



VOTE

AFGE LOCAL 987 ELECTIONS
APRIL 4, 7 A.M.-7 P.M.
UNION HALL,
1764 WATSON BLVD.

- MARK YOUR BALLOT BY FILLING IN THE BOX CORRESPONDING TO THE CANDIDATE OF YOUR CHOICE.
 - PLACE THE MARKED BALLOT IN THE BALLOT BOX. PLEASE DO NOT FOLD YOUR BALLOT
 - DO NOT SIGN, INITIAL, OR MAKE ANY IDENTIFYING MARKS ON YOUR BALLOT.
- SOURCE: TRUEBALLOT (NOTE: SUPERCEDES ALL OTHER GUIDANCE/TIPS)

OFFICES UP FOR ELECTION:

- PRESIDENT
- EXECUTIVE VICE
- PRESIDENT
- TREASURER

- SECRETARY
- VP OF MAINTENANCE
- VP OF DLA
- VP AT-LARGE
- SGT-OF-ARMS
- TRUSTEES (3)

AFGE: 2024 funding package a 'mixed bag'

By AFGE Leadership

The fiscal 2024 funding package that funds the federal government for the rest of the fiscal year became law March 23. Some agencies received the funding they need to boost their operations while others faced slight cuts or flat funding.

But the biggest win for federal workers was the fact that the 20% cuts that Republicans were pursuing last year as well as the social policy riders were not included in the package. The bill also did not disturb the President's 5.2% pay adjustment for 2024.

Here are some of the highlights:

Transportation Security Administration

The bill includes \$1.1 billion to align TSA employee compensation with the federal workforce and expand collective bargaining rights for Transportation Security Officers as part of an effort that was initially funded in fiscal year 2023 and implemented in July 2023.

This allows TSA to address recruiting and retention challenges as the agency responds to post-pandemic travel volumes.

Since its implementation, TSA attrition is down over 50% compared to this time last year.

The agreement also ends the partial diversion of the passenger security fee and redirects it to TSA operations. Due to the end of the diversion, we no longer need to push for H.R.

3394, the Fund the TSA Act – a victory for AFGE.

The bill also restores funding for exit lane TSA personnel – \$98 million.

Federal Bureau of Prisons

The bill includes \$8.4 billion for salaries and expenses at BOP and \$179.7 million for buildings and facilities for construction, acquisition, and maintenance.

Congress also directed BOP to submit reports on:

Its efforts to address sexual harassment and assault of female inmates in BOP facilities.

Hiring and staff, directing BOP to coordinate with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to expedite hiring for BOP facilities with vacancy rates exceeding 10% and to make use of recruitment and retention bonuses.

The agency's augmentation usage practices no later than 60 days after the enactment of this act.

Overtime pay rate

Congress also encourages BOP to hire additional programming staff to successfully provide these key programs and ensure that each facility has a Special Education Teacher on staff. They also encourage BOP to increase the number of correctional officers at medium-security institutions.

The Office of Personnel Management is also directed to work with the BOP to analyze how the General Schedule

See **FUNDING**, page 4

Women's History Month

AFGE seminar centers around the stigma of menopause

By DON MONCRIEF
 Editor, The Union Advocate
don.moncrief@afgelocal987.org

As part of its Women's History Month celebration – with the theme of: "Women Who Advocate for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion" – AFGE's Women's and Fair Practices Divisions held a Zoom seminar March 27 entitled "Women's Health and Wellness". It featured a presentation from Kaiser Permanente – a health provider with a wide-range of offerings; from doctors to preventive care, et cetera – and even a yoga session at the end.

"It's very important for our sisters to take care of themselves," AFGE NVP for Women's and Fair Practices Jeremy Lannan opened. "Because you are always taking care of everybody else. So, we wanted to make sure we provide a space for you all to connect with resources and to have some discussion.

"As we celebrate the strength and resilience of women everywhere, we want to make sure that it's crucial to address the unique challenges and opportunities when it comes to taking care of your physical, mental

and emotional well-being.

"So today we aim to explore the dimensions of women's

Menopause fact file



75% Of women will experience symptoms related to menopause

7 years is the average duration of menopause symptoms



1 in 3 will experience symptoms for 7+ years



25% Of women will experience severe symptoms

45% Of women say menopause symptoms have negatively impacted them at work

"And so there's a knowledge gap that's developed and it really has the potential to significantly alter our quality of our lives together. It's not a disease. It's just the beginning of the next stage of your life."

- Dr. Deb Friesen, internal medicine physician

health to reproductive health to mental health all throughout a woman's journey through life. And highlight the importance of self-care and empowerment."

With that, Lannan turned the program over to others, one of which was Dr. Deb Friesen, an internal medicine physician for Kaiser Permanente, who offered the main presentation.

It was centered around menopause and mental health.

"It's a subject really important to me as a woman because I also take care of women," she said. "And from the beginning

a passion of mine. Women's health is so much more than having breasts and a uterus. It's about our experience as women. It's about how we show up differently when it comes to our health needs. It's how we present differently with chronic illnesses or even acute illnesses such as heart attacks."

Why, she continued, as far as talking about menopause. "Mostly because I have found it is not well understood. It happens to half the population if we live long enough.

See **MENOPAUSE**, page 4

Women's and Fair Practices Departments to hold two-week EEO webinar series

Special to The Union Advocate

The Women's and Fair Practices Departments invites AFGE members to join in their two-week 2024 Spring EEO webinar series. This training, according to a release, will cover topics including: (1) Overview of EEO timelines, Requesting an RA and Reporting Harassment, (2) Disability Discrimination, and (3) Discovery: What you need to know and Best Practices. To make this series as accessible as possible, the release reads, "we are offering each session twice over two weeks."

Trainings and links are as follows:

Overview of EEO Timelines, Requesting an R.A. and Reporting Harassment

Date: April 9
Time: 7:30-9:30 p.m.
 Register at https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_xeBZ-vlJjSdan13vSmFDpwQ

Disability discrimination: Understanding the difference

between Disparate Treatment based on Disability vs. Reasonable Accommodation for a Disability

Date: April 3
Time: Noon-2 p.m.
 Register at: https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_uoCZr8RQbyZhkvUNXpJLw

Date: April 10
Time: 7:30-9:30 p.m.
 Register at: https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_SCNVnh5oTWa80tq49-u-7Q

Discovery: What you need to know and best practices

Date: April 4
Time: Noon-2 p.m.
 Register at: https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_mvD-QqhapSMuYGyV7ZA43UQ

Date: April 11
Time: 7:30-9:30 p.m.
 Register at: https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Urtfbv_eShqRssVgF3rx5Q



Membership meeting

Local 987 will have a membership meeting **April 18 at 5 p.m. (Doors open at 4 p.m., with refreshments/available.) It will be held at Union Hall, located at 1764 Watson Blvd. (It will also be on Zoom.) As always, membership will be verified before admittance into the meeting. You can make updates to your contact information - address, phone, email - by calling Union Hall at 478-922-5758 or by emailing Linda Baxter at linda@afgelocal987.org or Jeanette McElhaney at jmac@afgelocal987.org.**

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Vote! Vote! Vote! Vote! Vote! Vote!

Running on issues, facts, contributions to you

By HENRY BROWN

It is not the critic who counts: not the sideline member who points out how how the activist stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done them better.

Simply as a reminder of how team Marion began this campaign for your vote. We have committed ourselves to running on the issues and the facts of our contributions to you the member. Taking the high road is a lonely one when all around you are castigating the professionalism, integrity and the success that have been garnered on behalf of our members.

The facts are that they have nothing of substance to offer you the member other than hyperbole and illusory truth. The illusory truth effects tend to be strongest when statements are related to a subject about about which they believe themselves to be knowledgeable of, and when statements are ambiguous such that they aren't obvious truth.

"I will have fitness leave restored to our employees by December."

Did anyone pose the perfunctory question of HOW? A lie doesn't care who tells it as long as it is being told. You are being hoodwinked, bamboozled, led astray by someone who can't close the deal on a simple demand to bargain. Fitness leave was never negotiated by the Local or Counsel 214. It was an incentive provided to the workforce by the Air Force Sustainment Center.

When the Air Force Sustainment Center canceled fitness leave, Robins was lagging in C-5 production, the F-15 production was down as a result of longeron, remember the large number of F-15s were parked in various locations throughout the flightline. Leadership was faced with the option of a RIF or suspending the fitness program. Suffice it to say that the Air Force Sustainment Center elected to save jobs as opposed to RIFing employees. FACT Check. You will celebrate Christmas in July before fitness is restored by December. That is a Pinocchio AWARD.

"Secured over 100K in case winning."

For the record, if you've represented anyone in either the EEO, MSPB or Arbitration and you

won the case, you would have a settlement/award not a win. Team Marion will stand on the business of representing our members with a fervor and zeal that our opponent has never known.

Currently there are four members currently representing you with settlements, the at-large 152K, Arbitration 125K, 400K. Team Marion is led by the irrefutable master of representation. Marion William has racked up 2.5 million in wins.

How do you reconcile the fact of someone telling you of their prowess in the representation process?

Sorry, there isn't a record of them representing you in Arbitration, EEO, MSPB. Since this representative has fifteen years of it, it could be an accumulated total. FACT Check.

A second Pinocchio award. Team Marion has never made a

big deal of settlements/awards; our team makes awards count for you the member. Members know who's doing the work and garnering awards for the membership.

It has been said that people with low self-esteem often resort to tearing others down as a means of making themselves feel and look better.

Rather than focusing on repairing the warped sense of self they've adopted, they will spew their negativity all over the lives and relationships of other. As your Executive Vice President, I have worked twelve hours a day to meet the needs of the membership. The president and myself can be found working Saturdays and Sundays, for the record, I have never taken a penny from the membership while working in this elected position.

Opponents of Team Marion have taken shots at me person-

ally alleging that somehow, I was recorded using a racial epithet. I was vindicated by an arbitrator noted in his decision that those members of this team's testimony wasn't creditable. They came to the hearing with the expressed purpose of lying. In a court of law it's called perjury.

Lying comes easy to this team. They are represented by holdovers from the Trusteeship where funds went missing, spending was done absent of any buy-in from the membership. They want to return to those lawless days.

Our retiree's fees increased from twenty dollars per month to fifty per month without regards to members being on a fixed income. Team Marion put a motion on the floor to have the fees returned to the original twenty dollars per month - a win for the membership.

It's inevitable: you're going to

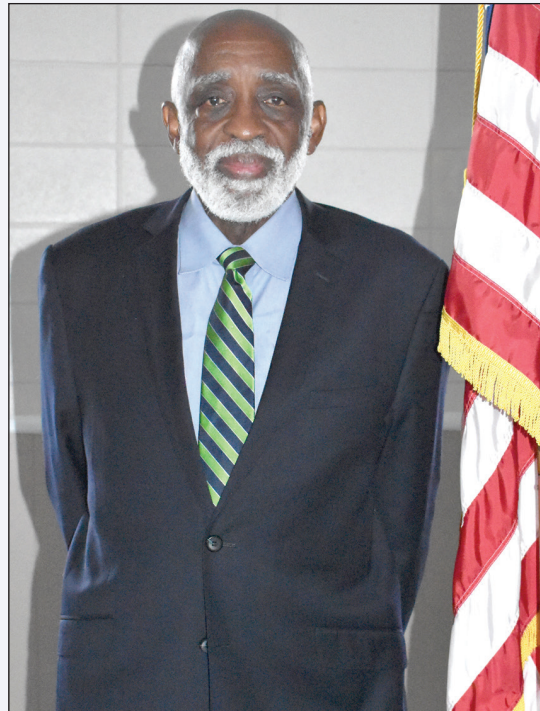
run into liars during this election. But don't worry, there are ways to deal with them. The first step is to be able to hold them accountable with your vote. Usually we miss the red flags you can look out for from our opponent. If someone is trying to pass off vague claims or half-truths as facts, they are most likely lying to you.

Once you realize that our opponent is lying, the next step is to deal with them accordingly, DON'T VOTE for them. It's time to come to the realization of the damage done to our Local by this bunch of liars ... Vote TEAM MARION the entire ticket.

The work we have done with some of the leftovers from the Trusteeship. IMAGINE WHAT CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED ON YOUR BEHALF BY GETTING RID OF THEM ALL - ONCE AND FOR ALL ... VOTE TEAM MARION!



**President
Marion Williams**



**Executive Vice President
Henry Brown**



**Monica Davis
Treasurer**



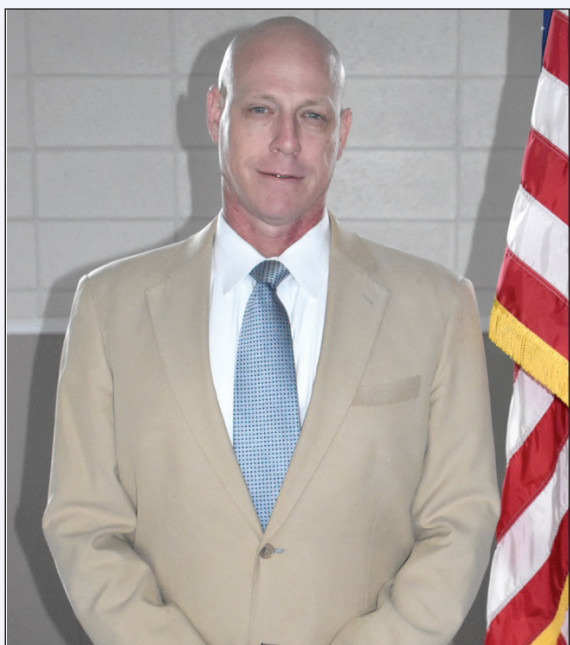
**VP of Maintenance
James Watson**



**VP-At-Large
Matthew Hawkins**



**VP - DLA
Gwen King**



**Sergeant-At-Arms
Sam Berry**



**Trustee
Teresa Freeman**



**Trustee
Ramona Higgins**



Vote! Vote! Vote! Vote! Vote! Vote!

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942 Distributed Mission Operations Center



Liberaiders from the 461st Air Control Wing at Robins Air Force Base participated in a virtual flag exercise at the Distributed Mission Operations Center located at Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico, Feb 26 – March 1. The DMOC's simulated scenarios provided an avenue for geographically separated units to connect and accomplish training at the joint/combined level. (Courtesy photo)

Liberaiders solidify battle management capabilities for joint integration in INDOPACOM

By 2nd Lt. William Hogan
41st Air Control Wing

Liberaiders from the 461st Air Control Wing demonstrated dynamic battle management during the week-long exercise Virtual Flag: Mission Command, Feb 26 – March 1, 2024.

The multi-unit crew was also comprised of Airmen from the 728th Battle Management Control Squadron, the 330th Combat Training Squadron and the 12th Airborne Command and Control Squadron.

In addition, the 726th Air Control Squadron at Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho, provided command and control and White Force support to over seven joint units directly from the Distributed Mission Operations Center located at

Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico.

"The DMOC's virtual simulation provided us the opportunity to test our (Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures) in a low-risk environment, to accomplish training to certify and upgrade our members, and allowed us to execute at a level where we could put (Battle Management Command and Control) advanced concepts into action," said Maj. Aurea Pomales Martínez, 461st ACW, Instructor Air Battle manager.

Maj. Luis Hidalgo, 461st ACW, Evaluator Mission commander said the virtual simulation reinforced the problem the Air Force faces in today's threat environment.

"Focusing on mission command, units had to truly understand what mission type orders, authorities, and responsibilities

meant in a degraded environment while testing the concept of distributed control, with units only receiving limited information prior to executing the plan," he continued. "On top of that, our crews were executing crew swaps each day, meaning everyone had to be on the same page with the current situation and upcoming events."

"To say it was challenging is an understatement, but our crews did an outstanding job and I believe we captured some good lessons learned to be able to apply in our training back home station."

The DMOC's simulated scenarios were engineered based on current U.S. Indo-Pacific Command adversarial threats and provided an avenue for geographically separated units to connect and accomplish training at the joint/combined level.

BBB alert: Watch out for 'free' roof inspections

With the warmer weather and summer storms, roofing scams become more common. BBB Scam Tracker frequently receives reports of shady "free" roof inspections. Homeowners should be on the lookout for these cons.

How these scams work

You receive a call, or a person shows up at the door claiming to represent a roofing company. According to Scam Tracker reports, con artists often use the name of the state (i.e. Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina) plus "Roofing" or "Construction" as their business name.

The "roofer" offers a free inspection. Why, you ask? The person may claim that their company is working on a neighbor's home and is offering inspections to those living nearby.

But if you ask questions about where the business is located or how their services work, you'll most likely be met with vague answers, or, if you are speaking on the phone, they may simply hang up.

You accept the free inspection, and the "inspector" shows up at your house. If they don't find enough wear and tear to merit a whole new roof, they may fabricate it, by tearing off shingles to mimic wind damage.

Or they may simply show you pictures of someone else's damaged roof. Don't hire this company! Any repairs done by such a dishonest business are not likely to be high quality.

How to avoid roofing scams

Beware of unsolicited offers. Most scams begin with a contractor who "just happens to



Kelvin Collins

be in the area" and notices your roof or home has the appearance of needing repairs from the outside.

Roofing scams typically increase in frequency after a powerful storm, so stay alert.

Get your insurance company to inspect your roof. Filing a claim with

your insurance company goes on your record and could affect future claims or your coverage. Before signing any paperwork or contracts with a roofing company, have your insurance company to come out for an inspection to verify the need for repairs or replacements.

Research roofing companies before you hire. Look at a company's business rating on BBB.org. Keep a close eye on previous reviews and any complaints other consumers might have had. This is one of the best ways to know if a roofing company is reputable or just a cover for a scam.

Storm chasing has become a multi-million-dollar industry, complete with computerized hail forecasting, teams of out-of-state installers and trained salespeople who go door-to-door soliciting work.

Trust your instincts and thoroughly research any company knocking on your door.

For more information about hiring a roofing company, see BBB.org/Roofers. You can also find valuable information at BBB.org/ScamTips and our Consumer HQ.

Medal of Honor spotlight

Chief Master Sgt. Richard Etchberger

By KATIE LANGE
DoD News

Many military men and women do heroic things that they can't get credit for because they're involved in classified missions. For Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Richard Loy Etchberger, he finally did get credit in the form of the Medal of Honor 42 years after he lost his life saving others during the Vietnam War.

Etchberger was born March 5, 1933, in Hamburg, Pennsylvania, to Donald and Kathryn Etchberger. He had an older brother named Robert.

When their father lost his job after the Pearl Harbor attacks, both boys started to work odd jobs to help with finances. Eventually, the family moved to nearby Minersville, Pennsylvania, so his dad could find more work. There, Etchberger became a star basketball player and excelled in academics. His brother said it helped that he had a photographic memory.

"When he would go upstairs to study, he would be done in 10 minutes. Then, he was back downstairs doing whatever he wanted. That used to infuriate me because I couldn't learn my lessons that quickly," Robert Etchberger said in an interview for an article on the Airmen Memorial Museum website.

After World War II ended, the family moved back to Hamburg, where Etchberger finished high school. He was the senior class president by the time he graduated in 1951.

A few weeks later, Etchberger enlisted in the Air Force. He initially wanted to be a pilot, his brother said, but due to an injury that lingered from his basketball days, he washed out of aviation school. Instead, he was trained as a radio operator and came to be known to be an electronics whiz.

A few years into his service, Etchberger met

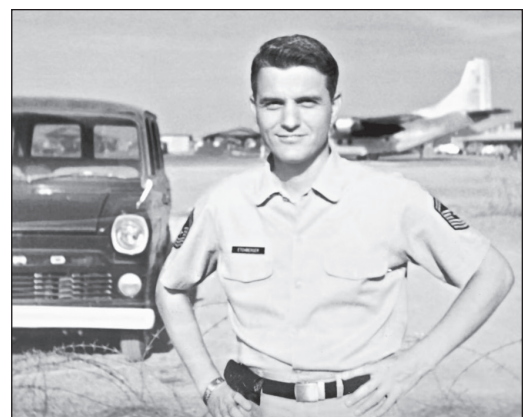


Photo courtesy defense.gov

Chief Master Sgt. Richard Etchberger

Catherine Vaccaria while on assignment in Utah. The pair married in 1956, with Etchberger taking on the role of stepfather to Catherine's son, Steve. By 1959, they had two more sons, Richard and Cory.

In August 1965, Etchberger and the whole family were transferred to Clark Air Base in the Philippines. Aside from his standard duties there, Etchberger was also the communications and electronics noncommissioned officer in charge of a radar control post on Hon Tree Island in Vietnam, where the U.S. was now at war.

After a brief stint back in the U.S., Etchberger was assigned to the 1043rd Radar Evaluation Squadron and placed on a top-secret Air Force/CIA mission code-named Project Heavy Green. It called for Etchberger and a small team to go to a small radar station on top of a remote mountain in Laos that was being used to direct U.S. air support to North Vietnam during the early years of the war.

The mission wasn't easy to join. Etchberger and the other airmen involved needed to be released from the Air Force and hired by Lockheed Corporation to avoid giving the perception that Laos was involved with the U.S. government in the war. When the mission was over, the airmen would be welcomed back into the Air Force.

In early 1968, Etchberger and his team made it to the radar station, which was called Lima Site 85. From that mountainous jungle perch, which was only 12 miles from North Vietnam, about 40 airmen controlled hundreds of air strikes into enemy territory during the 1968 Rolling Thunder campaign.

The North Vietnamese knew the value of the site, so they made many attempts to take it out. None were successful until March 10, 1968,

See HONOR, page 4

Pediatricians can help teens quit vaping, using tobacco

(StatePoint) Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in the United States and it almost always begins during adolescence.

According to leading medical advocates, pediatricians have a role to play in getting kids to quit vaping electronic cigarettes and using other tobacco products.

Ten percent of American students report using tobacco products, according to the FDA. And while there have been declines in the use of cigarettes among adolescents, the popularity of e-cigarettes and other smokeless tobacco and nicotine products is on the rise.

Smoking and vaping are both harmful to health, particularly to youth, whose brains are still developing and who are uniquely vulnerable to nicotine dependence.

That's why the American Academy of Pediatrics has developed the Youth Tobacco Cessation Progressive Web App. This new, free clinical decision resource, which can be used on a computer, tablet or offline mobile app, leads physicians through the following steps:

1. Ask: Screen for tobacco use with all youth,



PHOTO SOURCE: (c) JackF / iStock via Getty Images Plus

during every clinical encounter.

2. Counsel: Advise all youth who use tobacco to quit and have them set a quit date within two weeks.

3. Treat: Link adolescents to behavioral treatment extenders and prescribe pharmacologic support when indicated. After the visit, follow up to assess progress and offer support.

See QUIT, page 4

Help keep children safe from lithium coin batteries

(StatePoint) About 7,000 children in the United States visit emergency rooms for battery-related injuries each year, according to the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System. Lithium coin batteries, those small, disc-shaped batteries about the size of a nickel, are particularly dangerous.

The exact right size to get lodged in a child's throat if accidentally swallowed, they can turn deadly, burning a hole in an esophagus in as little as two hours. And, they're everywhere – in key fobs, key finders, flameless candles, remote controls, thermometers and many common home devices.

Despite parents' thirst for knowledge on how to keep their children safe, the potential dangers of lithium coin batteries are not widely discussed. It's no surprise then that 55% of parents with children ages 6 and under don't realize that lithium coin batteries are more dangerous than button batteries – in fact 45% think there is no



PHOTO SOURCE: (c) JackF / iStock via Getty Images Plus

difference. That's according to a 2023 Duracell survey conducted by Wakefield Research. This is why the brand is reminding parents that when it comes to lithium coin batteries, #BitterIsBetter.

As part of the #BitterIsBetter campaign,

See SAFE, page 4

THE UNION ADVOCATE

Published by the American Federation of Government Employees Local 987, Warner Robins, Georgia.

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Printer
Houston Home Journal
Editor/layout and design
Don Moncrief

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Please submit articles, photos, etc to don.moncrief@afge-local987.org. For questions about story content, to pass on story ideas or to request coverage, please contact the aforementioned.

MENOPAUSE

From page 1

Yet it makes us uncomfortable. When we don't understand things. When it makes us uncomfortable, we laugh, we make jokes. But they're all not funny, right.

"And when we laugh menopausal women think we're laughing at them. It's really uniquely awful and just disempowering to not understand what's happening in your own body. And when we don't talk about it, we're uninformed. We're disempowered. It's frightening and it really makes it hard to self-advocate.

"So even though it is a universal experience, we're just not talking about it. It's enshrouded in secrecy. You know we all learned about puberty in school. Remember our fifth-grade sex education class? There's no menopause curriculum in school. A lot of providers don't discuss it with their patients in advance."

Another thing she said she hears is "it's a lonely time." There really isn't a set of stories behind it. You know, we celebrate a lot of times when our daughters have their first period. It really is a sign that things are changing. Well part of that is how we're defining menopause, which is, well you haven't had a period since last year. It's really hard to get to that one-year celebration time.

"It's not a disease. It's really just part of how we adapt as humans. And we've come a long way, but this is one place where there's still a work in progress. And we still have a lot of work to do on this."

Facts about menopause Friesen offered were that more than a million women in the United States go through it

every year, and about five percent, she said, experience it as early as their 40s.

"Again, it's stigmatized. Flooded with shame, even now. And this is really goes along with our shame of aging. There's the belief once women lose their fertility they must be all dried up, washed out, devoid of sexual attraction or vitality.

"And so there's a knowledge gap that's developed and it really has the potential to significantly alter our quality of our lives together. It's not a disease. It's just the beginning of the next stage of your life."

In talking about what it is — a definition — Friesen referred to the book by Dr. Jen Gunter, The Menopause Manifesto — a bit of tongue-in-cheek description as a "Yelp" rating. As such it gets a "one star ... This establishment has temperature control issues followed by terrible chills. It defies the laws of thermodynamics. Would not recommend. Awful. Awful. Awful. Bleeding was scheduled but was rebooked without notification. Three weeks later than expected, when I was in a Uber and I flooded the car. The driver gave me a terrible review. The sex was dry."

Why it matters, she continued was, "again, most women will spend a third or even half their lives post-menopausal and there are currently 70 million in the U.S. who are 45 and older. And worldwide, that number is one billion. So again, a lot of women are going to go through this if they haven't already."

Statistics she gave were that 35 percent reported entering this stage of life in their early 40s. There is also a workforce impact, she continued, with 84 percent reporting that it impacted their work productivity.

"When I gave a webinar for another group and some of my

colleagues were there. One said, 'You know what. Thank goodness I went through menopause during the pandemic and was working at home. It was beautiful, because some days I couldn't get off the floor. I was bleeding so heavily and I was so anemic.' And it really does affect us."

Friesen continued with statistics that 65 percent felt the needs of menopause were overlooked by employers. "We certainly don't talk about it in the workplace very much at all," she said. "(Yet) there are productivity losses associated with menopause. Again, people at work aren't working effectively. They think that globally there is a total of about \$150 billion dollars a year.

"And then look at a person. What it does in their career life span as well. Some more than 6,000 a day in the U.S. Seventy-five percent, ages 40-75 receive no treatment for senior menopause treatments. One in 10 who worked during menopause will quit their jobs because of the severity of symptoms. And only about 30 percent of residency programs — teaching our doctors — have a menopause curriculum. If your doctor doesn't know about it, how are they going to help you get through it?"

From there, Friesen transitioned to talking about the stigma of it, symptoms and what people could do.

As a stigma, she said, someone once described it as "dreaded, derided and seldom disguised. And again, it's seen as a marker of getting old."

She referenced a 2023 study in the Journal of Women's Health that concluded a third of the respondents said they felt shame over it. Shame related to their menopausal symptoms, she continued, with 83 percent saying they felt shame over them.

"So shame is defined as, if you go to dictionary.com, as a 'painful feeling, humiliation or stress, caused by the consciousness of wrong or shameful behavior'. In stigma that's a mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality or person.

"So why in the heck do women feel either of these things? A natural phenomena for all of us if we live long enough? The changes we feel make us ashamed because we feel like we've done something wrong by aging."

There was another study, she said, called Body Image, that looked at aging in women over 50. The participants, she said, expressed their symptoms "over and over. One woman expressed it like this: 'You wake up one morning and your face is sagging. You develop an inner tube around your middle that wasn't there before. Your skin turns dry. Your earlobes get longer and the nose gets bigger. Your breasts droop. You sprout whiskers. Cellulite seems to be everywhere. Bruises and veins start to cover your legs. You have difficulty remembering different things.'"

Another, she said, noted how feeling ashamed "can make us ashamed. I'm ashamed of my aging body and I'm ashamed that I'm ashamed."

"I believe women pay a horrible price for cultural biases related to gender and age. And this woman was 58 years old. The average age is 52. That's in my rearview mirror and it doesn't feel very old. But if you look at Google images and menopause, what you're going to see are hairy, hot, sweaty, angry women. And you know, that's not the reality for the majority of women, but it does have that negative stigma. "It affects half the world's

population," she continued, "but again it's agism. It's sexism. We talk about erectile dysfunction and there's meds for that and there's commercials for that and it's talked about pretty freely. But for menopause we're still just not there yet."

The effect on the workplace is also very real, she said, saying menopause overlapped pretty much with the age employees are likely to be qualified into top leadership positions. Yet, she said, there's new research that shows that people undergoing menopause are judged less leader like. Another barrier, she said, citing the example of a writeup between two people up for a leadership position. One was a woman 55. The other a man 55. They had the same exact writeup and the same exact symptoms, she said. But in the case of the woman, she continued, her symptoms were attributed to menopause. His weren't. He was offered the position. She wasn't.

Only ... "When they changed one simple thing, they actually rated the woman the same. One simple thing, which actually wasn't that simple. If she acknowledged her hot flashes and made a joke about it. 'Oh. Is it warm in this pace? Someone turn on a fan and then we can keep going.'

So the thing about this in the workplace, it needs to be talked about destigmatizing it all together. We need to start the conversation."

As far as signs and symptoms, some Friesen offered up were that the average age was 51. It lasts two-seven years and even longer for some people, she said. Some experience different experiences as far as their period — i.e. none for 12 months, spotting, et cetera — and some might notice the changes four years in advance, she said. "A

lot of changes," she said. "The hot flashes, night sweats — hot flashes during sleep. Not able to lose weight, genital urinary symptoms, vaginal dryness, leaky bladder, dry eyes, dry skin, painful joints."

As far as what women can do, Friesen said there are some "non" and some "pharmaceutical" options "based on interventions." She went in great length about the latter — i.e. hormone replacement therapy — but inferred it was best to work that plan out with your doctor.

As far as the "non", she said a journal review of 17,000 found if women followed a low-fat diet with five servings of fresh produce and six servings of whole grains they were much more likely to control or lose their weight and a lot less likely to have hot flashes than the control group.

"So it really does matter that you eat healthy. Exercise is really important (as well)," she added. "Another study found regular exercise can reduce the frequency and intensity of hot flashes. It can just be walking."

"Sleep. It does matter. We invest way too much in this society in sleep but it can make such a difference in how you're feeling all through the day. There's data that if you sleep better, you have less hot flashes, but we know if you sleep like you're supposed to, you're just going to feel better."

There's also evidence to suggest reducing stress also helps, she said. "So doing things that reduce stress. It's our reaction to stress. Not the stress in our lives necessarily. Sleep is one of the things. Medication and mindfulness. Social outlets. Spending time with people is really, really important as far as stress reduction. We need people in our lives as well."

FUNDING

From page 1

levels for BOP employees can be modified to address concerns about pay-related matters, and to brief the committees on these efforts no later than 90 days after the enactment of this Act.

Social Security Administration

The bill includes \$14.2 billion for SSA's administrative expenses—an increase of \$100 million over FY2023 and a rejection of cuts proposed in the House bill. Tight spending caps significantly limit the ability to provide SSA the funding it needs to provide the service that Americans who have paid into Social Security deserve.

Addressing backlogs in key workloads and wait times will require sustained increases in funding to allow SSA to increase staffing and make

needed IT improvements. The administration's request was for \$15.5 billion. In real terms, this is another drastic cut to SSA.

Veterans Affairs

The bill funds VA medical care at \$138.127 billion, matching the FY2024 budget request—including \$121 billion in new funding plus \$17.1 from the 2024 advanced appropriation—for \$2.3 billion increase over FY2023. This includes \$71 billion for VA in-house medical services.

While we support the topline VA appropriations, we remain concerned that VA may allocate its funding away from VA to private care as the agency has discretion to transfer some of its funds between VA and private care accounts.

In the President's 2025 budget request, the VA proposes to transfer \$7.3 billion from VA Medical

Services and \$600 million from the Medical Facilities accounts to Medical Community Care. The agency also has discretion in how it allocates spending between mandatory spending related to toxic exposure and other VA spending, which makes it difficult to determine private care spending as roughly half of toxic exposure spending is private care.

The VA 2025 budget request shows that it expects VA in-house costs to grow by 5% and private care by 12% between 2024 and 2025.

Defense Department

The bill provides DoD \$824.5 billion, a \$26.7 billion increase over FY2023. The bill, however, dropped language from the FY 2023 defense appropriations act that prohibits DoD from reducing its civilian workforce without analysis of the effects of these reductions on workload, readiness, and costs.

This could encourage DoD to make arbitrary cuts to the DoD civilian workforce that are not in line with the current and future needs of uniformed personnel whose mission is to defend the U.S.

Environmental Protection Agency

The bill provides \$9.16 billion to the EPA, a significant cut — roughly \$1 billion less than EPA's enacted 2023 budget of more than \$10.1 billion.

This reduction in funding will prohibit EPA from being able to hire the necessary number of full-time employees to protect human health and the environment.

The administration's proposed FY 2025 budget for the EPA requests \$10.994 billion and 17,145 FTEs to support the agency's mission, including to hire more than 2,000 new employees.

The FY 2024 minibus appropriations cuts to EPA will prove an obstacle to the agency being able to hire more EPA

employees.

Department of Agriculture

The bill provides \$1.79 billion—a \$44 million increase over fiscal year 2023—for the Agricultural Research Service, USDA's premiere in-house research agency.

The bill also provides \$1.19 billion for the Food Safety and Inspection Service, an increase of \$32 million over fiscal year 2023.

This funding will help ensure FSIS can continue its vital work protecting America's food supply without being forced to reduce its staffing levels, which would jeopardize food safety and exacerbate supply chain delays.

Governmentwide A-76 ban

The funding package includes a continued ban on the use of A-76 public-private competition to convert federal jobs to contractor performance.

HONOR

From page 3

when they began to attack the site with heavy artillery. By nightfall, Etchberger and his off-duty team realized their sleeping quarters were vulnerable to the shelling, so they hid with their guns and survival radios on a ledge partially protected by a rocky overhang for the rest of the night.

Early the next morning, enemy commandos scaled the cliff the compound was on, killing 11 of the 19 Americans working at the site. While Etchberger's team was initially spared, it didn't take long for the enemy to find them and start attacking, killing two airmen and seriously injuring two others.

Since Etchberger was a radar technician, he didn't have any formal combat training. But that didn't stop him from picking up arms and defending their position. For hours, Etchberger single-handedly held off the enemy with an M-16 rifle, all while calling for air rescue and directing air strikes that were practically right on top of him.

Once rescuers arrived, Etchberger risked his own life several times, running through heavy fire to put three of his wounded comrades into rescue slings hanging from the hovering rescue helicopter. But when he finally climbed into the sling himself and was lifted to the chopper, he was hit by a burst of gunfire. Etchberger survived the initial helicopter flight, but he died before he could be transported for

further medical treatment.

Etchberger, who had turned 35 the week prior, gave his own life to save the lives of his remaining crew. Of the 19 men on the mountain that night, only seven made it out alive — three of them thanks to Etchberger's actions.

The slain airman's body was returned to the U.S. and buried in St. Johns Cemetery in his hometown.

Since details of the mission were classified, Etchberger was secretly awarded the Air Force Cross. Nine months after the mission, his wife, who accepted the honor on his behalf, was told the real story of what happened to her husband; however, she was sworn to secrecy. Etchberger's sons didn't even learn the truth until the late 1980's when the details were finally declassified.

Once his actions were no longer a secret, they remained relatively hidden in the past until the early 2000's. That's when Air Force Master Sgt. Robert Dilley read about Etchberger's heroism and thought more should be done to honor him. Dilley wrote his local congressman, and, together, they began a years-long movement to have Etchberger recognized with the Medal of Honor.

That dream came to fruition on Sept. 21, 2010, when Etchberger's sons received the nation's highest medal for valor in their father's name from President Barack Obama during a White House ceremony. Etchberger's wife, Catherine, was also recognized for her own personal sacrifice in keeping the secret — something she never told anyone, even upon her death in 1994.

QUIT

From page 3

The web app also provides a flowchart for clinical interactions, links to product descriptions, an AAP policy and clinical report, sample counseling statements, behavioral support options, such as texting services, quitlines and

online resources, and detailed information on pharmacologic support, including nicotine replacement therapy.

There is currently little data on successful youth tobacco treatment strategies. In the meantime, clinicians can leverage existing literature and promising practices to support tobacco cessation in young people. To learn

more and to access the Youth Tobacco Cessation Progressive Web App, visit aap.org/HelpKidsQuit.

Tobacco use and nicotine dependence are significant health concerns. Pediatricians can use their vital, trusted role as a source of expertise, support and guidance to provide teens with confidential tobacco cessation care.

SAFE

From page 3

Duracell is sharing these simple tips to help keep you and your family safe:

- One in 4 parents with kids aged 6 and under don't know how many devices in their homes require lithium coin batteries to operate. Do a survey of your devices, and move those that contain lithium coin batteries away from and out-of-reach of children. Examples of common devices include flameless

LED tealight candles, key fobs and thermometers.

- Get down to your child's eye level to see what they see. Look for loose lithium coin batteries in couch cushions, on low tables and shelves or any other areas that a child can reach.
- Inspect devices and secure lithium coin battery compartments by tightening the screws or securing them with tape for an extra layer of protection.
- Keep all new lithium coin batteries in a secure compartment, up high and out of children's reach. Remove expired

batteries from devices, and place them away safely out of reach of children until you can recycle them properly.

- Power your devices with batteries that have child safety features. When it comes to lithium coin batteries,
- Keep a watchful eye. Toddlers and young children are curious by nature.
- If you suspect that your child has ingested a lithium coin battery, act fast. Take them immediately to an emergency room. If you aren't able to drive, call 911 for help.

STEP 1:

Go to www.joinafge.org



STEP 2:

Select your Agency and Local Number



STEP 3:

Fill out the one-page membership form and click "Join"



STEP 4:

If you're a new member, select a rebate campaign and fill out the brief form (local participation may vary)



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STATEPOINT CROSSWORD

THEME: EUROPEAN CAPITALS

- ACROSS**
- Parting words
 - Broadcasting acronym
 - Taj Mahal city
 - Ernest, to mommy
 - "Fat chance!"
 - Fits of shivering
 - Rundown
 - Historical period
 - "___ its weight in gold"
 - *Namesake of famous pact signed in 1955
 - **"The City of a Hundred Spires"
 - Financial assistance
 - Bird's groomer
 - Pod nugget
 - Fountain order
 - Duck dish a certain way
 - Picture on a coat
 - Feline vibration
 - Stocking fiber
 - Stink to high heaven
 - Cocoyam, pl.
 - Felvic bones
 - Prost over (2 words)
 - Stew bean
 - Sleeveless garment
 - Predicament
 - Snakelike fish
 - Hi-___ monitor
 - Toothy wheel
 - *Street, in capital city in #38 Down
 - *On the Danube
 - *On the Thames
 - Virtue, in Italian
 - *Street, in capital city in #25 Down
 - Dashboard instruments
 - Beside, archaic
 - Geological Society of America
 - Type of heron
 - Parks or Luxembourg
 - Pecking mother

73. Like oboe's sound

DOWN

- "___ the land of the free ..."
- Cold one
- Peruvian Empire
- Miss America topper
- Blood infection
- Prepare to swallow
- *Dublin's cultural quarter neighborhood, "Temple ___"
- Parallelogram, e.g.
- All excited
- Spiritual leader
- Network of nerves
- Certain something in a tray
- Rouse
- Take puppy from a pound
- "Hamilton: An American Musical" singing style
- Great ___ Reef
- *On the Seine
- Not slouching
- Arabian chieftain
- Like Roman god Janus
- *Also the most populous city in Ukraine
- More ill
- Neil Diamond's "Beautiful ___"
- Annoying tiny biters
- Arctic jaeger
- *Located in boot-shaped country
- Sound of artillery
- Kind of hickory nut
- Jack's inferior
- Like a Grammy nominee
- Frustration, in print
- "A bird in hand is worth two in the bush," e.g.
- Source of veritas
- Wraths
- Volcano in Sicily
- Ground beef description
- Fairytale giant
- "All You ___ Is Love"
- Variable, abbr.
- Put to work
- Hog heaven

CROSSWORD

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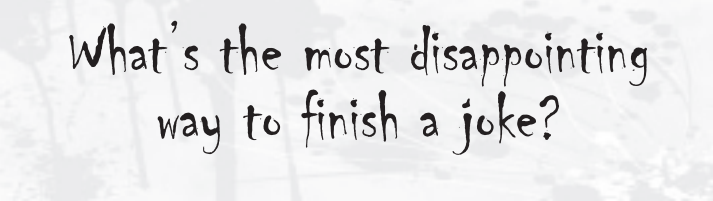
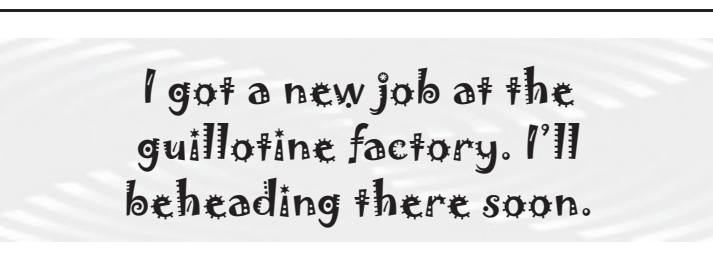
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Fill in the blank squares in the grid, making sure that every row, column and 3-by-3 box includes all digits 1 through 9.



Card Games

Z D T H G I E Y Z A R C O J X R U M M Y W V
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| BRIDGE | CANASTA | CRAZY EIGHT |
| CRIBBAGE | FLAPS | FREECELL |
| GIN | GO FISH | HEARTS |
| HOLDEM | MAJONG | OLD MAID |
| PHASE TEN | PINOCHLE | POKER |
| RUMMY | SLAM | SOLITARE |
| SPADES | TAROT | UNO |

A little humor ...

Boss: "The main thing to remember is that repetition, repetition, repetition is the key! If you have a product to sell, keep harping on it every possible way, cram it down people's throats ... make yourself sickening and repulsive if you have to, but don't ever forget to repeat and repeat and repeat! It's the only way to get results!"

Employee: "Yes, sir. Boss."

Boss: "And now, what was it you came in to see me about?"

Employee: "Well, sir, a raise! A raise! A raise! A raise! A raise! A raise! A raise! A raise ..."

Son: "Here's my report card ... and I'm tired of watching TV anyway."

Q. If a dog lost its tail,

where would it get another one? A. At the retail store.

Beverly: "A scientist says that we become what we eat."

Melba: "Oh, boy! Let's order something rich."

A man and his wife were running to their seats after a movie intermission.

He asked a man at the end of a row, "Did I step on your

toes on the way out?"

"You certainly did," responded the other angrily.

"All right," he said, turning to his wife. "This is our row."

A twentieth-century Rip Van Winkle slept for 20 years. Upon awaking he immediately found a telephone booth and called his broker.

"What's the stock market done the past twenty years?" he inquired.

His broker soon was able to report that his shares of AT&T were now worth \$3 million, his shares of General Motors worth \$2 million, and his oil holdings had increased to \$4 million.

"Great!" Rip exclaimed. "I'm rich!" A telephone operator interrupted and said, "Your three minutes are up, sir. Would you please deposit a million dollars?"

First husband: "I think my wife is getting tired of me."

Second husband: "What makes you feel that way?"

First husband: "She keeps wrapping my lunches in road maps."

The teller had just been robbed for the third time by the same man, and the police officer was asking if he had noticed anything specific about the criminal.

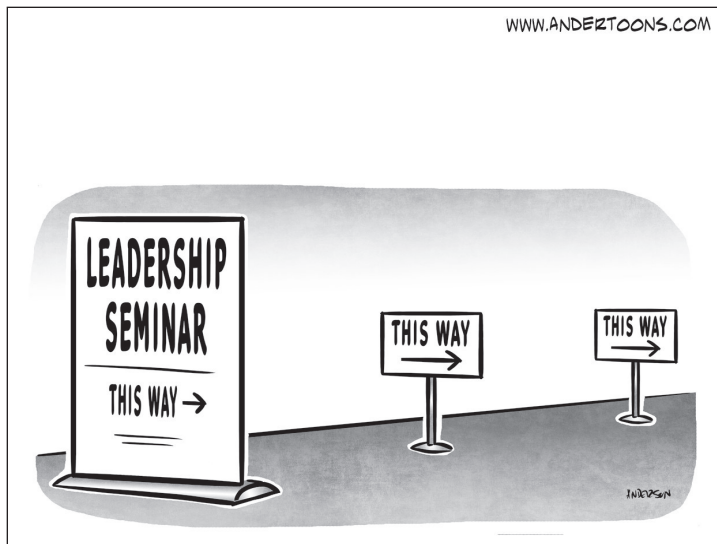
"Yes," said the teller, "he seems to be better dressed each time."

Ad in newspaper: "For sale cheap ... my son's collection of rock 'n' roll records. If a boy's voice answers the phone, hang up and call later."

Mr. and Mrs. Smith were touring Russia. Their guide, a man named Rudolph, argued all the time. As the couple was leaving Moscow, the husband said, "Look, it's snowing out."

The guide disagreed, "No, sir, it's raining out."

"I still think it's snowing," said Mr. Smith. But his wife replied, "Rudolph the Red knows rain, dear."



STR8TS

No. 677 Medium

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How to beat **Str8ts** - Like Sudoku, no single number can repeat in any row or column. But... rows and columns are divided by black squares into **compartments**. These need to be filled in with numbers that complete a 'straight'. A **straight** is a set of numbers with no gaps but can be in any order, eg [4,2,3,5]. Clues in black cells remove that number as an option in that row and column, and are not part of any straight. Glance at the solution to see how 'straights' are formed.

You can find more help and strategies at www.str8ts.com along with more puzzles, Apple apps and books.

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French Toast Casserole

Celebrate Spring with

Brunch Favorites



Double Chocolate Chip Mini Muffins

Bite-Sized Chocolate Delights

Flavorful French toast, filling breakfast burritos and favorite fruits make a feast to look forward to, but no brunch spread is complete without a chocolatey bite to cap off the meal. In fact, make it a double.

These Double Chocolate Chip Mini Muffins offer a combination of two kinds of rich chocolate complemented by the caramel notes of C&H Light Brown Sugar for an irresistible dessert in bite-sized form. Tiny, tasty treats are a perfect way to send guests off with one sweet final bite.

Visit chsugar.com to find more delectable dessert recipes.

Double Chocolate Chip Mini Muffins

Muffin Batter:
 2 cups all-purpose flour
 1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
 1 teaspoon baking soda
 1/2 teaspoon salt
 1 package (10 ounces) mini semi-sweet chocolate chips
 2 large eggs
 1/2 cup C&H Light Brown Sugar, packed
 1/2 cup C&H Granulated Sugar
 3/4 cup sour cream
 1/2 cup vegetable oil
 1/2 cup whole milk

1/2 teaspoon instant espresso (optional)
 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
 2 tablespoons flaked sea salt (optional)

Preheat oven to 350 F. Line mini muffin pan with mini cupcake liners.

In large mixing bowl, use whisk to combine flour, cocoa powder, baking soda and salt. Add chocolate chips and stir to ensure chocolate chips are coated in flour mixture.

In separate large mixing bowl, use wire whisk to whisk eggs and sugars until ingredients are combined and sugars are dissolved. Add sour cream, oil and milk. Whisk again to combine. If using espresso powder, add to vanilla then add to wet ingredients. Whisk vanilla espresso mixture into other liquid ingredients.

Pour liquid ingredients on top of dry ingredients. Using rubber spatula, mix until just combined, being careful to not overmix. Batter should be thick and shiny. Using tablespoon or two spoons, spoon muffin batter into liners. Batter should be filled almost to top of each liner. Top each muffin with flaked sea salt before baking, if desired.

Bake muffins on center rack 6 minutes. Rotate pan and bake 6 minutes, or until toothpick inserted in muffin comes out clean. Once muffins finish baking, place muffin pan on cooling rack to cool completely.

FAMILY FEATURES

Few things go together quite like fresh spring air, warm sunshine and a menu made up of delicious brunch bites. Whether you're hosting a crowd or simply gathering your loved ones around the family table for quality time together, a menu of morning favorites can appease appetites of all kinds.

From sweet to savory and back again, you can turn your mid-morning meal into a full-blown feast with a menu made up of pleasing dishes such as this French Toast Casserole, which can serve as a make-ahead twist on the breakfast classic; customizable Breakfast Burritos that pack a protein punch; and a bite-sized treat like Double Chocolate Chip Mini Muffins for a sweet finishing touch to any brunch occasion.

Find more recipes to inspire your next brunch menu at Culinary.net.

Warm Up with a Fresh Casserole

An exciting twist on a breakfast classic, it's hard to beat this French Toast Casserole when putting together your brunch spread. Crisp on top while soft and moist in the middle, it comes fresh out of the oven with the aroma of maple syrup and pecans that will have the whole house eager for a bite. It's easy enough to make fresh in the morning but can also be prepared the night before so all you have to do is add the topping and pop it in the oven.

French Toast Casserole

1 loaf French bread (about 1 1/2 pounds), cut into 1-inch cubes
 5 large eggs
 1 1/2 cups unsweetened milk
 2 tablespoons brown sugar
 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
 1 teaspoon cinnamon
 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
 1/4 teaspoon sea salt
 maple syrup, for serving

Topping:

2 tablespoons unsalted butter or coconut oil, melted
 2 tablespoons brown sugar
 1/2 cup chopped pecans
 1 cup frozen strawberries
 1 cup frozen blueberries
 confectioners' sugar, for dusting

Grease 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Place bread cubes in baking dish. In large bowl, whisk eggs, milk, brown sugar, vanilla, cinnamon, nutmeg and salt. Pour mixture evenly over bread cubes.

If making casserole ahead, cover baking dish and refrigerate overnight. If baking immediately, let stand 30 minutes at room temperature to allow bread to soak up egg mixture.

Preheat oven to 350 F.

To make topping: Drizzle casserole with melted butter and sprinkle with brown sugar and pecans. Top with strawberries and blueberries.

Cover and bake 35 minutes then uncover and bake 10-20 minutes, or until topping is browned and egg mixture has mostly set.

Remove from oven, cover loosely with foil and let stand 10 minutes. Dust with confectioners' sugar. Serve with maple syrup.

Brunch with a Powerful Punch

When you're craving something hearty and rich, switch up your brunch habits with wholesome and filling Breakfast Burritos. With protein to keep you full, veggies for a touch of added nutrition and hot sauce to pack a powerful punch of flavor in every bite, this hearty recipe will keep you full and bursting with energy until your next meal. Plus, they're easy to make in a matter of minutes and totally customizable to accommodate every palate.

Breakfast Burritos

Servings: 4

2 teaspoons canola oil
 1 small red onion, diced
 1 red bell pepper, seeded and diced
 1 can black beans, drained and rinsed
 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
 salt, to taste
 pepper, to taste
 4 eggs
 4 egg whites
 1/2 cup shredded pepper jack cheese



Breakfast Burritos

nonstick cooking spray
 4 flour tortillas
 1/4 cup sour cream
 1/4 cup salsa
 1 large tomato, seeded and diced
 1 avocado, sliced
 hot sauce (optional)

In large skillet, heat canola oil over medium heat. Add red onion and red bell pepper; cook 8 minutes. Add black beans and red pepper flakes; cook 3 minutes. Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Transfer to dish.

In medium bowl, whisk eggs and egg whites. Stir in cheese until combined. Heat large skillet over low heat, add egg mixture and scramble 3 minutes, or until cooked through.

Spread sour cream over tortilla. Spread salsa over sour cream. Spoon 1/4 bean mixture over salsa. Spoon 1/4 scrambled eggs over bean mixture. Top with diced tomatoes and avocado. Drizzle with hot sauce, if desired. Roll-up burrito. Repeat three times with remaining ingredients and serve.

YOUNG

Young Organizing Unionists for the Next Generation

The AFGE Young Organizing Unionists for the Next Generation program seeks to mobilize young union members to become leaders and activists for social change within AFGE and the Labor Movement.

AFGE members who are under the age of 40 and those mentors that are over 40 work together to include younger workers into

the union structure and keep them engaged in what's at stake for working class Americans. YOUNG intends to provide young members with networking opportunities and resources to engage in mobilizing other young workers into AFGE, union training to promote leadership skills, innovative social gatherings, AFGE conference meetings, and other engaging events. In doing so, partici-

pants work to build lasting labor solidarity, advance issues of social and economic justice, and find more inclusive ways to engage the current and future generations in the Labor Movement.

For more information, or to get involved at the Local 987 level, contact Brandon Respress at brandon.respress@afgelo-cal987.org.