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WHO WE ARE

Jax Gay Inc. is a Community Marketing and Events organization incorporating Jax Gay Magazine, Rainbow Events, and Drag Queen Aholic.

Our mission as a 502(c)3 non-profit is to promote North Florida and especially in Jacksonville, as a welcoming LGBTQ+ destitation through marketing and events. Jax Gay produces many events a year, including Jax Equality Festival in Jacksonville. Other events include the Rainbow Awards Show, White Party, Big Gay Picnic, Taste of Pride and Red Party. Visit www.JaxGayMag.com for more information.

Jax Gay Inc. also plans to launch our Jax Event Center & LGBT+ Art Gallery in Fall of 2023.

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12 Hol-i-Gay Travel Gift Ideas

By David Vandygriff















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Liberating Christmas



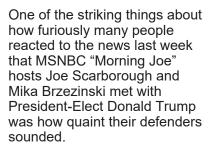
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Morning Joe' Hosts Grapple With Aftermath Of Trump Meeting By David Vandygriff



"It is insane for critics to NOT think all of us in the media need to know more so we can share/report more," Jim VandeHei, co-founder of Axios and Politico, said on social media.

It would be journalistic malpractice for the hosts of a morning television news program not to take a meeting with a president-elect, right? But "Morning Joe" isn't traditional journalism, and last week's incident is a telling illustration of the broader trend of impartial fact-finding being crowded out in the marketplace by opinionated news and the expectations that creates.

Scarborough, a former congressman, and his wife, veteran newswoman Brzezinski, didn't just talk about the presidential campaign from their four-hour weekday perch. They tirelessly and emotionally

advocated for Democrat Kamala Harris, likening Trump to a fascist-in-waiting.

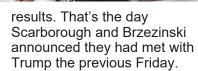
"They have portrayed themselves as bastions of integrity standing up to a would -be dictator," says Frank Sesno, a former CNN Washington bureau chief now professor at George Washington University's school of media and public affairs. "What the followers see is the daily procession of people on the show constantly talking about the evils of Donald Trump and then Joe and Mika show up and have high tea with the guy."

A quick and intense blowback from viewers

The social media blowback was instant and intense. "You do not need to talk to Hitler to cover him effectively," was one of the nicer messages.

More telling is the people who have responded with action.

"Morning Joe" had 770,000 viewers last Monday, its audience — like many shows on MSNBC — down from its yearly average of 1.09 million because some of the network's liberal-leaning viewers have tuned away after what they regard as depressing election



By Tuesday, the "Morning Joe" audience had slipped to 680,000, according to the Nielsen company, and Wednesday's viewership was 647,000. Thursday rebounded to 707,000. It's only three days of data, but those are the kind of statistics about which television executives brood.

"The audience for the polarized news-industrial complex has become unforgiving," says Kate O'Brian, outgoing head of news of the E.W. Scripps Co.

The Washington Post learned this last month when it lost a reported 250,000 subscribers — presumably the bulk of them non-Trump supporters — after announcing it would not endorse a candidate for president. A draft of an editorial endorsing Harris had already been in the works.

Mixing news and opinion isn't new; many U.S. newspapers in the 1800s were unabashedly partisan. But for most of the past century, there was a vigorous effort to separate the two. Broadcast television, licensed to serve the public

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interest, built up fact-based news divisions. What began to change things was the success of Fox News in building a conservative audience that believed it was underserved and undervalued.

Now there's a vigorous industry catering to people who want to see their points of view reflected — and are less interested in reporting or any content that contradicts them.

The most notable trend in 2024 campaign coverage was the diminishing influence of so-called legacy news brands in favor of outlets like podcasts that offered publicity-hungry politicians a friendly, if not supportive, home. Trump, for example, visited several podcasters, including the influential Joe Rogan, who awarded Trump with an endorsement.

"I won't even call it journalism," Sesno says. "It's storytelling."

The past decade's journey of Megyn Kelly is one illustration of how opinion can pay off in today's climate. Once one of the more aggressive reporters at Fox News, she angered Trump in a 2015 debate with a pointed question about his treatment of women. She moved to the legacy outlet NBC News, but that didn't work for her.

Among cable TV-based news brands, CNN has tried hardest to present an image of Impartiality. So the collapse in its ratings has been noteworthy: the network's audience of 4.7 million people for its

election night coverage was essentially half the 9.1 million people it had for the same night in 2020.

O'Brian is leaving Scripps at the end of the year because it is ending its 24-hour television news network after finding impartiality was a tough business. Scripps is continuing a streaming news product.

What's the place for non-partisan news in today's environment?

That's the environment Scarborough and Brzezinski work in on "Morning Joe."

"They are very talented show hosts," Sesno says. "But they are not out on the front lines doing journalism, seeking truth in the way that a professional journalist does."

Hours after the hosts' announcement that they had met with Trump, an MSNBC colleague, Katie Phang, said on X that "normalizing Trump is a bad idea." Scarborough had made a point of saying that was not what he was attempting to do.

"It's not up to you or your corrupt industry to 'normalize' or not 'normalize' any politician who wins an election fair & square," Christina Pushaw, the pugnacious aide to Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, replied to Phang. "Americans had their say; Trump will be your president come January whether you 'normalize' it or not. I would suggests journos should accept reality."

Quaintness alert: Sesno is



among those who believe the "Morning Joe" hosts did the right thing.

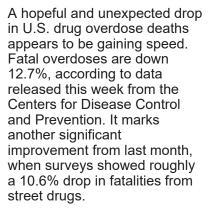
Whatever the motivations — and there are some who believe that worries that a Trump administration could make life difficult very difficult for them was on the hosts' minds — opening a line of communication to ensure that a show based on politics is not completely cut off from the thinking of a presidential administration makes business sense, he says. A little humility doesn't hurt.

Even if her own job has proven that it's not a great business now, Scripps' O'Brian has seen enough focus groups of people who yearn for a more traditional journalism-based approach to believe in its importance.

"I think that there is still a need for nonpartisan news," says the former longtime ABC News producer, "and maybe what brings it back to where it used to be will be an exhaustion from the hyper-polarized climate that we currently live in."



US Fentanyl Deaths Have Dropped Faster Than Expected: CDC By Austin Roberts



"This is the largest recorded reduction in overdose deaths, and the sixth consecutive month of reported decreases," White House officials said in a statement.

Experts say the drop in street drug mortality marks a dramatic reversal from just a few years ago when fatal overdoses were spiraling upward at devastating speed, fueled largely by the spread of street fentanyl.

If the trend holds, this year is expected to be the first since 2020 to see overdose deaths fall below the 100,000 mark.

During a press conference on Thursday, public health officials from New York City and Seattle said their experience locally mirrors the national trend.

Brad Finegood, who

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coordinates overdose and addiction programs in King County, Wash., which includes Seattle, pointed to a 22% decline in fatal overdoses in the first nine months of this year.

"That for us represents an extremely significant decline," Finegood said. "Our nonfatal overdoses have also decreased significantly."

New York City saw more modest improvement: a decline of 1% in fatal overdoses from 2022 to 2023. "This represents the beginning, the green shoots of progress," said city Health Commissioner Ashwin Vasan, who is leaving office on Friday.

Gupta, the White House of czar, said the drop in drug deaths, while welcome, is a beginning. "We have removed more barriers to treatment for substance u disorder than ever before invested historic levels of

Vasan said New York's small decline in drug deaths reverses a four-year trend when fatal overdoses rose sharply. He also said fatal overdoses in the first three months of this year appear to have dropped rapidly.

However, public health experts said some communities, especially Blacks and Native Americans, are not yet seeing significant declines in overdose deaths.

"Older African American men are particularly vulnerable," said Chrissie Juliano, executive director of the Big Cities Health Coalition, a group made up of



some of the nation's largest urban public health departments.

During Thursday's press conference, Juliano and other experts noted that poverty, homelessness and racial disparities in access to healthcare appear to be making it much harder for some groups to recover.

Gupta, the White House drug czar, said the drop in drug deaths, while welcome, is only a beginning. "We have removed more barriers to treatment for substance use disorder than ever before and invested historic levels of funding to help crack down on illicit drug trafficking at the border," Gupta said. He pointed to the widespread availability of the opioid overdose reversal medication naloxone as another likely factor reducing deaths.

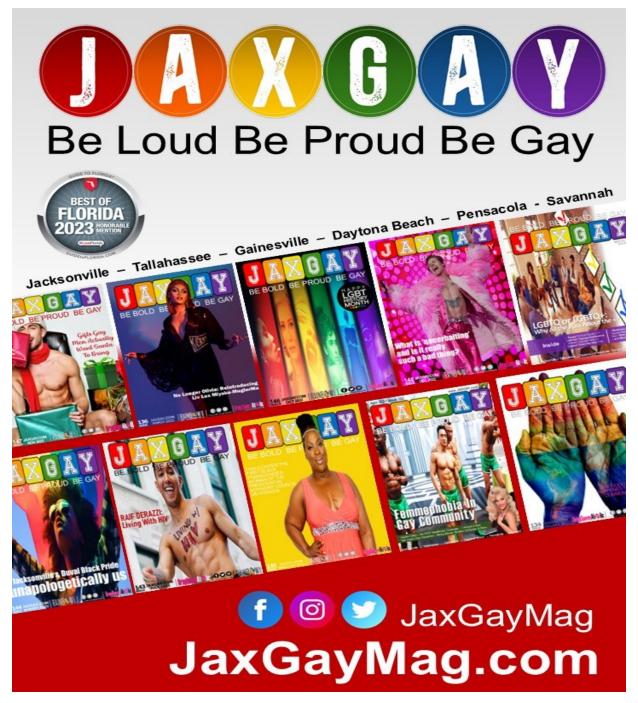
"This new data shows there is hope, there is progress, and there is an urgent call to action ... to save even more lives," Gupta said in a statement.

A debate has begun among drug policy experts and public health officials over why fatal overdoses are declining so rapidly.

Scientists who study the street drug supply say there has been a notable drop in the availability and purity of fentanyl available on U.S. streets.

Other researchers believe the shift reflects the devastatingly high number of drug deaths between 2020 and 2023, when tens of thousands of vulnerable

people lost their lives to fentanyl, methamphetamines and other substances.





80K US Homes To Get Clean Electricity From Ørsted's Largest Solar Farm

By Glenda Rutherford

A Denmark-based firm has established its largest solar farm in Texas. Ørsted's largest solar farm, which has been connected to the grid, will power 80,000 homes, businesses and support the conservation of rare, native tallgrass prairie habitat.

The company's Mockingbird Solar Center in Lamar County has a capacity of 468 MW, which will provide additional capacity needed to power the ERCOT grid.

Ørsted is harnessing the collective power of renewable energy solutions to meet the growing demand for clean energy in the U.S. By deploying the full spectrum of renewables technologies, the firm is delivering sustainable solutions that support American energy independence and achieve carbon reduction.

Clean energy to more than 100,000 American homes

Currently, the company's solar energy projects are delivering clean energy to more than 100,000 American homes by generating over 600 megawatts of clean, affordable power.

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In addition, Ørsted has nearly 700 megawatts of solar and battery storage projects under construction.

"We are delighted to commission Ørsted's largest solar project and deliver domestic and reliable energy to the Texas grid," said Melissa Peterson. Head of Onshore **Development and Origination** at Ørsted.

"We are very proud of this transformative project. In addition to progressing our goal of building out more American energy, we were able to form a meaningful partnership with The Nature Conservancy, advance our biodiversity commitment and preserve an important piece of Texas' land and heritage for future generations."

Portfolio of over 6 GW

The company claims that the Mockingbird Solar Center represents a half-billion-dollar investment in Texas, part of Ørsted's \$20 billion investment to build out U.S. domestic energy generation. In addition, the project will contribute \$75 million in local property tax revenue for the local school

districts and other public services.

With Mockingbird Solar Center officially online, Ørsted now has a portfolio of over 6 GW of onshore wind, solar, and battery storage projects in operation or under construction across the United States.

"This project and partnership is something everyone in our community can be proud of," said Mihir "Mark" Pankaj, Mayor of Paris. "Preserving natural habitat and generating clean energy is a win-win situation, and we appreciate Ørsted's efforts to source from local businesses and support our local economy."

As part of this project, Ørsted donated almost 1,000 acres of the of the Smiley-Woodfin Native Prairie Grassland adjacent to the Mockingbird Solar Center to The Nature Conservancy to preserve in perpetuity.

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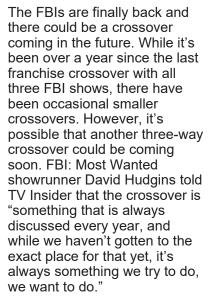
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'FBI' And 'FBI: Most Wanted' Potential Next Crossover

By Jennifer Davis



"They're very challenging to produce because you've got to wrangle three shows, three casts, three crews, but they work all day," Hudgins continued. "And so yes, we are looking at doing that, but it's not going to be 'til the spring." Not surprisingly, there wasn't a



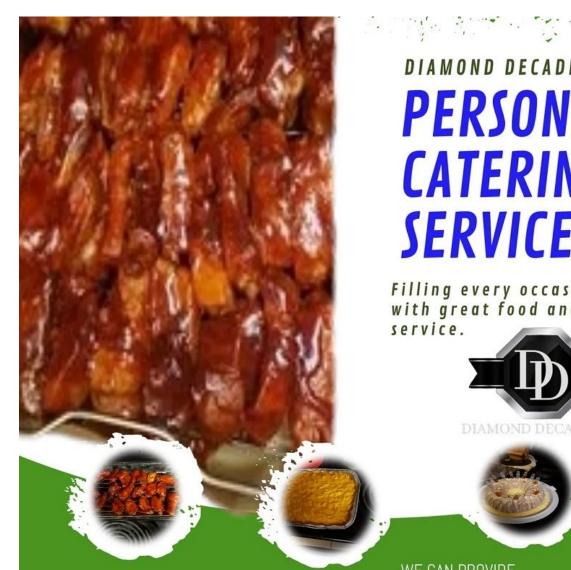
three-way crossover last season, likely due to the strikes and the shortened seasons, but there were some small crossovers.

"I see them down the hall, and they're always asking who's available," FBI showrunner Mike Weiss added. "And I'm like, 'You've got their phone numbers.' I think the great thing about having International is we do have this opportunity for people to find themselves in Portugal or Rome or whatever, which is always a delightful catnip, I think, for the actors. But no. we haven't vet figured out exactly how much crossing over there's going to be, but we know we love doing it. And it's kind of an amazing thing about the Wolf family. I mean, everyone's fantastic. Everyone is great and collaborative and it's a really fun thing to be able to do these moments where characters exist in this whole

universe that's bigger than any one show. It's a treat."

Since there are some new characters in all three FBI shows since the last three-way crossover, it would be fun to see some new dynamics between the teams and specific members. While it hasn't exactly been confirmed that another crossover is happening, it does sound like there are some ideas being thrown around. If one does happen, fans shouldn't expect anything until at least midseason, it sounds like, and closer towards the end of the seasons. The wait would be worth it, though, and before then, there should be at least a few more mini crossovers to look forward to. New episodes of FBI, FBI: International, and FBI: Most Wanted air on Tuesdays beginning at 8 p.m. ET on CBS.





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Smoking High Potent Weed Makes DNA Fly By Justin Davidson



Imagine a realm where the effects of cannabis extend beyond the mind, reaching deep into your DNA.

As potent strains of weed become increasingly popular, new research reveals that these powerful substances may not only elevate your mood but also influence genetic expression.

This intriguing intersection of cannabis and genetics invites us to explore how the highs of today can spark transformations at a molecular level, promising a future where smoking weed could truly change the essence of who we are.

DNA And Weed

High-potency cannabis use leaves a distinct mark on DNA, according to new research by the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience (IoPPN) at King's College London and the University of Exeter.

Published in Molecular Psychiatry, this is the first study to suggest that the use of high-potency cannabis (defined as having THC content of 10 percent or greater) leaves a

distinct mark on DNA, providing valuable insights into the biological impact of cannabis use.

The research also showed the effect of cannabis use on DNA is different in people experiencing their first episode of psychosis compared to users who have never experienced psychosis, suggesting there could be potential for DNA blood tests to help characterize those cannabis users at risk of developing psychosis to inform preventative approaches.

With the increasing prevalence of cannabis use and more availability of high potency cannabis, there is a pressing need better to understand its biological impact, particularly on mental health, said Professor Marta Di Forti, Professor of Drugs, Genes and Psychosis at King's IoPPN and senior author of the study.

"Our study is the first to show high potency cannabis leaves a unique signature on DNA related to mechanisms around the immune system and energy production. Future research needs to explore if the DNA signature for current cannabis use, and in particular the one of

high potency types, can help identify those users most at risk to develop psychosis, both in recreational and medicinal use settings."

Alters DNA Sequencing

Researchers explored the effects of cannabis use on DNA methylation, a chemical process detected in blood samples that alters how genes function (whether they are switched 'on' or 'off').

DNA methylation is a type of epigenetic change that alters gene expression without affecting the DNA sequence itself and is considered a vital factor in the interplay between risk factors and mental health.

The laboratory team at the University of Exeter conducted complex analyses of DNA methylation across the whole human genome using blood samples from both people who have experienced first-episode psychosis and those who have never had a psychotic experience.

The researchers investigated the impact of current cannabis use, including frequency and potency, on the DNA of a total of 682 participants.

The analysis showed that

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frequent users of highpotency cannabis had changes in genes related to mitochondrial and immune function, particularly the CAVIN1 gene, which could affect energy and immune response.

These changes were not explained by the well-established impact that tobacco has on DNA methylation, which is usually mixed into joints by most cannabis users.

Dr Emma Dempster, senior lecturer at the University of Exeter and the study's first author, said this is the first study to show that frequent use of high-potency cannabis leaves a distinct molecular mark on DNA, particularly affecting genes related to energy and immune function.

"Our findings provide important insights into how cannabis use may alter biological processes. DNA methylation, which bridges the gap between genetics and environmental factors. is a key mechanism that allows external influences. such as substance use, to impact gene activity. These epigenetic changes, shaped by lifestyle and exposures, offer a valuable perspective on how cannabis use may influence mental health through biological pathways."



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LifeStyle

How To Perfectly Thaw Your Thanksgiving Turkey By Linda Davis



When it comes to Thanksgiving, turkey is the main attraction. One of the reasons we eat turkey on Thanksgiving is the bird's abundance in North America. but the size of turkeys also plays a role in their holiday ubiquity, as these birds are big enough to satisfy the whole family. However, their impressive bulk also has one drawback in that it can take quite some time to defrost a whole turkey. For greater insight, Mashed spoke with Peter Som, recipe developer and lifestyle expert, about how to best thaw a turkey for the holiday. Here are Som's exclusive answers.

"Always thaw in the refrigerator, ensuring to place it on a sheet pan or tray to catch any drips," Som explains. Som also recommends getting an early start on the process, as refrigerator thawing takes time. "It'll be about 24 hours for

every 4 to 5 pounds of turkey," states Som, "so a 12 pound bird will take around three days to thaw in the fridge." And lest you think you can put a partially frozen bird in the oven, think again. Som cautions that this "is NOT the way to go." The turkey will cook unevenly if parts of it remain frozen.

You Can't Rush Perfection (But You Can Speed It Up A Little)

Let's imagine that you're so focused on preparing surprising Thanksgiving side dishes to wow your guests (such as sweet potato latkes and zucchini fritters) that you forget to relocate the turkey to the refrigerator. In this case, Peter Som recommends using a cold-water thawing method. The recipe developer explains that "You'll need to allot 30 minutes per pound of turkey," which means it will take roughly six hours for a 12-

pound turkey to defrost. So, while this method is a lot swifter than using the refrigerator, "it'll still take some time," according to Som.

As for how to thaw a turkey in cold water, Som advises that you submerge your bird in the sink (or a large bucket), changing the water every 30 to 45 minutes so that the water stays cold. While you might wonder whether you can speed up the thawing process by using warm water, it's not recommended. There are three safe ways to defrost food: in the refrigerator, in the microwave, and in cold water. Using warm or hot water to thaw food can place it firmly within the danger zone of 40 to 140 degrees Fahrenheit, which can lead bacterial growth. Fortunately, Som's advice lets you know exactly how long it takes to safely thaw a turkey so you can plan your holiday accordingly.









12 Hol-i-Gay Travel Gift Ideas
By David Vandygriff

Shopping can be a daunting task especially if you're trying to stay out of a crowded shopping mall or if you want to avoid countless hours surfing online for the perfect present for an LGBTQ+ traveler. So, we decided to pull together a list of gift ideas – a range of different prices – to help you find the right holiday gift for that friend or relative who enjoys traveling. We also included a few items to support LGBTQ+-owned businesses. All quoted prices are subject to change.



Roverlund Out-of-Office Pet Carrier (\$159)

Wired Magazine calls this the "Best Pet Carrier." With the Out-of-Office Pet Carrier, pet owners don't have to leave their pets behind when they

travel. This soft-sided pet carrier triples as an airline-compliant pet carrier, car seat, and mobile dog or cat bed, and a leash! The LGBTQ+-owned Roverlund brand makes 15 lbs. and 25 lbs. carriers, and they comply with the sizing requirements for most major airlines, including Delta, United, American Airlines, Southwest, JetBlue, and Alaskan, Made with marine and mountaineering grade materials, these carriers are designed to withstand a little wear and tear while transporting your furry friend by land, air, or sea.



KAFTKO Kaftans to Kozy Bears (\$68 – \$135)

We couldn't have a holiday gift list without including KAFTKO's colorful kaftans, including the Kozy Bear collection. The assortment of patterns and prints will tempt



you to splurge on gifts not only for the travelers in your life but you'll probably be one to snag one, too! These are ideal for a summer trip to the beach, a winter ski getaway, or just for lounging around the house. In case you didn't know, KAFTKO – the creation of Arab American gay designer Oday Shakar, and his two founding partners Dana Quadri and James Adelman offers these non-gendered. bear-friendly, femme-friendly looks and we're here for it!



Airplane Pockets (\$29.99)

For the frequent flyer, you may want to consider ordering the Airplane Pockets, a set of convenient pockets you can attach to the back of the seat in front of you to store all your travel essentials on or short or long-haul flight. It has four expandable, stretchable pockets to organize and store

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magazines, earphones, a tablet, a phone charger, and more. You can also use these waterresistant, machine-washable pockets to cover your tray table when you're ready to eat or do some work on your laptop. Larger Issues On Show



Stuzo Clothing (various prices)

Support Stuzo Clothing and buy genderless apparel for the hip travelers in your life. Fashion designers and married couple Uzo Ejikeme and Stoney Michelli teamed up to build this unique brand to celebrate the "nonconforming and bold at heart." Made in L.A., the Stuzo has a wide election of clothes including sweatshirts, hoodies, hats, tshirts, crop tops, and jackets. Accessories for sale include face masks, candles, and mugs. Kristen Stewart, Jada Pinkett Smith, and Lena Waithe have been seen wearing the distinctly different Stuzo brand. We'd love to travel in a comfy pair of Mola Joggers (\$65), Mola Overalls (\$175), or "Woman Up" Beanie (\$30) to keep our heads warm during

the winter. Stuzo Clothing also offers gift cards.



AWAY's Insider Packing Cubes (\$65)

It's the day before you leave on a trip, and you just can't pack everything in your carry-on suitcase. We've all been there before! So, for the non-stop traveler in your life, you might want to consider gifting AWAY's packing cubes to help compress and organize everything inside their suitcase, including socks, shirts, and unmentionables. Protect your clothes and other travel essentials in these waterresistant cubes that fit perfectly inside your suitcase and come in a set of four (\$45) or six (\$65). Regardless of the set size, the packing cubes come in seven different colors including a fabulous pink!







Trixie Cosmetics (various prices)

Bring out your authentic inner beauty when you travel with Trixie Cosmetics, founded by drag superstar Trixie Mattel. Create a fun gift package for your besties who enjoy giving the people their best 'beat' lewk, honey! Trixie's line of pro-level cosmetic products includes bronzers, blushes, brushes, lip balm, lip gloss, lipstick, mirrors, EYEconic palettes, and more. If you're looking for a gift idea for a traveler who enjoys serving lewks on the road, consider the bronzers, brushes, and balms in the Roadtripper Collection. Girl Talk, Breakup Rebound, Just a Girl, Plant Gay, Bottle Blonde, and Mod About You are a few other Trixie Cosmetics Collections to choose from, too! And keep checking the site... we're sure there'll be more special holiday gift offerings during the next couple of months.







Apple AirTags (starts at \$29)

It's happened to some of us before. You've just arrived home, but your luggage is enjoying a brief detour in some fun location you've never visited before. After the past year of lost luggage issues due to short-staffed airports and or airlines, you need one or more of these trusty gadgets to track your luggage no matter where you are at the moment. Just slip an Apple AirTag into your

luggage before you travel, and watch the travel anxiety fade away. You can purchase an Apple Airtag for \$29 and \$99 for a four-pack. For the luxury or bougie traveler in your life, vou may opt to be the high-end AirTag Hermes Bag Charm (\$299) or the Key Ring (\$349). For that price, his/her/their luggage better be easy to find should ALWAYS be able to find. Not a fan of Apple? Take a look at Good Housekeeping's product review of the top 5 luggage trackers for more giftgiving inspiration.



Bombas Socks (gift boxes start at \$50)

It's a holiday gift that people seldom feel excited about receiving – socks and underwear! But we appreciate it when you can buy gifts that ultimately give back to the community. So, although it's not an LGBTQ+-owned company. Bombas sells underwear, t-shirts, socks, and cozy slippers. The cool thing is that with every purchase you make, one item is donated. Take a look at their sock 4packs (4 purchased = 4 donated) that range in price, like the holiday snowflake ankle sock 4-pack gift box for

\$66 and the wool calf sock 4-pack gift box for \$102 – without tax.

Yeah, it's pricey, but just remember that more than 75 million items have been donated to a network of more than 3,500 giving partners that support overnight shelters, transitional living facilities, street outreach teams, medical service professionals, and more.



TomboyX Swimwear (various prices)

Swimwear is always important travel attire year-round, especially if you have plans for a winter getaway in warmer weather. Gift givers should consider buying something from the queer-founded TomboyX brand, dedicated to making "beautifully-made products for all bodies and needs, of all sizes and across the gender spectrum." And since we're all about travel at Vacationer, we have to give a shout-out to the swimwear at TombovX, touted as quick-drying, eco-friendly, and made with UPF 50 stretch fabric. Swim tank tops, unisuits, one-piece swimsuits, and board shorts are just a few gift options for everything from swimming to parasailing to relaxing cabana wear by the pool.



Travel Kettle (\$59.99)

We know there are some tea and coffee lovers out there. And if have a friend who travels quite often for business or leisure, then this might be a practical gift to give. Let's be honest, we're all sometimes a little unsure about how often those coffee pots in a hotel room are cleaned. So, why not consider a travel kettle (approximately \$60) as a gift for the frequent traveler in your life? In addition to the foldable electric kettle, it also comes with a collapsible cup, detachable power cord (U.S. plug), travel adaptor, zipper bag, and manual. The best thing about this gift is that you can have a spot of tea or coffee when you want it - and bonus it's easy to pack.



Malin+Goetz Best-Sellers Travel Kit (\$38)

Matthew Malin and Andrew Goetz created their

uncomplicated skincare company with products designed for every type, tone, and gender. Now, you can keep your fresh look with this travel kit of their six best-selling hair, body, and face products. The kit comes with a grapefruit face cleanser. Vitamin E face moisturizer, bergamot hand + body wash, Vitamin B5 body moisturizer, peppermint shampoo, and cilantro conditioner. Malin+Goetz's best -selling vegan products not only come in 100 percent recyclable aluminum tubes (travel size) but also come with/ in a biodegradable bag.







Atomic Gold Jewelry (various prices)

It may not be a travel-related gift, but we love to support LGBTQ+ businesses when we can! This queer-owned company makes "radically wearable fine jewelry," which includes body jewelry, earrings, rings, necklaces, bracelets, charms, and yes, wedding rings, too! Atomic Gold works with solid gold, platinum, silver, and a variety of gemstones for customized orders. We also love Atomic Gold because it prides itself on using nonphotoshopped, size-inclusive, non-cis, and non-white models all vear round - not just for awareness months. We're for it and they're creative bling.





NYU Performs 1st Fully Robotic Double Lung Transplant By Patty Ramsey



New York University (NYU) Langone Health achieved a medical milestone by performing the world's first fully robotic double lung transplant.

A 57-year-old woman with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) underwent a double lung transplant using the da Vinci Xi robotic system.

Small incisions between the ribs allowed the robotic system to remove each lung, prepare the surgical site, and implant the new lungs. Both lungs were successfully transplanted entirely with robotic techniques.

According to the team, the procedure showcases a breakthrough in robotic surgery and advances minimally invasive care.

Advancing lung surgery

On October 22, 2024, a double lung transplant was performed on Cheryl Mehrkar, four days after she was added to the transplant list following months of evaluation.

Diagnosed with COPD at 43, she inherited a genetic predisposition to lung disease, and her condition worsened

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after contracting COVID-19 in 2022. An adventurous individual, she was a scuba diversater, avid motorcyclist, and karate black belt, operating a dojo with her husband for over 20 years.

Health challenges led her to retire from teaching karate, but she continued serving her community as a volunteer emergency medical technician with the Union Vale Fire Department in Dutchess County, New York, where she remains active.

"By using these robotic systems, we aim to reduce the impact this major surgery has on patients, limit their postoperative pain, and give them the best possible outcome," said Stephanie H. Chang, surgical director of the Lung Transplant Program for the NYU Langone Transplant Institute, in a statement.

A month earlier, Chang and her team at NYU had performed the nation's first fully robotic single lung transplant.

Autonomous surgery

This month, a robot trained solely by analyzing videos of experienced surgeons

successfully replicated complex surgical procedures with skills comparable to human doctors.

The advancement highlighted the potential of imitation learning, a method that brings robotic surgery closer to autonomy, where robots could independently perform intricate procedures without human intervention.

Researchers from Stanford University and Johns Hopkins University trained a da Vinci Surgical System robot in three basic activities: suturing, tissue lifting, and needle handling. The robot performed these activities with human-like skill by using imitation learning, which eliminated the necessity for meticulously programming each movement for each medical procedure.

Kinematic data, which mathematically represents robotic motion, was combined with methods from sophisticated language models to create the training model, which included machine learning concepts. With this method, the robot was able to learn from surgical videos that were recorded by da Vinci

systems' wrist-mounted cameras. With over 7,000 da Vinci robots and more than 50.000 surgeons trained worldwide, there is a sizable dataset to improve this technology even more

While the da Vinci system is known for input inaccuracies, researchers overcame this by focusing on relative movements instead of absolute robots to learn procedures in actions. This adjustment improved precision and adaptability, allowing the robot to generalize to new environments and tasks, such as recovering a dropped needle during surgery.

The new model streamlines

robot training, enabling surgical days rather than years. According to experts, the innovation has the potential to advance surgical autonomy. minimize errors, and enhance procedural accuracy, marking a significant leap forward in robotic medicine.



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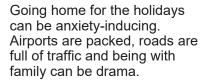
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Holidays Are Stressful, Restore Your Calm With These 5 Quick Tricks

By James Massengill



Dan Harris, host of the mindfulness and meditation podcast 10% Happier, is here to help. He shares five quick, science-backed techniques to help you stay cool in the moment, no matter the situation.

5 Holiday Stress Scenarios— And How To Cope

1. You're hitting major traffic on the road to your in-laws' house. Now you might miss Thanksgiving dinner!

The fix: Wear a half smile. Ever so slightly raise the upper corners of your lips. This will automatically reduce all that tension between your eyebrows and relax your face muscles, communicating to your brain that everything's OK, says clinical psychologist Jenny Taitz, author of Stress Resets.

Taitz recommends wearing a half smile when you're in a strenuous or anxious setting. "If you're sitting in a lot of traffic, clenching your hands on the steering wheel and tensing

your face, that's not going to help you accept what is happening," says Taitz. "But if you can soften your face, you're more likely to make peace" with your situation.

2. You're dreading flying home for the holidays. Air travel makes you so anxious.

The fix: Talk yourself through it. Harris says he has a history of panicking on airplanes because he has "debilitating claustrophobia." To cope, he rewires his inner dialogue by talking to himself as if he was his own good friend. He says, "You're good. There is no danger here. You've been through this before."

Research has shown that people who have the capacity to be self-compassionate "are more effective at reaching their goals and are happier and healthier," he says.

To supercharge this "saner inner dialogue," put your hand on your heart, says Harris. Supportive touch can activate the part of your nervous system that makes you calm down and feel safe.

3. Someone stole your parking spot at the mall on Black Friday. Grr!



The fix: Try straw breathing. "Take a deep breath in. Then exhale for two or three times longer than you inhaled, with gently pursed lips as if you're blowing through a straw," says Harris. You can even use an actual straw if you'd like. (Here's a helpful demonstration from Michigan State University.)

When we get stressed, our breathing gets short and shallow. And that lack of oxygen makes our muscles tense up and restricts blood flow. Breathing exercises like this one can get more air into your body, lower your heart rate and blood pressure and help you relax.

If you often get frustrated on the road, keep a few straws in the car to bust out whenever you need to do this exercise.

4. You're stuck in the back seat of the minivan with your family, and now they're fighting over politics. You wish you could just disappear.

The fix: Escape into your own little bubble. Now this doesn't mean disassociating, says Harris, "which is a kind of trauma response [some people]

develop as children when things are too much to take." This is about using mindfulness and meditation as a healthy way to get in touch with your bodily sensations in difficult situations.

To practice mindfulness, pick things in the present moment to focus on without judgment. Pay attention to your breath, what's out the window, your thoughts, your feelings about what is happening. The goal is to use your attention to "achieve a mental state of calm concentration and positive emotions," according to the American Psychological Association.

5. Your mom "voluntold" you to host the Christmas Eve gathering. As if you didn't have enough to do!

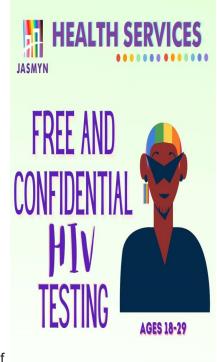
The fix: Sing it out. Harris says he learned this trick from Taitz. This might feel a little awkward,

but "take whatever inner thought track is stressing you out and sing those worries aloud."

"One of the most powerful ways to reduce stress and anxiety is to not take your thoughts so seriously," he says. Especially if they're negative, repetitive and not yoked to reality.

"So if we can learn to have a different relationship to our thoughts, that's a huge win." Singing them aloud is just one of many techniques to do that. (You can also try saying your thoughts in a silly voice, like Donald Duck, according to the Association for Contextual Behavioral Science.)

No matter how overwhelming your holidays get, try to think of these techniques as "an opportunity for you to practice skills that will help you for the rest of your life," says Harris.



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James Dean Was Blackmailed By An Ex To Keep Their Gay Affair Secret By Elizabeth Hearn

For decades, there have been rumors that James Dean was gay, but now we're finally getting more inside details about his secret long-term relationship with a man, and we are SEATED.

Earlier this year it was announced that a new biopic focusing on James Dean is in the works based on a memoir written by the actor's classmate at UCLA, former roommate, and alleged lover William Bast. The film will focus on Dean's years-long gay relationship that had to be kept secret because the actor's career was taking off.

But a new biography released today is providing readers with all new juicy details about a second gay affair the Rebel Without a Cause star had that started with lust and ended in blackmail, Queerty reports.

The star has been written about extensively over the years since his bad-boy appeal never seems to wane, but the brand new biography, out November 19, is full of information you may have never heard before, including details about his relationship with a closeted radio director

and TV producer.

In Jimmy: The Secret Life of James Dean, author James Colavito claims that Dean had a relationship with Rogers Brackett who he paid off to keep their relationship a secret because he was terrified of being outed as gay and starting a public scandal.

According to the biography, in the days leading up to the premiere of his hit film East of Eden in 1954, Dean paid Brackett \$800 — the equivalent of over \$10,000 today — as part of an agreement that remained secret for 70 years. Dean paid the older wealthy executive off even though Brackett allegedly sexually exploited Dean during their relationship.

"Implicit in the correspondence and conversations between Brackett's team and Dean's is the threat that the suit might become public, which both Brackett and Dean knew would destroy Dean's career," Colavito told the Daily Mail.

In the biography, Colavito claims that Dean met Brackett while he was struggling to pay rent after dropping out of UCLA and moving back to Santa Monica. The unemployed actor

caught the eye of the exec when he took a job as a parking attendant at the CBS Studios lot. Brackett was immediately taken with the handsome soon-to-be star, offering him a role in the radio drama Alias Jane Doe and eventually letting Dean stay in his home.

"Jimmy was like a child. He behaved badly just to get attention... he was a kid I loved, sometimes parentally, sometimes not parentally," Brackett said of his age-gap relationship with Dean, according to Colavito.

The relationship apparently grew tense as Dean's career took off and he didn't need to rely on Brackett anymore. Brackett considered him to be almost like an unruly son, while Dean thought of Brackett as his "heroic equal." Eventually, Dean scored the leading role in Elia Kazan's epic East of Eden, but just before it premiered, Brackett came asking for a handout. He was now hard up for cash, having lost his job, and said that since he helped turn Dean into a star, he was owed something in return.

At first, Dean refused to give him any money, but the threat

of a scandal forced his hand, and he ended up signing a letter of apology, but not before an "explosive argument" where Dean shouted, "I didn't know it was the wh*re who paid – I thought it was the other way around."

Things devolved from there,

and eventually, Brackett filed suit against Dean, who ended up settling for \$800 to be paid in \$100 weekly installments. The actor also got Warner Bros. to pay Brackett a large "finder's fee" to keep him quiet.

"This story has never been told before, and all parties involved worked hard to make sure no one ever found out," Colavito said in his interview with the Daily Mail. "And for 70 years, no one did. The only reason we know about it today is that Dean's agent secretly kept copies of his papers hidden away for decades."





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LifeStyle

Cured Vs Uncured Ham: Are They Actually The Same? By Brenda Davis



In the world of holiday feasts and charcuterie boards, ham stands as a distinguished centerpiece, celebrated for its versatility and succulence. Yet, in the bustling aisles of grocery stores and delicatessen displays, this beloved red meat falls under one of two categories: cured or uncured. So, what's the difference? The preservation process is at the heart of the distinction between cured and uncured ham. Cured ham undergoes treatment with a blend of salts, nitrates, and sugars to enhance its shelf life and infuse its characteristic taste. Meanwhile, uncured ham is also preserved, albeit with more natural sources. Both methods share the goal of preservation, but their techniques create variances in flavor, texture, and even color.

Cured ham is known for its bold, savory notes that develop through extended preservation.

Its texture can range from firm and fibrous (like a country ham) to smooth and silky (akin to premium Italian prosciutto, a dry-cured, traditionally thinly sliced ham that takes over a year to make). On the other hand, uncured ham typically features a softer, more tender texture paired with a fresher. milder taste — not necessarily the same pronounced saltiness found in cured varieties From spiral-sliced honey-glazed ham to ham and cheese sliders. there are countless uncured ham recipes you need to try.

Cured And Uncured Ham Are Preserved Differently

Cured ham owes its unique identity — namely its rich pink hue and smoky taste — to a meticulous, time-honored process involving salt and nitrates. These elements prevent bacterial growth and develop a deep, nuanced

flavor. Whether dry-cured or wet-cured (brined), this process imparts the ham with its signature savory notes, often elevated by spices such as black pepper and cloves. Some of the most iconic cured ham recipes include Spanish jamón serrano, which boasts a nutty, sweet complexity, and Italian prosciutto, which delivers a meltingly delicate bite. These global favorites are culinary masterpieces that showcase the art of meat curing.

Despite its name, uncured ham is indeed preserved, just with a different approach than its brinier counterpart. Rather than synthetic nitrates, uncured ham relies on natural sources like celery powder or beetroot before it's cooked, resulting in a subtler profile. It tends to be lighter, more moist, and less salty than cured ham, making it a great choice for hearty sub sandwiches and soups.





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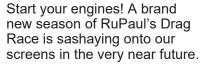
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RuPaul's Drag Race Season 17

By Catie Joshlin



Though there hasn't quite been a Drag Race drought, with new episodes Drag Race UK and Drag Race Down Under dropping in the space of 24 hours, and Canada's Drag Race season five premiering earlier today (22 November), fans are craving more queens.

It's hard to believe it's been almost a year since season 16, which introduced the world to newfound drag icons including Plane Jane, Sapphira Cristál, Amanda Tori Meating, Morphine Love Dion and, of course, the banana-loving champ herself, Nymphia Wind.

And yet season 17 is on the horizon. In a new teaser posted on social media, Drag Race production company World of Wonder announced that a brand new season of the OG franchise would be dropping in January. So, about six weeks' time. Gag.

Though it's just a ten second clip, the teaser promises that season 17 will certainly make a splash. At the beginning of the video, the coveted crown is dropped into a pool of water, never to be seen again (well, until around late April).

"This January on MTV, a new season of RuPaul's Drag Race is making major waves. Wetter is better, henny," Mama Ru



declares in a voiceover, rounded off with her signature cackle.

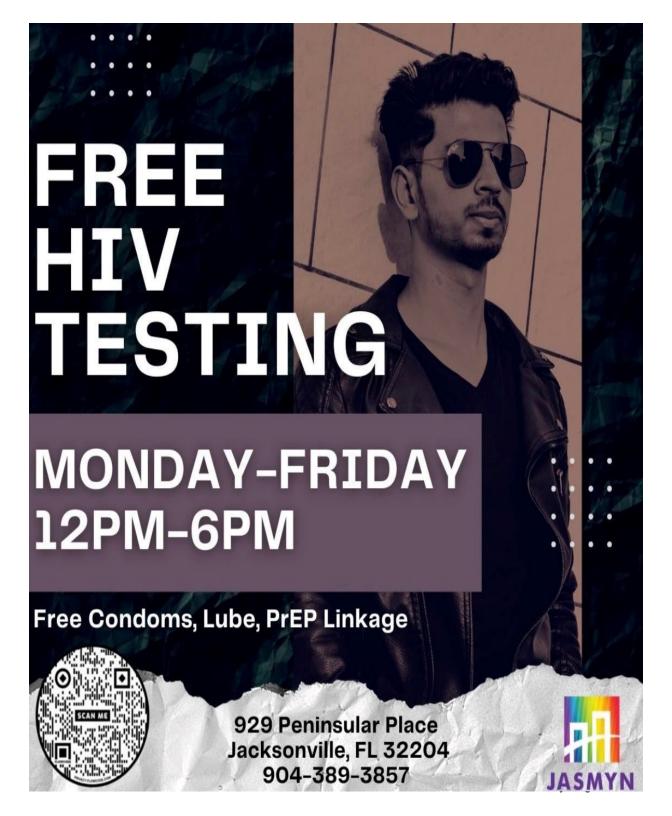
In a post on X/Twitter, World of Wonder confirmed that like season 16, season 17 will be available to watch on MTV in the US and on WOW Presents Plus worldwide, including the UK.

The season will be available to stream in Australia via Stan, and in Canada through Crave.

Season 17's cast is currently unconfirmed, though it's expected that the full cast reveal will happen in early December.

Last year, the season 16 cast dropped on 6 December, so bookmark that first week.







Musk Toys With Idea Of Buying MSNBC 'For Spits And Giggles'

By Robert Smith



The Tesla CEO purchased Twitter two years ago, and the changes he implemented drove off many of its users and advertisers, wrecked its revenue model and destroyed the company's value. He churned out hundreds of posts over the weekend on the site he renamed X musing about doing the same thing to the left-leaning cable network, reported Rolling Stone.

"Elon slapped a new name on his acquisition, delivered a sloppy product, and called himself a hero," wrote Nikki McCann Ramirez. "The notion of doing it again excites him." The telecommunications giant Comcast announced last week it would spin off several media properties, including MSNBC and CNBC, into a separate public company, and Musk's right-wing allies immediately pushed the tech mogul to buy it and turn the network into another conservative outlet.

"If you buy MSNBC I would like Rachael Maddow's job," said podcaster Joe Rogan, and Musk jokingly agreed they had a "deal." "I will wear the same outfit and glasses, and I will tell the same lies."

Former MNSBC host Keith Olbermann lamented Musk's apparent interest in turning MSNBC into a megaphone for right-wing propaganda, as he's done with X, where extremist content has cost the site many of its prestige advertisers and droves of users.

"Is there anybody to stop someone, Musk or not, from buying MSNBC and turning it into pro-Trump propaganda?" Olbermann said on his Countdown podcast. "Well, who stopped Musk from doing that to Twitter?"

Olbermann mocked the billionaire tech executive for apparently getting the idea from Donald Trump Jr.

"A tech bro posts that Comcast is putting MSNBC up for sale — not technically true,"
Olbermann said. But Trump Junior screenshots that — somehow steadies his hands long enough to post that screenshot and [types at Musk] 'I have the funniest idea ever.' And Musk replies 'how much does it cost'? Just for spits and giggles."







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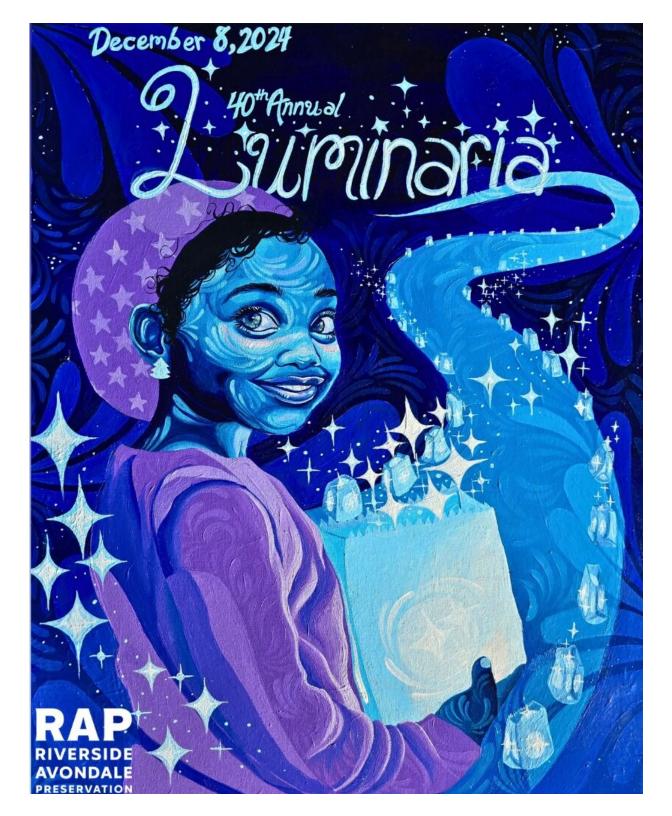
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Target Cuts 2K Prices Ahead Of Holiday Season

By Jeff Kingston

Target is slashing prices on more than 2,000 items, marking the second time this year that the retailer cut customer costs as it attempts to attract inflation-weary shoppers ahead of the holiday shopping season.

Some prices have dropped effective immediately on a number of items, including home goods, beauty products, food, beverages and toys. In a press release, Target said it "routinely adjusts its prices to remain competitive in markets across the country" and the

discounting will continue through December.

Target's price cuts have boosted customer spending after a string of dreadful quarters for the company. Discounts helped turn around Target's fortunes: Sales at stores open at least one year increased 2% last quarter, and its profit boomed 36%, according to its most recent earnings report.

In May, Target announced it was going to slash prices on 5,000 items but ended up



surpassing that number, cutting prices on 8,000 products. In total this year, the retailer will have discounted more than 10.000 items.

The new round of cuts affects name brands like Lego and Coffee Mate, as well as its house brands. Although prices vary depending on city, Target highlighted some examples with a Magic Bullet blender reduced to \$39.99 from \$49.99 and a Bluey fire truck toy dropping to \$19.99 from \$24.99.





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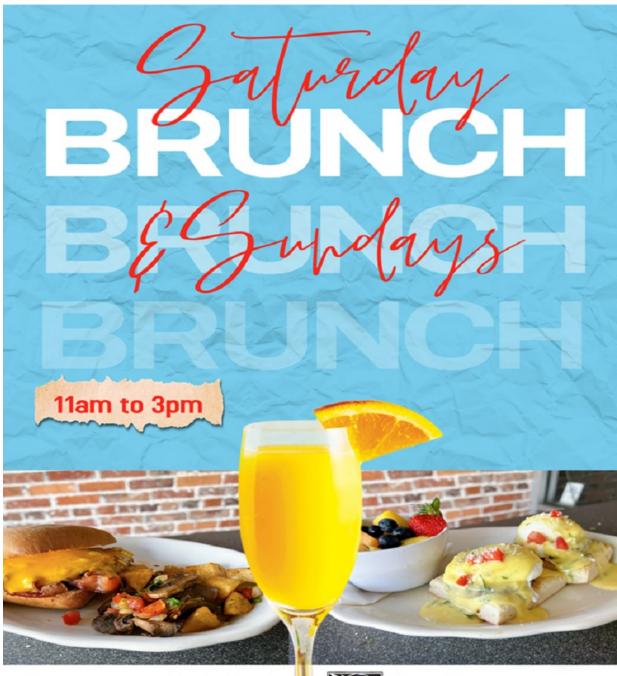
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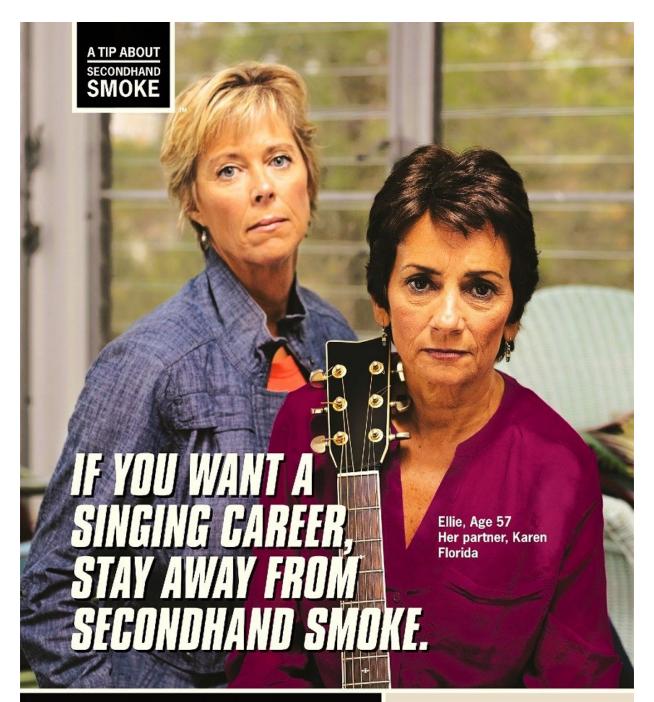
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