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Guest columnist

While our publisher is on a brief sabbatical, in lieu of our regular “From the Publisher” column we will be having guest writers. This month’s guest column is written by Howard Gleckman, a senior fellow at The Urban Institute and president of the Jewish Council for the Aging of Greater Washington. He is the author of Caring for Our Parents.

We are beginning to see what may be the end of the worst pandemic in a century. Many of us are visiting friends again. We are seeing children and grandchildren — and parents and grandparents — for the first time in more than a year.

But the scars remain. COVID-19 has illuminated the deep flaws in the way we care for older adults. The question now is: How will we respond to these painful lessons?

In Maryland, 87 percent of those who died from COVID-19 were age 60 or older. More than half were 80-plus. It was the same story in Virginia, where 90 percent of those who died from COVID-19 were over 60.

Tragically, vulnerable nursing home residents suffered the most. While, overall, about 1 percent of those diagnosed with coronavirus died, about one of every six nursing home residents who caught the virus passed away.

And keep in mind that these death rates represented only those who died directly from the disease. Many more likely succumbed to loneliness and depression that were directly caused by the COVID-19 lockdowns in facilities and by self-isolation of those living in the community.

What can we do to make sure this never happens again? Here are a few possible solutions:

1. Build a support system for as many older adults as possible to live at home. Not everyone will be able to stay at home as they age, but many can.
2. I’ve estimated that as many as 20 percent of those living in nursing homes have no clinical need for skilled nursing care. They are there because that is where Medicaid pays and because they lack those supports for remaining home.
3. Congress has increased the federal contribution to Medicaid’s home-based care program for frail older adults and younger people with disabilities by nearly $12 billion for the next year. And the Biden Administration wants to raise the federal payment by another $400 billion over eight years.
4. These dramatic increases promise to make Medicaid home care far more robust. But individual states will decide how to spend the money. And they have varied widely in how they use Medicaid long-term care dollars.

For instance, Maryland covers about 44,000 people in its home-based Medicaid program, while Virginia covers about 51,000. Maryland spends an average of about $44,000 annually on each enrollee while Virginia spends about $34,000.

However, Maryland focuses two-thirds of its spending on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Virginia, by contrast, spends four-fifths of its Medicaid home care dollars on seniors and other adults with physical disabilities.

And boosting Medicaid will help only some frail older adults. Many seniors will never be poor enough to qualify for Medicaid yet cannot afford the staggering costs of long-term care. For example, in the Richmond area, home care aides cost $19 or more an hour, or around $80 a day for a four-hour shift.

For those families, we need to build a robust infrastructure of care, including more home-delivered meals, transportation, adult day care, case management services, and caregiver training and respite care. Without those services, many people will have no choice but to move to a facility.

For those who do live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities, we must vastly improve infection control. Keep in mind that COVID-19 was not the first deadly virus to rage through senior communities. Every year, thousands of residents die from seasonal flu.

Staff need to be better trained and better paid. They need masks, gloves, and other personal protection equipment. They need access to rapid and accurate testing, and they need to be encouraged to be vaccinated.

Finally, there is a growing body of evidence that under-staffed facilities were more likely to suffer outbreaks of COVID-19. Thus, we need to increase staffing levels and reduce turnover.

All of this will cost money and will require state and local governments to give priority to the needs of older adults.

[Fifty Plus encourages readers to contact their elected representatives via phone, letter and/or email and express their views on this matter. Politicians don’t typically receive a lot of correspondence on current issues from voters. Your contact will have an effect.]
Cover Story

State’s archaeologist digs Virginia’s past

By Glenda C. Booth

It could be an 18th-century shipwreck half-buried in James River muck, a stone flake, a bone fragment, charred soil, a bead or a chunk of brick. Every artifact unearthed by archaeologists, along with its setting and the soil where it is found, tells a story or part of a story.

Dr. Elizabeth Moore, the state archaeologist since 2019, leads efforts to document Virginia’s past — much of it “prehistory,” the time before the written word. Her job, Moore said, is to “tell the story we don’t know from the written record, a past that archaeology can inform.”

Spending hours painstakingly scraping dirt, crouched in a one-meter-by-one-meter pit or poring over stone flakes in a lab may be unappealing to some. But Moore and her staff are dedicated to the state’s history, she said, “because it’s so visible,” citing Jamestown, Mount Vernon and Monticello.

“How we relate to our complex past affects how we treat people today,” Moore said.

That’s why archaeology is so important, Moore said.

Development leads to finds

Archaeological work is under way all the time in Virginia, Moore noted. Before a developer can build a shopping center or the state can expand a highway, an archaeological investigation or excavation often must be conducted to determine if cultural resources will be affected, especially if federal funds, permits or licenses are involved.

In some cases, if archaeologists identify significant artifacts, developers must leave the site undisturbed. In other circumstances, the project is allowed to go forward, often with conditions.

For example, at a site in Salem, Virginia, excavators found half a million bones or bone fragments — evidence of a Native American village. It’s now a soccer complex.

Last spring, Moore visited a Henry County site, probably 7,000 years old, which the owner and locality want to develop as a recreational vehicle (RV) park.

Her team excavated and found fire-cracked rock left behind from a hearth, projectile points and what she calls “lithic debitage,” or stone flakes produced from making a tool. Moore saw her outreach as successful because the owner agreed to protect the site and post an archaeology exhibit.

Balancing academia, field work

A New York native, Moore earned her doctoral and master’s degrees in anthropology from American University and her undergraduate degree from the State University of New York at Potsdam.

Moore came to Richmond from the Virginia Museum of Natural History in Martinsville, where she was curator of archaeology and assistant director of research and collections.

Moore has authored or co-authored numerous technical reports and articles in professional journals and chapters in several books. She co-authored The Archaeology of Virginia’s First Peoples, published in 2020.

From her office in the Department of Historic Resources (DHR), Moore manages the Threatened Sites Program and awards grants to protect at-risk archaeological sites.

She has overseen laboratory analysis and investigation of artifact collections. She also led volunteers during events with the Archeological Society of Virginia, the Council of Virginia Archaeologists and the U.S. Forest Service’s Passport in Time program.

For 2007 to 2019, she was chair of the State Review Board, Moore provided advice on historic properties under consideration for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

Moore is responsible for preserving more than six million Virginia artifacts stored in Richmond, including Paleo-Indian projectile points or arrowheads, stone tools, Colonial ceramics, glass bottles, beads, buckles, bookbinding hinges and Native American ceramics.

Our state’s prehistory

The human history of what became Virginia began 16,000 to 20,000 years before Jamestown — a timeframe that archaeologists continue to debate.

What’s not debatable is that Virginia’s history long precedes the 1607 founding of the Jamestown colony, when English colonists arrived and displaced Native Americans.

In fact, Virginia has one of the oldest Native American sites ever discovered in North and South America. Cactus Hill, in today’s Sussex County, appears to be more than 15,000 years old.

Moore’s research focuses on how animal remains, such as bones, shells and hides, and vestiges of DNA or proteins help reveal how people in the mid-Atlantic region have used animals over time for subsistence, economic, ceremonial and social purposes.

For example, the animal remains found at Pittsylvania County’s Oak Hill Plantation in 2015 suggest that wild animals were a staple food for the enslaved people there, likely supplementing the food provided by the plantation owners.

Recent discoveries in Virginia

Moore is excited about a project near Cape Charles on Virginia’s Eastern Shore that dates to the mid-1600s. Located across the Chesapeake Bay from the much-researched Jamestown, it’s in an area rarely studied by archaeologists.

A storm toppled a tree, exposing artifacts that had never been disturbed. Embedded in the tree’s roots was evidence of Dutch-made bricks, glass bottles and boulders of European origin, indicating that the Europeans had traded with Native Americans.

Moore hopes to build collaboration with Native American tribes and the descendant community. Native Americans, including Virginia tribes, historically were not treated well in this country, Moore pointed out.

In the field, Dr. Elizabeth Moore shows a student how to organize archaeological collections as they prepare to research Native American sites in Virginia that predate the Jamestown settlement. Many excavations are under way this summer throughout the state.

The public can see some of these artifacts at Richmond’s Virginia Museum of History and Culture, Historic Jamestowne, Colonial Williamsburg National Historical Park and Alexandria’s Archaeology Museum.
Radiation drugs track and kill tumor cells

By Carla K. Johnson

Doctors are reporting improved survival in men with advanced prostate cancer from an experimental drug that delivers radiation directly to tumor cells.

Few such drugs are approved now, but the approach may become a new way to treat patients with other hard-to-reach or inoperable cancers.

The study tested an emerging class of medicine called radiopharmaceuticals, drugs that deliver radiation directly to cancer cells. The drug in this case is a molecule that contains two parts: a tracker and a cancer-killing payload.

Trillions of these molecules hunt down cancer cells, latching onto protein receptors on the cell membrane. The payload emits radiation, which hits the tumor cells within its range.

“You can treat tumors that you cannot see. Anywhere the drug can go, the drug can reach tumor cells,” said Dr. Frank Lin, who had no role in the study but heads a division at the National Cancer Institute that helps develop such medicine.

Results were released in June by the American Society of Clinical Oncology ahead of its annual meeting. The study was funded by Novartis, the drug’s maker, which plans to seek approvals in the United States and Europe later this year.

Drug targets advanced cancer

When cancer is confined to the prostate, radiation can be beamed onto the body or implanted in pellets.

But those methods don’t work well in more advanced prostate cancer. About 42,000 men in the United States each year are diagnosed with prostate cancer that has spread and is no longer responding to hormone-blocking treatment.

The study tested a new way to get radiation treatment to such patients.

It involved 831 men with advanced prostate cancer. Two-thirds were given the radiation drug and the rest served as a comparison group. Patients got the drug through an IV every six weeks, up to six times.

After about two years, those who received the drug did better, on average. The cancer was kept at bay for nearly nine months compared to about three months for the others. Survival was better too — about 15 months versus 11 months.

The gain may not seem like much, but “these patients don’t have many options,” said ASCO president Dr. Lori Pierce, a cancer radiation specialist at the University of Michigan.

Radioactivity can reduce blood cell production, which can lead to anemia and clotting problems for patients. In the study, 53% of the patients had serious side effects compared to 38% of patients in the comparison group. Both groups were allowed to get other treatments.

Similar approach may fight other cancers

The results pave the way for government approval and will boost interest in radiation drugs, Lin said.

Others already in use include Novartis’ Lutathera for a rare type of cancer of the stomach and gut.

And Bayer’s Xofigo is approved for men whose prostate cancer has spread to the bone but not elsewhere. Xofigo targets areas where the body is trying to repair bone loss from tumor damage, but it isn’t directly aimed at prostate cancer cells wherever they may be in the body.

Since the experimental drug targets tumor cells, “that would be a first for prostate cancer,” Lin said.

In the coming decade, such drugs “will be a major thrust of cancer research,” said Dr. Charles Kunos, who worked on standards for radiopharmaceutical research at the National Cancer Institute before leaving to join University of Kentucky’s Markey Cancer Center. “It will be the next big wave of therapeutic development.”

“There’s great potential” with drugs being tested for melanoma and breast, pancreatic and other cancers, said Dr. Mary-Ellen Taplin of Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, who had no role in the study but reviewed the data.

As for prostate cancer, “it opens up a range of future strategies,” including at earlier stages of disease and alongside other treatments, said study leader Dr. Michael Morris of Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York.

—AP
“For decades archaeologists have not worked well with others outside their discipline — have not talked to tribal members,” she said.

“Archaeology as a science is not just data and objective descriptions of artifacts. When dealing with people’s ancestors, it is critical to take into account many viewpoints.”

Listening to those viewpoints with respect is also critical, she said. Native Americans “have a very deep history with a great deal of meaning and nuance.”

Moore’s department also partners with Richmond on projects like documenting historic African American cemeteries. This past year, DHR staff has helped prepare a nomination for the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground to the National Register of Historic Places.

“This is an important place in understanding some of Richmond’s and Virginia’s difficult history,” she said.

Surveying history by kayak
Moore’s staff will soon survey resources in Richmond’s parks along the James River to locate sites where people lived, camped and fished.

Archaeologists will also kayak along the Smith River in Henry County this year to document cultural resources, like the remains of mills and dams.

Moore also manages an inventory of historic underwater resources on state properties in rivers, including the James, and shipwrecks along the state’s Atlantic coast. No one knows how many shipwrecks exist in the state — “probably hundreds,” Moore estimates.

Moore is always looking forward to the next discovery, which can lead to a clearer picture of the past.

“There’s so much we don’t know.”
**New targeted drug may help lung cancer patients**

U.S. regulators have approved the first medicine for patients with the most common type of lung cancer whose tumors have a genetic mutation long considered untreatable with drugs.

The Food and Drug Administration in May said it has approved Amgen’s drug Lumakras to treat non-small cell lung cancer with the mutation in patients who have worsened after initial treatment with at least one other drug. Each year, about 13,000 U.S. patients are diagnosed with this cancer and mutation.

This is the first targeted therapy for tumors with a so-called KRAS mutation, the FDA noted. This type of mutation occurs in genes that help regulate cell growth and division. The mutation is involved in many cancer types.

“Today’s approval represents a significant step toward a future where more patients will have a personalized treatment approach,” Dr. Richard Pazdur, director of the FDA’s Oncology Center of Excellence, said in a statement.

Amgen said Lumakras, also known as sotorasib, will cost $17,900 per month, though most patients will pay less, depending on health insurance and other factors. Lung cancer is the most common cancer type and is the leading cause of cancer deaths in the U.S.

The agency also approved diagnostic tests from two companies that can determine if patients have the specific mutation, known as KRAS G12C, targeted by the drug.

Amgen and other drugmakers are working to develop several medicines designed to attack tumors with KRAS mutations.

“KRAS has challenged cancer researchers for more than 40 years,” Dr. David M. Reese, Amgen’s head of research and development, said in a statement.

The FDA approved the drug on an accelerated schedule, based only on early study results, because of its potential and the lack of options for these patients. It is requiring further testing to confirm the drug’s benefit.

In a study including 124 patients, 36% had their tumors shrink or disappear. Improvements lasted for six months or longer for nearly 60% of those who benefited. Common side effects included diarrhea, joint and muscle pain, fatigue and liver damage. The FDA said the drug should be discontinued if patients develop liver damage or a type of lung disease. —AP

**FDA stops use of heart pump tied to deaths**

U.S. health regulators warned surgeons in June to stop implanting a heart pump made by Medtronic due to power failures recently tied to cases of stroke and more than a dozen deaths.

Medtronic said it would stop selling its Heartware assist device, which is intended to boost blood circulation in patients with heart failure.

Recent company data showed the device can unexpectedly stop working and sometimes fail to restart, the Food and Drug Administration said. The company said it hasn’t been able to pinpoint the root cause in every case.

Surgeons can use implants from other manufacturers, the FDA said in a memo to physicians.

About 4,000 people worldwide currently have the Medtronic device, roughly half of them in the U.S. For those patients, the agency said U.S. doctors should contact the company for the latest guidance on managing the device, which includes managing blood pressure.

The FDA said Medtronic halted sales after reviewing 100 reports of power failures with the device, which led to 14 patient deaths and 13 patients having it removed.

The company previously issued recalls on some Heartware devices and components used when implanting it. In December, the company warned about power failures or delayed restarts with three lots.

The company said patients should not automatically have the device removed. Taking out recalled heart implants has to be carefully weighed against the potential risks of surgery. The company said it is preparing a guide for managing patients “who may require support for many years.” —AP

**FDA approves obesity drug that cuts weight by 15%**

Regulators in June said a new version of a popular diabetes medicine could be sold as a weight-loss drug in the U.S.

The Food and Drug Administration approved Wegovy, a higher-dose version of Novo Nordisk’s diabetes drug semaglutide, for long-term weight management.

In company-funded studies, participants taking Wegovy had average weight loss of after reviewing 100 reports of power failures with the device, which led to 14 patient deaths and 13 patients having it removed.

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Seeds are packed with protein, minerals

By Matthew Kadey

There is an old saying that “great things come in small packages.” When it comes to edible seeds, don’t let their diminutive size fool you: “In many cases, the nutritional make-up of seeds rivals that of nuts,” said Julie Andrews, MS, RDN, The Gourmet RD. “Each seed has a unique nutrition profile, but they’re all similar in the sense that they’re very nutritious.”

So, it’s a shame that nuts get the lion’s share of research dollars and attention in our kitchens. Not only are pumpkin, sesame and other seeds dense in minerals, healthy fats, antioxidants and other nutritional goodies, they are also delicious and undeniably versatile in the kitchen.

Here are the best ones to sprinkle into your diet:

Strengthen bones with sesame seeds

You might be surprised to learn that sesame seeds are a good non-dairy source of calcium, with a tablespoon providing about 10% of the daily need. “Bones store calcium, and it’s an essential mineral for maintaining bone mass,” Andrews said.

Sesame seeds also supply good amounts of copper, a mineral needed for proper energy production and neurotransmitter synthesis. Sesame seeds with the husk intact are referred to as unhulled and are golden in color, while those with the husk removed are considered hulled and are off-white. Andrews said the unhulled variety have a bit more calcium.

There is also a black variety of unhulled sesame seed, which has a deeper flavor and more crunch as well as higher antioxidant levels. When sesame seeds are blended into a creamy spread you get trendy tahini.

Tame hunger with chia seeds

What tiny chia seeds lack in size they make up for with impressive amounts of soluble fiber. When the soluble fiber in chia mixes with fluids in your stomach, it turns gel-like, which slows down food digestion to create a sense of fullness. So, chia could be a way to help put the brakes on overeating.

“Soluble fiber also slows the absorption of sugar to help better regulate blood sugar levels,” Andrews said.

Chia seeds also supply a bounty of heart-healthy omega-3 fat and bone-benefitting phosphorus. Chia is available in both black and white hues, but important nutritional differences have not been shown.

Drop blood pressure with pumpkin seeds

Often called pepitas when they’re hulled to reveal their green interiors, crunchy pumpkin seeds are a great way to boost your intake of magnesium, an often under-consumed nutrient linked to improved blood pressure numbers, which may translate into a lower risk for cardiovascular events like stroke.

Magnesium may increase the production of nitric oxide — a signaling molecule that relaxes blood vessels. The seeds are also a reliable source of vitamin K, which we need to make proteins involved in blood clotting and bone metabolism. As with other seeds, getting dummy shots, the average weight loss was about 2.5%, or just under 6 pounds.

“With existing drugs, you’re going to get maybe 5% to 10% weight reduction, sometimes not even that,” said Dr. Harold Bays, medical director of the Louisville Metabolic and Atherosclerosis Research Center. Bays, who is also the Obesity Medicine Association’s chief science officer, helped run studies of the drug.

In the U.S., more than 100 million adults — about 1 in 3 — are obese. Dropping even 5% of one’s weight can bring health benefits, such as improved energy, blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol levels, but that amount often doesn’t satisfy patients who are focused on weight loss, Bays said.

Bays said Wegovy appears far safer than earlier obesity drugs that “have gone down in flames” over safety problems. Wegovy’s side effects were gastrointestinal problems, including nausea, diarrhea and vomiting. Those usually subsided, but led about 5% of study participants to stop taking it.

Wegovy (pronounced wee-GOH-vee) is a synthesized version of a gut hormone that curbs appetite. Patients inject it weekly under their skin. Like other weight-loss drugs, it’s to be used along with exercise, a healthy diet and other steps like keeping a food diary.

The Danish company hasn’t disclosed Wegovy’s price but said it will be similar to the price of its Saxenda, a weight-loss drug that now typically costs more than $1,300 per month without insurance.

Phylander Pannell, 49, of Largo, Maryland, joined a patient study after cycles of losing and then regaining weight. She said she received Wegovy, worked out several times a week and lost 65 pounds over 16 months.

“It helped curb my appetite, and it helped me feel full faster,” Pannell said. “It got me on the right path.”

Shortly after she finished the study and stopped receiving Wegovy, she regained about half the weight. She’s since lost much of that, started exercise classes and bought home exercise equipment. She’s considering going back on Wegovy after it’s approved. Novo Nordisk also is developing a pill version.

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To learn more about this service and to receive a free copy of the Advanced Cardiac Care Guide for patients and caregivers, visit: capitalcaring.org/cardiac or call 1-833-233-6014...
Breathe easier with these asthma products

Seeds
From page 8

Flaxseeds are best consumed ground because the hard shell of the whole seed resists digestion. Reprinted with permission from Environmental Nutrition, a monthly publication of Belvoir Media Group, LLC, 1-800-829-5384, EnvironmentalNutrition.com. © 2021 Belvoir Media Group. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

If you’ve ever had your bronchial tube go into a spasm, you know how scary it is! A bronchospasm occurs when the breathing airways suddenly contract, making it hard to breathe and causing that high-pitched, whistling sound called wheezing. If this goes on chronically, it is termed bronchial asthma, or just asthma.

About 25 million Americans have asthma, and attacks may be mild and short-lived or serious. Today’s article is for those of you who wish to breathe easier and are seeking natural options to use in conjunction with your medication.

The symptoms vary from day to day, sometimes hour to hour, but always include wheezing, coughing, shortness of breath, exercise intolerance and chest pain. Acid reflux is also quite common.

There are many reasons for a person to have a problem breathing. One lesser-known trigger includes perfume or cologne. Another is pet fur, especially cat saliva.

There is also the trigger of tropomyosin, which comes from cockroaches. When I lived down South, it was the headache of every Florida resident!

And finally, there’s something called “cardiac asthma” which stems from the heart.

If you’d like to read a more comprehensive version of this article with more details and more solutions, please visit my website, suzycohen.com, where you can sign up for my weekly newsletter. I’ll email the longer article to you.

In the meantime, here are some natural remedies and devices to help you breathe with more comfort:

**Vitamin D-rich foods**
Eating more foods with vitamin D such as milk and eggs can help. Getting the “sunshine vitamin” is useful too, because your body activates the D into a hormone that is used for immune function.

**Black Seed Oil**
This is a dietary supplement that fights inflammation and is especially useful for the lungs. It contains many active compounds such as “thymoquinone,” which has been studied specifically for breathing.

**The Breather**
The Breather, a “natural breathing lung recovery exercise trainer,” is a small plastic device that you hold in your hand. It’s designed to improve the flow of oxygen.

**Spearmint**
A spearmint inhaler, a small plastic tube such as “thymoquinone,” which has been studied specifically for breathing.

This is a dietary supplement that fights inflammation and is especially useful for the lungs. It contains many active compounds such as “thymoquinone,” which has been studied specifically for breathing.

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Makes a great gift | Fitness & Health 9
Setting the record straight on whole grains

By Densie Webb

Whole grains are recommended, with few exceptions, to be included as part of a healthful diet. The latest 2020-2025 U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend three servings a day of whole grains and point to whole grain amaranth, barley, brown rice, buckwheat, bulgur, millet, oats, popcorn, quinoa, dark rye, whole-grain cornmeal, whole wheat bread, whole wheat chapati, whole grain cereals and crackers and wild rice as important, nutrient-dense sources of whole grains.

Despite these recommendations and overwhelming evidence that including whole grains in your diet can be beneficial to your health, 98% of Americans fail to meet the three servings-a-day recommendation. That shortfall may be partly due to several myths about whole grains that continue to circulate.

Here, Environmental Nutrition sets the whole-grain record straight.

Myth 1: Whole grains cause inflammation in the body. We’re not sure where this one started, but it’s simply not true. If anything, the natural phytochemicals found in whole grains act as antioxidants and anti-inflammatory agents.

Myth 2: Whole grains can aggravate or cause diverticulitis. The truth: Doctors used to advise steering clear of whole grains and seeds if you’ve been diagnosed with diverticulosis — small, bulging pouches called diverticula that develop in your digestive tract. When one or more of these pouches become inflamed or infected, the condition is called diverticulitis.

A high-fiber diet that includes whole grains can actually help decrease pressure in the colon, preventing flare-ups in these pouches.

Myth 3: Whole grains cause bloating. This is partially true. The myth is that you shouldn’t eat whole grains because they always cause bloating.

Abruptly increasing the amount of fiber you eat from any source can indeed cause gas and bloating. If you currently eat a low-fiber diet and want to increase the amount of whole grains in your diet, increase gradually so your digestive system has time to adjust.

Myth 4: Only whole grains, not processed grains, provide vitamins. The facts behind this myth might surprise you. While processed grains don’t contain the fiber of whole grains, processed breads are fortified with several vitamins and iron and may actually contain more than whole grains, which are not fortified.

Myth 5: Allergic reactions to whole grains are common. The truth: Actual allergies to whole grains that result in an immune response are uncommon.

People with celiac disease can become sick after eating wheat due to the gluten it contains. Celiac disease affects only about one to 2% of the population.

Some people may have gluten-sensitivity that causes rumbling down below, but it’s not an allergic reaction.

Myth 6: Only organic, non-GMO whole grains are healthy. The truth: Well, currently there is no genetically modified wheat commercialized anywhere in the world. Putting non-GMO on a product containing wheat is akin to putting a “cholesterol-free” label on a peach — never had it in the first place. So, yes, organic wheat is GMO free, but so is non-organic wheat.

And if you’re choosing organic wheat to avoid gluten, don’t. All wheat contains gluten, organic or not.

Myth 7: Whole grains are loaded with pesticides. The truth: Glyphosate is a chemical that sometimes is used to control the timing of wheat harvests, but that practice is not common in the U.S. [Ed. Note: According to the National Wheat Foundation, “Glyphosate use is limited in the wheat industry, if even used at all in some wheat fields. In fact, for 2016, it was applied to 33% of wheat acres in the U.S.”]

There is no credible evidence that glyphosate is the cause of digestive problems.

Myth 8: “Multigrain” or contains whole grains on the label is an indication that the product is as high in fiber as a product that says “whole grain” on the label. The truth: Breads, muffins, rice mixes, and the like that are labeled as “multigrain” may sound like high fiber, but processed white flour is also a grain.

The only way to know if a grain product is made with whole grains is to read the label carefully. If it says “100% whole grains,” then it is. If it says “multigrain” or “contains whole grains,” check the label for the amount of whole grains. You should aim for 48 grams of whole grains a day.

Myth 9: Whole grains contain “anti-nutrients” that are unhealthy.

The truth: Anti-nutrients such as phytate, lectins and oxalates, which are found naturally in wheat and other plant foods, can block the absorption of nutrients.

However, while wheat may contain small amounts of anti-nutrients even after being processed and cooked or baked, the health benefits of including whole grains in your diet outweigh any potential negative nutritional effects.

Myth 10: Ordering “wheat bread” in a restaurant is the same as ordering “whole-grain bread.”

The truth: It’s not uncommon when ordering a sandwich at a restaurant to be asked, “White or wheat?” But the question would make sense only if the waiter asks, “White or whole wheat?” Often the bread may be brown, but that doesn’t mean it’s whole wheat — just that a darker wheat has been used or a coloring has been added that makes it look more healthy.

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**Health Studies**

**INFORMATION ON AREA CLINICAL TRIALS**

**Studying a drug for Alzheimer’s agitation**

By Margaret Foster

Alzheimer’s disease is devastating to a patient’s family not only because of memory loss but because of changes in a loved one’s behavior. In addition to wandering away from caregivers, patients can become anxious, irritable, agitated or even violent.

Now a study is under way to see if a drug can help alleviate agitation caused by Alzheimer’s. Sponsored by Avanir Pharmaceuticals Inc., the study is a phase-three trial — the last step in being approved by the Federal Drug Administration.

The drug, known as AVP-786, is similar to the FDA-approved drug Nuedexta, and both consist of dextromethorphan and quinidine.

It has been tested in more than a dozen previous studies, and “Results from these studies suggest that AVP-786 is generally well tolerated,” according to Avanir Pharmaceuticals.

**Local study site**

The phase-three clinical trial, known as the Aspect study, will enroll 750 participants at 110 study centers in the U.S. and Europe, including a site in Richmond: Clinical Research Partners on Forest Ave.

In the double-blind, randomized study, patients will swallow a daily pill of either the study drug or a placebo. They will visit Clinical Research Partners several times to complete assessments and give blood and urine samples. Participants will receive $50 per visit or $500 total for completing the study.

People between 30 and 80 with a probable diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease and can help scientists to find an effective treatment without significant side effects in the pharmacological management of Alzheimer’s associated agitation.

For more information, caregivers may call (804) 477-3045 or visit ClinicalResearchRVA.com.

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

**Aug. 6**

**COMPUTER BASICS**

If you know next to nothing about computers, this free class is the place to start. The Henrico County Public Library offers “Computer Basics: Keyboard & Mouse” at various branches throughout the year. The next class takes place at the Varina Area Library, 1875 New Market Rd., Richmond, on Fri., Aug. 6 from 2 to 4 p.m. No experience required. To sign up, call your local branch or (804) 501-1980.

**Do you have a loved one with agitation associated with Alzheimer’s dementia? Is their agitation becoming overwhelming?**

**ASPECT**

Agitation Associated with Alzheimer’s Dementia Clinical Study

A clinical research study can help us learn more about treating agitation in adults with Alzheimer’s dementia.

To be eligible for this study, a potential participant must:

- Be between the ages of 50 and 90
- Have a diagnosis of probable Alzheimer’s disease
- Have moderate-to-severe agitation that interferes with daily life
- Have a caregiver who spends a minimum of 2 hours per day, 4 days per week with them and is willing and able to comply with all study procedures

This is not a complete list of study requirements. The study doctor will review all requirements with potential participants and their caregivers.

If you are a caregiver for a person with Alzheimer’s dementia, find out if they might be eligible for this study by visiting www.ASPECTTrial.com; or contact:

**Call (804) 477-3045 for more information or visit ClinicalResearchRVA.com**

MLR-786-US-0647-1220
Bone density tests assess risk of fractures

By Jeremiah Long, M.D.

Dear Mayo Clinic: I am a 62-year-old woman who has been fairly healthy most of my life. I try to walk daily and eat right. I've never had a fracture or bone health issues. But after my annual physical this year, my doctor suggested a bone density test. Do I really need one and how often?

A: A bone density test uses a low dose of X-rays in a quick, noninvasive way to measure the amount of calcium and other minerals in a segment of bone, usually the hips and spine. By identifying decreases in bone mineral density, your health care provider can determine your risk of fractures and diagnose and monitor osteoporosis progression.

Most young, healthy people do not need a bone density test. But, as you age, your risk for osteoporosis increases because bone density tends to decrease as people grow older. That is especially true in women. If you are a woman and 65 or older, a bone density test is recommended with a repeat test generally performed two years after the initial test — although this interval may change depending upon any treatments being administered.

For women under age 65, bone density tests may be recommended based on risk factors for osteoporosis, such as a family history of the disease or a history of fractures. For men without fractures, the answer isn’t quite as clear. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force doesn’t recommend routine bone density testing for men. Because men have a higher bone mass and lose bone more slowly than women, they’re at a lower risk of fracture.

However, up to 1 in 4 men over 50 will break a bone due to osteoporosis. Groups such as the National Osteoporosis Foundation still recommend testing for men 70 and older. Men 50 to 69 may consider testing also if they have risk factors for osteoporosis.

People over 50 who have broken a bone and people who have lost 1.5 inches of height or more also may need a bone density test to screen for osteoporosis.

Another risk factor for osteoporosis is taking certain kinds of drugs that can interfere with the body’s process of rebuilding bone. Examples of these drugs include steroid medications, such as prednisone, and immunosuppressant medications, such as those taken after organ or bone marrow transplants.

Bone density test results are reported in a measurement known as a “T-score.” A T-score of minus 1 or higher is normal. A score of minus 2.5 or lower is osteoporosis.

The range between normal and osteoporosis is considered osteopenia, a condition where bone density is below the normal range and puts a person at higher risk for developing osteoporosis. Osteopenia also raises the risk for breaking a bone.

Exercise, avoid tobacco and alcohol

There are things you can do to help keep your bones healthy as you get older. Exercise is important. Be sure to include a combination of weight-bearing exercises, such as walking, jogging, running or stair climbing.

Eat a healthy diet, making sure to get the right amounts of calcium and vitamin D. And if you smoke, stop. Research suggests that tobacco use contributes to weak bones. Similarly, regularly having more than two alcoholic drinks a day raises your risk of osteoporosis, possibly because alcohol can interfere with the body’s ability to absorb calcium. Therefore, limit the amount of alcohol you drink.

Talk to your health care provider about getting a bone density test and discuss any concerns you have about your bone health. Taking steps now can help ensure good bone health in the future.

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

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The Board of Directors, Advisory Council and Staff Members of Senior Connection, CAAA are truly heartbroken over the recent passing of our Executive Director, Thelma Bland Watson, Ph.D. Dr. Watson has left a legacy that will never be forgotten. She has served as an exceptional role model and change agent focusing on the well-being of others throughout her career. Dr. Watson served as the Executive Director of Senior Connections since 2002. Her tireless contributions to the organization and her collaborative work with community partners ensured innumerable older adults and caregivers received needed support and services.

Dr. Watson was a former Commissioner of Aging for the Commonwealth of Virginia, Department for the Aging (now a part of the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services) under both Democratic and Republican administrations, having been first appointed by former Governor Douglas Wilder and reappointed by former Governor George Allen. She also served as Executive Director of Field Services for the National Committee on Social Security and Medicare in Washington, D.C. from 1997 to 2002. Dr. Watson previously served as Assistant Executive Director of the Crater District Area Agency on Aging in Petersburg and served in several capacities with the Crater Planning District Commission.

She achieved numerous honors and accolades, including being included in the 2019 Person of the Year Program in Richmond, VA. Dr. Watson has served on the Boards of the Alzheimer’s Association of Greater Richmond, the Virginia Health Quality Center, Project Homes (formerly Elder Homes) and Covenant Woods Retirement Community. Dr. Watson also served on leadership Boards for the Virginia Association of Area Agencies on Aging (V4A), the Capital Area Workforce Investment Board (RESOURCE), the Dean’s Committee for Humanities at Virginia State University and Bon Secours Community Hospital. At the State level, she has served on the Public Guardian and Conservator Advisory Board with the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), the Board of Directors for the Virginia Legal Services Corporation and the Steering Committee for the 2016 Governor’s Conference on Aging. Dr. Watson was initiated into the Delta Omega Chapter of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated.

Thelma B. Watson received an associate degree from Richard Bland College and a bachelor’s degree from Virginia State University (VSU) in Sociology with a concentration in Social Work. Dr. Watson received a graduate degree in Gerontology and a Doctorate in Public Policy and Administration from Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). She was honored by each institution for her achievements and service as an outstanding alum. She also received certifications from the Virginia Executive Institute and the National Long-Term Care Institute. In 2015, Dr. Watson received the Humanitarian Award from the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities.

Message from Senior Connections Leadership Team

Dear Partners and Friends,

Our hearts are heavy as we learned of the passing of our beloved Executive Director, Dr. Thelma Bland Watson, on June 25, 2021. She was not only a visionary and inspirational leader for Senior Connections for more than 19 years; she was a fierce advocate for seniors across the Commonwealth.

Dr. Watson led Senior Connections with warmth and compassion for all people, creating a culture within the organization that helped the senior community live happy, healthy and productive lives at every age. She will be greatly missed.

Please keep Dr. Watson’s family and colleagues in your thoughts and prayers during this difficult time. We know that you have many fond memories of Dr. Watson and appreciate how many lives she touched, mentored and positively impacted as well as her many accomplishments on behalf of so many others.

Sincerely,
Michelle Johnson
Board of Directors Chairman

Remembering Dr. Thelma Bland Watson

The Board of Directors, Advisory Council and Staff Members of Senior Connection, CAAA are truly heartbroken over the recent passing of our Executive Director, Thelma Bland Watson, Ph.D. Dr. Watson has left a legacy that will never be forgotten. She has served as an exceptional role model and change agent focusing on the well-being of others throughout her career. Dr. Watson served as the Executive Director of Senior Connections since 2002. Her tireless contributions to the organization and her collaborative work with community partners ensured innumerable older adults and caregivers received needed support and services.

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The TeleBridges program at Senior Connections is a telephone reassurance program providing weekly phone calls to older adults in our community. The TeleBridges program is part of a larger collaborative effort by several organizations in the Central Virginia Area working to combat social isolation here in our own backyards.

A lack of mobility, illness and the other challenges of aging can often mean less opportunity for interaction and socialization. A silent epidemic of social isolation among older adults has been taking place for years and the national pandemic has made it worse. Being keenly aware of the challenges older adults face when socially disconnected, TeleBridges volunteers took extra steps to make sure TeleBridges program participants stayed connected during the Coronavirus pandemic. Telebridges volunteers made extra calls, created crafts and gifts and delivered more items to participants than in past years. Senior Connections always be thankful for the TeleBridges volunteers who kept older adults connected to the community during this difficult time.

Messages from TeleBridges Program Participants

Thank you all so very much for the beautiful knitted gift that you sent to me for Valentine’s Day! I love it, it is so very pretty. Also, Ms. Frances and I talk twice a week. I love her too! She is a great person, and we have a lot to talk about. Thank you for sending my name to her as my telephone friend. May God Bless all of you!

– Ms. Janice

I wish to thank you for that lovely, lovely, handmade gift that you sent. It reminds me so much of my younger years. It was very nice of you, and the lady that made it. I just needed to let you know that. Thank you!

– Rev. Martin S.

Impact Report for 2020

We are extremely pleased to share a portion of Senior Connections, The Capital Area Agency on Aging’s 2020 Impact Report with you as a part of this month’s Engage at Any Age. As indicated in the Impact Report, a major goal in 2020 was to continue providing the same level of service to older adults in our community regardless of the national pandemic. We are grateful to have the opportunity to reflect on our work and activities that support the quality of life for thousands of older adults, caregivers and family members.

As you read the Impact Report, you will see that fighting social isolation was a priority for Senior Connections during the COVID-19 outbreak. Social isolation was an epidemic prior to the pandemic, and with older adults being especially affected by COVID-19, we feared many older adults would be facing these difficulties alone. To meet these new challenges, we adjusted our operations to ensure we could provide the same level of service that was provided prior to the pandemic. In the Impact Report, we highlight our Nutrition, Care Coordination and Telebridges programs. We are proud of all of our team members who answered the call and we are grateful for the many volunteers who supported our efforts.

By the Numbers: Financial Statement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUPPORT AND REVENUE</th>
<th>FY 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Older Americans Act (Federal)</td>
<td>3,929,779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Federal Funds</td>
<td>465,934</td>
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<tr>
<td>State and Local Government</td>
<td>2,032,806</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Grant Funds</td>
<td>646,672</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donations &amp; Participation Fees</td>
<td>284,296</td>
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<tr>
<td>Noncash &amp; Other Income</td>
<td>186,181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Support and Revenue</strong></td>
<td>7,545,668</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| EXPENSES | |
| Programs | 6,387,056 |
| Management and General | 213,086 |
| Fundraising | 6,617 |
| **Total Expenses** | 7,056,759 |

| Change in Net Assets | 488,909 |
| Net Assets, Beginning of Year | 1,965,926 |
| Net Assets, End of Year | 2,454,835 |

Senior Connections, CAAA

804-343-3005 • seniorconnections-va.org
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Advisory Council – 2020

Finding Options and Resources
- No Wrong Door Program
- Information/Referral
- Care Coordination
- Medicare and Insurance Counseling (VICAP)
- Benefits Enrollment Center (BEC)

Support to Stay Home
- Home Delivered Meals
- Friendship Cafés/Meals/Activities
- Telephone Reassurance
- Personal Care
- Check Writing/Budget Assistance
- Care Transitions Program
- Ride Connection for Medical Appointments

Assistance for Caregivers
- Identification of Resources
- Respite Support Consultation

Advocacy and Support
- Public Guardian
- Medicare Fraud and Abuse Prevention
- Senior Law Day/Legal Assistance
- Long-Term Care Ombudsman

Getting Involved
- Foster Grandparents/Mentors
- Retired Senior Volunteers
- Senior Employment/Job Readiness

Education and Information
- Health/Wellness Classes
- Engage at Any Age Publication

Senior Connections Programs & Services
Care Coordination: The Hub Connecting Older Adults to Resources

All of the programs and services offered by Senior Connections were affected by COVID-19. Instead of meeting older adults in their homes and completing in-person assessments, our Care Coordinators conducted most of their work by the phone and virtually to ensure the safety of our clients. As community needs increased, our Care Coordinators found a way to continue providing outstanding service despite their new challenges. We are grateful for the compassionate and kind way they support older adults, and we honor the work they do.

The Care Coordination team at Senior Connections provides older adults and their caregivers with resource information, conducts assessments, coordinates services, and makes referrals to programs and services both at Senior Connections and in the community. Our Care Coordinators are community resource specialists with a keen understanding of the needs of older adults in our community. As a result of working directly in the community and seeing a growing need for affordable housing for older adults in our region, Senior Connections joined other community partners coming together to help address the housing crisis in our area.

In 2020, three programs were established at Senior Connections to help with the local housing crisis. The Chore program assists clients with bulk junk removal, deep cleaning, and other heavy-duty tasks. Eligible participants are often facing eviction due to the condition of their home. The Residential Repair and Rehabilitation (RR&R) program complements the Chore program by assisting eligible homeowners with critical home repairs that may otherwise force them out of their homes. In many localities, homes with too many code violations require homeowners to make costly repairs or vacate the property. The RR&R program keeps older adults in their homes by helping them with some or all of the repair costs. The Housing Stability program has also grown. The program was originally set up in partnership with the 7th Street Christian Church who donated $40,000 to help pay mortgages and rents of older adults facing imminent eviction or housing foreclosure. Senior Connections will soon be adding a Housing Stability Coach to their team to assist older adults in rural areas to plan for their financial futures after the loss of their loved ones. We are grateful for the opportunity to offer these programs.

A Tribute to Dr. Thelma Bland Watson

The Longevity Project for a greater Richmond would like to offer a moment of tribute to the life and legacy of our colleague and friend, Dr. Thelma Bland Watson. Dr. Watson passed away on Friday, 25 June, 2021, leaving so many of us profoundly sad and untethered. First and foremost, we would like to express our deepest sympathy to Dr. Watson’s family and friends for this profound loss. Dr. Watson spoke with visible joy and pride about her family, expressing a deep sense of belonging worthy of celebration and admiration. As a wife, mother, grandmother, leader, elder advocate and social worker, Dr. Watson’s life is a picture of compassion, passion, purpose and strength.

It is tradition for one with such community stature, honors and accomplishments that her obituary would read like a resume. These are the facts of an amazing life of contributions, of making lives and communities better. Yet, accomplishments are all background to the person Thelma Watson is to us as an individual, as a professional partner and as a leader. While it may seem that we have lost one of the best among us, she continues as part of us all. Thelma is a piece of all of our work; she is in every stitch sewn, every seed planted, every brick layed. She is forever a gentle reminder that this work matters and that we are all making a difference to improve lives and communities. Her stories, full of humor, humility and kindness, are a call to keep going, have a broader perspective, look at the long game and be kind. Her truth telling and trustworthiness are models for her astute understanding and quiet strength. Her way of committing and connecting with people of shared mission and values and subtly separating herself from the opposite are lessons in stalwart commitment to a principled approach and her gentle caring. Whenever called upon, Thelma showed up, ever responsive and accountable to the call to create positive change.

Thelma will continue to be our leader, our compass, our matriarch in this important work that we do together. She knew, as we all know on our best days, that we are better together. May we continue to hear her words in our ears.

To write that Dr. Thelma Bland Watson will be missed is a most acute understatement. Her memory is a blessing and her legacy is our mission.

Two Senior Connections Team Members Named “Health Heroes” in 2020

Missi Boyer, Director of Nutrition and Wellness, and Diane Foster, Client Services Coordinator, have worked together for over ten years but they have never spent as much time together as they did in 2020. Senior Connections’ Friendship Cafés are neighborhood gathering places for older adults. The cafés provide a hot lunch and social activities as a way to ensure program participants are receiving at least one nutritious meal a day, along with social engagement. When the pandemic hit, the Friendship cafés had to close but we knew we still needed to provide nutritional and social support to program participants. To meet this challenge, Missi and Diane created the COVID Community Café, which provided over 500 participants with a weekly Friendship Café box that included five meals, activities and other essentials. Each box included a menu put together by a Senior Connections nutritionist, along with instructions on how to prepare the meals. Also included were toilet paper, masks, hand sanitizer, puzzle books and more. Every Monday, staff members and volunteers met at Feed More, who graciously donated space for us to use, and packed the COVID Community Café meal boxes. Many of our community partners donated food and other essentials for the meal boxes. Drivers who drove program participants to our Friendship Café switched and started delivering meal boxes to each participant’s home. During the 2020 Fiscal Year, over 12,000 meals were provided through the COVID Community Café program. Missi and Diane were acknowledged for their hard work when they were named as 2020 Health Heroes in December 2020 by the Richmond Times-Dispatch. Senior Connections congratulates and salutes our 2020 Health Heroes for going above and beyond the call of duty and helping older adults live with dignity and choice.

Senior Connections, CAAA

JULY 2021 — FIFTYPLUS
Nine important money numbers to know

By Liz Weston

Your doctor needs to know certain numbers to judge your physical health, such as your weight, blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

Similarly, you need to know certain numbers to monitor your own financial health, including these:

After-tax income and ‘must-have’ expenses

Your after-tax income is your gross income minus the taxes you pay (federal, state and local income taxes, plus Social Security and Medicare taxes). If you get a steady paycheck, you can use your latest pay stub to calculate this figure. Otherwise, check your most recent tax return.

Divide your after-tax income by the number of hours you worked to earn it. That gives you a rough idea of how much time you’re trading when you buy something. For example, if you make $20 an hour after tax and something costs $100, you have to work five hours to afford it.

Knowing that figure can help you make more conscious money decisions.

Your after-tax income also is the basis for the 50/30/20 budget, a spending plan that helps you balance current expenses, savings and investments.

That budget suggests limiting your essential or must-have expenses — shelter, utilities, transportation, food, insurance, minimum loan payments and child care needed to work — to 50% of after-tax income.

Capping must-haves can help you survive a job loss or other financial setback. You also can use the limits to determine if you can afford a new loan payment. If the payment pushes your must-haves over the 50% mark, the answer may be no.

Lifetime income and net worth

You can access your Social Security statement, including your lifetime earnings history, by signing up at socialsecurity.gov/myaccount.

Add up your annual earnings, plus any other income you’ve received such as gifts, inheritances, investment income, pensions, under-the-table earnings or government benefits. (Estimates are fine.)

Now, calculate your net worth by subtracting what you owe (your debts, including loans, credit card debts and mortgages) from what you own (your assets, such as your home, retirement accounts, investments and savings).

Compare your net worth to your lifetime income to see what you’ve done with the money that came into your hands.

There’s no objective scoring system. Like the hourly wage figure, this exercise is meant to make you more aware of what you do with your money. If you think you should have more to show for the money you’ve received, consider trying to save more of your income.

Retirement age, expected benefit

Your full retirement age is the age at which you are entitled to 100% of the Social Security benefits you’ve earned. If you apply for benefits before that age, your checks will be permanently reduced.

If you delay your application until after full retirement age, you can qualify for delayed retirement credits that boost your benefit by 8% each year until 70 years old, when benefits max out.

The full retirement age has gradually been increasing. For those born 1943 through 1954, your full retirement age was 66. After that, full retirement age increases by two months each year: it’s 66 and two months for people born in 1955; 66 and four months for people born in 1956, and so on.

The full retirement age is 67 for people born in 1960 and later.

To better plan for retirement, you should have some idea of how much you can expect from Social Security. You’ll find estimated benefits in your Social Security statement. (While Social Security is facing myriad ways, from interest payments to insurance premiums.)

Monitoring at least one of your scores can allow you to see your progress in building credit and alert you to problems, such as identity theft.

To calculate your debt-to-income ratio, combine your monthly debt payments with your current rent or mortgage payment and compare that with your monthly income. A debt-to-income ratio of 36% or less is considered good by most lenders. A ratio over 50% could make it difficult to get approved for new loans. If your ratio is in between those two points, paying off some of your debt could help you qualify for the loans you want (and help you sleep easier at night).

—AP/NerdWallet

Listing your home in 2021? What to know

By Elizabeth Renter

It’s a good time to be a home seller — homes are selling fast and for a premium — but that doesn’t mean you can jump into the market ill-prepared. Knowing what to expect can position you to make the most of this seller’s market.

Roughly 1 in 6 (17%) homeowners plan on selling their home in the next 18 months, according to a new NerdWallet survey conducted online by The Harris Poll among 2,127 homeowners. Those listings will be a welcome sight to buyers currently competing for a limited number of homes commanding top dollar.

The March survey found that this current market is playing a role in many of these home sellers’ motivations. In fact, 45% of those planning to sell in the next 18 months say recent changes to the housing market, including higher asking prices and lower inventory, have spurred them to sell earlier than initially planned.

If you’re among the homeowners preparing to be on the favored side of this strong seller’s market, here’s what you need to know:

You may be able to skip presale home improvements

In addition to cleaning your house for showings, preparing to sell your home often means doing minor (or major) repairs and upgrades. But homebuyers are stalking real estate listings and jumping on those that even get close to checking all the boxes, so sellers could likely save some money by limiting or forgoing expensive projects altogether.

More than 4 in 5 homeowners planning to sell in the next 18 months say they plan to spend roughly $2,000 on major repairs or renovations to make their home more appealing to potential buyers prior to selling.

“You really can get away without doing renovations and minor repairs,” said Holden Lewis, NerdWallet mortgages expert.

“Unless the house has a major problem like a leaky roof, you’re probably better off selling as-is. Make it a priority to declutter and depersonalize the home so it’s easy for buyers to imagine themselves living there. The buyers can fix it up and renovate it on their own dime and schedule.”

It will all move very quickly

If you list your home in this market, there’s little question of the outcome. Barring any significant defaults or dramatic overpricing, you’ll sell your home. It will happen quickly, and you could receive multiple offers over listing price.

Existing homes are only on the market for an average of 20 days, according to the most recent data from the National Association of Realtors — that’s listed and under contract in less than three weeks.

So be prepared to sell the moment you hang that “For Sale” sign. It’s ideal to have your next home already lined up, but that may be easier said than done.

Have you heard the scam about the “free” ancestry test? See story on page 14.
You’ll face stiff competition shopping for a new home

The very things that make it a good time to sell make it a tough time to buy a house. Just 10% of those planning to sell in the next 18 months say one of their primary motivations for selling is that they no longer want to be a homeowner, according to the survey. For the rest of these sellers, entering the crowded pool of homebuyers will present challenges. “The trickiest part of navigating today’s market is finding a home to replace the one you’re selling,” Lewis says. “You can make the buyer’s purchase contingent on your finding suitable housing. In other words, you can make your buyer wait. Normally, buyers are reluctant to accept that condition. But we’re in a seller’s market, and sellers make the rules.” —AP

New Medicare con: ‘free’ genetic test kits

By Better Business Bureau of Virginia

If you are on Medicare, watch out for a resurgence of this scam. Scammers are claiming to offer “free” genetic testing kits that allegedly screen for heart conditions or cancer. It’s really a ruse to steal your Medicare information for fraudulent billing and/or identity theft.

How the scam works

You get a call from someone claiming to be from Medicare or an official-sounding organization (one victim reported to BBB Scam Tracker that they received a call from “the Cardiac Test Center”).

The caller claims to be providing free genetic testing kits. All you need to do is agree to receive a kit in the mail, swab your cheek, and return the vial. The test will tell you if you have a genetic predisposition to heart disease, cancer, or another common condition. The caller insists that the test will be totally covered by Medicare.

This sounds like a useful (and free) test, so you agree. Of course, there’s a catch! Before the company can mail your kit, they need your Medicare ID number and a lot of personal information.

Targets of this scam report being asked extensive questions about their health, such as their family medical history and previous diagnoses. One victim reported, “They kept asking me about my own history and family members going back to their grandparents. I finally said my father died from a stroke, and that seemed to qualify me. At that point, they verified my address — they already had it. Then they asked for information off my Medicare card, and I hung up.”

As always, there are several variations of this con. Previous versions involved scammers going door-to-door or setting up tables at health fairs. Con artists may even provide gift cards or other giveaways in exchange for your participation.

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While genetic testing is a legitimate service — some victims do actually receive a genetic testing kit — the scammers are trying to commit fraud by billing Medicare for the unnecessary tests.

For the victims, these cons can lead to medical identity theft and, in some instances, a bill for thousands of dollars. Consumers should always consult with their primary care doctor before agreeing to tests.

How to protect yourself

Be wary of any lab tests at senior centers, health fairs, or in your home. Be suspicious of anyone claiming that genetic tests and cancer screenings are “free” or “covered by Medicare.” If a product or test is truly “free,” you will not have to provide your Medicare number.

Don’t share your Medicare number.

If anyone other than your physician’s office requests your Medicare information, do not provide it. Also, protect your Medicare card by keeping it in a safe place (not your wallet).

Do not trust a name or phone number. Con artists often use official-sounding names or appear to be calling from a government agency or related area code. Medicare will never call you to confirm your personal information, your Medicare number, or ask questions about your personal health.

Report Medicare fraud. If you think you are a victim of Medicare fraud, be sure to report it. Go to Medicare.gov to get started. There you can read more about healthcare scams — including the Medicare back brace scam and durable medical equipment fraud — and how to protect yourself from Medicare fraud.

If you’ve spotted a scam (whether or not you’ve lost money), report it to BBB.org/ScamTracker. Your report can help others avoid falling victim to scams.

BBB is a nonprofit organization was established in 1954 to advance responsible, honest, and ethical business practices and to promote customer confidence through self-regulation of business. Core services of BBB include business profiles, dispute resolution, truth-in advertising, scam warnings, consumer and business education and charity review.

Listing your home

From page 13

You’ll face stiff competition shopping for a new home

The very things that make it a good time to sell make it a tough time to buy a house. Just 10% of those planning to sell in the next 18 months say one of their primary motivations for selling is that they no longer want to be a homeowner, according to the survey. For the rest of these sellers, entering the crowded pool of homebuyers will present challenges. “The trickiest part of navigating today’s market is finding a home to replace the one you’re selling,” Lewis says. “You can make the buyer’s purchase contingent on your finding suitable housing. In other words, you can make your buyer wait. Normally, buyers are reluctant to accept that condition. But we’re in a seller’s market, and sellers make the rules.” —AP
Dominion Energy program helps pay bills

By Catherine Brown

Many people — particularly older adults — have struggled financially during the pandemic. For that reason, Dominion Energy suspended all disconnections for non-payment beginning in March 2020. It’s also providing assistance to those in need.

The pandemic wasn’t the first time the company offered assistance to Virginia residents. Almost 40 years ago, Dominion Energy created EnergyShare — a program developed to assist those in need with payment of energy bills, providing funding to cover the gaps of what they’re not able to pay. EnergyShare began as a winter program and eventually expanded to offer assistance year-round.

EnergyShare is a crisis program that helps pay energy bills for healing and cooling. Additional assistance may be available for veterans, those with disabilities and those 60 and over.

“Seniors are often the most vulnerable,” said LeRoy Atkins, administrator of Energy Assistance Outreach. “A lot of times they will pay utility bills before medicine. “We want to help customers become more self-sufficient so they can move forward in life.”

In a testimonial, one recipient of bill-payment assistance said: “I was overwhelmed with bills from my treatments and hospital stays. The [enrollment] process was really easy, and the turnaround time was wonderful. I am extremely blessed to be where I am, and I think that EnergyShare is doing everything it can to help.”

In recent years, Dominion Energy has enhanced the EnergyShare program to provide more assistance. Residents who receive assistance with bill payment are also eligible for a free home-energy assessment and installation of free energy-efficiency upgrades and weatherization to save on energy bills.

From June 2019 to May 2020, more than 16,200 customers received bill payment assistance, and 5,000 homes received weatherization.

Free air conditioner

In another program, Senior Cool Care, older Virginians in the Dominion Energy service area may be eligible for a free single-room air conditioner, which can be life-saving during summer.

Senior Cool Care is sponsored by Dominion Energy and administered by the Virginia Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services.

To fund the EnergyShare program, Dominion Energy receives donations from consumers, employees and business partners. According to Atkins, all funding from donations goes toward helping its customers.

“We all have to think of alternative ways to do business,” Atkins said. “Human life is more important than financial gain.”

To learn more about Dominion Energy’s EnergyShare program, visit bit.ly/EnergyShareVA. Call 2-1-1 or visit 211virginia.org for a referral to your local EnergyShare agency.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Ongoing  VOLUNTEER AT A FOOD PANTRY

The Atlantic Outreach Group is seeking volunteers to help families get the food they need. This is a great opportunity for individuals who have daytime availability, enjoy working with a team, can lift food boxes, or are good at organizing. Two-hour shifts are available Monday through Friday. For more information, email mkelley@aog4u.org or call (804) 308-2648.
Sometimes
a helping hand
comes on two feet.

Dominion Energy’s EnergyShare™ program helps those who need it most. For qualified customers, we offer bill pay assistance along with free weatherization and energy-saving upgrades. From insulating attics and caulking doors and windows to installing energy-efficient lightbulbs, we’re not just helping customers, we’re helping neighbors. Visit DominionEnergy.com/EnergyShare-VA to learn more.
Many wows await Yosemite Park visitors

By Victor Block

When we followed the hairpin-curved road that snakes through Yosemite National Park, every turn elicited another “wow” moment. It was challenging to decide which view was best: dramatic overlooks across deep gorges, soaring mountains or some of the highest waterfalls in the country?

Suddenly, I found the answer. I spotted several people pointing binoculars at a cliff rising straight up from the valley floor, peering intently at — what?

It took me several minutes to pinpoint tiny dots of color on the precipice. Only after asking did I realize they were people climbing that seemingly insurmountable monolith, the massive 3,000-foot-tall granite formation known as El Capitan.

Wondering why anyone would take on such a challenge, I concluded that this colossal rock demonstrates why the word “big” is so apt when describing Yosemite National Park.

For starters, Yosemite sprawls over four California counties and is roughly the size of Rhode Island. Ranging in elevation from about 2,000 to more than 13,000 feet, the park supports a diversity of animal and plant life in vast valleys, clear lakes and rolling meadows, glaciers and groves of towering sequoias.

Highlights of the park

Given the size of Yosemite, and the fact that most people visit for a relatively short time, it’s challenging to take in all that the park has to offer. Several attractions appear on most people’s “must see” list.

Yosemite Valley is the natural backbone of the park, an almost mile-deep trough carved out by Ice Age glaciers. The Merced River meanders through the valley floor, while upstream, its powerful Vernal Falls and Nevada Falls are fed by melting snow.

Hiking trails range from short and flat to long and challenging. One alternative is the paved one-mile Mirror Lake Trail along the valley floor, which offers outstanding close-up views of Half Dome and other features.

One site I came upon provides a view of a microcosm of the best landmarks in Yosemite. Glacier Point, and adjacent Washburn Point, overlook Yosemite Valley, waterfalls, and Half Dome and Clouds Rest, two massive granite formations.

Half Dome is just that, a three-sided cupola with one sheer face that looks as if it has been sliced off by a giant knife. The tallest of eight other high peaks visible from Glacier Point is Mount Hoffman, which tops off at 10,850 feet.

An hour south of Glacier Point, Mariposa Grove is the largest cluster of Giant Sequoias in the park, home to some 500 towering trees.

Most noteworthy are the Grizzly Giant, which has grown to a lofty height of 210 feet during its estimated 1,900-to-2,400-year lifetime, and the California Tunnel Tree, which in 1895 was cut to allow vehicles to drive through it and retains that original opening in its trunk.

Off the beaten path

I also found worthwhile stops at interesting places that some people might miss in their rush to take in the park’s major sights. The little Yosemite Chapel, for instance, has been in continuous use since 1879 and offers a spectacular view of Yosemite Falls.

For those with an interest in history, the outdoor Pioneer Yosemite History Center, located just outside the park, displays structures that had important roles in the park.

One, a covered bridge erected in 1857 from timbers that still have its builders’ original markings, was once used by all Yosemite-bound traffic. Another, a Wells Fargo Office, operated as a stagecoach terminal and telegraph agency. A blacksmith shop was once the place to replace lost horseshoes and repair damaged stage coaches.

And if you wander over to a nearby cemetery, you’ll find intriguing headstones with nondescript identifications like “Pioneer Settler” and “Frenchman.”

The Pioneer Yosemite History Center is just one of many places near Yosemite that enhance a visit to the area. A number of attractions are grouped in Madera County, which provides easy access to the southern entrance into Yosemite. From ancient fossils to Native American culture to gold mines, there’s something to interest everyone.

Nearly 800,000 years ago, woolly mammoths, giant sloths and camels lived in what is now California. Prehistoric rivers washed some of their bones to a low-lying area, where they have been uncovered and are displayed at the Fossil Discovery Center.

The Sierra Mono Museum documents the Native Americans who lived in present-day Yosemite nearly 4,000 years ago. By the late 18th century, most of the region was populated by members of Miwok tribes and later by others, while Mono people occupied a large swath of territory nearby. Exhibits include tools, baskets, ceremonial items and intricate bead craft.

Miners, lumberjacks and ranchers were next to arrive, and to change the land forever. Discovery of gold in 1848 set off an influx of people into the territory.

By the time the Gold Rush ended seven years later, California had become a state, the Native American population had been largely decimated, towns were established, and farmers and ranchers arrived to feed the new residents.

The towns of Fine Gold and Coarsegold got their names from the precious metal.
Go to unwind on Virginia’s Eastern Shore

By Glenda C. Booth

With two national wildlife refuges, a national seashore, one state park and three state wildlife management areas, Virginia’s Eastern Shore is “nature untamed,” wrote local author Kirk Mariner.

The state’s Eastern Shore stretches 70 miles from Maryland to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. It is flanked by the Atlantic Ocean on the east ("seaside") and the Chesapeake Bay ("bayside") on the west.

Fully experiencing the Eastern Shore requires branching off Route 13, which bisects the region, and exploring the small towns, vegetable stands, bustling wharfs, quiet coves and friendly mom-and-pop stores.

Tucked away are inviting hamlets with names like Wachapreague, Pungoteague, Onancock, Machipongo, Oyster, Nassawadox and Horsey.

This landscape of vast saltmarshes, mudflats, beaches, inlets, creeks, hummocks and maritime shrub thickets and forests is a birding mecca. It’s also home to the wild ponies of Chincoteague Island.

**Quiet beaches**

To native Americans, “Chincoteague” meant “beautiful and across the water.” Reaching Chincoteague Island requires driving across a five-mile causeway, flanked by watery marshes alive with foraging egrets and swirling, laughing gulls.

Misty the wild pony is likely the Eastern Shore’s most renowned notable, made famous by Marguerite Henry’s 1947 book, *Misty of Chincoteague*. Misty’s hoofs are imprinted in the sidewalk fronting the 1945 Island Theatre, where the movie had one of two world premieres (the other was in Hollywood).

Every July, the town of 3,000 explodes with the 16-day volunteer firemen’s carnival, which ends in the annual pony swim and auction to keep the herd at a sustainable 150.

Chincoteague (insiders pronounce it “Shink-a-tig,” and others call the small-town beach the “anti-Ocean City”) is easy to stroll and has plenty of fishing and wildlife outings for hire.

If you’d rather spend the day at the ocean, pick up a fresh catch at a local mar- ket or restaurant, many of which specialize in seafood. The 48th annual Chincoteague Oyster Festival will celebrate the peninsula’s piscine bounty on October 9. At this typically sold-out event, guests can snack on oysters raw, steamed, fried and frittered, accompanied by hush puppies and clam fritters.

Throughout the year, watch rockets rise from the Wallops Flight Facility, a NASA rocket launch station just outside Chincoteague. Antares rockets lift off Wallops Island, carrying cargo to the International Space Station. At its visitors’ center, exhibits on scientific balloon research, the solar system and space flight attract space buffs of all ages.

**Middle Peninsula: cool towns**

In the 1600s Capt. John Smith called the area of Onancock “the Gem of the Eastern Shore.” Today, Onancock, pop. 1,200, has been dubbed the sixth-coolest U.S. small town by Budget Travel.

The town is full of stately, 19th-century homes, dockside eateries, artsy shops and galleries. The Eastern Shore of Virginia Historical Society is housed in Ker Place, a federal period, Georgian-style house, restored to its 1806 glory.

The tiny town of Wachapreague, population 230, is a mix of sea and science. Fishermen and recreational boats chug out of the town marina along lush marshes. The pedestrian-friendly town has a general store, tackle shop and places to rent kayaks, bicycles and golf carts.

The Island Restaurant is Wachapreague’s signature place to eat, and its specialty is Oysters Parramore, named for one of the nearby barrier islands.

Locals here expound on the gastronomic merits of Chincoteague oysters. The local waters, fed by ocean tides, give “their” oysters a briny, saltier flavor than others. Sweet potato biscuits pair perfectly with the oysters.

Also in Wachapreague is the Virginia Institute of Marine Science’s Eastern Shore Laboratory, a world-class research and teaching seawater lab for coastal ecology, aquaculture and marine science.

Every year scientists invite the public inside to learn about, for example, benthic invertebrates under high-powered microscopes or microplastic ocean pollution. Marine Life Day is scheduled for Sept. 18, 2021.

**Lower Peninsula: Cape Charles**

On the Delmarva peninsula’s southern tip, anyone with a driver’s license can scoot around Cape Charles in a golf cart and explore its boutiques, coffee shops, inns, art galleries, a distillery, cidery, brewery and bed-and-breakfasts in century-old buildings. Given its “urbanity,” Cape Charles “may be on the Eastern Shore, but it is not quite of it,” wrote Mariner in his book, *Off 13*.

In the Cape Charles Museum, located in a former power plant, visitors learn that in

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found nearby, and you’ll find information about mining at the Coarsegold Historical Society and Museum. It’s located on property that was a horse-drawn freight wagon station, and the original adobe building is still in use.

With authentic Indian teepees, grinding stones, mining exhibits, another blacksmith shop and other outbuildings, this little gem of a museum can transport visitors back to earlier times.

Finally, there’s the Fresno Flats Historic Village, which captures the flavor of 19th-century life of settlers. Visitors can explore two fully furnished homes, one-room school houses, a jail and a log cabin which explore two fully furnished homes, one-room school houses, a jail and a log cabin which once sat along a stagecoach road.

These and other remnants of America’s pioneer history would be reason enough to visit the area. Throw in some of the most magnificent natural settings anywhere, and it’s no wonder that Yosemite National Park and its surrounding area are included on many a bucket list.

If you go
Most people who visit Yosemite go there May to October, so a fall or spring trip can avoid the biggest crowds. Fall color, winter snow and spring flowers add their own seasonal beauty. The national park is about a four-hour drive from both San Francisco and Sacramento.

A good way to see the park is by tour bus. Guided tours hit the high spots and avoid the hassles of driving and seeking limited parking space.

Accommodations within Yosemite National Park, which range from the luxurious Ahwahnee Hotel to canvas-walled tent cabins, often are reserved well in advance.

I stayed just outside the park’s south entrance at the Sierra Sky Ranch, which dates to 1875 and was the area’s first working cattle spread. Log walls and stone fireplaces are among touches that retain the feel of the Old West. Room rates begin at $120 (sierraskyranch.com).

As for dining, the Forks Restaurant overlooking Bass Lake is a throwback to times gone by, with prices to match. Chicken fried steak ($15) and a triple-decker club sandwich ($12) will leave room to enjoy ice cream pie, sundaes and other fountain specialties (theforksresort.com).

In contrast, the Elderberry House, ensconced in a French-style chateau, should be reserved for a special occasion. The sophisticated décor and impeccable service come at a price of $80 for a prix fixe three-course meal. My free-range lamb was perfectly prepared, and the mel-in-your-mouth espresso panna cotta provided the perfect ending to a memorable meal (elderberryhouse.com).

For more information about visiting Yosemite National Park, go to nps.gov/yose. For information about exploring Yosemite’s southern gateway communities in Madera County, visit yosemitebigholiday.com.

Eastern Shore
From page 18
the Eocene epoch, a meteor smashed into the Atlantic Ocean at 37 miles per second and in effect created the Chesapeake Bay.

On the fishing pier, pros and amateurs can fish or crab without a license. The town’s Festive Fridays and old-fashioned holiday celebrations start the day after Thanksgiving.

The Islands
For a full experience of the Eastern Shore, a boat trip to the barrier islands is a must. Shells in shades of brown, gray and bleached white decorate the sand. Spartina grasses sway as terns dive and laughing gulls squawk overhead.

“Most of the islands are pretty much as they were when the first blue-eyed British dandy stepped out of his dinghy and sank up to his waist in marsh mud,” wrote Chris Badger in Virginia Wildlife magazine.

Longer than they are wide, the 23 uninhabited wind-blown sand strips are constantly reshaped by the winds (some are closed to the public). Most are prime, undisturbed habitat for shorebirds, sand diggers, fludder crabs and other wildlife, owned and protected by the state and the Nature Conservancy.

These islands are some of the most pristine, uninhabited habitat in the United States and have been designated an International Biosphere Reserve by the United Nations. To get there, rent a kayak, charter a boat or take a boat taxi from Wachapreague.

For a closer look at the islands’ human history, tour the Barrier Islands Center in Machipongo, which showcases fishing, farming and the impact of hurricanes. The center is housed in a historic almshouse with an intentionally crooked chimney.

For more information about the barrier islands of the Virginia Coast Reserve, see nature.org. For events, lodging, food and directions, visit Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission, VisitESVA.com.

Yosemite
From page 17
Shore, a boat trip to the barrier islands is a Village, which captures the flavor of 18th-century gem of a museum can transport visitors to explore two fully furnished homes, one-room school houses, a jail and a log cabin which explore two fully furnished homes, one-room school houses, a jail and a log cabin which once sat along a stagecoach road.

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Makes a great gift | Leisure & Travel
Family stories inspired research, book

By Catherine Brown

For as long as she can remember, Sandra Kemp, 74, has been listening to her older relatives’ stories about her ancestors’ experiences in slavery and beyond.

“I was always interested in personal stories of ancestors, especially those who lived through the Reconstruction [after the Civil War],” Kemp said in an interview with Fifty Plus.

Since she was a young adult, Kemp has searched for documents verifying the stories she had heard as a child, gathering reams of information along the way.

Several years ago, when Kemp was researching at what used to be Belmead Plantation in Powhatan, the county where she was raised, she met another researcher who asked her how she planned to recognize the 400th year of African slaves coming to Virginia.

Kemp decided then to put together the material she had compiled into a book, and The Journey for Justice was published in April 2020.

“I wanted to preserve African American history and heritage and put together information not readily available to the public,” she said.

The scope of The Journey for Justice is ambitious. It characterizes the experiences of Black Americans living through slavery, Reconstruction, segregation and integration, all from the perspectives of Kemp’s family members.

Linked to Belmead Plantation

For decades, Kemp conducted research at a variety of locations, including the University of Virginia, where she researched the Cocke family, who owned land in Surry County as early as the 1630s, as well as in Powhatan and Fluvanna.

The Cockes owned both Mount Pleasant and Four Mile Tree Plantations in Surry County, where Kemp’s ancestors, including her great-great-grandmother Rebecca, were enslaved.

Kemp also spent time researching Belmead, which was purchased by Philip St. George Cocke in the mid-1800s. Decades later it became the site of schools for Black children — and an important location for Kemp’s family.

“Our family’s association with Belmead lasted for over 180 years,” Kemp said.

Kemp’s great-grandfather, James Morris, son of Rebecca, was enslaved alongside other relatives at Belmead, and then worked there during Reconstruction. Kemp found records revealing that Morris worked as a carpenter and then a miller.

“He worked for 66 years in the plantation and left a legacy of Belmead ties,” Kemp said.

During Reconstruction, Morris purchased 54 acres a half-mile from the plantation. That land remains in the family today.

Kemp’s father, Ivory, also had ties to Belmead. He and his brother taught at St. Emma’s Military Academy for Boys, which was established on that land in 1895 by Edward Morrell and Louise Drexel Morrell. (St. Francis de Sales, an all-Black school for girls, was established there in 1899 by Saint Katharine Drexel of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.)

‘No one spoke to us’

Kemp is determined to educate young people about Black Americans’ experience. She learned firsthand from her family the benefits of education and the challenges many Americans faced accessing education.

In 1963, Kemp’s parents, along with other Powhatan families, pushed for the integration of the Powhatan County Schools. Kemp and her sisters were among the first 65 African American students to attend formerly white schools in Powhatan County.

At the time, Kemp was a junior and, because the other two Black students who entered as juniors later left the school, she became the first African American graduate of Powhatan High School.

“The teachers and students tolerated our presence,” Kemp wrote in The Journey for Justice. “It was a very isolating experi-
Ginger root has many health benefits

By Lela Martin

Not to be confused with the native plant called wild ginger (Asarum canadense), the tropical ginger plant (Zingiber officinale) has a long history and some promising uses.

Although often called ginger root, the ginger plant is actually grown for its rhizome, an underground stem that sends out roots or shoots.

Oldest known spice

Used in both cooking and traditional medicine, ginger was recorded as early as 500 BCE in China and India. Imported from India, which still produces a third of the world’s ginger today, ginger was known to the ancient Greeks and throughout the Roman Empire. In the early Middle Ages, a pound of ginger cost Europeans as much as a sheep.

Ginger was the first spice to be grown in the New World, in Jamaica in 1585. In fact, George Washington’s mother, Mary Ball Washington, would have used “Jamaican ginger” when she baked gingerbread for the Marquis de Lafayette.

Culinary uses

From gingerbread and gingersnaps to spicy stir-fries, ginger is perhaps the world’s most versatile spice. It can be used fresh, frozen, dried, powdered, candied, pickled or as an oil or juice.

Ginger beer was first brewed in mid-18th-century England. A non-alcoholic golden ginger ale soon followed. In 1907, the paler, milder version developed by a Canadian was dubbed “Canada Dry Ginger Ale.” A holiday favorite, Richmond’s Hardwood Brewery Gingerbread Stout features locally-grown baby ginger.

Medicinal applications

Additionally, ginger has been used in traditional herbal medicine, and is being studied by researchers to understand its medicinal effects.

Studies show that ginger may be helpful for the mild nausea and vomiting associated with pregnancy, according to my own personal experience and the National Institutes of Health’s National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, Ginger has been used safely in research studies when taken by mouth as a dietary supplement.

The polyphenols in ginger are micronutrients packed with antioxidants. Those antioxidants reduce cell damage by clearing up free radicals, which have been associated with higher risks of cancer, heart disease, premature aging and other chronic conditions.

A 2019 study done by Virginia State University (VSU) has proven ginger’s polyphenols and antioxidants are extremely high in young or “baby” ginger. In fact, VSU research confirms immature ginger contains about twice as many polyphenols and has two to three times more antioxidation activity than the mature ginger found in most grocery stores.

Combating obesity?

Researchers at VSU have just received a $600,000 grant from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) to study whether ginger helps combat obesity and other chronic diseases.

The three-year study runs from April 2021 until March 2024. Dr. Rafat Siddiqui, project director and scientist at the Agricultural Research Station at VSU, will collaborate with Cooperative Extension specialists Dr. Reza Rafie and Dr. Theresa Nartera, as well as with Dr. Victoria Volks of the University at Maryland–Eastern Shore.

How to grow ginger at home

Not only is baby ginger more potent, it can be harvested in seven to eight months, compared to commercial ginger, which takes up to 11 months to mature.

While this tropical plant can grow in your shady garden bed this summer, you must take it inside before the temperature drops below 50°F. Therefore, it is more practical to grow ginger in pots. However, since a full-grown plant may reach a height of four feet, make sure your container will accommodate its growth.

If you begin with either a rhizome intended for planting or one from the grocery store, you should start in the spring six weeks before you plan to take it out.

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Finally... a better mobility solution than Scooters or Power Chairs.

The Zoomer’s versatile design and 1-touch joystick operation brings mobility and independence to those who need it most.

If you have mobility issues, or know someone who does, then you’ve experienced the difficulties faced by millions of Americans. Once simple tasks like getting from the bedroom to the kitchen can become a time-consuming and potentially dangerous ordeal. You may have tried to solve the problem with a power chair or a scooter but neither is ideal. Power chairs are bulky and look like a medical device. Scooters are either unstable or hard to maneuver. Now, there’s a better alternative... the Zoomer.

My Zoomer is a delight to ride! It has increased my mobility in my apartment, my opportunities to enjoy the outdoors, and enabled me to visit the homes of my friends for longer periods of time. The various speeds of it match my need for speed, and I am most pleased with the freedom of movement it gives me.

Sincerely, A. Macon, Williamsburg, VA

After just one trip around your home in the Zoomer, you’ll marvel at how easy it is to navigate. It is designed to maneuver in tight spaces like doorways, between furniture, and around corners. It can go over thresholds and works great on any kind of floor or carpet. It’s not bulky or cumbersome, so it can roll right up to a table or desk- there’s no need to transfer to a chair. Its sturdy yet lightweight aluminum frame makes it durable and comfortable. It’s dual motors power it at up to 3.7 miles per hour and its automatic electromagnetic brakes stop on a dime. The rechargeable battery powers it for up to 8 miles on a single charge. Plus, it’s exclusive foldable design enables you to transport it easily and even store it in a closet or under a bed when it’s not in use.

Why spend another day letting mobility issues hamper your lifestyle? Call now and find out how you can have your very own Zoomer.

Joystick Control (adaptable left or right)

Sturdy & Lightweight Frame

Comfortable Seating

Powerful Battery/ Dual Motors

Swivel Away Footrest

Folds to 12” in seconds

Joystick conveniently rolls beneath table or desk

Easy to use joystick control

Ready to get your own Zoomer? We’d love to talk to you.

Call now toll free and order one today!

1-888-432-8114

Please mention code 115425 when ordering.

The Zoomer Chair is a personal electric vehicle and is not a medical device nor a wheelchair. Zoomer is not intended for medical purposes to provide mobility to persons restricted to a sitting position. It is not covered by Medicare or Medicaid. © 2020 zoomSTREET for Boomers and Beyond, Inc.
Ginger

From page 21

Since grocery-store ginger may have been treated with a growth retardant, soak the rhizome for 24 hours early next spring. Then cut the rhizome into two-inch sections with two to four well-developed growth buds (aka eyes). Sterilize the pieces in a 10% solution of household bleach for ten minutes. Allow the cut ends to dry out and harden for three days. Plant the sections just below the soil surface in fertile, well-drained soil. Water sparingly until top growth develops.

Once established, water heavily, fertilize monthly and keep the pot in a partial shade. Bring it outside when the temperatures rise above 50°F. Avoid the use of pesticides that could be harmful to humans.

Once the rhizomes are an adequate size, harvest sections carefully: Remove some soil from around the rhizomes, cut off an amount you want and carefully return the soil, allowing the remainder to continue growing. Baby rhizomes must be refrigerated, eaten or processed at harvest, unlike the tough, imported, shelf-stable rhizome in stores.

Growing ginger locally

VSU is studying the feasibility of small-scale farmers growing baby ginger in Virginia as an agricultural crop. Plastic high tunnel planting provides the partial shade ginger requires and a protective cover to extend the growing season. VSU can provide more information about growing and marketing ginger commercially.

Note: This is not a recommendation or endorsement of ingesting or using ginger for medicinal purposes. Please seek the advice of a medical professional before using this plant or any plant products.

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

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.

Well, cheer up! There’s finally a product designed to enable us all to walk properly and stay on the go. It’s called the Perfect Walker, and it can truly change your life.

Traditional rollators and walkers simply aren’t designed well. They require you to hunch over and shuffle your feet when you walk. This puts pressure on your back, neck, wrists and hands. Over time, this makes walking uncomfortable and can result in a variety of health issues. That’s all changed with the Perfect Walker. Its upright design and padded elbow rests enable you to distribute your weight across your arms and shoulders, not your hands and wrists, which helps reduce back, neck and wrist pain and discomfort. Its unique frame gives you plenty of room to step, and the oversized wheels help you glide across the floor. The height can be easily adjusted with the push of a button to fit anyone from 4’9” to over 6’2”.

Once you’ve reached your destination you can use the hand brakes to gently slow down, and there’s even a handy seat with a storage compartment. Plus the Perfect Walker includes Stand Assist handles which make standing from a sitting position simple and easy. Its sleek, lightweight design makes it easy to use indoors and out and it folds up for portability and storage.

Why spend another day hunched over and shuffling along. Call now, and find out how you can try out a Perfect Walker for yourself... and start feeling better each and every day in your own home.

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Questions? Call (804) 673-5203.

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FIFTY PLUS — JULY 2021

Rhyme Time

1. Gallows day
2. Scrubbed out of the history books
3. Loveseat’s least lump
4. Enerttic
5. Home to CA’s Latino Walk of Fame
6. Vocel of poverty
7. “Feel free to arrive ___ as you want”
8. ___-Matic (baseball game simulator)
9. Lodge man
10. Genesis time unit
11. Helped out a teacher
12. Like Target’s logo
13. Bluesman Waters
14. Saved in tall trees
15. Mother ___ (kid’s game)
16. Cock or bull
17. ___-Matic (baseball game simulator)
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By Believin’ Stephen
This year, we are pleased to announce two in-person events and an online Virtual 50+Expo

In-person Expos

Springfield, Va.
Sunday, Oct. 17, 2021
Springfield Town Center

Bethesda, Md.
Sunday, Oct. 24, 2021
Westfield Montgomery Mall

Health Screenings • Flu Shots • Keynote Speaker
Exhibitors (nonprofit, government and business)
Giveaways • Door Prizes

Online Expo

October 1 thru November 30 at beacon50expo.com

Online find dozens of free classes, speakers and entertainers available 24/7, as well as helpful resources and exhibitors at your fingertips for two months.

Watch this space for more details.
Or email info@beacon50expo.com to receive updates.

ATTN: Businesses and nonprofits: To sponsor or exhibit at either or both in-person Expos and/or at our virtual Expo, call 804-673-5203 or speak with your Fifty Plus advertising representative.