

April 2023

# Vitality

YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO AGING WITH  
GRACE, PURPOSE AND WELL-BEING



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**On the cover:** Jolico Inc. in Utica sponsors three ladies' traveling softball teams for players ages 55-70.

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**MONEY & SECURITY**

## Real estate: Are home sellers required to respond to all offers?

**Q**: We're living in the house that we built 47 years ago but it's getting to be too much for us to handle. We don't want another house and we're not sure if a condo would be right for us because we can't do all the things that we use to. We do not want an apartment with loud kids or music. What would you suggest and what have other seniors in our same position done? Please let us know.



**Steve Meyers**  
Columnist

**A**: That's a question I get asked quite often. Experience shows, no senior is in the same exact position. They may be in similar positions, but not exact. The reason I say this is because each senior has unique needs whether it's living, family, medical, financial, etc... What's good for one senior may not be good for another. Your move needs careful planning. From what you've told me maintenance of a property is a problem for you. So, I would definitely rule out a house. A condo may work for you but as you age or your needs increase that may not be a wise choice either especially if you're having difficulties now. An alternative would be moving to an Independent Living Retirement Community. These facilities cater to seniors who can still live an independent lifestyle (usually for those with very few medical problems). Special note here; some of these communities today offer amenities that rival resorts. Recently, I had the pleasure of visiting Waltonwood Lakeside and was given a tour by the Marketing Manager, Melissa Wright Marciano. This facility offers the trifecta; Independent Living, Assisted Living and Memory Care. You can age in place or if you're a couple and have different levels of need you both can be under the same roof. The Inde-

pendent Living features spacious one- or two-bedroom apartments with full kitchens, granite counters, patio/balcony, bi-weekly housekeeping and linen service, 24-hour emergency monitoring system, meals etc... just to mention a few of the amenities. The Assisted Living and Memory Care offer more customized services and specialized assistance. Some of the other community features are: a social room with home theater, indoor therapy pool, dining rooms, café, beauty salon, exercise room, social activities and much more. They also have courtesy transportation. Don't confuse this with the picture you may have in your head of the old dark and dingy retirement homes of 30-40 years ago. It's not the same. Take a look. You will be surprised and may find a new place to call home.

**Q**: I received an offer on my house that was well below asking price. I told my agent to ignore the offer because we're getting a lot of showings and it's new on the market. I'm not going to validate this buyer who is trying to low ball the price. The buyer's agent told my agent that the offer has to be rejected in writing. Is that correct?

**A**: No that is not correct. According to Michigan Attorneys, sellers have no legal obligation to reject an offer in writing and do not have to respond to an offer at all.

*Steve Meyers is a Real Estate Agent/Realtor at RE/MAX Metropolitan located in Shelby Twp., Michigan and is a member of the RE/MAX Hall of Fame. He can be contacted with questions at 586-997-5480 (voicemail) or email him at Steve@MeyersRealtor.com You can also visit his website: AnswersToRealEstateQuestions.com*

**Market Update:** February's market update for Macomb County and Oakland County's housing market is as follows. In Macomb County prices were up by more than 11% and Oakland County prices were up by more than 2% as well for the month. Macomb County's on market inventory was up by almost 15% and Oakland County's on market inventory was up by almost 2%; but still remain at historic lows. Macomb County average days on market was 42 days and Oakland County average days on market was 41 days. Closed sales in Macomb County were down by almost 18% and closed sales in Oakland County were down by almost 22%. The closed sales are down as a direct result of the continued low inventory. Demand still remains high. (All comparisons are month to month, year to year.)

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## MONEY &amp; SECURITY

## Ask the Financial Doctor: Can you convert a 529 educational fund to a ROTH IRA?

**Q**: Can I hire my child in my business and avoid paying FICA (Social Security and Medicare taxes)?



**Richard Rysiewski**  
Columnist

**A**: Yes, provided the child is younger than 18 and the parent-owned business is unincorporated. Both the child and the parent avoid paying FICA.

**Q**: What is the maximum Social Security benefit that a worker could receive in 2023?

**A**: The Social Security benefit depends on the age of the person. Assuming the full retirement age (FRA) of 66, the maximum benefit is \$3,506 per month in 2023. However, a person has an eight-year window from age 62 through 70 to begin

benefits. If you started at age 62 the benefit would be permanently reduced by 25%. If your FRA is 67 and you started at age 62 then your benefits would be permanently reduced by 30%. Delaying the benefit past your FRA will permanently increase the benefit by 8% per year till the age of 70. Additionally, if there are any annual cost-of-living adjustments in the future, your Social Security benefit will be adjusted upward.

**Q**: Is it true that an owner of a 529 educational fund could convert any excess money to a beneficiary's ROTH IRA?

**A**: Beginning in the 2024 tax year, any excess money in a 529 plan can be converted to a ROTH IRA up to a \$35,000 lifetime maximum per 529 account holder. Additionally, the 529 plan has to be open at least 15 years or more and those rollover

amounts cannot include any 529 contributions or earnings made in the preceding five-year period. Rollovers will be subject to the annual Roth IRA contribution limit which today is \$6,500 (\$7,500 if age 50 or older).

**Q**: I understand that I can reimburse myself from my Health Savings Account (HSA) for qualified medical expenses that I pay out-of-pocket. Is there a time limit? Do I need to reimburse myself in the same year?

**A**: There is no time limit and the reimbursement does not have to be in the same year as the medical expense. As long as you had your HSA established at the time of the medical expense and it was not reimbursed, you can pay yourself from your HSA, even years later.

**Q**: Can I claim my cousin as a dependent if he has no in-

come and I pay for his living expenses and he lives in my house.

**A**: Yes, you can as long your cousin is not a dependent of another person. Many filers think only young children can qualify as dependents and they miss out on big deductions as a result. Qualified dependents can include grandchildren, parents and even non-relatives who made less than \$4,400 in income during the 2022 tax year.

**Q**: My dad has not received his IRS refund for the tax year 2022. How can he check on the status of his tax refund?

**A**: Your dad can call the IRS directly 800-829-1040 or he can also use the internet by logging on to irs.gov and typing the keyword, refund.

**Q**: My husband passed away three years ago and I re-

cently discovered three stock certificates titled in his name and two stock certificates titled jointly with my name. How do I change the ownership of the stock certificates?

**A**: To change the title of a stock certificate owned solely by your deceased husband, you have to go to probate court. For the jointly owned property, send a letter of instructions together with a death certificate to the transfer agent to reissue new certificates or transfer the stocks to your brokerage account.

*Richard Rysiewski, a Certified Financial Planner®, welcomes all questions on tax and financial matters. Please send to Richard Rysiewski, Financial Doctor, 3001 Hartford Lane, Shelby Twp., MI 48316.*

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## HEALTH &amp; FITNESS

# When will Medicare cover medical marijuana?

By Kate Ashford  
NerdWallet

Many older adults are using medical marijuana to treat a variety of conditions, but experts say that conflicting laws, unclear safety standards and complicated rulemaking processes mean it could be years before Medicare may cover the drug.

One in five Medicare recipients currently uses medical marijuana, according to an April 2022 poll by the Medicare Plans Patient Resource Center, an organization that provides Medicare guidance and information. And nearly a quarter have used it in the past. Two-thirds of Medicare recipients think Medicare should cover it, the poll found.

But Medicare doesn't cover medical marijuana because it's not federally legal and not approved by the Food and Drug Administration. Here's where the situation stands.

## Why cover medical marijuana for older adults?

In one analysis of data from a large cannabis dispensary in New York, 60% of patients were 50 or older, according to an April 2022 paper in the journal, Cannabis and Cannabinoid Research. The patients used cannabis for severe or chronic pain, cancer, Parkinson's disease and neuropathy, among other things.

And marijuana isn't cheap: Patients might pay as much as \$5 per dose for edible products or \$5 to \$20 per gram for plant buds, according to New York Cancer & Blood Specialists, which



SUE OGROCKI — ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE PHOTO

Many older adults are using medical marijuana to treat a variety of conditions, but experts say that conflicting laws, unclear safety standards and complicated rulemaking processes mean it could be years before Medicare may cover the drug.

provides care to patients with cancer and blood disorders. (That's about \$142 to \$567 per ounce.) Even in states where medical marijuana can be legally prescribed, patients might not be able to afford the prescription.

"This medicine is so expensive," says Debbie Churgai, executive director of Americans for Safe Access, a nonprofit dedicated to ensuring safe and legal access to cannabis for therapeutic use and research. "There are some states now where insurance will cover the cost of the doctor visit or the cost of the marijuana card, but no insurance will cover the cost of the actual products."

## What are the federal roadblocks?

Two significant issues stand between medical marijuana and Medicare coverage. The first is that the government classifies

marijuana as a Schedule I drug, a category of drugs with "no currently accepted medical use and a high potential for abuse" in the United States, according to the Drug Enforcement Administration.

"There is no way the federal government is going to reimburse people through a federal program for a substance they deem as illegal," says Paul Armentano, deputy director of NORML, the National Association for the Reform of Marijuana Laws.

The second issue is that Medicare requires that the FDA approve a covered drug as safe and effective. Although the FDA has approved one cannabis-derived drug product and three synthetic cannabis-related drug products for prescription use, the agency hasn't approved the marketing of cannabis for medical treatment.

MARIJUANA » PAGE 8

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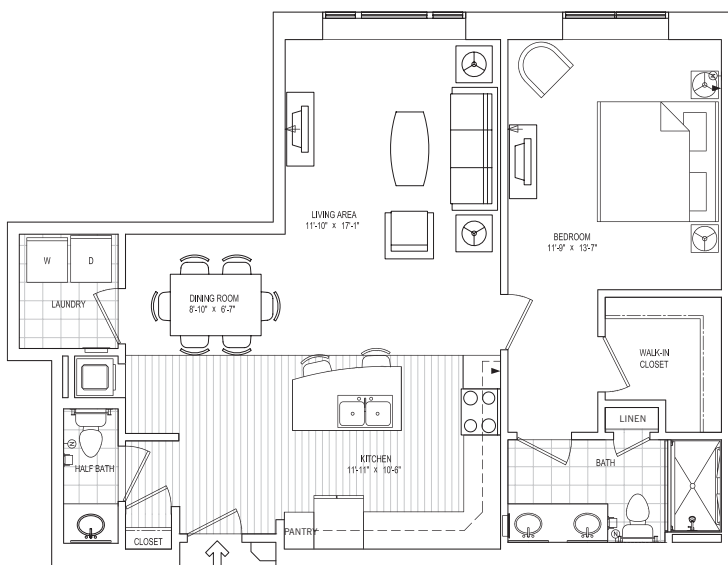


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## HEALTH & FITNESS

# What grip strength can tell you about how well you're aging

By **Gretchen Reynolds**  
*The Washington Post*

Want to know how well you're aging? Check your grip strength.

A recent study of 1,275 men and women found that those with relatively feeble handgrip strength, a reliable marker of overall muscle quality and strength, showed signs of accelerated aging of their DNA. Their genes appeared to be growing old faster than those of people with greater strength.

The study, although preliminary, raises the possibility that visiting the gym or doing a few push-ups in our living rooms might help turn back the clock and make our cells and selves more biologically youthful, whatever our current age.

A wealth of research already tells us that strength is good for us. People who lift weights are substantially less likely to develop heart disease, high blood pressure and many other chronic illnesses than those who skip resistance exercise.

Strength also can be an augury of how long we'll live. In a 2015 study of almost 140,000 adults in high-, middle- and low-income nations, reduced handgrip strength was closely linked to mortality in people of all incomes, predicting risks for early death better than blood pressure, which is often considered one of the best indicators of life span.

"Grip strength is a simple but powerful predictor of future disability, morbidity, and mortality," the authors of an accompanying editorial concluded, its effects holding true "not only in older people, but also



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

A new study, although preliminary, raises the possibility that visiting the gym or doing a few push-ups in our living rooms can help older adults feel more biologically youthful.

in middle-aged and young people."

How, though, might a sturdy grip today influence our well-being tomorrow?

"Grip strength is often called a biomarker of aging," said Mark Peterson, an associate professor of physical medicine and rehabilitation at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, who led the new study. "But the biological context for why it's so predictive of positive and negative outcomes during aging hasn't really been clear."

Maybe, Dr. Peterson and his colleagues speculated, epigenetics might be key.

Epigenetics involves changes to the numbers and actions of certain tiny molecules that attach like molusks to the outer surface of a gene and affect how and when that gene turns on. Epigenetic changes occur in response to our diets, exercise habits and many other aspects of our lives, and affect our DNA and health.

Epigenetics also may signal how rapidly we are aging, recent science shows.

About a decade ago, researchers began analyzing huge data sets of people's epigenomes, which are the epigenetic changes unique to each of us, and using that data to develop what are called "epigenetic clocks" that estimate our biological age.

Chronological age is, of course, how old we are, according to our birth certificates. Biological age indicates the functional age and health of our cells and bodies. The two numbers can differ substantially.

Epigenetic clocks use algorithms to assess biological age, based on the various patterns of molecules on genes. If the clock suggests your biological age exceeds your chronological one, you're aging faster than normal and, to be blunt, approaching frailty and death at a speedier clip than someone whose biological age is lower.

Aware of the latest epigenetic clock research, Peterson and his colleagues wondered whether strength





“I was impressed with the staff’s sincere interest in my mother’s well-being. It’s never easy to trust that others will provide the same care that you would, but there wasn’t one day that I felt my mother was not being taken care of.”

– Resident’s Family Member

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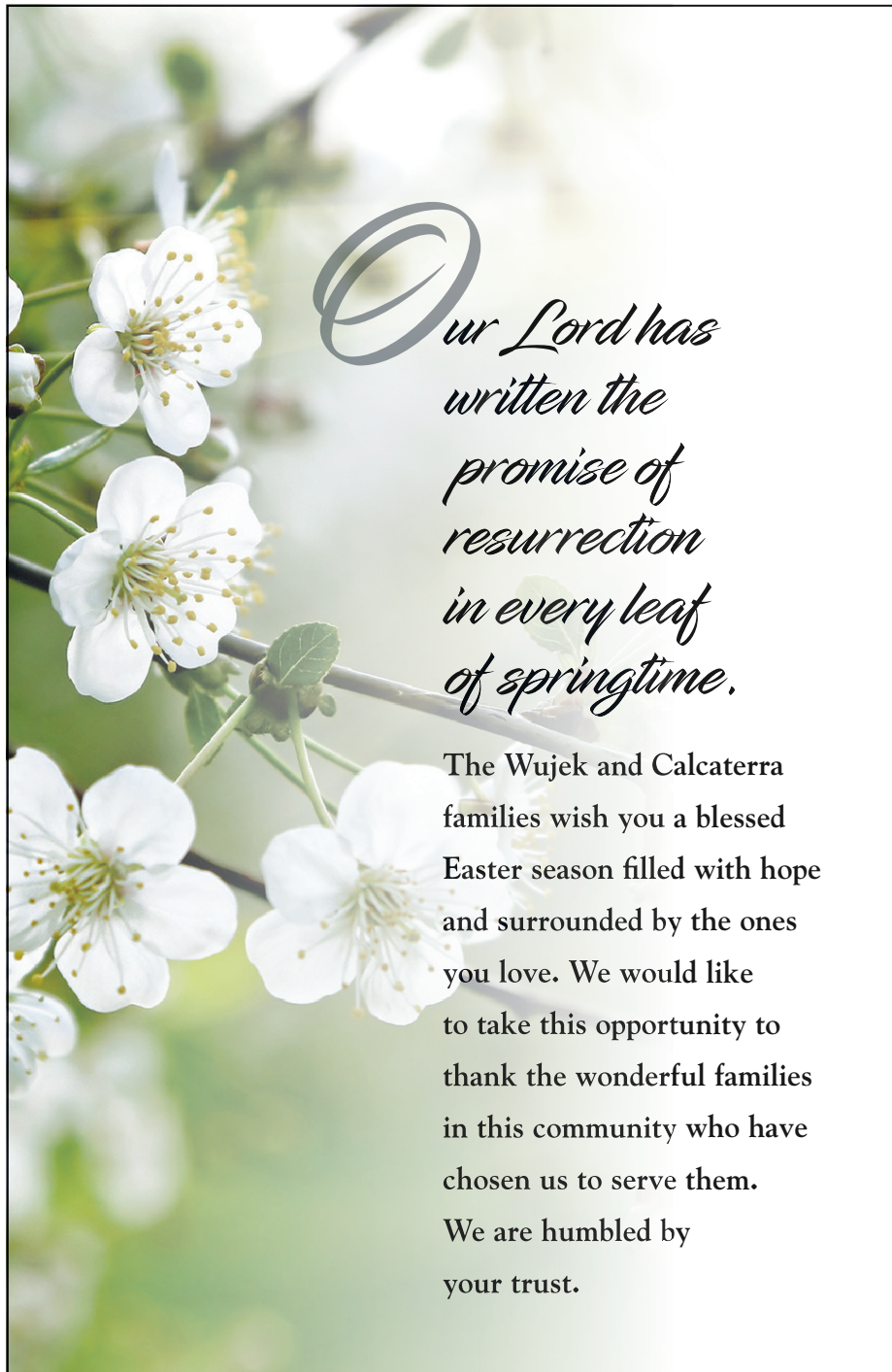
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## Grip

FROM PAGE 6

might be linked to epigenetic age, for better and worse.

They began gathering records for 1,275 participants of an ongoing study of aging who had already given blood and used a squeezable device called a hand dynamometer to measure their grip strength.

The researchers then determined everyone's approximate epigenetic age from their blood cells, using three different clocks. (Multiple labs have developed proprietary epigenetic clocks, which vary slightly.) They also checked death records for up to 10 years after people joined the study and, finally, cross-tabulated this data against people's grip strength.

They found that, in general, the weaker someone's grip strength was, the higher his or her epigenetic age. Their DNA appeared less youthful than that of their stronger contemporaries, leaving them

potentially more vulnerable to earlier illness or death.

"Overall, this study lends further support to the association of epigenetic age with frailty," said Guillaume Paré, a professor and director of the Genetic and Molecular Epidemiology Laboratory at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. Paré has studied epigenetics but was not involved in the new study.

The study raises new issues, though.

"A key question that remains to be addressed is the causality of these associations," Paré said.

Although the study shows that people with punier muscles are also people with elevated epigenetic age, it can't prove that weakness directly caused anyone's accelerated aging. Other factors might be at play, such as income, diet, medical history or other aspects of someone's lifestyle.

But even with its limitations, the study's results are provocative, Peterson said, suggesting that our muscular oomph — or its opposite — may influence our epig-

enomes and, in the process, how fast and well we age.

If you wonder about your current strength, many gyms have hand dynamometers you can use to test your grip.

If your results show your grip is on the weaker side, you don't need to focus just on your hands. You can strengthen your grip by getting stronger, in general.

In fact, most of us don't need to parse our precise grip strength to realize we could benefit from more strength training. "The usual exercise pyramids, showing how much exercise you need, put strength training at the top," Peterson said, "as if it's the part you need the least of. But strength should be at the bottom, I think, at the base. It's foundational to health."

So use that gym membership you bought this month. Get a dumbbell to keep at your desk. Try some body weight training or finish a burpee or three. You might wind up altering the age of your epigenome, as well as the brawn of your biceps.

## Marijuana

FROM PAGE 5

**What about in states where it's legal?**

Sure, marijuana is illegal at the federal level, but medical marijuana is now legal in 37 states and Washington, D.C. Could private insurers — companies that offer Medicare Advantage, for instance — decide to cover it?

Not likely, says Kyle Jaeger, a cannabis policy reporter and senior editor at Marijuana Moment, a cannabis news site. Like banking institutions that have hesitated to offer services to marijuana businesses, major health insurers will likely decline to cover cannabis as long as it remains a Schedule I drug under federal law.

Also, private insurers rely on the FDA to guide them on which drugs to cover. Consider that the FDA released a statement in January saying that current regulatory pathways are insufficient to allow the agency to classify CBD as a dietary supplement.

"It's incredibly frustrating for consumers, because all they want is a safe, consistent product," Jaeger says.

**How high is the bar for cannabis coverage?**

Among other things, the marketplace needs more data on the medicinal use of cannabis. "(Insurers) need data to show that the outcomes from cannabis care are equivalent to, if not better than, existing options that they do cover," says Dr. Benjamin Caplan, founder and chief medical officer of CED

Clinic, which provides services to people seeking cannabis treatment.

This is partly complicated by the free-market dispensary system in which patients are free to buy any product. "The system has to be tweaked," Caplan says. "Patients can't just have carte blanche to buy whatever they want and the insurance companies are on the hook to cover that."

Considering the breadth of legal and regulatory obstacles facing the process, plus an overhaul of the dispensary system, the road to cannabis coverage is lengthy, says Jaeger. "I'd say we are many years from having that conversation and rulemaking for something like Medicare."

*This article was written by NerdWallet and was originally published by The Associated Press.*



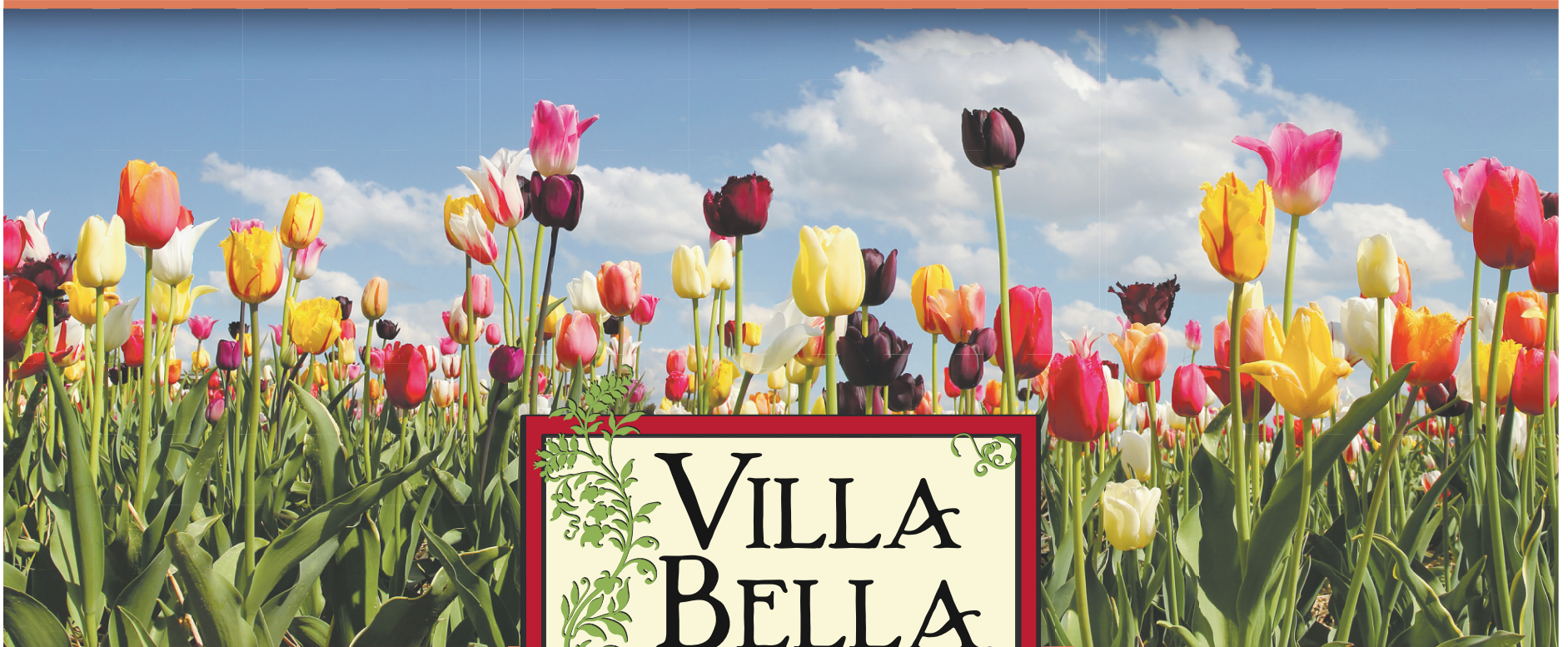
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## SOCIAL &amp; WELL-BEING

# Feeling isolated? Form your own social group

By Kerri Fivecoat-Campbell  
For Next Avenue

When my husband, Dale, passed away at the end of 2018, my local social circle was very small. We'd moved to a very rural area 11 years prior, I work from home and like many married people, most of my social life revolved around my life with Dale.

I've always been social and did know a few people, one of whom invited me to a gathering a couple of months after my loss. I met another recent widow and we both lamented over no longer having anyone to go to the movies with or to dine out with.

Knowing we live in an area with many mature retirees, we both thought there must be others who needed more friends for activities. We decided to create a social group for widows. When others who were divorced, or caretakers for partners who could no

longer go out, wanted to join, we expanded the parameters.

The group isn't a dating group, but a way for singles in our area to meet up for planned meals, live theater, movies, hikes, festivals and other events happening in our area.

## Many benefits to social connections

Numerous studies have shown the benefits of social interaction with close friends and family as we age are many, including contributing to better emotional well-being and possibly warding off cognitive impairment.

A 2019 study funded by the National Institute on Aging and the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development looked at 300 adults, 65 and over, who live in the Austin, Texas area. The study focused on how so-

cial interaction with friends, acquaintances and even strangers not only provides the same benefits mentioned above, but may mean older adults who engage in these encounters may also be more physically active. Older adults who have more physical activity also have higher chances of avoiding certain diseases and remaining healthier longer.

"There is a large research base that shows that people who engage with a broader social network live longer and are in better health. There are a lot of reasons for this, including that our loved ones support us. When we are ill, they make us feel good about ourselves, and keep us from being lonely. But this study shows that we are also more physically active and do a greater variety of activities when we are with a broad array of social partners," says Karen Fingerman, a professor of human development and

family sciences at University of Texas-Austin and the director of the university's Texas Aging & Longevity Center.

Fingerman added that this study revealed two important things:

- Linked the idea that a broad social network makes you more active

- People are more physically active while they are with a greater variety of social partners throughout the day, and when people are involved in a greater array of activities they also engage with a greater variety of partners.

"As we get older, we tend to want to spend more time with people we already know and love. So a lot of that is preference. One way to increase social engagement is to engage in a variety of activities," says Fingerman. "Things you do that expose you to the same people on

a regular basis such as attending religious services, going to the gym at a similar time each day, grocery shopping on similar days and times and speaking briefly with the checkout person to make them familiar."

Donna Fields Brown, 71, wasn't aware of the study when she moved to Pearce, Arizona, a rural community approximately 50 miles north of the Mexican border, but she knew she wanted to continue to be physically active while meeting people in her new town. She joined a chair yoga class and started teaching a mat yoga class.

"This was a community of people that pretty much kept to themselves, but sometimes people in the class would even go to a local coffee shop afterwards. I'm proud the classes helped people get out of their homes and it also gave me an opportunity to make new friends," says Brown.

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Through those connections, Brown also met a few people who formed a hiking group that meets for weekly hikes when the weather is cooperative. She also met people to play music with and formed a band. COVID reduced the number of people who come to yoga classes, but Brown hopes to build them to pre-pandemic numbers.

### Be a joiner without being a planner

Many larger areas already have interest groups on Facebook people can join. Tammi Kaeblerlein, 52, and founder of Wander Healthy in North Bend, Washington belongs to ten local Facebook groups reflecting her interests such as hiking, travel and writing. She finds the groups help her stay active and introduce her to people she wouldn't have otherwise met.

David Siegel, CEO of Meetup, one of the most popular online forums that help people with similar interests connect offline, says Facebook groups may be beneficial, but he says one of the problems is that it's an online forum



PHOTO COURTESY OF KERRI FIVECOAT-CAMPBELL

Members of the Soul Survivors social group in Mountain Home, Arkansas enjoy a picnic. There are many benefits of engaging socially, especially as we age.

and he's heard from many they have issues with people actually showing up for in-person activities (an issue we've dealt with in our local social group).

Siegel says Meetup doesn't track how many people who use the groups who are 50+, but information gathered from Google suggests about 20% are over 55 and there are approximately 3,000 groups that specify that age cate-

gory in the group's title.

Siegel says the most important thing is to find (or create) a Meetup group targeting people with similar interests. "Ageism is a real thing and there aren't enough older adults connecting with younger ones or younger people connecting with older adults," says Siegel. "It's great when there are variety of different ages in a group."

According to Siegel, 99% of Meetup groups are free. However, some may charge a small fee to join or charge a fee for activities to help the organizer cover the costs of keeping the group on the Meetup site. Siegel advises, "Find a group that matches your interests, push the fear aside and go in with an open mind. You want to find people you hit it off with, but you might find something

unexpected, too. I have a friend who runs Meetup groups and he's found his last two jobs through someone in a bowling group."

### My local group is four years strong

It's been four years since my friend and I formed our local social group. Aside from the 2020 pandemic year, we are still going strong. I've met some wonderful people through the group, one is now one of my best friends. Most importantly, it's given me a group of people to get out and do things with and helped me expand my social circle and activities.

It's also led me to unexpected things. A woman in the social group mentioned a dating meet and mingle event I didn't know about. That led me to a first date this coming weekend, something that wouldn't have happened without my social group.

*Kerri Fivecoat-Campbell is a full time freelance writer and author living in the Ozark Mountains. Story courtesy of Next Avenue.*

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## HEALTH &amp; FITNESS

# How to recognize, help those struggling with dementia

Maybe you've seen an older person in the market looking confused by the array of products on the shelves. Perhaps a neighbor is walking up and down the same street, seemingly unable to find his house. You might be standing next to someone who is trying to order food but can't figure out the menu.

You might be puzzled, irritated or even fearful. Or you could view this as an opportunity to help a person in your community who has dementia.

With an estimated 6.5 million Americans 65 and older in the U.S. with dementia (including Alzheimer's disease) and projections that the number will climb as the population ages, you will likely have more than a few opportunities to help

someone who is struggling to make sense of the world.

A program called Dementia Friends, offered in-person and via Zoom by the Area Agency on Aging 1-B this month and during the summer, aims to build awareness, challenge stigmas, sensitize participants and provide practical ways to take action.

The one-hour session can "help them take the extra step in actually helping someone," says Andrea Lang, MSIG, AAA 1-B's program manager of Social & Caregiver Services.

"It's a good starting point for a dementia caregiver and their journey," she says. "Also, these sessions are good for community organizations and businesses such as restaurants and health care profession-

## BECOME A DEMENTIA FRIEND

Dementia Friends workshops will be held at:

- 1 p.m. Wednesday, April 26: via Zoom
- 1 p.m. Tuesday, June 6: Sterling Heights Senior Center, 40200 Utica Road
- 1 p.m. Thursday, August 24: via Zoom

While the course is free, advance registration is required by going to [tinyurl.com/AAA1BFriends](https://tinyurl.com/AAA1BFriends). If you have questions, contact Andrea Lang at 248-251-6261 or [alang@aaa1b.org](mailto:alang@aaa1b.org).

als who work directly with the public every day."

Community organizations that are interested in having employees take the Dementia Friends training are welcome, Lang says.

Dementia Friends has a pay-it-forward element: After you complete the course, you become a Dementia Friend. That means you have the tools to recognize

someone who may have dementia and needs a friendly assist. It also means you can go on to take more training to become a Dementia Champion, which entitles you to train new Dementia Friends.

Communities can elect to become "Dementia-Friendly Communities." Saline is Michigan's only one so far, and having the voluntary




PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

The Dementia Friends program aims to build awareness, challenge stigmas, sensitize participants and provide practical ways to take action to support those with dementia in the community.

designation is intended to let residents and visitors know that Saline "respects and welcomes persons with dementia, and their caregivers, as valued participants in our community life," ac-

cording to its website. To learn more about the training, visit [aaawm.org/dfmi](http://aaawm.org/dfmi).

*Story courtesy of Area Agency on Aging 1-B.*



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## SOCIAL &amp; WELL-BEING

# Pontiac twins 'Cat & Eve' celebrate 90th birthday

By Terry Jacoby  
For MediaNews Group

When the waitress began taking orders inside Mitchell's Fish Market in Rochester, she started with the birthday girls, 90-year-old twins Catherine Walker Carter (Cat) and Evelyn Walker Jones (Eve).

"I will have the Alaskan King Crab Legs," said Eve. "I will have the same," said Cat.

The waitress just smiled and said: "I should have known you would get the same thing."

Pontiac residents Cat and Eve have been sharing "the same thing" for 90 years — and counting, and family and friends gathered on March 19 at first, the Newman A.M.E. Church in Pontiac, and later Mitchell's Fish Market, to celebrate two lives intertwined with love and sharing since birth.

"I have always admired their love for family," said Vana Thiero, Cat's daughter who came in from Los Angeles for the special occasion. "They have always been concerned about the well-being of their family first and foremost. The family always came

first and they were proud of everyone."

That Sunday afternoon in March was a very special day for the twins and the entire extended family. There were a lot of special memories shared in between all the smiles and laughter.

"I was just so excited to see them elated at church and at the restaurant and see people celebrate them," said Thiero. "They have spent their lives serving others so it was nice to see them get some love back. And to see them smiling the whole time and see the joy on their faces was amazing."

It was not only amazing but inspiring and touching. The twins truly enjoyed the moment.

"I never thought that we would both still be here at 90 years old," said Eve, in between those beaming smiles. "Her thoughts are my thoughts. She is just like me. I help take care of her now because she has some dementia and everyday I get up so I can help her and I wouldn't have it any other way. I'm the best person to take care of her because I know her the best and I know how to keep her the best she can be."

TWINS » PAGE 16



PHOTO BY TERRY JACOBY — FOR MEDIANEWS GROUP

Pontiac residents Cat "Kay" Carter (left) and Evelyn Jones have been sharing "the same thing" for 90 years — and counting.



The twins recalled their younger years with smiles and fond memories.

PHOTO COURTESY OF VANA THIERO

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# Twins

FROM PAGE 14

The twins were asked what they like most about the other.

"I like everything about her," Cat said. "I like her goodness. Her honesty. Her togetherness and the way she shares her love with everyone. There are so many wonderful things about her."

And Eve?

"We know everything about each other and we are so much alike and it's just a blessing to have had her for my entire life," she said. "I never thought we would still be together at 90 years old and I'm so grateful that we are. Her thoughts are my thoughts."

Also at the birthday celebration was Pauline Hoffman, 81, the last surviving sibling.

"When I was young and there wasn't any room in my parent's bed I would go sleep with the twins," she said. "They would always make room for me and let me sleep in the middle. They combed our hair, they dressed us for school. They did everything. They even taught me how to do the splits when I tried out for cheerleading."

Another guest at the table was family friend Jeff Vann, a longtime educator and coach in Pontiac. "I wouldn't be here today without (the twins)," said Vann, whose family lived a few doors down from Cat in Pontiac. "I owe them so much. I was very close to them growing up and have been ever since."

The twins were born in 1933 — first Eve, then Cat, in St. Francisville, Louisiana, to Harry K. Thaw Walker and Bessie Wilson. The family, which included seven children, moved to New Orleans where they all lived and went to school. The twins were 18 when they gradu-

ated from McDonogh 35, an all-Black high school in New Orleans.

They both recalled their younger years with smiles and fond memories.

"There were seven of us in the house in New Orleans but we got all the attention," said Eve. "The neighbors would come out of their houses just to watch us walk to school because we were dressed the same."

Cat said growing up together was "wonderful."

"We slept in the same bed and ate at the same time and we were always together," she said. "Our high school was in downtown New Orleans on Rampart Street. We were cheerleaders and just loved it."

They both joined the military right after high school at the age of 18 where they served in the U.S. Women in the Air Force (WAF) to train as nurses and were stationed in Texas.

Eve was 20 when she met and married William Jones, a sergeant she met at their duty station, James Connally Air Force Base in Waco, Texas. Cat married Fred Carter, an educator who settled his family in Pontiac in 1964. Soon came Evelyn's family and the twins' other two sisters and their husbands.

"My dad (Fred Carter) had a degree but couldn't work in his field because he was black," said Thiero. "So he was selling magazines door to door and he met Cat. Eve had already found a husband. They ended up moving to Michigan where my dad made a name for himself in education in Pontiac."

Both sisters had a boy and a girl and both became nurses. Eve worked in the surgery department at Pontiac General. Cat worked for a group of prominent black doctors in the area.

"These are some pretty



PHOTO BY TERRY JACOBY — FOR MEDIANEWS GROUP

Family and friends of identical twin sisters Cat "Kay" Carter and Evelyn Jones gathered last month to celebrate their 90th birthday.

important people in the history of Pontiac," said Thiero. "In the 1960s they would host cocktail parties for all the black professionals during all the big events. There weren't that many clubs people could go too so they would host these big events and everyone would get dressed up and it was so much fun."

Eve's husband, who was in the military for 20 years, promised her when he was finished in the military that they would move to Michigan so she could be back with her sister.

"His last assignment was in Newfoundland and I came to set up our home and be with my sister," Eve said. "And we've been together ever since."

Ninety — and counting.

**Right:** The twins were born in 1933 and grew up in New Orleans.

PHOTO COURTESY OF VANA THIERO





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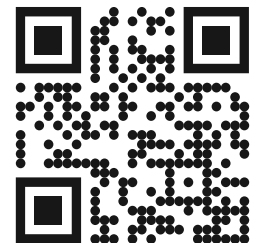
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## ON DECK

# Seniors swing into spring softball season



Besides the strong friendships developed through team sports, the benefits of giving senior softball a try are bountiful.

PHOTO BY DAVID DALTON — FOR MEDIANEWS GROUP

**By Debra Kaszubski**

*For MediaNews Group*

The day after Shelby Township resident Gerry Druzinski retired from his management career at Rite Aide in 2008, he stepped onto the softball field to play his favorite sport. Druzinski has been playing senior softball ever since. “I went right from working one day to playing the next,” he said. “It’s been great.”

Along with his spot on the Silver Hawks team, Druzinski serves as an umpire, baseball coach at Armada High School, and as a director of the Shelby Township Senior Men’s Softball League, one of the largest leagues in the area with close to 300 players. The league is made up of 19 teams of players ages 55 and older who reside in Shelby Township and nearby communities, including Clinton Township, Harrison Township, Sterling Heights, Troy, Farmington Hills, Armada, Richmond and others.

Play starts in May and extends through the middle of August, with games taking place Monday and Wednesday at Mae Stecker Park and Ford Field in Shelby Township. The players — mostly men although the league is open to women — are placed on teams according to ability. Teams are then divided into divisions so that teams of the same skill level compete against one another.

Sterling Heights resident Pat Radaj is a longtime player in the Shelby Township league. An outfielder for the Guns ‘N Hoses team, he said he plays every year for the love of the sport and also due to the camaraderie. “We don’t get anything if we win first place, and we don’t get anything if you win last place. It’s just a fun league with your buddies,” he said.

In nearby Warren, another softball league has been taking the field every spring as well. Warren’s eight to 10 teams play within their league on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. “Anyone can play in the league, it’s not just open to Warren residents,” said Mike Dembicki, Senior Softball USA tournament director. However, Dembicki added that players in Warren are selected to play on the team. “If skills are not as advanced, just like when you were a kid on the playground, make yourself better,” Dembicki said.



Still, he encouraged interested players to give the league a try. "Come out and try it. The players are your own age, and you're not playing against players 20 or more years younger than you," Dembicki said.

Jolico Inc., a manufacturing company based in Utica, sponsors three ladies' traveling softball teams for players ages 55-70. The women, who hail from all over Michigan and New Jersey, Ohio, and Florida, travel to and won tournaments all over the United States since the first Jolico team took to the diamond in 1997.

Pat Wieland, who owns the company, started playing in 2001. Her softball teams are very much like her business, where character and integrity are important, said outfielder/catcher Robin Crise, 59, of Shelby Township.

"It's funny because if you look up Jolico on the internet, you will find tool and dye components, but you will also find so much about softball. As much as Jolico is known as a company, it's also known for softball," Crise said. "We have been an extremely successful organization and one of the biggest female ball organizations in the country."

The teams' skills, drive and competitive nature are only two reasons why they've earned enormous success throughout the past 25 years. Crise said one of the biggest reasons for their prosperity is the camaraderie the team shares.

"People love the game, but the game is not enough. It's the people. Some of the best friends that I have and the closest people in my life I've met through this game," Crise said.

Besides the strong friendships developed through team sports, the benefits of giving senior softball a try are bountiful. The sport allows players the opportunity to work on their aerobic endurance, agility, and flexibility. Softball also improves mental acuity and awareness, as well as reaction time.

The cost to participate in the league varies, and several teams have sponsors which help with the cost. New players interested in the Shelby Township league should contact Druzinski at 586-823-8354 or Rick Croci at 586-292-6651.

Players interested in the Warren league and others in the area should visit [seniorsoftball.com](http://seniorsoftball.com) for more information.



Local senior softball teams Guns & Hoses and Patrick Parrott Realty compete against each other at a former league game at Mae Stecker Park in Shelby Township.

PHOTO BY DAVID DALTON — FOR MEDIANEWS GROUP



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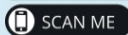
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## WORK &amp; PURPOSE

# Trash to treasure: Crafty seniors fashion mats for homeless from plastic bags



**By Debra Kaszubski**  
*For MediaNews Group*

What's six feet wide and two feet deep, waterproof, warm in the summer and cool in the winter, and ideal for sleeping outside?

Not expensive camping gear, but rather "Plarn" mats, which are cushy, body-size outdoor mats that are being fashioned by a group of crafty Washington Township Senior Center seniors. After the mats are created, they are distributed to various metro Detroit charities and churches that hand them out to homeless individuals who need

them.

"I know that those in need really appreciate these mats and that's why we do it," said Jenny Teller, of Romeo, who was weaving a mat using an oversized loom.

"Plarn" is a proper noun used to describe plastic yarn made from recycled store bags. At the Washington Township Senior Center, a small group of seniors have been collecting, sorting, cutting, and weaving or crocheting bags into the hefty mats.

"It takes about 700 bags to make one mat, said Liz Kole, 84, of Washington Township. Kole brought the



PHOTOS BY DEBRA KASZUBSKI — FOR MEDIANEWS GROUP

Liz Cole (left) and Bev Vasos, both of Washington Township, with a completed "Plarn" mat.

Annette Carrier of Washington Township cuts used Target bags into strips.





Jenny Teller of Romeo uses a loom to weave a mat.

idea of assembling the mats to the township a couple of years ago. And although she struggled to grow the mat assembly program due to the pandemic, it is now thriving. A small group meets every Monday morning to create the mats, and some assemble at home.

The seniors sort donated store bags by color before folding and cutting them into long strips. The strips are tied together and rolled into yarn-like balls of Plarn. After, participants use a homemade loom to weave the Plarn into the mats. For an experienced weaver, this process can take hours.

“That’s just for the weaving. It actually takes a lot longer when you think about how much work goes into them before weaving begins,” said Bev Vasos of Washington Township.

Those who choose not to weave, which requires standing around a loom, may use the Plarn to crochet a mat. Although crocheting is more labor intensive — it could

take up to 40 hours to complete — it is also an effective method to use to create a mat.

Most of the mats are gray, light brown, white, or a combination because those are the colors of the store bags. Those who look closely at a finished mat should recognize Kroger, Target, Meijer and other store logos weaved into the design. The final product looks and feels like a soft, waterproof mat that you’d easily pay \$40 to \$60 at the store. The seniors also weave or crochet handles to make them easy to carry.

No skills are needed to participate, and people of all abilities are welcome to stop by and prepare the Plarn and mats. “We welcome anyone who is willing to help,” Kole said. “Just stop by and we will give you something to do.”

The Washington Township Senior Center is located at 57880 Van Dyke. Mats are assembled every Monday from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.



Kathy Riederer of Washington Township ties bags into knots which is one of the first steps in creating the Plarn.



Once the mats are completed, they are distributed to various metro Detroit charities and churches that hand them out to homeless individuals in need.

PHOTOS BY DEBRA KASZUBSKI — FOR MEDIANEWS GROUP



## Calendar of activities and events

*Vitality publishes the second Thursday of each month. To have an event published, it must be sent at least three weeks prior to the monthly publication date. To submit information for the calendar, email [jgray@medianews-group.com](mailto:jgray@medianews-group.com).*

### Medical Equipment Loans:

At the Older Persons' Commission. Available for short term use: walkers, wheelchairs, canes, shower stools, transfer benches. To schedule a loan pickup, call 248-608-0248. Leave a voicemail with your name, contact number and item you need or wish to donate or return.

### April

**April 13:** Shelby Garden Club hosts Allen Chartier, a hummingbird specialist, will teach us all about hummingbirds at 1 p.m. at the Shadbush Nature Center, 4101 River Bends, Shelby

Twp. His blog can be found at [mihummingbirdguy.blogspot.com](http://mihummingbirdguy.blogspot.com). Donations for the club's ongoing community programs are appreciated. Programs are free but donations are appreciated. For further more, contact Ivy Schwartz at 586-873-3782.

**April 14:** Coping Techniques for Caregivers at 10 a.m. on April 14 at the New Baltimore Senior Center, 52401 Ashley St., New Baltimore. Door 3. Commonwealth Senior Living at New Baltimore will be hosting a seminar entitled Coping Techniques for Caregivers. While you're caring for your loved one, don't forget to take care of yourself too. There's no getting around it. Caring for an aging family member can be stressful. Their care, health, safety, and happiness all rest on your shoulders, and sometimes that responsibility can be overwhelming. Join us for this free present-

tation to learn how to cope with caregiving stress. We'll share tips and tools that you can use to make sure you keep yourself healthy and strong, so you can give your loved one the care they deserve.

**April 14:** Financial Friday at the Older Persons' Commission at 10 a.m. on April 14. Identity Theft — What you need to know. Presented by Xenia Woltmann, from Rochester Wealth Strategies. Register by calling 248-659-1029. \$2 drop-in fee. The OPC is located at 650 Leticia Drive, Rochester. For more information, call 248-656-1403 or visit [opcseiorcenter.org](http://opcseiorcenter.org)

**April 18:** RHGS Program: Willow Run and the Story of Rosie the Riveter at the Roseville Public Library, 29777 Gratiot Ave, Roseville, from 6-8 p.m. on Tuesday, April 18. No registration required. Claire Kitchin Dahl

has been teaching American History since 1971. She shares the incredible history of the Willow Run B-24 Bomber Plant and the teamwork of the powerful Detroit automotive industry. The Roseville Historical and Genealogical Society presents a program at the Library on a monthly basis. For more information, contact RHGS representative Ken Schramm at 313-884-3067.

**April 19:** Sister Pie at the Roseville Public Library, 29777 Gratiot Ave Roseville, from 6-7 p.m. on Wednesday, April 19. No registration required. Lisa Ludwinski, owner and head baker of Sister Pie in Detroit's West Village, will talk about her bakery and cookbook. For more information, call 586-445-5407 or visit [www.rosevillelibrary.org](http://www.rosevillelibrary.org)

**April 20:** Self Defense for Women held at L'Anse Creuse Middle School

South, 34641 Jefferson Ave, Harrison Twp., from 6:30- 8:30 p.m. Cost is \$35. Tickets can be purchased online at [Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com](http://Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com) or calling L'Anse Creuse Community Education at 586-783-6330

**April 21:** Caring & Sharing Loss Support Group at the Older Persons' Commission, from 10-11 a.m. for newcomers and 11 a.m. to noon for continued support on April 21. Participating in a grief support group can be a healthy step in the healing process. Meet others who are dealing with similar losses and gain a better understanding of the grief process. Register by calling 248-608-0261. The OPC is located at 650 Leticia Drive, Rochester. For more information, visit [opcseiorcenter.org](http://opcseiorcenter.org).

**April 21:** Coffee and donuts at the DSO featuring Hollywood Rocks — Iconic songs

from memorable movies and binge — worthy series, all in one concert, from 9:15 a.m. to 1:45 p.m. Sponsored by L'Anse Creuse Community Education. Bus departs from 45400 Marketplace Blvd, Chesterfield. Cost is \$60. Tickets can be purchased online at [Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com](http://Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com) or calling L'Anse Creuse Community Education at 586-783-6330.

**April 22:** The Single Way, a Christian singles group, is sponsoring a dinner and games night on Saturday, April 22 at 6 p.m. Price of \$5 includes the dinner main course, snacks, and beverages. Each person should bring either a salad or a dessert to share with others for the meal. If coming, a reservation is required by Friday, April 21. For more information and location, call 586-774-2119.

**April 22:** Western Theme Card Party Sponsored by:



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Daughters of Isabella Queen of the Skies, Circle 683, from 10:30 p.m. on Saturday, April 22 at St Thecla Catholic Church Activity Center, 20762 South Nunneley Road, Clinton Twp. Pinochle, euchre, dominoes or other games. Come alone or with a group. Lunch, dessert, raffles, door, & table prizes. Donation \$9. Tickets available at the door. Western apparel is optional, but Western theme wearers will receive a ticket to enter a prize drawing. 586-791-6177 or 586-791-9012.

**April 26:** Parkinson's Care Partner Group at the Older Persons' Commission, from 1-3 p.m. on April 26. This group provides an opportunity for those who are caring for their loved one to come together for support, sharing and time to talk with others who are also living with Parkinson's. Call facilitator Kathy Walton 248-568-3549. The OPC is located at 650 Letica Drive, Rochester. Visit [opc-seniorcenter.org](http://opc-seniorcenter.org)

[seniorcenter.org](http://seniorcenter.org)

**April 28:** Visually Impaired Group at the Older Persons' Commission, from 10-11:45 a.m. on April 28. Support group providing information, socialization, support and speakers to those with low vision. Register by calling 248-608-0261. The OPC is located at 650 Letica Drive, Rochester. For more information, visit [opc-seniorcenter.org](http://opc-seniorcenter.org).

### May

**May 1:** Mondays and Wednesdays: Starting May 1, from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., 20/20/20 Fitness held at Pankow Center, 24600 Frederick Pankow Blvd, Clinton Twp. For more information, visit [Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com](http://Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com) or call L'Anse Creuse Community Education at 586-783-6330.

**May 3-7:** Commerce Twp. Library Spring Used Book Sale at The Commerce Township Community Library, 180 E. Commerce

Road, Commerce Twp. Hours: Wednesday, May 3 and Thursday, May 4 — 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Friday, May 5 and Saturday, May 6 — 10 a.m. to 4:40 p.m.; and Sunday, May 7 — 1-4 p.m. Thousands of adult and children's books, fiction and nonfiction; DVDs, CDs, and more. Most books, \$1 each; many children's books 50 cents each. DVDs \$2 each. Special Fill a Bag Days: Saturday, \$5 each bag; Sunday, \$2.00 each bag. Payment: Cash or check only.

**May 3:** Slow Flow Yoga held at Wheeler Community Center, 24076 Frederick Pankow Blvd, Clinton Twp. Wednesdays starting May 3, from 9-10 a.m. Cost is \$50. For more information, visit [Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com](http://Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com) or call L'Anse Creuse Community Education at 586-783-6330.

**May 4:** Psychic Fun Night at Wheeler Community Center, 24076 Pankow

Bld, Clinton Twp., from 6:30—8:30 p.m. Sponsored by L'Anse Creuse Community Education. Cost is \$30. All tickets can be purchased online at [Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com](http://Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com) or calling L'Anse Creuse Community Education at 586-783-6330.

**May 7:** Sterling Heights Lioness Lion Club Branch is having its Spring Luncheon, Rockin' Around the Clock on May 7 at Shelby Gardens, 50265 Van Dyke, Shelby Twp., from noon to 4 p.m. Donation \$35 before April 18, \$50 after April 18. For tickets, call 586-557-1299.

**May 9:** Detroit Opera House Tour & Lunch, from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Sponsored by L'Anse Creuse Community Education. Bus departs from 45400 Marketplace Blvd, Chesterfield. Cost is \$75. All tickets can be purchased online at [Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com](http://Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com) or calling L'Anse Creuse Community Education at 586-783-

6330

**May 11:** Shelby Garden Club hosts The Monarch Crusader at 1 p.m. at the Shadubash Nature Center, 4101 River Bends, Shelby Twp. Brenda Dziedzic, raises monarch butterflies in her yard and has written books sharing her techniques. Programs are free but donations are appreciated. For further more, contact Ivy Schwartz at 586-873-3782.

**May 17:** Honky Tonk Angels and lunch at Alfoccino's, from 11 a.m. to 5:15 p.m., Bus departs from JPAC, 24600 Frederick Pankow Blvd, Clinton Twp MI 48036 Cost is \$110. For more information, visit [Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com](http://Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com) or call L'Anse Creuse Community Education at 586-783-6330.

**May 26:** Coffee and donuts at the DSO featuring Respect — A tribute to Aretha Franklin's music, from 9:15 a.m. to 1:45 p.m. Sponsored by L'Anse Creuse Commu-

nity Education. Bus departs from 45400 Marketplace Blvd, Chesterfield. Cost is \$60. Tickets can be purchased online at [Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com](http://Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com) or calling L'Anse Creuse Community Education at 586-783-6330

### June

**June 2:** Tchaikovsky at the DSO, from 9:15 a.m. to 1:45 p.m. Sponsored by L'Anse Creuse Community Education. Bus departs from 45400 Marketplace Blvd, Chesterfield. Cost is \$60. All tickets can be purchased online at [Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com](http://Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com) or calling L'Anse Creuse Community Education at 586-783-6330.

**June 3:** St. Malachy Church is having a Trunk Sale on Saturday, June 3, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the church parking lot. Free to shop. The church is located at 14115 Fourteen Mile in Sterling Heights.

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## MORNING BINGO Mondays

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# Poetry Page

## Ode to a Cat

My cat likes to sit in the sink  
 Maybe he wants to wash or have a drink  
 But that's not what I think  
 When he's not in the sink he's on my lap  
 Wanting to take a nap  
 He won't leave until his head I'll tap, tap, tap  
 Then he flies through the house nonstop  
 He'll find anything high to sit on top  
 There everything gets knocked to the floor  
 When he's done he'll look for more  
 He flies from window to window, table to table, chair to chair  
 Is he really trying to get somewhere  
 He keeps up amused and lives in our heart  
 With him we will never part.

By Steve Pankewicz of Sterling Heights, MI



## Claire

## The Day Before She Was Born

Got my fingers...got my toes...  
 Got my mouth and got my nose  
 Got my ears and got my eyes...  
 Oh, I can't wait to see you guys.

I know I've got a lot of hair.  
 I've even got a name....I'm Claire.  
 I'm just about to have my birth,  
 Get my first breath of life on Earth.

I've got so much, yet as I live  
 What I have most is love to give.

By Sharon Ostrander Reed of White Lake, MI

Do you have a creative side that you would like to share with your community readers? We are looking for original, unpublished poetry. This will be your time to shine in our Poetry Corner. Please keep poems and letters of appreciation to 300 words or less and print clearly. Next Issue will be May 11, 2023.

**Poems due by April 27th.**

FIRST & LAST NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

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CITY/STATE/ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_ NAME OF POEM: \_\_\_\_\_

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NEW  
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If you chose to submit your poem or letter of appreciation through email, please include your first and last name along with your phone number and the city, state you reside in. You will not be solicited and all information will be kept confidential.

Email Poems to: [demke@medianewsgroup.com](mailto:demke@medianewsgroup.com)

Thank you for your interest in sharing your creativity. We look forward to reading your poems and letters of appreciation.



# Pet Tribute Page



## BUDDY

Member of the Shock Family  
from Clinton Twp, MI

"Buddy" was my best friend for 13 years! Always by my side to get me through the hard times. He was a gentle soul who was loved by all. He will be missed more than words can express. Buddy loved his walks and also loved to go camping.

I look up to the heavens and hope we will be together again. Until then, you run, pain free and when it's time come running to me!



## FLIP

Member of the Manaigo Family  
from Warren, MI

"Flip" has been a wonderful companion for 16 years.

He has never given Ron and I any problems. He goes to be at 11pm and doesn't get up until 9:30am. Hope he lives forever! Carol Manaigo





# Wanda loves to smile and laugh with her residents. The feeling is mutual.



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