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4 facts about St. Valentine

Saint Valentine is the patron saint of lovers and engaged and married couples. He also is the name behind the holiday that in-
those who experience seizures associated with the disease.

- Visitors to the Basilica of Santa Maria in



spires images of red hearts and rose petals in the middle of February.

Not much is actually known about St. Valentine because records are sparse. However, these facts have emerged.

- St. Valentine could be one of at least three individuals who were martyred. In fact, some believe there were about a dozen St. Valentines.

- Of course St. Valentine is known for presiding over lovers. However, he's also the patron saint of epilepsy, watching over

Rome can find the flower-adorned skull of St. Valentine on display. Other parts of St. Valentine's skeleton are on display in the Czech Republic, England, France, and Ireland.

- Some people think Geoffrey Chaucer may have invented Valentine's Day. In his "Parlement of Foules," he speaks of a tradition of courtly love with the celebration of St. Valentine's Day. This association became more established after Chaucer's poem received widespread attention.

Accounts vary on Valentine's Day origins

Valentine's Day is a bright light in the middle of the winter. Come February 14, sweethearts celebrate their love and affection for one another on this day devoted to happy couples.

The origin of Valentine's Day has generated much speculation over the years. Most early accounts do not point to heart-shaped boxes filled with chocolates. Rather, a few distinctive tales may paint the picture of early Valentine's Day, and they have nothing to do with stuffed animals or romantic dinners.

Roman festival

One of the earliest records of the term Valentine's Day is traced to the Roman festival of Lupercalia, which was a fertility festival. This annual event held on February 15 included animal sacrifices and priests called the Luperci who would take

pieces of animal hide and touch it to the foreheads of women in the hopes it would make them more fertile. Fortunately for the squeamish (and the sacrificial animals), Pope Gelasius I ended Lupercalia and replaced it with St. Valentine's Day by the end of the fifth century.

Two or three St. Valentines?

Most people attribute the origins of Valentine's Day to the holiday's namesake, St. Valentine. But it seems that Valentine was the surname of a few different individuals. According to History.com, the Catholic Church recognizes at least three different saints named Valentine or Valentinus. One Valentine was a priest during the reign of Emperor Claudius II, who decided that single men made better soldiers than those with families or wives. Claudius outlawed marriage for young men.

Valentine disagreed with the decree and would perform marriages in secret. Others believe it was St. Valentine of Terni, a bishop beheaded by Claudius II outside of Rome, who was the true namesake.

Yet another Valentine may have been jailed and fell in love with a jailer's daughter while in prison. He purportedly wrote to her, beginning the first Valentine card or letter tradition. Other stories say the imprisoned Valentine actually was writing to a blind woman he purportedly healed, and signed

the note "from your Valentine."

It is hard to know who is who in regard to the name Valentine, as the stories and the people behind them are used interchangeably. Some historians believe they actually are the same person rather than several Valentines, while others insist there were multiple martyred individuals.

However you slice it, the defiant actions of one or more people named "Valentine" set the course for centuries of romance to follow.



Warning signs for heart disease

Heart disease is the leading cause of death across the globe. Data from the World Health Organization indicates that cardiovascular diseases, which are a group of disorders of the heart and blood vessels, claim roughly 18 millions lives each year. More than 80 percent of those deaths are due to heart attacks and strokes that oftentimes can be prevented.

The right lifestyle choices, which include eating a healthy diet and exercising regularly, can help people reduce their risk for cardiovascular disease. Learning to recognize warning signs of heart disease is another

way individuals can reduce their risk of developing this global but often preventable threat.

• **Chest pain:** Chest pain is widely recognized as a sign of heart attack. However, many people experience chest pain without ever suffering a heart attack. So how can individuals distinguish chest pain suggestive of heart disease from less threatening types of pain in their chest, such as stiffness after strength training or discomfort stemming from a pulled pectoral muscle? According to the British Heart Foundation, chest pain related to

See **HEART**,
Page 4

February is 
Heart Month

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Heart - From Page 3

heart attack is marked by feelings of heaviness, tightness or pressure in the chest. Pain or tightness in the chest that subsides after a few minutes may be indicative of angina, which the Mayo Clinic notes is a symptom of coronary artery disease caused by a reduction of blood flow to the heart.

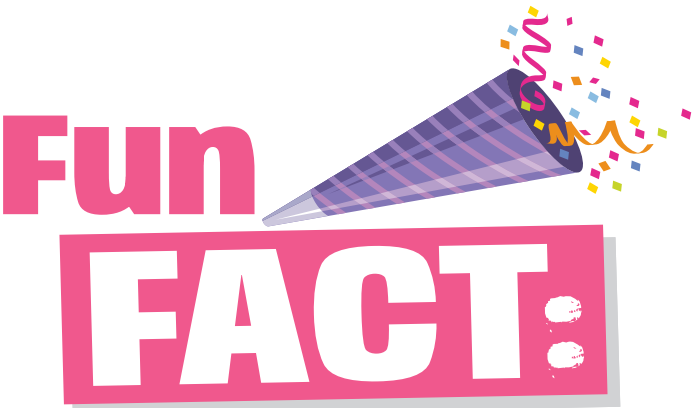
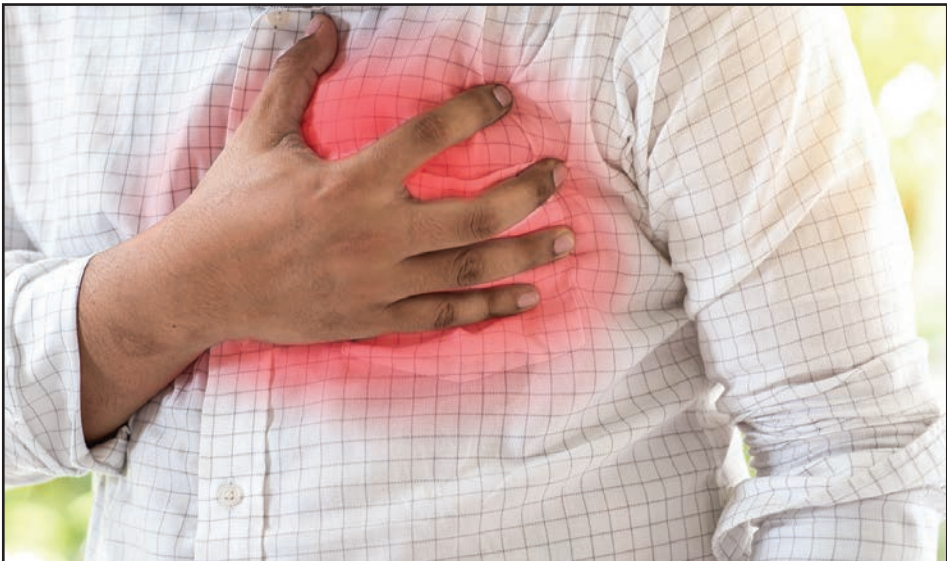
• **Stomach pain:** People may not instantly associate stomach pain with heart disease, but in certain instances such discomfort might indicate a heart problem. The BHF notes that a painful or burning feeling in the stomach can be indicative of a heart problem, including heart attack. Though it's not easy to distinguish between heartburn, which in spite of its name is a digestive issue, and stomach pain indicative of heart attack, it's best to avoid writing off abdominal pain as heartburn. The Mayo Clinic notes that many heart attacks do not involve sudden, crushing chest pain, and are instead characterized by a host of warning signs, including abdominal pain. The BHF advises anyone experiencing stomach pain who are

unsure of its origins to contact a health care professional immediately.

• **Arm pain:** Pain in the arm is another potential indicator of heart disease. According to the Mayo Clinic, arm pain that appears suddenly and is severe could be a symptom of heart attack. This pain may occur alongside feelings of pressure, fullness or squeezing in the chest. The BHF notes that a heart attack is more likely to occur if the pain is going down the arm, particularly the left arm, or into the neck.

• **Swelling in the lower legs:** The National Library of Medicine notes that swelling in the legs, ankles or feet is indicative of a heart problem. Blood flow is adversely affected when the heart is not working at peak capacity, and that can contribute to what's effectively a traffic jam involving the blood in the veins of the legs. That backup causes the buildup of fluid in the tissues.

Heart disease is a formidable and deadly foe. Learning to recognize the warning signs of heart disease might prove lifesaving.



Around 250 million of these are grown for Valentine’s Day each year. They are a popular offering as a gift of love.

Answer: Red roses

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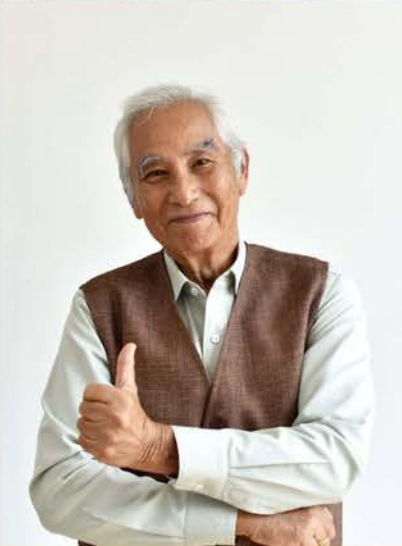
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Fun ways to celebrate Groundhog day

Move over local television and radio meteorologists. Come February 2, a different weather expert garners all the forecasting glory.

Groundhog Day celebrations are an entertaining way to break up the bleakness of winter. Groundhog Day evolved from an earlier custom, known as Candlemas Day, which was observed by early European Christians. During Candlemas, clergy blessed candles and distributed them to others as a way to ward off the winter chill. A poem was recited during the ceremony:

*If Candlemas be fair and bright,
Winter has another fight.
If Candlemas brings clouds and rain,
Winter will not come again.*



German settlers in Pennsylvania likely brought over Candlemas traditions, and they evolved into Groundhog Day customs involving a local animal known for its hibernation habits. Similar to Candlemas Day, if the groundhog “sees” his shadow then winter will continue for another six weeks. If he does not, spring is around the corner. Punxsutawney Phil is the most famous of the prognosticating groundhogs.

Phil emerges at festivities in Gobbler's Knob in Pennsylvania each year. But there are others who also look for their own shadows in different regions of the country.

Families can get in on the Groundhog action and do their own weather-predicting activities and other fun stuff. The following are some creative ways to celebrate Groundhog Day.

- **Make shadow art.** Explore how shadows work by gathering some three-dimensional objects and side-

walk chalk. Venture outdoors during the morning and see if you can trace the shadows of any of the shapes onto the sidewalk or a driveway.

- **Learn about groundhogs.** Groundhogs are interesting creatures that are sometimes referred to as woodchucks. They are extremely intelligent animals that form complex social networks. Groundhogs belong to a group of large ground squirrels known as marmots, and are native to

the eastern United States.

- **Create a groundhog craft.** All you will need is a paper tube made from construction paper, and a cut-out paper groundhog attached to a straw, stick or pipe cleaner for a fun kids' craft. Kids can take turns popping their groundhogs out of the tops of their tubes just like Punxsutawney Phil pops out of his den.

- **Read a groundhog-themed book.** Plenty of books feature groundhogs as the main character.

"Wake Up Groundhog!" and "How to Catch a Groundhog" are two such options.

- **Go for a night walk.** The days soon will be getting longer and hours of night shorter. Capitalize on the opportunity to enjoy the quiet of the darkness with a neighborhood stroll.

Groundhog Day marks the moment when people learn if winter will stretch on or if spring will soon arrive. It is marked by certain customs that families can make their own.




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THIS DAY IN HISTORY

FEBRUARY

5

62: An earthquake strikes in Pompeii, Italy.

1852: The New Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg, Russia, opens to the public.

1924: The Royal Greenwich Observatory begins broadcasting the hourly time signals.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

FEBRUARY

14

1778: The United States flag is formally recognized by a foreign naval vessel for the first time.

1849: James Knox Polk becomes the first serving President of the U.S. to be photographed.

2005: YouTube is launched.

Mental Health and the Geriatric Population

By: Gretchen Hook

Little Elm Residential Care

Geriatric? What? Not me!! As a Mental Health Therapist, Chaplain, and owner of a Residential Care Home, I hear that phrase often. How can I possibly be considered geriatric? I don't feel old! Or I'm only ... years old. I believe that age is just a number, but for the sake of argument, let's agree that a person becomes part of the geriatric population at age 65.

The hat I am wearing today is my Mental Health Therapist hat. I specialize in trauma-related issues, PTSD, bereavement, depression, and anxiety. When I am caring for people who fall into this population, I often run into depression and anxiety issues. I will informally counsel them and assist them during their life transitions, whether it be learning of a terminal illness, going on Hospice care, or other issues related to age. I want to propose that the geriatric population needs mental health counseling more than any other population. Let me explain.

Let's talk science for a few minutes: The brain begins to

shrink in a person's thirties and forties, with the rate of decline accelerating at age 60. Getting older affects multiple areas of the brain, including The frontal lobes, which rule our behavior and emotions; the hippocampus, which governs our memory and learning abilities, the cortical density (the wrinkled outer layer of our brains) thins, affecting cognition, the white matter connecting all four lobes of our brains decreases, slowing down our processing, chemicals from our aging bodies cause the neurotransmitter systems to break down, causing slower cognitive function. All of this happens in a normal brain, so you can only imagine how quickly it manifests in a brain that is compromised by a disease like Alzheimer's.

One of the most common mental health issues in our geriatric population is depression. This issue does not affect everyone over the age of 65. However, it seems to affect those who receive a terminal illness diagnosis, the loss of a spouse or child, or life-changing events. Loneliness and isolation often become issues for the geriatric population

leading to depression, anxiety, and frequently suicide. If this isn't a recipe for mental health counseling, I don't know what is.

It's never too late to learn new coping skills. There are several ways to avoid isolation, loneliness, depression, and anxiety. Stay connected, if possible, to friends, family, or neighbors. Attend events at your local senior center or other events in your community. Be aware of mental health warning signs, including Persistent sad, anxious, or depleted mood, loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities, feelings of hopelessness and pessimism, feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness, decreased energy, fatigue, sluggish, difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions, difficulty sleeping, early-morning awakening, or oversleeping, appetite and/or unintended weight changes, thoughts of death or suicide, suicide attempts, aches or pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive problems without a clear physical cause and/or that do not ease, even with treatment, and restlessness, irritability. If

you notice these signs, contact your doctor, family, or a mental health therapist.

Get the right help. Doctors may prescribe medications for depression and anxiety. These medications coupled with mental health counseling can be beneficial for some. If you are opposed to these drugs, again, reach out for help to learn how to cope with life changes.

Foster resilience through therapies. Physical therapy, occupational therapy, recreational therapy, and mental health therapy can all help you keep engaged and maintain a positive attitude. Learning a new skill or language will help with mental clarity.

Learn to be comfortable talking about death. Death is inevitable for us all. It is often a taboo topic that people feel uncomfortable discussing. There are many venues to assisting normalizing death. One such way is to find a Death Café. These venues normalize death and discuss fears, rituals, and other issues surrounding the death topic. Planning for your funeral using a death doula is another great way to assist with the topic of death. A Death Dou-

la is someone who will walk with you and your family on this difficult journey. They provide assistance with funeral planning, advanced directives, and durable powers of attorney, legacy projects, and so much more.

The more open we can be to experience life's losses, the more available we are to cherish all the beauty life has to offer. If you can allow yourself to face the inevitable losses, both personal and bodily, that come with getting older, this will unburden you to experience the best this stage of your life has to offer. It is in our willingness to grieve that we keep hope alive as we grow closer to death.

My hope is this article has helped you with the inevitable changes life throws at us. It's never too late to talk to someone, to build new relationships, to learn new skills, or to plan for end of life. If you or your loved one need help through these difficult times, please feel free to reach out to Gretchen Hook, LPC-A (under supervision with Dwayne Frei LPC-S), BCC, CALM, DEATH DOULA (certified). 254.314.8340 or ghook1@proton.me.



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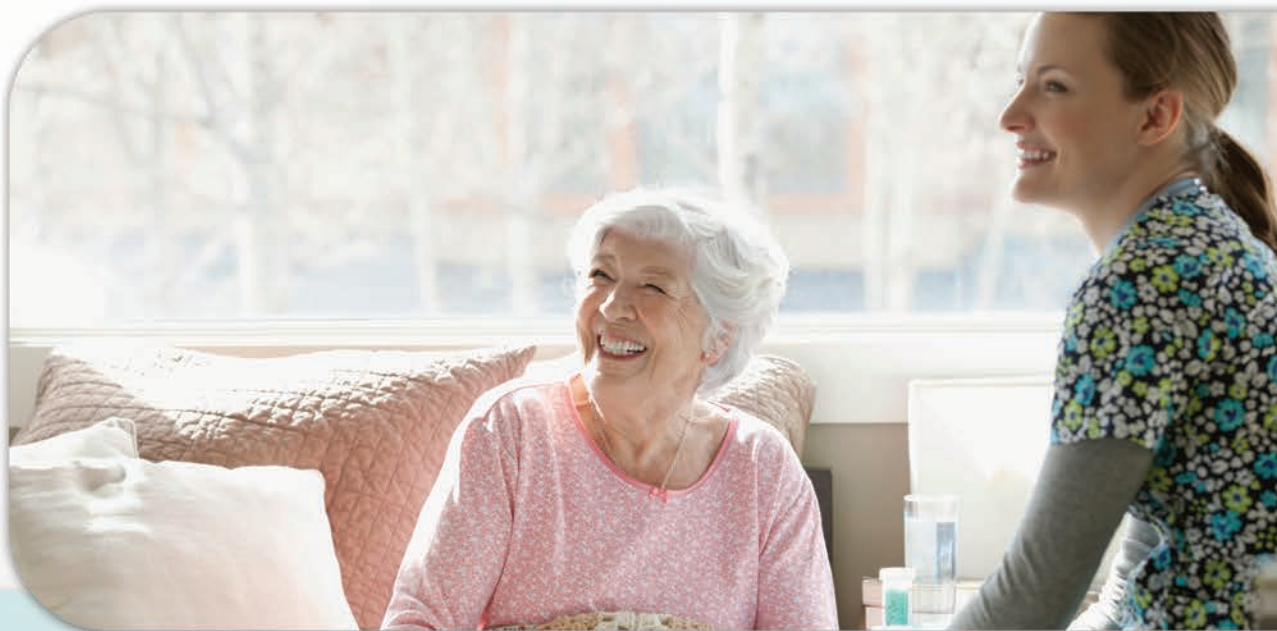
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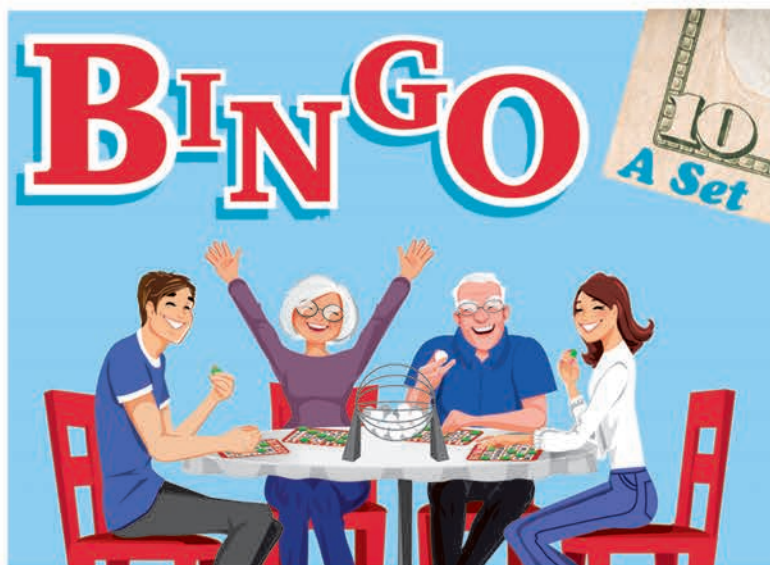
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4 interesting facts about the month of February

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February is the shortest month of the year. Unless it's a leap year, when an extra day is tacked on to the end of the month, February is just 28 days long. Despite its brevity, February is a notable month, and the following are four interesting facts about the second month of the year.

1. The name "February" comes from the Latin word "februa," which means "to cleanse." The ancient Romans celebrated a festival of purification and atonement known as Februalia, and historians believe that celebration, which lasted a month, occurred around the time of year that the month of February now takes place.

2. February is arguably the most unique month on the calendar thanks to the phenomenon of the leap year. According to NASA,

the Earth takes approximately 365 days and six hours to orbit the sun and approximately 24 hours (one day) to rotate on its axis. NASA notes that most years are rounded down to 365 days, though that does not erase the extra six hours in each year. So approximately every four years an extra day is added to the calendar in February. That will actually take place in 2024, which should excite anyone whose birthday happens to be February 29.

3. Speaking of February 29, many a notable event has taken place on that unusual date over the years. On February 29, 1720, the Queen of Sweden, Ulrika Eleonora, abdicated her throne in favor of her husband, who became King Frederick I a little less than a month after his wife's abdication. On February 29,

1940, actress Hattie McDaniel became the first African American to win an Academy Award. And on February 29, 1996, the Siege of Sarajevo officially ended, marking the end of a conflict that had lasted 1,425 days.

4. Though it's typically only 28 days, February still provides many opportunities to celebrate. February is Black History Month in both the United States and Canada, and has recently been observed in Ireland and

the United Kingdom as well. February also features Mardi Gras and "Fat Tuesday," the final, and often festive, feast day before the Christian season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday. American history buffs also have plenty of reasons to celebrate in February, as the month marks the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln (February 12), Susan B. Anthony (February 15) and George Washington (February 22), among others.

Have You Checked In With Your Heart Lately?

Heart disease is a leading cause of death around the world. Prevention begins with heart-healthy lifestyle choices, but it's also important to know your blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol levels, and to talk with your doctor about any cardiac disease risk factors or symptoms you may experience.

February is  **Heart Month**

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or be shortened by six weeks. For these Pennsylvania communities, the groundhog, rather than a badger, was more common and therefore took on the role of the prognosticating animal.

Considering that Pennsylvania was the early centralized spot for celebrating Groundhog Day, it should come as no surprise that it is still ground zero for these types of celebrations. Gobblers Knob in Pennsylvania is where thousands gather to see Punxsutawney Phil come out of his den each year. Yet this annual tradition is not exclusive to the Keystone state. There are various regions where Groundhog Day also is popular — and some do not even feature a groundhog.

• **Staten Island Chuck:** Staten Island Chuck is touted as the most accurate groundhog for prognostication. Staten Island Chuck resides at the Staten Island Zoo on this island borough of New York City.

• **Sand Mountain Sam:** People in Alabama celebrate Groundhog Day by referring to Sand Mountain Sam, who just happens to be an opossum.

• **Jimmy the Groundhog:** Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, has been calling itself “The Groundhog Capital of the World” since 1948, when it was a way to commemorate Wisconsin’s centennial year. Now it uses the title to celebrate Groundhog Day, when Jimmy makes his predictions.

• **Owlvivia and Owliver:** Floridians in Cape Coral turn to a set of owls, known as Owlvivia and Owliver, to find out if there will be six more weeks of winter. These are burrowing owls, so they are no strangers to underground dens.

• **General Beauregard Lee:** The General resides in Jackson, Georgia, and is so skilled at weather prognostication that he holds honorary degrees from the University of Georgia and Georgia State University.

• **Big Al:** Everything is bigger in Texas, and Groundhog Day is no exception. Instead of a groundhog, Big Al the alligator offers his forecast in southeast Texas each year.

Punxsutawney Phil may get the majority of the glory, but there are plenty more hard-working animals predicting the weather each Groundhog Day.



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THIS
DAY IN
HISTORY

FEBRUARY

20

1521: Juan Ponce de León sets out from Spain for Florida.

1792: George Washington signs the Postal Service Act.

1872: The Metropolitan Museum of Art opens in New York City.

THIS
DAY IN
HISTORY

FEBRUARY


26

1775: The British East India Company factory on Balam-bangan Island is destroyed by pirates.

1909: Kinemacolor, the first successful color motion picture process, is first shown to the public.

1995: Barings Bank in England collapses after a broker loses billions.

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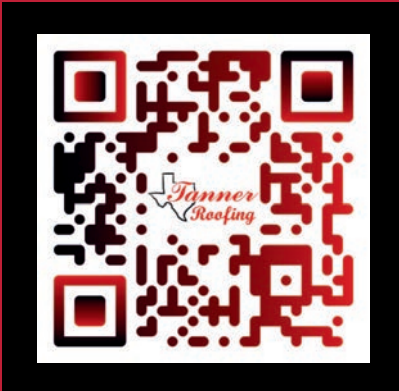
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ELECTROCARDIOGRAM

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HEART

MITRAL

PACEMAKER

PRESSURE

PULMONIC

PULSE

STRESS

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2 Zumba class will resume on 2/4. from 6-7 \$5/class No class on 1st/3rd Thurs,	3 Exercise Classes 8:45 and 9:40 9 Woodcarvers 10:30 Line Dance 12 Dominos 42	4 8 Mex. Train Doms. 8/9 Beg. Line Dance 10 Improver Line D. 9Quilting/12 Canasta 6 Zumba Class	5 Exercise Classes 8:45 and 9:40 10:30 Bible Study 12 Bingo 1 Arts & Crafts	6 8/9 Beg. Line Dance 10 Improver Line D. 9 Quilting 12 Canasta 6:30 Dance	7 Exercise Classes 8:45 and 9:40 10:30 Improver Line Dance 12 Bridge	8 Dance on 2/6 at 6:30, featuring Good Ol' Boys Band.
9 A 42 Dominos group meets each Monday at noon.	10 Exercise Classes 8:45 and 9:40 9 Woodcarvers 10:30 Line Dance 12 Dominos 42	11 8 Mex. Train Doms. 8/9 Beg. Line Dance 10 Improver Line D. 9Quilting/12 Canasta 6 Zumba Claas	12 Exercise Classes 8:45 and 9:40 10:30 Bible Study 12 Bingo 1 Art Painting	13 8/9 Beg. Line Dance 10 Improver Line D. 9 Quilting 12 Canasta 6 Zumba Class	14 Exercise Classes 8:45 and 9:40 10:30 Improver Line Dance 12 Bridge	15
16	17 Presidents Day Center will be closed,	18 8 Mex. Train Doms. 8/9 Beg. Line Dance 10 Improver Line D. 9Quilting/12 Canasta 6 Zumba Claas	19 Exercise Classes 8:45 and 9:40 10:30 Bible Study 12 Bingo 1 Arts & Crafts	20 8/9 Beg. Line Dance 10 Improver Line D. 9 Quilting 12 Canasta 6:30 Dance	21 Exercise Classes 8:45 and 9:40 10:30 Improver Line Dance 12 Bridge	22 Dance on 2/20 at 6:30 featuring Larry Burgin, Texas Traditions, Band.
23 Pot Luck is the 47th at 5:30 with Quinton Locklin singing,	24 Exercise Classes 8:45 and 9:40 9 Woodcarvers 10:30 Line Dance 5:30 Pot Luck	25 8 Mex. Train Doms. 8/9 Beg. Line Dance 10 Improver Line D. 9Quilting/12 Canasta 6 Zumba Claas	26 Exercise Classes 8:45 and 9:40 10:30 Bible Study 12 Bingo 1 Art Painting	27 8/9 Beg. Line Dance 10 Improver Line D. 9 Quilting 12 Canasta 6 Zumba Class	28 Exercise Classes 8:45 and 9:40 10:30 Improver Line Dance 12 Bridge	
			Upcoming Events: 1. The Center is partnering with the City of Belton on offering a new Zumba class on Tues. and Thurs. from 6-7 p.m., except for 1st and 3rd Thursdays when we have our regular dances. Cost is \$5 per class. 2, Dances - Thurs., Feb 6 with Good Ol' Boys and Thurs, Feb 20 with Larry Burgin, Texas Traditions, band. Dances start at 6:30 p.m. 3. Pot Luck - Monday, Feb. 24 at 5:30 for with Quinton Locklin singing. 4. The Center will be closed Mon., Feb. 17 for Presidents Day. --Contact Vernice at 254-933-1649 if you want to join the Bridge Group.			

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