



Better Home Living

The Newsletter That's Both Informative and Fun!

Easy Home Improvement Projects Add Comfort, Beauty and Value

Whether you're aiming to fill a need, add comfort or just make your home more beautiful, consider one of these projects.

- * Create a home office space from an unused bedroom or by partitioning off a room to make a private nook. You can divide it with acrylic block. It's great for you or to use as homework space.

- * Add beauty to a living room ceiling. Consider a lightweight urethane medallion around the ceiling light or fan. According to e-How.com, two-piece medallions snap into place in less than five minutes.

- * Invest in the lawn. A beautiful lawn creates a great impression both for your pleasure and that of any prospective home buyer.

- * Replacing old windows is neither easy nor inexpensive, but can make the whole house look better and reduce heating and cooling costs.

- * Expand your living space with a deck or sunroom. A porch can be turned into a sunroom and a deck can be improved with an awning.

- * Put new exterior trim on windows and doors. If there is old, rotted wood, you'll enjoy the look of low-maintenance, all-weather PVC millwork. It resists insects, termites and rot.

- * Upgrade the master bedroom bath with a tub window. Acrylic-block windows provide privacy, light and a focal point for the room.

- * Clean mildew from your home's exterior using a garden sprayer and mildewcide. Keep it from coming back with mildew-proof paint.

- * Change a bay window to a bow window. It will add extra living space and instant interior and exterior appeal to your home. It also makes the perfect spot for a Christmas tree.

March

We hope you enjoy this month's newsletter!

March Staff

March is ... National Social Work Month

Sponsored by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), most cities, states and public service organizations will recognize the continued commitment social workers have to improving the quality of life for our most vulnerable residents.

There are about 642,000 social workers employed in various fields of practice, including medical and public health fields; child, family and school (i.e., child abuse, eldercare, adoptions); mental health and substance abuse.

The 2014 theme is: All People Matter. Practitioners believe their work helps people move forward by utilizing their individual strengths to create a life vision for their own future.

March is also Women's History Month and NASW cites two pioneers in the social work field: Jane Addams, the first woman to receive a Nobel Peace Prize, in 1931, for establishing settlement houses for immigrants in Chicago; and Frances Perkins, also a social worker, appointed Secretary of Labor by President Franklin Roosevelt.

Happy St. Patrick's Day!

Do You Know...

... Someone that could use our services? Perhaps a friend, family member, co-worker, or someone from church?

When a new client signs up for regular cleaning services at your recommendation; you will receive \$50 off your cleaning after their 3rd cleaning!

If you would think of 3 or 4 people that could use our services, then don't hesitate to call them and give them our name and phone number. Be sure to have them mention your name when they call so we can send your Bonus!

Thanks a Bunch!

"I have been a customer of Mari's for several months now and find her services to be top notch. The staff is hardworking and trustworthy. I work during the day and entrust my home to her staff each month. On cleaning day I can't wait to come home and see my freshly cleaned home. Everything is shiny and clean. I would recommend Mari's service to anyone, they are top notch and the prices are very fair."

-West

Is your body telling you to be grumpy? Tell your body to knock it off

Psychologist Mark Salem says a bad mood is your brain's response to outside conditions.

But you can change your mood by changing conditions. Here's how:

- * Smile even if you don't feel like doing it. You can't be angry when you're smiling. Just try it. It's impossible.
- * Clean. Visual confusion makes us uneasy, so pick stuff up from the floor and take the glasses off the coffee table.
- * Wear something blue. It's relaxing. Orange is the biggest irritant. Red suggests power.
- * Throw off your taste buds by putting OJ into your coffee or eating sweet-and-sour chicken. Varying textures works too. Eat nuts or popcorn when you're in a bad mood.
- * Sniff a lemon. Nice smells can turn your mood around.
- * Pet your pup. Salem says skin-to-skin or skin-to-fur contact is a natural upper.



"That was our song? I guess it loses something when played on armpit, Mr. Romantic."

Online apps make menu planning a breeze

Meal planning is one area in which technology has met need with a host of online apps. They actually can make it easier to plan meals, shop and save money.

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Enter the new class of apps for desktop, phone and tablet.

They all solve some major problems: organizing and finding recipes that meet your criteria; remembering to buy the ingredients; and scheduling the dinners when you do have the ingredients. And beyond that, some apps hunt for coupons or scan barcodes of the stuff you already have.

One of the best is plantoat.com. At a cost of \$5 per month or \$39 per year, it won't break the bank. But it will probably save you time. You can search for recipes online and add them to your personal recipe list. Or, if you are on Facebook, for example, and one of the ubiquitous recipes pops up, you can click a button and save that to your plantoat.com recipe book. Then, whenever you want, you can browse your recipes and pull them over onto a calendar, allowing for leftovers and special quantities. The app seamlessly creates a shopping list for you based on your recipes. Very slick.

Emeals.com is slightly more expensive but more hands off. You choose your eating style (low carb, for example), your grocery store, your family size and like magic, every week a complete meal plan arrives by email complete with shopping list. Best yet, the list is organized around weekly sales at stores you select.

A free meal planner is ziplist.com. Ziplist draws recipes from thousands of online sites and offers a one-click way to add recipes from different sites to your recipe list. It also allows you to plan meals and add ingredients to a grocery list. It offers a coupon finder and weekly grocery specials. This system, like the others, ties into your smartphone.

None of these sites actually end up making the food. No doubt that is the next innovation.

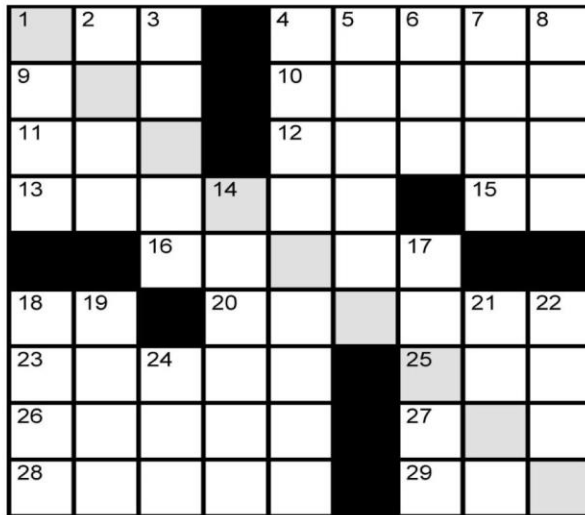


Trivia Teaser – On Your Mark

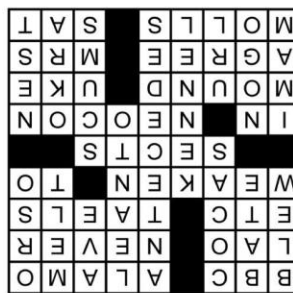
Basketball guard combo

Across

1. "Dr. Who" network
4. San Antonio landmark
9. ___-tzu, Chinese philosopher
10. "Well, I ___!"
11. List abbr.
12. Asian weight units
13. Diminish
15. Gift tag word
16. Divisions
18. Kind of crowd
20. Former liberal for short
23. Pitcher's place
25. Arthur Godfrey played it
26. Come to terms
27. Robinson of song
28. "___ Flanders"
29. Took a load off Down
1. Sounded a horn
2. Diminish
3. Actress Imogene and family
4. Predates



5. Shack
6. "___ Maria"
7. Go from solid to liquid
8. About
14. Doggie hotel
17. Undesirables
18. Mosque V.I.P.
19. Canceled
21. Creole vegetable
22. Hatchling's home
24. Web address



The title is a clue to the word in the shaded diagonal.

1. Mark Zuckerberg started programming the Facebook social networking site while he was a student at what university?
a-Denison University, b-University of Maryland, c-Stanford University, d-Harvard University.
2. Mark Cuban is the owner of which NBA franchise?
a-Sacramento Kings, b-Dallas Mavericks, c-Boston Celtics, d-New York Knicks.
3. Mark McGrath is the lead singer for what band whose hits include "Someday" and "Every Morning"?
a-Matchbox 20, b-Rancid, c-Sugar Ray, d-Morphine.
4. While Mark Spitz won 7 gold medals in swimming at the 1972 Olympics, how many world records did he break at the same time? a-4, b-5, c-6, 7-d.
5. What kind of animal was named Dan'l Webster in a Mark Twain story?
a-Mule, b-Horse, c-Pig, d-Frog.
6. What was the name of the spaceship pilot played by Mark Goddard on TV's "Lost in Space"?
a-Don West, b-Alex East, c-Steve Southern, d-Mark North.

7. In 2005, Mark Buehrle became the first pitcher in World Series history to start and save consecutive games, while playing for what team?
a-New York Yankees, b-Boston Red Sox, c-Detroit Tigers, d-Chicago White Sox.
8. Jose Canseco and Mark McGwire were nicknamed the "Bash Brothers" while banging out home runs for what baseball team?
a-Philadelphia Phillies, b-Tampa Bay Rays, c-Oakland As, d-San Francisco Giants.
9. What 1988 movie co-starred Mark Harmon with Sean Connery?
a-The Presidio, b-Black Rain, c-The Sentinel, d-Medicine Man.
10. Joaquin Phoenix and Mark Wahlberg played brothers in what 2007 crime film?
a-"Gone Baby Gone," b-"We Own the Night," c-"State of Grace," d-"Pain & Gain."

- Answers to "On Your Mark"
- 1-d, Harvard University
 - 2-b, Dallas Mavericks
 - 3-c, Sugar Ray
 - 4-d, 7
 - 5-d, Frog
 - 6-a, Don West
 - 7-d, Chicago
 - 8-c, Oakland As
 - 9-a, "The Presidio"
 - 10-b, "We Own the Night"

The Polar Vortex Caused Some Big Problems

It was a humdinger of a winter for more about 200 million North Americans.

All across the U.S. and Canada, cities were hitting all time low temperature records. But how cold was it? Colder than Mars. The planet Mars.

On January 7, Winnipeg, Canada, was colder than the planet Mars, according to the Winnipeg Free Press and readings from NASA. The rover Curiosity measured temperatures in the Mars summer as -20 degrees. But all day long it was slightly colder in Winnipeg.

It was so cold that on January 6 in Babbitt, Minnesota, it was -37 degrees while it was -20 at the North Pole and a toasty -6 at the South Pole.

In the midst of it, Mark Fischetti of Scientific American had these comments:

"Temperatures across half of the United States are dropping like a rock. So what is it invading America? The polar vortex is a prevailing wind pattern that normally keeps extremely cold air bottled up toward the North Pole.

Occasionally, though, the vortex weakens, allowing the cold air to pour down across Canada and the U.S. In addition to bringing cold, the air mass can push the jet stream that typically flows from the Pacific Ocean across the U.S. much farther south as well."

The jet stream normally brings warmer air to the U.S., but it was absent during the polar vortex move to the south. The jet stream was also pushed to the south. The weather in Australia was nice and warm.

The polar bear at Chicago's Lincoln Park Zoo was taken inside after zookeepers realized she lacked enough insulating fat to keep warm in the subzero temperatures.

Cream Cheese Sugar Cookies



Ingredients

- 1 cup
- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 (3oz) package cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon almond extract
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 egg yolk
- 2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour

Directions

In a large bowl, combine the sugar, butter, cream cheese, salt, almond and vanilla extracts, and egg yolk. Beat until smooth. Stir in flour until well blended. Chill the dough for 8 hours, or overnight.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C).

On a lightly floured surface, roll out the dough 1/3 at a time to 1/8 inch thickness, refrigerating remaining dough until ready to use. Cut into desired shapes with lightly floured cookie cutters. Place 1 inch apart on ungreased cookie sheets. Leave cookies plain for frosting, or brush with slightly beaten egg white and sprinkle with candy sprinkles or colored sugar.

Bake for 7 to 10 minutes in the preheated oven, or until light and golden brown. Cool cookies completely before frosting.

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”

Josh 1:9

Their V-formation Helps Birds Conserve Energy

Not just the ducks, but most flying birds arrange themselves in a V-formation for their journeys. In North America, it's often duck formations we see on their seasonal flights to the north or south.

Until now, no one knew why they flew in formation or how they could form a perfect V. The first close-up of their formation is providing some answers. Scientists, reporting in the journal *Nature*, have found that birds position themselves and time their wing beats perfectly in order to minimize their energy use.

Each bird monitors minute changes in its wingmates' flight and alters its own path and stroke, according to Britain's Royal Veterinary College.

Lightweight GPS units have made it possible to find out exactly what the birds are up to in a flight. The researchers used northern bald ibises raised in captivity in Austria. Every year a flock of the ibises takes off and is escorted by an aircraft known as a paraplane, says study author Steven Portugal.

Using data from 14 ibises, researchers found that each flew in just the configuration needed to catch the rising air generated by the wing flapping of the bird in front of it.

Portugal was amazed at how quickly they can respond to any changes by the bird in front.

Singing in a group can make you healthier

It could be that singing exercises the lungs, or maybe it's the camaraderie singers have with each other. Whatever the reason, cognitive neuroscientist Julene Johnson, a professor at the University of California, San Francisco, has found that singing together promotes healthy aging. After studying vocal groups in Finland, she's working with chorus members at 12 senior centers in San Francisco. To date, she has found that group singers had an improved quality of life, fewer falls, fewer colds, fewer doctor visits and less loneliness than individuals in a control group.

According to AARP, singing allows people to use their bodies and minds while creating something beautiful. The message for former choir members, barbershop quartet singers and those who join in at the piano bar: for a better, safer future, volunteer to sing in the church chorus or get back to singing with your pals again.

Take the Trivia Challenge!

During the Polar Vortex of Jan. 2014 where did the temperature drop to a low of -37 degrees?

- A – The North Pole
- B – Babbitt, Minnesota
- C – Fargo, North Dakota
- D – The South Pole

HINT: The answer is hidden somewhere in this newsletter.