

AFTER FIVE

THE NORTH STATE MAGAZINE

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THE NEWS, ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT MONTHLY



ON THE COVER

BANFF FESTIVAL

The Banff Mountain Film Festival is touring throughout the world and one of the stops this month is Feb. 10 at the Cascade Theatre in Redding. The film festival is a fundraiser for Redding Trail Alliance. See page 5

MAMA WON'T FLY

In photo at right, from left, Bobbie Heaton plays Savannah Honeycutt, Amy Goodwin portrays Haley Quinn, and Denise Derk is Norleen Sprunt in the Riverfront Playhouse Production of 'Mama Won't Fly' through Feb. 11. For the first time they will be using a big white screen to project background images. See page 10



NEW CINDERELLA

Axiom Repertory Theatre will present 'Rodgers + Hammerstein's Cinderella,' the new Broadway adaptation of the classic musical, Feb. 10-25, featuring the directorial debut of Michaela Duarte. This updated version has a modern, comedic edge filled with unexpected twists, Duarte said. See page 2

BLIND JOURNEY

In the first show of the 2023 Art Show Season at Dunsmuir's Siskiyou Arts Museum, Redding artist Julia Monson will share artwork created during various stages of her personal journey while she was going blind. Entitled, 'The Journey of Going Blind,' the exhibit's opening reception is scheduled Feb. 11. See page 7

First time Axiom director helms 'Rodgers + Hammerstein's Cinderella'

Axiom Repertory Theatre will present "Rodgers + Hammerstein's Cinderella," the new Broadway adaptation of the classic musical, opening Feb. 10 and featuring the directorial debut of Michaela Duarte.

"This is the first time I've directed a show, ever," Duarte said. "I'm so fortunate to have a team of directors who have been wonderful to work with."

Duarte said there are six of them on the directing staff, including three first timers.

"It's been a thrill to not only dive into directing myself, but to bring along talented friends I've grown up with (Kylie Mannion as choreographer and Lori McMahan as assistant music director) to make their directorial debuts as well," she said. "With the strong support of Assistant Director Mike Spence, Music Director Lizzie Stoxen, and Ballroom Choreographer Kathy Babcock, we've put together a really beautiful show."

Duarte said Cinderella is a good production for her first time directing as she's always been drawn to fairytales.

"They're stories of adventure, bravery, love, and magic, and often feature a strong female lead whose destiny lies in her own hands," she said. "This is especially true of this version of 'Rodgers + Hammerstein's Cinderella.' Ella is beautiful, but she's awarded the opportunity to go to the ball because she is kind and generous, not just for being in the right place at the right time. What she does with that opportunity is up to her, and I love how our Ella uses her presence at the palace for good."

This contemporary take on the classic tale features Rodgers and Hammerstein's most beloved songs, including "In My Own Little Corner," "Impossible/It's Possible" and "Ten Minutes Ago," alongside what Duarte said is an up-to-date, hilarious and romantic libretto as created by Tony Award nominee Douglas Carter Beane.

Originally presented on television in 1957 starring Julie Andrews, "Rodgers & Hammerstein's Cinderella" was twice remade for television, first in 1965 with Lesley Ann Warren and again in 1997, featuring Brandy and Whitney Houston.

The original Broadway production of "Rodgers + Hammerstein's Cinderella"



PHOTOS / Kim Mobley

Above, Chelsea Bailey is Cinderella and Sam Read is Prince Topher. Above right, Beka Baldochi plays Crazy Marie (Fairy Godmother). Right, Kathryn Kirk is Madame (evil stepmother).



opened in 2013 and starred Laura Osnes, Santino Fontana, Victoria Clark and Harriet Harris.

"Rodgers and Hammerstein's Cinderella' is a well-loved classic, but this updated version has a modern, comedic edge filled with unexpected twists," Duarte said. "I get it, we've heard Cinderella's story a million times. Still, I think audiences will be pleasantly surprised by this reimagined script."

Duarte said the cast of this show is stellar.

"Axiom puts as much of an emphasis on casting for personality as they do for talent, and this show is no exception," she said. "All of the actors have wonderful work ethics and warm hearts. I couldn't have asked for a better team."

Chelsea Bailey has the title roll of Cinderella, a production she said she is familiar with having performed in it at a Redding high school more than a decade ago.

"It has been an amazing experience to be able to revisit Cinderella after performing in the chorus 14 years ago in

Shasta High's 2009 production," Bailey said. "It's been a rare gift to get to return to a production that has evolved over time (as I have) and taken on new life since they reworked the production for Broadway in 2013."

She said it's strange to come back to something that is so familiar, and yet different.

"Cinderella is a timeless story of hope, love, and it's one that keeps getting told for a reason," Bailey said. "We need to be reminded sometimes that 'we are enough, just as we are' and I look forward to reminding our audiences of that with this beautiful story."

Duarte said Bailey meets the challenge.

"Chelsea approaches the character in such a nuanced, thoughtful way, and her voice just melts your heart," the director said.

Sam Read plays Prince Topher.

"I love working with Sam," Duarte said. "He and I co-starred in 'Shakespeare in Love' last February. He's intentional and kind and immensely talented."

Read said Cinderella has been a wonderful yet challenging experience.

"Learning all the songs and dances has been a challenge, but the skills I've learned are invaluable and the entire cast is a joy to work with," he said. "It feels like the show is really coming together and I can't wait to put it on."

Beka Baldochi is the Fairy Godmother, and Duarte said she is "a powerhouse." She added that Redding theatre staple Kathryn Kirk brings the house down as Madame, Cinderella's evil stepmother.

"The way she plays off of Ella and her two daughters, Charlotte (Jessica Cox) and Gabrielle (Melodee Padilla) has us rolling on the floor at rehearsals," Duarte said. "And Robbie McFarlane, our town herald Lord Pinkleton, is just unbeatable both in vocal talent and in stage presence."

Duarte said she didn't know if she could pick a favorite song from the show, but right now she's loving "The Pursuit," a cat-and-mouse chase scene between the prince, his knights, some animals that have been turned into humans, and Cinderella.

"It's magical," she said. "Two of my featured dancers, Juandrè Kleynhans and Gabe Testerman, really shine as the Fox and Raccoon in that number. They have the most gorgeous acrobatic skills, and that just takes the show to another level."

Bailey said she'd be lying if she wasn't most excited for the Ballroom Scene, where the cast waltzes as Topher and Ella fall in love.

"But I must say," she added, "no spoilers here, that the Fox and Raccoon may just beat that out. But you'll have to come see it to find out why."

Ticket and more information

Rodger's and Hamemrstein's Cinderella runs Feb. 10-25, Thursdays through Saturdays at 7:30 p.m., and a Sunday matinee on Feb. 19 at 2 p.m. Axiom Repertory Theatre is located at 2613 Bechelli Lane, Redding. The box office and full service Looking Glass Lounge both open an hour before every performance. Reserved seat tickets may also be ordered online at axreptheatre.com.

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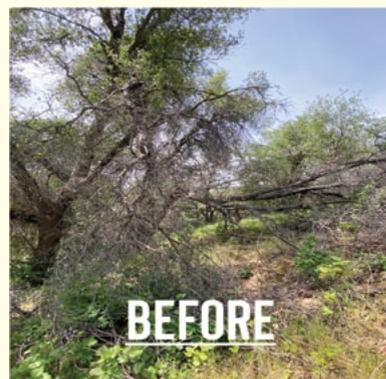
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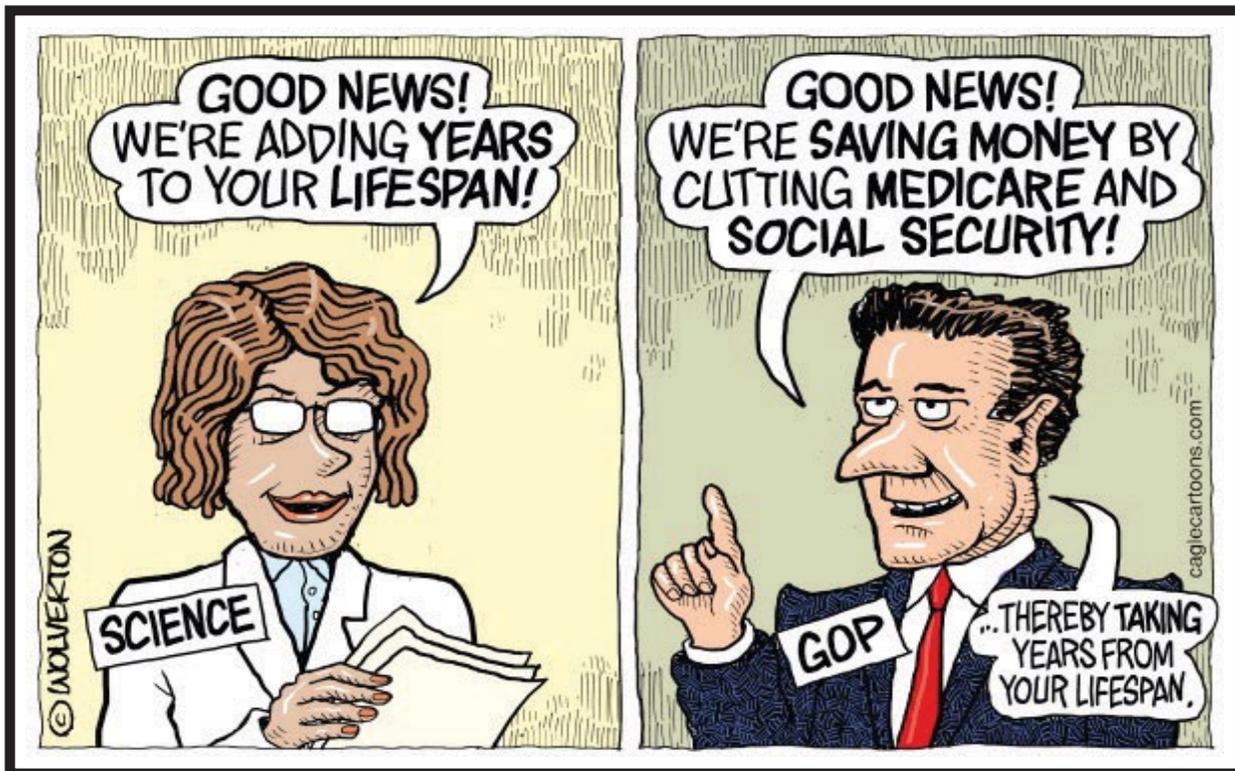
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Masterworks 3 features Young Artist winners

In this quirky and humor-infused program, the North State Symphony highlights their Young Artist winners, James Johnston (violin) and Sarah Harris (voice), for *Masterworks 3: Haydn's Drumroll*, scheduled for 7:30 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 11, at Laxson Auditorium in Chico and 2 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 14, at the Cascade Theatre in Redding.

The Symphony, under the direction of conductor and musical director Scott Seaton, also welcomes the area youth orchestras to join them for Franz Schubert's Overture "In the Italian Style," a Rossini-inspired work that captures the effervescence of the lively Italian opera overture with operatic melodies and a blazing finale.

The evening begins with the whimsical "Little Suite" from "Comedy on the Bridge," an opera where all the main characters get stranded on a bridge. The program takes a twist in Telemann's "Don Quixote," a sort of musical novel where the over-hyped image of Cervantes' Don Quixote has a unique take on reality. The first sounds of Joseph Haydn's "Symphony No. 103" will reveal instantly why it received the nickname, "Drumroll." What follows is a symphony full of imagination and wit that exemplifies a grandmaster of symphonic writing over 60 years in the making.

For tickets, go online to the Cascade and University Box Office websites, or northstatesymphony.org which has links to both sites.

AFTER FIVE The North State Magazine

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After Five is printed by the Klamath Falls Herald and News

Redding Trail Alliance host the Banff Mountain Film Festival as fundraiser for organization

The Banff Mountain Film Festival is touring throughout the world and one of their stops this month is at 7 p.m., Feb. 10, at the Cascade Theatre in Redding. General admission tickets are \$25 each and are available at cascadetheatre.org

The film festival is a fundraiser for Redding Trail Alliance, a non-profit with a stated mission to create high quality trail experiences by advocating for, building and maintaining trails which are progressive, diverse and promote community.

"We have some huge projects in the works that range from \$40,000 - \$200,000 per project which makes fundraising that much more important," Camille Knudsen of the Redding Trail Alliance said in an email. "From trail maintenance - never ending since the Carr Fire - to trail planning, building and the construction of something we are super excited about: the Redding Bike Park.

"While we have a passion for mountain biking in particular, we are all around lovers of the outdoors and most of the trails we work on are multi-use."

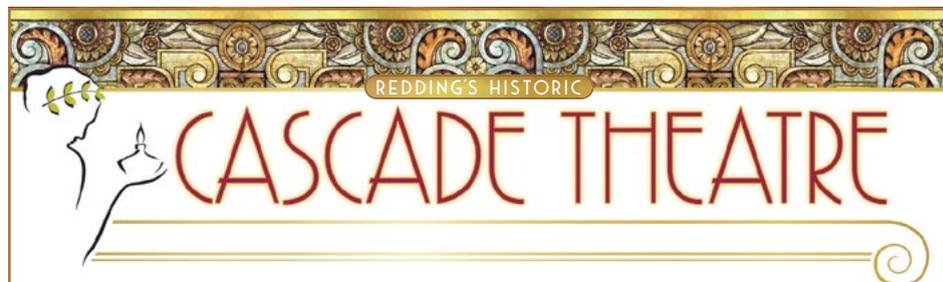
At the Banff festival screening this year they will be drawing the winner for their other fundraiser: the 2023 Dream Bike Giveaway. To enter and for more information, go online to reddingtrailalliance.org



PHOTO ABOVE AND COVER PHOTO
Banff Mountain Film Festival

Banff has various programs in their film festival and "Willow" will be the one shown in Redding.

The Banff Mountain Film Festival will also be shown in Chico for two nights on March 24-25. Check chicoperformances.com for tickets and more information on which programs they will be showing.



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Are you old enough to be a fashion model?

By Danny Tyree



According to a recent Wall Street Journal article, the demand for older models in the fashion and cosmetics industries is exploding.

Sorry. Perhaps “exploding” is a trigger word. It might give some of the most seasoned models flashbacks of “the rocket’s red glare, bombs bursting in air.”

That’s right. When I say “older,” I am not simply referencing hints of gray. Cosmetics juggernaut L’Oréal currently employs Helen Mirren (age 77) and Jane Fonda (age 85), and those celebrities are just the “young chicks” compared to other spokespeople out there hawking makeup and clothing.

(I’m still trying to secure an interview with one model who alleges, “When I started, the whole fashion line consisted of fig leaves. My best friend failed to moisturize and turned into a pillar of salt. You couldn’t strut your stuff on the runway until the waters parted.”)

For too long, mature women have let college-age influencers, teens or even creepily sexualized preteens set an impossible standard of beauty for them. (“Wait – before you bring home the bacon and fry it up in a pan, be sure to warm up by doing the splits and decorating the homecoming float.”)

Bless the ladies for whom “class” means something other than copying the school brain’s algebra test.

Good genes, diet, exercise, skincare and attitude have given society a plethora of older women who are stunningly beautiful. (So I am told. I hate when my wife reads over my shoulder.) Yet they have traditionally been burdened with fashions so frumpy that a “come hither” look is answered with, “Why? Do you need help milking the yaks?”

I’m glad we’ve gotten away from the paradigm of models being ever-younger and ever-skinny. People with memories of the disco nightclub days of Studio 54 still talk about the ugly scene when a model became jealous of her own still-attached umbilical cord.

One substantial advantage of hiring older models is that they are more sensible and less likely to let the glamor and spotlight go to their heads. Granted, there are other things that may cloud their judgment. (“Have you ever seen anything as beautiful as my grandson’s drawing of a whatever-it-is? If I can’t display this on the next lingerie magazine cover, you’ll hear from my lawyer, you whippersnapper!”)

Of course, new advertising campaigns must be tailored to current realities. The models who implored “Don’t hate me because I’m beautiful” in 1980s Pantene commercials would now beseech, “Don’t hate me because I’m going to drain the Social Security trust fund dry before you ever get there. Bwahaha...”

I must admit not all my friends are onboard with the industry shift. The article touted “models over 50 whose faces tell a story.” One friend conceded, “Okay, their face can tell a story – just as long as it’s not the one about walking five miles to school in the snow, uphill both ways. Or the one about sharing a wild taxi ride with Guy Lombardo.”

The heck with him. We need courageous models (male and female) who can inspire their contemporaries or those who aspire to be that age in a few years.

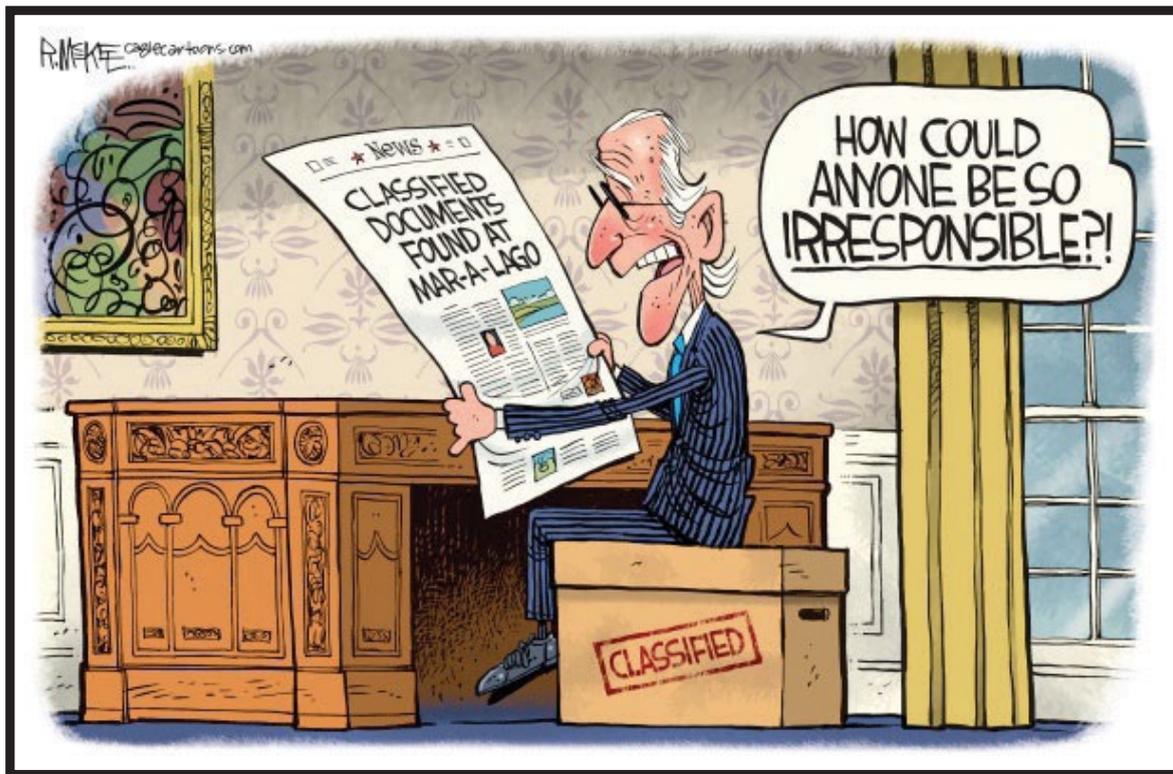
Perhaps you or someone you know has a bright future in modeling.

Just be prepared for the hyper-competitive arena of seeking to be quoted.

“Like I told Francis Scott Key, what happens in Fort McHenry stays in Fort McHenry!”

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Danny Tyree welcomes email responses at tyreetrades@aol.com and visits to his Facebook fan page “Tyree’s Tyrades.”





An Art Opening and Reception for Redding artist Julia Monson's show "The Journey of Going Blind," is scheduled Saturday, Feb. 11, from 4 to 7 p.m., at Siskiyou Arts Museum in Dunsmuir. Among Monson's work are, top, "Rays of Hope," (mixed media on canvas) and right, "A Different Perspective." (media on canvas)



'The Journey of Going Blind' exhibit at SAM in Dunsmuir

In the first show of the 2023 Art Show Season at Dunsmuir's Siskiyou Arts Museum, Redding artist Julia Monson will share artwork created during various stages of her personal journey while she went through the process of going blind.



Julia Monson

Entitled "The Journey of Going Blind," the exhibit is a collection of mixed media works painted on canvas, pressed board and paper. An Art Opening and Reception will be held from 4 to 7 p.m., Feb. 11, and will include an artist's presentation. Monson's exhibit will continue in their Main Gallery through April 1.

Growing up in Northern California, Monson was influenced and instructed by her artistic grandmothers. She began with studies of nature and experimented with many different mediums. She then branched into figurative and colorist art forms. A continued education in art was completed at Shasta College.

While art has been a driving force through Monson's life, it wasn't until recently that it all came crashing into focus/un-focus. She became legally blind around four years ago due to a combination of a mini stroke and a cone dystrophy. Her vision deteriorated and the progression of vision loss has increased every year since then.

Being strongly visually orientated, the loss of most of her usable vision became the biggest challenge for her to keep creating – both a difficult hurdle and an opportunity to relearn and look through a different lens.

Using a mixed media process of relearning how to paint and sculpt also grew into a longing to advocate for making creating art more accessible. Her newest works demonstrate how different methods can be learned and used to create quality and deeply felt works.

"An intimate insight about my journey into blindness is a vulnerable truth I am happy to have the honor of sharing with the viewer with this series," Monson said. "I hope it will create a space for conversation, opportunities to expand accessibility and advocacy, and a moment to reflect that there is as much beauty in the journey as there is in the reflections seen or unseen."

The Siskiyou Arts Museum (SAM) is a member and volunteer supported non-profit art gallery and gift shop, located in the heart of the downtown Dunsmuir Historic District at 5824 Dunsmuir Ave. They are open Thursday through Sunday, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., and until 7 p.m. for Second Saturday Art Openings. Stop in during their business hours, follow them on Facebook, visit their website at siskiyouartsmuseum.org, or call 530-235-4711.



MASTERWORKS 3: HAYDN'S DRUMROLL

Guest Soloists, Young Artist Winners:
James Johnston, *violin*; Sarah Harris, *soprano*
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Join local youth orchestras and Young Artist winners in a humorous and quirky, upbeat performance showcasing the young performers in our communities.

Saturday, Feb. 11 | 7:30 PM | Laxson Auditorium, Chico

Sunday, Feb. 12 | 2:00 PM | Cascade Theatre, Redding



James Johnston,
violin



Sarah Harris,
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MASTERWORKS 4: RACHMANINOFF & DVOŘÁK

Guest Artist Charlie Albright, *piano*

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Saturday, May 13 | 7:30 PM | Cascade Theatre, Redding

Sunday, May 14 | 2:00 PM | Laxson Auditorium, Chico



Tickets to both performances are available at
northstatesymphony.org

NEWS of the WEIRD

In Monterrey, Mexico, Carlos Alonso, 32, allegedly broke a glass door at Christ the King Parish and entered, intending to rob the church, Catholic News Agency reported.

But as he tried to flee with a statue of St. Michael the Archangel in hand, he tripped and fell on the angel's sword, seriously wounding his neck.

Passersby saw the injured Alonso and called for help; he is expected to be charged after he recovers from the fall. The statue was unharmed.

A drive-thru customer at a coffee shop in Auburn, Washington, wanted more than an extra shot, KCRA-TV reported.

As the barista handed Matthew Darnell, 38, his change through the window, a surveillance camera caught him grabbing her arm and pulling her toward him as he fumbled with a zip tie.

The barista was able to pull away from him and close the windows as his dollar bills went flying.

He drove off, but a distinctive "Chevrolet" tattoo on his arm was captured on video, along with his side profile.

Police later reported that Darnell had been arrested at his home in Auburn and was held on \$500,000 bail.

After getting into a dispute with staff at Jinling Purple Mountain Hotel in Shanghai over a misplaced laptop, a 28-year-old man named Chen decided to escalate, CBS News reported.

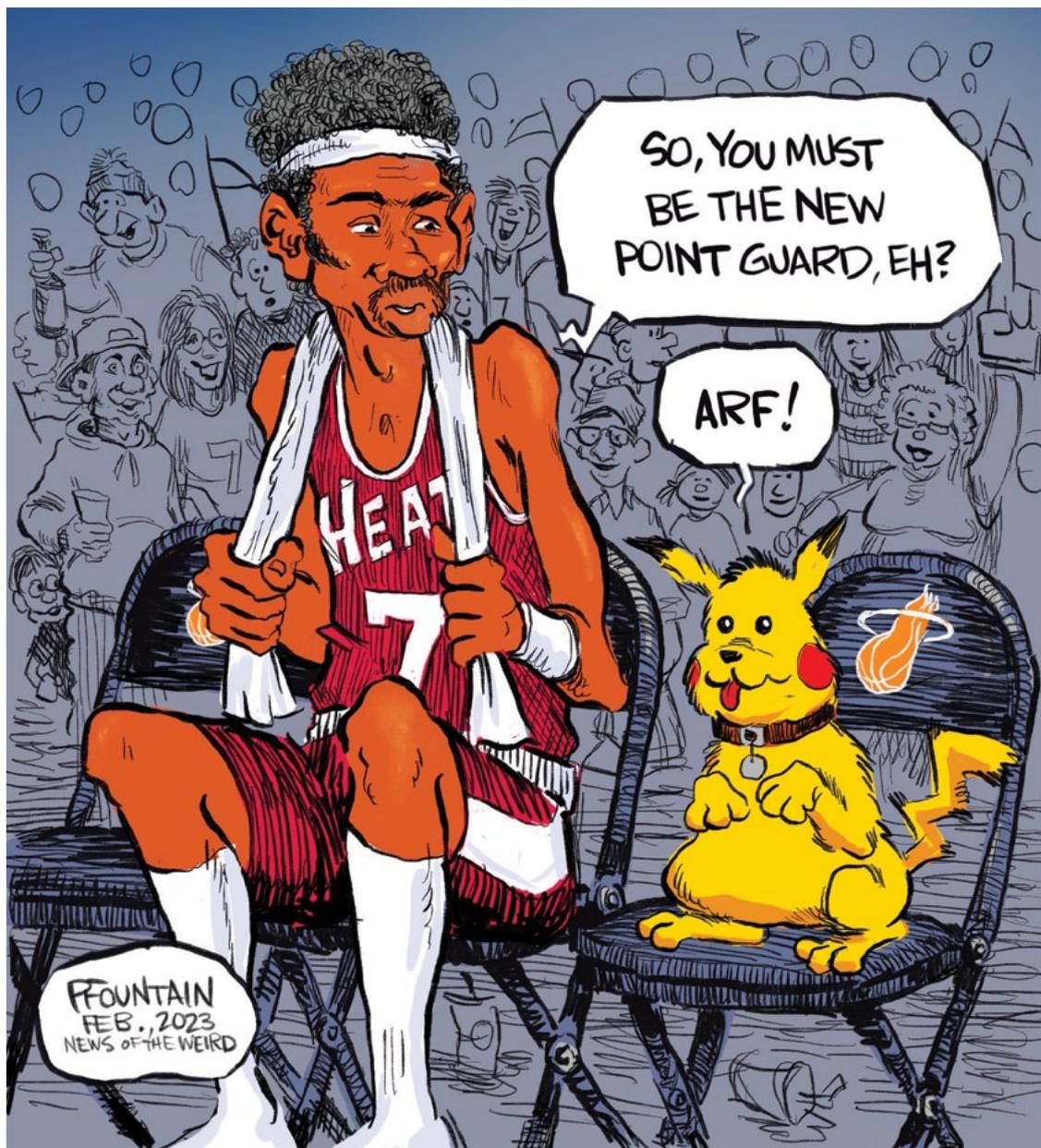
He crashed his car through the glass lobby doors and careened around the space, knocking over fixtures and terrifying other guests, who tried to get the driver out of the car.

"Do you have any idea what you've done? Are you crazy? Are you?" onlookers screamed at him.

As he attempted to exit the lobby, he hit a door frame and came to a stop, and police took him into custody. It turns out the laptop had been stolen and was found outside the hotel; no one was injured.

Carrier pigeons have been couriers of legitimate and nefarious items for centuries, but officials at the Pacific Institution in Abbotsford, British Columbia, nonetheless were stunned when a gray bird with a tiny backpack landed in a fenced inmate prison yard.

The CBC reported that officers "had to corner it," according to John Randle,



Dog owner Erik Torres, who owns a pet store in Doral, Florida, is facing charges after he brought his Pomeranian – dyed to look like Pikachu – to a Miami Heat game, WPTV reported. "It made NBA history because nobody's ever seen a Pikachu dog sitting next to an NBA player before," Torres said. But Miami-Dade County Animal Services officials were unamused: "No animal should be dyed, regardless of whether there's an ordinance prohibiting that," said assistant director Kathleen Labrada. She noted it is "unlawful for any person to possess, sell or otherwise transfer within the county any dyed or artificially colored rabbit or other animal." Torres is fighting the charge, saying the dog is not for sale and he used dye that is safe for consumption. He also has no plans to remove the dye.

Pacific regional president of the Union for Canadian Correctional Officers.

"You can imagine how that would look, trying to catch a pigeon." After some time, they were able to grab it and remove the package, which contained about 30 grams of crystal meth.

"We've been focusing so much on drone interdiction ... Now we have to look at, I guess, pigeons again," Randle said. They set the little guy free and are investigating its origin.

When Minnechaug Regional High School in Wilbraham, Massachusetts, was built in 2012, the district installed

a high-tech lighting system that was intended to save on energy costs, NBC News reported.

But the software that controls the lights failed on Aug. 24, 2021, and every light in the school has been on since then.

Aaron Osbourne, the assistant superintendent for the district, says the glitch is costing taxpayers "in the thousands of dollars per month on average, but not in the tens of thousands."

Teachers have removed bulbs where possible, and staff have shut off breakers to darken some of the exterior lighting. But help is on the way!

Parts from China have arrived to fix the problem, which is expected to be completed in February.

It's important to encourage your children in their scholastic endeavors.

But an unnamed mother in La Grange, New York, took parental support too far when she snuck into Arlington High School before school started to watch her freshman daughter beat up another girl.

The Mid Hudson News reported that Mom was caught on video using vulgar language and egging her daughter on as the girls tussled.

Superintendent Dr. Dave Moyer said the woman blended in with the students coming to school by wearing a backpack.

"The students and the mother involved ... will be held accountable for their actions," Moyer said.

WSMV-TV reported that a car that crashed into a mailbox in Nashville, Tennessee, was driven by an underage motorist – REALLY underage, as in 5 years old.

The child's father, John Edwin Harris, 53, was seen by a witness grabbing the kid and running from the scene, police said.

Officers found multiple open bottles of alcohol inside and ran the tags; when they arrived at Harris' home, he was driving away in his wife's car.

He failed a field sobriety test, could barely stand up and smelled of alcohol.

He was charged with DUI and leaving the scene of an accident – where's the child endangerment charge?! – and was released on \$4,000 bond.

An unnamed 62-year-old man from Garfield Heights, Ohio, was arrested – for the 70th time – in early January after he allegedly stole a shopping cart full of packaged meat to sell to restaurants, WJW-TV reported.

The Walmart in South Euclid alerted authorities to the theft; in the parking lot, the thief transferred the goods to a stolen suitcase and threw what wouldn't fit in a dumpster.

He told officers he sells the meat half-price to area restaurants. He was booked, again, for theft.

Between Oct. 1 and Dec. 31 of 2022, U.S. Customs and Border Protection reported a 108% increase in a certain smuggled item at ports of entry, Fox5-TV reported.

It wasn't fentanyl or heroin, though. Seized egg products and poultry were the hot catch as prices soared in the United States.

"My advice is, don't bring them over," said CBP supervisory agriculture specialist Charles Payne.

Or, he advised, if you do, declare them so you won't be fined. Thirty eggs in Juarez, Mexico, cost \$3.40 – a fraction of what they'd cost in the U.S. because of an outbreak of avian flu that forced producers to euthanize 43 million egg-laying hens.

Federal prosecutors charged

–Please See Page 13

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Road trip time as Riverfront Playhouse presents 'Mama Won't Fly' through Feb. 11

By Aaron Williams

What do you do when you need to get from Alabama to California in four days for a wedding?

Well, you drive when "Mama Won't Fly."

And that's exactly what happens in the Riverfront Playhouse production of "Mama Won't Fly" as the rush to get to the nuptials takes on a hilarious, but lesson-imparting cross-country journey.

The play is written by noted playwrights Jessie Jones, Nicholas Hope and Jamie Wooten.

The race-against-the-clock story begins as Savannah Sprunt Fairchild Honeycutt (played by Bobbie Heaton) agrees to get her mother across America for her brother's wedding. However, Mama, Norlee Sprunt (Denise Derk), refuses to take the easy way.

So the pair set a course for California, but are joined by the bride-to-be Haley Quinn (Amy Goodwin) and the twosome becomes a trio.

The story plays out with hilarious

hijinks with an underlying theme of bringing family together.

"Mama Won't Fly" began its run Jan. 27, but there's still time to catch the production that runs through Feb. 11. Tickets are \$25 for the 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday shows and \$20 for 2 p.m. Sunday matinees. Tickets and more information are available at riverfrontplayhouse.net. You can also purchase advance tickets at Enjoy the Store, 1261 Market St., Redding, or, if available, at the door before each performance.

Veteran director Jennifer Levens said the "big three" in the production play well against each other.

"Denise makes a good Southern mother," Levens said, admitting she had her eyes on that character before taking on the directing role.

She said many in the cast play multiple roles and are so good at becoming those various characters. It might be hard for theatergoers to realize the various roles are in reality about six people.



PHOTO ABOVE and COVER PHOTO / Michael Killingbeck

Amy Goodwin (left) portrays Haley Quinn and Bobbie Heaton is Savannah Honeycutt in the Riverfront Playhouse Production of "Mama Won't Fly," scheduled to run through Feb. 11. For the first time, Riverfront is using a big white screen to project background images from a projector.

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Mama Won't Fly

In addition to the trio of Derk, Heaton and Goodwin, Saralysette Stauffer plays Tanya Dudley, Rema Jean, Edweena and Kiki; Valarie "Rosie" Hardy plays Essie and Great Aunt Pawnee; Carol Anne Ciccone plays Fanny and Sybil; Miranda "Mack Bray plays Aunt Ardale, Juliette and Teeta; Abram Melendez plays Cousin Chicken, Mitch, Officer Dugger, Ronald and Kelvin; Roderick MacDermot plays Uncle Ferd, Mickey, Red and Spud; and Jermy Bott plays the sign carrier.

"The whole thing is a hoot," Levens said. She added that it's the first time Riverfront is using a big white screen to project background images from a projector. "It's pretty impressive," she

said, adding the play is prop heavy. "The cars are brilliant." As they venture across the country, Norleen, Savannah and Hayley make stops at a bra museum in Mississippi and a family reunion in Texas where their car and all their clothes are stolen. They wind up in a Mini Cooper and head to Las Vegas before finally making it to California.

"It's for the whole family," Levens said, "but (the jokes) are a little risqué. Kids won't get it, but adults will bust a gut. It's always good when adults can have a good time and the kids like the story."

And the final surprise at the end will only make you smile.

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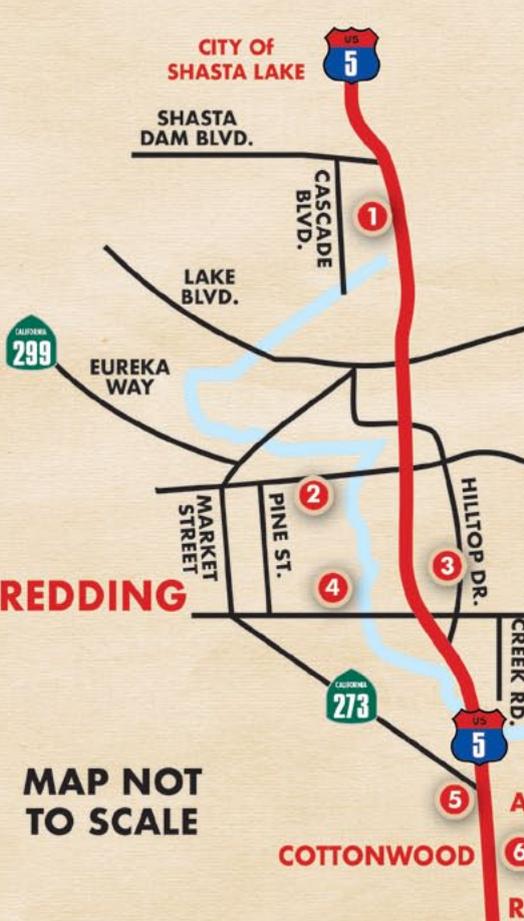
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NEWS of the WEIRD

-From Page 8

Mohammed Chowdhury, 46, of Boston with one count of murder-for-hire on Jan. 17, ABC News reported, after he allegedly contracted with “hired killers,” aka federal agents, on the internet.

Chowdhury had shared his wife’s and her boyfriend’s work and home locations, photos and work schedules with the contractors, and wanted both of them snuffed out – all for \$8,000, with a \$500 down payment.

The agents met with Chowdhury for two months to plan the murders.

“No evidence. No evidence from like, you know, that, uh, I did something, you know?” Chowdhury told them.

He was arrested as they met to collect the down payment; he could face up to 10 years in prison.

Dominican sailor Elvis Francois, 47, was rescued by the Colombian navy on Jan. 18 after surviving 24 days drifting from the island of St. Martin in the Netherlands Antilles, NPR reported.

Francois said he had been making repairs to a sailboat when currents swept it out to sea. He scrawled “help” on the boat’s hull, then survived on a bottle of ketchup, garlic powder, seasoning cubes and collected rainwater while he waited for a rescue.

“I called my friends, they tried to contact me, but I lost the signal,” Francois said. “There was nothing else to do but sit and wait.”

He finally caught the attention of a passing airplane by signaling with a mirror. “I thank the coast guard. If it weren’t for them, I wouldn’t be telling the story,” he said.

Muscle Shoals, Alabama, experienced a thunderstorm on Dec. 10 that brought more than lightning and heavy rain, WHNT-TV reported.

The city’s utility board manager, James Vance, said lightning struck controls at a sewer pump station, which allowed almost 2,000 gallons of sewage to flow into the streets of the Camden Cove subdivision.

The sludge eventually flowed into a stormwater retention pond, and utility crews were able to clean up the mess.

People. Can’t we all agree that fast food isn’t worth a human life? On Dec. 12 at a KFC restaurant in St. Louis, Fox2-TV reported, a man in the drive-thru asked for corn with his meal.

When the employee told him they were out of corn, he made threatening remarks, then drove up to the window displaying a handgun.

A 25-year-old employee went outside to speak with the suspect, who allegedly shot him. The victim is hospitalized with his injuries. The suspect took off after the shooting; police are still looking for him.

The Rockdale County (Georgia) Sheriff’s Department posted a list

of its top 10 most wanted fugitives on Facebook on Nov. 28, Fox News reported.

One local criminal evidently felt left out, though: Christopher Spaulding, an area man with two warrants for his arrest, commented, “How about me?” The sheriff’s department responded, “We are on the way” and on Dec. 1 arrested Spaulding.

Later, they commented, “We appreciate you for your assistance in your capture!” Spaulding’s warrants were for felony violation of probation.

A 72-year-old woman was arrested on Nov. 29 in Berlin after she allegedly turned off her hospital roommate’s ventilator – twice! – because the sound of it was annoying her, The Washington Post reported.

After the first incident, police said, the woman was told the machine was necessary to keep the roommate alive, but she switched it off again later in the evening. The other patient had to be revived, although she is expected to recover. The suspect was charged with suspicion of attempted manslaughter.

As Hassan Chokr, 35, appeared virtually from jail for a hearing in Wayne County, Michigan, he became frustrated with Judge Regina Thomas and started yelling and pointing at the camera, Fox News reported.

Thomas asked for Chokr’s microphone to be muted, and things escalated: “I want the record to reflect that ... now he has removed his pants to show the court his backside,” Thomas said.

“I don’t know why anyone would think it is appropriate to pull down his pants and show the court their behind during a court proceeding.”

Chokr’s attorney agreed with Thomas that a mental health evaluation “probably would be a good thing” and said Chokr was just exercising his right to free speech.

Thomas wasn’t buying it, though: “We don’t get to do and say anything we want to without the consequences of those actions,” she said. “That’s where your client finds himself today.”

An Olive Garden restaurant manager in Overland Park, Kansas, is out of a job after they sent a ranting message to team members about excessive time off, KCTV5 reported.

“We are no longer tolerating ANY excuse for calling off. ... If your dog died, you need to bring him in and prove it to us. ... If you only want morning shifts, too bad, go work at a bank. ... Do you think I want to be here until midnight on Friday and Saturday? No. I’d much rather be at home with my husband and dog,” the message said.

An Olive Garden representative said the message was “not aligned with our company’s values. We can confirm we have parted ways with this manager.”

The Wozniak family of Baltimore, looking to up their Halloween game, ordered a prop casket on Facebook Marketplace, Fox News reported.

But they got more than they bargained for when they found the ashes of Edith Crews, who had died in January of COVID-19, inside. They also found a photograph of Crews, her death certificate and her hospital bracelet.

The Wozniaks posted about the discovery on TikTok hoping to connect with her family members; Crews’ granddaughter happened to see the posting, and the items were returned.

Crews’ family had rented the casket for the woman’s service from Freeman Funeral Services, and she had been cremated afterward.

Self-proclaimed “Britain’s dullest man” Kevin Beresford has your holiday shopping list solution: a 2023 calendar of Britain’s best parking lots, the Daily Record reported.

Beresford traveled the country from one end to the other, photographing parking lots and later compiling his favorites into a 12-month calendar.

His personal favorite was Trinity Street car park in Birmingham, featuring walls made of crushed cars and adorned with street art.

Beresford, of Worcestershire, said he focuses on “slices of English life that nobody else does. I don’t create your normal conventional calendars. It’s sexy being dull.” Beresford is single, ladies.

Five-year Chicago police veteran Henry Capouch, 30, was arrested for battery and disorderly in St. Petersburg, Florida, where he was vacationing, The Smoking Gun reported.

According to officers, Capouch was discovered around 12:30 a.m. by an employee of Jimmy B’s Beach Bar as he was “(urinating) on the ice in the machine.”

The worker told Capouch to stop, but instead he shoved both him and a security guard. Police said Capouch actively resisted and did not obey commands while being arrested. They said he showed an “indication of alcohol influence.”

Mindy Janette Stephens, 46, was arrested and charged with illegal dumping after an incident that took place in Electra, Texas.

According to KXAN-TV, Stephens, seen on security footage wearing a white hazmat suit and a yellow mask, deposited three 5-gallon buckets of human excrement at the front door of the Electra police department, then got in her SUV and drove away.

Stephens told another media outlet that she had been renting an apartment to a man who had not paid rent or utilities for a year, and after she evicted him, she found the buckets of waste.

“He’d been pooping in the buckets,” she said. She said she called the police department to ask what she should do with them, but officers weren’t helpful – so she took the buckets to the station. City wastewater officials removed them, and Stephens bonded out of jail.

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STIMZY ROVE Buddies Cali Love



Stove debate a real gas

By Tom Purcell

I love my gas stove — almost as much as I love my Weber gas grill.

So I became curious when I heard that a commissioner in one of our ever-expanding federal-government agencies discussed a possible ban on natural gas stoves.



As the story goes, Richard Trumka Jr., a U.S. Consumer Product Safety commissioner, told Bloomberg that gas stoves are a hidden health hazard and that “products that can’t be made safe can be banned.”

Bloomberg says that 40% of America’s homes use gas stoves and that they “emit air pollutants such as nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide and fine particulate matter at levels the EPA and World Health Organization have said are unsafe and linked to respiratory illness, cardiovascular problems, cancer and other health conditions...”

If that is the case, I consider myself a gas-stove survivor.

Growing up in a house with eight people, our gas stove was always cooking something.

My mother mastered the gastronomic wonders of Hamburger Helper most nights and we devoured her delicacies unaware that our little lungs, hearts and other parts of us were being put at incredible risk.

Almost daily, my dad made the best eggs, bacon, hash browns and pancakes this side of an upscale Manhattan restaurant in his trusty cast-iron skillet — which posed its own health dangers.

Every Friday he used it to grill up the cheapest hamburger meat he could find and the exploding grease balls nearly took my eye out on more than one occasion.

God only knows the damage my parents caused us when we suffered a power outage on a cold winter day and they cranked up every burner on the stovetop to stay warm.

My dad loved to cook with gas so much he ran a gas line from the house out to the back porch to a grill that we used every night, rain or shine, from spring until Thanksgiving, to grill up delicious, healthy and inexpensive chicken and pork.

We enjoyed hundreds of delightful meals on our back porch that way.

We had no idea that using natural gas to feed our large family was shortening our lives and contributing to the downfall of the global ecosystem.

Nowadays you must feel guilty about having a large family and even guiltier if you choose to cook with a wondrous blue flame that can be turned up or down at will rather than use a red electric coil that heats and cools on its own sluggish schedule.

In any event, in response to the great gas-stove backlash that swept the country, the Consumer Product Safety Commission says now that there are no federal plans to outlaw gas stoves anytime soon.

But state and local efforts to ban gas stoves are gaining ground.

According to the Washington Examiner, nearly 100 cities and counties and 20 states have already adopted policies restricting the use of gas-powered stoves and heaters or have begun phasing them out for new construction.

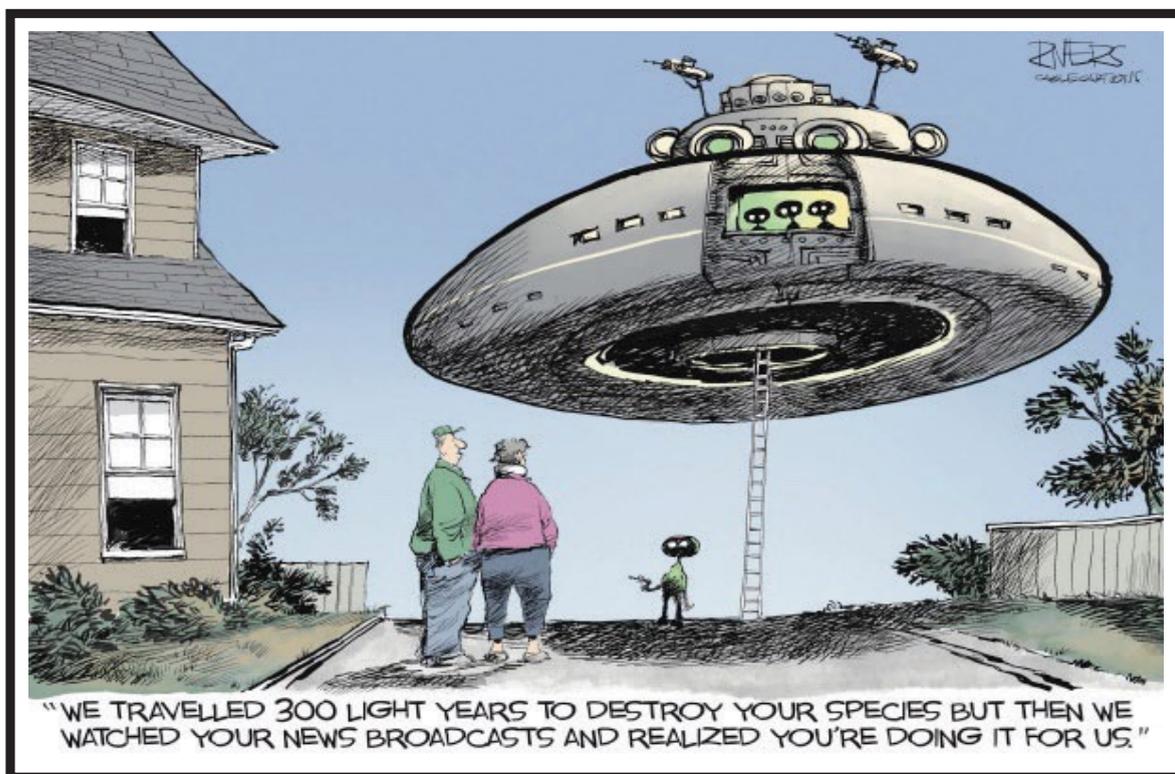
Banning gas stoves isn’t the way to go, though.

If there are health issues with their use, then let our creative minds in the private sector innovate gas-stove solutions — or make other cooking technologies, such as induction stoves, more affordable.

Now if you’ll excuse me, I’m going to fire up my cast iron skillet and make a fried-egg breakfast that would make my father proud.

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Purcell, creator of the infotainment site *ThurbersTail.com*, which features pet advice he’s learning from his beloved Labrador, *Thurber*, is a Pittsburgh *Tribune-Review* humor columnist. Email him at Tom@TomPurcell.com.



Could you have a thyroid problem and not know it?

Dear Savvy Senior,
What are the symptoms of thyroid disease? I've been dealing with a number of health issues over the past few years, and a friend of mine recently suggested I get my thyroid checked because it might be causing my problems.

- Almost 66



By Jim Miller

The TSH (thyroid-stimulating hormone) blood test is used to diagnosis thyroid disorders but depending on what they find, additional blood tests may be necessary.

If you are diagnosed with a thyroid problem, it's easily treated. Standard treatment for hypothyroidism involves daily use of the synthetic thyroid hormone levothyroxine (Levothroid, Synthroid and others), which is an oral medication that restores adequate hormone levels.

And treatments for hyperthyroidism may include an anti-thyroid medication such as methimazole and propylthiouracil, which blocks the production of thyroid hormones. Another option is radioactive iodine, which is taken orally and destroys the overactive thyroid cells and causes the gland to shrink. But this can leave the thyroid unable to produce any hormone and it's likely that you'll eventually become hypothyroid and need to start taking thyroid medication.

For more information on thyroid disorders, visit the American Thyroid Association at Thyroid.org.

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.

Dear Almost,
If your thyroid is out of whack, it can cause a number of health issues that can be tricky to detect because the symptoms often resemble other age-related health problems. In fact, as many as 30 million Americans have some form of thyroid disorder, but more than half aren't aware of it.

What to Know

The thyroid is a small butterfly-shaped gland located at the base of your neck that has a huge job. It produces hormones (called T3 and T4) that help regulate the rate of many of your body's activities, from how quickly you burn calories to how fast your heart beats. It also influences the function of the brain, liver, kidneys and skin.

If the gland is underactive and doesn't produce enough thyroid hormones, it causes body systems to slow down. If it's overactive, and

churns out too much thyroid, it has the opposite effect, speeding up the body's processes.

The symptoms for an underactive thyroid (also known as hypothyroidism) – the most common thyroid disorder in older adults – will vary but may include fatigue and weakness, unexplained weight gain, increased sensitivity to cold, constipation, joint pain, a puffy face, hoarseness, thinning hair, muscle stiffness, dry skin and depression. Some patients may even develop an enlarged thyroid (goiter) at the base of the neck. However, in older adults, it can cause other symptoms like memory impairment, loss of appetite, weight loss, falls or even incontinence.

And the symptoms of an overactive thyroid (or hyperthyroidism) may include a rapid heart rate, anxiety, irritability, fatigue, insomnia, increased appetite, weight loss, tremors of the hand, frequent bowel movements, sweating,

as well as an enlarged thyroid gland. Too much thyroid can also cause atrial fibrillation, affect blood pressure and decrease bone density, which increases the risk of osteoporosis.

Those with the greatest risk of developing thyroid disorders are women who have a family history of the disease. Other factors that can trigger thyroid problems include: autoimmune diseases like Hashimoto's or Graves disease; thyroid surgery; radiation treatments to the neck or upper chest; and certain medications including interferon alpha and interleukin-2 cancer medications, amiodarone heart medication and lithium for bipolar disorder.

Get Tested

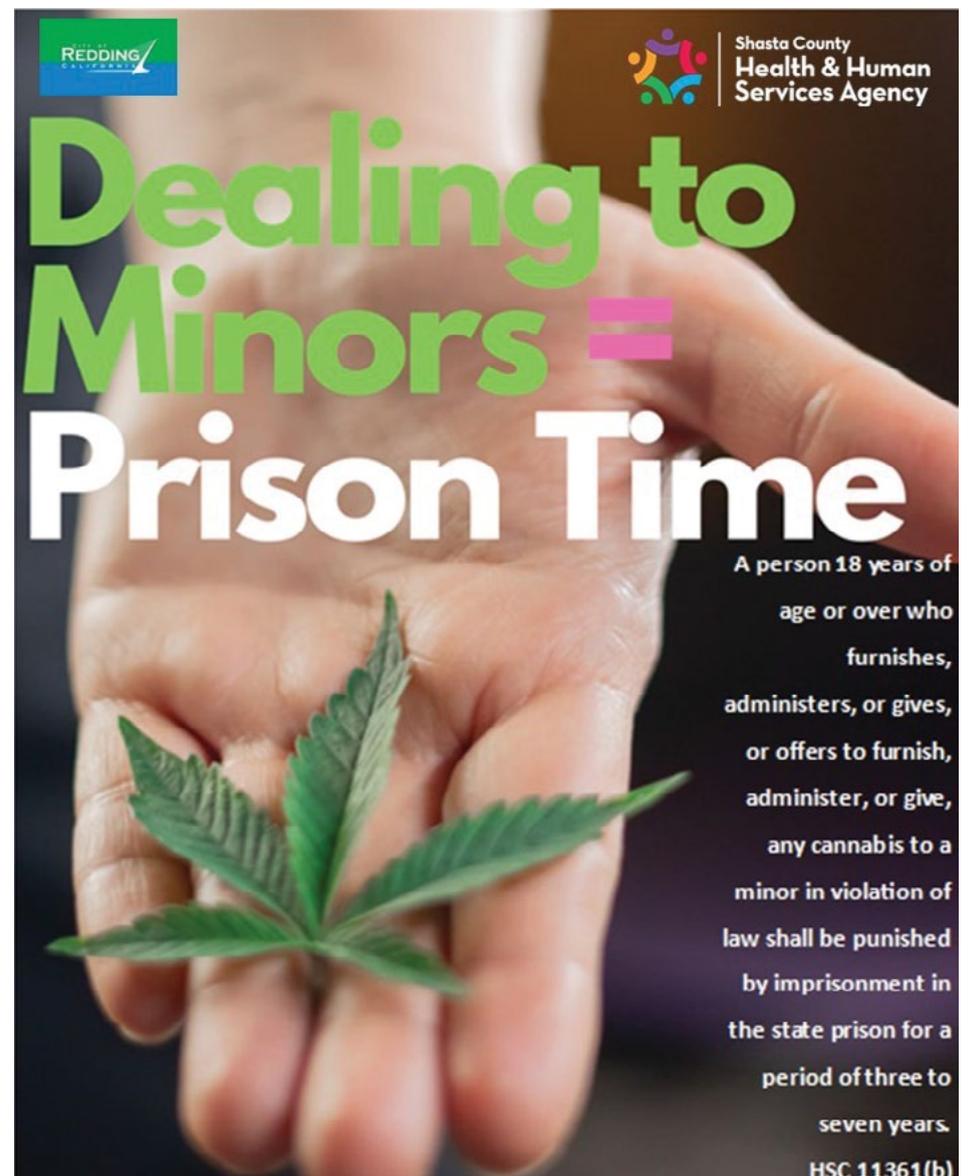
If you have any of the aforementioned symptoms, or if you've had previous thyroid problems or notice a lump in the base of your neck, ask your doctor to check your thyroid levels.

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LOTS OF TIE-DYE

**Senior Discount
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Spend \$100 or More
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No layaways. Not valid with any other offer.
Some items excluded. Expires 2/28/2023



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