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**COVID-19**

# Area senior citizens have varying opinions about COVID-19 vaccines



COURTESY OF THE BELVEDERE CENTER

Residents and staff at the Belvedere Center, a nursing home in Chester, received COVID-19 vaccinations on Jan. 9.

**By Kathleen E. Carey**  
 kcarey@21st-centurymedia.com  
 @dtbusiness on Twitter

As the COVID-19 vaccine begins its rollout, area seniors have varying opinions ranging from

excitement to hesitation regarding taking the shots.

At the Belvedere Center, a Genesis HealthCare-affiliated nursing home in Chester, not only did residents and staff receive the vaccine on Jan. 9, but the mayor and the

local NAACP president did also.

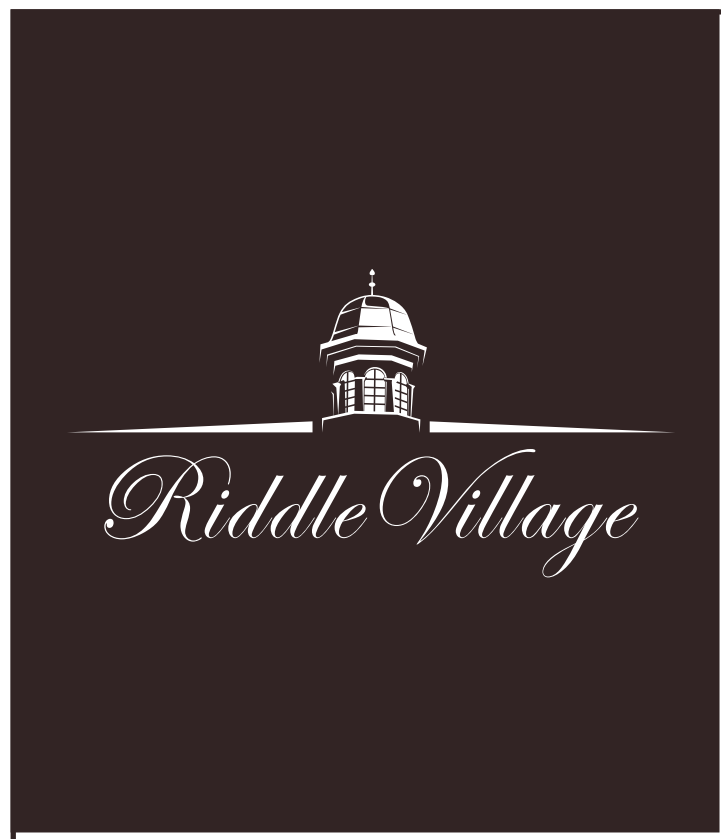
"This is an important day, not only for the city of Chester but also for citizens throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania," Mayor Thaddeus Kirkland said. "It is important that you bring

good health back to your community, and it starts with yourself. We are here today because we want to encourage others to get past the fear.

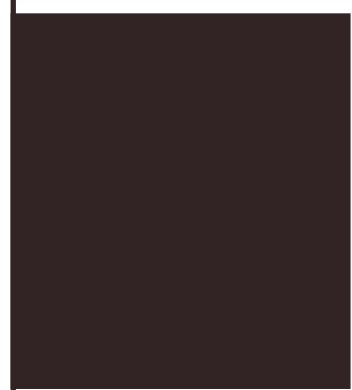
"We know about past history, but today's science is much bet-

ter. We are here today to lead by example. We want our entire community to get vaccinated and to get well. Today is a day of hope. If we are going to get healthy, this vaccine is the way to do it."

**VACCINE » PAGE C2**



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Chester Mayor Thaddeus Kirkland encourages the entire community to get vaccinated.



Sharon McDermond, center executive director of the Belvedere Center, said the vaccination event at the nursing home was a historic moment.



COURTESY OF THE BELVEDERE CENTER

Chester Mayor Thaddeus Kirkland gets his COVID-19 vaccine on Jan. 9.

## Vaccine

FROM PAGE C1

Kirkland received his vaccine that day, along with Darrell Jones, president of the Chester National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Genesis is working closely with state governments to vaccinate employees and residents at its facilities across the nation. Genesis selected CVS Health Corp. as its pharmacy partner to provide and administer the vaccine in all states that are working with CVS or Walgreens Boots Alliance Inc. for vaccine management.

“The vaccine is now our most important tool in fighting this pandemic — together with personal protective equipment, frequent testing and our rigorous standards and infection protocols,” Sharon McDermond, center executive

director of The Belvedere Center, said at the vaccination event. “This is yet another historic moment as the COVID-19 vaccine reaches more residents and staff.”

### Other opinions

Elsewhere, seniors who have yet to receive the vaccine shared their opinions. Marj Babiak, 66, of Swarthmore is enthusiastic. “I’m excited,” the chief financial officer of Community Transit said. “It would be nice to get back to some sense of normality.”

She said getting the vaccine would relieve some of her worries, especially as she works with the transportation agencies’ drivers, who are exposed to many in the senior population.

“What I find is that people who retired, or my friends, tend to be very cautious,” Babiak said. “(With the vaccine, I would) not have to worry so much about contracting the disease and protecting your

loved ones. That’s my hope, and that’s what some people are saying.”

### Not comfortable

Polly Harris of Folcroft is at the other end of the spectrum.

“To be honest with you, I’m not comfortable with it yet for several reasons,” the 65-year-old said. “I personally don’t trust it. I am African American, and I’m going back to the syphilis experiment, and I just don’t feel comfortable.”

Harris was referring to the Tuskegee Syphilis Study in which Black men were told they were being given free health care and instead the United States Public Health Service and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention were conducting a study on untreated syphilis from 1932 to 1972.

Harris said she’s noticed

dignitaries receiving the vaccine, but she has her concerns.

“I’m going to be one of the last ones,” Harris said. “I’m not really comfortable with it.”

### Somewhere in the middle

Merle Jones, 72, of Brookhaven is somewhere in the middle between Babiak’s excitement and Harris’ reticence.

“I think if I needed it to live, I’m willing to take it,” she said. “My husband is a resident of a local nursing home. He’s already received his first shot. He got it two weeks ago; he thinks that’s what you needed.”

She was speaking about her husband, James, who resides at the ManorCare Health Services — Wallingford.

Her four adult children also live in walking distance from her, and she spoke of how a vaccine would allow her grandchildren to return to full-time, in-person learning in the Penn-Delco School District, rather than the hybrid learning now where they switch in cohorts from virtual to in-person learning.

### Routine changed

Jones herself has had to change her routine because of COVID-19.

“I’m an officer at my church,” she said of the Thomas M. Thomas Memorial Presbyterian Church in Chester. “That’s changed quite a bit because all of our services are on Zoom now. That’s been since March.”

Employed full time in the financial department of Community Transit, Jones said she follows all the pre-

cautions they require.

“I didn’t do a lot of Christmas shopping,” Jones said. “I’m not going to a concert or a movie theater or any large political gathering.”

Although she bowls in a league, it had stopped for some time and then it resumed, but the number of people had to be reduced, so now her scheduled time to bowl is on Sunday nights to avoid any crowds.

Jones said when her doctor told her to get a shingles vaccine, which was also a two-part shot, she did so. She’s figuring on taking the COVID vaccine, too. She’s prepared to take Tylenol if she gets some of the symptoms or if she feels a bit achy after receiving it.

“I think it’s an intelligent move to take it,” Jones said. “If you have a negative reaction and it wipes you out, then so be it.”

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HEALTH

# Taking a look at COVID-19 vaccine myths vs. reality



Powell Keim

By Dr. Debra Powell and Marie Keim  
Tower Health

Distribution of COVID-19 vaccine is gearing up in our region, our nation and around the world. At Tower Health, we believe vaccination is the safest and fastest way to defeat coronavirus, along with wearing a mask, social distancing and frequent handwashing. Following Pennsylvania Department of Health guidelines, Tower Health is vaccinating its workforce, along with community-based healthcare providers. Over time, the vaccine will be made available to all. We believe strongly in the safety and effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccine

but also understand that others may have questions or concerns. As availability of vaccine increases and we prepare to administer the vaccine throughout the community, we want to provide some simply myths vs. reality about the COVID-19 vaccine. We hope this information will help more of the public embrace this opportunity to put the pandemic behind us.

**Myth:** COVID-19 vaccines will give you COVID-19.

**Reality:** None of the COVID-19 vaccines in use in the United States contain the virus that causes COVID-19. It is not possible for the vaccine to cause COVID-19.

**Myth:** Getting the COVID-19 vaccine will cause you to pass the COVID-19 illness to your family or friends.

**Reality:** The vaccine does not cause COVID-19, so it is not possible for the vaccine to make you contagious with the disease.

**Myth:** COVID-19 vaccines will cause you to test positive for COVID-19.

**Reality:** The vaccine does not cause COVID-19 and so will not cause you to test positive for the disease. If your body develops an immune response, which is the goal of vaccination, it is possible you could test positive on some antibody tests, indicating a level of protection against the virus.

**Myth:** Getting vaccinated will not prevent you and others from getting sick with COVID-19.

**Reality:** The Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines have shown an effectiveness rate of about 95 percent. This surpasses the effectiveness rate of the annual flu vaccine and is equal to the effectiveness rates for the measles vaccine. While no vaccine is 100 percent effective, the COVID-19 vaccines have been proven to safely prevent the spread of the disease. Vaccination, along with wearing a mask, avoiding large crowds and hand washing, is our best hope to slow the spread of disease, relieve the pressure on hospitals and caregivers and

low our communities to resume more normal activities.

**Myth:** Receiving an mRNA vaccine will alter your DNA

**Reality:** mRNA (which stands for messenger ribonucleic acid) is not able to enter or change your genetic makeup (DNA). The mRNA from a COVID-19 vaccine never enters the nucleus of the cell, which is where our DNA are. The mRNA vaccine works by teaching your cells to produce a harmless piece of "spike protein," similar to what is found on the coronavirus. Your immune system then creates antibodies in response to this spike protein, which protect you from the actual coronavirus should you become infected. Once your body produces these antibodies, the mRNA is eliminated by your body. mRNA technology has been used with other vaccines for flu, Zika, rabies and other viruses.

**Myth:** People who have recovered from COVID-19

do not need to get vaccinated.

**Reality:** The health risks of COVID-19 can be severe. Even if you have recovered from COVID-19, health experts advise that you should receive the vaccine, just as you should continue to wear a mask, avoid large crowds and frequently wash your hands.

**Myth:** After an individual is vaccinated, they no longer need to wear a mask and practice social distancing.

**Reality:** Even after you receive the COVID-19 vaccine, health experts advise that individuals continue to wear a mask, avoid large crowds and frequently wash your hands. We must remain vigilant against the spread of COVID-19 until the number of cases are low enough to allow for relaxation of these preventative measures.

**Myth:** COVID-19 isn't that serious, so I don't need a vaccine.

**Reality:** COVID-19 has killed more than 350,000 Americans and more than

1.96 million persons worldwide. While many cases are mild, or even asymptomatic, the disease can cause serious health problems and has taxed hospitals and healthcare providers around the world. Even low-risk individuals can spread the disease to others who might be come seriously ill or die. We all have a role to play in stopping the spread, and getting a vaccine is an important part.

Healthcare providers like Tower Health are working closely together and with government health authorities to vaccinate as many people as possible, as quickly as possible. We encourage you to follow information from state and local health departments and on Tower Health's COVID-19 Information Center.

Dr. Debra Powell is Chief, Section of Infectious Disease and Medical Director Infection Prevention; Marie Keim is System Director, Epidemiology and Infection Prevention, Infection Prevention Officer at Tower Health.

WHITE HORSE VILLAGE

# White Horse Village launches meal delivery service

MediaNews Group

White Horse Village, a nonprofit senior living community, announced a new meal delivery service using a custom-designed food truck that features temperature-controlled areas. The truck ensures a hot meal delivery to residents across the 96-acre campus in Edgmont Township, Delaware County.

"With winter weather approaching, we wanted to create a delivery system to maintain meal quality and temperature," said Chris Stewart, director of dining services. "Our new delivery truck offers warming carts to hold entrees, sides

and soups and cold carts for ice cream and desserts. Our hard-working dining team assembles meals in the truck and hand-delivers them to residents for maximum convenience."

The White Horse Village dining team delivers 280 meals a day, seven days a week, in reheatable, disposable containers.

A labeling system was designed for food areas in the delivery truck and for containers to confirm meals are accurately delivered.

The dining team meets for a post-service review each night after meal deliveries to discuss successes and identify areas for improvement.

"Sourcing the truck was more challenging than I expected," Stewart said.

"I visited salesrooms, rental companies and online retailers but struggled to find a truck that met our interior functionality needs.

"Ultimately, we purchased a used 14-foot truck and worked with the White Horse Village facilities and property management team to outfit the truck for our needs, including lighting, cargo areas and securing straps."

The new meal delivery service is one example of White Horse Village's innovative and problem-solving approach to managing the restrictions of the pandemic.

About White Horse Village: Situated on 96 acres in southeastern Pennsylvania, White Horse Village is an active senior living community offering a full range of living options and healthcare services. The community intentionally creates opportunities for extraordinary living in a vibrant, diverse community through personal growth, connectedness and relationships. As a nonprofit organization, White Horse Village reinvests earnings back into the organization to further the mission and vision. For more information, visit [www.whitehorsevillage.com](http://www.whitehorsevillage.com).



COURTESY OF WHITE HORSE VILLAGE  
Chris Stewart, in the truck, gives team members instructions for the day's meal delivery service.

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HEALTH

# Online sign-ups complicate vaccine rollout for older people



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Mary Christian, 71, of McComb, Miss., recalls the hours she spent unsuccessfully on both her cellphone and iPad trying to arrange an appointment online for a COVID-19 vaccination through the Mississippi State Department of Health website and on their listed registration phone line.

**By Patty Nieberg and Suman Naishadham**  
The Associated Press

**DENVER** » Howard Jones, who's 83, was on the phone for three to four hours every

day trying to sign up for a coronavirus vaccine.

Jones, who lives alone in Colorado Springs, Colo., doesn't have the internet, and that's made it much more difficult for him to

make an appointment. It took him about a week. He said the confusion has added to his anxiety about catching what could be a life-threatening disease at his age.

"It has been hell," Jones

said. "I'm 83 and to not have the use of a computer is just terrible."

As states across the U.S. roll out the COVID-19 vaccine to people 65 and older, senior citizens are scrambling

to figure out how to sign up to get their shots. Many states and counties ask people to make appointments online, but glitchy websites, overwhelmed phone lines and a patch-

work of fast-changing rules are bedeviling older people who are often less tech-savvy, may live far from vaccination sites and are more likely to not have internet

**ONLINE** » PAGE C5

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# Online

FROM PAGE C4

access at all, especially people of color and those who are poor.

Nearly 9.5 million seniors, or 16.5% of U.S. adults 65 and older, lack internet access, according to U.S. Census Bureau data. Access is worse for seniors of color: more than 25% of Black people, about 21% of Hispanic people and over 28% of Native Americans 65 and older have no way to get online. That's compared with 15.5% of white seniors.

In the San Francisco Bay Area, Dr. Rebecca Parish has been dismayed by the bureaucratic process and continued calls for help from seniors. One of her patients, who's 83, called her in tears, unable to navigate the online appointment system at Rite Aid.

A 92-year-old woman called her before dawn this week after reading about her in a newspaper, telling her, "I'll do anything to get this vaccine."

So Parish took things into her own hands. She reached out to Contra Costa County and acquired 500 doses to vaccinate people at a middle school in Lafayette, Calif. She's working with nonprofits to identify seniors who don't live in nursing homes and risk falling through the cracks. All her appointments were claimed, but she'll start taking them again once more doses are available.

## Other solutions

Some health officials have been trying to find other solutions to ease the confusion and help senior citizens sign up, just as the administration of former President Trump urged states to make the nation's 57.6 million seniors eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine.

Some places have found simple ideas work. In Morgantown, W.Va., county health officials used a large road construction sign to list the phone number for seniors to call for an appointment. Others are con-



Howard Jones, an 83-year-old veteran, talks about his struggle to secure a COVID-19 vaccination in El Paso County while seated on the deck outside his home in southwest Colorado Springs, Colo. Not having internet in his home, Jones ended up getting help from a friend to get an appointment for the vaccine in Colorado Springs.



Mary Christian, 71, of McComb, Miss., recalls the hours she spent on both her cellphone and iPad trying to arrange an appointment online for a COVID-19 vaccination through the Mississippi State Department of Health website and on their listed registration phone line.

sidering partnering with community groups or setting up mobile clinics for harder-to-reach populations.

Some seniors may be waiting to hear from their doctor. But there are limits to using health care systems, pharmacies or pri-

mary care providers to reach underserved people who don't have the internet, said Claire Hannan, executive director of the Associa-

tion of Immunization Managers.

She said the two coronavirus vaccines available in the U.S. and their low-temperature requirements "don't lend themselves to being sent out to rural areas."

In McComb, Miss., where 77.5% of residents are Black and almost half the population lives below the poverty line, 71-year-old Mary Christian made an appointment online with her son's help. But the only available sites are at least an hour away from her lives.

"I'm 71 years old, and my kids are not going to be happy for me driving 1 to 200 miles away to get a vaccine," said Christian, who has diabetes.

## Partner with community groups

Some medical systems, like UHealth in Colorado, are trying to partner with community groups to get vaccines to underserved populations, like seniors.

Dr. Jean Kutner, chief medical officer of UHealth University at Colorado Hospital, said she's volunteering at a clinic hosted by a church that brings in the vaccine and helps build trust between health care workers and residents.

For now, UHealth schedules appointments online, but Kutner said a COVID-19 hotline is in the works because of the volume of calls from seniors.

"Seniors are comfortable with the phone side of things, so that that's not really a technological barrier for them," said Gretchen Garofoli, an associate professor at West Virginia University's School of Pharmacy.

But even a Colorado health provider setting up vaccine clinics for underserved communities, Salud Family Health Centers, said their phone lines can't handle the volume of calls they're receiving and encouraged people to go online.

When calling for an appointment is an option, finding a number is often

only possible online.

That was the problem for Jones, the 83-year-old in Colorado. A retired service member, he considered reaching out to Veterans Affairs but couldn't find a phone number.

He asked for help from a friend, who gave him several numbers. One led to Angela Cortez, head of communications for AARP in Colorado.

## Flooded with calls

AARP has been flooded with calls from seniors like Jones who don't have the internet and need help navigating the websites of health departments, care providers and vaccine sign-up forms, Cortez said.

"It's not like you can show up somewhere and get vaccinated," Cortez said. "And if you don't have access to a computer, you're at a disadvantage."

Even Cortez had trouble as she tried to help Jones. She called numbers listed on the Colorado health department website and several Safeway stores after Jones heard friends were vaccinated there.

Eventually, Cortez was told to sign up online.

"I'm an employee of AARP, one; and two, I'm the communications director — I'm a trained journalist — and I have a computer, three, and I can't even get through to anybody," she said.

A friend was finally able to get Jones an appointment for Saturday. But he's frustrated that he had "to go through side channels" instead of doing it himself.

Naishadham reported from Phoenix. Associated Press reporter Janie Har in San Francisco and data journalist Larry Fenn in New York contributed to this report. Nieberg is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on under-covered issues.



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SPOT OF T

# Following footsteps to the past at Valley Forge

By Terry Alburger

There are few places where the statement “George Washington slept here” rings true ... but Valley Forge is one of those places. For me, it is more than a historic site, it is a place that has deep family significance. My parents lived a few miles down the road in Devon, so it was a place we visited frequently.

Washington and his men arrived at the location of Valley Forge three days before Christmas in 1777, and in short order, built nearly 1,500 cabins over the 3,500 acres. Standing on those grounds now, I can only imagine the challenges and hardships they faced. And I can appreciate all they did in the fight for our freedoms.

When my children were young, they spent many hours playing in the cabins, romping through the fields and climbing on the cannons. My eldest daughter mastered the art of walking in the fields, which were wintry “home” to nearly 12,000 of Washington’s men and 400 of their family members.

Last week, on a cold and blustery winter’s day, I took three of my granddaughters there for the first time. Though they are too young to appreciate the historical significance of the place, I hope they will remember the first glimpse of our past, their first introduction to that historic spot.

The cabins were locked, and it was a bit too cold to stay long, but I know my eldest daughter, now 40, felt the nostalgia of the place where she had many great times. It certainly evoked thoughts of a much simpler and happier time.

I could not help but smile at the thought that her children and the child of her sister were walking in the footsteps of their moth-



Cabins at Valley Forge were built by George Washington's troops during the Revolutionary War.

ers before them, and in my footsteps as well. I walked in the footsteps of my parents before me. And all of us indeed walked where Washington walked.

On our way out, we drove past the National Memorial Arch, which commemorates the arrival of Washington so many years ago. It stands tall, a beautiful and fitting tribute to a man who took a bunch of ragamuffin men, and with the help of Baron von Steuben turned them into a force to be reckoned with, the Continental Army capable of beating the British.

If you have never been to Valley Forge, it is truly worth the trip. There is a self-guided audio tour available, or you can easily download the map of the park. It is conveniently

a very large loop that you can drive on your own and appreciate the monuments and signs narrating your way.

In addition to the wonderful history through which you will drive, you have the added plus of the beautiful landscapes, dotted with many deer who also call that location home.

I can personally attest to the wonderful locations that are perfect for picnics and outdoor get-togethers. There are miles and miles of biking and walking paths for you to enjoy. And in safer days, there is a wonderful visitors center that includes an educational movie and beautiful exhibits.

Walking in the footsteps of the past ... if you listen closely, you can hear the his-



The National Memorial Arch at Valley Forge.

things are in turmoil right now, it might help to remember that our country has been through difficult times in the past, times that I’m sure scared the population and caused unrest.

Somehow, they persevered and survived and peace was eventually restored. We hope and pray that peace will return to us if we stay calm and react with intelligence and patience.

Need a peaceful space? Head to Valley Forge. Let the peace there envelope you, close your eyes and remember that no matter what, you’re going to be just fine.

tory. You can feel the depth of the sacrifices made and the victories and triumphs. We need to appreciate

those sacrifices, and remember that it was on those sacrifices that this country was founded. Though



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**BERKS COURT**

# Judge retires but is sticking around

James Bucci will help out hearing protection-from-abuse cases

**By Karen Shuey**  
kshuey@readingeagle.com  
@KarenShueyRE on Twitter

The retirement celebration looked a little different. There were no warm embraces, no cake to gather around, no congratulatory handshakes. Just a bunch of smiling faces belonging to colleagues staring at him from the glow of a computer screen as he gave his farewell speech — the event another victim of the coronavirus pandemic.

But it wasn't really a farewell. It was more like see you around.

Berks County Judge James M. Bucci may have officially retired from his post on the bench last month, but he said he does not plan on hanging up his robes anytime soon.

He will instead serve as senior judge, helping out at the courthouse by hearing protection-from-abuse cases once a week. The transition will likely be an easy one for Bucci, who had spent the last 17 years hearing cases and handing down decisions.

"The beauty of being a senior judge is that you work when you want to," he said with a chuckle. "They understand that there may be a week I need to be away and that's the privilege of being in this new position."

Bucci, who will be turning 70 later this year, said he's looking forward to the lighter case load so he can spend more time with his three grandchildren that live in other parts of the county.

But he'll still miss his



BEN HASTY — READING EAGLE

Berks County Judge James Bucci, shown in a county courtroom, has retired but will continue hearing cases as a senior judge.

courtroom where he most recently handled the bulk of family court cases that came through the courthouse.

"I found the role of being part of the judiciary very rewarding," he said. "When you're a judge you have the opportunity to make decisions that you hope perpetuate justice. It's a great honor and privilege to be part of an independent judiciary — which is so important in this country."

Bucci was first elected in 2004. He spent the first six years of his tenure presiding over criminal cases before volunteering to take on most of the county's family court cases. He then added overseeing orphans court to

his list of duties about two years ago.

"The opportunity to oversee family court came along at the right time," he said. "I had been on the criminal side of things at a time when we were all very busy. We were presiding over about 40 jury trials and dozens of bench trials each year so I thought it would be a better fit for me."

That decision, he said, was one of the best he ever made.

"Family court can be emotionally draining and emotionally rewarding all at the same time," he said. "These cases are so important. You're dealing with the lives and welfare of children, and the weight

of those decisions can fall heavy on your shoulders."

He added that his own personal experience as a father to three children certainly factored into the wisdom he brought to the bench.

"My experience as a parent was very helpful in my understanding of the dynamics of parent-child relationships," he said. "You know that saying about how no one gives you a handbook about how to be the perfect parent when you have a child is so true. But we do the best that we can."

Bucci said he has seen some very troubling issues during his career. The most upsetting has been presiding over custody cases with

parents who are struggling with addiction or have been incarcerated.

"There's been a significant amount of custody litigation that arises out of the opioid epidemic," he said. "We see a lot of grandparents coming to court seeking custody because one or more of the parents are addicted."

He said those cases are heartbreaking. But the most difficult are actually custody cases that arise when two parents, who are divided by great distances, want the opportunity to raise them.

"Those are the toughest cases," he said.

President Judge Thomas G. Parisi, who has served

with Bucci, commended Bucci for his work.

"He certainly has been exemplary in his service as a judge," he said. "He's pretty much been in most of the divisions that we serve throughout the last 17 years at one time or another. And he has always quietly and efficiently done a superb job."

Parisi said the compassion that Bucci possesses as a judge stands out.

"He's a very empathetic person," he said. "Certainly one of the attributes of a good judge is to be empathetic and willing to listen to each side before making any decisions."

Before being elected to the bench, Bucci started his career in the courts as an assistant district attorney representing the county in legal matters. But after just two years he decided to leave and spent most of his career in private practice and served briefly as interim district attorney.

Now that he has decided to take a step back from the law, he said he will have more time to focus on his second passion: beekeeping.

"It's actually something I've been doing for a long time," he said.

Bucci said he had his first hive when he was just 12 years old. He dabbled in beekeeping from time to time during his time outside the courtroom but began to get more serious about it seven years ago.

He said that while he plans to spend more time tending to his hive so that he has a consistent supply of honey for his friends and family, he has no plans to ramp up commercial production anytime soon.

"Oh no," he said with a laugh. "It's just a hobby."

**HERITAGE OF GREEN HILLS**

# Heritage of Green Hills holds Heal Our Country vigil



COURTESY OF THE HERITAGE OF GREEN HILLS

Ruth Shaeffer, a resident of the Heritage of Green Hills, leads the singing of "God Bless America" at the recent Heal Our Country vigil the community held.



On Jan. 19, several residents attended a Heal Our Country vigil at The Heritage of Green Hills, a healthy life plan community in Cumru Township.

Ruth Shaeffer led the attendees in singing "God Bless America."

Residents of the Heritage of Green Hills attend a Heal Our Country vigil on Jan. 19.

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**VOLUNTEERS**

# Nonprofit RSVP seeks math-savvy volunteers to expand virtual training

RSVP

Community-based nonprofit RSVP of King of Prussia has expanded its wide-ranging virtual math tutoring program to help fourth-graders. Before COVID-19, the My Free Tutor program matched some 50 volunteers with middle, high school and college students as well as veterans preparing for college. "Given the challenges families are facing with their child learning from home, we felt it was important to expand the program to younger students who may be struggling with math concepts," said RSVP Executive Director Michele Moll. "So My Free Tutor is now available for students in fourth grade through high school and beyond."

Volunteers who enjoy math and working with kids or young adults are needed to tutor one or more students online once a week for an hour, plus preparation time. Prospective volunteers must pass an open-book algebra test and state background checks required for working with children.

They then receive two to four weeks of online training before choosing from a list of students needing tutors at various grade levels and times of day. The tutoring takes place online using a whiteboard program but not cameras.

"We found that many students attending school from home or in hybrid schedules are falling behind earlier," said My Free Tutor and STEM Coordinator Anabella Tracy. "In fourth grade, they learn important basics that prepare them for pre-algebra, such as percentages, fractions, negative numbers, division and multiplication of double digits."

"Expanding to younger students offers an opportunity to volunteer for adults who like math but might not be comfortable teaching algebra, algebra 2 or pre-calculus. We're starting (elementary-level math tutoring) with 10 volunteers. We're going to

need more, though we also need tutors for the higher grade levels."

**A tutor's perspective**



Dussek

Francis Dussek is a retired engineer and professional science and math tutor. "People comfortable with math should give tutoring a try," he said. "My Free Tutor trains you and provides material. They don't just throw you out there. They make sure you are qualified. Before each session, you're going to have to do some preparation on your own."

Last semester, Dussek tutored an eighth-grader "who had some deficiencies, but we worked on them. I tried to get her away from the abstract and relate to real life. For example, if she was adding -12 and 5, I told her, 'Look at it this way: You owe somebody \$12 but pay them \$5. How much do you still owe?'"

He is just starting sessions with a fourth-grader.

Dussek tutors from his home in Florida.

"People here weren't interested in tutoring," he said. "I searched online and saw something about My Free Tutor. Tutoring is what I love doing, so I called Anabella Tracy, got certified and got this chance to help kids who are struggling. The way I look at it, if I can help one kid, I've done well. It's a very rewarding experience. You can see the progress."

**A parent's viewpoint**

Donna Davis's daughter Cayla, now a sixth-grader, meets weekly with her tutor, Francis Vithayathil.

"I had paid for help from a learning center, but it was expensive," Donna said. "Having a tutor who is free, can start on Cayla's level and work with her needs is a blessing."



COURTESY OF RSVP

Donna Davis and her daughter, Cayla, who meets weekly with her My Free Tutoring tutor to improve her math skills.

"This program really helps me as a single parent concerned about education, because education is the key to success. Cayla wants to be a teacher. It's a wonderful program. Francis is building Cayla's confidence, not only in math but in speaking to other people."

Although Cayla's 4:30 p.m. Tuesday sessions are supposed to end at 5:30, "sometimes Francis is still going after 6," Davis said. "He doesn't stop until Cayla explains to him how she got the answer. For the marking period that ended right before Christmas break, she got an A in math. Before that, she was a C student."

"Her confidence in math is building. That man has a passion

and wants to teach children. If you have that in you, please pass it on to today's children," she said.

**College students benefit, too**



Ghana

previously directed a program that

Juliani Ghana, director of student success and retention at Cheney University of Pennsylvania, has worked with My Free Tutor for several years. He previously directed a program that

helped Chester-area middle and high school students develop skills needed for college.

At Cheney, America's oldest historically Black college, Ghana worked with RSVP to develop a unique winter break program. Because of COVID-19, students were on break from the holidays through the end of January.

"That's a long break," he said. "Students need to brush off the cobwebs."

So working with Anabella Tracy, RSVP volunteer coordinator, he asked tutors to pick four topics within several math courses, creating single-topic weekly workshops for the month of January.

"It's been really good," Ghana said. "We had a very nice response from students. They are getting prepared for challenging math classes. They're getting familiar with their tutors and it sets the stage for the spring. Depending on the availability of tutors, we should be able to help students who struggle. My Free Tutor has really supplemented our retention efforts in an invaluable way."

Ghana urged potential volunteers with a math interest to consider the program.

"People willing to tutor for free are hard to find," he said. "Top students, they've got stuff they want to do. My experience is that this program has been just a blessing."

**For more information**

You'll find detailed information at [www.rsvpmc.org/my-free-tutor-home-page](http://www.rsvpmc.org/my-free-tutor-home-page).

To discuss or apply to volunteer for the program, call RSVP's volunteer coordinator at 834-1040, ext. 123, or email [anabellat@rsvpmc.org](mailto:anabellat@rsvpmc.org).

To learn about additional RSVP programs, visit [www.rsvpmc.org](http://www.rsvpmc.org).

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# Chiropractors can help with various ailments



METRO CREATIVE

### Metro Creative

Anyone who has experienced pain understands that it can be debilitating. Pain can make it challenging to manage everyday tasks and can affect relationships and physical and mental health in many ways. Pain medications were once the norm, but with the rise of the opioid epidemic, it may be wise to take a different approach to pain treatment.

Statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality and the

United States Department of Health and Human Services reveal that as many as one in five people received prescription opioids long-term for noncancer pain in primary care settings in 2016. While opioid use for pain does not always lead to abuse of these medications, opioid addiction has become a widespread problem across North America. These same agencies report that approximately 1,000 people are treated in emergency departments in the United States each day for misuse of prescription opioids. Between 2016 and

2017, opioid poisoning hospitalization rates went up by 8 percent in Canada, resulting in an average of 17 hospitalizations each day.

Chiropractic care may be one avenue to pursue as a viable alternative to pain medications. While chiropractic manipulations are most often associated with back and neck pain, there are many different benefits — some of which may surprise those unfamiliar with chiropractic care — for this type of care.

Migraines and headaches: Research shows that spinal manipulation can be an effective way to

treat migraines, tension headaches and headaches that begin in the neck. In clinical trials conducted at Macquarie University, 72 percent of migraine sufferers had noticeable or substantial improvement after a period of chiropractic treatment.

Accident injuries: Chiropractors can assess musculoskeletal anomalies caused by motor vehicle accidents as well as slips and falls. Whiplash is a common issue in car crashes, and this may be addressed by a chiropractor.

Anxiety and stress: The fight or flight mechanism

that is activated when a person experiences stress and anxiety can take its toll on various parts of the body. Because stress involves nerve impulses, chiropractors may be able to work primarily with the spine where these impulses originate to help release tension and nerve irritation. In addition, adjustments can improve blood circulation, which may help signal the brain to turn off its “rally to action” response to stressful situations.

Fibromyalgia: Fibromyalgia is marked by widespread musculoskeletal

pain in the joints, muscles, tendons, and other soft tissues. It can be combined with temporomandibular joint syndrome, or TMJ, as well as irritable bowel syndrome, among other illnesses. Chiropractors can remove subluxations, which are misalignments of the vertebrae in the spine and joints that lead to pain responses. A Florida State University study found that those with fibromyalgia who combined resistance training with chiropractic treatment two times a week saw improvements in their symptoms.



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SENIOR LIVING

# Hindsight is 2020



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Now that 2020 is in the rear view, we've learned more than ever that experiences, and especially the people with whom we share them, are what make for joyful living.

It's a big reason why the community setting is so important, be it amid the current pandemic, in winter or storm season — really any time when circumstances become unpredictable.

**Does isolation pose a risk?**

Did you know that according to the American Psychological Association, loneliness is associated with a 40% increase in a person's risk of dementia?

That is a staggering statistic and is yet another reason to consider a senior living community for loved ones who you may worry about when it snows heavily, when the sidewalks are icy or, heaven forbid, another stay-at-home order occurs, and you or your loved one has to rely on groceries, medications and other essentials to be accurately and timely delivered.

But, as we mentioned above, hindsight is 2020. If you've thought about it in the past, or are currently considering a senior living community for yourself or a loved one(s), the ability to receive priority vaccine access before the general population is yet another excellent reason to act right now.

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) has approved a recommendation stating that residents of personal care, assisted living, memory care and other long-term care communities be the first to receive the COVID-19 vaccination in the highest-priority grouping (1A).

**What this means to you or your loved one**

If you want to be assured you or your loved ones are among the first to receive the COVID vaccine, now is your opportunity to not only live your best life with us, but also become part of this priority grouping.

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Don't wait. Now is the time to choose Spring Mill Senior Living as the forever home for you or your loved one(s). To learn more, call us at 610-933-7675 to speak with a knowledgeable senior lifestyle counselor about special incentives and upcoming vaccinations schedules.



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DEPARTMENT OF AGING

# \$2 million in grants awarded for senior centers

MediaNews Group

The Pennsylvania Department of Aging (PDA) announced it has awarded \$2 million in grants equally among 405 Area Agency on Aging-affiliated Senior Community Centers (SCCs) for the fiscal year 2020-2021.

Due to the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on SCCs across the commonwealth and the resulting needs, PDA deviated

from a traditional competitive grant process and disbursed the funding to the 52 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) to allocate among all of its eligible centers.

Each AAA will receive nearly \$5,000 for each eligible SCC. The funding was appropriated by the General Assembly from the Pennsylvania Lottery.

“Our senior community centers have faced challenging times, with many of



Torres

As a result, participants have missed out on congregate meals and social or educational activities along with

the camaraderie and support that these centers offer.

“Given these extraordinary circumstances, we’re pleased to be able to allocate this funding to help all eligible SCCs throughout the commonwealth sustain their operations. This approach provides funding to all of these centers to help strengthen their overall ability to persevere and prepare them to welcome participants back.”

Each SCC will have the flexibility to spend the funding through June 30, 2022, on a variety of projects to best meet the needs of the center and their participants during the pandemic. Project types include COVID-19 mitigation, capital improvements and renovations, programs and services, technology, nutrition services, marketing and outreach and rent and utilities.

Senior community centers operated through PDA and its network of AAAs provide a variety of programs and services such as nutritious meals, educational programs, fitness and well-being classes, transportation services, financial and insurance counseling, and volunteer opportunities. Proceeds from the Pennsylvania Lottery help to fund these programs every year.

FINANCES

# State task force to address exploitation of seniors

MediaNews Group

Taking action to address the findings of its recently released statewide study of financial exploitation of older adults, the Pennsylvania Department of Aging (PDA) has convened an interdisciplinary task force of state agencies, aging, legal, financial, law enforcement and healthcare stakeholders and subject matter experts to discuss the issue of financial exploitation and focus on a multi-disciplinary approach to its prevention.

The formation of a task force was one of the five recommendations of PDA’s Financial Exploitation Study, released in September. The task force is scheduled to meet through April with the goal of better coordinating efforts and supports for older adults to provide additional opportunities for the early detection and prevention of financial exploitation.

Prior to assembling the task force, PDA convened a state inter-agency work group to explore collaborations between agencies and to develop recommendations for the task force to consider.

“Financial exploitation causes significant harm to older adults, and we know it is significantly underreported,” said Secretary of Aging Robert Torres, who is chairing the task force. “The department felt it was imperative to bring together stakeholders who work closely with older adults and discuss how financial exploitation occurs and ways to prevent and stop it.”

“I am pleased with the great feedback we received during the first meeting. Some members even made connections to work with one another outside of the task force. I look forward to seeing tangible results from these collaborations and the work of this task force to help protect vulnerable older adults.”

PDA conducted the financial exploitation study in response to Gov. Tom Wolf’s 2019 executive order on protecting vulnerable populations. The study examined several hundred substantiated financial ex-

ploitation cases investigated by 10 local Area Agencies on Aging, covering 14 Pennsylvania counties.

The study reported that the average victim was female, around 79 years old, widowed and living alone, with an income above the federal poverty guidelines. Sixty-five percent of the perpetrators were family members, most of them adult children. The average financial loss to each victim in the study was almost \$40,000, totaling close to \$12.5 million in the cases included in the study alone. Only 1 in 10 to 1 in 44 cases are ever reported. As a result, estimated losses, including unreported cases, for fiscal year 2017-2018, could have been as high as \$2.5 billion.

“Elder financial exploitation and fraud are all too common occurrences, exacerbated by this pandemic,” said Secretary of Banking and Securities Richard Vague, who is serving on the task force. “The work of the task force to coordinate and develop strategies around financial exploitation detection and prevention is more important than ever.”

During the task force’s

inaugural meeting, representatives from Temple University’s Institute on Protective Services and the director of the Lackawanna County Area Agency on Aging (AAA) presented case studies and how they have been handling incidents of financial exploitation. Lackawanna County AAA is one of multiple AAAs in the commonwealth that have established some type of Elder Abuse Task Force to monitor all forms of elder abuse in their local service area.

“I think the Financial Exploitation Task Force can provide the AAA network and all those serving this vulnerable population with critical resources to strategize solutions and a forum to talk through complex cases involving financial exploitation,” said Jason Kavulich, Lackawanna County AAA director and task force member. “I hope my contribution and participation can reinforce the importance of engaging and working with our communities to find better ways to message and combat exploitation.”

“Eliminating stigma and providing older adults with multiple avenues to discuss

their concerns can only serve them better.”

“PA Bankers Association appreciates the opportunity to provide input and guidance to the work of the Department of Aging’s Financial Exploitation Task Force,” said Daniel Reisteter, Pennsylvania Bankers Association and task force member. “Our members are on the front lines each day protecting their elderly customers’ assets and understand the types of activities that those who are less scrupulous undertake against our most vulnerable population.”

“We applaud the department for the formation of this task force and look forward to partnering with other stakeholders to develop further practices, policies and statutory changes to prevent this type of financial exploitation.”

Other members of the task force:

- Office of Policy and Planning, Gov. Tom Wolf
- PA Department of Human Services
- PA Department of Health
- PA Department of Revenue
- PA Department of State
- PA Office of Attorney

- General
- PA Department of Insurance
- PA State Police
- PA Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
- PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency
- PA Office of Victim Advocate
- AARP
- Alzheimer’s Association of Greater Pennsylvania
- PA Association of Area Agencies on Aging
- SeniorLAW Center
- PA Bar Association/Elder Law Section
- Cross State Credit Union Association
- PA Association of Community Bankers
- PA Society of Tax Professionals
- Temple University Institute on Protective Services
- PA Medical Society
- PA Psychological Society
- University of Pennsylvania, Penn Memory Center & P3MB
- PA Institute of Certified Public Accountants
- PA Chiefs of Police Association
- Allegheny County Area Agency on Aging
- Blair County Area Agency on Aging
- PA District Attorneys Association



Wolf

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