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BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Area Black seniors reflect on experiences of racism



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



Jefferson

While growing up in Reading, Robert S. Jefferson saw some subtle discrimination due to the color of his skin, but it was not until he joined the Army in 1957 and was stationed in the Jim Crow South that he faced racial prejudice at its ugliest.

"I was taken aback," recalled Jefferson, former president of the Reading branch of the NAACP. "In Reading, there was racism, but it was not as overt."

Jefferson, 81, of Spring Township; Kenneth Fisher, 58, of West Chester; and Linda Burns-Glover, 69, of Reading recently shared personal stories in celebration of Black History Month. Though their life experiences vary widely, all have lived in Reading and understand what it is to be Black in a society long dominated by a white majority.

Jefferson, a retired corrections officer and youth counselor, said his first encounter with prejudice came at the hands of his third-grade teacher. The teacher



COURTESY OF KENNETH FISHER

Kenneth Fisher performs in the cast of Gilbert and Sullivan's "Yeoman of the Guard." "With opera," he said, "if you can sing the part, you get the part."

seemed to have it out for the Black boys in class, picking on them, calling them names and disciplining them more harshly than she did white children. The experience left him with a distrust for white people in general, whom he learned to approach with reserve

and caution.

"Whenever I give speeches now," he said, "I advise teachers not to make racial statements that can affect children the rest of their lives."

The childhood wounds left scars, but the worst for Jefferson

came later. After leaving Reading High School, he enlisted in the Army and was flown to Fort Jackson in Columbia, S.C., for basic training. He got his first taste of the South's segregation as soon as he exited the aircraft.

Thirsty and in need of a rest-

room after a flight of over three hours, he looked around and spied a men's room. But as Jefferson went to open the door, he noticed a sign reading "Whites only." He finally found another marked "Coloreds only" tucked away from the concourse. It was the same with the water fountains.

He considered returning home immediately and recalled thinking, "There is no way I am going to serve my country and risk my life when I can't even get a drink of water."

But he stuck out a two-year stint in the Army that included six months in the South and 18 months in Germany, where he was treated better than in the U.S.

A trip to his father's hometown in Virginia also helped open Jefferson's eyes to the poverty and degradation of Blacks in the Jim Crow South.

"We were living poorly in Reading," he said, "but not as bad as people in the South. African Americans in the South were really living a horrific life in a place where there were no opportunities for housing or employment."

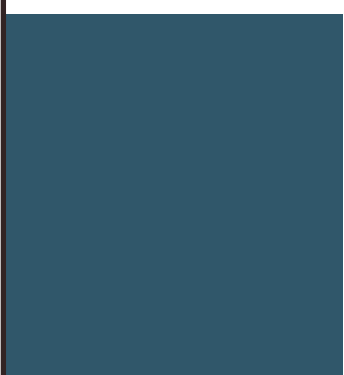
After bouncing around the East for a few years, Jefferson moved at age 28 to Los Angeles and enrolled in a junior college.

"I thought I was running away from racism and segregation," he said. "What I found was racism was even more overt in the large

RACISM » PAGE C2



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Racism

FROM PAGE C1

city of Los Angeles.”

In college, he joined the Black Student Union and had his first experiences with the civil rights movement. He was invited to join the Black Panthers, but declined because he thought the organization was too violent. Instead, he got involved with the Nation of Islam, an African American political and religious movement, founded in 1930 by Wallace Fard Muhammad in Detroit, and began reading the Bible and Quran.

“That made me a better person,” he said. “God speaks to the heart. As the heart, so is the man.”

Events of the past year took him back to the days of his youth and his own involvement with the civil rights movement. The activism of today, he said, is a response to the systemic racism that has dogged the nation.

“Blacks were always looked down upon,” he said. “There is a history in this country of more than 400 years of racial disparity.”

Still, he has hope that meaningful change can take place if people learn to look into their hearts.

“No one has any part in their coming into existence,” he said. “The place of birth, color, function of the body are the choice of the creator. There are no grounds for superiority and inferiority when you look at it that way.”

Kenneth Fisher

Kenneth Fisher had more than just the usual opening-night jitters when the curtain rose for his lead performance in Savoy Company’s 1997 production of the Gilbert and Sullivan opera “Ruddigore.” For the first time since the Philadelphia opera company’s founding in 1901, a Black man was cast in the lead role. The pressure was on.

“It was really intimidating,” he said. “Leading roles in musical theater are not seen traditionally as roles



COURTESY OF KENNETH FISHER

Kenneth Fisher of West Chester has had a varied career that included stints as a performer, teacher, director, choreographer and library print resource specialist. Along the way he has been cast in several lead roles traditionally played by white men.

for Black men.”

Earlier, Fisher undertook some leading and supporting roles not usually played by a Black man, including Will Parker in “Oklahoma” and Jesus in “Godspell.” There had always been some modifications to the script to help make the casting more acceptable to white audiences. More often, even when he could sing, dance and act rings around the others auditioning, Fisher was turned down for the lead.

“I was told the audience would not accept a Black man as the romantic lead or be able to handle an interracial kiss,” he said.

Such obstacles and a love of classical music were the main reasons he gravitated toward opera.

“With opera,” he said, “if you can sing the part, you get the part.”

His struggles were not unexpected. A high school director had warned him, saying, “You are very good, but if you choose this as your career, it will be hard for you.”

Fisher was drawn toward the performing arts and academia in his school days, finding acceptance among white peers with similar interests, but alienating many of the Black students, who called him derogatory names and accused him of “being white on the inside.” It did not help when he came out as gay during a time when those of differ-

ent sexual orientations were less widely accepted.

Those years were eye opening to Fisher, who was reared by parents who taught him all people were equal, yet sat him down for “the talk” most Black boys get when coming of age. They told him how dress to avoid suspicion, keep his eyes down and watch his tongue.

“Before you open your mouth, people already see your color,” they warned.

A graduate of West Chester University, Fisher has worked as a teacher, director and choreographer. He also interned overseas, teaching the German language in Australia and Wales, where he found race was less of an issue. With his theater career on hold due to the COVID-19 crisis, he now works as print resources specialist for Drexel University, Philadelphia.

A student’s recent Twitter post caught Fisher off guard.

“If you come across this tweet,” it read, “reply with the grade you were in when you had your first Black male teacher.”

Fisher, 58, said the tweet made him think. Looking back, he could not remember being taught by any Black men as a student through 12th grade or later in college.

A few Black women taught in the Reading schools he attended, and a much older cousin, Grace

Jones, now deceased, had been a principal at Lauer’s Park Elementary School. But Fisher said the only Black male educator he encountered was a librarian at a branch of the Reading Public Library.

As recently as 2006 while directing and choreographing a high school musical, Fisher had Black students comment that they had never had a Black director or teacher before.

“It is something to think about,” he said.

Linda Burns-Glover

Linda Burns-Glover was about 12 years old the first time she strayed alone outside her north Philadelphia neighborhood.

Most of the residents were Black in the Raymond Rosen Project Homes, where she lived, and she never noticed any difference in treatment due to her color or mixed African and Native American ancestry. So the racism she encountered on that first solo trip downtown hit her hard.

“I got thirsty and went into a convenience store for a drink,” she recalled. “I waited and waited for service before I asked for help.” But instead of serving

her, the clerk pointed to a sign hung on the wall behind the counter. Using a derogatory epithet, it indicated no Blacks were permitted in the store.

Her heart pounding in fear, Burn-Glover ran out the door.

“In my family we have all colors,” she said. “No one else’s race was ever downtrodden at our table.”

Burns-Glover grew up in a loving home presided over by her South Carolina-born mother and native Philadelphia father. Her parents worked hard, often struggling to find steady employment and provide for their children. The color of their skin, she said, often made it harder to find and keep jobs. Things improved when both parents secured government jobs; her mother with the school district and her father with the city.

“I had to grow up fast because my neighborhood was tough,” she said. “But some wonderful things grow up out of the projects.”

With her parents’ encouragement, Burns-Glover excelled in Warren G. Harding Middle School and Simon Gratz High School, where Marcus Foster was principal.

Foster gained a national reputation for educational excellence while serving at Simon Gratz from 1966 to 1969, and later as associate superintendent of Philadelphia schools from 1969 to 1970. In 1973, while superintendent of the Oakland, Calif., schools, he was assassinated by members of the Symbionese Liberation Army, purportedly due to his plan for keeping drug dealers off the schools’ campuses.

“He was excellent,” Burns-Glover said. “They really taught Black history in the schools then.”

Foster’s assassination hit her almost as hard as that of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. five years earlier.

“Dr. King came to my school to speak to the students,” she said. “I also listened to him on the radio. I couldn’t understand why someone would kill a man who was promoting peace.”

As she prepared to start 10th grade, Burns-Glover was selected by Temple University for its Upward Bound program and participated through graduation.

The federally-funded program is designed to prepare first-generation, low-income or high-risk students for college.

“They were looking for students like me,” she said. “I was smart, Black and came from a two-parent home.”

But after 21 years of marriage, her parents separated. Her mother and siblings moved to Reading, and Burns-Glover stayed in Philadelphia with her father.

“When I visited them in Reading, I could not believe she moved onto a block with white people,” Burns-Glover said. “My life was lived with or in a Black community.”

Later, Burns-Glover moved to Reading, too, and enrolled in Reading Area Community College, where she earned an associate’s degree. She also found love with her husband of 41 years. The couple have six adult children.

For more than 30 years, Burns-Glover worked in the City of Reading’s codes department, administrating the department her last six years before retiring in 2006 and starting her own property management company.

During her years at City Hall, she often encountered racism and was subjected to racist and sexist remarks, sometimes by a supervisor, who grudgingly came to respect her. The two later became close friends.

The workplace can be tough on Black women, who experience both racism and sexism, she said. Burns-Glover suspects some are intimidated by her outspokenness and that of other strong or powerful Black women.

“We have more problems than anyone else,” she said.

The nation is more divided than ever, she said, and that saddens her.

She credits her husband, family and Christian faith for her serenity and success.

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ELDER ABUSE

Department of Aging asks legislators to update Older Adults Protective Services Act

MediaNews Group

With the ongoing rise of financial exploitation and other forms of elder abuse, the Pennsylvania Department of Aging (PDA) is urging the General Assembly to prioritize and enact critical updates to the Older Adults Protective Services Act (OAPSA) in its new 2021-22 legislative session.

Enacted in 1987, OAPSA has served as Pennsylvania's system for protecting the health, safety and welfare of older adults who are at imminent risk of these serious offenses. The department, along with many stakeholders and the courts, agree on the critical importance of protecting

older Pennsylvanians and have called on these much-needed changes to the law for more than a decade.

"As the department responsible for advocacy and protection of Pennsylvania's older adults, updating OAPSA would help to adequately address changes in the direct care workforce and the facilities that serve older adults," said Secretary of Aging Robert Torres. "It would also help to respond to the rise of financial exploitation as a



Torres

form of elder abuse.

"Unfortunately, we were unable to get these updates across the finish line before the end of the last session. I am pleased to see that Sen. (Bob) Mensch has issued a co-sponsorship memo and hope we can see these legislative changes quickly proposed and passed during the new legislative session."

The department is seeking the following critical updates to OAPSA:

- Strengthening background checks for all employees, both new and current, who work with older adults in a long-term care setting
- Identifying individuals who should never have an opportunity to work as

a caregiver to older adults

- Expanding the list of mandatory reporters of abuse and facilities whose employees are required to report abuse
- Providing a clear process for reporting financial exploitation and related training for financial institutions

In September, the department released the findings of its Financial Exploitation Study of older adults. Gov. Tom Wolf directed the study to be done in his 2019 Executive Order issued to protect vulnerable populations in the commonwealth.

"The study issued five recommendations," Torres said. "Two of the rec-

ommendations related to passage of updates to OAPSA to help further protect vulnerable seniors from financial exploitation. Another recommendation to create a financial exploitation task force, comprised of public and private sector representatives, has been initiated by the department and the task force is working to develop comprehensive and collaborative approaches to help tackle financial exploitation in a meaningful way. However, amending OAPSA is critical to strengthen protections for older adults and help prevent them from becoming victims."

Torres noted the vol-

ume, type and scope of abuse has increased dramatically in the more than 30 years since OAPSA became PDA's legal guide to protecting older Pennsylvanians. According to the department's 2019-2020 Older Adults Protective Services Annual Report, cases of suspected elder abuse has increased 80% over the previous five years.

The department's Protective Services Office investigates and supports older adults who become victims of abuse. Anyone suspecting elder abuse should call the statewide reporting hotline at 1-800-490-8505, which operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

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SPOT OF T

What's just around the corner?



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

By Terry Alburger
Brittany Pointe Estates

Have you ever taken a corner just a bit too fast? That sometimes has disastrous consequences. My workplace has many corners, many long hallways that lead to ... more hallways! There are hubs where multiple hallways come together, there are turns that lead to a plethora of destinations. In some areas, there are rounded mirrors built into the ceiling so that you can literally see what is coming around the corner. In those areas, there are few

issues.

However, that is not always the case at every intersection. There are many times I encountered near misses because I failed to approach slowly and look both ways. I have since learned to look before I leap. I no longer just plow through, whether walking or driving a car. Doing so could be disastrous. Throwing caution to the wind is not a wise approach — and in fact, these days, it is downright dangerous.

Our lives are filled with corners, filled with twists and turns and paths yet un-

trod. Just when you think your life is a straight shot, you know exactly where you're going and what you're doing, then bam, a corner appears, and you have to face it.

In 2020, we all had the same massive corner pop up seemingly out of nowhere. We were stopped in our tracks and told not to even attempt to peer around that deadly corner. But now, with the advances made and the vaccines being administered, we are cautiously approaching a corner of hope. Though there are many ways to approach

the unknown of a corner, intelligence is still the best plan. We can now slowly begin to emerge from the trials of our COVID era with some optimism.

When approaching the unknown, it pays to be cautious and patient, because we never know what may come our way. We likely slow down, perhaps even come to a complete stop, peering around that corner to make sure the coast is clear. But then, we start up again, and we regain our momentum. Sometimes, what's around the corner is something amazing, some-

thing hopeful, something liberating. We keep our hope on what's around that corner.

So, what will be around your corner? I would certainly love to enjoy the company of my large family, and the freedom to feel safe going out socially again.

I don't know about you, but I have a year's worth of birthdays, anniversaries and special occasions to make up! COVID may have postponed these things, but it cannot steal them! Because soon, we will round that corner to the finish line of this dreadful pandemic. Soon,

it will be behind us and, though we will take abundant care and be cautious, we will once again view the coveted normal, which we left behind a year ago.

So, take heart. Good things can lie just around the corner if we follow safety guidelines. Make sure that you take the time to congratulate yourself for getting through a very difficult year. Once it's safe, celebrate your toughness and your perseverance. It was no easy task but soon you'll be around that corner. And we hope and pray that the coast is clear.

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PHOENIXVILLE

Vaccination clinic held at Spring Mill Senior Living

MediaNews Group

PHOENIXVILLE » Residents and staff at Spring Mill Senior Living in Phoenixville rolled up their sleeves for COVID-19 vaccinations.

CVS representatives came out to the community at 3000 Balfour Circle to help the residents, ranging from 65 to 100, to be protected from contracting the coronavirus.

With just a quick pinch in the arm, Spring Mill residents and staff did their part to crush COVID-19 by

getting round one of the Pfizer vaccines.

“Spring Mill residents are grateful for the continuous guidance and support from the CDC and our parent company, Discovery Senior Living, but it is the team inside Spring Mill that is working so hard to keep the residents safe,” said Jillian Nabozny, celebrations director at Spring Mill Senior Living. “They are truly one of a kind and are the reason Spring Mill is the best place to be right now.”



Spring Mill Senior Living resident Gertrude Emery was among the first to get the Pfizer vaccine at the center on Feb. 2.



Chelsea Dibofsky, left, and Catherine Sakowski, dining room servers at Spring Mill Senior Living, were vaccinated on Feb. 2.

Dr. Cedric “Jim” Jimerson, 101, was the first resident of the independent living neighborhood at the Heritage of Green Hills to get a COVID-19 vaccination.



Courtesy of the Heritage of Green Hills

HEALTH

101-year-old first to get COVID-19 vaccine at the Heritage of Green Hills

MediaNews Group

Dr. Cedric “Jim” Jimerson, was the first in line to receive a COVID-19 vaccination at the Heritage of Green Hills’ “Shots and Beers” Vaccination Day party for residents in its independent living neighborhood in Cumru Township, Berks County.

Among his many accomplishments, Jimerson is a World War II veteran with two battle stars. He joined Reading’s Community General Hospital as

the only board-eligible surgeon who had completed a formal surgical residency at an approved university hospital. He retired as the chairman of the Department of Surgery.

Jimerson will celebrate his 102nd birthday in August.

“Dr. Jimerson has been an amazing part of our community,” said Heritage of Green Hills Executive Director Doug Walther. “Not only the Reading community, where he served as a surgeon for so

many years, but also here at The Heritage, where he’s lived for more than a decade. He’s given so much of himself both in his vocation and in his relationships with other residents. We are both proud of him and thankful for him.”

Jimerson was just the first of many to be inoculated. Throughout the day, the community’s residents dropped in to receive the first round of their COVID-19 shots and grab a cold (root) beer.

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SENIOR LIFE

COVID-defying nun toasts 117th birthday with wine and prayer



COURTESY OF BFM-TV

Sister Andre, born Lucile Randon, is interviewed by David Tavella, communications manager for the Sainte Catherine Laboure Nursing Home in Toulon, France.

By John Leicester
The Associated Press

Question: How does one cram enough candles onto a birthday cake for one of the world's oldest survivors of COVID-19? Answer: With 117 candles, you can't.

A French nun who is believed to be the world's second-oldest person was celebrating her 117th birthday in style on Feb. 11. There were plans for champagne and red wine, a feast with her favorite dessert, a Mass in her honor and other treats to toast Sister André's exceptional longevity through two world wars and a recent coronavirus infection.

"It's a big day," David Tavella, the communications manager for the nun's care home in the southern French city of Toulon, told

The Associated Press. "She is in great shape. I went to see her this morning. She is really happy. She wanted me to tell her the schedule for the day again."

It was packed. Some of Sister André's great-nephews and great-great nephews were expected to join a morning video call for her, and the bishop of Toulon was due to celebrate a Mass in her honor.

"She was very proud when I told her," Tavella said. "She said, 'A Mass for me?'"

The menu for her birthday feast included a starter of foie gras, followed by capon with fragrant mushrooms and wrapping up with baked Alaska, the nun's favorite dessert.

"All of it washed down with red wine, because she drinks red wine," Tavella said. "It's one of her secrets

of longevity. And a bit of champagne with dessert, because 117 years have to be toasted."

As for packing dozens of candles onto a cake, "we stopped trying a long time ago," he added. "Because even if we made big cakes, I'm not sure that she would have enough breath to blow them all out. You would need a fire extinguisher."

Sister André's birth name is Lucile Randon. The Gerontology Research Group, which validates details of people thought to be 110 or older, lists her as the second-oldest known living person in the world, behind only an 118-year-old woman in Japan, Kane Tanaka.

Tavella told French media that Sister André tested positive for the coronavirus in mid-January, but she had so few symptoms that she

didn't even realize she was infected. Her survival made headlines both in France and beyond.

"When the whole world suddenly started talking about this story, I understood that Sister André was a bit like an Olympic flame on a 'round the world tour that people want to grab hold of, because we all need a bit of hope at the moment," Tavella said.

By strange coincidence, Tavella was celebrating his 43rd birthday on Feb. 11.

"We often joke that she and I were born on the same day," he said. "I never tell myself that she is 117 because she is so easy to talk to, regardless of age. It is only when she talks about World War I as though she lived through it that I realize, 'Yes, she did live through it!'"

SENIOR LIFE

Vatican seeks elder care rethink after COVID-19 'massacre'



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A medical staff member administers a dose of the Pfizer-BioTech vaccine to an over 80-year-old, in the Santa Maria della Pieta hospital in Rome.

The Associated Press

ROME » The Vatican is calling for a new paradigm of care for the elderly after what it calls the "massacre" wrought by the coronavirus pandemic, which has disproportionately killed elderly people living in nursing homes.

The Vatican's Pontifical Council of Life issued a position paper that made the case for a global rethink of how to care for people in their final years, including resisting any rush to institutional care in favor of adapting home environments to the needs of people as they age.

The council's president, Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, noted at a press conference that more than half of Italy's elderly dead during the initial coronavirus outbreak lived in nursing homes, while only a quar-

ter of overall deaths involving people over 75 lived at home.

"The death tolls are brutal in their cruelty," Paglia said. "A real massacre of the elderly."

Pope Francis has frequently spoken about the wisdom and richness that the elderly provide younger generations and denounced how they are often shut away in institutions. That tendency, he says, is part of what he calls today's "throwaway culture" that treats the elderly, weak and infirm as nonessential.

The 84-year-old Francis, who credits his grandmother Rosa with helping raise him and passing onto him her Catholic faith, recently designated the fourth Sunday of July as the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly.

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VOLUNTEERS

RSVP nonprofit consultants shift seamlessly to virtual

RSVP

The pandemic has created hurdles for many community groups, but for RSVP's Volunteer Executive Consultants (VEC), it's full speed ahead.

A high-powered cadre of mostly retired corporate managers, academics and nonprofit executives, VEC provides free services to area nonprofits, many of them small and understaffed. VEC furnishes experts to help its clients create strategic plans, raise funds, attract board members and volunteers and carry out other vital business functions.

"The program has transitioned well," said VEC Program Manager Sheri Wilensky Burke. "Everything we do now is virtual."

Workshops and office hours

In some ways the public has benefited from VEC's conversion to virtual meetings. A set of spring and fall workshops staffed by VEC experts that used to cost \$20 for non-clients to attend in person is now free and open to the public via Zoom.

"Last fall our theme was adapting to COVID-19," Burke said. "The upcoming spring workshop theme is 'Taking Charge of Your Future,' with an awareness that COVID isn't going anywhere quickly."

Workshop topics include Engaging Volunteers, Wednesday, March 24; Exploring Sustained Collaboration, Tuesday, April 20; and Why and How to Measure Program Effectiveness, Wednesday, May 19.

Each 90-minute session begins at 10 a.m. To register for these workshops visit www.rsvpmc.org/events-news.

The volunteer consultants also staff an Expert Office Hours program run by the Free Library of Philadelphia's Regional Foundation Center, held on the second Wednesday of each month. The March 10 topic is Board Development, with free, 45-minute individual or small group Zoom sessions available at 11:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. To view upcoming workshops visit www.freelibrary.org/programs/bric/nonprofit#Events.

"VEC offered me an opportunity to share what I was good at and to learn things I didn't know anything about," Green said. "VEC's Reading Allowed team includes VEC newcomer Dierdre Slattery, a semi-retired pharmaceutical marketing manager. Before joining the project, she received three hours of

to continue working with a VEC is a big plus."

The workshops and 45-minute consultations are "a good way of introducing ourselves to prospective clients, as well as to help current clients," Burke said.

Who are these nonprofit clients and how does VEC help them?

Reading Allowed

Some 55 VEC volunteers are currently assisting 31 VEC nonprofits in planning, fundraising, leadership, marketing and other crucial areas. A typical collaboration lasts six months, with two to four virtual meetings each month. One such project is with Reading Allowed.

Angela Marks, a certified specialist trained to assist readers of all ages overcome learning disabilities such as dyslexia, founded Reading Allowed 18 months ago. It currently matches 27 volunteer tutors with 80 reading-challenged area students from age 4 to adult. All of its volunteers are certified in the Wilson Reading System, an intervention program.

"Teachers, psychologists, special education attorneys all refer kids to us," Marks said. "We provide tutoring regardless of financial circumstances. The help our students need can be cost-prohibitive for many families. We charge on a scale based on household income. So far, we've been able to work with everyone who has approached us. Donations have enabled us to take on a few more kids."

Reading Allowed began working with VEC in November.

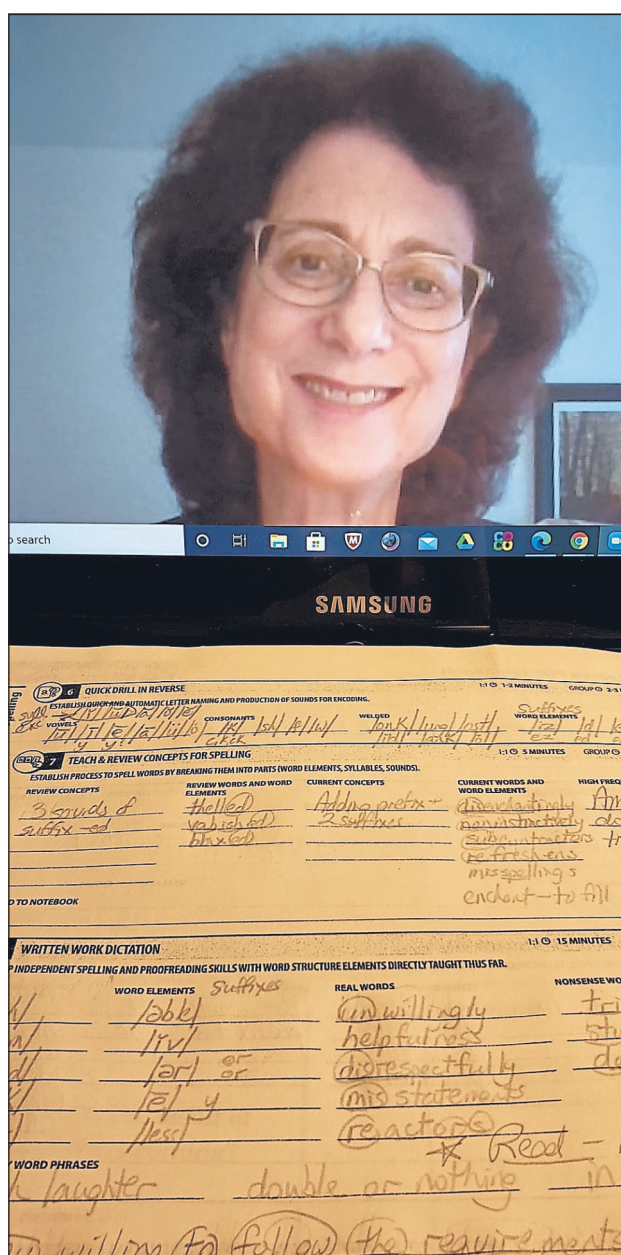
"We were hoping to apply for grants," Marks said. "I realized how much work we needed to do. I was spinning my wheels. I'd reached a wall. Then the Regional Foundation Center at the Free Library put me in contact with RSVP. They're both incredible resources."

A need for planning

RSVP, based in King of Prussia, matched Reading Allowed with a four-volunteer team led by VEC veteran Ed Green, a retired engineer, corporate information technology manager and for 13 years, an IT professor at Penn State Abington.

"VEC offered me an opportunity to share what I was good at and to learn things I didn't know anything about," Green said.

VEC's Reading Allowed team includes VEC newcomer Dierdre Slattery, a semi-retired pharmaceutical marketing manager. Before joining the project, she received three hours of



COURTESY OF RSVP
Andrea Kasper, Reading Allowed tutor, with her lesson plan during a Zoom session.

remote training, then several weeks of mentoring sessions.

For Reading Allowed, "I didn't anticipate being anything more than an observer, but it happened that from the first meeting, they were talking about business planning, and I had all this training," she said.

The VEC team recommended that Reading Allowed develop a strategic plan, which would clarify the organization's mission, values and goals.

"Angela Marks and her team think together with us, prioritizing goals and next steps," Slattery said. "They always come prepared. Sometimes they send us notes to review. I think it's beginner's luck: They say not every client is a dream client, but Angela is a dream to work with."

For her part, Marks says VEC "has been beyond invaluable. They're just wonderful."

Having completed Reading Allowed's strategic plan, the VEC team has moved on to budgeting and business planning.

"Ed is so kind and patient," Marks said. "No ques-

tion is stupid in his eyes. He sees the big picture — where we're headed. We anticipate finishing around May. The planning has given me an order in which we're going to do things and how we're

Team approach

going to get there." In nearly seven years with VEC, Green has participated in some 20 nonprofit projects. He also works with for-profit small businesses through the Senior Corps of Retired Executives.

"My approach is the team," Green said. "We build a team of VECs, then form a team with the clients. Everyone is a partner in the effort."

"In corporate America, the focus is on returning money to the stakeholders. Small nonprofits are very different. They are primarily focused on their mission, their passion, delivering services. It's nice if they make money to cover their expenses. Big corporations generally have enough people to get the job done. Small nonprofits who need reasons to want to stay and become engaged."

Green and his wife, Elaine, an adult literacy manager, as well as Sylvia Lifschitz, Ph.D., a marketing research expert, are facilitators for the May VEC workshop on measuring program effectiveness.

"You put your goals on a timeline," he said. "If you front load goals, it's impossible. If you back load them, you have no ability to make mid-course corrections. So you put them on a timeline and break them down into the objectives needed to achieve them."

Green believes VEC's new virtual approach "will stick, but we're going to move to a hybrid environment. Learning is much better done face-to-face, but it's a lot easier for people to come

to a workshop if they don't have to spend an hour on the Schuylkill getting there. At the least, we can record the workshops so they can be seen by folks who can't attend at the scheduled time."

For more information

VEC welcomes new volunteers with expertise in fundraising, grant writing, social media and other business areas. For information, email Kathy Stocker at kathys@rsvpmc.org or call 610-834-1040, ext.123.

For a new volunteer form, visit <https://monami.typeform.com/to/N3MK42Qi>

Nonprofits requesting VEC management assistance can visit

<https://www.rsvpmc.org/vec-management-assistance-form>

Startup nonprofits can visit <https://www.rsvpmc.org/vec-management-assistance-form-star>

To register for a VEC spring workshop, visit www.rsvpmc.org/events-news

For more information on the Regional Foundation Center's Expert Office Hours program, email nonprofit@freelibrary.org. For a schedule and registration form, visit <https://libwww.freelibrary.org/calendar/event/104322>

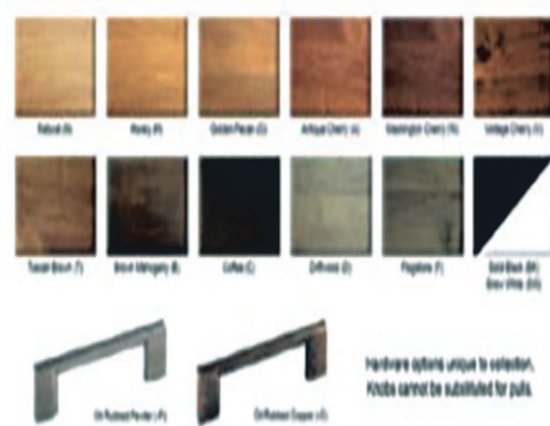
To learn about other RSVP programs, visit www.rsvpmc.org.

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BERKS WEATHER

Some seniors struggle with storm cleanup

County agencies don't have resources to help

By Mike Urban
murban@readingeagle.com
@MikeUrbanRE on Twitter

Frequent snowstorms including two big ones have left some senior citizens in Berks County looking for help.

Some of those who are unable to shovel their own sidewalks or clear their vehicles have been seeking assistance from the Berks County Office on Aging, which has received several dozen such calls, according to director Jessica Jones.

The options for those folks are limited if they don't have family or neighbors to help them, she said.

It's been at least a decade since Berks had a local group that connected seniors with volunteers who could shovel them out, and no one has stepped up to replace that organization, Jones said.



A man clears snow from his car on Chestnut Street in West Reading on Tuesday, Feb. 1, 2021, after a nor'easter dumped heavy snow on Berks County.

BEN HASTY — READING EAGLE

County agencies don't have the resources to offer such assistance, she said.

"This is a difficult area for sure," she said. "There is a definite need for it."

So when her office gets calls from older adults asking who can clear their steps and sidewalks, her staff will help them brainstorm ideas, such as calling their church group to

see if anyone can pitch in, she said.

"But the bottom line is there is no formal resource in the community that exists," she said.

While the situation exists every winter, this year's been worse because of the harsher weather, she said.

The total snowfall this season is already up to 33.4 inches, about 4 inches above

the normal for a full winter, according to the Berks Area Rainfall Networks, and AccuWeather is predicting more snow this week and again Tuesday.

Jones saw the problem first-hand before Christmas when she helped deliver meals to seniors and had to navigate properties that had not been cleared from the previous storm.

"It was precarious walking," she said.

If a senior calls and says they're trapped in their homes and need to go somewhere, the office may direct them toward their local fire department, or make those calls for them to see if help is available, she said.

Otherwise the best solution is for people to look out for their elderly neighbors,

she said, and offer to shovel, snowblow or plow for them if possible.

Berks Emergency Services Director Brian Gottschall doesn't know how many calls the communications center gets from seniors seeking help after snowstorms, but he said if dispatchers do get a call about an elderly person trapped in their home due to snow they would send local police there for a welfare check.

Local police are the 24/7 access to municipal government in most jurisdictions when an inquiry originates at 9-1-1, he said.

If the call came from a jurisdiction covered by state police, Gottschall believes troopers would ask the Department of Emergency Services to then notify the local public works.

With so much snow still on the ground and more expected to come, Jones urged everyone to keep seniors in mind.

"If you know someone is struggling, maybe you could clear a path for them," she said.

WALK TO END ALZHEIMER'S

White Horse Village honored by Walk to End Alzheimer's



COURTESY OF WHITE HORSE VILLAGE

A Walk to End Alzheimer's sign from the White Horse Village community walk on Nov. 14.

MediaNews Group

White Horse Village, a nonprofit senior living community in Edgmont Township, Delaware County, was named the 2020 Rookie of the Year by Philadelphia Walk to End Alzheimer's.

The community's first Walk to End Alzheimer's was held on Nov. 14, raising \$18,001 for the Alzheimer's Association. The Philadelphia region came in second in the country out of 630 walks, raising \$1,177,960.

White Horse Village residents and team members coordinated a week of com-

munity activities leading up to the walk, including a yard and window decorating contest, costume contest, water walking and gift baskets.

Multiple walking courses of varying difficulty were available for participants, and COVID-19 safety protocols were enforced at all events.

"Our residents and team members are passionate about giving back to the greater community," said Len Weiser, president and CEO. "It was inspiring to see our nonprofit community come together and fun-

draise for an organization near and dear to our hearts and those we serve."

White Horse Village offers a full range of senior living options and health-care services, including Four Season Memory Care. The specialized neighborhood provides services and support for individuals with cognitive changes. A highly trained and compassionate team strives to maximize each resident's independence and provide person-centered care in a therapeutic, home-like setting.

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 health-care 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.

You'll be in good company

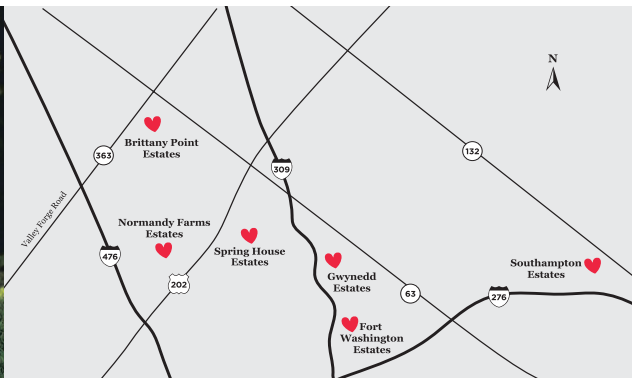


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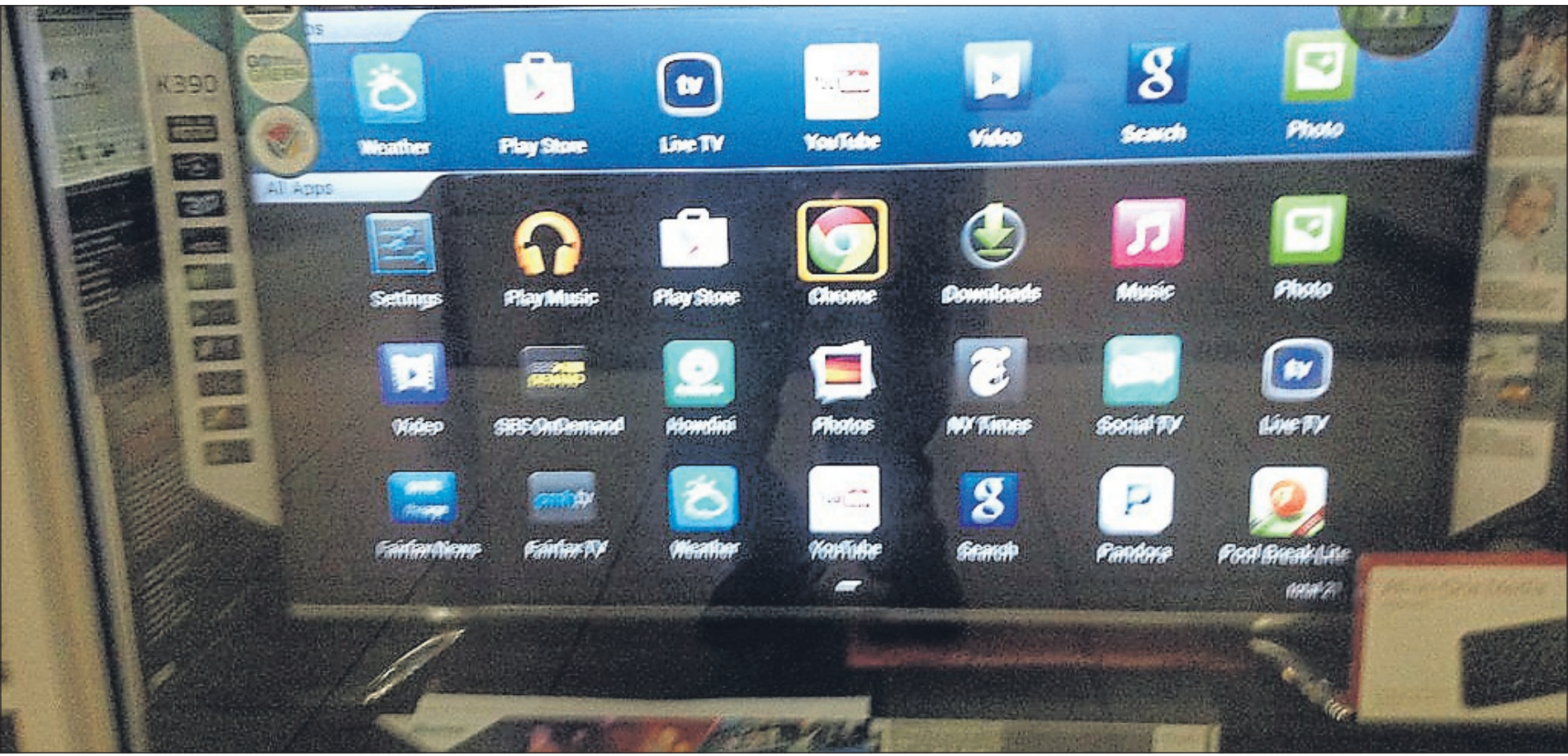
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PROMOTING SENIOR WELLNESS

How to stream TV shows and movies



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

You can stream lots of TV shows and movies if you have a smart TV.

By Hugh Bleemer

The Hickman Friends Senior Community

As I said in my last article, we are living in a unique time. We are being encouraged not to see our family and friends. We are told to avoid going to the movies, plays, museums, art exhibits and live sporting events. If you must go food shopping, make it quick! In your lifetime, have you ever been told you can't go out to a restaurant??

While we can now see a light at the end of the tunnel, that light is still at least a couple of months away. We are in the depth of winter, so now is the perfect time to take the plunge and learn to use some technology that will make your days much more enjoyable, educational and entertaining.

With any new technology, you may want to consider asking some-

one with experience for assistance. As I have said before, the most helpful trait in a teacher is patience. New technology is not easy to understand, and you want someone who will calmly answer all your questions and help you through the times you get frustrated.

I hope you have thought about or started learning about borrowing eBooks. Let's now discuss streaming TV shows and movies.

Watching TV has changed dramatically in the last five years. Gone are the days where you have to schedule yourself to watch a TV show. You can now watch an entire season of a series anytime that is convenient for you. Also gone are the days where you had to rent a DVD to watch a movie. Almost all TV shows and movies can be streamed to your TV when you want to watch.

Let's start with the technology you will need to stream. The first

older piece of technology is a HD (high Definition) flat screen TV. The TV should have inputs for HDMI attachments. Verify that you have HDMI ports prior to proceeding. The second older technology is a cable TV subscription. In the West Chester area, you have two choices for cable TV, Verizon Fios or Comcast Xfinity. You need to decide which company would work best for you.

If you don't have an HD TV package, I recommend you upgrade your current plan. The HD picture quality is dramatically better than an SD (standard definition) TV.

This is all the technology you need to start streaming TV shows and movies! This is because Netflix, the most popular streaming service in the country, is offered directly through Verizon and Comcast. Netflix has thousands of TV shows and movies, so

it is a great choice to learn how to stream and get comfortable with the technology. It is also 100% commercial free!

The best way for you to get started is to call your cable provider directly. Most of the time you can get a free trial of Netflix before you must start paying for the service. After the trial, the monthly fee is \$8.99 and up per month.

However, before you start paying for Netflix, make sure you fully understand how to use it. It is more complicated than changing TV channels. Even though the Netflix site is well organized, it can be intimidating to first-time users.

Hopefully, you enjoy the many shows and movies on Netflix and think the extra cost is well worth it. If you do, you may want to find out about other streaming services, and there are a lot

of them — Amazon Prime, Hulu, Apple TV, HBO Max and Peacock to name a few.

Most of these services need to be accessed by a smart TV, streaming stick or a smart home device. These are more complicated technologies, so before adding additional streaming services, take the time necessary to understand what you will have to do.

I hope you enjoy the many entertaining shows and movies on Netflix or other streaming devices. There has never been a better time to watch TV!

Promoting Senior Wellness is provided by The Hickman, a Quaker-affiliated licensed personal care home in West Chester, where Hugh Bleemer is the outreach and admissions counselor. The Hickman does not endorse and is not affiliated with the companies and apps mentioned in this article.

HINDSIGHT

They say hindsight is 2020 and last year we all certainly learned a valuable lesson about the negative effects social isolation can have on all types of people.

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SENIOR LIFE

'Hug tent' provides safe embraces

By Thomas Peipert
The Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, COLO. » Lynda Hartman needed a hug.

It had been at least eight months since she touched her 77-year-old husband, Len, who has dementia and has been at an assisted living center in suburban Denver for the last year.

Recently, she got a small taste of what life was like before the coronavirus pandemic.

Sort of. Thanks to a "hug tent" set up outside Juniper Village at Louisville, Hartman got to squeeze her husband — albeit while wearing plastic sleeves and separated by a 4-millimeter-thick clear plastic barrier.

"I really needed it; I really needed it," the 75-year-old said after her brief visit. "It meant a lot to me, and it's been a long, long time."

Hartman, who fractured two vertebrae and could no longer take care of her husband by herself, said she thought he was a little confused but that it was important for them to embrace again.

"We've been trying to do it for a long time," she said. "It felt good. I kept hitting my glasses when I hugged him, though. And he got cold."

Although the setup wasn't ideal, Hartman said, "At least you can do something, and it's important."

Since the pandemic hit, similar tents have popped up around the country and in places like Brazil and England, where some people call them "cuddle curtains."

The assisted living facility in the Denver suburb of Louisville, which has fully vaccinated its residents and staff, partnered with non-profit health care organization TRU Community Care to set up the tent with construction-grade plastic on a blustery but warm win-



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Lynda Hartman, 75, embraces her 77-year-old husband, Len Hartman, who suffers from dementia, in a "hug tent" set up outside the Juniper Village assisted living center in Louisville, Colo.

ter day in February.

"I think it's just a huge weight off their shoulders, just being able to have that hug that they haven't had in so long," said Anna Hostetter, a spokeswoman for Juniper Village at Louisville. "When we were planning this and setting it up, and I saw pictures, I wasn't sure if with all the plastic and everything you could really get that human contact. But I teared up on some of them. It was really special for our families."

Staff are planning to keep hosting the hug tents.

For Gregg MacDonald, holding hands with his 84-year-old mother, Chloe MacDonald, was impor-



Gregg MacDonald holds hands with his 84-year-old mother, Chloe MacDonald, at a "hug tent" set up outside the Juniper Village assisted living center in Louisville, Colo.

tant because they hadn't touched since April. She likes to get updates on her grandson and granddaugh-

ter. "Time is a precious commodity, so while we all wait to get back to more normal-

ity, in the meantime, everyone is doing what they can," Gregg MacDonald said. "So I appreciate any efforts that they are making to allow us to have more contact with everybody."

Amanda Meier, project coordinator for TRU Community Care, said she, her husband and some volunteers built the hug tent around a standard 8-by-8-foot popup frame and attached the construction-grade plastic with glue and Velcro. Plastic arm sleeves built into the tent are attached with embroidery hoops.

Since the beginning of November, she has helped set up four hug tents in Colorado and said the feedback

has been positive.

"Lots of tears, but happy sort of tears, and a lot of shocked expressions of how in the world can we be doing something like this," Meier said. "It's so weird."

But after the initial weirdness, the benefits are clear, she said.

"You can see sort of relief in their bodies and their faces when they finally get to have that physical contact, which is really a basic human need," Meier said. "And in these facilities, a lot of times they're missing it anyway because they're just not with their families. I don't think it's measurable, really. You just know it when you see it and feel it when you're there."



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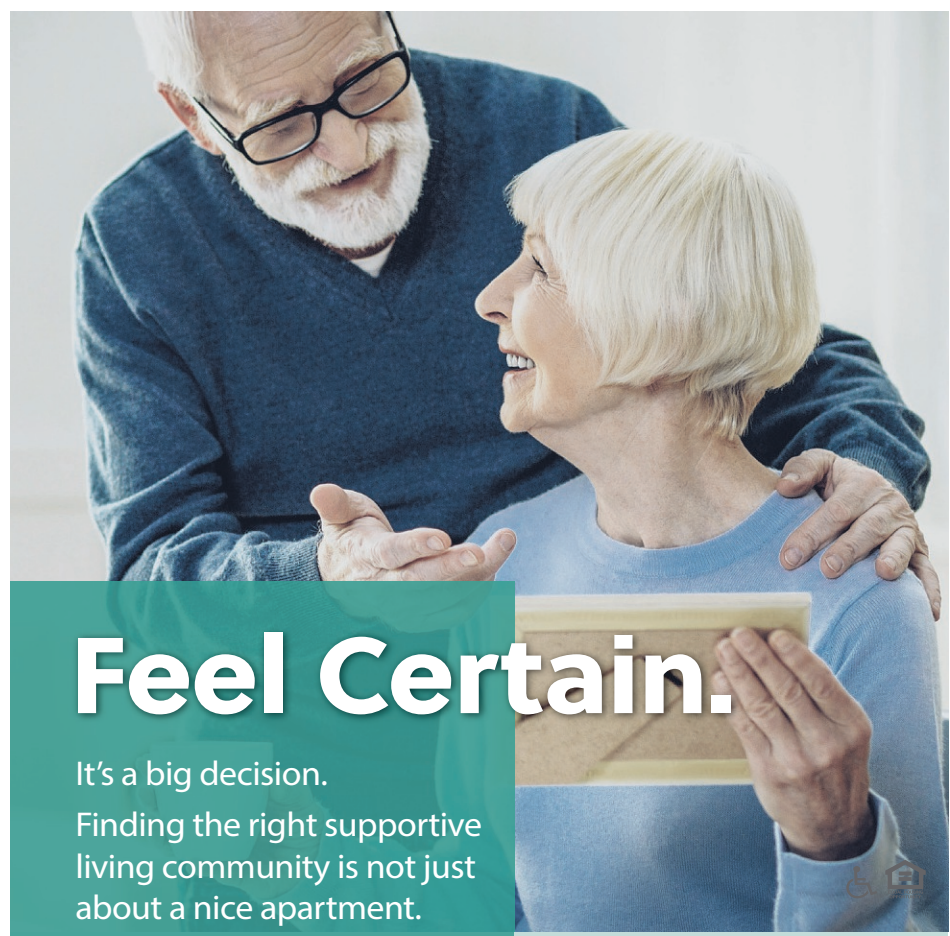
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HEALTH

Eating disorders, mental health go unchecked

By Jessica Hansford
The Renfrew Center of Radnor

Feb. 22-28 is National Eating Disorder Awareness Week, a national effort to make the public aware of the dangers and causes of eating disorders, their signs and symptoms and, what most individuals may not know, that recovery is possible.

This year, The Renfrew Center, the country's first residential eating disorder treatment facility located in Philadelphia, is launching a concurrent national campaign called "Beyond the Screen" to shine a spotlight on the toll the pandemic has taken on individuals' mental health. There is no denying screens are our lifeline right now, enabling us to remain connected to our families, friends and healthcare providers. But often the version of ourselves we present while video chatting is just a façade; in a year rife with unforeseen challenges, many of our lives Beyond the screen have far more layers than our one-dimensional, virtual selves reflect.

Eating disorders and body image issues are a source of distress that has been running rampant. In a culture obsessed with thinness, dieting and perfection, it can be difficult to recognize when a loved one — or even yourself — may be exhibiting thoughts or behaviors that have become high-risk, often leading to an eating disorder. Eating disorders are serious and potentially life-threatening illnesses that affect all ages, genders and races and, according to the National Association of Anorexia and Association Disorders

(ANAD), about 30 million Americans of all ages and genders are suffering.

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

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

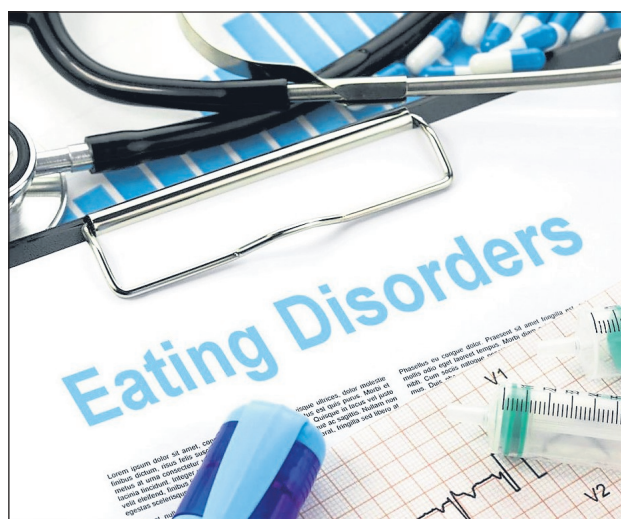
Guide to different types

At The Renfrew Center, we know there is never a single cause for the development of an eating disorder. Rather, it's a perfect storm made up of many factors. The three most common eating disorders are anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and binge eating disorder.

Anorexia (clinically known as anorexia nervosa) is self-imposed starvation. Individuals with anorexia are often profoundly dissatisfied with their body image and usually express a strong desire to lose weight.

One of the key features of this disorder is denial. Although obsessed with food, individuals continually deny their hunger and do not recognize that they are physically and emotionally fragile.

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



PICPEDIA.ORG

weight and body image as a source of self-esteem.

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

Warning signs

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

Someone with anorexia may be thin and continue to be thinner, staying on a diet because she feels overweight due to a distorted body image. Excessively discussing food, cooking or dieting and allowing body image to be the primary factor to her self-worth may also be evident. Thinning hair or loss of teeth occurs.

Someone with bulimia may engage in binge eating, particularly as a reaction to stress and may feel

her eating is out of control. Engaging in vomiting, laxative use or exercise and using the bathroom frequently after meals are also signs. A person's weight does not signal they are suffering from bulimia, although they may experience frequent changes in weight.

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

Women in midlife

For most people, the word eating disorder evokes thoughts of a thin teenager or young adult. However, eating disorders affect people from all walks of life. The Renfrew Center has seen an increase in the number of women in their 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s seeking treatment for their eating disorder, often for the first time. Over the past decade, there has been a 42% increase in the number of women over the age of 35 who sought treatment at Renfrew.

Women in midlife face

unique circumstances that may increase their vulnerability to developing an eating disorder. They may experience the same body dissatisfaction, body image distortions and fear of food that young women do, but these issues are often made more difficult to cope with when combined with the aging process. We live in a culture obsessed with thinness and youth, with constant media messages pressuring women of all ages, but particularly women in midlife, to alter their appearance or change themselves in some way to conform to that ideal.

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

What to do if your loved one is suffering

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

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

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

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

If you or someone you love is struggling with an eating disorder, speak with your primary care physician or a treatment facility, such as The Renfrew Center in Philadelphia or Radnor, Delaware County. Programming consists of a comprehensive range of services including day treatment, intensive outpatient and outpatient groups. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have temporarily shifted our day treatment and intensive outpatient programming to a virtual platform that is fully accessible to patients from the safety and comfort of their homes. Renfrew is accepting patients at its residential facility in Philadelphia and has put necessary procedures in place to ensure the continued safety and well-being of patients.

For more information, visit <https://renfrewcenter.com> or call 800-RENFREW.

Jessica Hansford is site director at The Renfrew Center of Radnor.



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