

The Avalon Gazette - December 2022



December



Avalon Village Holiday Party

After 2 years of not being able to host our Avalon Holiday Party, we are so excited to once again be able to gather in celebration of the season! This year will be a bit different than past years as the party will be catered instead of having our own staff prepare the food. Since this party is hosted by Avalon Management, we wanted all residents, as well as staff to be able to join in the celebration.

We hope you are all able to join us in celebrating.

Fondly, Beth Frost-Cooperative Director



Thank you to all Residents and Staff who made our annual Gather & Be Thankful Together event such a success!



Congratulations to this year's basket winners!

Judi Sykes, Bonnie Kline &
Wanda Passero



Avalon's Dining & Activities for December

Candle Light Dinner

December 2nd at 6PM



Social Hour with
Cheese, Crackers
& Drinks from 5-6PM

Appetizer - Cranberry Briz Bites
Salad - Winter Salad
Entree - Prime Rib, Garlic Chive Butter
Roasted Potatoes, Green Bean
Almondine
Dessert - Salted Caramel
Cheesecake

Ladies' Lunch

Wednesday, December 14th at NOON

To-Go Option is Available

****RSVP BY MONDAY DECEMBER 12TH****

Sign-up is required

\$15 per person

Appetizer - Bruschetta
Salad - Italian Salad
Entree - Creamy Garlic Shrimp with
Linguini
Dessert - Cinnamon Roll Cake



Avalon's December Recreation Activities



STRONG FOR LIFE - Every **Wednesday** at **10:30AM**:
Sonja Parker teaches this class in the **Manor House**
Upper Living Room.

YO'GA

YOGA - **Thursday 12/8 & 12/15** at **10:00AM**:
Julie Milan teaches this class in the **Manor House**
Upper Living Room.

***Note: There will be NO YOGA December 1st, 22nd & 29th**



TAI CHI - Every **Thursday** at **11:15AM**: Andy
Stewart teaches this class in the **Manor House**
Upper Living Room.

***Note: There will be NO TAI CHI December 29th**



POOL IN THE PUB - Every **Friday** at **3:00PM**:
Come join fellow Residents for some fun, games,
and cards in the **Manor House PUB**! No sign-up is
necessary! Refreshments and light snacks are
provided.

***Note: There will be NO POOL IN THE PUB December 9th due to the Avalon Holiday Party taking place.**



BUSY HANDS - On **Tuesday, December 13th** at
2:00PM in the **Manor House Living Room**, join
friends for conversation and your choice of
handcrafts. Beverages will be provided.

Local Entertainment for the 2022 Winter Season



Collins Center for the Arts



The Nutcracker

December 17, 2022 at 2pm

December 17, 2022 at 7pm

December 18, 2022 at 3pm

A holiday tradition for all ages, the BSO's annual production of *The Nutcracker* with the Robinson Ballet is beloved by audiences throughout Maine. Join us for a magical afternoon as Clara, the Sugar Plum Fairy, and the Nutcracker grace the stage of the Collins Center for the Arts as the Bangor Symphony Orchestra brings Tchaikovsky's score to life! Arrive early to shop at the BSO's Nutcracker Store, offering a variety of holiday gifts, Nutcrackers, and treats.



Masterworks III

Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto

January 29, 2023 at 3pm

Lucas Richman, conductor

Blake Pouliot, violin

Canadian violinist Blake Pouliot is taking the classical world by storm with his impeccable technique, modern style, and rich interpretations of classic works. Stravinsky's Pulcinella Suite transforms the commedia dell'arte of the 17th century into a showcase for every instrumentalist on stage.

The Program

F. J. Haydn | Symphony No. 100 in G major, "Military"

Felix Mendelssohn | Violin Concerto in E minor, Op. 64, Blake Pouliot, violin

Igor Stravinsky | Pulcinella Suite

Phone: 207.581.1755 Email: <https://www.collinscenterforthearts.com/events/>

CROSS INSURANCE CENTER

515 Main St, Bangor, ME 04401

Phone: (207) 561-8300



Cirque Du Soleil

December 9th - 11th

CORTEO, the most enchanting arena production from Cirque du Soleil, is

back in North America and kicking off its tour in Bangor, ME, set to charm audiences for the very first time. Bangor is the first stop on the North American tour which will hit multiple cities in the U.S. and Canada. CORTEO will be presented at the Cross Insurance Center for only four shows from December 9th to 11th, 2022.

BLUE MAN GROUP

January 9th, 2023

More than 35 million people around the world have experienced the smash hit phenomenon that is **BLUE MAN GROUP** and now it's your turn! **BLUE MAN GROUP** returns to Bangor for a limited engagement on their new North American tour. It's everything you know and love about **BLUE MAN GROUP**—signature drumming, colorful moments of creativity and quirky comedy—the men are still blue but the rest is all new! Featuring pulsing, original music, custom-made instruments, surprise audience interaction and hilarious absurdity, join the Blue Men in a joyful experience that unites audiences of all ages.



Phone: (207) 561-8300 Web: <https://www.crossinsurancecenter.com/>

Winter in Maine



Piper Mountain

27 Trundy Rd. Newburgh, ME

Since 1978, Piper Mountain Farm has been growing balsam firs rooted in tradition and Christmas spirit. The Corliss family created a one-of-a-kind place full of family fun and cheer. What started as a few balsams in their backyard grew into 30 acres of Christmas Trees. Wreaths and trees from Piper Mountain have won numerous awards, and Jim and Norma Corliss have even gotten to present First Lady Laura Bush with an 18-foot Christmas Tree for the Blue Room!

Now retired, Jim and Norma Corliss live nearby and continue to offer support, advice, and holiday cheer for the farm. Mac and Anne McCullen took over the farm in

2019 with a focus on both modernizing the farm's daily operations and continuing its timeless traditions.



Trees for Troops

Piper Mountain is the official Trees for Troops pickup location for the state of Maine. Working with the Maine Christmas Tree Association, Maine growers donate hundreds of trees and ornaments to provide free trees for military and their families.

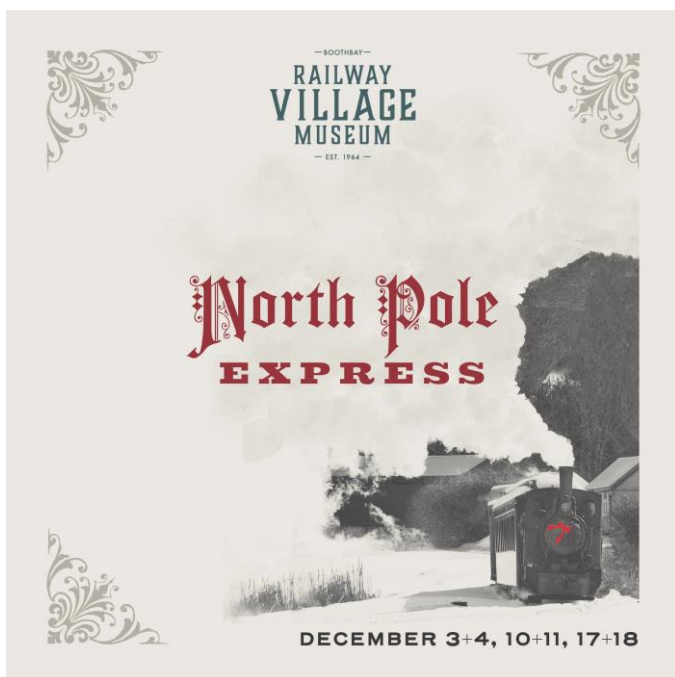
Web: <https://pipermtn.com/>

Phone: (207) 234-4300

Railway Village Museum North Pole Express Train Ride

A Christmas train ride is one of the classic Maine Christmas things to do. On Saturdays and Sundays in December, you can take a historic train ride from the Boothbay Railway Village Museum's train station (built in 1912) to the North Pole. There, you will, of course, meet St. Nick!

Whether you sit in a comfortable passenger car or in the 1904 Little Red Caboose, you'll enjoy the wonderful feeling of classic Christmas nostalgia as you drive through idyllic winter scenery.



Web: <https://railwayvillage.org/events/>

Phone: (207) 633-4733

See the Northern Lights in Maine

Winter in Northern Maine provides an opportunity to view the stunning aurora borealis. It's best viewed from December to February.

A couple of locations where you may be able to see the northern lights are the Aroostook National Wildlife Refuge and the Caribou-Speckled Mountain Wilderness.



Northern Lights - Bar Harbor, Maine

Gardens Aglow

The magic begins as darkness falls.

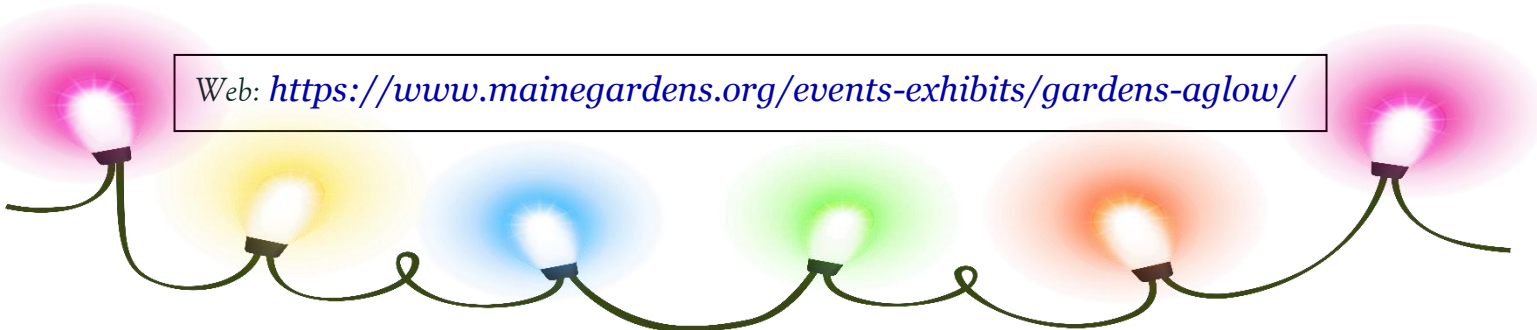
Nov. 19 to Dec. 31

Thursday - Sunday, plus select dates



Join us to experience the brilliance of New England's most beautiful light display! This year, the seasonal celebration returns to its roots as a walking event with a new, reimagined design and more than 750,000 LED lights woven through 14 acres of central gardens.

Web: <https://www.mainegardens.org/events-exhibits/gardens-aglow/>



The Streaming Corner

Buried Secrets of WWII on Disney+



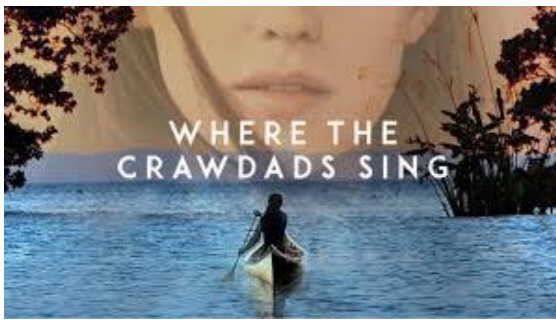
Documentary Series

2019 – Current

Starring: Martin K.A. Morgan, Pete Kelsey & Damiano Parravano

A military historian and a technology wizard explore the hidden secrets of the bloodiest war in human history, using 21st century gadgets to peel away the present, so they can study the past.

Remote sensing techniques tell the stories of WWII battles and campaigns, the details of which have been lost in the fog of war, misinterpreted, or overtaken by the landscape.



Where the Crawdads Sing on Netflix

Drama · Mystery · Thriller · PG-13

2h 5m – 2022 Film

Starring: Daisy Edgar-Jones , Taylor John Smith & David Strathairn

Where the Crawdads Sing tells the story of Kya, an abandoned girl who raised herself to adulthood in the dangerous marshlands of North Carolina. For years, rumors of the “Marsh Girl” haunted Barkley Cove, isolating the sharp and resilient Kya from her community. Based on the bestselling book by Delia Owens.

The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power on Amazon Prime

Tv Series · TV-14

2022

Starring: Morfydd Clark, Ismael Cruz & Cordova Charlie Vickers

The Rings of Power, created by Patrick McKay and J.D. Payne, focuses on the major events of the Second Age of Middle-earth, a largely unexplored part of the history of Tolkien's world that you can read about primarily in the appendixes of the Lord of the Rings trilogy.



Holiday Turkey Sliders

YIELDS: 12 sliders
PREP TIME: 10 minutes
COOK TIME: 12 minutes

Ingredients:

For the Honey Mustard:

1 Cup Mayo

¼ Cup Honey

1/8 Cup Mustard

For the poppy seed dressing:

1 Tablespoon Poppy Seeds

1 ½ Tablespoons honey mustard sauce

½ Cup butter unsalted, melted

¼ teaspoon Worcestershire Sauce

For the Sliders:

12 White Rolls

9 Thick slices of turkey

2 Cups stuffing

12 slices White Cheddar Cheese or Havarti or Munster

1-1 ½ Cups cranberry sauce

Mayonnaise

Honey Mustard Sauce, from above



Directions:

For the honey mustard sauce:

Step 1: In a small bowl, whisk together the mayo, honey, and mustard.

Step 2: Set aside. You'll have extra honey mustard sauce, so don't try to use it all.

For the poppy seed dressing:

Step 1: In a glass measuring cup, whisk together the melted butter, poppy seeds, honey mustard and Worcestershire.

Step 2: Set aside.

To assemble:

Step 1: Heat oven to 350 degrees F

Step 2: Slice open the rolls and spread honey mustard sauce on the bottom and mayo on the top.

Step 3: Place a slice of turkey, spoonful of stuffing and slice of cheese on each roll. Add some cranberry sauce on top of the cheese on each roll then place the top on each sandwich.

Step 4: Place all the sandwiches in a 9x13 baking dish

Step 5: Drizzle each sandwich with the poppy seed dressing until you've used a little more than half the dressing and each sandwich is covered.

Step 6: Tightly wrap the pan with tin foil and bake for 12 to 15 minutes.

Step 7: Remove the pan from the oven and take off the foil.

Step 8: Drizzle with a little more sauce (you may need to melt it again if the butter solidified) and serve immediately.

Note: These can be made a day ahead of time then topped with the dressing and baked.

Crab Brunch Casserole

YIELDS: 8 servings
PREP TIME: 15 mins
COOK TIME: 1 hour

Ingredients:

2 eggs, beaten
2 cups milk
2 cups seasoned croutons
8 ounces shredded Cheddar cheese
1 tablespoon dried minced onion
1 tablespoon dried parsley
1-pound fresh crabmeat
Salt and pepper to taste
¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese



Directions:

Step 1: Preheat oven to 325 degrees F (165 degrees C). Lightly grease a medium baking dish.

Step 2: In large bowl, mix the eggs, milk, croutons, cheese, onion, and parsley. Stir in the crabmeat. Season with salt and pepper. Spoon into the prepared baking dish, and sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.

Step 3: Bake 1 hour in the preheated oven, or until a knife inserted into center of the casserole comes out clean. Serve immediately.

French Toast Bake

YIELDS: 6 servings
PREP TIME: 15 mins
COOK TIME: 45 minutes

Ingredients:

5 cups bread cubes
1 ½ cups milk
4 large eggs
¼ cup white sugar, divided
¼ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 tablespoon butter, softened
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon



Directions:

Step 1: Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Grease an 8x8-inch baking pan.

Step 2: Line the bottom of the prepared pan with bread cubes. Beat milk, eggs, 2 tablespoons sugar, salt, and vanilla together in a large bowl until well combined; pour over bread cubes and stir to coat. Dot with margarine; let stand for 15 minutes.

Step 3: Combine remaining 2 tablespoons sugar with cinnamon; sprinkle over top of casserole.

Step 4: Bake in the preheated oven until the top is golden, about 45 to 50 minutes.

Note: You may use any type of bread or toppings for this French Toast Bake: cinnamon, banana, blueberry, etc.

BACK IN 1963

NEWS STORIES

- Start of Beatlemania
- Zip codes implemented
- Martin Luther King, Jr. delivers his "I have a dream" speech
- Members of Ku Klux Klan dynamite Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama
- Sabin oral Polio Vaccine which is taken with a lump of sugar is given nationwide in US and UK
- President John F Kennedy assassinated
- The Soviet Union launches the Vostok 6 spacecraft, carrying Valentina Tereshkova, the first woman in space
- Studebaker the US Car Maker goes out of business and ends production



THE PRESIDENT
John F. Kennedy



WORLD POPULATION

3.210 BILLION

AVERAGE INCOME PER YEAR

\$5,897



What money can buy...

New house
\$12,650.00

New car
\$3,233.00

Air conditioner
\$149.95

Gallon of gas \$0.29

Loaf of bread \$0.22

Gallon of milk \$0.49

Movies!

CLEOPATRA

HOW THE WEST WAS WON

THE BIRDS

TOM JONES

IRMA LA DOUCE

Music!

The Beatles - "She Loves You"

Kingsmen - "Louie Louie"

Paul & Paula - "Hey Paula"

Lesley Gore - "It's My Party"

The Beach Boys

Bobby Vinton

Brenda Lee

The Rolling Stones

The Shadows

Roy Orbison

WHAT ARE YOU

Men

Wearing?
Women

Polo shirts
Harrington jackets
Chino pants
Cardigan sweaters

Capri trousers
Short boxy jackets
Stiletto heel shoes

Slang!

Ditz - an idiot

'What's your bag?' -
What's your problem?

All Show and No Go -
pretty but has no substance

Fuzz - the police

Skirt - a girl

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Born this year

Michael Jordan

Johnny Depp

Whitney Houston

Brad Pitt

Seal

Lisa Kudrow

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

SPORTS

NFL CHAMPIONSHIP

CHICAGO BEARS - NEW YORK GIANTS
(14-10)



WORLD SERIES

LOS ANGELES DODGERS - NEW YORK
YANKEES (4-0)



NBA FINALS

BOSTON CELTICS - LOS ANGELES
LAKERS (4-2)



STANLEY CUP

TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS - DETROIT
RED WINGS (4-1)



Enjoy a *Safe* Holiday Season



From late November to mid-January, when families gather, parties are scheduled and travel spikes, safety should be top of mind. Following is tried-and-true advice to ensure your family remains safe and injury-free throughout the season.

*** Traveling for the Holidays? Be Prepared**

If you're traveling this year, be sure your vehicle is in good running condition, get plenty of rest and be prepared for any emergency. Traveling by car during the holidays has the highest fatality rate of any major form of transportation based on fatalities per passenger mile. Hundreds of people die every year in crashes on New Year's Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day. Alcohol impairment is involved in about a third of these fatalities.

*** Stay Up to Date with COVID-19 Guidelines**

Check with the CDC for the most recent updates:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/index.html>



*** Decorate Safely**

- Keep potentially poisonous plants – mistletoe, holly berries, Jerusalem cherry and amaryllis – away from children
- If using an artificial tree, check that it is labeled “fire resistant”
- If using a live tree, cut off about 2 inches of the trunk to expose fresh wood for better water absorption, remember to water it and remove it from your home when it is dry
- Place your tree at least 3 feet away from fireplaces, radiators and other heat sources, making certain not to block doorways
- Only use indoor lights indoors and outdoor lights outdoors, and choose the right ladder for the task when hanging lights
- Replace light sets that have broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections
- Turn off all lights and decorations when you go to bed or leave the house



*** Candles and Fireplaces**

Use of candles and fireplaces, combined with an increase in the amount of combustible, seasonal decorations in many homes during the holidays, means more risk for fire. The National Fire Protection Association reports that one-third of home decoration fires are started by candles and that two of every five decoration fires happen because the decorations are placed too close to a heat source.

*** Turkey Fryers**

Be alert to the dangers if you're thinking of celebrating the holidays by frying a turkey. The Consumer Product Safety Commission reports there have been hundreds turkey-fryer related fires, burns or other injuries, and millions of dollars in property damage losses from these incidents.

*** Food Poisoning Is No Joke**

Keep your holidays happy by handling food safely. The [foodsafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov) website from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provides some valuable holiday food safety tips:

- Wash your hands frequently when handling food
- Keep raw meat away from fresh produce
- Use separate cutting boards, plate and utensils for uncooked and cooked meats to avoid cross-contamination
- Use a food thermometer to make sure meat is cooked to a safe temperature
- Refrigerate hot or cold leftover food within two hours of being served
- When storing turkey, cut the leftovers in small pieces so they will chill quickly
- Thanksgiving leftovers are safe for three to four days when properly refrigerated



Have a Safe & Merry Holiday!



Astrological Corner:



Winter Solstice is Wednesday, December 21st



The term “solstice” comes from the Latin words sol (Sun) and sistere (to stand still) because, during the solstice, the angle between the Sun’s rays and the plane of the Earth’s equator appears to stand still.

So, what does that mean, exactly? Upon the winter solstice, the Sun appears at its lowest in the sky, and its noontime elevation seems to stay the same for several days before and after this day. The Sun’s gradual decrease in the sky reverses upon the winter solstice, marking what many cultures believe to be a “rebirth” of the Sun as the hours of daylight become longer.

Aquarius: January 20th to February 18th

Even though the end of the year is often peppered with endless opportunities to socialize, you’ll be in the mood for a quieter time. Hopefully, you can set aside meaningful moments of solitude to do whatever your heart desires—putter around the home, finally deep clean your kitchen, binge-watch shows you’ve wanted to see for a while, and read books! If you’ve been feeling burned out, slow down and resist the pressure of adding more social commitments to your calendar.

Pisces: February 19th to March 20th

The time for merriment and connecting with your dearly missed friends is now. Take some time for much needed heart-to-hearts with people you care about. Even proximal and parallel socializing, like working at a coffee shop or reading at your local public library, could do your spirits some good. Maybe take public transportation instead of driving. Get out and have some fun to balance out all the cozy times you’re tucked in at home.

Aries: March 21st to April 19th

If you’re not able to be public in your work or any role in your life, this month you’ll be itching to be seen and likely feel compelled to share more of yourself out in the world. If not, perhaps you’re thinking a lot about the future and the direction of your life. You’ll be confronting a lot of the “shoulds” this month ahead and questioning if they’re still in alignment with how you see your future.

Taurus: April 20th to May 20th

Hopefully, you’re feeling more relief after the hectic November that just passed. The month ahead promises greener grass to explore. If you can, travel somewhere you’ve never been, whether near or far. It doesn’t have to cost much money, but dedicate some time to get out of your daily life routine as much as possible. If not, go ahead and learn something completely foreign to your own worldview. Inspiration is waiting for you.

Gemini: May 21st to June 21st

Look back to springtime, when you may have started something related to taking care of your overall health. This month ahead marks the halfway point of whatever you attempted to start back then. It’s an excellent time to re-strategize and check in with yourself about how you’re coping emotionally with all the changes that have been happening over the past six months. Turn to your friends for some much-needed comfort and support.

Cancer: June 22nd to July 22nd

You’ll be in the mood for socializing and connecting with people who are important to you, especially if you’ve been away from them for whatever reason. Life gets busy, and spending quality time with those who matter the most to you can be challenging. If anything, this month ahead shows you the relationships you want to cultivate and nourish more.

Leo: July 23rd to August 22nd

Two likely possibilities for December are that, one, you're busy with lots of work on your plate, most of which you probably enjoy—so that's a bonus. Two, you're busy with lots of work and it's making you feel sick. Either way, both forecast an increase in responsibilities and projects taking your time and attention. One thing that would be helpful to focus on is assessing the quality of your time and make that guide how you want to be spending it.

Virgo: August 23rd to September 22nd

Dedicate as much time as possible to play this month ahead. Get creative and spend your energy on any hobbies you've wanted to do more. This is an excellent time to take that pottery class, or singing lessons or joining a knitting circle. Or maybe you want to learn how to swim. Perhaps learning to play an instrument you've always wanted to learn when you were a kid. Anything to get your creative juices flowing would be good for your spirit this month.

Libra: September 23rd to October 22nd

Expect to be more homebound this month ahead. Sound dull? This can actually be a very good thing. Maybe you'll be the one hosting people to come to you instead of the other way around. If you wish for a quieter time, then do just that and set up a cozy sanctuary at home. It's an excellent time to beautify your space and deep clean neglected corners.

Scorpio: October 23rd to November 21st

Go ahead and explore local joints and parts of your neighborhood you've always wanted to visit. This is the time to get acquainted with your immediate surroundings outside of the usual hustle and bustle of your daily life. Go to a different neighborhood for your coffee, check out a new hiking trail or park for some sunset views. Go to a community art event and get ice cream after. Take the train just for the fun of it. Enjoy yourself.

Sagittarius: November 22nd to December 21st

Revelations and culminations occur in the various relationships and work-related contracts you have had going on in the past six months. This month ahead, there's a general focus on establishing a more financially stable life. Perhaps more money needs to be spent since it's December, after all. Still, you're likely scheming how to earn more sustainably over the long term. Get creative with ideas on feeling more grounded about your overall financial picture.

Capricorn: December 22nd through January 19th

Expect an eventful month when it comes to your sense of self and identity. This may show up as general questions of who you are and who you're becoming as you navigate complex and challenging situations in your life. Or it can also manifest as a focus on your health and well-being, especially if there are pressing concerns you've been delaying or avoiding. Tend to yourself and work on what needs your attention.

 **Winter Solstice is December 21st** 



Crossword Puzzle

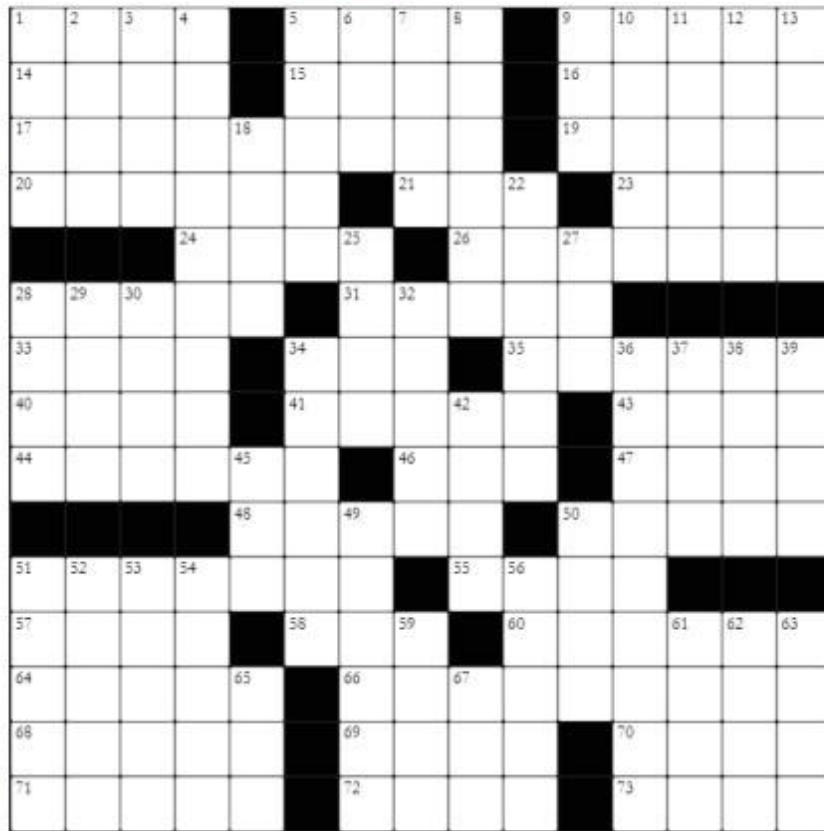
For answers to any Gazette puzzles, please email Kim at kim@avalonvillage.com

Puzzle 479



ACROSS

- 1. Musical sound
- 5. Ladder step
- 9. France's capital
- 14. Winter vehicle
- 15. Not nearby
- 16. Garbage
- 17. Submarine's viewer
- 19. Spry
- 20. Comfort
- 21. Water, to Jacques
- 23. Previously owned
- 24. Yours and mine
- 26. Roads
- 28. Commence
- 31. Subject
- 33. Cab
- 34. Sheep's sound
- 35. Wagner works
- 40. ____ Fitzgerald of jazz
- 41. Curvy letters
- 43. Slangy negative
- 44. Kitchen gadget
- 46. Create lace
- 47. Divisible by two
- 48. Passover dinner
- 50. Wave top
- 51. Eating area
- 55. All-male party
- 57. On the ocean
- 58. Min. part
- 60. Reluctant
- 64. Bakery items
- 66. Jim Henson, e.g.
- 68. Roof edges
- 69. Cleveland's lake



- 70. Machu Picchu native
- 71. Play part
- 72. Not ever, poetically
- 73. Folding beds
- 8. Lubricate
- 9. School org.
- 10. Dispute
- 11. Lift up
- 12. Tiny landmass
- 13. Casts off
- 18. Closed
- 22. Maximum
- 25. RR stops
- 27. Congressman (abbr.)
- 28. Dance move
- 29. Yarn
- 30. Car part
- 32. Undue speed
- 34. French caps
- 36. Peppy
- 37. Ramble
- 38. Tarzan's pals
- 39. Shipped
- 42. Corn units
- 45. NY time zone
- 49. Intensify
- 50. ____ in (collapse)
- 51. Appointments
- 52. Thinker ____ Newton
- 53. Boldness
- 54. Consumed
- 56. Become narrower
- 59. Make well
- 61. Nevada city
- 62. Religious subgroup
- 63. Significant times
- 65. Wind dir.
- 67. Bakery offering

DOWN

- 1. Recipe abbr.
- 2. Butter's rival
- 3. Notorious emperor
- 4. Opinion piece
- 5. Professional speedster
- 6. Alien's ship (abbr.)
- 7. Neck area

A Breath of Fresh Air

By Sonja Parker, MSPT, LMT
Designing Fitness Physical Therapy, LLC

Hello everyone! This month I would like to focus on something we cannot live without, something we do all day and night (approximately 24,000 times a day!), though most people don't ever take time in their day to slow down and consciously think about it. Our bodies do it automatically - sustaining life - and yet we have the option of altering it with our conscious effort: breathing.

Though the metabolic process of *respiration*, which supplies oxygen to all the tissues of the body and removes carbon dioxide, is involuntary, the act of *breathing* - the movement pattern that powers respiration — is actually a voluntary movement that you can alter at will. Take a moment to lie down on your bed or the floor, and ask yourself some questions:

Am I breathing through my nose or my mouth? Are my inhales or my exhales longer? How long are they? Two seconds? Three? Four? If I start breathing really fast, what happens to my body? Similarly, what if I start breathing slowly? When I breathe in, do my shoulders go up and my chest puffs out? Or does my belly rise and fall softly with the rhythm of my breathing? These are all great questions to contemplate as we begin to tune into our breath.

If you have noticed that your shoulders seem to rise or your chest expands when you breathe in, you are using what are called “accessory muscles”. This pattern of breathing is a learned habit that causes unnecessary tension throughout the upper body, contributing to tight shoulders and feelings of agitation and anxiety. It actually stimulates the “sympathetic fight-or-flight” response of the nervous system.

However, when you slow your breathing, relax your shoulders/chest, and allow your belly to rise and fall, you are allowing your diaphragm to do the work of breathing, as it is perfectly designed and most capable of doing. As this breathing pattern is our normal resting state (watch a baby breathe while it's sleeping), it stimulates the parasympathetic, “rest-and-restore” response of our nervous system, helping to foster feelings of relaxation and calmness.

The wonderful thing about tuning in to your breathing is that you can do it anywhere, anytime as a way to stay present and relax. You don't need a phone with earbuds, good music, or another person to guide you. You always have access to your breath, and the ability to alter the pace and mechanics of your breath. And as Dr Deepak Chopra has said, “Slow your breath, your thoughts will slow down as well.”

So, for this holiday season, I wish you not presents, but *presence* of mind...to focus on the most fundamental exercise of all - the exercise of breathing. Take good care everyone, and remember to:

Be strong, stay active, LIVE life!

Yours in good health,
Sonja Parker, MSPT, LMT
Phone: (207) 249-9410
Email: sonja@designingfitness.com
www.designingfitness.com

While this article is intended to provide a brief overview, it is not intended as a substitute for medical consultation. Please consult your doctor or physical therapist for more information.