Making Richmond cooler and greener

Rob Jones, executive director of Groundwork RVA, teaches students to plant and care for trees throughout the city. His organization is one of a dozen groups involved in the current Greening Southside Richmond project.

Photo by Samia Minnicks

A publication of the Beacon Newspapers, Inc.
Life lessons learned

If you’ve been reading Fifty Plus in recent months, or if you participated in our first Virtual 50+Expo last fall, you will know something about Dr. Ken Dychtwald, the respected author of 18 books on aging, founder of Age Wave, and world-traveled consultant and public speaker on the topic.

We profiled him on the cover of our October 2020 issue, and he gave the keynote address at our Expo. More than 1,000 visitors watched his presentation on our Virtual Expo website, and we received many positive comments about it.

I bring him up again because, at age 70, he is publishing a memoir, Radical Curiosity: One Man’s Search for Cosmic Magic and a Purposeful Life. He kindly sent me an advance copy.

It’s in the format of a collection of stories and essays, many of which build on each other, describing a number of intriguing, exciting, emotional and educational experiences, and some of the lessons they have taught him.

I vaguely knew that Dychtwald had a colorful past centering on the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California during the 1960s. But his memoir really puts readers right in the action and mind/body (even out-of-body) experiences that were Esalen’s hallmark at the time.

It was also there that Dychtwald first came to realize great wisdom could be gleaned from older adults (at that point, older hippies) — a discovery that was to shape his entire career.

In the same direct and insightful way, Dychtwald shows us how he (perhaps like many Boomers) transitioned from the anti-materialism of the 60s, to a college education and early work life in the 70s, to a “meteoric rise” as a business advisor and world expert in the 80s, to a multimillionaire venture capitalist in the 90s, only to be briefly left bankrupt, destitute and suicidal by the collapse of the whole enterprise due to unforeseen effects of the internet on his business plan.

It’s a wild ride in this book, from the Tao to the Dow and back again. While a more conventional autobiography might be more cohesive and better organized, I like Radical Curiosity for its evident honesty, self-awareness and sense of humor, even if readers might imagine Dychtwald has a few more life lessons to learn before all is said and done.

He invited me to print an excerpt from the book in Fifty Plus, and I have chosen the following short chapter that made me laugh out loud when I read it.

Also, upon further reflection, I realized it contained one of the most valuable pieces of advice in the book. I hope you enjoy it:

**Learning from “the Best”**

Find out who you are, and do it on purpose. — Dolly Parton

In the 1980s, with the arrival of cassette-tape players in cars (replacing eight-tracks, but far before CDs, DVDs, podcasts, or the Internet), more and more people began to purchase audio self-help learning programs they could listen to while commuting to work.

Usually there was a six-tape course, with each tape/module lasting around twenty-five minutes — which, handily, was the average commute time.

The leading publisher in this audio-learning space was Nightingale Conant, based outside of Chicago, which produced an unending stream of self-help learning programs in conjunction with best-selling authors and sought-after motivational speakers.

Since I was conducting seminars on body-mind, wellness, and peak performance, they reached out to me and commissioned me to write The Keys to High Performance Living. It was fun to do. I recorded the six sessions in a studio, got them edited, and then sort of forgot about it.

However, as a regular buyer of Nightingale Conant programs, I wound up on several of their targeted databases as the kind of guy who was interested in many self-improvement subjects. So, when a new program was released that might be up my alley (according to their database, which tracked my purchases), I usually received a direct-marketing brochure for the tape set and an offer to purchase the program in one of those customized form letters we all were getting used to receiving in that era.

While I was conducting seminars on bodymind, holistic health, wellness, and peak performance, I had over-loaded my life with more pressure and complexity than I felt I could handle. My exercise regime was faltering, and I had gained weight and was having trouble sleeping.

Then one day, I received a brochure in the mail from the president of Nightingale-Conant, Dave Nightingale, which read:

Dear Mr. Ken Dychtwald:

Do you feel you have lost control of your life? Are you suffering from too much stress? Are you finding it harder and harder to stay on your regular fitness program? Are you struggling to balance your work and family responsibilities? Do you feel that you are not achieving your highest potential?

If so, then Dr. Ken Dychtwald can help you! In his new six-tape program, this well-known expert on high performance living will help you solve all of your problems and take control of your life again.

What? This letter wasindicating that if I was out of control, then I could help me.

Although I didn’t buy the six-tape Keys to High Performance Living, this existential message from me to myself seemed strangely like a very good idea. After all, when most of us feel like we’re losing control, we probably don’t need some “expert” to tell us what to do.

One of the nice things about growing up and growing older is that most of what so-called experts can teach you, you’ve already learned. The real challenge is often less about knowing what to do and more about doing what you know.

Excerpted from Radical Curiosity: One Man’s Search for Cosmic Magic and a Purposeful Life by Ken Dychtwald, PhD, with the permission of Unnamed Press. © 2021 by Ken Dychtwald

I’d like to know what you think about that pearl of wisdom, and what pearls of wisdom from your own life you would like to share with your fellow Fifty Plus readers.

Please email or write us, or send us a comment through our website, fiftyplus-richmond.com. We look forward to hearing from you!

Copies of Radical Curiosity can be purchased on Amazon.com, $28 hard copy, $11.49 Kindle.

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HELP US make Fifty Plus even more useful and relevant to you. You may win $100!

Please complete this survey by filling out and mailing this page to us, or answer it online at bit.ly/April21FiftyPlus. All entries received by May 7 will be entered into a raffle for $100 cash.

1. How often do you read Fifty Plus?  
☐ Regularly ☐ Occasionally ☐ This is my first time

2a. How do you obtain Fifty Plus? (check all that apply)  
☐ Pick up free print copy ☐ Subscribe for mailed copy  
☐ View on the website ☐ Get email link (Note: we can send you this link each month at no charge, if you like. Just check off the box below.)

2b. Where did you obtain this month's edition?  
(In print, please identify the pick-up location.)

2c. What additional pick-up locations around Richmond would be helpful to you? (Please provide address and name of a contact, if known):

3a. Are you thinking about moving in the next two years?  
☐ Yes ☐ No

3b. If yes, where are you considering? (check all that apply)  
☐ A 55+ housing/retirement community  
☐ An assisted living community or group home  
☐ A smaller house/townhouse/condo/rental apartment  
☐ To live with family member(s)

4a. How interested are you generally in the types of advertisers you see in Fifty Plus?  
☐ Very interested ☐ Somewhat interested ☐ Not interested

4b. What other types of products and services would you be interested in patronizing if they advertised in Fifty Plus? Please list:

5. When you respond to an ad in Fifty Plus, which of the following steps do you take (please check all that apply)  
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☐ I call the phone number in the ad  
☐ I visit their location  
☐ I tear out the ad and file for future reference

6a. Have you patronized a Fifty Plus advertiser in the last six months?  
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7. What generally entices you to respond to an ad in a publication? Please check all that apply  
☐ It advertises a product or service I need  
☐ It offers a free consultation  
☐ It offers a free brochure or book  
☐ It contains a discount coupon  
What else? (please describe) ____________________________

8a. Were you a regular reader of Boomer Magazine when it was printed?  
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8b. Please list any types of articles (or authors) you miss from Boomer that you would like to see in Fifty Plus: ____________________________

9. Please tell us your approximate age:  
☐ Under 50 ☐ 50-64 ☐ 65-75 ☐ Over 75

10. Are you:  
☐ Male ☐ Female

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Email: ____________________________

Mailing Address (optional): ____________________________

City ____________________________ State ________ Zip ________

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Would you be willing to participate in a local focus group of Fifty Plus readers to help us improve our publication?  
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If yes, be sure to provide contact information above.

You may complete this survey at bit.ly/April21FiftyPlus

Or fill out this page and mail to:  
Fifty Plus, c/o The Beacon  
P.O. Box 2227, Silver Spring, MD 20915-2227
Richmonders restore city’s tree canopy

By Glenda C. Booth

Richmond is getting greener, thanks to Richmonders who are getting involved in a number of tree-planting projects around town.

One of them, led by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, involves a coalition of 12 organizations in the Greening Southside Richmond Project, who are working to convert asphalt into green spaces.

Participants are planting 250 trees on municipal properties and giving away 400 trees in communities like Oak Grove, Bellemeade and Manchester.

Studies have found that in many cities, including Richmond, some neighborhoods with minimal tree canopy are five to 15 degrees hotter than tree-covered areas. That’s because these neighborhoods tend to have more paved surfaces, which absorb and radiate heat.

“Southside Richmond has been underresourced for decades,” said Ann Jurczyk, director of outreach and advocacy for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and coalition leader.

“The lack of investment in green spaces — and trees in particular — correlates to poorer air quality and ‘heat islands,’ which can lead to increased emergency room visits,” she said.

“We can’t make right decades of disinvestment, but we can improve water and air quality and hopefully the health of Richmond’s Southside residents today,” she said.

Other partners in Greening Southside Richmond include the city, Southside ReLeaf, True Timber Arborists, Inc., Virginia Department of Forestry and VCU’s College of Humanities and Sciences Department of Biology.

Health, economic benefits

Trees provide numerous benefits, which biologists call “ecosystem services.” For example, they reduce stormwater runoff, which can pollute local waters, and enhance groundwater restoration.

Trees also absorb carbon dioxide, a major greenhouse gas, and other pollutants like ozone, carbon monoxide and sulfur dioxide. They can provide windbreaks and privacy, lower air conditioning costs and increase property values.

One study found that 844 houses in Athens, Georgia, with an average of five trees in the front yard, sold for 3.5% to 4.5% more than comparable houses without trees, according to Tree City USA.

Trees even foster mental and physical health. A University of Illinois study found that hospital patients recovered from surgery more quickly when they could see trees outside their window.

Boosting young conservationists

The act of planting trees can be beneficial, too. In the process of greening the city’s brownfields, parks, streams and schoolyards, a group called Groundwork RVA helps youth transition to adulthood.

Rob Jones, executive director of Groundwork RVA and a Greening Southside partner, is galvanizing the next generation of urban conservationists, guiding youngsters toward a greener, more sustainable and more equitable city by transforming neglected spaces into public assets.

His group provides a hands-on “learning lab” for 45 to 60 youngsters a year who take pride in improving their communities and completing a project.

Working with Jones, the students plant trees and water them to ensure their survival. In past years, they have built planter boxes and distributed them to older adults.

This year, from May to September, they will also install green infrastructure, such as permeable pavers and rain gardens.

Jones is devoted to helping at-risk teens and recent high school graduates find a career.

“I do this because I have a deep and abiding commitment to empowerment of young black and brown people, as well as a vision of equity in a city that has come to be my home and needs leadership to make it greener,” Jones said.

“I have faith that these young people will provide that leadership in years to come.”

One of his students, who is headed to Stanford University in the fall, has emerged as such a leader. She almost single-handedly created a community garden for the affordable apartment community Hillside Court.
Construction is underway at Avery Point

Experience vibrant, maintenance-free living at the NEW Erickson Senior Living® community in Short Pump! It’s the lifestyle you deserve in the ideal location.

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Dozens of your Richmond-area neighbors are claiming their spot on the Avery Point Priority List every month. Don’t wait to secure your future at our dynamic senior living community.

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Call 1-800-349-4221 or visit AveryPointCommunity.com for your FREE brochure.
Dear Mayo Clinic: I am 45 and relatively healthy. But about a year ago, I hurt my lower back while working in the yard. I felt a sharp pain and could barely walk. It took about a month to heal. Then about a month ago, I hurt my back again — this time while lifting my young son. The pain does not seem to be getting better. Is there anything I can do to speed the healing process? How can I prevent this from recurring?

A: Lower back pain episodes are common among adults, with about 80% of adults experiencing lower back pain at some point during their lives. Lower back pain is one of the top five reasons that individuals seek medical care. In many cases, lower back pain resolves on its own. Most people have significant improvement in their pain within 14 days, and symptoms usually resolve in 4 to 6 weeks. Unfortunately, it’s not uncommon for lower back pain to recur. The biggest predictor of developing lower back pain is having a history of prior episodes. As many as half of acute lower back pain sufferers will experience another episode of back pain within a year. However, only a very small percentage of those people go on to develop chronic lower back pain.

Steps for self-care
To ease your present lower back pain flare, there are a number of self-care steps you can take. First, maintain your usual activities as much as possible, but do be cautious with movements that sharply increase the pain. Second, consider taking a nonprescription pain reliever. Anti-inflammatory medication, such as naproxen and ibuprofen, may be of benefit for short-term use. There are also some topical medications that people find effective at times, including counterirritants for heat/cold, lidocaine for numbing and anti-inflammatories for more local use.

Many people take other nutritional supplements to help their pain, but no one supplement has been determined to be effective for everyone with lower back pain. However, most do not have a lot of side effects or risk.

If over-the-counter medications are not enough, talk to your healthcare provider about a muscle relaxant to reduce symptoms. The use of these medications is not to eliminate your pain but rather to reduce it to allow you to resume more movements and activities.

Be aware that prescription medications may have more side effects, such as nausea, sedation and/or constipation.

Physical therapy helps
Physical therapy during the acute...
Cooler Richmond

Her initiative landed Groundwork RVA a Virginia Outdoors Foundation grant to educate teens about managing an urban micro-farm.

Churches pitch in

This summer, as part of the Greening Southside Richmond project, congregants at Branch’s Baptist Church will convert half an acre of concrete and asphalt to a leafy habitat in hopes that the 10-acre church grounds can become a conservation model.

Second Baptist Church in Southside is one of 22 multi-denominational faith-based organizations that make up Richmonders Involved to Strengthen Our Communities (RISC), a group that is planting trees to reduce heat in the city. Half of RISC participants are over age 50.

Pastor Ralph Hodge said faith drives his congregation’s environmental stewardship.

“God gave us the environment not to abuse, but to manage because it benefits humankind. We don’t own it; we manage it,” Hodge said.

Since 2014, Hodge’s church members have tended a vegetable garden where people learn how to grow grapes, okra, strawberries, spinach, broccoli, peppers and corn.

‘People show up, work hard’

Many over-50 Richmonders have found a cause with the Richmond Tree Stewards.

Since 2008, Louise Seals has worked with the city’s Urban Forestry Division to lead the all-volunteer program.

As a result of her efforts to educate the public about tree care, Seals said.

“People show up and work hard,” she said.

“It is tremendously satisfying work,” Seals said.

She is also a 2014 founding member of the James River Park Invasive Task Force.

Team members are tackling 26 invasive plant species in Belle Isle Park — including tree-of-heaven, Amur honeysuckle and Johnson grass — that can threaten the health and longevity of trees.

“God gave us the environment not to use as pruning. Anyone who has completed the training course can get involved and do the required 15 hours of volunteer work a year.

In a normal year, Richmond Tree Stewards tend to about 5,000 trees. They sponsor tree giveaways in coordination with Enrichmond Foundation’s Tree Lab. They also help with the city’s Adopt-a-Tree program.

““vape” the drug in electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes), or consume it in foods or candy (called edibles) or as a tincture.

Many people assume that smoking or vaping marijuana isn’t as dangerous as smoking cigarettes, said study co-author Muthiah Vaduganathan, M.D., a cardiologist at Harvard-affiliated Brigham and Women’s Hospital.

“But when people smoke tobacco, they take frequent, small puffs. In contrast, smoking marijuana usually involves large puffs with longer breath holds,” he said.

As a result, smoking marijuana may deposit as much or more of the chemical toxins into the lungs as when people smoke cigarettes, he said.

And vaping any substance can be dangerous. Thousands of people in the United States, predominantly women, are going into the ground this year at schools, parks and cemeteries, thanks to Reforest Richmond, the Green City Commission’s Tree Committee.

Reforest Richmond

More than 8,000 redbud tree saplings are going into the ground this year at schools, parks and cemeteries, thanks to Reforest Richmond, the Green City Commission’s Tree Committee.

Reforest Richmond targets heat islands and “restoring the tree canopy with an equity lens,” said Daniel Klein, its vice chair.

Richmond-based Dominion Energy also promotes tree planting. Since 2007, the company has partnered with the Arbor Day Foundation to distribute 600,000 free tree seedlings in their service area, including Richmond.

Over time, thanks to these environmental advocates, Richmond will become a greener, cooler and better place to live.

Smoking cannabis vs. cigarettes

Derived from Cannabis sativa or Cannabis indica plants, marijuana is most often smoked in joints or in a pipe. People also "vape" the drug in electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes), or consume it in foods or candy (called edibles) or as a tincture.

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Lower back pain
*From page 4*

Episode can be an important part of treatment for lower back pain. It should involve teaching you to use heat and/or cold therapies, proper stretching exercises, and the safest strengthening exercises — especially for the abdominal core muscles.

Practicing good posture and proper body mechanics also can help reduce pain. The benefit to starting a physical therapy program is to find out which approaches are best for you with your current symptoms and to learn the proper technique for the exercises. The goal is to acquire a regimen of stretching and strengthening to be able to do at home for long-term benefit.

Additional passive interventions that may provide some short-term benefit for pain reduction in people with lower back pain include massage, acupuncture, low-level laser treatment and spinal mobilization.

These soft tissue and/or joint mobilizations often are called manipulation, and may be done by therapists, chiropractors or osteopaths.

Other, more active interventions to consider are yoga, Pilates or an aquatic exercise program. Talk with your healthcare provider about the benefits and risks of these approaches, and whether they may be right for your situation.

To reduce future risk

Once the pain goes away, take measures to reduce your risk of future lower back pain episodes. Follow your healthcare provider’s instructions on how to bend, lift and move to ensure proper back biomechanics.

When lifting heavier objects, it is often best to lift from the knees while you contract your abdominal muscles and keep your spine straight. You should not bend and twist your trunk at the same time, and, as you lift, hold the object as close to your body as you can.

You also may incorporate back-friendly practices into your daily life, such as using a chair that has good back support at work and at home, or using a desk that changes levels to move from sitting to standing intermittently.

Regular exercise can strengthen your muscles, which makes it less likely you’ll have future lower back pain episodes. There are no studies, though, that indicate one exercise is better than another for prevention of future pain.

General core exercises or aerobic exercises can be valuable. Proper warm-up and cool-down techniques may include more back-specific stretching maneuvers.

Aerobic and resistance exercises also can help you reach and maintain a healthy weight. This may help to protect you from future lower back and other problems that can be associated with obesity.

Finally, if you smoke, stop. Smoking accelerates spinal degeneration, and that contributes to the development of back pain.

If you would like guidance or support as you work to quit smoking, talk to your healthcare provider. Various treatment options are available that can help.

—James Atchison, D.O., Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Mayo Clinic, Jacksonville, Florida

Marijuana
*From page 7*

States have suffered serious lung injuries using e-cigarettes. As of this writing, 64 of them have died.

Heart-related risks

Marijuana can cause the heart to beat faster and blood pressure to rise, which can be dangerous for people with heart disease. The risk of heart attack is several times higher for people with heart disease. Menopausal women and people with heart disease — including blood pressure, cholesterol-lowering statins, and medications used to treat or prevent heart rhythm disorders — are at higher risk.

Mayo Clinic Q & A is an educational resource and doesn’t replace regular medical care. Email a question to MayoClinicQ&A@mayo.edu. For more information, visit mayoclinic.org.

Marijuana can cause the heart to beat faster and blood pressure to rise, which can be dangerous for people with heart disease. The risk of heart attack is several times higher for people with heart disease. Additional passive interventions that may provide some short-term benefit for pain reduction in people with lower back pain include massage, acupuncture, low-level laser treatment and spinal mobilization.

These soft tissue and/or joint mobilizations often are called manipulation, and may be done by therapists, chiropractors or osteopaths.

Other, more active interventions to consider are yoga, Pilates or an aquatic exercise program. Talk with your healthcare provider about the benefits and risks of these approaches, and whether they may be right for your situation.

To reduce future risk

Once the pain goes away, take measures to reduce your risk of future lower back pain episodes. Follow your healthcare provider’s instructions on how to bend, lift and move to ensure proper back biomechanics.

When lifting heavier objects, it is often best to lift from the knees while you contract your abdominal muscles and keep your spine straight. You should not bend and twist your trunk at the same time, and, as you lift, hold the object as close to your body as you can.

You also may incorporate back-friendly practices into your daily life, such as using a chair that has good back support at work and at home, or using a desk that changes levels to move from sitting to standing intermittently.

Regular exercise can strengthen your muscles, which makes it less likely you’ll have future lower back pain episodes. There are no studies, though, that indicate one exercise is better than another for prevention of future pain.

General core exercises or aerobic exercises can be valuable. Proper warm-up and cool-down techniques may include more back-specific stretching maneuvers.

Aerobic and resistance exercises also can help you reach and maintain a healthy weight. This may help to protect you from future lower back and other problems that can be associated with obesity.

Finally, if you smoke, stop. Smoking accelerates spinal degeneration, and that contributes to the development of back pain.

If you would like guidance or support as you work to quit smoking, talk to your healthcare provider. Various treatment options are available that can help.

—James Atchison, D.O., Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Mayo Clinic, Jacksonville, Florida

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Medications too costly? These can help

Q: Is there anything I can do to help cut back on my prescription costs? I have private insurance, but the copays are still too high!

A: Even after a medication has been billed to insurance plans, they may still be expensive. The high cost could be due to a number of things — including high deductibles, which require you to pay a certain amount for your medications before the insurance coverage kicks in, or varying coverage of medications within your plan, which could cause you to have a higher copay.

Whatever the case may be, the staff at your local pharmacy can help you investigate the following solutions:

Drug manufacturer copay cards

Copay cards — also known as copay savings programs, copay coupons or copay assistance cards — allow you to avoid paying full price for a drug that has no generic version.

Copay cards are often available on manufacturers’ websites for many brand-name drugs. The patient or pharmacist simply signs up for the program, prints the card from the website, and then presents the card each time a prescription is filled. Keep in mind that these cards are used in combination with private insurance. Unfortunately, patients with prescription insurance through state or federal healthcare programs such as Medicare or Medicaid are not eligible for these copay programs.

However, there may be other resources from the manufacturer that can help.

Pharmacy-specific discount programs

Many pharmacies, such as Publix, RiteAid and Walgreens, offer specific in-house programs to cover common generic medications. These programs can be used without insurance or coupons.

For example, Publix offers a 90-day supply of select generic medications for $7.50. Your pharmacist can work with you to transfer your medications to a pharmacy that offers one of these programs.

GoodRx

You may notice a large difference in pricing among pharmacies. By downloading the GoodRx app or using its website, GoodRx.com, you can compare prices at local pharmacies.

Make sure you search for the correct name, strength and quantity of the drug you were prescribed, as pricing will vary based on this information.

It is also important to confirm that your pharmacy accepts GoodRx. It’s used independently from insurance; use it if you do not have insurance or if the price of your prescription is cheaper on GoodRx.

Do not hesitate to speak with your pharmacist to see if transferring your prescription to another pharmacy may be the best option for you.

Other websites similar to GoodRx include BlinkHealth.com, PharmacyChecker.com and WellRx.com.

Additional coupons

There are a variety of other coupon cards and programs available to help pay for your prescriptions, such as SingleCare, WellRx, InsideRx and America’s Pharmacy.

You may have received some of these coupons in the mail. If you have not, your local pharmacy will have some on hand.

Keep in mind that these coupons cannot be combined with insurance or other offers, but they could possibly be a cheaper alternative to your private insurance copays.

Overall, the best thing to do when faced with this stressful situation is to talk with the staff at your local pharmacy. Together, you can identify saving programs specific to your situation.

Ashley Brooks is a fourth-year doctor of pharmacy student at VCU School of Pharmacy.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Apr. 14+
CHAIR AEROBIC CLASSES
Do low impact aerobic exercises from the comfort of a chair.
Classes take place on Wednesdays from 11:15 a.m. until noon, April 14 through May 19. Meet at the Bensley Recreation Center, 2900 Drewry’s Bluff Rd., North Chesterfield. For more information or to register for the $10 class, contact Lauren Wood at (804) 768-7904 or woodla@chesterfield.gov or visit chesterfield.gov/parks.

Are You A Veteran?

Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center is a Long-Term Care & Short-Term Rehab Facility that opened in January 2008. This facility was built specifically for our Virginia Veterans. Located conveniently on the campus of the McGuire VA Medical Center in Richmond, Virginia, this state-of-the-art facility is owned and operated by the Virginia Department of Veterans Services.

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It is time for your yearly eye examination...

David Alan Chandler, MD has moved to a new office location at MOB II of Memorial Regional Medical Center, designed for maximum safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.
By Kimberly Blumenthal, M.D.

People with a penicillin allergy on their medical record are not given penicillins (or often their relatives, the cephalosporins) when they have infections. Instead, the antibiotics prescribed may be broader-spectrum, less effective, and/or more toxic.

One recent national study from more than 100 U.S. hospitals with almost 11,000 patients demonstrated that if you have a reported penicillin allergy, you are five times more likely to be prescribed clindamycin than if you do not have an allergy.

Clindamycin is an antibiotic that is high- ly associated with the potentially life-threaten ing Clostridioides difficile (C. diff) gastrointesti nal infection. A study using comprehensive U.K. data recently confirmed that people with a documented penicillin al lergy have a 69% increased risk of C. diff.

When patients undergo surgery, a penicill in relative (cefazolin) is often used to prevent an infection at the surgical site. However, according to one study, in pa tients labeled with a penicillin allergy, cefazolin is routinely avoided in place of a less effective substitute, resulting in a 50% higher risk of surgical site infections for people with a documented penicillin allergy.

Confirming or ruling out a penicillin al lergy through penicillin allergy testing could justify the risks of avoiding beta-lactams (the drug class that includes penicillins and cephalosporins), or potentially avert them by allowing doctors to prescribe beta-lactams when they are needed.

Even some patients with severe penicillin allergy histories are able to take penicillins safely again, because penicillin allergy often does not persist for life. In all, about 95% of people tested for penicillin allergy in the U.S. are found not to be allergic.

**What allergy testing entails**

Penicillin allergy testing often begins with an allergy history. In order to know if testing is appropriate, the clinician needs to know some details about the reaction, such as: When did it happen? What were the symptoms? How were you treated?

If appropriate, the next step may be the penicillin skin test. This test involves pricking the skin and introducing a small amount of allergen. Anyone with a positive skin test to penicillin — there’s usually itching, redness and swelling at the site of the test — is allergic and should avoid penicillin.

People who have no reaction to the skin test can undergo the amoxicillin challenge. In this test, the clinician gives the person amoxicillin (a type of penicillin), and observes for signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction for at least one hour. Allergists routinely perform penicillin allergy testing. Other types of doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners, and even pharmacists can be trained to perform penicillin allergy skin testing in the US.

The amoxicillin challenge test can also be done by a variety of healthcare providers, as long as they are comfortable diagnosing and treating allergic reactions.

**New clinical tools**

There are increasing numbers of clinical tools that can help your primary care doctor, or other non-allergist healthcare provider, assess whether you have a true penicillin allergy.

The first tool is a risk stratification scheme, published in *JAMA* and endorsed by multiple professional associations. The review encourages an amoxicillin challenge be prescribed for low-risk patients.

Patients are classified as low-risk if their reactions occurred more than 10 years ago, and were isolated and unlikely allergic (gastrointestinal symptoms, headaches); featured itching without rash; and did not include allergic symptoms such as hives, swelling, wheezing, shortness of breath, or chest tightness.

The *JAMA* review recommends that medium-risk and high-risk patients, including those who did experience one or more allergic symptoms or an anaphylactic reaction, undergo a skin test before completing an amoxicillin challenge.

Another recently developed tool, called PEN-FAST, can be used by all types of medical providers to help decide if it is safe to give you penicillin, and potentially remove your allergy label (“delabel” you). The tool uses your allergy history to determine risk similar to the *JAMA* expert guideline.

PEN-FAST stands for PENicillin allergy reported by the patient, Five years or less since the reaction (2 points), Anaphylaxis or Angioedema, Severe cutaneous adverse reaction (2 points), Treatment required for the reaction (1 point). You receive a score based on your responses to these four criteria, which reflects the likelihood that you have a true penicillin allergy.

Although you are likely to know the “F” and “T” parts of FAST — when it happened and whether you were treated — the “A” and “S” reaction assessments should be discussed with your doctor.

Anaphylaxis is a bodywide allergic reaction, and angioedema is severe swelling under the skin. Along with the severe skin-related adverse reactions, these are severe and potentially life-threatening reactions.

Patients who are able to answer “no” to the four PEN-FAST criteria (0 points) have a very low risk of true penicillin allergy. A total score of less than 3 indicates a low risk of penicillin allergy. Both of these patient groups would be likely to tolerate an amoxicillin challenge.

Of course, you and your doctor must be prepared for an allergic reaction prior to ingesting any medication to which there is a possible allergy.

Kimberly Blumenthal, M.D., MSc, is a contributor to Harvard Health Publications.

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

May 6  **REMEMBER LOVED ONES**

All community members are invited to Ben Secours’ online service of remembrance of deceased loved ones or patients. An optional small discussion group will be held after the service. This event takes place virtually on Thurs., May 6 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. To receive a virtual invite, call (804) 433-4710 or email bereavement@bshsi.org.

**May 6**  **FIND A PARK**

Nature can be just what the doctor ordered! To learn how parks can help you stay healthy and to find parks in your area, visit parkrxamerica.org.
By Emily Gelsomin, Harvard Health Blog

Coconut oil has developed a cult-like following in recent years, with proponents touting benefits ranging from body fat reduction to heart disease prevention. Sadly for devotees, the evidence to support these assertions remains rather sparse.

But there is plenty of research to suggest that other plant-based oils have advantages over their animal-derived counterparts, particularly when it comes to heart health.

So, which oil is best? While no specific type should be hyped as a panacea, one variety isn’t getting the press it deserves: olive oil.

The case for olive oil

Olive oil is a staple fat in the Mediterranean diet, and its previously publicized benefits have largely relied on examining its use by European populations. This information is useful, but looking at olive oil within the context of American diets provides us with stronger data to guide dietary choices here at home.

A recent study published in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology looked at adults in the United States and found that replacing margarine, butter or mayonnaise with olive oil was associated with reduced cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk.

This is particularly notable because Americans tend to consume less olive oil than Europeans. In the U.S., high consumers averaged a little less than one tablespoon of olive oil a day, whereas daily intake in studies examining Mediterranean populations has been as high as three tablespoons.

After taking demographic and lifestyle factors into consideration, those consuming more than half a tablespoon per day had a reduced risk of developing CVD compared to those using olive oil infrequently (less than once per month).

Consuming more olive oil was also associated with a decreased likelihood of dying from CVD. Even slight increases in olive oil consumption, like replacing roughly a teaspoon of margarine or butter each day with a similar amount of olive oil, had advantages.

Olive oil was also correlated with a reduction in inflammatory compounds that may contribute to the progression of CVD. Olives contain plant chemicals called polyphenols that may help reduce inflammation.

Virgin olive oil, which is extracted through mechanical rather than chemical means, is thought to offer higher levels of protective plant compounds than refined olive oils. Extra virgin olive oil (EVOO) is a product of the preferred, mechanical processing.

Though we need more research, these polyphenols may also extend benefits to other areas of the body, like the brain. For instance, along with other healthy diet habits like eating leafy greens, primarily using olive oil when cooking has been associated with combating decline in brain function as we age.

How does coconut oil compare?

Proponents of coconut oil cite the medium-chain fatty acids it contains as a benefit because of the unique way these fats are digested. It’s claimed these fats offer advantages related to weight loss and cholesterol, though these assertions remain controversial.

Regardless, lauric acid — the primary fat found in coconut oil — is thought to behave differently from other medium-chain fats, and may not deliver as promised.

In a recently published study in the journal Circulation, which compiled data from a variety of trials, coconut oil did not show benefits related to waist circumference or body fat compared to other plant-based fats.

Coconut oil, a tropical plant oil, also did not fare as well as nontropical plant oils, like olive oil, with respect to reducing other cardiovascular risk factors. In fact, coconut oil increased low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol — the kind associated with an increased risk of heart disease.

Coconut has been an important fat in a variety of traditional diets in Asia, and is touted to impart health benefits within these communities, including fewer cardiac complications and premature deaths.

However, these diets often feature minimally processed coconut products, like coconut flesh, which are also higher in nutrients like fiber. Lifestyle habits in these Asian communities also typically include eating more fruits, vegetables and fish than in many American diets.

That said, extra virgin coconut oil, which can be purchased in the United States, is arguably less processed, and often refined in a manner similar to EVOO. A recent trial published in BMJ Open looking at extra virgin coconut oil did not show an increase in LDL cholesterol when compared to EVOO during a four-week period. (Both oils performed better than butter.)

Unfortunately, there are not enough human studies involving extra virgin coconut oil to support its use as a primary fat in our diets. Nor do we have information about its long-term effects here in the U.S.

And the winner is…olive oil

The benefits of using nontropical plant-

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Bring the natural benefits of sunlight indoors.

Ever since the first human went into a dark cave and built a fire, people have realized the importance of proper indoor lighting. Unfortunately, since Edison invented the light bulb, lighting technology has remained relatively prehistoric. Modern light fixtures do little to combat many symptoms of improper lighting, such as eyestrain, dryness or burning. As more and more of us spend longer hours in front of a computer monitor, the results are compounded…and the effects of indoor lighting are not necessarily limited to physical well-being. Many people believe that the quantity and quality of light can play a part in one’s mood and work performance. Now there’s a better way to bring the positive benefits associated with natural sunlight indoors.

A floor lamp that spreads sunshine all over a room

The Balanced Spectrum® floor lamp will change the way you see and feel about your living or work spaces. Studies show that sunshine can lift your mood and your energy levels. But as we all know, the sun, unfortunately, does not always shine. So, to bring the benefits of natural daylight indoors, use the floor lamp that simulates the full spectrum of daylight. You will see with more experience sunshine indoors at the touch-of-a-switch.

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The Balanced Spectrum® floor lamp will change the way you see and feel about your living or work spaces. Studies show that sunshine can lift your mood and your energy levels. But as we all know, the sun, unfortunately, does not always shine. So, to bring the benefits of natural daylight indoors, use the floor lamp that simulates the full spectrum of daylight. You will see with more experience sunshine indoors at the touch-of-a-switch.

Experience sunshine indoors at the touch-of-a-switch. This amazing lamp is easy on the eyes and easy on the hands. It features a special “soft-touch, flicker-free” rocker switch that’s easier to use than traditional toggle or twist switches. Its flexible goose-neck design enables you to get light where you need it most. The high-tech electronics, user-friendly design, and bulb that last 10 times longer than an ordinary bulb make this lamp a must-have.

Here is a guarantee that no other lamp can make. If the Balanced Spectrum® bulb ever burns out, we’ll send you a free replacement bulb, all you pay is a small fee for shipping and handling. The Balanced Spectrum® floor lamp comes with firstSTREET’s exclusive guarantee. Try this lamp for 90 days and return it for the product purchase price if not completely satisfied.

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The key to perfect pan-seared salmon

By America’s Test Kitchen

Pan-searing salmon sounds straightforward: Just add a little oil to a nonstick pan, get it good and hot, season a couple of fillets, and cook them until they’re cooked through and nicely browned on the exterior but still pink on the inside, right?

There are two issues with this technique: The fish cooks unevenly, and the exteriors of the fillets end up more tough than crisp.

We knew we could do better, so we set out to create a simple recipe that took advantage of the intense heat of the skillet to produce a golden-brown, ultra-crisp crust on salmon fillets while keeping their interiors moist.

The solution to the dryness problem was relatively easy: salt. We salt and brine meat all the time, and both techniques apply just as well to fish. Beyond seasoning the flesh, the salt also helps keep it moist.

A 15-minute brine did both, and as long as we patted the fillets dry with paper towels before cooking, we found that the treatment didn’t significantly inhibit browning.

To make sure the fish browned nicely and cooked evenly, we started skin-on fillets in a cold pan and then turned on the heat. This allowed the fish to cook through gently as the pan slowly came up to temperature.

We then flipped the fillets over after the skillet was good and hot so they could form a crust and finish cooking through. And the skin shed enough fat as it cooked that we didn’t need to add a single drop of oil to the pan.

This salmon was excellent with just a squirt of lemon, but we also whipped up a mango-mint salsa to go along with it. The salsa’s bright flavors balanced the salmon’s richness, and it added mere minutes to this quick, weeknight meal.

Pan-Seared Salmon with Mango-Mint Salsa

Serves 4

For the salmon:
Kosher salt
Pepper
4 (6- to 8-ounce) skin-on salmon fillets

For the salsa:
1 mango, peeled, pitted, and cut into ¼-inch pieces
1 shallot, minced
3 tablespoons juice from 2 limes
1 jalapeño chile, stemmed, seeds reserved, and minced
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
1 garlic clove, minced
½ teaspoon salt
Dissolve ½ cup salt in 2 quarts water in a large container. Submerge salmon in brine and let stand at room temperature for 15 minutes. Meanwhile, combine all sauce ingredients in a bowl and set aside.

Remove salmon from brine and pat dry with paper towels. Sprinkle the bottom of a 12-inch nonstick skillet evenly with ½ teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon pepper. Place fillets, skin side down, in the skillet and sprinkle tops of fillets with ¼ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper.

Heat skillet over medium-high heat and cook fillets without moving them until fat begins to render, skin begins to brown, and the bottom ¼ inch of fillets turns opaque, 6 to 8 minutes.

Using tongs, flip fillets and continue to cook without moving them until the centers are still translucent when checked with tip of a paring knife and register 125°F on a meat thermometer, 6 to 8 minutes longer. Transfer fillets skin side down to a serving platter and let rest for 5 minutes before serving with salsa.

Recipe notes: To ensure uniform cooking, buy a 1½ to 2-pound center-cut salmon fillet and cut it into four pieces. Using skin-on salmon is important here, as we rely on the fat underneath the skin as the cooking medium (as opposed to adding extra oil).

If using wild salmon, cook it until it registers 120°F. If you don’t want to serve the fish with the skin, peel it off after it is cooked.

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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Based oils remain very promising, making olive oil a natural choice in the kitchen.

Try oil and vinegar on a fresh summer salad, or in place of mayo in potato or tuna salad.

Consider a drizzle of olive oil instead of a pat of butter or margarine when cooking vegetables.

And keep coconut fat to occasional use, say, to enhance the flavor of a vegetable curry, or as a substitute for butter in baked desserts.


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Thank you for your support and interest as we prepare for the 50th Anniversary of Senior Connections (1973-2023). During this time, we have served thousands of older adults every year through essential programs such as Home Delivered Meals, Friendship Cafes, Insurance Counseling & Assistance, Caregiver Support, Transportation, Senior Employment, Money Management, Care Coordination, Telebridges, Retired Senior Volunteers, Foster Grandparents and many more. Throughout the Agency’s long and successful history, one constant has been the presence of hundreds of committed and supportive volunteers. Volunteers continue their support and dedication as we address the challenges of the Pandemic including outreach for COVID-19 Vaccines.

As we approach our 50th Anniversary, we are grateful to have volunteers and the spirit of volunteerism in support of service delivery and in maintaining ongoing contact with older adults in our communities. As in the past, we take the opportunity, on behalf of our Board of Directors, Advisory Council and staff, to thank and recognize all volunteers. We join with National Volunteer Recognition events that are being held in April (national volunteer month since 1974). Additionally, we are designating 2021 as a year of ongoing Volunteer Recognition. We recognize and honor all volunteers and the many programs they support. Volunteers help others by addressing important and essential needs in all communities in our Region. Volunteers make positive differences for us all.

During every day of 2021, let’s recognize volunteers for their time, contributions and dedication to helping with important needs and improving the overall quality of life for older adults, caregivers and families. Also, let’s thank them for their generosity and support. Finally, let’s thank them for the vital roles they play in our communities and the selfless contributions they make to enrich the lives of others.

Please join us in recognizing volunteers, especially during the month of April. Thank you for recognizing volunteers today and honoring their service throughout 2021 and as we approach our 50th Anniversary in 2023.

Best wishes to all.

Thelma Bland Watson, Executive Director

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Executive Director’s Message

Dr. Thelma Bland Watson
Executive Director,
Senior Connections,

Thank you for your support and interest as we prepare for the 50th Anniversary of Senior Connections (1973-2023). During this time, we have served thousands of older adults every year through essential programs such as Home Delivered Meals, Friendship Cafes, Insurance Counseling & Assistance, Caregiver Support, Transportation, Senior Employment, Money Management, Care Coordination, Telebridges, Retired Senior Volunteers, Foster Grandparents and many more. Throughout the Agency’s long and successful history, one constant has been the presence of hundreds of committed and supportive volunteers. Volunteers continue their support and dedication as we address the challenges of the Pandemic including outreach for COVID-19 Vaccines.

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Best wishes to all.

Thelma Bland Watson, Executive Director

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Thank You Volunteers
Adaptations, Triumphs, and Knowledge Gained

By Mrs. Shana Beverly, Senior Connections’ Volunteer Coordinator

The year of 2020 was like no other, in many ways, and presented challenges most of us had never faced. As volunteers, you stepped up to meet the existing and emerging needs of older adults in our community during the pandemic. You had to be creative and discover new ways to interact safely with those you served. Yet despite the challenges, you continued to serve! Senior Connections is grateful for everything you do to help improve the quality of life of older adults in our community!

Regardless of the obstacles faced due to the pandemic, Senior Connections was able to serve the same number of clients we served prior to the start of the pandemic. While some volunteer roles had to change, our volunteers continued to serve, and this allowed us to meet the changing needs of older adults in our community.

Since last March, approximately 250 volunteers have packed bags of groceries for weekly distribution to over 400 older adults after our Friendship Café’s closed due to the pandemic. Some VICAP volunteers began to work remotely while others continued coming into the office to support VICAP clients. Our TeleBridges volunteers made an extra effort to reassure program participants and increased the amount of time spent on calls in order to help provide more social interaction. Volunteer Money Management Program volunteers stayed in touch with their clients by phone and continued to help clients with the bill paying process and budget management. Many volunteers were present and available when called to help.

On behalf of Senior Connections, I would like to thank all of you for your help and for serving older adults in our community during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are sincerely grateful for all the support during these difficult times. You are making a difference in the lives of so many older adults in our area.

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SENIOR CONNECTIONS
HONORS
Our Many VOLUNTEERS
Who Make a Positive Difference
Every Day in the Lives of Older Adults in Our Community.
Retired and Senior Volunteer Program at Senior Connections Supports the Chesterfield Food Bank

One of the largest volunteer networks in the nation for people 55 and over is the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). The RSVP at Senior Connections is part of AmeriCorps Seniors, which is a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service. CNCS is the federal agency that improves lives, strengthens communities, and fosters civic engagement through service and volunteering. Through partnerships with organizations dedicated to serving others, the RSVP at Senior Connections is able to offer volunteer opportunities to older adults who can use their skills and talents, or learn new ones, while serving in a variety of volunteer roles within the community. This type of dedication is why Senior Connections has partnered with the Chesterfield Food Bank.

Founded in 2012 as a faith-based, non-profit organization, the Chesterfield Food Bank (CFB) utilizes volunteers who believe no one should go hungry and are dedicated to fighting hunger in the community. Perhaps no one understands this mission better than Ms. Linda Murphy, the Volunteer and Senior Program Coordinator for Chesterfield Food Bank. Prior to holding her current staff position at CFB, Ms. Murphy was a volunteer at the organization for 5 years. “I just fell in love with the place and its mission,” says Ms. Murphy. Ms. Murphy was also impressed with how CFB volunteers and staff were not only extremely hard working and efficient, but also very warm and friendly. “The mantra is policies and procedures tempered with grace and mercy. Our volunteers work hard, but they are able to work at a pace that is comfortable for them.”

Indeed, this is the type of atmosphere that drew RSVP volunteer, Ms. Linda Hammer, to the organization. Unlike Ms. Murphy, Ms. Hammer has only been volunteering for the CFB for three months. However, like Ms. Murphy, Ms. Hammer immediately fell in love with the hands-on, rewarding volunteer work of helping to feed others. “Growing up working on a farm, I became familiar with different types of food and the need for it,” she says. “It feels good to pack bags full of these foods knowing that they will go to people who need them.” Ms. Hammer also echoes Ms. Murphy’s statements concerning the friendly atmosphere at the CFB. “People are very helpful and friendly when giving instructions” says Ms. Hammer. “You can work at your own pace and people are understanding of any limitations a person may have.”

As it turns out, these hard-working volunteers are needed more now in the age of COVID 19 than ever before. According to CFB data, the number of clients served by the food bank in January and February of 2020 were 5,562 and 6,396, respectively. After a year of COVID, the number of clients that were served in January and February 2021 had jumped to an astounding 35,377 (January) and 34,185 (February). Despite this huge increase in the numbers of individuals in need due to COVID, the volunteers at the Chesterfield Food Bank have stepped up and met this challenge with their love and dedication to their communities. Not only has the number of participating volunteers more than doubled since this time last year, the amount of food that they have been able to distribute to those in need has more than tripled. In addition to helping to provide a variety of delicious, nutritious food to their clients during this pandemic, the Chesterfield Food Bank is expanding so that it can assist its clients with needs other than food. “Our vision is to serve the whole person – body, mind, and spirit,” says Ms. Murphy. Ms. Murphy goes on to say that the CFB is currently constructing another building next to its food distribution warehouse. This building will be used to serve clients who, in addition to needing food, are experiencing other situations such as homelessness, addiction, and mental health issues.

Ms. Hammer says that a big part of her dedication to volunteer for the CFB stems from the feeling she gets from knowing that she has helped those in their community who are suffering. “I always feel rewarded when I take off my dirty gloves and get back in my car after volunteering,” says Ms. Hammer. “Everyone is so appreciative and complimentary, and it makes me so glad I’m there.” When asked what she would say if approached by someone who was interested in volunteering at the Chesterfield Food Bank, Ms. Murphy says, “It is a vital service and a place of healing and caring. If you just have the time to care, then come on out and we’ll show you the rest!”

If you or anyone you know is interested in learning more about the RSVP program at Senior Connections, please call Mr. Lee Owens at (804) 343-3000.

*Leycester “Lee” Owens is the CNCS Programs Coordinator (Foster Grandparent Program/Retired and Senior Volunteer Program) at Senior Connections, The Capital Area Agency on Aging
April 16 is National Health Care Decisions Day

You make decisions about your health every day. But have you made plans for your care in case of medical emergency or serious illness? April 16 is National Healthcare Decisions Day (NHDD). It's the perfect time to start your advance care planning.

What is advance care planning?
Advance care planning isn't just for people with serious illness. It's a part of healthy aging. It's a way to help your loved ones and doctors make health care decisions for you if you can't speak for yourself. Talking about your values, preferences and beliefs will help make your wishes clear.

Why it’s important.
You have a right to make decisions about your medical care. But in a time of crisis, you may not be able to speak for yourself. One out of every three people will need someone to make decisions for them at some point. It's best to be prepared.

The basics of advance directives
An advance directive explains your wishes for end-of-life or critical care. It includes two types of legal papers: a living will and a durable power of attorney.

Living will
A living will speaks for you. It shows your choices for health care when you're not able to speak for yourself. It helps when hard decisions have to be made. Your family and doctors will know exactly what treatments you would and wouldn't want. Be sure to update your living will on a regular basis.

Health care durable power of attorney
This is a legal document that gives someone the power to carry out your medical wishes. The person you choose is known as your agent. Your agent can be anyone who:
- Knows you well
- Understands what choices you'd make
- Can talk with your loved ones about your care
- Will make sure your wishes are carried out

Creating a plan when you are healthy.
Discussions about end-of-life care should begin at the kitchen table - not in the intensive care unit - with people you love. By creating a plan, you can make these difficult conversations easier. To learn more about Advance Directives in Virginia, visit Honoring Choices Virginia’s website at www.honoringchoices-va.org. You can also call 804.622.8141.

Ms. Dorothy Manuel, A Senior Connections’ Foster Grandparent, receives a Shout-Out!

As Easter approaches, we are thankful for many blessings here at St. James's Children's Center. Due to COVID-19, our foster grandparent, Dorothy Manuel has not been able to volunteer with us, but through the Pen Pal Program at Senior Connections, she is still able to interact with the students she loves. Today her Easter bags for both staff and students were delivered! We are fortunate to be loved by Grandma Dot - that’s what we call her. Keeping children and seniors connected!

Do You Have Concerns About Falling?
Many older adults experience a fear of falling and often restrict their activities, making the risks of falling even greater. A MATTER OF BALANCE (MOB) is an award-winning program designed to reduce the fear of falling and increase activity levels among older adults.

NATIONAL HEALTHCARE DECISIONS DAY
FREE VIRTUAL WORKSHOP
My Care, My Choice: Tools to Help You Have a Say in Your Care

April 20, 2021 • 5:30-7 PM or April 22, 2021 • 10:30 AM-12 PM
REGISTER AT HONORINGCHOICES-VA.ORG/LEARN/EVENTS

National Healthcare Decisions Day is April 16. If you experienced a sudden accident or illness that left you unable to speak for yourself, who would make decisions for you? Would they know how to make decisions for you? Come learn how to make sure that you have a say in your own care no matter what happens.

Presented by:
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www.honoringchoices-va.org
The Senior Employment Program at Senior Connections

By Ms. Erika Payne, Senior Employment Program Coordinator

The Senior Employment Program at Senior Connections provides employment assistance to adults 55 and older by offering resources, job leads, and some training options. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, Senior Connections Employment Program received many calls from 55+ jobseekers needing employment assistance. Since the start of the pandemic, the need has grown.

On March 1, 2021, The National Council on Aging published an online article, “Get the Facts on Economic Security for Seniors” (www.ncoa.org). The article shared that 350,000 older adults aged 55-64 and 122,000 aged 65+ wanted to work but could not secure employment. Also, 55+ jobseekers experienced unemployment for 27 weeks or longer in 2020, and this figure could be attributed to the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, nearly 70% of older workers aged 50+ are likely to experience at least one involuntary job loss, 23% will experience two.

Senior Connections has two employment programs designed to assist older adults in competing in today’s job market. The programs are designed to reduce these percentages for residents in the City of Richmond and Charles City, Chesterfield, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, New Kent, and Powhatan Counties.

The Senior Job Referral File is designed to focus on the employment needs of individuals 60 and over. Senior Connections works with local employers to list job openings in today’s growing industries. These industries include healthcare, transportation, food preparation, clerical/customer service, warehouse/production, and janitorial. Senior Connections has also partnered with the Workforce Partnership Team under United Way of Greater Richmond and Petersburg to provide employment services. This partnership provides additional resources that Senior Connections Employment Specialists use to generate job leads and provide training. The Senior Job Referral File program is a great option for seniors seeking full or part-time work.

The second employment program offered at Senior Connections is the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). SCSEP is a work-based program for jobseekers 55 and older. The program is funded through Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 and administered by the U.S. Department of Labor through the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS). SCSEP allows participants to gain work experience by doing various community service activities at non-profit organizations and public facilities. The participants work an average of 20 hours a week and are paid minimum wage, the highest amount based on Federal, State, and Local wages (www.dol.gov). Jobseekers interested in SCSEP must be 55 and older, unemployed, and must meet an income eligibility requirement. SCSEP is ideal for older job seekers who have been out of the job market for six months or longer and need to “refresh” or gain experience in their desired career field. SCSEP also provides a work experience training opportunity for older adults looking to make a career change.

Older workers provide invaluable professional experiences for today’s job market. In the upcoming months, Senior Connections will be offering job readiness and computer training for 55+ jobseekers. To learn more, please call (804) 343-3000 and ask to speak with someone in the Senior Employment Program.
Will you run out of money in retirement?

By Andrew Kobylski and Caroline Whitaker Huggins

You just left a meeting with your financial adviser, and your nest egg is looking bulletproof, with a projected worth of over $1 million at age 95.

But wait a second: Are you sure about that? If your financial projections look too good to be true, they might well be, for a variety of reasons.

When the pandemic hit in March 2020, the stock market crumbled, and many people saw their investment portfolios drop. Fortunately, the markets eventually recovered, but the sudden drop caused many people to review their investments.

While reviewing a new client’s portfolio at that time, we learned that his previous adviser projected his net worth as double our estimate by age 70. Naturally, the client was confused by the different scenarios.

We discovered that the underlying growth assumptions the former adviser used were far too optimistic, giving the client an unrealistic view of his financial future.

Be safe; plan for the worst

It’s easy for any adviser to make a financial plan look unbreakable when using unrealistic assumptions. The true value of a financial plan comes from testing its resistance under difficult conditions.

To do this, financial advisers typically conduct a “stress test.” The test typically examines how a financial plan will fare during a future unexpected event, such as a recession or major geopolitical event, and allows you to adjust accordingly.

For example, if you are near retirement and your portfolio is heavily weighted in stocks, an unexpected recession may send it plummeting by double digits. Although there may be no recession in sight, stress testing would allow you to adjust your portfolio in advance to safeguard it from potential future harm.

It’s a good idea to consider asking your financial adviser to conduct this test. Here are four areas to discuss to ensure your plan will hold up:

What’s the implied growth rate?

Most financial advisers build a conservative growth rate into their projections — 5% annual growth is a common rate. While changing the growth by even a couple of percentage points may seem irrelevant, it can monumentally alter the trajectory of your projection.

Take this scenario: A 45-year-old has $1 million in investments and saves $20,000 annually. If he omit taxes and assume a realistic 5% annual rate of return, his portfolio will grow to around $4.3 million by age 70.

However, if this person’s adviser assumes a higher return, the projections show a scenario that is likely unrealistic. For example, at a 9% annual growth rate, his investments at age 70 would be valued at $10.3 million.

Our research shows that the average investor loses 4% of their annual returns from simple mistakes stemming from investment selection, fee management and emotional trading. Not accounting for this principle in your plan’s growth rate assumptions may inflate your projected future assets.

Our advice: Lean toward conservative growth assumptions to ensure your financial plan can withstand the unpredictability of future market returns.

Account for inflation

It’s not surprising $100,000 had greater spending power in 1950 than it does today. This can be seen in something as simple as the price of milk, which in 1950 was 83 cents. Today, the average price per gallon is around $3.60.

As we know, some expenses can have higher cost-of-living adjustments than others, such as healthcare or even education costs. Due to the ever-growing cost of living, accurately depicting inflation is necessary when developing your financial projections. Otherwise, your projections may misrepresent your future reality.

Our advice: Since the cost of living will rise in the future, make sure you account for this growth in your financial projections. For most general living expenses, we typically like to assume an inflation rate of 2.5%.

Check accuracy of your spending

During a planning session, a client reported she was spending around $120,000 annually, or about $10,000 per month. But when asked to map her annual expenses for one year, she realized she was spending closer to $140,000.

We discovered that the additional $20,000 primarily came from home improvement costs, roughly $500 a month on takeout/Amazon orders, and other miscellaneous.

Four financial ‘experts’ you shouldn’t ask

By Liz Weston

None of us knows everything we need to know about money, so we may turn to experts for help. But some money professionals who offer advice are not qualified to do so — nor are they required to put our interests ahead of theirs.

Be cautious when accepting advice from the following sources:

1. A dealership about how long your auto loan should be

A dealership wants to sell you a car. To make the payments more affordable, you may be offered a loan that lasts six, seven or even eight years.

Longer loans can get you smaller monthly payments, but they cost more overall, since you’ll pay more interest. You’ll also likely spend several years “upside down,” that is, owing more than your vehicle is worth. As the car ages, you could easily face big repair bills while still making payments.

2. Mortgage pros about how much house you can afford

Good mortgage brokers or loan officers can be invaluable in helping you navigate a complicated process and understand the guidelines that lenders use to determine how big of a loan you can qualify for.

But they can’t tell you how big of a loan you can comfortably afford. Neither can your real estate agent, for that matter.

True affordability will depend on a lot of factors that aren’t captured in your application, including when you want to retire and how much you want to save for other goals, such as a grandchild’s education.

There’s also your comfort level. Some people are fine borrowing the maximum because they believe their finances will only get better. Others prefer to borrow more conservatively.

3. Stockbrokers about whether to roll over your 401(k)

A stockbroker may tell you that rolling your 401(k) account into an individual retirement account gives you many more investment options, and that’s typically true. But IRAs can cost you more, and 401(k)s have better consumer protections.

Stockbrokers want to sell you investments that earn them commissions. Typically, they have no responsibility to make sure those investments are in your best interest.

By contrast, a 401(k) administrator is a fiduciary, so it’s required to put your interests first and provide good investment options at a reasonable cost. Many 401(k)s offer access to ultra-low-cost institutional funds that aren’t available in an IRA.

Most financial advisers aren’t fiduciaries, so make sure to ask.

See “EXPERTS”, page 14
Don’t run out

From page 13

In addition, your entire 401(k) balance is protected from creditors. By contrast, your protections with an IRA depend on state law. Many states exempt only an amount “reasonably necessary for support” — which means, in some cases, creditors potentially could get it all.

A better approach: Leave the money where it is if you like the old 401(k)’s investment options, or roll it into a new employer’s plan if that’s allowed.

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Experts

From page 13

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4. Social Security about when to claim benefits

You can collect Social Security as early as age 62, but your monthly benefit increases the longer you delay applying until it maxes out at age 70.

Multiple studies have shown that most people will collect more over their lifetimes if they delay filing. It’s particularly important for the higher earner in a married couple to delay, because that benefit determines what the survivor will get once the first spouse dies.

Unfortunately, Social Security Administration employees sometimes advise people to start early — even though Social Security employees aren’t supposed to give advice.

Applicants have been told, for example, that it doesn’t matter when they start benefits because the amounts paid out over their lifetimes will be the same. That’s a misinterpretation of Social Security’s attempt to be “actuarially neutral,” or have the system pay out the same amount in total regardless of when people claim benefits.

A better approach: A Social Security claiming calculator can help you figure out when to start benefits. AARP has a free one, while more sophisticated versions are available starting at $20 at Social Security Solutions or $40 at Maximize My Social Security.

—AP/NerdWallet
Reap cash rewards by referring friends

By Lisa Gerstner

Do you like your credit card or bank account enough to recommend it to a friend or family member? If so, you may be able to scoop up extra cash, rewards points or frequent-flier miles by making a referral—and your friend may get a bonus, too.

Several major card issuers provide referral bonuses to eligible cardholders. Chase, for example, offers $100 cash back for each friend who signs up for a participating Chase Freedom card (up to $500 total per year), and 15,000 points for each friend who gets the Chase Sapphire Preferred card (up to 75,000 points per year). Chase also offers referral bonuses for some of its airline and hotel cards, including those that offer rewards from the United MileagePlus, Marriott Bonvoy and Southwest Rapid Rewards programs.

For most of its cards, Discover offers a statement credit of $50 to $100 if you make a referral, and your friend gets a statement credit after making a purchase within the first three months. (See discover.com/sharediscover for the amount available and annual cap.) American Express and Capital One have referral programs, too.

Checking account rewards, too

For checking account customers, Chase offers $50 for each friend who opens a qualifying checking account (up to $500 per year). TD Bank provides $50 per friend that you refer to a personal checking account (up to $500 per year), and your friend gets $50 if he or she meets certain account activity requirements in the first two months.

Bonuses are taxable

Beware the tax bite, however. Generally, credit card rewards are not taxed if you spend money to earn them (such as “percent back” awards). But because referral bonuses are not usually tied to spending, you may receive a Form 1099 from the card issuer reporting the amount of rewards you claimed through referrals as taxable income.

Similarly, you may pay tax on bonuses you receive for opening or referring a friend to a bank account.

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Introducing Quingo® – the powerful, take-anywhere and go-anywhere mobility scooter that you never have to lift.

It’s a sad fact. Many people who have mobility issues and could benefit from a scooter aren’t able to use them away from home. Struggling to get it into a car or loading it onto a bumper-mounted lift just isn’t worth the effort. Even travel scooters can be hard to pick up and load into a car... and many are prone to tipping over. Now, there’s a better scooter, Quingo®. It’s easy to use, even for one person, and requires no more effort than opening a car’s tailgate and pressing a remote. Now anyone with a SUV, cross-over or mini van can go anywhere they want any time they want.

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– Judi K, Exeter, CA

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Portugal road trip reveals beauty, history

By Jeanine Barone

Strolling a sandy lane atop tall sea cliffs in Portugal’s Cape Sardao with nary a hotel in sight, I found an idyllic, pastoral setting far away from the hustle and bustle of Lisbon, just two hours north. My only company was a white stork gliding overhead.

Springtime is especially lovely in southern Portugal, with lavender and thyme blooming, and stork chicks squirming in nests built precariously on the cliff’s rocky ledges.

Rockrose, heather and hotentot fig line the paths through the Natural Park of Southwest Alentejo and Costa Vicentina—a protected land and sea area of more than 183,000 acres on the Atlantic coast.

Meaning “Beyond the Tagus [River],” the Alentejo, Portugal’s largest province, is a precious landscape, ranging from pristine coastal sand dunes to a sun-baked interior region stretching to the Spanish border.

Amid the Alentejo’s olive groves, cork trees and vineyards are fortified hilltop villages where the Romans and, later, the Moors once ruled.

Golden beaches

Cape Sardao’s windswept expanse is famous for its curious, century-old lighthouse, Farol Cabo Sardao. The red-capped tower was built facing inland instead of toward the sea. Here you can park, get a closer look at the lighthouse, and explore the cape’s picturesque trails.

Unwilling to leave the beautiful coast, I cruised five miles to Praia de Almograve. Come during low tide and you’ll delight in the wide crescent of golden sand at this beach, where black volcanic rocks pepper the sand and cliffs tower above. At high tide, surfers are attracted to the rolling ocean.

A short drive away is Vila Nova de Milfontes, a picturesque village situated where the placid Mira River meets the turbulent Atlantic.

Vila Nova is blessed with undeveloped beaches flanking both sides of the river that attract plenty of birds. You may spot a kingfisher plunging into the water to capture a meal, or glimpse a grey heron spreading its wings on the shore.

In this village, Tasca do Celso is a homey establishment where the locals sit on cork stools at the bar. Black pork tenderloin is one of the many Alentejo specialties served at this eatery.

Roman ruins

The next day, as I drove some 70 miles east, my route took me past what would become a familiar sight: clusters of gnarled cork oak trees. (Portugal is the world’s largest cork producer.)

Above blond plains floats Beja, a white-washed village surrounded by battlements. From its hilltop perch, Beja stands as a former key Roman outpost. In fact, the soaring Tower of Menagem, the most outstanding structure of Beja’s centuries-old castle, was built atop Roman ruins and is considered the symbol of the city.

Roaming Beja’s streets, you’ll see elaborate Manueline detailing on the facades and doorways, as well as ornate door knockers.

Among the museums, the most extensive is the Ethnographic Museum, which displays historic tools, instruments and machines, grouped by occupation, from blacksmith to basket-maker.

Monks and the macabre

After navigating 60 more miles on roads flanked by farmland, I gazed in the distance, gaping at a white city, Evora, the region’s historical center and a UNESCO World Heritage site.

I meandered Évora’s tangle of cobbled streets, checking out the many architectural and historical treasures.

One of the city’s most talked about venues is the Capela dos Ossos, part of the Gothic 16th-century Church of St. Francis. The macabre chapel’s walls and columns are constructed from floor to ceiling with human skeletons — more than 3,000 skulls can be counted. It’s no wonder Franciscan monks once meditated here on the meaning of life and death.

Surprises are everywhere in Évora: The present-day city hall was built around the visible Roman baths, and at the Cathedral of Santa Maria stands a marble statue of pregnant Mary.

Just outside town is Convento do Espinheiro Historic Hotel and Spa, a converted 15th century convent where the monks once hosted Portuguese kings.

Olive, one of several restaurants on the property, makes for an atmospheric dining spot. (It’s set in the kitchen once used by the monks.) Here you can dig into a scrumptious thin-crust pizza, such as one topped with mozzarella, cured ham and local figs.

Those who decide to stay at this luxe property may not want to leave, not just because of the evocative setting and guest rooms with balconies overlooking the blooming gardens, but also the relaxing spa. Olive oil-based signature massages and other treatments relying on organically-grown botanicals are among the most popular options.

Hilltop hamlets

I started the next day by driving an hour through a landscape carpeted with silvery olive trees, fields of lavender and vineyards toward Monsaraz — a wall-encircled...
Portugal

As I wandered the hamlet along schist-paved streets, I noticed that this dark stone is just about everywhere, from the facades to the floors of houses festooned with bougainvilleas.

Dating to the 13th and 14th centuries, the dwellings are bedecked with immense wooden doors bearing iron door locks and knockers. Those who climb to the top of the castle have grand views of the pastoral countryside.

There’s no need to leave the views behind if you have lunch at Sabores de Monsaraz, a cozy restaurant serving tasty, rustic cuisine. The scenic tables on the outdoor patio offer views over the vast Alqueva Dam. Two dishes worth trying are codfish migas (a traditional dish with bread that’s first soaked in water and then fried with garlic, olive oil and coriander) and the fish migas (a traditional dish with bread that’s first soaked in water and then fried with garlic, olive oil and coriander) and the roasted lamb.

If you go

As of press time, Portugal is open to travelers who present a medical certificate with a negative COVID-19 PCR test result issued within 72 hours of departure. Round-trip flights to Lisbon in April start at $727. Round-trip fares from the U.S. to Portugal, a 13th-century structure that’s first soaked in water and then fried with garlic, olive oil and coriander) and the roasted lamb.

No trip to the Alentejo is complete without a visit to Marvão, almost two hours away. You’ll navigate twisty roads to get to this village, whose walls seem to be one with its rocky perch. On the western edge of Marvão, a 13th-century fortress huddles on the crown of a rocky outcrop.

Checking out the strategically placed stone sentry posts and cannons along the bulwarks, I was treated to awe-inspiring views of the Portuguese mountains Serra de Estrela and Serra da São Mamede, a natural park dotted with Neolithic remains.

Remembering a Jewish past

Arriving at Castelo de Vide, a castle-centered village just six miles away, I walked the hilly cobblestone paths, passing homes adorned with well-tended flower boxes.

Roaming about narrow streets, I spotted ornate granite doorways in the former Jewish neighborhood, where ancient stone portals are etched with evidence of their past: diagonal grooves for mezuzahs. Here is one of the oldest synagogues in Portugal, a 13th-century structure that’s now a Jewish museum.

As I prowled the village’s network of streets, I was lost in thought, recalling the many discoveries on my Alentejo journey. It’s hard to believe that driving just two hours from Lisbon’s gleaming skyscrapers can transport us back centuries.

Marvão’s medieval castle looms over a historic village of hilltop homes and churches.

If you go

As of press time, Portugal is open to travelers who present a medical certificate with a negative COVID-19 PCR test result issued within 72 hours of departure. Round-trip flights to Lisbon in April start at $727.

In Évora, deluxe rooms at the Convento do Espinheiro Historic Hotel and Spa can be found for as low as $181/night. Pizzas and most of the main courses served at its restaurant, Olive, start at $18. Massages and other treatments at the spa start at $120 to $160; see conventodospinheiro.com.

For those looking to stay overnight in Vila Nova, Casa da Eira Boutique Houses is convenient to both the historic town center as well as the beach and the Mira River. The rooms are minimalist and comfortable, some offering memorable views from a private balcony. At Casa da Eira, rooms start at $85 and apartments at $170/night; see visitalentejo.pt.

At Tasca do Celso in Vila Nova, dishes are typically priced under $30 per person; see wonderful.land/tascadocelso. Entrees often range from $15 to $18 per person at Sabores de Monsaraz; see saboresdemonsaraz.com/eng.

To learn more about the Alentejo, go to visitalentejo.pt.
As travel reopens, what you can do now

Everywhere you look, you see signs of a reopening of the travel world. Airlines are ramping up schedules, and destinations are actively seeking customers.

Unfortunately, however, the major stakeholders — airlines, destinations and governments — have not put together coherent and unified policies and procedures for reopening. If you want to start thinking about spring or summer travel, you still have to navigate a minefield of confusion and uncertainty.

What medical evidence I can see suggests not even thinking about extended travel, anywhere, until after you have received a vaccine. Unfortunately, many U.S. residents won’t get vaccinated until summer — maybe even late summer.

If you can’t wait that long, a domestic road trip is probably your best bet, but even that might face some limitations.

Quarantines and shutdowns

The various states in our union are not even on the same chapter, let alone the same page, on policies about cross-border travel, either for residents or visitors. Currently, at least half of the 50 states still impose some form of quarantine on travelers entering from at least some other states.

Most rules ease limits for travelers with COVID-19 tests, but only three so far specifically account for vaccinated travelers. You still need to check for requirements for any out-of-state trip, even a road trip.

Fortunately, enforcement is feeble everywhere, and more than half of U.S. states assess no penalties for quarantine violations.

AARP’s continuously updated website is a good place to keep up with current rules: bit.ly/quarantineAARP.

Except for Mexico and North Macedonia, international travel is still difficult right now. As with domestic travel, rules everywhere are inconsistent, but no matter where you go, CDC currently requires a COVID-19 test for returning travelers on any international flight.

IATA (the International Air Transport Association) posts an updated interactive world map detailing restrictions at iatatravelcentre.com/world.php.

Vaccination and testing

Just about everyone in the travel business expects that immigration services and airlines will soon start to rely on some form of uniform health “passport” that travelers can carry to verify vaccination and test status. It will most likely be implemented as a digital app, but maybe also a card or paper certificate, as well.

IATA has developed a digital “International Travel Pass,” but to date only a few airlines and no governments have signed up for a trial (See “International travel pass in development” in the February Beacon).

American Airlines has launched VeriFly. Other proposals floating around call for linking health data electronically to passports.

There’s no scarcity of ideas, but “soon” is a pretty nebulous estimate of the time frame for a system that authorities around the world will accept.

Fares and rates

As with the pandemic, the rate outlook remains cloudy. Industry mavens predict leisure travel will rebound faster than business travel.

On the one hand, you will see lots of enticing offers; on the other, airlines and hotels need to stop hemorrhaging cash. Thus, I see some great airfare deals to Europe, but Allegiant’s latest domestic “promotion” features fares that are higher than they were before COVID.

More than ever, that means you need to sign up for a few of the dozens of programs that notify you about deals. Some let you name specific routes or destinations; others show you everything and let you sort out what you want.

Although the names of the deal websites focus on airfares, most also search hotels as well. And most work through apps as well as online. Here are some good ones:

—Metasearch systems sweep hundreds of sources to locate deals; you buy direct or through an online agency. Most provide for notification, including AirfareWatchdog.com, FareCompare.com, Google.com/travel/flights, and Skyscanner.com.

—The big online travel agencies (OTA), such as Expedia.com and Priceline.com, also provide similar services.

As I’ve been saying all along, plan as much as you want, but avoid nonrefundable prepayments. Domestic travel is likely to open up by summer; Europe and Asia maybe by fall.

Email Ed Perkins at eperkins@mind.net and check out his rail travel website at railguru.com.

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By Catherine Brown

A few weeks ago, Uptown Gallery artist David Robatin was leafing through a folder of old articles and scrapbooks he found in the storage area when he came across a photo of two longtime members, Solange Brown and Faye Henderson.

The two artists, now in their 70s, happened to be there that evening, so they reminisced about the changes they had seen over the 32 years since the Gallery first opened. Robatin even had them pose to recreate that original photo.

Brown and Henderson are the only two founding members who still belong to the Uptown Gallery — an artists' cooperative housed in one of the pastel-colored buildings that lines West Main Street (sometimes referred to as the Pastel Village).

Uptown Gallery came about in part because of Edgar Eck, who, in the late 1980s, was working to develop Uptown Richmond (the area of West Cary and West Main Street where VCU meets the Fan District).

“He thought an art gallery would attract people to the area,” Brown said. Eck reached out to the Metropolitan Art Association (now the Metropolitan Richmond Art Association) of which Brown was a member, along with other Richmond artists, including Stuart White, Bob Carter, John Stingle, Bev Purdue, Martha Jane Albus and Emma Lou Martin.

In response, more than 30 artists came together to open Uptown Gallery — a place for artists to exhibit and sell their work, exchange ideas and learn from one another.

In a way, the gallery was like a small art school. “Most of the founding members were seasoned artists,” said Brown, who at the time was shifting from creating graphic work and pen-and-ink drawings to watercolors. “I got a lot of help [from them] developing my art.”

Eck offered the building rent-free to the co-op for many years. After his death in 2012, Eck Enterprises has rented the space to them for “a very reasonable price,” Brown said.

A safe space for art

Robatin joined Uptown Gallery three years ago deciding to take his art more seriously. Members are juried in by the Gallery Board, who review the potential member's recent work.

For Robatin, membership is well worth the monthly dues and requirements to exhibit and work at the gallery. Belonging to the co-op provides him the opportunity to hear constructive, well-meaning feedback from fellow artists.

“The artists nurture one another,” he said. “You feel like you're in a safe space.”

Many of the members of Uptown Gallery have been working as professional artists for decades. “I would put them against any artists in Richmond,” Robatin said.

A number of participating artists are also members of other well-respected art organizations. Brown, for instance, is a signature member of the Virginia Watercolor Society.

When Robatin joined the group, he was moved by the ways the artists interacted with one another. “They're all friends and are very supportive of one another,” he said. “It feels like I am at home.”

Brown agreed. “Everyone's really close,” she said. “We are like a family.”

Changes over the years

From the beginning, every member of the co-op has contributed to the gallery’s success.

Artist members take turns sitting at the desk greeting visitors and helping them pick out work they might like to purchase. “Every time a visitor comes in, they talk to an artist,” Brown said.

While the Gallery is open regular hours during the week, they also, pre-pandemic, typically stayed open for First Fridays, when galleries on and surrounding Broad Street would keep their doors open late. “We try to attract visitors our way, off the beaten path,” said Brown.

Artists also work on various tasks that keep the gallery going, such as hanging works for shows — one of Brown's jobs over the years — marketing, public relations and maintaining the website. “Everybody does what they can to help share the load,” Brown said.

In recent years, Uptown Gallery has diminished from more than 30 members to fewer than 15. Some have moved on to other things; many have passed away. That means members work more than they did in the past.

Uptown Gallery now rents part of its three gallery spaces to outside artists. The Main Gallery is still typically reserved for member artists, but outside artists can rent studio or exhibit space in the Frable Mezzanine Gallery and the ELM Loft Gallery (named for founding member Emma Lou Martin, who remained a member until late last year). Uptown Gallery also hosts workshops to help pay expenses.

Reemerging from the pandemic

Brown says she hopes Uptown Gallery can survive the challenges of the past year. The restrictions in place to help slow the spread of COVID-19 kept the gallery closed for a while. Now it is open again, but with limited hours.

To celebrate the lifting of some restrictions and the arrival of spring, the artists of the Uptown Gallery are planning a four-day neighborhood celebration in April. They want to remind the community that they are still passionate about creating unique art and being part of Uptown Richmond.

“For all that people have been through,”
It’s a good time to plant megawatt bulbs

By Lela Martin

Even if you don’t grow daffodils, the shine of their cheerful yellow blossoms may inspire you to include bulbs in your own garden. And you can plant daffodils — just not until fall. (Autumn is the time to plant the bulbs you see blooming now.)

However, if you’re inspired and the weather is pleasant, you can plant certain bulbs now — those that gleam in summer and fall.

The everyday definition of “bulb” includes all plants that store their complete life cycle in underground fleshy structures. The official term is geophyte.

The term “bulb” typically refers to all of the following: true bulb (e.g., daffodil); corm (e.g., gladiolus); tuber (e.g., caladium); tuberous stem (e.g., tuberous begonia); tuberous roots (e.g., dahlia); and rhizome (e.g., iris and canna).

**Bulbs to plant for bright colors**

Excellent as cut flowers, **dahlias** brighten gardens in the late summer to early fall. Dahlias come in shades of peach, red, lavender, white, yellow, orange and pink. Their shapes vary from tiny pom poms to dinner-plate sized blooms.

In our zone 7, they prefer partial shade and rich well-drained soil. Remember to give them ample water during the summer, especially during periods of drought. They may require staking, as heights up to seven feet are not uncommon.

**Peonies** are perennials that are sold both as dormant tuberous roots and in containers. Their large blossoms come in a rainbow of colors. They are often so heavy that they require ringed plant supports.

Plain and hardy, **rhizomatous irises** planted in spring include Japanese, Siberian, Louisiana and blue flag. Irises are found in all colors except red.

 предпочирая full sun but growing well in partial shade, they perennialize rapidly. Deer avoid irises because they have either tough or grass-like leaves.

The botanic name for **daylilies** is **Hemerocallis**, Greek meaning “beautiful for a day.” While each individual flower lasts a day, by planting a variety of cultivars, you can enjoy blooms all summer.

Easy to grow, they tolerate a range of soils, as well as full sun to partial shade. **Daylilies naturalize and serve as background plants in a perennial garden.**

**Gladioli** originate from warmer climates; therefore, their corms...
Bulbs that resist deer

Lesser known, showy *agapanthus* (or Lily of the Nile) has large globular blue flowers that bloom in late summer. Butterflies and hummingbirds flock to it; however, deer do not, probably due to its leathery leaves.

*Canna* lilies also have leathery leaves in gorgeous greens or bronze. There are over 60 cultivars available, providing a wide choice of colors that flower for a long time.

When planting in May, find a sunny spot and cover the rhizomes with just an inch of soil. Water thoroughly and fertilize throughout the growing season. In our region, they can be left in the ground all year if protected by mulch over the winter.

To keep summer bulbs over winter

In Virginia, many of our summer- and fall-blooming bulbs are tender (such as dahlias, gladioli, and caladiums) and cannot survive our winter temperatures outdoors.

After frost has killed the foliage, dig the bulbs, allowing them to dry for a few days in an open area, and then store them in dry peat moss in a shed, garage or basement.

Do not use plastic bags or bins for storage; use mesh bags or cardboard boxes. Bring in tuberous begonias and agapanthus to overwinter as house plants to brighten your indoor space.

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

Gardening

From page 21

need to be lifted and stored for the winter. However, you can enjoy their brilliant flowers throughout the summer if you stagger their planting times weekly.

In well-drained soil, plant the corms 6 to 8 inches apart. Glads survive some deer browsing; however, gladioli are nicknamed “sword lilies,” explaining why deer generally stay away from their straight rough stalks.

Bulbs to brighten shady spaces

*Tuberous begonias* are spectacular summer flowering bulbs. Colors from soft pastels to brilliant and electric solid colors illuminate dappled spaces. They can be used as bedding plants, in hanging baskets or in containers.

Plant begonias after the last chance of frost. Tuberous begonias do not tolerate stresses: wind, water on their foliage, too much sun or shade, and poor or soggy soil.

*Caladiums* are a diverse group of tuberous plants, some of which are known as elephant ears. With large leaves of often brilliant colors, these do well in full shade. I especially love their whites and pinks to light up my backyard.

Buy them as bulbs and plant when the soil temperature has warmed up to 65°F, sometime around Memorial Day. Caladiums are deer-resistant, because they produce a toxin called oxalate/oxalic acid.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

_Ongoing_ U OF R MUSEUMS ONLINE

The University of Richmond Museums have expanded their online offerings. Now virtual visitors can experience a 360° tour of two exhibitions — “Action & Reaction” and “40 Years of Printmaking.” The website also offers talks and interviews with artists and museum staff. Visit museums.richmond.edu for more information.

Stand Up Straight and Feel Better

Discover the Perfect Walker™, the better way to walk safely and more naturally

It’s a cruel fact of life, as we age, gravity takes over. Our muscles droop, our bodies sag and the weight of the world seems to be planted squarely on our shoulders. We dread taking a fall, so we find ourselves walking less and less— and that only makes matters worse.

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Ongoing

WWII PHOTOS
A son and daughter are on a mission to identify the people in the many photographs their father took while being stationed in Hawaii after Pearl Harbor. They have uploaded the photos to a website (ww2pacificveteransproject.org) and ask that anyone who can identify a photo subject contact them at info@ww2pacificveteransproject.org.

Crossword Puzzle

Daily crosswords can be found on our website: www.TheBeaconNewspapers.com

Click on Puzzles

Across

1. Neat stack of hay 5. Grimm villain
2. Take to court 6. Leg swelling
3. Stamp on an invoice 7. Puerto ___
4. Take to court 8. CPR giver
5. Take to court 9. Afternoon socials
6. Hairdo 10. ___ of your bee’s wax
7. Medical checkup 11. ___ of your bee’s wax
8. Take to court 12. ___ of your bee’s wax
9. Medical checkup 13. ___ of your bee’s wax

By Stephen Sherr

Answers on page 21.
You can’t always lie down in bed and sleep. Heartburn, cardiac problems, hip or back aches – and dozens of other ailments and worries. Those are the nights you’d give anything for a comfortable chair to sleep in: one that reclines to exactly the right degree, raises your feet and legs just where you want them, supports your head and shoulders properly, and operates at the touch of a button.

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