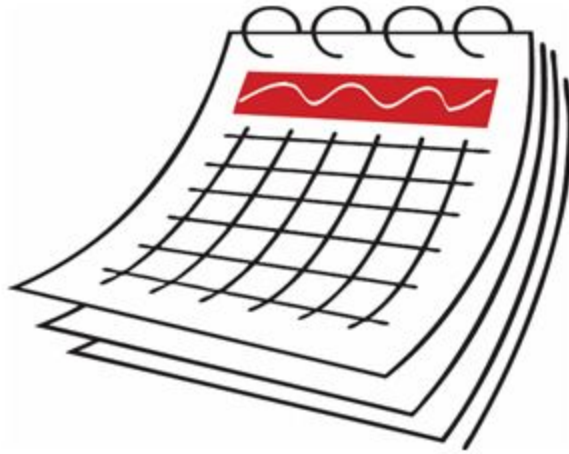


It's a Leap Year! Why the calendar must add a day every four years

February 28, 2024



February 29... that's a very rare day on the calendar.

The Triplicate conducted an informal survey last week and asked unsuspecting shoppers coming out of Walmart, Home Depot and the Jed Smith Center why an extra day is added to the calendar every few years. Fully two-thirds of those surveyed were unable to answer that question. “...it has to do with the Earth’s rotation,” said one individual. Not exactly! Another shopper said the extra day was “...some kind of a Holiday” but she couldn’t recall it! Yet another very nice lady said, Leap Year Day February 29 was added to remind folks 2024 is a Presidential election reminder. Incorrect!

The Triplicate thought a clear explanation of “Leap Year” might be helpful to those who couldn’t explain the extra day added to the February calendar every four years.

Everyone knows the calendar is 365 days. Not exactly. Our current use date/ month/ year almanac is the Gregorian calendar, named after Pope Gregory XIII. In 1542, Pope Gregory established all years divisible by four would be leap years.

According to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the Earth revolves around the Sun every 365.2422 days (rounded up to .25 or about six hours). The calendar functions on a 365 day cycle. What

to do with that extra one-quarter day? The approximate six hours multiplied by four years equals 24 hour day, the time it takes Earth to ROTATE (spin on its axis) one time.

Julius Caesar instituted his Julian Calendar back in 46 BC but did not accommodate this estimated six hour shortage and the confusion endured until the Gregorian calendar came into use in all Roman Catholic countries.

Leap years are important so the calendar year matches the solar year, the amount of time it takes for Earth to make a REVOLUTION trip (orbit) around The Sun. To be precise, five hours, 46 minutes and 48 seconds of one year doesn't seem like a big deal, but if one keeps subtracting about six hours every year for many years, things can get pretty messed up. For example, June is a typically warm month in the Northern Hemisphere, but if leap years were not used, all those missing hours would add up in days, weeks and months. Eventually June would be a cold, winter month.

Those who share a February 29 birthday celebrate their birthday on March 1. The selection of February as the month to add the extra day was made by the Roman's who originally used a ten month calendar. February was the tenth month on the Julian calendar.

The Triplicate recognizes Del Norters Erik Hauan and Chuck Doolittle who were able to explain specifics about Leap Year: two very smart guys!

Happy Leap Day, Del Norte.