

AFTER FIVE

THE NORTH STATE MAGAZINE

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THE NEWS, ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT MONTHLY

ON THE COVER

HOCKEY FANATIC

Like many in the north state, comedian Ian Bagg grew up in a small logging town. 'You either drove a truck, felled trees or blew stuff up,' he says in an After Five interview. A pretty fifth grade classmate who laughed at one of his jokes changed his direction in life. The hockey fanatic is set to perform Nov. 8 at the Cascade Theatre in Redding. See page 12

SANTA'S EARLY YEARS

This year's Cascade Christmas story, once again written and directed by Lizzie Stoxen and



scheduled to be performed from Nov. 24 to Dec. 3, focuses on the early years of Santa, Mrs. Claus and even some history about Rudolph. Pictured here, Cal Hunter and Kris Carpenter return as Santa

and Mrs. Claus. For the story on this year's holiday tradition, see page 2

YOUNG PERFORMERS

The North State Symphony kicks off its 2023-2024 Ovation season with 'Swan Lake,' featuring many of the area's talented young musical performers. See page 7



Santa and Mrs. Claus's early years focus of Cascade Christmas story

It's often interesting to find out someone's history before they became famous. A story like the early years of The Beatles comes to mind.

This year's *Cascade Christmas* uses that sort of premise by exploring the origins of Santa and Mrs. Claus...and even Rudolph.

"We see these people as younger versions of themselves, find out how they met and under what circumstances, and meet many new characters in the process," Lizzie Stoxen, who once again wrote and directs this year's production, said in an email.

Cascade Christmas producer Tara Faires says it's "another original masterpiece" by Stoxen, but the writer and director said she had some help.

"Jessica Fletcher, a local playwright and our stage manager, consulted on this script and her guidance has been priceless," Stoxen said.

Returning as Santa and Mrs. Claus are Cal Hunter and Kris Carpenter, who Stoxen said are the absolute perfect people for these roles. Other familiar faces include Jo Heneveld as Holly Goldmann, Maddie McCaffrey as Rudolph, and Abby Claycamp playing the role of Noelle.

"We also have some new faces on our stage this year, including Isaac Wilson as Kris Kringle and Paige Moebes as Suzy Snowflake," she said.

Stoxen said the ensemble is made up of approximately 40 singers, dancers and actors, including long-time Cascade family members Nick Meyer, Erin Richart and Spencer MacDowell, "who will absolutely knock your socks off," she said.

Of course, *Cascade Christmas* is also about the music and the tunes in this year's show are varied in genre, just as they have been in years past.

"I'm really excited that there's at least one traditional carol that I don't believe has ever been featured in the show before," Stoxen said. "We will also be doing some a cappella singing, which is always exciting, and keeping the musical selections diverse and interesting. There will be something for everyone in the musical offerings."

Stoxen said this is one of the largest casts she personally has worked with for a *Cascade Christmas* production.



PHOTO AND COVER PHOTO / Michael Burke
Among the cast of this year's *Cascade Christmas* are, left to right, back row: Kris Carpenter as Mrs. Claus and Cal Hunter as Santa. Middle row: Marissa Fuller and Kristen Lawrence. Front row: Kaitlyn Chan, Michael Grubaugh and Julia Swope.

"I absolutely love getting to share the joy of this show process with as many people as possible," she said. "This cast is so much fun in general. They are the most joyful, kind and enthusiastic group of people."

She added this year's show is the first time she has been able to work on the same side of the stage as their musical director, Katie Narf, which she said has been a treat.

"There are several scenic and choreographic elements that we're adding this year that will be very exciting,

including aerial silks," Stoxen said. "But you'll have to come see the show to find out the rest."

Stoxen, who first and foremost is a mom, has been teaching music in Redding for the last decade. She has performed with almost every theatre company in Redding and said she loves performing almost as much as she loves being on the creative side of things.

She was Mrs. Claus for five years in *Cascade Christmas*, played Shelby in *The Spitfire Grill* at Timbre Theatre, and also played the Lady of the Lake in

Spamalot at Axiom Repertory Theatre.

Stoxen teaches voice and piano privately, is the choir director at Pilgrim Congregational church, the director of the Axiom Children's Theatre and is in her first year teaching K-8 drama and high school choir at Redding School of the Arts.

"I grew up in Redding, benefitted from the rich culture of music and arts here, and am thrilled to get to give back to this community by sharing my love of the arts with a new generation of performers," she said.

In addition to her large cast, Stoxen also noted the importance of the production's team behind the scenes.

"I would like to add that our staff this year is tremendous," she said. "Tara Faires as a producer is top tier, Katie Narf as a music director is so dynamic, and Kristen Lawrence's choreography is both beautiful and brilliant. I am so thrilled to get to work with these ladies and the rest of our stellar staff, from our incredible costumers to our expert sound and light tech. The talent and skill in this town is remarkable."

Stoxen said she also appreciated that the Cascade's new managing director, Alex Hauf-Belden, has kept the ticket prices varied and affordable for the community and that Faires has scheduled the shows around other community events happening the same weekends.

Cascade Christmas is slated to run Nov. 24 through Dec. 3. Performances are scheduled for 7 p.m. Friday, Nov. 24, Saturday, Nov. 25, and Thursday, Nov. 30. The evening performance on Friday, Dec. 1 is scheduled to begin at 7:30 p.m. No show is slated the evening of Saturday, Dec. 2, so as not to compete with the Lighted Parade in Downtown Redding. However, there will be a matinee performance on that day at noon. Other matinees are scheduled at 2 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 25, Sunday, Nov. 26 and the closing show on Sunday, Dec. 3. For tickets, go online to cascadetheatre.org.

"We want to share this show with as many people as possible, but we also want our community to be able to attend all the amazing events that happen around downtown," she said. "Collaboration is a critical aspect of theatre."

Holiday Bazaar Nov. 11

The annual Holiday Bazaar, featuring 10 non-profit groups from the city of Shasta Lake, is scheduled from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 11, at the Larry Farr Community Center where city hall is located, 4499 Main St., Shasta Lake.

Join them for a cookie walk, candy shop, local crafts, handmade gifts, baked goods, food mixes and a hamburger lunch from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., or until they run out.

Authors Fair Nov. 11

In lieu of the regular monthly meeting, and just in time for holiday gift giving, the Redding Writers Forum will be hosting an Authors Fair from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 11.

The event will be held at the IOOF Hall, 1492 California St., downtown Redding. It's free to attend you'll be able to meet authors from around the north state. All will chat with you about their work and journey to become a writer, and will be happy to autograph books that are purchased.

For more information concerning Redding Writers Forum's monthly meetings and upcoming programs, go online to reddingwritersforum.com.

Interfaith Services Nov. 19

Shasta Interfaith, a faith-based association of more than 20 faith communities in Shasta County that serve the communities by promoting and advocating for respect and appreciation

for diversity, is presenting their annual Thanksgiving Interfaith Service from 7 to 8:30 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 19, at St. Joseph Catholic Church, 2040 Walnut Ave, Redding. Advocating Respect and Shasta Beloved Community are co-sponsors of the event.

This free family-friendly event will feature readings, prayers, reflections, and practices of giving thanks from various faith traditions. The program includes the following traditions: Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Native American, Jewish, Quakers, Baha'i, and others.

An interfaith choir will present three songs lead by choir director, Frank Grenard. Cookies and beverages will be served following the service. Donations collected at the event benefit Goodwater Crossing Microshelter Project.

For more information, go online to the Facebook page for Shasta Interfaith, email ShastaInterfaith@gmail.com or text or call 530-243-8862.

AAUW Starry Night Nov. 3

Starry Night of Art and Wine, scheduled from 4 to 7:30 p.m. on Nov. 3, is AAUW Redding Branch's only fundraiser this year that will fund scholarships. This evening is about sending women, who have completed their associates degree, on to four-year colleges and universities.

The event will be held at the North Valley Art League (NVAL), 48 Quartz Hill Road, Redding. General admission tickets are \$30 each. Wine tasting tickets are \$10. For tickets go online to aauwredding.org.

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The Infamous Stringdusters at the Cascade Theatre on Nov. 5

Nashville-based acoustic group The Infamous Stringdusters, scheduled to perform at 7:30 p.m., Nov. 5 at the Cascade Theatre in Redding, balance a fluency in old-timey bluegrass and indie jamgrass sensibilities with an emphasis on strong instrumental work, plus a sound that's both organic and groove friendly.

The band earned a stellar reputation among bluegrass fans right out of the box, earning three International Bluegrass Music Association awards following the release of their 2007 debut album, *Fork in the Road*. They began exploring a more ambitious musical approach with 2010's *Things That Fly* that won them favor with the acoustic jam band community.

The Stringdusters' genre-spanning approach got a workout on 2016's *Ladies & Gentlemen*, in which they collaborated with 11 different female guest musicians. Following their Grammy-nominated 2021 EP, *A Tribute to Bill Monroe*, they took a clear-eyed look at social and political issues on their 2022 effort *Toward the Fray*. They again highlighted one of their influences with 2023's *A Tribute to Flatt & Scruggs*.

Tickets for the Cascade show are available at cascadetheatre.org.

AFTER FIVE

The North State Magazine


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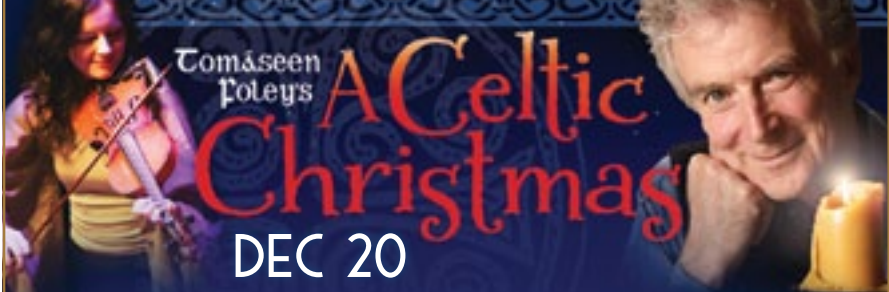
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HEARTBREAKING.



Things I'm glad I did

By Jase Graves



If you read my last two columns, you know that I'm now milking this one-trick pony for all it's worth – including some mixed metaphors. In my previous columns, I discussed things I haven't done, and things I've done and wish I hadn't – respectively (actually, there was quite a bit of disrespect involved, especially regarding Hooters.)

This time, I'll share a few things I'm actually glad I did – for now.

1. First, this past year, I hired someone to mow my yard. Yes, I could save some cash if I did it myself, and yes, my dad (who is in his eighties) still mows his own yard – and probably doubts my parentage. But considering that I often pull muscles and pinch nerves if I breathe too heavily, I'll probably save money on medical insurance copays. Besides, I now have more time to annoy my wife, three semi-grown daughters and pets.

2. Speaking of my daughters, I'm currently paying for a series of driving lessons for my youngest and quietest daughter. I still ride along while she practices, which almost always ends with apologies (from me) and a full wipe down of the front passenger window to remove claw marks and tear stains. But based on my eldest and middle daughters' experiences with parent-taught driving lessons (and my inability to find a substitute teacher), I thought sending my youngest to a driving academy might be better for her self-esteem, my cardiovascular health and our liability insurance premiums.

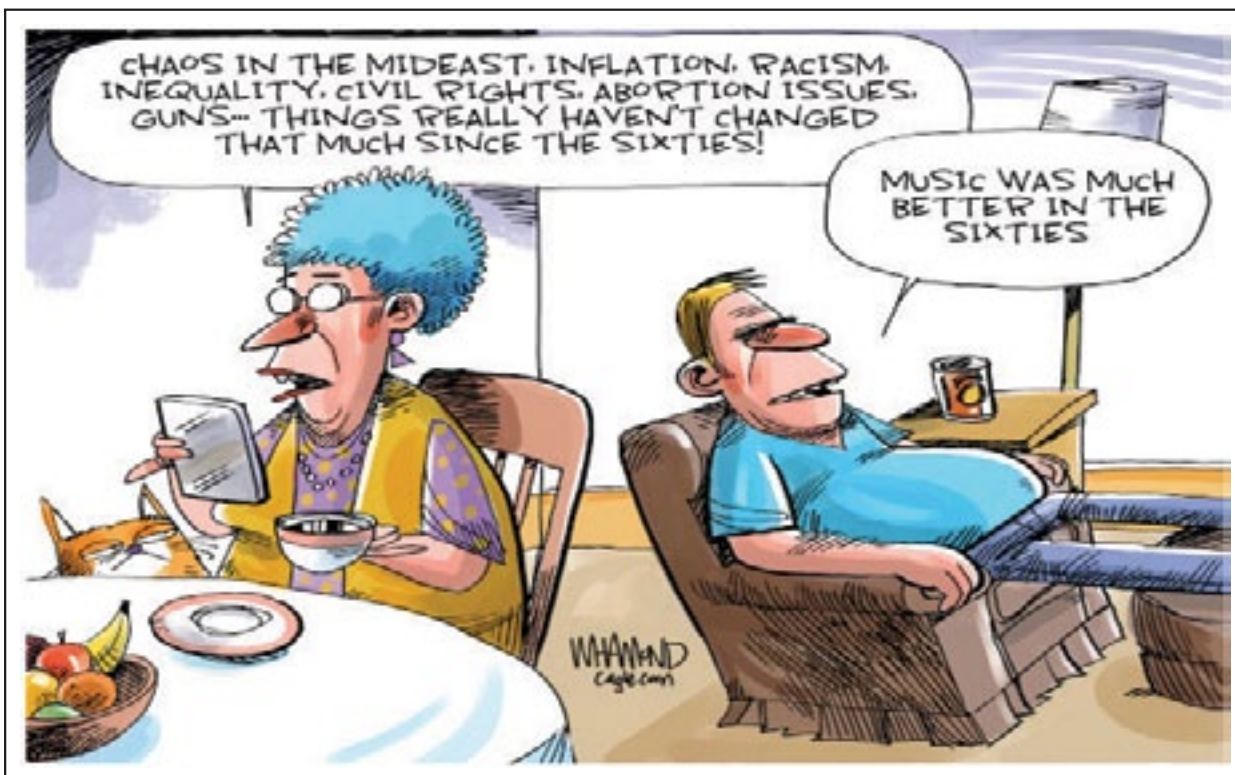
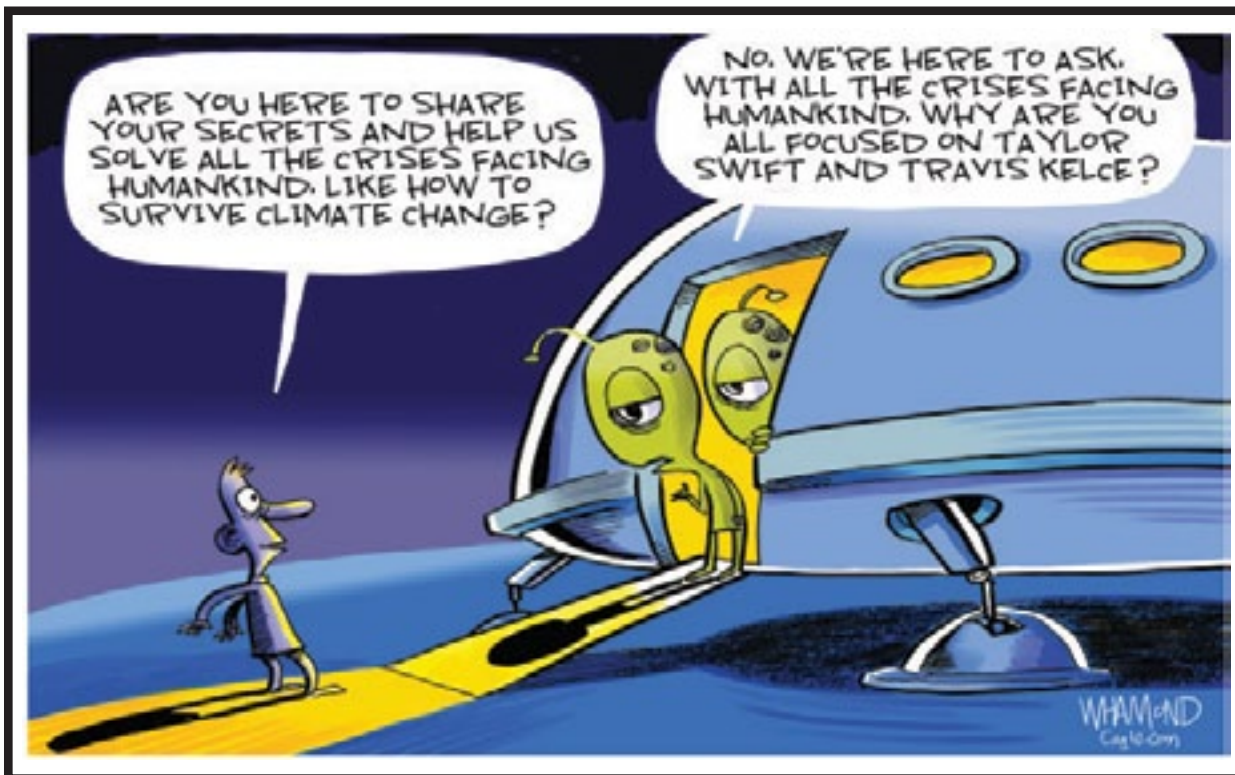
3. If you're still reading, you may want to stop now because next on the list is my switch several years ago to boxer briefs. I was raised in tighty-whities, which, on me, basically look like enormous diapers (I know I'll be wearing those soon enough). Not only do I find boxer briefs more bracing and comfortable, they vaguely resemble shorts, which is useful when I forget to put on pants before going out to check the mail.

4. Moving on from men's underwear to marital health (I'm convinced the two are closely related), for the past year, or so, I've been asking my wife out for a weekly date – and occasionally, she says, "Yes." When our three daughters were younger, my wife and I focused all of our time and energy on them, shaping and molding them into strong, intelligent young women who know exactly how to manipulate us out of our cash. Now that they are more independent (except for the cash part), I'm trying to dedicate more attention to my wife's needs. So, when we go out on our dates, I let her know I value her and her opinions by allowing her to choose where we eat – as long as it's my favorite Mexican food restaurant.

I could go on and on (not really – I'm pretty much out of ideas), but I'll finish by saying that although I've done plenty of things I regret, and I haven't done a lot of things that others have, marrying an outstanding lady and having three wonderful girls have made up for life's many shortcomings. Oh, and the boxer briefs help, too, especially when I go out to check the mail.

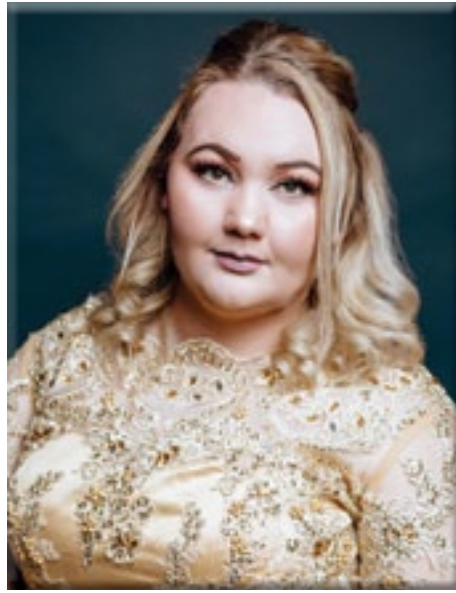
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Graves is an award-winning humor columnist from East Texas. His columns have been featured in Texas Escapes magazine, The Shreveport Times, The Longview News Journal, and The Kilgore News Herald. Contact Graves at susanjase@sbcglobal.net.





Allie Braitto



Amanda Michelle Britt

North State Symphony begins Ovation season with 'Swan Lake' and focuses on area's talented young musical performers

The North State Symphony 2023-2024 season, titled *Ovation*, begins this month with the soaring melodies and powerful story of Tchaikovsky's "Swan Lake," featuring a timeless tale of love and transformation.

Under the leadership and vision of longtime conductor Scott Seaton, the season takes off at 7:30 p.m. on Nov. 11 at the Cascade Theatre in Redding and 2 p.m. on Nov. 12 at Laxson Auditorium in Chico.

The concerts will feature the winners of the North State Symphony's 2023 Young Artist Auditions - Allie Braitto and Amanda Michelle Britt - who are also showcased in works by Mozart, Puccini and Strauss Jr.

Braitto is a pianist and violinist who attends Shasta Charter School in Redding and is concertmaster of the Shasta College Chamber Strings. Britt, also from Redding, currently attends CSU Sacramento where she continues to study opera and has performed as a leading lyric soprano in many well-known and well-loved operas.

They will be joined by area youth

orchestras with the Shasta College Concert Orchestra and Chamber Strings in Redding and the Music Teachers' Association of California (MTAC) Butte Youth Orchestra in Chico. The Shasta College Youth Strings are under the direction of Jeff Specht. The MTAC Youth Orchestra is under the direction of Yoshie Muratani.

The concert will open with a side-by-side performance of Benjamin Britten's "Soirées musicales" with the youth orchestras of Chico and Redding.

Tickets for the Redding show are available through the Cascade Theatre at cascadetheatre.org. Tickets for the Chico performance are available through the CSU Chico University box office. Links to both outlets, including purchasing season tickets, along with more information on the concerts can be found on the North State Symphony website at northstatesymphony.org.

The North State Symphony's other *Ovation* concerts this season are "Mozart Requim" on Feb. 17-18, 2024, and "Sounds of the Cinema" on May 11-12, 2024.



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Chicago The Tribute: Dec 1

Chicago the TRIBUTE; an 8-piece tribute band to the band with the horns and hits - Chicago. Chicago is known for fusing rock, jazz, funk and soul while adding a touch of brass to rock'n'roll. Chicago the TRIBUTE, brings an upbeat tribute to one of the greatest hit-making bands of the last 50 plus years.

Bah Humbug!

A Christmas Carol, The Musical: Dec 8-23

Broadway heavy hitters, Alan Menken (Disney's Beauty and the Beast, Disney's The Little Mermaid, Little Shop of Horrors) and Lynn Ahrens (Ragtime, Seussical, Once on This Island), breathe fantastic new life into the classic tale of A Christmas Carol. Revel in this magical holiday extravaganza at Axiom Rep this December.



Bah Humbug!

Sylvia: Jan 12-27

Greg and Kate have moved to Manhattan after twenty-two years of child-raising in the suburbs. Greg's career as a financial trader is winding down, while Kate's career, as a public-school English teacher, is beginning to offer her more opportunities. Greg brings home a dog he found in the park—or that has found him—bearing only the name "Sylvia" on her name tag. Don't miss your chance to see this heart felt comedy.



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NEWS of the WEIRD

The crater of the inactive Teoca volcano outside Mexico City is home to a football pitch where 10 teams play each weekend, Yahoo! News reported.

"It's a unique pitch," said player Adrian Garcia. A league representative said the field is about 70 years old; before it was converted to a sports venue, it was a ceremonial site.

Goalkeeper Daniel Mancilla Pena called it a "very nice setting to play football." Yeah, well, Mexico sits on the Ring of Fire, a seismically and volcanically active zone, so make sure you don't have much stoppage time.

John McKee, 51, of Vincennes, Indiana, landed in the Knox County jail after a state trooper observed him driving a Power Wheels Jeep around 9 p.m. on a city street.

According to police, the toy car didn't have lights or reflectors, and McKee failed a field sobriety test, The Smoking Gun reported.

He told the officer that he had crystal meth and marijuana in his system. He was released on bond, and his fancy ride was collected by Troy's Towing, a trooper said.

Goodwill employees in Goodyear, Arizona, were startled when they opened a donated box and found a human skull inside, The Arizona Republic reported.

The skull still had some of the teeth attached and featured a false eye set in the left eye socket.

Goodyear Police spokesperson Lisa Berry said they believed it to be "historic" and to have no "forensic significance, meaning there appears to be no associated crime."

The Goodwill store would not comment on whether the skull will be added to the store's shelves or how it would be priced.

Quincy, Illinois, police are hunting for a rabbit, NBC Chicago reported.

Someone wearing a full bunny suit entered the Winners Wash Laundromat and rifled through drawers, stuffing several items into a backpack.

Surveillance video caught the fuzzy culprit, who has not been identified. Quincy police are hopping mad and seeking leads.

KLKN-TV reported an unnamed 20-year-old man from Lincoln, Nebraska, was pulled over near Norfolk as he



Take me out to the ballgame, but leave your alligator at home. The AP reported that Philadelphia Phillies fan Joie Henney of Jonestown, Pennsylvania, was turned away from Citizens Bank Park when he tried to enter with WallyGator, his emotional support alligator. Henney has owned WallyGator for several years – legally, it should be noted – and the reptile really is certified as a support animal. Henney has taken his leathery friend to schools and camps for educational presentations, according to a 2022 Washington Post story about the gator. He even visits a local nursing home in his red "support animal" vest. But the Phillies game seems to have been a bridge too far. The stadium's policy on support animals states, "Guide dogs, service animals, or service animals in training are welcome. All other animals are prohibited." Sorry, Wally. We'll save you some peanuts and Cracker Jack.

drove his motorcycle at speeds up to 106 mph.

The driver had a suspended license and, in fact, had just left the Stanton County Courthouse, where he had been sentenced for ... driving with a suspended license and speeding.

The judge had ordered him to pay fines for both offenses. He was charged again and bonded out of jail.

The Nikko Japanese Steak and Sushi Bar in Pace, Florida, has closed after an incident in June, WSB-TV reported.

The Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office investigated after seven people were hospitalized following meals at the restaurant, finding

that bottles and packets of soy sauce tested positive for methamphetamine.

But no charges were filed, as detectives could not determine who contaminated the food "due to lack of witness observations and surveillance footage."

Later, the restaurant's owners announced on Facebook that they would be closing: "Today, a family-owned and operated business is closed, and 20 employees are out of work, all because of the power of social media," the post read.

It's happened again. On Oct. 15, as an EasyJet flight prepared to travel from the Spanish island of Tenerife

to London after a three-hour delay, the pilot announced that the flight would depart in about 20 minutes.

"And that's when the incident happened with the defecation," said passenger Aaran Gedhu, according to CNN Travel. Gedhu saw two people visit the forward restroom before an unpleasant odor permeated the cabin and word spread that someone had pooped on the bathroom floor.

"Obviously, the plane was in an unsanitary state. So they had to get external cleaners out from the airport to clean it," Gedhu said.

After the cleaning was complete, the pilot announced that passengers would have to disembark – which took

another 30 minutes. Another passenger, Kitty Streek, said: "We obviously can't prove whether the person simply had an accident or if they had done this out of anger for the delayed flight ... but nobody wants to be stranded in another country."

And yet, they were: Gedhu was lodged in a hotel overnight before taking a "rescue" flight the next day.

A restaurant in Tokyo, Abe-chan, recently revealed the secret behind its popular pork skewers, Oddity Central reported.

The skewers are dipped in a sauce jar that hasn't been cleaned in more than 60 years and is covered on the outside with a hardened goo.

Each day, cooks pour new sauce over the previous day's sauce, as they have throughout three generations of owners – a practice they say contributes to its rich flavor.

Experts said as long as the concoction is heated, there shouldn't be any bacterial growth.

As Volaris flight 221 prepared to leave Guadalajara International Airport on Oct. 6, passengers and crew were delayed by an infestation of mosquitoes in the cabin, ABC7-TV reported.

The flight was headed to Mexico City, and crew members and passengers tried for two hours to eradicate the pests, swatting them and spraying bug repellent.

Finally, passenger Elizabeth Corona said, the insects settled down when the cabin lights were turned off.

Fox News reported that Rowan Sturgill of Lexington, Kentucky, has documented her mother, Beth's, obsession with Diet Coke on TikTok: "This isn't even half of it, I'm not kidding," Rowan captioned her video.

Beth's decor includes a soap dispenser labeled with Diet Coke and a wall full of images related to the no-calorie drink.

Her Christmas ornaments are dominated by the soda, and an entire wall of her home is dedicated to a shrine of sorts comprised of bottles and cans of various sizes and shapes.

One friend posted that it's like being in an "alternate reality" when they're at the Sturgills' house.

As a child stood near a canal in Cape Coral, Florida, a Dodge Challenger left the road nearby at a high rate of speed and plunged into the canal nose

–Please See Page 16

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248th Marine Corps Birthday Ball on Nov. 10

The Shasta Marines and Friends present the 248th Marine Corps Birthday Ball at 5 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 10, at the Win River Event Center in Redding. Guest of honor and speaker is James G. Harker. Tickets are \$35 each. For tickets and more information on the event go to eventbrite and search for United States Marine Corps 248th Birthday Ball. For additional info., you can call and leave a phone message at 530.605.4565.

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**Performing
Nov. 8 at the
Cascade Theatre
with John Wynn
and Bobby Ulrich**

**“You either drove
a truck, felled
trees or blew
stuff up.”**

**- Ian Bagg on
growing up in the
small logging
town of
Terrace, B.C.**

Comedian and hockey fanatic Ian Bagg still chasing the Shannon Butler dragon

By Aaron Williams

Ian Bagg said it's all Shannon Butler's fault.

The comedian, who hits the Cascade Theatre stage Nov. 8 for a 7:30 p.m. show, remembered growing up in rural British Columbia, Canada and making his fifth-grade crush laugh one day.

“Beautiful girl, Shannon Butler was,” he said by phone with *After Five* on a break from his Los Angeles home. “One day I said something funny and she laughed.

“She wound up dating Kip Lindsey, but I never forgot that feeling of making her laugh. The attention was amazing and I've been chasing the Shannon Butler dragon ever since. After the first time, you're either addicted or not. I need it.”

Growing up in Terrace, B.C., a small town near the Skeena River known mainly at that time for logging, Bagg said the career options were relatively limited.

“You either drove a truck, felled trees or blew stuff up,” he said.

On his way to engineering school to work in explosives, he said he tried stand-up and “never made it to school.”

“Until I did stand-up I didn't know what would take me away from Terrace, but I knew mining would bring me back,” he said.

Bagg, who was a finalist on the ninth season of “Last Comic Standing” and has starred in his own specials on HBO, Showtime and Comedy Central, promises to crack wise, make the audience think and occasionally offend.

“I go out to make people laugh, not offend,” he said. “But the people who do get offended are often the ones that can't laugh at themselves.

“My scientific poll is that 45 percent of people have no sense of humor,” he joked.

His shows are mostly unscripted with a few “checkpoints,” but said it's always been his style to interact with the audience.

“I live in the moment,” Bagg said. “Nothing has to land in the same place

(at each show).”

He's bringing two openers to the Cascade show (“the funny Asian” John Wynn along with Bobby Ulrich) and while he's been to Redding once while promoting *Last Comic Standing*, Bagg joked the only thing he remembered was it “being very hot in a parked bus in the Walmart parking lot.”

He promised to take in more of Redding this time around and seemed intrigued about a bridge that could actually tell time. So be forewarned if it makes it into the show.

And while he grew up chasing the Shannon Butler dragon, he also idolized comics like Jonathan Winters, Stephen Wright, Sam Kinison and Bill Cosby.

He also desperately wished to be a hockey player, but has kept his skate in that arena with a podcast called “Enjoying Orange Slices with Jeff and Ian.” He's the Ian, but Jeff is Jeff Sharples, who also grew up in Terrace before playing 17 seasons of professional hockey, including three in

the NHL with the Detroit Red Wings.

“Everyone looked up to Jeff growing up,” Bagg said. “We always stayed in touch and our show is a conversation with hockey as the thru-line. I just say stupid things from time to time.”

The passion for hockey, as well as his stand up career, has helped him live every Canucks' fantasy - to drink from the Stanley Cup.

“A lot of things have happened to this kid from the middle of nowhere living his dream,” he said. “I got to know some of the (Los Angeles) Kings players when they came to a show. When they won, they invited me out and I got to drink Orange Crush and vodka - a real white trash drink - out of the Stanley Cup.

“It tasted like champagne.”

Bagg said hockey and comedy are so intertwined in his life that being funny does occasionally get him in “trouble.”

“It doesn't matter if I'm old or young, it seems like I'm always in the penalty box,” he said.

Show tickets at cascadetheatre.org.

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Axiom takes on 'The Tempest,' believed to be one of the last plays written by Shakespeare on his own

Axiom Repertory Theatre takes on "The Tempest" in what is believed to be one of the last plays William Shakespeare wrote on his own.

Directed by John Truitt, the play explores themes of magic, forgiveness, and the enduring power of the human spirit.

"We are so excited to be able to produce another Shakespeare production at Axiom," said Nancy Hill, producer and executive director for Axiom Repertory Theatre. "The Tempest" is a magical story that will engage all of our patrons who love Shakespeare, and even those who haven't seen a Shakespeare production. Our absolutely talented local actors are having a blast taking it on."

In "The Tempest," a man waits on a distant island. Robbed of his position, power and wealth, his enemies have left him in isolation. But this is no ordinary man and this no ordinary island.

Prospero is a magician, able to control the very elements and bend nature to his will. When a sail appears on the horizon, he reaches out across the ocean to the ship that carries the men who wronged him. Creating a vast magical storm he wrecks the ship and washes his enemies up on the shore. When they wake they find themselves lost on a fantastical island where nothing is as it seems.

According to Wikipedia, "The

Tempest," believed to have been written by Shakespeare around 1610 or 1611, has resulted in various interpretations. They include those that see it as a fable of art and creation, with Prospero representing Shakespeare, and Prospero's renunciation of magic signaling Shakespeare's farewell to the stage, to interpretations that consider it an allegory of Europeans colonizing foreign lands.

Daniel Hardy Jr., who plays Prospero, said "it's been an absolutely incredible experience rehearsing for the play."

The character of Prospero, he said, "juxtaposes with Shakespeare himself in that in some ways Prospero addresses the audience in a way that Shakespeare is addressing his readers," Hardy Jr. said. "Sometimes, as I'm reading the lines, it's like, oh my gosh, is this like Shakespeare? Like I almost feel like I'm Shakespeare as well with this character of Prospero."

"It's a really cool interactive experience where (Prospero) is speaking to the characters on the stage, but he's also bringing the audience in."

Performance dates

The Tempest is scheduled to run Nov. 10-26 with shows on Thursdays (except Thanksgiving), Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. For tickets and more information go online to axreptheatre.com.

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NEWS of the WEIRD

-From Page 8

first, NBC2-TV reported – fortunately just missing the child.

“I can only imagine how he’s feeling,” said Lorraine Holder, who lives on the canal and had a home security camera trained on the water that captured the incident.

The car’s airbags deployed, which made it difficult to get the driver out, but a Good Samaritan helped him escape before it sank completely. No injuries were reported.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

People in London have been perplexed by a bale of hay hanging from the Millennium Bridge, a modern structure that spans the River Thames, Sky News reported.

The bridge is undergoing maintenance that will reduce its headroom.

When social media lit up with questions, the City Bridge Foundation, a charity that benefits crossings over the Thames, came to the rescue: “In accordance with ancient tradition (and the Port of London Thames Byelaws), a bundle of straw is dangled from the Millennium Bridge to warn shipping of work under the bridge.”

At night, workers hang a white light to warn ships. Work is expected to be completed by Nov. 5.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Three Florida men were arrested in Pompano Beach, Florida, after a hapless kidnapping attempt, KMOV-TV reported.

Raymond Gomez and brothers Jonathan Arista and Jeffry Arista grabbed a man outside his apartment in Plantation, Florida, and drove him to a home nearby – but then realized they had the wrong guy, police said.

They threatened him with an electric drill and a firearm and attempted to waterboard him before deciding he might be able to lure their intended victim to them.

The kidnapers drove him to his place of business, where the other man was, but the original victim phoned in a bomb threat (to get an immediate response), and the suspects were arrested. They face life in prison.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Japanese milk producer Seki Milk has devised an entertaining solution to a growing problem, Oddity Central reported.

The company did research showing that 65% of students weren’t finishing their milk at lunch, so it partnered with a manga studio to produce an original comic series and print it in white on its glass milk bottles.

As they drink, kids are compelled to finish the beverage so the artwork is revealed. The company says Milk Manga encourages healthy behavior and reading and gets kids thinking about food loss.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Ryan Smith, 41, who transports bodies for a funeral company in Omaha, Nebraska, was arrested after he broke

into the home of a deceased person he had moved, The Smoking Gun reported.

Investigators said that when Smith initially went to the apartment, there was a “very real life size” sex doll on the bed near the body.

Later, Smith called the property manager and said the sheriff had asked him to remove the doll “to collect swabs for biopsy.”

The property manager denied Smith entry to the home, but he later suspected Smith was inside the unit, which had been secured with a deadbolt and chain.

The manager watched as Smith left with his shirt untucked and trousers in “disarray,” then called police. The sex doll showed evidence of recent use, and she was confiscated for DNA testing. Ryan was relieved of his job.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Adorchita Di Perno of Calgary, Alberta, was proud of finishing her 22nd marathon in Chicago, so she decided to have her medal engraved on the back, Running magazine reported.

She also had the 2018 Boston Marathon champion Des Linden sign the back in Sharpie.

When she picked up the medal from the engraver, though, she saw that not only was her time wrong on the back, but the F-word was engraved above it.

“This is my medal, but this is not my time or name,” she said. “And I did not ask for the F-word.”

Later that day, store employees figured out that her medal had been confused with another runner’s, who, oddly, DID want the F-word engraved on the back – but declined to say why.

Di Perno said she was upset about the mix-up at the time, but now she’s laughing about it. Probably helps that she qualified for the Boston race.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Some people are just desperate to get behind an underdog. So it seems with the members of a Facebook group called Chair Watch, who have locked in on an unlikely subject: a chair hanging from the top floor of a roofless abandoned home in Dennis Township, New Jersey.

“One day it will come down but until then we all must drive by and look at the chair in all its mesmerizing glory,” the group’s description says, according to United Press International.

“How long can it last? Will it blow down before the entire house falls down? ... Things we all want to know and don’t want to know at the same time because it will ruin the fun.”

The group has attracted almost 10,000 followers, one of whom, Donna Marie O’Leary, commented that she hasn’t “enjoyed this much fun since Christie was governor and closed the beach!”

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

In 1995, the Seattle Times reported, filmmaker Gerry Fialka of Los Angeles started a book club with an unconventional schedule: Members

read the notoriously difficult “Finnegans Wake” by James Joyce – one page at a time.

They just finished on Oct. 3.

“We do one page at a time and then discuss it for two hours,” Fialka said. “That’s why it’s taken us 28 years.”

When people ask what his book club is going to read next, he tells them, “We’re never going to read another book.”

He explained that the book ends with a run-on sentence on page 628, which then continues on the first page of text.

“So it’s a cyclical book. It never ends. We’ll read page 3 again next.”

Since the pandemic, the club has been meeting via Zoom, which Fialka says he likes better than in person. “I don’t have to set up chairs,” he said.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

In this week’s edition of “We Don’t Pay Teachers Enough,” Stephen Taylor, an educator at the Mill Creek Campus alternative school in Olathe, Kansas, lost his job over videos he posted to TikTok, Fox4-TV reported.

In the videos, Taylor, who also does stand-up comedy, said he “saved up” his “big milky lactose intolerant” gas and “drop(ped) bombs silently ... and then I just let it stew.”

He also claimed that he gives students misinformation when they “annoy” him: “I tell them Abraham Lincoln invented the car, that’s why it’s named after him.”

When Taylor was called before the school board, he told members, “The reason I’m doing comedy on TikTok is to make money because you only pay me \$45,000 a year and I work all the time.”

Taylor said the students understand his jokes, but he was relieved of his duties nonetheless and has no plans to return to teaching.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Fourth graders at the Academy of Innovative Education charter school in Miami Springs, Florida, got to choose a movie to watch during lunch on Oct. 2, CBS News Miami reported.

They unknowingly chose “Winnie-the-Pooh: Blood and Honey,” a 2023 horror film about two murderers who prey on university students while wearing Pooh and Piglet costumes.

The teacher “didn’t stop the movie, even though the kids were saying, ‘Hey, stop the movie, we don’t want this,’” said parent Michelle Diaz.

She said her twins were traumatized. The school later issued a statement saying they “have already met with those students who have expressed concerns.”

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Lenni Rodriguez Cruz, 28, topped off a busy night of crime with an assault on a police officer on Sept. 20, the Associated Press reported.

Cruz was allegedly driving a car with license plates that didn’t match in Queens, New York, when an officer tried to pull him over.

Cruz instead raced off, driving on a sidewalk and through a park and hitting four other vehicles, including a police car, before crashing.

His breath smelled of alcohol and

there was a cup with an alcoholic beverage in the car, police said. But it was back at the station where Cruz sealed his fate: He bit off an officer’s left ring finger up to the first knuckle.

The Queens district attorney said he could be looking at 25 years in prison.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

A family outing to the Fossil Rim Wildlife Center in Glen Rose, Texas, got all awkward when a giraffe lost its footing and crashed into the windshield of Kari Hill’s car, Fox7-TV reported.

The park allows people to drive through in their own cars and feed the animals.

As Hill and her family communed with a giraffe, it stuck its head through her sunroof and smiled for a picture.

But then the animal slipped and fell, became panicked and started flailing its legs.

After it recovered and ran off, Hill realized her windshield was shattered. No one was hurt, but they were covered with glass.

Hill said when she filed an insurance claim, “It was hard for them, as anyone, not to laugh, but they were professional.”

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Lincoln County (Oklahoma) District Judge Traci Soderstrom, who was sworn in on Jan. 9, may already be out of a job, the Associated Press reported.

In July, Soderstrom was captured on a court camera scrolling through social media and texting on her phone for minutes at a time during a trial.

Soderstrom’s texts to her bailiff included comments on jurors’ and prosecutors’ appearances and calling a police officer who was testifying “pretty” and saying, “I could look at him all day.”

She was suspended with pay pending a hearing by the Court on the Judiciary.

The chief justice of the Oklahoma Supreme Court recommended her removal: “The pattern of conduct demonstrates (Soderstrom’s) gross neglect of duty, gross partiality and oppression,” he said.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Amal Hanna, 60, will not be charged with driving under the influence, News12-TV reported, after an incident in which she mistakenly guzzled a White Claw during her shift as a school bus driver in Smithtown, New York.

Hanna said she is undergoing chemotherapy, which has affected her sense of taste, and she had no idea there was alcohol in the hard seltzer.

“I have been crying and crying. I don’t even have any more tears. It was just a mistake,” Hanna said. While she won’t face legal action, she did lose her job.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Daniel Powell, 76, got a rude response when talking with his mobile home park neighbor, Kali Robertson, 28, in Pinellas Park, Florida, The Smoking Gun reported.

According to police, Robertson took an “unsecured bag of dog feces and pushed it” into Powell’s face, “leaving feces smeared on his face.”

Robertson admitted to the assault but pleaded not guilty to the third-degree felony. She posted \$2,500 bond.

Holiday Gallery | Nov 25 - Dec 22

Opening Reception Nov 25 | 10am - 3pm at Old City Hall

Holiday Fine Art & Gifts Boutique

Join us on Small Business Saturday for the opening of a festive holiday art and gift boutique. Discover unique treasures created by local artists, listen to live music to get you in the holiday spirit, and enjoy a delicious spread of finger foods. Make your holiday shopping meaningful this year by supporting our community's talented artisans, while finding the perfect gifts for your loved ones. Don't miss out on this special event!

The exhibit will run through December 22nd. Shop local, shop artful, and celebrate the season with us!

Music | Food | Fine Art



Ovation

2023-2024 SEASON

Swan Lake

November 11, 2023

Cascade Theatre, Redding | 7:30 p.m.

November 12, 2023

Laxson Auditorium, Chico | 2:00 p.m.

Featuring Young Artists winners Allie Braitto on piano and Amanda Michelle Britt, soprano, along with the MTAC Youth Orchestra in the Chico performance and the Shasta College Youth Strings in the Redding performance.

Tickets available at NorthStateSymphony.org

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Hoping for a happier autumn

By Tom Purcell

Autumn is upon us, but it is making me a little bit sad this year.

I have always loved autumn.

I love the brilliant colors, the chilly air and the smell of oak burning in a fire pit.

Whereas spring is about new life and fresh starts — and summer about toil and sweat and a one-week break at the beach — autumn

is about harvesting your hard-earned fruits.

It's about peacefully accepting that the warm weather will be gone soon — that the bitter cold winds and snow will soon be here.

Autumn used to be about sitting around a fire with good friends, sipping hot apple-cider toddies and laughing into the wee hours — and taking a much-needed respite from politics.

But this autumn it's impossible to escape politics. It's also impossible to avoid worrying about the state our country is in.

Just a few years short ago the economy was booming. The cost of food and utilities was low relative to our incomes, which were strong and growing. The world was relatively stable and peaceful and prosperity was improving for billions across the globe.

Now we have major wars in Ukraine and Israel and the cost of goods and services have soared and continue to inflate.

According to the U.S. debt clock, our national debt stands at nearly \$34 trillion — about \$100,000 for every person in the country — and it continues to soar at a rapid pace. How long can such spending go on?

Crime rates are up across the board.

According to Newsweek, crime is increasing everywhere, not only in big cities. With organized looting by gangs out of control and going largely unpunished, many big retailers are closing stores.

And with so many people entering our country through our open borders — including those coming here with the sole purpose of attacking us — how long will it be before the next major terrorist event happens?

This past weekend I had some friends over to my house to enjoy the autumn splendor, but our firepit party got rained out, so we stayed inside.

Normally, such autumn gatherings are filled with joy and laughter, but this year we all shared a sense of worry for our country — and the world our children and grandchildren are going to inherit.

We all expressed a sense that our world has gone mad — that nobody is in control — and we are all feeling anxious as we wait for the other shoe to drop.

Of the many autumn events I have hosted, I cannot remember any of them being filled with such fear and concern.

But that is what is on our minds at the moment — and what is on the minds of many people. The recent Associated Press-NORC Research Center poll finds that 78% of Americans think the country is headed in the wrong direction.

I've always believed you should never bet against America, but our political leaders had better start making better decisions than they have been making.

That means things like limiting government overreach and spending, responding decisively to fight crime and choosing effective and wise leaders who will bring stability to the country and the world.

Unfortunately, at the moment it appears that our only choice for future leader of the free world next year will be between one fellow who will be 81 and one fellow who is almost that age.

But I still have hope that we will get our act together so I can get back to hosting fun and happy autumn gatherings into the wee hours.

Copyright 2023 Tom Purcell, distributed exclusively by Cagle Cartoons newspaper syndicate. Purcell, creator of the infotainment site *Thurbertail.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.



Misleading Medicare Advantage ads: What to look out for

Dear Savvy Senior,
I'm currently enrolled in original Medicare but have been thinking about switching to a Medicare Advantage plan during the open enrollment period.

Many of the Medicare Advantage ads I've seen offer lots of extra benefits beyond what traditional Medicare offers and no monthly premiums. What are your thoughts?

- Considering a Switch



By Jim Miller

care out of network, so an individual may be responsible for full costs. A PPO on the other hand, allows people to go out of network, but they generally have to pay more to do so.

Do some digging

Many MA plans tout free vision, hearing and dental benefits that are not covered by traditional Medicare, but these benefits are often limited.

For example, a plan that offers free dental coverage may cover only cleanings and x-rays. Extensive procedures such as root canals or caps may not be covered, or the plan may limit the dollar amount it pays. Find out the coverage details so you're not surprised later.

Get help

Reach out to your local State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) at ShipHelp.org or call 877-839-2775. These are nonprofit programs that provide unbiased one-on-one Medicare counseling and assistance.

You can also report any misleading MA claims to the Senior Medicare Patrol Resource Center at SMPResource.org or by calling 800-447-8477.

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 Considering,
Be very leery of the Medicare Advantage ads on TV, radio, social media and that come in the mail. While many of these ads may tout free vision, hearing, dental and other benefits with zero monthly premiums, they aren't always what they claim to be.

Advantage Basics

Medicare Advantage or MA plans (also known as Medicare Part C) are government approved health plans sold by private insurance companies that you can choose in place of original Medicare.

The vast majority of Advantage plans are managed-care policies such as HMOs or PPOs that require you to get your care within a network of doctors in a geographic area.

You can sign up for one of them during open-enrollment season from Oct. 15 through Dec. 7.

MA plans have exploded in popularity in recent years as insurers

have flooded the airways with advertisements, often by celebrity pitchmen, that promote low-cost options with lots of extra benefits. But be aware that the Federal government has deemed many claims in MA ads fraudulent and misleading.

Some ads imply that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services endorses or prefers a specific plan. Others promise more cost savings than you really get. And if you choose the wrong plan, your doctor may not be a member of that plan's network, or you may end up paying out-of-pocket for medically necessary care.

This past September, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services began cracking down on these ads, but you still need to practice self-defense.

Here are some tips to help you make a good decision.

Cover your needs

When evaluating MA plans, make

sure the one's you're considering cover the doctors you like and the health care facilities you normally go to. Also, make sure all of the prescription medications you take are on the drug plan's formulary.

To help you compare plans, a good first step is to call the office managers of the doctors you use and find out which Advantage plans they accept, and which ones they recommend. Then go to the Medicare Plan Finder tool at Medicare.gov/plan-compare to compare plans in your area.

Understand the details

Some MA plans promote no monthly premiums, but the reality is that you are still responsible for your original Medicare costs including your Part B premium and deductibles and copays for covered services. Moreover, you may have to pay more out-of-pocket if you see a doctor outside the network.

Also, if the plan is an HMO, it generally doesn't cover non-emergency

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CITY OF REDDING CALIFORNIA Shasta County Health & Human Services Agency

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