SAVING CANS AND SERVING OTHERS:
13-year-old raises money one can at a time.

GOOD IDEA OR BAD?
PAYING COLLEGE ATHLETES

A member of the University of Texas basketball team jumps during practice in Austin, Texas.
Many YA novels that teens love are not edifying. Many Christian books are not realistic or compelling. THE RIVERBEND FRIENDS series sits in the sweet spot for Christian teens and parents. Relatable characters go through real issues while deepening their relationship with God. Follow the funny, dramatic, and redeeming adventures of these four friends as they learn to solve their problems in God-honoring ways.

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FOCUS ON THE FAMILY®
A group thought to be migrants from Tunisia waits in bright green water near the Italian island of Lampedusa. The wooden boat is a risky ride—certainly not safe for long sea journeys. But people leaving Tunisia are desperate to get to Europe. They hope to find safe homes and decent jobs there. Will Lampedusa let them in? The island has room for only so many of these travelers—about 250 at a time. But again and again, the number of migrants living there has swelled beyond 1,000. What happens to the ones who just won’t fit? Charity boats from other countries, including France, Spain, and Germany, rush to the rescue.
NEW MEXICO: Wilderness Grows
United States Interior Secretary Deb Haaland visited her home state of New Mexico this summer. She was there in celebration of the largest land donation in the U.S. Department of the Interior’s history. The Trust for Public Land donated a 15-square-mile parcel of land in the northeastern part of the state. The parcel adjoins the Sabinoso Wilderness Area. Tacking it on increased the protected area’s size by nearly 50%. Officials gathered to accept the land donation. Ms. Haaland commented on its value to generations of families. “We’re here today because we recognize the importance of preserving this special place,” she said. United States Senator Martin Heinrich describes the Sabinoso Wilderness as “one of New Mexico’s most spectacular landscapes.” The terrain is varied, encompassing mesas, woodlands, pine thickets, ravines, and grassy savannas.

Deb Haaland looks out at the Sabinoso Wilderness.

FLORIDA: Record Manatee Deaths
After four months of rehabilitation, a baby manatee and its mother are back in the wild. Workers released them in Florida’s St. Johns River. That’s uplifting news after a recent announcement regarding manatee deaths. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission says that more manatees have died this year than ever before in Florida. Biologists believe water pollution is to blame. Pollution kills the seagrass that manatees eat, so the lovable marine mammals are dying of starvation. “Most deaths occurred during the colder months when manatees migrated to and through the Indian River Lagoon, where the majority of seagrass has died off,” says Florida’s Fish and Wildlife Research Institute. Boat strikes are also a major cause of manatee deaths in Florida. By mid-July, more than 840 manatees had died in 2021, say wildlife officials. As of now, there are approximately only 6,300 manatees living in Florida waters.

Volunteers help get a manatee into the St. Johns River.

JAMAICA: Paying for Slavery
Is it payback time? Jamaican officials plan to ask Great Britain to make good on a debt... for the Atlantic slave trade. Britain ended the practice of slavery in 1834. Before that, Brits abducted both Africans and Jamaicans and sold them as slaves to work on Caribbean plantations of sugar cane, bananas, and other crops. Jamaicans forfeited freedom as British slave traders made fortunes. “We are hoping for reparatory justice in all forms,” says Jamaican politician Olivia Grange. “Our African ancestors were forcibly removed from their home and suffered unparalleled atrocities in Africa to carry out forced labor to the benefit of the British Empire.” Jamaica became independent in 1962. But the country of almost three million people is still part of the Commonwealth. The reparations petition will be sent to Queen Elizabeth. In the 1830s, Britain paid slaveholders millions of pounds as compensation for freeing slaves. But the slaves were not paid for their labor. How much repayment is enough? Jamaica may ask for billions of pounds.
AFGHANISTAN: U.S. Clearing Out
All U.S. forces must clear out of Afghanistan by September 11 of this year. U.S. President Joe Biden made that decision in April. His decree closes a story for the United States that started 20 years ago. On September 11, 2001, al-Qaeda terrorists attacked the United States. War followed. The war in Afghanistan crushed the al-Qaeda plotters early on. But the U.S. army did not quell Afghanistan’s former Islamist Taliban rulers. The establishment of a stable Afghan government proved difficult too. As U.S. troops moved out this summer, the Taliban began claiming rural territory. The group put increasing pressure on key cities. District after district in Northern Afghanistan fell to the Taliban. The looming question: What power will fill the vacuum the United States leaves behind? Are Afghans ready to resist the Taliban on their own?

ITALY: Roman Boundary Stone
Archaeologists excavating for a new sewage system in Rome uncovered a rare and ancient marker. They say it is a pomerium stone, which would have marked the outer boundary of the city when it was placed. The stone is engraved with letters. The inscription reveals that it dates back to A.D. 49, the time of Emperor Claudius. That coincides with the beginning of the Apostle Paul’s second missionary journey. Some scholars say that’s the very year that Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians. The stone marked a sacred, military, and political boundary. In Rome at that time, no one could farm, live, or build anything in this area. No weapons could be brought through the space either. Archaeologists have found 10 other Roman stones like this one. The last such marker discovery was about 100 years ago.

MOROCCO: Liquid Gold
In the arid mountains of southern Morocco, women harvest argan oil. It is one of the most expensive oils in world. Once, this oil was used mainly as a flavoring and a savory dip for bread. Now people all over the globe prize it as an anti-aging skin treatment and restorative for hair. In the Tiout oasis near Taroudant, 100 women work together to produce the oil. For their labors they get a salary, free childcare, health insurance, and literacy courses. Machines help process the small, greenish argan fruit and speed up the work. But the women still have to remove the hard shell of the kernels by hand and pound it with a stone before the inner kernel can be pressed by a machine to extract the oil. “We work here, but we also have fun and sing together,” says oil harvester Zahra Haqqi. Internationally, the oil can sell for up to $250 per liter.
Brides and grooms are heading to the altar in droves. They’re also taking weddings outdoors and becoming selective about guests. After months of COVID-hampered nuptials, crowded wedding calendars mean venues (places for holding events) and other vendors are in high demand.

As restrictions lift around the United States, folks yearn for the whopping weddings they avoided due to COVID. Today, wedding planners and other wedding services providers are booking up to two years out.

Included in the wedding march are duos who married in simplicity during the pandemic—but now want do-overs with all the trimmings. Those wistful couples are competing for services with others who were already planning to marry this year.

Tirusha Dave is the owner and CEO of an upscale wedding planning company. “I think everybody’s ready for things to bounce back,” she says, “but just in a safe way.” Dave handled 10 weddings in 2019 and just three in 2020. This year, she already has 11 bookings.

Crowds at the altar may mean couples need to practice a little 1 Corinthians 13:4 advice about patience and kindness as they compete for services.

“Couples are getting super creative and having Thursday night ceremonies or Friday afternoon ceremonies just because of the [number] of people getting married this year,” says Maggie Lord, a vice president at David’s Bridal. She adds that “90 percent of brides this year are looking to have their weddings at outdoor venues,” where there are fewer restrictions.

Lord notes changes to other wedding traditions too. She predicts more livestreaming and online shopping and fewer passed hors d’oeuvres and buffets. Co-founder and president of the New York Food Truck Association, Ben Goldberg, has noticed the change in food preferences. “We’ve run out of trucks for some dates this year, and that hasn’t happened before,” he says.

Anna Price Olson of Brides magazine predicts higher prices because post-pandemic vendors must “hire additional resources, bring staff members back.” She also points out that goods themselves are more expensive. “There are only so many linens, only so many rentals, and only so many flowers that were planted this past season,” Olson says. And a basic market principle is that increased demand without increased supply means higher prices.

Clothing is another part of the bridal boom. Justin Warshaw is the creative director and CEO of a bridal design and manufacturing house. He’s seen a huge increase in sales of made-to-order gowns.

“A lot of that has to do with pent-up demand,” says Warshaw. “People want to celebrate with family and friends and get on with their lives.”
DOGS ON DISPLAY

In a 1970 Beetle Bailey comic strip, the character Sarge scolds his uniformed dog, Otto.

“Think, Otto, think!” Sarge says.
Otto replies, “We can’t all be Snoopy.”

Dog lovers can spot this oldie comic right now in the world’s largest cartoon museum at Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. It’s a dog show like you’ve never seen . . . mainly because it doesn’t feature actual dogs, just drawings and videos of dogs as depicted by comic artists. The exhibit shows off two centuries of dogs in cartoons.

It all started when Brad Anderson, creator of the dog comic Marmaduke, donated his collection of cartoons in 2018. He included 16,000 originals drawn from 1954 to 2010. After that, museum employees started to wonder just how many other dog cartoons they could dig up.

People and dogs make great partners. Dogs can smell way better than we can—so much better that it’s hard to put into words. Dogs are loyal and can be trained, so people harness the dog’s God-given abilities. In return, dogs get food, shelter, and human friends for life. Once, people valued dogs mainly for the shepherding, hunting, and guarding work they did. Now people generally prize dogs for their friendship—and what people love, they make art about.

Otto the dog first appeared in Beetle Bailey in 1956. Until 1970, he was a regular four-legged dog. Then his artist, Mort Walker, gave him human-like qualities, plus his own uniform and desk. Most people seem to relate to comics about dogs. Something about eager-to-please dogs makes them the perfect species to anthropomorphize and joke about.

Exhibit viewers get a memory jog as they walk through history with well-known dogs like Sandy from Little Orphan Annie, Daisy from Blondie, and Dogbert from the Dilbert strip. George Booth’s scrappy New Yorker magazine cartoon dogs make an appearance, as do Trots and Bonnie, a toon girl and her talking dog.

The exhibit also includes a video about animated canines. Remember Scooby-Doo, Huckleberry Hound, Underdog, Disney’s Pluto and Goofy, or Slinky Dog from the Toy Story movies? Spaghetti-sharing Lady and the Tramp make an appearance too.

And no dog story is complete without some cats. A few felines—Garfield, for example—sneak into the dog show too.

Snoopy, Otto, Scooby-Doo, Slinky Dog, and Daisy (clockwise from top left)

Brad Anderson works on Marmaduke in his studio as his own dog looks on.

Cartoonist’s best friend: The exhibit will be on display at Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, until October 31.

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2021 WORLD TEEN 7
This summer, China’s ruling Communist Party celebrated its centenary (100th anniversary). The rally featured a military flyover. Fireworks burst in the sky. Chinese President Xi Jinping gave medals to loyal party members. A carefully chosen crowd waved Chinese flags and sang patriotic songs. The president spoke from atop Tiananmen Gate in Beijing. That’s where revolutionary leader Mao Zedong declared the start of communist rule in China in 1949.

The Communist Party of China was established in 1921. It was founded on Marxist-Leninist principles. These include the idea that the state should control the means of production (the materials, tools, machinery, etc. that are used to make goods). Over time, China has become more open to capitalism. Most businesses are state-owned. But now the state does allow some carefully chosen, privately owned businesses as well.

“All party comrades should take their faith in Marxism and socialism with Chinese characteristics as their life’s purposes,” Xi said to medal winners. How different from God’s plan for our lives! Micah 6:8 asks, “What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

Xi also warned that anyone who tries to bully China “will face broken heads and bloodshed.” That seemed to be a jab at the United States and others that have criticized China’s trade and technology policies, military expansion, and human rights record. Xi talked about the country’s rise to power over the past four decades. China became the world’s second largest economy. It placed a space station into orbit. And the country expanded its economic and political influence throughout the world.

But Xi didn’t mention the famine of the Great Leap Forward beginning in the late 1950s and the violent class warfare of the 1966-76 Cultural Revolution. Nor did he recall the bloody 1989 crackdown on pro-democracy protesters at Tiananmen Square. Communist rule caused all these tragedies.

Western democracies accuse the Communist Party of abusing its power. Abuses include detaining more than a million Uyghurs and other minorities—including Christians. The party imprisons or intimidates into silence opponents from Tibet to Hong Kong. China threatens to invade Taiwan.

The party faces no serious challenges to its rule, but it’s difficult to gauge the public’s level of support. Few would dare criticize it because of fear of arrest.
On September 11, 2001, the Eagleson family—along with hundreds of others like them—lost a beloved family member in an event that shocked the world and shook the foundations of American culture. Brett Eagleson’s father, Bruce Eagleson, died that Tuesday morning in New York City, New York. Hijackers who hated the United States took control of four passenger planes. They flew one into each of New York’s World Trade Center towers, bringing those to the ground. Another targeted the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. A fourth didn’t reach its destination. It crashed in a field in Pennsylvania after passengers on board chose to fight the hijackers.

In all, 2,977 individuals lost their lives on that devastating day.

This September marks the 20th anniversary of that tragic, evil event. While mourning continues, some victims’ relatives press the courts to answer their lingering questions. They hold that the government of Saudi Arabia was involved in the events. Past investigations have identified ties between Saudi nationals and some of those who participated. But none have established direct government involvement. Attorneys for the victims plan to ask a judge to lift a protective order preventing their clients’ access to secret government documents. They also want to review testimony from the key subjects interviewed over the last year. The lawyers contend that this will provide clarity for the clients and apply pressure to produce the truth.

“The legal team and the FBI, investigative agencies, can know about the details of my dad’s death and thousands of other family members’ deaths. But the people who it’s most relevant to can’t,” says Eagleson.

“It’s adding salt to an open wound for all the 9/11 family members. . . . Sooner or later, this trial is going to become mainstream,” he adds. “They can’t keep things secret forever.”

God promises that He will bring everything hidden in darkness into light. (Luke 12:2-3) He judges with perfection. His judgment is filled with equity towards all the inhabitants of the Earth. Even if the current lawsuit does not provide the answers the Eaglesons and other want about the 9/11 events, God sees. He knows, and He is still in control and reigning justly.

The U.S. Civil Rights Trail winds through 15 states, mostly in the South. It includes more than 120 sites, such as churches, schools, courthouses, and museums. All are places where activists fought to advance social justice and racial equality in the 1950s and '60s.

Sentell's book is a companion to the trail itself. The book features a timeline of events from 1954-1969 and delves into the history of the trail's civil rights landmarks. It includes images of the locations today, as well as photographs from the civil rights era. Sentell wants “people to understand things about civil rights that they didn’t know before” after reading his book.

Much of the history of the civil rights movement is difficult to face. Sentell’s book
From a church bombing in Alabama to a landmark court case in Kansas, there are heartbreaking stories of segregation, prejudice, and injustice. There are also horrific stories of burnings and lynchings. Throughout, it is good to remember to “abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.”

(Romans 12:9)

The book tells stories of brave leaders too. Bernice King, daughter of civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., told Sentell “how concerned she was that young African Americans did not know the story about what her father and people’s parents and grandparents went through in the ’50s and the ’60s in order to leave a better world for their children and grandchildren.”

One of Sentell’s goals for his book was sharing details that some folks may never have heard. For example, he says the words “I have a dream” didn’t appear in Dr. King’s prepared text for the famous 1963 speech. But as King spoke, gospel singer Mahalia Jackson noticed restlessness in the crowd. She remembered a speech King had given in Detroit and called out, “Tell them about the dream, Martin. Tell them about the dream.” Dr. King went off-script and delivered the now-familiar “I have a dream” refrain.

Bernice King hopes families will “bring their children to these historical sites to learn the stories of brave, courageous, visionary, non-violent individuals who changed the South forever.” Further, she desires that young people be inspired to make changes to the world around them. She says, “People don’t know the story. If you don’t know the story, then you don’t care.”

The history of the civil rights era includes The Negro Motorist Green Book. Shamefully, black travelers in the United States often couldn’t find safe places to eat or sleep due to “whites only” policies. Weary of discrimination, New York City postal carrier and World War I veteran Victor Hugo Green came up with the idea for a guide. He compiled a list of places where black people would be welcome. For nearly 30 years, the Green Book listed restaurants, hotels, bars, and clubs where its readers could avoid problems because of their skin color. The guide’s cover contained this warning: “Carry your Green Book with you—You may need it.”

The opening paragraphs of the 1948 edition suggest the disgraceful state of the times but held to the same hope that Dr. King proclaimed in his “I have a dream” speech: “There will be a day sometime in the near future when this guide will not have to be published. That is when we as a race will have equal opportunities and privileges in the United States. It will be a great day for us to suspend this publication for then we can go wherever we please, and without embarrassment.”

In 1964, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act. It outlawed discrimination based on race or skin color. But it took years for much of the new law’s intentions to be realized throughout the culture.

Green died in 1960. He did not get to witness the day when his book was no longer needed. His wife, Alma, continued with its publication for several years. The last issue of the book was the 1966-67 edition.

In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety. — Psalm 4:8
Americans are emerging from their homes. They’re heading back to school and work after months of lockdown and limited activities. Many are also updating their wardrobes from sweatpants and pajamas to trousers and tops. For jeans giant Levi Strauss & Co., the change means re-thinking both methods and materials.

Last year, pandemic stay-at-home orders devastated businesses. Stores closed, people lost jobs, and sales plummeted. Shuttered shops and out-of-work consumers meant bankruptcy for many clothing companies, including Brooks Brothers, Chico’s, J. Crew, J.C. Penney, and others.

Not so with Levi’s. The business has adapted before—numerous times since its founding in 1853. Recent challenges weren’t viewed as obstacles. CEO Chip Bergh saw the 2020 health crisis as an opportunity. He invested “where we knew consumers were going to be going during the pandemic”—at home and online.

Company officials knew they needed to enhance consumer experiences. To that end, Levi’s unveiled a product suggestion engine on its website, created a new mobile app, introduced contactless returns, and enabled self-checkout at stores. These and other crisis-driven tech features have been popular with both pandemic and post-pandemic consumers.

Ten years ago, Levi’s sold only about 21% of its products directly to consumers. “Last year,” Bergh says, “we finished the year at almost 40%” straight-to-consumer sales. Bergh hopes to increase that percentage going forward. He says selling sans go-between is “important to us because we’re able to have that direct connection with the consumer.”

Another change for Levi’s was selling products virtually. Sellers moved from displaying actual clothing in person to presenting digital designs online, Bergh admits the change would’ve happened with or without the pandemic. But he believes the crisis sped up the process.

The company also recognized that comfy is here to stay. So Levi’s launched a line of cozy loungewear made of “eco-aware” cotton. The line sold out within weeks.

But the picture isn’t all rosy. Outside the United States, pandemic clusters remain. The Levi’s global market makes up over 50% of the corporation’s $4.45 billion in yearly sales. In addition, the company faces labor shortages, wage hike demands, and rising cotton prices.

Today, Levi’s sells products in more than 100 countries and operates 1,000 stores. Bergh continues to focus on the strategies that helped Levi’s emerge stronger from the pandemic. “We’re seeing a denim resurgence as more people are going out,” he says.

There’s another reason for the sales uptick: People changed sizes during lockdown. Some got bigger, some smaller. Either way, Bergh says over “25% of consumers have a new size.” Turns out, almost everyone needs new jeans.
In a country with a national debt of about $30 trillion, it’s no surprise that many Americans struggle to set—and stick to—a budget. This past June, Rhode Island officials passed a bill requiring schools to tackle the problem. They say it pays to start young.

The Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) reports that 60% of U.S. adults feel anxious when thinking about finances. Over 75% live from one paycheck to the next. They have no savings or spending strategies. The Bible addresses planning ahead—and while God never wants His people to worry (Matthew 6:34), He also says, “Which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost?” (Luke 14:28)

FINRA’s studies show that a key factor in money stress is lack of knowledge about how to handle money. “Many young people just don’t understand . . . credit and debt—what it means to have a mortgage that’s under water or how high interest rates can bury them in debt for their entire lives,” says Representative Mia A. Ackerman. “They don’t understand that paying the minimum on their credit card bills will keep them paying forever.”

State Senator Sandra Cano agrees. “How can we expect our children to become financially successful adults if we do not teach them the core aspects of our financial system when they are in school?” she asks.

On that front, Tolman High School in Rhode Island is ahead. The school already offers courses in financial literacy. Tolman salutatorian Hanatha Konte realized she need help with money when she landed her first job. “The classes really broke everything down for me in a way I understood.”

Rhode Island legislators want other schools to take note. They’re requiring public education institutions “to develop instruction standards on personal finance or consumer economic topics” according to the state’s website. Topics for the standards include budgeting, investing, saving, using credit, and more.

“The idea for developing finance standards was the brainchild of RI General Treasurer Seth Magaziner. “As Treasurer and a former public school teacher, I know firsthand the positive long-term impact providing this education will have on our state,” Magaziner says. “Now more than ever, a strong working knowledge of personal finance is essential for young people as they enter adulthood.”
A June 21st decision in the court case NCAA v. Alston ended a seven-year dispute. Athletes who played Division I football and basketball filed a class-action lawsuit against the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). The dispute was over compensation schools could and could not offer to amateur athletes.

Under NCAA rules, universities were allowed to provide student athletes with scholarships covering tuition. They could also fund basic expenses like textbooks, room, and board. But schools couldn’t give most other forms of compensation. And athletes were prohibited from receiving income from outside corporations, such as sports apparel or food product companies. But the Supreme Court of the United States determined that the NCAA restrictions were too strict. The justices’ ruling opens opportunities for additional compensation from colleges and universities to the players responsible for bringing vast income to their schools.

NCAA backers argued that allowing students to receive more benefits would mean less distinction between college athletics and professional sports. They also feared that the demand for amateur sports would decrease.

But the lines between college and professional sports are not erased. The case didn’t decide whether students may be paid salaries. Instead, the unanimous ruling helps schools determine whether they can offer athletes tens of thousands of dollars in educational benefits for tutoring, study abroad programs, free laptops or musical instruments, and paid internships.

The court’s decision stopped short of opening up endorsement and sponsorship income opportunities for college athletes. But several justices stated that the ruling didn’t go far enough, for just that reason. Perhaps the NCAA saw that move as inevitable. More than 10 states had laws set to go into effect that would have undercut existing restrictions on student income from outside sources. On June 30, the NCAA voluntarily announced that collegiate athletes would be allowed to profit from their own names, images, and likenesses. Since the announcement, a flurry of endorsement and sponsorship signings has occurred.

College athletes take risks when they compete for their schools. And of those who make it to the college level, many come from underprivileged households. Sports scholarships can be their only means of getting an advanced education. Colleges and universities make huge profits from sports programs and associated merchandise sales.

Isaiah 61:8 says, “I the Lord love justice; I hate robbery and wrong.” God doesn’t approve of exploiting others, especially the poor. The summer’s changes now allow athletes to receive compensation for their contributions—both on and off the playing field. Looks like this game has been called in favor of the athletes. Final score: Athletes 2, NCAA 0. Currently, no rematch is scheduled.
At his father’s urging, 10-year-old Genshu Price began recycling bottles and cans to save money for his education. But his scheme soon grew grander: He’s helping other students achieve their college dreams too.

Now 13 years old, Price has spent the last few years picking up bottles and cans and hauling them to recycling centers on the Hawaiian island of Oahu. He launched Bottles4College three years ago. In that time, Price has collected more than 100,000 containers.

But he’s not finished yet. His goal is to recycle two to four million cans and bottles every year. The determined young man hopes his proceeds will fund college tuition for up to two students.

Thinking of others is a good trait to cultivate. “Let each of you look not only to his own interests,” the Bible says, “but also to the interests of others.” (Philippians 2:4)

“[Collecting that many containers] would be able to help a lot more local families,” Price says. His actions show that he is not only a hard worker but also a selfless servant-leader.

The teen knows the value of his project: Recycling helps preserve the planet, keeps his island clean, gives people a sense of community, and promotes education.

Bottles4College “gained traction” during the coronavirus pandemic. “People saw this as a way to give an opportunity back to local families, especially since the pandemic has hit everyone so hard, especially the kids,” he says.

Genshu’s mother, Maria Price, recalls how her son began visiting beaches, Little League baseball games, and parks, “just asking people if they’re done with their drinks.” He collected their empties and sorted them with his parents’ help. She says he’s learning a lot.

Price already receives support from businesses and schools. Mililani Uka Elementary School, the Kualoa Ranch nature reserve, and S.W. King Intermediate School have allowed Price to set up drop-off depots. But he hopes to expand to every school on the island.

“Hawaii already has very high living costs,” Price says. “I want to give a way for students who may not . . . have been able to go to college by themselves.”

The rising eighth grader is also an aspiring filmmaker. He created a documentary highlighting his work. He makes videos with tips on sorting cans and bottles and encouraging others to recycle.

“We still have a little bit to go to get to the place where we want to be. But it’s definitely exciting,” he says. “Every can counts.”
For generations, the homeland of Bolivia’s Uru people wasn’t land at all. It was the surface of Lake Poopó, a broad, shallow body of water in the highlands of southwestern Bolivia. Now the lake has dried up, and an Uru remnant struggles for survival onshore.

The Uru, or “people of the water,” are native to Peru and Bolivia. Some Uru still live on Lake Titicaca, astride the Bolivia-Peru border. Visitors to that area can tour one of about 120 traditional Uru island habitats. But tourists must literally watch their steps: The Uru build their own islands from dried reeds.

The totora plant is a type of bulrush—perhaps similar to baby Moses’ floating basket in Exodus 2. Uru builders lash totora roots together with ropes to form giant “pallets.” They cover these in layers of totora reeds. The layers might be as thick as six feet! After that, builders anchor the buoyant pallets with ropes and drive long poles into the lake’s bottom. Historically, if an enemy came to attack, the Uru simply pulled up the poles and drifted away.

The reedy residences work well. But every two weeks to three months, depending on the weather, the reeds rot away. The Uru add new reeds to the top. The floating islands—which hold from two to 10 families—last about 30 years before builders must start from scratch.

In years past, the Uru harvested food from the water surrounding them. “They collected eggs, fished, hunted flamingos and birds,” says Abdón Choque, leader of Punaca, a shore town of about 180 people.

Punaca Mayor Rufino Choque says some Uru began settling on the lakeshore several decades ago as the lake began shrinking. But five years ago, Bolivia’s second-largest lake dried up completely. Scientists blame shrinking glaciers, diversions of the river for farming, and pollution.

Now the Lake Poopó Uru are left along the fringes of the former shoreline in three small settlements of about 635 people. They scramble to make a living—and to save their culture.

“We are ancient [as a people], but we have no territory. Now we have no source of work, nothing,” says Rufino.

Some of the women make straw crafts to sell. But with no land for farming, the young men become laborers in nearby towns or more distant cities. “They see the money, and they don’t return,” says Abdón.

“Our grandfathers thought the lake would last all their lives,” laments Luis Valero, a local Uru leader. “Now my people are near extinction because our source of life has been lost.”

In Him [Jesus] we live and move and have our being.
— Acts 17:28
Organizers of India’s 250 million trees project set a lofty goal. They expect that many trees—yes, a quarter of a billion—to be planted across the country this year. The idea is simple: get as many life-giving trees into the ground as possible. India pledges to keep a third of its total land area under forest and tree cover.

In a collective reforestation effort, lawmakers, government officials, and volunteers swarmed riverbanks, farms, forests, and school and government properties to plant. They set saplings into the soil around 68,000 villages and 83,000 forest sites in India’s northern Uttar Pradesh state.

The nation started the tree-planting drive four years ago in an attempt to curb deforestation. “We are committed to increasing the forest cover of Uttar Pradesh state to over 15% of the total land area in the next five years. In today’s campaign, over 100 million trees will be planted,” says Manoj Singh, a senior state forest official.

This year, people focused on the “peepul” tree, a type of ficus. Many young saplings of this type were planted all around the state capital of Lucknow. That city was ravaged by coronavirus infections. Hospitals ran short of oxygen needed to treat the very sick.

“This tree is known to release maximum oxygen. So this plant is the ‘need of the hour,’ as we are reminded of its importance after facing the oxygen shortage crisis when the outbreak was at its peak,” says Shachindra Sharma.

Trees are beautifully designed to help balance air quality. They serve as filters, pulling dust and pollution from the air, while absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen back into the atmosphere. God was purposeful in His design. He covered the face of the Earth with an abundance of trees that operate like factories, cleaning air and replenishing it for other living organisms.

Genesis 2:9 describes the first trees God created, “And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”

Not all 250 million saplings that are planted this year in India will survive. Under normal conditions, close to half will succumb to diseases or lack of water. People working with the sapling program are aware of that statistic. They are striving to increase the survival rate. State Forest Minister Dara Singh Chauhan says it’s getting better. In the past four years, about 80% of new saplings have survived.
Author, politician, and Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi is a key player in Myanmar’s history. She helped move the Asian country, also known as Burma, from a military-run government to a partial democracy—but at a cost. Suu Kyi faces charges of treason and bribery.

**Political Beginnings:** Aung San Suu Kyi is the youngest daughter of national hero Aung San, the Father of Modern Burma, and popular politician Khin Kyi. Suu Kyi graduated from the University of Delhi in 1964 and the University of Oxford in 1968. She worked at the United Nations before marrying British citizen Michael Aris in 1972.

Since gaining independence from Britain in 1948, Myanmar’s many ethnic groups have fought bloody civil wars almost non-stop. The country has struggled with a ruthless military, rampant poverty, and human rights abuses.

Suu Kyi returned to Myanmar from Britain in 1988. She went to care for her mother—and to push for democracy there. She helped form the National League for Democracy (NLD) political party. In the 1990 elections, the NLD won a parliament majority.

**Honors and Arrests:** But Myanmar’s military leaders refused to give up power. Threatened by her influence, the military had arrested Suu Kyi before the elections. She remained under house arrest (serving jail time at home) for almost 15 years. In 1991, she received the Nobel Peace Prize for “her non-violent struggle for democracy and human rights.”

In 2011, the military regime lost control. Suu Kyi and other political prisoners emerged from house arrest. Four years later, the NLD again won a majority.

Many global leaders thought Suu Kyi would become Myanmar’s president. But the country’s constitution prevents Suu Kyi, whose husband and children have foreign citizenship, from taking that office. Instead, she accepted a role similar to prime minister. It was created especially for her: state counsellor.

**Leader on Trial:** Many people criticize Suu Kyi’s leadership. As state counsellor, she defended military abuses against the country’s Rohingya minority (see Myanmar Coup at teen.wng.org/node/6597) and limited freedom of the press.

In February 2021, Myanmar’s military overthrew the elected government, again arresting Suu Kyi and other top NLD party members.

Suu Kyi faces corruption charges filed by the military-installed government. They include accepting bribes, sedition (spreading information that could cause public alarm or unrest), breaking pandemic restrictions, and illegally importing walkie-talkies for her bodyguards.

Many people say the charges are bogus—an attempt to discredit her and make the military takeover seem legal. Phil Robertson is deputy Asia director of Human Rights Watch. His group doubts Suu Kyi will receive a fair trial. Robertson says, “Clearly there are double standards being applied.”
In Mississippi, around 5,000 children live in foster care. For years, the state’s Child Protective Services agency was swamped. Then the church stepped in.

Tony Karnes is a pastor at Michael Memorial Baptist Church in Gulfport, Mississippi. In 2015, Karnes visited the Harrison County Children’s Shelter. It’s meant to be a one- or two-day emergency shelter for kids who must leave bad situations quickly. But it was filled with children. Some had been there for months. There was nowhere else for them to go.

The scene broke Karnes’ heart. He knew the answer wasn’t in just dropping off supplies. It was going to mean getting involved on a personal level.

Thinking of James 1:27 (Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction), Karnes set an ambitious goal. He determined to recruit 100 new foster families, including fostering in his own home as well. His church got on board. But potential foster families’ paperwork sometimes took more than a year for approval. Families had to gather references, complete home studies, get doctor approvals, vaccinate pets, and secure life insurance. The drawn-out process turned away some prospective parents.

Karnes and his church boldly pitched to the state a plan for a streamlined process that he dubbed Rescue 100. Foster parents train through online courses and an intense, one-day event. It takes just three months to get licensed.

It worked. The state made it official and soon added more than 300 new foster homes, including that of Kevin and Kelli Lundy.

The Lundys have fostered eight children since becoming licensed. They know their church—with more than 50 foster families—stands with them. Mrs. Lundy can ask when they need size 3 summer clothes or a sitter for the night. And foster kids involved at Michael Memorial Baptist Church reap another benefit. Kids who have experienced trauma can relate to other kids there with similar trials.

A shaky family foundation makes growing up and building a stable life a lot harder. If parents can’t or won’t take care of their children, foster families can offer a safe and loving environment. But family reunification, if possible, is always the goal. The church works to keep biological parents involved. That could include connecting parents with job training or rehab facilities. Parents are also invited to church services and activities. One foster mom in the church taught a biological mom to drive. She had Bible studies with the mom and helped her get a job.

Karnes emphasizes the value of everyone involved: “That child comes from a family unit.”

After seeing Rescue 100’s success, other states are looking at Mississippi’s model too.

This story was made possible with reporting from WORLD News Group’s Effective Compassion team.
Should you spy a robin wearing a backpack, don’t be surprised. That backyard birdie could be helping scientists study animal migration.

The American robin is an iconic North American songbird. Its cheerful chirp is a sure sign of spring. And although God knows every bird’s flight and fall, (Matthew 10:29) the robin’s migration habits remain a mystery to human scientists.

“It’s astounding how little we know about some of the most common songbirds,” says scientist Ken Rosenberg. “We have a general idea of migration, a range map, but that’s really just a broad impression.”

Ecologist Emily Williams studies the yearly migration of American robins. As a scientist, Williams wasn’t captivated by the birds’ striking plumage or sweet songs but their extraordinary travels.

“Realizing that this tiny animal that can fit in the palm of your hand can travel thousands and thousands of miles one way in spring, and then [do] it again later in the year, was just amazing to me,” she says. “I have always been dazzled by migration.”

Williams hopes to gather information about nesting in robin breeding and wintering grounds. She already knows some robins fly nearly 3,000 miles between their breeding area in Alaska and winter grounds in Texas—while others hop around a single backyard most of the year. She wants to know why.

As part of her study, Williams catches a robin and carefully measures its beak. She clips a toenail and plucks a tail feather. These samples will help her gauge the bird’s overall health.

Then she weighs the bird. On average about 80 grams, a robin weighs the same as four large strawberries. That’s just sturdy enough to carry a penny-sized satellite tag.

Williams fashions a makeshift “saddle” with clear jewelry cord. The saddle will hold the tag. When Williams releases the robin, it flies off. The tag beams location data to a satellite. Then Williams downloads that information to a laptop. The tracker gives locations within about 30 feet. Williams will be able to tell not only whether the bird is still in the city, but also on which street or in which backyard. Previous tags were accurate only to within about 125 miles.

Trackers on birds aren’t new. Scientists have put GPS-tracking devices on larger birds, but the technology has only recently become light enough for some songbirds.

“We’re in a sort of golden age for bird research,” says ecologist Adriaan Dokter. “It’s pretty amazing that we can satellite-track a robin with smaller and smaller chips. Ten years ago, that was unthinkable.”
An explosion in the sea urchin population threatens kelp and seagrasses along California’s coast. Playful sea otters to the rescue! These spirited creatures have a taste for seafood, and it’s good they do. They are a keystone species—creatures of critical importance in the food chain. Their place in that chain helps revive ocean plant life.

Off the California coast, the natural order of God’s design is evident. Larger creatures prey on medium-sized organisms which feed on small ones—and so on, from whales to plankton. Somewhere in the middle we’ll find otters, kelp, urchins, and eelgrass.

In the mid-2000s, disease wiped out large populations of the sunflower sea star. These large (three feet or more!) marine animals are sea urchins’ main predators. Sans sea stars, the spiny, bottom-dwelling sea urchin numbers exploded. They blanketed the seafloor and prevented nutrient-rich, carbon-absorbing kelp from growing through. If any kelp did spring up, the little urchins ate it.

Jessica Fujii helps manage a sea otter research program. She coauthored a study with researchers from the University of California Santa Cruz and the U.S. Geological Survey. Her team discovered that introducing sea otters can ease the sea urchin problem.

Happily for the kelp and humans who enjoy clean air, sea otters don’t mind chowing urchins—God’s food chain! Without being overgrazed, kelp forests continue to grow and play a natural role in a healthy environment.

Closer to shore, sea otters help seagrass flourish too. Fertilizer runoff and other environmental issues contributed to a global decline in eelgrass. Like kelp, eelgrass helps clean the air humans breathe, provides a vital food source, and supplies homes for a variety of sea life.

Sea slugs nibble algae off seagrass leaves. They help keep the leaves clean and healthy. But crabs see slugs as a delicious meal. When crabs eat too many slugs, seagrasses become sickly. Sea otters to the rescue again! The otters eat the crabs, and more otters mean fewer crabs to prey on slugs. The safeguarded sea slugs are free to nosh on eelgrass algae.

The ocean ecosystem is a miracle of God’s creative genius. Seeing its workings is rewarding for Fujii.

“Even after over a decade of doing this work, I love watching otters and seeing how they’re interacting with their environment,” Fujii says. “Having a healthy ecosystem is really important... and sea otters have a really important role to play in that.”

An otter crossing sign at a bridge over Elkhorn Slough.

Too many urchins on the seafloor? Send in the otters!

And another otter picture just because they’re so cute!
Forty years ago, a two-color children's newspaper rolled off the presses. Its eight pages featured stories of workers' strikes, references to then-U.S. President Ronald Reagan, and a fictional tale that unpacked a real-life civics lesson. Six presidents later, the magazine's page count is higher, its images more colorful, and its stories exist both on paper and in digital (internet) form—but the drive toward “sound journalism grounded in facts and biblical truth” remains the same.

A Big Idea Built on Big Ideas: Christian journalists love God and love people. They want to help God's image-bearers understand and appreciate truth, which originates in Him. Therefore, Christian journalists are careful about reporting events. They seek more than accuracy: They want readers to see God at work in His world, bringing redemption and restoration to His fallen creation.

Big ideas like these drove two men to pursue a profound goal in 1981. Fueled by the requests of Christian parents, the pair decided to publish a weekly newspaper for young people. The paper would report on world events and issues. But “the important purpose,” says Norm Bomer, “was to teach Christian worldview” to the glory of God.

A Dynamic Duo: Joel Belz and Norm Bomer were familiar with one news publication for elementary school children which had been popular since the late 1920s. There was just one problem: It wasn’t written by or for Christians. So students read reports of world events infused with an agenda that promoted humankind’s goals over God’s goodness—and swallowed error with every reading.

Belz was a respected church leader with years of publishing experience from his parents’ printing business and as managing editor of the *Presbyterian Journal*. He guided the founding of the new distinctively Christian children's publication headquartered in Asheville, North Carolina, dubbing the paper *It’s God’s World* (IGW). The kids’ publication caught on quickly, eclipsing the circulation and volume of its Presbyterian parent magazine.

Bomer was a high school teacher, first in Alberta, Canada, and then in Kansas. As IGW's first writer and editor, he was known for his quick wit, ready laugh, and eagle eye. He created the magazine’s style sheet (list of grammar rules), wherein he banned “cheap adjectives such as ‘nice’ and ‘beautiful’”—and expressed his stance on pronouns: “To avoid being executed, remember that their is plural.” He would continue as editor for the next 30 years.

The First Issue: The prototype (early sample) of IGW appeared August 10, 1981 (a date coinciding with Belz’s 40th birthday).
Bomer wrote every article while Belz drummed up support in the form of prayers and pennies for the fledgling venture.

Bomer keyed copy on a typewriter; someone re-entered it into a computer and then transferred the data to a floppy disk. The internet wouldn’t come along for another year and a half, so the disk traveled by mail to a printing company.

That first pre-issue’s lead article was “Players Return After Striking Out,” a story about a baseball strike. By the first actual mailed issue on September 10, 1981, that story had migrated to page three. The new lead was “Air Controllers Strike Out.” It told of President Reagan firing 12,000 federal employees who broke the law by walking off their jobs. Both guided readers to consider biblical principles surrounding justice and work.

Stories about new Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor and the Space Shuttle Columbia also appeared in that inaugural issue. Each reported the facts and infused the topics with biblical worldview. A fictional story, a recipe, a word search, and a Bible reading schedule rounded out the first paper.

**Early Success:**

One key to the magazine’s early success was news articles written with young people in mind. Adults were reading many of the same topics elsewhere, but IGW explained difficult concepts in government, economics, and environmental and other issues. These articles not only taught facts but also revealed to readers the God behind those facts. Popular features included etymology, puzzles, and a large once-per-year pull-out map—a resource still provided with the September issue all these years later.

Soon adults began asking, “Why don’t you publish a magazine for us?” In 1986, Belz launched *WORLD* Magazine, offering adult-focused, global news with biblical objectivity.

In 1996, the children’s magazine, by then called *God’s World Today*, won the Evangelical Press Association’s highest award, the Award of Excellence. Judges labeled GWT’s style as “newsy,” “unique,” “in touch,” “challenging,” and “creative.” The association also recognized the publication’s emphasis on worldview, analysis, understanding, and education.

**Whatever the News:** In the 2000s, God’s *WORLD* News experimented with publications for various age groups. At one time, there were as many as six individual children’s magazines, including a three-year run for an older teens’ magazine called *Trak*. In 2012, God’s *WORLD* News rebranded as *WORLD* News Group (WNG). The media organization included all print magazines, the digital content, and podcasts. It now reaches hundreds of thousands of people around the world with its resources and reports.

Today, the children’s arm of WNG delivers three magazines together with three interactive websites based on age range. They are *God’s Big World* (ages 3-6), *WORLDkids* (ages 7-10), and *WORLDteen* (ages 11-14).

On August 10, 2020, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, WNG launched “World Watch,” a streaming video current events program. The 10-minute daily program targets mid and older teens with its fast-paced, catchy style. The show’s signature closing resonates around the globe: “Whatever the news, the purpose of the Lord will stand.”
Wham! A piece of asteroid breaks off, hurtles through space, and collides with another celestial body. Through the last century, scientists knew of only a few hundred such planet-thumping lumps. Today, a new generation realizes meteorites are quite common—and profitable.

A meteor is a hunk of rocky, metallic material that detaches from a small body moving through space. It usually comes from an asteroid, comet, or meteoroid. If the “space rock” enters Earth’s atmosphere, it zips through, heating up on its plunge downward. It becomes a fireball, or shooting star. Once it lands, the object is officially called a meteorite. For meteorite hunters, the chase is on.

The psalmist says, “When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the Moon and the stars, . . . what is man that you are mindful of him?” (Psalm 8:3-4) Our wonderful God tends every particle and person in the universe—no hunting necessary.

Carrying a metal detector and a magnifying glass, Ali Lamghari roams the desert in Morocco. For a month at a time, he hunts meteorites. When he finds one, he fills out a data card, takes a picture, and records GPS coordinates. Lamghari takes his finds to the Museum of Meteorites at Ibn Zohr University in Morocco.

Professor Abderrahmane Ibhi founded the museum. It houses about 100 meteorites and recounts their history. Ibhi’s team conducts research and supports meteorite hunters. “We have been working with [meteorite hunters] since 2004, especially in the desert,” Ibhi says.

The museum receives samples from countries in North Africa and the Middle East. But most research focuses on Morocco, a meteorite hotspot. More than 50% of all meteorites in international museums and laboratories come from there.

An article in The New Scientist partly explains the phenomenon. Researchers say the arid environment preserves meteorites and that dark meteorites stand out against light sand. Researchers also believe Morocco’s nomad populace—people regularly moving through the desert—increases the prospect of finding them.

Since 2006, Ibhi has taught locals to identify meteorites. Now experts, many recognize features such as the blackish outside and other marks caused by a scorching, wind-whooshing space jaunt.

An entire industry—including brokers, dealers, nomads, and scientists—has sprung up around meteorite hunting. Large finds can mean big payouts. Some can be sold at hundreds of dollars per gram, the weight of a single paperclip. Tourists can book meteorite-hunting events, similar to safaris, but without harming animals.

Meteorite broker Mouloud Bachikh once found a 24-pound meteorite. Now he arranges deals between Moroccan nomads and other buyers. In a 2018 VICE News interview, Bachikh explained the growing meteorite trade: “The sky is raining gifts all the time.”

Ali Lamghari searches for meteorites in the sand dunes of Morocco.
Fire cloud on the horizon! Those columns of smoke and ash can reach up to six miles high. This summer, the Bootleg Fire in southeastern Oregon created multiple fire clouds that were visible from over 100 miles away. Meteorologists also spotted a bigger, more extreme form of fire clouds—ones that are so hot and big that they create their own weather.

Also called pyrocumulus clouds, fire clouds look like giant, dirty-colored storm clouds. A fire cloud will sit atop a column of smoke from a wildfire. Often the top of the smoke column flattens out into the shape of an anvil.

When air over the fire becomes superheated, it rises in a large column. As air with more moisture rises, it rushes up the smoke column into the atmosphere. The moisture condenses into droplets. That’s why “fire clouds” can look much like the thunderheads seen before a big thunderstorm. Sometimes rain does fall from the cloud. That can help put out the fire below.

But these clouds hold more than just water. Ash and particles from the fire also get swept into them.

When a pyrocumulus cloud forms over a fire, meteorologists watch carefully for its bigger, more dangerous brother, the pyrocumulonimbus cloud. NASA has called those the “fire-breathing dragon of clouds.”

Most of the clouds from the Bootleg Fire were the less-intense fire clouds. But the National Weather Service also spotted a pyrocumulonimbus cloud forming on satellite imagery.

Both types of fire clouds pose serious risks for firefighters. When one of the fire clouds on the Bootleg Fire partially collapsed, dangerous winds and embers fell on crews. Firefighters had to evacuate that part of the fire line. Thankfully, no one was injured.

In a worst-case scenario, a pyrocumulonimbus cloud could spawn a “fire tornado.” That phenomenon can spread wildfires rapidly, worsening conditions. This kind of cloud can also generate its own dry lightning and hail and create dangerous hot winds below.

U.S. Naval Research Laboratory experts say that they saw a “record number” of these fire-induced clouds in North America this summer.

In the Bible, God often uses fire as a symbol of His power. Exodus 13:21 tells how God used fire and cloud to lead the Israelites. “And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.”
Want glasses that help you see in the dark? You might have seen characters in an action movie use night vision goggles. Those show a ghostly green image that makes objects visible in the dark. Now researchers are developing a new technology. They want to use ultra-thin layers of nanocrystals (teeny-tiny crystals) to make infrared light visible.

Devices like night vision goggles can detect energy in the light spectrum that is invisible to the human eye. Infrared (sometimes called IR) is a type of radiation that has wavelengths longer than those of visible light. It is outside the range that humans can see. But God has no such limitations. Psalm 139:12 says of God, “even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.”

Infrared devices like goggles and cameras convert IR to an electrical signal. That signal shows on a screen. But this technology is bulky, heavy, and disrupts normal vision.

There are also all-optical alternatives. These don’t use electrical signals. Instead, they directly convert IR into visible light. The visible light can then be captured by the eye or a camera.

These technologies combine IR with a laser beam inside a material called “nonlinear crystal.” The crystal then emits light in the visible spectrum. However, nonlinear crystals are also bulky. Plus, they’re expensive, and they can detect only a limited range of light. So scientists want to make the all-optical approach work better.

The goal is to produce a lightweight film that can be applied as a thin layer on glasses or other lenses. Powered by a tiny built-in laser, the film will allow people to see in the dark.

Carefully designed layers of nanocrystal are called “metasurfaces.” Metasurfaces are ultra-thin and ultralight. They can manipulate the color or frequency of the light that passes through them. This makes metasurfaces a good platform to convert infrared photons (particles) to visible light.

The scientists designed a metasurface made of hundreds of incredibly tiny crystal antennae. They put the metasurface on a transparent glass, forming a layer of nanocrystals thinner than a human hair.

To test the metasurface, they shined infrared images on the glass. It worked! Those infrared images were converted to visible green images.

The military, police, security guards, hunters, and campers all sometimes need night vision devices. The technology could be helpful in other industries too. It could help monitor and maintain food quality control. It could also be used for mapping and measuring.
Bricks, bricks, and more bricks. LEGO produces about 36 billion of its iconic bricks, plates, and tiles every year. Now after years of making this blockbuster construction toy, LEGO is developing a completely sustainable product.

Sustainability refers to making goods without depleting or destroying resources. Since 1963, LEGO has used a plastic called ABS. ABS makes LEGO colorful, sturdy, and rigid. (If you’ve ever trodden on one barefoot, you know this!) But ABS comes from oil, a non-sustainable resource.

With over 100,000 tons of plastic pumping out of their factories annually, LEGO toymakers wanted to make bricks that didn’t contribute to damage to the planet. That’s a positive impulse. Humans are meant to be good stewards of creation—and caring for natural resources like oil and trees and air glorifies God while it serves humanity and other creatures too. By 2030, LEGO hopes to use sustainable materials in all its primary products and packaging.

After two years of experiments, LEGO researchers created a 98% plant-based, sustainable form of polyethylene (PE), the world’s most common type of plastic. (Think milk jugs, grocery bags, and bottle caps.) The PE product was a triumph—thanks mostly to its main ingredient: sugarcane. Cane grows at the same rate—or faster—than LEGO can use it. But the sweet new product proved too flexible to hold much weight.

Undeterred, LEGO engineers used the sustainable sugar-bricks for less vital pieces, like leaves or flowers. But those comprise only about two percent of LEGO products. To make a difference, researchers needed to keep working.

Tim Brooks is a vice president at LEGO. He says bricks require “clutch power.” That is, they must hold together well. Too flexible or too “shrinkable” bricks won’t stay put.

LEGO scientists experimented with PET, another type of plastic. They used recycled plastic bottles as a sustainable source of material.

Scientists ran the PET bricks through rigorous tests. They came close to LEGO’s ABS bricks. After some more tweaks to color and clutch, the testing to determine which bricks to change over to PET will begin.

Today, LEGO makes about 3,500 different pieces. LEGO executives think changing out the most popular brick—the two dot by four dot—will offer the biggest change for the environment.

According to Brooks, the perfect sustainable brick is probably a few years away. But “experimentation and failing is an important part of learning and innovation,” he says. He tells Wired UK that LEGO is working on a “secret sauce” to make PET bricks work like ABS ones. “Just as kids build, unbuild, and rebuild with LEGO bricks at home, we’re doing the same in our lab.”
**JELLYFISHBOT CLEANS THE SEAS**  
“It can go everywhere,” says Nicolas Carlesi of the aquatic robot dubbed Jellyfishbot. Carlesi holds a PhD in underwater robotics. He’s also the CEO of the company Iadys, which created the trash-gobbling marine robot. A sailor and diver, Carlesi says he came up with the idea for the sea-sweeping machine when spending leisure time on the water. He noticed garbage floating in the seawater around ports. He came up with the idea for a robot about the size of a suitcase, which tools around harbors, picking up rubbish from corners and narrow spaces where trash tends to accumulate. Those crannies are sometimes out of reach for cleaners with nets. Jellyfishbot is not the only device on the job. A San Diego non-profit called Clear Blue Sea is working on a trash-collecting drone called “Fred.” And a Netherlands firm debuted its “WasteShark” not long ago. All hope for fairer seas soon!

**SHARK ENCOUNTERS OF THE NEGATIVE KIND**  
Some say perception is more important than fact. So how you tell about an event, then, can be more or less powerful or persuasive than even the event itself. With that in mind, some officials in Australia want folks to be more gracious when describing pain-inflicting incidents involving sharks. Authorities and scientists don’t want people thinking badly of the big, toothy fish that are maligned for their unwanted presence around surfers and swimmers. So they’ll no longer use the term “shark attacks,” and they’re asking reporters and lay people alike to change their word choices too. The sharks don’t really mean to attack, they say. Therefore, it’s unfair to label those interactions as such. They’re proposing instead the more gentle language of “negative encounters.” But the question stands: Negative for whom? The sharks, if they could talk, might have yet another perspective.

**U.S. HIRING ON THE RISE**  
In a burst of hiring, America’s employers added 850,000 jobs in June. It’s a sign that companies may be finding workers to fill open jobs—but the gain has come at a cost. The demand for workers has resulted in significant pay increases in most industries. As businesses competed to attract willing workers, employers offered signing and retention bonuses, higher hourly pay, and more flexible hours. Many workers found themselves with choices about where, when, and for how much to work. “That underscores the growing bargaining power of labor,” says economist Joe Brusuelas. “There’s increasing confidence that they’re going to get better jobs at better wages as the U.S. economy expands.” Better pay is a good thing—but when it happens all at once, it usually means inflation. That’s when prices go up to cover the extra cost of higher wages. Most Americans have begun to see those increases in the prices of goods and services.
SAVE THE WHALES AND THE LOBSTER
Once called the “right” whale to kill, the North Atlantic right whale was listed as endangered in 1970. Since then, rules have been made to protect the over-hunted cetacean. But even so, its numbers continued to drop. Today, only about 360 North Atlantic right whales remain. So the U.S. Federal government is making more rules, which will also hit the profitable lobster fishing industry. Whales often get tangled in ropes connected to lobster traps in the ocean. The new rules would limit the number of vertical ropes allowed in the water. Some sea areas may be completely restricted from all fishing. Patrice McCarron of the Maine Lobstermen’s Association says lobster fishers want to help. But she fears the rules may require an overhaul of fishing practices—both in the U.S. and in neighboring Canada. And everyone expects price increases and a smaller supply of lobsters as a result too.

LEGAL LIES AND LIMITS
Police officers often have great difficulty getting suspects to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. But is it OK to lie in order to get to that truth? According to the law in most states, it is. Officers conducting interrogations with suspects are permitted to lie while trying to gain a confession. But the state of Illinois has banned such deceptive practices for officers interrogating minor suspects. Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker signed a bill into law in July making it illegal for police to lie to young teens or children in order to coerce a desired response. It appears that now, to get to the truth, the truth will have to do. A truthful witness saves lives, but one who breathes out lies is deceitful. — Proverbs 14:25

ARK PARK’S LOFTY NEW PLANS
The Ark Encounter in northern Kentucky announced plans to build a “Tower of Babel” attraction on the park’s grounds. A press release from the park does not say that the exhibit will try to reach the heavens, like the original tower was intended to do. (See Genesis 11. That was not a good idea the first time around.) It does say that the exhibit will help visitors understand how the Bible proves the origin of all people groups around the world. No one knows what the Babel attraction will look like yet. Answers in Genesis, the ministry behind the Ark Park, will fundraise for the new feature. Expansion plans also include an indoor model of Jerusalem.

REWARD FOR HACKING THE HACKERS
With ransomware attacks on the rise, the U.S. State Department wants to turn the tables on the criminals who demand millions of dollars to end their destructive mischief. The Biden administration says it is offering rewards up to $10 million for information leading to the identification of anyone engaged in malicious cyber activity against critical U.S. infrastructure. The public can visit stopransomware.gov to learn about countering the growing threat. In May, Colonial Pipeline paid a $4.4 million ransom to free its fuel delivery systems from hackers. The FBI was able to recoup most of that payment. But the new reward system hopes to stop attacks before they shut down national functions.
Think it through
Law ‘n Order (pages 8-11)

**QUIZ MY READING**

1. Marxism-Leninism includes the idea that the means of production should be owned and controlled by ________.
   a) workers
   b) the state

2. One of author Lee Sentell’s goals for his book about the U.S. Civil Rights Trail was ________.
   a) getting people to visit every site along the trail in the order the events happened
   b) giving details about events and sites that some people may never have heard

3. The U.S. Civil Rights Trail ________.
   a) includes churches, schools, court houses, museums, and more sites of activist events from the 1950s and ‘60s.
   b) is a new national park exhibit in Washington, D.C., honoring legislators who passed laws in favor of equal rights under the law.

4. What are the families of the 9/11 victims trying to prove in an ongoing lawsuit?
   a) that the Saudi government was involved with the 9/11 hijackers
   b) that they are owed financial compensation for their lost family members

5. Devastating ________.
   a) filled with comfort
   b) prophesied
   c) calamitous

6. Lingering ________.
   a) impatient
   b) unresolved
   c) loitering

**WORDS TO BANK**

1. comrades
   a) neighborly friends
   b) supporters of the state
   c) blood brothers

4. visionary
   a) grounded realist
   b) hopeless daydreamer
   c) one having profound foresight

2. gauge
   a) measure
   b) guess at
   c) direct

3. segregation
   a) unification
   b) separation
   c) affirmative action

**MIND STIR**

1. Why do you think Communist China is now allowing some businesses to operate with capitalistic principles?

2. Why do you think generations of people in the United States of America, a nation founded on freedom and equality, took so long to embrace integration instead of segregation?

**VIZ-QUIZ**

Which one of these paths would you take to see sights on the U.S. Civil Rights Trail?

A
B
C

**QUIZ ANSWERS ON PAGE 29**
Scan (right) to check out our “Farm News” page.

Have an ordinary kitchen blender? Sarah shows you how to turn raw wheat berries into pancakes in a short video.

Watch us harvest wheat from the field and transform it into pancakes, all in 5½ minutes.

Search our website for links on how Mennonites, fleeing the Ukraine, transformed Kansas’s agriculture and the American flour industry.

We grow them without synthetic chemicals in the fertility levels they traditionally thrived, and then we process them in a manner used hundreds of years ago. We accomplish this by doing everything, from planting to milling, here on our farm.

AVAILABLE AS Whole Corn Kernels, Wheat Berries, Oat Groats & Raw Cold Rolled Oats
Stone Milled: Cornmeals, Corn Grits, Sifted/Whole Wheat & Buckwheat Flours, Scottish & Irish Oatmeals

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FROM OUR FAMILY TO YOURS. ALL DONE ON THE FARM.
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