



Vital!

VITAL INFORMATION FOR A VITAL LIFE®

Healthy Heart, Healthy You!

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FEBRUARY 2021



I'm still trying to figure out if February is called American Heart Month or Heart Health Awareness Month, but no matter the name, the idea's the same: It's all about Heart! Heart health, and love, of course (thank you, St. Valentine). Maybe we should call it Taking Care Month—taking care of those we love, of ourselves, our relationships—even our community, our pets and our planet.

Heart problems run in my family, so heart health is something that's top of mind... mmm...maybe not all the time, but at least part of the time. And while National Wear Red Day's focus is on women, heart disease doesn't discriminate—it's the #1 killer of men AND women. So show yourself a little love: learn the signs that might indicate heart attack or stroke along with strategies to stay healthy on page 6.

There's been a lot written about love during a pandemic. People quarantined together for months has led to an increase in the divorce rate, and if you're single, you know it's next to impossible to meet new people—let alone, date—*safely*. So then the question becomes: What does true commitment take? Find out on pages 12 and 13.

Want to show your community a little love? Whether you want to give a little (page 3) or save a little (page 8), it's always heartwarming to know you've made your little corner of the universe better. If you don't live in Delaware, these programs have counterparts all across the country. Call your favorite nonprofit or your county to find out how you can contribute.

No matter what you want to call it, this month is the perfect time to share the love!

Happy February!
Karyn and Heidi



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Do More 24



Despite all that the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown at Delaware's nonprofit sector—stay-at-home orders, supply shortages, limited capacity fundraising events, and more—our state's nonprofits got creative in 2020 and found ways to step up for the people they serve. And now it's time for Delawareans to step up and help our local nonprofits in 2021.

Do More 24 Delaware

For 24 hours, starting at 6 p.m. on Thursday, March 4, 2021, Delaware will once again host its largest day of online giving: Do More 24 Delaware (<https://www.domore24delaware.org>). Hundreds of nonprofits and their supporters will be raising money and awareness as part of "Do More 24 Delaware," a 24-hour day of giving for nonprofits serving Delaware. The fundraising event is once again being organized by United Way of Delaware and Spur Impact Association.

"In a healthy safe manner, giving online with Do More 24 Delaware can be a way for you to be a part of a statewide initiative," said Charlie Vincent, Executive Director of Spur Impact. "Many of the fundraising events and activities of our local nonprofits have been cancelled over safety concerns. Despite additional federal and state grants over the past year, there is still a large need in our community for financial support."

The Do More 24 Delaware planning committee has been working hard to secure corporate sponsorship and grants to go directly to local nonprofits. "We are excited to announce that we are on track to award over \$500,000 in prize money to local

nonprofits in various sectors of the community," commented Vincent. "Nonprofits just need individuals to make the first step with an online donation!"

Delaware's Giving Day

Founded by United Way of Delaware in 2016, Do More 24 Delaware is a one-day event during which nonprofits across the state participate in an around-the-clock friendly competition to raise funds that go directly to participating agencies. Nonprofits create their own outreach activities to engage supporters while also competing for additional matching donations and prizes funded by corporate and foundation donors.

Nonprofits benefit everyone

The amount of money donated to nonprofits in Delaware is more than funding from government, corporations, and foundations combined. These donations support the nonprofits that everyone typically thinks of, such as churches, colleges, and disaster relief organizations. But donations are just as vital to those community-focused organizations that many forget are also nonprofits.

For example, thousands of animals are taken in and later adopted each year from nonprofit animal shelters. Most of the 10,000+ babies born in Delaware each year are born in nonprofit hospitals. Tens of thousands of students enrolled in Delaware schools benefit every day from after school activities, summer camps, and music, arts, and athletics programs run by nonprofit organizations. These nonprofits would be unable to function without support from individual philanthropists.

Supporting our community

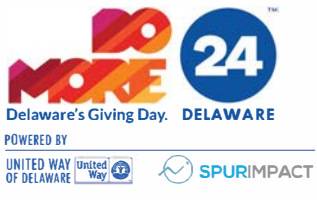
With record numbers of new COVID-19 cases and thousands of children and families still struggling, it's imperative that nonprofits are supported so they can continue to help Delaware communities.

"The efforts of our community-based organizations in response to COVID-19 have been nothing short of heroic," said Michelle A. Taylor, President and Chief Executive Officer of United Way of Delaware. "In the wake of the pandemic, nonprofits banded together, identified critical needs and pivoted quickly to meet those needs. From providing food, shelter and financial assistance to providing personal protective equipment, computers and internet, and even learning pods, community-based organizations continue to provide vital support for our communities. Do More 24 Delaware is the one day we ask our communities to support these incredible nonprofits."


How to donate

Visit www.domore24delaware.org during the 24 hours between 6 p.m. Thursday, March 4 and 6 p.m. Friday, March 5. Once on the website, you can search for nonprofits in a variety of ways. You can also learn more about an organization's mission, programs, financials, and more by clicking on the verification link or by visiting their website. You can then choose to donate or continue searching.

What if I can't find my favorite nonprofit on the Do More 24 Delaware site? While we encourage participation in Do More 24 Delaware, it is not required that nonprofits participate. If your favorite nonprofit does not have a fundraising page set up, you cannot use the Do More 24 Delaware website to donate to them and they will not be eligible for prizes on the giving day. Instead, give them a call and encourage them to participate. Everyone is welcome!



March 4th & 5th is your chance to
GIVE where you LIVE



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DO MORE**

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Cancer's Blessing: A Patient's Perspective

(2nd in a series)



Last month we introduced you to our friend, Paul Bohannon. Eight years ago, Paul was diagnosed with prostate cancer, and given 6 months to live. Yet, here he is to tell his story, eight years later, cancer free. How did he do it? What was his path? What did he learn? What can you or a loved one learn if you are going through a cancer diagnosis? We invite you to follow Paul's story each month, although if you don't want to wait, you can read more of his story at www.vitalmagonline.com/cancers-blessing-a-patients-perspective right now.

By Paul Bohannon

The goal of this series of articles is to help you find the variables you can control if you or a loved one has a cancer diagnosis. Unfortunately, when it comes to cancer, you will follow its lead. People often ask me how I've survived eight years after a six-month outlook. Well, here's my secret: After much reading and research¹, I've become a huge believer that the mind can positively or negatively impact the healing process and wound recovery of the body. But please remember, I am not a doctor; this is the story of my own journey.

Last month, we talked about the emotional roller coaster that comes with a cancer diagnosis. This month, I'd like to talk about the first step I took to get to where I am today. The steps in general were:

1. Set a goal
2. Find an advocate
3. Establish a treatment plan
4. Break it all down

Before beginning, it's imperative to realize that the depths of emotional response to a cancer diagnosis are overwhelming. To the casual observer, from the outside it may appear that the cancer patient is perfectly fine, but inside it is a wasteland. It would be irresponsible not to acknowledge how alone you feel when you hear the words, "you have cancer."

You are so alone that death is scary and welcome at the same time. Up becomes down and vice versa. The depth of fear is so extreme it cripples most people, but then the process of healing takes over. If you read nothing else, please read my first step. As someone who has lived way beyond the expected outcome, I am asking

you to trust me, for now at least. You'll see that I did not do these things well in the first round, and I almost voluntarily destroyed myself in the process. This is the blessing part of my cancer—I evolved, matured, and came to the place my body needed: balance.

Step One: Set a Goal

Sounds trite, but let's discuss the actual objective you have. For example, are you interested in length of life or quality of life? The volume of variables and impact of these variables vary from person to person. I can only relay the defining guidelines I was given. As a statistics major in college, I learned one extremely valuable lesson: Question data. ALWAYS.

Initially, I wanted to survive, maintain a healthy sex life, and did not want to have to pee into a bag. But my surgeons ranked my treatment priorities first in terms of longevity, then urinary control, then sexual performance.

I began to evaluate all my options based on those very basic goals. It wasn't until after I had decided to schedule surgery that I realized I needed to set a goal, not my surgeon. Setting a goal really simplified the rest of what happened next.

I remember meeting a woman in her thirties who had stage four colon cancer, and I asked her what her goal was. She said she couldn't handle the pain from the treatment, so she wanted to die.

That didn't make sense to me. Why wouldn't you want to fight? Why give up? She was too young, too strong. She told me fear of death was not her motivation; she was worried about her parents. How would they

survive this? She felt her outcome was inevitable and couldn't think of prolonging her parents' suffering.

Her view shined a light on something I was completely denying. We all have different tools, strengths, motivations, and backgrounds. The most important part of setting your goal for treatment is to take a real inventory of yourself. Taking pen to paper, and having the extremely difficult conversation with your advocate (more on advocates to come) is an important first step.

The discussion of your goals helps to frame future conversations with your advocate, treatment team and family members. Omitting the step of establishing a treatment goal leads you down a path without control, influence, or focus.

One more point: Goals give you an internal answer to the "What if" conversations that will plague you the rest of your life as a cancer patient/survivor. "What if this pain in my back is metastasized cancer? What if my treatment fails? What if I don't see my grandsons' birth?" Your goals are there to give you focus and purpose. Goals create a plan you can influence and they play a role in your health, healing, and remaining life (hopefully well beyond cancer's impact).

Some numbers

As a cancer patient, it's important to realize that you are not alone and should not address this alone. You need to build a support system. There are thousands of great, low- or no-cost resources to help people like you, people like us—who are trying to come to grips with our mortality.

I was the first person I knew diagnosed with cancer. According to www.cancer.org over 16.9 million

Americans are living with cancer. Let's reread that—LIVING with cancer. MOST of whom were diagnosed with cancer many years ago and have no evidence of cancer².

Let's frame your mindset about data that matters.

■ Cancer is the second most common cause of death in the U.S. behind heart disease. 606,520 Americans died or were expected to die of cancer in 2020. They are a subset of the above 16.9 million Americans plus the 1.8 million who were diagnosed in 2020.

■ The numbers above fail to illustrate the impact of improved technology and our knowledge of how to test for, detect and identify cancer. Analyzed in terms of deaths per diagnosis, in 1991, on average .002% of diagnosed patients died that year. In 2017, that number fell 29% to .0015%, mostly driven by drops in the four most common cancers—lung, colorectal, breast and prostate cancers.

■ Since the early 1960s, the survival rate for Caucasians rose from 39% to 70% and among African Americans from 27% to 64%. So here's the silver lining: The longer you live or the newer your diagnosis, the better your chance of survival. In my case, because I've lived 8 more years, my probability of living has gone up by a factor of 20 (meaning if I were to get my diagnosis today, my life expectancy is in terms of decades not six months).

That's good stuff.

Next month: Your Advocate

¹References available upon request.



The Covid-19 Vaccines

By Amanda Howell, MS, MPH

Pfizer vs. Moderna

Pfizer	Moderna
95% effective	94.3% effective
30 mcg doses given 21 days apart	100 mcg doses given 28 days apart
36,621 trial participants	30,350 trial participants

Both are mRNA Vaccines

COVID-19 mRNA vaccines provide instructions for our cells to make a harmless piece of what is called the “spike protein.” The spike protein is found on the surface of the virus that causes COVID-19.

COVID-19 mRNA vaccines are given in the upper arm muscle. Once the instructions (mRNA) are inside the muscle cells, the cells follow the instructions and make the spike protein. After the protein is made, the cell breaks down the instructions and gets rid of them.

Next, the cell displays the protein piece on its surface (showing off its work). Our immune system recognizes that the protein doesn’t belong there and begins making antibodies.

After developing antibodies, our immune system has learned how to protect against future infection.

The benefit of mRNA vaccines, like all vaccines, is that people who get the vaccine gain this protection without ever having to risk the serious consequences of getting sick with COVID-19.

Neither vaccine contains any aluminum, mercury or food allergens.

mRNA Technology

mRNA technology was discovered over 30 years ago and has been studied for vaccine purposes for nearly two decades. In fact, scientists have been working on a coronavirus vaccine since the SARS and MERS outbreaks, but funding dried up. No funding, no scientific advancements.

Early-stage clinical trials using mRNA vaccines have been carried out for influenza, Zika, rabies, and cytomegalovirus (CMV). Recent

Facts About COVID-19 mRNA Vaccines

They cannot give someone COVID-19. mRNA vaccines do not use the live virus that causes COVID-19.

They do not affect or interact with our DNA in any way. mRNA never enters the nucleus of the cell, which is where your DNA (genetic material) is kept. Your cell gets rid of the mRNA soon after it is finished using the instructions.

technological advancements in RNA biology and chemistry, as well as delivery systems, have mitigated these challenges and improved their stability, safety, and effectiveness.

Side Effects = Immune Response


Most commonly reported side effects include:

- Injection site reaction
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Chills
- Joint pain
- Fever

This is your immune response. This is response without infection. This is a good thing!

These short-term, easily managed side effects are significantly less risky than taking your chances with a COVID-19 infection. Get vaccinated!

Amanda Howell holds her master’s in public health with additional training in nutrition & women’s health. Amanda’s mission is to dispel health misinformation and guide people towards more sustainable and evidence-based approaches to health, nutrition, and fitness.



FLU SHOTS ARE HERE*

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*Vaccine subject to availability. State-, age- and health-related restrictions may apply.

National Wear Red Day[®] is February 5!

Celebrate National Wear Red Day[®] on Friday, February 5 when Americans nationwide will wear red to show their support for women's heart health. Show off your favorite red dress, red shirt or red tie to raise awareness that heart disease—not only the #1 killer of men, but also the #1 killer of women—is largely preventable.

In fact, 80 percent of cardiac events in women could be prevented if women made the right choices for their hearts involving diet, exercise and abstinence from smoking.



Know your Numbers

Knowing the numbers that impact your heart is an important step toward healthy living. Get a quick overview of the numbers you need to know and your goals using the chart below. Be sure to talk to your doctor to see how your current numbers measure up.

FACTOR	GOAL
Total Cholesterol	Less than 200 mg/dL
LDL (“Bad”) Cholesterol	LDL cholesterol goals vary
	Less than 100 mg/dL Optimal
	100 to 129 mg/dL Near Optimal/ Above Optimal
	130 to 159 mg/dL Borderline High
	160 to 189 mg/dL High
	190 mg/dL and above Very High
HDL (“Good”) Cholesterol	50 mg/dL or higher
Triglycerides	Less than 150 mg/dL
Blood Pressure	Less than 120/80 mmHg
Fasting Glucose	Less than 100 mg/dL
Body Mass Index (BMI)	Less than 25 Kg/m ²
Waist Circumference	Less than 35 inches
Exercise	Minimum of 30 minutes most days, if not all days of the week

Know the Signs of a Heart Attack

A heart attack occurs when the blood flow to a part of the heart is blocked, usually by a blood clot. If this clot cuts off the blood flow completely, the part of the heart muscle supplied by that artery begins to die. The average age of a first heart attack is 70, but because many women's symptoms of heart disease are vague and aren't recognized, many women in their 60s already have some form of heart disease and don't know it. Rather than common symptoms like chest pain or discomfort, many women may feel dizzy or nauseous, experience shortness of breath, have back or jaw pain, or discomfort in the chest or back of arms. These feelings may come on gradually during your normal activities and can go away with rest. But you still need to tell your doctor if this is happening. It could be a sign of a hidden condition. And if these symptoms don't go away in a few minutes or you experience them while you are sleeping,

they could be a heart attack. If you or someone you are with experiences any of these symptoms, especially chest pain combined with one or more of the other signs, don't wait—immediately call 911.

Signs of a Heart Attack:

1. Uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain in the center of your chest. It lasts more than a few minutes, or goes away and comes back.
2. Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
3. Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort.
4. Other signs such as breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.
5. As with men, women's most common heart attack symptom is chest pain or discomfort. But women are somewhat more likely than men to experience some of the other common symptoms, particularly shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting and back or jaw pain.

If you have any of these signs, don't wait more than five minutes before calling for help. Call 911. Get to a hospital right away.

Know the Signs of Stroke

Stroke is the No. 3 cause of death in America. It's also a major cause of severe, long-term disability. Stroke and TIA (transient ischemic attack) happen when a blood vessel feeding the brain gets clogged or bursts. The signs of a TIA are like a stroke, but usually last only a few minutes.

Stroke is a medical emergency. It's very important to take immediate action. Learn to recognize a stroke, because any delay in treatment can lead to brain damage. Don't wait more than five minutes before calling for help. Check the time so you'll know when the first symptoms appeared. If given within three hours of the start of symptoms, a clot-busting drug can reduce long-term disability for the most common type of stroke. Remember that not all of the following warning signs occur in every stroke.

Signs of Stroke and TIAs

1. Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body.
2. Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding.
3. Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
4. Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination.
5. Sudden severe headache with no known cause.

Keep Moving

As you age, it's important to make physical activity a priority. The older we get, the trickier exercise can be. Whether you've been active for years or you are just getting started, it's important to find an activity you enjoy that provides the right level of activity for your body.

For some, short brisk walks (as little as 10 minutes) throughout the day or water aerobics are best; others prefer resistance exercises, bowling or dancing. Just try to avoid the natural desire to sit more and get moving. Above all, remember to stay positive and that any exercise is better than no exercise. AHA recommends 150 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity each week, or visit <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/exercise-physical-activity> for some simple exercises that will get you moving.

Visit www.goredforwomen.org for more.

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Help Yourself While Helping Others

The Neighborhood Assistance Act Offers Tax Credits for Contributions

What better way to take a bite out of your tax bill than by contributing to the health of your community? Across the country, municipalities encourage their constituents to contribute by offering tax credits. Tax credits are generally considered to be better than tax deductions because they directly reduce the amount of tax you owe, while the effect of a tax deduction on your tax liability depends on your marginal tax bracket.

In Delaware, the Neighborhood Assistance Act (NAA) Program encourages businesses and individuals who have a Delaware state tax liability to invest in programs serving impoverished neighborhoods or serving low- and moderate-income families. In exchange for a qualified contribution, the NAA program provides state tax credits equal to 50% of the investment.

There Are Some Limits

Even though you may be generous to a fault, in Delaware the maximum tax credit available to any taxpayer is \$50,000 annually and \$100,000 over a three-year period. That means that you would max out your credit by giving a \$100,000 contribution, which would qualify you for \$50,000 in Delaware Tax Credits.

Each year there is a maximum of \$1,000,000 in tax credits available statewide. Credits are very competitive, and are available on a first come, first served basis. You may apply for credits at any time during the year. Applications received before July 1 “reserve” credits before they are officially available from the state on

July 1, so it makes sense to make any contributions prior to June 30th to maximize your chance of approval.

The Process

1 Determine your eligibility. The NAA Tax Credit is available to any individual or business paying income tax in Delaware and whose contribution is made to an approved NAA non-profit organization.

2 Identify your nonprofit organization of choice. Review the list of approved NAA programs by visiting http://www.destatehousing.com/OtherPrograms/ot_naa.php.

3 Make a contribution. Contributor must meet the minimum contribution amounts. The minimum a business must meet is \$10,000 while the minimum an individual must meet is \$2,500. The maximum contribution cannot exceed \$100,000 per tax year. (\$50,000 maximum credit).

4 Complete your application. NAA donor applications are accepted via the NAA web portal exclusively and uploaded by the qualified nonprofit. DSHA grants access to the NAA web portal to the nonprofit.

Non-profit Eligibility Requirements

Organizations must be designated as 501(c)(3) organizations by the Internal Revenue Service and document that they provide neighborhood assistance in an impoverished area, or provide neighborhood assistance for low- and moderate-income families.

Qualified purposes of nonprofits are considered eligible if they provide any of the following assistance:

- Community Services
- Crime Prevention
- Economic Development
- Education
- Affordable Housing

The list of qualified organizations runs the gamut from Girl Scouts and Girls on the Run to Habitat for Humanity, Light Up the Queen, TeenSHARP and many, many more.

Everyone Benefits through the NAA

This is truly a win-win program. Taxpayers benefit from their reduced tax liability and their freedom of choice in how their funds are used, while businesses enhance their

image in the community. Nonprofits enjoy increased funding for community activities, the possibility of long-term partnerships, increased business interest in their nonprofit mission, and a new opportunity to educate taxpayers. Impoverished communities and residents with low and moderate incomes enjoy the benefits of expanded programs that develop youth and build healthier communities.

Every state's benefits and requirements differ, so it's best to do an internet search for Neighborhood Assistance Act or Neighborhood Assistance Program for your own state to learn more about what your state offers. If you are in Delaware and have any questions or need further assistance, please contact Angie Lord at 302-739-0211 or email angie@destatehousing.com.

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*“Giving is not just about making a donation.
It’s about making a difference.”*

—Kathy Calvin



Love Your Pet!

It's Pet Dental Health Month



By Dr. Sandra J. Platt, DVM

February is a very special month for veterinary medicine—it's Pet Dental Health Month! The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) reports 80 percent of dogs and 70 percent of cats have some kind of oral disease by the age of three, although some experts believe it's actually much higher. No one debates that it's one of the most common problems faced by our four-legged family members, though.

One thing that has become more apparent with increased understanding of pet health is that dental health impacts the health of the rest of the body. Unfortunately, infection in the mouth, and particularly the gums (aka periodontal disease) is common in dogs. An extraordinarily wide range of bacteria exists in oral fluid and on oral surfaces.

Development of plaque and calculus on teeth causes periodontal disease to develop. Infection of the gums causes bacteria to be introduced into the bloodstream, which then exposes the rest of the body to bacteria.

A number of pet studies have proven association between periodontal disease and microscopic inflammatory or degenerative changes in distant organs such as the kidney, liver, and heart. Neglecting your pet's teeth and gums can also cause chronic pain issues that may even be at the center of certain behavioral problems.

So, what's the good news in all this? Do all pets require annual dental exams under general anesthesia? Should we ignore dental disease? NO!

Although periodontal disease is the most common clinical condition in cats and dogs, the good news is that it's completely preventable. Tooth brushing is the gold standard of canine and feline oral health. But oral hygiene can include more than brushing. The Veterinary Oral Health Council has a list of products that have met the preset standards for slowing accumulation of plaque and calculus (i.e., tartar); these products include dental diets, treats, water additives, gels, and toothpastes.

The best way to confirm efficacy of a product is to look for the Veterinary Oral Health Council seal of approval. Products with this seal have been evaluated by qualified veterinary dentists and found to be effective. The key is daily use, which is a lot easier if the owner can find a way to make daily oral hygiene a fun interaction.

The four stages of periodontal disease

Stage 1: There is visible tartar build-up on the teeth and slight swelling and redness of the gums.

Stage 2: The gums are more swollen and there can be mild loss of bone around the tooth roots (only visible on x-rays).

Stage 3: Might not look much different from stage 2 based on looking at the teeth, but x-rays show more severe bone loss.

Stage 4: This is the most severe type, with severe tartar accumulation, receded gum lines, tooth damage, and bone loss.

Your pet's teeth and gums should be checked regularly by your veterinarian for early signs of a problem and to keep your pet's mouth healthy. While regular dental checkups are essential to help maintain your pet's dental health, there are a number of signs that dental disease has already started. If you notice any of the symptoms below, take your pet in to your veterinarian immediately:

- Red swollen gums
- Bad breath (similar to the smell of a rotten egg)
- Teeth that are broken, loose, discolored or covered in tartar
- Abnormal chewing, drooling or dropping food from the mouth
- Bleeding from the mouth
- Shying away from you when you touch the mouth area

- Frequent pawing or rubbing at the face and/or mouth
- Weight loss

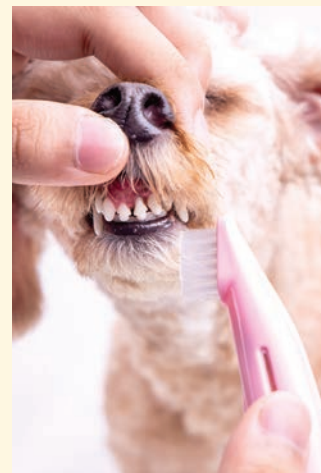
Take this month to check your pet's oral health, and make sure you know how to care for their teeth. National Pet Dental Health Month is the perfect time to call your veterinarian and schedule a dental check-up for your furry family members.

How to Brush Your Dog's Teeth

Although it's never too late to start, it's best to start brushing as early as possible in your canine friend's life so he or she will become accustomed to the brushing process. Ideally, try to brush your pet's teeth every day.

What should I use?

Use a moistened dog toothbrush with soft bristles. If you don't have a specially designed pet toothbrush, you can also use a child's toothbrush, a finger toothbrush, gauze around a finger or a cotton swab.



Do I need special toothpaste?

Pet toothpaste, often flavored like poultry, tuna and other pet-friendly varieties, is your best option. Never use human toothpaste, baking soda or salt. While safe for you, these cleaning agents can be harmful to your dog if swallowed.

At-home teeth cleaning tips

According to Banfield.com, the following tips will make the process easier for you and more comfortable for your pet.

- *Do use* a specially designed pet toothbrush or a recommended alternative.
- *Never* use human toothpaste. Instead, use pet-safe toothpaste with a flavor favorable to your dog's taste buds.
- Give your pet a small sample of the toothpaste to introduce the taste.
- *Lift the lip* to expose the outside surfaces of your pet's gums and teeth.
- *Brush* with gentle motions to clean the teeth and gums, as you would your own.
- *Clean* the outside (cheek-facing) surfaces, as most pets will not allow you to brush the inside surface of the teeth.
- *Be sure* to reach the back upper molars and canines, as these teeth tend to quickly build up tartar.
- *Reward* your dog with play, petting or a favorite activity to positively reinforce the brushing process.

COVID-19 & Grief

By Meredith English, MSHS



A year into the pandemic, our society is grieving our loss of everyday life, and normal coping strategies either don't work or are not possible. Essential workers fighting the pandemic wonder if there is an end in sight. Our normal support systems have changed. Friends and family have their plates full as they navigate their own fears. A constant underlying worry, for our children, our seniors and ourselves, has become many people's new normal.

COVID-19 has changed the way we do everything, and the constant readjustment is exhausting. Families worry about loved ones who are alone day in and day out, yet fear passing or contracting the virus. Many people have been unable to visit with

dying loved ones. They have unanswered questions as the medical community struggles to fully understand the virus. Those who have lost a loved one experience a more complicated grief due to the policies in place to keep all safe. The funeral or celebration of life is different than families hoped for. This can delay or prolong the grief, since grief is a journey you must walk through, not around.

Through it all we have adapted and adopted the best options we have to stay connected. Many have learned how to get online to seek medical help or to join virtual support groups. While we long to be in person, we settle for the next best thing, reminding ourselves we're doing the best we can and it's okay to not be okay right now.

Five ways to help grieve during COVID-19

1 Carve out time to grieve. Nobody needs to tell you to miss your loved one—you're already doing that. However, take time every day to journal, read, listen to a podcast, or simply "talk" to your loved one without any distractions. Taking a small action helps combat any avoidance or guilt that can come commonly in grief.

2 Identify a support person. Have one person that you check in with daily, whether by phone or text. Ask them permission to reach out when you're having a hard time. Ideally, this will be a

friend rather than a family member grieving the same person.

3 Be specific. When others say, "Let me know if you need anything" do not be afraid to be specific. Ask for help setting up a computer. Ask for help with grocery shopping. Ask for help with phone calls. They, too, will feel better by being able to help in some way. For many, this also helps them grieve.

4 Share the memories. Ask others to share their memories or photos. If you are not ready to look at the pictures, hold on to them. Save digital photos to a hard drive to muse over later or use in a future memorialization project. This is a great time to "be specific" with those who are tech savvy.

5 Get help. When you just need to talk or don't want to feel alone, don't be afraid of reaching out. There are many community resources. Or try out a telehealth session just one time. Even a video conversation can help in a time when we feel so alone.

Meredith English, MSHS is a Delaware Hospice Bereavement Counselor. Delaware Hospice offers free community bereavement services and workshops on various grief topics throughout the year. We also offer free grief resources on our website. For more information, please visit us at www.delawarehospice.org or call us at 302-478-5707.



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Get Paid to Be a Caregiver for a Family Member

About 53 million Americans provide care without pay to a loved one, and studies show they do so for an average of nearly 24 hours per week. That unpaid commitment can make it hard for caregivers to make ends meet. So what to do? See if you're eligible to get paid.

For Medicaid recipients

All 50 states and the District of Columbia offer self-directed Medicaid services for long-term care. The state grants Medicaid waivers that allow qualified individuals to manage their own long-term home-care services, as opposed to an agency managing services. In some states, that can include hiring a family member to provide care.

Benefits, coverage, eligibility and rules differ from state to state. Some programs pay family caregivers but exclude spouses and legal guardians. Others will pay care providers only if they do not live in the same house as the care recipient.

Program names also vary. What is called Consumer-Directed Care in one state might be called In-Home Supportive Services or Cash and Counseling in another. Contact your state Medicaid program to ask about your options or to get started.

For military veterans

Veterans have four plans that they may qualify for.

Veteran-Directed Care

Like Medicaid's self-directed care program, this plan allows qualified former service members to manage their own long-term services and supports. It is available in 37 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico to veterans of all ages who are enrolled in the VA health care system and who need the level of care a nursing facility provides, but want to live at home or in the home of a loved one.

A flexible budget — the average is about \$2,200 a month — enables veterans to choose the goods and services they find most useful, includ-

ing a caregiver to assist with activities of daily living, such as bathing, cooking, eating, dressing and adjusting prosthetic devices. The veteran chooses the caregiver and may pick any physically and mentally capable family member including a child, grandchild, sibling or spouse.

VA medical centers determine eligibility and make referrals. Find and contact your nearest center for more information on the program.

Aid and Attendance (A&A) Benefits

This program supplements a military pension to help cover the cost of a caregiver, who may be a family member. A&A benefits are available to veterans who qualify for VA pensions and meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Requires help from another person to perform activities of daily living.
- Is confined to bed because of disability.
- Is in a nursing home because of physical or mental incapacity.
- Has very limited eyesight, less than 5/200 acuity in both eyes even with corrective lenses, or a significantly contracted field of vision.

Surviving spouses of qualifying veterans may also be eligible for this benefit.

Housebound Benefits

Veterans who receive a military pension and are substantially confined to their immediate premises because of permanent disability can apply for a monthly pension supplement. The application process is the same as for A&A benefits, but you cannot receive both housebound and A&A benefits at the same time.

Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers

This program provides a monthly stipend to family members who serve as caregivers for veterans who need assistance with everyday activities because of a traumatic injury sustained in the line of duty on or after Sept. 11, 2001.



The care recipient must be enrolled in VA health services and require either personal care related to everyday activities or supervision or protection because of conditions sustained after 9/11. The caretaker must be 18 or older and a child, parent, spouse, stepfamily member, extended family member or full-time housemate of the veteran.

In 2017, yearly pay for caregivers under the program ranged from \$7,800 to \$30,000, according to the Congressional Budget Office. The stipend is not considered taxable income.

The military caregivers benefit is slated to be expanded to veterans of all eras. The change was expected to be implemented in 2019, but the VA missed its first deadline to update information technology infrastructure to support the expansion.

For more information on help for military caregivers, visit the VA Caregiver Support page or call its hotline at 855-260-3274.

Getting paid by a family member

Of course, a person can always choose to pay a family member. If you and your loved one are exploring this route, try to establish a proactive employer-employee approach, which can minimize stress and family tension.

- **Discuss what you both need.** Talk about wages and paydays, health risks, scheduling, and how

respite care and caregiver sick days will be handled.

- **Draw up a personal care agreement** as a contract between the caregiver and the care recipient. It should spell out wages, what services will be provided and when, and the length of the agreement, among other terms. Consider involving other members of the immediate family in working out terms so they are not surprised later.
- **Consult an elder law attorney** to review your contract to make sure it meets tax requirements and deals with inheritances. All other interested parties, such as siblings, need to approve it.
- **Keep professional records.** Specify services performed, dates of work and the amount paid. This paperwork is essential if your family member later applies for Medicaid. During the qualification process, a caseworker will examine records for the past five years.
- **Report income.** As with any paid job, caregivers are legally required to report wages as taxable income. If, at a later date, your family member becomes eligible for Medicaid but your taxes have not been paid, Medicaid will consider the money a gift — not an expense. This could prevent your loved one from qualifying for Medicaid. On the other hand, the Internal Revenue Service is clear: When services are provided, all money received is a wage, not a gift.



50 Years with Rosie

By John Raye, Vital! reader in NC

February's focus is always on love! And we love this article so much that we're sharing it again. John's 7 "gifts" are straight from the heart, whether you've been with your partner for forever, just starting anew, or focusing on yourself until we're past the pandemic.

August is a special month to me. That's because it was an especially hot August fifty years ago that I made a promise to live with the woman we all affectionately call Miss Rosie for the rest of my life, or "til death do us part."

For the past 50 years, I've gone to bed with her, woken up with her, had breakfast, sometimes lunch, and dinner with her, gone to church and movies with her, vacationed with her, raised children and grandchildren with her, argued and fussed with her. And through it all, I've cherished her—her cheeky smile and beaming butterbean-brown eyes. Simply put, she is the battery in the flashlight that lights up my life.

Without her, there would be no me. Without her, my days would be darker than dark, my nights even longer, and me forever lonely. I would not be the man that I longed to be, the man I used to be, or the man I hope to be. I would simply be a man who simply could not be.

Some people are absolutely astonished, amazed even, that two people could, in this day and age, stay

married to each other for 50 years. They're right; it's not that common, but there are many couples who do manage to reach that milestone.

"What's your secret?" some have asked. "Don't you ever get tired of one another? Have disagreements? Don't you get mad, fuss and fight, and don't you...well, whatever?" The short answer to all of the "don't you's..." is yes!

Over the last 50 years, we've had our good days AND our bad. But I can bear you witness that our good days far outnumber the bad. Why? It's very simple and not hard to explain, so here it is, in plain and simple language: **I love her. Always did. Always will. And she loves me... just like I am, warts and all!**

So what's the big secret? The success of our marriage has a great deal to do with a Jamaican proverb: *"Before you marry, keep both eyes open. After marriage, shut one!"*

In marriage, or any relationship, you never spill your guts. You *don't show* everything. You *don't see* everything. You *don't tell* everything. You



don't believe everything. You *don't know* everything. And you sure *don't hear* everything.

Now, it may not be convenient, but it's absolutely necessary that you learn how to stay focused, learn how to forgive, to forget and move on, because there is no such reality as a perfect marriage or a marriage made in heaven.

Our marriage is pretty much a give-and-take. Sometimes Miss Rosie gives and I take, and sometimes (more often than not) I give and she takes. (My own take on that Jamaican proverb? Learn not only how to shut one eye, but at times to *shut your mouth* as well!)

I yield to the reality that our 50 years together is not by chance, luck or coincidence but more so by divine grace. The ups and downs in our marriage—bad jobs, lost jobs, bounced checks, bad credit, bad investments, bad decisions, foreclosure, cancer, stroke, etc. are enough to make the rocks cry out. Yet the good outweighed the bad, and so we've stayed together for 50 years. Here are seven gifts that kept us out of divorce court:

1 The gift of self-love: There is no greater love than love of self. The only way to truly love another person is to first have love for self.

2 The gift of self-respect: The only way to gain the trust and respect of others is to first develop respect for self. Respect for others begins with respect for self.

3 The gift of self-responsibility: I might not be responsible for many of the unpleasant things that happen in my life, but I am responsible for how I deal with them.

4 The gift of self-knowledge: The last one a man becomes acquainted with is himself. Self-knowledge empowers a man to think and do for self.

5 The gift of everyday gratitude: Nothing is more noble or valuable than a grateful spirit. Gratitude leads to plenty; ungratefulness is the beginning of poverty.

6 The gift of everyday prayer: It's true—the family that prays together stays together. Prayer changes things. It can change your life. It can also save your life.

7 The gift of everyday faith: Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. With faith, all things are possible, including the possibility of staying 50 years with the same woman.

Living half a century with the same woman is nothing less than an act of God. What really kept us together for 50 years? Nothing but the 3 G's: God, Grace, and Gratitude! And that, my friends, is always more than enough!

John Raye is a national life-wellness-business coach and 13-year cancer survivor. He lives in Kernersville, NC.

Author and lecturer Leo Buscaglia once talked about a contest he was asked to judge. The purpose of the contest was to find the most caring child. The winner was a four year old child whose next door neighbor was an elderly gentleman who had recently lost his wife.

Upon seeing the man cry, the little boy went into the old gentleman's yard, climbed onto his lap, and just sat there.

When his Mother asked what he had said to the neighbor, the little boy said, "Nothing. I just helped him cry."



Entering into Commitment

Many people have not witnessed a loving relationship between their parents, so they don't know what it looks like.

Loving and committing to another person is a spiritual process whether it involves a wedding or any other type of commitment ceremony. Often when we enter into a relationship, we allow our emotions to lead us forward without thinking more deeply about what true commitment involves. If we can understand that sharing our lives with another person is not just based on love but also on the hard work of being able to compromise and enter into a dialogue with them, then we are much more likely to find the key to having a successful relationship with our partners. So many people have not experienced a loving relationship between their own parents and therefore have no role model of what love should feel like or look like.

Many of us have been exposed to the idea that love should be romantic and sweep us off our feet. While this is a natural part of any relationship, the true test of our love comes from our willingness to explore this world with another person; to not only share in the delights that we encounter but also to negotiate the bumps in the road together. Generally this often takes the form of a mutual exchange of ideas, but because any relationship is based on the needs and experiences of two people, we might also face a certain amount of misunderstanding. Learning to be open and receptive to our partners and to treat their wants and ideas with respect can help us navigate even the most difficult situations. One way to do this is to take a deep breath, holding our partner in a space of love, and allow ourselves to listen fully with our hearts to what they have to say. Should this become difficult to do, we can also turn toward people whose relationships we admire for advice or guidance. Knowing that there are resources out there to help us and being up for exploring them with our partner will only serve to deepen and strengthen our relationship.

Entering into a committed relationship is in fact a spiritual journey that we undertake with another person. By being able to love and care for someone else with an open heart, we will find that we can reach a greater level of personal transformation, evolving along our path and learning powerful lessons about ourselves that we might not otherwise be able to do on our own.

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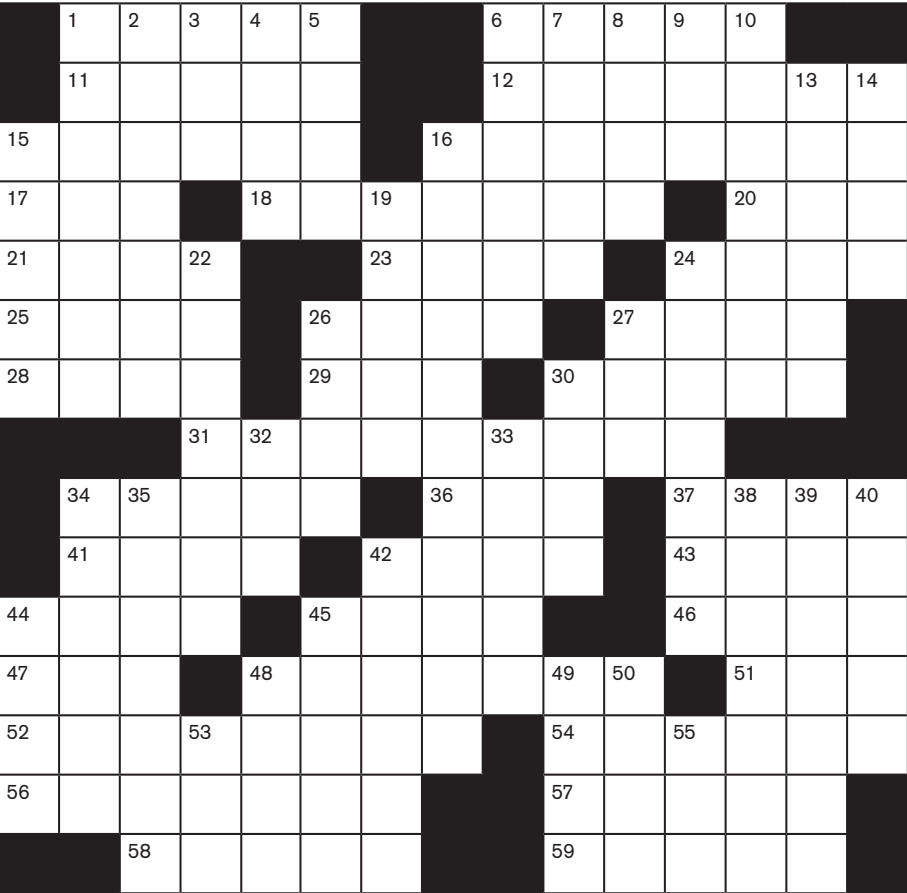
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Crossword

By Dave Fisher



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Answers on page 13

ACROSS

- 1. Shoe stud
- 6. Anagram of "Stabs"
- 11. Bisect
- 12. Better
- 15. Tiny village
- 16. Pajamas with feet
- 17. Sphere
- 18. Answer
- 20. Poetic dusk
- 21. Food thickener
- 23. Habit
- 24. Scottish hillside
- 25. Start over
- 26. Engine knock
- 27. Fuss
- 28. Blah
- 29. S
- 30. Residence
- 31. Diocese
- 34. Refine metal
- 36. Record (abbrev.)
- 37. Contributors
- 41. Recreational area
- 42. Questions
- 43. Bottomless
- 44. Quarries
- 45. Reflected sound
- 46. Behold, in old Rome
- 47. Genus of macaws
- 48. Aged
- 51. Beer
- 52. Evade
- 54. Palpebra
- 56. Fables
- 57. A cook might wear one
- 58. Backsides
- 59. Wampum

DOWN

- 1. A strong swift horse
- 2. A fast Brazilian dance
- 3. L
- 4. Anagram of "Rave"
- 5. French for "Head"
- 6. Be a member
- 7. Concerning (archaic)
- 8. Outbuilding
- 9. Faucet
- 10. Smiled contemptuously
- 13. Bring into existence
- 14. Feudal worker
- 15. Stockpile
- 16. Financial support
- 19. Nothing-but-net sound
- 22. Thieves
- 24. Material with a raised pattern
- 26. Annoyance
- 27. A law enforcement agency
- 30. Circle fragments
- 32. Type
- 33. A black tea
- 34. Apparition
- 35. Bullfighter
- 38. Ten Commandments
- 39. Grow worse
- 40. Velocity
- 42. Entry
- 44. Overtake
- 45. Go in
- 48. Largest continent
- 49. Half-moon tide
- 50. Sort
- 53. Before, poetically
- 55. Historic period

BURIED STRAWBERRY CHEESECAKE

Strawberries and chocolate are quintessential Valentine's Day treats. In this easy recipe, they're set atop a chewy brownie bottom and buried under decadent cheesecake.



Yield: 12 to 14 servings
Active: 30 min | **Total:** 4 hr (includes cooling and chilling)

INGREDIENTS

- Nonstick cooking spray, for greasing the pan
- One 18.4-ounce box brownie mix (plus required ingredients)
- 45 to 50 medium strawberries (about 2½ pounds), stemmed
- Two 8-ounce packages cream cheese, at room temperature
- 1 cup sugar
- 4 cups heavy cream
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- Two ¼-ounce packages unflavored gelatin
- Warm chocolate fudge sauce, for drizzling

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350° F. Lightly spray bottom and sides of a 9 x 13" metal baking pan with cooking spray. Line pan with parchment, leaving at least a 2" overhang on all sides.
2. Prepare and bake the brownies in the prepared pan according to the package directions for a 9 x 13" baking pan. Let cool completely on a rack, about 1 hour.
3. Meanwhile, slice 5 to 6 strawberries into 1/8-inch-thick slices. You'll need enough to fit around the edges of the pan; set aside. Leave the remaining strawberries whole.
4. Beat the cream cheese, sugar and 3½ cups of the heavy cream in a large bowl with an electric mixer on medium speed until stiff peaks form, 3 to 4 minutes. Fold in the sour cream and vanilla until smooth.
5. Bring the remaining ½ cup heavy cream to a boil in a small saucepan, then whisk in the gelatin. Continue to whisk off heat until the gelatin is dissolved, 2 to 3 minutes. Fold the gelatin mixture into the cream cheese mixture until well combined.
6. Stand the sliced strawberries upside down around the perimeter of the pan with the flat/cut sides touching the side of the pan, cutting an extra strawberry or two if needed. Pour 3 cups of the cream cheese mixture on top of the brownies and use an offset spatula to spread and smooth it out. Press the remaining whole strawberries into the cream cheese upside down (pointed ends up); you should have about 8 rows of 5. Spread the remaining cream mixture on top of the strawberries and smooth out the top with an offset spatula. Chill until set, at least 2 hours and up to overnight.
7. When ready to serve, use the parchment overhang to remove the dessert from the pan and place onto a serving platter (trim the parchment from around the edges). Drizzle the top with chocolate fudge sauce and cut into bars.

Courtesy: foodnetwork.com



Sudoku

Fill in the blank squares so that each row, each column and each 3-by-3 block contain all of the digits 1 thru 9.

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

Answers on page 13

(courtesy of KrazyDad.com)

FROM THE MOUTHS OF BABES

What is Love?

"When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore. So my grandfather does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That's love."
—Rebecca, age 8

"When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You just know that your name is safe in their mouth."
—Billy, age 4

"Love is when a girl puts on perfume and a boy puts on shaving cologne and they go out and smell each other." —Karl, age 5

"Love is when my mommy makes coffee for my daddy and she takes a sip before giving it to him, to make sure the taste is OK."
—Danny, age 7

"Love is what's in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and listen." —Bobby, age 7

"If you want to learn to love better, you should start with a friend who you hate." —Nikka, age 6

"Love is when you tell a guy you like his shirt, then he wears it everyday." —Noelle, age 7

"Love is like a little old woman and a little old man who are still friends even after they know each other so well." —Tommy, age 6

"Love is when Mommy gives Daddy the best piece of chicken."
—Elaine, age 5

"I know my older sister loves me because she gives me all her old clothes and has to go out and buy new ones." —Lauren, age 4

The Funny Bone

I was walking down the street the other day when I saw my best friend Jeff. I walked up to him and mentioned that I had the craziest dream the other night. Jeff listened as I told him that the dream consisted of just one thing. A huge glowing number "5." It was made of gold and sparkled with shiny diamonds. Jeff's curiosity was piqued. I went on to say that the first thing that I did in the morning was to grab the daily racing digest and look up the 5th race.

Jeff raised an eyebrow. I told him that the #5 horse in the 5th race was named "The 5th Element." Jeff started grinning. Then I told him point-by-point what I did that entire day.

I ate 5 bowls of cereal for breakfast and drank 5 cups of coffee.

I went for a 5 mile jog to clear my head.

I took a 5 minute shower to rinse off.

I dressed in the 5th suit I found in my closet.

I sat in my car for 5 minutes before starting it.

I drove to the racetrack and parked in the 5th stall in the 5th row.

I entered through the 5th admissions gate.

I bought 5 programs.

I went to the 5th betting window and bet \$555 on the 5th horse in the 5th race.

I went and sat in the 5th row of the bleachers making sure there were 5 people sitting on both sides of me.

I settled in and waited for the race to start.

"Well," said Jeff. "Did your horse win??"

I frowned at Jeff and said, "Stupid horse came in 5th."

Two engineers were standing at the base of a flagpole, looking at its top. A blonde walked by and asked what they were doing.

"We're supposed to find the height of this flagpole," said the first, "but we don't have a ladder."

The woman took a wrench from her purse, loosened a couple of bolts, and laid the pole down on the ground. Then she took a tape measure from her handbag, took a measurement and announced, "Twenty-one feet, six inches," and walked away.

The other engineer just shook his head. "Typical blonde! We ask for the height and she gives us the length!"

This morning at 7:45, I was in a long line at the grocery store; it was opening at 8 for seniors only. Just then a young man came from the parking lot and tried to cut in at the front of the line. Luckily, an old lady beat him back into the parking lot with her cane.

Nobody could believe it when he returned and tried to cut in again. And old guy punched him in the gut, kicked him to the ground and rolled him away.

Finally, he approached the line one last time. "Hey! If you don't let me unlock the door, nobody'll ever get in there!"

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