

COVID-19
testing keeps
OMRF running
strong

PAGES 6

More than
one Medicare
Enrollment
period

PAGE 10

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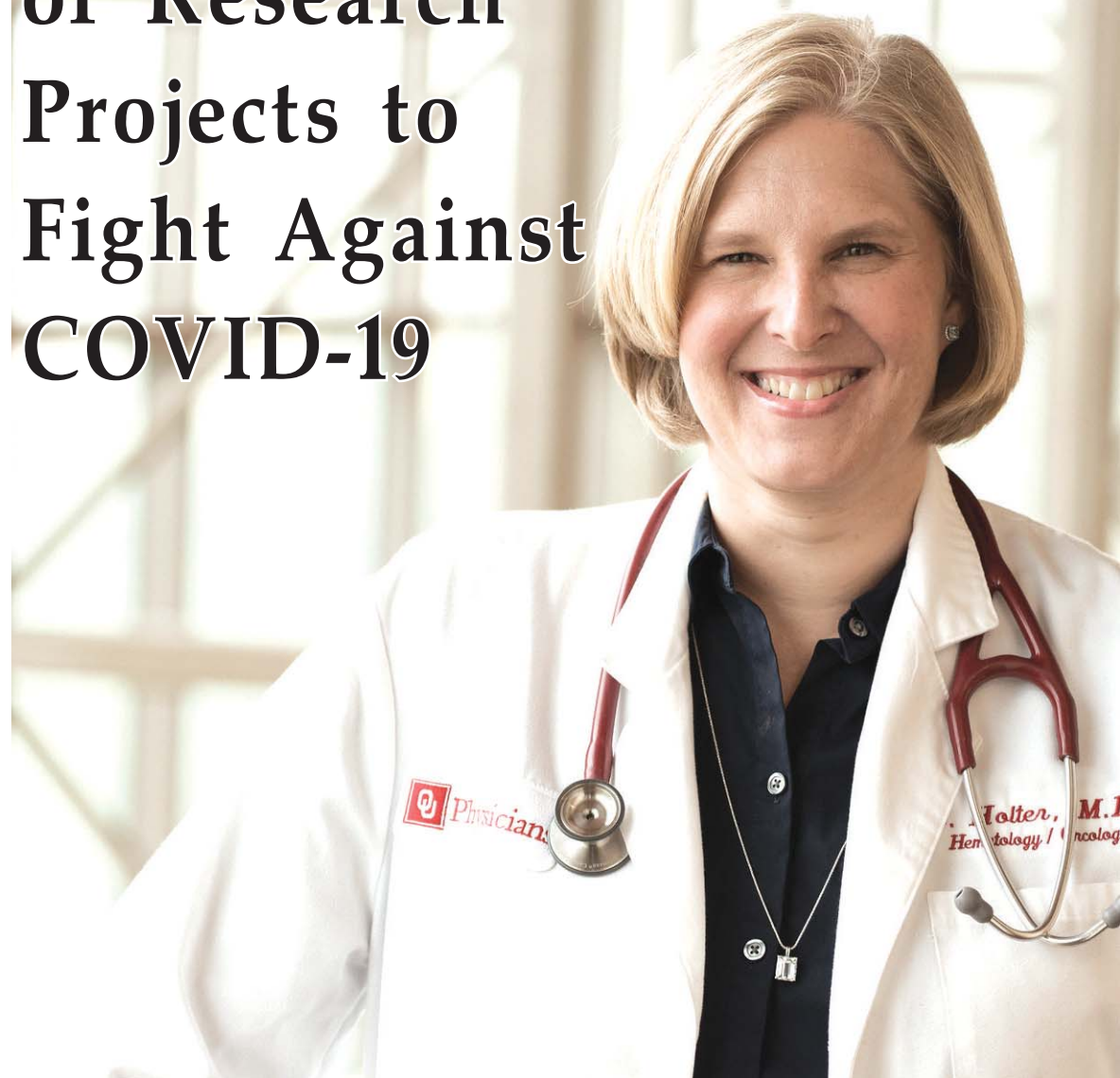
Information for Oklahoma Seniors

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OU Health Brings Variety of Research Projects to Fight Against COVID-19



Jennifer Holter-Chakrabarty, M.D. is a hematologist-oncologist at OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center and a campus leader in COVID-19 research.

About a year after COVID-19 arrived in the United States, vaccines and treatment innovations are providing light at the end of a long tunnel. OU Health has been a state and national leader in the rigorous research that has made such advances possible.

As an academic healthcare system, OU Health brings many resources to the battle against COVID-19, from laboratory

research to clinical trials to public health tools like epidemiology and disease surveillance.

"None of the current vaccines or therapeutics would ever have come to fruition had it not been for scientists who understand the mechanisms of the disease or clinical trials that help us identify better ways to treat patients,"

See FIGHT Page 8

COVID Care Center Offers Investigational Therapy



Kara De La Pena, APRN-CNP - De La Pena is a Family Nurse Practitioner licensed by the American Association of Nurse Practitioners.

Story by Darl Devault, Feature Writer

COVID-19 patients without serious symptoms requiring hospitalization and high flow oxygen or mechanical ventilation may receive Eli Lilly's bamlanivimab and Regeneron's casirivimab / imdevimab COVID-19 infusion therapies at the Oklahoma COVID Care Center in Edmond. Patients should be infused within 10 days of onset of any symptoms.

The single intravenous (IV) infusion therapy is U.S. Food and Administration authorized for the treatment of mild to moderate coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The FDA Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) was issued to Regeneron Pharmaceuticals Inc. November. 21, 2020

A member of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners, Kara De La Pena, who owns an Edmond based urgent care mobile practice, is advising COVID-19 patients over the age of 65 to take advantage of this life-saving infusion. With 15 years of experience in healthcare and recently treating COVID-19 patients in the outpatient setting, De La Pena says "I have seen many people, including close family members, almost lose their life to this disease. These infusions,

See THERAPY Page 5

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OPINION

S THE SAVVY SENIOR

Dear Looking,

Whether you need to enroll in Medicare at 65 if you continue to work and have health insurance through your job depends on how large your employer is. The same rules apply if your health insurance comes from your spouse's job.

But first, let's review the basics. Remember that original Medicare has two parts: Part A, which provides hospital coverage and is free for most people. And Part B, which covers doctor's bills, lab tests and outpatient care. Part B also has a monthly premium, which is \$148.50 for most beneficiaries in 2021, but is higher for individuals earning above \$88,000.

If you're already receiving Social Security, you'll automatically be enrolled in parts A and B when you turn 65, and you'll receive your Medicare card in the mail. It will include instructions to return it if you have work coverage that qualifies you for late enrollment. If you aren't yet receiving Social Security, you will have to apply, which you can do

Dear Savvy Senior,

I will turn 65 in a few months and plan to keep working for several more years. I have good health insurance from my employer now. Do I have to sign up for Medicare when I reach 65? **Looking Ahead**

online at SSA.gov/medicare.

If you plan to continue working past the age of 65 and have health insurance from your job, your first step is to ask your benefits manager or human resources department how your employer insurance works with Medicare. In most cases, you should at least take Medicare Part A because it's free. (Note: If you're funding a health savings account you may not want to take Part A because you can't make contributions after you enroll). But to decide whether to take Part B or not will depend on the size of your employer.

Small Employer

If your current employer has fewer than 20 employees, Medicare will be your primary insurer and you should enroll in Medicare Part B during your initial enrollment period. This is a seven-month period that includes the three months before, the month of, and the three months after your 65th birthday.

If you miss the seven-month sign-up window, you'll have to wait until the next

Do I Need to Sign-Up for Medicare If I'm Still Working?

general enrollment period, which runs from Jan. 1 to March 31 with benefits beginning the following July 1. You'll also incur a 10 percent penalty for each year you wait beyond your initial enrollment period, which will be tacked on to your monthly Part B premium.

Large Employer

If your employer has 20 or more employees, your employer's group health plan will be your primary insurer as long as you remain an active employee. If this is the case, you don't need to enroll in Part B when you turn 65 if you're satisfied with the coverage you are getting through your job. But if you do decide to enroll in Medicare, it will supplement your employer insurance by paying secondary on all of your claims.

Once your employment or group health coverage ends, you will then have eight months to sign up for Part B without a penalty. This is known as the Special Enrollment Period.

Check Drug Coverage

You also need to verify your

prescription drug coverage. Call your benefits manager or insurance company to find out if your employer's prescription drug coverage is considered "creditable." If it is, you don't need to enroll in a Medicare Part D prescription drug plan. If it isn't, you should purchase a plan (see Medicare.gov/plan-compare) during your initial enrollment period or you'll incur a premium penalty (1 percent of the average national premium for every month you don't have coverage) if you enroll later.

If you have more questions or need help, contact your State Health Insurance Assistance Program (see ShiptaCenter.org), which offers free Medicare counseling. Or call the Medicare Rights Center helpline at 800-333-4114.

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.

How to Choose a Medical Alert System

Dear Savvy Senior,

I am interested in getting my mom, who lives alone, a medical alert system with a wearable pendant button that will let her call for help if she falls or has a medical emergency. What can you tell me to help me choose one? **Too Many Choices**

Dear Too Many,

A good medical alert system is an effective and affordable tool that can help keep your mom safe and living in her own home longer. But with all the different products and features available today, choosing one can be challenging. Here are some tips that can help.

Three Key Questions

Medical alert systems, which have been around since the 1980s, provide a wearable help button - usually in the form of a neck pendant or wristband - that would put your mom in touch with a dispatcher who could summon emergency help or contact a friend or family member as needed.

To help you narrow down your options and choose a system that best fits your mom's needs, here are three key questions you'll need to ask, along with some top-rated companies that offer these products.

1. Does your mom want a home-based or mobile system?

Medical alert systems were originally

designed to work inside the home with a landline telephone, which is still an option. But since fewer and fewer households have landlines these days, most companies today also offer home-based systems that work over a cellular network. With these systems, pressing the wearable help button allows you to speak to a dispatcher through a base unit located in your home.

In addition, many companies offer mobile medical alert options, too. You can use these systems at home, but they'll also allow you to call for help while you're out and about.

Mobile alerts operate over cellular networks and incorporate GPS technology. They allow you to talk and listen to the operator directly through the pendant button, and because of the GPS, your location would be known in order for help to be sent.

If your mom doesn't leave the house very often, she may not need a mobile system, but if she is still active, she may want added protection outside the home.

2. Should her system be monitored or

not?

The best medical alert systems are monitored, meaning that the help button connects you with a trained operator at a 24/7 dispatching center.

But you also have the option to choose a system that isn't monitored. With these, when you press the help button, the device automatically dials a friend or family member on your programmed emergency call list.

These products can often be set up to call multiple people and to contact emergency services if you don't get an answer from someone on your list.

3. Should you add a fall-detection feature?

Most medical alert companies today now offer the option of an automatic fall detection pendant for an additional fee of \$10 to \$15 per month. These pendants sense falls when they occur and automatically contact the dispatch center, just as they would if you had pressed the call button.

But be aware that this technology

isn't full proof. In some cases, this feature may register something as a fall that isn't. The alarm might go off if you drop it or momentarily lose your balance but don't actually land on the ground.

Top Rated Systems

Here are four top companies, rated by Consumer Reports, that offer home and mobile monitored medical alert systems:

- **Bay Alarm Medical:** Fees range between \$20 and \$40 per month; BayAlarmMedical.com; 877-522-9633.
- **GreatCall's Lively Mobile Plus:** The device costs \$50 plus a \$25 to \$40 monthly service fee; GreatCall.com; 800-650-5921.
- **MobileHelp:** Monthly fees run \$20 to \$45; MobileHelp.com; 800-809-9664.
- **Phillips Lifeline:** \$30 to \$50/month, plus a onetime device/activation fee of \$50 to \$100; Lifeline.Philips.com; 855-681-5351.

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.

THERAPY

Continued from Page 1

also termed “BAM” infusions, along with mass vaccinations for COVID-19, will hopefully end this pandemic.”

This infusion treatment is for mild to moderate COVID-19 positive testing adults and pediatric patients (12 years of age or older weighing at least 88 pounds) who are at high risk for progressing to severe COVID-19. This includes those who are 65 years of age or older or who have certain chronic medical conditions.

This is the same therapy first described in the media as a Regeneron cocktail when given to former President Donald Trump in early October under an emergency, single-person authorization. Infectious diseases expert Anthony Fauci, M.D., has said of Regeneron’s experimental antibody cocktail: “There is a reasonably good chance in fact it made (President Donald Trump) much better.”

These two therapies infuse monoclonal antibodies (mAbs) intended to directly neutralize the COVID-19 virus and prevent progression of the disease.

“The FDA Authorizes these monoclonal antibody therapies that may help outpatients avoid hospitalization and alleviate the burden on our health care system,” said FDA Commissioner Stephen M. Hahn, M.D. “As part of our Coronavirus Treatment Acceleration Program, the FDA uses every possible pathway to make new treatments available to patients as quickly as possible while continuing to study the safety and effectiveness of these treatments.”

High risk is defined as COVID-19 testing patients who meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Have a body mass index (BMI) over 35.
- Have chronic kidney disease.
- Have diabetes.
- Have immunosuppressive disease.
- Are currently receiving immunosuppressive treatment.
- Are over 65 years of age.
- Are over 55 years of age AND have:

- * cardiovascular disease, OR
- * hypertension, OR
- * chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder/ other chronic respiratory disease
- Are 12-17 years of age AND

have: * BMI over 85th percentile for their age and gender based on CDC growth charts, OR * sickle cell disease, OR * congenital or acquired heart disease, OR * neurodevelopmental disorders, OR * medical-related technological dependence, OR * asthma, reactive airway, or other chronic respiratory disease that requires daily medication for control

For more info call 405-726-9859 to speak to an infusion coordinator or visit www.okcovidcare.com

The scheduling team coordinates convenient infusion appointment times.

Please note hydrating 2-3 days before a scheduled infusion appointment is encouraged to aid with the infusion treatment.

Patients begin their infusion day by completing a one-page health assessment so infusion nurses can identify current medications and recent health events. The nurses take patient vital signs and review overall health condition. Patients should make the infusion team aware of any recent surgery, scheduled surgery, or infections, as this could interfere with that day’s scheduled treatment.

Once all assessments and reviews are completed, the infusion nurse inserts a small IV needle into the hand or arm. Depending on the medication therapy selected for treatment, infusion times will vary from 30 minutes to six hours; however, most medications are administered in two hours or less.

Every patient is closely monitored from start to finish. Most patients feel normal after their infusion and can resume their daily activities, while others experience acute fatigue. The Oklahoma Covid Care Center strongly encourages patients to consider having transportation available to them.

In a clinical trial of patients with COVID-19, casirivimab and imdevimab, administered together, were shown to reduce COVID-19-related hospitalization or emergency room visits in patients at high risk for disease progression within 28 days after treatment when compared to placebo.

Monoclonal antibodies are laboratory-made proteins that mimic the immune system’s ability to fight off harmful pathogens such as viruses. Casirivimab and imdevimab are monoclonal antibodies specifically directed

against the spike protein of SARS-CoV-2, designed to block the virus’ attachment and entry into human cells.

“The emergency authorization of these monoclonal antibodies administered together offers health care providers another tool in combating the pandemic,” said Patrizia Cavazzoni, M.D., acting director of the FDA’s Center for Drug Evaluation and Research.

The issuance of an EUA is different than FDA approval. In determining whether to issue an EUA, the FDA evaluates the totality of available scientific evidence and carefully balances any known or potential risks with any known or potential benefits of the product for use during an emergency.

When used to treat COVID-19 for the authorized population, the known and potential benefits of these antibodies outweigh the known and potential risks. There are no adequate, approved and available alternative treatments for the authorized population.

“I get emotional thinking about these infusions. I am overjoyed we have a tool in helping prevent COVID-19 from replicating and causing more harm in the body. I wish we had this tool sooner

to help save some of the 400,000 Americans we have lost already, 3,293 of those being Oklahomans,” De La Pena said.

As an advanced practice registered nurse her certifications in advanced cardiac life support, basic life support, and pediatric advanced life support allow her to fully evaluate her senior patient’s situations. She has been nursing COVID-19 outpatients since the beginning of the pandemic as the owner of NP 2 Go.

“Many people qualify for the infusion.” De La Pena said. “If they have questions, they may call the center to confirm their qualification. There is another infusion clinic at St. Mary’s Regional Hospital in Enid (patients just need a referral from their provider). Oklahoma ER and Hospital in Edmond expects to add the infusion services soon.”

Fact sheets about using casirivimab and imdevimab administered together in treating COVID-19 are available to patients. These fact sheets include dosing instructions, potential side effects and drug interactions. Possible side effects include anaphylaxis and infusion-related reactions, fever, chills, hives, itching and flushing.

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HEALTH

Covid-19 employee testing keeps OMRF running strong

Once a week, after she brushes her teeth and gets ready to leave for work at the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation, Cindy Carter sets a 30-minute timer on her phone.

When Carter's phone buzzes on her drive, it reminds her of the task that now kicks off her week: submitting a saliva sample for OMRF's weekly employee Covid-19 testing program.

Before leaving her car, Carter opens her testing kit, which OMRF provides to staff members each week. Inside is a cup, a barcoded sample tube, pipette, alcohol wipe and biohazard bag.

"I don't want to take off my mask indoors, so before I go in, I spit into the cup, put the sample in the tube and throw the waste away in a biohazard receptacle," said Carter, a lab manager for OMRF's

Cardiovascular Biology Research Program.

Carter then enters OMRF's Research Tower, where a human resources staffer sits behind plexiglass, ready to collect samples.

"They scan a barcode on my employee badge, then a barcode on the tube," explained Carter, who joined OMRF in 1996. "Only human resources has those codes. It couldn't be easier or faster."

Each Wednesday morning, having collected samples from the 300-plus employees who are onsite each week, foundation technicians analyze the samples. The OMRF-developed process can run 186 samples at a time and examines each sample five times for accuracy. And because of the "specificity" of the test, it can detect amounts of the virus much smaller than those picked up by many commercially



OMRF Vice President of Human Resources looks on as OMRF scientist Antonina Araszkievicz tuns in a saliva sample for Covid-19 screening. Since starting the weekly in-house testing program developed by its researchers, OMRF has had no instances of onsite spread of the virus among employees.

available tests.

The lab relays any positive results by Wednesday evening to OMRF Vice President of Human Resources Courtney Greenwood, who contacts those individuals. "If you haven't heard from me by Thursday morning, you know you're in the clear," said Greenwood.

When it came to adding testing to OMRF's existing pandemic protocols of mask-wearing and physical distancing, Greenwood said OMRF leadership agreed the test had to be fast, free of nose swabs, and affordable for the foundation.

OMRF scientist Joel Guthridge, Ph.D., and his team answered the call, using existing equipment, technology and staff to develop the saliva-based PCR test at a fraction of commercial costs.

"It's pennies on the dollar comparatively," said Guthridge. "Our goal is to help people be healthier. We had to achieve that mission on our own turf so that we could forge ahead with our

other research."

More than 4,000 samples have been run since the testing program started in October. To date, they've identified 17 employees who were positive for the virus. In the same timeframe, there have been no instances of onsite spread of the virus among employees.

"This testing program has really proven effective at keeping our workforce safe and avoiding outbreaks," said Greenwood. "It's helped us maintain our laboratory operations, and we plan to continue the program as long as the virus remains a threat in the community."

For Carter, OMRF's weekly testing program, along with a host of other onsite safety protocols, have provided comfort during unsettling times.

I've felt really good about coming into work during even the worst stretches of the pandemic," said Carter. "Having worked here as long as I have, I'm not surprised they went above and beyond to protect us."

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INTEGRIS Health Pharmacy Manager Receives Medallion

Steven Howell, the Pharmacy Manager at INTEGRIS Baptist Medical Center, receives a token of appreciation from Alex Azar the former Secretary of the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

Howell was given this medallion for his role in discovering extra doses of the Pfizer vaccine. In early shipments of the vaccine, the FDA had originally approved the use of five doses per vial. But when examining the doses sent to INTEGRIS Health, Howell discovered that you could actually get six doses from each vial. He quickly informed his brother-in-law, U.S. Marine Colonel Gregory McCarthy, who happens to be on the White House Coronavirus Task Force. McCarthy relayed the information up the chain of command and after further review, the FDA granted

permission for hospitals around the country to use the sixth dose. "In essence, we received 20-percent more doses than we originally thought," said Howell. "We were able to vaccinate that many more people and none of the vaccine went to waste."

Howell may downplay his involvement in this potentially life-saving discovery, but he fully understands the importance of expanding the use of such a scarce commodity. "It's exciting to be a part of something so monumental," admits Howell.

We applaud you, Steven, for your daily contributions to INTEGRIS Health and the citizens of Oklahoma, and we commend you for your service to the entire country.



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FIGHT

Continued from Page 1

said Jennifer Holter-Chakrabarty, M.D., a hematologist-oncologist at OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center and a campus leader in COVID-19 research.

"This pandemic has served as an example of how quickly you can respond to something like COVID-19 when you already have a model where scientists and physicians are working together," she added. "Because OU Health has researchers and clinicians across many specialties, we are able to contribute to the discoveries that are being made."

OU Health is maintaining a biorepository of samples from patients who have been treated for COVID-19, allowing researchers to access those samples as they conduct studies, including one that is testing the ability of a sugar-based molecule to suppress inflammation caused by the virus. Patient samples are also used to study the length and quality of immunity in people who have had COVID-19, compared with immunity provided by the vaccine.

In addition, OU Health is

participating in two national registries of COVID-19 patients that allow researchers and clinicians to study treatments and outcomes over time, so they can better understand the virus on a national scale.

"Because this is a new virus never before seen in humans, we have pooled our resources throughout the United States to collect data and find themes," Holter-Chakrabarty said. "This is not uncommon in medicine. It allows us to identify how certain patient populations are experiencing the virus, in ways that we may not have observed within our individual healthcare institutions."

A related effort is Stephenson Cancer Center's participation in a National Cancer Institute clinical trial on the effects of COVID-19 in people being treated for cancer. Of the 793 national locations for the trial, Stephenson Cancer Center is the top enroller of patients.

"When you are diagnosed with cancer, that's frightening enough, but when you are diagnosed with COVID-19 in addition, we want to help you continue your cancer therapy, treat you for COVID-19,



Virologist James Papin, Ph.D. is leading the study for the OU Health Sciences Center.

and look at the impact of both of them in this patient population," Holter-Chakrabarty said. "In this trial, we are collecting data for two years from patients with cancer who've had COVID-19. This will allow us to look for themes that emerge on a national scale

and determine how we address them."

Stephenson Cancer Center has initiated a related trial for its own patients undergoing treatment for cancer. Trial participants receive

See FIGHT Page 9



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FIGHT

Continued from Page 8

an app on their phones that prompts them regularly to answer questions about any symptoms of COVID-19 they may have. If the app's algorithm determines they need to be tested for COVID-19, a test will be scheduled. Patients who test positive receive oxygen and pulse monitors that will help their healthcare providers determine if they can stay at home or if they need to be treated at the hospital.

Other studies involve monitoring patients with COVID-19 for thrombotic complications, particularly deep vein thrombosis, pulmonary embolism and stroke. "Because some of these conditions have been associated with COVID-19, our public health researchers are following incidence rates of patients getting a clot in their arm or leg, a clot that moves to their lungs, or having a stroke," Holter-Chakrabarty said. "Looking at surveillance data from various hospitals will allow us to see if any particular patient populations are more susceptible to these complications."

Drawing on its wide range of

research expertise, OU Health is also conducting studies on topics as varied as improving sterilization techniques for personal protective equipment (PPE); using artificial intelligence and bioinformatics to predict where future COVID-19 outbreaks will occur; and assessing the effect of social isolation during the pandemic on the rate of child maltreatment cases.

In addition, OU Health researchers are participating in the development of potential future vaccines. Because of its longtime relationship with pharmaceutical company Novavax, including ongoing research for vaccines against the Respiratory Syncytial Virus and Ebola Virus, the OU Health Sciences Center is playing a role in the company's newly developed vaccine for COVID-19.

"We established biomedical research laboratory models to study the vaccine's ability to produce an immune response," said virologist James Papin, Ph.D., who is leading the study for the OU Health Sciences Center. "We're contributing to the data that allowed Novavax to successfully move into Phase 1 and Phase 2 clinical trials and, now, transition to Phase 3 trials. Hopefully,

that vaccine will also receive Emergency Use Authorization from the Food and Drug Administration so that it can be added to current vaccination options, increasing the supply of vaccines and effectively increasing vaccination rates."

OU Health's researchers and clinicians are also championing the current vaccines on the market, as well as the importance of high vaccination rates in order to stem the rise of the pandemic. Both vaccines use Messenger RNA (mRNA) to prompt the body to build antibodies against COVID-19. Although the vaccines were developed in record-breaking time, the concept of mRNA has been well-studied and used for years in various treatments, including cancer.

"Some people are concerned about the fast track of the vaccines, but they were developed using platforms that have been studied for a long time," Papin said. "That speaks to the importance of research – investigators had already done years of work showing that mRNA is safe and effective. That's why the vaccines could be developed so quickly. But we also need to take what we've learned and stay diligent. Infectious diseases are one of the greatest threats to humankind. Hopefully, we will turn the corner soon on the current pandemic, but if it happens again, we will have the data and understanding to develop therapeutics even faster than we are doing today."

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COMMUNITY

Medicare Enrollment Periods *There's more than one?*

By Christina Sibley Lic. Insurance Producer, Bachelor of Science Health Studies/Gerontology.

Now that Fall is behind us and visions of Spring are ahead, why are we still talking about Medicare enrollment? What many people don't know is that there are many enrollment periods to Medicare and special circumstances around those periods.

Why is this important? There may be several reasons someone wishes to make a change outside of the October 15th - December 7th annual open enrollment period. Perhaps the options they currently have are just too expensive, or they need an option with different or more benefits. Maybe there have been life changes like a move, change in finances, change in other health insurance coverage, or newly diagnosed health problem.

Here are a few common

additional enrollment periods, that may apply. These are not the entire list so if these don't apply, or you aren't sure, you can always ask your Medicare broker to see if you may qualify for one or visit Medicare.gov for more information.

January through March- Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment

- Those already on a Medicare Advantage (part C) plan can make one plan change to another Medicare Advantage plan or go to original Medicare and add a drug plan. The plan changes are usually effective the first day of the following month.

- It's important to remember that this period can't be used to go from original Medicare to a Medicare advantage plan or to change from a drug plan to another drug plan BUT There may be other special election periods that can be used for that.

January through September- Low Income Subsidy/Dual (Medicare/Medicaid) eligibility

- If you are currently qualified for Extra Help or Medicaid health coverage, become newly eligible, or lose your qualification for Extra Help or Medicaid you may make a change. Those currently qualified may make one change per quarter for the first three quarters of the year.

- Extra Help is a program that helps pay prescription drug premiums and/or prescription costs for those who meet the income and resources requirements. Even if your income is too high for food assistance or Medicaid, you may still qualify for Extra Help. One of the most beneficial aspects of Extra Help is it may keep qualified people out of the dreaded coverage gap or "donut hole" and can lower drug copays. Apply through Social Security or your Medicare



Christina Sibley, Medicare Specialist, Sibley Insures.

broker may be willing to help you. Special enrollment and special needs plans based on health conditions.

Special enrollment and special needs plans based on health conditions.

- Some areas of Oklahoma may

See MEDICARE Page 11



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MEDICARE

Continued from Page 10

have “special needs plans” based on chronic health conditions, such as heart disease or diabetes.

- Enrollment in these plans, if you qualify, is open through the year. Enrollment is based solely on existence of a qualifying health condition, not income. Other special needs plans, not based on health conditions, may be available and based on enrollment in both Medicare and Medicaid.

Special Election Period due to declared disaster

- If you missed an election period that you otherwise qualified for due to a declared disaster in your area (like one of our famous Oklahoma ice storms, floods, and/or tornados) there may be an additional election period granted for a specific amount of time. These usually apply to valid election periods for those new to Medicare or those already enrolled in Medicare.

Special Election period- you moved

- If you move out of state, a service area (usually based on

counties), or there’s a new plan available to you because you moved, even if your plan is still available, you may make a change and do not have to wait until October 15th. This also applies if you recently moved back to the US, you moved into or out of an institution (like a skilled nursing or long-term care facility), or you were released from jail.

- Time to pick a new plan may be limited to just 2 months, so be sure to review your

options and change right away.

You lost other insurance coverage or have the chance to get other insurance coverage such as:

- Employer coverage, Medicaid, Program for All Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE), or Other credible coverage (like VA or Tricare). Specific rules may apply. Not all other coverage is considered “credible”, especially if you wish to delay or stop part B enrollment. Make sure

to do thorough research to avoid penalties for late enrollment or non-coverage.

These are just some examples of additional enrollment periods and special circumstances that may apply to you. The Medicare website is always the best source of information but feel free to reach out to your broker as well if you have questions or visit our *Resource Guide* at www.seniornewsandliving.com - see *Medicare Brokers*.

Enid Family Care Clinics Earn Recognition

The National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) recently announced that five INTEGRIS Family Care Clinics in Enid have earned Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH) Recognition renewal.

The clinics received the initial recognition for using evidence-based, patient-centered processes that focus on highly coordinated care and long-term, participative relationships. The facilities receiving the PCMH Certificate of Recognition renewal are listed below:

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INTEGRIS Dustin Baylor, M.D.
INTEGRIS N.W. Family Medicine Clinic
INTEGRIS Family Care Services of Enid

The NCQA Patient-Centered Medical Home is a model of primary care that combines teamwork and information technology to improve care, improve patients’ experience of care and reduce costs. Medical homes foster ongoing partnerships between patients and their personal clinicians, instead of approaching care as the sum of episodic office visits. Each patient’s care is overseen by clinician-led care teams that coordinate treatment across the health care system. Research shows that medical homes can lead to higher quality and lower costs and can improve patient and provider reported experiences of care.



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Photography and Text by Terry “Travels with Terry” Zinn t4z@aol.com

While you are taking advantage of my previous months articles on Kansas, might as well move on to Kansas City.

Oscar Hammerstein in his lyrics in “Oklahoma” said Kansas City was up to date in a humorous way, but it’s even truer today, as Kansas City is updating its attractions with multi-million dollar investments. Culture and cuisine is always high on my travel itineraries and while I only saw a few of Kansas City standouts on this trip, there was still a lot to absorb in Kansas City, Mo. One example is the National World War I Museum at Liberty Memorial with its symbolic see-through bridge over a field of 9,000 poppies, which represents a thousand casualties for each poppy. The exhibits were both diverse and meaningful, and a ride to the top of the memorial with its rewarding panoramic view is worthwhile.

The Belger Arts Center/Red Star Studios is an example of a partnership of industry and a passion in art collecting. Besides its display of contemporary art from the personal collection of businessman and wife, John and Maxine Belger, it is also home to a number of rotating solo exhibitions as well as touring group artists. The converted warehouse at 2100 Walnut St., offers loft-like exhibition space for a number of large scale art. Dr. Kathleen Desmond of REVIEW magazine said, “The Belger Arts Center is amazing in its presence in Kansas City; not quite a museum, not a university gallery, not a commercial gallery. It is an entity in itself that defies definition. It is an incredible resource and contribution to the visual arts in Kansas City.”

Another outstanding contribution is the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art where the building itself, built in 1994 is a work of art. It’s airy and up lifting design, lightens the spirit and is a complement to the upbeat contemporary art it contains. With a new exhibition almost every month it’s easy to see why this is a Kansas City favorite, as is the outstanding museum’s Café Sebastienne. I had a delightful lunch surrounded by a variety of paintings reminiscent of famous artists. My dining companion/painting was a coy girl in a Mary Cassatt style. Relaxing in the café setting or in the light filled and enclosed courtyard is as much a treat as is the contemporary cuisine.

The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art brings together masterful examples from many periods and world cultures. The American Indian gallery, which opened in November of 2009 is extensive - I’m told is one of the largest exhibits devoted to Native Americans. When I visited, there was a collection of Rodin bronzes, with an outstanding impact on this viewer. The museum’s addition of the Bloch building, houses several contemporary collections and illuminates at night. There are several galleries I did not get a chance to see, and there are many concerts and special events held throughout each season.

For upscale dining the menu and service at Pierponts, lived up to its reputation as a “culinary jewel.” Named after railroad baron, J. P. Morgan, Pierpont’s is located appropriately enough in Union Station where other attractions also reside. But don’t let that put you off, as Pierpont’s interior is as elegant and yet friendly as can be. No wonder it was named by the local press “Best Place to Entertain an out-of-town Guest.” Their prime steaks and seafood along with their wine list, is a must to enjoy.

The Kansas City Ballet has a relatively new permanent home, the Todd Bolender Center for Dance & Creativity, a top notch renovation of an old energy generating factory. Semblances of its history can hardly be seen amid the state of the art rehearsal halls and pragmatic architecture. Unique to this home of ballet is the rehearsal hall where studio productions are held, with seated viewing above the dance floor. Just watching a class of these artistic athletes is inspiring. Also inspiring is the new Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts with its two theatres, and expansive lobbies. An expansive view of downtown Kansas City is available for prime viewing from the lobby at intermission with the innovative slanted panorama glass walls. I vow I will experience a performance there, on my next visit.

I did however sample a delightful menu at the nearby Webster



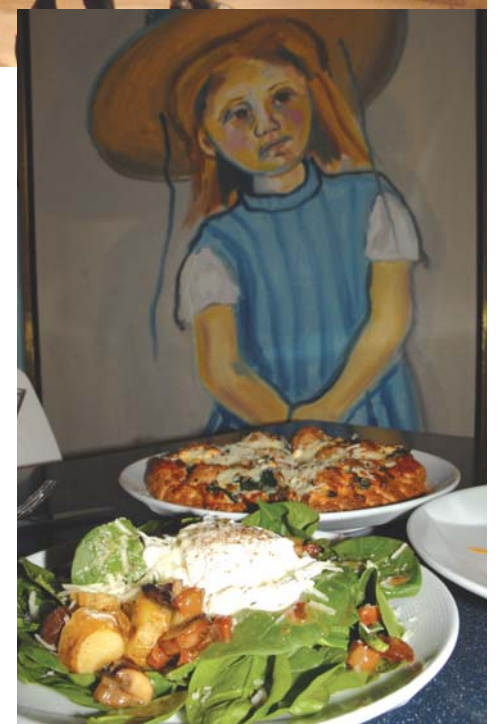
House, where I was also tempted by their antique and modern home décor shop. But the star of this visit was the fried green tomatoes with tomato jam ~ inventive and flavor packed. Webster House, a historic renovated school house, is within walking distance to the Kauffman Center and thus is perfect for pre-theatre dining.

And let’s not forget your home base for a restful retreat from all that Kansas City offers, and that would be the Crowne Plaza Kansas City located amid all the action downtown. Comfortable, convenient and affordable, what more could you want except room service and they have that too! Everything is up to date in Kansas City.

For more information and upcoming schedules:

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www.nelson-atkins.org

www.pierponts.com

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LOVE IS IN THE AIR WITH OKC ZOO'S NEW VALENTINE'S DINNER

Experience an unforgettable Valentine date with the Zoo's socially distant, 21+ event dinner

Your valentine will go wild when you surprise them with a unique dinner experience at the Oklahoma City Zoo and Botanical Garden. The OKC Zoo is hosting two socially distant Valentine's Dinner events at the Zoo's Sea Lion Stadium on Saturday, February 13 and **Sunday, February 14**. Each event will be limited to 122 guests, 21 and older, to ensure adequate social distancing among attendees. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and the first course is served at 7 p.m.

Participants will enjoy dining under the stars at private, socially distanced tables, arranged throughout the Zoo's covered Sea Lion Stadium. Heat lamps will be aglow, creating a cozy setting but dress warmly. Each event will feature a three-course dinner provided by Salt and Surrey Catering. Menu options include a strawberry or tossed salad, south of France chicken, grilled pork loin with peach chutney, or portabella mushroom stack and a sweet ending with strawberry or chocolate mousse for dessert. Dinners will feature a full bar with domestic beer, wine, mixed drinks, soda and the event's specialty cocktail, the Love Potion, available for purchase.

These one-of-kind dinners conclude with a splash as the Zoo's California sea lions and harbor seals along with their talented caretakers entertain guests with specially-themed presentation, Sealed with a Fish!

"We are excited to expand our adult, 21 and older events and provide Zoo fans with a new, exclusive opportunity to celebrate the Valentine's holiday

in a memorable setting with our beloved wildlife," said Jenna Dodson, OKC Zoo's manager of events.

Turn up the romance and complement your lovely dinner with a half-dozen chocolate covered strawberries for an additional \$35. Planning to propose this Valentine's Day? We can help. Purchase a proposal package to present during the Valentine's Dinner and a Zoo representative will reach out to help you plan the special occasion. For more information, contact events@okczoo.org.

Valentine's Dinner admission is \$120 per couple for ZOOfriends members and \$140 per couple for nonmembers. During the ticket purchasing process, you will be asked to give your menu choices and a place to request special seating with friends and other couples! Tickets are now available at okczoo.org. Tickets are non-refundable and non-transferable and events will be held rain or shine.

Cupid gives his "seal" of approval with the OKC Zoo's Valentine's Dinner! Get your tickets now. The Oklahoma City Zoo is open Thursday through Monday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. with no public access on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Advance tickets are required for all guests and ZOOfriends members and can be purchased at www.okczoo.org/tickets. Zoo tickets are limited each day to maintain social distancing among guests. Located at the crossroads of I-44 and I-35, the OKC Zoo is a proud member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the American Alliance of Museums,



Oklahoma City's Adventure District and an Adventure Road partner. Regular admission is \$12 for adults and \$9 for children ages 3-11 and seniors ages 65 and over. Children two and under are admitted free.

Stay connected with the Zoo on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and TikTok, and by visiting our blog stories. Zoo fans can support

the OKC Zoo by becoming a ZOOfriends member. Starting at \$45, memberships can be purchased at ZOOfriends.org and provide access to the OKC Zoo for an entire year plus, additional benefits and discounts. To learn more about Zoo happenings, call (405) 424-3344 or visit okczoo.org.

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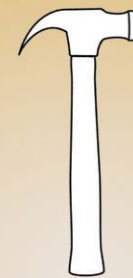
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AHCA/NCAL Issues Statement Regarding COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout In Long Term Care

The American Health Care Association and National Center for Assisted Living (AHCA/NCAL), representing more than 14,000 nursing homes and assisted living communities across the country that provide care to approximately five million people each year, released the following statement regarding the pace of the COVID-19 vaccination rollout.

The following statement is attributable to Mark Parkinson, president and CEO of AHCA/NCAL:

"With record-breaking cases in nursing homes right now due to soaring community spread, no one could wish for a swifter delivery of the vaccine than those living and working in long term care facilities. While we must be efficient in order to save the lives of our most vulnerable, we must also be thoughtful and targeted in our approach.

"Since the creation of the pharmacy partnership program for long term care, we knew that this

rollout would take time: to approve the vaccines for use; to have enough supply for each state to activate the program; to encourage states to prioritize our population; to distribute and ship the vaccine to the pharmacies; to prepare the clinics for our residents who have complex conditions; to gather consent among residents or their health care representatives; and to educate staff, residents and family members about the need to take the vaccine. The plan from the beginning was to vaccinate long term care residents and staff with the first dose over three to four weeks, beginning the last two weeks of December. Therefore, we are in the midst of the pharmacy partnership program really getting underway, and we believe this program is operating in accordance with its intended timeline.

"As of right now, we are not aware of widespread issues or delays with this vaccine rollout, and if there were, we would be among the first to sound the

alarm. We continue to assist a minority of member providers who come to us looking for assistance or clarity, but the majority of providers tell us that their clinics have been scheduled or have already occurred and that overall, the program is running smoothly.

"As with any effort of this scale, there will be issues, and vaccine hesitancy is our primary focus at this moment. Uptake among residents and staff is varying widely, but in general, staff seem to be mirroring the general public's reaction: excitement mixed with hesitation about the vaccines' development and safety. We launched the #GetVaccinated campaign to encourage all long term care residents, families and staff members to consent to the vaccine as well as provide credible information to help inform their decision. We call on public health officials, social media companies, and members of the media to



combat misinformation about the vaccine to aid in this effort.

"And pardon the pun, but we get more than one shot at this. We remain hopeful that uptake for the vaccine will improve as this pharmacy partnership program continues to unfold in the coming weeks and months in the subsequent clinics.

"This is a monumental effort to vaccinate millions of our nation's vulnerable seniors and their caregivers, and we are confident and grateful that everyone involved is working as hard and as fast as they can while still ensuring we get this right."

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LOOKING BACK

A bumpy road led Hank Garrett to 'Car 54' and beyond

By Nick Thomas

Raised in a rough Harlem neighborhood in the 40s and 50s, childhood proved challenging for Hank Garrett.

"We lived in the slums and I'd walk into the kitchen in the mornings to find the floor covered with roaches," said Garrett from his home in California. "And I still remember waking up one day with a weight on my chest - it was a rat."

As outlined in his 2020 autobiography, "From Harlem Hoodlum to Hollywood Heavyweight," other hardships dogged young Hank throughout his troubled teen years.

"I saw fights, stabbings, and shootings - it was a daily situation," recalled Garrett. But he endured,

including a later near fatal car accident, eventually turning his life around to focus on physical fitness and becoming a professional wrestler before turning to acting.

During a brief time on the New York police force, Garratt auditioned for "Car 54, Where Are You?" a new television comedy series that debuted in 1961.

"When I told my commanding officer I had a chance to work on a television series, he looked at me and said, 'tough decision isn't it Hank - to become a television star or stay a cop in New York!'" Garrett recalled. "'Car 54' opened up an acting career for me."

Series creator Nat Hiken hired Garrett as Officer Ed Nicholson. "So I went from real cop to reel cop!"



Hank Garrett between Fred Gwynne, left, and Joe E. Ross in Car 54, Where Are You - NBC



Hank Garrett as the mailman assassin in Three Days of the Condor - Paramount Pictures

said Garrett.

The show also starred Fred (later 'Herman Munster') Gwynne and Joe E. Ross who were partners in the series.

"Fred was very soft-spoken and truly a gentleman who also wrote and illustrated children's books," he said. "He lost a child who drowned and we were shooting when the news came. We were all devastated and shared his pain."

As for Ross, 'what a character,' said Garrett with a laugh. "Joe would bring in ladies of the evening and at one point asked if one could be put on the payroll as his acting coach! The producers didn't go for it. And, of course, he could never remember his lines and that's why he always went 'ooh! ooh!' until the words came to him."

Numerous other roles came Garrett's way, often being cast as the bad guy opposite some of Hollywood's biggest names including Kirk Douglas in "A Lovely Way to Die" (1968) where a stray punch from Douglas gave Garrett a bloody nose. But Hank got even with the A-lister crowd several years later in a memorably violent fight scene in "Three Days of the Condor" breaking Robert Redford's nose.

Playing the 'heavy,' he says, wasn't a stretch given his tough childhood. Nor did he forget his troubled past and has worked tirelessly for years with prisoners, veterans, and at-risk youth he calls Hankster's Kids (see www.hankgarrett.biz).

"I hope people will be interested in my book because the proceeds will go to disabled vets and the kids."

Nick Thomas teaches at Auburn University at Montgomery, Ala., and has written features, columns, and interviews for over 850 newspapers and magazines.

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STRANGE BUT TRUE
SO THEY SAY...

SBT Should there be a crash, Prince Charles and Prince William never travel on the same airplane as a precaution!
SBT Your body is creating and

killing 15 million red blood cells per second!
SBT The king of hearts is the only king without a moustache on a standard playing card!
SBT There are no clocks in Las Vegas gambling casinos!
SBT There is one slot machine in Las Vegas for every eight inhabitants!

So what’s the deal with coronavirus, masks: Q&A with AUM biology professor Karen Stine

Many people remain reluctant to cover their faces in public. Are masks effective against COVID-19? What’s the status of a vaccine? What’s the science behind it all?

Auburn University at Montgomery (Alabama) biology professor Karen Stine, who specializes in toxicology — the study of poisons — has taught courses in toxicology, pharmacology, cell biology, physiology and environmental science. She offers her thoughts on the ongoing global pandemic, and how the public at large can work to guard against it.

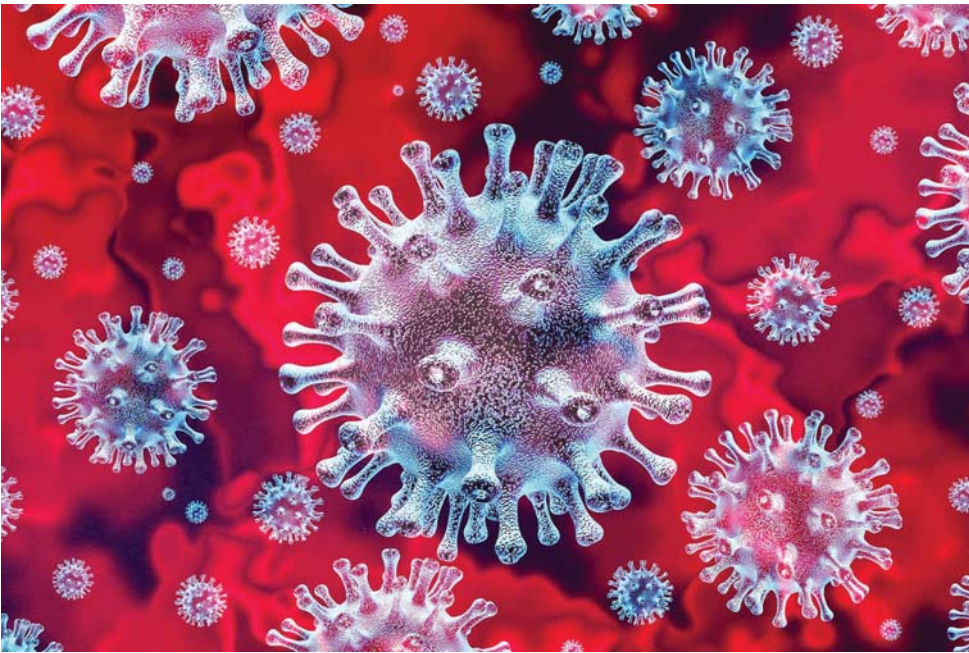
Q. How do vaccines work?

Stine: Vaccines generally contain either an inactivated virus, or isolated bits and pieces of a virus, any of which will hopefully stimulate your immune system to react. This gives you a head start, so if and when you’re actually exposed to the virus your immune system can inactivate it before it makes you sick. But immune

responses usually take some time to ramp up to full steam.

Q. Why don’t we have a vaccine for COVID-19 yet?

Stine: Right now, there are multiple organizations working on different viral bits and pieces, hoping to find the right combination that can get the immune system geared up against COVID-19. This takes time, though, as the strategies first have to be tested in the lab, and then in uninfected people to make sure the vaccine is safe and that indicators of effectiveness (usually antibodies) have been produced in the test subjects. Finally, large scale tests for effectiveness (usually involving thousands of people) have to take place. Only then will the vaccine be approved for the general public.many people remain reluctant to cover their faces in public. Are masks effective against COVID-19? What’s the status of a vaccine? What’s the science behind



it all?

Auburn University at Montgomery biology professor Karen Stine, who specializes in toxicology — the study of poisons — has taught courses in toxicology, pharmacology, cell biology, physiology and environmental science. She offers her thoughts on the ongoing global pandemic, and how the public at large can work to guard against it.

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you’re actually exposed to the virus your immune system can inactivate it before it makes you sick. But immune responses usually take some time to ramp up to full steam.

Q. Will a vaccine produce long-lasting immunity against COVID-19?

Stine: No one knows the answer to that yet. For some viruses (the virus that causes measles, for example), one or two doses of a vaccine can produce immunity that appears to last throughout life. For other viruses (influenza viruses, for example), frequent changes in the virus along

Continued next page

CROSSWORD CORNER

Across

- 1 Furniture chain that also sells lingonberry jam
- 5 Highlander
- 9 Irritable
- 14 December temp
- 16 Overseas coppers
- 17 March commander
- 19 Count who has a cameo in “Blazing Saddles”
- 20 Thus far
- 21 Airport with many connecting flights
- 22 Rathskeller rejection
- 25 Tenants
- 28 SFO overseer
- 31 Not just assume
- 33 Merit badge spot
- 34 Gaga over
- 36 Shellfish serving
- 38 Smug look
- 41 March composer
- 44 Fritters away time
- 45 French 101 verb
- 46 Old Russian ruler
- 47 Not demanding
- 49 Citrus peel
- 51 Greener Living org.
- 52 English blue cheese
- 55 Whiskey cocktail
- 57 Form 1099 org.
- 58 “Wonder Woman” actress Gadot
- 60 Run out
- 64 March creator

Down

- 1 Website for looking up “that actor on that show”
- 2 ___ Zor-El: Supergirl’s name on Krypton
- 3 Yale students
- 4 Totally wiped
- 5 Moo goo ___ pan
- 6 “Commonwealth” novelist Patchett
- 7 “Unique everything” online shop
- 8 “Gotta run!”
- 9 PC core
- 10 Copying button
- 11 Music to a bar customer’s ears
- 12 Really clean
- 13 Some Slavs
- 15 Stylishly smooth
- 18 GPS displays
- 23 Go very slowly
- 24 “I’m not kidding!”
- 26 Torments with reminders
- 27 Letter-shaped opening

- 28 “Natural artesian water” brand
- 29 Give ___ to: okay
- 30 Fashionable sportswear portmanteau
- 32 Ballroom dance
- 35 Tatum who plays Amanda in “The Bad News Bears”
- 37 Tangle around a surge protector
- 39 Pronto
- 40 “Teen Titans” and “Teen Titans Go!” voice actress Strong
- 42 Hissed summons
- 43 100 centavos
- 48 Tranquil discipline
- 50 Veil material
- 52 Opera great Beverly
- 53 Brook fish
- 54 Identifies
- 56 Regatta entrant
- 59 Put on cargo
- 61 Peruse, with “over”
- 62 Wild guess
- 63 Italian peak
- 65 ‘50s prez
- 66 Pre-1991 atlas initials
- 67 Couture monogram
- 68 “I’ve got it!”

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69							70							
71							72					73		

Answers on page 26

Q&A

Continued from Page 18

with gradually declining immunity means that people need to be re-vaccinated annually.

Q. Do masks really help prevent the spread of COVID-19?

Stine: It's a fair question. Early on, scientists and doctors were not encouraging (and in fact were discouraging) mask use. But as evidence mounted, we learned from it—that's how science works—and now, the scientific and medical advice has changed. The consensus now is that wearing a mask in public can greatly reduce transmission of the COVID-19 virus.

Q. What has the science shown the biomedical community that makes them support this?

Stine: A few facts have become clear over the last months. People can spread the virus without showing symptoms. We also know the virus is predominantly spread through respiratory droplets and that cloth masks are effective at blocking the release of respiratory droplets by infected people. Some of this evidence is from other viruses but should generalize to COVID-19.

Q. So what conclusion can be drawn from that evidence?

Stine: If everyone wears masks, which block respiratory droplets, transmission of the virus should be

greatly reduced.

Q. But does this work in the real world?

Stine: Evidence now indicates that masks, along with other measures, can indeed make a difference. Also, strong anecdotal evidence from countries in both Asia and Europe that have mandated masks in public lends support to the premise that masks can be an effective tool in dramatically reducing coronavirus transmission.

Q. Should everyone wear a mask in public?

Stine: For a very small segment of the population, wearing a mask is not medically recommended. For the rest of us, it is not only safe but is also the most effective thing we can do to make others feel safe, as well. And remember, workers in medical and other fields have always worn them!

Q. But some people feel wearing a mask infringes on their freedom. How do you convince these people to wear masks?

Stine: Perhaps it does a bit. But if mild inconvenience outweighs civic responsibility for you in a time of national crisis — and over 100,000 deaths nationwide certainly qualifies as a crisis — are you comfortable with what that says about your values?

Q. So if you could speak directly to people who are reluctant to wear a mask in public, what would you say to them?

Stine: The bottom line is that strong scientific evidence indicates that if everyone wears a mask in public (and maintains appropriate social distancing), rates of COVID-19 infection will drop, and we can all enjoy much safer freedom of

movement as we go about our daily lives. Also, those still isolated at home can more safely emerge and help boost our struggling economy. It's a win for everyone. So, wear a mask. Please. Lives and livelihoods depend on it.

**STRANGE
BUT TRUE**
SO THEY SAY...

SBT Saturday mail delivery in Canada was eliminated by Canada Post on February 1, 1969!

SBT In Tokyo, a bicycle is faster than a car for most trips of less than 50 minutes!

SBT There are 18 different animal shapes in the Animal Crackers cookie zoo!



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SITUATION UPDATE: COVID-19

COVID-19 Oklahoma Test Results

Cases	381,430
*Total Cumulative Negative Specimens to Date	2,750,480
*Total Cumulative Number of Specimens to Date	3,114,290
Acute Care OSDH Licensed Facility Hospitalizations	1,250
Other Types of Facilities Hospitalizations	125
Total Cumulative Hospitalizations	21,478
Total Cumulative Deaths	3,423

As of this advisory, there are 381,430 cases of COVID-19 in Oklahoma.

2,626 is today's 7-day rolling average for the number of new cases reported.

There are 35 additional deaths identified to report.

*One in Bryan County, one female in the 50-64 age group.

*Two in Caddo County, one female in the 50-64 age group, one male in the 65 and older age group.

*One in Carter County, one female in the 50-64 age group.

*One in Cleveland County, one male in the 65 or older age group.

*Three in Creek County, one female in the 50-64 age group, one female in the 65 or older age group, one male in the 65 or older age group.

*One in Garvin County, one male in the 65 or older age group.

*One in Johnston County, one female in the 65 or older age group.

*One in Kay County, one male in the 65 or older age group.

*One in Kingfisher County, one female in the 65 or older age group.

*One in Le Flore County, one male in the 65 or older age group.

*One in McClain County, one male in the 50-64 age group.

*Three in Muskogee County, one female in the 65 or older age group, two males in the 65 or older age group.

*One in Nowata County, one male in the 50-64 age group.

*Four in Oklahoma County, two females in the 65 or older age group, one male in the 50-64 age group, one male in the 65 or older age group.

*One in Pottawatomie County, one male in the 65 or older age group.

*Two in Rogers County, two males in the 65 or older age group.

*One in Stephens County, one female in the 50-64 age group.

*Seven in Tulsa County, four females in the 65 or older age group, three males in the 65 or older age group.

*One in Wagoner County, one male in the 65 or older age group.

*One in Washington County, one female in the 65 or older age group.

There are 3,423 total deaths in the state.

Additional hospitalization data can be found in the Hospital Tiers report, published evenings Monday through Friday.

For more information, visit <https://oklahoma.gov/covid19.html>.

*The total includes laboratory information provided to OSDH at the time of the report. As a result, counts are subject to change. Total counts may not reflect unique individuals.

The total includes laboratory information provided to OSDH at the time of the report. As a result, counts are subject to change. Total counts may not reflect unique individuals.

***The purpose of publishing aggregated statistical COVID-19 data through the OSDH Dashboard, the Executive Order Report, and the Weekly Epidemiology and Surveillance Report is to support the needs of the general public in receiving important and necessary information regarding the state of the health and safety of the citizens of Oklahoma. These resources may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be used in any way that would determine the identity of any reported cases.

Data Source: Acute Disease Service, Oklahoma State Department of Health. *As of 2021-1-28 at 7:00 a.m.

Oklahoma City Organization Earns National Recognition for Innovative Brain Health Education Program

VillagesOKC, an organization of virtual neighbors enabling mature adults to come together to learn, plan, and serve with spirit and dignity, has been selected by the Mather Institute as an honoree of the 2020 Promising Practices Awards. VillagesOKC was recognized for Bringing Brain Health Education to the Community.

Organizations working with older adults from across the country sent in submissions about how they are moving away from conventional practices through new and innovative approaches. Eight organizations with powerful ideas and practices were highlighted for continuing to move the aging services industry forward, despite an abnormally unusual year.

"The Promising Practices Awards honor true leaders in ideation and implementation," said Cate O'Brien, PhD, assistant vice president and director of the Mather Institute. "We hope these projects will serve as a catalyst for organizations across the country and around the world to spark innovation in their own

programs."

Over the past two years, VillagesOKC has worked closely with MINDRAMP Consulting, a brain health consulting and coaching company, to develop and sustain a Brain Health Initiative, offering MINDRAMP's unique approach through live presentations, videos, podcasts, web-based classes and workshops. The initiative presents a behavioral and risk-management approach that is specifically tailored for the mature adult population. From 2019-2020, more than 360 older adults attended brain health classes.

From Feb. to June 2021, VillagesOKC will again partner with MINDRAMP to host a weekly Brain Academy. The full semester of engaging, evidence-based sessions will be held via a secure Zoom meeting. The program is \$100 for non-members and \$50 for members of VillagesOKC. Programming includes:

Level 1. Strong Brains, Sharp Minds: The Art & Science of Aging Intentionally

- Feb. 10 - The Longevity Paradox & The Call to Adventure

- Feb. 24 - May the Force Be with You & Navigational Aids

Level 2. Mapping the Future of Your Mature Mind

- March 10 - Motivation & Assessments

- March 24 - Planning & Skills for Sustainability

Level 3. - Eight Behaviors That Shape Your Brain

- April 14 - Cogwheel Overview, Physical Exercise & Mental Stimulation

- April 28 - Social Engagement, Stress Management & Diet and Nutrition

- May 12 - Sleep, Medical Factors & Environmental Conditions

Practicum 1. Designing Your Brain Health Action Plan

- May 26 - Design Your Personal Action Plan

Practicum 2. Lions & Tigers

& Bears: Group Coaching to Overcome Obstacles, Setbacks and Discouragement



- June 9 - Put Your Personal Action Plan into Action

- June 23 - Develop Strategies for Sustainability

"The Brain Health Initiative has expanded the range and depth of our remotely delivered services and has positioned us as a leader in the aging community," said Marilyn Olson, executive director of VillagesOKC. "As MINDRAMP says, 'Everyone wants a better brain.' Offering this program has grown our membership and our place in the greater community."

To learn more and to register for the Brain Academy, please email info@villagesokc.org or call 405.990.6637.

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Arbor House of Midwest City 9240 E. Reno Ave. MWC, OK 73130 405-455-3900	Arbor House of Mustang 850 N. Clearsprings Rd. Mustang, OK 73064 405-376-2872

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Reaching out and touching lives

Resident benefit from pen pal program



Kellie Prather, activities director of Brookwood Skilled Nursing & Therapy, shows some of the hundreds of letters and cards received by the pen pal program there.

by James Coburn, Staff Writer

A tremendous response began last fall when Kellie Prather called for pen pals for the residents of Brookwood Skilled Nursing & Therapy on Facebook. Compassion took the form of an overwhelming bevy of letters and cards that continues being sent to residents.

Everyone has returned to the lost art of writing, Prather said. A whole new door opened both for the residents and the pen pals themselves.

"I didn't realize it was going to go viral," said Prather, the activities director for Brookwood Skilled Nursing & Therapy in Oklahoma City. "It went viral — it went all across the United States. It was crazy. I'm telling you, we heard

from people all over Oklahoma from towns I had no idea existed."

Letters came from New York, Illinois, Alabama, Kentucky, Arizona, and Arkansas. At one point 300 letters streamed to the residents all at once. Since the end of September, residents posted cards behind their beds and doors in appreciation. One resident has 50 cards from people writing they want to be a pen pal. The nursing staff is amazed at the difference made in the residents' lives and take part in helping elders decorate their rooms with cards. Staff and residents spend time talking about the pen pals. Nurses and CNAs read the letters and cards to

See TOUCHING Page 23

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- MAY 21 | OKALA RCAL Administrator Certification Course**
- JUNE 23 | OKALA RCAL Administrator Certification Course**
- NOV 4 | OKALA RCAL Administrator Certification Course**
- NOV 5 | OKALA RCAL Administrator Certification Course**

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TOUCHING

Continued from Page 22

residents who are challenged with their vision.

"I've got a pen pal team that's called the Pen Pal Club," said Prather, who has served at Brookwood since March and has been with the parent company Grace Living Centers for 12 years.

Residents involved in the pen pal program respond to the letters. Prather said she has never seen such a transformation in the residents who had been mulling over days of depression and routines. Letters come in for the bedridden residents as well. And Prather and her assistants write letter on behalf of those residents who are unable to do so.

"There's just been such a glow," she said of the letters from school children, high schoolers, college students, and others who write. Children are given a chance to learn how to write a letter and hear the experiences from elders.

Another program, this time with Zoom is being initiated.

"It's awesome. They have so much purpose now. My activity room is almost like a mailroom where there's a working station, a station where letters need to be mailed off, letters that need to be answered," Prather said.

It's heard repeatedly that America is divided over politics, but the pen pal program at Brookwood spells unity among people with different backgrounds with the common concern for the welfare of humanity.

"Isn't it beautiful?" Prather said. "It makes me happy to know that we're still together. When we get knocked down, we still help each other get back up. And it also makes me really happy that we're reaching out for our elderly, because they get to be the forgotten society too often."

Housewives and husbands have been sending not only photographs of themselves, but photographs of their dogs and the splendor of nature throughout the year.

"Everything is so beautiful, and it makes me so proud to be an American. It makes me so happy to know with all the muddy waters of political life, that we're able to still pay it forward — our kindness to others."

Residents who have been in lockdown without the ability to see family members or loved ones during the COVID-19 pandemic have their lives touched by strangers who become pen pal friends with many pointes of discussion to stimulate the day with positive messages, Prather said.

"It makes them feel alive; it makes them feel they have a purpose and makes them feel like they're loved. And it makes them feel like they can extend themselves out to somebody else as well. So, it's a win, win, win situation."

The backdrop of Brookwood encompasses Bridges Health, a separate wing for skilled nursing and rehabilitation. Residents are able to focus on their rehab in an encouraging setting.

"We've got some excellent nurses in there, case managers and the therapy department is just wonderful," Prather said. "And everybody works

hard around the clock to make sure these residents are getting the skill nursing they need."

The long-term facility is separate so not to interrupt ongoing therapy. Vending machine carts come through the rooms on a regular basis since vendors do not enter the building during the pandemic.

"We provide room activities as well as hall activities, and group activities when we're able to," she said.

Regulated outdoor visits may be scheduled as well as window visits.

"We've been pretty fortunate to keep the wheels rolling."

STRANGE BUT TRUE SO THEY SAY...

- SBT** One car out of every 230 made was stolen last year!
- SBT** Until the nineteenth century, solid blocks of tea were used as money in Siberia!
- SBT** The Nobel Peace Prize medal depicts three naked men with their hands on each other's shoulders!
- SBT** When glass breaks, the

- cracks move faster than 3,000 miles per hour. To photograph the event, a camera must shoot at a millionth of a second!
- SBT** A Boeing 747 airliner holds 57,285 gallons of fuel!
- SBT** A car uses 1.6 ounces of gas idling for one minute. Half an ounce is used to start the average automobile!
- SBT** The names of Popeye's four nephews are Pipeye, Peepeye, Pupeye, and Poopeye!

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When it comes to achieving the Oklahoma Standard, we've come a long way. All state property is 100% smokefree, and the age to purchase tobacco is now 21.

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- Smoking is still allowed in Oklahoma bars and some restaurants.
- Hotels in Oklahoma are NOT 100% smokefree.
- Exposing children to secondhand smoke in cars is still legal.
- Smoking at in-home daycares after hours is still legal.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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FEBRUARY

FREE LINE DANCE LESSONS

Weekly on Wednesdays 8PM-9PM. All ages and dance levels welcome. 401 South Meridian Ave. OKC-The Biltmore. *Event information may be out of date due to the COVID-19. Please confirm details with event organizers.

Mid Day Dance

WEEKLY on Tuesdays \$5.00 and Thursdays \$6.00 Lessons 12:30PM-1:30PM. Dance 2PM-4PM. Live Band - All ages welcome. 4361 NW 50th, Suite 400 OKC 73112 for more info: 405-943-1950. *Event info may be out of date due to COVID-19.

Barbed Tales Podcast Theatre Online

Price: Free. When: Mondays, 6am Email: barbedtales@gmail.com anchor.fm/barbedtales Barbed Tales Productions brings theatre to the airwaves. Theatre for your ears. Due to the quarantine, live theater has to make adjustments so that we may still bring culture and entertainment to audiences. Barbed Tales Productions are taking steps to provide high quality entertainment. Creating podcast theatrical releases and online shows are a safe way to provide culture to our area. Season One explores video game reviews, D&D, Outlander fan fiction, and more. Under fifteen minutes episode.

Online: Art Moves

When: Mondays-Fridays, 12 p.m. www.artscouncilokc.com/art-moves Art Moves artists have adjusted from daily downtown performances to online streaming. Help us support our local artist by joining us weekdays at Arts Council Oklahoma City's facebook page for live-streaming performances and demonstrations from artist homes or studios! Art Moves is an Arts Council OKC initiative that provides free arts events each workday from Noon-1:00. Events previously took place in various downtown locations and may include artist demonstrations or musical performances. The daily line-up features a wide range of artistic mediums including musical and theater performances, live art demonstrations, short film selections, and more

FEBRUARY

Paseo Arts District's First Friday Gallery Walk

3022 Paseo St., Oklahoma City 405-525-2688 | thepaseo.org When: First Friday of every month, 6-10 p.m. peruse art from over 80 artists with 25 participating business for a night of special themed exhibits, refreshments and a variety of entertainment opportunities.

FREE: A Night In The Paseo

The Paseo Plunge 3010 Paseo St., Oklahoma City 405-315-6224 | paseoplunge.org When: First Friday of every month, 7:30-9 p.m. Phone: 405-898-4215 Email: poeticcity16@gmail.com Poetic City is bringing poetry and music every first Friday in the Paseo Arts District. Several artists come to bless the ears of the Paseo, and open mic will be available as well. Our fav Host Louisiana's Lady Kat will be in the building! Dj Chief Tr3 will be on the ones and two's creating vibes! Bleek is the event coordinator for all events and CEO of Poetic City. Sponsored Literati Press Comics & Novels and owner Charles Martin.

Second Friday Art Walk

Downtown Norman 122 E. Main St. Norman 637-6225 | downtownnorman.com When: Second Friday of every month, 6 p.m. In keeping with the CDC's guidelines to a safe reopening, we will limit the 2nd Friday Norman Art Walk to a virtual broadcast experience that celebrates art, artists and our local businesses on Friday, July 10 that we can all enjoy from home. tour shops studios, venues & galleries to view visual art exhibits, hear live music and more.

Blazing a Trail

1700 NE 63rd St. Oklahoma City When: Mondays-Saturdays, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and Sundays, 12-5 p.m. Continues through May 16, 2021 Phone: (405) 478-2250 marketing@nationalcowboymuseum.org Price: \$12.50 * Senior and Children discounts available nationalcowboymuseum.org/exhibition/blazing-a-trail 2020 is the centennial for Women's Suffrage in the United States. For most of the West, however, suffrage was realized years or even decades before the rest of the country. Blazing a Trail explores why Western Women as a whole were more successful than their Eastern counterparts in achieving polling parity with men.

FEBRUARY

Find Her West

National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum 1700 NE 63rd St. Oklahoma City When: Mondays-Saturdays, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and Sundays, 12-5 p.m. Continues through May 16, 2021 Phone: 4054782250 marketing@nationalcowboymuseum.org Price: \$12.50 * Senior and Children discounts available nationalcowboymuseum.org/exhibition/find-her-west The American West is difficult to define and far more complex than stereotypes suggest. It is a destination, an experience, an idea, and for some even home. It has few boundaries and crosses cultures, geography, socioeconomics, gender, age, and eras. Photographs and other archival items from the Museum's Dickinson Research Center reveal this diversity. At its core, history is not about dates and events, but the people who experienced them. Not just the famous, but the everyday and ordinary. Look closely. These faces and names are not fiction.

FEBRUARY 18

Online

Davis-Waldorf Performing Arts Series:

Shakespeare in Jazz

When: Thu., Feb. 18, 7-9 p.m. Phone: 4055741310 Email: kdavis@usao.edu Price: Free

usao.edu/dwpas

Award-winning composer and pianist Daniel Kelly brilliantly reinterprets texts from Shakespeare's most beloved plays as lyrics for original jazz songs featuring Nicole Zuraitis' powerhouse vocals. The audience will not only enjoy a live, concert performance but will engage with the artists in real-time to collaborate on work! The performance will be free, but you must subscribe online at usao.edu/dwpas to receive your meeting invitations and passcodes via email.

MARCH 31

Davis-Waldorf Performing Arts Series: Harmonious Wail Online

Wed., March 31, 7-9 p.m.

Phone: 4055741310

Email: kdavis@usao.edu

Price: Free

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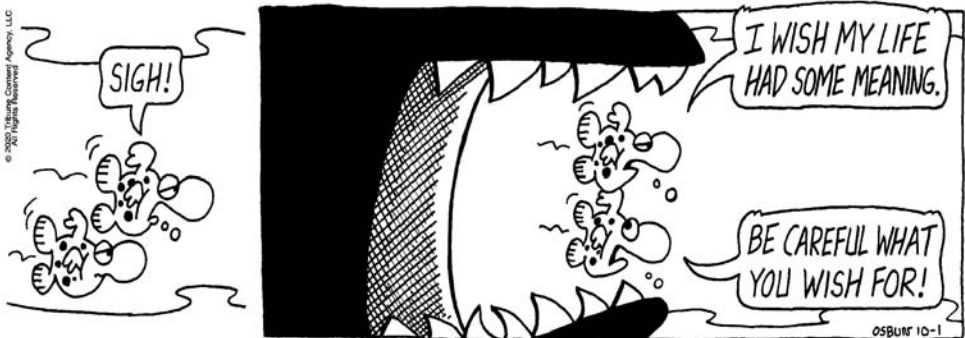
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January Answers | Jumbles: MUDDY AROSE SHRINK BURLAP
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"Remember, the self-driving feature automatically steers you to the bank when your payment is due."



I	K	E	A		G	A	E	L		C	R	O	S	S
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Greg Schwem: The Diet Coke button doesn't work in my office

by Greg Schwem

The hardware store employee approached, noting the confusion on my face. It's a look that just happens naturally the moment I enter any store that smells of lumber.

"What can I help you find today?" he said.

"The 'Diet Coke' button," I said.

"Excuse me?"

I repeated my request, glancing at my watch while doing so. Whenever I'm in a hardware store, my goal is to be out in less than five minutes. I never do this when I'm in, say, an electronics store. Then again, I enjoy being around flat screen televisions. Drill bits and tile grout, not so much.

"We sell Diet Coke at the registers," the employee said. "But that's it. Are you referring to something you wear on your lapel?"

"No, I want the button that sits on your desk. You press it and somebody walks in with a Diet Coke," I said. "I read Donald Trump had one installed on the Oval Office desk, but President Biden got rid of it when he was sworn in. And it didn't even require an executive order."

"We don't sell a Diet Coke button," the relieved employee said. "Have you tried contacting Coca-Cola? Maybe they have one."

"I sent an email," I said. "Still waiting for a response. Look, it doesn't have to be Diet Coke, specifically. Do you sell other buttons for a home office that produce objects instantly when pressed? What about a 'potato chips' button? A 'warm pair of socks' button? A 'Bud Light' button?"

"You want a Bud Light button in your office?" the employee said.

"I'd program it so it only worked after 5:30 p.m.," I replied.

"Sir, we have a full line of doorbells in aisle 15. Wouldn't something like that work?" asked the employee, now glancing at HIS watch.

"I suppose so," I said.

"Great. Happy to be of service," the employee said. "Now if you'll excuse me, I'm needed in plumbing."

Trudging to the other side of the store, I found an "entry alert kit" featuring a device that promised to emit a buzzing sound. I brought it home, secured it near my keyboard and pressed the button. My dog, not recognizing this new sound, freaked out, nonetheless.

"Why is she barking?" my wife yelled from upstairs.

"She'll be fine," I yelled back. "She just needs to get used to the new sound."

"What new sound?" said my wife, now standing at the entrance to my office.

"This one," I said, pressing the button again. The dog responded accordingly.

"Why are you buzzing?" she asked, after consoling our now breathless pooch.

"It's my Diet Coke buzzer," I said. "Like the one President Trump used. You're familiar with it?"

"Familiar enough to know that I'm not getting you a Diet Coke every time you press that thing," she said. "Did you really think that was going to happen?"

"It doesn't have to be you," I said. "It could be anyone who happens to hear it. What about our daughters? They've been spending a lot of



Greg Schwem is a corporate stand-up comedian and author.



Greg Schwem has dreamed about having a "Diet Coke" button on his desk.

time in the house since COVID-19. They can get it."

"When did everybody in this house suddenly become your servants?" she said.

"So, I should return the buzzer?"

"No, I think I'll get one. Maybe I'll get a few, all with different sounds. One is the signal that I'm not cooking dinner tonight, another is that the faucet is still dripping — I'll return it when you finally fix it — another for "

"OK, I get it. But can you just bring me a Diet Coke one time? Just so I can experience what might have been?"

Before she could answer, I pressed the button.

My wife exited the room, returning with my favorite beverage.

For a brief moment, I felt very presidential.

(Greg Schwem is a corporate stand-up comedian and author of two books: "Text Me If You're Breathing: Observations, Frustrations and Life Lessons From a Low-Tech Dad" and the recently released "The Road To Success Goes Through the Salad Bar: A Pile of BS From a Corporate Comedian," available at Amazon.com. Visit Greg on the web at www.gregschwem.com.)

You've enjoyed reading, and laughing at, Greg Schwem's monthly humor columns in Senior Living News. But did you know Greg is also a nationally touring stand-up comedian? And he loves to make audiences laugh about the joys, and frustrations, of growing older. Watch the clip and, if you'd like Greg to perform at your senior center or senior event, contact him through his website at www.gregschwem.com)

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