

HUMBOLDT NOW!

Volume 17 • Issue 2 • February 2026

Two women with long blonde hair are standing in front of a chalkboard. The woman on the left is wearing a teal V-neck sweater and dark pants. The woman on the right is wearing a bright orange long-sleeved shirt and dark pants. The chalkboard behind them has a 'Word Wall' with various words written on it, including 'a', 'I', 'or', 'no', 'so', 'of', 'is', 't', 'word', 'are', 'were', 'have', 'on'. There are also some numbers and a small clock on the wall. A red circle is placed over the word 'Word' on the chalkboard.

! *Love for students drives* Frerk, Dunphy at TR
! **FEBRUARY IS CANCER PREVENTION MONTH**
! **TC Health & Medspa serving Humboldt**

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- Upper respiratory problem (like sore throat, earache, sinus symptoms)
- Allergic reactions (non-life threatening)
- Minor skin infections and rashes
- Minor burns
- Minor lacerations, contusions or abrasions
- Urinary tract infections

Emergency Room

- Chest pain or symptoms of a heart attack
- Symptoms of a stroke including dizziness, weakness, loss of coordination or vision problems
- Loss of consciousness
- Severe lacerations (cuts)
- Injuries as a result of a car accident
- Fevers in elderly or very young children

WALK-IN CLINIC

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humboldthospital.org



Humboldt NOW!

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On the cover: Laura Frerk (left) and Kristin Dunphy are both in their 13th year teaching at Twin Rivers Elementary School in Bode.

See more inside! —Photo by Phil Monson

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What's Happening February NOW!

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Moffitt Animal Shelter Fundraiser Sun., Feb. 1, 11:30 AM - 4:00 PM VFW in Dakota City 	2 Adams Post 119 meeting At VFW in Dakota City at 7PM Humboldt City Council - 5:30PM	3  SAINT MARY CATHOLIC SCHOOL	4 Early Out Catholic Schools Week January 25 - January 31	5	6	7
8	9	10 Crafts & Crafts Free event by HAAC Bring your own craft! At Night Owl 5-8PM Wildcat PTO Mease Library - 5:30PM	11 Dakota City City Council 7PM	12 NATIONAL CANCER PREVENTION MONTH	13 No School	14 
15  Washington's Birthday	16 Humboldt School Board Meeting 5:30PM Admin office Humboldt City Council - 5:30PM	17 PK-12 CONFERENCES 17 & 19 2 hour early out	18  ASH Wednesday Conservation Board - 5:00PM	19 PK-12 CONFERENCES 17 & 19 2 hour early out	20 No School	21
22	23	24 Choir: 3rd Grade Music Program (Elementary Concerts) 6:30 pm - 7:30 pm	25 Early Out	26	27	28
EVERY MONDAY Board of Supervisors - 8:30AM		See all Humboldt Comm. School District's events for Feb., scan this QR code!	HUMBOLDT REC CENTER: 7&14- 1ST- 2ND REC BASKETBALL & MINI CATS CLINIC @ REC CENTER 17 - REGISTRATION DEADLINE FOR MINI CATS TRACK CLINIC 18 - REGISTRATION DEADLINE FOR 3RD-6TH MULTISPORT MASHUP MADNESS 19 & 26 - MULTISPORT MASHUP MADNESS @ REC CENTER 21 - BOYS BOOSTER BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT 27 - 2026 POOL EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION DEADLINE	HUMBOLDT COMMUNITY CHORUS PRESENTS Fri., Jan. 30 - 7pm Sat., Jan. 31 - 2pm Sun., Feb. 1 - 2pm R. Wesley Carlson Auditorium Humboldt High School Our Big Band will be playing 1/2 hour before each show.		

To submit items for the Community Calendar please email faith@humboldtnews.com or call 515.332.2514

Community Calendar Sponsored by:



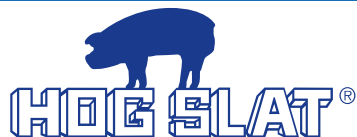
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‘The Four Engagement Rings’ of Sybil Rain” by Hannah Brown

By CAITLYNNE HAACK, Assistant Director and Young Adult Librarian

Sybil Rain is long overdue for a vacation, so when her besties suggest that she take an all-expense-paid trip to a tropical paradise, she can’t resist saying yes. Yes, to committing to starting over, yes to adventure, and yes to finally getting back to the “old” Sybil.

Technically, the expenses *were* paid—the year before—when she was supposed to be marrying the love of her life, Jamie, and then ride the plane off into the sunset (Hawaii).

Her friends make a good point: why shouldn’t she use the vouchers before they expire? The vacation can still go as planned - with Mai tais, med spas and me-time at the beach, even though the wedding plans didn’t. After all, she has been working nonstop since she took on a new job this past year.

The resort is absolute paradise, and Sybil can’t wait to get a drink with one of those umbrellas in her hands and down to the pool working on her tan.

Nothing could ruin this ultimate tropical experience, where Sybil is finally feeling free of the oppressive weight of her past. Except, perhaps her ex-fiancé and his bikini-wearing “associate”. In the face of humiliation, frantic to save face in front of the man who broke her heart at the altar, Sybil accidentally spits out that she is at the romantic resort with her boyfriend on *their* honeymoon.

However, what begins as a blatant lie soon spirals into a full-blown debacle when her second ex-fiancé, Sebastian, appears at the resort. Sebastian just

got done with a photography job and is all up for being her pretend boyfriend. He’s more than happy to make Jamie (un-expectantly) jealous. However, he might be a little too eager to forget the

bly can.

From horseback riding, late-night (or early morning) beach parties with locals, to snorkeling debacles, Sybil finds herself struggling to balance the two exes, while running from a past that seems to keep pace with her—no matter how fast she goes.

Is Sybil still the same “old” Sybil, making the same mistakes, covering up the parts of her that are not perfect and shiny, running when things get hard? Or is she a “new” version that will show the growth that she’s made in the past year and bravely stand her ground when it comes to confronting her past? Including the first ex-fiancé that no one talks about—Liam—and the future that she could have.

With so many options in front of her, how is she supposed to choose when they involve putting her heart in danger of being broken again...and what if she can’t piece herself back together after giving so much of herself away this time?

Hannah Brown has done it again and given a fresh perspective on a second-chance romance with her sophomore novel. This book was full of laughs and some unexpected-

ly deep moments that will leave you exasperated with the main character and rooting for a moment that always seems just out of reach.

Warning: It might also make you want to grab your closest friends and take a tropical vacation together and I am not trying to talk you out of it, I hear the beach calling me right now!



past, and pick up where they left off—overlooking all the reasons they didn’t work—choosing only to remember the fantastic times they had together.

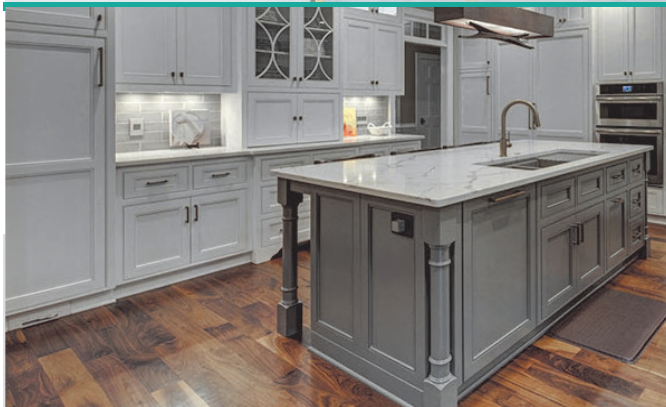
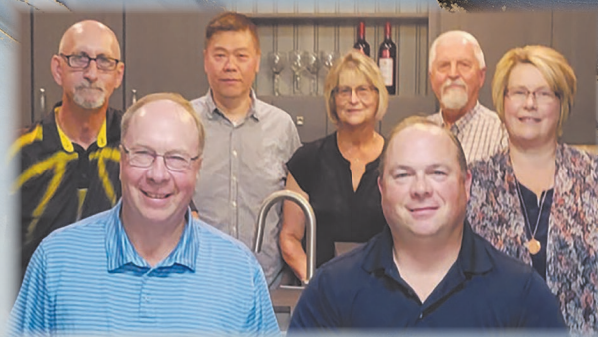
Despite the unexpected drama, Sybil tries to seize every opportunity for adventure (if those activities happen to be things that Jamie would never do, that would be so convenient,) that she possi-

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HUMBOLDT IN THE '50S AND '60S

BY TOM SWEARINGEN

SNOW

It's a given that snow will fall in Iowa. Some years are worse than others, but it's the nature of the geography and the Northern Plains of the United States, where winters can be brutal and a way of life for those living in Humboldt County.

When I was growing up in Humboldt, the white stuff seemed to start accumulating in November and did not recede until late March or early April, almost every winter.

I would shovel the snow to clear our driveway and sidewalk as soon as the precipitation stopped falling. There was an area of about five feet between the corner of our house and the garage where the snow accumulated to four or five feet high, especially on blizzard days. I would usually begin shoveling that area, and then finish the driveway, only to have the end of the driveway become a mountain of snow, thanks to the city snowplow that cleared the streets. (I never swore and still don't but came closest to it then.)

Now and again, blizzards would sweep down from the north/northwest and cause havoc in the north central part of the state. Farmers going to their barns to feed the animals would

sometimes get lost in the whiteouts, their bodies were not found until the weather cleared. Automobiles would often follow each other into ditches, all of them getting stuck in a snowbank. Wooden slotted fences along the rural roads did their best to keep the white stuff from inundating the roads, but they often were defenseless against the howling winds. Livestock occasionally fell victim to the freezing precipitation and plunging temperatures that often reached 30 degrees.

City streets pretty much stayed snow and ice-covered all winter long, with chains or snow tires required. Snow blowers and snowmobiles were not yet in widespread use. Many a car had to be pushed out of a precarious situation, using sand or gravel kept in the car's trunk. Some people would plug their cars in to electricity to warm their engines overnight.

"Snow days" were rare from school year to school year, but when school was out, you knew the weather was horrendous. Blizzards often came during the state basketball tournament in March. When driving south, somewhere around Ames, it seemed like there was a dividing line between the frigid part

of the state and the "warm" part of the state.

Iowa winters were harsh in the 50s and 60s, but after reading the nonfiction book, "The Children's Blizzard", storms during those decades seemed pretty tame compared to the Jan. 12 storm in 1888 that raged in Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, Iowa and Minnesota. That blizzard killed 235 people, many of whom were children released early from one-room schools in rural parts of those states.

Humboldt has had its share of snow in November and December. It remains to be seen what the rest of the winter will be like. Here in North Carolina, when I want to see a good snowfall, I can always go to the Humboldt Independent webcam and enjoy the snow from afar!



Sister Saturday

**Sat. February 7th
10AM-4PM**

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Laura Frerk (left) and Kristin Dunphy are both in their 13th year teaching at Twin Rivers Elementary School in Bode.

Love for students drives Frerk and Dunphy at Twin Rivers

By PHIL MONSON

Laura Frerk remembers how a teacher impacted her in a positive way as a young elementary school student.

Kristin Dunphy had the same experience growing up.

Because of those lasting impressions, it's why Frerk and Dunphy are playing key roles as teachers at Twin Rivers Elementary School in Bode.

Both are in their 13th year at Twin Rivers. Kristin Dunphy teaches first grade reading, kindergarten math and Title One teacher. Frerk is a special education teacher who also wears many hats in her work.

"The biggest success I look for in a student is them being proud of their work. I want them to get better grades. I also want kids to be resilient and be able to work on things," Frerk said. "Life is hard and I want them to know they can do hard things. When a roadblock or challenge comes along, I want them to learn how to try something a different way or try harder."

"I always tell them that you don't have to get all of them correct. You just have to do them better. Maybe it is reading one word per minute more than before. Or maybe you had one meltdown during the day instead of three. That's progress," Frerk said. "Any progress is good progress."

"Life isn't easy. I try to make that as real as possible to the kids. How can we make it so we can get it done but have time to do the fun stuff as well?" Frerk said.

"I remember when I was in school, I struggled with hearing the sounds. I had a teacher who did not give up on me. She always encouraged me. She made me feel like I was good. That's why I went into teaching in the first place, because I wanted to be like that teacher who was a big cheerleader," Frerk said.

"And with me having five kids of my own, I think about how would I want my own kids to be treated and supported in school. That's what I do for my own kids here in school," Frerk said. "I'll bring my own kids to Bode for family fun night and they just love being around my other kids."

"I feel it is important to be a positive presence in all of the kids' lives. Some kids come to school not so happy. Maybe something is going on at home. I want to be that happy, caring and genuine person. Give them the confidence to succeed in not only math and reading, but any aspect in life. Even during recess. During recess duty I get to play games with them," Dunphy said.

"I've always liked to read. I really enjoy books. I want kids to enjoy reading and see how much fun reading is. How it can take them to a different world and impact their lives," Dunphy said. "Some days when life isn't so good, you can get a book to help brighten your day and outlook."

"We have a great staff here at Twin Rivers and Laura and Kristin exemplify the dedication and commitment our entire staff day in and day out for our students," said Mark Wenzel, principal at Twin Rivers.

Laura Frerk, the former Laura Lyon, grew up in Pocahontas. She attended Coe College in Cedar Rapids and graduated with a degree in psychology. She then attended Mount Mercy College to earn her degree in elementary education.

Laura and her husband, Steven Frerk, live in Pocahontas. Their five children include: Brecken, age 10; Wiley, age 9; Theo, age 6; Finley, age 4; and Louie, who is 3 years old.

Laura, the former Kristin Schmidt of Fort Dodge, lives in Humboldt. Laura and her husband, Adam, have three children. They include Brody, age 7; Colt, age 4; and a daughter, Farrah, age 12.

"First and foremost, we have the most wonderful and amazing staff. We are all a family first and we look out for each other. If some of them have sporting events for their kids to attend, we'll cover for each other," Frerk said. "I also love the small school feel. We know the kids inside and out. We can communicate throughout the day if someone is having a hard time or if someone needs that extra support, we can shift and cover," Frerk said.

"We have no weak links. Some days I've played janitor for a while or if the principal has to be gone, I'll be principal for a while. Everyone is willing to help out wherever they can," Frerk said.

"Three years ago I didn't renew my contract because I was going to stay home with my young kids. I have five kids. But the whole time I was off I absolutely missed it. I always worried about how my school kids were doing. How are they progressing? Is somebody helping them? The school was having a hard time finding a special education teacher and I decided to come back. I was only gone for what the length of my maternity leave would have been," Frerk said.

"Within teaching special education, I work a lot with the general education teachers in how I can support them in the core standards. What kind of accommodations do they have to have to make learning accessible to them? I pool groups of kids together,

either small or individual. I like to dig into the diagnostics of why a student is struggling? Where are they struggling and how can I help? How can I make the learning more accessible but also easier for them so they can understand it more,” Frerk said.

“Not every learner is the same so how can I find the way for them to learn best? How can I help? I am constantly looking at their progression. If they are not progressing well, what can I do to change my teaching or what else can I do to help? It might be they need more emotional support,” Frerk said.

“Some of my students who are older now, I’ve gone to their wrestling meets and other activities. I love my school kids as much as I love my own kids. That’s what motivates me,” Frerk said.

“I have a former student who is now in high school and he was struggling with math and he came to me and we worked on a math lesson together after school. When you make those connections and you know that they are thriving now but they struggled so much when I first had them, it’s wonderful to see them realize that school isn’t so hard and they can do hard things,” Frerk said.

“I’ve also developed good relationships with teachers in Humboldt after we’ve done some professional development together. It’s fun to work on that cohesive transition work for the student from elementary school to middle school. We have the same goals and lesson structure so they are getting the same flow as the kids in Humboldt going from Taft Elementary School to the middle school,” Frerk said.

“Last year I obtained my master’s degree in special education and I also got my Instructional Strategist Endorsement, which means I can teach any level of special education. It’s great to see the transition my students will be going to in the future,” Frerk said. “And it’s been great to see how the Humboldt staff handle certain situations and learn from them.”

“I absolutely love the energy of school. I want to be a cheerleader for the kids. I want them to believe in themselves as much as I believe in them,” Frerk said. “I know special education is a field a lot of people don’t get into. I have always rooted for the underdog in my life. You are good at something. Let’s go find out what it is, whether it is math, reading, music or art.”

Dunphy graduated from Iowa State University in Ames, where she obtained a degree in elementary education.

“My first year out of college I was an associate at Ankeny. I was a study hall associate and I also worked also worked in a before and after school program at the YMCA. During college I also worked in a kindergarten classroom,” Dunphy said.

“My children attend school here in Bode and so I really love it. I have one girl in middle school at Humboldt and two boys in elementary at Bode. They come to school with me every day. I get



Kristin Dunphy (right) works with a student in her class.

to walk my son to pre-school and I can give them hugs when I see them,” Dunphy said.

“Some days you wake up tired and say to yourself, ‘am I doing what I should be doing?’ Then you arrive here at school and see how much of a difference you are making in the children’s lives,” Dunphy said. “Some kids need all the hugs and love that you can give them.”

“Sometimes I look at old photos of students I’ve had in the past and hope they are doing well. You really do love all of your students so much,” Dunphy said.

“Occasionally I get to see some of my former students. A couple of them work at Hy-Vee. Some get off the high school and middle school bus and I get to see them then. I check in with them and ask how school is going. I get invited to their graduation parties when they graduate. It is so fun to experience that,” Dunphy said.

“Since we have a small school, I get to recognize all of my students pretty well. It’s fun to see them all growing up,” Dunphy said.

“I really like the small, closeknit family environment here at Twin Rivers Elementary School. When you get hired here you want to stay here because everyone gets along well. The teachers here are fun and so it makes teaching fun,” Dunphy said. “I love my job. I love my co-workers and the students.”

“Kristin and I didn’t meet until we started teaching here together. When you work with your best friends and people who support you so much, it doesn’t feel like work. It feels more like a family. It’s like we are raising these kids together,” Frerk said.

“Laura was in my wedding and we’ve become great friends,” Dunphy said.

“I like to exercise. Laura likes to work out, too. We are so blessed to have a workout room here at school. During breaks we can work out. It can be a nice stress reliever in the middle of the day. When you go home you can be with your family. You can go grocery shopping, make dinner and get young kids to bed at a decent time,” Dunphy said.

“I’m fortunate to have had the chance to get hired to teach here at Twin Rivers,” Dunphy said.

“Everyone has areas where they are really good at. No one is afraid to ask a fellow staff member for assistance in how to handle a certain student,” Frerk said.

“Mr. Wenzel is fabulous. He doesn’t micromanage. He holds us accountable but he doesn’t overstep. We can also go to him. We can joke with him as a friend but it is also very professional at the same time, centered on what is best for the kids,” Frerk said.



Laura Frerk shown here working with students at Twin Rivers Elementary School in Bode.

Out & About



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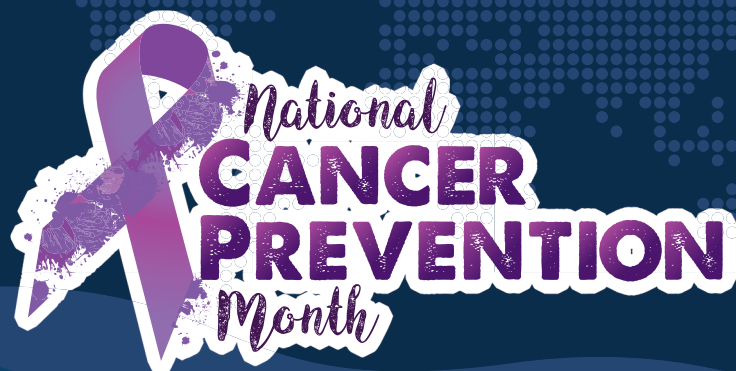
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By APRIL KELLEY

You have cancer. Maybe one of the top five most terrifying sentences in the English language and one that more than 2 million United States citizens and more than 21,000 Iowans hear each year. And the numbers are rising.

While searching for a cure for cancer is important, it is equally important to search for a way to eliminate cancer before it takes hold.

Although the exact number is hard to calculate due to private spending, it is estimated that between \$7 billion to \$8 billion is spent on cancer prevention research worldwide.

According to the National Cancer Institute (NCI), more than half the number of cancers diagnosed in the past 20 years could have been prevented by applying the knowledge we have now.

Several examples come easily to mind such as the use of tobacco causing lung cancer, vaccinating against the human papillomavirus (HPV) to protect against cervical cancer and limiting exposure to certain chemicals.

Still, even with those breakthroughs the number of individuals diagnosed with cancer continues to rise.

Experts believe there are several reasons for the increase in the number of individuals diagnosed with cancer.

The biggest trend is that through more advanced detection techniques and early screenings, more cancers are being detected in the early stages, many when they are treatable.

Another issue is that people the world over are living more sedentary lifestyles with exposure to carcinogens and ultra-processed foods, which are known to be large risk factors for cancer.

Ironically, one of the biggest reasons for higher cancer statistics is that we are living longer. While we are not living healthier, that longevity allows for a greater chance for cancer cells to grow in the body.

While statistics can be scary, it's important to look at them in the right context.

According to the CDC, in 2022 there were 1,851,238 new cancer diagnoses but 613,349 cancer deaths. The numbers do show that a large portion of those who are diagnosed are at least surviving with their cancer, if not completely beating it.

So what can you do to help protect yourself and your family from a cancer diagnosis? Harvard Medical School has pub-



lished the ten commandments of cancer prevention.

1. Avoid tobacco in all its forms. This includes exposure to secondhand smoke.
2. Eat properly. Eating more fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains can greatly reduce cancer risks. Eating saturated fats can increase the risks of colon cancer and prostate cancer.
3. Exercise regularly. Physical activity has been linked to a reduced risk of colon, breast and reproductive cancers.
4. Avoid obesity. Eating properly and exercising regularly are important but maintaining an optimal weight is just as important.
5. Limit alcohol intake. Experts suggest limiting alcohol intake to one drink or less per day. Excessive alcohol intake can increase the risk of mouth, liver, colon and breast cancer.
6. Avoid unnecessary radiation exposure. The experts recommend getting imaging studies done only when absolutely necessary. Check for residential radon by getting a kit and testing for it. Stay out of the direct sun and use sunscreen to protect yourself from ultraviolet light.
7. Avoid environmental and industrial toxins. This can be difficult because it requires a lot of research but pay attention to the factories and chemicals used in your community. Check for asbestos before doing any demolition.
8. Avoid infections that contribute to cancer. Getting the HPV immunization has greatly reduced the incidence

of cervical cancer. Prevent sexually transmitted diseases by wearing a condom.

9. Make quality sleep a priority. While the correlation between sleep and the incidence of cancer is still in its infancy, poor sleep habits can lead to weight gain, a sedentary lifestyle and poor choices in lifestyle.
10. Get enough vitamin D. Vitamin D is most notably obtained from sunshine but experts agree that in this area of the United States, it is almost impossible to get enough vitamin D naturally. Taking daily vitamin D supplements can help support the immune system.

Even living the healthiest lifestyle, taking the right supplements and avoiding as many triggers as possible isn't going to completely eradicate cancer in the immediate future so the goal becomes to diagnose and treat cancers as early as possible. The best way to do that is to follow a strict regimen of cancer screening guidelines.

The American Cancer Society has set out guidelines for testing for people with an average risk of cancer. As always, only you and your doctor can determine what is best for each individual.

Breast cancer

Mammograms are recommended every year for women between the ages of 45 and 54, when the highest number of breast cancers are detected. Women aged 55 and older can possibly switch to every other year if they have never had an adverse report.

All women need to learn to do breast self-exams and to do them at least monthly.

Learning what your own breast feel like and when something is suspicious can greatly increase the chances of a favorable outcome.

Colon and rectal cancer

Most people should begin colorectal cancer screening at age 45. This can be done with a test that screens for signs of cancer in a person's stool or with a colonoscopy.

Many people with low risk factors choose to begin with the lower risk and lower cost stool test rather than the more expensive and invasive medical exam.

Those with low risks to colon cancer and no adverse reports from previous screenings can discuss with their physicians ending the colonoscopies between the ages of 76 and 85. They are not recommended over the age of 85 due to the risk of damage during the test.

While it is rarely mentioned, men should also learn to do monthly breast exams. Men account for 1% of all breast cancers but since most men's breast cancer is not caught as early as women's, men's mortality rate is 19% higher.

Cervical Cancer

Women and other individuals with a cervix should start screening at age 25 and continue until at least age 65.

The screening test for cervical cancer is called a pap smear. Guidelines have recently changed but most providers recommend doing the painless test during a woman's yearly physical.

Since the introduction of the HPV vaccine, which can be administered to children as young as 9 years old, those guidelines have been changed to once every three years for anyone who has received the vaccine.



Lung Cancer

The American Cancer Society recommends yearly screenings using a low-dose CT scan for people aged 50 to 80 who smoke or used to smoke.

Many physicians also recommend low-dose CT scans for those who have lived with a heavy smoker or someone who has worked in smoke-filled environments.

Prostate Cancer

Men, starting at age 45, frequently have a prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood test that measures the level of PSA, a protein produced by both normal and malignant cells of the prostate gland.

An elevated PSA could indicate prostate cancer, but there are many other benign reasons the numbers could be elevated so it is important to follow up with an exam.

Melanoma

The best detection of melanoma is to know your skin and to pay close attention to any changes that occur such as a new or changing mole or an area that doesn't heal.

Physicians recommend that you look for the ABCDE of melanoma. Asymmetry - half of the mole does not match the other. Border - the edges are ragged blurred or irregular. Color - the color is uneven and may contain shades of black, brown or tan. Diameter - there is a change in size, usually an increase. Evolving - the mole changes over a few weeks or months.

Know your area

Although it is an emerging science, the study of cancer clusters is beginning to gain some backing by many scientists.

Less than a year ago, a group of researchers from the Iowa Cancer Registry presented their findings on the most common

cancers in Humboldt County.

According to their research, Humboldt County has about 71 new cancer diagnoses each year, ranking Humboldt at 42 out of 99 counties for the number of new cases. Of those 71 newly diagnosed cancers, the top five cancer diagnoses are prostate, female breast, lung, colorectal and melanoma.

While that doesn't mean you can ignore all the others, paying special attention to cancers that are prevalent in your area gives you a better chance at keeping on top of your risks while still enjoying life.

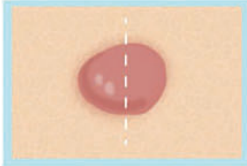
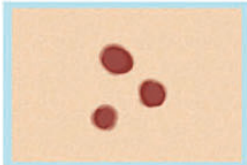
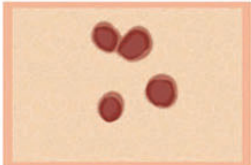
One last piece of good news: while the rate of cancer diagnoses has been increasing, the rate of cancer deaths has not kept in line.

Between 2000 and 2022, cancer deaths grew from approximately 550,000 to 610,000, up 10.6%. However, new cancer diagnoses increased by more than 36% in that same time.

We are nowhere near a cure, but we are much further ahead than we were. Just applying an ounce of prevention now can mean that someday, we may be able to lower those numbers even more.

— ABCDEs —

MOLE OR MELANOMA?

MOLE FEATURES		BENIGN	SEE DOCTOR
A	ASYMMETRY ONE HALF OF A MOLE DOES NOT MATCH THE OTHER.		
B	BORDER THE EDGES ARE IRREGULAR, RAGGED, NOTCHED, OR BLURRED. NORMAL MOLES ARE ROUND OR OVAL.		
C	COLOR THE MOLE IS NOT EVENLY COLORED. IT MAY INCLUDE SHADES OF BROWN OR BLACK, OR PATCHES OF PINK, RED, WHITE OR BLUE.		
D	DIAMETER THE SPOT IS LARGER THAN 6 MILLIMETERS ACROSS	 LESS THAN .25 IN	 GREATER THAN .25 IN
E	EVOLVING THE MOLE IS CHANGING IN SIZE, SHAPE, OR COLOR.		

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TC Health & Medspa brings confidence to Humboldt Residents

By Kylie Portz

Everyone should feel confident in their own skin. A sentiment that motivated Humboldt Native Chassidy Ruby, ARNP, to found TC Health & Medspa (formerly Ruby Aesthetics) – which opened in 2021 in Humboldt.

Located on Taft Street, TC Health and Medspa is led by Ruby and fellow Humboldt native Taylor Gidel, PA-C.

Ruby received her undergrad degree from the University of Iowa nursing program before going on to receive her Nurse Practitioner degree from Allen College. She spent time working in the Iowa City area before moving back to Humboldt in 2016. She began working in family practice at UnityPoint from 2016 until November 2024, when she transitioned to focusing on the clinic full-time.

Gidel attended Iowa State University, studying animal science, before her desire to help others led her to Knoxville, Tennessee, where she earned her Physician Assistant degree and Doctorate of Medical Science at Lincoln Memorial University.

Both women were drawn back to the community in which they were raised, to build confidence amongst its people.

According to their website, TC Health & Medspa's mission is to “empower every patient to embrace their confidence and feel their very best by delivering compassionate, comprehensive care tailored to their unique needs. We combine advanced medical expertise with a warm, supportive approach – because your well-being and self-assurance are the heart of everything we do.”

Gidel said, “Our biggest why, I guess you could say, is just helping people feel confident in their skin. We put it on the back of our sweatshirts, ‘love the skin you’re in. We just want everybody to feel confident.’”

“I know for me, everybody has insecurities that we want to help them kind of overcome. And the difference in somebody who has been self-conscious about their acne, or their spider veins, for a long time, just seeing that joy come back and that confidence is why I love what we do.”

Some of the services provided at the clinic include cosmetic dermatology such as laser treatments, injectables and facials. Or more recently, Gidel began to offer medical dermatology services at the clinic.

Gidel said, “We just added that in the beginning of last year, so that’s slowly been kind of ramping up, but we started accepting insurance. So we take most major insurance companies, but we also have pay options, too. If you have a high-deductible plan and you’d rather pay cash pay, we have those options available,



Taylor Gidel (left) provides medical and aesthetic treatments while Chassidy Ruby (right) offers aesthetic services. Submitted photo.

too.”

She continued. “Anything from acute to chronic conditions, I can treat and help manage, or if you have a suspicious skin lesion, I can take a look at it and get you pointed in the right direction.”

Gidel shared her process during consultations.

She said, “Whenever I do a consult, I always talk about discussing their goals, ‘What can I help you achieve?’ Making a roadmap of treatment plans that will get them to their goal and how I can I help.”

Ruby explained that on the aesthetic side of the clinic, insurance is not accepted for those services, as most insurance companies do not cover it. She shared what consultations for those appointments may look like.

She said, “We just like to sit down with them first and do an overall skin con-

“Our biggest why is just helping people feel confident in their skin. We put it on the back of our sweatshirts, ‘love the skin you’re in’. We just want everybody to feel confident.”

- Taylor Gidel

sultation, like Taylor (Gidel) said, to determine ultimately, what is your goal, what are the bothersome areas that you're wanting to enhance?"

She said, "We get a little information from them ahead of time like what it is that you're wanting to be seen for, you know? And if they say 'oh, well I've been struggling with acne. I can't get it under control. Then that's when they come in and make a Dermatology appointment (with Gidel) and then they can go over the treatment plan at that appointment."

They also reminded potential patients to double-check with insurance providers to see what dermatology procedures are covered.

During an aesthetic appointment, Goodell explained, "They (patients) would come in, fill out some intake forms, just to get some basic information on you. One of us would take some before pictures. We have a skin analysis machine that you would go into as well, and that kind of takes a peek at not only the top layers of your skin, but it can also go to the deepest layers of your skin to look at any sun damage or sun spots that you may have. As well as check redness and vascularity."

"So we are able not only to look at your skin from our own eyes, but we can take a deeper look and kind of look at what your skin looks like on a deeper level. After that, we would pull up those pictures, look at them together, discuss what your goals are and kind of build a treatment plan from there," she said.

Ruby added, "There are options, most of the time we start at the lowest price point and make sure we're doing this, this, and this, before we're going to recommend something that's

more expensive. Because you might have great results just with something at a lower price point. But maybe they've tried this, this and this and they're now at the point where we need to introduce some lasers for some of the correction."

Goodell shared, "Another big thing with us is we always try to meet patients where they are at. We're not going to if you say, 'I'd like to stay within in this budget.' We're not going to recommend a treatment that's outside of that. We're going to maybe talk about it and say, 'this is an option, but we're going to meet you where you are and try to help you as best we can with where you're at.'"

Ruby reminded people to make sure they get annual skin



Many of the products sold at TC Health & Medspa are displayed on elegant shelves. Submitted photo.



The machines used at TC Health & Medspa from left to right: Opus Plasma (treats skin texture, fine lines), Sciton mJoule (treats spider veins, rosacea, facial vessels, age/sun spots, diffuse redness). Next to the chair on the right sits an Alma IQ (completes skin analysis) Hydrafacial (exfoliating facial machine to help clean out pores and clear dead skin) On the chair sits, a Microneedling "SkinPen" (helps boost collagen and elastin for smoothing skin texture), Dysport (a neuromodulator, like Botox, that helps smooth fine lines and wrinkles) and Alastin (the medical grade skincare line offered). Submitted photo.



A before (left) and after (right) image of spider veins treated at the clinic. Submitted photo.

checks to ensure the health of their skin.

She said, “No matter who you are, you should always have an annual skin check just to make sure that there’s no suspicious lesions that we need to biopsy.”

At the end of the day, both Gidel and Ruby strive to help their fellow Humboldt residents leave their clinic more confident in their skin than when they entered.

Ruby said, “To be able to see somebody smile once you can help them get a little boost of confidence, to me, ultimately, that’s the most rewarding part of my job.”

Gidel shared a client testimonial that meant a lot to her.

She said, “She struggled with spider veins, so we started treating her with our laser and the confidence that I’ve seen in her (grow), I’ve resonated with it personally and just seeing how much more confident she is and how that’s been seriously life changing for (the patient).”

A misconception about aesthetic medicine Goodell wants to put an end to is the idea that if you seek it as a treatment, you will look overdone or fake.

She said, “I think another thing we pride ourselves on is natural results. We naturally enhance your own features. We never want to make you not feel like yourself. We just want to make sure you feel like a more confident version of yourself. Nothing has to be overdone, as long as it’s done tastefully and strategically.”

Ruby added, “Patients sometimes feel like it might be vain because ‘I’m getting this aesthetic procedure done’. Years ago, people hid the fact that they did certain aesthetic things. But the reality is we all age and we are all going to develop fine lines, wrinkles, loss of fat pads in our face and see signs of aging. Why not try to slow down the aging process? It’s not about looking fake or anything like that, it’s holding down the hands of time to feel more confident.

Looking to the future Gidel said, “We’re always looking to expand and be able to provide for the people here in Humboldt and surrounding areas, we love our town. We love supporting the people who are here.”

Ruby said, “This is our hometown, we grew up here, and it’s so rewarding to be able to practice in our community and offer a lot of services that years ago you had to drive to a city to get.”

Gidel concluded, “It’s just very rewarding to be able to say, ‘Yep this is our hometown and we’re taking care of our com-

munity.’ We did extensive research on the technology that we have here. We didn’t just go with a middle-of-the-line machine. We went for the machines that we know we are going to get results from. So we are invested in high-quality technology to be able to offer patients in Humboldt the best care.”



Another before (left) and after (right) image of conditions treated at TC Health & Medspa. Submitted photo.



The waiting area at TC Health & Medspa is cozy and welcoming for guests and patients. Submitted photo.



One of the examination rooms at TC Health & Medspa in Humboldt. Submitted photo.



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Karen's Quips!

By Karen May



It has been an interesting winter for me thus far. Another season to spend near extended family in Florida, renewing friendships with friends who return from all over the states and Canada, and escaping from the Iowa winter (snow, sleet and cold).

This year marks my 35th year in the park and each year there are changes. Last year, we had the hurricane and I'm happy to say 95% of the damage has been repaired. But we all keep track of the weather reports, as we know it doesn't take long for a storm to hit.

A lot of changes have come about in 35 years, people come and go, and new ones come in. This past season, the last original owner passed away, so everyone here is "new". I have been here for 35 years and have seen many changes. Hurricanes have done some damage with that kind of storm and many improvements have been made to the clubhouse and facilities. The association that operates the facility is planning a big celebration to observe the anniversary early in April, before we all head home. I hope to share some of these events with you.

Did you get all that holiday baking, cooking and candy-making done? I always make creamy caramels - from scratch - for family and friends. I babysat with a farm family in Garner when I was in high school and she always had this fantastic recipe. She gave it to me as a graduation present 70 years ago and I still have the original recipe card! I have never failed to make at least one batch of these favorites, and this year marks the fourth. My family and friends still request them. Did you or do you have a favorite recipe for the holidays? Did you use it? I hope to share several holiday recipes next season before December - hoping you are interested.

Being away from "home" most of the winter, I rely on my cell phone to check the weather, area news, etc. I don't know how people can live without "staying in touch"! And with a cell phone, it is easy to see what's going on. A cell phone used to be a luxury, but now it is almost a necessity.

I am also one of those people who must have a newspaper. I remember my mom and dad getting the newspaper before breakfast (delivered by a local boy on his bike) and reading the front page at least, before going off to work. I wonder how many of us can say we read it that early? Just asking. I get the Humboldt

Newspaper in the mail, the Fort Dodge Messenger online and the Tampa paper delivered. Still can't keep track of what is going on in the world.

I have been having problems with my computer lately. Does that ring a bell with any of you? I have a fantastic computer person (from Humboldt) that I have had to call several times this winter. I would be lost without his help.

I think there are many people who depend on others who have a special "trade" and are capable of helping. Be sure to thank them when they get you "out of a hole." I am thinking when I get home, I need to upgrade to a simpler form of computer, but oh, my - have you checked the various devices that are available? That's when I think maybe I am too old to try something new?

I have been enjoying my new TV this winter - but oh, does it take time and brains and patience to learn the new! How frustrating it was to learn that I couldn't get part of the sports features that I wanted. I really look forward to all the Iowa teams playing - but it seems many of them are in a plan where you have to pay more money in order to see them. And this one features a voice package that takes orders - I said something the other night as I switched channels and the picture was gone. The voice was smarter than I - it took me to the next day to get it working.

I am fortunate to have a daughter and son-in-law close by. They are TV literate and know which buttons to push! People say you are never too old to learn, but I am having my doubts.

Our RV park, Hunters Run, is planning its 35th anniversary shortly. Many of us are digging out photos (50th anniversary, Horseshoe Club, etc.) to put on display. Our oldest resident returned to her home in West Virginia and passed away in December. She "walked" the park each day, getting her exercise and visiting with residents. She and her husband came as the park was being built and picked out one of the first homes. He liked to tell the story of why he settled here.

There was a small meat market less than a mile down the road, and he loved to fix good meat! Over the years, it went out of business, but the sign stayed along the road till four years ago - Peacock Meats. The park is about half full of permanent RVs, with the remainder part-timers or those who come for the winter season.

I enjoyed my second home!

The president of our group comes from Wisconsin. He is a retired policeman and is involved in most of the activities. One thing about our park - you can be as involved as you want to be, or you can stay in your home and "watch".

Our weather has been exceptionally good so far - temps are running in the 60s most days, and I for one, am waiting for the 70s. The hurricane storm damage has been 90% repaired and right now there are only half a dozen open spots for motor homes/travel trailers.

The majority of residents are from the upper Northeast, with several families from Canada. Due to the cost of health insurance in the U.S., the number of Canadians owning homes and staying a long time is fewer than it used to be. But we all mix in activities and friendships are made. Pickleball, golf, cards and swimming are the favorites! We make friendships that last for years!

I am happy to report no hurricanes this season. Last year, over half of our residences were damaged by wind and rain the hurricanes brought. Nice to see 95% of the damage fixed and things return to normal!!

I look forward to quilting, bingo and soup luncheons. Monday morning coffee (free rolls) are always crowded.

There is a large variety of things to do in the park, from outside activities to painting, cards, and games. If you have a chance to visit friends or relatives in an RV park such as this, take time to stop and look around. I find it a good way to spend my "winter" away from home!



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Squaw Lake

By Phyllis Johnson



If you look at a map of Minnesota, you will see many lakes. Some are just a dot and some are larger. There is one lake, in the northern part of the state, not large by some standards, but big enough that one can barely see the opposite shore.

This lake, called Squaw Lake, sits 50 miles on this side of International Falls, in the middle of a Native American reservation and the Chippewa National Forest. The terrain is hilly, with winding roads and swampy areas.

There is a little town, also named Squaw Lake, which sits on an intersection with two narrow roads meeting there. It is remote by a town's standards, with only one store that sold everything from a loaf of bread to hooded sweatshirts and five buckled overshoes.

The store was operated by a couple who lived on the premises, sometimes not having a patron all day. They were pleasant people and loved to engage strangers in lengthy conversations. The store was about three miles away from our cottage and we made the trip often.

The road to Squaw Lake, about a 10-hour drive from home, ranged from an interstate highway, north to Minneapolis, to two lanes, then a gravel road and finally just a seven-mile winding path, too narrow for cars to pass or meet. At the end of the path was a lodge with five cottages that surrounded a larger cottage, which was the home of the owner/operators. This little camp was nestled in a grassy area along the shore of the lake.

We were part of this scenario for several years. My husband and I, along with two other couples who were close friends, spent a week to about 10 days in early to mid-June here. The crops had been planted, school had been dismissed for summer vacation and we felt free to spend some time with friends and fishing.

We had to take provisions with us, so our cars and pickups were loaded. There were two boats to be towed, along with fishing gear, food, clothing, other essentials and emergency kits. We made an interesting caravan, dodging deer as we neared the camp became interesting, as they felt ownership of the forest, along with black bears, who roamed the area looking for food, those last seven miles were a stop-and-start process.

There are many memories of those times spent there. A few experiences come to mind:

I have never been a fan of toasted marshmallows, but it became a nightly ritual. We had to be sure we were well-stocked with them before leaving home. After it got dark, we would have a bonfire and roast the marshmallows. The fire kept the wild animals away and it was a pleasant way to end the day.

I also got used to the smell of bacon, frying at about 5 a.m. The men were convinced they had to be in the boat by dawn to

catch the walleyes, so they would start having an early breakfast. Always bacon and eggs. We women were not so hardy and preferred to sleep in on most days. At about 10 a.m. the men would come into camp and eat another breakfast and this time the women cooked.

My birthday is in early June and one year to celebrate, we were invited to the camp's headquarters for a birthday dinner.

This home was exactly as one would picture with a large stone fireplace, emitting a smoky smell of wood burning, stuffed deer hanging on the walls and furniture made from the local tees. It was a quaint, inviting place.

I had to wear a blindfold to enter the dining room and when I was stopped and told to remove it, I was standing next to a black bear about eight feet tall. The bear had been caught and a taxidermist had done an excellent job of making him real. I think I almost fainted. The bear was part of the reception room's décor.

On rainy days, when fishing wasn't a part of the day's plan, we would play cards. There was no TV, so we relied on radios for the news. Cellphones were not part of the scene yet, but we made frequent landline calls home to check local news, weather and the well-being of our families.

On one such rainy afternoon, we decided to go to a neighboring town for our evening meal. I can't remember the name of the town, but it was about 15 miles away. What we hadn't counted on was the condition of the roads. Rain had washed across the road in one area, so we had to detour. But the detour was as bad. With no other choice, we had to drive on, because we couldn't turn around.

There were six of us, crowded into the pick-up and the driver was trying to maneuver us in a forward direction, instead of clockwise on the road. It didn't take long for us to be mired in the mud, sitting sideways. There was no panic. Instead, there was joking that the detour was a poor choice and now who would get out to push. Finally, deciding it was a job for all of us, we climbed out onto the muddy road.

Eventually, the truck was freed, but we were covered with mud. We gave up our plan for a night out and returned to our cabin for showers and egg sandwiches.

It was a daily ritual of mine at that time to take a walk each morning. This posed a problem, since there weren't a lot of choices as to where to go to make a three-mile hike. No one wanted to join me, so I went alone.

There was a circular drive and I figured out that it would take 10 trips around the circle to equal one mile. Thirty trips got to be a bore, so I explored other options. The mornings were quiet, with only the birds to make any sound in the forest, so I decided to wander a bit down the road. I was aware of the wildlife and decided to keep a watchful eye.

About a quarter of a mile away from the camp was a gar-

bage dump. It was used by other resorts in the area, too. A garbage truck from a nearby town came to pick up the garbage weekly. Of course, that was an attraction for bears.

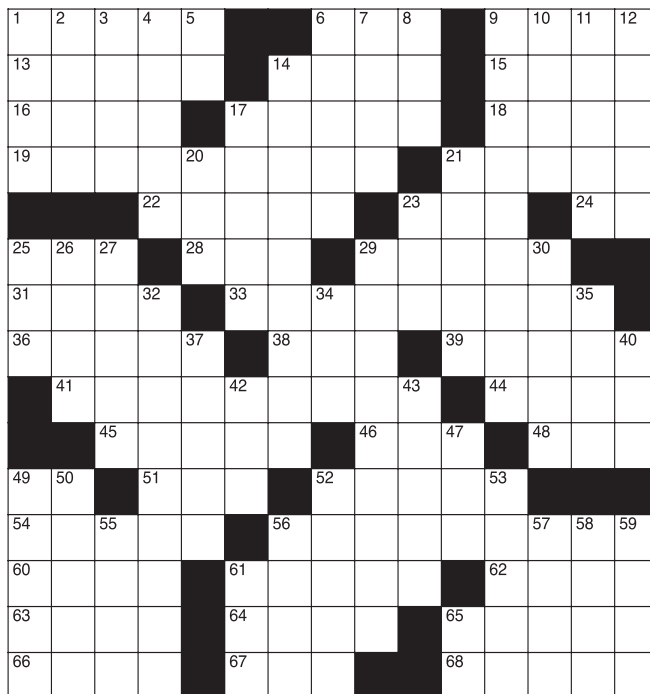
The days went by and my new plan was working. However, one day, I approached the garbage dump at the same time as a mother bear and her two cubs who were hunting for breakfast. The little guys had wandered away and were in a thicket behind me. I hadn't seen them, or the mama, and I continued walking.

Before long, around a curve, there was Mama Bear, all eight feet of her, standing upright, looking like a hairy giant. I was immediately aware that I was in between her and her cubs. She didn't make any noise, just stared. I made a quick turn and ran, not looking back. I was too scared to look to see where she was. When I returned to camp, totally out of breath, I decided to abandon my new walking route. From then on, it was counting the trips around the circle.

One of the guys in our group was a snorer. Sometimes it was so bad that the rest of us couldn't sleep. His wife had warned us to bring earplugs and we did, but it wasn't much help. There were nights when the rest of us ended up on the sun porch of the cabin, with the door closed, just to get some sleep.

Our annual trips to the lake came to a halt several years later. It was getting harder each year to handle the jobs that needed to be done. We had gone to the lake at least 10 years. Our good friends who owned the resort had moved. Things were not the same. One of the men in our group developed heart issues. The time had come.

Now, five of our group have passed on and I am the only one left. I still correspond with the lady who, with her husband, owned the lodge. She now lives with a daughter in Montana, she surprised me with a visit a few years ago. Looking back, I remember these trips to a little lodge in northern Minnesota and I wish they could be lived again. So many things in life have to become just a memory.



CLUES ACROSS

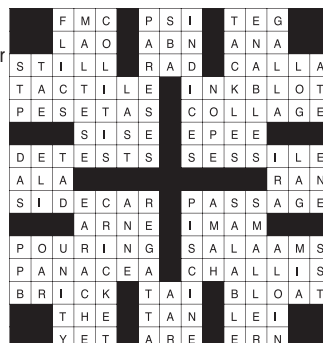
1. Lakes
6. Electromotive force
9. Invests in little enterprises
13. Longtime Utah Jazz coach
14. Small sailboat
15. Actor Idris
16. Mild yellow Dutch cheese made in balls
17. System that detects objects under water
18. Harsh, grating noise
19. Steward
21. A fencing sword
22. Infections
23. Actress Ryan
24. Sodium
25. Swedish castle
28. A lump of slime
29. African antelope
31. Insurance providers
33. Choosy
36. Ringworm
38. Unpolished
39. Drenches
41. Pant style
44. Son of Noah
45. Spiritual being
46. Upton Sinclair novel
48. Journalist Tarbell
49. Popular sports highlight show
51. Born of
52. Rich tapestry
54. S. China seaport
56. State of being unclothed
60. Surrounded by
61. Residue
62. Away from wind

63. Dried-up
64. Visionary
65. A very large body of water
66. Garden tools
67. Screen type
68. Ancient Scandinavian poet

CLUES DOWN

1. Millisecond
2. Spanish city
3. A sudden very loud sound
4. "The Indiana Jones of beer"
5. Tin
6. Sea eagles
7. Volcanic crater
8. Type of coat
9. Women's apartments in Ottoman palace
10. Divulge a secret
11. Norwegian playwright
12. "It's a Wonderful Life" director
14. Poisonous perennial plant
17. 18-yr astronomical period
20. Clothes
21. Places to sit
23. Family of regulator genes
25. NY ballplayer
26. Impressive in size or scope
27. Jacques ___, French biologist
29. One from the Big Apple
30. Genus of woolly lemurs
32. Songs to one's beloved
34. Indigenous person of N.E. Thailand
35. Supplemented with difficulty
37. Farewell
40. Investment account (abbr.)
42. One from Utah
43. Begets
47. A male child
49. Break apart
50. Brief appearance
52. Partner to "oohed"
53. A light informal meal
55. Fabric with smooth, shiny surface
56. One billionth of a second
57. Ancient Italian-Greek colony
58. Close tightly
59. Mail out
61. Language
65. Computer characteristic

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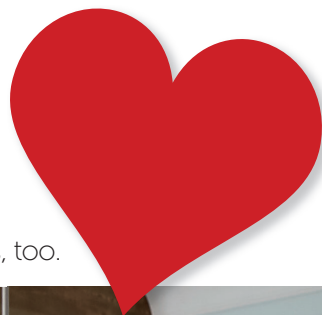


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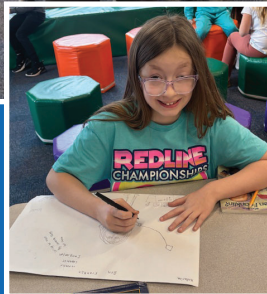
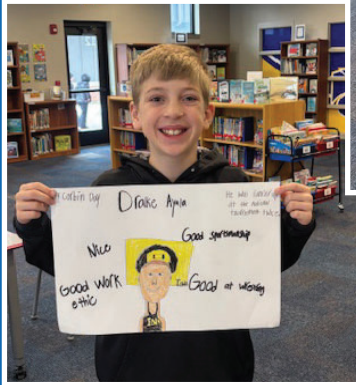
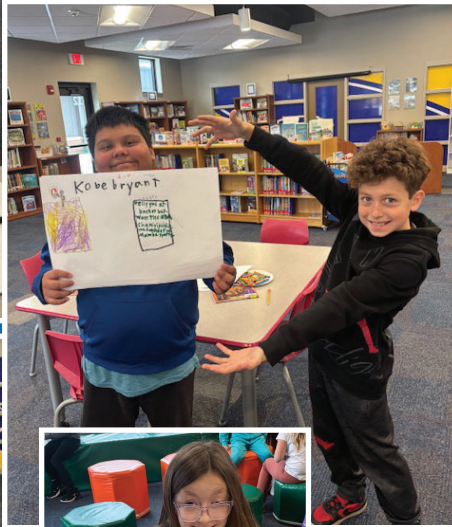


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These Taft Fourth Graders have been working on posters highlighting people in history that have shown good character. They made sure that their poster were colorful and eye catching, as well as showcasing specific character traits that made them a memorable part of history. They did a great job and we will be displaying them in our hallways at Taft!



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