

Plum Express

Volume 1, Issue 6

December 7, 2015

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OUR PERSPECTIVE ON SOCIETY

What Christmas Means to Me

By Guy C.

When I think of Christmas, a few things come to mind. I remember the Gospels of Luke and Matthew. Both describe Jesus as having been born in Bethlehem to a virgin mother. In the Gospel of Luke, Joseph and Mary travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem for a census. Jesus is born there and laid in a manger.

However, I also have personal memories. I used to sing in the church choir at my previous church every Christmas Eve, at 4 PM and at Midnight Mass. I also remember the traditional Ukrainian meal we would eat for Christmas. We ate Ukrainian food, and set an empty

space at the table for the dead members of the family. We also would put a spider on the tree, to remember how a spider had spun a web to decorate the tree when the family had no decorations.

One thing I have always enjoyed about Christmas has been getting together with my family. However, for the last two years I have been spending time with my roommate instead, because my parents are no longer with me. Have you experienced something similar? I wish you happy holidays, whatever your beliefs.

DID YOU KNOW?

Terrorism in France and the Middle East

By Michael Joseph

The lands of the Middle East have been contested since the time of the pharaohs of Egypt. Since before modern countries were established, humans have fought over the rich land, referred to as Mesopotamia. It became the "Holy Land." This cradle of humanity, considered sacred by three world religions since the days of primitive tribes, has been the site of much violence.

Is humanity making progress into better and better states of being? If so, will we be able to continue this progress, given our limited resources? These are important questions, given how the terrorist attack in France on Friday, November 13 showed humanity's desire for self-destruction.

If you seal a bottle of live bacteria, its population will grow exponentially until it reaches a maximum. The population will then feed on itself until the bottle is left sterile. The graph for this population growth with its sudden drop is

known as the "J-curve" in biology. Is this how life will be for humanity too?

Perhaps we can break the seal with our technology and go beyond the limits of the "bottle." Perhaps we can love each other, and do what bacteria cannot: become civilized. Perhaps we can solve our differences on a soccer field, instead of a battlefield. From my perspective, there is no excuse for terrorism. It takes effort to be civilized. I pray that in this holiday season, humanity can collectively dismantle those who would stop the progress of the civilized world.

If you would like to learn more about world events, the attack on France and conflict in the Middle East, you can access news online at the Bilingual Computer Group on Thursdays at 2 pm, at AID's Plum Street Office (1630 Plum Street).

Go at Your Own Speed (Some Thoughts on the Holiday Rush)

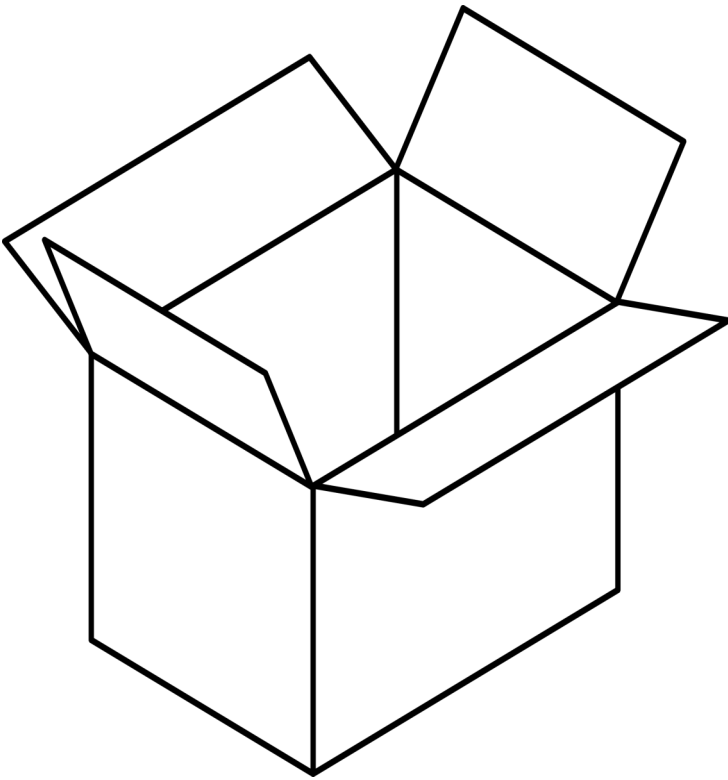
By Michael Joseph

The rush of the holidays has arrived. AID clients can often benefit from their Relapse Prevention Plans (RPP) at this time of year, to decrease escalating symptoms of mental illness. The first step in writing an RPP is to identify symptoms and triggers. Triggers include things that make you angry, frustrated or upset. They generally unbalance your mind and make it difficult to relax.

I find that relaxing is a lot harder than saying "I'm relaxing" and then letting out a big sigh of relief!

Everyone has a different relapse prevention strategy. For a time, when I was growing up, I thought drinking whisky was a good way to relax. However, drinking whisky did not make my symptoms go away. Instead, it caused me problems and I felt sicker. In treatment, I learned

that the way I had been drinking was called "self-medicating." Nowadays, I find that drinking some tea in a well-lit area, listening to soothing music, and looking at the lit Christmas tree are good interventions for the holiday madness. I have made them part of my current RPP. Consider talking with your treatment team to establish your own RPP.



"Cardboard Boxes"

By Michelle C.S.

Within our cardboard boxes, we cuddle with each other to stay warm with only our sheets as blankets.

As we gaze into the dark sky, the only lights we see are the stars above.

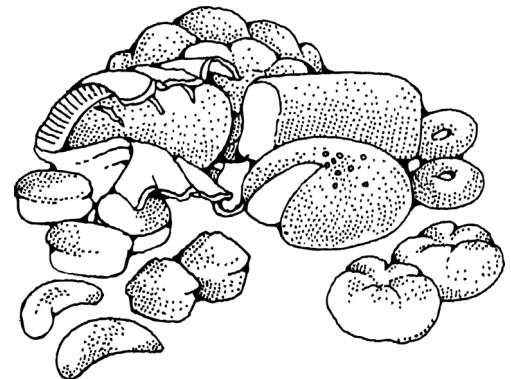
We pray together that we will make it through the night,
To face another day with hope in our hearts.

Hobby Corner: Baking

By Guy C.

I enjoy baking as one of my hobbies. I like baked goods (really who doesn't), but as a hobby, baking involves more than just making baked goods and eating them. You also collect recipes, share them with your friends, and steadily improve your baking skills. For some bakers, this may include pastry classes. I have taken a few pastry courses at the college level.

Some of my favorite desserts to bake are kolochies, pumpkin bread, and of course Christmas cookies. I intend to pass my recipes down to my nieces as part of our family tradition, especially my top secret Christmas cookie recipes. But remember, baking is not just a Christmas tradition – it's a great year round hobby. So get started this Christmas with a hobby that has results you can taste!



“Enjoying the Winter Day”

by Michelle C.S.

A new day

The flying snow

The brisk air

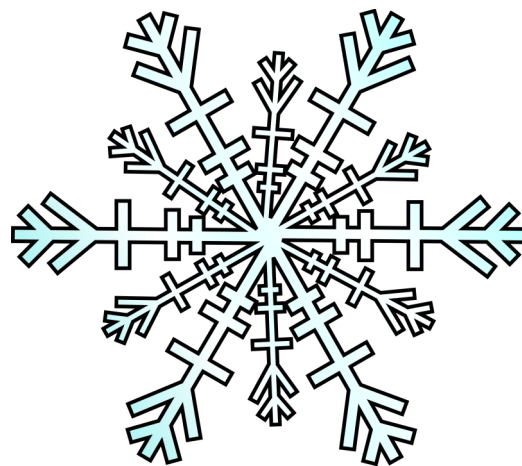
The white mountaintops

The slopes of the mountaintops are ready for skiing.

Gather with your friends and family to bundle up in all your snow gear to race down the mountaintop.

The slopes are deep and winding, but the race is on.

What could be better than this, except for hot chocolate waiting for us to drink at the end of our race, as we sit cozily by the fireplace enjoying the winter day?



Sports with the Fred Man

By Fred M.



Aaron Rodgers and Shea McClellin tussle.

Image source: naplesherald.com

I hope your Turkey Day was as fun as mine... Hurray! The Chicago Bears won against the Green Bay Packers 17 to 13! The Chicago Bears are now 3rd in the NFC standings. They currently have 5 wins and 6 losses for the season.

In basketball, the Chicago Bulls are doing well. They have 9 wins with only 5 losses for the season. Go Bulls!

In Hockey, The Chicago Blackhawks have 13 wins and 8 losses for the season. Go Blackhawks!

Have a happy holiday season everyone! Remember, you can save money by avoiding gambling on sporting events. That's sports with the Fred Man. Have a happy day!

Guy's Recipes:

Classic Ukrainian Borscht

By Guy C.

10 cups of water
 2-3 beets, whole
 2 carrots, grated
 ½ head of cabbage, thinly chopped
 2 bay leaves
 6 cups of chicken broth
 5 tablespoons of ketchup
 4 tablespoons of lemon juice
 ¼ tablespoon of lemon juice
 ¼ tablespoon of ground pepper
 1 tablespoon of chopped dill

Fill a large soup pot with water.

Add beets.

Cover and boil for about 1 hour. The time required to cook the beets will vary.

(If you are pressed for time, you can shave off an hour by using canned beets with their juice.)

Once the beets are cooked remove them from the water and dice them.

Place beets, carrots, cabbage, chicken broth, lemon juice, pepper, and dill in a saucepan.

Bring to a boil.

Boil, stirring, until vegetables are tender.

Purée the contents of the saucepan.

Your borscht is ready to serve.

Gaming Corner: Yahtzee

By Michael Joseph

Yahtzee is a great dice game. I play it once in a while with my room-mates. Here's the story of where the game came from: a wealthy couple who owned a yacht invented the game of "Yacht". They played the

game for years on the yacht with their friends. In 1956, they gave the rights to the game to a toy maker, E.S. Lowe, in exchange for game sets for their friends. E.S. Lowe changed the name of the game to "Yahtzee" and made lots of money with it! If you have access to the Internet, you can look up the rules to Yahtzee

online, and if you have some dice, a pencil, and a little patience, you can play in no time at all. You can also buy the game from Hasbro, but you will still have to read the rules to play, so it really doesn't pay to be impatient.

Restaurant Corner:

Colonial Café

By Guy C.

The location of the Colonial Café for this review is 1961 West Galena Road, in the West Aurora Plaza. On Wednesday, November 11, 2015, I dined at Colonial with two other members of the *Plum Express* crew. We each had a cheeseburger with fries and a chocolate malt. I enjoyed the atmosphere, but my cheeseburger tasted greasy (I should note that it did melt in my mouth). The malt was to die for! A real treat, fun for the whole family. I give the dining experience at Colonial 3 stars.

★★★

Music Corner:

The Phenomenon of the Christmas Album

By Michael Joseph

In 1942, a film called *Holiday Inn* was released. Danny Kay, Bing Crosby, Rosemary Clooney and Vera Ellen then made a musical romantic comedy loosely based on *Holiday Inn* called *White Christmas*.

Crosby's single of the song "White Christmas" sold over 50 million copies! The phenomenon of the Christmas album was born. Elvis Presley later sold 20 million copies of his own Christmas album, but he never topped the sales for "White Christmas." So what's *your* favorite Christmas album?