Remembering a civil rights icon

Oliver W. Hill Sr. was born in Richmond in 1907, became an influential civil rights attorney (with a case that was joined with others in the landmark Brown v. Board of Education decision), and died in his hometown at age 100.

Photo by P. Kevin Morley, courtesy of the Richmond Times-Dispatch

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How we talk about aging

As a publication geared toward readers over 50 (and largely written and produced by people over 50 or close to it), Fifty Plus is very sensitive to the issue of how we talk about aging. At least, we think we are. That’s why I bring up the subject today. I’d like to know your opinion.

First, I should start out by noting that my wife, Judy, and I started publishing when she was in her late 20s and I was in my early 30s. For many years, I didn’t even dare to write an opinion column on what we used to call “senior issues,” as I felt my perspective would be inauthentic, given my age.

But I have, so to speak, grown into this column over the past 32 years. Regular readers may recall me recounting my personal efforts helping my parents (of blessed memory) as they faced challenges in their health, housing situation, and hospital and rehab stays.

Those were educational experiences for me, giving me more understanding of, and empathy for, readers and their families with those issues.

Beyond this column, our managing editors and I have chosen to write, solicit or reprint stories in our regular health, financial, housing, travel and arts sections that we thought would resonate with readers and ideally inspire you towards a lifestyle and retirement years filled with meaning and fulfillment as well as pleasure.

In choosing to write about these topics, and in selecting interesting older adults and role models for our cover stories, we were intentionally “talking about aging” in a positive way. Or so I always thought.

Recently, I was introduced to the work of a think tank called the FrameWorks Institute. In a nutshell, its mission appears to be to help public policy advocates and members of the media reframe the way people think about important issues (such as aging, among many others) to make it more likely that public perceptions and, eventuallly, public policy will lead to positive change.

I support that in principle. But when I looked more closely into their suggested “reframings” of various issues related to aging, I was less sure I supported their approach.

My first exposure was to their discussion of how to approach the question: What does an aging population mean for programs like Social Security?

Now I have written about this issue frequently, almost annually, for many years. I have noted that the demographic shift to a larger proportion of older adults has been evident for many decades and yet Congress has been slow to adjust or even plan for the rising costs of Social Security and Medicare.

I’ve talked about the increasing share of the federal budget these programs will take up, and urged readers to contact their legislative representatives and support a forthright analysis and action.

I’ve also tried to calm readers, noting that there are no proposals to affect the benefits of current retirees, and the sooner Congress acts to preserve Social Security and Medicare for the long term, the more gradual any change will be.

Well, I now see that this approach of mine neatly fits what FrameWorks calls “The False-Start Answer.” They critique such an approach as sowing fear and anxiety, and tapping into the public’s “default perception” that the government is inefficient and unable to solve problems.

The think tank suggests reframing one’s answer to see the “opportunity” an aging population offers to “develop solutions” in keeping with our society’s long tradition of “innovative approaches to challenges.”

They suggest describing Social Security and Medicare as examples of innovative public policies that support better aging, and pivot to suggest “restructuring public policies on issues like work and retirement, transportation, housing, health care and community-building.”

The think tank calls this “an Ingenuity Narrative” that uses a “building momentum” metaphor and reframes the facts about changing demographics “to point to the civic benefits aging provides…which helps to foster optimism about the future.”

I can see that this approach is less anxiety provoking than mine, but I feel it completely fails to address a real problem seriously and honestly.

Perhaps their approach could be helpful in tamping down push-back some younger generations might attempt in the face of adjustments to Social Security. But to my mind it has no place in speaking either to older adults themselves or to those in government with responsibility for funding and maintaining Social Security and Medicare. I’d like to think it’s possible to be upbeat and positive about aging in general and still call attention to financial and social concerns that could lead to a crisis if ignored.

Of course, I could be wrong. So, now I’d like to ask what you think. Do you think my, shall we say, forthright approach would impel you to think differently about Social Security and take action, such as contacting your congressperson? Or would you feel more empowered and moved to act if you read the ingenuity narrative and felt optimistic about Social Security’s future?

As I mentioned before, here at Fifty Plus we like to be upbeat and help our readers learn the best ways to maintain their health, carefully spend their wealth, and enjoy all that life has to offer at any age.

But we also feel our readers do not need to be shielded from reality. After all, you have had the experience of facing and addressing challenges your whole lives.

Are we mistaken? Please share your thoughts via email, letters or at our website: thebeaconnewspapers.com/contact-us.

NOTE: I have greatly condensed the FrameWorks material, and have only shown you one example. You can see exactly how they address the questions of Social Security, ageism and successful aging at bit.ly/FrameWorksFAQ.
Area artist memorializes civil rights icon

By Margaret Foster

When the Virginia Museum of History and Culture completes its renovations next year, it will display a significant new work in the collection: a portrait of Oliver Hill — a Richmonder who was a trailblazer in the civil rights movement.


Midlothian artist Elaine Bankston, 70, donated the work to the museum in November.

“(Hill) allowed Elaine to sit down with him, make portrait studies, and get to know him. Thus, she could produce what art historians call a ‘life portrait’ — a portrait that carries us as close to the sitter as we will ever get,” Rasmussen said.

Oliver White Hill’s name is likely familiar to locals; it is seen on a Richmond courthouse and street, and his statue stands on North Third Street.

Born in Richmond in 1907, Hill was a lead attorney on one of the cases that led to the landmark 1954 Supreme Court opinion in Brown v. Board of Education, which found racially segregating public schools to be unconstitutional.

For his work in the civil rights movement, Hill was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1999 and the NAACP’s Spingarn Medal in 2003, two years before he died.

Passionate and fearless

Hill was born on St. James Street in Jackson Ward, but his family later moved to Roanoke. Because Black students were not allowed to attend Virginia schools after eighth grade, Hill moved to Washington, D.C., eventually graduating from Dunbar High School, Howard University and Howard Law School.

“I went to law school so I could go out and fight segregation,” Hill once said.

After practicing law for 10 years, he was drafted at age 36 into the U.S. Army and served in Europe during WWII. Once he returned home, Hill became the first African American on the City Council of Richmond since Reconstruction. In the 1950s, Hill began his fight against segregation in earnest.

“He was part of a small brotherhood out of Howard Law School that really planned and executed the strategies that led to the demise of Jim Crow segregation,” explained Margaret Edds, Richmond author of the 2018 book We Face the Dawn: Oliver Hill, Spottswood Robinson and the Legal Team that Dismantled Jim Crow.

“He was the face and soul of the civil rights movement in Virginia for many years. He had a fearlessness — he had great passion about him. He also was very pragmatic in his decisions, and he had a real generosity and lightness of spirit,” Edds met Hill in person in 1994, the 40th anniversary of the Brown decision, when he was 87 years old.

“We went down to the courthouse on Main Street in Richmond and sat in the courtroom” where he had argued his case, one of five desegregation cases that were consolidated and decided under Brown, Edds remembered.

“It was, for me, a very powerful moment to be with this icon of the civil rights movement and just to hear his memories.”

The artist’s story

Artist Elaine Bankston met Oliver Hill in 2003, when the University of Richmond commissioned her to paint an official oil portrait of him, now displayed in the Governor’s Mansion. Hill’s family later commissioned a second portrait and invited her to his centennial birthday celebration in 2007, just three months before he died.

“At his 100th birthday party he was cracking jokes, and everybody was laughing. It was exciting and humbling” to be
What acupuncture does Medicare cover?

By Jim Miller

Dear Savvy Senior:

Is acupuncture a viable treatment for pain and is it covered by Medicare?

Since the pandemic hit, I have a lot of lower back and neck pain and am wondering if it’s worth trying. What can you tell me?

—Looking for Solutions

Dear Looking:

Many studies over the years — funded by the National Institutes of Health — have found acupuncture to be very effective in easing pain and helpful with a variety of other ailments, too.

Here’s what you should know:

### Several types of relief

First used in China more than 2,000 years ago, acupuncture has become increasingly popular in the United States over the past decade.

While acupuncture isn’t a cure-all treatment, it is a safe, drug-free option for relieving many different types of pain including low back pain, neck pain, osteoarthritis, migraine headaches, fibromyalgia, postoperative pain, tennis elbow, carpal tunnel syndrome, dental pain and more.

Studies have also shown that it can be helpful in treating asthma, depression, digestive disorders, menopause symptoms like hot flashes, and nausea caused by chemotherapy or anesthesia.

Exactly how or why acupuncture works isn’t fully understood, but it’s based on the traditional Eastern theory that vital energy flows through pathways in the body, and when any of these pathways get blocked, pain and illness result. Acupuncture unblocks the pathways to restore health.

However, today most Western practitioners believe that acupuncture works because it stimulates the nerves causing the release of endorphins, which are the body’s natural painkiller hormones. It’s also shown to increase blood circulation, decrease inflammation and stimulate the immune system.

### What treatment is like

During acupuncture, practitioners stimulate specific points on the body by inserting thin needles through the skin. The needles are flexible, sterile and disposable (used only once), and are as thin as a cat’s whisker.

The number of needles used for each treatment can vary — anywhere from a few, up to a dozen or more. And where the needles are actually stuck depends on the condition being treated.

They are typically inserted about one-quarter to 1-inch deep in the skin and are left in place for about 20 minutes. After placement, the needles are sometimes twirled or manipulated, or stimulated with electricity or heat.

You may feel a brief, sharp sensation when the needle is inserted, but generally it’s not painful. Once the needle is in place, however, you may feel a tingling sensation, numbness, mild pressure or warmth.

How many treatments you’ll need will depend on the severity of your condition — 12 treatments done weekly or biweekly is very common.

It’s also important to know that acupuncture can be used either in conjunction with other conventional medical treatments, or by itself.

### Cost and Medicare coverage

The cost per treatment typically runs anywhere from $40 to $150, depending on where you live and what style of treatment you receive.

Today, an increasing number of private insurance plans — including some Medicare Advantage plans and policies provided by employers — offer some type of acupuncture coverage.

You’ll also be happy to know that last January (2020), the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services announced that original Medicare will now cover up to 12 acupuncture sessions over 90 days for patients with chronic lower back pain. Eight additional sessions can be added if patients show improvement.

However, acupuncturists can’t directly bill Medicare. In order to receive Medicare coverage for treatments, you must use a licensed acupuncturist who is supervised by a medical doctor, physician assistant or nurse practitioner trained in acupuncture, and that supervisor will need to process the acupuncture billings.
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These foods have more vitamin C than oranges

By Christine Matthes

If you chug a glass of orange juice every time you start sniffing, you may be on to something. Though studies show that consuming vitamin C can’t actually prevent colds, loading up on this nutrient may help slightly shorten the length of time you’re sick and reduce the severity of your symptoms.

The thing is, a medium-size orange has only about 70 milligrams of vitamin C, which is actually less than that of many other common fruits and veggies. To pack which is actually less than that of many other common fruits and veggies. To pack

1. Red bell pepper: A cup of chopped red bell pepper contains nearly three times more vitamin C than an orange — 190 mg. Red peppers are also a great source of vitamin A, which promotes eye health.

2. Green bell pepper: A cup of chopped green bell pepper contains less vitamin C than its sweeter sister, but at 120 mg., it’s still 130% of your recommended daily allowance. Green bell pepper is also a great source of fiber.

3. Kale: In addition to twice your recommended daily intake of vitamin A and seven times the recommended amount of vitamin K, a 1-cup serving of raw kale provides 80 mg. of vitamin C. The nutrition powerhouse also delivers a sizable dose of minerals and fatty acids.

4. Broccoli: This cruciferous veggie provides about 130 mg. of vitamin C plus a punch of filling fiber for just 30 calories per serving. Plus, research shows broccoli may have cancer-preventing properties.

5. Papaya: Research shows that eating papaya can help clear your sinuses, brighten your skin and strengthen your bones. A 1-cup serving delivers 88 mg. of vitamin C.

6. Strawberries: A cup of this super fruit contains 85 mg. of vitamin C, plus healthy doses of folate and other compounds shown to promote heart health. Another unexpected benefit of strawberries? They may help whiten your teeth naturally.

7. Cauliflower: Whether you roast it, steam it or mash it, eating a small head of cauliflower gives you a 128-mg. dose of vitamin C, plus 5 grams of fiber and 5 grams of protein.

8. Brussels sprouts: These little cabbages are loaded with cancer-preventing phytonutrients and fiber, but not to mention 75 mg. of vitamin C. If you’re usually turned off by their bitter taste, bring out their natural sweetness by roasting them.

9. Pineapple: In addition to 79 mg. of vitamin C per serving, pineapple contains bromelain, a digestive enzyme that helps break down food and reduce bloating. Bromelain also acts as a natural anti-inflammatory that can help you recover faster after a tough workout.

10. Kiwi: One serving of kiwi (about two fruits) has 137 mg. of vitamin C. The fuzzy-skinned fruit is also rich in potassium and copper.

11. Mango: Taste the tropics for a 122 mg. boost of vitamin C. Mango is also a great source of vitamin A which, like vitamin C, plays a key role in immunity and also helps keep your eyes healthy.

Health delivers relevant information in clear, jargon-free language that puts health into context in people’s lives. Online at health.com. ©2021 Meredith Corporation. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.
Safe storage is important for insulin pens

Q: I am diabetic and use an insulin pen. I am often confused over how to store the product and how long it can last once opened. Can you help me?

A: Insulin is used to lower blood sugar in patients with diabetes/high blood sugar. Insulin can come packaged in vials (for injection by syringe) as well as in injectable pen devices that utilize a spring activated by a simple push-button to inject insulin easily.

There are a number of different injectable pen devices on the market. While choice is nice to have, the large number of different devices, with different instructions on storage and expiration, can get confusing.

Here is a quick reference guide for those using these devices.

**General rules**

—All insulin should be kept in a safe place that is out of reach of children and pets.

—All insulin products should be protected from heat and light and never stored in a freezer.

—Unopened injectable insulin pens should be stored in the refrigerator until the expiration date on the packaging is reached.

—Once opened, an insulin pen will remain usable for a while before it must be thrown out (see more below).

—Opened injectable pens should be kept at room temperature until their expiration date. (Tresiba brand insulin is the one exception. Once opened, it can either be refrigerated or kept at room temperature until it expires.)

A quick tip is to write on the pen itself the date you first used it. That way you can easily keep track of how many days are left until it expires.

**Specific expirations**

Different insulin pen devices can have different expirations once they are opened. Here are expiration rules for a number of devices:

—Humulin 70/30 KwikPen, Humalog 75/25 KwikPen, and Humalog 50/50 KwikPen expire in 10 days once opened.

—Novolog 70/30 FlexPen expires in 14 days once opened.

—Novolog FlexPen, Novolog FlexTouch Pen, Humulin N KwikPen, Humalog KwikPen, Basaglar KwikPen, Lantus Solostar and Apidra Solostar expire in 28 days once opened.

—Levemir FlexTouch Pen and Toujeo Solostar expire in 42 days once opened.

—Tresiba FlexTouch Pen expires in 52 days once opened.

An important note: Do not use any insulin pen device if you notice that the solution has changed color, is cloudy, is leaking or has particles. These are signs that the insulin has expired. Throw away any unused or expired products.

Proper storage of insulin is important for safe use of your medication. Contact your pharmacist or medical doctor if you have questions or concerns about insulin safety and storage.

**Priscila Crawford** is a second-year Pharm.D. student at VCU School of Pharmacy. After graduating pharmacy school, she plans to pursue a residency in pediatric pharmacy or a career in community or nuclear pharmacy.

Oliver Hill

*From page 3*

among the famous guests at the “grand affair,” she said.

Bankston grew up on a Missouri farm and became interested in art in elementary school. A trip to the Louvre in Paris when she was in her 20s inspired her to pursue art.

“It wasn’t until I stood in front of the ‘Mona Lisa’ that I decided to take it more seriously and started studying — and more or less teaching myself,” she said.

As a flight attendant for Eastern Airlines, Bankston traveled the world, visiting 60 countries. Now retired, for the past 10 years she has taught art classes on cruise ships, including the Cunard Line’s Queen Elizabeth and Queen Victoria. She also teaches art to female inmates at the Pocahontas State Correctional Center in Pocahontas, Virginia.

All told, Bankston has been commissioned to do 2,000 portraits of judges, politicians and other Virginians, including three of Hill. She also paints landscapes, still lifes and plein air (outdoor) paintings.

Last July, when Bankston heard that Oliver Hill’s son had died, she revisited her files, unearthing letters from the Hill family. Their words inspired her to paint a fourth portrait of Hill, basing it on the original portrait as well as her photos.

Bankston completed the work in two months and donated it to VMHC, with approval by curator Rasmussen and its board of trustees.

“It is certainly a milestone in my life,” Bankston said. “He was a hero and a warrior.”
Driving in bad weather — best safety tips

Courtesy of Zutobi

There were more than 445,000 injuries and 6,000 deaths due to weather-related driving accidents in 2019. Ouch! The good news is you do not need to be one of them. Be the safest driver in town with this handy guide:

How does rain affect driving conditions?

Rain is a fairly common weather condition for most drivers, so it’s easy to forget how dangerous it can be. However, according to a summary of various government statistics on car crashes, 46% of weather-related crashes happen in the rain. On top of that, 76% happen on wet pavement.

Bad weather affects a wide range of factors in your environment and best driving practices. For example, when driving in the rain, you could experience the following driving hazards:

- Poor light conditions and visibility
- Sudden window fogging
- Reduced tire grip on the pavement
- Changed traffic patterns
- Nervousness and distraction
- Wind gusts from weather or commercial vehicles
- Flooding or reduced street capacity
- Obstructions and delays
- Hydroplaning (tires lose all traction with the road)

Bad vehicle performance (bad windshield wipers, stalled engines, poor tire grip, and other issues)

And that is just rain. It doesn’t even go into factors like freezing temperatures, traffic from severe weather evacuation and other things! The best way to guard against crashes is to practice safe driving measures for bad weather conditions.

Our top safety tips

Here are six of our best tips for driving safely in the rain:

1. Don’t panic

Stress and nervousness can affect your driving performance. You want to be mindful and watchful, and you need to be calm enough to react well if a situation unfolds.

2. Don’t drive when you don’t have to

During severe storms, heavy rain, dense fog, flooding and other conditions, it is almost always better to stay where you are until conditions improve. Think in terms of the following:

- Do you need to go shopping? Or can you order in?
- Can your lunch date swap to dinner?
- Would it hurt to wait ten minutes and see if the weather lets up?
- Can you cancel or reschedule?

3. Be careful of other drivers

Some people will drive the same way they do in ideal conditions. This means their reaction times will be off, they could hydroplane (and panic), or any other number of other risks.

- Be mindful of all vehicles.
- Give yourself space and time to react if anything goes wrong.
- Watch out around driveways and intersections.
- Be extra careful when merging with traffic or changing lanes.

4. Know your route

Don’t get caught unprepared in bad weather. Preview your route before you get in the car. Also be aware of the following:

- Your Pavement. James Solomon of the National Safety Council told Geico that roads are built with their local climate and weather factors in mind. For example, many southern roads are made with less asphalt density. This can make them look dry, but in reality, your tires can get slick and wet without you knowing!
- Your Environment. Know the flood zones and where water tends to stand.
- Be extra vigilant of brake lights ahead of you.
- Your Speed. Know which roads have or develop pot holes in heavy rains so you can avoid them.

Traffic Patterns. Avoid routes that get heavily congested in ideal weather. Likewise, know which ones are affected by standing water or extra congestion in the rain.

5. Adapt to the weather conditions

Adjust your driving habits for the weather. For example:

- Drive slower to accommodate slick tires and improve your reaction time to inexperienced drivers.
- Make sure to budget in extra time for commutes to avoid anxiety.
- Give extra room to other vehicles so you can accommodate slower braking speeds.
- Be extra vigilant of brake lights ahead of you.
- Be more careful at the start of the rainstorm, especially after a dry spell. Fresh rain will bring up grease and oil that worked its way into the pavement.
- Avoid sudden movements and hard braking. Gentle steering, braking and accelerating help offset the reduced tire grip on the road.
- Turn off cruise control. Ironically, cruise control becomes “lose control” during wet weather conditions. You cannot adjust your speed for weather or loss of traction with cruise control on.
- Lights, but not brights. Even if your vehicle has auto runners, manually turn on the lights so your tail lights will also shine.

See DRIVING IN RAIN, page 9

Visit us at capitalcaring.org to learn more. Call our 24/7 Care Line at 800-869-2136 to speak with one of our care specialists.
**Driving in rain**

*From page 8*

This will help outline all four corners of your vehicle for other drivers.

At the same time, avoid brights when you can, as the raindrops will reflect the light back into your eyes and obscure your vision. They can also blind and annoy other drivers.

Stay away from large trucks and buses. If you have reduced visibility, do so they. They might not see you as you try to pass. Large vehicles also kick up large sprays of water, which can significantly reduce your visibility.

Turn on your defroster, especially if your car is prone to fogging. You can go from a clear window to dense fog in seconds in the right conditions. Your defroster will help offset or avoid the problem altogether.

Drive in another vehicle's tracks. Give the person ahead plenty of space, but use their rearview mirror to watch how they handle your tracks. This will help outline all four corners of your vehicle for other drivers.

**6. Know what to do**

The best thing you can do for yourself is to be prepared. You are far less likely to suffer in an accident if you know what to do if you hydroplane or your route is flooded.

– Turn around; don’t drown. If you aren’t sure how deep standing water is, don’t go

through it. It only takes a few inches for water to get into most vehicle engines and stall you out.

If the water is too deep, the car can also float and take on water. It can even be carried away!

– Know how to handle a skid. Take your foot off the accelerator and continue to steer in the direction you want to go. Avoid slamming on the brakes. Go for a gentle deceleration until you stabilize.

– Be calm if you hydroplane. If your car losses its grip on the road and feels like it is sliding or “surfing” on top of the surface, gently ease your foot off the gas and avoid steering. Slow down and hold on until your vehicle regains contact with the road.

– Have an emergency bag in the trunk. At a minimum, it should have a simple first aid kit, food and water for three days, a candle or solar blanket to protect from cold weather, a poncho or rain jacket in case of roadside breakdowns, and at least one season-appropriate set of clothes. Preferably, you should also have the means to rent a room for the night if you get stranded.

– Practice ahead of time. Many DMVs have a defensive driving course to help you prepare for many types of driving hazards. You can also review and test your knowledge with our state-specific DMV guides and practice tests.

**7. What to do if you crash or break down in the rain**

Here are the steps to take if you have a mishap on the road:

– Is anyone injured? If anyone is hurt, contact emergency services. If you are trained, administer first aid as needed.

– Is everyone safe? If the vehicles are driveable, get them to a shoulder or as far out of traffic as you can. Turn on blinkers and set up hazard tags or cones if you have them. Do not stay in the vehicle unless it is unsafe to do otherwise.

– Prioritize continued safety. Follow any safety guidelines for the current weather situation, such as staying in a shelter during a lightning storm or waiting on higher ground if you broke down in a flood zone.

– In an accident, call the police. Even if it is minor, make sure you make the call so they can decide if they need to be onsite. They may ask you to file on your own.

– In an accident, take pictures for your insurance company once it is safe to do so. Exchange contact and insurance details.

– Call a tow truck or your emergency road service provider to get you and your vehicle home or to a mechanic (or at least safely off the road if it is not driveable).

There are a lot of challenges when you drive in rain or other hazardous weather conditions. But you can drive safely if you know how to adapt to the conditions.

Want to master more safe driving behaviors? Check out our program for bite-sized lessons and practice tests to ensure you master all the concepts. You’ll even find lessons specific to your state’s laws and guidelines.

Zutobi is a driver’s educational app. For more tips and tricks, visit zutobi.com/us.
The cold sore connection to Alzheimer’s

By Veena Alfred, Ph.D.

Cold sores are a common problem, and people everywhere get them. If you have not had them, you probably know someone who has. [Ed. Note: They should not be confused with canker sores. See “Canker sores not contagious,” on page 11.]

They are caused by a virus known as herpes simplex, and about 90% of people are infected with it. Most of us pick up the virus in childhood and recover from the cold sores without any treatment. But the virus remains dormant in our bodies in nerve cells in the skin, as does the chicken pox virus.

There is no way to get rid of the virus, and it can later be reactivated by various factors, such as stress, fatigue, exposure to strong sunlight or wind, and a weakening of the immune system — much like the chicken pox virus, which causes shingles when reactivated.

A precursor to Alzheimer’s?

A recent study conducted by a multidisciplinary team at Tufts University, published in May 2020 in the journal Science Advances, provides strong evidence that the herpes simplex virus may be responsible for creating the conditions in the brain that lead to Alzheimer’s disease.

Three decades earlier, scientists had already found evidence of a connection between the virus and Alzheimer’s. As early as 1991, scientists discovered that the virus can make its way from the nerve cells in the skin all the way to the brain, and many elderly people do indeed have the virus in their brain.

In 1997, it was shown that elderly people who have the virus in their brain and also have the APOE4 gene (the gene that increases risk of early-onset Alzheimer’s up to five times) are 12 times more likely to get Alzheimer’s than those without the virus and without the gene.

Associated with plaques, tangles

More recently, in 2007, it was found that the presence of the virus in the brain is associated with an increase in the formation of beta-amyloid plaques, which accumulate around brain cells in Alzheimer’s patients.

And in 2009, a research team at the University of Manchester in the U.K. demonstrated that the virus is responsible for the development of the tau tangles within brain cells that are also associated with Alzheimer’s.

An earlier British study, published in 2008, showed that there was a high level of the virus’s DNA within the beta-amyloid plaques extracted posthumously from the brains of Alzheimer’s patients. Thus, over the years, evidence has accumulated that points to the cold sore virus as one of the major causes of various dementias.

It is not clear exactly how this virus causes the conditions that lead to dementia. Scientists think that the virus makes its way toward the brain as we get older and our immune system gradually weakens.

When it reaches the brain, it lies dormant until it is reactivated by some triggering event, such as stress or inflammation in the brain caused by some other infection.

Reactivation of the virus damages the infected brain cells and produces inflammation. Repeated reactivation causes the damage to pile up and become irreversible.

The study published in May last year demonstrated that in artificially created human brain tissue in the lab, large beta-amyloid plaque-like formations developed just three days after infection with the herpes simplex virus, accompanied by high levels of inflammation and other forms of cell damage.

Potential route to a cure

The researchers also tested the effect of antiviral medication and found that antivirals help to reduce the damage to cells caused by the virus.

The role of antiviral drugs had already been studied using human subjects. A 2011 British study conducted in the lab showed that three anti-herpes antiviral drugs on the market are effective in greatly reducing the accumulation of beta-amyloid plaques and tau tangles in infected cells.

Researchers are now looking at ways to treat dementia with antiviral medication early on and perhaps even prevent the onset of the disease.

Dr. Alfred is a Certified Dementia Practitioner and the CEO of Alfred House Assisted Living.
Identifying and reacting to a panic attack

By Craig Sawchuk

Dear Mayo Clinic: After going to the emergency room for what I thought was a heart attack, the doctor told me there were no issues with my heart and that my symptoms were likely from a panic attack. How can I tell the difference, and how can I prevent future panic attacks?

A: While having a heart attack and experiencing a panic attack can feel similar, the symptoms differ, and the two conditions are managed very differently.

Although not life-threatening like a heart attack, a panic attack can be a frightening experience. Panic attacks also can affect your quality of life, as it’s common to develop a fear of having another panic attack.

A heart attack occurs when coronary arteries that supply the heart with blood become narrowed from the buildup of fat, cholesterol and other substances. Most heart attacks involve chest discomfort, such as an uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.

Other heart attack signs and symptoms include shortness of breath, cold sweats, nausea, lightheadedness, and discomfort in other areas of the upper body, such as the arm, neck or jaw.

People commonly link chest pain and other symptoms to a heart attack and may fear the worst if the symptoms come on intensely or abruptly. But you may experience many of the same sensations with a panic attack.

In addition to a sometimes-overwhelming feeling of anxiety or fear, a panic attack may also cause physical signs and symptoms, such as a pounding or racing heart, sweating or chills, trembling or shaking, and breathing problems. Dizziness or weakness, tingly or numb hands, chest or stomach pain and nausea also can occur.

Signs and symptoms of a panic attack often come on suddenly and peak within minutes. A panic attack may occur as a result of a frightening or stressful situation, or may occur out of the blue.

Attacks may even occur unexpectedly and repeated as a component of a panic disorder or along with another mental health condition.

Panic attack vs. heart attack

There are a number of ways that the symptoms of a panic attack differ from those of a heart attack.

For example, the sudden onset of symptoms during extreme stress is more likely to be caused by a panic attack. But onset of symptoms during physical exertion or onset with rest, such as upon waking, is more often associated with a heart attack.

Sharp, stabbing pain in the chest that improves over time — often within minutes — is more likely a panic attack; whereas, pain in the chest from a heart attack is often a squeezing pain and pressure that worsens over time and can radiate to the arm, jaw, shoulder blades or back.

Although the differences may be subtle, understanding them can help you know how best to respond when symptoms occur. This is particularly important for older adults and people with heart disease risk factors who are also prone to panic attacks.

That said, if you’re ever uncertain about your symptoms, don’t delay in seeking medical care, particularly if you’ve never experienced such symptoms.

If you have a history of heart attack, seek immediate medical attention if you experience symptoms that resemble a prior heart attack.

Therapy and meds can help

Getting early treatment for panic attacks can help prevent them from worsening or becoming more frequent.

Cognitive behavioral therapy teaches you different ways of thinking about — and reacting to — the feelings and symptoms that occur with a panic attack. Once you learn to react differently to the fear and physical sensations that occur, the panic attacks often begin to subside.

Antidepressant medications can reduce the signs and symptoms of panic attacks, and have a low risk of serious side effects. They may be used on their own or in combination with cognitive behavioral therapy or another form of therapy.

If you experience symptoms of a panic attack — particularly if they recur — talk to your healthcare provider. He or she can delve into your symptoms and recommend management options, as well as refer you to a psychologist or psychiatrist if needed.

— Craig Sawchuk, Ph.D., L.P., Psychology, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota

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No-fail popovers, no special pan required

By America’s Test Kitchen

Buttered popovers are a great accompaniment to dinner, and they take far less time to make than rolls. Or, drizzled with honey or smeared with jam, they make a delightful breakfast, brunch or snack.

The ideal popover is crisp and well browned on the outside and hollow on the inside, with inner walls that are lush and custardy. And the ideal popover recipe can be made in a popover pan or a muffin tin. We engineered our no-fuss recipe to check both boxes.

We started with bread flour. The extra gluten-forming protein in bread flour helped produce popovers that were about a third taller than those made with all-purpose flour. And their higher walls were also thinner, making them a bit crisper, and that crispness held up as they cooled.

We also found streamlined ways to circumvent a couple of common steps. Many recipes call for preheating the popover pan to jump-start the “pop,” but we found it equally effective (and a little safer) to warm the batter instead by adding heated milk.

Most recipes call for lowering the oven temperature after the popovers reach their maximum height to prevent the outsides from burning, but we found that zeroing in on the ideal baking temperature — 400 degrees — ensured a perfect bake inside and out, with less fuss.

Popovers
Makes 6 to 8

Ingredients:
1¼ cups (6¾ ounces) bread flour
¾ teaspoon table salt
1½ cups 2% low-fat milk, heated to 110 to 120 degrees (skim or whole fat milk may also be used)
3 large eggs
Salted butter

Directions:
1. Adjust the oven rack to the middle position and heat oven to 400 degrees. Lightly spray cups of popover or muffin pan with vegetable oil spray. Using a paper towel, wipe out cups, leaving a thin film of oil on bottom and sides.
2. Whisk together flour and salt in an 8-cup liquid measuring cup or medium bowl. Add milk and eggs and whisk until mostly smooth (some small lumps are OK).
3. Distribute batter evenly among prepared cups in the pan. Bake until popovers are lofty and deep golden brown all over, 40 to 45 minutes. Serve hot, passing butter separately.

Recipe notes
This batter comes together quickly, so start heating your oven before gathering your ingredients and equipment.

Our recipe works best in a 6-cup popover pan, but you can substitute a 12-cup muffin tin, distributing the batter evenly among the 12 cups. Start checking these smaller popovers after 25 minutes.

We strongly recommend weighing the flour for this recipe.

Do not open the oven during the first 30 minutes of baking; if possible, use the oven window and light to monitor the popovers.

Leftover popovers can be stored in a zipper-lock bag at room temperature for up to two days; reheat directly on middle rack of 300-degree oven for 5 minutes.

For 25 years, confident cooks in the know have relied on America’s Test Kitchen for rigorously tested recipes developed by professional test cooks and vetted by 60,000 at-home recipe testers. See more online at americastestkitchen.com/TCA.

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Dear Readers:

Senior Connections extends best wishes to all for 2021, which is well underway with many opportunities and challenges before us. We appreciate the tremendous support we receive from program participants, community partners, funders, contributors and supporters. As we embrace 2021, we reflect on our rich history and plans for the future. We touch the lives of more than 24,000 individuals each year and provide direct services to approximately 3,600 older adults annually. Another “clean audit” without findings or recommendations for period of October 2019 to September 2020 has been recorded. We have talented and dedicated staff and volunteers who continue to serve and support the needs of older adults and caregivers as we address the challenges of COVID-19. We are extremely pleased to have numerous long-term collaborations with community partners. We take this opportunity to thank all funders and supporters. We are extremely grateful to experience continued success and achievement during this time in our history.

As we prepare for the 50th Anniversary of Senior Connections in 2023, we will continue to formalize the Housing Stability Program as we collaborate with community partners to address housing needs. As recently announced, the theme for this year’s Older Americans Month celebration in May is “Communities of Strength.” This theme reminds us that housing is a priority concern for older adults. Many must balance housing related costs with their ability to manage other essential needs such as health care, food, medications and transportation. Many older adults are challenged by housing instability and COVID-19 makes this a significant concern.

In this issue of Engage at Any Age, we are also calling attention to February as a time to recognize the importance of heart health. During National Heart Health Month, we may be able to identify ways to manage our health and heart functions to maintain quality of life. Quality of life is important for all ages. At Senior Connections, our major focus is to address the needs of older adults and caregivers to help them improve overall quality of life by identifying and using available resources. As we recognize Heart Health Month this year, let’s reflect on the impact of COVID-19 to Heart Health. We are impacted by challenges and losses related to COVID-19. This a major reason to consult with medical experts for advice and to get basic information to safeguard and maintain healthy living. We can find and use resources that encourage eating nutritious meals, managing stress, staying engaged and monitoring activity.

Thanks for your support as 2021 unfolds while offering both challenge and opportunity. We are grateful to be of service.

Thelma Bland Watson, Executive Director
Transportation can be a major challenge to an older person’s ability to live independently. Some people remain good drivers into their nineties. Others face physical problems that can make driving unsafe. While cities often have good public transportation, these systems may not meet the needs of older adults. Public transportation routes and schedules are often designed to take people to work rather than to stores, medical appointments, and friends’ homes. Taxis are a good option for older adults who no longer drive, can afford them, and reside in a major city. However, many older adults retire to rural or suburban communities and rely on family and friends for rides.

Transportation concerns can also be worrisome for adult children. Is Dad still driving safely? Are the fears that stopped Mom from driving justified? Can they live on their own if they don’t drive?

Driving and Transportation Issues

Most Americans of all ages love their cars. Cars give us mobility and freedom, as well as a sense of safety, privacy, convenience, and comfort. In many communities, a car is essential because there are few or no alternative forms of transportation. However, some physical and other changes associated with aging can affect a person’s ability to drive safely. For these reasons, safe driving is the major transportation issue most older Americans face.

Older parents and adult children often view driving issues differently. From the older person’s point of view, driving is likely to be more than a practical issue. It is often linked to feelings of competence, independence, and being part of society. Adult children often wonder whether and when their parents should stop driving. Many parents resent having their driving ability questioned and don’t believe there is a problem with older drivers. In fact, a common perception among older people is that younger drivers are a greater danger.

On the other hand, some older drivers worry excessively and without sufficient cause that they are no longer safe behind the wheel. By giving up or limiting their driving too soon, they can restrict their daily lives and become isolated unnecessarily.

Where does the truth lie? Arguments support both sides. Older drivers have a low frequency of accidents and fatalities overall, but a higher rate of accidents and fatalities per mile driven (second only to that of drivers age 16 to 24). Transportation experts believe that the low frequency of problems comes in part from a recognition by older drivers of their declining skills. Older people avoid driving in high-risk situations, such as at night, during rush hour, in bad weather, or on high-speed roads. The slower driving that provokes many complaints from younger people may simply reflect people driving within their limits. However, sometimes it is legitimately dangerous. But, it is when drivers don’t acknowledge difficulties with driving that they present the greater problem to themselves and to others.

In addition, age alone cannot predict fitness behind the wheel. Just as in younger people, driving skills vary enormously by individual. In general, these skills begin to decline at about age 55, but no scientific data support the need to reassess driving ability on the basis of age alone. However, it is also true that the poor eyesight, hearing loss, slower reaction times, and reduced muscle strength and flexibility that many older people experience can all affect driving ability.

When older people do decide to give up driving, other issues may arise. Some may have no one to ask for rides, with family far away and friends no longer driving either. Others may be reluctant to ask for help, not wanting to impose or seeing no way to repay the kindness. Instead they just stay home at a time when being involved with the community is more important than ever.

Staying Mobile Safely

You can help your parents continue to drive safely, assess abilities realistically, and find alternative sources of transportation if necessary. Here are some steps you may want to take:

- Review and adjust your own attitudes about older drivers.
- Try to get an objective idea of your loved one’s driving abilities.
- Accentuate the positive.
- Be sensitive in how you approach driving issues with your loved one.
- Check your loved one’s car to make sure it is a good “fit”.
- Help your loved one assess their current driving skills.
- Address problems the assessment uncovers.
- Encourage habits that make for safer driving.

Include your loved one as an active part of all discussions and decisions about their driving.

Involve others if driving is dangerous and our loved one refuses to make changes or stop driving.

Help loved one find other means of transportation so they can learn how to get around without a car.

The information in this article was provided by AARP, a nonprofit, non-partisan membership organization dedicated to making life better for people 50 and over. To learn more, please visit https://www.granddriver.net/.

CarFit – Helping Mature Drivers Find Their Safest Fit

Program Goals and Outcomes

CarFit is an educational program that offers older adults the opportunity to check how well their personal vehicles “fit” them. The CarFit program also provides information and materials on community-specific resources that could enhance their safety as drivers, and/or increase their mobility in the community.

Why is CarFit Important?

Older drivers are often the safest drivers in that they are more likely to wear their seatbelts, and less likely to speed or drink and drive. However, older drivers are more likely to be killed or seriously injured when a crash does occur due to the greater fragility of their aging bodies. (Source: NHTSA)

Driver safety programs improve adult driver safety by addressing cognitive abilities and skills, however, older drivers can also improve their safety by ensuring their cars are properly adjusted for them. A proper fit in one’s car can greatly increase not only the driver’s safety but also the safety of others.

How is a CarFit check completed?

At a CarFit event, a team of trained technicians and/or health professionals work with each participant to ensure they “fit” their vehicle properly for maximum comfort and safety. A CarFit check takes approximately 20 minutes to complete.

CarFit Virtual Workshops

Due to COVID-19, the CarFit program is hosting a series of Virtual Workshops to provide an in-depth look at several key aspects involved in getting a proper fit in your vehicle. Learn about what to look for when it comes to fit, the everyday household objects you can use to measure and make adjustments, and how this may keep you safer on the road.

Do you want to attend a CarFit event?

Visit www.car-fit.org and click on the “Find an Event” link on the menu on the left to view an up-to-date listing of CarFit events scheduled, including virtual events, throughout the country, or in your area. If no events are listed, please check back for new postings by trained CarFit volunteers near you. For more information email us at info@car-fit.org.
Virginia GrandDriver
Live Long, Play Hard, and Get There Safely

Driving is a complex, fast-paced activity. A typical driver makes over 20 decisions per mile, with less than half a second to react to avoid a collision.

Age-related impairments can affect a driver’s ability to sense, decide and react. Know the early signs of driving difficulty so you can take action to drive longer and more safely. The website www.GrandDriver.net provides Virginians with information to stay safe and mobile on the road as we age.

While most older adults are good drivers, physical changes occur naturally with age and these changes can affect our ability to drive safely.

Ways to plan ahead
• Visit www.GrandDriver.net
• Get safety tips on driving, cycling, and walking.
• Schedule a free safety check to learn easy adjustments to increase vehicle control and comfort.
• Find a transportation provider near you. Contact Senior Connections at 804.672.4495 to learn more.
• It’s about getting you and those you love there safely.

Warning Signs
• Neglects to buckle up
• Has difficulty working pedals
• Has difficulty merging on freeways
• Has trouble seeing other vehicles, cyclists or pedestrians, especially at night
• Ignores or misses stop signs and other traffic signals
• Reacts slowly to sirens and flashing lights of emergency vehicles
• Weaves, straddles lanes, drifts into other lanes or changes lanes without signaling
• Gets lost or disoriented easily, even in familiar places
• Has two or more traffic tickets, warnings, collections or near misses in the past two years

Visit the website www.GrandDriver.net for additional resources:
• Self-assessments on driving ability
• Self-assessments on mobility
• Doctor’s Appointment

Signs It Is Time to Schedule a Doctor’s Appointment
Many heart conditions can be managed with regular treatment or lifestyle changes.

• Difficulty breathing after exercise
• Sweating
• Vomiting and/or nausea
• Dizziness or lightheadedness
• Facial drooping
• Slurred speech
• Unconsciousness/fainting
• Anxiety
• Heart palpitations
• Fatigue
• Numbness
• Impaired vision

These conditions often present with mild symptoms. Seniors should schedule an appointment with their primary physician or cardiologist if they experience symptoms of heart disease like:
• Fluttering in the chest
• Fast, slow, or irregular heartbeat
• High or low blood pressure
• Lightheadedness
• Ongoing fatigue
• Dizziness, fainting, or near fainting
• Difficulty breathing after exercise.
• Lower body swelling

Source: The American Heart Association and Mayo Clinic

Protect Your Heart Health as You Age

Every February is designated as American Heart Month by the federal government to encourage individuals to learn about, prevent, and address heart problems. Since older adults are especially at risk, it is important that they and their caregivers understand heart disease.

Types of Heart Health Problems
There are a wide variety of heart health problems. Cardiovascular disease is a term used to broadly describe the plethora of problems that can impair the cardiovascular system.

Specific cardiac issues include, but are not limited to:
• Diabetes
• Hypertension
• High Cholesterol
• Cardiomyopathy
• Arhythmia
• Valve Problems
• Pericarditis
• Stroke
• Heart Attack
• Heart Failure

While some of these conditions are manageable, others can be fatal if they are not handled properly. It is vital for older adults and caregivers to learn the signs of heart problems.

Signs of Cardiovascular Issues
Emergency treatment should be sought for signs of heart attack and/or stroke, such as:
• Chest pain or tightness
• Upper body pain in the jaw, neck, back or arms
• Difficulty breathing after exercise.
• Ongoing fatigue
• Lightheadedness
• High or low blood pressure
• Fast, slow, or irregular heartbeat
• Fluttering in the chest

Source: The American Heart Association

RIDE CONNECTION

Our goal is to help older adults and persons with disabilities have the knowledge of and access to transportation for medical and non-medical needs to age in place at home, live a healthy and socially connected life. Adults 60 and over and receiving SSA disability benefits are eligible for service. Ride connection:

• Provides information and mobility planning, education and referrals.
• Provides transportation to a limited number of medical appointments each month.
• Provides assistance with accessing public transportation.

For more information, please contact the Ride Connection Hotline at (804) 672-4495.

Living Better with Life’s Simple 7
A guide to guarantee you a longer life and help you prevent heart disease so you can feel stronger and healthier as you age.

Measure and Track the following for Healthy Living:
1. Physical Activity
2. Cholesterol
3. Healthy Diet
4. Blood Pressure
5. Healthy Weight
6. Blood Glucose
7. Smoking Status
The Joy of 55 Years Together

This year, in honor of Valentine’s Day, we celebrate Jack and Dolly Carroll who have been married for 55 years. After meeting each other in biology class at the University of Richmond in 1964, Jack and Dolly began their courtship, which led to their marriage in September of 1966. Since the late 1960s, the Carrolls have claimed Virginia as their home, and they have lived in the same home in Chesterfield for the last 42 years. In addition to their grown children, the Carrolls have ten grandchildren, ranging in age from 16 to 26.

According to the Carrolls, it was their similar personality traits that initially drew them together. Both are extroverts who have always shown an eagerness to learn and meet new people. They have always sought out new adventures in the form of new professional opportunities, new places to travel, and opportunities for new friendships. In addition, the Carrolls both concur about the importance of shared interests and the importance of building on these interests as time passes.

On the other hand, as with all couples, there are things that make Jack and Dolly Carroll different. Jack says that he is the impetuous one, whereas Dolly is the classic “planner.” However, the Carrolls say that they have managed to find a middle ground in their differences. They agree that vibrancy in a marriage comes from a combination of having commonalities and differences.

Despite Jack and Dolly’s personality differences, one thing that they firmly agree on is that the foundation of their relationship sits firmly on their shared religious faith. The Carrolls believe that their faith helps them grow together and to extend grace to one another. They are both regular church attendees and enjoy the community and fellowship that they receive from their church. Even in their seventies, Jack (77) and Dolly (75) are still very active in their community. Jack keeps busy with his consulting and real estate investment businesses and Dolly is active in church leadership. In addition, they make physical fitness a major part of their lives. “Just because you’re in your 70’s doesn’t mean that you have to sit on a rocking chair on your front porch all day,” says Jack. Finally, the Carrolls believe that it is important to avoid isolation, to share their lives with others, and to seek and find interests that can bring encouragement and a sense of personal value and accomplishment. They add that retirements should be a glorious time of reflection, an opportunity for the deepening of old and the development of new relationships to share life experiences and to face each day with excitement about what the future may hold. Senior Connections congratulates the Carrolls on their 55th Anniversary!

Help Support Older Adults in Your Community!

Did you know Senior Connections is a private, non-profit, 501(c)(3)? Essential services such as food, in-home care, emergency services, transportation and social engagement programs are provided through donated funds

YES! I want to help support Senior Connections. Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution of:

$100 ☐  $50 ☐  $25 ☐  Other $________

Contributions will support the Empty Plate Campaign.

Name:_________________________
Address:_________________________
City, State, Zip:_________________________

Mail to Senior Connections,
24 E. Cary St. Richmond, VA 23219.

To make a donation with a credit card, please visit our website at
seniorconnections-va.org
Your quick guide to key dates this year

By Kiplinger Consumer News Service

Planning is everything. Financial strategies can take years to put in motion and even longer to bear fruit. The last thing you want is to sabotage yourself by missing an important financial deadline, like any one of these dates in 2021.

Use this guide as a checklist and reminder of what you will need to do.

January: A new year is your cue to take stock of your retirement savings. Employees over 50 can contribute up to $26,000 ($19,500 for younger workers) to an employer’s saving plan in 2021, the same amount as last year.

Also unchanged are the annual maximums that you can squirrel away in a traditional or Roth IRA: $7,000 for those age 50 and older ($19,500 for younger workers) to an earnings, though the age limit is gone. Beginning in 2021, people 70% and older who are still employed can continue socking away money into an IRA.

Medicare’s general enrollment period runs through March, with coverage starting July 1. During this period, those who missed signing up for Medicare at age 65 and don’t qualify for a “special enrollment period” can enroll in parts A and B, and Medicare Advantage beneficiaries can switch to a different Advantage plan or to traditional Medicare.

March 31: General enrollment for traditional Medicare and open enrollment for Medicare Advantage ends.

April 1: The waiver of 2020 RMDs (required minimum distributions) makes this April 1 deadline for taking the first RMD moot. Plus, if you turned 70 on July 1, 2019 or later, you now have until age 72, not 70%, to start taking withdrawals from tax-deferred retirement saving accounts, with a deadline of April 1, 2022 for the first RMD.

April 15: Your 2020 federal taxes are due, along with any money owed, even if you file for a six-month extension. This is also your last chance to make 2020 contributions to an IRA. Plus, your first estimated tax payment for 2021 is due.

June 15: Second quarter estimated taxes are due.

July 1: Avoid penalties for any underpayment of 2021 estimated taxes with a midyear review. One way to dodge the penalties: Pay at least 90% of the current-year tax tab or 100% of the prior-year tax tab (110% if you have a high income). Consider other moves to trim your 2021 tax bill.

Sept. 15: Your third estimated tax payment for 2021 is due. If you’ve fallen behind on payments or just want a simpler way to pay, withholding the tax from your RMD at any point in 2021 — even the last day of December — is treated as if you paid federal taxes steadily throughout the year.

Sept. 30: By this date, you should have Medicare’s annual notice of changes to formularies, benefits and premiums for either a Medicare Advantage or Part D prescription drug plan. Changes take effect in 2022.

Oct. 15: For all you extension filers, this is the deadline to turn in your 2020 tax return. Also, Medicare open enrollment begins today. You have from now to Dec. 7 to switch between traditional Medicare and Medicare Advantage, or choose new Advantage and Part D plans, with coverage effective in 2022.

Nov. 1: Starting today, early retirees in most states have until Dec. 15 to buy health insurance for 2022 on the Affordable Care Act’s exchanges.

Dec. 1: If you plan to make a qualified charitable contribution (QCD) from your IRA, act now to ensure that the charity receives the money in time. Traditional IRA owners 70% or older can transfer up to $100,000 directly to charity in 2021 with a QCD.

Dec. 7: Medicare’s open enrollment ends.

Dec. 15: The ACA’s open enrollment ends. If you haven’t already done so, take your 2021 RMD now.

Dec. 31: By year-end, your RMD must be out of your IRA and any QCDs should be in the charity’s account.

Offered a free year of Netflix? Not so fast

By Better Business Bureau of Virginia

Between the winter weather and COVID-19, most people are spending a lot of time at home. Streaming services, such as Netflix or Hulu, are more popular than ever.

Watch out for scams cashing in on this opportunity. BBB Scam Tracker has gotten numerous reports of a text messaging con tricking would-be watchers with the offer of “free” Netflix for a year.

How the scam works

You receive a text message that says something like this: “Due to the pandemic, Netflix is offering everyone a free year of the service to help you while staying at home. Streaming services, such as Netflix or Hulu, are more popular than ever.

How to avoid text message scams

With many legitimate businesses using text messages to communicate with customers, scammers have come up with their own SMS cons. These are often called “smishing” (for SMS phishing) scams.

Don’t believe every text you receive. As a general rule, companies can’t send you text messages unless you opt in to receive them. If you receive a text message from a company you haven’t given permission to contact you in this way, proceed with caution. In fact, any unsolicited text message should be considered a potential fraud.

Go to the source. If an offer seems odd, or too good to be true, contact the company directly. Call or email customer service to find out if the text message you received is legitimately from that company.

Take a close look at web addresses. If you follow a link in a text message that you believe is legitimate, examine the web address carefully before you take any action to make sure you are visiting a company’s official website and not a look-alike. If you don’t see “s” at the end of http(s), it’s an unsecured website and possibly a scam.

Ignore instructions to text “STOP” or “NO.” Even if you realize the message is a scam, don’t text back for any reason. Scammers may want you to text back to verify that your phone number is an active one. Instead, simply block the number so you won’t receive messages from it in the future.

Change your password. Even if you don’t fall for this scam, Netflix advises its customers to change their password if they’ve been targeted. Check help.netflix.com/en/node/65674.

For more information

Learn more about smishing scams on BBB.org. Con artists are sending phony texts pretending to be banking alerts, “mandatory” COVID-19 testing requirements, and package delivery problems.

If you’ve received text messages from scammers, report your experience to BBB.org/ScamTracker. Your report can help raise consumer awareness about this common scam tactic.

For more about scams, go to BBB.org/ScamTips. (Netflix, Inc. and Hulu are both BBB Accredited Businesses.)
Dividing your estate around black sheep

By Kara Duckworth

Every family faces a unique set of circumstances when it comes to wealth, financial planning and thinking about the future. But no matter the situation — whether you have many children or none, whether you’re married or divorced — it is essential to consider your specific beneficiaries’ circumstances when it comes to estate planning.

Perhaps you are worried about substance abuse, a son- or daughter-in-law who is irresponsible with money or has mental illness, or siblings with different levels of motivation. Perhaps you simply want to incentivize certain behaviors in the future. All of these situations can be addressed thoughtfully and effectively in your estate planning documents.

There are several myths about how estates must be distributed that can lead to lots of worry about what will happen to a “wild child” in the future and stress about family dynamics. Let’s explore four of them.

**Myth #1: You must divide your estate evenly among beneficiaries**

Disinheriting a beneficiary is more common than you think. Sometimes, disinheriting happens for a variety of reasons that have nothing to do with disapproval of a potential beneficiary’s lifestyle choices.

For example, if you have a family member who is disabled, you may opt to leave more assets to that beneficiary to ensure their medical or caregiving needs will be met in the future, thereby leaving less to your other beneficiaries.

In other cases — ranging from wanting to protect assets from a spendthrift beneficiary to equalizing distributions when major financial gifts have been made during life — you may choose to make disproportionate allocations.

If you have helped one child with a down payment on a home but your other child has not settled down enough to be ready to handle homeownership, you may want to leave that child additional funds from your estate to make up for helping the first child buy a home.

No matter the reason for disinheriting completely or making unequal distributions, it is best to explain either in your estate documents or in a separate letter the rationale behind your decision so as to avoid the possibility of a claim against the estate or even just hard feelings among family members.

**Myth #2: Once you have disinherited the wayward beneficiary, you cannot change your mind**

In actuality, we recommend that you re-evaluate your estate-planning choices periodically. Situations change, hopefully in a positive direction, and you can then revise your estate documents to provide incentives for your beneficiary to continue making progress.

**Myth #3: You cannot control things from the grave**

Of course, you won’t have direct control after you pass. You can, however, make specific provisions in your trust to incentivize desired behaviors.

Examples include establishing trusts for beneficiaries that call for the trustee to earn a certain dollar amount or allow distributions of percentages of the assets of the trust upon achieving certain life milestones.

You can also stagger the distribution schedule so that a beneficiary cannot burn through their inheritance all at once.

It is possible to treat the share of inheritance for one beneficiary different from others. You can allow one (financially responsible) child to access their share of the estate in lump sum, establish a trust for the second child who is still finding their path in life with the ability to access the assets in a staggered fashion, and put the third child’s share in an incentive trust to encourage more responsible behavior in the future.

**Myth #4 (and how to bust it): Trusts are complicated**

Certain types of trusts allow you to name someone to help your beneficiary manage their inheritance. While you may not want to burden a family member or friend with the responsibilities of being a trustee — particularly if you have a serious or long-term situation with the beneficiary, such as mental illness or substance abuse — you can name a professional trustee to assume the administrative responsibilities of a trust.

Although there are costs associated with hiring a corporate trustee, they are a small price to pay for the peace of mind in knowing that your loved ones, even the black sheep of the family, will receive their inheritance.

Even under the best of circumstances, estate planning can be difficult. But rather than avoid the subject or struggle to grapple with it on your own, discuss the options available with your financial advisor and estate planning attorney.
Consumer rights when planning funerals

By Joshua Slocum

Few of us know our rights when making funeral arrangements. According to an online survey of 2,009 Americans commissioned in November by the Funeral Consumers Alliance (FCA) and Consumer Federation of America (CFA), only one-quarter of respondents know that funeral homes must provide a quote on the phone and an itemized price list in person.

To better inform consumers about their funeral rights, FCA and CFA released a free pamphlet titled “Planning a Funeral: 5 Key Tips.”

Here are summaries of the points that will allow you to take control of your funeral choices:

**Talk it out ahead of time**

Making funeral arrangements at the last minute can be stressful, expensive and disappointing in terms of services received.

A frank conversation with family can make everyone’s wishes and needs clear — which services are important and meaningful, and which are not? Cremation or whole-body burial? Does your loved one want viewing/calling hours? A graveside service? Does he or she envision a funeral ceremony at the funeral home, house of worship, family home, or no ceremony?

**Know your rights**

The Federal Trade Commission’s “Funeral Rule” gives you specific rights when arranging a funeral. They include:

- The right to receive an itemized price list (called a “General Price List”) at the beginning of any discussion with a funeral home about funeral arrangements
- The right to price quotes over the phone
- The right to buy goods and services item by item, rather than as a package
- In most cases, the right to decline embalming
- The right to a written, itemized estimate before the funeral
- The right to supply your own casket without paying a “handling fee” at the funeral home.

**Shop around**

In the same town or region, some funeral homes may charge twice as much as others for the same services.

Visit funerals.org to see if there’s a Funeral Consumers Alliance group in your area. These groups offer cost-comparison surveys, and may be able to tell you which local funeral homes are most affordable.

Pick several funeral homes and ask them for a “General Price List.” While the Funeral Rule doesn’t require funeral homes to mail or provide price lists electronically, some funeral homes will do so. If you visit in person, the funeral home must give you a price list to keep.

Consider doing business with a funeral home that posts its prices online or is willing to email their price list on request.

**Keep it simple**

All funeral homes have to offer two simple services: Direct Cremation and Immediate/Direct Burial. These services do not include embalming or any ceremonies, and they’re usually the most affordable choices.

- For Direct Cremation, $800 to $1,300 is a reasonable price range.
- For Immediate/Direct Burial, $1,000 to $1,500 is a reasonable price range. Remember that the casket is usually extra, and that cemetery fees always cost extra. Body donation to a medical institution may be free. Check with the medical schools in your area.

Instead of paying a funeral home for a ceremony, survivors can arrange a memorial service later at home, a house of worship, or at a venue like a restaurant banquet room.

**Avoid expensive extras**

Some funeral homes will try to sell you or your survivors goods or services that may offer little benefit but do drive up costs.

Sealed or “protective” caskets cost more than the non-sealed but don’t “protect” the body from decay. (No caskets do.) If the cemetery requires a rigid outer container to surround the casket, choose a simple concrete grave liner. More expensive sealing vaults, like sealing caskets, don’t do anything extra yet cost more.

Pay close attention to the items included in any package funeral. You have the right to choose goods and services item by item.

Joshua Slocum is executive director of Funeral Consumers Alliance. To read the whole brochure, visit bit.ly/funeralrights or funerals.org.

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FIFTYPLUS — FEBRUARY 2021
Appalachia offers simple life and luxury

By Victor Block

Last fall, my wife, Fyllis, and I visited southwestern Virginia, home to a luxury boutique resort which has won accolades as among the best resorts in the country.

But we also took time to explore the area around the resort, Patrick County, whose slogan is “Experience the simple life.”

Located along the Virginia-North Carolina border, about a five-hour drive from Washington, D.C., Patrick County is a getaway with eclectic appeal.

The elegant yet friendly Primland Resort offers unique activities like stargazing and all-terrain vehicle rides, while the surrounding county offers an immersion in a locale where people cling proudly to their way of life and their Appalachian heritage.

Live music is everywhere in Patrick County, from scheduled performances and festivals to pop-up sessions that can occur almost any time and at almost any place. You can hear gospel, bluegrass and country music at festivals, venues and even coffee shops.

Driving through the county, we encountered sparse traffic on narrow, curvy roads. We occasionally passed trucks carrying freshly downed trees, horse trailers or a plow heading for a farm.

Country stores left over from earlier times attracted our attention and, in some cases, our cash. First, we visited the rambling Poor Farmers Market, which lives up to its claim to be an “Old-Fashioned Country Store.” Homemade jams, jellies, cakes and pies share shelf space with bags of grits, barrels of beans, sacks of locally grown fruit, and beverages from a nearby winery.

At the nearby 1892 Mayberry Trading Post, corncob pipes, wooden toys and quilts are sold in the former post office, where open-letter cubicles marked with names of original owners remain as they were nearly 130 years ago.

Historic sites

Some of the flour sold at the Trading Post was ground at Mabry Mill, which has been in operation since 1905. The water-driven gristmill is said to be one of the most photographed places on the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Strolling through the site, located at Milepost 176 of the Blue Ridge Parkway, I could envision people from previous generations going about their chores.

In normal, non-pandemic times, National Park Service staff conduct demonstrations of blacksmithing, basketmaking and other activities. A walking path leads to a blacksmith shop, cabin, displays of early farm equipment and a moonshine still.

Because Patrick County is compact — slightly smaller than Montgomery County, Maryland — its attractions are never far apart.

Visitors can tour the Reynolds Homestead in Critz, Virginia, the birthplace of the tobacco magnate. A reassembled barn represents the original sheds where tobacco leaves were hung to dry. The Reynolds family cemetery is located near the Greek Revival mansion, and across a field is a cemetery for the people enslaved by the family.

Patrick County was also home to Confederate Gen. James Ewell Brown Stuart, better known as J.E.B. Stuart. His short life (he died in 1864 at age 31 after a battle) is told at Stuart’s birthplace and family home. Its 75 scenic acres contain hiking trails, a family cemetery and a separate slave cemetery.

“Fairy stones” are endemic to Patrick County, found in only a few places on Earth. According to local legend, the tiny minerals are the creations of fairies who once dwelled among the nearby hills and valleys.

The best place to search for stones is at the state park in Stuart named for them. For those not fortunate enough to find their own, the park’s gift shop sells the stones as is, or polished and fashioned into jewelry.

Bermuda-sized resort

Then it was time to see the Primland Resort, a high-end property with a friendly atmosphere. It’s located in Meadows of Dan, a village that got its name from an early English settler who took note of the beautiful grassland that carpets the area.

When Fyllis and I first arrived at Primland, we were struck by its expansive size. At the entrance gate to the complex, the congenial attendant said we had to drive six miles to reach the lodge. He chuckled and added, “Even when you get here, you’re not really here.”

So true! The resort’s main campus sprawls over 12,000 mountaintop and valley acres, and for good measure adds 2,000 more outside the gates. That makes Primland about the size of the island of Bermuda.

The family-owned property got its start as a source of scrub oak, a kindling wood, and later functioned as a hunting reserve. Today visitors are welcome to hunt live game or bone their skills firing at clay pigeons at the shooting range. From fly fishing on the Dan River to horseback riding to trail hiking, there are something-for-everyone alternatives at Primland.

Golfing is big at the resort, which received high praise from Golf Magazine, Travel & Leisure Golf, Golf Digest and others. Sightings of wildlife on the links are not uncommon, and the course holds the prestigious Audubon International certification for environmental protection.

If tennis is too tame, guests may try archery or tomahawk throwing. There are also mountain-bike trails, an indoor pool and watersports at the on-site reservoir.

Fyllis and I decided to brave a rugged all-terrain-vehicle ride, taking turns at the steering wheel. After bumping and bounc-
International travel pass in development

IATA, the International Air Transport Association, is developing a digital “Travel Pass” data system that it hopes will serve as the standard “health pass” for international air travelers.

The basic idea is simple: a computer system collects your personal ID information, the results of your most recent vaccinations and tests, current information on how well those vaccinations and tests are performing, and current entry requirements for most countries.

Then, when you want to travel, the computer’s algorithm will combine all the inputs and display whether or not you’re “good to go” on any individual trip.

Specifically, this project is designed to make it easy for travelers posing no health hazard to start flying all around the world even before the pandemic is completely controlled.

And, at least for now, the good-to-go result will be based primarily on data on your COVID-19 situation: some combination of your most recent test results and their validity, and your COVID vaccine and its known efficacy.

The system design implies that it will continuously update data from the various laboratories and governmental health institutions involved with COVID-19.

IATA is calling for COVID testing for all international travelers, along with a data flow that will allow all stakeholders to facilitate travel. As envisioned, it will provide:

- Governments with the means to verify the authenticity of tests and the identity of those presenting the test certificates.
- Airlines with the ability to verify that passengers meet the requirements for travel.
- Laboratories with the means to issue digital certificates to passengers that will be recognized and accepted by governments and airlines.
- Travelers with the means to convey test information securely to airlines and border authorities.

Dependent on smartphones

In some ways, this system is a technical metamorphosis of the old “yellow card” vaccination record issued by the World Health Organization (WHO). What’s new about IATA’s proposal is that it’s 100% based on smartphone/tablet apps.

You’ll apply and enter your data through the app, and you’ll display the results on the app when you board a flight or arrive in a different country. You probably won’t actually “show” it; you’ll pass your phone near a contactless RFID terminal.

So far, nothing I’ve seen treats the question of how you might use the system if you don’t have or use a smart phone or tablet. Taken along with the trend to cashless payments, adoption of the IATA system as an international standard would inevitably lead to the conclusion that the days are coming when you must either carry and use a smart device or stay home.

IATA’s motive is not altruistic: IATA is the worldwide trade association of large airlines, all of which desperately want you back in their airplanes as soon as possible. But it’s been clear for many months that the resumption of full-scale worldwide travel will depend on some sort of universally recognized and accepted system of test and vaccination documentation.

IATA is attempting to preempt the position of designing and operating such a situation, and it may well be successful. So far, no serious competitive system has shown up. But it’s very likely that most airlines will eagerly adopt the system. What remains to be seen is whether the government health agencies involved in setting rules will also be in favor.

My guess is that most will: Like the airlines, governments are under heavy pressure to allow their citizens to roam the world and to open their borders for incoming visitors.

The folks who kvetch about encroachments on their personal freedoms by big data are likely to kvetch about this deal. And it certainly does post the potential of making it harder for you to limit the spread of personal information that you’d like to stay personal.

My own take is that we’ve already so far down the big-data path that IATA’s add-on won’t tip the balance to any noticeable degree. Feel free to disagree. But if you opt out, don’t expect to be heading overseas any time soon.

Email Ed Perkins at eperkins@mind.net. Check out his rail travel website at railguru.com. © 2020 Ed Perkins. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

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Patrick County
From page 16

ing for an hour over rocky roads, around sharp hairpin turns and through mud puddles, we wondered if our internal organs remained where they were before the ride.

Spa and stargazing
Following a heart-thumping outing, what could be more relaxing than a visit to the spa? The Spa at Primland focuses on Native American healing rituals, supplemented with European techniques and organic products and essential oils. Of course, the usual massages, facials and nail services are available for men as well as women.

Perhaps unique among such resorts, Primland houses a serious telescope and offers stargazing sessions led by a knowledgeable astronaut. Even if you have little interest in astronomy, the enthusiasm of guides like Lauren, a self-proclaimed “professional-amateur astronomer,” is infectious.

As images of Mars, constellations and black holes were transmitted from the telescope to monitors around the room, she described what we were seeing and threw in food-for-thought facts, such as that there are some 400 billion stars in our galaxy alone.

As if this inventory of things to do and see at Primland wasn’t enough, the resort hosts a series of special events throughout the year, including bingo nights, a photography workshop, tastings of local wines and family movie nights.

Best of all, Primland Resort is open during the pandemic. Temperature checks upon entry as well as increased sterilization will put your mind at ease. Masques are required in public spaces. In the restaurants, tables are spaced more than six feet apart.

If you go
What price can you put on luxury and enjoyment? A visit to Primland isn’t inexpensive. Rates during December through March begin at $340, then rise to $450 per night. Nearly all activities also involve an extra charge.

The resort’s three excellent dining venues focus on fresh local organic and sustainable ingredients. The Elements restaurant dinner menu combines regional favorites like shrimp and grits ($20) with international fare such as agnolotti potato and truffle-filled pasta ($28). For more information or reservations, call 1-866-328-6210 or visit primland.com.

A stay at the somewhat quirky Uptown Suites of Stuart is a great way to immerse yourself in the locale. Situated on a classic American Main Street, the hotel’s suites occupy the second floor of a former office building constructed in 1928.

The suites include a living room, kitchen and the usual hotel amenities. Rates begin at $95. For more information, call (276) 694-4471 or visit uptownsuitesofstuart.com.

When it comes to casual dining, the El Rancho restaurant (119 North Main Street in Stuart) is a favorite among locals for its burritos, fajitas and other Mexican cuisine ($9.95-$14.55). The atmosphere is inviting, and the wait staff pleasant. For more information, call (276) 694-8555.

The place for breakfast, early lunch and some down-home flavor is The Coffee Break Café (111 North Main Street, Stuart). A full meal (egg, bacon, potato and pancake) costs just $5, and a giant cup of coffee costs $1. For more information, call (276) 694-4232.

To learn more about Patrick County, go to visitpatrickcounty.org or call (276) 694-6094.

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Local songwriter pens an anthem for men

By Catherine Brown

It’s February — the month of Valentine’s Day, chocolates, roses, romantic movies and love songs.

If you’re tired of mushy-gushy romance, however, Ronald Robinson has a new song for you: “Don’t Bring No Suitcase.” Released last December, the song Robinson co-wrote with musician Kenneth Parker is the antithesis of a love song.

Robinson, 66, became inspired to write it when a friend asked him why he always wrote love songs, which are typically more popular with women. The friend encouraged Robinson to write a song for a male audience instead.

While searching for inspiration, Robinson heard a song on the radio: “Irreplaceable” by pop star Beyoncé.

“It’s a women’s anthem telling guys they can be replaced,” Robinson said. “It was then I decided to write a song with an anthem for the guys.”

Robinson reflected on a typical dating situation: If a woman wants a relationship to become more serious, she might start leaving clothing or personal items in the man’s apartment, presumably to get him used to the idea of living together.

“The guy might see the clothing in his closet and say to himself, ‘I don’t mind these few pieces in the closet, but she’d better not bring a whole suitcase full of clothing,’” Robinson explained.

Robinson realized he had a good concept for the song: a guy who doesn’t want to make a commitment. He wrote the song lyrics, and Parker helped him develop the music — a Latin groove with a Santana-style guitar solo and even a rap section. Parker

See SONGWRITER, page 21

Ronald Robinson’s new single, “Don’t Bring No Suitcase,” which he co-wrote with Kenneth Parker, is the opposite of a love song. Listen to the song on Amazon Music, Spotify, Apple Music or bit.ly/dontbringnosuitcase.
Gardening’s physical, emotional benefits

By Lela Martin

“Biophilia” is a word first used by psychoanalyst Erich Fromm in the 1960s, and later popularized by Pulitzer Prize-winning biologist E. O. Wilson, to describe the passionate love of life and all that is alive.

True gardeners typically love to spend time outdoors. But did you know your garden loves you back?

American garden writer Robert Dash explains that the positive power of gardening comes from “reciprocal behavior. We tend it in exchange for the gift of it.”

During the pandemic, love of nature and love from nature have become even more important to us.

Health benefits

One of the most obvious gifts of gardening is working outdoors in the sun. Sunlight lowers blood pressure and increases vitamin D levels, especially during summer.

The blue light in the sun’s rays sets our circadian rhythm and regulates the production of serotonin in our brains. Serotonin is produced through the activity of soil bacteria called *antinomycetes*.

About 10 years ago, neuroscientist Christopher Lowry discovered *Mycobacterium vaccae*, another soil bacterium that can boost serotonin levels and help regulate the immune system. Lowry’s experiments found that mice exposed to *M. vaccae* exhibited lower levels of inflammation and were more resilient to stress.

Meditation and kindness

Another reason tending your garden may reduce stress is that, while gardening, one’s mind often goes into a focused state similar to meditation, according to Clare Cooper Marcus, one of the founders of the field of environmental psychology.

“When you are looking intensely at something, or you bend down to smell something, you bypass the [analytical] function of the mind.” With your senses awakened, you exist in the present moment.

Gardening can also increase feelings of kindness. Anthropologist Tim Ingold explains that “caring for an environment is like caring for people: It requires deep, personal and affectionate involvement — an involvement not just of mind or body, but of one’s entire undivided being.”

Additionally, a Korean test demonstrated that viewing natural scenery activated parts of the brain involved in generating empathy and increasing generosity.

Our innate need for beauty

American botanist Luther Burbank once noted, “Flowers always make people better, happier and more helpful; they are sunshine, food and medicine for the soul.”

In 2005, Rutgers professor Jeannette Haviland-Jones found empirical evidence of this positive reaction to flowers. When gifted with a bouquet, everyone in the study smiled. As Sigmund Freud said, “The enjoyment of beauty has a peculiar, mildly intoxicating quality of feeling” that can “compensate for a great deal.”

Improved memory

Can gardening cut your risk of dementia? Some studies suggest it can. In 2008, University of Michigan researchers found memory performance and attention spans improved by 20% after subjects spent an hour interacting with nature. (The weather did not affect the results.)

Additionally, an Australian study in 2006 found that gardening could lower the risk of dementia by 36%. For 16 years, researchers tracked more than 2,800 people over the age of 60, concluding that physical activity — daily gardening in particular — could reduce the incidence of dementia in future years.

Healing powers

Based on his own childhood illness during which he viewed a tree outside his window, environmental psychologist Roger Ulrich did research in 1984 on the healing power of nature.

In his study, hospital patients with a view of the outdoors were found to have lower levels of stress and more positive moods. They also needed fewer doses of pain medicines and, more importantly, they were discharged one day sooner.

Viewing flowering plants and gardens has also been found to alter the brain’s electrical activity through higher levels of

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recorded the song with Rudy Walker, a Richmond-based singer/songwriter.

**A romantic at heart**

Someone listening to Robinson’s newest release might assume he is a perpetual bachelor, but “Don’t Bring No Suitcase” doesn’t reflect the songwriter’s own life or 20-year marriage.

“I don’t do a lot of writing from experience,” he said. “I’ve got no more than six or seven songs based on my own experiences,” he said.

That’s a small fraction of the more than 500 songs he has written. About 50 of those have been set to music and released.

Later this month, Robinson will release another song with a storyline very different from “Don’t Bring No Suitcase.” It’s a love song Robinson wrote to his wife to celebrate their 20th anniversary this April.

Robinson has loved listening to music and writing songs for much of his life. Years ago, Robinson managed a vocal group based in his hometown, Petersburg. That group, called A Touch of Charm, was known for playing Temptations-type music.

The group’s album, I Caught an Angel, includes covers like “Just My Imagination” as well as original songs. The album sold well, especially in Japan, where more than 4,000 copies were bought. In 1980, A Touch of Charm beat 77 East Coast groups in a contest sponsored by Black Entertainment Television.

**Influenced by the Temptations**

In the early 2000s, Robinson released a seven-song CD entitled Education Is the Key to Life. In those songs, he addresses topics such as illiteracy, teen pregnancy and other challenges facing youth in schools.

Robinson has also published two children’s books: Stanley the Talking Parrot and You’re a Dog, Chase. Before the pandemic, he would visit local schools to read his books aloud to students.

Robinson, who double-majored in psychology and sociology at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Missouri, retired in 2019 from many years working in corrections and then as a truancy officer for Petersburg and Richmond city schools.

When he himself was a student at Petersburg High School, Robinson played basketball with Moses Malone, who went on to play for the ABA and the NBA from 1974 to 1995. Their team won two back-to-back state championships.

After having both hips replaced, Robinson no longer plays basketball. He does, however, walk three to four miles a day and stays busy with his creative endeavors.

“Every morning I wake up, I say thanks,” Robinson said. “I don’t take life for granted.”

**Gardening**

We all need recharging from time to time, particularly during a pandemic. Selin Kesebir, associate professor of organizational behavior at the London Business School, explains that, although people might not continue outdoor hobbies such as gardening post-pandemic, “being outdoors is a very good way of coping with the current situation.”

This year, let nature nurture you.

Lela Martin is a Master Gardener with the Chesterfield County office of the Virginia Cooperative Extension.

**Write a letter to the editor.**

See page 2.
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