

Retired Minister Guides Families

PAGE 14



Gary Puckett and the Union Gap

PAGE 26



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Seniors Honored in Edmond Parade



From left, Ms. Oklahoma Senior America Karen Tims and retired U.S. Air Force Col. Chuck DeBellevue look over from one of the first cars in the 4th of July 2003 LibertyFest Parade in downtown Edmond.

Story and photos by Darl DeVault, contributing editor

Billed as "Our America, Spanning the Generations," this year's Edmond LibertyFest parade featured seniors Ms. Oklahoma Senior America Karen Tims, 70 and her invitee, America's top air ace from the Vietnam War, Chuck DeBellevue, 77.

Taking part for the first time in what is hailed as Oklahoma's most extensive and most patriotic parade each 4th of July, the two seniors represented the older generation well. They said they were in awe of the patriotic outpouring of American pride displayed along the 1.5-mile downtown

Edmond route from the often 10-deep crowd in the shady areas.

Bands, floats, clowns, Boy and Girl Scouts by the hundreds, marching groups, horse groups, Corvettes and antique cars, clowns, round-up clubs, Shriners and more provided color and excitement to the 51st annual parade.

The City of Edmond, the University of Central Oklahoma and The Edmond School District provides people, equipment and facilities to make the all-volunteer parade

See HONORED Page 2

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Acclaim Living helps veterans



Kimberly Bolman, Acclaim resident and Marine Veteran.

story and photo by Van Mitchell, Staff Writer

Kimberly Bolman, a United States Marine veteran, purchased a home in Blanchard, and planned to live there before two strokes changed her direction.

Today, she is a resident of Acclaim Living, located at 12525 N Pennsylvania Avenue in Oklahoma City, in part due to the fact that more than half of their residents are veterans and now call it home.

"I bought a house in Blanchard and then I had two strokes," Bolman said. "Just having the veterans alone here attracted me. No matter what service you served in, the camaraderie is there. We all get help."

Having a veteran presence was also appealing to Jess Thomas, United States Army veteran, and his wife Carol Thomas, who also call Acclaim Living home.

See VETERANS Page 6

HONORED

Continued from Page 1

happen with the support of the Chamber of Commerce. This year the presenting sponsor was Citizens Bank of Edmond.

The parade is one of the largest in Oklahoma, attracting an estimated 120,000 people, some with their extended families in place as early as 6 a.m. in the dark along the route.

Tims, a businesswoman living in Arcadia, was crowned Ms. Oklahoma Senior America 2023 during the 15th annual pageant on April 15. She asked that the organization wait to send out news releases about her new role until she could find an event newsworthy enough to warrant the state's attention.

"My goal in being a part of the LibertyFest Parade was to honor patriotism by more than saying we support America but by also showing the parade attendees a hero of patriotism by inviting Col. Chuck DeBellevue, our top air ace from the Vietnam War, to accompany me in the parade," Tims said. "The ability to give a decorated veteran his rightful place in his hometown's huge celebration is far more important than the idea that I was selected as Ms. Oklahoma Senior

America. I was so grateful someone of DeBellevue's military preeminence accepted my invitation, so I designed signs for the car doors and looked forward to seeing Edmond residents honor his service to our great country in the skies over North Vietnam."

Tims said the cheering crowds along the parade route were fabulous, with most places crowded beyond capacity. So very many stood, and others saluted the Colonel and thanked him for his service.

"I had tears streaming down my cheeks at this heartwarming experience for him to receive this appreciation," Tims said. "This was his first Edmond parade, and he was well pleased, and for me, it was quite an experience to have met this gentleman."

Tims said people may recall that the military returning from Vietnam were not always treated respectfully. It made her happy to see this change in the appropriate behavior for someone who served for such a long and distinguished career in the Air Force on our behalf.

She says she was delighted to see so many enjoying the parade and the joy of seeing each participant because everyone was excited and having fun with huge smiles.



Edmond North High School Air Force Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps cadets march as the first Edmond honor guard in the 2023 LibertyFest Parade through downtown Edmond.

"I have to say my driver and his car drew a lot of attention from the young and not-so-young boys admiring his car," Tims said. "Andy Archbald drove us in his black Cobra convertible. He had it shining and decorated with an American flag on each side at the front of the hood to denote a military dignitary."

Tims says the notable excitement along the parade route was so much more than she had ever expected. She was impressed that so many people were having fun at this local event.

"I will ask Col. DeBellevue to consider we switch roles next year since my status only lasts a year," Tims said. "He will likely be invited back because of the crowd's huge patriotic outpouring for his attendance. I am hoping he will invite me to ride along to allow me to make such wonderful memories again."

U.S. Air Force Capt. Charles B. DeBellevue, now 77, became America's first and only six MiG victory credit flying ace in 1972 in the skies of North Vietnam as an Air Force Weapon Systems Officer (WSO).

DeBellevue was an integral part of a two-person aircrew in the McDonnell Douglas F-4 Phantom II, a two-seat, twin-engine, all-weather, long-range supersonic jet interceptor and fighter bomber. His air-to-air missile victories earned him the Air Force Cross and three Silver Stars.

Living in Edmond for 25 years now, the retired colonel says he witnessed a patriotic glimpse of America on display at the parade. "It is an honor to see my fellow

citizens celebrate our independence with 100 parade entries and flock to the parade route to continue one of our best traditions," DeBellevue said.

"Early in the UCO staging area, I saw the patriotic energy in the Edmond North High School Air Force Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps cadets," DeBellevue said. "They looked sharp in their uniforms. Five members were the 2023 National Champions of the Air Force Association's StellarXplorers Space STEM program. They were the best of 350 teams nationwide. They earned an all-expenses-paid trip to Space Center Houston in Texas. Members of the top three teams received scholarships to pursue their STEM education and career goals."

DeBellevue said things got even better when he learned he was to ride in a black Mustang Cobra Convertible.

He said the parade exceeded his expectations. "The crowd was amazing – energetic, patriotic and proud to be celebrating the 4th of July," DeBellevue said. "Being in uniform, I was impressed when veterans cheered as our car went by. Some clapped, some stood, and some saluted, which I returned. The center of this country is obviously very patriotic."

Being near the start of the parade paid off, he said. "Once we completed the parade, I watched the rest come through," DeBellevue said. "For me, the old tractors and the Corvettes were a big hit, as were the three Edmond high school marching bands celebrating the 247th birthday of this great country."

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OPINION



Dear Savvy Senior,

How does Medicare cover preventive health screenings? I'm due to get a physical and a colonoscopy this year, but I want to find out what I'll have to pay for before I go in. **Just Turned 65**

Dear Just Turned, You'll be happy to know that Medicare covers a wide array of preventive and screening services to help you stay healthy, but not all services are completely covered. Here's what you should know.

Free Preventive Benefits

Most of Medicare's preventive services are available to all beneficiaries (through Part B) completely free with no copays or deductibles, as long as you meet basic eligibility standards. Mammograms; colonoscopies; shots against flu, pneumonia, COVID-19 and hepatitis B; screenings for diabetes, depression, osteoporosis, HIV, various cancers and cardiovascular disease; and counseling to combat obesity, alcohol abuse, and smoking are just some of Medicare's lengthy list of covered services. But to get these services for free, you need to go to a doctor who accepts Medicare "on assignment," which means he or she has agreed to accept the Medicare approved rate as full payment.

Also, the tests are free only if they're used at specified intervals. For example, cardiovascular screening blood tests once every 5 years; or colonoscopy, once every 10 years, or every two years if you're at high risk.

Medicare also offers a free "Welcome to Medicare" exam with your doctor in your first year, along with annual "Wellness" visits thereafter. But

How Does Medicare Cover Preventive Health Services?

don't confuse these with full physical examinations. These are prevention-focused visits that provide only an overview of your health and medical risk factors and serve as a baseline for future care.

Cost Sharing Services

There are, however, a few Medicare preventive services that do require some out-of-pocket cost sharing. With these tests, you'll have to pay 20 percent of the cost of the service after you've met your \$226 Part B yearly deductible. The services that fall under this category include glaucoma tests, diabetes self-management trainings, barium enemas to detect colon cancer, and digital rectal exams to detect prostate cancer.

For a complete list of services along with their eligibility requirements, visit Medicare.gov/coverage/preventive-screening-services.

If you're enrolled in a Medicare Advantage (Part C) plan, your plan is also required to cover the same preventive services as original Medicare as long as you see in-network providers.

Hidden Costs

You also need to know that while most of the previously listed Medicare services are free, you can be charged for certain diagnostic services or additional tests or procedures related to the preventive service. For example, if your doctor finds and removes a polyp during your preventive care colonoscopy screening, you will pay 15 percent of the doctor's service fee. Or, if during your annual wellness visit, your doctor needs to investigate or treat a new or existing problem, you will probably be charged here too.

You may also have to pay a facility fee depending on where you receive the service. Certain hospitals, for example, will often charge separate facilities fees when you are receiving a preventive service. And you can also be charged for a doctor's visit if you meet with a physician before or after the service.

To eliminate billing surprises, talk to your doctor before any preventive service procedure to find out if you may be subject to a charge and what it would be.

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.



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Writers: Darl Devault, Contributing Editor, Bobby Anderson, Staff Writer, James Coburn, Staff Writer, Van Mitchell, Contributing Writer

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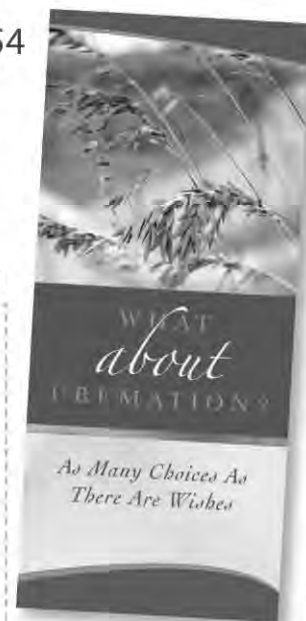
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Road Rage Running Rampant

AAA reminds drivers to stay cool behind the wheel; avoid engaging with aggressive drivers



Whether it's gesturing, shouting, threatening-or worse-anger behind the wheel is becoming far too common on America's roadways. Aggressive behaviors, ranging from speeding to acts of violence, pose a threat not only to other drivers but to passengers and pedestrians as well.

"Road rage is the term we use to describe extreme anger and aggression behind the wheel," says Rylie Mansuetti, public affairs manager, AAA Oklahoma. "Not only are these displays of hostility unsafe for those on and near the roadway, but a growing number of these incidents are turning deadly."

Aggressive driving versus road rage

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the term "aggressive driving" first began to emerge in the 1990s to describe a category of unsafe driving behaviors, such as weaving through traffic, running traffic lights, tailgating and driving at excessive speeds.

Road rage occurs when aggressive driving behaviors become extreme or violent. Examples range from angry gesturing and cursing to confronting, sideswiping and brandishing of weapons and other violent actions or threats.

While aggressive driving behaviors are traffic violations, road rage behaviors other than gesturing and shouting are criminal offenses.

Earlier this year, Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund released its latest analysis of road rage shootings in the U.S., finding that such incidents have continued to increase every year since 2018.

In 2022, 554 people were shot during road rage incidents nationwide, resulting in 413 injuries and 141 deaths-twice the numbers from 2018. The incidence of road rage shootings last year equates to one person being wounded or killed in a road rage incident every 16 hours.

The same data revealed there were 3.8 people shot per 1 million residents during road rage incidents last year in Oklahoma, putting it third among five states with the highest rate of people shot in road range incidents. These states-New Mexico, Arizona, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Wisconsin-make up 8% of the U.S. population, but 20% of road rage shooting victims. In 2023 to date, one victim has been killed and another three injured during road rage shootings.

Reasons for road rage

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), some people are more prone to road rage than others. These high-anger drivers are more impulsive, engage in hostile thinking and are more likely to seek revenge over a purported wrong. While these drivers may behave appropriately on a quiet country road, the APA points to research indicating traffic congestion and other environmental factors

can more easily set off road rage behaviors.

Data from the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety shows that nearly 80 percent of drivers expressed significant anger, aggression or road rage behind the wheel at least once within the previous 30 days. In a related study, the Foundation found potentially aggressive actions-such as tailgating, erratic lane changing or illegal passing-are a factor in up to 56% of fatal crashes.

While there are undoubtedly numerous reasons behind the growing problem of over-aggression behind the wheel, research from AAA and NHTSA point to a number of likely contributing factors:

Traffic congestion. No matter the cause, on-the-road delays and rising traffic congestion are frustrating for all. But some motorists have extremely low tolerance for delays, leading to tailgating, erratic lane changes and other aggressive behaviors.

Running late. A seemingly endless stream of errands and obligations weigh more heavily on some drivers than others, contributing to a pattern of aggression behind the wheel.

Anonymity. Some drivers feel insulated and detached from the outside world when in their vehicle, giving them a feeling of anonymity. For some, this causes an erosion of inhibitions to antisocial behavior, while the vehicle itself gives them a sense of power.

Changes in acceptable behavior. Just as other "norms" have changed over time-music, fashion, politics-human behaviors behind the wheel continue to evolve. It can become more acceptable to have less regard for law enforcement and fellow citizens as drivers "look out for number one."

"Drivers should consider whether any of these scenarios apply to their own actions behind the wheel and take measures to resolve them. Learning techniques for stress-relief, better time management and anger control could help keep you and others safe," Mansuetti says. "Think twice before making a rude gesture or laying on the horn and you'll dodge a potential road rage incident."

Avoiding road rage

While it isn't possible to control another driver's behavior, there are steps you can take to avoid becoming a victim of road rage. AAA has these tips for avoiding aggression on the roadways:

Practice polite driving habits. Follow the rules of the road and be courteous to others. If you inadvertently make an error that affects another driver, give a wave and smile. That simple act will often defuse a potential aggressor.

Slow down and let the aggressor pass. When you pull to the side or change lanes and let an aggressive driver pass, they will typically be glad they're on their way and not try to engage further.

Keep your cool. Remember, you're not the police. Even if a driver is doing a poor job, it is not your job to correct them. Give other drivers the benefit of the doubt and don't take their errors as a personal attack. If you encounter an aggressive driver, do not make eye contact, display anger or engage in any way.

Lay off the horn. Save the horn for an emergency situation or tap it lightly if you need to alert a driver to a changed traffic signal. Do not use it to "call out" the driving behaviors of others.

Don't drive under distress. Avoid driving if you're angry, upset or fatigued. Never drive impaired.

Be realistic about your travel time. Consider the amount of traffic you'll likely encounter and give yourself plenty of time to reach your destination without speeding or driving aggressively.

Call 911 if you're threatened. Aggressive drivers can be reported to local police, but if an aggressive driver threatens or attacks you, call 911 immediately. Do not make eye contact or engage in any way. Drive to the nearest police station, fire station, convenience store or other public location with witnesses. Never drive home with an aggressor following you.

"Remember, driving isn't a competition, so there's no need to 'one up' another driver. Your only win should be staying safe," says Mansuetti. "Keep your focus on your own driving and avoid actions that could make you a target of aggression from others."

AAA provides automotive, travel, and insurance services to more than 63 million members nationwide and more than 400,000 members in Oklahoma. AAA advocates for the safety and mobility of its members and has been committed to outstanding road service for more than 100 years. AAA is a non-stock, membership corporation working on behalf of motorists, who can map a route, find local gas prices and electric vehicle charging stations, discover discounts, book a hotel, and track their roadside assistance service with the AAA Mobile app ([AAA.com/mobile](https://www.aaa.com/mobile)) for iPhone, iPad and Android. For more information on joining or renewing a Membership, visit <https://cluballiance.aaa.com/>.

VETERAN

Continued from Page 1

"We were wanting to downsize and move into a senior community, and we wanted one that we could be active in and that I didn't have to worry about Jess, he is independent, but he doesn't have full speech because he has a facial stroke," Carol Thomas said. "So, if he wants to go out and do things on his own here, I don't care. I know everybody knows him and I know that he's in good hands if anything happens. We just felt really like we were home when we came in here."

Mrs. Thomas said the Acclaim Living staff treats residents like they were family.

"The staff that works here doesn't treat you like residents," she said. "They treat more like family and it's just a good atmosphere. They support veterans very well here. It is important to us. It's important that we have people that support the veterans, that support us and keep our freedom."

Polly Milligan serves as Residence Director at Acclaim Living. She said it is a privilege serving veterans.

"It's important to me," she said. "I've been a director for over 15 years and I've always put a huge focus on



Acclaimed Living in Oklahoma City has over 50 residents that are veterans. Pictured left to right is; Steve Sibley, Army veteran, and Financial Services Professional/Medicare Specialist at Sibley Insures; Jess (Army Veteran) and Carol Thomas, Acclaim residents; Kimberly Bolman, Acclaim resident and Marine Veteran and Polly Milligan, Acclaim Living Residential Director.

veterans because that's where I see the largest amount of people get lost in the mix. Any of the communities that I've run have always had a huge

veteran focus, as well as outreach programs, to get them in when other communities won't accept them because they've maybe struggled with

some PTSD issues or something like that. Then, those are the ones that I

continued next page



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VETERAN

Continued from Page 6

really reach out to, because a better environment can aid in settling that PTSD."

Steve Sibley a retired Army veteran with Sibley Insures, who educates and advocates for veteran health benefits, recently visited Acclaimed Living, and brought in Veteran Affairs officials via the VA's community outreach programs for veterans which are services that help veterans access health care, benefits and resources in various settings.

"The VA has a community outreach," Sibley said. "It's a focus on mental health outreach for veterans, and they meet weekly at the Black Rifle Coffee, which is just about a mile north of here. They're (Acclaim Living) actually now scheduled to go to take veterans to that event twice a month. It's a weekly event, but twice a month they actually will bus veterans out and it's been a really cool deal. They (Acclaim Living) actually take people down to the VA for appointments, I think that's really cool. So, that's just another thing that they do here."

Milligan said Acclaim Living stays in contact with the VA to let veterans know about housing options.

"We stay in touch with the VA housing department to see if there are people that are looking for placement that are, maybe, on the waiting list for a VA center and they don't quite qualify yet, because of need," she said. "We try to get our information to them so that they know that there's a place that most likely would fit within their budget with their aid and attendance funds"

Milligan said Acclaim Living offers a variety of housing.

"Handicap accessible apartments are available," she said. "And then, we have just regular home apartments that are available. It includes all of their utilities, their cable television, activities, transportation. We'll take them to their appointments if they need that. All of their meals, everything's right here included for them so that it's a one stop shop for what they need."

Mrs. Johnson serves as an Acclaim Living Ambassador, and she and her husband help welcome new residents.

"It's made of residents that have been here for a certain length of time that are outgoing and want to help," she said. "Then when a new resident comes, they hook that resident up with an ambassador that

has similar interests and they fill out a form for that, and then we work with that new person and take them through the whole building, making sure that they know where everything is, how everything operates. We eat with them. We take them to different functions within the building and so, until they get comfortable and know people, so that they're not just dumped in the door. We make them part of the community."

Milligan said Acclaim Living honors its veteran residents with a variety of activities.

"We do activities that are in honor of our veterans, we try to

do that a few times a year for different pinning, or just recognition, in general, of the veterans," she said. "We always recognize our veterans on the veteran wall in our community and those are ones that have been here before, and are here now. So, it's a history of our veterans that are displayed on our veteran wall. And then, we try to go to places that get them in touch with other veterans or happenings that are going on in Oklahoma City, so they can be a part of what other veterans are doing."

For more information on Acclaim Living call (405)-755-3200. or visit <https://legendseniorliving.com/>.

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Legend Senior Living Expands Tulsa Footprint

Aquires The Linden at Stonehaven, Name Changes to Stonehaven

Legend Senior Living, a Wichita-based, privately owned senior living operator, announced today that it had completed the purchase of The Linden at Stonehaven Square Assisted Living and Memory Care in a joint venture



with an institutional investor. The residence is located at 10802 East 81st Street in Tulsa, Oklahoma and was immediately renamed The Stonehaven.

The Stonehaven is the 5th Legend Senior Living residence in Tulsa, Oklahoma, following its recent acquisition of Prairie House Assisted



The Linden at Stonehaven Square in Tulsa was rated as a “Best Senior Living” community for assisted living and memory care by U.S. News.

Living & Memory Care in Broken Arrow in June.

The residence opened in 2017 and boasts 134 apartments, 79 of which

are assisted living and 55 memory care, ranging from studios to two-bedroom apartments, and offers thousands of square feet of indoor-outdoor amenities,

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including a sprawling outdoor patio, front porch with fireplace, salon, 2nd story game room and theater, fitness center, and lively bistro. The Stonehaven is located approximately 20 minutes outside downtown Tulsa and is near major highways, hospitals, and recreation.

“We are excited to welcome the residents, their families, and associates to the Legend Senior Living family,” said Legend’s Executive Vice President, Matt Buchanan. “The Stonehaven is a great fit for us as we expand our mission in Tulsa and across Oklahoma. The team at The Stonehaven is top-notch, and we are excited to serve area seniors alongside them.”

The company will bring its innovative programs and therapies to the community, including its wellness-focused life enrichment,

also for memory care, and its signature Gold Leaf dining program for an exquisite culinary experience.

Wichita, Kansas-based Legend Senior Living is a privately held senior housing and services company and one of the nation’s leading senior living providers. The company owns or operates 49 senior living residences across six states – in Florida, Colorado, Texas, Kansas, Oklahoma and Pennsylvania. Legend residences are recognized as Great Places to Work®, have ranked among the Top 25 Best Senior Living communities in the country by Fortune Magazine, and appear on U.S. News & World Report’s Best of Senior Living.

For more information about Legend Senior Living residences, visit: <https://legendseniorliving.com/>

Oklahoma Historical Society to Host All-Black Towns State Conference on August 12

The Oklahoma Historical Society, in partnership with the Oklahoma Conference of Black Mayors, will host the Oklahoma All-Black Towns State Conference on Saturday, August 12, from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at the Oklahoma History Center. The conference is designed to encourage a network of state agencies to join with the mayors of some of Oklahoma's historic All-Black towns to share resources and discuss ideas.

In the early 20th century, Oklahoma was home to more than 50 All-Black towns and communities. Segregation and Jim Crow laws led many Black people to leave the state. The Great Depression caused more families to migrate to urban areas or other states. These events devastated many small Oklahoma towns, including the All-Black towns.

From 10 a.m.-noon, mayors from more than a dozen historic All-Black towns will present their unique history, discuss future projects, and more. Starting at noon, attendees can eat lunch and listen to the

keynote presentation by Earthea A. Nance, who has a doctorate in environmental engineering from Stanford University. She is an associate professor in the Barbara Jordan-Mickey Leland School of Public Affairs at Texas Southern University. Nance holds joint faculty appointments in the Department of Urban Planning and Environmental Policy and the Department of Political Science. At 1 p.m., several state agencies will share resources that enable towns to collect, preserve and share their histories, including the Oklahoma Arts Council, the Oklahoma Department of Transportation, and the Oklahoma Historical Society.

Registration is required. The event is free and open to the public. Attendees can pre-purchase a lunch box from Florence's Restaurant when registering for the conference. Lunch orders must be placed by Monday, August 7, at 11:59 p.m.

The Oklahoma History Center is located at 800 Nazih Zuhdi Dr. in Oklahoma City.

Tribal Relations and OKC VA partner to bring the Lawton area Tribal Veterans PACT Act resources

The Office of Tribal Government and the Oklahoma City Veterans Affairs Health Care System (OKC VA HCS) partner with multiple resources to kick-off another PACT Act event providing Tribal area Veterans and surviving spouses with healthcare assistance and an understanding of attendee's VA benefits.

The PACT Act is one of the largest expansions of Veteran health care programs and benefits. The PACT Act will benefit millions of Veterans spanning generations of service members from World War II, Vietnam and more recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. If you served between conflicts, don't be afraid to come in and find out if you qualify.

The OTGR is hosting this Tribal PACT Act and bringing the OKC VA resources such as eligibility teams, medical experts to provide toxic exposure screening (TES), file claims with the Muskogee Benefits Office in association with the Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs.

Lawton-area Veterans are encouraged to come to the Fort Sill Apache Casino Event Center, located at 2315 E. Gore Blvd, Lawton, OK from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m on Thursday, July 27th. If you are unable to attend, please submit an intent to file so you don't miss out on the PACT Act August 9 deadline.

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HEALTH



by Flora Qualls, Your Cigna Agent in Oklahoma City - Flora.qualls@cignahealthcare.com

You know how important regular check-ups are and that consulting your healthcare provider when you have a concern is smart. But what happens after the visit is just as essential to maintaining good health.

Unfortunately, some people don't follow their provider's advice. Maybe they don't take their prescriptions as written or forego recommended preventive screenings and immunizations. This can be costly, both for individuals and the health care system. Case in point: More than 125,000 people die each year because of prescription medication non-adherence, according to the National Council for Patient Information and Education.

Following a doctor's recommended care plan can be challenging, according to Dr. J.B. Sobel, chief medical officer with Cigna Healthcare's Medicare business. There are multiple reasons why older patients can have difficulty following their provider's instructions – including managing multiple medications at different times of day – or trouble accessing or affording care.

Thankfully, there are some processes and resources that can help you faithfully follow your healthcare provider's advice.

Get organized. More than half of adults 65 and older take four or more prescription drugs. With more medications, it can be difficult to know what to take, when to take it, and in what dosage. A low-cost pill organizer, available at drug stores and retail outlets, can help you stay organized. You may also want to automate your medication by taking it at the same time every day if directions allow that. The key is to find a system that works for you and stick with it.

Communicate with your provider or pharmacist. If your medication doesn't seem to be working or is causing undesirable side effects, talk to your doctor or pharmacist about adjusting your dosage or switching to an alternative. Likewise, discuss any concerns about screenings or tests with your provider.

Having a good rapport with your doctor helps. Take notes at your

appointment or bring a loved one with you to help with questions. And don't be afraid to ask if there's anything you don't understand.

Connect your providers. Make sure your various doctors share information. For example, if you have an unexpected hospital visit, notify your primary care provider so they can review any new medications or diagnoses from the hospital and help you fit them into your current care plan. This can also help protect you from unnecessary or duplicate procedures.

Find alternative access to care. If you have difficulty getting around or live far from where care is rendered, there are programs to help. Your provider may offer virtual visits. You may be able to have prescriptions safely delivered to your home in a 90-day supply, perhaps at a lower cost, and with reminders for refills. If you have a Medicare Advantage plan, you may be eligible for rides to your provider or pharmacy at no extra cost. Learn more about Cigna Healthcare's Medicare Advantage plans at www.cigna.com/medicare.

Seek help with costs. "Extra Help" is a federal program providing prescription drug cost support to those who qualify. Many pharmaceutical manufacturers help customers afford medications. You could also ask your healthcare provider about generic medications, which typically cost less but are equally effective.

Medicare and Medicare Advantage plans pay for many preventive procedures with no extra cost to you.

"If keeping up with your health care feels overwhelming, please don't get discouraged," said Dr. Sobel, who oversees a team of clinicians that contact Cigna Healthcare's Medicare Advantage customers whose prescriptions have lapsed or not been refilled. "Seek help from a doctor, a pharmacy or a loved one. They want to help you. Keep in mind that it's easier to maintain good health than it is to recapture your health following a preventable crisis."

The information contained in this article is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health care provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition or treatment and before undertaking a new health care regimen.

For information about Cigna Healthcare email me at Flora.qualls@cignahealthcare.com or call me at 405-432-6725.

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FRAUDSTERS NEVER GO ON VACATION

Fraudsters will never take a break. While you are out enjoying fun and sun this summer, they are working hard to find new ways to scam you. Seniors and younger people are particularly vulnerable to scammers who claim to represent Social Security. To protect you and your loved ones, you can:

- Visit our Protect Yourself from Social Security Scams webpage at

<https://www.ssa.gov/scam/> for information on what tactics scammers use and how to report them.

- Check out the Federal Trade Commission's page at <https://consumer.ftc.gov/scams> for additional scam-related information.

Here are some tips to follow when you identify a potential scammer:

- Hang up right away or ignore the message.
- Never give personal information or money.
- Report the scam immediately to our Office of the Inspector General at <https://oig.ssa.gov/report/>.

If you owe money to Social Security, we'll mail you a letter with payment options and appeal rights. We only accept payments electronically through Pay.gov or Online Bill Pay, or physically by check or money order through our offices.

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- Promise a benefit increase in exchange for money.
- Ask you to send us gift cards, prepaid debit cards, wire transfers, internet currency, cryptocurrency, or cash through the U.S. mail.

There are no vacations for fraudsters, so you need to stay informed of the latest Social Security-related scams. For more information, please visit our blog at <https://blog.ssa.gov/>. Please share these useful resources with your loved ones.

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BUSINESS

Property Brother

Retired minister guides families

Story and photo by
Bobby Anderson, Staff Writer

Ross Pruitt spent most of his life tending to the needs of the church family. But even in retirement, the former minister is still helping people find their way.

Pruitt is a retired Baptist minister who - after 35 years ministering in churches from Oklahoma to California - was more than ready for the golf course.

But he still felt a pull.

"I retired after those years, I guess, with still a lot of energy left," he said. "I didn't want to stop helping people. I got my real estate license and that's exactly what I get to do now."

"I'm not beating the bushes to put in 50 hours a week like I used to but I do get to help people and that's important to me."

Licensed in 2014, Pruitt has continued serving others as a Realtor and certified senior real estate specialist through Metro Brokers of Oklahoma.

It puts him in a unique niche, helping families decide what to do with property that's no longer needed or being used, but still has sentimental value.

As a certified senior real estate specialist, Pruitt is often called upon by families who have to take on the task of what to do with a parent's estate either after a death or a move into a new living arrangement.

"That is what's stressful for them," Pruitt said. "Every time I've done it I've been glad I had the experience I had working with people intimately because emotions sometimes run high."

"After all those years I pretty much know when to hold hands and when to stand back."

Homes and property take on a new meaning when they're no longer needed. Oftentimes, family members will be torn or even at odds on what to do next.

And there are legal ramifications and processes that most are unfamiliar



At 76, Ross Pruitt helps families navigate through life changes.

with.

"What I enjoy the best is helping people. Sometimes the paperwork and all that will bog you down," Pruitt said. "If it helps people I'm all about it. At the end of the day if I was

any assistance to them during one of the biggest decisions of their life, then that's good."

"Most of the time most stress isn't about the property and the value of

Continued next page

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PRUITT

Continued from Page 14

the property, most of the time it's on the family."

Pruitt said he will often get clients who will come to him after they've tried to tackle the task on their own. Trying to sell a home without guidance can be daunting at best, and financially disastrous at worst.

"About 90 percent of people underestimate all that goes into it," Pruitt said. "It's stressful."

Pruitt realizes that family members will often bring emotion into the situation. He knows when to interject and when not.

Whether it's 20 acres or fine china, at the end of the day it's always about the people for Pruitt and helping them make the best decision possible for their situation.

"Usually it's an adult son or neighbor or family member they trust and that person is really just trying to get by day-by-day to help the family get all the possessions sold and all the paperwork," Pruitt said. "I'm trained in this and I can take a lot of the load off their shoulders. It's really a blessing for them to be able to rely on someone they can trust and someone who has the skills and knowledge to do it."

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CENTENARIANS OF OK



Jean Howell

(Right) Jean Howell of Tulsa turned 107 today! She was an adult education teacher in Los Angeles and Detroit and worked for the government in Washington, D.C. Jean has these words of wisdom for us: Stay in School and Work Hard. So happy to be there to celebrate with Jean on this great birthday!

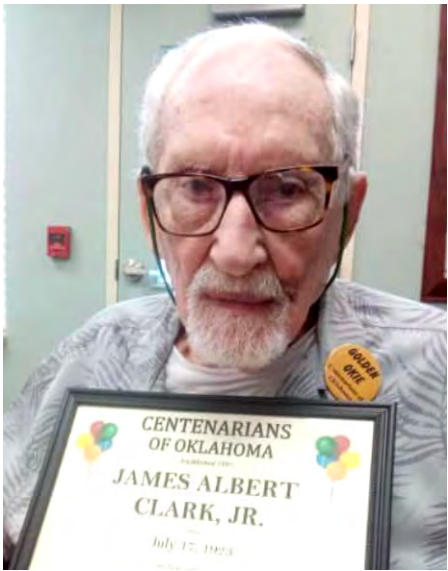


Betty Mae Thompson

(Left) Betty Mae Thompson of Tahlequah gave a heartfelt speech with stories of her life & how living to 100 isn't difficult when you have people that love you nearby. She earned her Doctorate Degree. She was a pilot, a doctor, a teacher & loves pecan pie. She is quite an accomplished woman. Her one word of wisdom for younger people: "EDUCATION!"

James Clark

(Right) James Clark of Oklahoma City turned 100 on July 17th. He spent four years in the Navy during World War II and had a career with the Nebraska Highway Patrol and the US Public Health Service. His words of wisdom to us are: Get a Dog. Thank you for your service and Happy Birthday, James!!



Norman Smith

(Right) Norman Smith of Oklahoma City turns 100 tomorrow, July 25th! He served during World War II as a Radio Operator on B-17s. Norman had a career as a farmer and businessman. He is still an avid reader and walks every day to stay alert, involved and active. Thank you for your service and Happy Birthday Norman!



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USS Oklahoma sailor from California to be buried July 20 in Hawaii

Fireman 1st Class Raymond Camery, was born in Modesto, California on August 29th, 1915. He was killed during the Dec. 7 attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 and will be buried in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii, on July 20.

Navy Fireman (FN) were part of the Engine Room Force, Artificer Branch. Historically, non-rated engine room men were paid at a higher rate than their deck counterparts because of the more strenuous nature of their work. Firemen are responsible for standing engineering watches and performing minor maintenance repairs. This rating is part of an apprenticeship opportunity that leads to training in propulsion and precision welding/fabrication/plumbing

Camery's awards and decorations include the Purple Heart Medal, Combat Action Ribbon, American Defense Service Medal (with Fleet Clasp), Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal (with Bronze Star), and the World War II Victory Medal.

Camery's promotions include: Apprentice Seaman upon enlistment, Seaman 2nd Class, Fireman 3rd Class, Fireman 2nd Class and Fireman 1st Class.



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VillagesOKC Combating Social Isolation Among Seniors

By Marilyn Olson,
Executive Director,
VillagesOKC



The U.S. Surgeon General recently issued an advisory calling attention to the public health crisis of loneliness, isolation and lack of connection in our country. Dr. Vivek Murthy officially gave the label of “epidemic” to loneliness.

“Our epidemic of loneliness and isolation has been an under-appreciated public health crisis that has harmed individual and societal health,” Murthy said. “Our relationships are a source of healing



VillagesOKC members enjoy socializing over burgers during a recent cookout.



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and well-being hiding in plain sight – one that can help us live healthier, more fulfilled and more productive lives.”

A Surgeon General’s Advisory is a public statement that calls the American people’s attention to an urgent public health issue and provides recommendations for how it should be addressed. Advisories are reserved for significant public health challenges that require the nation’s immediate awareness and action.

We know that loneliness and isolation are especially acute among older adults. VillagesOKC exists to help fill the gap for seniors in the Oklahoma City metro. Regular social connection is as essential as food and water for survival. Lacking social connection has serious health consequences including increased risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, depression, anxiety and premature death.

In 2021, 49% of Americans reported having three or fewer close friends compared to 27% in 1990. This lack of social connection may be deadly – as dangerous as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, according to the Surgeon General’s advisory. The rate of loneliness and isolation is increasing every year and was exacerbated by the pandemic and screen time –

television, computer, smart phone.

VillagesOKC is committed to turning the tide by providing a robust calendar of events which offer members opportunities for learning, planning and helping others. Every event is an opportunity for human interaction. It might be a daylong event like the Day of Positive Aging held at Rose State College in May and Southern Nazarene University in June. It might be a cookout at a members house, a lunch gathering at a local restaurant or a tour of a local landmark.

For the past four years, VillagesOKC has provided trusted connections for mature adults through organized friendships. Often people become members after attending a coffee or free educational presentation. Some become members when an adult child purchases a VillagesOKC membership for Mothers Day, Fathers Day or a birthday. Others become members when the pastor or someone in the faith community urges joining. But most often membership happens when a friend reaches out because he simply wants to share the joy of aging with vitality and positivity.

The satisfaction of meeting trusted professionals also give this

ISOLATION

Continued from Page 18

organization a small town feeling of connection. The television show Cheers had it right; it's good to go where everyone knows your name.

A 501(c) tax-exempt organization, VillagesOKC is part of a "national

village movement." These villages are intentionally bringing like-minded people together to embrace aging and practice positivity. VillagesOKC membership includes a modest annual membership fee and background check. For more information, go to: <https://www.villagesokc.org/> or call (405) 990-6637.

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brown fox jumps over a lazy dog." uses every letter of the alphabet!

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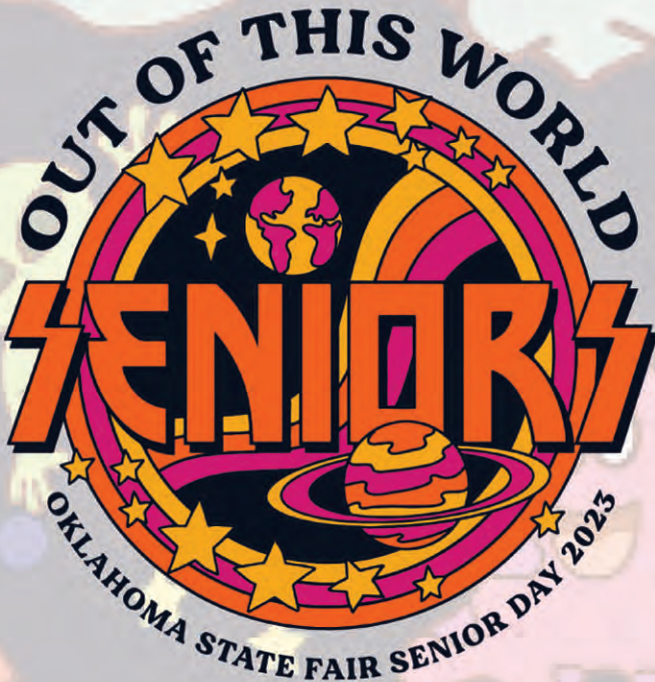
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EXHIBITORS, PHOTO BOOTH & FREE HEALTH SCREENINGS.	10 a.m. - 7 p.m.
DOOR PRIZES	Session 1: 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. Session 2: 1 - 3:30 p.m. Session 3: 3:30 - 6 p.m.
OUT & ABOUT: SPACE WALK	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
SENIORS IN MOTION VIDEO VOTING	10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
OKIE STOMPERS	10:05 a.m. & 11 a.m.
BLACK HOLE TOSS	10:35 a.m.
THE MILKY WAY - EXPANSIVE UNIVERSE OR DELICIOUS CANDY	11:30 a.m.
YMCA COMMUNITY TEAM	12 p.m.
LOVE YOU TO THE MOON AND BACK COUPLES CHALLENGE . . .	12:50 p.m.
OUT OF THIS WORLD KARAOKE CONTEST	1:20 p.m.
IT'S NOT ROCKET SCIENCE	2:20 p.m.
THE BIG BANG GAME SHOW	3:05 p.m.
SAVE THE FROZEN PLANET	4:30 p.m.
JIM GARLING	5 p.m.
OKLAHOMA CITY SWING DANCE CLUB.	5:20 p.m.
ALIEN INVASION	5:55 p.m.
VOCAL SOUNDS OF OKLAHOMA	6:10 p.m.
ELVIS VISITS THE SPACE STATION	6:30 p.m.
SHAWN KLUSH - TRIBUTE TO ELVIS	7:30 p.m.
Chickasaw Country Entertainment Stage	

For more detailed information visit the Senior Day
page on the Oklahoma State Fair website.



2023 OKLAHOMA

If your organization is having an upcoming event, let us know. Email the information to news@seniornewsandliving.com For a complete calendar of OK History events visit: <https://www.okhistory.org/calendar/ohs/>



August 8
6:30 p.m

HIA Celebration of Hope

National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, 1700 NE 63rd St, Oklahoma City. Join us as we honor God for all He has done through Hope is Alive from 2013 - 2023. This Celebration Of Hope will feature personal testimonies from graduates and family members of the Hope is Alive programs, live paintings, a custom set from Christian Recording Artist Ben Fuller, an inspiring message from Heisman Trophy winner Tim Tebow and a few surprises. All this and more, hosted by HIA Founders, Lance & Ally Lang.

August 9
6:30 – 9:30 PM

Orville Peck in Concert

The Jones Assembly, 901 W Sheridan, Oklahoma City. The Jones Assembly presents ORVILLE PECK - Bronco Tour. Presales beginning 4/19 @ 10:00 AM; public sale beginning 4/21 @ 10:00 AM. All tickets will be delivered via email and available for download in your Etix account beginning 3 days prior to the show (8/6/23). This helps us to limit ticket scalping purchases. Doors at 6:30. Full bar and walk-up food window available. Standing room only..

August 12
9 a.m.–11 a.m.

Quilting workshop with Martha Ray

Sod House Museum, 4628 State Highway 8 near Aline, OK 73716. The Quilting workshop with Martha Ray meets on the second Saturday of each month from 9 to 11 a.m. at the Sod House Museum at a cost of \$5 per person. Ray teaches how to create appliqué designs, traditional block patterns, original designs, crazy quilts, landscape designs, and paper piecing. New members of any skill level are always encouraged to attend! Call 580-463-2441 or email sodhouse@okhistory.org.

August 19
12:00pm - 3:00pm

Carriage House Sit and Sew

Henry and Anna Overholser Mansion, 405 NW 15th Street Oklahoma City. Sewers of all ages are invited to join the "Carriage House Sit and Sew" at the Henry and Anna Overholser Mansion in Oklahoma City. This free monthly event is for makers and crafters of all kinds and all skill levels. Participants are encouraged to bring their supplies and projects to sew and create in a different setting. Register for each session at <https://www.preservationok.org/shop> Registration is limited to 20 people. Guests can bring their food and drink.

SNL CROSSWORD CORNER

Across

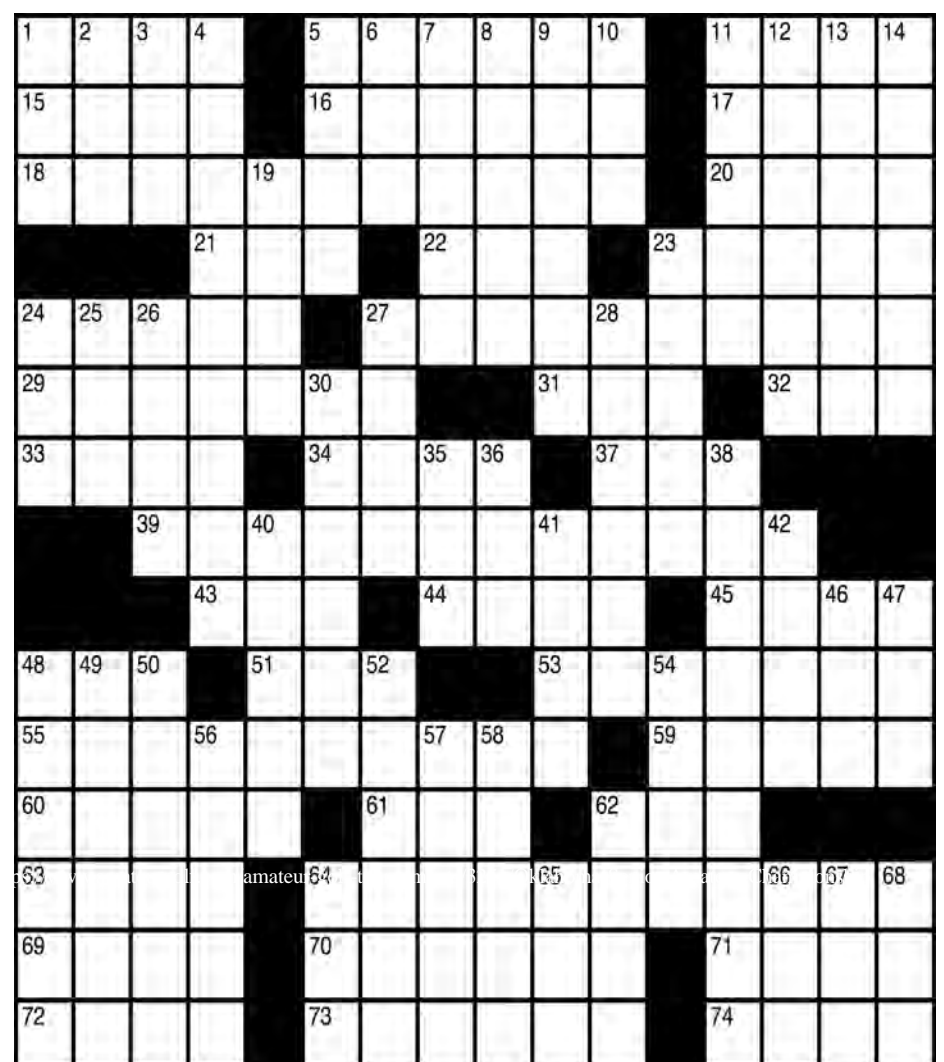
1 First lady Biden
5 Homeopathic treatment for bruises
11 "Say that's true ... "
15 On a cruise
16 Couple
17 "Mon ___!"
18 *Easy order for a bartender
20 Rare blood type, briefly
21 B'way passes
22 Blasting material
23 "Oh, brother!"
24 "It ___ meant to be"
27 *The place to be, informally
29 "Invisible Man" novelist
31 Galoot
32 Bygone airline
33 Online journal
34 ___ Eats
37 "Happy now?"
39 Rhetorical strategy of countering an accusation with another accusation, and an apt description of the answers to the starred clues
43 Up to, in ads
44 U2 lead singer
45 Mall event
48 Overly
51 Tattle (on)
53 Early stage

Down

55 *Toast choice
59 Paul of "Bewitched"
60 Some map dots
61 College domain
62 Playpen party
63 Lee with a posthumous cameo in "Avengers: Endgame"
64 *Is it almost time for dinner?"
69 Tattled (on)
70 In demand
71 Fragrant herb
72 Mani-pedi spots
73 "What a shame"
74 Fig or olive
1 Moose ___, Saskatchewan
2 "Give or take"
3 Floral wreath
4 Yesterday evening
5 Climber's goal
6 Blu-___ Disc
7 Closer's inning
8 Adler called "the woman" by Sherlock Holmes
9 Dos y dos
10 Suitable
11 "___ on it": "You can be sure"
12 Best
13 Experience schoolyard highs and lows?

Across

14 Should, informally
19 Hobby shop buys
23 Liu who plays the title role in 2020's "Mulan"
24 Organic flytrap
25 More than most
26 Boring
27 Sparks org.
28 Singer Sheena
30 Ban
35 Tidal movement
36 Joey of kiddie lit
38 Final thoughts?
40 Buenos ___
41 Hand or foot
42 "Mental Illness" Grammy winner Aimee
46 HDTV choice
47 ___ shadow
48 Unexpected endings
49 "I'm blushing!"
50 "Fancy!"
52 Southern California chain known for pastrami
54 Tidal movement
56 Lets use for now
57 Ideal places
58 Some matriarchs
62 "Meet the Press" moderator Chuck
64 1910s conflict, for short
65 Narc's org.
66 Unit of corn
67 Get on in years
68 Simple shirt



Answers on page 31

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Lyndale Edmond Senior Living Hosted Mid-Summer Networking

Story and photos by Darl DeVault,
contributing editor

Lyndale Edmond Senior Living Sales and Marketing Director Amber Compton welcomed 58 Senior Business Solution (SBS) colleagues to their networking luncheon on July 20 at Lyndale Edmond. Emphasizing how shifting demographics and reshaping complexes built for older Americans address a variety of rates and services, she explained they have recently added another nurse to the one already available in their assisted living option.

She explained that Lyndale features nine cottages on their remodeled senior living property as well as 115 independent living and 48 assisted living apartments for a total now of 173 units.

Lyndale is setting up a caregiver support group where attendees meet for lunch monthly beginning in the Fall. Topics will vary monthly and cover various issues and challenges caregivers face. Guest speakers



Lyndale executive staff (from left), Michelle Robbins, Kara Bolino, Cameron Gruenberg, Amber Saunders, and Amber Compton pose just before the start of the SBS Networking Luncheon on July 20.

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will provide insight and resources available in the area. The support group will be held in the Lyndale Clubhouse on the second Thursday of each month at noon beginning in September. Seating is limited, so RSVP is required at 405-340-5311.

The hosts shared their premium meeting space, their clubhouse adjacent to their pool, for the monthly gathering of senior healthcare marketers and senior-focused company workers.

Regional Director of Sales & Marketing Cameron Gruenberg was on hand to observe from his office in Tulsa.

"Lyndale Edmond is a beautiful senior living community offering independent and assisted living with a resident-first philosophy, caring associates, great lifestyle programs and delicious meals," Compton said after the luncheon. "By hosting this event, we showcase to attendees what life is like at Lyndale Edmond."

The networking group was treated to one of the host's amenities when Lyndale Culinary Director Bryan Newton offered a well-received lunch of chicken piccata, parmesan mashed potatoes and grilled asparagus.

The luncheon continued with

each invitee giving a few minutes of background on their employer and how they saw their role in helping seniors with their needs in the community. A few people outlined special events their venues were planning in the near future, inviting others to attend.

Vicki Escajeda solicited more raffle prizes and interaction to support the booths available at the upcoming Senior Day on September 20 at the Oklahoma State Fair. She also talked about how independent living, assisted living, and long-term care communities could submit a one-minute video by August 20 of their residents "In Motion." The entries will be judged, and the top 10 will be shown at the Fair, where the public will select the winner.

Joe Forrest with Re/Max FIRST gave his customary real estate market update explaining that home prices are up five percent in the market for those seniors seeking to sell their homes to move to senior centers. Forrest has worked in home healthcare services, independent and assisted living, rehabilitation, and as a Realtor for the past 20 years.

The guests were reminded of the Oklahoma Assisted Living

continued next page

NETWORKING

Continued from Page 22

Association Annual Trade Show as the association celebrates its 26th anniversary on August 22-24 at the Embassy Suites in Oklahoma City.

The meeting was a more personalized version of a monthly networking newsletter with information, announcements, and networking within the retirement industry.

Erin Stevens outlined that "The Edmond Way" is offering local hometown journalism to Edmond as it publishes online as a free weekly newsletter now and seeks to start printing editions in the Fall. Readers can find the publication at The Edmond Way.

Several speakers highlighted how to get involved in Oklahoma's many Alzheimer's Association Walk to End Alzheimer's, with the main ones being September 16 in Tulsa and October 28 in OKC.

Some providers reported real-time availability for their care and housing options, home care, and hospice providers.

Later, Compton explained that the spacious, fully-featured clubhouse the meeting was in is available to clients for special events

and for rent to outside groups. She offered the facility or to co-host any of the three upcoming SBS events in August, October and December that have yet to be planned.

The guests were also reminded that Lyndale hosts a monthly "Happy Hour" late afternoon for further networking. The event features the use of the pool, weather permitting, with food, drinks, and networking.

Conversations before and after the more formal portion allowed attendees to stay connected with their senior industry peers while building possible referral networks.

Sagora Senior Living operates the Lyndale property. Oklahoma is home to five more of their communities: Aberdeen Heights, Aberdeen Memory Care of Tulsa, Bellarose, Elison Independent Living of Statesman Club, and The Veraden. Sagora is one of America's top 50 privately-owned senior housing operators with communities throughout Texas, Alabama, Florida, California, Illinois, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, West Virginia, Mississippi and Nebraska.

For more information about Lyndale Edmond Senior Living <https://www.lyndaleedmond.com/>.

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New Comprehensive Life-Changing Veterans Outreach

Story and photos by Darl DeVault, contributing editor

Oklahomans are ensuring their fellow military veterans can register for the new Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act. Hundreds of Veterans Administration employees are ensuring this is possible at well-attended monthly outreach VA Veterans Festival (VET Fest) and PACT Act Resource Fairs around the state.

The most recent event was held by Oklahoma City VA employees on July 22, in west Oklahoma City, where 30 VA employees assisted veterans at the 7725 CONNECT building. The multi-tenant business campus in the old Western Electric Plant at Reno and Council saw 70 veterans lined up at the 9 a.m. opening, and 150 were assisted throughout the day.

The event was designed to provide services for veterans, spouses, caregivers, veteran's widows, survivors and active-duty personnel. This

outreach allows the VA to provide expanded healthcare and benefits to generations of veterans and their survivors.

The Warriors for Freedom Foundation co-hosted the event from their office in the 7725 Connect building. The nonprofit volunteers assisted the Oklahoma City, VA staff in spreading the word that more veterans and their survivors are eligible for benefits and VA health care under the PACT Act.

Signed into law by President Joe Biden in August 2022, the "Honoring our PACT Act of 2022" (in its short title version) initiates the most extensive health care and benefits expansion in VA history. This sweeping federal law



From left, David Francis with the Oklahoma Tax Commission discusses services with veteran mechanic Robert Gibson who attended the event to get a Toxic Exposure Screening.

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comprehensively addresses all the service-connected toxic exposure issues of the last six decades.

The act expands VA care eligibility for veterans who experienced exposure to toxic substances during service in Vietnam, the Gulf War and post-9/11 eras. Some veterans' surviving family members may also be eligible for specific benefits.

The line kept moving, with 30 people who had arrived around 11:30 a.m. waiting in line at noon. The event ran until 4 p.m.

The veterans were helped to register for PACT Act services and check the status of their PACT Act claims, while some were assisted with getting a My HealtheVet Premium account which allows them to sign in to VA online tools.

"The process was timely, very helpful and friendly," said Staff Sergeant Sarah Scott, who served at Tarin Kwot, Afghanistan, from 2010-2011. The Noble resident, now on active duty with the Oklahoma National Guard, said that once she was registered, she could go right to the people who provided her with the information she needed.

To be eligible for benefits under the PACT Act, a veteran's disability must connect to their military service. The VA now automatically assumes that a veteran's service caused some conditions. These are known as "presumptive conditions." The PACT

Act added more than 20 categories of presumptive conditions from exposure to burn pits, Agent Orange and other toxic substances.

"We are all excited to roll out the PACT Act to OKC veterans because this is one of the largest program expansions in veteran healthcare we have ever seen," said Carmen Daugherty, OKC VA public affairs officer.

The veterans who attended the PACT Act presumptive claims event asked VA eligibility and service officers questions about their exposure and claim eligibility. They were able to receive toxic exposure screenings from medical staff. Some filed a claim and, in some cases, received a same-day decision from the four VA doctors on hand.

"Being a veteran, I am thrilled to help veterans get their VA health care and benefits fixed," Daugherty said. "Some of these veterans have waited for 20 plus years to finally get answers to their exposure questions and get claims filed."

The act also requires the VA to provide toxic exposure screenings to every veteran enrolled in VA care. Many veterans enrolled in VA care for the first time at the event and were helped to secure appointments at the downtown VA Hospital.

Those enrolling in VA care for
continued next page

OUTREACH

Continued from Page 24

the first time started the process of having their ID cards mailed out to them.

Some 20 Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) staffers also worked many stations to provide information about benefits and services to veterans and their families. Many other services were provided, including four State of Oklahoma staffers providing information about state veteran services and Oklahoma Tax Commission privileges extended to veterans with 100 percent disability.

An underlying emphasis of PACT Act outreach is to fully inform veteran's widows of their access to benefits around the state in what has already been 10 VET Fest or PACT Act Resource Fairs, including several cohosted by tribal nations.

"The PACT Act makes it easier for survivors and widows to receive monthly VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (VA DIC)," Daugherty said. "They qualify if they are a surviving spouse, dependent child, or parent of a veteran who died from a service-connected disability."

The VA also provides survivors

previously denied DIC benefits the opportunity to be re-evaluated to see if they are now eligible under PACT Act provisions. The VA asks widows to come to one of the PACT Act events or the main Oklahoma City VA Health Care System to determine if they qualify.

"Our experts will re-evaluate each case and answer benefits questions for you and your family," Daugherty said. "Some benefits include burial allowance, education and training, monthly payments, home loans and health care. At these outreach events, we are bringing the experts to investigate each case and figure out exactly what benefits veteran's widows are entitled to register for as a surviving family member."

Another benefit explored at these events is that a surviving spouse, dependent child, or dependent parent of a veteran may receive a one-time accrued benefits payment if the veteran was owed unpaid benefits at the time of their death. The VA also informs everyone who qualifies for a Survivors Pension as a surviving spouse or child of a veteran with wartime service.

For more information about this VA benefits outreach campaign, click The PACT Act And Your VA Benefits | Veterans Affairs.



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TINSELTOWN TALKS:

Gary Puckett's powerful voice still delighting fans

By Nick Thomas

Currently traveling the U.S. on the 2023 "Happy Together Tour" with classic pop acts such as The Turtles, The Cowsills, and Little Anthony, (see <https://happytogethertour.com/>), Gary Puckett never tires of performing the songs made famous with his Union Gap bandmates.

The hugely popular 5-man pop-rock group, remembered for their string of late 60s hits including "Woman, Woman," "Lady Willpower," and "This Girl is a Woman Now," now features all new members but retains one of the most distinctive musical sounds of the era with Puckett delivering his characteristic soaring vocals infused with emotion and perfect pitch.

Famous for often performing in Civil War Union Army costumes and named after a town near where Puckett once lived in Washington state, the original Union Gap disbanded in 1971 but Puckett says the current group creates a sound as close as possible to the classic songs.

"The original recordings featured string and horn sections, but there's just four of us in the group now so our keyboard player is tasked with recreating those sounds," said Puckett while traveling to New York from his home in Florida. "I think we'll give fans what they want to hear."

Turning 80 last year, Puckett says he was around 8 or 9 when his family realized he could carry a tune.

"My folks would get a tape recorder and we would sing songs



The line up for today's Gary Puckett and the Union Gap. Woody Lingle, Gary Puckett, Jamie Hilboldt, and Mike Candito (L to R) - provided by Gary Puckett

and record Christmas messages to my grandparents," he recalled. "Then they would make a little record of it. My voice was way, way 'up in the sky' back then, and I remember my mother telling me at one point she just thought all little boys could sing like that!"

Young Gary's mother wasn't alone in appreciation of her son's vocal talents. While later attending college in San Diego, Puckett and the group toured the West Coast playing small clubs and were visited by Columbia Records producer Jerry Fuller.

He came down to see us in San Diego," Puckett remembered. "He liked my voice and the idea of wearing the outfits and walked up to the stage at midnight and said let's go make a record."

That record became their first hit, "Woman, Woman," one of several Fuller would produce for the band.

"When he first played it to me it was written as a country song," recalled Puckett. "So he added a 30-piece string, horn, and rhythm section and turned it into the pop record that established me as a singer in the music world."

The band amassed six gold records in the space of about 3 years during the late 1960s. But musical tastes were changing as the 70s began closing in and for a decade there was little interest in the group's music.

"Then in the early 1980s, radio stations began proliferating throughout the United States and featuring 60s music once again," said Puckett. "I started getting calls from disc jockeys who were playing our songs and promoters who wanted us back on the road giving concerts."

Puckett has continued to tour either solo or with the band ever since, releasing another nine solo albums over the years (see www.garypuckettmusic.com). Interacting with audiences remains a joy for the singer who is usually available at concerts to meet with fans to sign items they may bring along.

"I love to get out with the fans, it's always great to see them smiling and enjoying the music we created way back when," he says. "They are still appreciative of it all and the fact that they are there just honors me and the music."

Nick Thomas teaches at Auburn University at Montgomery, in Alabama, and has written features, columns, and interviews for numerous magazines and newspapers. See <https://www.getnickt.org/>.



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American Heartland announces \$2 billion theme park and resort development in northeast Oklahoma

The 1,000-acre resort destination is expected to attract more than 4.9 million guests per year to Oklahoma

Recently Oklahoma state and local officials joined American Heartland leadership to announce American Heartland Theme Park and Resort, a more than \$2 billion entertainment destination development in northeast Oklahoma, just west of Grand Lake on Route 66. The development will be built in phases starting with a large-scale RV park with cabins scheduled to open phase one in spring 2025 and a world-class theme park and resort scheduled to open in 2026. The American Heartland Theme Park and Resort will offer a unique visitor experience rivaling the world's top resort destinations. "We are thrilled to make Oklahoma the home of American Heartland Theme Park and Resort," American Heartland CEO Larry Wilhite said. "At the crossroads of the heartland, Oklahoma is an attractive location for a family entertainment destination. The state's business-friendly approach and innovative partnership efforts have helped make this possible. We look forward to bringing unforgettable generational experiences to Oklahoma. "American Heartland will be a 1,000-acre development with a 125-acre theme park, which is comparable to the size of Magic Kingdom Theme Park and Disneyland Park. The park will feature an Americana-themed environment with a variety of entertaining rides, live shows, family attractions, waterways as well as restaurant-quality food and beverage offerings. "Oklahoma is excited to welcome American Heartland Theme Park and Resort," Oklahoma State Rep. Rusty Cornwell said. "Located on historic Route 66 just west of Grand Lake, the development will attract visitors from around the world to experience and celebrate the rich cultures and hometown values America has to offer. "The adjacent 320-acre Three Ponies RV Park and Campground, designed by Oklahoma architects ADG Blatt, will be the largest campground in the central U.S. with 750 RV spaces and 300 cabins plus amenities. "There's no better place to represent the heart of America than northeast Oklahoma," said Oklahoma State Sen. Micheal Bergstrom. "This \$2 billion investment in our state will create more than 4,000 jobs and introduce a new category of entertainment to the region, and its long-term economic impact will be



transformative. Tourism is already one of Oklahoma's top industries and this project will elevate our state even further. Since tourism is a doorway to economic development, American Heartland Theme Park and Resort will draw new businesses not only to the surrounding area but also throughout the region and state. "The developer is American Heartland whose leadership has deep Oklahoma roots. American Heartland is an affiliate of Mansion Entertainment Group, LLC, Branson's leading performing arts, animation and studio brand. Led by Executive Producer Steve Hedrick, the design team is made up of the world's best theme park designers including 20+ former Disney Parks builders and Walt Disney Imagineers. Design firms include THG, FORREC and Cuningham, whose portfolios feature

the world's foremost theme park brands including Six Flags, Disney Parks and Universal Studios.

"We are pleased that American Heartland Theme Park and Resort has taken the first step and chosen Oklahoma to build a world-class entertainment destination," said Hopper Smith, interim director of the Oklahoma Department of Commerce. "We look forward to assisting with this project as it develops." American Heartland Theme Park and Resort is a family-friendly park promising timeless fun and boundless adventure. The 125-acre theme park will feature a collection of six distinctly American lands to welcome guests on a journey through the best of the American

story. Families will find thrilling rides and heartwarming shows as they discover Great Plains, Bayou Bay, Big Timber Falls, Stony Point Harbor, Liberty Village and Electropolis.

"American Heartland will be a place families can come together to create lasting memories, experience joy, laughter, imagination and wonder," American Heartland Founder and Chief Creative Officer Gene Bicknell said. "There is so much to celebrate about our country: its landscapes, its cultures and most importantly, its people. No matter where you're from, you'll feel right at home at American Heartland."

The development will also include a top-tier 300-room hotel and modern indoor water park.

"American Heartland will be an anchor tourist destination on Route 66 set to attract more than two million out-of-state visitors to Oklahoma each year," Kristy Adams, senior executive vice president of sales and marketing for Mansion Entertainment Group, American Heartland and Three Ponies, said. "The scale and quality of the development will be unlike anything else in the region, making Vinita, Oklahoma a can't-miss destination for families around the world."

Learn more at <https://www.americanheartlandthetmepark.com/> and <https://www.threeponiesrvparkandcampground.com/>.

When traveling this summer, pack up the kids, the dog...and the jerky

by Greg Schwem

The luggage carrier perched atop the SUV in front of me on a Chicago interstate one recent July afternoon reminded me of two facts:

1. Never get behind a vehicle with a luggage carrier if you are trying to read upcoming road signs.
2. Summer vacation season is upon us.

As I peer into cars on our nation's highways and see everything from bare feet pressed against backseat windows to dogs with facial expressions I interpret to mean, "Is my owner EVER gonna stop for a bathroom break?", I can't help but rekindle fond memories of car trips encompassing my youth. I could relate to the feet, but not the dog. We were cat owners, and cats do not accompany their masters on family vacations; nor do they have the desire. When we returned from excursions, no matter the length, our cat always seemed disappointed.

Today my sister and I reminisce about those trips with a combination of nostalgia and horror. How, we wonder, are we still walking Earth's face when our car was piloted by parents who began each vacation day with cigarettes and had devoured at least one pack each by the time we pulled into a roadside motel with neon signs proclaiming VACANCY and POOL?

Our lone break from the haze, and the harmful chemicals contained therein, came when Dad found a shaded rest stop at the 250-mile marker, also known as "halfway" on Schwem trips, and we commenced a picnic lunch. Often the fare was greasy fast food purchased just before the stop; on day one Mom probably packed sandwiches and threw in other items from the refrigerator that, if left unattended during our trip, would be a fine hue of green when we returned.

Although our vacations included plenty of heart healthy activities — tennis, golf and the occasional hike come to mind — it's a wonder we had the lung capacity to engage in any of those pursuits once we arrived at our destination. "Healthy vacation" was an oxymoron in my family.

However, in today's health-conscious world, that phrase is now chock-full of truth, right down to road trip snacks. While cheese balls, M&M's and oil-soaked potato chips may always have places in minivans, now you can also expect to see healthy alternatives vying for space, including homemade trail mix, yogurt in tubes and beef jerky.

Wait, what? Jerky? A food item that contains a silica gel packet? Absolutely, according to Kristyn Ristaino, managing director of Avalon Communications and PR director of Old Trapper beef jerky since 2019. The company recently celebrated its fourth consecutive year of double digit growth.

"Moms like it because it's not candy or chips," said Ristaino, who cites mom bloggers as her source. She added that moms feel confident in the snack not only because of its portability but also due to its clear packaging.

"You can see what you're actually getting," she said.

Jerky has also become a favorite snack among dudes, specifically those who leave the kids behind on annual hunting and fishing trips. While men gravitate (naturally) toward the hot and spicy variety, traditional beef jerky remains the company's biggest seller.

"(Jerky) is keto-friendly," adds Ristaino.

I chuckled at the idea of my father, in between puffs of Kent cigarettes, vowing to indulge only in ketogenic-friendly foods at rest stops. Although, who knows how many extra miles we may have been able to cover had he been familiar with the term "meal replacement"? Another favorable quality of jerky, Ristaino said.



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



Snacks, even healthy ones, are essential when packing for a road trip.

While rising gas prices have caused travelers to pump the brakes on car trips in 2023, those who do hit the highways will take their hunger pangs with them. Will those cars contain the sweet aroma of teriyaki or peppered beef jerky?

If the alternative is smelling bare feet from Ohio to Texas, I think I know the answer.

(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 <https://www.amazon.com/>. Visit Greg on the web at <https://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 <https://www.gregschwem.com/>)

JUMBLE

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

OTGUR

NYEPN

TGRREE

DCFAAE

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Print answer here:

(Answers Next Month)

July Answers | Jumbles: SPURN BLESS QUAIN SAFARI
Answer: They stayed at the beach resort near the Spain-France border to — "BASQUE" IN THE SUN

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

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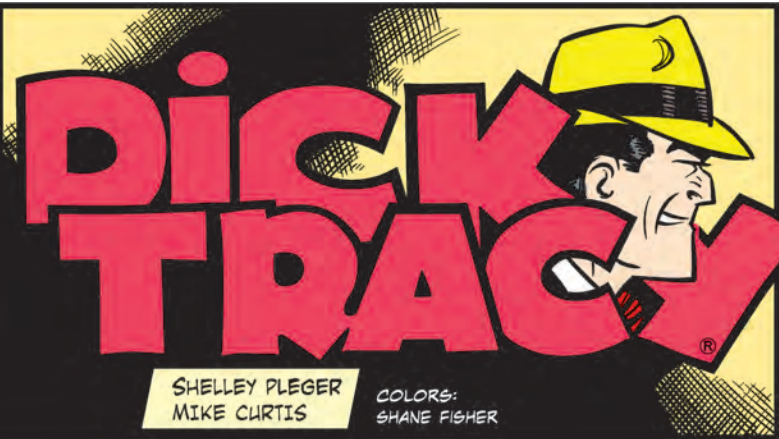
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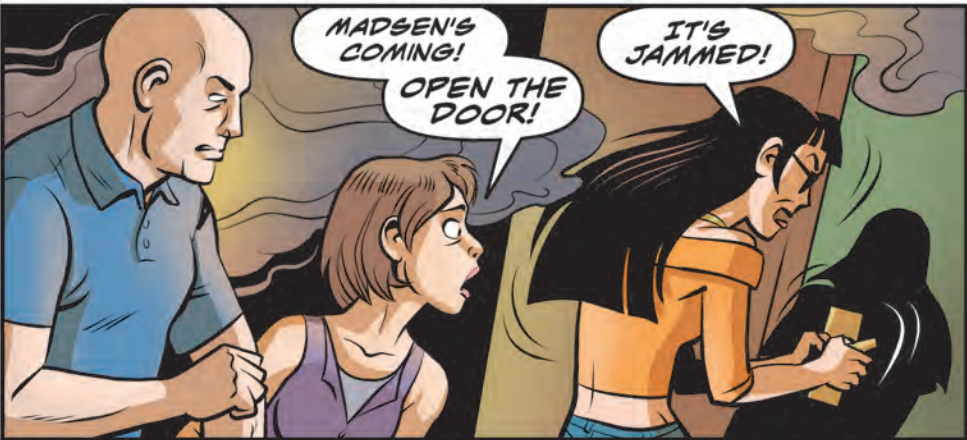
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Animal Crackers

By Fred Wagner



Broom Hilda

By Russell Myers



SNL AUGUST CHUKLES

SNL An older gentleman shuffled slowly into an ice cream parlor and pulled himself slowly, rather painfully looking, onto a stool. After catching his breath, he ordered a banana split supreme. The waitress smiled kindly at him, asking, "Crushed nuts?" The older gentleman replied, "No... arthritis."

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