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TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2024 BLUFFTON, INDIANA • Wells County's Hometown Connection \$1.00

BHMSD board candidates discuss roles, safety

By HOLLY GASKILL
 Three of four board candidates for Bluffton-Harrison Metropolitan Schools were present for a forum Monday evening.

Of the three seats on the ballot, only one has a contested race — incumbent Trent White is challenged by Chris Koiner for District 3. White was unable to attend the forum and declined to send a written statement.

Preston Kaehr represented his unopposed At-Large seat, which he was appointed to in July. The seat was vacant after Angie Sheets was appointed to fill Bruce Holland's District 1 seat when he moved out of the district.

Mike Murray, District 2, was also present and spoke about the continuation of his term after announcing he would not run for re-election. "I took my name out of consideration for running, thinking somebody might want to serve — nobody did," he said. "So, it was up to me whether to continue (after) Dec. 31, and I'm going to continue because I don't feel like I'm relieved of that responsibility because somebody didn't come forward."



Three of four candidates for Bluffton-Harrison Metropolitan Schools' board of trustees were present for a forum hosted by the Bluffton-Harrison PTO on Monday night. Pictured are Preston Kaehr, At-Large; Mike Murray, District 1; and Chris Koiner, District 3. (Photos by Holly Gaskill)

Moderator Erin Prible, executive director of the Wells County Chamber of Commerce, asked the candidates six questions related to their perspectives on board leadership, goals for office and district-wide challenges.

Firstly, the candidates were asked how they would provide support to students and staff as the Bluffton-Harrison PTO,

who organized the forum, strives to do so. This sentiment was mirrored in the following question, which also asked how their involvement in the school community had

(Continued on Page 2)

BHS construction may be delayed

By HOLLY GASKILL
 Renovation and repairs at Bluffton High School may be delayed due to a manufacturing error.

On Monday, Superintendent Brad Yates told the Bluffton-Harrison MSD school board that the project contractors noticed a slight defect in the exterior paneling. He explained, "It's very difficult to view. When I was speaking with the installers, they said you can only see it (for) about one hour a day when the sun's coming from the right angle to see the shadow on the panel, but it's an indentation on the panel."

Yates said the district is currently in talks to either receive replacement paneling or a discount to use the panels "in

a space that would not have any issue to the aesthetics of the building." There have been otherwise no significant issues in the renovation project, which aimed to address moisture issues in the walls and windows.

Students will also be able to use the middle school pool after fall break next week; the pool was added to current projects after a circuit failure flooded the basement and equipment room. Yates also said Adams Central has experienced an issue with its pool and will hopefully coordinate with BHMSD for practices.

Also during the meeting, Bluffton-Harrison Elementary School counselor Ashley Kilgore announced that BHES

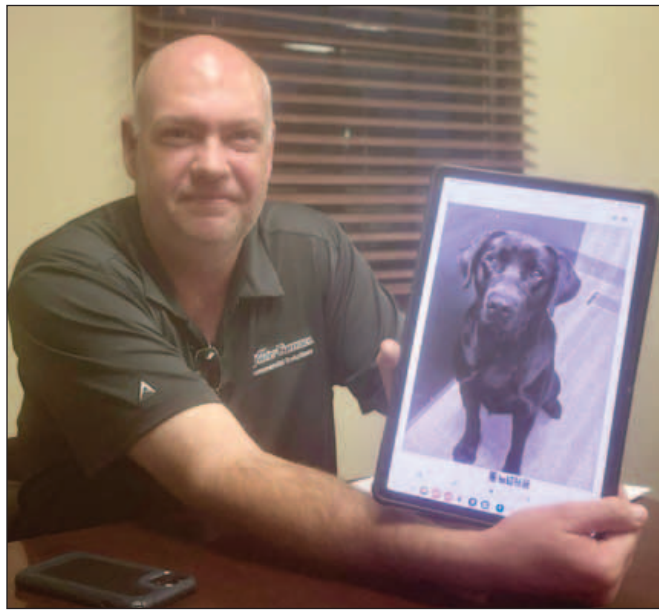
has received an Indiana Bronze Star School Counseling Award from the Indiana Department of Education. The school tracked specific data, set goals, and monitored progress through the Carrying the Torch to Student Success counseling program to receive the honor.

"It's quite a bit of hard work — she went through that (announcement) really quick about the work they did," Yates quipped.

The district's enrollment is also growing, with this year's IDOE county day registering 1,742 students — up 43 from last year.

"This is more than just a num-

(Continued on Page 2)



Ossian Police Commissioner President Caleb Chichester presents a photo of the new K-9 officer, Toby. (Photo by Sydney Kent)

K-9 Toby set to join Ossian Police Department

By SYDNEY KENT
 A black Labrador is the soon-to-be newest team member of the Ossian Police Department.

His name is Toby, and he is expected to join the OPD by the end of this year.

Police Commissioner President Caleb Chichester presented a photo of Toby and described him as a family dog with specialized training in search and rescue, drugs and retrieval. However, he is not drilled in aggression tactics or "bite" training.

Chichester acknowledged the need for Toby's services, particularly in drug training, noting that illegal substances are present in the town.

The cost for the K-9's initial fees, vehicle outfitting, training, memberships, harnesses and insurance were estimated

(Continued on Page 2)

Jury selection underway for trial of a man accused of 2017 Delphi murders

By RICK CALLAHAN
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Eight women and six men have been selected so far to a jury in the trial of a man charged in the Indiana killings of two teenage girls during a winter hike in 2017.

Jury selection opened Monday in the case against Richard Allen, which has long haunted the girls' hometown of Delphi and spurred endless online speculation.

Allen, 52, is charged with two counts of murder and two counts of murder while committing or attempting to commit kidnapping in the killings of 13-year-old

Abigail Williams and 14-year-old Liberty German. If convicted, he could face up to 130 years in prison. Prosecutors are not seeking the death penalty.

Jury selection is expected to continue Tuesday at a location in Fort Wayne, about 100 miles from where the killings occurred.

Once the 12 members and four alternates are selected, they will be taken to Delphi, a town of about 3,000 residents, sequestered during trial and banned from using cellphones or watching news broadcasts.

If jury selection is completed on Wednesday, jury instructions

and opening statements could take place Friday morning. The trial is expected to last a month.

Prosecutors said they plan to call about 50 witnesses during the trial, while Allen's defense attorneys expect to call about 120 witnesses.

Allen, a pharmacy technician who had lived and worked in Delphi, was arrested in October 2022, nearly six years after the girls known as Abby and Libby were killed.

A relative had dropped the eighth graders off at a hiking trail just outside Delphi on Feb. 13,

(Continued on Page 2)

Non-voters cite disillusionment, candidates and complexity

By LESLIE BONILLA MUÑIZ
Indiana Capital Chronicle

Erin Landis wants to vote. But a state program meant to protect Landis and her five children from a domestic abuser has complicated her access to the polls.

Landis, who described herself as a centrist Democrat with union roots, last tried to vote several years ago.

"It did cause a lot of chaos the last time I tried to vote," she told the Capital Chronicle. "... Clerks

couldn't give me straight answers. I went through so many people, just trying to call office after office, explaining the same story. No one could help me."

Landis doesn't know if her vote was counted.

Her true address is shielded by the Address Confidentiality Program. The initiative, administered by the Office of the Indiana Attorney General, seeks to protect survivors of domestic abuse, stalking, sexual assault, human trafficking and other offenses.

A confidential post office box nearly three hours away has served as the family's official address for about a decade, Landis said.

The P.O. box is what's listed on their identification cards — which are required to vote in Indiana. The program changes how participants vote, according to the Secretary of State's Office.

"Trying to use my I.D. for anything ... it's an issue," Landis said. "It's meant to provide safety for my family and myself, and it's more of a burden."

The 46-year-old and her voting-age children are among the million-plus eligible Hoosiers who don't participate in elections.

Indiana's voter turnout sank to 50th out of 51 — in a ranking of the U.S. states and the District of Columbia — in the 2022 midterm elections, according to the most recent Indiana Civic Health Index. The state landed at just 46th in the contentious 2020 election.

Candidates, issues drive decisions
 Other Hoosiers show less inter-

est in voting.

A plurality of more than 1,000 respondents — 38% — told the Indiana Community Action Poverty Institute that they didn't know enough about the candidates or issues to vote, in a survey conducted November 2023 to February 2024.

Some confessed they didn't know how or where to vote in written responses to the institute, which shared its survey results with the Indiana Capital Chronicle.

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Outside

Fall weather continues with rain and chilly temps

| Today | Wed. | Thursday |
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| High 52 | High 55 | High 62 |
| Low 32 | Low 31 | Low 35 |

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How to find joy in every season

By BARBARA BARBIERI

“Finding Joy in every Season of the Soul” was the topic shared by Jill Ellis Baughan on a recent Tuesday evening at the First Baptist Church in Bluffton.

In each season of the year she told of ways of finding joy.

In **summer**, a season of abundance, listeners were encouraged to celebrate childhood—their own and their neighbors as well as to tell God thank-you

During **autumn**, a season of change and

transition, they should take time to reflect on the process of transition and make a list of things they enjoy.

In **winter**, a season of loss and hardship, they were reminded to say “yes” to God, seek Joy even through tough times and allow others to surround you when they are needed.

In **spring**, a season of new beginnings, all were asked to take a risk by trying something new and to make of list of adventures you would like to do. And then to do some of them.



Jill Ellis Baughan

All who attended were given a hand-out sheet to remind them of how to find Joy in every season of the year.

Events at the Creative Arts Council of Wells County

428 S. Oak Street in Bluffton
260-824-5222
www.wellscreativearts.com
creativeartscouncil@gmail.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/wellscreativearts

Instagram: @creativeartscouncil
Creative Arts office hours — Monday through Thursday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Friday (by appointment only).

Creative Arts Dance Academy - *New 6 week class
• “Foundations in Dance” beginning Nov. 2

Ages: Students 5-8 years old
Day/Time: Saturdays from 10:00-10:45 a.m.

Dates: 11/2, 11/9, 11/16, 11/23, 12/7, 12/14 (no class 11/30 due to Thanksgiving)

Tuition: \$40 for the 6 week session
To register: <https://www.wellscreativearts.com/foundations-in-dance> or call the office at (260) 824-5222

Excerpts from “The Nutcracker”
Creative Arts Youth Dance Company proudly present excerpts from “The Nutcracker”

Performances: Dec. 6 at 7:00 p.m. and Dec. 7 at 3:00 p.m.

Creative Arts School of Music

• Voice Lessons with Lynne Niermeyer, Tuesday afternoon/evenings, \$30/half hour lesson

• Guitar Lessons with Mike Needler, Tuesday afternoon/evenings, \$35/half hour lesson

For more information regarding the music lessons above, please call the office at (260) 824-5222 for lesson times/availability.

Creative Arts Theater
Creative Arts 24/25 Theater season has been announced:

• “The BEST Christmas Pageant Ever” – Dec. 12-14

• “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat” – March 6-8, 2025

• Disney Newsies JR – June 13-14, 2025

• Disney Artisticats Kids – June 27-28, 2025

Tickets: \$15.00 per person sold through ArtsTix - (260) 422-4226

Auditorium: 428 S Oak Street, Bluffton

Auditions for “The Best Christmas Pageant Ever”

• Auditions will be held Oct. 15 from 5-8 p.m. at Creative Arts Council for “The Best



Christmas Pageant Ever”. Call backs will be Oct. 17 at 6 p.m.

Synopsis: In this hilarious Christmas classic, a couple struggling to put on a church Christmas pageant is faced with casting the Herdman kids- probably the most inventively awful kids in history. You won't believe the mayhem-and the fun- when the Herdmans collide head-on with the story of Christmas!

Performances: Dec. 12-14

For more information on auditions/roles visit: <https://www.wellscreativearts.com/holiday-production>

Ongoing Activities

Creative Crew: Tuesdays from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. All forms of creativity welcome: painting, drawing, needlework and more... spend the morning working on your craft and socialize with other artists.

Enter Door 1 or Door 10 at Life Community Church, the creative crew meets in the cafe.

Readers' Brown Bag Luncheon: Meeting the last Tuesday of the month at noon at Life Community Church, enter door 10. All readers are welcome. Feel free to call the office for more information.

Important Scheduling Note: Changes can occur after the Creative Happenings column has been published. Please confirm dates and times before planning to participate in programs and activities.

Creative Arts Council activities are supported by memberships, sponsors and grants from funders including Arts United, a regional agency; the Indiana Arts Commission, a state agency; and the National Endowment for the Arts, a national agency.

Master Gardeners sponsor iris event

On Thursday, Oct. 17, at 7 p.m. Alan Daugherty will present a program about the Cook/Williamson Iris Gardens at the Wells

County 4-H Community building.

The gardens were once located at the west edge of Bluffton and gained world

wide recognition. Many of the iris species had been developed here.

The program is open to the public.

A Talk with Tego



Stormy is an extremely affectionate, six-month-old, spayed female.



Gunner is a super sweet, five-month-old, neutered male.



Griffin is a very friendly, five-month-old, neutered male.



Tego

Tego's Tips: There are three of the five felines still looking for a forever home with waived adoption fees until Oct. 25.

These are just a few pets available for adoption at the Wells County Animal Shelter, 1613 W. Cherry St., Bluffton. For more information call 824-6063.

A special communion service for Gloria's family

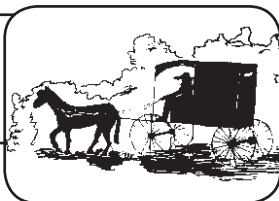
My earliest memories of communion was keen fascination as I watched the ‘big people’ wash each other’s feet. I felt the solemnity and security of seeing Dad and Mom do what Jesus had done with his disciples before he died on the cross.

Now, today, in our communion service, I glanced around the room. Julia, now 13, was sitting up front with the girls her age and older, Austin was with Uncle John, and Hosanna in her glory holding her newborn cousin who is named after her. The six-year-old boys, Jesse and Elijah, were sitting on either side of Grandpa, wishing they could sleep, and little Joshua was next to me.

I admit, church service used to be quite stressful for me with a handful of young ones who didn't want to hold still and missed not sitting with their daddy. Much has changed, I now find it more relaxing. Usually Daniel's dad has at least two of our children the entire service. Now as I tend a child or two, I relax with my Bible and enjoy meditating and praying. Sometimes when I'm battling hard things or see another person who is facing difficulties I'll ask God for a verse for the situation. I've been amazed many times over, when I opened my Bible to a promise that fit precisely with the

The Amish Cook

by Gloria Yoder



situation at hand. Quietly I claim it and continue to absorb what is being taught.

Today I was especially touched by the story of the woman who washed Jesus' feet and anointed them with an expensive ointment. The bishop from Ohio, who was preaching simply said, “She did what she could. She did what she could.” Isn't that life? We aren't asked to fix everyone's problems like we wish we could, but give Jesus all we have, no matter the cost- it may include time, money, dreams for the future, or our reputation. When we give our all to him, we'll never be short changed, he promised to give back more than we ever give to him.

Now as the time neared for the bread and wine to be passed the children watched with eagerness. The bread was made by my sister-in-law who is the deacon's wife. After taking wine I handed the stainless steel cup back to the minister. I had just taken my seat when little Joshua looked up in my face and asked, “Was it good?”

“Yes,” I said simply and brief-

ly reminded him how it was in remembrance of the blood Jesus shed for us- or for me. I like to personalize it, knowing that Jesus would gladly have died, if it had only been for me, or for you alone. What love!

Soon there was a congregational song in German while the members took turns washing each other's feet. This is a special time of demonstrating our submission to our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

Uncle John and my cousin Josh, who are a part of the ministry, were taking care of two of our children. When it was time to fetch the towels and buckets of water they told them they could go along and help. No second invitation was needed. They came back with pleased expressions, happy to be a part of the special occasion.

Lunch was provided by the Wengerd family. Mrs Wengerd made an unusually delicious potato casserole with chunks of chicken which they had marinated and



grilled. Salad and frozen cheese cakes finished off the meal. This recipe is similar to what was served.

COMFORTING CHICKEN & POTATO CASSEROLE

• 2 pounds sliced potatoes, cooked and shredded

• 2 cups chicken, diced and cooked

1 can cream of chicken soup or homemade chicken soup

• 1/2 cup butter, melted or browned

• 2 cups melting cheese, such as Velveeta

• 1 teaspoon salt

• 1 to 2 cups sour cream
• 1/2 cup chopped onion (opt)
• 1 package crushed crackers (opt)

Instructions

1. Mix potatoes, chicken, chicken soup, butter, cheese, salt, sour cream and onion. (The cheese may be melted with the butter or placed in the casserole and melted as the casserole heats.)

2. Spoon into a two-quart casserole.

3. Sprinkle cracker crumbs on top of mixture.

4. Bake at 350 for 40 minutes or until heated through.

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Healing after accusations and heartbreak

Dear Annie: A relationship I had for two and a half years has recently ended. I met a woman, "Marie," through mutual friends, and we quickly became best friends, eventually turning romantic. She was the first woman I ever dated, and while our relationship had its ups and downs, the challenges were unique. She had rare health problems and a history of being treated badly by men. Over time, I became somewhat of a caretaker for her, and we were inseparable.

constantly boasting about his latest business ventures, though our daughter is the real breadwinner. He always orders the most expensive items on the menu and complains if the liquor selection isn't top-tier. This is not how they live at home, and his entitlement is frustrating.

Dear Annie

by Annie Lane



But things changed. She began accusing me of being "manipulative" and a "gaslighter." While I made mistakes — this was my first relationship — I always apologized when I realized I was wrong. But she would refuse to explain what I had done, leaving me apologizing without understanding why. We tried counseling, but after one session, she didn't want to continue.

Two weeks ago, I moved from Arizona to South Carolina, while she stayed behind for work. Despite my efforts to stay in touch, she told me she didn't deserve how I treated her and that I needed to move on and treat the next woman better. I'm heartbroken because I haven't done some of the things she accused me of, like turning friends against her.

Pete also doesn't like children and makes it known how irritated he gets when any are around. His thin skin means that even the slightest comment causes him to sulk for days. Overall, his behavior has made these vacations unpleasant.

We brought this up with our daughter in what we thought was a civil conversation, but she brushed it off, saying he's just "maximizing" his vacation. To us, "maximizing" feels like him taking full advantage of our generosity.

We've thought about ending these trips, but we love spending time with our son and his wife, who are a joy to be around. We don't want to stop the vacations entirely because of Pete's behavior. What do you suggest? — Frustrated Generous Parents

Dear Frustrated Generous Parents: Pete sounds like quite the handful! I think it's time to let him foot the bill for his top-shelf liquor. You're already treating them to flights and luxury accommodations; he can splurge on his own taste in spirits. His entitlement isn't doing anyone any favors, least of all your grandchildren, who certainly don't need that kind of role model.

It might be time for a reality check. Letting him take responsibility for his actions (and expenses) could cool his bristles a bit. Nothing like paying for your own extravagances to bring things into perspective.

"How Can I Forgive My Cheating Partner?" features favorite columns on marriage, infidelity, communication and reconciliation. It is available as a paperback and e-book. Visit <http://www.creatorspublishing.com> for more information. Send your questions for Annie Lane to dearannie@creators.com. © 2024 CREATORS.COM

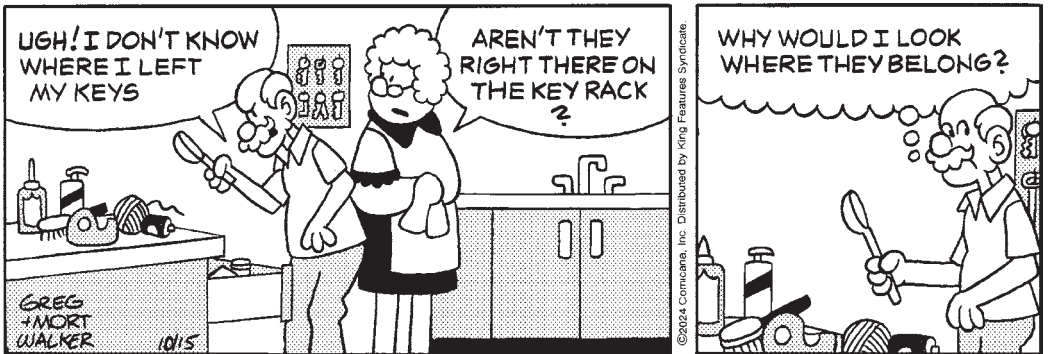
To complicate things, her mother has thanked me for everything I did for her daughter and even sent me photos from their family vacation. Seeing those pictures hurt deeply, as I don't think she'll ever smile at me the way she does in them. I feel broken. — Broken

Dear Broken: You may feel broken now, but you're on the path to building a much better life for yourself. While the pain is real, remember that this was someone who wasn't willing to work on the relationship through therapy and often turned things around by accusing you of manipulation and gaslighting. That's name-calling, not healthy communication. In the long run, it's better that you've parted ways. Stay strong; better days are ahead.

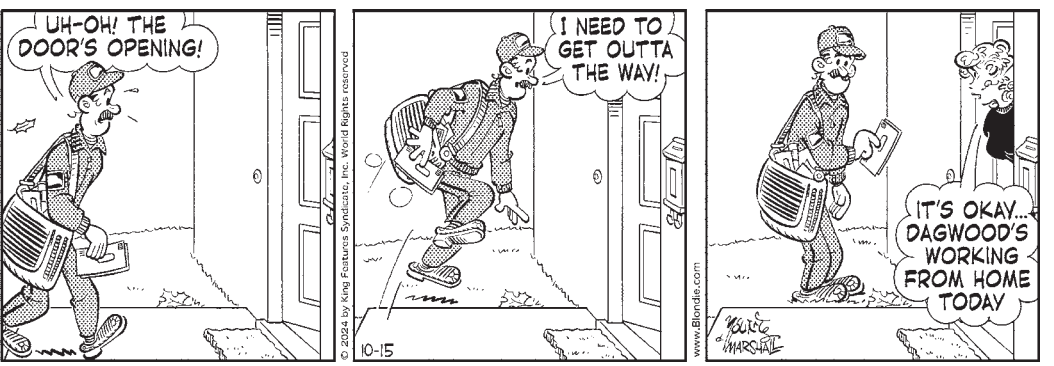
Dear Annie: Every year, my wife and I take our grown kids and their spouses on nice vacations. We've flown them business class to various overseas locations, and since we don't live in the same cities, we cherish this time together.

The issue is our son-in-law, "Pete." He behaves like he's paying for the trip,

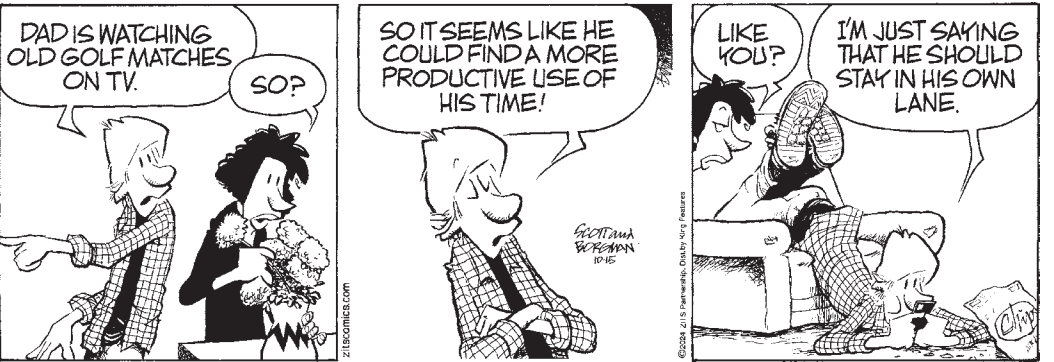
BEETLE BAILEY



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THE FAMILY CIRCUS

By Bil Keane

The LOCKHORNS



My Answer

By Dr. Billy Graham



Bible doesn't hide the negative side of getting older

Question: I've been told that the "golden years" are known as the years following retirement — the time to enjoy the fruit of one's labor. When I retired my life fell apart. Does society know that there is no such thing as retirement bringing a time of rest and leisure? It's a time of sickness followed by death. It's a dreadful thing. — R.B.

Answer: Many are surprised to learn that the term "golden years" was coined in 1959 for an advertising campaign for one of America's first retirement communities. People bought into the idea that retirement was a time of leisure and doing

what brings pleasure. The Bible doesn't hide the negative side of getting older — nor should we. But neither does aging mean that God no longer has a purpose for us.

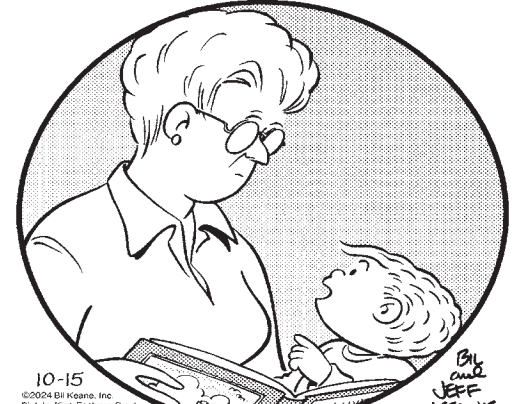
One of the most poetic and candid descriptions of infirmities in all literature comes from the writer of Ecclesiastes. After surveying the futility of life without God, he urges his readers to commit their lives to Him while they are still young. The reason? Not only would God give meaning and joy to their lives right now, but if they delay too long, it will be too late to enjoy God's good gifts.

He tells us to remember our Creator in the days of youth, before the days of trouble, for the time will

come when we say, "I find no pleasure in them" (Ecclesiastes 12:1, ESV).

But is this all there is to growing older? No. Scripture records the story of Barzillai in 2 Samuel 19, emphasizing that he was "old," yet still useful. The Bible is dotted with examples of the aged — men and women who refused to use old age as an excuse. It isn't always easy, but we will make our own lives better (and those who care about us) if we work at growing old gracefully; and God will help us.

(This column is based on the words and writings of the late Rev. Billy Graham.) ©2024 Billy Graham Literary Trust. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.



"Was 'Once upon a time' when you were little, Grandma?"

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CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS: 1 Corn seasoning, 5 Invoice fig., 8 Shredded cabbage dish, 12 Coffin stand, 13 Fan's cry shirt, 14 Casual shirt, 15 Ruse, 17 Castle craze, 18 Passing jots down, 21 Grown-up, 24 Subsequently, 25 Richard of "Chicago" lawyer's business, 30 Docs' org., 31 — Ste. Marie, 32 Chap, 33 Start of summer or winter, 35 Simple melody

DOWN: 2 Vacuum's lack version, 3 Allow 23 Caspian Sea feeder, 5 Desertlike arming event?, 6 PC alternative? 26 Container for art supplies, 8 Quick run 27 Disney exec, 9 Booty Robert, 10 Lip balm ingredient 28 Brusque, 11 Stir-fry pans out 31 Dazzle, 16 — Tuesday 34 Firm, 20 Geom. shape 35 Fifth president, 21 Turkish officials 37 Impose swing, 38 Ersatz Big fuses, 40 Vault, 41 Ointment amounts, 44 Before — Spartacus! 46 French vineyard, 47 Spiritual leader?

Solution time: 22 mins.

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10/15 TV schedule grid with channels (LIFE, FX, TVLAND, etc.), times (5 PM, 5:30, etc.), and program titles (Washington Watch, News at 6, etc.).

Farmers' Almanac teases a 2024-25 winter less crazy than the last

By AGDAILY

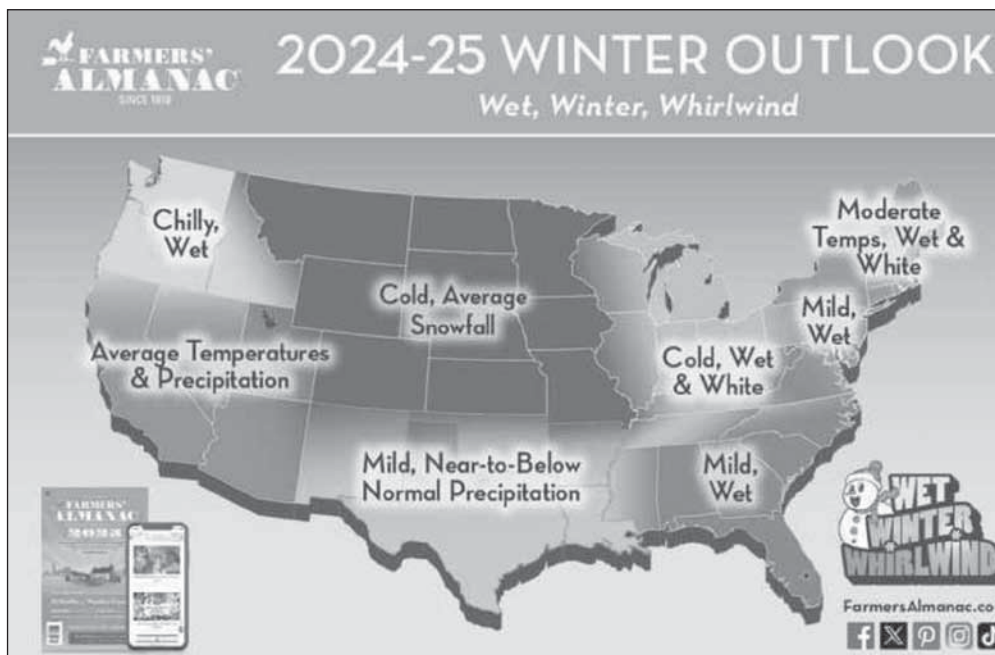
Farmers, get ready for a challenging winter. The 2025 Farmers' Almanac predicts a cold, stormy season, far different from last year's unusual weather anomalies.

While the winter of 2023-24 saw unpredictable warm spells and sudden cold snaps, this year's forecast promises more traditional winter conditions, particularly for the northern and eastern regions.

Winter officially starts on December 21, 2024, with the winter solstice, but don't expect the cold to hold off until then. La Niña's influence means cold temperatures and storms could hit earlier. The Farmers' Almanac highlights that the season's coldest temperatures will affect the Northern Plains and Great Lakes, where heavy snow is expected, especially during the final week of January into early February, as frigid Arctic air sweeps across much of the country.

The eastern half of the U.S. is on "red flag" alert for the final week of January due to a highly active storm track.

Between January 20 and 27, expect frequent bouts of heavy precipitation, along with gusty winds. This period could bring significant amounts of snow, rain, sleet, or ice, depending on your region.



A map of the winter forecast. (Image provided by The Farmer's Almanac)

For those in Texas and the Northwest, mark your calendars for early February. A potential snowstorm could bring up to 6 inches in Texas, while Idaho's Bitterroot Mountain range could see up to 12 inches.

Above-average precipitation is forecasted for the eastern third of the U.S., including the Great Lakes, Ohio Valley, and Midwest. The almanac says the Pacific Northwest will also have a wet and chilly winter, while the Southwest and South Central States are expected to experience average to below-average precipitation. This is a stark contrast to last year, when Texas experienced unusually cold conditions.

This winter, the Southern Plains, including parts of Kansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, and New Mexico, should have a warmer season, with the Southeast and Atlantic Coast also expected to experience above-average temperatures.

Looking back, and forward

Last winter's strange anomalies were driven by an El Niño event, but this year's steadier La Niña influence should bring more consistent winter weather patterns. However, with a highly active storm track predicted, the season is expected to deliver heavy snow, ice, and rain for many regions.

The Farmers' Almanac

continues to use its time-tested formula, developed in 1818, which accounts for environmental fluctuations, sunspots, the motion of the Moon, and other proprietary factors.

Even when nature throws curveballs, the almanac doesn't shy away from forecasting the weather months in advance.

For more detailed forecasts and regional maps, you can order your 2025 Farmers' Almanac or get all-access online. And, to be clear, this almanac should not be confused with the competing Old Farmer's Almanac, which is also leaning toward higher precipitation amounts compared with last year.

September tractor, combine sales decline

By AGDAILY

In September 2024, U.S. sales of agricultural tractors fell by 19.2 percent, and combine sales dropped by a significant 40.7 percent compared to the same period last year, according to data from the Association of Equipment Manufacturers. Canadian sales also experienced declines, with tractor sales down 24.9 and combines falling by 51.9 percent.

Curt Blades, Senior Vice President at AEM, attributed the downturn to the overall softness in the agricultural economy, highlighting the cyclical slowdown seen throughout the summer.

The decline in tractor sales, particularly among smaller models under 40 horsepower, points to broader financial challenges faced by farmers.

The agricultural sector continues to navigate rising costs and inflationary pressures. Farmers are dealing with reduced net incomes due to lower commodity prices and higher input costs, such as seed, fertilizer, and equipment maintenance. The cost of financing tractors has also surged, making new equipment purchases less attractive.

Farmers, particularly those in the grain sector, have seen their incomes shrink. Corn prices dropped from \$5.67 per bushel in 2021 to \$3.78 in August 2024, while soybeans fell from \$12.17 to \$9.82 per bushel in the same period. This decline in earnings, coupled with higher input costs, has further dampened equipment purchases.

Supply chain concerns are also at the forefront of farmers' minds, with many critical agricultural inputs now being produced by foreign companies. The rise of international ownership in seed and chemical production has sparked

concerns about potential supply disruptions due to global tensions.

Despite these challenges, U.S. farmers are adapting by being conservative in their financial decisions and are hesitant to take on debt for new equip-

ment. As a result, tractor and combine sales may continue to struggle in the near term, with many sales likely lost for good due to the long-term trend of farm consolidation and fewer farmers needing smaller tractors.

With agricultural operations becoming more efficient, the future demand for tractors is expected to remain subdued, marking a continued contraction in the market for this equipment segment.

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GENERAC

Non-voters cite disillusionment

(Continued from Page 1)

The organization administered the poll to thousands of current and former clients as part of community needs assessments, so that most respondents earn at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, Director Erin Macey said. This year, that's about \$62,000 for a family of four.

Linda Hanson, who leads the nonpartisan League of Women Voters' Indiana chapter, said a traditionally poor civics education has likely contributed to a voting-eligible population that feels uninformed about candidates, issues and even the mechanics of voting.

That's why, she said, the League created a website guiding users through registering to vote, checking their registration and finding who's on their ballot. An accompanying handbook lays out Hoosier voting rights and governance structures at the local, state and federal levels.

Riley Choe knows who's on the ballot — but doesn't like the options.

The Marion County resident,

who reported leaning "a little bit left of a moderate Democrat," said candidate quality is key.

The 20-year-old described participating in two elections thus far and volunteering with political efforts. But their vote isn't a guarantee: "I have submitted a ballot with entries left blank, as in a vote of 'no confidence.'"

Choe is deeply critical of Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett, his administration, and by extension, the Indiana Democratic Party.

Allegations of sexual misconduct against a top aide and other staffers, first reported by the Indianapolis Star and Mirror Indy, have rocked the deep-blue city.

"Having to choose a party that lets sexual assault go unpunished because my rights ... could go away if the other side wins — it doesn't make me excited to vote," Choe said.

Hogsett's not on the ballot in November, but other Democrats are. Choe described scrutinizing how gubernatorial nominee Jennifer McCormick and other candidates have reacted to the allega-

tions.

They plan to vote — but won't necessarily complete the ballot.

Respondents in the institute's survey thought similarly, with one writing, "All candidates are basically the same" and another adding, "There all liars."

Other reasons

Respondents in the institute's survey could pick multiple reasons for not voting. About 35% said they felt like their vote "doesn't matter."

Hanson said line-drawing strategies have contributed to the state's notoriously uncompetitive districts. She recounted how software advancements in the early 2000s let ruling parties across the country — Republicans and Democrats — further entrench themselves during the 2011 redistricting cycle.

"That election changed the dynamics in our Legislature, so that it wasn't like 50% or 60% — it was 80% of one party," Hanson said. "That in itself helped to squash competition. And this is, I think, what contributes to that lack

of voter interest."

Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 5, 2024.

Hanson said her group has been encouraging voters to participate in primary elections, since, she said, that's when electoral competitiveness peaks in Indiana.

But about 16% of non-voting survey-takers said they didn't have the time to vote.

Indiana has limited Election Day polling hours — 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. — and many counties further limit hours and locations for early in-person voting.

Limited voting hours were also a barrier cited by Hanson.

"In Delaware County, for example, there is one place for all of that (month) for early voting. One place in all of Delaware County," Hanson said. "It's our county courthouse."

Hanson, who teaches at Ball State University, said she told students "it's not a bad walk."

Those wanting to vote by mail must qualify for one of 17 excuses listed in law; lying on the application is a crime.

A small percentage of survey respondents cited a criminal record as a reason avoiding the polls, with one writing, "Felons can't vote."

Many states bar convicted felons from the ballot box — but Indiana isn't among them. As long as a prospective voter isn't physically behind bars during election season, they're eligible.

Hanson encouraged Hoosiers to plan how they'll vote.

"This is something that's not just your right, earned by people dying for it, but also it's your responsibility," she said. "Because if we're gonna have a democracy work, it's every one of us has to be involved."

And, she added: "You're paying taxes, and that tax money is going to be spent by the people you elect. Don't you want to have a say in who's going to make those decisions?"

Landis, meanwhile, said she'll try voting again.

She's working on forms she received in the mail — two weeks delayed, as always — but doesn't know how it'll go.

FEMA workers change some hurricane-recovery efforts after threats

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Federal disaster workers paused and then changed some of their hurricane-recovery efforts in North Carolina, including abandoning door-to-door visits, after receiving threats that they could be targeted by a militia, officials said, as the government response to Helene is targeted by run-away disinformation.

The threats emerged over the weekend. The Rutherford County Sheriff's Office said in a statement Monday that it received a call Saturday about a man with an assault rifle who made a comment "about possibly harming" employees of the Federal Emergency Management Agency working in the hard-hit areas of Lake Lure and Chimney Rock, in the North Carolina mountains.

Authorities got a description of a suspect's vehicle and license plate and later identified him as William Jacob Parsons, 44, of Bostic, a small community about

60 miles west of Charlotte. Sheriff's officials said in a statement that Parsons — who was armed with a handgun and a rifle — was charged with "going armed to the terror of the public," a misdemeanor. He was released after posting bond.

The sheriff's office said initial reports indicated that a "truckload of militia" was involved in making the threat, but further investigation determined that Parsons acted alone.

Messages left seeking comment at phone listings for Parsons and a possible relative were not immediately returned.

In a Facebook post, Ashe County Sheriff B. Phil Howell said FEMA put some work on hold as it assessed the threats.

"Stay calm and steady during our recovery, help folks and please don't stir the pot," Howell wrote Sunday.

FEMA confirmed in a statement Monday that it adjusted operations. It

emphasized that disaster-recovery centers remain open and that FEMA continues "to help the people of North Carolina with their recovery."

Workers from the agency's disaster-assistance teams — who help survivors apply for FEMA aid and connect them with additional state and local resources — have stopped going door to door and instead are working from fixed locations while the potential threats are assessed, a person familiar with the matter told The Associated Press. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because they could not publicly discuss details of the operations.

The person stressed that FEMA was making the adjustments "out of an abundance of caution."

FEMA did not immediately provide details on the threats.

Gov. Roy Cooper's staff said in a statement Monday that his office was aware of "reports of threats to

response workers on the ground," as well as "significant misinformation online." Cooper directed state law enforcement officials to work with local authorities to identify "the specific threats and rumors."

The Washington Post reported Sunday that the U.S. Forest Service, which is supporting hurricane recovery work, sent a message to multiple federal agencies, warning that FEMA had advised all fed-

eral responders in Rutherford County to leave the county immediately.

The message stated that National Guard troops had encountered "armed militia" saying they were "out hunting FEMA."

FEMA has faced rampant disinformation about its response to Helene, which hit Florida on Sept. 26 before heading north and leaving a trail of destruction across six states.

Former President Don-

ald Trump and his allies have seized on the storm's aftermath to spread false information about the Biden administration's response in the final weeks before the election. Their debunked claims include false statements that victims can only receive \$750 in aid, that emergency response funds were diverted to immigrants, that people accepting federal relief money could see their land seized and that FEMA is halting trucks full of supplies.

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Netanyahu mulls plan to empty northern Gaza of civilians, cut off aid

By JULIA FRANKEL
Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is examining a plan to seal off humanitarian aid to northern Gaza in an attempt to starve out Hamas militants, a plan that, if implemented, could trap without food or water hundreds of thousands of Palestinians unwilling or unable to leave their homes.

Israel has issued many evacuation orders for the north throughout the yearlong war, the most recent of which was Sunday. The plan proposed to Netanyahu and the Israeli parliament by a group of retired generals would escalate the pressure, giving Palestinians a week to leave the northern third of the Gaza Strip, including Gaza City, before declaring it a closed military zone.

Those who remain would be considered combatants — meaning military regulations would allow troops to kill them — and denied food, water, medicine and fuel, according to a copy of the plan given to The Associated Press by its chief architect, who says the plan is the only way to break Hamas in the north and pressure it to release the remaining hostages.

The plan calls for Israel to maintain control over the north for an indefinite period to attempt to create a new administration without Hamas, splitting the Gaza Strip in two.

There has been no decision by the government to fully carry out the so-called “Generals’ Plan,” and it is unclear how strongly it’s being considered.

When asked if the evacuation orders in northern Gaza marked the

first stages of the “Generals’ Plan,” Israeli military spokesperson Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani said no.

“We have not received a plan like that,” he said.

But one official with knowledge of the matter said parts of the plan are already being implemented, without specifying which parts. A second official, who is Israeli, said Netanyahu “had read and studied” the plan, “like many plans that have reached him throughout the war,” but didn’t say whether any of it had been adopted. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity, because the plan isn’t supposed to be discussed publicly.

On Sunday, Israel launched an offensive against Hamas fighters in the Jabaliya refugee camp north of the city. The amount of aid reaching the north has declined significantly since Oct. 1, according to the U.N.

The U.S. State Department spokesperson has said Washington is against any plan that would bring direct Israeli occupation in Gaza.

Human rights groups fear the plan’s potential toll on civilians

Human rights groups say the plan would likely starve civilians and that it flies in the face of international law, which prohibits using food as a weapon and forcible transfers. Accusations that Israel is intentionally limiting food to Gaza are central to the genocide case brought against it at the International Court of Justice, charges Israel denies.

A coalition of Israeli NGOs on Monday urged the international community to act, noting that “there are alarming signs that the Israeli military is beginning to qui-

etly implement” the plan.

“States have an obligation to prevent the crimes of starvation and forcible transfer,” they wrote, warning that continuing a “wait and see” approach will enable Israel to liquidate northern Gaza.”

So far, very few Palestinians have heeded the latest evacuation order. Some are older, sick or afraid to leave their homes, but many fear there’s nowhere safe to go and that they will never be allowed back. Israel has prevented those who fled earlier in the war from returning.

“All Gazans are afraid of the plan,” said Jomana Elkhilili, a 26-year-old Palestinian aid worker for Oxfam living in Gaza City with her family.

“Still, they will not flee. They will not make the mistake again ... We know the place there is not safe,” she said, referring to southern Gaza, where most of the population is huddled in dismal tent camps and airstrikes often hit shelters. “That’s why people in the north say it’s better to die than to leave.”

The plan has emerged as Hamas has shown enduring strength, firing rockets into Tel Aviv and regrouping in areas after Israeli troops withdraw, bringing repeated offensives.

After a year of devastating war with Hamas, Israel has far fewer ground troops in Gaza than it did a few months ago and in recent weeks has turned its attention to Hezbollah, launching an invasion of southern Lebanon. There is no sign of progress on a cease-fire in either front.

Israel’s offensive on the strip has killed more than 42,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza’s Health

UN Security Council expresses its ‘strong concern’ for UN peacekeepers after Israeli attacks

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The U.N. Security Council expressed “strong concern” Monday as Israel has fired on and wounded U.N. peacekeepers in southern Lebanon during intensified fighting, reiterating its support for their role in supporting security in the region.

It’s the first statement by the U.N.’s most powerful body since Israel’s attacks on the positions of the peacekeeping force known as UNIFIL began last week, drawing international condemnation.

U.N. peacekeeping chief Jean-Marie Lacroix told reporters that Secretary-General António Guterres confirmed Monday that peacekeepers will remain in all their positions even as Israel has urged the peacekeepers to move three miles north during its ground invasion in Lebanon.

Israel has been escalating its campaign against Hezbollah in Lebanon across a U.N.-drawn boundary between the

two countries. The sides have been clashing since the Iranian-backed militant group started firing rockets a year ago in solidarity with its ally Hamas in Gaza. Hamas’ deadly attacks in southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, launched the war.

The Security Council statement, issued after emergency closed consultations on Lebanon, did not name either Israel, Lebanon or Hezbollah. Read by Swiss U.N. Ambassador Pascale Baeriswyl, the council’s current president, it urges all parties “to respect the safety and security of UNIFIL personnel and U.N. premises.”

The 15-member Security Council has been deeply divided over the war in Gaza, with the United States defending its ally Israel as support for the Palestinians has grown among members and casualties have escalated. The Biden administration has become more critical of civilian deaths as well as the recent attacks on UNIFIL.

Ministry, which doesn’t distinguish between civilians and combatants, but says more than half of the dead are women and children.

People in northern Gaza could be forced to ‘surrender or starve’

The Generals’ Plan was presented to the parliament last month

by a group of retired generals and high-ranking officers, according to publicly available minutes. Since then, officials from the prime minister’s office called seeking more details, according to its chief architect, Giora Eiland, a former head of the National Security Council.

NASA’s Europa Clipper spacecraft will scour Jupiter moon for ingredients for life

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — A NASA spacecraft has set sail for Jupiter and its moon Europa, one of the best bets for finding life beyond Earth.

Europa Clipper will peer beneath the moon’s icy crust where an ocean is thought to be sloshing fairly close to the surface. It won’t search for life, but rather determine whether conditions there could support it. Another mission would be needed to flush out any microorganisms lurking there.

“It’s a chance for us to explore not a world that might have been habitable billions of years ago, but a world that might be habitable today — right now,” said program scientist Curt Niebur.

Its massive solar panels make Clipper the biggest craft built by NASA to investigate another planet. It will take 5 1/2 years to reach Jupiter and will sneak within 16 miles of Europa’s surface — considerably closer than any other spacecraft.

Clipper lifted off Monday aboard SpaceX’s Falcon Heavy rocket from NASA’s Kennedy Space Center. Mission cost: \$5.2 billion.

One of Jupiter’s 95 known moons, Europa is almost the size of our own moon. It’s encased in an ice sheet estimated to be 10 miles to 15 miles or more thick. Scientists believe this frozen crust hides an ocean that could be 80 miles or more deep. The Hubble Space Telescope has spot-

ted what appear to be geysers erupting from the surface. Discovered by Galileo in 1610, Europa is one of the four so-called Galilean moons of Jupiter, along with Ganymede, Io and Callisto.

What type of life might Europa harbor? Besides water, organic compounds are needed for life as we know it, plus an energy source. In Europa’s case that could be thermal vents on the ocean floor. Deputy project scientist Bonnie Buratti imagines any life would be primitive like the bacterial life that originated in Earth’s deep ocean vents. “We will not know from this mission because we can’t see that deep,” she said. Unlike missions to Mars where habitabil-

ity is one of many questions, Clipper’s sole job is to establish whether the moon could support life in its ocean or possibly in any pockets of water in the ice.

When its solar wings and antennas are unfurled, Clipper is about the size of a basketball court — more than 100 feet end to end — and weighs nearly 13,000 pounds. The supersized solar panels are needed

because of Jupiter’s distance from the sun. The main body — about the size of a camper — is packed with nine science instruments, including radar that will penetrate the ice, cameras that will map virtually the entire moon and tools to tease out the contents of Europa’s surface and tenuous atmosphere. The name hearkens to the swift sailing ships of centuries past.

The roundabout trip to

Jupiter will span 1.8 billion miles. For extra oomph, the spacecraft will swing past Mars early next year and then Earth in late 2026. It arrives at Jupiter in 2030 and begins science work the next year. While orbiting Jupiter, it will cross paths with Europa 49 times. The mission ends in 2034 with a planned crash into Ganymede — Jupiter’s biggest moon and the solar system’s too.

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