



10 newsmakers who made bold headlines

READY TO FLY
One of Max Alexander's signature designs is a faux-fur vest with sequin wings on the back.

"No matter if we were born as women or men, we can realize our dreams and desires, without our sex determining our destiny."

SPORTS HISTORY
Rafael Nadal has the most major titles on clay courts, earning the nickname King of Clay.

"My message to the girls in Afghanistan is: Keep the hope alive."

ANCIENT ORIGINS
Soap is believed to date back to about 2800 BCE, when animal fats were mixed with ash and water for cleaning.

"Life isn't about what we don't have but what we do with the gifts we're given."

BOOK SMART
Jeff Kinney and his wife also own a bookstore in Massachusetts called An Unlikely Story.

"We take life a little too seriously on Earth."

TOP NAME IN MEDICINE
The Albert Einstein College of Medicine was founded in 1953 and is named after one of the world's most famous scientists.

"I'm the biggest kid in the crowd."



Max Alexander
At age 8, Max Alexander earned a Guinness World Records title for being the youngest runway fashion designer. Alexander, from Southern California, began sewing at age 4, after asking his parents for a mannequin. Since then, he has created more than 100 gowns and also dressed celebrities. At his own runway show during New York Fashion Week, he debuted six handmade gowns, including a dress made of recycled coffee bags. Alexander has more than 3 million social media followers, including designer Isaac Mizrahi, who said he was "full of inspiration."

Claudia Sheinbaum
It was a big year for Claudia Sheinbaum, who was sworn in as Mexico's first female and first Jewish president in October. Sheinbaum, age 62, has a PhD in energy engineering and was part of a team that received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007 for its environmental work. In 2018, she became the first woman to be elected mayor of Mexico City. She won the presidency in June 2024 with more than 60% of the vote. During her six-year term in office, she plans to focus on poverty reduction, justice reform, immigration, and relations between Mexico and the US.

Rafael Nadal
After building a 23-year tennis career that included 22 Grand Slam titles and 209 weeks ranked as the world's top player, Rafael Nadal retired from competing. The star, who began playing at age 4 and turned professional at age 15, represented his home country of Spain when he won two Olympic gold medals and four Davis Cup team titles. He played his last pro match at the Davis Cup in December, telling fans, "The way I would like to be remembered is as a good person ... just a kid that followed their dreams."

Nila Ibrahim
In November, Nila Ibrahim, age 17, received the International Children's Peace Prize for advocating for Afghan girls. Ibrahim is from Afghanistan, where women's and girls' rights are limited. In 2021, she protested a local ban against schoolgirls singing in public by posting a video of herself singing. Her protest resulted in the ban being overturned. When the Taliban regained control of Afghanistan, Ibrahim and her family fled to Canada. She has spoken out for the right of girls to receive an education and helped found HerStory, which shares stories of Afghan women and girls.

Heman Bekele
One of science's brightest young minds is Heman Bekele, age 15, from Virginia. He was named *Time* magazine's 2024 Kid of the Year for his invention of a bar soap that can fight skin cancer. He was inspired by his childhood in Ethiopia, where he saw people working long hours under the sun. Bekele's soap can release cancer-fighting medicine that stays on after washing. In 2024, he also won the Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes, earning \$10,000 for his work. His advice to aspiring inventors: "Keep thinking of new ways to improve our world."

GETTY IMAGES (7); ALAMY; 3M/ DISCOVERY EDUCATION; NASA/JSC

Tatyana McFadden
During the 2024 Paralympic Games, seven-time Paralympian Tatyana McFadden, age 35, became the most decorated American track and field athlete of all time. McFadden, who was born with the spinal condition spina bifida, competes in wheelchair racing. At the Games, she was a Team USA captain and earned silver and bronze medals, bringing her total count to 22 medals across six Paralympics. McFadden has also won 24 major marathon titles and set five world records.

Jeff Kinney
Author Jeff Kinney published the 19th book in his *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series, then promoted it with a nationwide tour. In keeping with the food-themed story in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Hot Mess*, Kinney made the tour special by traveling across the country in a Wimpy Kid food truck. Instead of serving things to eat, however, he dished out a variety of books. Kinney performed interactive stage shows and made surprise school visits at each stop, but his main goal was to empower young readers. "The most important thing for a kid is to be able to choose their own book," Kinney said.

Sunita Williams
After unexpectedly getting stuck at the International Space Station (ISS), NASA astronaut Sunita "Sun" Williams became a model of leadership and adaptability. She and fellow astronaut Butch Wilmore were supposed to come home after an eight-day mission to test Boeing's Starliner spacecraft, but due to problems with the spacecraft, their stay was extended by eight months—then prolonged again. Williams, age 59, took over as ISS commander in September, and her stay in space, along with her prior missions, has turned her into one of NASA's most experienced astronauts.

Ruth Gottesman
Students at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York City attended school for free this year thanks to the generosity of Ruth Gottesman, age 94, who made a \$1 billion donation to the school. It is believed to be the largest gift ever made to a US medical school and ensures that students won't pay any tuition. Gottesman has been connected to the institution for 55 years, first as a pediatrics professor and now as chair of the board of trustees. Her hope is that the donation inspires people who thought they could not afford medical school to apply.

Snoop Dogg
Hip-hop icon Snoop Dogg became a breakout TV star this year. He served as a special correspondent for NBC's coverage of the Paris Olympics. There, he cheered on Team USA at events (even dressing in equestrian gear to support horseback riders), interviewed American athletes, and hosted segments with journalist Mike Tirico—all with his signature brand of cool commentary. NBC's executive producer called him an "ambassador of happiness." In the fall, Snoop joined *The Voice* as a judge for season 26 and became a fan favorite.