

December 2023

Vitality

PLEASE unplug
and...
person
Put on...
YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO AGING WITH
GRACE, PURPOSE AND WELL-BEING

MADE WITH LOVE

Save money on gift-giving
by making your own

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Local handbell choirs
chime in the holidays

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THAT'S A WRAP
7 ways to organize
and store your
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On the cover: Rochester Hills resident Margaret Afheldt works on a pottery bowl at the OPC Social and Activity Center.

DEBRA KASZUBSKI
— FOR
MEDIANEWS GROUP

VITALITY

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MONEY & SECURITY

Ask the Financial Doctor: Take those required minimum distributions or risk being penalized

Q: I am 48 years old and can contribute to a 401(k) in pre-tax, post-tax and Roth 401(k) dollars. What is the maximum allowed for 2023?

A: The pre-tax and Roth 401(k) contributions have a combined maximum of \$22,500 (\$30,000 if age 50 or older) for 2023. The post-tax contribution depends on the 401(k) plan. You could contribute above the \$22,500. The combined pre-tax, post-tax, Roth 401(k) and employer contributions can-



Richard Rysiewski
Columnist

not exceed \$66,000 for the 2023 tax year. Check with your plan administrator for the allowed maximum.

Q: The IRS changed the penalty for failure to take the annual RMDs (required minimum distributions) from an IRA once you reach the age limit. What is the penalty for the 2023 tax year?

A: The penalty is 25%, but will be reduced to 10% if the IRA owner withdraws the RMD and submits an amended re-

turn in a timely manner.

Q: I will be 73 years old in 2023. When do I have to take my first RMD?

A: The first RMD must be taken by April 1, 2025. Additionally, you would have to take a second RMD before Dec. 31, 2025. If you prefer not to take two distributions in one tax year, you could take your first RMD in 2024.

Q: What are the changes for the Roth 401(k) and Roth 403(b) in 2023 and 2024?

A: Regular RMDs for Roth 401(k)s and ROTH 403(b)s must be taken in 2023. Starting in 2024, Roth 401(k)s and ROTH 403(b)s will no longer have RMDs.

Q: I will be 67 this December and am collecting a widow's Social Security benefit. I will apply for my Social Security benefit based on my work record at age 70. Can I collect both benefits at age 70?

A: You cannot collect both benefits. You will get the larger of the two benefits. If your retirement benefit at age 70

is greater than your widow's benefit, then you will receive the higher benefit.

Q: What is the capital gains tax rate for 2023?

A: If the holding period is less than a year, then the gain is taxed as ordinary income at your tax bracket rate. If the holding period is greater than a year, the gain receives a favorable tax rate of 0%, 15% or 20%, depending on your tax bracket.

The 0% rate applies to single filers with taxable income less than \$44,625 or less and joint filers

with \$89,250 or less.

The 15% rate applies to single filers with taxable income from \$44,626 to \$445,850 and joint filers with \$89,251 to \$501,650.

The 20% rate applies to those making more than \$445,850 (single filers) and \$501,650 (joint filers.)

Some higher-income taxpayers will pay an additional 3.8%.

Richard Rysiewski, a certified financial planner, welcomes all questions on tax and financial matters. Send them to Richard Rysiewski, Financial Doctor, 3001 Hartford Lane, Shelby Twp., MI 48316.

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SOCIAL & WELL-BEING

Skipping sleep? 5 hours or less raises depression risk in older adults

By **Teddy Amenabar**
The Washington Post

Short sleepers — those who regularly get five or fewer hours of sleep at night — may be at a higher risk of developing depression symptoms, according to a study published recently.

Researchers examined the health data of 7,146 individuals, age 50 and older in England, and found that older adults who sleep five or fewer hours a night — either because of a genetic predisposition or other reasons — were more likely to show signs of depression years later. The researchers followed the study participants for an average of eight years.

The findings

▪ Compared with people who sleep seven hours a night, older adults who reported five or fewer hours on average were 2.5 times more likely to develop symptoms of depression later in life. Those who were genetically predis-

“The more we know about our individual genetic signatures, the more we’re likely to be able to take preventive steps to disease broadly.”

— *Odessa Hamilton*

posed to short sleep were 14% more likely to develop symptoms of depression years later in life.

▪ Too much sleep was a problem, too. Older adults who reported sleeping more than nine hours of sleep were 1.5 times more likely to develop symptoms of depression later in life, as compared with those who slept an average of seven hours.

▪ Depression also was more likely to lead to worse sleep. People with symptoms of depression were approximately 33% more likely to sleep for five or fewer hours a night.

The study, based on data from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing, found an association and not a causation between shorter

sleep and symptoms of depression, said Odessa Hamilton, the lead author of the study and a doctoral researcher in biobehavioral epidemiology and precision medicine at the University College London. The study was published in *Translational Psychiatry*.

Background

Sleeping for too many or too few hours at night has been seen as a sign of depression, Hamilton said. And some studies show that depression is often associated with problems sleeping.

But, more recently, researchers have started to consider whether a lack of sleep could be the cause of depression and other men-

SLEEP » PAGE 6



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Send in your information for meetings, seminars, events and press releases for our monthly calendar. Our next edition will run Thursday, January 11, 2024.

Deadline is December 27, 2023

To be included in our next edition please Email to:

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PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

People who regularly get five or fewer hours of sleep at night may be at a higher risk of developing depression symptoms, according to a study published recently.

Sleep

FROM PAGE 5

tal health issues.

Hamilton said the researchers wanted to study genetic data to “unravel” what comes first.

“The more we know about our individual genetic signatures, the more we’re likely to be able to take preventive steps to disease broadly,” she said.

Researchers have identified genes that are associated with short sleep and that allow individuals to not suffer from the effects of sleep deprivation. But there are no definitive numbers on how many people in the world have these genes, researchers said.

Hamilton said they used polygenic scores to identify individuals with a genetic predisposition for less sleep based on genome-wide association studies.

The study focused only on participants of European ancestry, which is a limitation, Hamilton said. The results may not be generalizable to people of other races and ethnicities.

Risks of less sleep

The potential health risks associated with a lack of sleep have been reported. In a study of almost 8,000 British civil service workers published last year, getting less than five hours of sleep was associated with an increased risk of heart disease, depression, cancer and diabetes.

Individuals who sleep less than the optimal hours each night may feel depressed because the ability

to regulate emotions can be hampered by the lack of rest, research shows. Brain regions that are involved in the processing of emotions can be affected by extended periods of sleep deprivation.

A good night’s sleep benefits your memory, mood and overall health. And one study suggests when we’re sleep deprived, we’re less generous. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has age-specific recommendations for sleep and advises adults get at least seven hours of sleep a night.

What experts are saying

Older adults can find it difficult to sleep through the night, with or without health problems. And it’s harder for them to fall asleep once they’re awake, said Satchin Panda, a professor at the Salk Institute for Biological Sciences and the author of “The Circadian Code,” a book on the importance of maintaining your circadian rhythm. It may be because older adults have less deep sleep, so small disturbances can wake them up.

It’s not that older adults require fewer hours of sleep. Instead, they actually don’t “rebound” as well from a night without as much sleep, Panda said.

“We may not feel sleepy, just like teenagers do on the weekend, but we still have to make an effort to sleep enough,” he said.

Some people do sleep less and feel fine, they’re not tired or irritable throughout the day, Panda

said. And that may be, at least in part, because of genetics.

But no one gene can cause someone’s sleep problems, he said. And healthy sleeping habits can reduce the risk of diseases associated with poor sleep, such as depression.

“If you’re given a lemon, you have to make lemonade,” he said. “The good habits can lessen the bad effect of bad genes.”

What you can do to help your sleep

A person’s genetic predisposition to sleeping less every night should “warrant consideration” but it is just one of the factors determining whether someone regularly gets poor sleep, Hamilton said. Their sleep habits and environment — the time a person goes to sleep, when they wake up and the noise or light around them as they go to bed — plays a large role.

“These genetic scores are accounting for quite a modest level of variability in your likelihood of developing these outcomes,” Hamilton said. “There is some good news in this in that we can regard sleep and depression as largely modifiable risk factors.”

Hamilton’s advice is to dedicate the time for sleep and to avoid late-night procrastination where you find one more episode to watch or one more task to complete before going to bed.

“We just find reasons,” she said. “Some reason not to sleep because we just don’t see it as being important.”

Older adults can find it difficult to sleep through the night, with or without health problems. And it’s harder for them to fall asleep once they’re awake, said Satchin Panda, a professor at the Salk Institute for Biological Sciences and the author of “The Circadian Code,” a book on the importance of maintaining your circadian rhythm.

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MONEY & SECURITY

Real estate: Can the type of shingles make or break a deal?

Q: Our home needs a new roof. The roofing contractor said we had a choice between regular 3-tab shingles or dimensional shingles at an additional cost. We are planning to sell in a few years. The price difference is about \$600. Does it matter?



Steve Meyers
Columnist

A: This question has come up often over the years. In my opinion, if your budget can handle the additional expense, I would get the dimensional shingles (sometimes called architectural). They look a lot better than regular shingles and from what I have been told by industry experts; the dimensional shingles last longer than standard 3-tab shingles which makes it a good selling point. By today's standards, 3-tab shingles just don't look new, even when they are brand new. Also, keep in mind that shingle manufacturers will

In my opinion, if your budget can handle the additional expense, I would get the dimensional shingles (sometimes called architectural).

Market Update

October's market update for Macomb County and Oakland County's housing market (house and condo sales) is as follows: In Macomb County, average sales prices were up by almost 5% and Oakland County average sales prices were up by more than 2% for the month, as well. Macomb County's on-market inventory was down by more than 38% and Oakland County's on-market inventory was down by more than 29%.

Macomb County's average days on market were 25 days and Oakland County's average days on market were 27 days. Closed sales in Macomb County were down by almost 19% and closed sales in Oakland County were down by almost 15%.

The closed sales continue to be down as a direct result of the continued low

not give the full warranty on their product unless it is a single layer of the new shingle; a tear-off must be done (no more second and third layers).

Q: We're looking to sell our home and move into a condominium. Should we try to sell our home in December and January or should we just wait until spring?

A: Just as Christmas comes this time of year, so does this question. My answer; Yes, you can sell now with success! Here are numbers to back this up. I checked the sales in the MLS (multiple listing service) for Macomb and Oakland counties. Last December and January, 3,480 sales closed. That figure does not include any new construction builder sales. Who says homes don't sell this time of year?

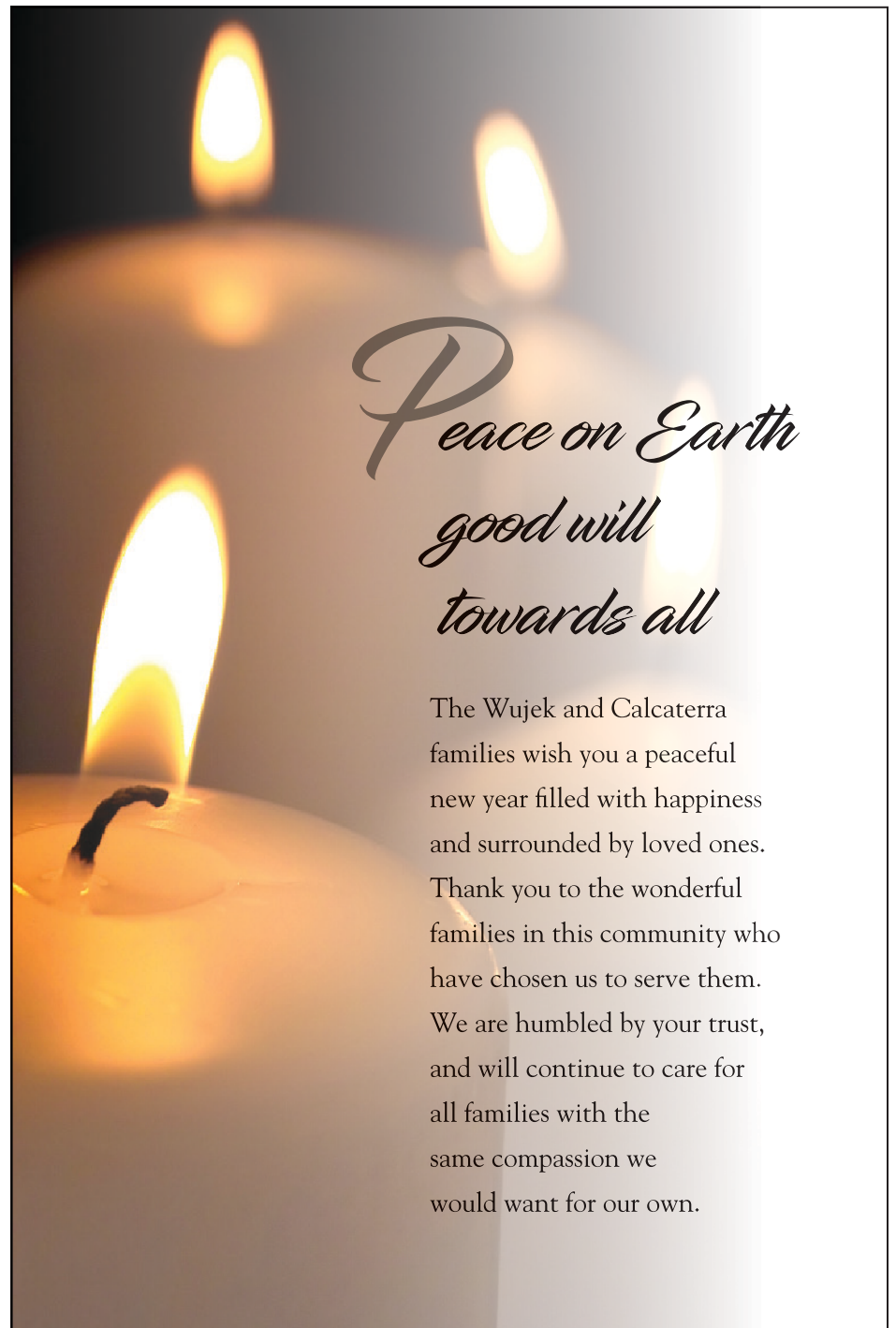
Steve Meyers is a real estate agent/ Realtor at RE/MAX Metropolitan in Shelby Twp. and is a member of the RE/MAX Hall of Fame. He can be contacted with questions at 586-997-5480 or Steve@MeyersRealtor.com You also can visit his website: AnswersToRealEstateQuestions.com.

inventory. Demand still remains high. (All comparisons are month to month, year to year.)

By the long-standing historical definition from the National Association of Realtors, which has been in existence since 1908, a buyer's market is when there is a seven-month supply or more of inventory on the market.

A balanced market between buyers and sellers is when there is a six-month supply of inventory. A seller's market is when there is a five-month or less supply of inventory. Inventory has continued to stay low.

In October, the state of Michigan inventory was at 2.3 months of supply. Macomb County's inventory was at 1.7 months of supply and Oakland County's inventory was 2 months of supply. As you can see, by definition, it is not a buyer's market.



*Peace on Earth
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The Wujek and Calcaterra families wish you a peaceful new year filled with happiness and surrounded by loved ones. Thank you to the wonderful families in this community who have chosen us to serve them. We are humbled by your trust, and will continue to care for all families with the same compassion we would want for our own.



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SOCIAL & WELL-BEING

Local handbell choirs, made up of ringers ages 50 and older, chime in the holidays

By Debra Kaszubski
For MediaNews Group

Beautiful sounds of ringing bells fill the venue as musicians ring, pluck, swing, strike and rotate a set of shiny handbells. It looks like a simple enough task, however, don't be fooled. Often taking months of rehearsal, a handbell performance is a precisely orchestrated and challenging feat accomplished by a talented group of musicians.

In the metro Detroit area, there are several handbell choirs, with many performing and rehearsing at local churches, community centers and other venues.

Handbells are finely tuned instruments that cost thousands of dollars and require proper maintenance and handling.

When properly cared for and performed by trained musicians, the sounds they produce are surprising to most first-time concertgoers.

The Gosbells handbell choir is based at the Utica United Methodist Church in Sterling Heights. The 13-member choir, led by director Dave Fox, rehearses and performs regularly at the church although they've also performed at Jimmy John's Field, Comerica Park, the Detroit Yacht Club, and at other churches and venues.

The group, most of whom are age 50 and older, performed their popular Christmas show, themed "A Christmas Carillon," in early December.

"Most people leave a concert saying they were

not aware of the different sounds that can be obtained from the bell," Fox said.

To be successful in a handbell choir, most musicians are required to read music.

Each bell corresponds to a note on the piano. Each ringer is responsible for at least two bells and their accidental notes plus corresponding chimes, Fox said.

A missed note is obvious, so each player must know his or her part to properly perform a tune.

"This looks easy, but playing handbells is one of the more difficult hobbies," said Jan White, a ringer with the Auburn Hills-based Heritage Handbells. "It takes total concentration and teamwork to make an arrangement sound beautiful. Only one person is playing each note, so if a wrong bell is lifted, or gets out of synch with the others, the whole arrangement flops."

The Heritage Handbells is an 11-member group based in the Heritage of the Hills Active Adult subdivision, a community for people aged 55 and older. Although based at Heritage of the Hills, many members live in nearby communities.

The ringers, led by director Twylia Voshol, travel to perform at senior centers, hospitals, schools, churches and nursing homes throughout the area. Formerly called the Belles and a Beau, the Heritage Handbells rebranded themselves after their male member took a temporary leave of absence.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE GOSBELLS CHOIR

The Gosbells choir is a handbell choir based out of the Utica United Methodist Church in Sterling Heights.

Although the group has performed a few shows as of early December, the Heritage Handbells do have several performances set throughout Macomb and Oakland counties. At 11:30 a.m. Dec. 14, the group will perform at Meadowbrook Hall, and at 10 a.m. Dec. 19, they take the stage at

the Randall Residence of Sterling Heights. They also plan to perform spring shows.

For the Heritage Handbells, audience participation is a big part of their show.

At schools, ringers give the kids a chance to play the handbells and learn

how to make a note. At facilities that cater to senior citizens, they encourage singing and clapping along.

Heritage Handbell ringer Jody Faron has been active with the group for about 13 years. She has since learned to read music and enjoys rehearsing

and performing.

"Playing bells gives (me) intense pleasure and pride. The fellowship from being in a choir is a lifetime benefit," she said. "The hand-eye-brain coordination that ringing takes is perfect as one ages. Ringing is just plain fun, and I love it."

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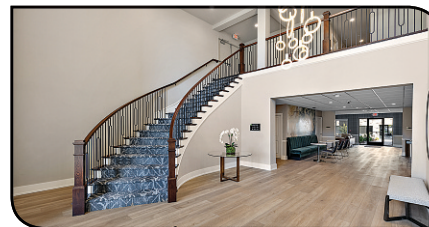
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SOCIAL & WELL-BEING

Free educational platform gives family caregivers a smart way to find answers

By Area Agency on Aging 1-B

With the holidays upon us, millions of family caregivers are facing challenges that might be new.

The good news is that they don't have to operate by the seat of their pants.

A lively online educational platform offered by the Area Agency on Aging 1-B (AAA 1-B) is a way to get answers to caregiving questions and to learn from other caregivers.

Trualta digs deep into a well of topics. It contains a vast range of short, printable learning modules that

can be read, listened to or watched. It features scenarios such as downsizing holiday obligations and celebrating with a loved one who lives elsewhere. General subjects include responding to a loved one's resistance to taking medications and managing family disagreements about care. Trualta offers tips for moving your loved one from a bed to a wheelchair or modifying the home environment to make it safer and easier to navigate.

Renowned dementia care leader Teepa Snow offers her expertise on care-

Trualta digs deep into a well of topics. It contains a vast range of short, printable learning modules that can be read, listened to or watched.

giving, with topics like Caregiving vs. Care Partnering and 5 Tips for a Positive Approach to Care. Other experts share their knowledge. Users can join facilitated online support groups or attend webinars.

Some of the other topics Trualta offers include:

- General care tasks in

the bathroom

- Managing pressure wounds
- Grandparents caring for grandchildren
- Healing caregiver burnout
- Using technology for caregiving

Each learning module has an activity and a goal. New content is added each month. Tutorials and checklists are available. All content can be translated to Spanish.

Trualta was co-created with caregivers.

Trualta also offers a chat

function so caregivers can learn from the online community.

"We're very excited to offer this learning platform to help caregivers reduce burnout and improve confidence in their roles," says Jeannine Roach, manager of health promotion. "Trualta has a wealth of material that can be helpful for many different caregiving situations and can be accessed at all hours of the day. Caregivers will have access to videos, support groups and toolkits to help them feel more competent and supported."

The only eligibility requirement to use Trualta is that the family caregiver and/or the older adult (60 and older) lives in one of the six counties served by AAA 1-B — Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland,

St. Clair and Washtenaw.

To sign up, visit aaa1b.trualta.com. You'll be asked to answer a few eligibility questions and to create a login to enter the platform.

For additional information or questions, call 833-262-2200 or email trualta@aaa1b.org.

This content is provided by the Area Agency on Aging 1-B, a nonprofit that serves older adults and family caregivers in Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair and Washtenaw counties. We provide services, programs and resources that are designed to help seniors age safely and independently. Call us at 800-852-7795 to get connected.

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With the holidays upon us, millions of family caregivers are facing challenges that might be new and now they have a resource to help them.

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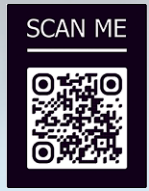
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MONEY & SECURITY

Social Security benefits in 2024: 5 changes retirees should plan for

By Bob Haegele
Tribune News Service

As inflation lingers, the Social Security Administration (SSA) is boosting its cost of living adjustment (COLA) for benefit checks in 2024. It's just one of many changes announced by Social Security recently.

More than 71 million people depend on one of Social Security's benefit programs, so annual changes to the program and its payouts are always highly anticipated. While this year's cost-of-living-adjustment is down substantially from last year's 8.7% increase — the biggest boost in over 40 years — any extra income is welcome news for beneficiaries on fixed incomes.

Here are some key

changes to Social Security happening next year — and what you need to know.

1. Cost of living adjustment (COLA) rises

The SSA has announced that benefit checks will rise 3.2% in 2024. The 3.2% adjustment will amount to a \$59 increase in monthly benefits for the average retired worker on Social Security, beginning in January.

Specifically, the average check for retired workers will increase from \$1,848 to \$1,907. For a couple with both partners receiving benefits, the estimated payment will increase from \$2,939 to \$3,033, a rise of \$94.

Since 1975, the SSA has tied cost of living adjustments to the Consumer Price Index for urban wage earners and clerical workers (CPI-W). The SSA compares the third-quarter CPI-W for the prior year to the third-quarter CPI-W in the current year to determine the COLA. It then adjusts the COLA based on the difference in CPI-W from one year to the next.

2. Maximum taxable earnings going up

In 2023, the maximum earnings subject to Social Security taxes was \$160,200. That is, workers paying into the system are taxed on wages up to this amount, typically at the 6.2% rate. In 2024, the

maximum earnings will increase to \$168,600, meaning more of a worker's income will be subject to the tax. This adjustment is due to an increase in average wages in the U.S.

3. Maximum Social Security benefit also set to increase

As expected, the maximum Social Security benefit for a worker retiring at full retirement age will also increase in 2024, from \$3,627 to \$3,822. It's important to note that this maximum applies to those retiring at the full retirement age, which is 67 for anyone born after 1960.

The maximum will be different for those who retire before the full retirement age, because benefits are reduced in that situation. The same applies for those who retire after the full retirement age, a strategy that can max out your benefit check.

4. Average benefit for spouses and disabled workers is increasing, too

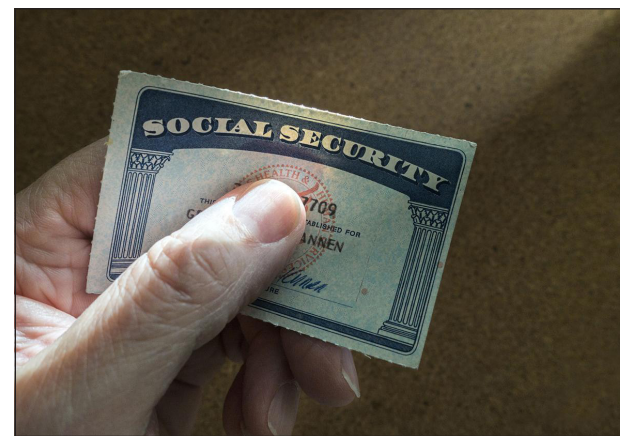
The average benefit will increase across the board in 2024, and that includes benefits for people such as widows, widowers and the disabled. Here's how those figures break out:

—The SSA says the average widowed mother with two children will see an increase from \$3,540 to \$3,653.

—Aged widows and widowers living alone will see their benefits increase from \$1,718 to \$1,773.

—The benefit will increase for a disabled worker with a spouse and one or more children from \$2,636 to \$2,720.

Of course, those are averages, and individual cir-



DREAMSTIME — TNS

More than 71 million people depend on one of Social Security's benefit programs, so annual changes to the program and its payouts are always highly anticipated.

cumstances will vary.

5. Social Security adjusts earnings test exempt amounts

If you claim your retirement benefits before you hit full retirement age, Social Security will withhold some benefits from your check above certain levels of income. It's what the program calls the retirement earnings test exempt amounts, and it can claim a serious chunk of your benefits if you're still working. Here's how it will work in 2024.

If you start collecting Social Security before full retirement age, you can earn up to \$1,860 per month (\$22,320 per year) in 2024 before the SSA will start withholding benefits, at the rate of \$1 in benefits for every \$2 above the limit. In 2023, the maximum exempt earnings were \$1,770 per month (\$21,240 per year).

In the year you reach full retirement age, this rule still applies, but only until the month you hit full retirement age and with much more forgiving terms. In 2024, you can earn up to \$4,960 per month (\$59,520

per year) before benefits are withheld, at the rate of \$1 in benefits for every \$3 earned above the limit (instead of every \$2). In 2023, the threshold was \$4,710 per month (\$56,520 per year).

Medicare Part B premiums increase

While Social Security and Medicare are different programs, most retirees participate in both, and many have their Medicare Part B premium automatically deducted from their Social Security check.

Monthly Medicare Part B premiums will rise from \$164.90 in 2023 to \$174.70 in 2024. The annual Part B deductible is also rising next year, from \$226 in 2023 to \$240 in 2024, or a \$14 increase.

Bottom line

The 2024 Social Security COLA offers retirees and others a better-than-average boost to their benefits as inflation lingers. But that's not the only change to the program, as other levels and thresholds have been adjusted to account for ongoing inflation, too.

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WORK & PURPOSE

MADE WITH LOVE

Save money on holiday gifts by making your own through online, senior center classes

By Debra Kaszubski
For MediaNewsGroup

It's no surprise that for many people, the holidays come with a hefty price tag for those tasked with buying gifts for friends and family.

Hosting holiday parties, travel and charitable donations add even more expense. With inflation running high, some people may be forced to cut back on their holiday spending, especially those who live off fixed incomes or retirement nest eggs.

The holidays don't have to bankrupt gift-givers, especially with some advanced planning. Those who give homemade gifts are likely to save a substantial amount of money while providing a unique and sentimental gift.

At the OPC Social and Activity Center in Rochester, members use their time in various arts and crafts classes to create unique gifts for family and friends.

Oakland Township resident Debbie Buffa is a big fan of creating handmade pottery gifts for the dozens of people she hosts at her annual Christmas Eve party. Buffa will visit the OPC regularly where she fashions items in the pottery studio.

"I harvest my own lavender. So, I took a bunch of lavender and I put it in this really nice (ceramic) leaf that I rounded (by hand)," Buffa said. "They're already wrapped and ready for the party."

Buffa was busy working on sunflower-shaped dessert plates, which she plans to gift next Christmas Eve.



PHOTOS BY DEBRA KASZUBSKI — FOR MEDIANEWS GROUP

Lynn Cromwell assists Troy resident Lesley Winters with a tie-dye scarf. Cromwell is owner of Ersie Tie Dye in Fraser and has been giving tie-dye items as personalized gifts for years.

Nearby, Cheryl Jurkiewicz was working on gifts, as well. Not only does she craft Michigan-shaped ceramic ornaments, she also creates personalized, dated ornaments for her grandchildren. "They're only 4 and 2 ½, so I just started doing this," she said. "But I plan to continue."

Lynn Cromwell, owner of Ersie Tie Dye in Fraser, has been giving tie-dye items as personalized gifts for years. She recently offered tie-dye classes at the OPC and other locations and urges people to consider giving hand-

made crafted items as gifts. "Everyone I know gets tie-dye," she said, while laughing. "It's a one-of-a-kind gift that can never be recreated. People will remember the gift and the person who gave it to them."

Deana Neibert is an instructor for GetSetUp, an online learning community for older adults. Neibert offers a variety of classes in which students may wish to give the items they've created, including a session called "Dollar Tree Crafts: Holiday Gifts and Decora-

GIFTS » PAGE 15



Rochester Hills resident Margaret Afheldt holds a pot she made as a gift.



DEBRA KASZUBSKI — FOR MEDIANEWS GROUP

Yolanda Rollins of Rochester Hills shows one of the plates she created as a gift.

Gifts

FROM PAGE 14

tions.” Neibert is also leading classes where students will create watercolor holiday cards and homemade foods.

In another session, Neibert teaches students how to fashion old books into angels.

Yet another class utilizes a paper technique called quilting to craft snowmen.

“When making a gift for someone, they are close to our heart and mind. As our

hands travel across the materials, I always feel like there’s a certain energy that is transferred into that gift and the receiver feels it, as well,” said Neibert, who has gifted homemade items for over 20 years. “There is as much joy in making something for someone you love as receiving a gift that was made specifically for you.”

Those who are not interested in taking a class could consider putting together a family cookbook to pass down to generations; framing family photos; or even volunteering to provide a helpful act of ser-

vice such as cooking a favorite dish, picking up groceries, or taking an older relative for a nighttime ride to see a holiday light display.

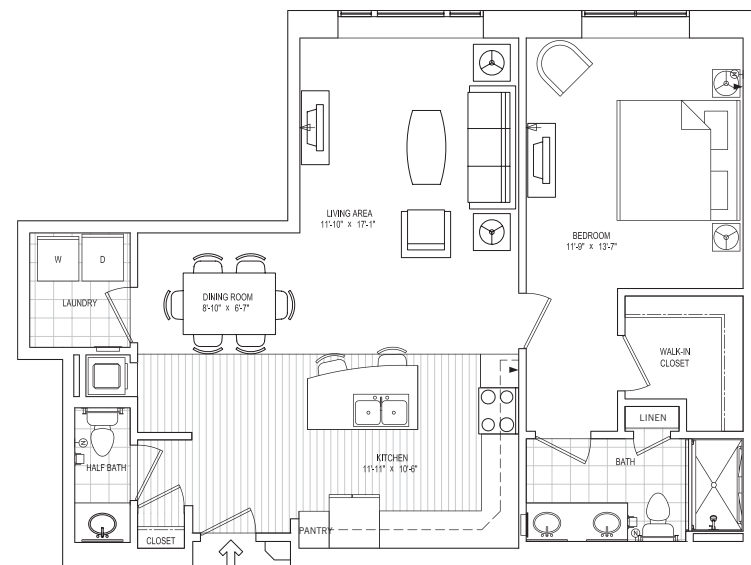
“Handmade gifts can take hours to complete,” Neibert said. “When someone gives me a (handmade) gift, I know how much time they put into designing that gift and making it. It’s such a quick and easy process just to pick something out and hit ‘buy.’ When we make something by hand, our love is transferred to that. I cannot think of anything more joyful.”

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HEALTH & WELLNESS

Let's have an honest conversation about what to expect as you age

By Judith Graham

Tribune News Service

How many of us have wanted a reliable, evidence-based guide to aging that explains how our bodies and minds change as we grow older and how to adapt to those differences?

Creating a work of this kind is challenging. For one thing, aging gradually alters people over decades, a long period shaped by individuals' economic and social circumstances, their behaviors, their neighborhoods, and other factors. Also, while people experience common physiological issues in later life, they don't follow a well-charted, developmentally predetermined path.

"Predictable changes occur, but not necessarily at the same time or in the same sequence," said Rosanne Leipzig, vice chair for education at the Brookdale Department of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York. "There's no more homogeneous a group than older people."

I called Leipzig, 72, who works full-time teaching medical residents and fellows and seeing patients, after reading her new 400-plus-page, information-packed book, "Honest Aging: An Insider's Guide to the Second Half of Life." It's the most comprehensive examination of what to expect in later life I've come across in a dozen years covering aging.

Leipzig told me she had two goals in writing this guide: "to overcome all the negatives that are out there about growing older" and "to help people understand that there are lots of things that you can do to adapt to your new normal as you age and have an enjoyable, en-



HYE JIN KANG — DREAMSTIME/TNS

Aging gradually alters people over decades, a long period shaped by individuals' economic and social circumstances, their behaviors, their neighborhoods and other factors.

gaged, meaningful life."

Why call it "Honest Aging"? "Because so much of what's out there is dishonest, claiming to teach people how to age backwards," Leipzig said. "I think it's time we say, 'This is it; this is who we are,' and admit how lucky we are to have all these years of extra time."

The doctor was referring to extraordinary gains in life expectancy achieved in the modern era. Because of medical advances, people over age 60 live far longer than people at the dawn of the 20th century. Still, most of us lack a good understanding of what happens to our bodies during this extended period after middle age.

Several months ago, a medical student asked Leipzig whether references to age should be left out of a patient's written medical history, as references to race have been eliminated. "I told her no; with medi-

cine, age is always relevant," Leipzig said. "It gives you a sense of where people are in their life, what they've lived through, and the disorders they might have, which are different than those in younger people."

What questions do older adults tend to ask most often? Leipzig rattled off a list: What can I do about this potbelly? How can I improve my sleep? I'm having trouble remembering names; is this dementia? Do I really need that colonoscopy or mammogram? What should I do to get back into shape? Do I really need to stop driving?

Underlying these is a poor understanding of what's normal in later life and the physical and mental alterations aging brings.

Can the stages of aging be broken down, roughly, by decade? No, said Leipzig, noting that people in their 60s and 70s vary significantly in health and func-

tioning. Typically, predictable changes associated with aging "start to happen much more between the ages of 75 and 85," she told me. Here are a few of the age-related issues she highlights in her book:

- Older adults often present with different symptoms when they become ill. For instance, a senior having a heart attack may be short of breath or confused, rather than report chest pain. Similarly, an older person with pneumonia may fall or have little appetite instead of having a fever and cough.

- Older adults react differently to medications. Because of changes in body composition and liver, kidney, and gut function, older adults are more sensitive to medications than younger people and often need lower doses. This includes medications that someone may have taken for years. It also applies to alcohol.

- Older adults have reduced energy reserves. With advancing age, hearts become less efficient, lungs transfer less oxygen to the blood, more protein is needed for muscle synthesis, and muscle mass and strength decrease. The result: Older people generate less energy even as they need more energy to perform everyday tasks.

- Hunger and thirst decline. People's senses of taste and smell diminish, lessening food's appeal. Loss of appetite becomes more common, and seniors tend to feel full after eating less food. The risk of dehydration increases.

- Cognition slows. Older adults process information more slowly and work harder to learn new information. Multitasking becomes more difficult, and reaction times grow slower. Problems finding words, especially nouns, are typical. Cognitive changes related to medications and illness are more frequent.

- The musculoskeletal system is less flexible. Spines shorten as the discs that separate the vertebrae become harder and more compressed; older adults typically lose 1 to 3 inches in height as this happens. Balance is compromised because of changes in the inner ear, the brain, and the vestibular system (a complex system that regulates balance and a person's sense of orientation in space). Muscles weaken in the legs, hips and buttocks, and range of motion in joints contracts. Tendons and ligaments aren't as strong, and falls and fractures are more frequent as bones become more brittle.

- Eyesight and hearing change. Older adults need much more light to read than younger people. It's harder for them to see the

outlines of objects or distinguish between similar colors as color and contrast perception diminishes. With changes to the cornea, lens and fluid within the eye, it takes longer to adjust to sunlight as well as darkness.

- Because of accumulated damage to hair cells in the inner ear, it's harder to hear, especially at high frequencies. It's also harder to understand speech that's rapid and loaded with information or that occurs in noisy environments.

- Sleep becomes fragmented. It takes longer for older adults to fall asleep, and they sleep more lightly, awakening more in the night.

This is by no means a complete list of physiological changes that occur as we grow older. And it leaves out the many ways people can adapt to their new normal, something Leipzig spends a great deal of time discussing.

A partial list of what she suggests, organized roughly by the topics above: Don't ignore sudden changes in functioning; seek medical attention. At every doctor's visit, ask why you're taking medications, whether doses are appropriate, and whether medications can be stopped. Be physically active. Make sure you eat enough protein. Drink liquids even when you aren't thirsty. Cut down on multitasking and work at your own pace. Do balance and resistance exercises. Have your eyes checked every year. Get hearing aids. Don't exercise, drink alcohol, or eat a heavy meal within two to three hours of bedtime.

"Never say never," Leipzig said. "There is almost always something that can be done to improve your situation as you grow older, if you're willing to do it."

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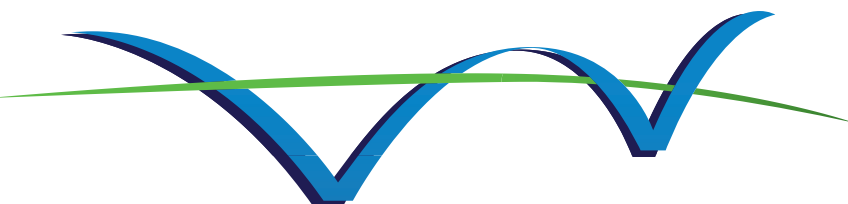
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WORK & PURPOSE

7 ways to organize and store holiday decorations

By Metro Creative Connection

Decorating a home for holidays is quite popular.

A survey from the National Retail Federation found that 53% of respondents said they were planning to decorate their home or yard for Halloween in 2023.

Lombardo Homes polled 1,000 Americans in 2021 and 94% said they celebrate Christmas in at least some way, and 84% said they decorate.

With so many avid holiday decorators, individuals will need to find ways to organize and store their seasonal items. Holiday decor comes in many different sizes — from the smallest tree ornaments to illu-

minated statues for the yard or inflatable items.

Figuring out a storage plan can take a little effort. These seven tips can help.

1. Purchase clear, similarly sized storage bins and shelving racks, hanging them where you plan to keep the decorations.

Most people prefer an out-of-the-way spot, such as in the garage, attic or basement. Label each bin by holiday and put the bins in chronological order to make finding items more convenient. Uniform bin sizes make it easier to stack and store.

2. Store smaller items inside larger decor items. Decorative baskets or wrapped boxes brought

out for Christmas or Chanukah are ideal places to keep smaller tchotchkes like ceramics, dreidels, candlestick holders or mantel hooks.

Delicate items can be tucked into Christmas stockings or wrapped and stored in a fluffy tree skirt. Egg cartons can be used to keep small items safe, as well.

3. Label everything so you will not need to dig through boxes or bins to know what is inside. This might be a good year to ask for a label maker for the holidays!

4. Use overhead or wall storage for holiday decor. Overhead spaces in the garage or basement walls can be good spaces

to keep holiday decorations. Always keep bins and boxes off the floor so they are not vulnerable to damage related to leaks or floods.

5. Garment bags can protect larger decorations, such as wreaths, artificial trees or signs. If you have a large number of mechanical, illuminated or inflatable lawn ornaments, consider investing in a small shed where these items can be safely kept. Wrap the extension cords and any bracing stakes or strings used with the decorations so it's easy to find.

6. Utilize pieces of cardboard as well as toilet paper or paper towel tubes to keep lights and wires tidy. Tuck cords



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

into the toilet paper tubes, and wrap lights around the cardboard to avoid tangles.

7. Each year, take inventory of your decoration collection and toss out anything that is dam-

aged or has seen better days.

Storing holiday decorations will take some time, but once you establish a system, things will be simple year after year.

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MONEY & SECURITY

White House releasing \$3.7B in home heating aid. See if you're eligible

6 million families relied on the program for heating or cooling last year

By Niels Lesniewski,
CQ-Roll Call

Tribune News Service

The White House recently announced the release of roughly \$3.7 billion in funding to help lower-income households afford their home heating costs.

The funding, according to a senior administration official, represents 90% of the allocated funding for the program known as the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program for fiscal 2024, with the balance being held back in case there is a budgetary adjustment in the final full-year appropriation for the

program, which is run by the Department of Health and Human Services.

"We've got news because the president worked so hard to get a bipartisan infrastructure law passed," HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra said on a call with reporters. "We know that in the next several weeks — we're beginning to figure out how people need to be able to stay warm."

Six million families were reliant on LIHEAP for heating or cooling last year, the secretary said. The funding largely comes from regular appropriations through the current continuing resolution,

with an additional \$100 million from the Biden administration's bipartisan infrastructure law.

"In addition, the Biden-Harris administration is looking at every avenue to increase support to the American people, and we're also looking at opportunities to potentially increase LIHEAP funding as well," a senior administration official said in response to a question about the allocation at this point last year being \$4.5 billion.

How to see if you're eligible

In conjunction with the announcement, the administration released a new online tool to help people determine their eligibility for funds, which

HHS Office of Community Services Director Lanikque Howard said was an important advancement because eligibility requirements vary.

"As a block grant, LIHEAP grant recipients have flexibility in establishing program eligibility requirements. And with varying income eligibility requirements all across the country, it can be difficult for individuals and households to determine if they might be eligible for the program and whether they should invest the time and energy to apply," Howard said.

Mitch Landrieu, the White House infrastructure coordinator, put the funding in the context of President Joe Biden's broader economic agenda. "The purpose of this



MARIO TAMA — GETTY IMAGES

U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra

is to lower energy bills for households in all 50 states, in D.C. and the territories," Landrieu said. "This funding is a lifeline for low-income communities, especially as winter approaches. It's going

to allow families to afford their home energy costs on top of the other essentials like food and medicine and housing."

To check your eligibility, visit liheapch.acf.hhs.gov/eligibility-tool



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HEALTH & FITNESS

Facts about oft-misunderstood fruitcake

By Metro Creative Connection

Certain sights and sounds are ingrained in the holiday season, from twinkling lights to carols piping over retailers' sound systems.

Amid the shelves of holiday wares and delicacies, fruitcake makes its annual appearance.

Fruitcake, sometimes referred to as plum cake or Christmas cake, can be prepared in various ways. However, a dense bundt-type cake dotted with dried, candied fruit and often soaked in rum or brandy has become the standard. Loathed or loved, seldom anything in between, fruitcake is typically mocked as the ultimate regift.

But just like Charlie Brown's scant Christmas tree, which was initially

mocked, it's time to see fruitcake in a new light.

Consider these fruitcake fun facts:

- The texture of fruitcake can vary from cake-like to more of a sweet bread like brioche. Italians dig into panettone, Germans delight with stollen and Jamaicans serve black cake.

- The first fruitcakes weren't eaten. According to historians, fruitcakes were initially made by ancient Egyptians, who tucked the desserts into the tombs with their dead so a sweet treat could be enjoyed in the afterlife.

- Fruitcake gained popularity as military rations, as everyone from Roman soldiers to Crusaders found fruitcake provided a diverse array of nutrients and an energy boost in battle. Fruitcake also stores well,

which can be beneficial for military personnel in battle.

- Fruitcake seemingly is indestructible. While it likely cannot last forever, Tastemade says if a fruitcake is kept in an airtight container and stored in a dark, cool place, it could be reheated years after being baked. Starch crystals and dried fruit in the cake will release stored water when warmed, rehydrating the cake.

- Historical accounts indicate Romans were among the first people to eat fruitcake, which they might have enjoyed as early as 100 A.D. A version called "satura" was made by mixing stale bread with pine nuts, pomegranate seeds, raisins, and then soaking it in a barley mash and an alcoholic beverage brewed from

FRUITCAKE » PAGE 22

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SOCIAL & WELL-BEING



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Find the right volunteer opportunity for you

By Metro Creative Connection

Giving back to one's community can provide a sense of purpose and improve an individual's overall well-being.

Data from Volunteer Hub indicates that people who volunteer improve their health by strengthening their bodies, improving their moods and reducing stress. Volunteerism also produces additional benefits, including boosting one's positive perception to others.

A study from Career Builder found 60% of hiring managers see volunteerism as a valuable asset when making recruitment decisions. Furthermore, human resources executives attest that contributing to a nonprofit can improve leadership skills.

By understanding the value behind volunteer work — for the people or organization on the receiving end as well as the volunteer — more individuals

may decide to donate their time and services. However, finding the right volunteer opportunity may take some trial and error.

The following are some tips for finding the right fit:

- Consider skills and interests. Before choosing a volunteer opportunity, make a list of activities that you enjoy. This may help guide volunteer choices. For example, if you like hiking, you may volunteer to clean up a local park.

- Assess your skill levels. Is there something you are particularly adept at doing? For example, if you are a certified public accountant, you may be able to volunteer by mentoring young accounting students, or doing taxes or bookkeeping tasks for the elderly or less fortunate.

- Think about commitment level. Figure out how much time you can spend volunteering. Maybe you only have the weekends or a few hours in the eve-

nings? Understanding how much free time you have can help you choose opportunities that fit within these parameters.

- Research potential organizations. Not all nonprofit groups are created equal. Utilize resources such as CreativeVolunteer that vet charitable groups to determine if they are trustworthy.

- Define your goals. Have goals in mind when selecting opportunities. Defining a goal can help you maintain the motivation to volunteer and see a project through to completion.

- Start small. Wade into a volunteer opportunity slowly to see if it is the right fit. This may include volunteering one day a week or month. Increase the time you spend volunteering once you've found the right place for you.

Volunteering can bring joy to a person's life, especially when individuals find an inspiring opportunity.

Senior 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.

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DECEMBER

Dec. 15: Coffee & Donuts at the DSO — "Home for the Holidays," from 9:15 a.m. to 1:45 p.m. Bus departs from Walmart parking lot, 45400 Marketplace Blvd, Chesterfield. Cost is \$65. Enroll online at Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com or by calling

L'Anse Creuse Community Education at 586-783-6330.

Dec. 21: Mystery Book Club: Holiday Mysteries at the Roseville Public Library, 29777 Gratiot Ave, at 6:30 p.m. No registration required. This month, we will discuss holiday-themed mysteries. Please choose any mystery with a Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, or New Year theme. For more information, call 586-445-5407 or visit rsvlibraryservice@roseville-mi.gov

Dec. 23: The Single Way, a group for Christian singles, is sponsoring a Christmas chocolate fondue with strawberries, pineapple and bananas at its games night on Saturday, Dec. 23 at 7 p.m. Cost is \$5. and includes snacks, chocolate fondue, and beverages. If coming, a reservation is required by Friday, Dec. 22. To register and for information on location, call 586-

774-211.

Dec. 28: Red Cross Blood Drive at the Roseville Public Library, 29777 Gratiot Ave, frp, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Give the gift of life. Give blood during the Red Cross Blood Drive. You can register in advance at <https://www.redcrossblood.org/give.html/find-drive>. Walk-ins are also welcome. For more information, call 586-445-5407 or visit rsvlibraryservice@roseville-mi.gov

Dec. 31: The Single Way, a group for Christian singles, is sponsoring a games night at its New Years Eve party on Sunday, Dec. 31 at 8 p.m. Cost is \$3 and includes holiday fruit punch, snacks and beverages (no alcohol allowed). If coming, a reservation is required by Saturday, Dec. 30. To register and for information on location, call 586-774-211.

JANUARY

Jan.: Tax Season is around **CALENDAR » PAGE 24**

Fruitcake

FROM PAGE 20

honey.

- Fruitcake became a popular dish to serve at British royals' weddings. Queen Victoria, Princess Diana and Prince William served fruitcake at their receptions.

- The Smithsonian Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C., has a fruitcake on display. It traveled into space on Apollo 11 in 1969, but was never eaten.

- Seth Greenberg, who worked in his family's New York City bakery, attests that fruitcake is delicious when made with the right ingredients. The neon-colored, dry and overly sweet fruit that many bakers use is the problem with poor



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

cakes. But proper ingredients like brandy, glace cherries, apricots, figs and dates can make for a delicious fruitcake.

- The average fruitcake weighs between two and three pounds. However, the heaviest fruitcake on record, according to "The Guinness Book of World Records," came in at

9,596 pounds. Despite the hefty weight of this cake, it's only around 92 to 160 calories per serving.

Regardless of its unfavorable reputation, fruitcake remains an unwavering holiday tradition. The website Serious Eats reports that more than 2 million fruitcakes are sold each year.



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Calendar

FROM PAGE 22

the corner. The Clawson Recreation and Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court will begin AARP tax aide appointments in January. For more information, call Gina or Lisa at 248-589-0334.

Jan.: Martin Luther King Day is Monday Jan. 15. When Reverend Dr. Bernice King, daughter of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., spoke at Jefferson in 2018, she asked the audience to perform acts of kindness to honor her father's memory. The Senior Center will continue this tradition for Martin Luther King Day by providing guests with cards containing motivational words, inspirational quotes, and kind thoughts throughout January. We are closed Monday, Jan. 15. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or visit cityofclawson.com

Jan.: Adult Music Lessons: Beginner Piano on Mondays, 7:15—8 p.m., starting Jan. 22. Beginner Guitar on Tuesdays, 7:15-8 p.m., starting Jan. 23 and Saturdays 11:15 a.m. to noon, starting Jan. 20. Ukulele for Fun on Wednesdays, 7:30—8 p.m., starting Jan. 20. Rental instruments are available for all classes. Classes held at Kawai Music Lesson Studios in Shelby Twp. Register online at Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com or call L'Anse Creuse Community Education at 586-783-6330.

Jan. & Feb.: Mondays and Wednesdays, from 5:30—6:30 p.m. (Jan 8—Feb 21), Fitness 20/20/20 held at Frederick V Pankow Center — Room 505, 24076 F V Pankow Blvd, Clinton Twp. Cost is \$96 Register online at Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com or calling L'Anse Creuse Community Education at 586-783-6330

Jan. 8: Lunch Bunch, sponsored by the Clawson

Recreation and Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, on Monday, Jan. 8. Depart 11:45 a.m. to enjoy lunch with friends at Jim Brady's in Downtown Royal Oak. Cost \$4. Take our bus or drive yourself (if you drive yourself, still sign up). Attendees are responsible for their meal. Sign up at the front desk. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or visit cityofclawson.com

Jan. 10: Birthday Lunch at the Clawson Recreation and Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court on Wednesday, Jan. 10 at noon. Dine-in only. Please sign up and attend to get your birthday card and lunch coupon. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or visit cityofclawson.com

Jan 11: Virtual Chat & Learn at the Clawson Recreation and Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court on Thursday, Jan. 11 at 11am meet a representative with Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers.

Learn about their volunteer services that help older adults and those living with a disability in their homes. You can attend the Zoom meeting at home or at the senior center. Those joining from home must provide their email address to join the discussion, or you can join on Facebook. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or visit cityofclawson.com

Jan 18: Cranbrook Museum, sponsored by the Clawson Recreation and Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, on Thursday, Jan. 18, depart at 10:30 a.m. Cost is \$4. Enjoy a day with friends at the Cranbrook Art Museum in Bloomfield Hills. Current exhibitions include Black Realism in Detroit, LeRoy Foster, Carl Toth, and Ash Arder. Bring a sack lunch or purchase one from us in advance as there is no cafeteria at the art museum. Sign up at the front desk. For more information,

call 248-589-0334 or visit cityofclawson.com

Jan. 25: Casino Trip to MGM Casino, sponsored by the Clawson Recreation and Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, on Thursday, Jan. 25. Depart at 10 a.m., cost is \$12. Please sign up early for this trip, as we may cancel if participation is low. Sign up at the front desk. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or visit cityofclawson.com

Jan. 25: Afternoon Movie at the Clawson Recreation and Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court on Thursday, Jan. 25 at 12:45 p.m. Join us to watch, "One Night in Miami," A fictional account of one night where icons Muhammad Ali, Malcolm X, Sam Cooke, and Jim Brown gathered discussing their roles in the Civil Rights Movement of the 60s. Complimentary popcorn and pop provided. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or visit cityofclawson.com

Jan. 30: Canvas Painting at the Clawson Recreation and Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court on Tuesday, Jan. 30 at 11 a.m. This FREE event is sponsored by ACHC. Sign up required. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or visit cityofclawson.com

FEBRUARY

Feb 8: Coffee & Donuts at the DSO — "Lush Life" Duke Ellington & Billy Strayhorn, from 9:15 a.m. — 1:45 p.m., Bus departs from Walmart parking lot, 45400 Market-place Blvd, Chesterfield. Cost is \$68. Enroll online at Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com or call L'Anse Creuse Community Education at 586-783-6330.

MARCH

March: Adult Water Fitness: Mondays and Wednesdays, from 10-10:50 a.m., open now through March 2024, at L'Anse Creuse High School North, 23700 21 Mile

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MORNING BINGO Mondays

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 (Just North of 21 Mile Road)
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Life Center Bingo

Linked Progressive, Computer and Paper Packages.
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FRIDAYS

Doors Open at 11:00am
Sales Start at 11:30am
Games Start at 12:30pm
Lic #A-21848

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North Gratiot Bingo Hall
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Rd, Macomb. Walk in \$5 a visit or purchase a punch card. Punch cards can be purchased at the pool, online at Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com or calling L'Anse Creuse Community Education at 586-783-6330.

MONTHLY EVENTS

■ **Chair Exercise on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at the Clawson Recreation and Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court. Level I at 10:30 a.m.:** Seated warm-up, light weights, bands and balance work. Level II at 11:15 a.m.: Low-impact moves. No fee, donations welcome. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or visit cityof-clawson.com

■ **Zumba Gold at the Clawson Recreation and Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court at 1:30 p.m.** on Mondays with Ivy. Cost is \$5 per drop-in class. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or visit cityof-clawson.com

■ **Indoor Walking on Mondays and Wednesdays at 9:15 a.m.** at the Clawson Recreation and Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court Meet with friends to walk in our gym. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or visit cityof-clawson.com

■ **Mondays and Wednesdays: 9:15-10 a.m.** (tentatively starting this Fall/Winter), Water Walking or Lap Swim held at L'Anse Creuse High School North, 23700 21 Mile Rd, Macomb. Walk in \$5 a visit or purchase a punch card. Punch cards can be purchased at the pool, online at Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com or calling L'Anse Creuse Community Education at 586-783-6330.

■ **Older Persons' Commission Membership:** Mondays — Thursdays, from 8:30 a.m. — 7:30 p.m.; Friday, from 8:30 a.m. — 3:30 p.m.; and Saturday, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. OPC membership is available at no charge to all

residents 50+ of Rochester, Rochester Hills and Oakland Township. Registration forms are available at OPC or online at opcseniorcenter.org. You must register in person and proof of residency is required. The OPC is located at 650 Letica Drive, Rochester. For more information, call 248-656-1403.

■ **Pinochle on Mondays and Wednesdays at 12:45 p.m.** at the Clawson Recreation and Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court. Cost is \$1. Price includes prize money for the top three scores. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or visit cityof-clawson.com

■ **Chair Yoga at 10:30 a.m.** on Tuesdays & Thursdays with Melissa & Stephanie at the Clawson Recreation and Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court. Come get a great stretch in this class! No fee, but donations are welcome. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or visit cityof-clawson.com

■ **Tai Chi at 1:30 p.m.** on Thursdays with Cheryl at the Clawson Recreation and Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court. Cost is \$5 per drop-in class. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or visit cityof-clawson.com

■ **Euchre on Tuesdays at 12:45 p.m.** Cost is \$1, which includes prize money, at the Clawson Recreation and Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or visit cityof-clawson.com

■ **Breakfast Sponsored by Widowed Friends Ministries:** Breakfast (3rd Tuesday of each) at 10:30 a.m., Pancake Factory, 13693 23 Mile Rd, NE corner of 23 Mile & Schoenherr, Shelby Twp. Sponsored by Widowed Friends Ministries. Contact Ellen 586-781-5781.

■ **Bowling held at Collier Bowl:** 879 S Lapeer Rd. (M24), Oxford every Tuesday. Arrive at noon for lane assignments. Sponsored by Widowed Friends

Ministries. Cost is \$7.50 for three games, (shoes extra at \$2.50). Lunch afterwards optional. Call Joe at 248-693-2454 or Nadine at 248-475-9036.

■ **New Baltimore Civic Club:** Euchre every Thursday at 36551 Main St. (corner of Blackwell) in New Baltimore. Sign in at 6:30 p.m., play at 7 p.m. \$10 plus a quarter for each euchre.

■ **Breakfast every Wednesday:** Sponsored by Widowed Friends Ministries. Join us at 10 a.m. at Cavis Pioneer Restaurant, 5606 Lapeer Rd., Kimball. Call Rita, 810-334-6287 for more information.

■ **Senior Card Playing:** Come and join a fun group of card players who play a wide range of card games. Everyone brings a snack to share while playing. Free. Mondays from 1-4 p.m. at 35248 Cricklewood Blvd. (Cricklewood Recreation Building). Call 586-725-0291.

■ **Dancing every Tuesday:**

at Polish Century Club, 33204 Maple Lane, Sterling Heights. Doors open at 6 p.m. Music from 7-10:30 p.m. Cost is \$8 per person with a cash bar. A table is reserved for Widowed Friends. Sponsored by Widowed Friends Ministries Contact Kate at 586-344-3886.

■ **New Baltimore Senior Club:** Tuesdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. This welcoming group of seniors has all sorts of fun. We play bingo, hold luncheons, go on trips, and play cards. Monthly dues, \$2. Location 35248 Cricklewood Blvd. (Cricklewood Recreation Building). Call 586-725-0291.

■ **Zumba Gold:** from 10:30-11:30 a.m. every Monday and Wednesday at the Washington Center, 57880 Van Dyke, Washington Twp. Cost depends on how many punches are purchased. 4 punches \$23 resident, \$29 NR; 11 punches \$60 resident, \$66 NR. For more information, call 586-752-6543.



Vitality

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Poetry Page

The Small, Still Voice

A long time ago I was repulsed and nauseated
By norms imposed on me with which I felt cornered
For one, I learned we do fake buff and polish
And applaud the vain and phony, if it's deemed stylish

Rock not the boat, dare not to stick out
Lest I'd upset the pack with the clout
They set the rules, the games and trends
That I'd mimic and echo, despite common sense

The ranks and popular might be daft, lazy or cruel
If they fatten or flatter me, I'd back them as a rule
It is what it is, I was not to check or question
But follow to keep alive the tribal ways and tradition

For a great while I relented to keep my head intact
Amid internal fury, I bowed and kept the act
Yet every so often I would hear this small, still voice
Nagging me so gently – "you think that's the right choice?"

The voice insisted that I listen to its suggestion
So I could cope with conflicts without much malfunction
And live with less anger, fear or resentment
But thrive and enjoy whatever there is at present

I remember not the details but the gists of its advice
That allowed me to apply in real world, to my surprise
One was simply to be kind to myself and others
Another was to be thankful and to pursue my druthers

And, yes, to be happy for them who get rich with flourish
Judge them not, and that beastly dope, smear not with relish
To make room for others to express their soul
For peace' sake, forgive their flubs, goof, bad and all

My favorite tip was to live well the moment
And to make time each day to notice the present
To remember all is fleeting and will die if its earthly
To let go of harmful feelings and be mindful of life's beauty

On the warped and unjust, not to succumb but adjust
Make small steps toward solutions that will work and will last
Use my talents effectively to overcome the circumstances
Be patient and work faithfully to realize the changes

At present I still live in the same chaotic situation
But my world has since evolved from painful angst to a mission
There is a sense of hope and freedom and lightness
For now I can accept what is and be the change to reduce the madness

Life can seem like a battle when my ideals are frustrated
But I go back to the wisdom bits the small, still voice had me upended
And this shifts my outlook and puts me in good disposition
To deal with reality, this time in a more artful fashion.

By Maria Odine of Troy, 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 January 11, 2024.

Poems due by December 27, 2023.

FIRST & LAST NAME: _____ PHONE NUMBER: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP: _____ NAME OF POEM: _____

MAIL TO: Vitality Poetry
And Letters of Appreciation
Dawn Emke
53239 Settimo Crt
Chesterfield, MI 48047



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

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

Poetry Page

CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY TAKE-OFF

Christmas comes but once a year
 Bringing with it loads of good cheer.
 Family rehearsals from Thanksgiving on,
 Reviews behaviors and recipes and the stories
 go on and on.....

The best part of all,
 Is the tree so tall,
 That every present big or small,
 Has a place to reside
 With love wrapped inside.

The decorations make it special
 With sparkly paper and ribbons galore;
 And tags of gnomes and elves,
 candles and angels,
 And puppy dog biscuits for special guests
 who arrive.

While all the time, we recall the stories
 Of special stars in the sky,
 Like the one on your tree,
 That shined over Bethlehem
 And brought a surprise;
 To animals who talked on that Special Eve night.

In a plain stable
 A child was born to remind us all,
 That the love in our hearts, can only make
 Holidays bright, if we share it with family
 And neighbors alike.

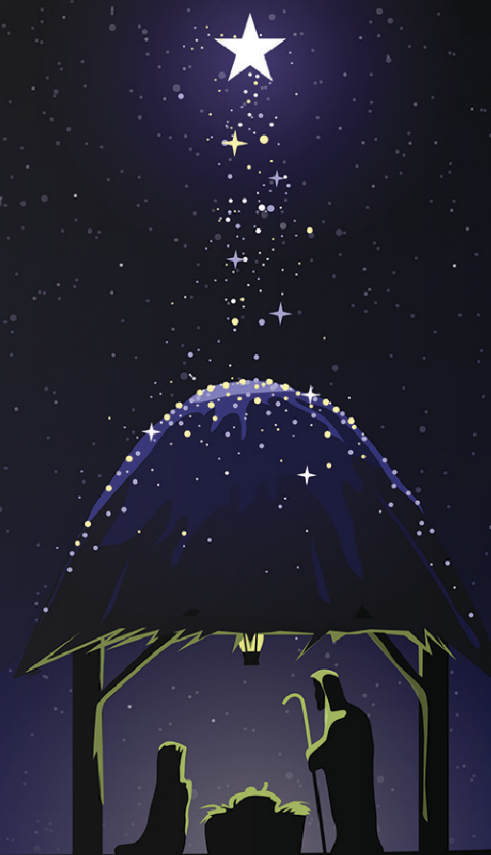
Christmas is love
 With Joy we can spread;
 Without ribbons and paper and
 Visions in our head.

It's a Holiday Take-Off,
 So get on board
 Tie it with a cord
 And knot it twice;
 Don't let it escape on Christmas night.

Open it up every day,
 So that visions of hope
 Surround you and make you realize,
 That you are the gift.

Like the babe in the stable
 Use your talents tried and true;
 To be Christmas for someone,
 Just like you!

By Margherita J. Wiszowaty of
 St. Clair Shores, MI



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

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