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202133417: Looking for a home that is close to hospitals, shopping and the local golf course? If so, you must come see this home that is move in ready featuring 3 bedrooms, a full bath upstairs, half bath and laundry room on the first floor! Enjoy your evening on the back sun porch over looking the large yard or on the cozy wrap around front porch! Appliances are around 2 years old, upgrades to the electrical with safety outlets throughout the home, whole home surge protection, water filtration system, security system rear 360 degree camera that can be controlled by your phone, and new carpet installed within the last 6 months. Nothing more to do than move in and make it your own! **\$147,000**

202133195: Partially renovated 5 bedroom home. Updated floors, kitchen and full bath on the first floor. Second floor has 3 bedrooms and master bedroom with a full bath. Detached garage with 200 amp for a work shop. Move in ready. New roof will be put on before closing. **\$84,500**

202119304: Here is an opportunity to bring a historic downtown building back to life. This property will require a total re-hab or total demo. Being sold AS IS. **\$29,900**

202114638: Back on the Market with many new finished updates and improvements and more updates in progress. Newest improvements are: the carport has been converted into a living space with pine board ceilings and walls w/recessed lights, new main entrance door, new roof, new replacement windows in downstairs bedrooms, new partitions in basement for laundry area and bedroom. Many rooms repainted. In progress is new carpeting for bedroom and living room. New vinyl flooring for kitchen and bathroom. Sheetrock to be installed in the basement area to finish of two rooms. **\$124,000**

202126058: Quaint Cape Cod style home located in a hilltop residential setting close to schools and shopping. Lathe and plaster throughout the interior has been removed and replaced with sheetrock along with updating of electrical and plumbing. Kitchen has new cabinetry not yet installed allowing you add your personal touch for the layout and countertops of your choice. Home has all new vinyl windows and a basement serves as a laundry room, craft area, work shop and a home brewery with a kitchenette (sink, stove, counter space). Bedrooms are bright with large windows each have a closet. More storage space in knee wall attic and hallway closets. Deck off kitchen leads to secluded back yard. Property lines are survey staked. Interior photos added as owners move out. **\$145,500**

202131679: 19 Acres of land with 5 additional barns/sheds with metal roofs, structurally sound and ready to use. Pastures have hydrants, fencing and gates. Barns have box, standing stalls and tack rooms. Work shop is insulated and heated. This property checks all the boxes for a livestock facility. Large barn stores 10,000 bales of hay. Shed row makes great storage for farm equipment and lean to structure is large enough to house hay wagons when not in use. Smallest of barns was used as an indoor arena to school driving ponies. All but the hay wagon shed have electric and water. **\$335,000**

202114207: This charming home in the village of Fort Plain is filled with character. It features 3 bedrooms with 2 full bathrooms, first floor laundry, pocket doors, wood floors, and a renovated kitchen. Schedule a showing today! **\$97,500**

202031528: Beautiful lake front property on Northville lake. Great getaway or year round living. Home has 3 bedrooms and open floor concept. Living room has wood burning fireplace for warm cozy nights. Large over sized garage. Enjoy your view of the lake from your back porch. Home has updated handicap accessible bathrooms. **A MUST SEE !!! \$335,000**

202123794: Ideal for an owner occupied 2-family or easily convert into a single family home! This great location featuring a large yard, walking distance to the school and beautiful park. Home has been well cared for and updated including windows, siding and roof. Very large garage with a workshop and plenty of storage on the 2nd floor. Commute to Albany, Utica or Saratoga. **\$115,000**

202129183: View this home to appreciate the charm inside this cottage style home. Hardwood floors through out, along with original woodwork & doors. Almost all windows have been replaced, new furnace. The extra room downstairs can be a 3rd bedroom or office space. It features a full bath upstairs and downstairs. Repair or replace the large deck on the back for extra outdoor enjoyment. Relax on the enclosed front porch entrance also. **A great location on quiet street. Complete the mostly cosmetic repairs to restore this home to it's full potential! Only a few blocks to schools! \$69,000**

202130311: Perfect country setting, located in Canajoharie school district, set on just over an acre. Endless opportunities here! The garage and back porch will be removed mid November. This property is being sold AS IS. **\$79,900**

20211139: A perfect setting comes with this raised ranch home located on 1.4 acres. Open kitchen, living room, dining area, and a huge family room. Large covered back deck for outdoor entertainment. Full basement, dug and drilled well. **\$169,000**

20212638: Consider owning your own road with the possibility of long-term snow removal and maintenance contracts for the residents along this private road. Currently 5 existing residents, and more parcels yet to build at this beautiful location. **\$12,000**

202120313: Looking for tranquility in the city of Amsterdam? This 2-family home is a hidden gem! Relax in the spacious yard with the sounds of running water flowing through the Chuctanunda Creek out back. Originally an 1880 farmhouse, it features much of the original woodwork, has newer replacement windows and vinyl siding and a two car garage. A large, private yard area, with distant neighbors, and a two-way driveway. Would make a wonderful owner-occupied dwelling or keep as a desirable investment property. **\$129,900**

20212824: This house has been in the family for a long time the family is moving and needs to sell. It does have a lot of character needs updating, some maintenance. This would make a great home to make your own. **\$105,000**

202129063: This beautiful ranch home checks all of the boxes! Location, gorgeous landscaping, updated and maintained are just some of it's attributes. Recessed lighting throughout the home. Full walk out basement with great potential, easily could be finished off! Property close to historical village of Cooperstown. **\$235,000**

201936618: Are you looking for vacant land to build your dream home. Looking to escape the congestion and noise of the city for the peace and quiet of country living, and remain within a 35 minute drive to Schenectady and surrounding areas? This could be the location you are looking for. If you are a hunter or into nature there is approximately 10 acres of woods to hunt or just enjoy the wildlife. There is 5 acres of cleared land to build your home, have a garden or plant fruit trees. Enjoy the outdoor night sky when sitting around a fire, or Snowshoeing and Cross Country Skiing under the moon light. There is an additional 6 acre double lot for sale directly across the road. **\$49,000**

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Family Counseling Center welcomes staff to two key roles

The Family Counseling Center has announced the hiring of Diana Bennett as corporate compliance director and Kathleen "Kat" Landry as psychiatric nurse practitioner. These positions provide key leadership and support within an organization that is about to complete an \$8.5 million renovation and expansion of their headquarters on Broadway in Gloversville.

Bennett has over 30 years of professional experience in volunteer recruitment, management and program development including intergovernmental relations and nonprofit management. Her extensive knowledge of federal and NYS government and agencies will play heavily in her role as corporate compliance director.

Bennett most recently worked for Congressman Paul Tonko as district office manager and has previously held roles with Special Olympics of New York and Cornell Cooperative Extension. She has her Master of Professional Studies from Cornell, where she focused on policy analysis and management.

Landry has joined the medical practitioners team as a psychiatric nurse practitioner. Landry graduated from Russel Sage College as a registered nurse and Husson University as an advanced practice nurse practitioner specializing in mental health across the lifespan. Prior to joining the Family Counseling Center, Landry was involved in critical care, forensics and

mental/behavioral health nursing at Albany Medical Center and St. Peter's Health Partners.

"We are excited to welcome both Diana and Kat to our team," said Michael Countryman, executive director of the Family Counseling Center. "Their experience and dedication to local organizations and the overall health of our community is admirable. They are joining a talented team of professionals working toward the common goal of providing the best care possible for our clients."

Benefit Club's Christmas Giveaway donation drive

It's that time of year already... the Benefit Club's Christmas Giveaway donation drive! Any assistance provided to local needy families is determined primarily by the monetary donations that the club receives from caring people like you. We really appreciate any help you could provide this year.

This program serves the villages of St. Johnsville, Fort Plain, Oppenheim/Ephratah, Nelliston, Palatine Bridge and Canajoharie, and will be held Dec. 12.

Our budget of \$8,000 provides qualifying families with a box of food, which includes a ham, potatoes, veggies, pasta/sauce, hot cocoa, oatmeal, stuffing,

milk and other non-perishables.

Children receive a brand new, age-appropriate toy. Two-year-olds and under receive a new outfit. We also provide a free raffle for 12 brand new bicycles – all from Santa, of course!

As always, thank you very much for your charitable donation. May you and yours have a safe and blessed holiday season, and Merry Christmas!

Send donations to H.C. Smith Benefit Club, P.O. Box 5, St. Johnsville, NY 13452. In the memo section of checks, write "Christmas Fund." Thank you!



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Meet Shakira at the Montgomery SPCA



Shakira, or as her friends call her, "Kira," is a playful and energetic three-year-old looking to find her forever home.

Like many Downstaters lately, Kira moved up to Montgomery County earlier this year looking for her permanent home. Her New York City shelter was running out of space and they knew that her personality, energy level and demeanor would be the perfect fit for Upstate New York.

Kira's bark is big, but she's learned that barking gets her attention and, more often than not, treats. She is super smart and knows how to sit and is eager to learn more commands in exchange for, well, treats! She has become a staff favorite at the Montgomery County SPCA and loves going for car rides, being the center of attention and is eager to show off for the camera.

Come visit Kira! Learn more at mc-spca.org.



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Consumer Alert:

NYS Division of Consumer Protection offers tips for a safe holiday season

The New York State Division of Consumer Protection (DCP) recently alerted consumers to issues impacting the holiday shopping season. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the holiday shopping season will be rife with delays, higher prices and potential scams. Consumers should expect to have a lengthy wait for goods and holiday presents due to the continued supply shortages and shipping backlogs.

Secretary of State Rossana Rosado said, "The holiday season brings out the best of us as we share with family and friends in celebration of this special time of year. However, this holiday shopping season may be frustrating due to delays, higher prices and the risk of scams. To help consumers enjoy this festive time, the Division of Consumer Protection encourages everyone to follow these basic tips to have a smooth and safe holiday shopping experience."

The DCP advises consumers to exercise caution this holiday season. Scams and theft are common this time of year, and it is essential consumers continue to protect themselves.

Shop safely using these tips:

Avoid Pandemic-Related Shortages

- *Shop early* this holiday season to avoid merchandise shortages and shipping delays. Experts advise to get shopping done ahead of time and avoid the last-minute rush to ensure your gifts arrive on time.

- *Consider virtual gifts.* Avoid shipping concerns altogether by gifting items that can be used online, such as streaming subscriptions, virtual gift cards or online learning classes. Always verify the source of online

retailers and shop on secure sites to avoid scams.

- *Shop local.* Support small business and pick up direct from in-store locations for holiday gifts. Many local retailers are offering deals to encourage consumers to shop locally from neighborhood businesses. Continue following COVID-19 safety protocols when shopping in person.

Know Your Rights

- *Retailers must inform you of any changes to your delivery.* The Federal Mail, Internet or Telephone Order Merchandise Rule (the Mail Order Rule) states that your order must be delivered within 30 days unless otherwise stated at the time of purchase. If there is a delay, you must be notified. If the company cannot reach you to obtain your consent to the delay, they must, without being asked, promptly refund all the money you paid for the unshipped merchandise.

- *Review refund policies.* Retailers must post their refund policy. If it is not posted, the retailer is legally required to accept a return within 30 days with receipt.

Savvy Online Shopping Tips

- *Shop on trusted sites* with retailers known to you. In the era of social media marketing and influencers, consumers are more exposed to sham businesses that advertise a premier product but only deliver a low-quality version of the advertised item, if they deliver anything at all. Use caution on trusted sites that host items for third-party sellers.

- *Beware of third-party vendors.* If redirected from a trusted site to a third-party site, read the seller's

policies, review ratings, read consumer comments and most importantly do a broad internet search before making your purchase. Trusted retailers who host third-party sellers do not warranty their sales, thus you could get a substandard product or no product at all when you take the risk and purchase from an unknown third-party vendor.

- *Do your research* if you want to try a new site or retailer. Performing a broad internet search will provide you with important feedback from other customers. Read the comments within any social media advertisements. This will help you assess what to expect if something goes wrong.

- *Read product specifications.* Online marketing is geared to get you to buy, so it is important to understand the product you are purchasing and the terms of the sale to ensure you are getting what you want.

- *Comparison shop.* Search other websites to compare price, quality, return policies, delivery cost and speed. Buying the "cheapest" advertised price may cost you more when you factor in delivery charges in the short term or return policies in the long term.

Tips for Using Credit Cards Online

- *Check the website's encryption.* It's easier than you think. Before entering your credit card information, make sure that the website's address begins with "https" and that there is a closed lock or unbroken key symbol in the lower portion of your window or up on the website address bar.

- *Don't keep the credit card on file* for future purchases. Provide your credit card number each time you make a purchase.

- *Designate one credit card and one email address* for online shopping. This will allow for easy review of purchases and provide protection in case of a dispute.

Online Privacy Protection Tips

- *Protect your passwords.* The key to safe passwords is to update them regularly and make them unique. Try using a passphrase instead of a password and include special characters and numbers. If it's difficult to remember so many passwords, try a password manager with multi-step authentication to manage your passwords.

- *Avoid autofill.* Saving usernames, passwords and credit card information on your device saves time. Unfortunately, it also makes it easier for thieves to get access to that information if they access your account or device. Re-entering important information each time – as opposed to autofill – is an extra step to safeguard personal information.

- *Check social media logins.* Many apps allow you to use your social media credential to create a new account on their platform, but when you stop using those apps, your social media accounts still have access to the information. Once a year, check the list of apps that you access through your social media account and delete any you do not recognize or no longer use.

Consumer 6

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Mountain Valley Hospice & Palliative Care Partners with Ruby & Quiri for Revamped Fundraiser

The annual "Ladies' Soiree Luncheon" is Mountain Valley Hospice & Palliative Care's (MVHPC's) largest fundraising event. Historically, over 250 women enjoy a wonderful meal at the Paul Nigra Arts Center, catered by Union Hall Restaurant and served by local male celebrity waiters.

However, due to COVID-19, this annual event has been reorganized. This year's "Event" will include Basket Raffles placed in Ruby & Quiri's storefront located at 307 North Comrie Avenue, Johnstown.

MVHPC President/CEO Kara Travis remarked,

"Fundraising has become increasingly difficult during the pandemic, limiting our ability for large indoor events. Many thanks to the committee for revamping this event and to Ruby & Quiri for hosting it."

There are over 25 gift baskets with various, creative themes brilliantly displayed throughout the store. Tickets can be purchased at Ruby & Quiri's customer service desk.

Mountain Valley Hospice & Palliative Care is a community-based, not-for-profit agency founded in

1988. Providing end-of-life care across Fulton, Hamilton, Montgomery and Saratoga Counties or at the Nancy Dowd Hospice Home located at 108 Steele Avenue, Gloversville, has been our focus for more than 30 years. In July 2021, we expanded our services to include pain and symptom management for the chronically ill to prevent Emergency Room visits and hospital readmissions.

It takes dedicated neighbors like you to make sure our team continues to provide excellent care in this region we call home.



Consumer from 5

- **Secure your connections.** Do your shopping while connected to a secure network, rather than public WiFi or an unknown WiFi server. Public WiFi does not mask any information, even if a website or app seems secure. Usernames, passwords, credit card and account information can be easily seen by hackers who are logged into the same network. On home networks, keep operating systems and antivirus software up to date with the latest security patches and ensure the network has a strong password.

- **Don't become the product.** Everything you do on your computer or device creates a digital imprint. That information is often compiled, tracked and sold to interested parties to better market products directly to you. This is called "behavioral advertising." You can shut this feature off on your devices. Go to your device's main settings and look for the settings marked "Privacy." You can adjust the privacy settings to your comfort level.

Package & Delivery Scams

- **Keep track of your packages.** Package tracking and delivery scams are common during the holidays. Review the tracking information for your package and note any issues right away through the merchandisers' websites.

- **Beware of phishing attempts.** Another common scam this time of year is scammers using phishing emails and text messages and impersonating delivery companies (e.g. UPS, USPS, FedEx), banking and

credit card companies, and other large retailers (e.g. Netflix, PayPal, eBay, Amazon), which often include links to sites attempting to steal your information. Always open a browser and type the company's website address yourself instead of clicking on a link in an email or text message.

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Calendar of events

December 12

13th Annual Candlelight Memorial Service sponsored by Catholic Daughters of the Americas and Our Lady of Hope Catholic Church in Fort Plain at 6:45 p.m. at Our Lady of Hope Catholic Church, 115 Reid Street, Fort Plain. RSVP by Dec. 1 to Doris Dutcher, 52 Gar-

field Street, Fort Plain, or call her at 518.993.4612.

Mohawk Valley Choral Society Concert 3 p.m. at the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes at 2222 Genesee St., Utica. Tickets may be reserved by emailing the Choral Society at mail@mvchoral.org or by calling 315.826.3092.

December 13

Spaghetti Supper Fundraiser for OESJ Cheerleaders 4-7 p.m. at Masonic Temple, 24 Bridge St., St. Johnsville. Dine in or take out. Plus bake sale.

Published bi-weekly on Saturday by Lee Newspapers
6113 St. Hwy. 5, Palatine Bridge, NY 13428

Publisher, President **Frederick W. Lee**
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Benefits of pet crates, and how to make them cozy

Aspiring pet owners purchase various items before they welcome a new companion animal into their homes. Food, collars, leashes, toys, and preventive medications are just some of the items necessary to keep pets happy and safe. Large animals like dogs and cats often benefit from crates and carriers as well.

Though some individuals and animal rights organizations are against crates, when used responsibly, crates can be useful in various ways.

• **Crates provide a safe space.** Certain animals have a natural instinct to bed down in dens. While some homes have areas that serve as cozy nooks, a crate set aside in a quiet room can replicate a safe den for the pet when he or she is stressed or tired and simply needs some time away. A pet may seek out this “den” on its own or can be placed there by an owner when the animal needs to calm down. Children should be advised to leave crated animals alone.

• **Assist with house training.** Many animals prefer not to soil where they sleep. Therefore, a pet will not void in the crate, provided it is sized correctly, and will learn to gradually hold it until it is granted access to the proper place to relieve itself.

• **Keep areas off limits.** Cordoned off areas surrounded by gates may work for some pets, but certain dogs are able to scale or circumvent such barriers. A closed crate provides a safe option when the animal cannot be supervised and has not yet demonstrated it can be trusted to have free reign of the home.

When selecting and outfitting a crate, pet owners



When used responsibly, crates can be useful in various ways.

should keep certain things in mind.

• **Be sure there is adequate ventilation so that the animal can breathe comfortably.** Wire crates, which are among the most popular, will allow for plenty of air flow and enable the pet to see his or her environment.

• **Seek out a crate that is rated for travel so that you'll get double duty out of the item.** Keeping pets contained in a moving vehicle is a safer way to travel.

• **Monitor your pet to determine what you can put inside the crate.** Some trainers recommend feeding and watering your pet in the crate to make the animal more comfortable with it. Comfortable bedding or a favorite toy or blanket may help provided your pet is not a chewer (and swallower) and can be trusted with these items overnight.

• **Remove harnesses, collars and other items** from the pet before placing it in the crate to reduce the risk of strangulation or injury.

• **Limit the time the pet spends in the crate to allow for exercise and stretching.** The pet should be able to stand up and reposition in the crate, but the crate should not be large enough that the dog can soil on one side and rest on the other. The crate should never be a punishment tool.

• **If the pet messes** inside the crate, clean it promptly.

Crates are useful tools for pet owners. When used responsibly, crates can serve as safe havens and training tools for pets.

Unique reasons to shop at small businesses

The numbers don't lie. Locally owned businesses may be classified as “small,” but they have a big impact on the national economy.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Business Employment Dynamics report, small businesses created 10.5 million net new jobs between 2000 and 2019, accounting for 65.1 percent of net new jobs created since 2000 in the United States.

The Government of Canada reports that the number of small businesses in Canada in 2020 was far greater than the number of medium and large businesses, accounting for 97.9 percent of all the businesses in the country.

Supporting locally

owned businesses is a great way to support a neighbor, but that's not the only attraction. Here are several reasons to shop small.

The feel-good factor

Doing for others certainly has an impact on the person on the receiving end, but also benefits the do-gooders. A November 2020 survey by Union Bank found that 72 percent of Americans said supporting small businesses was more important than getting the best deals. That may be due to the feeling of helping out a fellow neighbor.

Create job opportunities

Shopping at small businesses keeps those establishments afloat, and it also keeps their employees afloat. Small businesses are the larg-

est employers in the U.S. That's also true in Canada, where 68.8 percent of the total labor force works for a small business. A person may never know when he or she - or a relative - will need a job. Keeping small businesses viable provides a strong job market for locals.

Keep more money in the community

The Small Business Administration says \$48 out of every \$100 spent at a small business stays in the community. Spend the same \$100 at a national retailer and only \$14 stays.

Enjoy a more local flavor

National retailers and other businesses follow a global business model that may not allow for much customization,

but small businesses can provide products or services that relate directly to the needs of the communities they serve.

These same small businesses also may be more inclined to work with local vendors and startups than national com-

panies that have global supply chains.

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Quick and personal holiday gifts

Great gifts don't have to break the bank. Giving a homemade treat or supplying your recipient with the fixings to make a scrumptious nosh will win hearts and be gentle on your checkbook. With little effort your gift can be one of the highlights of the season.

If you're heading out to a holiday party, bring both a snack and a gift basket filled with the raw ingredients and recipe. Your hostess can sample firsthand the gift you're giving her and helps lighten her load. Providing a guilt-free snack to graze on will be a welcome and healthful alternative to yet another fat laden treat. That's why popcorn is a great option.

Plain or buttered, sweetened or spiced, popcorn can be flavored or even combined with other foods like nuts, fruit or cheese to create a delicious and nutritious snack. As a whole grain food, popcorn is a carbohydrate that is not only low in calories, but also a good source of fiber. It's an ideal in-between meals snack because it satisfies but doesn't spoil your appetite.

For others on your list, whether you're down to the wire or just beginning holiday shopping, simple gift ideas are sure to please. You can give a decorative tin filled with your favorite popcorn recipe or a basket filled with the ingredients to make the popcorn treat. Add a favorite board game, DVD, movie rental passes or a subscription

to an online DVD rental service for an extra touch and voila! Who knew holiday shopping could be stress-free, inexpensive and thoughtful?

Spicy Italian Popcorn

10 cups hot, freshly popped popcorn
2 tablespoons olive oil

1/3 cup grated Parmesan and Romano cheese

1 teaspoon oregano

1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper

1/4 teaspoon garlic salt

Drizzle olive oil over popcorn in large bowl. Add remaining ingredients; toss

well. Yield: 10 servings.

Perfect Popcorn Popping Tips

- Warm a heavy pan with lid. Add 1/4 cup of vegetable oil to the pan, or just enough to cover the bottom.

- Drop in two or three kernels and cover. When the kernels pop, add the remaining popcorn. Pour just enough kernels to cover the bottom of the pan. Cover with lid.

- Shake the pan while the kernels heat and pop. Occasionally lift the lid slightly to allow steam to escape. When you hear the last few pops, remove the pan from the heat, take off the lid and empty the popped popcorn into a large bowl.

For more simple and tasty popcorn recipes, visit popcorn.org.



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Mohawk Valley Choral Society to perform Dec. 12

After 18 months of postponement due to COVID-19, the Mohawk Valley Choral Society returns to its 40-year-long tradition of bringing exciting vocal music to the local area this December when it performs Christmas Collage, featuring songs of the holiday season.

Directed by Randy Davis, the concert will feature a

selection of vocal music from various cultures and will include music by composers such as Haydn, Mozart, Randall Thompson and Moses Hogan.

The concert will take place on Dec. 12 at 3 p.m. at the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, 2222 Genesee St. in Utica.

Tickets for the concert are \$12 in advance and \$15

at the door. Tickets may be reserved at the advance price by emailing the Choral Society at mail@mvchoral.org or by calling 315.826.3092.

All audience members must be vaccinated and must wear a mask throughout the concert.

The public is invited to join the Mohawk Valley Choral Society's return.

Reducing reliance on big box retailers

Big box retailers span the globe. Though Wal-Mart, Target and Lowes may offer great deals, there's often nothing unique about big box stores. Proponents of Main Street also note that big box stores can't provide the small business charm that can make local neighborhoods special.

Balance is everything, and that even applies to shopping. Big box retailers can feature in consumers' shopping plans, but there's a place for small businesses as well. The following are some strategies to reduce reliance on national chains.

Look at the alternatives first. Shoppers may look to big box stores because they know what to expect and are familiar with their goods. But exploring smaller alternatives first can turn up some pleasant surprises. Take walking tours of the community and make note of which stores are available. You might just uncover a hidden gem.

Prioritize quality, not quantity. Big box retailers frequently turn to foreign-made products and can offer very low prices because the huge amount of merchandise they sell enables them to negotiate lower bulk prices from suppliers. Mass production of products may result in lower-quality merchandise. Small businesses may pick and choose their stock, vetting items before the customer even does his or her research.

Ask for recommendations. Reach out through social media for recommendations on small businesses in the area. Find out where others are shopping and what they have to say about certain companies. You may not have certain establishments on your radar and may be pleasantly surprised at the competitive prices and outstanding service provided by local businesses.

Shop in person. There's no denying the convenience and all-hours capabilities of shopping online. However, it denies shoppers the experience of going into a store and browsing for products and getting a true feel for their sizes and quality. Modern consumers are no doubt familiar with the tedious nature of

returning online items that fell short of expectations. Such experiences are significantly less common when shopping in-store, particularly at small businesses.

Competition keeps prices lower. Big box retailers may offer good deals, but over time those prices may rise as national retailers command more control of the market. A competitive marketplace encourages businesses to offer lower prices to attract customers. By shopping a variety of stores, customers can further this healthy competition across the board.

Big box retailers need not be ignored. However, consumers can balance their spending at big-box stores and small businesses so they do not become entirely reliant on national chains.

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Deck the halls with popcorn trees

'Tis the season of decking halls and trimming trees, and we've got a delicious way to do both – in the kitchen. There's no chance of breaking heirloom ornaments when you're decorating miniature festive popcorn trees from the Popcorn Board. Roll up your sleeves, gather the kids and pull out your prettiest decorating sugars and sprinkles. Then turn marshmallows and popcorn into a scenic winter wonderland to display or eat.

Long ago, Christmas trees were trimmed with edibles such as apples, nuts or dates. With festive popcorn trees your entire tree is edible! There's no right or wrong way to decorate a tree but if you're unsatisfied with the results, eat it and start again. It's the ultimate eco-friendly way to trim a tree.

And if you're looking to trim fat and calories during this hectic season, pop up a bowl of plain popcorn to nibble on when hunger strikes. At 30 calories a cup, wholesome, whole grain popcorn is naturally low in fat and calories and the fiber can help fill you between meals. Leave the padding to jolly old St. Nick.

Festive Popcorn Trees

- Makes: 10 trees
Ingredients:
10 cups air-popped popcorn
1 10-ounce bag miniature marshmallows
2 tablespoons butter
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

- Decorating sugar (green, blue)*
1 tube of white frosting (with decorating tip)
Assorted small colorful candies, such as sprinkles and miniature silver dragees
Directions:

Place popcorn in large bowl. Place marshmallows and butter in medium saucepan over medium-low heat. Stir until marshmallows are melted and mixture is smooth. Remove from heat. Stir in vanilla extract. Pour mixture over popcorn in bowl. Toss well to coat popcorn evenly.

Line a baking sheet with foil. Spray hands with nonstick cooking spray, then scoop up about 1 cup of popcorn mixture. Shape mixture into a cone shape, keeping the base flat. This forms the tree. Sprinkle tree with decorating sugar. Continue to make the rest of the trees. Pipe frosting on trees to make a garland, then decorate them with colorful candies.

Serving suggestion: Place each tree on a sugar cookie and decorate your serving tray with shredded coconut to resemble snow.

Notes: *It's important that this recipe starts with unflavored white popcorn for best color and flavor. Make your own colored sugar by adding food coloring to sugar, stirring in a bowl or shaking vigorously in a sealed container. Add more food coloring for more intense tones.

For more simple and tasty popcorn recipes, visit popcorn.org.

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How to keep car interiors clean

Oil changes, tire rotations and even car washes may garner the bulk of drivers' attention in regard to vehicle maintenance. But various smaller undertakings, including keeping vehicle interiors clean, are worthy of drivers' attention as well.

Dust and dirt can accumulate in a vehicle over time, making for a less comfortable ride. Keeping vehicle interiors clean can make car and truck cabins more welcoming for drivers and their passengers, and such maintenance is simple and inexpensive.

• **Focus on the floors.** The floors in a car face all that weather has to offer. In winter, boots may track snow and deicing solutions like salt into a vehicle's cabin. In summer, sand from the beach or dirt from hiking trails may find its way in. Some drivers use the same floor mats year-round, but there's an advantage to switching based on the seasons. According to the automotive experts at Napa, fabric floor mats in summer will hold on to dirt and keep it from spreading. Beachgoers will appreciate that after tracking sand into their cars. In the winter, swap fabric floor mats with rubber or plastic alternatives, as these mats will hold melting snow, rain or salt, preventing them from

staining the floors.

• **Be mindful of seating materials.** When cleaning seats, drivers should be mindful of the materials those seats are made of. Cloth seats should be cleaned differently than leather and vinyl, and all seats should be



vacuumed prior to cleaning. Consumer Reports notes that leather and vinyl seats are treated with a protective coating that requires gentle cleaning. Begin with a small cloth with a dab of dish or saddle soap, and then apply a leather conditioner to prevent the leather from drying out. When cleaning cloth seats, an upholstery

cleaner can be applied to stains, just be sure to follow instructions carefully. Cleaning products are not all the same, and application techniques may vary. A scrub brush can be used to work cleaning solutions into the seats and any lingering moisture can then be wiped away with a microfiber cloth.

• **Clean the inside of your car windshield.** Use an interior glass cleaner to clean the interior windshields and windows. These surfaces can accumulate a significant amount of dirt due to interior vapors and air pollution. Consumer Reports recommends using a glass cleaner that contains alcohol. Interior glass cleaners are designed to prevent streaking and film buildup, which can compromise drivers' vision.

• **Take on touchscreens.** Modern vehicles have touchscreens that can quickly accumulate dust and fingerprints. Toyota recommends soaking a clean cloth in lukewarm water and lightly wiping the surface of touch screens. Avoid substances like solvents, alkaline or acidic solutions, which can contribute to staining or discoloration on the screen.

Clean car interiors can make driving that much more enjoyable and even more healthy.

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How to help kids find suitable volunteering opportunities

Volunteering is a great way for people to give back to their communities. Many people give back out of a desire to help others, but those same individuals may acknowledge that volunteering benefits volunteers most of all.

Various studies examining the benefits of volunteering on volunteers have been conducted in recent years. Seniors and retirees who volunteer often cite the sense of purpose that giving back provides. But it's not just adults who benefit from volunteering. In fact, a report from the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension noted that volunteerism promotes positive citizenship among youth, contributes to youths' identity development and increases their self-esteem. The authors of the report also note that volunteering helps youth develop empathy for others.

Parents who want their children to reap the rewards of volunteering can try various strategies to help youngsters find an opportunity to lend a hand.

- **Utilize the internet.** The internet is a great resource for aspiring volunteers. VolunteerMatch.org partners with more than 130,000 nonprofit organizations to help them find the volunteers they rely on to meet their missions. Volunteering opportunities listed on VolunteerMatch are broken into categories such as Animals, Arts & Culture and even Children & Youth, making this an ideal place for aspiring do-gooders to start their volunteering journey.

- **Speak with school officials.** A child's school is another great place to discover volunteering organizations. Extracurricular activities like school-sponsored clubs may organize volunteering excursions throughout the school year. Educators, including school principals, teachers and guidance counselors, also can help parents find the right volunteering opportunities for their children.

- **Speak with local church officials.** Like schools, local churches often sponsor youth-based volunteering activities. Many churches encourage all youths to join in their efforts, including those who are not members of their congregations.

- **Speak with children.** Parents can encourage youngsters to offer their input in regard to volunteering. Some youngsters may already have strong ideas

on the types of volunteering activities that interest them. For example, avid surfers and nature enthusiasts may want to volunteer with their local parks system to help keep beaches and parks clean. The more enthusiastic children are about a volunteering opportunity, the more likely they are to stick with it for the long haul.

Volunteering benefits young people in myriad ways, especially when kids find an opportunity they can be passionate about.



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Using positive reinforcement to address pets' behavioral issues

What can pet owners do when their pets exhibit unwanted behaviors, such as damaging furniture or jumping on people? The first instinct may be to yell or punish the pet by being cross with him or her. However, many animal behaviorists believe that positive reinforcement training is the most effective way to address pets' behavioral issues.

Positive reinforcement training, according to The Humane Society of the United States, utilizes rewards for desired behaviors. The reward, whether it is a treat, praise, toys, or anything the pet finds rewarding, will eventually get the pet to repeat the behavior that earned him or her that reward. Rather than punishing a bad behavior, pet owners who utilize positive reinforcement reward good behaviors.

Positive reinforcement also is known as operant

conditioning. It is a similar concept studied by famed Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov. When the dinner bell rang, Pavlov's dogs salivated. The American Kennel Club says that was classical conditioning because the dogs salivated involuntarily. However, operant training conditioning is when dogs learn to associate their behavior with certain results, all the while learning there are good and bad outcomes. The goal is to increase behaviors with pleasant consequences, such as receiving a reward. Experts say that by focusing on the positive, pet owners will see fewer side effects than negative punishment training, such as aggression, fear, anxiety and avoidance.

Timing is the key to positive reinforcement training. The reward must occur immediately after the desired behavior or the pet may not associate it with

the proper action. So if the dog sits, then the reward has to come as soon as it gets on the floor. If the reward comes when he has stood back up, then the pooch may think the reward is for standing.

When practicing positive reinforcement, keep commands short and training sessions brief so that dogs can understand before they get restless. Dogs don't understand sentences, says HSUS, and they will lose interest if sessions are too long. Consistency also is essential. Each person interacting with the pet should use the same commands and cues to achieve the desired result, which is a well-behaved pet.

It may take time for a pet to acclimate to commands and training. But with patience, positive reinforcement can be effective.



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It's wintertime and the snackin' is easy

Could it be that winter is the new summer? Once defined as a time of quiet hibernation, winter has come into its own in a social sense. In fact, we are often busier entertaining friends and family in the winter than during any other season. Consider the numerous celebratory occasions that begin with the harvest and continue on through the holidays and beyond, not to mention all the fun and frosty get-togethers prompted by skiing, skating and sledding. Truly, the winter social calendar can be downright exhausting! Luckily, by keeping a few ingredients on hand, you can whip up tantalizing popcorn snack recipes to feed and please crowds of party goers, carolers or game day fans. Since popcorn is a whole grain that provides carbohydrates and fiber to the diet, and it's naturally low in fat, you can even feel good about serving it! As an added bonus, these recipes will fill your home with the comforting fragrance of favorite wintry flavors.

This colorful White Chocolate Peppermint Bark packs both a festive punch and a sweet crunch.



Stir in crushed peppermints after chocolate is melted. Pour chocolate mixture over popcorn mixture and stir to coat.

Spread onto prepared pan; allow to cool completely. When chocolate is cooled and set, break into chunks for serving. Store in an air-tight container at room temperature.

Variation – White Chocolate Popcorn Crunch: Omit



White Chocolate Peppermint Popcorn Bark

5 cups popped popcorn

12 ounces white chocolate baking chips, chopped
white chocolate or white candy coating

1 cup crushed hard candy peppermints

Cover a baking pan with foil or wax paper; set aside. Place popcorn in a large bowl; set aside. Melt chocolate in a double boiler over barely simmering water, stirring until smooth or melt according to package directions.

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candy peppermints. Mix 1/2 cup dried sweetened cranberries and 1/2 cup sliced almonds with the popcorn. Pour chocolate over the mixture after it is melted. Yield is about 1 pound.

Served warm from the oven, this Gingersnap Popcorn Snack Mix is perfect for a cozy get-together around the fire.

Gingersnap Popcorn Snack Mix

2 quarts popped popcorn

Butter flavored cooking spray

1/3 cup granulated sugar substitute

2 tsp. ground ginger

1/2 tsp. freshly ground nutmeg

1/4 tsp. cinnamon

1/4 tsp. ground cloves

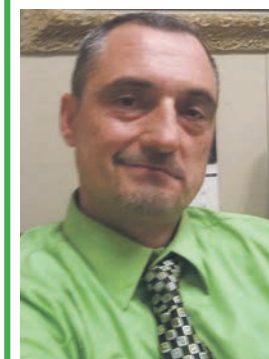
1/8 tsp. freshly ground black or white pepper

Preheat oven to 325° F. Spread popcorn on baking sheet and spray lightly with the cooking spray. Combine remaining ingredients in a small bowl and sprinkle evenly over popcorn. Spray again with cooking spray and toss to coat evenly. Bake 7 minutes and serve warm. Yield: 2 quarts.

For more simple and tasty popcorn recipes, visit popcorn.org.

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Good Housekeeping

Pulled-Pork Sandwiches With Cabbage Slaw

Homemade slaw is a tangy companion to this sweet pork, made with ketchup, brown sugar and chili powder. Serve the sandwiches with pickles and chips for fuss-free sides.

1/2 cup ketchup
1/4 cup packed brown sugar
1 tablespoon chili powder
1/4 cup cider vinegar, plus 2 tablespoons
Kosher salt and pepper
1 pork butt or shoulder
1/2 cup low-fat sour cream
1/2 small green cabbage (about 1 pound)

1/2 cup fresh cilantro

4 rolls

Potato chips and pickles

1. In a 5- to 6-quart slow cooker, whisk together the ketchup, sugar, chili, 1/4 cup vinegar and 1/2 teaspoons each salt and pepper.

2. Add the pork and toss to coat. Cook, covered, until the pork is tender and shreds easily, 7 to 8 hours on low or 4 to 5 hours on high.

3. Forty-five minutes before serving, in a large bowl, whisk together the sour cream, remaining 2 tablespoons vinegar, 1 tablespoon water and 1/2 teaspoon each salt and pepper. Core and thinly slice the cabbage, add it to

the sour cream mixture and toss to coat. Let sit, tossing occasionally. Fold in the cilantro before serving.

4. Using two forks, shred the pork into large pieces; gently toss in the cooking liquid. Fill the rolls with the pork and slaw. Serve with chips and pickles, if desired.

Tip: Replace the pork with a 2-pound brisket (trimmed of excess fat) and cook as directed. Or use 2 pounds of boneless, skinless chicken thighs and decrease the cooking times by 2 hours.

For thousands of triple-tested recipes, visit www.goodhousekeeping.com/food-recipes/.

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From the Members of the Fort Plain Fire Department

Bible Trivia

by Wilson Casey

1. Is the book of Psalms in the Old Testament or New Testament or neither?
2. From 2 Chronicles 26, at what age did Uzziah become king of Jerusalem? 16, 30, 65, 99
3. In Genesis 4, who did God ask, "Why is thy countenance fallen"? Eve, Ahaz, Cain, Esau
4. Which prophet saw the Lord's angel riding on a red horse? Hosea, Nathan, Zechariah, Isaiah

5. Who was the first person to build an altar unto the Lord? Abraham, Noah, Artaxerxes, Levi

6. From Exodus 33, who/what saw the back of God? Adam, The serpent, Abraham, Moses

Answers: 1) Old; 2) 16; 3) Cain; 4) Zechariah; 5) Noah; 6) Moses

Sharpen your understanding of scripture with Wilson's Casey's latest book, "Test Your Bible Knowledge," available in stores and online. It makes a great holiday gift. (c) 2021 King Features Synd., Inc.

How drivers can handle suddenly unsafe driving

The chance to take in idyllic landscapes and sun-soaked views is a big part of what makes road trips so appealing. When traveling during certain times of year, such as spring and autumn, seasonal landscapes dotted with vivid colors can be especially stunning.

Prior to embarking on a road trip, travelers can't be blamed for getting caught up in the sights they're on the cusp of seeing. But it's equally important that drivers take steps to prepare for unsafe driving conditions. Even if the forecast is nothing but sunny skies, driving conditions can suddenly take a turn for the worse. The following are a handful of unsafe conditions drivers may encounter on the road, and what they can do to make it through such situations safe and sound.

• **Aggressive drivers:** Aggressive driving or

road rage is a significant issue, more so than some drivers may recognize. A 2016 survey from the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety found that nearly 80% of drivers expressed significant anger, aggression or road rage behind the wheel at least once in the previous 12 months.

The insurance experts at Geico® recommend that motorists who encounter aggressive drivers do their best to stay away from them. Consider safely changing lanes, gradually slowing down or even exiting the highway. Geico® advises against stopping, as that can lead to potentially dan-

gerous confrontations.

• **Bad weather:** Bad weather can include anything from snowfall to driving rain to thick fog. Though it's wise for drivers to consult the weather forecast prior to hitting the road, no forecast is 100% accurate, which underscores the

importance of knowing what to do when conditions suddenly take a turn for the worse. If inclement weather appears unexpectedly, slow down and be sure to leave extra room between your vehicle and the vehicle in front of you. The automotive analytics firm J.D.

Power notes that many experts recommend drivers double the cushion between their vehicles and the ones in front of them when driving in rain, snow, sleet and other adverse weather conditions. Doing so can help to offset the slower brake time that occurs when driving in bad weather.

• **Debris:** Road debris can include anything from materials that get blown away from roadside work sites to falling rock to tire treads to items that fall off of other vehicles. The suddenness of and the potentially serious consequences of being hit by or hitting debris is why a proactive approach is ide-

al. Avoid tailgating so you have ample room to maneuver should anything fall into the road. It's also important to leave room on the side of your vehicle so you can swerve out of the way. On especially long road trips, share driving duties so whoever is behind the wheel is fresh and alert. Alertness improves reaction time, making it much more likely drivers can avoid debris.

The open road has its hazards. But drivers who plan ahead and know what to do when encountering adverse conditions can ensure road trips are memorable for all the right reasons.



The following are a handful of unsafe conditions drivers may encounter on the road, and what they can do to make it through such situations safe and sound.

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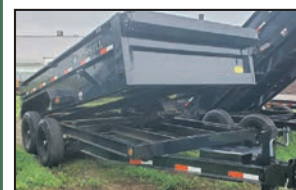


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If you've always wanted to own a piece of history, here's your chance! The Greene house was the home of famed illustrator Nelson B. Greene. Brimming with old-world charm, the property is currently run as a successful Airbnb. This classic Victorian-style home features beautiful woodwork, stained glass windows, pocket doors, wood floors lower level (possibly under carpet 2nd floor), 5 beds (first floor bedroom currently being used as an office), 3 baths, formal dining room, living room, family room, enclosed porch (sun room), 1st floor laundry, second floor porch & huge walk-up attic. Close to schools and parks. Convenient location for commuting to Albany, Amsterdam, Cooperstown, Sharon Springs, & Utica.

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Purchasing post-pandemic gifts this holiday season

Families, businesses, schools - just about everyone - had to modify daily life in dramatic ways due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the most significant effects of COVID-19, beyond the health implications, have been the changes in outings and gatherings and the ways holidays were celebrated.

The 2021 holiday season figures to be especially jovial as the world continues to emerge from the pandemic. As shoppers hit the holiday shopping trail once more, they can look to the pandemic for gift-buying inspiration.

Travel-related gifts. Travel restrictions greatly limited where people could go, so millions embraced staycations as a means to taking breaks from school and work. Travel restrictions have now been lifted in many parts of the world, and vaccinated individuals may feel more comfortable traveling again. Consider gifts that include travel essentials, such as luggage, plane tickets, toiletries, hotel vouchers, and even gift cards to use on vacation purchases.

Preparatory gifts. People are much more "germ-conscious" as a result of the pandemic. Cases of COVID-19 are on the decline, but it still pays to be cautious and sanitary. Gifts that promote cleanliness may continue to be appreciated and also prepare a person should another pandemic occur in the future. Stylish reusable face masks; special sanitary "keys" that limit contact with things like ATMs, doors and elevator buttons; ultraviolet disinfecting lamps; and even purses and bags that can be cleaned without damage are

all gift ideas that make cleanliness more convenient.

Home improvement supplies. In the wake of canceled vacation plans, homeowners channeled their vacation dollars into home improvements. Those who still have plans to redo and renovate will appreciate gifts that may include gift cards to popular home improvement and design retailers. In addition, as certain home improvement materials like lumber have risen in cost, a cash gift to offset the cost of materials can help people see projects through to completion.

Dining out vouchers. Even though many restaurants pivoted to takeout service or established outdoor seating to meet safety requirements, dining establishments still felt the pain of the pandemic. More people have now returned to traditional dining, and restrictions on indoor dining have gradually been loosened. Therefore, gifts that focus on dining out, such as certificates for favorite restaurants or wine bottle caddies for BYOB establishments, can make for great gifts.

Support new hobbies. Many people took on new hobbies and

HOLIDAY gift guide

explored new activities to pass the time during the pandemic. Encourage these hobbies by gifting tools and supplies. If a person adopted a new pet, try pet-toy subscriptions or even pet health insurance.

Though the pandemic is something many people would love to forget, holiday shoppers can look to it for inspiration when buying gifts for loved ones this year.

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Now Here's A Tip

by JoAnn Derson

• Got plastic packaging that's a pain to get open? Use your can opener. Run it around the sides to break into your packages. It works.

• For every side dish that requires extra preparation time, plan for one or two that don't. For instance, if you are prepar-

ing a casserole with many ingredients and complicated instructions, serve a package of vegetables that require nothing more than steaming.

• How to peel potatoes: Boil whole potatoes with skin on for 20-30 minutes (depending on the size of your potatoes). You should be able to stick a knife

all the way through without resistance. Then remove them to an ice bath for 10 seconds each. The skin will slip right off.

• "Have kids make their own whipped cream with a jam jar. Fill a screw-top jar (glass, chilled, works really well) half-way with heavy cream, a little

sugar and any flavoring extracts you like, then seal and shake. Kids also can make butter with cream in a jar. You may add a pinch of salt instead of sugar, and shake longer." - A.A. in Florida

• Researchers tell us that the best time to interview is late morning on a Tuesday. You will

avoid the interviewer's likely Monday/Friday crunch, and have his or her full attention. Do your homework on the company and get ready to shine.

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

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Good Housekeeping

Raisin-Bread Pudding

1 loaf Raisin bread with cinnamon
2 quarts milk
1/2 cup sugar
1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
2 tablespoons vanilla extract
3/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
6 large eggs
2 tablespoons maple or maple-flavored syrup

1. Preheat oven to 350 F. Grease 13-by 9-inch glass baking dish.

2. Place 8 bread slices, in one layer, in baking dish. Cut each remaining slice of bread diagonally in half and arrange in baking dish, overlapping slices.

3. In very large bowl, with wire whisk or fork, beat milk, sugar, cinnamon, vanilla extract, nutmeg and eggs until blended. Pour milk mixture evenly over bread in

baking dish. Press bread down with fork; let stand for 15 minutes for bread to absorb some of the milk mixture.

4. Bake 55 to 60 minutes until knife inserted in center of bread pudding comes out clean, covering loosely with foil during last 15 to 20 minutes of baking if top begins to brown too quickly. Brush top of bread pudding with maple syrup. Serve warm. Or refrigerate to serve cold later. Makes 16 servings.

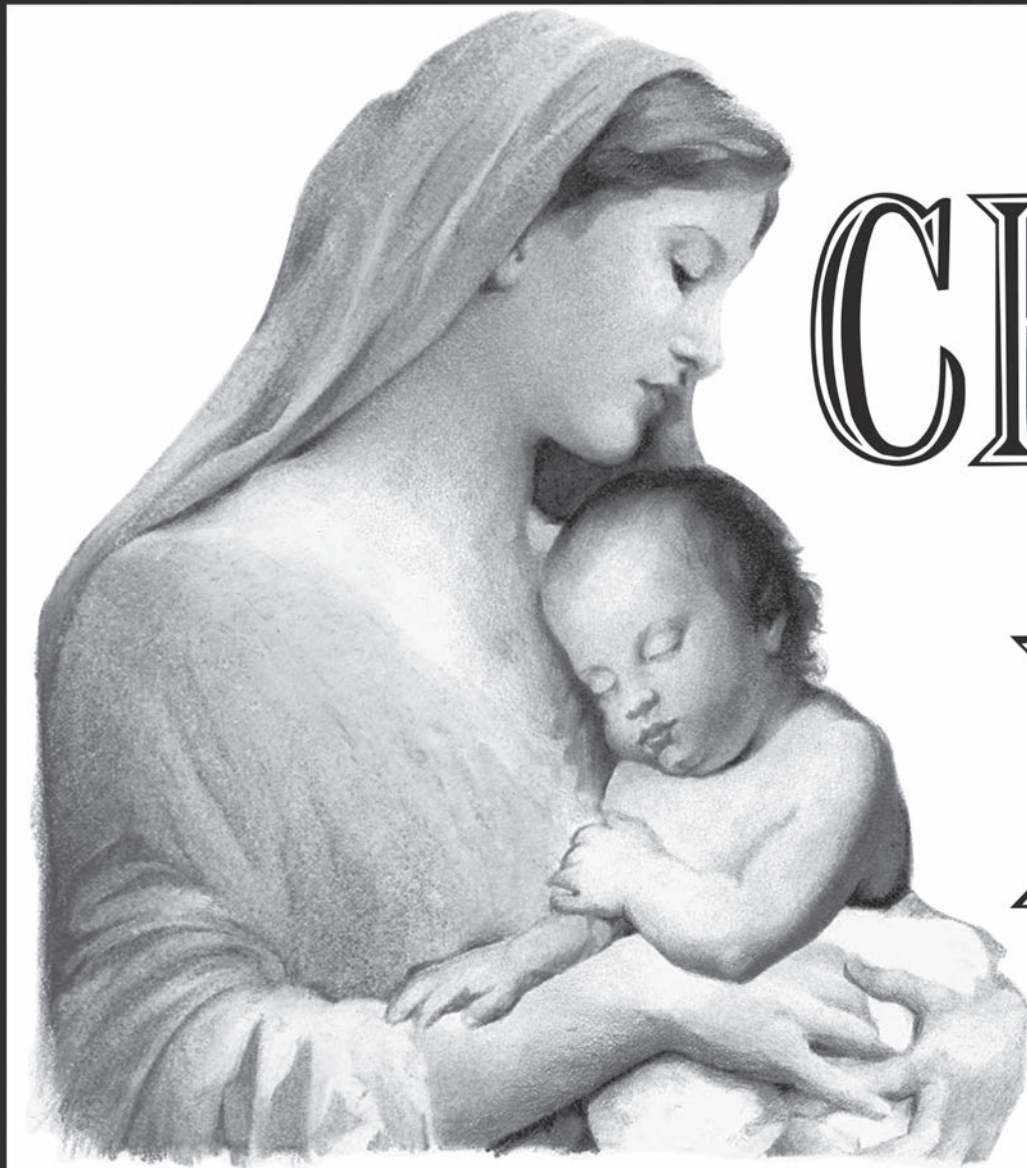
• Each serving: About 255 calories, 8g total fat, 96mg cholesterol, 240mg sodium.

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The impact reviews have on businesses

Online reviews have long been a mixed bag for small businesses. Though positive reviews can help businesses stand out from their competitors, negative reviews can be as harmful as positive reviews are helpful. That's true even when negative reviews do not reflect the average customer's experience. Search Engine Land, which covers digital advertising technology, reports 88 percent of consumers trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations. Unfortunately for businesses, Inc. magazine and entrepreneur Andrew Thomas found that a customer who has a negative business experience is highly likely to share that experience by leaving a bad review. On the other hand, someone who has had a positive experience is unlikely to leave a good review. Roughly 10 percent of happy customers say they were pleased by a product or service. Furthermore, Thomas indicates it takes roughly 40 positive customer experiences to undo the damage from a single negative review.

Customer happiness should be the goal of businesses, with the added benefit of helping to generate more positive reviews and word-of-mouth recommendations. While that is happening, customers can think twice about online reviews.

• Speak to product quality, especially when you have a very good experience with an item. Many retailers request feedback via email shortly after consumers have made a purchase. Take advantage of this opportunity to offer positive feedback.

• Companies gather personal information from customers so they can follow up in many cases. Great customer service helps prevent bad reviews and defines companies' brands. If you are asked for a phone number or email address, provide it. Doing so helps companies improve their products or services.

• Happy customers can reach out to friends and family members to share their experiences with certain companies. Posting your own review on social media also can drum up business for a company you respect.

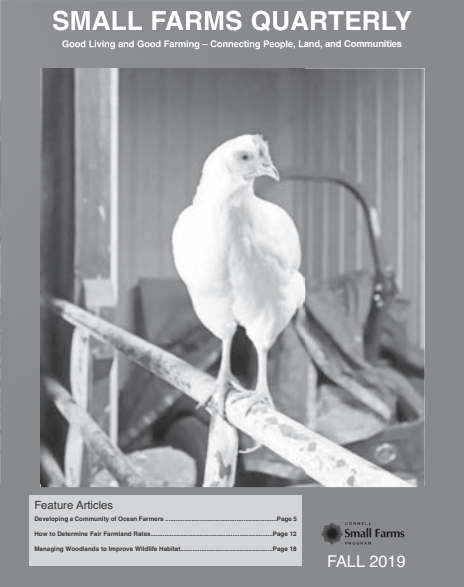
• Customers should weigh their words heavily and think before posting a review. The marketing and consulting resource The Chat Shop says 31 percent of customers are interested in grocery store reviews, 60 percent are likely to read restaurant reviews and 70 percent rely on technology product reviews. Make an effort to discuss issues with a company before leaving a negative review. You may be pleasantly surprised with the outcome. There's no need to hesitate when leaving positive reviews. Simply explain why you were pleased.

Reviews can make or break a company. Both business owners and customers have a role to play in making online reviews a valuable way to learn about a company.

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**AMVETS POST 2000
"Veterans Helping Veterans"**



CHRISTMAS "STUFF THE BUS"

AMVETS Post 2000 is collecting new toys to deliver to the Stratton Veterans Hospital, Albany, NY. The toys will be distributed to the children of veterans in need and to veterans' children while vets receive treatment at the VA Hospital.

Help a veteran's child smile!

Drop off at AMVETS Post 2000, Fort Plain, Tuesday - Sunday 3-8 p.m. Call Ed (518) 384-5592, Steve Greene (518) 817-8089, or Dan Dawson (518) 410-5655 for pick up.

Collecting toys until December 11th.



VETERANS HELPING VETERANS' CHILDREN



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Phone: 518-993-3637



COUNTRY

CULTURE

THE LAND • THE FOOD • THE PEOPLE

Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2 | | | | 7 | 9 | | |
| 1 | 5 | | | 3 | | | 7 | |
| | | 8 | 6 | | | | | 4 |
| 3 | | | 9 | | | 2 | | |
| | 9 | | | 4 | | | 6 | 1 |
| | | 5 | | | 8 | | 3 | |
| | 3 | | 8 | | | 1 | | |
| | | 4 | | | 2 | | | 8 |
| 2 | | | 1 | 9 | | | 4 | |

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦

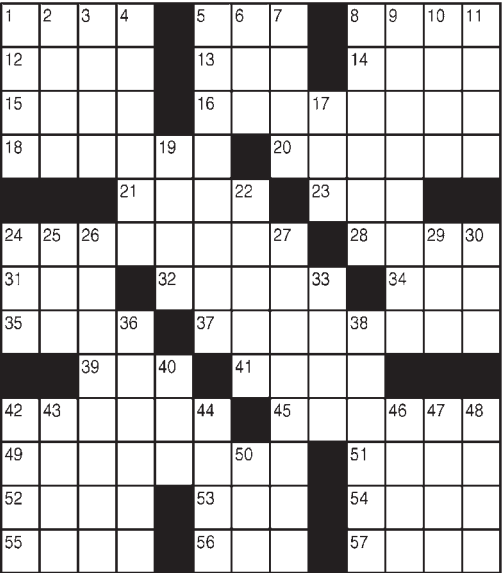
♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging
♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Creche trio
- 5 The whole enchilada
- 8 Outlet letters
- 12 Teensy bit
- 13 Irish actor Stephen
- 14 Vivacity, in music
- 15 At the summit of
- 16 Her bed was too soft
- 18 Jungle trek
- 20 Make happy
- 21 Swindles
- 23 Workout site
- 24 Spaghetti topper
- 28 Whirled
- 31 Hosp. area
- 32 Small stream
- 34 "As I see it," to a texter
- 35 Lavish affection (on)
- 37 Lunar light
- 39 Family card game
- 41 Greek letters
- 42 Regard highly
- 45 Morals
- 49 Legume used in Asian cuisine
- 51 Acknowledge
- 52 Wax-coated cheese
- 53 Baton Rouge



- sch.
- 54 Country's McEntire
- 55 Actress Ward
- 56 ShriII bark
- 57 "Hey!"
- 9 Slapstick mis-sile
- 10 "Buenos —!"
- 11 Apple center
- 17 H.S. math
- 19 Eldest Stark child on "Game of Thrones"
- 22 Sailing vessel
- 24 Central
- 25 Green prefix
- 26 Fall-related
- 27 Relax
- 29 Actress Thurman
- 30 — de plume
- 33 Make a scarf
- 36 Puzzle
- 38 It's equivalent to C, in some scores
- 40 Sphere
- 42 Iowa city
- 43 Ranch visitor
- 44 Slithery
- 46 Currier's partner
- 47 Corn castoffs
- 48 Smack a baseball
- 50 "— was saying ..."

DOWN

- 1 "Serpico" author Peter
- 2 "— girl!"
- 3 Blunder
- 4 Influence
- 5 How lovers may stroll
- 6 Meadow
- 7 Genie's home
- 8 Monasteries

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MAGIC MAZE ● AT FIRST

V W T D Q N J G D A X U R O L
J G D A E X V S P N K I M F C
A X Y V S D Q O L T J H U E C
A X V H T R N P N N S L I J C
H F D B P Y X E V I T R R I P
O M K I C O M A T N A L T A G
E D B I Z E R N X T S N A W L
A T T E N U A T E U A M T L R
Q T O O N L L J A L L O O I G
A F T E T E L H T A T T I R E
D A C A A H C A T T A A Y X W

Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions forward, backward, up, down and diagonally
Unlisted clue hint: SPACE JUST BELOW THE ROOF

| | | | |
|----------|-----------|---------|-----------|
| Athlete | Atlas | Atrium | Attended |
| Atlanta | Atoll | Atrophy | Attenuate |
| Atlantic | Atom | Attach | Attire |
| Atlantis | Atonement | Attend | |

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DECEMBER 31

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\$50

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Eagle® Sport All-Season Family (including ROF & SCT)

\$25

\$25

\$50

Wrangler TrailRunner AT™

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GOODYEAR

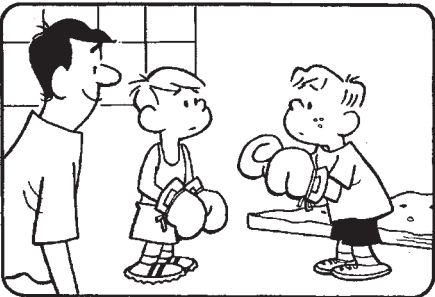


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THETIRESHOP.BIZ

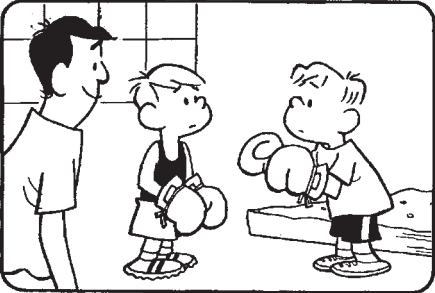
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HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



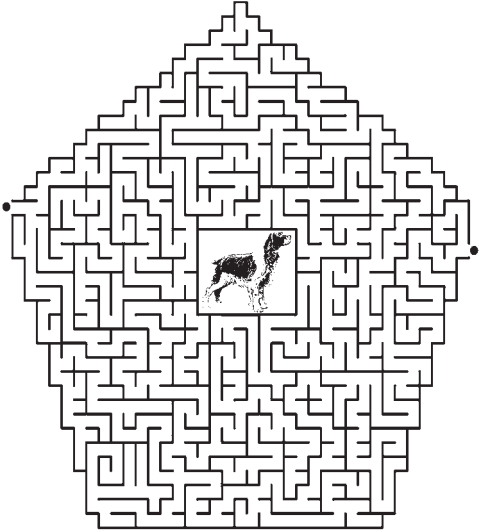
Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Shirt is different. 2. Sleeve is shorter. 3. Freckles are missing. 4. Mat is thicker. 5. Stripe is added. 6. Nose is smaller.

Mega Maze

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SCRAMBLERS

Unscramble the letters within each rectangle to form four ordinary words. Then rearrange the boxed letters to form the mystery word, which will complete the gag!

| | | | | |
|--------|--|--|--|--|
| Dainty | | | | |
| RENTED | | | | |
| Dream | | | | |
| RANEY | | | | |
| Unkind | | | | |
| DINES | | | | |
| Sniff | | | | |
| HEALIN | | | | |

TODAY'S WORD



"Hey, Al, do we have something back there called _____?"

Home Country

by Slim Randles



It began the way most miracles do: by accident or the hand of God, take your pick.

It might have been the weather, at least partly. For winter, the day had been almost balmy and warm. You know, sweaters instead of heavy coats. No mittens in sight.

Then there were still some Christmas lights on the stores, and that little bunch of Girl Scouts out raising money in front of the Read Me Now bookstore. Jasper Blankenship was inside going through the books to fortify his cabin's library for winter and sat, listening with a smile to the girls as they laughed and waited for customers that weren't really coming along too briskly.

"It's a shame there aren't more people out today for those girls," said Sarah McKinley, behind the counter. Jasper nodded and paid for his books, then walked out to the truck. He stopped and thought for a while, then brought out his violin, rosined the bow, and walked over to the sidewalk next to the girls.

"You girls like fiddle music?" he asked.

"Sure do."

And Jasper began playing fiddle tunes.

Carla Martinez was driving down the street, headed for the Soup 'R Market when she saw the Girl Scouts dancing with each other in front of their table to Jasper's music. Before he'd had time to finish that tune, she'd returned with her guitar and joined the fun. Jim Albertson, the local school principal, showed up with a harmonica, and he wasn't bad at it.

Dud got out his accordion and joined in the fun.

By this time, it was getting dark in the street, and several people turned headlights on the area in front of the bookstore. Older people had joined the Girl Scouts



dancing in the streets, and Delbert Chin from the Chinese restaurant across the street sent one of his girls out with a huge pot of coffee and paper cups.

The party was on.

It lasted until the cars' headlights began to wear down the batteries, but during its brief lifetime, the street dance and mid-winter party cast a blessing on us all.

It must have been the weather.

Brought to you by the genuine cowboy music and musings of Steve Cormier up in New Mexico's Sandia Mountains. Check him out at stevecormier.net.

It's here. Get rid of it.

by Courtney Llewellyn

In addition to all of the photos being shared of happy families reuniting for Thanksgiv-

ing this year, my social media feeds were full of another kind of image. Across much of the Northeast, many of my friends received their first few inches of the white stuff. Some were filled with wintry glee at this prospect; many others had accompany-

ing text that read something along the lines of "Noooo."

Living where we live, snow is inevitable. Sometimes it appears in October. Sometimes it sticks around until May. Ah, the glorious uncertainty! One thing many of us can be certain about, however, is

that we will have to move it – probably a lot of it – and not just once.

Being prepared is key. And there are lots of ways to remove snow, starting first with a good scraper/brush combo for your vehicles. If you're like me, a good Upstate

New Yorker, that scraper never leaves your car, not even on the muggiest days in July (because you never know when you'll need it). Something with a long handle is a must, as in many states you are required by law to not just have clear wind-

shields and windows but also a clear roof. If you've ever seen a big sheet of frozen snow or ice fly backwards off a speeding car or truck, you know why.

For the complete story, make sure to check out countryculture.co.

SCRAMBLERS

Today's Word

VANILLA

1. Field 2. Flange; 3. Invest; 4. Detain

AT FIRST

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | 8 | 7 | 1 | 9 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 3 |
| 5 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 2 | 7 | 9 | 8 |
| 6 | 3 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 5 |
| 7 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 4 | 3 | 9 |
| 8 | 9 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 1 |
| 3 | 4 | 1 | 9 | 5 | 6 | 2 | 8 | 7 |
| 9 | 7 | 8 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 4 |
| 1 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 2 |
| 4 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 9 | 1 | 6 |

Answer

Weekly Sudoku

Mega Maze

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | E | L | A | Y | I | P | S | S | T | | |
| E | D | A | M | L | S | U | R | E | B | A | |
| M | U | N | G | B | E | A | N | A | V | O | W |
| A | D | M | I | R | E | E | T | H | I | C | S |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| D | O | T | E | M | O | O | N | B | E | A | M |
| I | C | U | B | R | O | O | K | I | M | O | |
| M | E | A | T | B | A | L | L | S | P | U | N |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| S | A | F | A | R | I | P | L | E | A | S | E |
| A | T | O | P | M | A | M | A | B | E | A | R |
| A | T | O | M | R | E | A | B | R | I | O | |
| M | A | G | I | A | L | L | A | C | D | C | |

Solution time: 22 mins.

Answers

King Crossword

Tell winter to bring it on with this great offer.

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ONLY \$249,000
204 Market St, Amsterdam



Absolutely Gorgeous 4 BDRM, 2.5 Bath Home with 2 Car Garage, on a L shaped lot. All rooms are large, recently remodeled home provides some traditional elegance with modern style appeal. Kitchen, 4 Season room with Vaulted Ceilings, Formal Dining Room, Living Room with Fireplace and Large Foyer & 1st Floor Laundry. Finished Basement & Full Walk Up Attic.

NEW LISTING \$275,000
587 Pattersonville Rd,
Pattersonville



Great Country Home offering 4 BDRMS, 2 Baths and 12 +/- Acres with a large 3 Car Garage (Estimated to be 38 x 28) & Pole Barn (Estimated to be 36 x 50). Convenient location makes for a quick trip to Schenectady or Amsterdam.

Commercial & Multi-Family \$1,499,000
24 West Main St, Mayfield



Excellent Condition Metal Frame Building used as a warehouse now, with oil heat offering OVER 13,500 sq.ft. of space, plus 3 other buildings & large parking lot. We have a 2 story office building, single family home rented & a 2 family home rented. Rents currently \$3,000 total for residential homes only. A must see to appreciate. Do you need a warehouse? This is situated super close to Mayfield Lake & The Great Sacandaga Lake.

NEW LISTING \$349,900
1891 WAGNERS HOLLOW RD, FORT PLAIN



This is one Adorable & Meticulous kept 4 BDRM, 2 Full Bath Farmhouse, with a smaller 1 car garage, 2 vehicle car-port, barn and some extra out-buildings with 27+ Acres of land to come check out!

If you are looking to buy or sell, give us a call! Because Your Move Matters...

\$219,000 ~ 49 +/- Acres
Eaker Road, Ft. Plain



49 +/- Surveyed Acres situated here with an approximate steel building that is 50x67, a small outbuilding and a large covered building being used now for T-Hangers for 7 planes that is approximately 48x234. This is used currently for a registered airport with a drained 2200' grass landing strip. Possibilities are endless with this property. What do you desire?

NEW LISTING \$145,000
57 Kingsboro Ave, Gloversville



3 BDRM, 3.5 Bath Home situated on 1.10 +/- Acres with a 1 Car Garage. Many updates, Natural Gas Furnace, Central Air Unit, New Duct Work, Plumbing, Wiring/Electrical, Hot Water Tank all completed in 2017. A must-see to appreciate all the space offered in this home.

NEW LISTING \$105,000
1656 State Highway 30, Mayfield



Mixed Use Property on the Corner of State Highway 30 and Yates Rd. in Mayfield and across the road from The Great Sacandaga Lake. Current use 3 BDRM, 2 Full Bath home on 0.49 Acres with a New Oil Fired Furnace (2020) and annual taxes are only \$2,992. Great Investment Opportunity for Someone.

\$249,000
SACANDAGA LAKE PROPERTY
280 Vandenburg Point Rd, Mayfield

3.38 +/- Acres of Lake Front Property with a 60 Ft Permit to The Great Sacandaga Lake. This property is hidden in a little cove and offers a lot of space between neighbors. There is no current lake view, but that is something you can work on through the years. Walk about 50 yards to the Dock that you choose to place to enjoy summer fun & build your dream home upon.

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HOME TODAY.
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MARKET IF YOUR
THINKING
OF SELLING!

REDUCED \$305,000
192 Gidley Rd, Esperance



Fabulous 4 BDRM, 2 Full Bath Home situated on 2 +/- Acres with a super large Driveway & Oversized 2 Car Garage. Seller just redid the interior fireplace in living room. Beautiful View. Enjoy country living at its finest.

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