

Mountain Views News

Sierra Madre Arcadia Duarte Monrovia Pasadena Altadena South Pasadena San Marino

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SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2025

VOLUME 19 NO. 51

Imagine Snow In Sierra Madre For Christmas!



Artist Sonny Salsbury created this painting depicting snow in Sierra Madre at Christmas. His caption, "Wouldn't It Be Nice?" reflects the sentiments of many a child and adult alike. Salsbury is also a Grammy nominated musician who was born in Pasadena. He is the brother of local businesswoman Judith Brandley, owner of Leonora Moss in Sierra Madre. In a 2006 interview when he first granted permission to run this picture he said, "Sierra Madre is my favorite town anywhere." Salsbury, then 68, was the most celebrated painter of Sierra Madre and in this snowy depiction of the city, he brings out winsome qualities of small town life with his trademark simplicity and affection. Salsbury has spent most of his life working in youth ministries and backpacking and camping in the wilderness. With camping comes songs around the campfire – one of his favorite things to do – and he does that so well he was a candidate for a 2007 Grammy nomination for the CD "How's About A Boa?" which is a collection of camp songs for "children of all ages."

MVNews2025

'The Spirit of The Season

SIERRA MADRE HOLIDAY CLOSURES

City facilities will be closed for the holidays beginning December 24, 2025, at 12:30 p.m. and will reopen on January 5, 2026.

Public Works, Police, and Fire will continue providing essential services during this time.

Library hours may vary, so please check their posted holiday schedule.

Wishing everyone a safe and restful holiday season!

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

We Wish you all a Magical Holiday Season with your Family and Friends



Our Homes are only as important as the people inside them. May yours be filled with Love, Laughter, Shared Memories, Favorite Recipes, Lots of Treats and Good Health.

We look forward to meeting you all in the New Year and Helping to Make Your Real Estate Dreams Come True !!!

Warmly, Barbara and Eileen



R Barbara Rogers

626.484.8135

CalRE# 0116915



B Eileen Benson

626.278.0187

CalRE# 01880650



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Happy Holidays, Sierra Madre!

Wishing you and yours a joyful holiday season filled with warmth, laughter, and cherished moments.



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2 Sierra Madre's 2025 Best Decorated Houses

Mountain Views News Saturday, December 20, 2025



SIERRA MADRE'S BEST DECORATED HOMES - Above 237 E. Highland & Below 39 E. Lowell



All photos by Dirk Bolle

SECURE YOUR DREAM HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS!

217 N. Lima St., Sierra Madre, CA 91204

- 4 spacious bedrooms, 3 full baths, 3,230 sq. ft. including one downstairs ideal for guests or multigenerational living
- Grand two-story foyer, living room with fireplace, formal dining room and family room with fireplace
- Large kitchen with Sub-Zero refrigerator, new oven/microwave combo, walk-in pantry & prep island w/sink
- Expansive primary suite with sitting area, two cedar-lined walk-in closets & ensuite w/spa tub
- Dedicated laundry room with cabinetry, granite counters, utility sink and additional room
- Low-maintenance backyard with drought-tolerant landscaping, pavers, and tranquil water feature
- Paver driveway to a 2-car attached garage with built-in cabinetry and workbench
- Recent upgrades: fresh interior/exterior paint, new recessed lighting, updated fixtures
- Additional features: central vacuum, dual-zone HVAC, alarm system, fire sprinkler system, hardwood/tile/vinyl flooring, Cummins generator

Janette Ledeia

Realtor/Consultant
RE/MAX Tri-City
ePro, GRI, CDPE, SRES
DRE#01480942

CONTACT ME

(626)242-3244
jledea@remax.net
jledea.remax.com

CLASSIC MEET
CRAFT BEER FESTIVAL
OPENING WEEKEND TRACKSIDE
DEC 26 - 28

SANTA ANITA CLASSIC MEET
RACING FRIDAY - SUNDAY THROUGH JUNE 14

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
28 12:30 First Race	29 12:30 First Race	30 12:30 First Race	31 12:30 First Race			
1 12:30 First Race	2 12:30 First Race	3 12:30 First Race				
4 12:30 First Race	5 12:30 First Race	6 12:30 First Race	7 12:30 First Race	8 12:30 First Race	9 12:30 First Race	10 12:30 First Race
11 12:30 First Race	12 12:30 First Race	13 12:30 First Race	14 12:30 First Race	15 12:30 First Race	16 12:30 First Race	17 12:30 First Race
18 12:30 First Race	19 12:30 First Race	20 12:30 First Race	21 12:30 First Race	22 12:30 First Race	23 12:30 First Race	24 12:30 First Race
25 12:30 First Race	26 12:30 First Race	27 12:30 First Race	28 12:30 First Race	29 12:30 First Race	30 12:30 First Race	31 12:30 First Race

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SANTA ANITA PARK

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THURS/JAN 1 & MON /JAN 19
\$2 HOT DOGS + BEER + SODAS



....And yes, there IS SNOW IN SIERRA MADRE! Frosty recently made his annual visit to town for a few days, but the weather is a little too warm (and maybe too wet) for him to stick around until Christmas. Below are his 'care-takers' for the last 37 years who bring Frosty to town, flake by flake for the enjoyment of the young and old. Thanks Frosty Friends!



CONGRATS MAYOR KRISTINE LOWE!



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SIERRA MADRE

SIERRA MADRE

ARCADIA

PASADENA

ALTADENA

MONROVIA

Weather Wise



6-Day Forecast Sierra Madre, Ca.

Sun	Sunny	Hi	70s	Lows 40s
Mon:	Sunny	Hi	80s	Lows 50s
Tues:	Sunny	Hi	80s	Lows 50s
Wed:	Sunny	Hi	80s	Lows 50s
Thur:	Sunny	Hi	70s	Lows 50s
Fri:	Sunny	Hi	70s	Lows 50s

Forecasts courtesy of the National Weather Service



SIERRA MADRE CITY COUNCIL MEETING

January 6, 2026 5:30 pm

THIS MEETING WILL BE HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS!

As part of the City of Sierra Madre's COVID-19 transparency efforts and The Brown Act provides the public with an opportunity to make public comments at any public meeting. Public comment may also be made by e-mail to PublicComment@CityofSierraMadre.com by 3:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting.

Emails will be acknowledged at the Council meeting and filed into public record. The public may also comment in person at the meeting.

The meetings will be streamed live on Foothills Media website at foothillsmedia.org/sierramadre and broadcast on Government Access Channel 3 (Spectrum)..

1630 AM EMERGENCY RADIO & Free on-air publicity for local events

Sierra Madre's EMERGENCY radio station is now accepting scripts for Public Service Announcements (PSAs) about community events. PSAs will be broadcast on the air at no charge. The station operates 24/7 and can be heard at 1630 on the AM dial.

Any local non-profit or non-commercial organization can have their event information broadcast to the public on Sierra Madre Community Information Radio. The station covers the city of Sierra Madre, plus surrounding areas of Pasadena, Arcadia, and Monrovia.

Your event must:

- Benefit a non-commercial or non-profit entity
- Be open to the public
- Be of general interest to local citizens

Just write a Public Service Announcement that describes your event and e-mail it to radio@cityofsierramadre.com.



SIERRA MADRE SUSPICIOUS THREAT INVESTIGATION SUMMARY OF EVENTS

From Gustavo Barrientos, Chief of Police
Sierra Madre Police Department

On today's date [December 16] at approximately 3:15 p.m., the Sierra Madre Police Department Communications Center received a report from a staff member at Alvemo Heights Academy regarding a suspicious message.

Officers responded to the campus and learned that staff had received an anonymous phone call claiming that devices had been placed on school grounds. As a precaution, officers and school staff immediately began evacuating all students and staff. With the assistance of mutual aid partners from Monrovia Police Department, Arcadia Police Department, and Pasadena Police Department, including K-9 detection units, officers conducted a thorough search of the campus and all buildings. No devices were located, and the campus was determined to be safe.

The Sierra Madre Police Department would like to thank our partnering agencies for their assistance and cooperation during this investigation.

Out of abundance of caution and in light of recent international events, the Sierra Madre Police Department has increased patrols around schools, places of worship, the downtown area, and other locations where community members gather. Residents may notice an increased police presence throughout the city.

The Sierra Madre Police Department remains committed to the safety of our community. As always, we encourage residents to remain vigilant - *if you see something, say something.*



This week at the
Sierra Madre
Public Library

December 22—December 27

Monday

Baby Rhyme Time — Library at

9:00am

Preschool Storytime — Library at

10:00am

Wednesday

Modified Holiday Library hours—

10:00am—2:00pm

December 25—January 2

Library Closed for Holiday— No

Services

Read, Discover, Connect
at Sierra Madre Public Library
350 W Sierra Madre Blvd.
(626) 355-7186

REMEMBRANCE



SYLVIA JEAN MATEHETTI MARLOW

Sylvia Jean Matehetti Marlow was born on October 13, 1945 in Monrovia, California. Her parents are Dominick and Jennie Marchetti.

Sylvia grew up in Sierra Madre Ca a she dearly loved. Her father built their family home on Laurel in 1944. The home still stands and she would drive by and admire it often.

She attended St. Rita's Catholic school where she excelled as a student and loved playing many sports, especially volleyball. She shared her childhood with many happy memories of family and friends.

After St. Rita's she attended St. Andrew's High School in Pasadena. She then went on to San Jose State for her college years. She met her future husband, Troy Marlow, who was in the US Marines. They moved to Cincinnati, Ohio for a short time and then moved back to Sierra Madre.

Sylvia worked at Pac Bell retiring after 25 years as a Network Administration Center Manager. She has three wonderful children Pamela Christine Cimino, Cynthia Denise Garcia, Scott Christopher Marlow.

She also has 8 grandchildren better known as her dollbabies. She lived life for her grandchildren: Lauren, Ryan and Wyatt Cimino; Alyssa and Hailey Marlow, and Dustin, Amanda and Abigail Garcia.

Sylvia is survived by her children, grandchildren, her last surviving sibling,

-sister Dolores Marehetti and her friend Patrick Jacobs. She passed away in Temple City, California on Dec 4 2025.

Sylvia's Rosary will be held at Cabot Mortuary and funeral services at St. Rita Catholic Church. The services will be held in January 2026. Her final resting place will be in the Sierra Madre Pioneer Cemetery in Sierra Madre, California. She loved Sierra Madre.

WALKING SIERRA MADRE: The Social Side

by Deanne Davis



"Christmas is like candy; it slowly melts in your mouth, sweetening every taste bud, making you wish it could last forever."

Richelle E. Goodrich

"Like snowflakes, my Christmas memories gather and dance - each beautiful, unique, and gone too soon." Deborah Whipp

One of my very favorite Christmas things is my Nativity scene. I just love this. It has a stable, angels, little wise men, a shepherd and, of course, Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus in his straw-filled manger. That's the picture today. My mother bought this sometime in the 1960's, so it's really old and beautiful. Why she bought it I'll never know as she wasn't a believer in any of the true reason for Christmas. Probably because she thought it was pretty. She passed it along to me when we were in our house on Alegria and I was delighted to have it. Unfortunately, somewhere along the way, Joseph's fingers broke off and I've tried Elmer's glue, hot glue gun and they just won't stay on. I can see her shaking her head in heaven, yes, she did make that commitment before she left us, and all I can say is, "I'm sorry, Mom, I did my best!" Anyway, I take great joy in arranging this scene each year.

Christmas is just a few days away and I'm looking forward to a delightful day with family. We are giving Emily driving lessons for Christmas and as soon as she brings her grades up a little, she can get behind the wheel. Jessie is getting new clothes and a puzzle and everyone else in my family is getting a gift card. See, friends and neighbors, not one minute spent trolling for the right gift, fighting crowds, exhaustion and frustration. I'm not going to be in a terrific hurry to take all my Christmas down and stow it away as it's given me so much pleasure to walk through all these goodies I've accumulated.

I have assembled all the ingredients for Christmas Jam and I'll be making this shortly. As promised, I'm sharing the recipe with you dear friends so you can enjoy it, too.

You'll need a two-pack of liquid pectin, 6 half-pint canning jars with new lids. Fill your jars with really hot water and let them sit till you've got the jam ready to put in them. Then dump out the water and let them drain. Put the jar lids in a bowl of hot water till you're ready to cover the filled jars.

3 cups fresh cranberries
1 orange peeled and seeded
10 oz. package frozen strawberries, slightly thawed
1/4 tsp. ground cloves
1/4 tsp. ground cinnamon

Combine the cranberries and the orange in your food processor, pulsing till coarsely chopped. Add strawberries, cloves and cinnamon and process till mixture is finely chopped. Toss all this in a large pot and add:

4 cups sugar
1/2 cup water

Blend, stirring constantly over low heat. Cook for 2 minutes. Increase heat to high and bring mixture to a rolling boil. Stir in 1 pouch of the liquid pectin. Stirring constantly, bring to a boil again and boil for 1 minute. Remove from heat, ladle into hot jars leaving 1/4 inch headspace. Wipe rims and put on the lids. Let the jars cool. You can give this jam to everyone and they will be weak with gratitude. And you'll be so proud of yourself.

I've been reading the Christmas story from the Gospel of Luke, which blesses me. Hope it blesses you, too.

"And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ, the Lord...Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." Luke 2:13

"On a night like this, centuries ago,
A brilliant star rose in the East,
To show the Wise Men where to go.
They set out on a journey,
To find an unknown King.
Their hearts were filled with happiness
And praises they would sing!"

"(A Night Like This)" from "Star of Wonder - A Christmas Musical"
Book & Lyrics by Deanne Davis, Music by David Wheatley

My book page: Amazon.com: Deanne Davis
Christmas is just days away and my books:
"Sunrises and Sunflowers Speak Hope"
"A Tablespoon of Love, A Tablespoon of Laughter"
Would be really nice gifts for everyone you know. They're on
Amazon.com
"Star of Wonder" a delightful Christmas Kindle story, where four
lonely people find love
following a strange new star on Christmas Eve, is there, too.

Sierra Madre Woman's Club
550 W. Sierra Madre Blvd., Sierra Madre, 91024

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SierraMadreWomansClub.org

[SierraMadreWomansClub](#)

Wistaria Shop Closes 6/1 - Thurs 9/4

Pasadena Altadena

News From Your Community For Your Community

Rose Parade Tickets for Fires Victims

In the wake of the Eaton and Palisades fires, the Pasadena Tournament of Roses announced Wednesday a comprehensive complimentary ticket program designed to support and uplift residents who were affected by the recent wildfires. This initiative reflects the Association's continued commitment to honoring the strength, resilience and unity demonstrated by impacted communities throughout the region.

"As our neighbors continue the hard work of recovery, we want to offer moments of joy, connection and celebration during the New Year's festivities," said Mark Leavens, President of the Pasadena Tournament of Roses Association. "These tickets are a small but heartfelt gesture of support and solidarity."

Through a partnership with Sharp Seating, the Association's official grandstand seating and ticket company, and support from Alaska Airlines, the Association will provide more than 1,000 tickets to the Rose Parade presented by Honda to fire-impacted residents. These tickets will be distributed through local community partners, including Altadena Town Council, Black Freedom Fund, California Community Foundation, Community Women Vital Voices, Eaton Fire Collaborative, Greater Los Angeles Education Foundation, Partnership for Children, Youth & Families, Pasadena Community Coalition, Pasadena Community Foundation and YMCA of Metropolitan Los Angeles. These community partners will work directly with residents to allocate these tickets in the coming days. Additional details regarding distribution will be shared by those partner organizations.

In addition, the Tournament of Roses is making a significant allocation of 10,000 complimentary tickets to Floatfest: A Rose Parade Showcase available directly to residents impacted by the Eaton and Palisades fires. Floatfest offers guests an up-close look at the floral masterpieces of the Rose Parade—an opportunity to enjoy artistry, innovation and the spirit of celebration at their own pace.

Complimentary tickets to Floatfest are available to residents regardless of the nature of their loss. Impacted residents may request up to six tickets through the Tournament's official website, and requests will be fulfilled on a first-come, first-served basis, subject to availability.

The Association has also provided a limited number of tickets to the Rose Bowl Game, Equestfest, Bandfest and Decorating Places to community partners. The Tournament's goal is to ensure that those most affected have an opportunity to take part in new year traditions that bring people together and reflect the spirit of hope and renewal.

"As our community rebuilds, we remain committed to lifting up the stories of resilience and offering spaces where families and neighbors can gather, reflect and celebrate," added Leavens.

For more information on the complimentary ticket program, to request Floatfest tickets or for a complete event schedule, visit tournamentofroses.com.



Groundbreaking for Central Library Retrofit

The City of Pasadena commemorated an important step in the Central Library Seismic Retrofit and Renovation Project with a groundbreaking ceremony last week for the preconstruction phase.

Held December 12 in the parking lot of Pasadena Central Library, 150 people gathered for the event, which featured remarks from Mayor Victor Gordo, District 3 Councilmember Justin Jones, Public Works Director Greg De Vinck and Library Director Tim McDonald. Speakers provided an update on the project and checked out the ceremonial final book from Central Library, marking the symbolic start to a 3-year-long project. Attendees left with a keep-sake memento - a brick taken out of Central Library during selective demolition, stamped with the groundbreaking date.

Phase 1A of the Central Library Seismic Retrofit and Renovation Project commenced on August 18, 2025, marking the start of on-site activities. This includes the controlled demolition of existing mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems, completion of a Historic American Buildings Survey, removal, cataloging, and off-site storage of historic finish elements (e.g., millwork) for future reinstallation, and hazardous materials

abatement. Concurrently, Phase 1 preconstruction services, including constructability and value engineering reviews, are also underway. As an integral initial step in the process of reopening Central Library, this groundbreaking highlights the vital progress made and the exciting milestones to come.

With support from the community and funding from Measure PL, this project will deliver key improvements to Central Library keeping fiscal responsibility, historic preservation, and public benefit at the forefront of the plan. The City of Pasadena is committed to championing innovation rooted in legacy. This retrofit and renovation of a vital cultural pillar of the City, showcases that dedication and the commitment to maintaining a thriving Civic Center. Construction is on target to be completed in 2028.

"This library reflects who we are as a community," remarked Mayor Gordo, "inclusive, innovative and committed to ensuring generations of Pasadena have a beautiful place to connect and read." Emphasizing the importance of a library, Councilmember Jones remarked how the library is "one of the great equalizers of our community," providing space for everyone in the community to come together and learn.

"Access to a place for the

community to gather is an important part of our mission," remarked Tim McDonald, Library Director, as he outlined a vision of the library to come. "We are committed to the democratic ideas of freedom and equality, all members of the community - no matter their race, gender, religion - will always have access at the library."

Director of Public Works Greg De Vinck echoed these sentiments as he offered a detailed overview of the project, noting the major milestones achieved - a completed design phase and selection of the Construction Manager at Risk - and signaling an on-track project timeline.

For more information visit: cityofpasadena.net.

Roses Queen and Court at the Senior Center

Fresh from their tour down Colorado Blvd and the Rose Bowl game on January 1st, the Pasadena Tournament of Roses Queen and Royal Court will make their annual visit to the Pasadena Senior Center on Saturday, Jan. 3 at 1 pm.

Arcadia High School senior Serena Guo was selected as the 2026 Rose Queen by the Tournament in October. The six members of the Royal Court are Riya Gupta, Caltech Institute; Serena Guo, Arcadia High School; Keiko Rakin, Alhambra High School; Olivia Hargrove, Pasadena City College; Sophia Ren, Arcadia High School; Naira Wadley, John Muir High School; and Livia dePaula, Temple City High School.

The event is free for Pasadena Senior Center members and non-members, and reservations are suggested. To register or for more information, visit: pasadenaseniorcenter.org and click on Special Events, or call 626-795-4331.

From their selection in October 2025 and throughout 2026, the 2026 Rose Queen and Rose Court will attend numerous community and media functions, serving as ambassadors of the Tournament of Roses, the Pasadena community, and the greater Los Angeles area. Each Rose Court member will receive a \$7,500 educational scholarship from the Pasadena Tournament of Roses.

As a donor-supported nonprofit, the center operates without any local, state or federal funding and provides more services to older adults than any other organization in the San Gabriel Valley. Hours are Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Saturday from 8 a.m. to noon.

South Pasadena Opens Dr. Beatriz Solis Memorial Park



Los Angeles County Supervisor Kathryn Barger joined the City of South Pasadena Wednesday in celebrating the ribbon cutting of Dr. Beatriz Solis Memorial Park, a new community space honoring the life and legacy of a longtime South Pasadena resident and nationally respected advocate for education, equity, and inclusion.

The ribbon cutting ceremony took place at the new park, located at 2006 Berkshire Avenue. The event marked an important milestone for the community and the City of South Pasadena's ongoing investment in parks and open space.

"This beautiful new park is a lasting tribute to Dr. Beatriz Solis and the remarkable impact she had on this community and beyond," said Supervisor Kathryn Barger. "Her advocacy for parks and open space helped make this project possible, and I commend the City of South Pasadena for investing in a space that will serve residents for generations. This partnership reflects what can be achieved when local and County governments work together to improve quality of life."

The City of South Pasadena supported the project by allocating \$275,000 in Measure A funds from the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District, demonstrating a strong commitment to expanding accessible, high-quality public spaces.

Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Chair and First District Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, who also attended the ceremony, reflected on the park's significance and her sister's enduring legacy.

"My sister, Dr. Beatriz Solis, devoted her life to ensuring that communities too often left behind had a voice and the resources to thrive," said Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Chair and First District Supervisor Hilda L. Solis.

"She believed public spaces, like public health, should uplift people and bring them together. The Dr. Beatriz Solis Memorial Park reflects those values—offering a place for healing, wellness, and community connection. I am deeply honored to see her legacy live on in a space that will serve families for generations, and I thank the City of South Pasadena for helping make this meaningful tribute a reality."

Celebrate African American Heritage Through Kwanzaa

The Pasadena Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and the Pasadena Public Library invite the community to attend Pasadena's 37th annual Kwanzaa celebration on Saturday, Dec. 27 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at La Pintoresca Branch Library, 1355 N. Raymond Ave. All are welcome to join together in celebrating African American heritage and tradition. Enjoy music, storytelling and youth presentations, including Bluesman Brother Yusef and other special guests. Refreshments will be provided following the program.

Created in 1966 by Maulana Ron Karenga, Kwanzaa is an African American and Pan-African holiday that celebrates history, values, family, community and culture. The ideas and concepts of Kwanzaa are expressed in

the Swahili language, one of the most widely spoken languages in Africa. The seven principles which form its core were drawn from communitarian values found throughout the African continent. These principles are: Umoja (Unity), Kujichagulia (Self-Determination), Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility), Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics), Nia (Purpose), Kuumba (Creativity), and Imani (Faith).

Kwanzaa gets its name from the Swahili phrase, "matunda ya kwanza" and is rooted in first fruit celebrations which are found in cultures throughout Africa both in ancient and modern times. It is celebrated from Friday, Dec. 26 to Thursday, Jan. 1.

Stay connected to the City of Pasadena visit CityOfPasadena.net.



SIERRA MADRE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Sunday worship 9:30 a.m.

COME JOIN US IN WORSHIP! ALL ARE WELCOMED!

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Show proceeds support our Sierra Madre Woman's Club's Local Charities

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and a

Happy New Year



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AROUND SAN GABRIEL VALLEY

NEWS BRIEFS

COUNTY OFFERS GRANTS TO HELP RESIDENTS LIVE LEAD-FREE

Free Testing and Remediation of Lead-Based Paint Hazards

Alhambra, December 8, 2025 – The Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA) is excited to announce that it has secured additional funding to continue providing critical services to the various communities within Los Angeles County through its successful Live Lead-Free Program.

Thanks to a new multi-year funding commitment from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Program will offer free testing and remediation of lead-based paint hazards, and provide educational resources to qualified residents, thereby extending its reach and impact through November 15, 2028.

The Live Lead-Free Program offers the following services:

- Free in-home lead testing to identify lead-based paint hazards;
- Up to \$75,000 per unit for lead-based paint hazard remediation;
- Up to \$30,000 per unit for health and safety improvements;
- Educational materials on lead safety and prevention; and
- Collaboration with local health departments to coordinate lead-safe practices.

The LACDA provides free testing for chipping and peeling lead-paint hazards. If hazards are found, the agency will provide the contractors all materials and inspection services needed to repair damaged areas inside and outside the unit(s).

To qualify for the Live Lead-Free Program, households must:

- Be within the Program's target area;
- Have a child under six years old living in or spending significant time in the home, or a pregnant person living in the home; and
- Meet low-to-moderate income requirements.

Property owners and tenants can visit www.liveleadfree.org and enter their address to determine if they are in the eligible target area and submit an Interest Form or Application.

"Knowing how costly housing improvements can be, we are proud to assist property owners with lead-based paint remediation. By designing a program that directs resources to addressing unit safety needs, we will continue to ensure families remain healthy in hazard-free homes," said Emilio Salas, LACDA Executive Director.

Lead exposure, especially in young children, can have devastating lifelong consequences. Even low levels of lead exposure can affect a child's brain development, leading to learning disabilities, behavioral problems, and reduced IQ. Children under the age of six are particularly vulnerable, as their rapidly developing brains and bodies absorb lead more easily.

For more information, to submit an Interest Form or complete an Application, please visit www.liveleadfree.org or call (626) 586-1790. All media may contact Elisa Vásquez, LACDA Public Information Officer, at (626) 586-1762.

ATTEMPTED BURGLARY

SAN MARINO (CNS) - Three men suspected of trying to break into a San Marino home, shutting off the power and cutting through a water pipe in the process, were being sought by police Friday.

Officers responded at 10:30 a.m. Tuesday to the 800 block of Canterbury Road, regarding a possible residential burglary in progress, according to the San Marino Police Department.

Police said a housekeeper at the residence witnessed the suspects trying to break into the home and advised the resident, who was not at the property at the time.

Detectives determined that the residence sustained damage when the suspects used a hand-held reciprocating saw during the attempted break-in, which disrupted power to the home and severed a water pipe inside the wall.

The suspects fled before officers arrived, going over a wall and onto a property on Chaucer Road. A resident in the 700 block reported seeing three male suspects running down their driveway and through nearby bushes, police said.

The three suspects were last seen on Chaucer Road heading toward Lombardy Road.

"A thorough search of several properties met with negative results and no suspects were located," police said in a statement. "It is believed that the suspects were able to flee the scene and avoid capture prior to officers arrival."

Based on witness statements and surveillance video, police described the suspects as males wearing tan boonie-style hats, face masks, green long-sleeved T-shirts, tan work pants, dark-colored shoes, and carrying black backpacks.

"The clothing closely resembled that of a landscaper," police said. "The suspects appeared to run towards an older model dark colored sports utility vehicle. A surveillance camera likely belonging to the suspects was also recovered during the investigation."

Anyone with information regarding the attempted burglary or the suspects was urged to contact the San Marino Police Department Detective Bureau at 626-300-0720. Tipsters who prefer to remain anonymous can call Crime Stoppers at 800-222-8477 or visit lacrimestoppers.org.

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LIFT INTERNATIONAL CHURCH AND EVER AFTER EVENTS TO PROVIDE WILDFIRE RELIEF AND \$35,000 IN FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO LOCAL FAMILIES

WHAT:

Wildfire Relief Distribution & Financial Assistance Event: LIFT International Church will provide critical relief supplies and direct financial assistance to families impacted by recent wildfires, while also fulfilling Christmas wish requests submitted by families through its community portal.

WHEN:

Sunday, December 22, 2025 11:00 a.m.

WHERE:

LIFT International Church

1757 N. LAKE AVENUE PASADENA, CA 91104

WHO:

LIFT International Church

Ever After Events Partners

:

California Community Foundation

,

The Black Freedmen Fund and LA Wild Fires. Local families impacted by wildfires Community volunteers

DETAILS / VISUALS:

LIFT International Church will distribute essential household items, childcare supplies, and direct financial relief totaling over \$35,000 to 25-30 local families. In addition, the church will fulfill select Christmas wishes submitted by families in need.

Items being distributed include:

- Sealy Air Mattresses
- Pillows
- Air purifiers
- Amenity kits
- Tech decks
- Baby strollers
- 8piece nursery crib sets
- Child sleeping bags
- Clothing for men, women, and children
- Grocery gift cards

As wildfire-affected families face ongoing displacement and financial hardship during the holiday season, this event provides immediate relief, dignity, and hope meeting urgent needs while restoring a sense of stability and joy.

ALTADENA FOREVER RUN

WHERE RESILIENCE MEETS THE ROAD
Inaugural Eaton Fire Anniversary Run

A Run For and Through Altadena
Sunday, January 4, 2026
Race Start: 8:00 AM
Mariposa Junction
849 E. Mariposa Street
Altadena, CA



RUN FOR RECOVERY.
RUN FOR HOPE.
RUN FOR ALTADENA.

One year after the Eaton Fire, the people of Altadena are running forward stronger and more united than ever.

Join us for the Altadena Forever Run, a powerful day of remembrance, community, and renewal.

Every step supports Eaton Fire survivors and Altadena's first responders as they rebuild homes, restore hope, and strengthen what endures.

This isn't just a race, it's a chance to run for good.

CHOOSE YOUR COURSE

10K RUN – Scenic foothill route through restored neighborhoods and mountain views.

5K WALK/RUN – A lively community route filled with local spirit and cheering crowds.

1K FAMILY FUN RUN – Perfect for families and kids to join the movement.

All races take place on closed streets for a safe, festive experience.



REGISTER TODAY!

Registration closes
January 1st, 2026

Would you like to sponsor?

velma@thesocialimpact.co

AltadenaForeverRun.com

ST. RITA STUDENTS BRING HOLIDAY CHEER

The children's voices singing Christmas carols burst from the Sierra Madre Memorial Park stage into the afternoon sunlight last weekend. These 5th grade students from St. Rita School delivered their lively performance at the annual Sierra Madre Winter Village Festival.



Led by Mrs. Rachel Han, their teacher & Assistant Principal, the students sang a collection of beloved Christmas carols, sharing their talents and spreading heartwarming joy for their parents and community members alike.

A special feature showcased three student musicians who played Christmas songs on the cello (Sydney Tung - 5th grade), the violin (Fiona Tung - 5th grade) & the pipa (Jolyne Ng - 7th grade). Their instrumental performances added a unique touch to the afternoon.

The pipa is a traditional pear-shaped Chinese lute that is played with plectrums (or fingernails) on the fingers creating distinct forward ("pi") and backward ("pa") sounds, giving it its name. This ancient musical instrument is known for its expressive sound and Silk Road origins.

St. Rita School encourages its tradition of supporting city events and of fostering a strong community presence. The holiday festivities continued on their campus (north on Baldwin) this past weekend with their eagerly anticipated "Breakfast with Santa." Family, friends, and parishioners gathered for a morning of delicious pancakes, hot cocoa and a memorable photo opportunity with Santa Claus!

The St. Rita School community celebrates the anticipation and warmth of this Christmas season by playing and praying together. We wish you and your family a peaceful time together.

HOLY ANGELS 'ELF ON THE SHELF'

In December, every Thursday, our Elf on the Shelf made a surprise appearance, much to the delight of our students and the entire school community.

Parent quotes:

Elizabeth Delgado- "For me it's been seeing not only the students, but faculty and parents eyes light up with the Christmas magic from our special elves."

Cecilia McKim- "As a parent, I am so grateful for Holy Angels. It is a school where faith, joy, and learning come together, and where our children are truly known and loved. Under Mrs. Dyrek's leadership, the spirit of Christmas is felt not just in celebration, but in the kindness, service, and strong sense of community that make this school so special. My son loves going to school each day, and I'm thankful to be part of such a special community."

Deborah Muro- "The effort Aimee Dyrek put into this beautiful season truly shows the love she has for our children and our school community. The time and care behind these moments means so much to our kids and brings so much joy to the children and parents!! We feel so lucky to have her heading our school family!"

Victoria Campagna- "We are truly blessed with the best. Mrs. Dyrek and Mrs. Erin went above and beyond this holiday season to bring magic and cheer to our children and our school community. Years from now, our kids may not remember every lesson, but they'll remember how their school made them feel—and this is one of those moments."

Jessica Hernandez Arana- "The greatest blessing is to find a school that is filled with so much spirit. These fun and festive demonstrations brings the very best of our children, staff and parents. It takes a leader, such as our principal, to demonstrate kindness, joy, appreciation and overall community among our school family. Our school has exceptional staff and teachers that spend their time creating memories for our children. I could not have asked for more. We are so fortunate to be a Holy Angels family."

Students quotes:

Eli Tubbs- 6th

"The school has a lot of good spirit for the holidays like Christmas decorations. I think the elves are really impressive, I felt like it makes the kids really happy and I really appreciated it. The school also celebrates not just presents, but deep into Jesus' birth."

Charlie Tubbs- 8th

"Christmas at Holy Angels is so spectacular! From the moment you walk onto campus, you can feel the jolly spirit! This Christmas season, we had our principal, Mrs. Dyrek and Ms. Erin as our Elf on the Shelf's and always find them in crazy positions all over the school! I don't think anything will beat the enthusiasm of celebration at my school, especially during Christmas!"

Olive Yu- 1st

"It made me really excited to come to school"

Mackenzie Ruiz- 1st

"The elves at the school made me really excited for Christmas because it is Jesus' birthday on Christmas Day."

SCHOOL DIRECTORY

Alverno Heights Academy
200 N. Michillinda Sierra Madre, Ca. 91024
(626) 355-3463
Head of School: Joanne Harabedian
E-mail address: jharabedian@alvernoheights.org

High Point Academy
1720 Kinneloa Canyon Road
Pasadena, Ca. 91107
Head of School: Gary Stern 626-798-8989
website: www.highpointacademy.org

Arcadia Christian School
1900 S. Santa Anita Avenue
Arcadia, CA 91006
Preschool - TK - 8th Grade
626-574-8229/626-574-0805
Email: inquiry@acsliions.com
Principal: Cindy Harmon
website: www.acsliions.com

Arcadia High School
180 Campus Drive Arcadia, CA 91007
Phone: (626) 821-8370, Principal: Brent Forsee
bforsee@ausd.net

Arroyo Pacific Academy
41 W. Santa Clara St. Arcadia, Ca,
(626) 294-0661 Principal: Phil Clarke
E-mail address: pclarke@arroyopacific.org

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary School
Ms. Rose Navarro, Principal
2660 East Orange Grove Blvd.
Pasadena, Ca 91107
626-793-2089
https://school.abvmpasadena.org/

Barnhart School
240 W. Colorado Blvd Arcadia, Ca. 91007
(626) 446-5588
Head of School: Tonya Beilstein
Kindergarten - 8th grade
website: www.barnhartschool.org

Bethany Christian School
93 N. Baldwin Ave. Sierra Madre, Ca. 91024
(626) 355-3527
Preschool-TK-8th Grade
Principal: Jonathan Hawes
website: www.bcsliions.org

Clairbourn School
8400 Huntington Drive
San Gabriel, CA 91775
Phone: 626-286-3108 ext. 172
FAX: 626-286-1528
E-mail: jhawes@clairbourn.org

Foothill Oaks Academy
822 E. Bradbourne Ave., Duarte, CA 91010
(626) 301-9809
Principal: Nancy Lopez
www.foothilloaksacademy.org
office@foothilloaksacademy.org

Frostig School
971 N. Altadena Drive Pasadena, CA 91107
(626) 791-1255
Head of School: Jenny Janetzke
Email: jenny@frostig.org

The Gooden School
192 N. Baldwin Ave. Sierra Madre, Ca. 91024
(626) 355-2410
Head of School, Jo-Anne Woolner
website: www.goodenschool.org

Holy Angels School
PK-8th Grade
360 Campus Drive
Arcadia, CA 91007
626-447-6312
office@holylangsarcadia.org
Principal: Aimee Dyrek
holylangsarcadia.net

SUBMIT YOUR ENTRIES TO THE MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. ESSAY AND VISUAL ARTS CONTESTS AND WIN PRIZES!!

2026 Contest Theme Is: "Resilience and Renewal: Social Justice, Equality, and Community Empowerment"

As we enter 2026, we reflect on the vision conveyed by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in his "I Have a Dream" speech given August 28, 1963, during the March on Washington. More importantly, we should analyze that vision, while thinking about the current state of our society. Giving emphasis to racial integration, war, poverty, and economic and employment inequalities, we must ask ourselves, "Are we living the dream and what are we doing to help bring it to fruition?"

In his book Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. states, "In any social revolution, there are times when the tailwinds of triumph and fulfillment favor us, and other times when strong headwinds of disappointment and setbacks beat against us relentlessly. We must not permit adverse winds to overwhelm us as we journey across life, mighty Atlantic; we must be sustained by our entrance of courage in spite of the

winds. This refusal to be stopped, this 'courage to be,' this determination to go on 'in spite of' is the hallmark of any great movement."

"Resilience and Renewal: Social Justice, Equality, and Community Empowerment"

This theme recognizes Dr. King's commitment to nonviolent action in pursuit of justice and equality. It's a call to action to protect the values that elevate humanity, and to work together to ensure freedom, justice, and democracy are safeguarded.

Your submission should reflect ways to recover quickly from difficulties, trials and tribulations and respond to the challenges facing the country today, e.g. wildfire, immigration, threats to democracy, in line with the writing of Martin Luther King.

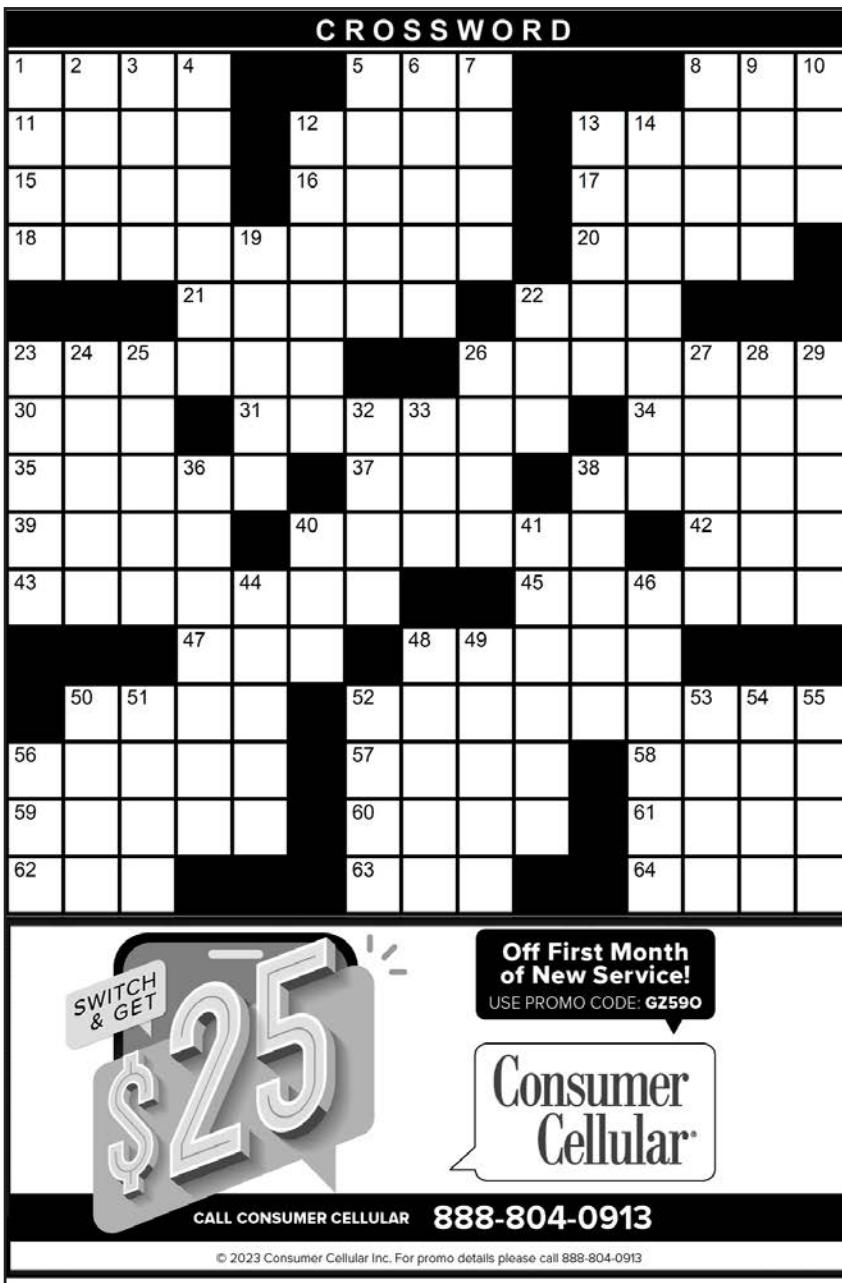
All in Grades 4th through 12th may Enter All submissions are due to the Pasadena MLK by: Friday, December 8, 2025

The event will take place Monday, January 19, 2026 at

John Muir High School Auditorium
Pasadena, California 91103

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BODY LANGUAGE

ACROSS
 1. Hot Springs and such
 5. ___ Bell and ___ Barker
 8. Wharton degree, acr.
 11. Artist's inspiration
 12. *Move head to show attention
 13. Angry growl
 15. Shamu, e.g.
 16. Diva's number
 17. Put on fancy dress (2 words)
 18. *Making facial expression showing pain
 20. Mine passage
 21. Single-handedly
 22. Assistance
 23. Made according to specifications
 26. Economizes
 30. Biochemistry acr.
 31. Aerie baby

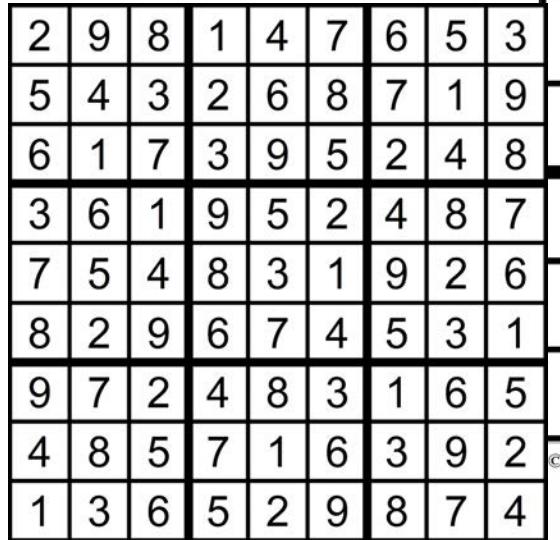
34. Genesis skipper
 35. Leaves out
 37. *Some look up and to the right when telling one
 38. Watcher
 39. "The Forsyte ___" by John Galsworthy
 40. Forty winks
 42. Fraternity letter T
 43. *Said "easy peasy" with fingers
 45. Like a weight lifter, usually
 47. Weasel-related onomatopoeia
 48. Undo laces
 50. Helicopter sound
 52. *Showing low self-esteem or boredom
 56. 100 centimes
 57. Purl partner
 58. From square one
 59. Frustration, in a comic book
 60. "At ___, soldier!"
 61. Don't go
 62. Dashboard acr.
 63. Like Willie Winkie

64. Frustrated driver's recourse

DOWN
 1. Urban haze
 2. Make like a cat
 3. Ascus, pl.
 4. Same as sea moss (2 words)
 5. Rice wine
 6. Dress with a flare
 7. Rudolph, when older
 8. Famous Christmas guests
 9. Like some champagnes
 10. High mountain
 12. Toyota truck model
 13. Part of flight
 14. *Showing agreement
 19. Healing plants
 22. Be in a cast
 23. *Show anger with arms
 24. Unnerve
 25. Eurasian antelope
 26. "___ but not heard"

27. Much, in Italy
 28. Song of praise
 29. *I don't know" move
 32. *One's smiling because one's ___
 33. Intoxicated
 36. *Showing impatience with fingers
 38. Like retina and brain connecting nerve
 40. Large edible mushroom
 41. Keen
 44. Nice place for a rocking chair
 46. Reuse ideas
 48. Forearm bones
 49. Hustle and bustle sound
 50. Sandwich alternative
 51. Stay out of its way!
 52. Place at angle
 53. Gung-ho about something
 54. Close by
 55. Gwyneth, for short
 56. Opposite of #54 Down

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS

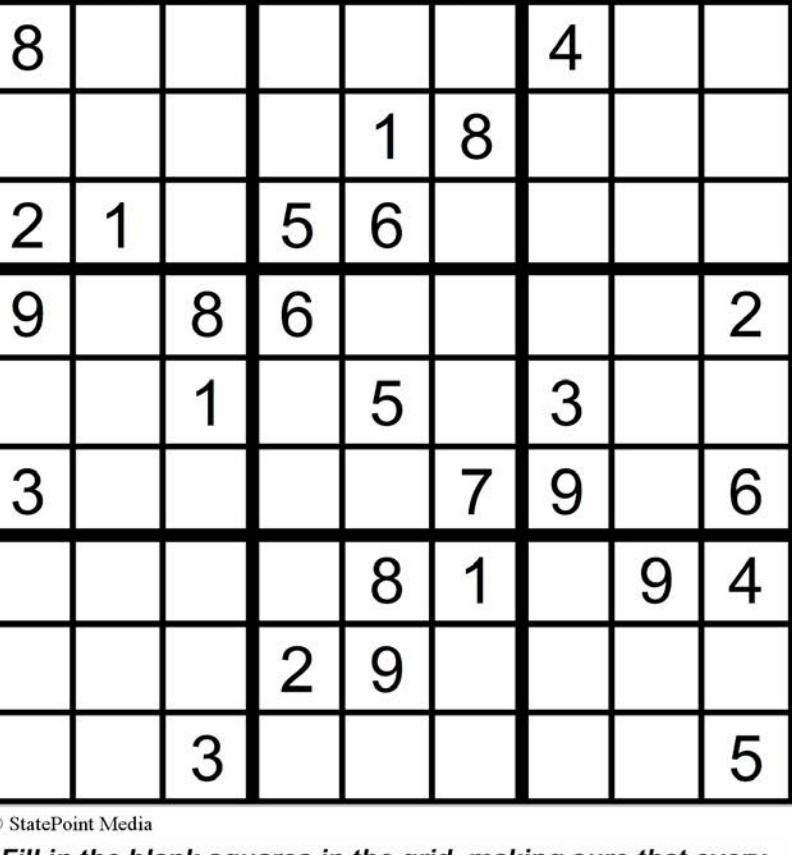


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Peter A. Dills
<https://podlink/1116885432>

Christmas Rules (Still Holding Up) 2025)

By Peter Dills

My dear old departed father used to remind me often: "Don't argue sex, politics, or religion—you'll never win." Smart advice then. Even smarter now.

I wrote this piece several years ago, not long after my dad passed, and after rereading it recently, I realized something—it still holds up. So no, it's not too late to pass it along (wink) before you head to Cousin Bob's house... or Aunt Kathy's cat den—oops, I mean house.

The holidays mean time with loved ones... and the loved ones who quietly test our patience. I still don't argue politics at family gatherings. That said, I will happily discuss the NFL coaching carousel—because unlike politics, everyone agrees the referees are terrible. (Rams)

A few reminders from my personal holiday rulebook:

Ask for help, but don't expect it.

Families are never fair. Work is never evenly divided. Someone always disappears when it's time to clear plates. I go in prepared to do everything—and pleasantly surprised when I don't. Keeping score is a guaranteed way to ruin the mood.

You don't have to be right about everything.

Holiday gatherings turn sour when someone needs to win every conversation. Of course, I am right about most things—but that doesn't mean I need to prove it between bites of stuffing.

Ease up on the criticism.

Public criticism—of a spouse, a sibling, or a child—is a mood killer. Holidays aren't the time for life coaching. If something truly needs to be said, take it private and keep it respectful.

Sit down and enjoy the moment.

If you're doing most of the work, remember to stop and join the party. Dinner doesn't have to be on the dot. I try to spend a few minutes one-on-one with each person—real conversation, not just "How's work?" That's where the good stuff lives.

Drink smart.

I don't drink at home, but I do enjoy a cocktail at parties. The key is knowing your limit. Too much holiday cheer has a way of turning minor annoyances into major productions.

Remember: we're all turning into our parents.

The very things that drive us crazy about our mothers and fathers are probably baked into us, too. It's just easier to spot in someone else.

Pro Tip: Don't bring an entrée unless you're asked.

Trust me—I learned that one the hard way.

If this helps you survive one family gathering with a little more patience and a little less stress, then my work here is done.

Happy Holidays—and good luck at Cousin Bob's. email me thechefknows@yahoo.com

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WINTER WELLNESS AND COMMUNITY STRENGTH FOR LOCAL SENIORS

Winter in Sierra Madre, Pasadena, Arcadia, and Altadena is usually a quieter season marked by cooler mornings and familiar routines. This year, however, many seniors in our foothill communities continue to feel the impact of the January fires that caused loss, disruption, and uncertainty for neighbors and friends.

For those who were displaced or lost their homes, winter can feel especially challenging. Maintaining health during this time is important, even amid change. Dressing in layers, staying warm indoors, and keeping regular meals and hydration can support both physical and emotional well-being. Gentle movement, such as stretching or short walks when possible, may help relieve tension and improve sleep.

Safety remains a priority, particularly during rainy weather. Slippery sidewalks and uneven surfaces can increase fall risks, especially in areas affected by cleanup or rebuilding. Taking extra time, wearing supportive footwear, and using mobility aids when needed can help prevent injury.

Emotional wellness is just as important as physical health. It is normal to feel grief, anxiety, or fatigue after experiencing loss. Staying connected—through phone calls, community gatherings, faith groups, or senior programs—can provide comfort and reassurance. Local libraries, senior centers, and community organizations continue to offer resources, activities, and a welcoming place to connect.

For those fortunate to be in their homes, this season offers an opportunity to check in on neighbors, offer a listening ear, or lend a helping hand. Small gestures of kindness strengthen the resilience that defines our communities.

As recovery continues, may this winter be a time of care, compassion, and quiet strength. Together, seniors across Sierra Madre, Pasadena, Arcadia, and Altadena can move forward—supported, remembered, and never alone.

HOW TO APPEAL A MEDICARE COVERAGE DENIAL

Dear Savvy Senior,
What steps do I need to take to appeal a denied Medicare claim? Frustrated Retiree
Dear Frustrated,

If you disagree with a coverage or payment decision made by Medicare, you can appeal, and you'll be happy to know that many appeals are successful, so it's definitely worth your time.

But before going that route, talk with the doctor, hospital and Medicare to see if you can spot the problem and resubmit the claim. Many denials are caused by simple billing code errors by the doctor's office or hospital. If, however, that doesn't fix the problem, here's how you appeal.

Original Medicare Appeals

If you have original Medicare, start with your quarterly Medicare Summary Notice (MSN). This statement will list all the services, supplies and equipment billed to Medicare for your medical treatment and will tell you why a claim was denied. You can also check your Medicare claims early online at MyMedicare.gov, or by calling Medicare at 800-633-4227.

There are five levels of appeals for original Medicare, although you can initiate a "fast appeal" if you're getting services from a hospital, skilled nursing facility, home health agency, outpatient rehabilitation facility or hospice, and the service is ending.

You have 120 days after receiving the MSN to request a "redetermination" by a Medicare contractor, who reviews the claim. Circle the items you're disputing on the MSN, provide a written explanation of why you believe the denial should be reversed, and include any supporting documents like a letter from the doctor or hospital explaining why the charge should be covered. Then send it to the address on the form.

You can also use the Medicare Redetermination Form. See CMS.gov/Medicare/CMS-Forms/CMS-Forms/downloads/CMS20027.pdf to download it or call 800-633-4227 to request a copy by mail.

The contractor will usually decide within 60 days after receiving your request. If your request is denied, you can request for "reconsideration" from a different claims reviewer and submit additional evidence.

A denial at this level ends the matter, unless the charges in dispute are at least \$190 in 2025. In that case, you can request a hearing with an administrative law judge. The hearing is usually held by videoconference or teleconference.

If you have to go to the next level, you can appeal to the Medicare Appeals Council. Then, for claims of at least \$1,900 in 2025, the final level of appeals is judicial review in U.S. District Court.

Advantage and Part D Appeals

If you're enrolled in a Medicare Advantage health plan or Part D prescription drug plan the appeals process is slightly different. With these plans you have only 65 days to initiate an appeal. And in both cases, you must start by appealing directly to the private insurance plan, rather than to Medicare.

If you think that your plan's refusal is jeopardizing your health, you can ask for an expedited (fast) request, where a Part D insurer must respond within 24 hours, and Medicare Advantage health plan must provide an answer within 72 hours.

If you disagree with your plan's decision, you can file an appeal, which like original Medicare, has five levels. If you disagree with a decision made at any level, you can appeal to the next level.

For more information, along with step-by-step procedures on how to appeal Medicare, go to Medicare.gov/claims-appeals and click on "File an appeal." Also make sure to keep photocopies and records of all communication with Medicare, whether written or oral, concerning your denial.

Need Help?

If you need help filing an appeal, you can appoint a representative (a relative, friend, advocate, attorney or someone else you trust) to help you. Or contact your State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), which has counselors that can file your appeal for you for free. To locate your local SHIP, go to ShipHelp.org or call 877-839-2675.

Send your questions or comments to questions@savvysenior.org, or to Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070.

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SENIOR HAPPENINGS

HAPPY BIRTHDAY! DECEMBER Birthdays*

Maria Decker, Nancy Dorn, Prudence Levine, Pat Karamitros, Joan Hufnagel, Mary Alice Cervera, Carol Horejsi, Helen Reese, Levon Yapoianian, Toni Buckner, Lottie Bugl, Sheila Wohler, Nan Murphy, Eleanor Hensel, Sylvia Curl, Elizabeth Levie, Gayle Licher, Cindy Barran, Melissa Stute, Hanna Jungbauer, Sheila Woehler.
To add your name to this distinguished list, please call the paper at 626.355.2737. YEAR of birth not required

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Seniors 60 Years of Age and Up
A suggested donation of \$3.00 for seniors 60 and over.
\$5.00 for non-senior guest.
Daily reservations are not required.
More Info: <https://www.sierramadreca.gov> 626-355-5278



OUT TO PASTOR

A Weekly Religion Column by Rev. James Snyder

ANOTHER CHRISTMAS DOWN THE CHIMNEY

If I have counted correctly, this is my 74th Christmas. Believe me, I do not remember all of them. The only thing is how much money I spent on all of those Christmases.

I know Christmas is filled with rituals. As a young person, I grew up on rituals. Our best ritual was on Christmas.

For instance, the day before Christmas, my father would get a real Christmas tree. On Christmas Eve, we would all gather to decorate it. Then, on New Year's Day, we would take down the decorations, and my father would move the tree outside to the backyard. Our backyard was filled with Christmas trees.

The day before Christmas, my mother and I would go Christmas shopping from early morning until late afternoon. She knew every shop and exactly what to buy in each. She worked on that list for months and was excited to receive all the gifts on it.

I remember one Christmas, after a full day of shopping, our car was packed with presents. I don't know how much my mother spent, but it must've been a lot.

On our way home, my mother remembered something she had forgotten.

She turned around and went back to a store for Christmas cards she had forgotten. We both went in, and my mother bought about 20 cards. As we left, she sighed and said, "Son, it's been a busy day—I'm glad it's over. I can't wait to get home." I agreed.

We would take these Christmas presents home, and when my siblings and I went to bed, my dad and mom would wrap all the gifts and put them under the tree.

As we approached the car, I noticed one of the back doors was not fully closed.

"Mom," I said, "did we leave the back car door open?"

Mother looked and said, "We sure did not leave any door open."

When we went into the store for the Christmas cards, the car was filled with all kinds of Christmas presents we spent all day collecting.

When we got to the car and opened the door, the inside was empty. All our Christmas shopping for the day had disappeared. My mother looked inside the car and could not believe what she saw. Or, maybe I should say she couldn't believe what she wasn't seeing.

Suddenly, my mother sighed, and tears ran down her cheeks. She looked at me and said, "Oh, what are we going to do?" It was too late to shop again, the stores closed early, and shopping time was over.

My mother stood just staring into that car for what felt like forever. I could feel her grief hanging heavily between us. I didn't know what to do. I felt helpless, wishing I could comfort her, but no words seemed right. Someone broke into our car and stole all our Christmas presents, leaving us with nothing but shock and a deep, hollow ache.

On our way home, my mother was relatively quiet. Usually, she's quite the chatterer, but today she hardly spoke at all.

We got home, walked into the living room, and saw the Christmas tree waiting to be decorated. Dad greeted us and said, "Where's all the Christmas presents?"

Without saying anything, my mother walked in and sat down, and was quiet for a few moments. Then she looked at my father and said, "Someone stole all our Christmas presents while we were in the last store."

My father just stared at her, shook his head, and said quietly, "What are we to do now?"

After a relatively quiet dinner that night, we went into the living room and began decorating the Christmas tree. No one talked as usual; we just put together all the decorations.

That Christmas really stands out in my mind because it was the only one with no presents under the tree. On Christmas morning, we woke up and sat around the tree as usual, but there were no Christmas presents under the tree.

That was the strangest Christmas our family ever had.

I thought it was strange that no one in our family ever mentioned that Christmas over the years. I guess I'm the only one who actually mentioned it. We all think of it, I'm sure. But it was one of the worst Christmas days we ever had as a family.

We celebrated Christmas as usual, and Mother had a wonderful Christmas dinner for us. We sat around the table trying to sing Christmas carols. It was hard, but we decided to move forward and celebrate our family rather than dwell on our missing Christmas gifts.

No matter how difficult the Christmases have been since that time, none of them has equaled the sadness of that Christmas.

Reflecting on that Christmas recently, an encouraging verse of scripture came to my mind.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God" (Psalms 42:11).

Not everything turns out the way we plan. I haven't had a Christmas like this, but there have been times when I thought everything was going the wrong way. It's times like this that I need to focus not on what's going wrong but on God. My faith in God gets me through every problem no matter how difficult.

Dr. James L. Snyder lives in Ocala, FL with the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. Telephone 1-352-216-3025, e-mail jamesnyder51@gmail.com, website www.jamesnyderministries.com.



CHRISTOPHER Nyerges

[Nyerges is an educator and author. His many books can be seen at www.SchoolofSelf-Reliance.com.]

PROFILES OF THE FIRE: IN THE SPIRIT OF GIVING.....BACK

Allison Moore was born and raised in Pasadena, had graduated from college, and was living in her Pasadena home. Then came January 7, with the high winds, and an out-of-control fire that burned for hours.

The Eaton Fire began a short few blocks from her home, on the east side of Altadena, devastating the Eaton Canyon Nature Center, with the high winds funneling the fires down-canyon. The winds drove the inferno into the foothills, burning the hillsides and homes, and rapidly spreading to the west, leaving a wrath of destruction in its path. The unusual winds lasted a good 12 hours, and died down on the morning of the 8th. When it was over, around 9000 homes, businesses, and structures were destroyed, and 25 people died.

Allison lost her father's home -- childhood home - while her mother's home sustained some wind damage. Experiencing the devastating loss all around her, Allison Moore sprang into action! Within days of the fire, she and her friends set up a community give-away right on her home's front lawn, even though there was no power in the neighborhood. While there was still the smell of smoke in the air, she and her associates set up tables and gave away water, diapers, clothes, and more to whoever needed it. Their efforts were promoted from word of mouth, and social media.

To continue the work, she and 3 other black women co-founded the Altadena Recovery Team, and she became the Chief Impact Officer.

The other leaders are Samantha James, Makai Ward, and Savannah Bradley. Samantha James lost her family's horse stables, and Makai Ward's home is one of two still standing on her street. As CIO of the Altadena Recovery Team (ART), Allison designs and evaluates their programs to measure and strengthen the impact and effectiveness of their wildfire recovery and resilience efforts. She also surveys residents, provides one-on-one service, and makes recommendations to ensure that their work remains community-informed and focused on results.

And donations poured in from all across L.A. county -- even statewide. "There was overwhelming support by community members both near and far that allowed us to continue serving our community, and be a reliable source for our neighbors during a time where so much was uncertain for so many" says Moore. Also, Changeist -- the nonprofit Allison worked for which focused on youth development -- helped them get off the ground initially with resources, finances, and legal assistance.



The ART team of Savannah Bradley, Makai Ward, Samantha James, and Allison Moore.

Being able to give back to the community that made me during such unprecedented times just seemed like the instinctual thing to do. It was very challenging to host the give-away drives at my house, working with only daylight since we still had no power! But I'd do it all again if I had to. There's no better feeling than being able to give back to the city that made me and instilled in me the very communal mindset that it took to keep going after such a loss, and also get ART off the ground," explains Moore.

To increase the visibility of their efforts, ART also set up shop on Woodbury Road at the Eagles Hall and gave out supplies to community members in need of basic supplies. They also worked with the fire victims to see that they found the help they needed.

According to Moore, "we are currently tenants at the Eaton Fire Collaborative with a permanent office space, continuing our drives and community care, at 540 W. Woodbury Road, where we set up the second Saturday of each month."

ART also hosts community wellness events, such as yoga led by Makai Ward, their wellness officer who is a certified yoga instructor. "We plan to create a scholarship event for impacted students, as well as partnering with other organizations to best meet the needs of our community. We also do environmental advocacy work that is mainly spear-headed by one of our cofounders Savannah and one of our volunteers Deshawn, to help ensure that the rebuilding process is environmentally sustainable and takes preventative measures for future natural disasters," says Moore.

"ART is ever evolving, and committed to the long term recovery efforts of the city," Moore explains. Editor's Note: This holiday season, consider providing donation support to this worthy organization in the spirit of giving. Their website is <https://altadenart.org>

ABOUT ALLISON MOORE

Moore has a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice and a minor in Psychology from San Diego State University. She has built a career centered on service, empowerment, and community-driven change. She plans to continue her academic journey at Pepperdine University, pursuing her Masters in legal studies as well as a Masters in dispute resolution starting in January. She hopes that this will allow her to support her community more effectively.

She helped to develop the Black Pre-Law Society on SDSU's campus where she served as the public relations chair helping to expand the horizons for aspiring Black law students.

Through ART, she works closely with local organizations, businesses, and volunteers to provide the free resources that residents need to rebuild their lives. Her leadership focuses on disaster preparedness, recovery, and long-term community resilience.

Beyond her work with ART, Allison has extensive experience in customer service, clerical support, and youth empowerment. As a Youth Empowerment Fellow with Changeist, an AmeriCorps program, she helped design and facilitated educational programs for over 100 students. Her ability to organize, advocate, and connect people has led to tangible results, including helping secure a \$450,000 grant to enhance Changeist's programming.

Allison believes in the power of grassroots movements to drive lasting change. Whether through disaster recovery efforts, youth mentorship, or community organizing, she remains dedicated to creating a more connected, resilient, and just society.

Katnip News! Meet "PRINCESS"



Last week you met Munchy, the cuddle bug of the 3 sisters who were rescued at just 3 days old during a storm, and hand-raised with love.

This week, meet PRINCESS, a female blue tabby. The name says it all. Princess does everything with charm and confidence.



She's adventurous, curious, and the natural leader of her little trio.



If you want a kitten who's brave, bright, and endlessly delightful, Princess is your girl. She has a loyal sidekick, whom you will meet next week, but you can see them all at <https://www.lifelineforpets.org/kates-kittens.html> or use the qr code. We'd love to get them homes for the holidays and forever! Apply now!

Pet of the Week

Meet Logan, a 3-year-old black Husky at Pasadena Humane who is a friendly, affectionate guy that loves people and happily leans in for pets, belly rubs, and even gives gentle kisses to say hello. Logan loves to play with squeaky toys, knows how to "sit," and has wonderful manners when out and about. After a good, fast-paced walk, Logan settles nicely and is eager to please, offering a sweet paw for attention and soaking up love from visitors of all ages.



Logan would shine brightest as the only dog in the home, and he'd do best with adults or teens who can match his energy and help him feel secure. Like many huskies, he can be vocal and a little squirmy at times, but a little patience (and maybe some cheese!) goes a long way with this good boy. With the holidays here, Logan is ready to be your new walking buddy, cuddle companion, and loyal sidekick.

Best of all, now through 12/31, Pasadena Humane is waiving adoption fees for large dogs over 40 lbs, like Logan, making this the perfect time to adopt. Come meet Logan and give him the home he's been wishing for this season!

The adoption fee for dogs is \$150. All dog adoptions include spay or neuter, microchip, and age-appropriate vaccines.

Walk-in adoptions are available every day from 10:00 – 5:00. View photos of adoptable pets at pasadenahumane.org.

New adopters will receive a complimentary health-and-wellness exam from VCA Animal Hospitals, as well as a goody bag filled with information about how to care for your pet.

Pets may not be available for adoption and cannot be held for potential adopters by phone calls or email.

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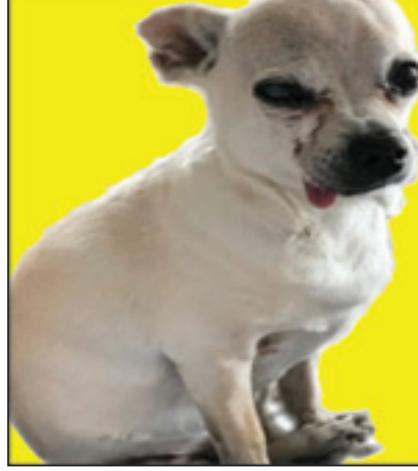




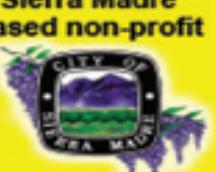
Pets in need

Some pet parents cannot afford the cost of vet care right now. You can help those pets! Visit us:

www.FreeAnimalDoctor.org





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FITNESS FOR LIFE



Michele Silence, M.A. is a 37-year certified fitness professional who offers semi-private/virtual fitness classes. Contact Michele at michele@kld-fit.com. Visit her Facebook page at: [michelesfitness](https://www.facebook.com/michelesfitness). Visit her Facebook page at: [michelesfitness](https://www.facebook.com/michelesfitness).

SURVIVING RELATIVES

The holidays are supposed to be about joy, laughter, and maybe a little pie. But sometimes, they come with something less fun: relatives. You know the ones. The cousin who lectures you about life choices, the aunt who criticizes your cooking, or the uncle who insists on debating politics. If family gatherings feel more like a mental marathon than a celebration, you're not alone. The good news? Handling them can actually be a workout—if you treat it like one.

Think about it: stress affects your body just like a tough gym session. When your cousin comments on your career for the fifth time, your body releases cortisol, a stress hormone. Too much cortisol can mess with sleep, energy, and even weight. That means mental tension has a physical impact. So why not approach holiday family time like a fitness routine?

Warm-Up: Start with some breathing exercises before you arrive. Deep breathing slows your heart rate and calms your mind. Try inhaling for four counts, holding for four, and exhaling for four. Repeat a few times. You wouldn't start a run without getting your body warmed up, right? Treat your brain the same way.

Set Your Boundaries: Just as you wouldn't lift a weight too heavy, don't let anyone push you past your limits. Politely excuse yourself from conversations that are getting tense. Step into the kitchen, check on the dessert, or take a quick walk outside. Setting boundaries is like proper form in the gym—it keeps you safe and prevents injury.

Mindful Movement: If tensions rise, don't sit there stewing. Walk, stretch, or go play with the kids in the other room. Even ten minutes of movement helps release endorphins—your body's natural stress relievers. Treat it like a mini-break between workout sets: you'll come back calmer and more focused.

Family Cardio: Let's be honest, holiday gatherings are endurance events. You might spend hours listening to opinions you don't share. Especially today. Just making it through the day without a physical or verbal altercation can be tough. Think of it like running a marathon. You wouldn't start a race without pacing yourself, and the same goes here. Take breaks, hydrate, and give yourself permission to step away when needed.

Resistance Training: Some relatives are like heavy weights. You can't avoid them, but you can train your mind to handle the load. Use positive self-talk: "I can do this. I am calm. I am strong." Repeat it silently when someone starts nagging or critiquing. This is mental conditioning—you're strengthening resilience.

Healthy Fuel: Holidays are full of snacks and sugary treats. Eating without thinking can make stress worse. Fuel your body like an athlete. Choose foods that give you steady energy, like fruits, nuts, and lean proteins. If you're going to enjoy a treat, do it mindfully. Savor it. Don't let stress drive your snack choices. Or provoke you into stuffing your mouth full of sweets just to cope with what you're listening to.

Visualization: Before tricky conversations, picture yourself handling them calmly. Imagine smiling, listening without reacting, and staying relaxed. Visualization is a favorite technique among athletes—it works for family stress too. You can even imagine your relatives as a friendly obstacle course, where each challenge helps you get stronger.

Recognize Toxicity: Sometimes, the "weights" are too heavy—year after year, the stress doesn't improve. If family gatherings are toxic, it's okay to skip them or limit your exposure. Choosing peace over obligation is part of your fitness plan too. Protecting your mental health is like resting your muscles after a hard workout, it's necessary for long-term strength.

Cool Down: After the event, take a few minutes for yourself. Stretch, meditate, or go for a short walk. Reflect on what went well and what you can improve next time. Just like in fitness, recovery is crucial. Your body and mind need it.

Remember, you're training for more than just surviving family gatherings. You're strengthening mental toughness, improving emotional control, and boosting physical health. Look at it as a total-body workout without any expensive gym membership. And here's the best part: the more you practice these strategies, the easier it gets. You'll walk into holiday gatherings feeling calm, confident, and ready to enjoy the season, no matter how many irritating questions and comments are thrown your way.

This holiday season don't just survive—train. Treat family stress like a fitness challenge. Warm up your mind, pace yourself, lift your spirits, fuel your body, and cool down properly. Your relatives may not change, but your reaction can. And that, my friends, is a win you can measure in both peace of mind and physical health.

ALL THINGS by Jeff Brown

JESUS & BUDDHA

Jesus Christ and Siddhartha Gautama, known as the Buddha, are two of the most influential spiritual teachers in human history. Emerging in very different cultural, historical, and religious contexts, they founded traditions that have shaped the beliefs, values, and moral frameworks of billions of people. While their teachings share important similarities, especially in ethics and personal transformation, they also differ in describing the nature of reality, the divine, and the path to ultimate fulfillment.

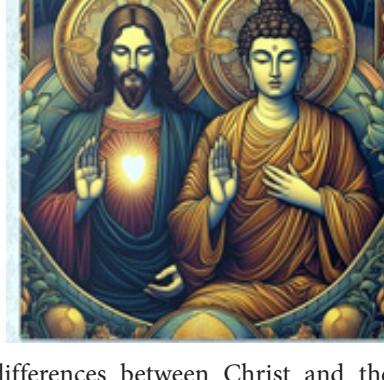
One of the strongest similarities between Christ and the Buddha is their emphasis on compassion and ethical living. Jesus taught love as the highest commandment, calling his followers to love their neighbors as themselves and even to love their enemies. Forgiveness, mercy, humility, and care for the poor and marginalized are central themes in his teachings. Similarly, the Buddha emphasized compassion and loving-kindness as essential virtues. He taught that harming others ultimately harms oneself and encouraged nonviolence, generosity, and mindful conduct toward all living beings. Both figures challenged the social norms of their time and rejected rigid hierarchies, stressing that moral worth is not based on wealth, power, or birth.

Another key similarity is their focus on inner transformation rather than mere external ritual or law. Jesus criticized religious hypocrisy and taught that true righteousness comes from the heart, not simply from outward observance of rules. He emphasized repentance, sincerity, and a renewed inner life aligned with God's will.

Likewise, the Buddha taught that suffering arises from inner causes such as craving, ignorance, and attachment. Through meditation, wisdom, and ethical discipline, individuals can transform their minds and free themselves from suffering & discover their ultimate identity. In both traditions, personal spiritual growth is central to moral living. Another similarity is the emphasis on purity and virtue of the mother. Mary is portrayed as humble, faithful, and chosen by God to give birth to Jesus.

Likewise, Queen Mayā is described as virtuous and pure, often depicted as morally exemplary and worthy of bearing an enlightened being. One major similarity is that both births are presented as extraordinary and meaningful, not ordinary events. In Christianity, Jesus' birth is understood as miraculous, involving divine intervention through the Virgin Mary by the power of God. In Buddhism, the Buddha's birth is surrounded by miraculous

signs and symbolic events. Both traditions signal that the child would grow into a figure of immense spiritual importance. Despite these shared



values, the differences between Christ and the Buddha are profound. The most significant difference lies in their understanding of God. Jesus' identity and mission are inseparable from belief in a personal, loving God. In Christian theology, Jesus is the Son of God and, for many believers, God incarnate, whose life, death, and resurrection offer salvation to humanity. The Buddha, in contrast, did not teach about a creator God or divine savior. His teachings focus on direct insight into reality and emphasize self-effort rather than reliance on divine grace. Another big difference is Jesus is seen as suffering on the cross and Buddha is seen smiling on a lotus flower. Their description about salvation also differ greatly. In Christianity, salvation is understood as reconciliation with God and the promise of eternal life, achieved through faith in Christ. In Buddhism, liberation (nirvana) is freedom from suffering by finding wholeness attained by following the Noble Eightfold Path and releasing desire and ignorance.

In conclusion, Jesus Christ and the Buddha share ethical teachings centered on compassion, humility, and inner change, yet they differ in many ways though both emphasize in the end a connection to our ultimate source. Together, their legacies continue to influence spiritual thought, moral values, and human understanding across cultures and centuries. All humans are intrinsically one with the entire universe but grow up and conditioned to feel separate & unfulfilled. We seek religious icons to reconnect to the divine & the oneness of everything, as Jesus and Buddha have done though their cultural descriptions of it all can seem so different. As Jesus said in John 17:21& 22 talking about his disciples "I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me. I have given them the glory You gave Me, so that they may be one as We are one." Happy Holiday to All!!!

UNLOCK YOUR LIFE



Lori A. Harris

WOULD YOU LIKE TO FEEL BETTER? Sing A Song!

Singing is one of the oldest and most universal ways humans connect. But beyond its cultural and artistic value, singing in groups, whether in choirs, classrooms, or community halls, has real, measurable benefits for health, well-being, and social life.

At a basic level, group singing lifts the mood. Studies show that singing with others helps lower stress, reduce anxiety, and improve people's overall mood. It works on a chemical level too: singing triggers the release of oxytocin and endorphins, hormones linked to bonding and pleasure. It also lowers cortisol, which is tied to stress. In one recent study, people with chronic respiratory conditions who sang in weekly sessions with caregivers saw noticeable improvements in both their mood and their sense of connection.

The social benefits are just as powerful. Singing with others builds trust and a sense of belonging faster than many other group activities. When people sing together, their breathing and heart rates often fall into sync, creating a shared rhythm that builds closeness. This has practical uses: schools use music and singing to reduce bullying and help students develop empathy. Singing also works well in care homes and senior centers, where it helps people feel less alone and more engaged.

The physical impacts are significant. Singing, especially slow, rhythmic singing, improves breathing, posture, and heart rate variability. Singing at around six breaths per minute can actually help regulate the nervous system, which is useful for conditions like high blood pressure and anxiety. One study showed that even quiet humming at this pace had measurable benefits for the body.

This Week

I went holiday caroling this week with a small group of friends. We bundled up, knocked on doors, and sang classics like "Silent Night," "Deck the Halls," and "We Wish You a Merry Christmas." It was so fun. People smiled, some sang along, and many thanked us just for showing up. It reminded me how rare and meaningful a real face-to-face connection has become. For an hour or so, we were part of something shared, joyful, and simple.

That night made this whole topic feel more real. I didn't need a study to tell me how good I felt afterward. But it's reassuring to know the science backs it up.

The most important part of group singing is that it brings people together in a way that feels natural and real. Singing is something anyone can do. It doesn't require fancy equipment or training. It doesn't matter if you're "good" at it. In community choirs, people often find not just a hobby but a support system. In schools, daily singing improves focus and teamwork. In workplaces, it can help build trust among colleagues.

Group singing also reaches across generations and cultures. In some programs, children and older adults sing together, sharing not just songs but stories, memories, and time. These moments help break down stereotypes, reduce loneliness, and create a sense of continuity across age groups.

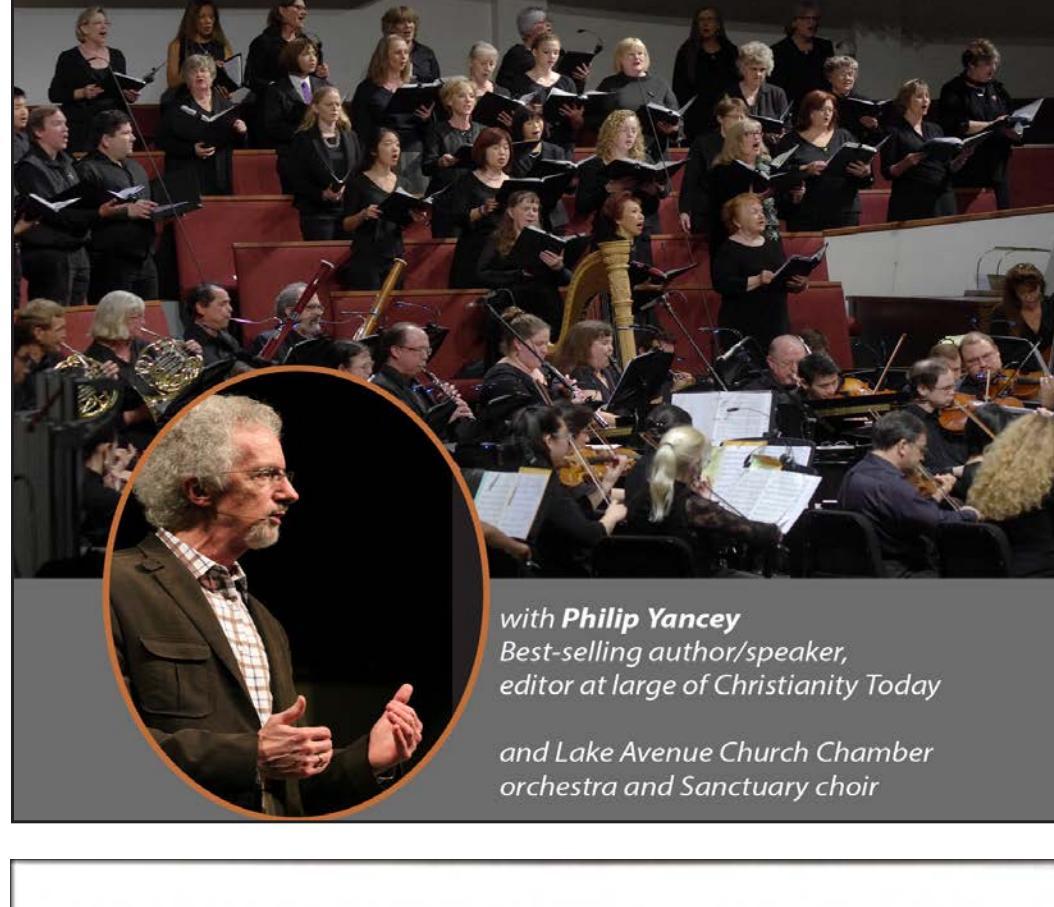
All of this makes singing more than just a fun activity. It's a tool for health, for connection, and for community. In a time when many people feel disconnected, burned out, or overwhelmed, singing together offers something simple but powerful: a way to feel human again.

Lori A Harris is an Integrative Change and Transformation Coach and podcast host. Learn more about her at loriaharris.com.

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**STUART TOLCHIN PUT THE LIGHTS ON
CHALLENGES AND VICTORY**


Throughout my life I have not taken much pride in anything but have always enjoyed a reasonably good life whatever that means. My friend Eric Thiermann's son, Kyle Thiermann has written a book entitled *ONE LAST QUESTION BEFORE YOU GO* subtitled *Why You Should Interview Your Parents*. The book is remarkably interesting and details the life of Eric, who is an Academy Award nominated film producer and cinematographer. Included also are details about Kyle who is a journalist and professional big wave surfer and podcast host. Both men have led exciting, varied lives completely different from my own, but so what?

It is true that I have never surfed and never had much interest in ever doing such a thing. I have never been involved in filmmaking or hosting podcasts or traveling around the world. Today I am retired and don't do much of anything other than complaining that I can't hear very well and that is a giant problem. I have been tested and purchased hearing aids but sadly they have not helped very much. It is not the loss of hearing itself that bothers me, but it is the realization that I have pretty much become an island unto myself. I cannot follow conversations or comprehend much about the news of the world which I still religiously watch and always am unsure about what is being said.

Wait a minute! It's not just hearing loss that bothers me. It is the resultant loss of connection with anything but my own mind. Although I have always been an avid reader, I can no longer focus enough to absorb what I read. It is as if I am surrounded by food but am still hungry. Speaking of hunger, eating is not the joy it always has been because I have lost much of my sense of taste. This is getting boring even to me but what I now realize is that these lost faculties can all be tolerated if I can forget what I was able to do in the past but notice what I can still enjoy in the present.

What is there to enjoy? That is a question to ask your parents and yourself. I have an 80-year-old friend who loves to take on the dissatisfaction of her friends who have bought something or gone on vacations or anything where they have spent money and were disappointed by the results. She calls companies and pretends that she is the dissatisfied person and generally is successful and obtains huge discounts or actual refunds of hundreds of dollars. She tells me that she is not interested in keeping any of the money for herself but just enjoys the whole process. She relishes that feeling of winning.

I spoke on the phone today to another old friend, a retired successful lawyer. He explained to me that what he missed was defeating the other side in difficult lengthy trials. In these situations, he found it easy and pleasurable to focus and work hard. It is the challenge and the ultimate victory that brought him the greatest joy in his fifty-year legal practice. Have I stumbled on something? Is it the challenge that gives meaning and brings satisfaction in life?

By facing the challenge of this article, I have come to the realization that it is facing and recognizing the challenges of life that are the underlying sources of satisfaction. Old age generally continues without the usual distractions and responsibilities and competitions and whatever else occupied one's life. This is a continual challenge. It is the belief and pride in oneself that is being challenged. I do not need to produce films or present podcasts or write books to appreciate who I am. It is the challenge of being alive and aware of that gift that can sustain one in the most difficult times of isolation and irrelevance.

I feel proud that I fought my way through this article and that is a victory enough for right now. The opponent to my challenge is myself, and victory requires that I focus on what I have rather than what I have lost. If you have met the challenge in reading this whole article and deriving some satisfaction or insight from it, you have joined me in Victory.

HOWARD HAYS AS I SEE IT


"An absolute horror... it's beyond belief what happened to him and that should not happen to anybody. I don't care what your political beliefs are..." - Rob Reiner on the murder of Charlie Kirk

When I was a kid, my Dad used an expression I thought kind of weird. If somebody cheated him or otherwise caused him harm, and then misfortune befell someone that person was close to, Dad might be asked if that gave him any sort of satisfaction. He'd say no, because he's "not put together that way". A good indicator as to how someone's "put together" is the way they respond to misfortune befallen others – and we've had horrific tragedies this past week.

With two students killed and nine injured in the school shooting at Brown University, student Mia Tretta's response was to re-dedicate herself working on preventing gun violence, as she'd focused before on those untraceable "ghost guns". She'd taken a bullet to the abdomen from a ghost gun six years ago as a student at Saugus High in Santa Clarita. Two students were killed, three injured in that attack.

We have students who've experienced multiple school shootings. Tretta's classmate at Brown, Zoe Weissman, was a twelve-year-old middle school student in 2018 when seventeen were killed at the high school next door in Parkland, Florida.

Vice President J.D. Vance responded to the shootings by saying they're "thinking of and praying for the victims". Weissman calls that response "laughable". She says, "If they actually cared about us... they would do something to end the gun violence problem in this country... We're fed up with the current administration and Congress' inaction."

As for President Donald Trump, aside from trying to blame Brown University for the FBI's failures, he responded by reminding that "Things can happen".

That same weekend, fifteen were killed and over forty injured as gunmen opened fire on a gathering celebrating Hannukah on Bondi Beach in Sydney, Australia.

Sen. Tom Cotton (R-AR) responded by noting how gun laws even as restrictive as those in Australia were unable to prevent the tragedy. This was the second mass shooting – defined as four or more victims – in Australia this year. In the United States, we're nearing 400 mass shootings for 2025. Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) responded by blaming the massacre on former Presidents Biden and Obama.

The response of Ahmed al-Ahmed was more immediate. Moments before charging the gunman, disarming him while suffering multiple gunshots himself, his cousin said he told him, "I'm going to die, please see my family and tell them that I went down to save people's lives." The cousin adds, "He said he thanks God that he was able to do this, to help innocent people and to save people from these monsters, these killers."

New York's Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani said of al-Ahmed, "Tonight, as Jewish New Yorkers light menorahs and usher in a first night of Hanukkah clouded by grief, let us look to his example and confront hatred with the urgency and action it demands." From his hometown in Syria, al-Ahmed's uncle said his nephew "is a source of pride for us. He made all Syrians and Muslims proud."

Ahmed al-Ahmed is a shop owner and father of two young girls, a Muslim who emigrated to Australia from Syria twenty years ago. His response showed us the way heroes are "put together". Under Trump's immigration and travel bans, he wouldn't be allowed to cross our border.

As a filmmaker, it's been said that when Rob Reiner tackles a genre, he ends up defining it ("This Is Spinal Tap", "The Princess Bride", "When Harry Met Sally"). As a political activist, he's never been simply another celebrity offering endorsements or hosting fundraisers – he'd be at forums and conferences in the thick of issues he was passionate about; from ensuring universal preschool availability to gay rights.

Their 32-year-old son, consumed by years of addiction and mental health problems, has been charged with the murders of Reiner and his wife Michele. But Trump couldn't wait to insist this was instead all because of "anger" caused by Reiner's opposition to Trump, along with failure to acknowledge how we're all now on the cusp of that promised, glorious "Golden Age" under President Donald J. Trump.

What's remarkable is that even Trump's most ardent MAGA supporters – pundits and podcasters, commentators, celebrities and apologists – have come out in near-unanimous revulsion to Trump's response to the tragedy. The only notable silence has come from Republicans in Congress.

One of the most reliably right-wing, outspoken Trump-supporting celebrities has been actor James Woods, cast by Reiner in his 1996 film "Ghosts of Mississippi", about the murder of Medgar Evers. Woods called comments on Reiner "infuriating and distasteful", telling Fox News that "I think Rob Reiner is a great patriot. Do I agree with many of his ideas on how that patriotism should be enacted, to celebrate the America that we both love? No. But he doesn't agree with me either, but he also respects my patriotism. We had a different path to the same destination, which was a country we both love."

Could Donald Trump ever begin to understand what James Woods was saying? To think of anything beyond himself? To show the slightest decency? As my Dad would say, he's simply "not put together that way".

**RICH JOHNSON
CHRISTMAS WEEK BRILLIANCE**


*The brilliance displayed here, if any, is not the brilliance of your incredibly clever and humble writer. Rather the real brilliance is the little baby over there in the manger! Say hi! His name is Jesus.

Note to parents of young children: Here is an almost guarantee you can sleep in on Christmas morning and not be awoken at the crack of dawn by your young children. I developed this strategy by having experienced my parents annual big mistake committed against my 3 siblings and I every Christmas Eve. Pay attention and take notes!

My parents permitted us to open one present on Christmas Eve. And it was always something like a pair of socks or slippers. The net result. My brother and two sisters and I were up at 5:00am banging pans in our parent's bedroom and shouting, "Merry Christmas". Time to open presents.

Dumb, dumb, dumb. Don't do that especially if you prefer to open gifts at a reasonable hour Christmas morning. Instead, allow your young children to open one gift on Christmas Eve. And make sure the gift is a gnarly toy they will love and want to play with immediately. Send them to bed WITH THE PRESENT and then you go to bed while letting them play with their toy in bed. Of course, they will eventually fall asleep.

Why is this a good idea? Because, if they play until 2:00 or 3:00am they ain't getting up until at least 8:30-9:00am. You and your significant other can leisurely sleep in, get up, have coffee and then go wake the children up at a decent hour.

That's all the motivational brilliance I can muster on my own. So, I did further research stumbling upon 8 life quotes designed to improve the quality of our lives. Many of life's problems are the result of something someone said that we interpreted negatively and we are still affected by today.

The first life quote is generally attributed to Eleanor Roosevelt who said: "What other people think of me is none of my business". Bravo!

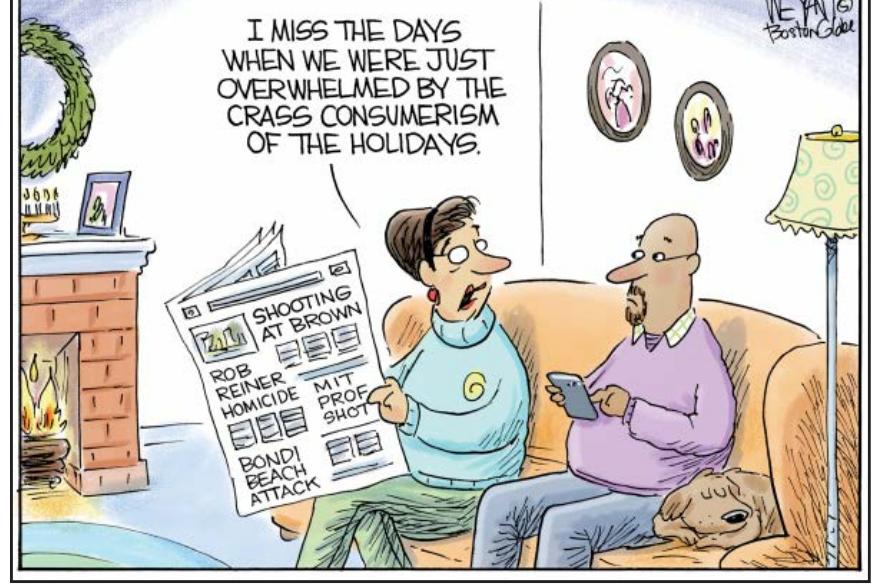
Other profound quotes over the last 20+ centuries:

"We suffer more in our imagination than in reality." Seneca
"It's never too late to be what you might have been." George Eliot
"Our life is what our thoughts make it." Marcus Aurelius
"Thinking is difficult. That's why most people judge." Carl Jung
"Care about what others think and you'll always be their prisoner." Lao Tzu
"A fool is known by speech and a wise man by silence." Pythagoras
"If you are the smartest person in the room, you are in the wrong room." Confucius
"The quieter you become, the more you are able to hear." Rumi
"The wisdom of the ancients isn't meant to be admired, it's meant to be lived." Anon (Anon says a lot)

I pray all of you who read my column have a loving, family building Christmas holiday.

FYI, Nano Café is open Christmas Eve up to 7:00pm and they are open Christmas Day from 7:00am until 3:00pm.

My band, JJ Jukebox is performing Saturday night January 3rd at Nano's. I recommend making a reservation. Their phone number is (626) 325-3334. Have a wonderful Christmas season. Rich


The only time Congress moves quickly...


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December Events Around Town!

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ONE TIME EVENTS:

December 5
Charity Dance Show at the Arcadia Performing Arts Center - Arcadia High School Dance presents exhilarating performances 7pm

December 6
Breakfast with Santa at Arcadia Community Center - Photos with Santa, breakfast, crafts, and games 8:30am & 10:30am

December 6
Snow Festival at Arcadia Community Center Enjoy snow sledding, crafts, & games 9am - 2pm

December 6
Family Workshop: Handmade Greeting Cards at The Huntington - Create handmade holiday cards using collage & other styles 10am - 1pm

December 6
Children's Holiday Wreath Making at the Arboretum - Children build enchanting holiday wreaths using materials from the Arboretum & the LA Flower Mart 2pm - 3:30pm

December 7
Vroman's Bookstore: Annual Gingerbread House Decorating Party - Decorate a house you can take home! 12pm - 5pm

December 7
Gloria: Christmas Sounds of Worship & Praise Celebrate the sounds of Christmas with the Lake Avenue Choir, Orchestra, Handbells, and guest soloist Jamal Sarikoff 4pm - 5:30pm

December 13
Holiday Fair in Downtown Arcadia - A fun day of entertainment, kid's activities, visits with Santa, Mrs. Claus's story time, & food 11am - 4pm

December 14
Castle Green Holiday Open House - Explore the Castle's turn-of-the-century charm. Entertainment, refreshments, games 11am - 3pm

December 14
The Lettermen at the Arcadia Performing Arts Center - Christmas concert celebrating the season & smooth three-part harmony 2pm - 4pm

December 20
Flower Arranging: Holiday Centerpieces at The Huntington - Create a winter holiday centerpiece 10am - 12pm & 1pm - 3pm

ONGOING EVENTS:

November 7 - January 11
Winter Frolic at Kidspace Museum - Sock skating, dress-a-snowman, build ice forts & more

November 16 - January 4
Enchanted Forest of Light at Descanso Gardens - Light, color & music transform the garden into whimsical botanical artscapes

November 21 - December 28
Enchant Christmas LA at Santa Anita Park This holiday events offers a light-maze, ice-skating trail, artisan markets, food and drink

November 29 - December 25
A Christmas Carol at A Noise Within This timeless Dickens' story is filled with music, merriment, and good cheer

December 6, 7, 13, 14
A Victorian Holiday at the Queen Anne Cottage - Tours of the Queen Anne Cottage with a holiday marketplace, carolers, dancers, kids' crafts, and visits with Santa

December 12, 13
Pasadena Symphony and Pops Holiday Candlelight Concert - Savor an array of holiday choruses in Pasadena's All Saints Church

December 20 - 21
A Jet Set Christmas at Sierra Madre Playhouse - Matt Johnson and the New Jet Set perform a foot-tapping show of festive music in swing, bebop, and big band arrangements 8pm

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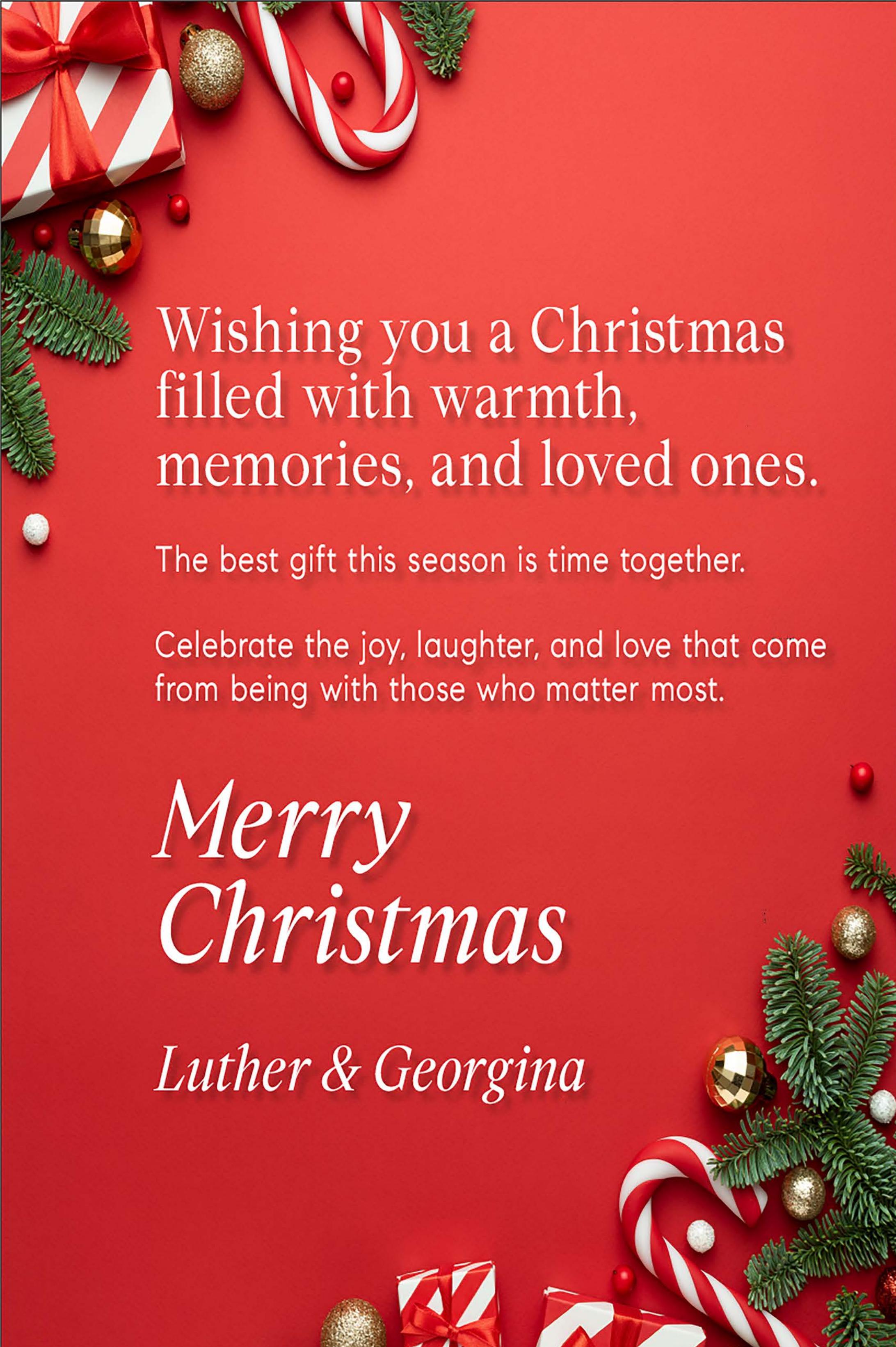
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