

SENIOR REPORTER

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MARCH 2026

"Serving The Needs of Orange County & Long Beach Seniors Since 1974"

Charlize Theron

"If I don't like seeing myself on the screen, I think when I start seeing that, that's when I think I'll stop."

— Charlize Theron



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Charlize Theron: The Real African Queen

By Les Goldberg

Known best for her award-winning performances in such hit films as *"The Italian Job," "Hancock," "Prometheus," "Mad Max: Fury Road," "Atomic Blonde,"* and *"The Old Guard,"* to name a few, the story of actress Charlize Theron is deeper than her movie and TV roles.

Did you know, for instance, that Theron, 50, who grew up on her parents' farm in South Africa, survived a near-fatal attack when she and her mother were shot at by her drunken, alcoholic father? Luckily, her mother retrieved the gun and killed her husband in self-defense.

Did you know that despite all

of her success, she has fought off demons throughout, like her struggles with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), sleeping problems, and her former addiction to smoking?



Photo courtesy
Wikimedia Commons.

She credits her ability to over-

come adversity, especially her early childhood in a chaotic family, to her surroundings in Africa, which she said were "so great. I was usually barefoot in the dirt: no Game Boys, no computers, and we had sanctions, so there were no concerts. This meant you had to entertain yourself."

Her pathway to a business career began as a teenager when she dreamed of being a dancer. At age 16, she traveled to Europe on a one-year scholarship to model in Milan, Italy. A year later, she and her mother moved to New York, where she trained as a ballet dancer.



Photo courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

In 1994, she flew to Los Angeles on a one-way ticket her mother bought to try to get into the movies. During her initial months there, she lived in a motel with just \$300 in her pocket, stealing bread from a restaurant basket to survive.

When she went to a Hollywood Boulevard bank one day, she tried to cash a check her mother had sent her. The bank teller refused, but the man standing behind her in line cashed it for her and gave her his business card. He was a talent agent who introduced her to an acting school.

By 1995, she secured her first non-speaking role in the horror film *"Children of the Corn III: Urban Harvest."* Her first speaking role came a year later when she played a hitwoman in *"2 Days in the Valley."*

After Theron found another agent who believed in her potential, her career expanded in the late 90s. Her breakout role was in the horror drama, *"The Devil's Advocate,"* in which she starred alongside Al Pacino and Keanu Reeves.

Since then, her resume has

Continued on page 6

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The Thing Just Stopped Working!

By Randal C. Hill

At the dawn of the 1970s, video games existed primarily as coffee-break time wasters for computer nerds. That's when two such techies — Nolan Bushnell and Ted Dabney — left Ampex to form Atari in Sunnyvale, a town in the heart of California's booming Silicon Valley. The pair had envisioned a future gold mine in the growing world of quarter-gobbling arcade games.

Bushnell and Dabney soon brought in a third Ampex worker, Allan Alcorn. To see what the newbie could do, Bushnell assigned him a single task: create a table-tennis-type video apparatus that the public would embrace — and pay to play.

Alcorn, who had no gaming experience, dove into the project and ended up with Pong, a name derived from ping pong, the nickname for table tennis. On sheets of graph paper, Alcorn had sketched out a vertical dotted line down the center of a TV screen, then added a small square (the ball) and a paddle on each side of the "net."

Two players would control their paddles by moving them vertically on the left or right side of the screen, competing against each other by knocking the ball back and forth, just as in the real game. Points were earned when the opposing player failed to return the ball,

and the first gamer to reach 11 points won the game.

Alcorn designed the game to offer about four minutes of playing time.

To cobble together a prototype, he bought a \$75 Magnavox TV set, bolted it inside a wooden cabinet, and soldered wires onto boards to create the circuitry needed to power Pong.

Then came the time to give the machine a test. "Andy Capp's Tavern was one of our favorite places," Alcorn explained. "We knew the owner, Bill Gaddis, and we trusted him. If something went wrong, we knew he would call us."

In September 1972, Alcorn and Bushnell trucked the awkward contraption to the nearby tavern, named after Andy Capp, a British comic strip character created in 1957 by cartoonist Reg Smythe. Pong made its public debut there after Alcorn installed a coin box made of a sawed-off plastic milk jug, then shoved the game into a corner behind the bar. His brainchild was set on a table among pin-ball machines and a jukebox.

The Atari trio crossed their fingers and hoped for the best.

A few days later, Gaddis phoned Alcorn with some bad news — Pong was having "technical issues" and had stopped working. He drove to Andy Capp's, fear-

ing the worst. But a heavy sigh of relief relieved Alcorn of any stress he had when he saw that there was no mechanical problem, and that the Pong game had malfunctioned because of a logjam of quarters shoved in by enthusiastic players.

Games in Gaddis's bar had typically brought in about \$10 a day; with Pong, which amount quickly quadrupled.

Later, when Pong was scaled down and offered for in-home usage, the fun machine sold more than 30 million units before being discontinued in 1992.

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Charlize Theron

Continued from page 4

been filled with leading roles in “Mighty Joe Young,” “The Cider House Rules,” “Reindeer Games,” “The Yards,” “The Legend of Bagge Vance,” “Men of Honor,” “Sweet November,” “The Curse of the Jade Scorpion,” and “Trapped.”



*Photo courtesy
Wikimedia Commons.*

With the turn of the century, Theron’s reputation grew to new heights. After her performance in “Monster,” in which she portrayed a serial killer, film critic Roger Ebert wrote, “It is one of the greatest performances in the history of the cinema.” For her role, she was awarded an Oscar for Best Actress as well as similar honors from the Screen Actors Guild and Golden Globes.

Becoming one of Hollywood’s highest paid actresses, she continued her successful journey in such films as “In the Valley of Elah,” “Sleepwalking,” “The Burning Plain,” “The Road,” “Young Adult,” “Snow White and the Huntsman,” “A Million Ways to Die in the West,” “Dark Places” and “Mad Max.”



*Photo courtesy
Wikimedia Commons.*

Most recently, Theron produced and starred in the romantic comedy “Long Shot” with Seth Rogen, the superhero films “The Old Guard and Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness,” and “Cipher.”

Last year, she was cast in “The Odyssey,” due to premiere later this year.

When she’s not acting, producing, or directing, she is advocating for her favorite causes – supporting African youth and women’s rights and safety. She is officially a United Nations Messenger of Peace.

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Dayle McIntosh Center's Mobility Management Program Grows Independence Mobility for Orange County's Disabled and Older Adult Population

By Stacey Kumagai

Mobility matters. For the over 500,000 people in Orange County who are people with disabilities and/or are part of the 60+ older adults / aging community population of 770,000 (2025 statistics for the State of California Department on Aging) – Mobility issues can be challenging in car-dependent Orange County. Enter a real-time solution with the Dayle McIntosh Center's MMPP program.

Dayle McIntosh Center for the Disabled (DMC) is celebrating 49 years as Orange County's only Independent Living Center for people with disabilities, older adults and Veterans and is also celebrating the one-year anniversary of the **Mobility Management Professionals Program** (MMPP) relaunch in partnership with OCTA after the program was paused due to COVID-19 at the start of the pandemic and funding ended in 2022

The DMC MMPP program is designed to inform, educate and train the community on how to have equity accessing the transportation system for a better quality of life. In addition to access, additional benefits in training include customized goal-setting, planning and additional support for travel safety. The OCTA Measure M2 (M2) Senior Mobility Program



DMC's MMPP Team: Ivan Cortez, Lead Home and Community Access Coordinator and Travel Trainers Marisol Zamora and Babar Masood.

is designed to fill the gap between local fixed-route buses and ADA paratransit, or OC ACCESS service, by providing local transportation services to seniors in participating cities in Orange County.

Thanks to the partnership's funding DMC moves people with disabilities and older adults forward as more change is created in creating solutions to what currently 25% of Orange County's population according to the OC Aging Services Collaborative.

DMC's MMPP so far has created access and impact for forty-four OC residents whose individual lives which have changed since the relaunch one year ago in which 16% of this

group are older adults with and without disabilities.

The oldest MMPP participant's age is 96 years old - proving no one is ever too old to learn new things desired to have bus training to succeed in living the life one chooses.

"The biggest demand in the 55+ market has been requesting assistance in applying to and navigating the OC ACCESS Paratransit Services. Travel Trainers offer one-time training with OC ACCESS given it is a direct ride to their destination. Most 55+ consumers prefer to save time by using OC ACCESS over the fixed route system due to their door-to-door service and less walking distance. However, after completing such training several 55+ consumers have shown interest in learning to ride the fixed route system as a fare saving option," states Ivan Cortez, DMC's Lead Home and Community Access Coordinator.

"The most notable change in consumer growth is going into the program with doubt and ending with confidence and to get out of their comfort zone and become knowledgeable about the fixed route system. (Overcoming fear) -It strengthens their confidence in riding independently and without needing to rely on others. It

motivates them to be proactive in the community and explore new areas for themselves. It is a great alternative to use for those who do not drive anymore as well. Consumers feel intimidated with the fixed route system at the start of the program because of its multiple bus changes. Here, Travel Trainers offer encouragement and adjusted training/routes to ease the process and ensure the consumer's comfort. Upon exiting the program, consumers have been seen in the community navigating the bus system independently following the Travel Trainers' teachings and guidance," Cortez explains.



DMC MMPP consumer J. Thomas successfully navigated a trip from Santa Ana to a day in Newport Beach.

In the last year since the program's revival, DMC has also had to pivot recognizing the market has a growth surge in additional needs. While the current program still features much of what the original program offered for the DMC

MMPP team to assist the older adult community to learn how to learning how to safely and confidently navigate public transportation through OCTA with trip planning and travel training to doctor's offices, libraries, churches, friend or family member's homes, and other locations of the consumer's choice, there are new gains with the current program's pivot to add value to the program.

"Now, we are able to provide those same services and supports through OCTA's Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Disabled (EMSD) funds, however after experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic, we are seeing not only an increase in need from the 55+ population but also a need to adapt our training methods due to the combined impacts of Long COVID, vaccine-related complications, and the natural process of aging. Additionally, there is a growing need to incorporate personal safety as older adults continue to be targets of theft and scams. As a result, the program and DMC as a whole is evolving to include more individualized pacing, increased coordination with healthcare and support systems, and expanded education strategies to ensure older adults can remain mobile, connected,

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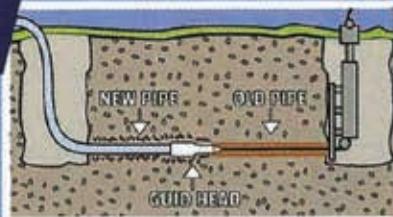
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On the Road Again ...

Overcoming Your Fear of Snakes

By Shana McCann

Are you one of the millions of Americans who cringe, shiver, and scream at the sight of snakes and all creatures that quietly slither at your feet?

To overcome this common fear, called herpetophobia in scientific jargon, experts recommend “exposure therapy,” the gradual introduction to reptiles and spiders in a controlled, safe setting.

They suggest you begin by looking at reptile photos or discussing them, then moving on to more direct encounters, like going to the zoo or managing a small lizard.

Well, folks, such an environment for controlled and safe exposure is literally in our own backyard here in the Orange County, Long Beach, and Los Angeles area.



We recommend you take your fears – along with your fearless grandkids – to the Reptile Zoo, also known as Prehistoric Pets, nestled in a Fountain Valley strip mall just south of the 405 freeway on Brookhurst Street.

For more than 30 years, the company, Prehistoric Inc., has



Photos courtesy The Reptile Zoo.

attracted visitors from around the world to its unique indoor facility featuring live amphibians, arachnids, fish, and other exotic animals under the watchful eyes of the highly qualified Reptile Zoo staff.

In addition to its pet store and educational materials and resources, you can get up close and personal with exotic species that include the African spurred tortoise, Baja blue rock lizard, the Midget faced rattlesnake, the Texas rat snake, a Yellow anaconda, a pig-nosed turtle, and a Burmese python.

That’s not all. There are also Rhinoceros iguanas, Leopard geckos, Peach-throated monitors, Egyptian sand boas, Solomon Islands Skinks, Crocodile and Cuvier’s dwarf monitors, Jamaican boas, and colorful Koi fish. Actually, if it crawls, you’ll find it at the Reptile Zoo.

While visiting this unique collection of exotic wildlife, you

might run into Jay Brewer, 60, the founder and owner, who is usually dressed in his khaki jungle safari garb and always happy to welcome guests with his infectious smile and willingness to tell stories about the “livestock.”



Brewer & Tarantula.

As he said, “These animals each have their own story; some are rescues, many were born here at the Reptile Zoo, and others were part of private collections. Here, guests can learn about these rare animals firsthand with interactive displays and presentations.

“Through the guidance of our handlers, guests learn proper handling techniques, basic facts about each animal, and gain an increased appreciation for what it takes to care for them.”

He is proud to boast that his facility is the home to movie and TV “stars,” like the late Twinkie, the world’s largest albino snake that previously was a “guest” on *“The Tonight Show With Conan O’Brien,”* and Frank, a monitor lizard from the show *Jessie*, along with a two-headed Texas rat snake.

Three years ago, the Reptile Zoo was featured on The Roku Channel’s reality show *“Reptile Royalty,”* a six-episode miniseries, and has been in several magazine and newspaper articles.

To call the place “interesting” would be an understatement. When you are roaming the 5,000-square-foot facility, you might see iguanas sitting on the heads of employees, or kids feeding the turtles while others are physically and verbally expressing their excitement of being in the presence of animals they might call “scary” before warming up to many of the harmless creatures.

“Reptiles get a bum rap,” Brewer said. “In the wild, they might be the ultimate predator, but when they are born and raised in captivity for multiple generations, and they are fed regular-

ly, you have the opportunity to bond with them.”

If this article convinces you that a visit to the Reptile Zoo would be worth your while as a daytime adventure, you could also be putting your fears of the creepy crawlies in your rear-view mirror.



And who knows, you might even bring a lizard, gecko, or bearded dragon home with you! To plan your visit to the Reptile Zoo, here’s what you need to know:

It is located at 18818 Brookhurst St. in Fountain Valley, and is open every day from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Ticket prices and fees are as follows:

Adult admission: \$15
Child admission: \$10
Toddlers: Free

If you want hands-on experience with the animals, it will cost \$5, the same price as feeding the tortoises. For a private feeding lasting 15 minutes, it will cost \$75, and \$175 if you want a 40-minute interaction with the animals.

There is much to see and do at Reptile Zoo, which is wheelchair accessible, and ample parking is available. Try it, you’ll like it.

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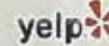
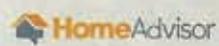
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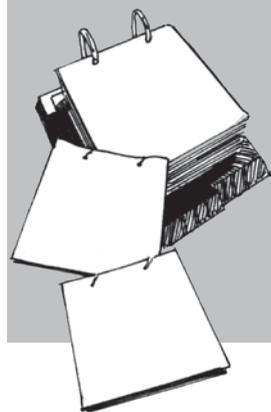
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MARCH Calendar of Events



March in Orange County brings family festivals, cultural celebrations, outdoor adventures, and food-centric fun for every age and interest. From whale watching and art walks to Irish festivals and music events, here's what's coming up this month.

D. Yoder Family Sundays San Clemente

March 1

10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Enjoy free chamber music and kids' crafts at Casa Romantica with this monthly family music program.

Bowers Museum Celtic Festival

Santa Ana

March 1

11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Celebrate Irish culture with dancers, crafts, face painting, and festive treats at the Bowers Museum.

Festival of Whales

Dana Point

March 6-8

The annual whale watching celebration includes a parade, sand sculpting, concerts, kid crafts, historic tours, paddling demos, and more at Dana Point Harbor.

Disney California Adventure Food & Wine Festival

Anaheim

March 6 to April 27

Culinary demonstrations, tasting booths, live entertainment, and seasonal delights at Disney's Food & Wine Festival.

Pacific Symphony Lantern Festival

Costa Mesa

March 7

11 a.m.

Free family festivities with music, lantern decorating, cultural demonstrations, and fun at Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall.

GEMfest - Newport Coast

March 7

A vibrant celebration for middle school girls with keynote talks, workshops, and hands-on activities at Sage Hill School.

El Presidente Ball

San Juan Capistrano

March 7

6 to 10 p.m.

An old Western-style dinner dance with great food and live country western music at El Adobe de Capistrano.

Irish Fest @ Old World Village

Huntington Beach

March 8-17

Enjoy food, drinks, and live music — including corned beef & cabbage — at Old World Village's Irish celebration.

Mulligan Mayhem Golf Tournament

Irvine

March 8

A full-day golf event featuring team formats and fun competitive play at Strawberry Farms Golf Club.

Old World Wiener Nationals 'Dach Of Irish' Race

Huntington Beach

March 8

10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Cheer on adorable dachshunds racing at Old World Village — perfect for families and dog lovers.

OC Restaurant Week

Orange County

March 8-14

Enjoy prix fixe menus at participating restaurants across the county with options for all tastes and price points.

Murder Mystery Scavenger Hunt

Laguna Beach

March 14

11 a.m.

Solve clues on foot around Downtown Laguna Beach in this live interactive game for adults.

Musical Melodrama in the Park

San Juan Capistrano

March 14

1 to 4 p.m.

Family-friendly Old West melodrama with music and laughs at Historic Town Center Park.

Old Towne Vintage Market

Orange

March 14

11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Browse vintage sellers, enjoy a live DJ, food vendors, and unique finds at American Legion Post 132.

OC Wine & Spirit Fest St. Patrick's Celebration

Silverado

March 15

Noon to 4 p.m.

Unlimited tastings of wine, brews, and spirits, live music, and food trucks at Giracci Vineyards & Farms.

Swallows Day Fiesta Grande

San Juan Capistrano

March 18

6 to 9 p.m.

A lively kickoff celebration with music and friendly contests at the Swallow's Inn.

The Muckenthaler Cultural Center Bugs, Bees & Butterflies Day

Fullerton

March 18

10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Free family event with crafts, eco vendors, and nature-focused activities.

Saint Joseph's Day at the Mission

San Juan Capistrano

March 19

Historic celebration with Mariachi music, storytelling, community presentations, and the ringing of bells.

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The Price of Immortality: The Haunting Legacy of Sunset Boulevard



Photo courtesy Adobe Stock Photos.

Billy Wilder's 1950 masterpiece, "*Sunset Boulevard*," is not just a film about Hollywood; it is a ghost story where the ghosts are still breathing. Part film noir, part scathing satire, and entirely a tragedy, it remains the definitive autopsy of the "Dream Factory." By blending cynical realism with Gothic melodrama, Wilder created a work that serves as both a love letter and a suicide note to the Golden Age of cinema.

A Dead Man's Tale

The film famously begins at the end: a body floats face-down in a swimming pool. In a stroke of narrative genius, the story is narrated by the corpse — Joe Gillis (William Holden), a down-on-his-luck screenwriter. This choice immediately establishes a sense of inevitable doom. We aren't watching to see *if* Joe dies, but to understand the soul-crushing machinery that led him to that water.

Joe's journey begins when he pulls into a crumbling driveway on Sunset Boulevard to evade repo men. He stumbles into a sprawling, decaying mansion that feels more like a mausoleum than a home. This is the domain of **Norma Desmond** (Gloria Swanson), a forgotten star of the silent era who lives in a delusional bubble of past glory.

The Grand Illusion of Norma Desmond

Swanson's performance is nothing short of legendary. A silent film star herself, Swanson brought an authentic, stylized theatricality to the role that grounded Norma's madness in reality. Norma is a woman frozen in time, convinced that her "return" to the screen is imminent.

Her most famous line — "**I am big. It's the pictures that got small**" — perfectly encapsulates her defiance. She refuses to acknowledge the evolution of the industry or the passage of her own youth. To Norma, the world outside her gates is a mistake that needs correcting.

She is enabled by her devoted butler, Max von Mayerling (played by the great silent film director Erich von Stroheim). In a meta-twist that adds layers of heartbreak to the film, Max is revealed to be Norma's first director and ex-husband. He maintains her fantasy by writing fake fan mail, choosing to live in the shadow of her delusion rather than let her face the cold light of obscurity.

The Cynic and the Starlet

Gillis initially views Norma as

a meal ticket. He agrees to edit her bloated, unfilmable script for "*Salome*," moving into the mansion and becoming a "kept man." The dynamic is a grim exploration of transactional relationships. Joe trades his integrity for silk shirts and champagne, while Norma buys a captive audience for her performances.

The contrast to this decay is found in Betty Schaefer (Nancy Olson), a young, idealistic script reader. She represents the "New Hollywood"—hardworking, collaborative, and grounded. Her budding romance with Joe offers him a glimpse of redemption, a chance to escape the velvet-lined coffin of Norma's house. However, in the world of "*Sunset Boulevard*," the past has a gravitational pull that is impossible to escape.

Themes of Obsession and Obsolescence

At its core, "*Sunset Boulevard*" is an exploration of **obsolescence**. It examines what happens to people when the world no longer has a use for them.

- **Norma** is a relic of a silent era discarded by the advent of "talkies."

- **Joe** is a hack writer struggling against a studio system that views talent as a commodity.

- **The Mansion** itself is a character — dusty, cavernous space filled with photographs of Norma, representing a mind that has turned inward until it has rotted.

Wilder's direction is razor-sharp, using light and shadow to heighten the noir atmosphere. The cinematography captures the contrast

between the sunny, frantic energy of the Paramount backlot and the oppressive, candle-lit stillness of Norma's estate.

The Final Close-Up

The film's climax is one of the most iconic sequences in cinema history. After Joe attempts to leave and reveal the truth, Norma's fragile psyche finally snaps. As the police and news cameras descend on the house, she mistakes the chaos for a film set.

Descending her grand staircase in a trance, she delivers her final monologue to the cameras: "**All right, Mr. DeMille, I'm ready for my close-up.**" It is a terrifying and pathetic moment. She has finally achieved the spotlight she craved, but only by descending into total madness.

Why It Still Matters

"*Sunset Boulevard*" remains relevant because the "celebrity industrial complex" has only grown more intense since 1950. The film's warning about the fickleness of fame and the danger of living in a curated reality resonates in the age of social media and instant, disposable stardom. It is a cynical, brilliant, and deeply human look at the high cost of the American Dream.

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The Gadget Geezer

By Les Goldberg

March Tech Madness Hits Home

Just when you think technology's maddening pace is subsiding, even slightly, along comes a whole new slew of products that dispel your thoughts completely. Here are a few that caught my eye at this year's Consumer Electronics Show:

Washer-Dryer Combo



Photo courtesy LG Electronic.

When your washer or dryer has spun its last cycle, there is a decision to be made – replace one or get a new pair of appliances. What if that pair were packaged into one machine?

LG Electronics, one of the world's largest appliance companies, has introduced the **LG Signature 29-inch WashCombo**, a two-in-one washer and dryer designed to save you time in the laundry room.

Using an assortment of AI sensors and technology, this ventless appliance can complete a wash and dry cycle in just 90 minutes, according to a company spokesperson.

An LCD dial display helps to choose between different loads, while a load detection sensor

and scale measure how much fabric is inside before starting the load. Detergent and fabric dispensers automatically give each load just the right amount of soap and softener.

Custom Ice



Photo courtesy Euhomy Inc.

Not having enough ice for your guests at a party can be frustrating. Waiting for your ice trays to freeze will try your patience. Fetching another bag at the convenience store is out of the question. That's why you need the **Euhomy Ice Leopard X1**.

What is it, you ask? It is the CES award-winning portable rapid ice maker that will produce fresh bullet ice in about five minutes, ready to plop into your guests' cocktails and drinks.

It features a unique and removable ice bucket with Cold-retention technology, keeping ice frozen for up to four or more hours. The energy-efficient ice-maker compacts and has app functionality allowing you to schedule ice production, monitor progress, and receive notifications.

Elite Headphones

For those of you who are dedicated audiophiles – you re-



Photo courtesy MoonAudio.

ally love sound quality from all of your electronic "toys" – **MoonAudio** now offers one of the most technologically advanced headsets on the market.

They are also expensive at \$4,500, but the company's new **Audeze LCD-5 Planar** headsets feature the thinnest, most responsive nano-scale Parallel Universe diaphragm to date, according to company spokespersons at CES.

"Our SLAM Technology," they said, "delivers powerful, extended bass response with pinpoint driver control, resulting in both expansive and precisely defined quality audio you would expect from an engineering-centric firm."

Designed for comfort and durability, these headsets are lightweight, built with carbon fiber, magnesium, genuine leather, and polished polymer acetate. The redesigned earpads are precisely sculpted to ensure

long-term comfort and improved seal, they added.

AI Dog Collar



Photo courtesy Satellai.

Worried that their dog friends might run away or be injured if not securely tethered to their owners or guardians, a company called **Satellai** invented one of the most advanced dog collars ever brought to market.

Another CES winner, judges were attracted to its use of AI to deliver satellite (GPS) tracking and the collar's ability to monitor your pets' location, activity, health, and more. It comes in four colors, one and two-year telecommunication plans, 120-hour maximum battery life, and free cover and flex strap. Price: \$400.

Walking Vacuum

Robotic vacuums are not new. They've been on the market for years, and millions have been sold. So, what is new?

How about one that walks and climbs stairs while clean-



Photo courtesy Roborock.

ing them? Sounds like something out of "The Jetsons" TV cartoons. But it is real. The **Dreame X50 Ultra** from **Roborock** is now available, so you can sit in your recliner while the vacuum navigates your home's staircase, cleaning as it goes, one step at a time, one retractable leg at a time.

The vacuum features retractable legs that overcome obstacles up to 2.36 inches with minimal noise, 360-degree mapping, a duobrush that tackles hair up to 11.3 inches, and 20,000 pounds of suction. Extended brushes and mops reach deep into corners and under furniture. Price: \$1,600.





Fast Facts About March



Photo courtesy Pixabay.

March marks the turning point between winter and spring in the Northern Hemisphere, bringing longer days, shifting weather, and a sense of renewal. Here are 400 words of quick, interesting facts about the third month of the year.

March was named after Mars, the Roman god of war. In ancient Rome, March (Martius) was actually the first month of the year, kicking off both the military campaign season and the agricultural calendar. It wasn't until 45 BCE, when Julius Caesar introduced the Julian calendar, that Jan. 1 became the start of the year.

March has 31 days and begins on the same day of the week as November every year, and also February during non-leap years.

One of the biggest events in

March is the spring equinox, which usually falls on March 19, 20, or 21. On this day, daylight and darkness are nearly equal in length. In 2026, for example, the equinox will occur on March 20. After the equinox, days continue to get longer in the Northern Hemisphere, signaling the start of astronomical spring.

March is known for unpredictable weather. The saying "In like a lion, out like a lamb" reflects the idea that the month often begins with stormy, wintry conditions and ends with milder spring weather — though that's not always the case.

Several major holidays and observances take place in March. St. Patrick's Day is celebrated on March 17, honoring Ireland's patron saint. It's marked by parades, green attire, and

Continued on page 41

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- 9.19.25 – J. Gomez – Very beautiful – very good renovation! 10/10
- 9.22.25 – J. Brown – Amazing transformation! 10/10
- 10.4.25 – J. Mendoza – Clean, nice, nice staff. Thank you!.....10/10



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In The Spotlight

By Debbie L. Sklar

Tax Season Tips from an Expert

As Americans move into their late 50s, 60s, and beyond, the tax picture often becomes more complicated—not simpler. Retirement doesn't mean taxes disappear. In many cases, new income streams, new deductions, and new rules come into play all at once. According to CPA Lisa Greene-Lewis, there are several changes and planning strategies people over 55 should understand now to avoid surprises later.

One of the biggest updates affects taxpayers 65 and older, she said.

Beginning in 2025 through 2028, eligible seniors can claim a new \$6,000 deduction in addition to the standard deduction. For 2025, the standard deduction is \$15,750 for single filers, \$31,500 for married couples filing jointly, and \$23,725 for head of household. Those who are 65 or older or blind can also claim an additional standard deduction—\$2,000 for single filers and \$1,600 for married couples filing jointly.”

However, income limits apply to the new \$6,000 deduction. It phases out for single filers with income over \$75,000 and married couples filing jointly with income over \$150,000. That makes income planning especially important for retirees juggling pensions, withdrawals, and part-time work.

Social Security

“Social Security is another area that trips people up. While many assume benefits are tax-free, that isn't always the case. If combined income—defined as half of Social Security benefits plus other taxable income—falls between \$25,000 and \$34,000 for single filers (\$34,000 to \$44,000 for married couples filing jointly), up to 50% of benefits may be taxable. Above those thresholds, up to 85% of benefits can be taxed. Pension income, 1099-R retirement distributions, and even side-gig earnings can push retirees into higher taxable ranges,” she said.

Other Tips

Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs) are also critical. Under SECURE Act 2.0, the RMD age is now 73. Those turning 73 in 2025 must take their first distribution by April 1, 2026. These withdrawals are taxed as ordinary income, and missing an RMD can result in a 25% excise tax. Careful timing can help reduce the tax hit, especially if retirees coordinate withdrawals with Social Security and other income, she added.

Mistakes often occur during the transition into retirement. Early withdrawals from traditional IRAs or 401(k)s before age 59½ generally trigger a 10% penalty in addition to ordinary

income tax unless an exception applies. Even after 59½, large lump-sum withdrawals can bump retirees into higher tax brackets or cause more of their Social Security benefits to become taxable.

Other Relief

For homeowners, recent changes may offer relief. The state and local tax (SALT) deduction cap increased from \$10,000 to \$40,000 for those with income under \$500,000. That makes itemizing deductions more attractive for some retirees, especially those paying significant property and state income taxes. Seniors should also remember to add the additional age-based standard deduction if they do not itemize.

“Medical expenses are another commonly overlooked deduction. Taxpayers who itemize can deduct qualified medical expenses exceeding 7.5% of adjusted gross income. That includes insurance premiums, checkups, dental visits, and unreimbursed caregiving costs. For someone with \$50,000 in adjusted gross income, expenses above \$3,750 may be deductible,” she said.

Charitable giving can also provide tax benefits. Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs) allow retirees to donate directly from their IRA—up to

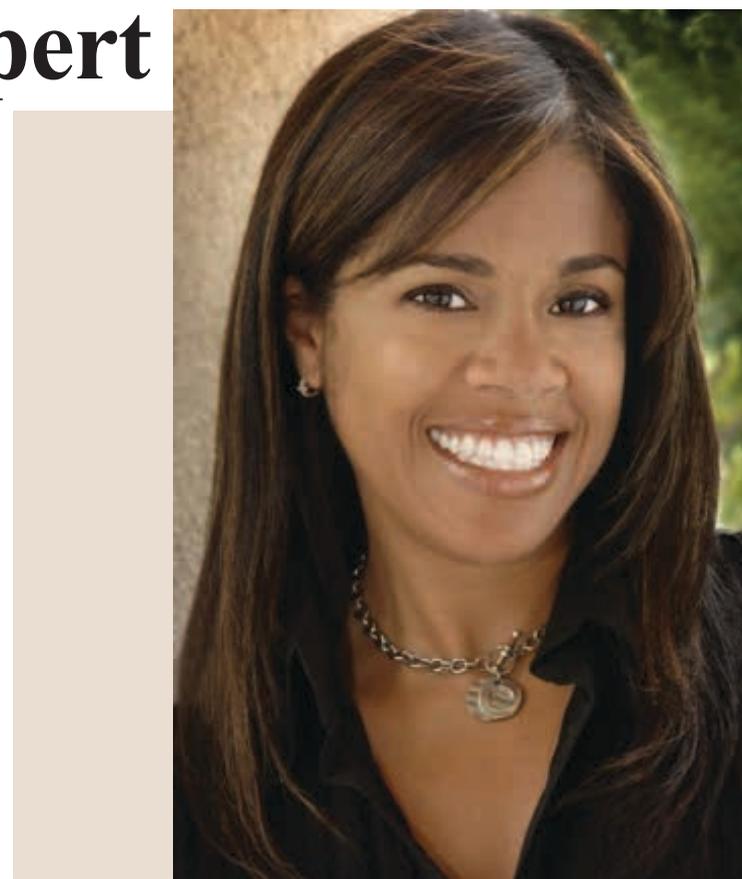


Photo courtesy Lisa Greene-Lewis.

\$108,000 in 2025 and \$111,000 in 2026—without including the distribution in taxable income. For those 73 and older, a QCD can count toward satisfying an RMD. Donor-advised funds offer another strategy, allowing retirees to claim an immediate deduction while distributing funds to charities over time, she said.

Older adults working side gigs should be mindful of both income and deductions. Under the new tax law, qualifying tip income may be deductible up to \$25,000, with phaseouts beginning at \$150,000 for single filers and \$300,000 for married couples filing jointly. Self-employed workers can also deduct business expenses such as supplies, mileage, and travel, which reduces net taxable income.

Investment income is taxed differently from retirement withdrawals. Distributions from traditional retirement accounts are taxed at ordinary rates. By contrast, investments held longer than a year are generally taxed at long-term capital gains rates—0%, 15%, or 20%—which are often lower than ordinary income tax rates. Investments sold after being held for one year or less are taxed as ordinary income rates.

“For those selling a home, up to \$250,000 gain for single filers and \$500,000 for married couples filing jointly may be excluded from taxes if the home was owned and used as a primary residence for two of

Continued on page 38

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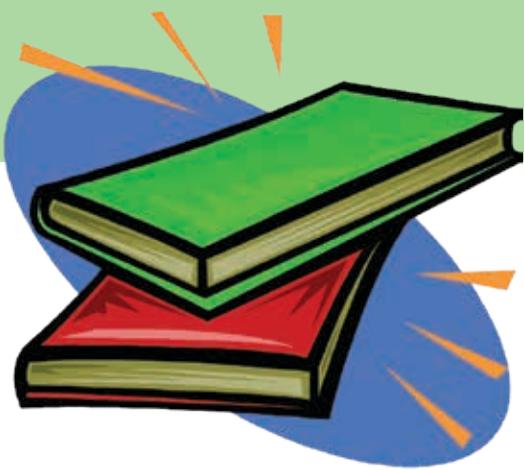
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March Book Club

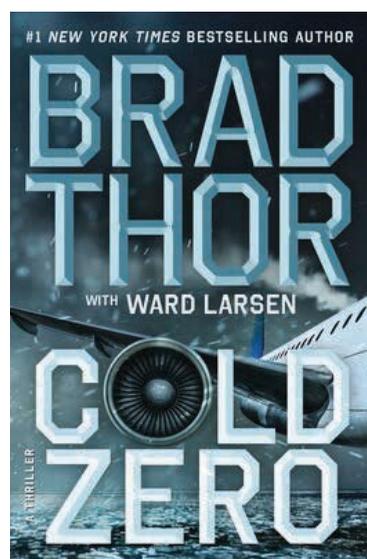
Pull up a chair and check out one of these new reads, from thrillers to political assassins, to get your new reading list started for March.

Cold Zero

A Thriller

By Brad Thor

With Ward Larsen



“A vanished plane. An earth-shattering secret. A countdown to World War III.”

“Hemisphere Airlines Flight 777—the most advanced jetliner ever built—disappears without a trace over the North Pole. Crippled by sabotage, it crash-lands on the ice, stranding the surviving passengers in a wasteland of frigid cold and chaos.

“The real storm, however, is still coming.

“Hidden inside the wreckage is the prototype for a revolutionary piece of technology that could upend the balance of world power. Now Washington, Moscow, and Beijing are racing to be the first on scene to retrieve it—at any cost.

“Trapped in the middle of the world’s most dangerous flash-point are CIA operative Kasey Sheridan and former fighter pilot turned first officer, Brett Sharpe. Hunted by enemy forces, they must spirit both the device and its creator across the ice to safety—before rival superpowers turn the Arctic into a war zone.

“With the clock ticking and the temperature dropping, the fate of the free world is about to be decided at the top of the globe,” according to Publisher Atria/Emily Bestler Books.

Keeper of Lost Children

A Novel

By Sadeqa Johnson

“In this new novel from the *New York Times* bestselling author of *The House of Eve*, one American woman’s vision in post WWII Germany will tie together three people in an unexpected way.

“Ethel Gathers, the proud wife of an American Officer, is living in Occupied Germany in



the 1950s. After discovering a local orphanage filled with the abandoned mixed-race children of German women and Black American GIs, Ethel feels compelled to help find these children homes.

“Philadelphia-born Ozzie Phillips volunteers for the recently desegregated army in 1948, eager to make his mark in the world. While serving in Mannheim, Germany, he meets a local woman, Jelka, and the two embark on a relationship that will impact their lives forever.

“In 1965, Maryland, Sophia Clark is allowed to attend a prestigious all-white boarding school and escape her heartless parents. While at the school, she discovers a secret that upends her world and sends her on a quest to unravel her own identity.

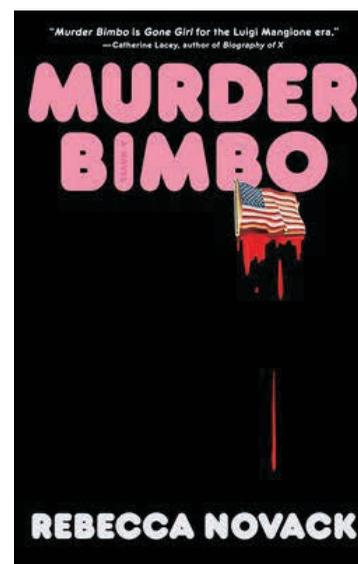
“Toggling between the lives of these three individuals, *Keeper of Lost Children* explores how one woman’s vision will change the course of countless

lives, and demonstrates that love in its myriad of forms—familial, parental, and forbidden, even love of self—can be transcendent,” according to Publisher 37 Ink.

Murder Bimbo

A Novel

By Rebecca Novack



“The exhilaratingly twisty story of a sex worker turned political assassin on the run, *Murder Bimbo*’ is an unputdownable and wholly fresh take on truth, murder, and optics in our national moment.

“A 32-year-old sex worker is shocked when she’s approached by undercover government agents to aid them in a top-secret plot to assassinate a politician known as Meat Neck. But once the deed is done, she realizes what made her the perfect recruit: She’s 100% disposable.

“Holed up in an off-the-grid cabin in the woods, she now has only two days, her wits, and a laptop to save her own life.

“Her best bet is to reach out

to the wildly popular feminist investigative podcast *Justice for Bimbos*.’ In a hastily typed series of emails, the newly minted *Murder Bimbo*’ explains how she was recruited and then trained by a cabal of code-named US agents to take out Meat Neck.

“Then she opens a new email. This time, it’s addressed to her ex, and the facts line up a little differently ...

“Constructed in three increasingly unhinged acts, each a more subversive version of the story than the last, *Murder Bimbo*’ can be read as a gloriously bold literary thriller, a satirical vigilante’s manifesto, or a raucous send-up of the political insanity we all live inside every day. Either way, it’s a dead-serious announcement of an electric new voice in American literature,” according to Publisher Avid Reader Press/Simon & Schuster.

Only Friends

A Novel

By Lydia San Andres

“Fans of *The Regency Vows*’ and *For the Love of Austen*’ series will adore this sexy and charming rom-com debut about an aspiring screenwriter and a gorgeous model teaming up to create Regency era thirst content for online fans.

“After being fired from her day job, unceremoniously ghosted,

Continued on page 28

March Crossword Puzzle

Across

1. Subside
4. Meat
9. _____ Gay
14. Seek the affection of
15. Component of organic fertilizer
16. Column type
17. Trauma ctrs.
18. Moisten while cooking
19. Things
20. Brief review
23. Oodles
24. _____ vivand
25. Playing marbles
28. Cowardly Lion portrayer
30. Barbara _____ Geddes
33. Aired again
34. Man of the hour
35. Shoppe adjective
36. High-speed separator
39. Life stories
40. Lukas of "Witness"
41. Derisive look
42. Big deal
43. Drains
44. Downy
45. Thoroughfares: Abbr.
46. Pluto's tail?
47. Impromptu
54. Kitchen gadget
55. Without a break
56. Paid player
57. Declare
58. Freedom from war
59. Big head

60. Final authority
61. Fudd of cartoons
62. Can be used to catch fish or surf!

Down

1. Large pitcher
2. Drill a hole
3. Pear variety
4. Writ
5. Characteristics

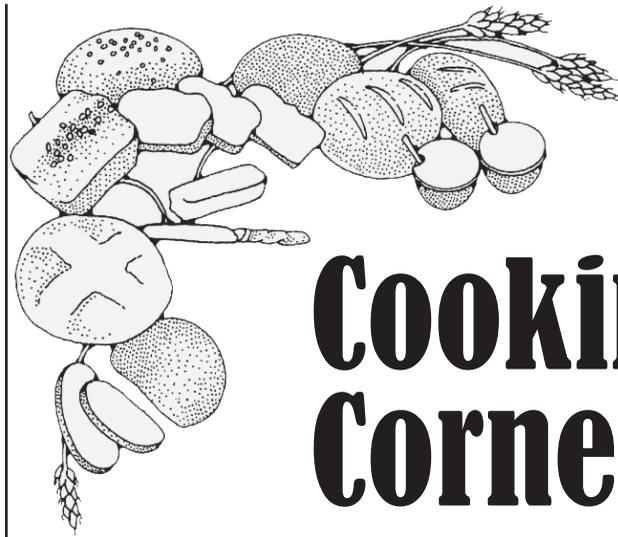
6. Bridge positions
7. Westernmost Aleutian
8. Ship stabilizer
9. Newspaper executive
10. Out
11. Black-and-white treat
12. Delineate
13. Cooling units, for short
21. Hitching posts?

22. Detest
25. Island off Venezuela
26. Icy
27. Threepio's pal
28. Horne and Olin
29. Some are liberal
30. Depressed spirits
31. Peripheries
32. Distrustful
34. Pile

35. Important
37. Abyss
38. Inhabitant of Oahu, Mindanao, or Java
43. Sound system
44. Republic in W Europe
45. Cancels a dele
46. Fatty part of milk
47. I could _____ horse!
48. Like Superman's vision

49. Bishop of Rome
50. Like Nash's lama
51. Ready for business
52. Impulse
53. Smoke deposit
54. Ltr. additions

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Cooking Corner

Irish Cheddar & Guinness Shepherd's Pie



A cozy, flavorful dish perfect for a St. Patrick's Day lunch or dinner.

Ingredients

For the filling

1 lb ground beef or lamb
1 medium onion, diced
2 carrots, diced
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 cup frozen peas
2 tbsp tomato paste
1 cup beef broth
½ cup Guinness (optional but delicious)
1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
1 tsp dried thyme
Salt & pepper to taste

For the topping

2 lbs potatoes, peeled and cubed
4 tbsp butter
½ cup milk or cream
1 cup shredded Irish cheddar (like Kerrygold)
Salt & pepper

Instructions

1. Make the potato topping

-Boil potatoes until tender.
-Drain and mash with butter, milk, salt, and pepper.
-Stir in the shredded Irish cheddar. Set aside.

2. Make the filling

-Sauté onion and carrots in a skillet until softened.
-Add garlic and cook briefly.

-Add ground beef/lamb and brown it.
-Stir in tomato paste, thyme, salt, and pepper.
-Pour in broth and Guinness; simmer 10 minutes until slightly thickened.
-Add peas and stir.

3. Assemble

Spread the meat mixture in a baking dish.
-Spoon the cheesy mashed potatoes on top and smooth.
-Use a fork to create ridges (they brown beautifully).

4. Bake

Bake at 400°F for 20–25 minutes until golden and bubbling.

Optional festive touches

-Sprinkle chopped parsley on top
-Add a little extra cheddar for a browned crust
-Serve with Irish soda bread or a simple green salad

Dale McIntosh Center

Continued from page 8

and independent in their changing bodies and environment," explains Brittany Zazueta, Executive Director for the Dayle McIntosh Center.

Impact and change is the main objective in the program service provided by DMC's MMPP Team. In addition to helping individuals gain access allowing them the freedom to travel independently and avoid social isolation, comes success stories like the time when DMC's Travel Trainer assisted a low vision, 74-year-old consumer with applying for OC ACCESS and obtaining a power electric wheelchair with double control switches through DMC's Reuse Recycling Program. This allowed the consumer's husband to effectively assist the consumer in using the power electric wheelchair for future OC ACCESS training with the Travel Trainer toward their goal of navigating independently to the Braille Institute.

Another time a 61-year old with spine/back injury who had limited mobility skills was provided support from DMC's Travel Trainer who coordinated with DMC's Reuse Recycle program to acquire a power electric wheelchair. After the Travel Trainer provided training on the fixed route system to DMC for the consumer to be able to take the power electric wheelchair home. This motivated the consumer to be active in the community and be able

to visit friends and family while also running errands using the fixed route system.

Many of these program success stories provide the best satisfaction and fulfillment to improve quality of life, independence and access for Orange County residents with disabilities and older adults needing additional support, which is part of the goal of DMC a peer-led organization.

This past year has been rewarding in that most consumers are very grateful for the travel trainers and the patience they have while working with them. They have stated how beneficial the program is for reaching both leisure and important destinations. The travel trainers enjoy doing trainings as each consumer is full of energy and eager to learn different routes. This has also opened doors for consumers to participate in different programs within DMC. The MMPP program has partnered numerous times with DMC's Reuse Recycle program to provide Durable Medical Equipment so consumers can safely navigate the fixed route system.

"Listening to consumers express their gratitude brings me joy because it shows that our trainings are meaningful in achieving their personal goals," states Cortez.

For more information on DMC's MMPP Program call 714-621-3300 or explore their MMPP webpage or share their flyers in English and Spanish with a friend for family member to get started on training today.

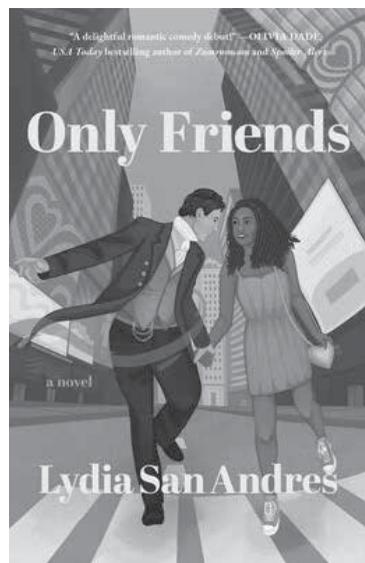
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MARCH Book Club

Continued from page 25



and facing a bad case of writer's block, 26-year-old aspiring screenwriter Mariel Rivera is one spilled coffee away from crying on the subway. When she's rescued from a Times Square kerfuffle by a very handsome model dressed in regency costume, Mariel has no idea her life is about to change.

"Dashwood Bennet has been modeling for years, though recently, his current portfolio includes some more risqué shots." However, he never imagined that after his encounter with Mariel, he'd be putting on his regency breeches just to take them off again ... in front of the camera.

"Dash is the answer to Mariel's prayers in more ways than one. First, he saved her from an unruly mob. Second, he's the perfect person to play the Duke of Harding, a character she's created that captured her attention and won't let go. Third, he's more than a gamble to be the face of her spicy historical shorts. And last but

not least, he's her perfect partner both in business and in the bedroom. But being work-partners-with-benefits can complicate things. Will their partnership survive, or are Mariel and Dash doomed to not have their happily ever after?" according to Publisher Atria/Primerio Sueno Press.

MARCH Calendar

Continued from page 18

Murder Mystery Scavenger Hunt

Huntington Beach

March 21

11:20 a.m.

Explore Downtown Huntington Beach while solving riddles and puzzles in this interactive event.

Swallows Day Parade & Mercado

San Juan Capistrano

March 21

11 a.m.

The nation's largest non-motorized parade is followed by a street fair with food, music, and live entertainment.

Weekend of Art

Los Alamitos

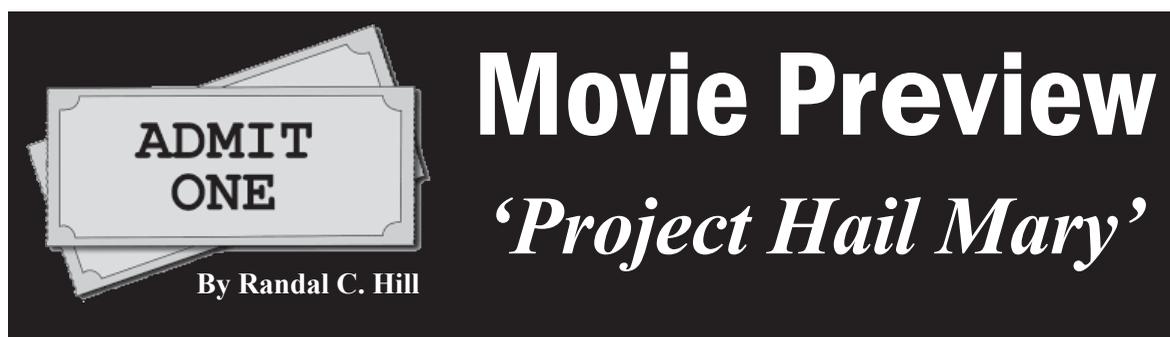
March 27-28

Visual and performing arts exhibition with local artists and an arts & crafts vendor fair at the Los Alamitos Community Center.

Whale Watching

Dana Point & Newport Beach

Gray whales can be seen off the coast through April, and cruises — including options from Dana Wharf and Captain Dave's — offer prime viewing from local harbors



Before Stephen Spielberg changed the movie business in 1975, summertime was often used as a dumping ground for drive-in theater fare for adolescents. "Jaws" changed all that, and now movie fans eagerly anticipate summer-season releases of Tinseltown's biggest blockbusters.

But not in 2026. Three months early, we are being offered a feature guaranteed to outperform — or at least equal — whatever Hollywood moguls have in mind for June, July, and August.

"Project Hail Mary" stars A-list-er Ryan Gosling ("Barbie," "La La Land") in the role of Ryland Grace. The nearly three-hour, budget-busting picture is based on the 2025 best-selling book of the same name by sci-fi savant Andy Weir.

In the opening round of jaw-dropping CGI scenes, Gosling comes to us as a wisecracking sixth-grade science teacher who awakens from a long sleep in an interstellar spacecraft — only to find himself far from home, with no memory of himself or his mission, but with the fate of humanity resting squarely on his somewhat fragile shoulders. He's on his way to Tau Ceti, a solar system that may (repeat, may) offer a solution.

The sun is dying, which, of course, will spell the end of

life on our planet. Grace is told that he's been selected for a project designed to save Earth. He is understandably overwhelmed by this responsibility and had earlier vehemently protested that he's way out of his depth here: "Some people are not good at things," he has proclaimed. "I put the 'not' in astronaut." Then, with a wink to the legacy of Michael Jackson, he confesses, "I can't even moonwalk!"

But Grace's words have fallen on deaf ears in the scientific community. "You have a doctorate in microbiology," he is reminded by Eva Stratt (Sandra Huller), the head of the Hail Mary Project. "You're the only scientist who might know what to do ... You'll figure it out."

With Ryland eventually hooking up in partnership with an alien he calls Rocky — who resembles a giant arachnid — "Project Hail Mary" could be considered akin to a buddy/action tale about two beings from different planets teaming up to save their respective worlds. Broadway icon James Ortiz eerily voices the all-important Rocky character.

"Project Hail Mary" is directed by Phil Lord and Christopher Miller (*The "Jump Street" movies*, *"The Lego Movie"*) with a screenplay by Drew Goddard

(*"The Martian," "World War Z"*). The feature is produced by a seven-member team and includes Weir and Gosling.

"Project Hail Mary," a release from MGM/Pascal Pictures, launches nationally on March 20.

Mark your calendars in red for this one!





SOMETIMES MY HUMAN DOESN'T WEAR PANTS AT HOME. IT'S A RIOT.

—COLBY
adopted 06-18-11

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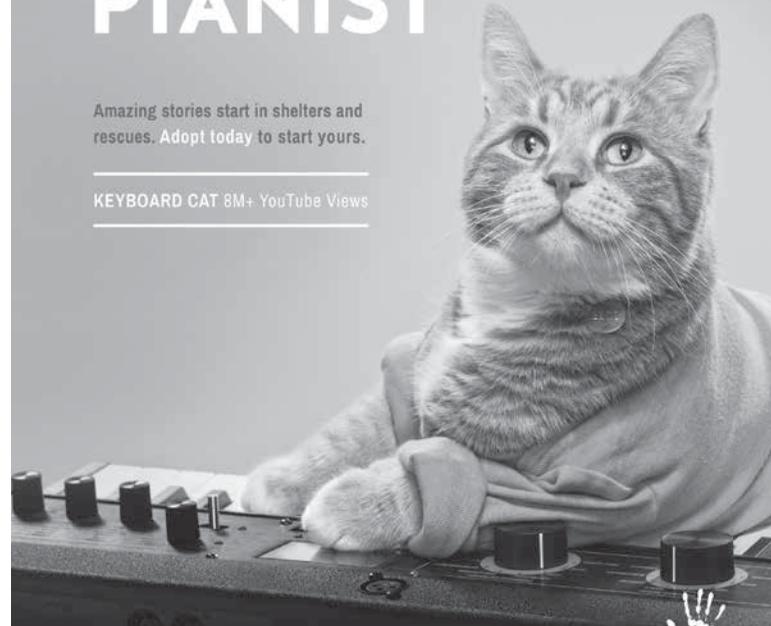
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Crossword Puzzle Answers from page 26

1	E	B	B	4	S	T	E	A	K	9	E	N	O	L	A				
14	W	O	O	15	U	R	A	T	E	16	D	O	R	I	C				
17	E	R	S	18	B	A	S	T	E	19	I	T	E	M	S				
20	R	E	C	21	A	P	I	T	U	L	22	A	T	I	O	N			
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36	U	L	T	R	A	C	E	N	T	R	I	F	U	G	E				
39	B	I	O	S			40	H	A	A	S			41	S	N	E	E	R
42	A	D	O			43	S	A	P	S			44	F	L	O	S	S	Y
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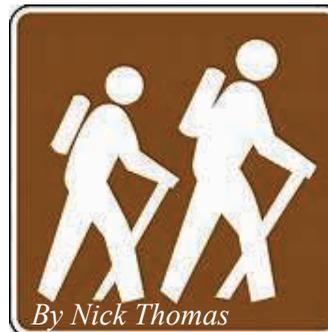
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By Nick Thomas

Take a HIKE

To Yellowstone National Park

Over the years I've returned to America's oldest national park many times and can summarize every visit in three words: Yellowstone never disappoints. Whether you're content to just drive the roads in search of wildlife or take a few steps from the car to admire the raging rivers and waterfalls, mountains, sprawling canyons, geysers or other geothermal features, Yellowstone will deliver. One year, we watched the aurora borealis spread across the Wyoming sky at 2 am, and on another occasion, saw the most magnificent spring rainbow at the West Entrance.

sively crowded. But you can always beat the crowds by arriving early. Two summers ago, I drove in at 5 am on a weekday and had the place almost to myself, sharing one area only with several wolves stalking some critter across the road.



Marmot observing strangers hiking into its territory.

For those wishing to discover Yellowstone on foot, there's more than 1,100 miles of trails to explore. Needless to say, we've only attempted a fraction of those, but if you're looking for a short easy trail that's not on everybody's radar, then Storm Point Trail is a great choice for several reasons.



Photos courtesy Nick Thomas. Stormy Point Trail leading from the trailhead to Yellowstone Lake.

We always stay at a hotel near the South Entrance, since it's only minutes to reach the park, although roads within the park (Hwy 98 and others) are usually closed during winter due to snow. It hardly needs to be said, but like most national parks in the summer, Yellowstone is enormously popular with the most visited sites like Old Faithful becoming oppres-

To quote the park website, "This trail begins in the open meadows overlooking Indian Pond and Yellowstone Lake. It passes alongside the pond before turning right (west) into the forest." The trailhead is about 3 miles east of Fishing Bridge Visitor Center and the trail itself is a loop, a little over

Continued on page 35

“EVERY MORNING MY HUMAN SHAVES OFF HIS FACE FUR, HE’S FUNNY LIKE THAT.”

—TUCK adopted 05-04-11

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Fabulous Finds

By Debbie L. Sklar

Fresh Launches to Refresh Your Routine

From sun-soaked recovery to head-to-toe hydration, the latest beauty and wellness drops make self-care effortless, effective, and a little fun. Here's a roundup of this month's most exciting launches — from dermatologist-backed skincare to scent-forward haircare you'll want to layer from scalp to toes.

Neutrogena Evenly Clear Collection



Photo courtesy Neutrogena.

Adult acne isn't just a teen problem. Neutrogena tackles it head-on with **Evenly Clear**, a six-product collection co-designed with dermatologists to treat active acne while fading post-acne marks. The Acne Cleanser has 2% salicylic acid and Polyhydroxy Acid (PHA) to exfoliate gently, while the Acne Gel Moisturizer adds 0.5% salicylic acid and 2% N-acetyl glucosamine to fade marks. The Cleansing Mask contains 3.5% benzoyl peroxide and clays to refine texture, and the Acne Exfoliant combines 0.5% salicylic acid with 2.5% mandelic acid for smoother skin. A 0.1%

adapalene Facial Retinoid renews skin and clears pores, and the Clarifying Spray refreshes on the go. Available nationwide and at Neutrogena.com.

Blue Lizard After Sun Soothing Lotion



Photo courtesy Blue Lizard.

Blue Lizard expands into post-sun care with a lightweight, fast-absorbing lotion to calm and hydrate sun-stressed skin. Aloe Vera and cucumber extract soothe redness, while shea butter replenishes moisture. Hypoallergenic, vegan, and cruelty-free, it's perfect for sensitive skin. Available at Amazon, Target, Walmart, and other retailers.

Rodan + Fields Pure C Serum



Photo courtesy Rodan + Fields.

Pure C Serum delivers a concentrated 10% pure ascorbic acid boost for antioxidant protection and collagen support. This oil- and water-free serum keeps skin hydrated, bright, and firm. Clinically tested, it reduces wrinkles and fine lines while leaving skin radiant and refreshed. Ex-

clusively on RodanAndFields.com and in select ULTA Beauty stores. Price: \$90.

NatureWell SunDaze & SunRise Haircare Collections



Photo courtesy NatureWell.

NatureWell brings its viral fragrance hits to haircare with **SunDaze** and **SunRise**, exclusive at Target. SunDaze focuses on hydration and nourishment with

Shampoo & Conditioner (\$11.99 each), Hydration Mask (\$14.99), Leave-In Conditioner (\$9.99), Hair Oil (\$9.99), and 2-in-1 Hair Perfume (\$12.99). SunRise delivers effortless volume and texture with Volumizing Shampoo & Conditioner (\$11.99 each), Styling Mist (\$9.99), Whipped Mousse (\$9.99), Sea Salt Spray (\$9.99), Dry Shampoo (\$9.99), and 2-in-1 Hair Perfume (\$12.99). Available at Target stores, Target.com, and NatureWell.com.

RoC Retinol Correxion Line Smoothing 2-Step Peel Pads

Inspired by professional in-office peels, these **2-Step Peel Pads** target lines, wrinkles,

dullness, rough texture, blemishes, and enlarged pores for visible transformation in just seven uses. Step 1 exfoliates with five acids and hyaluronic acid, while Step 2 delivers RoC's Patented Clinical Retinol with Ectoin for hydration and renewal. Dermatologist-tested, 90% of users saw improvements after one use, 93% by the seventh. Available at Target and Ulta Beauty, expanding to other retailers in Fall 2026.

Universkin by Alma Daily Mineral Serum SPF 50

For post-procedure care, **Daily Mineral Serum SPF 50** protects and soothes skin immediately

Continued on page 35



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Divine Guidance Leads Me to La Cocina De Ricardo

With more than 100,000 total employer establishments in the southern portion of Orange County, a great number of those are in the culinary industry.

I've lived in this area for three decades, and there are just so many wonderful and exciting choices.

However, on this particular Tuesday, I was on El Toro Road and yearning for a wonderful chicken taco. I was heading back toward the I-5 freeway, and I had to go through a few strip malls on the south side of El Toro Road.

As I drove into the third location, I was trying to find my way out and landed right in front of La Cocina De Ricardo. Imagine that!

If you believe in divine guidance, I do, and look where I landed!

Amazing. It was about 11:15 a.m., and I walked inside and

wanted to check things out. I don't usually like to go into a location I'm not familiar with, but when I walked in the door, it was so charming and quaint.



Photos courtesy Samantha Hammer.

There is a cute little seated bar area, and the restaurant looked so clean, and everybody was so nice to me when I was there. I couldn't believe how all the servers just made my experience so terrific.

I decided to order a chicken taco *à la carte*, to go. I asked what was inside the taco, and the waiter said just lettuce and cheese. That was fine with me, and I wanted it to be a soft taco.

While I was waiting for my order, there were so many people coming into the restaurant, and it appeared to be a lot of regular

**Free taco to the first person who replies to my cell phone.
Please text me, "Taco" 949-488-7808.**



Dining Area.

customers, and all were greeted with hugs and friendship from several of the staff members.

I was sitting at one of the little stools in the bar area, waiting for my taco. The cashier was putting a large package together, and I was thinking, "Oh, somebody's having lunch for a few people, and it looked really good."

The waitress handed me that bag. I said there must be some mistake; I just ordered a taco! She said no, this is for you. The Taco Tuesday price is \$4.45 each.

I thought I was just getting a little taco. When I opened the bag, it was prepared as if I was going on a picnic. The taco was in a special little box, and there were two packages of special salsa, plus a large bag of homemade tortilla chips, a fork, knife, and spoon, napkins, and some salt and pepper packages. Totally impressive.



The chicken taco was a smooth

blend of chicken and cheese, combined together with shredded lettuce on top. The tacos were just soft and perfectly warmed, and I'll tell you, when I took a bite, I couldn't even believe it. In all the years I've had tacos, probably the best chicken taco I ever tasted. The meal was so plentiful. I couldn't eat all of it, and I packed everything up and had the best experience again for dinner.

I drove about three blocks, and I thought, "I'm going to call the restaurant back and thank them and ask if I can speak to the owner and perhaps set up a time to write the story about this location."



Mario Arias, Owner.

The restaurant owner, Mario Arias, had greeted me while I was in the restaurant. When he got on the phone, I reminded him that I had been at the restaurant just a short while ago and introduced myself. We chatted for a few minutes, and I told him that I am a contributing restaurant writer and asked if he would like me to write the story about his restaurant. He was thrilled, and so, here's the story.

I'm going to give you a little history about this location. The original owner was Ricardo Beas. The first restaurant was created in Mission Viejo in 1987. The Beas family owned it. The name, La Cochina de Ricardo, was based on Ricardo's extended friendships with so many people in and around the area.

In 2004, the Beas family opened Ricardo's Place in San Juan Capistrano.

In 2022, Mario Arias, who is a cousin of the Beas family, became the sole owner of the Lake Forest location, La Cochina de Ricardo.

The Lake Forest location serves strictly authentic Mexican-style cuisine. Alicia Beas (recently passed away) is the person who created all the original recipes based on her life in Jalisco, Mexico, which is in the west-central region of Mexico. Alicia was so loved by everyone, and losing her too soon was such a loss for many.

Mario Arias grew up in Jalisco, Mexico, and came to the United States in 1970. His restaurant career began in 1984, working in many restaurants and starting as a server. He usually worked at the front end of the house.

Most of the staff have been in this location for 20 years plus.

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Life After Mother

By Lyn Jensen

'Exploring probate and estate issues from personal experience.'

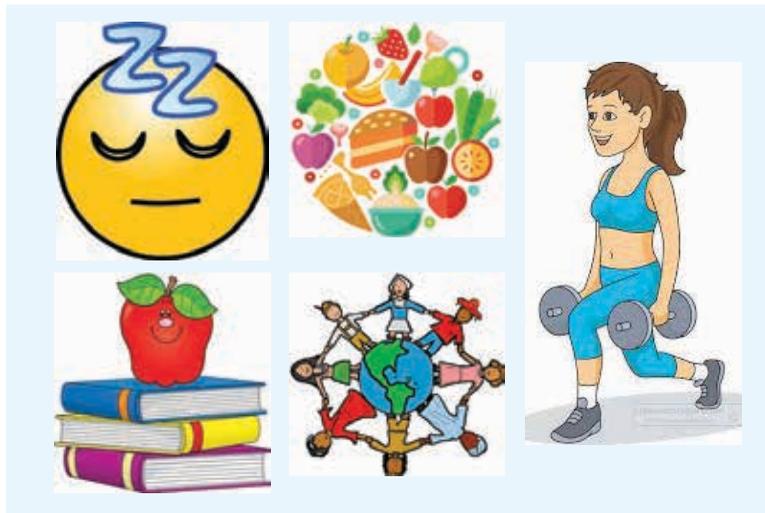
How to Build a Better Brain

During the height of the COVID pandemic, Dr. Sanjay Gupta, chief medical correspondent for CNN, helped guide TV viewers through the crisis. In his book *"Keep Sharp: Build a Better Brain at Any Age"* he helps guide readers through a different crisis, the prospect of memory loss that may be a sign of dementia such as Alzheimer's.

I watched both my parents struggle with dementia, and both were in denial about it, being hostile and combative while their healthcare providers talked about "mild" symptoms and no need to test for Alzheimer's. I don't want that fate, and I know many other seniors who worry that their "senior moments," forgetting some little thing, may indicate they're heading for the same decline.

According to Gupta's book, "Data from the Centers for Disease Control suggest that nearly 13 percent of Americans reported experiencing worsening confusion or memory loss after age sixty, but most, 81 percent—had not consulted with a health care provider about their cognitive issues. For most people, the memory lapses are just that, but it's still worth raising the issue with your doctor."

To perhaps prevent or postpone such a diagnosis, Gupta offers the outline of a twelve-week



Photos courtesy Google.

program to help keep our brains sharp, no matter our age. "It's like building any other muscle," he advises. His advice is to establish at least one new habit a week over those twelve weeks, in order to achieve five goals:

- Find new ways to stimulate your brain. Common advice about doing more Sudoku and crossword puzzles (or any kind of puzzles) applies here. So does reading and learning—take classes, keep up with the latest tech advances.
- Get enough sleep, and incorporate destressing practices into your daily life.
- Diet: when selecting fruits and vegetables for your meals, eat a "rainbow" of different colors. Also eat more fatty fish — tuna, sardines, mackerel, herring, and wild-caught salmon.
- Connect authentically with

others and maintain a vibrant social life. Stay socially engaged—I'll discuss this habit more in my next column.

- Build an exercise routine. I'm fairly good with the diet, brainpower, and sleep, but I know I need to improve on exercise. Before moving into my mother's house, I walked for at least 30-60 minutes several times per week. I got out of the habit when I moved and I've never been able to get going again. CDC recommend that all adults get 150 minutes of moderately intense exercise, every week. That means about 30 minutes five times per week. Some other experts recommend 30 minutes every day or 30 minutes three times per week. That 30 minutes can come from a wide variety of activities—including walking, jogging, dancing, yard work, playing a sport, or time in the gym, or participating in any of many exercise programs.

Take a HIKE

Continued from page 30

2 miles long, with just a few easy inclines and uneven spots to navigate. When we arrived early one July morning, a ranger was on hand and walked up, asking, "Do you have your bear spray?" We did, because we had heard it was an area popular with bears (spoiler alert: we did not see any on the path).

The trail leads to Yellowstone Lake, abundant with waterfowl, and you can walk down to the beach. You can also step out onto the rocky lookout, Storm Point, with a beautiful scenic view over the lake. Just behind that area lives a large colony of cute marmots that you will almost certainly see as they scamper in and out of their tunnels. The trail follows the shoreline for a while, then loops back through the forest and fields before returning to the parking area.

So, flaunting a lake, overlook, pond, fields, forest, birds, marmots, and with the possibility of a grizzly sighting, this trail won't disappoint, either.

Nevertheless, we worried that our visit to Yellowstone last summer might be our first disappointing trip, given last year's reports of reduced federal funding and staffing in the national parks. Fortunately, any impact was barely noticeable. The park rangers and staff clearly went out of their way to

keep the park clean, safe, and well-supported, and they were readily available should they be needed. Our national parks are a national treasure and should be treated accordingly.

Nick Thomas teaches at Auburn University at Montgomery in Alabama and has written features, columns, and interviews for many newspapers and magazines. His "It's A Wonderful Hike" column describes short trails, hikes, and walks from around the country that seniors might enjoy while traveling. See www.itsawonderfulhike.com.

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Busy Boomers

By Les Goldberg

Satisfying Your Need for Speed

For most of us who are a bit long in the tooth, we consider the days of driving fancy fast cars as in the rearview mirror.

Oh, we might delve into the “mid-life crisis” mode by buying our “dream car” Corvette, Ferrari, or Porsche, but for the most part, we’re not going to be speeding down the highways and city streets anytime soon.

So, what can we do to satisfy our innermost yearning to push the pedal to the metal while avoiding danger on the roads?

Sensing that so many people need speed, David and Susan Danglerd opened up the first K1 Speed family go-kart indoor tracks, which are now



Photos courtesy K1 Speed.

operating in 32 states and 10 countries.

Locally, you can go to a facility in Irvine on Von Karman Avenue or in Culver City in West Los Angeles.

In each case, you can climb into an all-electric go-kart that is about three inches off the ground, put on a racing helmet, crank up the engine, and take off to speeds up to 45 miles per hour around a quarter-mile

track complete with hairpin turns and steep ramps.

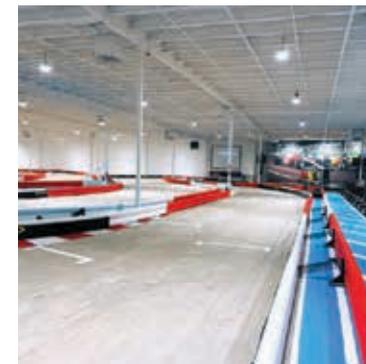
“I couldn’t believe the adrenaline rush,” said Keith Moreland, 51, of Laguna Hills, who brought his two young grandsons to experience the racing with him. “When you are low to the ground, it feels like you are going much faster than you are. It was fun.”

Today’s seniors may not be able to drive their cars with the abandon they once enjoyed or fantasized about, but they can get their kicks on a K1 track or by watching their kids and grandkids feel the thrill.



Once inside the K1 building, you will feel transported to a total racing environment, complete with checkered flags, Formula 1 racing gear, and the powerful go-carts that are 100 percent electric for faster acceleration and no noxious fumes.

Each location offers a unique track layout, but in all cases, participants of all ages are given a safety briefing to include information on the rules, flag and sign meanings, and kart operation. Each rider is required



to wear a current Department of Transportation-approved helmet with a full-face cover and equipped with a visor or goggles that are provided by the facility. Or you can bring your own helmet if it meets the same DOT requirements.

According to the Danglerds, you can expect to spend between six and 10 minutes to complete a K1 Speed race, but it just depends on how fast the racers are going and whether or not there are any caution periods.

Reminiscent of traditional bowling alleys, K1 Speed offers “off-road” activities to keep you busy and food-fortified for your next racing adventure.

Hungry riders can recharge at the Paddock Lounge, where a wide variety of food, including pizza, burgers, wings, nachos, desserts, and non-alcoholic beverages, is served, or you can entertain yourself with arcade games and billiards.

Maybe you just want to immerse yourself in the racing en-

Continued on page 41



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'Let Your Love Flow' Bellamy Brothers

By Randal C. Hill

Attention, music trivia fans! What do rocker Del Shannon, pop princess Lesley Gore, the made-for-TV Monkees, and iconic country kings the Bellamy Brothers have in common?

"Absolutely nothing," you might say. However, these disparate music-makers do indeed share one fact: Each hit No. 1 on the "Billboard" chart with their very first single release.

Howard and David Bellamy would sometimes be awakened by the sounds of a Merle Haggard or Buck Owens record being spun by their music-loving father. The future superstar siblings were frequently exposed to such country-music icons, as well as hearing the likes of Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly, the Everly Brothers, and, later, the music of the mid-1960s British Invasion.

Home was a cattle ranch in west central Florida, and the boys went to high school in nearby tiny Darby. Once graduated (Howard in 1964, David four years later), they launched their music career by performing *gratis* with their fiddle-playing father at a jamboree of sorts called the Rattlesnake Round-up in nearby San Antonio, Fla.

The twosome, who mastered seven instruments between them, gigged at frat parties and backed touring "oldies" artists

before moving to Atlanta to form a short-lived outfit that the Bellamys dubbed Jericho.

The duo also tried their hands at writing, and David's co-authorship with Jim Stafford's "Spiders and Snakes" became a novelty home run. Sales of 3 million singles gave the brothers the cash needed to move to Los Angeles, their goal being to connect with the music scene there.

They befriended Neil Diamond's backup band. One day, Diamond's drummer brought a demo (demonstration record) to the singing siblings and enthused, "Hey, this sounds like something you guys would do."

It was a song called "Let Your Love Flow" and had been written by Larry Williams, Neil's roadie (road manager).

Diamond had previously passed on the tune, as had fellow hit-maker Johnny Rivers. The Bellamys, though, loved it. Howard later recalled, "When we heard it, we had an idea of how we wanted to record it. It kind of fits our style — acoustic bass with a groove."

They signed to Warner/Curb Records, cut the song into a couple of takes, and watched in amazement as it became the best-selling record of the year.

Riding the tsunami of suc-

cess, the pair began touring the world. "We've always been known as a live act," Howard maintains. "We've gone with the idea that we're going to have fun, and the audience is too. Performing is not something we got into for money. We got into it for the love of it. It's a lifestyle with us. That's how we've managed to stay on the road for so long."

Long, indeed. Their 2026 tour marks the 50th anniversary of the Bellamy Brothers offering their talents to appreciative fans worldwide.

Williams never wrote another hit. Don't feel bad for him, though. Bellamy grins broadly when he says, "I would say the guy who wrote this song is the wealthiest roadie now that ever was."

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A fascinating new book reveals some exciting news about the future of AI.

SandboxAQ, a company that Time magazine recently named one of the Top 100 Most Influential Companies in the world, has over 200 employees, including 87 PhDs and 110+ technical engineers.

What's more, more than 46,000 applicants have applied to work at SandboxAQ in the past 12 months and the company only accepts 0.21% of candidates—that's one-fifth of one percent. It is harder to get into SandboxAQ than any Ivy League college. The company has a 91% employee retention rate, which is higher than the benchmark of the tech industry. So what makes this company so special?

AI That Understands the Physical World

It may be because the company is pioneering Quantitative AI—that is, AI models trained not just on language, but on math, physics, biology, and chemistry. It uses Large Quantitative Models (LQMs)—a new class of AI that understands and can simulate complex systems, from atomic interactions to electromagnetic fields to financial transactions.

Where traditional language models focus on probability, SandboxAQ's LQMs are about

precision. These models don't hallucinate or guess because they're grounded in the immutable laws of physics and mathematical equations. They can deliver more accurate predictions, new insights, and data that such industries as biopharma, aerospace, energy, and defense can rely on. For instance:

- **Drug Discovery:** The platform can simulate millions of molecular interactions virtually, using powerful computers instead of expensive, time-consuming physical lab experiments, helping researchers find treatments for Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and cancer faster than before.

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Founded by Jack Hidary, a serial entrepreneur, SandboxAQ is built on decades of work in AI and quantum science. Hidary authored a widely used textbook on quantum computing. His vision for the company is to make AI and quantum technologies the twin engines driving the next 50 years.

Whether it's enabling researchers to design drugs in months instead of decades, helping pilots navigate without GPS, cybersecurity, or creating next generation materials from the entire, vast chemical space, his company's goal is building the foundations for a safer, healthier, sustainable and innovative future.

Learn More

For more about Jack Hidary's vision, check out his book "AI or Die: A Guide for Leaders," or visit www.sandboxaq.com.



In The Spotlight

Continued from page 23

the past five years. Keeping records of major home improvements—such as kitchen remodels, new flooring, or structural upgrades—can further reduce taxable gain by increasing cost basis," she added.

The key for those over 55 is proactive planning. Avoid unnecessary early withdrawals, coordinate income streams carefully, and consider withholding or estimated payments if multiple income sources are involved. Whether managing RMDs, charitable giving, or part-time income, understanding how the pieces fit together can make the difference between an unpleasant tax surprise and a well-planned retirement.

Disclaimer: Tax laws are complex, and individual financial situations vary. This information is provided for general educational purposes only and should not be considered tax advice. Readers should consult a qualified CPA or tax professional to discuss their specific circumstances before making financial decisions.

Fabulous Finds

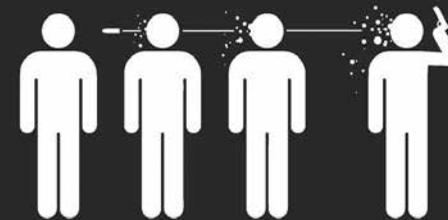
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Photo courtesy Alma Daily.

after laser, RF, IPL, microneedling, and chemical peels. Its **DUAL-SHIELD 50 Technology** combines 24% zinc oxide with an oil-continuous gel-emulsion to provide broad-spectrum UV protection while dissipating residual heat. Ideal for sensitive, post-procedure skin, it bridges medical aesthetics and daily skincare. Available through Alma providers; locate clinics at AlmaLasers.com.

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Please don't go through with it.

Staying Strong, Staying Connected: A Fresh Start for Spring



As March arrives and the first hints of spring begin to show, it's the perfect moment for a gentle reset — a time to refresh our routines, reconnect with others, and embrace the opportunities that come with longer days and warmer weather. For many seniors, this season offers a chance to focus on well-being, community, and purpose in ways that feel both energizing and achievable.

A Season for Renewed Wellness

Spring naturally invites movement. Even light activity — a short walk, stretching in the morning sun, or tending to a small garden — can boost mood, improve balance, and support overall health. You don't need a gym membership or a strict regimen. The goal is simply to keep your body in motion and enjoy the process.

A few easy ideas:

- Take a 10-minute walk after breakfast
- Try chair yoga or gentle stretching
- Join a local senior fitness class for both exercise and camaraderie

Small steps add up, and spring is the ideal time to begin.

The Power of Social Connection

Isolation can sneak up on anyone, especially after the winter months. March is a wonderful time to reach out — reconnect with old friends, attend a community meeting, or join a club that sparks your interest. Staying socially active is one of the strongest predictors of long-term emotional and cognitive health.

If you're looking for ways to get involved, many local organizations offer:

- Monthly luncheons
- Educational speakers
- Volunteer opportunities
- Social outings and hobby groups

A single conversation can brighten your entire week.

Keeping Your Mind Engaged

Your brain loves novelty. Learning something new — whether it's a craft, a technology skill, or a historical topic — helps keep

your mind sharp and your days interesting. Libraries, community centers, and senior groups often host free or low-cost classes that make learning fun and accessible.

Consider exploring:

- A new book genre
- A digital skills workshop
- A creative hobby like painting or photography
- Local history programs or museum talks

Curiosity is ageless.

Celebrating Purpose at Every Stage

One of the greatest strengths of seniors is the wealth of experience, wisdom, and perspective they bring to their communities. Whether you're mentoring younger generations, volunteering, or simply sharing your story with others, your voice matters.

Spring reminds us that growth is always possible — not just in nature, but in ourselves. This season, give yourself permission to try something new, reconnect with others, and celebrate the life you continue to build every day.

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Continued from page 34

Both chefs are women, and it is a tradition, all over Mexico, that women always did all the cooking.

Some of the chef specials that are greatly loved are the Pork Carnitas, Chile Rellenos, and Seafood Soup. Mario tells me that this location has the greatest assortment of soups and is so loved by long-term customers.

The restaurant menu is five, 8 x 10 pages long. Your choices begin with appetizers, salads, soups, seafood cocktails, combination plates, special combination plates, family specials, seafood specials, fish specials, beef specials, pork specials, breakfast favorites, tostadas, burritos, specialty items, children's plates, side orders, hot drinks, soft drinks, and specialty drinks.

Lunch specials are offered from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. And 10-ounce margaritas are \$6.95.

Happy Hour is available Wednesday through Saturday, 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. and serves House Margaritas, Modelo Draft Beer, and each special is half price per item.

Taco Tuesday is available every Tuesday, all day. Tacos are \$4.45.



Left to right: Elena, Mario, Lilia, Ely.

I also had a wonderful opportunity to meet Lilia, the main chef, second chef, Elena, and Ely, a server and cashier. Each of these people is so totally dedicated to their respective positions and offers exceptional customer service at the forefront.

I got really lucky and was able to select something to taste beyond the wonderful chicken taco that I had the week before. I selected a Chile Relleno with sides of rice and beans. Everything is made fresh to order.



This dish was above and beyond my wildest dreams. The authentic style of cooking is truly the best way to experience a traditional restaurant's style of cooking.

The roasted, peeled Poblano pepper was stuffed with a creamy Monterey Jack cheese, dipped in a fluffy egg batter, and bathed lightly in a savory,

light tomato-based sauce with more of this fabulous cheese melted on top. I can't even begin to tell you how delicious this whole experience was for me. You'll just have to get one yourself!

There was a very charming couple, Elena and Gerry, seated at a table behind me. I went over and introduced myself and asked them about their experience dining at this restaurant.

To my surprise, they have been dining at this family's restaurants since the beginning of the family business for well over two decades.



Elena and Gerry - Happy Diners.

Both Elena and husband, Gerry, love the authentic style preparation of their favorite foods, and of course, always enjoy their favorite beverages as well. They expressed how much they love the owner and all the staff. La Cochina de Ricardo is now in its 39th year of operation. Congratulations!

As always, I thank each of you for taking the time to read my article.

And as a special thank you, the owner offers a free taco to the first person who replies to my cell phone. Please text me, "Taco." (949-488-7808). I will take your name, and if you know when you'll be coming to the restaurant, I will advise the owner.

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Busy Boomers

Continued from page 36

environment by being a spectator. No problem at K1 Speed venues. Each one features large lobbies outfitted with leather couches, plasma TV screens, and racing memorabilia displays. All the areas are positioned strategically to provide direct track views.

Either way, your need for speed will be satisfied. Trust me, I know.



AMERICAN LUNG ASSOCIATION
IN CALIFORNIA



Continued from page 21

cultural festivities worldwide. International Women's Day is observed on March 8, recognizing the achievements and contributions of women globally. March is also Women's History Month in the United States.

March Madness, the NCAA college basketball tournament, dominates sports headlines throughout much of the month. Millions of fans fill out brackets in hopes of predicting the champion.

The birthstone for March is aquamarine, a blue-green gem said to symbolize calm and clarity. The month's flower is the daffodil, a bright bloom that represents rebirth and new beginnings.

Historically, important events have occurred in March. The Ides of March — March 15 — is famously known as the date of Julius Caesar's assassination in 44 BCE. Alexander Graham Bell received a patent for the telephone on March 7, 1876.

From seasonal change to cultural celebrations, March is a month of transition, history, and fresh starts.

Source: Various websites





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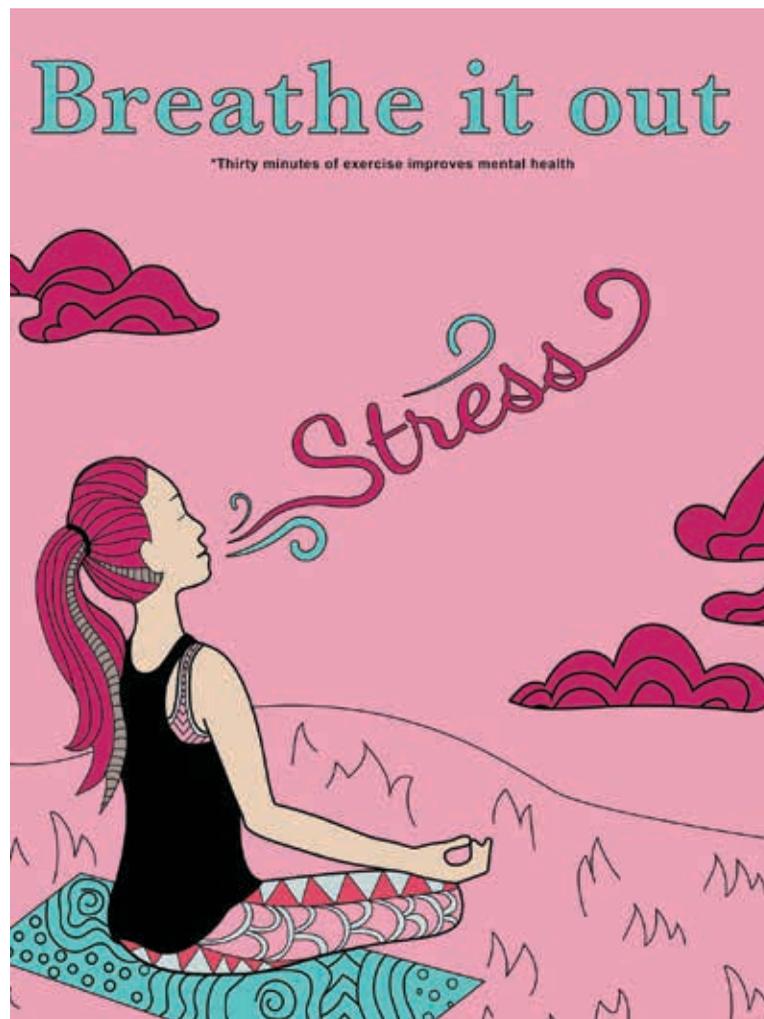
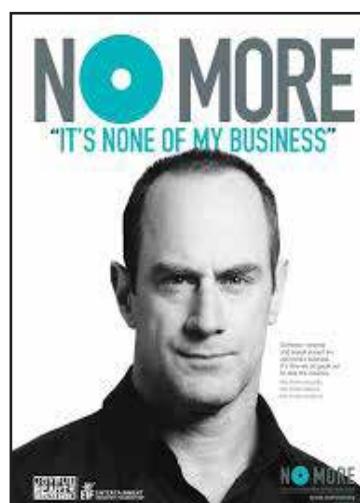
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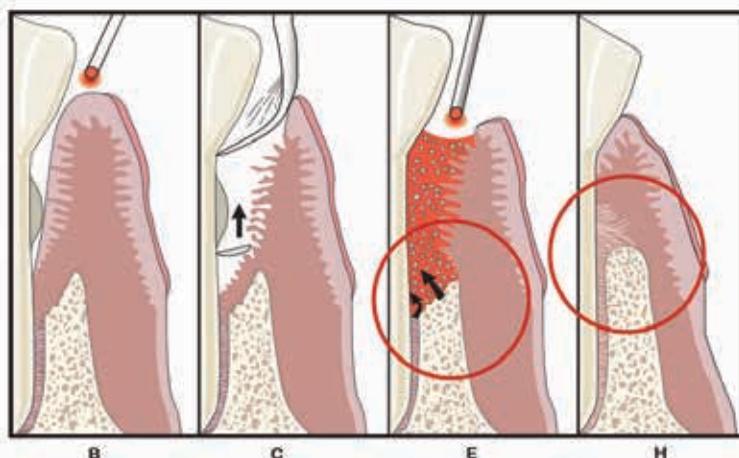
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2. FDA Clearance K151763



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