

Life!

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2025 SECTION B

Foods that steal your body's nutrients

BLACKDOCTOR.ORG

Even if you're eating a well-balanced diet, you're likely consuming some packaged foods...and some of those food ingredients are bad for you. This actually can include healthier options, such as cereal, yogurt, and frozen vegetables.

What's the potential damage? Eating them can make you deficient in key micronutrients. Luckily, it's not hard to rebalance your body's nutrients.

Just read the ingredient lists of any foods before you buy them and watch out for the following seven deal-breaker items:

1. Sugar

AKA: Agave nectar, brown sugar, cane crystals, cane sugar, caramel, crystalline fructose, dextrose, evaporated cane juice, fructose, fruit juice concentrate, glucose, honey, invert sugar, lactose, maltose, malt syrup, molasses, raw sugar, sucrose, syrup

Found in: Sodas, dessert items, candies, frozen fruits and vegetables with sauces or marinades, sauces, soups

2. Vitamin C, calcium, magnesium

Vitamin C and glucose use the same transporters to get into cells, so they compete with one another. Our body wants to absorb a limited amount of fructose, and when we consume more than that, the intestine rejects it and feeds gut bacteria, leading to bacterial overgrowth. These extra bacteria tend to steal nutrients and damage intestinal cells, inhibiting absorption of calcium and magnesium.

Increased Health Risks Due to Nutrient Depletion: Weaker immune system and bones, poorer night's sleep, compromised cellular and nerve function, chronic inflammation

2. High-fructose corn syrup

AKA: Corn sweetener, corn syrup, corn sugar

Found in: Packaged foods, cookies, cakes, breakfast cereals, soda, frozen veggies, yogurt, juices, condiments

3. Chromium, magnesium, zinc

The average American consumed 131 calories of high-fructose corn syrup daily in 2011, the most recent year that the USDA has data for. Biologically, this sweetener has the same effects on your health as sugar, including the formation of small intestinal bacterial overgrowth. This is a common condition found in most people suffering from IBS, according

Please see FOODS | 2B

Shutdown focuses retreat from big health care ideas

By Stephanie Armour

KFF HEALTH NEWS

The run-up to the 2020 election, all 20 Democratic presidential candidates promised voters they'd pursue bold changes to health care, such as a government-run insurance plan or expanding Medicare to cover every American.

Fast-forward to the congressional stalemate that has closed the federal government for more than a month. Democrats, entrenched on one side of the legislative battle, staked their political future on merely preserving parts of the Affordable Care Act — a far cry from the systemic health policy changes that party members once described as crucial for tackling the high price of care.

Democrats succeeded in focusing national attention on rising health insurance costs, vowing to hold up funding for the federal government until a deal could be made to extend the more generous tax subsidies that have cut premiums for Obamacare plans. Their doggedness could help them win votes in mid-term elections next year.

But health care prices are rocketing, costly high-deductible plans are proliferating, and 4 in 10 adults have some form of health care debt. As health costs reach a crisis point, a yawning gulf exists between voters' desire for more aggressive action and the political urgency in Washington for sweeping change.

"There isn't a lot of eagerness among politicians,"

Please see SHUTDOWN | 3B

North Carolina town showcases unique community of potters

By Emma Unger

UNC MEDIA HUB

Seagrove, North Carolina, recorded a population of 239 in 2024, but over two weekends in October, the small town at least doubled in size with visitors who came to celebrate its long history of pottery.

Artists, shoppers and curious first-timers didn't have to walk more than a couple minutes along Main Street to find another studio with unique collections of cups, vases, plates, figurines and more inside.

American Craft Week is a nationwide celebration of all types of art and their makers. Co-chair Sherry Masters of the national event reached out to the Seagrove Area Potters Association in 2010 about collaborating on a large-scale effort to support artists after the 2008 recession. This year marks Seagrove's 15th year recognizing the event.

From Oct. 4-12, Seagrove hosted demonstrations, explained clay processes, sold exclusive pieces and honored traditions of clay-working, though those tradi-

tions go much further back than 2010.

'Pottery capital of the United States'

"This area is abundant in red clay right below the topsoil, like for flowerpots and bricks," Seagrove potter Frank Neef said. "That's what brought the potters here in the 1700s."

According to the Seagrove Potters website, Native Americans were the first to realize the abundance of clay in the Seagrove area and used the resource to create both functional and ceremonial pieces.

In the late 18th century, German and English immigrants moved away from their original settlements toward the Seagrove area. Just as Neef explained, settlers were attracted by the availability of redware clay. "And then," Neef said, "in the 1800s, they shifted to stoneware clay, which is also here in abundance."

Thanks to the clay deposits, the potter population in Seagrove continued to rise. Expansion of the road and railroad systems in the 19th century gave potters access to larger markets stretching beyond

Please see SEAGROVE | 2B

« RIDES »



SUBARU

The Subaru Solterra electric is quick and nimble but can be a challenge to charge.

Solterra's a nice ride, charging issues aside

Subaru electric vehicle has solid handling, new interior and comfort

By Winfred Cross

SPECIAL TO THE POST

Subaru has upgraded its all-electric Solterra with the kind of technology that should make it appealing.

It gets a power upgrade, increased range and tweaked looks. There is even a Tesla charging port which should give it many more options for refueling. Alas, those charging options became the bane of my existence during my week with the Solterra.

The car can be charged with a provided cord that can be plugged into a standard home outlet. This is the slowest method of charging, or Subaru says. I tried charging with the cord and got a message saying the car would be charged to 100% in 95 hours. Bummer. An adapter is included to use non-Tesla chargers. I tried the adapter at a couple of charging stations, and it didn't fit.

My best option seemed to be the

Tesla network. To do so you need the Tesla app. Once downloaded, you add the car to the app and search for available chargers. I already had the app, so I searched for a charger and proceeded to the location. I couldn't get the vehicle to charge.

Realizing I didn't add The Solterra to the app, I did so and did another search. The stations were no longer on my app. The station has to appear on the app to select a charger. In fact, no supercharging stations appeared on my app within 10 miles, I found a couple of "destination chargers" at hotels. These are provided as a convenience for overnight guests, but the general public can use them.

My charge level was at 20% upon arriving at the charger (which I passed three times due to no signage). Luckily, I was successful in getting the charger to work. A fast charger charges at 150 kW. My destination charger was moving at

6 kW. I arrived at the charger around 6:30 p.m. I reached 55% at 3:30 a.m. Yikes.

The third time I attempted to charge, I called Tesla about my problem. I got an AI assistant on the phone that informed me my car may not be registered to work on every supercharger. You think? Determined not to spend most of my evening trying to charge the car, I did another search and a Tesla supercharger appeared on the app. I reached with 17% remaining. I got the vehicle to 80 in a little more than 20 minutes. Success!

Once the threat of running out of juice was lifted, I found the Solterra to be enjoyable. The 388 combined horses made the vehicle feel quick. Subaru's symmetrical all-wheel drive gave it solid handling. Four-wheel independent suspension helped provide a delightfully smooth and comfortable

Please see SOLTERRA'S | 2B

When childhood was real, raw, outdoors

By Stacy M. Brown

BLACK PRESS USA

The term "back in the day" is often used as nothing more than a throwaway line.

But for Black children growing up in the 1970s, 1980s, and even the 1990s, it was real life. It meant freedom, friendship, and community. It meant the smell of barbecue in the summer air, the sound of jump ropes hitting concrete, and the laughter of children echoing through the neighborhood. "Back in the day" was not just a time. It was a feeling. The Root recently explored what Black kids once did for fun before the world went digital, but we've gone a little further.

From the East Coast to the West, the streets belonged to the children. They rode bikes in groups, jumped double-dutch for hours, and raced each other down the block until the streetlights came on. There was no rush to get home to scroll through a phone or play on a console. The fun was right outside



STOCK PHOTO

Childhood has changed in recent generations as society digitized, but playing outdoors and old-school activities still has an appeal.

the front door. "We didn't stay inside unless it rained," said Denise Porter, a D.C. restaurant hostess.

"You'd eat breakfast, grab your bike or a jump rope, and you were gone all day. Everybody knew who you were and looked out for you. The whole neighborhood raised you." Before smartphones and streaming, imagination was the most powerful thing a kid could have. Children

created their own games like "Red Light, Green Light," "Mother May I," and "Hide and Go Seek." They clapped their hands to rhymes like "Miss Mary Mack" and "Down Down Baby," singing in unison, laughing, and learning rhyming without even realizing it.

Anthony "Tone" Rivers, who lived on Fordham Road in the Bronx all his 59 years, remembered how simple life was.

"We didn't need gadgets to have fun," he said. "A stick was a bat, a crate was a hoop, and the sidewalk was our playground. We made the best of what we had. That's how we learned to be creative."

Every neighborhood had a corner store that was a rite of passage. A single dollar could buy enough candy for the day. Kids

Please see WHEN | 2B



UNC MEDIA HUB

Seagrove Pottery, one of the many spots to buy a handmade piece in Seagrove, North Carolina, welcomes visitors during the 2025 American Craft Week. The store offers selections from many of the area's more-than 80 potters in one location.

Seagrove showcases its community of potters

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Seagrove and helped spread the town's pottery reputation.

North Carolina Highway 705, which runs through Seagrove, is called the North Carolina Pottery Highway, and today, Seagrove is home to about 80 potters with 50 pottery shops in a 20-mile radius. The town's long history and lasting traditions led to it being widely known as the Pottery Capital of the United States.

The road to claymaking

Long before you reach the "bustling downtown," as one resident joked, of the less-than 300-person town of Seagrove, the pottery mecca of the area begins to take shape. Seemingly every side road promises another studio or shop with modest charm. As the shop signs become more frequent, you'll find yourself in the heart of the town.

A small museum and education center, a couple restaurants, a wine bar and, of course, many more pottery shops make up downtown. On Oct. 11, as part of American Craft Week, visitors strolled from stop to stop to take stock of the potters' offerings. Jamie Cuka visited with her daughter, Penny Cuka, from Winston-Salem. "Penny is an artist, and ceramics is a medium she hasn't gotten into yet but is very interested in," Jamie Cuka said. "So, we decided to come and explore."

About 10 artists and shops offered exclusive items, demonstrations and even opportunities for visitors to try their hand throwing on the wheel, but several more offered their usual offerings. The diverse community of potters boasted unique clay, firing and glaze styles at each location.

Neef, who runs Pottery by Frank Neef with his wife Cindy Neef, is known for crystalline glazed porcelain, which covers pots in a random firework-like pattern of crystals.

"We go up to 2,400 degrees, drop back down to 2,000 and hold for six hours," Cindy said. "At that time, that's when your crystals are going to open up and grow, and that's what's forming those patterns."

Frank became interested in the style in 1977 when he saw an expensive crystalline piece in a St. Louis gallery. "I thought, 'I've got to learn how to do this because I can't afford this,'" Frank said. One of his favorite parts of the process is never knowing how the piece will look when it's finished.

Another clayworker, Cat Viera, felt similarly about ceramics. "It hooked my brain because there's so many variables to it," Viera said. "Anything could go wrong along the way or affect your results. I'll never stop learning."

Viera transitioned from two-dimensional art to ceramics during college, and she did an artist in residency at Seagrove after graduation. She returned to town later as the education manager at the pottery center, which she says is her day job, and she spends her nights and weekends making her own ceramics.

Seagrove potters show the range in production at all levels of the claymaking process during American Craft Week. Viera sat at a wheel in her driveway and showcased about 20 pieces underneath a tent covering. Across the street, the Neefs stocked an in-house gallery and work at a standalone workshop filled with pieces waiting to be glazed.

Frank Neef estimated he and his wife produce about 1,400 pots a year, but he said the number is small in comparison to other potters in the area. While Neef makes "one-off" pieces that require a lot of individual attention, other potters take a wholesale approach and focus on making consistent pieces in large quantities.

"We're approaching the same thing, only from completely different avenues," Neef said.

Regardless of how a potter approaches the craft, Neef said the community has a mutual appreciation for the artform and one another. The harmonious diversity is evident during American Craft Week, and visitors leave with a greater understanding of the many facets of the ceramics process.

"We have thoroughly enjoyed it," Jamie Cuka said of their walk through the stu-

dios. "It's amazing to see all the techniques."

No. 1 goal

Though American Craft Week provides many with an introduction to the intricate world of pottery in Seagrove, the town looks forward to its annual fall festival, the Celebration of Seagrove Potters Show and Studio Tour, which takes place Nov. 21-23.

The festival collects Seagrove potters into a large warehouse for a collective market and auction. Thousands of visitors fly or drive long distances to experience the many styles and artists of Seagrove all in one place. Other potters offer demonstrations and studio tours at their own locations, similar to the craft week's offerings.

And though Seagrove's tradition of pottery remains constant, potters adopt new practices and traditions as their and customers' interests change. A few years ago, local potter Crystal King created a collection of pumpkins for the fall and received a lot of attention. She had an event for the special pumpkins every year, and soon other potters joined in on the tradition. Now, an official group of five collaborate to create the Potters' Pumpkin Patch Trail.

"We've been slammed for three weeks now," Alexa Moddero of Seagrove Stoneware said. Seagrove Stoneware is on the trail, and Moddero said she is constantly restocking her pumpkins through the month of October. "We're kind of always making."

Many pumpkin potters add their own fall pieces to the trail, like Moddero's ghosts and Bobbie Thomas' acorn place settings at Thomas Pottery. Other Seagrove potters, like Viera, offer pumpkins separately from the trail.

Potters work together to promote themselves, highlight their work, offer events and keep the passion for the craft alive in the community and tourists, taking turns filling positions on a board of clayworkers who help coordinate events, promote Seagrove and make decisions that impact the town's artists.

"The community has a common goal of needing to sell enough pots to afford to keep making pots," Neef said. "That's the No. 1 goal."

Why Seagrove?

In the 1700s, Seagrove was one of the few places where potters had easy access to clay. But with easy shipping and nearly immediate access all over the country, what's the draw today?

Neef said some potters still take advantage of the local clay. A clay supplier in nearby Star, North Carolina, mixes the area's clay and sells it back to potters, and some potters still dig and process their own material. In that way, they honor the tradition of potters who came before them. Ben Owen of Ben Owen Pottery recently bought land that his own grandfather used to pull clay from and plans to begin digging for his own clay as well.

But for potters like Neef, Seagrove is more than a clay depository. It is a community of supportive, like-minded creators that attracts new potters and keeps other families for generations.

"This community is like no place else on earth," Neef said. "We have people who have master's degrees from the best clay schools in the country. We've got people who are in their sixth generation, seventh generation of pots being made in this area. ... Everyone came to the material a little differently."

Neef said it's rare in many communities to be able to walk next door to borrow an ounce of cobalt or to go on pottery trips with neighbors, but that's what Seagrove is like. Frank and Cindy moved to the town after a recommendation from a friend who lived in Seagrove, and now they have no plans to leave.

"I always refer to Seagrove as the ultimate graveyard of potters," Frank Neef said. "You come here to live out the rest of your useful years."

Those useful years provide beautiful pots for visitors to explore behind every door, but for the potters who make them, it's more than a business - it's a way of life.

"Every day, what do you do?" Neef said. "I'm going to make something from nothing!"

NC invests \$9.5M to help the formerly incarcerated with mental health issues

By Rachel Crumpler

NORTH CAROLINA HEALTH NEWS

Trying to get back on one's feet in the community after leaving prison or jail is rarely easy. People often face steep hurdles finding housing, employment and health care. For those with serious mental illness, the transition can be even more difficult.

About two in five people who are incarcerated have a history of mental illness — roughly twice the prevalence of mental illness within the general adult population.

Many of them leave prison or jail without a job or even a place to live. Some may have a single outpatient mental health

appointment scheduled and a 30-day supply of their medications. Others might just get handed a list of resources and phone numbers.

Too often, it isn't enough.

Ted Zarzar, a psychiatrist who divides his time between UNC Health and Central Prison in Raleigh, previously told NC Health News the period where people reenter their communities is especially critical — and high-risk — for people with a mental illness.

Without a direct handoff to care and support, Zarzar said staying stable in the community is nearly impossible. Many people end

up right back in a jail, prison or the hospital in a frustrating — and costly — cycle of recidivism. And taxpayers foot the bill: Incarceration in a North Carolina prison costs more than \$54,000 a year.

It's a cycle state leaders want to break — and they're trying a new approach.

On Nov. 3, North Carolina officials announced a \$9.5 million pilot program to provide intensive support to people with serious mental illnesses — such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and chronic post-traumatic stress disorder — as they reenter the community after incarceration.

Please see MENTAL | 4B

Solterra's a nice ride, charging issues aside

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quality. I experienced very little wind noise at 70 miles per hour (on the interstate). The tires were fairly quiet as well.

The Solterra's interior has been upgraded to look more modern. A larger touch screen is responsive and bright and houses Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, both of which can be used wirelessly. The Harmon Kardon sound system was especially impressive.

A fixed glass panoramic sunroof, seating for five, heated and ventilated front seats along with a smart rear-view mirror are among a plethora of standard interior features.

The Solterra's range has been increased to up to 288 miles. That's not bad but most vehicles should be

shooting for at least 300 miles minimum.

I really liked the Solterra despite my charging woes. Some of my problems may have been due to user error, but I've driven lots of electric vehicles before and none were this troublesome.

Pros:

- Tweaked exterior design
- Spacious, modern interior
- Copious standard equipment
- Improved range
- Fast charging
- AWD
- Solid handling
- Quiet, comfortable ride
- Quick acceleration

Cons:

- Difficult to charge
- Needs more range

When Black childhood was real, raw, and spent outdoors

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walked there in groups, joking, playing, and feeling independent.

"You'd walk to the store laughing with your friends," said Arlette Richardson, 54, whose father, Rodney Worthington, owned a bodega in Queens. "It wasn't about the candy. It was about the freedom, the trust, and the fun of being with your people. You felt grown even when you weren't."

Saturday mornings were for cartoons like Fat Albert, Super Friends, and The Smurfs. But once noon hit, televisions across America tuned into Soul Train. Don Cornelius's smooth voice, the dancers, and the music gave Black kids something no other show did at the time — a reflection of themselves.

"You didn't miss Soul Train," said Marcus Hill, 61, who works for MTA in New York. "You'd sit with your cousins trying to copy the dancers. It made you proud to see us shining like that. It was style, pride, and confidence all in one."

Community was everything. Family cookouts, block parties, and recreation centers brought people together. DJs set up turntables and filled milk crates with hit records while parents grilled ribs and

chicken. Kids danced in the street barefoot while elders clapped and cheered. These were not just weekend events. They were celebrations of life.

"Those cookouts brought everyone together," said Aja Sledge, 53. "You could smell the barbecue halfway down the block. Somebody started the music, and everybody came out. You didn't need an invitation. You just showed up and belonged."

And when the sun went down, kids found new ways to keep the fun going. They played school, house, or store, creating entire worlds from cardboard boxes and old notebooks. It was creativity that built character and connection. Sledge said those days shaped the way people grew up.

"We learned how to lead, how to care, and how to look out for one another," she said. "That's what 'back in the day' meant. We didn't need Wi-Fi to be connected. We had pay phones and some of us had pagers, but we weren't distracted by them like kids are today with cell phones. Most importantly, we had love, we had community, and we had each other."

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Shutdown focuses retreat from big health care ideas

Continued from page 1B
 said Jonathan Gruber, an economist who played a key role in drafting the ACA. "Why aren't they being more bold? Probably scars from the ACA fights. But health care is a winning issue. The truth is we need universal coverage and price regulation."

Voters rank lowering health care costs as a top priority, above housing, jobs, immigration, and crime, according to a September poll by Hart Research Associates for Families USA, a consumer health advocacy group.

And costs are climbing. Premiums for job-based health insurance rose 6% in 2025 to an average of \$26,993 a year for family coverage, according to an annual survey of employers released Oct. 22 by KFF, a health information nonprofit that includes KFF Health News. For all the attention given to grocery, gas, and energy prices, health premiums and deductibles in recent years have risen faster than overall inflation and wages.

Democratic headwinds
 The appetite for big, bold ideas to drive down such high costs has waned in part because Democrats lack political leverage, according to economists, po-

itical strategists, and health care advocates. They've also been burned before for backing significant changes.

After the ACA was enacted in 2010, for example, a backlash over the law — and its mandate that most everyone have insurance — helped Republicans win the House and gain seats in the Senate. In 2016, Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton backed the public option, a proposed government-run plan that would compete against commercial insurance. She lost to Donald Trump.

Democrats are also outnumbered in Congress. Sweeping changes to health care, such as the creation of Medicaid and Medicare and passage of the ACA, historically have occurred when one party has controlled both Congress and the presidency. Republicans currently have all that muscle. So for now, Democrats are fighting to preserve the status quo while portraying Republicans as a threat to Americans' insurance coverage.

If the ACA subsidies aren't extended, many of the roughly 24 million people who buy coverage on the health law's marketplaces will see their pre-

miums more than double next year, according to KFF. A KFF Health Tracking Poll released Nov. 6 found that three-quarters of the public supported extending them.

"There's no doubt people believe the current system needs reform," said Jesse Ferguson, a Democratic strategist. "Protecting people from premium increases is part of that. You don't win the future by losing the present."

Even bipartisan legislative proposals aimed at lowering health costs have fizzled in an environment defined by political threats and partisan social media attacks.

Bills that would have improved health care price transparency and reined in companies that manage prescription drug benefits gained traction in late 2024 as part of a spending package.

Then Elon Musk, who was serving as a senior adviser to President-elect Trump, took to his social media platform, X, to rally opposition, deriding the budget bill for what he asserted was excessive government spending.

GOP leaders dropped the health provisions, prompting Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.) to say on X that

Musk "tweeted to kill" the bipartisan health policies that Congress had hammered out.

But Democrats' focus on health care has cut both ways. Their messaging amid efforts to save the ACA from repeal and to preserve the law's protections for those with preexisting conditions helped the party take back the House in the 2018 midterm elections. "I still have PTSD from the experience," Republican Mike Johnson, now the House speaker, said recently.

And voters want relief. Six in 10 Americans are extremely or very worried about health care costs rising next year, according to an Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll.

Hagen Wenzek, 56, is among them. The chief executive of GI Digital, a high-tech startup, felt a pain in his calf in late summer and asked OpenAI's ChatGPT what it might be. It suggested he could have deep-vein thrombosis, or a blood clot. He went to the emergency room and obtained an ultrasound that confirmed the diagnosis, so doctors monitored him and gave him blood thinners.

His insurance was billed \$7,422, and Wenzek got a bill for \$890. The average cost of an ultrasound is about \$400 without insurance, according to GoodRx, a digital health platform.

"The hospital is making thousands for a procedure that costs \$500. It's kind of ridiculous," said Wenzek, of Sleepy Hollow, New York. "I have a \$40 copay just to go see a doctor for anything, and I'm on a startup budget."

'Defending the status quo'
 The lack of bolder ideas to tackle spiraling costs could also work against Democrats, some critics say.

Comedian and political commentator Jon Stewart, in an episode of his podcast in October, accused Democrats of committing "malpractice" by not presenting ideas to fix what people hate about the health care system.

Instead, he said, they're shutting the government down to protect a system that voters already believe is failing them.

"Once again, the Democrats are in a position of defending the status quo of policies that most people in the United States think suck," he said. "Meanwhile, on the same day, Trump rolls out TrumpRx. Hey, I'll just threaten Pfizer with 100% tariffs and then just open up a prescription drug outside of the middle managers and sell directly to the public at a discount."

TrumpRx, which is intended to help patients find lower-priced drugs, and pledges by Big Pharma to lower drug prices could help the GOP with voters, though Democrats are also hammering Republicans over the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, the bill the president signed into law in July that reduces Medicaid spending by about \$1 trillion over a decade.

Republicans are promising fixes, using the shutdown to try to leverage voter frustration. Vice President J.D. Vance said on Newsmax in October that "we do have a plan, actually," in reference to a question about health care reform.

(Trump has promised repeatedly that he would produce a plan to replace the ACA but never has.)

Senate Majority Leader John Thune said on CNBC in October that Trump wants to overhaul the ACA and "give people health insurance that is higher-quality and more affordable."

The White House did not respond to an email re-

questing comment from Vance.

"It's not that Democrats are focusing on tax credits to the exclusion of bigger, bolder reforms," said Anthony Wright, executive director of Families USA. "If you can get the conversation on health care, if we can prevent premiums from spiking, then we can focus on why health care costs so darn much to begin with."

But some Democrats say voters are hurting and want bigger and bolder ideas now. Earlier this year, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz said on the podcast "Fast Politics" that the party needs to offer more on health care in the next election.

"I'll tell you what people are going to expect," he said. "They're not going to expect us to tinker around the edge with the ACA. They're going to expect universal health care."

For now, at least, there are more innovative ideas in states. Oregon has established a governing board to set up a single-payer health system in which the state would take on health care financing — eliminating private insurance, premiums, and all deductibles for all residents as soon as 2027. The question is whether it will work. Vermont abandoned a similar effort in 2014.

"With the political environment we're in, there isn't currently an appetite for big reform, but we know it needs to happen," said Mona Shah, the senior director of policy and strategy at Community Catalyst, a health advocacy group. "Across party lines, people want government intervention in health care and people want universal coverage. The pain point that people are feeling, the public sentiment is where we were at before the ACA."



SAMUEL RAMOS | UNSPLASH

The federal government shutdown highlights the inertia of political leaders in transforming health care into a less expensive proposition for Americans through lowered costs.

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RACHEL CRUMPLER | NORTH CAROLINA HEALTH NEWS

First lady Anna Stein announces the launch of FACT teams in North Carolina on Nov. 3, 2025, at N.C. Department of Health and Human Services headquarters in Raleigh. The pilot program aims to improve outcomes for people whose mental illnesses lead to frequent interactions with the criminal justice system.

Mental health initiative for the formerly incarcerated

Continued from page 2B

The goal: to reduce repeat encounters with the justice system and guide people to the help they need.

These Forensic Assertive Community Treatment, or FACT, teams will deliver personalized clinical and social support to justice-involved individuals with serious mental health needs who also present a medium to high risk of repeated criminal behavior.

"We want to make sure that they are effectively connected to the treatment and supports that they need," said Kelly Crosbie, director of the state's Department of Health and Human Services Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Services. "It is good for them, it is good for their families and it is good for our communities."

High-risk, high-needs population

The first FACT teams will be based in Pitt, New Hanover, Wake/Durham, Buncombe and Mecklenburg counties. Each team will receive \$636,000 per year for three years — funding that comes from the \$835 million in behavioral health funding the state legislature appropriated in the 2023-25 state budget to improve the state's mental health system.

Teams are designed to tailor care based on a person's needs — from mental health and substance use treatment to housing and employment support and assistance with daily living tasks.

North Carolina's first lady, Anna Stein, has focused on supporting rehabilitation and reentry programs for people leaving incarceration and on reducing stigma against people with substance use and mental health disorders as two of her top priorities during her husband's time as governor. She helped announce the new program at NC DHHS headquarters in Raleigh.

"It is critical that we address the intersection of mental health needs and the criminal justice system," Stein said.

While the pilot program has been in the works for more than a year, its launch comes amid increased public attention on gaps in North Carolina's criminal justice and mental health systems. On Aug. 22, Ukrainian refugee Iryna Zarutskaya was stabbed to death on a Charlotte light rail train. The man charged in her killing had been diagnosed with schizophrenia and was homeless at the time of the incident. He had been arrested more than a dozen times over two decades and spent more than five years in prison for armed robbery.

'People want support'

Data shows that people with mental illnesses are overrepresented in incarcerated, probationary and paroled populations nationwide.

Crosbie said that many people have mental health concerns and behaviors that contribute to their criminal involvement, and others see their conditions worsen behind bars. Some

even develop new mental health conditions once they're incarcerated.

That's turned jails and prisons into de facto mental health institutions — even though they're ill-equipped to manage the growing, complex mental health needs of those in their custody.

The FACT model builds on Assertive Community Treatment — a model of care developed in the 1970s when psychiatric hospitals across the nation closed and care shifted into the community. ACT uses multidisciplinary teams who constitute "walking hospitals" to bring treatment directly to community members with the most serious mental health challenges.

Forensic assertive community treatment, or FACT teams, adapts that model to serve a justice-involved population by pairing treatment with interventions to reduce risks for future criminal behavior.

Each North Carolina FACT team will include nine roles: a team leader, psychiatrist or nurse practitioner, nurse, mental health counselor, substance use counselor, peer support specialist, housing specialist, vocational/educational specialist and forensic navigator. The team members work collaboratively to go beyond traditional outpatient care and "wrap" services around them.

"This program in particular is for people with very severe mental health issues," Crosbie said. "These are folks that probably need more than once every two weeks a 45-minute counseling appointment. They really need intensive support through that peer who can be with them every day if that's what they need, through a doc who they can talk to every day if they need to, a clinical social worker who's directing the rest of the team and providing counseling services to them."

"It's just a much more intensive level of clinical services, in addition to some of those other life supports, like housing and employment."

Crosbie said teams can meet clients anywhere — at home, in a park, a doctor's appointment or even at a job interview.

That flexibility is key for client engagement, said Lacey Rutherford, FACT team lead in Buncombe County.

Each FACT team has the capacity to work with up to 30 clients — a smaller caseload to allow staff to meet each person's intensive needs. Team members are available around the clock, with no time limit on how long they can work with someone to become stable in the community.

The Buncombe and Mecklenburg county teams are already operating and accepting referrals, Crosbie said. The remaining teams are expected to launch by the end of the calendar year.

Referrals can come from law enforcement, court officials, community corrections, behavioral health

care providers and even family members who think someone would benefit from FACT services.

Rutherford, who previously worked for two years on an assertive community treatment team in Buncombe and had clients with histories of incarceration, said she believes the specialized teams to serve justice-involved individuals will help better address unmet needs.

"People want support. They really do," Rutherford said. "Of course, we're going to have situations where people are going to be resistant to this — to treatment — but overall, this is something that these individuals haven't had. They haven't had support. They haven't had people in their corner fighting for them."

An emerging strategy

While FACT teams are new to North Carolina, the approach has been in limited use elsewhere since the 1990s.

One early FACT team was created in 1997 in Rochester, New York, by psychiatrist J. Steven Lamberti, who is also a professor of psychiatry at the University of Rochester Medical Center. Lamberti saw the gaps between the mental health and justice systems when many of his patients landed in jail. The program is still operating today, with Lamberti serving as team psychiatrist.

"FACT brings together best practices in community mental health with best practices in crime prevention," Lamberti told NC Health News. "It's a mobile one-stop shop to meet people's needs medically, psychiatrically and socially."

He described a typical FACT client as someone with a serious mental illness who may not recognize their condition and has previously refused treatment, living on the streets without stable housing or income — conditions that lead to frequent encounters with the justice system.

"At some point, they get involved in a survival crime like stealing food or aggressive panhandling because they're starving and trying to get money," Lamberti said. "If they get arrested, they'll go to jail. It's usually a misdemeanor charge, and they'll be right back out on the streets."

Breaking the cycle, Lamberti said, requires treatment, along with addressing the "criminogenic needs" that drive justice involvement — issues like housing instability, food insecurity, poor family relationships and more.

Lamberti published the first paper on forensic assertive community treatment in 2004. At the time, he identified 16 teams operating in nine states — though he noted differences in their structure. The number of teams has grown in recent years — aided by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration naming FACT among best practices in 2019, Lamberti said.

Foods that steal your body's nutrients

Continued from page 1B

to a 2010 report published in the *World Journal of Gastroenterology*.

Unlike sugar, however, HFCS doesn't trigger the "I'm full" hormone leptin in the brain, making it easier to overeat, which may lead to obesity.

Increased health risks due to nutrient depletion: Impaired immune function, hair loss, lowered blood sugar regulation, elevated triglycerides, discomfort, bloating, diarrhea, obesity

3. Pectin

Found in: Jams, jellies, fruit juices, milk drinks, canned frosting, yogurt

Robs you of: Beta-carotene, lycopene, lutein

Pectin may look and behave like good-for-you fiber, but it's not always working in your favor. While this glue-like food moves through you, things get stuck to it, including essential nutrients, which inevitably leave the body with it.

You're simply not going to reap the full benefits of lycopene — or any of these antioxidants — if you're also consuming foods that contain added pectin. So, keep eating your apples and other foods that contain natural pectin, but skip it when it shows up on the label.

Increased health risks due to nutrient depletion: Eyesight conditions, decreased immune response, frequent viral infections

4. Disodium EDTA

AKA: Ethylenediaminetetraacetic Acid

Found in: Processed foods

Robs you of: Vitamin C, magnesium, iron, calcium, zinc, potassium

Disodium EDTA excels at preserving the color and flavor of foods. It grabs any free metals that would normally promote oxidation, therefore increasing shelf life.

That's also why it is prescribed for people suffering from heavy metal poisoning. It binds to minerals in the digestive tract and helps remove them, allowing them to be eliminated through feces.

However, just as in relationships, clinginess is a bad thing for healthy

people because when you eat foods with the preservative, it pulls out both bad and crucial minerals and disturbs gut bacteria.

Increased Health Risks Due to Nutrient Depletion: Digestive issues, weaker immune system, compromised cellular and nerve function, anemia, cramps, and kidney damage

5. Phosphoric acid

Found in: Sodas, some flavored waters

Robs You of: Calcium, magnesium

6. Guar gum

Found in: Beverages, soups, cottage cheese, and some frozen desserts

Robs you of: Beta-carotene, lycopene, lutein

This fiber from guar beans, which functions as a thickener, feeds gut bacteria. And, just as with sugar, this causes an overproduction of bacteria, which compete for key nutrients.

In fact, eating guar gum may reduce the absorption of carotenoids by 22%, according to research out of the Technical University of Munich.

Increased Health Risks Due to Nutrient Depletion: Eye diseases, such as macular degeneration

This chemical additive that's used to keep carbonated drinks from going flat packs a one-two punch for your bones. In addition to blocking the absorption of calcium and magnesium, it may also be dipping into your personal calcium supply in your bones.

Calcium and phosphorus like to be bonded, so when you take in phosphorus without calcium, it'll take whatever calcium is currently in your body. Because calcium comes hand-in-hand with magnesium, when you lose one, you lose the other.

A study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* found that women who drank an average of five colas a week had lower bone mass density than non-cola drinkers, possibly due to lower phosphorus-to-calcium ratios.

Increased health risks due to nutrient depletion: Poorer bone and teeth health, osteoporosis, cramping and spasms, increased food cravings



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Your insurance dropped your doctor. Now what?

By Bram Sable-Smith

KFF HEALTH NEWS

Last winter, Amber Wingler started getting a series of increasingly urgent messages from the local hospital in Columbia, Missouri, letting her know her family's health care might soon be upended.

MU Health Care, where most of her family's doctors work, was mired in a contract dispute with Wingler's health insurer, Anthem. The existing contract was set to expire.

Then, on March 31, Wingler received an email alerting her that the next day Anthem was dropping the hospital from its network. It left her reeling.

"I know that they go through contract negotiations all the time ... but it just seemed like bureaucracy that wasn't going to affect us. I'd never been pushed out-of-network like that before," she said.

The timing was awful.

Wingler's 8-year-old daughter, Cora, had been having unexplained troubles with her gut. Waitlists to see various pediatric specialists to get a diagnosis, from gastroenterology to occupational therapy, were long — ranging from weeks to more than a year.

In a statement, MU Health Care spokesperson Eric Maze said the health system works to make sure children with the most urgent needs are seen as quickly as possible.)

Suddenly, the specialist visits for Cora were out-of-network. At a few hundred bucks a piece, the out-of-pocket cost would have added up fast. The only other in-network pediatric specialists Wingler found were in St. Louis and Kansas City, both more than 120 miles away.

So Wingler delayed her daughter's appointments for months while she tried

to figure out what to do.

Nationwide, contract disputes are common, with more than 650 hospitals having public spats with an insurer since 2021. They could become even more common as hospitals brace

for about getting a cash discount and about the hospital's financial assistance program.

2. Rifts between hospitals and insurers often get repaired.

When Brown University health policy researcher Jason Buxbaum examined 3,714 nonfederal hospitals across the U.S., he said, he found that about 18% of them had a public dispute with an insurance company sometime from June 2021 to May 2025.

About half of those hospitals ultimately dropped out of the insurance company's network, according to Buxbaum's preliminary data. But most of those breakups ultimately get resolved within a month or two, he added. So your doctors very well could end up back in the network, even after a split.

3. You might qualify for an exception to keep costs lower.

Certain patients with serious or complex conditions might qualify for an extension of in-network coverage, called continuity of care. You can apply for that extension by contacting your insurer, but the process may prove lengthy. Some hospitals have set up resources to help patients apply for that extension.

Wingler ran that gauntlet for her daughter, spending hours on the phone, filling out forms, and sending faxes. But she said she didn't have the time or energy to do that for everyone in her family.

"My son was going through physical therapy," she said. "But I'm sorry, dude, like, just do your exercises that you already have. I'm not fighting to get you coverage too, when I'm already fighting for your sister."

Also worth noting, if



KFF HEALTH NEWS

Nationwide, contract disputes are common, with more than 650 hospitals having public spats with an insurer since 2021.

you're dealing with a medical emergency: For most emergency services, hospitals can't charge patients more than their in-network rates.

4. Switching your insurance carrier may need to wait.

You might be thinking of switching to an insurer that covers your preferred doctors. But be aware: Many people who choose their insurance plans during an annual open enrollment period are locked into their plan for a year. Insurance contracts with hospitals are not necessarily on the same timeline as your "plan year."

Certain life events, such as getting married, having a baby, or losing a job, can qualify you to change insurance outside of your annual open enrollment period, but your doctors' dropping out of an insurance network is not a qualifying life event.

5. Doctor-shopping can be time-consuming.

If the split between your insurance company and hospital looks permanent, you might consider finding a new slate of doctors and

other providers who are in-network with your plan. Where to start? Your insurance plan likely has an online tool to search for in-network providers near you.

But know that making a switch could mean waiting to establish yourself as a patient with a new doctor and, in some cases, traveling a fair distance.

6. It's worth holding on to your receipts.

Even if your insurance and hospital don't strike a deal before their contract expires, there's a decent chance they will still make a new agreement.

Some patients decide to put off appointments while they wait. Others keep their appointments and pay out-of-pocket. Hold on to your receipts if you do. When insurers and hospitals make up, the deals often are backdated, so the appointments you paid for out-of-pocket could be covered after all.

End of an ordeal

Three months after the contract between Wingler's insurance company and the hospital lapsed, the sides announced they had

reached a new agreement. Wingler joined the throng of patients scheduling appointments they'd delayed during the ordeal.

In a statement, Jim Turner, a spokesperson for Anthem's parent company, Elevance Health, wrote, "We approach negotiations with a focus on fairness, transparency, and respect for everyone impacted."

Maze from MU Health Care said: "We understand how important timely access to pediatric specialty care is for families, and we're truly sorry for the frustration some parents have experienced scheduling appointments following the resolution of our Anthem contract negotiations."

Wingler was happy her family could see their providers again, but her relief was tempered by a resolve not to be caught in the same position again.

"I think we will be a little more studious when open enrollment comes around," Wingler said. "We'd never really bothered to look at our out-of-pocket coverage before because we didn't need it."

The Charlotte Post

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Classifieds

Classified Deadline: Monday at noon, prior to Thursday's edition

BIDS

NOTICE TO BIDDERS: REBID

Sealed proposals will be received until **2 pm, on Thursday, December 18, 2025, in the office of Mecklenburg County Asset & Facility Management Department, 3205 Freedom Drive, Suite 6000, Charlotte, NC 28208**, for the construction of the **Mecklenburg County Courthouse 8th Floor Interior Finishes Updates Project** at which time and place Bids will be opened and read aloud. Single-prime, lump sum bids will be taken for construction as indicated in the bidding documents. Proposals must be made on standard forms furnished by the County. The project is located at **832 E 4th St, Charlotte, NC 28202**.

The Contractor can obtain the Bid Documents digitally at **no cost** from the County's **authorized Design Consultant: Progressive Companies**. Contact Gary Runions via email at grunions@weareprogressive.com . CC Lydia Fries at lfries@weareprogressive.com

Bid Questions shall be sent to Gary Runions via email at grunions@weareprogressive.com . CC: Ron Culpepper at rculpepper@weareprogressive.com and LaElaina Taylor at laelaina.taylor@mecklenburgcountync.gov

Prime Contractors wishing to submit a bid for this project must provide a **MANDATORY** written, Letter-of-Interest to the **authorized Design Consultant** at least 48 hours in advance of the bid opening in order to be placed on the official Bidders List for automatic distribution of potential addenda and offered consideration by the County as a responsive bidder. **Bids submitted by Prime NC Licensed General Contractors that have not provided a Letter-of-Interest may be considered non-responsive.**

A mandatory pre-bid meeting shall be held at **7 am on Thursday, November 20, 2025**, at the **Mecklenburg County Courthouse located at 832 E 4th St, Charlotte, NC 28202**. **Bidders will have to go through security screening at the Courthouse entrances prior to entering the Mecklenburg County Courthouse**. All interested parties shall meet in the first-floor lobby beside the escalator after going through security.

Performance & Payment and Materials Bonds and a Bid Bond shall be required for this project. The laws of North Carolina and applicable regulations of various Licensing Boards and Mecklenburg County BDI provisions will be observed in receiving bids and awarding contracts. Mecklenburg County reserves the right to reject any or all proposals and to waive informalities or technicalities, as it may deem to be in its best interest. Upon request, this information will be made available in an alternative format for persons with disabilities. Please call 980-314-2432 for assistance.

EMPLOYMENT

Technical Lead, Western America: Averna Test Systems Inc., Charlotte, NC – Functionally Lead geographically distributed multidisciplinary technical projects & manage execution teams. Lead initiative w/ the local business unit to redefine core activities to create more value & leverage resource centers. Reqs: Bach or frgn equiv in Elec Engg, Mech Engg, Comp Sci, or a closely related field + 5 yrs of progressively responsible exp in an Elec Engg, Mech Engg, Comp Sci. occ. Job can be perform'd anywhere in the U.S. Domest. & int'l travel req. up to 30% of time for 2-4 wk. periods. Professional proficiency or native fluency in French. Send CV to HR@averna.com and reference TLWA-EL.

Senior Software Engineer: Averna Test Systems Inc., Charlotte, NC – Analyze requirements & provide solutions, conduct development, quality assurance & engineering support for the deployed test solutions. Reqs: Bach or frgn equiv in Comp Science, Telecom Sys Mgmt, Computer Engg, Electrical Engg, Electronics Engg or a closely related field; plus 4 years of exp in a software engineering & testing occupation Full-time telecomm'tg permitted. Send CV to HR@averna.com and reference SSE-MM.

Financial Analyst (Charlotte, NC): Dvlp & maintain analyses related to the operational activities of the Greater Charlotte Market. 30% WFH allowed. Reqs. incl. Bach. deg. & 2 yrs. exp. Mail CV to: Novant Health, 108 Providence Rd., Charlotte, NC 28207, Attn: L. Gaff.

Tier 3 Systems Engineer (Magna5 MS LLC) (Charlotte, NC): Lead & contribute to IT projects; Eval & reslv issues, propose & implement sltns; Mng & administer cloud-bsd IT svrcs; Perform trblshooting, idntfy sltns; Implmnt & mgmt DevOps practices for s/w dvlpmnt & infrstrctre mgmt; Coordinate planning, scheduling, & execution of s/w releases. Mng lifecycle of s/w products; Oversee platforms infrstrctre. Monitor systm hlt, perform capacity planning, implmnt measures to maintain svrc qly; Wrk w/ teams to integrate principles into SDLC. Reqs exp w/: Azure, AWS, Office 365, provisioning, mngrng & migrtng svrcs; VMware ESXi hyprvsr, provisioning, mgmt & migrtn virtual svrs; mngrng & trbleshooting nwtrk envrmnts, cloud svrcs intgrtion; svr migrtns, mngrng Exchange, Office 365 tenants & ensuring hgh availability & disaster recrv prctcs; identify mgmt sltns; EntralD, configrtn & mgmt to secure envrmnts; analyzng tech issues & prvd sltn; explaining tech concepts. Reqs: Bachelor's degree or frgn equiv in Computer Sci, IT or rtd fd & 3 yrs exp as Sr Sysms Engnr or rtd occ. Option to WFH. Salary: \$139,942.00/Yr. Send C.V. to Barb.Meyer@magna5.com

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LEGAL ADS

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

To be conducted by the INLIVIAN Board of Commissioners

PURPOSE:

To receive final comments on INLIVIAN's FY2026 Proposed Annual Budget

DATE: November 18, 2025

TIME: 5:30 P.M.

LOCATION: Virtual Meeting or Teleconference

Any persons wishing to speak during this public hearing should sign up in advance with Stacy Bridges at 704-336-5221.

Please plan to limit your comments to a three-minute time period.

A copy of the FY2026 Proposed Annual Budget is available at INLIVIAN's website.

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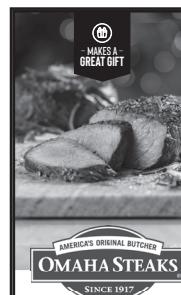


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« ON THE MARQUEE »



WESTERN PIEDMONT SYMPHONY

Trumpet soloist Ashley Hall-Tighe headlines Western Piedmont Symphony's "Masterworks: Italian Inspirations" on Nov. 22 at Lenoir-Rhyne University.

'Eureka Day' at The Arts Factory

By Herbert L. White
herb.l.white@thecharlottepost.com

Three Bone Theater presents "Eureka Day" through Nov. 23, The Arts Factory, 1545 W Trade St. Written by Jonathan Spector, directed by Tonya Bludsworth.

Advance tickets online at threebone-theatre.com are \$30, \$35 at the door and \$20 for students and educators.

The Eureka Day School in Berkeley, California, is a bastion of progressive ideals: representation, acceptance, social justice. In weekly meetings, Eureka Day's five board members develop and update policy to preserve a culture of inclusivity that reaches decisions by consensus.

But when a mumps outbreak threatens the Eureka community, facts become subjective and every solution divisive, leaving school leadership to confront the central challenge: Build consensus when no one agrees on truth.

The production is recommended for ages 14 and older due to references of illness and death in children, public health crises and vaccine hesitancy.

Nov. 13

Blues musician **Mac Arnold** and local jazz and blues artists perform during a celebration of Black philanthropy at Carolina Theatre, 230 N. Tryon St.

Rhythm & Roots includes tributes and a celebration of Foundation For Black Philanthropy. Music inspired by Charlotte's Black philanthropic legacy honors historical and cultural contributions of Black Charlotteans, with tributes to James Ferguson, Elizabeth Randolph, Lethia Jones Henderson and Jimmie and Minnie McKee.

The program starts at 7 p.m. Tickets range from \$96.15 to \$127 and available at Ticketmaster.com.

Nov. 19

Black Charlotte is returning to Carolina Theatre at 7:30 p.m. for an evening of Charlotte-focused poetry from 15 spoken word artists with backing from the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra.

Tickets for Black Charlotte: Live in Concert are available at TheCarolina.com. Carolina Theatre is located at 230 N. Tryon St.

Nov. 21-22

Ruben Studdard sings Luther Vandross at 7:30 p.m. at Knight Theater, 430 S Tryon St.

"American Idol" winner Ruben Studdard brings to life the songs that shaped a generation. Studdard brings out the warmth and romance in Vandross songs like "Here and Now," "Dance with My Father," and "A House Is Not a Home" backed by the power of the Charlotte Symphony.

Tickets range from \$30.48 to \$114.71 and available online at tix.blumenthalarts.org.

Nov. 22

Western Piedmont Symphony presents "Masterworks: Italian Inspirations" at 7:30 p.m. at P.E. Monroe Auditorium on the campus of Lenoir-Rhyne University at 625 7th Ave NE, Hickory.

The evening will start with Arvo Pärt's "If Bach had Been a Beekeeper" and Bach's "Air on the G String." The concert continues with Sammartini's Recorder Concerto arranged for trumpet and Haydn's classical Trumpet Concerto featuring internationally acclaimed trumpet soloist Ashley Hall-Tighe. The evening concludes with Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 4, "Italian."

Tickets are \$20-\$58 for adults. Student tickets are \$10 with a valid ID. Students can buy \$10 tickets in sections A and B only when accompanied by an

Please see NOV. 23 | 8B



Hannah Hasan, founder of Epoch Tribe said barriers to accessing funding for arts initiatives in historically underrepresented communities threatens their sustainability.

HANNAH HASAN

Arts initiatives fight for long-term sustainability

Funding uncertainty leaves creative communities to fend for themselves

By Nikya Hightower
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Charlotte's creative community needs funding equity and consistency.

As federal funding cuts hit local and state arts initiatives, communities face the possibility of either supporting the arts through public dollars or leaving them to fend for themselves. The situation is more dire in historically underfunded and overlooked communities where sustainability is more of a challenge.

Local urgency grew after the Infusion Fund, a temporary lifeline during the COVID pandemic, closed in

2024. Six years earlier, city leaders wanted to increase housing bonds from \$15 million to \$50 million, which threatened arts funding.

"It was kind of hard to look at us cutting funding to the arts, but people needed a place to live," former City Council member Julie Eiselt recalled.

Ultimately, arts funding was increased by \$3 million.

"I had lobbied that we not cut it, and we didn't cut it," Eiselt said. "In fact, we gave a little bit more money to an organization. But the arts have never really been front and center priority of the community, of the council from a funding standpoint, just because the other issues that we do fund are critically important."

Arts funding typically takes a back-seat compared to budget priorities

like housing, public safety and economic development. Although there are more pressing issues that require public funds, the city recognizes the importance of the arts to local tourism, which makes up 14% of Charlotte's economy. Ultimately, it led to the creation of the Infusion Fund.

"Every year there's pressure to increase that funding because salaries, personnel, increase," Eiselt said. "Personnel is expensive. It's always the most expensive component. It's the most part of an industry's budget."

In 2021, the Arts & Science Council also released its Cultural Equity Report, a 34-page examination of what leaders at the nonprofit described as an inequitable funding history and movement toward cultural equity.

The report detailed that of 61 organizations ASC provided operational support grants to over its history up to that point, only nine were Black, Latinx, Asian, Arab or Native American organizations. Among them were A Sign of the Times of the Carolinas, Brand New Sheriff Productions, Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts +

Culture and JazzArts Charlotte.

Multiple messages left with ASC for a response on its funding footprint and priorities were unreturned.

In 2024, Charlotte launched the Opportunity Fund where local artists and art organizations were awarded \$1.2 million in grants. But accessing grants also comes with barriers for smaller arts organizations in underrepresented communities and artists of color. Some lean into collabora-

tions for funding.

"We were in partnership with an organization that was co-led by a white man and a white woman and the white man was able to help us get in doors for fundraising," said Hannah Hasan, co-founder of Epoch Tribe, a Black- and woman-led production company. "These are people we knew, people who knew us, who knew me, who knew our work. We would have never been able to get in those doors before. That's the benefit of relationships. Off the strength of his identity, we walked through doors that had been closed to us before."

Said Quentin Talley, founder of OnQ Performing Arts, said community contributions have been vital for the stage production company's sustainability.

"We had funding from different sources," he said, "but the main portion of the funding that's helped us sustain somewhat as a company has been those individual donations for sure."

When it comes to underrepresented groups and arts sustainability, the stress of locating sufficient funding can overshadow the creative process, leaving artists feeling underestimated.

"Folks will pay low-end \$100, high-end \$200 for a Broadway show," he said. "But it costs just as much money locally to produce those

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« MOVIE REVIEW »

A family's reckoning of 'Sentimental Value'

By Dwight Brown
BLACK PRESS USA

Sentimental Value
4 stars

An American movie star asks, "Why didn't you want to do the role?"

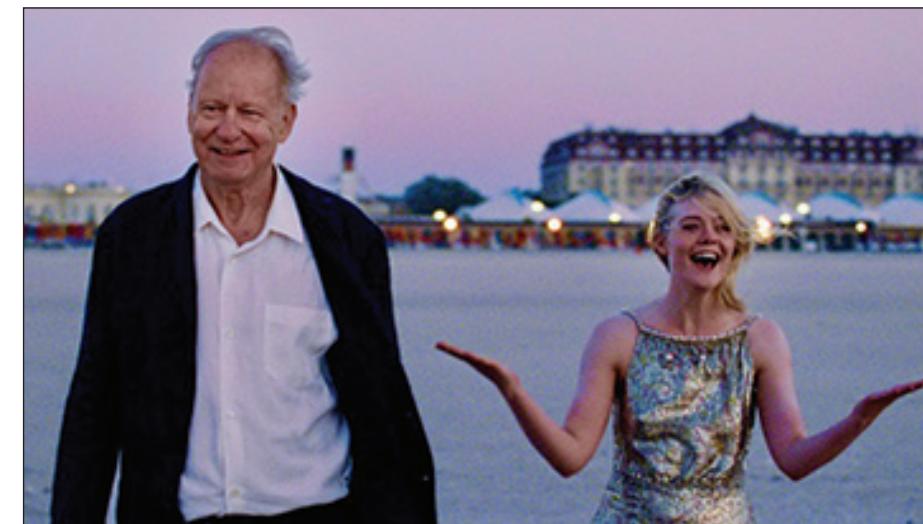
The daughter of the director, an actress, responds, "I can't work with him. My father is a very difficult person." And so, it goes. A daddy/daughter relationship fraught with bad feelings and lots of history churns and churns.

Absentee dads, and their behavior's repercussions, are an issue that causes drama all around the world. This ongoing father crisis takes place in Oslo, Norway. A large imposing red house, one with Dragon Style architecture, similar to American Carpenter Gothic, holds family secrets dating back decades.

That's when Gustav Borg (Stellan Skarsgård, "Dune: Part One and Two"), a young husband and filmmaker, had a stormy relationship with his wife. Arguments haunted the halls. Two little girls cowered in corners, behind closed doors. Years later, there is a reckoning, brought on by the death of the wife and a post-funeral gathering in that crimson mansion that held them altogether. Until it couldn't.

That's how Oscar-nominated screenwriter Joachim Trier ("The Worst Person in the World"), who also directs his films, starts this family saga. Along with co-screenwriter Eskil Vogt, Trier captures the past and present in a home and contemplates what the future will be for a wayward father and his two grown daughters.

In this story, the scene at the repast, a Bergman-like plot device, is so packed



Stellan Skarsgård and Elle Fanning in a scene from "Sentimental Value."

never-married anxiety-riddled actress.

Her young, more emotionally stable sister Agnes (Inga Lbsdotter Lilleaas), is a mom and a wife. For good measure, toss in a showy American actress, Rachel Kemp (Elle Fanning), an interloper who is oblivious to what came before.

This up-close look at family is rendered with the kind of microscopic emotional and mental detail long exhibited by another outstanding Scandinavian auteur, Ingmar Bergman ("Secrets & Whispers"). The Oscar-nominated writer/director was a champ at making movies with characters whose repressed feelings drove them crazy.

In this story, the scene at the repast, a Bergman-like plot device, is so packed

with drama you'd think the script couldn't top this awkward moment. But in minutes it does. Painstakingly.

One night, a play at the National Theater in Oslo is about to begin. Nora, the lead, waits back stage for her big entrance. The house is packed outside with eager theatergoers. An announcement is made, the curtain is ready to go up, and Nora freezes.

Try as the stage crew may, they can't get the nervous, mortified actress to move. She takes a step forward. Two steps back. Runs back to her dressing room for courage, a fleeting emotion.

Seconds, then minutes go by as the awkward stalemate continues, and the audience gets restless. Nora is para-

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Nov. 23 screening of 'Lucha: A Wrestling Tale'

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 adult who also buys a ticket in the same section. For tickets, visit wpsymphony.org, call (828) 324-8603, or go to the Western Piedmont Symphony Box Office at 243 Third Ave. NE. Box office is open Wednesday-Friday from 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Nov. 23

• Josh Lee, a North Carolina native, will appear for a screening of the award-winning documentary "Lucha: A Wrestling Tale," 4-7 p.m., at 4237 Raleigh St. Tickets: General admission \$9.31 (under 18) and seniors (65-plus) \$5.04.

The film follows four girls from the Bronx who formed New York City's first all-girls high school wrestling team—and the educators who help them fight for their futures. "Lucha" premiered at DOC NYC, where it won the Grand Jury Metropolis Award, one of the festival's highest honors.

Lee, a native of Dunn, N.C., moved to the Bronx to teach special education and started the all-girls Lucha Wrestling Club. The nonprofit provides mentorship, athletic training, and college access for girls across the city.

Following the film, Lee will participate in a Q&A and discussion about the making of the documentary and the club's continued impact on young people.

Nov. 26

• Novant Health Thanksgiving Eve Parade returns to Tryon Street for the 79th year. The procession step offs at 5:30 p.m.

The holiday classic kicks off the season looking to build off 2024's parade, which organizer say drew more than 46,000 attendees, 1,000 volunteers, and 85 units. The parade is free and VIP tickets are available near the performance zone at www.novanthanksgivingparade.com/tickets.

Organizers are also looking for volunteers to walk as costumed cast members in the parade, handle the balloons or serve as parade marshals. To sign up, or for more information about the parade, visit www.novanthanksgivingparade.com.

December

• Middle C Jazz is all in for December.

The club is hosting a series of music celebrations from smooth jazz artists to R&B favorites throughout the month. Tickets for all December performances, including the exclusive New Year's Eve event, are available immediately.

A major highlight of the month is the two-night run with the smooth jazz artists Peter White, Mindi Abair, and Vincent Ingala Dec. 12-13. It also includes an optional VIP pre-show wine and jazz tasting with Mindi Abair.

Among the highlights: (Dec. 4) "Happy Holidays - A Soulful Christmas" with Jay D Jones (R&B and holiday soul)

(Dec. 11) Ray Singleton Holiday Party Night (R&B favorites and holiday classics)

(Dec. 12-13) Peter White Christmas with Mindi Abair

& Vincent Ingala
 VIP Pre-show Wine & Jazz
 Tasting with Mindi Abair
 (Dec. 14) Adrian Crutchfield: "For You at Christmas ... with Love & Jazz!"

(Dec. 17-18) "A Charlie Brown Christmas" featuring Lovell Bradford and Tyra Scott, family-friendly celebration of the Vince Guaraldi Trio

(Dec. 19) Joey Santo Sings Christmas Classics of Sinatra, Crosby, & Martin perform vintage holiday standards

(Dec. 21) Jingle Jazz Tour featuring B.K. Jackson, Erin Stephenson and Gino Rosaria

(Dec. 31) New Year's Eve celebration with the Voltage Brothers

For tickets, showtimes, and schedule, go to www.middlecjazz.com.

Arts initiatives fight for long-term sustainability

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 shows as well and it would cost at least that much if you didn't have folks donating and you getting grants."

Although Charlotte's arts community advocates for equitable funding, Eiselt contends it's time to join forces in the fight for change. "I think that there needs to be more of a concerted effort in Charlotte for arts groups to work together and be represented by an organization that is going to advocate for them for funding," she said.

"I do think that there needs to be more of an organization that perhaps enables someone else to lead for them and advocate for them. And right now, the [Arts & Science Council] plays that role, but they have lost a

lot. The city and the ASC had a broken relationship, and so there's got to be a better relationship between whatever the arts organization is and the primary funders, which right now are the city and the county."

If the arts community had the right support and equitable funding, quality and quantity would increase, Hasan argues, which would add to the growth of tourism the arts contribute to.

"I imagine Black founders being less stressed and able to create and build their businesses from a place of abundance and not scarcity," she said. "When you properly invest in Black arts and Black artists, it is something that is like a gift that keeps on giving. It's like a trickle around effect."

The Charlotte Post

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Twists and turns in 'Sentimental Value'

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lyzed, willing to try anything to break the impasse. But none of her old tricks are working. Time ticks by. She rips her costume off in total frustration—yet nothing is alleviating the abject fear that constrains her. Will the show go on?

This sequence has to be one of the most uncomfortable and nerve-racking scenes ever filmed in a drama. She looks lost in her anxiety. And as a viewer, you're embarrassed for her and wonder what happened in her life that pushed the talented thespian to the brink of insanity. That's where the rest of the brilliant screenplay by Vogt and Trier comes in.

The storyline shows the depth of pain that a neglectful dad, who ignored his daughters for way too long, left behind.

The older and now reflective Gustav wants to worm his way back into his offspring's lives by filming a movie in their house. Filmmaking is the one skill he has that could become an instrument of reconciliation. It's like a baseball player asking his adult estranged children to play ball with him or go to a game as a way to forget the past, live in the moment and mend fences.

The overture doesn't go well. He can't read the room. Doesn't comprehend the depth of resentment, animosity and mistrust his daughters hurl his way. They're not making it easy. Forgiveness is not on the menu. Particularly for Nora. Gustav, "You two are the best thing that's ever happened to me." Nora, "Then why weren't you there!"

The parent/adult child conflict builds and builds. Every overture fails. Even offering his testy daughter a lead role is not enough to win her affection. Then casting an American actress (Fanning), instead, becomes one more insult on a pile of grievances. Wisely as the family drama boils to a head, the writers have a bunch of surprises instore for the viewers.

A final shocking turn of events that puts all the weird motives that came before it into context. Warning. Sit through the entire 133 minutes of this drama to feel its real impact. Then get ready to be awed.

The footage is a joy to watch, as filmed by cinematographer Kasper Tuxen, who was also behind the camera on "The Worst Person In The World." He lights the home well, film festival scenes in Deauville, France couldn't be more beguiling and the intimate scenes, whether capturing love or hate, are perfectly staged and composed.

The house and its rooms are filled with life (production designer Jorgen Strangeby Larsen). Clothes look everyday-ish or glamorous depending on the scene and the need (costume designer Ellen Daehli Ystehede). Sublime sequences and those that need to flourish get a winsome or dramatic assistance from the musical score (Hania Rani).

While editor Olivier Bugge Coutté has a particularly difficult task. The film starts slow, and the plotline builds cryptically and methodically. Giving what's on view a rhythm is not easy. But Coutté finds the beat the footage needs.

The weighty narrative's twists and turns are based on psychodrama and not action. That means its success relies heavily on the performances making an impact. Reinsve superbly handles that responsibility as the guarded little girl who became the obstinate adult daughter determined to make her feelings known to a man who has none.

She carries her wounds like medals and puts across a debilitating angst in the most realistic ways. Her antithesis is Lilleas, who plays the go-between daughter who smooths out the wrinkles, with a very conservative charm. Skarsgård is extremely effective as the dad, whose motivation seem suspicious almost throughout.

Adult audiences will be fascinated by this intriguing case of Scandinavian melancholia.

Visit film critic Dwight Brown at DwightBrownInk.com.