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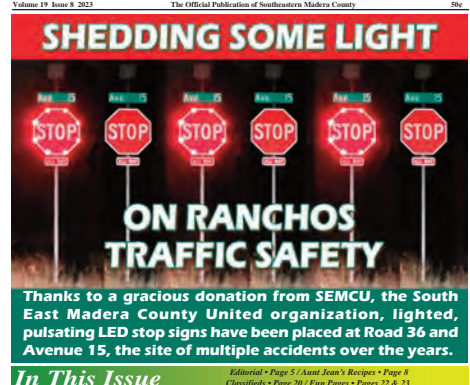
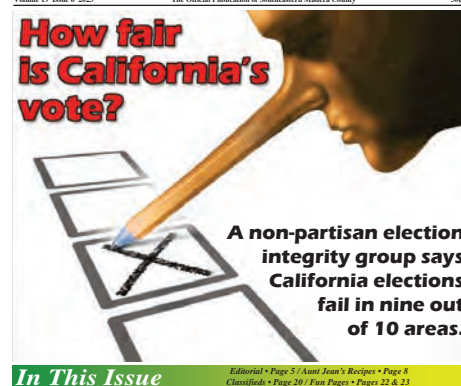
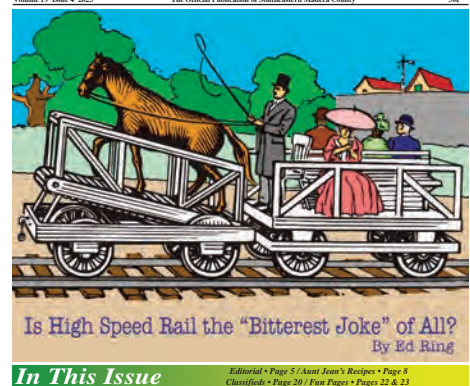
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50¢

## Looking Back: Taking a look back at the top stories in the Ranchos for 2023



**In This Issue** Editorial • Page 5 / Aunt Jean's Recipes • Page 8  
Classifieds • Page 20 / Fun Pages • Pages 22 & 23

# Cal Gas Tax Will Drop by \$6B

By Alejandro Lazo,

As the state battles climate change and Californians drive fewer gas-powered cars, tax revenue will drop substantially, according to a new state analysis. EV fees will make up only part of the transportation shortfall, so lawmakers need new funding options.

California's funding from gas taxes will drop by nearly \$6 billion in the next decade due to the state's electric car rules and other climate programs, "likely resulting in a decline in highway conditions for drivers," according to a new state analysis released today.

As California phases in major policies aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions — such as the mandates for zero-emission cars and trucks — consumers buy less gasoline and diesel, and consequently pay less taxes.

Those declines in tax dollars will be partially offset by the state's road improvement fee, which drivers pay when they register their electric cars. But the Legislative Analyst's Office stressed that overall, the state will still see a \$4.4 billion drop in funding, a 31 percent decline, over a decade, so the Legislature and governor must come up with substantial new funding sources.

Unless the drop is accounted for with new fees or other funding, there

would be substantially less money for highway programs as well as local road maintenance, the analysts wrote. Work supporting buses, trains and other public transit options across the state also would face drops in funding.

"As the state tries to meet its ambitious climate goals through the adoption of zero emission vehicles, and greater fuel efficiency within conventional vehicles, the report finds that we'll see a decline in fuel tax revenues," said Frank Jimenez, a senior fiscal and policy analyst with the office.

Fuel taxes and vehicle fees fund about a third of state spending on transportation. This year's budget, passed in June, includes about \$14.2 billion in state funding for transportation.

The report projects declines of \$5 billion, or 64 percent, in the state's gasoline excise tax, \$290 million, or 20 percent, in the diesel excise tax and \$420 million, or 20 percent, in the diesel sales tax, over the next decade.

Highway maintenance is funded primarily by the fuel taxes "and therefore will face significant funding declines," the report says. "... We project funding for these programs will drop by roughly \$1.5 billion (26 percent) over the next decade, from \$5.7 billion to \$4.2 billion."

The state's transportation agency,

Please see GAS TAX on P. 17



Electric cars could make our roads worse.

# 2023• Top Ranchos Stories

from the pages of the Ranchos Independent

**1 Supe Pay Raise Shot Down/February** • Who says you can't fight city hall — or in this case, "County hall"? Angry protests by common residents led to a 5-0 vote by the Madera County Board of Supervisors to repeal a \$30,000 spending increase voted by the previous Board for themselves.

**2 Lighted Stop Signs/July** • It's good to know that you don't HAVE to wait for the County to do something when you have motivated citizens willing to chip in. Local group SEMCU saw a need for improved traffic signs at Road 36 and Avenue 15 and put their money where their mouth was.

**3 MCH Closing Ramifications/May** • When Madera Community Hospital closed, many thought that was the end. But for it to be a viable option for a future medical group to possibly step in, there were serious loose ends that HAD to be addressed. The "end" was the beginning.

**4 Meet the New Supervisor/January** • After all the dust settled from the County elections in the previous year, the people of District One got a chance to read about Jordan Wamhoff and got an opportunity to better understand his background, his thoughts and his plans for our area.

**5 Leg Bail/September** • One of the best things about living here is its relative safety when it comes to crime. But in September, we were reminded that it's still a dangerous world. A person in a stolen car decided to "leg bail" near Liberty High and Ranchos Middle School, causing a total lockdown.

**6 Traffic Plans/October** • Ask any group of people out here what they DON'T like and traffic always bubbles to the top. Supervisor Wamhoff decided to be proactive and presented a series of suggestions for our area roads in the near, and long, term.

**7 Ranchos Sex Trafficker/May** • Another reminder of our dangerous world, a Ranchos man who had been accused of sex trafficking back in 2020 looked like he was finally going to court. Held on over \$1M in bail, his charges also included elder abuse and illegal possession of ammunition.

**8 19th Crab Feed/March** • The annual Crab Feed sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce disappeared during COVID, but came back in 2022 — only to be outdone in 2023. People wanted to get out and do something after the pandemic and eating crab filled the bill.

**9 Fleeing Insurance Companies/August** • A topic circulating in our area — and later tall of California — was disappearing insurers in the state. A tip from a local insurance broker led to some research that showed it WASN'T just people's imagination they couldn't get insured.

**10 Pot Meeting/April** • After California legalized marijuana for recreational use, many communities threw open their doors and cannabis dispensaries seemed to pop up on every corner; but not Madera. That's why it was interesting when a public announcement surfaced of a public meeting in Madera to discuss it.

all stories can be found at [www.TheRanchos.com](http://www.TheRanchos.com)

# They're Coming for Your Pool

California is trying to electrify everything to reduce fossil fuel emissions, and it's also trying to reduce power usage in the evenings when the state uses the most natural gas. The California Energy Commission has voted to require residential pools to be able to shut off their electricity when the grid tells them to.

There are 1.25 million residential pools in California, and the new pumps are ex-

pected to reduce the state's total greenhouse gas emissions by a half percent. By 2033, the state could gain more than 500 megawatts of power by shutting off pool pumps — enough to power about a half million homes.

Household appliances use lots of power and swill need to be electrified to reach net zero emissions by 2045. The CEC, which has authority over appliances'

energy use, is starting with pool pumps because they're relatively convenient to update. Starting in September 2025, all pool pumps sold in California will have to be able to connect to the internet and operate by default from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The smart pumps cost about \$70 more than regular ones, but users are expected to save \$100 a month by buying power during the day, when it's cheaper. They'll also be able to earn money by signing up to have their pumps shut off when electricity demand is high.

Pool manufacturers asked the com-

mission to phase in the rule over four to five years, instead of two, but regulators said no. "There has been quite a bit of projection that this was coming, so I'm for now comfortable with where it's landed," said Andrew McAllister, the commissioner in charge of the rulemaking.

Expect pools to be the first of many consumer goods to be made more flexible. McAllister said the agency would next tackle water heaters, residential batteries and potentially electric vehicle chargers.



## Senior Lunch Program

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12/23 

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12/23

## Love Animals? Help Start Area Spay and Neuter Clinic

A volunteer group has established the Madera Spay Neuter Clinic, Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, and is in the early stages of writing for grants and fundraising to open a much needed, affordable veterinary clinic in leased space in the city of Madera.

“Pop-up” Spay & Neuter Events are planned prior to the opening of the clinic, to try and help reduce the current flood of homeless

animals. The group is also in the process of raising approximately \$30,000 with a GoFundMe campaign to equip the pop-up spay neuter events, hire contract vets and other personnel as soon as funding allows. You can go to [www.gofundme.com/f/donation-fund-for-the-madera-spay-neuter-clinic](http://www.gofundme.com/f/donation-fund-for-the-madera-spay-neuter-clinic) for more info.

Founders DJ Becker and Kirsten Gross said the overpopulation of unwanted homeless animals was now a crisis. Both have decades of experience in local animal rescue, sheltering, fostering and adoptions. Gross retired as the long-time director of Madera County Animal Services in December 2019.

“You may have already noticed the large number of stray and homeless animals roaming nearly everywhere in the Madera area,” Becker said. “These ani-

mals are continuing to reproduce, only adding to the problem. Shelters and rescue groups are overwhelmed. Many area residents can also no longer find or afford even basic veterinary care for their pets. Simply put - it’s a crisis. We know people care and we are hoping the public can help.” said Becker. “We also pledge to use every dollar of your donation responsibly.

“If all of our local animal lovers could contribute just \$10 or \$15 we would be well on our way. Your donation of any amount now will assist us in purchasing the basic equipment, rent space and hire the contract veterinary personnel needed to make these monthly or weekly pop-up spay and neuter services happen. Hopefully within the next few months,” Becker said.

Please join the group on Facebook or visit their website at [www.MaderaSpayNeuterClinic.org](http://www.MaderaSpayNeuterClinic.org) for the full business plan and background information or to make an online donation. Donations can also be mailed to the address below and are tax deductible. EIN #87-3155849.

Startup Fund for the Madera Spay Neuter Clinic, Inc.  
1625 Howard Road, Suite 506  
Madera, CA 93637-5128



Founders of the Madera Spay Neuter Clinic, Inc. (drom left) Kirsten Gross and DJ Becker, saw a need with the animal situation in Madera County and are hoping to put their money where their hearts are.

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12/23

By Betty Van Valkenburg

Dear Santa, Grandma here, just checkin' in to see how your 2023 Christmas plans are coming along. I know you get millions of letters from the youngsters, but we old grandmas and grandpas have a few wishes of our own.

We don't want or need fancy new train sets. We just want the pie-in-the-sky, money-wasting, ill conceived "high-speed rail system" to be completed or scrapped. You know, the high-speed-rail they promised would take us from Fresno to Sacramento in the blink of an eye? So far, nothing has been completed and the only accomplishments seem to be wrecking neighborhoods, building bridges to nowhere and lining certain pockets with taxpayer money.

An interesting Fresno Bee article recently suggested that the doomed-from-the-start high-speed rail system might be used to house the homeless. Really! Its author stated that, "California is spending billions to construct a high-speed rail system. But it hasn't come close to completing an actual line." Amen.

Santa, we don't need instructions and costly mandates for combatting non-existent climate change, any more than we did when it was called global warming and then global cooling. Give us common sense instead.

We don't need a new confused Barbie or Ken doll. The vintage Barbies and Kens knew their genders and never worried about their pronouns. In fact, being doll "products of modern education," they might not know the meaning of the word "pronoun," let alone "adverb" or "participle."

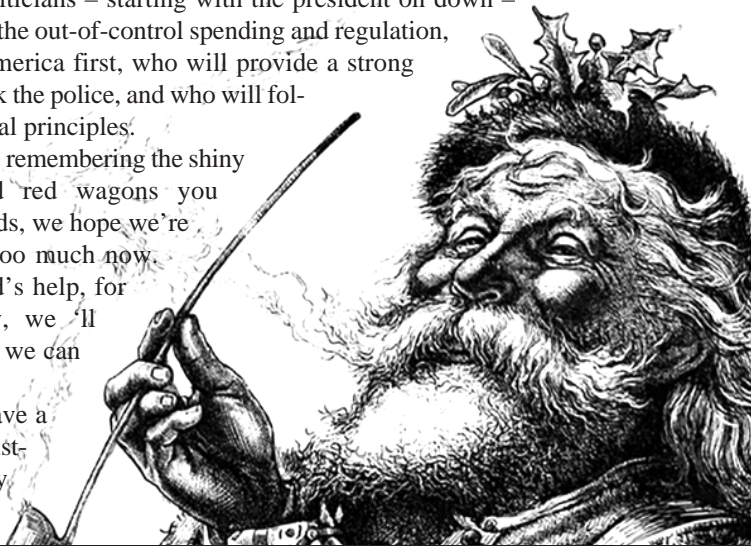
Santa, we don't need more "politics as usual." Have you seen the state of the nation and the price of hamburger meat lately? What we do need is a government of statespersons, not politicians - starting with the president on down - who will rein in the out-of-control spending and regulation, who will put America first, who will provide a strong military and back the police, and who will follow constitutional principles.

Well, Santa, remembering the shiny new bikes and red wagons you brought us as kids, we hope we're not asking for too much now. Along with God's help, for which we pray, we'll take all the help we can get.

May you have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



### Grandma's Santa List



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## Editorial

# Happy Anniversary

By Randy Bailey

I know it's getting to be a tired old joke, but hey — I only tell it once a year. Every December when I wake up and see I'm still putting out the Ranchos Independent, I always think to myself, "... and they aid it wouldn't last ..."

For more emphasis I always say it very slowly, barely above a whisper with my eyes squinted. The way I imagine Clint Eastwood would say it.

Twenty years ago I had a business partner and she and I had started a couponing magazine for Madera that we added to an ag magazine we were producing that was seriously struggling. Although I had walter Mitty delusions of being

William Randolph Hurst, it can be hard to go for the gusto when you only have two publications and one is failing. It's like being a runner with a bad leg.

Our couponing magazine was doing well and one day while we were out selling ad space for it, someone told us that there was a paper for sale in the Ranchos, where I lived. And I was familiar with the Ranchos Independent and its then owner, Bill Bell.

You see, I had written a letter to the editor about the formation of what was to be the Golden Valley Unified School District and like all TRUE letter writers, I included my name and address and phone number so if Bill wanted to verify anything, he would have a way to do so.

Real letter writers eschew "anonymous."

You can imagine my delight when my letter got published for all of the Ranchos — and the world — to see my thought process on this important issue

*It occurred to me that most people refer to [the Ranchos Independent] as "The Independent," so after 19 years. I thought I'd get with the program.*

*Welcome to The Independent.*

... complete with my name, home address and telephone number published at the end.

Needless to say I paid Mr. Bill Bell a visit. Immediately.

He was truly sorry and kept

saying he didn't know how it happened and I helped him by saying, "It happened because you didn't take it out."

It was a few months later that I heard the paper was for sale; of course what I didn't know was how sick he was from cancer. I bought the paper in December of 2004 and by St. Patrick's Day he was gone.

When I bought the paper, I saw no need to fundamentally change it. I did computerize everything — no more literally "pasting up" the paper with hot wax and transporting full-size layout sheets to the printer like I did on my high school paper in the 70s. I stuck to my guns of only distributing to 93636, which we still do to this day — 100 percent distribution. Every mailbox gets the Independent.

After 19 years, and a lot of soul searching, I have decided on one timely change. When the paper was created, and when I bought it, there WAS no Riverstone. There WAS no Tesoro Viejo. It was basically just variations on "The Ranchos." Before I bought the paper, its original incarnation by Mr. Len Wilcox was the "Madera County Independent" that morphed into the Ranchos Independent. It occurred to me that most people refer to it as "The Independent," so after 19 years. I thought I'd get with the program.

Welcome to The Independent.

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# Next Level People Watching

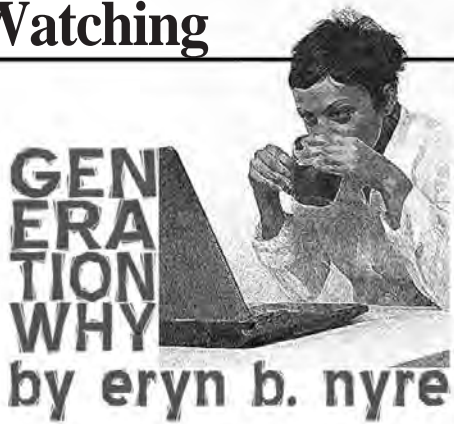
As a self-professed, avid people watcher, I find that amusement parks are among the best spots to engage in this particular hobby. I just got back from a trip to Orlando where I visited a few such places and was able to indulge myself and thought I would share my top three observations.

Story number one: I'll call this one, "The Sleeper." Around noon one day I saw a man napping on a bench, which in itself is not amusing. My guess is that this was at least day three of his family vacation and he had not properly prepared for the toll this kind of event would take on him. Picture an average sized, middle-aged man wearing two backpacks, one in the standard position, the other strapped to his stomach. He was leaning to the side with his head lulled on the back of the bench. He had two strollers pulled up in front of him and was slightly spread-eagled with one foot in each stroller. His family walked up to him and shouted

*It's like watching a movie and there's no way of predicting the ending.*

for him to wake up. I initially presumed it was to describe all the fun they'd just had on the ride and drag him on to the next. It turns out, it wasn't his family at all and they shouted at him because one of his footrests happened to be their stroller. Better, it wasn't exactly where they left it. He dragged someone else's stroller over to give himself a little makeshift footstool. I'm not sure if the other belonged to him either, but I'm doubtful. The level of physical and mental exhaustion one must have in order to muster that kind of audacity can only be brought on by a family vacation to Orlando.

Story number two: I'll call this one, "Home Alone: Lost in Jurassic Park." Amusement parks are full of families, immediate and extended alike, in matching shirts celebrating their grand vacation. The family in this example had matching shirts with the same last name on the back and then a number, one through 10, below it. I don't know if all eight children belonged to the man and



woman in shirts "one and two," or perhaps they were a mixture of their children, their children's friends, and maybe even their nieces and nephews. Whatever the case, it was still a ratio of adults to kids that would terrify me. The numbers turned out to be a pretty clever way to keep track of the brood. I was sitting on a bench waiting for the rest of my group when I heard the woman hollering about how number six had wandered off. I don't know

what amused me more, that she sounded more exasperated than worried, or the fact that she referred to the missing kid as six rather than a

name. The man, number one, seemed to think that number two had simply miscounted. She pointed at the shirts of the kids that surrounded them and said, "Try and count to 10 and tell me when you get stuck." I laughed so hard I snorted. It was even funnier when little number nine, who looked as though she was maybe four years old, asked if they really had to find six. That one was definitely a sibling. Don't worry, they found her happy and healthy, much to the chagrin of number nine.

Story number three: I'll call this one, "Pants are for muggles." For those not in the know, Universal Studios in Orlando has sections of the park dedicated to the Wizarding World of Harry Potter. These areas are designed to look like key locations in the series, and magical isn't adequate enough to describe it. Here, kids of all ages – and yes, that includes yours truly – wander around in awe as they pretend to be

Please see GEN WHY on P. 7

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GEN WHY cont. from P. 6

a part of that enchanted world of books and screen. Some people even dress up in wizards' robes and pretend to be witches and wizards for a day.

No, I was not in costume.

Moving on. The robes are exactly what they sound like. It's just a robe, in the house colors of your choice, that's worn over your clothes. As I was taking a leisurely stroll through Diagon Alley and enjoying a snack, I had the pleasure of seeing one mom trying to maneuver her very young daughter into such a garment. The little girl wasn't averse to wearing the costume, but she was evidently struggling to understand the concept of putting on an article of clothing without first taking off what she was already wearing. So as mom was attempting to put the robe on, daughter was fighting like a wet cat to take her pants off. The girl man-

aged to wrench herself free of her mother's grip and wriggle out of her pants faster than I thought was possible. Then, she took off running, hollering back at her mom that pants were for "muggles." I hope to have such a little girl someday. Her mom was laughing almost as hysterically as I was when she caught the miniature troublemaker and managed to stuff her back into her britches. This particular scene was by far my favorite.

Most of my friends don't share in my joy of people watching. They think anytime not on a ride, or waiting in line to be on a ride, is time wasted. I think they are missing out. Taking a moment to get off your feet is worth it in and of itself, but coupling that with the amusement I get from watching my fellow humans in ridiculous situations is well worth missing a ride or two. It's like watching a movie and there's no way of predicting the ending.



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### Best Laid Plans

When our kids were in elementary school, my husband taught our family to juggle. We didn't take our act on the road, but we mastered the concept. There's always at least one more object than you have hands for, and the goal is to keep them in continual motion without dropping any.

There was other juggling going on then as well — kids' activities, volunteer work, domestic duties, family engagements, etc. I found it very challenging at times. For some, the juggling challenge comes

through other means — a promotion with new responsibilities, becoming a single parent, health issues or caring for others in need.

As I near my Medicare birthday, and observe young families with busy schedules, I'm beginning to understand the perspective of my mom who wonders how I juggle my current load. Apparently not as efficiently as I used to.

I kicked off the first Saturday in December with a holiday volunteer project and an annual Christmas party hosted by a friend. Sandwiched between was the task of making a dessert. At the last minute I changed my plan and found a new dessert recipe. I picked up the ingredients and hurriedly put it together, pulling it out of the oven just as it

was time to leave. It wasn't until then that I realized it was supposed to cool three to six hours. In my haste I hadn't read the recipe all the way through.

"Juggling is an illusion," says Gary Keller. "In reality, the balls are being independently caught and thrown in rapid succession ... it is actually task switching."

For many, the holidays are a rapid succession of tasks and events that require precision skill to execute seamlessly. Most of us don't. Here are some things I would encourage you to consider throughout this busy season.

**Don't compare.** Some people can juggle a bowling ball and knives. I don't feel bad if that's out of my range. Likewise, we all have a different bandwidth when it comes to

holiday tasks and activities. Choose what fits your limits without comparing yourself to the one who seems to do it all.

**Let it go.** I brought my dessert still wrapped in

parchment paper instead of beautifully presented on my holiday plate. Did that hamper the fun and laughter of the evening? Not at all. Decide that when a ball drops — and they will at times — you'll have a sense of humor and be willing to let others know you're human too. Someone might be very relieved by that.

**Show yourself, and others, some grace.** Many get stuck in the "before" mode. Before I had kids, before I went back to work, before I had surgery, before my spouse passed away, before I got older ... none of us is exactly where we were a few years ago in life. Give yourself grace if you just can't or simply don't

Please see **ORGANIZE** on P. 9

## Christmas Snackin'

(December 2013)

**Editor's Note:** With the passing of Aunt Jean, I have decided to bring you a "Best Of" of her recipes over the past 10 years. Good recipes are timeless and I hope you enjoy them all over again.

Aunt Jean had received more than a few requests for her article on Christmas snacks that ran last year so we have decided to run it again. This article originally appeared in the December 2012 issue of the Ranchos Independent. Only the dates at the end of the story have been updated

Editor

Here we are just a week away from Christmas. Are your cards addressed and ready to be mailed, gifts bought and wrapped and you've started baking?

Do you have people around you that you would like to give a little "thank you" gift, but don't know what to do for that person? The boy down the street that comes and helps you with your lawn, the shut-in from your church, the senior couple that live next door and look after your home when you are away, or even the paper boy (or girl in my case)? How about giving them a tray of home-baked goodies: a few cookies in a pretty little Christmas gift bag, a loaf of date, zucchini or pumpkin bread, or even a half dozen muffins. Having come from you and knowing they are homemade might mean more than anything you could buy.

### Banana Raisin Muffins

2 C Cheerios cereal  
1 ¼ C all-purpose flour



by Jean Briner

1/3 C packed brown sugar  
2 ½ tsp. baking powder  
1 C mashed ripe bananas (2 or 3 medium)  
1 C raisins  
2/3 C milk  
3 T vegetable oil  
1 egg- beaten

Heat oven to 400. Grease just the bottom of 12 regular size muffin cups with shortening, or spray with cooking spray.

Place cereal in resealable storage plastic bag. Seal bag and coarsely crush with rolling pin. In large bowl, mix cereal, flour, brown sugar and baking powder. Stir in remaining ingredients just until moistened – do not beat until smooth. Divide batter evenly among the muffin cups. Bake 18-20 minutes or until golden brown.

Makes 12 muffins.

### Chocolate Chip Zucchini Cake

1 ¼ C sugar  
1/3 C butter  
or margarine – softened  
1/3 C vegetable oil  
1 tsp. vanilla  
2 eggs  
2 ½ C flour  
¼ unsweetened baking cocoa  
1 tsp. baking soda

½ C buttermilk  
2 C shredded zucchini  
1/3 to ½ C semisweet chocolate chips  
½ C chopped nuts (optional)

Heat oven to 350. Grease 13 x 9 pan with shortening or cooking spray, lightly flour.

In large bowl, beat sugar, butter, oil, vanilla and eggs with spoon until well blended. Stir in flour, cocoa, baking soda and buttermilk until well combined. Fold in zucchini, chocolate chips and the nuts. Spread batter

evenly in pan.

Bake 35 to 45 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool completely, about 1 hour. Cut into 20 pieces. If you don't have any buttermilk for this recipe, use 1 ½ tsp., vinegar or lemon juice to milk to make ½ cup.

### Chewy Peanut Bars

4 C Wheaties cereal  
1/3 C lightly salted dry-roasted peanuts, coarsely chopped  
½ C light corn syrup  
1/3 C packed brown sugar  
¼ C peanut butter  
3 T semisweet chocolate chips

Spray 9 inch square pan with cooking spray. In large bowl, mix cereal and peanuts. In a 2 quart saucepan, heat corn syrup,

brown sugar and peanut butter to boiling over medium heat, stirring constantly. Boil and stir 1 minute. Pour over cereal mixture, stirring to coat entire mixture. Press in pan, using your fingers. If mix is too sticky, dampen your fingers with water.

In a small microwaveable bowl, microwave chocolate chips uncovered on high 30 seconds, stir. Continue microwaving 10 seconds at a time, stirring after each time, until smooth. Drizzle over bars. Refrigerate about 30 minutes or until chocolate has hardened. Makes 16 bars.

### Fruit and Nut Snack Bars Snack Mix

4 C Honey Nut Cheerios cereal

Please see RECIPES on P. 9

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ORGANIZE cont. from P. 7

want to do it all. Choose carefully what fits with your current values and abilities. Show others going through transitions the same grace.

The Christmas events I value most are recorded on my December calendar months before they occur. In similar fashion, God foretold the event of Jesus's birth hundreds of years prior to His coming. Unlike many of our best-laid plans, God's plans never fail.

"When the fullness of time

had come, God sent forth His Son ..." (Galatians 4:4)

"For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6)

Merry Christmas!

Contact Organized by Choice at P.O. Box 26152, Fresno, CA 93729, call 559-871-3314 or email [info@organizedbychoice.com](mailto:info@organizedbychoice.com). You can visit [www.organizedbychoice.com](http://www.organizedbychoice.com) when you go online.

RECIPES cont. from P. 8

1 C dried tropical three-fruit mix \*

½ C sunflower nuts\*

½ C dry roasted peanuts

**Syrup**

¾ C packed brown sugar

½ C corn syrup

¼ C peanut butter

1 tsp. vanilla

Spray 13x9 inch pan with cooking spray. In large bowl, mix snack mix ingredients, set aside.

In 2 quart saucepan, mix all syrup ingredients except vanilla. Heat to boiling over medium-high heat, stirring constantly. Boil 1 minute. Remove from heat, stir in vanilla. Pour syrup over snack mix, stirring until evenly coated. Press mixture firmly in pan. Cool completely at least 30 minutes. Cut into 9 rows by 4 rows, making 36 bars. Store lightly covered.

\*If you can't find the dried tropical fruit, use whatever dried

fruit you like – apricots, dates, pineapple, but be sure to chop them to bite size. Same for the sunflower nuts – if you don't like them, use chopped toasted almonds, pistachios or even cashews.

In January I will start my fifth year writing this column. Yes, January 2009 was my first article. Sure doesn't seem that long ago. I've met a lot of nice people coming into the office, calling, or even writing. I want to thank each of you for your loyalty in reading my column each month. I sometimes don't even know what I'm going to write about until I sit down in front of my computer. If you have something you would like me to write about, please call me. If I'm not in the office, we have an answering machine or you can send me an e-mail, or write your info on paper and put it in the mail slot in the door. I would love to hear from you!

Hope you all have a blessed Christmas and the happiest, and best of New Years.

Talk to you next year.

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Senior Report

# A Fond Farewell to Another Year at the Ranchos Senior Center

By Melanie Williams

It's hard to believe the 2024 New Year is almost here. The Ranchos/Hills Senior Center is looking back at the wonderful events of 2023, but also looking forward to more new and exciting activities in 2024.

Our members had a chance to meet the new board members at the Annual Christmas Dinner in December. In the midst of this busy holiday season, Ruben and Darla Trujillo cooked another fantastic turkey main dish for the event. Thank you to all the members who took this opportunity to participate and brought their own favorite holiday dish to the Christmas Potluck Dinner.

January is the time to renew your membership at the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center. We would appreciate and encourage everyone to complete a membership application to update their information for the coming year. New and Renewal Membership Applications for 2024 will be available in January at the Senior Center receptionist desk.

The first big event is Game Night on Thursday, Jan. 11 at 5 p.m. to welcome all of our new and returning seniors to the 2024 New Year at the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center. Seniors, if you are attending the Game Night, please bring your favorite food for a potluck meal that serves six to eight people and your own place settings for dinner. There is no

main dish being provided on Game Night. Come and bring your favorite food, favorite game and a happy smile to our first senior event on January 11, 2024. If you have any questions, call the Senior Center at 559-645-4864.

Seniors can join us at the Birthdays and Anniversary Luncheon on the third Saturday of each month. We celebrate our seniors by going to a group lunch at a local restaurant in Madera or Fresno. In January, we are meeting at Arsenios Mexican Food at 37275 Ave. 12 in the Madera Ranchos. We are excited to try new restaurants in our local community and appreciate the willingness to accommodate our senior lunch group. Please call the Senior Center to reserve your spot at the Birthday and Anniversary Luncheon before January 11.

The Senior Center is beginning another year for the Brown Bag Program through the Madera County Food Bank. New and returning senior participants need to fill out an application for Brown Bag Day and mail it with a check made

out to the Madera Food Bank. An application must be completed and received by the Madera Food Bank before seniors can pick up a Brown Bag. Any senior in the local community can submit an application

for a Brown Bag at any time during the year. Applications are available at the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center. The Senior Center continues to serve the Madera Ranchos senior community as a distribution center for the Madera County Food Bank Brown Bag Program. If seniors are interested in vol-

unteering to help with the Brown Bag distribution or any other activities and events at the Senior Center, please contact us at 559-645-4864. The first Planning Meeting of the new year is on Monday, Jan. 8 at 1 p.m. Many seniors have expressed an interest in starting up Bingo at Game Night and a possible Bunco Night at the Senior Center. Come help us plan these events. Anyone is welcome to attend and make suggestions for activities this upcoming new year.

As the Christmas Holidays come upon us, have a wonderful time with family and friends. Merry Christmas from all the members of the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center.

Thought for the Holiday Season and the New Year: "Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth, for the touch of a friendly hand and for a talk beside the fire: it is time for home." – Edith Sitwell



At this year's Christmas Dinner Potluck, the 2024 Board Members were presented by George Hagler, left. Board Members are, front row from left, Joliene Mason, Ethel Hansen, Carol Wood, Cindy Lipinski, Diane Maxfield and Connie Prince. In the back row from left are Melanie Williams, Bob Campbell and Howard McLachlin.

center for the Madera County Food Bank Brown Bag Program. If seniors are interested in vol-

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## Golden Oak 4-H

By Jennifer Garzon

The Golden Oak Poultry project recently exhibited in the Central Coast Feather Fanciers 36th Annual Show in Paso Robles. Hunter Williams-Smith, Sarah Morgan and Iris Garzon competed in cage show, showmanship and poultry knowledge testing. It was an extremely successful show for all members. Hunter entered eight chickens in the Old English Game Bantam Class: three Brown Red, three Lemon Blues, one Silver Duckwing and one Wheaton. His Brown Red hen won Champion Old English in a class of 125 birds and it also won Champion Junior Bantam, Junior Show Champion, Best in Variety and Best of Breed. His Lemon Blue Pullet won Best of Variety and was in the running for Champion row of Old English Game Bantam. One of his Lemon Blue Roosters won Reserve Best of Variety and the other placed 2nd. His Silver Duckwing Rooster placed 1st in his variety class and his Wheaton Hen placed 3rd in her variety class. In Intermediate Showmanship, Hunter placed 8th using a bird never used in showmanship. He placed 3rd in the poultry knowledge testing.

4-H Happenings  
4-H Happenings  
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4-H Happenings  
4-H Happenings



At the Central Coast Feather Fanciers show in Paso Robles, Golden Oak 4-H was represented by, from left, Sarah Morgan, Hunter Williams-Smith, Iris Garzon and Griffin Williams-Smith.

Sarah Morgan competed in her first cage show, showmanship class and poultry knowledge testing. She entered her two Bantam Black Wyandottes that placed 5th in their variety class. In Novice Showmanship, Sarah placed 2nd and placed 10th in the poultry knowledge testing.

Iris Garzon entered six birds into the cage show: five Bantam Black Wyandottes that she hatched herself and one Old English Spangle. Her Black Wyandotte trio placed 1st in the Junior Division and her Spangle Hen placed 2nd in her variety class. Iris participated in Mini Showmanship placing 4th.

testing.

Our group also took a trip to local breeders to purchase their show birds and learned about the dubbing process for Old English Game Bantams. Our group looks forward to the next poultry shows in Hollister and Lodi in January 2024.

## Sierra Shadows 4-H

By Mikayla Carr

Merry Christmas, Joyeux Noël, Frohe Weihnachten. It's the holiday season and the Sierra Shadows 4-H is very busy gift giving and spreading holiday cheer throughout the community.

In the previous article, I talked about the Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce Christmas Tree Lighting. Our 4-H club helps with this very special event. Our members helped provide baked goodies, served hot cocoa and set up fun booths with games and activities. If you came to this event, you had the option to donate to veterans who are spending their



The Sierra Shadows 4-H Club's newest members are the 5-8-year-old Cloverbuds, who are busy learning crafts, and showing and learning about animals.

Please see 4-H on P. 15

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The Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce would love to see you at our next meeting, always the second Wednesday of the month. Join us on January 10 at 6 p.m. at 37167 Ave. 12, Suite 5C. Come give your input on the future of the Ranchos. Call us at 645-4001.

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# SEE YOU SUNDAY!

# SEMCU speaks

By Verlaine Elinburg

Every community benefits from caring people and organizations. In the Southeast Madera community, you will find the Ranchos/Hills Seniors advocating and caring for the large senior population. The Kiwanis perform fundraisers to obtain revenue for projects that benefit schools, kids, assorted groups and individuals. Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce is responsible for promoting business in our area and hosts the Ranchos Christmas Tree Lighting in the community to rally the community to donate a list of items for Veterans at the Veterans Hospital as well as receiving donated dollars to help purchase items to fill gift bags. SEMCU

has partnered in the past and is advocating working with Self-Help Enterprises emergency services programs. The Ranchos Library promotes education, reading and computer skills for our kids and everyone else. The Fire Department as well as the Sheriff are also doing their part and don't forget the good spiritual and life enhancing guidance we get along the way from our spiritual leaders within our community.

SEMCU is one of these entities active in our community. SEMCU, which stands for Southeast Madera County United, was adopted in 2012 as a nonprofit mutual benefit organization dedicated to represent the interest of the property owners and businesses in Southeast Madera County, primarily the zip code 93636 area. SEMCU advocates for local interests and needs. We study issues facing our community, like water, transportation, safety, education and energy, and work with local governments and private entities to find

working solutions to our region's problems. SEMCU also advocates wherever and whenever the opportunity arises to help our community and obtain grant funding to help address our area's needs. SEMCU also offers to share its ad page in the Ranchos Independent with any nonprofit organization in the community that needs to advertise an event.

This year among other activities, SEMCU donated the safety light flashing stop signs at the crossroads of Avenue 15 and Road 36 to help safety at this dangerous intersection, day and night.

At present, SEMCU is in the process of donating to the Ranchos Library state-of-the-art teleconference room equipment, which includes a large wall mounted TV, a roaming microphone, a camera to capture participants from various angles and a podium for presenters. The central point of focus will ensure a professional and organized meeting atmosphere. It is hoped it will be up and

functioning by the end of 2023 or by the middle of January 2024.

These days, SEMCU's main concern has to do with water conservation projects and searching for community-based grants, both for continuing and finding new projects.

SEMCU offers an opportunity for people in the community to join the SEMCU Board of Directors and help as it forges forward. The group meets only once a month for an hour on the third Monday of every month. The next meeting will take place on Monday, Jan. 15 at 6 p.m. To participate by telephone, dial 312-757-3121 and then dial access code 715657949# when prompted. You can also participate by computer, tablet or cell phone at [www.gotomeet.me/greystoneconference](http://www.gotomeet.me/greystoneconference). For more information call 559-363-9095, email [info@semcu.org](mailto:info@semcu.org) or visit its webpage at [www.semcu.org](http://www.semcu.org).

*SEMCU is "By the Community,  
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## Ex-Dodger/Padre All Star Steve Garvey: The Republican Wild Card

By Evan Symon

Since January, almost all the coverage of the 2024 U.S. Senate race has been on three major candidates: Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-CA), Congresswoman Katie Porter (D-CA), and Congressman Adam Schiff (D-CA). They have been by far the top candidates in terms of donations, endorsements, and where they place in polls. Other Democrats have occasionally made headlines, such as former tech executive Lexi Reese who has been a masterful fundraiser, but in polls they generally don't go above 2 or 3 percent.

For the first three quarters of the year, GOP candidates didn't do much better than those tertiary Democrats. Lawyer Eric Early did have an impressive early poll lead in the double digits, but has since settled in to single digit territory. He also has by far the most endorsements amongst any Republican, albeit with most coming from

County Republican organization. Businessman James Bradley also made waves by moving ahead of Early in some polls, but as they have each gotten an average of between 3 and 7 points in every poll since June, it's not saying all that much. While both are good candidates, the GOP needed a name candidate who could fundraise and go the distance against the top three Democrats.

While often rumored as a candidate, it wasn't until early last month that the GOP got a candidate who could potentially scuttle the all-Democrat path ahead –

former Los Angeles Dodger and San Diego Padre all-star Steve Garvey. While not as big a name as other celebrity California Republican politicians of the past like Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sonny Bono, Garvey came in with dedicated bases of support in LA and San Diego, as well as more off-beat blocs of support, such as those from baseball fans, that could reach beyond party lines and attract the coveted independent and undecided voters.



Many Democrats dismissed Garvey as just another Republican entering the race to be reckoned with, Democrats have now begun shifting rhetoric away from each other and back towards the GOP. However, either way is going to prove harmful to the Democrats in the long-term.

### *Garvey and the GOP*

"Either way, Democrats are going to lose face here," added Stephanie Lewis, a pollster in Southern California. "They get two Dem candidates in, and those two are going to waste tens of millions going after each other through most of 2024 and show just how divided Democrats are. If it is one Democrat against Garvey, yeah they still

last month. According to some experts the Globe talked with on Wednesday, Democrats saw him as just another minor dent in the number of votes going to someone other than Porter, Schiff, or Lee.

"He was seen as just another Early or Bradley, but with maybe another point or two in the polls because of his fundraising experience," said Matt Saunders, a political consultant who helps advise candidates from entertainment and athletic fields, to the Globe.


However, in the last month, Garvey has quickly not only become the top Republican in the race, but one of the top candidates period. The last two major polls have shown Garvey in third place with 10% of the vote, now ahead of Lee, one of the three major Democrats. As of the latest poll, he is only six points behind Schiff and three points, the margin-of-error, behind Porter.

With Garvey now a bona fide force to get the seat unless something crazy happens, but they are hurt because they beat out a few of their golden candidates. Oh, and if [Garvey] does well enough, it could show the Democrats losing ground overall."

For the GOP, the next few months are critical in the lead up to the March primary. While a win in November 2024 is extremely difficult, a win in March is becoming more and more likely. And there are several signs to watch for.

"One is the polls," continued Saunders.

Please see **GARVEY** on P. 17  
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4-H cont. from P. 11

Christmas at the Veterans Hospital in Fresno by giving them blankets, food, warm clothes and other needed items. The tree lighting event was on Dec. 1 at the Maywood Center and it was a lot of fun for the whole family. Definitely consider coming next year.

The Sierra Shadows 4-H club is holding a blanket drive for the veterans in need. On Dec. 12 our club had a

Christmas potluck complete with an ornament exchange and lots of delicious food for all the hard-working members.

Operation Christmas Child is a project that helps kids from other countries that don't have necessary items, or their families can't afford Christmas presents. Empty "shoe boxes" were supplied by Golden Valley Baptist Church and were then filled with Christmas items, then returned to the church that then sends the shoeboxes out. This is a

wonderful thing to do and it's very fun filling the boxes with goodies. This is just one thing that our 4-H club does to spread holiday cheer.

Events next month for Sierra Shadows 4-H are the Favorite Foods Day committee meeting and Favorite Foods Day, an event where members show off their baking and cooking skills in a competition. Also, the fabulous Madera County Photography Contest is coming up.

Introducing the 2023-2024 Sierra Shadows 4-H Cloverbuds. Cloverbuds is a new group to Sierra Shadows that was started last year by Jesse Bower. It's for children ages 5-8 and it's a great learning opportunity for these little ones. Some of the things the Cloverbud project includes are floral arrangements and crafts, like painting. They also get to enter animals in the fair and learn about them. The Cloverbud officers include Paisley Bower, Brooke Davis and Jade Mellott. These little officers help out the big officers and help plan events. This group is truly one of a kind and our club wouldn't be the same without them.

On Nov. 14 we had another club meeting and before the meeting started, the recreation officers had a paper airplane race. Our vice president started the meeting and talked about the past and upcoming events. The secretary and reporter read their articles and the treasurer talked about the club balance. A very special young lady did a presentation on the notes of a violin. She played a song and showed what each key sounded like. She also told us the parts of a violin. Then a raffle took place with a prize of bubbles. The meeting was adjourned and the members enjoyed a delicious snack.

In the spirit of the season, here are a few Christmas jokes.

How do elves clean Santa's sleigh on the day after Christmas? Stanta-tizer.

Who is Santa's favorite singer? Elf-is Presley.

What do snowmen eat for breakfast? Frosted flakes.

Sierra Shadows 4-H helps with many activities to spread holiday cheer and the Cloverbud group is an amazing group.

Merry Christmas.



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12/23



By Lucie Winborne

- Water itself does not conduct electricity well, but the impurities found in water do.
- When Ethiopian emperor Menelik II didn't feel well, he would eat a few pages of the Bible. While this curious habit didn't do him any harm as long as his consumption was limited, in 1913, feeling particularly ill after a stroke, he ordered an entire Old Testament book of Kings to be fed to him, a page at a time, but died before he could complete it.
- Humans can live unprotected in space for about 30 seconds if they don't hold their breath.
- Two actors have died while playing Judas Iscariot in live productions of the biblical story by accidentally hanging themselves for real during his death scene.
- Ever find yourself getting a little sleepy during a virtual meeting? Contrary to popular belief, researchers have determined that the cause isn't information overload, but mental underload and boredom. (Frankly, we're not too surprised!)
- A 1999 study found that a single square kilometer (247 acres) of the Amazon rainforest can contain about 90,790 tons of living plants.
- As editors around the globe already know, hearing grammatical errors can cause physical stress.
- Following a nationwide legal battle (and graceful concession from Gregory's Restaurant and Bar in New Jersey), Taco Bell successfully ensured that the term "Taco Tuesday" can be used freely throughout all 50 states.
- If Earth's history was condensed into a 24-hour span, life would have appeared at 4 a.m., land plants at 10:24 p.m., dinosaur extinction at 11:41 p.m., and human history would have begun at 11:58:43 p.m.

Thought for the Day: *"If a man empties his purse into his head, no one can take it away from him. An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest."* – Benjamin Franklin

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**Kiwanis Korner**

# Kiwanis Lets You Win A Limo

By Sally Rowden

Our Christmas Tea was a huge success. The tables were full and the chatter and laughter was plentiful. A mighty “thank you” to our Liberty High School Kiwanis Key Club members for their expertise at serving and maintaining all guests’ luncheon needs. The Silent Auction was well received along with the many door prizes awarded. Santa’s arrival was an exciting surprise. Thank you, Santa for sharing time with us and thank you all for supporting our Christmas Tea which in turn supports our children and our communities.



Richard Wayne, right, President of the Madera Ranchos Kiwanis, thanks Bill Groh and Carol Wood for their help with the Kiwanis community sign at the corner of Avenue 12 and Road 36.

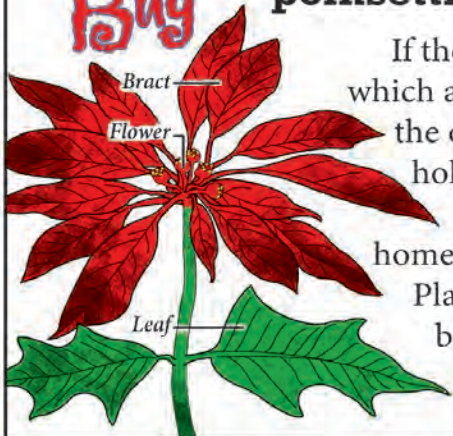
At the Annual Community Christmas Tree Lightening Ceremony sponsored by the Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce, we presented a check in the amount of \$400 to the Chamber. This donation assists the Chamber in purchasing basic daily needs for our local Veterans at the Fresno Veterans Hospital. The Chamber will be delivering all items to the hospital by mid-December.

We want to thank Bob Groh for his carpentry in repairing our Kiwanis Billboard located on the northeast corner of Avenue 12 and Road 36. This billboard sign is available at no cost to our non-profits, churches and schools for advertising their community happenings. Again, thank you, Bob, for your valuable support and making a club visit along with Carol Wood. If anyone would like further information regarding the Kiwanis Billboard, contact Sally Rowden at rowdensally2@gmail.com.

Coming up in February, our Valentine’s Day Limo Ride will once again be happening. You’ll soon have the opportunity to purchase raffle tickets to win a sweet limo ride for yourself and six to eight guests. Look for complete details up and running on our Facebook Page, Instagram and What’s Up in the Ranchos toward the end of December.

The Kiwanis Club of Madera Ranchos would like to send the warmest of wishes of peace and joy for your holiday celebrations, with an added quote for the new year: “Celebrate endings — for they precede new beginnings.” – Jonathan Huie.

[www.RanchosKiwanis.com](http://www.RanchosKiwanis.com)



## Selecting poinsettias

A healthy poinsettia will have attractive, intact bracts (the “petals”). Check the soil; it shouldn’t be very wet or very dry.

If the little yellow buds in the center, which are the actual flowers, look tight, the quality of the plant is good. This holiday favorite is a sensitive plant, so wrap it in paper for the trip home to guard it from wind and cold. Place it in a protected area that has bright, indirect light. – Brenda Weaver

Sources: [millcreekgardens.com](http://millcreekgardens.com)  
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*In Memoriam*  
**Morris "Edgar" Johns**  
 December 29, 1953 -- November 19, 2023



Morris Johns, a long-time Madera Ranchos resident, passed away on November 19, 2023, just five months after being diagnosed with glioblastoma.

Known as "Edgar" by friends and family, he was a larger-than-life figure that left a lasting impression on anyone he met. He was a loving and caring husband and father. Edgar was known for his incredible work ethic, always waking before the sun to get a head start on the day. He enjoyed working on various projects around the

home and spending countless hours on his tractor getting the soil just right for planting his annual garden. He also enjoyed spending quality time in the "great outdoors" with his family.

Edgar is preceded in death by his parents, Morris and Isabel Johns; sisters, Patricia (Johns) Bell; and Janet Johns. He is survived by his wife, Mary Johns; brother, John (wife Pam) Johns; son, Daniel (wife) Amanda Johns; son, Michael (husband Casey) Johns; and grandson, Colton Johns.

**GARVEY** cont. from P. 14

"Gotta keep an eye on them. Garvey has been moving up, and if he starts getting into that second place territory, both Schiff and Porter, who have sunk a ton of money and their future political careers into this, are not going to be happy.

Two is fundraising. New SEC totals for the quarter will come out in December, and where Garvey stands with money will be critical. To be competitive he needs at least as much as Lee, so we are talking at least a million dollars. Schiff and Porter have a bunch more, but he can also easily rack up more donations as needed. He just needs that threshold and a big number to draw in support.

"Speaking of, three is bringing in more support. Getting more from the GOP is good, but he needs more branching out to independents, undecideds, and maybe some one the fence baseball fans. You said getting former teammates involved could help, and yeah, it can. If he can reach out to Latinos especially, he can get a solid boost

of support. Female voters are big for him too to get, and there he can work in his non-profit experience to draw more in.

"Four is policy, as he needs a more clear vision as well as good counters to arguments that the Democrats have thrown out. And five is to bring together a unified Republican front. Again, Early and Bradley are great, and in any other year, they would be going for that outside shot of getting one of the primary spots. But Garvey is winning a lot of Republicans over. If both throw their support behind him, that is at least another easy five points for Garvey. Plus the GOP can claim a unified candidate, something which the Democrats are very much fractured on right now. A GOP unified Garvey could potentially start leading in the polls. In fact, that is very likely. Democrats would be humiliated and the GOP would get some good press.

"You said it. He is a wild card in the election as the top Republican. And right now, he is the only Republican these Democratic candidates fear."

**GAS TAX** cont. from P. 2

Caltrans, declined to comment. "Caltrans is reviewing the report but does not comment on potential legislative proposals," a spokesperson said.

Lawmakers could make up for the shortfalls in many of these programs by spending less on transportation, but that would likely mean worsening roads and highways, and also some public mass transit cuts. They might also consider further increasing gas taxes or vehicle fees. But that might have an outsized impact on the state's lower-income communities, who are expected to adopt zero-emission vehicles more slowly as middle- or higher-income Californians.

Lawmakers also could consider using

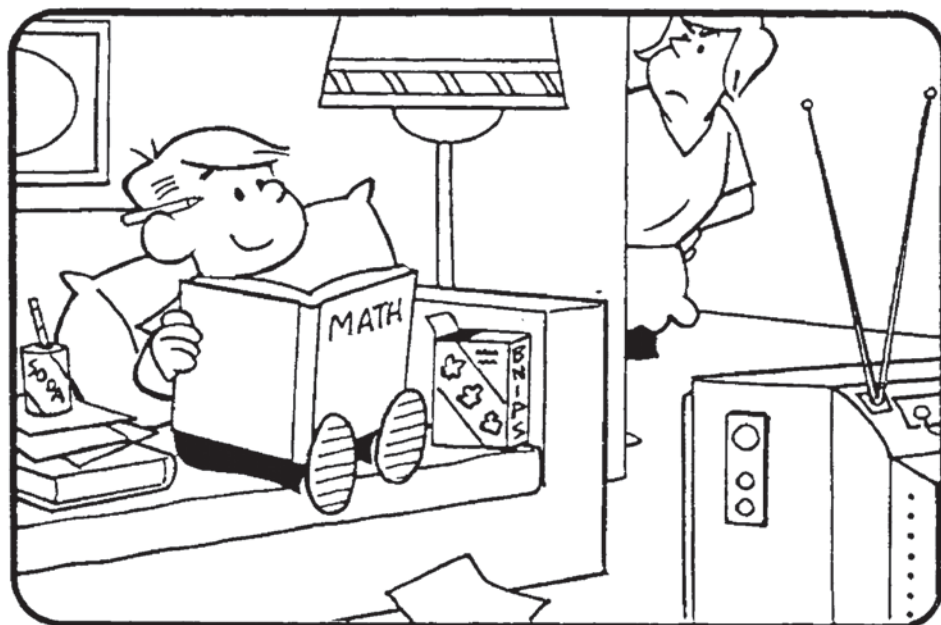
other state funds for transportation or implementing a road charge, which would tax people based on the number of miles they drive.

The report comes as California is bracing for a projected \$68 billion budget deficit next year. Gov. Gavin Newsom's Finance Department on Tuesday ordered departments and agencies across government to rein in spending on everything from travel to office supplies.

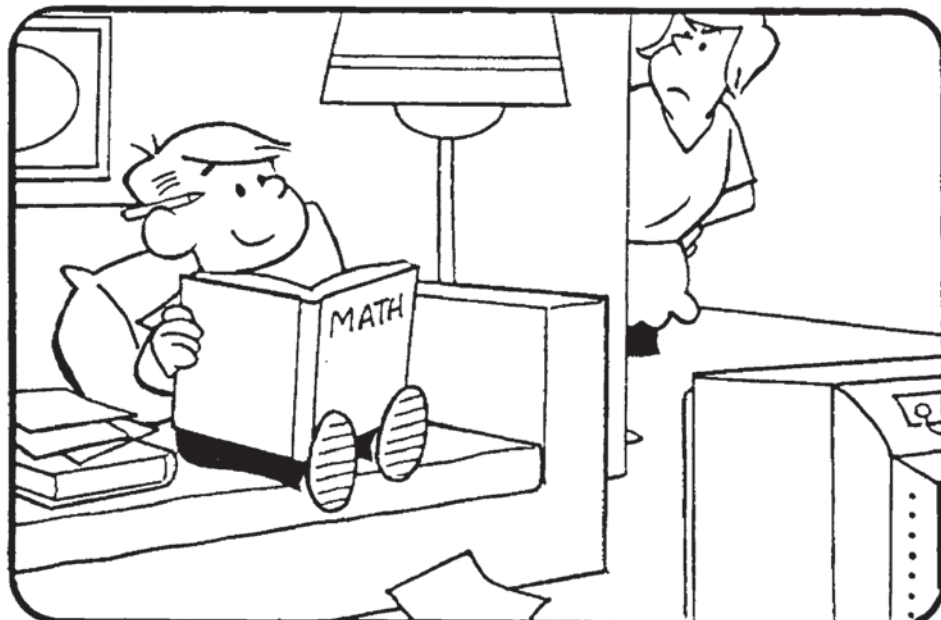
California aims to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 85 percent below 1990 levels by 2045, when the state is expected to reach a statewide goal of net zero emissions. One of the most prominent ways the state is doing that is by banning the sale of all new gas-powered cars by 2035.

**HOCUS-FOCUS**

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF




Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Can is missing. 2. Pillow is smaller. 3. Lamp shade is different. 4. Box is missing. 5. TV controls are missing. 6. Antenna is missing.

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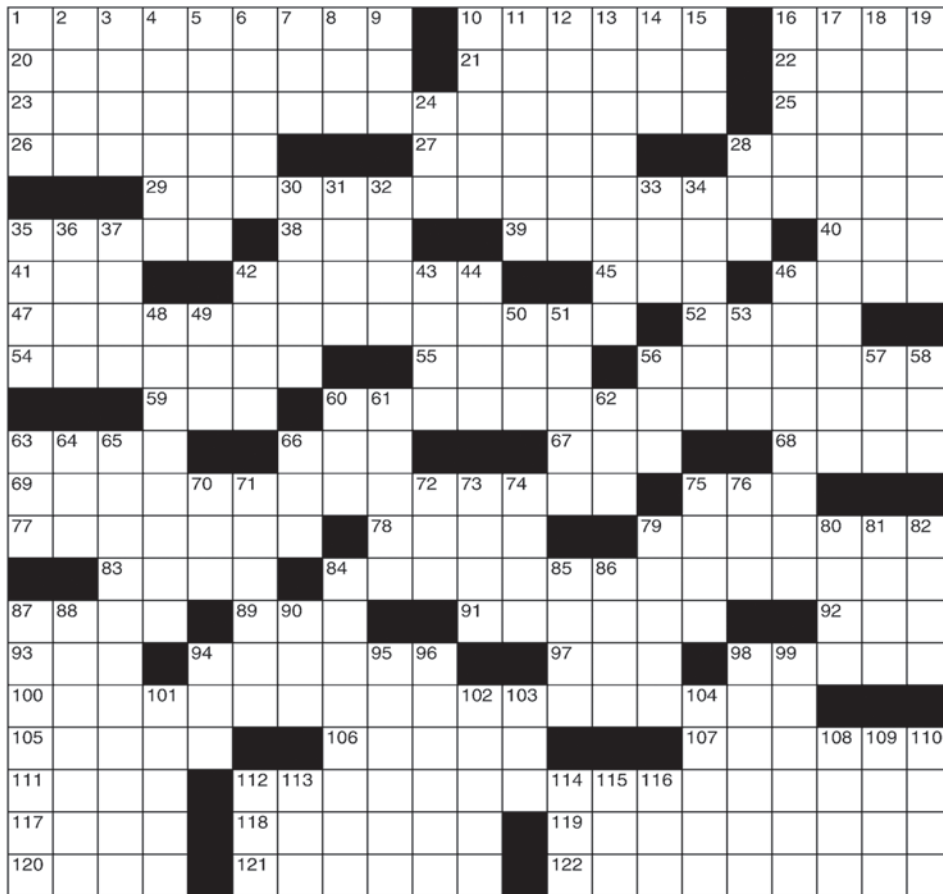
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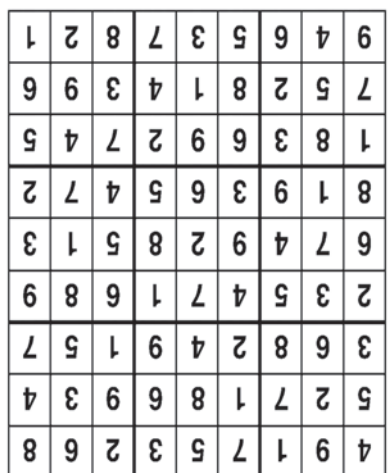
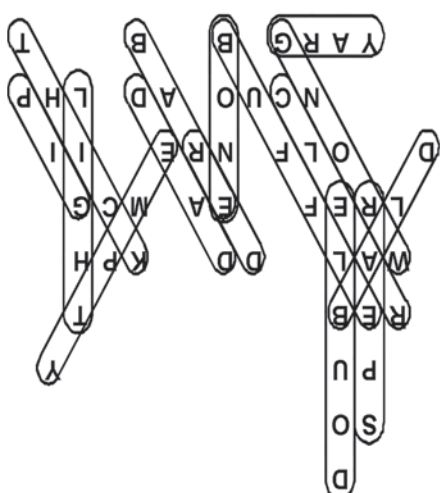
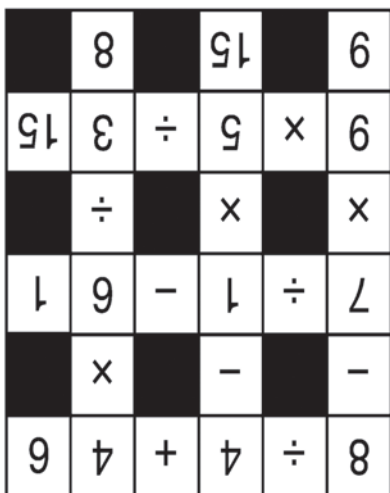
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# Super Crossword



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## WORD SEARCH



- |   |   |   |                                 |  |  |
|---|---|---|---------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>ACROSS</b>   | <b>49</b> Continuously                            | <b>90</b> Gore — (rainwear fabric)  | <b>DOWN</b>                     | <b>37</b> Puppies                        | <b>79</b> Test versions of smartphone programs, e.g. |
| <b>1</b> Requested                                    | <b>50</b> Cruel emperor                           | <b>91</b> Herb in pesto   | <b>1</b> Get a lock on          | <b>39</b> Boatloads                      | <b>80</b> Vacant political position                  |
| <b>6</b> Mass helpers                                 | <b>51</b> Troop's group                           | <b>92</b> Farm female   | <b>2</b> Milan's La — art       | <b>42</b> Piece of tile                  | <b>81</b> Oil, in slang                              |
| <b>15</b> Foil maker                                  | <b>52</b> Partners declaration                    | <b>93</b> FedEx competitor  | <b>3</b> Gold purity unit       | <b>43</b> Zoo dweller                    | <b>82</b> High-speed                                 |
| <b>20</b> Empathetic                                  | <b>53</b> Scenes in a 1985 film                   | <b>94</b> 1996-2002 "Saturday Night Live" cast member   | <b>4</b> St. Pat's land         | <b>44</b> Eyeball part                   | <b>83</b> A Great Lake                               |
| <b>21</b> Steak lover, e.g.                           | <b>54</b> Title sorority                          | <b>95</b> Agra apparel  | <b>5</b> Bargain buy            | <b>45</b> India's Gandhi                 | <b>87</b> Military post                              |
| <b>22</b> Lounges idly                                | <b>55</b> Turkish cap                             | <b>96</b> Band's job  | <b>6</b> Home                   | <b>46</b> Be wobbly                      | <b>88</b> Scans again                                |
| <b>23</b> Italian developer of an educational method  | <b>56</b> French friends                          | <b>97</b> Guarantee   | <b>7</b> Advances, as money     | <b>47</b> Fog or steam                   | <b>89</b> Artisans' club                             |
| <b>25</b> Third month                                 | <b>57</b> Smithereens                             | <b>98</b> The, to Henri Thorpe  | <b>8</b> Vietnamese New Year    | <b>48</b> Lounge around                  | <b>91</b> Rails in ballet                            |
| <b>26</b> "Two Years Before the Mast" star            | <b>58</b> Onetime rival of Steffi Graf            | <b>99</b> "Velvet Fog" vocalist   | <b>9</b> Several                | <b>49</b> "Good" or "bad" dietary intake | <b>95</b> Invited one                                |
| <b>27</b> Film director Craven                        | <b>59</b> Swimmer                                 | <b>100</b> Comedian with the 1990 HBO special "Cats, Cops and Stuff"                              | <b>10</b> Lay away              | <b>50</b> Fishnet stuff                  | <b>96</b> Actress Page                               |
| <b>28</b> Family-style Chinese dish                   | <b>60</b> Calculus, e.g.                          | <b>101</b> Disfigure  | <b>11</b> Deep-voiced singer    | <b>51</b> Oven brand                     | <b>98</b> "Duck —" (Warner Bros. short)              |
| <b>29</b> Body design, in brief                       | <b>61</b> Made in the manner of                   | <b>102</b> Actor Falk   | <b>12</b> Siouan tribesperson   | <b>52</b> "Good" or "bad" dietary intake | <b>99</b> Zellweger of the screen                    |
| <b>30</b> The new girl on "New Girl"                  | <b>62</b> American Red Cross founder              | <b>103</b> Therefore  | <b>13</b> "— out!"              | <b>53</b> Cry upon arriving              | <b>100</b> Body part often pulled by an athlete      |
| <b>31</b> French painter of "The Horse Fair"          | <b>63</b> Fix, as a pet                           | <b>104</b> Resistance to alternating current  | <b>14</b> — Lankan              | <b>54</b> Leading to something           | <b>101</b> "— buying it"                             |
| <b>36</b> Commotion                                   | <b>64</b> Frigid                                  | <b>105</b> Bel — (Italian cheese)   | <b>15</b> Kind of nut           | <b>55</b> Drank like a dog or cat        | <b>102</b> "Hero" actress Davis                      |
| <b>38</b> The "N" of USNA: Abbr.                      | <b>65</b> House pests                             | <b>106</b> Hunter constellation   | <b>16</b> Averse                | <b>56</b> Gives assent                   | <b>103</b> Emailed junk                              |
| <b>40</b> "— never believe me!"                       | <b>66</b> Spirited                                | <b>107</b> RBIs, e.g.   | <b>17</b> Criticized petulantly | <b>57</b> Speed-of-sound ratio           | <b>104</b> General — chicken                         |
| <b>41</b> Rap's "Dr."                                 | <b>67</b> Flub up                                 | <b>108</b> Engulfed by fire   | <b>18</b> "No question"         | <b>58</b> Green stuff                    | <b>105</b> Like a tinny recording                    |
| <b>42</b> She played Abby Parker on HBO's "The Deuce" | <b>68</b> Sense by touch                          | <b>109</b> Zeus' wife   | <b>19</b> Some hardwoods        | <b>59</b> Paddy crop                     | <b>106</b> Get set for surgery                       |
| <b>48</b> Cut with a light beam                       | <b>69</b> "— buying it"                           | <b>110</b> Singer Della   | <b>20</b> Part of MLB           | <b>60</b> Like a tinny recording         | <b>107</b> Other, in Oviedo                          |
|   | <b>70</b> More, in a music score                  | <b>111</b> Fencing sword  | <b>21</b> Flock of quail        | <b>61</b> Tobacco plug                   | <b>108</b> Band blaster                              |
|   | <b>71</b> She played Miss Ellie Ewing on "Dallas" | <b>112</b> It can precede eight first names in this puzzle to form the names of California cities | <b>22</b> Dancer de Mille       | <b>62</b> Get set for surgery            | <b>109</b> News svc.                                 |
|   |   |   |                                 | <b>63</b> City of ancient Egypt          | <b>110</b> Vocalist Yoko                             |

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• Zip-top bags are essential when our family packs for holiday visiting. We use gallon-size bags for the kids' outfits -- top, bottoms, underclothes, etc. -- and each bag holds one complete set. There is no suitcase chaos, as the bag comes out, and yesterday's clothing goes in, ready for laundry day when we get home. Happy traveling. -- JoAnn



• After Christmas sales are a great time to buy not only gift wrap (look for solid colors that you can use all year long), holiday cards and decoration, but also next season's winter wear. Things like scarves and gloves can be great bargains. And even coats can go on sale. Take advantage -- especially if you have kids -- and buy up.

• Here is a wonderful shopping tip that's especially useful during holiday shopping but is something we do all year round: Spend your first hour or so browsing only. Nothing goes in the shopping cart or your bag, and no purchases. If, after you are ready to buy, you still remember the things you "had to have," go back and make the purchases. -- M.M. in Arizona

• A great storage container for fancy ornaments is a liquor box, which you can get for free outside of package stores. They have cardboard separators that make it easy to store glass bulbs. -- W.F. in New Mexico

• I try to buy the same amount of presents for each of my grandchildren. I set a budget for each, and that carries me throughout the year, as I like to shop early for sales. One thing I do, though, is to take into account the value of the item if I get a super great deal. I think it makes it more fair for the rest of them. I haven't had any complaints! -- Grandma, via email

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

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**TO ADVERTISE call 559-645-0634**

## 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.

1 3 4 4 5 6 7 8 9

	÷		+		6
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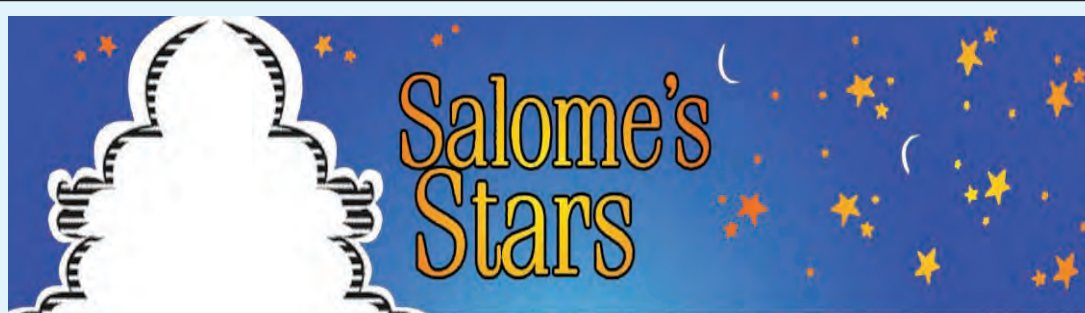
Click on "Local News" at

Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



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**ARIES** (March 21 to April 19) Although taking advice isn't always easy for the headstrong Sheep, you might want to consider what someone you respect will have to say about an upcoming decision.

**TAURUS** (April 20 to May 20) A new offer is tempting, but don't be bullied into a quick decision. Rely on your keen Bovine business sense to alert you to anything that might be questionable.

**GEMINI** (May 21 to June 20) Your "Gemini Twin" nature rallies to help you deal with this week's hectic schedule, both in your personal and professional lives. One caution: Watch your diet.

**CANCER** (June 21 to July 22) Avoid rushing to make up for lost time on a stalled workplace operation. It's best to set up a schedule and pace yourself. Welcome the help of your colleagues.

**LEO** (July 23 to August 22) Despite those glittering holiday distractions that you love so well, be sure to keep your feline senses set on high to alert you to anything that might require fast action.

**VIRGO** (August 23 to September 22) Making an effort to restore fraying relationships proves to be more successful than you dared hope. The holidays also bring new friends into your life.

**LIBRA** (September 23 to October 22) Private and professional matters compete for your attention. Be honest in your assessment of which should get more of it -- and for how long.

**SCORPIO** (October 23 to November 21) A seemingly endless list of must-do tasks is best handled by tackling them one by one. Don't forget to take energy-restoring timeouts between each job.

**SAGITTARIUS** (November 22 to December 21) A vexing relationship seems destined to deteriorate no matter what each side tries to do. A third party's advice just might prove to be helpful.

**CAPRICORN** (December 22 to January 19) Reach out and ease any tensions caused by home or workplace pressures before they threaten the relationship-building progress that you've made.

**AQUARIUS** (January 20 to February 18) You often go out of your way to show kindness to others, so don't be surprised if other people want to do something nice for you this week.

**PISCES** (February 19 to March 20) People in your life respect your Piscean wisdom, so don't hesitate to speak up about a matter that you feel isn't being handled quite the way it should.

**Born this Week**

*Your personal warmth helps you make friendships,  
and your sense of fair play helps you keep them.*

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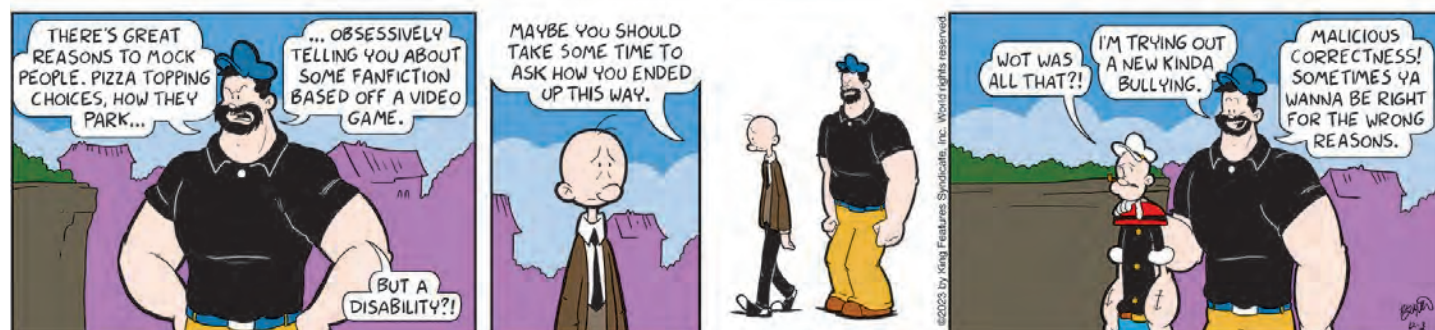
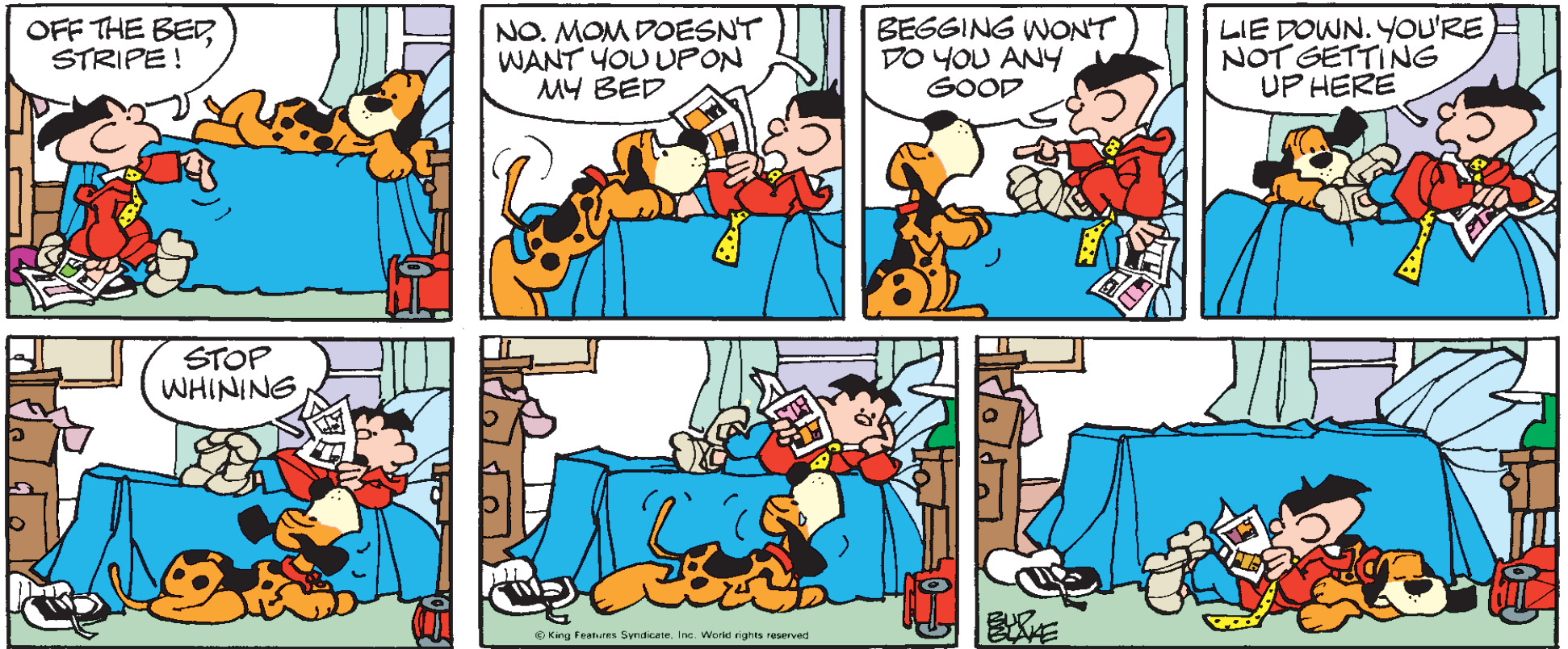
Kids' Maze



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## TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



## TRIVIA TEST

By Fifi Rodriguez

- MOVIES:** Which Disney animated movie features the song "Whistle While You Work"?
- GEOGRAPHY:** Which two oceans are on Russia's shores?
- PSYCHOLOGY:** What is the fear represented in the condition called euphoria?
- TELEVISION:** What is "The Simpsons" home address?
- GAMES:** How many dimples are on a golf ball?
- ASTRONOMY:** Earth's place in the solar system is how many planets from the Sun?
- LANGUAGE:** What is the only country in South America whose official language is Dutch?
- FOOD & DRINK:** What is a sweetbread?
- LITERATURE:** In which century was "The Canterbury Tales" written?
- SCIENCE:** Who is considered the father of modern astronomy?

- "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs."
- Arctic and Pacific.
- Fear of good news.
- 742 Evergreen Terrace.
- Generally between 300-500.
- Third.
- Surname.
- Internal organs of a young animal.
- Late 14th century.
- Copernicus.

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# Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



# Intelligent Life

by David Reddick



# Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



# The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



# SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

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		5	4		9
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	4		3		2

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## The Independent

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### MAGIC MAZE ● — HEADED

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

Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions forward, backward, up, down and diagonally  
 Unlisted clue hint: A MALE BOVINE

- Bald
- Bare
- Bone
- Buffle
- Clear
- Dead
- Double
- Empty
- Gray
- Light
- Pig
- Red
- Spear
- Thick
- Wrong

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