

OUTDOORS

Get outdoors and explore this spring



COURTESY OF ANASTASIA SHURAEVA

It's an ideal time of year to get moving outdoors on the many paths available in nearby parks and trail systems in forested areas.

By Courtney Diener-Stokes
For MediaNews Group

If you're in the active aging category, this is a wonderful time of year to start moving outdoors.

But before you venture out to your normal walking routes, it's good to consider a number of nearby trails that might expose you to some new sights and sounds.

You can do this safely and wisely taking into consideration any physical limitations you might have with the help of some longstanding trail clubs that aim for hikers to know what they are getting into before hitting the trails.

The Chester County Trail Club has been around since 1970, and 52 years later it has an impressive calendar filled with morning, afternoon and evening, weekday and weekend hikes for the month of April on its schedule.

Locations are listed, along with the category of hike rated from Class A to D, as well as mileage.

Class A is ideal for those seeking mostly flat trails with good footing and very little elevation change. Most Class A hikes take place on paved trails and well-worn foot paths. However, be sure to look at the length of the hike, because while it might suit your category needs, the length might add some of its own challenges that the difficulty of the trail doesn't.

Some hikes are considered Class B, the next step up from A in terms of degree of difficulty. On these trails you will likely find rolling hills with moderate elevation change. There also might be rocks on the trail and some underbrush, so you should be sure of your footing if venturing on this



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Ridley Creek State Park in Delaware County.

category of trail.

Upcoming Class A and Class A/B hikes to consider for the month of April include Ridley Creek State Park, Chester Valley Trail, Sadsbury Woods Preserve and Wilson Farm Park. Here are some details about each park to give you an idea of what to expect.

Ridley Creek State Park, Media

Ridley Creek State Park encompasses more than 2,606 acres of Delaware County woodlands and meadows. The gently rolling terrain, bisected by Ridley Creek, is only 16 miles from center city Philadelphia and is an oasis of open space in a growing urban

EXPLORE » PAGE 2

CHESTER COUNTY TRAIL CLUB

The Chester County Trail Club is a group of individuals who enjoy hiking, backpacking and other outdoor recreational activities. Club members also participate in building, maintaining and advocating for the protection of trails for public use. Whether you've logged a zillion miles or have never been on a hike before, you are sure to find something that piques your interest in the club's extensive schedule. To learn how to become a member and more visit their website.

Source: Chester County Trail Club
For more information: www.cctrailclub.org



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COURTESY OF RON LACH

If you're in the active aging category, it's ideal to consider the grade of the trail as well as the distance before taking it on.

Explore

FROM PAGE 1

area. **SOURCE»** www.dcnr.pa.gov **FOR MORE INFORMATION»** <https://tinyurl.com/2p8d8mrc>

Chester Valley Trail, Malvern and Exton trailheads

The Chester Valley Trail is 14.7 miles in length with 13.5 miles open for use in Chester County and 1.2 miles open to the east in Montgomery County. Maintenance and operation east of County Line Road should be directed to Montgomery County Parks, Trails, and historic places.

SOURCE» www.chesco.org **FOR MORE INFORMATION»** <https://tinyurl.com/4mjx9r9m>

Sadsbury Woods Preserve, Coatesville

Sadsbury Woods is part of the largest remaining,

unfragmented woodlands in Chester County. The 508-acre preserve is an important habitat for several species of birds — such as the scarlet tanager, rose-breasted grosbeak, and ovenbird — that are dependent on its deep, sheltering forest for their survival.

SOURCE» www.natlands.org **FOR MORE INFORMATION»** <https://natlands.org/sadsbury-woods-preserve>

Wilson Farm Park, Chesterbrook

Head out on this 1.3-mile loop trail near Berwyn, Chester County. Generally considered an easy route, it takes an average of 34 min to complete. This is a popular trail for road biking, trail running and walking, but you can still enjoy some solitude during quieter times of day. The best times to visit this trail are March through October.

SOURCE» www.alltrails.com **FOR MORE INFORMATION»** <https://tinyurl.com/2p8n2e3c>

HEALTHY EATING

Doctors provide patients with tasty, healthful recipes

By John Grimaldi

“You are what you eat” may not be as simple as it sounds. Health advocates are bound to offer that piece of advice no matter how old you are. Parents are apt to warn their kids that junk food is a definite no-no.

And when you arrive at the point in your life known as senior citizenship, your health care providers, to be sure, will continue to remind you that your diet is a critical element of your lifestyle as we age, according to Rebecca Weber, CEO of the Association of Mature American Citizens.

“Moms, dads and physicians have been telling us that ever since Anthelme Brillat-Savarin wrote his book in 1825, ‘Physiology of Taste, or Meditations of Transcendent Gastronomy,’” Weber said. “As he put it back then, ‘Tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are.’ But don’t be put off; healthy eating does not mean you have to sacrifice your taste buds in favor of nutrition. The two need not be contradictory. In other words, you can have your cake and eat it too, as another saying goes.”

Talk about preparing tasty dishes that are good for you. Dr. Linda Shiue, like most doctors, is an advocate of healthy eating. So when she joined a Harvard Medical School conference in 2012 attended by doctors, chefs and dietitians, she found an unusual way of helping her patients: teach them how to cook healthy meals.

The conference prompted her to train as a chef at the San Francisco Cooking School, and now she is not only an inter-

est, but she’s also a trained chef. In fact, Shiue wrote her own cookbook, “Spicebox Kitchen.”

“I like to think of a spicebox as the cook’s equivalent of a doctor’s bag, containing the essential tools to use in the art of cooking,” she said. “Learning to use spices is the best way to add interest and vibrancy to simple home cooking.”

In a profile that appeared in Bon Appétit, she explained: “I’d often felt like I wasn’t doing enough for my patients; that they weren’t able to make the lifestyle changes they wanted to. In that moment I realized food could be a really great, creative way of guiding them towards

healthier choices. I literally taught my first cooking class for patients a week after that and have been doing so at my clinic since.”

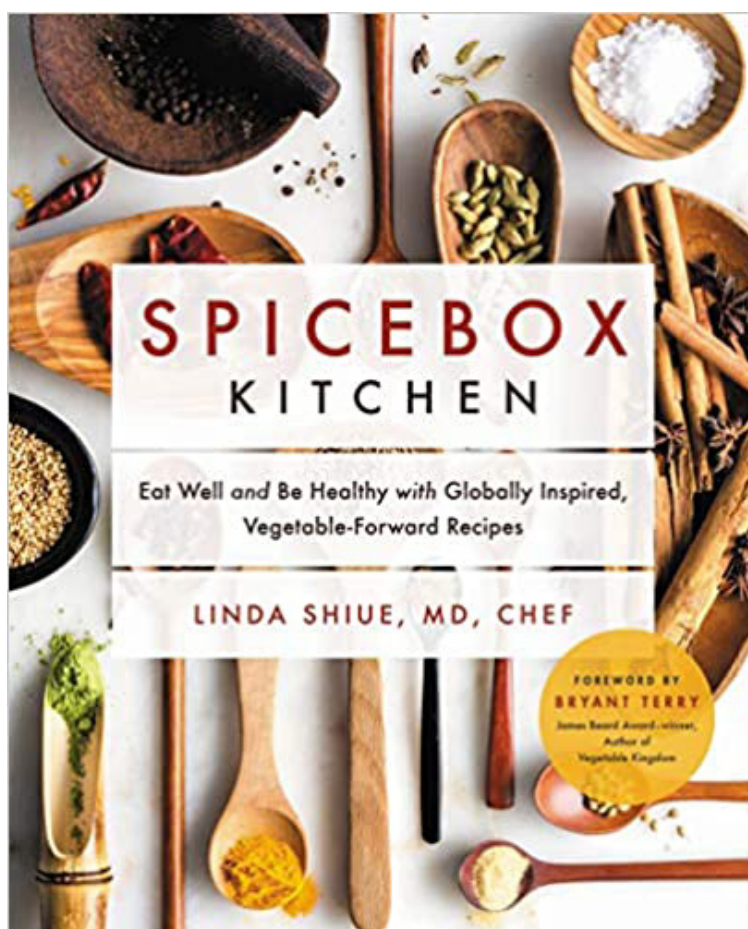
Shiue is not alone; medical schools are beginning to offer culinary medicine courses; they’re turning out young doctors who know their medicine and are versed in the art of offering patients appetizing healthy meals.

The Association of American Medical Colleges says they are “part of an emerging trend at medical schools across the country, one that teaches students how to cook so they will be equipped not only to take better care of themselves but also to counsel

patients on the role that good nutrition plays in improving health outcomes.”

No longer will doctors simply tell their patients that nutritious eating will prevent disease, he or she may be able to literally give them tasty recipes for a healthy lifestyle.

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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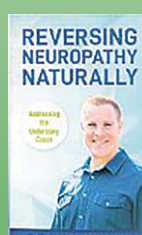
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HISTORY

Gen. Spaatz Museum in Boyertown celebrates Vietnam War Veterans Day

Memorabilia from local Vietnam veterans displayed

By Jesi Yost
For MediaNews Group

To commemorate National Vietnam War Veterans Day, the General Carl Spaatz USAAF Museum in Boyertown displayed a special Vietnam War era memorabilia exhibit and a museum admission discount for veterans March 26 and 27.

The exhibit, composed of donated memorabilia and individual items on loan to the museum from local Vietnam veterans, consists of equipment and clothing from that era and was on display in two locations within the museum through April 3.

"This would be what someone would look like leaving the perimeter," Tom Gosse, director of marketing for the museum, said as he described a Vietnam field uniform. "Many times in Vietnam, you didn't bother with the shirt. It's just too hot, this (uniform) was extremely heavy and extremely hot, but it was a lifesaver."

Also part of the special exhibit is a re-creation of an M60 Machine Gun, nicknamed The Pig, due to its size.

"You gave this to your best soldier," said Gosse. "The best, strongest person carried The Pig."

A highlight of the exhibit includes a Marine Corps "Mule" vehicle with the missing man ceremony field display. A Mule is a four-wheel drive, gasoline-powered truck/tractor vehicle that can carry up to a half-ton off-road. The Missing Man Ceremony Field Display includes a soldier's rifle and boots, with helmet on top.

One part of the display featured an MCI or Meal, Combat, Individual canned wet combat rations along with photographs and Donald L Conrad of Barto's order to report notice for his



JESI YOST — FOR MEDIANEWS GROUP

Part of the General Carl Spaatz National USAAF Museum team, Ray Page, Tom Gosse and Charles Haddad pose with a Marine Corps "Mule" vehicle with the missing man ceremony field display — a highlight of the special Vietnam War era memorabilia exhibit.



JESI YOST — FOR MEDIANEWS GROUP

Charlie Minsky, 10, with his father, Andrew, and grandparents Christina and Bart Minsky, found all four of the French Safehouse Escape Room items, completing the mission with just two minutes to spare at the General Carl Spaatz National USAAF Museum in Boyertown. The museum is planning an exclusive escape room in April.

induction into the armed forces on May 26, 1969.

"The equipment tells the story," said Kristian Steffenhagen, "Oftentimes, if you deconstruct the machinery it will tell you more about the environment that led to its creation. Oftentimes, you get a very complicated history behind the development of a machine ... why it is the way it is. And then occasionally, you wind up with standout stuff like these two pieces of ammunition (50-caliber round and 20mm shell) which are so widespread that they are still in use in various places around the world in a variety of roles."

Steffenhagen explained the difference in technology between a 50 caliber round and 20mm shell.

"Through World War II and into Korea, we were using 50-caliber machine guns. By the time Vietnam rolls around, the M61 Vulcan has come about and that is a 20-millimeter shell which is a significant upgrade in firepower. This 50-caliber round fires anywhere between 750 and 1,000 rounds a minute; the 20-millimeter shell fires 6000 rounds a minute."



JESI YOST — FOR MEDIANEWS GROUP

A collection of U.S. veteran autographs and stories compiled by Chris Boswell in several binders on display at the General Carl Spaatz National USAAF Museum in Boyertown.

The museum featured a video and period music with songs like "I Fought the Law," by The Bobby Fuller Four.

National Vietnam War Veterans Day is acknowledged on March 29, honoring the more than 2.7 million Americans who served in the war. The date was chosen because after 20 years in Vietnam, the last U.S. combat troops left the

SPAAZT MUSEUM » PAGE 4



JESI YOST — FOR MEDIANEWS GROUP

John Conrad and Rachel Conrad of Fredericksburg and Katie Rumpilla and Vietnam veteran Brian Rumpilla of Gilbertsville pose with a flag outside of the General Carl Spaatz National USAAF Museum in Boyertown. To commemorate National Vietnam War Veterans Day, the museum displayed Vietnam War era memorabilia and offered an admission discount for veterans March 26 and 27.



JESI YOST — FOR MEDIANEWS GROUP

Vietnam War era memorabilia exhibit includes a recreation of an M60 Machine Gun - nicknamed The Pig.



JESI YOST — FOR MEDIANEWS GROUP

Kristian Steffenhagen explains the difference in technology between a 50 caliber round (127mm) and 20mm shell, both pictured. The 20mm cartridge is larger of the two.

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Spaatz Museum

FROM PAGE 3

Southeast Asian nation on March 29, 1973. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam was disbanded and the last U.S. combat troops departed the country.

"As a national military museum, it is fitting that we would participate in honoring all veterans of foreign wars," said retired

Marine Col, Keith Seiwel, CEO and founder of the Spaatz museum. Many local veterans, and descendants of veterans, visit and contribute to the museum. We hear their stories, and many of the pieces on display are donated by them. Much has been written about what it was like for us to 'return to the world.' This museum offers a place to thank our veterans,"

The museum is planning to commemorate Vietnam War Veteran's Day every year. The current Viet-

nam War era memorabilia exhibit will be on display through April 3.

President Barack Obama proclaimed March 29, 2012, as Vietnam Veterans Day. He called upon Americans to observe the day with programs, ceremonies, and activities that would commemorate the 50 year anniversary of the Vietnam War.

President Donald J. Trump signed the Vietnam War Veterans Recognition Act of 2017 officially recognizing March 29 as National Vietnam War Veterans Day and called for U.S. flags to be flown on this day honoring everyone who served in the military (whether they were in Vietnam or not).

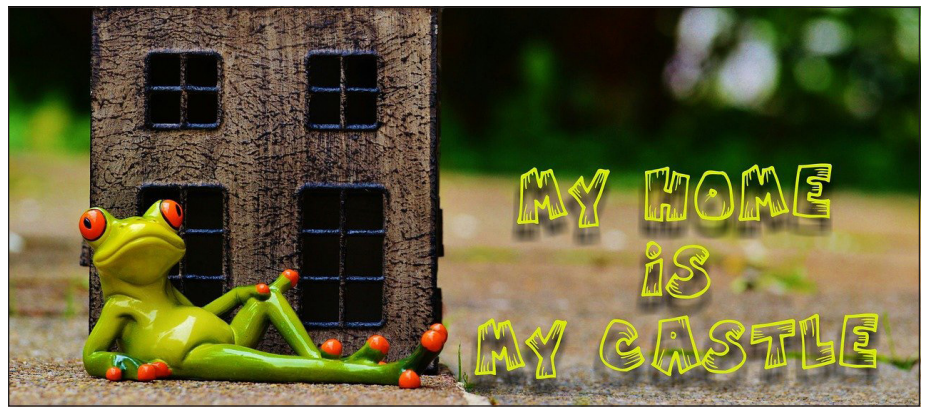
National Vietnam War Veterans Day also includes the service of the armed forces and support organizations during the war; the wartime contributions at home by American citizens; the advancements in technology, science, and medicine; and the contributions made by U.S. allies.



JESI YOST — FOR MEDIANEWS GROUP

Several items of Vietnam era clothing and uniforms make up part of the Vietnam War era memorabilia exhibit on display at the General Carl Spaatz National USAAF Museum in Boyertown.

SPOT OF T



PIXABAY

It's what's inside that makes a house a home

By Terry Alburger

If you have seen the newest hit Disney movie, "Encanto," or if you are Latino, you are likely familiar with the word casita.

Being part of both groups, I have embraced it as more than just a word. The literal translation is little house, but it is more than that. It is home. And those two terms are definitely not synonymous.

Twenty-five years ago, my then-fiance and I were house hunting. Both being "second-time-arounders," we were a mini Brady Bunch. We had four children between us, all school-age. Anticipating a long house hunt, we began nine months prior to our wedding. Little did we know our hunt would begin and end on the same day.

When we walked into the house, it immediately became home. It was the perfect size for our growing family, had potential for expansion in its unfinished basement and had a charm that spoke to our hearts ... "un encanto." (charm)

A quarter of a century later, now as empty nesters, with the addition of

some rooms and of some thoughtful gardens, it is still our precious casita. The roses bushes, blueberry trees, strawberry plants, perennials and fig trees, which had been cultivated many years ago by my father in his beautiful yard where I spent many happy years, warms my heart every time I look at them. It is for sure, my encanto.

This house has seen many a joy and many a sadness, many triumphs and yes, even some failures. It has seen our family grow, with the addition of grandchildren and extended members. When I hear the phrase "my home is my castle," it hits the nail right on the head. No matter where I am, whether I've been gone two weeks or two hours, the feeling of pulling into this driveway is second to none.

During the times of COVID, this casita served as our refuge from danger and kept us safe and sane. If I had to be sequestered somewhere, I'm glad it was here, in a space of comfort, a place where the walls served to protect and nurture rather than imprison or cage.

Casitas can come in all shapes and sizes, from a

tiny apartment to a huge mansion. It is not the exterior that makes a house a home. It's what's inside you when you are inside it.

I hope that wherever you are, it is a casita. An "encanto." A lot can be learned from our animated friends in that movie. It's about family, it's about love, and it's about supporting each other. The house is just the shell that surrounds the love of those who dwell inside. And the love makes it a home.

So next time you are sitting comfortably in your favorite room, close your eyes and feel the comfort and the security of being home. They often say, "if these walls could talk..." My hope is that the walls in my home would speak of the many happy memories, the great times, the family gatherings, the grandchildren and the puppies.

They would tell about the love that lives within. They would tell the story of my casita for years to come. Someday, when we retire and move away, I can only hope that the strong feeling of love will linger and will be felt by a new family, ready to begin their journey in that special casita.

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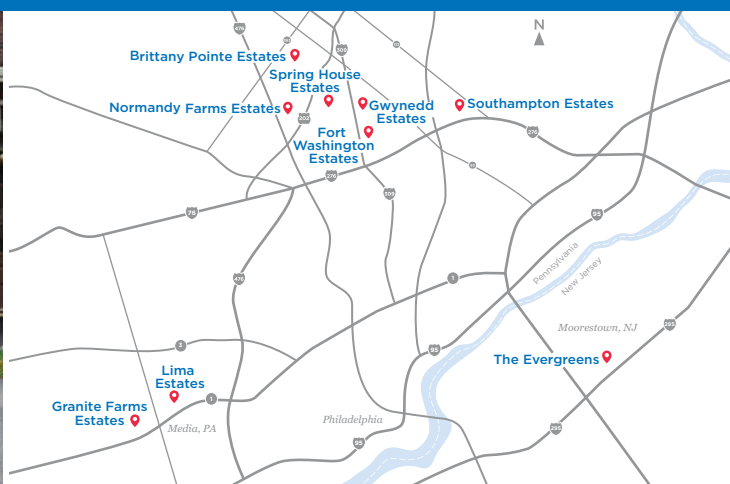
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PROMOTING SENIOR WELLNESS

The benefits of being outdoors are plentiful

By Jennifer Singley
The Hickman

Spring is here at last, and after such a long and frigid winter we are clamoring to get outside. The benefits of being outdoors are plentiful — natural vitamin D, stress reduction and ease of exercise, just to name a few.

Luckily, our Chester County landscape offers a multitude of possibilities for outdoor exploration and wellness at every level of ability, often coupled with a history lesson or two.

No matter how near or far you wander, our area abounds with both popular walking destinations and several hidden gems to discover. Find one that's calling your name this season.

WalkWorks ChesCo!

A mere two blocks from The Hickman front door, you'll find signs for WalkWorks, an initiative created by the Pennsylvania Department of Health in 2018 to get Chester County residents young and old walking more.

The 2.4-mile loop guides you through the picturesque, tree-lined streets of downtown West Chester along accessible, safe, well-lit sidewalks.

Download a free map on their website; on it you will find points of historical significance that you will pass as you stroll, such as Chester County Courthouse and Everhart Park. For those who plan to drive into town to walk this trail, both borough parking garages are adjacent to the route.

Chester Valley Trail

With trailheads in several locations throughout the county, Chester Valley Trail doesn't get any more convenient. Having been the site of a railroad in years past, this ADA accessible trail is straight, flat, paved and shaded in many parts.



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Part of the Chester Valley Trail.

CHESTER COUNTY WALKING TRAILS AND RESOURCES

WalkWorks ChesCo!: www.chesco.org/walkworks

Chester Valley Trail: East Whiteland Trail Head: 209 Conestoga Road, East Whiteland Township

Exton Trail Head: 132 Church Farm Lane, West Whiteland Township

Stroud Preserve: 454 North Creek Road, East Bradford Township, <https://natlands.org/stroud-preserve>

Willistown Conservation Trust: <https://wctrust.org>

Open Land Conservancy: www.openlandconservancy.org

Visitors can expect to share the trail with other walkers, joggers, cyclists and motorized wheelchair users. The trail is also patrolled by Chester County park rangers, lending an extra element of security to those walking solo.

Consider parking at the East Whiteland Township building to enjoy a mostly shaded portion of the trail while catching up on the historical significance of nearby land; many areas along the trail intersect with the Revolutionary War movements of Gen. George Washington's Continental Army and the British troops of Gen. Cornwallis.

The Exton Park trailhead

has significantly more sun, but conveniently offers public restrooms at its trail entrance.

Stroud Preserve

Sprawling over 500 acres on the outskirts of West Chester, Natural Land Trust's Stroud Preserve offers trails to fit a spectrum of abilities.

The purple loop, located near the parking lot, is great place to start. This easy and relatively flat .8-mile loop meanders through open grassland with access to viewing the Brandywine River. Take a moment to appreciate the ecological significance of the land; in his will, Dr. Morris Stroud stipulated that the preserve be permanently available for scientists at the Stroud Water Research Center to study ways to naturally protect rivers and streams.

Located in the heart of downtown West Chester, The Hickman is not only centrally located to a host of outdoor excursions but also offers its own serene outdoor landscape for residents and their families to enjoy. Contact us today for a tour and see for yourself how "when you're here, you're home."

The Hickman is a Quaker-affiliated licensed personal care home in West Chester. Jennifer Singley can be reached at jsingley@thehickman.org or www.thehickman.org.

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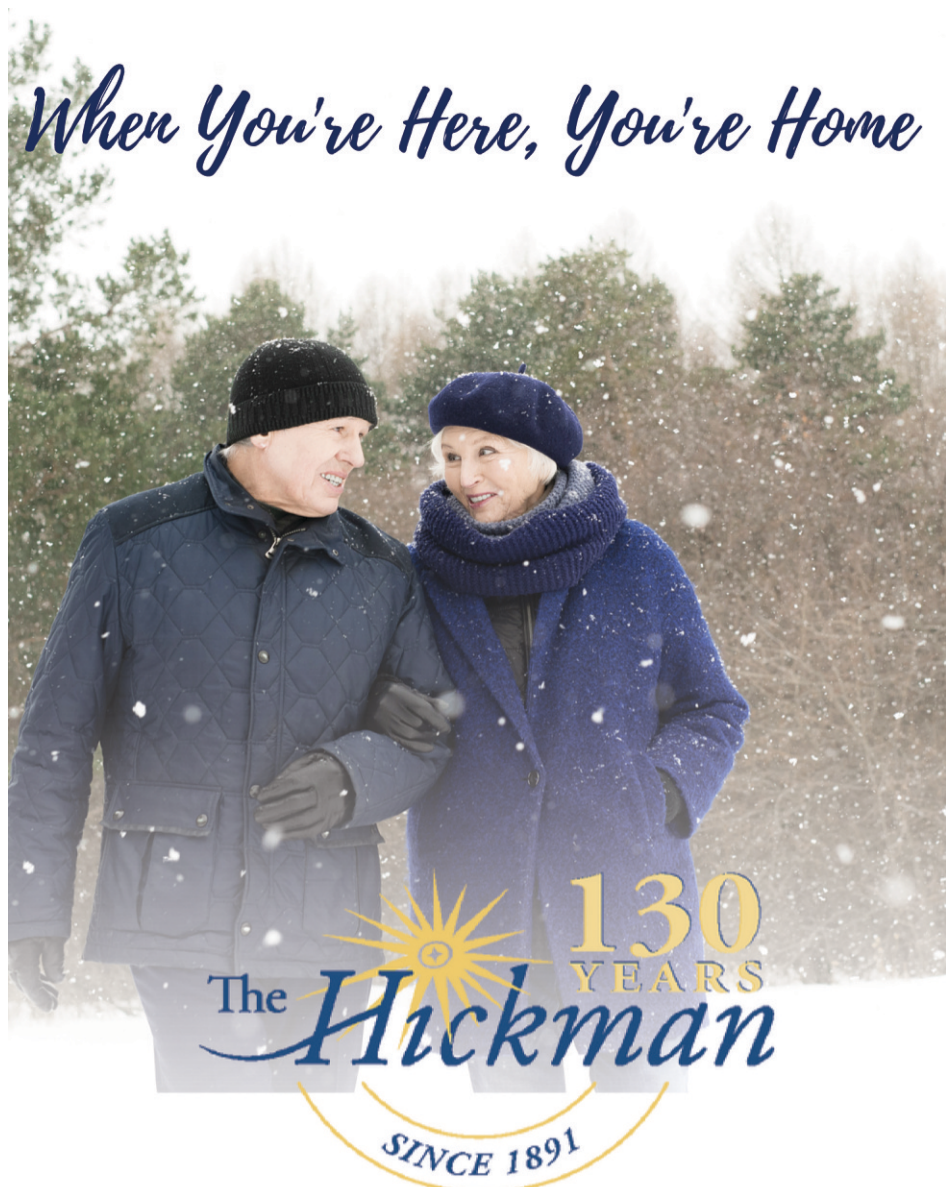
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ASK RUSTY

Should I claim early due to Social Security's financial condition?

By Russell Gloor

DEAR RUSTY» I plan on retiring at 62, one year from now. I have been coached to (if financially possible) leave my Social Security earnings for my wife to collect in the future if I die, considering that she was a homemaker for the majority of her income earning years. My instinct is to get Social Security coming (I understand I'm settling for a lesser amount at age 62) as soon as possible considering the forecast of our government's inability to fund Social Security for the rest of my life. No one has a crystal ball, and no one knows what our government will or will not be able to fund even into next week, so we weigh what we know and see, and then decide. Is my question clear?

— *Skeptical*

DEAR SKEPTICAL» Well, your question is clear but contains two opposing factors: You say you wish to provide well for your wife if you die, but also say you wish to claim at age 62 because you're not confident that Social Security (SS) will be there in the future. Yet claiming at age 62 will mean the lowest possible survivor benefit for your wife because her benefit as your widow will be the amount you are receiving at your death. I'll try to put all this into perspective for you.

Although Social Security is facing some future financial issues, it will never go bankrupt and be unable to pay benefits. The worst that could happen, if Congress takes no action beforehand, would be that benefits will be cut by about 22% if the SS Trust Fund is fully depleted in 2033. (Right now, reserves in the Trust Fund are used to supplement SS expenses



Russell Gloor

because SS revenue is currently less than program costs.) If that happens, Social Security can only pay out as much as it brings in.

But that almost certainly won't happen, because Congress won't permit it to. Congress already knows how to fix Social Security's financial issues. They just currently lack the political will and bipartisan spirit to implement the changes needed. But there's little doubt that they will fix the issue before allowing an across-the-board benefit cut to over 65 million beneficiaries (because seniors vote). FYI, there was \$2.9 trillion in reserves in the Social Security Trust Fund at the end of 2020.

I don't recommend you make your Social Security claiming decision based on fear of the program going bankrupt. It won't. Even if Congress doesn't act and a benefit cut is imposed in 2033 (which is highly unlikely), a 22% cut to your age 62 benefit amount would be more painful than a 22% cut to your benefit at your full retirement age (FRA), which would be about 30%

higher than your age 62 benefit amount. The longer you wait to claim, the higher your benefit, and your wife's survivor benefit, will be, even in the unlikely event of a later cut in benefits.

Instead, I suggest you make your claiming decision based only upon your personal circumstances. If you wish to increase your wife's survivor benefit, then waiting longer to claim is the way to do that. If you retire from working at age 62, Social Security's earnings test won't apply to you (the earnings test limits how much you can earn while collecting early SS benefits), thus you can certainly claim at 62 if you so wish. But it's important to consider the consequences of claiming early (including a lower survivor benefit for your widow) and make a decision based on facts, not fear of Social Security going bankrupt, because it won't.

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



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UKRAINE DONATIONS

Residents, staff at The Hickman take action to support Ukrainians

For Media News Group

Residents and staff at The Hickman Friends Senior Community of West Chester collected various items this month for Ukrainians of all ages, loading a van full of pain relief medication, diapers, baby wipes, personal hygiene products, blankets, towels, canes and other assistive devices and more.

The donations, collected for Chester County Hospital's Help for Ukraine Donation Drive, will be sent to those in need through the United Ukrainian American Relief Committee.

In addition, The Hickman residents and staff have been making pins of blue and yellow ribbons and sunflowers, the national flower of Ukraine, to spread awareness, show support and raise funds to aid Ukrainians in the midst of crisis.

Each \$1 donation per ribbon will be given directly to GlobalGiving Ukraine Relief Fund.

While they have reached their first goal of raising \$100, residents and staff will be making and selling these pins on an ongoing basis to continue supporting Ukrainians in need. Pins may be picked up at the reception desks in either the Hickman or Jeanes lobby at 400 N. Walnut Street, West Chester.

The Hickman Friends Senior Community of West Chester is a personal care home led by Quaker principles and traditions, providing older adults of all backgrounds and faiths with comfortable and affordable housing in the Borough of West Chester, Pennsylvania since 1891. For more information on The Hickman visit www.thehickman.org or call 484-760-6300.



COURTESY OF THE HICKMAN

Residents and staff of The Hickman load items to be donated to Ukraine into a van.

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BIRDING

Bye, bye birder

BERN TOWNSHIP'S ED BARRELL MARKS HIS LAST YEAR AS THE COMPILER FOR THE BERNVILLE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

By Bill Uhrich
Reading Eagle

Over his 30 years as compiler of the Bernville Christmas Bird Count, Ed Barrell has not only watched birds but also the weather.

He doesn't remember unusual birds in 1999, but he remembers the cold.

"That was the low, 6 degrees; the high that day was 18, and windy," he shuddered with a laugh. "Bitter. Your eyes would water, and it was hard to be out for long periods of time. Just the cold."

The Bernville count is the youngest of the three centered in Berks County — Reading began in 1911 and Hamburg in 1966 — and therefore has always been the count scheduled last in the official Audubon count period that runs from Dec. 14 until Jan. 5, always fall-

ing in the first weekend in January.

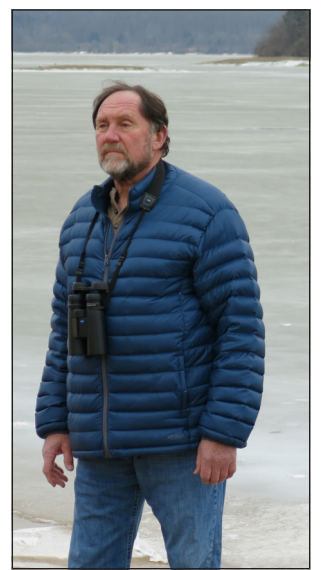
This year's count was held Jan. 1, in the rain and the fog.

And although he has participated in every Bernville count and plans to keep participating in future counts, this year marks his last as compiler.

"I enjoyed doing it, especially comparing the numbers and looking at the species, but I just thought it's time to pass it on," he said. "I don't find it very difficult to do, and I was never a numbers person. I just thought 30 years was a good number to round it off."

Barrell, 70, has participated in area Christmas bird counts every year since 1977, and like many Berks birders got his start at Hawk Mountain.

"What got me into bird-



BILL UHRICH — READING EAGLE

Ed Barrell is used to birding in the cold at the frozen Blue Marsh Lake. He has been the compiler of the Bernville Christmas Bird Count for the past 30 years.

ing was a 1975 article in the Pennsylvania Game News about Hawk Mountain," the Bern Township resident said. "I decided to go up one day, and there were lots of hawks flying low and close. "I was hooked."

A little while later, he attended a program on Hawk Mountain at the Reading Public Museum presented by the Baird Ornithological Club, which celebrated its centennial last year.

"I went and met people like Bob Cook, Rudy Keller, Joan Silagy and Jack Holcomb and started going on field trips with the club," he said.

In 1977, Cook asked him to help out on the Reading count, and he has been doing counts every year since then, often working on four counts — the three centered in Berks and the Elverson count, which overlaps southern Berks County.

His birding hasn't been confined only to the counts or to Berks County.

"My birding interests have taken my wife Sarah and me to other states and countries like Belize, Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador and Tanzania," he said.

He has also been active in the local Baird club as a former vice president, president, board member and



BILL UHRICH — READING EAGLE

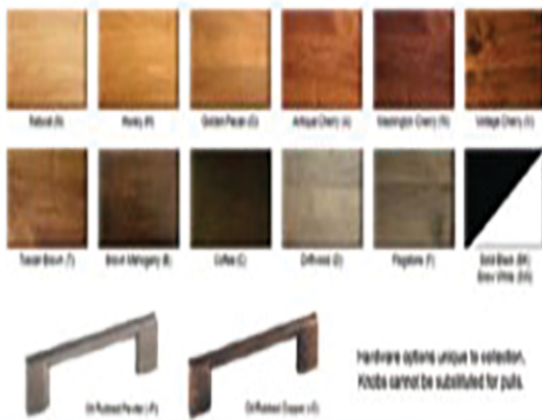
A ring-billed gull at Blue Marsh Lake, Bern Township.

ED BARRELL » PAGE 9

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Ed Barrell walks along the frozen shoreline at Blue Marsh Lake.

BILL UHRICH — READING EAGLE

Ed Barrell

FROM PAGE 8

field trip leader.

But he relishes the memories of the many birds seen and the birders who have participated in the Bernville count.

Because the count circle includes Blue Marsh Lake, the Bernville count has been noted for its gulls, nine species of which have been recorded throughout the count's history.

In fact, the Bernville count recorded the highest number of ring-billed gulls in North America during the 2006 count: 35,682.

"The reason there were so many gulls is that there was a pig farm up near Shartlesville that was dumping waste in the fields, and the gulls would leave here and go up there and then come back here and roost for the night," he said.

A rare gull that showed up in 1992, a European mew gull, created a stir that attracted birders from throughout the East.

"Another unusual one



BILL UHRICH — READING EAGLE

A glaucous gull, a ghostly bird from the far North, makes a rare appearance in Berks as it wings across Blue Marsh Lake.

that same year was the laughing gull," he said. "We don't get laughing gulls around here too much. They're around the Jersey coast but not too much inland. We've had glaucous gull — a bird of the Far North — over a number of years, too, and an Iceland gull a couple times."

The pig farm was subsequently shut down, but Blue Marsh still attracts a number of gulls.

A total of 148 bird species

have been found on the Bernville counts.

Another rarity on the count was a green-tailed towhee, a Western species, that was first found near the Blue Marsh stilling basin in late November 2011 and remained until the following April. It was the first Berks record for that species.

The Bernville count circle also encompasses the many farms and fields in western Berks, and in the second year of the count during another exceptionally cold winter an unprecedented number of rough-legged hawks irrupted into the count circle.

Rudy Keller, an original Bernville count participant, recalled finding the birds in his Marion Township territory.

"Rough-legs are birds of the arctic tundra that come this far south only in winters when heavy snow that hides their vole prey covers the regions to our north," he said. "Conditions must have been just right in the winter of 1986-87, when the BCBC recorded 28 rough-legged hawks, an unsurpassed number, on Jan. 4.

"Twenty of those birds were seen by Joan and Bob Silagy and me. As we drove along the roads through the farmland, we found new birds around every bend and over every hill, perched on treetops or hovering over the snowy, tundra-like fields."

Although a conspicuous feature of those early counts, the last rough-leg was recorded in 2008.

"Warmer, less snowy winters due to climate change that have kept the birds north, and a change in farming practices to ever more row crops like corn and soybeans, which do not support the meadow voles on which rough-legs prey, account for the decline," Keller said.

It's this type of long-term record keeping that makes the Christmas counts and the job of compiler so important.

But after 30 years as compiler, Barrell will hand the duties over to Mike Slater, another long-time participant in the count.

"It's all good," Barrell said. "I just enjoyed doing it, no matter the weather."

BERNVILLE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT START

The Bernville Christmas Bird Count is the most recent among the three official Audubon count circles centered in Berks County, getting its start in the 1985 count year.

The Bernville count owes its beginning to a close encounter with an owl.

Terrence Schiefer was a student at Penn State when he got hooked on Christmas Bird Counts and went on his first one.

Schiefer, now the curator of the Mississippi Entomological Museum at Mississippi State University, related the origins of the count in a recent email:

"I got my start at Christmas Bird Counts when the late Bob Cook invited me to go with him on the Elverson CBC," he wrote. "This was the first time I was ever owling, and Bob knew just where to stop to find each screech-owl. During the day we birded on some private property of a friend of Bob's where there was a stand of pines that contained a long-eared owl roost. We spread out to search for the owls, and one of the owls that the others flushed flew up into another tree and in turn flushed out a saw-whet owl that flew right by me. Bob liked to say that I positioned myself just right so that the saw-whet would fly by me.

"After that count I was hooked on CBCs. When at college at Penn State, I participated in the State College CBC for quite a few years. At that time I was interested in everything about the bird life of Pennsylvania. I remember visiting the university library and going through all of the CBC reports in American Birds (and its predecessors Field Notes and Bird Lore) and photocopying all of the CBC results for all of the counts in Pennsylvania (There was no internet then!). I then combed through all of the counts, seeing what species were reported on what counts and how frequently.

"So I guess my starting the Bernville CBC was an extension of my interest in Pennsylvania CBCs in general. I think it had long been in the back of my mind that the area around my old stomping grounds around Blue Marsh Lake would make an excellent area for a CBC with Blue Marsh Lake itself providing water birds that would increase the diversity of species on the count.

"Of course you can't do a count without participants, so I fielded the idea to some of my friends in the Baird Ornithological Club to see if they would be interested in participating in what would for them be an additional CBC. I got a favorable response, and so I drew up a count circle, being careful not to overlap the Reading and Hamburg counts, and submitted it to the National Audubon Society.

"At that time I didn't know what the future held for me, but as it turned out I soon got a job curating the insect collection at Mississippi State University. I believe I only compiled the Bernville count for a couple of years before turning it over to Mike Slater. For a number of years after that, I participated in the count, joining my father to help him cover his territory. I now compile the Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge CBC here in Mississippi (It is nice to have an NWR only 20 minutes from town)."

Slater compiled the count for several years before some out-of-state commitments required him to be out of the area during the count week, so he enlisted Ed Barrell to compile the count, which he has done for 30 years.

Slater has now come full circle and will take over the compiler duties from Barrell this year.



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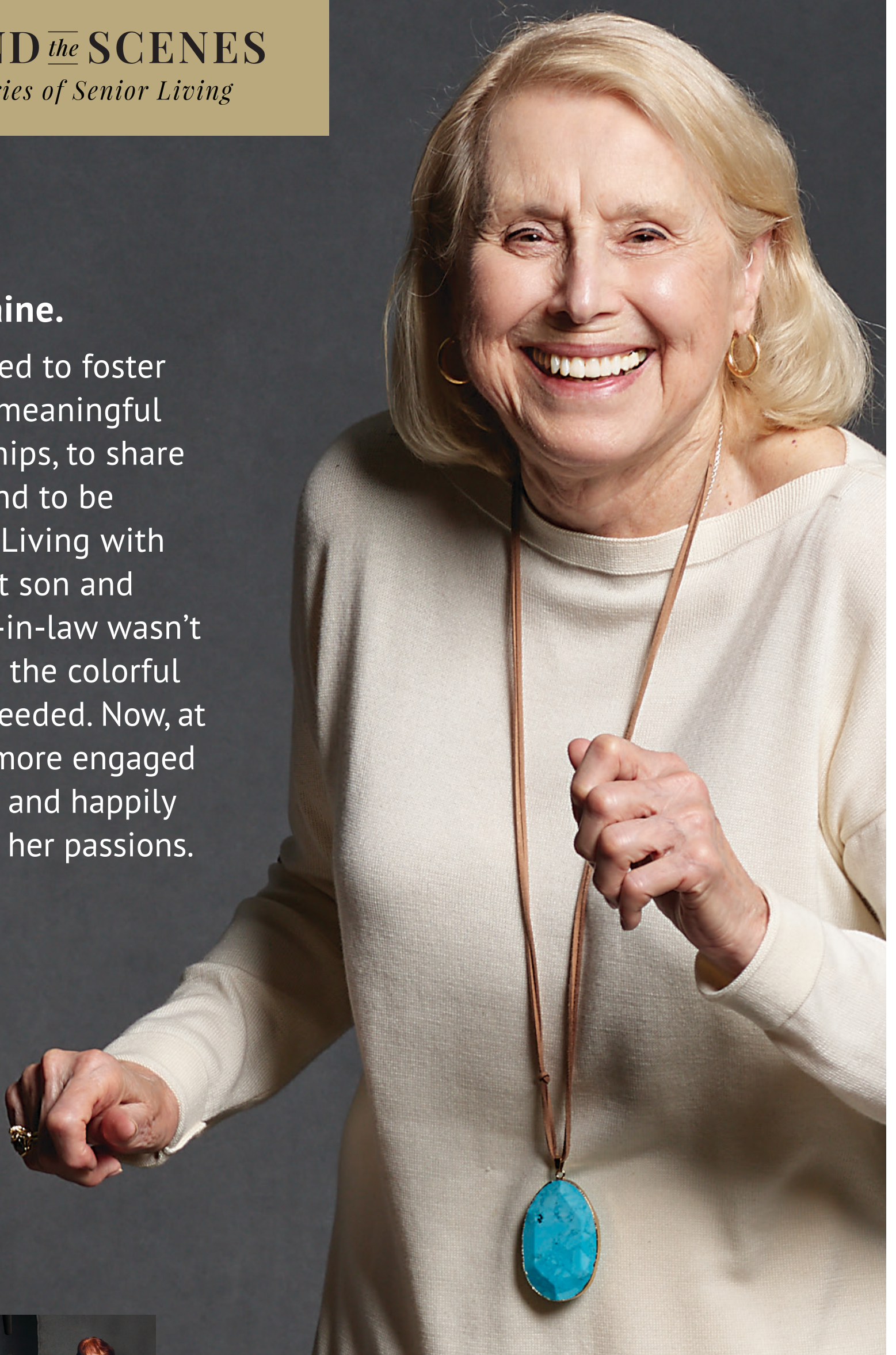
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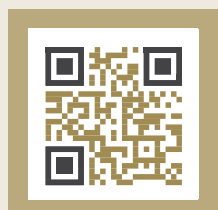
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