

AFTER FIVE

THE NORTH STATE MAGAZINE

JUNE 2023 / 36th Year / No. 8

THE NEWS, ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT MONTHLY

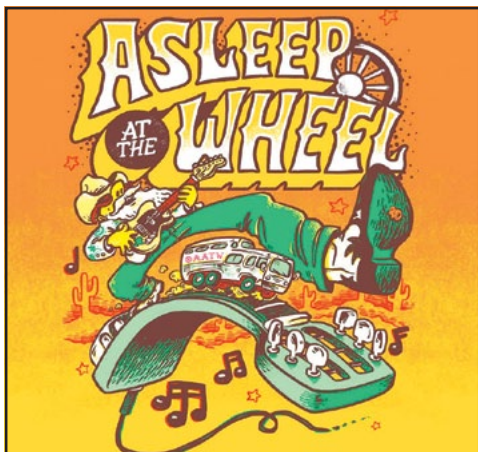
ON THE COVER

CASCADE FUNDRAISER

If you've enjoyed the many theater productions at the Cascade Theatre over the years, you'll want to be on hand June 24 for 'Encore: A Night of Singing, Stories and Sequins.' The fundraiser for the Cascade is a gala attired event that will bring back the songs and a few dance numbers from all the productions that graced the stage since it opened in 2004, including *Mamma Mia!* which featured Josselyn Carter and Blake Fisher (right). See page 2

ASLEEP FOR 50+ YEARS

More than 50 years ago, *Asleep at the Wheel's* Ray Benson wanted to form a band to bring the roots of American pop music into the present – and he has done exactly that, traversing the globe as an ambassador of Western swing music and introducing its sound to



generation after generation. *Asleep at the Wheel* is scheduled to perform June 14 at the Cascade Theatre in Redding. See page 10

ROADSIDE ATTRACTION

Redding singer-songwriter Jonathan Foster is once again heading out on his annual cross-country tour with the release of his sixth album, *Roadside Attraction*. See page 22



Cascade gala fundraiser to highlight theatre's musical past

By Aaron Williams

If you've enjoyed one, many or all of the theater productions at the Cascade Theatre in the nearly 20-year history of the iconic Redding venue, you'll want to be on hand June 24 for "Encore: A Night of Singing, Stories and Sequins."

The fundraiser for the Cascade is a gala attired event that brings back many songs and a few dance numbers of every production that's graced the stage since it opened in 2004, condensed into a tight nearly two-hour show.

Individual tickets are available at cascadetheatre.org with various packages also available for those wanting to bring friends and family.

"The idea of the fundraiser is to pay homage to the past while looking at the present and the future," said Tara Lihn Faires, producer of the event as well as the Cascade Theatre's events manager and in-house producer. "We've done 15 musicals over the last almost 20 years and we're doing musical excerpts from all of them."

The performers won't be wearing costumes from the shows, she said, but they and the audience should be dressed to the nines for the gala event.

Faires, who has been at the Cascade since 2017, said the pandemic has continued to impact the theatre's recovery and they realized they didn't have funds to do a summer production.

"So Alex Hauf-Belden (Cascade Theatre G.M.) came up with an idea for a fundraiser," she said. "We realized that in order to keep doing what we're doing in this cool venue, we need a little help."

It was Faires who then envisioned what the fundraiser would become - a gala and concert-style evening with a live band where they would bring back numbers from productions beginning in 2004 all the way up to last year's *Matilda*. And to help in that regard, she contacted James Santos, who was behind many of the Cascade's early iconic shows including *A Cascade Christmas*.

"I was only going to interview him and kind of pick his brain," Faires said. "But he hopped right on board and said 'I want to direct this show.' We're going to co-emcee it."

Santos, who lives outside of Las Vegas and has worked on such productions as *Cirque du Soleil* since

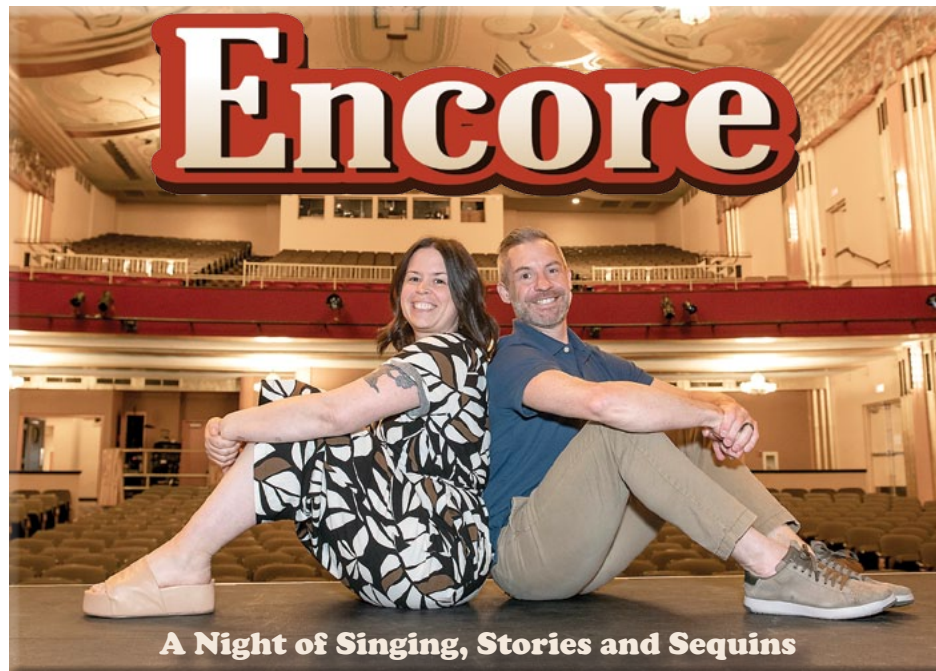


PHOTO / Michael Burke

Tara Lihn Faires is producing and James Santos is directing *Encore*, a Cascade Theatre fundraiser. Lizzie Stoxen (not pictured) is the musical director.

leaving Redding more than a decade ago, said the idea of coming back home was a no-brainer.

"I was born and raised here and have always been drawn back," he said. "Besides (the Cascade Theatre's) beauty, there is this heartbeat. After traveling around the world, it makes me that much more excited to come home. It ticks a box for me."

Both Santos and Faires said whether you're a fan of local theater or a fan of the Cascade, you'll want to attend in order to ensure the art deco venue's viability as it inches toward its 20th anniversary and beyond.

Special ticket packages are available where groups can buy sections, much like you buy a table at an event, Faires said. Additionally, all tickets to the show include a silent auction and all-you-can-eat popcorn, soda and water. They also will have both bars open for the event.

Putting on a show of this magnitude - there will be upwards of 75 performers on the stage in addition to the band - would prove challenging even under normal circumstances. But Faires and Santos each said the short timeline of the production means they'll have to crank their efforts up to 11 as they'll attempt to pull it all together very quickly.

"We are not rehearsing until June 18, (a week before the curtain rises)," Faires said. "We're waiting until everyone gets here. We've been working on getting music to everyone, but it'll be a bit of a theater reunion/theater boot camp."

Santos, who sketched the outline of the show, said directing "Encore" is "completely ass backward" from the way a normal production occurs.

"It's not a comfortable place," he said, "but the talent on the stage will be bursting from the seams. We'll have to work quickly and figure out what works and what doesn't."

Former cast members are coming back to Redding from all over, including Jana Pulcini-Leard, former Cascade Theatre general manager, who portrayed Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* (2014). She'll be making the trip up from the Los Angeles area. And Rebecca Mosley, who was in *Mary Poppins*

(2016) and *Oliver* (2018), is coming with her family from Tennessee.

"We live outside of Nashville and we're road-tripping back for the concert," Mosley said in an email. "We're bringing the whole family. Even the dog."

And while the show is a walk down memory lane for Santos, he said its importance can't be understated.

"People sometimes pass (the Cascade) by and take it for granted," he said. "I just want to say in order to keep the community moving forward with theater and entertainment, it's important to prioritize their support for it. You can't replace what art in general brings to your community. Even if you're not a theater person, come out because it supports the Cascade Theatre."

"Plus," added Faires, "we're going to make it a night to remember."

Encore

Numbers to be performed from the following Cascade Theatre musicals

- Matilda** (2022)
- Elf** (2019)
- Mamma Mia** (2019)
- Shrek** (2019)
- Oliver** (2018)
- Tarzan** (2017)
- Rock of Ages** (2017)
- Mary Poppins** (2016)
- Peter Pan** (2015)
- Wizard of Oz** (2014)
- Fiddler on the Roof** (2013)
- Hairspray** (2012)
- Sound of Music** (2011)
- Steppin' Out** (2010)
- Once on This Island** (2008)
- Swing, the Musical** (2007)
- Side by Side by Sondheim** (2005)
- Excerpts from **The Dance Project Collection** (2003-2010)

Saturday, June 24th



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PHOTOS / Michael Burke



Above, Jana Pulcini-Leard, former Cascade Theatre general manager who portrayed Dorothy in the 2014 Cascade production of *The Wizard of Oz*, is returning to perform a number from the musical. She's shown here with Brian Bisetti (Scarecrow), Ryan Nemanic (Tin Man) and the late Matthew Goodman (Cowardly Lion). Left, Rebecca Mosley portrayed Nancy in *Oliver* (2018). Here she is shown with Josh Wright who played Bill Sikes. Mosley is coming all the way from Tennessee to perform. Bisetti, Nemanic and Wright are still located in the Redding area and are expected to participate in the show, Encore producer Tara Lihn Faires said. The beloved Goodman, who tragically died in a single car accident in 2021, "will be there in spirit," she added.

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Asleep at the Wheel

JUNE 14



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ENCORE!

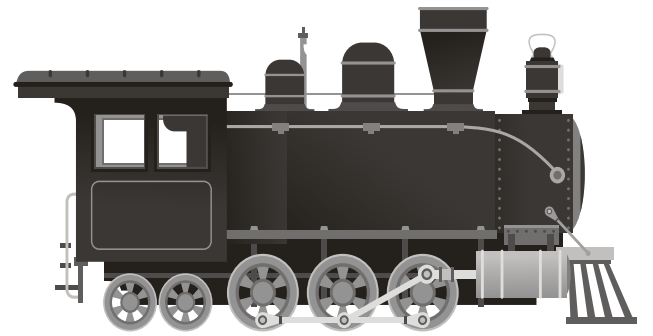
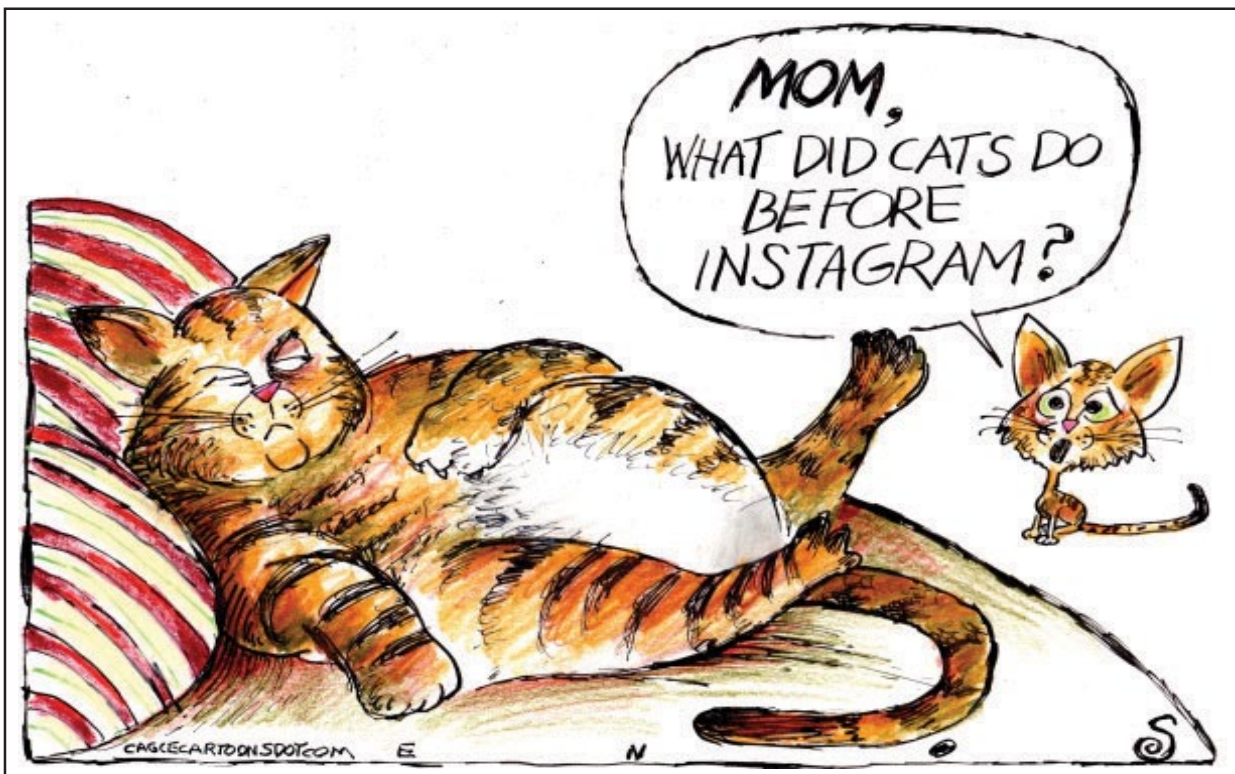
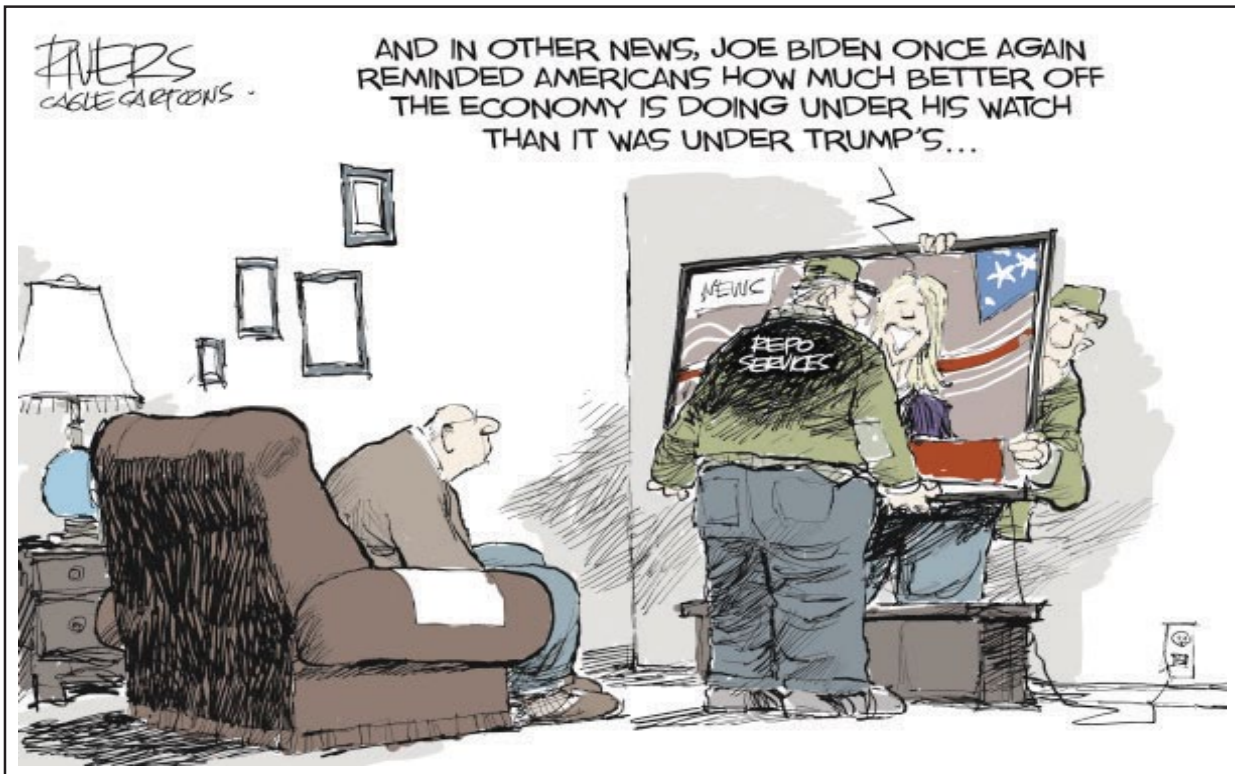
A night of singing, stories, & sequins:

Fundraiser for the Cascade Theatre

An evening Gala performance hosted by James Santos and Tara Faires. Relive the musicals once seen on the Cascade stage sung by past & present cast members with live music.

June 24, 2023
Doors/Silent Auction 6pm
show at 7:30pm
Directed by James Santos

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Siskiyou Arts Museum celebrates history of Dunsmuir's Railroad Days

"Celebrating Dunsmuir Railroad Days Past" is the theme of the Second Saturday Art Opening Reception at the Siskiyou Arts Museum in Dunsmuir on June 10 from 4 to 7 p.m. The event continues through July 1.

Dunsmuir Railroad Days is a long running tradition dating back to 1941. This show honors the role of the railroad in the city of Dunsmuir and looks back at previous events connected with Railroad Days. A sampling of posters, buttons, t-shirts and programs of previous years will be on display. Model railroad fans will enjoy the model train set up by Michael Wright.

Dunsmuir Railroad Days will take place the following weekend, June 16, 17 and 18 and SAM may stay open later on June 17. Watch for announcements.

The Siskiyou Arts Museum 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. Phone: 530-235-4711. Business hours now through December are Thursday through Sunday, noon to 4 p.m.

For more information, visit them on the web at siskiyouartsmuseum.org or their Facebook page.

AFTER FIVE The North State Magazine

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Advertising and editorial deadline for the July 2023 issue is Wednesday, June 14

No telephone call submissions; email or regular mail only.

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Redding Markets

SATURDAYS

April 1st – December 9th
7:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Behind Redding City Hall
777 Cypress Ave

SUNDAYS

June 4th – October 8th
8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Sundial Bridge Overflow Lot
800 Sundial Bridge Drive

TUESDAYS

Marilyn Miller Market
June 6th – October 10th
7:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Next to Dairy Queen
1700 Churn Creek Road

Burney Market

WEDNESDAYS

June 7th – Sept. 27th
3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Burney Sporting Goods
37427 Highway 299 East

Anderson Market

THURSDAYS

June 8th – October 12th
7:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
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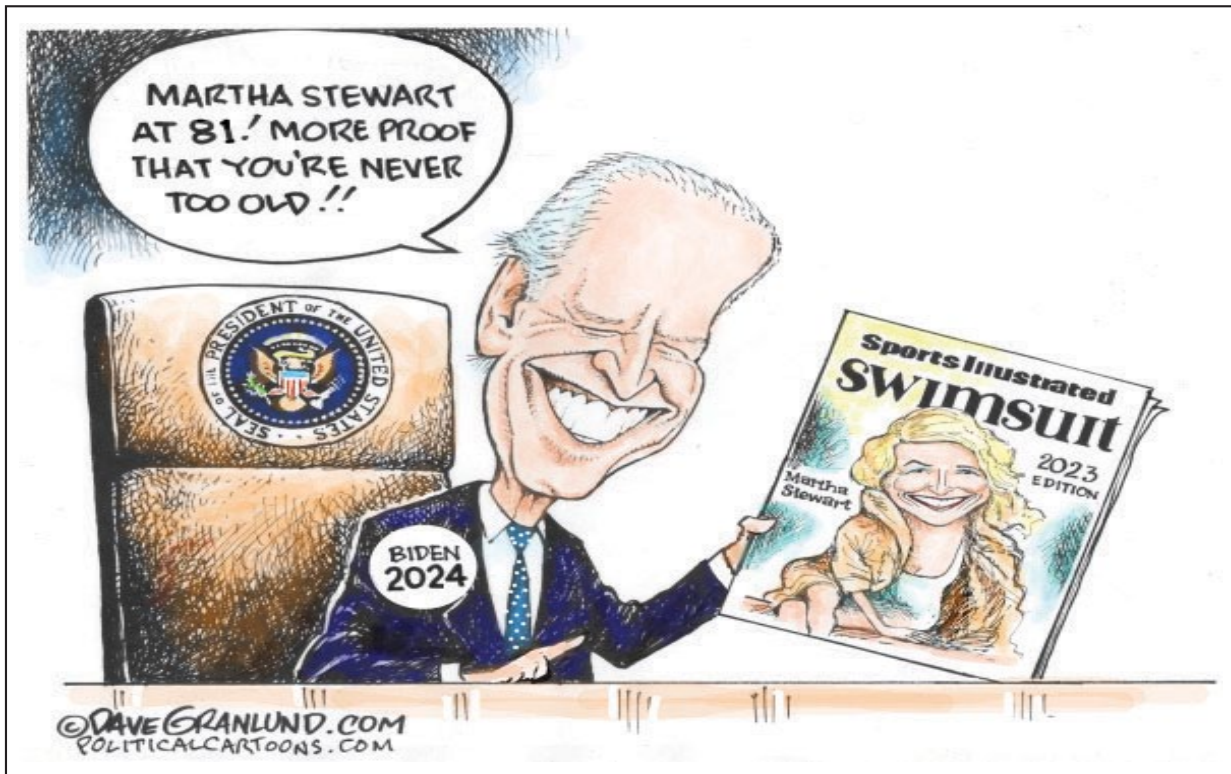
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All in a day's deletions

By Peter Funt

I spend the first half hour of my day reading — or, to be more accurate, deleting — emails. Lacking the nerve to “unsubscribe” for fear I’ll miss something of moderate importance, I trash an average of 75 messages every morning, without ever getting beyond the subject line.



Guaranteed to go: Emails beginning with my first name or warning of my last chance to do something. I also delete anything containing an exclamation point.

Among the subject lines on a recent Tuesday: “Our editors want to hear from you!” (The Hill). “Last chance: save on essential spring stories” (Des Moines Register). “Just Arrived!!” (GolfEtail Deals). “Peter, this deal will be music to your ears” (SiriusXM). “Peter, your bonus content is available” (USA Today). “Peter: Love this for you!” (Etsy).

According to a company called Content Marketing Institute, the “10 Best Practices to Write the Perfect Email Subject Line,” include: “Make it personalized,” “Use power words,” “Appeal to vanity,” and “Create FOMO” (fear of missing out). Clearly, none of these practices works on me.

I receive a lot of email newsletters, few of which I actually read. I’m especially annoyed by contrived chattiness, with greetings such as, “Hi, it’s Ashley. Today is Tuesday, so we’re almost halfway to the weekend!” The subject line on one newsletter I quickly deleted was, “Tuesday, I am fading” (The Daily Skimm).

I rely on several news services for overnight updates, but I tend to immediately trash all emails concerning: Tucker Carlson, debate over the deficit, the crypto market, or warnings about El Niño.

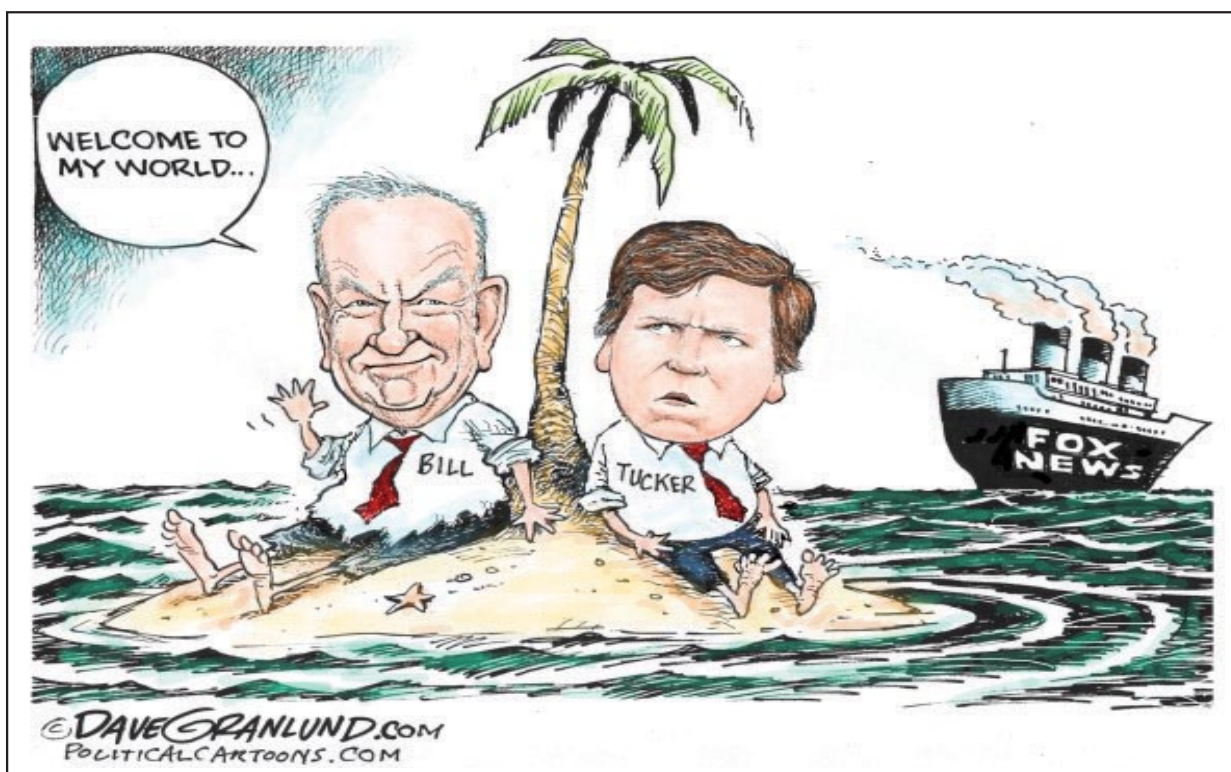
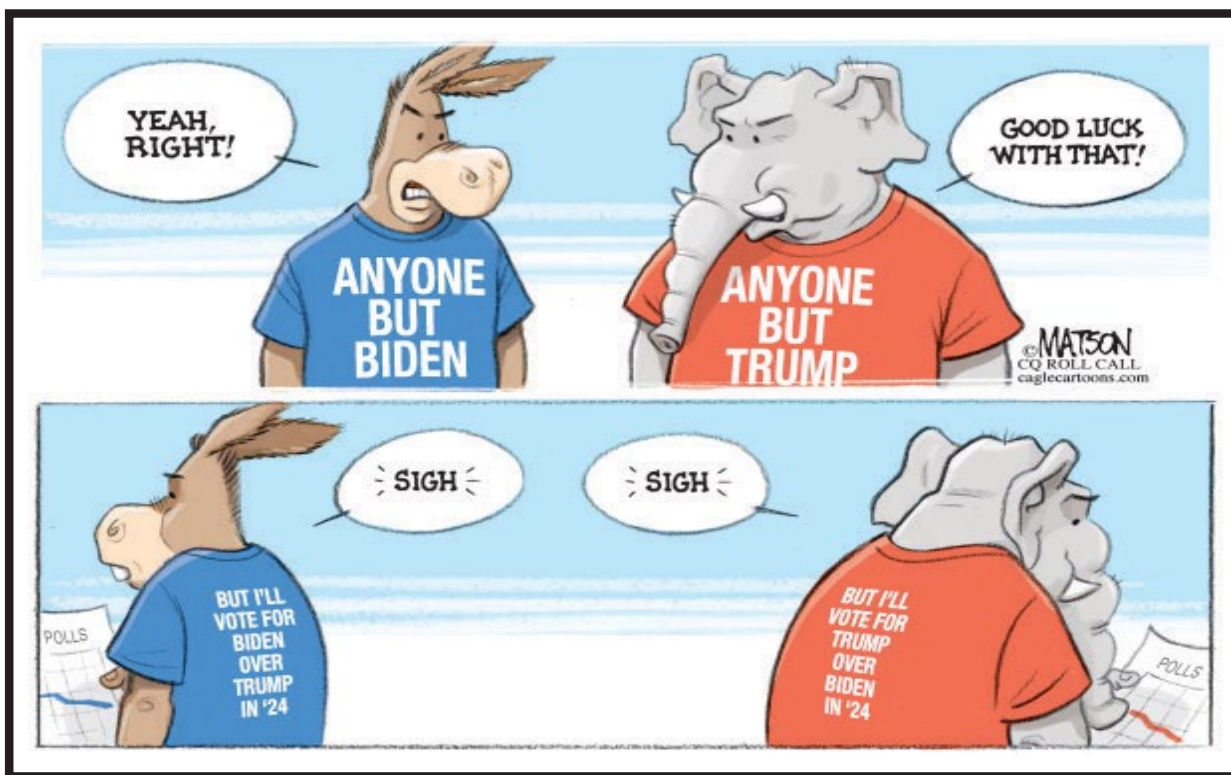
Tuesday’s deletions also had these subject lines: “No degree? No problem.” (New York Times). “Scram, roboscams” (Axios). “Bay Area city fights to preserve its rotten legacy” (San Jose Mercury News).

Since I work in the entertainment industry I must delete many showbiz emails, including: “Schwarzenegger Gets Candid on Career...” (Hollywood Reporter). Also: “Journalist Spit on By Johnny Depp’s Cannes Director Speaks Out” (Variety).

I frequently write about politics, but the barrage of worthless emails in that arena is often overwhelming. On Tuesday I trashed without reading: “Trump as President in 2024...” (Donald J. Trump). “Don’t believe Donald Trump” (Conde Nast Spotlight).

According to published reports, the number of emails sent each day worldwide is close to 350 billion. That’s a whole lot of FOMO.

Copyright 2023 Peter Funt distributed by Cagle Cartoons newspaper syndicate. Peter Funt’s latest book is “Playing POTUS: The Power of America’s Acting Presidents,” about comedians who impersonated presidents.



Cedarville art gallery to feature works by UNR fine arts students

Studio 540, a contemporary art gallery located at 540 Main St., Cedarville in Modoc County, will host "Art Now: Recent Work by Graduate Fine Art Students at University of Nevada, Reno" from June 2 to July 2.

This exhibition features works in a wide range of media and modes including photography, sculpture, painting, prints, drawing, and video.



Leaving a successful career in Silicon Valley, Anna Newman decided to focus on a career in photography. Her black and white photographs document the Nevada Northern Railway Museum in Ely.

Newman is just one of many artists whose work will be on display.

There will be a public opening on June 2 from 5:30 to 8 p.m., coinciding with Cedarville's First Friday monthly festival. The artists will give a walkthrough of the exhibition at the opening, between 5:30 and 6:30 p.m.

Gallery hours are Friday and Saturday from 1 to 8 p.m.; Sunday and Monday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.; or by appointment (call Nick, 415.350.0994).

NorCal OUTreach Project hosting events in June

The NorCal OUTreach Project, serving the LGBTQ+ community in Northern California for over 14 years, will be hosting a number of events in the Redding area to celebrate June 2023 Pride month. Everyone is welcome to the following annual events.

June 3-4, the Sundial Bridge Lights Up in rainbow colors.

June 3, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Redding's annual Gay Pride Festival, Redding City Hall Sculpture Park, 777 Cypress. There will be entertainment, booths, food and music.

June 3, 7 to 9 p.m., NorCal OUTreach Project sponsors a professional Drag Show at the historic Cascade Theatre. Six professional drag performers from Sacramento, the Bay Area and Redding will perform to popular tunes in what organizers said is a world of pure extravaganza and unapologetic self-expression. The theme, The Show Must Go On! is for ages 18 years and older. Tickets are on sale at cascadetheatre.org.

Executive director named for Jefferson Live! LLC

The JPR Foundation has named Shelley Austin the new executive director of Jefferson Live! LLC. Jefferson Live is the non-profit entity which operates Redding's historic Cascade Theatre while also working to restore Medford's Holly Theatre into a community performing arts venue. Austin assumes the role full-time on June 1.

Working with Managing Director Alex Hauf-Belden, she will oversee the management of the historic Cascade Theatre in Redding, which was restored and re-opened by the JPR Foundation in 2004.

"Shelley will be a welcome addition to our management, and I look forward to the expertise she brings to our organization," Hauf Belden said in a news release.

"My heart is in the arts and always has been," says Austin. "I have worked for and developed several arts organizations as I believe we all crave and deserve, inspiration and awareness provided by the arts."

Austin most recently served as the executive director of the Kootenai Environmental Alliance in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. She was previously executive director with the Jackson County Library Foundation for eight years and served as Oregon Shakespeare Festival Director of Corporate and Foundation Support. She has a B.A. in Economics from the University of Colorado, Boulder.



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Nothing went right for a carjacker in East Memphis, Tennessee, on March 10, WREG-TV reported.

An unnamed 22-year-old victim pulled into his own driveway that night, only to have a man yank the driver's door open and point a gun at him. He asked for the victim's wallet and keys to the 2006 Honda Element, then tried to back out of the driveway, but as he did so, he rolled down the window.

That's when the victim noticed the thief's gun didn't have a barrel, so he reached in and punched the car-jacker in the face, causing the car to clip the side of the house and run into a pole.

The carjacker jumped out and ran away; police were able to gather prints from the car and a recovered phone, but no arrests have been made.

As authorities in Gainesville, Georgia, searched the home of 75-year-old Alan Neil Thur after receiving a tip that Thur had child pornography on his computer, Thur sat at his computer ... "viewing five images of child pornography," Hall County Sheriff's deputies wrote in a report.

WSB-TV reported that Thur was charged with seven counts of sexual exploitation of a minor and booked into the county jail.

Flipping the bird is a protected, "God-given" right in Canada, NPR reported, after Judge Dennis Galiatsatos ruled that "offending someone is not a crime."

The decision stemmed from a court case between two un-neighborly neighbors in a Montreal suburb.

"The complainants are free to clutch their pearls in the face of such an insult," Galiatsatos said. "However, the police department and the 911 dispatching service have more important priorities to address."

Police officers were called to a home in Mill Creek, Washington, on a report of items stolen from the house, Fox13-TV reported.

As they investigated, they discovered someone was living in the home's upstairs loft — with a bed, drug paraphernalia and half-eaten food.

The oblivious homeowners did say they had noticed the smell of cigarette smoke. Police suggested the homeowners wait until the person returned, and it didn't take long: The following day they arrested Daniel Tomoiaga, 24. In his

NEWS of the WEIRD



The Blackpool Zoo in England is hiring! Wanted: "A team of people to join our Visitor Services team as 'Seagull Deterrents.'" You, too, can dress up in a large bird costume and scare away pesky seagulls, which steal food from both visitors and animal enclosures. The Daily Mail reported that candidates must be "outgoing, as you need to be comfortable wearing a bird costume," and hours will be variable.

possession, they found the stolen items, along with meth and fentanyl. No word on how long he'd been staying at the home.

Artificial intelligence has infiltrated television news in China, Oddity Central reported.

Ren Xiaorong, a virtual news anchor, was introduced on March 12 to viewers of People's Daily.

"For 365 days, 24 hours, I will be reporting the news for the whole year, round the clock, without rest," (Redundant) Ren told viewers.

"Whether at news sites or back in the studio, you will always see me."

She has absorbed the talents of "thousands of news anchors" and will continue to evolve based on feedback. Ren

can answer many questions, but her answers are all within the parameters of the Chinese Communist Party's rhetoric.

In the early 2000s, Joseph DeRuvo Jr. of Norwalk, Connecticut, had developed painful bunions on his feet, and his doctor suggested surgery to remove them, The New York Times reported.

While awaiting his operation, he started going barefoot, and he soon realized his feet felt much better. "The tactile feedback just kind of makes everything else going on feel a little bit smoother," he said.

Now at age 59, DeRuvo has been barefoot for two decades, and he says navigating weather and terrain is easier than navigating people. He is sometimes asked to leave a

business and on occasion, he fights back.

"If I'm feeling feisty," he said. His wife added, "We get thrown out of a lot of places." But his shoelessness contributes to a mindful life: "I pay attention to every single step I take," DeRuvo said.

KOKH-TV reported that a woman in Dickson, Oklahoma, was attacked by her neighbor's pet monkey, Jack, resulting in her ear being ripped "almost completely off my head," the victim, Brittany Parker, said.

"He started grabbing handfuls of my hair and just ripped it out," she added.

Dickson police were called, and as they looked for the monkey, two shots were fired.

"The shots came from the area of the victim's residence.

Officers went back to the house and found that a family member of the victim shot and killed the primate," police said. Parker said she will need plastic surgery to fix her ear.

P.J. Carter, Jack's owner, is distraught: "I lost my best friend and pet due to it all," he said. "He was my super monkey. I feel sorry for (Parker) and her injury. My friend and pet Jack lost his life over a massive misunderstanding and the lack of knowledge and education with an exotic animal," Carter added. The district attorney has declined to file charges.

News of the Weird reported in July 2022 that Dean Mayhew of Sussex, England, had his Tesco grocery loyalty card QR code tattooed on his arm. While Mayhew claims he has "no regrets" about the body art, Met-ro News reported that after eight months, he's saved only 18 British pounds' worth of points.

His goal is to save enough by the end of the year to pay for his Christmas food.

"Sometimes when I go in there, the cashier doesn't believe it's real — I have to tell them, 'just scan it, please!' and they're shocked," he said. "I love the tattoo so much."

Not a moment too soon, Oscar Mayer announced that it is changing the name of its iconic Wienermobile to the Frankmobile, CNN reported.

The company says the name change "pays homage" to its new recipe for hot dogs, which will roll out this summer. Uh-huh.

A company spokesperson said the change is a test; they'll have "to see if it cuts the mustard" with fans. The Wienermobile first appeared in 1936; 23 of the eye-catching vehicles now travel around the country.

In vino, vie ... or something like that. Lillian Ip of Cheltenham, Australia, was stranded in the country's remote bushland for five days in late April after she took a wrong turn and became stuck in mud, United Press International reported.

Sgt. Martin Torpey of the Wodonga police said Ip had planned just a day trip, "so she had taken a couple of snacks and lollies with her, but no water. The only liquid Lillian, who doesn't drink, had with her was a bottle of wine she had bought as a gift for her mother."

Without cell service, Ip couldn't call for help. Her family

—Please See Page 18

Visit Weaverville & Trinity County

- First Saturdays in Weaverville - June 3
- Lewiston Peddlers Faire - June 3
- LaGrange Classic Mountain Bike Race - June 3
- Weaverville Farmers Market - Wednesdays

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Ray Benson (wearing his "Feelin' Haggard" t-shirt) and Katie Shore on fiddle and co-lead vocals of the group Asleep at the Wheel.

Asleep at the Wheel's Benson may still be feelin' a bit haggard

Group slated to make a June 14 tour stop in Redding

More than 50 years ago, Asleep at the Wheel's Ray Benson wrote in his journal that he wanted to form a band to bring the roots of American pop music into the present - and he has done exactly that, traversing the globe as an ambassador of Western swing music and introducing its sound to generation after generation.

"I'm the reason it's still together, but the reason it's popular is because we've had the greatest singers and players," Benson said in the bio section of his website. "When someone joins the band, I say, 'Learn everything that's ever been done, then put your own stamp on it.' I love to hear how they interpret what we do. I'm just a singer and a songwriter, and a pretty good guitar player, but my best talent is convincing people to jump on board and play this music."

Although the lineup has changed numerous times since its inception, Benson's mission has never wavered. Asleep at the Wheel will make a tour stop with a 7:30 p.m. show, June 14, at the Cascade Theatre in Redding. Tickets are available at cascadetheatre.org.

Raised in Philadelphia, Benson dropped out of college in 1969 and moved to a farm near Paw Paw, West Virginia, to figure out how to put a band together with two friends, Lucky Oceans and LeRoy Preston. Although he gravitated toward honky-tonk and swing music, Benson stood on the opposite side of the generation gap - a young man opposed to the Vietnam War.

"Music became a rallying cry for these disparate groups," he recalls in his bio. "My reaction was we need to take this music to my generation to show them it's not the political posturing that is important, it is the soul of the music."

In 1969, when Benson began putting together his long-haired hippie band, Asleep at the Wheel, Merle Haggard, the country music legend and longtime Palo Cedro resident, was then at the top of the charts with his song "Okie from Muskogee"

In a Rolling Stone story the day after Haggard died in 2016, they noted the song was a call to arms against exactly the sort of counter-cultural revolution Benson had in mind with the Wheel. And yet, that did not keep Benson and Haggard from becoming collaborators, fellow travelers and, yes, dope-smoking buddies later when they met on the road.

When Rolling Stone asked Benson what songs of Haggard's first had an impact on him, he told them "Sing Me Back Home" and "Okie From Muskogee."

"But 'Okie' was a little disturbing," Benson said, "because we were hippies who were against the war in Vietnam and we were like, 'I love Merle Haggard. Why is he doing this song?' It was very tentative times in the Sixties, where it was either us or them, and Merle personified that.

"But Merle was actually everything. We were young hippies, but we loved country music and it really unified us, because the country was so divided in 1969 over the Vietnam War. It was amazing as time went on to see how Willie Nelson and Haggard were able to bring these disparate groups together."

Haggard played and recorded often with Asleep at the Wheel over the years, appearing on all three of the group's Bob Wills tribute albums.

Wills and His Texas Playboys were a major influence on the music of Asleep at the Wheel. According to Benson, the band initially played hippie-country-western-rock, before he heard Haggard's album, *A Tribute to the Best Damn Fiddle Player in the World (or, My Salute to Bob Wills)*, which was released in 1970.

Less than a year after Haggard's passing, Benson and Dale Watson were releasing their duets album, *Dale & Ray*, in which they recorded a tribute to the country legend titled "Feelin' Haggard" where they used titles of Haggard's songs for the lyrics.

"If I would think about it, I would never have written a song using his song titles,

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but they worked so well and conveyed the feeling," Benson said. "So I went, 'Hey, this song is working.' And the combination of our voices is the magic in it. When you sing 'Feelin' Haggard,' you can tell we really mean it, because Merle meant so much to Dale and myself. He was an inspiration."

As for Asleep at the Wheel, the group had some success in the early 1970s and toured as country singer Stoney Edwards' band in 1971. But it was one of the band's compositions, "The Letter That Johnny Walker Read," that took them to new heights becoming a national Top 10 country hit in 1975.

For the remainder of the decade, Asleep at the Wheel rode the wave of success, charting multiple singles and developing an international following. The Academy of Country Music named them the top touring band for 1977 and the band won the first of 10 career Grammys in 1979.

"We've always said that we're a live band," Benson emphasized in his bio. "We'll make great records but it's all about being on stage. The best promotion for a band is a great live show."

By 1981, the band faced a turning point. Most of its members had departed and the disco craze took over the music industry. While the band still played shows, they went without a label deal for six years. Benson made ends meet by producing commercials for Budweiser.

"The one reason that I kept going is that every week a fan would come up and be so appreciative, saying, 'Don't ever stop,'" Benson said. "We weren't drawing a lot of people, but they'd say, 'You're the only band that goes out on the road and does this old, cool music.' That's when I knew it was more than just a living – that I was blessed with caretaking a form of music."

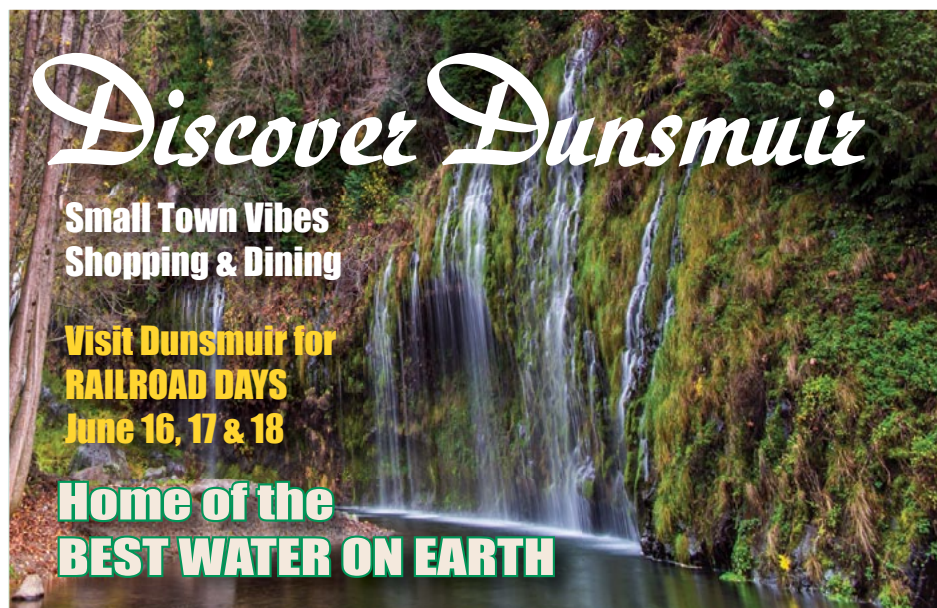
The 1990s put Asleep at the Wheel back on the music map for good with the band regularly playing between 180 and 200 dates a year. Even though some of its members and audiences represent a new generation, it's that far-reaching appeal that remains a testament to Benson's initial vision more than 50 years ago.

"How do you keep this music going?" Benson asks. "Well, you've got to have some young people. If young people aren't doing this, then we're just a museum – and I don't want to be a museum."

The band's most recent studio album, their 26th, was *Half a Hundred Years* released in 2021. The 19-tracks are a mixture of re-recorded Asleep at the Wheel material and new songs. It received positive reviews with Gary Whitehouse of the website *A Green Man Review* saying: "We're lucky to have a band like Asleep at the Wheel still playing this kind of classic American music."

Asleep at the Wheel band

In addition to Benson (lead guitar, lead vocals), the line-up of Asleep at the Wheel and the year they joined the group are: Katie Shore on fiddle and co-lead vocals (2014); Dennis Ludiker on fiddle, mandolin and backing vocals (2016); Connor Forsyth on piano, organ, accordion and backing vocals (2016); Josh Hoag on bass (2017); Flavio Pasquetto on steel guitars (2019); Jason Baczynski on drums and percussion (2020); and Joey Colarusso on saxophone (2021).



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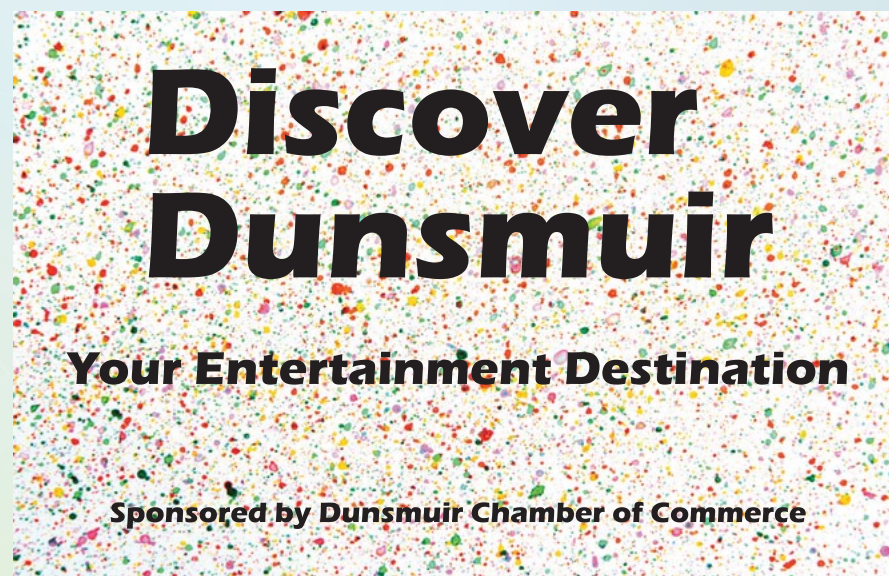


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SNWMF returns for the first time since 2018 following pandemic and passing of founder

The Sierra Nevada World Music Festival (SNWMF) is back on the California festival circuit June 16-18 as it returns to the Mendocino County Fairgrounds in Boonville following a four-year hiatus. In the past, Epiphany Artists have featured many of the top reggae and world music artists in the world and this year is no exception.

Among those scheduled to perform at the family-friendly festival are Beres Hammond, Luciano and reggae roots legend Burning Spear in his only California show this summer.

The three-day camping and music festival has always been held on the summer solstice and Father's Day weekend from 1994 up until 2018 when the festival's co-founder and promoter, Warren Smith, became ill and later passed away in 2021 at the age of 75.

Smith's wife, business partner and co-producer, Gretchen Franz Smith, decided the time was finally right to bring it back.

"Our last festival was in Boonville in 2018 and we cancelled (the 2019 show) due to Warren's health. And then there was the pandemic," Franz Smith said in an email. "Warren died in January 2021 and SNWMF had been on hold and was not really on my radar. I needed time to heal and my energy was focused on day to day."

Franz Smith said she had no thought of revitalizing SNWMF in 2021, then briefly flirted with the idea in 2022.

"And then it was just time," she said of bringing it back this year. "It's been challenging to start up again after five years and without Warren at the helm, (but) SNWMF is a great team and this team is making it happen."

Born in Sacramento, Warren Smith promoted his first reggae show at San Francisco's Winterland Auditorium in July 1975. Inner Circle, Dennis Brown and Toots and The Maytals performed. He also established Epiphany Records in 1976 where he produced Fully Fullwood and Soul Syndicate.

In a 2007 reggae blog by Bob Doran, he interviewed Smith about his life and the creation of SNWMF, which grew out of another festival in the early 1990s, Gathering of the Vibes.

In the mid-1980s, Smith said he had transitioned into being a stock trader for six years, "but also booked a few shows, Eek a Mouse, Leroy Sibbles, a few others that I still had a strong relationship with."



Among those scheduled to perform June 16-18 at the Sierra Nevada World Music Festival in Boonville are: (top left) Kabaka Pyramid, who won the 2023 Grammy for Best Reggae Album; (bottom left) Luciano; (above middle) Burning Spear; (above right) Beres Hammond. All photos including festival stage (bottom page) / Lee Abel.



Warren Smith

It was around 1989 when he said he was approached by a Berkeley student who had put on a show on the Russian River with Strictly Roots and the Itals that, for various reasons, Smith said was both a success and a disaster.

"They had all these problems and he couldn't go back there," Smith told Doran. "He came to me and said he was going to do another show, he wanted professional help and offered me a good sum of money to do the booking. For the next three years I booked Gathering of the Vibes and did the marketing as well."

By the third year, Smith said the young man was pretty much burned out so Smith brought in a partner, Bob Wallen, a college friend from their Chico State days, and in 1994 the Sierra Nevada World Music Festival was born.

"With Gathering of the Vibes it was reggae with Grateful Dead jamband type stuff," Smith told Doran. "When I did it, I wanted more cultures so we did reggae and world music. I knew the music pretty well and I wanted to bring all these gems out from Jamaica. And we succeeded. We've had some remarkable shows."

When Wallen left, Warren and Gretchen created SNWMF LLC where Warren handled the booking and marketing while Gretchen was the operations manager.

SNWMF began in Marysville where Gathering of the Vibes had taken place. But they moved to Angels Camp after having problems in Marysville where Smith said gangs were attacking those at the festival. After five years at Angels Camp, it was basically the head of the sheriff's office and then later others in the community who forced them to eventually look elsewhere. They finally settled in Boonville and haven't looked back since.

"It was so different in Boonville," Smith told Doran. "We were working with the people like ourselves, people who would come to the show."

Franz Smith said she has so many memories from all of the many festivals that it was hard to select just a few.

"I remember meeting LKJ for the first time, Gregory Isaacs sitting on a bench under a tree in Angels Camp during festival set up - he spent a week with us. Visions of some remarkable artists like Salif Keita, Alton Ellis, Los Van Van, Toots - too many too name. There are flashes of familiar faces, many of whom I know will be at SNWMF 2023."

Franz Smith said the artists scheduled to perform this year are amazing, including the headliners for the three-day festival.

"On Friday, 'the Messenjah' Luciano will be performing in California for the first time in seven years," she said. "On Saturday, the King of Lover's Rock, Beres Hammond, headlines, and then closing the festival on Sunday night is the legendary Burning Spear. We are also

presenting Kabaka Pyramid who recently won the Grammy for Best Reggae Album, and also the "King of Ska" Derrick Morgan."

In the press release for this year's event, they touted the family-friendly atmosphere which they said makes Sierra Nevada WMF stand out from the rest.

"Organizers stand firm in their tradition of admitting children 12 and under free of charge (with a ticketed adult). This makes the weekend much more affordable for families," they stated. "Activities such as drumming, dance, painting, bubbles, and bouncy castles await youngsters in the Kid Zone, and the festival parade is always a highlight of the weekend. A dedicated onsite family camping area is available, and spaces here are allocated on arrival."

Live music wafts from two stages: the Valley Stage, which is the main music bowl, and the intimate Village Stage, located in a shady grove of trees. The third stage is the Dance Hall, an indoor venue that hosts DJs and selectors, and continues late night, finishing with a silent disco. With many paved paths, the fairgrounds, organizers said, is a safe and ADA accessible venue.

The event will also have an eclectic food court and an international marketplace, as well as on-site camping. Percussion workshops and yoga classes along with other programming are available for the adults.

The Mendocino County Fairgrounds are located on Highway 28 in Boonville in the Anderson Valley about three-and-a-half to four hours southwest of Redding.

More information can be found online at snwmf.com

"SNWMF 2023 is for Warren," Franz Smith said. "We are following the path he left and remain dedicated to nurturing a world family united in celebration of the universal spirit of music. Warren created SNWMF as a place where this thinking is realized. Carrying forth this vision is the greatest tribute to him."



The main Valley Stage at the Mendocino County Fairgrounds in Boonville.

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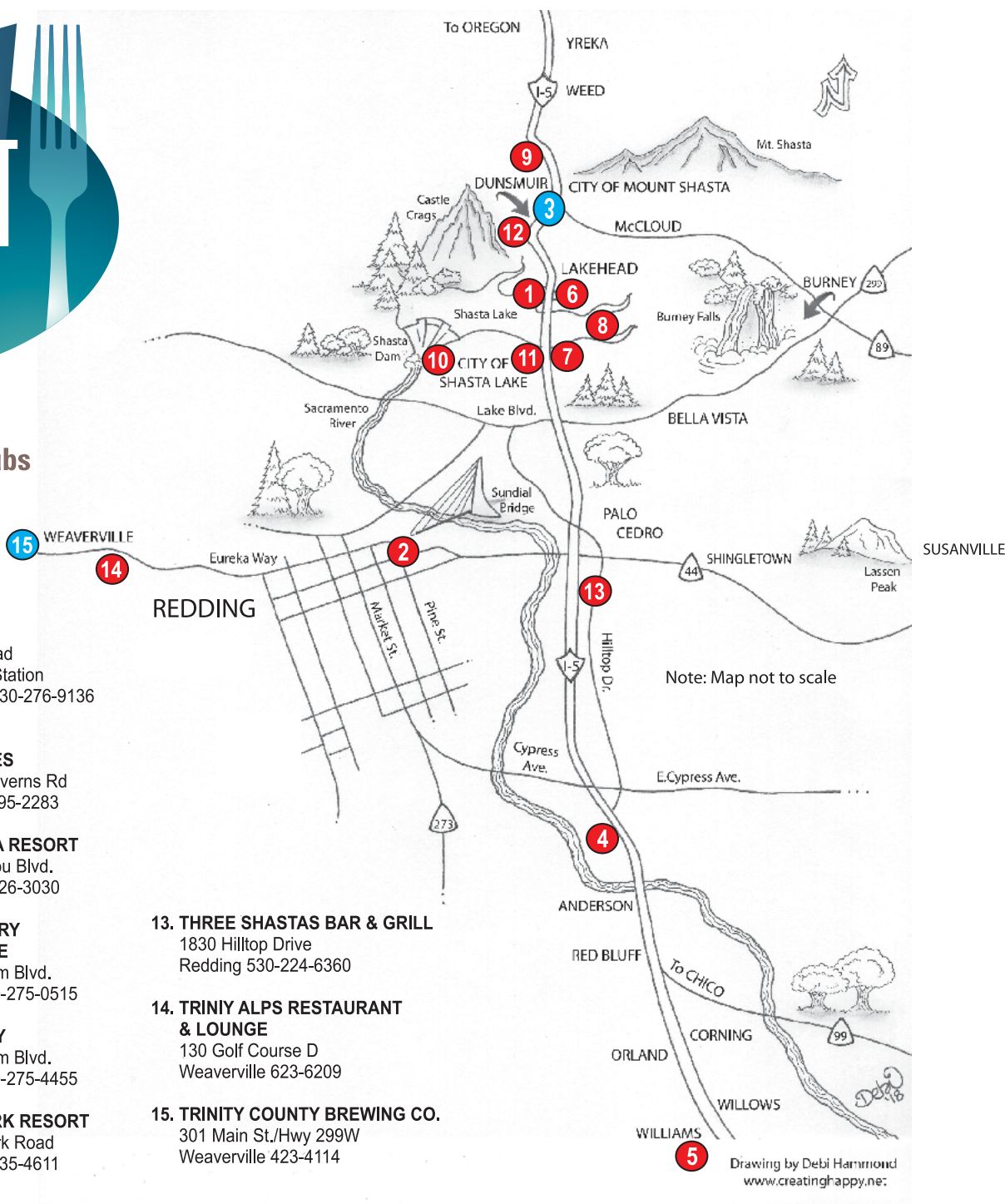
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NEWS of the WEIRD

-From Page 8

notified police about her absence, and a four-day search over the region included helicopters. Finally, Ip was spotted waving her arms, and police were directed to her location. "I thought I was going to die there," she said.

Students will go to just about any lengths to get out of a test – even outer space. So it was in Hemlock, Michigan when an enterprising student reported an alien invasion to avoid a math test, according to KTVZ-TV.

The student reported that ETs came from the skies in flying saucers and landed on the playground, and the rumors quickly began circulating amongst the student body on social media.

But Superintendent Don Killingbeck wasn't having it: "We have thoroughly investigated the situation, and there is no evidence of any alien activity on our school grounds," he said. The prankster has been disciplined, he added.

British IBM IT professional Ian Clifford, 50, has not worked since September 2008 as he battled mental-health issues and stage 4 leukemia, Business Insider reported.

Clifford has been on sick leave for 15 years, collecting a salary of almost \$68,000 per year after reaching an agreement with IBM in 2013.

But in February 2022, Clifford testified in an employment tribunal that he had been treated unfairly because he hadn't had a salary increase since the 2013 agreement went into place. He argued that inflation was causing his income to "wither" and sought a pay raise of 2.5%.

"Your mortgage doesn't go down because you are sick," he noted. This spring, Paul Housego, an employment judge, rejected Clifford's argument, saying Clifford was treated more favorably than others because he was being paid without having to work. Clifford plans to appeal.

Officers from Boone County and Watauga County, North Carolina, tried to chase down Joshua Minton, 34, after he was pulled over for reckless driving, CBS News reported.

Minton ran into an "undeveloped area," where law enforcement got an unlikely helping ... hoof.

Cows in the field "quickly assisted our officers by leading them directly to where the suspect was hiding," police announced in a Facebook post.

"The cows communicated with the officers as best they could and finally just had the officers follow them to the suspect's location." Minton was arrested on multiple charges.

Two brothers in Langkawi, Malaysia, were detained after crashing the car one was driving into a lamp post, CNN reported.

It's not hard to imagine why driving

might have been difficult for them: They are 6 and 3 years old.

Police Chief Shariman Ashari said the Toyota Vios they were in attracted attention from other drivers, who thought the driver might be intoxicated.

The boys sneaked out of their home and took the car, hoping to buy a toy car at the local shops.

"Mama is at home and we are going to the store," the 6-year-old said. "We want to buy a black car," the 3-year-old elaborated. The only injury was a cut to one boy's chin.

Spring weather can be unpredictable, but a man in Ankara, Turkey, got an up-close glimpse of exactly what intense winds can do, Metro News reported.

As Onur Kalmaz looked out his window, trying to check on his car during the storm, he captured on video a sofa flying from a balcony of a 35-story block of apartments nearby.

Kalmaz said the sofa crashed into other buildings before falling to the ground. "No one was hurt, but we were pretty scared," he said.

Two families went at each other at Walt Disney World's Magic Kingdom, Fox35-TV reported – all over who could stand next to a sign commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Disney Co.

According to police, one family was standing in front of the sign when another group wanted to snap a photo. When the second group asked the first to step aside, punches were thrown.

At least one person was treated for injuries at the site, but they didn't want to press charges. Two people were removed from the park.

David Neal, 52, is the night manager at the 4th Avenue South Hilton Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee – or he was, until a bizarre incident happened.

WKRN-TV reported that around 5 a.m. one day, Neal allegedly made a key card to enter an occupied room and suck on the toes of the sleeping guest.

When officers arrived at the hotel, Neal admitted entering the room but said he had done so because he smelled smoke and wanted to check on the occupant. He was arrested at his home and charged with aggravated burglary and assault.

When a 36-year-old woman in Providence, Rhode Island, couldn't afford conventional dental care for her painful teeth, a friend recommended "Yoriki," WPRI-TV reported.

The woman contacted Altagracia Yorquis Adames, 57, and went to her home basement "dental practice."

There, Yoriki allegedly removed instruments from a dresser drawer – some that were visibly rusty – then numbed the victim's molar and pulled on it until it came out.

She then numbed and drilled on the patient's front teeth. Later that

night, when her pain worsened, she texted with Yoriki, who told her to take painkillers and ice her mouth.

The next day, the victim checked into a hospital and was told she was "very sick." Police said Yoriki was a licensed dentist in the Dominican Republic but not licensed in Rhode Island; she is due back in court in August.

Even with declining occurrences of tornadic storms, Kansas is famous for its twisters (thanks, Dorothy). Some cause extensive destruction, but on May 9, one tornado took precise aim on an unexpected target: a coconut cream pie.

KSNT-TV reported that a baker in Clay Center, Nancy Kimbrough, filed an emergency report with the details: Her son was delivering baked goods to the Clay Center Country Club when the storm boiled up.

The wind was so strong that it ripped the meringue right off the pie and splattered it across the parking lot. The club repaired the pie with Cool Whip and served it to guests anyway, and Kimbrough got a good laugh out of the incident.

"It'll probably never happen again," she said, therefore inviting another pie-eating storm.

A tourist identified as Mr. Zhang checked into a hotel in Lhasa, Tibet, only to discover a foul smell in his room, CNN reported.

He stuck it out for half a day, thinking it might be his own feet or the restaurant downstairs, but finally he asked to be moved.

Two days later, he was informed about the source of the bad odor: a dead body under the bed. Police officers questioned Mr. Zhang but said he was not a suspect because the body had been there before he checked in.

He cooperated with police and then took his leave of Tibet, saying he was suffering from the shock of the incident.

"I stay up until 2 a.m. to 3 a.m. every morning, and the slightest movement would wake me up," he said. "It left me in a bad mental state." So yes, Billy, there really IS something scary under the bed.

A cyclist and a hunter came to the rescue of a 51-year-old man who had been tied to a tree near the German town of Bueckburg, KRQE-TV reported.

The situation was the unfortunate outcome of a sex game he had been playing with a woman; he told police that after she tied him up, she got a phone call and suddenly fled.

He was fully dressed and had pantyhose over his head when he was found, but the box cutter he had brought "for such situations" was unreachable. The man was unharmed and refused to identify the woman for authorities.

Chloe Stein, 23, of Jeannette, Pennsylvania, stopped attending classes at Penn State more than a year and a half ago, but her family was expecting her to graduate this month.

So she did what any enterprising

college student would do: She faked her own kidnapping.

The New York Post reported that Stein left her job at Sonic and texted her boyfriend that she'd been pulled over by police on a quiet road – then she disappeared.

When authorities caught up with her about 20 hours later, she was at the home of an acquaintance a few miles from the Sonic, where she had walked after abandoning her car and phone.

She at first told police she had been bound and "semi-assaulted," but then admitted the whole thing was a hoax to cover for the fact that she wouldn't be graduating from college.

State trooper Steve Limani said the search for Stein had cost the state "tens of thousands of dollars" in manpower and equipment. She is facing a number of charges in the case.

Beth Bogar of West Chesterfield, New Hampshire, was just finishing up a trip with her husband to Bali when things took a turn.

WMUR-TV reported that the couple ended their tour at Mason Elephant Park & Lodge, where she got to swim with and ride an elephant. But when she posed with the pachyderm for a photo, her arm got "pushed" into the animal's mouth.

"I couldn't get my arm out. I could just hear cracking and I just started to panic," she said.

Bogar was rushed to a hospital an hour away, where the surgeon was able to reassemble her arm with plates and screws.

"It's gonna be a long road," Bogar said. She noted that she knew the risks going in and doesn't blame the elephant.

Franklin County (Kansas) Sheriff's deputies pulled over a driver on I-35 near Ottawa after other motorists alerted law enforcement of his erratic driving, Fox4 News reported.

When officers approached the car, they saw that the driver was wearing a Bud Light can costume.

"A career in law enforcement is exciting, and you get to experience something new every day," the sheriff's department posted on its Facebook page. The driver posted bond on his DUI and was released from the county jail.

Ninety-two-year-old Colette Ferry of Frontenex, France, was surprised to answer her door recently and find two police officers, The Guardian reported.

The officers informed Ferry that they would have to remove three large frogs that lived in her garden pond and had been croaking loudly enough to keep Ferry's neighbor awake.

Ferry said the frogs didn't belong to her but were squatters.

"They're in and out of the water playing with my fish," she explained. "There's always someone ready to complain about someone else." She's looking forward to watching officials try to catch the frogs. "That'll be fun ... They jump."

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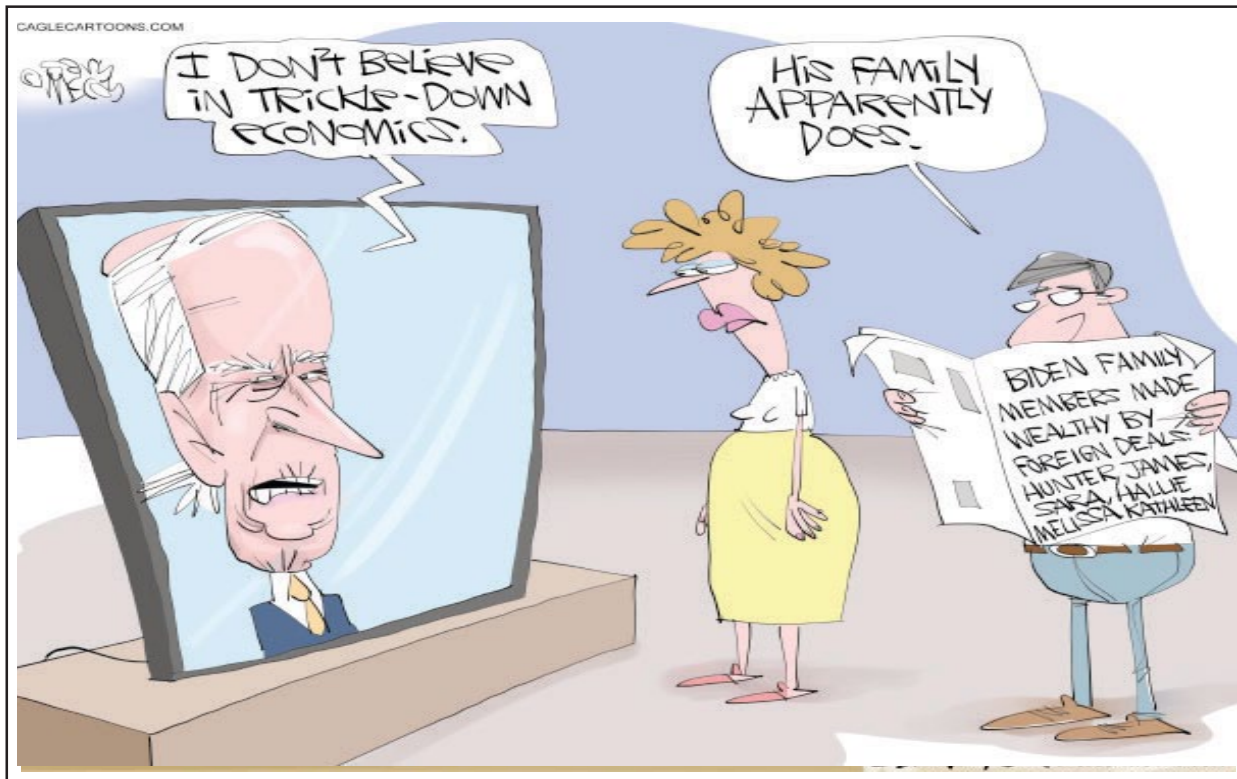
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How to 'un-dorm' a college student

By Jase Graves

Every year in late spring, parents of college students all over America travel to university campuses with stylish IKEA storage bags or (in our case) cardboard boxes that once held bulk orders of toilet paper and tortilla chips. When the parents arrive, they joyfully greet their academically-hungover children and start the arduous and sometimes pungent process of "un-dorming."



My wife and I recently drove in our decrepit but cavernous 2013 SUV to move our middle daughter and her dirty laundry back home from college. Upon our arrival to campus, we were immediately confronted by sympathetic glances from other dads in sweat-soaked t-shirts and beleaguered moms whose expressions belied their incredulity at how their children could possibly have spent an entire academic year living like this.

When we entered our daughter's dorm complex, apparently built sometime during the late Pleistocene era, I immediately began to feel itchy. My sensations didn't improve on our elevator ride to her room as the belt made a screeching noise that sounded like it had recently been repaired with Scotch tape and Flex Seal (as seen on TV).

Once we started the cleaning and packing process, I noticed the following repeated conversations between us and our daughter:

Parents: "Where is (insert missing item purchased at beginning of academic year for dorm room)?"

Daughter: "I threw that away. It was gross."

Parents: "What happened to (insert expensive and stained/damaged clothing/footwear item purchased at the beginning of academic year)?"

Daughter: "I'm not sure. It got wet somehow."

We eventually stopped asking questions, and I decided to retreat to the bathroom our daughter shares with her suitemates. I could barely navigate my way to the toilet as the place looked like it had been ransacked by cross-dressing Russian mercenaries.

In fact, I almost stepped on what looked like two deceased flesh-toned jellyfish about the size of fruit bowls. When I emerged from the bathroom holding them up about chest-high, my daughter shrieked, "Dad! Put those down! They're not mine!"

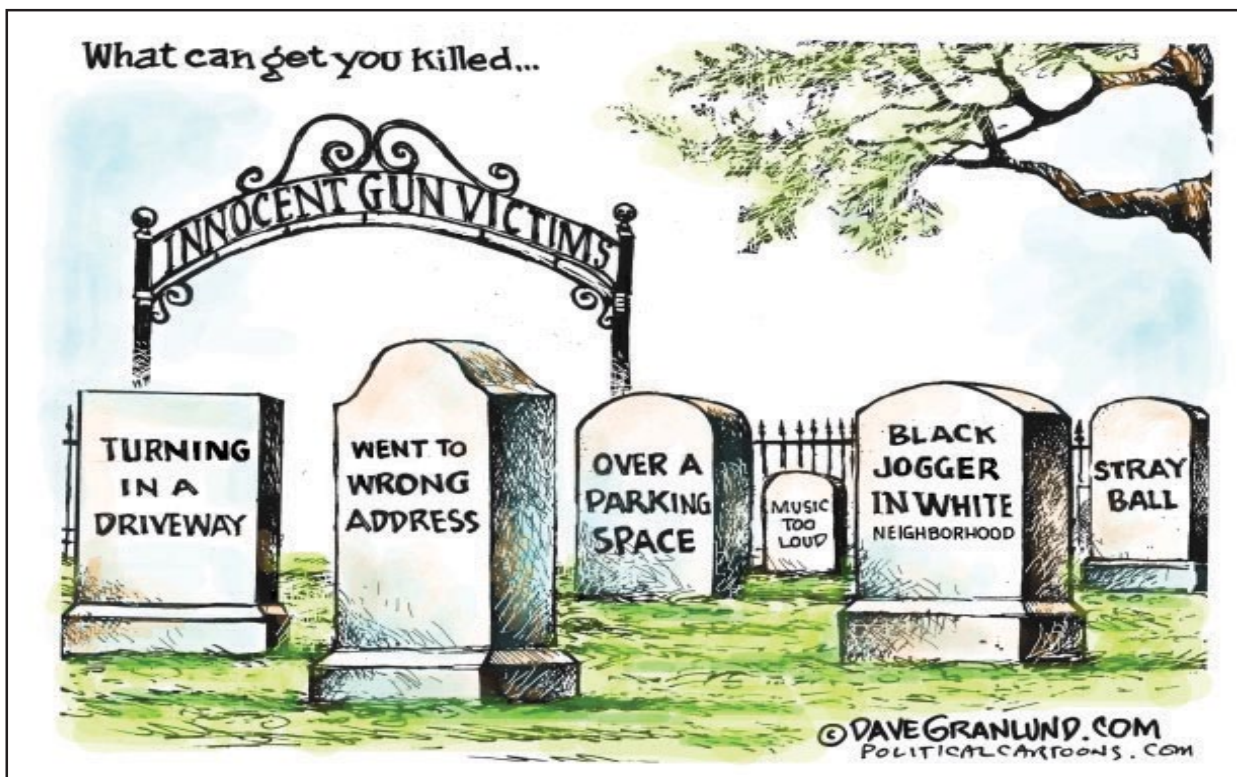
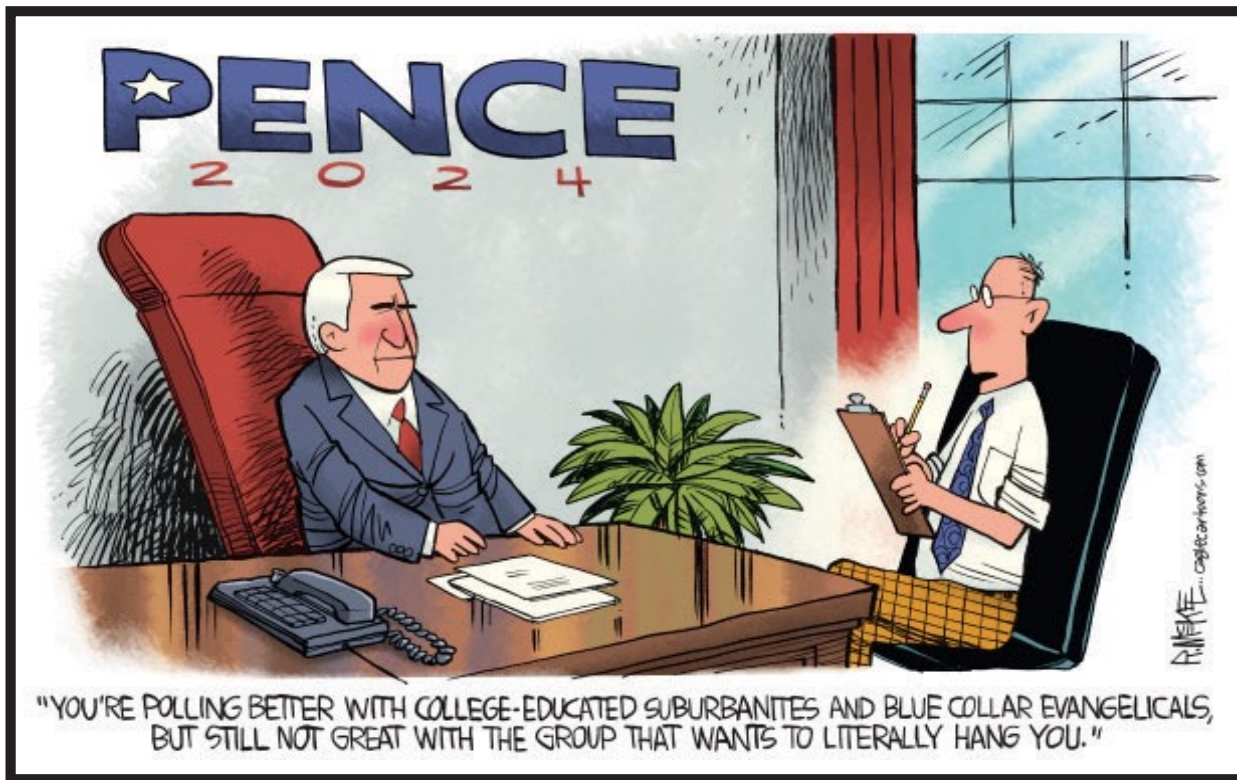
Naturally, I then wore them as a hat.

Once we had everything packed up, I made a final sweep with the vacuum cleaner and noticed that it wasn't sucking up the plethora of discarded contact lenses and goldfish cracker crumbs from the musty carpet. I immediately exhausted my mechanical expertise by checking the dust canister and removing enough hair to reconstruct a young woolly mammoth. (I'm still waiting for my medal.)

When the community assistant came in to examine the room for our final checkout, she noticed that a sliver of paint had been removed from the wall when my daughter had pulled off her adhesive LED lights. The CA then indicated that we would be charged a small fine for repairs—despite my protests that the room already looked like the dilapidated barracks of a Victorian madhouse when my daughter first moved in.

Oh, well. At least we got our daughter back home for the summer – and I'm hoping I'll stop itching before we have to move her back next fall.

Copyright 2023 Jase Graves distributed exclusively by Cagle Cartoons newspaper syndicate. Graves is an award-winning humor columnist from East Texas. His columns have been featured in Texas Escapes magazine, The Shreveport Times, The Longview News Journal, and The Kilgore News Herald. Contact Graves at susanjase@sbcglobal.net.



Trinity Alps Chamber Music Festival returns for 2023 season



PHOTO / Trinity Alps Chamber Music Festival

Mark your calendars for another exciting season of world class music, as the Trinity Alps Chamber Music Festival brings musicians from around the world to perform in a series of concerts in Trinity and Humboldt counties.

The festival will offer four concerts, featuring its signature programming of both fun and thoughtful classical works blended with arrangements of jazz and American roots music. On stage will be performers on strings, flute, accordion and two pianos.

The shows are all open to the public and ticket-free, with a suggested donation encouraging everyone to support the musicians as they are able.

The first concert will be at the Trinity Alps Performing Arts Center in Weaverville on Saturday, July 1 at 7 p.m., followed by a concert on Thursday, July 6 at 7 p.m. at the Hyampom Community Hall in Hyampom. The festival will spend the following weekend in Humboldt County, with a concert on Saturday, July 8 at 7 p.m. at the Arcata Playhouse in Arcata and a Sunday matinee at 2 p.m. on July 9 at the Morris Graves Museum of Art in Eureka.

Hyampom resident and clarinetist Karla Avila will be joining the festival musicians for the first concert in Weaverville. Avila, who recently took over as director of the Trinity County Arts Council, will collaborate with festival director Ian Scarfe at the piano and Colorado cellist Joseph Howe on cello for a performance of Beethoven's Piano Trio, Op. 11.

"This trio is the first example in history of a composer bringing this combination of instruments together, and one of Beethoven's most dynamic and humorous pieces," Avila said. "Written when he was only 28 years old, the piece captures the spirit of Beethoven as a young man with too much energy. He channeled this into his composing, creating this spirited and delightfully captivating trio."

The festival's retreat in Hyampom will last the entire first week of July, hosted by festival co-founder and violinist Ellen McGehee. McGehee will join the 12-person ensemble in performances of string quartets, trios and works featuring

flute and piano alongside the strings. Joining the group of performers will be composer Sam Reider, an accordionist, pianist and composer whose work brings together American roots music with jazz and classical styles.

The weekend of July 8 and 9 will take the entire lineup of performers to Humboldt County for a short residency featuring two concerts and other events. The Saturday night program at the Arcata Playhouse will focus on a diverse lineup of works by Sam Reider such as his Quintet for Accordion and Strings, while the Sunday afternoon concert at the Morris Graves Museum will feature lush classical and impressionist works that take advantage of the museum's superb acoustics, such as Maurice Ravel's exotic and virtuoso Piano Trio.

"We are all so thrilled to be kicking off our 13th season with this set of concerts," said Ian Scarfe, co-founder and festival director. "Our fan base has grown so

much as more and more people have realized how fun and entertaining this kind of music can be. Classical music has such a reputation for being stuffy and incomprehensible, and we are here to reimagine it as music that anyone can enjoy."

The festival presents graphics and

posters from two featured artists this year - Debbie Holland-Olson of Trinity County and Stock Schlueter of Humboldt County. Both of their posters can be found on the festival website. For more information about the festival, the performers, the music, or the scheduled concerts, visit www.TrinityAlpsCMF.org.



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Foster on cross-country tour again with release of *Roadside Attraction*

By Ron Harrington

Jonathan Foster is one of the area's hardest working musicians.

For the past several years his cross-country tours have been extensive, expensive and exhaustive. But the van living and pricey gas consuming trips have enabled the Redding singer-songwriter to attempt to break through to perform his Americana/folk songs to new listeners found at every type of live musical venue one could hope – or fear – to find in the many culturally diverse areas of the country. Places where musical tastes can often vary greatly.

His efforts appear to be paying off. By hitting the road annually, Foster has acquired fans among those new listeners, including critics and local media:

“A breezy songwriting style, alternating between lyrical introspection and worldly observation, (Foster) takes listeners on the road with him across America, admiring the beauty of rivers and forests while appreciating individuality along the way.” - The Canton Rep

“Unplug from the world for a few minutes with the beautiful sounds of singer/songwriter Jonathan Foster's latest masterpiece 'The Mountain Echo.' With Foster's emotive vocals fusing seamlessly with the beautiful sounds of the mandolin, 'The Mountain Echo' will make you feel like diving into an ocean of folk/Americana notes.” - Music n Gear

“Foster is original in his songwriting and his ability to tell stories through his music. If you mixed John Denver, Gordon Lightfoot and Blaze Foley all together you would get Foster.” - Americana Highways

“His songs are simple expressions of Foster's life in a rural, heartwarming place. Reminiscent of pre-Jesus Dylan and several other folkies who followed him, Foster is at once familiar and fresh.” - Sonoma Index-Tribune

“Unlike a lot of musicians who run out of fresh ideas as their careers progress, Foster is one artist whose work continues to impress.” – Bloggerhythms

And that's just a smattering of praise Foster has received as he gears up to once again hit the road, this time in support of his sixth full-length album, *Roadside Attraction*. It's one that, not surprisingly, was written mostly on the road. It's scheduled for release June 6.

“It's a batch of songs that came together during 2021-2022, mostly while I was living on the road in my van for over 12 months during that time span,” Foster said in an email interview. “I see and hear it as a group of picture postcard souvenirs mailed out across the country in the form of songs.”

Unlike Foster's previous albums, he took a somewhat different approach to writing songs for *Roadside Attraction*.

“One thing that likely makes this album a bit different is it's the first album that I primarily wrote all the guitar compositions first and added the lyrics second,” he said. “In the past, I have typically gone in with lyrics first and worked from there. I believe this has made for more memorable hooks and for more straightforward song structures that should be more accessible to listeners both on the album and live.”



The cover of Jonathan Foster's sixth album, *Roadside Attraction*.

Among the songs on the 10-track album is one that Foster has been performing since 2022 and which has an accompanying YouTube video – “The Mountain Echo.” A nostalgic song pulled from the memory of his younger years, it was the first single released from the album and has received favorable response.

“It was the title of the yearbook during my K-12 attendance at Clifton-Fine Central in Star Lake, New York,” Foster said. “It follows the thread of ‘the grass isn't always greener on the other side’ when you're longing to get out of a small town while growing up.”

The song features a memorable mandolin lead by Morgan Hannaford, locally of the groups Honeybee and Across the Grain.

“This is the tenth year that Morgan and I have recorded together and he is featured very prominently on half the project, with some very tasty playing, to say the least,” Foster said.

The album kicks off with “The Anchor,” a track he said “is a reflective song of self-imposed limitations, insecurity, and my sense of place in the world. It is simply meant to be a song of encouragement for whatever one's personal anchor may be that is keeping one from their goals, success, or limitations in life.”

It's also the second video from the album and, like “Mountain Echo,” is available on YouTube.

On yet another track, Foster touches on the subject of a near-death experience – HIS near-death experience - in “The Warm Light.”

“I had a near-death experience when I was a teenager. I was revived by my mother and an on-duty nurse, who I happened to run into at a show last summer,” Foster said. “The chorus line is a description of the dreamscape I entered

during the time I was unconscious.”

Foster noted that studies with supporting data state that upwards of 28 percent of humans have some sort of near death experience during their lifetime and there is often an aspect of a light during that event, thus the title.

The tune features a 12-string guitar lead by Bruce Turgon, a former member of Foreigner and Shadow King, who opened his Redding recording studio, After Hours Recorders, many years ago. Turgon also recorded, mixed, mastered, and co-produced *Roadside Attraction* and, in addition, plays piano, bass and acoustic guitars on the album.

“This is the tenth year that Bruce and I have worked together at his studio and this marks our tenth project to the finish line, too,” Foster said. “He has been a titan in our music community.”

And as he has done on his last few albums, Foster includes one traditional song in the track list. This time it's “The Cuckoo,” which has been covered by many musical artists over the years. According to Wikipedia, it's gone by different names and the lyrics in most versions usually include the line (or a slight variation): “The cuckoo is a pretty bird, she sings as she flies; she brings us glad tidings, and she tells us no lies.”

Among those who have recorded the song are Bob Dylan, Peter, Paul and Mary, Joan Baez, the Everly Brothers, and Steve Martin and Edie Brickell.

Foster said the song has a rich history and each of those versions, as well as his, have a different feel, lyrics and arrangement.

“For me, it's a very dark song, conjuring an early Appalachian story that has been passed down the mountains for generations,” he said. “The song was first recorded nearly a century ago in the late 1920s and the first version I can recall

hearing was by Ramblin' Jack Elliott. The movie, *Cold Mountain*, featured a great version, too, by Riley Baugus and Tim Eriksen.

“I have put a traditional song on each of my last three projects - “Shady Grove” and “Make Me a Pallet on Your Floor” being the others - and it's a trend I'd like to continue in the future.”

Also on Foster's latest album is “Cottonwood Vines,” a “laid back song” that he says is a nod to trimming grapes and sipping wine at Burnsini Vineyards while being on the road too long. It features acoustic guitar work by Foster's long-time collaborator Ron Gillette (“We started recording to tape in his garage in 2010”) with Jim and Keli Dyar of A Dyar Situation on backing vocals.

So why *Roadside Attraction* for the album's title?

“It has several meanings to me,” Foster said. “It's a nod to my favorite band, The Tragically Hip, and their late singer-songwriter Gordon Downie. The Hip used to headline an annual travelling music festival across Canada called Another Roadside Attraction, which is also the title of a well-known Tom Robbins novel. Perhaps the best show I ever attended was this festival in Ottawa 1997 featuring Los Lobos, Sheryl Crow, Wilco, Ron Sexsmith, The Hip and Ashley MacLissac.

“It is also how I feel sometimes playing so many shows around the country, one-night stands, singing on stage like a giant ball of yarn spinning out songs that no one has ever heard. I also make use of the title during the chorus of my new song ‘Americana Insomnia.’”

Also performing on the album is Foster's friend of 25 years, Joe Misztal from Syracuse, New York, who keeps the beat on the drums for over half of *Roadside Attraction's* songs.

“We used to have a band while we were studying biology and he has contributed to my recordings since 2015,” Foster said.

He added that special guest Nalani Proctor “adds her amazing voice” on another song, “When You Leave.”

Where to buy *Roadside Attraction* and June shows in the north state

Beginning June 6, the album will be available at Bandcamp (<https://jonathanfoster.bandcamp.com/>), via Foster's website JonathanFosterMusic.com, and on commercial download outlets such as Apple Music and Amazon.

But before he hits the road for his cross-country tour, you have a chance to see and hear him in the north state on three different evenings where advance copies of *Roadside Attraction* will be available for sale.

At 7 p.m. on June 1 he'll be at Three Shastas Bar & Grill in the Red Lion Hotel in Redding; on June 2 he'll travel a short distance south to Enjoy Local in Red Bluff for a 6 p.m. show; and on June 3 he'll head west to Trinity County Brewing Company in Weaverville for a 6 p.m. concert.

His summer and fall tour of more than 75 shows across 23 states - from California to New England and back - is scheduled June through October.

Best over-the-counter hearing aids for older adults

Dear Savvy Senior,

Can you recommend some good over-the-counter hearing aids for seniors on a budget? I'm not sure what to get or where to buy them.

- Hard of Hearing



By Jim Miller

Dear Hard,

The new FDA approved over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids that hit the market last October have become a very attractive alternative to millions of older Americans with hearing impairment.

These new hearing aids can be purchased at pharmacies, consumer electronics stores or online without a hearing exam, prescription, or appointment with an audiologist. And the savings are significant. The average cost of an OTC hearing aid is about \$1,600 per pair, which is about \$3,000 less than the average price of a prescription hearing aid.

But sorting through all the different options and styles can be confusing. Here are some tips along with a reliable resource that can help you choose the right aid for you.

Check Your Hearing

Your first step to getting a hearing aid is to get your hearing tested. Be aware that OTC hearing aids are designed only for people with mild to moderate hearing loss (signs include trouble hearing speech in noisy places, in groups, and during phone calls).

The best place to get your hearing

tested is through a hearing care provider like an audiologist. These in-person tests are usually covered by private medical insurance, and as of this year, Medicare will pay for general hearing evaluations without a doctor's referral.

You can also assess your hearing at home with a good app-based hearing test like Mimi (mimi.health) or SonicCloud (soniccloud.com).

If you find through your test that you have severe hearing loss (signs include being unable to hear spoken words even in a quiet room or trouble hearing loud music or power tools) then OTC aids aren't the right solution for you. You'll probably need a prescription hearing aid, which you must get through an audiologist or hearing instrument specialist.

Choosing an OTC Aid

If you decide that an OTC hearing aid may work for you, here are a couple pointers to help you choose.

First, you need to know that OTC

hearing aids come in two types: self-fitting and preset.

Self-fitting aids typically use a smartphone app to setup and adjust the device to suit your specific hearing needs, which makes them better suited for seniors who are technologically inclined. While preset hearing aids are much simpler devices that come with a number of set programs for different levels of hearing loss, and the controls are directly on the hearing aid.

Also, because OTC hearing aids have a learning curve, it's very important to know the level of customer support you'll have access to. So, before you buy, find out how long the company provides support after your purchase, and what sorts of experts will be providing the support.

You also need to find out about the company's return policy. It can take weeks to get accustomed to wearing hearing aids and figure out whether they're really working for you or not. So, make sure to choose a brand that offers a minimum 30-day free trial period, or money back return policy.

Best OTC Hearing Aids

To help you cut through all the different options the National Council on Aging (NCOA), which is a national nonprofit organization that advocates for older Americans, recently assembled a review team who collectively spent more than 5,000 hours researching, testing and interviewing customers about OTC hearing aids.

They came up with a list of nine winners based on such criteria as affordability, style and fit. Their best OTC hearing aids for 2023 in their nine categories include:

Best for Seniors: Jabra Enhance (jabraenhance.com)

Best Invisible Fit: Eargo (eargo.com)

Most User-Friendly: Lexie (lexiehearing.com)

Most Affordable: Audien (audienhearing.com)

Most Financing Options: Audicus (audicus.com)

Best Remote Customer Service: MDHearing (mdhearingaid.com)

Best Rechargeable for the Money: Go Hearing (gohearing.com)

Best Variety: Lucid (lucidhearing.com)

Best Earbud-Style: Sony (electronics.sony.com)

To learn more, see [NCOA.org/adviser/hearing-aids/best-otc-hearing-aids](https://www.ncoa.org/adviser/hearing-aids/best-otc-hearing-aids).

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

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