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SENIOR LIFE

Seniors delay doctor visits to their own detriment

By Alex Rose
 arose@21st-centurymedia.com
 @arosedelco on Twitter

A recent survey by the Mesothelioma Center found that 62 percent of seniors put off going to the doctor after noticing symptoms, a worrying trend for a population that is highly susceptible to chronic diseases requiring fast treatment.

The study of approximately 1,000 people aged 65 and older was conducted in December using Google Surveys and found 10 percent of seniors avoid seeing a doctor because they can't afford care. The survey also found 17 percent wait more than a week to visit a doctor - and in some cases, more than a month - while 16 percent never visit a doctor after noticing symptoms.

"Due to high health care costs in America, some patients may see cost as a deterrent to receiving the care they need," said Karen Selby, RN, patient advocate at The Mesothelioma Center at Asbestos.com. "However, it's usually financially smarter to get checked right away, as delaying care may result in more expensive medical bills later on."

The National Council on Aging has found that approximately 80 percent of older adults have at least one chronic disease and 77 percent have two or more. Seniors are particularly susceptible to chronic diseases such as cancer, heart disease, stroke and diabetes, all of which can lead to more serious complications if left untreated. That is why



Ten percent of seniors avoid seeing a doctor because they can't afford care, according to a recent study by the Mesothelioma Center.

Selby said it is imperative that older populations visit health care professionals as soon as possible when symptoms arise.

The Mesothelioma Center survey found two-thirds of seniors preferred waiting to see if their symptoms would disappear before visiting doctor. Others preferred self-diagnosing, said they did not have the time or money, lacked transportation or feared receiving bad news, according to the study.

"Fear of receiving a scary diagnosis also hinders people from visiting a doctor - but if you suspect something is wrong, it's better to get checked out sooner rather than later," Selby said. "Early detection of many diseases like the flu can help prevent them from spreading."

While the thought of a doc-

tor visit may cause feelings of dread and anxiety, the study says, regular checkups are necessary to address common health concerns among seniors, such as chronic diseases, physical injuries, mental or cognitive health issues, and issues associated with aging, like bladder control or sensory impairments.

"Being aware of the elevated risks of these conditions as you age will help you make more informed health care decisions and healthier lifestyle choices," the report states. "Ignoring signs of illness may only worsen a condition, cause other health complications and call for unnecessary medications."

The report also suggests scheduling regular screenings, as some serious health conditions may not produce symptoms. Early detection of

silent killers like cancer and heart disease may prove key in improving survival rates among seniors, so it is important for doctors to regularly review any changes in health and have information like family history at the ready.

The report notes that regular screenings of breast cancer helped reduce deaths by 39 percent after mammograms became routine, indicating women should begin getting a yearly mammogram starting at age 45.

Colorectal cancer is also a leading killer of both men and women, and those over the age of 50 should receive regular colonoscopies to help detect it, especially if there is a family history of the disease. But the report notes the American Cancer Society has found only about 60% of people re-

ceive colonoscopies every 10 years, as recommended.

Mesothelioma, "the asbestos cancer," has a particularly long latency period, between 20 to 50 years, putting seniors at higher risk if they were in contact with asbestos or asbestos products earlier in life. Early mesothelioma detection can improve the prognosis and life expectancy of those affected, so even those who lived with someone who was regularly exposed to asbestos should request a cancer screening from their doctor or a doctor specializing in mesothelioma.

Selby notes that February is notoriously the worst month for the flu. Because seniors are more susceptible, she said they should take extra precautions to avoid getting sick by avoiding crowds and public spaces, sanitizing frequently-touched surfaces such as counters, doorknobs and phones, avoid touching their faces and wash their hands.

"Preventative actions are also extremely important," said Selby. "The (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) reports that getting a flu shot can reduce your risk of getting the flu by up to 60 percent. Couple this with staying healthy by exercising regularly, drinking adequate fluids, and eating nutrient-dense foods."

For caregivers and family members of seniors, the United Hospital Fund has put together a guide to help them navigate doctor visits.

The guide suggests trying to schedule appointments when patients have the most

energy, such as mornings, before daily activities have worn them down. Those attending the visits should also have a list of questions or topics to discuss, and be knowledgeable about medications their loved one is currently taking.

Those taking seniors to appointments should talk with the patient ahead of the visit to determine any changes in health or symptoms, as well as the mental wellbeing of the patient. If sensitive issues such as incontinence or memory loss are at issue, figure out how and when to discuss those concerns with the doctor.

The guide suggests being upfront about concerns and questions at the start of the visit and taking notice of verbal and nonverbal cues from the patient, such as inaccurate information, frowning, looking away, or other indications of discomfort.

Following up with treatments, medication and testing is equally important to ensure the patient is complying with prescribed regimens and recommendations. It is also important to make sure the patient is receiving the quality of care they deserve and require by asking questions after the visit.

The full Mesothelioma Center survey is available at asbestos.com/treatment/specialists/avoiding-doctor-survey and the United Hospital Fund guide can be accessed at nextstepincare.org/uploads/File/Guides/Doctor_Visits/Doctor_Visits.pdf.



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SENIOR LIFE

Maris Grove Celebrates Groundbreaking for New Continuing Care Building

On Jan. 8, Maris Grove, a distinctive senior living community in Glen Mills, Pennsylvania, developed and managed by Erickson Living, held a ceremonial groundbreaking for the construction of Evergreen Pointe, a new three-story, more than 76,000 square-foot assisted living building on campus. Throughout the country, Erickson Living communities are known for their dynamic lifestyle, state-of-the-art amenities, and superior health and wellness services. It's this commitment to innovation and excellence that makes Maris Grove an ideal choice for retirement living in Delaware County.

More than 100 guests attended the ceremony, including Executive Director Maureen Heckler, Director of Continuing Care Danielle Hammer, Resident Advisory Committee liaison Charlie Barr, staff, and residents.

"The start of construction on this new building is exciting and supports our desire to increase the scope of person-centered care available on campus," said Executive Director Maureen Heckler. "Our integrated care model is just what seniors are looking for in order to enjoy optimal health."

Construction of Evergreen Pointe is part of Maris Grove's multi-year plan to expand and renovate its existing continuing care residences, along with amenity spaces. Evergreen Pointe will feature 84 new assisted living apartment homes ranging in size from studios to one and two-bedroom styles. Each apartment home will include a private, full bathroom and a kitchenette, along with elegant finishes and spacious designs, and some will feature patios leading to an enclosed



Rendering of Evergreen Pointe at Maris Grove.

courtyard. Common areas available for use by all continuing care residents will include a living room, media room, creative arts studio, family kitchen, dining venue, games lounge, library nook, and fitness room.

The new building will be located adjacent to the existing continuing care building, Rose Court, which will be renovated to include a dedicated memory care neighborhood and redesigned lobby and bistro. The expansion of memory care offerings will include a secure roof-top garden and new amenities. The well-designed memory care residences will meet the specialized needs of residents by providing a stimulating, nurturing, and amenity-rich environment.

The construction of Evergreen Pointe is estimated

to take 18 months. Three independent living neighborhoods, with more than 1,200 independent living apartment homes, are also located on the picturesque 87-acre campus.

Maris Grove's standard of excellence for the provision of health care and commitment to meeting the individual needs of residents is well-known in the senior living marketplace. Most recently, Maris Grove continuing care neighborhood earned a Best Nursing Home designation by U.S. News & World Report for its short-term rehabilitation services.

The project's designer is nationally recognized LEED-certified architectural firm SFCs. The Virginia-based architectural firm has a local office in Blue Bell, Pennsylvania.

The community's continued growth will create new

career opportunities. For more information about joining the talented team at Maris Grove, please visit jobs.ericksonliving.com.

About Maris Grove

Maris Grove, one of 20 continuing care retirement communities developed and managed by Erickson Living®, is situated on a scenic 87-acre campus in Glen Mills, Pennsylvania. The not-for-profit community of more than 1,600 residents and 740 employees is governed by its own board of directors, affiliated with National Senior Campuses, who provide independent financial and operational oversight of the community. Additional information about Maris Grove can be found at MarisGroveCommunity.com.

SENIOR LIFE

Senior Silver Poms Cheerleading Squad Gives Debut Performance

The debut performance of the "Heritage Hotties," a silver poms Cheerleading Squad made up of residents of The Heritage of Green Hills, healthy life plan community in Shillington, Pa., was presented on Monday, Feb. 24. After the short performance in the Tavern, there will be a screening of the film "Poms", accompanied by Sundaes on Mondays Ice Cream Bar.

It happened at The Heritage of Green Hills, 200 Tranquility Lane, Shillington, Pa.

The squad was formed when a group of residents saw the feel-good movie "Poms," and thought it would be fun to start a team of their own, like the heroines in the film.

Luckily, Resident Carol Lauer's granddaughter is Elizabeth Lavanga, the former Berks Catholic Varsity Cheer Captain. The pre-med student at Penn State offered to help organize a team over her break as a community-service project. Lavanga also put together choreography that would be beneficial for seniors. She took into consideration the Heritage's model of health and wellness through activity and fun, and planned movements that help with balance, stretching, memory and endurance.

Now members of the Heritage Hotties squad suit up

in matching "Cheer by your own rules" T-shirts every Friday to practice, move, laugh and have a great time together.

The team is open to all residents, including those who prefer to cheer from a seated position. Enthusiasm is the only requirement. Some members of the Heritage Hotties have cheerleading experience from high school and college, while others are completely new to the sport.

About Heritage of Green Hills

The Heritage of Green Hills is a healthy life plan community that provides independent living apartments and villas as well as personal care and secure memory care suites for seniors. The community's Well by Design(SM) program focuses on 8 Dimensions of Wellness — a body, mind and spirit philosophy that enables residents to lead rich, fulfilling lives. Independent living residents reside in an active, vibrant environment where they enjoy a maintenance-free lifestyle with amenities including housekeeping, flexible dining options, a gym with personal trainer, art studio, indoor pool and much more.

For more information, please visit www.HeritageOfGreenHills.com.



"Heritage Hotties," a silver poms Cheerleading Squad, is made up of residents of The Heritage of Green Hill.

19th Amendment

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Laurie Rofini, Chester County Historical Society

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SENIOR LIFE

Maris Grove Residents Stay Young and Healthy by Staying Engaged

By Dorrie Anshel

Walk into the lobby of any clubhouse at Maris Grove, an Erickson Living developed and managed senior living retirement community in Glen Mills, PA, and you'll feel the energy. The residents are constantly on the go, engaging with friends, learning in classes and lectures, exercising in the gym or pool, playing games, participating in clubs, enjoying live performances, taking field trips...the roster of activities is packed all day, every day. There is something for everyone, even those who prefer just to relax and enjoy the engaging atmosphere on campus.

Besides being fun, this regular engagement with others around shared interests delivers important benefits: It enhances residents' emotional well-being and cognitive function, and may even help stave off certain age-related illnesses.

Studies Prove the Point
The National Institute on Aging cites research that shows "a strong correlation between social interaction and health and well-being among older adults."

That's why so many seniors are opting to live in communities like Maris Grove, where they can stay active and connected. All the amenities - gym, pool, theater, restaurants, game rooms, art studio, TV studio, and clubs - are under one roof, so it's easy to engage with peers. Outings to cultural events are always on the schedule. With so much to do on and off campus, residents can pursue long-time hobbies and discover exciting new interests.

Director of Resident Life Todd Sullivan says, "We often joke that Maris Grove is like a cruise ship on land. There's something for everyone, with plenty of opportunities to try new

things."

"Even if you're not a 'joiner,' you'll see friendly faces and hear 'hellos' everywhere on campus," he adds. "It's easy to make friends and impossible to feel lonely here," he notes.

The Downside of Aging in Place

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 11 million seniors live alone, usually in their family home. Many view "aging in place" as a badge of independence, but living alone can be isolating.

Then, there's the time and expense of home maintenance. Unfortunately, houses age right along with their occupants; deferring maintenance can erode a home's value and your nest egg.

Maris Grove's Sales Director Liz Harrington notes, "We understand that leaving your home is emotional, but once people are living an active, maintenance-free life here, they don't miss it. We constantly hear, 'I wish I had moved sooner,' even from those who thought they weren't ready. When they see how much fun they're having and how good they feel, they don't look back."

She adds, "I encourage prospective residents to explore their options and be open to the wonderful lifestyle we offer. Having a sense of community and purpose makes such a difference. This truly can be the best time of your life."

Getting Much and Giving Back

The decision to move to Maris Grove was easy for Barbara Miller. Her brother and a good friend already lived there, and she frequently visited her aunt and uncle at Brooksby Village, an Erickson Living developed and managed senior living community in Peabody, MA.

Still, it took her 10 years after her husband passed



Maris Grove resident Barbara Miller enjoys meeting friends for dinner on campus. From left, Carol Ericksen, Bette Baylay, Barbara Miller, Pauline Pastore.

away to commit. "I'm not sure what I was waiting for," she says with a laugh. "I came in October 2018 and love everything about it, especially the people. Maris Grove made sure that the newcomers had plenty of parties and mixers, and everyone was so warm and friendly. In just one year I have made so many new, close friends."

Barbara spent decades in a large colonial home and admits that she never imagined living in an apartment. Now, she can't imagine living anywhere else. "I never knew how wonderful it could be to walk out your door and see neighbors in

the hall. We've all become so close. My apartment is beautiful and spacious," she adds. "I always had a porch swing at home, so I'm thrilled to have a swing on my screened-in patio. I have my own little garden, and there's something to do every minute of the day."

Barbara has always been active but believes that she's in the best shape of her life, thanks to regular exercise classes. Chair yoga, swimming, and ping pong are her favorites. She has taken billiard lessons and is active in the current affairs club. She loves the delicious meals, the variety of restaurants, and the mov-

ies, which she attends a few times a week.

"The range of activities is incredible, and you can meet so many wonderful people who share your interests," she says. "If you're bored here, you'll be bored anywhere."

Barbara's pursuits aren't confined to campus. She organized a small group that regularly attends the theater in Philadelphia. The best part? They don't have to drive. "We take a Lyft back and forth, grab lunch, enjoy the performance. It's so easy," she says.

Grateful for her new life and eager to give back, Barbara and her friend, Bette

Baylay, are working with Maris Grove to start a "reading buddy" program, in which residents tutor young students. "The staff is helping us set it up, and a number of residents have signed on as tutors," she says. "It enriches our lives to do something good for others, and we can't wait to get started."

That kind of support, she says, is what makes Maris Grove a special place to live. "I'm constantly meeting wonderful, interesting people. The staff is kind, respectful, and truly interested in how we're doing. I feel so relaxed and safe here, and being active and engaged helps us feel good about ourselves and our lives. I'm very blessed to be living at Maris Grove."

For more information on Maris Grove, visit marisgrovecommunity.com.

Maris Grove is a not-for-profit organization, developed and managed by Erickson Living®. The community is governed by its own board of directors affiliated with National Senior Campuses, who provide independent financial and operational oversight of the community.

About Maris Grove

Maris Grove, one of 20 continuing care retirement communities developed and managed by Erickson Living®, is situated on a scenic 87-acre campus in Glen Mills, Pennsylvania. The not-for-profit community of more than 1,900 residents and 1,000 employees is governed by its own board of directors, affiliated with National Senior Campuses, who provide independent financial and operational oversight of the community. Additional information about Maris Grove can be found at MarisGroveCommunity.com.

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SENIOR LIFE

Heritage of Green Hills Hosts Black Dress Party

The Heritage of Green Hills, a healthy life community in Shillington, Pa., recently held its third annual

Little Black Dress Party inspired by the film "Breakfast at Tiffany's." Attendees wore black, sunglasses and

pearls, to match the signature style of the movie's heroine, Holly Golightly. The event's annual motto

is a quotation from Audrey Hepburn, who portrayed Golightly: "For beautiful eyes, look

for the good in others... For beautiful lips, speak only words of kindness... And for poise, walk with

the knowledge that you are never alone!"



SENIOR LIFE

The Heritage of Green Hills to Host Long-Term Care Insurance Information Session Feb. 27

SHILLINGTON, PA. » The Heritage of Green Hills, a healthy life plan community in Shillington, is hosting a long-term care insurance information session, "Are You Long-Term Care Aware?" on February 27, from 1:30 to 3 p.m., with Rosanne Schaeffer from ACSIA

Partners. The event is free and open to the public. Topics covered will include: What is long-term care? Where is long-term care provided? Does my health insurance cover long-term care? What help can I expect from Medicare and Medicaid?

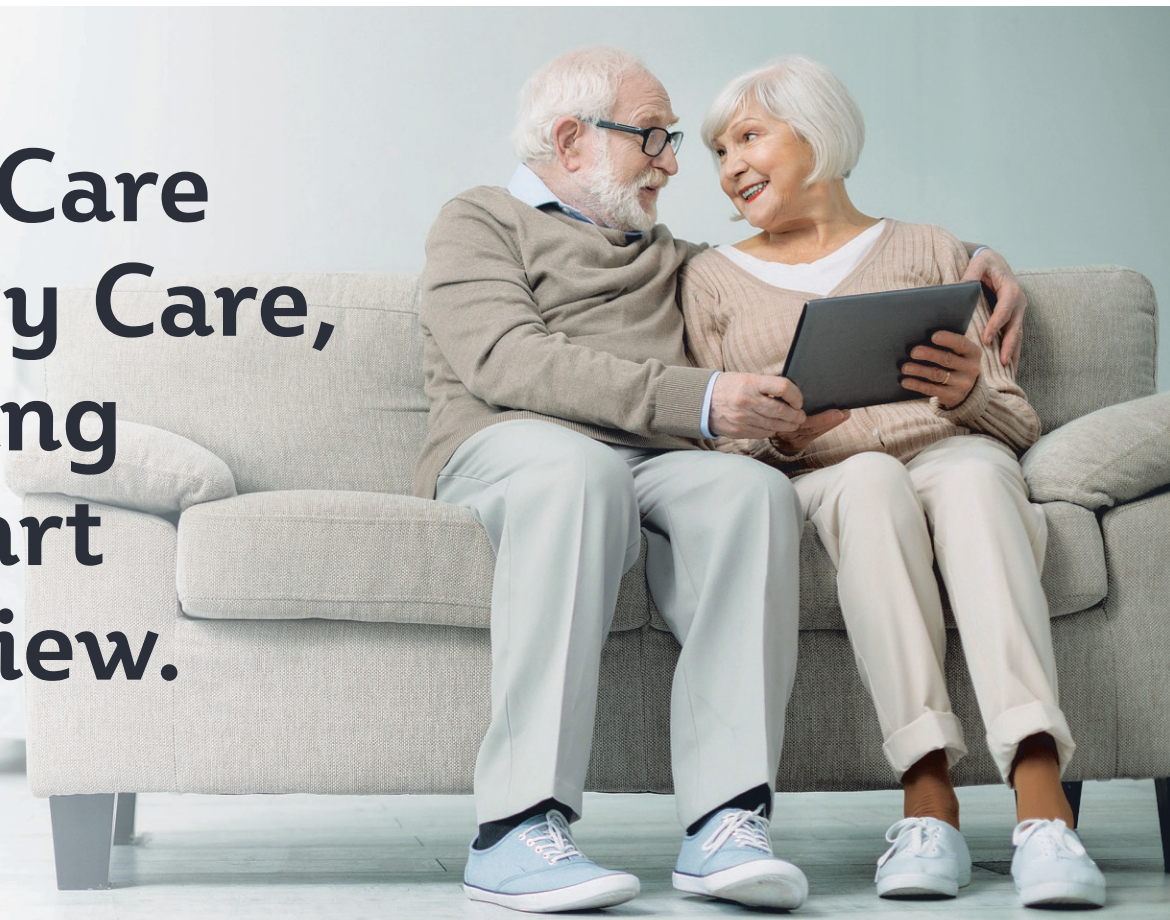
Why should I consider Long-Term Care Insurance? Please RSVP to Sally Schnitter at 610-775-1451 or by email at Sschnitter@heritagegh.com by February 21, 2020. The Heritage of Green Hills is located at 200 Tranquility Lane, in Shil-

lington, Pa. About Heritage of Green Hills The Heritage of Green Hills is a healthy life plan community that provides independent living apartments and villas as well as personal care and secure memory care suites for seniors. The commu-

nity's Well by Design(SM) program focuses on 8 Dimensions of Wellness — a body, mind and spirit philosophy that enables residents to lead rich, fulfilling lives. Independent living residents reside in an active, vibrant environment where they enjoy a maintenance-free

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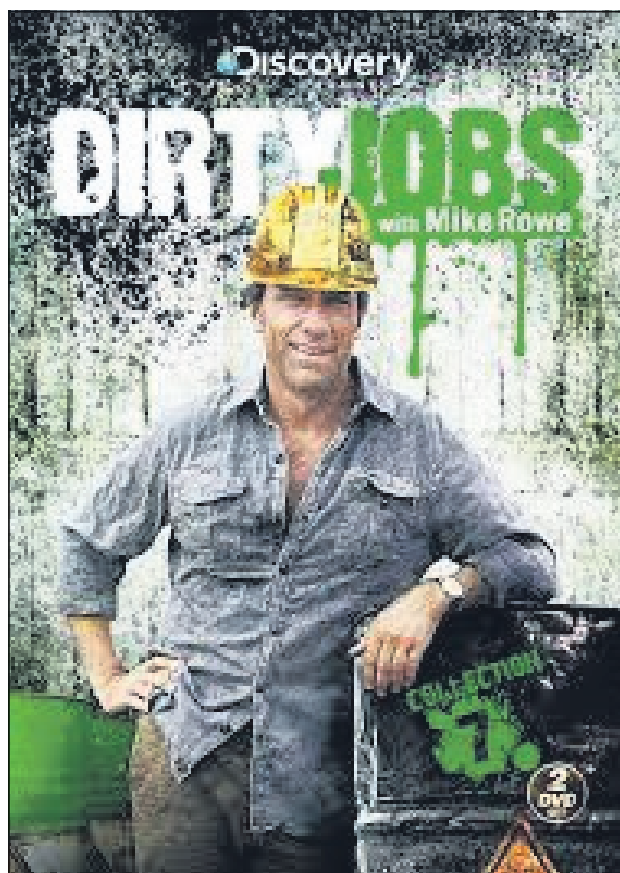
Spot of T - Behind the Scenes

By Terry Alburger
Life Engagement Coordinator,
Brittany Pointe Estates

Last weekend, I caught a couple episodes of the old TV show, "Dirty Jobs," hosted by Mike Rowe. It made me think, how many people do jobs behind the scenes in this world to make it a better place for us all to live? As Mike says in the opening of his show, "...These are hard-working men and women who earn an honest living doing the kinds of jobs that make civilized life possible for the rest of us."

Think about what goes on behind the scenes in your life and your neighborhood that make it comfortable and pleasant. Have you ever thought about what has to go on so that when you turn a faucet, clean water comes out? Or when you flush a toilet, things magically disappear? When it rains, why do you stay dry in your home? Or when you drive, why do you have relatively smooth roads under your wheels? (discounting a pothole or two!) It makes you think, doesn't it?

People get up every day and go to jobs that I have never before considered, and they take pride in them. They fix our cars, or assemble the clothing we wear, or cut down trees or repair bridges. People are there to cut our hair, to transport food from farms across the country so that we can eat. First responders and law enforcement officers risk their lives every day so that we might live more safely ... the list is endless. So many people do so many jobs. And we are all the better for it.



Mike Rowe of 'Dirty Jobs'

I am very grateful to each and everyone out there in the work force. No matter what your job, it has an important place in our world. The size of one's salary has nothing to do with importance of the service rendered. In fact, there is a whole army of volunteers out there that definitely make this world a better place.

One of the most important jobs I can think of is that of being a parent. If you are or were a stay-at-home parent, rest assured that there is no more important job in this world. To guide a young life, to be a good role model for your kids, and to encourage them to be a good human being as an adult is indeed

the most important job of which I can think. Raising a child is challenging and sometimes frustrating, but there is no more rewarding job.

So, the next time you see a crossing guard, a roadwork team, a construction crew, retail workers, those in the medical field, or any other job, please take a moment to think about the service they provide. This reminds me of the concept of six degrees of separation. The idea that anyone (and in this case, any job) is connected to particular person through a chain of circumstances with no more than five links. This is also known as the "small world" phe-

nomenon. Some links are obvious. The roadwork team repairs roads on which you drive every day or build new roads which will better enhance your life. That one is obvious. How about the crew in Alabama who work as worm farmers? They go out every day and dig up the right kinds of worms for fishermen to catch fish. These fishermen in turn go out and fish, bringing in their haul day after day. That haul goes to a local grocery or restaurant. Next step? On your plate! And only four steps away!

Every job has its benefits, every job can help in some way. So, to that farmer in Iowa out plow-

ing the field today, I thank you. To that scientist working on cures for diseases that may affect someone close to me someday, thank you. To the hairdressers out there who take care of our hair, thank you. This list is absolutely endless. Whoever you are, whatever you do or did in the past, thank you. You are, as the song goes, "The Wind Beneath My Wings."

About Brittany Pointe Estates

Brittany Pointe Estates is a gracious Lansdale retirement community that reflects the charm of the region of France for which

it is named. Situated in northern Montgomery County, residents of Brittany Pointe Estates senior living community enjoy an abundance of shopping opportunities, cultural offerings, theaters, gourmet restaurants, and beautiful parks that are nearby. Many of the nation's top hospitals and health care providers are less than an hour away in Center City Philadelphia and the surrounding areas. It is located at 1001 S. Valley Forge Road, Lansdale, PA 19446 and you can call 267-657-3106 for information.

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SENIOR LIFE

5 Cardio Exercises to Promote a Healthy Heart

By Anthony Byers
The Becoming Center

February is National Heart Health Month and if you're looking to maintain a healthy heart, regular exercise and physical activity is one step in the right direction. According to the National Heart Association, regular physical activity helps lower blood pressure, improve blood sugar, and control body weight, all of which can help decrease your risk for heart disease.

At The Becoming Center, professionally trained exercise physiologists understand the importance of physical activity and the role it plays in maintaining a healthy heart. Here are five cardio exercises for all fitness levels that can help you maintain and improve your

heart's health.

Interval Training

This type of training alternates between short bursts of high-intensity exercise with longer periods of active recovery. As your heart rate progressively speeds up and slows down, you can burn significant calories and improve the function of your blood vessels. Interval training is especially effective for those who have busy schedules as you can achieve the same physical benefits of a full-sized workout in a quarter of the time. There are plenty of ways to practice interval training. Incorporate this exercise into your morning jog. Run at a faster pace for thirty seconds to a minute and then jog for the next four. Repeat the cycle until you've reached your desired

distance. **Weight Training**

Weight training is a type of strength training that uses weights as resistance. While many people associate this type of exercise with a bench press and heavy dumbbells, your own body weight can provide sufficient resistance to strengthen and tone your muscles. Body weight exercises like push-ups, pull-ups, tricep dips and more can be a great way to build muscle, burn fat, and promote a healthy heart.

Swimming

An engaging full-body workout, swimming is a fun and active way to benefit your heart's health. Great for individuals with joint pain, the buoyancy of the water can help you move easily while strengthening muscles and burning calo-



Regular physical activity helps lower blood pressure, improve blood sugar, and control body weight, all of which can help decrease your risk for heart disease.

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SENIOR LIFE

Dear Aimee - Hospice is Hope

By Aimee J. Gustitis, BSN, RN, JD

Caregiver Consultant and Nourish For Caregivers Facilitator

Dear Aimee: My 82 year old father fell three times in the last few months. Each trip to the emergency room takes a great toll on both him and my mother. It seems like we are on a healthcare merry-go-round as we shuttle between the ER and various doctor's appointments and tests. Are there healthcare options available to manage symptoms rather than trying to seek a cure to what seems like a natural process? — Hopeful in Havertown

Dear Hopeful in Havertown: It sounds like what you are asking is whether or not your father would be hospice appropriate. The word hospice often conjures up images of people lying in bed in a darkened room, with loved ones speaking in hushed voices so as not to disturb the patient. Others may view the term hospice as a last resort, a path taken when death is imminent. Although some do have the above experiences at life's end, I am here to share the good news that hospice is hopeful and that the dying process can be a beautiful experience.

First, let's talk finances. From an insurance perspective, hospice is a Medicare/Medicaid benefit. Medical equipment, incontinence products, some medications, physician oversight, in-home skilled nursing care, social work, chaplaincy, music therapy, volunteers, and certificated nursing assistants are among the included ser-



Aimee Gustitis

VICES. Private pay insurance hospice coverage is also available depending upon the provider.

To qualify for this benefit, there must be two physicians who certify that a patient's life expectancy is six months or less based upon meeting specific clinical criteria. Although this timeframe may be true for some, take comfort in the fact that some patients live for years while on hospice. In contrast to the traditional medical mindset with a curative focus, hospice centers on symptom management. As a result, many patient's ex-

perience an increase in their quality of life because they can now comfortably savor time with family and friends rather than as you stated, live on a "healthcare merry-go-round".

It is common for caregivers to worry that they may be giving up on his or her loved one by considering hospice. For others, it may be a relief to disconnect from frequent emergency room visits, physically/emotionally challenging trips to a doctor's office, or tests and bloodwork that have no positive impact quality of life. With hospice,

the care comes to you in the comfort of your home or care community. They are your new 911 and are available 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

So the question then becomes, how do me or my loved one decide whether or not to move forward with hospice care? Understandably, this step can be emotional and sometimes confusing. A caregiver may choose to initiate a conversation with their loved one's primary care provider on his or her behalf should they be of diminished capacity. Other times, an individ-

ual may decide to pursue hospice for themselves after speaking with a healthcare provider. Another option to consider is to contact a local hospice agency directly and speak with a representative. They can obtain the necessary physician orders as well as provide a timely patient assessment. Even if one does not initially qualify, it may be beneficial to have an application on file in the event that a patient does become hospice appropriate.

Once a hospice agency has been identified an initial assessment would take place in the patient's place of residence. A nurse case manager, social worker, chaplain, and physician would be assigned creating an interdisciplinary team (IDT) to focus on a patient's needs. Routine visits these professionals as well as a home health aide would be scheduled. Ideally, the IDT meets bi-weekly to discuss the care of a patient in addition to the caregiver's wellbeing. As with all things, this process is a work in progress with the goal being to maximize the safety and comfort of a patient and his or her loved ones.

One final thought, after electing the hospice benefit you or your loved one may choose at any time to leave this symptom management path and return to the traditional curative approach. No one will deny you the healthcare you seek, rather these are options to consider.

Should you wish to learn more about hospice and the local agen-

cies available please visit: <https://www.medicare.gov/hospicecompare/> You can search by zip code, city, or state. Best wishes as you continue to care for your loved one.

About Aimee

For the past 10 years, Aimee J. Gustitis, BSN, RN, JD, has worked in long-term care, home, hospice and hospital settings empowering patients and their caregivers to navigate the complex world of senior healthcare. Additionally, she collaborates with pediatric special needs clients and their families to provide school-based nursing care. Her practice also includes providing legal nurse consulting services to law firms. She is well-versed in elder care case management, electronic health records documentation and interdisciplinary team participation. She has extensive experience determining hospice eligibility and with end of life comfort kit symptom management.

Aimee embraces the hospice philosophy that death need not be fearful and painful, but rather can be a beautiful, dignified experience for both the patient and their loved ones. As a Nourish For Caregivers facilitator she combines these areas of clinical expertise into serving those caring for aging, chronically ill and disabled loved ones.

She can be reached at 501 Lawrence Road, Suite C3, Broomall, PA 19008; or at 610-724-8950 or aimiegustitis@outlook.com.

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SENIOR LIFE

Recovery from Eating Disorders is Possible

By Jessica Hansford, LPC, CAADC

Site Director at The Renfrew Center of Radnor.

Feb. 24 through March 1 is National Eating Disorder Awareness Week, a national effort to make the public aware of the dangers and causes of eating disorders, their signs and symptoms and, what most individuals may not know, that recovery is possible.

In a culture obsessed with thinness, dieting and perfection, it can be difficult to recognize when a loved one - or even yourself - may be exhibiting thoughts or behaviors that have become high-risk, often leading to an eating disorder. Eating disorders are serious and potentially life-threatening illnesses that affect all ages, genders and races and, according to the National Association of Anorexia and Association Disorders (ANAD), about 30 million Americans of all ages and genders are suffering.

The number of women in midlife seeking treatment continues to rise and, according to ANAD, 13% of women over 50 experience disordered eating behaviors.

Eating Disorders Awareness Week is the perfect time to familiarize yourself with the most common types of eating disorders and their signs and symptoms. Recognizing an eating disorder, and seeking treatment early on, can save a life.

GUIDE TO DIFFERENT TYPES

At The Renfrew Center, the country's first residential eating disorder treatment facility located in Philadelphia, we know there is never a single cause for the development of an

eating disorder. Rather, it's a perfect storm comprised of many factors. The three most common eating disorders are anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and binge eating disorder.

Anorexia (clinically known as anorexia nervosa) is self-imposed starvation. Individuals with anorexia are often profoundly dissatisfied with their body image and usually express a strong desire to lose weight. One of the key features of this disorder is denial. Although obsessed with food, individuals continually deny their hunger and do not recognize that they are physically and emotionally fragile.

Bulimia (clinically known as bulimia nervosa) is the repeated cycle of out-of-control eating followed by some form of purging. The purging associated with bulimia may be self-induced vomiting, excessive use of laxatives or diuretics, or obsessive exercising. Individuals with bulimia are preoccupied with their shape, weight and body image as a source of self-esteem.

Binge eating disorder (also known as compulsive overeating) is uncontrolled eating or bingeing followed by periods of guilt and depression. A binge is marked by the consumption of large amounts of food, sometimes accompanied by a pressured, "frenzied" feeling.

WARNING SIGNS

The following common warning signs may indicate someone may be suffering from an eating disorder. It's important to remember that an individual may have symptoms of more than one of these diagnoses or may not show all the warning signs for a specific disease - but they may still need help.

Someone with anorexia may be thin and continue to be thinner, staying on a

diet because she feels overweight due to a distorted body image. Excessively discussing food, cooking or dieting and allowing body image to be the primary factor to her self-worth, may also be evident. Thinning hair or hair loss often occurs.

Someone with bulimia may engage in binge eating, particularly as a reaction to stress and may feel her eating is out of control. Engaging in vomiting, laxative use or exercise and using the bathroom frequently after meals are also signs. A person's weight does not signal they are suffering from bulimia, although they may experience frequent changes in weight.

An individual with binge eating disorder turns to food as a way of coping with feelings - eating large amounts of food when not physically hungry. They may eat to the point of feeling uncomfortably full, followed by feelings of shame, guilt or embarrassment.

WOMEN IN MIDLIFE

For most people, the word eating disorder evokes thoughts of a thin teenager or young adult. However, eating disorders affect people from all walks of life. The Renfrew Center has seen an increase in the number of women in their thirties, forties, fifties, and sixties seeking treatment for their eating disorder - often for the first time. Over the past decade, there has been a 42% increase in the number of women over the age of 35 who sought treatment at Renfrew.

Women in midlife face unique circumstances that may increase their vulnerability to developing an eating disorder. They may experience the same body dissatisfaction, body image distortions and fear of food that young women do, but these issues are of-



Jessica Hansford

ten made more difficult to cope with when combined with the aging process. We live in a culture obsessed with thinness and youth, with constant media messages pressuring women of all ages, but particularly women in midlife, to alter their appearance or change themselves in some way to conform to that ideal.

Mid-life women also experience unique milestones and life events, like divorce, grief/loss, infidelity, postpartum changes, 'empty nest syndrome,' menopause or career changes. These women may find it more difficult to seek help when experiencing these stressors, due to feelings of guilt because they often must leave behind family members or jobs that rely heavily on their presence every day.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR LOVED ONE IS

SUFFERING

Research shows the sooner an eating disorder is diagnosed and addressed, the more likely treatment will lead to sustained recovery. Don't shy away from expressing your concerns with a loved one but do recognize that a trusting relationship will make this easier.

Curb your impulse to comment on weight or appearance; even alarmingly underweight people are sensitive to any talk about their weight or shape and this may derail your interaction. Express concerns about general well-being first and then name the behaviors that trouble you. For example: "I've noticed you don't seem happy," "I'm concerned something's bothering you," "You seem tired and distracted," "I haven't seen you eating much at mealtime," "Are you having

some problems eating?" Remember, denial and shame accompany eating disorders, remain non-judgmental, avoid pressing too hard, leave the door open for future conversations, and continue to be aware of the loved one's behavior at home or in social settings.

Eating disorders can be a matter of life or death. Knowing the signs and symptoms, providing early intervention and accessing appropriate treatment can give your loved one the opportunity to fully recover and lead a successful, eating disorder free life.

If you or someone you love is struggling with an eating disorder speak with your primary care physician or a treatment facility, such as The Renfrew Center in Philadelphia, PA or Radnor, PA.



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FAMILIES IN CRISIS



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Some of the members of the board at Grands Stepping Up include, left to right, Kathryn Meloni, Esq. with PAWS for People therapy dog Frangelica, grandparent Kathy Baggio, Grands Stepping Up founder and President Karen Barnes, Lorna Laffey of St. Bernadette Parish, Deacon Al Murphy, co-chaplain, Paul and Barbara Anderson, and therapist/author Beth Tyson.

Grands Stepping Up

New group offers support, helping hands to grandparents raising grandchildren amid opioid crisis

By Peg DeGrassa
pdegrassa@21st-centurymedia.com
Editor of Town Talk, News & Press of Delaware County

MARPLE » Want more proof of just how bad the scourge of opioid abuse has become? Meet Grands Stepping Up, a new organization formed to help grandparents who find themselves overwhelmed and raising their grandchildren after the kids' parents have fallen victim to opioid addiction.

Only a few weeks old, the nonprofit group is planning a kickoff event 1-3 p.m. Saturday, March 7 at St. Mark's United Methodist Church, 2220 Sproul Road, Broomall. Grandparents raising grandchildren and others can get more information about the new organization in Delaware County, what it offers, and the opportunities available to help the group move forward with sponsorships and volunteering.

Founded by Karen Barnes of Drexel Hill, the local charity's foremost mission is to assist grandparents and other family guardians in Delaware County, who are raising their grandchildren. Although the largest majority of grandparents in the group found themselves in the sudden role of surrogate parents because of their own children's inability to raise their children due to drug addiction, another segment of grandparents are raising grandchildren because of their children's alcoholism, incarceration, mental health issues, death, or illness.

No matter what the reason, grandparents who suddenly find themselves in the role of parent to their grandchildren, often come to fill this role after experiencing an emotional, often chaotic, relationship with their own child, one likely dealing with addiction or



PEG DEGRASSA - MEDIANEWS GROUP

Terri Bower of Glenolden talks about the joys and the hardships experienced raising her granddaughter Makinley.

mental illness or a chronic illness.

The unique role of grandparents raising grandchildren saw an enormous spike in recent years as the opioid crisis continues to plague families everywhere. A recent statistic by Family and Community Service of Delaware County estimates that there's now about 5 percent of American families consisting of a grandparent raising a grandchild, primarily due to drug addiction or mental illness. According to a recent report from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, "Over 90,000 Pennsylvania grandparents are responsible for the basic needs of one or more grandchildren under the age of 18. These grandparents are caring for approximately 195,000 children, which is 7.5 percent of all children in the state. Over 20 percent of these grandparents are liv-

ing below the poverty level." In 2018, Pennsylvania's House Children and Youth Committee held a hearing on the issue, with estimates showing that Pennsylvania grandparents are saving the state at least an estimated \$1 billion per year by keeping their grandchildren out of the foster care system.

Barnes, a mother of five daughters, has been in the role of raising her grandchildren for more than half of a decade. When her fourth child became addicted to opioids and alcohol at 16 and had a baby at 17, Barnes' life radically changed. It wasn't long after the baby's birth when her daughter took off and left the grandmother with the infant.

Barnes, who eventually adopted her now-7-year-old granddaughter, is fortunate to say her daughter is presently recovered and

GRANDS » PAGE 11



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Delaware County District Attorney Jack Stollsteimer lends support to Grands Stepping Up founder and President Karen Barnes and her fellow Grands members.

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SENIOR LIFE

Local-Based Foundation Sets its Sights on Saving Sight for Millions

BALA CYNWYD, PA. » It is estimated that 20 million Americans are now living with age-related macular degeneration (AMD) or low vision – yet, many are left in the dark about living with this devastating disease that robs precious eyesight. This is something that The SupportSight Foundation (TSSF), a national nonprofit organization based in the Philadelphia area, which advocates for those with AMD, hopes to change. TSSF is using February, which happens to be Macu-

lar Degeneration Awareness Month and this important optometric year of 2020 to implement the next generation of the former Macula Vision Research Foundation (MVRF), a nonprofit that was dedicated to finding a cure for macular degeneration and other retinal diseases for over 20 years.

Their mission is solely focused on saving sight for millions of people who suffer from age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and lose their precious vision.

“We are leading the way as a strong and loud advocate for saving sight,” said Dawn Prall, Executive Director. “We encourage everyone to join us and make that voice louder and stronger.”

The organization places high priority on raising the public’s awareness of this devastating eye disease through education, advocacy, and research. Their free signature patient and caregiver education program, SupportSight SM, provides disease education

and access to low vision resources to help individuals, families, and caregivers whose lives are severely impacted by AMD.

Much like MVRF, TSSF also funds groundbreaking research projects by top scientists in the field who are on a path to discover effective new tools, technology, and treatments for people with vision loss.

“There is a major shortage of new, comprehensive, and accurate disease-specific information from a trusted source for pa-

tients, families, and caregivers who are impacted from AMD, in which TSSF will fill the void,” Prall said.

As for Age-related Macular Degenerated Awareness month, TSSF encourages everyone to check out its website and social media. “It is the perfect time for people to get to know us and the resources we offer,” said Prall.

About TSSF

The SupportSight Foundation (TSSF) is a 501(c) 3 public charity with a mis-

sion to provide patient education and access to low vision resources to help individuals, families, and caregivers, whose lives are severely impacted by macular degeneration. TSSF also funds innovative vision research projects conducted by top scientists in the field who are on a path to discover effective new tools, technology, and treatments with vision loss. For more information, visit supportights.org or call 888.681.8773.

SENIOR LIFE

Boomers Changing the Face of Senior Living

As members of the Baby Boom generation move into senior communities, they are bringing with them their unique perspectives and desires. This group, born between 1946 and 1964, aren’t content with retiring to a quiet life of cookie-cutter leisure, as their parents may have been.

Communities that want to attract this incoming wave of empty nesters and retirees know that Boomers want and deserve to be treated as individuals. In response, communities have moved far beyond one-size-fits-all offerings and amenities.

Two of the biggest recent trends in senior living that Boomers have embraced are flexible dining options and robust enrichment and social opportunities.

Flexible Dining

Boomers want – and expect – to have choices. And when it comes to food, those choices aren’t just about what they want to eat, but when and how.

For instance, residents of Echo Lake, a SageLife community in Malvern, Pa., have three different dining options within the community-

a pub, a café and restaurant-style dining room. There’s even a rooftop bar and terrace. In addition, Echo Lake’s flexible meal plan works on a point system. Continental Breakfast is included every day, then residents have points to use as they wish.

“Residents can eat breakfast, lunch or dinner at the community every day, or accumulate points and use them to host friends and family, or to eat lunch plus dinner on some days,” said Echo Lake’s Executive Director, Kathy Ardekani, MSW, NHA. “It’s up to them, which is what they want.”

Dining Director Patrick Moen’s menus also offer a combination of always-available favorites for those in the mood for sophisticated comfort foods, as well as changing seasonal offerings and specials to keep things fresh for those who want to mix it up.

So Much to Do

As individuals are living longer – and remaining active longer – they are looking at retirement as a chance to pursue new interests and delve deeper into life-long passions. Boomers are look-

ing for communities with a full slate of sophisticated entertainment, classes, celebrations and outings and the available spaces and services to develop their own community interest groups.

Echo Lake, for example, offers art classes, fitness classes, pickleball, trivia night, lectures, live entertainment, opportunities for community outreach, and

so on. The community’s Life Enrichment Director, Joyce Coleman, says “Lifelong learning is a real passion of mine. I like tapping into residents’ interests so we can plan programs and events that everyone will love.

And while having fun and learning is a goal in and of itself, pursuing interests and sharing them with others has far-reaching benefits.

The National Institute on Aging reports that social isolation and loneliness are serious health dangers, linked to higher risks for a variety of physical and mental health conditions, including high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, anxiety, depression, weakened immune system, cognitive decline, Alzheimer’s disease and even death.

Studies show that people who engage in meaningful, productive activities with others tend to feel better, have a sense of purpose and live longer. Their cognitive function may improve, too.

“Staying engaged and socially connected keeps Boomers healthier longer,” Ardekani added. “Aging should be about becoming an elder, not becoming elderly.”

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February is Macular Degeneration Awareness Month and Low Vision Awareness Month



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Grands Stepping Up Board members, left to right, Al Murphy, Lorna Laffey, Kathy Baggio, Gwen McCullough and Maria Kollar share a wealth of knowledge and past experience with the group.

Grands

FROM PAGE 9

doing well. Not all grandparents are so lucky. However, in more recent years, her other daughter became seriously ill and she again had to step into the role of raising two other grandchildren, ages 1 and 3.

Most of the grandparents aren't as vocal as Barnes, and are reluctant to speak on the record. Some are afraid to ruffle feathers of their unstable children, or they feel stigmatized or embarrassed by their family situation so they don't want their names published. Barnes said, what's sad, is that many struggling grandparents are either too embarrassed to ask for help or are too busy with the day-to-day demands of raising their grandchildren to reach out for support.

"It's hard to advocate for what's needed or attend meetings when you are overwhelmed and struggling each day to be there for your grandchildren and meet their basic needs,"



PEG DEGRASSA - MEDIANEWS GROUP

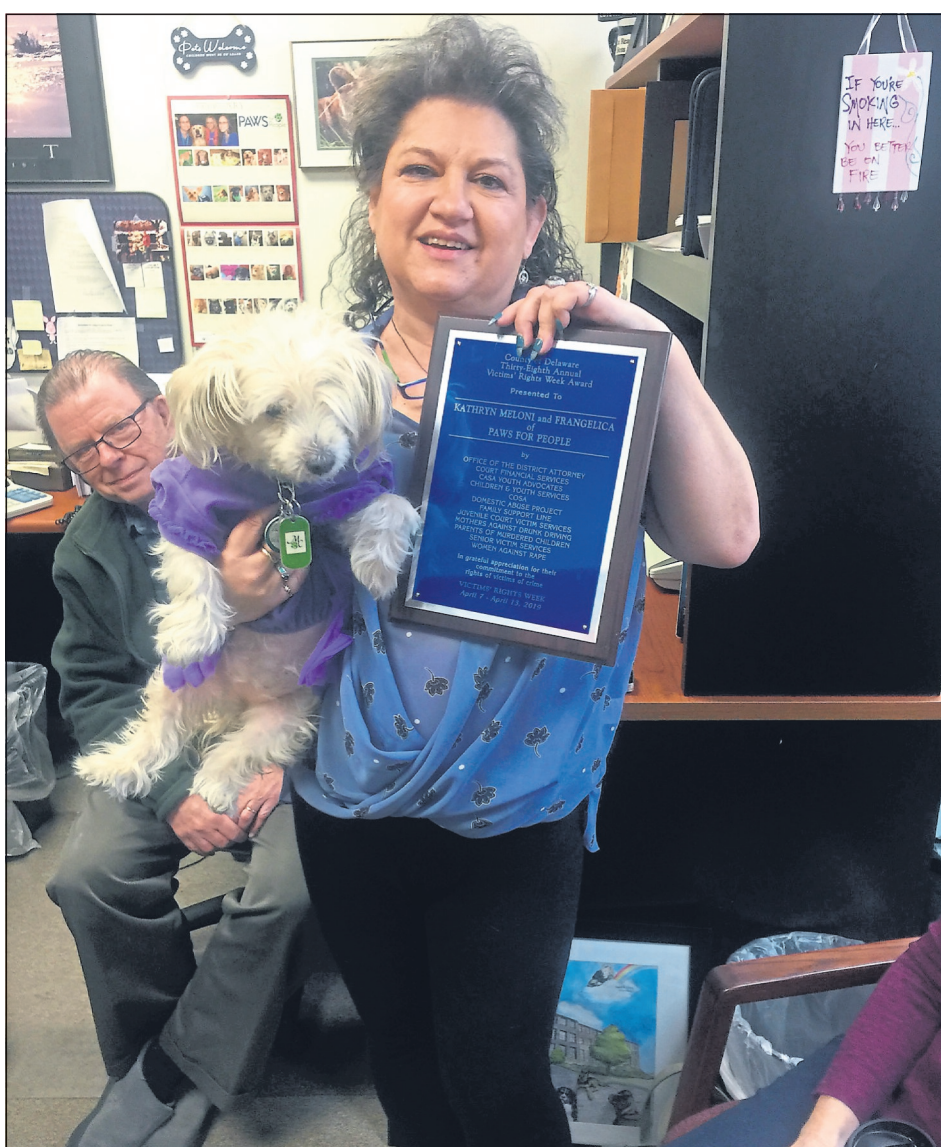
Delaware County residents Paul and Barbara Anderson talk about the hurdles they've encountered while raising their grandchildren.

Barnes said understandingly.

One grandmother, 66, in the group has full guardianship of two grandsons, ages 15 and 10. A widow who has been on disability for many years, she was living in Secane with one of her six daughters and son-in-law in 2018, when she got a phone call from the State of Delaware's Children and Youth Services that she had to pick up her grandsons, the children of another

daughter, or they would be placed in foster care. The boys, who were victims of their parents' drug addiction and abuse, have been with her ever since.

Because she lives in a household with her daughter and son-in-law, she has been turned down for all aid because the income of the entire household, not just of her and the boys, is viewed as above the poverty line. Yet, she is unable to afford to move or buy basic



PEG DEGRASSA - MEDIANEWS GROUP

Attorney Kathryn Meloni shows an award presented to her PAWS for People pet therapy dog Frangelica. Meloni is lending support to Grands Stepping Up by providing legal services, as well as the services of Frangelica to the group's grandchildren, who often are traumatized from former living conditions.

essentials. The boys have behavioral issues after suffering physical and mental trauma from their former living situation.

"I have so many roadblocks, I just want to scream and cry," she explained in desperation. "The actions of my grandsons' parents have put me in this situation. I need to move out of my one daughter's house, but I cannot find housing that I can afford for me and my two grandsons. I never envisioned that my life would be like this, but my grandsons deserve the best quality of life that I can give them so I keep persevering."

Another grandmother, a resident of Wallingford, who also didn't want her name published, dabs at her eyes, as she tells the story of her daughter, and why she and her husband are raising three of her daughter's four children.

"The children have been extremely compromised," she said in a choked-up voice. "They want to be with their parents but they can't. It's a heartbreak no matter how you look at it. The trauma part is just as big as the financial struggle. We go to bed at night, but we rarely sleep."

The grandmother, 67,

said she was ready to retire a few years ago, but now she cannot. Everything she makes, she said, goes into raising the grandchildren. She worries because her daughter can come take back her children at any time, whether she is stable or not. The couple does not have any legal custody because, not only is it too expensive to obtain, but they just don't have the heart to legally take custody away from the daughter they love. The children, who suffer from trauma, ADHD and behavioral issues, have different fathers, one of

GRANDS » PAGE 12

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Grands

FROM PAGE 11

whom is incarcerated.

“Just sitting here, talking to others in similar situations and so many willing to help, makes us feel a little better,” her husband said as he put his hand on his wife’s shoulder to comfort her.

Another grandmother in the group is currently fighting for legal and physical custody of her 3-year-old granddaughter. The child’s mother has had mental health and drug addiction issues since she was 16. She will turn 29 this year. The child’s father is incarcerated. After her granddaughter was born and the grandmother stepped in to raise her, the mother was awarded five hours a week in supervised visitation following a PFA order. During the past three years, the child’s mother has only participated in a visitation once and the child’s father has only called once.

Remarried only seven years, the grandmother, a resident of Glenolden, said, “My husband is a saint. We went from two salaries to one and all of the added expenses that come with raising a child. I am driving a car with 290,000 miles on it! You make many sacrifices because it’s important and it’s worth it.”

Only 54, the grandmother had to resign from her job a year and a half ago, due to the demands of raising her grandchild, finding services, and taking her granddaughter to behavioral and occupational therapy, preschool, the YMCA, the library and other places to help her. The young girl, who was born addicted, suffers from Apraxia, a motor speech disorder and other issues.

“Just getting insurance was a full-time ordeal,” the exasperated grandmother remarked. “With all of the struggles, it is important to keep focused on my granddaughter’s healing, by providing love, stability and

continuity.”

Support for the group has come from throughout the community, beginning with Delaware County District Attorney Jack Stollsteimer, who went to grade school in Havertown with Barnes.

“Karen Barnes is a dynamic, courageous classmate from St. Denis Elementary School,” Stollsteimer said at a recent meeting of the organization. “She has helped me understand the struggles grandparents face raising their grandchild as primary caregivers. This problem has been fueled at least in part by the opioid crisis. I’m happy to help her organization Grands Stepping Up to support families struggling here in Delco.”

Barnes, the organization’s president, has put together an impressive board, who represent many segments of the community, including attorney Kathryn Meloni; Beth Tyson, trauma therapist; State Rep. Mike Zabel, D-163 of Upper Darby; Lisa Grillo and Lisa D’Achille of Catholic Social Services; Trina Bass Hopkins, counselor, Child Guidance Resource Center; Rob Yannuzzi, vice president of Eddystone Borough Council; Al Murphy, chaplain; Tom Fitzpatrick, chaplain; attorney Kathy Kerns; Maria Kollar of St. Mark’s UM Church; Lorna Laffey of St. Bernadette’s Parish; Lisie and Brent Abrams of Berkshire Hathaway; Gwen McCullough, Mike Zabel’s chief-of-staff; Liz Lord of DoTerra Essential Oils and Ally Bank financial counselor; Paddy Rooney, pub owner; and Amy and Paul Sandman of St. Bernadette Church food pantry. Board members also include Barnes’ daughters, Chelsea Barnes, who is serving as vice president, Randi Kobielnik and Brittany Gentile, as well as several grandparents raising their grandchildren: Terri Bower, who is serving as secretary of the organization, Kathy Baggio, Paul and Barb Anderson, Gina Cappelli, Joan Cassidy and Blaine Zimmerman.

Most grandparents involved in Grands Stepping

Up have also derived support from other local sources in the past, such as the Gratitude for Grandparents or the Second Time Around Parents support group hosted by Family & Community Service of Delaware County. While those other groups are worthwhile and added sources of support to grandparents, Barnes said that Grands Stepping Up is unique in that it offers a holistic approach.

“I’m a firm believer that we all have to play nice at the playground,” Barnes stated. “We want to all work together because we all have the same goal – to support grandparents raising their grandchildren. Grands Stepping Up is open to all faiths, all cultures and all situations. We are a no-judgment zone. No one who reaches out will ever be turned away.”

Members say that Grands Stepping Up will be a hands-on community group, with a network of resources and community members in various fields actively participating.

“As a municipal leader, it’s an honor to be a part of an organization that will provide grandparents with the resources they need, when they find themselves in the challenging position of raising grandchildren,” stated board member Yannuzzi of Eddystone Borough Council. “Karen Barnes, and her vision of uniting those involved with the resources of municipal, county, and state government will be an invaluable blessing to those in our communities.”

A law clinic, headed by Meloni, will address grandparents’ legal issues. Grandparents not only are often not entitled to services, but they also usually have no legal standing with their grandchildren, which can complicate many things, including getting the children medical care. Grands Stepping Up is looking for more pro bono attorneys who can help. They also hope to eventually partner with Widener Law School for interns willing to get on board.



PEG DEGRASSA - MEDIANEWS GROUP

Grands Stepping Up founder Karen Barnes, right, stands beside Grands Stepping Up Therapist Beth Tyson, the author of the children’s book, “A Grandfamily for Sullivan.” The story is about Sullivan, whose entire world clouds over one day when he had to move away from his parents and his big worries about the future cause heartache.

In addition to her legal expertise, Meloni will also offer the benefit of her pet therapy dog Frangelica to the grandchildren. Grands Stepping Up will be trauma-focused and offers the services of therapist Beth Tyson. Experienced at counseling victims of trauma suffered in family situations, Tyson is also the author of the children’s book, “A Grandfamily For Sullivan,” a hopeful story about dealing with the emotions that often occur in kinship care.

“We have approximately 10,500 kids in foster care in Pennsylvania, compared to 90 thousand grandfamilies in our state,” Tyson stated. “The foster care system would implode without the help of grandparents, and yet we aren’t supporting them with financial support or mental health resources that are desperately needed. The long term outcomes are better for children who are raised by family members.”

With the amount of children being raised by grandparents in Pennsylvania being 10 times the amount of children being raised by foster parents, Tyson believes the time has come for this group to not only be recognized, but to be supported with state resources.

This past January, U.S. Rep. Mary Gay Scanlon, D-5 of Swarthmore, and Rep. Glenn Thompson, R-Pa., introduced the Help Grandfamilies Prevent Child Abuse Act, a bipartisan bill to better support kinship caregivers who have taken over responsibility as primary caregivers for children exposed to substance abuse and trauma. The bipartisan legislation would help address the unique challenges that grandfamilies and kinship caregivers face and ensure that these families are eligible for services under Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) and provide support to meet the unique needs of children who have experienced trauma, including exposure to substance misuse.

Grands Stepping Up has also recently partnered with the nonprofit Upper Darby

Recovery Without Barriers.

Tina Hamilton, Director of Upper Darby Recovery Without Barriers, added, “I am honored to enter into a partnership with Grands Stepping Up, a very needed resource for families who have the added responsibility of raising their grandchildren. This horrible epidemic of opioid addiction has claimed many lives and put so many in families in crisis.”

“The most precious resource we have in our County and in our country is our children,” Maria Kollar of St. Mark’s said solemnly. “We need to help in any way we can, because their futures are involved.”

Barnes said she was lucky to have the needed items on hand for taking over the care of her granddaughter, because the family had recently had a shower for her daughter. Most grandparents in her shoes have nothing, she explained, and must quickly find or purchase it all. It’s often a huge financial strain to afford the food and clothing and other necessities that come with raising children.

“Just this year, I got a call on New Year’s Day from a grandparent who suddenly inherited the responsibility of caring for her 5-month-old grandson due to unforeseen circumstances,” Barnes explained. “All she was given was a car seat and a bottle. Within hours, Amy Sandman engaged the wonderful and generous St. Bernadette Parishioners and just days later, the grandparent was presented with a large supply of wipes, diapers, formula and much more. This is the power of having a community network in place.”

Lorna Laffey interjected, “If it weren’t for the area churches, we’d be lost. We need our churches. If people don’t start participating in our churches, they are going to close and then we won’t have all of these wonderful resources.”

“We don’t want to see any grandparent do without the basic necessities of light, heat, housing, water, or food,” Murphy said. “Meeting these needs is just a part of basic human dignity.”

Members of Grands Stepping

Up explained that, in an effort to keep their grandchildren out of “the broken foster care system,” many grandparents struggle to afford, not only the basic human needs, but also things like school supplies, sports equipment, winter coats, music lessons and more.

“We thought our retirement would be spent doing a little traveling and enjoying our golden years,” said a tired-looking 71-year-old grandfather in the group. “But instead, we are eating up our retirement fund to raise our grandchildren.”

Grands Stepping Up is working to find more sponsorships so they can expand their goals of offering more support and helping local grandparents who are struggling. Their future goals are lofty – after gaining momentum in the county, the group hopes to establish chapters in neighboring counties, then throughout the state and throughout the country. But first, Barnes said, charity – and help – begins at home.

Lorna Laffey of St. Bernadette’s Parish is leading the fundraising committee and seeking corporate donations and grants for additional support. On Saturday, April 25, from 8:30- 11 p.m., the group will have a Beef and Beer at Paddy Rooney’s Pub in Havertown. For tickets or to donate gift baskets or gift certificates for a raffle at the event or for more information about Grands Stepping Up, contact Barnes at 610-355-6362 or reach out through the “Grands Stepping Up” Facebook page. Additionally, in a separate drive, the group is seeking donations of filled Easter baskets for the grandchildren. The group’s Facebook page has postings that seek specific items that grandparents need for the care of their grandchildren.

Barnes also asks anyone with ideas for the group to contact her. She strongly encourages any grandparent who is struggling to also reach out if they need help, so “they don’t have to do it alone.” All calls and inquiries to Barnes at 610-355-6362 are strictly confidential.

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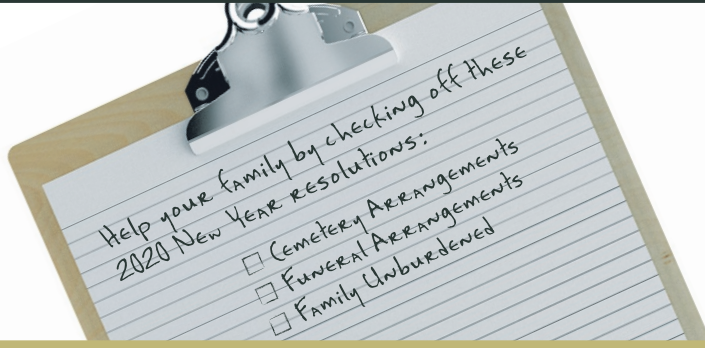
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AGE DISCRIMINATION

'It's a real thing'

Age discrimination affects workers, but can be overcome

By David A. Kostival
MediaNews Group

Looking at the lineup of 2020 presidential candidates, you might conclude that ageism, or discrimination based on age, is nonexistent.

Republican President Donald Trump is 73 and the top Democrats are also in their 70's: Bernie Sanders, 78; Joe Biden, 77; and Elizabeth Warren, 70.

But while the country may not care about the age of its leader, some businesses have a bias against those over the age of 50.

But that's illegal. The Age Discrimination in Employment Act, or ADEA, of 1967 protects applicants and employees over the age of 40.

Robert Orzechowski, chief operations officer for the Lancaster Cancer Center Ltd., East Lampeter Township, Lancaster County and past president of the Berks Chapter of the Society for Human Resource Management, said a 2018 report from the Equal Opportunity Employment Commission reveals age-related claims are on the rise.

Orzechowski said it's hard to imagine that employers still allow age discrimination to occur more than 50 years after the ADEA.

Glenn Miller, an experienced senior finance leader, is also the leader of the Berks County chapter of the Career Professional Executives Networking Group, or CPENG.

"It's a real thing," Miller said. "I've actually lived it myself and learned from it."

CPENG has chapters

that often address ageism. Miller said the problem with age discrimination is that it is never blatant.

"It's not like someone will say that you are too old," Miller said. "Sometimes people go through the interview process thinking they are a good fit, but it doesn't work out."

Miller said it's problematic when companies do not share feedback from interviews.

Ageism masked over Angel Peluso, CPENG board president and facilitator of the York chapter, said ageism is often masked over by human resources.

"HR knows how to get around the buzz words," Peluso said. "If a person goes into an interview and checks off every skill and qualification and are not getting hired, then why?"

Peluso said applicants often hear they are over-qualified or have too much experience, which she said is another way of saying they are too old.

Orzechowski said wise HR professionals will see people with advanced years as an advantage.

"Older workers bring elements of diversity," Orzechowski said. "Chances are they will interact well in the stakeholder group and be sounding boards or mentors for younger workers. As you get older, you care less about climbing the ladder. An older worker can fill a niche where it's not dog-eat-dog."

Heather Uczynski, founder of Leading Edge Business Consulting, Leesport, said age discrimination is often experience discrimination.

"If someone tells you

that you are overqualified, does that make any sense?" Uczynski said.

Uczynski said it is harder to find a job over the age of 50, but it's hard to prove ageism is the reason.

Uczynski mainly works with people who are already employed, she said, but they too deal with age discrimination.

Discrimination red flags she said discrimination in the work place has some red flags:

- Employer makes a comment about age.
- Performance reviews go down.
- You are disciplined for behavior overlooked for younger employees.
- You are reassigned to unpleasant duties.
- Raises stop.

As a former career coach, Uczynski would recommend applicants do not include graduation dates on resumes.

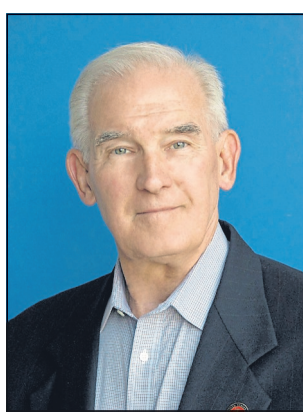
Peluso said applicants can also consider dying their hair close to its original color.

"Look at your appearance: Are you dressed like grandpa or a professional?" Peluso said. "Bosses are often millennials and millennials have a different way of doing things than a (baby) boomer does."

Peluso said some people in the CPENG organization can teach boomers how to deal with millennials.

Uczynski said many employers may shy away from older applicants because they believe they will be more expensive.

"I would tell them to try to find creative things to say to indicate they can afford to make less, without sounding desperate,"



Robert Orzechowski



Jim Watkins



Peg Calvario

she said.

Miller agreed, saying there are preconceived notions that anyone who has done well in a career will want too much money.

"These folks have kids already through college and they do not have some of their previous financial burdens," Miller said. "Salary may not be near the top of your list, but you have to get people to believe that. You have to look for opportunities to explain your situation."

Jim Watkins, a past-president of CPENG and active with the Harrisburg chapter, shared a personal experience.

Perfect fit

Five years ago, when Watkins was in his 60s, he went on a job interview in Atlanta because he believed he was a perfect fit.

"It was very clear when I arrived, they thought someone my son's age would be showing up," Watkins said. "It was little things that occurred and the looks on their faces. Then I met with the marketing manager who was about 35. He had the audacity to say to me that this is going to be a challenging role, and asked if I would really be ready to take that on."

Watkins said it was clear they wanted a younger person.

But Watkins said he chased down the recruiter to get feedback. He finally got an answer that the HR person said he had been responded to a question in

the same manner a fired employee had answered.

"It was clear to me no one would say what the issue was," Watkins said.

Orzechowski said companies have to look at how well managers are trained to conduct interviews.

"Many times, managers are not given the proper training tools," Orzechowski said. "I have heard them ask certain questions and cringed. It's not malice; they just didn't know better."

Orzechowski said managers should always ask themselves three questions: Can someone do the job? Will they do the job? Can they function in the work group?

Peg Calvario, a professional certified executive coach, Pottstown, recommends someone over 50 to "own their age."

"When a candidate starts to focus on their age as a liability, it tends to show itself as a lack of confidence," Calvario said. "This can become that internal obstacle, but at the same time, someone can be hindered if they have not kept up their skills and not made investments in professional development."

Minimize age Calvario has suggestions to minimize age.

Instead of formatting a resume with chronological dates, a functional format could be used where you focus on achieve-

ments.

"Focus less on history and more on skills," Calvario said. "Look at your resume as a marketing piece."

Calvario said the greatest tip, which was also recommended by all CPENG board member, is to maintain a strong professional network.

"We know that 70 to 80% of candidates land their next opportunity through networking," she said. "Get involved in places where there are people who can lead you to an opportunity. Find people who are doing the things you would like to do and find out how they launched their career."

Watkins said it is important to recognize that for the older individual, losing a job can be the equivalent of losing a loved one.

"You go through the stages of grief and can sink into depression," Watkins said.

In order to combat that, Watkins advises to find someone else in a transition period so that you can partner with them and hold each other accountable.

"This can be emotionally draining, so if you have someone else going through the process, they can relate to your emotions and be a good listener," Watkins said.

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SENIOR LIFE

Staying Active and Connected at Ann's Choice

By Dorrie Anshel

Vibrant retirement lifestyle helps residents stay healthy and happy.

Imagine waking up with an endless array of things to do, right outside your door: Exercise classes, club meetings, dinner with friends, followed by a lecture or concert. Perhaps you'd like to sing in a chorus, build a model train layout, sculpt clay, or produce a TV show. There is something for everyone, even those who prefer just to relax and enjoy the engaging atmosphere on campus.

All of that, and more, is possible for those interested at Ann's Choice, a distinctive Erickson Living developed and managed senior living community in Bucks County, PA. Besides being fun, the robust social life and abundant activities enhance residents' emotional well-being and cognitive function; they may even help stave off certain age-related illnesses.

Studies Prove the Point

The National Institute on Aging cites research that shows "a strong correlation between social interaction and health and well-being among older adults."

That's why so many seniors are opting to live in communities like Ann's Choice, where they can stay active and connected. All the amenities - gym, pool, theater, restaurants, game rooms, art studio, TV studio, and clubs - are under one roof, so it's easy to engage with peers. Outings to cultural events are always on the schedule. With so much to do on and off campus, residents can pursue long-time hobbies and discover exciting new interests.

Director of Resident Life Christa Segal says, "There are so many opportunities to meet people and socialize on campus. With more than 180 resident-run clubs, classes, and activities, you'll never run out of fun things to do."

The Downside of Aging in Place

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 11 million seniors live alone, usually in their family home. Many view "aging in place" as a badge of independence, but living alone can be isolating.

Then, there's the time and expense of home maintenance. Unfortunately, houses age right along with their occupants; deferring maintenance



PHOTO BY HARRY BEAM

Ann's Choice resident Ellen Matter, in pink shirt, enjoys dining with friends at the Fireside Restaurant on campus.

can erode a home's value and your nest egg.

Ann's Choice Sales Director Deborah Olcese notes, "For all of these reasons, it's so important to understand your living options as you age. We understand that moving can be emotional, but I encourage prospective residents to consider how much more active, engaged, and healthy they can be at Ann's Choice. Don't let anything keep you from living your best life."

She adds, "Residents create fast friendships on campus and a real sense of community. The connection to others and to where you live makes a huge difference in your overall quality of life."

"It Was Time for a Different Life"

Ellen Matter took the keys to her two-bedroom apartment home in April 2019. She gave herself exactly one week to unpack her boxes so she could get busy living. "Once I make a decision, I'm all in," she says.

Interested in everything and open to trying new things, the former special education teacher picked Ann's Choice because it offered so many

activities. She took water aerobics, tried pottery, and joined the history, bridge, and short story clubs. She became a resident ambassador, welcoming potential residents at community events. "I felt at home instantly and wanted to get involved," she says. "Everyone was so welcoming, any doubts I had were erased."

Ellen acknowledges that leaving the single-family home she had shared with her late husband, Howard, wasn't easy. "I loved our 55+ community and all my friends. After he died, I waited three years, but it was time to embrace a different life. That house was our home," she says. "This beautiful apartment is my home."

She adds, "We always said if something isn't working, try something new. It's not good to eat alone, to be stuck indoors in bad weather, to have to drag the trash can down a slippery driveway. Now, I don't worry about anything. It's so freeing to let all that go."

While Ellen is in excellent health, she has several food allergies that can cause a severe reaction. "When

I was researching my living options, I discussed my situation with the chefs. They have accommodated me at every meal," she notes. "Plus, if I had any unexpected adverse reaction, security would be at my door in a minute. It makes me feel safe."

An avid quilter, Ellen uses one of her bedrooms as a creative studio for sewing and embroidery. She teaches crafts on and off campus, volunteers at nearby historic sites, and occasionally performs a monologue, in costume, on prairie women, a topic that fascinates her.

"I'm all over the place," she says with a smile, "and I'm never bored. I always say that my blood type is B-positive for a reason - it's my personality to embrace life and enjoy everything. My daughter says I'm happier since I moved here, and I think she's right."

Ellen recalls, "My former neighbors thought I was crazy to move. Now, many of them are joining me. They see how much there is to do and how much fun I'm having."

"I teach, volunteer, take classes, exercise, and have met the most in-

teresting, kind people. Being active and engaged keeps you young, and Ann's Choice is the place to do it. Moving here was the best decision I could have made."

Ann's Choice is a not-for-profit organization, developed and managed by Erickson Living®. The community is governed by its own board of directors affiliated with National Senior Campuses, who provide independent financial and operational oversight of the community.

About Ann's Choice

Ann's Choice, one of 20 continuing care retirement communities developed and managed by Erickson Living®, is situated on a scenic 103-acre campus in Warminster, Pennsylvania. The not-for-profit community of more than 1,900 residents and 1,000 employees is governed by its own board of directors, affiliated with National Senior Campuses, who provide independent financial and operational oversight of the community. Additional information about Ann's Choice can be found at AnnChoiceCommunity.com.



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