



Holiday 2020

OutLook

for the Bay Boomer and beyond

by the Bay

A WALK THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS

O TANNENBAUM

GIFTS THAT
KEEP ON GIVING

HOST AN OUTDOOR
GET-TOGETHER

FRIENDSGIVING
OR SOLITARY
CELEBRATIONS

LISTEN TO
THEIR STORY

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Letters to the editor

RETURN

I was surprised and thrilled when I received my Fall copy of *Outlook by the Bay* in the mail a few weeks ago. Congratulations on the comeback. There are many folks who must be very happy to see your great magazine back in circulation.

Barbara A., Annapolis

TRIVIA QUIZ SPRING 2020

My wife and I really enjoyed taking Kater Leatherman's 1970s trivia quiz.

Anything we can do to work the brain is a good thing and it was fun!

Keep 'em coming. It adds variety to your magazine.

Sincerely,

Dr. Patrick G., by email

FALL OUTLOOK

Outlook returned strong! The articles in the Fall issue were outstanding and diverse. I read the issue cover to cover as I usually do. I always learn something interesting from all the gifted writers. Thank you for continuing to publish this gem. Your editorial offered hope ... You are so right: Who knows what tomorrow will bring!

Nancy S., Asheville, N.C.

ELLEN MOYER

I enjoyed your article about eagles. My wife and I enjoy watching eagles and owls when we can see them. Here is a website you will enjoy on nesting bald eagles: <https://explore.org/livecams/bald-eagles/decorah-eagles-north-nest>

We have been looking at the site for the past five years. It is especially fascinating to see and keep track of the hatchlings.

Dr. Richard B., Annapolis



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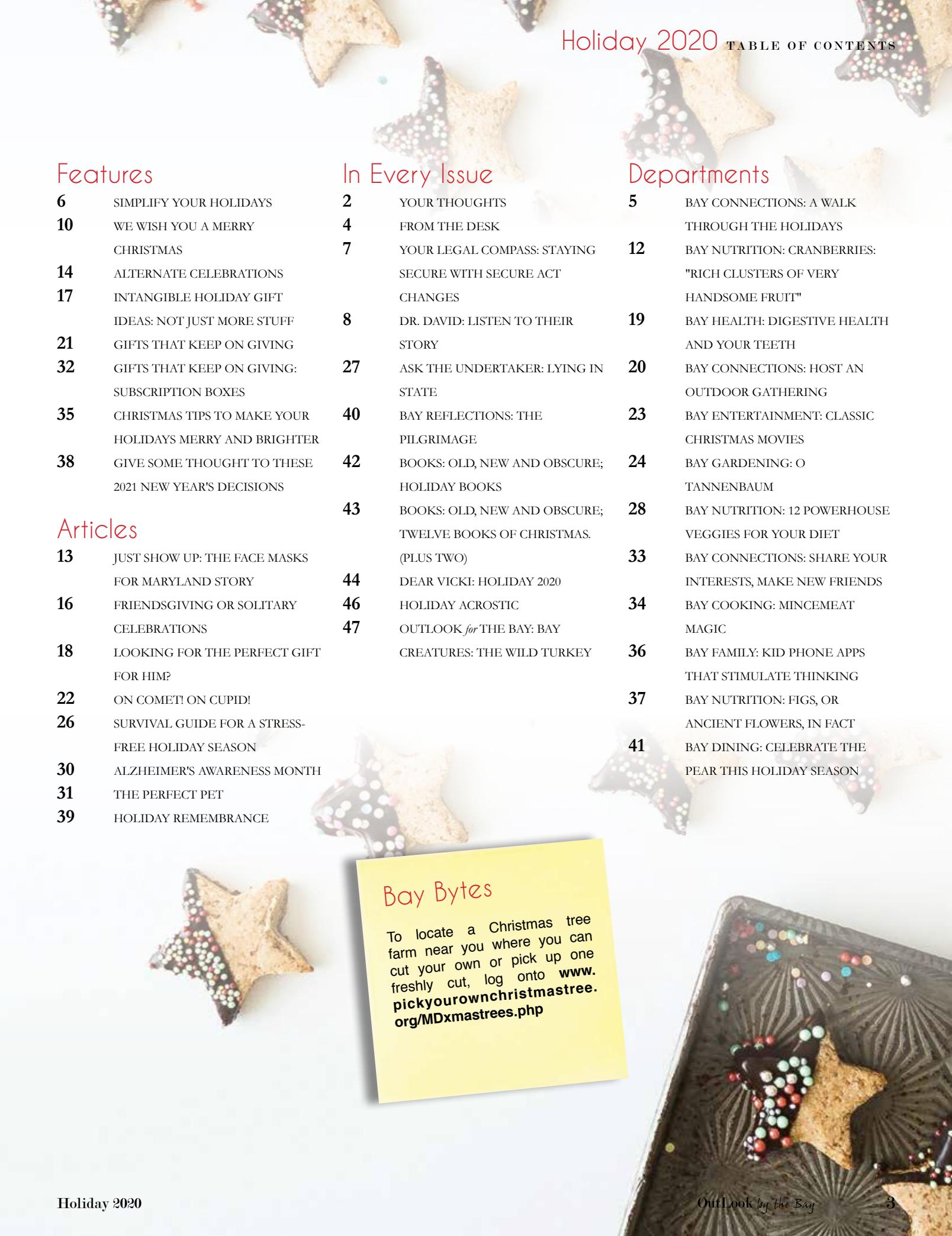
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Bay Bytes

To locate a Christmas tree farm near you where you can cut your own or pick up one freshly cut, log onto www.pickyourownchristmastree.org/MDxmas_trees.php.

OutLook *by the Bay*

For the Bay Boomer and Beyond...

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FROM THE DESK

No doubt you're aware that we're in for more than a few changes this holiday season – maybe some for the better? We've got the two most celebrated holidays of the year fast approaching! Both usually very family focused. They still are, but some of us will no doubt be using Zoom to stay close to those important to us and others may attempt to gather in some comfortably safe area.

And then there's one of our favorite families who live up there in Crownsville. They just may be able to stick with their tradition! They're known far and wide for their get-togetherness and for never missing a holiday! Their extended and warm family has for more than a few years celebrated their Thanksgiving out in the back field, where a few acres provides lots of space. Originally from New England, they are not easily scared off by a light chill in the air. Over the years, they've enjoyed their Thanksgiving festivities at an early afternoon feast set out on long tables, suitably decorated with mums and dried gourds and such. The tables are stretched in one long line across the field, not too far from the kitchen. Platters of turkey, tofu to satisfy the nonmeat eaters, bowls of buttery mashed potatoes and steaming trenchers of butternut squash are spread the length of the table. The homemade bread is kept warm in napkin-lined baskets and the cranberry sauce, although handled carefully, always leaves a distinct trail. They've done it this way for years. Only a few times it has been too cold or too rainy, driving the celebration inside or postponing it a day or two. Typically, it's only family, but then there are nearly 20 of them, as well as two dogs and one rabbit. There is the occasional guest or midshipman who just happens to be available that day, which only adds to the festivities. The laughter, the fun, the overeating can last well into the afternoon.

Maybe it's their attempt to bring us back to our beginnings? Afterall the Pilgrims weren't seated along mahogany tables spread with linen clothes with toasty heaters that sent out blasts of warm air. But then of note, the Pilgrims probably had their feast day in October, which is more accurately the end of the New England harvest. President Lincoln, in a move to lighten the mood of the country during those trying years, changed the day to late November.

At the conclusion of our friends' festivities, the table is cleared, kitchen cleaned and leftovers safely stashed away. They all then head out for a nice long walk and maybe a game or two of Capture the Flag before the pies and ice cream are set out.

So, what are their plans for this year? The plan is for it to be much like past years, but perhaps leasing a large awning to spread over the tables should the weather not cooperate. Most homes have space heaters so it will be easy enough to stay warm. The out-of-town side of the family will still be included, all with today's distance precautions.

And plans for Christmas or Hanukkah this year? In questioning others, the prevailing attitude seems to be to carry on. Masks and distancing will be de rigueur, but family and friends will as always be welcome. Most, after all, do have their traditions, which are not given up easily. Precautions are of course necessary, but with luck and some creativity, most are hoping to continue as usual. Chances are it won't be quite like it's always been, but there'll still be presents under the tree and an oversized ham and good friends and family.

And then, regardless of any changes, and not so unlike other years, while enjoying the bounty, no doubt we'll spend a bit of extra time thanking the powers that be that most of us are all still here and able to gather and to celebrate. And this year, maybe while we're gathered together and enjoying what is, rather than what isn't – perhaps it would be an appropriate time to take a moment to remember and give thought to the words of one of our favorite holiday characters, Tiny Tim, when he declared for all to hear, "God bless us everyone."



A WALK THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS

By Phil Ferrara

Although our daily lives are currently constrained, it is natural for human beings to seek out happiness and outlets of joy in their lives. People always find opportunities to get away from reality, albeit for a brief period. This need for enjoyment is sewn deeply into the fabric of our daily lives with family and friends.

Enjoying a walk during the holidays is a source of camaraderie, a chance for fresh air and exercise, an escape from the trials of our everyday world and an opportunity to learn something new. It is a lifeline that is precious and not to be lost.

The days are growing shorter and the weather colder, so we no longer have the warming benefits of the sun's radiation. What should we do each day to take full advantage when the dawn breaks here in the holiday season? For those of us lucky enough to live near the shores of the Chesapeake Bay there are many exciting opportunities to get out for a walk. The late Autumn's brisk and enervating fresh air is a strong force on behalf of good health. Combine that with the influence of family and friendships, and you will have discovered one of the great secrets of life.

And what are some of those not-to-be-missed opportunities during the holiday season that are available here in the Chesapeake Bay region?

One of them is ice skating, which is a perfect start for the holidays. There are plenty of locations in our region. Quiet Waters Park in Annapolis is a perfect venue with an idyllic setting and music. All details on times, fees and skate rentals can be found at www.aacounty.org/departments/recreation-parks/forms-and-publications/fall-202-guide.pdf Or call Quiet Waters at 410.222.1711. Other locations include the Glen Burnie Town Center (410.590.5990), the Piney Orchard Ice Arena on Piney Orchard Parkway in Odenton, or the many skating rinks available in Prince George's County (pgparks.com for additional information).

Another great holiday tradition in the Chesapeake Bay area is *Midnight Madness* conducted in downtown Annapolis on Thursday nights during December. This is a marvelous chance to walk the streets of historic Annapolis and enjoy an evening of music, shopping, refreshments and dinner at a local restaurant. Enjoy all the exhibits and offerings of the many retailers in Annapolis and the entertaining bands and singers

along the way. It all begins December 3. See the website at www.anapolis.gov/465/Special-Events for details.

Every now and then one comes upon a hidden gem, a unique place to be cherished for family enjoyment. *Honey's Harvest Farm* in southern Anne Arundel County is that jewel. Visit there this holiday season on any Sunday morning for an enchanting nature walk and farm tour starting about 9:30. There you will encounter music and entertainment, a farmers market with various vendors and a chance to pick your favorite fruits on the walk.

The farm is located on rural Brooks Woods Road near Lothian, Md., just west of Route 2. Simply enter *Honey's Harvest Farm* into your GPS, and you will find it with ease.

A great thrill on the Severn River and the Annapolis harbor is the Eastport Yacht Club's *Lights Parade*. This year it will be conducted on Saturday, Dec. 12, from 6 to 8 p.m. Enjoy a stroll about town, perhaps have an early dinner and watch the highly decorated boats as they parade through the harbor.

Or perhaps you might wish to go further afield to explore holiday venues. Go north to an oasis of unparalleled beauty -- *Longwood Gardens*, a place of magical wonders, located in Kennett Square, Pa. The gardens, particularly during the evening hours, are beautifully adorned with holiday lighting of every description. Ticket information, hours and directions are on the website at www.longwoodgardens.org As you wander through a thousand acres of elaborate gardens, intricate mazes and meticulously groomed forests, you will encounter a myriad of plants, flowers, bushes and trees. Interspersed throughout *Longwood Gardens* are ornate fountains spouting jets of water with elaborate designs and colors. They are accompanied by ponds with beautiful floral arrangements and exotic fish darting through the waters.

A marvelous family event during the holidays is the *Lights on the Bay* exhibits at Sandy Point State Park on Route 50 at Exit 32. The 26th annual show will begin on Nov. 20 with 70 elaborate and exotic illumination designs created by various organizations and individuals for your entertainment. All ticket and time information can be found at www.lightsonthebay.org/

So during this holiday season, plan your walking adventures and prepare to be dazzled by these area attractions.

Phil is the founder and leader of the Piedmont Trekkers biking club. Interested bikers and outdoor enthusiasts are welcome to contact him at pferrara65@comcast.net

Bay Bytes

If you'd like to volunteer to record an audiobook, log onto LibriVox.org. And then if you'd like to listen to an audiobook, log on to your local library site at www.aacpl.net/. There are also many audiobooks available at no charge from Amazon.com

SIMPLIFY YOUR HOLIDAYS

By Leah Lancione

Every year when the holidays approach we all vow to simplify the season or to at least make them as stress-free and enjoyable as possible. To do so, the website **ZenHabits.net** recommends first and foremost to remember what's essential. Ask yourself the following: "Do you care deeply about your religion? Do you care most about spending time with your loved ones? Maybe certain traditions matter tremendously to you. Maybe you love the feeling of giving. Get clear on this, and the rest gets much easier." Though this sage advice is excellent, there are some practical steps to simplify the holidays as well.

START EARLY: Sign Up Genius, the online tool that has made planning events that require participation and contributions from others so much easier, offers a few tips for limiting the hustle and bustle of the holidays. The main suggestion is to start shopping and planning early. Stores put out holiday décor and supplies way in advance, so take advantage of this sales strategy and get ahead of the game. Sign Up Genius asserts, "If you space out your shopping, planning and prep in smaller doses throughout the holiday season, you'll be significantly calmer come Christmas Eve."

RETHINK GIFTS OR DO SECRET

SANTA: Giving, by definition, is an act of love or caring, but it can become taxing when the shopping that leads up to it is tiresome. To limit the amount of shopping, hone the gift-giving process and discuss with your family the idea of Secret Santas. Each person puts their name on slips of paper, which go into a hat or sack (appropriate for Old St. Nick), then each person draws a name. The name drawn is the person for whom you are to purchase a gift. To make shopping easier, on the back of the slip of paper each person can write a few gift hints (before they go into the sack, of course). Each person's Santa can remain a secret or not. The main thing is to keep the selection process entirely



Bay Bytes

For a bit of low-key entertainment during some of our long Winter days, take a peek at Window-Swap.com and enjoy the view from someone's window for 10 minutes. Set up in many different locations throughout the world, it's an opportunity to observe life in other areas. Then, if you choose to, share what's going on outside your window!

random and fair. Each person will only have one person to shop for so there's more time for other holiday activities.

However, if you think your loved ones are ready and willing to forego individual Christmas gifts this year, present a plan for a family trip or some other group gift or experience. Think museum memberships, cooking classes, or season passes to a sporting event.

STREAMLINE TRADITIONS: If your grandchildren are older and no longer excited by the idea of driving through the neighborhood to rate home lighting displays, making gingerbread houses or decorating Christmas cookies to

pass out to neighbors, strike them off the list of must-do holiday customs. The lifestyle blog **Simple Lionheart Life** points out, "It's important to remind yourself you get to choose how you spend your time and what traditions to continue." For example, if the thought of writing a gazillion holiday cards gives you hives, don't send any this year, or if you're so inclined, try creating your own and incorporate it into an email for those you want to remember. If you're on social media, make a post with a nice photo that offers holiday well wishes and explains that you're going paperless this year. Save paper and spread love all in one media blitz!

Also, there's nothing wrong with enlisting some help for the customs you do want to keep. Share holiday meal-making responsibilities, let

the grandchildren trim your tree or hang the holiday lights. Whatever tasks you can share, try it!

SCALE DOWN THE MEAL: If year after year your holiday dinners end with tons of leftovers, consider refining the menu. Take a quick poll of favorite side dishes and desserts to narrow the selection so there's less shopping for ingredients, less prep work, and less cooking. Not to mention, less food means less waste. And while you're simplifying the menu, why not reduce your post-meal cleaning duties as well. Ditch the fancy holiday china that must be cleaned by hand and replace it with the charming, and disposable, holiday tableware you can buy anywhere.

Most importantly, remember that you can make the holidays what you want them to be. Visualize what your dream holiday would look and feel like and make it happen. You will never regret letting go of stale traditions or stress-inducing habits that put a damper on past holidays. This year you can make your holidays truly a season of good cheer!



STAYING SECURE WITH SECURE ACT CHANGES

This column presents general information regarding estate and disability planning and probate. It is not intended to create an attorney-client relationship or constitute legal advice to readers. Individuals with legal concerns should consult with an attorney for advice regarding their specific circumstances.

By Jessica L. Estes

In December 2019, Congress passed the Setting Every Community Up for Retirement Enhancement Act (SECURE), the intent of which was to make saving for retirement easier and more accessible for most Americans. However, there is one significant downside to the act – eliminating a taxpayer's ability to "stretch" taxable distributions and related tax payments over a lifetime.

Before we dissect the negative aspect, let us begin with the three biggest positives for most people. First, the law raises the age at which individuals must begin taking required minimum distributions from age 70½ to age 72 beginning with calendar year 2020. So, anyone who turns 70½ during 2020 will not be required to withdraw funds from their Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs) or 401(k)s until age 72. Unfortunately, in this regard, the SECURE Act is prospective, so anyone who turned 70½ prior to calendar year 2020 and who is not yet 72 will still be required to take distributions.

Second, the SECURE Act eliminates the age limit for contributions to a traditional IRA, provided the individual is still working. As such, beginning in 2020, individuals may make contributions to their traditional IRAs regardless of their age if they have earned income. As Americans live and work longer, and with traditional pensions a thing of the past, individuals can now save more for retirement and defer taxes on earned income. Previously, contributions to traditional IRAs were barred after age 70½ so if an individual was still working, likely more of their earned income was taxed.

Third, the SECURE Act provides an opportunity for long-term, part-time employees to join their company's 401(k) plan. With few exceptions, the SECURE Act requires employers maintaining a 401(k) plan to offer it to any employee who worked more than 1,000 hours in a year, or more than 500 hours each

year for three consecutive years. Again, this would provide an opportunity for elective deferrals to increase retirement savings while reducing taxable income.

But, as with most things, you must take the good with the bad. And the bad in this case involves inherited IRAs. An inherited IRA is what a beneficiary receives when the original owner of the IRA dies. Until Jan. 1, 2020, an inherited IRA could be "stretched" over the life expectancy of the beneficiary. Meaning, distributions from the inherited IRA could be taken over the beneficiary's life expectancy, provided certain requirements were met, rather than within a specified time, often providing the beneficiary with a reliable lifetime income source.

Now, under the SECURE Act, most beneficiaries who inherit an IRA from an original owner that died on or after Jan. 1, 2020, must withdraw all funds from the inherited IRA within 10 years of the original owner's death. There are a few exceptions to this new rule. If the beneficiary is the surviving spouse of the original owner, a minor child of the original owner, less than 10 years younger than the original owner or disabled or chronically ill (as defined under the applicable sections of the Internal Revenue Code), the "stretch" provisions will still apply. On the other hand, if the beneficiary is not exempt, there are several options available to maximize the tax savings, but careful consideration should be given to an overall estate plan before a final decision is made.

As I discussed in a previous article, the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Clark v. Rameker*, holding that funds in an inherited IRA are not "retirement funds" within the meaning of the bankruptcy statute, rendering those funds available for payment to creditors, is still applicable. Prior to this decision, an inherited IRA was considered "retirement funds" and protected from the reach of one's creditors. After this decision, though, that is not necessarily the case. And the SECURE Act did not override this decision. Thus, understanding the changes most likely to impact you and your family under the new SECURE Act will ensure that your retirement plans, as well as your beneficiaries, stay protected.

Jessica L. Estes is an elder law and estate planning attorney at ERA Law Group, LLC in Annapolis. She can be reached at 410.919.1790 or via email at jestes@eralawgroup.com

It really doesn't get easier, you just get stronger.

LISTEN TO THEIR STORY

Recently, while water walking, I struck up a conversation with the gentleman walking in the adjacent lane. He told me his life story. He was born in France, came to this country at age 27, and worked at the World Bank for 53 years. He came to live in the United States because his dad came here in 1942 as a French naval officer to take command of an American-made ship. Chatting with him was delightful because I am a Francophile. We now talk frequently when we meet at our retirement community's pool.

This pleasant experience was a reminder of the upcoming holidays and the increased level of socializing that we may experience. We may end up talking to family, friends, strangers and acquaintances we don't enjoy. The purpose here is to enrich your holiday conversations. Actually, you could employ these skills for the rest of your life as well.

PRECONDITIONS: The first rule of communicating is, "*We cannot not communicate!*" We all know this rule but sometimes we might fail to keep it in mind. In other words, we, at least most of us, are always reading one another. We are instantly, automatically judging one another either consciously or unconsciously.

While conversing with others during the holidays it is wise to more consciously tune into our own nonverbal presence as well as the persons we are encountering. Remember, there are hundreds of languages in the world, but a smile speaks for them all.

Another factor to consider is that the person you are engaging may or may not find you interesting or attractive, and that works

Dr. Jim David

in both directions. We humans tend to put a "hat" on each person we meet and that reminds us of someone else in our life that we like or dislike. Our challenge is to be nonjudgmentally engaging when we are not so motivated. Or maybe the wise path is to disengage!

The most pivotal or foundational precondition is our attitude. Do we truly want to understand the other person? Using the SOC principle may be helpful. S stands for Self. How do I feel? Patient or frustrated? O stands for Other. What is going on with the "Other?" Are they relaxed or frustrated? C stands for Context. What is the setting? Are you dining at home or in a restaurant?

We must be totally ready and willing to accept the other person's feelings, thoughts, values, etc. This stance takes time and practice to acquire, but is an absolute necessity in creating a safe reality. Helpful ingredients are remembering that feelings and thoughts are not fixed. Feeling safe and accepted enables flexibility. Lastly, keep in mind that the other is a separate person entitled to their own values and perspectives. This is often incredibly challenging for some of us.

LEVELS OF LISTENING: Listening well deepens the relationship as the receiver feels safe, goes deeper and shares effortlessly. Passive listening is the first level and it is mostly nonverbal with a few brief supportive words such as "Oh," "Interesting," "Really."

A second level is door-openers such as, "Tell me more," "Tell me about it, I'm interested in your perspective." Giving 100% attention is imperative. We are always reading one another. The relative credibility weight of each human communication is 55% nonverbal, 38% tone of voice and 7% the actual words. Whatever resides in our heart will be manifested in our tone of voice. We believe the nonverbal more than the verbal.

The third and final level is active listening, sometimes termed reflective listening or mirroring. You make believe you are a mirror and you simply repeat back to the sharing person what they have said. The beginning level of expertise is called parroting and is not very nurturing

Bay Bytes

To check the legitimacy of any of the charities where you send your hard-earned dollars, log onto www.givewell.org or www.charitynavigator.com

We can't direct the wind, but we can adjust the sails.

but some people at times want to receive a verbatim account of what they have shared. This beginning level of proficiency is often experienced as mechanical, artificial, inauthentic and maybe irritating!

The next level of expertise consists of paraphrasing in your own words the message sent to you. The first half and the most economical phrasing is to begin with "You feel" or "You are" followed by one word. For example, "You feel exasperated" or "You are discouraged." When you feed back your best hunch of the person's feeling state, he or she will feel heard and supported. This is the only time to begin a sentence with "You," because "you-sentences" are intrinsically judgmental. Use sentences beginning with "I."

The second half is to play back the facts or information shared. For example, "You really feel totally disrespected and unimportant when Joe says he will call you between 2 and 4 p.m. and then he does not do it." If your active listening is not 100% accurate do not be concerned because the sharing person

will correct you and say, "Well, it was more like this. I really feel unloved when he does that."

The third and highest level of proficiency or expertise requires feeling relaxed and confident. Due to months and years of practicing you will be fully aware of your feelings as you smoothly tune into the other's feelings. Active listening entails genuine compassion. We could term it "empathic listening." The artist Paul Klee reminds us that, "We don't see things the way they are. We see things the way we are." Listening moves us to fresh eyes for ourselves and the other person.

An accumulation of traditions created over the centuries

FINAL THOUGHTS: Holiday socializing will soon be here. Experiment with active listening. Give it a try. Enjoy noticing how the other opens up to you. Listen to their story. Feel enriched as they feel heard and valued. Do as much or as little as feels comfortable for you. Listening heals! Enjoy the holidays!

Dr. Jim David is a practicing psychotherapist in Silver Spring. Visit his website at www.askdrdavidnow.com or email at jimsue63@gmail.com.



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We Wish You A Merry Christmas

By Ellen Moyer

"We wish you a merry Christmas., we wish you a merry Christmas and a happy new year." Not so fast. When Oliver Cromwell orchestrated a coup in England and cut off the King's head in 1649, he declared Christmas, the time of good cheer, was pagan. He canceled it. It was returned as a celebration when King Charles II came to power. Meanwhile, Puritan followers of Cromwell who came to America outlawed Christmas in Boston. From 1659-1681 any Bostonians who displayed a Christmas spirit were fined five shillings.

Cromwell, who shrank from any kind of joyfulness, may have been on to something with his claim of paganism. In medieval times Christmas was often rowdy and raucous, celebrating its historic Roman ties with Winter solstice and Saturnalia hedonistic roots. It was more like Mardi Gras.

Christmas today is still filled with food and drink. As we all recall, the Christmas goose for Tiny Tim in Charles Dickens story of *The Christmas Carol* is a message of charity and good will toward all.

Today's kitchen is filled with good smells of cookies and parts of gingerbread houses baking. Who can forget the room full of feasters in "The Holiday Inn," the movie that showcased Bing Crosby singing Irving Berlin's "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas?"

Christmas as we know it today is largely an American "inventioned" holiday to fill the cultural needs of a new nation. It is true, the celebration of giving goes back to a monk, St. Nicholas, born in Turkey in 280 AD. He was known for traveling

the countryside to help the poor. He was regarded as the protector of children and known for giving gifts generously. These were symbolic of the gifts of the Magi, gold, frankincense and myrrh, which dates back to the birth of Christ. By the 13th century, the Netherlands had fully adopted the St. Nicolas spirit of giving known as Sinterklaas. It is considered the origin of Santa Claus.

In America, the early 1800s was a time of social unrest. Unemployment was high, and class conflict and rioting occurred during the Christmas season. New York City instituted its first police force in 1828 in response to Christmas riots.

Calmer voices responded with ways to change Christmas celebrations. Washington Irving wrote *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon*, a series of stories about celebrating Christmas in an English manor home that showcased Christmas as a peaceful, warm-hearted holiday that brought people together. Earlier New York City residents, looking for a non-English way to celebrate, renamed Santa Claus the patron saint of Nieu Amsterdam, the Dutch name for New York City. In 1810 he appeared in a bishop's red robes.

Families, more sensitive to the needs of children, picked up on the benefits of celebrating Christmas as a family affair. By 1822, Episcopal minister Clement Clarke Moore, cemented this relationship with his poem "An Annual Visit from St. Nicholas," more popularly known as "Twas the Night Before Christmas."

American cartoonist Thomas Nast picked up the image of Santa Claus based on Father Christmas, an English jolly, bearded, stout guy. By 1880, Nast portraits of this jolly guy were set in the image we continue to use today during the season of good cheer, charity and remembrance of the birth of Christ.

There are many ways we celebrate this day. By the 15th century it was customary in London to decorate your house in ivy and holly. Green symbolized eternal life. This gave birth to the Christmas wreath that we place on our front doors. Holly, too, was thought to bring protection from witches.

The Christmas tree, an evergreen, was brought to America in

Don't lose: Either win or learn!



the 1800s, continuing an ancient tradition dating back to Egypt and Rome. In 1931 construction workers assembled a Christmas tree in Rockefeller Center, which began a lasting tradition.

Today more than 35 million evergreen trees are sold in the US annually. Decorating the tree is a special treat with exclamations of joy as the tallest decorator scrambles to top it with the star of the Nativity or an angel. Children at one time strung popcorn and made chains of colored paper to tuck into the branches. Today gaily colored balls as well as mementos from family collections fill out the decorated tree.

And the red poinsettia? It was named after an American minister, John Poinsett, who brought the plant from Mexico in 1828. The red symbolizes the blood of Jesus' sacrifice.

The Christmas hymns date back to 4th century Rome. St. Francis of Assisi, who popularized nativity scenes in 1223, also loved singing and led the tradition of bringing voices together. By 1426, John Awdkay, a Shropshire bishop, had written 25 carols, including "Good King Wenceslas." The well-known carol, "Adeste Fideles" or "Oh Come All Ye Faithful," dates to the

13th century. Charles Wesley gave us "Hark the Herald Angels Sing," "Deck the Halls" and "Silent Night," which were added in the 1800s.

Americans added "Jingle Bells" in 1857, "Sleigh Bells Ring, Are You Listening," followed. And, for fun, "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer" was created in 1939 to lure customers to the Montgomery Ward department stores.

Come this Christmas season, remember that your classic Christmas of baking, decorating, singing, gathering, giving and church services are an accumulation of traditions that date back centuries. The spirit of

St. Nicholas, guardian of children and the poor, and with a belief in the remembrance of good in the gifts of giving witnessed on the birthday of Christ, has lived on for 2,000 years.

Ellen, a former mayor of Annapolis, can be contacted at Elo1936@yahoo.com

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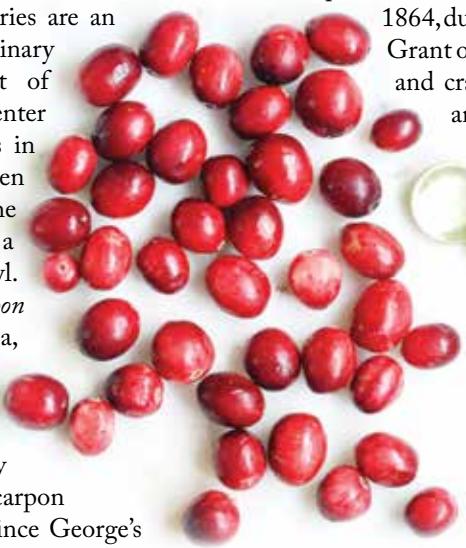
By Joyce M. White

An 1828 edition of the *New England Farmer* includes a blurb about the mighty cranberry. It describes these berries as being made up of “rich clusters of handsome fruit” and explains that they “may be cultivated with ease and success in our gardens and shrubberies.” Cranberries are an important part of the American culinary landscape and are an essential part of many poultry meals. While the epicenter of the American cranberry industry is in Massachusetts, cranberries have been exported to Europe and all regions in the United States for centuries, making it a beloved berry essential as a sauce for fowl.

Cranberries (*Vaccinium macrocarpon* variety) are native to North America, from Canada’s Atlantic provinces south to North Carolina, thus including the Chesapeake Bay region. According to a 1995 national wetlands inventory for Maryland, bogs with *V. macrocarpon* exist in Anne Arundel County and Prince George’s County, and other varieties of the berries can be found in swampy areas of western Maryland. While cranberries are not associated with the Chesapeake Bay region because they were never commercialized there, cranberries were used regularly in Chesapeake Bay cookery. Newspaper advertisements reveal that cranberries were imported into Virginia as early as 1752 and into Maryland by 1785, although they likely arrived earlier, and regular importation of cranberries occurred in the Chesapeake throughout the 19th century.

Interestingly, cranberries had the attention of at least some of the founding fathers. In a 1788 letter to Andrew Limozin, Thomas Jefferson wrote about a shipment of two barrels of cranberries he received from Mr. James Madison. However, Jefferson bemoaned the fact that some of the cranberries he received by land were reduced to *mummy*, meaning they were spoiled by the motion of the cart; steadier transport by water was preferred. In addition, in 1791 Jefferson tried to grow his own berries and thus ordered as many cranberry *bushes* as could be procured from a Mr. Prince of Philadelphia; the result was that Prince sent six cranberry trees to Monticello.

Jefferson is clearly not known for his cranberry-growing prowess. That honor fell to the cranberry growers in Barnstable, Massachusetts, the epicenter of North America’s cranberry industry. In 1816, Capt. Henry Hall opened the first commercial cranberry bed in Dennis. Hall noticed that wild cranberries in bogs grew better when sand blew over them. Hall transplanted cranberry vines and spread sand on them. Hall’s experiment proved so successful that other local cranberry farmers copied his method. As a result, the first agricultural census taken in 1854



reveals that 197 acres were used for cranberry cultivation in Barnstable County.

Moreover, by the middle of the 19th century, the cranberry proved itself to be an important American culinary staple. In 1864, during the Union siege of Petersburg, Gen. Ulysses S. Grant ordered that cranberry sauce be served to his troops, and cranberry sauce was included in the Thanksgiving and Christmas meals served to wounded Civil War soldiers in various hospitals. For instance, in 1864 at Mount Pleasant General Hospital in northwest Washington, D.C., an entire barrel of cranberry sauce was donated by a Mrs. Morse to be served to the wounded.

Of course, no Thanksgiving menu would be complete without cranberry sauce. The first cookbook published in America by an American author, *American Cookery* by Amelia Simmons in 1796, includes a recipe called “To Stuff and Roast a Turkey, or Fowl” in which cranberry sauce is suggested as an accompaniment. Subsequently, recipes for cranberries in 19th century American cookbooks are numerous and, in addition to recipes for classic cranberry sauce, recipes for pies, tarts, puddings, dumplings, jam, gelatins, salad, sherbet, conserves and relishes, as well as for drinks such as cranberry tea and cranberry punch, occur quite frequently.

Tickle your taste buds this holiday season with some historic recipes for cranberries:

CRANBERRIES

Source: Elizabeth Ellicott Lea, *Domestic Cookery* Maryland (1853)

To preserve cranberries, allow them their weight in sugar; make a syrup of the proportions of half a pint of water to two pounds of the sugar; boil and skim it before you put the fruit in; then let them boil until clear. To make sauce to eat with roast fowls, put three-quarters of a pound of sugar to a pound of fruit.

CRANBERRY BAKED PUDDING

Source: *A Domestic Cook Book, Containing a Careful Selection of Useful Receipts for the Kitchen* by Malinda Russell, covering Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina and Kentucky (1866)

Paste your pans with a thick rich crust and cover it with berries; add a little sugar if you like; then cover with a thin crust and fill with berries until four layings, then bake in a moderate oven; eat with cream and sugar, or wine sauce.

Joyce is a food historian and can be contacted at foodhistory@comcast.net



JUST SHOW UP: THE FACE MASKS FOR MARYLAND STORY

By Elyzabeth Marcussen

"Just show up."

That is Lucy Kruse's mantra. It seems to be more of a clarion call when it comes from her.

When a tornado hit the Bay City on Kent Island three years ago, she posted a call on social media for people saying she planned on going to help clean the debris left behind. People should just show up, she wrote. That first night, she was joined by two men. Then, there were 30 volunteers every night. Together, they cleared 60 lots of the debris.

Later, she would pull a team together to form a tree planting committee to replace those that were destroyed by the storm. They got trees, equipment and labor donated to replant trees throughout Bay City. They just showed up.

When the pandemic took over our lives in March, Kruse saw that the frontline workers were really scrounging for face masks. "My sewing machine had been tucked away for 20 years. Before the pandemic I said I should get my sewing machine out and start sewing things," she said.

But as she had already proven in the past, she knew there is power in numbers. And this activist knew where to find them. So, she posted again. And people just showed up.

The team became known as Face Masks for Maryland. As of the end of July, the group has created and donated 3,371 masks and 22 gowns. When the costs of the donated materials and labor are factored in, Kruse figures that is equivalent to \$16,855 worth of masks, and \$990 for the gowns. Hospice of the Chesapeake was fortunate to receive 1,083 of those masks.

More than 35 people have been involved in the project. One woman, Ann Foss, has made 800 masks. Jeff Jaros, who owns Advanced Architectural Metals, LLC, on Kent Island, created and donated the aluminum nose strips inserted into the masks. His wife and daughter also got in on the effort, helping to assemble mask-making kits distributed to people sewing the masks.

One of the caveats of the phrase "just show up," is the fact that physical contact was unacceptable. "I was nervous, it was frightening," Kruse said. She knew she needed to make it a no-contact project. Her front porch became a distribution center; an antique Coca-Cola cooler was the point where people could pick up mask kits and drop off finished masks and materials.

Other groups got involved, too. Doris Key, the director of Federated Garden Clubs of Maryland District 1, led a second team of mask makers. She and her husband Bill Key helped to put together mask-making kits.

Gene Deems, executive director of Medicine with a Mission, came across one of Kruse's posts about the mask-making efforts. "I was so impressed with their work, so I reached out and asked, 'How can we help?'" Deems said. He asked his board of directors who jumped on the idea of helping Face Masks for Maryland. He created an online campaign to raise money and with it, his nonprofit was able to purchase \$2,000 worth of materials. Lucy and Deems have become friends through their online shopping experience. They would talk on the phone and look at a website together. "She would say I need 80 yards of this and 100 yards of that," Deems laughed. "I had no idea about sewing or fabric."

Kruse has always been a can-do person. When her husband became ill, she returned to the workforce and held a variety of positions with the Federal Aviation Agency, retiring as a senior adviser to the vice president of acquisition. She lost her husband 13 years ago, and for a time would share her experience in a blog called "Sunshine Widows World."

"This project gave me a sense of purpose. It helped me focus on what we can do for the community and how people can contribute," she said. People who couldn't sew were cutting fabric, shuttling donations, acquiring materials, assembling kits. It is a multilevel community effort that takes a lot of coordinating from Kruse. Another team member, Erin Kelly, helped her with the logistics. When they finally met in person, Kruse was surprised Kelly was a 35-year-old bioengineer. "I'm 66, but we really clicked." Meeting people of all different ages and backgrounds has been one fun aspect of the mask-making endeavor.

Chris Wilson, director of advancement and volunteer services, said that Face Masks for Maryland stepped up to serve Hospice of the Chesapeake in a time of crisis. "Their generosity and selflessness have helped us to provide face masks for hundreds of essential people – from our frontline health care team members to patients and their families," she said. "We are ever so grateful for Lucy and the Face Masks for Maryland team for joining us in our mission of caring for life."

The operation is slowing down, but there is still a need, and there are many people who want to continue to contribute.

"There are still some die-hard seamstresses," Kruse said. "As long as they continue to sew, I'll be here."

All they need to do is just show up.

Elyzabeth Marcussen can be reached at EMarcussen@HospiceChesapeake.org

It's great growing older; not everyone gets to do it!

Alternate Celebrations

By Leah Lancione

What about 2020 has been normal? Though it's easy to crave normality or even the mundane at times because it's predictable, sometimes it is exciting, even enlightening, to try something new. So why not end 2020 with a bang by ending the year on your terms? Here are some ways you might explore for alternate ways to celebrate the holidays this year:

A Christmas/Thanksgiving Mashup: What? Combine Thanksgiving and Christmas? Well, yes in a way. Shake things up a bit and a few days before Thanksgiving, pull out the artificial Christmas tree from the attic or purchase a fresh one at the local garden store. No need to get out the ornaments because you're not going to trim it with the usual adornments, but rather notes written by each family member that describe what they've been grateful for in 2020. Either purchase multicolored hanging gift tags and ribbon (found as a set of 120 on Amazon for \$10 with a pen) or from a brick-and-mortar art supply store like Michael's. For a more rustic look, craft stores also sell small circular wood pieces that also do the job.

Have the family over for a "Thanksmas" or "Christmagiving" dinner and after the meal (blend menu items like turkey and taters, but fruit cake over pumpkin pie for dessert), take turns filling out and hanging the ornaments. Top off the festivities with a family walk or, if young kids are present, a nature scavenger hunt.

PhilanthroParty: The term "PhilanthroParty" coined by young social activist and author Lulu Cerone with her book *PhilanthroParties! A Party-planning Guide for Kids who Want to Give Back*, signifies a party with a giving motive. In

her book, Cerone presents ideas and strategies for hosting a holiday celebration with a socially conscious twist. The day after Thanksgiving is a day for family members, friends or neighbors to gather for a "Leftovers Potluck Feast" in which each guest brings a leftover (either turned into a casserole or as-is) along with foodstuffs for the local food bank.

If you want to take the philanthropic motivation even further, hold your Thanksgiving meal as a brunch instead of your regular dinner and volunteer at the local homeless shelter or soup kitchen to serve Thanksgiving meals to those in need.

Dinner in A Box: In her book *The Year of Cozy: 125 Recipes, Crafts, and Other Homemade Adventures*, Adrianna Adarme offers an idea for starting the holiday season of giving by assembling and presenting a "Dinner in a Box" for the person in your life (or a neighbor) who "never thinks too much of himself or herself."

Suggested items for the box (or basket or crate) include: a baguette, a bottle of red wine or sparkling cider, store-bought dried pasta, a jar of good-quality marinara, a chunk of parmesan cheese, a jar of red pepper flakes, pot of basil, and a card that says: "Happy Holidays!" or "You are special!" Add twine or ribbon around the items for a polished, decorative touch and add a cloth table napkin to line the bin.

Christmas Eve Game Night:

After you're finished eating the traditional family meal or are back from a Christmas Eve service, invite family or friends over for a game of "Tis the Season" Christmas trivia (available on Amazon for \$25). The game will keep you from cramming



in any last-minute, unnecessary shopping. Your grown children and older grandkids will enjoy battling it out in trivia-containing questions from Christmas classics like "It's A Wonderful Life," "Nightmare Before Christmas," "Miracle on 34th Street," and "Home Alone." In addition to movie trivia, questions pertain to Christmas carols, songs and traditions around the world. If it gets late, pause the game, and make a deal to resume after Christmas Day festivities. To some, it may beat watching football!

New Year's Eve Conversation Game: If your friends and loved ones are with you on New Year's Eve—great—you can play a conversation game, available for downloading and printing (www.aliceandlois.com/new-years-game-free-printable/). The game can be played before or after watching the ball drop in Times Square on TV. The game cards ask participants to discuss what they believe to be the best song of the year, favorite movie

of the year, best pop culture moment, most valued piece of advice, etc. It's a fun twist on doing a "year in review."



Backwards Day: Even though Jan. 31 is not typically included in the "holiday season" in the U.S., Backwards Day is considered a national holiday (www.timeanddate.com/holidays/fun/backwards-day). Since it will take place on a Sunday in 2021, invite the kids over for the last day of the weekend to do everything in reverse: wear clothes backwards, eat dinner for breakfast (pizza will be a hit!) and breakfast for dinner, and don't forget to dig into dessert first and salads last for all meals! And for more fun, text them the invite to come over for a quirky holiday observance with the words in the message spelled backwards! For another fun activity, pull out a board game and start at the finish instead of the starting line.

Here's to realizing we all can embrace a "new normal," enjoy the here and now and make the most out of life.

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FRIENDSGIVING OR SOLITARY CELEBRATIONS: MAKING THE MOST OF THE HOLIDAYS

By Kimberly Blaker

The long-held tradition of the family gathered around a table for a savory Thanksgiving feast carries fond memories for most. Yet, many will spend the day without others, either from circumstance or by choice. Whatever the case, there are plenty of ways to enjoy the holiday without family. So whether you go it alone or decide to hold a Friendsgiving, try these ideas to make the most of your holiday.

Independent celebrations: The upside of spending Thanksgiving by yourself is that you can celebrate any way you choose. But be sure to plan ahead so you don't waste it away, unless that's the plan you had in the first place.

One of the benefits of spending the day this way is that you can feast on anything your heart desires. If you like cooking, it's the perfect day to pull out your favorite recipes and treat yourself to a gourmet meal.

If cooking isn't your thing, you can still indulge by eating out. A few restaurants are open on Thanksgiving. Some will even serve a Thanksgiving dinner. Just make your reservation a week or so in advance because even with current circumstances, restaurants book up early for the holiday. There's also takeout. Why not select your favorite restaurant, your best time to enjoy a meal and go online to choose something from their menu? Have it delivered or pick it up if you choose. Enjoy in the tranquility of your day and indulge in a movie that you've been meaning to watch.

Thanksgiving can also be an excellent day for a trip down memory lane. Pour a glass of wine, play some music from your past and flip through photo albums.

Is there a book you've been dying to read? Search it out now, either from the library or Amazon.com and then curl up on the couch and spend the entire day relaxing, reading and indulging in that favorite ice cream that you thought you'd given up.

It's also an opportunity to call family or friends you haven't spoken to in a while. Why not a Zoom meeting to catch up?

If weather permits, get some fresh air and go for a bike ride or a hike.

Maybe you'd really like to do something good for the soul and others. If so, offer to help at the local homeless shelters or soup kitchens. Check for hours and if they're open.

Friendsgiving: Even if you don't have family around for the holiday and you'd rather not spend it alone, why not a day with friends? Odds are you know of a few people, co-workers, neighbors or acquaintances who'll also be spending the day alone. So why not hold a Friendsgiving?

Even if you do spend Thanksgiving with family, Friendsgiving is so popular, many people hold a Friendsgiving on Friday or Saturday after the big day so they too can enjoy the holiday with their pals.

There are lots of ways to do your Friendsgiving, which might depend in part on the size of your guest list. If there are only a couple of you, split the grocery list, then plan to cook together that day. And this year give some thought to partying out of doors or perhaps in the garage, which could be decorated appropriately with a few pumpkins and maybe a bale of hay or two. Dress warmly and even have a space heater or two to warm up the area.

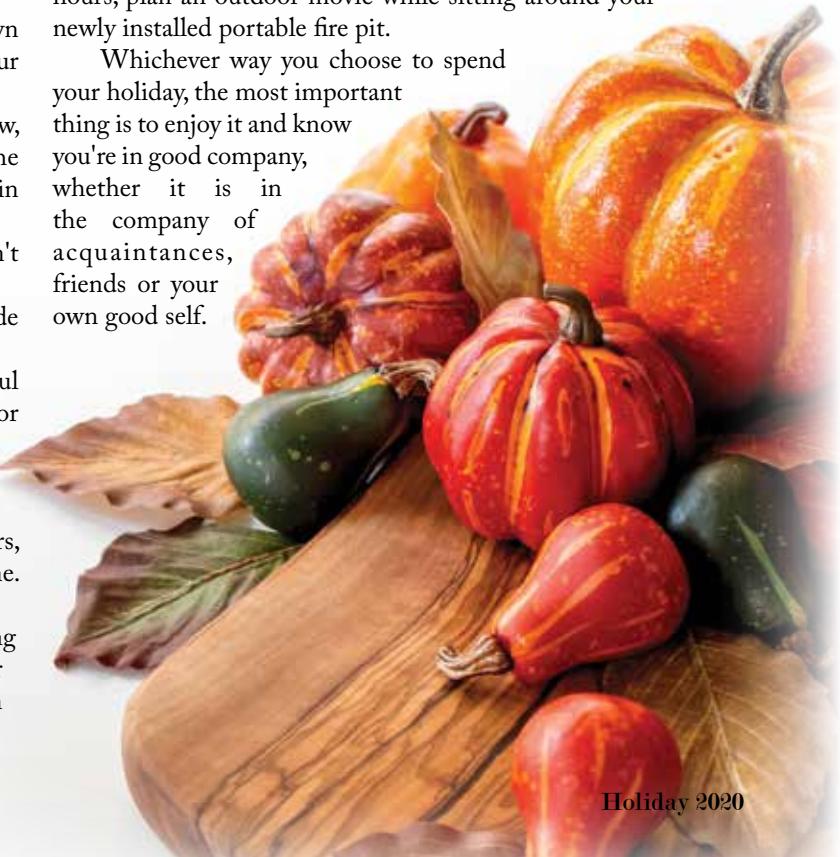
If you'd like to celebrate with several friends, a potluck might be best. Just plan everything ahead so the day will be a success without a ton of work and stress on your part. As the host, you

might offer to do the turkey or main dish yourself. Then each guest could bring a side dish or two. For that matter, guests could bring their own main dishes if that works for you. For beverages, you could offer to supply soda, or they could each bring their own favorite drink.

Additional items you can ask guests to bring if they'd like include tableware, folding chairs and even their own folding TV trays.

In addition to the day's main event – delicious food – you could also plan for some form of entertainment. Put together a variety of music to fit everyone's taste. You could also play corn hole or charades or Trivial Pursuit. If all your guests are football fans, it couldn't get any easier. And then if it's in the evening hours, plan an outdoor movie while sitting around your newly installed portable fire pit.

Whichever way you choose to spend your holiday, the most important thing is to enjoy it and know you're in good company, whether it is in the company of acquaintances, friends or your own good self.



INTANGIBLE HOLIDAY GIFT IDEAS: NOT JUST MORE STUFF

By Kater Leatherman

Would you like to reduce the amount of stress this holiday? If so, one way to do that is to give intangible gifts. Their main appeal is staying power because of the experiences and memories attached to them. Intangible gifts are more practical and less boring than most store-bought stuff, not to mention the amount of waste created by all the wrapping material.

Obviously, the secret to effective gift-giving is tuning in to the other person's interests, i.e., how and where does someone like to spend time or even shop. To begin, gift cards are a real lifesaver. Think services and consumables -- a local coffee shop, bakery, specialty grocery store or tickets to a wine tasting. Services that nurture the body are usually a hit since most people don't take the time or want to spend the money on their well-being.

Young children, fortunately, are fairly easy to impress. Most kids love to go to aquariums, amusement parks or hands-on museums. Give an age-appropriate child a certificate for a manicure and/or pedicure. To make it even more special, treat yourself to one and do it with the recipient. If you have an interesting talent, make something with them; the gift of your time never goes to waste.

Ideas for teens are a bit trickier. Generally, they are more particular about what they want, so you might as well put your cold hard cash into something that allows them the freedom to get what they want, even if it ends up being tangible. A good investment would be to open a college savings plan, something they can't appreciate now, but will down the road.

On a romantic note, plan a surprise weekend getaway with your partner (travel is at the top of most women's gift wish list). Or, take a class to learn something new together. Don't underestimate the value of giving them a handwritten card that includes a list all the things you love, appreciate and admire about them.

Homemade gifts show some serious time, effort and intention. If you are feeling whimsical, create a little homemade coupon book. Ideas might include washing their car, giving them a foot and hand massage or making their favorite meal.

Gifts that keep on giving include fruit-of-the-month clubs or a subscription to Netflix or Apple Music. For the person who wants to get in shape, give a gym membership or, if yoga is in play, a package of classes. Road travelers might really love a membership to AAA. Or, consider Angie's List if you know someone who is renovating their home. Other ideas include a gift certificate to [ancestry.com](#), purchasing steady dividend stocks or having someone's prize possession restored.

As for being on the receiving end of gift-giving? You probably don't want anything that needs to be dusted, fixed, stored or taken care of. So, why not ask for intangible gifts and you will more than likely get something that you love, want or need.

Happy gift-giving!

Kater can be reached at katerleatherman@gmail.com



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Read our article "Digestive Health & Your Teeth" in this edition of OutLook!

You've heard it more than once. The difficulty he's having in finding just the right gift for that special lady in his life. Interestingly, it's usually the other way round. Year after year, most women I know have been stumped in the search for something different and wonderful for their most significant other. Seems men have everything they need and if not, they go out and buy it. It's a dilemma. But now, with the help of other perplexed women, we've come up with a short list of items we think he didn't know he wanted, that he'd enjoy and that he wouldn't typically buy for himself. Here goes:

Fill a basket with special treats from your local food store or find one filled at www.harryanddavid.com/GiftBaskets where goodies might include his secret passion such as peanut butter, wines, cheeses, gourmet coffee or sweets.

Buy a subscription to a magazine featuring his favorite pastime: sailing, skiing, travel, hunting, politics, etc. Log onto www.Magazines.com/ or Amazon.com for lots of ideas.

Consider a key finder or a locator of other lost items including the family dog. Yes, there is such a thing. It attaches to most items that are easily misplaced. Log onto www.theTileApp.com/

He'll love this -- a lap desk that extends over the arms of his favorite chair to hold his laptop, iPad or book, which can be found at [www.Levenger.com/](http://www.Levenger.com)

How about a coffee table book featuring a favorite subject of his such as an historical event, favorite sport, artwork or hobby. Try www.Amazon.com or Barnes&Noble.com for options.

If he enjoys time in the kitchen, how about a coffee grinder, food processor, vegetable chopper or other kitchen toy to assist in his culinary pursuits? They are available at www.Williams-Sonoma.com

Or, take a shot with the many food services that can be subscribed to that will deliver packaged, ready-to-prepare meals. Subscriptions are available weekly or more often. This minimizes trips to the food store as all ingredients are included. For particulars, log onto HomeBistro.com (pricey but good), Veestro.com (vegetarian), MagicKitchen.com (senior focus, special diets) or BistroMD.com (weight loss).

There's always a tuition-paid workshop or camp for adults on sports, academics, music or boat building such as WoodenBoat.com. For the most comprehensive list, log onto www.ShawGuides.com where you'll find more than 6,000 possibilities offered year-round.

And then it's possible to have a different food treat delivered to his door each month featuring such things as coffees, cheeses or a unique gourmet mix. For variety, check out the specialty food

club at StoneWallKitchen.com or for strictly sweets, try www.DavidsCookies.com

How about TV headphones so only he gets to listen to his favorite game or war flick. Type in TV Headphone Reviews to get all the latest reviews to help with your decision.

For the late-night reader, there's always a nook or book light available at www.BarnesandNoble.com or Staples.com

You might try a central place for charging the phone, iPad and computer or other useful electronic wizardry. Check out what's available at Staples.com or houzz.com. There's also a portable charging device that can be brought on your hike or when you're away from your source of power. Check out *Popular Mechanics* article on battery packs.

Just for fun why not an indoor-outdoor thermometer or weather station featured at WeatherShack.com

And last, although not terribly imaginative, there are gift certificates that can be purchased online for shops such as Home Depot, West Marine, or for his favorite at home movies, which can be found on Amazon Prime.

And, by the way, many of these gift ideas also work well for someone who finds it problematic to get about on their own and who would welcome deliveries at their door.

LOOKING FOR THE PERFECT GIFT FOR HIM?

By Mrs. S. Claus



DIGESTIVE HEALTH AND YOUR TEETH

By Wooddell and Passaro Dental Group

Frequent stomach upset can cause a gradual wearing away of the protective enamel on your teeth, a process known as tooth erosion. This can affect the appearance of your teeth and open the door for harmful bacteria that cause cavities.

Your stomach produces natural acids that help your body digest food. Sometimes, these acids travel up the throat and into the mouth, especially after a large meal. Ordinarily, our saliva rebalances the acid levels in our mouth and everything's fine. However, for those who suffer from gastroesophageal reflux, also known as acid reflux or GERD, gastric acids reach the mouth throughout the day. This process is especially damaging when you're asleep, since you are swallowing less often, and your mouth is producing less saliva.

Another concern is the dry mouth caused by many acid reflux medicines. Saliva not only helps neutralize the acids caused by acid reflux, but also helps to wash away food particles and reduce bacteria that attack tooth enamel. This is why lower saliva production may increase your risk for cavities.

Acid reflux can wear away the enamel on the inside surfaces of your teeth, as well as the chewing surfaces. Your dentist may notice this during an exam. Unfortunately, tooth erosion is permanent. If your enamel has started to wear away, you may:

- feel pain or sensitivity when consuming hot, cold or sweet drinks
- notice a yellowish discoloration of the teeth

- find that your fillings have changed
- face greater risks for cavities over time
- develop an abscess or experience tooth loss, in extreme cases

Once erosion occurs, you may need fillings, crowns, a root canal or even tooth removal. Veneers may be an option to restore the look of your smile.

To protect your teeth, try chewing sugar-free gum made with Xylitol to encourage saliva production, which helps neutralize and wash away the acids in your mouth. Also, prescription or over-the-counter fluoride and desensitizing toothpastes may help strengthen tooth enamel. For relief from acid reflux, avoid alcohol and smoking and refrain from eating three hours before bedtime to reduce the frequency of acid reflux episodes.

If heartburn, acid reflux or other stomach problems are part of your daily life, work with your physician on a care plan to treat the underlying causes of your stomach troubles and see your dentist regularly to help make sure your teeth stay healthy. Your dentist can recommend ways to prevent tooth enamel erosion and suggest ways to get relief if you are also suffering from dry mouth.

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HOST AN OUTDOOR GATHERING

By Leah Lancione

Summer has passed, but you can still host a glorious outdoor party! There are plenty of options for a fun gathering in your backyard that don't involve a barbecue. Autumn is a season for celebrating the harvest, vibrant foliage and some would say, sweater weather. This is also the time for pumpkin-spice-flavored everything and football. Whatever you love most about the season, just remember you don't have to wait until Christmas to gather with loved ones to celebrate life's many blessings. Some ideas for hosting an outdoor soiree follow:

HARVEST PARTY

If you have a fire pit and/or a deck with comfy outdoor furniture, great. If not, no worries. You can turn your backyard into a cozy spot for a harvest-themed party with a few simple tricks. This time of year, it's easy to find hay bales for sale at any local farm or garden center. The bales can be used in place of outdoor seating. Just place a nice throw blanket overtop and—voila, relaxed, Fall-chic seating! Add a TV tray or a small table for each person. (If you do have a fire pit, make sure to keep hay bales at a safe distance from the fire.)

HGTV (www.hgtv.com/lifestyle/entertaining/) recommends carrying out an apropos harvest or bonfire theme with fun, casual menu items like a hot apple cider, and maybe a mashup dessert of s'mores brownies (brownies topped with crushed graham crackers, marshmallows and chocolate). Another fun idea is to cut off the top of a small pumpkin, scoop out the guts and add your favorite dip inside. Then, place an assortment of

veggies around the pumpkin for each table.

If you want to have an actual meal, but keep it simple, let each guest cook up a hot dog or brat over the grill or fire pit and add a few easy sides like seasoned sweet potato or French fries. Pigs in a blanket with mini burgers or sliders could be good options as well. If you want the cooking to be done in advance, what about a hearty vegetable stew or chili? Each hay and table setting could have a bowl of chili, a serving spoon, and a variety of toppings like shredded cheese, sour cream, Fritos, jalapenos, green chilis, onions, and cilantro, etc. Add some cornbread and you have invoked a campfire masterpiece! The website Everyday Dishes offers a snazzy idea for a rustic (and sustainable) chili bar with fixings: use washed out aluminum cans (with the labels off) for serving containers! Allow each guest to serve themselves; sides and desserts could already be plated or in baggies instead of the usual buffet-style party.

TAILGATE PARTY FROM YOUR OWN GARAGE OR DRIVEWAY

So, there won't be any fans in the stands this season, but who says you can't throw a proper tailgate party from your own garage or driveway? If you have a large-screen TV that can be set up in your garage, this can be your football viewing hub and station for fun party grub. Fill brown paper lunch bags (rolled down) with popcorn, soft pretzels or chips. If you want nachos and cheese, Amazon sells disposable plastic nacho trays (50 for \$10-15). Another snazzy idea to try from Finding Zest features taco boats that look like footballs. These finger foods are best for tailgating as folks like to watch and eat mindlessly! Amazon also sells oodles of tailgating accessories like football field tableware, blowup ice bucket fields (with touchdown posts and everything), tailgate games, yard signs to stick

Bay Bytes

Why are you standing in line at the post office? Go to www.usps.com to print your own postage that can then be affixed to cards, letters or packages you can leave for your mail carrier or for a special pickup.

Are you alive, or just breathing?

in the lawn and other novelty items to show your team spirit. Maybe even line your driveway with solar torch lights with a colored (gold, purple, or blue) and flickering flame to add to the party atmosphere.

OUTDOOR MOVIE NIGHT

Before the weather becomes too frigid to enjoy being outside, take advantage of clear nights and host a movie night in your backyard. If you want to buy a projector and screen, retailers like Best Buy, Home Depot and Walmart sell them (separate or as a combo) for \$100-\$300-plus, depending on the size. Amazon sells a mini projector and 100-inch screen bundle for \$130.

Then, gather up blankets that work well outdoors and some lawn chairs. Walmart sells outdoor picnic or camping blankets big enough for two adults for under \$20 if you prefer to recline during a movie. Lounge chair cushions work well for added comfort. Amazon does, however, sell inflatable outdoor seating from loungers to hammocks, sofas and hassocks for those who want to go all out!

Dollar stores sell inexpensive popcorn boxes and Amazon carries paper popcorn bags and other snack holders as well as

reusable plastic options for movie-time fun. Add beverages and the movie of your choice and let the camera start rolling!

DIY WREATH-MAKING PARTY

Everything about Autumn is beautiful—the radiant trees, the orange, yellow and red leaves tumbling to the Earth, clear nights for gazing at stars in the “celestial sea” and holidays that embrace togetherness and family. To celebrate this exquisite period of year, invite a few friends or relatives over to make DIY wreaths that pay homage to Autumn. The finished product will not only be something charming to adorn your door, but also a sentimental token of your time shared.

Check out Modern Glam (www.modern-glam.com/fall-hoop-wreath-diy-project/) for a Fall hoop wreath that calls for only a handful of supplies and can be done in four simple steps. Also check out www.TheSpruceCrafts.com for even more ideas.

Whatever you decide to do this Fall with friends or family, just remember that, “Autumn is the year’s last, loveliest smile,” as William Cullen Bryant put it.

GIFTS THAT KEEP ON GIVING

By Kathryn Marchi

It's that time of year. Once again. Time to think of buying Christmas gifts. The question is, what to buy for those who don't need or want a thing? Here are some ideas for gifts that might be appropriate or useful ... since we all still love opening gifts at Christmas!

The idea here is to give something that can be enjoyed and used by the recipient for now, and then perhaps, meaningful enough to be passed down to the younger generation for future Christmas holidays, such as:

- A framed sketch or photo: one artistic gentleman drew a pen-and-ink sketch of his family home and made the frame out of walnut from the tree that grew in the backyard. That's certainly a gift that can be passed down in the family.
- A beloved piece of jewelry maybe even reset, such as a cocktail ring made into a set of earrings.
- Handmade items such as afghans, quilts, rugs, needlepoint or artwork.
- Handcrafted woodcarvings.
- Beloved Christmas ornaments with a brief note telling of the family history behind them.
- Regifting items from one's own home: (My sister and I do this for Christmas, birthdays and anniversaries and there's often a story that accompanies them.) Choosing these gifts can be a lot of fun and are always surprising, plus they don't add any more "tchotchke" to the décor.

- Homemade foods ... jams, jellies, breads, pickles ... whatever your specialty. One lady made her special casserole, froze it and put it in a lovely dish, providing a delicious meal and a container for later use.
- A flower arrangement for the Christmas table, a potted plant or a live wreath for the front door. A friend has a rose bush in her yard that came from a slip off of the bush growing in her great aunt's yard. She gave slips of her bush to relatives who, in turn, were able to successfully propagate them to grow in their own yards.
- Book and magazine subscriptions. Yes, there are still those of us who love to hold our reading in our hands.
- Tickets to the theater, museum or a concert.
- Books on tape for those with poor sight, and for music lovers, DVDs of their favorite artists.
- A gift certificate for a needed service such as house cleaning, yard work, shopping or a restaurant offering.

These are all gifts that can keep on giving in some form or another; They shouldn't burden the recipient with anything unneeded, but most importantly it gives them the thrill of opening a gaily wrapped Christmas gift.



ON COMET! ON CUPID!

By Penelope Folsom

What a romantic vision we have of the white-tailed deer, first cousin of Dasher, Dancer, Prancer and Vixen! It's a bit skewed, as suburbia now views deer as unwelcome visitors. These light-footed, wide-eyed creatures can be seen at all hours of the day or night traipsing through the woods, fields and backyards. The sight of these beautiful animals that have the grace and symmetry of a prima ballerina causes most of us to stop and stare in fascination. What is it that makes us so often speechless at the beauty of what has become an all-too-familiar pest? The *Odocoileus virginianus* tiptoeing through our forests and yards is now a common sight as man's habitat encroaches ever closer on their homes. Once hunted extensively for both food and pelts, deer provided clothing, shelter and food, basics to the survival of America's first inhabitants.

No longer appreciated for sustenance by Native Americans and later settlers, we now find ourselves using unusual methods to keep deer off our properties. Human hair, urine, garlic and bars of soap hanging from the trees are just a few of the methods that are used to discourage their insatiable appetites. The feeding habits of this graceful creature can drive homeowners wild! As voracious herbivores, they have a penchant for the most expensive ornamentals – they consider hostas and day lilies dessert! Having a fondness for saplings and branches and newly emerged shoots, their grazing gives tender young plants little chance to survive and thrive, depleting our forests and tipping the environmental balance. In the past their natural enemies were bears, wolves and humans – the first two rarely seen in the Bay area anymore and the last long ago restricted from much of his hunting instinct.

In the early 20th century there were protective measures to protect the species from extinction. Now with a purported population of upwards of 200,000, white-tailed deer are commonly seen in every corner of Maryland. They have nearly lost their fear of humans, given that their encounters with us increase with their endless grazing.

With a life span of five years or more, very few predators, and with the arrival of twins or often triplets each Spring, their numbers continue to increase. Their fragile appearance is deceptive. Fawns are capable of traveling up to 30 mph within a week of their birth.

Within a year, bucks grow their first set of antlers, which they can effectively use as a defensive weapon. With the ability to jump 10 feet into the air, with the smooth acrobatic style of an Olympian, they are also capable of swimming great distances, allowing them to also populate islands. Larger than the does, bucks can weigh up to 300 pounds with a shoulder height of 3 1/2 feet. Should a pack of dogs or the occasional coyote threaten a deer, they have sharp and powerful hooves that can do much damage. And Bambi, that enduring young fawn beloved by children everywhere, causes numerous traffic accidents. Deer also host the tick responsible for spreading Lyme disease – a difficult-to-diagnose degenerative condition that is increasing at an alarming rate in the Bay area.

So how to control what has become an ever-increasing nuisance? There is no easy answer to managing their burgeoning numbers. Fencing a yard or farmland can be expensive. Inviting hunters on to your property in a congested area is a bit iffy. There are noxious repellents sold at the local farm stores, but their effectiveness lasts only a short time. One of the better plans would be to plant shrubbery that the deer find less than palatable such as holly. There are closely managed deer hunting programs that have been set up in an attempt to control the population, but this hardly makes a dent in their ever-increasing numbers.

The impact of all this on our woodlands, which in turn affects other wildlife that seek food and shelter from the forests, requires us to raise our awareness. Our woodlands are vital and without the regeneration there will be further issues with the already fragile ecological balance. Keeping in mind that it is we who have imposed upon them and are now occupying what was exclusively their territory, humane methods of control should be developed. Those could include a change in our hunting policies, better land management or development of an anti-fertility agent, such as the one introduced on Assateague Island to control the wild horse population. The hope is that with the burgeoning population, someday we will get back to living in harmony with not only this creature but all of nature and all the beauty and mystery that they provide.

Reprinted from the original that appeared in the Holiday 2017 edition.

The choices you make today will determine where you are a year from now.

CLASSIC CHRISTMAS MOVIES

By Nancy J. Schaaf

For many of us, celebrating the Christmas holiday includes eating dinner with family and friends, exchanging gifts and watching a favorite classic Christmas movie. Hollywood has produced many memorable films with heartwarming holiday themes that can be viewed year after year.

Here is a list of classic holiday movies that you might enjoy:

A Christmas Carol (1951)

Based on Charles Dickens' novella, "A Christmas Carol," is on everyone's list of holiday movies. You remember the theme: A stingy Ebenezer Scrooge wanders through his life as a cruel miser until one fateful Christmas Eve when he is visited by three ghosts who guide his transformation.

The spirits show Scrooge how he had become a cold-hearted old man. Using events from his past, present and expected future, the apparitions try their best to melt his hardened soul.

This beloved tale has been adapted to theater, opera, film, radio and television. However, the 1951 movie version starring Alastair Sim is considered one of the best. Who doesn't want to believe that the holiday spirit can melt the coldest heart?

While you might enjoy the classic movie version, if you wish to share this story with kids, consider "The Muppets Christmas Carol," a classic starring Kermit as Bob Cratchit with Miss Piggy as his wife, with Michael Caine as the crusty Ebenezer Scrooge.

An animated version of Dickens' classic, *Mickey's Christmas Carol*, stars Mickey Mouse as Bob Cratchit.

It's A Wonderful Life (1946)

Directed by Frank Capra, *It's a Wonderful Life* starred Jimmy Stewart and Donna Reed. The film tells of one man's struggles during the holidays. He has suffered losses in his business, is involved in a bankruptcy scandal and is wanted by police for embezzlement. Overwhelmed by all these failures in his life, George decides to commit suicide. However, the prayers of his family and friends reach heaven and God sends the Angel Clarence to save him.

Through a series of flashbacks, Clarence shows George all the good that he has done. George realizes that even though life is full of problems, it is still worth living. The film ends with a touching scene when George's daughter hears the bell on their Christmas tree ring and remarks, "Teacher says, every time a bell rings, some angel gets his wings." After 200 years, Clarence finally is granted his wings by saving George. This heartwarming story, winner of five Oscars, is regarded as one of the best holiday movies of all time.

A Christmas Story (1983)

This is a classic comedy that should be shared with family and friends. The film, narrated by nine-year-old Ralphie, who

only wants a Red Ryder carbine-action, 200-shot range model BB rifle with a compass in the stock, for Christmas. His mother, his teacher and even the department store Santa all say, "No, you'll shoot your eye out."

However, Ralphie's dad (Darren McGavin), surprises him by giving him his BB gun for Christmas. Ralphie runs outside to try his gun. However, a BB ricochets off his glasses, nearly shooting his eye out. This movie has many hilarious scenes and both children and adults will enjoy.

How The Grinch Stole Christmas (2000 animated version)

This Dr. Seuss tale is based on the children's picture book. Viewing this seasonal favorite is essential to understand Christmas as a celebration of love and joy.

The Grinch, an unpleasant and revengeful creature, is green with envy of the happiness enjoyed by the Whos down in Whoville. The Grinch decides to prevent the Christmas season by stealing all the Whos' presents and decorations. However, he sees that although he has stolen everything that the Whos had accumulated for Christmas, the holiday celebrations survive. The Grinch realizes that the holiday is more than gifts, so he returns all the gifts and decorations. The Whos then warmly welcome the Grinch into their community.

Another movie based on this book was released in 2002, entitled "The Grinch," which starred Jim Carrey who feels shunned by the people of Whoville and sets out to destroy Christmas. This heartwarming family movie has a wonderful message for both kids and grown-ups.

A Charlie Brown Christmas (1965)

This perennial family favorite addresses the material and spiritual aspects of the holiday season. The storyline follows the ups and downs of Charlie Brown who is depressed by the commercialism of Christmas. While directing the neighborhood play, Linus tells Charlie Brown about the true meaning of Christmas, which lifts his spirits.

The Santa Clause (1994)

This family comedy stars Tim Allen as Scott Calvin, a divorced toy company executive who through a bizarre twist of fate takes over Santa's deliveries on Christmas Eve after Santa takes a fatal fall off his roof! Calvin thinks his service as Santa is over after just one night, but learns that he must become the new Santa. This creates major problems for Calvin. This movie is truly a holiday classic which invokes the festive spirit.

Watching classic Christmas movies that have enriched our lives with treasured memories has long been a part of most of our traditions. Maybe this is the year to get back to enjoying these treasures.

O TANNENBAUM

By Neil Moran

If you're a little leery about joining the crowds for Christmas tree lighting and the revelry in the Bay area this year, you can still create your own holiday cheer and memories right at home. In fact, if "putting up the tree" has gotten to be a rather tired routine, why not make it really special this year by placing more emphasis on this time-honored tradition. Indeed, this may be a good year to invoke the Christmas traditions of the past that bring us comfort and joy.

The Christmas tree tradition got its start with an appreciation of evergreens. Plants that stayed green all year were revered by ancient people. Before Christianity, many of the ancients believed the sun was a god and that during the Winter months the god became weak. During the Winter solstice, which marked the beginning of longer days, they held celebrations because it meant that the sun god would start to get well again. During these celebrations the people would decorate their homes with greenery -- pine, cedar, spruce and fir -- believing it would ward off evil spirits, witches, ghosts and illness.

It is widely agreed that Germany started the actual tradition of bringing a Christmas tree into the home and decorating it. In the 16th century devout Christians built wood pyramids and decorated them with evergreen boughs and candles. Legend also has it that Martin Luther, the 16th-century Protestant reformer, was the first to light an actual evergreen tree with candles. He is said to have been out walking one Winter evening, when he was awestruck by the twinkling stars above and wanted to recreate the scene for his family, so he brought an evergreen tree into his home and fashioned it with a string of candles.

To the New England Puritans, Christmas trees, and other forms of celebration of the Christian holiday, were scorned upon as mockery. William Bradford, the pilgrims' second governor, wrote that he tried hard to stamp out "pagan mockery" of the Christmas holiday and scorned the "heathen traditions" of Christmas carols and decorated trees. In today's parlance, he was kind of a "Debbie Downer" of the time.

Fortunately, the German settlers who were arriving from abroad brought the Christmas tree tradition with them and had community trees as early as 1747, though they were still not widely accepted in American homes at this time.

It wouldn't be until 1846 when the British royals, Queen Victoria and her German Prince Albert, were seen (in illustrations) standing in front of a fully decorated Christmas tree with their children, that the tradition would be born in America. Apparently, what was good for the queen was good for Americans, and Christmas trees started popping up everywhere.

In the cartoon Christmas classic *A Charlie Brown Christmas*,

Lucy sends Charlie Brown and Linus to get a Christmas tree for their play, instructing the pair to get a "great big, shiny aluminum tree ... maybe painted pink." Most people

know the rest of the story. They bring home a real tree that needs more than a little TLC.

The first artificial trees weren't aluminum (or shiny pink), but rather polyvinyl. In 1964 polyvinyl trees made up roughly 35% of the \$155 million Christmas tree business in the U.S. These numbers would go up significantly in the decades that followed. According to a Nielsen survey, in 2018 82% of households decorated for the holidays with artificial trees and only 18% were real.

There are many reasons for the proliferation of artificial trees, including the perception that they're better for the environment, given the impact on the climate of harvesting and transporting trees. Also, climate change has made trees more difficult to grow, to say nothing about shortages of farmers to grow them as they retire and no one replaces them.

Yet the National Christmas Tree Association has appealed to the public to reconsider a real tree. By buying a real tree consumers support local economies. Also, many farmers say that for every tree that is harvested they plant three more, which helps the environment. And alas, a real tree brings the aroma of the outdoors inside your home, and who knows, live evergreens may

Look for opportunities when there is change.

ward off evil spirits as we usher out the year 2020, a trying one at best.

Whether you're going real or fake, you want to make sure you don't end up with a Charlie Brown-type of tree, so here are a few tips for when you go shopping for the real thing.

Perhaps putting up a live Christmas tree is just what the doctor ordered for you and your family this year. It can provide an outing to a tree farm or local nursery with the kids or grandkids to pick out that special tree. It's a chance to bring back a tradition and support local businesses in need of a boost this year. Here are suggestions to make such an endeavor go smoothly.

1. Size up the area in your home where you want to put the tree. Be sure that there is enough ceiling space for the tree and the angel up top as well as enough space around the perimeter for presents and such.
2. Locate the tree near enough to outlets but away from heat sources, which would cause the tree to dry out more quickly.
3. Measure from the floor to ceiling. Trees often look shorter outside than in so take along a measuring tape so you can measure the tree before purchasing it.
4. Don't bring the tree into the home too early (three weeks before Christmas max) where it can dry out before Christmas. Keep the tree stand filled with water so the tree doesn't dry out as fast.

Many folks don't want the mess that comes along with a real tree. And indeed, no matter what you do there will be a shedding of needles. Also, some people are allergic to fresh evergreens. An artificial tree may be a better choice. Your options:

1. As with a real tree, you need to size up the area where you want to put an artificial tree. A little preplanning will go a long way.
2. Choose between trees that are pre-lit or can be custom decorated. A pre-lit tree is ultimately less hassle, but more expensive and you can't change the color of the lights from year to year.
3. Hinged or unhinged? We're not talking about a state of mind. When buying an artificial tree, you have the option of buying one with the branches that are hinged, which makes it easier to set up, or unhinged whereas you have to hook the branches into the "trunk" of the tree. The latter option is the least expensive.
4. Tinsel and feather trees are another option. They don't resemble evergreens, but rather fill a different decorating need. They come in white, silver and gold - and who knows, maybe even pink!

Once you have your tree installed in your home you can let your imagination run amuck and decorate the tree any way that you choose. Get creative and acquire natural decorations for your

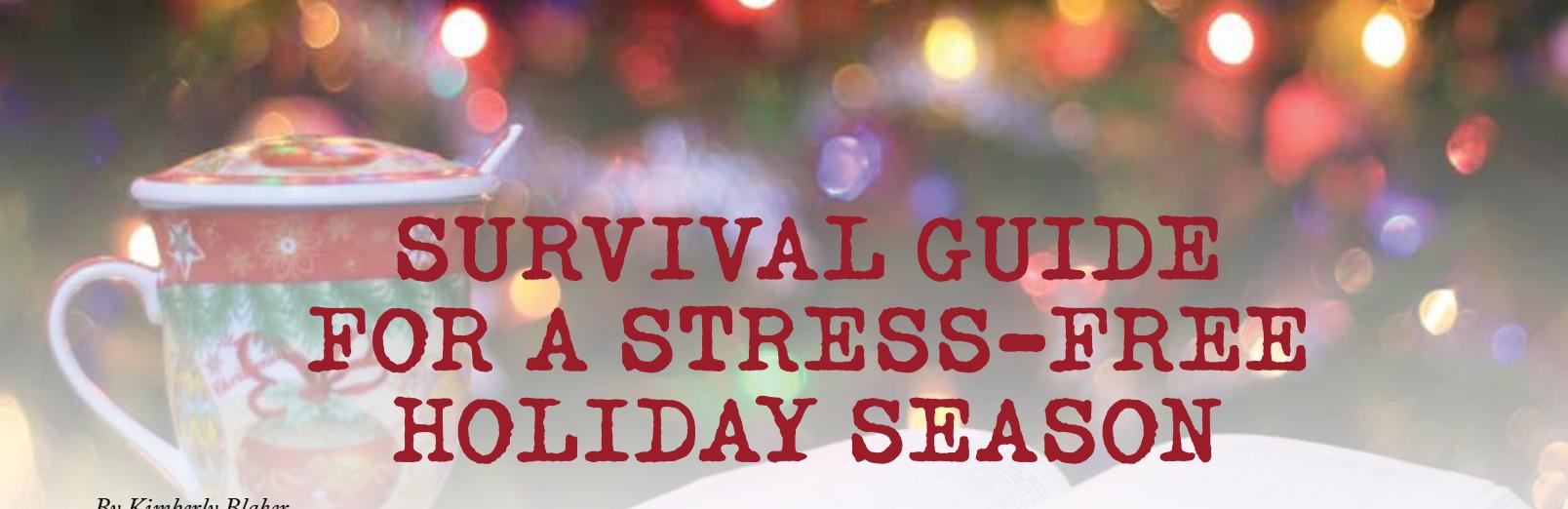
real tree, which could include acorns, pinecones, berries and even a string of popcorn. Start a new tradition of hanging ornaments picked out or made by the kids and grandkids that can be put on the tree from year to year and passed on to the next generation. Sit down with the kids and make cut-out ornaments that are truly unique and send a message of love and holiday cheer.

So why not put on your favorite Christmas music and decorate a tree or at least hang some boughs over the door to ward off the evil spirits! Gather together with friends and family and above all, enjoy the holiday to the fullest with the ones you love.

CHRISTMAS TREE TRIVIA

1. The tallest living Christmas tree is believed to be the 122-foot, 91-year-old Douglas fir in the town of Woodinville, Wash.
2. In 1923, President Calvin Coolidge started the National Christmas Tree lighting ceremony now held every year on the White House lawn.
3. In 1979, the National Christmas Tree was not lighted except for the top ornament. This was done in honor of the American hostages in Iran.
4. Between 1887 and 1933 a fishing schooner called the Christmas Ship would tie up at the Clark Street Bridge and sell spruce trees from Michigan to Chicagoans.
5. Christmas trees have been sold commercially in the United States since about 1850.
6. It takes a tree an average of seven to 10 years to mature to the popular height of 6 feet.
7. Tinsel, first made in Germany in the 1600s, was originally created from silver. Because it tarnished easily, lead was added to the mix. Later, when lead toxicity became known, plastic tinsel was introduced.
8. Thomas Edison's assistant, Edward Johnson, came up with the idea of electric lights for Christmas trees in 1882, just three years after Edison perfected the light bulb. Johnson's lights replaced the hazardous candles that had typically been used.
9. In the first week, a fresh tree in your home will consume as much as a quart of water per day.
10. Early European trees were decorated with lit candles, apples, nuts and homemade cookies. Early Americans used paper, fabric and tin for decorations.
11. According to the Maryland Department of Agriculture, when you buy a tree directly from a farmer, that dollar will circulate through the local economy four times, which strengthens our communities. A real Christmas tree is biodegradable, which means it can be easily recycled for mulch and other purposes such as preventing soil erosion.

Neil is a horticulturist and garden writer. Visit his blog at <http://NorthCountryGardening.blogspot.com>.



SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR A STRESS-FREE HOLIDAY SEASON

By Kimberly Blaker

Do you dread the hustle and bustle of another holiday season? Between shopping, wrapping, baking, holiday cards, parties and many other obligations and tasks, surviving the season can be a feat. Did I mention finding the time to enjoy the holidays with your family? This year, why not make a pact to eliminate stress by following these tips?

Early planning: First, close your eyes and think back to the last couple of years and how hectic and stressful they felt. What percentage of holiday activities and tasks would you need to eliminate to make the season truly enjoyable? During this process, don't think about what you can't remove. Just determine the percentage of reduction you need to make.

Next, make a list of everything you need to do during the holiday season, meaning which invitations you'll respond to and how much money you'll need to spend. And this year it may be a bit different, but cross off the least important, least necessary and least popular events and tasks. Then review the list and calculate how much time and expense you've shaved off. If you haven't reached your predetermined reduction, go through your list again.

Once you've decided which events you'll attend and the commitments you'll make, plan how you'll say no to all the others, so you're not caught off guard.

Share in the preparation: Enlist your family to help prepare for the holidays and divvy up the tasks. Don't expect perfection from yourself or your family. Remember, you probably don't notice or mind the imperfections in others' holiday gatherings. They're just as unlikely to see any in yours.

Holiday time- and energy-savers: Save time in gift wrapping by setting up a station in a spare room or the basement. Or stock a large box or basket with wrapping paper, ribbon, bows, tags, tape, scissors and pens, so everything is stored in one place. Have extras of everything on hand.

Keep cleaning to a minimum during the holidays. Dismiss unused areas that guests won't see or use, and clean only the obvious in rooms that will be seen. The barely visible layer of dust on your baseboards is unlikely to be noticed with all the holiday decorations and festivities.

Make everyday meals quick and easy throughout the season. Soups, sandwiches, fresh fruit and vegetables, cottage cheese, pre-cut veggies and dip, and other prepared or semi-prepared healthy foods will suffice for one month of the year.

Do your holiday shopping early. Maybe this year most of it

can be online and by catalog.

Give gift cards. Hard-to-shop-for recipients will appreciate something practical. Gift cards to restaurants, department stores, sporting goods outlets, specialty shops or a massage, pedicure or round of golf make great gifts.

Don't overdo the baking. If you are entertaining guests this year, they will likely have had their fill of holiday treats long before your gathering. Also, the caring gesture of visiting or calling friends and neighbors, rather than delivering a plate of baked goodies, will be more enjoyable and meaningful for everyone.

Money saver: Does your gift list grow each year? Decide with whom it's essential to exchange gifts. Then talk to extended family, friends, coworkers and others about forgoing gift exchanges, putting a cap on the price or drawing instead. You'll likely learn many feel the same as you do.

Holidays with children: Allow kids to spend the day at home after opening their gifts. It's hardly fair and often stressful for kids to leave their gifts behind that they've waited so patiently to open. In turn, this causes stress for parents. Traveling and holiday visiting can also stressful for young children who are bothered by changes in their routines and unfamiliar faces.

Care for yourself: Enjoy holiday treats in moderation. High fat and sugary foods and the lack of healthy meals can lead to tiredness and stress. Keep goodies stored in the freezer where they'll be less tempting. Have plenty of convenient, healthy snacks such as raw vegetables and nuts on hand. Prepare low-fat meals that won't bog you down.

Finally, give yourself a break. Get plenty of exercise such as a brisk walk in the fresh air, and set aside time for relaxation, like a long bubble bath.

Things to do for next year: Start your shopping early. Keep it fun and choose a different town or shopping center for each trip, focusing on unique malls or trendy cities.

Also, get a label-printing software program or app early in the year and enter all of the addresses on your holiday card list. When the holidays roll around, you can print the labels and eliminate the most time-consuming aspect of sending out holiday greetings.

And finally, remember the holiday season should be a joyful time for everyone, including you, so join in the good cheer with family and friends.

LYING IN STATE

By Ryan Helfenbein

In 1852, after the passing of Kentucky Sen. Henry Clay, our nation witnessed what has become the most honorable method to pay tribute to a distinguished citizen of our country: lying in state at our U.S. Capitol. We witnessed an historic occasion recently when Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg became the first woman to lie in state, to rest on the Lincoln catafalque and to receive a personalized tribute during such an event. With everything being witnessed today live on TV, images on Google News and replays on YouTube, many questions come to mind. How does one qualify for this honorable tribute? Does everyone attending in this setting need to be overly formal or can a personal touch be added? Finally, what is a catafalque? Let's explore these together ...

Since Clay's time, the honor of lying in state has been extended to 33 others including 12 presidents and four unknown soldiers. This was then modified in 1998 with the introduction of lying in honor after two Capitol Police officers were killed in the line of duty. Congress granted the use of the rotunda to the families of these officers and hence began the offering of public viewings in the U.S. Capitol to private citizens. Rosa Parks, by the way, was the first woman to lie in honor at the Capitol in 2005.

No law, written rule or regulation specifies who may lie in state or honor. Both privileges are ultimately authorized by congressional resolution or approved by congressional leadership, after survivors grant permission. These honorable visitations allow the public to pay tribute in person. Over the centuries we've witnessed open caskets, such as President Abraham Lincoln's, to closed caskets draped in US flags, such as President Kennedy. Two specific locations of the Capitol have become the center points for this honor, the Capitol Rotunda and the National Statuary Hall. Both options have been used for those who lie in state or honor.

It has been tradition, however, that only presidents, military commanders, justices of the Supreme Court and members of Congress are granted the privilege of lying in state, where private citizens may lie in honor. Included in the tradition of lying in state we witness five guards of honor, representing the five branches

of the U.S. Armed Forces, standing at attention surrounding the casket. Four Capitol Police officers stand guard over those who lie in honor. Overall, 34 Americans have lain in state and four have lain in honor.

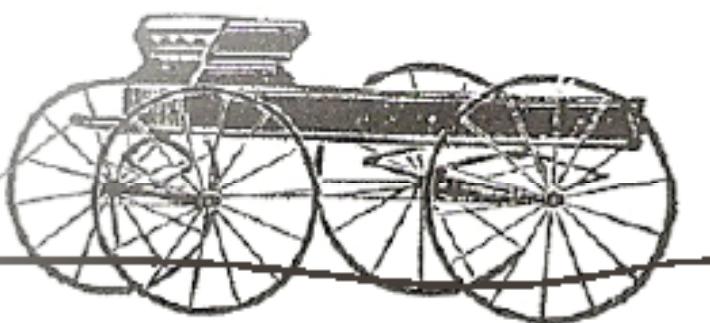
A tradition that has been set forth since the assassination of President Lincoln, the first president to lie in state, is the use of the black-clothed casket carriage called Lincoln's catafalque. This catafalque is used for those who lie in state, whereas a traditional bier (casket carriage) is used to support those who lie in honor. Lincoln's catafalque is a simply made base of rough pine boards nailed together and covered in black cloth. Since President Lincoln, the catafalque has borne the caskets of just 32 others. Although it has been slightly modified to accommodate modern day caskets, and the black cloth has been replaced several times, overall it remains much the same as it was in Lincoln's time. The only time in history that two

catafalques held caskets lying in state at the same time was in 1958. When Lincoln's catafalque and a matching one was made to bear that of the unknown soldiers of World War II and the Korean War as they rested in the Capitol Rotunda.

Over the years while witnessing these distinguished citizens lying in state and honor, we have rarely witnessed a personalized touch like we might in a traditional funeral setting for a neighbor, friend or family member. While this tribute to an honorable life lived should be conducted with respect and not include, for example, a second-rate marching band through the rotunda, a small personal touch would be very powerful for those who mourn. It would show the uniqueness of the individual and an insight into how they lived their life.

Ryan, who is owner, supervising mortician and preplanning counselor at Lasting Tributes on Bestgate Road in Annapolis, offers area residents solutions to high-cost funerals. He can be reached at 410.897.4852 or Ryan@LastingTributesFuneralCare.com

**... five guards of
honor, representing
the five branches
of the U.S. Armed
Forces, stand at
attention ...**



12 POWERHOUSE VEGGIES FOR YOUR DIET

By Kimberly Blaker

We all know how vital veggies are to our health, whether we like them or not. But not all vegetables are created equal. Each one has a unique combination of nutrients and benefits. Some, in particular though, are a powerhouse source of nutrition.

If you're not a vegetable fan, that's all the more reason to try a wider variety. There're bound to be a couple of veggies you'll be pleased with if they're prepared just right for you. If those vegetables happen to be some of these all-stars, it's all the better.

BUTTERNUT SQUASH. This Winter squash is loaded with vitamin A, in fact, four times the recommended daily allowance (RDA). It also contains double the RDA of vitamin C and packs more potassium than a banana.

To become a butternut squash fan, first cut it in half, and remove all the seeds. Fill a glass baking dish about 3/4" high with water, place the two halves with the skin facing up, and bake at 400 degrees for one hour. Allow the squash to cool enough to handle, then scoop all the squash out of the peel, and top it with butter. If that doesn't satisfy, try adding a touch of brown sugar.

KALE. This dark green leaf vegetable packs a whopping 684% of the RDA of vitamin K, and well over the RDA of both vitamins A and B6.

If you like salad, add a mix of kale to the lettuce. If you're not a salad eater, kale makes a great addition to smoothies with little change in flavor.

SWEET POTATOES. Vitamins A, B5 and B6, riboflavin, thiamin, niacin and carotenoids are their nutritional makeup. The good news is, Thanksgiving isn't the only time of year you can eat them. Sweet potatoes make yummy French fries, which can even

be baked rather than fried. Check out any of the oodles of baked sweet potato fry recipes out there.

PEAS. These contain a long list of nutrients. Of particular note, peas are very high in vitamins B1, C and K, manganese, copper, phosphorus and folate. Fortunately, peas are one vegetable most kids and adults will eat -- frozen being far preferable to canned. Add them to a variety of soups, stews and casseroles. Another tasty option is to add them to macaroni and cheese.

BELL PEPPERS. Red, orange, yellow or green bell peppers are nutritious regardless of the color. All are high in vitamin C, with red bell peppers containing 169% of the RDA. Also, bell peppers are high in vitamin A and carry a good dose of other nutrients as well.

Do you live by the motto, "everything tastes better with ranch?" If so, try bell pepper slices for dipping. Bell peppers are also great on pizza and sauteed to top hot sandwiches.

BRUSSELS SPROUTS. This veggie is noted for its Vitamins K and C. But they also provide numerous other nutrients in decent amounts as well. Still, you may be wondering how to acquire a taste for Brussels sprouts. If you're not a big vegetable eater, it may be a challenge. But try what one mom, Monica Kass Rogers, did as she revealed in, "How I Got My Kid to Eat Brussels Sprouts." Cut them in half, then stir-fry them in sesame oil with other vegetables. Another trick she recommends is to roast them with olive oil and salt. If kids can learn to love them, so can you.

ASPARAGUS. Folic acid is what asparagus is especially noted for because it contains 60% of the RDA. But asparagus

Risks often lead to achievement.

also includes a healthy amount of vitamins K and C, as well as several other essential nutrients. Grilled asparagus is a tasty side. Before grilling, brush the asparagus lightly with olive oil then add salt and pepper. Place the spears on the grill for 10 minutes, turn them, then give them a few more minutes until they're lightly blackened. Delicious.

SPINACH. Now here's an impressive number. Spinach contains 987% of the RDA of vitamin K. Spinach is also an excellent source of vitamin A, manganese, folate, magnesium, iron, copper and several other nutrients. It can be added to both smoothies and pizza. Spinach quiche and spinach pie are also dishes many people love.

BROCCOLI. Here's another vegetable that's a rich source of vitamin K, packing 245% of the RDA. Broccoli also exceeds the RDA for vitamin C and is an excellent source of chromium, folate and fiber. Try mixing broccoli into most any cheesy dish, and it's easy to gobble up. Broccoli cheese soup, broccoli smothered in cheese and other cheesy pasta dishes are good options.

AVOCADO. Although not a powerhouse of any particular vitamin or mineral, avocados still carry an adequate amount. But particularly notable is that avocado is an excellent source of

polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fat, which are the healthy fats. Guacamole is an all-time favorite, but avocados are also yummy mixed with egg salad or a tossed salad.

PUMPKIN (CANNED). This is an outstanding source of vitamin A, containing 2 1/2 times the RDA, not to mention a fair amount of a host of other vitamins and minerals. It can be added to soup, smoothies and even pancakes. Numerous desserts and treats can also be made from pumpkin, such as pumpkin pie, bread, cookies and muffins. So the next time you're in the mood to bake, make something with a little added nutritional value.

SCALLIONS. Also known as Spring onions, these pack 172% of the RDA of vitamin K. They're also known for their antioxidants and are a good source of vitamin A. They can be grilled just like asparagus. Brush them with oil, add salt and pepper, then toss them on the grill until they're lightly browned. If that doesn't work for you, try wrapping them in bacon.

Try some or all of these mega-healthy veggies. Cook them up your own way or check out any of the many delicious recipes featured on such sites as **Cooks.com**. With hundreds of different and delicious ways to prepare and serve them, they could become one of your new favorites.



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ALZHEIMER'S AWARENESS MONTH

By Nancy J. Schaaf

In 1906, German physician Dr. Alois Alzheimer first described "a peculiar disease" characterized by profound memory loss and brain changes which we now know as Alzheimer's. November is designated as National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month, the goal being to inform people about the disease and its prevalence among Americans. During this month, the Alzheimer's Association along with local organizations educate people about the symptoms, treatments and coping mechanisms for both patients and caregivers.

Alzheimer's, the most common form of dementia comprising 60% to 80% of all dementia diagnoses, is a progressive condition that worsens over time. There is no cure and no proven way to stop the disease.

In its annual report, the Alzheimer's Association says that more than 5 million Americans age 65 and older are living with Alzheimer's and that number is growing fast. It is projected that by 2050, the number of people in this age group with this disease will reach 13.8 million unless medical breakthroughs to prevent, slow or cure Alzheimer's are developed. It is the sixth-leading cause of death among that age group and is a leading cause of disability and poor health. People age 65 and older generally survive an average of 4 to 8 years after a diagnosis of Alzheimer's dementia. Alzheimer's is not confined to the elderly. Approximately 200,000 Americans under the age of 65 have early-onset Alzheimer's disease and may live for 20 years or more, which indicates the slow, uncertain progression of the disease.

Alzheimer's affects memory, thinking and behavior. Symptoms ultimately escalate to interfere with daily tasks.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, the most common early symptom is difficulty remembering newly learned information. As Alzheimer's advances, it leads to increasingly severe symptoms including "disorientation, mood and behavior changes; deepening confusion about events, time and place, more serious memory loss and behavior changes; and difficulty speaking, swallowing and walking."

The Alzheimer's Association provides these symptoms of the disease. If you are concerned that you or someone you know is displaying any of these signs listed, visit a doctor for a full medical evaluation. Early diagnosis offers you a chance to plan, access support services and explore medications that may help:

MEMORY LOSS THAT DISRUPTS DAILY LIFE. One of the most common signs of Alzheimer's disease, especially in the early stage, is forgetting recently learned information. Other memory-related causes include forgetting important dates or events, asking the same question over and over again or increasingly needing to rely on memory aids, e.g., reminder notes or electronic devices or family members.

CHALLENGES IN PLANNING OR SOLVING PROBLEMS. Some people living with dementia may experience changes in their ability to develop and follow a plan or work with numbers. They may have trouble following a familiar recipe or keeping track of monthly bills. They may have difficulty concentrating and take much longer to do things than they did before.

CONFUSION WITH TIME OR PLACE. People living with Alzheimer's can lose track of dates, seasons and the passage of time. They may have trouble understanding something if it is not happening immediately. Sometimes they may forget where they are or how they got there.

MISPLACING THINGS AND LOSING THE ABILITY TO RETRACE STEPS. A person living with Alzheimer's may put things in unusual places. They may lose things and be unable to go back over their steps to find them again. He or she may accuse others of stealing, especially as the disease progresses.

CHANGES IN MOOD AND PERSONALITY. Individuals living with Alzheimer's may experience mood and personality changes. They may be easily upset at home, at work, with friends or when out of their comfort zone.

Researchers have identified two abnormal structures called plaques and tangles, which are considered to be prime suspects in damaging and killing nerve cells. Plaques are comprised of the protein beta-amyloid that fill in the spaces between nerve cells. Tangles refer to twisted fibers of another protein called tau that forms in the cell.

Scientists do not know exactly how plaques and tangles affect the brain, but most believe they are critical in blocking communication among nerve cells and disrupt processes that cells need to survive. The destruction and death of nerve cells causes memory failure, personality changes, problems carrying out daily activities and other symptoms.

Despite no apparent cure on the horizon, treatments for symptoms are available. Although these treatments cannot stop this disease from progressing, there are some medications that can temporarily slow the worsening of symptoms and improve quality of life for those with Alzheimer's.

Today, research continues to find better ways to treat the disease, delay its onset and prevent it from developing. November is an appropriate time to review the signs of Alzheimer's disease and join in the fight against it.



THE PERFECT PET

By Sharon Schultz

So you want a pet of your own, but you can't have one. Perhaps you live in a building that doesn't allow pets. Maybe you or someone in your family has allergies. Fish come in a rainbow of colors, but you can't pick up a fish and play with it.

What would you think of an inexpensive pet that brings his own house, eats very little, never makes a mess and can be left alone for days? What is this perfect pet? Hermit crabs, like the kind you buy your grandkids as a souvenir from a beach trip.

Hermit crabs are growing in popularity as more people experience the joy of owning these unusual companions. There are many species of hermit crabs. The kind found in most shops is red and purple in color and called a land hermit crab. These crabs prefer to live in colonies in the wooded areas along the tropical shorelines of the Florida Keys and the Caribbean Islands.

Hermit crabs are born in the ocean, but they live on land. They swim ashore and "adopt" empty snail shells to live in to protect their soft-shelled bodies from predators. Female hermit crabs return to the ocean each year to lay their eggs.

Hermit crabs have 10 legs. The first pair of legs is different from each other. The leg on the left is a large, purple pincher that looks like a tiny lobster claw. It's used for climbing. The smaller right claw is used for feeding.

The second and third pairs of legs are for walking. The fourth and fifth pairs are rarely seen outside of the shell. The hermit crab uses these legs to hold his body securely inside the shell and to balance it as he waddles about.

Perhaps the strangest feature of hermit crabs are the eyes found at the ends of two stalks that stick out of the top of the head like alien antennas. Because their eyes extend out from their bodies, hermit crabs can see extremely well.

The best place to keep your hermit crab is in a glass aquarium with a top so you have a clear view and they can't escape. Fill the bottom of your aquarium with enough sand

so that it is deep enough for the hermit crabs to burrow in.

Keep fresh water in a shallow dish in your aquarium. Clam and oyster shells found on the beach make excellent water and food dishes for hermit crabs.

Hermit crabs need moisture to live and thrive in a tropical humidity. Mist your aquarium with fresh water every day and watch your pets perk up and become active.

Did you know that hermit crabs are accomplished climbers? Place a piece of driftwood, choya wood or coral in their habitat. Your pets will amaze you as they show off their skills climbing sideways and even upside down!

Land hermit crabs grow by shedding their outer shell and growing a new one.

During this process, they burrow down into the sand and remain hidden until their new skin has time to harden into a soft-shell, a process that usually takes about 10 days. As hermit crabs grow, they need larger shells. Keep several different-sized shells in your aquarium. Your crabs may try out several new homes until they find the right one.

There is one important rule to remember when selecting hermit crabs, whether from a pet shop or a gift shop. Hermit crabs are usually displayed in large wire cages. Some crabs will congregate on the floor of the cage, while others cling to the wire mesh sides. These are the crabs to take home -- the ones that need to be pried off the wire mesh. They are active and healthy enough to hang on for dear life!

When you handle your hermit crab watch out for the purple pincher. Since they use their large claw for climbing, they can sometimes pinch a little if they accidentally grab your finger while trying to hold on.

The main staple of a hermit crab's diet is cornmeal, but they also enjoy bits of lettuce, fruit and bologna.

These nocturnal animals tend to feast at night. Popcorn placed in a seashell will be scattered in the sand by morning. Shops where hermit crabs are sold carry commercially packaged hermit crab food and treats which are convenient but not nearly as interesting.

Hermit crabs are funny little creatures that are easy to care for, fascinating to watch, and they don't push back -- the perfect pet!

Sharon is a writer/photographer and a proud Bay boomer from Anne Arundel County and can be contacted at spcs924@hotmail.com

THE PERFECT PET BRINGS ITS OWN HOUSE AND REQUIRES LITTLE MAINTENANCE.

Bay Bytes

While enjoying all those tasty holiday treats, take a moment to interpret how many teaspoons of sweetener they contain. There are currently more than 50 names for sweeteners. Remember four grams equals approximately 1 teaspoon of sugar.

Bay Bytes

If you would enjoy raising a puppy to be a companion to a member of the military or a veteran, log onto either website for details. <https://warriorcanineconnection.org/get-involved/volunteer/> or www.hero-dogs.org/volunteer/



GIFTS THAT KEEP ON GIVING: SUBSCRIPTION BOXES

By Victoria Duncan

Who doesn't like receiving a present in the mail each month? And in this season when you are concerned about the health risk of shopping in crowded brick-and-mortar-stores, a monthly subscription service may be just what you've been looking for.

No doubt you're probably acquainted with the services in which you can send, for example, a wine of the month, to your favorite imbibers. But today, services such as this are the hottest thing around and the offerings are exploding in categories as varied as organic baby clothes, shaving supplies, gourmet foods, cosmetics or -- gulp -- even underwear!

A gift subscription service is a joy to give and to receive. These curated and attractively presented gift boxes are offered by retailers that specialize in themes such as gourmet food, cosmetics, books or hobby materials, etc. The subscriptions are available at different prices depending upon frequency of delivery. Most services also offer single boxes for one-time gifts. Each box, often customized to a subscriber's questionnaire, usually contains five or six different samples and, if added up individually, the value of the items within most often exceeds the cost per month of the subscription. Free shipping is usually included. This is a great way to try new products and then you may be able to buy full-size items at a discounted price.

Your job, as the shopper, is only to match your gift recipients with the type of products that will delight them. Select your service, place your order, and get ready for a big dose of ongoing appreciation. Get creative and wrap up a box that includes a note detailing the subscription and, perhaps, an item that is representative of the theme of the gift subscription. Some of these services donate a portion of your subscription price to a charity—a gift that truly keeps on giving.

FOR THE YOUNGER ONES

- Moms + Babes: Pamper baby and mom with this subscription that provides full-size, premium, personal-care products as well as goodies for the littlest family member. Designed by moms. www.momsandbabesbox.com
- KiwiCo Crates: For children from birth to 16-plus. Highly rated by parents and children, these age-appropriate boxes deliver hands-on fun with enriching science and art projects designed to stimulate creativity. www.kiwico.com
- Owl Crate and Owl Crate, Jr.: Designed to instill a love of reading in children (8-plus) and teens, these well-curated boxes are bound to delight any budding bookworm. Each attractively packaged box arrives with a middle grade or young adult hardcover book, a letter from the author and other bookish gifts. www.owlcrate.com
- Little Passports: Want to instill wanderlust in children aged 3-12 who are on your gift list? Designed by educators, these

boxes help create young explorers and stimulate a sense of curiosity about the world. A particularly on-point gift during this time of being homebound! www.littlepassports.com

FOR THE COLLEGE STUDENT

- Campus Cube: Treat your favorite student to an array of delicious, wholesome snacks, personal care items and treats to brighten their day. We like that these gifts ship in attractive and sturdy boxes that can be recycled into stackable storage for dorm rooms. Good for the environment, too. www.collegecarepackages.com
- Jeni's Pint Club: If you want to score major points with your coed, send a subscription for this gourmet ice cream. Four pints of icy yumminess delivered four times a year will ensure that this pricey gift is a hit! <https://shop.jenis.com/collections/pint-club>

FOR THE DIVA

- Birchbox: Cosmetic subscription boxes abound! Birchbox, one of the best known, delivers samples of well-known brands of cosmetics tailored to each recipient's beauty profile. A great gift for the woman who loves her products. Also available for men. www.birchbox.com
- Fab Fit Fun: This popular, lifestyle subscription box has been featured in many high-end publications and touted by television personalities. The service provides a goody box full of wellness, style and fitness products as well as on-trend cosmetics. www.fabfitfun.com

FOR THE WANT-TO-BE AUTHOR

- Scribbler: Give a subscription that will help aspiring authors to meet their goals. Scribbler delivers up curated writing gifts and teaching tools from already established authors. It's like a writing conference in a box! www.goscribbler.com

FOR THE COFFEE AND LITERATURE LOVER

- Bound to Brew: With the goal of assisting new authors to find their audience, this service delivers a first-edition book by an emerging writer paired with a selection of high-quality coffee from a hand-selected roaster. A portion of the subscription price is donated to a nonprofit that delivers books into the hands of children in underserved areas. www.boundtobrew.com

FOR THE ECO-CONSCIOUS

- Green Up: Hug a tree and your eco-conscious buddy at the same time with this sampling of sustainable goods that are good to Mother Earth. www.greenupbox.com

FOR THE FOODIE:

- Love with Food: Give all-natural, organic and gourmet snacks. Part of each subscription is donated to hungry children. www.lovewithfood.com

FOR THE DAPPER GENTLEMAN

- Sprezza: Remind your guy how handsome he is with quality accessories and styling products. www.sprezzabox.com

FOR THE FISHING FANATIC

- Lucky Tackle Box: Reel him in with this subscription service that delivers high-quality lures and tackle accessories selected by tournament fisherman. www.luckytacklebox.com

FOR THE CHOCOHOLIC

- Vosges Haut Chocolate: Make a little romance with scrumptious (and expensive) Vosges chocolate truffles, timed for delivery during the full moon. www.vosgeschocolate.com
- Cococlectic: Billed as a craft bean to bar club, this subscription features lesser-known, small-batch chocolate artisans. Products are advertised as being vegan, non-GMO, fair-trade, ethically sourced and free of soy, gluten, dairy and nuts. <https://cococlectic.com>

FOR THE PET LOVER

- Bark Box: This gift is going to the dogs---literally. A box of pet goodies in which 10% of the proceeds goes to rescue

groups. www.barkbox.com

- Cat Lady: Cat-themed gifts and treats to make any kitty purr are included in this highly rated subscription. www.catladybox.com

FOR THE LETTER WRITER

- Nicely Noted: Seniors, those recovering from an illness, or anyone who enjoys writing letters and fine stationery will appreciate this monthly selection of letterpress cards and stamps. www.nicelynoted.com

FOR YARN ENTHUSIASTS

- Knit Crate: Knitters and crocheters will be thrilled to receive a box of premium yarn in exciting colors along with a pattern geared to their specific skill level. www.knitcrate.com

FOR BOOKIES OF ANY AGE

- Gift Lit: Delight book lovers of any age with this gift subscription. Personally selected for age and interests by literary experts, these books will help instill a love of reading in the young or will open new literary doors to the young at heart. www.giftlit.com

And for additional ideas and reviews, check out the blog "My subscription addiction" at www.mysubscriptionaddiction.com. There are dozens of choices and a gift for everyone! Whichever you subscribe to, the recipient is bound to think kindly of you with the delivery of each scheduled package.

SHARE YOUR INTERESTS, MAKE NEW FRIENDS

By Edree Hovey

Is it time to start a group of like-minded people? Do you have an interest or even a passion that you'd like to share? Golf, art, board or card games, books, woodworking, outdoor sports? Were you once an avid tennis player - or did well at a Scrabble board, or enjoyed playing an instrument with others? Or do you enjoy hiking, biking or even camping in one of the local parks? Would you like to meet new people?

Why not start your own group and share your interest with others of a similar mind? Imagine going online for a biweekly game of bridge or *Words With Friends!* How about meeting up for a walk along one of the local trails. It's all possible.

Currently, as we're all aware, it's a bit of a challenge to find like-minded friends, but with not much effort, it can be accomplished. Log onto Meetup.com and if your special interest isn't listed there, start your own. If it's already listed go ahead and sign up. To form your own group, there are easy step-by-step instructions. And then for even more

possibilities, try Groups.Google.com or Reddit.com. There's also Nextdoor.com which keeps it local. Be advised if you are starting your own group, most start small. As few as two like-minded individuals could be the beginning of something grand. It may well take a bit of effort and sometimes take you outside your comfort zone, but chances are you'll find it was worth the time you put into it.

For many of us, weekly luncheons and canasta games are temporarily on hold. We miss our friendships, but now, without too much effort, we can switch gears. The rules are a bit different now with the wearing of masks and keeping a distance, but it's not necessary to live the life of a hermit. Just think of how many others would love to be part of your fledgling group and who may well thank you for your efforts.

As with all unknowns, exercise caution, always meet in public places and use good judgement in sharing information. So now, go ahead. Log onto any of those sites, or all of them, and see what you've been missing!

MINCEMEAT MAGIC

By Barbara Aiken

'Tis the mincemeat season once again. There are two camps regarding mincemeat, those who relish it and those who loathe it. No doubt you're in one of those camps. So, what exactly is mincemeat? Originally, it was a sweet mixture of fruit, nuts, spices and brandy and contained meat: beef, pork, lamb, fowl, rabbit and such. Today, purists still like their mincemeat to contain actual meat and may concoct their own personal recipe. "Mince" means small in Latin, so mincemeat is finely chopped meat. In England, the stand-alone word "mince" often means chopped meat. You may have heard Gordon Ramsey or Jamie Oliver say, "Tip your mince into a bowl" when preparing cottage or shepherd's pie.

Mincemeat probably made its first appearance around the 12th century. Some say it made its way to England from the Middle East by way of the Crusades. This makes sense, because Middle Eastern cuisine is well known for the sweet fruits, nuts and fragrant spices that are added to meat dishes.

Written on a scroll, the 12th century English cookbook, *A Forme of Cury*, contains a method for making mincemeat pies which is entitled "tartes of flesh." How yummy. The ingredients are pork, cheese, egg, saffron, spices and sugar. In the Victorian Era, mince pies were usually sweet since sugar was more affordable and meat was nixed as a major ingredient. During Prohibition, cans of mincemeat were found to contain on the plus side of 14% alcohol. Folks particularly loved their mince pies then.

Centuries ago, this lavish preparation of precious spices, fruit, nuts and meat would have been costly and mince pies were usually enjoyed only during the Christmas season. Wealthy families would show off their net worth with an assortment of mince pies fashioned into various shapes with intricate top crust designs all displayed upon their large dining sideboards. Very impressive to the visiting kith and kin.

Most often mincemeat is used to bake pies or tarts. A mincemeat pie can be too cloyingly rich and sweet for many, yet a smaller version (cupcake size) of the mince pie can be just right. Add some whipped cream or brandy sauce and you're in mince pie heaven. Don't forget the cuppa' tea.

According to an old 1983 *Washington Post* story, Mark Twain had a favorite mince cake. Phyllis Richman wrote the article and printed the recipe for Twain's favorite. It's been part of our holiday ever since.

Please note that back in the '80s and '90s most grocery stores

sold condensed mincemeat. It is not the same as the version in a jar. Condensed mincemeat is not soupy, it's dry like a little brick when packaged and comes in a small box. Now, it can be difficult to find. I've always used Borden, None Such, 9-ounce packages of condensed mincemeat. In recent years, I have been getting mine from, where else, Amazon.

MARK TWAIN'S FAVORITE MINCE CAKE

1 cup sweet butter
1 cup sugar
4 eggs
2 cups sifted all-purpose flour
1/2 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. freshly grated nutmeg
1/2 tsp. kosher salt
1/4 cup brandy
1/4 cup whipping cream
9-ounce package of condensed mincemeat, crumbled
2 Tbs. flour

Cream butter and sugar. Add eggs, one at a time; beat well after each addition. Sift dry ingredients together. Combine brandy and cream. Add dry ingredients and brandy-cream mixture, beginning and ending with the dry items. In a small bowl, combine crumbled mincemeat with 2 tablespoons of flour. Mix until mincemeat is well separated and well dredged with flour. Fold into batter. Spoon batter into a greased and waxed-paper-lined, 9-inch tube pan. Bake at 325 degrees for 1 hour and 20 minutes, until cake is golden brown and springs back when touched lightly. Cool in pan 10 minutes. Turn cake out and remove waxed paper. Cool completely.

Do try this lovely cake over the course of the festive season. Maybe pick up one of Mark Twain's books, such as *The Autobiography of Mark Twain* or *A Tramp Abroad*. Sit back, relax, take in some great literature and delight in the flavor of one of Twain's favorite cakes, buttery mincemeat magic.

Barbara loves to bake and this recipe brings back the memories of her mum's little mince pies, but with less fuss. barbara.s.aiken@gmail.com

Leave this life with memories, not dreams.

CHRISTMAS TIPS To Make Your Holidays Merry and Brighter

By Louise Whiteside

Many of us find the same old rituals a bit monotonous: putting up and trimming the tree, hanging the outdoor lights, decorating the house, baking goodies. All fun exercises, but how about a few fresh ideas, just to change it up a bit.

Let's try a few clever schemes to make your holiday planning more innovative, more relaxed and even a little more economical. So, pour yourself a cup of eggnog or cider, sit back, and read on.

Start by making holiday baking easier. Beginning in the early Fall, freeze a half dozen cookies each time you bake. Do the same with candies. This way you'll have lots of goodies on hand to either share in your home or pass on to friends and neighbors, while saving yourself that last-minute stress.

Cover the Christmas tree in "snow." Use pieces of baby's breath to fill in gaps in your tree and wreaths. Everything will appear to be covered in snowflakes.

Why not create a Winter landscape? Purchase quilt batting, cut it to fit your display area and then then arrange a miniature village on the "snow." Place a small mirror in the snow to create a pond.

Spice up your tree by cutting netting into squares and placing handfuls of pine scent potpourri in the center of each square. Bring the corners together, tie them tightly with gold or silver ribbon, and hang them on the tree.

To enjoy the best of both worlds if you have an artificial tree but you love the scent of fresh pine, visit a local tree seller and ask to collect greenery off the ground. Place these pieces in baskets around the house, or tie them together for a garland.

To make watering easier, if your Christmas tree base is hard to reach, as most are, try tossing a few ice cubes into its container. Watering done! And then to remove that tree sap from your hands easily, rub some shortening on your sticky fingers, wipe them with a paper towel and wash your hands with soap and water.

Tree disposal can also be a snap. Remove decorations, wrap an old sheet around the tree, and pull it outside. Alternatively, place a large garbage bag over the top and pull it down. And to use your tree after the holidays, cut up the branches and use them to protect plants in your garden. Sprinkle pine needles on your compost pile and saw the trunk into pieces to create logs for a cold day around the fireplace.

And this year save the hassle of tangled lights. Wrap each strand in heavy duty aluminum foil before storing them. Squeeze the foil around the bulbs to protect them against breakage.

After the holidays recycle the used tins. That festive canister that was once filled with

popcorn is likely to be decorated in a holiday theme. It just might make a pretty and easy-to-find storage box for your ornaments. Fancy gift bows can also be recycled. Those lovely-

but-used bows from last year might be a little squashed if they've been in storage. Use a hair dryer on high heat to perk them up.

These suggestions are just a start. Put your imagination to work to simplify and beautify your holiday. Christmas may never be the same!



KID PHONE APPS THAT STIMULATE THINKING

By Kimberly Blaker

Take a look at a few of the fun sites available for kids or grandkids that they might enjoy logging onto over the holidays. There's a massive sea of kids' phone apps on the market today, but which are best to maximize kids' media time? Read on for a selection of kid-tested and parent-approved apps, which just might help boost kids' critical thinking skills and creativity.

Piano Kids – Music & Songs. Free for Android. Age 3 and older. This top-rated app teaches kids and parents how to play musical instruments, including the piano, xylophone and drums. It exercises children's memory, concentration, creativity, listening and motor skills.

Flow Free. Free for all platforms. Age 8-plus. This color-based game offers various levels of play to sustain the interest of grade school kids on up to adults. It improves complex thinking skills as players try to connect the dots to create pipes without crossing over another color.

Super Family Hero. Free for all platforms. Age 4 and up. Kids and parents can enjoy this family game with individual levels of difficulty that make the game challenging yet fair to all players. Create custom avatars, then use interactive stories to play mini-games, and attempt to defeat "Dr. Excuses."

Heads Up! Free for Android. \$1 Apple. Age 6 and older. Based on the Heads Up! game created by Ellen DeGeneres, this family game is a blast for all ages. A player holds the phone on their head with an image facing out for the other players to see. The player's teammate then acts out the image shown on the phone while the teammate holding it up has to guess what his teammate is acting out. Sounds like charades, no?

Kids Build & Crash Blocks Game. Free for all platforms. Ages 1–4. Toddlers and preschoolers can build tall towers with colorful blocks while learning their colors and numbers. When they're done building, children thrill at crashing the tower. Your child can never lose in this game. The app also features fun sound effects and animations.

Lego City My City 2. Free for Android. Ages 7–14. With 15 mini-games in all, players go on thrilling car chases to catch thieves, blast off into space and explore underwater. As players move through the game, they earn blocks and components to build vehicles and complete their missions.

Doodle Magic Joy. Free for Android. Ages 3-plus. This drawing app, with colors ranging from soft pastels to bright neons, offers a variety of art tools including pen, calligraphy, airbrush, crayon,

pastel, sponge, eraser and more. When doodles are complete, the art can be saved and even played back as a cartoon. This is a fun app for kids to adults.

Unblock Me Free. Free for all platforms. Age 7-plus. This mental workout boasts 16,000 puzzles in all. The object of the game is to unblock the red block in as few moves as possible. Kids and adults can compete with friends and players around the world.

3/2 Chess. Free for Android. Ages 5 and over. Played much like standard chess for two players, this game is designed for up to three players. 3/2 Chess is a strategy game that boosts creativity and critical thinking skills.

Hoopa City 2. \$3.99 for all platforms. Ages 5–10. Kids can build the city of their dreams with skyscraper apartments, shopping malls and beach resorts in this 3D game app. Then they can play inside the city they've built, dress up their citizens, and even switch to night mode to see their city lit up.

Magic Tiles 3. Free for all platforms. Age 7-plus. This massively popular piano game requires players to tap the black tiles while avoiding the white ones to generate beautiful, high-quality music. The app features more instruments such as guitar, as well as a battle mode where kids can compete with other players from around the world.

ColorMinis Kids. Free for all platforms. Age 3 and up. With this color and design app, kids experiment with a variety of colors and materials, including Real 3D gloss, clay, glass, metal and more. They can color and design anime figures, animals, robots and castles. When their design is complete, they'll create animated gifs of their creations.

PBS Kids Video. Free all platforms. Age 2-plus. Kids can watch their favorite PBS kids shows wherever you go. This app is a fun form of educational entertainment for young children when riding in the car, waiting for appointments and on shopping trips. In addition to thousands of videos of their favorite shows, they'll also be introduced to the "Weekly Pick" of educational videos.

Drawing for Kids! Learning Games for Toddlers. Free for Android. Ages 2 through 5. This app is an easy way for even the youngest toddlers to learn how to draw. It includes fun sounds and animations as each drawing comes to life.

Whichever you choose it's bound to get their attention and allow for a fun interactive time with some of your favorite young ones.

FIGS, OR ANCIENT FLOWERS, IN FACT

By Nancy J. Schaaf

Did you know that figs are flowers? Jerry Parsons, Ph.D., a horticulture specialist with the Texas Cooperative Extension in San Antonio, says that technically, figs are not a fruit, but rather inverted flowers. The flowers from fig trees are found within the pear-shaped blooms they produce, and these flowers eventually turn into the edible fruit.

Figs, of which there are more than 150 varieties, differ considerably in color and texture. The plump fruits have skins ranging from soft yellow and pale green to a dark inky purple. The versatile fig tastes sweet and has a complex texture which blends the chewiness of its flesh and the crunchiness of its seeds. Five popular fig varieties can be found most often in the grocery store. Calimyrna figs are greenish yellow with amber flesh and have a nutty, buttery flavor. The mild floral-flavored brown turkey figs are pear shaped with a brown-colored skin and a reddish interior and mild floral flavor. The Sierra fig, developed in California, is a large green fig with a sweet, honeyed flavor. Brought to California by the Spanish missionaries, the dark purple black mission figs with pink-colored flesh have an earthy wine-like sweetness. The tear drop-shaped Kadota, the most common variety of fig, has green skin with purple flesh, but is less sweet than other varieties.

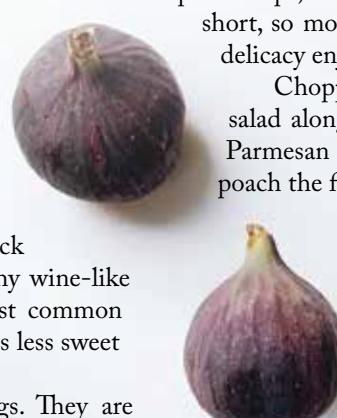
Since ancient times, people have enjoyed figs. They are mentioned in the Bible and other ancient writings. Hippocrates said, "Let food be thy medicine and medicine thy food." Undoubtedly, he was referring to sweet ancient figs which boast health benefits such as phytonutrients, antioxidants and vitamins, in addition to being a tasty treat, too. The small juicy fig, with blooms and seeds inside its fleshy skin, provides the highest level of dietary fiber, which may help reduce cholesterol, promote blood sugar control and prevent constipation. In addition to fiber, figs are a good source of several essential minerals including magnesium, manganese and potassium, which helps lower blood pressure. Figs are extremely high in bone density-promoting calcium. Also, figs provide vitamins K, B and A along with folate and choline. Whether fresh or dried, figs contain powerful antioxidants that neutralize free radicals in the body and help fight cardiovascular disease and protect against macular degeneration. In many cultures, the leaves of the fig tree are consumed because studies show that the leaves have antidiabetic properties and can reduce the amount of insulin needed by persons who require insulin injections.

The first week in November is designated as National Fig Week, starting the holiday season in a flavorful way. Cooking or baking delicious figs is a wonderful way to celebrate. Many holiday recipes containing figs are served such as roasted fig tartlets, fig and ginger truffles and figgy scones.

They are not only the main ingredient in a popular cookie, the fig bar, but enjoy the status of a culinary delicacy. They are a great snack by themselves, but when combined in many recipes, the seeds add a distinct tasty chewiness. The fig's luscious rosy flesh has a floral edge and a honeyed sweetness that pairs well with cheeses, greens or grilled foods. Figs are often cooked with pork chops, lamb and even on pizza. The season for fresh figs is short, so most figs are dried, creating a sugary and nutritious delicacy enjoyed throughout the year.

Chopped dried figs make a great addition to a Greek salad along with fennel, spinach leaves, arugula and grated Parmesan cheese. Add dried or fresh figs to oatmeal or poach the figs in juice or wine and serve with frozen desserts.

Fresh figs stuffed with goat cheese and chopped almonds can be served as hors d'oeuvres or as desserts like chocolate-covered figs. For many interesting and different recipes using this versatile and yummy flower, log onto **Cooks.com** and type in figs, where it lists recipes from appetizers to breads, salads, entrees, desserts and more.





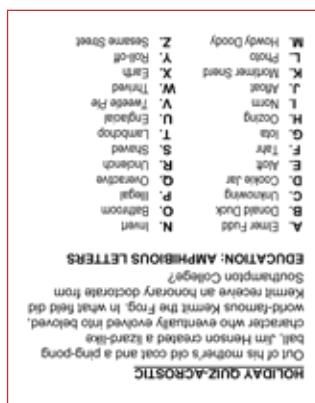
Give Some Thought to These 2021 New Year's Decisions

By Penelope Folsom

If our world continues to remain hunkered down for a bit, most of us would probably welcome some sort of diversion to help us through the beginning days of 2021. The following suggestions were collected from various individuals, those who continue to stay occupied and upbeat.

1. Have you always dreamed of owning a boat? Sail or power? There isn't a better time to search one out than during the Winter months. Doing a Google search is easy. List what you're thinking of or type in boats for sale and locality if you have a particular place where you'd like to look.
2. Did you knit or crochet when you were younger? Have you thought of picking it up again? If you think you've lost the knack, start with something easy, a scarf or a hat on a circular needle. And for patterns, check out Pinterest or **Revelry.com**. Keep those fingers busy while binge-watching your favorite show.
3. If you don't know how to knit or crochet, but would like to learn, check out any of the instructional videos on YouTube, which feature easy-to-follow directions.
4. And if you've ever wanted to play an instrument, this could be the time. Either rent from one of the local shops or buy a used instrument. The library loans out ukuleles and such. With instrument in hand, pull up a YouTube instructional video.
5. Is it time to start selling some of all that accumulated stuff? Is it too large to ship very far? Log onto Craigslist, where it can be listed for buyers within five miles of your home.
6. Master the art of bread baking. You don't have to eat it all – share with a friend or neighbor, they're bound to love it. There are countless recipes from Danish to stollen to rye to
7. Are you binge-watching TV and tired of the cost of what's available? Consider joining PBS/MPT for \$60 a year. Imagine the binge-watching you could do through the Winter. They have a fabulous lineup, and many are serials like "Doc Martin." Then to go along with it purchase a hot air popcorn popper for an oil free treat!
8. Get a birdfeeder. If you have one, purchase another. Squirrel-proof works best, although they are pricey. Fill with black-oiled sunflower seeds – a bit more costly than the mixed brand of seed, but your birds will thank you. Go online to identify the different species – more than 400 can be seen in Maryland.
9. Find somewhere convenient to meet people – maybe on a walk or at an outdoor bench near the coffee shop. There are lots of unattached people out there who would no doubt enjoy chatting with you.
10. Go online to **Meetup.com** and become acquainted with people with similar interests. There are history buffs, card players, sports people, book chats, etc. Many are local as well as online.
11. Create an amusing holiday card with the help of Pinterest for quotes and designs. Send them to old friends or anonymously to those you think would enjoy them.
12. Plan a bring-*yer*-own picnic at a sunny picnic table in the park. Invite a few old friends and a couple of new friends who might enjoy an outing and a bit of conversation.

pumpkin bread on countless websites such as **Cooks.com**. Choose your favorite and if you'd like to keep it super-simple, purchase a bread-making machine found at either **Williams Sonoma** or **Amazon.com**.



HOLIDAY REMEMBRANCE

By E. Hovey

Each year in December, what is now a holiday tradition, takes place in military cemeteries throughout the country. Created to commemorate the lives of America's fallen heroes, the public is invited to either join the volunteers to help distribute wreaths to be placed against each tombstone or to come as an observer. Morrill Worcester, the president of Worcester Wreath Co., of Harrington, Maine, started Wreaths Across America in 1992 with the delivery of 5,000 handmade Christmas wreaths to Arlington National Cemetery. This year, the event will take place on Saturday, Dec. 19, and unlike other years, advance registration will be required. Last year more than 400,000 wreaths were distributed throughout Arlington's 624-acre site.

This tradition has spread throughout the nation and again this year thousands of wreaths will be distributed.

for gravesites at more than 1,600 locations throughout the United States. Your group or organization can get involved with a donation, by serving as a fundraiser or by volunteering to place the wreaths. Wreathes to be distributed can be purchased through the website for \$15, \$75 for five and upwards from there.

Acknowledgement, if you would like, is sent either in memory of, or in honor of the one you would like remembered. More information can be found online at www.WreathsAcrossAmerica.org/ including a list of local cemeteries that will be taking part.

With current circumstances and changes happening almost daily, call or go online prior to the listed date to confirm that the memorial will in fact take place at the scheduled time.

THE PILGRIMAGE

By Rev. Dr. Patrick DeVane

On Aug. 15, 1620, 120 brave men and women set off in two ships from England, leaving everything they had ever known behind to seek freedom in a new land across the Atlantic. After a few days at sea, these brave travelers then turned around and headed back to England. They then regrouped, gathered on their two ships (one of which was called the Speedwell) and set off once more. A few days later, they turned around again. The Speedwell, it turns out, was not seaworthy and kept taking on water. Eighteen of these people got so mad they left the group, leaving 102 brave pilgrims to travel on the one remaining ship, the Mayflower, to the New World. While there was only one death, a sailor, on the journey across the Atlantic, over half the Pilgrims would die by the end of their first Winter in America.

What leads someone to do this? Why would you turn your back on everything that you have known to face the grim reality that death is likely, and success will be hard-won and difficult? By definition, to be a pilgrim one must be on a pilgrimage. The writer, Paul Elie, defines a pilgrimage as “a journey made in light of a story.” Why would the Pilgrims choose this difficult path? The answer lies in the story they ascribed to and what they felt worthy of their time, effort and even their lives.

The Pilgrims rejected the claims of the Church of England to dictate the shape and practice of their faith. They believed that they were called to more closely follow the teachings of the Bible as they understood them and reject any earthly authority that stood in the way. Their story centered on their faith and the belief that death is not the final end or the worst possible outcome. They believed that their faith would guide and direct them even in the face of suffering and difficulties. Their story made their journey not only possible, but inevitable.

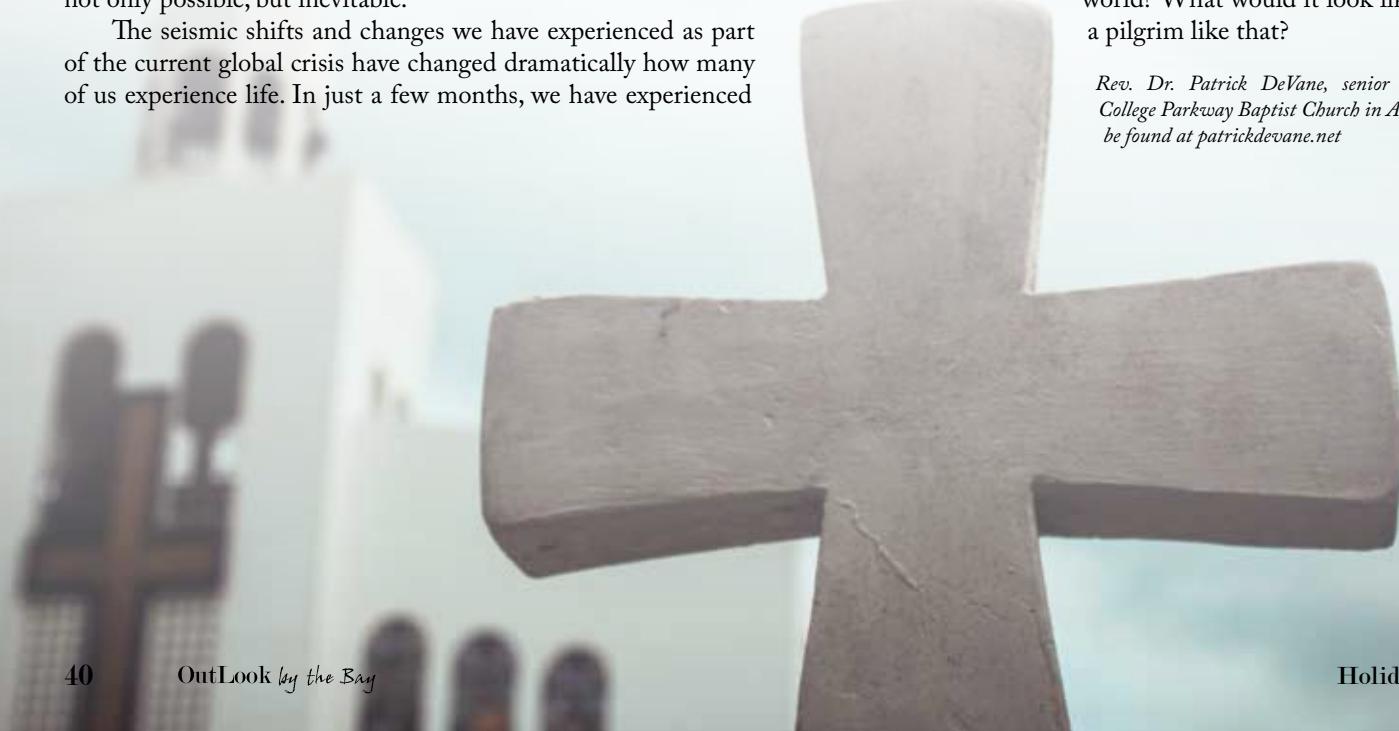
The seismic shifts and changes we have experienced as part of the current global crisis have changed dramatically how many of us experience life. In just a few months, we have experienced

things that many of us would never have imagined. We have seen a seemingly unending increase in the hostility and nastiness of our national discourse. The loudest voices in our culture are those who are the angriest, most manipulative and most cruel. While we seek some new normal in the midst of these endless changes, we are confronted again and again with the choice of how the story we claim to believe will shape our words, thoughts and actions.

What story are we living out right now? As a Christian, my story is shaped by my belief that God is loving, merciful, gracious and actively working to bring about the ultimate good for the world. While too often most of us forget this and act like we’re on our own, this belief allows me to live in calm assurance of deliverance and hope, despite what may be happening in the world. This promise of ultimate deliverance should allow us to trust and live by the teachings of the Lord, which remain as countercultural and revolutionary today as they were when they were first taught. Love your neighbor as yourself. Forgive others as you have been forgiven. Seek first God’s kingdom and his righteousness and everything you need will be given to you. These words cast a vision of a story that is bigger than my limited perspective. It allows me to trust that I am not responsible for saving the whole world, I am simply given today to do what I can, through the power of God, for the good of all. Releasing fear, doubt and worry allows a trust that even in the midst of turmoil and trouble, I do not have to fear.

Too many people, including too many Christians, are living a destructive and deadly story. What if, instead, we saw our lives as a pilgrimage? What if our lives gave us the chance to operate out of a bigger, better story for the world? What would it look like to be a pilgrim like that?

Rev. Dr. Patrick DeVane, senior pastor of College Parkway Baptist Church in Arnold, can be found at patrickdevane.net



CELEBRATE THE PEAR THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

By Nancy J. Schaaf

Pears are my favorite fruit. This juicy fruit has been treasured throughout the world and savored for its delicious flavor for more than 4,000 years. Mentioned in Celtic, Roman and Chinese writings, poets acclaim the pear's flavor and exquisiteness; artists honor its contour and brilliant colors of green, yellow, brown and red. The Greek poet Homer in *The Odyssey* praised the pear as a "gift of the gods." Many home cooks and chefs agree. December, designated as National Pear Month, presents a wonderful opportunity to discover new recipes using this seasonal fruit memorialized in the 18th century Christmas carol, "The Twelve Days of Christmas."

During the holiday season, pears are a tasty ingredient in entrees, breads, salads, appetizers and desserts. They offer the juiciness of peaches along with the crunchiness of apples. As an appetizer, place sliced pears on a cheese plate, which gives color and shape for an elegant presentation. Include pears in green salad dishes such as spinach paired with walnuts or in a fruit salad for extra flavor. Pears shine in a side dish by delivering a fruity punch to stuffing or to roasted veggies such as squash and beets. For the main course, their delicate flavor enhances fresh seafood, chicken and pork.

Pears are a popular choice for desserts like pie, quick bread and cake. A simple spiced pear using only the fruit, red dye and cinnamon hot candies looks stunning and tastes scrumptious. Pears make a fancy and yummy topping drizzled over ice cream or cake.

Not only are pears delicious, but they are nutrient-rich and provide many benefits for optimal health. The Food and Drug Administration approved the following nutrient content descriptions for pears: "low-fat, saturated fat-free, sodium-free, cholesterol-free, an excellent source of fiber and a good source of vitamin C."

Spices and herbs add amazing flavor to pears. Cinnamon, nutmeg, allspice, coriander and ginger are perfect complements especially in sweet desserts. Black pepper, rosemary, tarragon and thyme added to savory dishes enhance flavor. And these herbs and spices add additional health benefits.

Including this seasonal fruit in holiday feasts creates a new flavorful experience for family and friends. After the holidays, continue to use pears in various dishes, as they are a nutritious and delicious ingredient. A bowl of soup warms the body and spirit and blending roasted and pureed pears creates unique flavors and textures to both sweet and savory soups.

To celebrate National Pear Month, try a few of the 10 varieties grown in the U.S. and discover a new pear recipe.

Pear and Sausage Stuffing

Credit: USA Pears/USAPears.org

Whether you are a "stuffing" or a "dressing" kind of person, pears add a magical twist when served alongside your holiday bird. Because they are sautéed and then baked, the pears are meant to be meltingly soft in this side dish, and any variety will do. Sausage adds a piquant kick, and don't skimp on those fresh herbs. Consider this recipe another delicious vehicle for getting pears on your Thanksgiving table.

Serves 8

- 6 Tbs. unsalted butter, plus more for greasing and brushing
- 1 (20-ounce) loaf white bread, crusts trimmed, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 1/4 cup finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 2 Tbs. finely chopped fresh sage
- 1 sweet yellow onion, chopped
- 3 celery ribs, chopped
- 12 oz. mild Italian pork sausage (casings removed if the sausage is in links)
- 2 ripe USA Pears, stemmed, cored and cut into 1/2-inch chunks
- 2 cups low-sodium chicken broth or homemade turkey stock
- 1/2 tsp. freshly ground pepper
- Kosher salt

Preheat the oven to 375°F. Grease a three-quart casserole dish with butter. Spread the bread cubes on a large, rimmed baking sheet and toast them in the oven until lightly browned, 12 to 20 minutes (depending on the moisture content of the bread). Combine the toasted bread cubes, parsley and sage in a large bowl; set aside.

Melt the butter in a 12-inch skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and celery and cook until soft and translucent and beginning to brown, about 15 minutes. Add the sausage and cook about 5 minutes until browned, breaking it up with a wooden spoon. Add the pears and continue cooking until they are just soft, 3 to 5 minutes. Pour in the stock, add the pepper, and bring it to a simmer. Pour the contents of the pan over the bread cubes and toss until evenly moistened. Taste and add salt as needed.

Loosely pack the dressing into the prepared dish and cook, uncovered, until the top forms a deep crust, 25 to 30 minutes. Serve hot.

BOOKS: Holiday Books

Peggy Kiefer

Many of us can remember sitting on a parent's knee and listening in awe to *The Night Before Christmas* or Dickens' *Christmas Carol*. Now it is our turn to curl up in a comfortable chair or bed and read a good holiday book written for adults!

For this holiday season give some thought to this list of titles – some new, some familiar -- that you may enjoy. Some of the books have been made into movies, doubling the treat!

1. THE CHRISTMAS SISTERS

By Sarah Morgan

Set in the snowy highlands of Scotland, Suzanne McBride hopes she can help create a perfect cozy Christmas for her three adopted daughters. Her daughters have their own personal problems, but she hopes the magic of the season is strong enough to survive a family Christmas.

2. KWANZAA-A CELEBRATION

By Dr. Maulana Karenga

Because this was written by the creator of Kwanzaa, this book has a clear description of the views and values of this holiday. It explores the historic origins and cultural meanings to the millions of people who celebrate it in Africa and around the world.

3. A STILLNESS IN BETHLEHEM

By Jane Haddam

This is not the Bethlehem you think of, but a small town in Vermont that distinguishes itself from other nearby small towns by having a Christmas pageant every year. If you like mysteries, this book is for you. A crime writer from New York City comes to town and disputes the using of public land for a religious event. She is killed in an "accident" and a detective has to find the "grinch in Christmas apparel."

4. SKIPPING CHRISTMAS

By John Grisham

You might recognize the author's name. Here he turns from his usual legal, courtroom novel to a humorous holiday book.

If you have seen the movie "Christmas

with the Kranks," when they decide they are not going to "celebrate" Christmas with all the chaos associated with it, it was adapted from this book. They are not going to decorate, hang lights or throw their annual Christmas party. They are going to relax on a Caribbean cruise, but they find out this is not as easy as they thought it would be.

5. THE CHRISTMAS BOX

By Richard Paul Eucus

To quote from the author, "Whatever the reason, with each passing Christmas, the story of the Christmas Box is told less and needed more. So, I record it now for all future generations to accept or dismiss as seems them good. As for me, I believe. After all, it is my story."

A young family of three, husband, wife and child, move into a Victorian home as caretakers with an elderly widow just before the Christmas season. As their relationship grows, Mary shares an important message with Richard. Now it is up to him to decide what to do with it.

6. ADVENTURES OF THE CHRISTMAS PUDDING

By Agatha Christie

Here is another famous author who has changed her venue into a holiday tale. If you are an Agatha Christie fan, you will recognize that Hercule Poirot is a central character in her books.

Set in an English country house at Christmas time, Poirot is expecting to relax and get away from it all. But he finds a sinister warning on his pillow to avoid the plum pudding and the fun goes on from there.

7. A REDBIRD CHRISTMAS

By Fannie Flagg

Fannie Flagg has not lost her humorous writing in this holiday story.

This is a tear-jerker of a book with a happy ending, in true Fannie Flagg fashion.

Oliver Campbell moves from cold, snowy Chicago to Lost River, a little town in Alabama, for his health. Here he meets a disabled girl

and a shopkeeper who is nursing an injured red bird named Jack. The relationships between the child, the shopkeeper, the friendly, nurturing townsfolk and the bird is the basis for this humorous, engaging Christmas story that might have you crying and cheering at the end.

8. A HANUKKAH PRESENT

By Mark Binder

This is a different type of book in that it includes 11 multigenerational tales and a novella. It was a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award for Family Literature. *A Hanukkah Present* is written by the award-winning author Mark Binder.

9. A CHRISTMAS MEMORY

By Truman Capote

Here is a Christmas tale from an unlikely author. It is a short story originally written for a magazine and turned into a short novel. It is basically an autobiographical story of a 7-year-old boy and an older, distant cousin, who is considered "slow." The family is poor, and the boy is mostly ignored by his family, so he bonds with his cousin. It is a story of love, sharing and friendship during the Christmas season. It has been published many times and is considered a classic.

10. MR. DICKENS AND HIS CAROL

By Samantha Silva

This is a humorous story with much historical detail and glimpses of Dickens' life. When Dickens is blackmailed into writing a holiday book by his publisher because he needs the money, he gets "writer's block." While walking through the streets of London one night, he meets a mysterious woman who helps him write a novel unlike any he has ever written.

Perhaps reading one of these adult holiday tales will become one of your favorite traditions. Some authors you will recognize, and others might include one whom you may later recognize as having written another book you enjoyed.

TWELVE BOOKS OF CHRISTMAS (PLUS TWO)

By Peggy Kiefer

Most of us probably grew up listening to and then reading Clement C. Moore's famous Christmas classic, '*Twas the Night Before Christmas*. This is a must for any child's library, but there are many other charming holiday stories, both old and new. Perhaps you'll recognize some on this list, but others are contemporary or for holidays such as Hanukkah. You might want to add a few of them to your holiday list for the children in your life.

1. *Auntie Claus* By Elise Primavera

Spoiled children learn a lesson about the true meaning of Christmas as well as the Golden Rule.

2. *The Crippled Lamb* By Max Lucado

Over a million copies of this delightful story have been sold. It's written by a famous children's author, who is also a pastor. The tale is told of a crippled lamb who is left by the other sheep and waits for the shepherds in a stable where Mary and Joseph are with the baby Jesus. The lamb warms the baby with his wooly body.

3. *Hanukkah Haiku* By Harriet Ziefert

This beautifully illustrated combination of poems and paintings tells a story of a family's Hanukkah celebration. It is best suited for preschool through 1st grade.

4. *Hershel and the Hanukkah* By Eric Kimmel

Eye-catching pen and watercolor illustrations tell an entertaining story about tricking scary goblins that have been haunting the local synagogue and stopping the villagers from celebrating Hanukkah. You will find this an excellent read-aloud book for the whole family.

5. *How Santa Got His Job* By Stephen Krensky

Better suited to older children, this is a book for those who know that Santa isn't real. It is a rather silly story about all the jobs a young man has to help him become Santa.

6. *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* By Dr. Seuss

Who doesn't know this crazy and silly rhyming tale of a grumpy Grinch who learns the true meaning of Christmas after many adventures?

7. *The Light of Christmas*

By Richard Paul Evans

A book with short text, bright pictures and beautiful illustrations, it is a good choice for preschoolers. It is about a young boy who learns the true meaning of Christmas.

8. *The Little Fir Tree*

By Margaret Wise Brown

This is another classic from many years ago and is a good one to read before Christmas. It is a charming story about a lonely tree that meets a boy who can't walk.

9. *Little Match Girl* By Hans Christian Anderson

An old classic, this book might be too intense for very young children, as the young girl dies from the cold, but it is one of Hans Christian Anderson's most famous tales.

10. *The Polar Express* By Chris Van Allsburg

Many children have probably seen the movie made from this book. It is about a young boy who rides a magic train to the North Pole where he receives the first gift of Christmas.

11. *The Reindeer Christmas* By Atsuko Morozumi

This beautifully illustrated book tells how Santa chose the reindeer over other animals to pull his sleigh.

12. *Santa Mouse* By Michael Brown

A little mouse with no home and no name meets Santa and is given a new name and a wonderful job helping Santa on Christmas Eve. A delightful rhyming story that may become one of your Christmas favorites.

Plus 1. *The Sweet Smell of Christmas* By Patricia Scarry

An unusual book of wonderful smells, it will bring back memories of baking apple pies with grandma or finding an orange in your Christmas stocking. Children love scratching and sniffing the smells of Christmas.

Plus 2. *The Trees of the Dancing Goats* By Patricia Polacco

A heartwarming tale that is a favorite of many Jewish children. Trisha and Richard are children who live with their mother and grandparents in Soviet Russia. They help their sick Christian neighbors decorate their tree and are given a carved menorah as thanks.

Adding to your holiday book collection each year could well start a new and loved tradition in your family. Keep in mind that it is always a good idea to read the book first so you can match it to the young person for whom it is intended. Many of the old tales are quite intense and would be better for older children. Preschoolers and younger elementary school children love the brightly illustrated books. With the addition of fragrance and pop-ups to old favorites, the selection has never been better.

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What a year, huh? A friend just confided that she plans on staying up 'til midnight on New Year's Eve this season, something she usually forgoes, but this year it's because she wants to shut the door on 2020. Most of us would agree with her sentiment!

The many questions and concerns I've received about coping with the holidays during the COVID-19 pandemic center on two issues: 1). How do I balance my concerns for health safety with the question of traveling to visit family and friends or with hosting others in my home? 2). How do I find joy in this season when so many of my usual holiday activities are canceled, curtailed or simply unsafe?

Sharpening our skills in evaluating, accepting, planning and exercising creativity and flexibility can provide a roadmap during this time of uncertainty. Begin by evaluating the current situation, your own health risks, the attitudes of your family and friends, and simply your own comfort level. By the time this issue is in print, the knowledge about this pandemic may have shifted because the science is evolving rapidly. Stay up to date with the most current and reliable sources of information in order to make well-informed decisions. Individually, evaluate your own risk taking into consideration any underlying health concerns. In deciding how much and what type of visitation with family and

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friends to engage in, consider the age and health attitudes of your loved ones. If your family is filled with twenty-somethings who have decided to throw caution to the wind, give that some thought. Finally, examine your own comfort level. If you are going to be a nerve end of anxiety hosting overnight guests, acknowledge this. Nobody will have fun if you are in a corner wringing your well-sanitized hands! Best to be honest with yourself and get on to how to best salvage the season.

Next, simply accept that this year will be different. Railing against that fact will do nothing to change it, but do allow yourself to feel sad about the loss of a "normal" holiday season. Don't dwell on it but don't deny your feelings either. Faced with a choice to be miserable or to make the best of it, decide upon the latter. Choose to enjoy as much happiness and pleasure as possible from the upcoming holidays and move on to the next step ASAP!

Plan ahead. If you wait till the holidays descend upon you, you may get caught up in situations where you feel uncomfortable, unsafe or simply unhappy. If you've evaluated the risks of travel or hosting a large get-together and have decided it's not feasible, communicate that in a timely manner. Avoid arguments or justifying your decision. Clearly say that you are uncomfortable with the norm in these uncertain times, offer your regrets, and add that you look forward to resuming your get-togethers soon. If you're met with resistance, repeating, "I'm so sorry but I'm just not comfortable with our usual plans," should suffice.

But what now? Plan ahead for creative and flexible ways to stay in touch, deepen your own sense of meaning and joy, and give back to others. If you have family and friends close by that you feel comfortable seeing, look for safe ways to be together. Perhaps you want to invest in outside heaters? There are a variety of choices at different price-points available. Host simple, small

Share the love and brighten someone else's life.

get-togethers. Look for designated safe friends—those who practice similar precautions as you do—to spend time with. Turn to technology. Plan a Zoom cocktail party or a virtual family Pictionary game. Ideal? No, but it enables us to be connected so be grateful for the gift of technology.

With fewer social events of this year's holidays, look to traditions that you may have dropped in the busyness of the usual demands or to those that you may have never tried to bring form and depth to the season. You now have the gift of more free time. Use it. Perhaps you gave up writing Christmas cards years ago? This may be the year to reconnect with people you've lost touch with by sending a newsy holiday greeting. Have you always wanted to feel a deeper spiritual connection to the holidays? Dig down to your faith. Plan weekly Advent devotions. Do you admire beautifully wrapped gifts? Check out Pinterest for ideas. Learn a new skill like making festive bows or baking French-style macarons. Online classes abound. With less of a crowd for the holiday dinner, choose something new and festive. Beef Wellington, anyone?

Bay Bytes

Respite care is available should the caretaker want some time off. Log onto <http://dhr.maryland.gov/office-of-adult-services/respite-care-program/> for a listing of the many different options available for some needed time off for the caretaker.

Keep your eye out for safe, local events. *Lights on the Bay*, at Sandy Point State Park, is a drive-through Christmas light display that benefits the SPCA (www.lightsonthebay.org). Lift your spirits and support a great cause at the same time from the safety of your own car. In fact, this might be the year when you make a special effort with your own outdoor holiday lights. We all need our spirits lifted and a little extra sparkle in your own neighborhood would be a welcome touch of giving to others. Seek ways to give back through your local church or favorite charity.

No, it won't be the usual holiday season but evaluating, accepting, planning and using creativity and flexibility will help to make the best of it. And like all holiday seasons, this one will approach, peak and recede. This year will pass. I'd add cultivating gratitude and hope to that roadmap. Being grateful for our blessings and holding out hope for a better year ahead will see us through. Merry Christmas and joyful holidays to everyone!

Vicki Duncan is a licensed professional counselor and welcomes your questions. She can be reached at Victoria2write@aol.com

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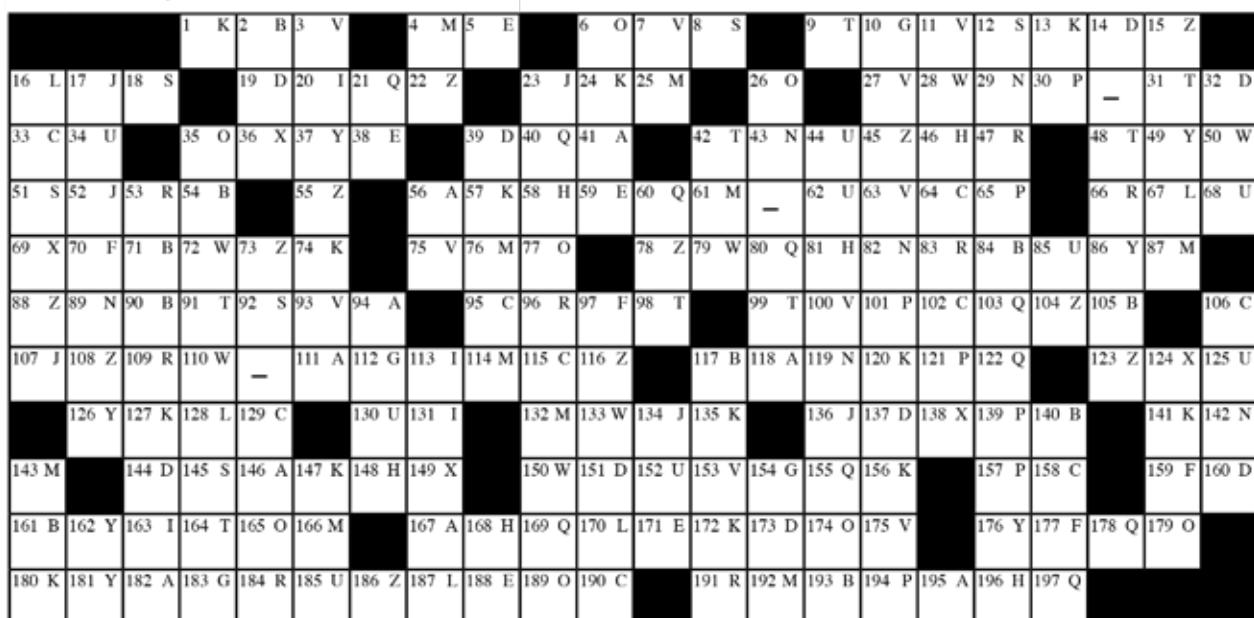
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HOLIDAY QUIZ-ACROSTIC



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Directions

1. Read the definitions and supply the correct words over the numbered blanks.
2. Transfer the letters to the corresponding squares in the diagram.
3. Reading left to right, the completed diagram poses a trivia question. Words are separated by black squares.
4. Reading down, the first letters on the numbered blanks give the subject category followed by the answer to the trivia question.

- A. Wabbit hunter (2 wds.) 195 56 41 118 146 111 182 167 94
- B. Daisy's boyfriend (2 wds.) 105 90 161 84 193 54 140 2 71 117
- C. Ignorant 115 190 64 33 102 106 95 158 129
- D. Storage for snickerdoodles (2 wds.) 19 160 32 144 137 151 39 173 14
- E. High up 59 38 171 5 188
- F. Wild goatlike mammal 97 70 159 177
- G. Whit 154 10 183 112
- H. Slowly pouring forth 168 46 58 148 81 196
- I. Standard 131 20 163 113
- J. Drifting 134 136 17 107 23 52
- K. Charlie McCarthy's slow-witted companion (2 wds.) 147 1 172 135 57 120 156 74 180 24 13 127 141
- L. Snapshot 187 67 16 170 128
- M. Former candidate for President of All Kids (2 wds.) 76 4 132 61 87 143 192 114 25 166
- N. Find the mathematical reciprocal of 142 29 89 43 119 82
- O. Lavatory 35 26 174 6 165 189 77 179
- P. Unlawful 121 194 139 65 30 157 101
- Q. Frenzied 178 155 197 60 21 169 122 40 103 80
- R. Release from a grip 83 96 66 109 53 47 191 184
- S. Sheared 8 12 51 92 145 18
- T. Shari Lewis' creation, born from a sock (2 wds.) 91 164 9 99 48 42 98 31
- U. Within a body of ice 125 44 34 85 68 152 130 185 62
- V. 1947 cartoon directed by Friz Freleng (2 wds.) 11 75 175 100 3 63 153 27 7 93
- W. Flourished 72 133 150 28 79 50 110
- X. Densest major body in the solar system 138 36 69 149 124
- Y. Type of wheeled open-top dumpster (hyph.) 49 181 37 86 162 126 176
- Z. PBS' famed thoroughfare (2 wds.) 45 78 15 55 186 88 116 123 108 73 104 22

Quiz-Acrostics and
Quiz-Acrostics Book 2,
published by Puzzleworm,
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BAY CREATURES: THE WILD TURKEY

By Henry S. Parker

When it came to choosing a national symbol, there was never really a debate. The bald eagle, with its stunning plumage, prominent hooked beak and fierce talons, easily won the honor. Popular myth to the contrary, Ben Franklin never lobbied for his personal favorite, the wild turkey. But he did say this, in a private letter to his daughter: "...the Bald Eagle is a Bird of Bad Moral Character. He does not get his living honestly...Besides he is a rank coward...the Turkey is in comparison a much more respectable bird...a true original Native of America...a Bird of Courage..."

Today, bald eagles or not, Americans universally appreciate *Meleagris gallopavo*, North America's only native wild turkey species. Yet we almost lost this iconic bird.

In the early 1600s, English Colonists found vast flocks of wild turkeys in the New World. Pre-Columbian populations may have numbered 10 million birds. Native Americans relied on these animals for food (even as preserved turkey jerky), tools and clothing. But by the 1930s, wild turkeys were nearly gone from the Americas. Rampant hunting, loss of habitat (including wide-scale clearing of forests for agriculture) and predation had decimated their population. Fortunately, habitat conservation, restoration efforts, sensible hunting regulations and the return of forests to the landscape have brought the birds back from the edge of extinction. Today more than six million roam North America and they inhabit every state except Alaska. They're a familiar sight around the Chesapeake Bay.

As their numbers have expanded, so has our knowledge about these remarkable birds. Consider what we've learned:

- *They get around.* Though wild turkeys don't migrate, they range far and wide—a mile or more a day—mostly in search of food. Their home range is about a square mile. They can move fast, at some 20 miles per hour on the ground (top speeds may approach 50), and equally fast through the air. They may fly a mile at a time and they roost on high tree limbs at night.
- *They eat well.* They forage for nuts, berries, seeds, grasses and insects. They occasionally consume plant bulbs, small reptiles and snails. All that good eating and exercise makes for large sizes: 15-30 pounds for adult male "toms" and about half that for hens.
- *They're social animals.* They travel in flocks, often consisting of 30 or more birds.
- *They're great communicators.* They have a substantial "vocabulary" of perhaps 30 distinct clucks, yelps and gobbles.
- *Male turkeys have a free-wheeling sex life.* In early Spring, mature males (toms or gobblers while juvenile males

are called jakes) start showing off to comely hens by vocalizing, strutting and displaying their finery. Sound familiar? Gobblers often court in groups. Dominant males establish territories, defend them against competitors and mate with multiple eligible females. When mating is complete, males hang out together, leaving the hens to make the nests, incubate the eggs and rear the chicks (hatchlings are called pouls).

- *They're named after the country.* Well, sort of. Best evidence is that, centuries ago, English gourmets began importing, from merchants in Turkey, a delicious guinea hen from Madagascar. So they called it "turkey." When Native Americans introduced a similarly delectable, but totally unrelated large bird to the first English Colonists, the Pilgrims named it turkey as well. And speaking of Pilgrims, when we think of turkeys we of course think of Thanksgiving. It's true that wild turkeys were featured in the storied "First Thanksgiving" in Massachusetts in the Fall of 1621, when Native Americans broke bread with English settlers. But today's portly, stubby-legged domestic turkeys, bred for the dinner table, scarcely resemble their agile, mobile progenitors. Fly? They can barely stand. Mate? No way. Physically impossible with all that protruding breast meat. Hence their breeding is through artificial insemination. But, as the centerpiece of a modern holiday feast, or as an off-season meat alternative, you can't beat a domestic turkey. That's why Americans buy nearly six billion pounds of turkey per year.

There are still those who relish wild turkeys, especially hunters who have bagged one for the dinner table. Some care is taken to sort out errant shotgun pellets. We should allow hunters their indulgences. After all, were it not for hunters' dedication to restoring and protecting wild turkeys, these fowl might have gone extinct in North America. Instead, they're now a familiar feature of the landscape.

But we can't be complacent. There is some evidence of recent declines in wild turkey numbers. We can all do our part to preserve this species for future generations by helping to protect their habitat, supporting research efforts and educating citizens about the history, habits and fascinating behavior of these magnificent birds.

Henry S. Parker is an adjunct associate professor at Georgetown University. He can be contacted at hspshp@gmail.com

Note to self: Be content with what is.

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