

The Chariot

Edition 1

September 2021



What are students really lacking this school year?

by Ashley Baker

As the beginning of the year is slowly fading away and we are entering a stable five day week, it is important to take a step back and gain perspective on the importance of mental health throughout the school year.

I interviewed one of my peers to gain more perspective on how individual students viewed this issue, “In my freshman year, I struggled through Covid to keep up with grades and expectations, while I was also trying to find a peaceful environment to work in at home,” says Wyomissing Area High School

student, Emily Cassler. “I worked hard, but assignments continued to get away from me until I found myself apologizing for putting my mental health before my math homework.”

As we are exiting our COVID year, it is more important than ever to be serious about our mental health, as it is the basis of all of our decisions. The CDC government says, “Mental health affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices.” (Continued on page 2).

Nightvale Presents: Who are they and why should you care

by Sutton Dareneau

Nightvale Presents is a podcast production company run by co-creators Joseph Fink and Jeffery Cranor. Beginning in 2015 with their first podcast, *Welcome to Nightvale*, they are dedicated to promoting independent podcasts and pushing the boundaries of their storytelling craft. That's all well and good and all, but why should you care? Why am I writing an article about this specific company? Well, first and foremost, their storytelling is amazing. They use different formats, completely forgoing the norm. *Welcome to Nightvale* is told through the format of community radio, *Alice isn't dead* is told entirely through a truck driver's dispatch, and *Within the Wires* is told using found audio. Even more than that, they are rather staunch allies. It goes beyond having LGBTQ side characters, or even main characters. In their universes, not only are they main characters but it is just accepted. (Continued on page 3).

Want to try some new snacks? Check out Ellie Folga's smoothie recipes on page 4.

Before you order those new clothes online, check out Stella Koch's article on thrifting on page 5.

Learn more about the school's renovations from Paul Monsour on page 6.

Check out the new student ad section on page 9. Take a break from school work with the fun section on page 10.

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To summarize, when mental health goes downhill, and students are experiencing forms of depression or anxiety on any scale, grades are likely to slip. All of a sudden that student, who is already struggling, feels even more swamped with piles of work and unrealistic expectations.

At this point, it is easy to blame teachers for their rigorous curriculum, but a more healthy approach would be to accept the situation for what it is and improve yourself first. Basically, you can't change your teacher's expectations, but you can change

your own. By doing some of these simple self-care activities once a day, or once a week, motivation will follow:

- Meditate after you wake up to center yourself before the day starts.
- Make your bed when you wake up to complete your first task of the day — this will put you in a better mindset to complete more tasks as the day goes on.
- Find time to journal in the morning for two to five minutes a day to get your feeling out on paper.

- After school, listen to music or watch a show to give yourself some much needed relaxation time.

- Before starting homework, light a candle and let your thoughts wander. I have found that I am much more susceptible to information when my mind is free of roaming thoughts.

Of course there are other ways of showing self love to add some peace into hectic lifestyles, but these were just a few. Remember that there are always people or groups to help when times get difficult, so don't ever hesitate to reach out and talk about your mental health.

Cross County “isn’t a Sport”

by Tyler Nolt



Cross country “isn't a sport.” For some context, I am a cross country runner going into my second high school season. For the most part, I agree with the statement. Many of us on the team have been practicing all summer, and there have been very few times when I felt as though I was participating in a sport. The cross country team isn't like most other sports teams; it reminds me more of a friend group. Even people who hate running come to every cross country practice because of the amazing people on the team.

When running, you will usually run in a group of people who are at around the same skill level as you. You'll most likely be with your group until the end of the run, which can range from 30 minutes to more than an hour. That doesn't include the time it takes to warm up and stretch, so you could end up spending more than 2 hours with each other. When you're surrounded by the same people

almost everyday, you get used to them rather quickly. When I joined the team last year, I had not met anyone else there. I was very introverted, so I did not interact with many new people. Over time, I started talking to these guys a lot more, because I was around them pretty much every other day. These are the people I now talk to everyday, and my best memories were made with them. Because of the amazing team atmosphere the sport is made very enjoyable, which is the reason it does not feel like a sport even though you are pushing yourself.

So while I agree that cross country does not feel like a sport when we are practicing, race day is a completely different story. That's when you have to prepare both your mind and your body to perform the best they can. It is when your hard work and dedication pays off, something we will be seeing a lot of that this season.

(Continued from page 1) It's part of the storyline, sure, Cecil, community radio host from *Welcome to Nightvale*, gets a romance arc, but it's not the main issue. In *Alice isn't dead* she chases after her wife, but the whole thing isn't about discrimination against her, or simply about the fact that she's lesbian. It's relevant to the plot, but it isn't the entire plot, which is honestly really refreshing.

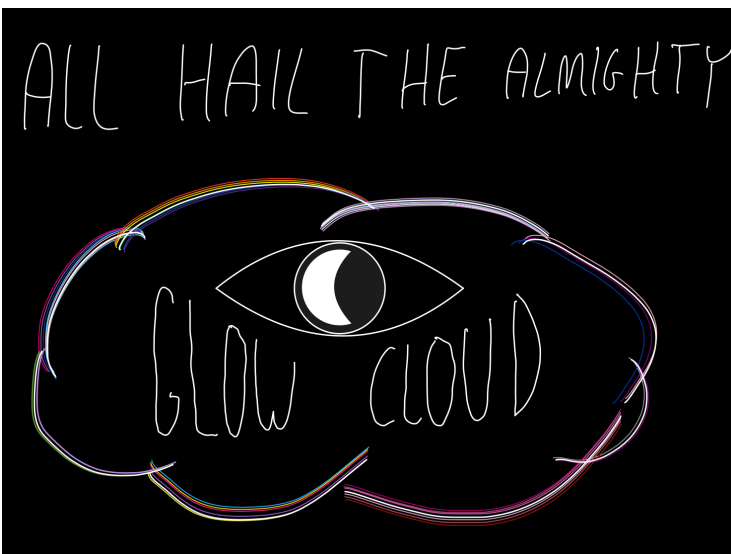
So now we know who Nightvale Presents is, and why you should care, but that only takes up roundabout a paragraph, and this simply won't do. This is barely skimming the surface. I found this with a simple google search and, as we know, my articles are defined by the amount of stupid research I do. And so, I have taken upon myself to listen to three episodes of every single podcast they have created. Each episode is between twenty minutes and an hour. This burned a majority of my week and my mental stability. However, as of 8:27 Thursday, September 9th, exactly one day before my article is due, I have finished. I am done. And I can only talk about a few, only 5 of which I recommend.

We'll start at the beginning, with both my listening experience and Nightvale Presents first podcast. That is to say, let's start with *Welcome to Nightvale*. *Welcome to Nightvale*, as previously stated, is told in the format of community radio, complete with ads, sponsorships, news stories, weather reports,

and traffic. The thing about this little town called Nightvale, however, is that it is very, very strange, but nobody wants to admit it. For instance, the weather report is a song, there are glowing lights above the Arby's, and there exists a mind controlling, dead animal dropping Glow Cloud. This almighty Glow Cloud is also president of the school board. *Welcome to Nightvale* is a mix of episodic and linear. Each episode has its own smaller conflict and resolution, usually getting resolved during the weather, but the characters, places, and plot all piece together to create a larger picture of this little town.

Moving forward to the second podcast I'd mentioned: *Alice isn't dead*. This one is about a truck driver's journey to find her missing wife. It's told from her dispatch on the truck. The cool thing about this one, is that the truck driver isn't expecting to be heard, she's simply throwing her voice, her stories, into the static of the radio, and hoping beyond all belief that somehow her wife, Alice, will hear it. But once again, because this is Nightvale Presents, in comes the dystopian, the surreality. While on the highways, she sees things never meant to be seen. This one is far more structured than *Welcome to Nightvale*, having three parts with ten chapters a piece. With that, we are out of Story Podcasts.

On to the Talky Talkies. First on the chopping block is *Our Plague Year*, a podcast made entirely of audio essays inspired by, well, our plague year: 2020. It's a lot more personal than the others. You can tell how tired some of the speakers are. I recommend listening to it when you're feeling down, or during a rainy day. It has that sad, angry, bittersweet mix that's so deeply personal that you almost never get with other podcasts. After that comes *Random Number Generator Horror Podcast no. 9*. (Continued on page 4)



(Continued from page 3) This is a horror movie review show run by Jeffery Cranor, someone who does not care for horror, and Cecil Baldwin, voice of Nightvale, and someone who really really does. If you read the description, you can get a very brief rating of the movie, covering a range of approachability, gore, jump scares, creeping dread, and more. This is to say, you can either refuse to watch the movie, and just listen to them talk about it, or take their ratings into mind and watch it along with them. The final podcast from Nightvale Presents that I'd like to recommend is *Start with This*, where Joseph Fink and Jeffery Cranor, co-creators of Nightvale Presents, talk through the process of creating art, one concept at a time. They cover a range of topics, from burnout to taking feedback to impostor syndrome. At the end of each episode, they also give you an assignment: something to consume and something to create. After all, as they'll tell you, the best way to start writing is to start writing.

And that's it, that's all. Those are my recommendations from the Nightvale Presents crew. Over a week of doing nothing but listening to one company's podcasts, and here we are. My favorites, however? You absolutely need to listen to *Welcome to Nightvale*, and *Alice isn't Dead*. Their storylines are golden and I love them so much. But no, yeah, all hail the Glow Cloud, beware the Thistle Men, and I take you now, to the weather.

Fall in Love with Smoothies this Autumn

by Ellie Folga

As the weather starts to cool and the leaves start to turn color, signs of fall are settling in. As we complete the first weeks of school, the reality of homework, studying, and tests are becoming apparent, and the fall sports season is already in full swing.

Whether you are a busy student, diligent athlete, or involved in other extracurriculars, the importance of giving your brain and body appropriate nutrition in this approaching fall season is key to success. Not only will you feel better, but you will also more see more and more positive results, with increased energy, confidence, and alertness.

Many people find the most difficulty about eating well is from a lack of time to create nutritious yet appetizing options. Busy athletes often turn to snacks to keep them energized and enthused,

and it is important to consider what is comprised of those snacks.

Oftentimes packaged, processed foods lack the nutrients that keep us feeling and acting our best, but it isn't always easy to find high-fueling alternatives.

A better version of snacking exists though: in the form of smoothies! You may drink smoothies every once in a while from a restaurant or café, or remember them as a distant memory from childhood, but as is the case with many other snacks, the ingredients of a smoothie determine its benefits.

So what are great smoothies made of? Great-tasting, nutritious smoothies can be made with ingredients that are easy to find and require little prep time. Many smoothies use bananas or a thicker fruit as a base, including mango or avocado to give it a creamy texture. Some kind of liquid is incorporated, which usually includes a milk, such as dairy, almond, or coconut. Add-ins to increase protein content include chia seeds and nut butters. Throwing in a handful of spinach is also not a bad idea to get an extra helping of vegetables in, and with many other ingredients varying in taste, spinach is

not an overpowering flavor. Cinnamon, nutmeg, and vanilla extract may be added to enhance other flavor profiles and add some additional flavor as well.

The best part about smoothies however, is that they are convenient. You can make one the night before and store it overnight or make one in the morning for breakfast or the day. They don't take much time to prepare, as once you whip out the ingredients and throw them in a blender, a push of a button will give you a creamy drink in no time. I'd also recommend smoothies to athletes who are burning a lot of energy constantly because a smoothie will give you healthy fats and protein that will sustain your energy levels.

As a part of this article, I've included some smoothie recipes I enjoy, that hopefully you will try or use to provide inspiration for your own. (Continued on page 5).

(Continued from page 4) I recommend a smoothie in the morning, as a snack after school to resist the afternoon slump, or at night to repair the muscles you've been working throughout the day. Enjoy!

Pumpkin Pie Smoothie:

1 cup full fat coconut milk
 ½ cup water
 1 banana
 ¼ cup canned pumpkin
 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
 1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
 Small handful of ice

Purée all the ingredients in a blender until smooth. Makes 1-2 servings.

Banana Peanut Butter Chocolate Smoothie:

1 banana
 2 tablespoons peanut butter
 1 tablespoon cocoa powder
 1/3 cup rolled oats
 ½ cup milk of choice

Blend all ingredients in a blender until smooth. Makes 1 serving.

Thrifting 101:

What is it? Where did it come from? Why is it so popular now?

by Stella Koch

Ever since the summer of 2020, thrifting has become a very popular activity amongst teenagers and young adults. One reason why it became so desirable is that many people began to advocate for second-hand shopping. So, how exactly did they advocate? Well, thrifting is a very sustainable way to shop. 1,800 gallons of water are used to make one pair of jeans. So the High-waisted American Eagle jeans you are wearing right now took up 1,800 gallons of water. To which you could say to me, "Stella, that's not that much water," but in reality, it's a lot. In the US there are 986 locations, and there are 1,078 locations in the world. Not including the online store, American eagle makes 14 different types of jeans for women and 6 different types of men. If each American Eagle store sells 200 pairs of each type then each store would have 4,000 pairs of jeans. So in total for the US, that's 3,944,000 pairs of jeans. That's a lot of water if you ask me.



So why should I tell you to go thrift shopping, instead of buying your favorite tank top from Brandy Melville? Besides sustainability, sometimes you can find really good items. On a good day, you could find designer items such as Louis Vuitton, Dolce & Gabbana, Chanel, and more. Now I'm not saying every time you go to Goodwill, you are going to get a brand new Louis Vuitton bag, but there is a chance you could find one. On other days, you could find some great vintage pieces.

(Continued on page 6).

(Continued from page 5) Lots of people have been finding lots of early 2000s pieces, which contributes to why they are making such a big comeback. There is even a chance you could find clothes from the 70s, 80s, and on. You can even find other cool items that fit your specific style. Another great thing about thrifting is that they have clothes for all different people. There is no specific gender on clothes and you can find clothes that fit your body type. There is no need to feel ashamed when you walk into a consignment store because everyone is there for one reason: good clothes for a decent price. Sustainable, affordable, and cute - who could say no.



A Sneak Peak Into School Renovations

by Paul Monsour

For years, teachers and students alike have fantasized about renovations to the school of all kinds. From air conditioning, cafeteria remodeling, or even upgrades to our athletics facilities, everyone has their own pipe dreams for our already splendid building and it's various territories. Unless you live under a rock—or just don't listen to your teachers when there isn't a PowerPoint involved—these renovations, and more, are coming to fruition in the upcoming year. Since facts about these projects are hard to come by, I have interviewed one of our two favorite assistant principals, Dr. Redcay, on these changes so students know what to expect—starting with the air conditioning.

We've all been there. After a long day of laboring in the trenches of academia, you've finally reached gym. It's the table-tennis unit, and you're eager to socialize over a rousing game of serve-the-ball-seven-feet-off-the-table-and-watch-your-partner-run-to-collect-it. As you step onto the hardwood, ignorant of the forty-one minutes of punishment ahead, the heat death of the universe is thrust upon you. Overzealous imagery aside, it is no secret that the school has had central heating problems. The AC connoisseurs of Wyomissing know that the issue spreads much farther than just the old gym. Mrs. Vargo's room is best described as a tundra. Mr. Comerford's room will noticeably change temperature

over the course of one class period. In one of my classes when a teacher put in a work order to raise the temperature of their room, it went from frigid to... a mysterious degree of frigid that changes daily. While temperature rises globally and the ice sheets melt, I am confident that the Wyomissing JSHS cafeteria will never eclipse 70 degrees. Of course some of this is just the nature of having a three story building with lots of spacious areas, but the most egregious examples will be fixed by new controls to the air conditioning rather than fully implementing a new system. To my best understanding, this will make work orders like the aforementioned one easier to complete successfully.

Does anyone else remember the library? Personally, I have fond memories of using the printer, checking out books, or going there to do homework or study with friends after school from seventh to ninth grade (this article isn't about high school tips, but if you're reading this and you're in Junior High; go to the library after school as often as you can, even if you don't think you have homework). Sadly, the library was rendered largely unusable last year for obvious reasons. Even to begin this year, with the students and staff more comfortable with Schoology and "week-at-a-glance" formatting, utilizing the library has gone largely out of style. Luckily, the library is being remodeled with this in mind. In addition to cosmetic improvements and newer furniture, the library will be more conducive to "21st century learning", fully equipped with what was described to me as "collaborative working areas". (Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6) I'm not entirely sure about what that could entail, but anything that will serve as a catalyst for more classes to use the library as a lecture hall or alternative classroom setting is exciting.

Few things are as quintessential to the high school experience as lunch. The first-week battle for lunch table positioning and the ever present effort to squeeze all nine of your friends onto one table were two of the only things I didn't miss in 2020. Our lunch room will be getting some upgrades of its own this year, including a small extension to increase capacity. There will also be unspecified cosmetic changes. In every year I can remember, seating has always become more valuable in November and December when sitting outside begins to become more impractical, resulting in a cutthroat seating market where getting up to go to the bathroom, getting extra napkins, or especially missing a day out sick could get you permanently estranged from your seat and sentence you to the harsh life of a cafeteria journeyman, drifting from the kids who stay on their

phones the whole time, to the kids who look like they're building a computer out of their trash, to the kids gossiping about people you don't know, and back to the kids looking at their phones for the rest of time. The real question is whether this new annex will cause the seating bubble to pop and lower the value of seating as a whole, or if it will continue to the point that you can get a chair for zero money down? Wait...

Of course all of these changes will come after next summer. There were also some changes I wasn't able to ask about but have heard of, such as the rebuilding of the old gym. Will that become the new gym next year since it was technically built after the current new gym? Whatever the answer, exciting changes are afoot in Wyomissing this year, and I hope the student population will welcome them with open arms. To close this article, I would like to thank Dr. Redcay and the Facilities Department for providing the backbone for this piece.

Autism Awareness Walk: Event Summary

by Vanesa Aguay

The 18th Annual Help Solve the Puzzle, the Walk for Autism Awareness, was held Sunday the 19th at the First Energy Stadium, in which members of the Service Club volunteered contributing to the success of the event. Members of the community attended the walk receiving raffle tickets for every four laps around the baseball field. The Autism Society of Berks County hosted the event with teams of families receiving prizes for the most amount of money fundraised while celebrating the Autism Community of Berks County. Volunteers from our Service Club helped facilitate the walk and interact with participants in the carnival-style games. Funds from this main event go to the Autism Society supporting families in Berks County and providing events such as music therapy groups, social skills groups, and events free of charge to hundreds of children every year with the help of donations and volunteers.





The Return of ABBA

by Anneka Gernert

On September 2nd, 2021, ABBA released brand new music for the first time in forty years. You read that correctly—forty years. In case you aren't familiar with ABBA, they are a Swedish group that makes disco and pop music, and I can almost guarantee you have heard at least one of their songs before. The name ABBA comes from the first letter of the members' names: Anni-Frid, Benny, Bjorn, and Agnetha, whose name no one seems to know how to pronounce. The group was actually two couples, but sorry to all you hopeless romantics out there because all of the members eventually went on to remarry. Not surprisingly, the divorces are what caused them to take this forty year break, although, Benny did mention in an interview how he feels as though the group was never gone because their music has continued playing everywhere.

The first new song, "I Still Have Faith In You," was written about ABBA themselves and their return. It's like a victory song—celebrating their everlasting friendship and amazing comeback. The second song, "Don't Shut Me Down," also refers to the group's journey over the years. This song talks more about their romantic relationships with each other and forgiveness after the divorces. The whole ABBA Voyage album will be released on November 5th. For all fellow ABBA fans, this will be such a long 6 weeks until then, but I predict the album will be worth the wait.

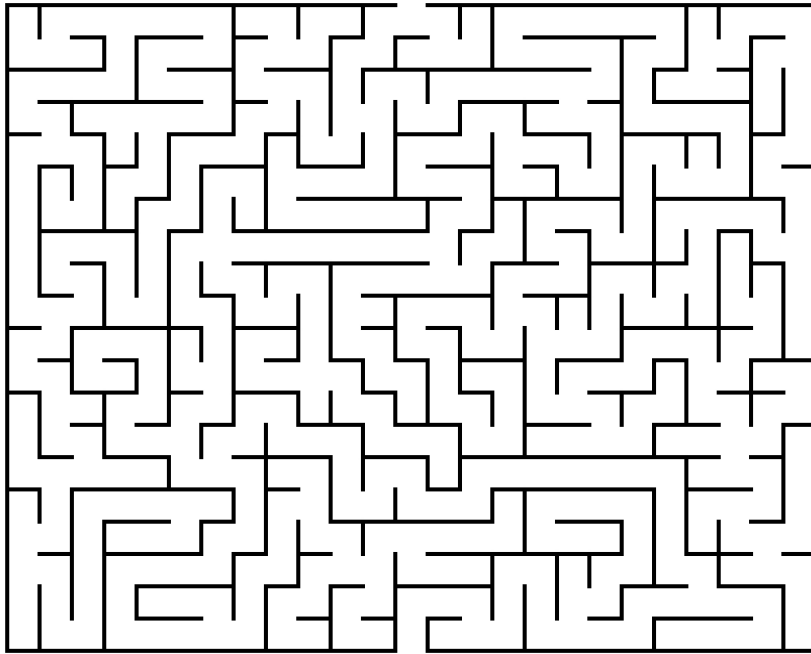
Not only is ABBA releasing a whole new album, but there will also be a concert including new and old music. Unfortunately for us, the concert will be in London where a custom-built arena is being built. For the concert, the group has created ABBA-tars. These avatars are scarily life-like holograms that look like ABBA in the 70's when they were most popular. I guess someone really wants to be young again... Anyway, the ABBA-tars aren't just computer programmed holograms—they are recorded projections of the members' actual movements. So, in order to create this concert, the group got into specialized suits with sensors that traced their gestures and facial expressions. The recorded movements were then created into the holograms and combined with the recorded songs to create the monumental concert that is to come.

ABBA has returned just when the world needed them most. Their music has united so many people, young and old. Benny said in the interview, "They make friends because of the fact that they like ABBA, and I like that very much." So I encourage you to go listen to ABBA's new songs and become a part of the close-knit community.

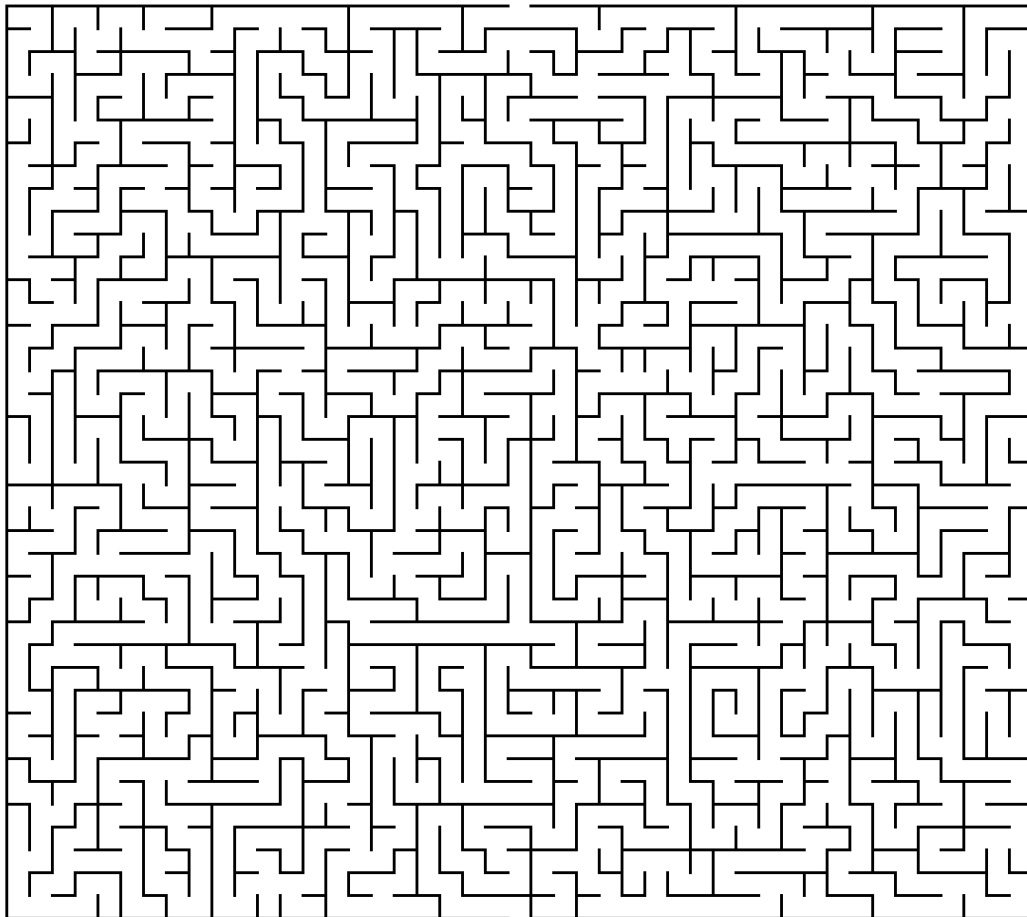


Fun Section:

Easy



Hard



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SMOOTHIE
MUSIC
DONATIONS
COVID
NUTRITIOUS
RUNNING
CONSTRUCTION
NIGHTVALE
RENOVATIONS
ABBA
SUSTAINABLE
MOTIVATION
SERVICE
DEDICATION
PODCAST