

Vitality

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

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many benefits

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106-year-old loves
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February 2024

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On the cover: Coco was adopted from the Animal Welfare Society of Southeast Michigan in Madison Heights by Cindy La Ferle.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CINDY LA FERLE

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WORK & PURPOSE

Giving up one's driver's license is a difficult topic to raise, even harder to actually do

By AgeWays

Formerly Area Agency on Aging 1-B

Many seniors are fine drivers.

But weakening eyesight, less flexibility in the neck to check for blind spots, medications that might cause drowsiness or dizziness, and loss of height may make driving more challenging.

Here are a few signs that your older loved one might be reaching the point of driving retirement:

- Repeated fender benders, or near misses
- Being honked at often
- Get-

- ting lost on familiar routes
- Feeling overly stressed when driving
- Reacting slowly to driving situations
- Making poor driving decisions

If you notice dents and dings in your loved one's car, or they mention how bad traffic is, it might be the perfect time to ride along to observe what might be taking place.

Steering the driving conversation

If raising the subject of driving retirement with your older loved one is dif-

icult, giving up driving can be traumatic.

"You have to realize that what you're asking that person to do is to give up a bit of their freedom," says LaVonna Howard, mobility project manager with myride2 at AgeWays Nonprofit Senior Services (formerly the Area Agency on Aging 1-B). "Taking away a person's keys can trigger a grieving process."

When approaching a loved one about perhaps giving up their driver's license, be mindful of the day and time you have the conversation.

"You want to have a conversation when everyone is at ease and let them know the suggestion is not just for their personal safety, but for the safety of other drivers and pedestrians, as well," Howard says.

A recent traffic ticket or fender bender might strengthen your case.

And, be prepared to discuss alternative means of transportation, Howard says.

For example, does your loved one have friends who can drive, especially if it's to a place they can go at the same time? Can they pool their money with a friend or friends for a ride service?

Does the senior center in their town offer transportation, even if it's only within city boundaries? Does a public bus route offer curb-to-curb service in their neighborhood?

Myride2 offers mobility options training, including helping people learn to use public transportation and signing them up to use a ride service.

Call 855-697-4332 or visit myride2.com.

If your suggestion to stop driving is met with resistance — or you don't want to have the conversation at all — your alternatives might be to physically disable the car. You can do this by letting the air out of the tires or disconnecting the battery, Howard says.

Vehicle modifications

Good drivers, despite their age, may need to make adjustments so they can continue to drive, such as using a seat cushion and newer assistive devices like a larger rearview mirror

Area Agency on Aging 1-B



that goes over an existing rearview mirror or a handle you can put inside the car to make it easier to get in and out. The steering wheel may also need to be adjusted so that it can be reached more easily.

CarFit, a program developed by AAA, AARP and the American Occupational Therapy Association, offers virtual workshops to help older drivers make necessary adjustments to make driving safer.

If a driver refresher course or vehicle modifications might keep your loved one on the road, some organizations offer them, such as AAA and AARP.

The Michigan Secretary of State has a host of resources for older drivers and their families at michigan.gov/agingdriver.

If your loved one refuses

If your loved one refuses to give up their driver's license, you may submit a Request for Driver Evaluation form (OC-88) on the Michigan Secretary of State website or at your local Secretary of State (SOS) branch office. The form will request an on-the-road driving evaluation and an assessment of a person's cognitive and physical faculties that may affect driving ability.

The SOS will send a letter to the driver to say they

have been called in for re-evaluation (without mentioning the name of the person who requested it). The state can revoke a license or place restrictions on where and when a person may drive.

You may also write a letter to the Department of State at the following address:

Traffic Safety Division
Michigan Department of State
P.O. Box 30810
Lansing, MI 48909-9832

The letter should include the name, birth date, driver's license number (if known), and current address of the driver being referred. It also should describe an incident or pattern of behavior, or other evidence that justifies an evaluation. The request must also include your name, address, telephone number and signature.

This content is provided by AgeWays Nonprofit Senior Services (formerly 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 or visit ageways.org to get connected.

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MONEY & SECURITY

Ask the Financial Doctor: Can I still switch my Medicare if I missed open enrollment?

Q: Where can I get tax forms?

A: You can call 800-829-3676 or download any form at irs.gov. Additionally, some post offices and public libraries have tax forms.



Richard Rysiewski
Columnist

Q: I am a school teacher and have out-of-pocket educational expenses of \$210. Can I deduct the \$210 on the federal form 1040?

A: Yes, the \$210 is deductible and you do not need to itemize on Schedule A. The maximum deduction for the 2023 tax year is \$300.

Q: I have been on a Medicare Advantage Plan (MAP) for the last three years and I missed the open enrollment period. Can I still switch my MAP to another insurance provider?

A: Yes, you can. MAP participants have a second enrollment window from Jan. 1 to March 13, 2024, to change to a different MAP.

Q: I have some HH bonds that I will be redeeming this year. Will I owe any taxes?

A: If you choose to report yearly interest, then the interest income will be taxed in the year received. Any deferred interest will be taxable in the year when the bonds are redeemed.

Q: When is the due date for filing my 2023 personal tax return?

A: The due date is Wednesday, April 15, 2024. As long as you have the postmark, April 15, your tax return is considered on time. Taxpayers needing an extension have until Oct. 15 to file their 2023 tax returns. Regardless of the extension, any tax liability must be paid by April 15.

Q: Are there any exceptions to the 10-year mandatory distribution rule for inherited IRAs and 401(k)s under the SECURE Act?

A: There are five exceptions: a surviving spouse, the chronically ill, the disabled, a minor child, or any person less than 10 years younger than the decedent. These exceptions are called eligible designated beneficiaries (EDBs). When an EDB dies, the beneficiary will be subject to the SECURE Act 10-year rule. When an EDB minor child reaches the age of majority, then the 10-year rule will apply.

Q: What is the maximum contribution to an IRA for 2023?

A: The maximum amount for 2023 is \$6,500, plus a \$1,000 catch-up if you are 50 or older.

Q: Did the rules change for switching spousal benefits on Jan. 1, 2024?

A: Yes, any Social Security recipient who turns 70 years old after Jan. 1 can no longer claim spousal benefits first and then switch to benefits based on their own work record to maximize the Social Security benefits.

Q: I am not sure if I can use Schedule A for the 2023 tax year. Do property and state taxes have a restricted deduction?

A: The state and property taxes are capped at \$10,000. Most miscellaneous deductions are eliminated and the home equity interest deduction is eliminated except if the home equity loan is used for home improvement. Most filers will not use Schedule A because the standard deduction is more beneficial.

Q: My parents set up a 529 plan for my children's college education. Can my parents fund the tuition for elementary or secondary school from the 529 plan?

A: Yes, grades 1 through 12 and even kindergarten can be funded from a 529 plan. The only restriction is a maximum of \$10,000 in tuition per child, per

*God be in my head,
and in my understanding.*

*God be in my eyes
and in my looking,*

*God be in my mouth
and in my speaking.*

*God be in my heart
and in my thinking,*

*God be at my end
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SOCIAL & WELL-BEING

Belly dancing offers many health benefits



PHOTO COURTESY OF ZEA WEISENBACH

Sterling Heights resident Zea Weisenbach is a professional belly dancer who is offering classes in Sterling Heights and Warren.

Middle Eastern dance highlighted in upcoming programs in Warren and Sterling Heights

By Debra Kaszubski
For MediaNews Group

Sterling Heights resident Zea Weisenbach was diagnosed with arthritis at age 26. At that time, she knew she wanted to keep moving through some form of exercise, so she started by picking up a belly dancing VHS tape.

Today, more than 40 years later, Weisenbach, now 67, is still belly dancing. Instead of dancing in front of a television, though, she is leading belly dancing sessions at area community and senior centers.

"It's low-impact and easy for people. It's fun and it unites people. It's also healthy and inspires people to be artists," Weisenbach said.

A 2022 study published in the National Library of Medicine determined that any form of dance benefited balance and might contribute to metabolic health. Individuals who dance not only increase their activity levels, they also improve their emotional and cognitive health. Although more research is needed, the study also found less brain atrophy in the dancer group than in the treadmill-walking group, suggesting that

dance is more beneficial for brain health.

While most forms of dance are beneficial, belly dancing in particular helps practitioners improve their core and overall strength, flexibility, balance and posture. Like yoga, belly dancing can be meditative and calming.

"I feel with belly dancing I flow like water. It's kind of like yoga or Tai Chi in that you use your breath a lot," Weisenbach said. "You concentrate more on what's happening inside and with the muscles."

During one of Weisenbach's sessions, she plays traditional belly dancing music and begins with a gradual warm-up and some stretching. "I start out with easy movements which will get the body to wake up. Then I gear into choreography," Weisenbach said.

According to the instructor, choreography is low-impact and simple to learn. This ancient form of Middle Eastern dance is easy to follow and is slower moving than something like Zumba or fitness dance. Weisenbach urges participants to focus on the muscles and posture with each movement. "There is a soft build and I always encourage peo-

"I feel with belly dancing I flow like water. It's kind of like yoga or Tai Chi in that you use your breath a lot. You concentrate more on what's happening inside and with the muscles."

— Zea Weisenbach

ple to listen to their bodies," she said.

During class, most participants wear fitness clothes and tennis shoes. Some wear coin belts, which adds to the overall ambiance, although dressing up is not necessary.

Weisenbach, a former professional belly dancer, has offered belly dancing classes in Shelby Township, St. Clair Shores, Clinton Township and Marysville. Her current classes are in Warren. They started Feb. 7 and continue weekly at 11 a.m. at the Warren Community Center, 5460 Arden Ave. She also has a class beginning at 2 p.m. April 4 at the Sterling Heights Senior Center, 40200 Utica Road.

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Doctor

FROM PAGE 5

year.

Q: When can a widow start collecting survivor benefits from Social

Security?

A: If the widow is caring for children under the age of 16, the benefits begin immediately. If no children, then the survivor benefits can begin at age 60 or if disabled, at age 50.

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.

MONEY & SECURITY

Real estate: It's smart to get well water tested before buying a house

Q: We are in the process of buying a house that has well water. The seller has lived there for years and said they never had a problem. Is it worth it to get the well water tested?

A: Yes, it's most certainly worth it to get well water tested and depending on what municipality or county the property is located in, it might be mandatory. Clean drinking water is something that is easy to take for granted. Hiding in well water can be contaminants that are dangerous to humans such as bacteria, inorganic chemicals, organic chemicals, pesticides, herbicides, PCBs, etc.

There are various levels of testing that you can have done. There's a minimal potability test that checks only for the basic E.coli, total coliform and nitrate, which in my opinion isn't enough. That still leaves at a minimum nitrite, lead, arsenic, fluoride, chloride, phosphate, sulfate, silver, barium, cad-



Steve Meyers
Columnist

mium, chromium, copper, selenium, zinc, calcium, magnesium, benzene, etc. On top of that partial list, there is also the testing for specific conductance, hardness and pH. As you can see, there are basic tests that check for only three items or you can have a deluxe test that checks for 100+ items.

What is often overlooked on properties with wells is what is the unknown history of the property and surrounding properties. Was there ever an underground storage tank for heating fuel? Did someone bury their old car batteries on the property or dump the oil from their oil changes? Was the property or surrounding properties used for farming? Additionally, there are a lot of naturally occurring chemicals in the ground that can contaminate well water. Did you know there can be radon in well water?

You can spend as little as \$150 for a basic test or \$325+ for the deluxe test. Also, keep in mind that you will need

to make sure your inspection contingency is long enough for the test you want to have done. For a basic test, the lab will need two to three business days and for a deluxe test 10-12 business days.

Q: We're going to be selling our house this summer. Currently, our hot water tank needs to be replaced. To sell, does it make a difference if we install a 40-gallon or 50-gallon tank?

A: Most folks prefer a 50-gallon tank. But on the other hand, in my almost 26 years of selling homes, I have never had a buyer not buy a home because it had a 40-gallon hot water tank.

Steve Meyers is a real estate agent/ Realtor at RE/MAX First 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.

Market Update

December's market update for Macomb County and Oakland County's housing market (house and condo sales) is as follows: In Macomb County, the average sales price was up by more than 5% and Oakland County's average sales price was up by more than 6% for the month. Macomb County's on-market inventory was down by almost 36% and Oakland County's on-market inventory was down by more than 28%. Macomb County's average days on market were 31 days and Oakland County's average days on market were 30 days. Closed sales in Macomb County were down by almost 8% and closed sales in Oakland County were down by 7%. The closed sales continue to be 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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SOCIAL & WELL-BEING

106-year-old Rochester Hills woman credits longevity to community service, staying active

By Debra Kaszubski
For MediaNews Group

It's hard to believe Rochester Hills resident Gail Kemler is 106 years old.

Although she claims her memory is fading, she still recalls her days at Rochester High School, where she graduated in 1935; her days working various jobs around Rochester and Pontiac before her 1938 wedding to husband Donald; and her many years in service to various organizations around Rochester and Oakland County. She only stopped volunteering three years ago, at age 103.

"Mom has been motivated for mercy and that you have to take care of people less fortunate than you. Mom always said if you've been given a lot, you must give back more," said her daughter, Ruth Hugo.

Kemler was born on Oct. 28, 1917, in Brookfield, Illinois.

When she was 4 years old, her mother was severely injured when the stove exploded and she had to be hospitalized for 11 weeks. Kemler and her sisters stayed with their

grandparents while their mom recovered.

Edward and Cora Cole ran the Idle Hour Theater on Main Street in downtown Rochester. At that time, silent movies — called "talkies" — were featured, and Kemler's aunt, Ruth, played the piano to accompany what was on the screen.

When her mom recovered, her family moved from Illinois to Ferndale where her father opened a cleaning business.

The Great Depression caused the business to close and then the family moved to Rochester, where the family of six and two grandparents shared a small apartment.

To help support her family, Kemler took odd jobs around town.

She gave her father her entire life savings — around \$100 — to help repair his Model T car. It was around that time she started dating Donald, whom she would marry after dating for seven years.

Kemler worked at a dime store, at a knitting mill (which is now the Rochester Mills Brewery), at a real

estate office in Pontiac, and at Consumers Energy.

"Consumers didn't employ married women at that time, so once I got married, I had to leave. But it worked out well because I got pregnant shortly after," she said.

Kemler had four children: James, David, Charles and Ruth. The family lived in a house Don built, which was located on Walnut Street in Rochester, before moving to a larger home on Cobb Creek.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Kemler was active in the Rochester Community Schools Parent Teacher Association, and then she was later elected to serve on the school board for eight years. While she was on the school board, the district opened several schools in the northern part of the district's boundaries, such as Adams High School.

In addition to her time on the school board, Kemler was one of the original organizers of Neighborhood House.

She also co-chaired the Helping Hands Food Pantry and helped to pass out food regularly until about

three years ago. She also was active on the Rochester Historical Commission from 1992-2013.

Although she has slowed down somewhat over the past few years, she is still a very vibrant, happy 106-year-old. She lives at home with her daughter, walks with the aid of a walker, and regularly attends church services. She has nine grandchildren, 15 great-grandchildren, and five great-great-grandchildren.

Her bedroom wall is filled with various awards and certificates, many of which recognize her number of years in community service. A 2012 certificate of recognition from President George Bush is among the many that proudly hang.

When asked what the secret to a long happy life is, she said she wasn't sure. But her children — Charles and Ruth — were quick to add that Kemler "has never stopped moving and is always giving back. She believes in leaving the world better than you found it and that's exactly what she has done and is still doing."



DEBRA KASZUBSKI — FOR MEdIANEWS GROUP

Gail Kemler, 106, enjoys living in her Rochester Hills home.



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MONEY & SECURITY

Older Americans say they feel trapped in Medicare Advantage plans

By Sarah Jane Tribble
Tribune News Service

In 2016, Richard Timmins went to a free informational seminar to learn more about Medicare coverage.

“I listened to the insurance agent and, basically, he really promoted Medicare Advantage,” Timmins said. The agent described less expensive and broader coverage offered by the plans, which are funded largely by the government but administered by private insurance companies.

For Timmins, who is now 76, it made economic sense then to sign up. And his decision was great, for a while.

Then, three years ago, he noticed a lesion on his right earlobe.

“I have a family history of melanoma. And so, I was kind of tuned in to that and thinking about that,” Timmins said of the growth, which doctors later diagnosed as malignant melanoma. “It started to grow and started to become rather painful.”

Timmins, though, discovered that his enrollment in a Premera Blue Cross Medicare Advantage plan would mean a limited network of doctors and the potential need for preapproval, or prior authorization, from the insurer before getting care. The experience, he said, made getting care more difficult, and now he wants to switch back to traditional, government-administered Medicare.

But he can’t. And he’s not alone.

“I have very little control over my actual medical care,” he said, adding that he

now advises friends not to sign up for the private plans. “I think that people are not understanding what Medicare Advantage is all about.”

Enrollment in Medicare Advantage plans has grown substantially in the past few decades, enticing more than half of all eligible people, primarily those 65 or older, with low premium costs and perks like dental and vision insurance. And as the private plans’ share of the Medicare patient pie has ballooned to 30.8 million people, so too have concerns about the insurers’ aggressive sales tactics and misleading coverage claims.

Enrollees, like Timmins, who sign on when they are healthy can find themselves trapped as they grow older and sicker.

“It’s one of those things that people might like them on the front end because of their low to zero premiums and if they are getting a couple of these extra benefits — the vision, dental, that kind of thing,” said Christine Huberty, a lead benefit specialist supervising attorney for the Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources.

“But it’s when they actually need to use it for these bigger issues,” Huberty said, “that’s when people realize, ‘Oh no, this isn’t going to help me at all.’”

Medicare pays private insurers a fixed amount per Medicare Advantage enrollee and in many cases also pays out bonuses, which the insurers can use to provide supplemental benefits. Huberty said those extra benefits work as an incentive to “get people to join the plan” but that the plans then “re-

Enrollment in Medicare Advantage plans has grown substantially in the past few decades, enticing more than half of all eligible people, primarily those 65 or older, with low premium costs and perks like dental and vision insurance.

strict the access to so many services and coverage for the bigger stuff.”

David Meyers, assistant professor of health services, policy, and practice at the Brown University School of Public Health, analyzed a decade of Medicare Advantage enrollment and found that about 50% of beneficiaries — rural and urban — left their contract by the end of five years. Most of those enrollees switched to another Medicare Advantage plan rather than traditional Medicare.

In the study, Meyers and his co-authors muse that switching plans could be a positive sign of a free marketplace but that it could also signal “unmeasured discontent” with Medicare Advantage.

“The problem is that once you get into Medicare Advantage, if you have a couple of chronic conditions and you want to leave Medicare Advantage, even if Medicare Advantage isn’t meeting your needs, you might not have any ability to switch back to traditional Medicare,” Meyers said.

Traditional Medicare can be too expensive for beneficiaries switching back from Medicare Advantage, he

said. In traditional Medicare, enrollees pay a monthly premium and, after reaching a deductible, in most cases are expected to pay 20% of the cost of each nonhospital service or item they use. And there is no limit on how much an enrollee may have to pay as part of that 20% co-insurance if they end up using a lot of care, Meyers said.

To limit what they spend out-of-pocket, traditional Medicare enrollees typically sign up for supplemental insurance, such as employer coverage or a private Medigap policy. If they are low-income, Medicaid may provide that supplemental coverage.

But, Meyers said, there’s a catch: While beneficiaries who enrolled first in traditional Medicare are guaranteed to qualify for a Medigap policy without pricing based on their medical history, Medigap insurers can deny coverage to beneficiaries transferring from Medicare Advantage plans or base their prices on medical underwriting.

Only four states — Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, and New York — prohibit insurers from denying a Medigap policy if the enrollee has preexisting con-

ditions such as diabetes or heart disease.

Paul Ginsburg is a former commissioner on the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission, also known as Med-PAC. It’s a legislative branch agency that advises Congress on the Medicare program. He said the inability of enrollees to easily switch between Medicare Advantage and traditional Medicare during open enrollment periods is “a real concern in our system; it shouldn’t be that way.”

The federal government offers specific enrollment periods every year for switching plans.

During Medicare’s open enrollment period, from Oct. 15 to Dec. 7, enrollees can switch out of their private plans to traditional, government-administered Medicare.

Medicare Advantage enrollees can also switch plans or transfer to traditional Medicare during another open enrollment period, from Jan. 1 to March 31.

“There are a lot of people that say, ‘Hey, I’d love to come back, but I can’t get Medigap anymore, or I’ll have to just pay a lot more,’” said Ginsburg, who is now a professor of health policy at the University of Southern California.

Timmins is one of those people. The retired veterinarian lives in a rural community on Whidbey Island just north of Seattle. It’s a rugged, idyllic landscape and a popular place for second homes, hiking, and the arts. But it’s also a bit remote.

While it’s typically harder to find doctors in rural ar-

reas, Timmins said he believes his Premera Blue Cross plan made it more challenging to get care for a variety of reasons, including the difficulty of finding and getting in to see specialists.

Nearly half of Medicare Advantage plan directories contained inaccurate information on what providers were available, according to the most recent federal review. Beginning in 2024, new or expanding Medicare Advantage plans must demonstrate compliance with federal network expectations or their applications could be denied.

Amanda Lansford, a Premera Blue Cross spokesperson, declined to comment on Timmins’ case. She said the plan meets federal network adequacy requirements as well as travel time and distance standards “to ensure members are not experiencing undue burdens when seeking care.”

Traditional Medicare allows beneficiaries to go to nearly any doctor or hospital in the U.S., and in most cases enrollees do not need approval to get services.

Timmins, who recently finished immunotherapy, said he doesn’t think he would be approved for a Medigap policy, “because of my health issue.” And if he were to get into one, Timmins said, it would likely be too expensive.

For now, Timmins said, he is staying with his Medicare Advantage plan.

“I’m getting older. More stuff is going to happen.”

There is also a chance, Timmins said, that his cancer could resurface: “I’m very aware of my mortality.”

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SOCIAL & WELL-BEING

Adopting a dog offers many benefits for seniors

By **Cindy La Ferle**
For *MediaNews Group*

There was a time when I was content to spend my free evenings on a couch



Cindy La Ferle

with two cats while binge-watching PBS murder mysteries on television. But that was before one sweet shepherd-retriever changed everything.

Days before I found her, Coco had been rescued from a kill shelter (a shelter that euthanizes stray animals due to limited resources) and brought to the Animal Welfare Society of Southeast Michigan in Madison Heights.

Coco didn't try to compete with the chorus of barking pit bulls and terriers also waiting to be adopted. But she walked straight toward me as I approached her cage, then gently leaned against the door. In that instant, I knew I had to make room in my home for her.

My mother had died earlier that fall after a long battle with vascular

According to a survey conducted by the *Aging & Mental Health* journal, adults aged 65 or older with pets found that their animals boosted their emotional well-being by “providing companionship, giving a sense of purpose and meaning, reducing loneliness and increasing socialization.”

dementia. Still grieving, I was sure that adopting a shelter dog would help fill the extra time that had suddenly opened up on my caregiving calendar.

First, I had to convince my husband that we absolutely needed a dog to shepherd us through our senior years. Then I had to convince the folks at the Animal Welfare Society that two 60-year-old cat owners could manage a 48-pound canine that hadn't quite reached maturity.

I soon discovered that shelter pet adoption is nearly as competitive as an Ivy League university admissions process. Shelters and rescue organizations work hard to place pets in suitable homes — and typically require po-

tential owners to fill out extensive paperwork, provide references, and undergo interviews.

Happily, I got the phone call declaring that my husband and I were approved to become dog parents. After leading Coco to our car on her brand-new leash, I began the most rewarding adventure of my senior years.

Creature comforts

If you've ever wondered if dog adoption is suitable for older adults, the health benefits of dog ownership might cinch your decision.

According to a survey conducted by the *Aging & Mental Health* journal, adults aged 65 or older with pets found that their animals boosted their emotional well-being by “pro-



PHOTO COURTESY OF CINDY LA FERLE

Coco was adopted from the Animal Welfare Society of Southeast Michigan in Madison Heights.

viding companionship, giving a sense of purpose and meaning, reducing loneliness and increasing socialization.”

Since dogs thrive on routine — including regular exercise — they inspire their owners to get off the couch and get moving.

Not surprisingly, daily strolls or hikes with a dog can add extra years to your lifespan while boosting your mental acuity, as reported by medical experts at the Cleveland Clinic. The payoff extends to improved cardiovascular fitness and reduced risk of chronic diseases such as heart dis-

ease, stroke, cancer and diabetes.

Wherever you choose to get your new best friend from, you'll need to do some serious research first.

Making the right choice

Begin by learning about various dog breeds, and then decide which one would be most compatible with your lifestyle and energy level — as well as the size of your home and yard. (Ask for opinions from dog owners you know.) Consider the dog's health requirements along with your budget for veterinary care.

If you decide to give a shelter dog a forever home, start exploring online services such as petfinder.org or adoptapet.com.

Modern Dog magazine advises visiting a few shelters or rescue groups near your home before you commit to adopting. And be sure to visit more than once before making your final decision on a particular animal.

From the get-go, I knew I wanted a large shelter dog. So, I narrowed my search down to shepherds, retrievers, and other sporting breeds. Since I also wanted my dog to be

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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, March 14, 2024.

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To be included in our next edition please Email to:

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Email: Joe Gray

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PHOTO COURTESY OF CINDY LA FERLE

Cindy La Ferle walks with Coco soon after adopting her.

housebroken and settled, I decided against adopting a puppy. By the time I found Coco, who was just under a year old, I knew what kind of dog would be perfect for our household. And I wasn't wrong.

Along with the deep satisfaction of giving a home to a dog who needed one, I've been gifted with a renewed outlook on life.

Coco has coaxed me, one walk at a time, out of the dense fog of grief that had nearly numbed my heart by the time my mother died. I've often referred to her as my "therapy dog," and I'm grateful for every one of the nine years she's been here for me.

I'm convinced that shelter dogs are somehow at-

tuned to the hurt we carry. In our efforts to rescue them, we heal the fragile, wounded places in our own hearts. In exchange for our care, they offer us unconditional comfort and devotion.

Cindy La Ferle is a freelance columnist in Royal Oak. Visit her "Life Lines" blog at laferle.com.

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HEALTH & FITNESS

Home care services: What to know and how to find help

By Reed Abelson
Tribune News Service

Most older Americans want to live at home as long as they can, but finding and affording the help they need often isn't easy. There are severe shortages of home health aides in many parts of the country. Hiring them is costly. And most middle-class people will have to pay for home care themselves if it's needed for the long haul.

Here's a guide to locating home care for an older person:

What kind of home care do you need?

After a fall or surgery, some older people will need short-term care at home from a nurse or therapist to help them recover. Medicare, the federal insurance program for those 65 and older, typically pays for this kind of home health care. A nurse can make sure a wound is healing properly, for example, while a physical therapist can help a person get back on their feet after a knee replacement.

But millions of older Americans need assistance over months or years to stay in their homes safely instead of moving to an assisted living facility or nursing home. They may require help getting out of bed, taking a shower, or going to the bathroom; getting to the doctor; shopping for groceries; or making meals. They would need a home aide or personal care assistant, who may not have much, if any, medical training.

How do I find help?

A wide range of services are available, whether it's light housekeeping or hiring a private-duty nurse. Monica Moreno, senior director of care and support at the Alzheimer's Associ-

ation, suggests you start by making a simple list of the kind of help you or your loved one needs and the number of hours each day or week required.

To identify agencies and services available in your area, Moreno recommends looking through a database of community resources provided jointly by the association and AARP, the nonprofit group representing older Americans, that is searchable by location. A list of agencies and a brief description of what they provide can be found under the category "care at home." Visit communityresourcefinder.org.

Should I use an agency?

While Medicare certifies and gives star ratings to home health agencies, the businesses that provide home care services are not subject to federal oversight or required to be licensed in every state. But a good agency will run background checks on its workers and give them training and support. If an aide calls in sick or quits, the agency can find a replacement. Some businesses also bond and insure their caregivers.

To choose an agency, Jennifer Battista, chief operating officer for the Home Care Association of America, suggests inviting several of them to your home to conduct an assessment. Ask them how they vet their employees, whether they run criminal background checks, and whether their employees are required to know how to perform CPR or provide first aid. Be sure to ask for references for individual aides and talk to families who have employed them before.

Once you pick an agency, you may want to try a few

caregivers before finding the right one. The more information you share about your loved one's needs, the better the agency will be able to find an aide who's a good fit. "It's a lot like matchmaking," Battista said.

What about finding someone through word-of-mouth?

Many families have success finding a caregiver by asking people they trust for recommendations, said Nicole Jorwic, a lawyer who is the chief of advocacy and campaigns for Caring Across Generations, an advocacy organization. "Cast a wide net, post on private social media, and ask family and friends," she said, noting that she found caregivers for her grandparents by asking people in her community.

Churches and other religious institutions, local charities, and community organizations may also have suggestions. A primary care doctor or local medical practice may have experience with specific home care agencies or know of individual caregivers. If you decide to hire someone privately, you should be sure to do a thorough background check and talk to families who have employed them before.

Will Medicare cover the cost of an aide?

Many home agencies erroneously say they can't send a home aide and will tell a doctor's office or patient that Medicare won't pay for one. "This is a longstanding problem," said Judith Stein, executive director of the Center for Medicare Advocacy, a nonprofit legal group.

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PHOTO BY SARAH REINGEWIRTZ, MEDIANEWS GROUP

Elsa Florez helps her mother Maria Olguin, 80, who suffers from dementia and spinal stenosis, to her walker in her home. Florez got her a part-time caregiver to give her father a break since her mom needs 24-hour care. Florez and other family members also take shifts caring for her.

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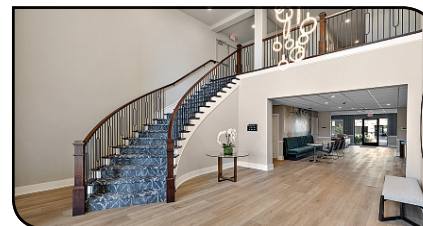
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HEALTH & FITNESS

The sexual health checkup older adults didn't know they needed

By Dr. Trisha Pasricha

Special to The Washington Post

Adults have sex at every age, so it follows that STDs can spread at every age. But my older patients who have new sexual partners are sometimes bewildered when I ask if they want to get screened.

It's healthy to be sexually active as an older adult, and it correlates with greater enjoyment of life. My patients tell me that nursing homes can present really exciting opportunities to make new friends in this regard.

In fact, 40% of adults aged 65-80 are sexually active and about 10% of people older than 90 are sexually active, though it bears noting that the latter figure is based on a survey limited to

one municipality in Sweden.

But STDs spare no one. Few people I've seen whose STD testing comes back positive were expecting that result. And from 2007 to 2017, STD cases more than doubled among adults age 65 and over.

That is why it is important to get screened and always use a condom. Condoms are infrequently utilized among older people, but they do reduce, yet not eliminate, risk of STDs.

Why are STD cases rising among older adults?

Researchers speculate STD cases are rising simply because older adults are having more sex than in generations past.

One factor at play is how people are meeting each other and forming relationships, including with web- or app-based dating services that are increasingly attracting older people.

The market for devices and medications that address sexual health problems is also flourishing — and not just for men. In the past several years, the Food and Drug Administration has approved more treatments aimed at postmenopausal women who may have trouble with sex due to vaginal dryness and pain.

This all may be impacting how often older adults have sex and subsequently get STDs. After the introduction of sildenafil — known by the brand name Viagra — in 1998, for ex-

ample, the risk of STDs increased significantly among widowed men.

How do I know if I need STD screening?

The United States Preventive Services Task Force advises all women aged 24 and younger to get screened for gonorrhea and chlamydia regularly — and thereafter, when you have new sexual partners or other situations that increase risk. Everyone should be tested for HIV at least once. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends men who have sex with men to get screened at least once a year for syphilis, chlamydia, gonorrhea and HIV.

But there's a lot of leeway among other groups, so much of STD screening is left to common sense.

Here's my advice:

- Got a new partner? I'd check.
- Have multiple recent partners? Let's definitely check.
- Got a new partner who only had one prior long-term partner before you? You know me. If it were me, I'd check.
- Found out your partner has been cheating? You know the drill (and I'm truly so sorry).
- Just oral or anal sex? You can still get STDs. Shall we check?

In other words, if you're even thinking about getting screened, just do it.

What STDs should I get screened for?

Chlamydia and gonorrhea are two classic STDs that have been rising among older adults in recent years. There were more than 2,000 cases of each among people 65 and older in 2017. Syphilis, while rarer, is also rising in this population, and in

2018, the majority of people diagnosed with HIV were age 50 and older.

Other conditions get less attention, such as trichomoniasis and bacterial vaginosis (the latter is not quite considered an STD but is linked to sexual activity). Both can produce a distinctive "fishy" smelling discharge in women. Discuss which STDs to check for with your health care provider since your personal history plays a role, as well.

What STD symptoms should I look out for?

Sure, painful genital sores raise a red flag pretty quickly, but most people with STDs don't actually have any symptoms. If you have symptoms like burning with urination, itching or unusual discharge, consider the possibility of an STD with your provider before immediately presuming it's a urinary tract or yeast infection.

Also keep the following in mind:

- Most people with a new HIV infection experience a brief flu-like illness about two to four weeks after exposure. Then they tend to feel perfectly normal for several years before their CD4 cells — important immune cells in your body destroyed by HIV — drop low enough to draw medical attention.
- Chlamydia is known as a "silent infection" because as few as 5% of women and about 10% of men develop symptoms. Most men and women with gonorrhea are similarly asymptomatic.

▪ The first stage of syphilis infection involves a painless round genital sore that can infect others who come into contact with it. These sores are often not as noticeable as you'd think (they may be inside a skin

fold and can be as small as a few millimeters). Later, the latent stage of syphilis can last for years with absolutely no symptoms.

Who is at the highest risk for STDs?

To be clear, cases of STDs among the elderly are going up, but they're still much fewer than those among older teenagers and adults in their 20s. But everyone, regardless of age, should take precautions and test appropriately.

Age aside, men who have sex with men, users of intravenous drugs and people who have a prior history of another STD are all at higher risk. A study from Vanderbilt University, where I went to medical school, recently found what I had long observed as a student: Compared to other groups, Black women are losing the most years of life to HIV (and 91% of new HIV infections among Black women nationwide are reported from heterosexual contact).

There's another striking discrepancy within the country: Southern states account for about half of new HIV cases annually. These states, not coincidentally, also have the highest rates of poverty nationally and tend to focus on abstinence-based sex education that has been shown to be ineffective in STD prevention.

What I want my patients to know

I never enjoy telling someone they have something like chlamydia. But I do like what I can say next, which is that most STDs can be fully cured with medication, and for those we can't cure, like HIV, we have excellent medications to treat. You only stand to win by knowing.

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Services

FROM PAGE 14

While it's true that Medicare doesn't pay for long-term care, it may pay for an aide as part of a patient's care plan if that person also qualifies for a home nurse or therapist for a time. Agencies often refuse to provide someone because Medicare pays a lump sum per patient, meaning the agency isn't paid more for sending an aide in addition to the nurse or therapist. Talk to the doctor about whether an aide is necessary so one can be specified in the care plan presented to the agency.

Medicare patients are getting fewer visits from an aide now than they did some 25 years ago, and the center is now appealing a judge's dismissal of a lawsuit claiming that Medicare, under the Department

of Health and Human Services, discouraged the use of aides for thousands of people.

The judge did acknowledge that many people were not getting care.

Will other insurance pay for an aide?

Under Medicaid, the state-federal program for low-income people that provides long-term care, the cost of an aide is often covered as an alternative to a nursing home.

But a shortage of workers can make it difficult to find one even if you qualify. Families complain of frequent no-shows, and because wages are low under the program, agencies often have high turnover among workers.

Some private Medicare Advantage plans offer home care as a supplemental benefit, and some help may be covered under a long-term



PHOTO BY MARK RIGHTMIRE, MEDIANEWS GROUP

Kari Buist-Baker, left, a certified nurse care manager with d Concierge Care Navigators, a fee-for-service program, sorts out medications for Mary Jonas, 88, in the living room at her home.

care insurance policy. If you or your loved one is a veteran, it's worth checking with the Department of Veterans Affairs to see if it will pay for home care.

widely, and some agencies may not be able to fill a position for just a few hours a week.

Across the country, agencies are charging roughly \$27 an hour with a little more than half of that going to pay their workers.

There are no good estimates for how much people working for themselves may charge.

You could save some money because there is no go-between agency taking a cut, but some independent caregivers charge roughly the same as an agency.

How do I report a problem?

If the agency you're using is licensed by your state, you can check with the government office overseeing it if you run into a problem. You can also file a complaint with various state agencies, including the state health department.

Where else can I get help?

State or local government agencies that focus on aging or nonprofit groups can provide information.

You can also try the Eldercare Locator at eldercare.acl.gov. The Alzheimer's Association also offers a 24-hour helpline: 1-800-272-3900.

What about respite care?

Family caregivers should also think about taking advantage of respite care to give themselves a break from time to time.

Depending on the circumstances, insurance may cover the cost, and there are local government and community groups that will pay for an aide for a brief period.

Churches and other organizations might also provide respite care.

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SOCIAL & WELL-BEING

7 things I've learned about how to live happily in retirement

Writer: Don't 'retire;' instead, rewire your thinking about how you want to spend your days

By Anne Valdespino
MediaNews Group

Long before I had any thoughts of retirement, I enjoyed a busy career as a journalist.

On a rare night off, I was invited to a writer friend's house; she was a superb hostess with a cranky, charismatic hubby who retired from the industry. He had a career as a producer whose claim to fame included the hockey fan favorite, "Slap Shot," starring Paul Newman.

That night, I tried to get his take on a film I had just seen.

"The movies?! Anne, I don't have TIME to go to the movies!" It wasn't an angry response, he just seemed puzzled that I didn't understand. I chalked it up to his long list of eccentric interests: he loved screwcap wines, knives, guns and cigars; he had inherited Alfred Hitchcock's collection of stogies.

No time for a flick? What was he up to? Now I know.

Decades after that dinner, I'm almost two years retired myself. I had enjoyed my fast-paced job as a features writer/editor for local publications including The Orange County Register, Los Angeles Times and Orange Coast magazine. But as I began to age, it was taking a bigger and bigger chunk out



PHOTO BY MARK RABINOWITZ

Following your bliss is part of finding fulfillment after working years are done. Chocolate is definitely the answer for some, as this woman's T-shirt says at the Reform Temple of Laguna Woods' Death by Chocolate extravaganza Wednesday, Nov. 8, at Clubhouse 1.

of me.

I hung in as long as I could, trying to keep up the relentless pace. Then I started having health issues: I was trying to do my long run after skipping it for weeks and I threw my back out. I struggled on for a few years without taking a month for it to heal as I had in the past. Now that pain was chronic and I was in my 60s. Retirement loomed.

Still, the thought frightened me.

What would I do with myself when I was off deadline once and for all? It's been an interesting journey, but with time for self reflection I've learned seven important lessons on what makes for a happy retirement.

Finances first

Setting our finances straight was Lesson No.

1: Less can be more if it leads to delight.

The biggest money issue was real estate. I loved Southern California and had vowed I would never move back to Texas. But how could I afford to retire here?

My husband also is a writer, and even before the pandemic we considered downsizing. We continually feared that the mortgage on our big comfy

house eight blocks from the Huntington Beach Pier would crush us if I lost my job.

We wanted to Marie Kondo our lives, play it safe. The pandemic hit and we called our realtor to ask if we should wait. She didn't mince words: "If you can get out quickly, I can stage it and sell it fast."

We had an estate sale. Listed and sold within about six weeks.

We'd gotten our price but the problem in this luxury market is that we would have to spend it all to buy another place. Unless — and it was a big unless — we could live in an affordable 55+ community.

We decided to try it on for size. We found a charming rental in Laguna Woods that reminded us of our beach house.

The tree-filled neighborhood with green lawns was elysian. There will never be another community built just like it because land is worth too much now in Southern California.

Joining the village people

We liked Laguna Woods so much we decided to buy. It turned out to be a huge relief. So much pressure was off our shoulders.

So, there we were in our new neighborhood, or

should I say village? Modest condos. Wrinkled residents with tiny dogs. Some of my newspaper pals were collapsing with laughter. "Anne, why are you living in old lady land?"

Even my sister asked a couple of times. How do you feel living among all these oldsters? I answered with a question: Who wouldn't want to be in a community where all around you were seniors enjoying their longevity? It was an inspiration that my neighbors were living independently, aging with grace, strength and dignity.

Honestly, some of them had a lot more mobility than I did. The longer I lived there the more I understood. There were five pools. I had more time to go swimming and luxuriate in a huge hot tub. Hospitals and doctors were all around us. I could see my nearby physical therapist weekly, so there was less pain and more nights of restful sleep.

I started to get more health conscious and dumped calorie counting for the Dash Diet. Pounds were shaving off, verrrrry slowly. Feeling physically better was the ultimate mood booster, and that was Lesson No. 2: Keep your spirits up and your body will follow.

I watch what I eat, but my diet isn't draconian.

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Retire

FROM PAGE 18

When I interviewed celebrity chef Ina Garten, she told me a healthy diet is not the only key to longevity.

In one of her books, she wrote that she and her husband know a physician, a geriatrics specialist, who spoke to them about life expectancy. “Loneliness is an epidemic in this country, and may be a more important predictor of longevity than diet and exercise,” she wrote.

Creative fulfillment

It took about a year for the back to begin feeling better. During that time, I was doing a lot of thinking about returning to all the pursuits I loved, especially writing and music. Throughout my career I had thought about penning a book, played around with a few nonfiction ideas and also took courses in fiction writing, but nothing had ever taken off.

As I got closer to leaving my job, I started reading more. I bought a copy of “The Middle Passage” by James Hollis and the biggest takeaway was that my happiness was up to me; that was Lesson No. 3.

Hollis explains that we break from counting on our parents to make us happy and look to our soulmate to provide that joy; but that isn’t the path toward true contentment.

“It is a cruel self-deception to believe in the magical other,” Hollis writes. “When one has the courage to turn within, one has the opportunity to open to those neglected parts of one’s own personality. If one lifts off of the partner the imperative for incarnating life’s meaning, then one is called to the activation of one’s own potential.”

Would I have the courage to return to my favorite forms of fulfillment and

face them like an adult? We had bought a dazzling new grand piano with some of the money we made from the sale of our house. But realistically, I gave up my dream of becoming a concert pianist many years ago, and now, with my back problems, I couldn’t practice six hours a day like I did in undergrad.

Still, I started playing again and my technique returned almost fully. Playing solos gave me an incredible sense of power as I was reminded how hard I had worked for years to produce a rich, bravura sound and how much I loved music. Who needs Spotify when you can channel Bach, Bartók, Mozart and Chopin with your own two hands?

Facing myself as a writer was a lot harder. Six months went by without missing writing at all. When I started to think about tapping out a book idea or a story, I would look at my desk and feel rage directed at my chair. That’s what caused all my pain: long hours of sitting. For a year, I was stuck.

I had horrific anxiety, convinced that anything I wrote would be awful and that any time spent sitting would trigger intense back pain.

There were tears. Nightmares. Psychic agony.

But one afternoon I remembered a dream I had shortly after my father died. He was a true Renaissance man: a math teacher, realtor, mechanic, a ball turret gunner who fought in World War II.

As a teen, he was a laborer and one of the strongest men I’d ever known.

In the dream, I saw his powerful hands — he boxed and had won a Golden Gloves award — and his palms were turned up, like the logo in the Allstate insurance ad. His voice simply said, “Begin it.”

Encouraged by the spirit of my dad, I decided to take baby steps.

Project chocolate

I thought of Anne Lamott, the patron saint of procrastinators, author of “Bird by Bird.” She always advises that if you feel stuck, start moving. “Don’t look at your feet to see if you are doing it right. Just dance,” she writes.

I riffed off her wisdom with Lesson No. 4: If you want to stop procrastinating, start putting yourself out there.

At first that lesson was pretty tough. I found myself avoiding some of my younger friends who weren’t retired because next to them I suddenly felt irrelevant. But as I made even a minuscule amount of progress, my courage grew. I started to plan more social activities and I took that lesson headfirst into my book project.

My big idea? A directory of chocolatiers in California. Would I have the nerve to meet with one of the field’s leading authors in the industry? While I was dragging my feet, I got a phone call from a former colleague who told me our friend’s daughter, in her early 20s, had died in her sleep.

The tragedy shot through our circle of girlfriends like a lightning bolt. We gathered around her and did everything we could to help her pull together a memorial. Meanwhile, the drumbeat of another life lesson has resonated in the background ever since: death can come to any of us at any hour.

Lesson No. 5: Don’t waste time second guessing yourself or thinking you’re too old to do something. Do what you want now or forever have regrets. I stopped saying I wasn’t ready to meet with the chocolate guru.

I was going to be in Vancouver, Canada, where she lived, so I reached out with an email to arrange a meeting. She responded! We spoke for hours in person

and she set me on a fascinating path. She told me not to put anyone in the book unless their product was the best. Since chocolate isn’t rated like wine or coffee, we agreed; I’d have to do all the tasting myself. Poor me! She recommended books on flavor. I’m studying vigorously and I’m certain loads of family and friends will volunteer to help with my “research.”

Bucket list anxiety

As for my old line of work, I don’t have the strength or interest to go back into the daily grind. I am freelancing, just to keep my hand in and to make sure the writing skills stay sharp. I’ve also begun my best hobby novel ever. It might never be published, but at this point, success to me is never fearing the blank page.

Yet, with all these Wonder Woman-sized missions of self-fulfillment on the go,

there’s still more to do. For the first time I’ve got a little family around me. My niece and her sister have moved to Orange County. They fell in love with this place as kids, during summer vacations at my beach house. I like spending time with them and my great nephew, usually at my house because I love to cook and entertain.

My friends keep asking me if I’m traveling. “Do it before you’re 70!” they say. Up until now I didn’t think that I would be well enough, but I’m getting more fit and I’m hopeful. What better way to work on those European languages I studied but never mastered in grad school?

There are so many bucket list challenges it threatens to create its own anxiety, but for now I’m keeping that on the back burner: Lesson No. 6: You’ve stopped working, so be done with stress.

Other little lessons still creep up. Like the words of a former therapist who always said, “Give yourself permission to suck at something!” It’s a witty way of describing Lesson No. 7: Try new activities to see if they spark joy. Like a ukulele class I took at a resort while vacationing in Carlsbad. So, each day is its own little adventure. Or not, because I can always sleep late and spend all day at the beach. There’s no schedule and no guilt when you’re off the clock. But if I stick to my retirement life lessons, I find it a lot easier to know what to do with myself each day.

I’m happy leaving work behind and finding the world so full of wonderful things. My neighbors keep reminding me that I could join one of the 200 clubs offered in Laguna Woods. Clubs?! Whuuuut? I don’t have TIME for that right now.



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CALENDAR OF ACTIVITIES, TRIPS AND EVENTS

To have an event included in the Vitality calendar, email the name of the event, the time, date, address, cost (if applicable) and contact information to jgray@medianewsgroup.com.

FEBRUARY

Feb. 8-10: Contract Bridge Tournament: Southeast Michigan Bridge Association Valentine Sectional, Feb. 8-10, at 10 a.m. each day. Located at The Michigan Bridge Connection, 26776 W 12 Mile Rd, Southfield. Cost: \$12 per person per session. For more information, visit tournaments.acbl.org/schedule.php?sanction=2402317

Feb. 12: Community Conversation with Representative Kimberly Edwards, at the Roseville Public Library, 29777 Gratiot Ave, Roseville, Monday, Feb. 12 at 6 p.m. No registration required. For more information, call 586-445-5407 or email rsvlibraryservice@roseville-mi.gov

Feb. 12: Lunch Bunch on Monday, Feb. 12 Depart at 11:45 a.m. at the Clawson Recreation and Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court. Enjoy lunch with friends at Asya Middle Eastern restaurant in Madison Heights! 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

Feb. 13: Chat & Learn with Oakland County Sheriff on Tuesday, Feb. 13 at 1 p.m., at the Clawson Recreation and Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court. Sheriff Bouchard will discuss Drones, Technology in Law Enforcement and Senior Scams. Sign up for this FREE event. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or visit cityofclawson.com

Feb. 14: Birthday Lunch on Wednesday, Feb. at noon, at

the Clawson Recreation and Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court. 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

Feb. 14: Valentine's Day Luncheon on Wednesday, Feb. 14 at noon, at the Clawson Recreation and Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court. Cost is \$5. Celebrate Valentine's Day with a delicious lunch and some musical entertainment. You are welcome to attend for the great entertainment even without purchasing a lunch ticket. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or visit cityofclawson.com

Feb. 14: Valentine Bingo on Wednesday, Feb. 14 at 1 p.m. at the Clawson Recreation and Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court. Join us for bingo. Come early for lunch and stay to play. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or visit cityofclawson.com

Feb. 15: Mystery Book Club: "The Verifiers" by Jane Pek, At the Roseville Public Library, 29777 Gratiot Ave, Roseville, Thursday, Feb. 15 at 6:30 p.m. No registration required. Calling all sleuths. Get together with other mystery readers as we discuss crime novels every third Thursday of the month. For more information, call 586-445-5407 or email rsvlibraryservice@roseville-mi.gov

Feb. 17: Valentine theme card party: pinochle, euchre, dominoes or other games from 1-3:30 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 17. Come alone or with a group. Sponsored by the Daughters of Isabella, Queen of the Skies, Circle 683, at St. Thecla Catholic Church Activity Center, 20762 So. Nunneley Road, Clinton Township. Lunch, dessert, raffles, door, & table prizes. Donation \$9. Tickets available at the door. For more information, call 586-791-6177 or 586-791-

9012.

Feb. 20: Virtual Chat & Learn on Tuesday, February 20th at 1 p.m., at the Clawson Recreation and Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court. Staff with the MI Assistive Tech Program discusses how assistive devices promote independence as we age. Attend virtually at home or with us at the senior center. Call Gina or Lisa to learn more. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or visit cityofclawson.com

Feb. 21: Planning Your State Park Camping Adventure with Holly Vaughn of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, at the Roseville Public Library, 29777 Gratiot Ave, Roseville, Wednesday, Feb. 21 at 6 p.m. Registration required. Have you always wanted to go camping, but never knew where to start? Come to this fun, interactive presentation where we'll talk about what to pack, activities to enjoy while camping, how to reserve a campsite and the best state parks in Michigan. You don't have to travel far to have a wonderful camping adventure with your family or friends. For more information, call 586-445-5407 or email rsvlibraryservice@roseville-mi.gov

Feb. 22: Afternoon Movie on Thursday, Feb. 22 at 12:45 p.m. at the Clawson Recreation and Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court. Join us to watch the jazz sensation, 'Ma Rainey's Black Bottom.' Free movie and popcorn. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or visit cityofclawson.com

Feb. 22: The Purple Door Tearoom on Thursday Feb. 22, sponsored by the Clawson Recreation and Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court. Depart at 10:45 a.m. Cost \$4. Choose your lunch option (not included in cost, range, \$15-\$20) when you sign up for this fun trip with friends. For more informa-

tion, call 248-589-0334 or visit cityofclawson.com

Feb. 26: Deal Me In!: Cribbage, at the Roseville Public Library, 29777 Gratiot Ave, Roseville, Monday, Feb. 26 at 6 p.m. Registration required. Players of all skill levels are welcome to a social night of Cribbage. We provide the cards and boards, you provide the fun. Need a refresher or want to learn the game? Drop in between 4-6 p.m. and our presenter will be available for instruction before the social play begins. For more information, call 586-445-5407 or email rsvlibraryservice@roseville-mi.gov

Feb. 27: Self Defense for Women, held at Middle School South Cafeteria, 34641 Jefferson Ave, Harrison Twp, Tuesday, Feb. 27, 6:30—8:30 p.m. Cost is \$40. Register online at Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com or calling L'Anse Creuse Community Education at 586-783-6330.

Feb. 28: Meadow Brook Theatre 'Native Gardens,' on Wednesday, April 3 & lunch at Kruse & Muer. Depart at 10:45 a.m. Cost \$70, includes lunch. Reserve by Feb. 28. Sign up at the front desk. Sponsored by the Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, Clawson. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or email lball@cityofclawson.com

Feb. 28: Meadow Brook Theatre 'Native Gardens,' on Wednesday, April 3 & lunch at Kruse & Muer. Sponsored by the Clawson Recreation and Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court. Depart at 10:45 a.m. Cost \$70, includes lunch. Reserve by Feb. 28. Sign up at the front desk. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or visit cityofclawson.com

Feb. 29: Tarot Cards, at the Roseville Public Library, 29777 Gratiot Ave, Roseville, Tuesday, Feb. 29 at 6 p.m. No registration required. Always wonder what Tarot Cards are all about? Join us

and find out the history and what different readings are with Joshua Wilde. For more information, call 586-445-5407 or email rsvlibraryservice@roseville-mi.gov

Feb. 29: Casino Trip Hollywood on Thursday, Feb. 29, sponsored by the Clawson Recreation and Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court. 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

MARCH

March: Somerset Mall Walking on the 1st & 3rd Wednesday of the month in March. Depart at 9:45 a.m. with friends to enjoy a scenic and safe way to support your physical & mental well-being. Cost \$3. Sponsored by the Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, Clawson. Sign up at the front desk. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or email lball@cityofclawson.com

March 4: State Representative Visit on Monday, March 4, at 5 p.m. State Rep. Sharon MacDonell visits the center for a conversation with the community. Join us to discuss the issues most important to you at this all age event. Sponsored by the Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, Clawson. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or email lball@cityofclawson.com

March 5: Crafting with Chrissy on Tuesday, March 5 at 11 a.m.. Sign up for this FREE event. Sponsored by the Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, Clawson. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or email lball@cityofclawson.com

March 6: Lunch & Learn with Oak Street Health on Thursday, March 6 at 11:45 a.m. Join us for lunch sponsored by Oak Street Health

as they discuss their services that specialize in caring for older adults like you. You must attend the entire presentation to receive a FREE lunch ticket. Sign-up required. Sponsored by the Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, Clawson. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or email lball@cityofclawson.com

March 7: March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. On Thursday, March 7 at 1 p.m., Oakland County Health discusses prevention and early detection of colorectal cancer. Stool-based colorectal cancer screening FIT kits will be distributed free to eligible participants for at home use. Sign up required. Sponsored by the Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, Clawson. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or email lball@cityofclawson.com

March 8: Coffee & Donuts at the DSO — Red Carpet Film Scores, Bus departs from Walmart, 45400 Marketplace, Clinton Twp at 9:15 a.m., Friday, March 8. Cost is \$65 Register online at Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com or calling L'Anse Creuse Community Education at 586-783-6330.

March 10: Mystery Trip?!?! Of Course, since it is a Mystery, we can't say too much. We can tell you that lunch will be at an historic, waterside eatery that has a lovely interior and after lunch, we're off to one of Metro Detroit's finest venues for a performance by an Emmy Award-winning professional comedienne that, most likely, will stir up fond memories, and have you laughing too. Bus departs from JPAC Parking lot, 24600 F V Pankow, Clinton Twp at 11:45 a.m., Sunday, March 10. Cost is \$125 Register online at Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com or calling L'Anse Creuse Community Education at 586-783-6330.

March 11: Lunch Bunch on

Monday, March 11. Depart at 11:45 a.m. to enjoy lunch with friends at Kruse & Muer in Royal Oak. Cost \$4. Take our bus or drive yourself (if you drive yourself, still sign up). Attendees are responsible for their meal. Sponsored by the Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, Clawson. Sign up at the front desk. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or email lball@cityofclawson.com

March 12: Mocktail Anyone? On Tuesday, March 12 at 1 p.m. join Chrissy with the ACHC for a discussion on safe alcohol consumption for older adults. Participants will learn how to make mocktail drinks at this FREE event. Sponsored by the Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, Clawson. Sign up required. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or email lball@cityofclawson.com

March 13: Birthday Lunch on Wednesday, March 13 at

noon at the Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, Clawson. Dine-in only. Sign up to get your birthday card & ticket. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or email lball@cityofclawson.com

March 14: St. Patrick's Day Luncheon on Thursday, March 14 at noon at the Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, Clawson. Cost is \$6. Enjoy this delicious meal of corned beef and cabbage. Tickets will go on sale Wednesday, Feb. 14 and be sold until Thursday, March 7. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or email lball@cityofclawson.com

March 13: Royal Oak Musicale on Tuesday, March 19th. Depart 12:30 p.m. Cost \$3. Enjoy sweet treats and music from local musicians. Sponsored by the Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, Clawson. Sign up at the front desk. For more information, call 248-

589-0334 or email lball@cityofclawson.com

March 16: To Kill a Mockingbird and lunch at the Grand Trunk Pub, Bus departs from Walmart, 45400 Marketplace, Clinton Twp at 10:45 a.m., Saturday, March 16. Cost is \$145 Register online at Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com or calling L'Anse Creuse Community Education at 586-783-6330.

March 20: Michigan Legal Help presents on Thursday, March 20 at 1 p.m. at the Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, Clawson. Join Kim Cramer with Michigan Legal Help after lunch in the Senior Dining Room to learn how to use their website to create legal documents like wills and powers of attorney. This informative FREE event will also discuss NEW resources added in 2024 to find low-cost to no-cost legal assistance. All ages are welcome. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or email lball@cityofclawson.com

com

March 21: Afternoon Movie to honor Women's History Month. On Thursday, March 21 at 12:45 p.m. at the Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, Clawson. Join us to watch 'Whale Rider.' A young girl challenges a thousand years of tradition to become the next leader of her tribe. Free movie and popcorn. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or email lball@cityofclawson.com

March 28: Easter Luncheon on Thursday, March 28 at noon at the Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, Clawson. Cost is \$6. Join us for a fun-filled afternoon of good food, good friends and good fun! Tickets will go on sale March 14 and will be sold until Thursday, March 22 or until we sell out. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or email lball@cityofclawson.com

March 28: Easter Bingo on Thursday, March 28 at 1

p.m. at the Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, Clawson. If you love bingo, hop on over to the Clawson Senior Center for a fun afternoon! Don't forget to purchase your Easter lunch ticket and make a day of it. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or email lball@cityofclawson.com

March 28: Casino Trip MGM on Thursday, March 28. Depart at 10 a.m. Cost is \$12. Please sign up early for this trip, as we may cancel if participation is low. Sponsored by the Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, Clawson. Sign up at the front desk. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or email lball@cityofclawson.com

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 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.

APRIL

April 11: Shelby Gardeners Club, "Let's Bee Friends" with Kerry Wysocki at 1 p.m. Come meet an apiarist raising bees in the burbs! Our beekeeper will bring items for sale from her hive and garden at the Burgess-Shadbush Nature Center 4101 River Bends Drive, Shelby Twp. Space at Shadbush Nature Center is limited to the first 40 guests. A \$5 fee is appreciated to help support our community programs. For further information, contact Ivy Schwartz at 586-873-3782, or ShelbyTwpGardenClub@gmail.com or Shelbytwp.org/communityserviceorganizations/shelbygardenersclub.

April 26: Coffee & Donuts

CALENDAR » PAGE 24

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Calendar

FROM PAGE 23

at the DSO — Country Hits, Bus departs from Walmart, 45400 Marketplace, Clinton Twp at 9:15 a.m., Tuesday, April 26, Cost is \$65 Register online at Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com or calling L'Anse Creuse Community Education at 586-783-6330

MAY

May 8: Route 66 at Meadowbrook Theatre — Bus departs from Walmart, 45400 Marketplace, Clinton Twp at 11 a.m., Wednesday, May 8. Cost is \$115 Register online at Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com or calling L'Anse Creuse Community Education at 586-783-6330

MONTHLY EVENTS

▪ **Current Events Club:** meets the 1st Tuesday of each month at 1 p.m. at the Clawson Recreation and Senior Center, 509 Fisher

Court. Let's meet up to discuss the latest topics and ask questions in a friendly environment. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or visit cityofclawson.com

▪ **Fitness 20/20/20:** Monday and Wednesdays, 5:30-6:30 p.m. 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.

▪ **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 cityofclawson.com

▪ **Socrates Club:** Meets the 3rd Tuesday of each month

at 5 p.m. at the Clawson Recreation and Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court. Meetup to discuss current events in a relaxed, informal setting. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or visit cityofclawson.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 cityofclawson.com

▪ **Solo-Seniors Group:** meets the 2nd Thursday of each month at 1 p.m. at the Clawson Recreation and Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court. Meet and mingle with other seniors in this fun social group. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or visit cityofclawson.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 cityofclawson.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 per-

son 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 cityofclawson.com

▪ **Chair Yoga:** at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesdays & Thursdays with Melissa or 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 cityofclawson.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 cityofclawson.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 cityofclawson.com

▪ **Confident Communicators Club:** Meets monthly for people who seek improving public speaking skills and leadership confidence. This supportive Toastmasters group meets online the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month from 8-9:30 a.m. Many of our members have gain skills needed to become a better salesperson, grow their business, get promoted, and engage students. Register for any of our meetings to get the Zoom Link — <https://confident-communicators-club-meeting.eventbrite.com>. Contact our VP Membership to get more information vpm-1196053@toastmastersclubs.org



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Name(s) of Pets: _____

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*Any photos received after photo page is full will be held and used in future issues.

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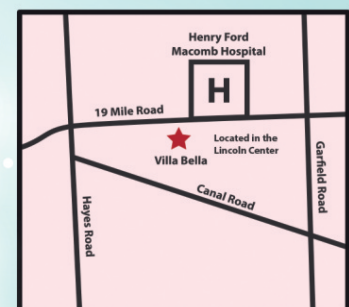
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Poetry Page 1

Where are you?

I need you?

Save me from this insanity I want you, I live you, I breath you.

I fall asleep, dream and awake you all at the same time.

Why won't you give me a chance to love you.

I promise I could really love you.

Drs say I may have to live without ever knowing you.

I feel cursed, I feel like I have no worth.

I'm a woman, I'm entitled to you right?

What am I doing wrong?

I plan my day with you in mind and you aren't even here.

Don't you want to let me love you?

I'm so happy, but yet I'm so empty without you.

Tears fall as I write. Why all of the emotion, when I haven't even held you?

I got a visit today, no knock or call. Just a cramp or two.

God, how I wish it was you (instead).

By Faith Janet Coleman of Detroit, MI

Submitted by Faith's mother, Clothildes Tate of Harrison Twp., 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 March 14, 2024.

Poems due by February 8, 2024.

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

WATCH THE RIVER

Flowing with the water of the river,
 As I watch, my mind sails to unknown places.
 Mind flowing into peace,
 Soul pauses into the stillness of my surroundings.
 Eyes seeing beyond understanding,
 Heart feeling and seeking moments of beauty.
 Seeing the smiling faces of people fishing,
 Sharing of joy toward one another.
 Watching today pass and tomorrow becoming...
 Feeling no sorrow.
 What a place to be in this time and space,
 Where there is peace and grace.

Alethea Monk Howard of Detroit, MI

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Poems due by: February 28, 2024.

THE FIRST SNOW, 2023

Toward the end of the first month
 On a Sunday morn,
 The trees full of branches,
 Took on their winter chances
 And wore a covering of white.
 Every little twig, every arm of safety,
 Once dark and drear, now gleaming white.
 On a table prepared for kings,
 The birds hovered and tried
 To pick on a breakfast of seed and corn.
 They fluttered and flew,
 Forth and back,
 Dancing in unison on a musical track.
 All around, the scenery was delightful
 Nature providing a view so insightful.
 Peek out every window,
 Pull up the shades.
 The dawn of winter's artwork,
 Late but great,
 Now on canvas is laid.

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

FIRST & LAST NAME: _____ PHONE NUMBER: _____

ADDRESS: _____

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

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**NEW
 ADDRESS**

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



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