NEWSBRIEFS

Horizon City landscaping project underway

By Don Woodyard
Special to the Courier

HORIZON CITY — Change is coming to Horizon City. The change is a facelift, a spicing up which will transform the north side of Horizon Boulevard into a winding and curving walk and bike trail which will be dotted with shade trees and other native plants and ground cover.

Horizon Mayor Walter Miller estimates the cost of the two beautification/enhancement projects at $1.5 million and will span two years. The funding, which was approved two years ago, comes through two grants from the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT).

Michelle Padilla, city planner for Horizon, says these works are part of TXDOT’s Green Ribbon Project to beautify roadside areas throughout the state.

Blanca Del Valle, public information officer for the El Paso office of TXDOT, breaks down the distribution of funds:

• The more immediate enhancement project calls for $300,000 for the landscaping of 1.06 miles along Horizon Boulevard from Crocker to Darrington. Allowing for intersecting roads and other breaks, the landscaping will not be a continuous strip, but rather placed at different intervals, Del Valle says. The city is providing the work crews.

Phase 1 got under way earlier this month, and motorists along can already see the irrigation pipe for the irrigation system along the main roadway. Once in place, Padilla says flowering plants, shrubs and trees will be put in. Barring unforeseen weather conditions, she estimates completion of the entire project by around the first of the year.

• The balance of the grants funding, about $1.4 million, will build a three-mile walk and bike trail. The winding trail will be 11 feet wide and will run from Ashford to Rifton, according to Del Valle. There will be additional landscaping to complement and enhance the trail.

Horizon City landscaping project underway

By Don Woodyard
Special to the Courier

HORIZON CITY — Change is coming to Horizon City. The change is a facelift, a spicing up which will transform the north side of Horizon Boulevard into a winding and curving walk and bike trail which will be dotted with shade trees and other native plants and ground cover.

Horizon Mayor Walter Miller estimates the cost of the two beautification/enhancement projects at $1.5 million and will span two years. The funding, which was approved two years ago, comes through two grants from the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT).

Michelle Padilla, city planner for Horizon, says these works are part of TXDOT’s Green Ribbon Project to beautify roadside areas throughout the state.

Blanca Del Valle, public information officer for the El Paso office of TXDOT, breaks down the distribution of funds:

• The more immediate enhancement project calls for $300,000 for the landscaping of 1.06 miles along Horizon Boulevard from Crocker to Darrington. Allowing for intersecting roads and other breaks, the landscaping will not be a continuous strip, but rather placed at different intervals, Del Valle says. The city is providing the work crews.

Phase 1 got under way earlier this month, and motorists along can already see the irrigation pipe for the irrigation system along the main roadway. Once in place, Padilla says flowering plants, shrubs and trees will be put in. Barring unforeseen weather conditions, she estimates completion of the entire project by around the first of the year.

• The balance of the grants funding, about $1.4 million, will build a three-mile walk and bike trail. The winding trail will be 11 feet wide and will run from Ashford to Rifton, according to Del Valle. There will be additional landscaping to complement and enhance the trail.

HITTING THE BOOKS — Rebecca Hernandez, a senior at Northwest Early College High School, studies for a test. Hernandez is scheduled to start classes at UTEP in January, and she will graduate from high school and receive an associate of arts degree in computer science next May thanks to partnerships between local school districts, El Paso Community College (EPCC), and the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP).

By Alfredo Vasquez
Special to the Courier

TEXAS — Hispanics became the majority of Texas public school students for the first time in 2011; and by 2050, the number of Texas public school students is expected to swell to nine million from roughly five million now, with nearly two-thirds being Hispanic, according to Steve Murdock, a demographer and director of Rice University’s Hobby Center for the Study of Texas. Of 979,000 children added to Texas’ under-18 population from 2000 to 2010, 931,000 were Hispanic.

The overall percentage of white students will drop by half to about 15 percent. Without a change in Hispanics’ current socioeconomic status, that also means Texas students will continue to grow poorer — and their education more expensive — in the next four decades, Murdock predicted in a recent news report.

State population figures over the last decade show the shift is well under way in the public school system. Economically disadvantaged children in Texas classrooms make up 60 percent of all children in public schools, up from less than half in 2000. Students with limited English skills now make up 16 percent of them.

According to state data, Hispanic students are statistically less likely to leave high school with a diploma than their white peers. Of the Hispanic students who do graduate, few are prepared for...
Veterans Post | By Freddy Groves

Vet-friendly schools

G.I. Jobs magazine has released its annual survey and has rated 1,739 schools as being veteran-friendly. The Military Friendly Schools list ranks the top 15 percent of more than 11,000 schools in the country, including universities, colleges and trade schools.

It looked at value, flexibility, academic accreditation, percentage of students who are veterans, graduation rates, military-spouse policies, tuition discounts and support services for veterans.

To view the list, go online to the database at www.militaryfriendlyschools.com.

The matchmaker program is very well done. Pick a degree program, and a list of possibilities opens on the right. Break it down by location and you have a choice between virtual only (online) or campus schools. For a campus location, you can select either a region of the country or an individual state.

Click on Flexibility, and use the slide bars to indicate how important it is to have weekend classes, evening classes or online classes. Use the slide bar to indicate sources of funding.

When it comes to Areas of Study, here is where the astonishing breadth of the offerings comes into play. Click on your chosen field, and the program immediately sorts all your school options.

Once all your choices are made, look for the red thumbs-up icon, which indicates schools in the top 15 percent category. Click on each school name for particulars and the ratings in the criteria. Be sure to look at Academic, Review and Profile.

If you want to alter your choices, click back through the categories and make changes to the information. The program responds instantly, showing you the options. If you want to save your information, register on the site.

I’m not usually a fan of online databases, but this one is outstanding. If school is in your future, use this program to sort your options.

Write to Freddy Groves in care of King Features Weekly Service, P.O. Box 536475, Orlando, FL 32853-6475, or send e-mail to cdunrepey@gmail.com. (c) 2012 King Features Synd., Inc.

San Elizario students thank veterans

By Cynthia P. Marentes | Special to the Courier

San ELIZARIO Students, faculty, and staff from throughout the San Elizario Independent School District participated in a number of Veterans Day events in honor and gratitude to all those who have served in the armed forces.

On November 9, J.L. Sambrano Elementary School invited all San Elizario community veterans to its first Veterans Day Celebration. The assembly included patriotic music by students. San Elizario ISD Board Trustee and Vietnam veteran Ramon Holguin delivered the keynote address. Other current and former service men and women who attended the event shared their experiences and positive messages with the students.

According to Melanie Mendez, sixth-grade teacher and U.S. Army veteran, the celebration was meant to honor those who have given their lives for their country.

“It is these veterans that have embodied the truth on your resume or during a job interview, but as recent headlines about disgraced executives being fired have shown, these lies can come back to haunt you. Employers can easily determine if the degree or past job titles you’re claiming are legitimate. Another no-brainer: If your resume is posted online on Monster.com or LinkedIn, make sure there aren’t major inconsistencies with the one you submit to prospective employers.

Tattoos. One-fifth of adults have at least one tattoo — the percentages are higher among younger adults. A few years ago, job candidates wouldn’t get past the first interview sporting tattoos; today, depending on the industry and type of customer contact involved, many employers will look the other way.

However, some employers do enforce strict no-tattoo policies which, if based on sound business reasons, are legal. Fortunately, my own kids aren’t old enough for body art to be a consideration, but when they are, I’ll give them the same advice I’d give any young adult: Think about the long-term consequences of your actions.

Jason Alderman directs Vasa’s financial education programs.
CANUTILLO – Armando Rodriguez, a seven-year veteran of the Canutillo Independent School District, was named President of the Board in a unanimous vote last Thursday night.

The Board also picked Leticia “Letty” Gonzalez as Vice President and Patsy Mendoza as Secretary. The new positions became effective on Thursday during the Board’s regular monthly meeting.

“It’s such an honor to receive the vote of confidence from my fellow trustees. I am going to work hard to live up to their expectations as well as the expectations of the children and taxpayers of the Canutillo school district,” Rodriguez said.

“I have learned a lot during my time on the Board and I feel ready to lead this body as we tackle some challenging times in dealing with tougher academic standards and growth in enrollment,” he added.

Rodriguez replaces Laure Searls as President of the Board. Searls said she was proud to hand over the seat to someone with a strong sense of history in the District.

“I’ve known Mando since he was a child and a student in our schools,” she said. “I’m so happy to have had the opportunity to serve this Board as President and to now pass along the gavel to someone who is homegrown and ready to be a leader.”

The winners of the Nov. 6 school-board election were sworn in on Thursday. Rodriguez, Gonzalez and Rachel Quintana were re-elected, while Adrian Medina won his first term on the Board.

Medina replaces outgoing Trustee Monica Cazares, who did not seek re-election.

Families get health check at San Elizario fair

SAN ELIZARIO – In preparation for the oncoming cold weather and accompanying flu season, hundreds of families from San Elizario and neighboring towns had the opportunity to receive basic exams and important guidance for staying healthy at the 5th Annual San Elizario Independent School District (SEISD) Fall Health Fair on November 3. SEISD partnered with the University Medical Center and the UTEP College of Health Sciences to once again offer the yearly event in the local community where healthcare options and other services are limited.

Close to 700 participants attended the event to receive free health screenings for vision, glucose, hearing, blood pressure, and cholesterol. Over 50 agencies and organizations provided attendees fitness and nutrition tips, information on social services, and suggestions on other available health and wellness resources. Childhood immunizations in addition to flu shots were offered as well. There were also many fun activities for children such as games, face painting, music and entertaining performances by different student groups.

According to Amanda Sanchez-Munoz, SEISD Special Education Director, while school nurses from the various campuses coordinated most of the planning, the health fair would simply not have been possible without the active role played by many students. For example, members of the Health Occupations Students of America chapter lead by instructor Andrea Ceron were responsible for the autumn theme and decoration of the campus as well as other duties throughout the duration of the fair. Meanwhile, the elementary schools held a pumpkin decorating contest among all of their classes in order to get students and their families excited about attending the fair. Skills USA students under the direction of Annette Rincon and Sylvia Ruvalcaba applied what they have learned in their advertising and graphic design classes in creating and printing all of the promotional materials for the event. San Elizario High School teacher Debra Harris had a group of culinary arts students preparing food early that Saturday morning for all the exhibitors participating in the health fair and taking the opportunity to also practice their customer service skills while they served the meals. Basic occupational skills students guided by special education teacher Lorraine Herrera produced the health fair t-shirts worn by all the volunteers. Also lending a hand at the event were students with NJROTC and National Honor Society.

While attendance was slightly lower than at last year’s health fair there was a larger variety of participating agencies enabling families to obtain much more valuable information on how they can improve their quality of life, health and wellbeing.
Fathers become Watch D.O.G.S.

By Gustavo Reveles Acosta
Special to the Courier

CANUTILLO – In an effort to better involve fathers in the education of their children, Gonzalez & Sofia Garcia Elementary School officials have established the Watch D.O.G.S. (Dads of Great Students) Program at the Upper Valley school.

The program is open to fathers, grandfathers, step-fathers, uncles, and other male figures who wish to volunteer and agree to go through the security background checks that are part of the Canutillo Independent School District policy book.

The watch program involves volunteer work at the school and that help is greatly appreciated,” said Garcia Principal Sheryl Maxxom. “But we also want to provide avenues for fathers to feel welcomed and appreciated in their efforts to be involved in the education of their children.

Part of the Watch D.O.G.S. program are asked to volunteer in classrooms during the school day, playgrounds during recess, the cafeteria during meals or even patrolling hallways.

Population
From Page 1

Over the last decade, the disparity between the academic achievement of white and Hispanic students in the state has narrowed. But if the current rate of closure remains, it would still not be enough to ensure the state’s public schools, according to Patricia Lopez, an associate researcher at the University of Texas at Austin’s Texas Center for Education Policy.

“Too often, students are looked at as the problem, rather than the institutions that serve them,” Lopez stated in a recent news report. “We don’t sit back and ask is the challenge really about the capacities of the schools and the people within those schools not being up to par,” she stated.

The 2011 budget cuts, when lawmakers reduced public education financing by more than $5 billion, exacerbated the situation, Lopez said. But the issue also needs to be addressed in teacher and principal recruitment programs, which she said could help make school leaders aware of their own biases in the classroom and better understand the world their students inhabit.

If Texas can adequately educate the new student majority, Mundock said, the potential reward is large. As a state with a population that is growing younger instead of older its workforce would be competitively poised to replace a generation of retiring baby boomers, he said, taking advantage of the accompanying economic opportunity and higher incomes.

2012 PROPERTY TAX RATES

Village of Vinton Small Taxing Unit Notice
The Village of Vinton will hold a meeting at 6:30 p.m. on December 4, 2012 at 436 E. Vinton Rd., Vinton, TX 79821 to consider adopting a proposed tax rate for tax year 2012. The proposed tax rate is $0.27569 per $100 of value.

The proposed tax rate would decrease total taxes in the Village of Vinton by 1.44%.

PUBLIC NOTICE
El Paso County Tornillo Water Improvement District
Proposal to Become a Texas On-Site Sewage Facility (Septic System) Authorized Agent
Tornillo, El Paso County, Texas

The El Paso County Tornillo Water Improvement District (TWID) will host a public hearing on November 29, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. at St. Rita Hall, 19211 Cobb St., Tornillo, Texas for a proposal to become a Texas On-Site Sewage Facility (Septic System) Authorized Agent within the TWID District boundaries in Tornillo, El Paso County, Texas (Subchapter B: Local Administration of the OSSF Program 285.10).

For additional information on this proposal to become a Texas On-Site Facility Authorized Agent, please call Francelia Vega, Business Manager, El Paso County Water Improvement District at 915-764-2966. Persons with disabilities who plan to attend the meeting and need auxiliary aids or services, or who require Spanish translation, are requested to contact Ms. Vega by phone or email.

If you are unable to attend the meeting, you may send your comments or concerns to:

Francelia Vega
El Paso County TWID
P.O. Box 136
Tornillo, Texas 79853

Office: 915-764-2966
Fax: 915-764-3725
epctwid@yahoo.com

WTCC: 11-22-12

2012 King Features Synd., Inc.

BUT TRUE

By Samantha Weaver

• It was revered civil-rights leader Mohandas Gandhi who made the following sage observation: “Freedom is not worth having if it does not connote freedom to err.”

• If you’re afraid of rats and mice, you might not want to read the following tidbit: “Though rats do such things say that 60 percent of all the mammals on earth are rodents.

• Athletes playing baseball on steroids have frequently been in the news over the last few years, but drugs are nothing new in America’s national sport. During the late 1960s and throughout almost all of the 70s, Dock Ellis was a valued pitcher who played for several teams, including the Pittsburgh Pirates. On June 12, 1970, Ellis took LSD, under the mistaken belief that it was a wonder drug for his team. By the time he realized that the Pirates were scheduled to play against the San Diego Padres that evening, it was too late. The drug proved to have no effect on Ellis; in fact, he pitched a no-hitter. When he recounted the event to a reporter 12 years later, he said he remembered only bits and pieces of the game, though he felt euphoric. Many years later, after losing treatment for addiction Ellis became a coordinator for an anti-drug program in California.

• It’s been reported that Albert Einstein did not like to wear socks.

• George W. Church, the founder of Church’s Fried Chicken, didn’t actually enter the chicken hatchery and sold his first career, Church ran a chicken hatchery and sold incubators.

• Historians say that Russia’s Peter the Great was nearly 7 feet tall.

Thought for the Day: “Sometimes I wonder if men and women really suit each other. Perhaps they should live next door and just visit now and then.”

Katharine Hepburn

CryptOQuip
Answer
When you write a small notation in the margin, are you getting a word in edgewise?
In some ways a doomsday theory and a conspiracy theory are diametrically opposed. By proclaiming that most of the world’s problems are due to the secret planning of a hidden cabal of public or private entities, a conspiracy theory tends to encourage the prospective follower to be wary of authority, and, in general, to trust no one. Conversely, the follower of a doomsday theory trusts at least the forces of nature that proclaim to bring about the end of the world. It matters not to the believer in the rapture or resurrection that the forces of nature that proclaim to bring about the end of the world.

Doomsday will live in ways not perceptible. Doomsday will be the believer in the rapture or resurrection that are is dust in the wind.” In short, the doomsday theory surrounding the end of the Mayan calendar, an awareness of some simple factors may engage with the public. It offers meeting minutes, agendas, and information packets for school boards, committees, and city council meetings since 2007. It also has its district policies posted online, broken-out by section, and by alphabetical order of topics. And, of course, members of the public also can contact the administration or other key personnel and faculty from the website, by email, with questions about these issues or other issues related to their children, or, on their phone numbers listed online.” – René Seifs

**Closing**

Justice of the Peace Pct. 6-1, located at 190 N. San Elizario in El Paso, will begin taking Christmas Holidays from Dec. 24, 2012 to Jan. 4, 2013. Normal business hours will resume on Jan. 7, 2013, at 8:30 a.m., during that time will be accepted through Jan. 31, 2013.

The court wishes everyone a safe and happy holiday season on behalf of Judge Ruben Lujan. – Marioita Kalbus

**Debate team**

EPCC Intercollegiate Speech and Debate team returned victorious from the fall 2012 tournaments held at Midland College and Grossmont College in San Diego, CA. The tournaments were held the weekend of November 10 through 11. They finished first at each college and won the First Place Overall Team Sweepstakes Award. Team members include: Joel Anguiano and Bobby Munoz also won the Parliamentary Debate Gold Medal, for Novice Prose Interpretation, and Marilyn Wallace for Novice Interpretation, and Christian Maggiori for Professional Debate. The second day of competition was held at Grossmont College. First place winners were: Megan McGill for Novice Prose, Alexis Martinez for Prose Interpretation, Marilyn Wallace for Novice Poetry, Alexis Martinez for Poetry Interpretation, James Salazar for Informative Speaking, Marilyn Wallace and Megan McGill for Novice Duo, Sebastian Orozco and Juan Aparicio for novice Duo and Marilyn Wallace for Novice Dramatic Interpretation. A total of 26 speakers and universities from the southwest region attended the competitions. – Jim Heiney

**Crime Stoppers**

A woman walking to her car is grabbed from behind by a suspect who threw her to the ground and then stole her purse, making this the Crime Stoppers “Crime of the Week.” On Tuesday evening, November 6, 2012, about 9:00 p.m., a woman shopping at Ross Department Store, 1313 George Dieter Road, was grabbed from behind by an unknown male who placed his hand over her mouth and threw her to the ground. The suspect then pulled at her purse while she attempted to hang on. Fearing for her life, the victim let go of the purse and the suspect fled on foot south on Yarbrough. The victim suffered multiple injuries and was able to identify the suspect from surveillance video at a neighboring store where her purse was found with the wallet missing. The suspect is described as an Hispanic male in his 30s, 5’7” tall, medium build, wearing a black and white hooded jacket. If you have any information at all about the identity of the suspect, contact Crime Stoppers of El Paso at 566-TIPS (566-8477), on-line at www. crimestopperselpaso.com or by text message by entering the key CRIME1 (no space) plus your tip information, and text it to 81388. You will remain anonymous and, if your tip leads to an arrest, you can qualify for a cash reward.

– James Klaes

**Classifieds**

People know Pueblo for its...
UTEP basketball is moving in the right direction

By Steve Escoveda
Special to the Courier

The UTEP basketball team took a pretty good shot in the mouth last week at the hands of the 12th-ranked Arizona Wildcats. Arizona’s quickness and size just overwhelmed Tim Floyd’s bunch en route to an easy 72-51 home victory.

But even though the game resembled a Wildcat dunking exhibition at times, things looked bright for a bit. After cutting the lead to eight points (57-49) with 7:48 to go in the game it appeared as if maybe the young Miners were ready to make a stunning comeback.

Not quite, the Miners were then outscored 15-2 the rest of the way. UTEP looked and looked but just couldn’t find anyone who could put the ball in the basket consistently.

But you know what they say about black clouds?

UTEP’s silver lining made its appearance last week in the form of one Isaac Hamilton. The 5-star recruit appeared live on ESPNU last week to announce where he would attend college in 2013.

Hamilton, who had received a late scholarship offer from UCLA, made his TV appearance wearing the Bruins’ powder blue and gold.

When asked where he was going to college, Hamilton looked right into the camera and he was going to the University of Texas at El Paso.

For those of you who may not be aware of how big this signing is, ESPN ranks him as the 25th best player in the nation and the fifth best shooting guard.

CBS College Sports ranks him as the 17th best player in the United States.

He is a pure shooter who can run the court and pass the ball as well as any point guard. Looking at tons of video on him I would say that he kind of reminds me of a little of Reggie Miller.

One of UTEP’s true deficiencies this season is at the guard position. They are only mediocre at the point guard spot and they only have two real shooting guards.

The only problem is that Konner Tucker is out with an injury and Jalen Ragland has been inconsistent from the field hitting only 35 percent of his shots (6-of-17).

Unfortunately, at least in the early going, it seems that only the two Miners who can call up their own shots are the Washburn brothers, Julian (a sophomore) and Chris (a freshman).

But help is on the way in the form of another brother team.

Hamilton’s younger brother Daniel is a high school junior and is currently ranked as the 23rd best player in the country among the class of 2014 according to ESPNN.

The word is Daniel definitely wants to play with his brother.

The Miners also have a verbal commitment from shooting guard Andre Spight (out of Pasadena, CA), who is ranked as the 74th best shooting guard in the country according to ESPN.

There’s no doubt that Tim Floyd is very serious about bringing the good old days back to the Don Haskins Center. He wants to bring back the days when Don Haskins himself prowled along the bench at UTEP.

And with these recruits, Floyd is well on his way.

This year’s version of the Miners will get things together offensively as the year goes on but Floyd wants his players to play defense first.

He knows that you are never out of a game as long as you play tough defense. He knows players can score. That’s all they’re used to doing.

But defense is something that has to be learned through discipline and hard work – a way of life.

It’s obvious that Hamilton’s decision raised some eyebrows across the country and don’t be surprised if this historic commitment leads to other players suddenly asking themselves, “why not UTEP?”

At this rate, it won’t take very long before the team starts playing the way they did back in the decade of the ’80s when they played in front of sold out crowds every time out.

And who was the assistant coach to Don Haskins back then? Who was the guy who recruited all the great players? You got it, Tim Floyd.

It’s too bad that Mike Price and his UTEP football Miners have suffered through another dismal season.

At least the basketball program is heading in the right direction. The only question is how far up the ladder they can climb.

A sporting view
By Mark Vasto

Why I can’t shoot the jump shot
I can’t shoot a jump shot because of mint chocolate-chip ice cream.

This is all because my basketball-clinic coach – an otherwise good man – had minty breath. And not the “curiously strong” or lifesavers “Pep-o-Mint” variety of minty breath, but of mint chocolate-chip ice cream.

Anecdotally speaking, mint chocolate chip as an ice-cream flavor has fallen out of favor. It was pretty big in the ’70s, though. Presented as a cardboard block in your grocer’s freezer, mint chocolate-chip ice cream held the distinction of possessing a particular color of green not found in nature… a pretty neat trick.

To the point, when I was supposed to be listening to my coach – a saint (also, the chips weren’t really caramel-colored yak fat.) – I was reminded of this particular story about a sled that was discarded by elders in my family years ago.

When it snowed during a holiday, the absence of the sled led to great consternation… if only out of nostalgia.

“Don’t get rid of the basketball stuff,” I tell her. “Pass it down to your grandchildren and great-grandchildren.”

She nodded in agreement, but had to laugh a bit.

“You have to see the cover (of the media guide)... those shorts... and that jump shot! They don’t shoot like that anymore.”

Yeah, well... at least he had one. In today’s game a good jump shot is as rare as mint chocolate-chip ice cream. Either way, I’ve got neither to speak for.

Mark Vasto is a veteran sportswriter who lives in Kansas City. (c) 2012 King Features Synd., Inc.
DEAR DR. DONOHUE: My very healthy, active, 6-year-old grandson was just diagnosed as having kidney stones. His pediatrician said it is mostly genetic, but no one else in the family has kidney stones. A friend told us she heard that stones could be caused by drinking Gatorade. My grandson has a lot of Gatorade. He does not eat processed meat, nor has drunk a lot of Gatorade. He does not eat processed meat, nor does he have much salt in his diet. From the Internet, I came up with the enclosed article, which linked Gatorade to kidney stones. I feel that someone needs to inform parents that too much Gatorade in children can adversely affect health. -- G.S.

An increase in children having kidney stones has been noticed. Some authorities have speculated that the increase in stones might be linked to children’s greater intake of salty foods like potato chips, french fries and other heavily salted snacks. The sodium in salt leads to a rise in the amount of calcium lost in the urine, and, therefore, an increase in kidney-stone production.

Eight ounces of Gatorade has 110 mg of sodium. New guidelines for daily sodium intake is 1,500 mg. To reach that limit by drinking Gatorade, one would have to drink 13 8-ounce cans or 9 12-ounce cans. Blaming the surge in the number of children on Gatorade seems iffy to me.

Your grandson would be better off substituting one of his consumption of Gatorade with water. He needs to cut back on his consumption of salt from other foods too. Gatorade keeps him hydrated, but he can stay hydrated with water. Dehydration is a proven cause of kidney stones.

I welcome other readers’ opinions on this.

The booklet on sodium, potassium and chloride – elecroteylites – explains the role of these minerals on health. Readers can obtain a copy by writing: Dr. Donohue – No. 202W, Box 536475, Orlando, FL 32853-6475. Enclose a check or money order (no cash) for $4.75 U.S./$6 Canada, with the recipient’s printed name and address. Please allow four weeks for delivery.

DEAR DR. DONOHUE: Does it hurt you to exercise if you have a cold? I do it all the time, and I don’t see that it makes anything worse. I’ve been told not to do so. -- B.R.

If you’re coughing, sneezing or have a dripping nose, others are not going to appreciate exercising along with you.

A general rule says if your symptoms are above the neck, it’s OK to exercise. Such symptoms would be a stuffy or runny nose, a scratchy throat and an occasional sneeze.

If you have an elevated temperature, achy muscles or a persistent cough, don’t exercise.

DEAR DR. DONOHUE: Since I was a young child, I was told not to use public restrooms because I could catch something. What are the chances of catching a disease from them? -- F.N.

Yours is a fear shared by many. If public restrooms were a source of infections, they would be closed. They’re not. As far as sexually transmitted diseases go, I have never seen any information that implicates them in passing such infections to others.

Dr. Donohue regrets that he is unable to answer individual letters, but he will incorporate them in his column whenever possible. Readers may write him or request an order form of available health newsletters at P.O. Box 536475, Orlando, FL 32853-6475 (c) 2012 North America Synd., Inc. All Rights Reserved.
Chances are, if you receive Social Security benefits, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or any federal payment, you receive it electronically. More than 90 percent of people getting monthly Social Security benefits already receive electronic payments. If you don’t yet, that’s about to change.

There is a U.S. Department of Treasury rule that does away with paper checks for most federal benefit and non-tax payments by March 1, 2013. With a few exceptions, this mandate includes Social Security, SSI, Veterans Affairs, Railroad Retirement Board, Office of Personnel Management benefits, and other non-tax payments.

People required to switch have the option of direct deposit to a bank or credit union account or they can have their monthly payment directed into a Direct Express® debit card account (Treasury’s debit card program). Please visit www.godirect.org to learn more.

So, why the push for electronic payments instead of paper checks received in the mail? There’s a list of reasons an electronic payment is better than an older-fashioned paper check.

• It’s safer: no risk of checks being lost or stolen.
• It’s easy and reliable: no need to wait for the mail or go to the bank to cash a check.
• It saves taxpayers money: no cost for postage and paper and printing; Treasury estimates this will save taxpayers $1 billion over 10 years; and
• It’s good for the environment: it saves paper and eliminates the need for physical transportation.

If you still get your check in the mail, don’t wait for the new rule to go into effect next year – sign up for electronic payments now. Please visit www.godirect.org today and begin getting your Social Security and SSI payments the safe, easy, reliable way – electronically.

Q: What is Supplemental Security Income (SSI)?

A: SSI provides monthly income to people 65 or older, blind, or disabled, who also have limited income and financial resources. To be eligible, an individual also must be a U.S. citizen and resident of the United States or a noncitizen lawfully admitted for permanent residence. There are, however, some noncitizens granted a special immigration status who are eligible. To get SSI, an individual’s financial resources (savings and assets) cannot be more than $2,000 ($3,000, if married). For more information, read our publications, Supplemental Security Income or Understanding Supplemental Security Income. Both are available at www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs.

Q: I have worked as a household worker for several years and I recently received my Social Security Statement of my Earnings. I noticed that my employer is not reporting the contribution and report the year-to-year Social Security taxes on my own by filing as a self-employed person?

A: Yes. Social Security offers a number of services and products specifically designed for people who are blind or visually impaired. For example, we make all our publications available in multiple formats including Braille, audio cassette tapes, compact disks or enlarged print. Also, most of our publications are available online in audio format.

To get any of these products in alternative formats, contact us by:
• GOingonline to www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/al-pubs.html;
• Calling us at 1-800-772-1213 (TTY, 1-800-325-0778) between 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday;
• Contacting your local Social Security office;
• Contacting your U.S. Embassy or Consulate, if you live outside the United States; or
• Mailing, calling, or faxing your request to:
  Social Security Administration, Braille Services Branch
  6401 Security Boulevard, L1141 West Low Rise
  Baltimore, MD 21235
  Phone: 410-965-6414 or 410-965-6407 (TTY, 1-800-325-0778)
  Fax: 410-965-6413

For more information on any of the questions listed above, visit our website at www.socialsecurity.gov or call us at 1-800-772-1213. If you have any questions that you would like to have answered, please mail them to the Social Security Office, 1111 Gateway West, Attn: Ray Vigil, El Paso, Texas 79935.