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SOMEONE TO LEAN ON

BY David Williams



When Frey's grandparents were young, they once signed up to be extras on a televised dance show, just for fun. It happened to fall on **Valentine's Day**. They hadn't been married long, didn't have much money, and thought it would simply be a silly night out. It sure was that - and more!

The premise of the show was delightfully absurd. Couples danced in the background while guest contestants competed in a twist-style dance-off. Every round, one couple would be eliminated. But instead of a buzzer or a stern judge, a giant furry blue monster named Mumu was released onto the dance floor.

If Mumu caught the losing couple before they reached the cameramen, they were out. If he missed, they got to stay. Mumu was enormous, soft, clumsy, and impossibly cuddly. The kind of creature you half-feared and secretly hoped would scoop you up.

While the as if their

competing couples ran lives depended on it, Frey's grandparents did the opposite. They slowed down. They laughed. They kind of waited. They spent the entire show (not so) secretly wishing Mumu would catch them and give them that ridiculous, cozy hug. Why not - they were extras anyway! When almost everyone else was gone, they asked production if they could stay a little longer and dance once more. They were allowed. Sliding across the empty set was just as fun as you'd imagine. And they even got a Mumu hug in the end!

That night became a story they told for decades. Not because of the show, or the cameras, or even Mumu, but because of how it made them feel. Chosen. Connected.

Wrapped in something warm and protective, even while life stayed uncertain and a little wild. They went on to live very, very long lives, passing a month apart from one another, still deeply in love and still finding joy in every stage. Together.

When we heard that story, it landed in an unexpected way. Because in real life, insurance is a bit like Mumu. Or maybe we are. We're the thing chasing you down, trying to keep you safe, nudging you toward a hug when you'd rather sprint ahead. You want to run. You want to win the prize right in front of you. We get it. We just happen to know how comforting it is when something soft and steady has your back when you need it most.

That is why, quietly, your insurance agent is cheering for your date nights. Not because we're sentimental, though some of us absolutely are, but because we've seen what happens when people stop choosing each other.

Prevention is rarely glamorous. It is, however, powerful. And it often begins with something as simple as deciding to show up for one another, especially on days meant to be remembered.

There are five reasons this matters more than people think.

DATE NIGHTS ARE RELATIONSHIP MAINTENANCE, NOT A LUXURY. Nobody debates oil changes or roof inspections. You don't wait for smoke or collapse to pay attention. Relationships work the same way. Small, intentional time together keeps things aligned and prevents quiet cracks from spreading.

CONNECTED PEOPLE MAKE CALMER, SMARTER DECISIONS. Most questionable choices aren't about intelligence. They're about exhaustion and disconnection. When couples regularly reconnect, decisions become collaborative instead of reactive. Clarity follows closeness.

STRESS IS THE SILENT TROUBLEMAKER IN ALMOST EVERY CLAIM. Stress affects health, finances, reactions, and communication. A good date night

interrupts that loop. Laughter and presence lower stress in ways spreadsheets never will. Fewer ripple effects start there.

DATE NIGHTS PREVENT SURPRISE LIFE ANNOUNCEMENTS. The hardest conversations don't happen between errands. They need space. Time together creates room to talk before changes turn into shocks. Alignment beats surprise every time.

A STRONG PARTNERSHIP IS THE MOST OVERLOOKED FORM OF PROTECTION. You can insure assets and plan for risk, but a resilient partnership handles pressure with humor and grace. From where we sit, that's structural integrity.

Frey's grandparents understood this instinctively, even before they had words for it. They didn't know they were practicing preventative care for a lifetime together. They just knew that dancing, laughing, and waiting for a hug mattered. That choosing each other, again and again, made everything else feel safer.

So yes, this season, we're nudging you gently. Get cozy and enjoy it together, even when you feel like... not. Because you get to, so give in a little. Plan the date. Make it silly, quiet, or unforgettable. Eat the candy. Wear the good shoes. Or don't. Stay in. Go out. Talk about everything or absolutely nothing. Just don't skip the thing that quietly protects everything else.

Your insurance agents, your Mumus, want you to have a story like that. We believe it begins with dates. Many of them. Especially the one circled on **FEBRUARY 14**.





BUILDING HOPE THROUGH CARE

BY David Williams

Strong communities are built on compassion, connection, and care, and The Care Cabinet is turning those values into action every day.

This Christ-centered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization is dedicated to meeting the basic needs of students and families in our community. By partnering with schools, The Care Cabinet identifies spaces where essential care items can be stored and easily accessed, providing immediate support when students face unexpected challenges.

From deodorant, toothpaste, and socks to backpacks, snacks, and school supplies, The Care Cabinet ensures every

student has what they need to feel confident, cared for, and ready to learn. These small acts of kindness make a big difference, helping children stay focused in class and reminding them that they are seen, supported, and valued.

At Williams Insurance Advisors, we believe that caring for our neighbors strengthens us all. That's why, for every referral we receive this month, we'll donate \$15 to The Care Cabinet to help stock school-based care spaces with essential supplies for local students. Every contribution helps restore dignity, comfort, and hope, one student at a time.

Together, we can make sure no child goes without the basics they need to thrive. Let's build a stronger, more caring community, one act of kindness at a time.

JOIN US: dlwins.com/community

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WHAT ARE THE 4 SONGS?

Submit your answer by **Feb 28th** at:

ourhometownmag.org/riddle

COOK THIS RECIPE

YOU'LL LOVE PAV-LOVA NUTELLA+CHERRIES ON TOP

By David Williams

February is Cherry Month, love is in the air, and this pavlova gives everything we want romance to be, just in case: crisp on the outside, cloud-soft in the center, indulgent, layered, and a little dramatic in the best way. Let's be real - bringing Nutella to any mix is almost always a winning idea. Kind of like choosing the right coverage with us. Ready for the irresistible?

INGREDIENTS: PAVLOVA

- 6 large egg whites
- 1 1/2 cups superfine sugar
- 1 tsp white vinegar
- 1 tsp cornstarch
- 1 tsp vanilla extract

NUTELLA MASCARPONE CREAM

- 1/4 cup mascarpone cheese
- 3/4 cup Nutella

PREPARATION:

- 1 Preheat oven to 250°F and line a baking sheet with parchment.
- 2 Whip room-temp egg whites to soft peaks, add sugar until stiff and glossy, then gently fold in vinegar, cornstarch, and vanilla.
- 3 Shape meringue into an 8-9 inch round with a shallow center.
- 4 Bake 90 minutes until crisp, turn off oven, and cool inside with door slightly open.
- 5 Mix mascarpone, 1/2 cup Nutella, powdered sugar, and vanilla until smooth, chill if needed.
- 6 Simmer cherries, sugar, and lemon juice 5-7 minutes, add cornstarch slurry, cook 1-2 minutes until thickened, cool.
- 7 Fill pavlova with Nutella mascarpone, drizzle cherry sauce, and spread remaining Nutella on top.

- 1-2 tbsp powdered sugar
 - 1 tsp vanilla extract
- ### TART CHERRY SAUCE
- 2 cups fresh or frozen pitted cherries
 - 1/4 cup sugar
 - 1 tbsp lemon juice
 - 1 tsp cornstarch mixed with 1 tbsp water

TOPPING

- Fresh cherries, pitted and halved

Finish with more cherries, sauce, and get ready to **FALL IN LOVE!**

3

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LIFE

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