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Volume 22 Issue 2 2026

The Official Publication of Southeastern Madera County

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# Trump Strengthens California Water Supply

**New off-stream storage  
provides over 200,000  
additional acre-feet  
of water**

*In This Issue*

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# Myths and Facts of the SAVE Act

The SAVE Act, shorthand for the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act, establishes proof-of-citizenship requirements for voter registration. It does not automatically invalidate existing registrations. Here are some of the current myths about the Act and the facts about it.

**MYTH 1:** “Tens of millions of Americans will be disenfranchised.”

**FACT 1:** The bill defines proof of citizenship using widely held documents: REAL ID-compliant identification, a valid U.S. passport, military ID with record, or valid government-issued photo ID. These are standard credentials, not unusual requirements.



**MYTH 2:** “Your birth certificate name must perfectly match your current ID.”

**FACT 2:** The bill does not impose a universal “exact name match” rule. Existing legal processes already account for name changes due to marriage, divorce, or other lawful updates.

**MYTH 3:** “This Act overrides existing identity and name-change laws.”

**FACT 3:** The legislation does NOT replace or invalidate long-established identity verification systems. Legal name changes, amended records and identity reconciliation processes remain fully intact.

**MYTH 4:** “Married women will lose voting rights.”

**FACT 4:** Name changes are among the most common legal updates in the country. Government, financial and legal systems already handle this routinely.

**MYTH 5:** “This creates impossible documentation burdens.”

**FACT 5:** REAL ID-compliant licenses are now standard nationwide and passports



The Department of the Interior has advanced President Trump’s Executive Order 14181, approving reservoir site projects to strengthen California’s water reliability. This approval clears a path for new off-stream storage as the Executive Order highlights more than 200,000 additional acre-feet of water for California.

The Department of the Interior approved the “Record of Decision” for the Sites Reservoir Project, a major off-stream storage project in Northern California. The decision authorizes the Bureau of Reclamation to provide up to 25 percent of the total cost for the 1.5 million acre-foot off-stream reservoir, which will be located west of the Sacramento River near Maxwell, Calif. The reservoir is designed to capture and store water during wet periods for use in dry years and the project will strengthen reliability for communities, agriculture and the environment across the state.

The action reflects the Trump administration’s priority to expand water supply, enhance system resilience and reduce regulatory delays through the direction established in Executive Order 14181. The

be stored.

“President Trump made clear that federal water projects must deliver real results for American families,” said Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum. “This administration is getting it done in record time. The Sites

*Assistant Secretary for Water and Science Andrea Travnicek said, “This decision reflects years of analysis, public engagement and coordination, and establishes the foundation for construction through sound partnerships that will ultimately result in additional water supplies for California.”*

Reservoir Project and the gains achieved over the past year demonstrate how a disciplined, mission-focused approach can expand water reliability for communities,

order has driven operational improvements that delivered more than 200,000 acre-feet of additional water to the Central Valley Project, enough to supply more than 500,000 people for a year by streamlining operations and capturing storm flows that historically could not

agriculture and the economy.”

As a result of the executive order and favorable hydrology, Reclamation made more than 180,000 acre-feet of additional water available to the Central Valley Project in 2025 compared to 2024, benefiting agricultural water users, communities and other project partners. Following the approval of the Action 5 Record of Decision in December 2025, an additional 39,000 acre-feet was captured during storm events in late December and early January by leveraging operational flexibilities, water that historically would have flowed through the system. In total, these efforts secured more than 200,000 acre-feet within one year of the order’s signing. Sites Reservoir would further boost that supply.

“Signing the Sites Reservoir Record of Decision represents a federal commitment to move a long-studied water storage project forward,” said Assistant Secretary for Water and Science Andrea Travnicek. “This decision reflects years of analysis, public engagement and coordination, and establishes the foundation for construction through sound partnerships that will ultimately result in additional water supplies for California.”

The Record of Decision finalizes Reclamation’s selection of an alternative analyzed in the project’s environmental review and authorizes the agency to move forward consistent with applicable federal laws and regulations. The decision follows years of technical studies, public input and coordination with state, local and tribal partners.

Reclamation continues to implement President Trump’s Executive Order 14181 as it advances both near-term operational improvements, and long-term infrastructure projects that support food production, strengthen economic stability and increase community resilience.

are widely held. The bill largely relies on documents millions already possess.

### Common Concerns Worth Addressing

**Q:** “What if someone doesn’t have a passport?”

**A:** Having a passport is only one acceptable option. REAL ID-compliant identification and other government-issued IDs qualify.

**Q:** “What about name discrepancies?”

**A:** Identity systems already incorporate lawful name changes. This is not a new legal problem introduced by the Act.

**Q:** “Isn’t this voter suppression?”

**A:** Policy intent is open for debate. But that debate should be grounded in the bill’s actual language rather than interpretations that amplify fear.

## LHS Brings Home 13 Medals

Liberty High School competed in the 44th annual Academic Decathlon and earned a total of 13 medals and one scholarship. Glacier High School Charter in Oakhurst won this year’s competition for the fifth consecutive year.

Seven schools competed in this 10-event competition answering questions based on the topic “The Roaring Twenties.”

“The decathletes demonstrated remarkable commitment and teamwork, with their positive energy evident throughout the competition,” said Tricia Protzman, Madera County Superintendent.

Madera High School came in second place with Matilda Torres High School placing third. Liberty High School, Chowchilla Union High School, Madera South High School and Sherman Thomas Charter High School also competed in this 10-event competition.

Decathlon teams are comprised of up to 25 members competing in three levels of competition: Honor (A), Scholastic (B) and Varsity (C) students.

The top scoring senior from each school received a \$250 scholarship. Liberty’s winner was Tory Green.



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**Kiwanis Korner**

**Kiwanis March Events *Marching On!***

By Sally Rowden

Here we are in the second month of 2026. If you celebrated Valentine's Day, we do hope your celebrations were sweet.

Now we're marching right into our third month of the year with a huge community event happening. The Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce Annual Crab Feed. Tickets for the Friday, March 6 event have been sold out for some time now. We will be ready to serve this tasty feast to all in attendance. Of course, your tip-giving generosity will be very much appreciated. As this is a fundraising opportunity for us to be able to continue to support the many events we provide for the children in our communities.

Just as our John Minney Liberty High School Scholarship fundraiser is currently underway, our Lead Chair, Andrea Pille, has tirelessly been working to get information letters out to our communities. This is an exciting opportunity for our qualifying graduates to be awarded a scholarship to support their future endeavors. If you would like to support this event, please contact Andrea at 883harleygrl@gmail.com.

Another event beginning in March is the Storyland Theme Park Field Trips, supporting the three elementary school kindergarteners in the Golden Valley Unified School District. Through our Raffle Basket Fundraisers, a Microgrant received from the Kiwanis Children's Fund and a partnership with Storyland,

we are able to pay all park entrance fees. It's an exciting event for the children.

In fact, this is our 40th Year Anniversary of the Kiwanis serving the communities in southeastern Madera County. We've moved from a few communities to several. More opportunities for us to fulfill our mission of serving the world, one child and one community at a time.

An example of this fulfillment just occurred as we were cleaning up after our meeting at the Pizza Factory. A parent realized who we were, stepped into the meeting room and shared with us that his son would be graduating from UC

Davis. That his son received our Character Counts Bicycle Award in elementary school. In high school he was awarded one of our John Minney Liberty High School Scholarships.

In closing, we want to highlight a major event we are eagerly planning for Sept. 10 at Birdstone Winery. The fabulous Jeremy Pearce will entertain us with a Tribute to Elvis. Dinner and a Silent Auction will also be happening, and the ticket cost is \$60 per person with a free drink ticket included. Doors open at 6 p.m. with dinner at 7 p.m. and Elvis at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are available at the Golden Valley Chamber Office (Monday-Wednesday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.) or call Mona Diaz at 559-333-1913.

A quote from Elvis ... *"Some people tap their feet, some people snap their fingers, and some people sway back and forth. I just sorta do 'em all together, I guess."* Expressed in 1956 talking about his way of moving on stage. (*Graceland - The Home of Elvis Presley*)



*Storyland Theme Park Field Trips are coming and they're supporting the three elementary school kindergarteners in the Golden Valley Unified School District. Through fundraisers and a Kiwanis grant, all park entrance fees will be paid.*

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*Guest Editorial*

# New Taxes? They Just Don't Care

By Josh Koehn

Lawmakers and local officials want to unleash an avalanche of new taxes on Californians in 2026, slugging everyone from big and small business owners to everyday consumers. The new tax push comes just as gasoline tax increases yet again this summer — with drivers receiving little notification beyond a sneaky mention on an obscure government webpage.

In Sacramento and San Francisco, lawmakers and unions are crafting new taxes to go after landlords with vacant properties and businesses, big and small and the most controversial proposal is the billionaire's tax, which has already seen an estimated trillion dollars in wealth fleeing the Golden State.

In Los Angeles, county supervisors seized on Gov. Gavin Newsom and the Legislature's frequent waiving of a 2 percent cap on local sales tax to push another half-cent sales tax increase, meaning Angelenos face paying an eye-watering 10.25 percent every time they arrive at the cash register. Meanwhile, California's absurd gas taxes — the highest of any state in America — will be jacked up again in July because lawmakers and former Gov. Jerry Brown signed off on SB 1 in 2017, which locks in excise increases on gasoline and diesel based on the annual rate of inflation.

"The overall picture is one of high taxation and taxes that don't exist in other states," said Jared Walczak, a senior fellow at the Tax Foundation.

A study by the Tax Foundation found that California ranked only behind Washington D.C. and New York for the highest combined state and local per capita tax at \$10,319 per year. But for California's lefty lawmakers and the advocates, that's not enough. They want to be number one. And a sampling of new taxes on the menu includes AB 1790, or the "water's-edge" election, a corporate tax change putting more pressure on companies employing millions of Californians. The proposal means a portion of any income they earn, anywhere in the world, would be subjected to Californian law.

Other proposals include creating new employer penalties tied to workforce metrics, such as how many employees rely on government health coverage, or pay-ratio triggers based on the gap between a CEO and rank-and-file workers. Dave Kline, spokesperson for the California Taxpayers Association, said a wider variety of taxes are being introduced, particularly at the state level.

"It's not just proposals to increase the sales tax or income tax on everyone — it's very targeted these days," Kline said.

Dem lawmakers up and down the state have cast many of these new tax proposals as a response to cuts in state funding via President Trump and Republicans' "Big Beautiful Bill." California is facing a budget deficit between \$3 billion and \$18 billion depending on whether one trusts Gov. Gavin Newsom's math or his nonpartisan budget analysts. But what is not pointed out, however, is California's total budget has increased by \$150 billion — to \$348.9 billion — since Newsom took office in 2019.

"It would be tough for taxpayers to look around and think all of the services have improved to the same extent as spending has gone up," Kline said.

State legislators introduced proposals for more than \$16 billion in new taxes and fees, according to the California Taxpayer Foundation. The

Please see **EDITORIAL** on P. 12

# The Independent

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**Randy Bailey.....Publisher/Editor**

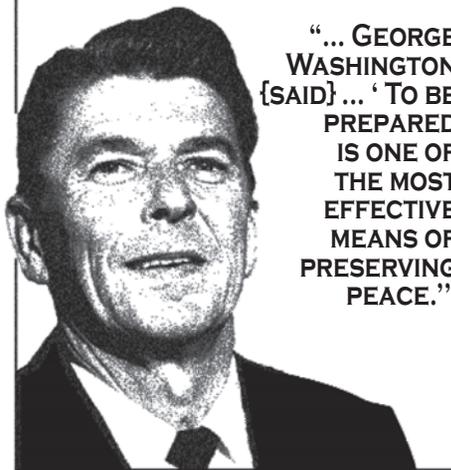
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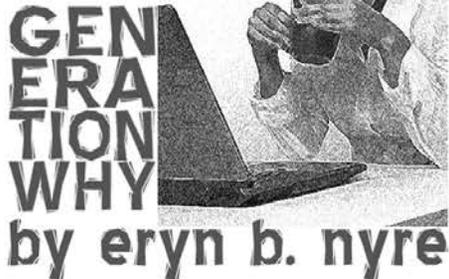
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# Not so SMART Phones

A few nights ago, my dad and I were having a conversation about his favorite subject: how much he hates smartphones. Now, he sure likes being able to instantly access random information like how old Sam Elliott is or what the most dangerous city in New Mexico happens to be. But when it comes to attention and distractions, he really hates smartphones. Well, he doesn't particularly like the internet in general, but most of his anger is directed at those blasted handheld devices, especially when he feels someone is splitting their focus.

He was telling me about how, when he was younger, no one needed such a device. If you needed to talk to someone, you called their house phone and hoped they were home. If they weren't, you either left a message or tried again later. If you were watching TV, then you actually paid attention and didn't have one eye and half your brain on a miniature computer. If you were supposed to meet someone somewhere and they were late, you waited. You just stood there in front of the movie theater or inside the mall entrance, mentally running through the limited number of possibilities available to you in a world without



**GENERATION WHY**  
by *eryn b. nyre*

constant updates. Sometimes you left, sometimes you waited around for a long time and mostly, you were bored.

There was no checking email, no scrolling social media and certainly no watching a short video about how to clean your grout with baking soda and existential dread. You were just ... waiting. Looking around. Thinking. Watching people pass by. Maybe striking up a conversation with someone else who also looked like they had nowhere else to be for the next 15 minutes, which is pretty much unheard of now that so many of us seem to have developed a pathological aversion to social interaction. You certainly didn't have the op-

Please see **GEN WHY** on P. 7

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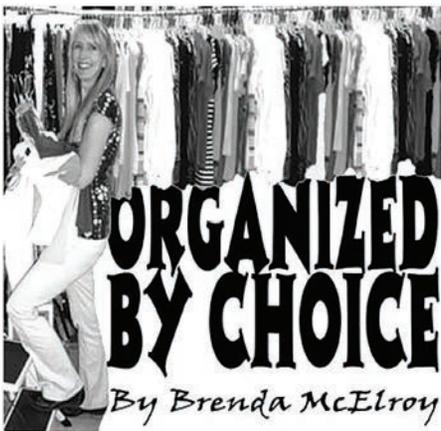
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### Strategies for Smooth Sailing

As I make my way to a new client's home, I see traffic backing up in front of me. Road construction signs announce they've reduced the road to one lane at a time. I'll get through but it's slow going and creating stress around my arrival time.

Disorganization does the same thing. It slows us down. We're stressed wasting time and energy looking through things we don't need to find the things we do need.

Wasting time in traffic is often beyond our control. But wasting time at home is often our choice. Here are five strategies to gain control —

saving your precious time and energy.

**Let it go** – It's magical. Purge single socks from your sock drawer, remove plastic containers or lids that don't have a match, clear out clothes you can't or choose

not to wear and suddenly the items you need appear. Impacted areas — cabinets, closets, drawers, under the sink — cause things to disappear. Let go of things that aren't earning their keep and you'll have easy access to the items you need.

**Create zones** – Just like a well-organized store has things grouped in ways that make sense, your home functions best when similarly organized. Intentionally group similar things, or items that are used together in one place. Then, whether you're baking cookies, touching up paint on the baseboards, or packing for a trip, all the things needed for that task are together and easily retrieved.

**Keep close what's used most** – Store whatever you touch most in the mid-body range — top drawers, bottom cabinets, middle shelves. Relocate backup supplies and things used less often to upper and lower spaces.

This may cause an exception to the "create zones" rule. For example, you might separate the spices you use most often and place them in the cabinet near the stove and move less used spices to the pantry. This protects your prime shelving for other things frequently used.

Consider rotating seasonal items like clothing, bedding and sports gear in and out of prime storage spots. Beach supplies can swap places with snow gear as seasons change — keeping whatever is in season accessible while the off-season gear relocates.

**Containerize and label** – Need something from the back of the shelf? Having loose items containerized makes re-

trieval easier. Putting a label on it means that everyone knows what's there and where things go at-a-glance.

Use open-topped containers for things frequently used and lidded stacking bins for things like batteries, light bulbs, etc. Use pop-top clear cannisters for pantry items purchased in bulk or bags that aren't user-friendly.

Organization is much easier to maintain when cabinets and drawers have designated containers for things.

**Clear the path** – Just like traffic slows when objects block the road, clogged entryways and halls create hazards and stress in the home. Be strategic in creating homes for things that typically land in these areas — hooks on the wall for backpacks/purses, benches with storage for shoes, and baskets on top for incoming/outgoing packages. Protect the open floor space by intentionally placing objects in these designated areas.

When your space is clear and organized, it's smooth sailing!

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*Disorganization ... slows us down. We're stressed wasting time and energy looking through things we don't need to find the things we do need.*

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GEN WHY cont. from P. 6

tion to text random people in your contact list to pass the time. And good grief, do not get him started on texting, "Why can't people just pick up the phone and call anymore?" Well, Dad, because texting is a lot faster and you can do it while doing several other things at once.

But in all honesty, that's the crux of the problem. We have gotten used to multitasking. Doing the dishes while watching a movie, having a text conversation and scanning through news alerts and social media has made it harder to just have a conversation or focus on one thing at a time, because there's always more stimulation available. I say this as someone who has absolutely checked her email while standing in line to check out at the grocery store. You know what it is? It's a lack of boredom. How can you be bored with a digital world in the palm of your hand? Boredom made us appreciate enter-

tainment when it happened. A stimulating conversation. An interesting TV program. An exciting movie. Now it seems more like those things have to compete with the instant gratification that comes from being able to see, read, or listen to whatever we want whenever we want it from our computer or phone or smart TV.

We now live in a world where every small pocket of unoccupied time has been identified as a problem to solve. A gap in stimulation. A missed opportunity for entertainment. If there's a moment where you might find yourself alone with your own thoughts, there's an app that can fix that. If you might otherwise have to make eye contact with a stranger in the produce aisle, there's a service that will leave your groceries at your front door and send you a notification when it's safe to come outside again. Hungry? Tap your phone. Need groceries? Tap your phone. Don't feel like going inside the store, interacting

Please see GEN WHY on P. 16

## Super Time for Soup

(February 2016)

**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.

Is there a right or wrong time of the year for soup? We eat ham at Easter, snacks for the Super Bowl party, turkey for Thanksgiving and beef or turkey for Christmas, so is there a "right" time for soup? I don't think so. Soup can be eaten anytime of the year. However, I do think there is a good time to cook a pot of soup and that time is now. The weather is perfect for it – it's cold and rainy outside and according to the weather channel we'll be having some more of that before it starts to get warm.

When I was doing the articles on the *Good Housekeeping Cook Book*, I found a soup recipe I wanted to tell you about but I just didn't have the room

for. This is a perfect time for it.

### Knife and Fork Vegetable Soup

- 2 T. Salad Oil
- 1 large, or 2 small fairly lean, meaty short ribs, cut into 2" pieces
- 2 minced cloves garlic
- 2 ½ tsp. salt
- 1 coarsely chopped large onion (about 1 cup)
- 2 quarts hot water
- 2 bouillon cubes
- 2 stalks celery, cut into 1" pieces
- 4 carrots, peeled and cut into 1" pieces
- 4 zucchini, trimmed and cut into 1/2" pieces



1 ear corn, broken into 4 pieces or ½ C whole kernel corn, canned or frozen

Salt and pepper

Heat salad oil in large stock pot. Add meat and brown on all sides.

Sprinkle garlic with 1 tsp. salt and mash well with the side of knife; add with the onions to meat. Cook, stirring 2 or 3 minutes. Add hot water and bouillon cubes; simmer covered, 1 ½ hours or until meat is just tender.

Add 1 ½ tsp. salt, celery, carrots. Cook, covered 15 minutes. Add zucchini, cover and

simmer for another 10 minutes. Add corn and simmer, covered, 5 minutes longer. Season to taste. Be sure to serve a piece of meat with each serving.

Patti Groh sent this recipe for soup she served at a Seniors Luncheon and from all reports it

was a big hit.

### Tomato Tortellini Soup

- 1 pkg. (9 oz.) refrigerated cheese tortellini
  - 2 cans (10 ¾ oz. each) condensed tomato soup, undiluted
  - 2 cups vegetable stock
  - 2 cups milk
  - 2 cups half and half cream
  - ½ C. chopped canned tomatoes – drained
  - 1 tsp. onion powder
  - 1 tsp. garlic powder
  - 1 tsp. dried basil
  - ½ tsp. salt
  - ½ C. shredded Parmesan cheese
  - Additional Parmesan cheese (Optional)
- Cook the tortellini accord-

ing to the package directions.

Meanwhile, in a Dutch oven, combine the soup, broth, milk, cream, tomatoes and seasonings. Heat through, stirring frequently. Drain the tortellini, carefully add to soup. Stir in cheese. Sprinkle each serving with additional cheese if desired. Makes about 10 cups. Thanks Patti.

This recipe I found in a magazine at the doctor's office. It's from the American Heart Association.

### Mexican Chicken Soup

1 14.5 oz. can low-sodium whole kernel corn, drained and rinsed

1 15.5 oz. can low-sodium kidney beans drained and rinsed

2 tsp. extra virgin olive oil

1 medium bell pepper, chopped

1 medium jalapeño, diced and seeded (use less to reduce spice or heat)

1 large onion, chopped

2 cloves garlic, minced

2 tsp. ground cumin

5 C. fat-free low-sodium

chicken broth

1.5 lb. boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into 1 inch cubes

1 large tomato, diced

½ C. chopped cilantro (optional)

Heat oil in large soup pot over medium heat. Add bell pepper, onion and jalapeño, cook 5-7 minutes, stirring often until vegetables are tender. Stir in garlic and cumin and cook another minute.

Add broth to saucepan, increase heat to high and bring to a rapid simmer. Add chicken and cook until no longer pink, about 5 minutes. Stir in beans, corn, tomato and cilantro, cover and cook on medium heat for 10 minutes, top with extra cilantro (optional). Serve hot.

Soup is usually served with a tasty loaf of your favorite French bread or a basket of crackers. I found a way to dress up crackers. This recipe calls for saltines, but I think just

Please see **RECIPES** on P. 9

*Well, here are three new recipes that would be good on a cold, rainy day. I'm not going out to the office for the next couple of days. I think I have all the vegetables I'll need for a pot of soup, just have to check my freezer and see what meat I have. Stay warm!*

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RECIPES cont. from P. 8

about any kind of cracker will work except flavored ones.

**Seasoned Crackers**

- 1 stick butter
- 1 tsp. Italian seasoning
- ½ tsp. seasoned salt
- 1 sleeve (4 to a box) saltine crackers

Preheat oven to 275

Melt butter in saucepan and add the Italian seasoning and

seasoned salt. Dip the saltines in the mixture and place on a rack on a baking sheet. Bake for about 20 minutes.

Well there are three new recipes that would be good on a cold, rainy day. I'm not going out to the office for the next couple of days. I think I have all the vegetables I'll need for a pot of soup, just have to check my freezer and see what meat I have. Stay warm!

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**Senior Report**

**Happy St. Patrick's with the Seniors**

By Melanie Williams

March is just around the corner and here's what is happening at the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center.

The March calendar is filled with a whirlwind of activities for seniors this month. The Ranchos/Hills Seniors want to invite seniors in the community who would like to take a field trip to view the new exhibits at the Fresno Art Museum.

Our senior art lovers are planning a group tour on March 1 to view some of the new exhibits curated for the 2026 year.

The admission to the museum is free with the RHS tour group. Sign up by Wednesday, Feb. 25 to join us. We will meet at the Senior Center on Sunday, March 1 at 1 p.m. to carpool to the museum or you can meet us at the Fresno Art Museum at 1:30 p.m. The address of the Fresno Art Museum is 2233 N. First Street in Fresno. If any seniors in the community would like to join us, please contact the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center at 559-645-4864 for information.

The Luck of the Irish Potluck is on Thursday, March 13 at 6 p.m. Cheers to St. Paddy's Day and wear something green to celebrate. All Seniors in the community are welcome to join us for the Luck of the Irish Potluck Dinner at the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center. Please call the Senior Center at 559-645-4864 to sign up so we have enough tables set up for everyone.

We are looking forward to another great Monthly Sale on Saturday, March 7 from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. We are always grateful for the wonderful community donations coming into the Treasure House, Boutique and Scout Garden. Many thanks to our local Ranchos community for their generosity in giving to

the Senior Center. If you are planning to do some "Spring Cleaning" soon and wish to donate some "treasures" to the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center, we are open every weekday to take donations from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., excluding holidays.

We are preparing for our Home and



Ranchos/Hills Senior Center 2026 Board Members. Front row, from left, Kathleen House, Connie Prince, Ellen Williams and Leslie Carella. The back row, from left, Bob Campbell, Diane Maxfield, Carrie Bennett, Howard McLachlin, Carol Wood, Ethel Hansen, Lena Bradford and Cyndi Lipinski.

Garden Festival on April 11. The Scout Garden needs donations of potted plants with a healthy root system, potting soil or plant cuttings from your garden this Spring. Please call the Senior Center at 559-645-4864 if you wish to donate plants and talk to Diane Maxfield. She is at the Senior Center on Tuesday mornings and can answer any questions about how to preserve plants before transporting them to the Senior Center.

Weekly activities at the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center include the exercise class led by Jo Chase every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 10 a.m. Players of card and table games also meet together every Thursday at 12:15 p.m. and many seniors just like to stop by to work on our puzzles each month.

An Indian Basket Weaving Class is available to attend on Tuesday, March 3 at 9 a.m. The Madera Basket Cases meet twice a month on Tuesday mornings to learn about basket weaving with pine needles. The Basket Cases are also meeting on Tuesday, March 31 at 9 a.m. at the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center.

The Senior Hot Lunch Program of-

Please see SENIORS on P. 12

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The Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce would love to see you at our next meeting, Wednesday, March 11 at 6 p.m., 37167 Ave. 12 Suite 5C in the Maywood Center. Come join us and see what's going on in your community. Call us at 645-4001.

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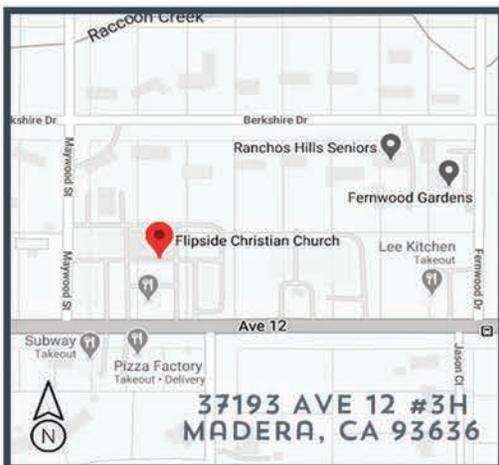
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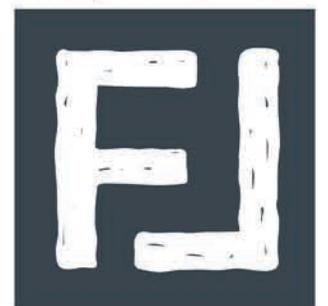
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# SEE YOU SUNDAY!

EDITORIAL cont. from P. 5

question an increasing number of Californians seem to be asking about taxes is: What are we getting in return?

“Any skepticism voters have in regard to state and local government is justified,” said Jon Coupal, president of the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association.

In Los Angeles, the county Board of Supervisors’ vote to increase the sales tax by another half-cent comes less than a year after the enactment of Measure A, which doubled the previous homelessness sales tax to a permanent half-cent. Supervisors said they are pushing the sales tax effort to raise \$1 billion a year to make up for funding gaps in healthcare, similar to an argument being used by the state’s SEIU-UHW organizers running the proposed billionaires’ tax. The latter proposal’s passage would be unprecedented in American history – and it may not even be legal in trying to pin individuals’ California residency to the start of this

year, Walczak said.

Kathryn Barger, the lone dissenting vote on the LA county board, noted her reluctance to pick up where state legislators have left off, as Los Angeles has suffered a series of scandals over mismanaged funds related to a sales tax increase for homelessness services.

“We are not, as a whole, credible when it comes to promises made, promises broken,” Barger told the Los Angeles Times. But sales taxes and property taxes are only part of the equation. Some of the most significant increases barely register with the public.

“The tax burden affects California’s economy, and some of these new proposals could drive out more capital investment, jobs and economic opportunity,” Walczak said. “When people move, they often don’t say they moved for taxes but for jobs. And what California has done with its tax policies is drive those jobs elsewhere.”

*This article originally appeared at www.nypost.com.*

SENIORS cont. from P. 9

fers adults from 60 years and older a nutritionally balanced lunch every weekday the Senior Center is open. Some favorite meals include Orange Chicken with rice and Pork Chile Verde. The Senior Lunch host does a great job with the hot meals and provides a welcoming luncheon experience for our seniors. We work with the Fresno-Madera Area Agency on Aging to provide this program to all the seniors in the community. Seniors don’t need to be members to enjoy a wonderful hot meal during the week. If you would like to participate in the Senior Hot Lunch Program, come register at the Senior Center at 10 a.m. any weekday, Monday through Friday.

The Senior Center is always looking for ideas to include seniors in daily activities. Any senior can come to help plan the Annual Home and Garden festival or introduce a new activity for the Senior Center Calendar. We welcome new suggestions and volunteers to help us support our local seniors. The next Planning

Meeting is on Monday, March 23 at 1 p.m.

A volunteer senior at our reception desk can give you information on our weekly activities and upcoming events every weekday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. You are welcome to come into the Senior Center and pick up a Monthly Newsletter and Senior Hot Lunch Calendar.

Brown Bag Day is Wednesday, March 18 from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Visitors can come by any weekday between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. to pick up a Newsletter with a calendar highlighting our upcoming activities and events at the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center. Our volunteers at the front desk would be happy to answer any questions.

Daylight Savings Time starts on Sunday, March 8.

Happy St. Patrick’s Day on Tuesday, March 17 from the members of the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center.

Quote for March: *“It was one of those March days when the sun shines hot and the wind blows cold: When it is summer in the light and winter in the shade.” — Charles Dickens*

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## GO FIGURE!

The idea of Go Figure is to arrive at the figures given at the bottom and right-hand columns of the diagram by following the arithmetic signs in the order they are given (that is, from left to right and top to bottom). Use only the numbers below the diagram to complete its blank squares and use each of the nine numbers only once.

	+		÷		= 2			
+		-		+				
	+		×		= 45			
×		÷		-				
	+		×		= 36			
=		=		=				
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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

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... IN THE INDEPENDENT**

# SEMUCU Speaks

By Igal Treibatch

## Enjoy the rain while it's here

The rain in Spain may have fallen on the plain, but more rain is falling on Madera! The "Wet Season" must be enjoyed while it lasts, since it does not always follow the predictions.

One of my absolute favorite things to do is walk on the beach while it is raining and hear the raindrops hit my raincoat



while the surf spills onto the sandy beach. No one is here. I'm all alone – but not really. Nature is walking along with me. Most of these times I'm the sole person enjoying nature as it reveals its beauty. I know it sounds sentimental, but I can't help it, nature in its multitude of moods can be as beautiful as it can be dangerous and ugly, so I take these moments as poetry.

Do I sound sentimental? I feel so, and that's ok. You may want to take the time and do something similar but not on the beach. Take a stroll through an

orchard or the forest while it is raining and listen to the quiet and stillness of nature. It is a symphony with a harmony dictated by nature in time immemorial.

The point I'm trying to make is simple: take the time to take a break when you can, Enjoy a moment whether you are by yourself or with someone. Take a moment and listen to nature. We all need it sometimes.

Along with others, SEMCU is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that represents the interests of the residents, property owners and businesses in Southeastern Madera County. Its concerns, among other issues, are our community, safety, water, traffic, schools, future parks and energy. We invite community members to join SEMCU as board members to help shape the Southeast Madera County area and help make a difference for our families and youngsters. Together, we can build a stronger, more vibrant community.

SEMUCU meets once per month for about an hour online. Our next meeting is on March 17, 2026. You may join us online and virtually participate. To join online, go to [www.semcu.org](http://www.semcu.org) for a link and simple instructions. Or if you prefer, you can call in on your cellphone at 669-900-6833 then enter the ID# 83632424343 followed with the access code 85422.

Make a difference – make your voice heard!

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SEMUCU is "By the community, for the community"

## In Memoriam



## George Eldon Briner

September 27, 1946 — January 24, 2026

George Briner, 79, passed away on Jan. 24, 2026, in Fresno, CA. George was born on Sept. 27, 1946 in Madera, Calif. to Orville Briner and Gladys (Drinne) Briner. After graduating from Chowchilla High School in 1965, George moved to Fresno where he attended Fresno City College. George began working at several local gas stations owned by Joe and Harlan Bailey, his future father-in-law and uncle-in-law. After that, he worked for different beverage companies. In 1985, George made the leap to go into business for himself starting a landscape maintenance business which ultimately grew into Briner and Son Landscape Management. George was able to celebrate the company's 40th anniversary last month.

George married JoRene Bailey on August 9, 1969 in Fresno and was blessed to celebrate 56 years together. The couple have three children: Eric, Sara and April. George was known for his friendly personality, his work ethic and his love to putter and tinker on projects. He was loved by all and will be missed by so many.

George is survived by his beloved wife JoRene; son Eric and daughter-in-law Elizabeth Briner; daughter Sara and son-in-law Eric Karlson; daughter April and son-in-law Cliff Carey; grandson Colton Briner and his wife, Kiley; great-grandsons, Casey, Morgan and Carson; grandchildren Zac Briner, Ethan Briner, Dawson Briner, Wyatt Ward, Arianna Ward, Mason Sweetin, Samuel Karlson, Benjamin Karlson, Georgia Karlson, Charlotte Karlson, Peter Carey, Titus Carey, Audrey Carey and Emilia Carey. He is also survived by a multitude of nieces and nephews.

He is preceded in death by his parents Orville and Gladys Briner, sisters Jean Briner, Faye Bailey, Maxine Briner and brother Lloyd Briner, and also his granddaughter, Elyse Carey.

A memorial service was held Saturday, Feb. 7 at Peoples Church in Fresno, in the G.L. Johnson Chapel. George was interred at Clovis Cemetery in Clovis.

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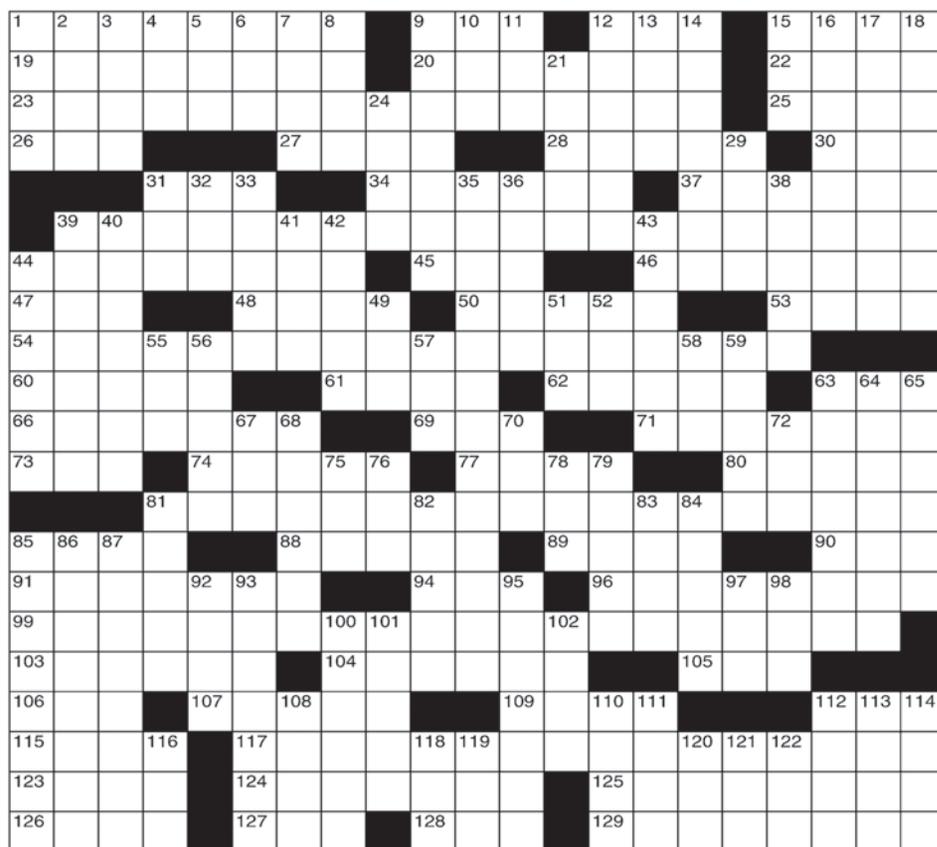


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# Super Crossword



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WORD SEARCH

56	=	4		11
8	+	1	x	4 = 36
X		÷		-
2	+	3	x	9 = 45
+		-		+
5	+	7	÷	6 = 2

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

- |   |  |   |  |
|---|--|---|--|
| <p><b>ACROSS</b></p> <p>1 Soft drink giant</p> <p>9 Pappy</p> <p>12 "Botch- —" (old hit song)</p> <p>15 Masticate</p> <p>19 Oval wind instruments</p> <p>20 Took too far</p> <p>22 Put concrete on</p> <p>23 Start of a riddle</p> <p>25 Partially</p> <p>26 Heir, often</p> <p>27 Penta- plus one</p> <p>28 Spitting beast</p> <p>30 Everything</p> <p>31 Unusual</p> <p>34 "Our Gang" novelist Roth</p> <p>37 Actress Peet of "Trust Me"</p> <p>39 Riddle, part 2</p> <p>44 Leonardo of "Titanic"</p> <p>45 Curvy letter</p> <p>46 Given a permanent post</p> <p>47 Cereal grain</p> <p>48 Computer menu option</p> <p>50 Prefix with chemistry</p> <p>53 Curiosity's planet</p> <p>54 Riddle, part 3</p> <p>60 Palatable</p> | <p>61 Computer menu option</p> <p>62 Revise, as a manuscript</p> <p>63 Yank's home</p> <p>66 Try to be like</p> <p>69 A couple of</p> <p>71 Mice, e.g.</p> <p>73 House divs.</p> <p>74 Kinda</p> <p>77 And higher, as in price</p> <p>80 Perfect</p> <p>81 Riddle, part 4</p> <p>85 Dalai —</p> <p>88 Contaminate</p> <p>89 Big burden</p> <p>90 Sports draw</p> <p>91 Paper-folding craft</p> <p>94 Part of BTW or OTC</p> <p>96 "Allow me to assist"</p> <p>99 End of the riddle</p> <p>103 Allergy sufferer's device</p> <p>104 White swan in "Swan Lake"</p> <p>105 Audit org.</p> <p>106 Spy's device</p> <p>107 With</p> <p>112-Across, "Hold on!"</p> <p>109 Sneak attack</p> <p>112 See</p> <p>107-Across</p> <p>115 Akron's state</p> | <p>117 Riddle's answer</p> <p>123 Painter Vincent</p> <p>124 Fastening feature of many a face mask</p> <p>125 Ultimate consumers of products</p> <p>126 With</p> <p>83-Down, Italian veal dish</p> <p>127 'Zine staffers</p> <p>128 Antis' votes</p> <p>129 Occupied, as an inn</p> <p><b>DOWN</b></p> <p>1 Female whales</p> <p>2 Eight, in Peru</p> <p>3 "Misery" actor James</p> <p>4 Prado display</p> <p>5 102, to Nero</p> <p>6 Walk- — (small roles)</p> <p>7 Plastering strip</p> <p>8 Arthur of tennis</p> <p>9 Troy of "A Summer Place"</p> <p>10 Gardner or DuVernay of film</p> | <p>11 Biden's party: Abbr.</p> <p>12 Basketball coach Rupp</p> <p>13 Re-sol linkup</p> <p>14 Boiled, salted soybeans</p> <p>15 1040 pro</p> <p>16 Dance similar to the tango</p> <p>17 Unsaintly soul</p> <p>18 Marshy habitats</p> <p>21 Holy artifact</p> <p>24 Trade show</p> <p>29 "So true!"</p> <p>31 Fertilizable cells</p> <p>32 Chip go-with</p> <p>33 Actress Bo</p> <p>35 "The risks outweigh the benefits"</p> <p>36 Intense beam</p> <p>38 Some reunion-goers</p> <p>39 U.S. women's soccer star at the Atlanta Olympics</p> <p>40 Living ink squirter</p> <p>41 Assistant</p> <p>42 Idaho's capital</p> <p>43 Person doing penance</p> <p>44 One searching for water with a divining rod</p> <p>49 Tariff in brief</p> <p>51 Sporty truck, base</p> <p>52 Daiquiri</p> <p>55 "Cool" cash amount</p> <p>56 Very little, as of salt</p> <p>57 Tantrum</p> <p>58 Brian of electronica</p> <p>59 Give as a bonus</p> <p>63 Like wasted food</p> <p>64 In a theatrical manner</p> <p>65 Snoozing</p> <p>67 Shoe tip</p> <p>68 Like Nin's writings</p> <p>70 "Mind Train" singer Yoko</p> <p>72 Baseball great</p> <p>75 Old Pan Am competitor</p> <p>76 "Shy" singer DiFranco</p> <p>78 ETs' craft</p> <p>79 Fail to keep one's cool</p> <p>81 Return to base after a fly ball</p> <p>82 — nous</p> <p>83 See</p> <p>126-Across</p> <p>84 "Likewise"</p> <p>85 African capital on the Gulf of Guinea</p> <p>86 Wyoming tribe members</p> <p>87 Small swine breeds</p> <p>92 Several</p> <p>93 Plant-eating sea mammal</p> <p>95 Catches in a snare</p> <p>97 "Planet Money" ailer</p> <p>98 Includes</p> <p>100 People lugging things</p> <p>101 Politician Mo, Mark or Tom</p> <p>102 Ship's rigging</p> <p>108 "If only — known!"</p> <p>110 — of March</p> <p>111 Taboo thing</p> <p>112 Litigated</p> <p>113 Poet Pound</p> <p>114 "— la vie!"</p> <p>116 "Well well!"</p> <p>118 Charged atom</p> <p>119 Animal park</p> <p>120 Rx watchdog</p> <p>121 Dude</p> <p>122 Suffix of enzymes</p> |
|---|--|---|--|

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Potable Water Dust Control

Covering Mountain Areas & the Central Valley  
Call Gina at 559-289-3401  
email [BubbawsWTS@yahoo.com](mailto:BubbawsWTS@yahoo.com)

**MARION POOL SERVICE & REPAIR**

- Weekly Service
- Equipment
- Supplies
- Residential
- Drains - Upstarts • Commercial
- Locally Owned

**251-2514 351-1605 645-4799**  
office cell after 5 p.m.

**SEMCU**

**"For the community, by the community."**

**559-363-9095**  
Meetings ONLINE • Go to [SEMCO.org](http://SEMCO.org)  
3rd Tuesday of the month • 6 p.m.

**VALLEY PROPANE**

"Service you can trust, prices you can afford."

**645-5324**  
The ONLY locally owned propane company in the Ranchos

LANDSCAPE MATERIAL  
SAND & GRAVEL • CRUSHED ROCK  
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**Get Involved!**

**Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce**

**645-4001**  
2nd Wed. of the month • 6:30 p.m.  
37167 Ave. 12 #5C, Madera Ranchos

**FLIPSIDE join us**  
SUNDAYS 9 & 10:30 AM

**559-481-6875**  
37193 Ave. 12 #3H  
Madera Ranchos

LIVE ONLINE AT 10:30 AM  
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[info@acts176.com](mailto:info@acts176.com)  
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Sports Physicals only \$35!

**HANEY CHIROPRACTIC & rehabilitation center**

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36754 AVE. 12 • Madera Ranchos

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37164 Ave. 12 #102 (behind Subway)

for MORE sales tomorrow, call

**RANDY BAILEY Today!**

**(559) 645-0634**  
The Independent

# Classified

## Carpet/Aggregate Cleaning

**Pinnacle Carpet Care and Upholstery** - "Dries in hours, not days." BBB A+ rating. Epoxy/aggregate specialist too. **Call Bruce today for a free estimate. 559-676-0760.**

## Firewood

**Firewood for sale** - Seasoned Almond firewood. Round or split. **Call 259-7122 or 645-5523.**

## Gutter Services

The Gutter Doctor specializing in both continuous and standard rain gutters. General Contractor. Repair Maintenance. 26 years working in the area. **Call 559-908-0759.**

## Housecleaning

**One month FREE! with 6-month arrangement. 40 years of experience in the Ranchos. - References available** - Lupe's House Cleaning, residential, one-time service, move-ins/move-outs, windows, construction clean up. **LupePrado25@yahoo.com.**

Call **either** of our **LOCAL numbers: 559-710-0692 or 650-771-2915.**

## Property Clean Up

Property clean up, landscape maintenance and tree trimming - **FREE ESTIMATES.** Professional and reliable. **Call Eric at 559-903-3757.**

## Recyclables Pick Up

**KEEP IT LOCAL - FREE RECYCLING PICKUP** - AmericanMade Direct/Kids4recycling offers free pickup of newspaper, shredded paper, all household plastic, glass, aluminum and tin cans (containers **DON'T** need to be CRV). Metal haul away and cleanups available also! 80% return back to community! **Call Dianna at 559-999-6832.**

## Tractor/Trenching Services

**BOBCAT WORK - DRILLING POSTHOLES** - Trees - Trenching - Clean Up. **TRACTOR WORK** Discing - Rototilling - Mowing - Scraping - Stump Grinding. **Call John at 908-1066.**

GEN WHY cont. from P. 7

with another human being, or making polite conversation with the cashier who has rung you up for the last six years? Tap your phone.

We have engineered friction out of nearly every aspect of daily life.

And in doing so, we've also engineered out the parts of living that forced us to be patient, observant and perhaps most tragically, bored. Because boredom wasn't just something to be avoided. It was where a lot of life actually happened. It was where you noticed things. Where your mind wandered. Where new ideas showed up. Where you replayed conversations and realized you should probably apologize to your mom. Where you daydreamed about changing careers, or planting a garden, or writing a book you were fairly certain no one would read but you wanted to write anyway. It was where kids made up games in the backyard instead of expecting someone else to entertain them. It was where you learned

how to sit with discomfort instead of immediately distracting yourself from it. It was where conversations started. Two people standing next to each other with nothing else to do eventually run out of places to look.

Convenience has given us a lot of good things. I am not here to make the case that we should all return to a landline-only existence and start relying on paper maps the size of a fitted sheet before leaving the house. I mean, I think that's my father's argument, but it isn't mine.

But maybe the next time we find ourselves stuck waiting somewhere with nothing to do, we could resist the urge to immediately fill the silence. Let ourselves be bored for a minute or two. After all, boredom is still one of the few places where you might come up with a good idea, notice the world around you, or remember why you walked into the kitchen in the first place, which no smartphone has successfully optimized yet ... though I'm sure there's an update coming.

• "I purchased a roll of reflective tape to mark our basement stairs. It reflects the light from the open doorway at the top of the stairs, and I can turn the downstairs lights off before heading up. I had some leftover, so I put a strip on my dog's collar. When I let him out at night, I can shine a flashlight and spot him instantly, since the tape is more visible in the night." -- V.R. in Pennsylvania

• Tongs lost their clip? Use the rubber band from a bunch of broccoli to hold the ends together in storage.

• "I am an avid craft sewer. One trick I have used that was passed down from my mother is to save the bar soap when it gets to a sliver. Then I use it to trace patterns on cloth. I like it better than chalk. It makes a clear mark that 'sticks.' But it will wash right out when you are done." -- I.W. in Kansas

• Use an old vegetable peeler in the shop to sharpen pencils.

• "Diaper rash hurts. The best medicine, in my opinion, is a little diaper-free time for baby. But there are times when it's not practical to let the little one go about pants-free. When you just can't air-dry an angry baby bottom, you can help dry the skin up with a couple minutes of warm air from a hair dryer." -- P.M.

• Wrap the metal end of your paintbrush with masking tape before painting. Then you can peel it off and there's no stuck-on paint.

• Store plastic wrap in the refrigerator or even freezer to keep it from sticking to itself.



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**

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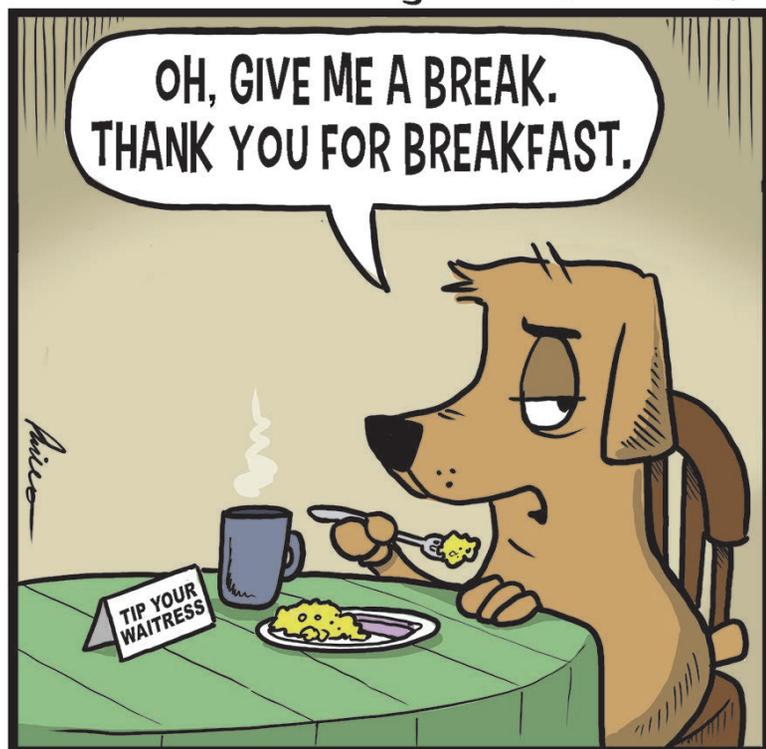
Specializing in **AUTO ACCIDENTS**

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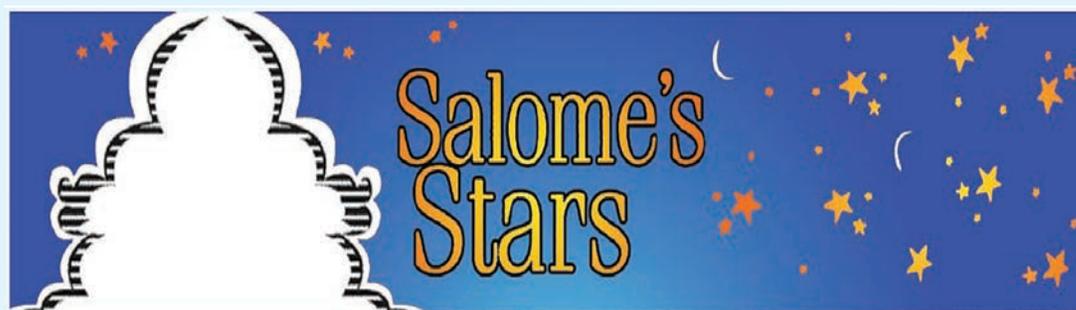
Click on "Local News" at

Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



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**ARIES** (March 21 to April 19) There could be some negative reaction to your tough stance when making a recent decision. But overall, your efforts result in well-earned recognition and all that can follow from this.

**TAURUS** (April 20 to May 20) Your financial situation seems confusing, even for the fiscally savvy Bovine. Maybe it's the conflicting advice that you're getting. Check it out before things get too tangled to unknot.

**GEMINI** (May 21 to June 20) A relaxed attitude goes a long way in helping you deal with any of life's irritants that might be popping up this week. You're also a reassuring role model for others in the same situation.

**CANCER** (June 21 to July 22) Your aspect favors creativity, which should persuade you to work on your artistic projects. If time is a problem, prioritize your commitments so that your work isn't compromised.

**LEO** (July 23 to August 22) Scrutinize all the job offers that interest you. Most are honest and worth considering, but a few might not be completely forthcoming about what the job is and what the salary and benefits are.

**VIRGO** (August 23 to September 22) An unexpected snafu could delay the completion of a project that you're eager to finish. Find out what's causing it, fix it, and if you need help, don't be shy about asking for it. Good luck!

**LIBRA** (September 23 to October 22) An idea that could be helpful to you comes from an unlikely source. Listen to it. Discuss it. If necessary, adjust it. If it looks as if it might work out quite well, go ahead and use it.

**SCORPIO** (October 23 to November 21) Be careful about allowing someone to share a very personal secret with you. This could cause problems down the line with others who are involved in this person's private life.

**SAGITTARIUS** (November 22 to December 21) A cooling down of a relationship could be the result of neglect -- unintended or not. To save it from icing over, you need to warm it up with a large dose of hot SAGITTARIUS passion!

**CAPRICORN** (December 22 to January 19) This is a good time to get involved with a number of family matters that deal with money or other issues that might jeopardize the closeness between and among family members.

**AQUARIUS** (January 20 to February 18) Cheer up! A difficult person who appears to be deliberately stalling your project might just need to be reassured of the value that they bring to it.

**PISCES** (February 19 to March 20) Good news! Expect to feel reenergized now that you've gone through a stressful energy-depleting period that involved a lot of changes. Now, go out there and show them what you can do!

**Born this Week**

*You have a warm, giving nature that inspires many to follow your example. You show all of us what it's like to lead with love.*

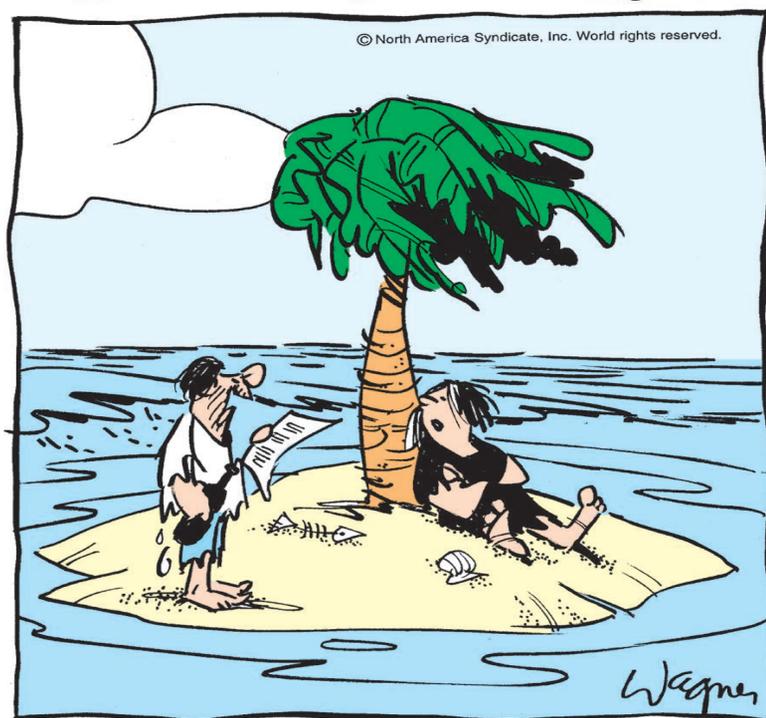
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**GRIN and BEAR IT** Wagner



"Hey, this is a great deal on refinancing!"



# Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



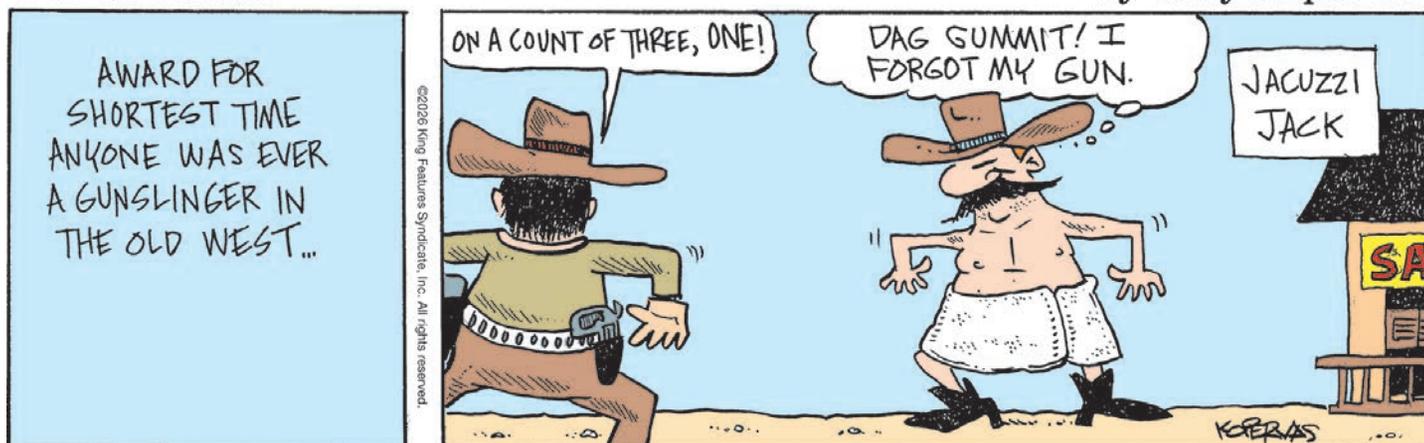
# The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



# Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



# HOCUS-FOCUS BY HENRY BOLTIHOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.  
 Differences: 1. Wheel is larger. 2. Hat is larger. 3. Window is missing. 4. Button is missing. 5. Sleeve is longer. 6. Sidewalk is wider.

# SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

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

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The Independent  
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# MAGIC MAZE • RAIN OR SHINE

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

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

- Bahrain
- Drain
- Drivetrain
- Ingrain
- Monkeyshine
- Moonshine
- Outshine
- Refrain
- Restrain
- Rise and shine
- Shoeshine
- Spit-shine
- Sprain
- Sunshine
- Terrain

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# FUN PAGES

# SEM CU

**south east madera county united**

A non-profit organization dedicated to improving life in South East Madera County

## Notice of SEMCU Annual Board of Directors Meeting and Election of new Board Members

Please join us to provide questions, concerns,  
and solutions to our community.

**The public is invited to nominate and be  
nominated to the SEMCU Board of Directors  
at our ANNUAL MEETING: MARCH 17<sup>th</sup> at 6pm**

**SEMCU meets on the 3rd Tuesday every month**

Our next meeting is online on Tuesday, March 17<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m.

Online: go to: [WWW.SEMCU.ORG](http://WWW.SEMCU.ORG) for the link

By phone: 669-900-6833

& enter meeting ID#: 836 3242 4343, then access code 854 221

559-363-9095 • [www.semcu.org](http://www.semcu.org) • [info@semcu.org](mailto:info@semcu.org)

**FOR THE COMMUNITY, BY THE COMMUNITY**