

Health | Gardening | Fitness | Memories | Poetry | Recipes | Interviews | Fun

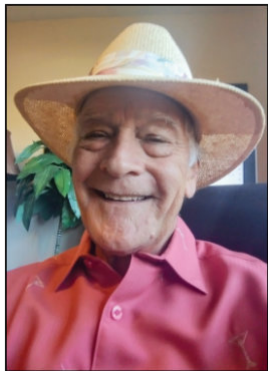
Encore

Winter 2026

Senior Lifestyle Magazine for the Central Coast



Publisher's Introduction - Winter '26



Happy New Year!! Bye, bye 2025, 2026 has arrived. And so has our winter weather. The rains of November have transformed our hillsides from California Golden to a rich green as the grasses and many of the trees and bushes show their appreciation. The wintry weather also brings in more clouds, which add to richer sunsets. As I'm approaching the twilight of my life, I find I appreciate the glow emanating from our coastal sunsets even more.

I hope everyone had a wonderful Holiday season enjoying family, friends and good cheer. Our Winter Edition of Encore is full of many familiar contributors and some new ones as well. As editor, I have the good fortune of reading all of the articles first and I always find myself either learning new things that I can incorporate into my everyday life or simply being entertained and amused. Which is a good thing because that kind of balance is what we are striving for as a publication.

I personally attended a couple of Senior Health Fairs in the Fall and was pleasantly surprised by all of the older adults who had already seen and read the magazine and really enjoyed its content. At the same time, it was great to introduce Encore to a whole group of new readers. It was also an enjoyable experience to meet many of the other vendors in attendance and to learn more about their products or services. Some of them you will find promoting their businesses within our pages. I urge you to contact them directly if you are in the market for their services.

I hope all of you enjoy our latest collaboration, because that is truly what it is. Between the writers and photographers and graphics contributors, we are attempting to produce a product that all of you readers find enjoyable and informative. Please share with family, friends or neighbors or whoever you think might enjoy its content. May 2026 be a year to remember.

Dixon

Encore

Senior Lifestyle Magazine for the Central Coast

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Encore

Digital

Anyone who would like to check out the digital version can go to our website at www.encoreseiorlife.com



You can sign up for a free online subscription by emailing us at publisher@encoreseiorlife.com



FYI

Tax Update:

Seniors (65+) can claim an additional standard deduction of \$6,000 on their 2025 tax returns.



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Hicap@centralcoastseniors.org
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(Health Insurance Counseling)

Seniors Helping Seniors - Seniorcareslo.com
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THE

KITCHEN HACK

by Carrie Head

Baking Hacks To Take Your Recipes to the Next Level

Baking is a science compared to savory cooking, where personal taste and intuition guide decisions, baking requires precision. Every ingredient, measurement, and technique plays a crucial role in the outcome. Whether it's how yeast interacts with sugar to make dough rise or how flour and liquid combine to form gluten, baking demands accuracy.

In baking, you can't always improvise like you would with savory dishes. Adding more sugar or flour to your cookie dough could ruin the recipe. Of course, it is always okay to add a little more chocolate chips.

By incorporating simple tips and techniques, you can ensure your baked goods have a professional touch. Success often lies in the details, and following a few tried-and-true guidelines can make all the difference.

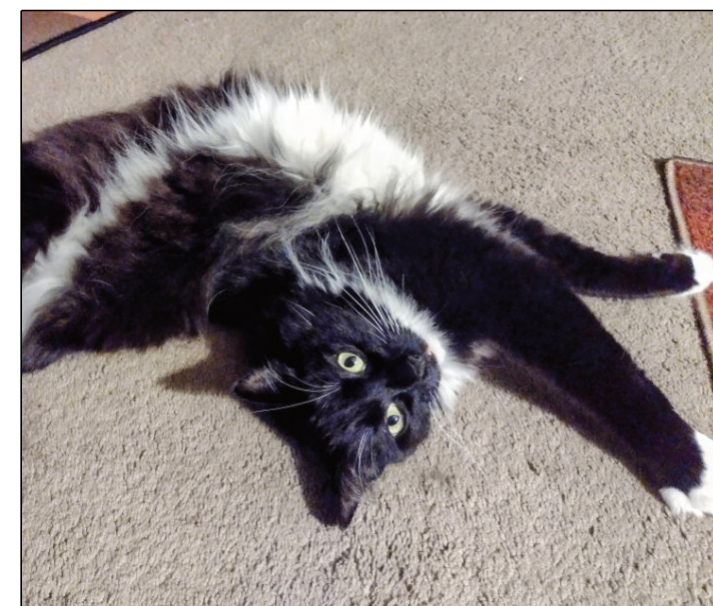
Baking Hacks:

- Allow butter and eggs to come to room temperature before baking. Let them sit out 30 minutes beforehand.
- Keep brown sugar soft by transferring it from the box to a tight glass container and adding a piece of bread.
- To soften butter, cut it up in small pieces or grate it with a cheese grater. Let it sit at room temp for 30 minutes. Do not put it in the microwave, it will melt.
- Use a kitchen scale for measuring baking ingredients for the most

accurate measurements. Weighing your ingredients (especially flour and sugar) in grams is more accurate than using measuring cups, which can vary based on how you fill them.

- Refrigerate cookie dough for 30 minutes before baking.
- Rotate baking sheets and muffin tins half way through the baking phase to assure even baking.
- Add freshly grated citrus zest to your recipes. The zest is packed with natural oils that will elevate your baked goods. Keep in mind you need a very small amount ½ -1 teaspoon.
- Avoid over mixing cookie dough or cake batter. Once the flour (gluten) has been moistened, stir the dough gently.
- To check if an egg is fresh, place it in a dish of water. If it sinks, it's fresh; if it floats, it's not. If it stands on one end, it's best to use soon.
- If your cookies crumble, leave them on the baking sheet pan for 20-30 seconds before moving them to a cooling rack. Letting them sit for that brief time allows the heat to escape and helps prevent your crumbling.
- Before whipping cream, place the bowl and mixing beaters in the freezer for 15-20 minutes.
- Brown butter secret – a lot of recipes, cookies and cakes, are now incorporating brown butter into them. Try it out, it truly adds a special flavor that will take your baked goods to the next level.

If you have any kitchen hacks you would like to share, please email.



The Cat's Meow

Feline Advice Column by Kozmo

- If someone wakes you up, simply stare at them like they've committed a felony.
- Never come when called unless there's food. Preferably tuna.
 - If a door is closed, demand it be opened. Once it's opened, don't go in. This maintains dominance.
 - Sit on anything important—papers, laptops, freshly folded laundry. This shows your love. And ownership.
- If there is a box, you must fit in it. Even if physics says no.
 - At 3 AM, sprint around the house like you're training for the Olympics. This keeps the humans humble.
- If you make a mistake, immediately lick yourself. No one can question you if you're grooming.
 - If you don't know what to do, take a nap. If you do know what to do... still take a nap.



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Yoga Pants

by Doris Lance

Although there is disagreement if Albert Einstein said the definition of insanity is, "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results", let 2026 be the result of changing negative, ingrained destructive habits to life-giving healthy habits. Days filled with strength, less pain as new days and months roll by. It may come as surprise to know that health inheritance is 30% of health issues, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and high cholesterol.

The genetic vs. lifestyle debate

While genetics affects disease risk, the recently released 2025 U.K. Biobank study reveals lifestyle behaviors play a larger part in determining whether a disease develops by interacting with your genes- lifestyle is the dominant factor in health outcomes.

- **Genetics:** Account for a smaller percentage of disease risk (estimated around 30%)
- **Lifestyle:** Determines most disease risk (estimated around 70%)

In addition, according to the Mayo Clinic's ongoing research, poor lifestyle choices, such as a sedentary lifestyle, poor diet, smoking, and excessive alcohol use, are major contributors to chronic

diseases and health risks like heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and cancer. In contrast, an individual's healthy choices, habits and behaviors result in far-reaching prevention of unhealthy conditions, as well as reducing the risk of premature death.

Major lifestyle factors and their effects

- **Physical Activity:** Regular exercise reduces the risk of chronic diseases, improves mood and sleep, and enhances brain health.
- **Diet:** A diet high in processed foods, sugar, and unhealthy fats increases the risk of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. Conversely, a balanced, plant-based diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains can protect against disease and promote longevity.
- **Sleep:** Insufficient sleep can lead to increased stress, impaired cognitive function, and a higher risk of chronic diseases like diabetes and cardiovascular disease.
- **Substance Use:** Smoking and excessive alcohol consumption can lead to health issues, including various cancers, liver disease, and heart disease.
- **Stress:** Chronic stress weakens the immune system and can lead to mental health disorders and conditions like heart disease and hypertension.

Managing stress through techniques like mindfulness and meditation can mitigate these negative effects.

"Quote"

"Before you criticize someone, you should walk a mile in their shoes. That way when you do criticize them, you're a mile away from them and you have their shoes." - Jack Handey



Jim Horner has had many Encore moments in his life. We will touch on a few of those in this interview. Jim lives in Cayucos with his wife Penny, but volunteers his time at the San Luis Obispo Senior Center as one of the directors on their board. He spent a good portion of his adult life in the San Diego area where he and his wife Penny raised a family while he ran his own residential & commercial repair business that mostly focused on appliance repair. However, after many years, the two of them decided to leave the hustle & bustle of Southern California for a quieter, rural community up near Medford, Oregon in a town called Eagle Point. Once there, they made the ambitious decision to buy a lot and to design and build their next home. While Jim had some experience remodeling and fixing & repairing things, the prospect of building an entire house from the ground up became a daunting task, but one that he said was a great learning experience. With the help of a few friends, the project became a reality, and they lived there happily for close to 20 years.

After the home was built Jim became a volunteer bus driver for a senior living facility. After he had been there for a while, the General Manager left for another opportunity. Jim decided he would apply for the opening and to his surprise he got the job. How's that for making the most out of a volunteering opportunity? They

were quite comfortable in Eagle Point, but as their kids started getting married and having kids of their own in the San Diego area, Penny insisted that they move closer to family. Jim's folks had bought a couple lots in Cayucos with the idea of building someday, but with all the water restrictions, that dream became less and less likely. But, as luck would have it, soon after Jim & Penny moved to the Central Coast, they were rewarded by being able to obtain one of the few water permits for one of his parents' lots. With the experience of building a home up in Oregon behind him, Jim tackled the next challenge of doing it all over again, building their new Cayucos home.

Once they got settled into their new community, they started looking for various social outlets. They found out there was a group of Pinochle enthusiasts getting together at the San Luis Obispo Senior Center. Soon they became members and were constantly playing their beloved game while making all sorts of new contacts & friends. But again, being the type of person that wholly believes in giving back to one's community through service, Jim found himself being the new membership coordinator of the center with over 350 members.

At this moment in time, he has given up his position as new member coordinator, but for the last 4 years he has been on the Board of Directors, which is where we started this story. While Jim admits he has a hard time articulating what he loves about volunteering & helping others, he does say being a part of a group of like-minded people who value service to others in need brings a certain civility and order to the chaos we all often experience in our everyday life.

"Quote"

"It is useless to try & hold a person to anything they say when they're madly in love, decidedly drunk or running for office." - Shirley MacLaine



Hiking with the Hawks

By Renne Gardner

I heard the high-pitched screech of the red-tailed hawk. Normally I would look up to catch sight of the raptor, but today I searched the sky below me. I was at the top of 1,347 foot Valencia Peak in Montana de Oro State Park, and I was hiking with the hawks.

As I made my way toward the peak, I wondered if my hiking companions were scanning the landscape for prey. Or were they searching for mates? Perhaps they were simply riding the thermals for the thrill of it. I could not imagine floating on thermals. For the pounding in my chest and the rapid breathing were constant reminders that I was certainly not floating. I was working the switchbacks, struggling on the climbs, and carefully focusing each step on the rocky trail. Only the beauty of the sage and wildflowers lining the trail reminded me to stop every now and then. Or maybe it was the burning in my legs... or the sweat in my eyes... or the heat on the back of my neck.

When I finally reached the top, I was rewarded with hawk-eyed views of Morro Rock, Point Buchon and the myriad shades of ocean blue leading out from Spooner Cove. My feathered hiking friends were surely descendents of hawks who soared above the

Chumash, who spied the Spanish explorers and who nested among the ranchers and trail builders. I was thrilled to share their view of the rugged coast and the mountains covered with golden poppies, mustard and monkey flower

It's a 4.5 mile round trip hike to 1,347 feet Valencia Peak. My Garmin watch indicated the actual mileage from the trailhead to the peak. But to my heart and lungs, it felt like much more!

After the hike, it was time to replenish some calories. According to poet Gary Snyder, the red-tailed hawk teaches us to have a broad view of things, while not missing the stirring of a single mouse. With this lesson in mind, I surveyed my surroundings, then narrowed my focus on a meal. I looked far and wide...on Google Maps. Only one place to go: Sylvester's in Los Osos for a tri-tip sandwich. A large, meaty and savory tri-tip sandwich.

Hiking Montana de Oro's Valencia Peak is good for your legs, heart and lungs while offering breathtaking views. And the tri-tip sandwich is great for your taste buds! And the perfect reward for hiking with the hawks!!



Health & Aging

A new study indicates that vitamin D supplements may help preserve telomere length, which could potentially slow the aging process. (Telomeres are like the plastic ends of shoe laces that prevent the ends of our chromosomes from unraveling.) Spending more time outside in the sun should also help.

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Happy Hour

Happy Hour is one of my favorite inventions. I mean just the name makes you smile. So, each issue will have a Happy Hour section in it. The column will contain 1 or 2 cocktail recipes plus 1 or 2 appetizer recipes for you to try, taste and enjoy. The first contributions will come from our editorial staff, but we would love to hear from our readers for future recipes which we will reprint, giving the creator full credit.

Apple Jackson

- 2 oz. of Jack Daniels (or any good whiskey)
- 2-4 oz. of unfiltered apple juice
- Stir with ice cubes or warm in the microwave
- Add a dash of cinnamon

KAMIKAZE

- 1 1/2 oz. vodka
- 3/4 oz. triple sec
- 1/2 oz. lime juice
- 1/2 oz. sweet & sour mix
- Shake w/ ice

TAPENADE APPETIZER

- 1 C of olives (black & green)
- 1-3 pepperoncinis
- 3 cloves of garlic
- 1-2 tbsp. capers
- 1-2 tbsp. olive oil
- Add ground pepper to taste
- Chop all ingredients or use food processor (do NOT puree)



Charlie's New Year Toast: To Your Health

The health benefits of using your singing voice:

- Boosts mood by releasing endorphins and reducing stress.
- Improves lung capacity and respiratory function.
- Enhances cognitive function and memory through melody and lyrics.
- Strengthens the immune system by increasing antibodies.
- Fosters social connections and community through group singing.
- Provides a creative outlet for self-expression and emotional release.

SUDOKU

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Time Travel

Match the singer with the song

- 1) The Five Satins
 - 2) Connie Francis
 - 3) Perry Como
 - 4) Wanda Jackson
 - 5) Hank Williams
- A) Hard Headed Women
 - B) I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry
 - C) In The Still Of The Night
 - D) Who's Sorry Now
 - E) Catch A Falling Star

Answers on bottom of page

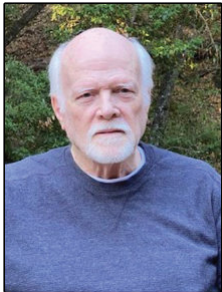
The Benefits of Pet Ownership for Seniors

As we grow older we can become more solitary and more sedentary, which is not a good thing. Social engagement and activity/movement are ways to reduce some of the effects of old age. Another way is to add a furry companion into your home. It has been proven in many case studies that adding a pet into your environment can:

- Improve cardiovascular health
- Lower your blood pressure
- Decrease loneliness
- Cause a drop in cortisol and stress
- Improve your mood and emotional health
- Can increase opportunities for exercise and physical activity
- Can expand social interactions (especially with dogs)
- Slower rate of cognitive decline
- Give a renewed sense of purpose



1-C 2-D 3-E 4-A 5-B



And Another Thing!

By Rod Pound

I hate New Year's Resolutions! They never work more than two days. "I'm going to give up salt and sugar, and eat more fresh fruit." "I'm going to start every day with exercising." "I'm going to lose weight." Try saying any of these out loud without laughing.

Here's my top 10 New Year's Resolutions. Make that 12.

1. I'm going to find the person who thought it was a good idea to put a child-protection top on my arthritis medication. Then I'm going to find a child with strong hands who is available at 8:00 every morning.
2. I'm going to give up swearing at people on television...unless the call goes against my team, or my political persuasion, or if they are just plain dumb.
3. I will no longer eat or drink anything that is new and approved.
4. I'm going to plant a lawn and get a t-shirt that says, "Get Off My Lawn!"
5. I'm going to find a reporter "on the street" and tell them what I really think.
6. I will not take any medication with "cautions" which may result in suicidal thoughts, reduced sexual desire, uncontrolled flatulence, or death.
7. I'm giving up deliberately driving slow just to teach another driver a lesson, unless they really, really piss me off.
8. I will ignore anyone who says, "really, really."
9. I will also ignore anyone who begins a sentence with, 1) "I mean," or, 2) "To be fair." And anyone who uses numbers to make a point. Or, says, "Like y'know?"
10. I will be nicer to my neighbors, except for that guy across the street.
11. I will start smoking, then give it up. My doctor will think I'm trying to be healthy.
12. I will no longer stay in bed in the morning just because its comfortable, warm, and safe, and the real world is none of that. I will be brave and get up. Soon. Like y'know?

In the Garden with Janice

Winter Gardening Tips



by Janice Van Bever

Winter is coming and some areas will most likely experience frost. It's a good idea to make sure plants have been watered before a frost as moist soil retains the heat easier than dry soil. Your potted tender plants such as succulents, citrus and tropicals should be moved into a protected area or against a south facing wall. Some succulents will thrive indoors in a bright window.

It's a good time to prune deciduous trees that are dormant which includes fruit trees such as peach, plum, apple, etc. When you prune fruit trees it's best to know if the tree produces fruit on new or older wood. Peaches fruit on new wood, and apples fruit on spurs that could have been there a few years. I always google the fruit before I start as a reminder of how much wood to remove, and which wood to keep. Roses are another plant to prune in the winter. On all pruning, make sure to cut out all dead or diseased wood and any crossing branches. It's a good time to check tree stakes either to loosen, adjust or remove.

This is a great time to divide and transplant hardy perennials, clean up decaying vegetables and litter to prevent pests and disease. If you haven't already, then now is the time to add compost to the beds to break down over the winter and renew your mulch. A chore that I don't like is cleaning and sharpening the tools and oiling the handles to prevent cracking. The reward for that chore for me is to go through some of the wonderful seed catalogs to order seeds for my veges and flowers. I enjoy Annies Annuals and Territorial Seed. The

catalogs are free and contain so much information and will help with your future planning.

January is a great month to start seeds indoors for the spring and start planning your next season's garden. Stay dry!

HAPPY GARDENING!



Weeds in the adult garden:

Between 2021 and 2023 cannabis use among older Americans 65 and older increased by 46%.

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Gluten Free Recipe

MANGO CUCUMBER SALSA *By Pat Chaney*

- 3 TBSP fresh lime juice
- 1 TBSP honey
- 2 cups cubed mango (short cut: use frozen)
- 1 1/2-cubed unpeeled English cucumber
- 2/3 cup minced red onion
- 1 TBSP seeded & minced jalapeno
- Kosher salt (pinch)
- 1 clove pressed garlic
- 1/4 cup roughly chopped cilantro

Whisk lime juice & honey in a medium reusable container until well combined.

Stir mango, cucumber, onion & jalapeno until well combined. Add dressing, toss to coat, cover bowl & refrigerate at least 1 hour to let flavors meld. Season with salt.

This is great with tortilla chips or served with fish.



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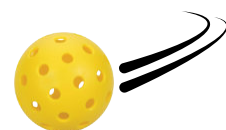
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Mastering Spin in Pickleball:

Topspin and Underspin for Total Ball Control



by Gregg Whitfield - National Award Winner and Instructor/Trainer

Technique 2: Underspin (Backspin/Slice)

This is the second part of the article on learning spin techniques in order to improve your game. Underspin is produced by contacting the ball with a slightly open paddle face while moving the paddle either downward or gently under the ball. This imparts reverse (backward) spin, which causes the ball to stay lower after the bounce and often skid or bounce unpredictably. When executed with finesse, underspin offers exceptional control over depth and pace, letting you delicately “dial in” your targets.

Mechanics of Underspin

- Paddle face: Slightly open (tilted back).
- Swing path:
- Downward slice for drives, returns, and approach shots.
- Soft upward motion under the ball for dinks, drops, and defensive lobs.
- Contact point: Below the centerline (equator) of the ball.
- Finish: Paddle “cups under” or slices through the ball to maintain backward spin.

Tip: Think of slicing the ball like you’re “shaving a thin layer of ice” from beneath it. The more pronounced your brushing or

slicing motion, the more underspin you apply. This fine-tuned control is ideal for managing distance and softness.

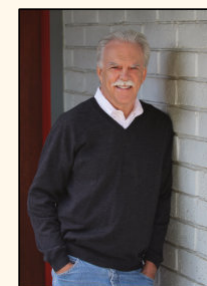
Strategic Spin Application

- **Topspin** is ideal for offensive play — enabling dipping passes, sharp roll volleys, and high-speed groundstrokes that arc down quickly and bounce up aggressively. It’s your go-to when you want to apply pressure while keeping the ball in play.
- **Underspin** excels in neutralizing or defensive contexts — such as controlled returns, low dinks, deep approach shots, and touch-based resets. It disrupts your opponent’s timing, reduces their attack options, and helps you take control of the pace. Both types of spin are tools, not tricks. They allow smart players to adapt their responses based on the ball’s height, spin, trajectory, and the opponent’s court position.

Bottom Line:

Developing topspin and underspin not only enhances your shot variety—it gives you greater command of both offensive and defensive strategies. Learning to apply spin with intention elevates your game from reactive to proactive, helping you shape each point with purpose.

POET’S PODIUM



CONCEIT

By Kevin Clark

When I was a kid, Hitchcock’s *The Birds* wrecked my sleep for months. Sometimes it still does. But not for the gruesome scar-the-night reasons you might think. I hated the ending. All those birds

settling in as if they’re taking over. Was I simply supposed to put up with that? Maybe I was fighting off the future I’d seen in my parents: Arthritis, pissy arguments, that daily bus from Jersey

to the city. The constants. Then again, maybe I was in the early stages of contrariety. At twenty-four I was a union president. My wife still calls me the Young Turk. Maybe I’ve got a thing against figures

of authority, all their warnings. Still, I have to say, in ‘63...? No way would I have thought *The Birds* an eco warning. Only *Godzilla* carried that gravitas. My friends left the theatre, but I refused. No kidding,

I stayed in the balcony of the old Westwood Cinema waiting for the next half. I figured an intermission split the story in two. But the quick opening credits roll and once more Tippi Hedren walks right past

Hitchcock and his two schnauzers. Maybe in my first inklings of what makes legit art, I thought the ending was a cop out. Okay, a kid wants closure most, but that wasn’t the all of it. Maybe I’m rewriting

my own memory again. Weren’t my parents a loving couple? Did my friends really leave me? And come on, No way at thirteen could I have known that’s Hitchcock in his cameo. What is it with me?

Even as I write this, my original conceit is dissolving. In the pitch dark, I’ll often roll over to find my wife gone. Every time, I forget she’s running before work. There’s no getting back to sleep. There’s no end to it—

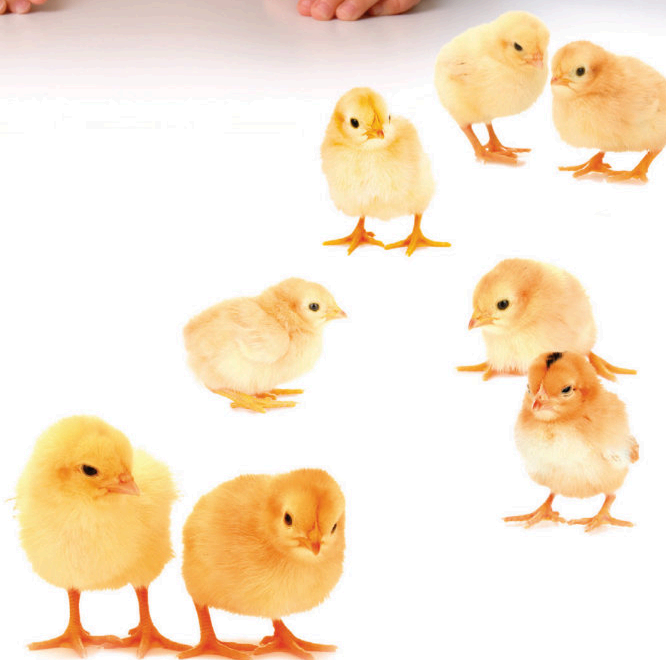
Don't miss a peep



Turn the
chick up
louder.



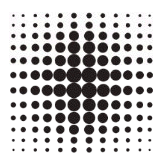
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