

HAPPY NEW YEAR GREETINGS INSIDE FROM YOUR FRIENDS & NEIGHBORS

AFTER FIVE

THE NORTH STATE MAGAZINE

DECEMBER 2022 / 36th Year / No. 2

THE NEWS, ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT MONTHLY



ON THE COVER

SWITCHFOOT

San Diego alternative band Switchfoot (photo above) is bringing its fun-filled, unique show to Redding's Cascade Theatre on Dec. 14 to celebrate the season and their first Christmas album. See page 2

BETTER WATCH OUT

Riverfront Playhouse will present the Don Hodgins holiday comedy 'You Better Watch Out,' scheduled to run Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. from Dec. 2-17. See page 5



CHRISTMAS STORY

Yes, the tongue stuck to the flagpole, the bunny suit and the leg lamp award scenes are all here (with some of the cast pictured at left) as Axiom Repertory Theatre presents 'A Christmas Story, The Musical,' Dec. 9-23. See page 9

MEDICAL BILL HELP

Suggestions on ways to reduce your medical bills, plus contact information for free services from the Patient Advocate Foundation are offered up by the Savvy Senior, Jim Miller, in his After Five monthly column on page 19



Switchfoot to perform songs from their Christmas album Dec. 14 at the Cascade Theatre

By Aaron Williams

Just as no two snowflakes are alike, no two Switchfoot shows are the same.

Fitting because the San Diego alternative band is bringing its fun-filled, unique show to Redding's Cascade Theatre on Dec. 14 to celebrate the season and their first Christmas album, *This is our Christmas Album*. Tickets are available at www.cascadetheatre.org.

The 10-track red vinyl includes five "songs we wrote" and five "songs we didn't."

"I think for all of us (in the band), it's our favorite time of the year," said Switchfoot drummer Chad Butler.

"Growing up in musical families, we all sang carols but it was different in Southern California. There was no snow and in San Diego we'd often go surfing on Christmas."

The new album includes traditional songs like "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day," "Silent Night/It Came Upon A Midnight Clear" as well as Switchfoot originals like "California Christmas," "Scrappy Little Christmas Tree" and "Midlife Christmas."

"We couldn't find the Christmas album we wanted to listen to so we made our own," Butler said in a phone interview with *After Five* from his San Diego County home. "We put our Switchfoot stamp on it and made the

"Growing up in musical families, we all sang carols but it was different in Southern California. There was no snow and in San Diego we'd often go surfing on Christmas."

**- Chad Butler
Drummer for Switchfoot**

Christmas album we wanted to see in the world."

Butler said it seems like a world ago that the band was last in Redding in 2019 and that the pandemic was difficult - as it was for many in the entertainment industry - to not be able to play for live audiences.

"During the lockdown, we did livestreams and were able to connect with the audience and the digital community, but nothing replaces being live with an audience," he said.

The December show at the Cascade Theatre will include the holiday offerings along with what Switchfoot fans have come to expect from one of their shows - a dynamic and interactive production.

"We don't just do a typical rock

show," he said. "We lean into the theatrical and will play two sets, one acoustic and one rock."

Formed in 1996 originally as Chin Up, Switchfoot features brothers Jon and Tim Foreman, Butler and Jeremy Fontamillas and takes its name from a surfing term for riding with your wrong foot forward. Originally, the band was marketed as a contemporary Christian band, but found mainstream success when Mandy Moore sang their song "Only Hope" in the movie *A Walk to Remember*.

"Labels, categories, genres, that's something I've never enjoyed," Butler said. "We just call ourselves a rock band. People can put labels on you, but I don't want to be boxed."

"Christianity is a faith, not a genre. I see people of all faiths (at our concerts) singing the same song and that's the power of music."

The band's catalog includes 25 years worth of music from 13 albums and the band took home a Grammy in 2011 for Best Rock or Rap Gospel Album for *Hello Hurricane*.

But make no mistake, Switchfoot's influences run from the Beach Boys to Black Flag and everywhere in between.

Butler said he remembers one of his first concerts in the early '90s with De La Soul, Johnny Rotten with P.I.L., Bjork and New Order and how that bill's

diversity was important to him realizing that all music can be meaningful music.

Butler said the years have been kind to the band and they don't take for granted being able to connect with the audience through their music.

"It's a gift, honestly," he said. "We want to communicate hope through our songs because hope deserves an anthem. People connect with Switchfoot because the songs are honest and wrestle with the big questions in life - beauty, pain, love, loss."

And while the songs still reach the listener, Butler said the band's approach is different.

"Our first record, we were in college and a lot of the songs were about college and classes," he said, "but now we all have families and life is a little more complicated. We write honest songs that acknowledge we don't have it all figured out. We write honest songs that ask meaningful questions."

"You can say things that are uncomfortable in a song."

He said it means everything to the band to not only be touched by a Switchfoot song, but a Switchfoot concert.

"We love Christmas and had all these traditions growing up that we are going to lean on with the new album and tour in all these cool venues like the Cascade," Butler said.



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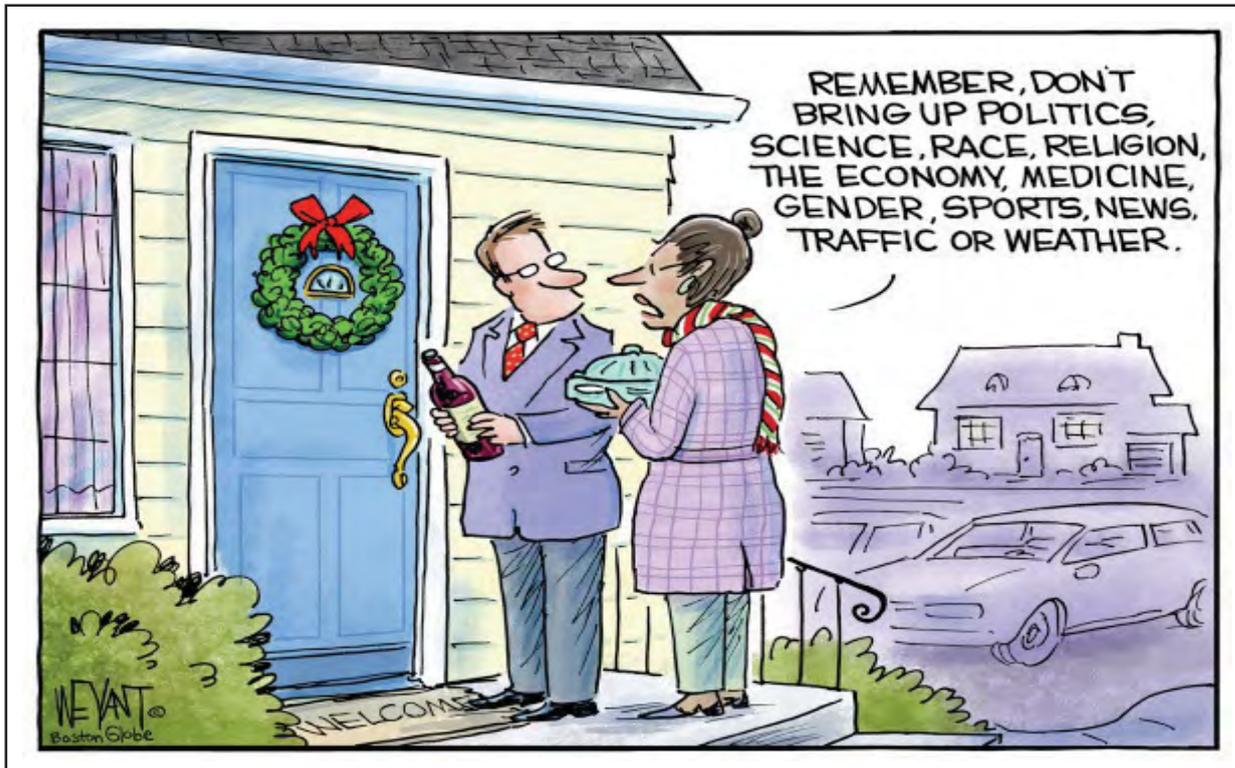
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Christmas in Hawaii Dec. 18

Ukulele master and jolly ambassador of aloha, Jake Shimabukuro promises to bring joy to the world this holiday season with the debut of "Jake Shimabukuro – Christmas in Hawaii," scheduled for a Dec. 18 stop in Redding at the Cascade Theatre.

In addition to his signature show favorites, this special evening will draw on a catalog of such holiday classics as "We Three Kings," "Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer," "O Holy Night," "I'll Be Home For Christmas" and selections from his *Jake & Friends* album released in November 2021. That album featured such artists as Willie Nelson, Bette Midler, Jack Johnson, Michael McDonald, Vince Gill & Amy Grant and more.

The concert also includes bassist Jackson Waldhoff and a pair of special guests in singer-songwriters Justin Kawika Young and Herb Ohta, Jr.

For tickets, visit cascadetheatre.org.



AFTER FIVE The North State Magazine

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Advertising and editorial deadline

for the January 2023 issue is Dec. 9.

No telephone call submissions; email or regular mail only.

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**After Five is printed by the
Klamath Falls Herald and News**





PHOTO / Elijah Higgins

Above, Thorin Hansen plays Andy in the Riverfront Playhouse production of "You Better Watch Out." Below left, Tim Murray (left) portrays Art Cramer and Monte Whitacre plays Mr. Smith. Below right, Grace Coe plays Jenny Ryan.



PHOTO / Michael Killingbeck

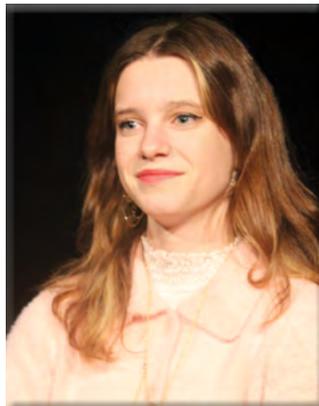


PHOTO / Elijah Higgins

Riverfront presents 'You Better Watch Out'

Riverfront Playhouse will present the Don Hodgins comedy "You Better Watch Out," for their holiday play this year.

Directed by Carolyn Murray, the show is scheduled to run Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. from Dec. 2-17. A \$15 preview night is scheduled on Nov. 30. Go online to riverfrontplayhouse.net for tickets.

The comedy begins when a snow-storm strands a group of strangers in a bed and breakfast in a Wisconsin forest, Murray said in an email. One of them is Santa incognito. He is there to help a soul caught in the darkness of grief.

The group begins as strangers but by morning they will count each other as family. Murray said your funny bone will be tickled and your heart will be tugged. And not to mention, Christmas breaks out all over the stage, carols sung, trees trimmed, and eggnog nugged.

"The play doesn't really feature a (single) performer, Murray said. "This truly is an ensemble work with no clear leads."

Among them is Grace Coe, who plays Jenny Ryan. She was just seen in "The Fall of the House of Usher" at Riverfront Playhouse; Megan Pittman, who plays Marsha Poznarski, was Mrs. Kirby in "You Can't Take it With You" and Quincy/Bart in "Mr. Burns: A Post-Electric Play" at Shasta College; and Tim Murray, who plays Art, was in "The Grapes of Wrath," "Messiah on the Frigidaire" at Riverfront, and "The Philadelphia Story" and "MASH" in other theatres.

"And we have the great good fortune to have the talented Kathy Orr as our music director and composer of original

music for the show," Murray said. "Her original song, I think, will be a highlight of the show. She also has a degree in theatre and directs locally."

Murray recently earned an MFA in Theatre after decades of working in the field and now teaches theatre at Shasta College. Locally, she has written and won grants to make theatre with the Redding Cultural District, "Shakespeare in the Park: Twelfth Night" and with the PBS/KIXE "Scenes from Shakespeare," a documentary and performance funded by a competitive grant from Thirteen/WNET in New York City.

She has worked professionally in the Bay Area, most notably at TheatreWorks Silicon Valley. Last summer the show she directed, "Insertion" by Sarah Groustra, for Sacramento's B Street's New Comedies Festival, was picked up for the mainstage season and will go up next summer. On top of all that, Murray is also a playwright. Her latest play, "Something Fresh," adapted from the P.G. Wodehouse novel, was performed in a theatre in Idaho last month.

Murray said directing "You Better Watch Out" came about several years after Malarie Glavan worked with her on "Scenes from Shakespeare." Glavan asked Murray to direct this play.

"From a place acquainted with sorrow, this play celebrates the light and that resonates with me," Murray said. "Theatre should help us to live better lives and I think the way this play honors suffering, even as it has an infectious optimism, does just that."

For tickets and more information, visit riverfrontplayhouse.net.

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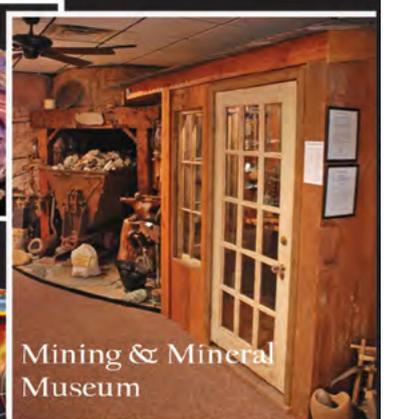


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Thurber's Tail: Can dogs talk?

By Tom Purcell

I've always loved dogs who talk in TV shows and movies.

I've also always loved jokes told by talking dogs.

Which is why this joke makes me laugh out loud:

A three-legged dog walks into a bar and sets his pistol on the table.

"I don't want any trouble," says the nervous bartender.

"I have no beef with you," says the dog. "I'm looking for the man who shot my paw."

I recently watched the 1959 movie, "The Shaggy Dog," and laughed out loud when Fred MacMurray realizes that his son has been transformed into a talking, shaggy dog.

One of the first movies to feature a talking dog, it was a runaway Disney hit, and I think I know why.

Any human whose home is blessed with a wonderful, silly dog would love for their pups to be able to talk.

Even though some dogs may appear to be voicing human words, such as "I wuvvvv youuuuu," Scientific American says that dogs cannot talk the way humans do — but scientists do make it clear that dogs can communicate with us.

Thurber and I communicate very well with each other every day.

He is way smarter than I ever expected him to be and he understands the many words, tones and gestures that I use when I ask him to do something or retrieve something.

He tells me when he wants to eat, play, help him get a ball that slid under a chair and many other things.

Thurber uses his eyes, various whimpers, groans and tones to communicate what he wants me to know or do.

When the matter is urgent — such as the need to go Number 1 or 2 — he knows a loud bark will get my immediate attention.

Dogs are way smarter than many people are aware. The average dog can learn about 165 words, but some dogs can learn more than 200 and even beyond 1,000!

If Thurber could talk, I know he'd tell the silliest, corniest jokes, such as this one:

"What do you call a Labrador who does Magic?"

"A Labrakadabrador!"

Or this one:

A dog walks into a dentist's office one evening and says, "I think I'm a moth."

The dentist says, "I'm sorry, buddy, but I can't help you. You need to see a veterinarian."

"I am seeing a veterinarian," says the dog.

"Then why did you come to my office?" said the dentist.

"Your light was on," said the dog.

The fact is, Thurber DOES "talk" in a series of funny videos featured on his blog, ThurbersTail.com. Watch him tell jokes at this link: ThurbersTail.com/FunnyVideos.

In any event, all of this talk about talking dogs reminds me of the fellow who sees a sign outside a house that reads: "Talking Dog for Sale."

The fellow walks up to a dog sitting on the front porch, and the dog says, "May I help you mister?"

"You really can talk!" says the man. "You're amazing!"

"My life has been amazing," says the dog. "My talking skills helped me communicate with human authorities and other dogs to save avalanche victims in the Alps, as well as earthquake and hurricane victims all over the world. Now semi-retired, I spend my days telling jokes at the local children's hospital."

The fellow, flabbergasted, asks the dog's owner, "Why on Earth would you want to sell an incredible dog like this?"

"Because he's a compulsive liar!" said the dog's owner. "He's never left the yard!"

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Tom Purcell is creator of ThurbersTail.com, which shares helpful pet-care tips and funny stories and videos featuring Tom's beloved Labrador, Thurber. Email Tom at Tom@TomPurcell.com.



A Celtic Christmas, featuring traditional Irish musicians and dancers, returns to Redding

"The troupe did not so much speak parables and sing hymns as fashion an imagined moment in time co-existing peacefully with the spirit of Christmas, recreating the innocence and charm of times gone by - defining moments when family gathered around a hearth to share tales, exchange gifts and reflect on the passing of the days."

- The State Journal-Register

For the 27th season, "Tomáseen Foley's A Celtic Christmas" takes to the road featuring traditional Irish musicians and dancers. At its center is native Irish storyteller, Tomáseen Foley.

A Celtic Christmas is scheduled for a stop in Redding at 7:30 p.m., Dec. 20, at the Cascade Theatre in Redding. For tickets, visit cascadetheatre.org.

A Celtic Christmas springs from the infinitely rich treasury of Ireland's cultural heritage. It is a re-creation of a night before Christmas in the West of Ireland in the 1940s, before the advent of motorcar, the television, and the telephone.

Traditionally, in the remote parish of Teampall an Ghleanáin - Tomáseen Foley's birthplace - the neighbors gathered at each other's farmhouses and brought with them their fiddles, uilleann pipes, flutes, whistles, and



bodhráns and, most important of all, their unshakeable sense of community, for a night of traditional music, song, dance and, of course, storytelling.

On stage, the spirit of A Celtic Christmas dances to life and glows brightly when these artists (the neighbors) gather to create a wholesome, cultural, family feast directly from the rich table of communal life in the west of Ireland. By recreating just such a night on stage, "Tomáseen Foley's A Celtic Christmas brings the timeless tradition to American audiences."

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NEWS of the WEIRD

A Chinese man in his 40s, identified only as Hu, and his partner were picking pine nuts in a forest park in Heilongjiang province in northeastern China using an unconventional method: They were perched in the basket of a tethered hydrogen balloon.

Which might have been fine, but the balloon became untethered, CBS News reported.

The second person jumped to the ground, but Hu was aloft in the balloon for two days and traveled more than 200 miles before rescuers reached him by cellphone and instructed him about how to slowly deflate the balloon and land safely.

By that time, he was close to the border with Russia. Hu was reportedly in good health aside from having back pain from standing so long.

Comic book creator Dale Keown has launched a YouTube channel to talk about his own career and that of other cartoonists, Bleeding Cool reported.

But on Sept. 8, Keown's livestream got a little less lively when he fell asleep and the camera kept rolling – for more than five hours.

The beginning of the video includes Keown expounding on Marvel, Disney, the Hulk and his own drunkenness – and then he seems to just drop off into dreamland.

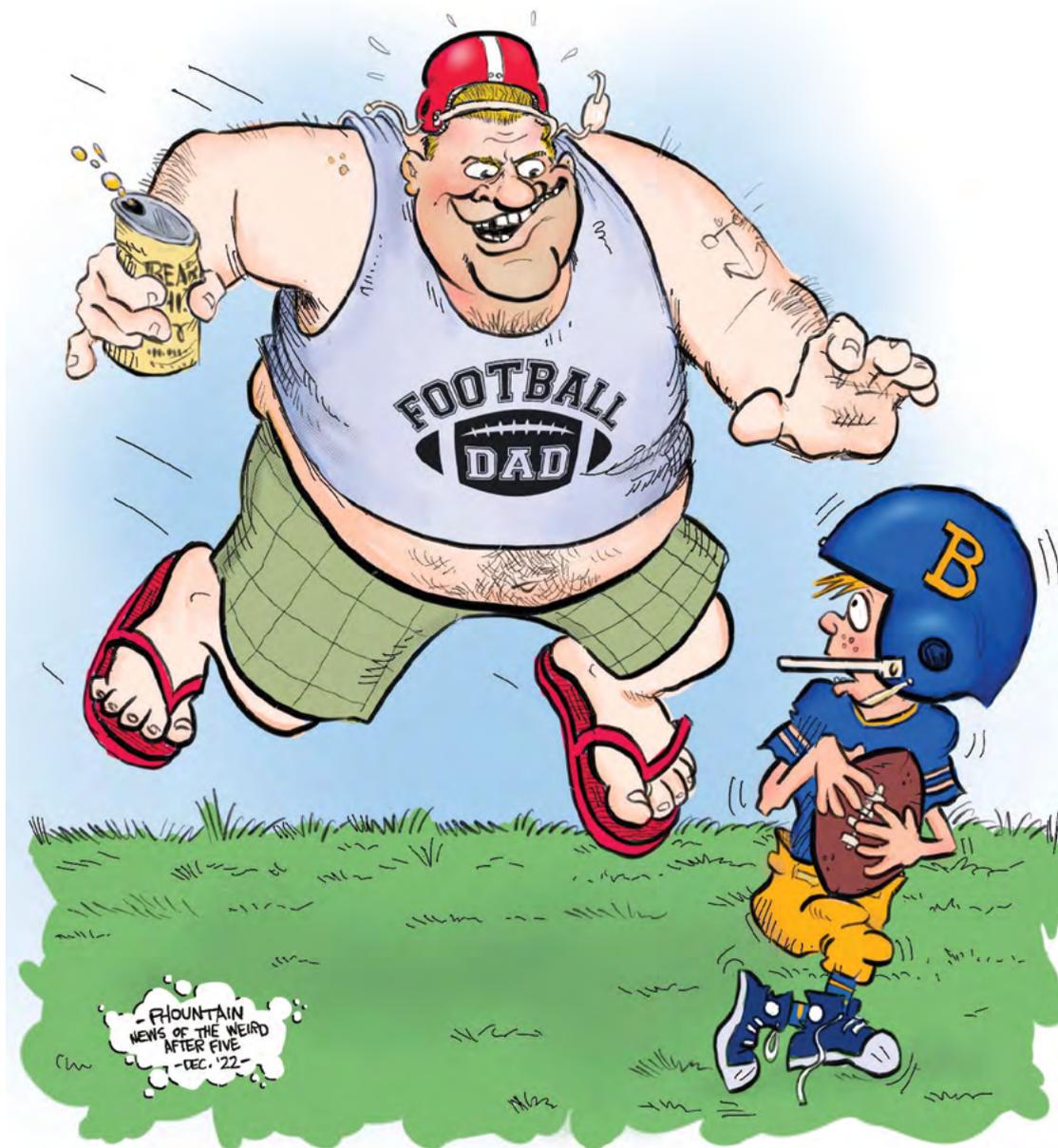
Journalist and Bleeding Cool founder Rich Johnston, who was watching the stream, called it “so transfixing and mellowing.”

Mary K. Brown, 38, of Durand, Wisconsin, was charged with physical abuse of an elder person after she performed surgery on a man under her care, WQOW-TV reported.

Brown was working as a hospice nurse at Spring Valley Health and Rehab Center, where she cared for a patient suffering from severe frostbite on his feet. Brown took it upon herself to remove the victim's right foot – without a doctor's order or permission.

Another nurse, who held the victim's hand during the procedure, said he was moaning and squeezing her hand, and he told yet another nurse that he felt everything, and it hurt very bad.

Brown told one nurse that her family has a taxidermy shop and she intended to preserve the foot and put it on display with a sign saying, “Wear your boots, kids.”



David Alan Taylor, 41, of Pensacola, Florida, did not follow the guidelines for safe tackling recommended by the various youth, college and professional football organizations when he charged onto the practice field, donned a helmet, got into a football stance and charged his target, burying his helmet in said target's chest before grabbing him by the arms and pushing him to the ground. But it wasn't Taylor's form that got him in trouble; it was the fact that his victim was 9 years old. The Pensacola News Journal reported that shortly before demonstrating his rusty football skills, Taylor had become enraged upon seeing his son being overpowered by the victim during a one-on-one tackling drill. The tackled youth was not seriously hurt, and Taylor was booked to the Escambia County jail on a first-degree felony count of aggravated child abuse and a misdemeanor count of disorderly conduct.

College dreams were scattered across a highway in El Paso, Texas when a UPS truck lost its load of SAT tests that had been completed at El Paso High School, KTSM-TV reported.

Senior class vice president Santiago Gonzalez said the school called a meeting to discuss the lost tests.

All but 55 of them were recovered; the College Board is working with those students to set a retest date.

Student body president Zyenna Martinez is worried about identity theft: “(The tests)

have all of our identification and information ... where we live, our address, our date of birth ... and it stinks because our identity is out there right now.”

TSA officers at the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport made a “hen you believe it?” (their pun, not ours) discovery as they screened luggage: a pistol stuffed inside a raw chicken.

The Associated Press reported that both raw meat and firearms are allowed on airplanes – just not packed together.

TSA posted a photo of the bang-bang chicken on its Instagram account but did not identify the traveler or whether it made any arrests.

Alexander Tominsky, 31, of Philadelphia invited the public to assemble and watch him eat an entire rotisserie chicken – for the 40th day in a row, The New York Times reported.

Dubbed “The Chicken Man,” Tominsky placed fliers around Philly to advertise his consumption of the 40th bird, and dozens of people showed up at a pier on the Delaware

River to watch. “Eat that bird!” they chanted. And he did. Why? He told the Times that much of the world is in pain, so he needed to do something painful to himself that would make others smile.

After 40 days of cramping and bloating, Tominsky was looking forward to a sushi dinner.

As 61-year-old James Hodges, who is legally blind, walked down the street in Columbia County, Florida, deputy Jayme Gohde noticed the walking stick folded up in Hodges' back pocket and thought it was a gun.

She stopped him and handcuffed him after he refused to produce his ID.

But, The Washington Post reported, she and her sergeant learned he had no outstanding warrants and he clearly wasn't armed, so she was prepared to release him.

Then Hodges asked for her name and badge number, and her sergeant said, according to body cam footage, “You know what, put him in jail for resisting.”

On Nov. 7, charges against Hodges were dropped; on Nov. 8, Sheriff Mark Hunter announced that the sergeant had been demoted and Gohde was suspended for two days without pay. Both will receive remedial civil rights training.

Japanese convenience store Lawson is testing a new candy that tastes like emptiness, Oddity Central reported.

“Aji no Shinai? Ame,” or “Tasteless? Candy,” apparently has a slight odor but almost no flavor.

The makers are hoping that people who use candy just to keep their mouths and throats moist will appreciate the flavorless variety.

German collector Alexander Smoljanovic is on the hunt for a special item to complete his collection, Metro News reported.

Smoljanovic wants a purple Sulo 240-liter wheeled trash can, available only in the United Kingdom, to round out his collection of more than 100 full-size wheelies.

“I have miniatures and real wheelie bins from USA, Australia, France, U.K. and Germany. Almost every color is available. The most valuable colors are purple, gold, silver and transparent,” he said.

He hopes for a donation, but he's willing to pay for the elusive purple wheelie. “Some –Please See Page 12



PHOTO / Kim Mobely

Amy Chalfant is Mom, Zane Peebles is Randy, Paul Chilson is The Old Man and, in front, Josh Dodson is Ralphie in the Axiom Repertory Theatre production of "A Christmas Story, The Musical." Mat McDonald is Jean/The Narrator. Nancy Hill directs.

For the holidays, Axiom presents 'A Christmas Story, The Musical'

Yes, the tongue stuck to the flagpole, the bunny suit and the leg lamp award scenes are all here as Axiom Repertory Theatre presents "A Christmas Story, The Musical," Dec. 9-23.

The musical version is based on the movie classic that runs round-the-clock on television every Christmas. The film is based on Jean Shepherd's semi-fictional accounts in his 1966 book "In God We Trust: All Others Pay Cash," and some additional elements from his 1971 book "Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories And Other Disasters."

Set in the 1940s in the fictional town of Hohman, Indiana, the musical follows 9-year-old Ralphie Parker and his quest for the Holy Grail of Christmas gifts—an Official Red Ryder carbine-action 200-shot Range Model air rifle. Rebuffed at every turn with a similar echoing response, Ralphie plots numerous schemes to achieve his desperate desire for the coveted BB gun.

All the iconic scenes from the movie are here: Ralphie's friend, Flick, getting his tongue stuck to the flagpole; his brother, Randy, getting dressed in his snowsuit; the bullies, Farkus and Dill; the leg lamp award; the bunny suit; Christmas dinner; and many others.

Of course, what sets this apart from the film is the versatile score that ranges from gentle ballads to show-stopping full-ensemble numbers, such as "Ralphie to the Rescue!," "A Major Award," "Sticky Situation," "Up on Santa's Lap," "Somewhere Hovering Over Indiana" and the inevitable "You'll Shoot Your Eye Out!"

"A Christmas Story, The Musical" was written by Joseph Robinette, with music and lyrics by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul.

The Axiom production is directed by Nancy Hill and stars Mat McDonald as Jean/The Narrator, Paul Chilson as The Old Man, Amy Chalfant as Mom, Zane Peebles as Randy, and Josh Dodson as Ralphie.

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit axreptheatre.com.



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ANDERSON - *Sleigh Ride*

HANDEL - *Hallelujah Chorus*
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RUTTER - *Magnificat, IV "Et misericordia"*
RUTTER - *Magnificat, I "Magnificat anima mea"*
FINNEGAN - *Christmas Carol Sing A Long*

Friday, Dec. 9 | 7:30 PM | Laxson Auditorium, Chico
Saturday, Dec. 10 | 7:30 PM | State Theater, Red Bluff
Sunday, Dec. 11 | 2:00 PM | Cascade Theatre, Redding



Daun Weiss,
soprano

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Saturday, Feb. 11 | 7:30 PM | Laxson Auditorium, Chico
Sunday, Feb. 12 | 2:00 PM | Cascade Theatre, Redding



James Johnson,
violin



Sarah Harris,
soprano

Tickets to both performances are available at
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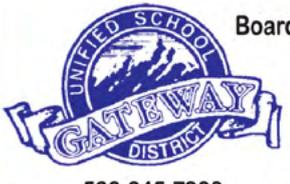
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NEWS of the WEIRD

-From Page 8

people tell me, 'Now I consider my wheelie bin from another angle.'

Dustin Procita lives in rural northern California among cattle ranches and farms. On the evening of Nov. 4, Procita "heard a big bang. I started to smell smoke and I went onto my porch and it was completely engulfed in flames," he told KCRA-TV.

Procita saved one of his two dogs from the fire, which he believes was caused by a meteorite landing on his house.

Video taken by people nearby shows a bright ball of light falling from the sky; the Taurid meteor showers were happening in that area when the fire occurred.

Firefighters battled the blaze for several hours before getting it under control. Procita said he might have to buy a lottery ticket: "They said it's a 1-in-4 trillion chance."

Two unnamed thieves stole merchandise from the Ross Dress for Less store in Springfield, Missouri, KY3-TV reported.

They apparently then hopped into two separate cars to make their getaway – and crashed into each other. Police

said the suspects tried to flee on foot but were quickly apprehended; they'll face misdemeanor theft charges.

A man caught running out of a Vons supermarket in La Verne, California, with a cart full of Tide liquid laundry detergent turned out to be a murder suspect, KTLA-TV reported.

Police arrested the unnamed man, who had 20 bottles of the soap, and then realized he had a \$2 million warrant out for his arrest. The detergent was returned to the store.

Farmer Richard Nicholson of Cannon Hall Farm in Barnsley, England, wondered why his sheep were gradually turning pink, the BBC reported.

He thought farm workers were using spray markers "too enthusiastically," but eventually realized the ewes were rubbing against a new, red feeder, and the color was bleeding onto them.

"Visitors to the farm certainly do a double take when walking past," Nicholson said. "They're starting to look like a bunch of old ladies who've had the same hairdo."

His sheep get sheared only twice a year, so they'll be "pink ladies" for a while.

Stouffer's, of TV dinner fame, has

a new offering sure to appeal to ... Garfield.

Stouffer's Lasagna Inspired Bloody Mary Mix, the company's first foray into drink mixes, claims to sport a "bold and savory" flavor, Food & Wine magazine reports.

"For decades, Stouffer's Lasagna has had a special place at holiday tables," said Megan McLaughlin, the company's brand marketing manager.

Really? But here's the good news: While you can't buy the mixer, they began giving away bottles through the online merchandise store.

Michael Sherwood and his son, Kyle, of Cleveland come from a long line of morticians.

So, a few years back, when a friend wondered how he might have his tattoos preserved after he passes away, the two came up with an idea, Oddity Central reported. They figured out a method for removing and preserving tattoos, then started a business called Save My Ink Forever.

"Some of these things really are pieces of art," Kyle said. "Instead of having just the remains or the burial ... (families) have actually a piece of their loved one."

The Sherwoods say their technique is proprietary, but it takes roughly three or four months. Families are left with a parchmentlike piece of art. "We are trying to do this in the most dignified manner possible," Kyle added.

Jerome Ellis, a Dollar General employee in DeLand, Florida, allegedly got into an argument with a co-worker, which prompted him to a retaliatory move that could have been deadly for his victim, Fox35-TV reported.

The victim set down a can of Pepsi and went to the restroom. When he returned, he took a drink of the soda and noticed it tasted like cleaning supplies.

Sure enough, video surveillance cameras revealed that Ellis had poured bleach into the Pepsi can, wiped it off, then spit in it.

Cameras also caught Ellis trying to unplug the surveillance system. He told investigators that he put cleaning solution in the drink to get back at the co-worker, who he said was difficult to work with.

A female lion at the Topeka Zoo in Kansas has grown a mane, The Topeka Capitol-Journal reported.

Zuri, 18, who lost her mate, Avus, in 2020, started producing more testosterone after his death, which has resulted in the butch look.

"It's nothing like the mane you would see on a fully sexually mature male lion," said Zuri's curator, Shanna Simpson. "She looks like a teenaged male lion."

Zookeepers said along with the mane, Zuri has become more feisty – growling, snarling and roaring more than before. "She feels like she needs to protect her pride, so her testosterone increases," Simpson said.

A 1941 artwork by Dutch abstract

artist Piet Mondrian has been found to have been hanging upside down in various museums for 75 years, The Guardian reported.

One could be forgiven for the mistake; the piece features interlaced red, yellow, black and blue adhesive tape strips that subtly thicken at the bottom.

But a photograph of Mondrian's studio shows the same piece on an easel – with the "bottom" at the top.

However, Susanne Meyer-Buser, curator of the North Rhine-Westphalia's art collection, said it will continue to be displayed upside down.

"The adhesive tapes are already extremely loose and hanging by a thread," she said. "And it's now part of the work's story."

A man who stopped in a corn maze in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, to get a corn kernel out of his shoe accidentally shot himself in the leg, KMSP-TV reported.

The 38-year-old from Circle Pines was carrying the gun legally, and it discharged when he bent over to retrieve the kernel. Police said the gun did not have a safety; the owner wasn't charged.

Tyler County (Texas) Deputy Cory LeBlanc and other first responders undertook an unusual assignment, KFDM-TV reported.

An unnamed man who was bow hunting for deer from a tree stand called 911 around 4:25 p.m. to report that he had fallen from his perch and was stuck upside down, 18 feet above the ground. The man's ankle had become lodged in the framework of the stand.

"We had the Spurger Volunteer Fire Department, DPS, Texas Parks and Wildlife on the way, all trying to help," LeBlanc said.

After an hour and a half of being heels-over-head, the man was lowered to the ground and was unhurt. His advice: "Use a harness. It was in my truck. I just got complacent."

Miller Lite wants to light up your Christmas tree in more ways than one!

The company is offering the Christmas Tree Keg Stand for the low, low price of \$49.99, CNN Business reported.

The tree stand is basically a keg with a small table on top, and when beer is dispensed, the design "makes it seem as if beer is being poured from the tree," said Sarah Showak, associate marketing manager. According to Miller Lite, the stand will support up to a 5-foot-tall tree with ornaments and lights.

Linda Hill, owner of a rental home in Gainesville, Texas, has ghosts, Fox News reported. Many ghosts.

"We've got kids, and we've got old people, old guys, and we've got hookers," she said.

The hookers are the most common visitors, known to stroke a male renter's face or their arm.

"They try to stir up business, but they can't figure out a way to conclude the transaction, so nothing ever happens," she said.

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Cascade Christmas cast includes, left to right: Marissa Fuller, Nick Meyer and Lanson Zaniroli. Front: Marin McIntosh.



Left to right: Cadge Percia, Teralee Johnson and Mariah Santala.



Left to right: Mia Rasheed, Michael Grubaugh and Julia Swope.

AFTER FIVE PHOTOS / Ron Harrington

Head to the North Pole and meet the discontented elf Jasper in this year's short 4-day run of Cascade Christmas, Dec. 1-4

If it's the holidays, it must be time for the Cascade Theatre's annual production of Cascade Christmas. But you better hurry as you won't have many chances to see the production. Due to time and various scheduling issues, it's slated for just a short four-day run from Dec. 1-4.

This year's production, written and directed by Lizzie Stoxen, returns to the days of yore, featuring 25 performers. It centers around the ideas of traditions, home and acceptance, Stoxen said in an email.

"This year's show will bring about new performance elements that will leave the audience feeling immersed in the experience," said Stoxen, who previously performed for five years as Mrs. Claus in A Cascade Christmas and has extensive experience both acting and directing in local theatre. "There are a multitude of dance styles that will be performed (choreographed by Kristen Lawrence), as well as many traditional Christmas carols that have never been performed in previous productions. The show this year seeks to create an inclusive holiday celebration with heartwarming new traditions."

The story begins with a tour group of Christmas superfans, led by their holiday-loving tour guide Leo, that makes its way to the North Pole for the first-ever public

tour of Santa's workshop, said Stoxen. There, they meet the discontented Jasper, an elf who has never left the North Pole, even though he doesn't fit in. With a cast of unforgettable characters – including St. Nick himself – we learn that discovery, hopefulness, and acceptance are at the heart of this festive season and wherever we call home.

Among the cast, Cal Hunter returns as Santa Claus with Kris Carpenter making her debut as Mrs. Claus. Nick Meyer portrays the North Pole elf Jasper and Spencer MacDowell is Leo, the tour guide. The show is being produced by Tara Lihn Faires. Costumes were created by Amanda Hazeleur and Debbie Goodman.

Stoxen recently performed on stage in The Spitfire Grill with the Redding Performing Arts Center and Spamalot with Axiom Repertory Theatre. She also recently directed The Secret Garden with Axiom, is the director of Axiom Children's Theatre, and is a choir director, teacher and runs a private music studio.

Showtimes and tickets

Cascade Christmas is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. performances on Thursday, Dec. 1, and Friday, Dec. 2, with a 12 p.m. matinee on Saturday, Dec. 3, and a 2 p.m. matinee on Sunday, Dec. 4. For tickets go online to cascadetheatre.org.



PHOTO / Michael Burke

The production team for Cascade Christmas, left to right: choreographer Kristen Lawrence, writer and director Lizzie Stoxen, and producer Tara Lihn Faires. Costumes were created by Amanda Hazeleur and Debbie Goodman. Performances are scheduled for 7:30 p.m. on Dec. 1 and 2, noon on Dec. 3 and 2 p.m. on Dec. 4.



Christmas as celebrated in Mexico Dec. 19 in Chico

Chico Performances presents a Christmas as celebrated south of the border with "Nochebuena: A Christmas Spectacular, Ballet Folklorico de Los Angeles and Mariachi Garibaldi de Jaime Cuéllar, scheduled 7:30 p.m., Dec. 19, at Laxson Auditorium in Chico.

Artistic directors Kareli Montoya (Ballet Folklorico de Los Angeles, photo on right) and Jaime Cuéllar have created a holiday experience celebrating the traditions and customs of Christmas in Mexico with an all-star cast of musicians and dancers.

In Mexico, Christmas is a whole season of holiday celebrations that represent a blend

of Indigenous cultures, Spanish heritage, and diverse cultural influences.

On "Nochebuena" (Christmas Eve), Mexican families attend midnight mass before returning home to a late-night feast that includes foods like bacalao, ham, turkey, tamales, and mole, with ponche to drink and lots of music.

Other Chico Performances shows at Laxson Auditorium in the final month of the year include guitarist extraordinaire Tommy Emmanuel on Dec. 11 and The Mavericks on Dec. 13. Both shows start at 7:30 p.m.

For tickets and more information, visit chicoperformances.com

Interfaith solstice holiday candle lighting service scheduled Dec. 22 in Redding

You can welcome in the holiday season by experiencing an evening of beauty with a unique interfaith solstice holiday candle lighting service, scheduled at 6:30 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 22, at Pilgrim Congregation United Church of Christ, 2850 Foothill Blvd, Redding.



The event is presented by Rev. Lynn E. Fritz, ordained minister, affiliate, Centers for Spiritual Living, with co-presenters: Rev. Megan Owens, Pilgrim Church; Rev. Helen Cummings, Redding Zen Priory (Buddhist); Rev. Bob Swartz, St. James Lutheran Church; and Geri Copitch, Temple Beth Israel. The event is co-sponsored by Shasta Interfaith and Shasta County Citizens Advocating Respect.

The evening will incorporate practices from a spectrum of spiritual traditions including: Native American, Christianity, Buddhism and Jewish traditions. Sheri Curtis, guest pianist, will lead the singing of two Christmas carols. Native American flute player, Joey Carroll, will also perform.

No pre-registration is required. This is a free family event. Donations accepted to help offset costs.

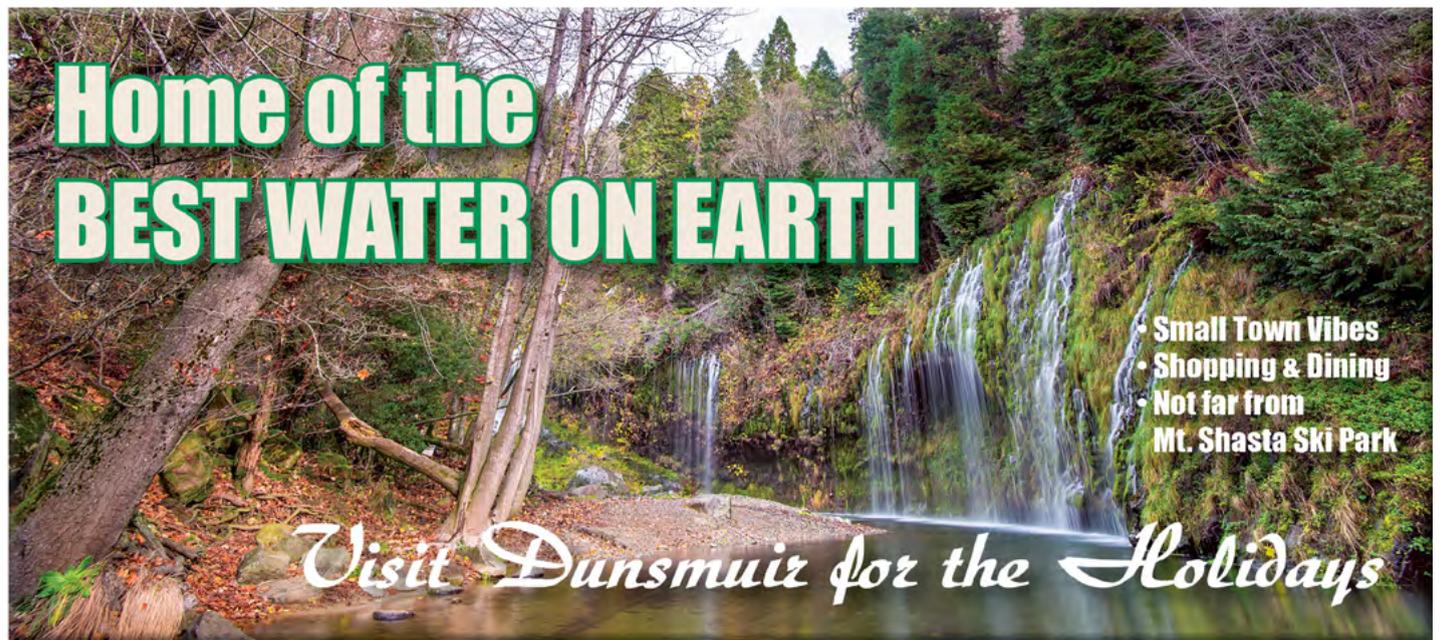
For more information, call 530-243-8862 or 530-243-1928 or go online to pilgrimchurchredding.org.

Christmas concert by Glenn Chorale Dec. 4

Glenn Chorale Christmas Concert is scheduled for 3 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 4, at the Veterans Memorial Hall, 327 4th St., Orland.

The Glenn Chorale, formed in 1981, is a 40 to 60 voice tri-counties/regional community choir composed of singers from their teens to their 80s who enjoy singing 4-part harmony.

The concert will feature a mixed choir, handbell choir and special musical numbers. Admission is \$10 at the door. Children are admitted free.



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NSS holiday concerts in Redding, Chico and Red Bluff

In their year-end concert, the full complement of the North State Symphony will fill three venues with joyous music and a festive atmosphere to put you in the holiday spirit.

The Symphony is scheduled to perform 7:30 p.m., Dec. 9, at Laxson Auditorium in Chico; 7:30 p.m., Dec. 10, at the State Theatre in Red Bluff; and 2 p.m., Dec. 11, at the Cascade Theatre in Redding.

From Nutcracker selections to "A Charlie Brown Christmas," the concerts will feature special guest soprano Daun Weiss, an audience favorite, who will join the symphony for "Twas the Night Before Christmas" and other holiday favorites.

Also scheduled to perform are the Shasta College Chorus and the Butte College Choir.



Here's a sneak peak at this year's program under the direction of conductor Scott Seaton: "March from Nutcracker," "A Charlie Brown Christmas," "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas," "Carol of the Bells," "March of the Toys" from Babes in Toyland, "Fantasia on Greensleeves," "Sleigh Ride," "Hallelujah Chorus," "Winter Wonderland," "Twas the Night Before Christmas," "Magnificat,



NSS music director and conductor Scott Seaton.

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For tickets and more information, head to northstatesymphony.org or to each venue's website.



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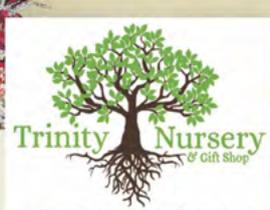
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Nurse practitioner requirements changing, allowing them to practice without physician supervision

The new rules will improve access to health care in many communities where it is lacking, supporters say. Some physicians are concerned the rules will expand the scope of services nurse practitioners provide.

By Ana B. Ibarra - CalMatters.org
November 16, 2022

California's nursing agency in mid-November approved rules that will allow nurse practitioners to treat patients without physician supervision. It's a move that aims to expand access to care in the Golden State at a time when workforce shortages plague just about every corner of health care.

The vote is one of the last major steps necessary to fully implement a 2020 law that will allow nurse practitioners to practice more freely. Nurse practitioners, who have advanced degrees and training, currently must enter into a written agreement with a physician who oversees their work with patients.

Despite some earlier concerns about potential delays, nurse practitioners say they are now confident that applications to start the certification process will go live early in the new year as planned.

"Hopefully we don't crash the website, but we are very excited," said Cynthia Jovanov, president of the California Association of Nurse Practitioners. "This means that if I want to do a mobile clinic in Skid Row, I don't have to be held hostage by paperwork to get a partnering physician who may not have the same desire."

Nurse practitioners are a cost-effective way of bringing more primary care providers to communities that need them, particularly in rural areas, said Glenn Melnick, a health economist at the University of Southern California.

"And that can benefit the consumer as long as the quality of care is acceptable," he said.

Still, there are a limited number of them.

Nurse practitioners in California have been fighting to break free of physician oversight for years. The biggest

pushback came from physicians. During legislative debate, the California Medical Association said nurse practitioners have less training than physicians, so allowing them to practice independently could lessen the quality of care and even pose a risk to patients.

Law is not "carte blanche"

In 2020, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed into law Assembly Bill 890, which was authored by Assemblymember Jim Wood, a Santa Rosa Democrat. To go into full effect, the Board of Registered Nursing had to first iron out details, including how nurse practitioners would transition into their more independent role and what type of additional training or testing, if any, would be needed to obtain certification.

The law essentially created two new categories of nurse practitioners. Starting in January, nurse practitioners who have completed 4,600 hours or three years of full-time clinical practice in California can apply for the first category. This first step will allow them to work without contractual physician supervision, but only in certain facilities where at least one doctor or surgeon also practices. The idea is nurse practitioners would still be able to consult a doctor when needed.

"So that does not give them (nurse practitioners) the carte blanche that I think some people were fearful of," said Loretta Melby, executive officer of the state's Board of Registered Nursing, during Monday's meeting. "And then, when they are there for three years in that group setting with a physician or surgeon, only then can they advance to the (second category)."

This second designation will allow nurse practitioners full practice authority, without any setting restrictions. And in theory, nurse practitioners would be able to open their own medical practice. Given the phased-in approach, eligible nurse practitioners will likely obtain full independence around January of 2026.

California's requirements for nurse practitioners to transition into full independence will be among the most robust in the country, according to one



analysis by the California Health Care Foundation.

Nurse practitioners can perform physical exams, order lab tests, diagnose ailments and prescribe medication, but in California it had to be under the oversight of a doctor. Of the 31,000 nurse practitioners in California, an estimated 20,000 will be eligible to apply for expanded authority in 2023, according to the California Association of Nurse Practitioners.

Kenny Chen, a family nurse practitioner in South Central Los Angeles, exemplifies the type of clinicians researchers say California needs more of: He is interested in primary care; he speaks multiple languages, including Spanish and his native Mandarin; and he enjoys working with underserved populations.

Chen said that while he doesn't expect major changes to his current role at Martin Luther King, Jr. Outpatient Center, the new law would allow his clinic to hire more nurse practitioners without having to meet physician-to-nurse practitioner ratios.

"It can be very difficult to recruit physicians to come work in South Central LA," Chen said.

Giving nurse practitioners more authority, he said, can also attract more of them to California. All other western states, for example, already allow nurse practitioners greater independence. California's restrictions could be a deterrent, he said.

Ahead of Monday's vote, the California Medical Association sent a letter to the Board of Registered Nursing stating that the nursing board's rules for nurse practitioners to transition into their independent roles lacked clarity and didn't provide any more meaningful guidance than what was already stated in the text of the law.

Melby, the nursing board's executive officer, said she has also heard concerns that the law would expand the scope of services that nurse practitioners can provide, but clarified that the law doesn't actually change the type of work nurse practitioners will be doing.

"What was updated was the supervision requirement," Melby said. "And so it's not like the nurse practitioner is now going to have the freedom to go out and perform surgery; that has never been a nurse practitioner scope of practice."

New rules may increase health care access

According to workforce researchers, allowing nurse practitioners more flexibility is a small but key piece of the puzzle in alleviating California's provider shortage.

Even prior to the pandemic, California was experiencing a shortage of medical providers. A 2019 report by a commission of health care experts estimated that by 2030, the state would need an additional 4,100 primary care clinicians. About 7 million Californians already live in provider shortage areas with a need for primary, mental and dental care, according to the report.

Rural counties tend to have the greatest shortages — in counties like Glenn, Trinity, San Benito and Imperial, more than 80% of people live without sufficient access to care. And when patients do find care, they often rely on nurse practitioners. Some studies have shown that although physicians still make up the biggest proportion of primary care providers in rural areas, nurse practitioners are choosing to work in rural settings at a faster rate.

Alexa Curtis, a family and psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner at a substance use disorder facility in Nevada County, said the need in rural communities has driven most of her career. Curtis, who is also an associate dean at the School of Nursing at the University of San Francisco, plans to develop a rural street medicine program with a focus on unhoused people with mental health needs and substance use disorders.

Once she is granted greater authority, "I will be able to pursue that goal without the barrier and expense of needing to secure a physician supervisor," she said.

But working with other types of providers, including physicians, will always be part of her practice.

"It is how we are trained and how we function as nurse practitioners," she said.

Earlier this year, Newsom also signed into law Senate Bill 1375, which authorizes nurse practitioners to provide reproductive care and first trimester abortions without doctor supervision.

These two wins were huge for nurse practitioners, said Jovanov, the president of the nurse practitioner lobby. "I can tell you that this will lead to many more bills for regulations that need to change. We're on this momentum and that is really exciting."

CalMatters.org is a nonprofit, nonpartisan media organization explaining California policies and politics. Read more at calmatters.org.

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Ways to help you reduce your medical bills

Dear Savvy Senior,
 What tips do you recommend to Medicare beneficiaries dealing with hefty medical bills? My husband recently had open heart surgery and is recovering slowly, but the medical bills are coming in fast and furious and they're putting us in medical debt.
 - Struggling in Springfield



By Jim Miller

According to the American Hospital Association, about half of U.S. hospitals are nonprofit. This means they are required to offer free or discounted services in some instances. This is usually reserved for low to moderate income patients who have limited or no health insurance, but requirements vary from hospital to hospital.

Dear Struggling,
 I'm sorry to hear about your billing struggles, but medical debt has unfortunately become a chronic problem in this country.

According to U.S. Census data, 19 percent of Americans households carry medical debt, including 10 percent of households headed by someone 65 or older. Even seniors on Medicare can easily get snagged in a web of complicated billing and coverage problems.

To help you slash your medical bills, here are some tips recommended by health care experts that you should try.

Double check your bills

Almost half of all medical bills contain at least one error, including duplicate charges or charges for services you never received.

If you're facing a high bill and are on the hook for some portion of it, request itemized invoices from the hospital and

other providers that detail everything you were charged for and go through them line by line. If you find something you don't understand or find fishy contact the provider for an explanation or a correction.

Wait for your EOB

Doctors' offices and hospitals may mail initial bills to you before they even submit them to your health insurer. So, hold off on any payment until you receive an explanation of benefits (EOB) from your provider – Medicare, supplemental Medicare, Medicare Advantage, or private insurer. This will show what you owe after your insurance has paid its portion.

If your EOB shows that your insurer is refusing to pay for services that you think should be covered, call them to see whether it's a correctable mistake, such as a coding error for a certain test or treatment. If it's truly a denial of cov-

erage, you may need to file an appeal.

For details on how to file a Medicare appeal, see Medicare.gov/claims-appeals/how-do-i-file-an-appeal.

Ask for a discount

Call the hospital's accounting office or the billing staff at your doctor's practice and ask if they can reduce your bill. You'd be surprised how often this works. Or if you have the funds to pay the entire bill, ask the hospital or provider for a "prompt pay" discount which may save you 15 percent or more.

If it's best for you to pay your bills over time, ask the billing office to set up a no-interest payment plan for you. It's in the provider's interest to work with you to obtain payment.

You can also call the hospital where your husband had his surgery and ask a billing specialist if the facility offers financial assistance.

Get help

If you've gotten nowhere on your own, contact the Patient Advocate Foundation (patientadvocate.org, 800-532-5274) who can help you understand and negotiate your medical bills, free of charge. Or consider hiring a medical billing professional to negotiate for you, but be aware that these services can cost upward of \$100 an hour.

You can find potential candidates through the Alliance of Professional Health Advocates (advconnection.com). Be sure to choose someone who is credentialed by the Patient Advocate Certification Board.

Send your senior questions to: Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070, or visit SavvySenior.org. Jim Miller is a contributor to the NBC Today show and author of "The Savvy Senior" book.

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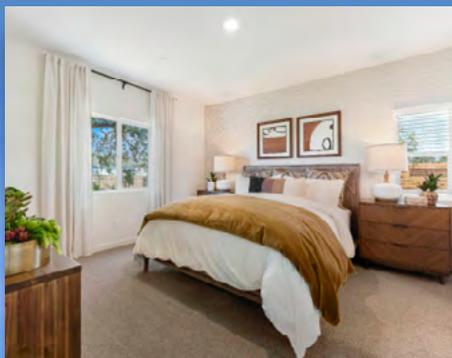
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