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50¢





By DJ Becker

On Friday, Jan. 24 at approximately 11:30 a.m., the 72-year-old driver of an empty Madera Unified school bus was traveling northbound on Road 26 at Avenue 12 when he failed to yield the right of way as he crossed Avenue 12. This resulted in him pulling out in front of a westbound Freightliner dump truck moving at highway speeds, according to Public Infor-

mation Officer Sergio Moreno of the Madera office of the California Highway Patrol. No students or other school personnel were aboard the bus at the time of the incident.

The driver, a man from Madera, sustained major injuries and was found lying down outside the front of the school bus at the crash site. Officers said the driver may have been disoriented by the impact, tried to exit the bus, and may have fallen out due to the crushed door and steps. No updates were available on the man's condition as of press time, according to Moreno.

The Freightliner dump truck struck the school bus on the right front of the vehicle. The force of the impact spun the school bus 180 degrees in a southbound direction, blocking traffic on busy Avenue 12 for over an hour as officers and emergency crews worked to help the injured drivers and clear the roadway. As a result of the impact, the Freightliner truck continued sliding in a northwesterly direction, sideswiping a PG&E power pole before stopping on the right shoulder.

The school bus driver was taken to the Community Regional Medical Center and the 58-year-old driver of the Freightliner sustained minor injuries and was treated at St. Agnes Medical Center. Both drivers

were wearing their seatbelts at the time of the crash, according to officers, likely preventing more serious injuries. Roadway conditions were clear and dry at the time of the collision and no citations are pending at this time. Alcohol and/or drugs are not suspected to be a factor in this crash.

The California Highway Patrol would like to remind drivers to avoid distractions, pay attention to your surroundings, look in every direction as you approach an intersection, and obey all traffic signs and signals.



Chamber Keeps Tradition Alive



In a tradition that goes back nearly as long as the Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce has been in existence, members of the Chamber, led by Chamber member Ollia Ridge, take 100 "care packages" to the Fresno VA Hospital to be distributed to veterans who are away from home during the holidays.

Every year, as the holidays approach, the Chamber puts the word out for donations for the vets of sorely needed supplies. To make it easy, the Chamber has the gathering of items coincide with the annual lighting of the community Christmas tree at the Maywood Center, usually during the

first week of December. Community members can get a list of needed items from the Chamber and a list is posted in the Independent each year as well.

Once all the items are gathered, they are packed in shopping bags donated by Trader Joe's and then, on a specific date coordinated with the hospital, volunteers from the Chamber fill their cars and trek down to the VA Hospital to play Santa Claus.

Keep your eyes peeled next December and come help the Chamber make some lonely vets' holiday a little brighter. Call the Chamber at 559-645-4001 for more information.

Rolling Hills Show Appreciation

The Rolling Hills Citizens' Association recently did a general cleanup in their area and wanted to give credit where credit was due by giving a big thank you to all of the neighbors who worked throughout the weekend to trim and clean up the medians in their neighborhood. Specifically, members wanted to thank the RHCA Vice President Mike Estrada for

organizing the event and give a special "shout out" to Ken Warnock for providing a tractor to scoop the vegetation trimmings and quickly put them in the trash bin. The group was thankful that with the group of volunteers they were able to remove debris in the gutter near the Firehouse, thus mitigating flooding by allowing water to drain.



An idea of some of the vegetation the Rolling Hills Citizens' Association faced and cleared out.



Ken Warnock's tractor with the scoop was a lifesaver for the group cleaning up the roadway in Rolling Hills.

Say you saw it in the Independent





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Letters

Dear Editor:

As we begin a new year, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude for your consistent support of California CASA and the thousands of children and youth in foster care we serve—as well as the many more we strive to reach. Your generosity during the giving season not only lifted our spirits but also laid the foundation for a brighter future for countless young lives.

This year, we were deeply moved by the outpouring of support from our community. Your generosity, amplified by a remarkable \$50,000 matching gift from an anonymous donor, has the power to transform lives. Because of you, we can continue supporting our network of 44 local programs to recruit, train, and empower CASA volunteers who bring stability, advocacy, and hope to children and youth navigating the foster care system.

Every contribution we receive goes beyond monetary value. It transforms into the steady presence of a trusted adult, the voice that ensures a child's needs are heard, and the guiding light toward a safer, more promising future.

As we embark on 2025, we are more determined than ever to expand our reach, ensuring every child in foster care who needs a CASA has one. Your support helps

lay the groundwork for fundamental change, empowering not only individual children but also fostering a stronger, more equitable system.

We invite you to see the impact of your generosity in action by viewing our latest Impact Report. Together, we can continue to make a difference for the children and youth who need us most.

Thank you for standing with us in this mission. We couldn't do this critical work without you.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Sharon M. Lawrence, Esq. CEO, California CASA Association

Dear Editor:

Hey, Randy, this is Martha Yolkham, and it's not necessary to call me back, but I just wanted to tell you how much I appreciated the little story about the most beautiful thing, a Christmas story from our family to yours. Thank you again, and Merry Christmas. He's the reason for the season. Jesus is the reason for the season.

Martha Yolkham Madera Ranchos





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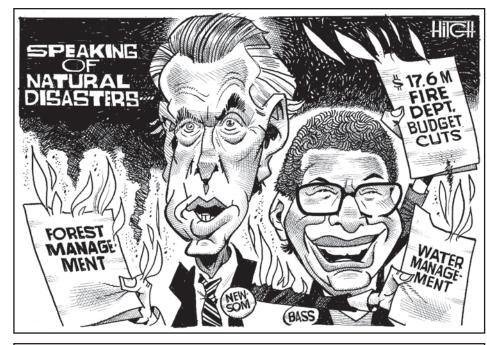
GO HAWKS!

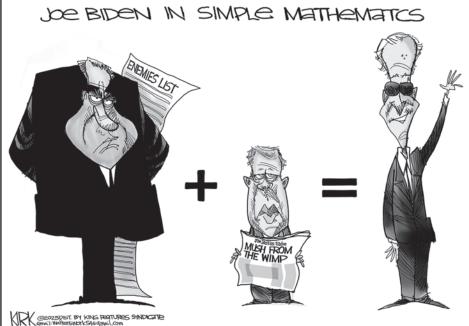
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Independent

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Randy Bailey.....Publisher/Editor

Jean Briner -- Columnist, Advertising Sales Emeritus

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Editorial

Resolution This!

By Randy Bailey

I had someone come up to me the other day and ask, "So, what resolutions have you made for 2025?"

I just looked at her.

She had a big smile on her face and was eagerly anticipating a litany of goals for the new year. I don't know if this is something she does every year after New Year's Day and eagerly looks foreward to the responses after she accosts people, or if this was her first time out trying this as a new greeting.

Unfortunately, she picked me.

I was nice. I put a smile on my face and nodded up and down as I looked at her. Then I said, "I don't make New Year's resolutions. I think they're kind of ... stupid."

She got a look on her face. She obviously thought New Year's resolutions were a lot of things, but "stupid" plainly was not one of them.

- "What do you mean?"
- "Hmm?" I responded.
- "What do you mean?
- "About what?"

"About New Year's resolutions being 'stupid'."

I thought the sentence was fairly self-explanatory, but obviously I was wrong. "Wait a minute," I said. "You know what 'stupid' means, right?"

"Yes," she said with an accompanying eye roll.

"And you know what 'New Year's resolution' means, right?"

I sensed she was becoming impatient with me.

"Yes."

"Then what don't you understand?"

She crossed her arms.

"Oh," I said, pretending to have a light of understanding go off in my head. "You want to know WHY I think it's stupid."

"That's what I said."

Well, no it wasn't but we were beyond that. We were in my office so I invited her to have a seat.

"Let me ask you something, ok? She nodded her head. We had es-

She nodded her head. We had escalated to non-verbal communication.

"If you walked outside to your car right now and discovered you had a flat tire, what would you do?"

"I'd call Triple A and have them come fix my flat," she said, quite perturbed at such a silly question.

"Ok. And what if you went home and found your cat high in a tree and looking like it was quite stuck there. What would you do?"

"If I couldn't get him down I'd call some friends and see if we could figure something out."

"Great. Last question: If when you got home you realized you were out of food in your house, what would you do?"

That one made her squint at me.

"I'd ... go ... to ... the ... store."

It was time for me to walk her back from the ledge.

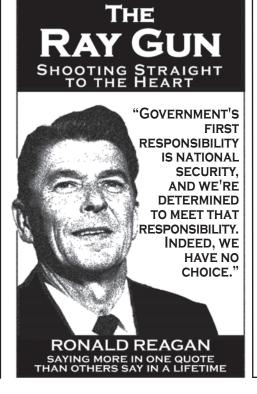
"In any of those situations would you say something like, 'I think I'll wait until sometime in February to do something about it.'?"

"No, that would be stupid."

I fought back the obvious urge and said to her, "That's exactly what I think.

"Every choice and decision we have in life we can act upon right now. Do you want to lose weight? Start eating right ... right now. Want to be in shape? Start exercising ... right now. There is nothing magical about resolving to do something on January first. The magic comes in doing something about it. And you have 365 opportunities to do that."

She was still looking at me but now it was more like a partial glare. And then she said, "Why didn't you just say that?"



The Curse of "Bob Talk"

I'm not a huge fan of small talk, but I understand that it's a necessary part of polite society. Not all conversations need to be an exercise in formal discourse. There's no place I'm more certain of this than in the workplace, especially with regard to politics.

Here's my issue: the office isn't a theme park. I don't wake up every morning, put on a pair of bedazzled corporate logo ears and prance off to work singing the company theme song. For those of you who do, that's a blessing and I'd be lying if I said I wasn't a little jealous, but for me it's just a job. I devote more than a third of my day in service to a paycheck, not a dream. This is a means to keep a roof over my head and food on my table because I'm an adult and I'm not independently wealthy. I would wager that many people feel similarly. Hot button topics, like politics, bring unnecessary tension into the equation. Unlike out in

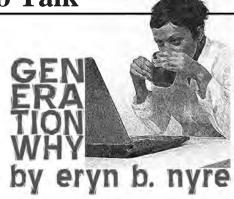
the wild, at work I can't turn the channel, leave the theater, or just walk away if I don't want to listen. I can, and have, told people I'm not interested in political discussions in the office, but it's a delicate dance be-

cause you do, in fact, have to work with them. Sometimes the success of your projects depends on their contributions, so shutting them down or ignoring them might not be the best option.

It's not about having to listen to people I disagree with – I'm not willing to engage with the people I agree with at work, either. It's about the fact that we all have to be there for the entire workday. So, if it's not related to the job, let's avoid conversations that can make people uncomfortable.

I don't subscribe to the nonsense philosophy that we have the right to never be offended – life is full of offensive things. I do, however, believe we have a reasonable expectation that work is a neutral, safe environment where we just do our jobs, be professional, show others some respect, and collect our money. Then once we leave we can have whatever type of conversation we would like where people are free to engage with us or ignore us and walk away without consequences to their career and their paycheck.

Sadly, though, every office has a po-



litical Chatty Cathy or two. I have one who sits right across the aisle from me. Bob doesn't engage me anymore because I told him I won't talk to him about politics, and I wasn't very nice about it. In fairness, I was nice the first two times I told him, but since he didn't seem receptive to gentle redirection, I adopted a different approach. He is one of those people who can turn even the most mundane of conversations into a political debate faster than you can say "Oh no, it's Bob." You

Hot button topics, like politics,

bring unnecessary tension into the

equation. Unlike out in the wild, at

the theater, or just walk away if I

don't want to listen.

mention that it's offensively cold outside and somehow he is steering the conversation toward climate work I can't turn the channel, leave change. You were just standing there with your coat half off wondering how it's Monday again already and now

> you're listening to a dissertation on how a certain administration dropped the ball on finding clean energy alternatives and why our tax dollars need to go to funding more wind and solar farms. It's seven a.m. on a Monday morning, Bob. Maybe take it down a couple of notches.

> The thing is, I have zero problem discussing politics in the proper forum. I also have zero problem debating someone I disagree with. Actually, I often enjoy it when it's actual discourse and not someone merely shouting over you and calling you names because you disagree. The proper forum, however, is not the office. I already have to deal with tracking people down to get 15 forms signed a hundred different times just to procure a stapler, I don't need a daily floor battle over whether or not the administration in charge for the last four years made a mess of the economy. It did, but this is not the place to discuss it.

> Tuesday after inauguration was a particularly difficult day with ol' Bob. He

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



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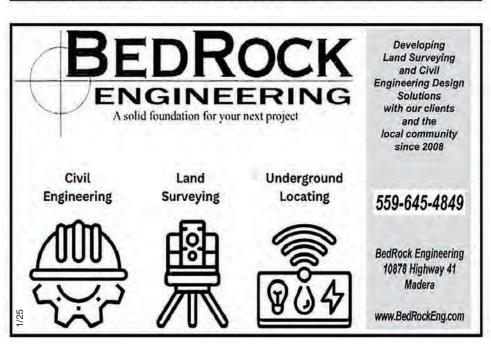
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GEN WHY cont. from P. 6

kept hijacking my concentration by giving everyone within earshot a rundown on all the executive orders being signed and how everything was illegal and no other president has ever signed so many before. He was wrong about most of it, and wanted ... I really wanted to point it out ... but I won't do it at work and I'm certainly not willing to give him even a moment of my personal time. Eventually I put my Bob-cancelling headphones on and cranked the music up

until he finally stopped talking. Judging by some of the Olympic level eye rolls I witnessed, I was not the only one annoyed.

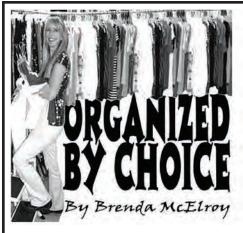
Ultimately it boils down to this: the office isn't your living room. You share the space with a group of people with all different opinions and perspectives. Company time is for talk of spreadsheets and the weather and maybe what you did over the weekend. Save the controversial topics for your friends and family who probably aren't listening to you anyway. Especially if you're Bob.





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

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Out of Whack

Throwing my Amazon return in the basket, I hopped on my bike and rode to the UPS store. While cruising home, I hit a little bump. Suddenly there was a terrible noise. My bike went crazy and came to an abrupt stop. My first thought was thank you God that I didn't fall!

My second thought — what just happened? I looked down and discovered my metal bike basket was now attached to the side of my front wheel. The wheel frame was bent out of whack, and the fenders had closed onto my tire.

People walked, rode and skated

things get out of whack quickly

rives, a sudden surgery, etc.

Other times it's a slow process

now." Enough stuff in the

wrong places creates a stand-

still. You can't walk into your

walk-in closet. You can't find

put away the groceries because

there's no room.

- holidays, a new baby ar-

by as I waited for my husband to rescue me. A couple asked if I needed help, but no one asked why there was a bike basket attached to the of "I'll just put this here for side of wheel. A strange sight indeed.

Sometimes in our homes things get out the items you need. You can't whack quickly - holidays, a new baby arrives, a sudden surgery,

process of "I'll just put this here for now." Enough stuff in the wrong places creates a standstill. You can't walk into your walk-in closet. You can't find the items you need. You can't put away the groceries because there's no

My bike basket reminded me that when things get out of whack,

it's important to get them back where they belong to move forward. January is a great month to start fresh with putting and keeping things in their place. Here are five tips to help make that happen.

Narrow your focus

Choose a day, time, and small area to begin. Look for a place that's out of whack. Maybe it's a drawer, your car trunk, or the coat closet. Save the garage and other large projects for after you've had success with your smaller ventures.

Set the stage

Some people need music playing, a cup of coffee in hand, or a partner to anchor them to the task. Set a timer for breaks. Label bags or boxes — trash, recycle, donate and relocate.

Sort the stuff

Pick up each item and place it in the appropriate bag/box, or let it stay if it belongs. For a "Keep or Toss" list visit my website and request the free tip sheet (www.OrganizedByChoice.com).

Finish the job

Toss the trash, relocate items that don't belong, and place the donations in your car for drop-off. Set in place and containerize items that belong in that area.

Reset regularly

Because life Sometimes in our homes is messy, you'll have bumps in the road that knock things out of whack. Commit to a regular time to set things back in place. The more frequent, like a daily 10-minute tidy, means less to reset.

> A few days after my basket mishap, I was back on bike for an af-

etc. Other times it's a slow ternoon ride. It ended with another call for help when my chain came off. To my credit, I first tried to fix it myself and ended up with very greasy fingers. My husband is ready to trade in our beloved 20-year-old beach cruisers for some electric bikes. Sounds like more moving parts to get out of whack. Sometimes less is more.

Super Bowl Eats

(January 2015)

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.

Are you hosting a Super Bowl party or going to one? As for the food, make it simple. This isn't Thanksgiving. My nephew Steve said they are going to have a party, but he hasn't let us know what to bring, but I'm sure whatever we have to eat we will have a good time. Chicken Wings have become the staple food on the Super Bowl menu, beating out pizza. The chicken industry estimates 1.25 billion (that's with a "B") wings will be eaten this year. To put that in perspective, that is enough wings to circle the Grand Canyon 120 times. I found a recipe that is a lot easier to make and can be eaten without a knife and fork.



Sunday, February 9 at 3:30 p.m. Caesars Superdome New Orleans, Louisiana

Panko Chicken Strips

5 T Butter

2 cloves garlic, minced

3/4 C Panko breadcrumbs

 $^{1}\!\!/_{\!\!4}$ C freshly shredded parmesan cheese

1 T finely chopped parsley (optional)

Salt and pepper

1 ¼ to 1 ½ lbs. boneless, skinless chicken breast

Preheat oven to 400 and have ready a baking pan that has been sprayed with nonstick cooking spray.



In a small saucepan, over medium-low heat put in the butter. As the butter begins to melt, add the minced garlic to saucepan. Once butter has melted, remove from heat and pour the butter-garlic mixture into a shallow flat dish, such as a pie pan. In another low, flat dish, mix the panko, parmesan and parsley, if you're using it. Add salt and pepper to your taste. Cut chicken breasts into strips. Roll chicken strips in the garlic butter then completely dredge in the panko mixture and place on prepared baking pan. Bake in preheated oven for 15 to 20 minutes or until chicken is just cooked through. Serve with your favorite dipping sauce: Barbeque Sauce, Ranch Dressing or Blue Cheese.

Jalapeño Bites

These are a lot like stuffed jalapeño peppers, but a lot easier to make.

1 (8 oz.) package cream cheese - softened

8 oz. grated parmesan cheese

3 T chopped jalapeños – depending on how hot you want them, you could remove the seeds first, but if you want them hot go for it!

2 large egg yolks2 C dry breadcrumbs

Preheat oven to 350.

Combine the cream cheese, parmesan cheese, peppers and egg yolks in a bowl and mix to form a paste. Shape a half tablespoon at a time into quarter inch rounds.

Roll in the breadcrumbs. Place on an ungreased baking sheet and bake for 10-15 minutes or until golden brown. Best if served warm.

As I've told you before, I love potatoes cooked just about any way. And with this recipe, you not only get the potato skins, but you also get a bowl of mashed potatoes on the side.

Potato Skins

6 medium baking potatoes
3/4 C cheddar cheese, shredded
1/3 C butter

6 slices bacon, fried and chopped 1/3 C green onions, thinly sliced Salt and pepper

Preheat oven to 375

Scrub potatoes well, dry and pierce with a fork several times. Arrange potatoes on a baking sheet and bake for about an hour or until tender. Let stand until it's cool enough to handle. Cut potatoes in half lengthwise and scoop out center, leaving 1/8" of potato in shell. Shells can be chilled for up to two days until ready to use.

When ready to prepare the skins, melt the 1/3 C butter. Brush the skins with the butter inside and out. Place cut side up on baking sheet. Bake in a 500-degree oven for 20 minutes or until brown and crisp. Divide the bacon, onions and cheese among each shell. Return to oven until cheese melts

Into the bowl of potatoes that were scooped out of the skins, add 1/3 C milk and ½ C butter, some salt and pepper and mix well for mashed potatoes.

Do you want something sweet? How about:

Caramel Coated Popcorn

1 C. margarine

2 C. brown sugar

½ C. Karo syrup

1 tsp. salt

1 tsp. baking soda

1 tsp. vanilla

10 to 15 Cups popped popcorn

In a LARGE pot, heat the margarine, brown sugar, Karo syrup and salt over medium heat. While stirring, bring mixture to a boil and let it boil for five minutes. Remove from heat. Stir in baking soda and vanilla. Be careful, it will flare up. Mix well. Pour over freshly popped popcorn. Stir until popcorn is well-coated. If using microwave popcorn, be sure to remove the kernels that didn't pop. This recipe, as it is written, makes a sticky, chewy caramel popcorn. If you like a crunchier popcorn, bake it in a 250-degree oven for an hour, stirring every 15 minutes.

There you have four recipes that are fairly easy and can be eaten with a paper plate and a napkin. No dishes to wash. Eat up and have fun.







Golden Oak 4-H

By Sarah Morgan

On Jan. 25, the Golden Oak 4-H club participated in the annual Favorite Foods Day at the Liberty Engineering Agri-Science and Farming, or LEAF, building on the Liberty High School Campus. Favorite Foods Day is an event every year where members of all different clubs come together to show many different exciting foods and treats in categories ranging from entrees to desserts to table setting. They design and deliver their meals to the best extent they can and are judged on their performance for

taste and looks of the food, recipe accuracy and overall setup. The three judges'

job was to taste all of the foods in a specific category and place them, based on their overall taste and looks. There is also some showmanshiplike competitions called "Kitchen Showmanship" and "Consumer Science Judging." In kitchen showmanship, you identify different supplies you need for cooking, measure solid and liquid ingredients and



Sarah Morgan, center, goes up to receive her award at the annual Favorite Foods Day held at Liberty High.

answer questions given by a judge, with the difficulty increasing based on your

age. Consumer Science Judging is when the child participating has to judge a

> specific thing, such as a type of food or cleaner, and judge which would be the best for its main purpose, as well as which would be the worst. There was also a community service project where kids made dog toys that would go to animals that have not been adopted.

> Wyatt Morgan exhibited a dish labeled "Bacon, pasta, and peas" which is a

pasta dish which contains those three ingredients. While he did not place in the food category, he also participated in the Consumer Science Judging, the Commu-

nity Service Project and Kitchen Show-manship.

Hunter Williams-Smith entered his pork belly recipe and won a bronze medal in the "appetizers" category. Hunter also received a bronze medal in Consumer Science Judging in his age category.

Sarah Morgan exhibited two different things: A dish labeled "Italian meatballs" which were judged under the pork category, and a place setting that was based around the sea and different fish-related meals. She received a bronze medal in table setting, and also participated in the Consumer Science Judging, the Community Service Project and Kitchen Showmanship.

Griffin Williams-Smith exhibited a Pokemon-themed decorated cake. He also entered homemade cinnamon rolls complete with cream cheese frosting.

Iris Garzon and Elizabeth Morgan, two of our mini-members, participated in a special mini-member category as well. Iris entered some beautiful flowerthemed cupcakes with a homemade

Please see 4-H on P. 16

Golden Valley Baptist Church

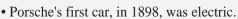
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• Cheerleading was once an exclusively male sport, and the first cheers, copied from military chants, began at Princeton University around the Civil War era.



• Motorola has developed an FDA-approved "ed-

ible password pill" which, once digested, is activated by the acid in your stomach and emits an 18-bit signal that is strong enough to communicate with and unlock all your devices.

- On Mars, no resource can be wasted -- not even our bodily waste. Urine will be recycled into drinking water and feces into fertilizer.
- Scientists can deduce information about a person's lifestyle, including their grooming products, food and medications, from the chemicals found on the surface of their mobile phone.
- * The 1,400-page novel "War and Peace" was copied around seven times by Leo Tolstoy's wife, Sophia, by hand. Now, that's love!
- * U.S. Marine John Kelly was the last person to be awarded two Medals of Honor. He ran 100 yards in advance of the front line and attacked an enemy machine gun nest, killed the gunner with a grenade, shot another man with his pistol, and returned with eight prisoners. He was 19.
- The only difference between a fog and a mist comes down to visibility: If you can't see farther than 100 meters, you're in a fog.
- As the planet heats up, flowers are emitting less scent.
- George Washington had one remaining tooth in his mouth when he was sworn in as the first American president in 1789.
- The sound of a Star Wars lightsaber was created by pairing the sound of an idle film projector and the buzz from an old TV set.

Thought for the Day: "Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little." -- Edmund Burke

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Senior Report

Valentine's Day at the Center

By Melanie Williams

Welcome to the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center where the 2025 New Year has begun. Renewal Membership forms and Ranchos/Hills Senior Center Newsletters were sent through the mail in January and we encourage current members to fill out the applications for renewal and submit their forms to the Senior Center. If they were missed, we have forms available at the reception desk in the Senior Center. We invite all seniors in the community to come in and check out the activities that might interest you happening at your local Ranchos/Hills Senior Center.

The first Monthly Sale of 2025 opens on Saturday, Feb. 1. The February Saturday Sale is open from 8 a.m. and closes at noon. The Boutique and other sweet treats are located in the main building of the Senior Center. Come check out our new 2025 FUNDRAISER BASKET featured in the Senior Center Boutique. Tickets are available at the February Saturday Sale.



The Scout Garden has plants available for sale next to the Treasure House. The Senior Center receives many donated items throughout the year from the Ranchos community and we want to say thank you to all who help keep the Senior Center open through your membership dues and community donations.

We have plenty of activities to attend for all seniors in the community. Our Annual Valentine's Day Potluck is happening on Thursday, Feb. 13 at 5 p.m. Join us for a fun time celebrating the Valentine's holiday with a few surprises planned for the night. Make sure to call and sign up at the Senior Center to reserve your spot at 559-645-4864. Don't forget a friendly smile and your favorite table game to share with others.

Seniors can join us at our monthly Birthday and Anniversary Luncheon on the third Saturday of each month, when we celebrate our seniors and their special day. This upcoming month we are meeting on Saturday, Feb. 15. Please call the Senior Center at 559-645-4864 for information and to sign up so we can call ahead for reservations.

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. while many seniors just like to stop by to work on our puzzles each month.

An Indian Basket Weaving

Please see **SENIORS** on P. 17





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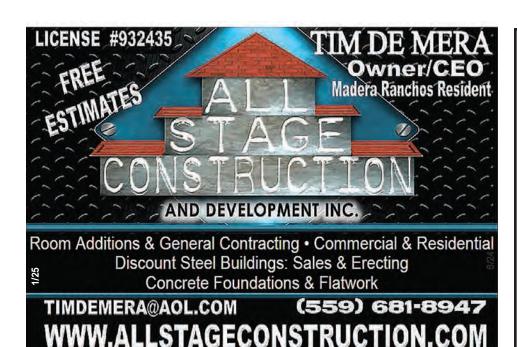
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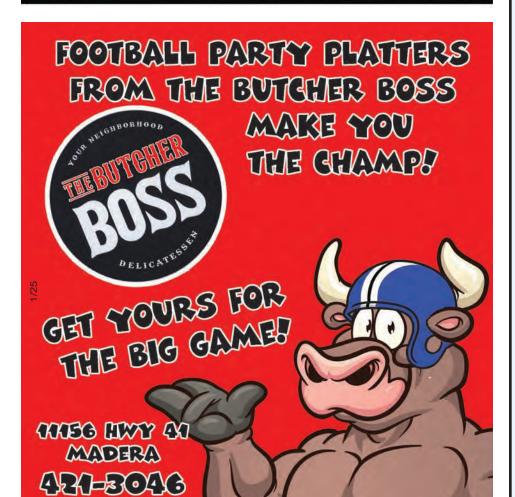


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www.TheRanchos.com www.TheRanchos.com www.TheRanchos.com Kiwanis Korner

Kiwanis Scholarship Changes a Life

By Sally Rowden

Our first meeting of 2025 was well attended and exciting. Our guest speaker was Anna Harr, a past Kiwanis Liberty High School Scholarship recipient in 2019. Anna graduated from California State University, Fresno in the Nursing Program last year. She is currently working at Valley Children's Hospital in the Discovery Department which is the Gastrointestinal/Infectious Disease Unit. It was informative to hear about her work at Valley Children's and how receiving the Kiwanis Scholarship supported her college journey. Thank you, Anna, for returning to share your successes. We sincerely enjoyed your presenta-

We also had our membership installation for our two newest Kiwanis Members. Ed Duarte was pinned by his Kiwanis Member Sponsor, Rod Chaney, and Andrea Pille was pinned by her Kiwanis Member Sponsor, Leslie Carella. Both Ed and Andrea have already put in many volunteer hours. Their involvement highly enhances the Kiwanis Club of Madera Ranchos.

A guest visitor, Daniel Walters from Riverstone, was in attendance. Daniel shared that he read our Kiwanis Club article in the Ranchos Independent Newspaper which made him want to know more about the club. In talking with Daniel, it sounds as if he will be visiting again. Thank you, Daniel, for stepping out to meet us.

In the next few months, we have several events happening. We currently have our Valentine's Day Flyers are already out in the community. This is a chance to win a limo ride for 10 on Feb. 14. Tickets being drawn on Feb. 7 at the Pizza Factory on Avenue 12 at 6:30 p.m. You do not have to be present to win. For tickets, contact Mona Diaz at monadiaz@gmail.com or call 559-333-1913.

The Crab Feed sponsored by the Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce will be on Friday, March 7. We will be present volunteering as dinner servers. And, yes, tips are very much appreciated. Another way we support our

many projects for the children of our communities.

Our Kiwanis/John Minney/Liberty High School Senior Scholarship Fundraiser will be underway in the



Anna Harr, left, was the 2019 Kiwanis Liberty High School Senior Scholarship Recipient and shared with Past President Mona Diaz and other club members about the impact the scholarship made on her life.



Madera Ranchos Kiwanis welcomes Limousine Raffle tickets on sale. its two newest members, Andrea Pille, left, and Ed Duarte.

are \$50 a piece with the winning ticket next few months too. This event supports Liberty High School seniors who apply for our scholarship(s) and, if awarded, assist in furthering their educational goals. Letters will be going out to businesses, agencies and individuals very soon for support in helping make our fundraising endeavors a success; a success such as Anna Harr shared above about her achievement in

Please see **KIWANIS** on P. 15

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The Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce would love to see you at our next meeting, Wednesday, February 12 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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Speaks

By Igal Treibatch

Happy New Year ... Maybe?

Well, 2025 started with a real whirlwind (sorry, could not help it). January 2025 is being built as one to be remembered for a long time.

A new president with a storming bag of actions, has lit a fire under the government's seat with demand for immediate action as we have not seen for a long time.

On the other hand, January 2025 will also be remembered throughout the ages for the Southern California fires (and mostly because of the locations and the ABSENCE of WATER to fight the fires). We in the Central Valley, are used to "BIG FIRES," but these days Los Angeles is learning a lesson in a classroom none of us would like to be in.

Losing forests, animals and nature's grounds is painful, but losing homes comes under a different category. Although my work is in Madera, I live in Santa Monica, two blocks from the evacuated fire area. Friends and family members lost their homes and property that can't be replaced. You can't rebuild or replace the collection of life history one has accumulated in a lifetime.

California's land area totals roughly 100 million acres. Annual fires in California consume between 90,000 and 1.5 million acres. During the 2020 fire season alone, over 8,000 fires contributed to the burning of nearly 4.5 million acres. Can you put these numbers in some perspective that can make sense? I cannot! It is just mind-boggling to me, and I don't think that reality has sunk in yet in Los Angeles.

ABSENCE of WATER. I'm sorry but again, the fire within me compels me to speak about California State water policies which have not helped all of us. More than 90 percent – yes, 90 percent – of our rainwater is being dumped purposely into the ocean due to what is being called "Turbid-

ity." According to Google, turbidity is a "Measure of how cloudy water is, or how much light is scattered by particles in the water. Turbidity is an indicator of water quality and can be caused by natural or human made sources." So, I guess, why spend money on cleaning the water and use it rather than spill it to the ocean where it causes "Oxygen Deprived Dead Zones" that kill fish?

I said it before and I will say it again: There are about 40 million people in California today. The way California's government is managing our water forces us to run out of water. What do you think is going to happen when we have 60 million people in California with the same amount of water? Look at Saudi Arabia, a total desert with limited water. It has spent the money necessary to manufacture water by desalination and made gardens blossom out of the sand.

As I read the reports about this summer's weather, I cringe. Verry little rain and potential high temperature to be expected. Folks, please be ready. Sometime people relax and maybe get a little lazy about being prepared. Now is the time to clean up, get everything in order and be ready in case you must act.

SEMCU 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 SEMCU as board members to help shape the Southeast Madera County area. Together we can build a stronger, more vibrant community. SEMCU 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 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, Feb. 18 at 6 p.m. Make your voice heard!

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Say you saw it in the Independent

KIWANIS cont. from P. 11

becoming a Registered Nurse.

If you wish to attend one of our meetings you can find us at Second Son Brews in the Maywood Shopping Center at 37167 Ave. 12, Suite 4C. We are there every second and fourth Thursday of the month at 6 p.m. You can also contact Sally Rowden at rowdensally2@gmail.com for any further information.

We want to wish you a Happy Valentine's Day and, as Winnie the Pooh answered Piglet, "How do you spell 'love'?" asked Piglet. "You don't spell it ... you feel it," said Pooh.

www.RanchosKiwanis.com





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In Memoriam



LeAnn Irene Coffey Fursman

October 10, 1956 — January 13, 2025

We lost our precious sister, wife and mother today. She was surrounded by family as she spent her last moments with us. Her last years were a battle against congestive heart failure plus a host of other complications. She put up a gallant struggle for life, aided by her family.

LeAnn and her husband of 49 years, Michael, made a loving life for themselves and their children. They were married on April 10, 1979.

LeAnn is survived by her daughter Lacey and her granddaughter Willow. She also had two grandsons by Willow, Jeremiah and Casian. LeAnn is also survived by her son, Cory, and his wife Stephanie and their two children, Tyler and Emma. She also had a brother, Darold, and a sister Denise who also survived her.

LeAnn was preceded in death by her father, Victor, who passed away on Jan. 23, 2024 and by her mother, Phyllis, who passed away on Jan. 26, 2024.

LeAnn graduated from Fresno High School in 1974 where she participated in cheerleading and swimming.

THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

...Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

1 CORINTHIANS 15: 57,58



Detail of "Praying Girl" by Kathe Kollwitz (1892)

Page 16

4-H cont. from P. 9

wreath to help accentuate them. Elizabeth entered strawberry cheesecake mini-pies. Both girls did a great job decorating their creations.

Overall, Favorite Foods Day was a great experience and is an activity every member enjoyed.

Sierra Shadows 4-H

By Jake Poore

Sierra Shadows 4-H club members have been busy. The club meets on the second Tuesday of the month at Sierra View Elementary school and you do not have to attend Sierra View to join the club. We have members from all over Madera County and from all the different schools here in the Ranchos, as well as schools from both Madera and Fresno county. We love our community and would love to meet new friends.

Over the last couple of months we had a December Potluck Party and ornament exchange; we helped the Chamber of Commerce at the Ranchos Tree Lighting; we have been collecting donations for Bowe's Animal Rescue; and of course attending our many project meetings concerning rabbits, floral design, goats, swine, horse, public speaking, robotics and more. Don't forget about our Cloverbud project for 5-8-year-olds too. This is a great overall project introducing them to the Learn by Doing motto.

Many members just finished up with Madera County Favorite Foods Day where Sierra Shadows hosted and facilitated a fun event for all 4-H members at the LEAF building at Liberty High School. We had prestigious community judges from all over the county come and enjoy all the entries which included International and Main entrée Dishes, appetizers, pastries, decorated food, bread, cookies, cakes, candy and salads. Along with the Food event, members were able to participate in Kitchen Showmanship where they competed with kitchen skills identifying numerous kitchen tools and exhibiting measuring skills and kitchen-oriented knowledge. There was also a Consumer Science portion where there were fun classes to judge and place. All of these fun things allowed participants to receive medals for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd placings. Sierra Shadows 4-H wants to thank all of the people who helped make this a successful event.

Another January event was Madera County Horse Expo. Sierra Shadows leader Elizabeth Martin brought three members to participate in Level 1 and 2. Jake Poore, Tatumn Drake and Artemus Arsenault all earned a gold medal and will move on to the next level. Congratulations.

Next, we will be doing a Small Animal Expo in February, County Presentation Day and Large Animal Expo in March and then prepare for Chowchilla Fair then there will be a 4-H camp. Please contact us to join in on the fun. Sierrashadows4h@gmail.com and Jesse Bower, our club leader.

1/25



The 2025 Madera County Sierra Shadows 4-H Horse Expo medalists from Elizabeth Martin's horse project.



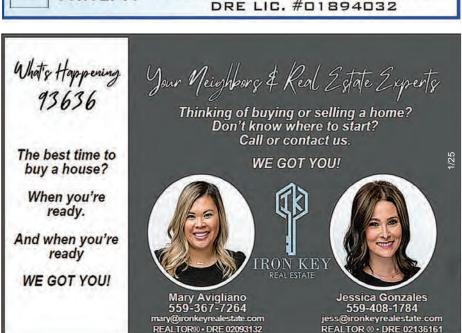
Sierra Shadows 4-H wants to thank our community judges that came from throughout Madera County for our event.











SENIORS cont. from P. 10

month.

The Senior Lunch Program many seniors just like to stop offers adults from 60 years by to work on our puzzles each and older a nutritionally balanced lunch every weekday An Indian Basket Weaving the Senior Center is open. Class is available on Tuesday, Some favorite meals include ways looking for ideas to in- ior Hot Lunch Calendar. Jan. 28 at 9 a.m. The Madera Orange Chicken with rice clude Basket Cases meet once or and Pork Chile Verde. Jaime twice a month on Tuesday and Camille do a great job mornings to learn about bas- with the hot meals and pro- a new activity for the Senior ket weaving with pine nee- vide a welcoming luncheon Center Calendar. We welcome experience for our seniors. Daily hot senior meals are We work with the Fresnobeing served at the Ran- Madera Area Agency on chos/Hills Senior Center. Aging to provide this pro-Seniors don't need to be gram to all the seniors in the members to enjoy a wonder- community. If you would

ful hot meal during the week. like to participate in the reception desk can give you Senior Hot Lunch Program, information on our weekly accome to the Senior Center at tivities and upcoming events 11 a.m. any weekday, Mon-every weekday from 9 a.m. to day through Friday.

> seniors i n come to help plan or introduce chos/Hill Senior Center. new suggestions and volunteers to help us support our Feb. 24 at 1 p.m.

A volunteer senior at our Luther King, Jr.

1 p.m. Come in and pick up a The Senior Center is al- Monthly Newsletter and Sen-

We are looking forward to activities. Any senior can a great New Year at the Ran-

Happy Valentine's Day.

Quote for February: "No local seniors. The next Plan- work is insignificant; all ning Meeting is on Monday, labor that lifts up humanity has dignity."



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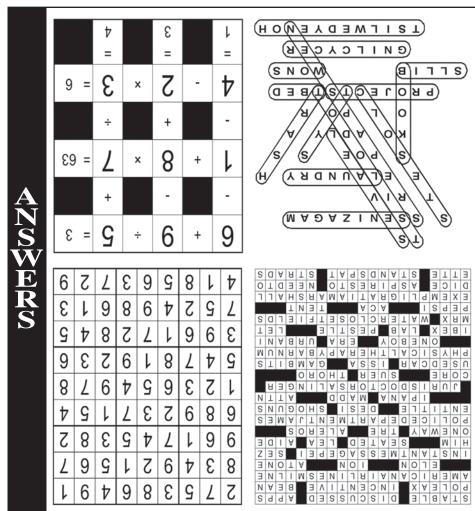
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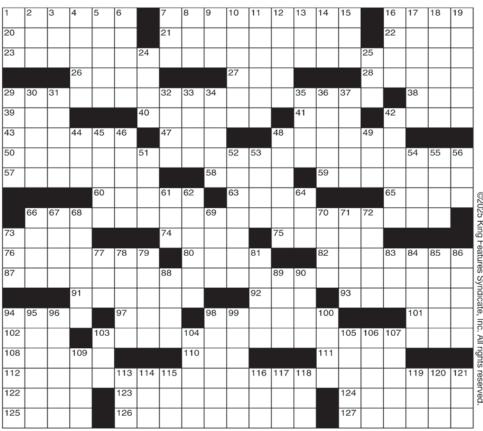






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Super Crossword



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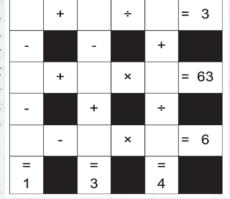
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GO FIGURE! by Linda Thistle

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

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

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• Lunchbox tip: Assemble your sandwich the night before (without veggies). Wrap in waxed paper and freeze. Add veggies and a condiment packet in a separate bag. Your sandwich will thaw by lunchtime and will stay cold!



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

- "My girls get a little crazy with clothes shopping -- they want everything! Before we go, we pull out all the clothes they have and assess their needs. We keep a count of shirts, skirts, shorts and pants, so we don't overbuy and have too many. They also make outfits out of what they have, so we can see if anything needs to be bought for that purpose. And undergarments and socks are replenished first, so they get included in the budget!" -- S.S. in South Carolina
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ARIES (March 21 to April 19) Your batteries should be fully recharged by now, making you more than eager to get back into the swing of things full-time. Try to stay focused so that you don't dissipate your energies.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) You're eager to charge straight ahead into your new responsibilities. But you'll have to paw the ground a little longer until a surprise complication is worked out.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) Rival factions are pressuring you to take a stand favoring one side or the other. But this isn't the time to play judge. Bow out as gracefully as possible without committing yourself to any position.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) Reassure a longtime, trusted confidante that you appreciate their words of advice. But at this time, you need to act on what you perceive to be your own sense of self-interest.

LEO (July 23 to August 22) You need to let your warm Leonine heart fire up that new relationship if you hope to see it move from the "just friends" level to one that will be as romantic as you could hope for.

VIRGO (August 23 to September 22) There's still time to repair a misunderstanding with an honest explanation and a heartfelt apology. The sooner you do, the sooner you can get on with other matters.

LIBRA (September 23 to October 22) Expect a temporary setback as you progress toward your goal. Use this time to reexamine your plans and see where you might need to make some significant changes.

SCORPIO (October 23 to November 21) Some missteps are revealed as the cause of current problems in a personal or professional partnership. Make the necessary adjustments, then move on.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21) Jupiter's influence helps you work through a pesky problem and allows your naturally jovial attitude to reemerge stronger than ever. Enjoy your success!

CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 19) Set aside your usual reluctance to change, and consider reassessing your financial situation so that you can build on its strengths and minimize its weaknesses.

AQUARIUS (January 20 to February 18) Some recently acquired information helps open up a dark part of the past. Resolve to put what you've learned to good use. Meanwhile, travel plans continue to be favored.

PISCES (February 19 to March 20) Act on your own keen instincts. Your strong Piscean backbone will support you as someone attempts to pressure you into a decision that you're not ready to make.

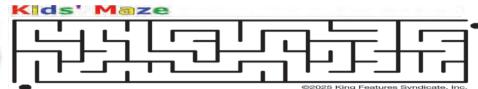
Born this Week

You embody a love for traditional values combined with an appreciation of what's new and challenging.

You're quite well-rounded.

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by BUD BLAKE

































1. TELEVISION: Who created the retro TV series "Stranger Things"? 2. U.S. STATES: Which state is the home of Yellowstone National Park? 3. ASTRONOMY: Which is the only planet in our solar system to rotate on its side? 4. MOVIES: What is the given name of the large bird in the animated movie "Up"? 5. GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: Which three zodiac signs are considered earth signs? 6. LIT-ERATURE: What is the name of Hagrid's half-brother in the "Harry Potter" book series? 7. GEOGRAPHY: What is the capital city of Australia? 8. FOOD & DRINK: What type of nut is used in the chocolate spread Nutella? 9. SPORTS: What kind of sports match is divided into 7-minute periods called chukkas? 10. ADVERTISEMENTS: What type of horses often are used in Budweiser beer ads?

> 10. Clydesdale. .oloq .e

8. Hazelnut.

7. Canberra.

6. Grawp.

5. Taurus, Virgo and Capricorn.

4. Kevin.

3. Uranus. 2. Wyoming.

1. The Duffer Brothers.

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Click on "Local News" at

Amber Waves











by Dave T. Phipps





The Spats





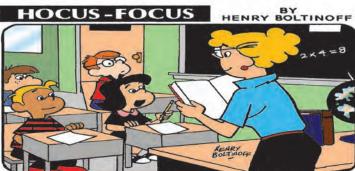
by Jeff Pickering



Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas







Eind at least is missing. 2. Book is missing. 3. Doorknob is higher 4. Blackboard is wider. 5. Bow is missing. 6. Pencil is added on desk.





SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

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

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The Independent

THINGS THAT MAGIC MAZE PILE UP

F G D T S B Y W T R P M K I F D S B S S E N I Z A G A M Y S WUTSRIVQOMKIFDE BZXEWE(LAUNDRY)UH SQONSLPOEJHSFSS D C A Y K O W A D L Y V A T I SQPNOLLKPOIRHFD ECPROJECTSTBEDB SLLIBZYWVUWONSS RQPNGNILCYCERML J I H T S I L W E D Y E N O H

Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions forward, backward, up, down and diagonally Unlisted clue hint: DIRTY - IN THE SINK

Bills Honeydew list Laundry Books Closets Leaves Magazines

Newspapers To-do list Projects Toys Recycling Trash Snow

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

HAPPY NEW YEAR 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, February 18th at 6 p.m.
Online: go to: WWW.SEMCULORG for the link
by phone: 639-200-6333

& 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

/25