Mended Hearts® of Atlanta

Chapter Newsletter

How Texas lost a 10-foot giraffe

It is not easy to hide a giraffe. Gracie, who stands 10 feet tall and weighs at least 1,200 pounds, managed it for nearly two weeks in the Texas Hill Country.

According to the Associated Press, the roughly 3-year-old giraffe wandered off Cedar Hollow Ranch near Leakey after climbing a rock slab and slipping out of an eight-foot gate. Her owner posted a missing alert on a local lost-and-found app, and within a day, he said, the story was all over the world.

The search leaned on trail cameras and a helicopter. Two weeks in, a pilot spotted her about four miles south of the ranch, near a pond with plenty to eat. The sheriff pronounced her "fat and happy." She was returned home.

Weight-loss drugs may guard the heart's rhythm

The popular weight-loss and diabetes drugs known as GLP-1 receptor agonists may do something their makers never set out to do: protect the heart from its most common rhythm disorder.

According to research presented at Heart Rhythm 2026, an annual meeting of heart-rhythm specialists, a study of more than 13,000 patients who started a GLP-1 drug found they were significantly less likely to develop atrial fibrillation -- the irregular, often racing heartbeat that raises the risk of stroke and heart failure -- than a matched group who did not take one. They also lived longer.

The surprise was in the fine print. The lower AFib risk held regardless of how much weight patients lost, and in some cases even among those who gained weight -- a sign the drugs may steady the heart through some pathway beyond slimming down. Among the medicines studied, semaglutide showed the strongest effect, and patients over 65 saw the largest benefit, a drop of roughly 44 percent.

Atrial fibrillation affects more than 40 million people worldwide and is behind an estimated 454,000 U.S. hospitalizations a year. The study's lead author, University of Virginia cardiologist Kenneth Bilchick, told Healio the results were better than expected.

What an air cleaner can -- and cannot -- do

An air cleaner can be a big help for people with allergies, but there are some things it won't do.

It will not lower the radon in your basement, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. It will not fix a mold problem, and it will not do much about the fumes from fresh paint or a new carpet. No air cleaner removes everything.

What a good one will do is pull particles out of the air: pollen, dust, pet dander, mold spores, wildfire smoke.

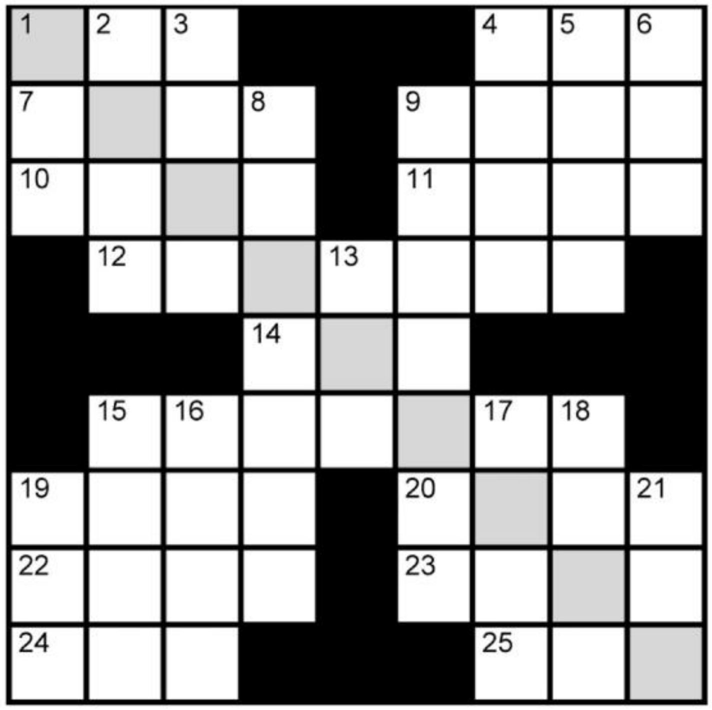
The number to look for is the CADR, or clean air delivery rate, verified by the Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers. It tells you how much clean air the machine delivers per minute, with separate scores for smoke, dust and pollen. AHAM's rule of thumb: the CADR should be at least two-thirds of the room's square footage. A 300-square-foot bedroom wants a CADR of 200 or better.

Buy a true HEPA filter, which traps 99.97 percent of particles down to 0.3 microns. Be wary of "HEPA-type" and "HEPA-like," which mean almost nothing. Add an activated carbon layer if odors are the problem. Skip ozone generators -- the EPA warns that ozone irritates the lungs and does a poor job on pollutants anyway. Look for CARB certification, California's ozone safety standard.

Cigarette smoke is the hard case. The visible haze is particles a HEPA filter can catch, but the smell is a gas that slips straight through -- only activated carbon adsorbs it. No purifier can pull the smell out of walls, curtains and upholstery.

Then check these two costs: replacement filters, which can run $50 to $100 a year, and noise. A loud one is a nuisance.

Getting along

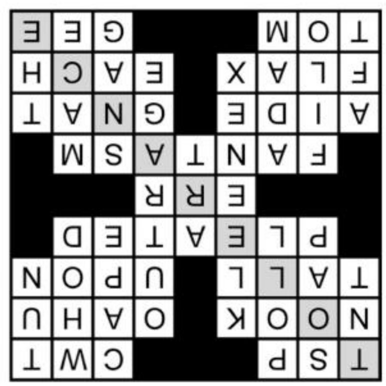


Across

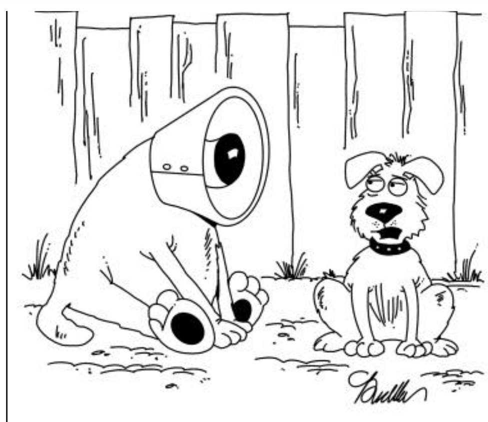
1. Cooking meas.
4. 100 lbs.
7. Breakfast area
9. Diamond Head locale
10. Farfetched, as a tale
11. ___ reflection
12. Like some skirts
14. Flub
15. Apparition
19. Adjutant
20. Small pest
22. Type of plant fiber
23. Apiece
24. Actor Cruise
25. "Fancy that!"

Down

1. Atlanta-based station
2. "General Hospital," e.g.
3. Straw or exit __
4. Superhero accessory
5. "__ of thunk it"
6. Wine cask
8. Soft tissue
9. Indignation
13. Gallery display
15. Greek pastry dough
16. Economist Smith
17. Glitch
18. Defensive spray
19. Astern
21. French beverage



The headline is a clue to the answer in the diagonal.



"I couldn't get away with it, but on you it looks good."

The envelope that decides next year

Somewhere in the mail this month is a document that sets what your health care costs in January. It arrives in a thick envelope and looks like junk.

Medicare Advantage and stand-alone Part D drug plans are required to get an Annual Notice of Change, or ANOC, into members' hands by September 30 -- 15 days before Open Enrollment opens. The notice lists every change the plan is making for the coming year: premiums, deductibles, copays, which drugs are on the covered list, and which doctors and pharmacies stay in the network.

Not everyone receives one. People on Original Medicare and people carrying a Medicare supplement policy do not, because those plans do not change this way. For everyone in a private plan, though, the envelope is coming, and what is inside is not minor. A prescription covered in December can be off the list on January 1. A doctor of many years can be out of network.

A second document usually arrives with it. The Evidence of Coverage is the long version, with the full rules. The ANOC is the short one, and it is the one to read.

Here is the part that catches people. Doing nothing is a decision. A plan that is still being offered simply renews at the new price, with the new drug list, whether or not anyone opened the envelope.

Open Enrollment runs October 15 through December 7, and anything changed during those weeks takes effect January 1. Every state also runs a free counseling service, the State Health Insurance Assistance Program.

Invested retirees need an emergency fund, too

The classic reason to keep an emergency fund -- replacing a paycheck if you lose your job -- disappears in retirement, when Social Security, a pension, or an annuity keeps arriving on schedule. Yet advisors say retirees still need a cash cushion. It simply does a different job.

In retirement, an emergency fund protects your portfolio. When a surprise bill lands -- a new roof, a car to replace, a large out-of-pocket medical cost -- paying it from cash means you are not forced to sell investments at a bad moment. According to Fidelity, selling in a down market locks in losses and shrinks the base your future income depends on. Pulling the money from a traditional IRA can sting too, since a large withdrawal can push up your tax bill.

That is why the familiar "three to six months of expenses" rule often rises for retirees. Some certified financial planners suggest holding closer to one to two years of essential expenses in cash, so an unexpected downturn does not force a sale.

There is a limit, though. Fidelity cautions that holding too much cash carries its own cost: it tends to trail inflation, and if the money came from a tax-deferred account, you may have triggered taxes for nothing. And for a truly catastrophic expense, even a healthy cash fund will not be enough -- that is when selling assets or tapping home equity becomes the plan, ideally with an advisor's guidance. The emergency fund is for the surprises in between.

For older adults, 68 may be the new 62

Living longer is only half the story of aging. A growing body of research suggests that each generation is arriving at older age in better shape than the one before.

According to a study published in the journal Nature Aging, researchers tracked combined physical, mental, and sensory function across thousands of older adults in the long-running English Longitudinal Study of Ageing, and compared the pattern with a parallel study in China. More recent generations, they found, entered later life with higher capacity, and their declines came more slowly. The gains were large enough to shift the arithmetic of age. In their data, the researchers concluded, a 68-year-old born in 1950 had the functional capacity of a 62-year-old born a decade earlier.

Walking counts more

Getting out of the chair is not quite the same as moving. In studies that interrupted long stretches of sitting in older adults, short bouts of easy walking outperformed simply standing up, according to research published in Sports Medicine. Standing still beat sitting. A lap around the room beat both.

A reasonable target is to break up sitting every 30 minutes, even briefly. Stretching while lying down or reclining is not a cop-out either -- it takes the hips and shoulders through their full range without asking the back to hold up body weight.

Living on Social Security? A small fund works

If you live on Social Security, the advice to stash away a year or two of expenses can feel not just impossible but insulting.

Here is the good news: that advice is meant for people with big investment portfolios. For regular Social Security recipients, an emergency fund can be far smaller and still do its job.

That job is simple: keep a surprise from becoming a crisis. A car repair, a dental bill, a broken water heater, or a sick pet can wreck a tight monthly budget and push you toward a credit card or a payday loan. A small cushion of cash heads that off.

How much? A realistic first goal is $500 to $1,000, which covers most everyday emergencies. Research from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau suggests that even about one month's worth of expenses is enough to sharply lower the risk of hardship for households on a tight income. You do not need to get there overnight.

The most important step is simply starting. Financial educators like to say that any emergency fund is better than none, and studies back them up: people who begin saving, even a little, are far less likely to be sunk by an emergency. Set aside $10 or $20 when you can, keep it in a separate savings account so it is not too easy to spend, and let a tax refund or a birthday check go straight in. A few hundred dollars, built slowly, is worth more than a perfect plan you never begin.

Apple Nachos

Recipe borrowed from https://recipes.heart.org/en/recipes/apple-nachos

Calories
167 Per Serving
Protein
4g Per Serving
Fiber
4g Per Serving

Ingredients

1/3 cup dried unsweetened cranberries or raisins
1/4 cup sliced unsalted almonds
2 tablespoons unsalted shelled sunflower seeds
3 medium green or red apples, such as Granny Smith or Red Delicious, cored and thinly sliced into about 12 wedges each
1 to 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
2 tablespoons water
1/4 cup smooth low-sodium peanut butter
1 tablespoon honey

Directions

1. In a small bowl, stir together the cranberries, almonds, and sunflower seeds.
2. Layer half the apples on a large plate or platter. Sprinkle the lemon juice over the apples to keep them from browning.
3. In a small microwaveable bowl, microwave the water on 100% power (high) for 2 minutes, or until boiling (or boil on the stovetop and pour into a small bowl). Add the peanut butter and honey, stirring until the mixture is smooth.
4. Using a spoon, drizzle half the peanut butter mixture over the apple wedges. Sprinkle with half the cranberry mixture.
5. Layer the remaining apples over the cranberry mixture. Drizzle the remaining peanut butter mixture over all. Sprinkle the remaining cranberry mixture over all.

September 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8 Heart Failure Support Group Meeting 5pm ET	9	10 Zoom Meeting Chapter 81 Atlanta 7PM	11	12
13	14	15 Empower Trans-plant Group Meeting 4pm ET	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

For registration and additional meeting information, please contact info@mendedhearts.org or call 888-432-7899.

https://mendedhearts81.com

Please note that The Mended Hearts, Inc. is a volunteer organization composed of patients and caregivers.

Our Chapter continues to thrive in our community and State due to the volunteerism of YOU!

The Mended Hearts, Inc.

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MEMBERSHIP FORM

DATE_______________

☐ NEW MENDED HEARTS® ☐ NEW MENDED *LITTLE* HEARTS® ☐ NEW YOUNG MENDED HEARTS® ☐ RENEWAL

Name (Mr. /Mrs./Ms.) ____ Chapter/Group__________ National Member ____________

Address ____ Phone ___________________________________

City / ST / Zip ____ I want to be a support volunteer: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Email address ____ I am interested in CHD Parent Matching: ☐ Yes ☐ No

(Please check all that apply) I am a ☐ Heart Patient ☐ Caregiver ☐ CHD Parent ☐ Physician ☐ RN ☐ Healthcare Employee

OPTIONAL INFORMATION: Race: ____ Gender: ______________________

Membership Levels: All membership levels are for ONE YEAR, renewed annually, except for Heart of Gold Lifetime Sponsorship. Please choose your membership level and complete any appropriate payment information below.

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP

____ Associate Member --- FREE
* Can attend any chapter/group meeting for MH, MLH or YMH
* Can join online communities
* Can access Member Portal
* Receives the National e-newsletter

____ Individual Member --- $20 annual donation per person
* All of the benefits of an Associate Member, PLUS
* Membership Card
* Car Decal – Select ___ MH ___ MLH ___ YMH
* One-time 5% off coupon for purchase from the MH store

____ Bronze Member --- $45 annual donation per person
* All the benefits of a Full Individual Member, PLUS
* Membership Pin
* Choice of ___MLH Drawstring Backpack or ___MH/MLH Notecards (10 pk)
* 5% off registration of any National (not regional) MH/MLH/YMH Conference or Symposia

____ Silver Member --- $100 annual donation per person
* All the benefits of a Bronze Member, PLUS
* A Stainless Steel Mended Hearts Travel Mug

____ Gold Member --- $250 annual donation per person
* All the benefits of a Silver Member, PLUS
* A Red Fleece Blanket
* 10% off registration of any National Conference or CHD Symposium

____ Heart of Gold Lifetime Sponsor --- $1500 donation
A one-time donation per individual
* All the benefits of a Gold member FOR LIFE, PLUS
* 15% off registration fees at National MH/MLH/YMH Conferences / Symposia
* Recognition in the next *Heartbeat* magazine after enrolling in the Heart of Gold Lifetime Sponsorship, in all special Heartbeat issues, and on our website's list of Heart of Gold Lifetime Sponsors

FAMILY MEMBERSHIP

For members of one household with one mailing address only

____ Family Membership --- $40 annual donation
* All of the benefits of an Associate Membership, PLUS
* Membership Cards for all members of the family
* 2 Car Decals – Select ___ MH ___ MLH ___ YMH
* Each family member receives a one-time 5% off coupon for purchase from the MH store. Use only one coupon per order.

____ Bronze Family Membership --- $75 annual donation
* All the benefits of a Family Membership, PLUS
* One Membership Pin per member
* Choice of ___MLH Drawstring Backpack or ___MH/MLH Notecards (10 pk)
* 5% off registration of any National (not regional) MH/MLH/YMH Conference or Symposia

Family Members:

____
Spouse ___ Child ___ Heart Patient ____

____
Spouse ___ Child ___ Heart Patient ____

____
Spouse ___ Child ___ Heart Patient ____

____
Spouse ___ Child ___ Heart Patient ____

ALL Donations are tax deductible

PAYMENT INFORMATION:

Membership Level____________________ $ ________________

Additional tax-deductible Donation to:
☐ Mended Hearts ☐ Mended *Little* Hearts
☐ Young Mended Hearts $________________

TOTAL TO NATIONAL $ ________________

ADDITIONAL CHAPTER/GROUP DONATION: ________

Chapter/Group Name:____________________

Amount: $____________________

TOTAL TO CHAPTER $ ________________

Please note: To be a member of a Mended Hearts® Chapter, Mended *Little* Hearts® or Young Mended Hearts® Group, you must be a member of The Mended Hearts, Inc.