

the simple list

Your monthly dose of useful tidbits, timely trivia, and catchy conversation starters

365

The number of thoughtful notes documented in the uplifting new memoir *365 Thank Yous* (Hyperion, \$23), out at the end of this month. At 53, John Kralik was in the midst of a divorce, with a struggling business. Instead of dwelling on his misfortune, he decided to embrace an attitude of gratitude by writing one thank-you note every day—to business associates, his children, and even his regular Starbucks barista. This daily ritual—and what he learned from it—will inspire you to tackle life's (occasional) stink with ink.



1891

The year that a Salvation Army captain in San Francisco set up a crab pot at a ferry landing to collect money for the poor at Christmas, marking the beginning of the organization's famous Red Kettle campaign. These days, donating is as easy as downloading the Salvation Army Christmas Music app (\$3, iTunes), since \$1 from each purchase goes to the charity. The app streams holiday music from eight categories, including classical, jazz, oldies, and children's.

\$5.65

How much it costs to send an old-time telegram anywhere in the world, courtesy of TelegramStop.com (international postage included). At this nostalgic site, you simply type in your message (in true telegram fashion, the word *stop* is subbed in for periods), preview your telegram, then click Send. Within four to eight business days, the recipient will receive her surprise, although it will be delivered via mail truck, not (*sigh*) a pony.

10

Roughly how many hours of shut-eye you need to replenish your body and mind after several semisleepless nights (think four hours), according to a new study in the journal *Sleep*. Researchers have found that sleeping in after a few days of missed sleep can help pay back that debt, reducing any lingering sense of fatigue and mental fuzziness. As the weekend approaches, we suggest highlighting this paragraph, then tacking it to your bedroom door to ward off early risers.



8

The number of balls that have dropped in New York's Times Square on New Year's Eve since 1908, when the tradition began. The current one, on duty since 2008, weighs 11,875 pounds, measures 12 feet tall, is embellished with 2,668 Waterford crystals, and has 32,256 LEDs to light its way. A bit flashy, you say? Not for Times Square, where buildings are *required* to have at least one illuminated sign that stays lit until 1 A.M.



44,102,664

How many bulbs you'll find featured on TackyLightTour.com, a Clark Griswold-ian ode to over-the-top holiday lawn displays. Upload your favorite eye-blinding showcase (there's a 10,000-bulb minimum, so have fun counting!), or search for homes in your area to map out a self-guided tour. While your kids may covet your neighbor's North Pole-apalooza, you certainly won't envy his electric bill.