

The *Serving the Madera Ranchos* Bonadelle Ranchos • Rolling Hills Riverstone • Tesoro Viejo Independent



PRSRRT STD
ECR
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
MADERA, CA.
PERMIT NO. 61

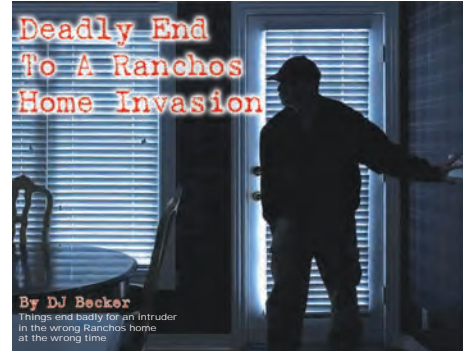
NOW IN OUR
20TH YEAR
IN MADERA
COUNTY

Volume 20 Issue 12 2024

The Official Publication of Southeastern Madera County

50¢

Looking Back: Taking a look back at the top stories in Southeast Madera County for 2024



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



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



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



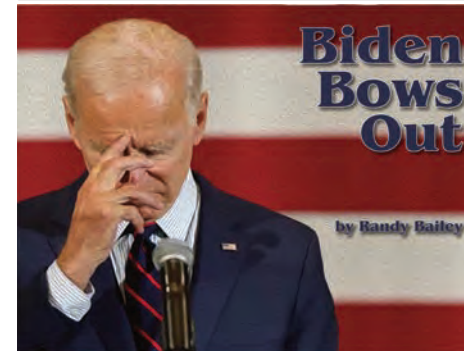
In This Issue Editorial • Page 5 / Aunt Jean's Recipes • Page 8
Classifieds • Page 20 / Fun Pages • Pages 22 & 23



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



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



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



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



In This Issue Editorial • Page 5 / Government Why • Page 6
Classifieds • Page 14 / Fun Pages • Pages 18 & 19



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



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

In This Issue

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

The Most Beautiful Thing

a Christmas story from our family to yours

The sides of the path were covered with rings of white snow. But, in the center its whiteness was crushed and churned into a foaming brown by the tramp, tramp of hundreds of hurrying feet. It was the day before Christmas.

People rushed up and down the path carrying armloads of bundles. They laughed and called to each other as they pushed their way through the crowds.

Above the path, the long arms of an ancient tree reached upward to the sky. It swayed and moaned as a strong wind grasped its branches, and bent them toward the earth. Down below a haughty laugh sounded, and a lovely fir tree stretched and preened its thick green branches, sending a fine spray of snow shimmering downward to the ground.

"I should think," said the fir, in a high smug voice, "that you'd try a little harder to stand still. Goodness knows you're ugly enough with the leaves you've already lost. If you move around any more, you'll be quite bare."

"I know," answered the old tree. "Everything has put on its most beautiful clothes for the celebration of the birth of Christ. Even from here I can see the decorations shining from each street corner. And yesterday some men came and put the brightest, loveliest lights on every tree along the path—except me, of course." He sighed softly, and a flake of snow melted in the form of a teardrop and ran down his gnarled trunk.

"Oh, indeed! And did you expect they'd put lights upon you so your ugliness would stand out even more?" smirked the fir.

"I guess you're right," replied the old tree in a sad voice. "If there were only somewhere I could hide until after the celebrations are over, but here I stand...the only ugly thing among all this beauty. If they would only come and chop me down," and he sighed sorrowfully.

"Well, I don't wish you any ill will," replied the fir, "but you are an eyesore. Perhaps it would be better for us all if they came and chopped you down." Once again he stretched his lovely thick branches. "You might try to hold onto those three small leaves you still have. At least you wouldn't be completely bare."

"Oh, I've tried so hard," cried the old tree. "Each fall I say to myself, 'this year I won't give up a single leaf, no matter what the cause', but someone al-

ways comes along who seems to need them more than I," and he sighed once again.

"I told you not to give away so many to that dirty little paper boy," said the fir. "Why you even lowered your branches a little, so that he could reach them. You can't say I didn't warn you then."

"Yes, you did at that," the old tree replied. "But they made him so happy. I heard him say he would pick some for his invalid mother."

"Oh they all had good causes," mocked the fir. "That young girl, for instance, colored leaves for her party, indeed! They were your leaves!"

"She took a lot, didn't she?" said the old tree, and he seemed to smile.

Just then a cold wind blew down the path and a tiny brown bird fell to the ground at the foot of the old tree and lay there shivering, too cold to lift its wings. The old tree looked down in pity, and then quickly he let go of his last three leaves. The golden leaves fluttered down and settled softly over the shivering little bird, and it lay there quietly under the warmth of them.

"Now you've done it!" shrieked the fir. "You've given away every single leaf! Christmas morning you'll make our path the ugliest sight in the whole city!"

The old tree said nothing. Instead, he stretched out his branches to gather what snowflakes he could that they might not fall on the tiny bird.

The young fir turned away in anger, and it was then he noticed a painter sitting quietly a few feet from the path, intent upon his long brushes and his canvas. His clothes were old and tattered, and his face wore a sad expression. He was thinking of his loved ones and the empty, cheerless Christmas morning they would face, for he had sold not a single painting in the last few months.

But the little tree didn't see this. Instead, he turned his back to the old tree and said in a haughty voice, "At least keep those bare branches as far away from me as possible. I'm being painted and your hideousness will mar the background."

"I'll try," replied the old tree. And he raised his branches as high as possible.

Please see **BEAUTIFUL** on P. 16

2024 • Top Ranchos Area Stories

from the pages of the Independent

1 Ranchos Home Invasion Ends in Death/January •

One of the great things about living in Southeast Madera County is safety. But sometimes, things happen that remind you it's still a dangerous world. A Ranchos home got broken into and the homeowner was armed. The burglar didn't make it.

3 Pile Up on Highway 41/August •

People started noticing an increase in traffic — and accidents — on area roads. In August, there was quite a pile up on Highway 41 at Avenue 12 that involved six vehicles in a chain reaction. Fortunately no one was killed, but it ignited concern.

5 Riverstone Water Treatment/April •

Everyone knows that water is a precious commodity and when that commodity comes out of the faucet brown, there's a problem. The Riverstone Development agreed to a \$25 million water treatment facility that'll be online by the end of 2025.

7 LHS Wall of Honor/November •

And speaking of good news, Liberty High has a "Wall of Honor" for graduates that have gone into military service. Principal Kandace Osborn put out a call to the community to make sure that everyone who is or has served is recognized. Good job.

9 Merced Judge Releases Child Molester to Madera County/May •

A Merced Superior Court Judge released a convicted child molester, deeming him "no longer a threat." He was released to Madera because he had family here. Multiple psychologists disagreed with the judge.

2 Flatlanders Returns/April •

After being gone for a year for different reasons — including Covid — the Flatlanders Day Parade returned to the Ranchos. There was a new route, a craft fair and seemingly a new spirit of cooperation that doesn't want to lose it again.

4 Road Changes Coming for Area Roads/September •

After the multi-car pile up in August, the County announced plans to start safety measures in 2025 that will result in increased traffic signals, increased number of lanes and an increased police presence by the CHP. About time.

6 Virginia Vick Lifetime Achievement/October •

It's not always bad news. Long-time resident Virginia Vick was honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Madera Chamber for nearly half a century of good works in the Ranchos. Way to go, Virginia.

8 Biden Bows Out/July •

Although not specific to Southeast Madera County, when a sitting president opts out of running for reelection, it's news. Biden decided to not run, throwing the Democrats into a frenzy. With no primary election, he threw his support behind V.P. Harris and the election was on.

10 Madera Community Hospital/February-April •

After closing its doors in 2023, and leaving Madera without a hospital, it looked like it was getting close to re-opening its doors ... but then at the last minute everything changed. A month later it was back on. Then it was off. As of today, it is still closed.

all stories can be found at
www.TheRanchos.com

\$130K CHP Grant for Our Area

The California Highway Patrol has received a grant of \$130,000 specifically to help make the highways of southeast Madera County safer. The CHP estimates that between 2020 and 2023 there were 106 deaths on the highways and approximately 2,600 other injuries.

The program is called FREE, standing for Fatal Reduction for Education and Enforcement grant. The grant is being

funded by the California Office of Traffic Safety. One of the most promising aspects of the FREE program is that it will provide extra CHP officers to police Highway 41 and 145, and Highways 99 and 152. It will also include unincorporated roads in rural areas. Along with additional officers on the road, the money can also be used for community outreach programs for educating local citizens.

Turning On Your Lights Shouldn't Break The Bank



Stop feeling trapped by your utility company and their ever increasing rates

- **Fixed Monthly Costs** - Remove the fear of unpredictable energy costs with a consistent, monthly solar bill that you set!
- **Transparent Billing** - Stop paying outrageous hidden fees dumped on you by your utility company and only pay for the energy you use.
- **More money for the things you love** - Been putting off that beach house vacation or Caribbean cruise? With solar savings of up to 40%, you can afford the retreat you deserve.



559-978-7448

6081 N 1st Street • Suite 101 • Fresno • info@solarbystellar.com

\$1,200 average first year savings • 5 Star rating on Google • Kuubix Master Dealer • FREE Estimate

Letters

Dear Editor:

I want to commend Principal Kandace Osborn and her team for the Wall of Honor, recognizing the graduates from Liberty High School who are, or have served, in the military. Well done.

"The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation." George Washington
Brenda McElroy
Riverstone

Dear Editor:

We all have driven Avenue 12, 10, 9, Road 38 and 40, and probably every back road in Southeast Madera County. We even avoid traveling on these roads from 3 to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday whenever humanly possible because they are overrun with vehicles. Overrun is putting it mildly. Southeast Madera County has turned into a traffic nightmare.

What is occurring in our once easy driving and idyllic small town is not simply unfortunate – as if it could not have been avoided. No, it is not unfortunate that I cannot invite friends over for dinner during the week lest it take more than 30 minutes from Riverpark and several incidents of road

rage. No, it is not unfortunate that it took my wife 45 minutes to get from the Children's Boulevard exit to the Ranchos Market last Friday evening. Rather, it is an utter failure by unserious bureaucrats who did not plan properly. It is not as if we did not know a decade ago, or even longer, that exponential growth was coming. It is as if these central planners are the same people who planned and are now "executing" the so-called high-speed rail.

Bureaucrats are not the only people with a share of the burden. Someone continues to vote-in do-nothing, excuse-making bureaucrats, and these same voters pretend like nightmare traffic could not have been avoided, as if out-of-control traffic is simply the price of progress. It's true that building infrastructure and properly planning for growth is an uphill battle in an ineffective and inefficient state like California. However, we all know there was plenty of time to plan and procure in order to make our population growth manageable. But, alas, using time and money effectively is not a strength of bureaucrats and apparently not a concern of some voters.

Now what? We either just accept red tape, excuses and higher taxes – that don't end up doing the thing for which there was

Please see **LETTERS** on P. 9



Taking the guess work out of where to drill ... so all you hear is the sweet sound of flowing water.

Finding Water is what we do WELL!



National Groundwater SURVEYOR
559-259-4259
CaliforniaGroundwaterSurveyor.com

National Groundwater Surveyor works with R.A. Sorensen CA License PGP # 957

12/24

Say you saw it in the *Independent*

How do you get free tank rent for the first year, prompt friendly service, a free initial leak test and competitive prices? You call ...



VALLEY PROPANE
559-645-5324
the **ONLY** locally owned propane company in the Madera Ranchos

12/24

GO HAWKS!

Join us in supporting our **LIBERTY HIGH HAWKS** this season and all year long
VALLEY PROPANE
"Service you can trust at prices you can afford"
645-5324 • 37221 Ave. 12 #1D
Madera Ranchos • Maywood Center



The Independent

The Independent is published by Five and Two Publishing.
 All contents of this publication are copyright 2024, all rights reserved. Reprinting without the permission of the copyright holder is forbidden by law.
 All articles are submitted as the opinion of the author, who remains solely responsible for the content. The information gathered for this publication is from sources that are considered to be reliable, but are not guaranteed. Opinions expressed in advertisements or articles remain the opinion of the writer.

Randy Bailey.....Publisher/Editor

Jean Briner -- Columnist, Advertising Sales Emeritus

559-645-0634 37167 Ave. 12, Suite 5C • Madera, CA 93636
ranchosnews@yahoo.com

www.TheRanchos.com

Editorial

Twenty Years Later

By Randy Bailey

Do you know the story of the Ranchos Independent? December is our anniversary month because in December of 2004 my partner and I bought the paper from its second owner, the late Bill Bell. Last year I did a pretty good history of our acquiring the paper so I thought I would share some highlights from it.

“... 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 said 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 named Kim Allison and she and I had started a couponing magazine for Madera called the Super Clipper. That publication was 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 ... 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.

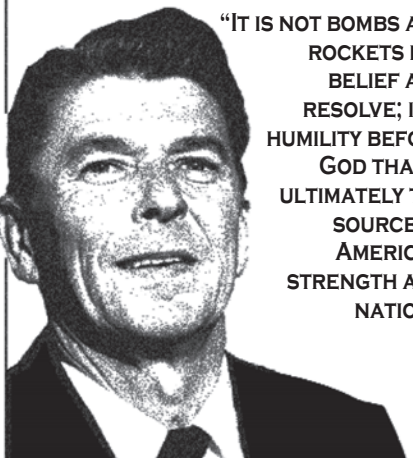
“It was a few months later that I heard the paper was for sale; of course, what I didn’t know was how sick he was from cancer. I bought the paper in December of 2004 and by St. Patrick’s Day he was gone.

“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.”

In 2023 I did make one big change. I changed the name from the Ranchos Independent to simply the Independent. When I bought the paper, the Ranchos was pretty much the only game in town, but that is not the case anymore. There was no Riverstone or Tesoro Viejo. It occurred to me that most people refer to the paper as “The Independent,” so after 19 years I thought I’d get with the program.

Who knows what the next 20 years will hold? I’m just hoping to be a part of as many of them as possible. Thanks for being there.

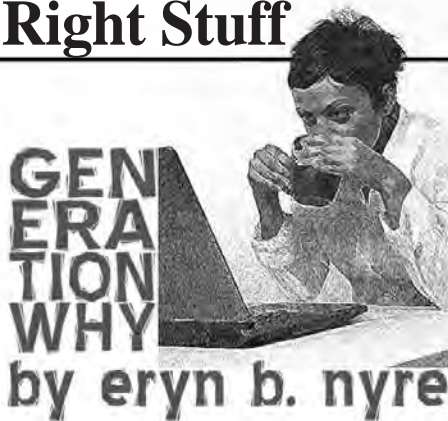
THE RAY GUN
 SHOOTING STRAIGHT TO THE HEART



“IT IS NOT BOMBS AND ROCKETS BUT BELIEF AND RESOLVE; IT IS HUMILITY BEFORE GOD THAT IS ULTIMATELY THE SOURCE OF AMERICA’S STRENGTH AS A NATION.”

RONALD REAGAN
 SAYING MORE IN ONE QUOTE THAN OTHERS SAY IN A LIFETIME

Remembering the Right Stuff



GENERATION WHY
by **eryn b. nyre**

I love the Christmas Season. It is my favorite time of year. The decorations, the lights, the movies and the music are all magical. I even love the weather; the colder the better. The best part is that this is the time of year that we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. So, with the true spirit of Christmas in mind, and I suppose as a part two to what I wrote for Thanksgiving, I am going to talk about the blessings I have in my life, because I believe if we focus on Christ, and all he has blessed us with, the spirit of joy will fill us.

I am blessed to have been raised by two people who took their job seriously as parents. At any given time, they would jump through fire for me, fly across the country to be with me if I had an emergency, and always showed up for me. Mom is spending another Christmas with Jesus, but I'm lucky to know that my father would still do all that and more if I needed him. I couldn't have asked Santa for two better parents, and I thank God every day that He sent me to them. They were my counselors, my wardens, my disciplinarians, my cheerleaders and my role models. I wouldn't be nearly the woman I am today if not for their love and support. I am honored to be their daughter.

I couldn't have asked Santa for two better parents, and I thank God every day that He sent me to them. They were my counselors, my wardens, my disciplinarians, my cheerleaders and my role models. I wouldn't be nearly the woman I am today if not for their love and support. I am honored to be their daughter.

I am blessed to have wonderful grandparents, all of whom have passed on now. Each one of them brought a different type of joy and an abundance of memories into my life, which I love to reminisce about during this time of year. I've had some truly spectacular experiences because of this group of wonderful people. From scavenger hunts to magic wishing wells to a life-sized doll house to extravagant trips – my grandparents really knew how to make a childhood feel like a fairytale. My life has been enriched because of the amazing people that brought my parents into this world.

I am blessed with a kind and loving extended family. Aunts, Uncles and cousins that support your dreams, give you comfort and guidance, and even open up their homes to you and welcome you like one of their kids. Some people don't

know this kind of joy because their family has only known conflict. I know how blessed I am to have such a fun and loving family.

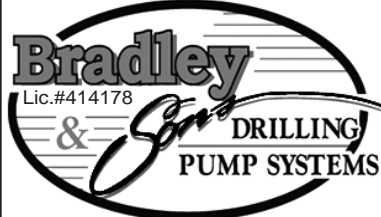
I am blessed with a great circle of friends. From the comedians that keep me laughing when times are tough to the motivators that constantly push me to work a little harder, reach a little higher, be a little better each day. They've given me shoulders to cry on, hands to hold, ears that I have just about talked off, and

brains I have picked nearly dry. Everyone needs a village; a tribe. It's hard enough to navigate this life in the good times, but when things get rocky it's our village that helps us through. We can borrow strength and share in hope. Even though, over the years, some tribe members have come and

gone, I am so blessed to have had a group of friends I know I can rely on when I need them.

I am also blessed with a warm home, steady work, and the ability to put food on the table even in this economy. I think of those sleeping out in the cold tonight and I say a little prayer for them. Each day that I wake up is a gift from God, and no matter how difficult life may seem, with each new obstacle, each little bump in the road, I know it is making me a better person. We all face struggles, and pain doesn't look the same for everyone, but I know I will climb into a cozy bed tonight. I know I have electricity that will keep the house warm. I have a reliable car that will drive me into work tomorrow morning where they pay me a decent wage. Then I will come home tomorrow, make dinner,

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



Bradley & Sons
Lic.#414178
DRILLING & PUMP SYSTEMS

674-1663
36691 Ave. 12
Madera Ranchos

DRILLING AND PUMP SERVICE

Same Day Service

Family Owned
Since 1976

12/24

Now Is The Time To Shed Those Unwanted Pounds

Look Good and Feel Great



Quick, Fast Results
CALL NOW!

- Nutritional Counseling & Menu Included
- AM PM Medications
- Diet Injection

LOSE WEIGHT AND INCHES TOO

WE KNOW LOW CARBS!
\$20 OFF
1st visit only

DIET WORLD MEDICAL GROUP

"We Are Very Affordable" **224-6744** OPEN: Monday - Friday
9:00 AM until 5:30 PM


4844 N. First, #101 • Fresno, CA 93726 • Between Shaw & Santa Ana

12/24


BEDROCK ENGINEERING

A solid foundation for your next project


Civil Engineering



Land Surveying



Underground Locating



Developing Land Surveying and Civil Engineering Design Solutions with our clients and the local community since 2008

559-645-4849

BedRock Engineering
10878 Highway 41
Madera

www.BedRockEng.com

12/24

www.chadstrucking.com



TRUCKING
CA #441782

ARENA SAND • SAND & GRAVEL • HORSE FOOTING • CRUSHED ROCK • LANDSCAPE MATERIAL • FILL DIRT • TOP SOIL • HUMUS • BARK • CHIPS • RIVER ROCK • BASE ROCK • ROCK DUST • COBBLE STONES • DRIVEWAY BASE • CONSTRUCTION CLEANUP •



LANDSCAPE DIRT & DRIVEWAY

559-479-4113

12/24

GEN WHY cont. from P. 6

fill my belly, say my prayers and go to sleep so I can do it all again tomorrow. Despite what I may face on any given day, those are true blessings for which I am eternally grateful.

Perhaps there are fewer gifts under the tree this year than last year. Maybe you are suffering the loss of a loved one or two. You could be facing an illness or the loss of a job. All of this makes the season of giving harder

when you feel like you've lost so much. Remember what we are celebrating: the birth of our Lord and Savior, our Emmanuel. Even when times are tough and the walls seem to be closing in, if we look to Him and focus on all He has blessed us with, we will keep the true spirit of Christmas alive within us not only at Christmas but everyday throughout the year.

I hope all of you have a wonderful and blessed Christmas, and May God be with you in the coming year and always.

I hope all of you have a wonderful and blessed Christmas, and May God be with you in the coming year and always.



Sago Key Palm Plantation!
 More than 20,000 Palms & Sagos in stock.
 We also have a wide selection of Shade & Fruit trees.
 call Juan and Maria at
559-268-6650
 6700 E. Central Ave. • Fresno • www.sagorey.com

12/24



Stump Grinding
 Trimming
 Topping
 Pruning
 Shrubs
 Removal

LIC. #1017900
 BONDED &
 INSURED

GARCIA'S TREE SERVICE
559-708-9152

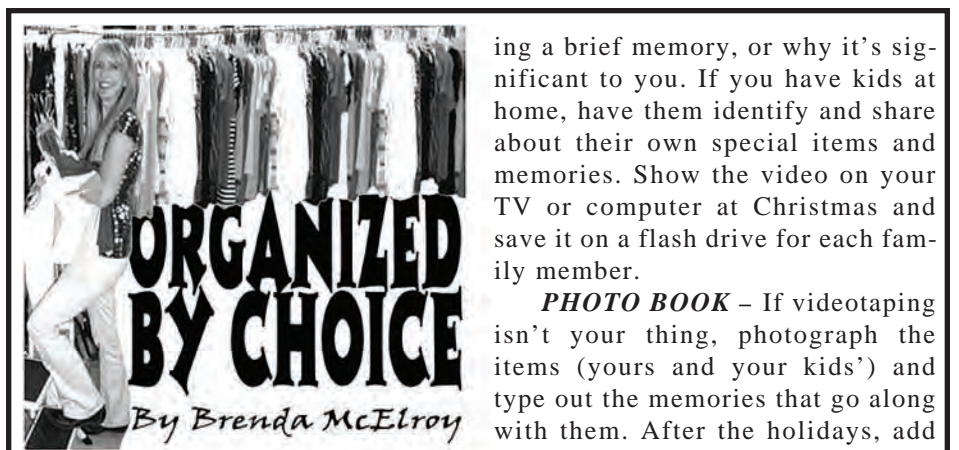
let us get your trees ready for the changing seasons!
call today and get **10% OFF!**

12/24

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

Visit the Ranchos Independent's own Website and get fully downloadable back issues of the Ranchos Independent (beginning with April 2006)

www.TheRanchos.com
www.TheRanchos.com
www.TheRanchos.com



ORGANIZED BY CHOICE
 By Brenda McElroy

Ants in the Angel

Our Christmas tree is a memory maker and keeper. Twenty-five years ago, our musical angel ornament began playing randomly — even without the “on” button pushed. How odd, we thought, and began to investigate. We discovered it became home to a nest of ants while on their way to an ornament of the edible variety. After a thorough cleaning, the angel found its way back to the tree. Each year as I hang this angel, it triggers the memory of the mystery music.

Today as I adorn our tree, other memories flood my mind — two little birds in a treehouse commemorating our first Christmas on Sparta Ave. Glittered popsicle stick stars my preschoolers made decades ago. Years of handmade ornaments from my sister-in-law. The miniature Coleman lantern in memory of a dear friend who passed. A San Francisco trolley car and Mickey ornaments remind me of family trips. And, of course, 40 years of picture ornaments which now warrant a tree of their own.

Ours is an eclectic tree harboring a plethora of memories that are sweet to recall. If preserving holiday memories is of value to you, here are three ways to make that happen.

VIDEO – Once your home is decorated, grab your phone and roam the house looking for ornaments and other decorations that have special meaning. Take video of them one item at a time while shar-

ing a brief memory, or why it's significant to you. If you have kids at home, have them identify and share about their own special items and memories. Show the video on your TV or computer at Christmas and save it on a flash drive for each family member.

PHOTO BOOK – If videotaping isn't your thing, photograph the items (yours and your kids') and type out the memories that go along with them. After the holidays, add photos of your gatherings and activities (ticket stubs/programs/etc.) to create an online photo book using Mixbook, Vistaprint, Shutterfly, Snapfish, etc.

Although I failed this year, I try to put together a photo book of the previous Christmas before another Christmas comes around. We keep a shelf of our Christmas photo books accessible during the holidays to view and reminisce together.

JOURNAL/SCRAPBOOK – If you'd prefer steering clear of the digital mode, there's always good 'ol scrapbooking. Unless you're a Creative Memories expert, you may want to opt for a book with prompts and specific places to record your memories. Our Christmas Story: A

Ours is an eclectic tree harboring a plethora of memories that are sweet to recall. If preserving holiday memories is of value to you, here are three ways to make that happen.

Modern Christmas Memory Book by Korie Herold, can be purchased on Amazon.

Of all the special holiday memories, I'm most thankful for the record of the first Christmas

that Luke carefully investigated and recorded.

“So, Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over

Holiday Snacking

(December 2014)

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.



the hulls. Put them in cool water so they are easy to handle. With a gentle push the hull should come right off, or if the kids are "helping" they can squirt the almond meat out of the hull. Let the almonds dry completely.

In a frying pan, heat enough oil to cover the bottom of the pan. Pour in the dried almonds and stirring until they are browned and crisp. With a slotted spoon, remove almonds from pan onto paper towel lined baking sheet and sprinkle with salt while they are still hot.

One of my all-time favorites is the Seven Layer dip. I don't know why they call it seven layers because it is more than seven. When I make it, I

usually use a large cookie sheet, but you can use any flat plate or platter or cookie sheet, depending on the amount you want to make. The quantities in parentheses are the amount I use – you use whatever you need.

Seven Layer Dip
Refried Beans

- (2 or 3 cans) Sour cream (small container)
- Guacamole (small container)
- Chopped Ortega chilies – Drained.
- (2 small cans) Lettuce – shredded (enough to cover)
- Tomatoes – Chopped – (2 or 3, depending on size)
- Green Onions – Chopped – (1 or 2 onions) Optional
- Sliced Olives (1 or 2 of the little cans)
- Cheese – Shredded – Cheddar, Mexican mix, or even pepper jack.

On your serving plate layer the beans, top with the sour cream, guacamole, sprinkle on the chilies, and then cover the layers with the lettuce. Sprinkle on the tomatoes, green onions, olives and the cheese. Serve with tortilla chips.

Thanksgiving is over for another year, all the leftovers are gone and it is time to think about Christmas and New Year's. Will it be beef, ham, turkey or pork? I know a family that doesn't fix a big dinner on Christmas. After all the gifts are unwrapped, they fix a big breakfast and spend the afternoon visiting with family and friends that can't get out. Then it is sandwiches and snacks in the afternoon.

Someone was in the office the other day and said he was going to visit a family that doesn't cook dinner on Christmas and wanted to take a couple of snack food dishes with him. So I put on my thinking cap and came up with a few that I know and like. Be sure to take simple things, you don't have to be elaborate.

I know a family that doesn't fix a big dinner on Christmas. After all the gifts are unwrapped, they fix a big breakfast and spend the afternoon visiting with family and friends that can't get out. Then it is sandwiches and snacks in the afternoon.

I can remember as a kid my grandmother always having a bowl of sugared walnuts on the table. This is her recipe

Sugared Walnuts

- 1 C sugar
- 7 T milk

Boil 4 minutes and pour over 2 or 3 cups of walnuts. Pour onto a pan that has been covered with wax paper. Let cool and break into bite size pieces.

Or my mom would always have a bowl of almonds. You can do these two different ways, either with the hulls on or off the almonds. If you have kids, they can help you take the hulls off the almonds, however you will probably have almonds all over the kitchen as I remember we did. Put whatever amount of almonds you are going to toast in boiling water for just a minute or two and this will loosen

My niece Rachael serves a dip that is yummy and usually goes fast.

Rachael's Spinach Dip

1 Box (10 oz.) frozen chopped spinach, cooked, cooled and squeezed dry.

- 1 container (16 oz.) Sour Cream
- 1 C mayonnaise
- 1 pkg. Knorr vegetable mix
- 2 or 3 ribs of celery, chopped
- 2 or 3 green onions chopped (optional)

1 loaf French bread

Combine all ingredients except bread and chill for at least 2 hours. Cut the top off the bread and hollow out, saving the cut out bread to use for dipping. When ready to serve, put chilled dip in hollowed bread loaf and serve with the reserved bread that has been cut into bite size pieces. When

the dip is gone, cut up the "bowl" and eat it.

How about a tray of pinwheels – easy to make, and delicious

Pinwheels

- 1 (8 oz.) Pkg. cream cheese
- 1 (16 oz.) sour cream
- 1 pkg. ranch dip (dry)
- 1 lb. sliced deli meat (ham, turkey, beef)
- 8 large flour tortillas

In large bowl mix together cream cheese, sour cream, and dry ranch dip mix. Beat until smooth. Spread a thin layer of mix on each tortilla. Top with layer of deli meat. Roll each tortilla up tightly and wrap with plastic wrap. Refrigerate until ready to serve. When ready to serve, cut each roll into 3/4- to 1-inch slices. Place on serving platter.

Please see **RECIPES** on P. 9

Create a gift from the heart

Ranchos Crafters' Studio & Gifts
559-824-6336
37164 Ave. 12 #102 (behind Subway)

Appointment Only -- Give us a call!

Visit us at www.RanchosCraftersStudio.com and Facebook "What's Up in the Ranchos"
Contact us for SPECIAL GROUP PARTIES
NEVER a sitting fee • Walk-ins ALWAYS welcome

Arts & Crafts Studio • Bisque • Wood Items

TIRED OF PAYING FOR FLOOD INSURANCE?

Lenders' requirements vary, but an Elevation Certificate could reduce the cost of flood insurance (or eliminate it completely). You can't afford to wait any longer, so contact the professionals today at

Michael Sutherland & Associates, Inc.

645-4730 • Fresno 447-5815
Lic. #PLS 5815 36691 Avenue 12 • Madera Ranchos

SAY YOU SAW IT IN the Independent

Click on "Local News" at



Tea Time

By Betty Van Valkenburg

Political Conservatives' Letter to Santa

Dear Santa,

Political conservatives have very short wish lists of things to be delivered to us — delivered either one night a year by you, jolly old Saint Nick, or sometimes by a few necessary government entities.

We work hard, plan for our daily lives and futures, provide for our families, and play by the rules. We ask only that the government live within the rules laid out by the United States Constitution and the state and local laws passed by the people.

Here's what we want from government:

- Safety in our nation, cities, and homes.
- Fair taxation to provide only that government intervention which is absolutely necessary to an orderly society safe from local and international aggression.
- Free and fair elections so that those who govern us are chosen freely and fairly by us.
- Adherence to the United States Constitution and citizen-passed local laws.
- Freedom of thought and expression.

The government wish list could go on, but being the bright as well as jolly old soul that you are, I'm sure you get the idea: keep the country safe and orderly so that we can take care of ourselves and our families.

And, Santa, what we want from you is just a few gifts under the tree for the children, a warm blanket and glass of eggnog for ourselves, and world peace. Is that too much to ask?

Merry Christmas!

LETTERS cont. from P. 4

a need to tax in the first place – or we vote for men willing to actually – not rhetorically – fight for meaningful change and real results.

Make no mistake, there is money and there is a way to apply pressure resulting in a much quicker long-term solution, but there is not a will to spend tax dollars appropriately, just as there is not a will to hold bureaucrats responsible. This problem will not be fixed anytime soon, I know; but we must follow these steps now and in the future to correct the current traffic crisis:

1. Vote out people who are nothing more than weak-willed politicians who prefer excuses to rough and tumble engagement.

2. Vote in no-nonsense people who won't be corrupted by political shenanigans and know when to bring scissors to a red-

tape fight.

3. Demand at every meeting – even meetings that have nothing to do with roads – that radical change must occur.

4. Ensure that you vote for people that have the virtues of tenacity, diligence, perseverance and a commitment to serve constituents, not a commitment to gain power and paychecks.

Residents of Tesoro Viejo and Riverstone did not sign up for this nonsense and Ranchos residents certainly did not either. But many of us contributed by not holding politicians, agencies, elected officials and others accountable. Madera County is still a preferred county in California, and we can do something about keeping it that way. Let's make Southeast Madera County drivable again.

Ray M. Sanchez
Madera Ranchos

www.TheRanchos.com

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



By Wyatt Morgan

Golden Oak 4-H was fortunate enough to be a part of the Madera Ranchos Community Christmas Tree Lighting on Dec. 6. We had a great time running our fishing game. Anyone who wanted to play was able to drop their “fishing line” behind our screen and come up with candy as a prize. Wyatt Morgan, our club Treasurer, Sarah Morgan, our club Secretary, Zander Navarro, one of our newest members, and Elizabeth Morgan, one of our Cloverbud members, all took turns behind the screen, making sure that every person who came fishing with us got a sweet reward.

While our members enjoyed the company, and running their game, the younger members couldn't help but focus on the biggest part of the evening, the arrival of Santa. Santa is one of the greatest

symbols of the Christmas season. His arrival on a fire engine was both fun, and a reminder of the work and sacrifice that our first responders are proud to offer.

The Christmas Tree Lighting is a great part of this community, and Golden Oak 4-H is proud to be a part of it. The lighting is an example of a community coming together. Busy people, from all walks of life, take time out of their days to help make a community event happen. This event is a great example of what the people of the Ranchos are about. They care about their neighbors. They care about their community. They work hard to create an event that everyone can enjoy, and that everyone is welcome to. Every part of this event showed the connections that the Ranchos community is committed to, and Golden Oak 4-H is proud to be a part of this community, and this commitment.

RECIPES cont. from P. 8

Using a serrated knife is helpful.

If you don't want to go to the trouble of making an appetizer, go to the produce department and buy a variety of vegetables to be eaten raw – broccoli, carrots, celery, cucumber, zucchini and cherry tomatoes. While you are in the store, buy a can of black olives and a container of ranch dressing. Wash and slice the vegeta-

bles into serving sizes, place on a platter with the drained olives and pour the dressing into a bowl and you have a wonderful appetizer.

There you have some suggestions. Regardless of what you serve for dinner or snacks, I pray that each of you and your family have a blessed and Merry Christmas and the happiest and most prosperous New Year.

God bless us all!

ORGANIZE cont. from P. 7

their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you

good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Luke 2:4-12

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

Visit the Ranchos Independent's own Website and get fully downloadable back issues of the Ranchos Independent (beginning with April 2006)

www.TheRanchos.com

Senior Report

Kiwanis Honors Senior Center

By Melanie Williams

In December, the local Kiwanis' Club hosted the Member Appreciation Christmas Dinner for the members of the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center. Our members wanted to convey their appreciation for the thoughtfulness of Kiwanis Club to honor the Senior Center members for their volunteer service to the seniors in our Madera Ranchos community. It was a lovely evening of delicious food and a festive atmosphere of Christmas holiday table settings and décor. Thank you to the Kiwanis Club for the honor of this celebration.

2024 was a wonderful time for the seniors at Ranchos/Hills Senior Center. Our seniors enjoyed weekly activities like exercise classes, card games, hot lunches and good cheer with other seniors in the community. Monthly activities included creatively themed potlucks, game nights, basket weaving classes, a conversational book club, Brown Bag Day and of course, our Saturday Sale at the Treasure House.



During the 2025 New Year, we are looking forward to all our regular activities as well as adding some new ones. The Senior Center is wanting to start a Lawn Bowling Club for weekly games in early spring. We need participants who would be willing to join or form a team to play at the Senior Center once a month on our back lawn area. Once we have the participants from senior community members, we would invest in the resources to develop a playing schedule and provide equipment for Lawn Bowling games. Interested in joining us or letting us borrow some Bocce Balls or Lawn Bowling equipment as we develop this fun activity, please call the Senior Center at 559-645-4864. Signups will begin in January for this new activity.

January is also the time to renew your membership at the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center. The membership is good for one year and the cost has not increased with inflation. New and Renewal Membership Applications for 2025 are available at the Center. The dues help to keep the Center open and provide activities for seniors in our community. We are a nonprofit senior community center and we do not rely on federal funding to keep the doors open to Madera Ranchos community. If you have any questions, call the Senior Center at 559-645-4864.

In 2025 the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center is updating our By-Laws and providing information about the projects we participate in with the Madera County Food Bank distribution

Please see **SENIORS** on P. 15

Got Water?

*Got a holding tank to fill? What about a swimming pool?
Don't want to waste your precious well water or pay PG&E to pump it?*

CALL US!

Bubba's Water Truck Service
call Gina at 559-289-3401 • BubbasWTS@yahoo.com

12/24

NORTHwest PEDIATRIC Medical Group

Marina Alper, MD | Vivian Hernandez, MD | John Kim, MD

Quality Pediatric Care Since 1995

NOW ACCEPTING NEW PATIENTS

Pharmacy, laboratory and
urgent care ON SITE

**Close to the Friant exit
off of Freeway 41**
7355 N. Palm Ave. #100
Fresno, CA 93711

12/24

(559) 271-6302

northwestpediatricmedicalgroup.com

**SAY YOU SAW IT ...
... IN THE INDEPENDENT**

Click on "Local News" at

LICENSE #932435 **TIM DE MERA**
Owner/CEO
 Madera Ranchos Resident

FREE ESTIMATES

ALL STAGE CONSTRUCTION

AND DEVELOPMENT INC.

Room Additions & General Contracting • Commercial & Residential
 Discount Steel Buildings: Sales & Erecting
 Concrete Foundations & Flatwork

TIMDEMERA@AOL.COM (559) 681-8947
WWW.ALLSTAGECONSTRUCTION.COM

**PRIME RIB,
 FIRE-GLAZED HONEY HAMS
 AND WE MAKE
 TURDUCKENS!**

THE BUTCHER BOSS
 YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD DELICATESSEN

**GET YOURS FOR
 THE HOLIDAYS**

**1156 HWY 41
 MADERA
 421-3046**



WE'RE ON THE WEB!

Visit the Ranchos Independent's own Website and get fully downloadable back issues of the Ranchos Independent (beginning with April 2006)

www.TheRanchos.com
www.TheRanchos.com
www.TheRanchos.com

Kiwanis Korner

Kiwanis Serves LHS Girls Tennis Need

By Sally Rowden

Here we are in the month of December. A beautiful, crisp sunny day today although fog was with us in prior days with rain in the forecast. Definite weather characteristics for our next few wintery months.

During these chilly months you'll primarily find the Kiwanis involved with indoor activities, though we did venture out the evening of Friday, Dec. 6 with coats and gloves on to support the Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce in its Community Christmas Tree Lighting event. A Station 19 Fire Engine with its siren shrieking and lights flashing pulled up with Santa on board.

Of course, the children were all smiles. Then the Grinch came lurking. Some smiles waned until Santa invited the Grinch to take pictures with him and the children and handed out candy canes. Smiles thrived. The lighted Christmas Tree was beautifully decorated by Priscilla Burgin of The Bedroom Plus Store on Avenue 12. The Chamber raffled off this beautiful tree with Santa picking the winning ticket being Tawny Higgins. Congrats, Tawny. Cookies, coffee and hot cocoa were available to all with Sierra Shadows 4-H providing crafts and games. Thank you, Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce, for a fun celebrative evening.



Liberty High School Girls Tennis Coach James Chance, left, talks to the Kiwanis with tennis team member Colie Tickel and Team Captain, Ella Hiatt.

We also had the pleasure during the month of December to hear from two Liberty High School Girls Tennis Team members, Ella Hiatt, Team Captain, and Colie Tickel. The presentation they gave us provided information on the team's successes, challenges and needs. Their Tennis Coach, James Chance, was also present. With further discussion, we learned that the girls tennis team was doing fundraising for a much-needed ball machine. The question became whether the Kiwanis could help with the funding. After a Board Meeting vote the answer was ... "Yes!" The Liberty High School Girls Tennis Team will be getting a new ball machine.

On Dec. 12 we served dinner to the members of the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center. It was their Christmas 2024 Celebration. The meal was prepared by our own Ollia Ridge. The tables were individually decorated by Ranchos/Hills Senior members and a playlist of Christmas music was heard as we served the members. Another celebrative evening of enjoyment.

We want to wish all a joyous season as we all share in the many cultural and religious holiday events during the months of December and January.

"Advice is like snow – the softer it falls, the longer it dwells upon, and the deeper it sinks into the mind." – Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

shop local · buy local · shop local · buy local · shop local · buy local

All of Southeast Madera County
needs a
MAYOR!

**WHY
NOT
YOU?**



Whether you live in the Madera Ranchos, Riverstone or Tesoro Viejo, anyone can run. In the proud tradition of American politics,
YOUR VOTES ARE FOR SALE!

Become a candidate representing your favorite local charity, service group or organization and the top "vote getter" will become the Honorary Mayor. PLUS your group gets 75 cents of every dollar you collect. WIN-WIN-WIN!

FOR MORE INFORMATION
CONTACT THE CHAMBER

The Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce - 559-645-4001
37167 Ave. 12 #5C - GoldenValleyChamber@yahoo.com

The 21st Annual Chamber

CRAB FEED

Friday, March 7 • 6 p.m.



The DANTE CLUB • No-Host Bar • Live/Silent Auctions
Your \$75 ticket includes Crab, Salad, Pasta, Bread and Dessert!

Tables of 10 are available for your Business or Group for only \$700. Business Sponsorships are also available.

Call for info. **Proceeds go to the Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce. Get your tickets early!** You can get your tickets at the Chamber office or the Ranchos Independent. Call the Chamber at 645-4001 for more info.



The Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce would love to see you at our next meeting, Wednesday, January 8 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.

shop local · buy local · shop local · buy local · shop local · buy local

FLIP SIDE *join us* SUNDAYS 9 & 10:30 AM

WWW.FLIPSIDE.CHURCH
FIND US ONLINE AND IN YOUR APP STORE FOR UPDATES ON EVENTS AND ALL OF OUR MINISTRIES



CHRISTMAS

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE
LIBERTY HIGH SCHOOL AT 5 PM

IN THE MAYWOOD CENTER | 37193 AVE 12 #3H MADERA, CA 93636 | INFO@ACTS176.COM



SUNDAY SERVICES AT 9 & 10:30 AM
CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS FROM BIRTH-6TH GRADE
JR HIGH 2ND SERVICE

YOUTH MIDWEEK SCHEDULE
JR HIGH | MONDAYS 7 - 8:30 PM
HIGH SCHOOL | WEDNESDAYS 7 - 9 PM



SEE YOU SUNDAY!

SEMUCU *speaks*

By Paul Negrete

Family, Nostalgia and the Holidays

Is the holiday season upon us already? Well, it is a time for family, emotional gatherings, reminiscing and rekindling our family ties. One of the bonding forces is the food we always shared and enjoyed together as family and friends.

As part of my family's get-together, food has always been one of the things to which we looked forward. Gathering around the kitchen, the bustling family preparing the food is always exciting and heartwarming. The aromas bring that nostalgic feeling and emotional warmth of family togetherness back, especially during Thanksgiving and Christmas. I walked into my brother and sisters-in-law kitchen at Thanksgiving and the aroma of camote (sweet potato, brown sugar, and cinnamon) empanadas, parsley, onion and celery cooking to be mixed with dried bread seasoned croutons for stuffing filled the air. One gets engulfed by the scent of the pork tamales, arroz and mole and made my senses peak. These traditional dishes coupled with the deserts, especially the capirotada (Mexican bread pudding), help make for festive times. Yes, sitting at the dinner table among family – some of whom we only see annually – as children sat together and our parents prepared the same dishes

and handed down recipes sure brings back that warmth and festive feeling. At Christmas time, as we anticipate and excitedly watch the children tear open gifts, we adults reminisce of days when we did almost the exact same things.

I would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas engulfed in good time and memories.

If you know of a friend or a neighbor that may be lonely and longing for holiday companionship, please make the effort and include them as part of your own comfort and happy time.

SEMUCU is a nonprofit 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 our community to join and help make a difference for our families and youngsters. We invite community members to join SEMUCU as board members to help shape the Southeast Madera County area. Together we can build a stronger, more vibrant community. SEMUCU meets once per month at the Madera Ranchos Library at 37398 Berkshire Dr. in the Ranchos, or you may join us online to virtually participate. To join online, go to www.semcu.org for a link and follow the 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. Our next meeting is on Tuesday, Dec. 17 at 6 p.m. Make your voice heard!

*SEMUCU is "By the Community,
For the Community"*



Not everyone needs us ... But you might.

If you've been involved in an wreck, you know there's nothing worse. Will your car be like it was? Will it cost an arm and a leg to fix? Will it take forever? Call Caesar Dents. Estimates are always free, the work is empeccable and the price just might surprise you.

**Caesar Dents
& Auto Body Repair**
1146 Barstow #G • Clovis
559-797-2528
Auto • Aircraft • Boats



12/24

Click on "Local News" at

7/24

Valley Well Drilling

Lic. #1099927

**Domestic Well, Agriculture Well
Airlifting, Well Brushing, Swabbing
Well Rehabilitation, Test Hole**

559-307-9720 or 559-351-9624

In-Home Services for Seniors by Seniors

Like getting a little help from your friends®

There's a huge difference in the kind of home care you can receive from someone who really understands what your life is like as a senior. Our loving and compassionate seniors are there to help. We offer all the services you need.




Seniors Helping Seniors®
 THE POWER OF LOVE®

559.500.3070
 care@shsgreaterfresno.com
 www.shsgreaterfresno.com

©2019 Each office is independently owned and operated. (EYES)REGISTRATION# NCA 10470003

12/24

Strange BUT TRUE

- You're more likely to have weirder, scarier and sexier dreams when sleeping on your stomach.
- The *cymothoa exigua*, a parasite that severs the blood vessels of a fish's tongue and becomes a new functional tongue, is the only known parasite capable of replacing an entire organ.
- Are you a java junkie? Scientists found specific genes that are more caffeine-loving than others, so addiction to it might be genetic. In other words, you can go ahead and blame your parents for your coffee obsession.
- "Family Feud" host Richard Dawson met his second wife, Gretchen Johnson, when she was a contestant on the show in 1981. And yes, he did kiss her.
- After four years of planning and two months of working nightly from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m., a team of hackers at MIT turned their Earth and Planetary Sciences Department building into a giant, multicolored, playable Tetris game.
- It is considered unlucky to clean your house on the Chinese New Year. You risk sweeping away the good luck of the coming year.
- *Gigi* author Sidonie-Gabrielle Colette could only write after she had plucked fleas off her dog.
- If you pour cold water into a person's ear, their eyes will move in the direction of the opposite ear. If you pour warm water into their ear, their eyes will move toward that ear. Used to test for brain damage, this process is called "caloric stimulation."
- Some areas in Scotland and Japan switched to blue street lights at night and saw a decrease in crime and suicide rates.

© 2024 King Features Synd., Inc.

SENIORS cont. from P. 10

of Brown Bags and the Senior Hot Lunch Program. If any senior community member wishes to make suggestions for the implementation of the new By-Laws and other programs, we can provide for our seniors, you can come into the center to leave comments in our suggestion box. The first committee meeting for the new By-Laws will be scheduled in January. Please call the Senior Center for information if you wish to know when the By-Laws Committee meeting is scheduled or want to leave comments in the suggestion box.

We are beginning a new year for our Brown Bag Program through the Madera Food Bank. Participants must fill out a new application for Brown Bag Day and mail it with a check made out to the Madera Food Bank. There are time sensitive aspects of submission of your application to participate in the Brown Bag Program for the 2025 year, but you can still sign up at any time during the next few months. The Senior Center serves the Madera Ranchos


area as a distribution center for the Madera County Food Bank Brown Bag Program.

There is no Monthly Sale in January because of the New Year Holiday schedule. The first Monthly Sale of 2025 is on Saturday, Feb. 1 from 8 a.m. to noon. The Treasure House and Boutique will have new Valentine's items ready for the Monthly Sale in February.

The New Year's Potluck Event is scheduled for Jan. 9 at 5 p.m. We are celebrating the New Year at the Senior Center with a grand potluck event. If you are interested in any of the Senior Center activities, please call for more information.

We also encourage you to stop by the Senior Center and pick up a monthly calendar that lists the dates and times of each activity and event. If you join the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center, the calendar is sent directly to you through email or sent to your mailbox each month.

Happy New Year from the Members of the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center. We wish you the best in the New Year and hope that the coming year is full of amazing opportunities and experiences for each of you.



Grow your own Christmas tree

A "Christmas tree" seedling should be planted outdoors in a moderately cool season such as early fall or late spring. Dig a hole the same size as the seedling's container; gently loosen the roots if the soil is impacted, then place the seedling and soil in the hole. Gently fill in and pat down where needed. Water it weekly in its first year; after that, only water the tree during dry months or during a drought. After the first two to three years you can start to prune and shear it. Harvest time will depend on what tree you've decided to grow, but it's best to cut it down in late fall when it is full of moisture. This ensures your tree stays as green as possible during the holidays. —Brenda Weaver

Source: modicafarm.com

© 2024 by King Features Syndicate, Inc. World rights reserved.

Say you saw it in
the Independent

BEAUTIFUL cont. from P. 2

It was almost dark when the painter picked up his easel and left. And the little fir was tired and cross from all his preening and posing.

Christmas morning he awoke late, and as he proudly shook away the snow from his lovely branches, he was amazed to see a huge crowd of people surrounding the old tree, ah-ing and oh-ing as they stood back and gazed upward. And even those hurrying along the path had to stop for a moment to sigh before they went on.

"Whatever could it be?" thought the haughty fir, and he too looked up to see if perhaps the top of the old tree had been broken off during the night.

Just then a paper blew away from the hands of an enraptured newsboy and sailed straight into the young fir. The fir gasped in amazement, for there on the front page was a picture of the painter holding his painting of a great white tree whose leafless branches, laden with snow, stretched upward into the sky. While below lay a tiny brown bird almost covered by three golden leaves. And beneath the picture were the words, "The Most Beautiful Thing Is That Which Hath Given All."

The young fir quietly bowed its head beneath the great beauty of the humble old tree.

Merry Christmas
from
Golden Valley Baptist Church

Come celebrate the
Birth of Jesus Christ at our
Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
December 24th at 6:30pm

12414 Road 37
Madera, CA 93636
(559) 645-1700

Sunday School 9am
Sunday Worship Service 10:30am
Wednesday Bible Studies for all ages 6:30pm
Women's Bible Study Thursdays 6:30pm

Real Estate



"Real estate is my life! I make your real estate dreams a reality."





MARIA FOTOPOULOS
REALTOR

12/24

559-250-6740 • mfotorealtor@gmail.com
Integrity, Dedication, Results
www.homesmartpva.com/mfoto • DRE #01454566
"Put my experience, knowledge, service and professionalism to work for you."



**TIME FOR A HOME CHANGE?
LET ME HELP YOU!**

ANA MARIE SHERWOOD, REALTOR®
559-903-0855

ASHERWOOD@REALTYCONCEPTS.COM
DRE LIC. #01894032



12/24

The Luxury Home Realtor
an expert in your area!

559-790-4729
Folland@comcast.net

TheLuxuryHomeRealtor.com

Truly Local, Truly Expert

Available for all your Real Estate and investment needs



Lourie Folland
559-790-4729
Folland@comcast.net
BRE #01816846

12/24

What's Happening
93636

The best time to buy a house?
When you're ready.
And when you're ready
WE GOT YOU!

Your Neighbors & Real Estate Experts

Thinking of buying or selling a home?
Don't know where to start?
Call or contact us.

WE GOT YOU!

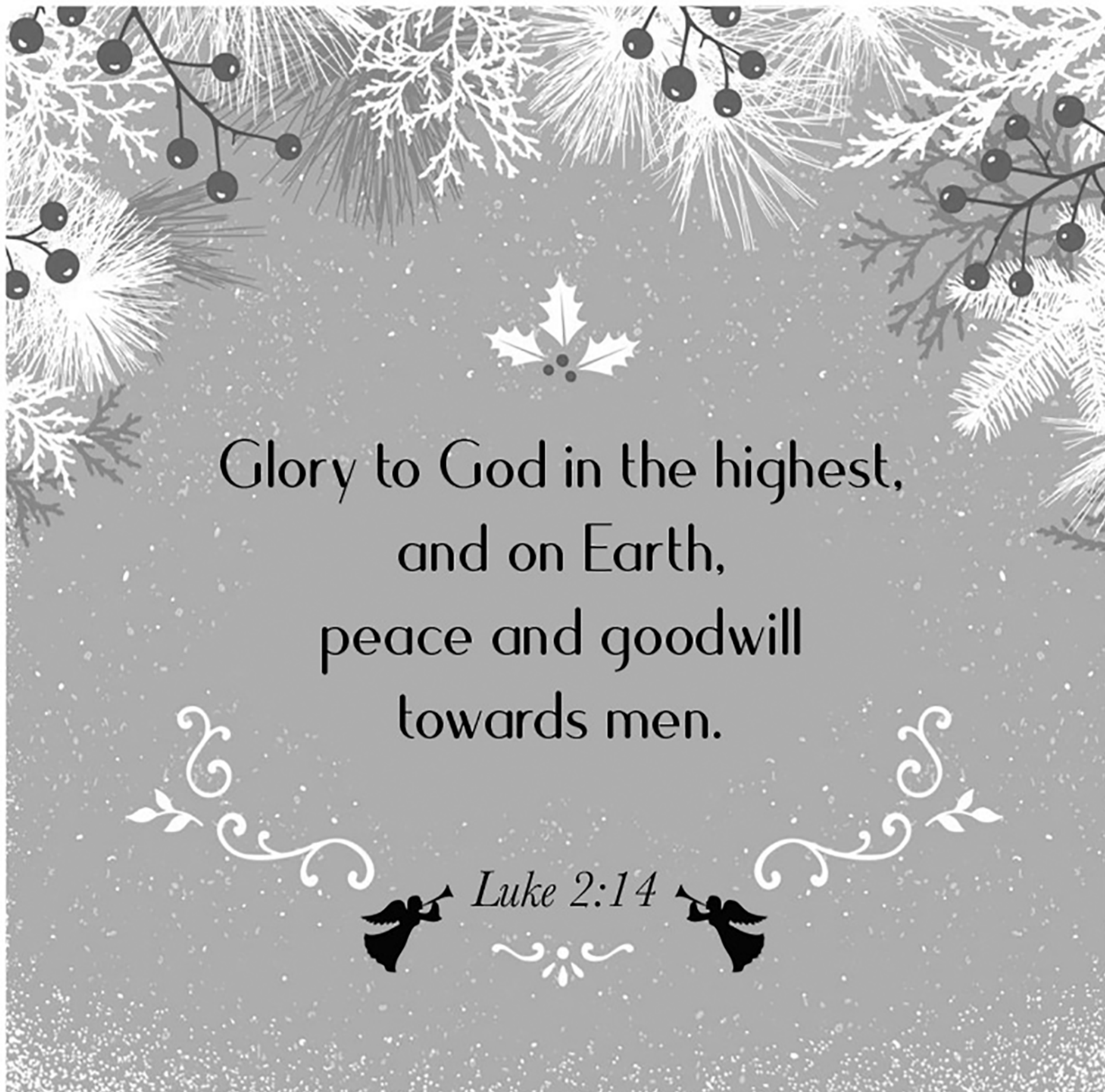




Mary Avigliano
559-367-7264
mary@ironkeyrealestate.com
REALTOR® - DRE 02093132

Jessica Gonzales
559-408-1784
jess@ironkeyrealestate.com
REALTOR® - DRE 02136161

12/24



Glory to God in the highest,
and on Earth,
peace and goodwill
towards men.

Luke 2:14

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year from The Independent

Business Directory • Business Directory • Business Directory • Business Directory

CHANEY'S

 Lic. #899496
Bobcat Service
 • DRILLING • TRENCHING • DIRT WORK •
 • efficient • reliable • cost-effective call Beau
559-301-1613

CLARK'S

 559-645-1578
General & Custom Auto Service & Repairs
559-645-1578
PERFORMANCE

Unlimited Concrete
 Lic. #1042108

 DRIVEWAYS • SIDEWALKS • COMMERCIAL • RESIDENTIAL
 call Jose Lopez
559-779-0401

Mike's Country Clippers Barber Shop
HAIRCUTS \$16
 Seniors Thursdays ONLY \$13!
439-2004
37184 AVE. 12 #104
 (behind Pizza Factory)

NEW & USED CARS & TRUCKS
All Makes & Models
J.H. Sanders Sales & Leasing
822-4500
41453 Ave. 14 1/2
Madera Ranchos
www.jhsanders.com

Now Is The Time To Shed Those Unwanted Pounds!

DIET WORLD MEDICAL GROUP
 Quick, Fast Results CALL NOW!
224-6744
Lose Weight NOW!

Bradley & Son
 Lic. 414178
DRILLING & PUMP SYSTEMS
674-1663
same day service

TIRED OF PAYING FOR FLOOD INSURANCE?
 Lenders' requirements vary, but an Elevation Certificate could reduce the cost of flood insurance (or eliminate it completely).
 Lic. #PLS 5815

Michael Sutherland & Associates, Inc.
 645-4730 • Fresno 447-5815

BEDROCK ENGINEERING
 A solid foundation for your next project
 Land Surveying • Civil Engineering • Consulting
INVEST IN YOUR EXISTING PROPERTY!
 For a free consultation, visit our Madera Ranchos office!
 10878 HWY 41 • 559-645-4849
 www.bedrockeng.com

TOUCH OF GREEN LANDSCAPE
 CA LIC. #934774
commercial, residential and industrial landscaping
 call **559-242-6352**
 info@TouchOfGreenLandscape.us

NEED CONCRETE?

 Architectural Hardscapes
 Residential • Commercial
 Place & Finish Services
 Site-Work • Curbs
 Sidewalks • Foundations
 Retaining Walls • Patios
 Driveways • Demo • Grading
 call **559-718-3554**
209-276-1579
Free Estimates!
 Lic. # 1119919

NORTHWEST PEDIATRIC
 Medical Group
 Quality Pediatric Care Since 1995
We're Accepting NEW Patients
"Right off of Highway 41 at Friant."
 7355 N. Palm #100
 Fresno
559-271-6302
 NorthwestPediatricMedicalGroup.com

PERSONAL TOUCH
 Lic. # B0008113
Landscaping & Gardening Services
 Yard cleanups & hauling • Weed control
 Lawn & garden service • Maintenance
 Weekly & monthly service (not a licensed contractor)
 call Mag Anaya Jr.
559-974-1357
 Rancho Resident

BUBBA'S WATER TRUCK SERVICE

 We Fill Holding Tanks Swimming Pools
 Potable Water Dust Control
 Covering Mountain Areas & the Central Valley
 Call Gina at 559-289-3401
 email BubbasWTS@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
 3rd Tuesday of the month • 6 p.m.
 37398 Berkshire Dr. • Rancho Library

VALLEY PROPANE

"Service you can trust, prices you can afford."
645-5324
The ONLY locally owned propane company in the Rancho

LANDSCAPE MATERIAL
 SAND & GRAVEL • CRUSHED ROCK
 FILL DIRT • TOP SOIL • HUMUS • BARK
 CHIPS • RIVER ROCK • BASE ROCK
 ROCK DUST • COBBLESTONES
 DRIVEWAY BASE
 CONSTRUCTION CLEANUP

559-479-4113
 CA #441782 • www.chadstrucking.com

Aleman's Painting

 Interior & Exterior
 Specializing in Repaints
 Rental, Residential & Commercial
 Drywall, Stucco, Redashing & Acoustical Removal
 Color Matching
 BONDED & INSURED LIC. #589140
559-974-2268

Get Involved!

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
WWW.FLIPSIDE.CHURCH
 info@acts176.com
 SEE YOU SUNDAY!

"We've got your back"
 D.O.T. Physicals • Drug Testing
 Sports Physicals only \$35!

HANEY CHIROPRACTIC
 & rehabilitation center
660-5262
36754 AVE. 12 • Madera Ranchos

Create a gift from the heart

 Arts & Crafts Studio • Bisque • Wood Items
Rancho Crafters' Studio & Gifts
559-824-6336
 37164 Ave. 12 #102 (behind Subway)

for MORE sales tomorrow, call
RANDY BAILEY
Today!
(559) 645-0634
The Independent


Classified

Alterations

Call **Greg's Alterations in Fresno** for all of your clothing alteration needs. Great service and 40 years of experience. Call **Greg at 559-301-7331**.

Carpet Cleaning

Pinnacle Carpet Care and Upholstery - "Dries in hours, not days." BBB A+ rating. Golden Valley Chamber member. Call **Bruce today for a free estimate. 559-676-0760**.

Chimney Sweep

Paul the Chimney Sweep Guy- 29 years of experience. Wood stove inserts, pellet stoves and fireplaces. Also clean clothes dryer vents.

REMEMBER: THINK SAFETY, BURN SAFELY! Call **559-908-9332**.

Exterminator

CSI Exterminators - "If you've got a pest, call the best!" Free estimates. Call **559-293-1779**.

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

Over 40 yrs of experience - 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 POST-HOLES - Trees - Trenching - Clean Up. **TRACTOR WORK** Discing - Rototilling - Mowing - Scraping - Stump Grinding. Call **John at 908-1066**.

Window Cleaning Services

Most windows start at \$5 and up -- inside/out - Screen, track, sills. Remove hard water stains on home windows, shower doors and car windows. Cobweb removal too. Fully insured. Call **Nick at 285-1723**.

Free estimates.



• "Save egg cartons for children's painting palettes. It's very easy to give kids a small amount of many colors, and they don't spread them out and run them together as quickly when they are each in their own cup. Plus, they are easy to carry." -- O.L. in Utah

• Remove price tag residue off hard surfaces with hairspray. Or WD40 works well too.

• Make your own frozen dinners by purchasing divided trays and using them to store leftovers. Slip each into a plastic bag and label. On busy nights, you can take your favorite out and microwave it.

• "A beautiful but stained or worn tablecloth can find a new life at your dinner table. Cut into napkin sizes, and give any frayable ends a hemming." -- A.S. in Oregon

• A great winter tip that's double purpose: After your dishwasher has done its job, open the door and let the dishes air dry rather than machine dry. You'll save on energy, while you add warmth and humidity to your home's air.

• Damp cloth plus baking soda should be your first weapon against stains in the kitchen and bathroom. It's eco-friendly, and a mild abrasive, which works without scratching!

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

© 2024 King Features Synd., Inc.

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 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

	+		-		= 8
-		+		+	
	+		-		= 7
÷		+		×	
	+		×		= 32
=		=		=	
1		16		72	

©2024 King Features Syndicates, Inc.

STOP THE PAIN!

"We've got your back"

Specializing in AUTO ACCIDENTS

D.O.T. Physicals • Drug Testing
Sports Physicals only \$35!

HANEY
CHIROPRACTIC
& rehabilitation center

36754 AVE. 12 • 660-5262

12/24

Click on "Local News" at

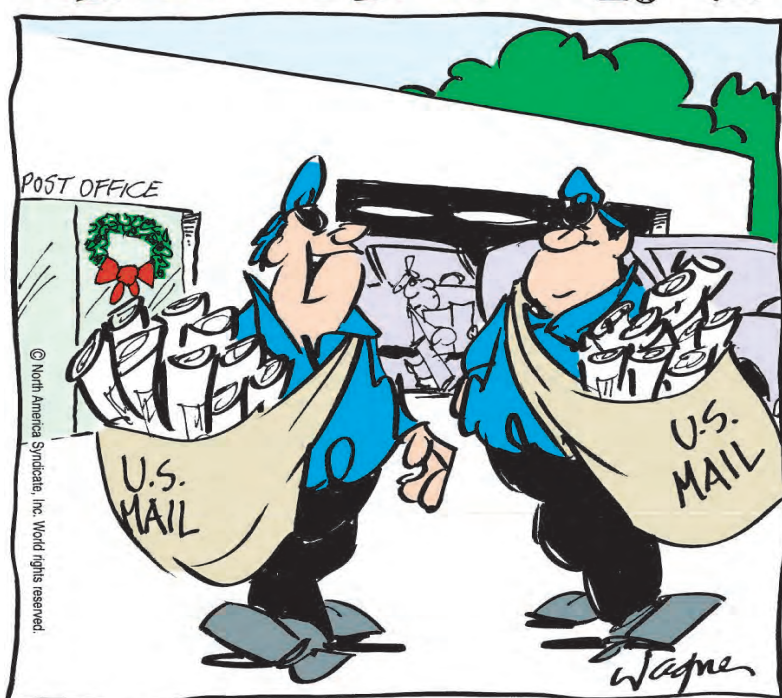
Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



©2024 King Features Syndicate, Inc. All rights reserved.

GRIN and BEAR IT *by Wagner*



© North America Syndicate, Inc. World rights reserved.

"The Christmas catalogs aren't so bad. ... Last year I had fruitcake delivery."

www.TheRanchos.com



ARIES (March 21 to April 19) I know, dear Lamb, that you don't like anyone trying to take charge of your projects, but try to be a bit more flexible. A new idea could help hasten a positive result.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) I'm sure, being the time-thrifty Taurus you are, that you've done much of your holiday shopping. But don't relax yet! Wrap those gifts now to save yourself lots of unwanted pressure.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) Be receptive when a family member or friend asks to confide in you. Your positive reaction could ensure that they have a happy holiday experience.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) Don't be rushed into wrapping up a workplace problem. Consider leaving it be until after the holidays. This way, you'll have the facts you need to reach the right resolution.

LEO (July 23 to August 22) You'll get news that will make you glow brighter than the lights of the holiday season! Be sure to use what you learn both carefully and kindly in order to avoid giving the wrong impression.

VIRGO (August 23 to September 22) A frayed relationship could be mended in time for the holidays if you were more flexible. Give a little, and you could get back a lot more than you imagined.

LIBRA (September 23 to October 22) Things might not seem to be settling down as quickly as you would prefer, but it might just be a little "holiday time flutter." You'll soon get news that will lead to more stability.

SCORPIO (October 23 to November 21) Stop getting so involved in everyone's personal problems that you lose precious time with loved ones. Remember, even the Supreme Court closes for the holidays.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21) All signs point to a bright holiday, with all of those pesky problems finally resolved in your favor. Share the good times with people you love and who, of course, love you.

CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 19) Your plans should not be set in stone and cemented over. Leave some openings in case you need to make changes. Meanwhile, spend the holidays with your nearest and dearest.

AQUARIUS (January 20 to February 18) Surprise! This holiday finds you on the receiving end of generosity from those who are usually the recipients of what you give so freely and lovingly.

PISCES (February 19 to March 20) A piece of good news assures that you'll be swimming in clearer, calmer waters this holiday season. There might be a storm or two ahead, but you'll weather it all in fine style.

Born this Week

You have a flair for seeing things as you'd like them to be, as well as a gift for turning your perceptions into realities. Manifestation is your superpower.

©2024 King Features Synd., Inc.

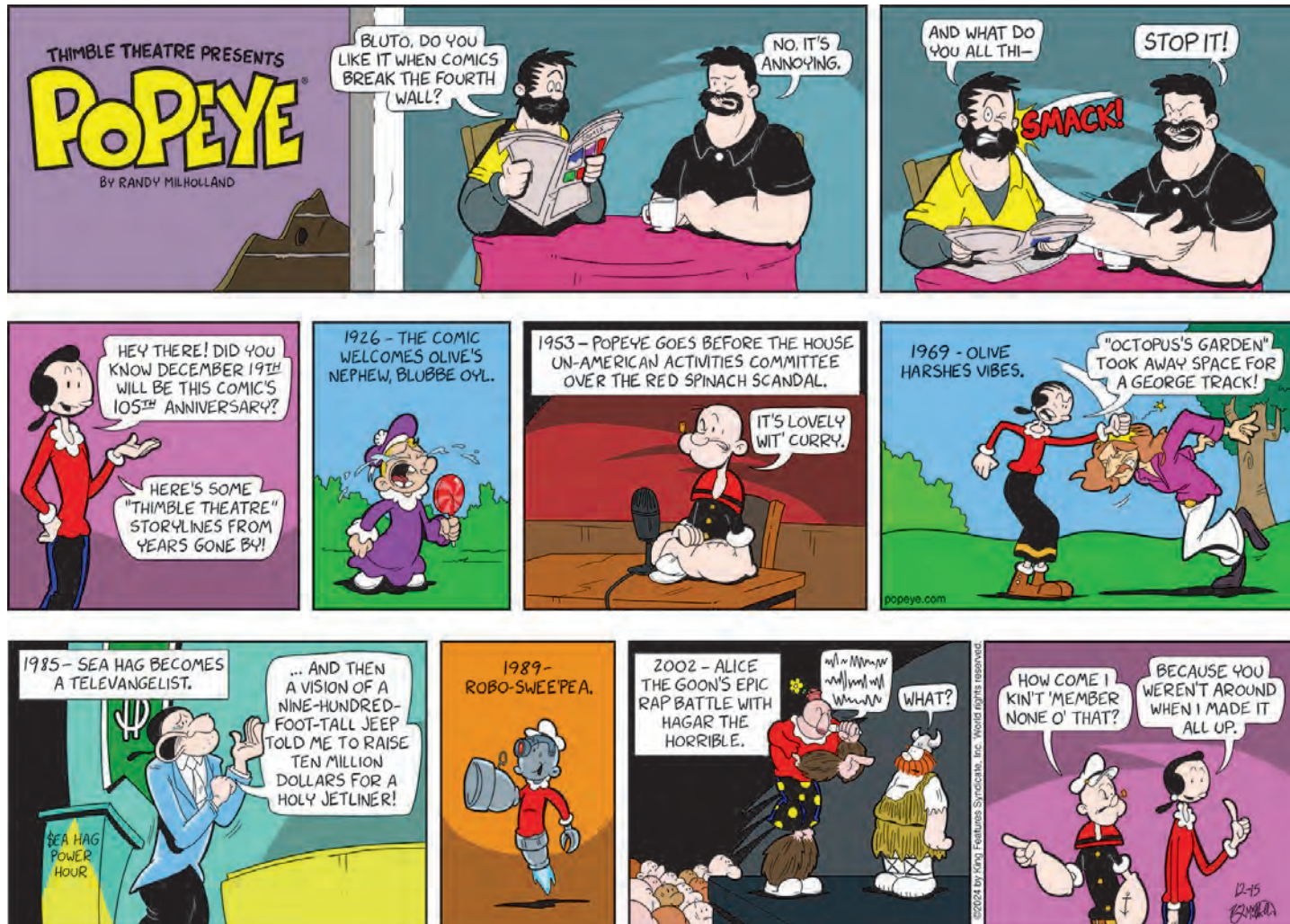
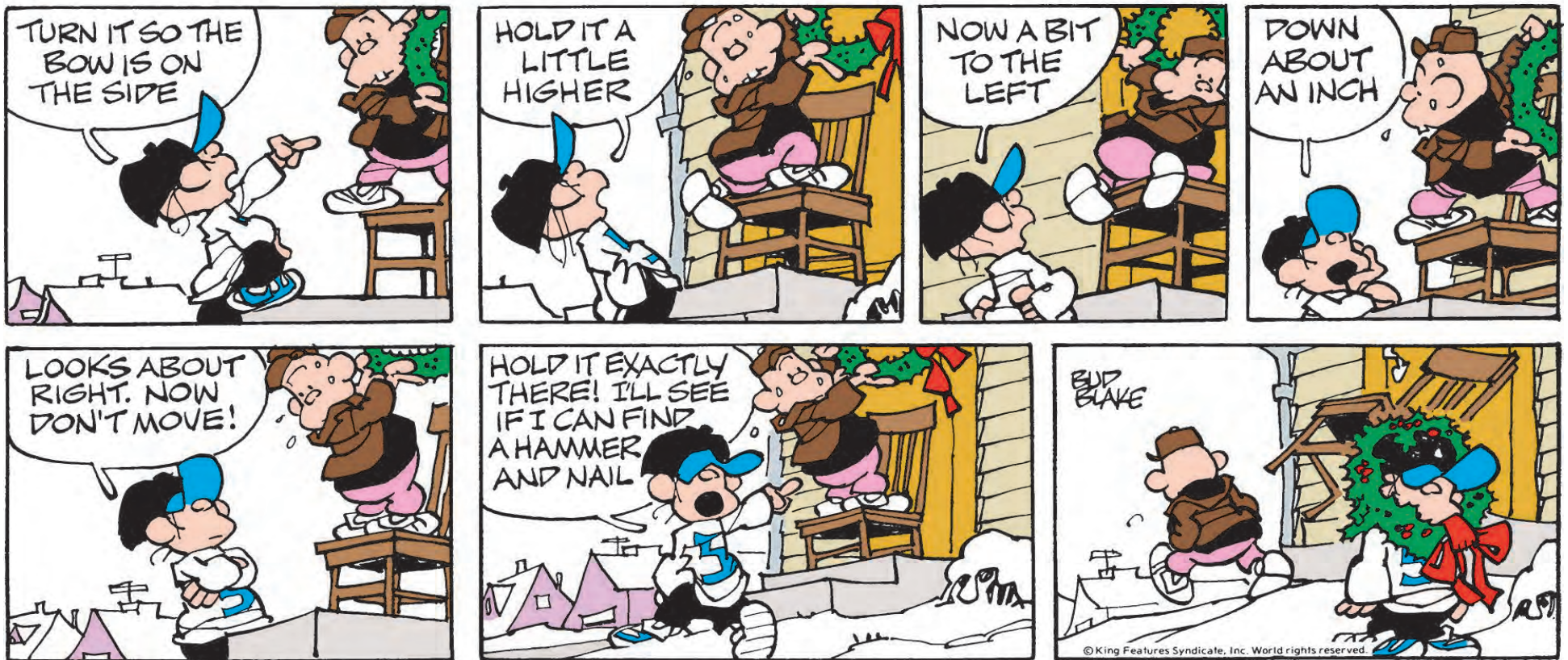
FUN PAGES

Kids' Maze



TIGER

©2024 King Features Syndicate, Inc.
by **BUD BLAKE**



TRIVIA TEST

By Fifi Rodriguez

- GEOGRAPHY:** What is the northernmost capital city in the world?
- U.S. STATES:** Which state is the driest?
- MOVIES:** In the movie "It's a Wonderful Life," what is the name of the angel who saves George Bailey?
- LITERATURE:** Which American novelist also wrote under the pen name Edgar Box?
- SCIENCE:** What is the process called in which plants lose water through their leaves?
- HISTORY:** What was the name of the international group that was supposed to keep the peace after World War I?
- TELEVISION:** Which TV sitcom featured a holiday episode titled "Abed's Uncontrollable Christmas"?
- ASTRONOMY:** What is it called when a group of stars forms a pattern?
- MUSIC:** What is the top-selling holiday song of all time?
- GENERAL KNOWLEDGE:** How many years are in a millennium?

1. Reykjavik, Iceland.
2. Nevada, with an average of 10 inches of rain a year.
3. Clarence Odbody.
4. Gore Vidal.
5. Transpiration.
6. The League of Nations.
7. "Community."
8. Constellation.
9. "White Christmas" by Bing Crosby.
10. 1,000.

© 2024 King Features Synd., Inc.

Click on "Local News" at

Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.
 Differences: 1. Boy's legs are longer. 2. Tree is moved. 3. Stocking is shorter. 4. Woman's leg is shorter. 5. Belt is shorter. 6. Robe collar is different.

SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

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

©2024 King Features Syndicates, Inc.

The Independent
 CALL 645-0634

MAGIC MAZE • NIGHT —

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

Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions forward, backward, up, down and diagonally
 Unlisted clue hint: BIRD THAT GIVES A HOOT

- Before Christmas
- Blindness
- Club
- Crawler
- Gown
- Hawk
- Light
- School
- Shade
- Shift
- Shirt
- Stand
- Stick
- Vision
- Watchman

©2024 King Features Syndicate, Inc. All rights reserved.

FUN PAGES

SEM CU
south east madera county united

**MERRY CHRISTMAS
TO ALL
GOT IDEAS?**

**What can SEMCU do next that is important for
our South East Madera County community?**

**Schools, Seniors, Veterans, Traffic,
Water Supply, Safety, Health Care & More**

SEMCU meets on the 3rd Tuesday every month

Our next meeting is in person on Tuesday, January 21st at 6 p.m.

Online: go to: WWW.SEMCU.ORG for the link

by phone: 669-900-6833

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

We meet at the Ranchos Library Teleconference Room

37398 Berkshire Drive, Madera Ranchos Library

559-363-9095 • www.semcu.org • info@semcu.org

FOR THE COMMUNITY, BY THE COMMUNITY