

AFTER FIVE

THE NORTH STATE MAGAZINE

DECEMBER 2023 / 37th Year / No. 2

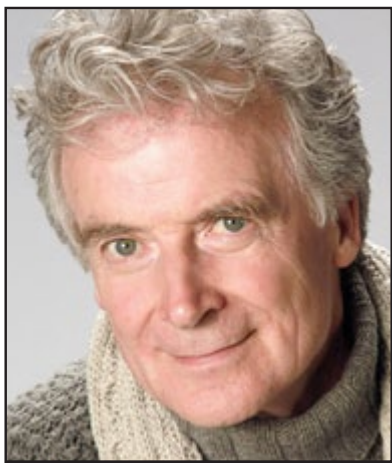
THE NEWS, ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT MONTHLY

ON THE COVER

CHRISTMAS COMEDY

Featuring a large cast, Riverfront Playhouse presents the comedy 'A Good Old-Fashioned Big Family Christmas' by Pat Cook, who has written and published more than 150 plays during his career. The play is helmed locally by Andrew Gibson in his directorial debut. Pictured top to bottom from the play and who they portray are Aubri Six Wilkerson (Carla), Amanda Marsh (Judith) and Grace Coe (Beth). See page 14

CELTIC CHRISTMAS



Drawing on the infinitely rich treasury of Ireland's cultural heritage, 'Tomáseen Foley's A Celtic Christmas,' now in its 28th season, returns to the Cascade Theatre in Redding at 7:30 p.m., Dec. 20. See page 12

CARTOONISTS MIA

Daryl Cagle, publisher of Cagle.com and owner of CagleCartoons.com, writes about cartoonists having to be extra careful in these divisive times with three well-known cartoonists recently having their cartoons pulled from major newspapers, with one of them even being fired. See page 18





ORIGINAL PHOTO / Kim Mobley COMPOSITE / Racheal Newman

Paul Chilson portrays Scrooge and Ray Webber is Tiny Tim in the Axiom Repertory Theatre production of *A Christmas Carol: The Musical*.

Axiom presents 'A Christmas Carol: The Musical'

Broadway heavy hitters, Alan Menken (Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Little Mermaid*, and *Little Shop of Horrors*) and Lynn Ahrens (*Ragtime*, *Seussical*, *Once on This Island*), breathe new life into the Charles Dickens classic tale with *A Christmas Carol: The Musical*, presented by Axiom Repertory Theatre in Redding from Dec. 8-23.

"A Christmas Carol has been one of my favorite stories since I was a child," Amy Dunn, who portrays Ghost of Christmas Past in the local production, said in an email. "I love that it showcases humankind's ability to open our hearts through empathy and understanding."

Ebenezer Scrooge is a prosperous curmudgeon who believes that personal wealth is far more valuable than the happiness and comfort of others. With an infuriated "Bah! Humbug!" Scrooge summates his feelings of Christmas tidings and charitable giving, but he's forced to face his selfish ways when three ghosts on Christmas Eve lead him through his past, present and future.

Thanks to their guidance, Scrooge recognizes his faults and greets Christmas morning with a cheerful "Happy Christmas" before spending the

day reconnecting and sharing love with those that mean the most to him.

"On top of getting to bring this beautiful tale to an audience, we also get to sing gorgeous music and have a literal party on stage," Dunn said.

Paul Chilson, who portrays Scrooge, said his favorite part of the musical is how so many characters have a hand in changing Scrooge's heart. There's Marley's ghost showing us his torment, to little Grace Smithe's forgiveness during her mother's funeral. And from his nephew Fred hoping against all odds that his only living relative will finally come to Christmas dinner to Tiny Tim's eternal optimism in the face of poverty and affliction.

"I love seeing the loss that pushed Scrooge to become the way he was, the friendship and fun he is missing during the present, and the choice he must make on how his life will ultimately impact those around him," Chilson said. "(And) the music by Alan Menken that underscores this redemption story heightens the emotion and brings this vivid picture of 19th century Victorian Londontown to life."

Ray Webber, who portrays Tiny Tim,

said his favorite part is the chance to say the noteworthy line in the production.

"When I get to say the classic line 'and God bless us everyone,' it's Tiny Tim's best day ever and it feels like a perfect Christmas moment," he said.

A Christmas Carol: The Musical is directed by Ken and Nancy Hill with choreography by Bobby Millhouse and

music direction by Amy Chalfant. Based on the book by Mike Ockrent and Lynn Ahrens, lyrics are by Ahrens with music by Alan Menken.

Performances are scheduled Thursdays through Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. with Sunday matinees at 2 p.m.

For tickets and more information, go online to axreptheatre.com

Dance companies holiday shows

Three local dance companies present their annual holiday shows at the Cascade Theatre in Redding. Tickets for all shows are available at cascadetheatre.org.

Redding City Ballet presents The Nutcracker

Dec. 8 (7 p.m.) and Dec. 9 (two shows 1 p.m. and 7 p.m.)

Redding City Ballet's performance of *The Nutcracker* features all local dancers. They will also perform *The Nutcracker* at 3 p.m., Dec. 2, at Trinity Alps Performing Arts Center in Weaverville. Go online to tapaonline.org.

California Dance Company presents Sleighing with CDC

Dec. 16 (four shows – 10 a.m., 1 p.m., 4 p.m., 7 p.m.)

California Dance Company's 27th annual Christmas showcase features dance performances from their 2023-2024 season of classes from students ages 2 and up.

Dance Depot presents their Holiday Showcase 2023

Dec. 17 (two shows – 1 p.m. and 6 p.m.)

Dance Depot presents their 2023 Holiday Showcase on stage. Dancers of all ages will share the spirit of Christmas as they sing and dance to the music, bringing a wide variety of dance styles.



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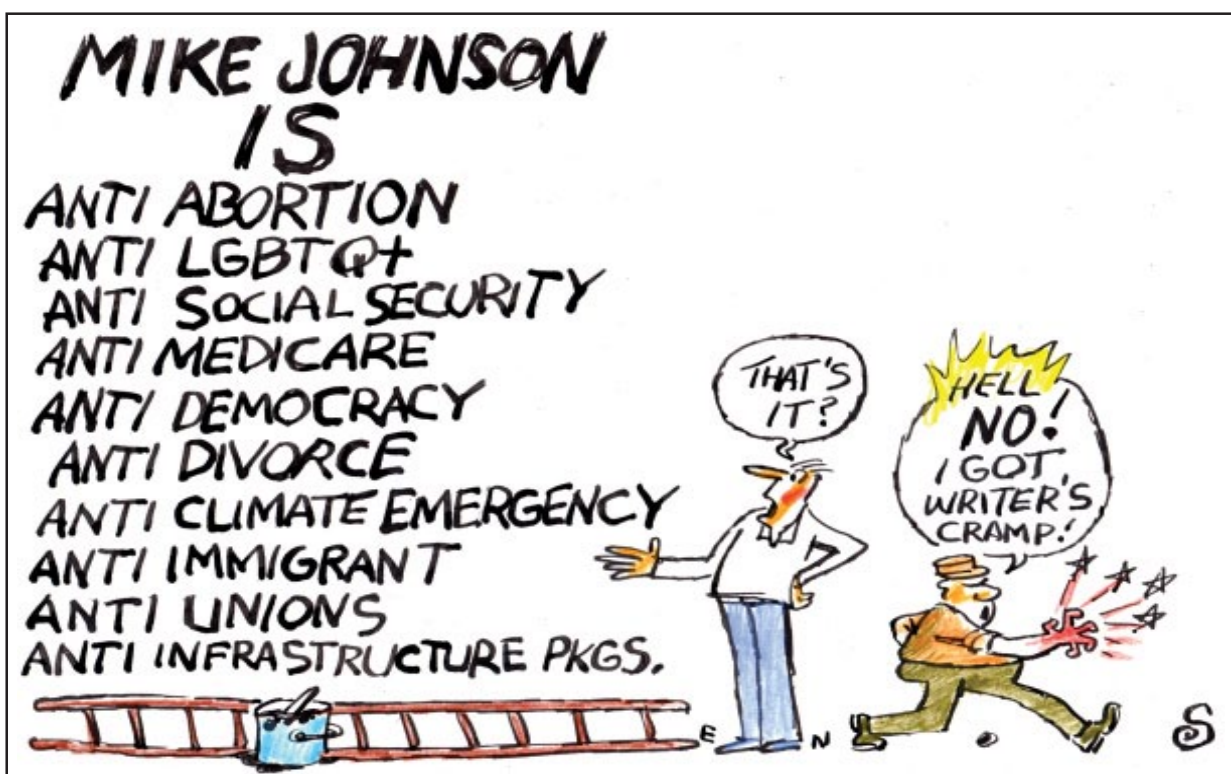
'A Christmas Carol' in Mt. Shasta features eurythmy movement art

The Inland Isle Players will present Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" at The Jefferson Center for the Performing Arts in Mt. Shasta in December.

The troupe of over 30 performers, directed by Wendy Poer, presented the play last year to sold out audiences. She has produced several Shakespeare plays in the community over the last 15 years.

This performance will feature live music, singing, acting and the movement art of eurythmy through which the ghosts will be portrayed. In eurythmy, an art created by Rudolf Steiner, the spoken word and musical tone are made visible through imaginative gestures. The wonder of Marley's ghost and all of the Christmas Spirits are thus brought to life in this harmonious art.

Performances are scheduled for 7 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 14, Friday, Dec. 15 and Thursday, Dec. 21. The JCA Theater is located at 1124 Pine Grove Dr. Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$10 for students and are available at The Fifth Season in Mt Shasta or by calling 530.938.9691.



AFTER FIVE The North State Magazine

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No telephone call submissions; email or regular mail only.

Prefer reading After Five with a digital device? Use the QR Code below or go to northstate.news to download a PDF version with hyperlinks.

AFTER FIVE

General Manager/Editor: Ron Harrington

Publisher: Craig Harrington

P.O. Box 492905, Redding, California 96049

ON THE WEB northstate.news

Advertising and Editorial

Phone: 530.275.1716

Fax: 530.303.1528

Email: SLB@shasta.com or

after5redding@gmail.com



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New Year's Eve CELEBRATION



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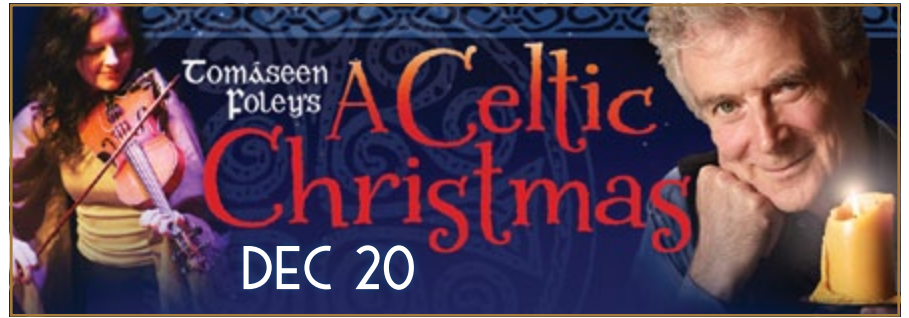
Dinner includes one of three entrees plus appetizer and dessert. Served from 6pm to 9pm. Music 9pm to midnight with DJ-Grizz. Also, party favors and champagne toast. \$80 p/p. Tickets available at ThreeShastas.com

Stay the Night? Discounted room accommodations available with tickets purchased for dinner. Call the hotel directly at 530.221.8700. Red Lion Hotel 1830 Hilltop Drive, Redding

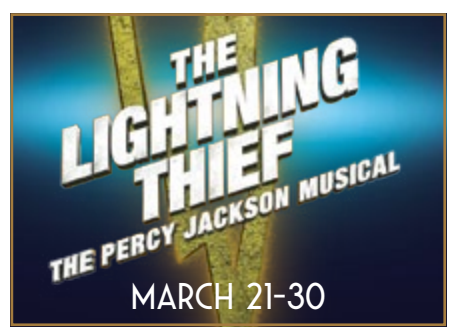
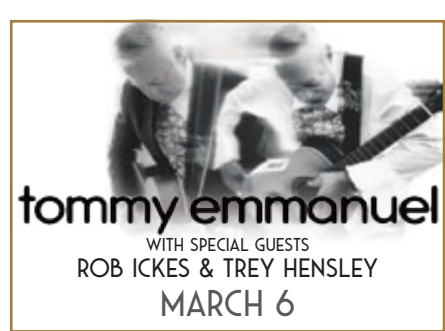
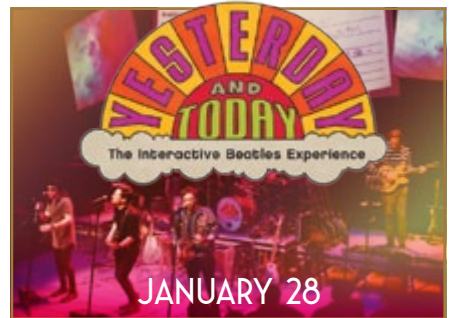
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Fed up? Yes. Nasty? No.

By Peter Funt



If you listen to pollsters and politicians, or consume heavy doses of social media and cable-TV news, you might come away thinking the nation is in a collective bad mood. We're said to be irritable, even hostile.

I've just come off a 18-day road trip that took me from New Hampshire to Florida, spending time in nine states. My sense is that folks are frustrated with pretty much everything over which they have no control: the economy, politics and global conflict, to name just three biggies. But it's a mistake to conclude that they're taking it out on each other.

Americans I encountered seem to be compensating by treating each other — and strangers like me — with surprisingly pleasant vibes, almost the way they did at the start of the pandemic.

My conclusions are unscientific. Yet, having spent much of my career studying human nature on "Candid Camera," I trust my instincts.

On I-275 in Florida I found myself having to pay a \$1.75 toll with a 50-dollar bill. "No worries!" said the remarkably cheerful woman, laboring in a tiny booth on an 82-degree afternoon. "I've got plenty of change!" Still feeling guilty about the inconvenience, I fibbed, "I've never been on this road before." "Oh, what fun!" she chirped as I pulled away.

When the young delivery woman in Columbia, S.C., accidentally went to the wrong hotel, she ripped up the bill for my pizza and her boss tossed in a free desert and soda.

In Manchester, N.H., I was among 1,700 people at the SNHU Arena watching Seth Meyers do comedy. It was the most courteous, mild mannered crowd I've ever encountered. The cops were like ambassadors, explaining how the facility is struggling since the minor-league hockey team moved away.

At the Mayflower Inn in Washington, Conn., I watched a young man spend nearly 15 minutes carefully guiding a motorist to safety after a semi had wedged his car into an impossibly small corner of the parking lot.

In Harrisonburg, Va., the internet was out at the Hampton Inn and the manager insisted on giving me a partial refund. He was so apologetic you'd think an evening without wifi was something truly awful.

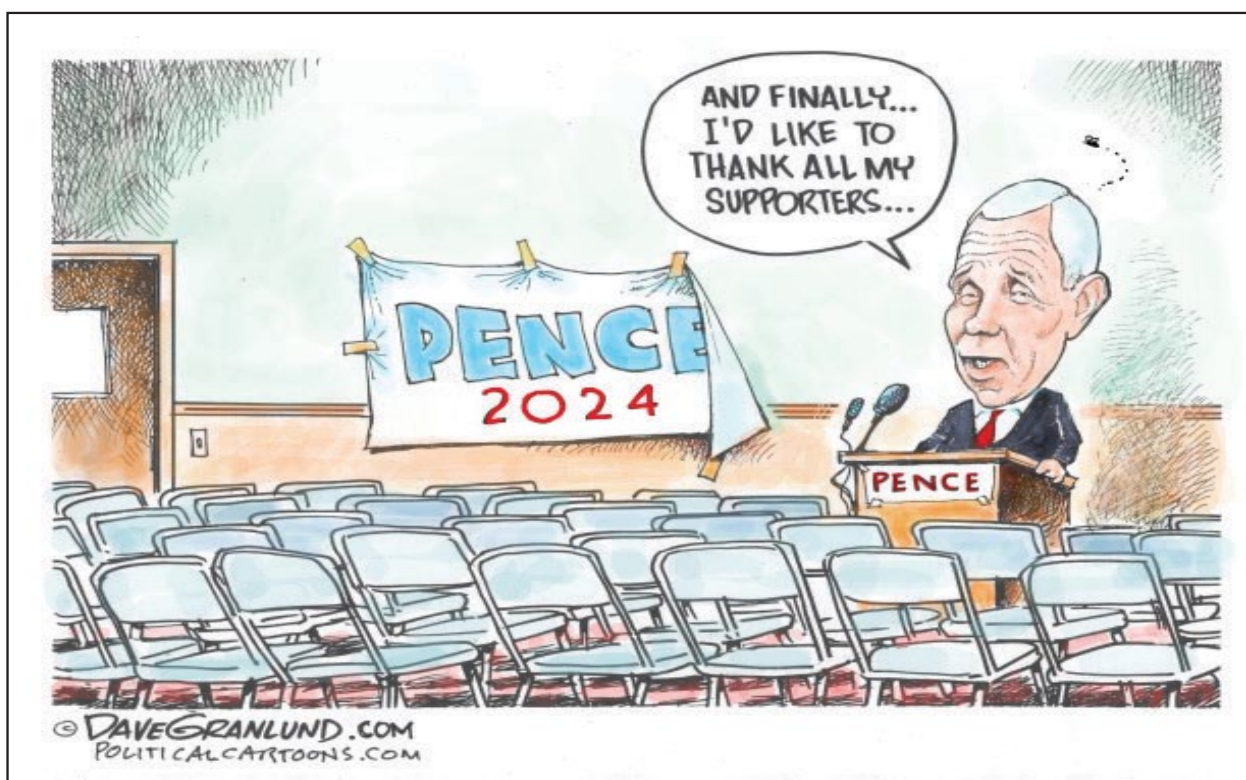
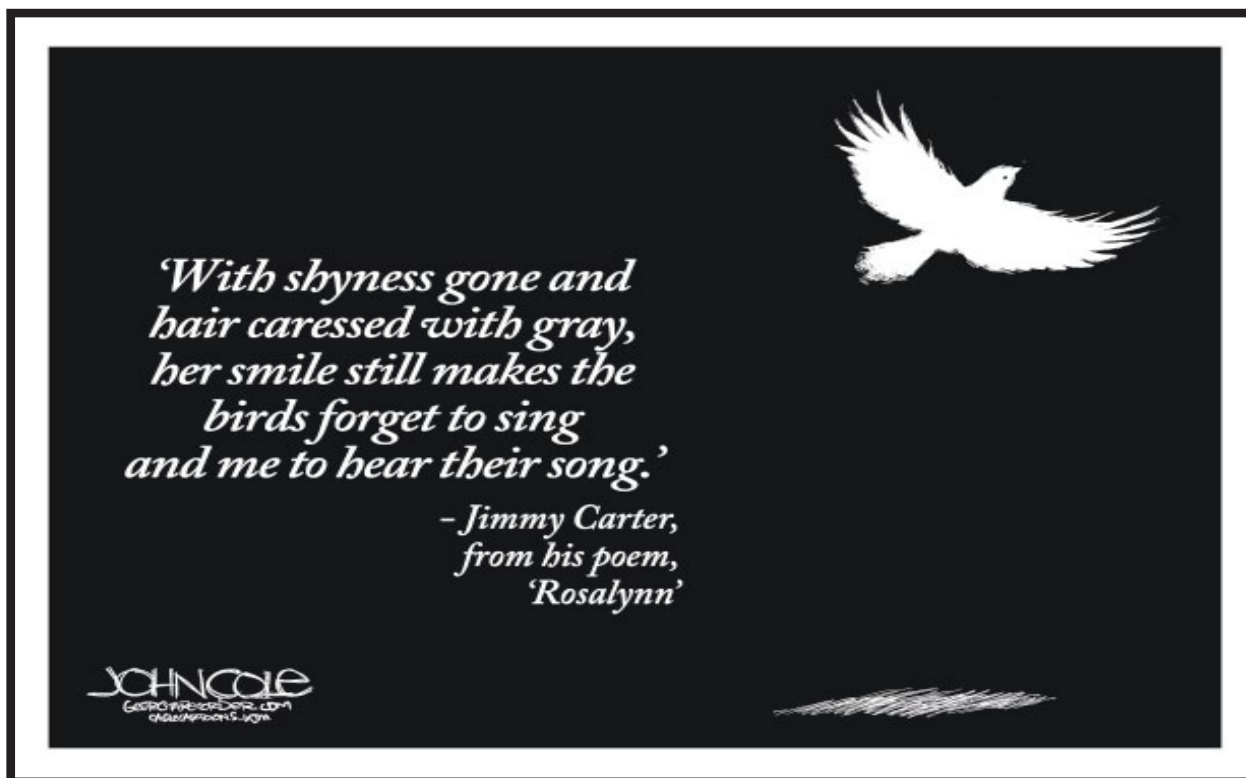
After my rental car blew a tire in Ocala, Fla., the guys at H&D Services could not have been more sympathetic and accommodating, replacing the tire while regaling me with stories about highway mishaps they've observed.

In Fort Myers, a city still struggling to recover from last year's devastating hurricane, employees were setting up holiday decorations at the Big Tower mall, where many of the stores didn't make it back and half the palm trees are supported by large wooden trusses. "I'm just glad to have a job," a middle-aged guy told me, as he stacked potted poinsettias in the shape of a ten-foot Christmas tree.

Look, I'm not naive about national discontent. But it's good to know the American spirit is more resilient than many influencers on the national stage would have you believe.

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Peter Funt's latest book is "Playing POTUS: The Power of America's Acting Presidents," about comedians who impersonated presidents.



NEWS of the WEIRD

The Saucon Valley School District in Hellertown, Pennsylvania, and The Satanic Temple have come to an agreement, The Philadelphia Inquirer reported.

Earlier in 2023, the district had banned the temple from using its facilities at Saucon Valley Middle School to host the After School Satan Club (motto: Educatin' With Satan).

But on Nov. 16, the district agreed to cover the temple's attorney fees and give the club the same access to facilities as "comparable groups."

However, The Satanic Temple noted that they do not run the clubs in districts where there are no Christian-based religious programs; since the district's Good News Club appears to be defunct this year, the After School Satan Club will be on hold.



Office Christmas parties are on the horizon, so take this cautionary tale to heart: Alana Bechiom filed a lawsuit in Los Angeles Superior Court over a Christmas party that went very sideways last year at a San Pedro, California, Taco Bell, where she worked at the time.

KTLA-TV reported that Bechiom's manager invited her to the potluck staff party, and Bechiom brought a bowl of guacamole.

When she arrived, she said, she realized her manager had "covered the windows of the restaurant with wrapping paper" and had covered the lobby cameras.

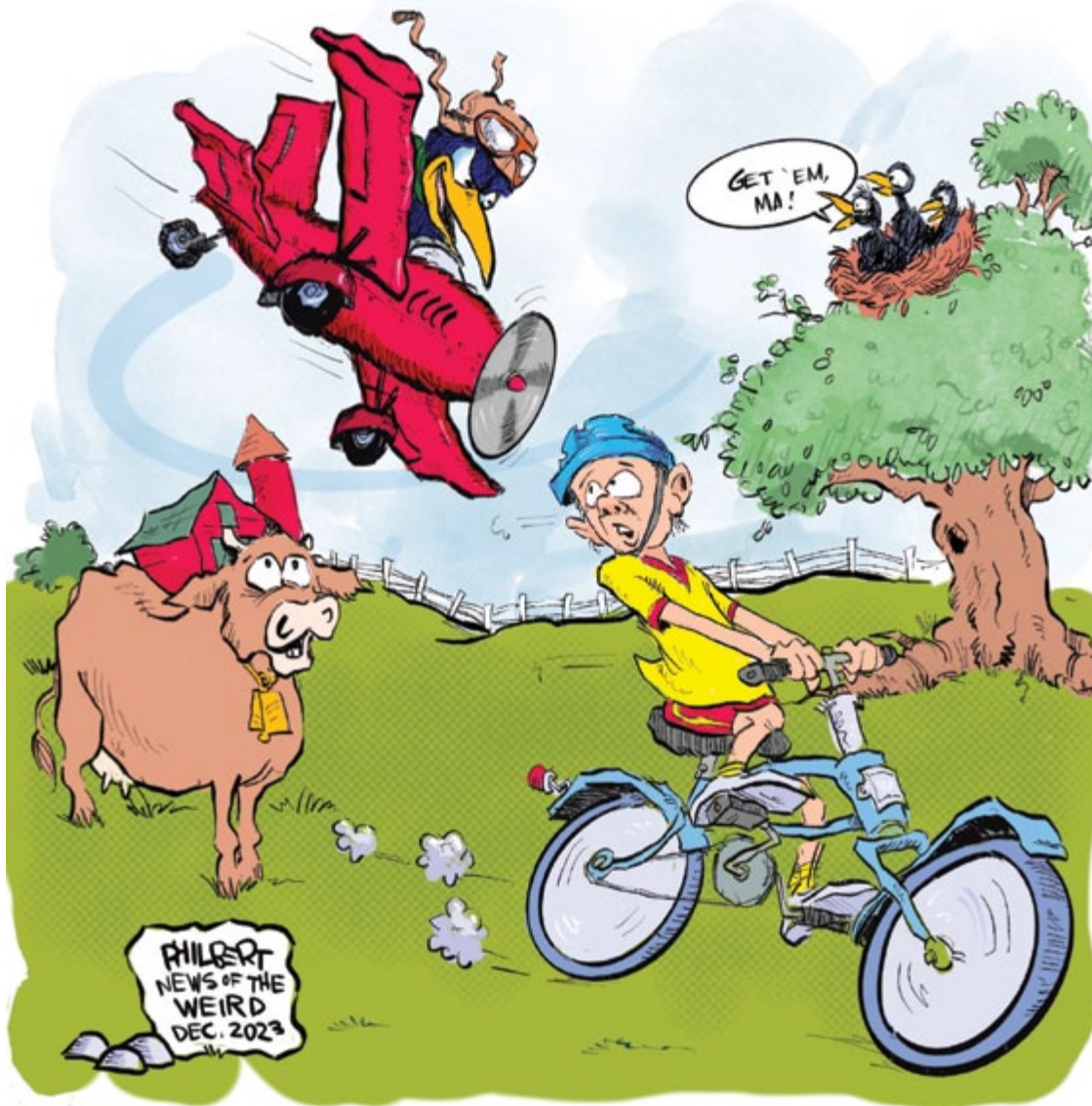
She noted that the supervisor had provided alcohol and some staffers were "overserved."

After stepping outside for a moment late in the evening, Bechiom returned to find a co-worker "having sex with his wife in front of everyone at the party"; the wife was also kissing the manager and another female co-worker.

Bechiom said she ran out of the restaurant but went back in to get her guacamole bowl, where she found the manager and co-worker vomiting, one in her bowl.

Bechiom reported the incident to Taco Bell, and the manager and co-worker were fired, but since then she's been threatened and had her car windows shattered.

Bechiom said she has suffered "actual, consequential and incidental financial losses"; her lawsuit names Taco Bell and the franchise owner, who she said "did nothing about the threats." Taco Bell says they "take these claims very seriously."



Since Sept. 20, Alejandro Rios, 25, has become the target of a dive-bombing magpie who follows him as he rides his bike home from work. Fox News reported that when the Brisbane, Australia, resident first felt something hit his head, "I ... thought a piece of fruit had fallen off a tree or someone had hit me," he said. Rios' helmet and eyewear protect him from injury, but the bird is persistent. Scientists say magpies remember faces and this one is likely protecting its young. "It's a bit of a friend and a bit of a nemesis," Rios said of his attacker. "I want to say it's my friend -- but it really, really hates me."

Angela Presti of Parma, Ohio, was so excited to bring home her first real Christmas tree and decorate it with her daughter, WKYC-TV reported.

But a few hours later, she noticed her face was swollen and "My cheek was hot and itchy," she said.

"My tongue, I felt like I could swallow it, except I couldn't swallow and my throat started closing and my breathing was wheezy."

Presti called her dad, who rushed her to the emergency room. She said medical staff weren't surprised that it might be the tree; about 7% of the population suffers from Christmas Tree Syndrome, caused not so much by the tree itself as the mold that grows on it in the sales lot. Presti's doctor

suggested she go back to an artificial tree.



According to the Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies, a number of "witch bottles," created to deter evil spirits, are washing up along Gulf Coast beaches, the Fort Worth Star-Telegram reported.

The bottles are part of old-school spell casting; they contain objects including iron nails, rusty pins, hair and urine.

Jace Tunnell of the institute thinks the bottles originate in the Caribbean and South America.

"I've found around eight of these bottles and never opened one. I have five of them on my fence in the backyard since my wife won't let me bring them

inside," he said.

Tunnell said the bottles are intended to "draw in and trap harmful intentions directed at their owners."



Three unnamed men were taken into custody in St. Louis, Missouri, after accidentally locking themselves in a city jail known as the Workhouse, KSDK-TV reported.

The Workhouse, a medium-security lockup, has been empty for more than a year; the trespassers had to call 911 after getting themselves trapped inside.

After being sprung, they were arrested for property damage, burglary and stealing.



Residents of Tees Valley in Northeast England have been

flummoxed by about 1,000 small blue balls that have washed up on their beaches since mid-November, Metro News reported.

The bright blue orbs are made of a rubberlike substance, and many people believe the appearance has to do with storms and strong currents disturbing a deposit of balls on the seabed.

As it turns out, the balls are called Taprogge balls, after their manufacturer, and they're used to clean the local power station's pipes.

Sometimes they get released into the sea, but station officials say there's been no release lately.

"They do this every week, they go through with the balls. It's a closed system and the balls shouldn't escape," said Jacky Watson from the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust.

"They are natural and will biodegrade but are still a hazard. We put the word out locally if people found the balls, they could let us know."



Tapacio Sanchez, 35, wasn't even a guest at the La Quinta Inn in Naples, Florida, when she started taking out her aggressions on the fire suppression systems there, WINK-TV reported.

Managers at the hotel asked Sanchez to leave the premises, but instead she tampered with the HVAC circuit breaker, ripping out internal wiring, and damaged eight sprinkler heads.

Next, Sanchez took off for the Olive Garden restaurant next door, where she was discovered in the restroom with a dog (not hers).

Police said she was speaking gibberish. She was arrested; the dog was returned to its owner.



Thieves made off with a questionable booty in Philadelphia, WPVI-TV reported.

While a tractor-trailer was parked in a Target lot, six men broke the locks on the back of the trailer and stole multiple cases of talcum powder, police said.

The driver was in the cab at the time but was unaware of the burglary until he started to drive away.



At an adoption event, the Anti-Cruelty Society, a Chicago animal shelter, had just one dog left: Elvis, a "3-year-old meatball," People reported.

So the ACS took to Facebook to appeal for Elvis' placement: "Elvis was the only dog that didn't find a home during our

—Please See Page 16

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Interfaith Solstice and Holiday Candle Lighting Service

Wed., Dec. 20 in Redding

The annual interfaith solstice and holiday candle lighting service is scheduled for 7 p.m., Wednesday, Dec. 20, at Pilgrim Congregation United Church of Christ, 2850 Foothill Blvd., Redding.

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

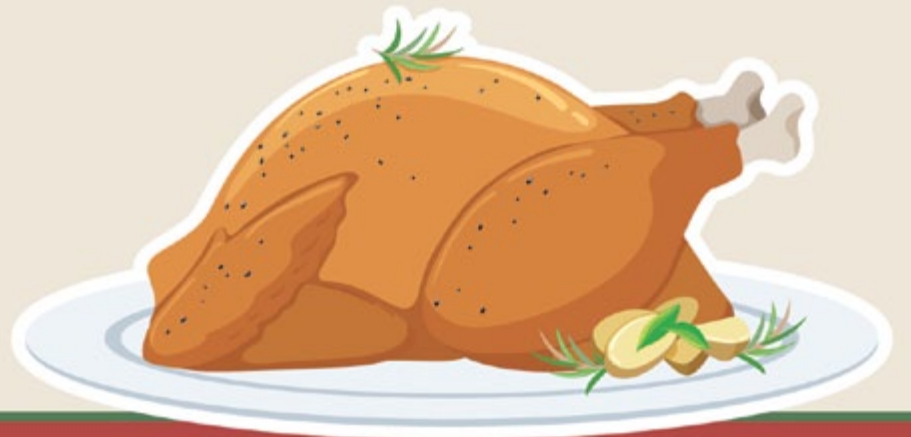
Interfaith.

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

This is a family event, however, donations are accepted to help offset costs.

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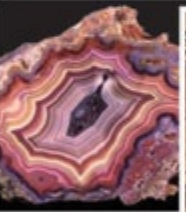
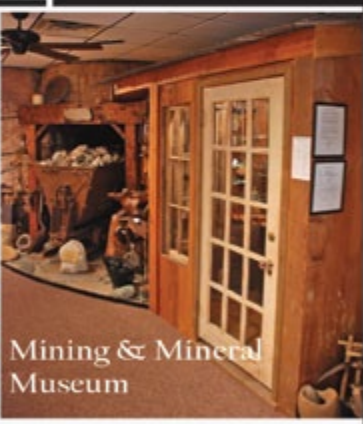
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A Celtic Christmas returns to Cascade for its 28th season

"If you can't cross the Atlantic, at least make your way to 'A Celtic Christmas.'"

- Cleveland Plain Dealer

Drawing on the infinitely rich treasury of Ireland's cultural heritage, Tomáseen Foley's A Celtic Christmas, now in its 28th season, is a re-creation of a night before Christmas in the West of Ireland in the 1940s, in the days before the motorcar, the television and the telephone.

Tomáseen Foley's A Celtic Christmas returns to the Cascade Theatre at 7:30 p.m., Dec. 20.

Traditionally, in the remote parish of Teampall an Ghleannáin - Tomáseen Foley's birthplace - the neighbors gathered at each other's farmhouses on the nights leading up to Christmas, bringing with them their fiddles, tin whistles, flutes, bodhráns, uilleann pipes, and, perhaps, most important of all, their unshakeable sense of community. They gathered to raise the rafters of the old houses with the joy of their music, to knock sparks off the flagstone floor with their traditional dances - and, of course, to tell stories - they filled the night with the laughter of their stories

A Celtic Christmas brings to life just such a night. On stage, the spirit of a Christmas dances to life and glows



brightly to create an Irish family feast, direct from the rich table of communal life in the west of Ireland.

"Great storytelling swept up more than 1,000 listeners... 'A Celtic Christmas' received a standing ovation at the end. Some people may have been standing to reach for a tissue...it was heart tugging...Foley runs pictures and thoughts across the mind like shooting stars on a crystalline night, with emotions shaking the ground."

- Green Bay Press Gazette

For the Cascade Theatre show, go online to cascadetheatre.org for tickets and more information or call 530.243.8877.

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Starring Bennett Gale - 4:15pm - Siskiyou Arts Museum
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PHOTO ABOVE AND COVER PHOTO / Michael Burke

Riverfront Playhouse's production of "A Good Old-Fashioned Big Family Christmas" features a large cast. Among them and the characters they portray, left to right, back row: Leila Walstead (Mildred), Dyllan Huber (Cliff), Hal Paquin (Tom), Laura Christensen (Marjorie), Marilyn Robrahn

(Arlene), Gary Corum (Jack) and Rodrick Dusio MacDermott (Max). Middle row: Grace Coe (Beth), Joey Flores (Hayden), Amanda Marsh (Judith) and Aubri Six Wilkerson (Carla). Front row: Elizabeth Moeckli Shettell (Phoebe), Dagmar Hansen (Lanie) and Finn Hansen (Blair).

Large cast for Riverfront's holiday production of 'A Good Old-Fashioned Big Family Christmas'

For their holiday production, Riverfront Playhouse presents the comedy "A Good Old-Fashioned Big Family Christmas." The author, Pat Cook, has written and published over 150 plays during his career.

According to Andrew Gibson, Riverfront's director for the production, the play is basically about a woman who decides that her parents are having difficulties and it rests on her shoulders to save their marriage.

"The method she decides to go about 'saving' said marriage is by getting the entire family together for a massive Christmas party. A 'big Family Christmas,' if you will," Gibson said in an email. "More broadly, the play is about the things we do in the name of love and how sometimes all you really need to solve a problem is basic communication."

The play involves a large cast. In fact, Gibson said it's the largest he's ever worked with for a non-musical.

The main characters, he said, are married couple Hayden and Judith (portrayed by Joey Flores and Amanda Marsh) while the suspected difficulties between Judith's parents (Jack and Arlene, played by Gary Corum and Marilyn Robrahn) are the inciting incident of the play.

Also involved in Judith's plot are her sisters, Carla and Beth (Aubri Six Wilkerson and Grace Coe), and, begrudgingly, the sister's husbands, Max and Cliff (Rodrick Dusio MacDermott and Dyllan Huber).

Hayden and Judith's daughter Phoebe (Elizabeth Moeckli), is unaware of Judith's reason for the season and has her own motivations during the festivities. Carla and Max's kids, Blair and Lanie (Finn Hansen and Dagmar Hansen, actual siblings), really only care about catching their favorite show on TV. Hayden's parents, Tom and Marjorie (Hal Paquin and Laura Christensen), find their way into

the festivities, and neighbor Mildred (Leila Walstead) also tends to pop in and lend a hand.

"It's a full house in a lot of ways, but a very, very, very fine house," Gibson said.

The production marks Gibson's debut as the director of a full-length play. In the past, he has directed a couple of Riverfront's Playwright's Night Out, while also directing some short films he wrote.

"I've worn many theatrical hats, both onstage and off, having participated in every facet, from stage managing to assistant directing and so on," he said. "So, in many ways, this is a long time coming. I'm a writer at heart, always having some sort of project gestating at all times, and I feel like I bring those sensibilities into my directing style, working to enhance what's on the page and filtering it through my actors, who obviously contribute their own brilliance."

Gibson said members of the talented cast have exceeded his expectations.

"I really hope everyone comes to see the show and gets as blown away as I was," he said.

The show runs Fridays through Sundays from Dec. 1-17. Tickets for Friday and Saturday shows are \$25 each with performances at 7:30 p.m. with the exception of Saturday, Dec. 2, which will be a 2 p.m. matinee so as not to conflict with the Redding Lighted Christmas parade. Sunday matinees are \$20 per ticket with performances at 2 p.m.

For tickets and more information, go online to riverfrontplayhouse.net.

Holiday Craft Fair

Riverfront Playhouse is holding a Holiday Craft Fair from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 9. There will be gifts, jewelry, crafts, food and more. Riverfront Playhouse is located at 1950 California St., Redding.

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!

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A Christmas Carol THE MUSICAL

Music by Alan Menken Lyrics by Lynn Aherns Book by Mike Ockrent & Lynn Aherns

Original Choreography by Susan Stroman Based on the story by Charles Dickens Originally directed by Mike Ockrent

Originally Presented by Radio City Entertainment At the Theatre at Madison Square Garden.

Presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI). All authorized performances outside are also supplied by MTI. www.mtishows.com

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 Aherns (Ragtime, Seussical, Once on This Island), breathe fantastic new life into the classic tale of A Christmas Carol. Don't miss this classic come to life on the stage!

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Midnight in the Garden: Dec 31

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SYLVIA

by A.R. Gurney

Doggone Funny

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

-From Page 7

Fall in Love adoption week. He met a lot of potential adopters ... Help us find Elvis a family to love!"

Three days later, Elvis' dreams came true in a serendipitous way: Loren Michael Agron – who used to work as an Elvis Presley impersonator – and Drew Wilhelm took Elvis home.

"Elvis has LEFT the building," the ACS announced.

"We couldn't be happier for Elvis, who finally got his happily ever after!"

The couple report that the canine king of rock has settled in nicely: "His personality is shining through so much." He may be nothin' but a "Hound Dog," but Elvis is not "Lonesome Tonight."

Dr. Jason Gladwell, an orthodontist in Raleigh, North Carolina, has a catchy new promotion going, WRAL-TV reported: "Grins and Glocks."

Yep – patients who sign up for Invisalign braces can choose between a free Glock 19 (\$500-plus retail) or a membership to Youngsville Gun Club & Range.

The deal is open only to those 21 and older, and the club will conduct a background check on recipients.

Dr. Gladwell has received mixed reactions to the come-on; notably, Align Technology, which makes Invisalign, isn't happy: "This promotion does not reflect our brand purpose."

A cargo flight on its way from New York to Liege, Belgium, was forced to turn around after a horse escaped its stall, CNN reported.

The pilot alerted Boston Air Traffic Control that while the flight was not impeded, "we cannot get the horse back secured."

They also requested a veterinarian meet the plane at JFK Airport, as the horse was having "difficulty." Later, the plane resumed its journey and arrived in Belgium the next morning.

In West Palm Beach, Florida, Kelly Jacobson was heartbroken after officers led away her pet pig, Pork Chop, during an eviction.

WPTV reported that animal care and control officers actually had to drag the pig, as he weighs 400 pounds and can't really walk.

They plan to gain custody of Pork Chop and get him the dietary care he needs.

Jacobson has been cited twice before for neglecting his needs, but she said she would "do whatever I have to do to make him better. I need him."

Rudy Wilcox, 45, of Clearwater, Florida, was "observed defecating on a deceased opossum," according to The Smoking Gun.

Officers with the Clearwater Police Department said he was in "full view of the motoring public during busy traffic times."

While Wilcox denied the accusation,

officers found "physical evidence" to support the charges. Wilcox was jailed.

When a game warden pulled over a pickup truck near Lubbock, Texas, the driver and passenger obligingly waited with a deputy while the Texas Parks and Wildlife officer searched the vehicle, the Fort Worth Star-Telegram reported.

At one point, the driver asked for permission to retrieve a burrito and 44-ounce drink from the cab, telling the officer that he "did not have any drugs or anything in the vehicle."

Ah, but how about that big drink? When the officer removed the lid from the cup, he found an orange bag inside with 5 grams of methamphetamine. The driver was taken into custody.

Charlie Curtis of Toronto, Canada, developed Crohn's disease in 2014, Yahoo! News reported.

Although he took medicine, Curtis was hospitalized with his symptoms and had to visit the bathroom multiple times a day.

Then he tried a new therapy: do-it-yourself poop transplants, using his mother's fecal matter.

Fecal microbiota transplants, or FMTs, are typically performed by a doctor and involve collecting feces from a healthy donor, mixing it with a saline solution and inserting it in the patient's gastrointestinal tract through an enema.

But Curtis' DIY transplants had an unexpected side effect: Over the four years they did the procedure, Curtis experienced sweating, hot flashes and mood swings – his mom's menopause symptoms.

Doctors believe hormones in his mom's fecal matter most likely were to blame.

"When I was actually doing the procedure," Curtis said, "I'd feel tingling inside of me. It felt healthy, it felt like it was working."

Kelsey Hatcher and her husband, Caleb, of Dora, Alabama, have three kids under 8 and a busy life, WVTM13-TV reported.

Kelsey already knew she had the unusual condition of having two uteri and two cervixes when she became pregnant for a fourth time.

But when she had her first sonogram last spring, she discovered something amazing: She has two babies on the way, one in each uterus.

"OB/GYNs go their whole careers without seeing anything like this," Shweta Patel, Kelsey's doctor, said.

The pregnancy is getting the Hatchers a lot of attention, which Kelsey isn't all that comfortable with. Both babies are girls and are due on Christmas Day, but doctors say they could be born hours, days or weeks apart.

Henry Meade, 40, was busy spreading the Christmas spirit in Tazewell, Tennessee, Fox59-TV reported.

Meade was operating "Santa's Train," a riding lawn mower pulling a cart with children and families, at the town's Christmas Tractor Parade. But visitors thought Meade was acting erratically and reported him to police.

He subsequently failed a sobriety test, and officers found a syringe, meth and other narcotics in his possession. He was charged with possession and driving under the influence.

Kathy Magruder, who operates the Pageturners Bookstore in Indianola, Iowa, was rummaging through the never-checked-out books at the Calvin Community retirement home when she stumbled upon a treasure, KCCI-TV reported.

There among the other titles was a leatherbound Bible, printed in 1705 in Selkirkshire, Scotland.

Interestingly, it was printed illegally, without the oversight of the church.

"This one, just something about it, when I open it up, the pages make a noise when you turn them that's a little different than a new book. They feel a little different, and the book smells a little different than any other book," Magruder said about the Bible.

In Glendale, Wisconsin, police identified a stolen Dodge Durango being driven erratically, TMJ4-TV reported.

Officers deployed stop sticks, and the Durango crashed into two other cars before all four occupants jumped out and ran away, with one ducking into a portable toilet to hide.

As they crossed a golf course, one golfer stepped in to help: "When we realized they were being chased and that kid was in the porta potty ... I just made a rash decision to go push the porta potty down," said golfer Adam Westermayer.

The suspect was trapped inside, and police were able to arrest him and one other suspect.

It was always Sara Fazekas' dream to have sex in public, and so she did, on Nov. 10 in Dunedin, Florida, the New York Post reported.

Fazekas, 55, and Robert Clarke, 60, weren't a bit shy about fulfilling her lifelong goal.

The police report said the couple were "fully nude on top of one another" on a causeway, even as adults and children looked on.

One witness said they were "going to town," but Clarke, a registered sex offender, told police he had no remorse and that "children should be at home and not at the causeway."

He was held on \$50,000 bond; Fazekas was charged with exposing herself.

Townfolk in Skelmorlie, Scotland, were getting their Halloween on as a Pennywise-type clown lurked around the streets, Sky News reported, leaving red balloons in his wake.

Early on Oct. 12, the clown, who may or may not be someone named Cole Deimos, posted a "message to the media" in rhyme: "They called me

'killer clown.' Why don't you leave the jokes to me? The only thing that's dying is your credibility. This clown doesn't want fame, glory or gold. He just wants to play in this so-called 'sleepy town.' So, come and join in and learn to fear the Skelmorlie clown."

Police haven't received any reports of crimes, and Facebook followers are gleeful: "Out of all the clowns in the village, he's the best."

A store in Swansea, Wales, that supports the Barnardo children's charity has circulated a request to its donors, United Press International reported.

Please don't send us your sex toys. "Please be mindful that we are a children's charity and as such we have a range of ages on our wonderful volunteer team," the statement read.

"We therefore ask that you refrain from donating your used and unused marital aids! ... The branch has CCTV so that these items can be traced back to their owners." In other words, we know who you are.

Desirae Kelly of Farmington, Missouri, woke up at 5 a.m. on Oct. 24 to a strange feeling. "I actually felt something move in my ear," Kelly said in a TikTok video.

Fox News reported that Kelly was in such discomfort, she started to cry in the waiting room at urgent care. As a nurse started to flush her ear with water, Kelly "felt whatever that was crawl out of my ear ... and I watched out of the corner of my eye something fall and land on my sweater," Kelly said.

"I watch this black spider with all eight legs crawl across the floor." She said she screeched and threw up as the nurses trapped the spider in a container.

"The nurses were so sweet and passed no judgment like I thought they would," Kelly said. "I don't think I could ever sleep without earplugs again."

A 75-year-old woman in Pavia, Italy, had to get the courts involved to get her two sons, ages 42 and 40, out of her house, CNN reported.

Mom described her sons as "parasites" who had been living with her without contributing financially, even though both had jobs.

Judge Simona Caterbi called the brothers "bamboccioni," or big babies, and declared they have until Dec. 18 to vacate the woman's home.

"Once a certain age has been exceeded, the child can no longer expect the parents to continue the maintenance obligation within limits that are no longer reasonable," Caterbi said. The brothers hadn't decided whether they would appeal the decision.

Too many words, according to officials in Spain. Fernando Fitz-James Stuart, the 17th duke of Huescar, recently baptized his second child with a name 25 words long, Sky News reported.

The name pays tribute to the baby's mother and father, other members of the family and religious devotions. But –Please See Page 17

Cartoonists are casualties of war, too

By Daryl Cagle

People who like to draw serious political cartoons for a living – people like me – have to be extra careful in these divisive times.



In just the last month three major newspapers – the Washington Post, the Philadelphia Inquirer and the Guardian in Britain – have pulled down or decided not to publish cartoons drawn by the best editorial cartoonists in the world.

Michael Ramirez, Monte Wolverton and Steve Bell each bravely applied their talents and opinions to the brutal war in Gaza between Israel and Hamas that started Oct. 7.

For their troubles, they were charged with being Islamophobic, anti-Semitic or racist by readers, their fellow journalists and editorial boards. Bell was even fired.

The most recent example was at the Washington Post, where my good friend Michael Ramirez ran his caricature of a Hamas spokesman, Ghazi Hamadi, in a suit with five women and children roped to his body.

“How dare Israel attack civilians...” the Hamas spokesman was saying.

You’d think it’d be easy for anyone to get the point Ramirez was making. Many cartoonists have used the same idea of Hamas or Hezbollah wearing children as human shields, including me.

But many readers immediately expressed outrage on social media and bombarded the paper’s comment section from their silos.

Ramirez was charged with excusing Israel’s war crimes and pushing Israeli military talking points and accused of being a racist for his malicious, offensive and “grotesque caricature” of a Palestinian.

The reader outrage was so intense that the boss of the Post’s opinion section, David Shipley, “re-evaluated” his decision.

He didn’t just pull it down from the paper’s web site. He issued an apology for having “missed something profound, and divisive” and published a selection of critical comments by readers.

Ramirez ably defended himself on Michael Smerconish’s Nov. 11 show on CNN.

Calling the charges against him “ridiculous,” he said, “The cartoon was very specific. It pointed out the hypocrisy of an organization that uses civilians as shields” and said his critics “used the race card as a way to eliminate a contrary political opinion they don’t agree with.”

I agree with Ramirez. It was outrageous how quickly – and abjectly – the Post caved to the complaints of its noisiest, most partisan and most sensitive readers.

What happened last month at the Philadelphia Inquirer to my good friend Monte Wolverton was another example of how careful editorial cartoonists have to be today.

My small business represents Wolverton and syndicates his work. His Oct. 18 cartoon showed an oversized Israeli army boot crushing Hamas terrorists.

It ran in many other newspapers without any complaints, but the Inquirer reconsidered and decided to take it down and apologize because its editors thought the cartoon reinforced “pernicious anti-Semitic tropes about Israeli aggression.”

I suggested to Monte that he withdraw the cartoon and apologize for it because I think any big military boot in an editorial cartoon could be seen as a Nazi boot and portraying Jews as Nazis is an anti-Semitic trope.

The most outlandish – and unjustified – case of cartoon cancelling happened to the highly respected Steve Bell of the Guardian newspaper in Britain. He was fired after 40 years at the paper, over a cartoon that was never even published.

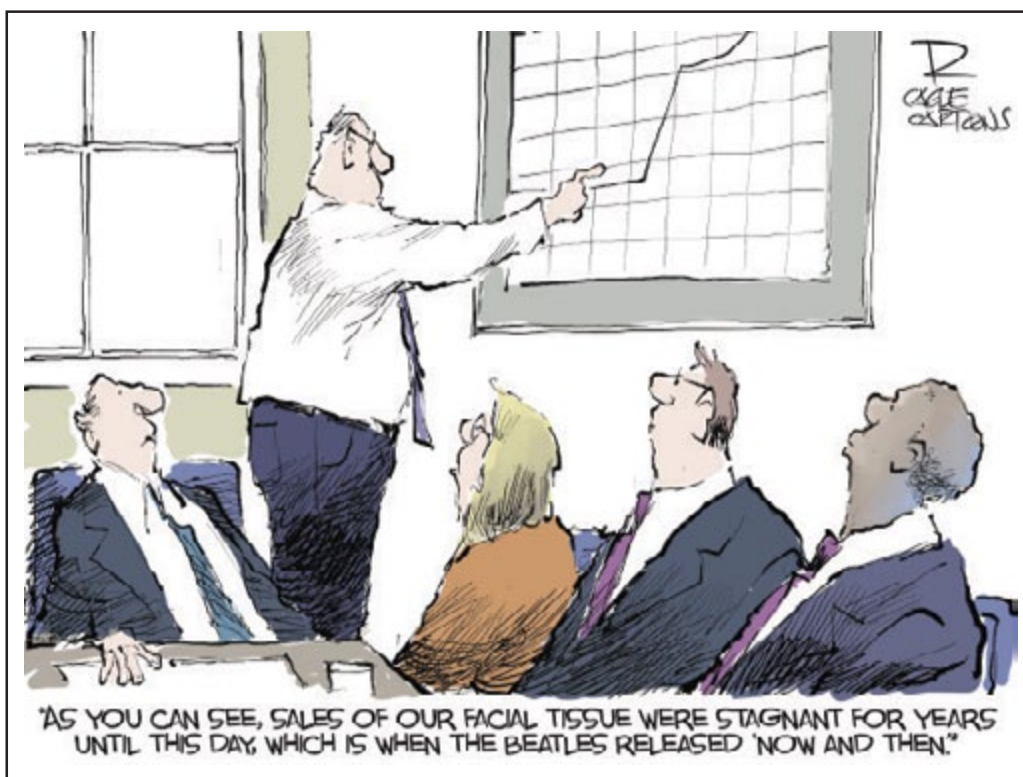
His fatal cartoon depicted Benjamin Netanyahu carving the map of Gaza on his bare belly with a scalpel and saying “Residents of Gaza get out now.” The cartoon drew upon a famous photo of Lyndon Johnson, lifting his shirt to show a scar from a recent surgery, which formed the basis for a famous cartoon by David Levine, with LBJ showing a scar shaped like Vietnam on his belly – an image familiar to all cartoonists and a good analogy. Gaza is Netanyahu’s Vietnam.

Bell quoted his bosses as saying the cartoon could be seen as anti-Semitic because somehow they believed it was playing on the “pound of flesh” line spoken by Shylock, the Jewish moneylender in Shakespeare’s 1596 play *The Merchant of Venice*.

On my “Caglecast” podcast I asked the top three editorial cartoonists in Israel if Bell’s cartoon qualified as anti-Semitic and they agreed it wasn’t even close. Declaring Bell’s cartoon anti-Semitic was a ridiculous stretch.

But it shows how political cartoonists of today really have to know where to draw their lines.

Daryl Cagle is the publisher of Cagle.com and owner of CagleCartoons.com, a syndicate that distributes editorial cartoons and columns to over 500 subscribing newspapers. See Daryl’s blog at DarylCagle.com and watch his video podcast about editorial cartoons at Caglecast.com



Tips on caring for an aging parent

Dear Savvy Senior,
Where can I turn to for caregiving help? I help take care of my 80-year-old father and work too, and it's wearing me out.

- Worn Out Wendy

Dear Wendy,
Taking care of an aging parent over a period of time – especially when juggling work and other family obligations – can be exhausting. But help and resources are available. Here's what you should know.

Identify Your Needs

To help you determine and prioritize the kinds of help you need, a good first step is to make a detailed list of everything you do as your dad's caregiver and the amount of time each task takes. Identify the times when you need help the most and which tasks others might be able to do for you.

Then list the types of care needed, such as simple companionship or doing active chores, like shopping or running errands. Once you determine this, here are some tips and places you can reach out to for help.

Care Helpers

If you have siblings or other loved ones close by, start by asking them if they could come and help with specific tasks. And see if friends, neighbors or faith group members could help too.



You also need to check into local resources that may be available. Many communities offer a range of free or subsidized services that help seniors and caregivers with basic needs such as home delivered meals, transportation, senior companion services and respite services, which offers short-term care so you can take an occasional break. Call your nearby Area Aging Agency (800-677-1116) for referrals to services.

There are also a bevy of online services you can use to help you save time on certain chores. For example, online grocery shopping and home deliveries, and online pharmacy medication refills and deliveries. You can also order meal-kits or pre-made meals online through numerous meal service delivery companies and arrange needed transportation with ride sharing services like Lyft or Uber.

Or, if you can afford it, you may want to consider hiring someone a few hours

a week to help with things like cooking, housekeeping or even personal care. Costs can run anywhere from \$12 up to \$25 per hour. Care.com or CareLinx.com are two good websites to help you find someone, or you can work with a local home care agency.

Financial Aids

If you're handling your dad's financial chores, make things easier by arranging for direct deposit for his income sources, and set up automatic payments for his utilities and other routine bills. You may also want to set up your dad's online banking service, so you can pay bills and monitor his account anytime. Or, if you need help, consider hiring a bill paying service like Silver Bills (SilverBills.com), which charges a flat fee of \$150 per month.

BenefitsCheckup.org is another excellent tool to look for financial assistance programs that may help your dad, particularly if he's lower income.

Technology Solutions

To help you keep tabs on your dad when you are away at work or if he lives alone, there are affordable technology devices that can help. For example, there are medical alert systems and smart speakers that help with communication and allow him to call for help if needed. Home video cameras with two-way speakers that allow you to monitor and talk to him when you're away. Electronic pill boxes that can notify you if he has taken his medications. And to help you coordinate his care with other members of his care team there are websites like LotsAHelpingHands.com.

Other Resources

There are also a number of other organizations you can draw on for additional information like the Family Care Alliance (Caregiver.org), which provides a state-by-state listing of caregiving programs and services; the Alzheimer's Association (ALZ.org/help-support/caregiving) that provides information unique to the challenges of dementia caregivers; and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (Caregiver.va.gov), which offers caregiver support services to veterans and spouses.

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.



By Jim Miller

Giving marijuana to minors = Prison Time



Any adult who gives or offers cannabis to a minor may be punished by imprisonment for a period of three, four, or five years.

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