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Volume 22 Issue 10 2026

The Official Publication of Southeastern Madera County

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Time is Up for California as 20K Noncitizen Voters Mailed Ballots

By Katy Grimes

The United States Department of Justice filed a federal lawsuit against California Thursday, Oct. 15 seeking an order to sequester, and not tabulate, vote-by-mail ballots from roughly 20,000 people the federal government identifies as “likely noncitizens.”

This follows Oct. 13 letters to California Secretary of State Shirley Weber and Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder Dean Logan by acting Deputy

figures cited for the four states were roughly: California 190,832; New Jersey 35,152; Nevada 15,903 and Pennsylvania 14,576. In total, over a quarter of a million people. California, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Nevada opted not to use a new federal citizenship database.

Twenty-five states ran more than 68 million records through an expanded version of the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements database and reported more than 28,000 potential non-citizen matches plus hundreds of thousands of de-



Attorney General Trent McCotter, who provided officials in Los Angeles County with a “password-protected thumb drive” with the names of people the federal government “believes are likely noncitizens” and were sent mail-in ballots from California.

“For individuals whom you cannot independently confirm citizenship status, we request that you immediately instruct the appropriate elections official to segregate — not cancel — those individuals’ vote-by-mail ballots until their citizenship status can be determined,” McCotter wrote.

Earlier this year, the Department of Homeland Security raised broad concerns alleging more than 190,000 non-citizens on California rolls. In a July 16, 2026 letter from DHS Secretary Markwayne Mullin to California Secretary of State Shirley Weber (and similar letters to officials in New Jersey, Nevada, and Pennsylvania), DHS stated that a review of publicly available voter registration data indicated “there may be as many as 190,832 non-citizens registered to vote in California.” It gave an example of 81,336 registrants matching name, date of birth, address and Social Security number to non-citizens in DHS files. The combined

ceased registrants.

In July, in a speech about election integrity, President Donald Trump shared intelligence findings that the People’s Republic of China “compromised” more than 200 million voter records across at least 18 U.S. states.

California officials did not comply with the 48-hour deadline this week, as the Globe reported Oct. 14. At 5:21 pm on that day, California Secretary of State Shirley Weber issued a statement about the U.S. Department of Justice’s demand that she and LA County Registrar-Recorder Dean Logan review and assess the list of noncitizens who received ballots for the upcoming November election. Secretary of State Weber responded with a letter expressing her dismay that the Department of Justice gave her only 48 hours to accomplish this, after more than nine months to provide verified list maintenance, identified potential noncitizens or other ineligible registrants:

“Logan’s office cited data-security concerns with the thumb drive and protocols,” Fox News reported. “Weber’s office pushed back on the lack of

Please see **VOTERS** on P. 9

ELECTION 2026

THE RANCHOS INDEPENDENT RECOMMENDS

(The following suggestions are provided by ReformCalifornia.com. These are merely suggestions with which the Ranchos Independent agrees. While this is still America, vote how you please.)

Governor: **Steve Hilton** • Lieutenant Governor: **Gloria Romero**
 Attorney General: **Michael Gates** • Secretary of State: **Don Wagner**
 Treasurer: **Jennifer Hawks** • Controller: **Herb Morgan**
 Superintendent of Public Instruction: **Sonja Shaw**
 State Board of Equalization Dist. 1: **Shannon Grove**
 Congress Dist. 5: **Tom McClintock** • Senate Dist. 4: **Alexandra Duarte**
 State Assembly Dist. 8: **David Tangipa** • Associate Justices: **Pick ‘em**

14 Propositions on California's November 3 Ballot

- Prop. 1** — **NO** — Borrows \$11.25 Billion for Costly Housing Projects.
- Prop. 2** — **NO** — Guts State Budget Spending Limit and Cancels Tax Rebates.
- Prop. 3** — **NO** — Income Tax Increase.
- Prop. 4** — **NO** — Gives Your Tax Dollars to Politicians’ Campaigns.
- Prop. 5** — **NO** — Weakens Citizens’ Right to Recall Politicians from Office.
- Prop. 37** — **NO** — Borrows \$25 Billion for Costly Housing Projects.
- Prop. 38** — **YES** — Public-Private Partnership Bonds for Immunology Research.
- Prop. 39** — **YES** — Voter ID to Improve Trust in Elections.
- Prop. 40** — **NO** — “Billionaire” Tax that Is Really an “Everybody” Tax.
- Prop. 41** — **YES** — Audit Special Taxes.
- Prop. 42** — **YES** — Stop the Savings Tax.
- Prop. 43** — **YES** — Local Taxpayer Protection Initiative (Saves Prop 13).
- Prop. 44** — **NO** — Imposes Costly Mandates on Community Health Clinics.
- Prop. 45** — **YES** — Reduce Housing Costs by Cutting Red Tape.

For more depth on these Propositions, visit ReformCalifornia.com

Ranchos Seaman Comes Home

Casey Garcia of the Madera Ranchos is with the U.S. Navy, was stationed on the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln and, according to his mother, Amanda Sanchez, is finally home.

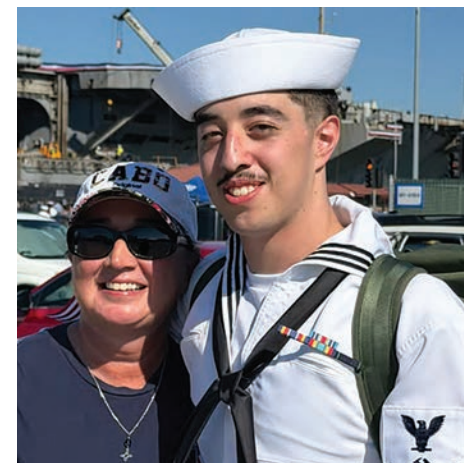
The USS Abraham Lincoln departed San Diego on Nov. 21, 2025, and spent a record-setting deployment supporting U.S. military efforts against Iran. Its 321-day deployment has been recorded as the second-longest since the Vietnam War. After spending about 10 months at sea, military service members finally returned to its homeport near San Diego.

“After months of worrying, praying, missing him, and counting down the days, my son is finally home from his deployment aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln,” Sanchez said.

Garcia grew up in the Ranchos and attended Webster Elementary all the way up to graduating from Liberty High School.

“As a mom, there is no greater feeling than being able to wrap your arms around

your child after being separated by thousands of miles, knowing he is finally home safe,” Sanchez said. “The tears, the relief, the overwhelming happiness, and the pride are emotions I can’t even begin to explain. Our hometown has a hero, and I am beyond blessed and proud to call that hero my son.”



Casey Garcia, right, with his mom, Amanda Sanchez, is back home in the Ranchos.

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the Independent

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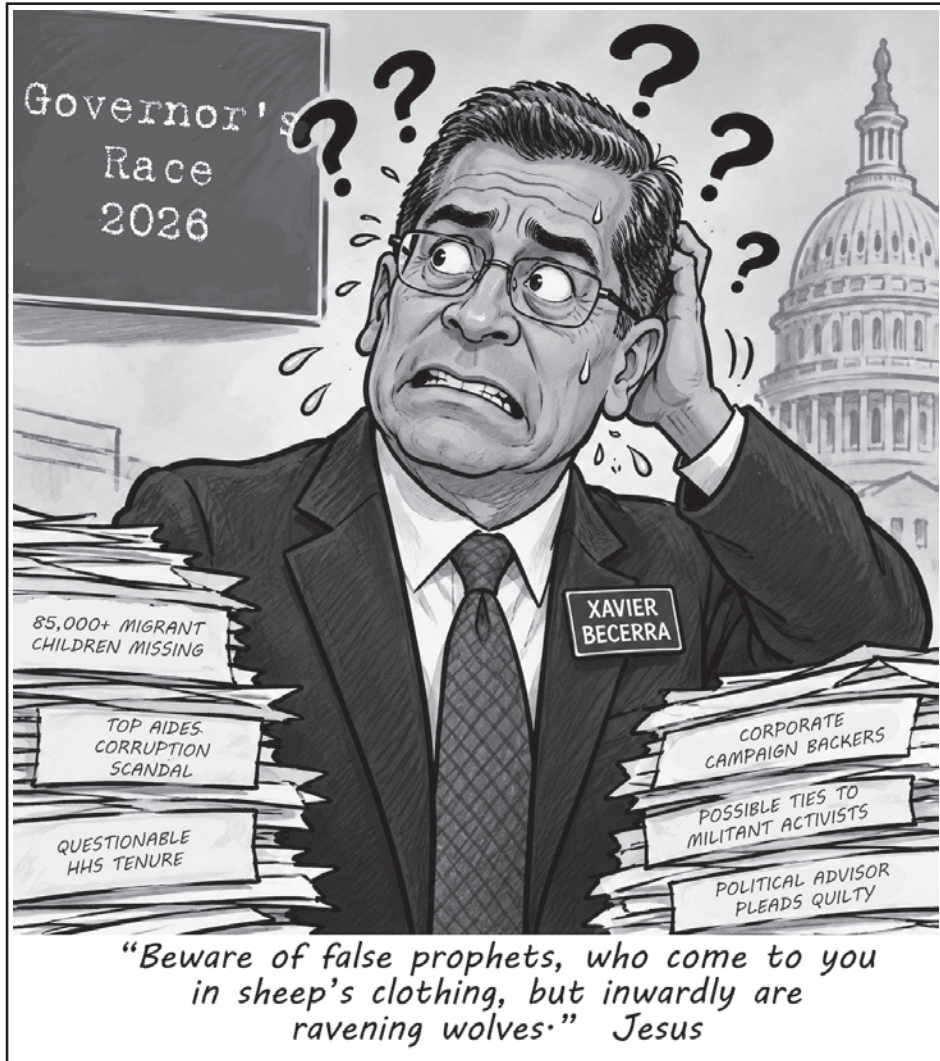
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Guest Editorial

Hilton's Plan for California

By CA Post Editorial Board

Xavier Becerra — the Dems' milquetoast gubernatorial candidate — is pitching a couple hours of "free" electricity if you do your laundry when the sun shines, say between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. His GOP rival, Steve Hilton, wants to curb state spending to give you tax relief. Which of these approaches sounds more practical to you? Let's break it down.

Becerra offers more of the same, and then more of that. His laundry-friendly "power hour"? A feeble nod to pseudo-novelty. Meanwhile, he'd drive up prices with the usual spending and more, from green rackets to homelessness boondoggles to taxpayer-funded healthcare for illegal immigrants.

Not appealing?

Steve Hilton provides an alternative and good news. It involves common sense. In August he unveiled a sweeping plan for change in California.

Hilton would scrap state income taxes on the first \$150,000 of earnings for every Californian. To cover

the multibillion-dollar gap in tax receipts, he'd gut waste, pare bureaucracy and shrink government. While the math might need scrutiny, the approach is sound. After all, the state general-fund budget has roughly doubled to \$250 billion in the past 10 years. Does anyone believe Californians are getting twice the public services they received in 2016?

Hilton would also scuttle the state's highest-profile taxpayer rip-

"... My answer is to stop wasting what taxpayers are already paying."

Again, we have to ask: Which of these approaches sounds more practical to you?

offs. These include the high-speed rail project that's not laid an inch of track in 18 years and state funding of a homelessness industrial complex that pipes tax dollars to nonprofits which entrench

both the crisis and their own funding.

And then there's the climate fever dream that grips the left in Sacramento. It's led to years of regulations that have bloated the cost of gas, oil, energy, utilities, food, housing and more — for no discernible change in global temperatures. Thanks to the green zeal of Becerra & Co, you're paying more for just about everything — but perhaps you can do laundry for "free" at 3 p.m.! Hilton's innovation play is stronger: He'd use AI to strip waste from government and modernize state operations.

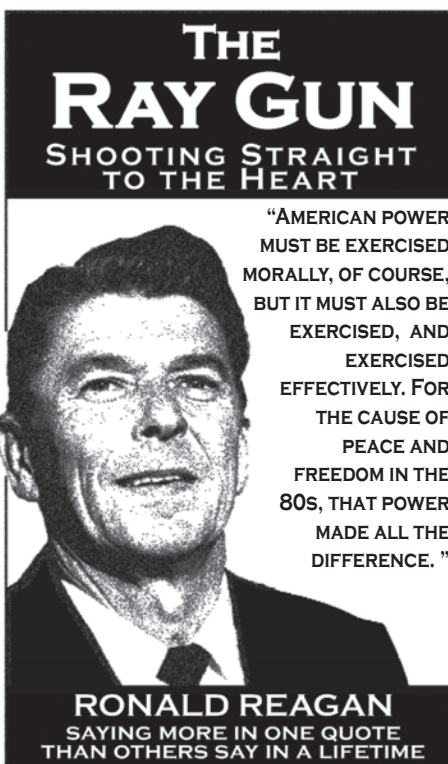
Finally, there's Becerra's take on affordability. You might say it's as bloated as his spending.

"As governor, I will take on the cost of living head-on by standing up to price gouging and unjustified rate hikes, expanding help with childcare and essential costs, and using the power of the state to lower prices where the market has failed," Becerra said.

Standing up to price gouging? Expanding help? Using the power of the state? Posturing, pricey and yikes.

Hilton says, "The political establishment's answer is always to take more from taxpayers. My answer is to stop wasting what taxpayers are already paying."

Again, we have to ask: Which of these approaches sounds more practical to you?



Santa's Halloween Moves

I would like to report a crime: Halloween has been kidnapped, and I believe I know who's responsible.

Christmas. It may be Santa himself, I don't know, but I've walked the crime scenes at Walmart and Costco. They smell suspiciously of gingerbread and tinsel, and I just know those little elves were involved.

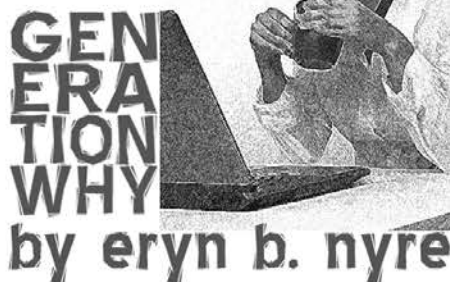
Yes, Christmas. The holiday of peace, goodwill and apparently hostile takeovers. Somewhere along the way, the season of giving decided it was no longer satisfied with December, so it encroached on Thanksgiving's territory. I'm not even a little bit upset about that, though. Turkey tastes better next to a Christmas tree and cleaning up that dinner is always easier with holiday music and twinkle lights. But it would appear that November wasn't enough either. Now it's coming for October, and frankly, I think somebody needs to intervene.

I love Christmas. It makes me think of my mother and there's nothing like the warm glow of Christmas lights against the winter chill to make you want to snuggle up and soak it in. But this is October. This is

spooky season. Whether you prefer the scary or the whimsical, it's the time of black cats, turning leaves and perhaps the Sanderson sisters. The pumpkins haven't even started rotting yet and suddenly I'm fending off garlands and peppermint. Give a Disney witch a chance to breathe.

I first became suspicious in September when I spotted a Christmas tree lurking behind the garden section at Walmart. At the time, I thought perhaps it was an isolated incident. A rogue employee. A shipping error. Some poor soul who had misunderstood the assignment. I was wrong.

The evidence is everywhere now. Halloween decorations are being crowded out by ornaments, artificial trees and enough twinkling lights to illuminate a small airport. Skeletons are standing shoulder to shoulder with Santa Claus. Plastic tombstones



are sharing shelf space with reindeer. Somewhere, a witch is being evicted to make room for a snowman. I haven't located the missing Halloween decorations yet, but I suspect they're being held somewhere between the wrapping paper and the artificial wreaths.

Halloween used to have some dignity. It had an entire month to itself. We strung fake cobwebs in the

bushes, hung witches from our trees, plastered ghosts all over our front porches and spent an unreasonable amount of money on candy that we'd eventually eat ourselves. Apparently, children no longer trick-or-treat in sufficient numbers to justify buying twelve

pounds of chocolate, but I fear buying less will tempt the fates into sending every single child in a 10-mile radius straight to my front door.

Now Halloween has to compete with an increasingly aggressive Christmas that apparently starts plotting its takeover the moment the last Fourth of July sparkler burns out. You can hardly find a plastic spider before someone is trying to sell you a 12-foot inflatable Santa. You go looking for a witch's hat and somehow end up in an aisle filled with stockings, garlands and a ceramic village that costs more than your monthly electric bill.

And Christmas music? Don't get me started. There is something deeply unsettling about standing in a store with the air conditioning blasting,

Please see **GEN WHY** on P. 13

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ORGANIZED BY CHOICE
By Brenda McElroy

What's inside? Inherited furniture you feel obligated to save? (Your kids aren't going to want it either.) Stuff you want to sell? Boxes of who knows what? If you didn't already own what's there, would you spend your money on it today? Of course there are some valid reasons for temporary off-site storage. Just make sure yours is one of them.

PEACE AND TIME – A drawer crammed with unmatched containers and lids is going to cost more time and stress when putting leftovers away. Multiply that by however many other drawers are likewise cluttered, and the cost of being disorganized exponentially rises.

Wasting time doesn't set well. At least not when doing something frustrating like looking for stuff you know you have but can't find. The stress compounds when you're late or miss an appointment due to misplaced or inaccessible items.

Remember, it's not all or nothing. Evaluate your belongings like I did with my tray, and see what earns its keep.

RELATIONSHIPS – I'll always remember the joy of a grandma who was able to host her grandson overnight for the first time, after we cleared space for him. Was the decluttering process difficult and costly? Yes. Was the benefit worth it? Absolutely.

When you're unencumbered by your stuff, you're free to live in the moment and invest in the relationships that matter most.

Is the abundance of stuff that leads to wasted time, added stress, financial and relational burdens worth it? If your answer is no, go to my website Organized ByChoice.com and visit my blog page for practical steps to get organized and experience the benefits.

For more info, contact Organized By Choice at 559-871-3314 or email them at info@organizedbychoice.com.

Is It Worth It?

I struggled to retrieve a large serving tray from an upper shelf. Blocking it was a plastic tray with a turntable. One of those \$5 purchases from the dollar section of Target. I thought it was a great deal at the time.

Now, it was in the way – again. I did a quick cost versus benefit calculation. How much have I used it? Is it worth the frustration it causes when I need something from that area? Do I have other things that can serve the same purpose?

My conclusion? I marched it to my closet and placed it in the donate bag. What's in your possession that's just not worth it? What would it cost you to let go? What is it costing you to keep?

FINANCIAL – When it comes to cost versus benefit, the big-ticket items are those in paid storage. Yes, Derrel, I'm picking on you again. It sounds harsh, but from my experience helping people empty storage units, Derrel might as well be building a bonfire on Avenue 12 for people to burn their money.

Most people don't have money to burn, so it's best to do the math before signing that "first month free" contract. An average medium unit can cost upward of \$100 per month. In one year, you've spent \$1,200. In five years \$6,000. Ten years \$12,000. Put it on autopay and it's easy to never see your stuff or your money again.

When you're unencumbered by your stuff, you're free to live in the moment and invest in the relationships that matter most.

Senior Report

Heart and Brain Health is Focus of Upcoming Senior Center Presentation

By Melanie Williams

The Ranchos/Hills Senior Center invites anyone in the community to attend presentations by local senior organizations that support senior health and encourage steps to a better quality of life for seniors. The first seminar is "Heart and Brain Health: What You Do Now to Reduce Your Risk of Developing Cognitive Decline." You are invited to attend and hear Dr. Bhatia speak on things seniors can do NOW to help prevent future risk of slow decline with memory and cognition. He is a local Neurologist who treats patients with dementia and other cognitive disorders.

Dr. Bhatia will be available to answer any questions people might have about his knowledge and experiences.

We are anticipating a very good presentation from Dr. Bhatia from seniors who have improved their lives through his treatment. If you would like to attend the presentation by Dr. Bhatia, please call the Senior Center at 559-645-4864 to register for this free seminar on Thursday, Nov. 5 at 5:30 p.m.

Autumn begins and our thoughts turn toward preparation of holiday celebrations. The members of the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center are looking forward to celebrating the season of thanksgiving as well. The Thanksgiving gathering at the Senior Center is on Thursday, Nov. 12 at 5 p.m. We are organizing a Thanksgiving Potluck this year and are planning a Game Night after the Thanksgiving Potluck. Call the Senior Center at 559-645-4864 for information and to sign up for the Thanksgiving Potluck.

The 8th Annual Holiday Craft Fair at the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center was a great success. Thank you to all the Ranchos community who came to see the participating vendors and their

uniquely crafted items at the Craft Fair. We greatly appreciate the local businesses who donated toward our silent auction. Most important is how thankful we are for the community, vendors and volunteers who attended our 8th Annual Holiday Craft Fair in October. Our coordinator, Judy Sears and her committee worked very hard to ensure everyone had a good experience and enjoyed the festivities at the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center.

The monthly Saturday Sale is on Saturday, Nov. 7 from 8 a.m. to noon. The Treasure House has lots of great decorations for the holidays being donated and there is new winter clothing, coats, jackets and sweaters for adults and children on sale. Also, the Boutique has unique items just in time for holiday decorating.

Thank you for all the wonderful Treasure House donations we receive from the community to support our outreach to local seniors.

The Indian Basket Weaving Classes are meeting at the Senior Center. Terry Killingsworth is very willing to add more people that want to join the group. She encourages all members to share their wonderful baskets with friends and family during the coming holidays.

Weekly activities at the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center are on calendar of the RHS November Newsletter. Anyone is welcome to pick up our RHS monthly newsletter at the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center during weekdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The Exercise Class, led by Jo Chase, meets every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 10 a.m. and any senior can attend the Exercise Class for free at the Senior Center.

The Card and Table Games are every Thursday at 12:15 p.m., except for the Thanksgiving Potluck on Thurs-

day, Nov. 12 and Thanksgiving Day on Thursday, Nov. 26.

The Odd Fellows Breakfast is on Sunday, Nov. 15 from 7:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. They donate their proceeds to local Madera County charities, and it is located at the Odd Fellows Lodge on Avenue 15 and Road 28 in Madera.

Brown Bag Day is on Wednesday, Nov. 18 from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center. Many of our seniors in the Madera Ranchos community have registered for the Brown Bag Program through Madera County Food Bank. It's almost the start of a new year for Brown Bag and applications for 2027 will be available soon. Any senior in the community can sign up by filling

out an application for Brown Bag Day.

Tuesday, Nov. 3 is Election Day. We encourage people to vote, if they have not done so yet.

The Ranchos/Hill Senior Center is closed on Wednesday, Nov. 11 for Veterans Day. We will also be closed on Thursday, Nov. 26 and Friday, Nov. 27 to celebrate Thanksgiving.

Happy Halloween on Oct. 31, Happy Veterans Day on Nov. 11 and Happy Thanksgiving Day on Nov. 26 from the members of the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center

Quote for November: "I am most radiant and full of energy when the leaves are falling and there is a ghost of change in the air." — Anna Madsen

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Kiwanis Korner

As Summer Cools, Kiwanis Heats the Ranchos Up for the Holidays

By Sally Rowden

It's finally cooling off. It seems like summer just didn't want to say goodbye. It's been so pleasant the last few days to be out doing yard-work in the middle of the afternoon. It's a welcoming comfort.

Our Installation of Officers and New Members took place on Friday, Oct. 9 at Ollia Ridge's home. Sally

Rowden will continue as President, Andrea Pille will continue as Secretary and Marie Cameron will once again be Treasurer. Our three new members are Odi Barrios, Farrah Williams and Sherri Vogel. They will certainly be bringing us fresh perspectives as we continue to grow and strengthen our club. Thank you, Ollia, for a delightful dinner, along with a scrumptious dessert and your warm hospitality.

Our club is hosting a fundraising opportunity drawing for a beautiful Christmas Wreath measuring 40" X 40". Designed and created by our own Ollia Ridge. Enter for a chance to win this gorgeous festive decoration. The wreath is housed at the Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce located at 37167 Avenue 12, Suite 5C. The office is open Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tickets are \$5 each. See Ollia Ridge at the Chamber for tickets. The winning ticket will be drawn on Friday, Dec. 4 at the Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce Christmas Tree Lighting Event. Thank you, Ollia Ridge, for all you do for the Kiwanis and the Chamber.

We also have our Venmo QR Code that you can use to purchase tickets. Enter the total amount for the tickets you are purchasing. Each ticket is \$5. Then in the payment description, include your name, cell number and number of tickets purchased. Once payment is received, your ticket entries will be recorded. A text message will be sent to you with each ticket number. Ticket stubs will then be placed in our ticket tumbler. Venmo may ask for a "phone number verification." If so, enter the following number verification: 1675. For any other information and/or assistance, please email Sally Rowden at rowdensally2@gmail.com.

It's exciting to hear about the possibility of a community park being established in the Ranchos. Both SEMCU and Supervisor Jordan Wamhoff's office have been working on a community park survey. Findings from the survey will be shared at a viral meeting on Oct. 22.

Two other meetings are also planned. Both of these meetings will be in person. One meeting is on Oct. 29 and the other is on Nov. 12. Contact Supervisor Jordan Wamhoff's of-



You can try for a chance to win this beautiful Christmas wreath for only a \$5 entry ticket. You can email Sally Rowden at rowdensally2@gmail.com for info.

fice at 559-662-6010 for further meeting information. The Kiwanis are eager to hear the survey outcomes.

We meet every second and fourth Thursday of the month at 6 p.m. at the Pizza Factory on Avenue 12. For the months of November and December we will only be meeting on the second Thursday of the month due to upcoming holidays.

Madera Ranchos
Kiwanis

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-Kiwanis

VOTERS cont. from P. 2

evidence/methodology, the compressed timeline during active voting, potential errors affecting citizens, and the absence of clear legal authority for the demand." California maintains it complies with federal

requirements such as the Help America Vote Act and National Voter Registration Act which provide citizenship attestations under penalty of perjury. They contend that noncitizen voting is rare.

Governor Gavin Newsom said the Department of Justice action is unsubstanti-

ated, politically motivated interference close to the election, and a threat to eligible voters' rights. "This is a sad, desperate attempt by Trump to use his politicized Justice Department to try to suppress California voters just three weeks before Election Day," Newsom said. "Courts have

made clear the federal government has no role in running state elections. We will defend free and fair elections in the Golden State and call out every authoritarian attempt to undermine our democracy."

Katy Grimes is the Editor in Chief of the California Globe.

Pray FOR OUR Schools

10/26

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The Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce

Annual Community Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony

Maywood Shopping Center • Friday, Dec. 4 • 6 p.m.

The Community Christmas Tree Lighting is coming to the Maywood Center on Friday, Dec. 4 at 6 p.m. Come join in the celebration that raises badly needed supplies for our Veterans at Veterans Hospital in Fresno while you get to enjoy snacks, beverages, a Christmas boutique, Christmas carols and a visit by Santa Claus himself.

Pick a star for a Veteran at the VA Hospital.

Items needed for Veterans: Instant coffee, white hand towels, white socks, lap blankets, toothpaste, toothbrushes, L and XL white t-shirts, new books. Items need to be returned to the Chamber office by Dec. 10. Gifts will be delivered to the Veterans at the VA Hospital in Fresno on Dec. 17 at 10 a.m.

Call the Chamber at 559-645-4001 for complete details



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10/26

The Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce's Annual

Chamber Christmas Mixer

**Wednesday, December 2
6 p.m.**

**37167 Avenue 12 Suite 5C
Madera Ranchos**

*Everyone is invited.
Great food will be served.
Our Merry Christmas present to you.
Call 559-645-4001 for info.*

See you at our Christmas Mixer on Wednesday, Dec. 2 at 37167 Ave. 12 #5C at 6 p.m. Call 559-645-4001 for info.

A "Thank You" to all of our Chamber members ...

The Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce does good work, but it's only as good as the volunteers who make it a reality. If you are a member, thank you for your participation this last year. If you're not a member, take a minute to consider becoming a member and helping the community you call home.

For more information call 559-645-4001. You'll be glad you did!



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MIDWEEK SCHEDULE

JR HIGH & HIGH SCHOOL | MONDAYS, 7 - 9 PM
WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY | MONDAYS, 7 - 8:30 PM
MEN'S TABLE TUESDAYS | TUESDAYS, 6 - 6:50 AM
THE FORGE BIBLE STUDY | WEDNESDAYS, 6 PM
YOUNG ADULTS | THURSDAYS, 7 - 9 PM



SEE YOU SUNDAY!

In Memoriam



John Rene Herrera
December 7, 1946 — October 7, 2026

John Rene Herrera was born on Dec. 7, 1946, in Mission, Texas, and passed away peacefully at his home of nearly 50 years in Madera Ranchos on Oct. 7, 2026. He was surrounded by the love of family and friends, both near and far. A beloved husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, friend, and public servant, John dedicated much of his life to serving others.

John began his 33-year career with the Fresno Police Department in May 1969, serving as a patrolman, a detective and served on the Police-Probation Team where he finished his career in February 2002. He helped establish the Latino Peace Officers Association in Fresno at a time when such efforts were considered radical and potentially career-ending. He also challenged longstanding practices by recruiting women into law enforcement, despite resistance.

On April 2, 1977, John married the love of his life, Cecilia Colmenero. Together, they raised a blended family they affectionately called the “Brady Bunch.” John had his own nickname for his seven children, the “Mag 7,” inspired by one of his favorite Western films, *The Magnificent Seven*. Kathy Bradley, Susan Vargas, Gabriel Lanas, John R. Herrera Jr., Michael Herrera, Tabitha Villalba and Vanessa Chau were among his greatest sources of pride.

John and Cecilia shared more than 49 years of marriage, grounded in their Catholic faith and devotion to family. Together, they served their church and community, including bringing Holy Communion to residents of local nursing homes. Their faith was an important part of their lives, reflected in their service to others and their commitment to family.

John is survived by his beloved wife, Cecilia; his “Mag 7” and their respective spouses and partners; his sisters, Jennie Ramirez and Florence Mora; 24 grandchildren; 22 great-grandchildren; and many nieces, nephews, in-laws, extended family members, and dear friends.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Reynaldo Herrera Sr. and Gregoria Herrera, and his brothers, Reynaldo Herrera Jr., Robert Herrera, Edward Herrera, and sister, Dionicia Herrera.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated on Saturday, Nov. 14 at 10 a.m. at Sacred Heart Church, 2140 N. Cedar Avenue, Fresno. A Celebration of Life will follow at the hall at Memorial United Methodist Church, 1726 Pollasky Avenue, Clovis.

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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.

	+		×		= 72			
+		+		-				
	+		×		= 56			
×		÷		+				
	+		+		= 13			
=		=		=				
56		9		6				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Say you saw it in the Independent

SEMCU speaks

Flooding for the Future: How El Niño is Recharging Central Valley Aquifers

By Dov Adler

In California's Central Valley, our relationship with water has exactly two settings: "Dust Bowl" and "Swimming Pool"—after years of praying for a single drop of rain, we usually just end up having to rent a submarine when it finally arrives.

With a historic El Niño threatening to unleash heavy winter storms across the region, Madera County's nut growers aren't just bracing for the deluge — they are actively welcoming it. Instead of fighting the floodwaters, Central Valley farmers are employing a strategy known as On-Farm Managed Aquifer Recharge, intentionally turning their dormant winter orchards into temporary lakes to replenish heavily depleted groundwater basins.

But for the rural residential communities built right up against these vast agricultural tracts, this extreme water management highlights the complex —

often messy — reality of being neighbors with large-scale farming.

The Price of Proximity

Living next to an almond or pistachio orchard in the Central Valley comes with well-known seasonal friction. Year-round, rural residents endure the noise of heavy tractors, harvest dust that coats windows and cars, the wear-and-tear of large freight trucks on small county roads and persistent anxieties over agricultural pesticide drift.

During intense drought years, the relationship can grow even more strained. When surface water from rivers dries up, large agricultural operations turn to deep, powerful pumps to pull irrigation water from underground. This aggressive pumping lowers the regional water table, often draining the much shallower domestic drinking wells that rural homeowners rely on.

The Unseen Benefit of the "Swimming Pool"

However, when an El Niño winter flips the script, those same residential neighbors become the quiet beneficiaries of agricultural flood management.

When farmers intentionally divert raging river flows onto their fields for On-Farm Managed Aquifer Recharge, they are effectively turning thousands of acres of farmland into a giant sponge. For nearby homeowners, this provides two massive, life-saving benefits:

Saving the Domestic Wells: The floodwater soaking into the orchards slowly percolates down, recharging the shallow aquifers first. The millions of gal-

lons farmers capture on their land directly refill the domestic wells of adjacent residential properties, ensuring rural families have reliable drinking water through the next dry summer.

Neighborhood Flood Protection: By absorbing excess stormwater that would otherwise overwhelm local rivers and drainage systems, flooded orchards act as massive, natural detention basins. They keep the water in the fields and out of residential living rooms.

Preparing for this deliberate inundation is a high-stakes balancing act. Farmers plant deep-rooting cover crops to break up compacted

soil, build earthen berms to protect tree trunks from rot, and dredge irrigation canals so they can swiftly drain the fields before the trees drown.

While the dust and noise of rural farm life might test a neighbor's patience, this winter's El Niño is a stark reminder of our interconnected survival. The same agricultural land that surrounds these communities is exactly what might save their drinking water — and their homes — when the heavy rains arrive.

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 online for about an hour and you may "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 Tuesday, Nov. 17 at 6 p.m. Make your voice heard!

**SEMCU is "By the community,
for the community"**

GEN WHY cont. from P. 6

trying to decide whether to buy a plastic skeleton while the original 90s diva gives Santa her single-item wish list. The calendar says October, yet the retail industry has apparently decided we should all be dreaming of a white Christmas. It was only a week ago that I was still dreaming of temperatures below 80.

What bothers me isn't really the decorations. Or even the music. It's the relentless insistence that we should already be preparing for whatever comes next.

In August, we're told to get ready for fall. In September, Halloween is already on clearance in some stores. By October, Christmas is taking over. And before we've finished digesting Thanksgiving dinner, somebody is trying to convince us that we need to reinvent ourselves for the new year. We don't even get to finish one holiday before the next one starts knocking on the door. Actually, knocking would be po-

lite. Christmas doesn't knock. It kicks the door open, throws tinsel everywhere and starts rearranging the furniture to make room for the porcelain village.

And I understand why retailers do it. Christmas is big business. The earlier they convince us to start shopping, the longer they have to separate us from our money. Somewhere in a corporate office, somebody has calculated the exact number of days between Labor Day and Christmas during which an average American can be persuaded to purchase decorative throw pillows. I'm sure that person received a bonus. I don't have enough evidence to bring charges, but I'm reasonably certain the executives are accessories to the crime.

But I'm still on Halloween time, dang it, and there's a particular magic to it. The ordinary houses become haunted mansions and little kids show up at your door dressed as superheroes and princesses, hoping you're not the house giving out raisins or toothbrushes.

As much as I want Christmas to last until Valentine's Day, I do not want it to steal Halloween's thunder. It doesn't need a three-month advertising campaign to be wonderful. Maybe I'm old-fashioned. Maybe I'm simply becoming the sort of woman who complains about how things used to be while shaking her fist at the seasonal aisle. Maybe I'm already turning into my father. That's entirely possible. But I don't think it's unreasonable to ask

that we enjoy the holiday we're actually celebrating before we start preparing for the next one.

So, for now, I'm taking a stand. I'm going to enjoy October. I'm going to appreciate the spooky decorations, embrace the neighborhood festivities and perhaps eat a completely irresponsible amount of Halloween candy. Christmas can wait its turn. And if I see Santa trying to push a skeleton off the shelf at Walmart, I'm calling security.



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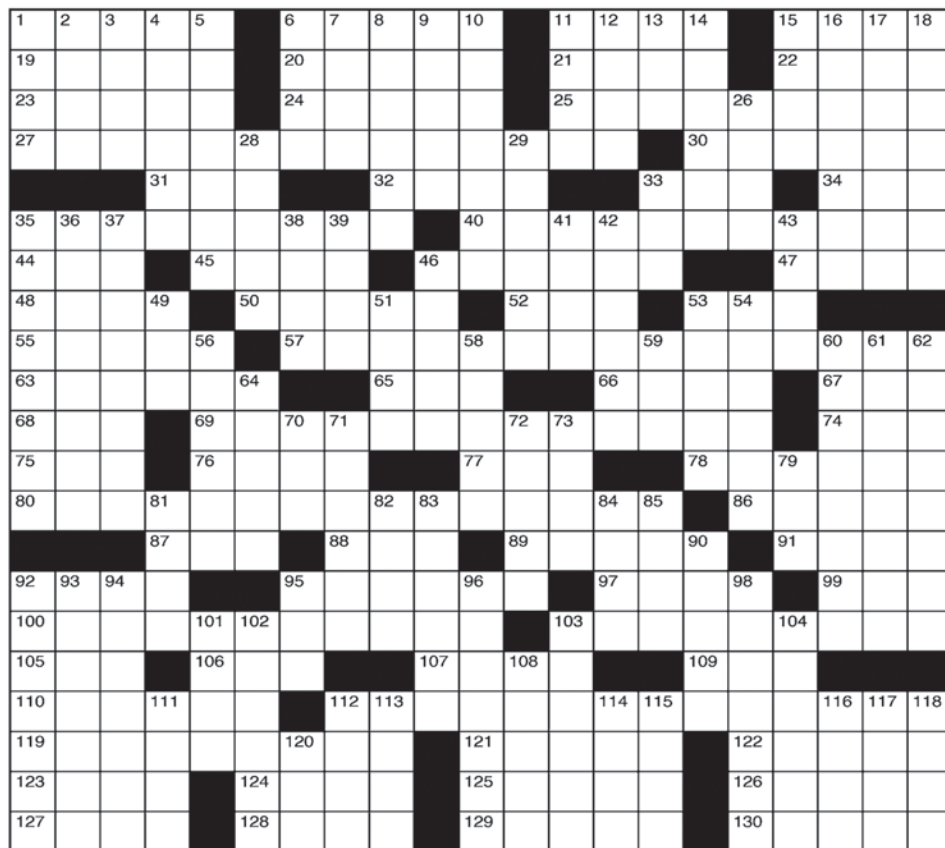


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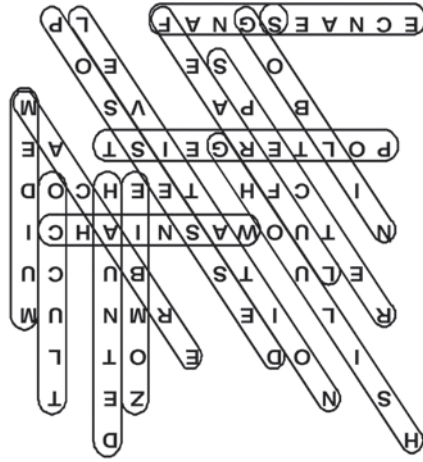
Super Crossword



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ANSWERS

6		9		56
=		=		=
13	=	4	+	8
	+		÷	x
95	=	7	x	2
	-		+	+
72	=	9	x	5



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



ACROSS

- 1 Perp's excuse
- 6 Bee-related
- 11 Lipids
- 15 In addition
- 19 "Cheers!" in Spain
- 20 Cousin of large
- 21 Concept
- 22 Geometry, e.g.
- 23 Photo-sharing app, casually
- 24 Be finished by
- 25 "Shakespeare in Love" Oscar winner
- 27 "A Pocket Full of Rye" novelist
- 30 Device connecting to a computer port
- 31 "Alley —!"
- 32 High mountain peaks, in Italy
- 33 "J to — L-O!" (2002 album)
- 34 Put on
- 35 Portrayer of Emma Peel on "The Avengers"
- 40 Longtime editor-in-chief of Vogue
- 44 Purported psychic gift
- 45 Reebok rival
- 46 One-celled swimmer
- 47 — 500 (auto race)
- 48 Ren or Stimpy, e.g.
- 50 "Peanuts" blanket toter
- 52 Cherry-hued
- 53 "Dr." of rap
- 55 Gazes at creepily
- 57 "Rebecca" novelist
- 63 Fee-free, as a mutual fund
- 65 Come — halt
- 66 Succotash ingredient
- 67 Kung — chicken
- 68 12-month period, in Rio
- 69 Longtime Royal Ballet luminary
- 74 Sick-dog link
- 75 Levy
- 76 Conical-bore woodwind
- 77 Wed.-Fri. link
- 78 Kind of gas that's banned for autos
- 80 Best Actress winner for "Butterfield 8"
- 86 Large-eyed primate
- 87 — jiffy
- 88 Cattle call
- 89 Presley called "The King"
- 91 Morning TV's Kelly
- 92 Trotsky of Russia
- 95 Copier clogs
- 97 Free-for — (melees)
- 99 Eggy drink
- 100 "The Good Apprentice" novelist
- 103 1986 Grammy winner for Best Jazz Vocal Performance
- 105 La Paz's country: Abbr.
- 106 Tee preceder
- 107 See 53-Down
- 109 Cut the lawn
- 110 Old Jewish ascetic
- 112 With 119-Across, "South Pacific" song ... or a declaration about the nine women featured in this puzzle?
- 119 See 112-Across
- 121 Mann of pop
- 122 Apple drink
- 123 Pernicious
- 124 British trolley
- 125 Atlantic, e.g.
- 126 Siri's cousin?
- 127 Bears' lairs

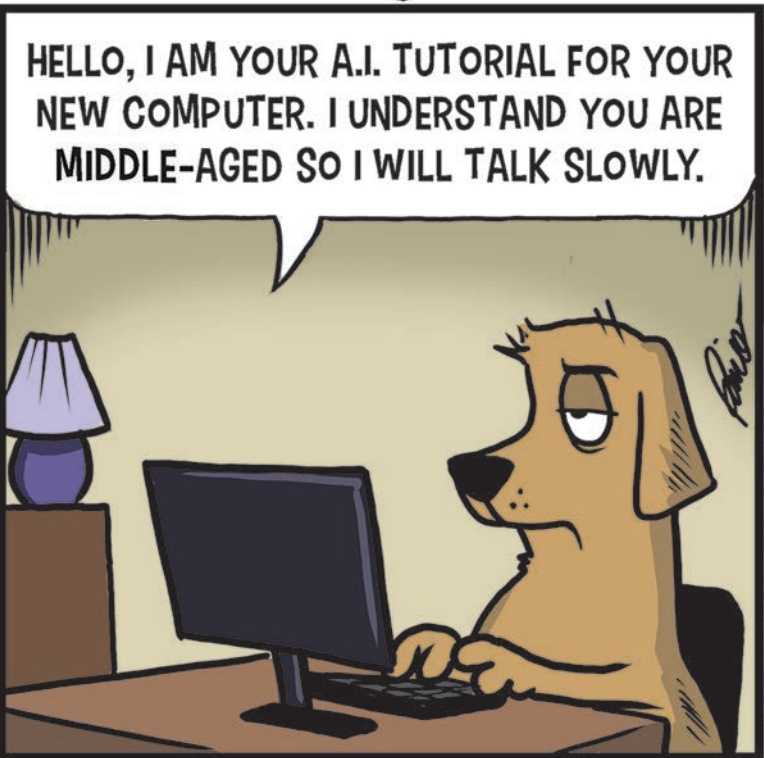
DOWN

- 128 1980s Dodge
- 129 Quickness
- 130 Catnaps, e.g.
- 26 — about-face (flip-flop)
- 28 May preceder
- 29 Unrefined source of element #50
- 33 Pan Am rival
- 35 Explode, as a bomb
- 36 Having equal angles
- 37 Moon-landing mission
- 5 Boise native
- 6 A Baldwin brother
- 7 Phnom —, Cambodia
- 8 How RuPaul performs
- 9 "Garfield: — of Two Kitties" (2006 film)
- 10 "Move to inbox" email phrase
- 11 Pacific island nation
- 12 In unison, in music
- 13 TV coach
- 14 Voiced a quick greeting
- 15 "That's for sure!"
- 16 "Arnie" actress Sue Ane —
- 17 City NW of Minneapolis
- 18 Classic chocolate candy bar
- 70 Fish eggs
- 71 Become irate
- 72 "That's for sure!"
- 73 — and void
- 79 — Lingus
- 81 California wines, in brief
- 82 — sapiens
- 83 "Ooh, good comeback!"
- 84 Circle relative
- 85 Irritate
- 90 Replay mode, for short
- 92 Defamed in print
- 93 Causing to wear down
- 94 Raincoat fabric
- 95 Srs., last year
- 96 Ancient Egyptian king
- 98 Toy racer
- 101 Actress Suvari
- 102 In the habit of
- 103 Regions, weatherwise
- 104 For a bit
- 108 Camera brand
- 111 Morays, e.g.
- 112 IRS guy, e.g.
- 113 Half: Prefix
- 114 Chair part
- 115 Hawaiian
- 116 — of March
- 117 Following
- 118 Mardi —
- 120 Chair part

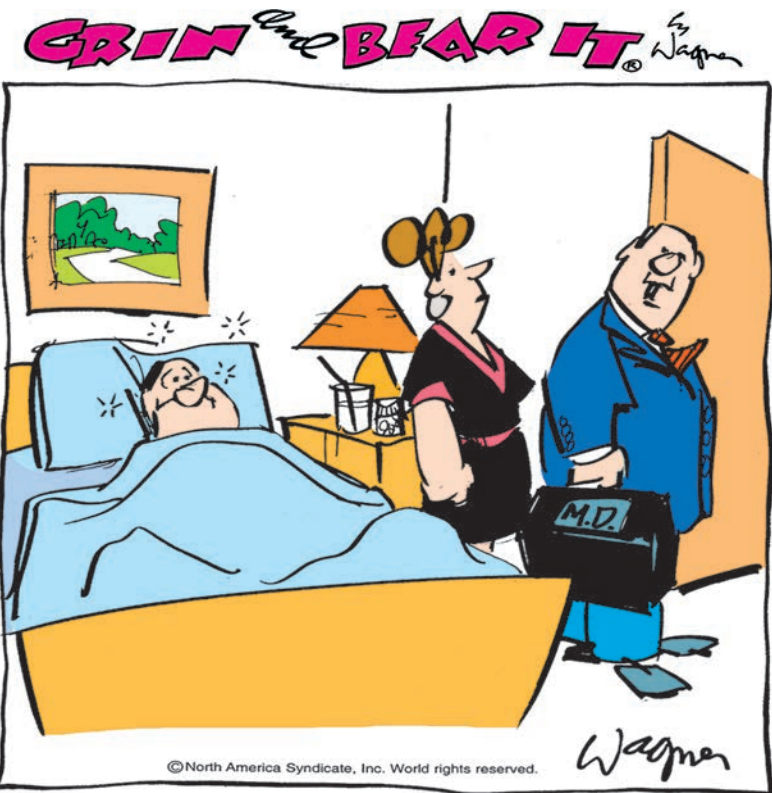
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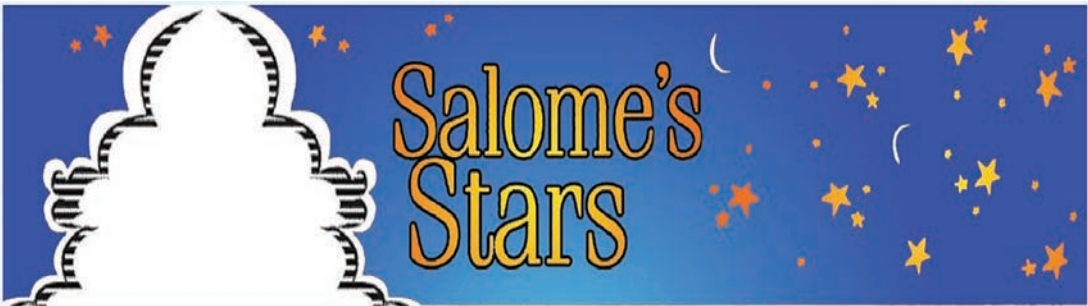
Just Like Cats & Dogs by Dave T. Phipps



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“I’m afraid shock over my making a house call may have complicated his condition.”



ARIES (March 21 to April 19) Some flashes of ARIES ire might erupt as you confront an unusually bewildering situation. But you should be able to keep your temper under control as you work through it.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) The marriage 'twixt the arts and practicality, which Taureans excel at, once again highlights your enjoyment of much of the week. However, you need to watch any sudden urge to splurge.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) Even with all the plusses apparently outweighing the minuses, you still might want to defer an important decision to make sure that you have all the facts you need.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) One or two problems might threaten to derail otherwise smoothly running situations at work or at home. But a few well-placed words should help get things back on track quickly.

LEO (July 23 to August 22) This could be a good time for all you LEOS and LEOnas in the spotlight to open your generous Lion's hearts and share the glory with those who've helped you accomplish so much along the way.

VIRGO (August 23 to September 22) Before investing time or money (or both) into a questionable matter, you might want to get advice from someone who has been there and knows these situations better than you do.

LIBRA (September 23 to October 22) Be careful with how you handle a workplace matter that seems out of place in the schedule you've prepared. Before you act, one way or another, find out who set it up and why.

SCORPIO (October 23 to November 21) Your entertainment aspect is strong this week. Besides providing a wonderful break from everyday obligations, sharing fun times brings you closer to those you care for.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21) Having a weekend fun fest? Your friend or relative who's down in the emotional dumps could perk up if you find a way to include them in your plans.

CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 19) If you're stuck in one of those "the Goat knows best" moods, you might want to ease up and try listening to what others have to say. You could learn something.

AQUARIUS (January 20 to February 18) A new challenge is getting closer, so you should now be out there showing facts and figures to potential allies to help persuade them to rally to your support. Good luck!

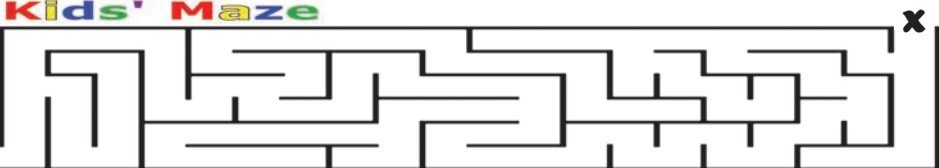
PISCES (February 19 to March 20) Getting a head start on holiday plans could help free up some time later for you to spend on other projects. Meanwhile, a colleague has some ideas that you might find worth discussing.

Born this Week

You're always there for others, but sometimes you need to be reminded that you need to be there for yourself as well.

FUN PAGES

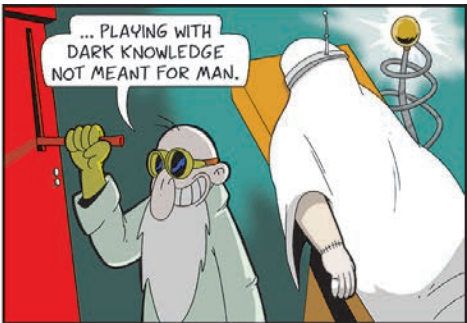
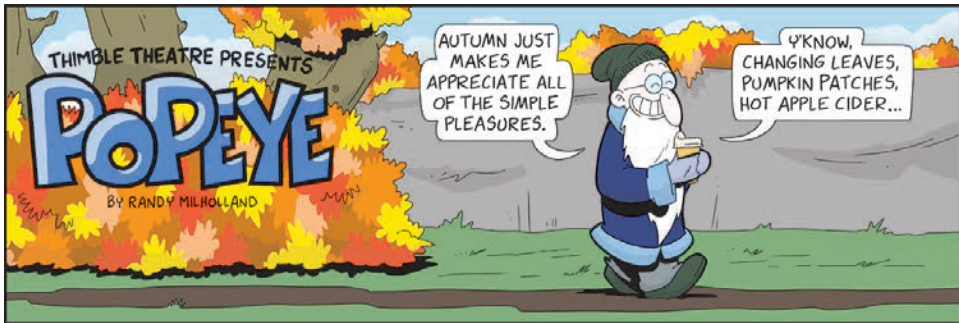
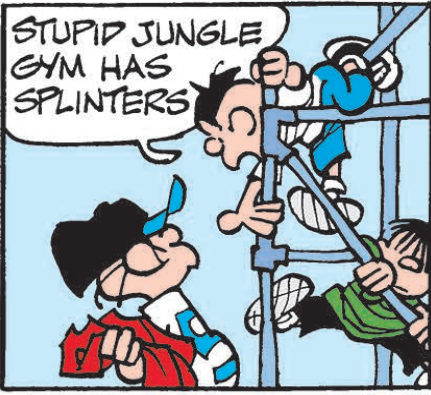
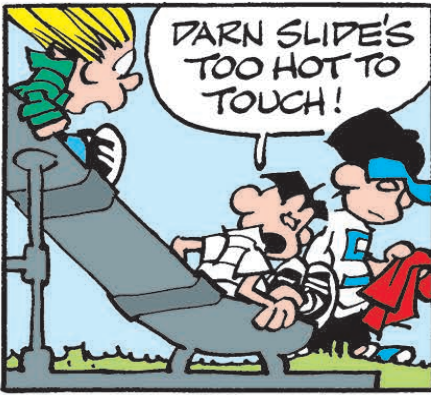
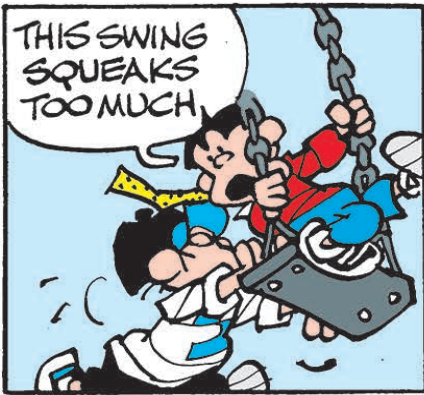
Kids' Maze



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TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



TRIVIA TEST

By Fifi Rodriguez

1. **BUSINESS:** Which company produced the Frisbee? 2. **GEOGRAPHY:** What is the capital of Ethiopia? 3. **LITERATURE:** What was American poet Wallace Stevens' job aside from writing poetry? 4. **HISTORY:** The first atomic submarine was built in which decade? 5. **MEDICINE:** What is the medical name for low blood sugar? 6. **MOVIES:** In what year was the terrorist-threat movie "Black Sunday" released? 7. **U.S. PRESIDENTS:** Which U.S. president's image was featured on a dollar coin in 1971? 8. **INVENTIONS:** When was the transistor invented? 9. **U.S. STATES:** What is Wyoming's official nickname? 10. **MEASUREMENTS:** How many hectares are in 1 square kilometer?

1. Wham-O.
2. Addis Ababa.
3. Insurance executive.
4. 1950s.
5. Hypoglycemia.
6. 1977.
7. Dwight D. Eisenhower.
8. 1947, Bell Laboratories.
9. The Equality State.
10. 100.

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Click on "Local News" at

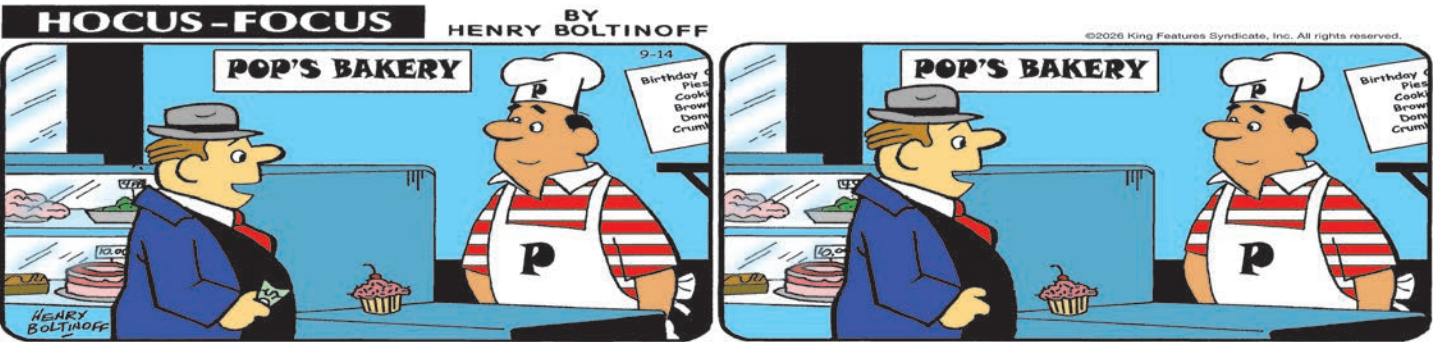
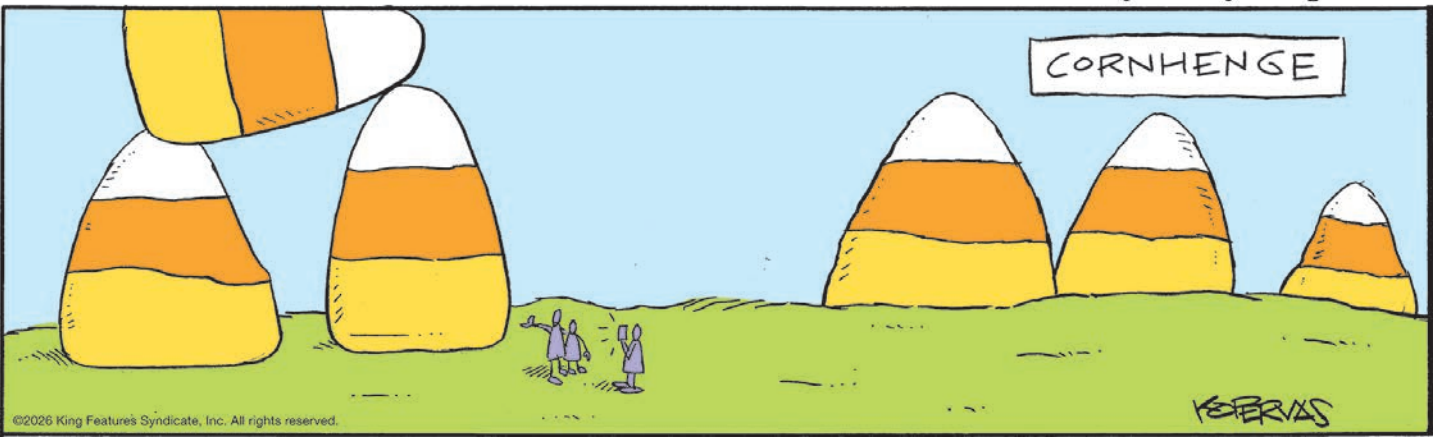
Amber Waves



The Spats



Out on a Limb



Find at least six differences in details between panels.
Differences: 1. Cupcake is moved. 2. Money is missing. 3. Sign is missing. 4. Man is taller. 5. Counter is wider. 6. Sleeve is shorter.

FUN PAGES

SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

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

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ★

★ Moderate ★★ Challenging
★★★ HOO BOY!
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The Independent
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SPOOKY
MAGIC MAZE ● HALLOWEEN
WORDS

HNLJGECZXVTD RPN
LSJNHECAYWZE VTT
RPINODLKEIOTGLE
CRBLZIE XWRMNUUM
SREL UPTSOMBULCU
JNITUOWASNIAHCI
GEIDCFHBTEEH COD
A POLTERGEISTYAE
XWUTBSPAQPVS ONM
LBEWBOCSEKJEOHG
ECNAESGNAFFDLPC

Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions forward, backward, up, down and diagonally
Unlisted clue hint: Tangles of Silken Threads

- | | | | |
|----------|------------|-------------|---------|
| Chainsaw | Goblin | Medium | Seance |
| Fangs | Haunted | Occult | Specter |
| Fearful | Levitation | Poltergeist | Zombie |
| Ghoulish | Macabre | Possessed | |

SEMCU

south east madera county united

10 TURKEYS GIVEAWAY

To qualify, you must live in the Southeast Madera County area and write one paragraph: "Why I would like a PARK near my neighborhood."

Winners will be the first 10 QUALIFIED entries.

EMAIL entry to "info@semcu.org"

and please include your full contact information

PICK-UP DATE for WINNERS: Friday, November 20th 4-6pm

Entry deadline is Sunday, November 15th.

Winners contacted the next day. One entry per family.

FREE ALZHEIMER'S SEMINAR

with a Neurologist from the Alzheimer's Association

On How to Reduce Your Risk of Developing Cognitive Decline

FREE but CALL to REGISTER: 559-645-4864

Thursday, NOVEMBER 5th, 2026 @ 5:30 pm

Ranchos Hills Senior Center

37330 Berkshire Drive, Madera, 93636

SEMCU meets the 3rd Tuesday every month

Our next meeting is online Tuesday, November 17th at 6 p.m.

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

Or by phone: 669-900-6833 & enter meeting ID#: 836 3242 4343 with access code 854 221

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FOR THE COMMUNITY, BY THE COMMUNITY

