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Wednesday, June 3, 2020 » MEDIANEWS GROUP

SENIOR LIFE

Society's most vulnerable hit hardest by pandemic

Seniors represent more than 83 percent of all COVID-19 related deaths in Chester County since March

By **Jen Samuel**
jsamuel@dailylocal.com
@jenpoetess on Twitter

PENN » The mission to protect the most vulnerable in society inspired the nation to shut down in March.

Still, regionally the most vulnerable — senior citizens — have suffered the most from the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The senior citizens of Chester County — and the Commonwealth as a whole — are an integral part of our community,” said State Sen. Andy Dinniman, D-19th, of West Whiteland. “I have always worked hard as an advocate for our senior communities, and the livelihoods of seniors across my district has been a core issue of mine. What has happened these past few months is nothing short of tragic.”

“On the Senate floor, in my town halls and with everyone I speak with, I have been fighting for an increase of precautions in long-term care and nursing homes, I have been fighting for universal testing for everyone who lives and works inside them. Our senior citizens deserve better. We as a state ought to do better,



JEN SAMUEL — MEDIANEWS GROUP

A parade passes by the homes of senior citizens at Jenner's Pond on April 22 in Penn Township.

and come together to do so.”

The first death happened on March 28, said Chester County coroner Christina VandePol.

According to the Chester County coroner's office, more than 86 percent of all COVID-19 related deaths during the last 90 days occurred at assisted living facilities, representing 298 of 317 confirmed deaths total, as of press time on May 29.

VandePol said of 317 total deaths attributed to COVID-19, 298 were test confirmed.

In May, VandePol called

for officials to probe the circumstances behind the spike in deaths at those facilities.

There are 75 licensed long-term care and personal care homes in Chester County, with nearly half of them experiencing a coronavirus outbreak. 30 Chester County facilities have reported one or more COVID-19 deaths to the coroner's office, as previously reported. Seven of those facilities plus a nearby Montgomery County facility have had 10 or more residents die

of confirmed or probable

COVID-19.

“The nursing home statistics are chilling and the stories downright horrifying,” said state Sen. Thomas Killion, R-9th, of Middletown. “We now know this virus disproportionately affects our seniors and those with underlying conditions. Pennsylvania's response to nursing and congregated care facility infections has been disgraceful and excusable.”

In March, Wolf announced statewide mandated closures of the Pennsylvania economy. His ad-

ministration broke down businesses into two basic categories: life-sustaining vs. non-essential. Based on these labels, the governor shut down small business enterprise industry by industry, sector by sector.

Hospitals, pharmacies and groceries plus gas stations, including Wawa, Sheetz and Turkey Hill, were granted gubernatorial permission to remain open as community providers of life-sustaining services. The extreme mitigation measures, government officials said, were to pro-

tect the most vulnerable.

Seniors. “COVID-19 has been particularly devastating to our seniors in congregant living,” said state Rep. Christina Sappey, D-158th Dist., of West Bradford. “There have been the noted health impacts, but the isolation from loved ones has also been very difficult for them and their families.”

As for what is being done now to protect seniors, Sappey said, “In the House we have acted to appropriate funds that will go to testing, PPE and other measures for residents and staff in long-term care facilities, as well as funding for our regional health collaborators in academic medical institutions to use toward treatment and prevention of COVID-19.”

Since the pandemic began in March, Chester County's death rate for COVID-19 never hit 1,000 people in April as government officials in Harrisburg and Washington, D.C., early on feared.

Both private and state-run retirement communities, with assisted care support, have been under strict lockdown exposures since early March, as previously reported by the Daily Local News. Cases from the global plague have been trending down in Chester County lately.

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Health, approximately 70 percent of all COVID-19-related deaths in the commonwealth have occurred at long-term senior living

PANDEMIC » PAGE 2



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Pandemic

FROM PAGE 1

facilities since March. East Vincent Township is home to the Southeastern Veterans Center, and the state-run assisted living facility has suffered the largest number of communal deaths, veterans and their spouses, in all of Chester County. To date, more than 33 veterans and their spouses have died at this senior citizen VFW facility after suffering fatal reactions from novel coronavirus exposure this spring.

With most deaths in the region occurring inside nursing homes under lockdown, the need to protect senior citizens from harm has never been greater.

Ahead of the June 2 primary, politicians running for office chimed in on the crisis and presented solutions to protect senior citizens in the days, weeks and months ahead.

“We have come a long way in a short time, and congregate care communities now have better access to PPE, protocols that are working for identification and isolation of those who are positive,” said State Rep. Danielle Friel Otten, D-155th, of Uwchlan. “This is going to be a long game though, we have a lot of work to do to protect our seniors and the people who care for them.”

“Our senior living communities were in a vulnerable situation before COVID-19. Years of underfunding reimbursements from state government have been a huge burden to contend with for nursing homes. Workers make low wages, have few protections and do incredibly difficult work. Add to that existing challenge, workers are now getting sick and sometimes working more than one essential job to make ends meet.”

that workers do not have to work multiple jobs in order to care for their own families.”

Otten said COVID-19 exposure of seniors is the greatest threat to their safety.

Newcomer Rose Danese, a medical technologist at Chester County Hospital, ran against Otten in the Democratic primary on Tuesday. She said key improvements are needed to support nurses and staff moving forward.

“I feel the best way to keep nursing home residents safe is to make sure they have adequate staffing,” Danese said. “There should always be enough nurses staffed for each floor so that they are not overwhelmed. There should always be enough nursing assistants’ on a floor as well. I believe nurses and nursing assistants should not be tasked with duties like trash and laundry, and I feel there should be separate staffing for that covering all shifts and areas of the facility.”

Since March, the coronavirus crisis in the U.S. and worldwide has propelled governments to mandate stay-at-home orders for the old and young alike. Data shows that the elderly are most susceptible to suffer fatalities from COVID-19.

Millions of grandparents across America, as a result, cannot see their grandchildren for traditional family dinners or even special occasions, including milestones.

Yet, there is hope. Families are waving to one another from behind closed windows, and thanks to contemporary technology, video conferencing courtesy of Zoom, Skype, FaceTime and Google Duo enables grandparents to say hi to their children and grandchildren virtually.

And while grandparents are hurting, their grandchildren miss them very much, too. Children are crying while on Zoom with loved ones because they miss them, they want to hug them, and they want this crisis “to be over.”

PANDEMIC » PAGE 3



JEN SAMUEL — MEDIANEWS GROUP

Penn Township's Chuck Oertel awaits the arrival of the first-ever volunteer parade for Jenner's Pond. He said, "I just want to thank them."

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JEN SAMUEL — MEDIANEWS GROUP

The community showers Jenner's Pond with support during an April 22 parade in Penn Township.

Pandemic

FROM PAGE 2

Long-term facilities for senior citizens are rising to the occasion to keep their residents safe.

Earlier this spring, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) announced the implementation of a series of measures to mitigate COVID-19 and protect the health of residents and staff at Pennsylvania's state centers, state

hospitals, youth development centers and youth forestry camps.

All visitors are currently prohibited from all state center and state hospital campuses, youth development centers and youth forestry camps, the department said. The policy shall remain in place until guidance from public-health professionals changes.

Exceptions include visits of medical necessity, visits by probation departments or legal counsel, as well as family and clergy visits ap-

proved by the facility director. Residents of state hospitals maintain their rights to attorney consultations. Any visitor permitted must undergo a health screening upon arrival prior to entry.

In southern Chester County, the Friends Home on State Street in downtown Kennett Square and Jenner's Pond Retirement Community in Penn Township have kept a vigilant watch on their seniors since the pandemic began.

Starting on March 3, Friends Home implemented

extensive procedures for cleaning. On March 10, all outside trips were canceled, all inside entertainment was postponed, and all visitations were suspended, according to Christine McDonald, executive director. Friends Home is a private institution and was established in 1898.

Founded in 1998, Jenner's Pond Retirement Community, also private, in Penn Township recently celebrated its 20th anniversary. It is home to 350 independent residents; 55 peo-

ple are residents of assisted living; 25 people live in the skilled nursing community.

Like Friends Home, Jenner's Pond stopped allowing visitors earlier in March.

Barbara Croyle, executive director, said on May 29 that everyone at Jenner's Pond is "doing well, still COVID free."

The ban on visitors won't be lifted for some time and will depend on instructions from federal and state agencies as well as the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). Cro-

yle said independent living residents should see visitors this summer.

She thanked the community and said people have donated masks, sent cards and held a surprise parade, featuring vintage cars, through the campus earlier this spring.

Croyle said she is "grateful for all the support we've received." She added thanks for special work achieved by the community at-large including allowing special shopping hours for senior citizens at grocery stores.

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SENIOR LIFE

Spot of T: It's the little things

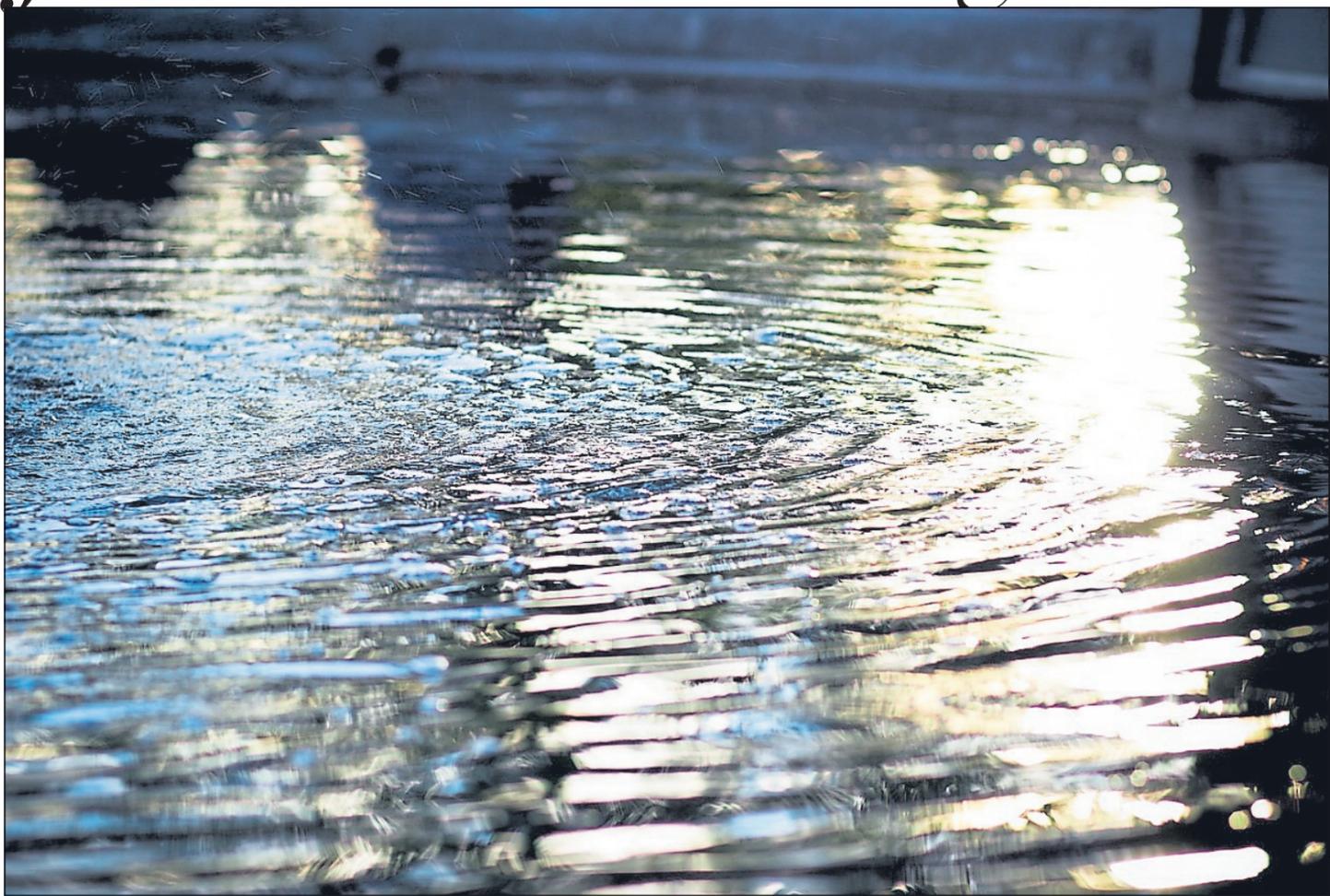
By Terry Alburger

How're you doing in this time of uncertainty? Each of our experiences is different; we each have unique situations, specific to our lives. But ultimately, we all live under the same difficult set of rules. Social distancing. Masks required. Stay-at-home protocols. Travel ban. These are all phrases that have unfortunately become part of our everyday vocabulary.

No, things will not magically go back to the way they were before COVID-19 hit. But I will maintain, not all results of this pandemic have been bad. I for one have realized that sometimes, it's the little things that make the biggest difference. We just have to learn to appreciate the small stuff. Not a bad lesson to learn.

The number of people who are learning new technology each day, in order to stay in touch with their beloved family members, is astounding. I see it every day here at Brittany Pointe. Here, many of our residents were very tech savvy already, but now, the number has risen greatly. FaceTime, Skype, House Party, Zoom, Facebook Messenger and video calls have become the lifeline of many.

Due to virtual church services, many people have had to acquaint themselves with this new way of worship. In my church, our services are streamed live via



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Like a small pebble creating ripples on a pond, a tiny gesture of love can go a long way.

Facebook, while being coordinated with Zoom. The contributors of the service are connected virtually – the pastor, the musicians, the readers. Those of us involved with this process have learned so much, and those who tune in, including many seniors, are also becoming more and more familiar with it.

It might seem like a little thing – a few programs on a computer or iPad. And yet, it is allowing the entire country to worship with their church

families in real time. This little thing has become a lifeline for so many.

Time. We now have more of it. This past weekend, I sat down and read a few chapters of a book. That may seem like a little thing, but in my world, it's huge. I don't usually have a lot of extra time. I do now and I try to make the best use of it. You can consider this mandatory quarantine to be a curse, but, though difficult, I choose to see it as a blessing, in some

ways. If you try to make the most of the situation, great things may happen.

Drive-by's. Another new term that has become so incredibly important. The simple act of driving by someone's house on a special occasion, of pausing at a house to wave and talk through a car window, can elevate spirits immensely. On my birthday in April, my daughter and her children stopped by to hand presents out of the car window, and my grandkids held

up signs that they had made. It's a little thing, a small act of kindness, that made my entire day. I felt their love through the virtual hugs.

A phone call to a friend or family member who lives alone might seem trivial to you, but to that person, it may be the only contact they have that day. A little thing offered may easily be perceived as a great gift by others.

The ripple effect of the little things can be far reaching. Consider a small pebble

thrown into a smooth pond. The ripples continue outward, seemingly unending. So, in a similar way, a tiny gesture of love can do the same thing. So, go ahead, toss that small pebble of kindness into the pond. Do what you can in this time of challenge to make life just a little bit better for others. Trust me, it is no little thing.

Terry Alburger is the resident services director at Brittany Pointe Estates in Lansdale, Montgomery County.



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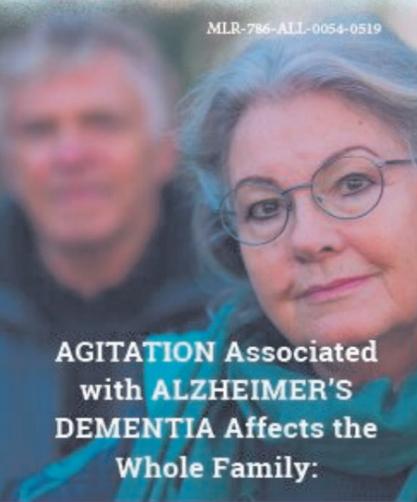




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AGITATION Associated with Alzheimer's Dementia

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SENIOR LIFE

Boomers changing the face of senior living

By Christopher Redding Murray

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, isn'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, Chester County, have three different dining options within the community: a pub, a cafe 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. "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 looking 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.

Life Enrichment Director Joyce Coleman said, "Life-long learning is a real passion of mine. I like tapping into residents' interests so



COURTESY OF CHRISTOPHER REDDING MURRAY

One of the dining room options at Echo Lake, a SageLife community in Malvern, Chester County.

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.

SENIOR LIFE

Surrey Services for Seniors names new president and CEO

By Maureen McKnight
Surrey Services for Seniors

The Surrey Board of Directors voted unanimously to appoint Christi Seidel as president and CEO following a six-month, nationwide search.

Seidel brings strong leadership, extensive experience and a deep commitment to Surrey's mission of serving the needs of older adults to this position.

"Christi's leadership has been evident at Surrey," said Rick Davis, chairman of the board of directors. "Her accomplishments range from helping

Surrey garner state and national awards for excellence, to ensuring operations continued smoothly without interruption during the COVID crisis."

Seidel began as a volunteer grocery shopper at Surrey more than 20 years ago. In 2010, she joined the Surrey staff as the marketing manager. Since then, she has held roles in virtually every business area, including management of Surrey's community centers, membership, volunteers, consignment shop, and, most recently, as Surrey's chief operating officer with responsibility for finance, human resources

and home care services.

"Surrey is truly a unique community made up of engaged older adults, supportive donors and partners, and committed volunteers working together to support Surrey's mission and values," Seidel said. "I am honored to lead Surrey as it enters its 40th year of serving older adults in our community."

Prior to joining Surrey, Seidel was marketing director for Reed Technology and Information Services in Fort Washington, Montgomery County. She has a bachelor's degree in business administration from Marymount Univer-



Seidel

sity and an MBA from St. Joseph's University. She is involved in several community organizations, and

she serves on an advisory board for the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

Seideli was raised in Chester County and is a resident of Tredyffrin-Easttown. She has four adult children.

For more information about Surrey call 610-291-0136 or visit the website at www.SurreyServices.org. To contact Seidel directly, email cseidel@SurreyServices.org.

About Surrey Services: Surrey Services for Seniors is a nonprofit organization that has been serving the community for nearly 40 years. Surrey's mission is to help older adults live

with independence and dignity and to continue as engaged members of the community. Surrey offers a wide variety of programs, activities and life-long learning opportunities from four community centers and support services to over 5,400 individuals each year. The supportive services include everything from transportation and meals to in-home services, such as RN Care Management, personal care and social companions. Surrey also has an extensive volunteer program made up of over 1,300 volunteers.



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SENIOR LIFE

Age and pandemic: Time lost, plans canceled, dreams deferred

By Tamara Lush
The Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, FLA. » Elizabeth Hubbard was booked for a cruise that followed the path of Lewis and Clark's expedition in the Pacific Northwest. Joel Demski was set to watch and cheer his grandson graduating from the Naval Academy. James Kelly planned a trip to Scotland, to scatter his father's ashes in the Clyde River near Glasgow.

They are all older than 60. And like millions of others, they now face the painful realization that their plans, their hopes, their bucket-list items, were not simply deferred but in many cases denied thanks to the coronavirus.

The global pandemic has left them wondering about the time they have left, and how to spend those moments when movement is severely limited. Instead of taking in the Seven Wonders of the World or making family memories, many are worried about the mundane, like whether it's safe to grocery shop or even go outdoors.

Guilt, anger and frustration seep in, with all this precious time lost.

"One less year is one less trip," said 72-year-old Bob Busch, an avid traveler from Sarasota, Fla., who canceled a 35-day camping trip with his wife.

They are healthy this year, but what about in the future, after the pandemic has passed?

"How many times can you hook up the trailer and head west?" he said.

Demski, who lives in Vero Beach, Fla., was crestfallen when the Naval Academy canceled its graduation ceremonies. Instead of taking in the celebration in Annapolis, Md., with his grandson, he is left with concern as the young man ships out on his assignment. Plans



James Kelly with a photo of his late father, also named James Kelly, at his home in Atlanta. Kelly had to delay his plans to travel Scotland, where he planned to scatter his father's ashes, because of the coronavirus outbreak

to see another grandson graduate from UCLA in California have also been scrapped.

"I'm really just sad; it's sadness for the whole country," said Demski, who is a few months shy of his 80th birthday.

Mick Smyer, a psychol-

ogy professor at Bucknell University who studies aging and the elderly, said the baby boom generation is among the first to have additional years of vitality. This pandemic is hitting in the middle of their generation's "developmental task," which, as the Ameri-

can Psychological Association defines it, is "the fundamental physical, social, intellectual and emotional achievements and abilities that must be acquired at each stage of life for normal and healthy development."

In other words, boomers are feeling their mortality. As headlines blare about elders being more susceptible to dying of coronavirus, the healthy wonder: Will I be able to achieve, see and do everything I wanted out of life?

"Boomers are thinking back about whether it has been a good life, and what was it all about," he said. "Now there are fewer options in the near term. The next two years are off the table, and how many good years are left?"

Kelly, a 63-year-old psychologist, also plays guitar and writes country rock and Americana songs. Lately, he's been pondering his fate as he sits alone in his Atlanta home, thinking about when he'll be able to bring his father's ashes to his native Scotland.

"My most recent songs have been about aging," he said. "Dealing with life and loss. The road behind and the road ahead, about how much is behind me and how little is in front of me."

"There's not a lot more road in front of me," he recently wrote in a song lyric.

At the same time, many acknowledge that their sacrifices are also a product of privilege. Millions of people who are unemployed or working in essential, yet low-wage jobs, don't have that luxury now — or possibly ever.

"Some of my emotion, in all honesty, is guilt," said Judy Foreman, a 70-year-old from Flourtown, Montgomery County. "We're inconvenienced, and we're scared, and we're able to handle it. I try to help as much as I can. When I get a food order, I leave a huge tip. I give to food pantries."

But the feeling that time is slipping away grates on her. She can't travel to visit one of her daughters in California. She can't even hug her three grandsons, who live across the street.

"It's depression, loneliness," she said. "It's boredom. Fear. Mostly fear."

She spends hours wiping down groceries, sanitizing doorknobs, thinking about how the future will be permanently different from now on.

"I do all this because I don't want to die," she said in a quiet voice. "So yeah, I'm feeling my mortality."

Helen Miltiades, a professor of gerontology at Fresno State in California, said older adults are struggling in ways younger folks aren't.

"The whole phrase 'the new normal,' people are using that, but what does that mean?" Miltiades said. "People make jokes about it. That's a way of coping with change without really understanding what the change entails. I don't think we have that figured out yet."

Hubbard, who was supposed to go on the cruise with her husband, canceled that. The 70-year-old Miami resident is holding onto a shred of hope that she can see Hugh Jackman — her favorite actor — on Broadway this fall, but she's prepared for disappointment.

"This was supposed to be my decade," she said. "And it's going to be very different than I expected."

Dena Davis is more optimistic. She's a 73-year-old professor of bioethics at Lehigh University in Bethlehem. She has postponed her sabbatical because of the pandemic and figures her plans for retirement have been pushed back.

"If you're lucky, the reason there isn't that much more time is because you've already had a lot of time. ... It depends on the way you look at it," she said. "I'm not seeing endless vistas in front of me. There are pretty big vistas behind me. You can't have it both ways."

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Yield to me, it's the law

By Elaine Hendricks

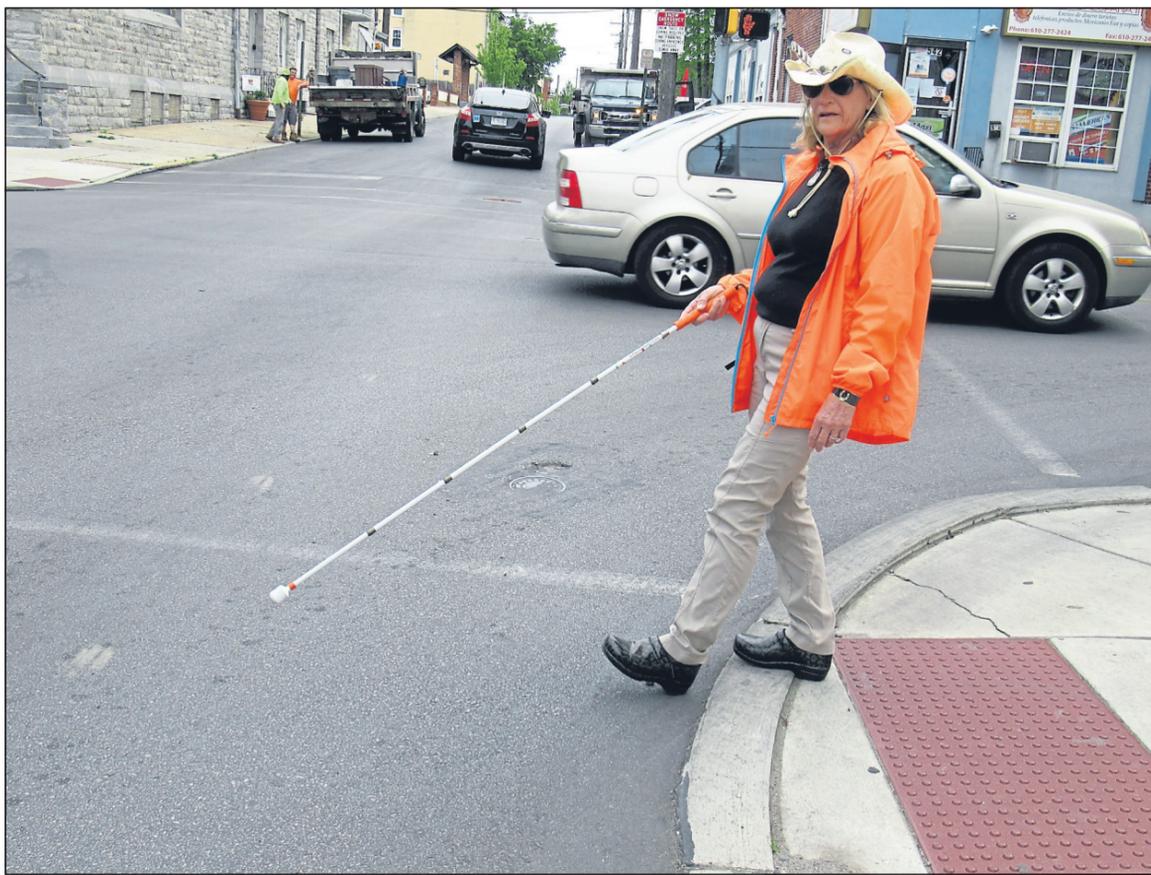
As the weather warms up, more and more people are out walking. Unfortunately, we hear more stories of pedestrians who are struck by vehicles while attempting to cross at intersections on our local streets.

Often these accidents are labeled hit and runs. As an Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Specialist for the blind and visually impaired, all too often I witness vehicles turning directly in front of my students.

My students, young and seniors alike, who are learning to travel safely around their communities, will often say: "Why is this happening? You told me that the law states that pedestrians have the right-of-way on public streets! Elaine, I think you are the only one who knows that the law exists. So many drivers seem to have never heard of it!"

Sadly, our streets are becoming more dangerous for everyone, regardless of age, who have visual loss of any kind. Not yielding to pedestrians is a huge problem. And it's illegal.

Pennsylvania Law 3549 clearly states that drivers must yield the right-of-way to a pedestrian who is totally or partially blind carrying a clearly visible white cane or accompanied by a guide dog.



Elaine Hendricks demonstrates important practices to help people cross streets safely.

When this law is flaunted by drivers, the consequences are often heartbreaking.

Given the reality of the situation, here are some tips for people of any age, whether or not they use a

white cane, when crossing intersections:

Never assume that drivers will yield to you, even if you are using a white cane.

Assume all intersections permit right turn on red, even if a no turn on red sign

is posted. Many drivers do not abide.

Analyze your crossing as best you can, including width of street, traffic control, shape of intersection and sound of traffic.

Wear bright reflective

clothing.

For night travel, use a flashlight and wear reflective clothing.

If you have a white cane, use it. Here are tips for white cane users:

Extend the cane into the

street to indicate your intent to cross.

Signal to potential right-turning vehicles by holding out your left arm and outward-facing palm to say, "Stop, I'm crossing."

Swing the cane up and down vertically before stepping out into the street.

Place one foot slightly forward indicating your intent to cross.

One final suggestion: research has shown that the yield to pedestrian signs reduce the risk of accidents, and driver compliance increases by 30% to 40%. If a person with visual loss uses an intersection regularly, they should contact the local governing body to request that a sign be posted at your intersection.

About the Montgomery County Association for the Blind (MCAB): Founded in 1945, is the only local organization to provide continuous specialized services to county residents of all ages with visual impairments. MCAB's mission is to enhance the quality of life for people coping with blindness or vision impairments through education, support and advocacy, and to strive to prevent blindness through education and screening programs. For more information, call Catherine Nold at cnold@mcab.org or 215-661-9800, ext. 413.

ASK LU

Explaining Medicare Part B drugs

By Lucille Bondi

Lu: Can you explain to me what a Medicare Part B drug is?

Medicare Part B drugs are medications given in

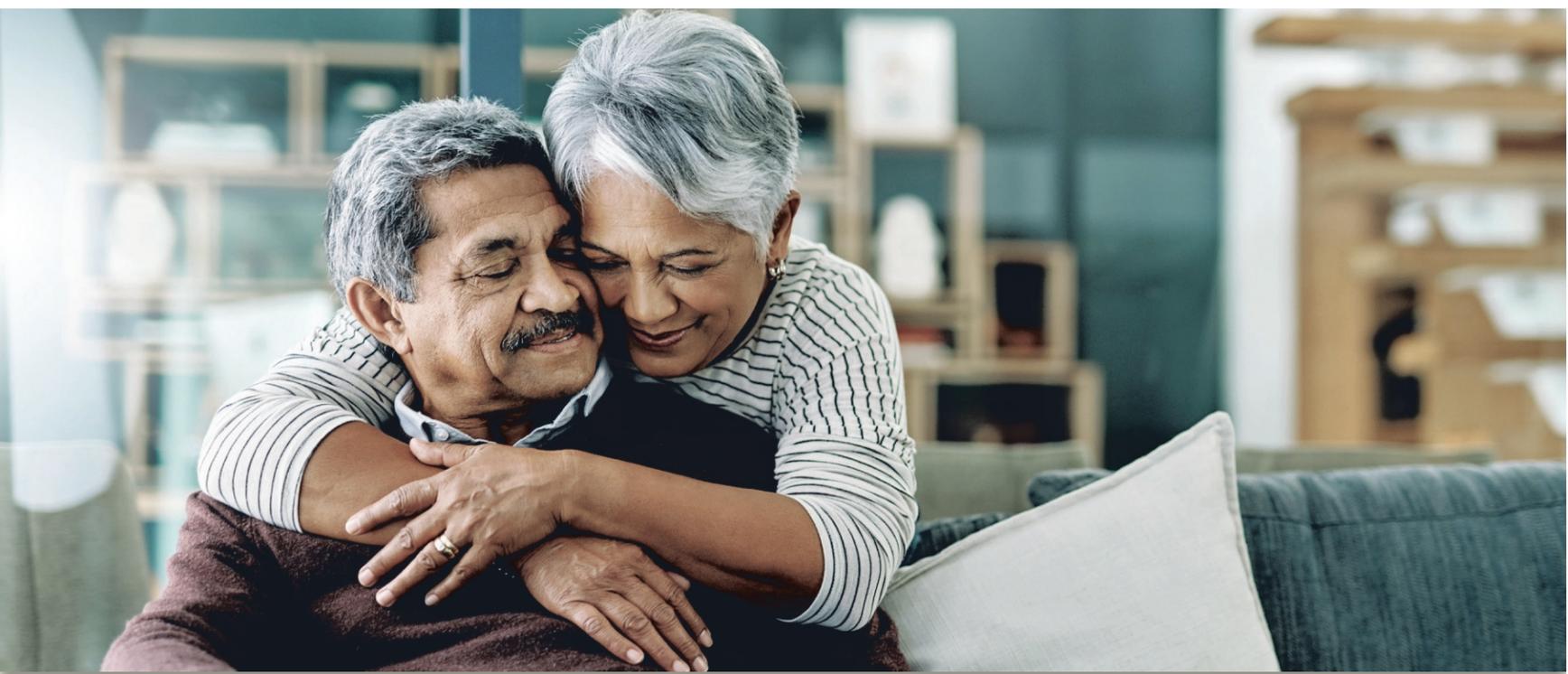
a clinic, doctor's office or hospital outpatient setting. Some common examples of Medicare Part B drugs are medications used in a nebulizer, chemotherapy, insulin used in most insulin pumps, immunosuppres-

sant drugs, certain oral anti-cancer drugs, most intravenous infusions, some bone density infusions, and of course, immunizations like the pneumococcal vaccine and the influenza vaccine.

You pay 20% of the Medicare-approved amount for these covered drugs, and the Medicare Part B deductible applies. A standard Medicare Supplement or Medigap plan will pick up the 20%.

A Medicare Advantage plan or Part C requires you to pay that 20%. Medicare Advantage plans do have a cap on annual medical expenses which can range between \$3,400 and \$6,700 per year.

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BIRDSBORO

Cub Scouts deliver Sunshine Bags, food to seniors

Scouts have been baking desserts for the weekly meals distributed to seniors by St. Mark's

MediaNews Group

Cub Scouts from Birdsboro Pack 595 have been baking and making Sunshine Bags to deliver with meals distributed to seniors in Birdsboro.

"The Scouts have seen the needs of some of our most vulnerable members of the community, our senior citizens, and they are aiding in supplying meals for these members in light of the current pandemic," said Pastor Jim Farnsworth of St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Birdsboro.

St. Mark's Church delivers meals to about 23 to 30 homes of the seniors in the borough twice a week on Wednesdays and Saturdays. They provide three entrees, sides, and healthy snacks to help get them through the week with home cooked meals.

The scouts are making cookies and desserts which are then added to the weekly meals and distributed to local seniors.

"One of the older scouts used his own money to buy snacks, activity books and personal hygiene items and packaged them in gallon bags to distribute to our seniors," said Farnsworth.

"It is wonderful to see the scouts become aware of the needs of others and show great citizenship and compassion for those in need."

Declan Larrimore, 10, Bally, and his mother, Tanya, spent the day baking a variety of cookies, breads and cupcakes. Declan also put together Sunshine Bags for the seniors. He saved his own money to purchase items to donate to the seniors. Each bag in-



Submitted photo

Birdsboro Pack 595 Cub Scout Declan Larrimore, 10, Bally, put together Sunshine Bags. He saved his own money to purchase items to donate to the elderly. Each bag includes a puzzle book, pens, snacks, tissues, bath bombs, and a book of inspirational quotes. "I hope they're very happy to get the fun things that were in them."

cluded a puzzle book, pens, snacks, tissues, bath bombs, and a book of inspirational quotes.

"I like to give them out to everyone because this is one of the most horrible things that we're going through," said Declan. "I hope they're very happy to get the fun things that were in them. I would do this again as long as everyone else is happy, I'm happy."

When talking about Cub Scouts Declan said, "I'm up-

set that we can't go camping this year and see all of our friends. My favorite part of scouts is camping, going on trips and learning new things."

His mother, Tanya, Pack 595 Committee member, said they enjoy making the baked goods together.

"It was something we knew we could do to give back to the community. St. Mark's Church does so much for everyone that we were inspired to help out,

too. The stay-at-home order is difficult for everyone and we understand that," said Tanya. "Declan and I just wanted to put a smile on people's faces."

Jacob Derer, 10, and his brother, Mark Derer Jr., 6, of Birdsboro have been making cookies weekly.

"I like making cookies so much, it makes me happy," said Mark. "I feel sad that the older people can't go out right now to get their own food. I can help them stay

safe by giving them food to eat, especially cookies to cheer them up!"

"I felt really good about making cookies, because the older people, don't have as much as I do, and I could do my part as a Cub Scout to help them stay safe and get through this together," said Jacob.

He also noted that Scouts has changed so much.

"We do virtual Cub Scouts now instead of going to the church, but this

was one way that I could go and help Pastor Jim and St. Mark's Church. I love being at the church, Pastor Jim is pretty fun and I miss being there."

The brothers enjoy baking together.

"It was fun baking cookies with my brother Jacob," Mark said.

Jacob agreed, "We had fun, and this was something we could do together."

Alex Thompson, 7, a 1st SCOUTS » PAGE 9

HEATHERWOOD RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

Starting this Friday and every Friday, Heatherwood is hosting a



**Family Friday
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10:00-3:00 families are invited to drive in! we will have a map of the area that their loved one will be seated & can see/talk from their car in timely intervals.

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The 2020 Graduating classes are devastated. No Spring sports, Prom, Formal Graduation, no last 'hurrah' to say good-bye to schoolmates & teachers. A void of everything these kids worked so hard to accomplish.

I am organizing an "Adopt A Senior" Program for the Twin Valley Class of 2020.

Heatherwood will be putting together a gift basket at a value of \$100 of items for one student.

My goal is to have families & businesses take part of this & if you need a drop-off point, Heatherwood is it!!!

It makes my heart happy to be able to do this for this group of kids.



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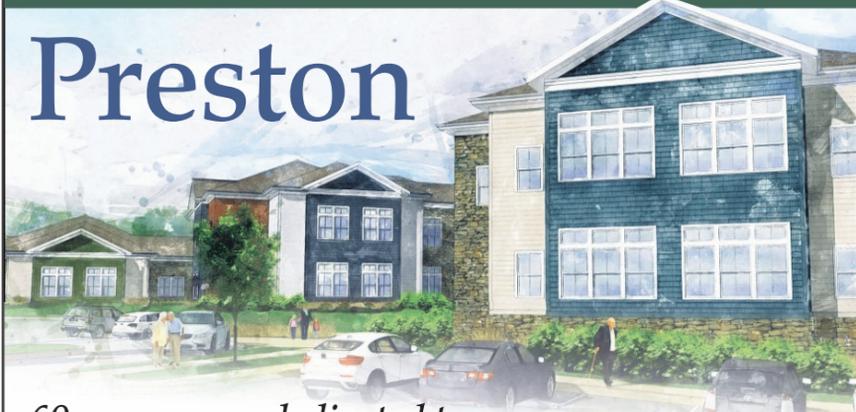
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Scouts

FROM PAGE 8

grader in the Tiger Den of Pack 595, helped his mother pack their van with various boxes of food to deliver to the community. He was eager to help out and was all smiles about getting out of the house to do some good deeds and help those around him.

"I felt happy delivering meals because I was happy giving people food so they don't have to leave their house and risk getting this virus," said Alex. "The people getting the food probably felt so happy because they didn't have to go out and get it."

His mother Christen, Tiger Den Leader for Pack 595, said she has been delivering meals twice a week since March.

"I enjoy bringing my kids with me from time to time so they can see the sweet, vulnerable people in our community that we want to keep safe from this virus. I'm proud that they get excited to ride along and help. It is difficult to

do much with scouting since we can't meet in person," said Christen. "These young boys have so much energy, which sitting them in front of a screen for a virtual meeting is just not an easy task. I'm so thankful that St. Mark's gives them this opportunity to stay involved in scouting by helping out their community."

St. Mark's Lutheran Church has been live streaming services and holding drive-in services at which people honk their car horn or flash their lights. The Memorial Day Service features a cannon salute, taps and bagpipes. On May 31, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., the church is sponsoring a Drive-thru Carnival Food sale event. While practicing social distancing, people can drive up to purchase carnival food.

One of the oldest running Cub Scout Packs in Berks County, Pack 595 was established in 1942, making it 78 years old. This pack is chartered out of St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Birdsboro, and has continued to support the church in this time of need.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Birdsboro Pack 595 Cub Scout Alex Thompson, 7, Birdsboro, helping to load the van with food.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Birdsboro Pack 595 Cub Scouts Jacob Derer, 10, and Mark Derer Jr., 6, brothers from Birdsboro, have been making cookies weekly to help provide some cheer to the elderly in the community.



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FLEETWOOD

Drive-by parade honors 100-year-old

By Ron Devlin
rdevlin@readingeagle.com
@rondevlinre on Twitter

Given restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 crisis, having a birthday could be a lonely affair if you're living in a retirement community.

Not so for Evelyn M. Gibson, who turned 100 Wednesday.

Family and friends saw to it that Gibson, a retired nurse, did not enter her second century in life alone.

At 2 p.m., they staged a drive-by parade at Key-

stone Villa at Fleetwood in Blandon, where Gibson lives.

Standing outdoors, a jubilant Gibson greeted family and friends as they drove through the Villa portico, waving and shouting Happy Birthday.

Nearby, a group of Villa residents sang "Happy Birthday."

Occupants of the vehicles were given cupcakes courtesy of Keystone Villa, which also provided a birthday cake.

"It was so nice to see the residents cheering for Gram," said Amy Bot-

wright, Gibson's granddaughter. "I just wanted to hug her, but we had to make the best of it."

Botwright, box office manager at Kutztown University's Schaeffer Auditorium, turned 45 on Monday. With birthdays only two days apart, Botwright said, they normally would have celebrated together. Usually, she said, it would be "something involving dessert."

Gibson graduated from the nursing school at Roosevelt Hospital in New York in 1944. In 1950, she had her husband, Ernest Gib-

son, moved to Shoemakersville.

Gibson worked at St. Joseph's Hospital before transferring to Reading Hospital, where she became head nurse in the outpatient clinic. She retired in 1980.

A longtime volunteer, she was a member of the Shoemakersville Fire Co. auxiliary and Shoemakersville Senior Citizens.

"She's always been so active in the community," Botwright said. "It was so good to see her getting outdoors and being active."



LAUREN A. LITTLE — READING EAGLE

Certified Nursing Assistant Julie Ybera accompanies Evelyn Gibson during a parade of family as residents and staff at Keystone Villa at Fleetwood celebrated her 100th birthday on Wednesday.

SENIOR LIFE

Advocacy group wants to ensure older Americans included in pandemic recovery

AMAC Action

AMAC Action has provided Congress and the Administration a series of recommendations aimed at safeguarding seniors' interests within the flurry of legislative proposals designed to cope with COVID-19's aftermath.

"Senior Americans are among those most impacted by the virus, not just from a health susceptibility standpoint, but from an economic impact perspective," said Bob Carlstrom, president, AMAC Action, the advocacy affiliate of the 2.1 million-member Association of Mature American Citizens. "We believe our recommendations will be helpful to the Congress in addressing issues seniors face."

Among the recommendations:

Make the healthcare system more transparent.

Replace "surprise medical billing" with a fair and equitable arbitration pro-

cess: "Americans should not receive a surprise bill when receiving medical treatment at an in-network hospital or surgery center," said Carlstrom. AMAC supports enactment of legislation such as HR 3502, a strong bipartisan bill that comprehensively and properly addresses the surprise bill issue.

Order compelling price transparency between hospitals and insurers. The health care system is in dire need of transparency and the freedom for patients to experience the individualized care they want for themselves and their families.

Enact the "Lowering Prescription Drug Prices for America's Seniors and Families Act of 2020" (S. 3384) which would require Medicare Part D plans to include real-time benefit information. Knowing what's covered and how much they would have to pay out-of-pocket would empower seniors to take more con-

rol over their prescription costs."

Increase long-term health for individuals and society.

Increase access to primary physician care for Medicaid-eligible Americans — enact the Physician Pro Bono Care Act (H.R. 856): This bipartisan bill increases access for low-income patients to receive chronic healthcare at physician and clinical offices, rather than expensive hospital ERs. By offering physicians the opportunity to take a charitable tax deduction for seeing Medicaid eligible patients in their offices and clinics, Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) could see billions of dollars in savings. The cost of this self-executing tax deduction pales in comparison to the level of Medicaid and CHIP reimbursements for the same services, particularly the costs for chronic care in ER visits, a 95% savings.

Enact the Personalized

Care Act of 2019 (S. 3112), which would expand HSAs to pay for direct primary care, health sharing ministries, insurance premiums and medications.

Enact the "Protecting Seniors Through Immunization Act of 2019" (H.R. 5076) which would eliminate out-of-pocket vaccine costs for Medicare beneficiaries.

Improve Social Security during the coming recovery.

AMAC Actions advocates several Social Security policies to help seniors: Guarantee a minimum Social Security COLA for 2021 and beyond, based on MAGI to ensure the lower income beneficiaries with greater need are helped, not by a one-size-fits-all CPI formula.

Enact the bipartisan Senior Citizens Tax Elimination Act (H.R. 3971) to eliminate the unjust double-tax on middle-income seniors' Social Security benefits.

Protect Social Security benefits from federal governmental garnishment.

Protect small businesses and their employees.

"Seniors are one of the most at-risk populations for coronavirus, however they are also one of the largest groups of small business owners and will be responsible for putting Americans back to work in the coming recovery," said Carlstrom.

More than one-quarter of all new business starts are by seniors ages 55-64. More than 1.5 million of the 6.5 million of the new businesses created each year are started by seniors.

According to AMAC Action's recommendations, Congress should act to:

Ensure seniors are not locked out of SBA programs providing quick and easy access to credit, debt forbearance and targeted debt forgiveness.

Protect at-risk seniors who are still working and who want to return to work by helping small businesses to afford personal protective equipment.

Delay tax filing until

mid-October, which would allow small businesses a cash cushion during these fragile months.

AMAC Action secured some key policy wins in the CARES Act, Carlstrom noted, expressing hope that the organization could tack on more victories for mature Americans in the coming weeks and months.

"Members on both sides of the aisle are very good at counting votes," he said. "In the 2020 election, about 40 percent of eligible voters will be 56 and older. Seniors are more likely to turn out to vote will likely comprise a disproportionately larger share of those who show up at the polls."

About AMAC Action: The rapidly growing 2.1-million-member AMAC Action is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit advocacy organization created to assist Association of Mature American Citizens members with grassroots participation on Capitol Hill and at the local level through its advocacy programs.

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MEMORIAL DAY

In 1945, a somber and jubilant time

By Ron Devlin
 rdevlin@readingeagle.com
 @rondevlinre on Twitter

On Memorial Day 1945, Lou Cinfici was an adventurous 17-year-old aboard a tugboat ferrying ammunition to U.S. troops on remote islands in the South Pacific.

The Reading youth had five brothers serving in World War II. He also wanted to serve, but Uncle Sam said he was too young to don a uniform.

Undeterred, he lied about his age and ended up in the Merchant Marine, attached to the Army Transportation Corps, in the final weeks of the war in the Pacific.

Seventy-five years, Cinfici acknowledges, have dimmed the memory of that Memorial Day.

"I was more concerned about the Japanese than the holiday," confides Cinfici, 92, a resident of The Heritage of Green Hills in Cumru Township.

On Monday, the nation will observe the 75th Memorial Day since 1945, a landmark year in the nation's history.

Originally known as Decoration Day, the holiday honored the dead of the Civil War.

It was not until after World War I, however, that the day was expanded to honor those who have died in all American wars. In 1971, Memorial Day was declared a national holiday by an act of Congress and placed on the last Monday in May, according to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

In 1945, it was a time of jubilation and lament.

A war-weary nation celebrated only weeks earlier when, on May 8, Germany and the Axis powers unconditionally surrendered to Allied forces under the command of Gen. Dwight



LAUREN A. LITTLE — READING EAGLE

World War II veteran Ralph Minotto, 100, outside his residence at the Birdsboro Lodge in Exeter Township. Minotto is among the handful of veterans of that era who were serving during the Memorial Day 75 years ago.

D. Eisenhower, ending the war in Europe.

It would become known as V-E Day, or Victory in Europe Day, and millions poured into the streets in the U.S. and Europe.

Yet, in addition to mourning the loss of about 105,000 personnel in the European theater, the nation grieved for the passing of the beloved president who led the nation through its darkest hours, Franklin D. Roosevelt, who died six weeks earlier on April 12.

Moreover, World War II was far from over.

Some of the bloodiest fighting of the war was still to come in far-off places like Okinawa, only 350 miles from mainland Japan.

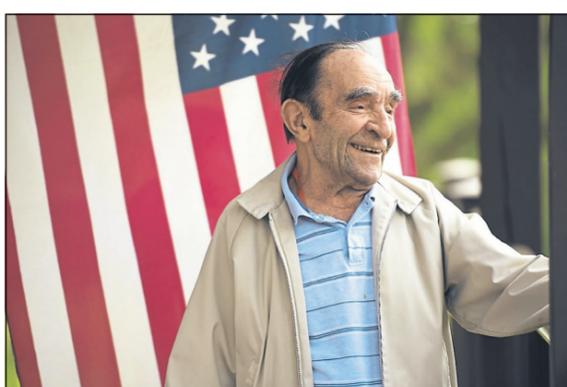
Berks veterans of World War II, including Cinfici, recently reflected on Me-



LAUREN A. LITTLE — READING EAGLE
 Ralph Minotto's photo from 1943.

morial Day 1945.

Their memories are clouded by time, but they retained the spirit of a generation that rose in defense of its country and made no apologies for it.



LAUREN A. LITTLE — READING EAGLE

WWII Veteran Elmer Davidheiser, 96, was in the service 75 years ago.

Joseph Pinder was a 20-year-old Army private with a medical unit in Luxembourg on that holiday.

Despite jubilation in Europe, the war was not yet over for Pinder, who grew up in Stowe, Mont-

gomery County.

After serving in hospitals in England and Europe, he was transferred to the South Pacific after V-E Day.

The emotional scars inflicted by the sight of hundreds of wounded and dy-

ing soldiers linger seven decades after the war ended.

"I'll tell you what I did in the war, but not what I've seen," insisted Pinder, 95, who lives at Birdsboro Lodge personal care home in Exeter Township. "What I saw, I never will forget in my whole life."

Dr. Cedric Jimereson, too, was witness to the horrors of war as a 25-year-old surgeon with the 663rd Medical Clearing Co. in Europe.

Jimerson was treating refugees at a hospital in Germany on Memorial Day 1945.

For two years, he'd treated troops wounded in some of the major battles in Europe. But with the war over, he was treating refugees at a dusting station near Aachen.

Cholera, not shrapnel, was the culprit in post-World War II Germany. In Aachen, refugees were de-loused with DDT, the long since banned insecticide, to eradicate the wave of infection.

"I was too busy to celebrate," recalls Jimerson, 100, who went on to spend 36 years as chief surgeon in Community General Hospital in Reading.

Elmer Davidheiser was a 20-year-old serving with the 301 Signal Corps in Europe on May 30, 1945.

The cook had not seen direct action. He had, however, prepared meals for enlisted troops who'd seen combat in the Battle of the Bulge and other encounters as the war wound down in Europe.

He spent Memorial Day 1945 dreaming of returning home after three years in the service.

"I didn't do anything special," recalls Davidheiser, 95, who lives at Birdsboro Lodge. "I was just glad it was over."

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SENIORS INDULGE IN LOVE OF THE GAME AND FRIENDSHIP ON THE FIELD

BATTER UP!

STAYING FIT AT ANY AGE

By Courtney H. Diener-Stokes
For MediaNews Group

Two years ago, brothers Rich, 70, and John Stanislaw, 71, had a shared thought after traveling to Lyons from their homes in Exeter Township and Kenhorst, respectively, to play on the Lyons Senior Softball Team.

“We thought, ‘this is kind of crazy there is only one team in a county which is known for softball and baseball,’” Rich said.

So they set out to start their own league and started getting the word out by putting yard signs up in the area. People called and helped spread the news by word-of-mouth, which led to the formation of nine teams just two years after establishing the Berks County Senior Softball League.

“I was surprised it grew that fast,” Rich said. “I thought we would have four teams.”

Rich, who is retired, chalks up the interest to pent-up demand.

“A lot of people wanted to do it but they never knew they could,” he said. “They figured they were never going to play softball or baseball again in their life and now they are playing.”

That was Rich and John’s case just seven years ago when they joked with each other one day about getting together to play baseball catch.

“We laughed and said we hadn’t played in 40 years,” Rich said.

A love of the game

Like Rich and John, most members of the league grew up playing baseball in their youth and maintained a love of the game but had no outlet to play until the Stanislaw’s league came along.

This year, the co-ed League anticipates growing to 10 teams, although the coronavirus outbreak has delayed the start of the season. The teams play each other twice a week during the winter at Exeter Field House, Exeter Township, and compete in the summer at Big Vision Sports Complex, Leesport.

The age requirement to join is 60 and over for men and 50 and over for women. Currently, the oldest player in the League is 86.

“We lowered the age for women to try to get more to join the team,” Rich said.

Kristyne Rosier, 51, found out about the league by spotting one of the League’s yard signs.

“I had been looking for a team for a long time, but there weren’t any teams in this area,” Kristyne said.

This opportunity to play again takes her right back to her youth.

“When we are all out there it’s just like we are 16 again,” she said.

Kristyne, who lives in Sinking Spring, said she has found a true brotherhood/sisterhood through her experience of playing in the League.

“They are all like brothers to me,” she said. “It doesn’t matter what team you are on

because we encourage each other and are all good sports.”

In total, 135 team members come out to play twice weekly in the summer and 90 in the winter.

Most players hail from Berks, Montgomery, Lancaster and Lehigh counties but some come from further afield, such as Quakertown, Minersville and even Phillipsburg, New Jersey.

Practices and games normally take place on Tuesday and Thursday mornings.

“Some people are retired but those who work arrange to take off at that time and have flexible schedules,” Rich said.

Special safety rules in place

The league has special safety rules in place headed up by a safety committee to help players avoid injuries.

“We can’t slide, we have two home plates, one for batting and one to run to, to avoid collisions,” he said. “We have a double bag at first base so you don’t run on someone’s foot.”

If they believe a team member may be a danger to themselves, they put them through the safety committee.

“If they are seeing double we would do that,” Rich said, of one example. “It’s difficult to tell someone we want to protect you from getting hurt.”

The range of talent varies and each new member is assessed before being placed on a team.

“Some people are really good and you wonder how they keep in such good shape,” Rich said.

Kristyne said that getting back to playing after a long break is kind of like riding a bike.

“You never forget,” she said.

Due to the wide range of skills, in order to keep the playing field even they make up the teams to include all ranges. The nine teams that make up the league play each other unless it’s a charity game. Each team has a different coach that is a player-coach and games are self-umpired on an honor system and stats are kept for each game.

“It’s a fun league but people like to win,” Rich said.

Competitive edge

Just because the teams are made up of seniors doesn’t mean they have lost their competitive edge.

“There are certainly people that speak out more than others and are more competitive than others,” Rich said.

Spectators who come out to watch the games are typically made up of spouses, the children of players and grandkids.

“If there are at least two people in the bleachers we tell them they have to do the wave for us,” Rich said, with a laugh.

The time the players spend together extends beyond the fields. At the end of the season, they have an annual hamburger and hot dog barbecue where they give out awards.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The Berks County Senior Softball League offers a winter and summer playing season.



submitted photo

Kristyne Rosier, shown coaching third base, is a member of the co-ed Berks County Senior Softball League.

“The camaraderie is the best part about it — you have that feeling of being on a team,” Kristyne said.

It’s an opportunity to make new friends and in one case, establish a lasting relationship, such as a man and woman who met each other playing on the same team and ended up getting married.

“Not only physically does it keep you young, but you also benefit from it emotionally and spiritually and friendship wise,” Kristyne said. “We are like one big family.”

Berks Senior Softball League: COVID-19 UPDATE

In accordance with federal and state guidelines surrounding COVID-19, the league aims to offer a Summer/Fall league beginning mid-June, but will make the final call at the end of May as to specifically when the season will begin or if it has to be cancelled. The league will resume recruiting as soon as



submitted photo

John Stanislaw, left, and brother, Rich, founded the Berks County Senior Softball League two years ago.

they start back up. You don’t have to live in Berks to join the league. Stay updated by visiting: www.berksseniorsoftball.com or call: call 610-507-5869



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Camaraderie is a big part of the appeal of the Berks County Senior Softball League.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Teams that play each other as part of the Berks County Senior Softball League support and encourage one another during games.



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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