

KNIGHT FOR A Princess

Feb. 21 & 22 | REGISTRATION DEADLINE: FEB. 13

Alerus Center | 6:30 - 9 pm
\$40/person | \$80/couple

FOR MORE INFO & TO REGISTER, SCAN THIS CODE OR VISIT: GFPARKS.ORG

event by **gfparks**

Although event is promoted towards dads & daughters, the GF Park District does not discriminate based upon gender. All are welcome.

UND senior center a volunteer at heart. B1

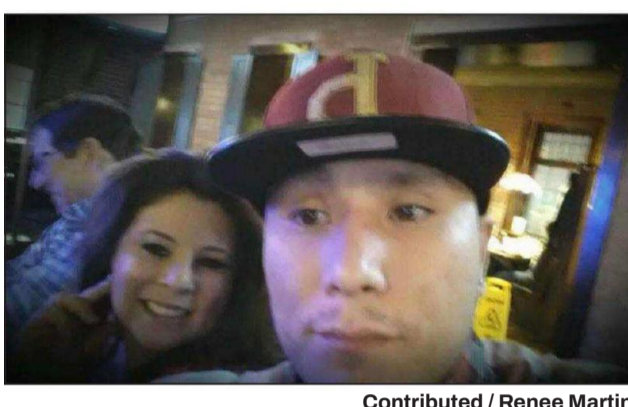
Grand Forks Herald



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SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2025

Mother seeks answers in police shooting



Contributed / Renee Martin
Renee Martin, left, and her son Brandon Laducer are pictured in this 2016 selfie.

Five years after incident at Turtle Mountain, woman with no law experience hopes to take case to Supreme Court

BY HANNAH SHIRLEY
Grand Forks Herald

GRAND FORKS — The night police killed Brandon Laducer at a house on North Dakota's Turtle Mountain Reservation, they didn't realize their case of mistaken identity until after they began

processing the scene. That's according to the North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigations' report detailing the aftermath of the police shooting. According to that report, earlier the night of Aug. 23, 2020, officers learned of "a shooting incident" at a bar in

neighboring Bottineau County, in which Laducer was suspected to have threatened patrons and discharged a weapon. With active warrants — for unrelated incidents — for one Brandon Lee Laducer in hand, officers pursued him onto the reservation.

At a homestead belonging to the Laducer family, police learned Laducer was armed, according to the report. When he came outside onto the deck, he fired a handgun, and as many as seven officers responded with fatal gunfire, the report says.

COURT on A10

Proposal seeks to raise fee for ND licenses

BY BRAD DOKKEN
Grand Forks Herald

BISMARCK — The price of fishing licenses, some hunting licenses and assorted other permits in North Dakota would increase next year, pending the outcome of a bill in the Legislature.

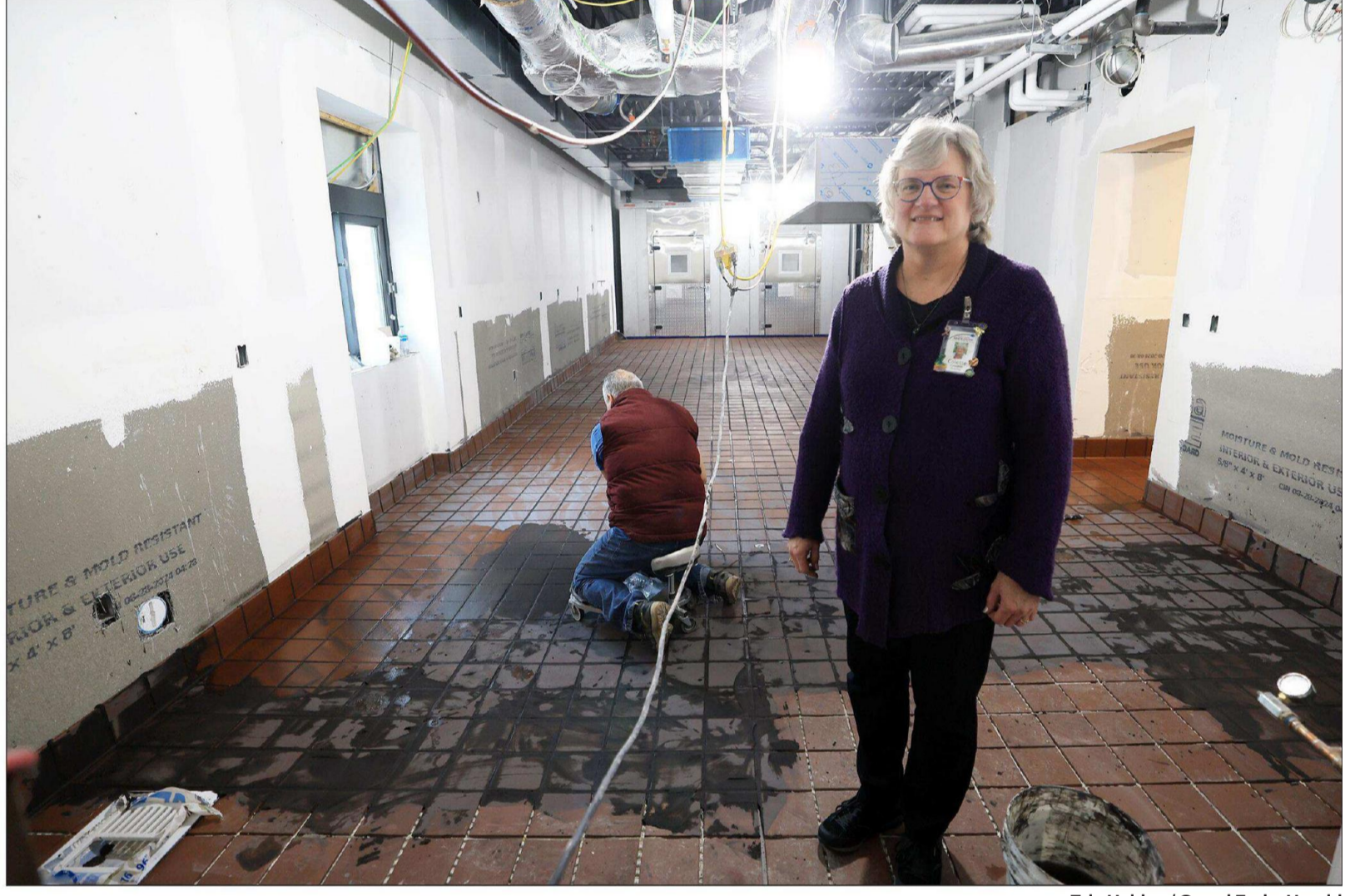
House Bill 1470 is sponsored by Reps. Glenn Bosch, R-Bismarck, and Todd Porter, R-Mandan. Sen. Dale Patten, R-Watford City, is sponsoring the bill in the Senate.

Among the increases outlined in HB 1470, the price of a resident small game license would increase from \$10 to \$20, and a nonresident small game license would increase from \$100 to \$120. The price of a resident fishing license, which currently costs \$18, would increase to \$25, except for resident senior citizens and disabled veterans, who would pay \$10 instead of the current fee of \$5 for a fishing license. The price of an individual nonresident fishing license would increase to \$60 from the current price of \$53.

Resident big game hunting licenses would remain at \$30, while nonresident big game and archery licenses would increase from \$250, the current price, to \$350.

Furbearer licenses, turkey licenses, paddlefish tags and resident early Canada goose licenses also would see slight increases under the proposal.

LICENSE on A8



Eric Hylden / Grand Forks Herald

Colette Iseminger, executive director of the Grand Forks Senior Center, checks on construction progress in the new expanded kitchen area Thursday. It's part of \$2.75 million building project that started in April and is expected to be completed in mid-July.

Millions raised, countless served

Giving Hearts Day offers the opportunity to support the work of charities in this region

BY PAMELA KNUDSON
Grand Forks Herald

Grand Forks Senior Center is among more than 600 charitable organizations in this region that are counting on contributions from this year's Giving

Hearts Day event to carry out their missions.

The senior center is in the midst of a \$2.75 million building expansion project and, of that total cost, it needs to raise \$400,000 to purchase commercial-grade kitchen equipment. The rest is covered by the city.

For Giving Hearts Day, the center has set a goal of \$60,000, "the rest of what we need to finish off that \$400,000," said Colette Iseminger, executive director. "We're almost there."

HEARTS on A8

Several school choice bills hear testimony

Many allow public dollars to cover private tuition

BY JOSHUA IRVINE
Grand Forks Herald

GRAND FORKS — Several bills directing state education dollars outside of North Dakota's public schools inched through committee hearings this week, as lawmakers push

to open the state to school choice.

School choice refers to a broad slate of educational options where public dollars are spent outside public schools, whether toward public charter schools, homeschooling support or pri-

vate school tuition.

Though conservative lawmakers have successfully pushed for school choice legislation across the country, North Dakota is one of a handful of states that has resisted implementing such measures.

Some form of school choice legislation is considered likely to pass this legislative session, particularly after President Donald Trump issued an executive order directing the Secretary of Education to prioritize school choice programs in federal discretionary grants. Department of Public

Instruction Kirsten Baesler called on Senate lawmakers Monday to lay groundwork so North Dakota could receive these funds on its own terms.

"At the federal level, school choice is no longer a matter of if, but how," she said.

SCHOOL on A9



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COURT

CONTINUED from A1

Inside the residence, as officers processed the scene, they found Laducer's wallet on the kitchen counter. Inside was his ID bearing his full name and birthday — he wasn't Brandon Lee Laducer, a 37-year-old white man from Dunseith, North Dakota, with a number of warrants out for his arrest, as officers had believed, but Brandon Richard Laducer, a 35-year-old Native man from Belcourt, North Dakota, who had no active warrants.

Renee Martin, Laducer's mother, said she didn't learn this until more than a year and a half later, when she obtained the NDBCI report through a Freedom of Information Act request. She alleges that's also how she learned that the official narrative in the case varied significantly from what officials told her in the aftermath of her son's death.

Martin has been in contact with other families of tribal members caught in fatal encounters with police. What she's learned, she said, is that her experience of being left distraught and with more questions than answers is not unique.

"What's been very difficult for families such as myself, who are going through what I'm going through, is we don't know what happened," Martin said. "... How can we as families or attorneys move forward effectively if we don't even have the right version of how Brandon died that night?"

Despite no legal training — her background is in human resources — she has spent the last four years in court, representing herself, suing the United States and the officers involved in the incident, arguing that by pursuing Laducer onto the reservation without a

warrant, law enforcement violated his Fourth Amendment right to no unlawful search and seizure. After being dismissed last year in district court, her case is now in the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals. She intends to take the case to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Dan Lewerenz, director of the Indian Law Certificate program at the University of North Dakota, says the odds of the Supreme Court taking on her case — like any given case — are incredibly low. However, he noted, there are elements of this case that could very well pique the high court's interest.

Most notably, Lewerenz said, the district court judge who heard Martin's initial claim dismissed the case, essentially, on a technicality — the decision to dismiss had nothing to do with what she was actually arguing.

"Nowhere in the decision does it say that she's wrong," he said. "It doesn't say that her theory is incorrect."

Conflicting narratives Martin has been trying to learn more about her son's death since it happened.

On Feb. 18, 2021, about six months after Laducer's death, she met with FBI Special Agent Reed Mesman and Assistant U.S. Attorney Eric Lundberg. She claims they told her officers went to the Laducer homestead to perform a wellness check on Annette Laducer, Brandon's aunt and the owner of the residence, who was believed to be having a mental health crisis. Martin claims she wasn't told anything about the alleged altercation in the Bottineau bar, the warrants officers believed they had for Laducer, or that officers were looking for Laducer at all.

After that conversation, she says officers became unreachable. In an attempt to answer the

questions she still had, she filed Freedom of Information Act requests for the NDBCI, FBI and Bureau of Indian Affairs reports into the incident. She received the NDBCI report in April 2022. The FBI and BIA never fulfilled the request. Since the United States also has not entered those reports into evidence in Martin's case, they remain essentially unavailable.

(The Grand Forks Herald similarly requested a copy of the FBI report. The FBI acknowledged the Herald's request in 2021, and confirmed the request was still being processed in 2023, but has provided no updates since.)

In a 2021 interview with the Herald, Martin expressed bewilderment at how much was still unclear surrounding her son's death. Four years later, she has become more cynical.

"How can I go to court when nobody has the official FBI report?" Martin said. "This is why you don't see these cases being prosecuted."

Martin's suit, based on the NDBCI report, was filed in U.S. District Court on Aug. 22, 2022.

Defendants listed in the case are the United States of America, BIA Lt. Kelan Gourneau, BIA officers Michael Slater and Evan Parisien, Rolette Police Chief Joseph Kaufman, Rolette County Sheriff's deputies Trenton Gunville, Mitchell Slater and Andrew Saari Jr., and Rolla Police Officer Jayde Slater, all of whom were present during the shooting.

Additional defendants are now-former Rolla Police Chief William Poitra, FBI Special Agent Reed Mesman, Rolette County Sheriff's Deputy Nathan Gustafson and BIA officers Earl Charbonneau and Heather Baker. Annette Laducer is also listed as a defendant. An NDBCI special agent who

investigated the incident was previously listed as a defendant, but was dismissed.

Attorneys representing the defense declined to comment on the case, citing policies to not discuss pending litigation.

Annette Laducer could not be reached.

In her suit, Martin alleges a slate of officer misconduct and violation of their own procedures, but the core of her argument hinges on the tribal warrant for the wrong Brandon Laducer.

Martin alleges that after the incident was reported in the Bottineau County bar, BIA Lt. Gourneau offered to pursue Laducer onto the reservation. Her suit claims Gourneau believed there were active tribal warrants for Laducer's arrest, and that he said he knew where Laducer could be found. However, because Brandon Lee Laducer — a white man — was the subject of the warrants, BIA officers did not have the authority to detain a non-Indigenous person on tribal lands, her suit alleges.

She claims the BIA knew Brandon Lee Laducer did not live at that address, and "used the warrant as a guise to enter the Laducer homestead without cause."

In the suit, Martin requested \$20 million to provide financial and medical relief to Laducer's two children and new grandchild.

"The BIA has some responsibility to these children," Martin said. "They murdered their father; they have not afforded a reason why, they have not even contacted anyone to have a meeting. There's a whole report we've never seen. They ghosted the family. Another dead Indian is a good Indian, keep it moving."

"I can guarantee, some of these other families in our area are going

through the same thing," she said.

The legal battle

Lewerenz believes that no matter what, the 8th Circuit will be an uphill battle.

Martin might counter that the whole case has been an uphill battle. While not the first Indigenous person to attempt to take a similar issue to court, to her knowledge, her case has made it at least as far as any.

"I don't think any other tribal mother has been able to take things this far," she said. "I'm not tooting my own horn, but it just seems so surreal to me, where this is sitting right now, and now it's just waiting."

U.S. Magistrate Judge Alice Senechal dismissed the case on Feb. 28, 2024, after taking issue with elements of Martin's case.

First: the court found that Martin did not exhaust all avenues for administrative relief prior to pursuing legal

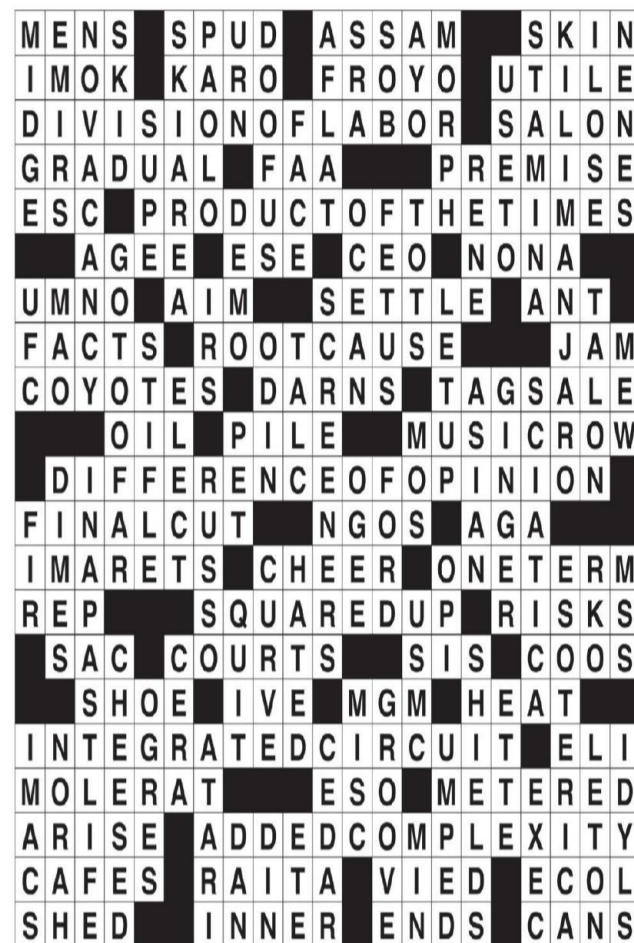
action.

Under the Federal Tort Claims Act, citizens may bring legal action against the U.S. government, but only if they exhaust all other options for relief first. In this case, Martin was required to file an administrative tort claim with the U.S. Department of the Interior.

She filed that tort claim three days before filing the civil case. The Department of the Interior rejected her claim on Jan. 6, 2023, because she had not demonstrated her authority to file a wrongful death action on behalf of Laducer — essentially, she failed to provide proof she is his mother.

Second: plaintiffs cannot bring legal action against a collective, meaning Martin would have had to detail the specific actions of each defendant individually to justify including them in the case.

COURT on A11

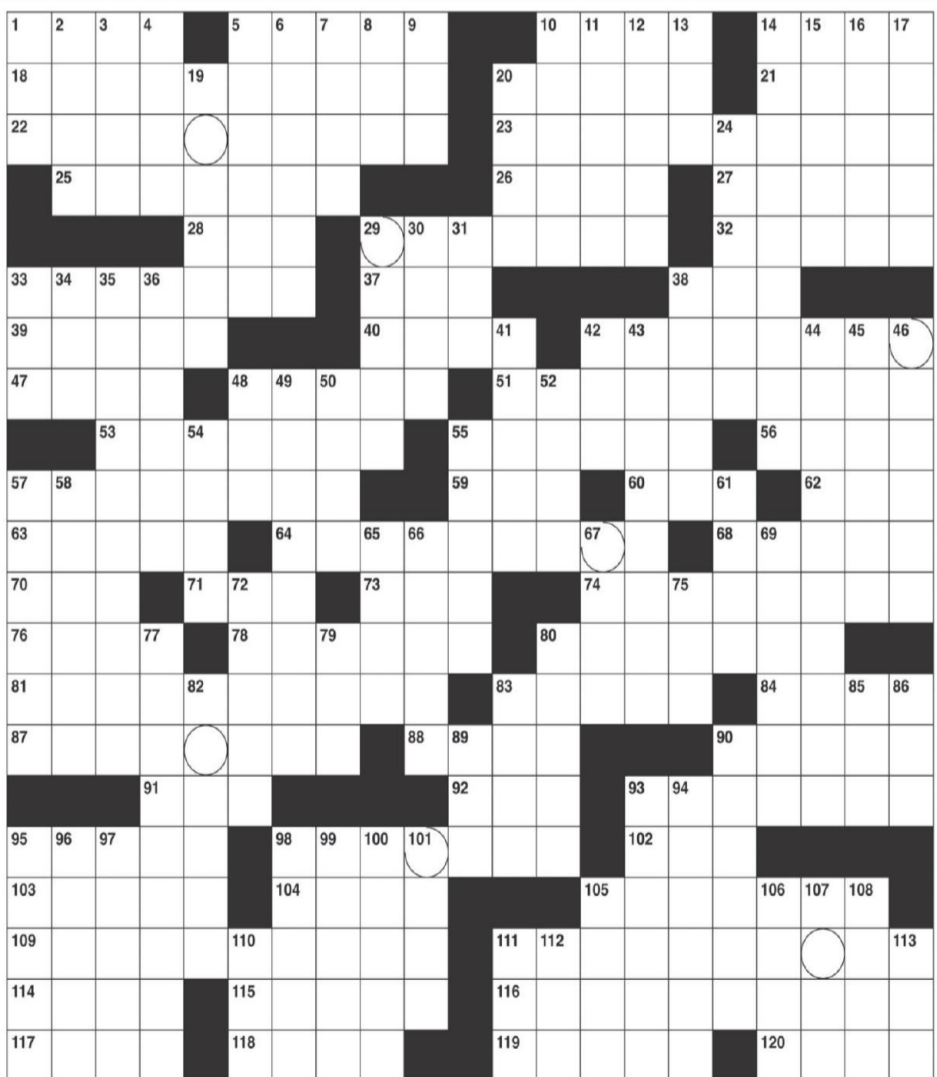


New York Times Crossword

LETTER OPENERS
BY RICH PROULX / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Rich Proulx (pronounced "proo") of Berkeley, Calif., works for the Food and Nutrition Service of the U.S.D.A. This is his ninth crossword for The Times since 2017, and his first Sunday. For this puzzle, he originally wanted the images to appear in circles in the grid, but those proved too small to make out. So he revamped the puzzle and placed them in the clues instead. — W.S.

- ACROSS
- 1 "The weekend is almost here!"
- 5 Pioneers of freeze-drying food
- 10 Share from an illicit endeavor
- 14 Polite term of address
- 18 Lifted one's spirits?
- 20 Riveting persona of W.W. II
- 21 Frozen treat with a domed lid
- 22 See 19-Down
- 23 Place for a white picket fence and a mom-and-pop shop
- 25 Aid for using Bluetooth
- 26 Startle
- 27 Flirt with
- 28 Feel bad
- 29 See 29-Down
- 32 Highly capable
- 33 Passion
- 37 Water feature created by rising sea levels
- 38 STEM part: Abbr.
- 39 Sierra ____
- 40 "What are the ____?"
- 42 See 46-Down
- 47 Awkward people to butt-dial, perhaps
- 48 Circuit board device
- 51 Vast, as an operation
- 53 ____ Collins, author of "The Hunger Games"
- 55 Helen of "The Queen"
- 56 Futon component
- 57 Was transfixed by, in a way
- 59 Glass ____, spaghetti-like fish
- 60 Give a darn?
- 62 French aperitif
- 63 Weapon with wires
- 64 See 67-Down
- 68 Justice Kagan
- 70 Natural feature between México y Texas
- 71 ____ Kosh B'gosh
- 73 TV journalist Navarro
- 74 Annual observance for breast cancer awareness
- 76 Knee parts, in brief
- 78 Auto mechanic's tool
- 80 War room briefings, in military shorthand
- 81 Gold Medal offering
- 83 "Au contraire!"
- 84 Cause of puddles in early spring, say
- 87 See 82-Down
- 88 Go a little one way or the other
- 90 Gordon ____, engineer with a "law" predicting a doubling of transistors on microchips every two years
- 91 Record label for the Backstreet Boys
- 92 Tech company exec, for short
- 93 In a corner
- 95 Cause of some sleep issues
- 98 See 101-Down
- 102 "Ten-____!"
- 103 Show listlessness
- 15 Sharp
- 16 "The Boy Who Cried Wolf" author
- 17 Intended
- 19 **CIRCLED LETTER** +
- 20 Kashmiri king
- 24 Offs
- 29 **CIRCLED LETTER** +
- 30 Number two
- 31 Bit
- 33 Public house offering
- 34 White House dog of the 1980s
- 35 Helps, informally
- 36 Guarantee
- 38 Part of an act
- 41 More crafty
- 42 [Shivers]
- 43 Visible signs of maturity
- 44 Got down to business, in a way
- 45 ____ Urquhart, co-host of the podcast "Morbid"
- 46 **CIRCLED LETTER** +
- 48 Many a school chaperone
- 49 Later
- 50 Cognizant of
- 52 Folk singer Guthrie
- 54 Diddly-squat
- 55 Hip-hop's ____ Thee Stallion
- 57 They're for suckers
- 58 Meditative martial art
- 61 Common word with or without an apostrophe
- 65 Meaty pasta sauce
- 66 Ridge in metalworking
- 67 **CIRCLED LETTER** +
- 69 Office folder?
- 72 Vowel sound in "father"
- 75 Dude
- 77 Audiophile's system
- 79 Cut (off)
- 80 What "fitz-" or "-ovic" means, in names
- 82 **CIRCLED LETTER** +
- 83 Innocent sort
- 85 "Chances ____"
- 86 Became one
- 89 Modern prefix with anxiety
- 90 Salt's companions
- 93 Theseus' need in the Labyrinth
- 94 An uncouth manner
- 95 Marketing worker, informally
- 96 Credit, informally
- 97 Prominent features of elephant seals
- 98 Comedian Radner
- 99 A perfect storm, e.g.
- 100 Planet whose day is longer than its year
- 101 **CIRCLED LETTER** +
- 105 Done
- 106 Extend one's military service
- 107 **CIRCLED LETTER** +
- 108 Hard thing to find in a house of mirrors
- 110 "Wee" fellow
- 111 Channel with the onetime spinoff America's Store
- 112 Suffix with emir
- 113 S.F.-to-Napa dir.



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Simply find the crossword puzzle in the e-paper and click on it. On the new screen that pops up, select the print option on the top menu. Members can also use the snipping tool. For detailed instructions visit grandforksherald.news/crossword