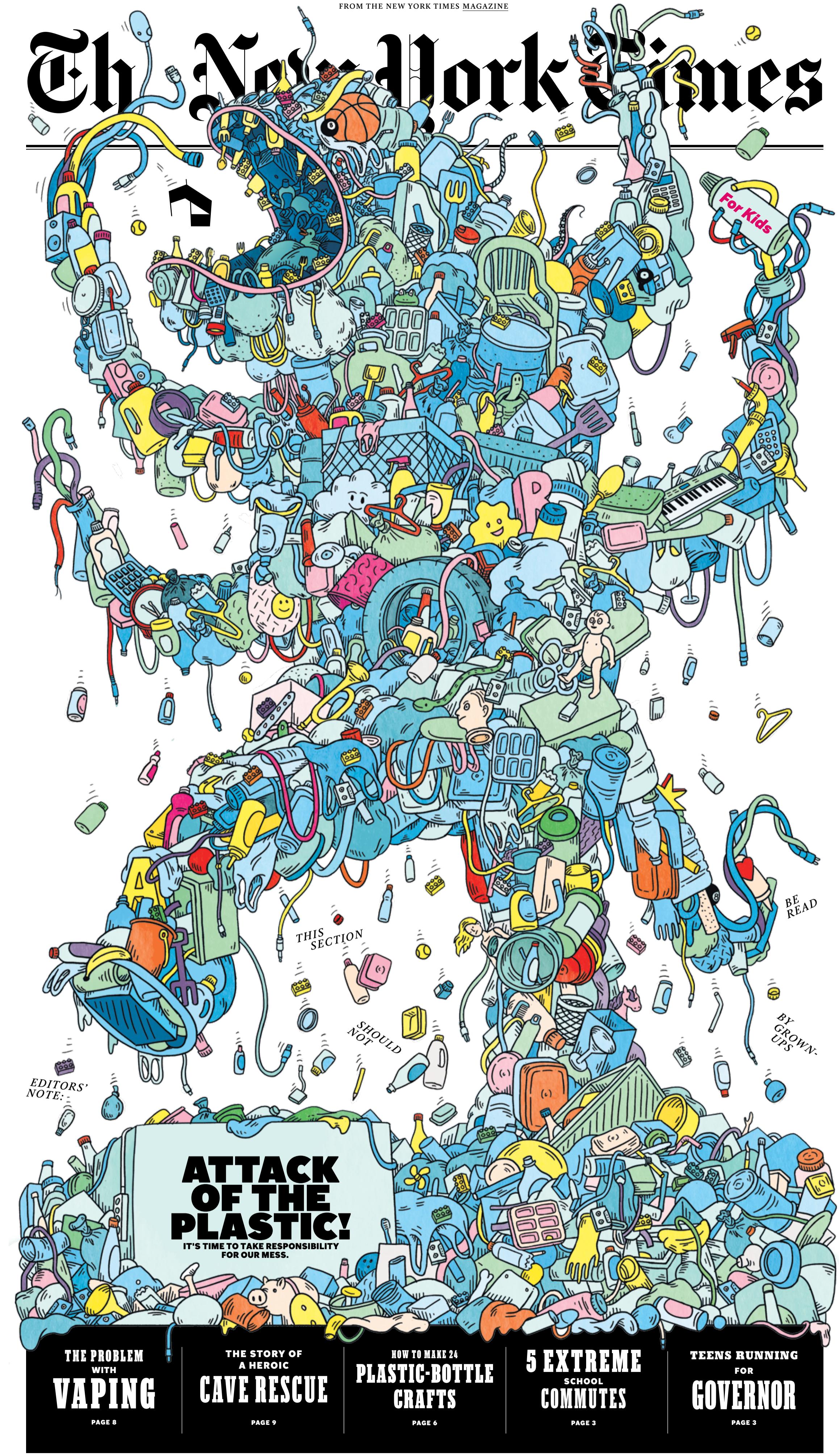


The New York Times



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THE CAVE RESCUE

HOW A THAI BOYS' SOCCER TEAM CAPTURED THE WORLD'S ATTENTION



BY CHELSEA LEU

YOU MAY HAVE participated in what you considered an epic food fight in the school cafeteria, but it was nothing compared with the world's biggest food fight.

La Tomatina occurs every year on the last Wednesday of August (this year, Aug. 29), when tens of thousands of revelers converge on Buñol, a small town in Spain, to hurl more than 200,000 pounds of squishy, pulpy tomatoes at one another. The tradition began more than 70 years ago, although no one's sure exactly how — some say a group of kids disrupted a parade by flinging food; others say that disgruntled Buñol residents threw fruit at local officials during a celebration. Nowadays, the festivities officially begin when someone is able to fetch a *jamón*, or a leg of Spanish ham, from atop a greased wooden pole. When that happens (or at 11 o'clock, if no one can reach the ham before then), a cannon fires to signal that the tomato-throwing may commence. La Tomatina is a messy free-for-all, but there are a few rules — most important, that people have to squish the tomatoes before hurling them. Getting hit point-blank with a ripe tomato can hurt! Some people also wear goggles to protect their eyes from tomato juice, which is acidic and can sting. After an hour of chucking, dodging and general mayhem, a second cannon sounds to signal the fight's end. By then, the ground, walls and participants are covered in a thick layer of red goop; fire trucks hose off the streets, and everyone trudges off to clean up, exhausted but exhilarated. ♦

TINY STORY

97,000

Pieces of mail sent from the post office at the top of Mount Fuji in Japan last summer.

1

The number of crawler tractors (bulldozers without the front blade) that journey to the top to collect the crates of postcards and letters and bring them back down.