

Columns

Resolutions this year are to make small adjustments

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,

The flying cloud, the frosty light:

The year is dying in the night;

Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,

Ring, happy bells, across the snow:

The year is going, let him go
— Alfred, Lord Tennyson

I don't know about ya'll, but to me, 2022 whizzed by like a black Friday shopper at Wally World, careening on the edge of a collision, yet somehow arriving relatively unscathed at their destination.

Thus, we arrive at the threshold of 2023, with new perspectives and resolutions. For the past several years, I've

come here to put into writing what I resolve to accomplish, in a vain attempt to hold myself accountable.

This year? This year's going to be different. (He writes, hopefully). No more lofty pronouncements, doomed to failure almost before they get started. No more pithy, heart-felt statements.

For 2023, I'm going to try to do it without fanfare. I'm just going to try to do everything I do a little better.

Here's my plan. Try to get 10,000 steps a day. It's harder than it sounds when you drive a laptop for a living.

I'm going to try to limit my beer drinking. Maybe cut it in half, or not have any Busch Latte's on weeknights.

I'm going to try to eat dinner earlier. Too often, I'm eat-

ing after 9 p.m. and then hitting the rack. Got to try to get my hectic life together better than that.

I'm going to start a new endeavor (details will be forthcoming) that hopefully will bridge into the next phase of my life in a few years.

I'm going to try to be a more patient spouse. Often, my comments and retorts are taken more seriously than I intend them, and the results are a peeved wife and/or upset kids. It's weird though. Mrs. HLS is extremely close to our offspring. Maybe it's a product of her being a stay-at-home mama when they were little, but they have an amazingly similar way of looking at things. So, when we play card games like cards against humanity, I always lose because

Hook, Line and Sinker

By Tony Hooker



my perspective is so different than theirs. Things that I think are knee-slappingly hilarious are met with rolled eyes and stony countenances. Meanwhile, they share some sort of Vulcan mind meld and smile at things that I don't even notice.

The four of them tend to keep their emotions close to their sleeves most of time, where you know where I stand from jump street. I'm the guy

who cries at EVERY hallmark Christmas movie. I tend to get choked up a bit when the National Anthem plays. Taps has been known to elicit a few tears, as I remember family and friends who have been laid to rest after serving this great country of ours.

Heck mama and the princess got a good chuckle at my expense the other night for snuffing a bit at GREASE!

I've only seen it in the neighborhood of 507 times, but man, when Danny and Sandy reunite at the carnival and Riz isn't preggio and she and Kenickie hook back up and the whole gang gets back together? I'm a puddle.

At any rate, I am going to try my hardest not to respond instantly and harshly to the ones I love the most without pondering their perspective and trying to see where they're coming from. Like I said. No momentous proclamations, just common sense. Something that isn't always in great supply inside my brain box.

Here's to 2023. Here's to resolutions, both stated and unstated. I hope it's the best year yet for everyone.

Pets need extra care during cold weather

The major cold wave we had just before Christmas reminded me of just how vulnerable outside animals are and that we should be more vigilant in protecting them. I thought I was being a good fur mommy but I discovered the below zero temperatures can even effect the heated pet mats. I have multiple heated boxes for my two stray cats and a heated food tray and water bowl but when I went out to feed the cats on the morning it was -7; the canned food I had put out for them the night before was frozen solid.

Simey, the blind cat, was the smarter of the two and had made his way into the shed where he was protected from the storm in a heated box but Chessy had been spooked by the wind and disappeared. I am not sure why he did not go into the shed but finally the next day he followed Simey into the shed and spent the rest of the day in his heated box.

Luckily I had thought to place a large bowl of dry cat food in the shed because the canned cat food in the shed was frozen too. At first I thought perhaps the cords to the heated pad and bowl had come unplugged but that was not the case; the pad and bowl just don't seem to work below zero. Knowing that we also have other animals

Memories and Musings

By Cheri Sims



which come to eat in bad weather I decided to purchase another heated food mat to place in the shed instead of moving the one plugged into the porch receptacle.

I have also started making my homemade seed balls for the birds and squirrels. Not only do I freeze all my leftovers to use as winter food for the animals but I save all the meat grease and mix it with seed, nuts and oats. I know they enjoy the treats because I see at least four squirrels running back and forth between their nests and the bird feeder.

We also have a large rabbit running around the neighborhood so as I was putting out bird food I gathered a few sticks and broke them up and placed them under the feeder along with the branches from the hydrangeas that I had pruned in the summer. Rabbits do pretty well on their own but sweeping away the snow and exposing the vegetation and sticks helps them

during fresh snow fall.

I am careful to put out all the food in the morning and hope it has all been consumed by dark as I am not really interested in attracting raccoons. They are cute little devils and I love watching the babies but they are messy and destructive and have, on occasion, really messed up the back porch, broken planters and torn up chair pads. One time I found one of the cat house blankets dragged out of the house and shredded in a heap and the animal in question marked his territory by depositing a large pile of poo on the blanket. Not my idea of fun cleaning up that kind of mess in below zero temps.

Apparently you can teach old dogs new tricks. Until this past grocery shortage situation I had never bought canned pop; for some reason the pop I like, diet caffeine free "Coke," does not taste right in cans, like it does in bottles. With the shortages it

has been hard to find my choice of "Coke" so I have been forced to buy cases of canned pop.

Since moving into this house I do not have as much kitchen cabinet space as I would like so I have a shelving unit in the garage for grocery stock. During the deep freeze, last week, I went out to the garage to bring in a case of pop and to my utter shock the cans had frozen and some of them had exploded.

I lost two cases of "Coke." Not only was I surprised that it had frozen and exploded I was irritated to have lost so much money. I also had two six packs of pop in plastic bottles out there and I was able to bring them inside and allow them to thaw before opening them; so at least I did not lose that pop or money. Sometimes I wonder where my brains are.

This isn't a recipe but I made

the most delicious pot of soup with leftover Christmas dinner. I made a batch of potato soup and added the rest of the potato salad and popcorn shrimp, and allowed it to simmer to meld the flavors. Oh my goodness was that a rare treat for dinner last night. I had just fed the cats and was really cold and that bowl of soup just hit the spot.

Be safe and stay warm.

Sirius is seriously cool to see

Happy New Year! We have a fun-filled year of skywatching coming up in 2023, including a partial solar eclipse on October 14.

We begin the year with many planets in the sky. At sunset this week, we have Venus low in the southwest around 5:15 p.m. with Mercury to the lower right and Saturn far to the upper left. Jupiter is roughly halfway up in the sky in the south and the reddish Mars can be found above the eastern horizon.

At sunset early next week, look toward the eastern horizon for the familiar constellation of Orion, our Hunter, and its three belt stars. At this angle, the three will appear to make a nearly vertical line.

In the night sky

By David Leake



Just after 6:30 p.m., you'll be able to trace a line through these three stars toward the east-southeastern horizon to the brilliant star Sirius, the bright star appearing in our night sky. Watch Sirius rise. As it's light passes through the thicker atmosphere near the horizon, the air will cause Sirius to twinkle like crazy and even

change colors. This is an atmospheric effect though as Sirius is a white star, 26 times brighter than our Sun and the 5th closest to us.

David Leake is retired Planetarium Director of Staerkel Planetarium at Parkland College and co-founder of the Champaign-Urbana Astronomical Society, Inc.

FBI Springfield year in review

As 2022 ends, I thought it heartening to highlight successes of your Springfield FBI Field Office so you may see the positive impact our efforts had throughout Central and Southern Illinois. Threats to our community come from all directions, but we're hitting back at them full force. I continue to be impressed by the dedication of our workforce—our agents, analysts, professional staff, and task force officers who serve the public with rigor, objectivity, and a fierce passion for our mission to protect the American people and uphold the Constitution. Our focus is on prevention, but when bad actors strike, we will not rest until we hold them accountable and work to heal victims and the community.

Over the last year, the efforts of the men and women of FBI Springfield led to notable successes across our territory, from Moline to Marion.

Violent Crime

The violent crime problem is real, and it's one we're firmly determined to combat.

Our primary model for fighting violent crime remains our task forces. We work shoulder-to-shoulder with our local, state, and federal partners, using intelligence to drive investigations which identify and target the most violent and dangerous offenders. We investigated and arrested dangerous carjackers and gang members who terrorized their communities. In total, we arrested more than 35 violent criminals during the year.

Organized Crime and Drugs

Transnational organized crime poses a significant threat to our national and economic security. FBI Springfield targets high-level drug dealers and organizations operating in Illinois who distribute for Mexican drug cartels. Our efforts to disrupt and dismantle these organizations led to the arrest of 45 individuals and the seizure of dangerous drugs and firearms.

Financial Crime

To combat financial crime, we assembled a team of highly skilled agents, analysts, and forensic accountants who identify fraud and trace money. Financial crime not only harms individuals and businesses, but it can also erode investor confidence and trust in our financial markets. During the year, our team uncovered bid rigging, the misuse of federal grant money, bank fraud schemes, and significant fraud targeting various COVID-19 relief programs. Our efforts led to charging more than 20 individuals during the year for orchestrating these types of fraud schemes.

Civil Rights

Law enforcement officers are entrusted with power and authority to protect our community. In the rare instances when officers abuse that authority, the FBI prioritizes holding those officers accountable. This year, FBI Springfield brought justice on prison guards who brutally beat an inmate resulting in his death.

Op-Ed

David G. Nanz



Crimes Against Children

We utilize proactive investigative techniques to stay ahead of sexual predators, and by doing so, seek to remove them before they harm children. This year, our efforts resulted in more than 80 individuals sentenced to jail who harmed or attempted to harm children.

Terrorism

Preventing terrorist attacks is a hallmark of the FBI's mission. FBI Director Wray recently commented, "Lone actors are the greatest terrorist threat we face in the U.S. today." This year, the efforts of FBI Springfield's Joint Terrorism Task Force led to nine individuals sentenced

to jail on charges ranging from attempted arson, sabotage of railroad tracks, extortion of a railway, and possession of a destructive device.

Espionage

One of the FBI's most important areas of focus – and one you may not often hear about – is our effort to counter foreign government efforts to steal our secrets and technology. In particular, the Chinese government continues to orchestrate a major effort utilizing its intelligence services, researchers, business conduits, and academics to steal U.S. intellectual property. This year, our efforts led to the disruption of those seeking to steal our secrets and technology.

Cyber Crime

Malicious cyber activity threatens the public's safety and our national and economic security. The FBI is the lead federal agency for investigating cyber attacks and intrusions. We collect and share intelligence and engage with victims while working to unmask those committing malicious cyber activities, wherever they are. This year, our efforts disrupted foreign malicious cyber actors and led to the arrest of two individuals.

These examples highlight just some of the positive impact FBI Springfield made over the last year. Special thanks to our local, state, federal, private sector, and community partners who were integral to our success. We are privileged to serve communities throughout Illinois and will continue to dedicate ourselves to protect the American people in the new year.

David G. Nanz, Special Agent in Charge, FBI Springfield