

Prarie Fare: Does a 'Digital Detox' Promote Better Health?

"Do you have anything on the 'information diet'?" someone asked.

I wasn't exactly sure what he was talking about.

I told him that we had information on identifying reliable information on the web. Then it dawned on me what he meant.

We have more information coming at us than at any time in history. Many of us would benefit from putting away our phones and turning off our screens. Some call it a "digital detox."

I can't drive home without seeing billboards with messages. I enjoy listening to the radio, but I do not always have it on. I like to drive in solitude and pay attention to the drivers around me, who sometimes are on phones and occasionally drive through red lights.

Getting away from the constant stream of information hitting us from every direction can benefit our health on several levels.

I recognize the irony of some of you reading this on a computer, phone, tablet or other device.

In North Dakota, a state law requires students to turn off and store electronic devices during school hours or leave them at home.

As I walk around a college campus, I am often amazed to see a line of students, all on their devices, while their peers are walking or sitting next to them.

So, what's the problem with all this media? Devices are distracting and reduce face-to-face interaction and learning. Our brains are not designed to truly multitask.

We may feel addicted to technology or fear we are missing something if we set aside our devices.

Too much screen time and blue light can negatively affect sleep. Staring at screens can strain our eyes. That's why eye care professionals recommend the 20-20-20 rule: take a 20-second break to look at something 20 feet away every 20 minutes.

If you take some breaks from your phone, you might notice reduced stress and better physical health — maybe even more creativity. You also may cultivate stronger relationships by taking a walk with a friend during a break instead of scrolling on a device.

Our devices can also leave us with "tech neck" from bending our heads forward to look at screens. Our heads weigh about 10 pounds, and slumping forward increases pressure on the neck and shoulders. Sit up straight with your body aligned and your feet flat on the floor.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has information about ergonomics to help prevent strains.

Let's also consider the cleanliness of these screens. More than two decades of research show that digital devices can harbor bacteria and fungi, which may be transferred to our food and mouths from our scrolling fingers.

Many people take their phones to the bathroom. Give yourself some privacy. Some researchers have reported that phones can carry thousands of bacteria per square inch — sometimes more than a toilet seat.

Many experts recommend limiting recreational screen time to no more than two hours a day. You might set a timer, turn off your device at night, clean it with an alcohol-based wipe (or whatever your manufacturer recommends) and keep it out of your bedroom.

As I write this column on my computer, I know technology is not going away. Unlike my children, I am not a "digital native." I was an adult when I bought a cell phone, while my kids grew up with technology.

Use devices for what they are: tools to help us when we need them. If you would like to read about recognizing reliable information while online, see "Nourish Your Mind and Body with Accurate Health Information" from North Dakota State University Extension.

Reclaiming some time from screens can open space for movement, conversation and nourishing food. Try this recipe from Iowa State University and enjoy it on a brisk walk with a buddy.

Peanut Butter Banana Smoothie
 1 frozen banana
 1 container (6 ounces) vanilla yogurt
 1/2 cup milk
 1 tablespoon peanut butter
 1/2 teaspoon cocoa powder (optional)
 1 teaspoon chia seeds (optional)
 3 ice cubes (optional)

Cut a fresh banana into 4 to 6 chunks. Place in a tightly sealed container or zippered bag and freeze for at least 4 hours. Place frozen banana, yogurt, milk, peanut butter and optional ingredients in a blender. Blend until smooth.

Makes two servings. When made with nonfat milk, each serving has 190 calories, 4.5 grams fat, 7 grams protein, 33 grams carbohydrate, 2 grams fiber and 100 milligrams sodium.

Submitted by Julie Garden-Robinson

The Prairie Pulpit: From Ashes to Easter

By Pastor Chris Brademeyer
 As winter gives way to spring, Christians prepare for Lent, a forty-day season of reflection, repentance, and discipline leading up to Easter. Unfortunately, Lent is often portrayed as harsh or legalistic. In reality, it is deeply Gospel-centered. It turns believers' focus toward Christ's work for sinners rather than toward human effort.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday with the solemn reminder: "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." This acknowledgment of human mortality is not meant to frighten but to direct hearts toward the Gospel. Lutherans understand confession not as a burdensome duty, but as a return to God's promise of forgiveness through Christ. It is a season to confront sin honestly, confident in God's mercy and, even more, to receive the forgiveness of sins and the assurance of that mercy.

Being "evangelical" in the Gospel-oriented sense shapes the entire Lenten rhythm. Rather than emphasizing outward ritual or moral achievement, Lent becomes an intentional time to contemplate God's gracious action in Christ. Practices such as fasting, prayer, charity, and daily Scripture reading are undertaken not to earn favor with God, but to create space to hear His Word of promise and to grow in faith. Every discipline is oriented toward the good news that Jesus has died and risen to restore sinners.

Historically, Lent has combined both communal and individual reflection. Lutheran liturgies emphasize passages of Scripture that highlight human sin and brokenness and, even more, God's mercy in Christ Jesus. Midweek services help worshippers see the suffering of Jesus as the source of

their salvation and understand their lives as responses to this gracious work. These gatherings remind the faithful that repentance is not an abstract exercise, but a Gospel-shaped response to God's love.

Many Lutherans also adopt practical expressions of Gospel-centered reflection. Giving up a favorite indulgence, fasting, or taking up acts of service are tangible ways to align daily life with the priorities revealed by our Lord Jesus. Yet these practices are never ends in themselves; they point back to the heart of the season: Christ's saving death and resurrection. Every sacrifice, prayer, and meditation serves as a reminder of God's grace freely given and our utter dependence upon Him. After all, man does not live by bread alone, but by every Word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

Lent also prepares hearts for Easter. These forty days of reflection help believers see the significance of Christ's resurrection with renewed clarity. Confronting sin, mortality, and personal weakness is not meant to drive us into despair or self-loathing. Rather, it deepens our appreciation for the breadth and depth of God's forgiveness and mercy in our lives.

In a culture that prizes busyness and distraction, Lent stands out as a season of spiritual intentionality. For those who are Gospel-oriented, it is a time to pause, reflect, and reorient life around the good news of Christ. The season's disciplines, far from being burdensome obligations, serve as reminders that the Gospel is not merely a message to hear, but a reality to live in every day.

Please join us for Sunday services at 9:00 a.m. or Wednesday Lenten services at 6:30 p.m. at St. John's Lutheran Church, 120 S. 9th St., Oakes.

Cooper's Corner

by Martha MacLeod



Sweet Bobboo
 Once I saw a Peanut comic strip where Sally called Snoopy her "Sweet Bobboo." Snoopy didn't like it and so he stuck out his tongue and said, "Ack!" I thought Sweet Bobboo was a cute term of endearment so I called Snickers "My Sweet Bobboo." Snickers was the toy poodle I had before Cooper. He didn't seem to mind being called Sweet Bobboo and I even shortened it to Bobboo. When I got Cooper and he grew up to be sweet I started calling him Sweet Bobboo.

This week I looked up Sweet Bobboo on Google and it sent me first to Amazon. It turns out that Charles Schulz, creator of Peanuts, wrote a book about Sweet Bobboo and another one with the title "I'm not your Sweet Bobboo." I also learned that it was Sally who first called Linus her Sweet Bobboo and so that's where the term started.

Amazon had a number of t-shirts, baby onesies, books, Valentine cards and coffee cups that said Sweet Bobboo on the front. It turned into quite an industry.

I went to Wikipedia and learned that it was Charles Schulz's wife that used Sweet Bobboo as her pet name for husband, Charles Schulz.

Also, there is a British singer with the name Sweet Boboo, spelled with one B.

On Thursday last week Judy and I took our Sweet Bobboo to Soggy Paws in Milnor for grooming. It was his first time there. Before this he always went to Nancy Hagen who just recently retired. He likes Soggy Paws and knows the dogs and staff there. When I told him we were going to

Soggy Paws his eyes got big and he just stared at me with a look of amazement.

While Cooper was in for grooming Judy and I went to the Black Pelican grill in Wyndmere for lunch. It was a beautiful sunny afternoon. When we got home we sat in the sun on the back deck. It was a little breezy and after awhile we got cold so we all came inside.

But before we came in Cooper took the opportunity to run around the back yard. A few minutes later we looked out and there he was, all freshly groomed and clean, rolling in the dead grass. He looked so happy I couldn't scold him. He was just doing what dogs love to do.

Once we got inside Judy went to the front porch to bring in the mail. There was a brown box delivered by FedEx that Cooper started barking at. In fact, he wouldn't stop barking at it. Judy brought it into the kitchen and when she opened it there was a ham sent to us by our sister, Verna. It is to be for Easter with the instructions to freeze it. The Sweet Bobboo didn't stop barking until the ham was out of sight, out of his smelling range and in the freezer.

Public Notices

www.ndpublicnotices.com

CITY ELECTION

The Election for the City of Oakes will be held Tuesday, June 9, 2026, in conjunction with the Dickey County Primary Election. Petitioners have until 4:00 PM April 6, 2026 to turn in their petitions to be placed on the City Election ballot.

City Offices to be filled at the June Election are:
 Mayor — four-year term
 Three City Council Persons — four year term each
 One City Council Person — two-year unexpired term
 Three Park Commissioners — four year term each
 One Park Commissioner — two-year unexpired term

Individuals seeking to have their name on the ballot for any one of these offices may obtain a petition from the City Auditor at City Hall located at 124 South 5th Street, Oakes ND, Monday through Friday 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM from now until April 6, 2026.

Signatures required from the residents of the City of Oakes to validate a candidate's petition:
 Mayor — Twenty-seven (27)
 Council — Twenty-one (21)
 Park — Seventeen (17)
 (Submitted to the Oakes Times 2/26/2026, 3/5/2026)

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			8	4	3			9
	9		5	6	1			
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To complete Sudoku, fill the board by entering numbers 1 to 9 such that each row, column and 3x3 box contains every number uniquely.

For many strategies, hints and tips, visit www.sudokuwiki.org

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CITY CORNER WASTE DISPOSAL SITE
Landfill Closed for the Winter
 From Oakes: The Disposal Site/Compost Pile is located 2 miles west on County Rd 3 - then 3/4 of a mile south on 108th Ave

Waste will now be disposed of in large metal containers; trees and branches must be separated as they are no longer allowed in compost area. Recyclable metal items should be separated from other waste.

Contact City Hall at 742-2137 for more info

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