



kern county Family magazine

FREE



Reflections

From Our
Community

PAGE 18

ON THE COVER

J.R. Flores

Talks
Men's Health

PAGE 8

How Fathers Shape
Habits that Help
Prevent Cancer

LEAD THE WAY,
Dad



Find Tommy Turkey | Bundt Cake Bliss | News & Trends

Early detection starts here

Because a man's health is important to his whole family



Scan QR code or visit AdventistHealth.org/KernCancerCare to learn more or take a free cancer risk assessment.



Did you know...

1 in 8

men will get
prostate cancer in
their lifetime

1 in 16

men will get
lung cancer in their
lifetime

1 in 23

men will get
colorectal cancer in
their lifetime

About 42 out of 100 men will develop some form of cancer in their lifetime. The most common cancer diagnosed in men is prostate cancer, followed by lung and colorectal cancers.

Early detection gives men the best chance to share more of life's important moments with the people they love.

That's why the AIS Cancer Center offers screenings that can catch cancers in their earliest stages, when treatment is most effective. Taking time for a simple screening today can mean more memories made with family tomorrow — because he was made to be there for the moments that matter most.

Our providers



Neeraj Agnihotri, MD

Medical Oncologist/
Hematologist



Vikas Ghai, MD

Medical Oncologist/
Hematologist



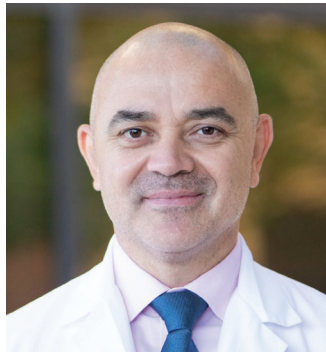
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Healthy Men, Stronger Families



Lilly, 9 and
her father
J.R. Flores

PHOTO BY HEATHER HAFEN

How Fathers Shape Habits that Help Prevent Cancer

By Andrea Rose

The statistics are sobering: 1 in 2 men will develop some form of cancer in their lifetime; 1 in 8 will get prostate cancer; 1 in 16 will get lung cancer; and 1 in 23 will get colorectal cancer.

No parent wants to imagine a cancer diagnosis—but that’s exactly why these numbers matter. Early detection gives men the best chance to see their children grow up.

It Starts with Screenings

Unlike women, who routinely receive pap tests and mammograms, many men skip annual exams and are less likely to pursue cancer screenings—even when recommended. Maybe they think it won’t happen to them. Maybe they’re avoiding uncomfortable procedures. Or maybe they’re just too busy.

If you’re a woman, you might be rolling your eyes right now—juggling car line, dinner plans, and remembering your own eye appointment. But let’s not be too

quick to judge. It’s hard to keep track of suggested screenings, especially without regular visits to a proactive physician.

In general, men should be aware of three key screenings:

- **Colorectal cancer**
- **Lung cancer**
- **Prostate/testicular cancer**

The American Cancer Society recommends starting colorectal cancer screening at age 45, and prostate/testicular and lung cancer screenings at age 50, depending on smoking history. Genetic or hereditary factors may shift these timelines.

Facing the Fear

If screenings lead to a diagnosis, there is hope. Locally, Adventist Health AIS Cancer Center offers board-certified oncology experts and advanced treatments to improve quality of life for survivors.

Dr. Luis Mariscal, medical director and radiation oncologist at AIS, uses high-energy radiation beams to treat various cancers—and it’s not as scary as it sounds.

“People hear radiation and think of Chernobyl or nuclear bombs. That’s not what we do,” Mariscal said. “Think of



radiation therapy more like a lightsaber. We use machines that create beams of radiation that are highly focused and precise.”

Kern County is also leading in surgical innovation with the Da Vinci 5 Robot, which boasts 10,000 times the computational power of its predecessor.

“Our investment in two DV5 robots—the only hospital in Kern County to do so—shows how much we value our patients and prioritize their well-being,” said Daniel Ruiz, administrative director of surgical operations.

Family Support Matters

Support at home is just as vital as medical care.

“It’s huge,” Mariscal said. “Cancer treatment is stressful. Having people in your corner makes a difference. Patients with strong support systems tend to do better.”

Family support also plays a role in prevention.

“There’s no single cause of cancer,” Mariscal explained. “Lifestyle choices—smoking, alcohol use, nutrition, physical activity—all have a big impact. A healthy diet, maintaining a healthy weight, and staying active can reduce your risk.”

That’s why Mariscal talks to patients about more than just treatment.

“I spend time helping people realize that while we’re dealing with cancer, we also need to look at overall health. What can we do to improve your general wellness?”

It’s a conversation worth having as a family. Because healthy choices lead to healthier lives—for everyone.

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MEMBERS OF



ON THE COVER: Lilly, 9 and her father J.R. Flores, local radio personality.
PHOTO BY HEATHER HAFEN

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COLORING FOR A CAUSE



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Vaun Thygerson
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

This month, KCFM asked readers and writers to share their favorite books to read as children, and I had an immediate response: Little Golden Book Little Mommy. This book was my absolute favorite as a child. From the moment I could walk and talk, I was obsessed with having my parents and five older sisters read it to me over and over and over again. This book was so well-loved and read that it literally fell apart. The cover had been torn off, and the pages were

a mess: ripped or covered in my artistic expression (aka scribbles). I assumed it had made its way to the trash.

Much to my surprise, for a wedding gift almost 35 years ago, my mother revitalized my original book for me. She had re-bound, fixed the ripped pages, pasted the original wording over my colorful renderings, and laminated it. This treasured book has definitely seen better days, but its importance means everything to me. I am grateful to have grown up in a household that encouraged reading and to have had a family that read this book to me so often that many of them can still quote from it to this day. And, thanks to my mom's gift, I could share my original copy with my children.

Speaking of books, November 1st celebrates Family Literacy Day and National Authors Day. KCFM wanted to find out our readers' favorite books to read as adults or children. In the article, **"Have You Found Your Favorite Read?"** Andrea Rose gives KCFM friends' recommendations from family favorites to classics like Charlotte's Web by E.B. White & Garth Williams to crime-solv-

ing novels like First to Die: A Novel (Women's Murder Club #1). To find out more about KCFM readers' favorites, and mine too, turn to page 12.

Callie Collins writes KCFM's Happy Mama articles each month, and this time, we get to learn more about her foster parenting journey. As November is National Adoption Awareness Month, she writes about her foster and foster-to-adopt family. With her husband Mario, they are parents to six boys, many temporary infants and four long-term placements. In her article, **"Hello, Happy Mama (Of Many Kids): Callie Collins,"** on page 10, you can read how love is what makes a family.

For this month's laugh-out-loud Humor at Home article, **"Chicken, Chicken, Chip: The Sandwich Memory That Started It All,"** Julie Willis shares how her child loved dipping her chicken into sour cream during a lunch date at Sequoia Sandwich. Next time, she ordered chips, which her daughter had never eaten, and this turned into a fun chant of "chicken, chicken, chip." Soon, this mealtime fun evolved into a sandwich tradition, complete with "dirty" chips. To read all about it, turn to page 20.

As November's signature feeling of thankfulness fills the air, it's a joy to remember being grateful for the memories we had as children, and how these moments from our childhood help shape us into the people we are today. Something as simple as remembering your favorite book can evoke nostalgia. Maybe this year, around the Thanksgiving dinner table, you can share your special books with each other. KCFM gives much thanks for our incredible readers and friends!

Happy Turkey Day!

FIND TOMMY TURKEY!



Count the number of Tommy Turkeys you find in this issue, then submit your answer by midnight on

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Groundbreaking Veterans CareerBridge Launches in Kern County

Kern County will launch a first-of-its-kind initiative, the Veterans CareerBridge, a structured, employer-driven pathway designed exclusively for the Veteran community. Supported by a Catalyst Fund grant through the Kern Coalition and California Jobs First, this program, which begins on January 5, 2026, aims to retain local veterans in critical roles.

By running bi-monthly cohorts, the program creates a predictable and sustainable model that not only retains veteran talent but also makes Kern County a destination for Veterans nationwide seeking meaningful careers. The program will provide veterans who have served honorably and utilized their GI Bill with a clear, structured, and predictable pathway to meet employers where they are, through training, matching, and paid internships that lead to real careers.

"This is a game-changer," says Kenny Spratt, Founder of TalentBase, retired Army First Sergeant, Ranger, Purple Heart, and Bronze Star Medal for Valor recipient. "Veterans CareerBridge isn't just another program; it's a movement.



It's the first time Kern County will have a direct, employer-backed pathway where veterans turn their services and education into real careers. Employers get leaders they can count on. Veterans get futures they deserve. This is how we win as a community."

TalentBase is calling on employers to step forward and join the January 2026 pilot cohort. To secure participation, complete the Employer Interest Form at TalentBaseUSA.com or email connect@TalentBaseUSA.com.

USPS Operation Santa Now Accepting Letters

The U.S. Postal Service recently launched the 2025 season of USPS Operation Santa, inviting children and families nationwide to start writing and sending letters to Santa Claus. In its 113th year, this program connects letter writers with generous individuals and organizations who help fulfill their holiday wishes. This year, participants now have the option to fulfill wishes from multiple people within a single household by adopting a family letter.

All letters must be received by December 6 to be eligible for adoption and fulfillment.

For more information and complete program guidelines, including important dates and details on how to write a letter or participate in fulfilling a letter, please visit www.USPSOperationSanta.com.



Kern Dance Alliance Awarded National Honors



Kern Dance Alliance (KDA), a leading nonprofit arts advocacy organization, recently received the 2025 Outstanding Dance Education Organization Award from the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO). The award recognizes KDA's exceptional contributions to dance education and community impact. In addition to the award presentation, KDA participated as panelists in the "Empowering Excellence in Dance Education" session at NDEO's National Conference in Detroit, Michigan.

Founded in 2015, KDA stood out for its innovative programs that integrate dance with education, healthcare, and economic empowerment, serving nearly 200,000 individuals and investing \$5 million

across Kern County and the Southern San Joaquin Valley.

"KDA is deeply honored to receive this national recognition from NDEO, which validates our decade-long mission to make dance accessible to everyone, regardless of age, ability, or background," says Andrea Hansen, Executive Director of KDA. "This award celebrates not just our team of dedicated volunteers, but the entire community we've empowered through programs that foster creativity, wellness, and opportunity. We're excited to continue building on this momentum as we mark our 10th anniversary."

For more information about KDA and its programs, visit www.kerndance.org or www.kdacreativecorps.org.

Bank of Sierra Donates \$10,000 to Support the ENABLE Program at the Boys & Girls Club



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF KERN COUNTY

Bank of Sierra recently awarded the Boys & Girls Clubs of Kern County (BGCKC) a \$10,000 Sierra Grant to underwrite the Club's out-of-school programming, which includes the ENABLE Program. The Club's ENABLE Program specialists support and facilitate integrated social, academic, and enrichment programs for Club members with intellectual or developmental disabilities at two Boys & Girls Clubs: E.L. Jack and Monica Armstrong Youth Center in East Bakersfield and Stockdale Boys & Girls Club in Southwest Bakersfield.

"At Bank of the Sierra, we are committed to investing in the future of our community. We are proud to support

the Boys & Girls Clubs of Kern County with a \$10,000 grant to further their exceptional work in providing academic support and enriching programs for children," says Naseem Saba, VP Relationship Manager Commercial and Ag Banking with Bank of the Sierra. "Together we are helping to build brighter futures for the youth in our community."

In early 2023, BGCKC reached out to local organizations serving children with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and they were repeatedly informed that no regular/integrated after-school or summer activities were available. This void for services for children diagnosed with intellectual and developmental disabilities prompted the Club to take a closer look at out-of-school time programming and develop the ENABLE Program in collaboration with Kern Regional Center.

For more information, please visit www.bgckc.org.

Help Fulfill Wishes for Children in Foster Care

Sponsored by Kern County's Department of Human Services (DHS), the 2025 Holiday Cottage is open to help fulfill wishes for children in foster care around Kern County during the holiday season. To support their cause, you can enjoy the event, Cruise for Cottage, on Saturday, November 8, at 10 am at 3043 Wilson Road, Bakersfield. Holiday Cottage has partnered with local car clubs to showcase some fantastic cars while having fun and donating.

The DHS marketing and outreach team works with resource parents, social workers, probation officers, and other partners to fill over 800 wishes for these children. There are many ways you can help.

For details, please visit www.kcdhs.org/how-do-i/learn-about/holiday-cottage.



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- 7" Black Forrest Torte
- 7" French Chocolate Cake Chocolate & Walnut Frosting
- 8" Toasted Almond Squares Serves 16 2"X2" Servings
- Pumpkin Cream Cheese Ring Cake
- Red Velvet Cupcakes Cream Cheese Frosting
- Pumpkin Cupcakes Cream Cheese Filling
- Triple Chocolate Cupcakes Dubash Filled
- Champagne Cupcakes
- 7" Pumpkin Chantilly



PIES:

- Berry • Cherry • Pumpkin • Mince
- Pecan Pie: *Special Order Only*
- Lemon Meringue: *Special Order Only*
- Chocolate Meringue: *Special Order Only*
- Chocolate Whip Cream: *Special Order Only*

BREAD:

- Dutch Toast - 24 oz
- Holland Dutch
- 100% Wheat
- Cinnamon



LOAF CAKES:

- Banana Nut
- Pumpkin Loaf
- Zucchini Loaf
- Cranberry Loaf

DINNER ROLLS:

- Butter Rolls
- Holland Dutch
- Potato Rolls
- White Wheat Brown & Serve: *Special Order Only*



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ON THE COVER

J.R. Talks Health

Being a dad has been the prescription Andrew (J.R.) Flores needed for staying healthy.

"It wasn't until I had my daughter almost nine years ago, that I started going in for my annual physical," Flores admitted.

When Lilly came along, it opened his eyes to putting first things first.

"Not only as I've gotten older but since I've had my daughter, I realize I need to be healthy for not only myself now, but for her," Flores explained. "You don't realize how out of shape you are until you are chasing after a kid."

Flores is program director at KERN Radio & ESPN Bakersfield and host of The J.R. Show.

Although his job has him talking about things like current events, local government or sports, off air, he focuses on his most important job: being a dad—and that means staying strong for your family.

"I love my dad and want him to see me grow up," Lilly said. "He is the best dad and plays with me and studies homework with me. I try to make him eat healthy and drink less soda. I want my dad to live for a long time and be healthy."

But it doesn't necessarily come naturally.

"It's almost like it's a generational thing. We didn't see our fathers and grandfathers go to the doctors," Flores observed. "I think we men are prideful and there is still this thing about showing weakness—kind of that 'man up' mentality, 'We got this!'"



PHOTO BY HEATHER HAFEN

That's where Lilly comes in. Father and daughter enjoy outdoor activities and riding bikes.

And Flores hopes other dads find inspiration to keep an eye on their health.

"Take your health seriously. If anything, get your yearly physical," he said. "Know your numbers. Know your family's health history and when to get those screenings."

And one more thing the guy who talks for a living has to say:

"Remember that men's health isn't just about the physical—your mental health is just as important," Flores said. "Your spiritual health is equally important. If you aren't feeling like yourself, talk to someone about it. Getting involved in a church or men's group. The Influencers Men's group changed my life. Allow yourself to be happy, stop putting so much pressure on yourself. Learn to slow down, enjoy your family and be grateful!"

Risk Factors of Alzheimer's Disease

Dementia is a progressive syndrome caused by various brain diseases, most commonly Alzheimer's, that erodes memory, reasoning, and personality. As of 2025, over 57 million people worldwide live with dementia, and that number is projected to reach 139 million by 2050.

Alzheimer's disease deeply affects both patients and families. While aging is the strongest risk factor, several controllable risks that may help delay onset:

High Blood Pressure: Chronic hypertension damages brain blood vessels and accelerates cognitive decline.

Diabetes: Type 2 diabetes raises dementia risk by impairing blood flow to the brain.

Smoking: While research has shown mixed results, overall evidence links smoking to increased Alzheimer's risk.

Head Trauma: Serious head injuries, especially those involving loss of consciousness, are associated with higher Alzheimer's risk.

Alcohol Use: Heavy drinking may triple Alzheimer's risk, while moderate intake shows mixed findings—some studies suggest a slight protective effect, others warn of harm.

Promoting brain health through lifestyle changes—like regular exercise, social engagement, and managing chronic conditions—can make a meaningful difference.

Source: National Institute of Aging, Harvard Health, www.hopkinsmedicine.org, www.alzheimers.org.uk, www.alz.org, www.neurosciencenews.com

Peanut Butter Power

November is Peanut Butter Lovers Month a perfect time to celebrate this creamy (or crunchy!) classic that's as nutritious as it is nostalgic. Peanut butter is a nutrient-rich spread that offers several health benefits when consumed in moderation. It's packed with heart-healthy fats, plant-based protein, and fiber, which help support cardiovascular health, regulate blood sugar, and pro-

mote satiety. Peanut butter also provides essential vitamins and minerals like magnesium, potassium, and vitamin E, contributing to muscle function, energy production, and immune support. Just be mindful of portion sizes and added sugars in some commercial varieties.

Sources: www.health.com, www.tuasuede.com, www.nutritionix.com, www.verywellhealth.com



Alcohol and Diabetes: Key Considerations



Managing diabetes requires careful attention to both food and drink choices—including alcohol. While there's no universal rule, the American Diabetes Association recommends discussing alcohol use with a physician due to several risks:

Blood Sugar Impact: Alcohol can lower

blood sugar by disrupting the liver's glucose release, increasing the risk of hypoglycemia—especially for those on insulin or certain medications. Symptoms include confusion, drowsiness, and difficulty walking.

Medication Interference: Alcohol may affect how diabetes medications work, potentially intensifying their effects and increasing hypoglycemia risk.

Weight and Blood Sugar: Alcohol is high in calories and carbs, which can lead to weight gain and elevated blood sugar (hyperglycemia). Excess calories stored as liver fat may also reduce insulin sensitivity over time.

In short, alcohol can complicate diabetes management. Always consult a healthcare provider before drinking.

Sources: American Diabetes Association, Cleveland Clinic, WebMD, www.diabetes.org

Q. Can You Catch Up on Sleep?

A. YES. Sleeping in on the weekend may help mitigate the negative effects of losing



sleep during the week. Scientists tracked people who averaged less than seven hours of sleep a night for 14 years and found that

those who got the most ZZ's on the weekends

(at least 1 ½ hours more than during the week) were about 20 percent less likely to have heart disease. While getting seven to eight hours of shut-eye nightly is ideal, the next best thing is to sleep in when you can. (Study: State Key Laboratory of Infectious Disease at Fudan Hospital)

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Once Upon a Time: Readers Write the First Line



NOVEMBER INVITES US to slow down, reflect, and—maybe—begin something bold. In honor of National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo), we asked readers: **“If you wrote a novel, what would the opening line be?”** Here’s what they shared.

“She never believed in love at first sight, until the stranger in the coffee shop smiled like he’d been waiting for her all his life.”

Andrea Morales

“Every story has a hero. This one’s about me instead.”

Amanda Pado

“Apparently, being ‘responsible’ means paying bills instead of buying snacks, which feels like false advertising for adulthood.”

Amber Henson

“Not so very long ago...”

Dawn Miller

“Magical Christmas.”

Aleyda Huerta

“Are you ready?! Coffee splashes all over my freshly ironed white blouse.”

Annmarie Amaya

“Okay here’s another day where I have no idea what I’m doing, but we’re gonna try our darndest and hope for the best!”

Ariel Gomez

“GOD IS MY SHIELD.”

Luis Carmona

“Sometimes things happen to us that we wish was just a dream, but in my case, it wasn’t a dream at all.”

Carissa Clough

“Want to know a secret?”

Samantha Dowdy

“This is the story of a boy from a poor family and a girl from middle class Mexico defying all family traditions in the pursuit of love, happiness and a child on the way, me.”

Cynthia Magdaleno

“It started the way all great love stories do - with a dropped hot dog, 7th Inning Stretch, and his team losing.”

Jessica Cox

“A mother’s Autism journey, through my eyes.”

Jennifer Carmona

“The rain tasted like regret as it fell on the city, each drop a memory of what once was.”

Cristian Sandoval

Quick-Start Novel Writing Tips:

Spark it: Start with a “what if?” or vivid scene.

Sketch your arc: Even a loose ending helps.

Build your cast: Track quirks, goals, fears.

Write fast, edit later: Keep momentum.

Set a goal: Even 500 words a day adds up.

Read aloud: Catch clunky phrasing fast.

Cut deep: If it doesn’t serve, it goes.

Track your themes: Stay emotionally consistent.

Save your scraps: They might shine elsewhere.

Celebrate milestones: Every chapter is a win. Perfect for NaNoWriMo—or any month you’re ready to write.

Novels Born from NaNoWriMo

“The Night Circus”

by Erin Morgenstern

“Water for Elephants”

by Sara Gruen

“Fangirl” by Rainbow Rowell

“Cinder” by Marissa Meyer

“Anna and the French Kiss”

by Stephanie Perkins

These success stories show that NaNoWriMo isn’t just about word count—it’s about unlocking creativity.

Source: www.goodreads.com,
www.ssf.bibliocommons.com,
www.company.overdrive.com





Hello, neighbor.

Close enough to be your neighbor, caring enough to be your family.

CONNECT THE DOTS AND COLOR THE PICTURE



For answers to this month's puzzle, scan the QR code, or go to: omnifamilyhealth.org/puzzle-answer-key/



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ADOPTION DAY: We left our oldest son at college less than 24 hours before adopting our youngest son. L to R: Samuel, Abraham, Mario, Gabriel, Callie, Jacob-Peter, Isaac. PHOTOS BY GLORIA BRIDGES PHOTOGRAPHY

HELLO, HAPPY MAMA OF MANY KIDS

Love is what makes a family. That time-honored phrase, personified by families of all types, featured prominently on our embossed adoption announcement.

November is National Adoption Awareness Month and I always lead with “it’s complicated.”

Feelings around adoption are as varied as the individuals it involves, with many things that can be true at once: happiness to love a child, hope for their future, joy for progress and permanency but also grief for a birth family that could not find safety and stability.

My husband, Mario and I, adopted Abraham, age 2, in August. We were



The judge let Abraham bang her gavel to declare himself adopted. She gave him a miniature version to take home as a keepsake.

his foster parents for almost two years before permanency became possible.

Married nearly 20 years, I work as a professional writer and Mario teaches Spanish. We own a translation business together.

When asked how many children we have, we hesitate. We are the parents of Samuel 18, Isaac, 13, Gabriel, 10, Jacob-Peter, 7, in addition to Abraham. A temporary infant placement is part of our household too, six boys total. We also hold in our hearts, if no longer in our arms, the many infants who have come through our doors and reunified with their birthparents. I think of them every day and hope they’re doing well.

We have hosted four long-term placements, who stayed with us for months or years, and more than 20 short-term infants since 2021.

Foster care's goal is reunification with biological parents or other family members after safety can be established. Children need temporary alternate caregivers for many reasons, including substance use, incarceration and even parental illness or injury.

I think of foster care in simpler terms: I'll hold your baby while you make changes in your life. However long that takes, no matter the issue, my family and I will nurture the child. We maintain daily communication with biological parents, compartmentalizing the issues that brought them to this point, without judgment.

We are here through supervised visits, court hearings and medical appointments. Upon reunification, we will help arrange housing and utilities, adding in family outings when possible to try to ease the transition.

Statistics show that about 45% of foster children do go back to their biological families.

So far, only Abraham has needed to stay forever. What started as one weekend turned into a long-term situation after the Department of Human Services let us know finding another bilingual family for him would be difficult.

It was not lack of love that landed us here but rather, lack of resources, systemic failures and complex care needs.

When I spoke with Abraham's birthmother over legal, she said, "I am giving Abraham to you because I love him. I wish you had been my Mom, too."

I have yet to meet a mother in this situation who does not love her children.

Many families are living a nightmare, sorting out generational poverty, addiction, bad circumstances and worse luck. They must complete court-ordered service plans, which can include programs and classes, to prove themselves safe and fit for a child's return. I do not envy the role of social workers and judges in making those determinations.

Over the past two years, we have

Fill-in-the-blank questions

The first thing I do when I wake up in the morning is: Check on my children.

Favorite way to relax: Swimming, so I can't touch my phone.

So far, my best life advice is:
Children spell "love" "t-i-m-e."
You will never regret spending time with a child.

attended nearly 300 medical and therapy appointments for Abraham. Now, with the help of a team of professionals and many brothers to interact with each day, he does not qualify for special needs preschool.

I am happy to care for my son. I am sorry it was impossible for him to return to his biological family. Those feelings co-exist and through it all, our family will continue loving Abraham.

Q&A WITH CALLIE COLLINS

Q. What do you wish other families knew about adoption?

Adoption is not a rescue mission. It is part of our obligation to care for one another. I have worked as a translator and a journalist throughout my career, so seeing human struggle really wore on me and still bothers me a lot. Foster care, and now adoption, is one of the few ways I could find to make a direct impact on children in the community. I would not recommend foster care as a path to adoption, as its goal is reunification.

Q. How has foster care helped your children learn empathy?

Our children have gained an acute awareness of issues affecting their community, from how the justice system works to mental health and the effects of drugs. Ultimately, they see firsthand the importance of making good choices, having good friends. Our oldest son is now a pre-med student who hopes to work with a Medicaid-based population as a psychiatrist. They have learned to share toys, space and their parents' time. My youngest boys even share a birthday.

Q. What is your community PSA?

You only have what you give away. Everyone can help in some capacity.

FIND TOMMY TURKEY CONTEST!

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This one doesn't count!

Count the number of Tommy Turkeys you find in this issue, then submit your answer by midnight on

NOVEMBER 20TH

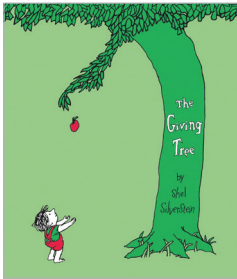
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Have You Found Your Favorite Read?

THERE'S NOTHING BETTER THAN READING to little ones or watching them cozy up with a good book. But not all kids—or adults—can read. On average, only 79% of U.S. adults nationwide are literate and in 2024, California had the lowest rate of adult literacy. In honor of Family Literacy Day and National Authors Day on Nov. 1, we asked Kern County Family friends what their favorite books are and here's what they recommend:



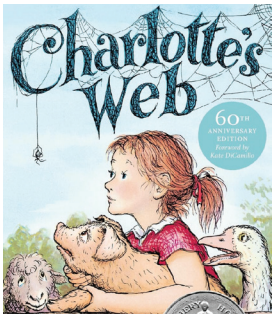
The Giving Tree

By Shel Silverstein
\$10.59; Ages 2 and up
Publisher: HarperCollins
Amazon.com
This children's classic tells a parable of the gift of giving and an

acceptance of love.

"It's about acts of service and sacrifice for others that fosters joy and a sense of purpose for the individual,"

—Zane Smith, Executive Director, Boys & Girls Clubs of Kern County



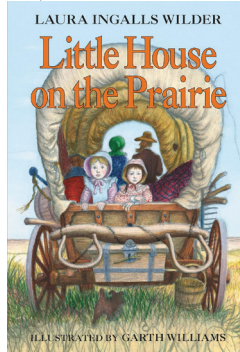
Charlotte's Web

By E.B. White & Garth Williams
\$6.29; Ages 5+
Publisher: HarperCollins
Amazon.com
Originally published in 1952, this classic tale has spanned

generations. Charlotte's spiderweb tells of her feelings for a little pig named Wilbur, who simply wants a friend. They also express the love of a girl named Fern, who saved Wilbur's life when he was born the runt of his litter.

"This was my favorite book as a child. Today it symbolizes the key areas that help me to address autism matters: Friendship serves as a reminder that kindness and compassion can be found in even the most unexpected places. Sometimes we need to think beyond our own needs and consider the needs of others. Perseverance reminds us that with enough determination and creativity, anything is possible,"

—Ramona Puget, Executive Director, Kern Autism Network



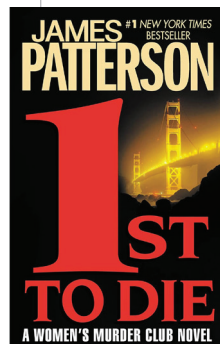
Little House on the Prairie

By Laura Ingalls Wilder
\$47.00; Ages: 6+
Publisher: Harper Trophy
Amazon.com
This classic series is based on the true story of the Ingalls family—Laura, Ma, Pa, Mary, and baby Carrie—who live in

a log cabin in the Midwest in the 1870s. It was later made into a TV series.

"Laura's bold spirit, everyday adventures and close-knit family life make her deeply relatable to young girls. She's not only brave and curious—she's a natural problem-solver, tackling challenges with creativity and grit. The cozy scenes of baking, sewing, and storytelling offer a sense of warmth and belonging that continues to charm readers."

—LJ Peterson Radon, Kern County Family Owner/Publisher



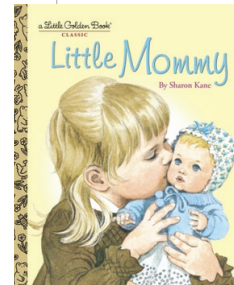
First to Die: A Novel (Women's Murder Club #1)

By James Patterson
\$6.99; Ages: adult
Publisher: Warner Books
Amazon.com
In the first of a 25-book series, four crime-solving friends face off against a killer in San Francisco,

each one bringing different skills to solve the crime.

"I wasn't much of a reader as a child, but I've really come to enjoy James Patterson's Women's Murder Club Series. Each new release feels like a mini getaway, an escape that lets me unwind and recharge before diving back into the work I love."

—Debbie Powers, Executive Director, Golden Empire Gleaners

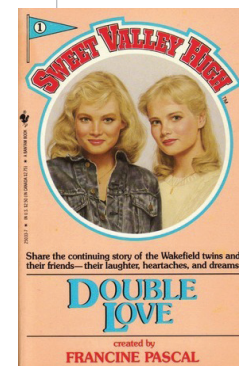


Little Mommy

By Sharon Kane
Ages: Child
Publisher: Golden Books
Price varies
Thriftbooks.com
Little Mommy, a fun story about a traditional mommy taking care of her

three children, was my absolute favorite book as a child. As early as I could walk and talk, I would hold this book in my chubby little hands and eagerly ask any one of my five sisters to repeatedly read it to me. In fact, my older sisters read it to me so often that many of them can still repeat the opening line from it today, which goes... *"This is my house, and I am the mommy, my children are Annabelle, Betsy, and Bonnie."* Thanks to my mom, who saved my original copy of this much-loved, worn-out book, I could read it to my children."

—Vaun Thyrgerson, Contributing Writer, Kern County Family Magazine



Sweet Valley High: Double Love

By Francine Pascal
\$9.04; Ages: 12-15
Publisher: Bantam Books
Amazon.com
This series was released in 1983 and grew to include more than 100 books.

All tell the tale of twins Elizabeth and

Jessica Wakefield, who attend Sweet Valley High and look identical, but couldn't be more different in personality.

"The 'Sweet Valley High Series' by Francine Pascal was my favorite."

—Jennifer Henry, Executive Director, Links for Life

Find more faves at
www.kerncountyfamily.com



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From Service to Support: Resources for Kern County Veterans

IN KERN COUNTY, THE SPIRIT OF SERVICE doesn't end when the uniform comes off. From mental health counseling to housing assistance, our community offers a robust network of resources to help veterans and their families thrive. Whether you're navigating civilian life, seeking medical care, or building a business, these organizations stand ready to serve those who've served us.

Mental Health & Wellness

Veterans face unique emotional challenges. These centers offer confidential, compassionate care:

Bakersfield Vet Center: Counseling for PTSD, depression, and military sexual trauma.

VA Clinic Bakersfield: Outpatient care including mental health, nutrition, and optometry.

Veterans Crisis Line: 24/7 confidential support. Dial 988 and press 1, or text 838255.

Career & Entrepreneurship

Veterans looking to build careers or launch businesses can tap into these resources:

Kern County Veterans Chamber of Commerce (KCVCC): Business support and entrepreneurship programs.

Kern County Veterans Service Department: Claims assistance and benefit navigation.

Homelessness & Housing Support

For veterans facing housing insecurity, these programs offer shelter and stability:

California Veterans Assistance Foundation (CVAF) – Transitional housing, clothing donations, and family support.

Community Action Partnership of Kern (CAPK) – 211 – Connects veterans to housing, employment, and benefits.

Wounded Heroes Fund – Practical assistance and community connection.

Education & Campus Support

Veterans pursuing higher education can find tailored support at local colleges:

Bakersfield College Veteran Resource Center – Priority registration, academic counseling, and VA benefit assistance.

CSU Bakersfield Veterans Success Center – On-campus resources and student engagement.

Kern County's veteran community is strong, resilient, and deeply valued. If you or someone you love is navigating the transition from military to civilian life, these resources are more than services—they're lifelines. Reach out, reconnect, and rediscover the support you deserve. **For more details about resources, visit www.kerncountyfamily.com.**



Coloring for a Cause: Celebrating Veterans

VETERANS DAY is a time to honor those who've served with courage and dedication. Invite your child to color this page—and use it as a chance to talk about service, sacrifice, and gratitude. When it's finished, share it with a veteran to say thank you in a heartfelt way.



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Gathering Thanks: Reflections from Our Community

AS THANKSGIVING NEARS, we're celebrating the spirit of gratitude by spotlighting voices from across our community. We asked leaders, changemakers, and everyday heroes one simple question: **"What's something you're especially thankful for this year—personally or professionally?"** Their answers offer warmth, wisdom, and inspiration for us all.



"I am thankful for the gift of another year of life, a chance to grow, learn, and embrace all that comes my way. I cherish my family, whose love and support are the foundation of my strength and joy. I am grateful for my work, where purpose and opportunities to help others on the Autism Journey."

Ramona Puget
Executive Director,
Kern Autism Network



"I am grateful for the relationships that we have in the community that have given us the courage to open new locations (3,) expand our talented team, explore new programming, and serve children all over Kern County."

Zane Smith
Executive Director, Boys & Girls
Clubs of Kern County



"I'm blessed to assist women, men, and families throughout Kern County who are facing breast cancer. I'm especially grateful for the funding that allows us to take our mobile mammography unit to outlying areas, providing life-saving screenings to women who might otherwise go without."

Jennifer Henry
Executive Director, Links for Life



"I'm especially thankful for the new team members at the Golden Empire Gleaners. Their fresh ideas and enthusiasm have helped us grow in new directions and strengthen our mission of feeding families and seniors throughout Kern County."

Debbie Powers,
Executive Director,
Golden Empire Gleaners



"I'm especially thankful for the love and support of my family, friends, and colleagues this year. Their encouragement and teamwork have inspired me both personally and professionally reminding me how meaningful it is to grow, create, and make a difference together in our community."

Fahra Daredia, Marketing and Promotions Associate II,
Kern County Library



"I'm especially thankful for my family Lexi and Olive who make every day meaningful. I'm also grateful for the chance to keep learning, growing, and building something that inspires others. Simply being present and excited for what's ahead feels like a gift."

Greg DeWitt, Executive Director,
The Bakersfield Skateboard Foundation

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WE LOVE IT!

By Lisa Keosouphanh

Bake the Season Bright: Must-Haves for Makers & Bakers
From multitasking pans to imaginative playsets, here's a
roundup of November-ready favorites that make every
moment deliciously memorable.

1. GoodCook Bundt Pan \$12.88, www.walmart.com **2. Mindware Playful Chef: Master Series Baking Challenge** \$39.95, www.mindware.orientaltrading.com **3. GoodCook Pro Spatula and Spreader** \$6.97, www.walmart.com **4. GoodCook Best Bake MultiMeal Divided Sheet Pan** \$16.99 www.walmart.com **5. GoodCook AirPerfect Nonstick Cookie Sheet** \$24.99, www.walmart.com **6. Mindware Oh So Fun! Rise & Shine Coffee Café Playset** \$39.95, www.mindware.orientaltrading.com **7. GoodCook Muffin Pan (12 Cup)** \$15.07, www.walmart.com

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⑤



How to Create a Family Picture Book

NOVEMBER IS A MONTH FOR STORIES — the ones we read, and the ones we live. As the days grow shorter and the season leans into cozy, it's the perfect time to celebrate Picture Book Month and Gratitude Month side by side. Picture books invite us to slow down and see the world through wonder-filled eyes. Gratitude reminds us to notice the little things — the giggles, the messes, the moments that make your families uniquely yours.

Gather Your Story Ingredients

Pick a theme to guide your book. Choose one of these or invent your own:

1

- "A Day in Our Life" — morning to night snapshots
- "Family Favorites" — foods, games, sayings
- "Little Author, Big

Illustrator" — kids lead the story

- "Generations Together" — past meets present

Let each family member brainstorm ideas, draw pictures, or share stories to include.

Collect Photos, Drawings & Mementos

- Mix media for a rich, personal feel.
- Print photos or sketch scenes from memory
- Add ticket stubs, leaf rubbings, or recipe cards
- Use speech bubbles, captions, or "fun facts" to bring each page to life
- Encourage kids to decorate with stickers, stamps, or doodles.

Build Your Book

Assemble your pages into a real book.

3

- Fold printer paper in half and staple along the edge
- Use cardstock or cereal box cardboard for a sturdy cover
- Let kids design the cover with seasonal colors or favorite characters.

Share & Celebrate

- Host a mini "book launch" at home.
- Read the book aloud in silly voices or dramatic flair
- Record a video reading to share with relatives
- Display it on a shelf or coffee table for guests to enjoy

Bonus: Make a second copy as a gift for grandparents!

4

Keep the Story Going

- Add new pages throughout the year.
- Create a "Next Chapter" section for upcoming adventures
- Leave blank pages for future drawings or quotes
- This turns your craft into a living family archive — full of laughter, love, and growth.

5



Chicken, Chicken, Chip: The Sandwich Memory That Started It All

I first took my toddler out to lunch when she was 14 months old. Mostly I was craving a sandwich from Sequoia Sandwich Company. My baby didn't really eat, but I thought it might be fun to establish a tradition of going out to lunch, just the two of us, that would reach into her teenage years.

I did not order anything for her. I got myself a chicken fajita sandwich (an item that is no longer on the menu, I regret to inform you, although many other delicious options are) and sat down to enjoy. I gave her a piece of chicken and let her dip it in the sour cream.

And you would have thought I had given her the moon. She loved the moon. There were two things she loved at this age besides dogs: Busses and the moon. Any time we saw one, she would shout hysterically, "Bus! Bus!" or "Moon!" like we needed to hurry up and look, or we would miss the once in a lifetime opportunity to see that GET bus or school bus or crescent orb in the sky. So, when I say I had "given her the moon," you need to know that it was a big deal.

She loved that chicken.

Mostly I think she loved the sour cream. She dipped her few pieces of chicken in so much sour cream that we had to ask for more.

And so was born our Sequoia Sandwich habit. From then on, every time we would visit Sequoia, I would order the chicken fajita sandwich, and she would eat half the chicken and at least one full container of sour cream.

One day when she was about three, I decided to risk it and buy a bag of chips to go with my chicken fajita sandwich. This poor child had not had chips before, so she didn't even bat an eye when I picked up the yellow bag of salty goodness.

Three or four lunches passed without incident until one day she caught me.



"Wa's dat?" she asked, and I knew my days of not sharing were over.

"These are chips," I said, trying to act like it was no big deal, but of course she wanted to try one. "I don't know if you'll like them," I said, more hopeful than truthful.

Of course she loved them. Who wouldn't? This was back when Sequoia still had the "Dirty" potato chips, and she ended up loving them as much as I did.

After just one chip, she wanted more and more and more. I finally had to say, "Take another bite of chicken first."

She did. Then another chip.

Then chicken. Then chip. Chicken, chip. Chicken, chip.

Then a rule was born: "Chicken, chicken, chip."

For as long as Sequoia had their chicken fajita sandwich (which was years), she would eat half my chicken, all my sour cream, and all of it between chips.

Chicken, chicken, chip.

Eventually, we started widening out and trying different sandwiches. Now she is a teenager, and we still visit Sequoia Sandwich Company every now and then. She gets the Southwestern Chicken Sandwich every time. She eats the bread now, too, but she still dips every bite into a container (or two) of sour cream. And while we both miss the "Dirty" potato chips, I still see her eating chicken, chicken, chip as we enjoy our lunch out.

Bundt Cake Bliss for Your Thanksgiving Table

AS THANKSGIVING APPROACHES, it's the perfect time to serve a dessert that bridges garden-fresh goodness with cozy holiday flavors. This Zucchini Spice Bundt Cake brings together the warmth of autumn spices and the comfort of homegrown ingredients—ideal for your holiday table. Discover more festive treats at Culinary.net.



Zucchini Spice Bundt Cake

INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 1 box spice cake mix | 1 cup chopped white chocolate chips, divided |
| 2 cups grated zucchini | |
| ½ cup melted butter | |
| 3 eggs | |
| 1 cup chopped walnuts, divided | |

For the glaze

- | |
|----------------------------|
| 1 cup powdered sugar |
| ¼ cup milk (approximately) |

INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat your oven to 350°F (175°C).

In a large bowl, combine the spice cake mix, grated zucchini, melted butter, and eggs. Mix well.

Stir in ¾ cup of the chopped walnuts and ¾ cup of the white chocolate chips.

Pour the batter into a greased bundt pan.

Bake for about 40 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.

Allow the cake to cool in the pan for 10 minutes before inverting it onto a wire rack to finish cooling.

For the glaze, mix the powdered sugar and milk in a small bowl until it reaches your desired consistency.

Drizzle the glaze over the cooled cake.

Sprinkle the remaining walnuts and white chocolate chips over the glazed cake. Slice and serve.

— Recipe courtesy of "Cookin' Savvy"

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NOR's "Plant a Flag" Veteran's Day Tribute is taking place this year on November 10. PHOTO COURTESY NOR

NOVEMBER 1

6th Annual Autism Gala "Stayin' Alive for Autism"

Celebrate Kern Autism Network's 29th Anniversary with a 70s disco-themed evening featuring hors d'oeuvres, cocktails, formal dinner, music, and a silent auction. Event is for adults only. No-host bar available. Dress code: Semi-formal/Cocktail attire with 70s disco flair.

5 – 10 p.m.

Bakersfield Country Club
4200 Country Club Drive
Bakersfield, CA
661-489-3335
<https://kernautism.org/>

55th Annual Fall Faire Luncheon

Celebrate the season with food, fellowship, and festive fun! A cherished community tradition featuring a hearty luncheon, local vendors, crafts, and autumn cheer.

10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Grace Lutheran Church
2530 Drake St.
Bakersfield, CA
661-324-4315
mirthoughts@gmail.com

Día de Los Muertos Celebration

Enjoy performances from Mariachi Aguilas de Bakersfield, local ballet folklorico groups, and other FREE arts and crafts activities! Get a face painting, design your own skull mask, participate in our first-ever costume contest, or decorate a picture frame for your own ofrenda at home.

12 – 4 p.m.

Cesar E. Chavez Monument
29700 Woodford-Tehachapi Rd.
Keene, CA
661-823-6271
<https://www.facebook.com/CesarEChavezNPS>

NOVEMBER 2



KCHCC's 15th Annual Dia de Los Muertos Celebration

A vibrant evening of altars, music, dance, food, and family traditions honoring past loved ones. All ages welcome—come dressed in your festive best!

2 – 7 p.m.

Kern County Fairgrounds
1142 South P Street
Bakersfield, CA
661-633-5495
<https://kchcc.org/>

Día de Los Muertos Celebration

Celebrate the memory of loved ones through a vibrant cultural gathering featuring an altar contest with prizes, traditional food and drinks, live music, folkloric dance, and family-friendly activities. Free and open to all.

4 – 8 p.m.

Greenlawn Cemetery Northeast
3700 River Blvd.
Bakersfield, CA
661-324-9701
<https://www.facebook.com/people/Greenlawn-Northeast-Bakersfield/61561469129813/>

NOVEMBER 4

Election Day!

NOVEMBER 7

KCVCC Veterans Ball 2025: Rise & Remember

Honor service, uplifting veterans & foster economic opportunities.

5:30 – 10:30 p.m.

Bakersfield Marriott
801 Truxtun Ave
Bakersfield, CA
559-791-8885
<https://www.kcvcc.org/>

CAPK's Casino Night

A night filled with thrilling table games, delectable cuisine, and a chance to make a meaningful impact by supporting the children of The Friendship House.

5 – 10 p.m.

The Collective Venue
931 19th Street
Bakersfield, CA
661-336-5236 x1156
<https://www.capkfoundation.org/fhcc25/>

NOVEMBER 8

Touch-A-Truck @ Beale Library

Bring the whole family the biggest and most beloved events! Kids of all ages can climb aboard, explore, and interact with the amazing trucks and vehicles that serve the community while meeting the everyday heroes who build, protect, and serve Kern County.

10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Beale Memorial Branch Library
701 Truxtun Ave
Bakersfield, CA
661-868-0701
<https://kerncountylibrary.org/>

NOVEMBER 8 & 9

Bakersfield College Rodeo 2025

Saddle up for a thrilling day of rodeo action, family fun, and community spirit! This annual event features exciting competitions, delicious food, and entertainment for all ages—celebrating tradition, sportsmanship, and faith in the heart of Kern County.

Saturday: Gates Open at 4 p.m.

Sunday: Gates Open at 11a.m.

Kern County Fairgrounds
1142 South P S.St.
Bakersfield, CA
661-395-4800
<https://supportbc.org/upcoming-event/2025-bc-rodeo/>



VETERAN HAPPENINGS

NOVEMBER 8

8th Annual Wings 'N' Wheels 2025

Rev up for a full day of music, dancing, food, raffles, vintage aircraft, classic cars, and family fun at Minter Field Air Museum's signature event!

9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Minter Field Air Museum
401 Vultee Street
Shafter, CA
661-393-0291
<https://www.minterfieldairmuseum.com/event-details-registration/wings-n-wheels-2025-8th-annual>

NOVEMBER 10

NOR's "Plant a Flag" Veteran's Day Tribute 2025

Plant your flag in the growing sea of red, white, and blue, celebrating past, present, and future heroes.

9 – 10 a.m.

Liberty Park's Liberty Garden
11225 Brimhall Road
Bakersfield, CA
661-392-2010
<https://www.norfun.org/seasonal-492d727>

NOVEMBER 11

Portrait of a Warrior Gallery Bell Ringing

A solemn bell ringing ceremony honoring fallen service members.

12 p.m.

Portrait of a Warrior Gallery
1925 Eye St.
Bakersfield, CA 93301
661-479-5095
<https://www.kern-warrior.org/>

Bakersfield Post 26 Veterans Day Parade 2025

Bring out the family and honor our local Veterans at the annual Veterans Day Parade sponsored by the American Legion Post 26.

Breakfast (\$5 donation, Veterans eat free):

6:30 – 9:30 a.m.

Parade: 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Lunch (\$8 Or \$15 donation, Veterans eat free): 12 – 2 p.m.

Downtown Bakersfield (Parade route begins at 22nd and L St.
661-324-9453

<https://www.facebook.com/vetsdaypost26bakersfieldca>

Taft's Veterans Day Celebration 2025

Bring out the family and honor all who served. Enjoy food, drinks, and patriotic music. Challenge coins will be available to veterans as long as the supply lasts.

10 a.m.

Veteran's Memorial Park
217 East Kern Street
Taft, CA
661-763-1222
<https://www.cityoftaft.org/>

Tehachapi's Veteran's Day Celebration & Resource Fair 2025

This is a free family event where we gather to honor not only Americas veterans but the veterans of our community!

11:11 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Philip Marx Central Park
Mojave and "E" Street in
Downtown Tehachapi
661-822-3228
<https://www.tvrpd.org/veteran-s-day-celebration>

NOVEMBER 19

BC's Vet Fest 2025

Bakersfield College is paying tribute to all current and past members of the US Armed Forces.

9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Renegades Crossroads
1801 Panorama Dr.
Bakersfield, CA
661-395-4312
veterans@bakersfieldcollege.edu
<https://www.facebook.com/vetsdaypost26bakersfieldca/>

ONGOING EVENTS

Combat Trauma

Christian-based combat healing using the "Bridges to Healing" Series. Followed by discussion and review. A time for healing and camaraderie.

Wednesdays

8:30 – 10 a.m.

Portrait of a Warrior Education Room
1925 Eye Street
Bakersfield, CA
661-479-5095
<https://www.kern-warrior.org/>

Vietnam PTSD Support Group

A weekly peer-led support group offering a safe space for Vietnam veterans coping with PTSD.

Wednesdays

10:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Portrait of a Warrior Gallery
1925 Eye Street
Bakersfield, CA
661-479-5095
<https://www.kern-warrior.org/>

Veterans Breakfast @ Zingo's Cafe

Wednesday Veteran's Breakfast, where veterans enjoy breakfast, free coffee, and comradery. All branches welcome.

Wednesdays

8 a.m.

Zingo's Cafe
3201 Buck Owens Blvd.
Bakersfield, CA
<https://www.facebook.com/ZingosCafe/>

WHF Coffee & Donuts with Kern County Veterans

Connect with men and women from our community while enjoying donuts, memories, and freshly brewed coffee.

Third Thursdays

8:30 – 10 a.m.

Wounded Heroes Fund
3121 Standard Street
Bakersfield, CA
661-328-8600
<https://thewoundedheroesfund.com/>

Bakersfield Honor Flight Kern County Breakfast

Free to all Honor Flight, all local WWII veterans. Please limit 1 guest, \$10. Wear your Honor Flight shirt & name badge!

First Thursdays

8 - 10 a.m.

Elks Lodge 266
1616 30th St.
Bakersfield, CA
Karen Galyan: 661-301-4754
honorflightkerncounty.org

Lake Isabella Honor Flight Kern County Breakfast

For more information, contact Gary Zuber (760) 379-2109. Wear your Honor Flight shirt & name badge!

Second Thursdays

8 - 10 a.m.

VFW Hall
2811 Nugget Ave.
Lake Isabella, CA
661-527-3838
honorflightkerncounty.org

Ridgecrest Honor Flight Kern County Breakfast

For more information, contact John Abbott at (619) 808-222. Wear your Honor Flight shirt & name badge!

Third Thursdays

8 - 10 a.m.

Historic USO Building
230 W. Ridgecrest Blvd.
Ridgecrest, CA
661-527-3838
honorflightkerncounty.org

NOVEMBER 27



NOVEMBER 28

Adventist Health: Lunch & Learn Community Education Series: Men's Health

Learn to spot early signs, explore care options, and join live demos. A medical expert will answer questions during the Q&A. Space is limited—RSVP now!

12 - 1 p.m.

Adventist Health Bakersfield
1524 27th St., Second Floor, "Be Brilliant" Conference Room
Bakersfield, CA
661-446-5442
<https://www.adventisthealth.org/bakersfield/events/ahbd-lunch-learn-community-education-series/4-25-25>

NOVEMBER 28

T & C Village Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony

It's time for the annual Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony! Bundle up and bring your family to take part in this beloved holiday tradition. Come say hi to Santa and Mrs. Claus, enjoy the pet parade, and more!

3 p.m.

Town & Country Village Shopping Center
8200 Stockdale Hwy.
Bakersfield, CA
townandcountryvillage@gmail.com
<https://www.facebook.com/TandCBakersfield/>

NOVEMBER 29

Teddy Bear Toss 2025

The biggest night of the year returns as the Condors take on the Henderson Silver Knights. Bring new stuffed animals to throw on the ice after the Condor's score their first point and support local nonprofits serving children and families of Kern County.

6 p.m.

Dignity Health Arena
1001 Truxtun Ave.
Bakersfield, CA
<https://www.bakersfieldcondors.com/news/teddy-bear-toss-tickets-on-sale-now/>



ONGOING HAPPENINGS

TUESDAYS

Kinship Support Services

The Henrietta Weill Memorial Clinic offers free parent & caregiver support groups with community resources, bonding activities, and practical parenting tips through videos, discussions, and multimedia tools.

10 - 11 a.m.

Henrietta Weill Memorial Child Guidance Clinic
661 Roberts Ln Ste. A
Bakersfield, CA 93308
661-371-3360
<https://hwmcgc.org/support>

THIRD TUESDAYS

Foster/Adoption Support Group

The Resource Parent Support Group at Kern Bridges Youth Homes supports foster and adoptive families through open discussions on trauma-informed care, parenting, child welfare, and self-care. Dinner provided, no childcare provided.

6 - 8 p.m.

Kern Bridges Youth Homes
1321 Stine Rd.
Bakersfield, CA 93309
661-747-4333
kernbridges.com

Worship Guide

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Thanks-Living: Not Just Thanksgiving

November is often known for Thanksgiving, but why limit gratitude to just one day? Each day of this month can become an opportunity to pause, reflect, and give thanks for the many blessings—big or small—that shape our lives. Beginning each morning with a grateful heart sets a positive tone and reminds us of what truly matters. On the first day, we might give thanks to the family, the people who support and love us. Another day could be dedicated to friends, whose laughter and companionship bless our days. We can express gratitude for health, for the ability to breathe, walk, and experience the world. We can appreciate nature's beauty or whisper a word of thanks for a good night's rest. Each day offers something new to notice—a kind gesture, a lesson learned, or when down times turn to up times. Writing these thoughts in a gratitude journal can turn simple appreciation into a lasting habit. By the time November ends, we realize that gratitude doesn't belong to a single holiday. It's a way of life that transforms ordinary moments into extraordinary ones and fills our hearts with peace every day of the year.

— By Jon Engen



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To register, visit our website kernautism.org

Adults on the Spectrum Gathering: Saturday, November 15th.
To register, please contact our office for details.

Father's Virtual Support Group Meeting: Saturday, November 15th @ 2:30 pm.
To register, visit our website kernautism.org

Chess Club for Teens Sunday, November 16th from 11 a.m. to noon.
To register visit our website www.kernautism.org

Female Support Group Gathering Thursday, November 20th @ 6 pm.
To register, please contact our office for details.

To read more about the organization, follow us on Facebook and Instagram.

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Support your immune system this flu season with 6 easy tips

As the cold weather approaches, it's time to gear up for flu season. Even though germs are always around, you can take small, daily steps to give your body a better chance to stay healthy. Registered Dietitian and Nutritionist Dawn Jackson Blatner shares six simple, practical tips to keep your immune system strong during the fall and winter months.

1. Add spices to your meals

Certain spices like turmeric, garlic and ginger not only add flavor to your food but also provide natural anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial benefits. Consider adding these spices to your meals for a simple and tasty way to support your immune system.

2. Stay hydrated

Staying hydrated helps your body flush out toxins and defend against seasonal bugs. Water is essential, but broths and herbal teas are also good options that provide extra warmth and comfort during the colder days.

3. Eat colorful fruits and vegetables

The colors of produce reflect phytochemicals, natural compounds that offer unique health benefits. According to the Mayo Clinic, when eaten, these phytochemicals can provide certain health benefits, including antioxidants that strengthen your immunity. Filling your plate with a variety of colors, such as leafy greens, peppers, carrots and berries, ensures you get a wide range of protective nutrients.

4. Prioritize sleep

Sleep is the time when your body re-



Harvest Stracciatella Soup

pairs and recharges. Getting seven to nine hours of restful sleep each night helps your body recover from daily wear and tear, and prepares your immune system to handle seasonal changes.

5. Practice good hygiene

Good hygiene is one of the easiest ways to reduce your chances of

getting sick. Washing your hands regularly, avoiding touching your face and keeping frequently used surfaces clean can help reduce the spread of germs. Don't forget your phone and computer keyboard!

6. Eat immune-supporting meals

The meals you choose can help strengthen your body during flu season. As you plan your meals for the week, add immune-supporting options to your list. Cooking meals with wholesome ingredients like chicken broth and veggies such as this Harvest Stracciatella Soup (Italian Egg Soup with Vegetables) from Eggland's Best can help you stay nourished all season long.

You can find more immune-supporting recipes to get you through flu season at [EgglandsBest.com](https://www.egglandsbest.com).

Harvest Stracciatella Soup (Italian Egg Soup with Vegetables)

Prep time: 15 minutes

Cook time: 15 minutes

Yield 4

INGREDIENTS

1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
3 cups chicken broth
1 cup coarsely grated sweet potato
1/2 cup onion, finely chopped
1 cup shaved Brussels sprouts
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon Kosher salt
6 cups chicken, cubed
4 Eggland's Best eggs, large
2 tablespoons cornstarch
1 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
2 cups chopped kale

DIRECTIONS

Heat the oil in a 2-quart soup pot over medium heat. Add the grated sweet potato, chopped onion and shaved Brussels sprouts and sauté for 3-4 minutes until softened. Pour the broth into the pot, over sautéed vegetables and bring to simmer, about 4 minutes. While broth is coming to a simmer, put the eggs, cornstarch and half of the cheese (reserve remaining for upcoming step) in a medium bowl and whisk together. Scoop out 1 cup of the hot broth from the saucepan and add to the egg bowl, whisking until smooth. Slowly add the egg mixture to the soup in the saucepan, whisking constantly. Turn the heat down to low and continue cooking until the soup thickens, 4-6 minutes. Stir in the chopped kale and cook for another 2 minutes until wilted. Season with nutmeg. Serve in warm bowls with the additional cheese sprinkled on top.

5 best airports in the US to get stuck in during layovers

Even the most avid travelers can have their enthusiasm dampened by endless security lines, delayed flights, and interminable layovers. Luckily, more airports are figuring out that passengers on a layover shouldn't feel like they've been trapped in Dante's nine circles of hell! So, Way.com provides a countdown of the best airports in the U.S. to get stuck in. These airports offer pretty awesome layover experiences for travelers passing through them and are a destination in themselves.

Over the past decade, there's been a concerted effort to make airports more welcoming and hospitable. As a result, airports across the U.S. now offer a wide range of amenities. These include free Wi-Fi, nap pods, soothing spas, fantastic food, premium shopping, and yoga rooms. Some airports, of course, do more than others. AirHelp recently revealed its list of the world's best airports — here are the top five in the U.S., where layovers seem like mini vacations.

Salt Lake City International Airport

Salt Lake City International Airport, the busiest airport in Utah, currently holds the coveted tag of the "best airport in the United States." Just because the airport is super busy doesn't

mean it's crowded and gloomy. If you're a regular flyer from here, you'll know why this airport is a traveler's delight. With a whole lot of amenities and processes tailored to make your experience trouble-free, SLC is one of the best airports in the world. It's not all about the amenities, though.

SLC Airport often ranks high for on-time departures and arrivals and the fewest flight cancellations. SLC underwent a \$5.1 billion overhaul that got rid of its outdated terminals and replaced them with a more flyer-friendly modern version. It's a lot easier to get around the airport now, thanks to a tunnel connecting the concourses.

Los Angeles Airport

Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) is the fifth busiest airport in the United States and the 11th busiest in the world, with millions of travelers passing through each year. It is also the busiest airport in the world for both origin and destination flights. According to AirHelp, LAX is ranked as the second-best airport in the U.S. for 2025. With tons of amenities to help travelers, LAX is especially great for business travelers.

Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport

Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport ranks

fourth on the list of best airports in the US. The airport is the busiest airport in the Upper Midwest, welcoming over 37 million travelers each year. The airport is known for being one of the best in the country because it offers a friendly atmosphere and good amenities.

Atlanta Hartsfield-Jackson Airport

AirHelp has ranked the Atlanta Hartsfield-Jackson Airport as the 36th best airport in the world, and the fourth best in the United States. And just in case, you didn't know, it's been the busiest airport in the world for many years. ATL is the primary hub for Delta and offers 1,000 flights daily to 225 destinations from here. With top-notch amenities and a lively atmosphere, ATL is the kind of airport where you wouldn't mind spending extra time.

The airport has racked up some accolades over the years, like Business Traveler Award for North America's Best Airport in 2023 and One Flew South being named one of the top 10 full-service airport restaurants in the U.S. in Newsweek's 2025 Readers' Choice Awards and.

Portland International Airport

Travelers seem to love the Portland Airport, which probably explains all the awards it's garnered — it's been crowned the best airport in the U.S. by Travel + Leisure and Condé Nast Traveler multiple times! PDX is probably one of the few airports you'll want to arrive a few hours early.



Salt Lake City International Airport

This story was produced by Way.com and reviewed and distributed by Stacker.

Infant sleep safety: 8 tips every parent should follow

ALISON JACOBSON FOR NATUREPEDIC

1. Always Place Your Baby on Their Back

You might think putting your baby on their tummy is safer in case they spit up, but here's the truth: Babies are actually better able to clear spit-up when on their backs. If they're face-down, spit-up can block their airway. Back sleeping is the safest position for every nap and nighttime sleep until your baby is strong enough to roll on their own.

2. Use a Firm, Flat Sleep Surface

Your baby should sleep in a safety-approved crib, bassinet or portable play yard with a firm mattress and fitted sheet. Avoid car seats, swings, couches or adult beds for sleep – these surfaces can put your baby in a dangerous position where they can't breathe properly.

3. Keep the Crib Clear

We get it. Cute blankets, pillows and stuffed animals feel comforting, especially when you're trying to make the nursery cozy. But here's the thing: Babies don't need them, and they can be dangerous.

You might think your baby is too young to move much, but it only takes one wiggle or squirm for them to end up with a blanket over their head, with their face pressed against a pillow or snuggled into a stuffed animal where they can't breathe.

4. Room-Share, Don't Bed-Share

We know how tempting it is, especially when you're exhausted, to keep your baby in bed with you. But the safest place for your baby is in



ADOBESTOCK / IDAMBEER

their own crib or bassinet, close to your bed. The AAP recommends room sharing for at least the first six months of your infant's life.

5. Be Mindful of Dozing Off With Your Baby

It happens all the time: You're lying on the couch with your baby on your chest, and you both start to drift off. The problem? Your baby could roll onto the cushions or get pressed against your body, making it hard to breathe. If you feel yourself getting sleepy, immediately place your baby in their crib or bassinet.

6. Keep Baby Comfortable, Not Overheated

Overheating is considered a risk factor for SIDS, so it's important to pay attention to how warm your baby's sleep environment is. Babies can't regulate their body temperature as easily as adults, which means they may become overheated without showing obvious signs. Instead

of blankets, dress your baby in a wearable blanket or sleep sack that keeps them warm without the risk of covering their face. A breathable crib mattress can also help.

The ideal room temperature is one that feels comfortable to a lightly dressed adult, typically between 68-72 degrees F (20-22 degrees C).

7. Pacifiers Can Help

Offering a pacifier at nap time and bedtime may reduce the risk of SIDS. Experts believe pacifiers can help by keeping a baby's airway open and encouraging a lighter stage of sleep, making it easier for them to wake if needed. If your baby is breastfeeding, it's usually best to wait until feeding is well established (around 3-4 weeks) before introducing a pacifier, to avoid any potential nipple confusion.

If your baby doesn't want it, that's okay – never force it.

8. Stay Smoke-Free

Smoking around babies is one of the biggest risk factors for SIDS. And it's not just about the smoke you see.

Secondhand smoke is what your baby breathes in when someone smokes nearby.

Both are harmful, and both raise your baby's risk of breathing problems and SIDS. If someone in your household smokes: Make sure they always smoke outside.

Wash hands and face before handling the baby after smoking.

These small steps can make a huge difference in protecting your little one

This story was produced by Naturepedic and reviewed and distributed by Stacker.



ADOBESTOCK / CYNOCULUB

When dogs bark, are they using words to communicate?

CLIVE WYNNE, Arizona State University, The Conversation

Does your dog bark a lot? Or is he one of those quiet pooches who barks only when things get really exciting? Most dogs bark at least a little.

Dog barks are not words. But although your dog will never tell you about his parents or the weather or the amazing bone he had yesterday, his barks still communicate important information.

Dog barks are much closer to the noises people make when they accidentally hit their thumb with a hammer – “Ow!” – or open a fantastic present – “Wow!” These sounds convey how someone feels, but not why they feel that way. When other people hear these kinds of sounds, they often come over to see what has happened: How did you hurt yourself? What is this wonderful gift you received?

All dogs, even the tiniest chihuahua, are descended from great grey wolves. Wolves almost never bark. They howl. Sometimes dogs howl too – but howling is rarer in dogs. Understanding why wolves howl and

dogs bark helps explain what barking is for.

A howl can be a beautiful sound – almost like a kind of music. And, just as group singing brings people together, so too does group howling help a pack of wolves feel united.

Dog barking also brings groups together – but it’s not a beautiful sound. It is a much more urgent noise, just like the sounds you make when you are hurt or very pleased. Many smaller animals, like scrub jays, meerkats and California ground squirrels, make such noisy sounds. They do this when they feel frightened by something. In dogs, barking can bring a group together to defend against a danger that can’t be coped with alone.

Wolves don’t need to make sounds like this because they are big and fearsome and don’t often feel threatened. Dogs, on the other hand, are much smaller and weaker than their wolf ancestors – and often need to call the group together.

This is why dogs bark. They are calling their group to get help with something they are not confident

they can handle on their own. This doesn’t mean a barking dog is always frightened. He may just be very excited. He badly needs the family to know that there is a stranger coming to the door, or another dog coming close to the house.

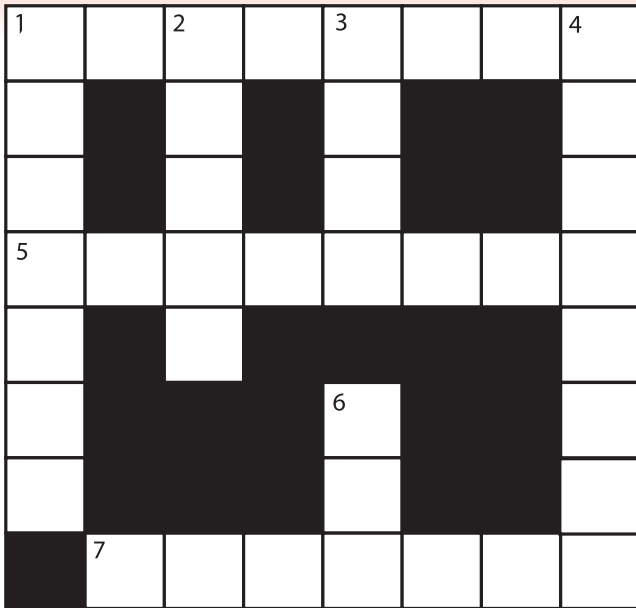
Your dog’s barks may not be words, but he probably barks a little differently depending on what kind of thing has got him excited. If you listen closely, you may find you can tell the difference between a bark directed at a package deliverer and one directed toward a friend at the door. The bark to a passing dog may be different than the bark at a passing car.

Your dog doesn’t understand much of what you say, but he listens hard to try to make sense of human language. If you return the compliment and listen hard to his sounds, you may find you can also understand him better, and the two of you will have a richer life together.

This article is republished from The Conversation, a nonprofit, independent news organization bringing you facts and trustworthy analysis to help you make sense of our complex world.

NOVEMBER ACTIVITY CORNER

Crossword



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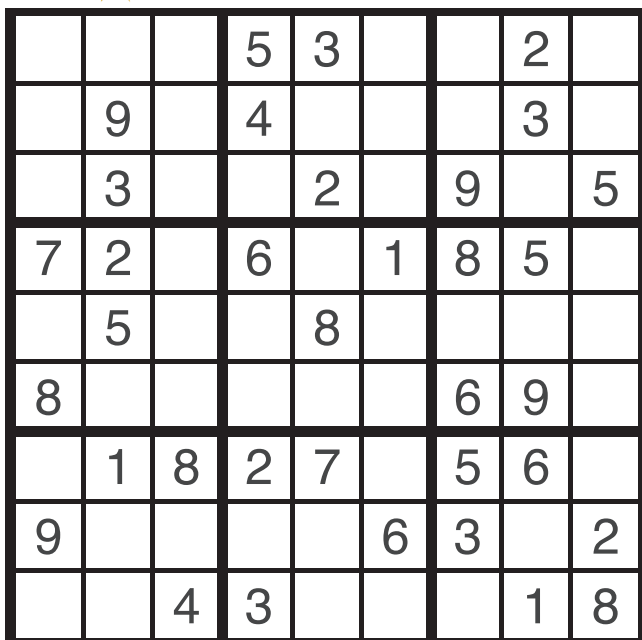
1. Parcels
5. Tidy a space
7. Liquid turning into a gas

DOWN

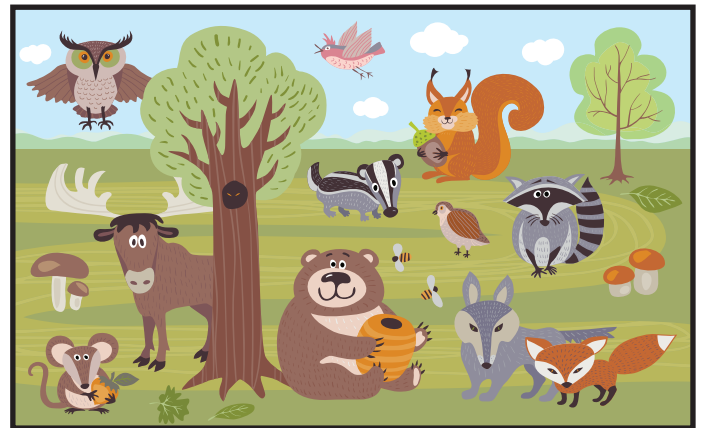
1. Nuts that are not a nut
2. Transparent
3. Pain
4. Trying things out
6. Liquid fat



Sudoku



There are 10 differences in the pictures below. Can you find them all?



DID YOU KNOW?



Turkeys can blush!

When a turkey gets excited or scared, the skin on its head and neck can change color—turning red, white, or blue.

www.livescience.com/17057-turkey-facts-thanksgiving.html

NOVEMBER ACTIVITY CORNER

PUZZLE
ANSWERS
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FALL DAYS WORD SEARCH

PRESENTED BY PACIFIC AG RENTALS

H	D	F	S	C	I	O	W	F	L	E	A	V	E	S	H	V	B	N	K
M	R	E	W	C	B	R	G	E	F	M	N	P	A	E	P	S	I	R	C
R	E	D	I	C	E	M	F	A	L	L	U	I	C	R	W	V	G	C	V
G	F	E	I	W	G	F	O	K	F	M	G	M	O	Y	T	G	O	D	V
V	N	M	L	B	V	K	W	E	P	C	A	I	R	I	S	R	K	R	Y
Y	L	I	D	N	B	W	H	K	H	G	W	O	N	S	N	N	M	H	U
T	S	E	V	R	A	B	I	A	T	O	O	I	K	U	K	L	E	E	D
Y	L	D	R	I	G	N	R	D	R	B	S	E	C	O	D	H	A	A	K
L	F	G	L	O	G	V	K	C	F	F	A	O	C	L	C	D	G	R	E
I	L	F	G	E	E	S	E	A	U	R	P	N	H	I	R	K	N	T	K
P	P	O	N	S	E	R	K	F	A	I	O	N	G	A	P	F	W	H	R
G	C	L	T	R	A	K	M	N	A	M	S	O	K	C	Y	S	L	P	T
L	I	I	U	C	Y	C	H	N	A	T	A	P	V	K	N	R	P	E	G
G	V	A	S	H	S	G	V	N	G	H	B	M	K	K	B	I	I	T	H
E	I	G	D	N	B	W	N	B	F	V	T	V	R	M	P	D	C	D	G
R	D	E	M	A	M	I	E	M	E	G	K	S	A	S	V	A	L	W	E
F	R	E	H	P	C	U	I	A	U	S	V	P	E	R	I	F	N	O	B
N	U	C	M	P	B	H	T	V	T	L	L	N	S	P	S	O	O	R	B
N	O	B	H	L	L	D	M	U	U	E	F	W	M	H	A	M	U	G	U
R	G	F	P	E	T	I	V	W	A	S	R	I	R	U	N	C	D	S	N

ACORN

APPLE

AUTUMN

BONFIRE

CIDER

CINNAMON

CORNUCOPIA

CRISP

FALL

FOLIAGE

GOURD

HARVEST

HAYRIDE

HEARTH

LEAVES

MAPLE

PUMPKIN

SCARECROW

SPICE

SWEATER

THANKSGIVING



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