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SENIOR LIFE

Senior living communities get creative with activities

By Michelle Lynch
mlynch@readingeagle.com
@BerksMichelle on Twitter

Peering from their windows earlier this year, residents of Manatawny Manor saw a strange visitor staring back at them.

The big eyes beneath the long lashes in the furry face outside belonged to Duchess, an alpaca.

The woolly camelid, owned by Wendy Tucci of Dream Maker Alpaca Ranch in Union Township, Berks County, brightened the day for residents confined to their rooms due to precautions taken to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

"We have to be creative with all the things we offer," Joenel Torrillo, executive director of the senior living community, said of the facility's effort to provide engaging activities while keeping residents safe.

Manatawny in East Coventry Township, Chester County, is one of nine Diakon continuing-care retirement communities in Pennsylvania and Maryland.

The Lutheran social service also operates The Lutheran Home at Topton in Berks County.

With statewide COVID-19 mitigation measures restricting social activities in senior living communities, Diakon and other independent- and as-



COURTESY OF MANATAWNY MANOR

Wendy Tucci and Duchess, the alpaca, share window visits with residents of Manatawny Manor, a Diakon senior living facility in East Coventry Township, Chester County. Tucci of Dream Maker Alpaca Ranch in Union Township, Berks County, is owner of the alpaca.

sisted-living facilities and nursing homes are finding new ways to keep residents active and entertained.

"They've been doing a fantastic job," William Swanger, Diakon's senior vice president for corpo-

rate communications and public relations, said of Manatawny.

Swanger noted that as of mid-May the facility near Pottstown had no recorded cases of the coronavirus among its residents

and staff.

Torrillo said Manatawny's staff has come up with numerous fun and entertaining activities since restrictions on communal dining and recreation were adopted in March.

Among the more imaginative was a recent Flores de Mayo, or Flowers of May, festival.

Flores de Mayo is celebrated throughout the month in the Philippines, where it originated to

honor the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Staff at Manatawny put their own spin on the tradition for Mother's Day. They dressed in bright floral prints and paraded down the facility's hallways, holding umbrellas decorated with colorful flowers over the heads of residents, who stayed safely in their rooms.

Torrillo's staff is one of many taxed with keeping the residents of senior living facilities from getting bored during the social-distancing phase of the pandemic.

The restrictions have not been easy for the usually active residents of The Heritage of Green Hills in Cumru Township, Berks.

"They feel like they are caged lions," said Cheryl Anderson, Well By Design program director at The Heritage. "They are used to doing all kinds of stuff, and now they can't."

Residents are being asked not to leave the senior community's 80-acre campus but are free roam the premises in small groups of four or five and while using recommended social-distancing techniques.

"I want them outside in the sun and fresh air," she said

Anderson has come up with several ways to encourage fun outdoor activities, including a "bear hunt."

ACTIVITIES » PAGE 2



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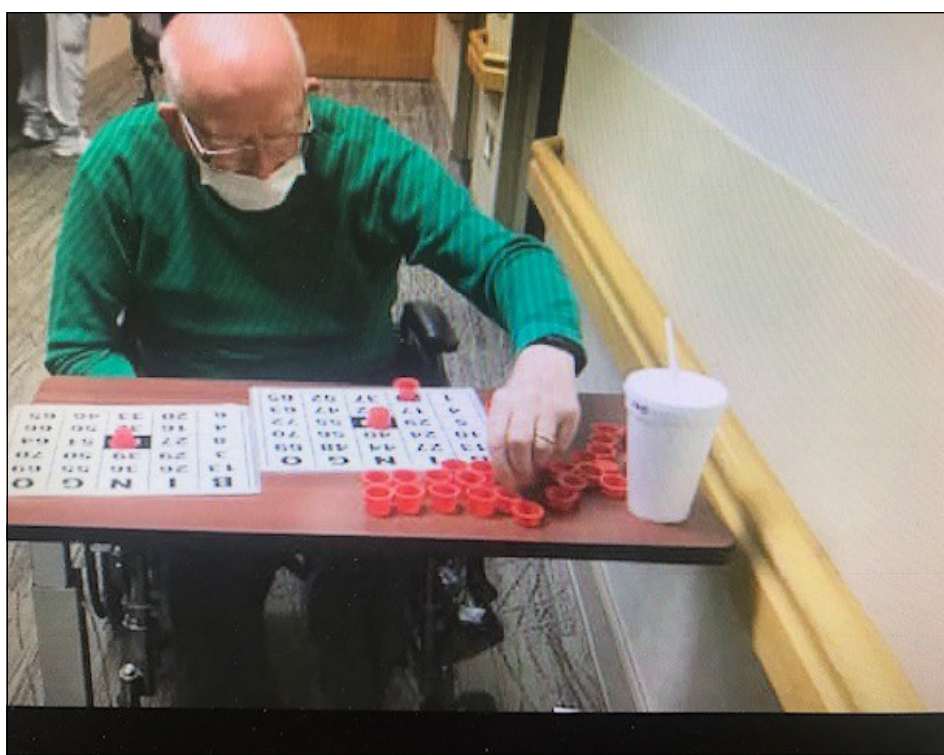


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COURTESY OF MANATAWNY MANOR

Joel Neiss, a resident of Manatawny Manor, plays bingo from the safety of his room as numbers are called over a microphone in the hallway. Staff at the senior living facility in East Coventry Township, Chester County, are coming up with creative ways to engage residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.



COURTESY OF MANATAWNY MANOR

Manatawny Manor activities assistants Anastasia Stoulis and Ginny Rathman and activities director Janet Swiecicki hold festively decorated umbrellas during a Flores de Mayo celebration on Mother's Day. The activities department of the senior living facility in East Coventry Township, Chester County, is coming up with creative ways to engage residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Activities

FROM PAGE 1

On a recent blustery day, residents gathered outside their apartments, and standing 6 feet apart, blew soap bubbles into the wind. They also waved bubbles as greetings to those watching from their windows and drew cheery messages to staff and neighbors using colorful sidewalk chalk.

Despite the warmer spring weather, residents managed to have a May "snowball fight," hurling white yarn pom-poms at one another in a friendly battle.

Residents also decorated the campus trees with 1,000 origami paper cranes, a Japanese tradition believed by some to bring good luck or good health.

There are plenty of indoor activities for the fun-loving crowd at The Heritage, too, Anderson said.

One of the most innovative is the upcoming

"reptile exhibit," which should not cause alarm even in those afraid of snakes, she said. The serpents to be displayed in the facility's halls will be made of wood and painted by residents with bright patterns drawn from nature and their imaginations.

The seniors also have visited museums and gardens around the world using technology to take them on virtual tours of the Louvre, Longwood Gardens and Metropolitan Museum of Art, among many others.

Technology also is helping those at The Heritage and other senior communities stay in touch with friends and family off campus. Residents are using applications such as Skype, Zoom and FaceTime to video chat and see the faces of their loved ones.

"Each (of Diakon's facilities) is focused on maintaining contacts to the extent possible since the visitor restrictions went into effect," Swanger said, noting a supply of iPads was or-

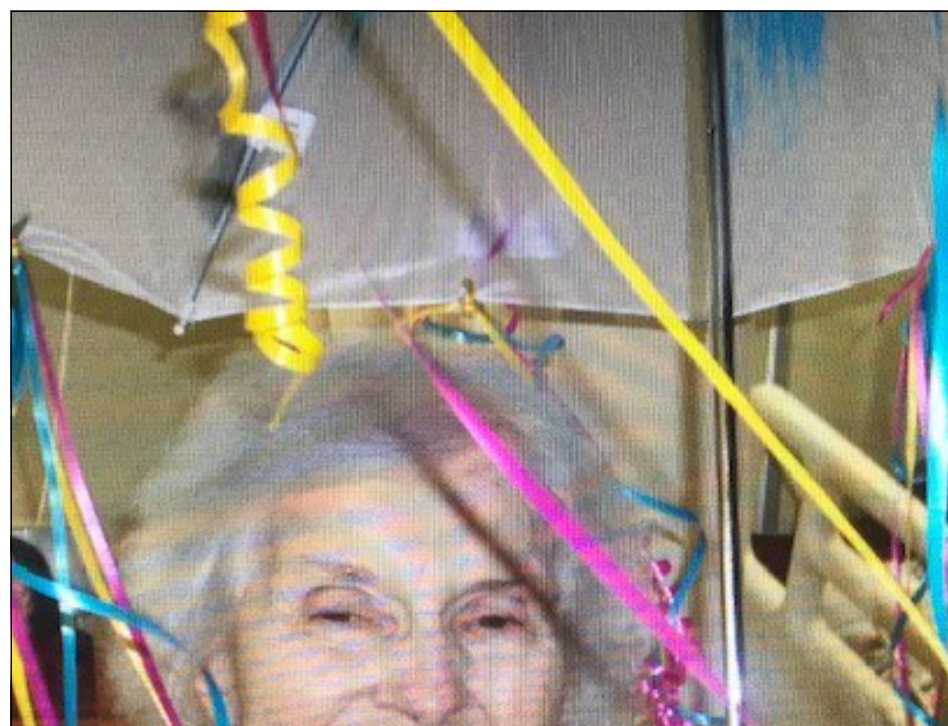
dered to aid communications between residents and their families.

Regular use of technology is one of the positives to come out of the coronavirus crisis, Torrillo said. It has allowed residents to connect virtually face-to-face with family out of state who might not be able to visit in person even without the COVID-19 restrictions.

Meeting applications, such as Zoom, also go beyond the one-on-one voice interactions of a phone call and enable larger groups of people to see each other's faces and hear each other's voices.

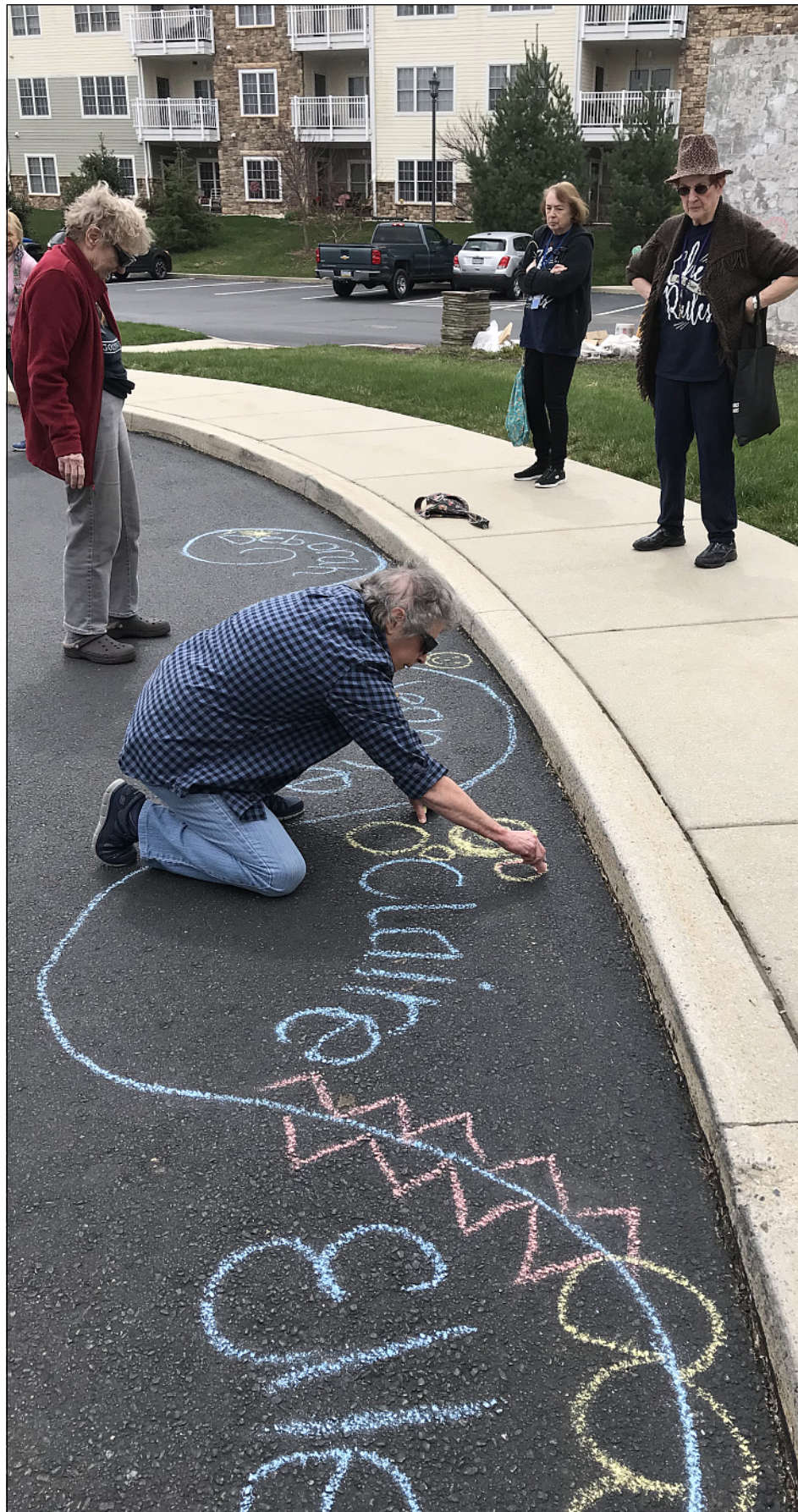
"One resident recently celebrated his 94th birthday in a Zoom meeting with friends and family," Torrillo said.

Residents also enjoy "window visits," waving to loved ones while safely protected from physical contact, he said, and Duchess, the alpaca, has become a regular visitor at Manatawny's windows.



COURTESY OF MANATAWNY MANOR

Mary Ann Gantert, a resident of Manatawny Manor, holds a festively decorated umbrella during a Flores de Mayo celebration on Mother's Day. Staff at the senior living facility in East Coventry Township, Chester County, are coming up with creative ways to engage residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.



COURTESY OF THE HERITAGE OF GREEN HILLS

Residents of the Heritage of Green Hills use sidewalk chalk to write encouraging messages to staff and neighbors. Cheryl Anderson, activities director at the senior living facility in Cumru Township, Berks County, is coming up with creative ways to engage residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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SENIOR LIFE

Spot of T: a bridge to normal

By Terry Alburger

Life Engagement Coordinator, Britany Pointe Estates

These days, as we journey deeper into this world of isolation, it feels more and more like we are on an island, with no connection to normalcy. The only visible bridge is a bridge to nowhere.

If we really let ourselves, we could get lost in this dreary scenario, followed by the wonder of how, without a bridge, we can ever get back to normal. But really, is the old normal what we should strive to find? Maybe we can reinvent normal.

In the past few months, most of us have had extra time on our hands. That is a bit of an understatement, I know. Speaking for myself, I found it hard to get motivated during that forced downtime.

The days when I pushed myself to get up off that couch and get moving did a lot to lift my spirits. Though Mother Nature has thrown several wrenches into our well-oiled plans, I did manage to get outside, to work in the gardens, to take my dog for a long walk and to enjoy a little sunshine.

Sunshine is vital for production of vitamin D, also known as the sunshine vitamin. This vitamin is produced in your body and a direct result of sunshine. Spring days are perfect for a little sunny basking. The sun rays aren't too strong, but the warmth can do much to improve your spirits.

Some research has even shown that vitamin D may play an important role in regulating mood. And best yet, it could possibly ward off depression.

During this extra time, we have plenty of opportunity to try to figure out what our new normal might look like. Certainly, it will be very different. But is different necessarily bad?

I have found a greater appreciation for so many things that before, I took for granted. A simple hug from a grandchild, with a casual "See you later!"

were standard issue before mid-March. Now, it's something for which I can only strive. Trust me, when this quarantine is over, I will savor each hug as if it were our last.

That is something vital that this virus has taught me: appreciation for demonstrations of love, hugs, kisses, cuddles even playtime.

In our world of new normal, events that put us cheek by jowl won't happen, in my opinion. Again, is this bad? Most people do not like crowds and would rather have a little elbow room.

I foresee capacity crowds for things like concerts and sporting events possibly being diminished greatly. Maybe every other seat is a good beginning. Perhaps airlines will adhere to the every-other-seat rule of social distancing, and we might actually have room to spread out.

Restaurants won't seat you nearly on top of the next table, and the ambiance won't be so chaotic.

New normal. Those words are a bit daunting and a bit surreal. But broken down, it might not be so bad. I for one will be much more inclined to shop at the small businesses and shops, and support them as much as possible. I will shy away from the larger stores and will strive to buy American.

I will choose the smaller restaurants rather than the chains. Those businesses that actually survive this catastrophic time will need our help.

It is so easy to succumb to the feelings of isolation with no end in sight. But please, do yourself a favor: see a bright future. Visualize those happy reunions we are all going to have one day in the not-too-distant future. Visualize a time when you have no more restrictions on where you can go and with whom you can spend time.

The struggles and sacrifices of today will ensure the safety and happiness of tomorrow. Stay the course. I promise that bridge will lead to better days.



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with Faith C. Woodward
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With Faith Woodward, Director of Admissions and Marketing at Barclay Friends—to learn more, please call 610-696-5211 or visit our website, <http://bf.kendal.org/>.

SENIOR SPEAK OUT

East Goshen Township couple staying busy during lockdown

By April Soublis
Wellington at Hershey's Mill

Staying put has been quite a challenge for Richard and Cynthia Pound, residents of Wellington at Hershey's Mill in East Goshen Township, Chester County.

They've been doing a variety of activities to keep their mind and bodies active.

A few things that have helped pass the time are staying in touch with their grandchildren and a 6-year-old great-grand. This has been by far their favorite activity and at the top of the list as far as priorities go.

Richard and Cynthia, as well as the kids, love the reassurances they get knowing the people they love are

well.

Richard was pleased to move to Wellington after the sale of his home last year. He says Wellington offers more in the way of activities than other community he and Cynthia visited.

After the coronavirus pandemic arrived and activities were cancelled to protect both the residents and staff of Wellington, they had to get creative.

Richard walks a mile, maybe 2, every day. He'll pop into Giant as needed and exercise in his apartment. He has also been reading a lot and watching television.

Cynthia loves to cook and bake. She's been making lots of breads, pastries and biscotti from new reci-

pes as well as old.

Cynthia is very generous and doesn't want to be the only one gaining the quarantine 15, so she makes sure she delivers goodies to her all her neighbors.

Other activities keeping Cynthia busy are practicing the piano 1 to 2 hours a day, sewing (mostly masks), watching Netflix and Amazon and reading.

While Richard and Cynthia are doing their best to keep busy they both agree that the most important thing to remember is your sense of humor. Whenever you see either Richard or Cynthia you'll usually see a smile on their face!

April Soublis is director of communications at Wellington at Hershey's Mill.



Richard and Cynthia Pound

COURTESY OF APRIL SOUBLIS

SENIOR SPEAK OUT



Jessica and Bob Spencer

Having to stay home means time for learning

By April Soublis

Bob and Jessica Spencer are passing the time quite well during this time of limited interactions at Wellington at Hershey's Mill in East Goshen Township, Chester County.

They both enjoy learning about new and old in-

terests via online courses. Bob is studying American history, and Jessica likes to learn about music and literature. The couple also enjoys reading and crossword puzzles to help pass the time.

They like to keep in touch with family over Zoom calls and stay updated via the phone with

their grandkids.

Bob and Jessica are grateful that they have each other to lean on and keep each other company.

They're hopeful that soon we can begin normal daily activities of Mahjong, going to the gym and their favorite: happy hour with all their friends!



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100TH BIRTHDAY



Willard Sylvester

Wellington at Hershey's Mill resident celebrates 100th birthday

By April Soublis and Debbie Gile

Will Sylvester celebrated his 100th birthday on May 9.

Will is a resident of Wellington at Hershey's Mill in East Goshen Township, Chester County, originally from Wilmington, Del.

His worked at the Hotel DuPont in the cigar and newspaper store, then became a machinist with Hercules Powder Co. before enlisting in the Army Air Corps in 1941 as an aviation mechanic, specializing in aircraft instruments.

After the war, Will went back to work at Hercules and thought he'd be a bachelor until he met his bride,



100th Sylvester

Dorothy, in 1949.

She didn't care too much for Wilmington, so Will worked to make a life with Dorothy in Massachusetts, where she was from. They had four sons, and Will says the secret to making it to 100 is to "just keep going"

and don't smoke!

Will is a delightful resident of Wellington, and we are so happy we could share this monumental milestone with him. Happy 100th birthday to Will, he's 10 decades young!

SENIOR SPEAK OUT

Couple loves to make others smile

By April Soublis

Wellington at Hershey's Mill

Bill and Jo Ann Shore have been married for 67 years and have learned what makes them happy: making others smile! The loving couple can often be spotted holding hands and smiling whenever they are out and about, and Bill is always ready with a fist bump, except now he gives out an elbow bump because fist bumps aren't permitted during these uncertain times.

As they endure the virus shutdown they've tried to find creative ways to keep their minds and bodies active. They are sticking to their normal routine, which is an important thing to remember these

days.

The Shores, who live at Wellington at Hershey's Mill in East Goshen Township, Chester County, begin the day with a large glass of fresh squeezed orange juice, fresh fruit and cereal. After they've finished their breakfast, there is then time to invest in reading and discussing what they've learned from "New Morning Mercies" & "My Heart Cries Out," both by Paul David Tripp.

One quote Bill and Jo Ann like to ponder from their readings is "If you put yourself in the center of your world you will find plenty of things to complain about." That thought led to some interesting conversations.

Getting out for a walk, usually in East Goshen Park, is something they enjoy on a nice day. Keep your eyes peeled if you happen to be out for a stroll and come across a mature couple hand in hand. They have a touch love language and it shows.

Every morning Bill and Jo Ann make a choice to smile and to make others do the same, or at least try. They know that smiling is contagious and that is something they enjoy spreading.

They also find something to be grateful for every day and continue on their life-long learning quest. Life is a never ending journey that begins with today.



Jo Ann and Bill Shore



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CORONAVIRUS KINDNESS

Girl Scouts write letters to Keystone Villa residents

By Lisa Mitchell

lmitchell@21st-centurymedia.com
@facebook.com/northeastberksnews/

Daniel Boone Girl Scouts have been writing letters to residents at Keystone Villa Douglassville since the residents cannot have visitors during the coronavirus outbreak.

“We were looking for ways that the girls could continue participating in Girl Scouts while Gov. Wolf placed a stay-at-home order,” said Cory Derer, service unit manager of Daniel Boone Girl Scouts. “This was an excellent opportunity for our girls to serve the community from the safety of their homes. Daniel Boone Girl Scouts operate on the school’s schedule, so with school being closed for the rest of the school year, all Girl Scout activities unfortunately were canceled as well. Seeing the sisterhood of how these girls came together in a time of need is what Girl Scouts is all about.”

Wendy Yambor, Girl Scout Leader Troop 11022 of the Daniel Boone Service Unit, put this activity together for all of the Girl Scouts in the Service Unit. So far there are seven troops in grades kindergarten through high school participating in this project.

“I saw other posts on Facebook encouraging people to send pictures to nursing homes and thought this was a perfect project for our Girl Scouts,” said Yambor. “Keystone Villa is always so kind to the Girl Scouts, allowing us to have meetings in their activities room and supporting us. They were a natural organization to reach out to. It’s my hope that the girls felt they were empowered to make a difference during this pandemic.”



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Douglassville sisters Alexis Darrohn, 8, a Brownie in Troop #1709, and Olivia Darrohn, 13, a Troop #1797 Cadette, have been writing letters to residents at Keystone Villa Douglassville who cannot have visitors due to the stay-at-home order.

Yambor added, “We have an amazing service unit with some really special girls. I knew they would rise to the challenge and

help others in any way they could.”

Incredibly proud of the girls in the service unit, Yambor said, “They didn’t just sit back and be victims

in the current world situation. They took action and helped make the day a little better for others in their community.”

Yambor noted that the Girl Scout motto is “Be prepared.” In the 1947 Girl Scout Handbook, the

motto was explained as, “A Girl Scout is ready to help out wherever she is needed. Willingness to serve is not enough; you must know how to do the job well, even in an emergency.”

“I think our girls nailed it!” she said.

Kathy Undercuffler at Keystone Villa said the residents are really enjoying the pictures and cards.

They hope to schedule a visit at Keystone Villa once the stay-at-home order is lifted.

SCOUTS » PAGE 7

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Scouts

FROM PAGE 6

Troop #1797 Cadette Olivia Darrohn, 13, of Douglassville, and her sister Alexis Darrohn, 8, a Brownie in Troop #1709 have been among the Girl Scouts participating in the letter writing project. Olivia said that she is a little sad

because everything is virtual now, and she can't see her friends. Girl Scouts is all about making new friends and interacting with them, so this new way of doing things is very challenging.

"It was nice to work on this project with my sister Lexi," said Olivia. "Because of our age difference, we don't get to do a lot of Girl Scout activities together. I liked doing the arts and

crafts with her." When asked about the project, she said, "I wanted the residents of the Villa to know that someone is always there for them."

"I like making people happy, and I get to do this with my sister!" said Alexis.

Their mother, Stacey Darrohn, Troop Leader, said, "Having my girls being able to work together on a project and having

my oldest lead and help her younger sister, this is why we participate in Girl Scouts. They learn how to lead, set examples for each other, demonstrate empathy, and caring for others, traits you want your children to have."

Madisyn Gassert, 9, of Birdsboro, a member of Junior Troop 11142, said, "I thought it would be a nice thing to do to lift their spir-

its since they can't have visitors right now. It felt good to be able to put a smile on someone's face even though I couldn't see it."

Troop 1156 Cadette Hannah Martin, 11, of Exeter, wrote in her card, "Hi, my name is Hannah from Girl Scout Troop 1156. I hope that you are doing well. I feel bad for you because you can't have any visitors, so I think that this will cheer

you up a little bit. I hope you stay well."

Reflecting on the project, Hannah said, "I hope people receiving my letters are very happy that someone thought about them and took the time out of their day to make them happy. Thinking about this project, it makes me happy to know that it will make someone else happy!"



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Troop 1156 Cadette Hannah Martin, 11, of Exeter, wrote in her card, "I hope that you are doing well. I feel bad for you because you can't have any visitors, so I think that this will cheer you up a little bit. I hope you stay well."



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Madisyn Gassert, 9, of Birdsboro, a member of Junior Troop 11142, believes the letter writing project is a nice thing to do to lift residents' spirits since they can't have visitors right now. "It felt good to be able to put a smile on someone's face even though I couldn't see it."



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SHILLINGTON

The Heritage gets creative to keep residents' spirits up amid coronavirus

MediaNews Group

SHILLINGTON » In the time of COVID-19, The Heritage of Green Hills, a healthy life plan community in Shillington, is facing a unique challenge: protect the physical health and safety of its population, while keeping everyone emotionally healthy and happy during a difficult time.

“Staying connected to one another and engaged in life are always important parts of wellness and vitality,” explains Cheryl Anderson, the community’s Well By Design Director.

“But in a time of stress and uncertainty, like now, they are essential. So we’ve been coming up with creative ways for our residents to remain as socially, intellectually and emotionally healthy as possible — while still adhering to CDC regulations and following the guidance of local health experts to minimize risk of exposure to COVID-19. Since congregating inside is impossible, we’ve encouraged everyone to get outdoors, where they can have fun and be together — while staying safely apart.”

In the past few weeks, Anderson and her colleagues at The Heritage of Green Hills have dreamt up several unique events and spirit-raising initiatives for the independent living residents.

On a particularly lovely windy day, residents were invited to a silly “Bubble Parade,” where they filled the air with soap bubbles by waving their arms around. In order to ensure that residents remained more than the recommended 6 feet apart, the spots where they stood were marked with pin-wheels.

The Heritage Hotties silver poms cheerleader squad practiced their new moves outside. Set to the



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Bob and Pat Kostenbader sit on one of the benches set up outside — spaced far apart — to encourage The Heritage residents in Shillington to enjoy the spring weather and the views.

“Rocky” theme, this inspiring routine is specially choreographed to keep the cheerleaders together in spirit, but safely apart physically.

An Earth Day Nature and Gratitude scavenger hunt challenged residents to venture out on safely solo walks to enjoy fresh air and the campus’ lush springtime greenery while looking for list items, which they were encouraged to touch (smooth rocks, tree bark), look for (birds, animal footprints) or smell (flowers, old leaves).

A short story writing contest with a \$1,000 prize for the best entry encouraged experienced writers and newer scribes to cre-

ate exciting new works to be shared.

On the goofier side, “Maraca Mania” invited everyone to pick up maracas, feathers, googly eyes and other craft supplies in order to create funny characters out of the instruments.

Members of The Heritage of Green Hills Sewing Club have been using their skills and talents to make more than 700 masks for their neighbors and others in the area who need them.

The community has added more benches outside — spaced far apart — to encourage residents to enjoy the spring weather and the views.

SPIRITS » PAGE D1



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Heritage resident Bob Rasbridge talks to several family members via Zoom.



Anthony, executive director of The Becoming Center

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SUBMITTED PHOTO

Maraca Mania invited everyone to pick up maracas, feathers, googly eyes and other craft supplies in order to create funny characters out of the instruments.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Members of The Heritage of Green Hills Sewing Club have been using their skills and talents to make more than 700 masks for their neighbors and others in the area who need them.

Spirits

FROM PAGE C8

In order to ensure that residents stay connected to their families and friends who live off-campus, The Heritage of Green Hills has purchased extra iPads and TV monitors, and set up several stations where the residents can video chat privately with

their loved ones.

With the community's restaurants closed to sit-down meals, the Food & Beverage team has individually hand-decorated the bags in which certain "room service" meals are delivered. Messages written on the bags include everything from heartfelt wishes of health and happiness, to silly puns, like "You're Shrimply the Best," complete with a cute doo-

dle of a crustacean.

The Heritage of Green Hills' residents have been showing their appreciation for the staff's hard work and dedication during this difficult time in creative ways, too. "Operation Friendly Flyer" saw residents writing thank-you notes to the staff and then turning them into paper airplanes and sending them flying off their porches and balconies.

The planes were collected and hung up in staff areas for the team to enjoy.

A staff appreciation event had residents serenading staff members with kazoo music, while their names were chalked out and decorated on the community's driveway.

"We've been forced to get creative to fulfill our Well by Design mission, which includes nurturing and promoting several dif-

ferent types of wellness, including spiritual, physical, emotional, vocational, environmental, intellectual and social," says Anderson. "It's turned out to be very rewarding and a lot of fun!"

Using some out of the box thinking, staff members in the personal and memory care neighborhood at The Heritage of Green Hills have also been keeping everyone as active

and engaged as possible at this time. "We're setting up video chats and encouraging families to visit with loved ones through the glass front doors," says Heather Setley, A&E Coordinator.

"We've also given residents access to hobbies and tasks that can be enjoyed individually, such as gardening in raised beds, crafting and drawing, and caring for bird feeders."



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FAMILIES

Generation gap

Grandparenting goes digital during coronavirus pandemic.

By Lindsay Whitehurst

SALT LAKE CITY » A few weeks ago, Debbie Cameron saw her grandsons most days, playing the piano, making after-school snacks or singing nursery rhymes with the baby in her Chandler, Ariz., home.

Then the coronavirus crisis hit, and the boys were suddenly gone. Cameron is 68 and has asthma, making her one of the people most at risk of getting seriously ill or dying. Now she sees her grandchildren from behind the glass of a window or a phone screen.

“Looking at them through the window and not being able to hug them, it’s just a dang killer,” she said.

For grandparents all over the world, being protected from the pandemic has meant a piercing distance from their loved ones. While children don’t seem to be getting seriously ill as often, they can be infected and spread the virus. It’s been a jolting change for many.

Cameron and her husband, both retired teachers, usually watch their older grandchildren, ages 8 and 11, after school and their 7-month-old baby grandson four times a week. One of their three daughters is due to have another child in July.

But as the effects of coronavirus spread, the family decided that caring for the boys was too risky. While most people who catch the disease suffer from symptoms like fever and cough and recover in a few weeks, some get severely ill with things like pneumonia. COVID-19 can be fatal, and older people who have underlying conditions like Cameron are the most vulnerable.

So instead of chasing after little boys, she’s doing puzzles, listening to old radio shows or watching the Hallmark channel, trying to fill the hours in her much-quieter house.

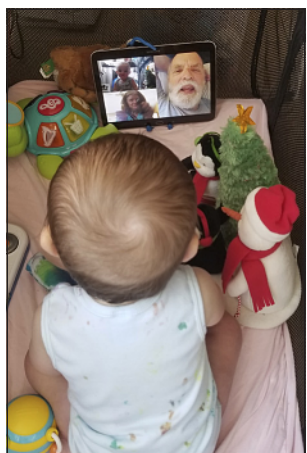
“I just go day by day, and when the dark thoughts come in I try and do something to take them away,” she said. “I cry. Sometimes I cry.”

Still, she feels lucky she doesn’t have to leave the house to work, and that she has close family ties. Sometimes she re-reads a letter her mother wrote her father while he was deployed to the Philippines during World War II, laying out her raw emotions about how much she missed him as she cared for their first child without him.

“My mother is a really strong woman, and in this one she was struggling,” she said. “If my mom did that, I can do this.”

The sudden change has been challenging for kids’ parents too, many of whom

are trying to work from home and balance child care.



COURTESY OF JULIE BUFKIN

Julie Bufkin, he’s 7-month-old boy, Calvin, interacts with his grandparents Debbie and Allan Cameron in Chandler, Ariz., on a FaceTime video call from his crib in Tempe, Ariz.

Cameron’s daughter Julie Bufkin is at home with her 7-month-old son, Calvin, working from home as a project coordinator at Arizona State University, while her husband goes into the office as an analytical chemist for Intel.

She’s been taking webcam calls and answering emails while breastfeeding the baby and trying to keep him entertained, even after coming down with a fever and headache, symptoms similar to the new coronavirus.

In line with the advice of public-health officials, she stayed at home to recover and wasn’t tested for the vi-

rus, since she’s young and healthy and didn’t become seriously ill. She’s now on the mend, but it only deepened her mother’s feelings of helplessness.

“Imagine if your child is sick you can’t go help them,” Cameron said. “That’s the hardest part.”

But for her daughter, it further confirmed that staying physically separate for now is the right decision.

“We want my mom to survive this,” Bufkin said. And the grandparents can still step in remotely — Bufkin sets up a phone or a tablet in Calvin’s playpen, where they can sing songs, show him around the yard, look at the cat or play piano over FaceTime.

“Anything we can, even five to 10 minutes to give her a little rest, that makes my day,” Cameron said.

They’re only 5 miles away in suburban Phoenix, and for a time Bufkin was dropping off food weekly, then touching hands or exchanging kisses through the window. More often, they’re sharing their lives through a phone or tablet screen.

The baby watches his grandparents on the screen, looking up from his own games to smile and laugh at his grandpa or focus on his grandmother playing the saxophone.

Other grandparents are also looking for moments of brightness. They’re replacing chats on the porch with friends with Facebook conversations, or connecting



Seen through their kitchen window, Allan and Debbie Cameron contact their grandchildren via the internet in Chandler, Ariz. Debbie, 68, has asthma which makes her one of the people most at risk from the new coronavirus. The Camerons now see their children and grandchildren from the other side of a window or a phone.

with church congregations through video-messaging apps like Marco Polo.

Others are turning the technological clock back. Margret Boes-Ingraham, 72, used to drive her 14-year-old granddaughter to choir practice a few times a week near Salt Lake City, then stay to listen to her sing. Without those rides spent listening to show tunes, she’s encouraging her granddaughter to keep a journal.

“I asked her if I could read, and she said no!” Boes-Ingraham said with a laugh.

For grandparents who live alone, hunkering down during the crisis can increase their isolation.

Terry Catucci is a 69-year-old retired social worker and recovering alcoholic of 30 years in Maryland. She has seven grandchildren nearby in the Washington, D.C., area including a 5-year-old and a 1-year-old who she helps care for sometimes. She tries not to think about the little changes she’s missing during the years when children seem to grow every day.

“When you’re in a time of

crisis, you want to be with people you love, and we can’t,” she said. “I’ve run the whole gamut of the five stages of grief at any given day.”

But she’s getting by, talking with her family and checking in daily with her Alcoholics Anonymous sponsor. Every night, neighbors in her retirement community set up lawn chairs at the end of driveways to chat with friends walking by at a safe distance.

“We’re all learning how to survive in this time,” she said, “to live a little bit the best we can.”



COURTESY OF JULIE BUFKIN

Julie Bufkin’s 7-month-old boy, Calvin, interacts with his grandmother Debbie Cameron, in Chandler, Ariz., on a FaceTime call from his crib in Tempe, Ariz.

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HEALTH

Vertigo — where no one wants to go

The dizziness associated with this condition can be alarming, but there are steps you can take.

By Marylouise Sholly

MediaNews Group correspondent

Alfred Hitchcock called his frightening movie “Vertigo” for a reason.

While the 1958 film noir directed by Hitchcock is classified as a psychological thriller, the real, every-day variety of vertigo is horrific.

One minute of vertigo is like one minute of a toothache; you just want it to go away.

“It is scary at first, because you have no idea what’s going on,” said Dr. Leslie Sondag, the Director of Audiology at Berks ENT Surgical Associates Inc. in Wyomissing. “So it’s important to know that help is out there.”

Vertigo is a symptom of a medical condition, not a disease, which doesn’t make it any less alarming.

Imagine having your balance askew, with everything spinning fast and crazily around you; that’s vertigo.

“Vertigo is a sense of motion; that spinning feeling that people sometimes get,” Sondag said.

Vertigo is a visual disturbance caused by the inner ear, she explained.

It’s not generally painful; it’s more insidious, totally disabling as well as disorienting. People suffering from vertigo will be immobile, trying not to move a muscle so the spinning doesn’t recur.

Vertigo could also be a symptom of a more serious event, like a stroke or cardiovascular disease, so it’s important to see a doctor if you have an episode of vertigo.

“With true vertigo, new onset, we need to rule out blood vessel problems,” said Dr. Winifred Kao-Seda of the Berks ENT group.

A blood vessel that’s occluded or blocked needs immediate attention.

If feeling vertiginous, the best course of action would be to have someone drive you to an emergency room or see a neurologist ASAP.

“Use your judgment, make sure you’re not having an impending stroke,” Dr. Kao-Seda said.

When that possibility is ruled out, the next step would be to consult an ENT doctor for further diagnosis and treatment.

After looking for fluid behind the eardrum, changes in the patient’s hearing, and ringing in the ears, if the inner ear is suspect, medications like meclizine or bionine could be prescribed to help with the vertigo.

Causes of vertigo vary, but no matter the reason, little can be done in the way of prevention.

Children don’t seem to be affected as much by vertigo as other age groups; once you hit your 20s, anybody is fair game.

“If one ear is affected by a disease process or inner ear balance disorder, it can cause vertigo and that can happen at any age,” Sondag said.

The inner ear is often the culprit, as this is where the center of the somato-sen-



LAUREN A. LITTLE — MEDIANEWS GROUP

Dr. Tammy Balatgek of the Center for TMJ and Sleep Disorders, Reading, works with a patient.

sory system is located; the workings that help people know where their body is in relation to space.

Feeling lightheaded or faint is not the same as vertigo; being dizzy.

Feeling faint could be caused by getting up too quickly and experiencing a drop in blood pressure.

One of the main causes of vertigo is Benign Positional Paroxysmal Vertigo (BPPV) that results when tiny calcium crystals in the ear get out of place and find their way to an inner ear canal, Sondag said.

The shifting of the inner ear crystals could be the result of a head injury, although that’s not always the case, Sondag said.

Dizziness could be a side effect of some medications, so folks should speak with their family physician if they have questions.

Vertigo seems to become more common as people age, Sondag said.

“It’s a degenerative process; the gel-like membrane that holds these crystals in place degenerates as we get older,” Sondag said.

The dislodging of the crystals could be caused by something as simple as turning over in bed to reach for the alarm clock.

“This type of vertigo (BPPV) only goes away when you stop moving,” Sondag said. “The patients who have that type of vertigo learn really quickly what triggers it.”

To determine if a patient’s vertigo is being caused by BPPV, a physician will use the Epley Maneuver.

“We put the patient’s head in a certain position and let gravity do its work,” Sondag said. “We’ll know a patient has BPPV by watching their eyes.”

If the crystals are out of place, involuntary jerky eye movements will be noticeable.

If that’s the case, a physician can reposition the head to get the problematic crystals out of the ear canal.



LAUREN A. LITTLE — MEDIANEWS GROUP

Dr. Tammy Balatgek shows the relationship of the jaw to the ear in causing vertigo on a model.

Occasionally, vertigo will resolve on its own, Sondag said, although it can also return.

People suffering from vertigo can be referred to a physical therapist for vestibular rehabilitation, a specialized form of therapy that focuses on re-training the brain to maintain its balance.

Vertigo can also be caused by vestibular neuronitis, an inflammation of the balance nerves.

Thought to be caused by a virus, antibiotics won’t help with this kind of inflammation.

While Benign Positional Paroxysmal Vertigo may only last a few minutes or hours, vertigo caused by neuronitis may last a few days.

Meniere’s Disease can also be accompanied by vertigo.

“It’s a more episodic vertigo, typically accompanied by pressure in the ear, nausea, tinnitis (ringing in the ear) and possible hearing loss,” Sondag said.

Meniere’s Disease seems to be related to fluid buildup in the inner ear.

Treatment might include dietary restrictions, such as a low-salt diet, Sondag said.

Dr. Tammy Balatgek of the Center for TMJ and Sleep Disorders, 2433 Morgantown Road, Reading, suggests staying hydrated as a first step in fending off vertigo, since dehydration can be instigate a number of physical maladies.

Dental hygienist Bonnie Brown, employed by Balatgek, had bouts of vertigo in the past.

“It was debilitating,” Brown said.

After calling off sick a few months ago, Dr. Balatgek suggested checking the alignment of Brown’s jaw.

An oral appliance was made for Brown and so far, is working well.

“I’m cautiously optimistic that this took care of the problem,” Brown said. “The re-positioning of my jaw took pressure off my ear.”

The jaw joint, a socket joint, connects in front of the ear.

An ear infection or even a congested cold could bring on a bout of vertigo.

People suffering from vertigo will usually see their primary care physi-

cian or an ENT doctor first, Balatgek said.

“They come to us when other treatments don’t work,” Balatgek said. “Sometimes we can tell them ‘your jaw is out of alignment’ and we can help them.”

Structurally, if the vertigo is coming from the jaw misalignment, Balatgek can outfit the patient with an oral appliance that will keep the jawbone away from the ear.

Grinding or clenching one’s teeth at night could contribute to vertigo, Balatgek said, because the high pressure being exerted can distort the bones in the ear.

She suggested an evaluation if teeth grinding is a problem.

Balatgek might also prescribe anti-nausea medication to lessen vertigo, including Dramamine, the drug of choice for seasickness.


“I like to start conservatively, but if the Epley Maneuver doesn’t take care of it, we’ll try something else,” Balatgek said.

While vertigo can affect almost all ages, the consequences are greater for the elderly, who may be more inclined to fall due to that loss of balance, Balatgek said.


“The jaw joint can be a main cause of vertigo, but that’s not something that will turn up on the Internet,” Balatgek said. “Physical therapy can sometimes help.”

The vertebral artery can get temporarily occluded when you tilt your head way back, as in looking up at the sky, causing a slight dizziness, Balatgek said.

Balatgek advised: Don’t stand up too quickly, get help if you grind your teeth, and don’t spin around on amusement park rides.



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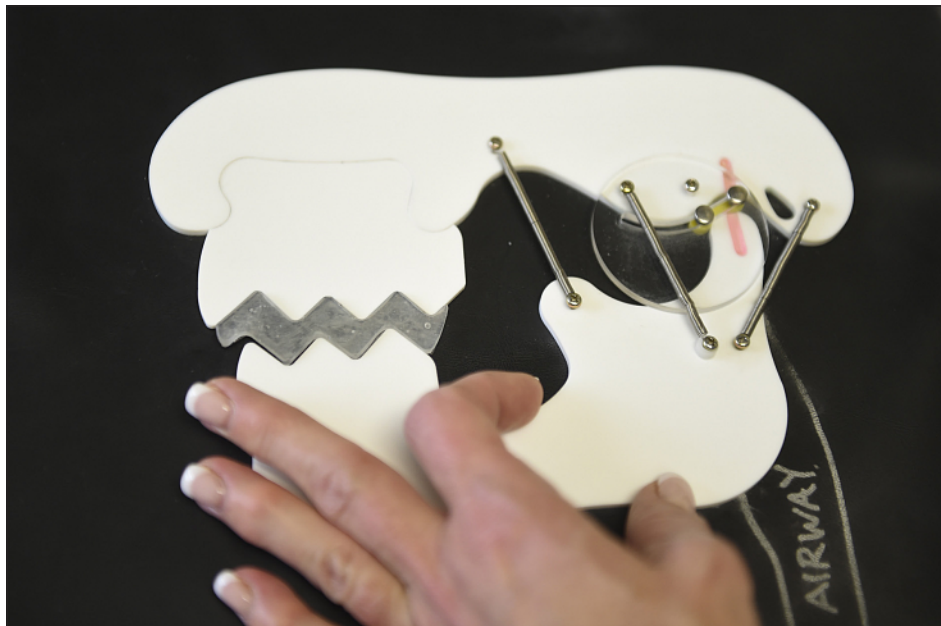
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Dr. Tammy Balatgek uses a model to show the relationship of the jaw to the ear.

CORONAVIRUS

Birdsboro Lodge residents treated to a parade

By Jeremy Long
 jlong@readingeagle.com
 @jeremylong on Twitter

The residents at Birdsboro Lodge have been cut off from their families for over a month because visitors are prohibited to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus during the pandemic.

On a recent afternoon, they had a chance to see them briefly.

Chris and Laurie Gregg, who own the personal care facility, organized a parade for the residents.

Family members drove their cars around the facility's parking lot, honking their horns and waving at the residents, who were gathered in front of the building that was decorated with balloons and sidewalk chalk art.

"We knew the residents were cooped up, and a lot of health care pros are getting parades and decided to put a twist on it," Chris Gregg said.

All 11 residents made the trek outside to watch the parade that included sons, daughters, siblings, and even great-great-grandchildren, Gregg said.

"They were excited. They couldn't believe it," Gregg said. "The family members made up signs and decorated cars. They couldn't believe how much of a celebration it was."

Gregg said maintaining a 6-foot distance inside the building and prohibiting visitors from the facility was starting to take a toll on the residents.

"We are kind of cooped up," he said. "We are all making the best of it but figured we would try to do something to get the residents involved."



LAUREN A. LITTLE — MEDIANEWS GROUP

Christine Sandritter of Exeter Township rings bells as she hangs out of her car's sunroof while parading by the Birdsboro Lodge personal care home. She was there to cheer for her mother, Vangie, a resident of the home. Her husband Bryan Sandritter is driving the car.



LAUREN A. LITTLE — MEDIANEWS GROUP

Beverly Albright and her daughters McKinley Albright, 4, and Kennedy Albright, 15, hidden behind McKinley, wave and cheer for the girls' great-grandfather, Elmer Davidheiser, a resident at Birdsboro Lodge, during a parade at the personal care home. Elmer is Beverly's husband's grandfather. She said she really misses him.



LAUREN A. LITTLE — MEDIANEWS GROUP

Birdsboro Lodge resident Joe Pinder waves at a parade of families in their cars.

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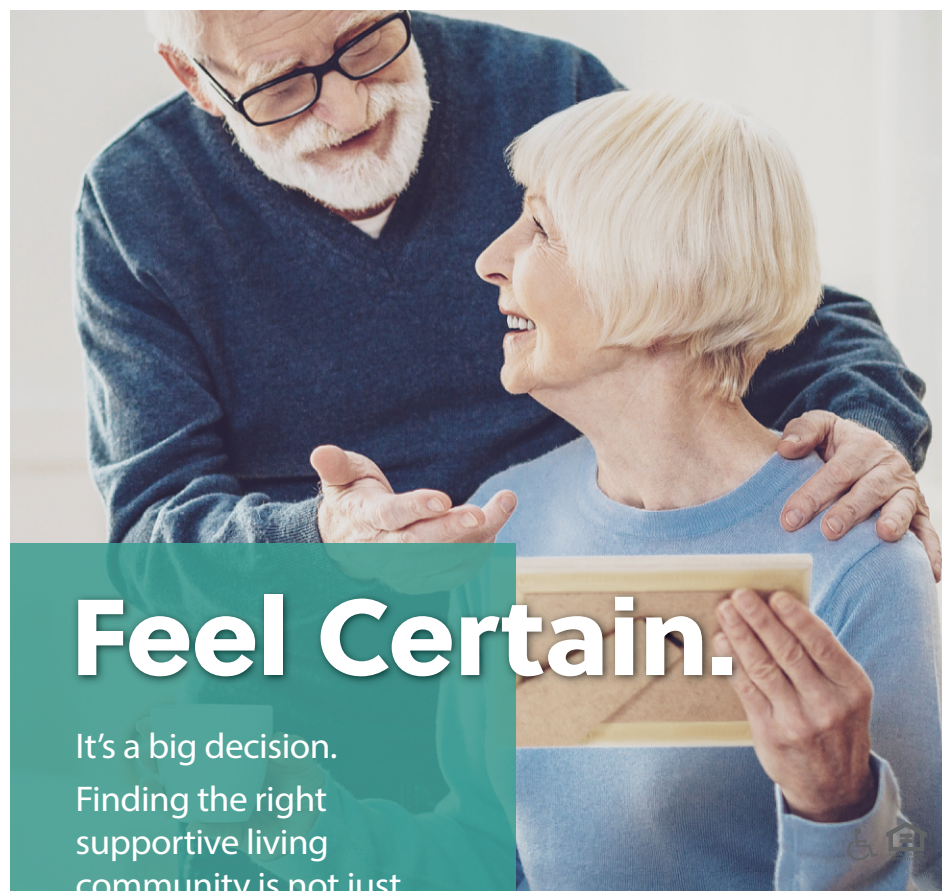
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CORONAVIRUS

Survey looks at how pandemic is affecting older adults

By Pennsylvania Council on Aging

HARRISBURG » The Pennsylvania Department of Aging and the Pennsylvania Council on Aging (PCoA) recently released the findings of a statewide survey conducted by PCoA to assess the status, needs and interests of older adults during the COVID-19 outbreak. The survey inquired about food access, public risk factors and social connection.

The brief online survey, conducted during the first week of April in both English and Spanish, drew more than 3,700 responses from older adults across Pennsylvania.

The survey included questions on how often the older adult communicates with people outside their home, technologies they are using to connect, how often they are leaving their home during this pandemic and their primary reasons for doing so.

COVID-19 is a virus that vastly and disproportionately affects older adults. According to the Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention, older adults are much more at risk of fatality. Eight out of 10 deaths reported in the U.S. have been in adults aged 65 and older. In Pennsylvania, the majority of COVID-19-related hospitalizations are of people ages 65 and older.

“The PCoA determined that there was an immediate need to better understand the landscape that older adults in Pennsylvania are navigating during this crisis,” said PCoA Executive Director Faith Haussler. “The overwhelming response we received to the survey provides a wealth of insights into their living situations, how they’re getting their needs met, what types of risks they’re taking, what types of activities matter most to them, how connected or isolated they feel, and where they

could use some extra help.”

Those aged 60-80 made up 81% of the survey respondents. Those who are over the age of 80 made up 17%. This mirrors the Pennsylvania population of older adults, according to the U.S. Census.

Some of the major findings:

- Older adults, on average, are going out almost twice weekly to get groceries.

- Older adults are also going to the pharmacy at high numbers, even though almost all pharmacies have offered delivery and drive-through options for shopping and prescription-filling.

- Adults aged 85 and older reported that senior centers were the third source they relied on for their community connection. The first two were family and religious institutions.

- Almost 6% of the “oldest” older adults (91 years and older) reported that

they still attended religious events.

- Fewer than 20% of the “oldest” older adults have access to smartphones, but more than 20% stated that they were interested in virtual connections.

The survey revealed differences among age groups and rural and urban settings in how older adults connect with their communities, how they access food and what technologies they use to stay connected.

Several themes emerged highlighting areas where older adults can be supported during this pandemic and in the future. Some of these themes and related recommendations:

- Evaluating how older adults can access food more safely

- Implementing services and support to maintain communication with older adults and minimize social isolation

- Increasing access to virtual connectivity across

the commonwealth for older adults

“We’re very excited about this survey and its potential applications,” said PCoA Board Chairman Mickey Flynn. “In addition to providing practical recommendations for helping older adults meet their needs during the COVID-19 emergency, the PCoA views the data collected as a rich resource for continued planning for services for older adults now and after the COVID-19 pandemic.”

“The Wolf Administration and the Department of Aging are keenly aware that food access, community connections and social isolation have and will continue to be issues affecting older adults’ well-being and quality of life,” said Aging Secretary Robert Torres. “The responses drawn by this survey, in real time during this pandemic, present an opportunity for us to deepen our collective understanding of

these major issues and engage with partners to develop thoughtful, creative and effective solutions.”

The Pennsylvania Council on Aging serves as an advocate for older individuals and advises the governor and the Department of Aging on planning, coordination and delivery of services to older individuals. The Council’s 21 volunteer members, the majority of whom are required to be age 60 or older, are nominated by the governor and approved by the state senate.

Members of the Council also serve as chairpersons for five regional councils totaling 65 volunteers, which meet quarterly. These regional councils gather information and insights on local needs and service delivery and report their findings to the Council. They also serve as resources for research and community outreach efforts.

SURVEY

Survey looks to identify needs of LGBTQ seniors

SAGE

SAGE, the world’s largest and oldest organization dedicated to improving the lives of LGBTQ elders, and the Visiting Nurse Service of New York (VNSNY) Center for Home Care Policy & Research, launched a new survey as part of a joint initiative to learn more about the health and social needs of LGBTQ elders living in New York City.

With funding from The Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation Inc., longtime supporters of both SAGE and VNSNY, The SAGE AdvantAge Initiative Survey of LGBTQ+ Older Adults in

NYC is designed to assess the needs and well-being of LGBTQ New Yorkers, age 55 and older, living in all five boroughs of the city.

Part of a nationwide effort to help make communities more aging friendly, the Advantage Initiative process was developed by VNSNY Research to capture older adults’ perceptions of and experiences in their communities; identify barriers to aging in place; and plan for action to address these barriers.

Collecting this data during the time of COVID-19 is especially crucial because of the population’s heightened

risks due to disparities, comorbidities and lack of access to care.

This SAGE/VNSNY initiative marks the first time New York City’s LGBTQ elder community has been surveyed specifically with the intention of paving the way for improvements in health care and social programming, and amplifying unrepresented voices within the LGBTQ community. The short, online survey is an opportunity for LGBTQ elders to anonymously share their experiences with the aim of creating a more inclusive and age-friendly community.

“In order to best serve

our community, we need to hear directly from the voices that look to SAGE as a space where they can continue to form connections and find opportunities to flourish,” said SAGE Executive Vice President Lynn Faria. “It is our responsibility as a community to learn about and understand the needs of our LGBTQ elders, so we can provide sufficiently comprehensive services and resources that allow the members of our community to thrive.”

“For many LGBTQ elders in New York City, the COVID-19 pandemic awakens deep-seated fears and memories of negative experiences with access to care

that began in the 1980s and ‘90s with the plague of HIV/AIDS,” said Arthur Fitting, VNSNY LGBTQ Program Director. “SAGE and VNSNY developed this survey to reveal and more clearly understand critical concerns that older members of the LGBTQ community are struggling with, not only in the midst of this public health crisis, but every day.”

Mia Oberlink, the director of the AdvantAge Initiative added, “We have collected and provided valuable data to more than 60 communities around the country and are so pleased to have the oppor-

tunity to extend our survey capabilities through SAGE to capture data about the older LGBTQ community in NYC.”

Survey responses will serve as a vehicle for identifying essential needs and barriers to health and social equity throughout New York’s five boroughs, as well as a blueprint for future SAGE programs and services. Participants completing the survey can enter a drawing for the chance to win one of twenty-five \$25 gift cards. The survey is anonymous, takes minutes to complete and is available in English or Spanish at sageusa.org/advantagesurvey.

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Dr. Daniel McClimon, DC, BCN
Board Certified Neuropathy Specialist



Unprecedented times foster stronger connections.

Our community heroes have shown us that this is an amazing place to live, work and play. **Anthology Senior Living of King of Prussia** is excited to join a community of heroes this fall.

INDEPENDENT LIVING

If you're an active senior who wants to elevate your lifestyle, our independent living option can offer you a dynamic, engaging environment.

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PERSONAL CARE

When managing your home or day-to-day life becomes too challenging, our assisted living option can offer the support you need to lead a life you'll love.

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We go above and beyond to provide comprehensive care in a safe, nurturing environment with top of the line services and amenities and the newest advancements in wellness and dementia programming.

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