

**HOLIDAYS**

# FAMILY TIME



**Make memories with your grandchildren this holiday season.**

**By Courtney Diener-Stokes**  
*For MediaNews Group*

The holidays are abundant with opportunities to bond and make memories with your grandchildren.

When Patty Belsterling of Wyomissing, Berks County, is ready to trim her tree, her teenage grandchildren, Finn and Riley Giblin, come over to help decorate as Belsterling creates an ambience to get everyone in the holiday spirit.

"I put out nibbles, light a fire and play Christmas carols to get into the season," Belsterling said.

Instead of doing a different tree theme each year, Belsterling enjoys sticking to the ornaments she has accumulated over the years that have become sentimental keepsakes. In addition, each year she gives the gift of a new ornament, with the year written on it, to each grandchild.

COURTESY OF PATTY BELSTERLING

Patty Belsterling's Christmas tree in her living room at her home in Wyomissing, Berks County, is adorned with ornaments that have become sentimental keepsakes over the years.

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# Holidays

FROM PAGE 1

“I love the memories behind each ornament,” she said. “I have some ornaments made out of the mobiles from their crib, some from their school pictures — it was best when they were younger and would bring an ornament home from school.”

## Carve out time

Belsterling works around the busy schedules of Finn and Riley, who attend Wyoming High School, to carve out time over the holidays. Since they live just a block and a half away with Belsterling’s daughter, Erin Belsterling Giblin, and her husband, Bernie Giblin, it’s not too difficult to arrange time to see them.

“They brighten me up,” Belsterling said of the time she spends with her grandchildren. “They are sweethearts, and I’m proud of the people they are becoming — it makes me happy to be around them and see how they are getting older and the way they think — It makes you feel younger being around them.”

Belsterling, who was married to the late Louis “Bucky” Belsterling for 53 years, said she hopes to take Finn and Riley back to Stratton Mountain Resort in Vermont over the holidays for a long ski weekend, a pastime from their youth. “That’s a real special time,” she said.

Belsterling would also like to take them to Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square, Chester County.

“It’s like candy to the eye,” she said of Longwood’s light displays.

## Start planning now

Since the hustle and bustle of the holiday season will soon be upon us, now is a good time for you, like Belsterling, to think about ways to make some memorable moments for your grandchildren.

“I would start planning now because I know some of these places sell out so



MEDIANEWS GROUP

Koziar’s Christmas Village in Jefferson Township is open on weekends through the New Year. The spectacle attracts locals and tourists alike and creates a traffic backups on Route 183. State police ask motorists to have patience and prepare for delays.



COURTESY OF PATTY BELSTERLING

Patty Belsterling with her grandchildren, Finn and Riley Giblin.

quickly you can’t believe it,” said Lisa Haggerty, marketing manager, PA Americana Region.

Due to COVID-19 precautions still being in effect, some events you’re used to attending as an annual tradition might play out differently this year.

“Some will require you to make a reservation to make sure it’s not too crowded, to stay with social distancing and keep people safe,” Haggerty said, referring to timed slots to visit versus just arriving when you please.

Haggerty suggests doing your homework before heading out to any holiday attractions with your grandchild so there aren’t any surprises.

“That would be so disappointing to get there and not be able to get in,” said Haggerty, who is a grand-

mother of two. “Plan in advance.”

## Plenty of options

Whether you want to stay outdoors to play it safe or prefer something like an indoor performance, Berks County has plenty of options for children of all ages to enjoy along with their grandparents.

“We are lucky to have Christmas Village in our backyard,” Haggerty said, adding that many visitors come from outside of Berks to see their light display each year.

Koziar’s Christmas Village in Jefferson Township opens on Saturday for weekends only until Thanksgiving, when it will also be open on weekdays.

“That’s a good place to go early to avoid the cold and crowds,” Haggerty said.

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# Holidays

FROM PAGE 2

If you are on a tight budget, the lights at Gring's Mill in Spring Township, which opens the first weekend in December, might be more appealing.

"It's an outdoor place to go with the kids, and there is just a charge for the carload," Haggerty said.

Typically you can also listen to music, get hot chocolate and visit Santa in the barn, in addition to taking in the lights, but Haggerty isn't sure if that will all be happening this year due to COVID.

"Some places haven't given us all of their information as to what they are going to do," she said.

## Indoor entertainment

If you prefer indoor entertainment, which is ideal if you have any physical limitations or intolerance to the cold weather, Haggerty shared many productions that will be available to see this season.

"Genesius is going to do a Christmas play, 'A Berks County Christmas Carol,'" she said of the theater company in Reading. "Berks Ballet is going to do the 'Nutcracker.'"

The Santander Performing Arts Center also has a host of holiday productions in store this year, including "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" on Dec. 2 and "A Charlie Brown Christmas — Live on Stage" on Dec. 8.

For those grandparents looking for a combination of both indoors and outdoors, you can take in the outdoors while traveling in the comforts of a train car for a little adventure.

"We have a lot of local railroads that are doing holiday excursions," Haggerty said. "That's another way to spend time with a grandchild where you can sit and enjoy the ride."

You might have a chance to see Mr. and Mrs. Claus on the train, drink hot chocolate



The holiday lights at Gring's Mill.



Passengers on the Colebrookdale Railroad can view the Secret Valley between Boyertown and Pottstown from the open-air car. The car was decorated for holiday season.

late and sing Christmas carols.

"Colebrookdale (in Boyertown) does the Polar Bear Express and Allentown & Auburn in Kutz-

town is doing themed seasonal excursions," she said. "WK&S in the Hamburg area is doing different Christmas train rides, and Reading Northern on Route 61 is doing themed excursions as well."

## Shop around if on budget

Haggerty said it's wise to shop around if you're working on a budget.

"These rides are at all different price points — they are not the same," she said. "Sometimes all of this holiday stuff gets expensive."

Haggerty suggests that when trying to figure out the perfect activity to suit grandchildren of varying ages, it doesn't hurt to ask them what they might like to do.

"They might be too young to go to the 'Nutcracker' and sit through it, however, they might have just started dance lessons so it could be a good time

to take them," she said.

If you have your grandchild for the entire day, you might want to head to Murdough's Christmas Barn in Heidelberg Township after taking in a theater production and lunch.

"They can pick out an ornament and put a date and initials on them," Haggerty said. "They have such a wide selection of Christmas tree ornaments; it would be a fun way to make a day of it."

## Bond with your grandchild

Whether carrying on an annual tradition with your grandchild or trying something new each holiday season, there is a good chance the time you share will be special.

"It's a good way to bond with your grandchild and make memories," Haggerty said. "I think it becomes a really special time."

Regardless of whether you head out to do an activity with your grandchild or decide to cozy up at home with a seasonal craft, Haggerty suggests it's best for parents to take advantage of some free time away from their kids to prepare for the holidays while they are with their grandparents.

"It can give parents a chance to go out and go shopping," she said.

There are a huge variety of holiday options in Berks, so you don't have to go too far afield to make the most of the holidays with your grandchildren.

"A lot don't realize how many things are going on around the county," Haggerty said. "Much can be done for little money or free, so take advantage."

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on local holiday events, visit [www.visitpaamericana.com](http://www.visitpaamericana.com) (click on the events tab at top of home page on the blue banner)

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By Terry Alburger

Remember those great board games we played as kids? I mean, before the age of technology and hand-held devices.

You cannot compare the joy of actual games to the virtual world. People are so busy trying to replicate reality in the graphics and details of real life that they forget, real life exists!

Yes, I guess I am old-school. I prefer reading a real book to my Kindle. I prefer the feel (and frustration) of a real 500-piece jigsaw puzzle to the neatness of my virtual challenges. I know that sometimes, the virtual versions come with great benefits — less mess, no real space required, accessibility, etc. But there is just something about old-fashioned games. Looking back to my childhood, they taught me a lot.

Let's start with the classic, most likely in every home in America, Monopoly. Who hasn't spent days playing this one? And I do mean days! This game most definitely taught me patience since it spanned several days to complete.

It also taught me the importance of paying taxes on time, of owning stock in the right companies and of spending hard-earned money to buy real estate in the right neighborhoods. Oh, and one more thing — it taught me the importance of being on the right side of those prison bars: "Just visiting!"

Then there was Mouse-trap. With this game, I learned the importance of building a structure just right, on a sound base. You have to stick to the specifications and instructions exactly, or chaos may ensue. You could easily lose your marbles playing this game, pun intended. If your stairs are off kilter, or if your bathtub is askew, your marbles are gone and the mice escape.

Candyland. For most youngsters, this is one of the first games they play. It



SPOT OF T

# Everything I know, I learned from playing board games



teaches colors and counting, and it could also teach good sportsmanship... that is, if a parent would actually allow his or her child to lose.

If they are like me, I felt

it was important to bolster self-confidence in my kids, so I invariably let them win. But no matter what, this game teaches that sometimes there are rules that you have to follow. As

a kid's first board game, it taught how to take turns and hopefully play well with others. Hopefully.

Battleship. I learned how to use strategy in this game. It is important to

outwit your opponent by moving your ships around from game to game. It also taught me how to look for patterns in my opponent's (aka my big brother's) ship placements. It also taught

me that bigger was not necessarily better. The smaller ships were much harder to sink.

Chinese checkers. This was a game that taught me balance. Literally. These precariously placed marbles on a board were easily displaced, and many was the time I knocked them all over the floor. I guess I also learned that a game that takes more time to set up than to play is not necessarily my favorite! However, it did teach me that simplicity in design should also not be confused with ease. While there was no fancy design to this game, it did require strategy and patience to master.

Clue! Now that was a fun game. I most likely got my love of mysteries and thrillers from this game. Each time you played, you had to solve a murder. A murder! Is it any wonder that I love the "NCIS" TV shows so much?

We had so much fun making up scenarios for each murder, "Professor Plum was murdered in the conservatory with a candlestick, by Mrs. Peacock!"

Of course, we would take it a step further, and offer a motive as well. We did indeed enjoy this game. I suppose we learned to pay attention to detail, to keep track of what went on around us and what clues we already had.

Scrabble. I do believe it was with Scrabble that I developed my love of words. I love writing, and I attribute that to this game. I wanted to play all the time, with whoever was around. I even had a Spanish version of the game — it had a lot more vowels and a different number of the consonants. I enjoyed playing people who didn't realize it. I suppose you could say I had a distinct advantage.

The list of childhood games could go on and on. Think back ... which games did you enjoy playing? Every once in awhile it's fun to go back to those days, and perhaps yell, "Bingo!"

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CAREGIVING

# Jean Griswold Foundation receives approval for change in status

MediaNews Group

The Jean Griswold Foundation announced that it has received notice from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania that its transition to a public nonprofit foundation with a caregiver-focused mission is complete. The foundation was established in 2010 to complement the efforts of Griswold Home Care, which is one of the oldest non-medical home care franchises in the United States.

Griswold Home Care is renowned for its services to older adults, those with disabilities and individuals recovering from injuries or illness. With franchises in 29 states, the organization includes almost 170 local offices and works with thousands of caregivers.

“When the foundation was created, its mission was to provide grants to community nonprofit organizations that enhance the quality of life for low-income seniors and adults with disabilities who choose to age in place,” said Maryanne Murray, chair of the Jean Griswold Foundation. “Now, along with a change in status, all of the foundation’s future efforts will focus on creating opportunities that empower caregivers.

“For almost two years, we’ve all felt the strain presented by the COVID-19 pandemic — few have felt this strain more than those on the frontlines. Our caregivers have always been a source of compassion and hope, and now we are honored to offer resources that will help them further their careers.”

Having applied for a change in status from a



**“With humility and appreciation, we recognize the critical role of our caregivers. The pandemic was an astonishing reminder of just how important they are to society. The Jean Griswold Foundation is proud to focus its efforts towards supporting caregivers everywhere.”**

*Griswold Home Care CEO Michael Slupecki*

private nonprofit to this new designation in February 2021, the foundation will offer Caregiver Support Grants, specifically for Griswold Home Care caregivers who may be in need and suffering from hardship. In addition to grants, the foundation will place a large focus on scholarships for caregivers. What’s more, anyone is eligible: you don’t



Jean Griswold, the founder of Griswold Home Care.

COURTESY OF GRISWOLD HOME CARE

have to be a Griswold Home Care caregiver to apply for a scholarship.

“With humility and appreciation, we recognize the critical role of our caregivers,” said Griswold Home Care CEO Michael Slupecki. “The pandemic was an astonishing reminder of just how important they are to society. The Jean Griswold Foundation is proud to focus its efforts towards supporting caregivers everywhere.”

During the COVID-19 pandemic, prior to the foundation’s change in status, the Jean Griswold Foundation donated more than \$50,000 in food relief to disadvantaged older

adults. Those interested in discovering more about the Jean Griswold Foundation, as well as opportunities to support its new mission, can visit [www.jeangriswoldfoundation.com](http://www.jeangriswoldfoundation.com).

About the Jean Griswold Foundation: Honoring the founder of Griswold Home Care, Dr. Jean Griswold, the Jean Griswold Foundation is transitioning to a public nonprofit whose primary goal is to support caregivers. Funds raised through private donors, corporations, franchisees and employees will focus on caregiver education through scholarships and grants that support caregivers in times of hardship.

The Jean Griswold Foundation believes that everyone deserves to age with dignity, regardless of their financial status or available resources. We want to make it easier for the elderly and differently-abled to have access to the physical and mental health resources they need to remain healthy, happy, and active in the comfort of their home. Caregivers are the lifeblood of the home care industry and it’s through supporting them that we will achieve success.

About Griswold Home Care: With almost 170 locations in 30 states, Griswold Home Care is one of the country’s top home care

companies, delivering compassionate care 24/7 to its clients. Its purpose is to give people the help they need to live in the place they love. Through this purpose, Griswold Home Care helps adults maintain quality of life despite advanced age or onset of illness through services including companion care, home services, personal care, and respite care. Founded by the late Jean Griswold in 1982, the company has maintained its founder’s profound sense of empathy for older and disabled adults and those living with chronic conditions. For more information, visit [www.griswoldhomecare.com](http://www.griswoldhomecare.com) or call 877-268-3277.



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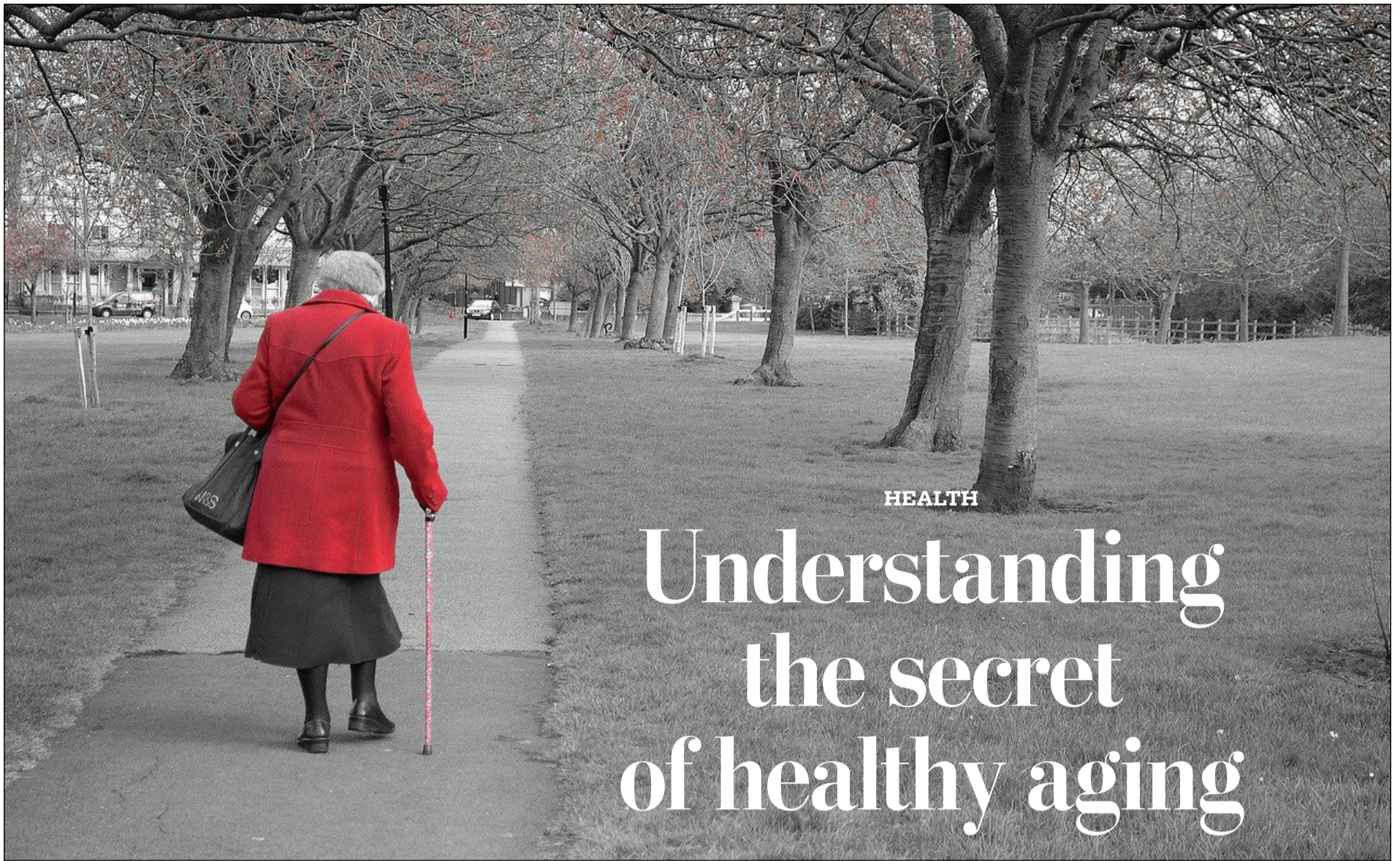
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HEALTH

# Understanding the secret of healthy aging

PIXABAY

By John Grimaldi

It's not easy growing old. However, if you want to live to a ripe old age, you have to work at it; you have to make a promise to yourself to take care of your mental health as well as your physical health.

"The ability to grow as old as you can begins when you are young and healthy and continues long after you officially become a senior citizen," said Rebecca Weber, CEO of the Association of Mature American Citizens. "As we aged some of us traded in healthy lifestyles for easier, unhealthier routines. But it's never too late to make a commitment to turn things around, even if you already are a senior citizen."

You already know that ex-

ercise is an important part of aging well; surely your doctors, your friends and family have told you. But there is nothing to be afraid of. Surely, you can take a daily walk, no matter how far or fast you walk. Some exercise is better than no exercise. The idea is to keep moving, according to Weber.

The Centers for Disease Control says: "As an older adult, regular physical activity is one of the most important things you can do for your health. It can prevent many of the health problems that seem to come with age. It also helps your muscles grow stronger so you can keep doing your day-to-day activities without becoming dependent on others."

It's important also to get plenty of sleep. The recommendation of most health

experts is that seniors need at least seven hours of undisturbed sleep each and every night. There is convincing medical evidence that exercise and a good night's sleep are both important elements of brain health.

"Experts used to think brain development peaked in late adolescence and it was all downhill from there," say the health experts at Kaiser Permanente. "They believed if a person lost brain cells due to problems like a head injury, stroke or substance abuse, nothing could be done to restore memory and brain function."

"Now, thanks to discoveries in neuroscience, we know that the brain can grow new cells and form new neural connections.

Like our muscles and other body parts, the brain can rebuild itself through repeated use and exercise."

In fact, according to Kaiser Permanente, sleep is key to preventing memory loss as are activities that focus on mental and physical health.

You should also focus on your social health, suggests Weber. We've had a year and a half of social isolation and there is more to come before we see an end to the COVID pandemic. But it is important that you pay attention to your human need for social interaction.

COVID notwithstanding, Harvard Medical School says: "Research increasingly shows that strong social ties are crucial to your brain health. Socializing can stimulate atten-

tion and memory and help to strengthen neural networks. You may just be laughing and talking, but your brain is hard at work. This increase in mental activity pays off over time ...

"Scientists have found that people with strong social ties are less likely to experience cognitive decline than people who spend most of their time alone. In fact, one large study, which included some 12,000 participants, suggests that when people are lonely, their risk of dementia rises by as much as 40%."

What you eat is also important for your physical and mental health. For example, they don't call fish brain food for nothing. Fish such as salmon, trout, albacore tuna, hering, and sardines are rich

Exercise is important to staying healthy as we age.

in omega-3 fatty acids. "Your brain uses omega-3s to build brain and nerve cells, and these fats are essential for learning and memory," according to the internet site Healthline.

*The 2.4 million member Association of Mature American Citizens, www.amac.us, is a vibrant, vital senior advocacy organization that takes its marching orders from its members. AMAC Action is a nonprofit, non-partisan organization representing the membership in our nation's capital and in local Congressional districts throughout the country.*

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**CASINO NIGHT**

# Casino night at the Heritage of Green Hills raises money for resident benefit fund

MediaNews Group

Casino Night returned to the Heritage of Green Hills, complete with blackjack, roulette, craps, slots, Texas hold 'em, and big wheel.

The annual event at the healthy life plan community in Cumru Township, Berks County, raised \$7,000 for the Heritage Resident Benefit Fund, which helps defray costs for residents who have outlived their resources.

In addition to table games, prizes were raffled off and a silent auction was held.

"Casino Night is one of our most popular – and fun – events here at the Heritage," said Heritage Execu-



Gene Waltz spins the big wheel.



From left. Mary Ann Kruse, Bonnie Eshelman, Mary Meyers, Delite Hawk (standing), Scott Eshelman, Kathy Wagner and Lois Beam at Casino Night.

tive Director Doug Walther. "We're thrilled that it came back so strong after having been put on hold in 2020."

**CELEBRATION**

# Little Black Dress Party returns to The Heritage of Green Hills

MediaNews Group

The Heritage of Green Hills, a healthy life plan community in Cumru Township, Berks County, celebrated the 60th anniversary of the film "Breakfast at Tiffany's" with the return of its annual Little Black Dress Party – which had been on hold since 2019.

The slightly tongue-in-cheek soiree was attended by a bevy of fashionistas in their most glamorous black outfits and pearls to celebrate happiness and friendship.

At the party, attendees were given light-up "diamond" rings, glamourpuss wax lips and roses in Tiffany blue to complete their looks.

Heritage's Little Black Dress Party celebrates the spirit of the iconic Audrey Hepburn, who famously said, "I believe that happy girls are the prettiest girls."



**FUNDRAISER**

# Taking steps to raise awareness and finding a cure

MediaNews Group

Memory care staff and residents from Keystone Villa at Douglassville participated in the Berks County Walk to End Alzheimer's on Oct. 16 at the Berks County Heritage Center.

The memory care community also donated \$1,300 to further the care, support and research efforts of the Alzheimer's Association.

"It's important to bring attention to Alzheimer's disease and all dementias," said Stephanie Jones, memory care director at Keystone Villa at Douglassville. "The Alzheimer's Association is our biggest ally in fighting back against this disease and we are thankful

to those who helped us raise money and support a world without Alzheimer's."

Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia, a progressive neurologic disorder that slowly destroys memory and eventually, the ability to carry out daily tasks.

Keystone Villa at Douglassville provides a positive approach to memory care. The care team takes the time to know their resident's likes, dislikes and personal history, while recognizing each resident's abilities to create purposeful and meaningful connections.

"We focus on what residents can do, what makes them happy, and what instills fulfillment now because

living in the moment is the greatest gift we can give to anyone we serve during their journey," Jones explained.

In addition to memory care, Keystone Villa at Douglassville provides independent living and personal care services. To learn more, visit [www.keystonevillaatdouglassville.com](http://www.keystonevillaatdouglassville.com) or call 610-385-5002.

Keystone Villa at Douglassville offers spacious studios, one-bedroom, or two-bedroom apartments designed to suit your style. There are no buy-in fees or hidden costs, and the apartments are leased on an affordable month-to-month basis. To learn more, visit [www.keystonevillaatdouglassville.com](http://www.keystonevillaatdouglassville.com).



COURTESY OF KEYSTONE VILLAGE AT DOUGLASSVILLE

Memory care staff and residents from Keystone Villa at Douglassville attended the Berks County Walk to End Alzheimer's to raise awareness and support those living with the disease.

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FITNESS

# More exercise is better than less as you get older

By John Grimaldi

“Twenty-first century seniors live longer, healthier and more active lives,” said Rebecca Weber, CEO of the Association of Mature American Citizens. “Sure, you’ll find some older folks who might prefer to sit out their senior years. But, for the most part, the elders among us — and there are a lot of them — choose ‘not to go gently into that good night,’ as poet Dylan Thomas put it.”

The Census Bureau reports that when they conducted their 2010 head count, the oldest baby boomer, the first of whom were born in 1946, was not even 65 years old yet. But since then, a staggering 10,000 of them have been celebrating their 65th birthdays each and every day and the gray tsunami will continue for yet another decade.

Today’s life expectancy is about 79 years. It was little more than 68 years in 1950, and it will continue to increase well beyond the turn of another century. Medical innovations have a lot to do with it. In 1950, there were nearly 589 deaths due to heart disease per 100,000 population; today, the death rate due to heart disease has dropped dramatically to 167 per 100,000.

But, while medical interventions certainly allow more of us to have longer life spans, another important contributing factor is modern day lifestyles. We’re taking better care of ourselves, eating better, sleeping better and getting more exercise.

According to the Centers for Disease Control: “Older adults should move more and sit less throughout the day. Keep in mind, some physical activity is better than none. Older adults who sit less and do any amount of moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical



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activity gain some health benefits. Your health benefits will also increase with the more physical activity that you do.”

Weber, meanwhile, is suggesting that more exercise is better than less as you get older: taking long walks, participating in sports, climbing stairs, lifting weights, doing push-ups and sit-ups. In fact, a growing number of seniors have gone so far as to engage in more extreme ways to get

exercise, she says, warning us to make sure we don’t overdo it.

For example, an exercise regimen known as parkour has been growing in popularity in the U.S. in recent years. To say that it is an extreme way for senior citizens to stay fit is an understatement; it involves a lot of jumping, climbing and vaulting over and around barriers.

As a matter of fact, Sean Hannah president of PK

Move, told U.S. News, “You say, ‘parkour for seniors,’ and it hits the brain weird, like that’s the absolute opposite of what seniors should be doing.”

PK Move bills itself as “The WORLD’S 1st and ONLY evidence-based program for seniors based on modified parkour.”

Nancy Lorentz is executive director and co-founder of PK Move. In an interview with Northern Virginia Magazine, she

described parkour training as “the art of moving through your environment in a smooth, efficient manner. This art of movement requires and builds mental and physical strength to overcome obstacles in the path you have chosen. Generally, parkour involves crawling, running, jumping, leaping, climbing, swinging or diving. There are no set routines (such as in yoga or tai chi) for practicing parkour, although

proper functional form is required to train safely.”

The 2.4 million member Association of Mature American Citizens, www.amac.us, is a vibrant, vital senior advocacy organization that takes its marching orders from its members. AMAC Action is a non-profit, non-partisan organization representing the membership in our nation’s capital and in local Congressional Districts throughout the country.



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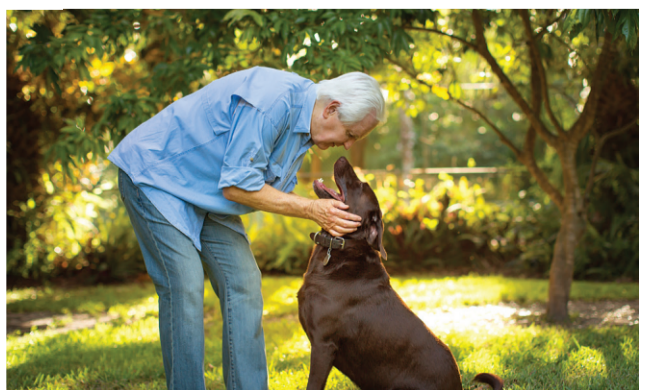
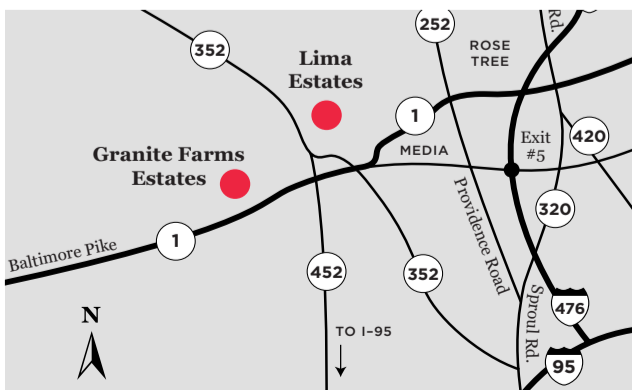
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DENTISTRY

# Laser focus

Use of new technology helps take the fear out of going to the dentist

By Don Botch  
dbotch@readingeagle.com

For many people, the prospect of going for a dental procedure is met with fear and trepidation.

But a growing trend, laser dentistry, which uses energy generated by light to remove soft or hard tissue in the oral cavity, is putting more and more patients at ease as they consider time spent in the chair.

Laser dentistry isn't exactly new. It's been around since the early 1990s.

But in the early days the equipment was cost prohibitive, so not many dental practices took the plunge.

Angstadt Family Dental, with locations in Wyomissing, Exton and Lancaster, is one that did.

Dr. Eric R. Angstadt said when he first started using lasers, he was among less than one-quarter of 1% of dentists who used laser technology. Now, they are much more affordable and so more dentists use them.

To him, Angstadt said, it's always been important to remain on the cutting edge of new technology. Now, with three decades of laser dentistry under his belt, he has mastered the techniques and finds the technology to be indispensable.

His practice uses the Waterlase iPlus from Biolase, which combines water, air and laser energy to energize water molecules to very precisely create a cool, biological cutting of soft and hard tissues. As a result, the patient feels no heat, no pressure and no vibration to cause pain, which often means no needle to administer a numbing agent, as well.

The lasers, which can be used instead of drills for certain procedures, also create fewer aerosols than tradition dental handpieces, so there is less bacteria emitted into the air, which makes for a safer environment.

"I always tell patients I'm always learning," he said. "I'm al-

ways a neophyte. I'm always trying to find the next best thing. Are we missing something? Is there something better?"

### Lasers' uses and benefits

Angstadt believes lasers are the best thing going for procedures such as removing dental decay on tooth structure, shaping tissue for cosmetic effect, creating better margins for crowns or fillings and exposing areas of decay below the gumline.

Benefits include better accuracy and precision, reduced trauma, improved cavity fillings, less bleeding and swelling, no needles and fewer dental visits.

"It's also made dentistry quicker and easier," Angstadt said. "As busy as people are, this

is another thing that's made it much more convenient for patients' lives."

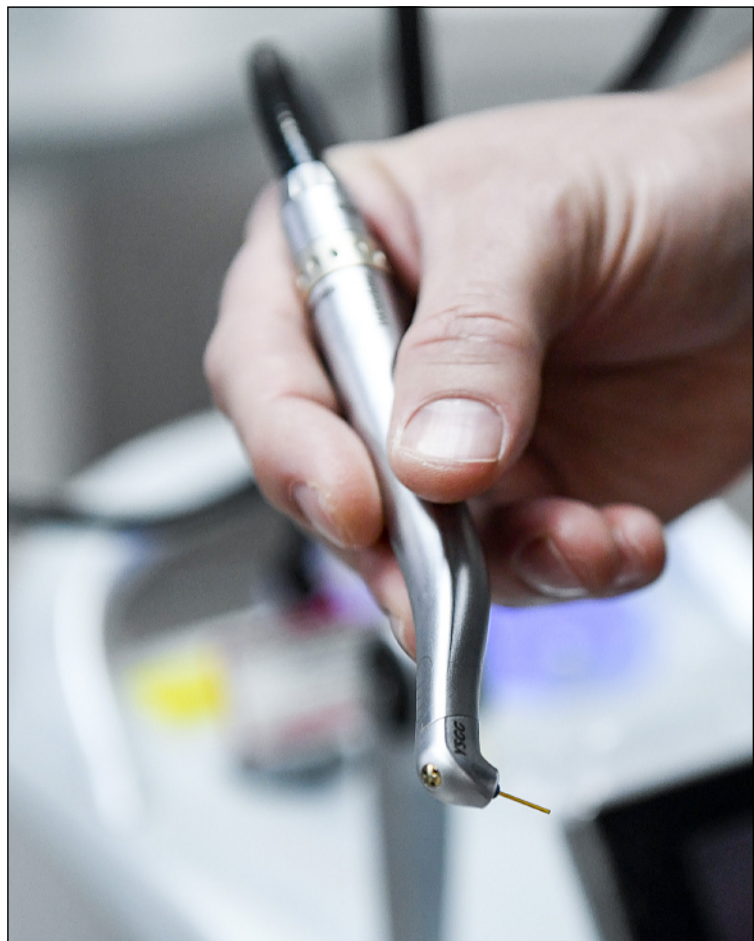
### Margins for crowns

Angstadt said one of the more common uses of lasers is in creating margins for crowns. The laser troughs the tissue very easily, literally in seconds.

"You have a better margin, it's not bleeding, and you've actual been able to kill bacteria with that laser energy, too," he said, "so you have a cleaner, more sterile field, and you get a much better margin."

"It's made me a much better dentist. It would be very difficult for me to practice to the same degree of efficiency and efficacy if I

LASER FOCUS » PAGE 2



BEN HASTY — READING EAGLE

Dr. Jon Angstadt holds the Waterlase handpiece.



BEN HASTY — READING EAGLE

Dr. Jon Angstadt and Dr. Eric R. Angstadt stand next to the Waterlase laser at Angstadt Family Dental in Wyomissing.



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## Laser focus

FROM PAGE 1

didn't have my laser to create trough tissue for a better fitting crown or bridge."

### Finding decay

Lasers also come in handy in dealing with tooth decay. Angstadt uses a different laser called a DIAGNOdent for diagnostic purposes. It sends light into the tooth and gives a "bounce-back" on that light if there is decay.

"You feel nothing, and it tells us if there's decay there to over 95% efficiency," Angstadt said. "So it's very easy to find small areas, take care of them before they become bigger, and all of a sudden the bent of your practice is extremely preventive. You're finding things that are small, easy to diagnose and then easy to treat with the Waterlase laser."

### The happiness factor

Angstadt said the lasers, used in conjunction with flowable composites, which have replaced amalgams for fillings, and newer bonding materials all combine to make for happier patients because they are spending less time in the chair and experiencing less discomfort.

And better still, the patient walks away with an extremely durable restoration that will last "for years if not decades," he said.

"Let's not forget the happiness factor," Angstadt said. "For a patient to come in and say, 'Wait, we're done? I just felt tapping on my tooth. That was it?' Some patients feel nothing at all, others feel a little bit of tapping. Some might say I'm too sensitive for that and we get them a little numb. It's really not a big deal."

### Nothing to fear

Angstadt stressed that pa-

tients need not be fearful. "Over 50% of the folks who avoid going to the dentist, it's because they had a bad experience or they're just afraid, and oftentimes fears are unfounded," he said.

But putting off dental visits often leads to more problems dealing with issues that could have been handled quickly, easily and with less expense with a preventive approach.

### Coffee talks

"We always determined our practice was going to be cutting edge technology: best possible care, best possible materials, best possible technology," Angstadt said. "Have conversations with patients. Dentistry really is co-care. We sit down and discuss patients' needs with the patient and try and resolve what they need by having a coffee-talk-like conversation: Come sit at my 'kitchen table,' let's talk. It's having that conversation and bringing in technology and telling patients what the advantages are."

Angstadt compared sharing the benefits of laser dentistry with being a missionary.

"When you have a piece of knowledge and you know it can make somebody's life better, you want to tell them about it," he said. "And lasers are definitely one of those things. I get excited about telling people I've got something that can really make your life better. We can do this for you. It's exciting to share that information."

*Angstadt Family Dentistry has offices in Wyomissing, Exton and Lancaster. The Exton office is at 319 N. Pottstown Pike, Suite 106. Call 610-594-1050. To learn more, visit [angstadtfamilydental.com](http://angstadtfamilydental.com).*



Dr. Jon Angstadt with the Waterlase.

BEN HASTY — READING EAGLE



The Waterlase.

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## PROMOTING SENIOR WELLNESS

# Exercise has many benefits for seniors



COURTESY OF THE HICKMAN

Residents at The Hickman participate in chair exercises.

By Samantha Gordon

No matter our age, exercise is vital to our everyday health, and this is especially true for seniors. Many experts believe seniors should aim to stay as active as they can to live a long and happy life.

However, it is important to always consult your doctor before starting any new exercises to ensure it is the right fit for your body and to practice safe workouts.

### Mental benefits of exercising

- Exercising gives us more energy.
- It can improve how we sleep — prevent insomnia.
- It gives us more

strength — improves our independence.

- It can improve our mood and prevent anxiety and depression.
- It can improve how our brain functions and works.

### Physical benefits of exercising

- It can improve our physical strength.
- It gives us better balance; it can help prevent falls.
- It can help fight or prevent diabetes, heart disease and some other diseases.

Exercising can even help our social health, meaning, it can increase our social engagement with the help of joining workout classes, going to the gym with a friend or even by joining a club.

It can give us many opportunities to meet new people and try new things.

At the end of the day exercising should be something you enjoy and should not be seen as a chore or hassle. It's important not to push yourself too much but there is nothing wrong with starting at the beginning and making your way up to the goal you want to reach.

*Promoting Senior Wellness is provided by The Hickman, a Quaker-affiliated licensed personal care home in West Chester, where Samantha Gordon is the communications and outreach manager. She can be reached at [sgordon@thehickman.org](mailto:sgordon@thehickman.org) or [www.thehickman.org](http://www.thehickman.org).*



## SCIATICA

# Understanding and living with sciatica

Metro Creative Content

The largest nerve in the human body is the sciatic nerve, which originates in the lower back and travels through the back of each leg. Injury or pressure on this nerve can lead to a type of pain known as sciatica.

Sciatica can have an adverse effect on everyday life, causing pain that can radiate from the lower back through the hips and buttocks and down the legs. People experiencing pain in these areas should consult a physician immediately, as the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons notes that between 80 and 90 percent of people diagnosed with sciatica get better over time without surgery. Many typically feel better within several weeks of beginning treatment.

The first step toward diagnosing sciatica begins at home. People who learn to recognize potential symptoms of sciatica may be more likely to seek immediate treatment than those who might mistake their pain for something else.

## What are the symptoms of sciatica?

The AAOS notes that sciatica may feel like a bad leg cramp that lasts for weeks before it goes away. According to Spine-health.com, a property of the health publisher Veritas Health, sciatica pain is often described as burning, tingling or searing as opposed to a dull ache. In addition, pain resulting from sciatica may be worse when sitting, even though sharp



METRO CREATIVE CONTENT

Sciatica can have an adverse effect on everyday life, causing pain that can radiate from the lower back through the hips and buttocks and down the legs.

pain associated with sciatica can make it difficult to stand up or walk. Numbness characterized by a “pins and needles” feeling, weakness or a burning or tingling sensation down the leg are some additional symptoms of sciatica.

## Does sciatica affect both legs?

WebMD notes that sciatica usually affects only one leg, though the buttock or leg on the affected side may feel like it is in con-

stant pain.

## What causes sciatica?

Spine-health.com notes that the following five lower back problems are among the most common causes of sciatica:

• **LUMBER HERNIATED DISC»** This occurs when the soft inner material of the disc herniates, or leaks out, through the fibrous outer core, irritating or pinching the nerve root.

• **DEGENERATIVE DISC DISEASE»** Discs in the back can degenerate naturally with age and never contribute to a problem like sciatica. However, degeneration in one or more discs in the lower back can sometimes irritate a nerve root and lead to sciatica.

• **ISTHMIC SPONDYLOLISTHESIS»** This occurs when a small stress fracture allows one vertebral body to slip forward on another. The combination of collapsing disc space, a fracture and the slipping forward of the vertebral body can pinch the nerve and cause sciatica.

• **LUMBAR SPINAL STENOSIS»** In this condition, which is relatively common among people older than 60, a narrowing of the spinal canal can contribute to sciatica.

• **PIRIFORMIS SYNDROME»** A muscle found deep within the buttocks, the piriformis connects the lower spine to the upper thighbone, running directly over the sciatic nerve. Spasms in the piriformis can put pressure on the sciatic nerve, triggering sciatica.

## Treating sciatica

Sciatica often can be treated successfully without surgery. Doctors may recommend applying heat and/or ice packs for acute sciatic pain. In addition, over-the-counter and prescription pain medications can effectively reduce or relieve sciatic pain. Doctors also may explore other treatments, including chiropractic manipulation, acupuncture, massage therapy and surgery.

## BACK PAIN

# Keep back pain at bay

These basic approaches will help you avoid a trip to the doctor's office.

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Back pain is a part of life for many people. The American Chiropractic Association says 31 million Americans experience low back pain at any given time, and experts estimate that up to 80 percent of the population will experience back pain at some point in their lives. WebMD says back pain is the second most common reason people visit the doctor.

Back pain can take on various forms, ranging from a dull ache to a sharp pain. Some may experience intermittent back pain, while others may have chronic back pain. The causes can be considerable, from injury to underlying medical conditions. Alleviating back pain — or preventing it in the first place — involves understanding the common causes and taking appropriate actions.

• **TRY EXERCISE»** Routine exercise is not guaranteed to eliminate back pain, but it can make it less frequent, advises doctors at Harvard Medical School. Low back pain due to muscle strain or muscle spasm can be tamed by exercise. Yoga, or a similar stretch-based exercise, can be very effective at alleviating back pain. Yoga relaxes muscle tension and expands range of motion in the joints. It also can build muscle strength.

• **MAINTAIN PROPER POSTURE»** Slouching over

computers or looking down at phones while texting may be doing damage to the back. Work ergonomically and take breaks to stretch. Sit up straight in chairs and try to keep a straight back while walking as well.

• **SHED SOME POUNDS»** Extra pounds at the midsection can shift the center of gravity and put strain on the lower back, advises WebMD. Try to stay within a range of 5-10 pounds of your ideal weight.

• **DON'T SMOKE»** The Arthritis Foundation says research shows a high prevalence of spinal stenosis and back pain among smokers. It is believed that smoking can damage blood vessels that supply blood to the back. Smoking is also bad for the bones and is a risk factor for osteoporosis.

• **TRY A DIFFERENT SLEEPING POSITION»** Talk with a doctor about the best position for sleeping to ease up back pain. It may include being on your side with knees pulled up, or placing a pillow under your knees if you're a back-sleeper.

• **LIFT CAUTIOUSLY»** Always bend at the knees and use the legs to lift items. This can help you avoid straining your back.

Back pain can be overwhelming, but with some strategies a person can reduce his or her propensity for pain.

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*“I cannot believe, it's 3 1/2 months later, and I am able to work in my garden. When I first started, I couldn't even walk 4 minutes, now I am walking 45 minutes. It's like a miracle. I thank God that he sent me here.” -Mary S.*

*“I went from not being able to tolerate wearing my hiking boots to wearing them for 7.5 hours and 3.5 miles over the weekend. No pain in my feet or ankles at all after doing the hiking.” - Sharon G.*

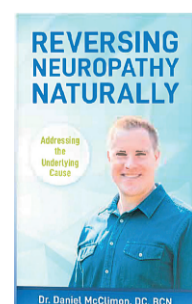
*“To me, it is like celebrating Christmas every day, to be able to get out of bed, to be able to walk in my bare feet, and I also have better balance. I could go on and on because this is so exciting for me.” - Susan D.*

*“I am getting much better. My legs don't hurt when I walk. My feet don't burn at night time. My ankles were extremely painful when I started, and now they very seldom hurt anymore. I can go up and down the steps again. I'm feeling way better, and I'm starting to lose a little weight.” - Gerri V.*

*“I couldn't sleep. I was having terrible pain when I went to bed. I was sleeping less than 2 hours per night. I almost lost my job. Now I can sleep as long as I want. I had blister-like pain under my feet. I don't have that anymore. It is working for me.” - Lily N.*



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ASK RUSTY

# What happens to your Social Security taxes upon death?

By Russell Gloor

**DEAR RUSTY»** I have heard that when my wife and I pass, the government keeps all we have paid into Social Security. Is this correct? — Curious Senior



Russell Gloor

the way the program has worked since enacted in 1935 and the way it still works today.

The money you contributed has already been used to pay benefits to others. However, hopefully you and your wife will live to claim your own benefits, and what you get when you claim will be based upon your earnings record over your entire lifetime (up to earnings you paid Social Security FICA payroll taxes on).

Those historical earnings are adjusted for inflation and your lifetime average monthly earnings amount is determined, from which your base benefit is calculated. Just as you and your wife helped pay for those getting SS benefits while you were

working and paying into Social Security, those now working and paying into the program will help pay benefits to you and your wife.

You may be interested to know that studies show most workers get back everything they've personally contributed to Social Security within about 3 to 5 years of starting their benefits.

One study I'm familiar with looked at how long it would take the average Social Security recipient who starts benefits at full retirement age (FRA) to get back money equal to what they paid into SS. That study looked at four different hypothetical earners: one who earned only half of the national average wage index (AWI) for

their lifetime; another who earned 100% of the national AWI for their lifetime; another who earned 150% of AWI for their lifetime; and yet another who earned the maximum annual payroll tax cap for their entire lifetime.

The study then figured how much each of those individuals would have paid in Social Security payroll taxes over their 35 highest-earning years (which is what SS benefits are computed from). Then, the study looked at what their SS benefit would be at full retirement age and calculated how long it would take for each to recover the Social Security FICA taxes paid over their lifetime.

The analysis revealed that the lowest earn-

ing beneficiary would get back everything paid into Social Security within about 34 months, and the highest earning beneficiary would get back everything paid within about 63 months.

For clarity, this study looked at employed workers who pay Social Security FICA taxes; those who are self-employed and who must pay both the employee and employer portion of SS tax must collect benefits longer to break even.

So, the answer to your specific question is that the money you and your wife contributed to Social Security while you were working has already been used to pay benefits for others who were getting benefits at the time you

paid into the program.

Hopefully, by the time you and your wife pass you both will have received considerably more in Social Security benefits than the taxes you paid into the program while you were working. If you were an employee, you only need to collect benefits for about 3 to 5 years to be ahead of the game.

One final note for those who contend they could do better investing that money on their own: Not paying Social Security tax on employment earnings isn't a personal option.

*Russell Gloor is a certified Social Security adviser by the Association of Mature American Citizens: <https://amac.us/social-security-advisor>.*

HEALTH

# It's important to invest in your mental health

By Kathy Ardekani

Life is busy and often moves very quickly. We race around working, exercising, doing errands, seeing friends and family and keeping up with social media. Even though many of these items are enjoyable, they can sometimes make us feel frenzied.

Life may be hectic, but it is important to carve out time for improving and maintaining personal happiness and well-being. Failing to focus on personal fulfillment and joy can lead to anxiety or depression and can negatively impact physical health.



Kathy Ardekani is the executive director at Echo Lake.

## Reasons to focus on mental health

Mental health issues can strike anyone at any time for any reason. Unfortunately, most of us find it much easier to prioritize other people and things before ourselves. It is important to realize that disregarding personal mental health can have a number of unintended consequences, such as:

- Anxiety, depression and even eating disorders.
- Frequent anger or irritability.
- Overall lack of motivation.
- Physical symptoms such as fatigue, chronic pain, confusion, foggy thinking and difficulty making decisions.
- Insomnia and poor sleep.
- Weight gain or unhealthy habits such as smoking or excessive drinking.
- Difficulties in resolving issues or problems.
- Diminished sense of hu-

mor or loss of the ability to laugh at life.

- Reduction in self-esteem.
- Indifference to relationships with family and friends.

## How to prioritize mental health

Just like exercise and the normal activities of daily living, such as brushing teeth or getting dressed, it is important to dedicate some time each day to focus on personal mental health.

This can mean different things to different people, and you may need to experiment with a few strategies until you find what works best for you. From enjoying a nature walk to taking a warm bubble bath, here are some suggestions for focusing on your mental health:

- **TRY SOME OM»** Listen to a meditation app such as Insight Timer and work on daily guided meditation

before bed or first thing in the morning.

- **GET SOCIAL»** Take time to connect with others. Whether it is a coffee date, a phone call or participating in a class, being around others can reduce feelings of isolation. Fostering social connections can help regulate emotions and reduce feelings of anxiety and depression. Studies show that connecting with others socially offers a number of benefits for mental health.

- **ENJOY TASTY, NUTRITIOUS MEALS»** Both the brain and the body need a variety of nutrients to function well. Eating nutrient-dense foods can help provide more energy while reducing fatigue. Join a healthy cooking class or regularly get-together with friends for a healthy lunch or snack.

- **GET ACTIVE»** Physical activity does not have to be intense to improve mental

health. Participating in a yoga class, taking a relaxing walk outdoors or going for a swim are all examples of activities that can help boost endorphins and reduce stress levels. Whatever your interest is, getting your body moving regularly can put you on a path toward improved mental health.

- **FIND THE JOY»** To improve your mental outlook, focus on things that bring you joy and make you happy. Some people enjoy reading. Others love to sing, dance, travel or sew. Think of the last thing you did that took your mind off worries or troubles and make a point to incorporate more of that activity into your life.

- **TRY SOMETHING NEW»** A new hobby or interest can spark curiosity and provide an outlet to focus energy into. If you feel like you are in a personal rut, try shaking things up a

bit. Sign up for an art class, join a theater group, start planning a trip to a new destination or seek out another new endeavor.

- **HELP OTHERS»** Volunteering can be a powerful way to put life in perspective and also offer a sense of personal fulfillment. Helping others can boost self-esteem, impart a feeling of being needed and provide a new viewpoint.

*At Echo Lake, we believe it is important to have the freedom to live your very best life. We offer residents opportunities to embrace adventure, spark creativity and enjoy social interaction. Contact us at 484-568-4777 to schedule an in-person or virtual tour of our luxury retirement community in Tredyffrin Township, Cheater County >> [www.sagelife.com/echo-lake](http://www.sagelife.com/echo-lake). Kathy Ardekani is executive director at Echo Lake.*



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