

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Style Invitational Week 1505: Munici-pals

Pair 2 or more names of 'sister cities' for a 'joint venture.' Plus winning ways (not) to be helpful.



By Pat Myers

September 8, 2022 at 9:57 a.m. EDT



(Bob Staake/For The Washington Post)

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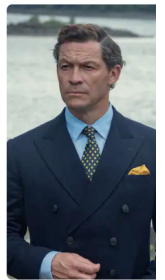
The Keokuk (Iowa)-Chappaqua (N.Y.) Conference on Jazz Drumming Sounds (*Phil Frankenfeld*)

The Marietta -Liddell-Lamm Children's Library (*Brendan Beary*) (*Ga., N.C., N.C.*)

The Pray-Novice-Pilot-Cando-Landing Air Phobia Support Group (*Russell Beland*) (*Mont., Tex., Va., N.D., N.J.*)

Here's a contest the Empress ran when she was a wee little thing, just

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weeks into her Empressitude, and had never run again despite a deluge of entries. You know how two towns sometimes have a cultural or economic relationship as “sister cities”? **Choose any two or more real U.S. or Canadian towns — they need to show up on a Google search — and come up with a joint endeavor they would undertake**, as in the examples above from Week 546 in 2004. It’s conceived as a wordplay contest on their names, but the E wouldn’t rule out an idea based on the qualities of the actual places. Write the state/province names at the end of your entry so your joke is easier to read.

Submit up to 25 entries at wapo.st/enter-invite-1505 (no capitals in the Web address). **Deadline is Monday, Sept. 19**; results appear Oct. 9 in print, Oct. 6 online.

Winner gets the Clowning Achievement, our Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a truly fabulous large-format (and out-of-print) album of “**Literary Paper Dolls**,” which let you cut out and dress everyone from Shakespeare to Dickinson to Capote with appropriate accessories. For Kafka, there’s a full-size bug with little tabs! Donated by Pie Snelson.



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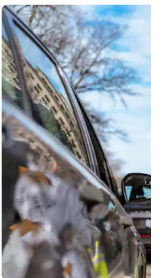
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Other runners-up win their choice of our [“For Best Results, Pour Into Top End” Loser Mug](#) or our [“Whole Fools” Grossery Bag](#). Honorable mentions get one of our [lusted-after Loser magnets](#), “A Small Jester of Appreciation” or “Close, but Ceci N’est Pas un Cigare.” First Offenders receive only a smelly tree-shaped air “freshener” ([FirStink](#) for their first ink). See general contest rules and guidelines at [wapo.st/inviteFAQ](#). The headline “Loser-Friendly” is by Duncan Stevens; Duncan also wrote the honorable-mentions subhead. Join the lively Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at [on.fb.me/invdev](#); follow Style Invitational Ink of the Day on Facebook at [bit.ly/inkofday](#); and follow [@StyleInvite](#) on Twitter.

The Style Conversational: The Empress’s weekly online column discusses each new contest and set of results. See this week’s at [wapo.st/conv1505](#).

[And from The Style Invitational four weeks ago ...](#)

Loser-friendly: ‘Helpful’ hints from Week 1501

In [Week 1501](#), the Empress asked for “helpful” acts that are anything but. Several people noted how they thoughtfully straddle two parking spaces so they won’t ding nearby cars when they throw open their doors.

4th place:

For their birthdays, I give my grandchildren underwear I’d saved from when I was their age, so they can treasure the link between our generations. (*Paul Brown, Silver Spring, Md.*)

3rd place:

When I have a full cart at the supermarket, I go to the express lane and break it up into multiple purchases of 12 items so people will see I’m not cheating. (*Sam Mertens, Silver Spring, Md.*)

2nd place

and the [“\(Butt\) Head of the Household” men’s socks](#):

Nobody likes being told in public that their zipper’s down, so I just walk

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up and discreetly zip it back up for them. (*May Jampathom, Oakhurst, N.J.*)

And the winner of the Clowning Achievement:

When I see tourist couples trying to take selfies, I always offer to take the photo for them because I have really long arms and they probably enjoy having a local in the picture. (*Coleman Glenn, Huntingdon Valley, Pa.*)

Ech support: Honorable mentions

With so many of my neighbors working from home these days, I make sure not to disturb their Zoom calls: I do all my lawn mowing and leaf blowing before 7 a.m. (*David MacGregor, Arlington, Va.*)

Around Valentine's Day, I make sketches of random people on the subway so they can give them as gifts to their special someone. And I depict them as I imagine they would appear naked. (*Kevin Dopart, Washington*)

As a police officer, I recognize that we're all too often seen as the "bad guys." That's why I make a point of pulling drivers over on the road just to introduce myself. (*Donald Norum, Charlottesville, Va.*)

Knowing how difficult the months ahead can be, I like to discreetly take a picture of the deceased at funeral viewings, then use it later to make a personalized Christmas card for the widow or widower. (*Jon Ketzner, Cumberland, Md.*)

At home, I always leave the toilet seat up so my wife can see at a glance whether she needs to clean it. (*Jeff Hazle, San Antonio*)

When I see a woman trying to decide between two items at the grocery store, I pick one and throw it in her cart. — S. Alito (*Ben Aronin, Washington*)

Believe me, I know how unfair it is to pay taxes, so I make sure my employees at Mar-a-Lago stay in a low bracket. (*Neil Kurland, Elkridge, Md.*)

Every time I take a sip from the Communion chalice, I always spit it back in to make sure there's enough for the next person. (*Mark Wakefield, Frederick, Md., a First Offender*)

"P-O-T-A-T-O ... Add one little bit on the end ... You're right

phonetically, but what else ...? There ya' go ... all right!" — Vice President Quayle visiting an elementary school, 1992 (*Roxi Slempp, Bariloche, Argentina*)

When I play golf, I scream "FORE!" at the top of my lungs every time I swing, just to be on the safe side. You never know where that putt might go. (*Scott Richards, Hollywood, Md.*)

I always keep candy in the car in case I want to offer a ride to some poor kid walking home alone. (*Terri Berg Smith, Rockville, Md.*)

I think that, like me, most people do these little acts of kindness. So they'll know their efforts are appreciated, I leave little anonymous notes where strangers will find them, saying, "I know what you did." (*Daniel Galef, Tallahassee, Fla.*)

When the flight attendant passes my row, I always smile, point at my lap and poke my pelvis up so she can see my seat belt is fastened. (*Drew Bennett, Rogers, Ark.*)

When I'm first in line at a stoplight, I always pause a few seconds when the light turns green to give everyone behind me the chance to get off their phones. (*Robert Welch, Atlanta*)

My roommate is kind of a neat freak, so I make sure to keep all my toenail clippings on my side of the dorm room. (*Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.*)

When I learned that my son's English class had been assigned to read "Moby-Dick," I gave my son the comic book version so he'd have more time for football practice. (*Howard Walderman, Columbia, Md.*)

Sailing to Europe at last to bring those guys the goods they want! I figure we'll [be back in the Crimea by 1347](#). Glad I have my pet rat Bubo to keep me company — wish he didn't have fleas, though. (*Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.*)

When I get a 2-for-1 coupon for a good restaurant near my job, I always invite a co-worker to come with me so we can both enjoy some friendly conversation while I eat my free lunch. (*Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn, Va.*)

As a proctologist, I try to keep my patients relaxed by putting smiley faces on the fingertips of my exam gloves. (*Rob Cohen, Potomac, Md.*)

When I see someone parked in a handicap spot without the sticker, I help them stay out of trouble by spray-painting a little wheelchair on their windshield. (*Mark Raffman*)

When I'm alone in an elevator with another person, I subtly signal that I'm not a threat by intoning nursery rhymes under my breath. *(Coleman Glenn)*

At classical concerts, I always applaud and cheer after each movement of a symphony to give the players that emotional boost for the rest of the piece. *(Steve Honley, Washington)*

When I walk in the state park, I often see trees defaced with brightly painted rectangles. Now I always bring brown spray paint with me to cover up the ugliness. *(Diane Lucitt, Ellicott City, Md.)*

A friend of mine has put on a few pounds, but I wanted to let her know that I didn't think any less of her for it. I even sent her a list and photos of successful fat people. *(Neal Starkman, Seattle)*

During my barista shifts in the winter, I keep completed orders warm in my armpits while customers make their way to the counter. *(Leif Picoult, Rockville, Md.)*

You know how they say, "You know your child best"? That's why I help out my daughter's soccer coach by pointing out the best times to put her into the game. *(Fred Shuback, Silver Spring, Md.)*

I know how irritating it is to have a long wait during a short lunch break. That's why I always wave to my friends to join me in my place in the food truck line. *(Joanne Free, Clifton, Va.)*

To encourage my young children to give back to the community, I have them bring their violins to restaurants so the other customers can listen to music while they dine. *(Hildy Zampella, Vienna, Va.)*

To reduce motel maids' duties, I never remove the "Sanitized for Your Protection" toilet band during my entire stay. *(Rob Huffman, Fredericksburg, Va.)*

When there's a bicyclist in front of me, I sound my horn every five seconds so they know I'm carefully watching them. *(Frank Mann, Washington)*

And Last: When submitting a Style Invitational entry I insert lots of laughter emoji to help the Empress realize it's funny! 😂😂😂😂
(Christy Tosatto, a full-time RV nomad submitting from near Cheticamp, Nova Scotia)

And Even Later: I KNOW THAT THE EMPRESS IS GETTING PRETTY OLD BY NOW, SO I HELP HER OUT BY SUBMITTING MY

ENTRIES IN ALL CAPS. (*Rob Cohen*)

Two contests still running — deadline for both is Monday night, Sept. 12:

For [Week 1503](#), write a song about food (growing, cooking, eating, anything) to a well-known tune or your own.

And for [Week 1504](#), write something that uses all 100 Scrabble tiles.

DON'T MISS AN INVITE! [Sign up here](#) to receive a once-a-week email from the Empress as soon as The Style Invitational and Style Conversational go online every Thursday, complete with links to the columns.

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Gift Article



By [Pat Myers](#)

Pat Myers is the "Empress" of The Style Invitational, The Washington Post's famed contest for clever, edgy, wacky humor and wordplay. In the role since 2003 – 900-plus contests ago – she writes the column and is its only judge. She also writes the weekly Style Conversational column and runs the Style Invitational Devotees page on Facebook. [Twitter](#)