

DRIVER SAFETY



COURTESY OF KAMPUS PRODUCTION

A driver refresher course can help you stay on the road safely as you age.

MORE INFORMATION

Next Smart Driver Course

Where: TriCounty Active Adult Center, 288 Moser Road, Pottstown

When: Aug. 10, 10 a.m.

To register: Space is limited, so sign up in advance by calling 610-323-5009

For more information: www.tricountyaac.org

For the online course: www.aarpdriversafety.org

Learn important driving techniques

When you take the AARP Smart Driver course, you could be eligible for a multi-year discount on your auto insurance. The course teaches proven driving techniques to help keep you and your loved ones safe on the road. You'll learn:

- Important facts about the effects of medication on driving.
- How to reduce driver distractions.
- How to maintain the proper following distance behind another car.
- Proper use of safety belts, air bags, anti-lock brakes and new technology found in cars today.
- Techniques for handling left turns, right-of-way and roundabouts.
- Age-related physical changes and how to adjust your driving to compensate.

Source: www.aarp.org

DRIVING REFRESHER COURSE FOR SENIORS PUTS SAFETY FIRST

By Courtney Diener-Stokes
For MediaNews Group

As we age, our vision and hearing may get worse, and our reaction time behind the wheel slows down, all of which can negatively impact seniors when they're driving.

There also are more cars on the road, with people driving faster, which makes venturing out riskier business.

The best way to keep ourselves driving for as long as possible is to do so as safely as possible, which is why the TriCounty Active Adult Center in Pottstown is offering AARP's Smart Driver course for those age 50 and up.

"For a lot of these people, it has been 50 or more years since they passed their driver's test," said

Brian Parkes, the Adult Center's executive director. "If you think about that, a lot has changed."

The refresher course reviews safety aspects of driving among other topics.

"The things that have changed and things they should be aware of," he said.

It's also creating a greater level of awareness about aspects of aging that might make driving more challenging.

"That their reaction time may not be what it used to be," Parkes said. "Vision changes when driving at night is another."

The recertification class, taught by a professional, is typically offered at the center twice a year. You aren't required to be an AARP member to attend but can get a discount on the

course if you are. There are other perks to attending.

"A lot of people receive a discount on their auto insurance if they complete the course, so it's a good incentive for them to keep it up," he said, adding that after the four-hour course, they have to take a periodic refresher.

According to the AARP, safer driving can do much more than save you money.

"Our defensive driving course teaches evidence-based strategies to keep you safe behind the wheel," the AARP states on their website.

Strategies they offer include important facts about the effects of medication on driving, how to reduce driver distractions, age-related physical changes and how to



COURTESY OF BRIAN PARKES

Brian Parkes, executive director of the TriCounty Active Adult Center

DRIVING COURSE » PAGE 2

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PROMOTING SENIOR WELLNESS

Take proactive measures to stay behind the wheel

By Jennifer Singley

From the time we are excitedly old enough for our learner's permit to when we officially pass our driver's test, the ability to drive is so much more than just a means of getting around — it is a cornerstone of independence.

Being able to drive means not needing to rely on others to meet your needs, something of paramount importance, especially in today's car-dependent world where families are more spread out than in decades past.

Yet, as we or our loved ones experience aging-related changes, driving can unfortunately become risky from a safety standpoint. How do we know when driving may no longer be safe for us or a loved one? What proactive measures can seniors take to remain behind the wheel as long as possible?

And for those older Chester County residents who are no longer able to drive, what transportation supports are available to them?

When is driving no longer safe?

The ability to drive safely does not decline solely because a person is older. Rather, driving often becomes unsafe for older adults because of physiological and cognitive changes that naturally tend to occur with aging. Such changes include:

- Changes in vision
- Hearing loss
- Reduced reaction time
- Joint and muscular stiffness
- Medication side effects

If you or an aging family member are experiencing any of the above changes, you might notice an increase in near accidents, unexplained dents or scrapes on the body of the vehicle,



Being able to drive helps seniors maintain their independence.

DEPOSITPHOTOS

less confidence behind the wheel or difficulty adapting driving to varying road and weather conditions.

Furthermore, individuals developing dementia might find themselves unable to remember where they were headed or how to get back home. If any of these factors are present with you or your loved one, it might be time to consider transportation alternatives.

How to remain a safe driver

According to the Mayo Clinic, several proactive measures can be taken to remain a safe driver:

- Stay — or become — physically active, which increases flexibility and strength
- Remain current and regular with your vision and hearing tests
- Limit driving to when road conditions are ideal; avoid driving at night or in poor weather
- Manage medications properly and be aware of any side effects that may affect your focus, alertness or ability to see the road
- Minimize distractions; if you have a cellphone, keep it off or stashed away
- Regularly refresh your driving skills; the AARP offers an online safe driver

course based upon the state in which you live to keep your understanding of the rules of the road current

Transportation alternatives

In the event you or a family member are no longer able to safely drive, consider consulting the following resources for getting around in Chester County:

- Chester County Transportation Services: <https://www.chesco.org/1912/Transportation>
- Chester County Ride Guide: <http://www.chescorideguide.org/paratransit.cfm>

▪ Rover Community Transportation: <https://www.krapfbus.com/transportation/rover>

▪ West Chester Area Senior Center: <http://wcse-niors.org/services-and-programs>

Driving is a significant gateway to independence throughout life, but physical and cognitive changes resulting from aging can make driving unsafe and threaten that independence. Fortunately, not only are there are several ways to ensure driver safety as we age and thereby remain behind the wheel for as long as possible, but resources are also

available for accessing transportation in the community when driving is no longer an option.

Located among tree-lined streets in the heart of downtown West Chester, The Hickman is both walk-friendly to a variety of destinations and near to community transportation, an arrangement that fosters independence and enables our residents to maintain a connection to the community in ways that are important to them. Call 484-760-6300 or visit www.thehickman.org for more information or to schedule a tour.

Driving course

FROM PAGE 1

adjust your driving to compensate.

There is no test involved after taking the course that is offered in-person at the Adult Center, but it can be taken online, directly through the AARP. Attendees just have to sit through the class, and the online course is self-paced.

Parkes highly recommends the Smart Driver course for those in the active-aging category given he has witnessed firsthand the impact aging can have on driving.

"I keep a count that I announce each day of the accidents in the parking lot," he said. "If more people take this course, I hope that they can extend their

driving later into their lives in a safe way and with more confidence."

The topic of driving can be a touchy subject, particularly when it comes time to have a conversation with a loved one whose driving skills appear to be deteriorating.

"It's a big topic and a big topic for families when they talk to their parents about giving up their license," he said. "Our members see driving as so critical to their independence."

Parkes said this conversation doesn't necessarily happen at one particular age.

"We have a 98-year-old member who just gave up his license last year," he said. "Then we have people in their 70s who can no longer drive at night or can't drive anymore due to a disability."

He highly recommends that families be alert to

signs that a driver's capability is diminishing because they no longer have the driving skills they used to have.

"The first sign that people notice are usually dents in the car," Parkes said. "Their parents hit a grocery cart or backed into a pole — it's usually something that is not that serious."

But that could easily change over time when they not only pose a risk to themselves, but to others as well.

"Driving has become a lot more dangerous these days," he said. "It's important to stop driving before something serious happens."

As soon as new dents are present, Parkes suggests it's a good time to start the conversation, but be prepared because it's typically a touchy subject. He said it's important to



COURTESY OF KEENAN CONSTANCE

As we age there are aspects of aging that make driving more challenging

determine how your loved one's driving is going to be replaced so that a solution can be discussed.

"Think about 'how are you going to keep your parent independent without a car, and how do you fill that void,' he said.

"If you have the answer, the conversation can go smoother."

Solutions might be family members who can offer support with driving to doctor's appointments and the grocery store, or maybe getting them set up

with a TransNet Pass.

"It depends on their abilities and their location as to whether or not they can easily take public transportation," he said, adding that in some cases, someone might need some specialized type of transport.

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HEALTHCARE

PACE nurses meet people where they are

By Mellisa Russell

As a nurse, I can tell you the national nursing shortage is not just media hype.

Too many good colleagues are leaving the profession, creating vacancies throughout medical settings. But I still believe the same thing I thought when I entered this profession: Nursing remains a rewarding and fulfilling way to make a living.

Especially if you are someone who has the care gene.

Some background: I work as a PACE nurse, meaning I am part of a growing model of home and community-based care for some seniors who need the skills of a nursing home but are able to live safely in the community with support.

PACE is an acronym for Programs of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly and is a viable option for an increasing number of seniors. I used to work in hospitals, but PACE nursing is where I found my calling.

Being an effective nurse in a PACE environment means meeting people where they are. You adjust your strategies to meet the goals of the participant.

Nursing in PACE is gratifying. You can see the differences and benefits in someone's life. You remember why it is you went into nursing in the first place.

If it weren't for PACE, I may never have met the mayor of Sharon Hill.

The mayor isn't an actual elected official, and when I met him, he was in bad health and had a poor diet. He was more than 200 pounds overweight. I felt he was literally eating himself to death.

In the case of the mayor, he was unable to walk at all because of his excess weight. When I met him, I could sense the desper-

ation. He didn't want to die, but he didn't quite understand how to turn around his own health.

In essence, he was giving up on himself. But we believed in him and never quit trying to help him improve his outlook.

Change takes time, and we weren't going to help the mayor with one visit. But PACE allows for continuous care because it follows a different insurance reimbursement model, one that rewards positive outcomes and is free for our eligible participants.

Because PACE programs receive a capped reimbursement from Medicare and Medicaid, we are financially incented to keep our clients out of the hospital.

Over time, he lost enough weight to qualify for a gastric bypass procedure. Today, the mayor can walk on his own, no cane or walker. Even better, he has a new mental outlook on life.

The mayor believes in himself, and that makes us believe in him, too. He strides through the PACE center with the self-confidence of a public officeholder. This is why we nickname him the mayor.

When someone enters a PACE program, they receive access to chronic care management. We work with a patient over time, helping them take the baby steps that eventually lead to giant strides.

I am one of the lucky ones. I get to experience the good side of nursing every day. And, if you have the care gene, you can see the upside of nursing, too.

I spent more than a decade as an emergency room nurse, so I have experienced nursing through two different professional lenses.

I've been there to work on cases that are stressful, where split-second decision making is needed to save a life.



COURTESY OF TRINITY HEALTH PACE

Mellisa Russell in her office at Trinity Health PACE.

My current role also has stressful moments but the stresses are different and infinitely rewarding.

The start of the COVID-19 pandemic reminded us of the daily bravery and heroism of ER nurses. The stories you read and saw were all 100% true.

Still, nurses are heroes every day, not only in the throes of a pandemic. And not just in hospital settings.

The COVID-19 pandemic,

while not officially over, is certainly not as intense as it was in March 2020.

We need to recognize the altruistic efforts of nurses, regardless of setting.

Indeed, nursing heroes can be found in physician offices, long-term care facilities, in rehab facilities and, yes, at PACE centers.

Nursing is not only a career, it is a calling. It is one of those professions that truly allow you to go the

extra mile for people.

If you want a career where you feel needed, nursing may be for you. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects 194,500 average annual openings for registered nurses each year until 2030.

Please look into being one of us. We need hard workers with generous hearts. We need people with the care gene in their DNA.

Mellisa Russell is a regional clinical director of operations with Trinity Health PACE. She is a resident of Sharon Hill, Delaware County, and practices PACE Nursing at Mercy LIFE in Sharon Hill and other Mercy LIFE locations in the greater Philadelphia area as well as Mercy LIFE in West Springfield, Mass.

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SPOT OF T

TAKING A CHANCE ON THE LUCK OF THE DRAW

By Terry Alburger

What is your first reaction when you hear that the Powerball or Megamillions jackpot is at a record high? If you are like most people, you will probably make arrangements to grab a couple of tick-

ets. Whether you are a regular lottery aficionado or new to the lottery world, you will do what you can to buy into the dream with the purchase of a ticket.

Have you ever wondered why we do this? Do we really think we will win? At the risk of sounding like Mr. Spock from "Star

Trek," the odds would be astronomical. And yet, we do it.

While I cannot speak for anyone else, I can say that for me, I'm buying a dream. I'm buying a few days in an imaginary world that I know will never actually become my reality. But the cost of the



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

lottery ticket is most definitely worth those days of fantasizing just what I'd do with those winnings. The people I'd help, the donations I'd make, the good I'd be able to do... all those plans rely on the outside chance the my ticket has the right numbers.

So, what is your strategy? Do you choose numbers that have meaning in your life, perhaps birth-dates of family members? Or maybe numbers that represent important facts from your life — house numbers, phone numbers or ages of loved ones?

My personal favorite is to let the computer pick my numbers. After all, if I were to play the same numbers each time the lottery hit record highs, then decided to skip it just once, I am convinced that would be the time that my numbers would hit. No, I couldn't risk that! So, as you can see, my strategy is based on sound logic... or lack thereof

There is strategy in all games of chance, I think. Recently, we had a large raffle event at my workplace, where 15 impressive raffle baskets were created to raise money for a charity. For eight days, these baskets were on display,

and residents, staff and family members were all invited to participate.

As one of the event coordinators, I witnessed many people approach these raffles with clever and unique game plans. I became fascinated with this! Some purchased lots of tickets but only placed a certain amount into the boxes associated with the baskets they most desired that first day. They subsequently returned several times in the following days, to place their remaining tickets in those same boxes.

Then there were those that stacked the deck as it were, all at once. They bought lots of tickets and loaded them all into one box. Still others opted for the baskets that were not the most popular, thinking that fewer people would try for them, and their odds of winning would increase.

And of course, there are those who believed that it only takes one ticket to win, so they placed one in each of the baskets. After all, if God intended for them to win, it would happen... right? (I admit, I am of that ilk.)

We had many who came each day to view the bas-

kets, study their contents and really ponder which they would win. Most of those waited until the last day to purchase their tickets and place them carefully in the boxes. I had to smile. I'm sure they knew that each drawing would find those tickets mixed up and shuffled thoroughly before the winner was pulled. But it did not change their strategy. It was definitely an interesting study of human behavior.

Many people told us what they would do with their winnings. We had several baskets that were made up of cash (in the form of a clever money tree or beautifully wrapped up as a present) or gift certificates. To me, it was impressive to see the number of people who said if they won either of those, they would donate it back to the charity for which we were raising money. And in fact, one of the winners did just that.

So, into which category do you fall? Or doesn't it matter? From the time you purchase that ticket...that chance (albeit a small one), that dream, is certainly worth the cost of admission. So ... what will you do when you win?

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VOLUNTEERING

RSVP's Virtual Summer Reading program helps students avoid the summer slide

RSVP

School buses may be off the roads, but that doesn't mean that learning has ended.

There are more than 90 first- through fifth-grade students registered for RSVP's Virtual Summer Reading program who will need a volunteer to spend 30 minutes once or twice a week coaching them by reading online books together.

This is the third year that RSVP is offering this virtual summer program to students.

The student and volunteer will meet via Zoom based on the pair's schedule. If a volunteer's schedule changes, it's simple to select a new time slot. After sessions have been planned, scheduling software will send a few reminders to the pair before the planned session.

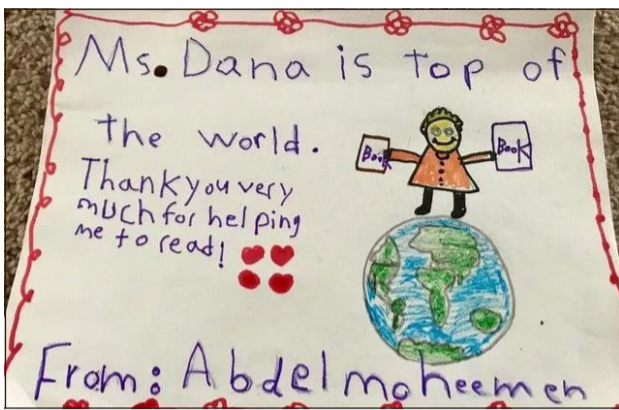
The student's reading level has been logged into the e-book site Raz Level-Up Books, enabling the student to select a book, including many science book choices.

When children select a book that interests them, they receive the most benefit in reading comprehension, vocabulary, reading achievement and grammatical development. The book will appear on the screen and the student will read aloud to the volunteer.

The Raz program features a module that tracks the student's progress, which can be shared with the teacher and parent.

Dana Hayne has been active in the elementary reading program since 2019. Although she misses interacting with the students in the classroom, she has adapted to the virtual format of the program as many classrooms were still not welcoming volunteers into schools.

"This is the most fulfilling thing I have done in a long



COURTESY OF RSVP

One of Dana Hayne's students sent this artwork to thank her for her help.

time," Hayne said. "With the 30 minutes dedicated to each session, I had the opportunity to support the student in several ways, not just by helping them gain confidence in reading but also by listening to their stories and dreams and being able to encourage them."

One student told Hayne that he wanted to be a basketball player so Hayne did some research and created a short story about Joel Embiid, center for the Philadelphia 76ers. She shared the story with the student, who was so happy that she took the time for him.

Another student she read with selected a book about death and dying that they read together. Afterward Hayne asked the student why he chose this book, and he responded that his father had just passed away.

"It's easy to take a moment to connect with the student to form a trusting bond and it makes all the difference to the student," Hayne said.

Jackie Matusow, RSVP's reading program coordinator, reports that all students who participate make advances in reading.

"Reading just four to six books over the summer has the potential to prevent a decline in reading achieve-

ment scores," she said. "Even small steps are very beneficial."

Hayne offers some advice to community members considering volunteering in this program.

"You should have a passion to share the joy of reading and gaining knowledge," she said. "Each child is unique in their own way and it is so rewarding and important to acknowledge that uniqueness."

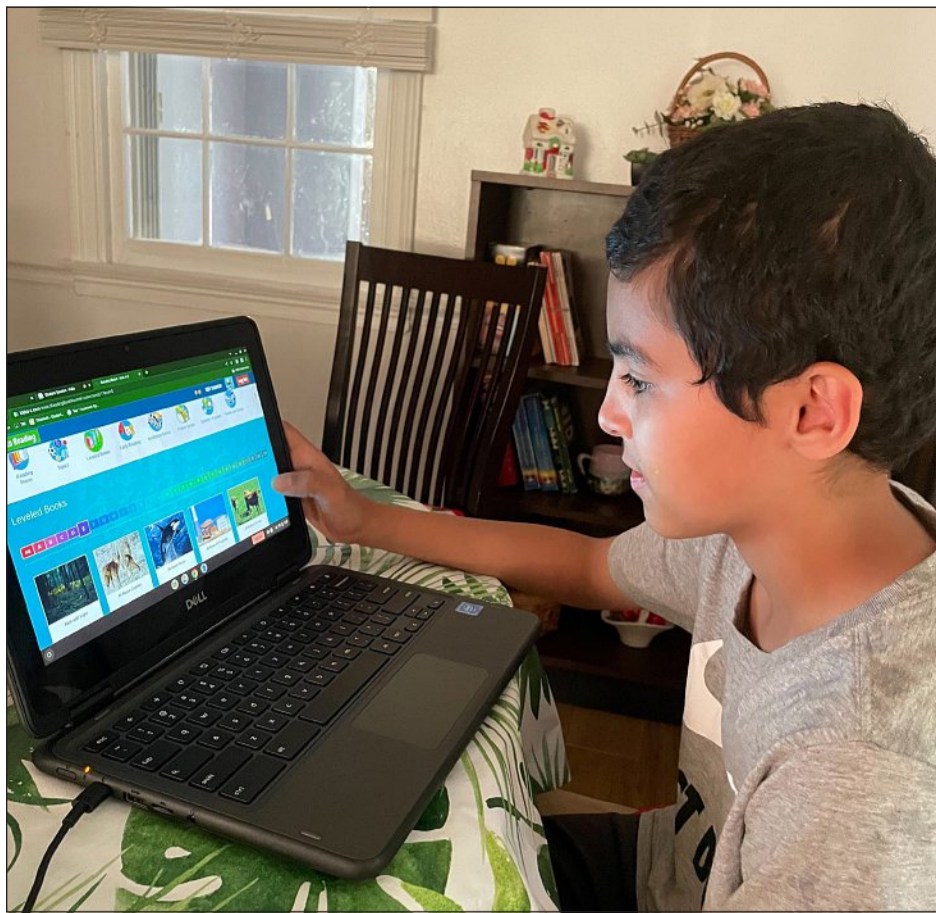
RSVP's Summer Reading program began on June 27 and runs through Aug. 11. Training will be provided for volunteers covering session booking, screen-sharing in Zoom, signing into the Raz Kids library and some tips on what a successful virtual session looks like.

To sign up as a volunteer, visit <https://www.rsvpmc.org/virtual-literacy>.

To sign up as a student, visit <https://www.rsvpmc.org/resources-for-parents>.

For more information, visit www.rsvpmc.org.

Nonprofit RSVP's programs improve the lives of vulnerable populations by focusing on education and wellness. For information on volunteering, visit rsvpmc.org, email volunteer123@rsvpmc.org or call 610-834-1040, ext. 123.



COURTESY OF RSVP

Abdelmoheemen prepares for his reading session with Dana Haynes.



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FLAG DAY

KEYSTONE VILLA AT DOUGLASSVILLE HOLDS FLAG DAY CEREMONY

For MediaNews Group

Blue skies and sunshine set the backdrop for the annual Flag Day ceremony held at Keystone Villa at Douglassville.

A crowd of residents and guests, seated in front of the flagpole just outside of the independent living building, turned out on a warm afternoon to honor the American flag and the birthday of the U.S. Army.

“Our Flag Day celebration becomes more meaningful each year,” said Sue Seanor, the executive director for independent living at Keystone Villa at Douglassville. “The

celebration of our flag is a powerful reminder of the generations we serve at Keystone Villa and how our men and women fought for our country and stood by the flag. Our residents understand and embrace patriotism.”

The program began after reciting the Pledge of Allegiance with opening remarks from Seanor, followed by a prayer led by resident Jim Moll, and included additional patriotic verses, songs and readings by Keystone Villa residents.

Guest speaker, retired Col. Keith Seiwel, a 30-year veteran of the U.S.



COURTESY OF KEYSTONE VILLA AT DOUGLASSVILLE

A small crowd of residents and guests turned out at Keystone Villa at Douglassville in recognition of Flag Day and the birthday of the U.S. Army.

Marine Corps and the CEO and founder of the General Carl Spaatz National USAAF Museum in Boyertown, also ad-

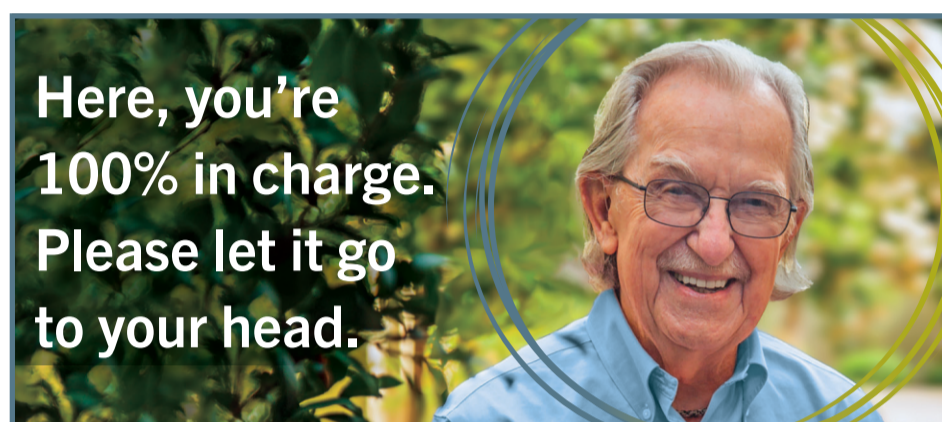
dressed the group.

Keystone Villa residents Alice and Ed Specht donated the ceremony flag.



COURTESY OF KEYSTONE VILLA AT DOUGLASSVILLE

Guest speaker retired Col. Keith Seiwel, a 30-year veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps and the CEO and founder of the General Carl Spaatz National USAAF Museum in Boyertown, addresses the crowd at Keystone Villa at Douglassville during its annual Flag Day ceremony.



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COURTESY OF KEYSTONE VILLA AT DOUGLASSVILLE

Honoring the stars and stripes, retired U.S. Marine Corps Col. Keith Seiwel gets assistance from Mike Murphy with properly folding the American flag during the annual Flag Day ceremony at Keystone Villa at Douglassville.

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