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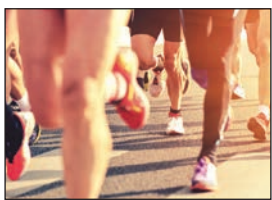
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Over 2,400 evacuees in Osceola schools

► Gateway, Osceola high schools seeing most impact since hurricane

By Rachel Christian
Staff Writer

Over 2,400 students have entered Osceola County District schools since Hurricane Maria struck Puerto Rico in September.

That's more students than the average Kissimmee middle school.

Gateway and Osceola High Schools have seen the largest influx, with 135 and 118 students respectively, district officials said.

Dana Schafer, public information officer for the district, said students have enrolled at nearly every school in the county, and each one is trying to find ways to accommodate them.

"It's a big number, but the students are spread out," Schafer said. "So we haven't seen a major strain on resources yet."

Osceola County first began counting evacuee students on Oct. 2, about 12 days after Hurricane

Maria hit Puerto Rico. At that point, 34 children had enrolled.

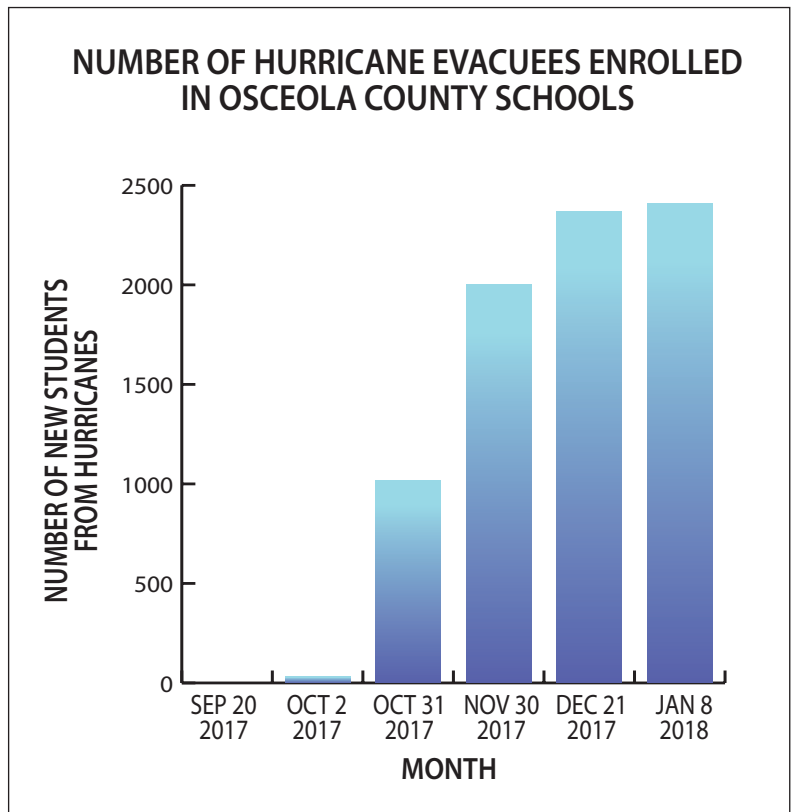
When faculty and students returned from winter break Jan. 8, that number had risen to 2,408.

The growing head count has impacted nearly every aspect of the school corporation, from transportation to language and social services.

Breaking the language barrier is something schools in Osceola County are familiar with, Schafer said. The district's extensive English as a second language (ESOL) program has traditionally served the area's large Hispanic community, and is now making the transition smoother for recently arrived Puerto Rican students, Schafer said.

The district, in addition to providing Spanish-English dictionaries to each evacuee child,

See **Schools**, Page 2.



AROUND TOWN

Baby New Year



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Osceola County couple Victor Cervantes and Karla Hurtado welcomed their new daughter, Lucia Cervantes-Hurtado, at Osceola Regional Medical Center on New Year's Day. Born at 4:43 a.m., Lucia was the first of six babies born on New Year's Day at the hospital. Osceola Regional offers comprehensive maternity care within its Baby Suites unit and Level II Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and is set to open its new Level III unit later this year.

FEMA extends temporary housing voucher program

By Charlie Reed
For the News-Gazette

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has extended emergency shelter funds for Puerto Ricans who have relocated to Florida in the wake of Hurricane Maria.

FEMA's Transitioning Shelter Assistance Program was set to expire next week. Some 300,000 Puerto Ricans

have come to Florida after fleeing the aftermath of Maria, which ravaged the island that already was reeling from a depressed economy.

Roughly 200,000 displaced Puerto Ricans have come to Central Florida, with Orange and Osceola counties absorbing most of the population, statistics showed.

The biggest problem? A lack of housing.

Osceola County for years has struggled to bring more affordable housing and high-wage jobs to the area. But it's reached critical mass with even more residents now looking for both.

From Gov. Rick Scott to Kissimmee Mayor Jose Alvarez, politicians and other officials are grappling with how to meet the needs in a region already bursting

See **FEMA**, Page 3.

Mobility fees for Osceola developers nearly double

By Rachel Christian
Staff Writer

Osceola County Commissioners revised an ordinance this week aimed at generating revenue for much-needed roads and transportation projects across the county.

During a Monday meeting, the commission voted to more than double the county's mobility fee, a cost developers pay for government agencies to improve roads and transit systems impacted by new private construction projects.

HNTS Corporation began a review of the county's mobility fee in November, and found it to be "significantly less" than what agencies like the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) charge for similar work in the open market, according to the ordinance.

"The fee increase is due to construction cost increases, which have risen over 200 percent," Mary Moskowitz, senior planner at the Osceola County Transportation Department, told commissioners Monday.

How much will fees increase? The fees will impact all types of real estate projects, and are assessed based on factors, such as how



Cheryl Grieb

much traffic an anticipated construction is likely to generate. Big projects like golf courses and hospitals will have much higher mobility fees than a townhouse.

Under the revised ordinance, fees for a single-family home will nearly double from \$4,585 to \$8,671, and fees for multifamily projects will go from \$3,203 per unit to \$6,058.

Discounted fees will be given to mixed-use and transient-housing projects; both of which are part of the county's comprehensive growth plan.

Background on mobility fees

The commission first adapted the mobility fee ordinance in 2015 to replace transportation impact fees, which commissioners suspended in 2011 and later repealed.

See **Fees**, Page 3.

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St. Cloud woman accused of killing mother on trial

By Charlie Reed
 For the News-Gazette

It's the stuff of a tragic true-crime drama.

What drove Amy Hawkins Day to allegedly kill her mother and then bury her in a flower bed in 2015?

That question and more are being asked at Day's murder trial, which began this week at the Osceola County Courthouse.

Day, 46, is charged with first-degree murder of her 79-year-old mother, Ora Hawkins. She also faces charges of kidnapping and aggravated abuse of an elderly person.

The trial began on Tuesday.

Day had a high-profile job with the Orlando Aviation Administration for nearly 20 years before becoming a 911 dispatcher for the Osceola County Sheriff's Office until being

fired for driving under the influence.

Day was also married to former five-term Osceola County Property Appraiser Bob Day. The couple divorced in 2011, about the same time Day went to live with her mother in St. Cloud.

According to police reports, Day's sister, Judy Schult, told detectives she last saw her mother on Sept. 19, 2015, when Hawkins stopped by to talk about problems she was having with Amy.

Hawkins was reported missing the next morning on Saturday, Sept. 20. Her body was found the next day under a mound of dirt covered by plastic flowers in the backyard of her home on Lakeshore Drive. By then, Day had told investigators that her mother had moved to Colorado with a woman named "Rose."



Amy Day

An autopsy indicated Hawkins died of head trauma and records show Day inconsistent statements to enforcement officers, who never located anyone named Rose who knew Hawkins.

Detectives also found video of Day driving her mother's car and using her mother's debit card locally when she said she was out of town, according to police reports.

For any updated information on the trial, visit www.aroundsosceola.com.

POLICE NEWS

Police seeking information about man who approached girl, 7

Kissimmee police officers are seeking information on a suspect who allegedly invited a 7-year-old girl into his car on Thursday.

At about 7:40 a.m., a 7-year-old girl was walking westbound on Mabbette Street to school at Thacker Avenue Elementary. According to a police report, the child was approached by an unknown white or light skinned Hispanic male in a white four door vehicle with tinted windows.

The male told the child

to "come into my car", which she politely replied, "No thank you" and continued to walk to school, a police press release stated. The male continued to follow the child until she began to run away from the area.

The male was described as being in his late 20's or early 30's with a beard and brown hair. Anyone with information about this male or the vehicle is urged to contact the Kissimmee Police Department at 407-846-3333, by email

at seeitsayit@kissimmee.org or Crimeline at 1-800-423-TIPS (8477). Calls made to Crimeline remain anonymous and can be eligible for cash rewards.

Bicyclist hit, killed in St. Cloud

A bicyclist was killed in St. Cloud on Wednesday after a vehicle hit him.

According to a Florida Highway Patrol report, Bobbi Cox, 26, of St. Cloud was driving a 2010 Ford
 See **Police**, Page 6.

SCHOOLS

Continued from Page 1

has hired additional ESOL teachers to keep up with demand.

"I wouldn't say we have a critical teacher shortage in that area," Schafer said. "But any teacher who can speak both languages is always beneficial to us."

Community partnerships have helped provide evacuee students with other resources, such as backpacks filled with school supplies and food for their first Thanksgiving in Florida.

Guidance counselors also are expected to play a major role in the transition process, especially for children still coping with a new home, culture and stress.

Schools are taking a proactive approach to student mental health by encouraging guidance counselors and social workers to reach out to evacuee students once they enroll, Schafer said.

"Just to check in with them, see how they are and if there's anything their family needs," she said. "Making a move under those circumstances can be extremely stressful for

anyone, especially a child."

Parents of newly arrived students may also find opportunity with the school district. School officials have been courting adult evacuees to fill much-needed positions like bus drivers, cafeteria workers, teachers and administration support staff.

"There is talent out there, and we are happy to utilize it," Schafer said.

A major concern for educators across Central Florida is the possibility of new students falling behind academically.

Particularly, officials worried about 11th and 12th graders, who faced different graduation requirements back in Puerto Rico.

A state memorandum sent to school districts Dec. 29 said an agreement with the Puerto Rican Department of Education had been reached, and high school juniors and seniors from the territory could now earn Puerto Rican diplomas at Florida public high schools.

Puerto Rico's graduation requirements are less stringent than Florida's, with fewer required credits

and no required grade-point average, according to the education department memo.

Evacuee students can still earn a Florida high school diploma, but older students who might have trouble meeting certain state's graduation requirements — such as required exams in English — can pick the new option.

"Making sure students are in the right classes is our number one priority," Schafer said. "We don't want them to get farther behind then they have to."

Leaders at both the federal and state level have said the exodus of Puerto Rican residents to Florida will likely continue. Schafer said this could mean future funding issues for Osceola County schools.

Despite possible long-term challenges, Schafer said the Osceola County School District would stick by its original message to evacuee students and their families.

"We will welcome them with open arms," she said. "If they come here, our doors are open."

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County hurricane debris contractors complete work

Contractors working to remove Hurricane Irma debris from Osceola County neighborhoods have completed the second – and final – phase of operations, officials said Friday.

“Hurricane Irma left behind quite a mess, and a timely, effective cleanup operation was key to making the community whole again,” said Commission Chairman Fred Hawkins, Jr. “I’m glad we were able to respond immediately after the storm. It’s a positive start to the New Year.”

Hawkins noted that debris was collected and handled faster than after the 2004 hurricanes.

“We applied the lessons learned from those three storms and the result was evident in our response to Irma,” he said.

While the work is deemed complete, anyone

with specific questions – or who feels they may have been missed – should call 407-742-7750.

When Irma passed through Osceola County in September, it left flooding and storm debris in its wake. But the county was the first government in the area to begin debris collection. The first pass began almost immediately with a focus on trees and vegetative debris. The contractor’s second pass concentrated on construction debris and large tree stumps.

More than 35,000 tons was picked up after Irma. That is more than double the amount of yard waste that’s brought to the County’s Bass Road processing site by curbside haulers and commercial landscapers. In a typical calendar year, that amount “only” totals about 13,000

tons, a county press release stated.

Plans call for all vegetative debris collected to be burned over the coming weeks at three sites around the county.

Regular yard waste is collected every Wednesday in unincorporated Osceola County. This includes grass clippings, tree branches, palm fronds, etc. (tied and bundled). Guidelines include:

A recommendation to use a garbage container for yard waste, no larger than 45 gallons.

Placing leaves, pine needles and yard clippings in bags/bundles/containers.

Cutting branches to four-foot lengths, no wider than four-inches in diameter and not over 50 pounds.

Collection is limited to 10 bags/bundles/containers per yard waste collection day.

FEES

Continued from Page 1

County Commissioner Cheryl Grieb said the recent fee hike is a way to make sure developers pay their fair share of improvement costs to roadways affected by their projects.

“I’m happy with the new ordinance, and only wish these changes had been made sooner,” she said.

Grieb said the commission suspended similar fees during the recession when market conditions were poor and attracting development was a priority. When mobility fees were implemented three years ago, the county kept them relatively low to help foster growth.

Now that the market is more stable, increasing mobility fees is one way commissioners hope to curb Osceola County’s rapid growth woes.

Collecting the money sooner

The revised ordinance

also allows the county’s transportation department to collect mobility fees sooner.

Previously, fees were due around the certificate of occupancy, or the end of the project. This schedule often puts a strain on local government, which was forced to make roadway and infrastructure improvements long before developers paid their share. Fees will now be collected during the earlier permitting stage, putting Osceola County in stride with other nearby municipalities like Orlando and Orange County.

Not a “cure all”

Despite an unanimous approval by the board, Commissioner Chairman Frank Hawkins Jr. cautioned fellow commissioners from thinking of the mobility fees as “the end-all to fixing our road problems.”

“I think that the mobility



Fred Hawkins

fees and the moratorium are just a small percentage of the work this board is going to have to do to figure out where we’re going in the future and how to overcome the hurdles we face,” Hawkins said.

Commissioner Brandon Arrington, who said the county is still facing a \$400 million infrastructure investment gap, even with the fee changes, echoed the sentiment.

Revised mobility fees go into effect on new construction projects effective May 1.

on getting some ESOL programs here,” she said.

The Puerto Rican chamber recently partnered with the Minority Business Development Agency in Orlando, a program under the U.S. Dept. of Commerce. The partnership will expand opportunities for the new Puerto Rican population, Ellis said.

Meanwhile, the extension of the FEMA temporary housing funds “will help thousands of recent Puerto Rican families relocating to Central Florida with temporary housing,” Soto said in a press release. “We will continue to work with the Puerto Rico government to get a direct lease program and make sure we provide adequate housing assistance for those Puerto Ricans still in need.”

To submit an application or get more information, go to www.fema.gov/transitional-shelter-assistance.

FEMA

Continued from Page 1

at the seams. Elected officials and social service agencies – from the mainland and Puerto Rico, a U.S. Commonwealth – also have been working to meet the short-term needs of the evacuees and devise long-term plans to accommodate the spike in growth.

State Rep. Darren Soto, D-Kissimmee, formed a bipartisan Task Force on Puerto Rico Arrivals last month, consisting of elected officials from Seminole, Osceola and Polk counties. The congressman has been leading efforts in Congress to provide federal assistance to help Puerto Rico recover and to help Puerto Ricans who have fled the island, where many are still without power and supplies are in high demand. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is preparing to deploy a barge with material requested months ago as rebuilding efforts continue.

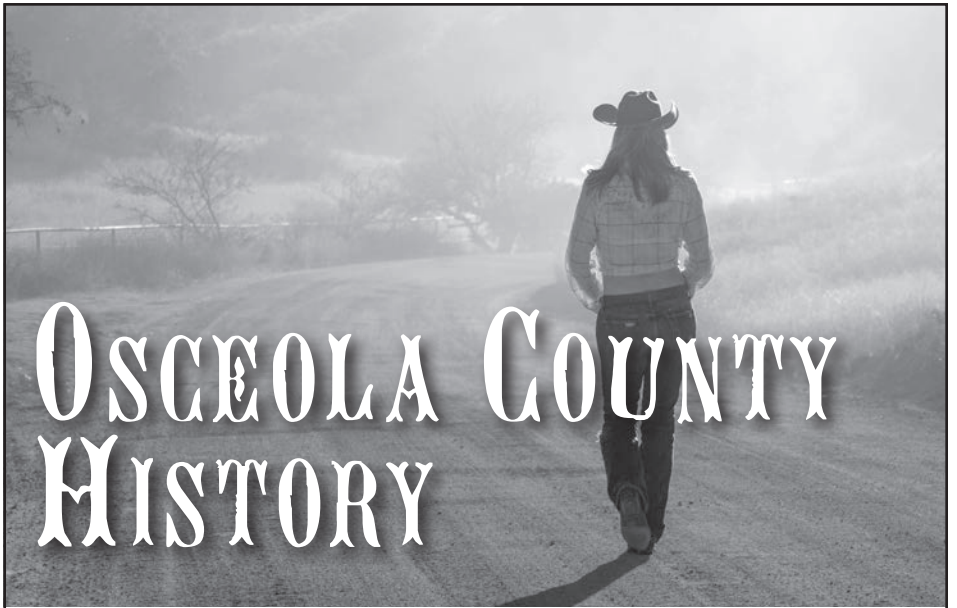
The governor of Puerto Rico hosted a town hall at the Kissimmee Civic Center Friday to discuss the humanitarian crisis, reconstruction efforts and economic policy on the island, among other topics.

Kissimmee resident Nancy Ellis, interim president of the Puerto Rican Chamber of Commerce of Central Florida, was among those in attendance.

The chamber, like many organizations throughout Central Florida, has been integral in fundraising efforts for Puerto Rico and assisting incoming Puerto Ricans find jobs and open their businesses here in Florida.

Puerto Rican culture is part of the social fabric of Osceola County, but adjusting to life in Florida is tough for many, especially children, said Ellis.

“Some kids are having trouble. We’re working



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The Osceola County Solid Waste Department will observe the following holiday schedule:

On Monday, January 15, 2018 (Martin Luther King Day)
The administrative offices and the Bass Road Recycle Center will be closed.

Curbside garbage and recycle collection will run as normally scheduled.

HABRÁ SERVICIOS DE RECOLECCIÓN DE BASURA Y RECICLAJE

El Departamento de desperdicios solidos observara el horario para el siguiente dia de fiesta:

Lunes 15 de enero, 2018 (Dia de Martin Luther King)
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Sin embargo, sus servicios de recolección de basura y reciclaje no serán interrumpido.

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VIEWPOINT

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GUEST EDITORIAL

The man who saved civilization

By Rich Lowry

This year's best movie about a spirited band of resisters fighting an empire of evil isn't the latest entry in the "Star Wars" franchise, but "Darkest Hour," an extraordinarily deft and moving depiction of the outset of Winston Churchill's prime ministership during World War II.

Cabinet meetings and political intrigue aren't the most natural cinematic material, although the underlying event in "Darkest Hour" is one of the most dramatic in modern history: One man standing defiant before the onslaught of an enemy army, rallying his nation with his willpower and words.

Discounting for Hollywood embellishments, the movie is worthy of this story, which is high praise indeed. In particular, Gary Oldman's portrayal of Churchill is so compelling that the Academy Award for best actor should be signed, sealed and delivered to him right now.

Upon taking power, Churchill faced disaster on every front in the war, yet bucked internal political pressure to explore a deal with Adolf Hitler. In his marvelous history of this crucial interlude, "Five Days in London: May 1940," the great historian John Lukacs writes, "Then and there he saved Britain and Europe, and Western civilization."

In 1937, Churchill's reputation had been at a low ebb, but he recovered on the strength of his acuteness about Hitler.

When Neville Chamberlain returned from Munich, Churchill gave a speech in the House of Commons declaring "we have sustained a total and unmitigated defeat." Britain's position slid downward from there.

The same day that Churchill became prime minister, Hitler's army invaded Western Europe in earnest, sweeping all before it and eventually trapping the British at Dunkirk.

"Upon taking power, Churchill faced disaster on every front in the war, yet bucked internal political pressure to explore a deal with Adolf Hitler."

Given the circumstances, the desire of Viscount Halifax, Churchill's inherited foreign secretary, to explore peace terms wasn't unreasonable, just profoundly wrong.

Churchill opposed any deal. He was convinced, Lukacs notes, "that such a settlement, under any conditions, could not be counter-balanced by a maintenance, let alone a guarantee, of British liberty and independence." Churchill bent a little toward Halifax when he initially felt it politically necessary, but ground him down and ultimately outmaneuvered him.

In a key episode, Churchill went to the larger Cabinet and won overwhelming approval for his stalwartness. Here, he made his famous statement, "We shall go and we shall fight it out, here or elsewhere, and if at last the long story is to end, it were better it should end, not through surrender, but only when we are rolling senseless on the ground."

After the war, Churchill wrote of the reaction of his colleagues: "Quite a number seemed to jump up from the table and came running to my chair, shouting and patting me on the back. There is no doubt had I at this juncture faltered at all in leading the nation, I should have been hurled out of office."

He didn't falter. Churchill tapped into and built up the resolve of the British people. "There was a white glow," he wrote later, "overpowering, sublime, which ran through our island from end to end."

The so-called Great Man theory of history might be overly simplistic, but history indisputably has its great men. "Darkest Hour" does justice to one of them.


Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.



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City closing Lakeshore Boulevard to finish park project

The city of Kissimmee will close a section of Lakeshore Boulevard for the final phase of construction on the Kissimmee Lakefront Park Redevelopment Project starting Monday, Jan. 29.

The improvement project focuses on Lakeshore Boulevard and Brinson Park, bringing road closures between Monument Avenue and Neptune Road for about 18 months. Motorists travelling in either direction on Neptune Road can use Tohopekaliga Avenue to travel west. Motorists on Neptune Road can also travel east through Lawrence Silas Boulevard, to access the newly widened East Oak Street. Tohopekaliga Avenue is scheduled to open on Tuesday, Jan. 16.

During the construction phase, Kissimmee Lakefront Park guests will not be able to park on Lakeshore Boulevard or Monument Avenue. Residents and visitors should utilize the Kissimmee Intermodal




FILE PHOTO

See **Park**, Page 6.

The city of Kissimmee will start the final phase of construction for the Kissimmee Lakefront Park Redevelopment Project Monday, Jan. 29.

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AAA: 83 percent of Floridians plan to travel in 2018

With the holidays in the rear-view mirror, Floridians are beginning to make travel plans for 2018.

A new AAA Consumer Pulse survey shows that 83 percent of Floridians plan to take at least one vacation of three days or more this year, requiring overnight accommodations. While that would be three percentage points lower than those who traveled last year, there are still 10 percent of travelers who are still undecided about this year's plans.

"Strong economic growth led to a record number of holiday travelers last year, and we expect that momentum to carry into 2018," said Vicky Evans, assistant vice president of Travel Sales Development, AAA - The Auto Club Group. "Some of the harsh winter weather we have

experienced could be the catalyst that drives more travelers to seek warm weather destinations in the coming months.

"Looking ahead at trends this year, travel to Europe looks strong, thanks to a favorable exchange rate for Americans. Also, domestic travel continues to grow. Destinations like Florida and California are always popular. Meanwhile, Hawaii and Alaska are experiencing more advanced bookings than what we normally see this time of year."

Spring break

Although January and February are usually slower months for travel, travel activity begins to pick up in March for spring break. More than half (55 percent) of travelers will take a spring break vacation of 3 days or more. That number is even

larger among Millennials (80 percent).

"Spring Break has a reputation of being a time for students to go party with friends," Evans continued. "While that is certainly true, more than half of millennials (61 percent) say they will travel with family. This is the time of year when cruises and beach hotels are booked solid, and things can get costly as a result. So spring travelers should make their plans now, to get the best options and price."

Summer travel

Traveling during the summer is even more popular than spring. More than three-quarters (79 percent) of Floridians will take at least one summer vacation (requiring overnight accommodations),

sometime between the Memorial and Labor Day holidays.

"Booking a vacation during the summer is similar to spring, in that beach destinations and cruises remain popular," Evans said. "However, travelers should not forget about hurricane season, and consider purchasing travel insurance. Certain coverages can help offset non-reimbursable expenses. One of the requirements is that you purchase the policy before a storm is named."

Most travelers undeterred by terrorism

AAA's survey revealed that only 5 percent of Floridians feel unsafe traveling and would rather stay close to home, amid concerns over terrorism and political unrest. While the overwhelming majority of Floridians would still travel, 65 percent would take certain precautions like maintain a heightened sense of awareness (42 percent), avoid international travel

(13 percent), and stay away from large crowds/events (10 percent). Fourteen percent of those surveyed say they simply do not travel enough for terrorism to be a concern.

"Acts of terrorism are certainly unpredictable, but travel insurance is one form of protection," Evans said. "Most travel insurance providers allow customers to cancel their trip if an act of terrorism occurred at their destination within 30 days of their scheduled arrival. Customers could then receive payment to offset their non-refundable trip costs. It's important to note that this type of coverage does not extend to Travel Warnings issued by the U.S. State Department."

Tips for planning your 2018 vacation

Book early - Booking early gives you both the luxury of selecting the best cruise cabin or preferred seat on your flight, at a more competitive rate. As hotels, cruises, and flights fill-up, prices usually rise due to lower availability.

Use a travel agent - Not only can they advise you on where to go and what to do when you get there, but also hook you up with exclusive upgrades, find competitive pricing, and tell you what you need to know about your destination.

Consider travel insurance: When the unexpected happens, travel insurance can be your best friend.

Hurricanes, flight cancellations, even illness while overseas could cost you hundreds or thousands of dollars. While travel insurance can vary in both coverage and price, you can find policies that reimburse you for health emergencies and/or out-of-pocket expenses due to a delayed/cancelled flight. Know your destination: Are you traveling abroad? Can you bring your pet?

Refer to the U.S. Department of State to find information regarding visa requirements, what you can bring, and detailed travel alerts and warnings.

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Move Over law awareness month

AAA - The Auto Club Group is reminding motorists to Slow Down, Move Over. The law requires passing motorists to give adequate space to law enforcement, tow truck drivers, utility service vehicles and other first responders who are stopped on the side of the road.

"This law is in place to protect the ones who protect us," said Montrae Waiters, spokeswoman for AAA - The Auto Club Group. "Not focusing on the road puts your life and others at risk. If you are caught violating the "Move Over" law, you could be issued a ticket which could result in a fine, as well as, three points on your driver's license."

According to the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV), there were 204 crashes and 68 injuries reported as a result of a motorist failing to move over in 2016. Law enforcement officials issued more than 5,000 citations to drivers who failed to move over.

AAA recommends the following driving tips while driving on Florida's roadways:

► Use common sense: Watch for situations where emergency vehicles, tow vehicles, sanitation and utility service vehicles are pulled off on the side of the road.

► Two-lane roadway: When approaching an

emergency vehicle with lights flashing parked on the side of a two-lane road, drivers must slow down to 20 mph below the posted speed limit and approach with caution, unless otherwise directed by an emergency worker on the scene.

► Multi-lane roadway: Slow down when you see the flashing lights of an emergency vehicle on the roadside, and - if you can - move over into an adjacent lane. If you cannot change lanes, reduce your speed to 20 mph below the posted speed limit.

► Stay alert: Pay attention to changes in traffic patterns and speed limits.

POLICE

Continued from Page 2

vehicle southbound on Canoe Creek Road, near Fanny Bass Road, at about 8:50 p.m.

A man riding a bicycle was in front of her, when the vehicle hit him from behind, according to the report.

The rider was ejected from the bicycle and pronounced dead on scene. He was not identified, as his family had not been notified.

Neither Cox nor her passenger was injured.

The crash remains under investigation.

Psychotherapist arrested for battery on patient

The Kissimmee Police Department arrested a psychotherapist on Jan. 5 after he was accused of inappropriately touching a patient.

On Dec. 27, an adult victim contacted the Kissimmee Police Department alleging she was the victim of a battery. The victim stated that over the past three months she met for therapy sessions with Dr. Gerardo James DeJesus, at Mindful Behavioral Healthcare, located at 717

E. Oak St., Kissimmee.

During several sessions, there were multiple instances when DeJesus touched the victim in an unwanted manner, a police report stated.

On Jan. 5, an arrest warrant was signed charging DeJesus with three counts of battery. DeJesus was arrested and transported to the Osceola County Jail.

The Kissimmee Police Department is urging any other potential victims to call 407-846-3333 or come to the Kissimmee Police Department 8 N. Stewart Ave., Kissimmee.

PARK

Continued from Page 5

Center Parking Garage behind the Kissimmee Civic Center, city officials said.

According to a city press release, the project will create a larger, linear park space between the roadway and the lake to allow for additional green space, new park benches,

and larger pedestrian friendly sidewalks. In addition to Lakeshore Boulevard becoming a bricked road, it will receive drainage improvements, new landscaping and energy efficient LED street lighting.

The intersection at Lakeshore Boulevard and

Neptune Road will receive a new traffic signal and pedestrian crossings to make it safer.

This area will be a gateway into the city and the Kissimmee lakefront area.

For more information about the city of Kissimmee visit, www.kissimmee.org.

SPORTS



Local Knight

St. Cloud's Tyler Williams is at UCF.

Page 8.

Local & National Sports • Sports Commentary



CONTACT
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OSCEOLA NEWS-GAZETTE SPORTS EDITOR

EMAIL: KJACKSON@OSCEOLANEWSGAZETTE.COM

THE SPORTS COLUMN

All varsity action, girls or guys, can be exciting

► They all deserve the fans' support

So after 10 weeks as The People's Sports Editor, I'm finally more mobile and have been getting out and seeing some local teams play.

KEN JACKSON
Sports Editor



Among the area's high school teams, here's my tally of who I've seen so far: two girls soccer teams, four girls basketball teams, four boys basketball teams and nearly all of the county wrestling programs at the Orange Belt Conference championships last month. I'll be adding to that tally quickly when district and regional soccer and basketball playoffs begin in a couple weeks.

I was treated to a fine girls basketball game last Friday. St. Cloud and Celebration, two fundamentally-sound and well-coached teams, swung the momentum back and forth, and the Storm pulled it out by two points thanks to sinking a three-point shot with seconds left.

Hours later, I got a text from St. Cloud Coach Chad Ansbuagh: "Thanks for coming out and covering our girls teams."

He went out of his way to thank me just for that, and didn't have to.

Girls, boys, whatever — they're all varsity athletes to me, and I've always wished that schools' fans beyond the ladies' families understood how hard and well they play.

Physical differences mean the same sports are played a little differently — and it's not a bad thing. For example, where guys basketball teams can and do play at or above the rim, the ladies play closer to the floor, so their fundamentals of being in the right position have to be spot on.

Also, that game Friday? One hour and twenty minutes long. The girls games keep their rhythm and momentum better, in general, than the more physical guys games.

Same with soccer. The guys want to go through the defense. The girls go around it, then loft a pass back into the middle. It's poetry in motion when it goes right.

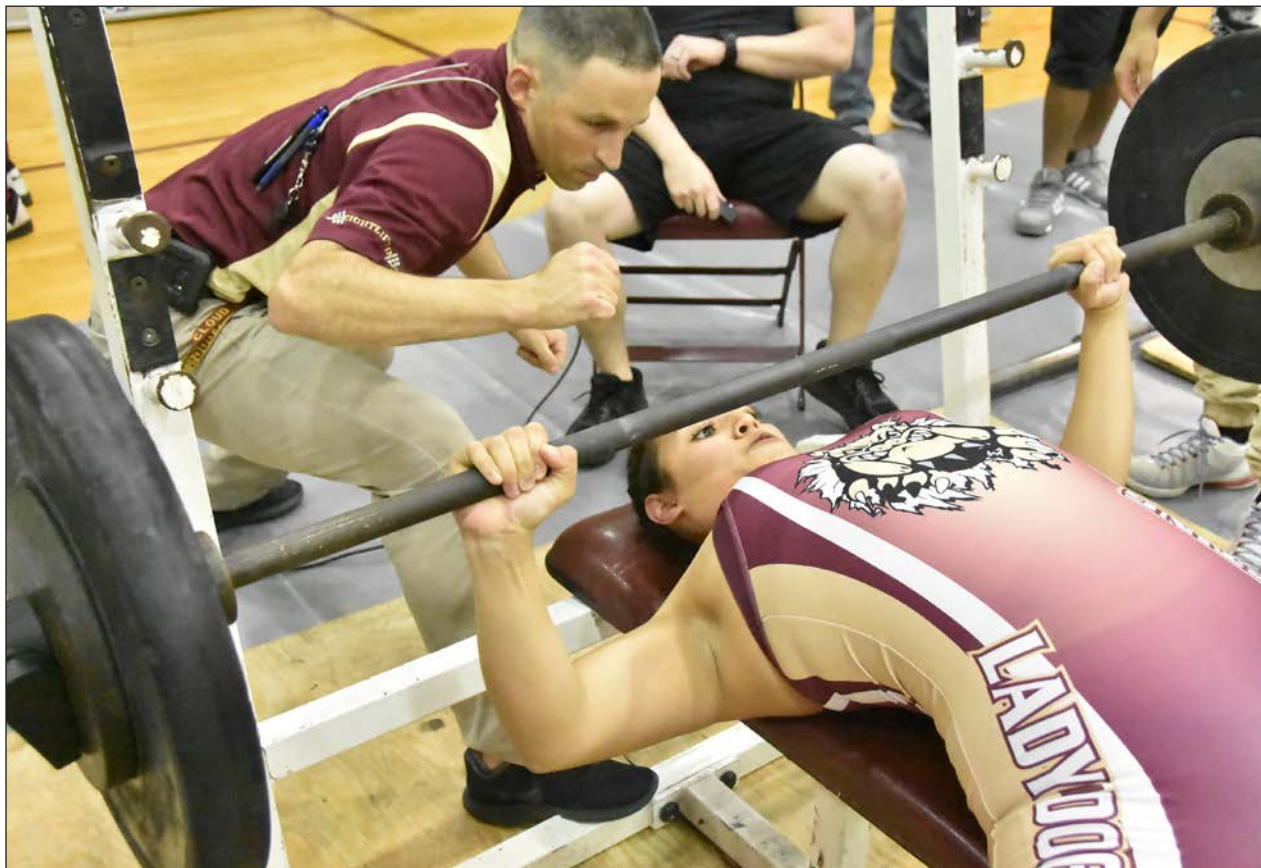
For whatever sport I'm going to see, and who I'm going to see play it, I walk in in the mood to see the way it's going to be played. I encourage everyone to share my enthusiasm for how our young athletes get after it and support all the girls and the guys who suit up for their schools ...

... My only take from Monday night's college football game — is there a more fun

See **Column**, Page 9.

GIRLS DISTRICT WEIGHTLIFTING

First step back to state



NEWS-GAZETTE PHOTO/MARTY MADDOCK

St. Cloud's Yohali Aldana works to complete a bench press attempt at Wednesday's District 2A-12 championship as Bulldog Coach Cory Aun looks on. She won the 183-pound district title and qualified along with over a dozen other lifters for the Region 6 meet in Vero Beach on Jan. 20. The conference meet is Jan. 24 and the state meet is Feb. 2-3 in Panama City.

St. Cloud wins district; next up is Jan. 20 regional meet

By **Ken Jackson**
Sports Editor

The march back to the state girls weightlifting meet began Wednesday with the District 2A-11 event at St. Cloud High.

The Bulldogs, looking for a repeat of last year, when they sent seven lifters to state, had qualifiers for the next round, the Region 6 meet next Saturday in Vero Beach, in every weight class, and tallied 71 points to win the district title.

The meet, which had

every county school minus Poinciana (which competed in District A-11 in Frostproof Wednesday), was much like a soft preview of the Jan. 24 Orange Belt Conference event, where St. Cloud will be looking for its seventh straight conference title.

Liberty (53), trying to eclipse the three lifters it sent to state last season, pushed St. Cloud all evening and was second, scoring points in nine of the 10 weight classes. The rest of the field included Osceola (31), Harmony (28),

Freedom (23), Lake Nona (10), Cypress Creek (3) and Celebration (1).

The top six in each weight class punched a ticket to Vero Beach.

The meet had a handful of highlights. St. Cloud's Maria Sandoval, a rookie lifter, was one of six first-year lifters to qualify for regionals by winning the district championship with a 235-pound total (115 bench, 120 clean and jerk). And unlimited lifter Essence Tornabene rocked the gym when she broke

her own school record with a 200-pound clean on the way to a 380-pound total and a district title.

Yohali Aldana (155-160—315) also won a district title for St. Cloud.

Osceola claimed two titles with Virginie Beljour (101 pounds, 130-140—270) and Jaeda Ray (129, 125-145—270), and Liberty got two from Kelly Benson (119, 105-135—240) and Destiny Washington (150-140—290). Harmony's Madison Ewen

See **Weights**, Page 9.

THE REEL DEAL

2018 tournament schedule begins with tragedy

The First Fishing League Worldwide's (FLW) Costa Series Tournament of the season got off to a tragic start Jan. 4 on Lake Okeechobee. Hundreds of anglers launched out of Scott Driver Park on Day 1 of the competition and it wasn't until check-in and weigh-in late in the afternoon that it was discovered one boat with two anglers didn't return. Lake Okeechobee is a 750-square mile lake and on that day the water temperatures were in the mid 50's with winds of 15 to 20 mph. The lake in weather like this is almost like being in the ocean — not a good match for the average bass boat.

Once realized the boaters didn't return at their required time, fellow competitors ventured back out in search of the two. Early that morning hazardous conditions caused co-angler Nicolas "Nik" Kayler, 38, from Apopka, Florida to get tossed out

of the boat. Preliminary Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation say Kayler was thrown from the boat after it struck a wave.

Unfortunately, Kayler's body was found Wednesday morning, recovered from the lake.

Boat owner Bill Kisiah, 51, of New Orleans, tried to rescue Kayler, but suspected engine damage and water conditions hampered his efforts. Around 11:30 that night Kisiah was safely located with his boat that had drifted into some rocks. Kisiah was suffering from hypothermia and was taken to a local hospital and released the next evening.

The FWC and a band of volunteers searched through the night and all of the next day for the missing angler. There were all kinds of members of the fishing community coming together volunteering their time, boats, resources to help search hoping and praying he was stranded in

the grass line that borders the massive lake. But as each hour and day and cold night passed there was no sign of Kayler. The family offered a reward for the return of their loved one.

The remaining two days of the tournament were cancelled as the search efforts took on importance. Help for search teams and boats were being called for on social media and the news channels. It was heart breaking and amazing to see the fishing community put competing aside to look for one of their own.

Nik Kayler's half brother, Anthony Llanos, is a former water survival instructor for the U.S. Marines and was hopeful that Kayler was practicing the skills he learned as he had some survival training himself.

A former specialist on a Black Hawk helicopter, Army Veteran Kayler, whose missions included a tour of Iraq in 2003,

was no stranger to the sport of competitive fishing or the FLW Circuit. He had fished over 60 events, had 13 top-10 finishes and one career tournament win.

"Please keep his family and friends in your thoughts and prayers during this difficult time and as they seek closure to this unfortunate accident," said an Anglers Channel Facebook page set up to help in the search before the body was found.

A GoFundMe campaign, which had already raised over \$65,000 by noontime Thursday, has been established benefiting Nik's wife, Kelly, and daughter, Caralee. To make a contribution, visit GoFundMe.com/Nik-Kayler.

Have a safe weekend if on the water — now more important than just a saying — and tight lines friends.

CINDY JOINT
The Reel Deal



UPCOMING GAMES

BOYS BASKETBALL

Saturday
Gateway in Wildwood tourney

Thursday
Ridge at Gateway, 7 p.m.
Harmony at St. Cloud, 7 p.m.

Friday
G. Jenkins at Gateway
7:30 p.m.

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Tuesday
Osceola at City of Life, 7 p.m.
St. Cloud at Viera, 7 p.m.

Friday
Melbourne at St. Cloud, 7 p.m.

GIRLS SOCCER

Tuesday
Osceola at University, 7 p.m.
Harmony at Dr. Phillips, 7 p.m.

Thursday
Osceola at Olympia, 7 p.m.

SPORTS

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with all the news from Pyeongchang

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Breaking news
Photo galleries
Events Schedule
Behind-the-scenes blog
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St. Cloud's Williams part of UCF's historic 13-0 football season

By Ken Jackson
Sports Editor

When it comes to college football, Osceola County has long been a majority of Gator Country.

But UCF, with its first-ever undefeated season that ended Jan. 1 with a 34-27 win over favored Auburn, another Southeastern Conference opponent, gave fans down here one county south of campus something to cheer for. And it wasn't just geography that gave the county a link to the Knights' incredible season.

Two players from here, Tyler Williams from St. Cloud and Tristan Reeves of Harmony, were members of that UCF team. The Knights ended the season ranked sixth in the Associated Press poll, the highest in school history, and garnered four first-place votes from the 51 pollsters and, because Auburn had beaten both Alabama and Georgia, who played for the College Football Playoff title as chosen by a committee, Athletic Director Danny White gave the blessing to fans to call the team a national champion.

The News-Gazette caught up with Williams this week, and will catch up with Reeves soon.

Williams signed to play in Orlando last February as a preferred walk-on. He projected as a linebacker after a 100-tackle season for the St. Cloud Bulldogs in 2016.

Much the rest of the team and the season, Williams' role and outlook changed entering the fall, when he joined a talented group of tight ends. He redshirted the season and worked with the scout team, the opposition in practice tasked with looking like each week's opponent. By the end of the year, he said, he'd earned practice reps with the starting unit, an offense that ended the season leading the NCAA Football Bowl Subdivision in points per game (46).

"I was open to the change, just doing whatever would benefit the program the most," he said.

As a redshirted player, he worked hard during the year in practice, then became a



SUBMITTED PHOTO

St. Cloud's Tyler Williams, shown at the Peach Bowl in Atlanta, was a redshirt tight end for UCF this season. The Knights finished 13-0 and ranked 6th in the AP.

spectator with a great view on game day.

"It was definitely an adjustment from being a big part of the St. Cloud team to redshirting," he said. "It was humbling, but I understood my role, and I saw a lot of things that were eye-opening that really helped me. I developed patience that's turned into momentum for next season and trying to earn a spot."

A season that started with improvisation — two games were called off because of Hurricane Irma — turned into perfection that became exhausting near the end, as the revised schedule meant the team played 11 straight weeks, during which they endured the speculation that Coach Scott Frost would become Nebraska's head coach and wear both Cornhusker and Knight hats through the end of the season, whenever it would come.

The season stretched into the American Athletic Conference championship game. Williams called the 62-55 double-overtime victory the highlight of the season.

"It was very exciting, but very tiring, we had more meetings, more practices and more preparation than anybody else in our conference," he said. "The result showed the hard work everybody in the program had put in."

That win put UCF in the Peach Bowl and on the national stage on New Year's

Day, playing right before the playoff games. Williams said the Knights prepared for it like a team that wanted to show it had earned more respect than given by the college football landscape.

"We practiced and prepared with a chip on our shoulders," he said. "We worked liked we had something to prove. Yes, there was the coaching situation, but we were determined not to let that mess with our heads."

"The team was really focused, and we came out, attacked and proved people wrong."

Williams said he got to be part of a wild sideline celebration that ignited when the defense intercepted Auburn quarterback Jared Stidham with less than a minute left in the game to seal it.

"The sideline was nuts, water bottles went everywhere," Williams said. "I'll take that moment with me the rest of my life, no matter what my football career holds."

As for next year, new UCF Coach Josh Heupel hired on John Cooper to coach UCF's tight ends, and Williams said Cooper wants him to stay with that group. It's a position where Williams' chances to earn playing time are good; junior starter Jordan Akins declared for the NFL Draft, and seniors Jordan Franks and Michael Colubalie graduate.

"It's going to be a young position, and competition is going to be high," he said.



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SPORTS

WEIGHTS

Continued from Page 7.

(199, 155-125—280) was also a district champ.

"I told the girls their job is top 6 and once that has been done I wanted them to try and accumulate as many points as possible for the team score," St. Cloud Coach Corey Aun said. "I was very proud of the girls that we scored points in every single weight class against some very good lifters. We lost to Liberty at the very beginning of the season and they have been amazingly tough all year. We have faced them almost a dozen times in meets this season. (Coach) Rob Weilert has done an absolutely fantastic job with those girls. Very few realize the amount of preparation and effort it takes to get these lifters to where they are now. I think we have six or eight girls from our district who will be on the



NEWS-GAZETTE PHOTO/MARTIN MADDOCK

Liberty's Kelly Benson cleaned 135 pounds on the way to winning the 119-pound District 2A-12 title Wednesday at St. Cloud High School.

medal podium at the state meet in Panama City in February."

Liberty advanced 14 of 17 lifters, and Weilert called it "A good day."

"I knew we would need some breaks to take the

team title, but I'm proud of how the girls battled and fought for points," he said. "Our team is pretty young, 12 girls were lifting at the district meet for the first time. So now we will be turning our attention

to a really tough regional competition. I'm excited to see what we can do and if we can qualify girls for the state meet while also getting ready to compete for an OBC title on the 24th."

COLUMN

Continued from Page 7.

team to watch play than Desperate Alabama? ...

... This may shock many of the people who read this and know me well ... but I have not, and don't plan to, bought a UCF National Champion t-shirt.

I do have a commemorative "Undeclared 2017" shirt on the way, thought.

They're not the national champions. They didn't play for it, although they were definitely one of the best four teams and should have had the chance. I'm smart enough to know this, unlike a segment of UCF's young, prone-to-hype and easily-enthused fan base. Some are loudly complaining that many people won't recognize their team as the

champs, and I apologize that you can't tune them out.

People can argue whether UCF should have been ranked higher, or involved in ESPN's made-for-TV playoff invitational. But there's a few facts that nobody can argue about:

The Knights were the only team to go undefeated through a schedule that a major hurricane interfered with.

The final three acts to do so involved beating a ranked arch-rival, a ranked division champion in the conference title game and the team that beat Alabama and Georgia.

When it was all done, four Associated Press college football poll voters ranked UCF as their national champion.

You can't ignore what UCF accomplished, and if they get off to another great start in 2018 under new Head Coach Josh Heupel and run the unbeaten mark up past 20 games, more facts will become impossible to ignore ...

... I said last week was it for the season ... but, oh, to heck with it. Here's one more NFL playoffs set of *Picks of the Weak*:

Atlanta (-3) at Philadelphia: Eagles, the top NFC seed, getting no respect with Carson Wentz out. That's because, in his last two games, backup Nick Foles looked less like Wentz and more like Rodney Dangerfield. **Black Birds by 4**, and I don't have to like it.

Tennessee at New England (-13): I think calendars up around *Baaahstin* and *Aaah't'fird* actually read "Tom-uary" this time of year. **Pats by 10**.

Jacksonville at Pittsburgh (-7.5): When they met in October, the Jags' D had five interceptions. No, Blake Bortles wasn't playing for both teams. **Steelers by just 3**, and that's with just one or two picks.

New Orleans at Minnesota (-4): Drew Brees has played in more Super Bowls — one — than Vikings under-respected QB Case Keenum has had playoff starts. He might as well be Dangerfield. **Saints by 4 in No Respect Upset Special**.

SPORTS BRIEFS

▶ St. Cloud Soccer girls festival

The St. Cloud Soccer Club will hold a free Festival Style Camp for Girls ages 5 to 13 on Saturday, Jan. 13 at Stephanie Rothstein Park from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. The day will include fun games and competitions and is open to experienced and beginning players. The day will also feature a bounce house, snacks and drinks for all. Parents of players ages 5-8 are asked to stay onsite. Registration is available at stcloudsoccer.org. For information email Mike Alfors at malfers1713@gmail.com or call 503-548-3762.

▶ Osceola School District Legacy Program

The School District of Osceola County has launched a Legacy Club to promote greater community engagement with schools. Individuals ages 60-64 will receive to \$2 off admission to any district athletic, musical, arts, or

theater performances. Those over 65 will receive to free admission. To apply go online to osceolaschools.net/legacyclub.

▶ Tampa Bay Buccaneers taking 2018 season ticket deposits

Fans can witness all the cannon fire that the Tampa Bay Buccaneers hope to bring to fans in the 2018 National Football League season by placing a deposit for season tickets. Among things to look forward to in 2018 include a remodel to the East Stadium Club this offseason. Perks and benefits that come with Buccaneers Membership include behind the scenes tours, exclusive autograph opportunities and VIP experiences. Deposits are \$50 for upper bowl seating, \$100 for lower bowl and \$200 for Stadium Club. To secure seats and get other ticket package information, call 813-998-3871 or email centralflorida@buccaneers.nfl.com.

▶ Orlando Solar Bears hockey

The Orlando Solar Bears, the ECHL affiliate of the NHL's Toronto Maple Leafs and AHL's Toronto Marlies, plays the rival Florida Everblades at the Amway Center on Jan. 20 (7 p.m. start) and 21 (1:30 p.m. face off).

▶ Women in Sports Day

Join the Women's Sports Foundation in celebrating the 32nd anniversary of National Girls & Women in Sports Day on Feb. 7. This national observance celebrates the extraordinary achievements of women and girls in sports and is celebrated in communities across all 50 states. Together, with coalition partners National Women's Law Center, President's Council for Fitness, Sports & Nutrition and Girls, Inc., and dozens of stakeholders, the group will unveil the 2018 NGWSD logo and theme: PLAY FAIR, PLAY IX. Our theme recognizes the

ongoing effort towards equality and access for girls and women in sports. Visit www.NGWSD.org for more information and to find out about local events or to plan and register an event in the community.

▶ Harmony wrestling

The Harmony Longhorn wrestling club meets Tuesdays and Thursdays from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the Harmony High School Wrestling room. Athletes ages K-8 are invited to participate. Beginners are welcome.

▶ SCAT swimming

The St. Cloud Aquatic Team, a U.S. Swimming affiliate, welcomes swimmers ages 5-and-over who have experience swimming the length of the pool with a crawl stroke. All swimmers will participate in a training program focused on technique, endurance and speed. For more information, visit www.scatl.org or call 407-891-3436.

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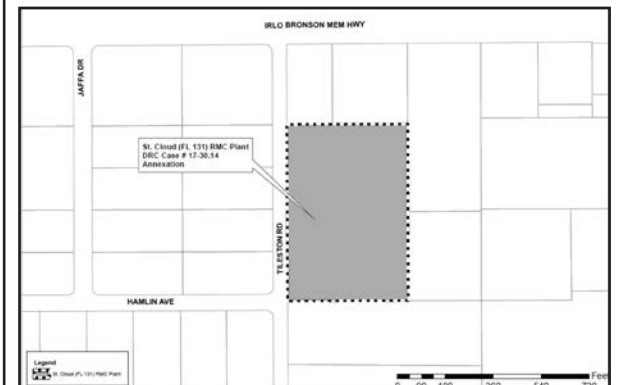
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NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
ORDINANCE NO. 2018-07

Notice is hereby given that the City Council of the City of St. Cloud, Florida, at a meeting to be held on January 25, 2018, in their Chamber at City Hall, 1300 9th Street, St. Cloud, Florida at 6:30 p.m., will consider enactment of Ordinance No. 2018-07 entitled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ST. CLOUD, FLORIDA, TO ANNEX INTO THE CITY OF ST. CLOUD APPROXIMATELY 5.71 ACRES, KNOWN AS ST. CLOUD (FL 131) RMC PLANT, LOCATED APPROXIMATELY 300 FEET SOUTH OF U.S. 192 AND EAST OF TILESTON ROAD AT 1501 TILESTON ROAD; IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE VOLUNTARY ANNEXATION PROVISIONS OF CHAPTER 171.044, FLORIDA STATUTES.



Interested parties may appear at the meeting at which time this ORDINANCE is to be considered and shall be heard with respect to the proposed ORDINANCE at the Public Hearing thereon. The complete legal description by metes and bounds and the ORDINANCE in its entirety can be reviewed at the City Clerk's office between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. and between 2:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

If a person decides to appeal any decision made by the Committee/Board, with respect to any matter considered at such hearing/meeting, such person will need a record of the proceedings and that, for this purpose, such person may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based, and which record is not provided by the City of St. Cloud. (FS 286.0105)

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, persons needing assistance to participate in any of these proceedings should contact the Secretary/Clerk of the Committee/Board (listed below), prior to the meeting. (FS 286.26)

Linda P. Jaworski, City Clerk
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OSCEOLA NEWS-GAZETTE

THE DAILY PLANNER

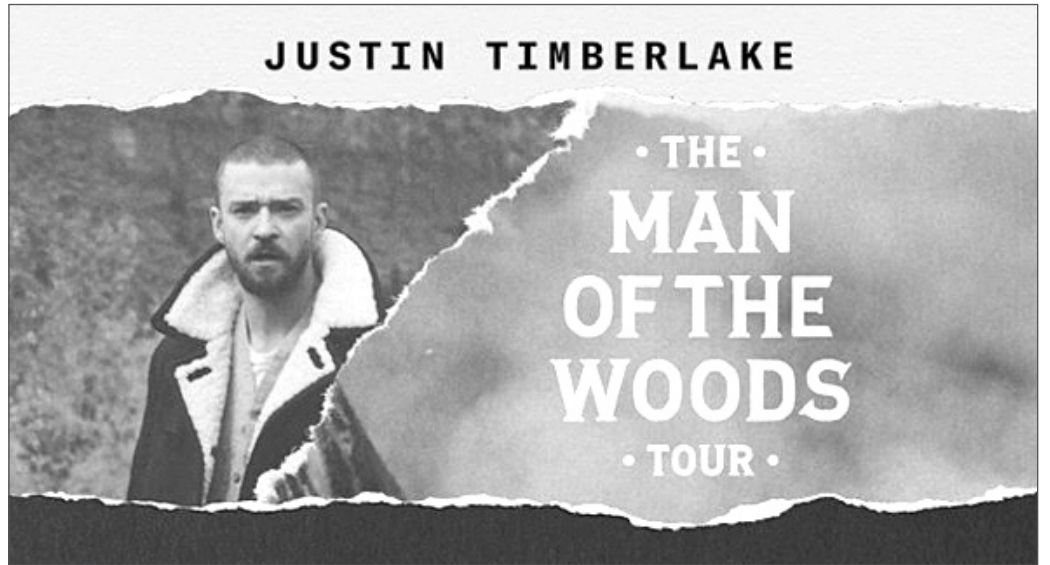
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Weekly and Monthly Events

Global superstar Justin Timberlake will bring his Man of the Woods Tour to Central Florida and the Amway Center, Monday, May 14. American Express Card Members may purchase tickets before the general public through a series of pre-sale opportunities. For tour dates on sale to the general public on Monday, Jan. 29, the American Express pre-sale begins Wednesday, Jan. 24 at 10 a.m. through Sunday, Jan. 28 at 5 p.m. EST. For complete The Man of the Woods Tour VIP packages information or to purchase, visit www.VIP.justintimberlake.com. The Man of the Woods Tour is named after Timberlake's forthcoming album, "Man of the Woods," set for release on Friday, Feb. 2.

WHAT Justin Timberlake
WHERE Amway Center
WHEN Monday, May 14
COST \$49.50 - \$250

VIP PACKAGES INFORMATION www.VIP.justintimberlake.com



DAILY SATURDAY 01-13



DARK SKY FESTIVAL

When the Harmony Dark Sky Festival and Star Party returns to Bok Tower Gardens in Lake Wales the waning crescent moon will be just a slender sliver in the sky. If you have been to the Dark Sky Festival in the community of Harmony, you know what to expect at Bok Tower Gardens: An evening of star-gazing, plus many guest speakers. *The festival is included in general admission and is free to members. Speakers begin at 4 p.m. and the gate closes at 9:30pm.*



NATIONAL ARTS

The 13th annual exhibit and awards for the National Arts Program at Osceola Arts will be at the center Jan. 6-Feb. 16. A reception will be held Jan. 13 from 2 to 4 p.m. The exhibit showcases youth, teen, amateur, intermediate and professional artists. *Gallery hours are 10 a.m. to 5 pm. Galleries and exhibit receptions are free and open to the public.*

FLEETWOOD MAC TRIBUTE

The Rumours will be at the House of Blues Orlando, 1490 Buena Vista Drive, Orlando, at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$8.75. For tickets or for more information, visit HOUSEOFBLUES.COM

WINTER MUSIC SERIES

Lakeridge Winery. Nightly Groove Band. *The music event is from noon until 4 p.m. and features beer and wine for sale, complimentary winery tours and tastings and more. Admission to Clermont area winery is free.*

MECUM AUCTION

This is the final weekend for the Mecum auto auction at Osceola Heritage Park. An estimated 3,200 cars will cross the auction block by the auction's end on Sunday. Doors open at 8 a.m. each day. General admission is \$30. All vehicles, show schedules and more are at MECUM.COM

SUNDAY 01-14

THE 16TH ANNUAL HERITAGE UNITY FESTIVAL

Shady Park in Winter Park, Jan. 14-15. The community festival promotes family history and raises funds for the Educational Fulfillment Fund to benefit local economically disadvantaged youth. Special activities will include children's games, career booths, food and retail vendors, special entertainment by various gospel artists, job training, job readiness and financial literacy. Visitors are encouraged to visit Hannibal Square Heritage Center, which pays tribute to the African-American community.

MONDAY 01-15

THE MENDELSSOHN'S

Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra Presents Focus Series: An Evening with the Mendelssohn's. *The Plaza Live, 425 N. Bumby Ave., Orlando; 8 p.m.; \$18-\$54; PLAZALIVEORLANDO.ORG*

THE ANNUAL MARTIN LUTHER KING DINNER

Hosted by the Osceola Visionaries, will be held at the Kissimmee Civic Center Jan. 15. This is the 15th year for the event and it will be catered by Signature by the Lake. *For information and more details contact Shirley Taylor at 407-414-0766.*

WEDNESDAY 01-17

KAIA KATER

The Plaza Live, 425 N. Bumby Ave., Orlando; \$22; PLAZALIVEORLANDO.ORG

THURSDAY 01-18

WORLD QUILT SHOW

Featuring the World Quilt Competition and The Florida Quilt Competition, comes to the Orange County Convention Center, Jan. 18-20. In addition to the quilts, the show includes the Merchants Mall featuring everything quilters need in the way of supplies and material, as well as workshops and lectures. *Pre-registration and other information is available on the show's website, QUILTFEST.COM*

VALENCIA ART SHOWCASE

Valencia College is hosting an exhibition of artwork by Mississippi-born artist Robert Reedy Jan. 18 through March 1 at Valencia's East Campus, in the Anita S. Wooten Gallery. To kick off the exhibition, "Doodah Dada: Works by Robert Reedy," Valencia will host a reception for Reedy on Thursday, Jan. 18, from 5 to 7 p.m. in the gallery. Reedy will talk about his artwork at 6 p.m.

NINJA NATION TOUR 2018

House of Blues Orlando, 1490 Buena Vista Drive, Orlando, at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$20. For tickets or for more information, visit HOUSEOFBLUES.COM

CANDY CHANG

Artist Candy Chang will be at Rollins College. As part of the Winter Park Institute Speaker Series, the world-renowned artist and urban designer will present "Before I Die: A Participatory Art Installation," at 7:30 p.m. at Tiedtke Concert Hall in Keene Music Building.

FRIDAY 01-19

iLUMINATE

The Plaza Live, 425 N. Bumby Ave., Orlando; 8 p.m.; \$28.50-\$45; PLAZALIVEORLANDO.ORG

BOEING BOEING

French-inspired comedy, comes to the Osceola Arts starting Jan. 19. *Tickets are on sale now at OSCEOLAARTS.COM*

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. BANQUET

Osceola Visionaries will present their 30th observance of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday with a banquet, at 6 p.m. at the Kissimmee Civic Center, 201 E. Dakin Ave., Kissimmee. The guest speaker will be the Honorable Retired Judge Belvin Perry Jr. *Tickets are \$35. Contact: Anna Pinellas - 407-846-2656 or Shirley Taylor - 407-348-4629.*

SATURDAY 01-20

PRAISE WAVE

SeaWorld has announced the lineup for the Praise Wave Christian music shows coming in January and February. Scheduled acts include Steven Curtis Chapman, Jan. 20; Lecae, Jan. 27; MercyMe, Feb. 10. More acts will be announced soon. Shows are included with admission to SeaWorld. For more information go to SEAWORLDDORLANDO.COM

LIBRARY BOOK SALE

The Osceola Friends of the Library Book sale will be held at the Hart Memorial Library, 211 E. Dakin, Kissimmee, Thursday, Jan. 18 through Saturday, Jan. 20. There will be a bag sale all three days, from 10 am. to 3 p.m.

FAIR SIGN-UP

Creative arts participants for the upcoming Osceola County Fair should sign up at the Kissimmee Valley Livestock Show office at Osceola Heritage Park, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. *For more information, contact Beverly Frankenberg at 407-552-6932.*

SUNDAY 01-21

GOSPEL CONCERT

New Life Freewill Baptist Church, 1211 Ocean St, Kissimmee, will host a gospel concert featuring The Parson Family, at 6 p.m. There is no admission fee but donations are accepted.

MONDAY 01-22

BLOOD DONATIONS

January is National Blood Donor Month. Everyone donating blood at any OneBlood Center through Jan. 22 will receive a long sleeve T-shirt and a \$10 eGift card. *For locations, hours and appointments go to ONEBLOOD.ORG/LOCATIONS*

TUESDAY 01-23

BALLET

There are still good seats left for Uncorked Orlando Ballet at the Abbey, at 7 p.m. *General admission tickets are \$30, VIP tickets are \$50 and include up-front seating and a glass of wine. To buy tickets, go to INTERLAND3.DONORPERFECT.NET/WEBLINK/WEBLINK.ASPX?NAME=E172538&ID=25*

WEDNESDAY 01-24

THE KILLERS

The Killers with special guest Alex Cameron will be at Hard Rock Live Orlando, 6050 Universal Boulevard, Orlando, Jan. 24 at 8 p.m. *For tickets or for more information, go to HARDROCK.COM*

MORSE LECTURE SERIES

The 2018 Morse Museum Lecture series, focusing on topics related to the museum's collection and exhibitions, begins Jan. 24 with Innovation by Design: Frederick Wilson and Tiffany Studios. Diane C. Wright, curator of glass at the Toledo Museum of Art is the guest lecturer. *It starts at 2:30 p.m. The museum is located at 445 N. Park Ave., Winter Park.*

THURSDAY 01-25

DROWNING POOL

Also performing will be Adeltis Way and Joyous Wolf. *House of Blues Orlando, 1490 Buena Vista Drive, Orlando, at 7 p.m. For tickets or for more information, visit HOUSEOFBLUES.COM*

FRIDAY 01-26

YONDER MOUNTAIN STRING BAND

The Plaza Live, 425 N. Bumby Ave., Orlando; 8 p.m.; \$22.50-\$39.50; PLAZALIVEORLANDO.ORG

ONGOING

BINGO

Fraternal Order of Eagles 15 W Darlington Ave., Kissimmee 4:00 p.m.; (2) \$200 games guaranteed (1) \$250 jackpot guaranteed. 407-846-4990; *Everyone is welcome.*

ELKS CLUB CRIBBAGE, KAROKE

Kissimmee Elks Lodge, 1655 Kings Highway, Kissimmee. Every Wednesday 5:30-9 p.m. Open to the public.

THURSDAY NITE CRUISE IN

Classic Cars, Hot Rods, Trucks are on display every Thursday night. Bring your own classic car to show. 4060 13th St. St. Cloud; 5:30-8 p.m.

TAI CHI FOR ARTHRITIS

Tai chi for arthritis and falling prevention. *Mondays at Poinciana Library, 101 N. Doverplum Ave. 2 p.m.; and Wednesdays at Orlando Family Physicians, 1502 Village Oak Lane, Kissimmee 11 a.m.; 407-900-9003*

TAI CHI FOR ENERGY

Tai chi for energy. *Saturdays at Hart Memorial Library, 211 E. Dakin Ave. Kissimmee; 10 a.m.; 407-900-9003*

OVEREATER'S ANONYMOUS

Open to anyone who wants to stop eating compulsively. Meetings are conducted in English; some materials are available on Spanish. *Meets every Monday at 7 p.m. in main office at 1485 Mill Slough Road, Kissimmee (Casa de Fe y Bendicion).*

Editor's note: Due to space constraints, the News-Gazette cannot guarantee that all events submitted will be published in the Daily Planner in every Thursday and Saturday edition.

DANCE COMPANY

Valencia College's resident dance company, Valencia Dance Theatre, along with the Dr. Phillips High School Dance Magnet Program and professional modern company Yow Dance, will present 3 in Motion, a performance of modern dance on Valencia's East Campus at 8 p.m. *General admission tickets are \$12. Tickets may be purchased online at VALENCIACOLLEGE.EDU/ARTS, use the code "VALENCIAWEB" for a \$2 discount on each ticket.*

SATURDAY 01-27

CHAMBER ANNUAL MEETING

The Kissimmee/Osceola Chamber of Commerce will hold its annual meeting, including the awards presentation, dinner, dancing and more will be held at the Disney's Contemporary Resort, from 7 p.m. to midnight. Individual tickets are \$100. Corporate and premium tables also are available. For tickets and event information go to HTTP://BUSINESS.KISSIMMEECHAMBER.COM/EVENTS/DETAILS/93RD-ANNUAL-MEETING-951



AROUND OSCEOLA

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 EMAIL BMCBRIDE@OSCEOLANEWSGAZETTE.COM

TOOLS FOR BETTER LIVING

UF | IFAS Extension
 UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

Focus on all your strengths in 2018

As we start another new year, we also begin to focus on resolutions; goals that we want to accomplish.

GABRIELA MURZA
 UF/IFAS Extension



As we pursue our goal, we may start to lose our motivation, finding it harder to continue. Eventually, other things take precedence while our goal is pushed farther down the ladder. In fact, up to 80 percent of resolutions fail within the first three months.

Why is that? What causes people to struggle to keep themselves focused and motivated? There are a lot of reasons, both internal and external. However, there are ways to make them work in your favor. One way is to focus on your strengths. Studies have shown that individuals who focus on their strengths at work are more confident, feel happier and healthier, are more motivated and engaged, and feel more satisfied. This can also be used in setting personal goals.

Organizations do a similar type of analysis by creating a SWOT table. This is probably a different way of thinking about goal setting than what you're used to, but stay with me! SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, and are divided as having internal and external origins/attributes.

Internal attributes are personal strengths and weaknesses such as skills, attitudes, and knowledge; External Attributes are opportunities and threats that may be in your environment, society, culture, etc. All influence your ability to reach your goals in different ways. You may start with a long list of goals, but eventually you want to work your way down to one to two items. This means that these items need to be the most influential in effecting your goal.

When setting a goal, it's important to think of the entire picture – opportunities, barriers, personal motivation and environmental factors, and ways that they all work together to help or hinder success. This is similar, just in a different format. Also, we are focusing on strengths. Use the SWOT analysis to realize and use strengths to reach your goal instead of trying to fix weaknesses. You may find yourself more motivated and confident, and crushing your goal before you know it.

For more information, contact UF/ Gabriela Murza at 321-697-3000 or via email at gmurza@ufl.edu.

Local lawyer honored for pro bono work

The Florida Bar will recognize 21 lawyers, including a local attorney, for their work on behalf of poor and indigent clients at a Jan. 25 ceremony at the Supreme Court of Florida.

Established in 1981, The Florida Bar President's Pro Bono Service Awards are intended to encourage lawyers to volunteer free legal services to the poor by recognizing those who make public service commitments

See **Lawyer**, Page 12.

5th annual Celebration Marathon Jan. 28

By Jennifer DiDomenico and Tracey Model
 For the News-Gazette

The fifth annual Town of Celebration Marathon and Half Marathon will be Sunday, Jan. 28. Sponsored by Raw Threads, the marathon brings the town of Celebration together to cheer on athletes while it also hosts visitors and friends.

The race itself winds through the streets of Celebration. With a cap of 2,500 runners, the race has sold out every year.

As popular as the race is, what really makes this marathon unique is its support for the community extended through greater Osceola County.

Over the past four years, the race has donated \$229,000 to the Osceola Education Foundation, to award scholarships to worthy seniors in every high school in the county. In addition, the race has donated over \$120,000 to local non-profit clubs, teams and organizations.

"The Celebration Marathon is an event which brings this community together. There are always such positive comments about how well the race is organized," said Gloria Niec, executive director of the Celebration Foundation. "The marathon, led by wonderful volunteers, has shared its proceeds by benefiting Osceola County youth through scholarship and Celebration's



seniors through support of Thriving in Place."

The concept of the Celebration Marathon was conceived by a group of runners who met three times each week at the Founder's Park Flag Pole to run in Celebration. Race director Ken Zambito wanted to give other runners the distinctive experience this town has to offer. There are plenty of marathons that run through cities and towns across the

country, but Zambito and the other members of the "Tri-Junkie" running group wanted to showcase Celebration for the uniqueness that it holds.

After the race, athletes are welcome to celebrate their achievement with an after party in downtown Celebration.

"All finishers, from the speedy runners seeking to qualify for the Boston Marathon or the walkers participating to reach their varied fitness goals, absolutely

love the post-race party which is supported by our local restaurants," said Assistant Race Director Sue Smith.

While some changes have taken place over the years, the organizers of this event strive to continually improve the runner and spectator experience, as well as pursue the sense of community which so many of the residents in Celebration enjoy.

For more information, visit www.CelebrationMarathon.com.

Local karate student wins gold at championships

A local karate student recently medaled at World Karate Championships in Orlando.

Christian Bayonne, a student at New Dimensions High School, (pictured at right) is a member of the Sport Karate Center in Poinciana. He is also a member of Bring It All Stars (a professional martial arts team).

The competition was Nov. 4-10. The World Karate Championships were held in Orlando at the Wyndham Orlando Resort on International Drive.

Teams from just about every country were represented including Canada, Guatemala, Venezuela, Brazil and Scotland.

Christian won gold in light contact fighting, gold in traditional weapons, and silver in free style forms. This gives him two world titles.



St. Cloud Christmas tree recycling event set for today

The city of St. Cloud Parks and Recreation staff and the Tree Advisory Committee (TAC) are coordinating the 14th Annual "Don't Curb It... S.W.A.P. It!" event.

S.W.A.P. stands for St. Cloud Winning Arbor Patrol. This most-awaited occasion is scheduled for Jan. 13 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., at Peghorn Nature Park and Trail (2101 Peghorn Way). During this event, the practice baseball fields at the Civic Center Complex (3001 17th St.) will be closed.

St. Cloud residents may bring their live, non-decorated Christmas trees to the park and select a containerized tree to plant in their yard. Residents must present a valid photo identification card and are allowed one containerized tree per household.

The "Don't Curb It... S.W.A.P. It!" program is part of the

City of St. Cloud

Don't Curb It... S.W.A.P. It!

municipality's efforts to increase recycling awareness and to restore the urban forest. For details on

this or any Parks and Recreation program or rental facility, visit the Parks and Recreation Web

page at www.stcloud.org, email ParksAndRecreation@stcloud.org or call 407-957-7243.

OSCEOLA

Four questions about the economy in the year 2018

By Jill Schlesinger

Last year defied most expectations. Synchronistic global growth led to a surge in corporate profits, which in turn pushed worldwide stocks higher. The FTSE All-World index shot up nearly 22 percent, its biggest rise since 2009. U.S. markets were along for the ride: The Dow Jones Industrial Average increased by 25.1 percent, the S&P 500 index was up 19.4 percent and the NASDAQ Composite jumped 28.2 percent. The year's progress propelled the

second longest bull market on record, which began in March 2009, towards a ninth anniversary.

But that's history. Now it's time to look ahead and to remind you that the stock market is not the economy and the economy is not the stock market. Despite the sterling performance of equities, only 54 percent of Americans report having money invested in the stock market at all (including individual stocks and stock market funds held inside or outside of retirement accounts), a share that is

down from 62 percent just before the financial crisis, according to Gallup.

Considering that nearly half of us don't give a hoot about the stock market, here are four questions to consider for 2018.

How will the economy perform? From the end of World War II until the Great Recession, gross domestic product (GDP) averaged just over 3 percent growth annually. In the post-crisis years, growth has bounced around between 1.5 percent and 3 percent. Due to a slow start to the year, it looks like

2017 will show growth of about 2.3 percent overall. Most economists believe that the corporate tax cut will add a bump up in 2018 - estimates now range from 2.5 to 3 percent GDP.

Will employment continue to improve? The economy has added about 175,000 jobs per month in 2017, down from previous years but stronger than expected this deep into the recovery. The unemployment rate, which is hovering just over 4 percent, is down 0.5 percent from a year ago and officials at the Fed are forecasting that it could go below 4 percent in 2018. With jobs continuing to grow and the unemployment rate at low levels, economists say that workers should see bigger increases in wages. Over the past few years, wages have increased by 2.5 percent to 3 percent annually; projections for the year to come are for increases of more than 3 percent.

What's going to happen in the housing market? The real estate market was plagued by one big problem in 2017: There were very few homes for sale, which pushed up prices, probably by 6 percent for the year in 2017. On top of the inventory issue, there is a new worry on the horizon: The GOP tax plan will limit the deductibility of state and local taxes and property taxes to \$10,000. Some analysts believe that the change could negatively affect high-cost, high-tax states such as New York, New Jersey and California.

Will interest rates continue to drift higher? The Fed raised short-term

interest rates three times in 2017 and based on their predictions at the December meeting, they expect a repeat performance in 2018. But longer-term rates, as measured by the yield of the 10-year Treasury note, ended 2017 at 2.409 percent, down a touch from 2.446 percent a year ago. Relatively low interest rates have helped the economy overall as well as the housing and stock markets, but if growth accelerates, both the Fed and investors may push up rates more than currently anticipated, which would be good news for savers, bad news for borrowers and potentially bad news for investors.



LOCAL

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The Osceola News-Gazette has been serving our community for 126 years. We are a part of the fabric of our local community bringing you the news and information that impacts your daily life. From blue ribbons to state championships. From cattle drives to home runs, environmental issues to volunteering opportunities. From County and City government to arts and entertainment. We bring you the most relevant, up-to-date information about our community to keep you informed on issues that impact you.

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Jill Schlesinger, CFP, is CBS News Business Analyst. Jill covers the economy, markets, investing and anything else with a dollar sign on TV, radio (including her nationally syndicated radio show), the web and her blog, "Jill on Money." She welcomes comments and questions at askjill@moneywatch.com. Check her website at www.jillonmoney.com.

Sometimes cats are 'top dog' in house

By Cathy M. Rosenthal

Dear Cathy,

We recently got a cat from our local Humane Society. He is a three-year-old male. His cage card said he wasn't good with other cats. It wasn't until we got home that we saw the paperwork also said he doesn't like dogs either. We don't have cats, but we do have a five-year-old Shar-Pei. He bloodied the dog's nose during the first encounter.

It's been more than six months now. The cat is otherwise very sociable with people and loves to be brushed and cuddled in our bed. But he is like a ninja with the dog. These aren't big battles anymore; the dog knows to give the cat space. But the cat seems to taunt the dog. He waits behind corners to attack the poor dog and sits in the dog's favorite spots. I think he does this on purpose.

What can we do to discourage this behavior? - Chuck, St. Paul, MN

Dear Chuck,

Your cat is the dominant "dog" in the house and has set the tone for his interactions with your Shar-Pei. Even though your dog gives the cat a wide berth, you can discourage the cat's intimidating behavior by gently moving him along when he looks like he is about to chase or pounce. Then rub a little dab of hairball gel onto his top paw. He will begin licking it off and should lose interest in intimidating the dog, both instantly and hopefully over time.

Also, get your cat a tall cat tree - at least six-foot tall. Cats like to climb and observe their world from above, so this may reduce face-to-face encounters with the dog. Rub a little catnip or leave a catnip toy or treats on the highest platform to

encourage your feline to climb up the cat tree.

If moving your cat along doesn't discourage him, shake a can of coins when he looks like he is about to pounce, or use something called a Pet Corrector (available online), which emits a compressed air sound that will distract your cat and hopefully discourage him from jumping the dog.

Dear Cathy,

I have four indoor only cats. They range in age from two- to six-years-old. Our problem child is a five-year-old female cat named Trinity. Before we adopted her at four months old, Trinity lost a leg before from a dog bite. When we brought her home, she didn't use the litter box. She used the couch instead. After three days, we took her to the vet who said she had ringworm. Trinity was put into isolation and

See **Cats**, Page 12.

LAWYER

Continued from Page 11

and to raise public awareness of the substantial volunteer services provided by Florida lawyers to those who cannot afford legal fees. Florida Bar President Michael J. Higer will present the 2018 awards.

John R. Dierking, of the 9th Judicial Circuit (Orange and Osceola counties), became a member of the Bar in 1992, after a career in banking, and joined Holland & Knight in Orlando that same year. He also became a member of the Orange County Bar Association and the association's pro bono panel. As a specialist in mergers and acquisitions, Dierking thought he would accept some pro bono nonprofit incorporation work from legal aid.

But his wife, who had become a lawyer nine years earlier, was handling Guardian ad Litem cases

from legal aid, and she shared her stories about the children and their problems. Helping children appealed to Dierking, and he accepted his first GAL case.

After 25 years and cases involving more than 125 children and more than 2,500 hours on closed cases, Dierking is still advocating for children who have been victims of neglect, abuse or abandonment. Dierking, who earned his J.D. at the University of Florida Levin College of Law, is still with Holland & Knight, as a partner in the Orlando office and a member of the firm's Mergers and Acquisitions Team.

The awards recognize pro bono service in each of Florida's 20 judicial circuits as well as service by one Florida Bar member practicing outside the state of Florida. They are

presented annually in conjunction with the Tobias Simon Pro Bono Service Award, which is given by the chief justice of the Florida Supreme Court. Awards recognizing pro bono contributions also will be presented in the categories of Distinguished Judicial Service, Distinguished Federal Judicial Service, Law Firm Commendation, Voluntary Bar Association and Young Lawyers Division.

In the most recent 12 months reported, Florida lawyers provided more than 1.5 million hours of pro bono services to those in need and more than \$5.5 million to legal aid organizations. This year's awards ceremony is scheduled for Thursday, Jan. 25, at 3:30 p.m. at the Supreme Court of Florida. Watch it live at <http://wfsu.org/gavel2gavel>.

Everyone can take steps to help control blood pressure

Dear Mayo Clinic: I've been on blood pressure medication for nine months. It has lowered my blood pressure, but I'm having trouble with side effects like dizziness. I eat a healthy diet and walk every day, but want to know if there are other ways to lower my blood pressure so that hopefully I can stop taking this medicine. I am only 57.

Answer: You're on the right track. Eating well and staying active are two good ways to help control blood pressure. But there are more steps you can take that can make a difference and could eliminate your need for blood pressure medication.

Blood pressure is a measure of how much resistance there is to blood flow through your arteries. It's recorded as two numbers: a top number and a bottom number. The top is called systolic pressure - the pressure in your arteries when your heart beats. The bottom number is diastolic pressure - the pressure in

your arteries when your heart is at rest between beats.

Blood pressure generally is considered too high when the top number is more than 140 or the bottom number is more than 85. High blood pressure can lead to serious medical problems, including kidney disorders, heart attack, stroke and heart failure, among others.

Medication often is used to help keep blood pressure under control. But it may not be necessary for everyone who has high blood pressure. Estimates are that at least 25 percent of people in the U.S. currently taking blood pressure medicine might not need it if they made certain lifestyle changes.

One of the best things you can do for your blood pressure is to get to and stay at a healthy weight. Weight makes a significant difference in blood pressure because every pound you put on equals about five additional miles of blood vessels through which your heart has to pump blood.

To meet the extra demand, your heart works harder. As it does, blood pressure goes up. Losing even a small amount of weight can lower blood pressure.

A healthy diet is key to healthy weight, and it benefits blood pressure, too. In particular, eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables a day, and lower the amount of salt in your diet. Salt makes your body retain fluid, and the more fluid in your body, the higher your blood pressure. Processed, packaged and fast foods contain high amounts of salt. As much as possible, eat foods prepared from fresh ingredients, without added salt.

Weight loss can also combat another contributing factor to high blood pressure: sleep apnea. About half of all people with high blood pressure have this sleep disorder. When sleep apnea is left untreated, it can be difficult to get blood pressure under control. If you snore loudly, briefly stop breathing during sleep, wake feeling

unrested, or have significant bouts of daytime sleepiness, consider being evaluated for sleep apnea.

Daily physical activity can also help lower blood pressure. As you move, your blood vessels open to allow for more blood flow, and they remain open for a time after you are done. As part of your activity, consider engaging in interval training - alternating bursts of intense activity with lighter activity. This type of exercise has been

shown to be more effective in opening arteries than steady, continuous activity alone.

Limit the amount of caffeine and alcohol you have each day, and don't smoke. Over time, caffeine, alcohol and tobacco can narrow and stiffen blood vessels, raising your blood pressure.

Finally, keep track of your blood pressure at home. A number of devices are available you can use to measure blood pressure. When you see those

numbers on a regular basis, you become more familiar with what has an impact on your blood pressure and you gain a better understanding of how you can control it. - Dr. Stephen Kopecky, cardiovascular diseases, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minn.

E-mail a question to *Mayo Clinic Q&A (AT SIGN)mayo.edu*. For more information, visit *www.mayoclinic.org*.

CATS

Continued from Page 11

given sulfur baths for the ringworm for almost two months. We visited her regularly to keep her familiar with us. When we brought her home, we noticed that loud noises sent her running. She began to use the litter box regularly, and we had no more issues. We had a rescue cat that lived with us for six months, and a second cat that was injured. We moved almost two years ago, and everything was fine.

Recently, we had workers in the house, and shortly after, we caught Trinity urinating on the rugs in the kitchen, bathroom and laundry room. Some of these rugs were right next to the litterboxes she had been using for over a year. She was put on antibiotics

for a possible UTI, and Prozac for stress. We love to be able to put the rugs back down without having to wash them daily. Any suggestions? - Jeannetta, Abingdon, Virginia

Dear Jeannetta,

I am glad you ruled out health issues first. Trinity's early traumatic life, however, may have shaped her poor litter box habits. When cats are sick or stressed, they often avoid the litter box. Stress, like the temporary cats coming in and out of

the home or the strangers working in your home, can all be triggers for her urinating outside the box.

If you need to foster other cats, just know this is a likely trigger for her. Leave the rugs off the floor for now and sprinkle a litter box attractant (available online or at a pet store) to entice her back to the box.

When the litter box habit is fully restored, put the carpets out again one at a time to see how she reacts, keeping the carpets away from the litterbox area for now.

Cathy M. Rosenthal is a longtime animal advocate, author, columnist and pet expert who has more than 25 years in the animal welfare field. Send your pet questions, stories and tips to cathy@petpundit.com. Please include your name, city, and state.

EXTENSION SERVICES



► Wednesday, Jan. 17, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., A Home of Your Own, First Time Homebuyer - One Day Class (English), at UF|IFAS. Extension Osceola County

Registration is open now. The fee is \$10.

This class addresses the ins and outs of buying/building a home. Participants will learn how to prepare financially, select a home, negotiate price, review contract and what to expect at closing. Register at www.tinyurl.com/myochome.

[tinyurl.com/myochome](http://www.tinyurl.com/myochome).

► A Home of Your Own, First Time Homebuyer - One Day Class (Spanish) Thursday, Jan. 18, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. at UF|IFAS Extension Osceola County.

Registration is open now. The fee is \$10.

This class addresses the ins and outs of buying/building a home. Participants will learn how to prepare financially, select a home, negotiate price, review contract and what to expect at closing. Register at www.tinyurl.com/myochome.

► Friday, Jan. 26, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Is a Conservation Easement Right for Your Land? It's at UF|IFAS Extension Osceola County.

Conservation easements are voluntary agreements that keep land in agricultural production, rangeland, or natural habitat. This workshop explains how landowners can reduce tax liability and protect their property into the future through easements.

Register at <https://ocagriculture.eventbrite.com>.

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Due to space constraints, the News-Gazette cannot guarantee that all church listings submitted will be published in the Worship page every Saturday edition.

OBITUARIES

For daily obituaries and services please visit www.aroundosceola.com

COLLINS - Robert Wayne Collins, 76, of Saint Cloud, Florida went to be with the Lord and his beloved Hattie Lee Collins on Saturday January 6, 2018, at his home.



Robert "Bobby" Collins was born in Orlando, Florida on February 21, 1941, the son of the late James Paris Collins and Mary Courtney Phillips. He was retired as the Osceola County Alligator Trapper. Bobby is survived by a son Kinnee A. Wilson III and wife Melody, four daughters: Tina Marie

Wilson DiMarco, Linda Lee Wilson, Sandra "DeeDee" Wilson, and Debbie Rape, six grandchildren: Charles Wilson and wife Donna, Chad Wilson, Kinnee Wilson IV, Christopher Michael Derison, Jonathan Black Wilson, James DeMarco, seven great-grandchildren: Robert "Collins" Wilson, Cole Wilson, Chase Wilson, Burke Wilson, Candace Turner, Josh Rape, Ashley

Rape, four siblings: Edgar Collins, Eveleen Burdick, Gloria Burdick, and Virginia Neurauter. Bobby Collins will be remembered for his love of the outdoors and he wanted people to remember him for being a man of his word. The Celebration of Life will be held on Saturday, January 13, 2018, Ralph V. Chisholm Park, Saint Cloud, Florida 34771 at 2 p.m., Pavilion B.

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MILLER - Miller, Louisa F., 89, beloved mother, went to be with the Lord on Monday, January 8, 2018.



She was born July 30, 1928 in Tyrell, OH, to Oliver and Louise Fowler who preceded her in death. Louisa lived in St. Cloud, FL since 1968. Traveling and camping with her family were an enjoyment in her life. She loved the opportunities she had living in other countries with her husband, Harlan D. Miller (USAF, ret.) who preceded her in death. She loved working with the Seedline Ministry of Eastern Avenue Baptist Church where she helped assemble books of the Bible. These books were

then shipped to foreign countries so those receiving them could read the Bible in their own language. Louisa is survived by her brothers Oliver (Molly) Fowler, Gene (Sally) Fowler; three children, Janet (Nick) Muller, David (Connie) Miller, Doris (Larry) Ostergren; 7 grandchildren and 12 great grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her sister Viola (Jesse) Jackson. Visitation will be held 6-8 p.m. Friday at Grissom Funeral Home. Funeral services will be held 11 a.m. Saturday, January

13, 2018, at Eastern Avenue Baptist Church of St. Cloud. Graveside services will follow at 2:30 p.m. at Woodlawn Memorial Park. Words of comfort may be offered at www.grissomfh.com. In lieu of flowers, the family invites you to please consider making a donation in her name to the Seedline Ministry Project at Eastern Avenue Baptist Church, P.O. Box 701209, St. Cloud, FL 34770. Arrangements entrusted to Grissom Funeral Home 407-847-3131.

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Dignity

NOHE - Emerson Joe Nohe, 95, long time resident of Kent, Ohio and St. Cloud, Florida, passed on December 22, 2017, at Brookdale Assisted Living in Melbourne, FL.

Joe was born in Belleville, WV to Dock and Ora Nohe on July 10, 1922. Joe left WV with \$3.00 in his pocket which he borrowed from his Brother-in-law, Lloyd Rawson to come to Ravenna, OH.

In 1945, Joe enlisted in the U.S. Maritime Service, Brooklyn, NY. In 1946, the Army called and Joe was stationed in Whittier, Alaska and was the only man they trusted to use the forklift to unload the caskets off the returning ships in WWII. Joe was discharged March 23, 1948. He married longtime girlfriend, Martha V. Watkins on August 5, 1948, and they moved to Akron, OH to start their life together.

Daughter, Linda was born in Akron and when Linda was four they packed everything up and moved to Ontario, CA. After 18 months they moved to Kent, OH, where he was half owner of Bill

& Mike's Towing, Frame & Wheel Alignments. Joe owned Brittain's Wheel Alignment and Towing in Ravenna, OH, and after he sold the business he worked for the State Highway retiring in 1985. Upon retiring they bought a home in St. Cloud, FL and returned to Ohio in summer. Joe and Martha took square dance lessons and belonged to Square Dance Clubs in FL and OH. And was member of the St. Cloud Garden Club. They had many friends that they played cards with sometimes every night of the week. Joe loved garage sales and fixing treasures that he bought. Joe could fix or craft anything and his motto was "you never put off what you could do today until tomorrow". Joe believed that a man should work hard and live a clean life. He

certainly made his mark. We all learned from him and will miss him. Joe is preceded in death by his parents, Dock and Ora, wife, Martha. Sisters, Margie Rawson (Lloyd), Lena Pifer (Everett). Brothers, Ronald, Jack, and Ovie Nohe. Joe is survived by his daughter, Linda Moore McBride (Jim), two Grandchildren, Douglas Moore (Alysha) and Melissa Blazek (Josh) and Great Grandchildren, MacKenzie and Mason Blazek, and Colton and Riley Moore. A Celebration of Life will be held in the summer for Joe and Martha Nohe in West Virginia. Arrangements are by Fisk Funeral Home where condolences and memories may be shared at: www.FISKFH.com

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SCHOOL ZONE

THIS WEEKS CALENDAR OF EVENTS

► **Deerwood Elementary**

- Deerwood Elementary's next SAC/PTO meeting will be on January 15 at 9:30 a.m. in the Title I building. The school is looking forward to more parents, volunteers, and community members helping the school with decision making.
- Deerwood Elementary's Book Fair Week will take place January 22-25 from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. There will be a Book Fair Family Night on January 25 from 4 to 6 p.m. Students will be able to purchase books that they enjoy and that challenge their reading levels. Contact: Melissa Ramos, Deerwood Elementary – 407-870-2400

► **Highlands Elementary**

- Highlands Elementary is proud to announce that Mrs. Tennessee Martin is Highlands Elementary's 2018 Teacher of the Year. Ms. Iliia Colon is Highlands Elementary's 2018 School-Related Employee of the Year.
- Highlands Elementary parents and Osceola County School District stakeholders are invited to visit the school's website to stay updated on future events at www.hles.osceolaschools.net. Stakeholders can also receive weekly updates by joining REMIND by texting @HLESPAR to 81010.
- Highlands Elementary encourages all parents to stay current with their child's grades via the Parent Portal by visiting http://osceola.net/parent_resources/parent_portal/.
- Student, parents, and the community are invited to join the SAC team, a school-based group that shares responsibility for supporting the school's continuous improvement. The next SAC meeting will be Thursday, January 11, at 7:30 a.m. in conjunction with the All Pros Dads meeting in the media center.

► **Narcoossee Elementary**

- Narcoossee Elementary will be hosting a Leadership Day on February 1 from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. During the day, the school will be showcasing its Leader in Me program. The school will host approximately 50 educators from around

the state/country who are attending the Leader in Me Symposium and have chosen to visit the school. Contact: Scott Knoebel, Narcoossee Elementary – 407-892-6858

► **Discovery Intermediate**

- The Drama Club at Discovery Intermediate will be meeting every Tuesday in room 5-115 and 5-104 from 4:15 to 5:30 p.m. Please contact Mrs. Ambrose at ext. 17653 with any questions.
- Discovery Intermediate encourages everyone—students, parents, family members, neighbors, teachers, and community business partners—to help raise thousands of dollars by clipping Box Tops. Box Top coupons can be found on the packaging of many products, such as cereal, snacks, frozen food, and household cleaning items. This year, the school's goal is to raise \$1,000. Send them to Discovery Intermediate School at 5350 San Miguel Road, Kissimmee, FL 34758. Contact: Maria Cuevas, Discovery Intermediate – 407-343-7300

► **Neptune Middle School**

- Sandy Hook Promise is a national non-profit organization founded and led by several family members whose loved ones were killed at Sandy Hook Elementary School on December 14, 2012. This week, Sandy Hook Promise recognized Neptune Middle School's Students Against Violence Everywhere Club for empowering young people to show their leadership, creativity, and passion to protect their schools and community. All Neptune Middle students are invited to SAVE meetings on Monday, January 8, January 29, February 12, and February 26, in room 7002 from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m.
- Neptune Middle School's 2018 spring SAC meeting dates will be January 16, February 20, March 27, April 17, and May 15 at 5:30 p.m. in the media center. Every parent is welcome to attend.
- Battle of the Books is still accepting new students. Participants have lots of fun to

discuss and will be prepping for the district competition. All are welcome, just meet club members on Mondays after school in room 5012 from 2:30 to 4 p.m. Contact: Elsa Mottola, Neptune Middle – 407-935-3500

► **Parkway Middle School**

- For the 2018-19 school year, the Osceola School District will offer the International Baccalaureate Program at select schools. The International Baccalaureate (IB) Program is a curriculum that encourages international awareness in young people with an emphasis on the skills, attitudes, and knowledge needed to participate effectively in the 21st Century. Parents are encouraged to attend an informational meeting on January 25 at Thacker Avenue Elementary School for International Studies, located at 301 N. Thacker Ave. in Kissimmee at 6 p.m.

► **St. Cloud High School**

- St. Cloud High Bulldog 2D art students' Star Wars works are currently on display in the student gallery and Fancher's Art Wall. Part of the celebrations also showcase Star Wars chalk art currently on display in the school courtyard.

► **TECO**

- Ms. Danielle Westerlund's first Cosmetology students are official TECO graduates. Westerlund said, "Today, my first Cosmetology class at TECO graduates! I'm so proud of them and wish them the best of luck in their future endeavors."

► **Zenith Accelerated Learning Academy**

- Zenith Salon offers students the experiences necessary for the development of skills required to be a licensed nail specialist. Hours for appointments are 7:45 a.m. through 5 p.m. You can book your appointments today by calling 407-846-3976, extension 39701. Contact: Jaelyn Vazquez, Zenith Accelerated Learning Academy – 407-846-3976

► **FOR UPCOMING SCHOOL EVENTS**
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Create a teen-friendly space in the home

Teenagers are busier than ever before. But even the busiest teens need places to unwind and relax with friends.

Many parents aspire to create that type of environment in their homes but don't know where to begin.

Having teens close by and interacting with them on a regular basis can benefit families. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics notes that parental involvement correlates to higher grade point averages. Research from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says certain parenting styles, including those that set rules and monitor teens in supportive ways, develop kids who are more likely to wear seat belts while driving, while such support also lowers crash risk. Involved parents also may reduce the chances of teen drug use and promiscuous behavior.

Parents who want to keep teens nearby can create hangout spaces at home that make it easy for teens to feel comfortable with their friends. These "teen caves" can be private but permit supervision when necessary. With a few modifications, it's possible to transform a room in a home into a teen-friendly hangout space.

► Talk to your children. Involve teens in the process of renovating a home to create a spot in which they



would like to congregate. Talk about elements they would like to see in the space, whether it be a particular design style, technology or activity.

► Establish a shared budget. Paint is inexpensive and can transform just about any room in a single afternoon. If the room being renovated is the teen's own bedroom, allow him or her to choose the color palette and other accents. Even if it isn't to your taste, he or she will be proud of the results and may want to share it with friends.

► Have a snack station. Some teenagers always seem to be hungry, and hanging out with friends while enjoying food is a popular pastime. When renovating a room into a teen cave, find a way to make food a focus. Install a mini-refrigerator and non-alcoholic bar where kids can serve snacks to friends. Think about a space you would like as an adult and modify it to be

more accommodating to teenagers.

► Add more seating. Having friends over means having enough seating to handle a small crowd. Beanbags, cushioned benches, a daybed, modular seating, and more can ensure everyone has a place to sit.

► Make a private outdoor spot. Teen spaces do not need to be restricted to the indoors. Design advice site Houzz says an outdoor escape zone that includes comfortable seating in a private area — particularly a spot that can also be enjoyed into the evening — will be a coveted spot.

► Invest in "indestructible" materials. Teenagers are bound to make messes, and having other people over means contending with a certain measure of damage. Design the space with indoor-outdoor carpeting, water-resistant fabrics, distressed wood, and other durable materials.



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Manufacturer Photo

2018 JEEP WRANGLER

Tackles Rugged and Refined Roads



Manufacturer Photo

The 2018 Jeep Wrangler delivers unmatched off-road capability with legendary four-wheel drive and is produced with more than seven decades of 4x4 engineering experience. Wrangler offers a body-on-frame design, front and rear five-link suspension system, live axles, electronic lockers, and is one of the few midsize SUVs that offer a six-speed manual transmission, in addition to its five-speed automatic. The 3.6-liter V-6 engine delivers 285 horsepower and 260 lb.-ft. of torque and is engineered to provide a broad torque band with a focus on low-end torque.

By Frank A. Aukofer
Motor Matters

Every aficionado of the Jeep brand expected the refreshed 2018 Wrangler to be one of the most capable off-road vehicles on the planet, which it is. But it also comes with an unexpected bonus: on-road refinement and driving enjoyment.

Of course, the new Wrangler is still as rugged and sure-footed over rocks and boulders as a mountain goat. And if it's your thing, you can still easily drop the windshield, remove the doors and top, and expose your body and pioneer soul to the elements.

However, equip it like the four-door Sahara model we tested and you'll experience a quiet (even sedate), family station wagon that handles well in traffic and around curves, tracks steadily in a straight line, and delivers long-distance comfort that can eliminate complaints from the kids and other passengers. Yet it can still tackle trackless terrain.

Who knew that any Jeep could be so appealing across the board? Hardly anybody, except for the designers themselves who set out to make the new Wrangler more consumer friendly while steadfastly maintaining its traditional looks and rugged personality.

The list of improvements is long, though no one will mistake it as anything but a Jeep Wrangler. Styling tweaks are subtle, such as a slight bending of the seven-slot trapezoid grille, larger windows, and an easy-folding windshield with a bit more rake to reduce wind resistance and improve fuel economy. Even with the windshield down, the new Wrangler now has a rearview mirror mounted on a crossbar.

Also contributing to weight reduction and fuel economy are aluminum doors, hood, fenders, and the windshield frame, along with a magnesium rear swing gate. New handles make the doors easier to remove and carry away.

The 2018 Wrangler has two engine and two transmission offerings. The standard

engine is a 285-horsepower, 3.6-liter V-6 with 260 lb.-ft. of torque. Optional is a new 275-horsepower, 2.0-liter turbocharged four-cylinder that makes 295 lb.-ft. of torque. A 260-horsepower V-6 diesel engine will be added for the 2019 model year, as well as a plug-in gasoline/electric hybrid in 2020.

Standard on the V-6 Wranglers is a six-speed manual gearbox, with an eight-speed automatic transmission optional. The eight-speed is standard with the 2.0-liter engine.

Three trim levels are available for the four-door Wrangler, — which now accounts for more than three-quarters of all Wrangler sales in the U.S. Trims are the base Sport, mid-level Sahara, and the top-of-the-line Rubicon. Traditional two-door Wranglers come in Sport or Rubicon trim.

The Wrangler offers a choice of improved tops. The convertible top now is motorized and can be opened and closed with the touch of a button. A new system for the soft top eliminates zippers and enables quick folding and removal of panels. Two hard tops also are available.

Inside, the Wrangler now features lumbar support on the driver's seat, pushbutton starting, and an upgraded infotainment system with optional Apple CarPlay and Google Android Auto integration. Touchscreens — as usual with Fiat Chrysler vehicles — are intuitive and easy to use. Screens measure 7.0 or 8.4 inches, depending on the model. One awkward feature: the power window controls are mounted in the center of the dash. But that's unavoidable because of the removable doors.

The back seat accommodates three adults with plenty of head and knee room, though the center-rear passenger must put up with a hard cushion and restricted foot room from a floor hump and intrusion of the center console.

The 2018 Jeep Wrangler starts at \$23,995. The subject here, the Sahara four-door hardtop with comfortable cloth upholstery, arrived with a starting price of \$38,540.



Manufacturer Photo

SPECIFICATIONS 2018 JEEP WRANGLER SAHARA

VEHICLE TYPE
5-passenger 4WD SUV

BASE PRICE
\$37,445 (as tested: \$38,540)

ENGINE TYPE
24-valve Pentastar V-6 w/SMPFI

DISPLACEMENT 3.6-liter

HORSEPOWER (net)
285 at 6400 rpm

TORQUE (lb.-ft.) 260 at 4800 rpm

TRANSMISSION
8-speed automatic

OVERALL LENGTH
188.4 in.

TURNING CIRCLE (curb-to-curb)
40.8 ft.

CURB WEIGHT
4,345 lbs.

FUEL CAPACITY
18.5 gal.

EPA MILEAGE RATING
18 mpg city, 23 mpg highway

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The rise of the town center: Bringing an urban feel to suburban living



Town centers are trending in communities across the country. These mixed-use complexes have a variety of features that make them attractive to young professionals, families and seniors. Town centers marry apartments, condos or townhouses to commercial office space and retail shops while providing recreational areas to offer the convenience of city living in suburban areas.

Many developers and architects support town centers. Unlike suburban sprawl with acres upon acres of space between houses and shops, town centers promote the concept of proximity as a profitable and attractive real estate design principle. While some town centers date back to the mid- to late-1990s, it was not until the 2000s that such centers were embraced on a wide scale. According to LMN Architects, which piloted the development of Redmond Town Center in Oregon, lifestyle trends that reflect the pressures of modern society have created a demand for town centers.

Here are some of the reasons why town centers are growing in popularity and why one may be coming to a town near you.

► **Casual interaction:** Town centers provide common areas where residents and visitors can gather and spend time together. This fosters a more relaxed and homey feel than congregating in a mall anchored by department stores.

► **Recreation:** Recreational opportunities for active people attracts many people to town centers. Centers may include park land, walking paths, fountains, bandstands for local performers, rooms to embrace the arts, and/or pools.

► **Mixed retail:** Town centers frequently feature a mix of national retailers and small mom-and-pop shops. This helps to create a “Main Street” vibe in the community.

► **Housing options:** Living within a town center enables residents to have amenities right outside their doors. Housing complexes attached to retail stores and recreational areas ensures residents that something to do is never too far away.

► **Attracts visitors:** Travelers passing through may be enticed by the offerings of town centers, making them more inclined to stop for a bite to eat or to do some shopping in these communities.

► **Nearby schools:** Schools may be included in the blue prints of town

center projects to accommodate families. Individuals who reside and socialize within the center will have the luxury of sending their children to the same school.

► **Transit hub:** Some town centers are

built around a train or bus station, offering residents easy access to mass transit.

Town centers located in suburban areas represent a way to infuse close-knit, urban-style living outside of big cities.

Median time to contract on home increasing

The median time to contract is mostly up across our local area as cooler temperatures in November cooled buyer traffic.

In Osceola County, single-family homes saw a 36.1 percent year-over-year increase in the median time to contract, or the median number of days between the listing date and contract date for closed sales during the month. This left the time to contract at 49 days for November. Median time to sale is also up for single-family homes in Osceola County. This value is at 93 days after increasing 5.7 percent from this time last year.

Condos and townhomes in the area also saw increases in median time to contract. In this market, the time to contract was at 46 days after a 2.2 percent increase. The median time to sale was unchanged, however, staying put at 85 days.

The local metro area which covers Orlando, Kissimmee, and Sanford saw Median Time to Contract increase 5.4 percent to 39 days within the single-family home market, but saw a decrease in the condo and townhome market, declining 8.6 percent from last year to 32 median days to contract. The median time to sale was also down for these condos and townhomes. In this case the decline was 2.6 percent to 74 days. And going back to the single-family home market of this metro area, we see another decline in median time to sale, this time by 4.5 percent from November 2016, landing at 85 days to sale.

Florida’s statewide data showed another increase in Median Time to Contract for single-family homes. Here the median time to contract was at 46 days in November, up 7 percent year-over-year. The median time to sale fell 1.1 percent to 91 days. Meanwhile, in the condo and townhome market for the state, the median time to contract didn’t budge from last year, maintaining its value

Pending home sales inch up 0.2 percent in November

Pending home sales were mostly unmoved in November, but did squeak out a minor gain both on a monthly and annualized basis, according to the National Association of Realtors.

Heading into 2018, existing-home sales and price growth are forecast to slow, primarily because of the altered tax benefits of homeownership affecting some high-cost areas.

The Pending Home Sales Index, www.nar.realtor/pending-home-sales, a forward-looking indicator based on contract signings, rose 0.2 percent to 109.5 in November from 109.3 in October. With last month’s modest increase, the index remains at its highest reading since June (110.0), and is now 0.8 percent above a year ago.

Lawrence Yun, NAR chief economist, says contract signings mustered a small gain in November and were up annually for the first time since June.

“With last month’s modest increase, the index remains at its highest reading since June (110.0), and is now 0.8 percent above a year ago.”

“The housing market is closing the year on a stronger note than earlier this summer, backed by solid job creation and an economy that has kicked into a higher gear,” he said. “However, new buyers coming into the market are finding out quickly that their options are limited and competition is robust. Realtors say many would-be buyers from earlier this year, stifled by tight supply and higher prices, are still trying to buy a home.”

One of the biggest questions heading into 2018, according to Yun, is if the depressed levels of available supply can improve enough to slow price growth and make buying a home more affordable. While last month’s significant boost in existing sales was noteworthy, it did come with some concerns. Sales prices were up 5.8 percent – more than double wage growth – and the 3.4-month supply of homes on the market was the lowest since NAR began tracking in 1999.

“The strengthening economy, and expectation that more millennials will want to buy, serve as promising signs for solid homebuying demand next year, while also putting additional pressure on inventory levels and affordability,” said Yun. “Sales do have room for growth in most areas, but nationally, overall activity could be slightly negative. Markets with high home prices and property taxes will likely feel some impact from the reduced tax benefits of owning a home.”



of 52 days, while condos and townhomes declined in Median Time to Sale by 5.2 percent leaving the figure at 91 days.

The Osceola County Association of Realtors is the largest trade association in Osceola County and represents over 3,400 Realtors in the area, bringing valuable training and support to its membership, and offering community services to the Osceola County area.



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You should be fluent in Spanish and be comfortable writing about a variety of topics. Freelancers must possess a valid Florida driver license, reliable transportation and be available to schedule assignments and deliver work on deadline. Additional skills would ideally include photography, and an outgoing, friendly and professional attitude when conducting business.

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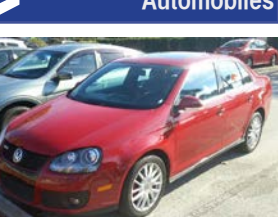
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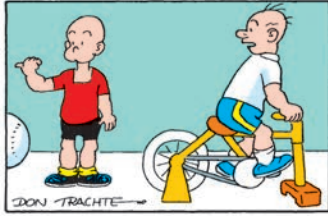
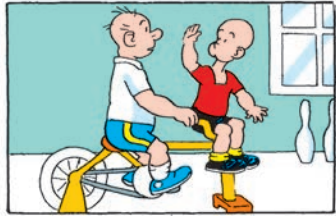
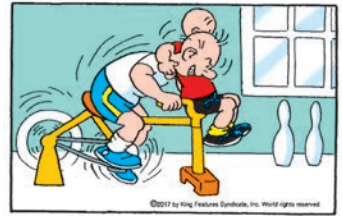
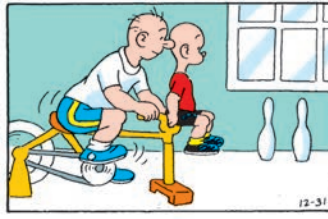
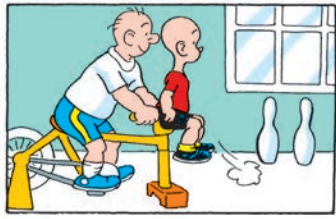
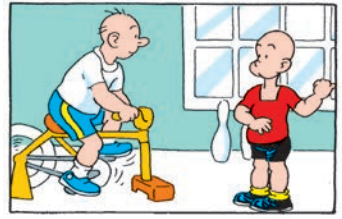
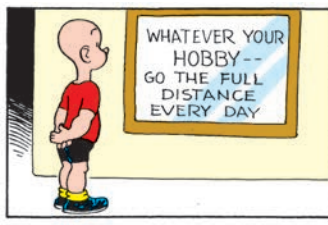
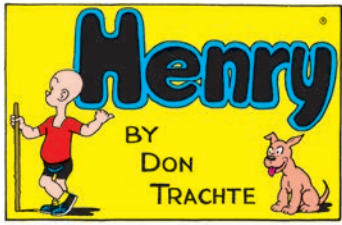
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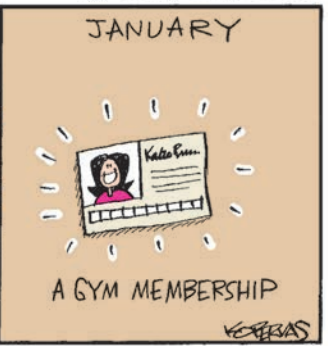
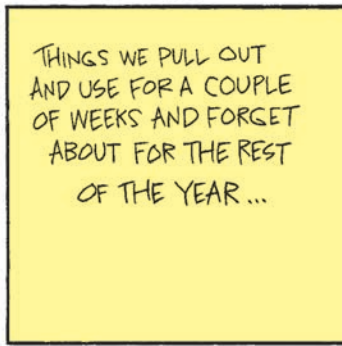
CONTACT

BRIAN MCBRIDE EDITOR
 EMAIL BMCBRIDE@OSCEOLANEWSGAZETTE.COM



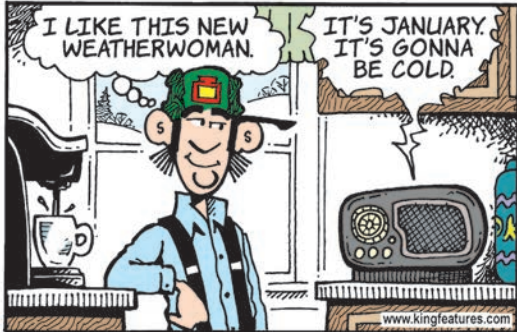
Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



R.F.D.

by Mike Marland



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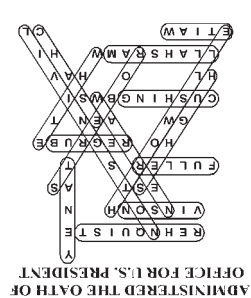
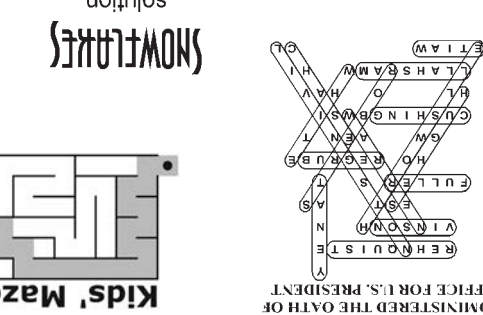
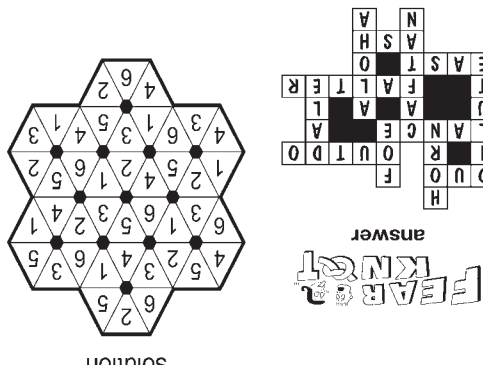
Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions forward, backward, up, down and diagonally

- | | | | |
|-----------|------------|-----------|--------|
| Burger | Fuller | Rehnquist | Waite |
| Chase | Hughes | Roberts | Warren |
| Cushing | Livingston | Taney | White |
| Ellsworth | Marshall | Vinson | |

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- Answers:
- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Twins, Twine | 5. Minor, Minot |
| 2. Really, Really | 6. Otter, Utter |
| 3. Apathy, Avary | 7. Decent, Decel |
| 4. Water, Wager | 8. Grass, Glass |
| 9. Forty, Forte | 10. Kitten, Mitten |

Just Like Cats & Dogs by Dave T. Phipps



Even Exchange by Donna Pettman

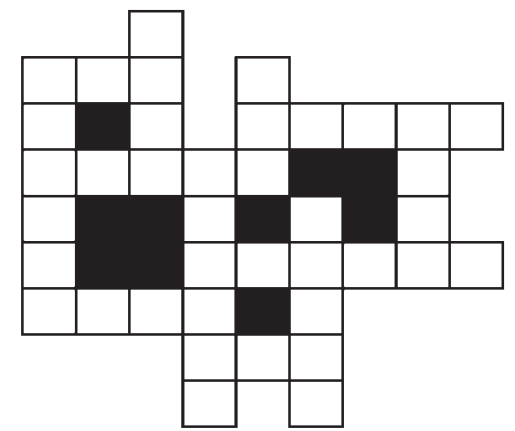
Each numbered row contains two clues and two 6-letter answers. The two answers differ from each other by only one letter, which has already been inserted. For example, if you exchange the A from MASTER for an I, you get MISTER. Do not change the order of the letters.

- | | | | |
|------------------------|---------|-----------------------|---------|
| 1. Identical siblings | _____ S | Strong string | _____ E |
| 2. Housing market | _____ T | In truth | _____ L |
| 3. Beehive location | _____ P | Bird sanctuary | _____ V |
| 4. Thin cookie | _____ F | Poker bet | _____ G |
| 5. Juvenile | _____ R | North Dakota city | _____ T |
| 6. Water-loving animal | O _____ | Speak | _____ U |
| 7. Moral and proper | _____ N | Misrepresentation | _____ I |
| 8. Soddy stuff | _____ R | "The _____ Menagerie" | _____ L |
| 9. Two score | _____ Y | Person's specialty | _____ E |
| 10. Young feline | K _____ | Fingerless glove | M _____ |

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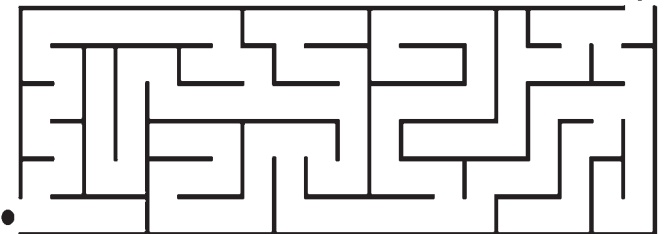
- OE F
- TED LIU
- AHOAL
- RHNO
- ANCFAT
- ODU
- ♥ATSE
- ♥NALEC
- ♥SHA
- TRAFLE
- OODUT
- ♥ADEL



Unscramble these twelve letter strings to form each into an ordinary word (ex. HAGNEC becomes CHANGE). Prepare to use only ONE word from any marked (♥) letter string as each unscrambles into more than one word (ex. ♥RATHE becomes HATER or EARTH or HEART). Fit each string's word either across or down to knot all twelve strings together.

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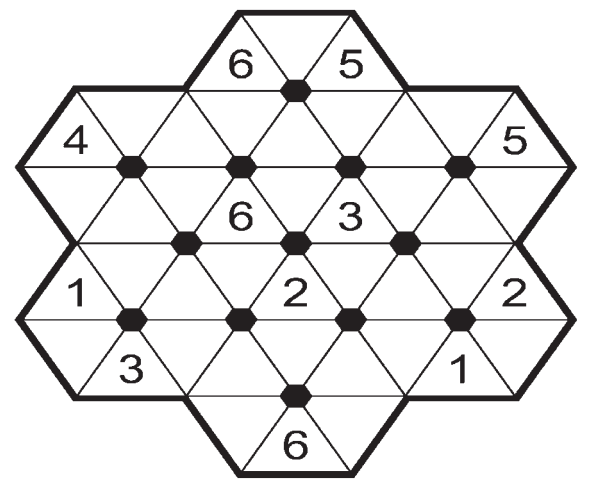
Kids' Maze



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SNOWFLAKES
by Japheth Light

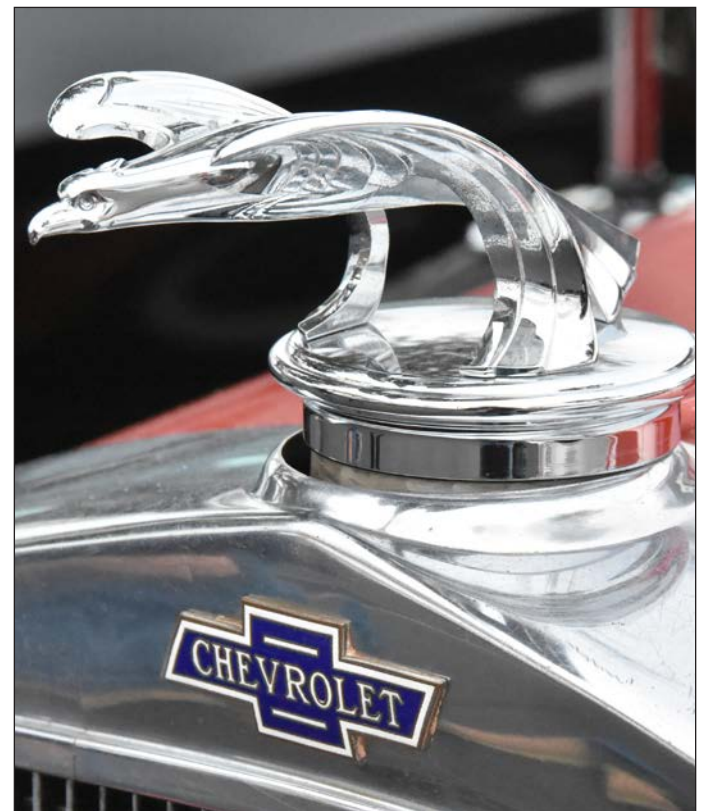
There are 13 black hexagons in the puzzle. Place the numbers 1 - 6 around each of them. No number can be repeated in any partial hexagon shape along the border of the puzzle.



DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ◆ Easy ◆◆ Medium ◆◆◆ Difficult

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MECUM'S 12TH YEAR AT OHP



Anyone who loves automobiles needs to get out to Osceola Heritage Park where the Mecum Auto Show/Auction is now underway until Jan 14. A total of 3,200 cars including classics, hot rods, muscle cars, imported sports cars, motorcycles, racing boats and much more will be auctioned off from 24 different collections. Top row: A 1967 Chevy Chevelle goes up for bid and fetches \$53,000. Auctioneer Heath Spracklen keeps the bidding going. A 1933 Ford 5 window is rolled out for bidders, Second row: David Prochorenko from Naples, Florida looks over the specs on a '71 Dodge Demon from the Wayne Schmeekle collection. Third row: A 2015 Ferrari 458 Speciale Aperta from the Michael Fux collection is estimated to sell for close to \$750,000.00. Detail of a radiator cap on a 1932 Chevy Confederate Roadster. Bottom: crowds wander through the classic cars in the Ray Hott collection.



News-Gazette Photos by Martin Maddock

OSCEOLA NEWS-GAZETTE Triple E

Section E

January 13, 2018

Holiday blues for retail jobs

Americans stepped up their shopping for the winter holidays, but that didn't lead to more retail jobs in December.

Retailers shed a seasonally-adjusted 20,300 jobs last month. As part of that total, department stores let go of 8,200 workers. The job losses suggest that greater consumer spending this winter won't be enough to reverse the continued challenges confronting brick-and-mortar retailers caused by online outlets and past decades' overbuilding of shopping malls and plazas. Retail jobs



peaked at the start of 2017 and have steadily fallen since.

Holiday sales were up 4.9 percent this year, according to a report by Mastercard Spending-Pulse. This was the largest percentage gain since 2011. Americans felt more confident as the unemployment rate has fallen to a 17-year low of 4.1 percent.

But just days into the New Year, Sears Holdings announced it would close more than 100 stores. Macy's has separately said it will shutter 11 stores early this year and that it expects to eliminate 5,000 jobs, or 3.5 percent of its total workforce.

Retail jobs are declining
Despite stronger holiday sales, retailers have been letting go of workers since the start of 2017.



Source: Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis

Josh Boak; Alex Nieves • AP

Company Spotlight Camera obscura

Camera maker GoPro tumbled Monday after it said it's axing up to 300 jobs following disappointing sales over the holidays.

The San Mateo, California company plans to shrink its workforce more than 20 percent, to fewer than 1,000. It's the latest in a string of layoffs GoPro has made over the last two years.

GoPro forecast \$340 million in revenue for the fourth quarter, a huge drop from a year ago and far short of

Wall Street estimates. The company blamed weak demand for its Hero5 Black camera.



In the opening minutes of trading the stock fell as much as 33 percent to an all-time low of \$5.04. It narrowed its losses after a CNBC report that GoPro has hired JPMorgan Chase to review a possible sale.

GoPro shares finished down 12.8 percent at \$6.56. It went public in June 2014 and once traded above \$98 a share.

GoPro (GPRO)

Monday's close: **\$6.56**

Price change 1-yr 2-yr* 3-yr*

52-WEEK RANGE

Price-earnings ratio: **Lost money**
(Based on past 12-month results)

GPRO -27.7% -36.4 -52.2

\$5 \$12

AP

*annualized

Source: FactSet

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Company Spotlight **Cold pizza**

Shares of Domino's Pizza took their worst loss in about six months Wednesday after the company said long-time CEO Patrick Doyle will leave the company at the end of June.

Domino's gave no reason for Doyle's departure after eight years at the helm. He'll be replaced by Richard Allison, currently chief of Domino's overseas operations.

The nearly 60-year-old



Michigan-based chain's stock has multiplied 14-fold during Doyle's tenure. The chain's efforts to improve quality and make ordering easier have helped increase sales to \$2.5 billion last year from \$1.6 billion when Doyle started in 2010. He's also overseen an increase in Domino's store count to about 14,000 last year, from about 9,170 in 2010.

Domino's stock traded above \$218 a share in June. On Wednesday it lost 3.2 percent to \$200.09.

Domino's Pizza (DPZ)	Wednesday's close: \$200.09	Total return	1-yr	3-yr*	5-yr*
52-WEEK RANGE	Price-earnings ratio: 38 (Based on past 12-month results)	DPZ	21.4%	27.2	36.4
\$163 \$222		Div. yield: 0.9%	Dividend: \$1.84		

AP *annualized Source: FactSet

Airlines get a tailwind

Airlines are busy spending their tax-law windfall.

Four of the six biggest U.S. carriers have announced they'll give employees bonuses of \$1,000 each. More significantly, Southwest Airlines says it will buy 40 more Boeing jets.

Airlines get a boost from two key provisions of the new law.

Because they didn't use as many deductions as some other industries, airlines had relatively high effective tax rates. Slashing the tax rate on corporate income from 35 percent to 21 percent will immediately help Southwest, Alaska Airlines and JetBlue —

all of which announced bonuses.

American, the other bonus-giver, doesn't pay cash federal income taxes yet because it can offset profits with huge losses from past years. Delta and United do the same. But they expect to start paying cash taxes over the next

few years, so the lower rate will help them in the long run.

The new law also lets companies immediately deduct the expense of new assets. That's huge for airlines because of the cost of new planes.

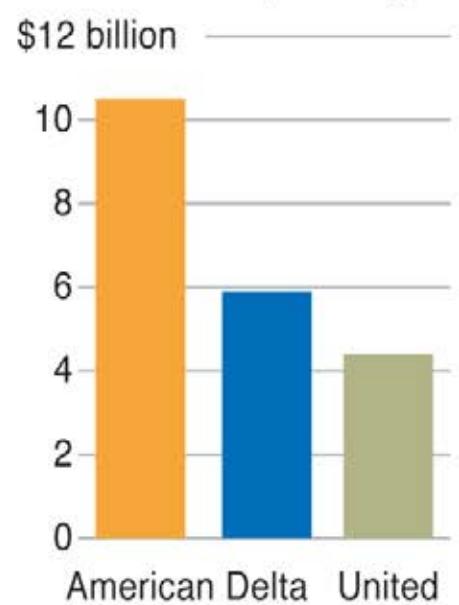
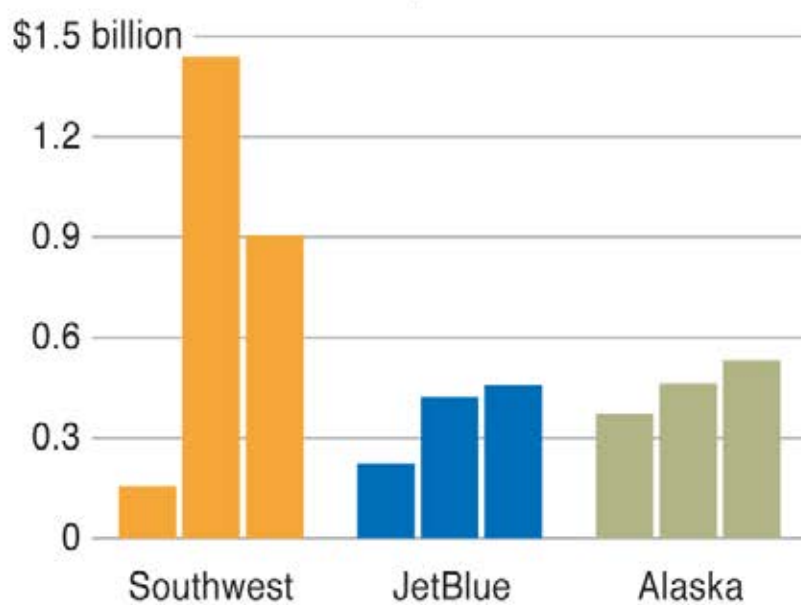
Washington is making the outlook brighter for airlines, which are already highly profitable.



Income taxes paid 2014-2016

Losses pending*

Welcome relief: Some carriers are giving bonuses to their employees as they anticipate lower tax rates and changes to tax law. Airlines have lots of debt to offset future tax liabilities.



Sources: Company filings; *available to offset taxes on future income, as of 12-31-16

David Koenig; J. Paschke • AP

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Trump's first medical checkup as president set for Friday

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump will be the patient, not the commander in chief offering comfort, when he visits the Walter Reed military hospital on Friday.

Trump is headed to the medical facility in Bethesda, Maryland, outside Washington, for his first medical checkup as president. But what has been a fairly routine exam for previous officeholders has taken on outsized importance in the age of Trump, given the tone of some of his tweets, comments attributed to some of his close advisers and Trump's recent slurring of words on national TV.

Some of the comments were published in a new book about Trump's first year, "Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House" by Michael Wolff, which White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders has denounced as "complete fantasy" for portraying her 71-year-old boss as undisciplined and in over his head as president.

Trump himself has pushed back hard against any suggestion that he's mentally unfit, declaring himself "a very stable genius."

Some questions and answers about Trump's physical:

WHAT QUESTIONS WILL THE EXAM ANSWER?

The exam, lasting several hours, will measure things like Trump's blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar, heart rate and weight.

Conclusions about his mental acuity aren't expected. The White House said Trump will not undergo a psychiatric exam. Officials did not address a different type of screening: assessments of cognitive status that examine neurologic functions including memory. Cognitive assessments aren't routine in standard physicals, though they recently became covered in Medicare's annual wellness visits for seniors.

IS THE EXAM MANDATORY?

No, but modern presidents typically undergo them regularly and release a doctor's report declaring they are "fit for duty."

WHAT'S KNOWN ABOUT TRUMP'S HEALTH?

Two months before the November 2016 election, Trump released a five-paragraph letter from his long-time physician, Dr. Harold Bornstein, who concluded that Trump "is in excellent physical health." A year earlier, Bornstein said in a December 2015 letter: "If elected, Mr. Trump, I can state unequivocally, will be the healthiest individual ever elected to the presidency."

The 2016 letter put Trump's blood pressure and cholesterol measurements in the healthy range, though he uses a cholesterol-lowering statin medication. His EKG, chest X-ray, echocardiogram and blood sugar were normal. The 6-foot-3 Trump weighed 236 pounds, and his body mass index, or BMI, of 29.5 put him in the category of being overweight for his height.

Trump takes Crestor for his cholesterol, a low-dose aspirin for heart attack prevention, Propecia to treat male-pattern baldness and antibiotics for rosacea. The doctor's 2016 letter stated that Trump's testosterone level, 441.6, was in the normal range, as was his PSA reading for prostate abnormalities and tests of his liver and thyroid.

Trump was 70 when he took office on Jan. 20, 2017, making him the oldest person ever elected to the nation's highest office.

WHAT ABOUT HIS LIFESTYLE?

He leads a largely sedentary lifestyle compared to his most recent predecessors, and has said he gets most of his exercise playing golf.

The American Heart Association says that the best types of exercise increase the heart rate and make a



In this Friday, Dec. 29, 2017 file photo, President Donald Trump walks with Gene Gibson, commanding officer at Coast Guard Station Lake Worth Inlet, as he arrives to meet with members of the U.S. Coast Guard, who he invited to play golf, at Trump International Golf Club, in West Palm Beach, Fla.

person breathe heavily, but that activities like golf don't provide as much cardiovascular benefit since they don't require much extra effort. The association suggests players walk the golf course instead of renting a golf cart. Trump drives a cart from hole to hole.

President Barack Obama played basketball, lifted weights, worked out on an elliptical machine or treadmill and played golf. George W. Bush traded running for mountain biking to preserve his knees. He also cleared brush from his central Texas ranch during the 100-degree summers. Bill Clinton was a runner who installed a jogging track at the White House. He also played golf and indulged in Big Macs.

Trump likes fast food, too, along with well-done steaks, chocolate cake and double scoops of vanilla

ice cream. He reportedly downs 12 Diet Cokes a day. In their recent book, "Let Trump Be Trump," former top campaign aides Corey Lewandowski and David Bossie described the four major food groups on Trump's campaign plane as "McDonald's, Kentucky Fried Chicken, pizza and Diet Coke."

The advisers also said one Trump meal in Chicago consisted of two Big Macs, two Filet-O-Fish sandwiches and a chocolate milkshake.

WHAT MEDICAL INFORMATION WILL THE WHITE HOUSE RELEASE?

How much of Trump's health information the public gets to see is up to the president, but Sanders said she expects the White House to release the same

kind of details past presidents have made public. Trump's doctor will release a brief statement on Friday after the exam, and then join her at Tuesday's briefing to offer a more detailed readout and answer questions.

Obama's three medical reports included sections on vital statistics; physical exam by system, such as eyes, pulmonary and gastrointestinal; lab results; his past medical and surgical history; his social history; and medications, among others.

WHO WILL EXAMINE TRUMP?

Trump's official doctor is Ronny L. Jackson, a Navy rear admiral who was the emergency medicine doctor for a shock trauma platoon in Taqaddum, Iraq, during Operation Iraqi Freedom,

according to his Navy bio. Jackson also provided care for Obama. Jackson became a White House physician in 2006. He has overseen health care for the Cabinet and senior staff, served as physician supervisor for the Camp David presidential retreat and led the White House Medical Unit.

Jackson will examine the president and line up specialists to conduct other parts of the exam. The White House has released no information about the other doctors who will examine Trump.

HAS TRUMP EVER BEEN TO WALTER REED HOSPITAL?

Trump has visited twice as president to cheer wounded service members. He awarded Purple Hearts during visits in April and December.

House OKs spy program after conflicting Trump tweets

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's puzzling tweets about a key U.S. spying law threw the House into temporary disarray Thursday, but lawmakers ended up renewing the law — with a new restriction on when the FBI can dig into the communications of Americans swept up in foreign surveillance.

During a hectic morning of House votes and presidential tweets, Trump's national intelligence director also issued new guidance for how officials can find out the names of Americans whose identities are blacked out in classified intelligence reports.

Trump has said previous rules were far too lax and led to damaging leaks about top aides, a claim fiercely contested by Democrats.

The new guidelines on "unmasking" Americans, however, were a side show to the House showdown over the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, reauthorizing a collection program set to expire on Jan. 19. The bill passed 256-164 and is

now headed to the Senate. It would extend for six years the program, which includes massive monitoring of international communications.

Trump has said he'll sign the renewal, but his first tweets Thursday suggested he had suddenly turned against the program, alarming intelligence officials.

In one tweet, Trump linked the program to a dossier that alleges his presidential campaign had ties to Russia.

"House votes on controversial FISA ACT today," Trump wrote, citing a Fox News headline. "This is the act that may have been used, with the help of the discredited and phony Dossier, to so badly surveil and abuse the Trump Campaign by the previous administration and others?"

Trump then spoke by telephone with House Speaker Paul Ryan, according to a Republican familiar with the call but not allowed to publicly discuss private conversations.

And a short time later, Trump changed his tune.

"This vote is about foreign surveillance of foreign bad guys on foreign land," he tweeted. "We need it! Get smart!"

Democrats pounced on his earlier criticism.

"This is irresponsible, untrue, and frankly it endangers our national security," Sen. Mark Warner of Virginia, the Senate intelligence committee's top Democrat, tweeted. "FISA is something the President should have known about long before he turned on Fox this morning."

National Intelligence Director Dan Coats applauded the House action, saying it was a critical step in protecting Americans and U.S. allies and "I have faith that my former colleagues in the Senate will follow the House's lead."

"Our security is not a partisan issue," said Coats, a former senator from Indiana.

Lawmakers had begun the day readying for two votes related to the program that intelligence officials call the "holy grail" because it provides insight into the thinking and actions of U.S. ad-

versaries.

While the program focuses on foreign targets, Americans' emails, phone calls and other communications get vacuumed up in the process. Privacy advocates and lawmakers from both parties have argued for years that government agencies should have to get warrants if they want to look at Americans' communications in the database.

The bill approved by the House allows the FBI to continue scanning the database, using search terms, for information on Americans. But it would require investigators to get probable cause warrants to view the actual content in cases unrelated to national security.

Exceptions would apply, such as for murder, kidnapping and other crimes specified in the bill. The House rejected an alternative proposal that would have imposed stiffer restrictions on the FBI, requiring warrants to query the database at all.

Rep. Adam Schiff, the House intelligence commit-

tee's top Democrat, warned that stiffer restrictions would "cripple" the intelligence program. He described the bill that passed as reaching a "very sensible balance."

However, fellow California Democrat Zoe Lofgren, who backed the defeated proposal, warned the government was gathering "the content of your phone calls, content of your emails, content of your text messages, video messages," and searching them "for crimes that have nothing to do with terrorism."

The vote cut across party lines, with 65 Democrats joining 191 Republicans to pass the bill. Forty-five Republicans and 119 Democrats voted no.

There are no obvious links between the dossier Trump spoke of, which includes salacious but unsubstantiated allegations against him, and the reauthorization of the spying program, or between the program and Trump's oft-repeated claims that the Obama administration wiretapped Trump Tower during the presidential campaign.

Top intelligence and FBI officials and Republicans in Congress have rejected the wiretapping accusations as false.

CNN reported last year that details from the dossier were used in part to get a warrant to monitor Trump adviser Carter Page after the FBI independently corroborated them. The Associated Press hasn't independently confirmed the report.

White House aides scrambled on Thursday to explain Trump's apparent about-face, saying the president was happy to see the House approve the bill.

"We weren't confused, but some of you were," press secretary Sarah Sanders said.

Just as the House was voting, National Intelligence Director Coats issued his own guidance on how redacted names of Americans in intelligence reports can be requested and disclosed. Only top intelligence officials or their designees can approve such requests, which must be justified and documented.

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Actresses, shows about women win big at Critics' Choice

SANTA MONICA, Calif. (AP) — It was a good night for women at the Critics' Choice Awards, which honored women-centered stories like "Big Little Lies," "The Handmaid's Tale" and "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel." "Wonder Woman" was named best action movie and star Gal Gadot accepted a special award for challenging gender stereotypes.

Yet the industry's ongoing sexual misconduct crisis remained an element of the ceremony as James Franco won an acting award early in the evening, hours after a report detailed new misconduct allegations against "The Disaster Artist" star and director. Franco did not attend Thursday's presentation at the Barker Hangar in Santa Monica, California, and his award was presented during a pre-telecast section broadcast only online.

Franco won a similar award at the Golden Globes earlier in the week, where most women dressed in black to protest sexual harassment. More women dressed in color on Thursday, but their determination to end gender discrimination remained just as fierce.

"I want to share this award with all the women and men who stand for what's right, standing for those who can't stand or speak for themselves," Gadot said as she accepted the second annual #SeeHer award. "My promise to you is: I will never be silenced. We will continue to band together to make strides, uniting for equality."

Guillermo del Toro's fantasy romance, "The Shape of Water," was the top film winner with four awards. Del Toro, who was also named best director, closed the show Thursday night by shouting that he's always

believed in the equality of women.

"Let me tell you one thing, if you don't do that, you don't know what you're missing," he said.

"The Shape of Water," which led all nominees with 14 bids, also claimed the best picture prize, along with score and production design honors.

Olivia Munn hosted the dinner ceremony, which was broadcast live on the CW network. The actress, who has spoken publicly about her own experiences with sexual misconduct in the entertainment industry, led the audience in a toast. Joined by actress Niecy Nash, they raised a glass "to all the good guys in Hollywood," who held meetings in conference rooms rather than hotel rooms.

"Congratulations for doing what you're supposed to do!" Nash said.

"Big Little Lies" received

four awards: best limited series, as well as acting honors for Nicole Kidman, Alexander Skarsgard and Laura Dern.

Kidman thanked the entertainment community "who show up to make really fantastic films and TV and let us do what we love."

"I love being an actor," said the 50-year-old Oscar winner. "Thank you for letting me do it all the way through to this age and beyond."

Stories about women also won in comedy categories. "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" was named best comedy series, and star Rachel Brosnahan won best actress in a comedy.

As she accepted her award, Brosnahan noted that even though women aren't wearing black like most did at the Golden Globe Awards earlier in the week, she said the fight to eradicate sexual harass-

ment continues.

"Let's not lose focus," she said, urging viewers to support the Time's Up initiative. "Let's keep this going."

Presenter Chris Hemsworth noted that women have had a stellar year at the box office.

"The three biggest movies of 2017 in North America were 'Star Wars: The Last Jedi,' 'Beauty and the Beast' and 'Wonder Woman,'" which all feature female protagonists, he said. "The biggest comedy was a female ensemble, 'Girls Trip,' and the biggest independent movie was written and directed by Greta Gerwig."

Hemsworth presented the best actress award to an absent Frances McDormand for "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri." The film also won for acting ensemble and supporting actor for Sam Rock-

well.

Double winners Thursday included "I, Tonya," "Darkest Hour," "Get Out" and "Coco."

"I, Tonya" brought acting accolades for star Margot Robbie and supporting actress Allison Janney. "Darkest Hour" won awards for makeup and lead actor for Gary Oldman. "Get Out" was named best sci-fi or horror film, and writer-director Jordan Peele claimed original screenplay honors. "Coco" won animated feature and original song for "Remember Me."

Many Critics' Choice Awards winners also took home Golden Globes, including McDormand, Rockwell, Oldman, Brosnahan and the stars of "Big Little Lies." Hollywood's awards season continues through March 4, when the Academy Awards are presented.

Some utility rates could go down after US corporate tax cuts

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Public utility regulators from Oklahoma to Massachusetts are considering lowering the rates that homeowners and businesses pay for electricity and natural gas after a federal tax overhaul signed into law by President Donald Trump reduced the corporate income tax rate by 14 percent.

The tax overhaul that went into effect Jan. 1 lowers the highest corporate income tax rate from 35 percent to 21 percent. Now, regulators and consumer groups such as AARP are demanding that the rates consumers pay be rolled back.

Utilities are allowed to incorporate federal income tax obligations into the rates they charge customers. Exactly when and where consumers might

see savings remains to be seen as regulators look into the matter.

SAVINGS FOR UTILITIES IN THE MILLIONS

Oklahoma Attorney General Mike Hunter estimates five public utilities operating in the state will save at least \$100 million a year.

In Montana, regulators estimate utilities will save tens of millions of dollars a year in taxes.

In Maryland, where three utilities asked that state's regulators reduce utility rates to reflect tax savings, Baltimore Gas & Electric estimated that it alone will pass \$82 million in tax savings on to customers.

Bob Anthony, a member

of the Oklahoma Corporation Commission, which regulates public utilities in the state, said consumers help pay a utility's federal taxes every time they pay their electricity or natural gas bill.

"It's not fair to over-collect for federal corporate income taxes," Anthony said.

Montana Public Service Commission Chairman Brad Johnson said the agency "wants to ensure that this money is not simply captured by shareholders, but instead is directed in a way that provides a long-term benefit to the consumer."

POTENTIAL CUSTOMER SAVINGS ON HOLD

But many regulators are allowing utilities to collect existing rates while they calculate changes in their tax liability.

The Oklahoma Corporation Commission, for example, voted to require utilities to track savings from the tax cut and report it to the commission within four months. The commission also instructed companies to create an account for the savings and refund those savings to customers later.

But regulators in other states have suggested the money could be used to help pay for capital projects and offset large, unusual expenses.

And some utilities are still seeking rate increases even with the tax savings.

Stan Whiteford, a spokesman for the Public Service of Oklahoma,

an affiliate of American Electric Power that's seeking a rate increase of \$170 million, said the utility's earnings are "far below the level that we are authorized to earn by the commission." PSO favors "a more thoughtful and comprehensive approach" to dealing with the tax savings, he said.

"We look forward to the opportunity to provide the commission with information in context on all of our costs," Whiteford said.

FEDERAL REGULATORS ASKED TO STEP IN

Attorneys general, consumer advocates and regulators in more than a dozen states — including New York, California, Illinois,

Texas and Virginia — have asked the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to get involved in the issue to ensure customers benefit from any windfalls utilities receive from the tax overhaul. A letter from the coalition calls for an investigation into the "justice and reasonableness" of utility rates following reduction of utilities' corporate tax rates.

AARP, which has supported a reduction of utility rates in Oklahoma and elsewhere, believes regulators "have an opportunity to save ratepayers a significant amount of money each month while still allowing utility companies the revenue necessary to provide reliable and affordable service to their customers," said AARP Oklahoma State Director Sean Voskuhl.

What will the #MeToo movement mean for Cosby's next trial?

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Jurors couldn't agree the first time around whether to accept a woman's story that "America's Dad," Bill Cosby, sexually assaulted her over a decade ago. Now he faces a retrial in less than 90 days in a vastly different cultural climate, one in which powerful men from Hollywood to the U.S. Senate are being toppled by allegations of sexual misconduct.

The jury in Cosby's case was deadlocked on charges he drugged and molested a woman in 2004, and the judge declared a mistrial in June. But that was before the revelations about movie producer Harvey Weinstein and the #MeToo movement burst into the public sphere.

The shift is clearly on Cosby's mind. He quipped to a reporter after shaking her hand Wednesday outside a Philadelphia restaurant: "Please don't put me on MeToo."

Legal experts say the seismic change in believing and supporting victims

of sexual harassment and assault — and the near-immediate ramifications for so many famous men — will surely trickle into the Cosby retrial, slated to begin April 2.

"Given the split last time, the challenge is going to be in jury selection," said Los Angeles lawyer Mark Geragos, who is not involved in the Cosby case but whose clients have included Michael Jackson. "Almost all cases are won and lost in jury selection, this case in particular."

In Cosby's first trial, jury selection was moved to Pittsburgh over defense fears that widespread publicity could make it difficult to find unbiased jurors in the Philadelphia area. Cosby has a new legal team, and its strategy may be very different.

The star of "The Cosby Show" is charged with knocking out accuser Andrea Constand with pills and sexually assaulting her at his home near Philadelphia. He has said Constand, a former executive with Temple University's

women's basketball program, consented to their sexual encounter.

"This is about whether you believe the victim or not, and the events of the last year certainly make the case harder for Cosby," said Philadelphia criminal lawyer Alan J. Tauber, who isn't involved in the case. "Ordinary people are seeing people they respect and trust undermined by terrible accusations."

Calls and emails seeking comment from Cosby's lawyers weren't returned.

During his first trial, the comedian's lawyers portrayed Cosby and Constand as lovers who had enjoyed secret "romantic interludes" and tried to sow doubt about her claims.

The lawyers reminded jurors she waited a year to contact the authorities and suggested her story evolved during interviews with police. They also noted Constand made dozens of telephone calls to Cosby, who was a member of Temple's board, after the alleged assault.

"This isn't talking to a trustee. This is talking to a lover," former Cosby lawyer Brian McMonagle said of one call that lasted 49 minutes. "Why are we running from the truth of this case — this relationship? Why?"

In a case like Cosby's, in which the evidence is primarily testimonial and not physical, credibility is key.

Diane Rosenfeld, a lecturer and director of a gender violence program at Harvard Law School, believes the floodgates of victim support opened after the Weinstein allegations and not after Cosby's accusers came forward for two reasons: perceived credibility of the victims and the likability of the accused.

"Bill Cosby had been such a treasured American hero, giving us this friendly, accessible view of a successful African-American family," she said. "He was such a loveable public presence, his accusers didn't have as much power collectively or public notoriety as victims in the

Weinstein case."

As the #MeToo movement gained momentum, the accused lost jobs, TV shows, book deals and a Senate seat. Kevin Spacey was even erased from a completed movie.

"I think the shift is here to stay," said Carol Tracy, executive director of the Women's Law Project in Philadelphia. "It might not be on the front page next year, but I do think it will have a significant impact going forward in the criminal justice system and on how jurors view these cases."

Constand's lawyer said she was floored to hear Cosby's comment about the #MeToo movement.

"Apparently Mr. Cosby still believes sexual assault is a laughing matter," said attorney Dolores Troiani. "You have to hope he is alone in that opinion."

The Associated Press does not typically identify people alleging sexual assault unless they grant permission, which Constand had done.

Montgomery County

District Attorney Kevin Steele, who is retrying Cosby, said in a statement he hopes one of the positive outcomes of the trial is that sexual assault victims feel they can be heard.

"And for a number of reasons," he said, "that seems to be happening now across the country."

Geragos said the cultural shift might make it easier to get a jury from a defense perspective, because a lot of people who might have been pro-prosecution will self-disqualify by saying they can't be fair in the current climate.

Some people feel the pendulum has swung too far in targeting men, he said, and those are the types of jurors the defense needs to tap into.

It will be difficult to find 12 people to acquit Cosby in the current climate, predicted Tauber, the Philadelphia criminal lawyer.

"Victory," he said, "might just be another hung jury."



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Saudi women to enter stadiums for first time to watch soccer

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP) — Saudi women will for the first time be allowed to enter a sports stadium on Friday to watch a soccer match between two local teams — though they will be segregated from the male-only crowd with designated seating in the so-called "family section."

The move is Saudi Arabia's first social reform planned for this year granting women greater rights. The kingdom has also announced that starting in June, women will be allowed to drive, lifting the world's only ban on female drivers.

To prepare for the change, the kingdom has designated "family sections" in the stands for women, separated by barriers from the male-only crowd. The stadiums have also been fitted with female prayer areas, restrooms and smoking areas, as well as separate entrances and parking lots for female spectators.

While many have welcomed the decision, others have spoken out against it. An Arabic hashtag on Twitter about women entering stadiums had more than 50,000 tweets by mid-day.

Many used the hashtag to write that women's place should be in the home, focusing on their children and preserving their faith, and not out at a stadium where male crowds frequently curse and chant raucously.

Saudi Arabia's 32-year-old Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who is King Salman's son and heir, is seen as the driving force behind these changes. He is set to inherit a country where more than half the population is under 25 years-old and hun-



In this Sept. 23, 2017 file photo released by Saudi Press Agency, SPA, Saudi men and women attend national day ceremonies at the King Fahd stadium in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Saudi women will for the first time be allowed to enter a sports stadium on Friday, Jan. 12, 2018, to watch a soccer match between two local teams — though they will be segregated from the male-only crowd with designated seating in the so-called "family section." The move is Saudi Arabia's first social reform planned for this year granting women greater rights.

gry for change. Rather than grant citizens greater political rights, the crown prince has instead looked to boost his popularity by curbing the influence of ultraconservatives. His reforms are also aimed in part at raising local spending on entertainment as the country faces years of budget deficit amid continued lower oil prices.

The first stadium to

open its doors to women will be in the Red Sea city of Jiddah for a match between Saudi soccer teams Al-Ahli and Al-Batin later on Friday evening. The national stadium in the capital, Riyadh, will open to women a day later, on Saturday, followed by the western city of Dammam next Thursday.

These stadiums were built with hundreds of millions of dollars when oil

prices were nearly double what they are now. The government spent lavishly on the stadiums in an effort to appease young Saudis and provide spaces for fans eager to cheer on local clubs, as well as hold national parades and ceremonies.

In a one-off, the main stadium in Riyadh allowed families to enter and watch National Day festivities in September — marking the

first time women had set foot inside the stadium.

A Saudi woman who tried to attend a soccer game in Jiddah in 2015 was arrested. Police were quoted in local media at the time as saying that security spotted her at the stadium "deliberately disguised" in pants, a long-sleeve top, a hat and sunglasses to avoid detection.

Over the years, though, there have been some ex-

ceptions for foreign women.

In 2015, an Australian female supporter of Western Sydney Wanderers soccer club was permitted to attend a match at Riyadh's main stadium and a group of American women traveling with members of U.S. Congress watched a local club match, also in Riyadh.

Germany's Merkel closer to breaking impasse over new govt

BERLIN (AP) — Chancellor Angela Merkel took a significant step toward ending Germany's lengthy political impasse by securing a preliminary agreement Friday to enter formal coalition talks with a center-left party. The deal was welcomed by Germany's European allies, but her prospective partner now faces a tough task to sell it to skeptical supporters.

Exhausted negotiators from Merkel's conservative Union bloc and the center-left Social Democrats presented their deal, which includes pledges to strengthen the European Union and keep a lid on the number of migrants entering Germany, following over 24 hours of non-stop talks to cap a week of wrangling.

"We have achieved outstanding results," said the Social Democrats' leader, Martin Schulz. But to make a new government a reality, he must first persuade a party congress Jan. 21 to agree to hold formal coalition negotiations. Then, if those talks are successful, he must steer a coalition

deal through a ballot of the full party membership.

If things go well, a new government could be formed by Easter, said Horst Seehofer, the leader of the Christian Social Union — the Bavaria-only sister party to Merkel's Christian Democratic Union.

"If we succeed, these could be four very, very good years," Seehofer said. "I am already speaking of these years because I believe we will succeed."

The prospective partners have governed Germany together for the past four years but Schulz, Merkel's defeated challenger in Germany's Sept. 24 election, initially said after the Social Democrats crashed to a disastrous result that they would go into opposition. That decision was popular with members.

He reluctantly reconsidered after Merkel's coalition talks with two smaller parties collapsed in November.

The conservatives also performed poorly in the election, and the three coalition parties' support dropped by a total of near-

ly 14 percentage points.

"This election result was a signal to politicians that business as usual wouldn't work and that we must show the people in this country we understand," Seehofer said. "We made that the basis of our work."

Seehofer's CSU, which has taken a hard line on migration, has sought to reinforce its law-and-order profile in the face of a challenge from the nationalist Alternative for Germany party, which entered parliament for the first time in September.

Friday's agreement states that the number of new asylum-seekers shouldn't exceed a range of 180,000-220,000 annually. And there will be a 1,000-per-month limit on the number of close relatives allowed to join migrants in Germany who have a status below full asylum. That falls short of conservative demands for maintaining a block on such family reunification, but also is more limited than what the Social Democrats sought.

Schulz obtained a minor reform to how the public

health insurance system is financed — far from his party's original proposal — as well as a commitment to guarantee the current level of pensions through 2025, among other things. He didn't secure an increase in the top income tax rate that his party proposed.

Merkel highlighted promises to hire 15,000 more police officers and 2,000 people to strengthen the justice system.

The three parties didn't officially give up Germany's target of a 40 percent cut in carbon dioxide emissions by 2020 compared with 1990, which a draft earlier this week had suggested they would.

The deal pledged that Germany will play an active role in the debate on the EU's future and strengthening European integration — an issue dear to Schulz, a former European Parliament president.

The parties pledged to fight tax dumping and evasion in Europe, pushing for "fair taxation of big companies" including internet giants Google,

Apple, Facebook and Amazon, and called for unspecified minimum rates for corporate tax. They said Germany wants to reform the eurozone in partnership with France and is prepared to pay more into the EU budget.

Merkel currently leads a caretaker government, limiting her ability to take major policy initiatives as French President Emmanuel Macron pushes an ambitious European reform agenda.

"We have, in what feels like a long time since the election, seen that the world will not wait for us," Merkel said. "We are convinced that we need a new awakening for Europe."

"So I have no worries about us finding common solutions with France," she added.

France and Bulgaria, which currently holds the rotating EU presidency, welcomed Friday's developments. Jean-Claude Juncker, the head of the EU's executive Commission, said the European part of the deal was "a significant, positive, constructive future-looking

contribution to the European policy."

If the new coalition doesn't come together, the only remaining options would be an unprecedented minority government led by Merkel's conservatives or a new election. President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who alone has the power to dissolve parliament, has made clear he doesn't want a new vote — and polls so far suggest that the result wouldn't be significantly different.

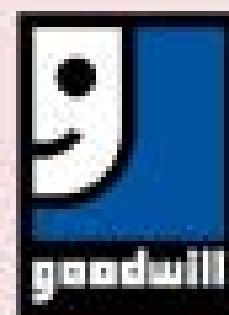
Prominent Social Democrat opponents of a new "grand coalition" of Germany's biggest parties weren't placated by Friday's deal and vowed to keep fighting it.

Kevin Kuehnert, the head of the party's youth wing, criticized "cheap compromises." Left-leaning lawmaker Hilde Mattheis said the result was "disappointing" and would produce "no new policies for more fairness and solidarity." Another lawmaker, Frank Schwabe, described the deal on migrant's relatives as "shabby."



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Amazon looks to build on 1st season of NFL streaming

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Amazon had a mostly successful debut into live streaming of major sports events, with increased audience and an improved viewing experience in its first season showing NFL games.

The question looking ahead is how aggressively will Amazon be in the sports streaming landscape?

"It's too soon to say," said Jim DeLorenzo, the head of Amazon Sports. "We're just in the early stages here. We were definitely pleased with the way things played out. It was great to partner with the NFL on this and we were really happy with how our customers reacted to it. But it's too soon to say this impacts our strategy going forward."

Amazon.com Inc. already had smaller deals with the ATP Tour to air last year's Next Gen ATP Finals and the rights to show some men's tennis tournaments to customers in the United Kingdom and Ireland, as well as an upcoming deal to show beach volleyball events.

But the NFL is the biggest endeavor Amazon has made so far after paying \$50 million for the rights to stream 10 Thursday night games and an additional one on Christmas.

Amazon.com Inc. already had smaller deals with the ATP Tour to air last year's Next Gen ATP Finals and the rights to show some men's tennis tournaments to customers in the United Kingdom and Ireland, as well as an upcoming deal to show beach volleyball events.

On a per capita basis, the biggest audience was in the District of Columbia, followed by Washington, Colorado, Oregon and Utah. Prime members in Montana, Wyoming, South Dakota, North Dakota and North Carolina watched for the longest amount of time.

Viewers who already are used to watching movies and scripted shows on Amazon's various platforms stayed longer on the NFL, with the average viewer watching for 63 minutes.

The feed was usually much cleaner than on Twitter or some other streaming services and was delivered even faster than some cable systems, as opposed to the usual delay for online streaming.

"This was really our first step into distributing live sporting events at scale on a global basis," DeLorenzo said. "Of course there was learning. Because we're so early on in that process of distributing this kind of content to our customers, there are a number of things we can look at along the way."

Even though television audiences for the NFL dropped for the second straight year as people cut the cord and drop cable or satellite service, the streaming audience on Amazon was still a small fraction compared with the more than 10 million viewers who watched on average the Thursday night games on NBC, CBS or the NFL Network. CBS and NBC pay about \$45 million per game for the rights to their Thursday night broadcasts.

The NFL will decide soon its plans for Thursday night games next season, but it is expected to once again split the package between a broadcast and streaming partner. Amazon offered alternate language feeds for the broadcast to cater to some of the fans from more than 220 countries who tuned into the games, with feeds in Spanish, Portuguese and "U.K. English," for those less familiar with the American version of football.

"That was a fun component of what we were doing and we were glad to see customers reacted well to that as well," DeLorenzo said.

Opera 'Carmen' altered in anti-violence protest

FLORENCE, Italy (AP) — Carmen, the opera heroine, gets to live instead of being slain — thanks to a bold twist to the finale of the Georges Bizet work by some who believe it's time to say enough to violence against women.

The production of "Carmen" this month at the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino theater in Florence is the talk of the town, and seats are sold out through the last performance on Jan. 18.

In the classic opera, first performed in Paris in 1875, the feisty gypsy Carmen is murdered by Don Jose in a fit of jealousy. But those in the cast thought the time was ripe for a new finale given Italy's recent, burgeoning movement to combat male violence against female partners or relatives. And so this production's ending has the heroine shooting to death Don Jose.

"It's a way to say to all, men and women, 'enough of the violence,'" soprano Veronica Simeoni told The Associated Press before Wednesday's performance. "In this case, there's a precise message against violence targeting women, a plague that has concerned all of us always, and in this moment is before the eyes of everybody."

The reaction from opera-goers and on social media was mixed. Luca Paoletti, who was in the audience, was lukewarm about the ending.

"I do not consider it a great idea, but it can be useful for talking about the issue of violence on women. It takes the risk to open the door to interpretation that can twist the real spirit of the opera, but we can accept it as a provocation," he said.

Opera reviewer Alberto Matteoli of La Stampa thought the production fell short of the revolution that it hoped to provoke.

"It is legitimate to do everything on the stage, but the politically correct does not have retroactive value," Matteoli wrote.

Simeoni, the soprano, said the reactions were understandable, given the often traditional approach to opera.

"The opera buff wants to go to the opera and see the scene exactly as it was, as seen for so many years at home or on their own video cassettes or DVDs and or maybe they have seen it so many years ago, and makes a fuss," Simeoni said.

The theater's superintendent, Cristiano Chiarot, told the Italian news agency ANSA earlier this week that the production is sold out. He said the production as it is now will stay in the theater's repertory for the next two or three years, and will be back on the program in fall 2018.

Liam Neeson rides again in 'The Commuter'

BY JAKE COYLE
AP Film Writer

The tagline for the Liam Neeson Metro-North thriller "The Commuter" — "Lives are on the line" — feels like a missed opportunity. I would have gone with: "The quiet car is about to get loud."

It's been ten years since Neeson's unlikely reign as the movies' best action hero began with "Taken" — the little Paris kidnapping that unlocked Neeson's special set of skills. What has followed has been a decade of lean, blunt and glum thrillers (three "Taken" movies, "Non-Stop," "The Grey") anchored by the looming and still quite potent presence of Neeson.

Neeson has suggested that, at 65, he's nearing the end of the line. So "The Commuter," which reteams him for the fourth time with Spanish director Jaume Collet-Serra, may be one of our last chances to see Neeson kick some butt. "The Commuter" rides very much the same rail as his previous movies with Collet-Serra; it's a hostage crisis tick-tock that speeds straight ahead. Collet-Serra's genre mechanics, stylized and sober, are efficient. His trains run on time, even if — especially in "The Commuter" — a rush-hour's worth of implausibility eventually wrecks the thrill.

Neeson plays Michael McCauley, an ex-cop who has spent his last ten years as a life insurance salesman, commuting Monday through Friday into Grand Central from his family's suburban home up the Hudson in Tarrytown, New York. The movie's clever overlapping opening montage shows the repetition of his days, begun every day with 1010 Wins on the radio, a ride from his wife to the train station and the



This image released by Lionsgate shows Vera Farmiga, left, and Liam Neeson in a scene from "The Commuter."

crowded but solitary walk through Grand Central.

But one day is a particularly bad one. McCauley is fired five years short of retirement. With his savings depleted by the 2008 financial crisis and college tuition coming soon for his high-school graduate son, McCauley's panic is palpable. He stops for a drink with his old police partner (Patrick Wilson) before boarding the train home. There, he's greeted by a Hitchcockian stranger on the train (Vera Farmiga) who explains that McCauley will make \$100,000 on his ride home if he can only find the person on the train "who doesn't belong."

McCauley, as he soon discovers, has stepped into the plot of an absurdly powerful syndicate that will use him to ferret out a crucial FBI witness. The gaps in the story's logic aren't to be minded. The web around McCauley is mysterious. And for Cold Spring, a few stops past McCauley's usual one, to be epicenter of such intrigue is curious. But then again, even the Feds deserve a bit of antiquing and

a brisk hike.

Most eyebrow raising for the 1.6 to 3.1 million who trudge into and out of Manhattan everyday will be an unforgivable incongruity in the train's otherwise largely accurate path. It makes various subway stops through Manhattan, when every commuter since the time of "Revolutionary Road" knows it runs straight to Harlem. It's the kind of inaccuracy that will cause untold swarms of strap-hangers to throw their MetroCards at the screen.

But Collet-Serra, whose "Non-Stop" similarly relished the confined space of an airplane cabin, is too interested with swooping his camera through the train to care much about the blur on the outside. But he knows well how to shoot Neeson, following the actor's hulking frame from car to car.

Their movies are, in part, parables for the terrorism age. Like in "Non-Stop," where Neeson played an air marshal, the protagonist of "The Commuter" must wrestle with the morality of uncovering the one threat in a sea of maybe-innocent,

maybe-guilty faces, some of them "regulars" (daily riders), some of them unfamiliar. As before, Neeson is a lone warrior trying to stay decent in a fallen world. With pandering references to the big banks throughout, "The Commuter," has just enough smarts to make its final destination disappointing.

The old equation of man-plus-locomotive has been a dependable one for the movies since Buster Keaton rode the rails in "The General." (See also: Burt Lancaster in "The Train," and Denzel Washington in "Unstoppable.") "The Commuter" isn't in that class, but there are worse tickets to punch, especially in January. Such a woeful time of year for new releases warrants repeating the old warning: If you see something, say something.

"The Commuter," a Lionsgate release, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association of America for "some intense action/violence, and language." Running time: 104 minutes. Two stars out of four.

Cindy Crawford recreates iconic Super Bowl ad 26 years later

BY MESFIN FEKADU
AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Cindy Crawford is heading back to the Super Bowl: The model has recreated her iconic 1992 Super Bowl ad for Pepsi, now featuring her 18-year-old son.

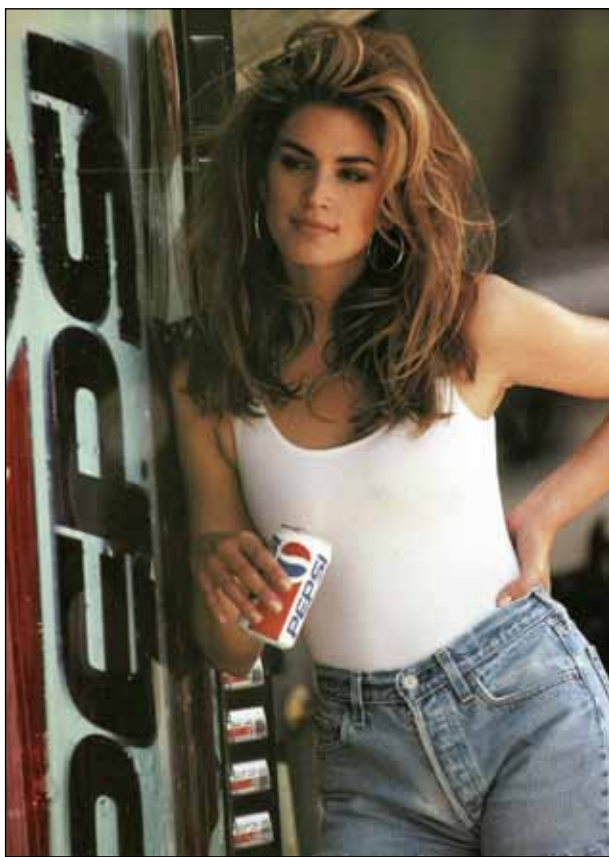
Crawford recently filmed the commercial, which will debut at Super Bowl 52 on Feb. 4. It includes her son, Presley Walker Gerber, as well as footage from Michael Jackson's memorable Pepsi commercial.

The 51-year-old said she didn't hesitate to recreate the ad 26 years later, especially since she was able to work with her son.

"Just as a mother, we drove to work together that day and we shared the same trailer. And when he was doing his thing, I was just a proud mom watching from the sidelines, trying not to annoy him," she said in a phone interview Wednesday.

The new Super Bowl ad, dubbed "This Is The Pepsi," is part of the company's "Pepsi Generation" campaign honoring the brand's 120-year history in pop culture.

The original features Crawford in a tank top



This image released by Pepsi shows actress-model Cindy Crawford in a scene from her 1992 iconic Super Bowl Pepsi commercial.

and jean shorts — made from her own jeans she brought to the set that day — driving a Lamborghini and stopping at a gas station to buy a can of soda. She said she felt the 1992 spot "became such a classic for so many reasons."

"It was one of those moments in my career that when I walked down the street, people were like, 'Pepsi!' Or I'd be at a bar and people would send me over a Pepsi," she said, laughing. "And it's funny because during

Halloween a lot of women will dress up as me in that commercial. It's like an easy Halloween costume."

Crawford plans to attend the Super Bowl in Minneapolis, where her father lives.

"I think probably that will be the highlight for me is just getting to see my dad," she said. "I took him to a Super Bowl before I had kids ... and it's not like he ever wanted to go to an awards show or something like that, but if I can take him to the Super Bowl, that's a pretty cool thing for me to be able to do with my dad."

Crawford's modeling talents have not only extended to her son — her 16-year-old daughter graces the February cover of Vogue Paris.

"She's more ready for it. She's just so much more sophisticated and worldly than I was at that age," she said of Kaia Jordan Gerber.

"I do know the business ... (and) I feel like who better to help guide my kids?" she added.

"It kind of happened for both of them and they listen to my advice when it comes to this. The one thing they can't say is, 'Mom, you don't get it.'"

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Trump group says memo should have kept email from prosecutor

WASHINGTON (AP) — A group representing President Donald Trump's transition team says a memo in the hands of the General Services Administration should have stopped the agency from turning over tens of thousands of emails to the special counsel investigating Russian meddling in the 2016 election.

A lawyer for Trump for America said in a letter to GSA that a cache of transition emails the agency delivered last August to Robert Mueller's investigators was actually owned and controlled by the transition. The transition claims it believes a GSA official communicated that warning in a memo to Mueller's investigators before the special counsel took possession of the emails.

The transition group's letter, obtained Wednesday by The Associated Press, asked GSA to find the memo under the federal Freedom of Information Act and turn it over to Trump for America. GSA provides workplaces, goods and services for federal agencies.

Trump for America general counsel Kory Langhofer did not explain in the letter how the group was made aware that the GSA memo exists but said "it is our understanding" the document was sent in June by the GSA's top lawyer, Richard Beckler, to Mueller's team. Beckler has since died.

"The GSA had no right to access or control the records but was simply serving as Trump for America's records custodian," Langhofer

wrote in the letter delivered Monday. He added that the GSA "unlawfully" handed over "thousands of private and privileged (presidential transition team) emails to the Special Counsel's office, and failed to notify (Trump for America) of the production."

GSA spokeswoman Pamela Dixon declined Wednesday to comment on the letter. Peter Carr, spokesman for the special counsel, also declined to comment, citing an earlier statement that when the counsel's office obtains emails during its investigations "we have secured either the account owner's consent or appropriate criminal process."

In September, investigators for Mueller obtained tens of thousands of emails that related to 13 senior Trump

transition officials. Among them was former national security adviser Michael Flynn, who pleaded guilty to one count of making false statements to FBI agents in January and is now cooperating with Mueller's investigation. Flynn was fired by Trump in February for misleading senior administration officials about his contacts with Russia's ambassador to the U.S.

Mueller so far has indicted two other Trump campaign officials and a fourth has pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI.

Ken Nahigian, Trump for America's executive director, said the transition made the records request to respond to GSA's role in the "unlawful seizure of Transition documents by Mr. Mueller."

Nahigian said the agency's

cooperation with the special counsel without the knowledge of the transition "will irreversibly chill the operations of future presidential transition teams."

The GSA in recent years has provided office space, phones and computers to presidential transition teams. After Trump's presidential election victory in November 2016, his transition officials relied on the federal agency's site to host and archive its electronic communications. The transition's emails were slated for deletion after Trump's inauguration, but the transition asked the GSA to retain the records after receiving document requests from Congress last spring.

Some criminal law experts have expressed skepticism about the transition's claims

to legal ownership of the emails, but Langhofer and other transition officials insist that Beckler had agreed with Trump for America both in phone conversations and in the sought-after memo that the emails belonged to the transition.

Langhofer said that Beckler "acknowledged unequivocally" that the transition team "owned and controlled" the emails and that the GSA "was simply serving as TFA's records custodian." In Beckler's absence last August, his deputy, Lenny Loewentritt, made the decision to turn over the trove of transition emails to Mueller's team — without notifying Trump for America, Langhofer said.

Coal executive's 'action plan' finds success under Trump

WASHINGTON (AP) — In the early days of the Trump administration, the head of one of America's largest coal companies sent a four-page "action plan" to the White House calling for rollbacks of Obama-era environmental and mine safety regulations.

"We have listed our suggested actions in order of priority," Robert "Bob" Murray, the chairman and CEO of Ohio-based Murray Energy, wrote in his March 1 letter addressed to Vice President Mike Pence. "We are available to assist you and your administration in any way that you request."

A review of the memo by The Associated Press shows Murray, an early campaign supporter of President Donald Trump and major GOP political donor, has gotten about half the items on his

wish list. They include pulling the United States out of the Paris climate accords and revoking the Clean Power Plan, President Barack Obama's signature effort to limit planet-warming emissions from coal-fired power plants.

Murray has spoken widely about his policy priorities in the intervening months, but a copy of his four-page plan became public this week after it was obtained by Democratic Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island and first reported by The New York Times.

Under Trump, the Mine Safety and Health Administration has also moved to reconsider rules meant to protect miners from breathing coal and rock dust — the primary cause of black lung disease — and diesel exhaust, which can cause

cancer.

Other Murray priorities, such as eliminating federal tax credits for wind turbines and solar panels, have floundered, however. The renewable energy tax breaks were largely retained in the final Republican-drafted tax plan signed by Trump last month.

And despite Trump's campaign pledges to put scores of coal back to work by ending what he and Murray have derided as Obama's "War on Coal," the administration's regulatory rollback has thus far had modest economic benefits.

Only about 500 coal mining jobs were added in Trump's first year, bringing the total to about 50,900 nationally, according to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics. The nation's utilities have also continued to shutter coal-fired plants in favor

of those burning natural gas made cheaper and more abundant by new drilling technologies.

In an interview with the AP on Wednesday, Murray said Trump and his appointees have overall done a great job helping his industry, rating them "nearly a 10" in the first year. He specifically credited Environmental Protection Administrator Scott Pruitt and Energy Secretary Rick Perry with being "stars."

Murray said he had private meetings with both Pruitt and Perry last year to discuss his policy goals.

"President Trump has done a wonderful job in addressing what is needed to improve the cost of electricity in America and to improve the reliability, security and resilience of the electric power grid," Murray said. "I

give him very high marks."

Spokespeople for Pruitt and Perry did not immediately respond to questions Wednesday about Murray's action plan.

Murray said he is still hopeful that Pruitt will follow through on the second-highest priority item on his 2017 action plan, revoking EPA's 2009 finding that emitting greenhouse gases in the atmosphere threatens public health and welfare. The finding provided the legal underpinnings for Obama's efforts to regulate carbon emissions as pollutants under the Clean Air Act.

Murray also expressed disappointment that Trump appointees on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission voted Monday to reject a proposal by Perry to make coal and nuclear power plants eligible for billions

of dollars in government subsidies.

AP reported last year that Murray had asked the Trump administration to issue an emergency order protecting coal-fired power plants from closing. Murray warned that failure to act could cause thousands of coal miners to be laid off and force his largest customer, Ohio-based FirstEnergy Solutions, into bankruptcy.

Perry ultimately rejected Murray's request, but later asked FERC to boost coal and nuclear plants by subsidizing their continued operation.

The Republican-controlled commission voted unanimously to reject Perry's claim that further retirements of coal-fired power plants pose a threat to reliability of the nation's electric grid.

States rethink sexual misconduct policies after complaints

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — After a tumultuous few months that saw numerous lawmakers accused of sexual misconduct, a majority of state legislatures across the country are considering strengthening sexual harassment policies that have gone unheeded or unchanged for years.

A 50-state review by The Associated Press found that almost all legislative chambers now have at least some type of written sexual harassment policy, though they vary widely, and many are placing a greater emphasis on preventing and punishing sexual misconduct as they convene for their 2018 sessions.

This week alone, lawmakers in Arizona, Idaho and Rhode Island underwent detailed training about sexual harassment, some for the first time.

Yet about a third of all legislative chambers do not require lawmakers to receive training about what constitutes sexual harassment, how to report it and what consequences it carries, the AP's review found.

The AP also found that only a minority of legislative bodies conduct external investigations into complaints, with most others entrusting lawmakers or staff to look into allegations against colleagues. That has contributed to a culture in some capitols

in which the targets of sexual harassment have been reluctant to come forward with complaints — until recently.

Lawmakers around the country have said it's now time to take concrete steps to change that culture.

"Let's treat all women — regardless of their background, their age, their political affiliation, their role in the process — as ladies, as we would like anybody to treat our wives, our daughters, mothers, sisters," said J.D. Mesnard, the Republican who heads the Arizona state House, where lawmakers took part in mandated sexual harassment training this week.

A wave of sexual misconduct claims against prominent figures in entertainment, media and politics gained momentum last fall after a multitude of women made allegations against movie producer Harvey Weinstein.

In the past year, at least 14 legislators in 10 states have resigned from office following accusations of sexual harassment or misconduct, according to the AP's review. At least 16 others in more than a dozen states have faced other repercussions, such as the voluntary or forced removal from legislative leadership positions. Some others remain defiant in the face of ongoing investigations into sexual harassment com-

plaints.

The AP found that about three-fourths of the states have at least one legislative chamber that has updated its sexual harassment policy during the past several months, developed specific proposals to do so or undertaken a review of whether changes are needed.

The Arizona House had no written sexual harassment policy until November, when Mesnard issued one after a female lawmaker accused a male colleague of sexually harassing her. In the weeks that followed, several other women came forward with stories of crude behavior by state Rep. Don Shooter.

On Tuesday, at the start of mandatory sexual harassment training, Shooter stood before colleagues and apologized for conduct he called "jarring, insensitive and demeaning." But he denied the most serious complaint — that he tried to pressure Rep. Michelle Ugenti-Rita into a sexual relationship.

Ugenti-Rita was sitting just three rows in front of Shooter and appeared shaken at times as he spoke.

Shooter, a Republican, has been removed as head of the appropriations committee as an investigation into his conduct continues.

In Kentucky, the acting House speaker has appointed a committee to devise a

formal system to address workplace complaints. That comes after former Speaker Jeff Hoover resigned his leadership post following revelations that he had paid to keep a sexual harassment settlement secret. Three other lawmakers who signed the secret settlement were removed as chairmen of various committees.

"If people felt like they had to be accountable and responsible for their behavior and there were strict guidelines for what they had to follow, sometimes that's all people need is a list of duties or a list of dos and don'ts," said Kentucky Rep. Mary Lou Marzian, who has been pushing for a formal House policy.

Legislative chambers in Alaska, California, Colorado, Minnesota, Nevada and Ohio are among the states considering improved policies on sexual harassment — in each case after sexual harassment claims were brought to light.

In Washington state, more than 40 lawmakers joined scores of other women in a letter last November calling for a change in the capitol culture. They wrote it has "too often functioned to serve and support harassers' power and privilege over protection of those who work for them."

A Senate panel subsequently approved annual training for senators and

staff.

Among states that require sexual harassment training for lawmakers, the frequency varies greatly. Some offer it annually or every other year, while others require it only once, when a lawmaker is first elected.

The New Mexico House and Senate last provided sexual harassment training to lawmakers in 2004, but will hold mandatory training next week.

Experts say more frequent training is best, but they emphasize that its effectiveness also depends on how it is conducted.

Providing only generic definitions of sexual harassment or relying solely on online and video training can be unproductive, said Jennifer Drobac, a law professor at Indiana University who focuses on sexual harassment law. A better approach uses in-person training with real-life scenarios about what constitutes harassment and what to do about it, she said.

Debbie S. Dougherty, a communications professor at the University of Missouri who researches sexual harassment policies, recommends that such policies include more emotional language — referring to harassers as predators, for example — to emphasize the seriousness of the issue. They also should be tailored to the

unique work culture of a legislature, where the people with the most influence are elected rather than hired.

Experts say external investigations also are important for people to feel comfortable in reporting sexual harassment allegations. Yet the AP's review found that only about a dozen House chambers and slightly more Senate chambers conduct external investigations, with several additional chambers offering it as an option.

Among those is the Texas House, which until December had a written policy encouraging accusers who wanted to pursue an external complaint to call a phone number that didn't work at a state commission that was defunct. The revised House policy explains the internal complaint process in greater detail, offers an external review on a situational basis and gives accusers options for filing complaints through an external agency.

The Missouri House updated its policies after former Speaker John Diehl Jr. resigned in 2015 while admitting to sending sexually suggestive text messages to a House intern. Among other things, the new policy requires a private attorney to be hired to investigate any sexual harassment allegations involving lawmakers.



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Local governments won't say what they're offering Amazon

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — State and local governments have been more than happy to play up the amenities they think make their locations the best choice for Amazon's second headquarters. But many of them will not disclose the tax breaks or other financial incentives they are offering the online giant.

More than 15 states and cities, including Chicago, Cleveland and Las Vegas, refused requests from The Associated Press to detail the promises they made to try to lure the company.

Among the reasons given: Such information is a "trade secret" and disclosing it would put them at a competitive disadvantage.

"We want to be in the best possible position to negotiate. We don't want the whole world to know our strategy," Democratic Gov. Gina Raimondo of Rhode Island said in a radio interview.

Amazon's search for a second headquarters city has triggered an unprecedented competition among governments around North America to attract a \$5 billion project that promises to create 50,000 jobs. The retailing behemoth has made clear that tax breaks and grants will be a big factor in its decision. It received 238 proposals and said it will announce a decision sometime this year.

Public records laws around the country vary, but when courting businesses, governments generally aren't required to disclose tax breaks and other incentives during the negotiating phase.

Open-government advocates, though, argue that Amazon is a special case because of the way it has turned the project into a public auction, the large amount of taxpayer money at stake, and the political clout the Seattle-based company could have in its new home.

"They're just acting like this is another secret deal," said Greg LeRoy, head of Good Jobs First, a nonprofit group that tracks economic development spending. "This is a nutty situation."

He said there are no grounds for hiding the information since no one is



This Wednesday, Oct. 18, 2017, file photo shows City Hall in Philadelphia. The cities of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh are both attempting to woo Amazon to build its second headquarters in Pennsylvania. In Philadelphia, an independent development agency overseeing the city's bid said it spent \$160,000 to develop and promote its proposal, including a website and video.

negotiating yet with Amazon.

"It's all paid for by taxpayer dollars," he said. "Therefore, it should all be public."

In recent months, Amazon suitors in Maine have cited New England's charm, skiing and beaches, Detroit has cited its rebounding downtown, and others have boasted of their labor forces or public transportation. Chicago recruited "Star Trek" actor William Shatner to help narrate a video pitch in hopes of getting the attention of Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos, a devoted Trekkie.

The AP asked for copies of the financial proposals from dozens of places trying to draw Amazon. The AP also sought invoices outlining how much public money was used to create

the proposals and promote them via public relations campaigns.

Some state and local governments have trumpeted the financial incentives they are dangling. New Jersey's pitch contains \$7 billion in tax breaks, a draft of Houston's plan calls for about \$268 million in inducements, and Boston's offer includes \$75 million for affordable housing for Amazon employees and others.

But others — including Delaware, Georgia, Kansas, Nevada, Virginia and such cities as Detroit; Philadelphia; Orlando, Florida; Louisville, Kentucky; and Albuquerque, New Mexico — won't say exactly what they're offering.

Chicago said releasing such information "could give an advantage to another applicant," and it turned

over to the AP 82 pages of nondisclosure agreements. Charlotte, North Carolina, gave a similar explanation.

An Amazon spokesman declined to comment. Amazon said in its request for proposals in September that "certain aspects" of the project and details about the company "are confidential, proprietary and constitute trade secrets."

Many of the bids received by Amazon were submitted by outside groups such as regional economic development agencies that are not typically required by public records laws to release such information.

More than 40 other requests from the AP for financial information produced no responses from government agencies or are still under consideration.

In Texas, for example,

cities including Dallas, Houston and Austin responded to the AP's request by asking the state attorney general for an opinion on whether some of the financial details can be withheld for competitive reasons.

Kelley Shannon, executive director of the nonprofit Freedom of Information Foundation of Texas, lamented: "The people of our state can't really follow the money anymore. ... Taxpayers have a right to see how their money is being spent."

John Marion, executive director of the good-government group Common Cause Rhode Island, said the state has been publicly selling itself in part by telling Amazon it would be a big player in a small state.

"We don't necessarily want a company that can throw its weight around.

So it would be interesting to know how that message was represented in the bid," he said.

According to records obtained by the AP, the costs associated with the proposals themselves ranged from a few hundred dollars for copies, to tens of thousands of dollars for promotional efforts.

In Philadelphia, an independent development agency overseeing the city's bid said it spent \$160,000 to develop and promote its proposal, including a website and video. Worcester, Massachusetts, released invoices showing that it spent more than \$10,500 on its proposal, most of it on a video. Virginia Beach, Virginia, spent \$3,000 to build a sand sculpture to promote its application.

How to leverage great credit without borrowing a dime

As average credit scores for Americans continue to rise, the question for many becomes how to use their excellent credit rating to optimize their lives without borrowing money or adding risk.

Capitalizing on great credit doesn't have to mean incurring great debt; instead, it's about using your money reputation for a financial advantage.

"In the right hands, a good credit rating can be a real asset," said Jordan Goodman, editor of MoneyAnswers.com and author of "Master Your Debt."

From higher credit card bonuses and rewards to lower insurance premiums and interest rates, hundreds or even thousands of dollars worth of goodies are available to those with great credit. And they don't need to borrow a dime.

USE YOUR LEVERAGE

Nearly 40 percent of Americans have excellent FICO credit scores of 750 and above, according to credit scoring company Fair Isaac Corp. Half of those have scores of 800 or higher, considered "superprime." They get the best lending terms and lots of special treatment.

Leveraging credit to access these benefits works best for people with responsible financial habits, like paying bills on time, every time, and paying monthly credit card balances in full.

"You want to make sure you have discipline," said Roger Wohlner, a personal finance writer and financial planner in Arlington Heights, Illinois. "This is for someone who has all the basics covered."

If that's you, here are ways to use a great credit

rating:

— Shop your insurances: It's a good idea to regularly shop for better insurance rates; you can often find identical auto and home coverage for less. When you have great credit, you'll get even better rates.

— Snag credit card bonuses: The market for rewards credit cards is sizzling, with generous sign-up bonuses and rewards for consumers who can qualify.

With a travel credit card, for example, you might be able to use points or miles to pay for a trip if you can meet the card's minimum spending requirement. It's not about "churning" cards, or opening accounts to get bonuses and then closing them. It's about not hesitating to apply for a lucrative card that meets your needs. If the card has an annual fee, make sure you extract

more value than you pay.

"If you are fiscally responsible and enjoy playing the game to earn these sign-up bonuses, then you do have a real opportunity to win at the expense of credit card companies," said Byrke Sestok, president of Rightirement Wealth Partners in White Plains, New York.

— Get a HELOC for emergencies: Homeowners can supplement an emergency fund for free by opening a home equity line of credit. The point isn't to borrow more money with the credit line on your house — instead, leave it unused — but to have it available in case financial tragedy hits. "Everyone who can control their spending should have a HELOC that they can tap in case of an emergency," said John Eckel, a certified financial planner and finan-

cial analyst in Simsbury, Connecticut.

— Lower your interest rates: High credit scores should mean low interest rates. Make sure you're paying rock-bottom rates for loans, especially big-ticket items like your mortgage and auto loans. If not, you can refinance.

— Get no-interest deals: Paying in full is a solid habit. But if a car dealership is willing to lend you money at 0 percent because of your great credit, you can take the loan and make monthly payments, while banking the money you were planning to use to pay outright — preferably in an interest-earning account.

— Apply for retailer credit cards: Signing up for a credit card at the checkout counter has risks if you don't pay in full because interest rates are usually

high. But if you're diligent about paying bills, why not apply for a card to get 15 percent off a \$2,000 furniture purchase? It's an easy \$300. Diligence is key. "Merchants are very good at offering carrots, but you slip up for one microsecond and they bang you over the head," Goodman said.

Exploiting your great credit rating in these ways can actually improve it over the long run, assuming you continue to pay bills on time, because credit scoring formulas reward responsible use of credit. Just space out applications so the small dip in your scores can disappear before the next, and be wary of diluting your average age of accounts.

Even if you take none of these actions now, you can rest easier knowing you'll have plenty of options when a financial crisis hits.

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8 earthquakes strike along Iran-Iraq border, rattle Baghdad

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — A series of eight earthquakes hit the Iran-Iraq border area and rattled Baghdad on Thursday, apparent aftershocks of a temblor that struck the mountainous region in November and killed over 530 people. Four people suffered minor injuries in Iran, state television reported.

The U.S. Geological Survey said seven of the quakes struck near the Iraqi city of Mandali, 120 kilometers (75 miles) northeast of the Iraqi capital. Mandali is right on the border between the two nations. The eighth hit near Mehran in western Iran, about 90 kilometers (55 miles) southeast of Mandali along the sparsely populated Zagros Mountains that divide Iran and Iraq.

All the earthquakes struck within an hour of each other, beginning at 0659 GMT. Six had a preliminary magnitude of at least 5, while two registered at magnitude 4. Scientists consider earthquakes of magnitude 5 as moderate.

Iranian authorities offered similar figures for the earthquakes on state television. All the information could change as scientists examine the data.

Iranian state television said online that people rushed into the streets as

the temblors hit. In Baghdad, people felt a quake shake the Iraqi capital, followed by what felt like aftershocks.

All the earthquakes struck at a depth of 10 kilometers (6 miles), according to the USGS. Earthquakes at magnitude 5 can cause considerable damage. The temblors also all were very shallow, which causes more ground shaking and potential damage, particularly in places without strict building codes.

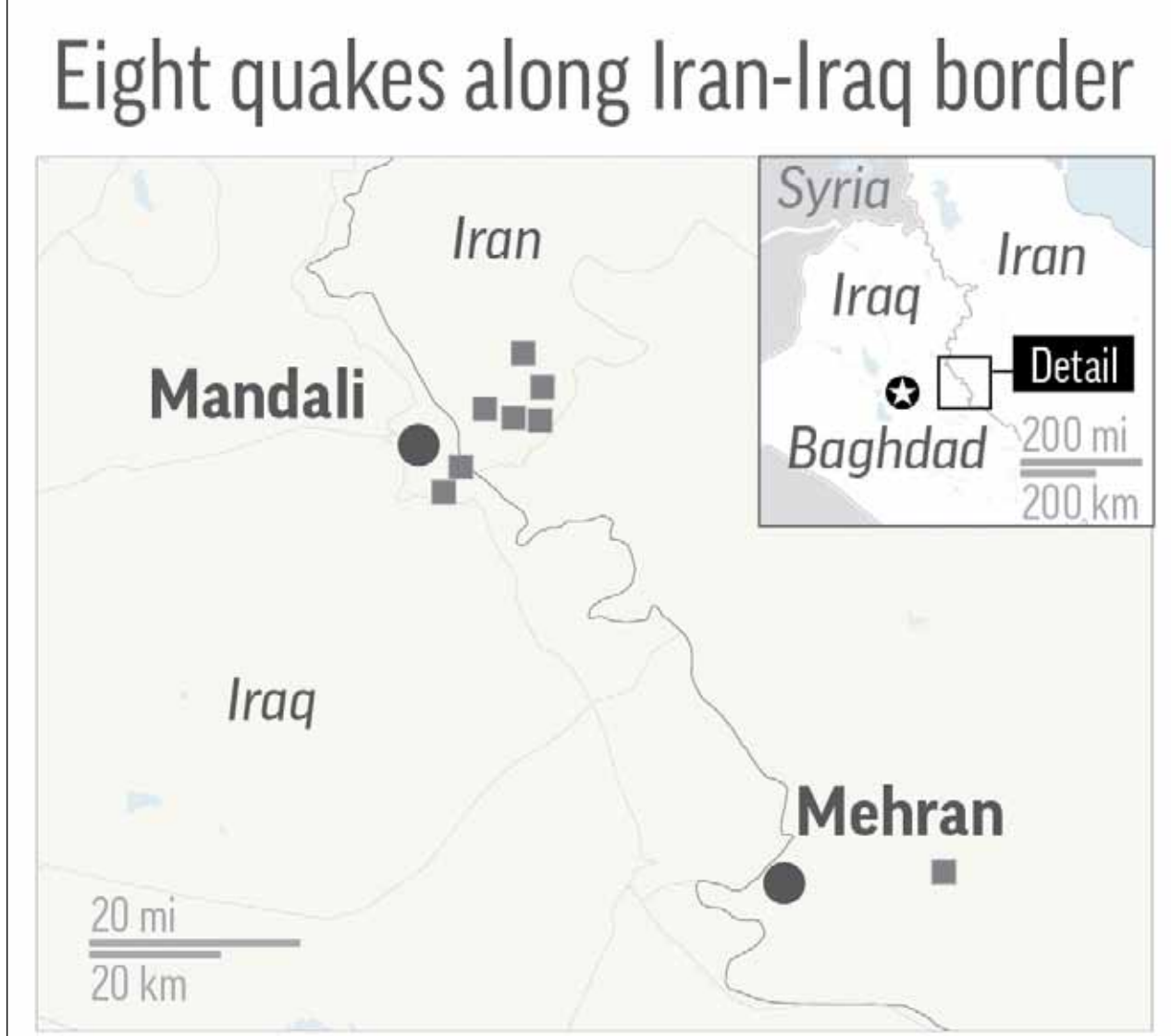
In November, a major 7.3 magnitude earthquake struck the same region, killing over 530 people and injuring thousands in Iran alone. In Iraq, nine people were killed and 550 were injured, all in the country's northern Kurdish region, according to the United Nations.

Randy Baldwin, a geophysicist with the USGS' National Earthquake Information Center in Golden, Colorado, said the earthquakes all appeared to be aftershocks from the November temblor.

That area is home to many shallow faults, he said.

"It's ongoing activity there," Baldwin told The Associated Press. "If there was a stressed fault that's ready to move, they happen like that until the stresses are relieved, so it's not too unusual."

The November earthquake hit hardest in the



Kurdish town of Sarpole-Zahab in the western Iranian province of Kermanshah, which is only 80 kilometers (50 miles) from where most of Thursday's earthquakes struck.

The region, largely rebuilt in recent decades after Iran and Iraq's ruinous 1980s war, saw many

buildings collapse or sustain major damage in the November quake. While Iranian government has offered loans for those affected to rebuild their homes, many still live in tents or temporary shipping containers-style homes and face the rains and cold of winter.

Iran sits on major fault lines and is prone to near-daily earthquakes. In 2003, a 6.6 magnitude quake flattened the historic city of Bam, killing 26,000 people.

Earlier on Thursday, the USGS said a magnitude 4.9 quake hit Iran's southern province of Kerman

before dawn, while another 4.6 magnitude temblor struck Wednesday night in Kermanshah province. No injuries or damage were reported.

Late Thursday afternoon, another 4.8 magnitude earthquake struck in Kerman, according to the USGS.

After 2017 breakthrough, 2018 is when Brexit gets tough

LONDON (AP) — After months of spats and false starts, Britain and the European Union ended 2017 by agreeing to have an amicable divorce. In 2018, they have to find a way to live together in the future — and that's when things could get complicated.

With the U.K. due to leave the bloc in just over a year, the fates of Britain and of Prime Minister Theresa May depend on whether the two sides strike a friendly deal, a frosty deal or no deal at all.

"This year is going to be messy," said Maïke Bohn of The3Million, a group that successfully lobbied to make the rights of EU citizens in Britain one of the dominant issues in the first round of Brexit talks. "Not everything is resolved and there are some big, crucial gaps."

There was a Brexit breakthrough in December, when the EU declared that "sufficient progress" had been made on citizens' rights, Britain's financial obligations and other divorce terms to start negotiating future relations, including trade.

It's a vast task that means setting rules for everything from trade in automotive parts to intelligence-sharing. Time is tight: A withdrawal treaty and an outline of future relations need to be ready by the fall, so that EU member states and the European Parliament can approve them before Brexit day on March 29, 2019. And the two sides have differing — even contradictory —

visions.

Britain wants a frictionless free-trade deal with the EU that allows goods to flow freely and the U.K.'s huge financial services sector to keep doing business across Europe.

The EU insists Britain cannot "cherry pick" benefits of EU membership, such as access to its borderless single market, without any of the responsibilities. EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier said this week that the bloc was willing to strike a deal covering "security, defense and foreign policy, as well as justice and home affairs and include some sectors such as aviation and fisheries" — but not financial services.

Meanwhile, neither side has revealed in detail what kind of post-divorce relationship it wants. The British government has not even agreed on a united position. Some ministers want a "soft Brexit" that would see Britain pay for access to EU programs and markets, and keep the U.K.'s regulations broadly in line with those of the bloc.

Others prefer a "hard Brexit" that would leave Britain free to limit immigration, set its own economic course and strike new trade deals around the world, but would mean tariffs and other trade barriers with the EU.

Simon Usherwood, deputy director of the U.K. in a Changing Europe think-tank, said Britain has still not "had that debate about what we want the country to be like. What's the point

of leaving?"

"We didn't really have that (debate) in the referendum, we haven't had it since," he said.

As the Brexit deadline approaches, it will also become harder for politicians to defer discussion of difficult issues, or to paper over differences with ambiguous language.

The 27 other EU nations maintained a disciplined unity in the first phase of negotiations, but Usherwood says differences are likely to grow in 2018.

"I think we are going to see disagreements between member states about what they offer the U.K.," he said.

There will have to be compromise — and that alarms hard-line Brexit supporters in Britain, who insist that "no deal is better than a bad deal." They say the U.K. must be prepared to walk away from talks without agreement if the EU demands too much. That would mean falling under World Trade Organization rules, which would bring tariffs for British businesses trading with the bloc.

Many U.K. businesses fear such an outcome. Research commissioned by the mayor of London estimated that a "no deal" Brexit could cost the U.K. half a million jobs and 50 billion pounds (\$67 billion) in investment.

Brexit-supporting economist Ruth Lea, economic adviser to the Arbutnot Banking Group, believes pragmatism will prevail.

"I have no doubt there will be tantrums on the



British Prime Minister Theresa May laughs as she takes a question from a journalist at the launch of her 25-year environment plan at the London Wetland Centre in south west London, Thursday, Jan. 11, 2018.

way," she said. "But I suspect at the end of the day there will be some sort of compromise and they will agree on some sort of deal on financial services, because it's mutually beneficial."

If the talks don't collapse during 2018, the British government could. May has been a weakened leader since she gambled and lost her parliamentary majority in a snap election last year. She is surrounded by rivals hungry for her job, including Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson.

But many believe she is likely to stay in office until the messy business of Brexit is done.

"It's her problem, so why

would anyone else take it on?" Usherwood said. "It's more convenient to let her carry the can for it."

Opponents of Brexit, meanwhile, still hope the decision can be reversed with a second referendum. Former Prime Minister Tony Blair is among those arguing that the British people "have the right to change our mind."

"When we voted in 2016, we knew we were voting against our present membership of the European Union, but not what the future relationship with Europe would be," Blair wrote last week.

"Once we know the alternative, we should be entitled to think again."

He has an unlikely ally in arch Brexiteer Nigel Farage, former leader of the U.K. Independence Party, who said Thursday it might be worth having a second referendum on EU membership to "kill it off for a generation."

Even so, it remains unlikely. Polls suggest relatively few British voters have changed their minds, and both the Conservatives and main opposition Labour Party oppose a second referendum.

"Brexit is going to happen," said Lea. "Yes, it's been a bit of a shambles. But it'll happen."

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Coconut milk and curry paste take chicken to new heights

BY MELISSA D'ARABIAN
Associated Press

Boneless skinless chicken breasts save the day for so many busy folks who want to get a lean, protein-filled, affordable dinner on the table in a hurry.

I always have a package or two in my freezer - I buy them when they are on super-sale (which they are once every 4-6 weeks in my experience) and freeze them, a strategy even more helpful if you seek out the pricier organic or free-range versions.

Even if I forget to pop the frozen chicken in the fridge to thaw the night before I need it, I can always do a quick-thaw in a big bowl of cold water, and still get dinner on the table quickly.

This ubiquitous cut of meat is chock-full of lean protein - a 4-ounce serving is only 125 calories, and has about 26 grams of protein, plus a smattering of minerals and B vitamins, and only a gram or two of fat.

The downside to the boneless skinless chicken breast is that the flavor is a little lackluster. But what some call bland, I call a blank slate! And with so little fat in the meat, you have a little wiggle room to indulge a bit with other ingredients.

In my Weeknight Thai Curry Chicken recipe, for instance, I use full-fat coconut milk - a mere half cup for six servings of chicken is enough to create a luxurious mouth-feel without adding more than a few grams of fat per serving.

In this quick weeknight-friendly recipe, I use fragrant Thai curry paste as a rub right on thin chicken cutlets, infusing them with a ton of flavor, and I serve the sauce as an accompaniment, rather than having the chicken swim in it.

A quick saute gives the chicken just the right amount of char (don't overcook), and the coconut sauce is made flavorful with fresh basil,



This Jan. 1, 2018, photo shows a Thai chicken coconut curry in Bethesda, Md. This dish is from a recipe by Melissa d'Arabian. AP

green onion, and garlic and quick - just a few pulses in a blender and a few minutes stovetop. Dinner in about 20 minutes will prove that weeknight cooking need never be boring.

WEEKNIGHT THAI CHICKEN CURRY

Servings: 6
Start to finish: 20 minutes

6 chicken breast cutlets, about 4 ounces each
2 tablespoons red Thai curry paste
1 teaspoon neutral oil

Sauce:
1/2 cup coconut milk (canned)
1/2 cup chicken broth
2/3 cup fresh basil leaves, loosely packed (about 10 large or 20 small leaves)
3 cloves garlic, chopped or passed through a garlic press
3 green onions, chopped
1/2 teaspoon salt
3 cups of cooked brown rice, for serving

Lightly pound or press the chicken breasts so that they are no thicker than 3/4 of an inch. Coat each cutlet with a teaspoon of the curry paste. Heat the oil in a large nonstick pan

over medium-high heat, brush the oil to coat the whole pan.

Place the chicken cutlets in the pan, smooth side of the cutlet down. Turn the heat slightly down to medium, and cover the pan. Cook for 5 minutes, uncover, and flip the chicken using a spatula. (If the chicken is stuck to the pan, let it cook for another minute or two and then flip.)

Let the chicken cook on the second side, uncovered, for another 5 minutes, or until the internal temperature is 160 F. Remove from heat and set on cooked brown rice on plate or platter to serve. Meanwhile, place all the sauce ingre-

dients in a blender and pulse just enough to mix, leaving some of the basil in flecks. Pour the sauce into a small saucepan and bring to a gentle simmer over medium heat. Spoon a few tablespoons of sauce over the chicken and rice.

Chef's Note: I used full fat coconut milk for unctuous texture since the quantity is relatively low, but you may substitute low-fat version.

Nutrition information per serving: 310 calories; 79 calories from fat; 9 g fat (4 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 86 mg cholesterol; 602 mg sodium; 26 g carbohydrate; 3 g fiber; 1 g sugar; 30 g protein.

Danica Patrick shifts careers, courts new fan base

BY JENNA FRYER
AP Auto Racing Writer

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — Danica Patrick's days as a race car driver are pretty much over. She says she has two races left in her, the "Danica Double," but she has yet to announce rides for either the Daytona 500 or the Indianapolis 500.

With nothing racing related to announce, Patrick has stormed into her second act and shifted gears away from the track.

She returned to work last week promoting her new book, "Pretty Intense," a 90-day food, body and mind plan that she swears will change your life. She exercised on live television, prepared a meal, did a media blitz in New York City, then capped her week by returning to North Carolina for her first book signing.

And so begins regular life for Patrick — if "regular" is a thing for one of the most recognizable female athletes in the world.

"I've been doing different things and talking about different things, it's like a fresh start, almost, with my career," said Patrick, who will turn 36 in March. "Cooking on TV with recipes I wrote, going on TV wearing workout clothes ... it's so different. It has been fun to do something different."

It made sense for Patrick to choose a bookstore in Charlotte, the heart of NASCAR country, for her first signing. Autograph signings are a weekly requirement for race car drivers, so this was going to be a piece of cake.

The line began to form

about an hour before she arrived. At the front were two race fans and a little girl wearing a Patrick shirt who had driven 45 minutes to see their favorite driver. There was a fan with the ticket from a recent NASCAR race hanging on a lanyard around his neck. A pair of high school boys, one wearing a neon GoDaddy jacket, nervously awaited their chance to meet the race car driver.

Of the roughly 200 people who showed up, at least 90 percent were fans of Patrick through racing. Roughly a dozen women who had participated in Patrick's pilot program that launched her book stood in line together,

some wearing "Warrior By Danica" athletic gear, all living proof that "Pretty Intense" had worked.

"I was the fattest I've ever been," said Julie Grunwald of Charlotte, whose before and after photos and story made Patrick's book.

"I see muscles I've never had before. It wasn't as hard as I thought," said Grunwald, who has shed nearly 20 pounds and uses Patrick's guide as her new normal. "The workouts were intense, but doable. It took a while to get used to no dairy or sugar, but it's been a total life change. I'll never go back. I'll never eat the same way I ate ever again."

Grunwald represents the new fan base Patrick is currently courting. Yes, the bulk of the audience at this Barnes & Noble was comprised of race fans, but for Patrick to succeed in her second act her base needs to grow.

Underestimating her next career move would be a mistake.

Patrick is no fool. She left her Illinois home at 16 for Europe to try to become a famous race car driver. Despite mediocre results on the track, the "Danica Machine" was marketing genius and Patrick became a brand. Now the brand is shifting off the track and she's deftly

navigating the landscape.

The middle-aged men in line to buy her book? Well, she joked with them that "Pretty Intense" is "practically a picture book," and revealed she's wearing her undergarments in many of the action photos.

The two teen boys stammering to talk to her? They have a fledgling blog, called "Out of Your League," and Patrick gave them positive mantras hoping they'd learn nothing is out of reach. As they walked away from the star, she called after them: "You guys should have asked me out. I'd have said yes."

Patrick is not going to talk

about the end of her five-year relationship with fellow NASCAR driver Ricky Stenhouse. The two broke up shortly after the 2017 season ended. She is not going to entertain questions about a rumor she was spotted on a date with Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers.

Why would she? Keep everyone guessing and she remains in the headlines.

As for her "Danica Double," it appears she jumped the gun when she announced her Daytona and Indy farewell tour. She had not actually secured rides for the two showcase events before revealing her plan.

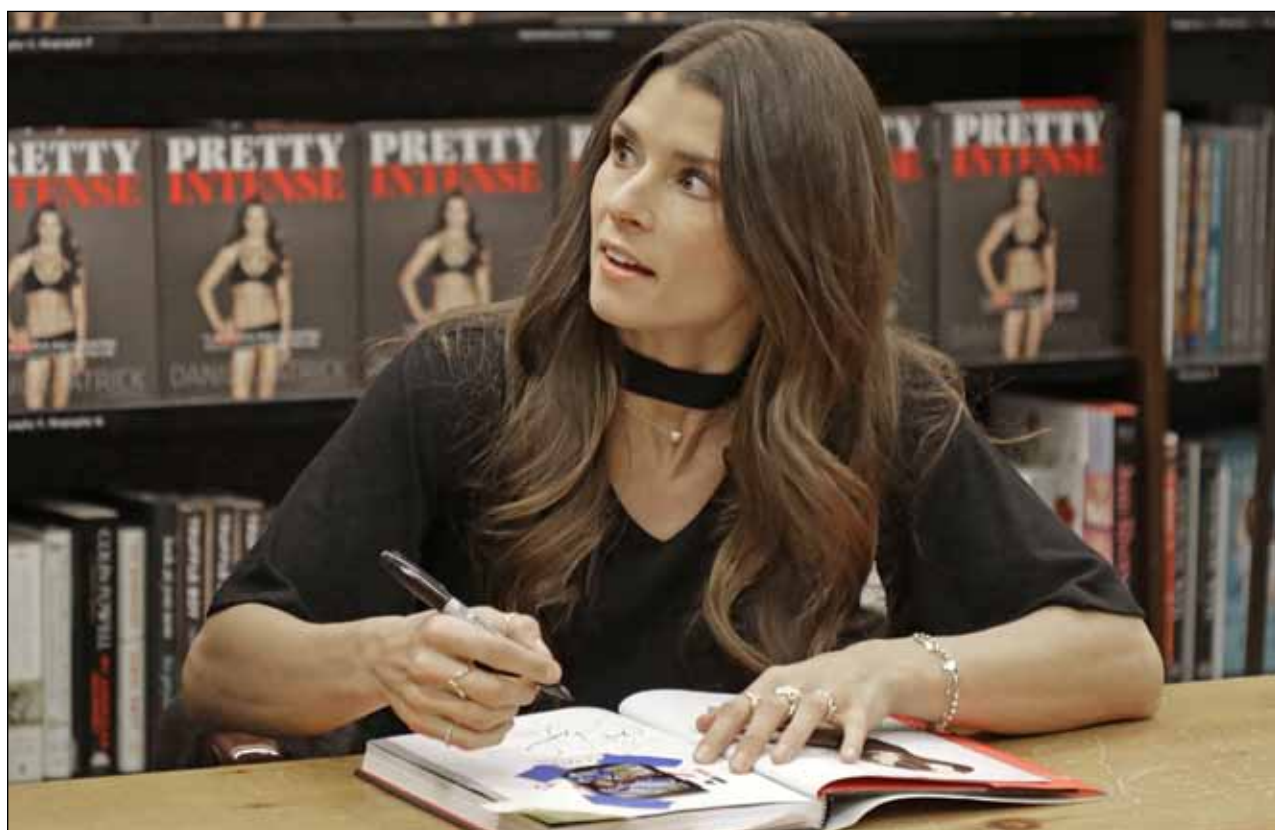
Patrick said the double "is coming a lot slower than I would like it to," but vowed that it will happen. It's never been this hard for Patrick to go racing, and a large part of these struggles is because of the economic climate. She has fallen into the category of a driver who needs to bring sponsorship for a race team to hire her.

She understands the circumstances, but didn't think it would be this difficult.

"I thought this time around, because I had less stuff, less sponsors, less teams, less everything, that it would go faster and be more straight-forward," she said. "But nothing in my world ever is."

Patrick said her plans to race in next month's Daytona 500 are further along than an Indianapolis 500 deal, but seemed certain both races will happen.

She's put her mind to it, and if you follow her guide, that's the first step in making positive things happen.



Danica Patrick talks to a fan as she autographs her new book during a book signing in Charlotte, N.C., Thursday, Jan. 4, 2018. AP

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Democratic report warns of Russian meddling across Europe

WASHINGTON (AP) — A new report by Senate Democrats warns of deepening Russian interference throughout Europe and concludes that even as some Western democracies have responded with aggressive countermeasures, President Donald Trump has offered no strategic plan to bolster their efforts or safeguard the U.S. from again falling victim to the Kremlin's systematic meddling.

The report commissioned by the top Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee is the first from Congress to comprehensively detail Russian efforts to undermine democracies since the 2016 presidential election. It wastes no time in calling out Trump personally for what it describes as a failure to respond to Russia's mounting destabilization activities in the U.S. and worldwide. The report was obtained by The Associated Press in advance of its public release Wednesday.

"Never before has a U.S. president so clearly ignored such a grave and growing threat to U.S. national security," the report warns.

No Republicans on the committee signed on to the 200-plus page report released by Sen. Ben Cardin of Maryland. But even without GOP backing, the report's recounting of Russian operations in 19 European nations foreshadows the still-unpublished Senate Intelligence Committee's bipartisan inquiry into Russia's role during the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

Cardin said in a statement that he commissioned the report so Americans can see the "true scope and scale" of Russian President Vladimir Putin's efforts to undermine democracy.

"While President Trump stands practically idle, Mr. Putin continues to refine his asymmetric arsenal and look for future opportunities to disrupt governance and erode support for the democratic and international institutions that the United States and Europe have built over the last 70 years," Cardin said.

Cardin's inquiry lays blame directly on Putin for a "relentless assault to undermine democracy and the rule of law in Europe and the United States." Concerned that Trump has failed to



In this Nov. 11, 2017, file photo President Donald Trump, right, and Russia's President Vladimir Putin talk during the family photo session at the APEC Summit in Danang, Vietnam. AP

identify Russian aggression as a national rallying point, the report urges a "stronger congressional voice" in pro-democracy efforts and funding. The report calls for committee hearings and other bipartisan efforts to aid European nations in countering Russian aggression.

Some policy changes suggested by the report have garnered GOP interest, including the aggressive use of financial sanctions aimed at Russia and pressuring social media companies to be more transparent about Russian political messaging.

The report also pushes for the administration to fully fund and utilize the State Department's Global Engagement Center, which it says is hobbled by "a lack of urgency and self-imposed constraints" under Secretary of State Rex Tillerson.

The center was created in 2016 to blunt terrorist propaganda. It duties have expanded to include countering Russian propaganda under legislation last year from Sens. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, and Chris Murphy, D-Conn.

Cardin's report sketches a bleak portrait of European nations besieged by Russian encroachment. It also cites years of cyberattacks, disinformation, clandestine social media operations, financing of fringe political groups, corruption and in the extreme, assassination attempts and military operations that destabilized fledgling democratic governments in the Ukraine and Georgia. The report leans heavily on open source information as well as staff interviews with European diplomats and government officials.

Labeling Russia's activities an "asymmetric assault on democracy," the report notes that even elections in countries such as Britain, France and Germany were reportedly targeted by Moscow-sponsored hacking, internet trolling and financing for extremist political groups. The report also credits those nations and smaller European countries, such as Finland and Estonia, for responding quickly and often with effect.

Facebook officials told

Cardin's investigators that Kremlin-backed trolls that stirred up political tensions on its American pages also "pursued a similar strategy in the lead up to the 2017 French political election, and likely before Germany's national election" last year.

Similarly, Finnish officials told Cardin's investigators that Finland has ramped up anti-disinformation efforts after Russian-leaning Twitter accounts "began tweeting misinformation and fringe viewpoints" before that nation's 2015 parliamentary elections — foreshadowing the surge in Russian-sourced fake Twitter accounts that proliferated during the U.S. presidential election.

Senate Intelligence Committee officials have questioned efforts of Facebook and Twitter to accurately determine the extent of Russian political messaging during the 2016 U.S. election. Cardin's team also noted alarming discrepancies between the extent of Russian troll activity found by independent researchers and far lower figures claimed by so-

cial media companies in European countries. The report advocates for social media companies to do a better job of auditing their platforms to determine the full extent of Russian disinformation flowing across them.

Cardin's report urges Trump to set up an inter-agency "fusion cell" on Russian interference modeled on the National Counterterrorism Center that was created after the 9/11 attacks. The report recommends that the president convene an annual global summit modeled after similar forums on combating the Islamic State group or homegrown extremists. Rapid response teams should be formed to defend ally countries after cyberattacks, with an international treaty governing the use of cyber tools in peace time.

It calls on the government to increase the amount of aid it provides to promote democracy in Europe and publicly to expose any organized crime and corruption links to Putin. It says social media companies should be required to publicize the

sources of funding for political advertisements along the same lines as broadcast and print media.

So far, the president personally has shown little interest in addressing Russia's activities. During a November trip to Asia, where he met with Putin, Trump said "he said he didn't meddle" and added: "I really believe that when he tells me that, he means it."

Other administration officials have been more skeptical of Russian behavior. Defense Secretary James Mattis has said the U.S. is prepared to deter Russian aggression in Europe and the U.S. agreed late last year to allow sales of lethal anti-tank weapons to Ukraine.

CIA Director Mike Pompeo said Sunday on CBS' "Face the Nation" that the CIA is working diligently to prevent Russia or any other U.S. adversary from interfering in future elections. "I continue to be concerned not only about the Russians but about others' efforts as well," Pompeo said.

Trump lashes out at court over immigration ruling

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump lashed out Wednesday at the federal court that temporarily blocked his administration from ending a program protecting nearly 800,000 young immigrants from deportation. His twitter attack came as lawmakers planned talks on extending those protections.

Bipartisan bargainers fresh off a White House meeting with the president Tuesday said they hoped to parlay that session into momentum for resolving the politically blistering issue.

But Trump lobbed a new salvo Wednesday after U.S. District Judge William Alsup Tuesday granted a request by California and other plaintiffs to prevent Trump from ending the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program while their law-

suits play out in court.

"It just shows everyone how broken and unfair" the court system is, Trump tweeted, when those opposed to his policies "almost always" win in the federal court district that includes that court.

It's not clear what effect the ruling might have on the talks on Capitol Hill. The judge said lawyers in favor of DACA clearly demonstrated that the young immigrants "were likely to suffer serious, irreparable harm" without court action.

Facing a Jan. 19 deadline for averting an election-year government shutdown, lawmakers are seeking a formula for reviving protections against deportation that Trump has ended for nearly the young immigrants who arrived in the U.S. as children and are now living here illegally. In exchange, Trump

and Republicans want toughened border protections and tightened restrictions on others trying to migrate to this country.

"I'll take all the heat you want," Trump told nearly two dozen lawmakers Tuesday at the White House for a meeting that began with a startling 55 minutes in which reporters and TV cameras watched. "But you are not that far away from comprehensive immigration reform."

Trump said an immigration deal could be reached in two phases — first by addressing young immigrants and border security with what he called a "bill of love," then by making comprehensive changes that have long eluded Congress. That second bill would likely face long odds for passage, considering long-running disagreements over issues like how to handle all 11 mil-

lion immigrants illegally in the U.S.

Republicans will need Democratic votes to prevent a federal shutdown in 10 days, votes Democrats have threatened to withhold without an immigration agreement. House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., told reporters talks would begin as early as Wednesday, adding, "And we'll solve this problem and find common ground."

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Wednesday that the federal judge's ruling was "outrageous, especially in light of the President's successful bipartisan meeting with House and Senate members at the White House on the same day." She said the issue should "go through the normal legislative process" and pledged Trump "will

work with members of both parties to reach a permanent solution."

After Trump and lawmakers spent time meeting privately, the White House and numerous lawmakers said there was agreement to limit the immediate bill to four areas. These were border security, family-based "chain migration," a visa lottery that draws people from diverse countries and how to revive the DACA program.

That Obama-era program has given hundreds of thousands — the so-called Dreamers — a shield from deportation and the right to work legally. Trump ended it last year but gave Congress until March 5 to find a fix, and Tuesday he signaled flexibility.

Trump even flashed some give on his cherished plan to build a wall along the bor-

der with Mexico, perhaps his highest profiled pledge from last year's presidential campaign. That proposal has been strongly opposed by Democrats and many Republicans as a futile waste of money.

Trump said it needn't be a "2,000-mile wall. We don't need a wall where you have rivers and mountains and everything else protecting it. But we do need a wall for a fairly good portion." He'd made similar statements last year, but this time it was in the context of negotiations for actual legislation.

Both parties were already showing signs of divisions over how much to give in upcoming talks. But one conservative foe of giving ground acknowledged the impact of Trump's support.

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\$1.6 billion Toyota-Mazda plant planned for Alabama

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — Japanese automakers Toyota and Mazda are expected to announce Wednesday that they have chosen Alabama as the site of a coveted \$1.6 billion joint-venture auto plant that will employ about 4,000 people, a person briefed on the decision said.

The companies are planning an afternoon announcement about the plant and Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey has scheduled a news conference at the same time to make what her office described as a major economic development announcement.

The manufacturing plant is to be built in the Hunts-

ville area not far from the Tennessee state line, said the person, who asked to remain anonymous because the site hasn't been officially announced.

Alabama and North Carolina apparently were finalists for the huge factory, which is expected to begin operating in 2021. It will be able to build 300,000 vehicles per year and will produce the Toyota Corolla compact car for North America and a new small SUV from Mazda, the companies have said.

Toyota and Mazda are forming a capital alliance and splitting the cost for the plant equally. The Huntsville area already has a Toyota engine fac-

tory that employs nearly 1,500 people. The decision to pick Alabama is another example of foreign-based automakers building U.S. factories in the South. The companies have located there largely because of lower wages and to avoid the United Auto Workers union, which is stronger in Northern states.

After reassessing the market, Toyota Motor Corp. has changed its plan to make Corollas at a plant in Guanajuato, Mexico, now under construction, and instead will produce Tacoma pickups there, the company has said.

President Donald Trump had criticized Toyota for taking auto production

and jobs to Mexico. With the investment, both automakers hope to prove their good American corporate citizenship and appease the Trump administration's concerns about jobs moving overseas.

But during the summer, Toyota President Akio Toyoda denied that Trump's views influenced his decision.

"We have been reviewing the best production strategy for our business," he told reporters in Tokyo at the time.

Toyota and Mazda Motor Corp. also plan to work together on various advanced auto technology, such as electric vehicles, safety features and con-

nected cars, as well as products that they could supply each other, they said.

It's difficult to predict auto sales in three years, but at present, Toyota may not need the factory for Corolla production.

U.S. sales of small cars fell nearly 10 percent last year as buyers continued a massive shift toward SUVs and pickup trucks. Corolla sales fell 14 percent for the year, to just under 309,000, according to Autodata Corp.

Still, Toyota and Mazda have said their collaboration will respect mutual independence and equality. Toyota, which makes the Prius hybrid, Camry

sedan and Lexus luxury models, already provides hybrid technology to Mazda, which makes compact cars for Toyota at its Mexico plant.

The sheer cost of the plant also makes a partnership logical, as it boosts cost-efficiency and economies of scale. Working together on green and other auto technology also makes sense as the segment becomes increasingly competitive because of concerns about global warming, the environment and safety.

Tech show showcases gadgets we don't need - until we do

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Today's vision of a smart home has more to do with what's technologically possible than what people really need.

Thus the endless parade of internet-connected wine openers, water bottles, meat thermometers and refrigerators, and a dearth of automation that would clean and fold our laundry, pick up things around the house or assist aging people as their physical strength wanes.

Not that some tinkers aren't trying to come up with life-changing tools, often while trying to persuade consumers to share their routines and shopping habits to make all this work — and potentially opening the doors to hacking or surveillance in their homes.

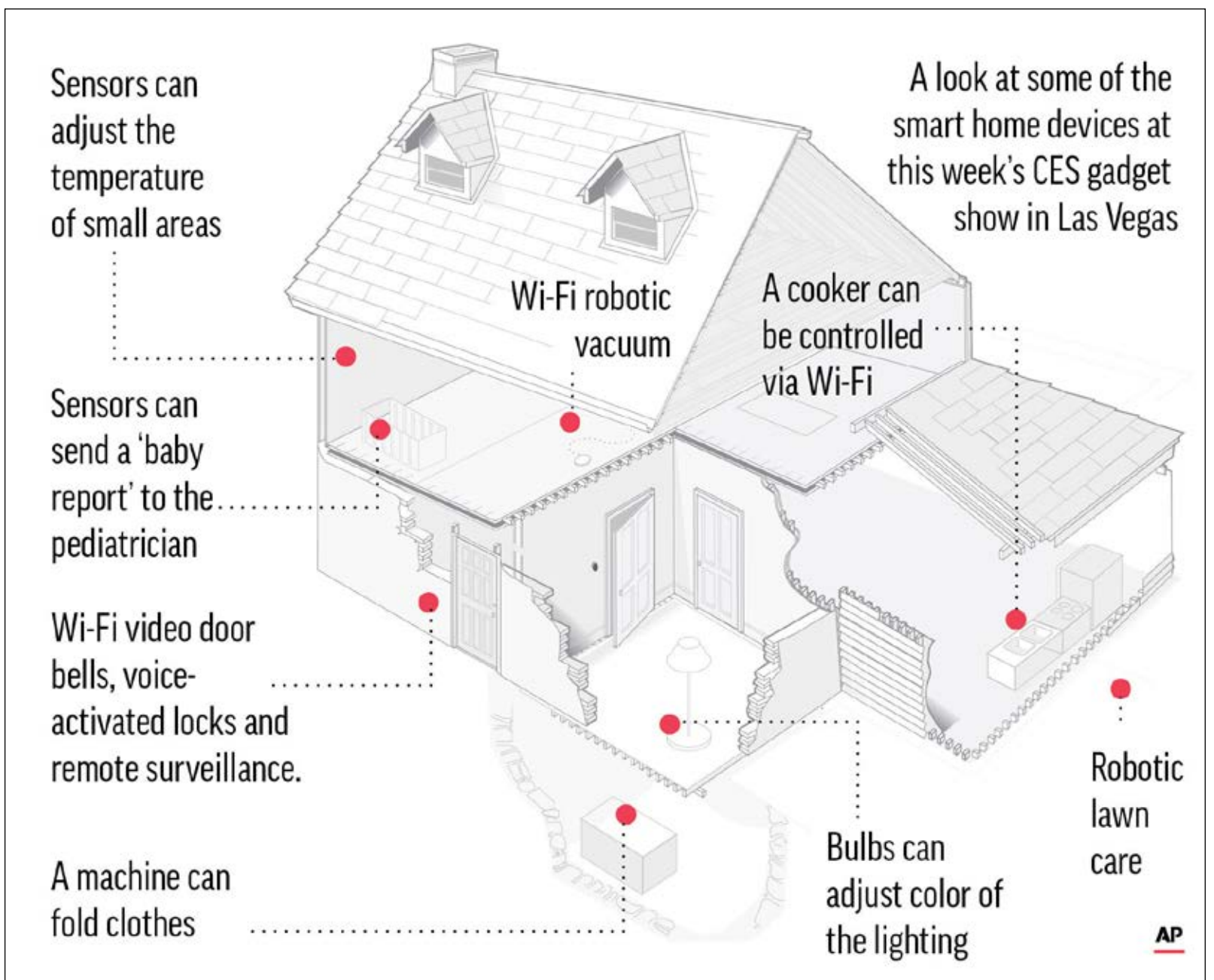
The annual CES gadget show, which opened in Las Vegas on Tuesday, is a showcase of the latest innovations from big corporations and tiny startups. Some of these inventions could soon be useful to consumers. Others look outlandishly impractical — or maybe it's too soon to tell.

THE INTERNET OF WHAT?

Want to book an Uber ride from your fridge? Samsung has you covered with one of its latest refrigerator models unveiled in Vegas. Of if you're looking for a water bottle that "helps celebrate when you've met your hydration goals," the internet-connected Hidrate Spark 2.0 has arrived.

You can command a Whirlpool microwave to switch settings with your voice, but per regulations, you still have to walk over to push the button to start it (and of course put food in and out). A meat thermometer made by Apption Labs will send a notification to your phone app when your steak is fully barbecued.

It's unlikely that anyone but the most extreme wine connoisseur will need to track wine-preserving argon gas levels in a half-finished bottle of pinot noir. But a maker of bottle-opening gadgetry, Coravin, lets you do just that. The device needles wine out of a bottle without pulling the cork. What's new is connectivity and an app, so you're alerted when the gadget needs cleaning or a



A cottage industry is striving to imbue every last household appliance or wearable item with connectivity.

new battery.

All this reflects a cottage industry striving to imbue every last household appliance or wearable item with connectivity. But do we really need it?

NEVER MIND THE NAYSAYERS

What one person considers a silly idea is another person's breakthrough, and many innovations displayed at CES could find long-term commercial success among niche audiences even if they aren't widely adopted, said technology analyst Tom Coughlin, president of Coughlin Associates.

"Some stuff is before it's time. Some stuff is partially thought through," Coughlin said. But you never know, he said, because "sometimes people don't know what they need until they see it."

At CES, Coughlin said, "you see the hopes and

dreams, the fantasies, both mad and sublime and clever things that people can think of doing."

THE DUTCH LESSON

In the Netherlands, startup entrepreneurs often look mockingly back to a late-1990s video that asked random people in Amsterdam if they ever wanted a mobile phone, said Stefan Witkamp, co-founder of smart home startup Athom B.V.

"Now it's unthinkable not to have your smartphone," said Witkamp, whose company's Homey product links various connected devices to a single system. Similar skepticism now affects smart devices, he said.

"People think, why do I need to control my music through my smartphone? Why do I need to manage and monitor my home remotely or automatically?

But it could very well be that in five years, we'll be thinking: 'Why would we ever not want to?'"

BUT WHERE'S MY ROBOT?

The reality is that it's a lot easier to connect an appliance to the internet than it is to build "Rosie," the robotic maid that TV cartoon show "The Jetsons" launched into the world's imagination a half-century ago.

Sure, robotic vacuums are already cleaning carpets and kitchen floors around the world, but the level of artificial intelligence and physical precision it takes to do housework like a human is still a far-off dream for robot-makers. Instead, many of the robots coming on the consumer market are either toys or designed to be a more personality-driven version of a talking speaker.

But it's not for lack of

trying.

DUELING LAUNDRY-FOLDERS

"It took us 13 years to reach this point," said Shin Sakane, founder and CEO of Tokyo-based Seven Dreamers Laboratories.

His "Laundroid" clothesfolder — and the rival FoldiMate also on display at CES — are feats of engineering that also underscore the limits of current technology. Sakane's bureau-sized machine is powered by hidden robotic arms and computer vision that can distinguish between different types of clothing.

"It's a soft material," Sakane said, clutching a white towel. "It could be a T-shirt. It's hard to distinguish."

Priced at \$16,000, the machine can take 30 items per cycle, though it's still

not terribly efficient. It takes 10 or more minutes to fold a shirt — making each cycle a 6-hour project.

Rival FoldiMate claims to be faster, but the company came to the show for the second-year running without a functioning prototype. As founder and CEO Gal Rosov demonstrated putting shirts and towels into a top rack where they were sucked into the machine, a bottom drawer opened with pre-folded items inside. To repeat the display, he opened a middle panel where crumpled items hadn't been folded at all.

Rosov said the machine on display was just a concept model and the company hopes to start "early shipping" at the end of 2019.

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Exiled Iranian prince backs regime change, new coalition

WASHINGTON (AP) — Reza Pahlavi concentrates intently on the little cellphone in his hand, scrolling through clips of chanting Iranians and explaining why the protests unsettling his homeland are different this time. Even as the latest reports suggest the unrest may be ebbing, the scion of Persia's 2,500-year-old monarchy believes Iran's people are writing a new future for themselves, and perhaps for their exiled son.

"We all know that regime change is the ultimate formula," said Pahlavi, the son of the last shah before the 1979 Islamic Revolution and a harsh critic of the clerical rulers that have dominated Iran ever since. "But that's what the Iranian people are asking. It's not going to be because the U.S. says so, or the British say so, or the Saudis say so, or the Israelis say so. It's because it's what the Iranian people want."

More than want, he believes they may succeed.

For Pahlavi, who advocates replacing Tehran's theocracy with a pluralist, parliamentary democracy, the demonstrations that have rocked cities across Iran the last two weeks aren't about egg prices, unemployment or economic opportunity. They're about the nation's greater grievance with its entire political system.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Pahlavi cast the current discontent as more threatening to the Islamic Republic's survival than the violence that followed disputed elections in 2009 — when Iranians clashed over the direction of a government that would in any scenario be undemocratic and corrupt,

and opposed to human rights and the separation of state and religion.

"The time has really come for a massive coalition," Pahlavi told the AP in Washington, where he says he's trying to help Iranian activists, human rights advocates, union leaders, journalists and students pull in a broader pool of citizens in defiance of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, and the clerics and officials comprising the country's ruling establishment.

"These are usurpers that have invaded the country, taken us hostage and we shall get our country back. Today is the time," he declared, describing his part — at least for now — as carrying the flag of the protesters' cause with Western countries like the United States to intensify their responses and consider new sanctions on Iran's leaders and their assets.

Iranian officials say they've arrested some 3,700 people since Dec. 28. Some protesters have called for the government's overthrow, and videos show some vocal support for Pahlavi, who left Iran at 17 for military flight school in the United States just before his cancer-stricken father Mohammad Reza Pahlavi abandoned the throne for exile. Revolution meant neither Pahlavi ever returned.

It has been the ubiquity, more so than intensity, of the protests that have surprised many observers. Whereas millions flooded Tehran's streets after the contested vote last decade that returned hardliner Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to power, the movement this time has been more amorphous and leaderless, but

perhaps wider in reach — spreading to more than 80 cities nationwide. In recent days, however, Iranian officials have described the protests as waning.

Pahlavi is staying abreast of developments in Iran through what his aides describe as a vast network of contacts, inside and outside of the government, he has maintained for decades. An equally important source: normal Iranians reaching out to him directly via social media.

But Pahlavi may not be the credible voice for change in a country that he hasn't seen in 38 years. Iranian officials accuse him of exploiting the instability to advance his personal aspirations for power in a part of the world replete with cautionary tales about long-estranged exiles believing they know what's best for their homelands. And Pahlavi's father was hardly a paragon of democracy, ruling lavishly and repressively, and benefiting from a CIA-supported 1953 coup of Iran's prime minister.

While many of the young faces in today's crowds of protesters couldn't conceivably have been born when the last shah still ruled, Pahlavi believes the support he is seeing in text messages and Telegram files is genuine.

"It is not a matter of coincidence or, if you will, nostalgia," said Pahlavi, 57, insisting that a young, scrutinizing Iranian generation is expressing "rapport" with his message of inclusion, and rejecting the Islamic Republic's "brainwashing" and exclusion.

He outlined a vision of how to achieve democratic change: Intensifying "the struggle" until Iran's gov-



AP
Reza Pahlavi, the exiled son of Iran's last shah before the 1979 Islamic Revolution and a critic of the country's clerical leaders, pauses for a photo after an interview with The Associated Press in Washington, Tuesday, Jan. 9, 2018.

ernment implodes; initiating a transition process; holding popular elections for a constitutional assembly; enshrining secularism and democracy; free and fair voting for a first parliament and government.

But these are broad ideas that would each entail incredibly difficult processes. For example, Pahlavi said that whatever form Iran's future government takes, it should offer amnesty to military and paramilitary forces such as those in the Revolutionary Guard Corps so they abandon the camp of Khamenei and other hardliners. Such a promise wouldn't resolve their massive stakes in

Iran's economy, a source of significant popular discontentment.

And what of Pahlavi's path in this new Iran? Does it end with him sitting upon the Peacock Throne? Or does he aspire for something akin to the "Baba" role played by Mohammed Zahir Shah, Afghanistan's deposed king who returned after the fall of the Taliban as a symbolic but powerless figure of national unity?

"I don't know, to be honest with you. I know what I need to do now," Pahlavi answered. "I've never been preoccupied with my personal role or destiny," he said, describing fair elec-

tions in Iran as his "only mission in life," replacing the current votes for presidents and parliamentarians among pre-approved candidates.

"Of course, I stand ready to serve my country," Pahlavi said, noncommittally. "I have no idea in what capacity it may or may not be. I may end up just being a regular citizen living the rest of my days, or I may be called upon to play a bigger role."

"Everybody knows that I carry the monarchic heritage. If the country is more ready for a republic, even better. That's great."

As Olympics approach, things to know about Pyeongchang

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea (AP) — The Olympics are coming to one of the most remote, ruggedly beautiful parts of South Korea, an area known for icy winds, a collapsed mining industry, towering granite mountains that blot out the horizon and for a tough, proud, rapidly aging population as curious about the approaching foreign masses as outsiders are about the place they're heading.

With the Olympics just a few weeks away, here are some answers to questions about Pyeongchang and the Korean Peninsula:

Q: Is the Korean Peninsula safe?

A: Yes, with a half-century-old caveat.

South Korea is one of the safest places in the world to live and visit. People regularly leave their cellphones and bags on restaurant tables when they go to the restrooms.

But it's also an easy drive to the edge of an incredibly hostile, and nuclear-armed, North Korea. Since U.S. President Donald Trump has begun matching the over-the-top rhetoric North Korea has always favored, there have been worries over the pos-

sibility of war. South Koreans, used to decades of threats about turning Seoul into a "sea of fire," are still fairly nonchalant about the North. The presence of 28,500 U.S. military personnel and a massive amount of U.S. and South Korean firepower aimed at North Korea helps. North Korea's dictatorship values its existence above all things, and knows that it could not win a war with South Korea and its U.S. ally. This has tempered the threat since the Korean War ended in 1953.

Q: Do people speak English?

A: Not many.

But the government has paid for English lessons for some people in the service industry; there will be translation apps and English-speaking volunteers; phone hotlines are available. Adding to these efforts will be South Koreans' natural hospitality and curiosity.

Q: Where, exactly, am I going?

A: To a lovely, frigid land of mountains, streams and clean air. But also to a more temperate, coastal region known for its sea-

food and beach.

The Olympics are actually being held in three areas: Pyeongchang, known for mountains and winter sports; Jeongseon, a blue-collar former mining region; and Gangneung, the biggest of the three Olympic towns by far and a bustling port and vacation area along the Sea of Japan, known here as the East Sea. Together they take up South Korea's northeast corner, not far from the border with the North. The inland areas have always been isolated, and while sections have been revamped for the Olympics and the coastal areas are well developed, many places are proudly as they've always been, which is to say they have little in common with the skyscraper glitz and "Gangnam Style" glamour of Seoul.

That, for many Koreans who visit, is the point.

Q: What can I eat?

A: Korean cuisine is some of the world's best, a daily joy to explore.

Spicy, pungent kimchi; thick fermented soups filled with meat so tender it falls off the bone; barbecued everything; all of it washed down with ubiq-

uitous soju liquor. While food options here aren't as wide as in Seoul, there are local delicacies, including dried pollack (fish), in stews and grilled; grilled and marinated pork and squid; tofu; riced steamed with mountain herbs and some of the country's best beef.

Q: What's the weather like?

A: Bundle up.

Gangwon Province is one of the country's coldest places. The wind is brutal, and the stadium for the nighttime opening and closing ceremonies is open air and has no heating system. Locals make it a matter of pride not to complain about daily wintertime life, but visitors risk misery if they're unprepared.

Q: How will I get around?

A: Just in time for the games, high-speed trains will whisk people from Seoul and the Incheon airport to the area in about an hour, compared to three hours or more by car. Also available: more taxis than usual, 150 free inter-city buses and shuttle buses that connect with major

hotels and the local airport. Officials hope to reduce traffic by restricting locals' car usage. Outsiders driving in can choose from seven parking lots near the Olympic venues, then take free shuttles to stadiums.

Q: What else is there to do in Pyeongchang and South Korea?

A: Pyeongchang County is famous for winter sports, with plenty of area ski rental shops. Just driving among the massive granite peaks and frozen streams can be breathtaking. For scenic views, try Odaesan National Park and the Woljeongsa Buddhist temple, which offers overnight stays. You can hike Mount Seonjaryeong and visit sheep ranches in the mountain town of Daegwallyeong.

Jeongseon, with one Olympic venue, the downhill skiing course, has the country's only casino where Koreans may gamble — Gangwon Land. You can pedal "rail bikes" amid the mountains at the Jeongseon Railbike Park, an abandoned coalmining railway track, or walk over a cliffside see-through floor at the Jeongseon Ski

Walk on Mount Beyongbansan.

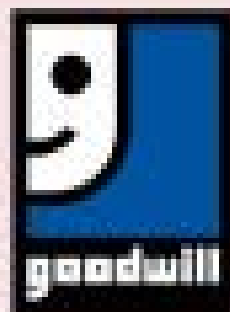
Gangneung has the vibrant Sacheon and Gyeongpo districts near the city's famous Gyeongpo Beach and hosts five Olympic venues handling skating, curling and hockey. The Ojukcheon House and Municipal Museum is a well-preserved 16th-century Joseon Kingdom-era house. And Jeongdongjin Sunrise Park arguably provides South Korea's best mainland sunrise view.

Seoul offers shopping and nightlife in Gangnam south of the Han River. In the north there are Namdaemun's open air markets and several royal palaces and gardens. A short drive away is the Demilitarized Zone, where soldiers glare at each other across the border, the South Koreans through mirrored sunglasses, as tourists gawk. The always odd mix of Cold War tension and modern tourist trap (the southern side has a Popeyes and amusement park) has gotten stranger since the recent defection of a North Korean soldier. He's recovering from being shot five times by his former comrades during a dash across the line.



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