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The correct decay

In the article "Deep coral reveals ocean's fickle history" (SN: 5/2/98, p. 277), you state: "Measuring a second form of radioactive decay—carbon-14 to carbon-12 . . ." Carbon-14 decays into nitrogen by emission of a beta particle. Bill Nye the Science Guy got this wrong too.

*Joel Swank
Beaverton, Or.*

Upside-down art

As an art therapist who is researching the effects of psychiatric diagnosis and medication on the formal variables in drawings, I was stunned by the illustrations in "Picturing pesticides' impact on kids" (SN: 6/6/98, p. 358). It looks as if the line quality (broken and sketchy rather than continuous and fluid) is considerably worse in the pesticide-exposed children. The drawings of some adults with dementias and those with long histories of severe alcohol abuse also have poor line quality as well as fewer details and less recognizable depictions of people. I hope the researchers plan follow-up studies

to test other older children in the two groups, as well as to follow the original subjects for the next 2 to 5 years.

Is it possible, though, that one of the illustrations was printed upside down? Young children (3- and 4-year-olds) sometimes rotate parts of their drawings, but to turn the people on their heads is indeed unusual!

*Linda Gantt
Buceton Mills, WV*

The drawing was not rotated. In fact, Guilette told SCIENCE NEWS that a number of the children from the pesticide-exposed group, and only that group, drew their people upside down—an observation that disturbed her too.

—J. Raloff

Soy in a healthful diet

Your informative and detailed story "Soy-nara, heart disease" (SN: 5/30/98, p. 348) omitted a few crucial points. Yes, consuming soy—even as a mere side dish—lowers one's cholesterol. But adding a bit of tofu to a typical American diet does virtually nothing. To enjoy its fullest benefits, people should

incorporate soy and other legumes into a low-fat, pure vegetarian diet. Also, the Framingham Heart Study, underway in that Boston suburb since 1949, has documented a "threshold" cholesterol blood level of 150 mg/dl, below which heart attacks and heart disease almost never occur. But one-third of cardiac deaths befall those with levels between 150 mg/dl and the federally suggested 200 mg/dl. For most people, a pure vegetarian diet can confer powerful immunity from heart disease without resorting to cholesterol-lowering drugs.

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