

Losing 30 pounds was a SNAP

By Andrea Jansen
for the Mail Tribune

People are publicly proclaiming their pandemic achievements and lifestyle changes. My triumph is losing 30 pounds since the spring; not because I am a front-line worker or exercise fanatic, but a SNAP recipient.

Prior to COVID-19, my monthly food allotment was approximately \$80, but it has since increased by \$100. This equals the maximum amount I might receive for my situation: 65, living alone, Social

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a point. Don't cuss. And make us glad we asked. If we like it, we'll run it in the Sunday paper.

Do you have something to say? Do you have a humorous take on current events or an insightful angle on the seemingly mundane? Maybe you have a view of life that will help us all see things a little more clearly. If so, email your 500-word column to features editor David Smigelski at dsmigelski@rosebudmedia.com. Please put "Columnist for a Day" in the subject line, and include your phone and city of residence. The rules are simple. Keep it short. Have

Security my sole income. It's not hard to understand how my focus

had been price over nutrition, so predictably, the pounds piled on.

That began to change when I could afford better quality food, including fresh fruits and vegetables, leaner meats, healthful snacks and reduced calorie items. I replaced pasta with fish and read nutritional labels as never before. No longer huffing and puffing on short walks, I have more energy and don't crave sweets as much; but just in case, I've discovered delicious, sugar-free chocolates. Encouraged by the bathroom scale, I continue eating smaller meals and curbing bad habits. I happily donated my wardrobe to fire victims.

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I therefore advocate at least a portion of the increased SNAP benefits become permanent, but with an unpopular yet sensible caveat: there should be restrictions on junk food. This idea is not new but was raised during deliberation of the Food Stamp Act of 1977, when a proposed change restricting low-nutritional foods was rejected. Here are a few examples of why the entire program could use

re-examination.

In grocery stores, only cold foods can be purchased using SNAP; nothing from the hot, prepared section. A freshly roasted chicken does not qualify; however, once that same unsold, dried-out carcass is placed in the refrigerated section it becomes eligible. Not everyone has an oven, consider fire and homeless victims.

Not permitted are alcohol and tobacco, rightly so; but neither can SNAP be used for paper or hygiene products. Some people advocate dog food be allowed, but as a pet

owner I disagree. Free dog food is frequently donated through shelters, but hand soap and toothpaste don't grow on trees.

I can grab all the candy, ice cream, pastries, chips and soda I want. I could blow my entire month's allotment running the gauntlet at the checkout stand. Holiday gift boxes with gourmet food items get through, I discovered by accident. I can even buy a jalapeno pepper plant.

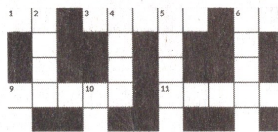
I need toilet paper more than a jumbo bag of M&M's, and a warm meal is healthier than a can of Red Bull. If I

crave a bag of chips but have to pay for it with cash, I'll think twice and grab an apple. Imagine the reduced cases of obesity and diabetes alone.

It won't help to throw extra credit into SNAP accounts if people don't know how to manage a limited budget, so I suggest every SNAP household receive a guide to shopping and cooking a more healthful diet, such as "Good and Cheap, Eat Well on \$4 a Day," by LeAnne Brown, available online for free.

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CROSSWORDS / C4, C7



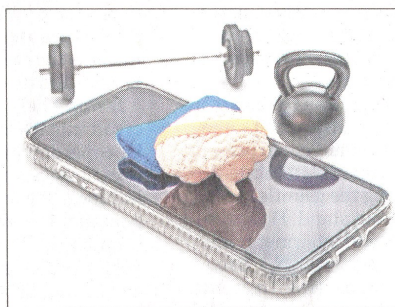
NEW YORK TIMES

68 DOWN: Villain with the "real" name Edward Nigma.

UNIVERSAL PRESS

51 ACROSS: Painfully meshy chaps, perhaps.

TODAY IN YOUR LIFE



(App)ropriate help

Amid the coronavirus pandemic, mobile mental health apps have experienced a surge in growth, responding to an increased need for support as many people have been affected by the psychological toll of 2020. C7

YOUR INSIDE LINE

COVERING YOUR LIFE

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