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AFN marks milestone for overseas streaming

STORY AND PHOTO BY JONATHAN SNYDER, STARS AND STRIPES Published: December 30, 2024

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION IWAKUNI — U.S. service members, Defense Department civilians, military retirees and their families living overseas together have watched more than 1 million hours of American Forces Network streaming TV since the service launched two

ing to the DOD. "It's been a good year for AFN streaming,'

years ago, accord-

Kim Antos, associate director of the AFN Broadcast Center, said in a DOD news release Thursday. "Everyone at AFN worked so hard to make this happen and ensure America's military overseas have

news, entertainment and top-rated sports."

AFN also reported signing up more than 100,000 subscribers for the AFN Now app, which provides live television and on-demand movies and TV shows. The app is available free to all DOD personnel and their families assigned overseas.

"I think the popularity of simulcasting our traditional satellite TV

channels enabled us to hit many of these milestones," Antos said. "Our audiences come for the live sports

and news, but they stay for the fantastic entertainment programming we offer."

An AFN spokesman could not be reached for further comment.

In 2024, the NFL authorized AFN to stream every game in the



Marine Staff Sgt. Nils Aylor, Marine Wing Support Squadron 171, displays the AFN Now app on his smart phone at MCAS Iwakuni on Dec. 30.

powerhouse sports league to military audiences overseas, the re-

lease said. "I use AFN Now to watch the Exchange at MCAS Iwakuni on football games," Marine Sgt. Tyler Dec. 30. "Being out here, I still

McMullen, Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 12, told Stars and Stripes outside the Marine Corps love football, so I still got to find some way to watch it.'

"It's pretty expensive with NFL streaming services, so AFN Now is pretty sick," McMullen said.

Households can stream the app on up to four platforms, including smartphones, computers and television devices such as Roku, Fire TV Stick and Apple TV.

"I have the app on my phone," he said. "So, while I'm at work, I have it on the side of my desk and I can watch the games while I'm finishing my work up."

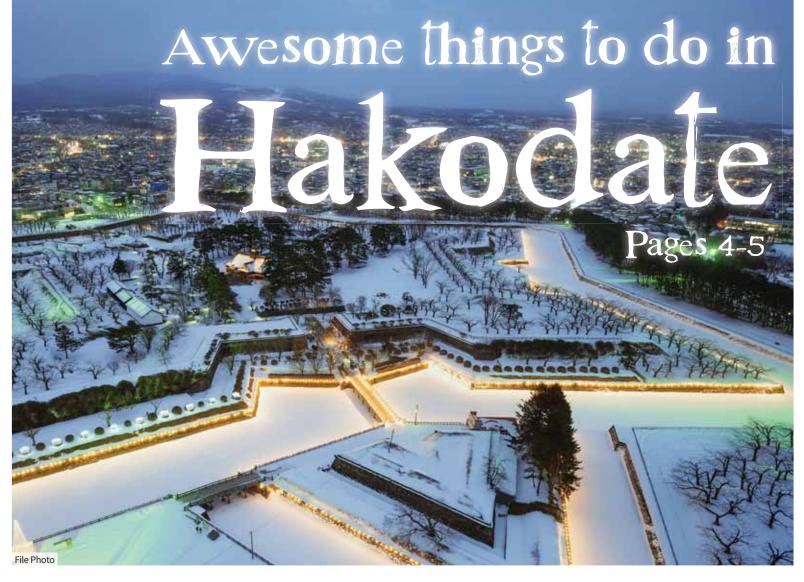
One feature that McMullen likes about the AFN Now app is the notification system that lets him know when the NFL games

"AFN streaming has an important future and we're just getting started," Antos said.

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STORY AND PHOTOS BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI, STRIPES JAPAN

escribed as a "sacred place and source of artistic inspiration" during its inscription as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. the Fuji Five Lakes area is home to natural wonders like Mt. Fuii, the pristine lakes, eight ponds of the purest water and cultural wonders like villages of traditional homes and buildings. For decades and probably longer, many have drawn inspiration from this beautiful getaway, and you can too!

These majestic lakes at the foot of Mt. Fuji each boast a distinct color and look. The largest of the five are Yamanakako and Kawaguchiko which are also the busiest thanks to the many hotels, sports and resort facilities they are host to. Saiko, Shojiko and Motosuko, the three

other lakes remain untamed and Don't forget to check out Oshino

surrounded by the tangled and wild Aokigahara Jukai forest. Interest-

> ingly, these three lakes are still connected via underground waterways and consequently maintain the same surface level of 2,952 feet above

> Spend time at the Saiko Ivashinosato Nenba village featuring traditional folk houses and great souvenir shopping.

Hakkai, eight ponds revered for their crystal-clear waters fed directly from the snow that melts of Mt. Fuji every year.

And, if you're hungry, try Houtou, a regional miso-based broth soup with flat and thick noodles, a variety of meat options, and chunks of hearty local vegetables like pumpkin, green onions and mushrooms. This delicious and warm noodle soup will energize you after all the walking you'll do in the

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Offering: Pizza, Personal Pan Pizza, Wings, Pasta, Breadsticks, Dessert and multiple drinks











Photo courtesy of Ladeania Jackson

Air National Guard Master Sgt. Ladeania Jackson competes on the reality TV show, "The Summit." Photo courtesy of CBS

Master sergeant wins \$250K on reality show 'The Summit'

BY JEREMY STILLWAGNER, STARS AND STRIPES Published: December 18, 2024

YOKOTA AIR BASE — Ladeania Jackson, an Air National Guard master sergeant, and three others who completed a 14-day challenge in the Southern Alps of New Zealand shared a \$1 million prize on the reality TV show "The Summit."

The 16 contestants who started the show carried a share of the prize money in their backpacks but, as they dropped out, surrendered it to those who carried on.

Jackson — known as "Punkin Jackson" on the show — said she has been an avid reality TV fan since childhood. When she found out about auditions for "The Summit" through an Instagram post, she seized the opportunity.

"We had no idea what exactly we were signing up for," she told Stars and Stripes in an interview at Yokota Air Base, an airlift hub in western Tokyo. "I just thought it would be a great experience and a great opportunity."

A native of Columbus, Miss., Jackson serves with the 194th Air Support Operations Group at Camp Murray, Wash. But her home is at Yokota with her spouse, Senior Master Sgt. Tamika Boler of the 374th Logistics Readiness Squadron.

Jackson went home with \$250,000 and plans to use the money to expand her family. It will cover some of the cost of in vitro fertilization, she said

Jackson said the competitors weren't told what they had signed up for until the first day of filming.

They were given 14 days to scale a mountain while carrying an equal share of a \$1 million prize in addition to all their gear. Anyone who made it to the top would win a share of the prize money, but if no one completed the journey, all the money would be lost.

"Hearing those words was a shock, to say the least," Jackson said. "None of us had any kind of hiking experience or mountain climbing experience, so it was going to be challenging for sure. I was getting what I signed up for, a challenge.3

As their trek wore on, contestants were eliminated through votes and challenges until the final three reached the summit of Mount Head.

We all had a goal to make it to the top, and to be one of the three that made it, win the game and accomplish that goal, was an amazing feeling that is truly hard to describe," Jackson said.

The show averaged 2.1 million viewers per episode, according to TV tracker tvseriesfinale.com, but earned mixed reviews.

"The Summit" ends up a cheap knockoff of the CBS network's defining reality show, 'Survivor,'

said Kelly Lawler, TV critic for USA Today.

Photo courtesy of CBS

The show is "too physically difficult for most of its contestants and full of nonsensical twists and rules that make it hard to understand, let alone get sucked into," she wrote Sept 27. "There's very little suspense to a

show where it seems clear the biggest guy is probably going to be the winner."

Joel Keller of the Decider website was kinder. "The vistas in that part of the world are spectacular," he wrote Sept. 29. "The show is worth watching

just to show this group going from the lush greenery at the base of the mountain to the Arctic conditions near

Jackson hopes to compete on more reality TV shows and is eager for the next challenge.

"Your mind is your biggest obstacle," she said. "If you can get over that, you can accomplish any dream or goal you set out to accomplish."

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Awesome things to do in Ha

akodate, in southern Hokkaido, has an exotic atmosphere with classic brick buildings and an amazing night view from Mt. Hakodate. Add to those sights

culinary delights that include famous seafood from the Tsugaru Strait, and you have a city that draws tourists thr are ten fun things to do in Hakodate -



Squid fishing ⋰at the Hakodate Morning Market

The Hakodate Morning Market ("Hakodate Asaichi") is an experience you definitely don't want to miss. Shops sell fruits and vegetables, dried foods, sweets, clothing, and more, all centered on fresh fish and a lively early morning atmosphere. At one corner of the market is the always vibrant Donburi Yokocho Market, which serves seafood bowls and other dishes.

At the Asaichi's Ekini Market you can try your hand at squid fishing, a popular activity in which you can catch your own squid from a small tank before eating it on the spot. The price varies depending on the size of the day's squid, and it is about 600 to 2,000 yen per person (including cooking fee). The fresh, exceptionally delicious squid are like nothing you've ever tasted. Here you'll also be able to try "ikagoro" (squid intestines) – a delicacy that can only be eaten fresh.

Hakodate Morning Market

ADDRESS: 9-19, Wakamatsucho, Hakodate, Hokkaido PHONE: 0138-22-7981 (Hakodate Morning Market Cooperative Association Secretariat)

HOURS: 6 a.m. - 2 p.m. (January - April), 5 a.m. - 2 p.m. (May -December), differs from shop to shop



Enjoy the footbath near Yunokawa Onsen Station

Hakodate's City Tram is convenient for sightseeing throughout the city, connecting major destinations like Motomachi with its Hakodate Ropeway platform and historic churches, to the Red Brick Warehouses, Goryokaku Park, and Yunokawa Onsen. One-day tram tickets and one- and two-day passes valid for both the tram and city buses are useful transit options depending on your destination and how many days you'll be in the city.

The footbath located near Yunokawa Onsen Station is a popular spot not only for tourists but also for Hakodate citizens. This sodium/calcium chloride spring is available free of charge. Bring a towel to dry your feet and you can relax while waiting for the tram.

Public Footbath 湯巡り舞台

Cooperative)

ADDRESS: 1-16-5, Yunokawacho, Hakodate, Hokkaido PHONE: 0138-57-8988 (Hakodate Yunokawa Onsen Ryokan

HOURS: 9 a.m. - 9 p.m., open daily

PRICE: Free



Eat Hakodate's most popular hamburgers at Lucky Pierrot

Hakodate Lucky Pierrot is a local hamburger chain with shops found only in and around Hakodate. The Bay Area Main Store is the original, opened in 1987. Following a philosophy of "no one is the same," each of the seventeen locations are uniquely designed and decorated. In addition to the three most popular burgers – the Chinese Chicken, Lucky Egg, and Pork Katsu (Cutlet) Burgers – the menu includes Hokkaido-esque burgers like the Hakodateyama Burger (1,100 yen, tax excluded) and the Genghis Khan Burger (350 yen tax excluded), curry, and omelet rice. They're all delicious, and sure to put a smile

Hakodate Lucky Pierrot Bay Area Main Store 函館ラッキーピエロ ベイエリア本店

ADDRESS: 23-18, Suehirocho, Hakodate, Hokkaido **PHONE:** 0138-26-9099

HOURS: 10 a.m. - 9 p.m., open daily



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kodate, Hokkaido

Hakodate ramen, fresh local hamburgers, and oughout the year. Here recommended by a lo-



HAKODATE



Aerial view of Goryokaku Park's cherry blossoms from Goryokaku Tower

okaku was the political center of Ezo (Hokkaido's forne), but has been a public park since 1914.

thousdan cherry trees have been planted in the park, it one of the most acclaimed cherry blossom spots in o. Prime blossom viewing takes place from late April May. From 107-meter-high Goryokaku Tower, adjacent ark, you can enjoy views of the pink, star-shaped fort, itself, Mt. Hakodate, and the Tsugaru Strait. Be sure ss these much-beloved cherry blossoms in full bloom!

3: 43-9, Goryokakucho, Hakodate, Hokkaido

)138-51-4785 (Goryokaku Tower) a.m. - 6 p.m., open daily

ON: Adults 1,000 yen



Handmade craft at the classic Kanemori Red Brick Warehouse and Meijikan

nori Red Brick Warehouse is a renovated commercial se used during the Meiji period. Representative of the e Bay area, the Warehouse is an exotic shopping area ouvenir shops, sweet shops, and beer halls that retain the ere of the Meiji era.

date Meijikan is a renovation of the former Hakodate ice, which was built in 1911 as Hokkaido's first post ofde the building, there's a Handmade Music Box Workere customers can make their own music boxes, as well andblast Experience Workshop where they can create ted glass art (reservation required).

boxes from 100 years ago are also displayed on the first d music box concerts are held in the morning and afterbject to cancellation).

ori Red Brick Warehouse ノガ倉庫

: 14-12, Suehirocho, Hakodate Shi, Hokkaido

138-27-5530

2:30 a.m. - 8 p.m. (varies depending on the season), open daily

te Meijikan 月治館

i: 11-17, Toyokawacho, Hakodate, Hokkaido

138-27-7070

30 a.m. - 6 p.m. (varies depending on the season), closed Wednesdays



Visit hot spring monkeys at Hakodate Tropical Botanical Garden

The Hakodate Tropical Botanical Garden opened in 1970 as a place to enjoy the feeling of summer all year long. Approximately 3,000 colorful flowers tropical plants from 300 species are on display, and the garden's monkey habitat is home to more than 70 Japanese macaques. Macaques don't bathe on hotter days, but consistently soak in hot springs to cope with the harsh Hokkaido winter. Come check out these relaxed monkeys!

Hakodate Tropical Botanical Garden 函館市熱帯植物園

ADDRESS: 3-1-15, Yunokawacho, Hakodate, Hokkaido

HOURS: 9:30 a.m. - 6 p.m. (April I - October), 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

(November - March), closed December 29th - January 1st

ADMISSION: Adults 300 yen



Do the Squid Dance

Every August, the Hakodate Port Festival takes place over five days as the city's biggest, most colorful summer event. Among many individual events, the Hakodate Ikaodori (squid dance) is the most exciting. Volunteers came up with the idea that "anyone can dance" in 1980, and the dance was first performed during the Port Festival the following year, gradually gaining popularity with festival-goers.

Since Hakodate is famous as a "squid town," squid dishes like squid sashimi, salted squid, and squid somen are represented in the dance. Hand fans with choreography instructions are distributed at the festival venue, so give it a try!

Hakodate Port Festival

函館港まつり

LOCATION: Hakodate city area (Jujigai Station, Hakodate Station,

Chiyogadai Station, Goryokaku)

PHONE: 0138-27-3535 (Hakodate Port Festival Executive Committee)

DATE: August 1-5



Popular coffee ice cream ⋰at Coffee Room Kikuchi

In addition to hot drinks, Coffee Room Kikuchi sells delicious soft serve ice cream with a gelato-like texture. Available in mocha, milk, vanilla, and three-flavor mix varieties (270 yen including tax), take-out customers stop by one after another for this cool treat. You should definitely try it if you're in the vicinity of Yunokawa Onsen.

Coffee Room Kikuchi

コーヒールームきくち

ADDRESS: 3-13-19, Yunokawacho, Hakodate, Hokkaido, 042-0932

PHONE: 0138-59-3495

HOURS: 9:30 a.m. - 7 p.m., closed New Year holidays



The spectacular night view from Mt. Hakodate

With Mt. Hakodate jutting into the sea, which wraps around either side of the city, the night view of Hakodate is said to be one of the three best night views in the world. The transition from dusk to night is the best viewing time as the red sky and city lights create a fantastic atmosphere. The top of the mountain can be reached via ropeway, bus, or car. However, there are restrictions on private transportation depending on the season and time of day, and public transportation is recommended to avoid traffic congestion. The buses' narrow and winding mountain route is thrilling, compared to the ropeway's direct ascent, so taking the ropeway up Mt. Hakodate and riding the bus down is a convenient way to experience the best of both worlds.

Hakodateyama Ropeway 函館山ロープウェイ

ADDRESS: 19-7, Motomachi, Hakodate, Hokkaido

PHONE: 0138-23-3105

HOURS: 10 a.m. - 10 p.m. (last descent) (April 20 - September 30), 10

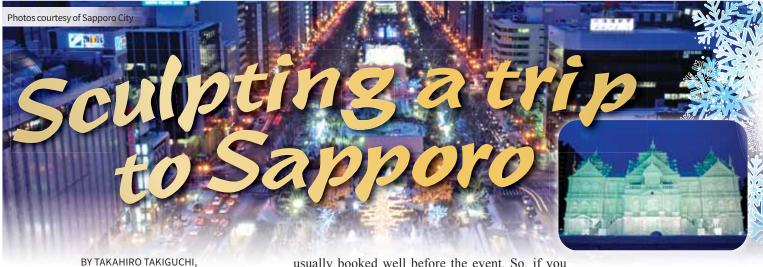
a.m. - 9 p.m. (last descent) (October 1 - April 19), open daily

FARE: Adults (junior high school students and above) 1,800 yen (round

trip) 1,200 yen (one way)

Hakodate has so much more than just this top 9!

In the midst of Hokkaido's wealth of magnificent natural scenery, Hakodate is one of a few locations where you can get a feeling of history and romance. In this city that developed along with its port near the end of the Edo period, there are many other impressive sights besides the ten we've recommended including foreign-influenced buildings like the Orthodox Church and the former Russian Consulate, the grave of famous poet Takuboku Ishikawa, and the relaxing Yunokawa Onsen. Be sure you have plenty of time to visit the next time you're in Hakodate!



Sapporo Snow Festiva

Period: Feb. 4 - 11 Location: Odori Park, Susukino and Tsudome in Sapporo City, Hokkaido Prefecture OPEN: Odori Park and Susukino (24 hours), Tsudome (10 a.m. - 4 p.m.) Tel: 011-281-6400



STRIPES JAPAN

undreds of gigantic, eye-catching castles, shrines, Disney characters and Darth Vader of Star Wars will be shining February in the winter sunlight in Sapporo, the capital of Japan's northern main island of Hokkaido. They are not made from glass or any synthetic materials, only ice and snow!

Annual Sapporo Snow Festival, one of the largest events in northernmost major island of Hokkaido, kicks off its 75th edition Feb. 4. For eight days, as many as 200 eye-catching snow statues and ice sculptures will dot Odori Park and other sites in Sapporo, dazzling by day and by night an estimated 2.4 million visitors including 107,000 from overseas. This festival began in 1950 when students of five high schools in Sapporo City created six snow sculptures at a corner of Odori Park where Sapporo citizens usually disposed shoveled snow during winter time. It has grown as an annual local event in the city. The festival added ice sculptures five years later when members of the Japan Self-Defense Forces took part in the fun. The 1972 Sapporo Winter Olympics helped to bring international recognition of the festival, and two years later the International Snow Sculpture Contest began, with teams from many countries around the world joining in. The U.S. military has been part of the festivities for some time, with a team from Naval Air Facility Misawa in Japan participating more than 30 times in the international snow carving contest.

The main exhibition sites are Odori Park, in the center of downtown Sapporo and Susukino, where the Susukino Ice World 2025 will be held. This festival, also located downtown, presents ice sculptures featuring live crab, squid and salmon, and other forms of entertainment.

The sculptures are on display 24 hours a day at Odori Park and Susukino, and are illuminated until 10 p.m. at Odori Park.

This annual festival is so popular among tourists that almost all hotels within Sapporo city are usually booked well before the event. So, if you are interested in the festival, package tours are highly recommended.

Other sites to see

A package tour includes visiting to several tourist attractions in the vicinity of the festival site, so you can enjoy what the northern main island of Hokkaido has to offer through the tour as well.

In fact, Hokkaido is a treasure trove of tourist attractions.

In Sapporo City, there are many historical places to see, including a clock tower and building from the Sapporo Agricultural College (now Hokkaido University). The school's founder, an American instructor named William S. Clark, said, "Boys, be ambitious!" in his 1879 parting speech to his students, an inspirational phrase that has become nationally known in Japan. A visit to Sapporo Beer Garden is also considered an essential part of enjoying the city.

Hakodate, an important port city south of Sapporo, offers a splendid night view from Mt. Hakodate that is considered to be one of the top three in the world. The city also features a number of Western-style buildings along the waterfront that have been converted into restaurants, shops and even a beer hall. Another interesting tourist site is the Trappist Monastery, outside the city, whose butter cookies have become famous.

The Asahiyama Zoo is another wonderful attraction, drawing more than 2 million visitors a year. It features an interactive approach to viewing its animals that almost makes you feel you can reach out and touch them.

Hokkaido's onsen (hot spring) resorts are also a major draw as are its many ski resorts, including Niseko, which has achieved fame for being a prime destination for Australian skiers and the hotels catering to Western tastes.

So, whether you come for the festival or to experience other winter delights, a visit to Hokkaido should be high on your list of things to do this

takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com



From New Chitose Airport, you can take a JR train or a bus to Sapporo. Rental cars are also available at the airport. There is a special information counter for foreign travelers next to the JR ticket counter (midori-no-madoguchi) in the basement floor of the airport. The information staff provides services in English, Chinese and Korean.

Take a tour with ITT

The following package tours are available within Japan.

■ YOKOTA ITT is offering two festival package tours, (1) Feb 3-5, \$790 for ages 12 and up (2 people sharing), \$775 (3 people sharing) and \$ 450 for ages 3-5. (2) Feb 10-12, \$805 for ages 12 and up (2 people sharing), \$775 (3 people sharing) and \$450 for ages 3-5. For more info, visit Yokota ITT website or call 227-

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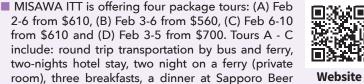
Airport, two night hotel stay, two breakfasts and tour

escort. For more info, visit Misawa ITT website or

Facebook or call 226-3555.



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Stripes Sports Trivia

The NHL has seen 4 teams come back to advance after facing a 3-games-to-none deficit in a playoff series. In MLB, this has only occurred once - Boston in 2003. And the feat has never happened in the NBA. The last team to do it in the NHL did so in 2014 - Who made the improbable comeback against an in-state rival?

Answer

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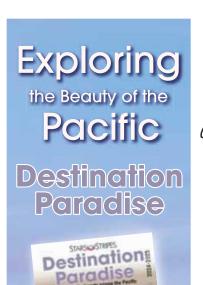
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STARS STRIPES

Kanji of the week



Language Lesson

Where is bathroom?

Toire wa doko desuka?

DID YOU KNOW?

apan is getting older and older! While the nation has the highest life expectancy, 84.3 years, in the world (81.47 for men, 87.57 for women), about 28.4 percent of Japan's population is 65 or older. The U.S. ranks 40th at age 78.5, and while the number of elderly rapidly increases in Japan, the number of children being born declines, causing major concerns over how a shrinking workforce will continue to fund healthcare and social security.



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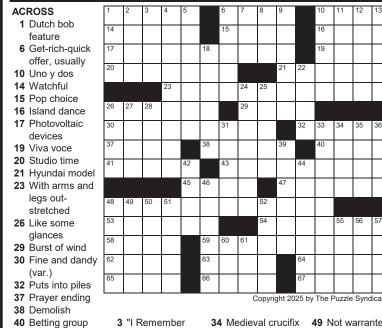


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- 27 Hefty book
- 28 Store sign
- 31 Dots on a map
- 33 Favorable, as a

- 34 Medieval crucifix 49 Not warranted
- 50 Payola, e.g. 35 Kind of bridge
- _ gin fizz
- **39** 100th of a drachma
- 42 Big drink
- 44 Sunrise greeter
- 46 Eleven"
- (Clooney film)
- 48 Fruit skins
- 61 PC "brain'

51 Down the road

52 Aviary sound

56 Style of poker

55 Alleviate

57 Spots

60 Murmur

Answers to Previous Crossword:

Α	L	F	Α		S	0	Α	Р			S	Р	Α	М
L	Ε	Α	Р		U	R	G	Ε		F	Α	R	С	Е
L	Α	٧	Α		Р	1	Е	D		1	Ν	Е	R	Т
0	٧	Е	R	S	Е	Е		-	С	Е	D	Т	Е	Α
W	Е	S	Т	Е	R	Ν		G	0	R	S	Е		
			М	Α	S	Т	Е	R	L	Υ		Ν	В	Α
Α	S	S	Е	R	Т		L	Е	0		Ι	D	Е	Α
J	0	Н	Ν		I	D	L	Е	R		Ν	Е	Α	R
Α	L	0	Т		Т	Ε	Е		S	Ε	Ν	D	U	Р
R	0	W		Р	1	Ν	Ν	Α	С	L	Ε			
		Т	Α	R	0	Т		С	Н	Α	R	G	Е	R
M	Α	R	Т	I	Ν	I		С	Ε	Ν	Т	I	М	Ε
Α	Χ	ı	0	М		S	Т	Ε	М		U	٧	Ε	Α
D	1	Α	Ν	Ε		Т	0	Ν	Ε		В	Ε	Ν	D
Е	L	L	Е			S	Е	Т	S		Е	Ν	D	S

SUDOKU

5 1

9

6

9 4

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Edited by Margie E. Burke

HOW TO SOLVE:

Each row must contain the numbers 1 to 9; each column must contain the numbers 1 to 9: and each set of 3 by 3 boxes must

6 2

6

3

5 3

1

6

8

6

4

5

ı	Answer to Previous Sudoku:											
	8	9	6	4	2	7	1	3	5			
	7	5	3	8	6	1	9	4	2			
	2	4	1	3	9	5	7	8	6			
			5	1	4	9	3	7	8			
	9	3	7	2	8	6	5	1	4			
1	4	1	8	7	5	3	6	2	9			
1	1	6	4	9	7	8	2	5	3			
	5	7	2	6	3	4	8	9	1			
_	3	8	9	5	1	2	4	6	7			



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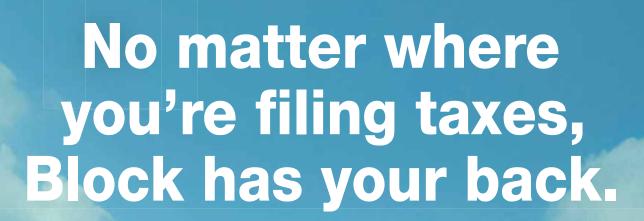


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