

HOLIDAYS

HOLIDAY TRADITIONS OFTEN ARE ROOTED IN FAMILY

By Courtney Diener-Stokes
For Media News Group

Barb and Mike Dietrich of Oley Township, Berks County, look forward to seeing their three married children when they visit over the holidays now that two live in Virginia and one lives in Alaska.

Dietrich shared some of their family's most valued traditions that typically unfold when they're together.

"We always have to have a pastured turkey," she said of Christmas dinner. "And we always have to have my mom's recipe for her potato filling."

In addition, other staples are sweet potatoes and sweet corn, which has been cut off the cob and frozen, that they grow on their farm, Oley Valley Organics.

For many years, when their children were younger and Mike was in the military, they lived a transient lifestyle. He retired as a colonel in 2009.

"We moved a lot so usually just did family things — not the same thing every year," Dietrich said.

It could be something as simple as playing games on Christmas Day or doing something special leading up to the holidays.

"One year we took them up to New York City and saw 'The Lion King' over the holidays," she said.

Regardless of what they do each year, the focus has always been on being together as a family.

TRADITIONS » PAGE 2



COURTESY OF BARB DIETRICH

Barb Dietrich, left, and her husband, Mike Dietrich, right, with their children, from left, Matt, Casey (Dietrich) White and Nate with the Christmas tree they picked out in 2014.



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COURTESY OF BARB DIETRICH

Mike and Barb Dietrich, far left, with their children and most of their children's spouses at a recent football game family outing.

Traditions

FROM PAGE 1

The perfect tree

Picking out the perfect Christmas tree has always been a family affair at Furnace Run Farm Tree Farm in Earl Township, Berks County.

"Getting our tree is a big thing," Dietrich said, adding that they even connected with their two sons to help one year when they were both abroad serving in the Army.

"When our sons were deployed, we had to FaceTime them, and we walked around looking for trees so they could all choose a tree together — one was in Afghanistan and my other son was in Iraq," she said.

Special tree ornament

Each year, the Dietrich children would get a special

tree ornament, and often it would reflect where they were currently living.

"When we were in Germany we got some cool handmade ornaments there, and in North Carolina we got some ornaments made out of cyprus leaves," she said.

Dietrich explained how their kids benefited from relying on each other since they moved so often. Now as married adults who live out of state, that bond is what roots their tradition of family togetherness.

"The most important thing is being together," Dietrich said. "It's not doing the same thing every year — its being together as a family."

The importance of traditions

Jeff Laubach, a West Lawn, Berks County, counselor, discussed how traditions are important because they help bring us together.

"They give us a sense of belonging and strengthen our identity," Laubach said. "Holidays often give us a break from the daily grind, provide us with time to reunite with family and friends and bring generations together."

When family is together, Laubach said, it's a time when stories are shared and new memories are created.

"This can strengthen family values, bring families closer together, provide some consistency to our lives, and allow us the opportunity to celebrate both the things we have in common and the things that make our families unique," he said. "For many, this is a time to emotionally connect with those around us and fill us with a sense of warmth and security."

Not for everyone

But carrying out traditions isn't for everyone. For Nancy Niggel, as soon

as her two children moved out of the home in 2015, it was time for her and her husband to get away from keeping up with carrying out traditions.

"When I get a day off I want it to myself," said Niggel, a library director who lives in Montgomery County. "If I can get out of anything, I will."

However, one tradition they will keep up this Christmas is a family dinner centered on a stuffed roasted turkey.

"It's nice to relax," she said. "It's no pressure and a nice dinner."

However, typically on holidays, Niggel does whatever she feels like doing and doesn't let the expectation of fulfilling tradition dictate her decisions.

"We're very liberated in that respect," she said.

Less pressure

She finds that taking this route equates to less pres-

sure to have to perform.

"We do whatever we want," she said. "We had hamburgers one year for Thanksgiving because I was so exhausted from work."

Overall, Niggel finds that traditions are exhausting.

"I have broken out of that mold," she said. "I am not going to be stuck — I'll be the iconoclast."

That includes the decision to not get a Christmas tree this year.

"Now that they are older and have other places to go, I'm not going to be bothered," she said.

Since Niggel's children live nearby, they have the luxury of seeing them all the time.

"They flock to the home-stead," she said, adding it might be twice a week that they visit.

Niggel has a hunch that much of her newer approach to the holidays has to do with seeing her kids so much and having a very

close relationship.

"We are constantly together," she said. "They are a super big part of our life."

Makes expectations clear

But for holidays she makes any expectations clear.

"I tell them you're welcome to be here, but I'm not going to put on anything special," she said.

In addition, since their children are doing well in their professional lives, Niggel doesn't feel a need to get them gifts as usual, so this year they picked names to do a Pollyanna gift exchange.

Regardless of how things pan out each year for the holidays, like Dietrich, Niggel emphasized the most important aspect that remains consistent year after year.

"We are together, and that is what's important," Niggel said.

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It's all about perspective

By Terry Alburger

Perspective is an interesting thing. How you see a certain scene is dependent on your vantage point and also your state of mind. What you might see is not necessarily what I might see. And sometimes, you have to look deeper than face value.

I've always been a fan of optical illusions, which help demonstrate how things are not always what they appear to be. Two of us may look at the same picture on a page — you see a duck and I see a rabbit.

You see a beautiful young girl, and I see skulls. You might see a bunch of parallel lines

while I see crooked lines. We are looking at the same images, yet we see what our individual minds perceive. It is fascinating!

Recently, I spent time in the dentist chair; not a fun outing to be sure. As I sat there and endured the necessary scraping and cleaning, my gaze focused on a painting on the walls in front of me. It clearly was a pencil sketch of teeth — upper teeth, lower teeth, in two straight lines across the page. There was a slight gap in between rows.

It was as if someone had spent time inside a mouth and decided to sketch the view from within. Each tooth was drawn in its entirety, root and all, in a

kind of dental tail. As I stared at this artwork, my mind was obviously in need of a diversion.

Those teeth slowly morphed into cats, sitting on the edge of a pond. The line across in the middle was the edge of the water, and the images below that line were the cats' reflection in the water. The more I stared, the more clearly, I saw cats.

As the dental hygienist took a brief pause, no doubt to grab another dental torture device with which to scrape my teeth, I pointed out my findings. "Cats?" she inquired with a delighted smile.

She glanced up and immediately saw them. The power of suggestion! This

woman had obviously gazed on that sketch hundreds of times in her daily job. And suddenly, it took on a whole new meaning. She told me that from now on she would not be able to see anything but cats in that sketch.

Honestly, would you rather look at teeth or cats? Personally, I'll take the cats.

I was privileged to attend the Van Gogh Experience at the Tower Theater earlier this month. As a Van Gogh fan, the exhibit was amazing. It brought to life the many paintings I've admired over the years.

When you look at a painting, you see a snapshot of someone's imagi-

nation. They are captured in time, in two dimensions. However, when a painting is animated and seems to come out at you, it gives you a whole new perception of the artist's intention.

It made me realize that there is always more to the story than what you originally see. And there is more to every person than what you get at first sight.

I believe this is a fitting message this time of year. There is a lot of hustle and bustle, people rushing to get to and fro. There is the added concern of COVID, in its latest form of omicron, as well as delta and all other variants. These are words

we now use in daily conversation, relatively new to most of our vocabularies.

The stress level may be higher than usual this time of year with these added factors. So, remember to use a bit more patience and compassion. What you see and perceive may not always be accurate when it comes to those around you.

Everyone has a story. Everyone has a perspective. It just may not be the one you see. Remember that the glass you see may indeed be half empty, but hopefully you can see it as half full.

Wishing you peace during this Christmas season and always.

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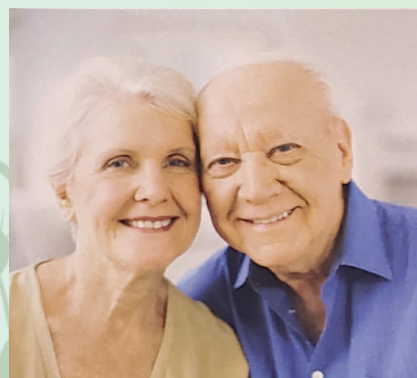
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COURTESY OF WHITE HORSE VILLAGE

White Horse Village announces Relocation Support Services for prospective residents

MediaNews Group

White Horse Village has launched a new Relocation Support Services (RSS) program to assist prospective residents through the process of selling a home and moving to the active nonprofit senior community in Edgmont Township, Delaware County.

A component of the program is a real estate broker license, which the community obtained from the state of Pennsylvania.

White Horse Village partnered with the Matt Fetick Team at Keller Williams to bring a wealth of experience in-house. Listing specialists are certified in senior housing and offer a range of services, including downsizing advice, moving support, staging, photography and more.

In addition, the new program provides access to trustworthy partners, such

as stagers, movers, organizers and a realty team that shows homes in a traditional or virtual approach.

"We know how stressful moving can be, and prospective residents can trust us to help them navigate this journey," said Susan Abtouche, vice president of mission enhancement. "The sooner new residents move into our community, the sooner they can enjoy hassle-free senior living."

White Horse Village also offers a Virtual Design Modeler (VDM) to help future residents select flooring, paint, cabinetry, countertops and more for newly-renovated homes. The design tool lets users visualize design selections in a virtual model of the exact residence floor plan.

"Our goal as a sales team is to minimize the stress of moving for new residents, and the comprehensive RSS program does that," said Di-

rector of Sales Wendy Patton. "Our realty specialists and sales counselors partner with prospective residents to manage all the details and connect them with trusted resources to ensure a smooth move."

For more information about the RSS program, call 610-675-2001 or visit the whitehorsevillage.org.

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, connectiveness, and relationships. As a nonprofit organization, White Horse Village reinvests earnings back into the organization to further the mission and vision.



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PROMOTING SENIOR WELLNESS



DEPOSITPHOTOS

What is short-term respite care?

By Samantha Gordon

It isn't uncommon for many family members and caregivers to wonder what is involved with a short-term respite stay for their loved one. Over the years, respite care has become more popular among the aging demographic. It gives caregivers short-term relief for either a few weeks or months and can be provided at your local senior living community, adult day center or even at home.

Each location can offer different care options depending on the length of stay and care needed. It's important to do plenty of research ahead of time to ensure it is a good fit for your loved one.

Respite care costs

The location you choose, such as a senior living com-

munity that offers respite stay, and where you are located geographically can influence prices for a respite stay, as can the length of stay or care level needed.

With all these factors, it can be as low as \$30 a day to as high as \$290 a day. Each state will have different prices. These costs are usually not covered by insurance plans, although some long-term care insurance may cover costs depending on where you go.

However, Medicare coverage is only associated with hospice respite care, where an individual meets the requirements for Medicare-covered hospice in order to receive respite care.

Respite stay length and time

Depending on the health-care facility you go to for re-

spite care, there might be a minimum stay. For example, an adult day center is great to go to during the day for a few hours. However, if you need to go away for a week or so a senior living community will most likely offer a two-week minimum respite stay, which can include meals, care services, daily activities and more!

Whether it's care for a day or for two weeks, there are plenty of resources around you that can be the best fit for your loved one.

Promoting Senior Wellness is provided by The Hickman, a Quaker-affiliated licensed personal care home in West Chester, where Samantha Gordon is communications and outreach manager. She can be reached at sgordon@thehickman.org or www.thehickman.org.



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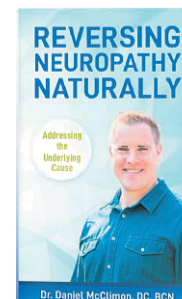
"I cannot believe, it's 3 1/2 months later, and I am able to work in my garden. When I first started, I couldn't even walk 4 minutes, now I am walking 45 minutes. It's like a miracle. I thank God that he sent me here." -Mary S.

"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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CAREGIVERS

Conversation is a critical element of caring for loved one with Alzheimer's

By John Grimaldi

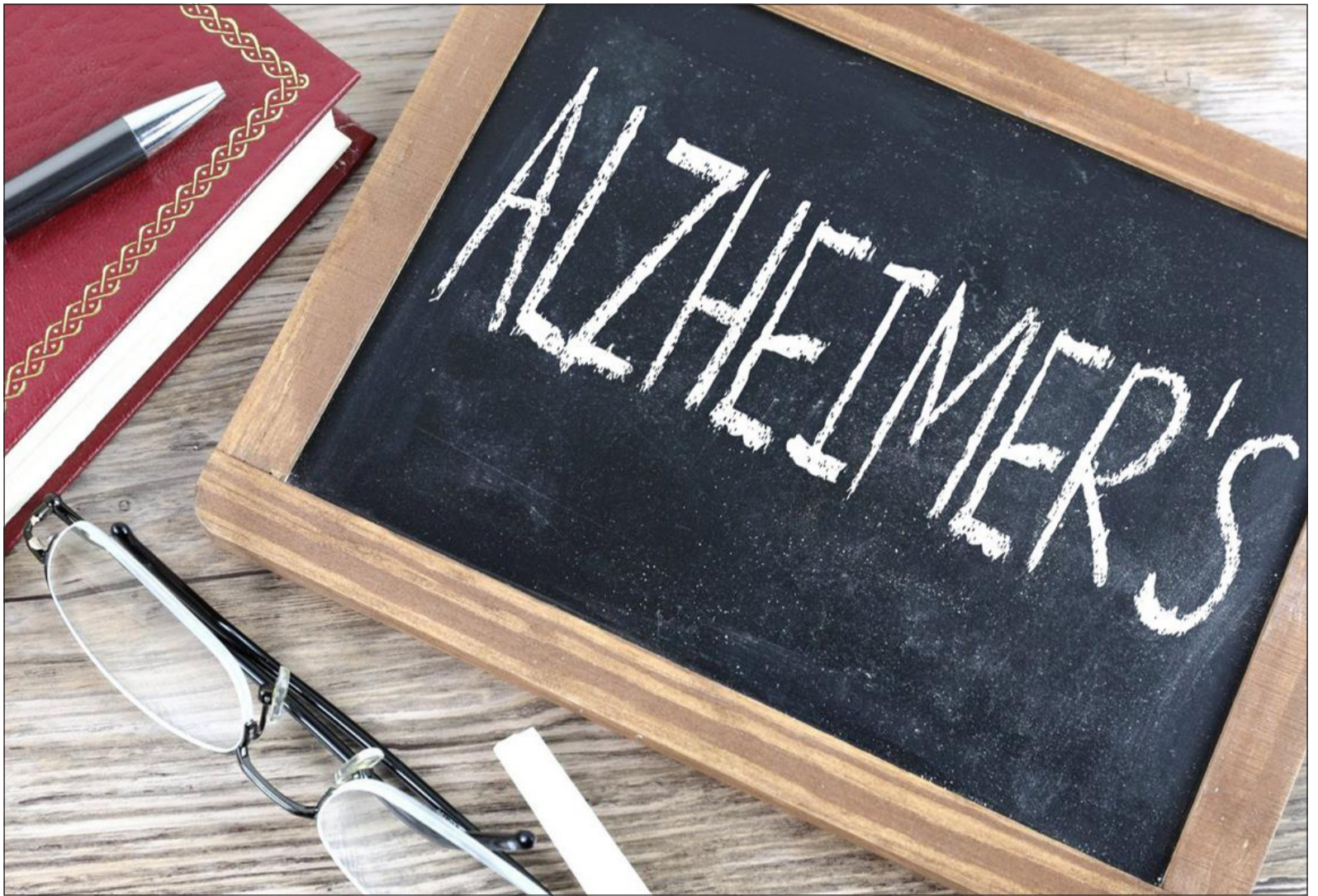
More than 6 million Americans have been diagnosed as having Alzheimer's disease, and that number is growing at too fast a rate; the projection is that the numbers of Alzheimer's patients will more than double by 2050.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, 11.2 million Americans are volunteer caregivers for loved ones with the disease. In fact, family members and friends account for 83% of all Alzheimer's caregivers. The pros are trained to know what to do, but "civilian" helpmates may need help.

"Three of the main reasons (novice) caregivers provide assistance to a person with Alzheimer's or another dementia are the desire to keep a family member or friend at home (65%); proximity to the person with dementia (48%); and the caregiver's perceived obligation to the person with dementia (38%)," the Association said. "Caregivers often indicate love and a sense of duty and obligation when describing what motivates them to assume care responsibilities for a relative or friend living with dementia."

It's a daunting task that requires commitment and perseverance, and that's where love and a sense of duty and obligation enter into the equation. Day-to-day assistance with hygiene, dressing and incontinence as well as routine activities of daily living are difficult enough for these amateur caregivers.

But, perhaps, as challenging as these routines may be, it can be frustrating at best for novice help-



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mates to engage in conversation no matter how simple the chat may seem. Bear in mind that verbal give-and-take is a critical element of taking care of someone with Alzheimer's.

The disease impairs both the patient's ability to verbalize and his or her ability to understand what you are saying. In addition, in many cases, especially as the disease progresses, they can't remember words or things that have happened in their lives nor, perhaps, recall

who you are.

Their capacity to communicate fails them and, as a result, it might hinder their ability to maintain their dignity and self-esteem. Many amateur caregivers who have been at it for a long time understand the importance of conversation. But, if you are new to it, here are a few recommendations, courtesy of the Alzheimer's Association:

- Engaging the person in one-on-one conversation in a quiet space that

has minimal distractions.

- Speaking slowly and clearly.
- Maintaining eye contact to show you care about what he or she is saying
- Giving the person plenty of time to respond so he or she can think about what to say.
- Being patient and offering reassurance to encourage the person to explain his or her thoughts.
- Asking one question at a time.
- Asking yes or no ques-

tions. For example, "Would you like some coffee?" rather than "What would you like to drink?"

▪ Avoiding criticizing or correcting. Instead, listening and trying to find the meaning in what the person says. Repeating what was said to clarify.

▪ Avoiding arguing. If the person says something you don't agree with, let it be.

▪ Offering clear, step-by-step instructions for tasks as lengthy requests may be overwhelming.

▪ Giving visual cues by demonstrating a task to encourage participation.

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ONLINE SAFETY

How seniors can protect themselves from misinformation online

By Tina Wilhelmsen

The internet provides a wealth of information day or night and enables easy communication and sharing. Seniors have discovered that it's a great way to connect with their kids and grandkids and stay current.

Even traditional printed newspapers and magazines, like The Washington Post or The New York Times,



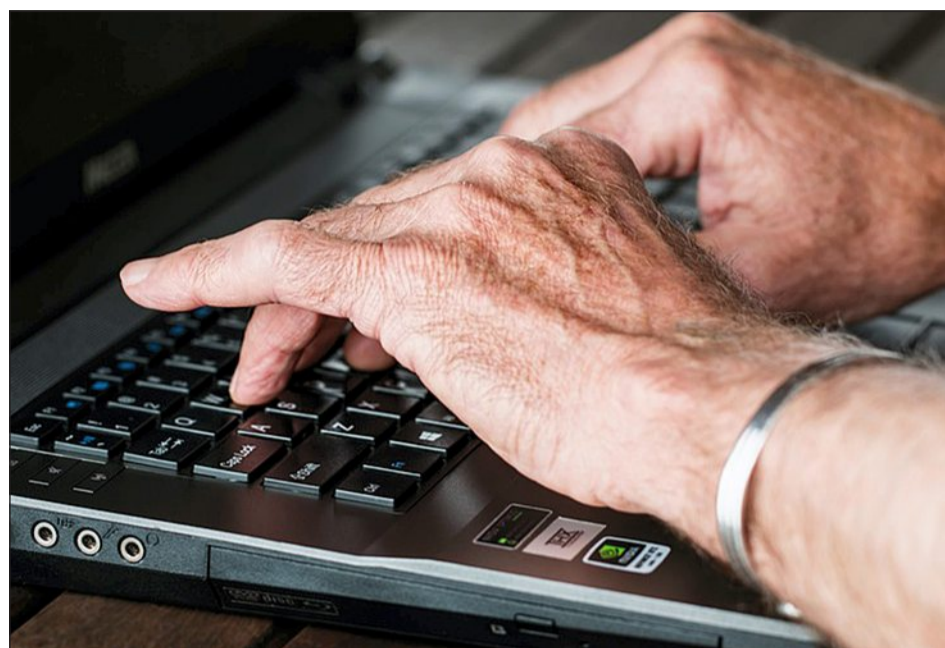
Tina Wilhelmsen, interim executive director at Plush Mills

are available in an online version. There are also plenty of other online information sources such as blog articles, forums and social media posts.

Unfortunately, the old adage about not believing everything you read applies to online news as well. The way information is presented in social media, emails or online news articles can make it very difficult to separate fact from fiction. Here are some tips for discerning the difference between real and false information.

Understand the difference between opinion and fact

Just about any kind of information can be distributed today through a variety of channels. Once something is published online, it can be widely shared and distributed through emails and social media. This means that in a very short time, many people will have seen or will have access to a



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newly published piece.

It is not uncommon for authors to interject their own opinions into an article or post, but editorializing is very different from just presenting facts. For example, "it is 65 degrees today in Philadelphia" is a fact that can be investigated and proven, but "the weather is very comfortable today" is an example of an opinion.

Statements that are predictions about the future, a position on a controversial issue or an expression of the author's personal beliefs are nearly always opinions. When reading an email, article or post, it is important to discern whether the author is editorializing vs. stating facts.

Pay careful attention to the source

It is not unusual to see an article shared on Facebook or forwarded from a

friend through email. Just because someone you know has shared the article, do not assume it is credible. Pay close attention to the article source before you make any decisions based on the information it contains or before forwarding it along yourself to additional people.

First, check the web address to ensure the article is from a trusted and respected news source and not a random writer or blogger with whom you are not familiar.

Checking the website address suffix can be helpful too. A website address that ends in .edu signifies it is from an education institution (for example, pennstate.edu) and a website address that ends in .gov signifies it is from the federal government (for example, cdc.gov).

Be aware that scammers sometimes use web addresses that are very close

to real ones (for example, NPR.co instead of NPR.org) in an effort to persuade unsuspecting readers that their information is real. Lastly, check the contents of the article by pasting the title into the search bar of a legitimate, fact-checking website such as Snopes.com, PolitiFact.com or Factcheck.org.

Investigate your own bias

When reading information, whether in print or online, it is helpful to remain objective. Confirmation bias is a very real phenomenon in which people tend to embrace information that confirms their personal beliefs and dismiss information that conflicts with their own views. Remaining objective can be difficult. If possible, try to look at information from different sources and from a variety of perspectives.

Here are some additional tips for reading and fact-checking online information:

• **READ MORE THAN JUST THE TITLE»** In many cases, titles are simply designed to grab attention. Read the entire article before forming an opinion.

• **CHECK CITED SOURCES»** Ensure that sources cited within an article or post are real, legitimate sources.

• **BE SKEPTICAL»** Approach any news story or post with some level of doubt until you do your own background research. Consider if other reliable sources are challenging the facts presented in the article.

• **DO BACKGROUND RESEARCH»** Read up on the author and consider if they appear to be credible. Maintain a sense of humor. Some information that is shared online is simply meant to be funny or sarcastic. Determine if the article or post is actually meant to be a joke or sarcasm.

• **SHARE FACT-CHECKING RESOURCES»** If a friend or family member shares something with you that you identify as being fake news, send them some fact-checking resources.

• **TAKE A BREAK»** If you read something online that you find upsetting or that makes you angry, take a break before replying or commenting. It is especially important to avoid clicking through on what may be a scam email or social media post.

Be alert for new types of online scams

Unfortunately, it is very easy for online information to be revised and modified. For example, images can be altered in an effort

to influence or change the viewer's beliefs. Be wary of images with odd lighting or angles as they may have been altered.

False information can also be shared from fake social media accounts. Be on guard if you notice a social media profile with very few friends and followers, an odd username or very inflammatory comments. Be suspicious of any new profile encouraging further communication by phone or text.

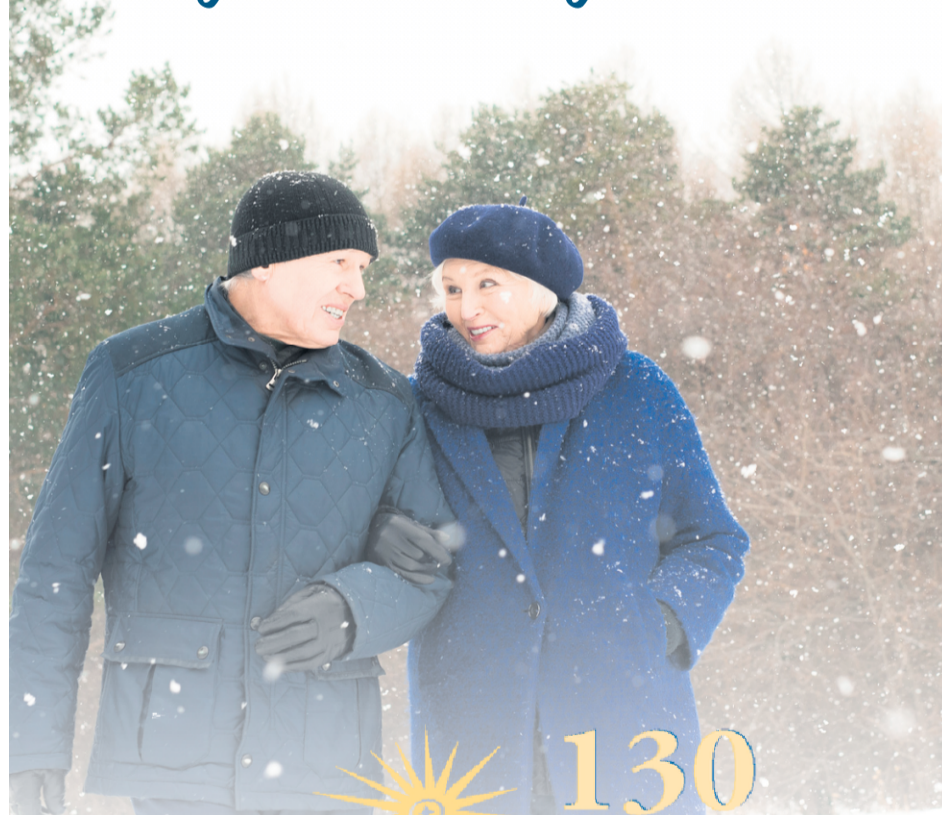
Stay connected and well informed

The Internet, social media and email can be immensely helpful for staying informed and also for fostering and maintaining connections with friends and family. Getting news directly on a mobile phone, tablet or computer can provide more immediate coverage compared to strictly relying on the printed newspaper or television news.

Fact checking online information can help people feel secure about the decisions they make and the actions they take based on the news and articles they read.

About Plush Mills: Plush Mills is a vibrant independent living, assisted living, and personal care community where residents build lasting connections, enjoy favorite hobbies and also find enriching opportunities to learn new things. To learn more about the SageLife community in Nether Providence Township, Delaware County, visit <https://www.sagelife.com/plush-mills>.

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PROMOTING SENIOR WELLNESS

There are ways to boost immunity as we age

By Monica Nearey

As we enter the winter months, respiratory illnesses such as the flu, common colds and COVID-19 tend to peak, especially for seniors in our community. A strong immune system is an important component of good health because it helps to fight infections and illness.

As we age, our immune system starts to weaken and become less efficient. It's not a single body process, but rather a network of systems working together to promote well-being. To strengthen the body's immune system as we age, it's best to pair a healthy diet with a healthy lifestyle. Read on for some vital immune boosters for seniors!

A healthy diet is essential to a strong immune system. As we age, nutritional needs and eating habits may change for a variety of reasons. Poor nutrition can affect immunity and weaken bones and muscles, which can reduce how often and efficiently we exercise.

A well-balanced diet includes a variety of vegetables, whole fruits, whole grains, low-fat dairy and a variety of protein foods. The American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics recommends including foods rich in the following nutrients to strengthen immune system health.

- Protein, such as seafood, lean meats, poultry, eggs, beans and peas

- Vitamin A, such as sweet potatoes, carrots, broccoli and spinach

- Vitamin C, such as citrus foods, strawberries and certain cereals

- Vitamin E, such as almonds, hazelnuts and peanut butter

- Zinc, such as lean meats, poultry, milk, whole grain products and beans

Regular physical activity can help aging adults stay

strong, independent and healthy. But did you know that exercise can also help us to strengthen our immune system?

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends at least two hours of moderate intensity exercise each week. A short 10-minute walk around the block may be a good way to start.

Yoga or tai chi are also great activities to improve flexibility and boost mental and emotional health. Find an exercise that meets your activity level and ask a friend to join.

Stay hydrated. Dehydration in seniors often leads to many health issues. Adequate hydration is a key immune booster. Water helps your body absorb nutrients and minerals, and flush body waste. Drinking at least eight glasses of fluid a day can help you avoid dehydration.

Try to drink a glass of water before and after every meal and in-between snacks. Remember that fruits and vegetables, soups and caffeine-free tea or coffee can also add hydration throughout the day. Alcohol can weaken your immune system, so limit intake.

Be sure to get plenty of sleep. When we are sleep-deprived the body releases stress hormones like cortisol to keep us awake and alert, which can suppress the immune system. Additionally, sleep disorders are often linked to chronic diseases and conditions, such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, obesity, and depression. Chronic insomnia is a common sleep disorder among older adults which can be addressed by your healthcare provider.

Reduce stress levels and connect with others. Managing stress is an important aspect of how we can strengthen the immune system as we age. Chronic stress takes a toll on immune health.



DEPOSITPHOTOS.COM

Participating in enjoyable activities that promote relaxation, such as meditation and deep breathing exercises can have positive effects on health.

Social distancing guidelines amid the coronavirus outbreak may have left us feeling isolated from family and friends which can lead to feelings of loneliness and depression. It's important to find creative ways to stay connected with others to boost immune health.

Phone calls, texts, and use of video technology such as FaceTime, Skype, or Zoom are great ways to connect if you cannot meet in person.

Keep up to date with seasonal vaccinations. The single best way to prevent COVID-19 and the seasonal flu is to get vaccinated. Complications of both viruses can be especially severe in older adults. Information on where to get both vaccines is listed on state public health websites and both are available at most community pharmacies.

Ask for the senior flu shot because it offers stronger protection to fight the virus than the regular flu shot. A COVID-19 booster is recommended for senior adults aged 65 and older to provide additional protection against emerging variants.

Washing your hands thoroughly and often can help prevent the spread of disease-causing germs from one person to another. Be sure to lather hands with soap and scrub for at least 20 seconds before rinsing with warm water.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends hand-washing before, during, and after preparing food; before eating; after using the toilet; before and after caring for someone who is ill; and after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing. Keep a bottle of alcohol-based hand sanitizer nearby when out and about in the community to keep

hands clean. Hand hygiene is one of the most effective tools for infection prevention.

These immune boosting activities will reduce the risk of illness over the winter months and throughout the holiday season. Stay healthy and happy.

Promoting Senior Wellness is provided by The Hickman, a Quaker-affiliated licensed personal care home in West Chester, where Monica Nearey is the infection preventionist. She can be reached at mnearey@thehickman.org or www.thehickman.org.

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HOLIDAY GIFTS



COURTESY OF COURTNEY DIENER-STOKES

For the holiday hostess with the mostess: This festive foam soap and disposable hand towel set that comes in a metal holder is perfect for the owner of a home where people love to gather, from Eleanor Russell Unique Gifts and Decor. Price: \$28.99



COURTESY OF JENNIFER BEDNEZ

A taste of nostalgia: Cashew patties by The Original Zipf's Candies by Sweet Surprises are unforgettable and a Zipf's original recipe that was taught to Jennifer Bednez, the owner of Sweet Surprises. Price: \$13.50 for 1/2 pound (10 cashew patties)

HERE'S A NIFTY GIFT GUIDE FOR THE 50-PLUS PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE

By Courtney Diener-Stokes
For MediaNews Group

When it comes to her wish list this holiday season Annesley Kern, 81, puts everything into perspective given her primary

wish speaks to the times we're living in, a time when concern for our loved ones takes precedence over our individual needs and wants. "Our ideas have changed into hoping for the well-being and health of our family members," Kern said of she

and her husband, Stuart, who live in Pike Township. The Kerns, owners of Evelyn & Harriet's gift shop in Oley Township, have the luxury of a large array of unique items they source from around the globe at

GIFTS » PAGE 2



COURTESY OF COURTNEY DIENER-STOKES

For eye-catching entertainment: A lightweight bird feeder that attaches to a window with suction cups for ease in bird watching, along with a bag of bird seed, from Oley Valley Feed. Price: \$17.99 and up for window feeders / bird seed sold separately (20% off bird feeders through Christmas)



Your days may be merry & bright.



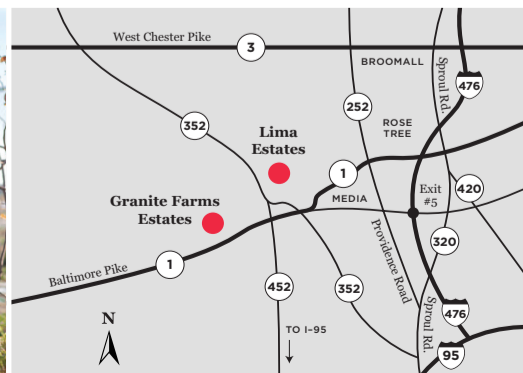
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COURTESY OF COURTNEY DIENER-STOKES

For some family fun: Puzzles bring all generations together at one table for all to enjoy, from Evelyn & Harriet's Gifts. Large and extra large pieces make for easier handling. Price: \$12.50 and up.

Gifts

FROM PAGE 1

their fingertips, but other people's pleasure is what makes them happiest.

"Stu and I really enjoy finding wonderful things made by people all over the world, and we like seeing people enjoy them," Kern said.

Despite shared sentiments grounded in health and well-being, it's still nice and in keeping with tradition to show our love to family and friends through gift-giving, so this guide is intended to help you find that perfect gift for a grandparent, parent or friend who is in the active aging category of 50 and older.

All stores listed are locally owned, and items chosen take into consideration some of the physical limitations that go along with aging. Take, for example, a lightweight bird feeder that

can attach to the window so that birds can be viewed up close and personal in addition to other advantages.

"You don't have to trek through the yard or snow to fill them up, and they take a smaller amount of feed, which means you have to fill it more often," said Brian McAllister, sales associate at Oley Valley Feed in Oley Township. "It's good exercise, but not overly taxing."

Like Oley Valley Feed, Ace Hardware in Phoenixville, Chester County, is an unassuming place to find a wonderful selection of gifts for everyone on your list. But since older people are typically done with amassing stuff, it's best to think about practical things that they can use that can either provide a source of entertainment, can be consumed, used often or serve as a way to showcase family — the most important aspect of the holiday season. And yours!

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Evelyn & Harriet's Gifts, Oley Township: www.evelynandharrietsgifts.com

Oley Valley Feed, Oley Township: www.oleyvalleyfeed.com

The Original Zipf's Candies by Sweet Surprises, West Reading: www.sweet-surprises.com

Ace Hardware, Phoenixville, Chester County: www.ace-hardware.com/store-details/15869

Eleanor Russell Unique Gifts and Decor, Glenmoore, Chester County: www.eleanor-russell.com

HOLIDAYS

Tips to keep your tree fresh all month long

Metro Creative

Christmas trees are often the piece de resistance of holiday decor. Few things draw the attention of holiday guests quite like an awe-inspiring Christmas tree, especially when that tree maintains its fresh, healthy sheen throughout December.

Many families purchase fresh trees over Thanksgiving weekend or during the first weekend of December. Though the weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas Day may seem like a long time to keep a tree looking great, there are a handful of ways for holiday celebrants to help their trees maintain that undeniable appeal for the long haul.

- Pick the right tree. Choosing the right tree is one of the simplest ways to keep a tree looking good throughout the holiday season. A freshly cut tree that buyers choose and cut down themselves or have cut down can reassure them that the tree is likely to stay strong throughout December. Trees purchased from a tree lot may have been cut down long before they made it to the lot, which can make it harder to keep them looking good until Christmas Day.

- Cut an inch off the base of any tree that is not freshly cut. MSU Extension at Michigan State University notes that all Christmas trees are conifers, which means they have resin canals in their trunks. Once a tree is cut, the resin can block the pores and make it harder for the tree to take in water. Cutting an inch off the base of a tree that was not freshly cut just before putting it in the stand can help ensure it gets the water it needs to stay healthy and firm. MSU Extension notes that this approach should be taken with any tree that was not cut within six to eight hours of being put in a stand.

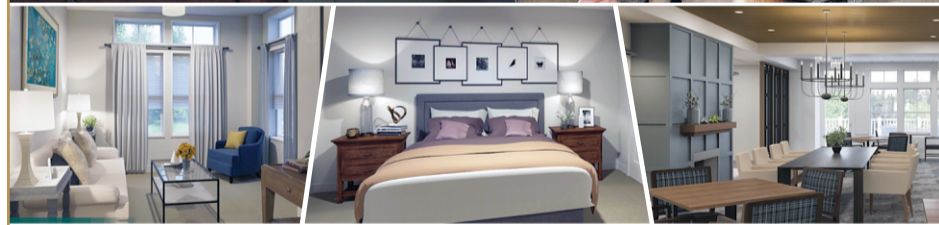
- Replenish the water supply every day. Fresh tree veterans recognize that Christmas trees can be very thirsty, especially within the first week or so of being cut and brought home. Fill the stand with water each morning and, if necessary, refill it each night before going to bed. The more water a tree gets and drinks, the more likely it is that the tree will look healthy all the way to Christmas Day. MSU Extension notes that many decorative or antique tree stands do not hold much water, so anyone with such a stand may need to replenish the water supply more than once or twice per day.

- Keep the tree away from a heat source. For safety's sake, trees should be kept away from heating vents, fireplaces and space



heaters. But keeping trees away from such heat sources, and ensuring they are not spending the daytime in direct sunlight, also decreases the chances they will dry out before Christmas Day.

A handful of simple strategies can help holiday celebrants keep their Christmas trees looking good throughout the month of December.



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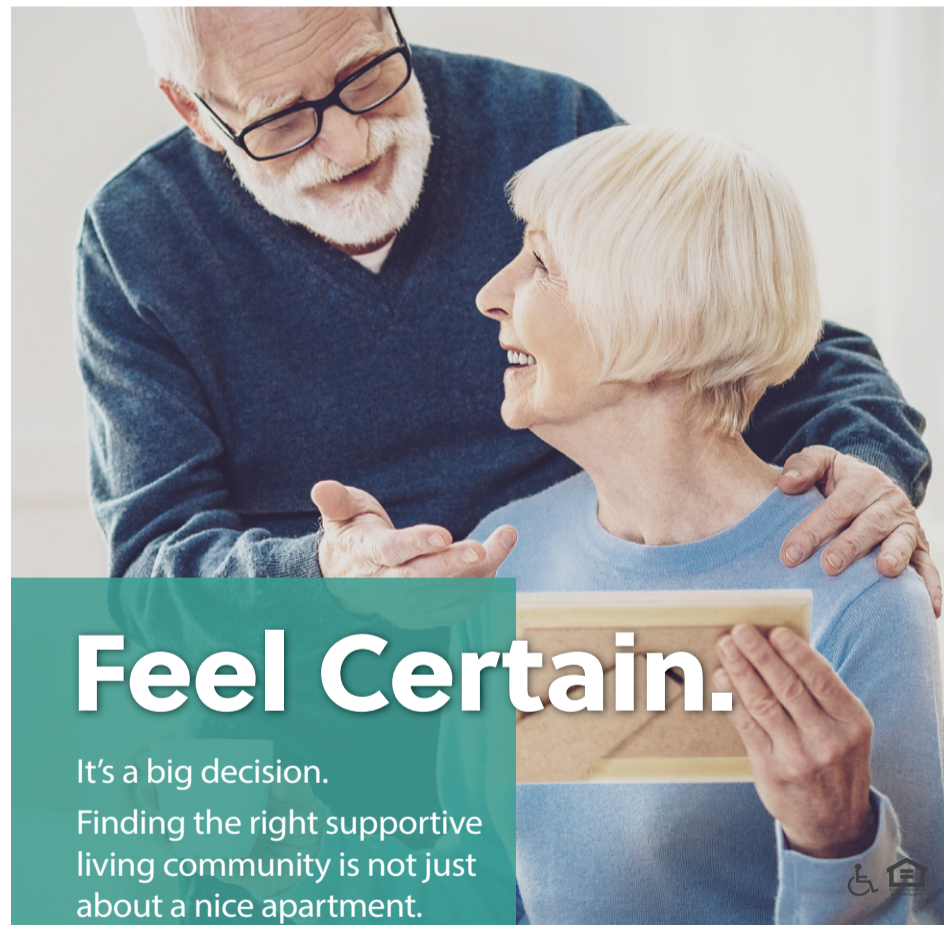
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TRAVEL GIFTS

Great holiday gifts for retirees who can't wait to travel

Metro Creative

Retirement provides a chance for adults who have worked throughout their lives to take a step back, relax and enjoy the fruits of their labors. Though the most indelible image associated with retirement might once have been a rocking chair, modern retirees like to get up and go, and holiday shoppers can take that joie de vivre into consideration as they look for the perfect gift for retirees who can't wait to fly the friendly skies or hit the open road.

• **MAPS**» It might seem simple, but roadmaps can be an ideal gift for retirees. A recent poll from RBC Wealth Management found that 63 percent of Americans age 50 and older say travel is an important retirement goal. Roadmaps of their own country or a foreign country can help seniors plan their dream vacations. Seniors can study maps and create their own routes as they visit popular tourist attractions and find lesser known locales along the way.

• **VOUCHERS/GIFT CARDS**»

Airline vouchers can inspire retirees to take to the skies and visit locales that have long taken up real estate on their bucket lists. If seniors prefer to take to the open road, hotel vouchers or Visa gift cards that can be spent anywhere that accepts credit cards can help pay for gas, meals or entry to popular parks and tourist attractions.

• **PROJECTOR AND PORTABLE SCREEN**» Retirees may want to get away from it all, but that doesn't mean they have to leave everything behind. A projector and portable

screen can let on-the-go seniors enjoy movie night under the stars or watch their favorite teams even when they're far from home. This can be an especially good gift for retirees who are anxious to gas up their RV and leave home behind for a few weeks.

• **LIFETIME PASS TO WORLD-RENOWNED PARKS**» All United States citizens or permanent residents are eligible for the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Senior Pass, which provides access to more than 2,000 recre-

ation sites across the country. Those sites are managed by federal agencies like the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Bureau of Reclamation, among others. A similar system is in place in Canada, where adults age 65 and up can gain unlimited admission for a full year to more than 80 Parks Canada locations across the country.

• **TABLET**» Of course, retirees may still want to enjoy some of the comforts of

home while they're off in parts unknown. A new tablet can help traveling retirees read the latest bestsellers and stay in touch with family and friends via video conferencing apps like Zoom. Many campgrounds and hotels now provide free WiFi to guests, so a tablet can be just what on-the-go retirees need to stay connected to life back home.

Holiday shoppers can make the season bright for their favorite retirees who can't wait to spend their newfound free time traveling the world.

FINANCES

How to talk money with your parents this holiday

Holiday gatherings may present an opportunity to talk to your parents about important money issues, such as estate planning or long-term care. The need to discuss this stuff may feel particularly acute if you don't see

your folks often or these are the first holidays you'll be together since the pandemic started.

Tread carefully, though, because these discussions can easily go wrong. Diligent preparation, the right approach and a respectful attitude can help your family tackle potentially uncomfortable subjects without ruining the holiday, advises Amy Goyer, AARP's national family and caregiving expert.

Ideally, families would talk "early and often" about issues related to aging, she says. The more remote or theoretical the topic, the easier it can be to discuss. For example, talking about how to

pay for assisted living or a home health aide may be less fraught when the need is hypothetical than when your parent has just fallen down the stairs or is in the hospital.

"Finances are hard to talk about, much less in some kind of a crisis," Goyer says.

Most U.S. adults say there are obstacles when it comes to discussing important financial topics with family, according to a study published in October from financial services firm Edward Jones in partnership with Age Wave and Harris Poll. The top issues include: avoiding family conflicts (22%), trying to avoid burdening family members with their finances (20%) and being too uncomfortable to discuss these topics (18%).

If you want to talk to your parents about money, consider the following steps.

First, adjust your attitude

Goyer bristles when people talk about having to "parent their parents"

because the phrase sounds disrespectful to her. Having a superior or condescending attitude toward your parents, or trying to tell them what they should do, will just make the conversation harder, she says.

"Even though your role changes, you are still their child, and therefore they deserve your respect," Goyer says.

Instead, research some options in advance so you can present choices to your parents rather than issuing orders. If they don't have long-term care insurance, for example, they might be able to sell investments or tap their home equity to pay for a nursing home stay. If they don't have an advanced directive or other estate planning documents, you could offer to help them use estate planning software or find them an estate planning attorney. If bills aren't being paid, you can offer to set up autopayments, take over bill paying or find a daily money manager who will do it for a fee.

"The point is for them to get what they want —

that their wishes will be adhered to," Goyer says.

Focus on feelings

How you broach the topic will depend on your family dynamics. An indirect approach would be to mention that you read an article on the topic or saw something on TV about it, or that you're doing similar planning for yourself.

"For some people, an indirect approach is more effective," Goyer says. "For other people, they're going to see right through you and be angry that you're indirect."

Take the approach you think will work best with your parents. However you bring it up, pivot quickly to asking for your parents' perspective. It's important to listen more than you talk, especially at the beginning.

"Ask them how they're feeling about the finances, or the housework or the driving or whatever it is," Goyer says. "Do they ever feel uncomfortable? Do they ever feel unsafe?"

She says you could

pose it as a question, such as: "Do you ever feel like you might like to have a little bit of help to do that?"

Ask follow-up questions and consider paraphrasing what you're hearing to show that you're actively listening (using phrases like "What I'm hearing you saying is ..."). People who feel heard are less likely to be defensive and more likely to listen to what you have to say, Goyer says.

If your parents aren't troubled by a situation, but you are, Goyer recommends using "I" statements.

"Never start anything with, 'You need to,'" Goyer says. "Instead, say, 'I'm concerned about' or 'I want to help you.' Your role is to provide support for them."

Prepare to abandon ship

That support includes staying calm if your parents get angry, fearful or sad. Your folks may be embarrassed about their financial situation, wor-

ried about the future or resistant to the idea of needing help. Acknowledge those feelings, even if you don't agree with their viewpoint, Goyer says.

"If they are feeling insecure, or they're feeling angry at the thought of a change — are scared at the thought of a change — validate those feelings," Goyer says. "Change is hard."

But be prepared to drop the subject, at least for the time being, if tensions remain high.

"For some people, (discussing money) is fine, but for others, it's going to ruin the holiday," Goyer says. "Maybe the holiday is when we observe, and we make a plan to talk later about it."

This column was provided to The Associated Press by the personal finance website NerdWallet. Liz Weston is a columnist at NerdWallet, a certified financial planner and author of "Your Credit Score." Email: lweston@nerdwallet.com. Twitter: @lizweston.



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SCAMS

Holiday season brings out elder fraud scammers

By John Grimaldi

'Tis the season to be jolly, and for seniors to beware of fraudsters who target the elderly this time of the year.

What makes older folk more susceptible to becoming targets for scammers during the holiday season? The consensus is that the older we get, the more charitable we become, says the Association of Mature American Citizens.

The National Institutes of Health calls it positivity bias. It's a condition that makes "older adults draw more positive affect from both the planning and outcome of monetary donations and hence benefit more from engaging in monetary charity than their younger counterparts."

According to the FBI, scammers target seniors "because they tend to be trusting and polite. They also usually have financial savings, own a home and have good credit — all of which make them attractive to scammers. Additionally, seniors may be less inclined to report fraud because they don't know how, or they may be too ashamed

at having been scammed."

The phone rings and the caller identifies himself or herself as representing a charitable organization that helps needy kids or disadvantaged families. He or she asks for an over the phone credit card donation. There are variations of this particular scam. For example, the caller may say that a relative is in trouble and needs money and gets an elderly "mark" to wire funds.

And then there are the con artists who prefer the person-to-person approach. They'll hand around the mall looking for gray hair, and when they spot a likely victim, they will simply approach him or her, recite a well-rehearsed spiel tale of need and ask for a handout.

A variant of this approach is a bit more theatrical. For example, they will dress for the occasion and represent themselves as an authorized solicitor working for the Salvation Army or a relief organization collecting funds for families displaced by a recent disaster such as a fire, flood or storm, for example.

The internet has facilitated these types of rip-offs. With more and more seniors becoming tech-savvy and learning how to use a computer, swindlers have yet another way to separate a kind seniors from their money.

Email solicitations are growing in popularity among these seasonal thieves. The holidays allow them to stalk the web with seemingly personal messages from organizations and companies that seem very honest. They can

make email messages look very real by mimicking the actual logos of legitimate charities and retailers. This technique allows them to get your money via a phony charitable contribution or get you to make a fake holiday purchase online.

Gerry Hafer, executive director of the AMAC Foundation, says that AMAC has long been focused on the issue of elder fraud. The foundation, AMAC Inc., itself and its advocacy subsidiary, AMAC Action, have joined forces to create an Elder Fraud Initiative to aid in development of an instructional approach to help seniors protect themselves.

The initiative aims to provide a guide for online protection, a sort of how-to protocol for defending against fraud.

"Our website blog page already presents a variety of news and info posts associated with elder fraud and will soon provide a comprehensive guide for online protection that our tech folks are in the process of preparing," Hafer said.

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.

SENIOR LIVING

The 501 at Mattison Estate holds Topping Out ceremony



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Attending the Topping Out ceremony at The 501 at Mattison Estate are, from left, Community Relations Director Judy Brackenrig, SageLife President Kelly Address, General Manager Parrish Phillips and Community Relations Director Candise Smart.

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80TH ANNIVERSARY

'Need to remember'

Attacks on Pearl Harbor changed the U.S. forever

By Mike Urban
murban@readingeagle.com

Though there are no longer any veterans of the Pearl Harbor attack left in Berks County, it's still important to commemorate that infamous day from 80 years ago today, as it changed the nation and the world forever, local historians say.

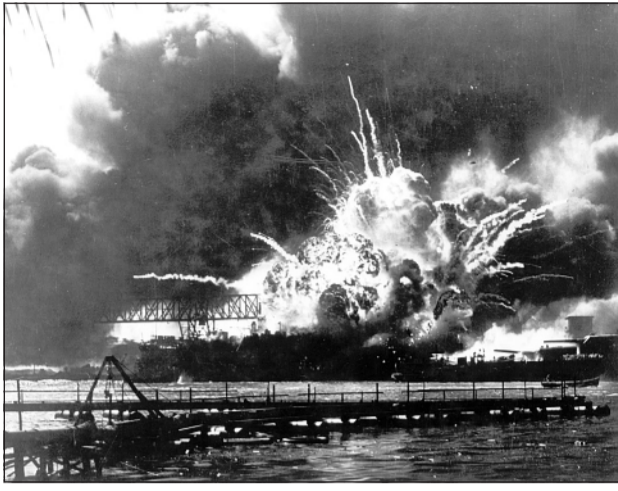
And the Dec. 7, 1941, surprise attack in Hawaii should be remembered not only for leading the United States into World War II, but also for the many American service members who paid the ultimate price that day, Berks veterans director Ken Lebron said.

"The recognition of and the remembrance of Pearl Harbor Day and the attacks on this country on that fateful day are important because it is, yet again, another example of and testament to the might and resolve of America and its citizens," he said.

"The attacks on Pearl Harbor inspired this nation and motivated the American people to wholeheartedly commit to the victory in the Second World War," he said. "As Americans we will never stand down or stand idly by whenever our country and its citizens are attacked. It is a day that will live in infamy. The 2,403 military and civilian lives lost during those attacks will never be forgotten."

Alvernia University history professor Dr. Tim Blessing grew up in Huntingdon County hearing stories about the Pearl Harbor attack and World War II from his parents, who spoke about rationing meat, gasoline and even nylon stockings to help the war effort.

As a professor teaching about that day, he's had many students who could name only two his-



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

In this Dec. 7, 1941, file photo, the destroyer USS Shaw explodes after being hit by bombs during the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.



Dr. Tim Blessing, political science professor at Alvernia University



Ken Lebron, Director of Berks County Veterans Affairs.

torical dates from the last 100 years — Sept. 11, 2001, and Dec. 7, 1941, he said

"It was a day that changed the country forever," he said of Pearl Harbor Day. "It's a dividing line like the Grand Canyon ripping across the American historical landscape."

The U.S. was somewhat isolated prior to World War II, but the Pearl Harbor attack spurred it to become an international force and the so-called arsenal of democracy, he said.

"It was a great awakening for America," he said. "Psychologically it brought us more into the

world."

At the start of the 21st century, Berks was still home to several dozen veterans who survived the Pearl Harbor attack,

But by 2010, when a luncheon for survivors was held in Berks, there were only believed to be five remaining.

Now it appears there are none left.

So Jody Reidenhour of Kutztown, an Army veteran, is working to keep their stories alive in part through the Pearl Harbor presentation she gave Sunday at the Kutztown Area Historical Society.

She plans to give similar programs annually, and she is working to interview Kutztown-area veterans and family members for an upcoming history book. It will include the two late Pearl Harbor veterans from the community — George Bordner and Robert Ritzman.

"Since many of the veterans are gone, it's up to us to pick up that responsibility of sharing their histories," she said. "We need to remember them."



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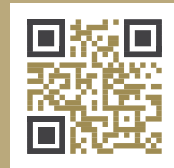
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