

December 2011

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Holidays Around the World



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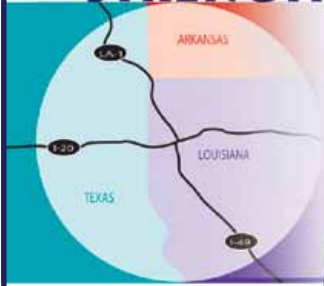
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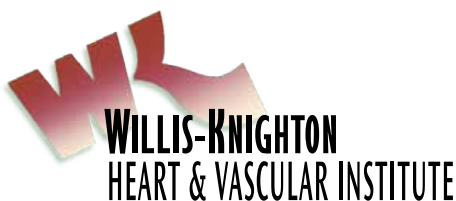
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WWII veterans

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Bill Losey, Certified Financial Planner

**DECEMBER 17, 2011**  
"Legal Considerations in Estate  
Planning"  
Joseph R. Gilsoul, Elder Law Attorney

**DECEMBER 24, 2011**  
"Popular Holiday Toys of the Past"

**DECEMBER 31, 2011**  
"Did You Know?"

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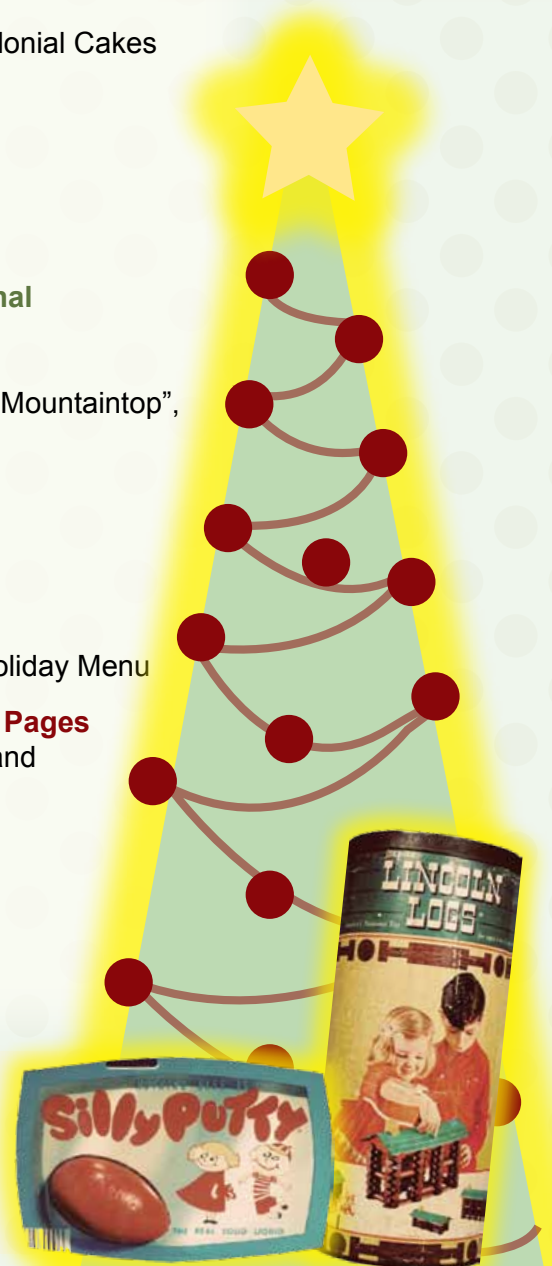
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by Tom Ensey



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# The Best Of Times

# i

# Celebrating!

We are bursting with pride!! The Best of Times was awarded 15 national awards at NAMPA's (North American Mature Publishers Association) annual convention. Member publications are independently judged by the prestigious University of Missouri School of Journalism which is generally considered one of the top journalism schools in the world.

**FIRST PLACE:**

- Best of Show
- Most Improved
- Column Review
- Senior Issue
- Briefs and Shorts (Editorial)
- Travel Column
- Front Cover Design Photo
- Table of Contents
- Briefs and Shorts (Design)
- Best Single Ad Color
- Self Promotion / Awards
- Web Self Promotion

**SECOND PLACE:**

- Urgent Senior Issue
- Feature Layout
- Overall Design

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**JUNE contents**

**Staying in Shape**

**IS IT AN EMERGENCY?**  
Signs and symptoms to determine if your odd pain needs medical attention to save time

**Branson** *Something for Everyone*

**Restaurant Review**  
**The Market**





I can't believe it's December already. The past year has been dizzying! It seems like yesterday we were working on our 2011 editorial calendar and planning an entire year's worth of activities to mark our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary as owners of this publication.

As the year draws to close I'm proud to report that all our planning paid off. Our special events were well attended and jam-packed with information, screenings, movies, refreshments, giveaways, door prizes, and entertainment. Our contests were also a hit, with lucky contestants taking home over \$19,000 worth of fabulous prizes. The highlight of the year was *The Best of Times* MegaGiveaway. Winners were announced at Senior Day at the State Fair. Congratulations to: Nancy Childs of Bossier City (Grand Prize valued at \$4,534); Shirley and Roy Wolfe of Shreveport (Platinum Prize valued at \$1,010); Vernon Hastings of Shreveport (Gold Prize valued at \$886); Joann Lonadier of Shreveport (Silver Prize valued at \$451); and Bobbie Jackson of Shreveport (Bronze Prize valued at \$266).

The culmination of all of the festivities was our anniversary celebration at SciPort on November 16. Imagine our surprise when a representative from the Shreveport Mayor's office arrived with a proclamation that read in part: Whereas *The Best of Times* is the premier publication for seniors in Northwest Louisiana and is celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary; and Whereas, this publication and radio talk show are staples in our community for the insightful, creative and timely information delivered to the loyal and dedicated audience it serves; and Whereas *The Best of Times* has established itself as a prize-winning journal; and Whereas *The Best of Times* continues to show readers and listeners it really cares about what they want; Whereas the City of Shreveport seeks to officially recognize and honor this treasured local resource; Now and Therefore, I Cedric Glover, Mayor of the city of Shreveport, do hereby proclaim Wednesday, November 16, 2011 as "The Best of Times Day". WOW! What an honor!

But of course, our main focus the past year was, and will always be, this publication. I think the issues of the past year have been among our very best and it seems that our peers agree. Forgive me for taking this opportunity to toot our own horn, but I'm pleased to announce that we again came home with an armful of awards at the North American Mature Publishers Association convention which was held in Albuquerque. (See the facing page for a full listing.) Among the judges comments: crisp-layout, readable, engaging, informative, user-friendly, jam-packed, practical and actionable information, a must-read, lots of surprises, intriguing covers, tightly-edited and designed, enjoyable, and delightful. Of special note - Jessica Rinaudo won in 3 different areas - design, writing, and photography. Congrats! Attorney Lee Aronson seems to have the Senior Issue category in hand. He won first place for an amazing 5<sup>th</sup> year in a row. Kudos also to winners Lizzie Lyles, KP, and Katie Branch for their fabulous contributions and for sharing their talent with us.

Whatever accolades we received, though, are just icing on the cake. What matters most is what YOU, our readers, think. I encourage you to email your comments and suggestions. We love to hear from you!!

We hope you had as much fun in 2011 as we did. We're already working on some surprises for next year. Until then I pray that the joy and peace of this special time of the year be with you always.

*Tina*

PS - Many of you have asked about the shirts, hats, totes, aprons, and jackets with our logo that Gary gives away as door prizes. In response to your requests we have established an "online store". Please call toll-free 1-800-506-8352 or visit [www.store.allcustomwear.com/thebestoftimes/](http://www.store.allcustomwear.com/thebestoftimes/) to place your order.

# The Best of Times

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## STAT!

### Am I Having A Stroke?

A stroke happens when blood flow to a part of the brain stops. A stroke is sometimes called a "brain attack." If blood flow is stopped for longer than a few seconds, the brain cannot get blood and oxygen. Brain cells can die, causing permanent damage. The symptoms of stroke depend on what part of the brain is damaged. In some cases, a person may not know that he or she has had a stroke.

#### Warning Signs Of Stroke:

1. Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm, or leg, especially on one side of the body.
2. Sudden confusion, trouble speaking, or understanding.
3. Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
4. Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination.
5. Sudden, severe headache with no known cause.

#### Known Risk Factors For Stroke:

1. Uncontrollable risk factors include age, gender, race/ethnic groups, family history, and prior stroke or heart attacks.
2. Stroke increases if a close family member, such as a parent or sibling, has had a stroke.
3. Prior stroke or heart attack increases the risk of having another.
4. Risk factors that can be treated, modified, and controlled are high blood pressure, tobacco use, diabetes, heart disease, atrial fibrillation, transient ischemic attack, certain blood disorders, and high blood cholesterol.

*(American Heart Association)*

### Weight Loss Best Medicine for People with Knee Osteoarthritis

According to research presented at the American College of Rheumatology Annual Scientific Meeting in Chicago, weight loss combined with exercise can improve mobility and reduce pain by as much as 50 percent with knee osteoarthritis. Knee osteoarthritis is a common form of osteoarthritis and is caused by cartilage breakdown in the knee joint. Factors that increase the risk of knee osteoarthritis - including being overweight, age, injury or stress to the joints, and family history - can increase the risk of knee osteoarthritis.



### Prevent colds and respiratory infections by:

- Washing your hands many times a day with soap and water
- Staying away from crowded areas during the cold and flu season
- Maintaining good oral hygiene; avoid germs by brushing your teeth twice a day and seeing your dentist regularly
- Getting a flu vaccine every year
- If you get sick, stay home! Protect people around you from getting sick until you feel better.

*(from the American Lung Association)*

### Take Your Blood Pressure Medication Before Bed

It's better to take blood pressure-lowering medications before bed rather than first thing in the morning, according to a study appearing in an upcoming issue of the *Journal of the American Society Nephrology* (JASN). The study followed patients an average of 5.4 years. Patients who took at least one blood pressure-lowering medication at bedtime had better control of their blood pressure and were about one-third as likely to experience a heart-related event such as a heart attack, a stroke, or heart failure compared to patients who took their medications upon awakening.





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# Toys of Christmas Past

BY TOM ENSEY

THERE WAS A TIME YOU DIDN'T NEED A \$3,000 COMPUTER AND A DEGREE IN ENGINEERING TO PLAY. TOYS WERE MADE OF WOOD, STEEL, RUBBER AND THAT NEWFANGLED STUFF, PLASTIC. OCCASIONALLY, YOU EVEN HAD TO GO OUTSIDE, WHICH IS MUCH LIKE BEING INSIDE A VIDEO GAME, ONLY THERE ARE NO ZOMBIES, WIZARDS OR PTERODACTYLS THAT SHOOT LASERS OUT OF THEIR EYES. YOU HAD TO USE YOUR IMAGINATION. A LOT. REMEMBER THESE?

**SILLY PUTTY:** A silicone polymer invented by accident when scientists were trying to improve on rubber. It appeared in the classic, egg-shaped plastic containers in Christmas stockings in the 1950s. A “solid liquid” with a bizarre, slick texture, it could be molded into shapes and then melt back into a puddle. You could mash it down on the Sunday funnies — in the days when people still bought newspapers — and it would pick up the images which you could then distort. Roll it into a ball and it would bounce.

It wasn't long before mom discovered that it was useful around the house to pick up pet hair and broken glass — once. And if you ground it into your sweater, it was goodbye sweater.

**ELECTRIC FOOTBALL GAME:** The original electric football game, manufactured by Tudor, broke onto the scene in the 1940s. There were no dice, spinners or cards to determine the action, just sculpted little players that you could paint yourself, attach decal numbers to, and turn on the switch and ... they vibrated all over the place like you'd kicked open an anthill. But it was the 40s. Electricity was novel and boys imaginations were better than they are now. The game was beautiful, sitting under the Christmas tree, all the little men lined up, with a giant grandstand on either side and a scoreboard with dials and buttons. You could almost hear the roar of the crowd. When you flipped on the switch, it sounded like a plane taking off. The ball was an oval piece of felt. The quarterback's arm cocked back with a little cradle to hold the ball. You tripped the trigger and ... doop. The ball fell at his feet. Today, immaculately preserved games sell to collectors for hundreds, or thousands of dollars. They're worth it as a piece of art and memorabilia. Amazing to look at.

**LIONEL ELECTRIC TRAINS:** These have been around for more than 100 years. They started out as not so much a toy as a display



for toy stores, according to the company website.

The models are richly detailed. The tracks and the trains themselves are engineered with precision from locomotive to caboose, down to the last rivet. They evoke the nostalgia of a bygone era. Collectible trains cost as much as an SUV. Let's face it. These toys are way too cool for kids.

**VIEW MASTER AND REELS:** Back in 1939, a device that would enable youngsters to view seven 3-D images of the Eiffle Tower and stuff was moderately interesting. Nowadays, not so much. It has a certain, old-school charm. But if your 10-year-old is not bored by this thing within 10 minutes, have him tested.

**HULA HOOP:** The Zen simplicity is striking. A circle of light, colored plastic. You put it around your waist, your arm or your neck and make it go around and around. You are the master, centrifugal force is your servant.

It doesn't come easy. It takes practice, several days, to stop looking like a dork. And you get bruises on your hips. Wham-O put them on the market in 1957, and sold 100 million in the first few months. Yes, 100 million back in the day when 100 million was a lot.

My grandmother used to tell she and her brothers and sisters improvised their own hula hoops. They lived on a farm, and barrels were a big part of the deal, there. They dismantled the barrels and took the metal hoops that held them together and played with them in the same way that I and 99,999,999

other little Americans played with our hula hoops. Even then, as a tiny child, I realized if my grandmother had a better sense of marketing, I might be hula hooping on the family estate in Hollywood.

**EASY BAKE OVEN:** A light bulb oven in which little girls could prepare tasty, sweet treats. The small packets of cake mix and tiny bowls and cake pans came with it. My baby sister got one of the first ones off the assembly line in the early 1960s. The drawback was the cooking chamber got about as hot as the surface of the sun, and if you didn't cook the tiny cakes long enough, they simulated the consistency and temperature of lava.

My baby sister's tinkling laughter filled our home that Christmas morning as I



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popped her cake in my mouth and screamed as smoke came out my nose. The company improved the design and sold a few million.

**LINCOLN LOGS:** Brown cylinders of wood with notches at the ends enabled you to build a serviceable replica of a log cabin, the likes of which was the first home of our nation's 16th president. Best thing about this toy -- when you got tired of building little houses and forts and stuff, you and your buddies could take them outside, construct a village and ... Oh, no! Godzilla attacks! Drench it with charcoal lighter fluid and set it on fire with the Zippo you swiped from dad's coat pocket and it was neat until Mrs. Jackson next door called the cops.



**ROLLER SKATES:** Metal shoes with wheels. Stand up. Fall down. Repeat until you can skate or have to go to the hospital.

**BARBIE AND KEN:** Barbie, the doll that launched a million cases of anorexia nervosa, began creating an unrealistic body image in the minds of American girls in 1959. According to a study, a standard Barbie doll is 11.5 inches tall, which would make her 5-foot-9 inches at 1/6 scale. She'd have measurements of 36 (chest)-18 (waist)-33 (hips). The only other comparable American icon, Marilyn Monroe, was downright pudgy by comparison, standing 5-foot-5 with measurements of 35-22-35. Andy Warhol painted portraits of both. Boyfriend Ken showed up in 1961. He, too, is iconic but far from spectacular, an example of homogenous, bland good looks and plastic hair. The couple has its own mythos and a universe of friends, houses, cars, electronics, videos, furniture and clothes, clothes, clothes, clothes and clothes. The motto on the official website says it all: "It's Barbie's world. We just play in it." Applied to any other creation of humanity, those words would be hubris most foul. Talking about Barbie, it's nothing but the truth.

**JACKS AND BALL:** About as simple as it gets, in terms of the toy itself. A red rubber ball and at least 10 jacks. You bounce the ball, pick up one jack. That's onesies. You bounce the ball, pick up two jacks, twosies. You continue all the way up to tensies. Completing a run from onesies to tensies requires

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the hand-and-eye coordination of a major league shortstop. It was a good idea to keep the jacks away from small children and pets. Swallowing one ensured a high-speed trip to the emergency room.

**OPERATION:** Milton Bradley brought us this battery powered electric game in the mid 1960s. The board featured a portly patient with a bad haircut and a red light bulb clown nose. "Cavity Sam" was his name, and the surface of the board was dotted with openings that contained Sam's "broken heart," "knee bone connected to the ankle bone," "Butterflies in the stomach" and about 10 other afflictions.

You tested the steadiness of your hand attempting to remove the various ailments with a pair of tweezers connected to the board by a live wire. If you touched the metal edged side of the opening with the tweezers, you completed the circuit and Sam's nose lighted up and a loud buzzer sounded indicating you had killed your patient. Years passed, we took the game to college, and played it while enjoying cocktails, adding a whole new dimension.

**MARBLES:** The most ancient of toys, marbles compare favorably to a rock, the other playtime option of the cave child. They're glass balls. That's

it. They roll and you can throw them at people, and if you swallowed one, your mom took you to the doctor and he gave you this stuff, and well, that's all I care to say about marbles.

**CHEMISTRY SET:** Chemistry sets never really lived up to their billing. On TV, in movies and cartoons, people were always whipping up solutions with their chemistry sets that gave Model Ts the power of flight, made baseballs repel wood so they could not be hit with a bat, or better yet, created mutant insects that destroyed civilization. The best havoc an 8-year-old boy could wreak with an off-the-shelf chemistry set back when the Beatles topped the charts was to make a corked test tube full of rotten egg gas. It involved sulfur and some other stuff and you could clear a math class with it if you unleashed it in front of the fan. Of course, I wouldn't know about that.

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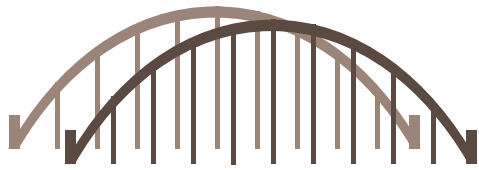


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# Holiday Budgeting 101: Tips to Keep Over-spending at Bay

by Andrea Woroch

It's time to pull back the spending reins and prepare for holiday gift expenses. During a time when most shoppers are reducing their spending altogether, it's especially important to make a realistic budget for your gift list.

While the following tips are intended to help you manage holiday spending, many are applicable to saving money all year 'round.

## 1 Make a budget!

The National Retail Federation's (NRF) 2011 Holiday Consumer Intentions and Actions Survey reported that holiday shoppers plan to spend an average of \$704.18 on gifts this season, representing a slight decrease over last year. Making a budget is a no-brainer, but challenge yourself to go under budget this year. Track your spending using the Toshl app

to keep tabs on what you're shelling out and how much you have left.

## 2 Cut down on dining expenses.

'Tis the season for holiday dinners at expensive restaurants, but this expenditure is the last thing your budget needs. Replace the annual white-tablecloth celebration with an intimate gathering at home. Guests can bring a dish to share and everyone can comfortably converse without interruption from servers or obnoxious patrons.

## 3 Refrain from personal purchases.

This one is tough during a time when bargains abound, but it's especially important to avoid making purchases for yourself when you still have people on your gift list. That same NRF study reported the av-

erage consumer will spend approximately \$130 on gifts for themselves. Imagine the dent you could make in your recipient list using that cash.

## 4 Trim your gift list.

The spirit of the season often yields never-ending gift lists, especially when you're surprised by presents from people who didn't make the cut. Trim your gift list to essential recipients and come up with inexpensive tokens for everyone else. Homemade goodies, cards with heartfelt wishes and offers of service (babysitting, for example) are great options for neighbors and co-workers and can be produced last-minute.



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## 5 Research gifts to find the best bargain.

Santa never misses the mark by making a list and checking it twice, so take a hint from the jolly man in red and do the same. Once you develop a list of essential recipients, bargain shop for gifts before making your final purchase. It's tempting to get all your shopping done over a weekend just to get it out of the way, but doing so means missing out on bargain-rich opportunities.

## 6 Know return policies.

Retailers tighten return policies around the holidays, so be sure you read the fine print before making a pur-

chase. Price matching is all the rage these days, too, so it pays (literally) to know a store's policy on compensating shoppers who find better deals elsewhere. Walmart recently announced it will provide gift cards in the amount of the price difference, and Bed Bath and Beyond will even price match items found on Amazon.com.

## 7 Shop early...and late.

With all the advice circulating about when to land the best deal, it ultimately pays to shop throughout the holiday season. Make a game plan for Black Friday and Cyber Monday purchases with these do's and don'ts, and don't forget about Free Shipping Day for last-minute items. The one-day online event is scheduled for Friday, December 16 and features free shipping offers from over 2,000 merchants with delivery by Christmas Eve.

## 8 Pay with cash.

It's not easy sticking to a budget and the holidays make the task even more challenging. Paying for purchases with credit cards is risky since the "I'll pay for it later" mentality breeds over-spending.

Opt to pay with cash and experience your hard-earned money disappear from your finger tips. This sight alone will make you think twice about unnecessary or over-priced purchases, and help you stick to your budget.

## 9 Reduce everyday costs with resourcefulness.

The toughest part of budgeting for holiday gifts is not letting it eat into the money required for everyday items, including food. Consider developing a menu for the week to reduce unnecessary food purchases, and use websites like Gojee.com to develop dishes around what you already have in your pantry. When you do head to the store to stock up on provisions, arm yourself with printable grocery coupons from such sites as CouponSherpa.

*Andrea Woroch is a consumer and money-saving expert featured among top news outlets such as Good Morning America, NBC's Today, MSNBC, New York Times, Kiplinger Personal Finance, CNNMoney and many more.*

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# Credit Cards, Cell Phones and Long Lines

I was standing in line at the grocery store the other day and the guy in front of me was trying to pay by credit card. But the cashier told the guy that his credit card had been rejected. The guy asked the cashier to run it again, explaining that he always paid his credit card in full every month and had never been late.

The cashier ran the card again and it was rejected again. So the guy pulls out his cell phone and calls the credit card company. Meanwhile, everyone else in line, including me, continue to wait and start eyeing all the other lines.

Anyway, as with all cell phone conversations, I “get” to hear everything that’s going on. It turns out that the guy had a credit limit of \$4,000. But the credit card company lowered his limit to just \$200. And because the guy was trying to charge over \$200 worth of stuff, his card was being rejected. The guy got furious and wanted to know why his limit had been reduced and why he hadn’t received anything in the mail about it. And that’s when I switched to another line.

But does any of this sound legal to you? (I’m not talking about using a cell phone while you are checking out of a store. That, unfortunately, is legal.) Here’s what the law says: A credit card company can lower your credit limit at any time for any reason or for no reason at all. And they don’t have to give you any notice at all.



**Lee ARONSON**

But you usually will get notice when your limit is lowered. Here’s why: let’s say that you have a balance on your credit card of \$800. And your credit limit is \$1,000. Because your balance is under your credit limit, you don’t have a problem. But if the credit card company suddenly changes your credit limit to \$500, you’ve got a



problem because you are now over your credit limit. And if you go over your credit limit, the credit card company is going to want to charge you an over the limit fee or raise your interest rate. But if the credit card company doesn’t give you notice of the lowering of your credit limit, then the

credit card can’t charge those fees.

Here’s exactly what the law says: “if a creditor decreases the credit limit on an account, advance notice of the decrease must be provided before an over-the-limit fee or a penalty rate can be imposed solely as a result of the consumer exceeding the newly decreased credit limit. Notice shall be provided in writing or orally at least 45 days prior to imposing the over-the limit fee or penalty rate.”

So back to the example of the credit limit being lowered from \$1,000 to \$500. If the customer has a balance of \$800, he’s over his limit. And once he is notified of his reduction in his credit limit, he will have 45 days to get his balance below his new \$500 credit limit. And if he doesn’t, the credit card company can charge him an over the limit fee or increase his interest rate.

And to make things even worse, technically the credit card company doesn’t even have to put anything in writing. That’s because the law allows the credit card company to charge an over-the-limit fee after giving 45 days notice “in writing or orally.”

But even if this happens to you, and I hope it doesn’t, it still may not be a good idea to cancel your credit card. That’s because when you cancel a credit card, particularly one you have had for a long time, your credit score will go down.

*Lee Aronson is an attorney with Legal Services of North Louisiana. His practice areas include consumer protection law, housing law and health care law.*

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# Beware of Fake Check Scams

The other day I got one of those annoying emails from a supposed Nigerian prince promising rich rewards for helping to move money out of his country. It's hard to believe those kinds of scams are still thriving, but they are. In fact, according to a recent survey conducted by the Consumer Federation of America, fraud (including fake checks, bogus sweepstakes and work-at-home schemes) is now among the top 10 consumer complaints received by consumer protection agencies.

Endless variations on fake check swindles are being perpetrated by phone, letter and email, including these gems:

- You've won a foreign lottery and are sent a check that's



**Jason ALDERMAN**

the first installment of your winnings. To get the rest, you must deposit and cash the check, then wire the money to someone who will pay facilitate the transaction and pay taxes on your behalf.

- Someone responds to your classified ad or online auction posting for a valuable item. They have a logical-sounding reason why you're receiving a check above the purchase price: For example, they live overseas and asked someone in the U.S. who owes them money send you a check for more than your sales price; then, you'll keep your share and wire the buyer the difference.

- You're hired as a secret shopper to help evaluate a money-transfer service. You're sent a check to deposit, minus your "pay," and are then asked to wire out the remainder using the service being tested.

What these scams have in common is

that the checks themselves are fraudulent. Thieves count on the fact that your bank generally must make deposited funds available to you within a few days. However, weeks may pass before the bank ultimately discovers the fraud, at which point they bounce the check. You must then repay your bank the money or have your account frozen or closed and be sued – possibly even face criminal charges.

Today's sophisticated scanners, printers and software programs make it easy to create checks that sometimes even fool authorities. A few warning signs:

- Fake checks are often printed on lighter, slippery paper and lack at least one perforated or rough edge.
- Missing or faded bank logo, suggesting it may have been copied.
- No street address or a P.O. Box only, or an inaccurate ZIP code.
- Check number at the upper right corner doesn't match the number on the check's bottom line.
- Usually drawn for less than \$5,000 because by law, deposits under that amount must be made available to you within five days. Crooks count

*There's a new scam born every minute.*

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on your completing their transaction before the check has actually been cleared by the issuing bank.

- Stains or gaps around signatures, a digitized appearance, or odd pen strokes, suggesting a scanned or forged signature.

- The first nine digits in the check's bottom line typically identify the routing number of the issuing bank. Having fewer or more than nine digits means it's fake. Verify correct routing numbers at [www.fededirectory.frb.org/reserve.cfm](http://www.fededirectory.frb.org/reserve.cfm).

Many good resources exist where you can learn more about fake check scams and how to avoid them, including the FBI ([www.fbi.gov/scams-safety](http://www.fbi.gov/scams-safety)), the Federal Trade Commission ([www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov)), the Consumer Federation of America ([www.consumerfed.org](http://www.consumerfed.org)), and the National Consumers League ([www.fakechecks.org/index2.html](http://www.fakechecks.org/index2.html)).

To paraphrase P.T. Barnum, there's a new scam born every minute. Just make sure you're not one of the poor suckers who falls for it.

*Jason Alderman directs Visa's financial education programs. To Follow Jason Alderman on Twitter: [www.twitter.com/PracticalMoney](http://www.twitter.com/PracticalMoney)*



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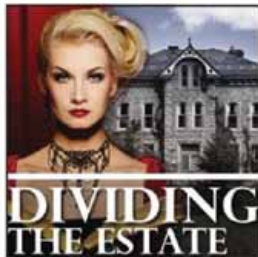
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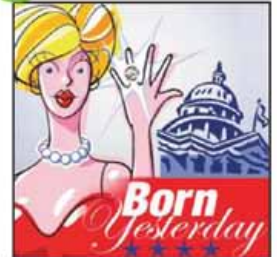
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# HOLIDAYS AROUND THE WORLD

BY CLAIRE YEZBAK FADDEN



**A**h yes! It's that time of year again. Time to haul out the holiday decorations, dig through recipes to bake those special treats and reflect on how quickly 2011 has passed.

In every family, there are traditions and celebrations that make our holidays special. At my house it really wouldn't be Christmas if we didn't have the annual "tilting of the Christmas tree." Each year, my sons and I stand in amazement as their father once again puts up our Christmas tree at an angle. We're not sure how he manages to always achieve this feat, because the tree always stands straight when they drill it at the tree lot. But this is our Christmas tradition. I fear the first time he manages to put the tree up straight. I'll then have to search for a new family tradition: perhaps "burning the sugar cookies."

Whether your family celebrates Hanukkah, Kwanzaa or Christmas, there are many traditions and legends honored throughout the world. Here's a glimpse of the many ways the Holidays are celebrated throughout the world.

## CHRISTMAS

Christmas is a Christian holiday commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ, considered the Son of God by Christians. According to the religion, Christmas is both a holy day and a holiday because Christ's birth brought the chance of salvation to the world. Christmas is observed on December 25. Around the world, families celebrate Christmas in their very special and unique ways.

## THE FIRST CHRISTMAS TREE

The children of Germany were the first to enjoy the holiday season with Christmas trees, because the legend of the first Christmas tree originated there. One of the most exciting moments for German children is on Christmas Eve when they see their Christmas tree for the first time. Their mother has already secretly decorated the tree. Decorating Christmas trees didn't become popular in the United States until the 1930s.

German children anticipate Christmas coming at the beginning of December by making Advent calendars one kind of Advent calendar is made of a fir wreath that has 24 little boxes hung from it. One box is opened each day until Christmas Eve. Some German children will write letters to the Christ Child and glue

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sugar sprinkles to the envelopes, so that'll glitter and catch the Christ Child's eye. The envelopes are left on the windowsill on Christmas Eve. The children wake up the next morning hope for presents.

## KWANZAA

For seven days and nights beginning on December 26, African-American families celebrate Kwanzaa. Originally created in 1966 by San Diegan Maulana Ron Karenga, a professor of African-American studies, it is the only original African-American holiday. Kwanzaa was patterned after harvest festivals that still occur in several parts of Africa and is not a religious holiday. Instead it promotes seven principles: unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity and faith.

During Kwanzaa season, children may wear brightly colored clothing and share in the lighting of the mishumaa saba (candles). These seven candles, one black, three red and three green, are held in a kinara and one is lit each night until, on the last night, all seven candles are aglow. On the last night of Kwanzaa, families gather for a Kwanzaa Karamu, the feast at which they share special dishes and sip from the "unity cup" to honor their ancestors. Kwanzaa gifts are opened on the seventh day, which also is New Year's Day.

## LA POSADA

A traditional part of Christmas in Mexico is la posada, a Spanish word meaning "the procession." Children dress up and perform the part of the nativity story where Mary and Joseph look for an inn to spend the night. Children are given lighted candles and carry a board that holds clay figures of Mary riding on a donkey, and Joseph. There are night posadas and the first begins December 16. They go from house to house and stop to sing outside for neighbors and friends. Their song asks for shelter for Mary and Joseph. Each time, the children are told there is no room and they must go away. On the last posada, on Christmas Eve, a little manger is added to the board; a stable and shepherds and shelter for Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus are found. Mexican families don't exchange presents on Christmas Day. They receive their presents on Jan. 6, the Feast of the Three Kings.

## LA BEFANA

Italian families wait to celebrate Christmas on the Twelfth Night, the Epiphany. This is when



KWANZAA PROMOTES SEVEN PRINCIPLES: UNITY, SELF-DETERMINATION, COLLECTIVE WORK AND RESPONSIBILITY, COOPERATIVE ECONOMICS, PURPOSE CREATIVITY AND FAITH.



IN LA POSADA CHILDREN REENACT THE BIRTH OF THE CHRIST CHILD AND FRIENDS. THEIR SEARCH FOR MARY, JOSEPH

the three kings arrived in Bethlehem to worship the Christ Child. On that night, children wait for the good witch, La Befana. A woman with a stern nature, she would come down the chimney, carrying a cane in one hand and bell in the other. When the children of Italy would hear a bell ring on the Eve of the Epiphany, they would hurry off to sleep before La Befana came. Instead of presents, some naughty children found pieces of charcoal or ashes in their shoes. But for the good children, presents to satisfy their dreams were there.

## SINTER KLAAS

The children of Holland hand up their stockings for Sinter Klaas to fill. The patron saint of all children is St. Nicholas and the Dutch name for him is Sinter Klaas. The legend of St. Nicholas tells of a man who liked to do good deeds secretly. He heard of a merchant who had become so poor that he had no money to give his three daughters when they were married. So, St. Nicholas crept up on the roof of their house in the night and dropped three bags of gold down the chimney. In the morning, the sisters found the gold in the stockings they had hung up to dry. This is why we hang our stockings up by the fireplace for Sinter Klaas to fill.

In Holland, Dec. 6 is St. Nicholas Day. On this day, Dutch children put their clogs or shoes by the fireplace, hoping that St. Nicholas will drop presents down the chimney. Some children even fill their clogs with hay and carrots for St. Nicholas' horse.

LA POSADA \* LE BEFANA \* SINTER KLAAS \* ST. LUCIA \* PERE NOEL \* CHRISTMAS \* HANUKKAH \* KWANZAA \* LA POSADA \* LE BEFANA \* SINTER KLAAS \* ST. LUCIA \* PERE NOEL \* CHRISTMAS \* HANUKKAH \* KWANZAA





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DURING HANUKKAH'S EIGHT-DAY FEAST, JEWISH FAMILIES RECITE BLESSINGS, TELL STORIES AND ENJOY SPECIAL "LATKE" OR POTATO PANCAKES.

but some Christmas customs have come to Japan from other countries. Besides exchanging gifts and eating turkey on Christmas day, the Japanese decorate community Christmas trees. In Japan there is a god or priest known as Hoteiosho. He resembles what American children believe in as Santa Claus. He is always pictured as a kind old man carrying a huge pack. Children believe he has eyes in the back of his head, so they better be good.

New Year's Day is the most celebrated holiday of the year in Japan, however. That's when houses are cleaned thoroughly and are decorated for the next day. After everything has been made clean, the family members dress in their finest clothes. Then the father marches through the house and drives the evil spirits out. He then throws dried beans into every corner, bidding the evil spirits to withdraw, and good luck to enter.

### ST. LUCIA

In Sweden, December 13 is celebrated because it is the feast of St. Lucia. She is remembered throughout the country as an early follower of Jesus. In those days, Christians were sometimes treated cruelly. They met to pray to Jesus, hiding in underground caves. Lucia would secretly take them food in the night. On her head she wore a crown of candles. In this way, with both hands free to carry the food and drink, she was able to see her way in the dark. Many Swedish children begin their celebration by cooking special Lucia buns and gingersnaps on December 12. The next morning, the youngest girl in the family dresses up as St. Lucia in a long white dress and wears a crown of evergreens with candles to light her way in the darkness. She carries a tray of coffee and Lucia buns to her family while they are still in bed.

### PERE NOEL

The children of France believe in Pere Noël, Father Christmas, and wait for him to bring presents on Christmas Eve. In anticipation, the children put their shoes by the fireside and hope to awaken the next morning with presents. In many French homes, a creche, a stable that has small clay figures of Mary, Joseph, the baby Jesus, the shepherds, the three kings and animals, is used to remind everyone of the first Christmas Eve. French families sometimes burn a log of cherry wood as a Yule log.

### A JAPANESE CHRISTMAS

Not many Japanese children are brought up as Christians,

### HANUKKAH

During the eight days of Hanukkah, also known as the Feast of Dedication or the Festival of Lights, Jewish children enjoy lighting candles on the Menorah (the Hanukkah Lamp). The celebration dates back more than 2100 years ago to when the Jewish people were ruled by Antiochus the Syrian. He drove them from their Temple in Jerusalem and ordered them to pray to the Greek gods. The Jews refused to pray to any other god, and were punished. Today, the lighted candles of the Menorah represent the Jewish struggle to pray to their own God. The spinning of the dreidel is a traditional part of Hanukkah. A dreidel is a square top, usually made out of wood and has four sides. A Hebrew letter is written on each side. The children spin the dreidel, and guess a letter before the top falls to one side. Usually nuts, candies, and raisins are given as prizes. During Hanukkah's eight-day feast, Jewish families recite blessings, tell stories, and enjoy special "latke" or potato pancakes. Some families give a small gift to their children each night. The finest gift is given on the last night of Hanukkah.

This holiday season, whether you gather your family to celebrate a tradition of your ancestors, or maybe to begin a new one, I hope the joys of the holidays from throughout the world are yours. And remember, somewhere in San Diego, the annual "tilting of the Christmas tree" is taking place once again.

*Claire Yezbak Fadden is an award-winning freelance writer and mother of three sons. Follow her on Twitter @claireflaire.*



## When NOT To Exercise

**F**or a week now I have been nursing the flu. I've been mostly in bed and its very frustrating. I can feel the fitness juice draining out of me. Several times I've thought of getting out of bed, putting on my sneakers and each time, my body, my lungs and my head have said "whoa maybe this is a bad idea".

So, resting on an elevated pillow, feet up, I've resigned myself to the fact that there are times when being physically active can do more harm than good.

Now that I have nothing else to do I'm making a list of when not to exercise.

### When You Are Sick

If you've got a cold and it's not severe you CAN exercise without making yourself sicker. Your body will probably tell



**Mirabai HOLLAND**

you to back off the intensity and you should listen. So just do a maintenance workout.

The Flu however is not to be messed with. Influenza kills several thousand people a year. Your body is under siege from a virus and you need to win that battle. Rest. Don't exercise.

### With A Fever

The Flu is often accompanied by a fever because your immune system is fighting off infection. Any time you have a fever you need to be resting to give your body a fighting chance. No exercise.

### When You're Tired

How tired? If you've got the fatigue and brain-block that comes from a long day at the office, some moderate exercise after work may help you relax and recharge.

But if your body is telling you go home and go to bed, that's what you need to do.

### When A Chronic Condition Flairs Up

Most people with chronic conditions or



injuries can exercise with doctor's permission between flair-ups. But many make the mistake of trying to exercise when their condition is acute. When your condition flairs up, wait it out. Don't exercise. It only takes a moment to cause permanent damage. If your flair-up persists, go see your doctor.

### When You're Pregnant

Most pregnant women can exercise but ability to exercise varies greatly from



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person to person. Make sure you talk to your doctor about any exercise you're planning to do.

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It really IS that simple. Pushing through the pain is nonsense even for most professional athletes. If you've got pain don't exercise. See your doctor.

This list is a work in progress and since I'm lying here, I'm sure I can think up some more stuff. How about you? If you've got some good reasons not to exercise, send them to me at [exercise@movingfree.com](mailto:exercise@movingfree.com).

*Mirabai Holland M.F.A., legendary fitness pioneer is one of the leading authorities in the Health & Fitness industry, and a public health activist who specializes in preventive and rehabilitative exercise for people. Her Moving Free® approach to exercise is designed to provide a movement experience so pleasant it doesn't feel like work. © 2011 [www.easyexercisevideos.com](http://www.easyexercisevideos.com).*



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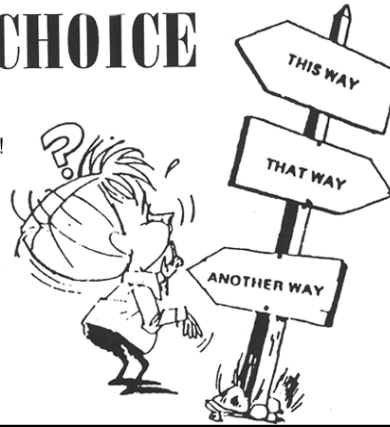
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**Suzy COHEN, RPh**

I think Americans lack the right fats in their body, for example, a healthy balance of linolenic acid, omega 3, 6 and 9s. Balance is key so I recommend oils that are rich in nutrients known to advance our health. I'm not thrilled with yellow-colored lard alternatives to butter, you're better off with natural butter or ghee. Now here is my list of healthy oils:

**Flaxseed-** Packed with essential fatty acids, like linolenic acid and omegas, flax

is known to reduce toxic forms of estrogen in the body, thereby reducing your risk of breast or prostate cancers. It has a subtle nutty flavor and high quality versions are "cold pressed" rather than heated. Bear in mind any "cold-pressed" oil should not be heated beyond the smoke point.

**Hemp seed oil** - A study showed it may relieve symptoms of eczema. Pressed from the seeds of legally-grown cannabis flowers, this gorgeous green oil does not impart psychoactive effects and in fact it has regenerative properties because it is an incredible source of vitamin E, gamma-linolenic acid and omega 3s. It helps heart, immune and digestive function. It tastes nutty and because it's cold-pressed, don't fry with it.

**Almond-** Refined almond oil is great for cooking purposes because of its relatively high smoke point meaning the oil can be heated without destroying too many nutrients or creating harmful compounds. Almonds are rich in vitamin E and D. Just incredible!

**Sunflower** - Low in saturated fats and rich in vitamin E, sunflower contains oleic acid, which increases a gut hormone called GLP-1. If you read my diabetes book, you'd know that this hormone makes you feel full faster so you're less likely to stuff your face! GLP-1 also increases insulin sensitivity and protects your pancreatic cells. Don't overheat.

**Avocado** - The best source of powerful antioxidants like glutathione and vitamins A, E and D. Use it in salads or apply it to your skin- it helps eczema and psoriasis. Glutathione in avocados can clean out your digestive tract, especially your liver and pancreas. Okay to heat.



**Coconut** - So many uses for this! It fights candida, helps digestion and tastes like coconuts. It may also chase away viruses. I often saute veggies with this, but it's great for cooking at higher temperatures. You can add to smoothies, apply a tad to dry elbows, heels or skin irritations.

**Grape seed** - One of my favorites because it has a mild taste and imparts strong antioxidants. Great for your heart, it raises good HDLs and lowers bad LDLs.

**Olive oil**- Use only extra virgin, cold-pressed oils which are high in essential fatty acids, and vitamins E and K. Olive oil can promote smooth digestion while protecting you from heart disease or circulation problems.

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# Christmas Travel Colonial Cakes



# and Spanish Stew

Story by Andrea Gross; [www.andreagross.com](http://www.andreagross.com)

(Below) Themed Christmas trees are inside the Mount Vernon Ford Orientation Center

Photo credit: Russ Flint



Martha Washington tops Martha Stewart on my list of hostesses extraordinaire. In order to prepare for her Christmas guests, the first Martha whipped forty eggs,

four pounds of butter, four pounds of sugar and five pounds of flour into a massive cake.

Meanwhile, almost 2,000 miles away, in a part of the country that was most likely beyond the imagination of the First Family, Native Americans joined Spanish settlers in serving *posole* and *enchiladas*.

Today, modern renditions of these holiday festivities take place at George and Martha's Mount Vernon home in Virginia and around an adobe plaza in New Mexico.

## A Mount Vernon Christmas

I don't expect to see a camel at Mount Vernon. Christmas trees, poinsettias, even a gingerbread house.... sure. But a camel? Then I learn that when Washington wasn't off winning

wars or fathering a country, he enjoyed playing with exotic animals and often rented a camel to entertain his Christmas guests.

In 1789, George Washington spent his first Christmas as president attending St. Paul's Church in New York City. The following week he returned to Mt. Vernon where he and Martha relaxed with family and friends.

Camels aside, the President's Christmas, as most eighteenth-century Christmases,

was low-keyed compared to today. There would have been few gifts and certainly no Santas or reindeer, neither of which became popular Christmas symbols until the nineteenth century.



(Above) Washington rented a camel to entertain guests during the Christmas holidays. Today, Mount Vernon does the same.

(Top right) A woman demonstrates how chocolate was made during colonial times.

(Right) A gingerbread version of Mount Vernon is on display throughout the holidays.

Photo credits:

Mount Vernon Ladies' Association



Today Christmas at Mount Vernon is still mostly about welcoming guests. In addition to the regular attractions, which include tours of the mansion as well as the slave quarters, stables, gardens and farm, the holiday season brings a host of special delights.

I go into the mansion, past twelve decorated trees, through the dining room where a table is set to accommodate guests, and up to the garret chamber, which is only open during the holidays. "This is where Martha lived the last years of her life," says a cheery woman who's dressed in Colonial garb. "After George died, she never returned to their shared quarters."

The thought of a lonely woman huddled in an attic room saddens me, so to lift my spirits, I follow the smell of chocolate and cinnamon. In the kitchen a woman is stirring chocolate by an open fire, just as it was done in colonial days. Nearby there's a large gingerbread house designed to look like Mount Vernon as well as Martha's grand cake, which was modeled after those traditionally served on the twelfth day of Christmas (January 6). A guide offers me the recipe, but the mention of forty eggs and four pounds of butter leads to thoughts of calories and cholesterol, and I politely decline.

That night a costumed actor cajoles me into dancing the Virginia reel, and a costumed Martha leads a candlelight tour of the mansion. I sing carols by the fireplace, sip cider and reluctantly bid good-bye to Mount Vernon and George's Christmas camel.

[www.mountvernon.org](http://www.mountvernon.org)

## A New Mexican Holiday

Santa has an easy time in Taos, New Mexico, where the town's flat adobe rooftops provide sure footing for his team of reindeer. But while the town welcomes St. Nick, its holiday charm is rooted in its blend of Native American, Hispanic and Anglo traditions.





The Hispanic culture is represented by the *farolitos* [small bonfires] and *luminarias* [paper bags lit with votive candles] that shine from streets to rooftops, bathing the town in a soft glow. Las Posadas, a candlelight procession that re-enacts Mary and Joseph's search for shelter, takes place from December 16 – 24.

As for Hispanic holiday food, I become addicted to *biscochitos*, the melt-in-your-mouth Christmas cookies that are flavored with anise and cinnamon. The original recipe dates back to the Spanish colonists. For heartier fare, I try *posole*, a spicy stew of meat and corn that's served in most Taos restaurants throughout the holiday season.

After the 16<sup>th</sup> century when missionaries converted many of the Natives to Catholicism, Spanish and Native American customs blended and eventually created traditions that are distinctly New Mexican. In this spirit, the 1200 year-old Taos Pueblo has a Christmas Eve vespers service as well as Christmas and New Year's Day celebrations that feature the Deer or Matachines (animal) dances.

Anglo customs are highlighted (pun intended) with a gloriously tall Christmas tree that dominates the town plaza. In

addition, the Taos Chamber Music Group presents "A Classical Holiday Encore."

But my favorite holiday activity is the annual Lighting of Ledoux, a tradition of mixed origins during which *luminarias* guide people up the winding road that's home to Taos' famed art galleries and studios. All the while, the piney aroma of piñón smoke wafts through the chilly desert air. For me as for many people, that signals that Christmas has come to Taos.

[www.taos.org](http://www.taos.org)

(Above right) Ledoux Street is filled with merry-makers and art-lovers during the holidays. Photo credit: Gak Stonn

(Above left) Christmas trees and luminarias decorate the plaza during the holidays. Photo credit: Tina Larkin of The Taos News

(Left) Posole is a traditional dish during the holidays. Photo credit: Graham's Grille

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# More than the Music

*By Mary Flanders*

Like so many little girls, Donna McKechnie dreamed of being a ballerina. But unlike most little girls, who grow out of their dreams of dancing, Donna made her dream come true. When she was eight, she began taking ballet classes. With an insight beyond her years she immediately felt that's where she belonged.

Trained in classical ballet, she left home at 17 to be a dancer on Broadway. Donna debuted on Broadway in "How to Succeed in Business without Really Trying," where she first met Michael Bennett and went on to perform in "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum," and "Company," and appeared in the original Television series "Dark Shadows." The role that made Donna McKechnie a star was in the ground breaking dancer's musical Michael Bennett's "A Chorus Line" where she originated the somewhat autobiographical role of Cassie. For that role she earned the 1976 Tony for

Donna McKechnie  
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Best Actress in a musical and established herself as a musical theater star.

Donna is what is called on Broadway, a triple threat. It means someone who can sing, dance and act, incredibly well and all at the same time. It's difficult to master one discipline, to be the master of all three is almost impossible. Only a few remarkable ladies in the musical theater can be called a triple threat; legendary ladies like the incomparable Gwen Verdon, the matchless Chita Rivera and the amazing Donna McKechnie

For anyone interested in theater, Donna's autobiography, *Time Steps* is fascinating. It's filled with wonderful stories about Broadway giants Bob Fosse, Marvin Hamlisch, Gwen Verdon, Steven Sondheim and of course, Michael Bennett. But the real reason she says she wrote the book was to chronicle her battle with rheumatoid arthritis. In 1980, at the height of her career she was struck down with that debilitating disease. For a time in her life Donna fought, not to master a complicated choreography, but to merely get out of bed. Thanks to a wonderful understanding doctor who prescribed a very strict regimen of diet and therapy and Donna's inner strength and endurance,

she overcame her disease, returned to the theater and resumed her grueling rehearsal and performance schedule.

Since then she has returned to perform Cassie in "A Chorus Line" in 1986, and has toured across the country performing the title roles in "Sweet Charity" and "Annie Get Your Gun." In 1996 she earned the Fred Astaire Award for best female dancer in the Broadway revival of "State Fair." She has performed in Europe, produced her own one woman shows, teaches master classes in acting and as her career comes full circle, she is now a Tony Nominator as well.

---

**Do not miss this opportunity to see one of Broadway's truly great ladies, Donna McKechnie.**

---

This great lady of American Theater is constantly busy, but she always has time to give, to share, and after just a few minutes of talking with her you will feel like she is not just an amazing incredibly talented and hard working Broadway star, but a dear friend who enjoys talking with you.

In a recent interview from her home in New York she talked about returning to Shreveport to star in the River Cities Repertory Company's production of "The Subject was Roses."

"I was thrilled when he called," Donna said. "I love working with Patric."

Her friendship with Director Patric McWilliams goes back to the first production of the River City Repertory Company when she played Amanda Wingfield in "The Glass Menagerie." Since then, Patric and Donna have become good friends. He says with a laugh "Going to dinner with Donna at Joe Allen's in New York is like going to Buckingham Palace with Queen Elizabeth." Patric added, "We're so honored to have her coming back."

"It's a chance to explore the family dynamic," Ms. McKechnie says, something she's very interested in. Then she adds "I love coming to Shreveport."

When asked about the difference in doing drama as opposed to musical theater, she talked about teaching her master classes.

*Donna McKechnie: More Than the Music*  
Continued on page 35

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# BROADWAY

## A Personal Perspective

by Brian Bradley, exclusive to The Best of Times

Elizabeth Taylor, who passed away last March, was a true Hollywood icon, but few probably know that the legendary star also appeared twice on Broadway.

On May 7, 1981, Elizabeth Taylor made her Broadway debut in a revival of Lillian Hellman's classic *The Little Foxes*. She was surrounded by an A list cast including Maureen Stapleton and dressed to the nines by the brilliant Florence Klotz. It was quite the event and well received. *The Little Foxes* garnered five Tony Award nominations that year including one for Elizabeth Taylor.

At the conclusion of the 1981 Tony Awards the actors were still on stage. However, the only star the press photographers were interested in was Elizabeth Taylor (who lost best actress to Jane Lapotaire for *Piaf*). Finally the photographers moved on to the second most requested photograph of the night: the trio of female winners Jane Lapotaire, Lauren Bacall (*Woman of the Year*) and Lena Horne. All three were represented by a friend of mine who recounted this story.

That obligation done, Jane literally begged my friend to introduce her to Elizabeth Taylor, who was still surrounded by a mob. They fought their way through the crowd. Jane to Elizabeth: "Me mum will be more excited about this than my winning the Tony. Can we take a photo together?" Elizabeth (never Liz) to Jane: "Honey, if it will make your mother happy, by all means."

In 1983 Elizabeth Taylor returned to Broadway in a revival of Noël Coward's *Private Lives*. But because she was starring with Richard Burton, the whole thing took on a circus atmosphere and from all accounts was not comparable to her first experience. She never returned.

And now onto Broadway's fall season. Several shows have opened with starry names or familiar faces. But, as is typical of the first half of any season in New York, the results are mixed. The Roundabout Theatre Company got their season off to a respectable start with a limited run revival of Terence Rattigan's little known *Man and Boy*. Written in 1961 and



Elizabeth Taylor. Photo by Martha Swope

**"On May 7, 1981, Elizabeth Taylor made her Broadway debut in a revival of Lillian Hellman's classic *The Little Foxes*."**

set in 1934, Rattigan could just as well have been writing about Bernie Madoff and his son's suicide, not Ivar Kreuger, the European Ponzi-scheme artist who killed himself, Rattigan was referencing.

Three-time Tony Award winner Frank Langella stars as an egomaniacal and amoral entrepreneur whose financial house of cards along with his treasured reputation is on the verge of collapse. It's a meaty role filled with aristocratic posturing and grand gestures and Mr. Langella clearly relishes those depraved displays of insensitivity and disdain. However, both Adam Driver as his estranged son whom his father actually attempts to pimp to salvage a merger and Francesca Faridany as his wife could have explored more interesting and layered choices in their featured moments. Derek McLane's basement Greenwich Village apartment is perfection.

Academy Award nominee Samuel L. Jackson makes his

Broadway debut as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in *The Mountaintop*. Angela Bassett, also Oscar nominated, co-stars in this rather thin, 90 minute play set in Room 306, Lorraine Hotel on April 3, 1968, the night prior to King's assassination. In a competent but low-key performance, Jackson's King seems weary and not well after having delivered "I've Been to the Mountaintop". Neither his portrayal nor the script offer fresh insight into the man's charisma, his drive or the momentous power of his oratory. Emphasizing the mundane does him no justice. On the other hand, Ms. Bassett comes on like gangbusters,

Angela Bassett in [The Mountaintop](#).





all spirited effusiveness and flirtatious energy, as a maid who is not what we are led to believe. It's unfortunate then that director Kenny Leon was not able to either reign in the more experienced and skillful Ms. Bassett a tad or push Mr. Jackson to ratchet it up. This overblown production is out of balance.

*Relatively Speaking*, three one-act comedies from renowned purveyors of quirky, off-beat humor, is a throwback to the days when lightweight diversions demanded nothing more of their audience than a sense of humor. *Talking Cure* the curtain warmer concocted by Ethan Coen about a recalcitrant mental patient and his stymied therapist was too obtuse for me. The final play, *Honeymoon Hotel*, is Woody Allen's homage to shticky situations and borscht-belt one-liners. The best of the lot is Elaine May's *George Is Dead* about a pampered woman in crisis who shows up at the door of her "friend" whose marriage at that moment is unraveling. Original and unexpected with clever dialogue and a little sadness, I loved it.

**Next month:** Stockard Channing, Stacy Keach and Rachel Griffiths in *Other Desert Cities*, Kim Cattrall in *Private Lives*, Hugh Dancy in *Venus in Fur* and a revival of *Godspell*.

*New York based theatre critic Brian Bradley is a voting member of the Outer Critics Circle. Send questions to brianbradley@hotmail.com.*

*Donna McKechnie: More Than the Music*  
Continued from page 33

She tells her students "Drama is where the song comes in." And nobody knows that better than Donna McKechnie.

Ms. McKechnie's experience spans the entire spectrum of theater from light musical comedy to the most serious drama, but it all boils down to her beautiful philosophy. As she says, "If I can inspire one person, it's all worth it."

Shreveport is so fortunate to have her coming here. Do not miss this opportunity to see one of Broadway's truly great ladies, Donna McKechnie.



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# Create a Delicious HOLIDAY MENU

## Pistachio-Crusted Tenderloin with Cabernet Sauce

(Makes 8 to 12 servings)

- ¼ cup salted, shelled pistachio nuts, chopped
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme
- 2 tablespoons Dijon-style mustard
- 1 center-cut beef tenderloin roast (about 2 to 3 pounds)

### Cabernet Sauce:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 4 ounces cremini or button mushrooms, sliced
- ¼ cup finely chopped shallots
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup reduced-sodium beef broth, divided
- 1 cup Cabernet Sauvignon
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch

Heat oven to 425°F. Combine nuts and thyme in small bowl. Spread mustard evenly over all surfaces of beef roast; press nut mixture evenly onto mustard.

Place roast in shallow roasting pan. Insert ovenproof meat thermometer so tip is centered in thickest part of beef. Do not add water or cover. Roast 35 to 40 minutes for medium rare; 45 to 50 minutes for medium.

Remove roast when meat thermometer registers 135°F for medium rare; 150°F for medium. Transfer roast to carving board; tent loosely with aluminum foil. Let stand 15 to 20 minutes. (Temperature will continue to rise about 10°F to reach 145°F for medium rare; 160°F for medium.)

Meanwhile, prepare cabernet sauce. Heat olive oil in large nonstick skillet over medium heat until hot. Add mushrooms, shallots and salt; cook and stir 6 to 9 minutes or until mushrooms are browned. Add ¾ cup broth and wine to skillet; increase heat and bring to a boil; reduce heat slightly and cook 12 to 16 minutes or until liquid is reduced to 1½ cups. Combine remaining ¼ cup broth and cornstarch in small bowl. Whisk cornstarch mixture into wine mixture; bring to a boil. Cook 1 to 2 minutes or until sauce thickens, stirring frequently.

Carve roast into slices; season with salt, as desired. Serve with cabernet sauce.

*Courtesy of The Beef Checkoff and Kendall-Jackson Winery*



FAMILY FEATURES

## Sweet and Savory Petite Steak Sandwiches

(Makes 12 petite sandwiches)

- 1 pound beef top sirloin steak, cut 1 inch thick
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1½ cups diced red onion
- 1½ cups balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 12 small dinner rolls, split, toasted
- ½ cup blue cheese crumbles
- Chives (optional)

Heat oil in large saucepan over medium heat. Add onions; cook and stir 2 to 3 minutes or until crisp-tender. Add vinegar and sugar; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer 30 to 35 minutes or until reduced to about ¾ cup, stirring occasionally.

Meanwhile, press pepper evenly onto steak. Heat large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Place steak in skillet; cook 15 to 18 minutes for medium rare (145°F) to medium (160°F) doneness, turning occasionally. Carve into thin slices.

Spread 1 tablespoon onion mixture on bottom half of rolls. Top evenly with beef, blue cheese and chives.

*Courtesy of The Beef Checkoff*



## Buttermilk Panna Cotta with Riesling Raisins

(Makes 8 servings)

- 3 sheets gelatin
- 2 cups cream
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 vanilla bean, split and scraped
- 2 cups buttermilk
- 2 cups Riesling
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1 cup golden raisins
- 2 ounces pine nuts, toasted

In bowl, add gelatin sheets and cover with ice cold water. Allow to sit until softened.

In sauce pot, combine cream, sugar and vanilla bean. Bring to a simmer and remove from heat.

Squeeze out water from gelatin and add gelatin to cream mixture. Add buttermilk, stir to combine.

Strain and pour into 8 (4-ounce) ramekins. Let set at least 4 hours in the refrigerator.

In small pot, combine wine, honey and raisins. Bring to a simmer and cook 5 minutes. Remove raisins from liquid and reserve. Reduce liquid to ¼ cup. Allow to cool and combine with raisins.

Top each panna cotta with 2 tablespoons of raisin mixture and sprinkle with ½ tablespoon pine nuts.

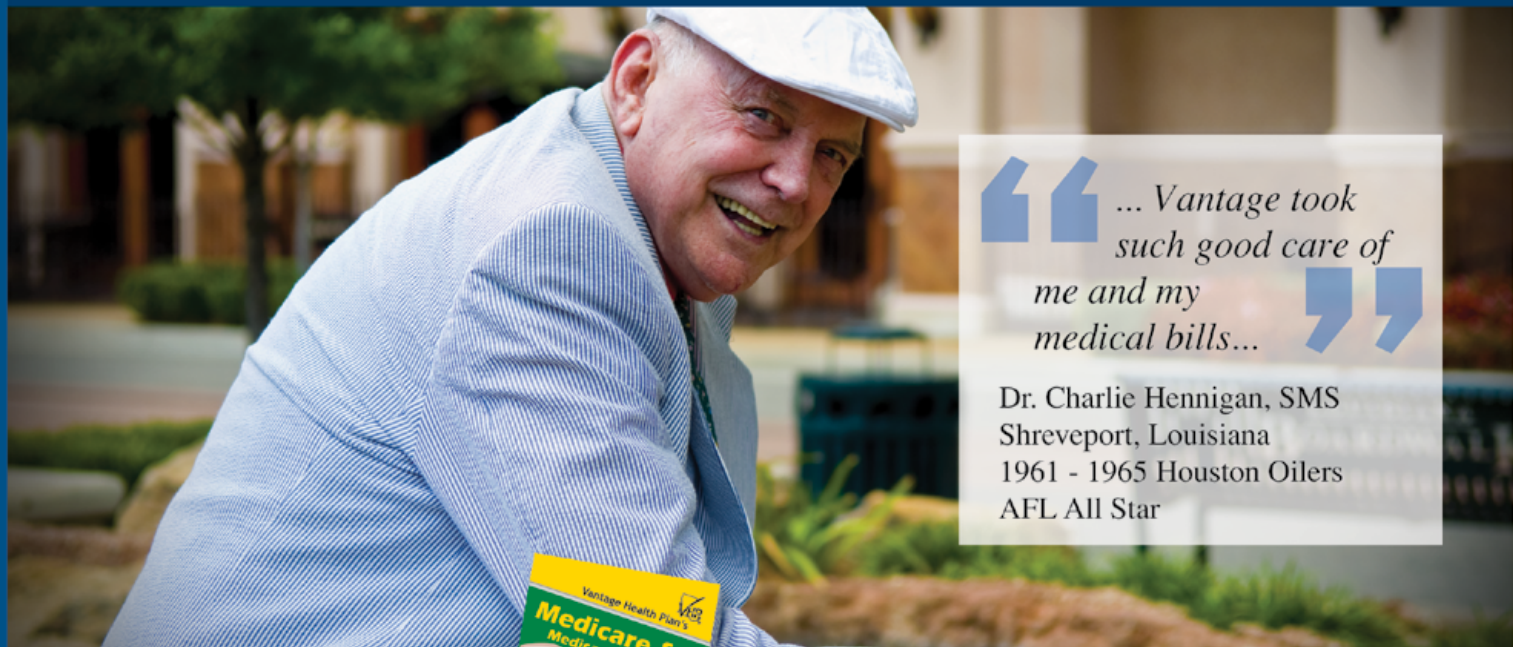
*Courtesy of Kendall-Jackson Winery*





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ACROSS

- 1. Can cause mass destruction
- 6. \*Part of a strength training set
- 9. Ball of yarn
- 13. Fear-inspiring
- 14. Husk of corn
- 15. It has two doors
- 16. "Boy \_\_\_\_\_ World"
- 17. "He \_\_\_\_\_ and drank the precious Words..."
- 18. Packers QB
- 19. \*Lookout man
- 21. \_\_\_\_\_ the Great, king of Persia
- 23. Rolled grass
- 24. Colored
- 25. Socialist, abbr.
- 28. \_\_\_\_\_ E. Coyote
- 30. Silver in a cloud?
- 35. Often done cold turkey
- 37. Harsh, as in remark
- 39. Oil tanker
- 40. "Do \_\_\_\_\_ others as you would have them do..."
- 41. \_\_\_\_\_ like a dark cloud
- 43. Bog down
- 44. Sour in taste
- 46. Feed storage
- 47. Don't forget to hit this button when done
- 48. Ennui
- 50. \*Done to a sparring partner
- 52. Bear's winter hangout
- 53. Conservative talkshow host
- 55. File a suit
- 57. Red light, green light
- 60. \*Dumbbells and plates
- 64. Narrow water-filled gorge
- 65. And not
- 67. Greek bazaar
- 68. Raja's wife
- 69. \*Sometimes follows injury
- 70. Himalayan country

**At The Gym**

Solution on page 41

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71						72				73				

- 71. \* \_\_\_\_\_ gym, accessible to everyone
- 72. Kicked in yard game
- 73. Proficient
- 25. \*Glute exercise
- 26. 1/16th of a pound
- 27. Recognized
- 29. Vietnam's neighbor
- 31. Jodie Foster's " \_\_\_\_\_ Island" (2008)
- 32. It describes the siege of Troy
- 33. Courage to go on
- 34. Light signal
- 36. Reality TV actress Spelling
- 38. "Wilhelm \_\_\_\_\_" by Friedrich von Schiller
- 42. Agitate
- 45. \*Often done in four counts
- 49. Police \_\_\_\_\_ shot
- 51. Region of northeastern South America
- 54. Type of boom
- 56. Pelted, as with eggs
- 57. \*Congratulatory gesture
- 58. \*Listen to one on headphones while exercising
- 59. Bad luck predictor
- 60. Kind of bird
- 61. It springs eternal?
- 62. Try not to fall into this
- 63. Lot's wife turned into a pillar of this
- 64. "To and \_\_\_\_\_"
- 66. South American tuber

DOWN

- 1. Tailor's actions
- 2. Sound from rival of #28 Across
- 3. Black and white treat
- 4. Catcher's gear, pl.
- 5. Bequeath
- 6. Back seat
- 7. Jack Sprat couldn't do this to fat
- 8. College president
- 9. Sweet talk
- 10. Used in angling
- 11. "Iliad," e.g.
- 12. Skin cyst
- 15. \*Exercise of the heart
- 20. Piaf or Wharton
- 22. Unagi
- 24. Ascetic Muslim monk

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**SUDOKU** - Fill in the blank squares in the grid, making sure that every row, column, and 3 x 3 box includes all digits 1 through 9.



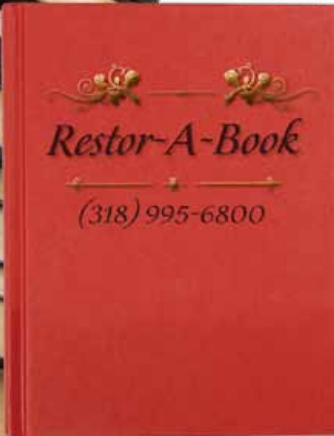
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**Toys of Christmas Past Word Search (solution page 41)**

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 T S U D B Y B S K C A J  
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| Ball      | Jacks       | Slinky     |
| Barbie    | Lego        | Toys       |
| Bike      | Logs        | Train      |
| Doll      | Marbles     | Trucks     |
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| Hula Hoop | Skates      |            |



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**Murder Mystery Dinner Theatre** - Presented by The Alzheimer's Agency of Shreveport/Bossier, Inc. Saturday, December 10 at 6 p.m. at Harrah's Louisiana Downs in Bossier City. The Murder Mystery "And Then There Was One" by Michael Druce will be performed by the Loyola College Prep Drama Club under special arrangement with the Contemporary Drama Service. \$50 per person. Also a Silent Auction and a 50/50 Draw Down. Call (318) 780-7906 for reservations or online at [www.alzagency.com](http://www.alzagency.com).

## BRIDGE

**Easybridge 2** - Thursday evenings beginning January 19. This course will be a continuing course for the Easybridge players from Easybridge Basic, however, will be a wonderful course to help former duplicate players update their game, as well as to introduce rubber bridge and party bridge players to duplicate bridge. Open to players with 0-99 masterpoints. Just show up with a partner. \$6 fee. The mini-lesson begins at 6:15 sharp, followed by playing cards from 6:30 to 8:30ish. The Shreveport Bridge Association is located at 7625 E. Kings Hwy. Call Bonita Hays 318-865-1224 with any questions or just show up!

## CONCERTS

**Shreveport Symphony** - RiverView Theatre in downtown Shreveport. Tickets are \$17 - \$42. Call 227-8863.

• *Holiday Pops* with amazing soprano Twyla Robinson and the Holiday Pops Children's Chorus - Saturday December 17 at 7:30, Sunday December 18 at 2:30.



## Red River Ringers Handbell Concerts

- On Saturday, December 10 at Live Oak Retirement Center in the Living Room at 1 PM and on Sunday, December 11 at Broadmoor United Methodist Church in the sanctuary at 2:30 PM. Secular and sacred Christmas music. **FREE** of charge and open to the public.

## EXHIBIT

**Blue Dogs, Cajuns, and Russians on the Red River** - Through December 30. Louisiana State Exhibit Museum, 3015 Greenwood Road, Shreveport. 54 original paintings and sculptures. Monday - Friday 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. For more info call 318-632-2020. **FREE**.

**Inside the Toy Box: Antique Toys and Dolls** - Through January 14. Wednesdays through Fridays, 10am to 4pm The Spring Street Historical Museum opens its toy



box for this display of treasured toys and dolls. Spring Street Historical Museum, 525 Spring St., Shreveport. 318-424-0964. **FREE**.

## HEALTH

**Flu Shots for Veterans** - Overton Brooks VA Medical Center, including the VA Outpatient Clinics in Monroe, Texarkana and Longview, will be offering flu shots to enrolled Veterans during scheduled Primary Care or Specialty Clinic Appointment. There is **no charge** for the flu shot. Overton Brooks VAMC Walk-in Flu Clinic - Wednesdays only - Dec. 7 through Dec. 28 - 8:00 to 10:00 am. Check-in at Front Desk - Main Lobby. No appointment necessary. All dates exclude Federal Holidays.

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**HOLIDAY**

**An Image of Christmas: History, Theology and Ritual in 19th Century Russian Iconography** - December 17, 2 p.m. Saturday Speaker Series. Norton Art Gallery, 4747 Creswell Ave., Shreveport. For more info 318-865-4201. Father Jason Foster, priest of Holy Nativity of God Orthodox Church in Bossier City will discuss Russian icons and the role they play in devotion.

**2nd Annual Oaks of Louisiana Tour of Trees** - Saturdays and Sundays through Dec. 18. The Oaks of Louisiana, 600 E. Flournoy Lucas Road, Shreveport. Tour Tower at The Oaks and designated areas during the holidays while engaging the community in what The Oaks has to offer. Guided-walking tours will be held on the half hour from 1 to 4 p.m. Featuring elaborately decorated themed trees. **FREE** and open to the public.

**21st Annual Christmas Tour of Home** - Sunday, December 4 from 1-5 PM. Presented by Quota International of Bossier City. Featuring five Bossier homes beautifully decorated for Christmas. Admission is \$20 and includes free raffle ticket. Tickets may be purchased from any Bossier Quota member or call 747-2613 or 675-9832

**MOVIES**

**Sci-Port's Golden Days Matinee** - Weekdays 1 - 4 p.m. On the Shreveport riverfront. Seniors enjoy an IMAX film, **FREE** admission to Sciport galleries and a frozen yogurt. Games & activities available. All for \$9. Groups call (318) 424-8660 to schedule.




**THEATRE**

**River City Repertory - The Subject Was Roses** starring Tony award winner Donna McKechnie. The Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award winning play focuses on a young veteran, just returned from WWII, and his strained relationship with his parents. River-view Theatre, 601 Clyde Fant Parkway, Shreveport. December 9-10 @ 7:30 p.m. December 11 @ 3:00 p.m. All seats \$35. For reservations and info 318-868-5888. [www.rivercityrep.org](http://www.rivercityrep.org)

**Shreveport Little Theatre** - Tickets are \$15 for seniors, students and active military, \$17 for adults. Tickets may be purchased at box office, 812 Margaret Place, from noon – 4 p.m. weekdays, or by calling 424-4439.

- SLT *Some Enchanted Evening: The Songs of Rodgers & Hammerstein* - January 5, 6, 7, 13, 14, 2012 at 8 p.m., January 8, 15, 2012 at 2 p.m.

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# December Parting Shots

Share your photos with us.  
Email to [editor.calligas@gmail.com](mailto:editor.calligas@gmail.com)

AT&T donated \$3,000 to Bossier Parish Council on Aging (BCOA) Meals on Wheels program.

*(l to r) Billy Montgomery, Former State Representative and current Board Member Roy Adley, State Representative and Board Member Roy Burrell, BCOA Executive Director Tamara Crane, and AT&T Regional Director Troy J. Broussard.*



Middle right: A birthday celebration for community volunteer Loretta Addison was held on October 27 at Community Renewal.

*(l to r) Candy Welch, Jane Wolfe, Loretta Addison, Shelley Ryan Gray and Eve Goines*

Below: *Jeri Holloway and Eli*



*Libby Alexander and Dena Martin celebrated their birthdays with Bunko buddies*



Women's Super Senior 4.0 state champions will be representing Louisiana at the Sectional Championships in Hilton Head, SC in December. *(front row l to r) Lyndal Barclay, Judy Tabor, Judy Butcher; (back l to r) Patricia Voorhies, Anne Hodges, Patty Guanella, Joanna Trudnak, Gale Evans, and Robin Shaffer*

## Community Forum on Medicare Advantage Plans for 2012 at the Louisiana State Exhibit Museum



*Paula Williams (left) and Kathryn Angell*

*(l to r) Clarence Loyd, Jimmy Dean, and Ben Strogdill*



*(l to r) Donna Grimaldi with David Fletcher and Robert Robinson of AllMed Mobility. Donna won the Grand Door Prize - a Pride Mobility Three Wheel Scooter donated by AllMed Mobility.*



## The Shreveport Mayor's Women Commission HERA Awards Reception on Nov. 10

*(l to r) Bobbie Hodges, Romney Guy, Candy Welch and Burdine Anderson*



PHP and Platnium Records partnered with Goodwill to collect and bag clothes for National Make a Difference Day. *Joe Cooper of Goodwill Industries and April Stanley with People Helping People Outreach (PHP) and Platnium Records.*





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# Senior Day at the State Fair



Bossier Council on Aging Singing Seniors entertain the audience

Right  
Contestants play *The Best of Times' Keep or Swap Game*



Below  
Shreveport Mayor Cedric Glover (right) welcomes the attendees



Above: Elvis impersonator Richard Cook gives an attendee his scarf

Below: Louise and James Malway visit David Fletcher (left) at AllMed Mobility exhibit booth



Right  
Ray Urban visits Dianne and Jerry Harmon in *The Best of Times* booth

## The Best of Times Mega Giveaway



Clockwise from left:  
Silver prize winner Joann Lonadier  
Gold prize winner Vernon Hastings  
Bronze prize winner Bobbie Jackson



Lynda Herzog Pope (left) with Ginny Bates

### Trinity Home Care in Shreveport Grand Opening



(l to r) Kristen Alexander, Amy Ezell, and Xavier Horton



(l to r) Carolyn Clampit, Gail Lemoine, and Danny Jones





# Remember When?

## Alzheimer's Clinical Trial

If you are age 50 or older and have a diagnosis of probable Alzheimer's disease, you may be eligible to participate in this study for 20 months. Throughout the study, participants may receive the investigational drug or a placebo. All study related procedures, physical exams and laboratory services would be provided at no charge. All participants will be monitored by a medical team, including a physician, nurse and study coordinator.

For more information call:

**J. Gary Booker, MD**

At

**318.227.9600**

**[www.jgarybookermd.com](http://www.jgarybookermd.com)**



# Les Boutiques de Noel

preview party at the Bossier Civic Center

*Dr. and Mrs. Bill Wilder*

*Betty Henderson*

*Tom and Libby Siskron*



*Donna and David Cavanaugh with Boutiques chair Wendy Harper*



*Troy Broussard (left) and Kevin McCotter*



*Kirby and Lois Rowe*

## Medicare Open Enrollment October 15 - December 7



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Anyone eligible for Medicare (65+ or disabled) should know about the **Senior Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP)**. SHIIP offers free and confidential help with Medicare and other health insurance. Our counselors work through local organizations and can help answer your questions.



1-800-259-5301 [www.lidi.la.gov](http://www.lidi.la.gov)



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- Partial Hospitalization (Day Treatment)
- Outpatient

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**Brentwood**  
*Senior Care Unit*  
**(318) 678-7500**

### Warning Signs

*That May Indicate the Need for Treatment*

- Depression, extreme sadness
- Confused thinking, difficulty concentrating
- Hallucinations; hearing voices
- Misuse of alcohol or medications
- Disorientation
- Numerous unexplained physical ailments
- Difficulties coping with daily living
- Excessive fears, anxieties or suspiciousness



December Parting Shots (continued)



**The Best of Times**

**10th Anniversary** celebration was held on Nov. 16th at Sci-Port.

Attendees were treated to an IMAX showing of "Greece: Secrets of the Past", admission to Sci-Ports exhibit galleries, an informational fair, door prizes, and Gary's world famous Baklava.

Top right: Gary Calligas proudly shows attendees the Proclamation by the Shreveport mayor's office proclaiming Nov. 16 as The Best of Times Day.



Middle Right: (l to r) Zoe McCombs and Kay Goodrich



Bottom Right: Gary Calligas congratulates Don Bailey winner of the grand door prize of a Lift Chair donated by AllMed Mobility

(l to r) Martha Miller, Donnie Duck, Joan Bond, Jean Achee, and Fay Hart



Above: Mme G Harper (left) and Barbara Ann Pate

Left: Dan and Cynthia Hines with their door prizes

To view additional photos visit **The Best of Times** photo gallery at [www.TheBestOfTimesNews.com](http://www.TheBestOfTimesNews.com)



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- Which company will best meet my needs?
- How do I choose?



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