

THE JOY OF COMICS

REIGNITE YOUR IMAGINATION

For the past couple of decades, we have seen superhero movies rise in popularity to the point where everyone rushes to the theaters whenever a new Marvel or DC movie is released. It's safe to say the current rise in popularity started with Christopher Nolan's "Batman" trilogy and was further propelled by the mass success of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. But these movies didn't just come out of nowhere. They're based on comic book characters who have been going on adventures for well over 50 years.

I've enjoyed reading comics ever since I was a little kid. Back then, I was a voracious reader, and I think you could credit comics with fostering my enjoyment of reading and encouraging me to read more. I was a shy kid who didn't live in the greatest home environment, so comics provided the perfect escape whenever I needed it.

I used to raise money to afford my comics by scouring the street and searching for soda bottles. I would then take those bottles to the grocery store where I could redeem each return for 2 cents. At the time, comics were only 12 or 15 cents, so it didn't take me too long to gather enough funds to pick up a new issue.

When I saved up enough money, I would go and pick out a new issue of "Richie Rich," "Casper the Friendly Ghost," "Archie," or "Dennis the Menace." Once I got older, I started to read DC comics and really enjoyed anything involving Batman. I enjoyed the comic books as well as the recent movies because they give you a definitive bad guy and good guy. It just makes life simpler. We all look up to a hero who fights for the little guys while kicking some bad guy butt.

I didn't get all of my comic needs from traditional comic books, either. I also enjoyed reading the comics that came in the Sunday paper. Reading "Marmaduke" or "Blondie" always brought a smile to my face, but "Peanuts" was my absolute favorite. I had pennants of all of the characters in my room as a kid



and I still have my copy of "Happiness Is a Warm Puppy." In general, comics are just plain fun. They're great for kids who are learning to read and for adults who are trying to reignite their childhood imagination. Most current comics are also beautiful to look at as the artwork is nothing short of amazing.

If you've been interested in getting into comics as a new or veteran reader, May provides one of your best opportunities. On May 7, comic shops across the country will be hosting Free Comic Book Day where you can stop by and grab a few select issues free of charge.

If comics aren't your thing, then you won't want to miss another pop culture event in May — Star Wars Day on May 4. It's the perfect opportunity to watch some of your favorite "Star Wars" movies. I can vividly remember seeing the first few movies multiple times when they were still in theaters. Even now, I won't pass up an opportunity to spend time in a galaxy far, far away with my sons.

Whether you like superheroes, horror, romance, comedy, or any other genre you can think of, there's a comic for you. You just have to get out to your local comic shop and explore the options. Who knows? You may end up discovering a new favorite hobby.

- Jim Monast

MAKE YOUR KITCHEN CLEANER THAN EVER BEFORE

WITH THESE 3 HACKS

You cook your meals, make your coffee, wash the dishes, and do so many other activities in your kitchen. It's no surprise that our kitchens are often the most trafficked rooms in our homes. Our kitchens are also commonly the messiest rooms in the house since they're used to cook meals.

Trying to keep your kitchen clean on a daily basis can be maddening. Every time you make a meal, there's another mess to clean up. It seems like there's no end to the kitchen cleaning process. Thankfully, there are a few hacks you can try that will lengthen your time between cleanings and ideally help your kitchen sparkle.

Garbage Disposal Cleaning

If your home has a garbage disposal, there's a good

chance that it's one of the dirtiest appliances in your kitchen. It's also one of the hardest things to clean since it's located in your sink. But there is an easy trick to keep it fresh. Fill an ice cube tray with water and lemon wedges, then stick it in the freezer. Once it's frozen, crack the ice cubes free, and send them down the drain with the garbage disposal turned on. The lemons will improve the smell while the ice removes any excess grime and cleans the blades.

No Need for Auto Clean

How do you normally clean your oven? Do you press the auto-clean button and let it run? While this works, it will often leave your house with a displeasing smell and can even set off your fire alarms. You can make a mixture of 1/3 cup water,

1/3 cup white vinegar, and 1/2 cup baking soda. Spray the inside of your oven with the mixture, but avoid the heating elements. After 8-12 hours, clean the oven with soapy water and dry it using a cloth. Your oven will be cleaner than you might've even imagined.

Quick Cabinet Cleaning

Your cabinets and pantry can get gross quickly and attract bugs if the items inside of them are open or spilled. If you try to clean your cabinets with a rag, you'll end up missing some of the crumbs and dirt. Instead, use your vacuum cleaner to capture any debris and ensure they are spotless. It's a quick and easy method to keep your cabinets clean.



OUR FRIEND AND CLIENT

BRENDA MCCLESKEY HAS 9 LIVES

Born in Norfolk, Virginia, Brenda McCleskey's dad served in the Navy. The family moved often and settled in Dayton, Ohio, after her grandfather died and her grandmother wasn't doing well. Brenda grew up and raised her own family of five in Dayton (she now has five grandchildren, too). She loves attending the kiddos' sporting events, fishing, and other activities.

She moved to Columbus, Ohio, and began working as a picker at a fulfillment center for one of the world's largest employers. (Fun fact: This company was founded by a bald guy who looks a lot like a bad James Bond villain, but he retired from the company last year and now spends his time rocketing into space, hanging out with movie stars and sailing on his yacht!)

Brenda had some foot problems in her youth, but after surgery, she did fine for years ... until lifting a large box mattress from

overhead to fulfill a customer order. It slid down along her body, striking her right lower leg, foot, and ankle.

She visited doctors the company had sent her to, but she didn't improve. After undergoing all of the normal tests and treatments for tendinitis — and a torn ankle tendon — her instability and pain worsened. Even during surgery, she developed complications: internal bleeding that required three blood transfusions! The doctors told her she nearly didn't make it, but by golly, she did. Still, her problems lingered. The doctors ruled out deep vein thrombosis (DVT), and her orthopedic surgeon suspected she had developed complex regional pain syndrome, a very painful condition I've written about before.

Her employer fought her tooth and nail over the complex regional pain

syndrome (CRPS) and the depression that typically comes with it. While this happened, Brenda began experiencing terrible headaches. Her doctor did a brain scan and ... found a mass on her brain that required urgent surgery to remove.

Brenda is rocking a new, much shorter hairdo now since her brain surgery. Had she not been seeing a doctor anyway, because of her ankle problems, she may not have addressed her headache symptoms. It's surreal to think the scans wouldn't have been done that helped doctors discover the mass in time.



Brenda recently agreed to settle her claim with the Bond-villain company so she can focus on recovering from her brain surgery. As is obvious from her pictures, she's still an upbeat, happy camper ... with just a tad less hair to mess with for now! She's such an inspiration.

BUILDING A MUCH-NEEDED HOSPITAL

NBA STAR MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN HIS HOMETOWN



You often hear about the many professional athletes who go to visit children in the hospital or donate a portion of their salaries to charity, but one NBA star has taken his dedication to charity to the next level. Phoenix Suns' center Bismack Biyombo recently announced that he will be donating the entire \$1.3 million value of his contract to the construction of a hospital located in his hometown of Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Biyombo has made stops all around the league during his NBA career, playing in Charlotte, Toronto, Orlando, and now Phoenix, but he actually took last season off to take care of his sick father, who passed away this past August. While taking care of his father, Biyombo realized how lucky he was that he had the opportunity to even bring his father to a hospital.

"I told my agent my salary for this year would be going to the construction of a hospital back home to give hope to the hopeless," Biyombo said in a YouTube video for his foundation. "I want to be able to give them

better conditions so they can somewhat have hope that their loved ones will be able to live and see another day."

The Bismack Biyombo Foundation focuses on creating initiatives that will give children in the DRC opportunities to pursue a future in athletics and education, while promoting good health. They've been able to give out 185 scholarships annually, 150 higher education opportunities, and even help over a thousand patients a week receive treatment in Congolese hospitals. During the early days of the pandemic, Biyombo's Foundation raised \$1 million for medical supplies in hospitals across the DRC.

Biyombo isn't the only NBA star who is trying to make a difference in their hometown. LeBron James recently opened his own school in Akron, Ohio, where he hopes to provide an education to those in need. Additionally, Shaquille O'Neal is constantly making headlines for his charitable donations. Biyombo's donation is just another example of the charitable contributions made by many professional athletes.

SUDOKU

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 9 | | 6 | 8 |
| | | 5 | | | | 9 | | 7 |
| 8 | | 6 | 1 | 7 | | | | 4 |
| | 8 | 7 | | 6 | 3 | | 4 | 9 |
| | 6 | | 9 | 2 | 1 | | | 5 |
| 9 | | 1 | 8 | | | | 2 | |
| 5 | 3 | | | 9 | 6 | | | 1 |
| | | 8 | 4 | 5 | | 6 | 9 | 3 |
| 6 | | 9 | | 1 | | 7 | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | 4 | 9 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 7 | 2 | 5 |
| 5 | 3 | | | 9 | 6 | | | 1 |
| | | 8 | 4 | 5 | | 6 | 9 | 3 |
| 9 | | 1 | 8 | | | | 2 | |
| | 6 | | 9 | 2 | 1 | | | 5 |
| | 8 | 7 | | 6 | 3 | | 4 | 9 |
| 8 | | 6 | 1 | 7 | | | | 4 |
| | | 5 | | | | 9 | | 7 |
| | 1 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 9 | | 6 | 8 |

ANSWER



MUNCHIES WITH MOLLY MOTHER'S DAY BRUNCH RAINBOW FRITTATA

Inspired by EatingWell.com

INGREDIENTS

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1/4 cup sweet potato, diced
- 1/4 cup yellow pepper, diced
- 1/4 cup broccoli, chopped
- 8 eggs
- Basil, thyme, salt, and pepper, to taste
- 1/2 avocado, pitted, peeled, and thinly sliced
- Cherry tomatoes, halved
- Sriracha hot sauce (optional)

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350 F and coat a cast-iron skillet with nonstick cooking spray.
2. In the skillet over medium heat, cook sweet potatoes, yellow pepper, and broccoli until soft.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together eggs, basil, thyme, salt, and pepper.
4. Pour egg mixture into skillet with vegetables. Don't stir but instead use a spatula to lift the edges of the egg mixture until it is evenly distributed.
5. Transfer mixture to oven. Bake for 5 minutes or until the dish sets.
6. Top with avocado and tomatoes. Drizzle Sriracha on top (if desired).

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

1 I've Enjoyed Comics Since I Was a Kid

2 3 Hacks to Improve Your Kitchen's Cleanliness

Brenda McCleskey Has 9 Lives

3 NBA Star Making a Difference in His Hometown

Mother's Day Brunch Rainbow Frittata

4 Remembering the Space Race

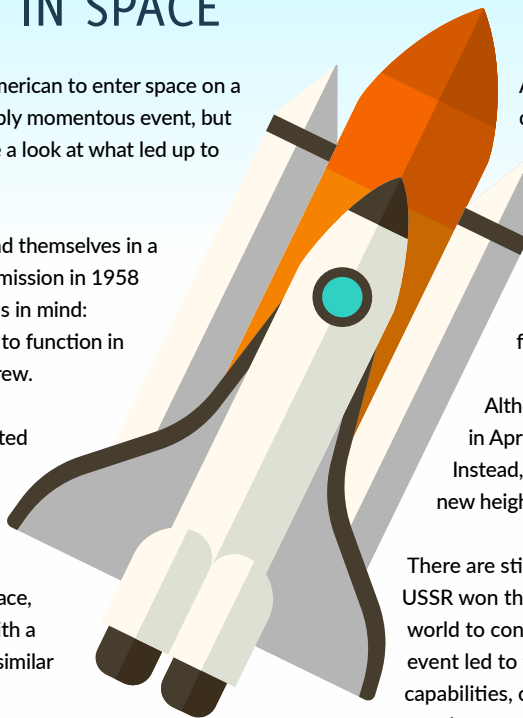
AMERICA'S JOURNEY TO ORBIT EARTH

THE FIRST AMERICAN IN SPACE

On May 5, 1961, Alan B. Shepard became the first American to enter space on a Mercury capsule named Freedom 7. It was an incredibly momentous event, but what all had to occur for it to even happen? Let's take a look at what led up to Shepard's launch into space.

During the 1960s, the U.S. and the Soviet Union found themselves in a space race. The United States first began their space mission in 1958 with Project Mercury. Project Mercury had three goals in mind: orbiting a crewed spacecraft, investigating the ability to function in space, and safely recovering the spacecraft and the crew.

Before the first American took flight, the U.S. conducted several test launches to see what they needed to adjust and modify to be safely launched into space. The first successful launch of Mercury without an astronaut occurred in December 1960. But before they attempted to launch an American into space, NASA tested the Mercury capsule in January 1961 with a chimpanzee named Ham, who took a route that was similar to the one Shepard would eventually take.



After going through numerous simulations, NASA decided that Shepard would be making the first flight. He began his mission on May 5 at the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, and over half a million Americans watched the launch on nearby beaches. Shepard took his orbit around the Earth and made a successful return. He then received NASA's highest reward, the Distinguished Service Medal, from President John F. Kennedy on May 8, 1961.

Although the Soviet Union sent the first human into orbit in April 1961, this didn't stop the U.S. from pushing forward. Instead, the bravery of these men inspired the U.S. to go to new heights and have the first man on the moon in 1969.

There are still ongoing debates about whether the U.S. or the USSR won the space race. Either way, this race allowed the world to conduct more research on our galaxy. As a whole, this event led to tremendous efforts to push the limits of human capabilities, create new technology to explore outer space, and see what our universe holds.