

Vitality

Your monthly guide to aging with grace, purpose and well-being

December 2025

'I remember'

Memory box reignites past joy

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Group works to make
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101-year-old veteran has
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VITALITY

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On the cover

From all the staff on Wrexham Critical Care, We are sending you this heart as you cannot be with your loved one at this difficult time. A heart has also been given to your loved one.

As you loved one at the end, we would like to reassure you that they were not alone as a member of our team was with them.

The centre of this heart we are sending you, is with your loved one.

Respectfully,
Critical Care Bereavement Support Team

Staff at Wrexham Maelor Hospital's intensive care unit made memory boxes like this one for relatives of loved ones who died on the ward. Each box was customized and contained personal items such as a handprint and a lock of hair. **CHRISTOPHER FURLONG — GETTY IMAGES**

MONEY & SECURITY

Real estate: How clean is 'broom-clean'?



Steve Meyers
COLUMNIST

Q: We are buying a condo. Somewhere in the offer, it said the sellers have to leave the property "broom-clean." What exactly is that, and can they leave any of their stuff behind?

A: The purchase agreement that I use has the following language: "Seller agrees to leave property broom-clean and free of debris and personal property." Sellers are expected to remove all personal property from the home and leave nothing behind unless there is an agreement to do otherwise. For instance, the appliances are usually included in the sale in the purchase agreement, and sometimes items such as pool tables or bar stools are also included. It's also normal for the sellers to leave behind leftover paint in case you need to do a touch-up, and any leftover flooring material or tile. They should not be leaving unwanted furniture, junk, trash, etc. The implied intent of broom-clean is for the seller(s) to remove all personal property that is not included in the sale, and at a minimum, sweep or vacuum the floors to remove debris. It is not a deep cleaning.

HOME MAINTENANCE TIP

When's the last time you inspected your gutter downspout extensions? Many homes

I look at either have no gutter downspout extensions or they have fallen off. The purpose of gutters and downspout extensions is to get the water away from the foundation. Basements and crawl spaces are basically holes in the ground that water wants to fill up, just like the Great Lakes, but on a much smaller scale (slab foundations can collect water under the slab). At a bare minimum, you want to have extensions that are at least 3 feet to 4 feet in length. Many municipalities have codes that require 6-foot extensions. Buried downspout extensions with pop-ups are even better to get the water as far as possible from the foundation. I cannot tell you how many times I have heard from homeowners that they had a leak in their basement and either reconnected a downspout extension or added one to remedy the leak. Foundations are already under a lot of stress from the soil, so why add more stress with additional water trying to penetrate? For homes with a sump pump, why make it work harder? Also, before the snow flies, it's a good idea to make sure the gutters and downspouts are not filled with leaves. If you cannot or should not be using a ladder, then call a handyman to take care of it. In the future, I will be covering negative grading and its effect on foundations.

Steve Meyers is a real estate agent/ Realtor at Realty Executives Home Towne in Shelby Township. He can be contacted with questions at 586-997-5480 or emailed at Steve@MeyersRealtor.com. You can also visit his website at AnswersToRealEstateQuestions.com.

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, the average sales price was up by almost 8% and Oakland County's was up by more than 4%. Macomb County's on-market inventory was up by almost 1% and Oakland County's was up by 6%. Macomb County's average days on market was 31 days and Oakland County's was 29 days. Closed sales in Macomb County were up by less than 1% and Oakland County's were down by more than 1%. (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's inventory was at 2.8 months of supply. Both Macomb and Oakland counties' inventories were at 2.5 months of supply. By definition, it's still not close to a buyer's market.

*Peace on Earth
good will
towards all*

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

Memory box is a heartfelt gift that reignites past

The notes help you heal your own spirit along with brightening someone else's day

By Linda Spangle
NEXT AVENUE

What kind of gift can you give someone who doesn't need or want anything?

My family members faced this when my mother was approaching her 80th birthday. Of course, she didn't need a thing, and she certainly didn't want more useless decorative objects.

We wanted to get her a practical gift that she would love, but that wouldn't take up much space in her tiny apartment.

Inspired by an idea from a magazine, we decided to create a memory box as a gift for her. First, we found a wooden box with a hinged lid and glued a small sign that said "Mom's Memory Box" on top.

Then we asked each of her kids, their spouses and the grandkids to write down special things they remembered about my mom. The notes could be any length, but they all needed to begin with the words, "I remember."

SIMPLE OR ELABORATE

Everyone liked the idea, and they all started creating their memory notes on colored pieces of paper. Then they mailed or hand-delivered the notes to one of my sisters. The notes came in a variety of sizes, but each message described a single memory of my mom and told why it was important.

A few were simple, such as "I remember you always comforting me when I skinned my knee as a kid." Others were more elaborate: "I remember how you pushed me to



The author's mother, Velma. PHOTO COURTESY OF LINDA SPANGLE

finish my college degree when I was ready to drop out of school."

Here are a few quite specific ones:

- "I remember that when we had fried chicken, you always ate the back and neck and gave us the better pieces."

- "I remember how on our birthdays, you would bake us our favorite kind of cake and let us lick the beaters and the bowl."

- "I remember that you didn't criticize Dad when he bought ten tubes of toothpaste because they were on sale."

- "I remember you sewing a dress for me that perfectly matched one

I had picked out in a department store catalog."

- "I remember you playing lots of games with us on snow days when we didn't have school."

After the entire family worked on this for a couple of weeks, we gathered all of the notes and put them into the memory box. After we counted them, we realized we had collected more than 150 notes.

We gift-wrapped the box and gave it to Mom at her birthday celebration. As we sat around a large table in a motel party room, Mom opened the box and started taking out the pieces of paper. She couldn't believe all the notes, and she began

When my mom died, we discovered that she had taken every one of the memory box notes and glued them on the pages of a three-ring notebook. After her funeral, my family members sat and read those notes again, and we were amazed at how they helped us deal with our grief. In that room, it seemed that my mom's spirit was holding and comforting each one of us in our sadness. What a gift!

reading them out loud one at a time. I still remember how she cried as she read through the entire box of notes. Of course, many of us cried along with her.

That birthday became one of the most meaningful times I can remember with my mom and our family members. I know that Mom kept that box and she read those notes many times until her death five years later.

THE GIFT THAT KEEPS GIVING

When my mom died, we discovered that she had taken every one of the memory box notes and glued them on the pages of a three-ring notebook. After her funeral, my family members sat and read those notes again, and we were amazed at how they helped us deal with our grief. In that room, it seemed that my mom's spirit was holding and comforting each one of us in our sadness. What a gift!

Memory box messages are typically directed toward one person, as they were with my mom. But a few years ago, I decided to create a virtual memory box by writing

notes to many people who had touched my life in some way.

Here are a few things I put into my virtual memory box:

- Barbara, my editor and friend: "I remember all the times when your editing improved my writing and how you helped me become a great writer."

- Lavonne, my sister and friend: "I remember how much you helped me heal after the loss of pregnancies, as well as during my recovery after breast cancer surgery. You were such a gift to me during those painful and challenging times."

- Kathy, Colorado neighbor and friend: "I remember how you would drop whatever you were doing to go to Jack's Coffee Shop when I needed to talk."

- Mike, my husband: "I remember how during our 50-plus years of marriage, you've never forgotten my birthday or our anniversary."

- Readers of my books and articles: "I remember the joy I've felt every time one of you shared what you loved about my writing and how my work has helped you."

As I added notes to my memory

SOCIAL & WELL-BEING

Michigan nonprofit's goal is to help make caregiving less lonely

'Please reach out. We're here to help.'

By Susan Thwing
FOR MEDIANEWS GROUP

When financial adviser and former social worker Jim Speir noticed more and more of his clients were either older adults or members of the “sandwich generation,” two patterns emerged.

Many didn't know where to turn when health or housing needs changed, and too many were being taken advantage of by unvetted service providers.

“I saw a gap,” Speir said. “People needed trustworthy resources, and they needed a community to help them navigate the hard stuff.”

Some 19 years later, the Senior Caregiver & Resource Network has grown from that insight into a nonprofit backbone for aging services across Metro Detroit. It's part referral network, part continuing-education hub, and part fundraising engine that channels real dollars to urgent needs. Its impact is both practical and deeply human: helping families find respite care so a spouse can attend a funeral, connecting an out-of-state daughter to a reliable home-care agency for her mom, and installing grab bars and repairing steps before a preventable fall becomes a crisis.

SACRN's structure is simple and unusually intentional. The group meets on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month, from 8:30-10 a.m., at AgeWays in Farmington Hills. Every gathering is built around clarity and accountability. Members introduce themselves, the exact referrals that fit their services, and two members deliver 10-minute presentations that delve into their expertise, everything from legal changes affecting estate planning to updates on retirement policy.

“We're very structured and goal-oriented about what we're trying to accomplish in that hour and a half,” said Speir, SACRN's president.

Membership is vetted — references are checked and reputations are earned — and relationships are nurtured face-to-face.

That matters, said Lynn Breuer, senior director of community outreach and well-

ness at Jewish Family Service of Metropolitan Detroit and a 14-year SACRN member.

“What makes SACRN special is we all ‘stay in our lane’ and refer to each other's depth of expertise,” she said. “It takes a village to meet the complex needs of older adults with integrity. Because we sit in the same room twice a month, I know which home-care company will go above and beyond, and they know when a case needs JFS.”

Caregivers' needs, Breuer noted, are urgent and layered: overwhelm, isolation, too many appointments and medication changes — and not enough time, money or reliable information.

“Caregivers have the ‘too many's and the not enoughs,’” she said. SACRN's answer is coordinated, high-trust referrals to services families may not even know exist, often mixing free or low-cost resources with specialized, vetted providers.

SACRN is deliberately woven into the region's aging-services fabric.

Long-standing partners include the Alzheimer's Association and Wayne State University's Institute of Gerontology. The group also invests in the broader professional community, hosting free continuing-education programs on timely topics and bringing in outside speakers at quarterly planning meetings to keep members current. The COVID-19 years accelerated hybrid know-how, but the heart of the model remains in-person accountability.

Culture matters as much as mechanics.

“People tell me they'd belong even if they weren't getting referrals,” Speir said. “They care about the mission.”

That mission shows up in SACRN's finances, too. Annual dues — \$395, which are never increased — run the organization. All fundraising and donated dollars flow to the year's beneficiary. Nonprofits now join for free, a bylaws change adopted to broaden the safety net.

The giving has grown alongside the network.

“Our first fundraiser brought in \$250 for Holiday Meals on Wheels,” Speir said. “Last



James Speir, president of Senior Caregiver & Resource Network, founded the organization 19 years ago. It exists to aid older adults who didn't know where to turn for help or after being taken advantage of by unvetted service providers. **PHOTO COURTESY OF SENIOR CAREGIVER & RESOURCE NETWORK**

year, we wrote a \$27,000 check to the Healthy Black Elders Center at Wayne State's (Institute of Gerontology)."

This year, SACRN selected JFS's emergency assistance for older adults — flexible funds that stabilize households when no other resource exists. Breuer has seen those dollars keep people safe.

"Sometimes, there's no program to pay for grab bars or a small home repair," she said. "SACRN's support can stop a bad situation from becoming dangerous."

On Oct. 23, SACRN's community turned out for a rockin' evening at Club Venetian in Madison Heights, with dinner, dancing and Detroit's well-known cover band, Vavoom, raising money to help JFS provide that lifeline of emergency assistance to older adults.

For families, SACRN is also a front door. Individuals regularly reach out through the website or main phone line.

Speir often triages calls personally and matches people to the right member, who includes placement specialists, benefits navigators, dementia supports, home-care providers, financial planners, attorneys and more. One recent inquiry came from out of state.

Within hours, a local SACRN member had engaged the family and set services in motion.

Looking ahead, SACRN's goals are straightforward: expand membership to fill remaining gaps, grow awareness so more families find help earlier, and raise more dollars for urgent needs.

The network is especially seeking an older-adult-focused tax preparer, providers who can make home visits (think mobile hairstylists), and medical partners such as hospital or physician groups.

"When a crisis hits, those connections can smooth the way for a family," Breuer said.

If the work sounds personal, it

is. Speir founded SACRN before caregiving reached his own doorstep. Years later, his mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, and his sister needed support.

"You don't really understand the stress until you've lived it," he said. "Even with all the emotions, having trusted resources at my fingertips made a huge difference. My clients know SACRN is in my back pocket, and they call: 'Mom's in the wrong place; who can help?' There's always someone I can trust to pick up the phone."

For individuals or businesses that want to connect, whether you're a caregiver, an older adult or a professional who wants to serve this community, visit SACRN's website at sacrn.org to reach the team, learn about membership, and explore ways to support emergency assistance for older adults.

As Breuer puts it: "There are people who care about assisting you on your aging journey. Please reach out. We're here to help."



James Speir

"Even with all the emotions, having trusted resources at my fingertips made a huge difference. My clients know SACRN is in my back pocket, and they call: 'Mom's in the wrong place; who can help?' There's always someone I can trust to pick up the phone."

— JAMES SPEIR



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SOCIAL & WELL-BEING

Caregiver-focused webinars provide bridge to resources

By AgeWays

FORMERLY AREA AGENCY ON AGING 1-B

Family caregivers need all the help they can get. Tapping into resources that can provide an answer to a caregiving challenge — or that are readily available — isn't always possible.

Understanding that caregivers may be squeezed for time or overwhelmed by the options available to them, AgeWays Nonprofit Senior Services has launched a six-part Caregiver Community Connection webinar series that aims to make it easier to access trusted resources.

The first webinar in November, "It's alright to ask for help," featured an educational portion by CaringBridge, a nonprofit health platform that enables loved ones to support a person who is facing health challenges. It was followed by a panel discussion with three additional social service organizations — Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency (Grandparents Raising Grandchildren), Dementia-Friendly Saline and Senior Regional Collaborative's Changing the Care Conversation Coalition (advocacy and resources for caregivers).

REDUCING THE BURDEN ON CAREGIVERS

The series is intended "to help reduce the burden on caregivers," says nurse Taylor Clark, program specialist with wellness and caregiver services at AgeWays. The 90-minute webinars include an educational section, comments from panelists, and a live question-and-answer period. Questions may be submitted in advance of each webinar.

UPCOMING WEBINARS

January's webinar will address end-of-life preparation, a subject that many of us don't think about, but probably should. It takes place from 11 am to 12:30 pm Thursday, Jan. 8, via Zoom. A licensed advance planner from Borek Jennings

Funeral Home in Livingston County will offer advice on thinking about end-of-life practicalities. Panelists will include Shari Smith, AgeWays' outreach and partnership manager, who will speak briefly about the Medicare counseling offered by AgeWays, and a representative from Hospice of Michigan who will discuss what to expect at the end of life.

"We know that at the end of the day, there's an end of life for everybody. When you're grieving, it's not easy to think about the details of planning a funeral," Clark says.

The remaining webinars, in March, May, July, and September, will address having difficult conversations, benefiting from support groups, respite care, and the aging process.

The webinar recordings will be available at ageways.org and on AgeWays' YouTube channel.

To register for the webinar series, call 833-262-2200, email wellnessprograms@ageways.org or visit tinyurl.com/AgewaysWorkshops.

OTHER AVENUES FOR HELP

AgeWays' resource specialists can connect callers with resources that will support their caregiving journey. The information and assistance number is 800-852-7705 and is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays.

AgeWays' resource guide, Connect, (ageways.org/connect), features comprehensive, county-by-county listings to help readers find what they need as older adults, adults with disabilities, and family caregivers.

This content is provided by AgeWays Nonprofit Senior Services, 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.

Area Agency on Aging 1-B



Caregiver Community Connection Webinar Series

ARE YOU HELPING A LOVED ONE BY:

- Providing emotional support, companionship, or conversation?
- Helping with cleaning, cooking, laundry, or shopping?
- Watching for changes in mood or health?
- Driving them to appointments or errands?
- Assisting with personal care like bathing, dressing, or medications?

You are a caregiver — and you're not alone. Come for education, stay for connection, and leave with resources to support you every step of the way.

REGISTRATION REQUIRED

(833) 262-2200

WellnessPrograms@Ageways.org

tinyurl.com/AgewaysWorkshops

Can't join us live? Catch the replay at Ageways.org or on our YouTube channel.



SCHEDULE: 11 AM-12:30 PM

November 13th: It's Alright to Ask for Help
January 8th: Importance of Life Planning
March 12th: Having the Difficult Conversations
May 14th: Benefits of Using Support Systems
July 9th: What is Respite & What Counts
September 10th: What is Usual Aging

This workshop is made available in whole or part with funding from the Federal Older Americans Act and Michigan Department of Health and Human Services/ The Bureau of Aging, Community Living, and Supports through AgeWays Nonprofit Senior Services.

SOCIAL & WELL-BEING

Is a continuing care retirement community right for you?

By Amy Arnott
MORNINGSTAR

Deciding where to live later in life isn't an easy task.

Many seniors prefer to stay in their own homes, but may need help managing medical issues or day-to-day tasks. Others might move in with their adult children or family members.

One potential solution is a continuing care retirement community, or life plan community.

A CCRC is a community living facility where retirees can access a spectrum of care as they age — care levels typically include independent living, assisted living, nursing care, and memory care.

Most CCRCs also offer a range of amenities and activities, such as on-site fitness centers and groups for different hobbies.

There's evidence that people living in CCRCs enjoy better health outcomes and higher levels of social and emotional well-being. It can also be an attractive option for couples as they can continue living near each other even if one person eventually needs a higher level of care.

Moving to a CCRC requires a substantial financial commitment, and it carries the sobering possibility that it might be the last time you get to choose where you live.

Here are some key things to consider:

FEES AND LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

People entering a CCRC generally start in independent living, with their own living quarters.

In many cases, the cost of admission could be on par with buying a house in the same area. Based on data from US News & World Report, entrance fees average about \$400,000 but can range from \$100,000 to more than \$1 million. The hefty price tag doesn't mean



Jo Cartwright, 96, and Bernard Snyder, 98, relaxing together. The couple live in the same retirement community in Austin and got married on Nov. 1. **PHOTO COURTESY OF DONNA SNYDER**

you're buying the property you live in; instead, the money helps cover part of the costs you may incur while living there and may be partially refundable to your estate after death.

Residents also pay monthly fees, which averaged about \$4,200 for independent living as of the end of 2024.

Monthly fees, which often increase about 4% per year to cover inflation, generally cover housing, meals, housekeeping, maintenance, transportation, and

recreational activities. Depending on your contract, monthly fees may also cover certain healthcare costs.

THREE TYPES OF CCRC CONTRACTS

Type A contracts are the costliest option. They have the steepest entrance fees and the highest starting monthly fees, which generally cover comprehensive long-term-care services and remain the same (except for annual inflation increases) even if you need a higher level of care.

Type B contracts have lower upfront costs than Type A contracts, and lower monthly fees when you first move in. They provide the same access to housing and residential services as Type A contracts, but not the same level of access to health care services. If a resident needs a higher level of care, the monthly fee grows to cover the higher cost. In exchange for lower monthly fees at move-in, people in these contracts take the risk that their costs could significantly increase.

Type C contracts generally

have the lowest upfront costs and may not include any entrance fee. Instead, the monthly fee changes to reflect the market rate for the type of healthcare needed.

Monthly fees start lower when a resident first enters independent living, but can grow dramatically if they need higher-level care. As with Type B contracts, people in these contracts pay lower monthly fees when they move in, but may end up paying significantly more.

OTHER FACTORS TO CONSIDER WITH CONTRACTS

The upfront payments included in Type A and Type B contracts are often partially refundable after you leave the facility or die, though the refundable portion of the fee varies.

Taxes are another factor to consider.

For Type A and Type B contracts, part of the entrance fee may be eligible for a one-time tax deduction as a prepaid medical expense. A portion of the monthly fees may also be eligible for annual deductions if they're considered a prepaid medical expense. (In both cases, deductions are only allowed if the costs are more than 7.5% of adjusted gross income.) Facilities typically provide residents with specifics on the portion of fees that may be deductible each year.

FINDING THE RIGHT FIT

ACCRC can help seniors maintain a happy, healthy, and rewarding life. But it's imperative to make sure the facility is not only a good fit for your needs, but financially strong before signing a contract.

The National Continuing Care Residents Association (naccra.com) offers resources that include a Consumer Guide, a Handbook on CCRC Finance, and a Model Bill of Rights.

Amy Arnott is a portfolio strategist for Morningstar.

HEALTH & FITNESS

How older people are reaping brain benefits from new tech

By Paula Span
KFF HEALTH NEWS

It started with a high school typing course. Wanda Woods enrolled because her father advised that typing proficiency would lead to jobs. Sure enough, the federal Environmental Protection Agency hired her as an after-school worker while she was still a junior.

Her supervisor “sat me down and put me on a machine called a word processor,” Woods, now 67, recalled. “It was big and bulky and used magnetic cards to store information. I thought, ‘I kinda like this.’”

Decades later, she was still liking it. In 2012 — the first year that more than half of Americans 65 and older were internet users — she started a computer training business.

Now she is an instructor with Senior Planet in Denver, an AARP-supported effort to help older people learn and stay abreast of technology. Woods has no plans to retire. Staying involved with tech “keeps me in the know, too,” she said.

Some neuroscientists researching the effects of technology on older adults are inclined to agree. The first cohort of seniors to have contended — not always enthusiastically — with a digital society has reached the age when cognitive impairment becomes more common.

Given decades of alarms about technology’s threats to our brains and well-being — sometimes called “digital dementia” — one might expect to start seeing negative effects.

The opposite appears true. “Among the digital pioneer generation, use of everyday digital technology has been associated with reduced risk of cognitive impairment and dementia,” said Michael Scullin, a cognitive neuroscientist at Baylor University.

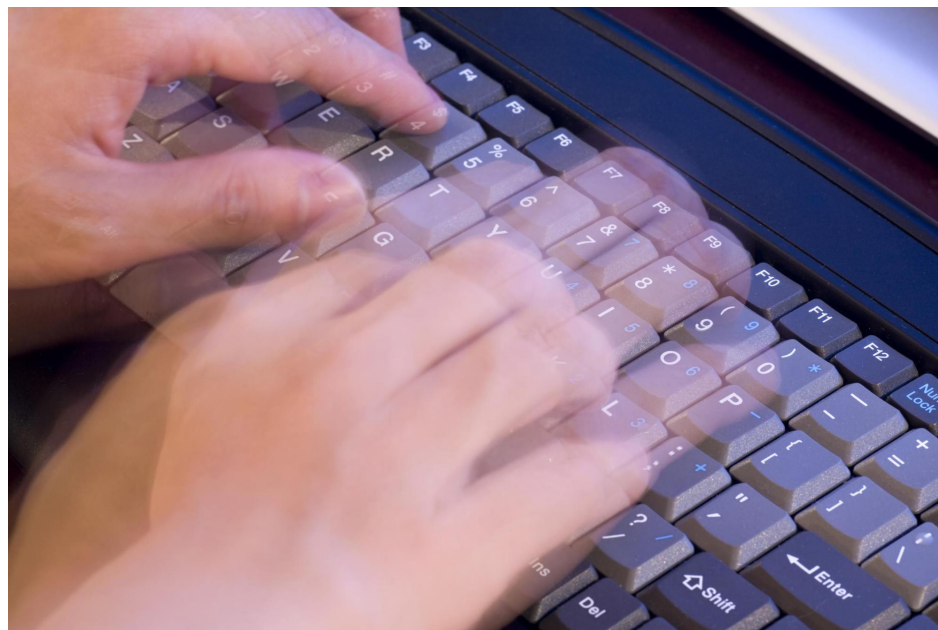
It’s almost akin to hearing from a nutritionist that bacon is good for you.

“It flips the script that technology is always bad,” said Murali Doraiswamy, director of the Neurocognitive Disorders Program at Duke University, who was not involved with the study. “It’s refreshing and provocative and poses a hypothesis that deserves further research.”

Scullin and Jared Benge, a neuropsychologist at the University of Texas at Austin, were co-authors of a recent analysis investigating the effects of technology use on people over 50 (average age: 69).

They found that those who used computers, smartphones, the internet, or a mix did better on cognitive tests, with lower rates of cognitive impairment or dementia diagnoses, than those who avoided technology or used it less often.

“Normally, you see a lot of variability across studies,” Scullin said. But in this analy-



Those who use computers, smartphones, the internet, or a mix do better on cognitive tests, with lower rates of cognitive impairment. **DREAMSTIME — TNS**

sis of 57 studies involving more than 411,000 seniors, published in *Nature Human Behavior*, almost 90% of the studies found that technology had a protective cognitive effect.

Much of the apprehension about technology and cognition arose from research on children, sometimes focused on adolescents, whose brains are still developing.

“There’s pretty compelling data that difficulties can emerge with attention or mental health or behavioral problems” when young people are overexposed to screens and digital devices, Scullin said.

Older adults’ brains are also malleable, but less so.

And those who began grappling with technology in midlife had already learned “foundational abilities and skills,” Scullin said.

Then, to participate in a swiftly evolving society, they had to learn a whole lot more.

Years of online brain-training experiments lasting a few weeks or months have produced varying results. Often, they improve a person’s ability to perform the task in question without enhancing other skills.

“I tend to be pretty skeptical” of their benefit, said Walter Boot, a psychologist at the Center on Aging and Behavioral Research at Weill Cornell Medicine. “Cognition is really hard to change.”

The new analysis, however, reflects “technology use in the wild,” he said, with adults “having to adapt to a rapidly changing technological environment” over several decades. He found the study’s conclusions “plausible.”

Analyses like this can’t determine causal-

ity. Does technology improve older people’s cognition, or do people with low cognitive ability avoid technology? Is tech adoption just a proxy for enough wealth to buy a laptop?

“We still don’t know if it’s chicken or egg,” Doraiswamy said.

Yet when Scullin and Benge accounted for health, education, socioeconomic status, and other demographic variables, they still found significantly higher cognitive ability among older digital technology users.

What might explain the apparent connection?

“These devices represent complex new challenges,” Scullin said. “If you don’t give up on them, if you push through the frustration, you’re engaging in the same challenges that studies have shown to be cognitively beneficial.”

Even handling the constant updates, the troubleshooting, and the sometimes maddening new operating systems might prove advantageous. “Having to relearn something is another positive mental challenge,” he said.

Still, digital technology may also protect brain health by fostering social connections, known to help stave off cognitive decline. Or its reminders and prompts could partially compensate for memory loss, as Scullin and Benge found in a smartphone study, while apps help preserve functional abilities like shopping and banking.

Numerous studies have shown that while the number of people with demen-

tia is increasing as the population ages, the proportion of older adults who develop dementia has been falling in the United States and several European countries.

Researchers have attributed the decline to a variety of factors, including reduced smoking, higher education levels, and better blood pressure treatments. Possibly, Doraiswamy said, engaging with technology has been part of the pattern.

Of course, digital technologies present risks, too. Online fraud and scams often target older adults, and while they are less apt to report fraud losses than younger people, the amounts they lose are much higher, according to the Federal Trade Commission. Disinformation poses its own hazards.

And as with users of any age, more is not necessarily better.

“If you’re bingeing Netflix 10 hours a day, you may lose social connections,” Doraiswamy pointed out. Technology, he noted, cannot “substitute for other brain-healthy activities” like exercising and eating sensibly.

An unanswered question: Will this supposed benefit extend to subsequent generations, digital natives more comfortable with the technology their grandparents often labored over? “The technology is not static — it still changes,” Boot said. “So maybe it’s not a one-time effect.”

Still, the change tech has wrought “follows a pattern,” he added. “A new technology gets introduced, and there’s a kind of panic.”

From television and video games to the latest and perhaps scariest development, artificial intelligence, “a lot of it is an overblown initial reaction,” he said. “Then, over time, we see it’s not so bad and may actually have benefits.”

Like most people her age, Woods grew up in an analog world of paper checks and paper maps.

But as she moved from one employer to another through the ’80s and ’90s, she progressed to IBM desktops and mastered Lotus 1-2-3 and Windows 3.1.

Along the way, her personal life turned digital, too: a home desktop when her sons needed one for school, a cellphone after she and her husband couldn’t summon help for a roadside flat, a smartwatch to track her steps.

These days, Woods pays bills and shops online, uses a digital calendar, and group-texts her relatives.

And she seems unafraid of AI, the most earthshaking new tech.

Last year, Woods turned to AI chatbots like Google Gemini and OpenAI’s ChatGPT to plan an RV excursion to South Carolina. Now, she’s using them to arrange a family cruise celebrating her 50th wedding anniversary.

WORK & PURPOSE

At 101, WWII veteran has become a songwriter

By Glenn Gamboa
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

In a life filled with milestones, Irving Locker celebrated a new, unexpected one last month: He became a published songwriter.

One day before his 101st birthday, “If Freedom Was Free” was released by Big Machine Label Group and CreatiVets, the Nashville-based nonprofit that helps veterans work through their traumas by building something new through the arts.

CreatiVets teamed Locker, a World War II veteran who landed at Utah Beach on D-Day, with Texas singer-songwriter Bart Crow and duo Johnny and Heidi

Bulford, who also sing on the track. The chorus — “If freedom was free, there wouldn’t be a mountain of metal and men under Normandy” — includes the message Locker has used in lectures from classrooms to the White House. Freedom, he says, is not free. People should be thankful for it and for those who make it possible.

“I have to talk about things like that,” he says. “I got nothing to gain. But people have to know and appreciate the fact that they’re living because of men who died. It comes from the heart, not the lips.”

Locker, who now lives in The Villages, Florida, said the chance to write a song was an “unbelievable” thrill,

one that he never dreamed possible. It means even more to him because music is such an important part of his life.

He said he and his wife of 77 years, Bernice, still go out dancing often — still doing the jitterbug and the cha-cha as they have for decades.

“You should see me on the floor even now,” said Locker, adding that he knows how lucky he is to be alive and active when so many other veterans are not.

“To be very honest with you, I was never conscious of God until the war,” he said. “But I came so close to dying that I learned how to thank God and use the simple phrase ‘But for the grace of God go I.’”



Irving Locker, a 101-year-old veteran of World War II, D-Day and the Battle of the Bulge, listens as Jesse Wayne Taylor, left, records a song based on Locker’s military experience on Wednesday, Sept. 9, 2025, in Nashville, Tenn. **MARK HUMPHREY — THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

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HEALTH & FITNESS

Nurse practitioners critical in treating older adults as ranks of geriatricians shrink

By Jariel Arvin
KFF HEALTH NEWS

On Fridays, Stephanie Johnson has a busy schedule, driving her navy-blue Jeep from one patient's home to the next, seeing eight in all. Pregnant with her second child, she schleps a backpack instead of a traditional black bag to carry a laptop and essential medical supplies — stethoscope, blood pressure cuff and pulse oximeter.

Forget a lunch break; she often eats a sandwich or some nuts as she heads to her next patient visit.

On a gloomy Friday, Johnson, a nurse practitioner who treats older adults, had a hospice consult with Ellen, a patient in her 90s in declining health. To protect Ellen's identity, KFF Health News is not using her last name.

"Hello. How are you feeling?" Johnson asked as she entered Ellen's bedroom and inquired about her pain. The blinds were drawn. Ellen was in a wheelchair, wearing a white sweater, gray sweatpants and fuzzy socks. A headband was tied around her white hair. As usual, the TV was playing loudly in the background.

"It's fine, except this cough I've had since junior high," Ellen said.

Ellen had been diagnosed with vascular dementia, peripheral vascular disease, and Type 2 diabetes. Last fall, doctors made the difficult decision to operate on her foot. Before the surgery, Ellen was always colorful, wearing purple, yellow, blue, pink and chunky necklaces. She enjoyed talking with the half dozen other residents at her adult family home. She had a hearty appetite that brought her to the breakfast table early. But lately, her enthusiasm for meals and socializing had waned.

Johnson got down to eye level with Ellen to examine her, assessing her joints and range of motion, checking her blood pressure, and listening to her heart and lungs.

Carefully, Johnson removed the bandage to examine Ellen's toes. Her lower legs were red, but cold



Stephanie Johnson, a geriatric nurse practitioner, checks her patient Ellen with a stethoscope during a hospice consult. **JARIEL ARVIN — KFF HEALTH NEWS/TNS**

to the touch, which indicated her condition wasn't improving. Ellen's two younger sisters had power of attorney for her and made it clear that, above all, they wanted her to be comfortable. Now, Johnson thought it was time to have that difficult conversation with them about Ellen's prognosis, recommending her for hospice.

"Our patient isn't just the older adult," Johnson said. "It's also often the family member or the person helping to manage them."

Nurse practitioners are having those conversations more and more as their patient base trends older. They are increasingly filling a gap that is expected to widen as the senior population explodes and the number of geriatricians declines. The Health Resources and Services Administration projects a 50%

increase in demand for geriatricians from 2018 to 2030, when the entire baby boom generation will be older than 65. By then, hundreds of geriatricians are expected to retire or leave the specialty, reducing their number to fewer than 7,600, with relatively few young doctors joining the field.

That means many older adults will be relying on other primary care physicians, who already can't keep up with demand, and nurse practitioners, whose ranks are booming. The number of nurse practitioners specializing in geriatrics has more than tripled since 2010, increasing the availability of care to the current population of seniors, a recent study in JAMA Network Open found.

According to a 2024 survey, of the roughly 431,000 licensed nurse practitioners, 15% are, like Johnson,

certified to treat older adults.

Johnson and her husband, Dustin, operate an NP-led private practice in Washington, a state where she can practice independently. She and her team, which includes five additional nurse practitioners, each try to see about 10 patients a day, visiting each one every five to six weeks. Visits typically last 30 minutes to an hour, depending on the case.

"There are so many housebound older adults, and we're barely reaching them," Johnson said. "For those still in their private homes, there's such a huge need."

Laura Wagner, a professor of nursing and community health systems at the University of California-San Francisco, stressed that nurse practitioners are not trying to replace doctors; they're trying

to meet patients' needs, wherever they may be.

"One of the things I'm most proud of is the role of nurse practitioners," she said. "We step into places where other providers may not, and geriatrics is a prime example of that."

PRACTICE LIMITS

Nurse practitioners are registered nurses with advanced training that enables them to diagnose diseases, analyze diagnostic tests, and prescribe medicine. Their growth has bolstered primary care, and, like doctors, they can specialize in particular branches of medicine. Johnson, for example, has advanced training in gerontology.

"If we have a geriatrician shortage, then hiring more nurse practitioners trained in geriatrics is an ideal solution," Wagner said, "but there are a lot of barriers in place."

In 27 states and Washington, D.C., nurse practitioners can practice independently. But in the rest of the country, they need to have a collaborative agreement with or be under the supervision of another health care provider to provide care to older adults. Medicare generally reimburses for nurse practitioner services at 85% of the amount it pays physicians.

Last year, in more than 40 states, the American Medical Association and its partners lobbied against what they see as "scope creep" in the expanded roles of nurse practitioners and other health workers. The AMA points out that doctors must have more schooling and significantly more clinical experience than nurse practitioners. While the AMA says physician-led teams keep costs lower, a study published in 2020 in Health Services Research found similar patient outcomes and lower costs for nurse practitioner patients. Other studies, including one published in 2023 in the journal Medical Care Research and Review, have found health care models including nurse practitioners had better outcomes for patients with multiple chronic conditions than

teams without an NP.

"I would fully disagree that we're invading their scope of practice and shouldn't have full scope of our own," Johnson said.

She has worked under the supervision of physicians in Pennsylvania and Washington state but started seeing patients at her own practice in 2021. Like many nurse practitioners, she sees her patients in their homes. The first thing she does when she gets a new patient is manage their prescriptions, getting rid of unnecessary medications, especially those with harsh side effects. She works with the patient and a family member who often has power of attorney. She keeps them informed of subtle changes, such as whether a person was verbal and eating and whether their medical conditions have changed.

While there is some overlap in expertise between geriatricians and nurse practitioners, there are areas where nurses typically excel, said Elizabeth White, an assistant professor of health services, policy, and practice at Brown University.

"We tend to be a little stronger in care coordination, family and patient education, and integrating care and social and medical needs. That's very

much in the nursing domain," she said.

That care coordination will become even more critical as the U.S. ages. Today, about 18% of the U.S. population is 65 or over. In the next 30 years, the share of seniors is expected to reach 23%, as medical and technological advances enable people to live longer.

PATIENT AND FAMILY

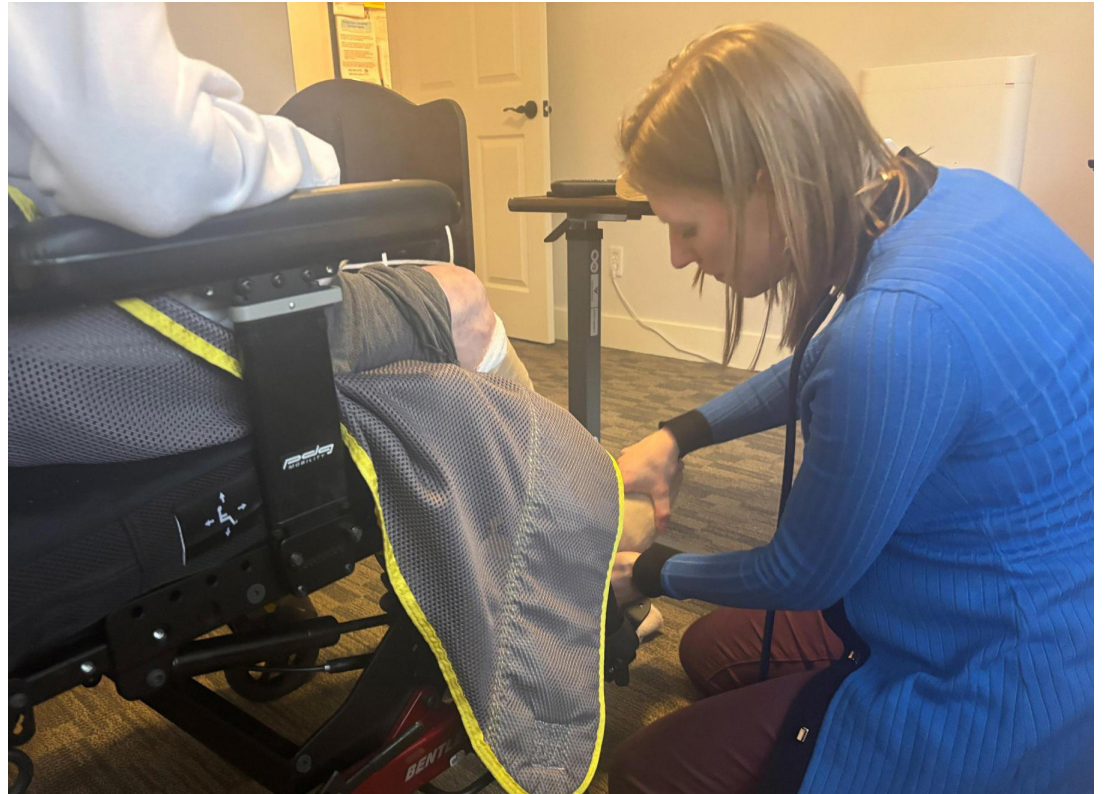
In an office next to Ellen's bedroom, Johnson called Ellen's younger sister Margaret Watt to recommend that Ellen enter hospice care. Johnson told her that Ellen had developed pneumonia and her body wasn't coping.

Watt appreciated that Johnson had kept the family apprised of Ellen's condition for several years, saying she was a good communicator.

"She was accurate," Watt said. "What she said would happen, happened."

A month after the consult, Ellen died peacefully in her sleep.

"I do feel sadness," Johnson said, "but there's also a sense of relief that I've been with her through her suffering to try to alleviate it, and I've helped her meet her and her family's priorities in that time."



Stephanie Johnson examines her patient Ellen's foot. Ellen had been diagnosed with vascular dementia, peripheral vascular disease, and Type 2 diabetes. Last fall, doctors made the difficult decision to operate on her foot. **JARIEL ARVIN — KFF HEALTH NEWS/TNS**



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HEALTH & FITNESS

From frustration to joy: What I learned about getting a hearing aid

By Katherine Roth
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

My first tip-off were the little things, the high-pitched little things: the doorbell and ringtones my kids could hear but I could not.

Then it was the garbled-sounding conversations, and the accompanying annoyance of having to ask people to repeat themselves. Or worse, giving up and just playing along without being able to follow everything that was being said.

Even then, I stalled for years before finally going through the process of getting a hearing aid. How do you even begin? Will it look clunky and make me feel like a dinosaur? And the cost!

Getting a hearing test, and confirmation that I needed a hearing aid, was just the beginning.

FINDING AN EXPERT

The doctor handed me a list of places I could go to get fitted. I made some calls and narrowed it down to the places that took my insurance and my zero-interest health care credit card.

The first couple places were demoralizing: I walked in, was told it'd be \$7,000 for the "best" option (they mysteriously didn't happen to have any other options handy), then marched right back out the door, utterly discouraged.

I started asking friends and neighbors whether they wore a hearing aid, or knew anyone at all with a hearing aid, and could point me to a good audiologist.

It took a lot of poking around, but I found one — and it made all the difference.

THE JOY OF RECONNECTING WITH THE WORLD

I've been wearing my hearing aids for several months now, and they are as easy as slipping on a pair of glasses, are almost invisible, have reconnected me with the world, and, as crazy as this may sound, they bring me joy.

After talking with a few audiologists around the country, it turns out that my experience is pretty typical.

"There are a lot of people who stall before getting one," says Meagan P. Bachmann, director of audiology at Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist in North Carolina.

"Hearing is important because it connects



Hearing aids. DREAMSTIME — TNS

us with people," she says. "Multiple studies show that not hearing can affect your ability to connect with others and participate in life, so you have to think of it in terms of overall health. Maybe you no longer go to family events, or you don't understand your doctor. People start to withdraw. A lot of people come in because it's gotten so bad that it is impacting their relationships."

STEPS TO TAKE

To speed up the process and make it less frustrating, here's what the pros recommend: **1.** Get tested, take the results seriously, and know that many if not most hearing aids these days are small, nearly invisible, rechargeable, and pretty easy to wear and maintain. And believe it or not, hearing aids can be fun — these days, there are colors to choose from and ways to bejewel them.

2. Shop for an expert audiologist. Look for someone who takes your insurance or any sort of medical credit card you might have, or has a payment plan of some kind, if needed. This is a world at the awkward juncture of

consumerism and medical care, but a good audiologist should come across as a medical provider, not a salesperson.

And a good audiologist should take the time to work with you to find a hearing aid that meets your individual needs, and also fits your budget.

A good place to start is often with your doctor; with the American Academy of Audiologists, which lists providers on its website at audiology.org; or by word of mouth.

"Although all hearing aids are amplifiers, not everybody needs the same thing," says Bachmann. "Fitting a hearing aid is an art. It changes the acoustics, and everyone is different. You want someone who listens to your lifestyle needs. Do you have a lot of difficulty with noise? Are you mostly in quiet situations? How much technology do you need, and what kind?"

Greta Stamper, an audiologist at the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Florida, agrees. "Hearing loss is not a one-time thing. It's a chronic health condition. It should be a partnership between you and your audiologist," she said.

"It's someone asking you what you're looking for and how it's going. You shouldn't feel pressured or pushed."

3. A note on cost. Although hearing aids can be pricey, there are affordable options, and a good audiologist should be able to let you try out options at several price points. Insurance often covers much of the cost, and there are ways to pay for the remaining cost in installments. Also, avoidance has pretty high costs, as well, audiologists say, and the longer the wait, the harder it may be to solve the problem with a hearing aid. Although there are cheaper hearing aids at big box stores, Bachmann warns that it's good to check with your audiologist before taking that route. "Some of those hearing aids are locked, so that you're not allowed to have them programmed by an outside audiologist," she says.

Remember, says Stamper, that hearing aids are an investment, and usually last between five and six years.

4. Know your rights. "We select what is the most likely to be successful, and if it doesn't work out you come back and do something else," says Stamper. She said most states mandate a trial period. In some cases, hearing-aid companies also cover the cost of multiple visits to your audiologist while you are getting used to your new hearing aid and get training in how to use and maintain it.

5. Embrace the process, and expect it to take a little time and a few expert tweaks. Audiologists say your brain needs time to adjust to a hearing aid, and that hearing-aid settings should be adjusted little by little as your brain adapts to them.

"A big misconception is that you can just wear them a couple hours a day. Your brain does better with it if you use them most of the day. Your brain needs to adapt to hearing sounds it hasn't heard for a while, and it takes the brain awhile to relearn how to process all those sounds," says Stamper.

6. Be realistic. "Although hearing aids can be enormously beneficial, they may not give you back your normal hearing," says Stamper. Depending on the situation, there might be limitations to what a hearing aid can do.

"It might just be lots of improvement in the key areas in which you're struggling," said Stamper.

Using hearing aids is a process, the audiologists say, and although it requires some patience, it can be well worth the journey.

Calendar of trips, activities 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.

DECEMBER

Dec. 11: Adult Craft Night: Craft Supply Exchange & Drop-In Winter Craft at the Harrison Township Public Library, 38255 L'Anse Creuse, Ste. A, Harrison Twp., Thursday, Dec. 11, from 6-8 p.m. Avoid the cold weather — come "chill" with us at HTPL! No registration is required for this special Adult Craft Night. Drop in and create holiday cards, ornaments, handmade bows, and more small crafts. Snacks and beverages will be provided. In addition to Craft Night, we'll be hosting a Winter Craft Supply Exchange! Drop off up to 5 standard sized (12 x 12 x 10") boxes of craft supplies starting Dec. 1 through Dec. 11 to participate. For each box you donate, you'll receive a "ticket to shop." One ticket equals one box that you can fill up on the day of the exchange. Any leftover supplies that are not taken after the exchange will be donated or used for library programming. This is an Adults-Only program. However,

we will accept children's craft supplies for the exchange. Check htlibrary.org/events for a full list of accepted and non-accepted items. For more information, call 586-329-1261.

Dec. 11: Booked for the Evening: Lillian Boxfish Takes a Walk by Kathleen Rooney, Thursday, Dec. 11 at the Roseville Public Library, 29777 Gratiot Ave, Roseville, from 6:30-7:30 p.m. Booked for the Evening is the Roseville Public Library's monthly book discussion group that has been meeting since March of 1999. We discuss all kinds of books and you are welcome to join us whether you have read them or not. This month we will be having a lively conversation about "The Safe Place" by Anna Downes. For more information, call 586-445-5407 or email rsvlbraryservice@roseville-mi.gov

Dec. 11: Holiday Orchestra Concert. Sponsored by Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, Clawson, Thursday, Dec. 11, 11:30 a.m. \$4 for lunch (served at noon). Phone: 248.589.0334. Enjoy the festive sounds of the Clawson Public Schools String Orchestra as they perform holiday classics for our community. Following the concert, students will join senior adults for a

special lunch. Space is limited—please register ahead for lunch. Register: <https://miclawsonweb.myvscloud.com/webtrac/web/>

Dec. 15: Movie at the Library. Sponsored by Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, Clawson, Monday, Dec. 15, 1 p.m. Free. Phone: 248.589.0334. This month, we celebrate UN Human Rights Month with a special viewing of the movie Gandhi at the Blair Memorial Library. Popcorn and refreshments provided. Register: <https://miclawsonweb.myvscloud.com/webtrac/web/>

Dec. 15: Secretary of State Mobile Office at the Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, Clawson, Monday, Dec. 15, from 10 a.m. — 3 p.m. Phone: 248.589.0334. Renew IDs, driver's licenses, and other common documents without leaving Clawson. The Mobile SOS Office will be at the Senior Center. Call to make an appointment today at 248.589.0334.

Dec. 16: Chess Club at the Roseville Public Library, 29777 Gratiot Ave, Roseville, Tuesday, Dec. 16, from 6-7:30 p.m. Once a month, local Chess enthusiasts gather at the library to socialize, trade tips, and challenge each other

to this classic game of strategy. Whether you are a master player or just learning the game, you are welcome to join us. You may bring your own set or use one of ours. Ages 12 to adult are welcome. For more information, call 586-445-5407 or email rsvlbraryservice@roseville-mi.gov

Dec. 16: OATS Tech at the Library Saving Money with Tech at the Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, Clawson, Tuesday, Dec. 16, 4 p.m. Free. Phone: 248.589.0334. Explore ways that tech can help you save money and manage your finances. Register: <https://miclawsonweb.myvscloud.com/webtrac/web/>

Dec. 16: Harrison Township Diamond Dazzlers: Diamond Dot Club at the Harrison Township Public Library, 38255 L'Anse Creuse, Ste. A, Harrison Twp., Tuesday, Dec. 16, from 6-8 p.m. Are you a regular Diamond Dot fanatic, or are you looking for a new hobby to keep you occupied during the cold winter months? Drop in and join our new Adult Diamond Dot club! Come chat with fellow Diamond Dotters and treat

yourself to a cozy and relaxing evening of crafting. Snacks and beverages will be provided. Feel free to bring your own project to work on. We'll also have freebies available if you come empty-handed. No registration required. For more information, visit htlibrary.org or call 586-329-1261.

Dec. 18: Mystery Book Club: The Twelve Clues of Christmas by Rhys Bowen at the Roseville Public Library, 29777 Gratiot Ave, Roseville, Thursday, Dec. 18, from 6:30-7:30 p.m. Calling all sleuths! Get together with other mystery readers as we discuss crime novels every third Thursday of the month. This month, we will discuss The Honjin Murders by Seishi Yokomizo. You are welcome to join us even if you have not finished the book. For more information, call 586-445-5407 or email rsvlbraryservice@roseville-mi.gov

Dec. 18 (register by Dec. 8): Christmas Lunch & Bingo at the Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, Clawson, Thursday, Dec. 18, noon. \$6. Phone: 248.589.0334. Celebrate together with a festive holiday


lunch, then stay for merry rounds of bingo with prizes. A seasonal favorite—these seats fill quickly! Register by: Dec. 8. Register: <https://miclawsonweb.myvscloud.com/webtrac/web/>

Dec. 17: Papotage & Cie: Talk-time in French, Wednesday, Dec. 17 at Roseville Public Library, 29777 Gratiot Ave, Roseville, from 6-7 p.m. Papotage & Cie is a program for French conversation practice with a French native speaker (and librarian...) The program is open to any teenager or adult who speaks some French and wants an informal and safe place to practice with others. If you have learned French at school—or learned it and forgot it—and want to practice again, this event is for you. For more information, call 586-445-5407 or email rsvlbraryservice@roseville-mi.gov

Dec. 30 (register by Dec. 18): "Noon Year's Eve" Lunch with Olivia Van Goor at the Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, Clawson, Tuesday, Dec. 30, noon. \$6. Phone: 248.589.0334. Ring

See CALENDAR on Page T19

Next Issue of Vitality



will be on

THURSDAY

JANUARY 8, 2025

ATTENTION ORGANIZATIONS GROUPS & CLUBS

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Deadline is December 23, 2025

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



When I Was a Little One
(A true Christmas story)

When I was a little one
So very long ago, I remember going out
With my dad and trudging in the snow,
To find the perfect Christmas tree
And make it all aglow.
Out came the boxes, Aunt Rose
Had tucked away, filled with the
Ornaments and trim.

My mother was in the kitchen
Making cookies galore,
Aunt Mary was told to hid them
So I wouldn't eat anymore!!
Aunt Virginia brought out the ribbons
And lights that looked like candles.
"Hot to touch", I was told,
And not for me to handle".

Last, but not least, came presents
Wrapped to hug the base.
Aunt Mary smiled a Christmas smile
My eyes were all ablaze.

All the pieces to the puzzle
Fell right into place: my teddy bear,
Peppy, the dog and I watched from my little chair,
Gleaming with approval, we looked on
From my front row seat with pride and joy,
In awe of the sacred living room space.....

Merry Christmas, Margherita Wiszowaty of St. Clair Shores

The Magic of a Christmas Tree

★
I
Am joy
And wonder
For everyone to see
My name is Christmas Tree

🌲🌲🌲
It's amazing how merry everyone can be
When they all gather to sing happily around me

🎵🎵🌲🎵
Glowing lights and sparkle with tinsel here and there
I am admired as everyone feels some magic in the air

🌲🌟🌲
Twas the night before Christmas and Santa stopped in
To place all the presents carefully under my protection

📦🧑🎅📦
What a delight it is to be part of the Magic of Christmas!
HO
HO
HO

By Lucia Allen of Roseville, MI

FIRST & LAST NAME: _____ PHONE NUMBER: _____
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If you chose to submit your Poetry, Pet Tribute or Be Kind Spotlight 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 Poetry, Pet Tributes & Be Kind Spotlights to: demke@medianewsgroup.com

Look for other ads in this issue of Vitality for more information on Be Kind Spotlight and Pet Tribute.

NEXT ISSUE WILL BE JANUARY 8, 2026

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



On Suffering

They say that suffering is just a part of life
Sooner or later, we'll know some things will hurt and bite
But what does one do when pain does really strike?
When fear or anger consumes one with all its might?

I guess we all react to life's pains in our own fashion
Some glide through the muddy spots without much
malfunction

Yet others like me are prone to temptation
To succumb to blame, resentment or inaction

Then something wise in my brain would suggest I change
I'd struggle to obey it, like I'm bound by inner chains
For I like to stay put, within the frame of what has been
and reject what is new, different, and not akin

My inner chatter says change is hard, not for me
The outside should change, I would rather see
But this thinking creates more angst and pain, really
For the outside is more stubborn than the desperate little me

I used to think I was a victim and played the act
and noticed that pain and suffering seemed to remain intact
Something told me to accept life as it is and adapt
For life goes on, with or without me, that's a fact

This was my life situation before I decided
that something could be done, if I am too bothered
The cauldron of turmoil had to go for me to thrive
With effort and patience, I must change and oblige

A closer look on what I believe about my situation
How I viewed and judged others, and the world in
conjunction

Led me to open up to new ideas and solution
that brought some relief to my upsets and vexation

Momentum is messy, and more so with changes
To fall back is human, so I cut myself some kindness
But I stood by my decision, and did my best to abide
everyday with small steps, small changes I applied

My path to change was hard work, without magical ending
To my tale of woes and attempts at overcoming
But I did notice that the outside world changed before me
Bit by bit, like my efforts, it became a bit more friendly

Suffering, I learned, can be a tool for us to change
if we take notice to know the real causes of our pain
Suffering awakes us up to a different level of thinking
As we change perspectives, our lives have more depth and
meaning.

By Maria Odine of Troy, MI

FIRST & LAST NAME: _____ PHONE NUMBER: _____
ADDRESS: _____
CITY/STATE/ZIP: _____ NAME OF POEM: _____

MAIL TO: Poetry, Pets &
Be Kind Spotlight
Dawn Emke
53239 Settimo Crt
Chesterfield, MI 48047

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CALENDAR

From Page 15

in 2026 early with a celebratory lunch and a sparkling jazz performance by Olivia Van Goor. Count-down at noon—party favors and smiles guaranteed. Register by Dec. 18. Register: <https://miclawsonweb.myvscloud.com/webtrac/web/>

Dec. 19: OATS Tech Lecture, Technology for Aging in Place at the Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, Clawson, Friday, Dec. 19, 1 p.m. Free. Phone: 248.589.0334. Come learn how smart technology can help you maintain your independence in your own home. Register: <https://miclawsonweb.myvscloud.com/webtrac/web/>

January
Jan. 13: The Birmingham Metropolitan Women's Club presents their Annual Meeting followed by a delicious lunch, Tuesday, Jan. 13 at 10:30 a.m. We will discuss our achievements, our charities and our events at the Spring Tea & Fall Fashion Show. Come see what we are all about. You do not have to be a member to give us a try. Reserve your place two weeks prior to the event by calling Chris at 248-303-7339. Lunch & program \$34, held at the Iroquois Club, 43248 Woodward Ave., Bloomfield Twp. To learn more, visit tbmwc.com

Jan. 14: Let's head to lunch at Lelli's before the show at Meadowbrook Theatre, "All Shook UP" on Wednesday, Jan. 14. This musical was inspired by and features the songs of Elvis Presley. Set in 1955 the story of the guitar-playing young man and his hip-swiveling musical fantasy will have you jumping out of your blue suede shoes. Enjoy these classics: "Heartbreak Hotel", "Jailhouse Rock" and "Don't be Cruel." Bus departs from John Armstrong Performing Arts back parking lot, 24066 F V Pankow Blvd, Clinton Twp at 11:00 am. Cost \$120. Register online at www.lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com or by calling L'Anse Creuse Community Education at 586-783-6330.

Jan 21: Bridgerton-Themed Tea Party, Guests of every station are welcome, though those inclined to dress for the time are most encouraged. Should you choose to grace society with your finest, the ladies may don empire waist gowns, pearls, or their most resplendent cocktail attire, while gentlemen shall be most fetching in a classic waistcoat. Whether you attend in royal regalia or come simply for the charm, one thing is certain, this gathering will set the tone for the social season. Ardmore Café in St Clair shores lunch and

refreshments. Wednesday, Jan. 21 at 7:45 a.m. Pick up location at St. Paul of Tarsus, 41300 Romeo Plank Road, Clinton Twp. or 8:15 a.m. at St. Margaret of Scotland, 2120113 Mile Rd, St Clair Shores. Cost \$68. Register online at www.lc-ps.eleyo.com or by calling L'Anse Creuse Community Education at 586-783-6330.

FEBRUARY

Feb. 10: The Birmingham Metropolitan Women's Club presents at their monthly luncheon, Kathy Trudeau, from the Eastern Market will tell us the story of the Eastern Market from the beginning until now and its impact on the Detroit community and surrounding areas, Tuesday, Feb. 10 at 10:30 a.m. You do not have to be a member to give us a try. Reserve your place two weeks prior to the event by calling Chris at 248-303-7339. Lunch & program \$34, held at the Iroquois Club, 43248 Woodward Ave., Bloomfield Twp. To learn more, visit tbmwc.com

Feb. 25: Round Trip Transportation — Via deluxe highway motor coach. Detroit Prohibition tour — This guided tour will take you to the haunts and riverfront locations the rum runners and bootleggers used to ply their trade. Lunch at Ottawa Via located in historic Corktown. After lunch we will visit a former Detroit Speakeasy. For adults 21 years of age or older. Wednesday, Feb. 25 at 7:45 a.m. Pick up location at St. Paul of Tarsus, 41300 Romeo Plank Road, Clinton Twp. or 8:15 a.m. at St. Margaret of Scotland, 2120113 Mile Rd, St Clair Shores. Cost \$159. Register online at www.lc-ps.eleyo.com or by calling L'Anse Creuse Community Education at 586-783-6330.

MARCH

March 10: The Birmingham Metropolitan Women's Club presents at their monthly luncheon, Britta Riashi, Friendship and Engagement Manager, The Ford House, Tuesday, March 10 at 10:30 a.m. She will lead us through a memorable experience of visiting the Ford House and enlighten us as to Eleanor Ford's vision of the estate in the future. You do not have to be a member to give us a try. Reserve your place two weeks prior to the event by calling Chris at 248-303-7339. Lunch & program \$34, held at the Iroquois Club, 43248 Woodward Ave., Bloomfield Twp. To learn more, visit tbmwc.com

MONTHLY EVENTS

▪ **Monthly Casino Trips:** Sponsored by the Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court,

Clawson. Last Thursdays & Fridays, 10 a.m. (unless otherwise noted). \$12. Venture out to Hollywood Casino or Motor City Casino (rotates monthly). Try your luck at the slots, table games, and more! Enjoy the excitement with friends. Register: 248.589.0334 or recreation.cityofclawson.com

▪ **Chair Drumming:** Second Thursday of the month at 1 p.m. 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 online at recreation.cityofclawson.com.

▪ **The Birmingham Metropolitan Women's Club:** Meets the second Tuesday of the month at the Iroquois Club, 43248 Woodward Ave., Bloomfield Twp. at 10:30 a.m. for lunch & informative speakers. We are a friendly group of 50+ women who gather for friendship, informative programs & philanthropic activities in our community. Visit before becoming a member. The cost for the luncheon & program is \$32. To make a reservation, call Chris at 248-303-7339. To learn more, visit tbmwc.com

▪ **Monthly Epic Health Screenings:** At the Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, Clawson. Last Wednesdays (unless otherwise noted), 11 a.m.—1 p.m. FREE. Stay on top of your health with a quick 10-minute checkup. Professionals will be on-site to monitor vital signs and share tips for maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Register: 248.589.0334 or recreation.cityofclawson.com

▪ **Learn Spanish:** at 11:30 a.m. on Wednesdays at the Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, Clawson. Donations welcomed. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or visit cityofclawson.com

▪ **Somerset Mall Walking and Shopping:** 1st & 3rd Wednesdays of the month. Depart at 9:45 a.m. from the Clawson Recreation and Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court to enjoy a scenic and safe way to support your physical & mental well-being and shop while you are there! Cost \$3. Contact dispatch at 248-583-6700 to sign up.

▪ **Join Widowed Friends:** a peer support group hosting Tuesdays, noon. Bowling Collier Bowl, 879 S. Lapeer Rd (M24) Arrive at Noon for lane assignment. Three games, shoes extra. Lunch afterward is optional. Hosts: Joe, 248-693-2454 or Nadine, 248-475-9036.

▪ **Join Widowed Friends:** a peer support group hosting Thursdays. Michigan Meadows Golf Course will resume very soon. Call Chuck, 586-201-6607.

▪ **Yoga for Seniors:** At the Fraser Senior Activities Center, 34935 Hidden Pine Dr., Fraser. Friday mornings 10:30am-11:30 a.m. (6-week sessions). Wednesday mornings 11:30-12:30 p.m. (6-week sessions). \$26 for members per session, \$32 for non-members per session. To register, call 586-296-8483.

▪ **Attorney Eric Glick:** At the Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, Clawson. 3rd Wednesdays, 1—2:15 p.m. FREE. Schedule a 15-minute legal consultation to discuss your questions and concerns. Find helpful guidance and resources in a confidential setting. Register: 248.589.0334 or recreation.cityofclawson.com

▪ **Join Widowed Friends:** a peer support group hosting Monday Golf, Stony Creek Golf Course will resume soon. Call Ted, 248-425-4879.

▪ **Pickleball Drop:** in with friends of all ages for a friendly game of pickleball at the Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, Clawson. on Mondays, from 1-3 p.m. Cost is \$2. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or visit cityofclawson.com

▪ **Quilting Group:** meets every Tuesday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, Clawson. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or visit cityofclawson.com

▪ **Water Fitness Classes:** Mondays & Wednesday, from 11:10 a.m. — noon (times subject to change based on staffing) at L'Anse Creuse North high school located at 23700 Twenty One Mile Rd, Macomb. Cost \$5 drop in or punch cards available for \$50 — payment accepted poolside or online and bring your receipt. Register online at Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com or by calling L'Anse Creuse Community Education at 586-783-6330.

▪ **Wheel of Fortune:** At the Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, Clawson. 3rd Thursdays, 1 p.m. (date subject to change). FREE. Spin the wheel, solve puzzles, and claim your prize in this lively, interactive game. Bring your lucky charm and competitive spirit. Register: 248.589.0334 or recreation.cityofclawson.com

▪ **Men Only Breakfast:** Lukich Family Restaurant (1st and 3rd Thursday), 3900 Rochester Rd., Troy, at 9.m. The Widowed Men's Group invites you to meet with other widowed men for breakfast at either of the Men's Fellowship locations whichever is more convenient for you. Many topics & ideas help you become involved in the activities of Widowed Friends. Sponsored

by Widowed Friends Ministries Contact Ray at 248-585-5402.

▪ **Quilting Group:** Meets every Tuesday, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Room 5/6. 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

▪ **\$5 Movie at MJR:** Sponsored by the Clawson Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court, Clawson. 1st Tuesdays (morning showtime). \$3 bus fare, \$5 ticket. Catch a fun flick with friends at MJR. Movie title and showtime will be announced as the date approaches. Purchase your ticket and any concessions on-site. Register: 248.589.0334 or recreation.cityofclawson.com

▪ **Pick Your Play:** Thursdays at 12:45 p.m. at the Clawson Recreation and Senior Center, 509 Fisher Court. Play Kings in the Corner, Hand & Foot, Farkle, whatever you like. Bring a friend and have some fun. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or visit cityofclawson.com

▪ **Did you want to learn to play piano, guitar or ukulele?:** What about voice lessons? We offer beginner classes for youth and adults: Visit our website to see all of the music lessons we offer. Lessons take place at Kawai studios and rental instruments are available for rent. Kawai studio is located at 12745 23 Mile Rd, Shelby Twp, MI 48315. Register online at Lc-ps.ce.eleyo.com or by calling L'Anse Creuse Community Education at 586-783-6330

▪ **Join Widowed Friends:** a peer support group hosting Tuesdays at 6 p.m. Dancing American Polish Century Club, 33204 Maple Lane (14 Mile east of Van Dyke), Sterling Hgts. Doors open at 6PM. Music from 7-10:30 p.m. Cost \$10 per person, cash bar. Contact Event Host, Liz 586-801-4536.

▪ **Current Events Club:** meets the 1st Thursday 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 the gym. For more information, call 248-589-0334 or visit cityofclawson.com

▪ **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 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

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