

Life!

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2025 SECTION B



STOCK PHOTO

The Trump administration's charge that Tylenol leads to autism is rebuked by scientific research.

Tylenol and autism: Separating facts from federal myths

BLACKDOCTOR.ORG

Headlines spread quickly after President Donald Trump and Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. announced new warnings about Tylenol (acetaminophen) use during pregnancy, suggesting it may increase the risk of autism in children.

The claim sparked alarm across social media. Is this true? Should pregnant women avoid Tylenol altogether? Doctors, scientists, and mental health organizations are pushing back strongly. While research on autism continues, the scientific consensus remains clear: there is no proof that Tylenol causes autism. Here's what you need to know.

During a White House press conference, Trump and Kennedy urged pregnant women to avoid Tylenol unless absolutely necessary, suggesting the common pain reliever could increase autism risk. They also announced new federal research on autism causes and treatments, including funding for environmental studies and Medicaid coverage of a prescription drug called leucovorin.

While their announcement drew attention, many of the claims were misleading or oversimplified. For example, Trump repeated debunked myths about vaccines and autism, originally tied to a fraudulent study from 1998 that has long since been retracted.

Researchers have studied acetaminophen use during pregnancy for years. Some observational studies have found a possible association between heavy use of Tylenol during pregnancy and later diagnoses

Please see TYLENOL | 2B

Lay the foundation for creative writing

FAMILY FEATURES

Learning to write is one of the defining milestones of early childhood, but it doesn't happen all at once.

Children build writing skills over time, from indecipherable scribbles to writing letters and words. While children progress at their own pace, families can help foster early writing development.

Dr. Lauren Loquasto, senior vice president and chief academic officer at The Goddard School, and Dr. Sonia Cabell, professor of reading education at Florida State University and member of The Goddard School's Educational Advisory Board, provide this insight and guidance for families.

Early writing milestones

Writing begins in early toddlerhood, around 18-24 months. The earliest developmental milestone is when children scribble on paper with a crayon.

By 2-3 years old, children often draw shapes and narrate their writing. Parents should show genuine interest to help build confidence and interest. Ask your children to read what they write, as this helps make the connection that marks on paper represent thoughts and ideas. It's not expected for children younger than 3 to write identifiable letters. Instead, encourage them to make marks on paper without constraint, allowing them to freely express themselves.

Around ages 3-5, children begin to move from writing (making marks) to handwriting, which is the formalized motion of making numerals and letters in recognizable forms. It's vital for parents to value

Please see LAY | 2B

«RIDES

Volkswagen's midsize Tiguan SUV option makes a great case for moderation

By Winfred Cross

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Volkswagen's Tiguan sits between the smaller Taos and the much larger Atlas, giving the buying public a kind of midsize, seven-seat option in a smaller package - really smaller.

The third row of seats was good for packages and small kids. For 2025, the Tiguan is bigger, but the third-row option has been dropped. The all-new Tiguan makes much more sense for five people and their stuff.

There still isn't a lot of room for the stuff but it's decent. There is no useless third row to fold down so that's a plus.

The second-row occu-

pants will appreciate the extra breathing room. Three can sit comfortably with enough hip, head and leg room. It's comfortable but I like the seats in front the best.

Everything about the Tiguan is new, or, at least refreshed. The exterior looks more muscular with a much different grille. The SUV looks less like a bloated Jetta and more like a proper SUV.

The interior gets a nice upgrade with a 10.25-inch digital dash and a 12.9-inch touch screen. Both have snappy graphics and are bright and easy to read. The touch screen works much like the rest of VW's lineup which means it has

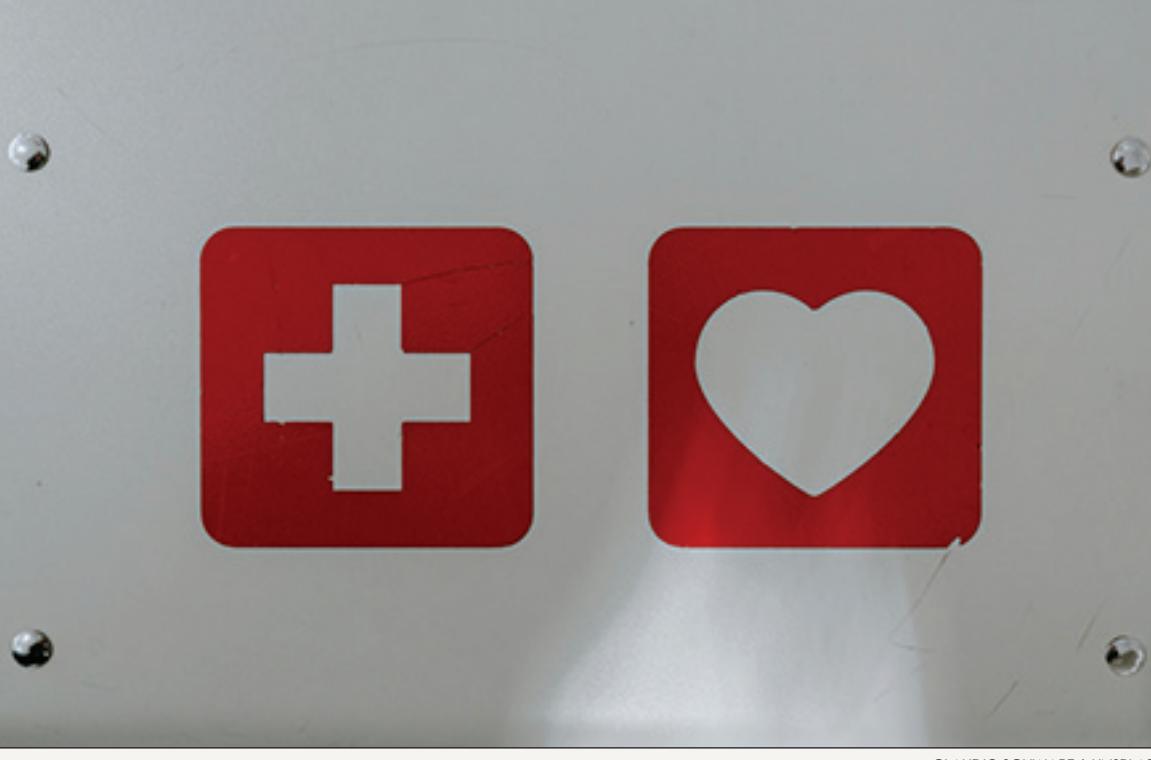
a few quirks. Overall, the touch screen is useful and has more right than wrong.

The interior is comfortable. The base model gets cloth seats, but you can get fake leather in the SE and the real stuff in the SEL. The front seats are comfortable and have enough adjustments for the driver to find a perfect position. The steering wheel can be heated and leather covered.

The Tiguan is powered by a 2.0-liter, turbocharged engine that makes 201 horsepower and 207 pounds-feet of torque. If you go for all-wheel-drive (available on all models) torque is bumped to 221 foot-pounds. The only

available transmission is an eight-speed automatic. There is no hybrid version so far.

The 2.0-liter engine is stout enough to make the Tiguan feel powerful. You can zip and zag through traffic with little problem. The eight-speed transmis-



CLAUDIO SCHWARZ | UNSPLASH

De-prioritization of medical debt relief on the federal level has shifted the fight for patient protections to the states.

As US punts on medical debt, the battle moves

Patient protections are a patchwork depending on state politics

By Noam N. Levey
Katheryn Houghton
and Arielle Zions

KFF HEALTH NEWS

With the Trump administration scaling back federal efforts to protect Americans from medical bills they can't pay, advocates for patients and consumers have shifted their work to contain the nation's medical debt problem to state capitals.

Despite progress in some mostly blue states this year, however, recent setbacks in more conservative legislatures underscore the persistent challenges in strengthening patient protections.

Bills to shield patients from medical debt failed this year in Indiana, Montana, Nevada, South Dakota, and Wyoming in the face

of industry opposition. And advocates warn that states need to step up as millions of Americans are expected to lose insurance coverage because of President Donald Trump's tax and spending law.

"This is an issue that had been top of mind even before the change of administrations in Washington," said Kate Ende, policy director of Maine-based Consumers for Affordable Health Care.

"The pullback at the federal level made it that much more important that we do something."

This year, Maine joined a growing list of states that have barred medical debt from residents' credit reports, a key protection that can make it easier for consumers to get a home, a car, or sometimes a job. The measure

passed unanimously with bipartisan support.

An estimated 100 million adults in the U.S. have some form of health care debt.

The federal government was poised to bar medical debt from credit reports under regulations issued in the waning days of former President Joe Biden's administration. That would have helped an estimated 15 million people nationwide.

But the Trump administration did not defend the regulations from lawsuits brought by debt collectors and the credit bureaus, who argued that the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau exceeded its authority in issuing the rules. A federal judge in Texas ap-

Please see AS US PUNTS | 2B

Research: Humans are creatures of habit

By Stacy M. Brown

BLACK PRESS USA

You probably didn't think much about brushing your teeth this morning.

Or making that cup of coffee. Or scrolling through your phone before heading out the door. That's because, according to new research, nearly nine out of every 10 actions people take each day are automatic and performed with little to no conscious thought. A team of behavioral scientists from the University of South Carolina, Central Queensland University in Australia, and the University of Surrey in the United Kingdom tracked 105 people for a week.

Using real-time prompts, the researchers discovered that 88% of daily behaviors were "habitually executed," while 65% were "habitually instigated"—triggered by environmental cues rather than conscious decisions.

Amanda Rebar, associate professor at the University of South Carolina and lead researcher, explained that most people like to imagine themselves as careful decision makers. "However, much of our repet-

itive behavior is undertaken with minimal forethought and is instead generated automatically, by habit," Rebar said.

The study broke down automatic behavior into two parts. Habitual instigation occurs when a cue —like hearing a notification— automatically sparks an action, such as checking a phone. Habitual execution refers to carrying out an activity without actively thinking, such as brushing teeth or driving a familiar route. Researchers found that demographics, including age, gender, and marital status, made no difference in how automatic people's lives were. One exception stood out: exercise.

People were more likely to be automatically prompted to start working out, but the activity itself required conscious attention once it began. This means cues may successfully get someone to lace up their sneakers, but they still need deliberate focus to complete the workout.

Interestingly, most automatic actions weren't working against personal goals. Nearly half of all behaviors studied were both



An international team of researchers found 88% of human behaviors are "habitually executed," meaning people often perform tasks without prompting.

Habits quietly steer the course of everyday life, and scientists say the best way forward is to design the right cues to make good behaviors automatic. "Our research shows that while people may consciously want to do something, the actual initiation and performance of that

Employment and education accounted for 22% of daily actions, while domestic tasks, eating, screen time, and transportation.

Experts said the takeaway is clear that, while people may consciously intend to live a certain way, their brains are already running much of the show.



VOLKSWAGEN

The 2025 Volkswagen Tiguan.

available transmission is stout enough to make the Tiguan feel powerful. You can zip and zag through traffic with little problem. The eight-speed transmis-

sion is also up to snuff. It selects gears quickly and precisely. I didn't experience any hunting for the

Please see VOLKSWAGEN'S | 2B

As US punts on medical debt, the battle moves

Continued from page 1B

pointed by Trump ruled that the regulation should be scrapped.

Now, only patients in states that have enacted their own credit reporting rules will benefit from such protections. More than a dozen have such limits, including California, Colorado, Connecticut, Minnesota, New York, and Vermont, which, like Maine, enacted a ban this year.

Still more states have passed other medical debt protections in recent years, including caps on how much interest can be charged on such debt and limits on the use of wage garnishments and property liens to collect unpaid medical bills.

In many cases, the medical debt rules won bipartisan support, reflecting the overwhelming popularity of these consumer protections. In Virginia, the state's conservative Republican governor this year signed a measure restricting wage garnishments and capping interest rates.

And several GOP lawmakers in California joined Democrats in support of a measure to make it easier for patients to access financial assistance from hospitals for big bills.

"This is the kind of commonsense, pocketbook issue that appeals to Republicans and Democrats," said Eva Stahl, a vice president at Undue Medical Debt, a nonprofit that buys up and retires patients' debts and has pushed for expanded patient protections.

But in several statehouses, the drive for more safeguards hit walls.

Bills to ban medical debts from appearing on credit reports failed in Wyoming and South Dakota, despite support from some GOP lawmakers. And measures to limit aggressive collections against residents with medical debt were derailed in Indiana, Montana, and Nevada.

In some states, the measures faced stiff opposition from debt collectors, the credit reporting industry, and banks, who told legislators that without information about medical debts, they might end up offering consumers risky loans.

In Maine, the Consumer Data Industry Association, which represents credit bureaus, told lawmakers that regulating medical debt should be left to the federal government. "Only national, uniform standards can achieve the dual goals of protecting consumers and maintaining accurate credit reports," warned Zachary Taylor, the group's government relations director.

In South Dakota, state Rep. Lana Greenfield, a Republican, echoed in-

dustry objections in urging her colleagues to vote against a credit reporting ban. "Small-town banks could not receive information on a mega, mega medical bill. And so, they would in good faith perhaps loan money to somebody without knowing what their credit was," Greenfield said on the House floor.

Under the Biden administration, CFPB researchers found that medical debt, unlike other debt, was not a good predictor of creditworthiness.

But South Dakota state Rep. Brian Mulder, a Republican who chairs the health committee and authored the legislation, noted the power of the banking industry in South Dakota, where favorable regulations have made the state a magnet for financial institutions.

In Montana, legislation to shield a portion of debtors' assets from garnishment easily passed a committee. Supporters hoped the measure would be particularly helpful to Native American patients, who are disproportionately burdened by medical debt.

But when the bill reached the House floor, opponents "showed up en masse," talking one-on-one with Republican lawmakers an hour before the vote, said Rep. Ed Stafman, a Democrat who authored the bill. "They lobbied just enough votes to narrowly defeat the bill," he said.

Advocates for patients and legislators who backed some of these measures said they're optimistic they'll be able to overcome industry opposition in the future.

And there are signs that legislation to expand patient protections may make headway in other conservative states, including Ohio and Texas. A proposal in Texas to force nonprofit hospitals to expand aid to patients facing large bills picked up support from leading conservative organizations.

"These things can sometimes take time," said Lucy Culp, who oversees state lobbying efforts by Blood Cancer United, formerly known as the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. The patients' group has been pushing for state medical debt protections in recent years, including in Montana and South Dakota.

More concerning, Culp said, is the wave of uninsured patients expected as millions of Americans lose health coverage due to cutbacks in the recently passed GOP tax law. That will almost certainly make the nation's medical debt problem more dire.

"States are not ready for that," Culp said.

Tylenol and autism: Separating facts from government myths

Continued from page 2B

of autism or ADHD. However:

• Other studies show no link. Several large-scale reviews have concluded there is not enough evidence to prove Tylenol causes autism.

• Correlation is not causation. Just because two things occur together (Tylenol use and autism diagnoses) does not mean one causes the other. Many confounding factors — maternal illness, stress or genetics — could play a role.

• Medical experts remain firm. The American Psychiatric Association, the Food and Drug Administration, and Tylenol's manufacturer all emphasize that acetaminophen is safe when used as directed during pregnancy.

In fact, most doctors still recommend Tylenol over other pain relievers like ibuprofen or aspirin, which are proven unsafe for pregnant women.

Autism spectrum disorder is a neurodevelopmental condition with a wide range of presentations. Scientists believe it arises from a combination of genetic and environmental factors. But no single medication, vaccine or behavior has been proven to "cause" autism.

Volkswagen's Tiguan SUV option makes a great case for moderation

Continued from page 1B

right gear.

The four-wheel independent suspension soaks up most of the bad stuff you run across. The Tiguan delivers a firm, but smooth ride. Its handling capabilities are good for a compact SUV. There is body roll when cornering, but I'd still call the vehicle sporty. Curvy roads don't intimidate the Tiguan and that's a good thing.

The Tiguan's ride is pretty quiet for a small SUV. There is wind and tire noise but not enough to

spoil the party. You can hold a conversation without shouting even traveling at highway speeds.

The current Tiguan is far better than the model it replaces. Volkswagen continues to improve its fleet with models that engage the driver and look good in the process. There is a lot of standard stuff on the base S which starts at \$30,245.

The SE may be the best deal but if you want everything there is to have, the SEL-R Line will give you that at \$40,505.

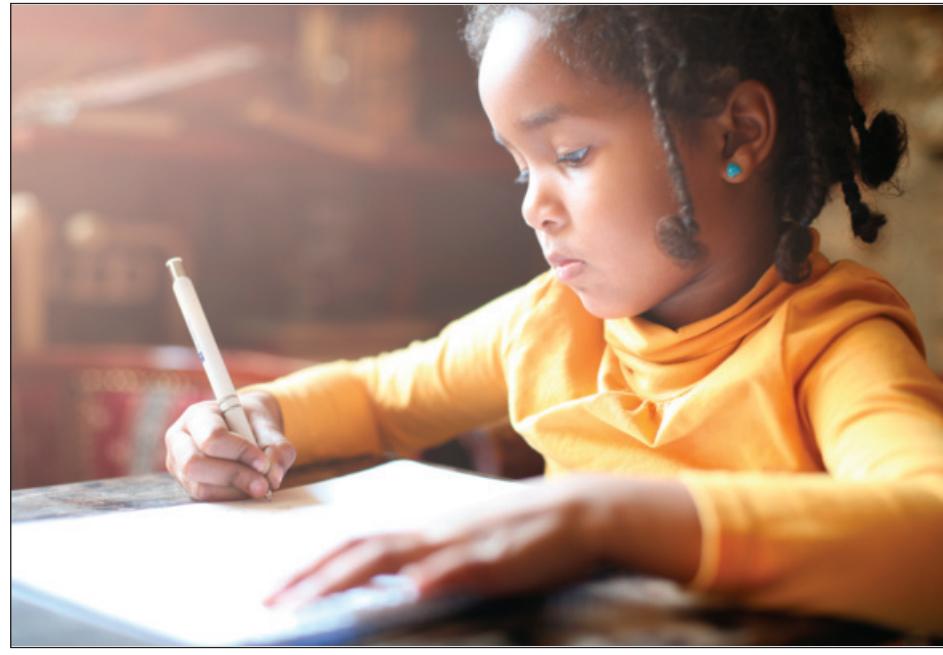
Yes, that's a lot, but it's the price you pay for wanting it all.

Pros:

- All new for 2025
- Better looking exterior
- Spacious interior
- Good engine/transmission combo
- Comfortable ride
- Quiet on highway
- Copious amount of standard equipment
- AWD available on all trims

Cons:

- No hybrid
- Pricey



SHUTTERSTOCK

Laying a foundation for children to embrace writing among children opens the door for creativity and learning.

Lay foundation for writing development among kids

Continued from page 1B

their children's writing no matter what appears on the paper and provide opportunities for them to regularly engage in writing. Children at this age tend to write letters in different ways. It's common, for example, for letters to appear backwards or from right to left. These are not causes for concern; this is a natural part of the development process.

Writing supports reading

Reading and writing skills develop in tandem, reinforcing each other. Through writing, children experiment with how written language works, learning English moves from left to right and top to bottom.

By estimating spelling — using their knowledge of letter shapes and sounds to attempt to write words — they are beginning to break the code of reading.

Moreover, when children are composing stories, they are supporting comprehension and oral language growth, which are critical for reading development.

Encourage writing at home

Make writing part of everyday life. While ensuring paper and writing utensils are accessible is a start, materials alone won't spontaneously create writing experiences. Children naturally want to engage with things they see, so parents and older siblings should serve as writing models. For example, when writing a grocery list, ask your children to write their own lists. When you're writing a thank-you note, have them write their own.

The development of fine motor skills is also essential. One way to do this is pro-

vide tools like chopsticks or tongs that require them to use their forefinger and thumb in a pinching motion; this strengthens the hand muscles that are used to write. Also encourage play with small toys like blocks or beads that engage the hands in different ways. As fine motor skills improve, it becomes easier to grip writing utensils and write for extended periods.

Writing tools

From apps to workbooks, countless tools and resources tout their ability to help children learn to write. Typing on a tablet or computer is no substitute for learning to write by hand. Multiple studies have shown that writing — not typing — better promotes cognitive and literacy development.

Avoid activities like workbooks that require repetitive writing of letters over and over, as this inhibits creativity and experimentation. These activities can cause children to fear making mistakes, which can lead to anxiety, frustration and a loss of interest.

The best tools are often the simplest: a small writing utensil (not big or bulky; children have small hands and need appropriately sized utensils) and a blank piece of paper.

Remember, children develop at their own pace. Provide encouragement and focus on effort, not perfection.

To watch a writing webinar featuring Loquasto and Cabell and access additional parenting resources, visit the Parent Resource Center at GoddardSchool.com.



SHUTTERSTOCK

Maintain your composure when talking to your child about handling their emotional anxieties.

Help children manage emotions

FAMILY FEATURES

Managing meltdowns

Parents are most effective when they stay calm, speak quietly and move slowly. Counterbalance your child's extreme emotion and behavior with the opposite extreme. Take deep breaths and stay near your child while the emotion dissipates.

Because young children often don't have the language or regulation skills to handle these big feelings, they can result in tantrums, mood swings, rebellion and emotional outbursts, which may trigger feelings of embarrassment and exasperation for parents. Fear not; every parent has been there.

Dr. Lauren Loquasto, senior vice president and chief academic officer at The Goddard School, and Kelly Oriard and Callie Christensen, co-founders of Slumberkins and authors of "All Feelings Welcome," share guidance to help parents effectively deal with these situations.

ialogical feelings with an emotional label.

Once calm, work with your child to repair and reconnect. Share your coping techniques. For example, "I feel angry sometimes. When I get angry, I like to stomp my feet and turn up my music. Do you want to try this with me?"

Model this often, either when you're upset or as a teaching moment by pretending to feel angry. Real-life examples help normalize feelings and teach emotion regulation skills.

If you acted in a way you regret — yelling, for instance — address it by apologizing and taking responsibility. This grounding can help you and your child move forward.

Take proactive preventative steps

While big emotions and corresponding behaviors are a natural part of early childhood, there are steps you can take to help mitigate future meltdowns.

Please see HANDLE | 3B

Fuel creative mindset to unleash innovation

FAMILY FEATURES

Perhaps unsurprisingly, many people believe they aren't creative.

They say, "I can't draw," or "I don't have a creative bone in my body." However, creativity isn't about perfecting an art technique or spending time in formal training. It's about expression, curiosity and the courage to explore. It's about seeing the world not just as it is, but as it could be. In fact, the biggest barrier to creativity isn't lack of talent, it's the reluctance to claim it as your own.

To that end, Crayola wants to broaden traditional views about what creativity is and how it shows up in the world. Creative superpowers shine when you solve problems, tell stories, build things and connect ideas. In other words, creativity isn't just for artists.

It's about engaging in simple, everyday creative moments that help unlock a mindset useful for navigating personal and professional demands, as well as managing life's unexpected challenges.

In an effort to redefine what it means to be creative, Crayola's Campaign for Creativity is challenging narrow definitions and highlighting the benefits of this critical skill that fuels lifelong growth. By shifting the focus from perfection to possibilities, the campaign empowers everyone, regardless of age or ability, to put imagination into action.

This opens the door to new ways of expressing creativity, and one of the most powerful and accessible forms of expression is color.

According to a Color Perception Survey conducted by Crayola in partnership with the Ad Council Research Institute, color isn't just decoration - it can be a catalyst to spark emotion, fuel imagination and deepen creative expression. In fact, 87% of those surveyed say color impacts their creativity and 69% link specific colors to moods and emotions. This evidence supports that color is deeply personal,

connecting people to their emotions and memories, and helping creatively express their feelings, thoughts and ideas.

To help tap into your own creative superpowers, consider these colorful ideas to get started.

Use color

Multiple bodies of research affirm the interconnected relationships between color, sound and creativity. Specific colors and sounds can stimulate creativity, and their interaction can enhance creative processes. While the specific impact of color varies for everyone, it's clear color can affect moods or reflect inner feelings.

For example, you might associate blue with a sense of calm while others with sadness; red can evoke feelings of energy and celebration or fear. Incorporating colorful elements into your creations - from fashion and decor to workplace presentations and weekend projects - can bring your ideas to life, showcase your unique perspective, amplify your message and inspire connections with others.

Creating by hand

Whether through journaling, scrapbooking or coloring, creating by hand offers an immersive and meaningful experience. Research shows these activities can engage multiple areas of the brain, supporting memory, understanding and creativity. Coloring, in particular, is a timeless act of self-expression - from childhood scribbles to adult stress relief - that invites you to slow down, reflect and connect with your emotions.

Try a new recipe

There's no more practical outlet for creativity than in the kitchen where you can concoct new dishes that nourish your body and mind. Whether your goal is to put a novel flair on a familiar dish or stir some variety into your family's routine menu, experimenting in the kitchen is a terrific way to infuse creativity and a splash of color into your cooking.

Get outside

Spending time in nature

isn't just good for your body and mind; it's a powerful way to recharge your creativity. Natural environments are full of expressive color palettes, from the deep greens of forest canopies to the vibrant hues of wildflowers and sunsets.

Research shows being outdoors can sharpen focus, reduce stress and even improve sleep. Beyond the science, nature invites you to observe, imagine and create. Try sketching a sunset, capturing the textures of leaves or using found objects to spark a new idea. Whether you're walking through a park or sitting in your backyard, the colors and sounds of the outdoors can fuel your next creative moment.

Find more ideas for inspiring your creativity with color and beyond at Crayola.com.



SHUTTERSTOCK

Creativity is about expression, curiosity and the courage to explore.

The Charlotte Post

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BOOK REVIEW

Raymond Chandler's 'Nightmare' revealed

By Hillel Italie
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — In his dreams, Raymond Chandler could conjure tales as unsettling as some of his greatest novels, as if haunted by the spirits of Kafka and Edgar Allan Poe.

"Nightmare," a brief and rarely seen sketch published last month in The Strand Magazine, finds the author of "The Long Goodbye," "Farewell, My Lovely" and other crime fiction classics imagining himself in prison "somewhere" for a murder he does not remember committing. His cellmates include two men he knows nothing about, a pregnant woman named Elsa, and a piano in the corner that must be played lying down after "nine o'clock."

Chandler's vision becomes even darker and stranger as he learns of his likely fate.

"As I was wondering, apparently rather audibly, about the date set for my execution, the guard said to me, 'After a bit you'll get a letter with the envelope addressed in your own writing. That will tell you the date for your hanging,'" Chandler wrote.

"Nightmare" was found recently among the papers of Chandler's assistant, Jean Vounder-Davis, that were sold last year through the Doyle auction house. Other items included Chandler's 1953 Olivetti Studio 44 typewriter, unpublished drafts of early novels and a two-page list of 46 things he hated, among them "golf talk" and "novels about people who can't make any money."

Strand Managing Editor Andrew F. Gulli purchased "Nightmare" at auction but declined to say how much he paid. Writing in the current edition of The Strand Magazine, Gulli called the piece a perfect illustration of Chandler's "ability to evoke so much with so little." He

Please see PIANO | 6B



REBECCA SPENCER

Mariah Carey marked her 35th year as a recording artist with "Here for It All," her 16th studio album.

Mariah Carey rolls out new album 'Here for It All'

By Leslie Ambriz
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES — Seven years after her last album and 35 years into a powerhouse career, Mariah Carey continues her reign as the queen of pop and R&B with "Here for It All."

If good things come to those who wait, fans are about to audibly feast on Carey's evolution with this musically layered project.

Carey's 16th studio album brings fans into what she's calling "the era of me" — leaning into her now-familiar, unapologetically confident energy. "I'm D-I-V-A, that's MC ... I ain't checked a price since Emancipation Mi ... I'm the movie and the muse/and you couldn't walk a mile in my shoes," she sings on the first track, "Mi."

The 11-track album includes singles "Type Dangerous," sampling Eric B. and Rakim, and "Sugar Sweet," featuring vocals from Kehlani and Shenseea. Anderson .Paak and the Clark Sisters join in the fun.

Carey recently sat down with The Associated Press to discuss her collaborations, the spirituality woven into her music and her most liberating era. This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.

AP: What comes first in the songwriting process for you? And has it become almost like a spiritual discipline in a way where whenever you need to enter a space of healing or process emotions, you immediately turn to songwriting?

CAREY: It's really interesting. I have all

Please see MARIAH | 6B



CHILDREN'S THEATRE OF CHARLOTTE

A scene from "A Sick Day at Amos McGee," one of the first productions in Children's Theatre of Charlotte's Kindness Project in 2018-19.

Children's Theatre kicks off new season on stage

2025-26 season includes three new productions, and a pair of favorites

By Nikya Hightower
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

The world needs more kindness. Children's Theatre of Charlotte has a packed season filled with kindness, new in-house productions and returning audience favorites.

The season includes five productions. Returning favorites "Journey to Oz" opened Sept. 20, and "The Invisible Boy," opens Oct. 11. The three new shows are "Bessie: Fearless and Free" (Nov. 15), "Topsy-Turvy Cinderella" (Jan. 10) and "Tiny & Large: Big Friends" (May 28).

Since 2016, kindness has been at the forefront of the theatre through The Kindness Project, whose goal is to inspire not only children but parents and teachers but have those conversations with their children.

"If we can get our audience to feel sympathetic for a character that we're doing a good job, and then we talk even more about empathy, if we can take it one step further, and we can have our young audience empathize with a character on stage, I have felt what that character is feeling, that's a good thing, right?" artistic director Adam Burke said.

Burke was moved by how people

treated one another after the 2016 election. He felt that it was important to make sure kids were able to see more kindness in a time of division.

"As we're looking at the idea that we want young people to grow up to be really productive and caring and empathetic citizens, people, humans, we're not modeling that," he said. "And that's when the idea of The Kindness Project was born."

The theatre wants audiences to feel like they are a part of the story. "Journey to Oz" has no Dorothy character because the goal is for the viewer to see themselves as Dorothy. They even let a child make a decision that will determine the rest of the play.

"The mantra of this company, the Experiential Theatre Company, who we've partnered with for this production, is if you're in the room, you're in the show," Burke said.

CTC is debuting a new show, "Bessie: Fearless and Free," created by Keetha B of Concord, a former program participant.

"It's really this wonderful full circle moment from someone who was a student of ours," Burke said. "Pretty cool story for typically a young Charlotte child to come and see and hear, do," he said.

"oh my gosh, the person who created this piece that I'm seeing was a student just like me."

The theatre also does most of the production in house, creating the shows from start to finish. "We have the technicians. We have the carpenters. We have the seamstresses, you know, the costume personnel. We build all the costumes here. We build all the sets. We have a full-time scenic artist who paints everything for us. We do everything here."

In the future, Burke hopes The Kindness Project can spread to education programs and touring productions. Burke said, "I have dreams that it just grows beyond our walls, that we start to move, perhaps, beyond simply commissioning work."

For those who see the shows, Burke aims to spark conversations. "I hope that they carry joy. I hope that they carry a story that they can talk with their family about. There's always going to be something in a story that we tell that is engaging in a way that you can talk about what happened to that character or for that character in some joyful way about how they accomplished the thing they needed to do," he said.

I hope that they carry joy. I hope that they carry a story that they can talk with their family about.

Children's Theatre of Charlotte artistic director ADAM BURKE

MOVIE REVIEW

Domestic bliss doesn't co-exist with revolution

By Dwight Brown

BLACK PRESS USA

One Battle After Another

2.5 stars

The revolution will not be televised. But it's been made into a movie...

They knew what they were doing in the '60s. Helping the less fortunate escape arrest. Robbing banks. Sticking it to the man. Rebellious against military authority run amuck.

And so, this group of revolutionaries, French 75, fought in the dark and battled during broad daylight. Trying to bring justice to a world gone askew. Committing crimes and political/social performance art.

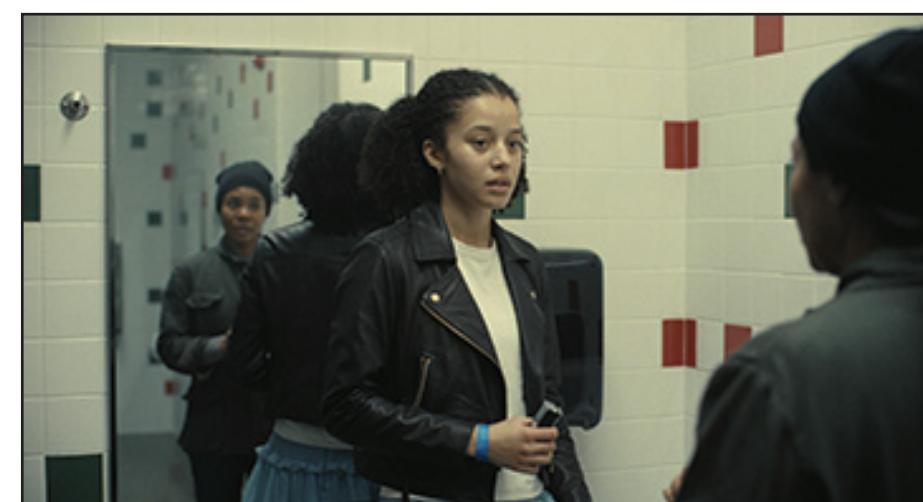
"I want you to create a show. I want you to create a revolutionary violence."

Back in the day, Perfidia (Teyana Taylor, "A Thousand and One") was the bravest in the bunch. An Amazon warrior fearless against military forces. Also, greatly in love with her partner Bob Ferguson (Leonardo DiCaprio). They were the king and queen of their movement.

She flaunted her revolutionary power and sexual prowess. In part, that led her to an odd encounter with the enemy, a Colonel Steven J. Lockjaw (Sean Penn, "Milk"). A mistake that led to more mistakes.

And so, years later, after Perfidia's bad choices metastasized, her legend is tarnished. Now, her man Bob is a single dad raising her teenage daughter Willa (Chase Infiniti) and trying to maintain a quiet life, slowed somewhat by a love of weed and drink. But even within the haze of being constantly high, he is focused on keeping his daughter safe. Protected from malevolent military forces and corrupt commanders. Protected until a phone call warns him that danger is around the corner.

That's the foundation of



WARNER BROS.

Chase Infiniti and Regina Hall in "One Battle After Another."

director/writer Paul Thomas Anderson's ("There Will Be Blood") take on the chaotic political scene back in the '60s that segued into the repressive '80s. When and where a bunch of anarchists, whose heyday was long over, were still hunted like prey by the military. It feels like the script, project and themes are going in several directions.

An obvious commentary on the increasingly militaristic times we live in now, where cities are being shadowed by U.S. armed forces and ICE agents. Then there's the story about the strong radicalized woman Perfidia, who's out to save the world but is shamed by weaknesses that hurt her and those she loves.

And parts of the screenplay are based on the postmodern fiction novel "Vineyard," by Thomas Pynchon, a tale that follows a father and daughter, descendants of '60s radical politics, as they live in Ronald Regan's 1980s America. When counterculture waned and con-

servatism dominated.

That's a lot to digest. And that's the issue. Splintered ideas. A narrative that won't pull all audiences through. Yes they'll care that Bob and Willa are under attack. They'll hate Captain Lockjaw for a variety of reasons, including trying to join an elite white racist men's club that's bent on racial purification.

Under normal circumstances watching protagonists trying to beat the antagonists would be enough. Not here. Something is off. Likely the distracting, half-assed political satire vibe that may further sideline viewers' emotions. Like hearing an inside joke that's just not funny or ironic enough.

It's a misfire that affects some performances, too. DiCaprio knows how to interpret unique characters better than most. A complicated teen in "The Basketball Diaries," an adventurous young man in "Titanic" and middle-aged-frontiersman in "Revenant." He finds the nu-

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Domestic bliss doesn't co-exist with revolution

Continued from page 5B

ances in the people he plays in ways others can't. He's a chameleon whose artistry is so sleight of hand you never notice him acting. Yet here, because the film has tonal issues, his half comic performance seems like wasted gimmickry. Like he's struggling to find Bob's soul.

Penn's performance meets the same fate. This is a versatile, formidable actor whose won Oscars for "Milk" and "Mystic River." Yet his interpretation of Lockjaw, a sordid horny and evil man, seems affected at best. The facial expressions and nervous ticks, that might have worked on a similar character in another movie, seem off. On the other hand, Taylor adds an intensity to *Perfidia* that fleshes out her complex persona well. When she brandishes a rifle, runs for her life and ties up her lovers, you don't wonder if she would actually do it. You know she would.

Though the script may cause some debate, Anderson's directing skills won't. A night scene in which young men try to help Bob escape from soldiers by fleeing across rooftops is

captivating. The guys are gliding on skateboards and jumping roof to roof. It's a memorable vision. Second only to a car chase sequence when Willa is being chased by an assassin and the assassin is being chased by Bob. The autos zoom over a California highway that runs over hills and down valleys.

The footage shot by cinematographer Michael Bauman ("Licorice Pizza"), is as mesmerizing as the intensifying musical score by Jonny Greenwood ("The Power of the Dog"). The rest of the tech team (production designer Florencia Martin, costume Designer Coleen Atwood, editor Andy Jurgensen), helps to evoke the time and place.

Still, it may be hard for audiences to conjure up decisive feelings, of any magnitude, for what they see. It's easy to remain distant. Detached. Observant but not absorbed. To like some of the pieces but not the whole puzzle. Yes, the revolution has been cinematized. Sometimes it's a clear vision. Sometimes not.

Visit film critic Dwight Brown at DwightBrownLink.com.

Piano and a prison: Raymond Chandler's 'Nightmare' revealed

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believes "Nightmare" was likely written in the early 1950s, before the death of Chandler's wife, Cissy, whom the author mentions in a footnote. Cissy Pascal Chandler died in 1954, five years before the death of Raymond Chandler.

Chandler scholar Tom Williams, author of the 2013 biography "A Mysterious Something in the Light: The Life of Raymond Chandler," places "Nightmare" in a special category

of wry, eccentric and spontaneous notes the author left for Vouder-Davis. Williams found one part especially surprising and intriguing: Chandler follows the line about receiving the dreaded letter with a joke likening the experience to getting a notice of rejection.

"Chandler liked to imply that his success writing crime stories came easily, and he told a friend that his first story, 'Blackmailers Don't Shoot,' was

picked up straightaway," Williams told The Associated Press in a recent email. "But the note suggests he was more familiar with rejection and it makes me wonder if the myth he spun about his success told the full picture. Was he rejected by the pulps at some point? Or was he referencing a rejection from an earlier part of his career? It's impossible to know but it makes me want to find out more."

OUT & ABOUT

PHOTOS BY DANIEL COSTON | FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST



Harvey Gantt and Kieth Cockrell were among the guests at United Way's Longest Table event, held at Truist Field on Sept. 27.



Patrons enjoyed the Hollywood Nights gala, benefiting Michel's House, held at the Union At Station West on Sept. 26.

Mariah Carey rolls out album 'Here for It All'

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different ways of going about it. Sometimes I'll just have to say this happened in the past and sometimes it happens again, you never know what it's going to be. But I'll suddenly be like — I hear a melody and a lyric at the same time, and I'll go, you know, put it in my notes and sing it into the notes and also just write down what I'm hearing, what I am feeling. I think songwriting has definitely been my outlet for what I need when I'm ever going through something, you know, whenever I'm feeling like the need to express myself. It's definitely songwriting.

AP: You get to work with The Clark Sisters on this project. I know in the past you've listed them as an influence. What was it like to have this full circle moment where you're both collaborating on "Jesus I Do"?

CAREY: It was amazing. I was so thrilled to be able to work with the Clark Sisters. ... I never could have imagined that it would have happened that I would be able to work with The Clark Sisters, but we did. So, it was major ... definitely butterflies coming into it. And also just like, you know, shaking a little bit like, "This is really happening."

AP: You've mixed in your faith through different gospel tracks on different albums. We see it in this one as well with "Jesus I Do." Why is it important for you to say, "I'm not necessarily making a gospel album with this one, but I want to make sure that I bring my faith into this a little bit?"

CAREY: Well, it was interesting. Also, the title track, "Here for It All," kind of has a spiritual tonality to it, and interestingly enough, I put "Jesus I Do" right before that. ... Since the past few albums that I've done, I've kind of had to put something spiritual in there because it's for me, it's not like a "Let me impress this one or that one with this." That was, you know, always just for me to really feel like that spiritual side of who I am ... it's definitely almost like a dedication to faith.

AP: I feel like you're one of the few icons who is so connected to their fans and invites them in any chance that you get. What is it about that love that is so important to you and how much do they play into the decision-making of what goes into the album?

CAREY: I love my fans, like we have this whole thing with the Lambily, it's a long

story, but we love the Lambs. And I think the fact that they really study the albums, you know, like it's not just like, "Oh, I'll just throw this out." I know they're going to really be focused on what I've written about, what type of musical selections I've made, so, yeah, I don't know, we just have an incredible connection.

AP: "Here for It All" so beautifully ties everything together. What led you to say this is the one that's gonna be representing the album, but it's also gonna be the one that really ties it all together at the end?

CAREY: Well, I knew it was going to be the one that ties it all together at the end. But then I also, when listening to the album that I had sequenced, I said I have to put "Here for It All" at the end because I want people to take the time to listen to it. I want my fans to take time to listen to it and just to know that it's, in a way, it's kind of for them. It's interesting. It's got a vibe to it that just happened.

AP: You're embarking on a new creative chapter for this. I'm curious, did the album unfold as you were organically making new music?

CAREY: Yeah, I was working on this album for so long, and I didn't even know, like, was I going to put it out? What was it going to be? And it just became something that I then sort of focused on and said, I'm going to make this my 16th album, which I can't even believe it is. But yeah, I am so thankful for where we are at with this album, and I can wait for people to hear it. We're calling it the era of me.

AP: I know you've mentioned that "Butterfly" era was the first time that you felt free in your music. What does that mean to you to feel free, and how have you continued to feel free throughout all of these different eras that you've gone through?

CAREY: Well, the "Butterfly" era was amazing and also a scary moment because I was going through like a breakup of a relationship that I really couldn't get out — it was a whole thing. I don't want to go into it because I hear people are saying that I won't let it go so I'm like, "It's just one person, we don't care about them." But yeah, "Butterfly" was definitely my first time feeling fully free and just, yeah, loving the moment. Even though I was a little bit stuck in a moment, I got through it.

Literary mystery meets dystopia future in 'What We Can Know'

By Jill Lawless

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LONDON — When novelists look to the future, the view is often grim. There are a lot more fictional dystopias than utopias.

Ian McEwan has good news and bad news about what lies ahead in "What We Can Know," a book he calls "science fiction without the science."

The British author's 19th novel, published in the U.S. by Knopf, is set in 2119 and follows a professor of literature researching a famed 21st-century poet and his circle.

So far, so cozy. But it's a world in which nuclear war, pandemics, economic collapse and climate change — a period known as The Derangement — have halved the global population. The United States is a lawless land of feuding warlords. Nigeria is the global superpower. Inundated England has been reduced to a string of small island republics.

McEwan, 77, said his working assumption is that humanity will "just scrape through" the next century of crises and catastrophes. The novel seeks "to look at the present through the rather envious eyes of someone in the future."

Literary mystery

Those eyes belong to Tom Metcalfe, an English academic studying the famous (fictional) poet Francis Blundy, and a legendary lost poem he read aloud at a dinner party in 2014.

As dystopias go, it's a gentle one. Tom sifts through reams of 21st-century social media detritus for nuggets of information gold that may lead to the missing poem. He later undertakes an adventurous journey with touches of "Treasure Island."

To Tom, our era is a barely imaginable time of abundance.

"What brilliant invention and boneheaded greed," he says.

Readers may hear the author's voice in the sentiment.

"There is something very

reminiscent to me of the ninth century about contemporary life: passionately superstitious, even as we have extraordinary discoveries in biomedicine and in cosmology," McEwan told The Associated Press.

Partway through the book, McEwan delivers a twist that shifts the reader's perspective. It's something he has done before, notably in 2001's "Atonement" — his bestselling novel, which many consider his best.

The book's second half delivers surprise, violence, betrayal and — another McEwan trademark — evidence of the "terrible things that perfectly ordinary people can do."

McEwan said he wants readers "to be, not disoriented, but just to pass through a different mirror turning the page from part one to part two."

"I hope to bring the reader back to the title."

Not a climate change novel

McEwan says he's not an "issues novelist," although his books often touch on world affairs: the 2003 invasion of Iraq in "Saturday," climate change in "Solar," artificial intelligence in "Machines Like Me."

In "What We Can Know," humanity has wreaked havoc on nature. But McEwan says "this isn't really a novel about climate change."

"The only way to write about climate change is not to," McEwan said, as the weather outside his London home changed in an instant from sunshine to downpour. "To actually put at the center properly conceived characters and other issues and let the climate change matter simply be there as a given."

"It's already a given. The last thing I want to do is warn people about it. No one needs any warning about it," he said. "All that matters is your response to

it."

Upstart to elder statesman

McEwan made his name in the 1970s and '80s with unsettling works like "The Cement Garden" and "The Comfort of Strangers." Today, he's one of the United Kingdom's most commercially and critically successful novelists, a five-time Booker Prize finalist who won the prestigious award in 1998 for "Amsterdam." The Financial Times called him "the centrist dad of English fiction."

He's part of a garlanded generation of British writers that includes Martin Amis, Julian Barnes and Salman Rushdie.

"Those writers I met in the early 70s, '80s ... became lifelong friends," he said. "That's been a delight. And sadness as we all drop off the twig." His friend Christopher Hitchens died in 2011, Amis in 2023.

McEwan says he'll keep writing "till the cogs start falling off," and claims not to think about his legacy.

"It's out of my hands," he said. He recalled decades ago standing in his publisher's office, lined with shelves of dusty novels from the 1920s and '30s.

"And I scanned the shelves for a name I could recognize," he said. "There were the usual dust jacket quotes: 'Absolutely brilliant.' 'A novelist for our times.' But forgotten. Just gone."

Then there's AI, which he thinks might write "novels of no great originality, but possibly colossal commercial success."

And yet, he's optimistic about the future of the novel.

"We can't really know the minds of people in the past," he said. "We can't even begin to know the minds of people in the future. We barely know the minds properly of people we're very close to. And that's at the heart of the paradox of why the novel is not dead: because it gives readers the illusion that they could know."