

# SENIOR REPORTER

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APRIL 2026

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

# Jon Hamm

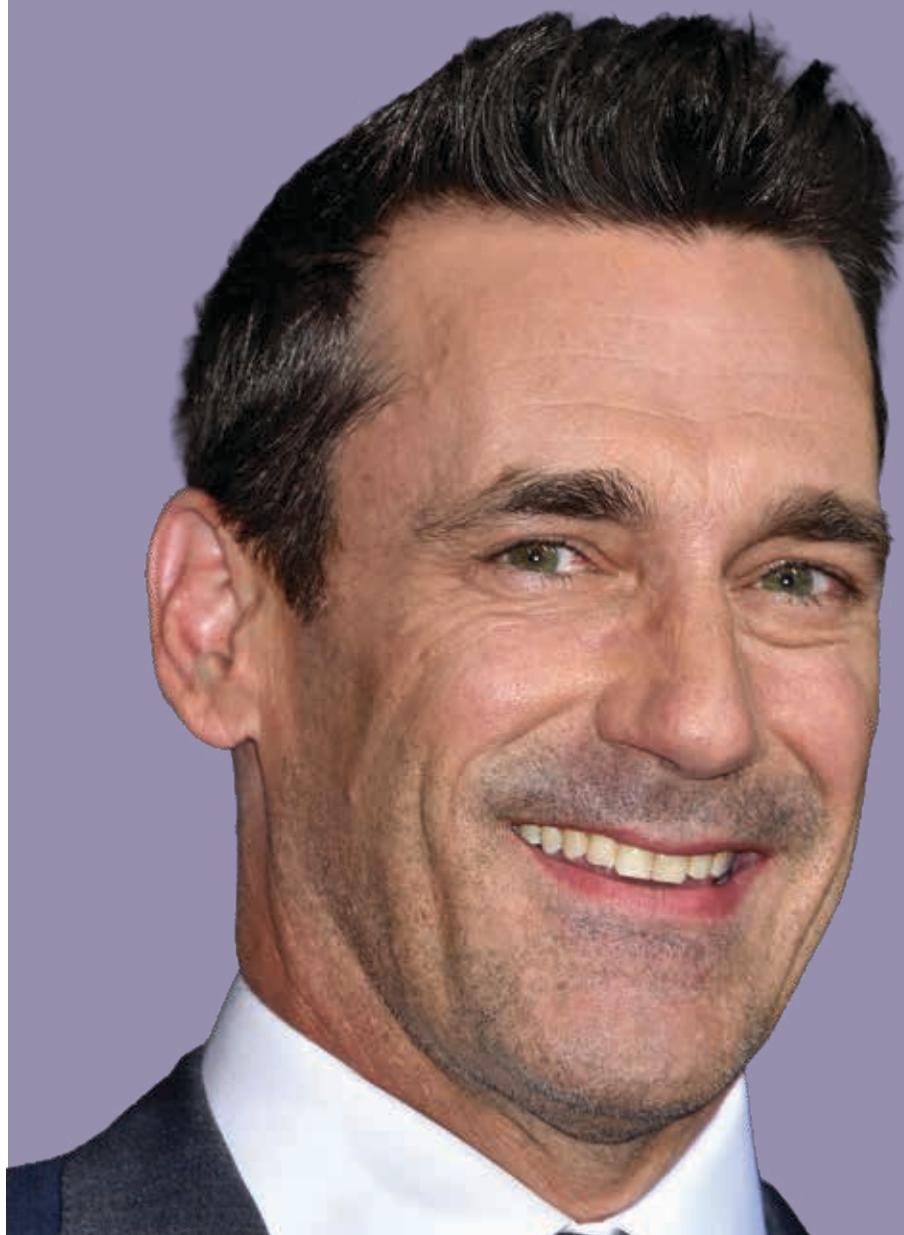
*“Acting is sort of an extension of childhood. You get to play all of these roles and have so much fun.”*

— Jon Hamm



## What's Inside ...

Jon Hamm .....	4
Flashback .....	5
Saavy Senior .....	8
Travel .....	11
Classified & Professional Service Directory.....	16-17
Calendar of Events .....	18
Gadget Geezer .....	20
Off The Beaten Path.....	21
In The Spotlight .....	23
Book Club.....	25
Cooking Corner .....	27
Movie Review .....	28
Fabulous Finds .....	31
The Magic of Old Hollywood .....	34
Life After Mother .....	35
Busy Boomers.....	36
Song Preview.....	37



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## ‘Mad Man’ ‘Jon Hamm: Everyman’

By Les Goldberg

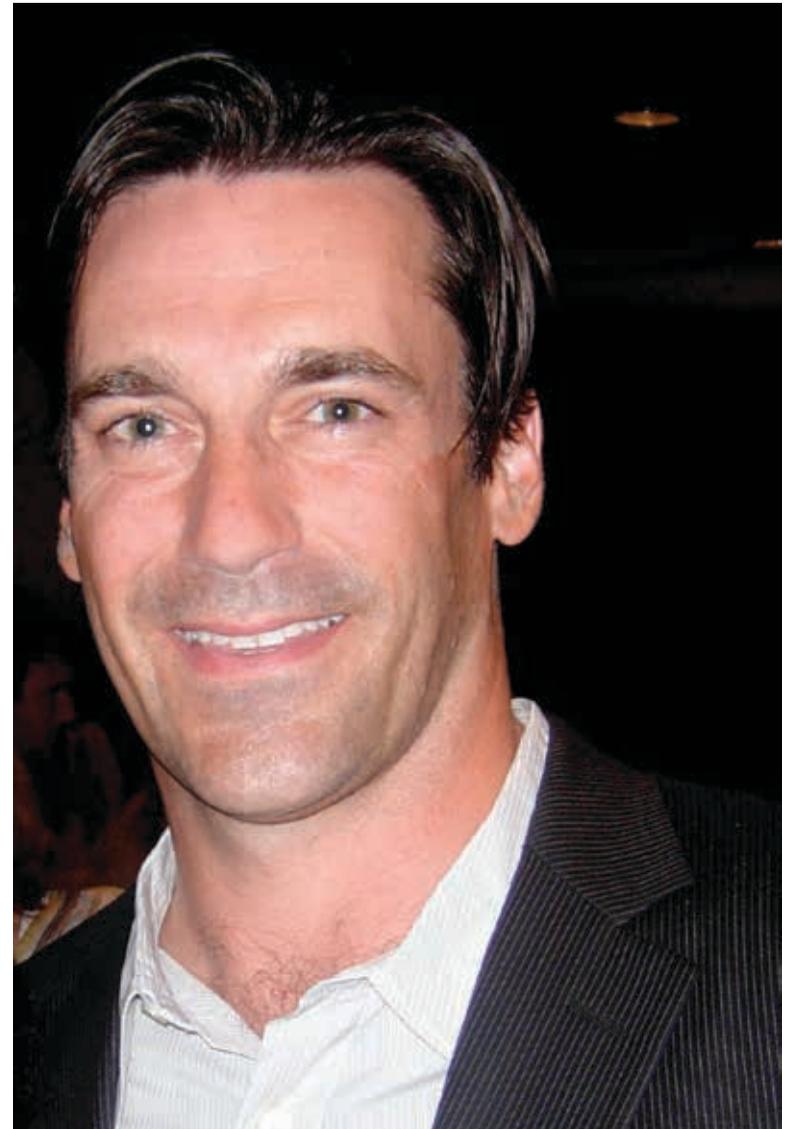


Photo courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

You’ve seen him in movies, on TV in various shows, talk shows, and commercials. He’s a frequent visitor on the red carpet at the Emmy Award events.

Just turned 55, he’s Jon Hamm, “who you can say has ‘been there, done that’” in the entertainment industry. He is, in fact, a prime-time actor who is still having fun. As he says, speaking of his love for his profession:

“Playing an athlete would be so cool. Or where you get to shoot guns, ride horses. I wouldn’t turn any of that down.”

Hamm’s love for acting developed in the first grade when he was cast in his first role as Winnie-the-Pooh. While in high school near his hometown of St. Louis, he mixed drama classes with being a member of

*Continued on page 6*

70s  
FLASH  
BACK

# Sorry, Richard

By Randal C. Hill

Richard Hornberger, writing under the nom de plume Richard Hooker, entertained visions of success as a writer when he penned his novel “M\*A\*S\*H\*” (Military Army Surgical Hospital), a reflection on his days with the 8055th M\*A\*S\*H\* unit in Korea. For several frustrating years, he submitted his brainchild to various book publishers, but no one expressed interest.

He took on a writing partner, who helped him polish his manuscript. Eventually, William Morrow and Co. published “M\*A\*S\*H\*.” The book bombed, but it was embraced by movie producer Ingo Preminger—Otto’s brother—who bought the movie rights and commissioned Ring Lardner, Jr., to produce a screenplay. The film, which starred Eliot Gould and Donald Sutherland, became box-office gold.

Hollywood power people felt that many more dollars could be squeezed out of the “M\*A\*S\*H\*” story by offering it as a low-budget television show. After all, start-up costs would be minimal, as the sets and props from the film were still in place nearby in a future state park.

Producer Gene Reynolds asked writing pal Larry Gelbart to give him a script, which took Gelbart a mere two days to whip up a workable outline for the show. Given the green light, Larry

threw himself into painstaking research, toiling with photocopies of early 1950s issues of “Time” magazine, as well as keeping a master list of Korean names, a map of Korea, and an Army handbook on his cluttered desk.

Most TV scenes were shot at the Twentieth Century Fox studio in Los Angeles, where the “M\*A\*S\*H\*” “compound” measured a mere 45’ x 90’ and consisted primarily of a Korean landscape backdrop behind a rubber floor.

“M\*A\*S\*H\*” premiered on CBS-TV in September 1972. Ratings were low at first, and reviews ran the gamut from so-so to scathing. But, in a rare moment of insight in a ratings-obsessed business, CBS believed that the program could, if given time, build a decent-sized audience. The series was allowed to struggle through its first season. The gamble paid off when season two ratings skyrocketed and made “M\*A\*S\*H\*” a must-watch winner.

Everybody involved seemed happy. Everybody, that is, except for Richard Hooker. As an ultra-conservative military veteran, he detested the way television star Alan Alda voiced subtle but frequent anti-war statements during his moments on the small screen.

The series ended on Feb. 28,

1983, after 11 seasons and 251 episodes. An estimated 125 million viewers watched the final show (2 ½ hours long)—back then, more than half the population of America.

“M\*A\*S\*H\*” mixed sarcastic humor with the grimness of war. How did Alda and the others in the show approach such a combination? Alda said, “I think a lot of what attracted people to the whole series was that, even though it was mainly a comedy, we never tried to forget that real people had lived and suffered through stories like the ones we were telling. We wanted to honor that as much as we could.”

And the show did indeed do that.

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## Jon Hamm

*Continued from page 4*

the football, baseball, and swim teams. His drama teacher cast him to play Judas in the play *Godspell*, an experience he found “enjoyable,” but still did not take acting seriously.



*Photo courtesy  
Wikimedia Commons.*

It was not until his college years at the University of Missouri that his eventual career path found roots. He answered an ad from a theater company seeking players for a production of “*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*” and was cast in the production.

Other roles followed, but following graduation in 1993 with a Bachelor’s degree in English, Hamm returned to his high school to teach eighth-grade acting.

Two years later, he moved to Los Angeles permanently and worked as a waiter while attending auditions. Except for one live theater role as Flavius in a production of Shakespeare’s “*Timon of Athens*” with the Sacred Fools Theater Co., he found it difficult to find work as an actor and continued working as a waiter and, briefly, as a set decorator for a softcore pornography movie. He decided that

his 30th birthday would be his deadline to succeed in Hollywood, and told himself:

“You either suck that up and find another agent, or you go home and say you gave it a shot, but that’s the end of that. The last thing I wanted to be out here was one of those actors who’s 45 years old, with a tenuous grasp of their own reality, and not really working much. So, I gave myself five years. I said, if I can’t get it going by the time I’m 30, I’m in the wrong place. And as soon as I said that, it’s like I started working right away.”

### Career Launch

In 2000, Hamm landed the role of romantic firefighter Burt Ridley on NBC’s drama series “*Providence*.” His one-episode contract grew to 19 and allowed him to quit waiting tables.



*Photo courtesy  
Wikimedia Commons.*

He made his feature movie debut with one line in Clint Eastwood’s adventure film “*Space Cowboys*.” More substantial roles followed in the independent comedy “*Kissing Jessica Stein*,” the war film “*We Were Soldiers*,” his recurring role of police inspector Nate Basso on Lifetime’s television se-



*Photo courtesy  
Wikimedia Commons.*

ries “*The Division*” and other minor roles on the TV series “*What About Brian*,” “*CSI: Miami*,” “*Related*,” “*Numbers*,” “*The Unit*,” and “*The Sarah Silverman Program*.”

### Mad Men

Hamm landed his breakthrough role in 2007, when he was chosen from over 80 candidates to play Don Draper, protagonist of AMC’s drama series “*Mad Men*.” In the series, he played a suave, married, philandering ad executive with an obscure past. He recalled, “I read the script for “*Mad Men*” and I loved it ... I never thought they’d cast me.”

With almost 1.4 million viewers, the show developed a loyal audience, with Hamm receiving strong reviews and nominations for best actor by the Golden Globes, Screen Actors Guild, and the Emmys.

Hamm’s next film role was in the 2008 science fiction movie “*The Day the Earth Stood Still*,” a remake of the classic 1951 film of the same name. Cementing him as a legitimate major star, he was invited sever-

*Continued on page 7*

## Jon Hamm

Continued from page 6

al times to host “Saturday Night Live.” He also guest-starred on the NBC television sitcom “30 Rock,” which earned him nominations for the Primetime Emmy for Outstanding Guest Actor in a Comedy Series.



Photo courtesy  
Wikimedia Commons.

Moving back and forth from the little screen to the big screen, he landed his first leading film role in the mystery thriller “Stolen” in 2009, had a minor voice role in the animated feature “Shrek Forever After,” appeared in the crime drama “The Town” with Ben Affleck, had a guest appearance in the “The Simpsons” and continued to show off his comedic talents in the film “Bridesmaids.”

Throughout the early 2000s, his credits include the sitcom “The Increasingly Poor Decisions of Todd Margaret,” hosting the 21st ESPYS Awards, the sports drama “Million Dollar Arm,” “Young Doctor’s Notebook,” the Christmas episode of the British science fiction anthology series “Black Mirror,” titled “White Christmas,” “Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt” and “Wet Hot American Summer: First Day of Camp.”

### Career Expansion

During the last few years, Hamm worked with Dakota Johnson and Jeff Bridges to promote “Bad Times at the El Royale,” and appeared in the comedy “Keeping Up with the Joneses,” the science fiction film “Marjorie Prime,” the comedy crime film “Baby Driver,” and the drama “Aardvark.”

Hamm will forever be remembered for his recurring role in the HBO comedy series “Curb Your Enthusiasm,” appearing opposite Larry David. During this time, he voiced roles in “Bless the Harts,” “Invincible,” and Marvel’s “M.O.D.O.K.”

Most recently, he appeared in “Top Gun: Maverick,” “Confess,” “Fletch,” “The Morning Show,” “ Fargo,” “Good Omens,” “Mean Girls,” and “Landman.” Last year, Hamm began starring in the Apple TV+ series “Your Friends & Neighbors,” which has been renewed for a second season.

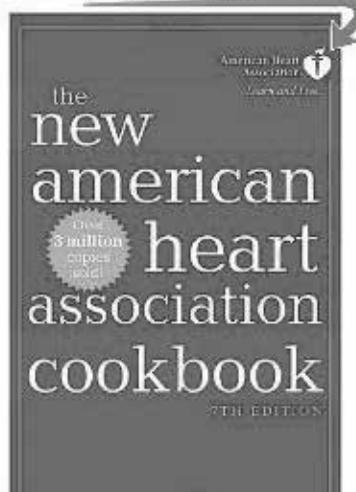
### Hamm’s Persona

It’s no secret that Hamm’s appeal to his legion of fans is his good looks and genuine charm. In fact, he is considered an international sex symbol. In fact, his masculine image has earned him the titles of “Sexiest Man Living” in 2007 by “Salon Magazine,” “Sexiest Man Alive” by “People Magazine” in 2008, “Entertainer of the Year” by “Entertainment Weekly” in 2008 and 2010, and “International Man” of the year 2010 by “GQ Magazine.”

No argument here!



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For added peace of mind, Snug also offers a Dispatch Plan (\$20 per month or \$200 per year) that includes multiple daily check-ins. If she misses one, Snug will call her directly to see if she's OK. If there's still no response, they can request an in-person wellness check by local authorities, who will visit her home to make sure she's safe. The app works with both iPhone and Android devices.

#### Check-In Calls

If your mother doesn't use a smartphone, a daily check-in call program can provide similar reassurance. Many police or sheriff's departments nationwide offer telephone reassurance programs, often free of charge.

Typically, an automated system calls at a set time each day. If she answers, all is well. If she doesn't pick up after repeated attempts, or the call goes to voicemail, her emergency contact is notified. If that contact can't be reached, backup con-

tacts are called. As a last resort, local police or emergency services may be dispatched to her home.

To see if this service is available in your mother's community, call her local police department's nonemergency number or the Area Agency on Aging at 800-677-1116. If no local program exists, private companies like CareCall or ConfirmOK offer similar services for a monthly fee.

#### Technology Aids

You might also consider simple home technology to enhance her safety. Monitored medical alert systems are among the most common – wearable “help buttons,” some with fall detection, that allow her to call for help 24/7 while immediately notifying you. These typically cost around \$1 per day.

Other options include motion or contact sensors placed around the home to track daily routines and alert you to unusual activity, or a small security camera with night vision, motion detection and two-way audio that allows you to check in visually and even speak directly with her. Basic sensors and cameras can cost under \$35, though they require Wi-Fi and do raise privacy considerations, so it's important to discuss them with your mother beforehand.

While no solution can eliminate every risk, these tools can provide meaningful peace of mind, for both you and your mother, while preserving her independence.

Send your questions or com-

ments to [questions@savvyse-nior.org](mailto:questions@savvyse-nior.org), or to Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070.

#### BIO

Journalist and senior advocate Jim Miller is the creator of Savvy Senior, a weekly information column devoted to older adults that appears in more than 250 U.S. newspapers and magazines. He is also the author of *The Savvy Senior: The Ultimate Guide to Health, Family and Finances for Senior Citizens* (Hyperion) and is frequently featured in major media outlets, including Time, USA Today, The New York Times, CNBC and CNN.



by Jim Miller

# Savvy SENIOR

## Is Your Aging Parent Safe at Home?

Dear Savvy Senior,  
After watching the coverage of the Nancy Guthrie kidnapping case, I'm worried about my own elderly mother who lives alone in another state. I want to make sure she's safe without being intrusive. Are there simple, affordable ways to check in on her from afar?

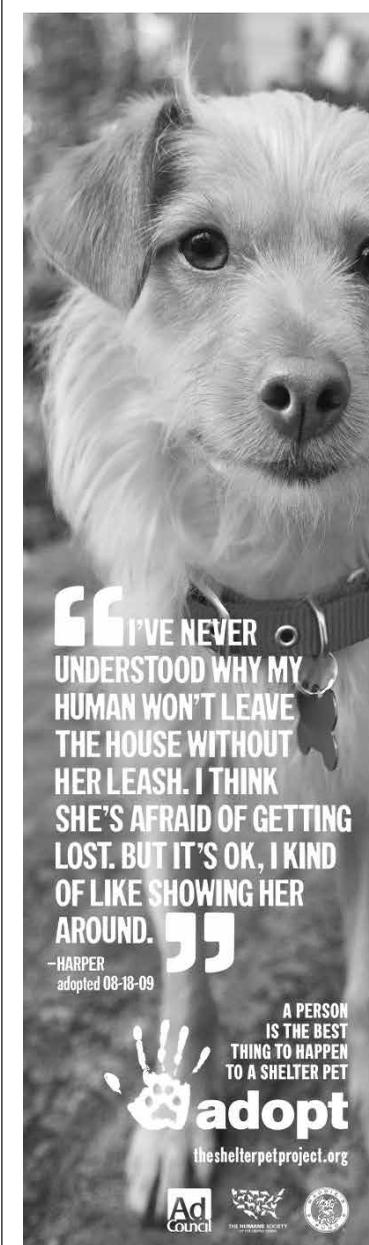
— Concerned Son

Dear Concerned,  
You're not alone. High-profile cases like this often heighten fears, especially for adult chil-

dren whose parents live alone and may be vulnerable. The good news is there are several free or low-cost ways to stay connected and gain peace of mind without infringing on your mother's independence. Here are some nice options to consider.

#### Check-In App

If your mother uses a smartphone, a simple solution is Snug ([snugsafe.com](http://snugsafe.com)), a free app that checks in daily to confirm she's OK. It's used by tens





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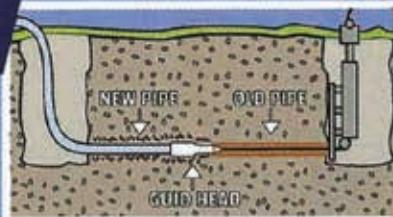
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*On the Road Again ...*

# LA's Natural History Museum Perfect for a Spring Fling

By Shana McCann

As a kid growing up in Los Angeles, I vividly remember my parents taking me to the La Brea Tar Pits on Wilshire Boulevard. For my young eyes, the sights of prehistoric animals up close were, in a word, awesome.

Back then, the trip involved parking your car, walking up to the chain-link fences surrounding the open tar pits, and peering down to get a glimpse of the blackened fossils. Move the clock a half-century forward, and the scene has transformed into a fully developed interactive museum.



To meet the demands of LA and Southern California's exploding population, the tar pits are now part of the Los Angeles County Natural History Museum, complete with modern exhibits, guided tours, souvenir store and, of course, entry fees (seniors and students, \$14; adults, \$18; children, \$7, and \$8 for museum members.

However, if you are looking for a fun and interesting day trip (less than an hour's drive from



*Photos courtesy Los Angeles County Natural History Museum.*

Orange County and even less from Long Beach), this adventure is well worth it. For me, visiting the museum is always a trip down memory lane. Let's begin at the tar pits.

Free with admission are several options to explore the exhibits that explain the Tar Pits' history, mysteries, and fables from the Ice Age more than 10,000 years ago:



1. Ice Age Encounters – a 15-minute show featuring a life-size adult saber-toothed cat puppet, a live performance, and film projections that bring the distant past to life. The one-of-

a-kind multimedia performance transports guests back in time to come nearly face-to-face with a moving, roaring extinct feline. The show is available Thursdays and Fridays at 10:30 and 11:30 a.m., Saturdays and Sundays at 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Admission is \$8 in addition to the regular admission fee.



2. The Excavator and Discoveries from the Tar Pits exhibits – These free activities take you on educational tours in a Fossil Lab where real paleontologists work and to active excavation sites, while you will learn some of the lesser-known stories about the Tar Pits, including

active research and discoveries. Check the website [tarpits.org/excavations](http://tarpits.org/excavations) before you go.

3. The Tar Pits Insider Tour – If you are REALLY curious about what goes on behind the scenes, you need to spend another \$145 for this exclusive backstage pass. Visiting with the scientists, you'll be up close and personal with the bubbling tar and be able to sort real fossils, including those from mammoths, dire wolves, mastodons, and microfossils of insects, plants, mammals, and reptiles.



“The Tar Pits,” said Museum Curator Dr. Max Sheenheim, “help us understand life around Wilshire Boulevard long before there ever was a Wilshire Boulevard in the city of LA. Our research is designed to discover what lies ahead as climate and habitats continue to change.”

He said the museum's most recent discoveries included prehistoric giant lizards, ancient raccoons, spiders, and heroic extinct dugongs.



Take it from me, whether you are a first-time visitor or a repeat customer, you will feel a sense of nostalgia along with the knowledge that you were able to experience a bit of prehistoric history at the museum, which is billed as “the world's most powerful gateway to the Ice Age.”

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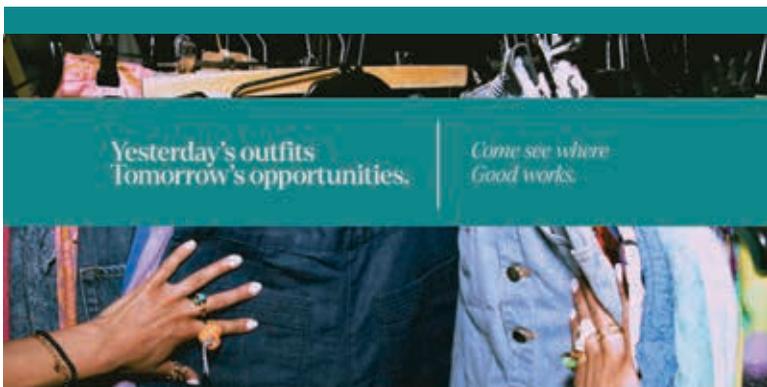


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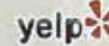
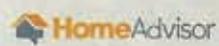
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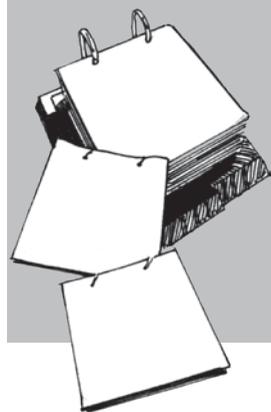
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# APRIL Calendar of Events



Spring arrived in March, and April brings a variety of events designed for those who enjoy culture, cuisine, and leisurely exploration. From classic car shows and garden tours to wine tastings and interactive murder mystery hunts, there's something to delight every interest. Celebrate Easter with brunches, community gatherings, or scenic whale-watching excursions along the coast. Take advantage of this month to connect, relax, and experience the best events at your own pace.

## **April 4** **Murder Mystery** **Scavenger Hunt** **Dana Point**

**10:45 a.m. (arrive by 10:25 am)**  
Test your detective skills in this fun, engaging scavenger hunt designed for adults. Explore Dana Point Harbor, Doheny Beach, Dana Island, Lantern

Bay Park, Heritage Park, and landmarks along Pacific Coast Hwy, following logic-based clues to discover "Who Done It?" Information/Tickets: Promo Code: OCNET for 25% off tickets. Full schedule at OCNET events.

## **April 5** **Easter Sunday** **Easter Brunch & Community** **Events – Various Locations**

Enjoy Easter-themed activities geared toward adults and families, including brunches, church services, and community celebrations:

- **Westminster:** Liberty Park, 13900 Monroe St., 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. At Gillespie Park, 9802 Bishop Place, 1 to 2:30 p.m.
- Additional local community events: brunches, services, and cultural gatherings. Check city websites for details.

## **April 10–12** **Veggiopalooza Plant Sale** **Fullerton**

**10 a.m. to 4 p.m.**  
Browse heirloom tomatoes, peppers, varietal veggies, and over 200 ornamental plants, including California natives. Perfect for gardeners and plant enthusiasts. At Fullerton Arboretum, 1900 Associated Road, Fullerton. Call (714) 278-3407.

## **April 11** **Orange County Food &** **Wine Celebration**

**Laguna Beach**  
**3 p.m. to 6 p.m.**  
Savor premium wines, spirits, and gourmet hors d'oeuvres while mingling with local winemakers and food artisans. Unlimited tastings included with ticket. At Festival of Arts, Pageant of the Masters, 650 Laguna Canyon Road, Laguna Beach.

## **Walk MS** **Costa Mesa**

Enjoy a 1–3-mile scenic walk in support of the National MS Society. All routes are accessible, and mobility devices are welcome. At 475 Anton Blvd., Costa Mesa. Call (800) 486-6762.

## **Annual Gardenfest** **San Clemente**

**8 a.m. to 2 p.m.**  
Explore a plant sale, garden flea market, sustainable gardening demonstrations, art competitions, and butterfly habitat education. At San Clemente Community Center, Avenida Del Mar at Calle Seville. Free admission.

## **Murder Mystery** **Scavenger Hunt** **San Clemente**

**10:45 a.m. (arrive by 10:25 a.m.)**  
Explore downtown San Clemente and the pier while solving clues in this adult-focused whodunit adventure. Call/Tickets: Promo Code: OCNET for 25% off tickets.

## **April 11–12** **Imaginology** **Costa Mesa**

**10 a.m. to 4 p.m.**  
STEAM-focused hands-on activities for all ages. While this is family-friendly, adults interested in science, technology, arts, or creative demonstrations will find plenty to enjoy. Parking: \$15. At OC Fairgrounds, 88 Fair Drive, Costa Mesa.

## **April 18** **Murder Mystery** **Scavenger Hunt** **Old Town San Diego**

**11:20 a.m. (arrive by 11 a.m.)**  
Explore Old Town with logic-based clues and puzzles. Adults can enjoy this fun, interactive adventure at a relaxed pace. Call: Promo Code: OCNET for 25% off tickets.

## **Good To Go Fair** **Irvine**

**9 a.m. to 1 p.m.**  
Focus on family resources and wellness, including health screenings and developmental support. Adults accompanying children can also enjoy the event's informative sessions. At Pretend City Children's Museum, 29 Hubble, Irvine.

## **April 25** **Festival of Nations** **La Palma**

**10:30 a.m. Parade Starts**  
**11:30 a.m. Festival Starts**  
Experience cultural performances, food trucks, and heritage exhibits displaying the rich diversity of Southern California. At La Palma Central Park, 7821 Walker St., La Palma.

## **Annual ACES Hot Rod** **Resurrection** **Huntington Beach**

**9 a.m. to 1 p.m.**  
Classic pre-'65 hot rods, vintage bikes, live music, and German village ambiance. Free admission and parking. At Old World Village Festival Hall, 7561 Center Ave., No. 49, Huntington Beach.

*Continued on page 21*

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## Protecting Your Money

## Can You Recognize An Artificial Intelligence (AI) Scam?

Postal inspectors want to help you and all USPS customers stay safe.

Scammers take every opportunity to trick you into believing their lies are legitimate offers, wins, and even emergency requests from friends and family. Now, with the prevalence of artificial intelligence (AI), scammers are using this new method to personalize their tricks and cons to make them appear even more real, legitimate, and believable—from AI-generated photos and voice clones that mimic a real person to wording that builds a relationship with a victim over weeks. But a fake is still a fake. As in any other scam, these fakes are created to separate you from your hard-earned money or property.

AI fakes are used in many types of long-running scams, from romance to investment scams, cryptocurrency scams, and even scams claiming to be tech support. Whatever the scam, they all involve impostors looking for their next victim, but it doesn't have to be you.

It can be difficult to recognize scams that use AI, but here are some tell-tale characteristics:

- The “person” contacting you has an inconsistent or thin social media footprint—few friends, recent account creation, comments that don't seem natural or are too well-written, or images that don't match name/profile details.

- Tiny misspellings, non-secure websites that ask for login info,



*Artificial intelligence helps scammers cheat people out of real money—but you can protect yourself.*

or an email address that doesn't match the website domain asking for information (example: john.doe@USPUS.com, when USPS.com is the actual domain name).

- Overly polished “evidence”—PDFs or screenshots that can be easily fabricated.

- Requests to move communication off-platform—e.g., insisting on speaking via WhatsApp, Telegram, or a separate private email address so platform security protections won't apply.

- Inconsistencies in audio/video—lip sync timing may be off, weird lighting/jerky motion, or a voice that doesn't quite match the person you know.

- Too-good-to-be-true financial returns—guaranteed high returns and rewards, pressure to recruit others, or “exclusive” private opportunities.

To protect yourself from scammers, follow these tips, and

share them with customers and your community:

- Never send money to someone you know only online—especially through cryptocurrency, wire transfer, gift cards, or prepaid reload methods.

- Treat unusual financial asks as red flags. Requests to “loan me to buy a ticket” or “invest through this private wallet” are warnings to STOP and verify.

- Enable multi-factor authentication (MFA) on email, social, and financial accounts.

- Use payment methods with buyer protection (credit cards, escrow services) when transacting with unknown parties.

- Limit sharing of personally identifiable information. Providing your full date of birth, Social Security number, photos of IDs, or home addresses can enable identity theft.

- Keep devices and software updated. Use antivirus software and a password manager for strong, unique passwords.

- Be cautious with “too helpful” strangers. If someone offers to set up an investment account or “help” you sign up, slow down and verify.

- Inform your contacts. Warn friends and family if you see a suspicious contact pretending to be you.

And if you believe you have been a victim of a scam, take

immediate action:

1. Stop communication with the scammer and preserve all messages and transaction records.

2. Contact the bank/payment provider immediately to attempt to stop or trace transfers.

3. Report to authorities:
  - Report to the Postal Inspection Service at [www.uspis.gov/report](http://www.uspis.gov/report); Federal Trade Commission (FTC) at [reportfraud.ftc.gov](http://reportfraud.ftc.gov); and the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) at [ic3.gov](http://ic3.gov).

- Report the profile and messages to the platform where the contact occurred.

4. Change passwords and enable MFA if you shared login info.

5. Place fraud alerts and a credit freeze if you shared sensitive financial data.

6. Contact local police if you lost significant sums of money or were threatened.

7. Seek support. Scams cause emotional harm, so talk to trusted friends, family, or a counselor.

8. If you used cryptocurrency, contact law enforcement immediately. Tracing is difficult, but reported early, there may be a chance of recovering your funds.

If you believe you have been a victim of any scam connected to the U.S. Mail, report it to postal inspectors at 877-876-2455, or at [www.uspis.gov/report](http://www.uspis.gov/report).

## FOOD WASTE

A GLOBAL ISSUE

**1/3** of Total Global Food Production is Lost or Wasted

Food Loss & Waste =

**\$680 Billion** in Industrialized Countries

**\$310 Billion** in Developing Countries

**95-115 kg** of food per capita are wasted in Europe and North America Each Year

**6-11 kg** the per capita food waste for people in sub-Saharan Africa, south, and south-east Asia



**Be Conscious of Food Waste.** Just 1/4 of food that is currently lost or wasted could feed over 800 million people.

You can learn more from the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations <http://www.fao.org/save-food/resources/keyfindings/en/>

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# The Gadget Geezer

By Les Goldberg

## Springtime Means Gardening Time

I must admit: Spring is my favorite time of the year. Planting new flowers, pruning my trees, or seeding the grass – it's all part of having fun in the sun. However, as we get older, it is comforting to know that there are always new gadgets to help us make our jobs easier.

Here's a small sample of what I found:

### Auto Soil Tester



Photo courtesy Amazon.

Whether you are planting indoors or outdoors, knowing how much water, what the temperature of the soil is, and how much sunlight is needed are vital to the lifecycle of your plants. That's why it is important to invest in an automatic soil tester like the 4-in-1 multi-functional **Yamron** device.

When you plug the tester about four inches into the soil, the latest probe detection technology can quickly and accurately measure the soil's pH level, moisture, and temperature. Results of the test will appear within 10 seconds on a large

LCD screen with a backlight display for easy reading.

A 45-degree rotating screen head allows you to easily view the screen content without bending over. Price: \$28 on Amazon.

### Seeding Template



You don't have to be a horticulturalist to grow vegetables like a professional farm operation. It turns out, all you need is **Contour Creations Seeding Square**. This tool ensures seeds and seedlings are perfectly spaced to maximize your output from two to five times larger.

The product's precision spacing grows a dense crop that crowds out weeds and reduces water evaporation for a more productive garden with less cost and effort. It is sold with a color-coded gardening template with dibber, seed spoon, ruler, and planting guide. \$29.95 on Amazon.

### Handy Garden Bag

In my younger years, I loved to garden, get my hands dirty in the soft, fresh soil. I also enjoyed making my own garden "toolbox" out of scrap wood I managed to salvage from con-



struction sites in my neighborhood. As I got older, however, carrying around my shovels, shears, water spray bottles, hand rakes, and other tools became more annoying than convenient.

That's why I welcome the newest fabric garden bag from **Grenebo Gardening Tools**. At \$29.99, it features durable, rust-proof, and heavy-duty material, and storage room to hold up to eight items, including pruning shears, weeder, transplanter, cultivator, gloves, and more. And the ergonomically designed handle makes it easier to carry.

### The GardenGlide



While the garden bag is ideal for carrying your tools around in an organized fashion, what about those really heavy items like bags of potting soil, fertilizer, garden edge stones, etc? **The**

**Leonard GardenGlide** was invented to solve that problem.

It is not a sled. But it is a transporter built with 100 percent recycled plastic and measures 28 and a half inches in diameter and less than four inches tall. This lightweight disk weighs only three pounds but has a working capacity of 200 pounds. It also features a 54-inch braided nylon rope connected to a plastic handle.

With the ability to slide over nearly any surface without marring or digging into the yard, the GardenGlide is ideal for homeowners, landscapers, gardeners, campers, masons, and contractors who need to transport potted plants, rocks, pavers, firewood, bagged materials, and other heavy objects safely.

As one customer said, "I've used this for moving everything from plants and large trees to giant rocks and compost. My back thanks the GardenGlide." Price: \$65.60 at Amazon.

### Cordless Grass Trimmer



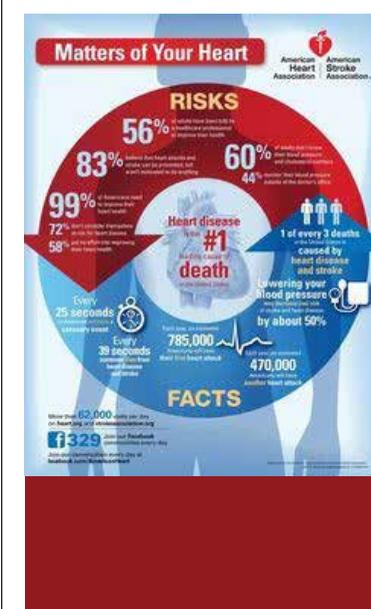
The days of getting down on your hands and knees to trim the grass and shrubbery are long gone. In fact, the next

generation of electric trimmers required a cord that often got caught in the blades or was just annoying to work with. That problem has been solved, too, with the advent of cordless battery technology such as that found in the new **FSA 50 Battery Grass Trimmer** from StihlUSA.

The company claims its newest version of the grass trimmer has 10 percent more power than previous models, making it easier to manage the toughest of grass.

It features the ability to switch from trimming to edging in seconds, while allowing you to adjust the shaft and mowing head for comfort and hard-to-reach areas. Also, it is lightweight and balanced and has a soft, high-visibility bumper for trimming neatly around trees, fences, and walls. Price: \$219.99 on Amazon.

Happy gardening, happy springtime!





## April: A Month of Renewal, Mischief, and History



Photo courtesy Pixabay.

April has long been associated with renewal. In much of the Northern Hemisphere, it is the month when winter finally loosens its grip and spring begins to show itself in earnest. Trees bud, flowers bloom, and longer days signal the shift toward warmer weather. The name “April” is believed to come from the Latin word *aperire*, meaning “to open,” a reference to the opening of blossoms and the awakening of nature after the colder months.

One of the most lighthearted traditions of the month arrives on April Fools’ Day, celebrated on April 1. On this day, practical jokes and playful hoaxes have been part of popular culture for centuries. Historians are not entirely certain where the tradition began, but it has appeared in European writings

as far back as the 1500s. Newspapers, radio stations, and even major corporations have occasionally joined the fun with elaborate pranks that fool audiences—at least for a moment.

April also carries moments of solemn remembrance. On April 15, 1912, the ocean liner RMS Titanic sank in the North Atlantic after striking an iceberg during its maiden voyage. The disaster, one of the most famous maritime tragedies in history, claimed more than 1,500 lives and led to sweeping changes in maritime safety laws around the world.

Another major date is April 22, known globally as Earth Day. First celebrated in 1970, Earth Day emerged from the growing environmental movement in the United States. Millions

of Americans participated in rallies, teach-ins, and community cleanups, helping launch modern environmental awareness and eventually influencing legislation to protect air, water, and wildlife.

From laughter to reflection, April holds a unique place on the calendar. It is a month that reminds people of nature’s power to renew itself and of the importance of caring for the world around us. Whether through blooming gardens, playful pranks, or moments of historical remembrance, April marks a turning point in the year—a time when life seems to open up once again.



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## APRIL Calendar

*Continued from page 18*

**April 25–26**

**Floral Park Home & Garden Tour**



**Santa Ana**

Explore stunning vintage homes and gardens, enjoy the Street of Treasures Market, classic car displays, and light refreshments. Ideal for gardening enthusiasts and architecture lovers.

**April Whale Watching**  
(Dana Point & Newport Beach)

Gray whales migrate along the

West Coast through April, with humpback, finback, and minke



whales visible year-round. Cruises last 2–2.5 hours and provide a relaxed, scenic experience perfect for all adults.

**Dana Point Locations:**

Captain Dave’s Dolphin & Whale Safari, 24440 Dana Point Harbor Drive.  
Dana Wharf Sportfishing & Whale Watching, 34675 Golden Lantern.

**Newport Beach Locations:**

Davey’s Locker Whale Watching, 400 Main St.  
Newport Landing, 309 Palm Street, Suite A; \$16 cruise special.

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# In The Spotlight

By Debbie L. Sklar

## April After 55: Rediscovering the Joys of Spring

For many people over 55, April carries a special kind of energy. After the slower rhythm of winter, the arrival of spring invites people outdoors again. The days are longer, the air feels warmer, and neighborhoods come alive with blooming trees and fresh greenery. It's a season that naturally encourages reflection—and often, a little renewal.

Unlike earlier decades filled with busy careers and raising families, this stage of life can offer something many people once had very little time for. April becomes an ideal month to use that time in ways that are meaningful, enjoyable, and sometimes even surprising.

### Outdoor life

One of the simplest pleasures of the season is simply being outside again. A walk through the neighborhood can reveal small signs of spring that are easy to miss during colder months—birds returning to familiar trees, gardens beginning to wake up, and the scent of flowers smelled during a mild breeze. Many people find that daily walks become not just exercise, but a quiet ritual that improves mood and overall well-being.

Gardening is another favorite spring activity among older adults. Whether it's tending to a backyard vegetable patch or planting flowers in patio con-



Photo courtesy Pixabay.

tainers, gardening provides gentle physical activity and a sense of accomplishment. Watching tomatoes ripen or roses bloom brings a quiet satisfaction that few hobbies can match.

Spring is also a time when many communities begin hosting outdoor events again. Farmers' markets reopen, art festivals return, and neighborhood gatherings become more common. These events offer opportunities to reconnect with neighbors, meet new people, and support local businesses. Even a simple Saturday morning visit to a market can become a social outing as much as a shopping trip.

### Nature Lovers

April also brings a meaningful moment for people who appreciate nature and the environment. Each year on April 22, people around the world

celebrate Earth Day. Since its beginnings in 1970, the day has encouraged individuals and communities to think about conservation and protecting natural resources. For those who have watched environmental awareness grow over the decades, it can be satisfying to see younger generations continuing that commitment.

For many people over 55, April is also a time to revisit interests that may have been put aside during earlier years. Painting, photography, writing, music, or woodworking often return as fulfilling hobbies once schedules become more flexible. Some people take classes at community centers or local colleges, discovering new skills alongside others who share similar interests.

### Out and About

Travel, even short trips, also

becomes more appealing in spring. Crowds are often smaller than in summer, and the weather in many parts of the country is mild and comfortable. A day trip to a nearby coastal town, historic site, or botanical garden can offer a refreshing change of scenery without the stress of extensive travel planning.

Volunteering is another way many older adults find purpose during the spring months. Libraries, food banks, museums, and schools often welcome volunteers who bring both life experience and reliability. For some, volunteering becomes one of the most rewarding parts of retirement, creating connections while contributing to the community.

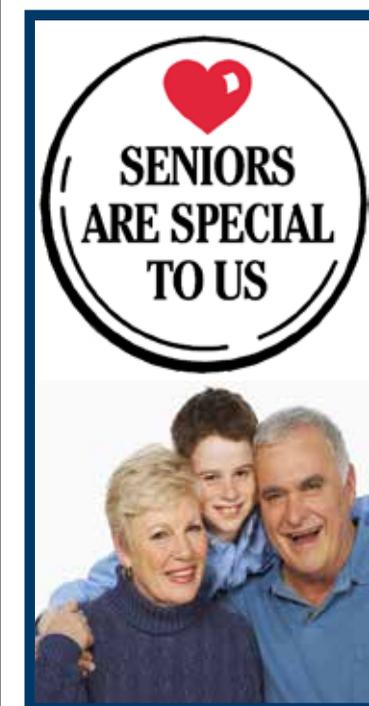
### Appreciate the Surroundings

Of course, April is not only about activity. It can also be a season for slowing down and appreciating simple moments, reading a book on the patio, sharing coffee with a friend, or watching the sunset stretch later into the evening. These quiet pleasures often feel more valuable with age when the pace of life has finally eased enough to enjoy them.

Perhaps that is what makes April so meaningful later in life. It reminds people that renewal is not limited to nature alone. Just as trees produce new leaves each

spring, people also continue to grow, learn, and rediscover passions at every stage of life.

For those over 55, April offers something simple and profound: a gentle reminder that every new season still holds possibilities waiting to be explored.



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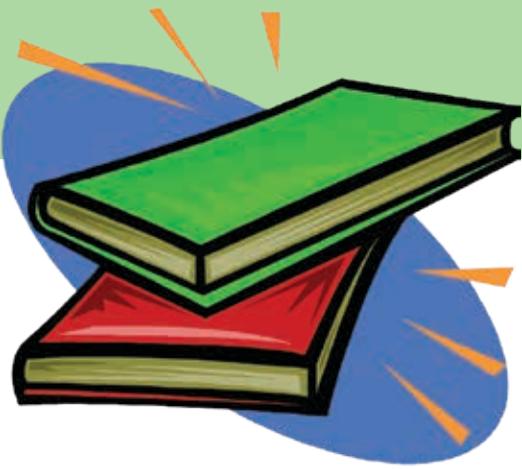
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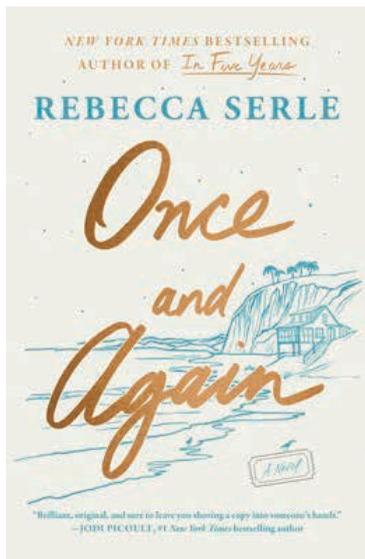
American Heart Association



# April Book Club

April's new book releases offer a mix of emotional depth, magical worlds, and suspenseful romance that will appeal to avid readers looking for engaging stories this spring. From family secrets and first loves to epic adventures and high-stakes thrillers, these titles provide a range of experiences perfect for a weekend read or a book club discussion.

## *Once and Again* A Novel by Rebecca Serle



The Novak women are born with a rare gift: the ability to turn back time just once. For Lauren, this gift has always been a double-edged sword. She has watched her mother, Marcella, use it to save Lauren's father from a deadly accident, leaving her own future uncertain.

Broad Beach Road, reconnecting with her father and navigating the complex relationship with her mother. But the real challenge comes when Stone, her first love, moves back next door. As old feelings resurface and family history complicates her present, Lauren must consider the choices she would change—and whether it's worth the risk.

Serle's storytelling blends heartfelt family drama with romantic tension, crafting a narrative about love, regret, and the moments that define a life. Available at Atria Books, Amazon, and local bookstores. Price: \$28 hardcover.

## *Voidverse* By Damien Ober



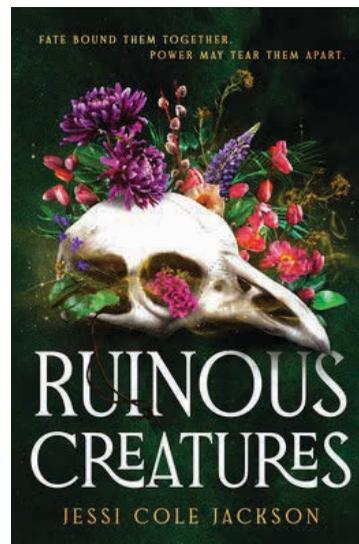
In a universe that exists on isolated, floating "rocks" amid infinite darkness, danger lurks in every corner. The Sinker, hardened by a violent childhood, has no fear of the Void. When she meets Emery, a woman

Now, after her husband takes a job in New York, Lauren returns to her childhood home on Malibu's

desperate to save her ailing son, they journey together through this treacherous expanse, facing mercenaries, princes, and powerful anomalies.

As Emery's world is destroyed, and the Void destabilizes; the pair confronts a prophecy that may determine the fate of everything around them. Ober's debut is a sweeping blend of high-concept science fiction and fantasy, weaving poetic language with intricate world-building. Themes of survival, courage, and the bonds that sustain us drive the story forward, making "*Voidverse*" a page-turning adventure and a meditation on resilience in a collapsing universe. Available at S&S/Saga Press. Price: \$27 hardcover.

## *Ruinous Creatures* A Novel by Jessi Cole Jackson



Deep within a secluded valley, magic is a privilege and a curse, drawn from the bones of extraordinary creatures. Adela has spent years preparing these magical skulls, ensuring

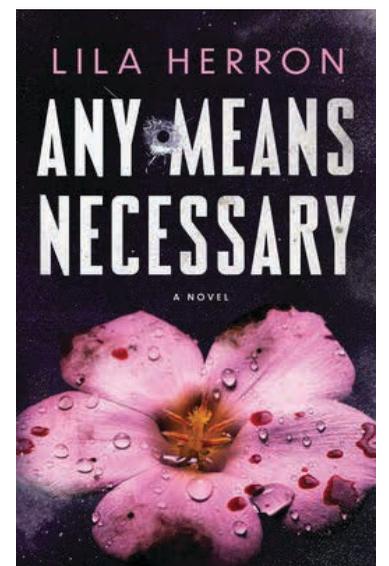
the valley's traditions endure. When she discovers two phoenix skulls—long thought to be myths—she awakens powers beyond her imagination, throwing the valley into chaos.

Meanwhile, Kian, a determined novice, enters the ceremonial matching with a secret agenda: he seeks revenge against the magical hierarchy that killed his parents. As their paths converge, Adela and Kian's fates intertwine, their connection intensifying as the valley's magic reaches a dangerous crescendo.

Jackson's novel combines rich fantasy world-building, morally complex characters, and a slow-burning romance, exploring themes of power, responsibility, and love that cannot be ignored. "*Ruinous Creatures*" is a mesmerizing fantasy and a story about the choices that shape destiny. Available at Atria Books, Amazon, and independent bookstores. Price: \$28 hardcover.

## *Any Means Necessary* A Novel by Lila Herron

ER nurse Lexie West thought she could leave the trauma behind and start fresh, house-sitting in New York City while her life recalibrates. But when Callum Russo, a professional "fixer" for powerful clients, discovers her in his kitchen, their worlds collide. Lexie agrees to a tentative arrangement, but the boundaries between their lives quickly blur.



Her medical skills save Callum and his team from unexpected dangers, and attraction grows in parallel with suspense. Herron delivers a story that balances intense romance with fast-paced thrills, drawing readers into a world of high stakes, moral ambiguity, and genuine emotional connection.

Lexie and Callum's chemistry, combined with the tension of Callum's secretive work, makes "*Any Means Necessary*" a page-turner that will appeal to fans of romantic suspense and contemporary drama. Available at Atria/Emily Bestler Books. Price: \$28 hardcover.



# April Crossword Puzzle

## Across

1. Bone to pick
5. Simpleton
9. Strip of wood
13. Cockney greeting
14. Wispy clouds
15. Eastern discipline
16. Stadium level
17. By surprise
18. Me neither
19. They do not possess
21. Chou En-\_\_\_\_\_
22. Latin 101 word
23. Univ. recruiting group
25. A reel problem
27. Unusual
31. Line on a weather map
35. Impulse carrier
36. Persnickety one
38. \_\_\_\_\_ Kick Out of You
39. Dallas player, briefly
40. Compassion
42. Boozehound
43. Academy freshman
46. Together, in scores
47. Unit of loudness
48. Join
50. Located
52. Monetary unit of China
54. Political cartoonist Thomas
55. Lira replacement
58. Squeal (on)
60. Close at hand
64. Bridge length
65. Pianist Claudio
67. \_\_\_\_\_ contendere
68. Sleipnir's rider
69. Country dances
70. \_\_\_\_\_ to differ!
71. Boot bottom
72. 90 degrees from norte
73. Basic monetary unit of Ghana

## Down

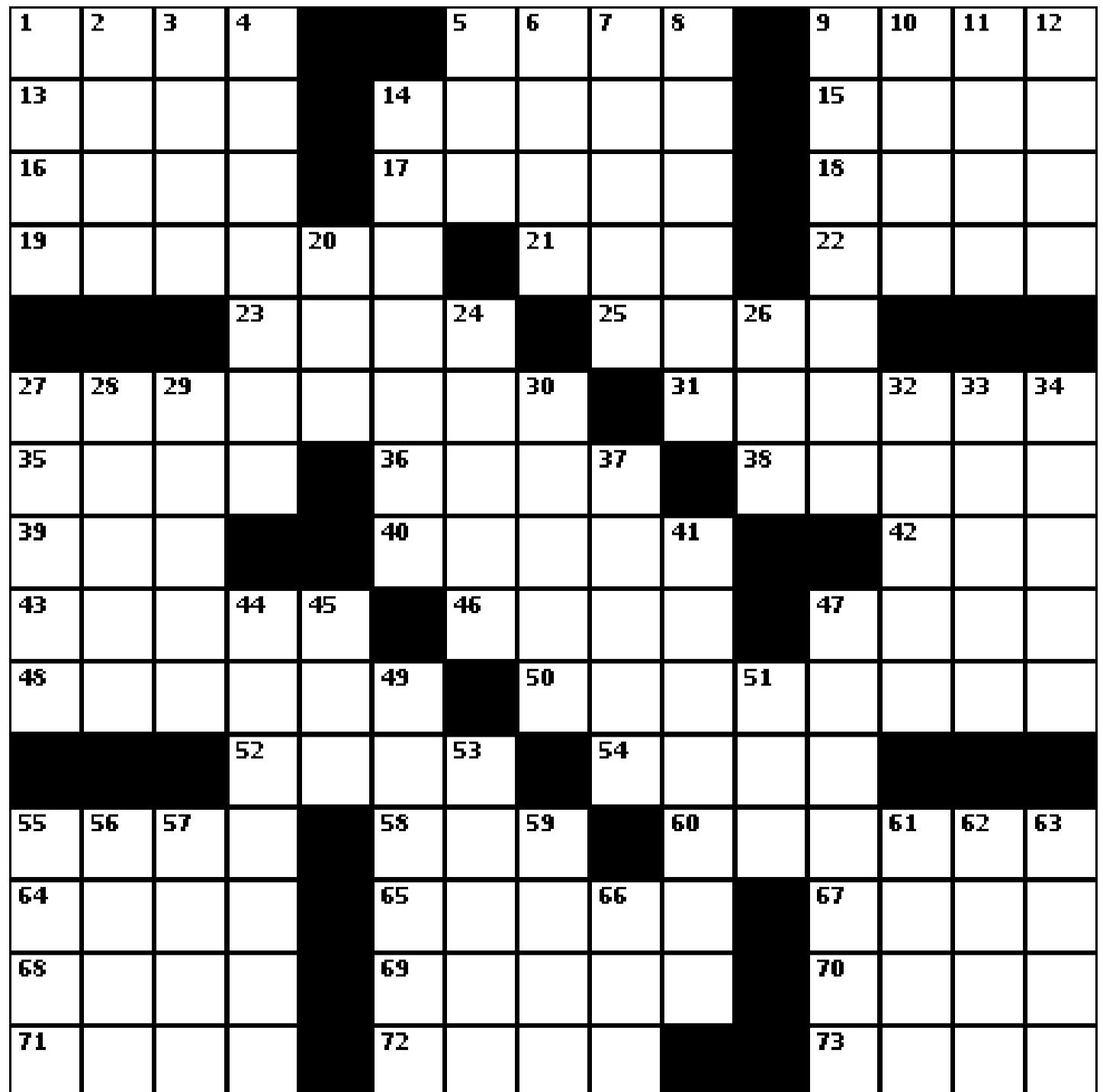
1. Playwright Henley
2. Lamb's pen name
3. Mtn. stat

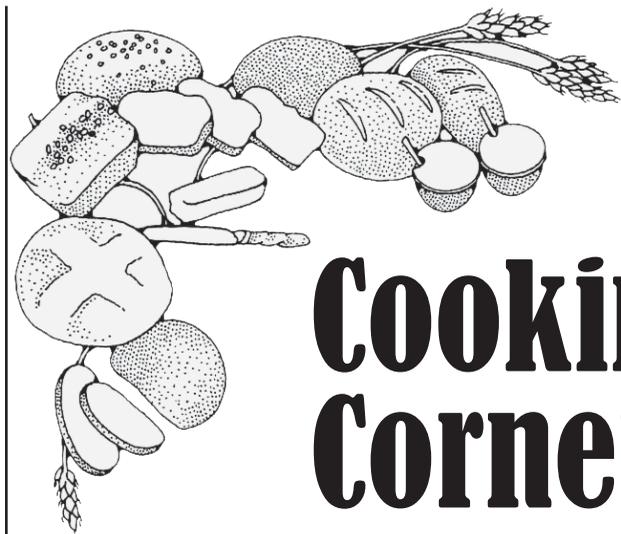
4. Precede
5. Front part of an apron
6. Vocal
7. Killer whales
8. Two-piece bathing suit
9. Jewish house of worship
10. Apparatus for weaving
11. Mogul capital until 1658
12. Mai \_\_\_\_\_
14. Feline
20. Cambodia's Lon \_\_\_\_\_

24. Port of Crete
26. Just \_\_\_\_\_ suspected!
27. Argentine plain
28. Glorify
29. Eagerly desire
30. Ways to go
32. Intoxicate
33. Do penance
34. Like most movies
37. UCLA player
41. Lockjaw

44. Seaport in NE New Jersey
45. Euro forerunner
47. Diabolical
49. Zimbabwe's capital
51. Purpose
53. Nostrils
55. Those, to Juan
56. High hair style
57. Banister
59. Waste allowance
61. Cloak

62. Ran, as colors
63. Meditator
66. Bass, e.g.





## Cooking Corner

### Easter Brunch Ham & Swiss Strata



Easter morning calls for something comforting, simple, and special enough to share. This Ham & Swiss Strata is a make-ahead brunch bake that lets you enjoy the holiday without spending the morning in the kitchen. It's hearty, flavorful, and perfect for serving family or a small gathering of friends.

A make-ahead baked casserole that's perfect for Easter morning. It's easy to assemble the night before, and it bakes up golden, puffy, and delicious — ideal for seniors cooking for family or for smaller gatherings.

#### Ingredients

- 6 cups cubed French bread or sturdy sandwich bread

- 1 ½ cups diced cooked ham
- 1 cup shredded Swiss cheese
- ½ cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 6 large eggs
- 2 cups milk
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley (optional)

#### Assemble

- Lightly butter a 9×13 baking dish.
- Spread the cubed bread evenly in the dish.
- Sprinkle the diced ham over the bread.

Add the Swiss and cheddar cheeses on top.

- In a mixing bowl, whisk together the eggs, milk, Dijon mustard, onion powder, salt, and pepper.

- Pour the egg mixture evenly over the bread and ham.

- Press down lightly with a spatula so the bread absorbs the custard.

- Cover and refrigerate at least 2 hours or overnight.

#### Bake

- Preheat oven to 350°F.

- Uncover the dish and let it sit at room temperature for 10 minutes.

- Bake for 45–55 minutes, or until the top is golden and the center is set.

- Let rest for 5 minutes before slicing.

- Sprinkle with parsley for a fresh spring touch.

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**FOOD WASTE**  
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You can learn more from the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations <http://www.fao.org/save-food/resources/keyfindings/en/>

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# Movie Preview

## ‘Kangaroo Island’

By Randal C. Hill

Here’s a well-crafted piece of storytelling from Down Under.

Lou Wells (Rebecca Breeds), who once had a promising start in an American soap opera, has hit rock bottom in California. She’s broke, jobless, and sleeping on her ex-boyfriend’s couch. One day, she receives an airplane ticket from her estranged father in South Australia. He wants Lou to return home, as he has something important — very important — to tell her.

Reluctantly, and dreading the reunion, the prodigal daughter returns to the ruggedly beautiful and wildlife-abundant Kangaroo Island, where she reconnects with her father, Rory (Erik Thomson), and her sister, Freya (Adelaide Clemens). Much has changed, of course, including the fact that Freya is now married to Lou’s once-time love, a charismatic surfer named Ben (Joel Jackson).

Freya, who is devoutly religious, has leased the Wells property to a Christian organization for 80 years—without consulting her father or sister. This throws open wide a door that allows for several intense discussions of faith—from having faith in God (or a god) to faith in the dreams we may have for our own lives.

Long-buried family issues unfold at a brisk pace as this tale brings us secret on secret, with hectic scenes but allowing us to understand each important character during the picture’s 110-minute running time.

“Kangaroo Island” is admittedly awash in soap-opera-ish fare that includes betrayal, joy, grief, loss, and unrequited love. Be aware, also, that the abundant wildlife and sprawling island scenery—beautiful, authentic, and powerful—will captivate you as you watch this unique offering.

Well-deserved praise goes to the husband-and-wife team of ex-New Yorkers Timothy David (director) and Sally Gifford (scriptwriter). Their production is a near-perfect balance of drama, mystery, and hilarity. (Don’t be surprised by the humor. Such moments are carefully sprinkled throughout the story, and they bring fleeting relief to the heavyweight concerns that we are experiencing with the Wells family.)

While the unspoiled island appears tranquil, a mere scratch below the surface reveals that human life there is anything but.

This release clearly reveals the power of family to do both harm and heal.

Critics from Down Under can’t seem to gush enough about “Kangaroo Island.” As one reviewer enthuses, “This film is brilliantly written and clever in all the right ways. It’s funny (and we did not expect that) but also surprisingly sad ... Congratulations to everyone involved, as they’ve pulled off something really very special.”

“Kangaroo Island” opens for a limited theater run on April 29. It is also available for rent or purchase on Apple TV and Amazon Prime.





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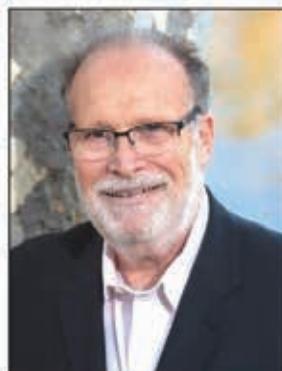


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## Food News & Notes

# How To Reduce Food Waste At Home

by Dr. Jean Buzby

Here's a cool idea: A clean, well-organized refrigerator can help your family prevent food waste.



### Three Ways To Fight Food Waste

**1. Know and, if necessary, reorganize your fridge and pantry.** Keep your refrigerator and pantry clean and organized so you can see what needs to be eaten first. If fresh food is "out of sight, out of mind," it may be forgotten until it's no longer fresh and so ultimately wasted. Food is less likely to go bad when you use the more perishable and older items first.

Also, storing food in clear containers can help you see what you have available in your fridge and pantry and can help you avoid buying food you already have.

In the fridge, extend the life of your food by putting it in the right place. For example, the temperature in the refrigerator door fluctuates more than the cabinets or the back of the unit so don't store such perishable foods as milk in the door.

**2. Download the FoodKeeper App.** The USDA, the Food Marketing Institute, and Cornell University jointly created FoodKeeper, which is available free at the Google Play or iTunes stores, or via desktop at [www.usda.gov/foodlossand-waste](http://www.usda.gov/foodlossand-waste).

FoodKeeper provides guidance on safe handling, preparation, and storage of more than 650 foods and beverages. With the app, you can track storage times for different foods, see cooking tips, watch helpful videos, and get information on food recalls. Users can also set up calendar reminders for when products are nearing their recommended storage date.

**3. Love your leftovers.** Give leftovers a makeover when you reuse them in recipes. Add broccoli stems to a salad or omelet or blend overripe fruit and peels into a low-fat smoothie. My favorite all-time smoothie was made from about-to-expire chocolate yogurt and wilting blueberries and raspberries. Make broth from vegetable and/or meat trimmings, and freeze what you don't plan to eat right away.

Be creative while keeping leftover safety in mind. If you cook often and typically have loads of leftovers, consider having one dinner a week designated as Leftover Night.

Many foods can also be safely frozen indefinitely, so if you can't use something perishable

*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

## Spring Beauty, Wellness & Grooming Must-Haves

Spring is here, and it's the perfect time to refresh your routines—from skincare to wellness to grooming. This season, brands are introducing products that deliver visible results, indulgent textures, and a little extra fun to everyday self-care. Whether you're sipping, spritzing, or styling, these **Fab Finds** are worth a spot on your shopping list.

### COSRX: Ingredient-Driven Skincare for Radiant Spring Skin



Photo courtesy COSRX.

If your skin feels tired after winter, COSRX has you covered. Known for ingredient-focused routines, **COSRX** highlights peptides, snail mucin, and PDRN technology to target key concerns.

Try the **Peptide Trio routine**, which includes 6 Peptide Skin Booster Serum (enhances absorption), Peptide Collagen Hydrogel Eye Patch (reduces puffiness and fine lines), and Peptide Collagen Lifting Glow Hydrogel Mask (for luminous, smooth skin). For hydration lovers, the Advanced Snail 96 Mucin Power Essence and Advanced Snail 92 All-in-One Cream deliver soothing mois-

ture, while the PDRN EXO-SOME Skinplaning Glaze Mask provides a peel-off treatment for a revitalized finish. Don't forget Ultra-Light Invisible Sunscreen SPF50 PA++++ to protect skin under spring rays.

**Where to buy:** Amazon.com

**Cost:** Varied

### Vital Proteins: Collagen You Can Sip



Photo courtesy VitalProteins..

Hydration just got a glow-up with Vital Proteins **Collagen Sparkling Water**, a refreshing beverage that pairs light carbonation with VERISOL collagen peptides. Clinically shown to improve skin elasticity and reduce fine lines in 30 days, each can also deliver 100% of your daily Vitamin C—sugar-free, no artificial sweeteners, and just 15 calories. Flavors include Strawberry Blossom, Lemon Lime, and Blood Orange, making hydration tasty and beneficial for hair, nails, and skin.

**Where to buy:** Walmart, vital-proteins.com, Amazon, Vital Proteins TikTok Shop

**Cost:** \$2.50 per 12-oz can; \$17.99 for 12-count variety pack.

### IOPE: Professional-Grade K-Beauty at Home



Photo courtesy IOPE.

For those seeking clinical-grade K-beauty, **IOPE from Amorepacific** launches in the U.S. via Sephora.com. With 30 years of research behind it, IOPE's nine products feature PDRN, stabilized Vitamin C, and proprietary retinol complexes.

Standouts include **XMD Stem**

**III Clinical Recovery Serum** (\$59), inspired by professional PDRN treatments, and **Retinol RX 2% Reti-jection Serum** (\$57), designed to boost collagen and minimize wrinkles while reducing irritation. These formulas deliver treatment-level results at home, addressing texture, firmness, brightness, and overall vitality.

**Where to buy:** Sephora.com

**Cost:** \$6.50–\$69, depending on product.

### OLIVIAUMMA: Vegan Skincare With Playful Textures

**OLIVIAUMMA**, a fully vegan Korean skincare brand, debuts nationwide at Sephora. Merging Korean skincare philosophy with a modern Mi-



Photo courtesy OLIVIAUMMA.

ami-inspired aesthetic, **OLIVIAUMMA** emphasizes visible results paired with enjoyable textures, vibrant colors, and a polished design.

Two Sephora-exclusive launches include **Milky Resurfacing Brightening Toner Pads** and **Cloud Foam Hydrating Cleanser**, offering effective, mindful daily routines inspired

*Continued on page 35*



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## The Healthy Home

# How to Breathe Better Air

You can't see them but they can harm you and the people you care about with every breath you take.

No, it's not some new horror movie. It's the particles and pollutants hidden inside your home.

### The Problem

Many homeowners know about cleaning surfaces or vacuuming when they want a healthier home, but some of the biggest factors affecting indoor air quality are in places most people probably never think about at all: inside your heating and cooling system.

### The Reason

Because such systems circulate air throughout the house, particles of dust, pollen, pet dander, and mold spores can move through the home's airflow.

### Why It's Important

Experts at the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-conditioning Experts (ASHRAE) estimate Americans spend nearly 90 percent of their time indoors, making the quality of indoor environments a major factor in overall exposure to air pollutants.

In fact, according to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA), eight out of ten people in the United States are exposed to dust mites and six out of ten are exposed to cat or dog dander, two of the most common indoor allergy triggers. What's more, the AAFA



*Because HVAC systems move air throughout the entire home, regular inspection and proper maintenance should be part of your healthy home checklist.*

reports, over 28 million Americans — about 1 in 12 people — have asthma and these indoor triggers can worsen their symptoms.

### An Answer

ASHRAE members and other experts across public health, building science, and environmental health increasingly emphasize that ventilation, airflow, moisture control, and HVAC system performance all influence the air people breathe indoors. Having regular maintenance — such as changing filters, controlling moisture, and having HVAC systems inspected — as part of your healthy home checklist, they note, can help manage these pollutants and support cleaner indoor air.

### What You Can Do

- **Change the air filters.** Dirty filters can restrict airflow and allow particles to recirculate throughout the house.
- **Manage moisture and humidity in the house.** Excess humidity can contribute to mold growth and other indoor air concerns.
- **Maintain proper bathroom and kitchen ventilation.** Ex-

haust fans help remove moisture, cooking particles, and pollutants from indoor air.

- **Keep vents and air pathways clear.** Blocked vents can interfere with airflow and reduce ventilation effectiveness.

- **Watch for excess dust and debris.** Visible buildup near vents or registers may signal the need for system maintenance.

- **Have regular professional inspections of your HVAC system** to help ensure components are functioning properly and airflow remains unobstructed.

### Who Can Help

Qualified HVAC professionals, such as the members of the National Air Duct Cleaners Association (NADCA), can evaluate and improve your home's system performance.

### Learn More

For further facts and to find a qualified HVAC company near you, visit [www.BreathingClean.com](http://www.BreathingClean.com).

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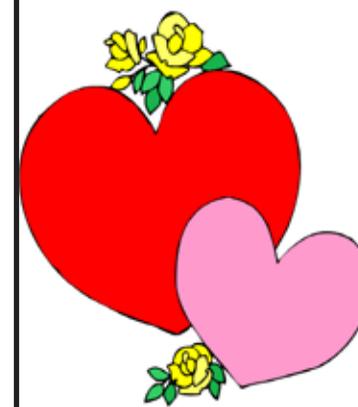
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## 'Howdy Doody Show' 1954



Photo courtesy Google.

### Gemini said

The year was 1954, and across the suburban landscape of America, a peculiar ritual was taking place. It was 5:30 PM—a time when the chaos of backyard play ceased, and millions of children, still dusty from the outdoors, scrambled toward the flickering glow of the family's mahogany-boxed television.

They weren't just watching a show; they were entering a neighborhood. Specifically, they were heading to Doodyville.

### The Peanut Gallery Awakens

The screen flickered to life with the familiar, frantic energy of a

circus barker. "Say, kids! What time is it?"

Before the man on the screen could even finish, a cacophony of high-pitched voices—the lucky forty children sitting in the bleachers on set—shouted back in unison: "It's Howdy Doody Time!"

In the center of it all stood Buffalo Bob Smith, dressed in his fringed buckskin vest, beaming with the kind of earnest enthusiasm that could power a small city. Beside him, suspended by nearly invisible strings, was the star of the hour. With forty-eight freckles (one for every

state in the Union at the time) and a permanent, toothy grin, Howdy Doody was the undisputed king of the airwaves.

To a modern eye, Howdy might look like a relic of a simpler era, but in the 1950s, he was the first true "inter-media" superstar. He wasn't just wood and paint; to the children in the "Peanut Gallery," he was a peer who just happened to be made of timber.

### Chaos in Doodyville

The Howdy Doody Show was a masterclass in controlled chaos. While Buffalo Bob provided the structure, the surrounding cast provided the Technicolor (or, for most, grayscale) madness.

There was **Clarabell the Clown**, played by a young Bob Keeshan before he became Captain Kangaroo. Clarabell was the silent anarchist of the group, communicating only through a bicycle horn and a relentless desire to spray Buffalo Bob with a seltzer bottle. The tension of when the seltzer would strike was the 1950s equivalent of a high-stakes thriller for the under-ten demographic.

Then there was **Mayor Phineas T. Bluster**, the quintessential grumpy neighbor with the protruding chin, always plotting to ruin the fun, and **The Flub-a-Dub**, a biological impossibility consisting of the parts of eight different animals. It was a world where logic took a backseat to imagination—a place where a puppet could run for President (as Howdy did in 1948) and actually receive thousands of write-in votes.

### A Bridge Between Generations

For parents, the show was a godsend. It was the "electronic babysitter" in its earliest, purest form. While moms across the country were busy in the kitchen preparing meatloaf and mashed potatoes, Buffalo Bob was teaching their children about "The Golden Rule" and the importance of brushing their teeth.

But for the kids, it was about the **Wonder Wheel** and the prizes. It was about the catchy songs that would stay lodged in their brains for decades. The show was one of the first to truly understand the power of the "fourth wall." When Howdy looked into the lens, he wasn't looking at a camera; he was looking directly into the living rooms of Levittown, speaking to every child who felt a little too small for the "grown-up" world.

### The Final Seltzer Spray

By the late 1950s, the landscape of television was changing. New icons like Mickey Mouse were moving in, and the strings of the Doodyville residents were starting to show their age. On September 24, 1960, the show reached its legendary conclusion.

The final episode was a bitter-sweet farewell. For years, Clarabell the Clown had remained strictly mute, relying on his horn and his antics. As the final moments ticked away and the music began to swell for the last time, the camera zoomed in tight on the clown's face. The hijinks were over. With a look of genuine emotion, Clar-

abell leaned in and whispered the only words he would ever speak on air:

"Goodbye, kids."

It was the end of an era. The children of the fifties grew up, the black-and-white sets were replaced by color consoles, and Doodyville faded into the nostalgia of the Greatest Generation's scrapbooks. Yet, the legacy of that freckle-faced marionette remains. He proved that television could be a friend, a teacher, and a communal campfire for an entire generation.

# Life After Mother

By Lyn Jensen

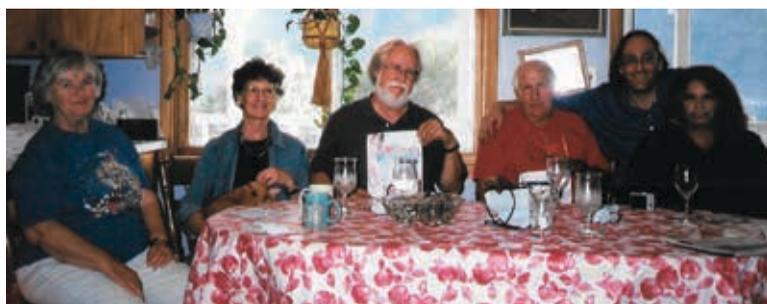
*'Exploring probate and estate issues from personal experience.'*

## Your Brain on Social Connections

In my March column I focused on Dr. Sanjay Gupta's advice for keeping our brains sharp as we age, as described in his book *"Keep Sharp: Build a Better Brain at any Age."* He suggests focusing on five goals over a 12-week period until those goals become habits. Briefly, those goals include exercise, get adequate sleep, eat a "rainbow" of fruits and vegetables along with generous servings of fatty fish, stimulate your brain with new activity, and "connect authentically with others and maintain a vibrant social life." This last goal is complex enough to be described in greater detail here.



According to Dr. Gupta's book, keeping up with the latest tech developments is one example of how to both stimulate your brain and stay socially engaged, "An Australian study involving more than five thousand older men found that those who use computers have a lower risk of receiving a diagnosis of dementia by up to eight and a half years, and an experimental study conducted in the United States found that older adults performed about 25 percent better on memory tasks after learning to use Facebook."



Photos courtesy Lyn Jensen.

Some further suggestions follow:

- What activities do you enjoy? Challenge yourself to try something new. Join clubs, teams, non-profits or political organizations. Meet in person, not just virtually. Get to know people apart from the meetings, too. Take a class on a subject you want to study. Do volunteer work. Travel.

- Connect regularly with friends, relatives, neighbors. Call, write, email, text or visit someone in your social circle at least once a week. Use social media such as Facebook to keep your network current about your activities—and theirs. Hang on to your old BFF and make a new one.



- Boomers make a special effort to regularly contact anyone you know from Gen X, Gen Y, and/or Gen Z. They're the ones that

will inherit whatever you leave behind.

- Do you have one or more pets? Dogs are especially helpful for socializing. They need to be walked, meaning, you, too, get some exercise, and at the same time you'll become more familiar with your neighborhood and neighbors. If you exercise your dog at a local dog park, you'll meet other dog persons and dogs. Trainers, groomers, veterinarians, all can be part of your pet-friendly network.



- If you're feeling isolated to the point of depression, reach out for help--to telephone hotlines, senior organizations, religious groups, and/or medical professionals. Take a walk with someone and talk about your worries. You'll get a combination of exercise, in-person interaction, and easing your mind.

- If you have mobility issues, such as no longer being able to drive, ask your local senior center or senior organization for assistance. That's a personal connection, too.

## Fabulous Finds

Continued from page 31

by founder Hye Young Kim's mother-daughter philosophy of care and connection.

**Where to buy:** Sephora stores nationwide and Sephora.com

**Cost:** Available in nine SKUs; pricing varies.

### BLVD & CO: Salon-Grade Men's Haircare



Photo courtesy BLVD. & CO.

For men, **BLVD & CO** from **Creative Labs** brings accessible, salon-grade haircare to 2,682 Walmart stores nationwide and online. Designed for real performance, BLVD & CO offers thoughtful scents, premium bottles, and easy-to-follow routines for scalp health and styling.

Key products include **Essential Shampoo and Conditioner** (\$8.97), **Thickening Shampoo and Conditioner** (\$8.97), and styling essentials such as **Texture Sea Salt Spray, Pomade, Clay, and Sculpting Fiber Crème** (\$9.97 each). The brand is built to empower men with high-performance, everyday haircare solutions.

**Where to buy:** Walmart and [www.blvdandco.com](http://www.blvdandco.com)

**Cost:** \$8.97–\$9.97 per product

From head-to-toe hydration to professional-grade serums, vegan skincare, and salon-quality haircare, spring is giving us plenty of ways to refresh routines and add a little sparkle to everyday self-care. Whether sipping, spritzing, or styling, these **Fab Finds** make it easy to treat yourself this season.

## Reduce Food Waste

Continued from page 30

before it may spoil, pop it in the freezer. Check the FoodKeeper app to see if your item may be frozen.

Mindfulness about food and food waste prevention in general can also help save you time and money. USDA estimates that each year at the consumer level, around \$1,500 of food goes uneaten per family of four. Imagine what your family could do with that kind of money.

- *Dr. Buzby is the USDA Food Loss and Waste Liaison in the Office of the Chief Economist.*



**AMERICAN LUNG ASSOCIATION**  
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# Busy Boomers

By Les Goldberg

## Court Watchers Key to Justice

While some seniors spend their time travelling, gardening, golfing, fishing, or whatever they find interesting and fulfilling, others volunteer for worthy causes, helping in the fight against diseases, hunger, and numerous social dilemmas.

For a growing number of people over 50 and in their “retirement” years, they are sitting in courtrooms across the country, making sure that the justice system is running smoothly. They are not lawyers or jurors, or anyone employed by the legal system. They are court watchers.

In my earlier life as a reporter for a Los Angeles daily newspaper covering both civil and

criminal courts, I first learned of these special volunteers whose job is to observe first-hand court proceedings to ensure that judges, prosecutors, and public defenders are accountable and fair.

With their eyes peeled and notebooks in hand, court watchers are trained and dedicated to unraveling the mysteries of the court that the public rarely gets to witness. Their job is to gather information that could be used to expose problems or trigger reform.

It’s a heavy responsibility that most of the seniors I talked to in the court watcher program are happy and proud to bear, telling me they feel like they did when



Photos courtesy ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union).

they served in juries or were in the military.

“I am only in my 60s, and I feel like I still have a lot to give to my country and my community,” said Julie Gregory of San Clemente.

“As a court-watcher, I can observe how our justice system works and knows that I am helping to keep our democracy strong.”

An official court watch program was established a decade ago in Orange County by a coalition of legal advocacy groups, including the ACLU, Law Enforcement Accountability Network, Chicano@s Unidos, and Arthur’s Center for the Wrongfully Convicted.

As one defense attorney said, “Judges have the power to uproot people’s lives. If we don’t have the tools to hold them accountable, then what will happen?”

It is well-documented that court watchers can, and do, change behaviors both in and outside of the courtroom. In Philadelphia, for instance, it caused judges to reduce the number

of bail hearings, allowing people who could not pay for their freedom to stay out of jail.

According to Jeremy Isard, a noted public defender and trial attorney, “court-watching makes our justice system fairer and builds an educated public. Getting a complete cross-section of society into the courtroom as spectators will reduce the alienation felt by many of us when we report for jury duty.

He goes on to say that court-watching “will help the court feel like a community institution. Most importantly, it will present the public with a real portrait of what occurs, which will result in ... a voting public better equipped to champion a more equitable judicial system.”

If you are interested in becoming a court watcher, you can contact your local city, state, or federal courts to receive formal training, which will provide you with the skills to observe and report your observations. With your certificate, you’ll be able to walk into any courtroom and watch the proceedings of any case.





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# 'Bohemian Rhapsody'

## Queen

By Randal C. Hill

**Opera:** A dramatic work set to music for singers and instrumentalists.

**Bohemian:** An artist or musician from about a century ago who defied convention and standards.

**Rhapsody:** A classical music piece with distinct sections played as one movement.

"I always wanted to do something operatic," Queen's charismatic leader Freddie Mercury once said. "I don't really know anything about opera myself. Just certain pieces. I wanted to create what I thought Queen could do." The result became the quartet's signature song:

Mercury's now-classic offering is a six-minute suite consisting of several sections—an introduction, a ballad segment, an operatic passage, a hard rock part, and a reflective coda — and all structured like Led Zepelin's dynamic "Stairway to Heaven."

While "Bohemian Rhapsody" is a monumental production, many Queen fans ended up scratching their collective heads when it came to trying to interpret Freddie's mystifying lyrics:

*Mama just killed a man*

*Put a gun against his head*

*Pulled my trigger; now he's dead*

*Mama, life had just begun*

*But now I've gone and thrown it all away*

Was he confessing to an actual homicide? When quizzed about the "Rhapsody" lyrics, Mercury declared, "It's one of those songs that has such a fantasy feel about it. I think people should just listen to it, think about it, and then make up their own minds as to what it says to them."

Freddie—born Farrokh Bulsara in Zanzibar (now part of Tanzania) in 1946—had just broken up with his long-time love, Mary Austin, after revealing to her that he had fallen in love with a man.

It seems that, in the words of "Bohemian Rhapsody," the Queen leader is literally addressing his mother." She embraced Zoroastrianism, which is intolerant of homosexuality, and her son's lyrics laid bare the angst he is suffering as he comes out as gay.

He's "killing" the straight Freddie he has always shown the world.

The quartet's record label bigwigs balked at the song's length—just under six minutes—and worried that Top 40 radio would shun the single due to its unorthodox running time. ("Hey Jude" was a minute-and-a-half longer.)

Queen's drummer, Roger Taylor, recalled, "They said it was too long and wouldn't work. We thought, 'Well, we could cut it, but it wouldn't make any sense ... You would miss all the different moods of the song.' So, we said no, it'll either fly or it won't."

The tune's length never proved to be a problem. Once "Bohemian Rhapsody" — gleaned from the Queen album "A Night at the Opera" — hit the English airwaves, the record-buying fans made the single a No. 1 winner there for nine weeks.

In America, the 45 on Elektra Records became the group's first entry into "Billboard's Hot 100" listing, climbing to the No. 9 spot in 1976 and reaching No. 2 on the 1992 chart after it was featured in the teen-oriented film "Wayne's World."

Trivia notes: On "Bohemian Rhapsody," Mercury played the same recording-studio grand piano as did Paul McCartney on "Hey Jude."

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## Breathe it out

\*Thirty minutes of exercise improves mental health



# Celebrating Earth Day: Small Steps, Big Impact

Each April, as spring settles in and the desert begins to show its first hints of color, Earth Day invites us to pause and appreciate the remarkable planet we call home. For seniors especially, it's a moment to reflect on the changes we've witnessed over the decades — cleaner air, better recycling programs, smarter energy use — and to recognize the meaningful role each of us continues to play in caring for our environment.

### • A Tradition Rooted in Community

Earth Day began in 1970 as a nationwide call to protect our natural resources. Today, it's celebrated around the world, reminding us that stewardship isn't about grand gestures. It's about everyday choices that add up over time — something seniors understand better than anyone.

### • Easy Ways to Make a Difference

You don't need to hike mountains or plant acres of trees to participate. Even simple actions can help keep our communities healthy and beautiful.

A few senior-friendly ideas:

- **Reuse and repurpose** items instead of tossing them
- **Bring reusable bags** when shopping
- **Turn off lights** when leaving a room
- **Recycle** paper, plastic, and cans whenever possible
- **Plant a small herb pot** or flower container for pollinators



These small habits not only help the planet but also bring a sense of purpose and satisfaction.

### • Enjoying the Outdoors

Earth Day is also a wonderful reminder to step outside and enjoy the fresh air. A short walk, a visit to a local park, or simply sitting on the patio with a cup of coffee can lift your spirits and support your well-being. Nature has a way of grounding us, offering peace and perspective.

### • Passing It On

Many seniors enjoy sharing their knowledge with younger generations — teaching grandchildren how to recycle, showing them how to plant a seed, or telling stories about how the environment has changed over

the years. These conversations help build a legacy of care that continues long after Earth Day has passed.

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by Jim Miller

# Savvy SENIOR

## Top Senior Scams and How to Avoid Them

*Dear Savvy Senior,*  
My adult kids keep warning me about scams, but it's hard to know which calls and messages are dangerous. What scams are most commonly aimed at seniors right now? — Almost 80

*Dear Almost,*  
Your kids' concerns are well-founded. Financial fraud is a massive – and rapidly growing – problem for older Americans. In 2024 alone, scams cost older adults an estimated \$81.5 billion, according to the Federal Trade Commission. That staggering figure includes both reported losses and the many crimes that are likely to go unreported.

While many scams today target people of all ages, older adults are often singled out or suffer the greatest financial harm. From urgent phone calls and alarming emails to online romance schemes and bogus investment opportunities, scammers use high-pressure tactics, fear, and emotional manipulation to convince seniors to hand over money or sensitive personal information.

Knowing the most common scams is the first line of defense. Here's a list of scams for seniors should watch for:

**Imposter and Government Scams:** Fraudsters pretend to be from Social Security, Medicare, the IRS, the police, banks, or utility companies. They claim there's a problem requiring immediate payment or personal information and may threaten arrest or loss of benefits.

**Tech Support Scams:** Calls, emails, or pop-ups warn that your computer has a virus. The scammer offers to "fix" it but instead steals money, personal data, or access to your device.

**Grandparent or Family Emergency Scams:** Callers pose as a relative—often a grandchild—in distress and urgently request money. Some even use AI to mimic a loved one's voice.

**Investment and Cryptocurrency Scams:** Offers for "too good to be true" investments, including crypto or high-yield retirement schemes, often prom-

ise big returns but lead to large financial losses.

**Romance Scams:** Scammers build fake online relationships on social media, dating sites, and other interactive platforms, then invent emergencies or investment opportunities to get money. Seniors have lost millions to these schemes.

**Medicare Scams:** Calls or texts claim to be from Medicare, asking you to verify your number, offering special plans, or warning of fraud. Medicare will not contact you this way.

**Sweepstakes and Lottery Scams:** You're told you've won a prize but must pay fees or taxes first. Real lotteries never require payment.

**Charity Scams:** Scammers call or email, asking for donations to fake charities, often after disasters. Always verify before giving.

**Phishing and Online Fraud:** Emails, texts, and pop-ups that look like they're from banks, Amazon, or PayPal try to steal passwords, account numbers, or trick you into clicking harmful links.

**Employment Scams:** Seniors seeking part-time work or ways to supplement their retirement should watch out for fake job offers on LinkedIn, Indeed, and other online job sites. Scammers may promise easy income or work-from-home opportunities but ask for upfront fees, personal information, or involve illegal tasks like package reshipping. Always verify employers and never pay to apply.

### How to Protect Yourself

Awareness and caution are your best defenses. Slow down when a call, email, or text pressures you to act immediately. That sense of urgency is a red flag. Hang up, don't click suspicious links, and verify any request by calling the organization directly using a number you look up yourself, or by checking with a trusted family member.

Never send money using gift cards, wire transfers, or cryptocurrency. Legitimate organizations will not ask for payment this way. Stay informed through trusted resources like the AARP Fraud.

Watch Network ([aarp.org/fraud-watchnetwork](http://aarp.org/fraud-watchnetwork)), the National Cybersecurity Center ([nationalcybersecuritycenter.org](http://nationalcybersecuritycenter.org)), and the Federal Trade Commission ([consumer.ftc.gov](http://consumer.ftc.gov)).

Protect your accounts by setting up bank alerts, regularly checking your credit reports, and using strong, unique passwords. Some seniors also find it helpful to have a trusted family member or financial ally review unusual account activity. Report suspicious calls, messages, or offers at [reportfraud.ftc.gov](http://reportfraud.ftc.gov).

Being informed, cautious, and deliberate can greatly reduce your risk of fraud, giving you and your family peace of mind.

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Grant Sevdayan - Music Director

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## Pass The Love On



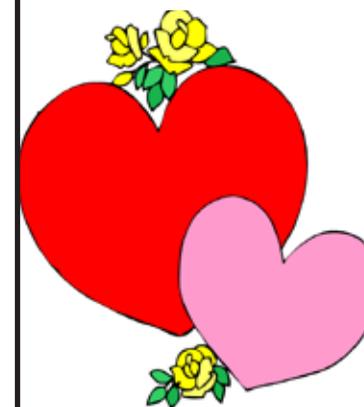
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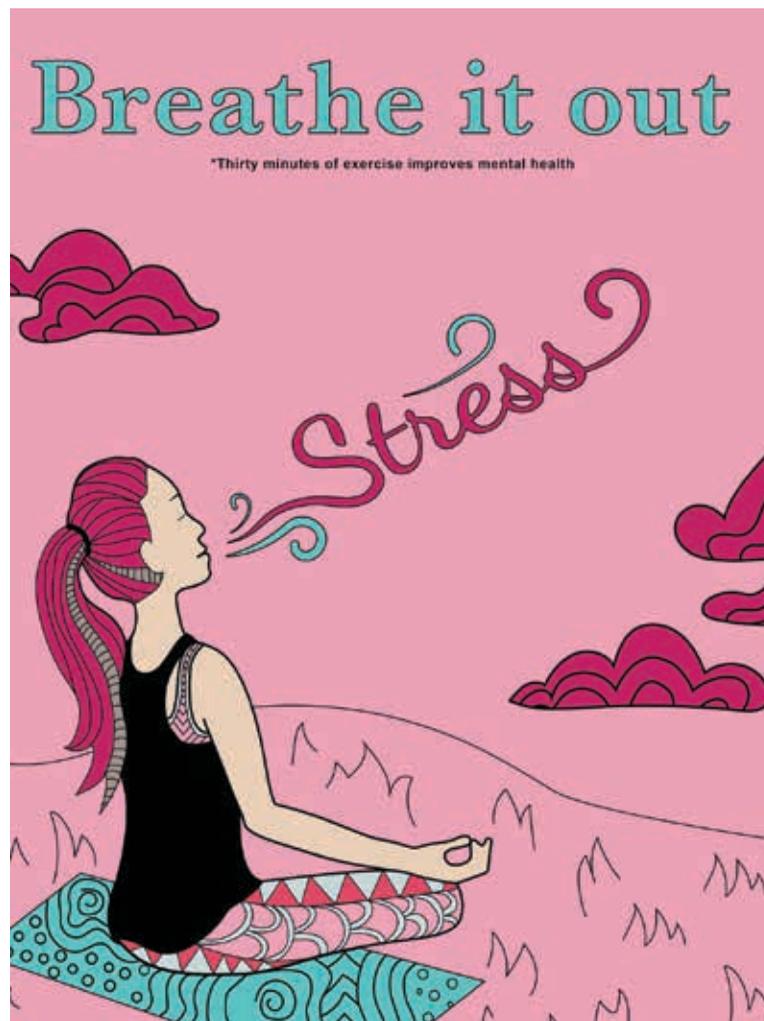
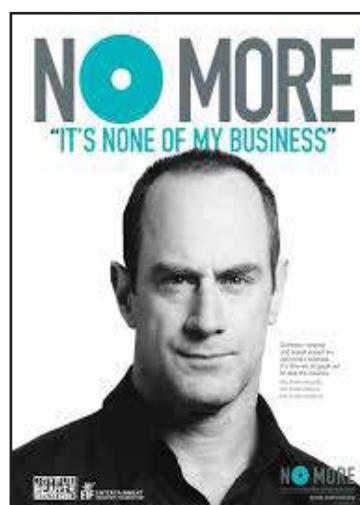
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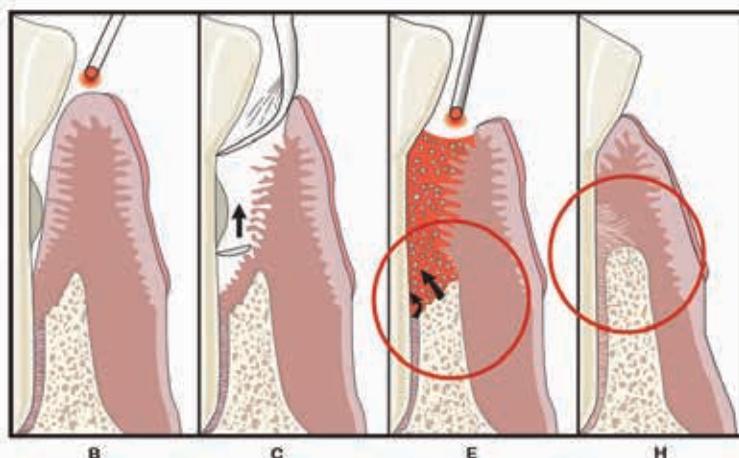
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