hand, I also knew the devastating consequences if we did not invest in the future. His proposal was a non-starter because it only contained \$2 billion for new storage. With already record low reservoir levels, we absolutely need to concentrate on creating surface water storage reservoirs, like Temperance Flat and Sites Reservoirs.

The important part, though, was that all parties were engaged in this process of crafting a new water bond that recognized the need for storage, Delta restoration, and clean water.

Because we held firm, we were able to get \$2.7 billion for new storage – a piece of the water puzzle that is absolutely essential to not only rebuilding our archaic water system built 50 years ago, but ensuring we continue to receive this increasingly precious resource now and for years to

come. This bond retains 90 percent of the funding for storage that was contained in the 2009 bond. Storage was just 27 percent of the original \$11.1 billion bond. Because of the cuts to other areas, it is now 36 percent. This bond’s allocation will allow us to build new infrastructure for the future.

We have kept the necessary funding to bring more water into our water system through surface storage, groundwater sustainability, and clean water. There is \$725 million for water recycling and \$200 million for stormwater capture projects. There is \$520 million to clean up our drinking water and \$750 million to prevent and reduce groundwater contamination.

For our region, this is very crucial. We have seen levels of subsidence in the Central Valley that are far too great. In the Salinas Valley, we are battling saltwater intrusion. In both regions, we have communities that cannot drink the water out of their taps. For the richest state in the richest country in the world, this is unacceptable.

This bond also eliminates the pork that did not provide additional water to the system and would have made it much harder to convince voters to pass the bond. If we would have kept the original bond, we would have missed a window to do what is right for the entire state. I can honestly say that this is the toughest issue I have faced since joining the Senate.

This victory shows how government should run. The 2009 bond barely made it through the Legislature and was cobbled together in middle-of-the-night negotiations. This new bond had overwhelming bipartisan support. We all came together to represent not just our constituents but to prepare California for the future. I am proud of the work done to create this new bond, and hopefully, Californians understand the importance of this bond and will pass it in November.

Senator Anthony Cannella, (R-Ceres)
Ceres

Dear Editor:

Well, it has happened. Our community water system is now on stage 4 – no outside watering. We can survive this if everyone works together. Our efforts should be two-pronged: 1) all of us should be conserving water in every way possible; and 2) we should all be contacting our state and county officials to demand comprehensive water legislation. I believe that every water

Please see **LETTERS** on P. 12

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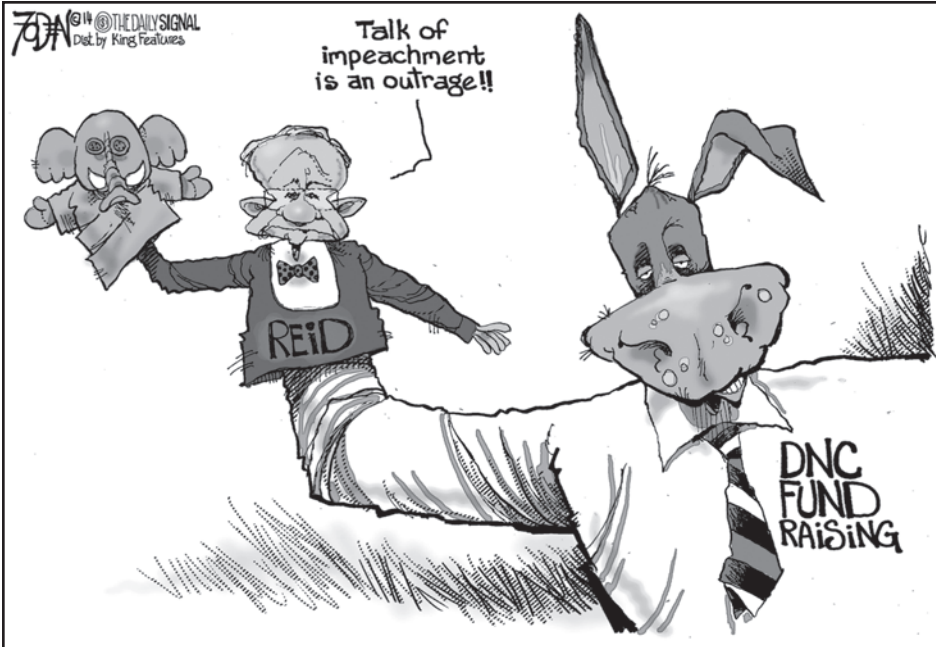
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Editorial

The Bogeyman

By Randy Bailey

The other day I was in my office when the phone rang. It was a Ranchos resident who wanted to know how to stop the development at Highway 41 and Avenue 12. "Why do you want to do that?" I asked.

"Well, for the water. They're taking our water," she said.

"So they're the reason we're at DEFCON 1 right now?"

She didn't know what that meant.

"So they're the reason why we can't water outside and all of our plants and lawns are dying and why the best advice we can get is 'if it's yellow let it mellow and if it's brown flush it down'?"

"Yeah. They're taking our water."

"Well what about the development the other way? The one off of Road 34?"

"Them too. Definitely. No question they're taking our water."

"Well, Highway 41 and Avenue 12 is a done deal. That's been in the works for decades. Short of an act of God or a nuclear holocaust, there's no way to stop it."

"But they're taking our water ..."

"Yeah. I got that part."

"Can't we get to vote on it or something?"

"You did."

"When?"

"When you elected the people to run Madera County's government, and the state of California's government. You

elected them to represent your interests and your interests then were closer shopping and a larger tax base so things could get done. Remember? When water wasn't an issue, solely because we hadn't run out yet, it was the crappy roads and a swimming pool at the high school and a community park ..."

"But our water ..."

"Look. Our water problem is very real, but those developments have nothing to do with *our* water situation."

"What do you mean?"

"With neither of those developments built, what's our water situation in the Ranchos right now?"

"It's terrible. That's what I've been saying."

"Okay, if those developments aren't even built, who's using all the water in the Ranchos right now?"

There was a long silence.

"But our water ..."

"WE are using all of the water. Us. Not 'them.' We utilize the 'Ranchos System' of water management where we suck it out of a depleting aquifer, use it one time, then put it into an aging septic system. Any guesses where that septic tank water is going?"

Another long silence.

"We do not have a water shortage problem. We have a water storage problem. We should be getting our water from Temperance Flat dam behind Millerton Lake ..."

"Well then why don't we?"

"Because it's not built. 'They' won't let it be built. Even in a drought year enough moisture falls on California to supply all of our water needs, but there's no where to store it so it ends up in the ocean. Do you really want to do something about 'our water'?"

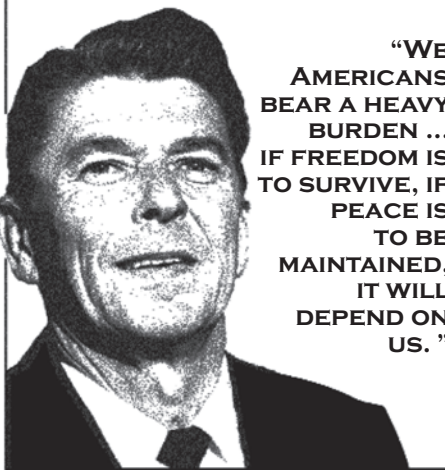
"That's what I called you about."

"Start a movement. March on Sacramento. DEMAND that water storage be built. DEMAND that we get a water treatment system that allows our precious water to be used more than once. DEMAND that our leaky pipes that waste -- conservatively -- 25 percent of the water we pump out of the ground be replaced. DEMAND that our sewage doesn't end up in our dinner. But more than anything, stop looking for the solution from 'without.' As Pogo said, 'We have met the enemy and he is us.'"

"So this Pogo guy is taking our water?"

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A Dead Bug's Life

Sometimes I think I deserve my own reality show. Especially when I do something particularly amusing or absurd, or both. Most often these moments of hilarious ridiculousness involve some sort of multi-legged bane of my existence. This weekend was no exception.

It's no secret I do not like bugs. I hate them. Frankly, I am terrified of them. If I have the misfortune to run into something with more limbs than I have, my knee-jerk reaction is to run screaming in the opposite direction. It's not that I don't get how ludicrous this reaction is – I do. And yes, I am fully aware that I am a thousand times the size of the creature that haunts my nightmares. None of that matters when I see a bug; my fight or flight instinct kicks into full throttle and it never tells me to fight.

Ever.

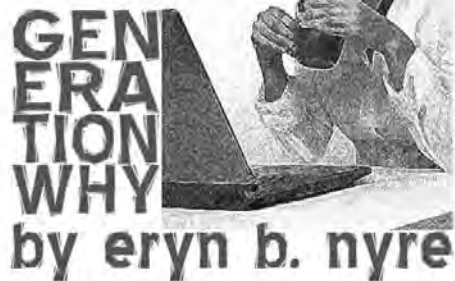
Summertime is my least favorite time of year. Not only because I abhor the heat, but it also happens to be when six- and eight-legged beasts come out of the woodwork and delight in torturing me.

You can't convince me of any other reality than they search me out personally because they get some sick amusement out of my terror. They know who I am and they have meetings about how funny it is to watch me scream and cry. They are after me.

The management company of my apartment complex pays to have a pest control com-

pany come out once a month to spray the units. It's one of the reasons I chose this apartment. For the most part my home is creepy crawler free. When the occasional little bugger finds its way in it rarely makes it very far before dropping dead. The most common graveyard I have noticed is the light fixture in my bathroom ceiling. It's one of those big panel lights and it seems to be the clandestine meeting grounds of ill-fated lovers of the insect variety. They fall in love, waddle into my light fixture, past the napalm border that I patrol regularly, and die. Romeo and Juliet: The Tale of Star-Crossed Water Beetles.

Every once in a while, maybe twice over the course of the summer, one of those little monsters with a supernatural



immunity to the poison the pest control company uses attempts to make my home theirs. I'm convinced there is some deep recess of my building that is emitting radioactive gas and creating mutant insects.

This weekend that is exactly what happened. Well, it wasn't my apartment specifically, but it attempted a surprise attack on me in front of the elevator. There I was, minding my own business, lugging two baskets full of neglected dirty clothes to the laundry room, when the elevator doors slid open and what


proceeded to launch an attack on me but a giant, black beetle. It was huge. I could see its eyes. I could smell its breath. I had no weapons, no escape route. I was cornered in an elevator with it advancing on me like it hadn't eaten in weeks. I needed bug spray. I needed a baseball bat. I needed Iron Man.

The elevator doors closed just before it boarded and I quickly ran back to my apartment, barely cognizant of the trail of dirty socks I was leaving behind me. Leave them ... they can't be saved.

I slammed my door and grabbed the nearest bottle of bug spray and began dousing every crack, crevice and entry into my apartment. I'm quite certain I will smell like Raid for the rest of the year.

I recognize that a grown woman crying and clutching a can of insect poison is a preposterous image, but there I was, praying the bug wasn't following my scent all the way to my apartment like the murderous villain in every horror

Please see **GEN WHY** on P. 11




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Senior Report

Seniors Plan Doll, Collectable Show

By Verlaine Elinburg

Remember When: When we were in high school more than 50 years ago, the top discipline problems were talking, chewing gum, making noise, running in the halls, getting out of turn when standing in line, wearing improper clothes and not putting paper in wastebaskets. Today it's drugs and alcohol abuse, pregnancy, suicide, rape, robbery, assault and guns in the schools.

Back then the fun things to do included playing cowboys and Indians, chocolate milk and cookies, sucking on ice chips, licking mom's mixer beaters and catching lightening bugs in a jar. Today it's all about hanging out

at the mall and being glued to iPods or cell phones for texting or playing games. We experienced and enjoyed our youth, some of us as stuffed shirts and some of us as part of the hippie movement with its free love. We lived through the changes of our children growing up and shake our heads at our grandchildren as they are glued to their electronic gadgets. Laptops, iPhone and iPad with headsets. Texting, listening to music or playing games. Today, if you need a friend to play a game with you will connect on the air. I would love to live long enough to experience the fad of the next generation following my grandchildren.

Come by and share your morning with us on Sept. 6:

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School Lunch Time



Aunt Jean's Ranchos Recipes

by Jean Briner

Well, school has started – where did the time go? Vacation is over, but summer won't be over until Sept. 23. It is still hot – I think it was 101 today. As I've said so many times, the best thing about summer is I know winter is on its way. Yes, I like the fog and rain.

For you families with school children that are up in the morning trying to get them fed and lunches fixed, I have seen the menu for the local cafeterias and some of them look quite

tasty. For those days your child doesn't want to eat in the cafeteria, there is always the box lunch from home. When we were in school, most everyone ate in the cafeteria. The food was excellent. It was cooked on the premises and almost like home cooking. The only time I remember taking my lunch was the three

years we lived in San Francisco during WWII. I can still remember my mom's bologna sandwiches. I don't know what was so special about them, but I loved them. Thinking back it just may have been the bologna that we bought at a meat market. It was a stick that you sliced at home and it had a wrapping on it that you had to peel off before eating it. We didn't have the plastic wrap or the sandwich bags we have today. Everything was wrapped in wax paper, even potato chips and cookies. And did you get an orange in your lunch? Mama always "scored" it (run the tip of a paring knife in a circle around the top and strips down the sides) so it would be easier to peel.

Have you had trouble in the past with someone stealing your

child's sandwich out of his lunch bag? I have the solution! There is a site on the internet for Anti-theft Sandwich bags. After looking at them, I can understand why no one would want to eat the sandwich they just stole. This sandwich bag is made to look like the sandwich in it is all moldy. I know some kids that would think it a blast for someone to try to steal their sandwich.

Sandwich Ideas

There are so many combinations available today for sandwiches. There isn't just white or brown bread; there is pita bread, mini croissants, sandwich rolls (cut to the size your child can handle), and tortillas for wraps. Or how about peanut butter on raisin

bread? And so many different kinds of fillings. Not just bologna, ham or cheese, or combinations thereof. My mom would take the leftover Sunday roast and put it through the food grinder (they didn't have food processors in those days), added Miracle Whip – of course you could add mayo – and use it as a spread for sandwiches.

I love a good tuna fish sandwich, but I want to eat it as soon as it is made, because I don't like to let it sit and make the bread soggy. When I worked, I would fix the sandwich as usual, only not put the tuna on. I would put the tuna in a separate container then put it on the bread when I was ready to eat lunch.

Please see **RECIPE** on P. 13

Have you had trouble in the past with someone stealing your child's sandwich out of his lunch bag? I have the solution! There is a site on the internet for Anti-theft Sandwich bags. After looking at them, I can understand why no one would want to eat the sandwich they just stole. This sandwich bag is made to look like the sandwich in it is all moldy. I know some kids that would think it a blast for someone to try to steal their sandwich.



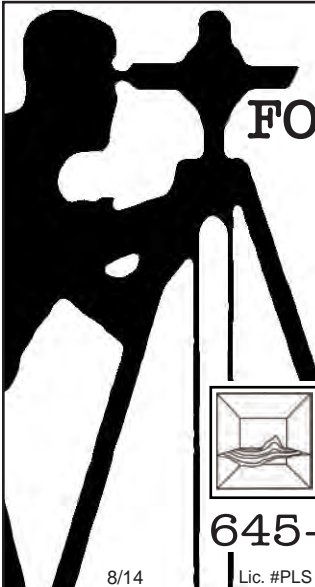
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Not So Good More

Have you seen the Verizon commercial? The announcer says, "There's *good* more ..." and you see a guy standing still with his arms stretched out and a couple of birds landing on them. He's excited and tries to get his wife's attention to see them. Next scene, "... and there's *not* so good more," where a few more birds land and then a hawk and a vulture swoop down and carry him off.

Too often we're like that guy. Without much effort on our part, stuff starts landing in our homes, closets, garages and storage sheds. Some of it is "good more" that we get excited about. But, before we know it, we can get carried away and end up with "not so good more."

How do you know when you've crossed the line from good more to "not so good more?"

For one thing, you spend more time than you'd like managing your stuff. Everything we own costs us time, space, effort and energy. First, we have to figure out where we're going to store it. Until then, we step over or around it. Then, when we want to use it, we have to remember where we decided to store it. We have to clean it and move it to clean where we stored it. We have to move it again to make room for "not so good more" stuff. The more stuff we have the more time, space, effort and energy it requires of us.

Another indication of "not so good more" is when something transforms from a blessing to a burden. This can be books, toys, clothes, magazines, craft supplies, souvenirs, or just about anything. When we have more than we could possibly use, more than we have space for, or more than we want to clean up, we've crossed the line.

"Not so good more" also causes break-

downs in relationships. Everyone has a different level of tolerance when it comes to clutter. Without regard for a partner's, roommate's, parent's, or even child's level of tolerance, the home can easily become a place to avoid rather than a place to experience peace and rest.

A Plan

So how do we stay on this side of the "not so good more" line? Before your next purchase, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Is the return on my investment of time, space, money, effort and energy worth it? You know how you want your kid to weigh the duties and responsibilities of owning a dog before getting one? Do the same thing — ask yourself, "How much more work will having this add to my life? Will it give me more pleasure and satisfaction than it's going to cost me to maintain or store it?"

2. Do I have room for it? Where, specifically, will I store or display it?

3. Can I see myself using it regularly? What's my plan to make sure it earns its keep?

4. Do I already have something I could use instead of buying this, or do I need to use up what I have before adding more?

5. What will I let go of to make space for this new item?

6. Will bringing this home create tension in a relationship?

7. If I wait thirty days before buying it, will I still want it?

I'm sure you won't ask all of these questions before each and every purchase, but as you become more purposeful and intentional with your buying you will increase your measure of satisfaction and decrease the number of purchases that end up in the "not so good more" category.

Here's a "good more" idea: Look for my ad on page 19 of this month's Ranchos Independent for information about a Ranchos Organizing Class that I am teaching. Come to the class and together we'll get you on the right track — or at least on a more organized one.

You can contact Brenda McElroy to have questions answered at Organized by Choice (because things don't always fall into place) at P.O. Box 26152, Fresno, CA 93729, or you can email her at info@organizedbychoice.com, visit her website www.organizedbychoice.com or she can be reached by phone at 559-871-3314.

"... as you become more purposeful and intentional with your buying you will increase your measure of satisfaction and decrease the number of purchases that end up in the 'not so good more' category."

USERS cont. from P. 2

county water usage for Madera County agriculture is a staggering 655 billion gallons per year, with most, if not all of it, being pumped out of dwindling groundwater supplies this year. It's a large, unusual and difficult computation, he said, but that's billions, with a "B."

Almonds and other permanent tree crops use approximately 52 inches of water in "acre feet," which is around 1.42 million gallons per acre, per year, he said. Madera County has roughly 660,000 acres of tree and row crops under production in 2014. The drought has had an impact, Monk said, but the same industry that sustains the Central Valley – agriculture – is also the main user, or some would say abuser, of local groundwater. Almond acreage in 2014 has also increased by at least 20,000 acres or more in Madera County from the 2010 figures, according to the farm report. Monk acknowledged the measurement of water use in "Acre Feet" and "Acre Inches" can be confusing unless someone works in agriculture. Critics say the ag measurements just camouflage the problem and sound innocent enough, until the calculations into gallons are made. By contrast, residential usage is estimated to be only four percent of Madera County's overall water usage, including the municipal use by cities.

A Zero Allocation

Madera Irrigation District (MID) received a zero surface water allocation for irrigation from the state in 2014, according to MID president Carl Janzen and has been parceling out small amounts of water to some contract growers from water MID had "banked" or stored from previous years in local reservoirs like Friant and Hidden Lake.

Residential wells going dry in the county are only the beginning, Monk said, bringing the obvious problem of groundwater overdrafting painfully home to many rural residents.

"Wells are going dry all over the Central Valley," he said, adding that there's no denying the overdrafting that's taking place now. Without recharge and sustainable groundwater, Madera farm fields will also falter and begin to fail like the west side of Fresno County, and other arid and barren counties to the south, Monk said.

"Everything in this climate is irrigated in the Central Valley. Almost all of this water is pumped from groundwater, and in recent years there has been no recharge allocation," he said, adding

that the existing water shortage is the direct result of years of unsustainable water use, overdrafting by agriculture and drought and climate cycles.

An acre of mature almond trees use approximately 52 inches of water per year, which translates into 1.42 million gallons per year per acre, Monk said. That amount is mainly what is used by the plant for production and evaporation, and little is recharged into the ground. By contrast grapes, cotton or other row crops use less, only about 28 inches per year.

"Most valley crops are water intensive," Monk said. "Only alfalfa uses more water per acre, about 56 inches in acre feet, per acre per year."

Monk said that water use is moving in the wrong direction in Madera and the Central Valley, and it's had a large impact on groundwater. "Madera has replaced lower water-use crops like [grape] vines and cotton with higher water use crops ... but almonds make money," he said.

A Failed Law

The lack of water has already forced the fallowing and removal of many irrigated fields relying on external water sources in western Fresno County. No groundwater is within reach on those dry fields, and other adjacent areas in the Valley could be next, he said. Monk said the Central Valley Project Improvement Act, or CVPIA, passed into law approximately nine years ago also hasn't improved the Central Valley's water situation, but rather has had a large negative effect. It has diverted most, if not all, of Madera County's potential surface irrigation supply and recharge water into the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary.

Monk said it was a very complex situation but it was doubtful the groundwater could be recharged adequately anytime soon, given climate conditions, current levels of ag water use and the lack of state water allocation to replace what is used. That leaves only water-use restrictions and/or the fallowing of fields, and more residents' wells potentially going dry, he said.

"Recharge [of groundwater] is an answer but takes time and it's better seen over a five year average," Monk said. "And recharge water and the purchase of water storage [land] isn't cheap." He stressed that the issue is urgent and needs to be addressed by local governments and irrigation districts to stop further groundwater decline. Monk said that if the overdrafting continues it's everyone's livelihood and property that will soon be at risk.

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--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

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Ranchos Dr. Becomes a Mudder

On Aug. 16 and 17, over 60,000 people came together around the world to take part in a challenge called the Tough Mudder. The Tough Mudder is a 10 to 12-mile obstacle course designed to test all-around strength, stamina, teamwork and mental grit. Tough Mudder is also a proud sponsor of the Wounded Warrior Project and Mudder Nation has raised over \$6 million to support the transition of thousands of warriors returning home from the current military conflicts. Dr. Matthew Pia of Ranchos Dental Care and a team of six brave war-

riors from Valley Children's Hospital completed the Tough Mudder in North Lake Tahoe on Aug. 16. The Mudder was held at the Northstar Ski Resort and boasted some of the steepest, fiercest climbs and most rugged, rocky cross-country trails in America. The team had to crawl, climb, run, jump and carry each other through the mud to receive their coveted Mudder headbands. They escaped with a few good bruises and a lot of great stories. Tough Mudder is considered by many to be the toughest event on the planet.

GEN WHY cont. from P. 6

movie ever made. I called my mom, but I couldn't convince her to jump on a plane and fly out to California from her home in New Mexico to find and kill the bug for me. This blatant disregard for my wellbeing will be reflected in her Christmas present. Instead, she told me to put my big girl pants on and go do my laundry. Of course, she didn't imagine that I would stuff a couple of cans of bug spray in a utility belt and strap a Swiffer pole to my back like Dog the Beetle Hunter. But, I did it. I grabbed my laundry basket and forced myself to go back downstairs.

I climbed into the elevator and hit the

lobby bottom. My heart pounded and my eyes watered as I reached the bottom floor and the doors gently slid open. There he was, across the small foyer. I could hear the soft whistle of an old western tune breeze past my ear as we locked eyes. He moved first. He was lightning fast, but I was faster. I drew and fired. The beast was strong, he kept coming, but I just kept spraying. I would empty the entire contents at him if I had to. He would not win. A half a bottle and a puddle of poison later he was finally dead. The complex was safe.

Okay, maybe I went a little overboard, but I'll tell you this: I have clean clothes again, and I now carry a fully loaded can of bug spray with me at all times.

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8/14

LETTERS cont. from P. 4

user should be on water meters. It is crazy that we have been able to use water all day and all night long if we feel like it. With freedom comes responsibility.

Even before the current drought our water table was dropping by 4-6 feet per year. This isn't sustainable. We cannot continue the same water and landscaping habits. We have been blessed with the chance to live here. We have space, nice people, good schools, peace and quiet. By being selfish with water ourselves, we deny our children and grandchildren the same chance to enjoy life out here. If a plea to care about the future doesn't work with you, what about financial considerations? If we don't get a grip on our water issues and start using water conservatively, many more wells out here will go dry at a major cost to the owners of those wells. We were told 20 years ago that there is a layer of arsenic at 500 feet – an expensive thing to filter out. Thus, continuing to allow the water table to drop will affect all of us – whether we are on the system or on an individual well. If we continue to ignore this issue our properties will be worth nothing. Those super green yards won't mean much then.

We are not like Fresno – we do not have Millerton to draw water from. We live or die on groundwater.

Here are some things our family is doing to reduce our home water consumption:

1) We don't flush the toilet every time it is used (if it's yellow, it's mellow) or better yet, install low-flow toilets.

2) We have buckets in our kitchen and bathrooms. When food is washed or when the shower water is warming up, that water goes into a bucket and is used to water our plants outside. Cooking water goes outside too.

3) We installed low-flow shower heads and reduced our showering time. Legs and faces are shaved with a cup of water.

4) We planted California natives in parts of our yard. One whole side of the yard has not been watered in 20 years. These plants can be planted, watered deeply, mulched heavily and then left alone. It's called "walk away landscaping." (See Las Pilitas Nursery in Santa Margarita at www.laspilitas.com). Native plants can resist drought better and provide food and habitat for the birds, bees and butterflies.

5) Our lawn has been dead for months. Redesign your yard so just a little is lawn.

6) Don't plant redwood trees or anything else that needs lots of water. It's crazy that redwoods are planted all over the Ranchos. We have cut down three trees and are planning to cut down more.

7) Mulch heavily. We got chipped al-

mond from Chad's Trucking in the Ranchos. It really reduces the use of chemicals too.

8) Use your leaves! Ours stay in our flowerbeds and help mulch.

9) Look into a grey water system (greywateraction.org). We bought two 30 gallon barrels for \$10 each and added a spigot at \$8 each. They are wheeled into our laundry room and the washing machine water goes into them. With our front load machine this gives us 20 gallons of water per load. We use "soap nuts" or ECOs laundry detergent.

I'd like to see the UC Master Gardener program give a series of classes on drought tolerant plantings and irrigation. I'd like the county to present classes on grey water systems.

If you are tempted to cheat, you are hurting everyone else in our community. If you are on a well, conserve too.

To quote Dr. Seuss from The Lorax, "Unless someone like you cares a whole lot, nothing is going to get better, it's not."

Ellen Williams
Madera Ranchos

(Editor's Note: The Master Gardeners are offering a class on garden questions on Sept. 6 at Yosemite Lakes Park. See their announcement on page 18.)

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RECIPE cont. from P. 8

I was on the internet looking for ideas for this article and I found some excellent sites. I Googled “school kids lunches” and “school kids sandwiches.”

Having trouble getting your child to eat a good whole wheat bread because he or she only wants white bread? How about using one slice of white and one slice of whole wheat with a design on each. Put the two slices of bread together before putting in the filling, and using a cookie cutter, cut a design from the center of each slice. Then take the design from the brown slice and put it in the spot that was cut from the white bread and do the same with the white slice. At least you'll get them to eat half brown bread.

Or how about a wrap? Put a flour tortilla in the microwave for about 20 seconds so it will be easier to roll. Using your choice of fillings: lettuce that has been sliced very thin, grape tomatoes, sliced olives, red bell pepper that has been chopped, grated cheese, and sliced turkey or ham lunch meat. Spread the tortilla with ranch dressing and layer each ingredient on half of the tortillas. Fold in each side of the tortilla and roll the wrap from the end with the filling, making sure to tuck in the filling as you roll. You can cut the roll in half if you wish to make it easier to handle.

Sandwich on a Stick?

Or how about a sandwich on a stick for fun? Using the ingredients your child would like in a sandwich, put it on a stick. Cube a slice of bread, cheese of choice and

lunch meat. Slide onto a skewer with other foods your child will eat. Olives, pickles, grape tomatoes or a piece of lettuce. You might want to add a little container of ranch dressing for dipping. Also, I would suggest not using the skewers that look like big toothpicks – don't think the school would appreciate a child playing with them after they eat their lunch. I've seen packages of the sticks used for candy apples in the grocery store that might work better than the skewer.

Who says lunch has to be a sandwich? There are all kinds of things you can use for box lunches. How about a thermos of warm left-over stew or soup from the night before dinner? Or a piece of left over pizza – yes, I know kids (and adults) that will eat cold pizza. Or a spaghetti sandwich – yes, spaghetti! Butter two slices of bread, put the spaghetti on one and top with the other and Viola! A spaghetti sandwich. I know adults that will eat that!

I hope I have been able to give you some ideas for lunch boxes or bags. And I didn't even get into the desserts available. There are all kinds of prepackaged cookies and some just 100 calories, and there are all of the prepackaged gelatins, puddings and fruit that are available. If you are afraid to send one of your good spoons (I know they can be tossed with the wrappers), why not purchase a package of disposable spoons so you don't need to worry?

Editor's Note: This article originally appeared in the August 2010 issue of the Ranchos Independent.

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8/14

BUST cont. from P. 2

Both men were taken into custody and booked into Madera County Department of Corrections for felony drug possession and transportation for sales. Bail has been set at \$5 million for each of them.

Sheriff John Anderson said this was significant. "Apart from the amount of narcotics seized, it shows that Madera County remains a major hub and thoroughfare for drug traffickers operating in our state," he said.



Juan Carlos Esparza, 39, was one of the two suspects arrested on Highway 99 near Ave. 12 with \$700,000 in drugs. He consented to a search and the CHP K9 struck paydirt.



Also arrested on Aug. 12 was Raydel Estrada Gomez, 29. Both he and Esparza were from the Sacramento area and are being held with bail set at \$5 million each.

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HOSE cont. from P. 3

ments, a condition that has been in place for MD-10A Water System ratepayers since Aug. 14 and stipulates, among other things, no outdoor watering. Upon further questioning from the board, Hoevertz acknowledged that Stage 4 would likely only be in effect until the seasonal rains begin, after which outdoor watering will not likely be necessary. Regardless, he said that water from GVUSD could not be used by ratepayers to water outside.

Offering a Hose

Board member Kathleen Crumpton asked several questions and also commented that wells of friends who live near Liberty High School went dry when the school's well and 1 million-gallon storage tank was installed. When board member Brian Freeman likened the situation to offering a neighbor a hose when he's having problems with his well, Crumpton said she knew of similar situations that had gone on for years and questioned how long water from the high school would be needed.

Further questioning from board members led Hoevertz to relate that at the Aug. 26 Board meeting he would be proposing a Stage "3.5" condition for MD-10A, a term coined by ratepayer Beverly Walsh to describe a compromise whereby some outdoor watering would be allowed. Additionally, Hoevertz reported about the status of getting MD-10A's new Dublin Well online. He said once that was completed, probably by mid-April of 2015, there would be no further potential need for the GVUSD's water.

In addition to several comments and questions from board members, several members of the public spoke, mainly to thank the board for considering the water connection. Ratepayer Craig Roberts commented that the school district's Webster Elementary School is fed by the MD-10A Water System, not the high school, and also that by law, Webster is required to maintain a lawn for the kids to reduce

dust and allergy symptoms. Others expressed concern that if homes have to be abandoned due to a lack of water that would decrease the district's tax base. Ratepayer Walsh said that she would prefer the time and money for the connection to the high school's water be spent to connect the Dublin Well, which is located just beyond the northeast corner of the MD-10A Water System piping network. But Hoevertz said that the Dublin Well connection was already proceeding on an independent track.

Questions from the board about how MD-10A ended up in such a desperate condition were met first by ratepayer Seth Thomas who said residents of MD-10A had approved all County requests for assessments and rate increases. Hoevertz added that it is typical of a small water district such as MD-10A to apply patches over decades until it reaches a point where major work and expense is necessary. He said that the County had applied for a \$10 million grant from the State Environmental Health Department and had recently been notified that the application was accepted and complete. The grant is for new water lines and water meters. Hoevertz also reported that MD-10A is currently using three wells, New Fender, Charlton and Kensington, all of which are performing at subpar levels. He also agreed with ratepayer Chuck LaRue's suggestion that if MD-10A is connected to the high school, it would be possible to pull the pumps from the MD-10A wells one at a time and redevelop and service them. After much discussion, the board voted in favor of pursuing the feasibility of the project.

To get involved and learn the latest about the water system, attend the regular MD-10A Water Oversight Committee meeting at the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center at 37330 Berkshire Drive at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 10. Additionally, you can "like" the Ranchos Independent on Facebook to get community updates and notices.

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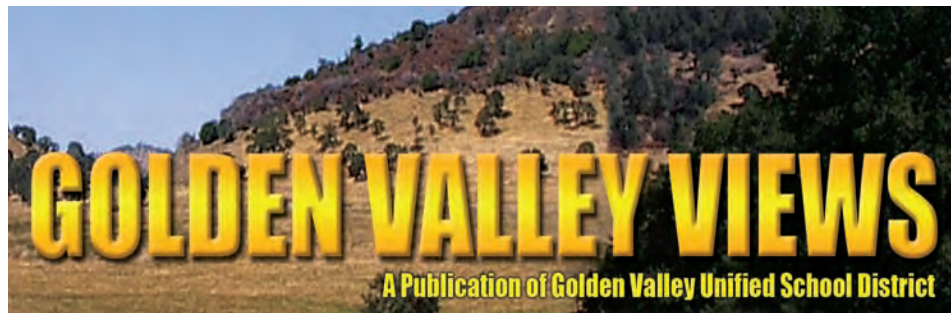
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RMS Named a Jostens Yearbook Program of Excellence Winner

The Ranchos Middle School yearbook program, advised by Kevin Feramisco, received the Jostens National Yearbook Program of Excellence for its performance during the 2013-2014 school year.

Jostens is a leading producer of yearbooks and student-related content and is the printer of the Ranchos Middle School's yearbook.

The National Yearbook Program of Excellence designation recognizes dynamic school yearbook programs and recognizes yearbook staffs and advisors who create engaging yearbooks

for their school communities.

The awards are presented twice annually. The award presented to RMS was for achieving the defined criteria in each of three following categories: 1. Creating an inclusive yearbook; 2. Generating school engagement; and 3. Successfully managing the yearbook creation process.



The 2013-2014 Ranchos Middle School yearbook staff received the Jostens National Yearbook Program of Excellence award.

The RMS yearbook program

will receive a plaque to display in the yearbook area and a banner to display in school so the entire school community will be aware of the outstanding achievement.

LIBERTY HAWKS FOOTBALL

Back-to-Back Div. V Valley Champions 2014 Schedule

Aug. 29	7 p.m.	vs. Firebaugh
Sept. 5	7 p.m.	vs. Mendota
Sept. 12	7 p.m.	at Madera South
Sept. 19	7 p.m.	vs. Fowler
Sept. 26	7:15 p.m.	at Corcoran
Oct. 10	7 p.m.	at Yosemite
Oct. 17	7 p.m.	at Sierra
Oct. 24	7 p.m.	vs. Washington union
Oct. 31	7 p.m.	vs. Kerman (Sr. Night)
Nov. 7	7 p.m.	at Chowchilla

HOME GAMES IN GREEN

Gateway Village is now Riverstone

By Karen Petryna

Riverstone is the new name for the 6,600 residential unit master-planned community now being developed at Highway 41 and Avenue 12. According to Tim Jones, Fresno attorney, part owner and former Director of the Root Creek Water District, the name "Riverstone" reflects what will be the development's contemporary rustic style, and, as the project continues to move forward, Jones said the first community center, which will be built before the first homes are occupied, is now being designed.

In addition, a bike path from Riverstone down to the San Joaquin River through the yet to be started 4,000 acre San Joaquin River Ranch development – and over what will eventually be a four-lane Avenue 9 – is being considered so that kids

need not endanger themselves crossing such a busy street. In the meantime, the River Ranch property has already been irrigated with more than 500 acre-feet of water, according to Jones. The water comes from the Groundwater In-Lieu Recharge Project, a 2.7 mile pipeline that runs from Lateral 6.2 of the Madera Canal and under Avenue 12 about one and half miles west of Highway 41. This means that in lieu of recharging groundwater, it is no longer being pumped in order to water the trees in the Root Creek area, Jones explained.

The next stage for Riverstone will be grading, according to Jones, who said that while the current 25-foot elevation change in some places will be decreased, he intends to maintain the rolling hills aspect of the landscape. Jones also said he is available to discuss the development as questions arise.

Successful Soccer Event Doubles Size

The summer has been hot, but not as hot as the Madera County Soccer Fest event that took place July 29-31. Over 650 kids within Madera County came out to participate in the free, multi-day event with attendance almost doubling compared to years past.

Coaches from the Major League Soccer team Chivas USA, as well as coaches from the Fresno Fuego, helped attendees, aged 6 to 19, hone their soccer skills, while providing instruction on teamwork and positive motivation. Many of the participants had the chance



Kids scrimmaging during the afternoon session at Liberty High School on July 29.

to win free raffle prizes, such as signed balls, team jerseys, rally towels and more. Even the local soccer coaches from within the community had a chance to benefit from the events as a special lunch Q&A session was held at Lee Kitchen on Wednesday, July 30 hosted by the coaches of Chivas USA.

"Our goal for this year's festivities was to create an event not just for the kids, but also for the community that was free of charge," stated Igal Treibatch, President of SEMCU Foundation. "We were fortunate to gain tremendous support for this year's festivities from the Madera County Board of Supervisors, Madera County EDC, the City of Madera, Golden Valley Unified School District, Madera Unified

School District, the local soccer clubs in the area; as well as the gracious donations received from sponsors within the community."

The Madera County Soccer Fest event will also be taking place again in 2015 as Chivas USA has recently donated \$2,500 toward next year's events. The Major League Soccer team has communicated that it is proud to be involved with the communities within Madera County and hopes to continue to establish a relationship well into the future.

This year's collaboration with the Fresno Fuego has also led to discussions of an annual tournament for local area teams to compete. Though this project is not likely to launch immediately, current proposals estimate that something may be organized as early as summer 2016.

The success of this year's events is planned to continue as up to 400 participants still have a chance to win tickets to attend the Chivas USA vs San Jose Earthquakes game on Sunday, October 26, 2014. Further information regarding the event, as well as the bus trip scheduled for October 26, 2014 can be found on the Madera County Soccer Fest Facebook page at www.facebook.com/maderacountysoccerfest.



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VA Hospital Could Choose Ranchos

By Karen Petryna

Fresno VA Hospital Inadequate

A new Veteran's Administration Hospital may be in store for the greater Ranchos area according to Tom Zonsius who is working to form a committee and begin what will likely be a decade-long process to cite a location and get it built. Zonsius, who wanted to keep his neighbors in the Ranchos informed, said the first step is for his committee to put together a presentation for the Congressional VA Commission who will select one of three locations, hopefully within the next year. The three general locations being considered are Fresno, Clovis and the Ranchos, according to Zonsius, who has spoken to Tim Jones of the Riverstone (formerly Gateway Village) development about utilizing one of several properties on Avenue 9 and Avenue 12. Regardless of which site is chosen, the completed project will create approximately 1,300 jobs at the hospital and associated facilities as well as dozens more at nearby restaurants, hotels, gas stations and other services including low-income, handicapped-accessible apartments for vets who need to live near the hospital for regular treatment.

Zonsius, who prepared similar types of documentation while in the Air Force and is a lifelong VFW member, will be working with Charlie Waters, who was instrumental in getting the Cal Vet Home up and running in Fresno beginning last October, and who is a past Central Valley Regional Commander of the American Legion as well as both a member of the Marine Corps League and the Purple Heart Association.

Due to inadequate space, the Fresno VA Hospital currently houses two to three times the number of vets offsite at a higher expense. The houses around the hospital that the VA previously owned and used to house medical residents and nurses in training were sold to the city when those programs were terminated or moved. In addition, two or three vans take vets to San Francisco and Palo Alto every day. Furthermore, the Outpatient and Radiation Clinics are too small. Built in the 1950s, the hospital would likely not withstand even a 4.0 earthquake as was determined when the foundation was dug for the front porch and it was discovered the whole structure rests on sand which can turn to liquid during an earthquake.

Project Specifications

The new project will be on a 100 to 160-acre site and include 60 acres for the hospital, 20 acres for a community living center, 10-20 acres for a Fisher House (to temporarily house patients' visiting family members), an outpatient clinic, an auditorium/classroom for medical resident training and research, and additional administration space. The facility will have to meet the federal government requirement to produce 50 percent of its own power (so it can run on reduced power if PG&E goes down) as well as a requirement to have its own water well for backup. If a Madera site is chosen, it will also have to meet the County requirement for a "0 water balance" so that as much groundwater is replaced as is used.

Other Considerations

Other considerations include access to major roads. If a site off Avenue 9 is chosen, for example, the four lane improvement that will be made as part of the San Joaquin River Ranch development will have to be extended. Whereas if a site off of Avenue 12 is chosen, that will facilitate the planned bypass happening within the next eight years, according to Zonsius, who added that if any of the sites that are within the Rio Mesa District and Root Creek area are chosen, it will have immediate benefits to Madera Ranchos such as jump starting economic development and increasing property values.

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Fatal Wreck North of Ranchos

By DJ Becker

A head-on rollover collision, on State Route 145 on the north side of the Ranchos, killed a 25-year-old Fresno man Sunday, Aug. 17 at about 12:40 p.m., according to the California Highway Patrol. Authorities have identified the man as Caleb Ryan Koop. Distracted driving is under investigation as a factor in the fatality. No evidence of alcohol was found at the scene and toxicology reports are pending.

Four to five other people sustained minor to moderate injuries in the high-impact crash, and one was airlifted by Lifeflight helicopter to Community Regional Medical Center.

CHP Sgt. Lincoln McKenna said Koop was driving solo in a Mitsubishi Mirage sedan westbound in weekend traffic at 55 to 60 m.p.h., two miles west of Highway 41, when he drifted out of his lane and directly into oncoming traffic.

"We have a witness behind him that said he just started to drift over into eastbound lane and collided with a westbound Ford F250 pickup truck pulling a boat," McKenna said. "The driver of the pickup truck saw the Mitsubishi in her lane and attempted to move to the south shoulder but she was unable to fully avoid the impact."

The left front of the pickup collided with the left front of the Mitsubishi, killing Koop at the scene. The force of the impact bounced the car backward and spun it, but the car remained upright in the roadway, McKenna said.

"The pickup truck went off the roadway and rolled over, injuring a group of girls in their mid-20s – six, possibly seven girls from Chowchilla – in the truck. Our info is they may have been going to Millerton, or another local lake for the day," McKenna said. The rollover also took out about 60 feet of barbed wire fence but the boat remained upright.

"One of the female passengers was also not wearing a seatbelt and sustained cuts, bruises and road rash from contact with the ground, through the broken truck windows as the truck rolled. She was very fortunate she wasn't further ejected out and killed," McKenna said.

Officers said Koop had no identification on him and may not have been wearing a seat belt.

The collision backed up and detoured area traffic. Highway 145 was closed for about two hours as emergency personnel and CHP worked to treat the injured and clear and investigate the scene.

Drivers need to buckle up, slow down and focus on the roadway, McKenna said.



Distracted driving is what is assumed led to the death of a 25-year-old Fresno man driving the top vehicle. A pickup pulling a boat was hit head-on but all passengers survived.

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by Linda Thistle

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3				6			5	
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	5				9		4	
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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.

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GO FIGURE!

by Linda Thistle

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.

	-		×		18			
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	+		×		12			
+		×		-				
	-		×		10			
12		14		19				
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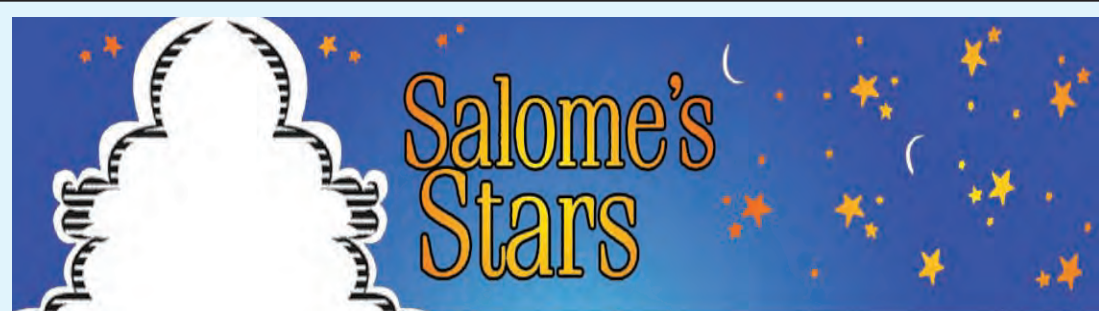
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Just Like Cats & Dogs by Dave T. Phipps



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ARIES (March 21 to April 19) Despite your Aries penchant for wanting to tackle a problem head-on, you might want to take a little more time to see how a current situation develops. It could surprise you.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) Taking on the role of peacemaker in a disruptive environment is a challenge. But you can do it. Just continue to have the same faith in yourself that so many others have in you.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) Although your work schedule keeps you busy, you should make time to start preparing for that important upcoming family event you'll want to celebrate in a special way.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) Home is where the Moon Child wants to be early in the week. But by week's end, a chance to travel raises her or his excitement level, and that of the lucky person who gets to go along.

LEO (July 23 to August 22) Be careful not to be a copycat when dealing with someone who uses unfair or even unkind methods to reach a goal. As always, do the right thing the right way, and you'll win in the end.

VIRGO (August 23 to September 22) An offer could have many good things attached to it that are not apparent at first glance, including a chance to move into another career area. You might want to check out its possibilities.

LIBRA (September 23 to October 22) With responsibilities surging both in the workplace and in the home, it's important to prioritize how you deal with them. Be patient. Pressures will begin to ease starting early next week.

SCORPIO (October 23 to November 21) A positive reaction to a suggestion could indicate that you're on track for getting your message to the right people. Devote the weekend to catching up with the special people in your life.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21) A new attitude from those in charge could make things difficult for you unless you can accept the changes without feeling as if you're being pressured into doing so.

CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 19) Family matters once again dominate much of the week. But don't neglect your workplace duties while you deal with them. An offer to help could come from a surprising source.

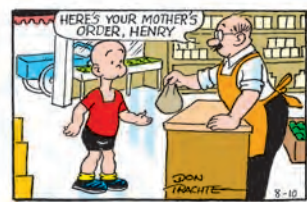
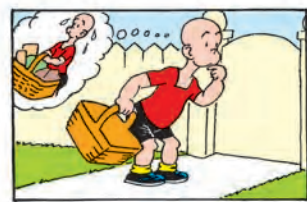
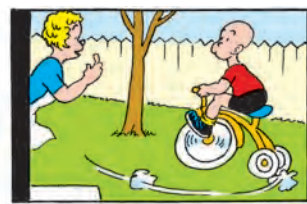
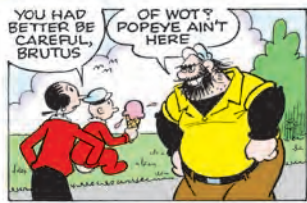
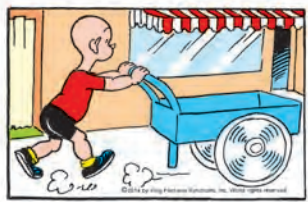
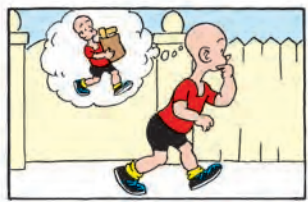
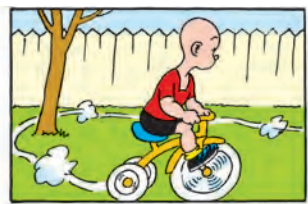
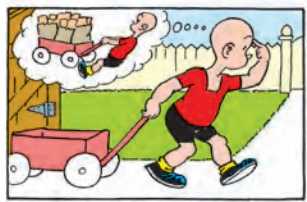
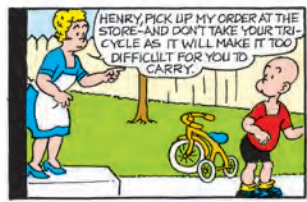
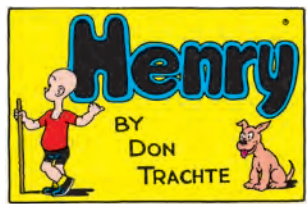
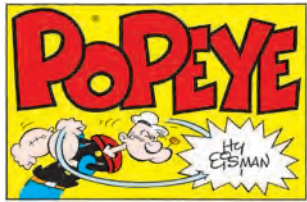
AQUARIUS (January 20 to February 18) A difficult workplace situation begins to ease, but there still are matters that need to be dealt with before it's fully resolved. There's also a more positive turn in domestic relationships.

PISCES (February 19 to March 20) Don't let yourself be rushed into making a decision about an intriguing financial arrangement. Asking questions and checking it out now could pay off in a big way later on.

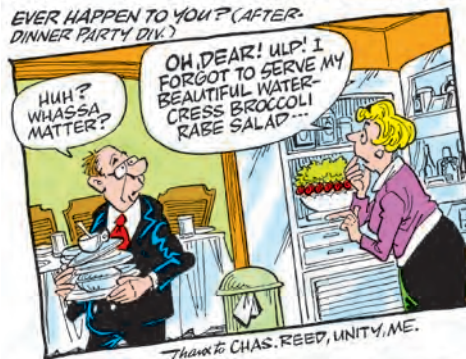
Born this Week
 You might have a tendency to be more than a bit judgmental,
 but others understand it comes from a warm, loving heart.

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FUN PAGES



THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME

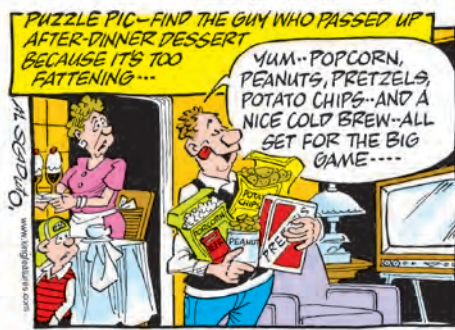


HOSPITAL PESTS NO. 1753 - THE VISITOR WHO DOESN'T BRING A GIFT. ONLY HIS TREMENDOUS GALL AND APPETITE TO MATCH...
—Thank to HAROLD LASH, BOYNTON BEACH, FL.



WHERE DID YOU FOLKS GET THIS (MUNCH MUNCH) FRUIT BASKET? YUM--THE APPLES ARE DEE-LICIOUS-- AND THE GRAPES AND BANANAS EVEN BETTER--YUM--THE CHOCOLATES ARE MY FAVORITES-- YU-UM-M...

BY AL SCADUTO



PUZZLE PIC--FIND THE GUY WHO PASSED UP AFTER-DINNER DESSERT BECAUSE IT'S TOO FATTENING...



YUM--POPCORN, PEANUTS, PRETZELS, POTATO CHIPS--AND A NICE COLD BREW--ALL GET FOR THE BIG GAME----

Junior Whirl

by Hal Kaufman

SUM BUNCH! Well, how about that! Take the number 9801, which has four different digits. Lump the consecutive digits into pairs (98 and 01), add these amounts, square the result (99), and alakazam, you have the original number — 9801.

Another number similarly composed of four different digits produces the same result. What number?

Number 9801 was first published in 1955. Number 9801 may be divided into pairs 98 and 01. 98 + 01 = 99. 99 squared = 9801.

WORD PLAY! Take the word PORT, precede it with RE, and it will be ER, and you have REPORTER. Likewise, add RE and ER to COAR, and you have RECORDER. See if you can think of at least two more such words.

View, base, form, form, tall, and are some possibilities.

WORD SQUARE PUZZLER

Five five-letter words are required to complete the word square exercise above. See how quickly you can fill the blanks.

Definitions:

1. Kind of a tiger or doll.
2. Superior in rank or position.
3. Sits for an artist's picture.
4. A happening.
5. Takes a breather from work.

Remember, a word square consists of a grouping of words that read the same both horizontally and vertically. Time limit: 2 min.

HO, JO-JO! Hit the clown, win a prize. Which contestant is the winner? Take a guess, then check by tracing lines.



STALK SHOW! Sunflowers grow on stout stems, many 6 to 12 feet tall. Add these colors: 1—Red, 2—Lt. blue, 3—Yellow, 4—Lt. brown, 5—Flesh, 6—Lt. green, 7—Dk. brown, 8—Dk. green, 9—Orange.

SPELLBINDER

SCORE 10 points for using all the letters in the word below to form two complete words.

CONSUMER

THEN score 2 points each for all words of four letters or more found among the letters.

Try to score at least 50 points.

Wishing Well

2	8	3	4	2	8	6	7	2	6	8	3	4
T	B	I	A	H	E	P	U	I	R	H	D	V
7	6	5	6	4	6	2	7	3	2	4	5	3
N	O	A	G	O	R	N	B	E	K	I	P	A
6	2	8	4	6	3	7	5	3	2	3	6	2
E	P	E	D	S	S	O	A	A	O	R	S	S
3	6	3	5	7	3	6	4	2	3	5	6	2
E	I	E	R	U	X	S	D	I	C	T	M	T
3	7	3	5	2	3	8	7	5	2	5	6	7
H	N	A	Y	I	N	L	D	F	V	O	A	E
3	6	3	4	6	2	4	3	7	5	4	8	7
G	D	E	E	E	E	B	D	D	R	A	P	E
5	8	7	5	4	8	7	5	4	7	8	7	7
Y	F	N	O	T	U	E	U	E	R	L	G	Y

HERE IS A PLEASANT LITTLE GAME that will give you a message every day. It's a numerical puzzle designed to spell out your fortune. Count the letters in your first name. If the number of letters is 6 or more, subtract 4. If the number is less than 6, add 3. The result is your key number. Start at the upper left-hand corner and check one of your key numbers, left to right. Then read the message the letters under the checked figures give you.

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MAGIC MAZE ● RAPTORS

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

Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions forward, backward, up, down and diagonally.

Bald eagle	Curved beaks	Hawk	Osprey
Buzzard	Falcon	Hunters	Talons
Carnivore	Golden eagle	Keen vision	Vulture
Condor	Harrier	Kite	

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TRIVIA TEST

By Fifi Rodriguez

1. MOVIES: What sport was featured in the 2009 movie "Invictus"?
2. PSYCHOLOGY: What fear is represented in the condition known as hemophobia?
3. MUSIC: Which well-known 1979 song contained the lyrics, "It's better to burn out than to fade away"?
4. GEOGRAPHY: Which two countries surround the Dead Sea?
5. ANIMALS: How many muscles does a cat have in each ear?
6. MEDICINE: What does the old-fashioned medical term "apoplexy" refer to?
7. U.S. PRESIDENTS: When did U.S. Sen. John Glenn make an unsuccessful bid for the presidency?
8. CARS: Which car manufacturer had a hit with the 1955 Thunderbird?
9. GAMES: What color is the \$20 bill in the game of Monopoly?
10. FOOD AND DRINK: What are the chief ingredients in a White Russian cocktail?

Answers

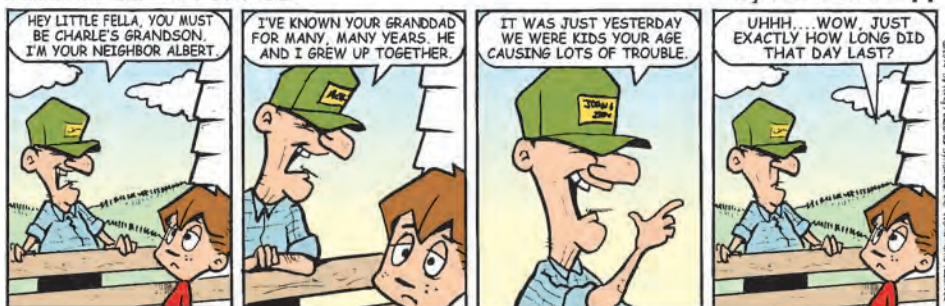
1. Rugby
2. Fear of blood
3. "My My, Hey Hey," by Neil Young
4. Israel and Jordan
5. 32 muscles that control the outer ear
6. Stroke
7. 1984
8. Ford
9. Green
10. Coffee liqueur, vodka and cream

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Click on "Local News" at

Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



R.F.D.

by Mike Marland



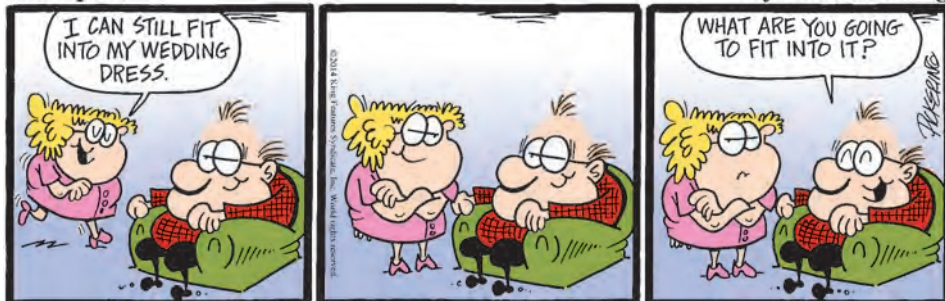
Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



SCRAMBLERS

Unscramble the letters within each rectangle to form four ordinary words. Then rearrange the boxed letters to form the mystery word, which will complete the gag!

Blow Up **FAYMING**

Bloom **ROPPERS**

Cluster **UNBLED**

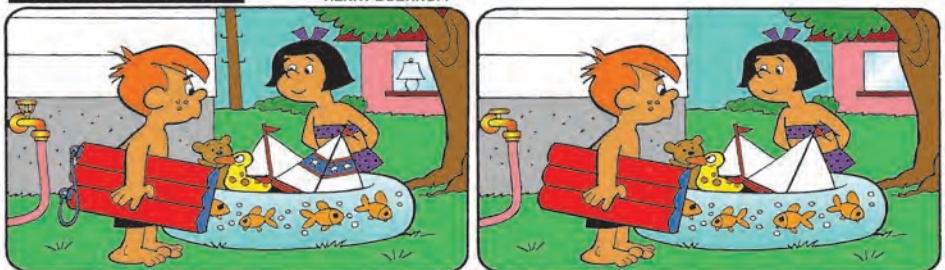
Define **FEYPICS**

"How can I enjoy my vacation knowing when I get back will look more rested than me?!"

TODAY'S WORD

HOCUS-FOCUS

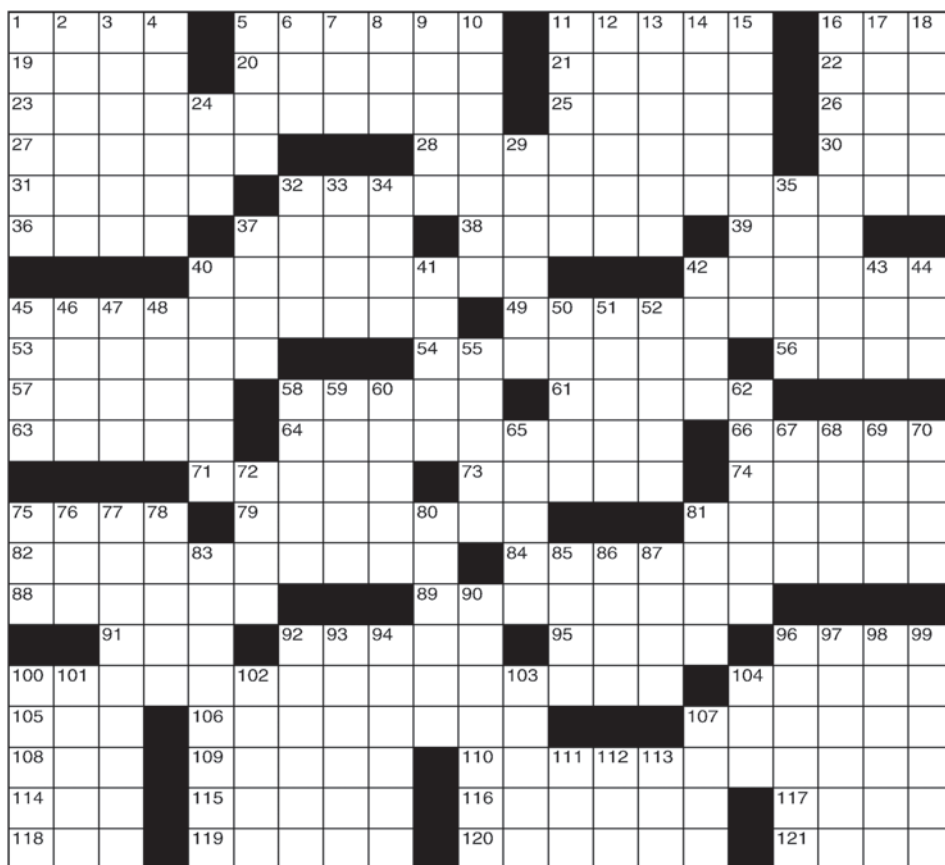
BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



CAN YOU TRUST YOUR EYES? There are at least six differences in drawing details between top and bottom panels. How quickly can you find them? Check answers with those below.

DIFFERENCES: 1. Handle is different; 2. Tow rope is missing; 3. Pole is missing; 4. Sail design is missing; 5. Fish is missing; 6. Lamp is missing.

Super Crossword



- ACROSS**
- 1 "Take a Chance on Me" band
 - 5 Like the reading on a thermometer
 - 11 "Ad — per aspera" (Kansas motto)
 - 16 Org. that aids start-ups
 - 19 Cut calories
 - 20 Float event
 - 21 2007 horror film sequel
 - 22 Abbr. ending a math proof
 - 23 Surgical cleaning pad
 - 25 Near
 - 26 Web site ID
 - 27 Uranus, e.g.
 - 28 Meditate over
 - 30 Greek tycoon
 - 31 Track official
 - 32 Prized seafood
 - 36 Bird feed bit
 - 37 Tool storage building
 - 38 "There's no — sight"
 - 39 Land in le Pacifique
 - 40 Person from Madrid, say
 - 42 How soup or soda is often sold
 - 45 Test ban topic
 - 49 Behaving brainlessly
 - 53 "Ad — per aspera" (Kansas motto)
 - 54 Everybody in the group, in the South
 - 56 Bic Clic —
 - 57 Record over
 - 58 Painter
 - 61 Bartók and Fleck
 - 63 Kitchen plastic wrap
 - 64 Depressed, as the economy
 - 66 Perfect places
 - 71 Tortilla treats
 - 73 Severe pang
 - 74 Divulge
 - 75 Lake fish
 - 79 "— Place" (1990s show)
 - 81 — alla Scala (Milan opera house)
 - 82 Med student's hands-on workplace
 - 84 Kind of fruit pie
 - 88 "From the beginning," in music
 - 89 Jonathan Swift, e.g.
 - 91 Obituary info
 - 92 Actor — Zimbalist Jr.
 - 95 — de plume (literary aliases)
 - 96 Parka, e.g.
 - 100 Totally docile
 - 104 Pyromaniac
 - 105 Hot tub site
 - 106 Pop singer Belinda
 - 107 Regal home
 - 108 She-pig
 - 109 Flip — (decide by chance)
 - 110 Write in any of this puzzle's eight theme answers?
 - 114 Before, in verse
 - 115 Online voice calling service
 - 116 Region of Spain
 - 117 Pill bottle specification
 - 118 Tetley drink
 - 119 Curvy letters
 - 120 "Man alive!"
 - 121 Part of BFA
- DOWN**
- 1 Evolves, say
 - 2 Jazz singer
 - 3 Holiday
 - 4 Paid the penalty (for)
 - 5 Glimpse
 - 6 Ex-Oriole Ripken
 - 7 — Antiqua
 - 8 Trial subject
 - 9 John Quincy —
 - 10 Chastising person
 - 11 Climb up
 - 12 Tall, swift, slender dog
 - 13 One of 10 that go down in a strike
 - 14 Five-time Pro Bowl wide receiver
 - 15 Vindicating
 - 16 Like some diamonds and jaws
 - 17 Catcher Yogi
 - 18 Do improv
 - 24 The woman
 - 29 Flip-flop's kin
 - 32 Pursuer of Moby Dick
 - 33 Jay who jests
 - 34 Take — view of
 - 35 Armor- (some naval vessels)
 - 37 Org. that protects pets
 - 40 Speechless
 - 41 Have — (make merry)
 - 42 "To Live and Die —" (1985 film)
 - 43 Pal, in Nice
 - 44 "The Voice" network
 - 45 Tarzan's pals
 - 46 Actress Reid
 - 47 Actor Epps
 - 48 Small plateau
 - 50 Of computers
 - 51 1990s cardio fad
 - 52 "— Home for Christmas"
 - 55 Sacks in war
 - 58 "Dawson's Creek" role
 - 59 Ring-shaped island
 - 60 Iraqi seaport
 - 62 Single out
 - 65 Kind of flour
 - 67 Treasured
 - 68 "—, Brute!"
 - 69 Standard
 - 70 High-hatter
 - 72 Stuff in guns
 - 75 Ill-behaved
 - 76 Actress — Alicia
 - 77 Figure on a \$1 coin
 - 78 Prop's place
 - 80 Preoccupy
 - 81 Harper of "Ishtar"
 - 83 Unsolved crime
 - 85 With 96-Down, rum cocktail
 - 86 Grads' dance
 - 87 Tree "arm"
 - 90 Blend
 - 92 Jetson boy and others
 - 93 Mexico's Calderón
 - 94 Actress Ella
 - 96 See 85-Down
 - 97 Gifted talker
 - 98 Approach and confront
 - 99 City of ancient Egypt
 - 100 "Plus" item
 - 101 Bit of pollen
 - 102 Carpet nails
 - 103 Distrustful
 - 104 Scottish cap
 - 107 Little horse
 - 111 Asian "way"
 - 112 E-I link
 - 113 CD- drive

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