Hosting healing dinners

Danita Rountree Green, left, and Marsha Summers, right, are co-CEOs of Coming Together Virginia, a Richmond nonprofit that brings people together at casual dinners to share views, stories and fears on race-related topics.

Photo courtesy of Coming Together Virginia

A publication of the Beacon Newspapers, Inc.
Alzheimer’s drug saga

Last year, we covered the controversy over the FDA’s approval of Aduhelm, the new — and first ever — drug treatment to claim the ability to slow the progress of Alzheimer’s disease. More has happened in the last few weeks.

To summarize, the FDA approved the drug under a process that bypassed its usual “safe and effective” standard. Instead, Aduhelm received “accelerated approval” based on an expectation that its proven ability to remove clumps of amyloid protein in the brains of patients (one of several biomarkers of the disease) ought to reduce patient symptoms.

Unfortunately, the studies on which the approval was based were in conflict on this point. In fact, two early studies of the drug were halted by the manufacturer itself due to disappointing results.

Furthermore, of the 11 medical experts convened by the FDA to consider all the study evidence, 10 indicated the studies failed to show “clinical effects,” and additionally expressed uncertainty even as to the role of amyloid in Alzheimer’s disease.

Not only did the studies not prove Aduhelm to be effective, they revealed some very serious — in one case fatal — side effects, including falls, brain bleeding and brain swelling.

Despite its uncertain (unlikely?) benefit, the drug’s developer, Biogen, proposed to charge patients (in most cases, that means Medicare) $56,000 a year for the product.

Today, more than one out of 10 Medicare recipients suffered from Alzheimer’s. As a result, when Medicare set its premium rates for 2022, it raised them by the largest dollar-amount ever: $21.60 per month, about half of which it said was due to the expected cost of covering this one drug.

That means 56 million Medicare recipients are each being charged $130 more this year to cover the cost of this dubious treatment for eligible patients.

In my view, there are several parties responsible for this egregious situation: The researchers who pushed the FDA to approve the drug despite the absence of the usual required evidence; the patient advocacy groups who have sought a treatment — any treatment! — for Alzheimer’s for decades and lobbied the FDA heavily for approval; the manufacturer, who reportedly priced the drug based on “comparables” from life-saving cancer treatments (Aduhelm is not a life-saver, or even a proven life-extender at present); and even competitor drug manufacturers pursuing similar lines of research who hoped to piggyback on the approval of Aduhelm to promote their own treatments.

Fortunately, though the FDA overlooked its “safe and effective” standards in this case, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), which administers Medicare, did not ignore its “reasonable and necessary” standards for covering the drug’s cost.

Normally, Medicare pays for all FDA-approved drugs. This year, however, CMS announced it would cover Aduhelm’s cost only for patients enrolled in an approved double-blind study of the treatment’s effectiveness.

I will also note that, due to a great outcry over Aduhelm’s originally proposed cost, and also to the reluctance of many leading hospitals and medical practices to prescribe the treatment, Biogen cut the price in half. As a result, Medicare is now considering whether to reduce the current premium. They certainly should, not only because of the price drop, but due to the very limited coverage Medicare is offering.

Here’s how I view the characters in this modern-day morality play:

- The FDA, in providing accelerated approval, succumbed to political and other pressures, ignoring long-standing rules, established expectations, and the judgment of its experts.
- Biogen was guilty of overreach both in pushing for full approval without satisfactory evidence, and aggressively pricing this drug of limited effectiveness. On the plus side, at least the company responded to market pressures and reduced the price, though it’s still exorbitant.
- Medicare made two smart calls: first, in pricing this drug into 2022 premiums, and second, in publicizing the degree to which the new drug was responsible for the increase. This transparency appropriately galvanized public response. I think it would be wise for Medicare to act similarly whenever extraordinarily priced drugs have a measurable effect on premiums.
- CMS was not wrong to both limit coverage of the drug and to require all patients receiving it to participate in a study. However, I wish those studies were not required to be placebo-controlled, because that means half the patients will not be receiving the real drug, and that the number (and locations) of participants will be highly limited.

Another, less onerous route exists for collecting study data on new drugs: a CMS-approved registry. That would permit more patients to obtain Aduhelm from doctors all over the country, and require those doctors to submit data to CMS that could be used to prove (or disprove) the new drug’s effectiveness over time in real-world settings.

CMS’s position is that placebo-controlled studies must first establish evidence of effectiveness so that registry data can be compared against those results. Once such studies are complete, the registry can be utilized to gather data more broadly through the population.

That means most Alzheimer’s patients and their caregivers and families will have to wait several more years before finding out if they will get a chance to try the much-hyped, much-hoped-for Aduhelm or one of the other treatments still in development.

Let’s hope that day comes. It can’t be too soon.

FROM THE PUBLISHER
By Stuart P. Rosenthal

Editorial Mission: Fifty Plus is dedicated to providing readers with accurate information, professional guidance, and useful resources. Our publication is intended to both reflect and enhance fifty-plus lifestyles, and to encourage reader dialogue and input.

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Letters to the editor

Readers are encouraged to share their opinion on any matter addressed in Fifty Plus as well as on political and social issues of the day.

Mail your Letter to the Editor to Fifty Plus, P.O. Box 2227, Silver Spring, MD 20915, or email to info@fiftyplusrichmond.com.

Please include your name, address and telephone number for verification.

Dear Editor:

Thank you for the informative articles you provide in each issue that are not available in other publications.

Of serious and present interest is your April article titled “Can COVID bring on a case of shingles?” by Jim Miller. My personal experience with the shingles vaccine I was urged to take a few years ago warrants mention for your readers to preclude awakening the beast that is shingles.

As with most all of us, we follow medical recommendations that often fail to advise us completely. I and every other person I have spoken to over the years have not been cautioned to avoid the shingles vaccine if you are immune compromised.

I took the vaccine that was a live virus and did develop shingles. Doctors [later] advised that I should not have taken the vaccine since it is a live virus and I am immune compromised. Your article does not directly address this serious prohibition that your readers should be informed about.

See LETTERS TO EDITOR, page 22
Candid and courageous conversations

How the group started

The national organization Coming to the Table was started by two Virginians whose ancestors enslaved people.

Susan Hutchison, a White descendant of Thomas and Martha Jefferson, attended a family reunion in 2003 with the descendants of Jefferson and Sally Hemings, whom Jefferson enslaved and with whom he had several children.

At around the same time, Will Hairston, a White man whose ancestors were enslavers, attended the annual African-American Hairston family reunion.

Hutchison and Hairston met and decided to have a different kind of reunion — one with descendants of both enslaved people and slaveholders. In 2006, two dozen people representing both sides of slavery gathered at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Virginia, and the group was launched.

Today, there are more than 50 local affiliate groups in 18 states. For example, there are nine groups in Virginia and seven in Maryland. The Richmond chapter, with around 4,000 participants, is funded by donations and foundation grants.

In 2013, Green and Richmond antiques dealer Martha Rollins went to the 50th anniversary of the Martin Luther King Jr. March on Washington. Rollins, a descendent of Confederate General Robert E. Lee, grew up in Martinsville, Virginia, during a time when public schools and many facilities were segregated. Green dubbs herself “a child of the Civil Rights Movement.”

The next year, the two co-founded CTTT’s Richmond chapter, Coming Together Virginia. They began by hosting “listening luncheons” in people’s homes to bridge the racial divides they perceived here.

Two leaders, one vision

Coming Together Virginia has two chief executive officers: Green and former volunteer Marsha Summers, who is White. This structure is intentional and symbolic. They have equal voices, they say. They also have a lot in common. “We finish each other’s sentences,” Summers said.

Summers, originally from southern California, started volunteering with the group in 2016, motivated by her experiences with multi-racial congregations where her husband was a Presbyterian minister. She began working with the group as a volunteer, organizing food for the dinners and other activities.

Green has a master’s degree in transformational leadership from the Maryland University of Integrative Health. Calling herself “a storyteller on a mission,” she has published several books, including Love Locked Down, a novel about women in relationships with incarcerated men, and Broom Jumping: A Celebration of Love, which many credit with rejuvenating some African traditions in the Black community, like the broom-jumping wedding ceremony.

Summers was especially inspired by an eye-opening, eight-day pilgrimage to historic civil rights sites in the South. She was moved by the people she met who had suffered violence and injustice but still managed to maintain their good will.

Summers sees herself as an evangelist, devoted to the basic principles of our democracy and to her religion. “The Biblical stories about setting people free and loving your neighbors are core teachings that shaped me. Add to that respect for the words of the national founding documents in this country — about all people being created equal and having rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and you get an idea what drew me to this organization,” she said.

See DINNERS, page 22

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All carbonated drinks may boost appetite

By Robert H. Shmerling, M.D.

Are you trying to cut back on calories by making the switch from regular soda to diet soda? Do you prefer carbonated water with a bit of flavor, such as Hint or LaCroix? Or maybe you’ve purchased a carbonating device like SodaStream or Drinkmate?

Research suggests that none of these choices help with weight loss. Worse, they might even lead to weight gain! The reason might surprise you. It sure surprised me.

It isn’t just the calories

If you’re drinking two 12-ounce cans of regular Coke each day, you could eliminate 280 “empty” (non-nutritive) calories by switching to a zero-calorie alternative. Over a month, that’s 8,400 fewer calories, enough to lose almost two and a half pounds. So, what’s the catch?

One worry is that artificially sweetened diet sodas may create a craving for sweet, high-calorie foods. So, even as calorie counts drop from zero-calorie sodas, consumption of other foods and drinks might add back even more. In rodent studies, at least one artificial sweetener (aspartame) has been found to damage a part of the brain that tells the animal when to stop eating.

And dozens of studies in humans have actually found a tendency toward weight gain among people drinking artificially sweetened beverages. But research has been mixed: Some studies have found that artificially sweetened low-calorie beverages can help with weight loss.

One factor complicating the study of zero-calorie beverages and weight loss is called “reverse causation.” People at risk for obesity tend to choose these beverages, making it appear that these drinks are to blame.

Of course, there are other health concerns associated with artificial sweeteners, including a possible increase in the risk of certain cancers, cardiovascular disease and kidney problems. The evidence for this isn’t strong enough to be sure, though. What about fizzy water?

Surely carbonated water with no artificial sweeteners is fine?

Drinks that contain carbonated water and no artificial sweeteners have long been considered safe bets when it comes to breaking the regular soda habit. With none of the sugar, calories or artificial sweeteners, how can you go wrong?

But a 2017 study of humans and rats casts doubt on this approach, too.

First, the rats: For more than a year, male rats were given one of four drinks — water, a regular carbonated drink, a regular carbonated drink that had been allowed to go flat, or a diet carbonated drink. The regular carbonated beverages had sweetener that wasn’t artificial.

Here’s what the researchers found:

The rats drinking a carbonated beverage (regular or diet) ate more food than

See CARBONATED, page 6
Are diabetes and dementia connected?

By Andrew E. Budson, M.D.

Due to increasing rates of obesity, inactivity and an aging population, Type 2 diabetes is more prevalent in our society than ever before. In high-income countries, death from diabetes dropped from 2000 to 2010, but then increased from 2010 to 2016 — leading to an overall 3% increase in premature deaths since 2000.

Particularly troubling is that Type 2 diabetes is now being seen frequently in children, due to obesity and inactivity.

Doctors have known for many years that Type 2 diabetes increases the risk for strokes and heart disease. More recent studies have shown that diabetes also increases your risk of dementia.

What has not previously been investigated, however, is whether the age of onset of diabetes makes a difference in your risk of developing dementia.

More diabetes years raises risk

A newly published study examined the association between age of onset of diabetes and the development of dementia using a large, ongoing cohort study. The cohort was established in 1985-88 among 10,308 employees aged 35 to 55 years (33% women, 88% white) in London-based government departments.

Data on diabetes exposure, including fasting glucose and the Finnish Diabetes Risk Score, were obtained at ages 55, 60, 65 and 70. (The Finnish Diabetes Risk Score includes age, family history of diabetes, personal history of elevated blood glucose, fruit and vegetable consumption, blood pressure medication, physical activity, body mass index, and measured waist circumference.)

Dementia due to any cause was the primary outcome measure. In addition to diabetes, researchers also examined the effects of age, sex, race, smoking, alcohol consumption, physical activity, fruit and vegetable consumption, high blood pressure, body mass index, coronary heart disease, heart failure, stroke, medications, and the Alzheimer’s risk factor gene, apolipoprotein E.

From 1985 to 2019, 1,710 cases of diabetes and 639 cases of dementia were recorded.

For every 1,000 people, examined yearly, the rates of dementia were 8.9 in those without diabetes at age 70. Comparable rates of dementia for those with diabetes were 10.0 for those with onset up to five years earlier, 13.0 for six to 10 years earlier, and 18.3 for more than 10 years earlier.

These striking results clearly show that the earlier you develop diabetes, the greater your risk is for developing dementia.

One connection: heart health

There are multiple reasons why years of Type 2 diabetes may lead to dementia. One reason is related to the effects that diabetes has on the heart, as heart health is related to brain health. Heart disease and elevated blood pressure are both associated with strokes that, in turn, can lead to dementia.

However, strokes do not appear to be the complete answer, as some studies found that diabetes led to an increased risk of dementia even when strokes were controlled for.

Another factor relates to the episodes of hypoglycemia that commonly occur in diabetes. Although tight control of blood sugars has been proven to reduce the long-term risks of heart disease and strokes, tight control can also lead to hypoglycemia, memory loss and dementia. Here, the reason is likely because low blood sugar episodes are known to damage the hippocampus — the memory center of the brain.

Similarities to Alzheimer’s

One of the more intriguing hypotheses is that diabetes directly causes Alzheimer’s disease. Indeed, Alzheimer’s disease has even been called “type 3 diabetes” because of shared molecular and cellular features among diabetes and Alzheimer’s.

For example, insulin plays a critical role in the formation of amyloid plaques, and insulin is also involved in the phosphorylation of tau, which leads to neurofibrillary tangles.

In other words, whereas insulin resistance in the body can lead to Type 2 diabetes, insulin resistance in the brain can lead to the plaques and tangles of Alzheimer’s disease.

How to reduce your risk

The good news is that you can reduce your risk of Type 2 diabetes — and your risk of dementia. Speak with your doctor today about whether the following lifestyle modifications would be right for you. Note that these life changes are helpful even if you have a diagnosis of diabetes or prediabetes.

• Engage in aerobic exercise at least 30 minutes each day, five days each week.
• Eat a Mediterranean-style menu of foods.
• Maintain a healthy body weight.
• Treat high blood pressure.
• Treat high cholesterol.
• Don’t smoke.

Lastly, social activities, a positive attitude, learning new things, and music can all help your brain work at its best and reduce your risk of dementia.

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Time to rename low-risk prostate cancer?

By Carla K. Johnson

A cancer diagnosis is scary. Some doctors say it’s time to rename low-grade prostate cancer to eliminate the alarming C-word.

Cancer cells develop in nearly all prostates as men age, and most prostate cancers are harmless. About 34,000 Americans die from more aggressive prostate cancer annually, but treating the disease can lead to sexual dysfunction and incontinence.

Changing the name could lead more low-risk patients to skip unnecessary surgery and radiation, some doctors believe.

“This [low-grade diagnosis] is the least aggressive, wimpiest form of prostate cancer that is literally incapable of causing symptoms or spreading to other parts of the body,” said University of Chicago Medicine’s Dr. Scott Eggener, who is reviving a debate about how to explain the threat to worried patients.

The words “You have cancer” have a profound effect on patients, Eggener wrote last month in the Journal of Clinical Oncology. He and his co-authors say fear of the disease can cause some patients to overreact and opt for unneeded surgery or radiation.

Others agree. “If you reduce anxiety, you’ll reduce overtreatment,” said Dr. David Penson of Vanderbilt University.

“The word ‘cancer,’ it puts an idea in their head: ‘I have to have this treated.’”

Making a diagnosis

Diagnosis sometimes starts with a PSA blood test, which looks for high levels of a protein that may mean cancer but can also be caused by less serious prostate problems or even vigorous exercise.

When a patient has a suspicious test result, a doctor might recommend a biopsy, which involves taking samples of tissue from the prostate gland. Next, a pathologist looks under a microscope and scores the samples for how abnormal the cells look.

Often, doctors offer patients with the lowest score — Gleason 6 — a way to avoid surgery and radiation: active surveillance (formerly called “watchful waiting”), which involves close monitoring but no immediate treatment.

In the U.S., about 60% of low-risk patients choose active surveillance. But they might still worry.

“I would be over the moon if people came up with a new name for Gleason 6 disease,” Penson said. “It will allow a lot of men to sleep better at night.”

But Dr. Joel Nelson of University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, said dropping the word “cancer” would “misanthropic patients by telling them there’s nothing wrong. There’s nothing wrong today, but that doesn’t mean we don’t have to keep track of what we’ve discovered.”

What to call it instead?

Name changes have happened previously in low-risk cancers of the bladder, cervix and thyroid. In breast cancer, there’s an ongoing debate about dropping “carcinoma” from DCIS, or ductal carcinoma in situ.

See PROSTATE CANCER, page 8
It’s time to return to primary care doctor

Q: I stopped going to my primary care doctor during the pandemic and I feel fine. Why should I still continue to get primary care?

A: It was necessary, though difficult, to hold back from many forms of primary care during the initial stages of the pandemic. Today, there may be long wait times to get an appointment.

But it is highly recommended to see a primary care doctor at least once a year if you are over the age of 50 — even if you feel fine. You should seek care more frequently if you have any kind of health disorder that requires more frequent monitoring, such as diabetes.

Primary care is important for many reasons including: monitoring for conditions that need additional health screenings as you age; helping maintain a healthy lifestyle; keeping prescription medications renewed; immunizing against communicable diseases; managing mental and cognitive health; avoiding interactions among drugs and supplements; and as-taining interactions among drugs and supplements; and as-taining interactions among drugs and supplements.

Dr. Meinhardt is a fourth-year doctor candidate at VCU School of Pharmacy. Originally from Virginia Beach, he graduated from VCU with a B.S. in chemistry with a focus on biochemistry and biomedical research.

A: First of all, be patient! Due to the pandemic, it may take a while to get an appointment, so plan accordingly.

Q: What screenings should someone over 50 years old have?

A: It varies, depending on age, sex and other variables. Consult this web page for a list of common screenings: bit.ly/over50screenings.

Q: What vaccines are routine for people over age 50?

A: You can receive many vaccines from your doctor, but they are also available at your local pharmacist or vaccine clinic. 

- Annual flu vaccine (high-dose or adjuvanted if 65 or older)
- Shingrix (shingles shot), age 50 or above. This is a two-dose series, two to six months apart.
- Pneumonia vaccine (Pneumovax 23), age 65 (sooner with risk factors)

Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about travel vaccines if traveling internationally.

Q: What if I cannot afford to see a doctor or these screening services?

A: There are many options available to you. Medicaid is available to Virginians who make under $18,775 in 2022.

Medicare becomes available to all people at age 65 and older and under a certain list of conditions for those younger.

There are also free and sliding scale fee-based clinics in the Richmond area that are available to low-income individuals and their families. Some require patients to be uninsured, but some are available regardless of insurance status.

Most screenings are now free under Medicare and Medicaid (if you meet eligibility requirements), as required under the Affordable Care Act.

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Most screenings are now free under Medicare and Medicaid (if you meet eligibility requirements), as required under the Affordable Care Act.

- Blood pressure, blood glucose, and sometimes blood cholesterol can be provided free of charge by your pharmacist.
Do nighttime calories stick around more?

By Densie Webb

You may have heard the adage, “Eat breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince, and dinner like a pauper.” But the truth is that most of us snack in the evening, sometimes even after a large dinner.

According to the Washington D.C.-based International Food Information Council’s 2021 Food and Health Survey, about 65% of those surveyed said they eat at least one snack in the evening, and almost half report that they consume at least one snack between 9 and 11 p.m.

The question often asked is, can eating at night make it harder to lose weight, or even make you gain weight?

The research

A study out of Japan found that among 11 young women, nighttime snacking not only reduced the burning of fat, it increased levels of total and LDL cholesterol in the blood, suggesting that nighttime eating changes fat metabolism and may increase the risk of weight gain and obesity.

Research with mice, published in Chronobiology International, found that the timing of food intake may be even more important than regular exercise for preventing obesity. Mice are nocturnal animals and when made to eat during the day, weight gain resulted.

According to Colleen Rauchut Tewksbury Ph.D., MPH, RDN, CSOWM, LDN, National Spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, there are very small, controlled studies showing that eating earlier is better for weight management than eating later, which may slow weight loss.

While the answers are not all in, she said, early data suggests that timing of eating could be an important factor in weight management, but the evidence isn’t to the point that we would issue a blanket recommendation that all late eating is detrimental to health.

There are a few reasons why late-night snacking could be a problem.

Mindless eating

Late-night snacking is often done while watching television or even reading. Your focus is likely on the movie you’re watching or the book you’re reading, not the calories you’re consuming.

Any weight-loss program includes instruction on how to be mindful of what you’re putting in your mouth rather than combining eating with a distracting activity.

Less filling or healthy

The results of a study of more than 800 men and women who kept food diaries for one week showed that the type of foods eaten late at night lack the satiety of foods eaten at other times of the day, which results in an increase in food intake, a greater calorie intake for the day, and ultimately weight gain.

Chips, cookies, cakes, trail mix and pretzels are among the more common fare for late-night snacking, rather than steamed broccoli or kale salads.

The calories from fat and sugar from these foods can quickly add up. The higher the fat and sugar, and sometimes sodium content, the more likely you are to crave more.

Effect on hormones, sleep

“Eating late can alter your circadian rhythm,” Tewksbury said. As a result, it may affect your ability to sleep. Inadequate sleep has itself been associated with weight gain.

While the mechanism isn’t completely understood, some research suggests that late-night snacking can shift hormones — such as ghrelin, growth hormone and others — and push the body toward weight gain.

Eating during the day, rather than at night, has been found to promote weight loss and improve insulin levels.

Timing

While nighttime snacking may cause a shift in hormones that affect appetite and alter your body’s circadian rhythm, eating before bedtime also increases the risk of experiencing acid reflux, when stomach acid or bile flows into the food pipe and irritates the lining.

Some experts have suggested it’s best to stop eating at around 7 or 7:30 p.m. Tewksbury, however, made the following recommendation: “If someone sets a goal to reduce late eating, the best cut-off time is the one they can stick with. This will be different for everyone and may take some time to achieve.”

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Prostate cancer

From page 6

In prostate cancer, the 1960s-era Gleason ranking system has evolved, which is how 6 became the lowest score. Patients may assume it’s a medium score on a scale of 1 to 10. In fact, it’s the lowest on a scale of 6 to 10.

What to call it instead of cancer? Proposals include IDLE for indolent lesion of epithelial origin, or INERT for indolent neoplasm rarely requiring treatment.

“I don’t really give a hoot what it’s called as long as it’s not called cancer,” Eggener said.

Steve Rienks, a 72-year-old civil engineer in Naperville, Illinois, was diagnosed with Gleason 6 prostate cancer in 2014. He chose active surveillance, and follow-up biopsies in 2017 and 2021 found no evidence of cancer.

Calling it something else would help patients make informed choices, Rienks said, but that’s not enough: Patients need to ask questions until they feel confident.

“It’s about understanding risk,” Rienks said. “I would encourage my fellow males to educate themselves and get additional medical opinions.”
How to start, maintain a walking program

By Jim Miller
Dear Savvy Senior,

My doctor recently suggested I start a walking program to help get my weight and blood pressure under control, but I’ve never exercised much and am 66. Can you recommend some tips?

—Hate to Exercise

Dear Hate,

You should follow your doctor’s orders. Years of research have shown that walking may be the single best exercise you can do to improve your health as you age.

It burns calories, which will help you lose weight, builds endurance, enhances muscle tone, and it doesn’t pound your joints.

It also helps improve or prevent many age-related health problems including high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, osteoporosis, dementia and even depression.

But walking is not only good for what ails you. It’s also one of the easiest and most convenient exercises you can do, and is almost completely free. All you need is a good pair of walking shoes that fit well and are most convenient exercises you can do, and it’s almost completely free. All you need is a good pair of walking shoes that fit well and help prevent injury.

Most fitness professionals recommend walking about 30 minutes, five or more days a week. For optimal health benefits, aim for 10,000 steps per day, which is the equivalent of about five miles.

Your walking pace is also important. While strolling around the park or neighborhood at an easy pace is good for you, a brisker pace that has you breathing heavily (but still able to carry on a conversation) provides better health, fitness and weight loss benefits.

Staying motivated

While starting a walking program takes initiative, sticking with it takes commitment. Here are some tips to help you stay motivated:

Start out slow if you need to. Head out the door, walk for 10 minutes, and walk back. Do it every day for a week.

If that seems easy, add five minutes to your walks the next week, and keep adding five minutes until you are walking as long as you desire.

It’s also a smart idea to start and finish your walk with a few simple warm up and cool down stretches. Stretching will make you feel better and help prevent injury.

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While starting a walking program takes initiative, sticking with it takes commitment. Here are some tips to help you stay motivated:

Find a walking buddy: Having a friend to walk with can provide motivation and support along with companionship. (Ed note: If you don’t have a walking buddy, try listening to a podcast or audiobook as you walk, or even call a friend and talk while you walk.)

Wear a fitness tracker or pedometer: These devices measure how far you’ve walked in steps and miles, providing motivation by spurring you to meet a particular goal and showing you if you’ve met it. Or, if you use a smartphone, there are free pedometer apps you can download at MyPace.com, Google.com/fit or Accupedo.com.

Join a walking club: To find one in your community, call your nearby medical center, mall, health club, senior center, running shoe stores or Area Agency on Aging to see if they sponsor or know of any clubs or groups. In Richmond, call (804) 343-3000 to reach Senior Connections, the Capital Area Agency on Aging. Or try MeetUp.com or the American Volkssport Association (AVA.org), to search for non-competitive walking clubs in your area. Or start one yourself!

Keep a journal: Use it to keep track of your walking minutes, steps or mileage, and total it up at the end of each week to see how you’re progressing. There are also free apps like MapMyWalk.com and Walkmeter.com that use GPS to map your walk and measure your distance and time, which is fun and motivating.

Have a backup plan: If bad weather, allergies or other factors limit your outdoor walking, have a backup plan like walking at your local mall, buying a home treadmill or joining a health club.

Send your senior questions to: Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070, or visit SavvySenior.org. Jim Miller is a contributor to the NBC Today show and author of The Savvy Senior book.

Ed. Note: For walking groups in and around Richmond, visit walkwithadoc.org or walkvirginia.org or call (703) 583-2916.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

June 2 BLOOD DRIVE The American Red Cross will host a blood drive at Chesterfield County’s Central Library at 7051 Lucy Corr Blvd. on Thurs., June 2 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Call (804) 751-2275 for more information.

Call today to set up a consultation and your first treatment and receive 20% OFF a 3 or more treatment package with this ad.

Chandler Eye Care Specialists is one of the only offices in RVA that offers this amazing new solution to removing fine lines and wrinkles. See chandlereyemd.com for before and after photographs.

Call 804-256-3020 to schedule your appointment today.

8266 Atlee Road, Suite 226 Mechanicsville, VA 23116 chandlereyemd.com
Eucalyptus leaves’ many health benefits

To me, eucalyptus oil is one of the best essential oils you’ll ever find. It has so many uses.

If you don’t want a little bottle of this, I suggest using the plant leaves that are sold dried or fresh, and you can shower with them!

The compound that does the work in eucalyptus is called 1,8-cineole, and it breaks up mucus and reduces spasms in the respiratory tract. This compound has proven clinical efficacy for many diseases, including bronchitis, asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

Did you know eucalyptus oil is one of the main ingredients in Vicks® VapoRub? That over-the-counter product also contains a lot of camphor, and it’s good for cough and colds. The compound that does this is called 1,8-cineole. If you still get the benefits of this breathing compound by putting 5 or 10 drops of eucalyptus oil in a large bowl of hot water. Cover your head with a towel and bend over the bowl to breathe in the aroma for about 10 minutes.

Or you can add 10 to 20 drops into a tub bath, or use a carrier oil like coconut oil to rub some directly on your skin.

Many helpful properties
The health benefits of 1,8-cineole found in eucalyptus may:
- Relieve chest tightness and congestion
- Promote feelings of relaxation
- Ease breathing
- Reduce sinus inflammation
- Help a stuffy nose
- Help with allergies
- Improve symptoms of asthma and bronchitis
- Reduce anxiety and tension

Aside from the respiratory benefits that are well documented, 1,8-cineole has been shown to help relieve pain in people who underwent knee surgery.

It also can help with sinus headaches and possibly even certain forms of heart disease and skin cancer. These unusual benefits speak to the power of the plant, and even though we need more studies and data, it’s still good news.

One fun fact about eucalyptus is that it’s a natural bug repellent! Bees and butterflies don’t like it. Luckily, the flowers don’t have actual petals, but rather hundreds of stamens so it can self-pollinate without the need for natural bug pollinators.

Incorporating eucalyptus is easy. It can be found in many products, including herbal teas, decongestants, cough suppressants, mouthwash and dental formulas, skin care products, natural candles, infused Epsom salt baths and muscle rubs.

If you make changes to your daily health regimen, always ask your doctor if it’s right for you. To read a longer version of this article, sign up for my free newsletter at suzycohen.com.

This information is opinion only. It is not intended to treat, cure or diagnose your condition. Consult with your doctor before using any new drug or supplement.

Suzy Cohen is a registered pharmacist and author of The 24-Hour Pharmacist and Real Solutions from Head to Toe.

DEAR PHARMACIST
By Suzy Cohen

MARK YOUR CALENDAR
Tuesdays

YOGA AT MAYMONT
Take a community yoga class on the grounds of Maymont Park on Tuesdays. From 6 to 7 p.m. Bring your own mat and pay what you wish.

For more information, call (804) 358-7166.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

June 18

RICHMOND DAYLILY SHOW
See hundreds of varieties of daylilies at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden on Sat., June 18 from 1 to 4 p.m. The show is included with regular admission. For more information, visit bit.ly/RichmondDaylily or call (804) 262-9887.

Mobility Breakthrough

It’s not a walker. It’s not a rollator. It’s the So Lite Glide!

For millions of Americans, the simple pleasure of taking a stroll has become an impossibility. Age, injuries and a variety of conditions have diminished their strength and stamina, making walking a challenge… and even a health risk. Traditional walkers and rollators leave you hunched over and shuffling along. Now, medically-minded design engineers have created a product that enables almost anyone to walk upright, and to have a place to sit and rest when they need it. Best of all, it weighs only 19 ¼ pounds, so it’s practical and easily portable.

Features & Benefits
- Padded armrests distribute weight across the upper arms and shoulders, not the hands and wrists
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- Upright handles and locking handbrakes provide stability and safety
- Easy-adjust height control and “infinite position” hand grips fit almost any body type
- Comfortable mesh seat and adjustable backrest provide relaxed seating
- Stand-assist handles help you get back on your feet
- Crafted with the highest grade materials for safety and durability

Standing up straight allows for better breathing, relieves pressure on your neck and back, and enables you to interact with friends and family at eye-level.

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These veggie crisps live up to their name

By America’s Test Kitchen

Vegetables and fruits such as carrots and zucchini (surprise — zucchini is technically a fruit!) are mostly made up of water. For example, a zucchini or carrot is about 95% water.

It can be a challenge to deal with all that water when cooking or baking — no one likes soggy zucchini bread!

One of salt's many superpowers is that it can pull water out of food. Plants are made up of countless tiny cells. When you sprinkle salt on vegetables and fruits, some of the water inside the cells is pulled out toward the salt. This process is called osmosis.

Squeezing the shredded zucchini and carrot in a towel gets some of the water out, but salting them and letting osmosis do its work lets you squeeze out double the water!

So, for crisps that are crispy — not soggy — use salt to draw out that extra water before cooking, as in this recipe.

Cheesy Zucchini-Carrot Crisps
Serves 2 to 4 (Makes 12 crisps)

Ingredients:
- 1 small zucchini
- 1 small carrot, peeled
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup panko bread crumbs
- ¼ cup shredded cheddar cheese (1 ounce)
- 1 large egg, cracked into bowl and lightly beaten with fork
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder

Directions:
1. Adjust oven rack to the upper-middle position and heat to 425 degrees. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper and spray with vegetable oil spray.
2. Trim off the ends of the zucchini and carrot. Shred zucchini and carrot on the large holes of a box grater.
3. Set a fine-mesh strainer over a large bowl. Transfer shredded vegetables to a strainer and sprinkle with salt. Stir until combined. Let sit for 10 minutes to drain.
4. Place a clean dish towel on counter. When salted vegetables are ready, transfer to the center of the dish towel. Gather the ends of towel together, twist tightly, and squeeze hard over the sink, draining as much liquid as possible. Discard any liquid from the large bowl and add vegetables to the bowl.
5. Add panko, cheddar, egg and garlic powder to bowl with the vegetables. Stir mixture until combined.
6. Use a 1-tablespoon measuring spoon to scoop and drop the vegetable mixture onto a baking sheet in 12 mounds (about 1 heaping tablespoon each). Use your hand to gently press each mound to flatten into a thin circle.
7. Bake crisps until edges are browned, 13 to 15 minutes. Remove the baking sheet from the oven and place on a cooling rack. Let crisps cool for 10 minutes. Serve.

For 25 years, home cooks have relied on America’s Test Kitchen for rigorously tested recipes developed by professional test cooks and vetted by 60,000 at-home recipe testers. The family of brands — which includes Cook’s Illustrated, Cook’s Country, and America’s Test Kitchen Kids — offers reliable recipes for cooks of all ages and skill levels. See more online at americastestkitchen.com/TCA.

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

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Healthy food on a budget

By Beth Ehrensberger

Is your grocery bill sometimes enough to raise your blood pressure? Many people believe that filling the grocery cart with healthy food is a sure way to suffer sticker shock at the cash register. If you're looking to age your way, one important place to start is keeping control of the grocery tab.

You don't have to sacrifice good nutrition for a reasonable grocery bill. One key to keeping the receipt within reason is to commit to a basket of healthy foods. If you're filling your basket with unhealthy foods and discretionary calories, you will see a rise in your bill. If you cut out the boxes of trans-fat filled cookies, salt-laden chips and other “extras,” you will find that a significant proportion of your grocery budget is free. You can use those savings to invest in high quality, healthy food and still stay within your budget. With a little practice, healthy grocery shopping on a budget will become second nature!

Tips for Navigating the Notorious Two: Healthy Grocery Shopping’s Two Biggest Budget Busters

Meats

You don’t have to unload a good portion of your budget on meats. The USDA’s Dietary Guidelines suggest a diet that is built around whole grains, vegetables, fruits and low-fat dairy, accented by lean meats. Think of your mealtime plate as a pie chart — about ½ (or more) of your plate should be filled with vegetables and fruits, ¼ filled with a whole grain, and about ¼ (or less) of your plate should be a protein source like lean meat. For added savings, buy larger portions than you need, divide into individual servings when you get home, and then freeze for later; you will save by purchasing in bulk. Don’t forget that protein isn’t just found in meat — try trading lean meats for other protein sources a couple times a week. Beans, tofu, nuts and eggs all make excellent protein choices that are good for your health and your wallet, too.

Produce

The produce aisle is another common area to suffer grocery store sticker shock. Seasonal fruits and vegetables taste best and are often drastically less expensive, so choose those when possible. Structure meals around produce in season, and you will see a significant savings. When fresh produce is simply too budget prohibitive, try the frozen version, or canned with no added salt. Research suggests that canned or frozen fruits and vegetables are just as good, and in some cases, even better, than fresh. If you’re concerned about sodium, try rinsing canned vegetables before cooking. Another way to cut costs in the produce department is to design a weekly menu, and match your grocery shopping to the meals on the menu. A well-planned menu brimming with healthy meals will reduce the likelihood for waste, especially on produce and other fresh foods. A bunch of fresh asparagus on sale isn’t a deal if it spoils before you can eat it.

It doesn’t have to cost a fortune to do your healthy grocery shopping on a budget. Commit to buying healthy foods in place of discretionary calories. Plan your grocery trip, shop from a list, make a few adjustments to your purchasing, and your bill will leave you pleasantly surprised!
Young at Heart

By Carol Ayars, CVA
AmeriCorps Seniors Programs Manager

There are a variety of reasons why people volunteer. Many desire to make a difference in their community, while others like making friends and bringing people together. Others use it to gain experience to add to their resume, while some volunteer out of a sense of civic responsibility. Whatever the reason, most never consider the health benefits of reducing stress and how that improves your overall health. For Loraine Jackson, that’s exactly why she started her volunteering as an AmeriCorps Seniors Foster Grandparent Program volunteer at Senior Connections. Her doctor recommended it.

This quiet lady volunteers five mornings a week at Trinity Village Child Development Center as a Foster Grandma. Grandma Jackson, as she is known by children and staff at the center, loves working with the children. She mentors in the Blue classroom, which is full of active, energetic four- and five-year-old boys and has fun doing it. She even sits on a child-size chair at a child-size table with the boys while helping them learn and create throughout the morning. And the astonishing part that her doctor would be proud of, she can get up from those little chairs without any assistance or trouble. Not bad for being a lady who just recently celebrated her 80th birthday!

The doctor must have known what he was talking about, because Grandma Jackson joined the Foster Grandparent Program in May 2017 and she hasn’t shown any signs of slowing down. The staff love having her volunteering with them as attested to by Sarafina Drakeford, the Director at TVCDC, “Grandma Jackson is a sweet lady who does an amazing job with our little ones.”

The pandemic was hard on Loraine because she was separated from her kids at the center and wasn’t as active as she usually was when she was with them. But she is back and shows no signs of slowing down.

For more information on how to possibly improve your health, or at least stay young at heart by providing one-on-one mentoring, tutoring, and social-emotional support to children with special or exceptional needs, call Carol Ayars, AmeriCorps Seniors Programs Manager at 804-343-3043 or email her at cayars@youraaa.org.

The Volunteer Experience at Senior Connections

By Shana Beverly, CVA
Volunteer and TeleBridges Coordinator

At Senior Connections, we value our volunteers. Because of this, we do our best to offer members of the community an opportunity to use their skills to partner with us in our mission to empower seniors to live with dignity and choice. Senior Connections provides a number of programs and services that are focused on the needs of individuals in our community. Our volunteer program operates in the same way, as we seek to provide opportunities for members in our community to share their unique skills and talents in a way that mirrors our Agency’s mission.

We’ve found that some things that are important to volunteers are knowing that their service makes a difference and knowing that their time and effort is appreciated. Being able to match passion and vision...it’s awesome when it happens! Over the years, we have had many long-term volunteers who have experienced that combination of passion and vision, and have seen the impact of their volunteer service.

Before assigning someone to a program, Volunteer Program Staff talks with potential volunteers to learn about what individuals see as their strengths, and what they enjoy doing. We talk about the volunteer needs we have and where we might be able to work together. We also talk about what motivates them to volunteer.

In the TeleBridges program, we had a client who recently experienced a life-change, and had to step away for a while. But when she was ready, she came back. Her volunteer made her feel connected, and helped to support her through a really difficult time in her life. She wanted to reconnect with the program, to continue having that support.

What our VICAP Counselors provide for clients is honest, non-biased help navigating Medicare concerns. This results in Medicare beneficiaries who have been educated on how to make the most effective choices for them, individually. Based on a foundation of trust and competence, our counselors use their skills to make a transformative difference in client’s lives.

For more information about volunteering at Senior Connections, contact Shana Beverly, Volunteer and TeleBridges Coordinator, at 804-343-3024 or by email at sbeverly@youraaa.org.
5 Portraits of People Aging Their Way

By Colleen Wilhelm

Every May, the Administration for Community Living leads the nation’s observance of Older Americans Month, a special month to honor the contributions of older adults to our society. This year’s theme, Age My Way, is centered around how older adults choose their own paths, stay engaged and remain vital to their communities.

At Senior Connections, we celebrate older Americans every day, but this month, we reached out to several individuals on our staff and those enrolled in our programs. We wanted to find out how they have aged their way. We asked how they planned for this chapter in their life and then what’s the plan for the next chapter. We thank them for sharing their stories and wisdom, as well as being amazing older adults who have truly aged their way.

Nan Connor: Friendship Café Member, Mother, Volunteer

At 82, Nan still wants to serve. Born and raised in Richmond, she was the baby girl in a family of three girls and three boys. Nan kept busy during her early adulthood raising her own family of seven children. She also worked with Richmond City Public Schools for almost 30 years, starting as a dishwasher then moving to assistant cook and finishing her career as cafeteria manager at George Mason Middle School. She supported her husband, a minister, in their local church. Upon retirement, her desire to serve and connect remained strong, and in 1990 she was hired as a Friendship Café Manager with Senior Connections. In this role, she managed food service, created activities, coordinated field trips and brought the fun! When she retired yet again in 2000, she continued to work as a manager substitute – traveling to all the cafés in the greater RVA from Goochland to Charles City. Now, officially retired, she still volunteers to help serve food and manage paperwork at the Friendship Café of Richmond at CAPUP, Capital Area Partnership Uplifting People.

1. How have you “aged your way”?
   From managing food service, creating activities and planning field trips to providing a place for people to make friends and support others, Nan has been very active. She has never stopped working to give back to her community.

2. Anything special you did to plan for this chapter in your life?
   Nan has always been active, both in her work and her personal life. She has continued to serve her community in a variety of ways, including volunteering with Senior Connections, CASA, and Meals on Wheels.

3. What do look forward to in your next chapter?
   Nan is looking forward to spending more time with her family and continuing to volunteer in her community.

Patrick Hickey: Husband, Player of Sports, Cat Enthusiast

Born in Maine, Patrick came to Virginia Tech for college and never left Virginia. He gravitated to the field of human and social services and began working for Senior Connections 38 years ago as a care coordinator. Since then, he has moved into a leadership role as our No Wrong Door Director, leading the agency’s work on this important initiative. Outside of work, Patrick likes animals, particularly cats, and has had quite a few. One of his favorite places is outdoors: either gardening, walking, or biking. He grew up playing lots of sports like baseball, basketball and soccer. He continues this love of all things sports as a spectator as well as a participant on two local senior slow pitch softball leagues.

1. How have you aged your way?
   Patrick has maintained a strong, active lifestyle throughout his life, both personally and professionally. He has stayed involved in his community and continues to give back to others.

2. Did you do anything special to plan for this chapter in your life?
   Patrick has always been active, both in his work and in his personal life. He has continued to give back to his community and has been able to maintain a very active lifestyle.

3. What do you look forward to in your next chapter?
   Patrick looks forward to continuing to give back to his community and enjoying his time with his family and pets.

Carol Bryant: Quilter, Lifelong Learner, Foster Grandparent

At 76, Carol Bryant has had a lifetime of volunteering, working, and learning (and she is not stopping!). Born in Hampton and educated at Hampton University, her career took her to North Carolina, New York and then here. Deciding that her first chosen career as an economist with USDA was not fulfilling, she went back to school to earn a second degree in accounting and enjoyed that work. Throughout her life, she gave back to community – as a CASA volunteer, a Big Sister with Big Brothers and Sisters as well as a Meals on Wheels volunteer for 15 years. Currently, she is juggling work as a toll booth collector while being a volunteer with Senior Connections, CAAA

At 76, Carol Bryant wants to serve. Born and raised in Richmond, she was the baby girl in a family of three girls and three boys. Carol kept busy during her early adulthood raising her own family of three girls and three boys. She also worked as a toll booth collector and volunteered for 15 years at Senior Connections, CAAA.

See 5 Portraits, p. B-4
Mabel Smith: Friendship Café Member, Grandmother, Volunteer

In her 70’s now, Mabel started life as one of 6 children in rural Henrico, on a farm where her 95-year-old mother lives today. She worked for the state for 35 years as supervisor in the mail room. Not wanting to fully retire, she started with a cleaning service and continues to do that today. In addition to her work, she is a member of the Friendship Café of Richmond at CAPUP. She and Nan are friends. Her 10 grandchildren and two great grandchildren keep her busy. Although she describes life as good, she has had loss and some health problems. But as she says, “when doctors tell you about your health and what you can’t do, ignore them and keep on going.” Giving back to community and helping others is important to her as she volunteers at a local faith-based food bank every Friday. When the food is delivered, she and another volunteer sort and pack between 100 and 200 grocery bags and give food (and words of comfort) to those in need. When needed, she pitches in and helps the staff at CAPUP with the Friendship Café as she says, she enjoys just doing!

1. How have you “aged your way”?
I don’t know about what old is? Never did. Age is how you feel about yourself. Just do.

2. Did you do anything special to plan for this chapter in your life?
Eventfully I will quit work – so trying to get everything I want while still working. I would like to get up every day and quit – sit in a lounge chair and then get out and do things. I have been talking to my friends about our bucket lists. One friend wants to go to a Bruno Mars concert. So, I am going to join her. Also, I want to take an Alaskan cruise. I don’t fly, so I told my friends, I will meet you in Vancouver. I will take the train. I am a very good sailor and I love boats – but this woman doesn’t fly.

When asked why she is a Foster Grandmother, Carol said, “I never married and had kids of my own. I never thought I would ever hear children call me Grandma and now I get to hear a whole center call me Grandma every day. What is better than that?”

Pat Giesen: Advocate, Great Grandmother, Widow

Born in Norfolk 85 years ago, Pat was raised in Jacksonville, FL until her return to VA at the age of 12, when her parents divorced, a trauma that she still remembers today. She studied English at William and Mary until she married and started a family. She never graduated as she put her dreams of becoming a lawyer on hold to raise her family. Single again, she began working at the state legislature where she met Pete Giesen, a beloved delegate and local businessman. They married and blended their family of nine children together for the next 38 years. Pat still is grieving the loss of Pete, who died just over a year ago. Pat’s first experience with local area agencies on aging was when she was a caregiver. After that experience, she knew she wanted to work at one. Between the Valley Program for Aging Services and Senior Connections, Pat has worked with senior employment, fundraising, and special projects. Today, she assists older adults accessing legal services to create life planning documents.

1. How have you “aged your way”?
Truthfully, I am still grieving. I feel that loss of Pete just as acutely as I did when it first happened. I also lost a friend (we were good friends for over 50 years); that was hard too. This may sound eerie and strange but I am looking forward to seeing Pete again. Not that I think or feel that may be soon, but I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that if anyone is in Heaven, it is Pete Giesen. His whole life was one of service to others. I am trying to live my life in that same way and enjoying every minute of it. So, I hope to continue doing what I am doing now as long as possible!

2. Did you do anything special to plan for this chapter in your life?
Truthfully, I didn’t think I would make it to old age. I was premature, weighed less than two pounds. When my great grandmother delivered me, she told my mom not to expect me to live. So, I didn’t plan. I just did, but I know if I sit still, then that’s it!

3. What do you look forward to in your next chapter?
I look forward to fulfilling my own needs. I want people to recognize me and to see me. To know me and see me and say, there is a good person I know. To still be out there. Helping and doing.
Why you should name a ‘trusted contact’

By Liz Weston

For the past few years, financial services companies have been bugging me to name a “trusted contact.” Banks, brokerages and insurers increasingly want to have someone to call or email in case they notice suspicious activity and can’t reach the account holder.

I ignored these requests. Trusted contacts are a great idea for older people experiencing cognitive decline, I thought, but that’s not me.

Then a younger friend developed early-onset dementia, and I realized we don’t always get enough warning to put such protections in place.

Clearly, trusted contacts aren’t just good for older people. Anyone’s financial accounts could be vulnerable if they’re displaced by natural disaster, wind up in the hospital, suffer a brain injury or are traveling and hard to reach.

Helping your brokerage, bank or insurer connect with someone who knows what’s going on in your life could protect your money and prevent financial catastrophe.

“I love the idea of the trusted contact, because it can really head off any fraud or exploitation before it snowballs out of control,” said Amanda Singleton, a family caregiving expert for AARP and an estate planning attorney in Florida.

**They can’t make changes**

Naming a trusted contact doesn’t give that person authority over your accounts or the ability to see balances or make changes, explained Gerri Walsh, senior vice president of investor education at the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority, known as FINRA. FINRA is the nongovernmental organization that regulates the securities industry, including brokerages.

Instead, your trusted contact can help financial services companies reach you (if you’re unreachable) or identify others who might help.

If you’re incapacitated, for example, your contact might connect the company to your legal guardian or the person with power of attorney over your accounts. If you’ve died, your trusted person could provide contact information for the executor of your estate or the successor trustee of your living trust.

You aren’t required to name a trusted contact, but financial services companies — along with regulators and consumer advocates — recommend it.

You can change your trusted contact whenever you want, or name more than one. Ideally, a trusted contact is someone you’re confident will protect your privacy and act responsibly.

“It could be an adult child, a close friend, an attorney or some other trusted person that the financial institution can reach out to for extra help to try to reach you,” said Deborah Royster, assistant director for the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau’s Office for Older Americans.

**They could thwart fraud**

The push to name trusted contacts started out of concern for older Americans being scammed out of their life savings. More than 369,000 cases of financial fraud of older adults are reported to authorities each year, causing an estimated $4.84 billion in losses, according to a January report by Comparitech, a cybersecurity research company.

But this kind of fraud is notoriously underreported, often because victims are embarrassed, worried that others will think them incapable, or protective of the perpetrators, who may be loved ones, caregivers or neighbors. Comparitech estimates the real toll may be 8.68 million cases and more than $113.7 billion in losses each year.

To help reduce that toll, two new FINRA rules were approved in 2017. The first allows brokerages to put temporary holds on withdrawals when financial exploitation is suspected. The second requires brokerages to “make reasonable efforts” to get customers to name trusted contacts.

So far, other financial services companies such as banks, credit unions and insurers don’t have similar rules. Even so, some are offering the opportunity to name trusted contacts on accounts, Royster said.

**Beware fraudulent email requests**

One thing you shouldn’t do is respond
Why to invest in crypto despite its risks

By Elliot Raphaelson

As cryptocurrencies have become more mainstream, average investors have wondered whether and how to use them safely and effectively in their portfolios.


Edelman shows you why investing in digital assets will enhance your portfolio. He comes with some pretty impressive recommendations. Barron’s has ranked him the nation’s No. 1 independent financial adviser.

Several years ago, he wrote *The Truth About Your Future: The Money Guide You Need Now, Later and Much Later*. In that book, early in the age of crypto, he wrote about the importance of digital assets.

He created the Digital Assets Council of Financial Professionals (DACFP), which is about the importance of digital assets. The organization’s website, DACFP.com, provides contacts for financial advisers who can offer advice about investing in digital assets.

In *The Truth About Crypto*, Edelman explains why blockchain is so transformative. There are thousands of commercial applications for blockchain technology.

Some of the commercial applications are consumer purchases, corporate finance, foreign trade and supply chain management. Blockchain offers advantages such as banking and credit to billions of people in the world who have smartphones but don’t have access to banks.

Blockchain even has the potential to eliminate poverty globally and raise the standard of living for billions of individuals who live in poverty.

Edelman also discusses the basics associated with blockchains, how they work, and the role of Bitcoin and other digital assets in the process.

Not too late to invest

Is it too late to buy Bitcoin? A survey by Ernst and Young and Intertrust indicated that 31% of hedge fund managers planned to add significant digital assets to their portfolios by 2023, and to invest an average of 7.2% of their portfolios to crypto by 2025.

At the end of April, Fidelity announced it will allow customers to hold Bitcoin in their retirement accounts. It is not too late to invest.

Surely, there are risks in investing in digital assets. Edelman writes that because digital assets are an emerging asset class, we should consider the possibility of a massive and permanent market crash in the prices of digital assets.

He discusses several reasons, such as market manipulation, technological obsolescence, the vagaries of consumer/investor demand, regulatory intervention, rogue custodians and scams. As a scam example, Edelman believes Dogecoin is a distraction and dangerous. He said don’t buy it.

Why hold risky assets?

Digital assets carry high risk, but that’s exactly why Edelman believes you should invest in them.

He refers to research done by Nobel laureate Harry Markowitz on correlation. Two assets that rise and fall simultaneously are positively correlated, so you are no better off if you owned only one of them. However, if two assets are negatively correlated, then if you owned both, your overall risk is sharply reduced.

Now, if you add a third asset with higher risk, then you not only reduce the overall losses of the portfolio at any one time, but you also improve its overall return because the third asset makes more money than the other two. So, by adding a higher risk asset, you get higher returns with lower risk.

Bitcoin’s correlation to other assets is very low: With bonds it is 0.25; with equities, 0.12; with gold, 0.07 and with commodities, 0.00. The bottom line is that adding a risky asset to a portfolio helps to reduce the portfolio’s overall risk.

Only 1% of portfolio

How much of your portfolio should you place into digital assets? Edelman is very conservative in this regard. He recommends only 1% of your portfolio should be invested in digital assets, in order to minimize your risk. He initiated the 1% strategy in 2015, and it is widely used. The book contains several examples that illustrate its value.

How do you choose the right assets? Edelman devotes a comprehensive chapter to the options available. In a conversation I had with him, Edelman recommended exploring funds managed by Grayscale, Bitwise and Osprey. He also recommends using dollar cost averaging for these investments.

Bottom line: This book is comprehensive, practical and easy to understand. After reading it, you will understand why digital assets are so important, and why you should add them to your portfolio.

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**FiftyPlus — May 2022**

**Funds reimburse COVID-related funerals**

*By Zeke Miller*

The federal government has already provided more than $2 billion to help cover funeral costs for more than 300,000 families of people who died from COVID-19, the Federal Emergency Management Agency announced in March as it launched a new campaign to raise awareness about additional aid available to eligible families.

The COVID-19 Funeral Assistance program provides up to $9,000 per funeral and covers COVID-19 related deaths since Jan. 20, 2020. The average amount awarded per death is $6,500, according to FEMA.

“FEMA’s COVID-19 Funeral Assistance program has helped provide over 300,000 people with critical financial relief during a time of such unexpected, unimaginable and widespread loss,” said FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell in a statement.

The agency last month launched a new paid ad campaign in California, New York, Pennsylvania and Texas targeted at areas with large rates of COVID-19 deaths but lower rates of reimbursement requests in order to help connect people to available assistance. The agency is also reaching out to community groups and local media outlets to help publicize the program.

“Our new outreach campaign is designed to reach families, specifically across underserved communities, where the cost of a funeral can be a financial burden to a loved one,” Criswell said.

“Our goal is to help families apply for assistance, as well as submit all required documents for existing applications.”

If your financial institutions offer the option, it’s relatively quick and easy to add a layer of protection on your accounts, said Abby Schneiderman, co-founder and co-CEO of the end-of-life planning site Everplans and co-author of *In Case You Get Hit by a Bus: How to Organize Your Life Now for When You’re Not Around Later*.

“People should take two minutes out of their day and name a trusted contact,” Schneiderman said.

—AP/NerdWallet

**Trusted contact**

*From page 13*

...to emails that seem to be from your financial institution asking you to name a trusted contact. Those may be scams to steal your passwords or create other havoc, FINRA’s Walsh said.

Instead of replying to those emails, consider calling your financial institution or looking on its website for a form that lets you name a trusted contact.

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The Hull Street branch of the Richmond Public Library hosts a workshop on life insurance on the third Thursday of the month at 3 p.m. For more information, call (804) 646-8699.

**SCAM AWARENESS**

Learn how to identify and report scams involving Social Security numbers by visiting oig.ssa.gov.

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

**June 16**

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

**June 16**

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

**June 16**
By Elliot Raphaelson

In a recent issue of InvestmentNews, there was an advertisement placed by the Foundation for Financial Planning (FFP). The ad was a solicitation for tax-deductible gifts and for financial planner volunteers. The ad also indicated that FFP has helped over 500,000 people in crisis who needed access to free financial planning.

I wanted to find out more about this service because I believe that many individuals and families who can’t afford to hire certified financial planners (CFPs) do have such a need. The ad indicated that 1 in 3 cancer patients deplete their savings; over 92% of military veterans live in debt; and millions of Americans need but can’t access quality, ethical financial advice.

Accordingly, I contacted the FFP in order to learn more about their services. I learned a great deal. Based on my initial contact with a representative of FFP, I was referred to a representative of the Financial Planning Association (FPA) — an organization of certified financial planners, whose members provide pro bono services to underserved individuals/families.

I was referred to Kristin Pugh, a certified financial planner who is a member of the FPA and chairs the National FPA Pro Bono Advisory Committee. Pugh also has extensive experience providing pro bono services locally to those in need through her home chapter, the FPA of Georgia, and provided me with valuable input.

She indicated that individuals who need financial planning services but can’t afford them should contact the local chapter of FPA, and determine if there are pro bono financial planners available in their geographic area.

Who qualifies for help?

Pugh indicated that there are not specific limitations such as a minimum level of assets or income to be considered, but that the FPA pro bono volunteers reserve services for those considered underserved or part of an “at risk” community.

Such communities can include military personnel, veterans, those with disabilities, individuals and families with limited income/assets, and individuals in bankruptcy.

Pugh pointed out that her chapter has developed a close working relationship with local nonprofit groups to reach out to the underserved. Periodically, the members of the nonprofit groups work with FPA planners to sponsor educational workshops available to the general public.

Pugh told me that workshops provide a great way to expose people to a specific area of planning; attendees can then meet with a planner to discuss their specific situation.

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How much help is provided?

There is no predetermined schedule. In some situations, one meeting is sufficient, while in other cases multiple meetings are arranged. Pugh said that she has maintained contact with some individuals with complex issues for as long as six months.

She told me that partnering with a nonprofit is not required to sponsor a workshop to establish one-on-one services. Nonprofits can establish one-on-one relationships directly with a FPA CFP.

For example, Pugh described her chapter’s relationship with a nonprofit organization that provides free legal services to individuals in the Atlanta area. By forming this relationship, the FPA chapter can pair CFPs with their legal clients and offer one-on-one financial planning sessions.

The bottom line is that if you need financial planning assistance but cannot afford to hire a certified financial planner, help may be available. Contact your local FPA chapter to determine if there are pro bono CFPs in your area and whether you would qualify for these services.

Contact the Financial Planning Association’s Central Virginia chapter at (757) 274-6212.

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**MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

**June 18**

**JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION**

Henrico County hosts a Juneteenth Celebration on Sat., June 18, from 4 to 10 p.m. at Dorey Park. The event is free and open to the public and includes a vendor fair, kids’ zone, food trucks, entertainment and fireworks. For more information, call (804) 652-1440.

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An intergenerational Southwest road trip

By Don Mankin

“It’s crazy,” my grand-nephew exclaimed as we approached the South Rim of the Grand Canyon. I heard Aaron say that often over the next several days as the two of us explored the national parks and monuments of northern Arizona and southern Utah.

Aaron, 23, has spent most of his life in Florida, so for him the canyons, cliffs and mountains of the American Southwest were like something from another world.

This was our first adventure together since his bar mitzvah gift 10 years ago — a day-long kayak trip in the Channel Islands of Southern California. I guess that trip made a positive impression, because he started bringing up the idea of another adventure with me during the middle of the pandemic.

I suggested a road trip through the American Southwest, including the Grand Canyon, Canyon de Chelly, Monument Valley, and Arches, Canyonlands and Zion National Parks.

To the uninitiated, it might seem like the American Southwest is all about rocks, and that once you’ve seen one rock, you’ve seen them all. Yet from one place to another, the colors, sizes, shapes and geometry of these rocks change dramatically. The scenery and the experience of Monument Valley, for instance, is nothing like that of the Grand Canyon.

And the sky! Until you have seen a canyon or butte or crazy-shaped monolith framed against a sky as blue as it gets, dotted with clouds as bizarrely shaped as the rocks below, you can’t appreciate why a person as well traveled as I returns as often as possible.

This trip was guaranteed to blow Aaron’s Floridian mind and give me an opportunity to relive some of the most memorable trips of my 30s and 40s.

Thinking back on those trips as I approached my 80th birthday, I remembered how they helped transform my life, especially my self-confidence and self-image, as I backpacked solo for the first time in an unfamiliar and potentially hostile environment.

Though my trip with Aaron would be far less challenging, I hoped that it would be more than just a fun diversion from his job and a life constrained by a stubborn pandemic.

Our next stop was one of my favorite sites in the Southwest — Canyon de Chelly National Monument in northeastern Arizona, a four-hour drive from the Grand Canyon.

Located on Navajo tribal lands, Canyon de Chelly is a bit off the beaten track, so it attracts far fewer visitors than the other parks in the region. But from an aesthetic point of view, I believe it is the most dramatic and beautiful place in the Southwest.

Unlike the Grand Canyon, which is deeper and more vast, the overlooks in Canyon de Chelly are sheer and the several-hundred-foot drops, with no guard rails, are heart-pounding if you get too close to the edge.

Plus, you are likely to be the only one standing at the rim looking at the rock as it turns orange-red in the rays of the setting sun. At this canyon, there is no jostling for the best view or photo, and no sounds other than the wind pushing you toward the edge of the overlook.

For a different perspective on the towering sandstone cliffs and the verdant valley below, we took a jeep tour through the canyon the next morning with a Navajo guide for a close-up look at the prehistoric rock art and the remains of ancient Pueblo villages.

The canyon has been inhabited by several Native American tribes for millennia, and the Navajos, the current residents, still maintain homes and ranches in the canyons.

Southern Utah’s parks

From Canyon de Chelly, we drove 90 minutes to Monument Valley, which is also on Navajo tribal lands. Despite being relatively close to Canyon de Chelly, Monument Valley is a very different place.

Instead of peering down into narrow canyons, you look up at towering sandstone monoliths scattered throughout a vast, wide-open landscape. It’s easy to see why the legendary movie director John Ford used Monument Valley as the setting for many of his classic Westerns.

The 17-mile loop road through the valley provides multiple opportunities to view and photograph the magnificent sandstone spires, pinnacles and buttes from different angles.

Moab, our next stop, is a 2.5-hour drive from Monument Valley. Surrounded by stunning red-rock scenery, Moab has numerous opportunities for hiking, biking, sky diving, rock climbing, canyoneering, ballooning and off-roading.

See SOUTHWEST, page 19
Volcanic park shows off nature’s power

By Glenda C. Booth

In the northeast corner of California, the Earth’s innards spurt, spit, squirt, gurgle and boil from seen and unseen orifices. Sulphur Works belches. Steam whirs out of Devil’s Kitchen. And occasionally a volcano erupts (most recently in 1980).

This is Lassen Volcanic National Park, where Earth’s ever-changing nature has been on display in this volcanically active region for three million years. Surprisingly, it is one of America’s least-visited national parks.

The 166-square-mile park surrounds Mount Lassen, the largest lava plug dome in the world and the southernmost active volcano in the Cascade Range. The 1915 eruption that rained volcanic ash as far as 200 miles to the east was the impetus to establish the park in 1916. That was the last eruption in the Cascade Range before Mount St. Helens erupted in 1980.

Lassen is located at the junction of the Cascade Range, the Sierra Nevada Mountains and the Great Basin Desert. Because of this location and the elevation range of 5,000 to 10,000 feet throughout the park, there’s a rich variety of plants and animals.

To the area’s indigenous people, Lassen — or Waganupa, as the Yahi tribe called it — was a spiritual center and sacred land. Parts of the park are almost otherworldly, a landscape of thumping mudpots, steaming fumaroles and boiling pools connected by a complex hydrothermal system.

“In this park, one can safely witness the hints of the power of the Earth belching its matter upward,” said retired seismologist David Von Seggern.

Prudent visitors stick to marked trails and boardwalks to safely meander. “You may feel tempted to explore thermal features up close by walking beyond established trails and walkways,” the park’s website reads. “However, a venture to satisfy curiosity may land you in the hospital with severe burns,” it cautions, accompanied by a photo of the reddened, burned foot of someone who stepped off the trail through a deceptively solid crust of earth.

Attracts a variety of scientists

Since 1863, when experts conducted the first geological survey there, scientists have seen Lassen as an outdoor living laboratory. U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) scientists have analyzed the eruptive history of the area, finding that in the last 100,000 years, at least 72 volcanos in and around the park have erupted.

USGS’s California Volcano Observatory monitors Lassen’s volcanoes for signals of an impending eruption.

Today, scientists at NASA are studying microbes in the park’s bubbling pools to gain insights into possible life on other planets. Hot springs, like those in Lassen, may have supported chemical reactions that linked molecules.

“It has very significant implications for the future of space exploration,” Natalie Batalha, an astrophysicist at the University of California, Santa Cruz, told Science magazine in 2020.

Other scientists take advantage of the park’s famously dark skies to study stars. Every August, the park hosts a Dark Sky Festival, when rangers, astronomers and astrophysicists host programs for visitors of all ages.

Still other researchers study climate change’s impacts on snowpack, precipitation and wildfires.

Exploring by car

A driving tour on the 30-mile highway in the western part of the park offers a good introduction to the region. Some sites’ names offer a hint of what to expect: Devil’s Kitchen, Brokeoff Mountain and Bumpass Hell.

The park has more than 150 miles of trails. Around Manzanita Lake, visitors might see wildlife along the lakeshore and do some catch-and-release fishing. Signs along Devastated Area’s trails explain Mount Lassen’s eruption.

Lassen has more than 700 flowering plant species. Paradise Meadow and Hat Creek explode with wildflowers in the summer. Plants such as mountain mule ears, corn lilies and silverleaf lupines and 12 species of pine tree thrive in the park.

At Chaos Crags, visitors can explore a moonscape jumble of rocks that tumbled down the incline 300 years ago at speeds up to 100 miles per hour. In the less-visited areas, visitors might encounter a mule deer or yellow-bellied marmot. Waterfowl visit the park’s 50 lakes.

There’s a restful side, too: snowy mountain peaks, crystalline lakes, peaceful forests and mountain breezes. Climbing to volcano tops brings panoramic vistas of northern California’s beauty.

Fiery, feisty, but tranquil too, Lassen is a place of geologic wonders.

If you go

Lassen Volcanic National Park is located three hours northeast of Sacramento and 50 miles from Redding, California. Round-trip flights from Richmond to Sacramento start at $600.

Aside from cabins and camp sites, the only lodging inside the park has been the Drake’sbad Guest Ranch. Fortunately, the ranch

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The Invention of the Year

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Introducing the future of battery-powered personal transportation . . . The Zinger.

Throughout the ages, there have been many important advances in mobility. Canes, walkers, rollators, and scooters were created to help people with mobility issues get around and retain their independence. Lately, however, there haven’t been any new improvements to these existing products or developments in this field. Until now. Recently, an innovative design engineer who’s developed one of the world’s most popular products created a completely new breakthrough . . . a personal electric vehicle. It’s called the Zinger, and there is nothing out there quite like it.

"What my wife especially loves is it gives her back feelings of safety and independence which has given a real boost to her confidence and happiness! Thank You!"

— Kent C., California

The first thing you’ll notice about the Zinger is its unique look. It doesn’t look like a scooter. Its sleek, lightweight yet durable frame is made with aircraft grade aluminum. It weighs only 47.2 lbs but can handle a passenger that’s up to 275 lbs! It features one-touch folding and unfolding — when folded it can be wheeled around like a suitcase and fits easily into a backpack or trunk. Then, there are the steering levers. They enable the Zinger to move forward, backward, turn on a dime and even pull right up to a table or desk. With its compact yet powerful motor it can go up to 6 miles an hour and its rechargeable battery can go up to 8 miles on a single charge. With its low center of gravity and inflatable tires it can handle rugged terrain and is virtually tip-proof. Think about it, you can take your Zinger almost anywhere, so you don’t have to let mobility issues rule your life.

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Located a short drive to two national parks, Arches and Canyonlands, Moab has many hotels, restaurants and even a couple of decent brew pubs, despite Utah’s strict liquor laws.

Arches and Canyonlands National Parks were our raison d’etre for being in Moab. Arches is famed for its, well, arches. Huge, often delicate red-hued sandstone formations provide great opportunities for stunning photos — as long as you have the patience to wait for the swarms of people on the arches to get out of the way.

Canyonlands was my favorite destination of the trip. The huge, 527-square-mile park is divided into three districts — Island in the Sky, the Needles, and the Maze. We chose Island in the Sky for our one day of hiking because it is the most accessible district, just a 40-minute drive to the park entrance.

Our first “hike,” which was actually just a short half-mile roundtrip walk from the parking lot, was to Mesa Arch. The large arch frames a distant view of rugged rock formations and the snow-capped peaks of the La Sal Mountains — one of the best photo ops of the trip.

Our second hike, a bona fide hike, was the Grand View Point Hike, two miles round trip along the edge of the mesa. The views of the etched canyons hundreds of feet below are expansive and spectacular from almost every point on the trail.

After a brief stop in a very crowded Zion National Park, where the Virgin River flows through a very narrow, long and steep canyon, we headed back to Phoenix for our flights home the next day.

All in all, it was a very successful trip; I was able to introduce a place I care about to a person I care about. The opportunity to share this place with Aaron made the road trip even more special. I don’t know if the American Southwest transformed his life like it did mine, but from our conversations, it’s clear he’s rethinking his life and career.

We have more adventures planned, including a trip next year to my second-favorite place in the U.S. — the Pacific Northwest. I hope we have initiated a tradition of annual trips to special places until I get too old to travel or he finds someone younger and more interesting to travel with.

If you go

Non-stop round-trip air fare to Phoenix is about $450 on Southwest Airlines. If you want to cut your driving time by 4 hours (2 hours each way), you can fly into Flagstaff, but there are no non-stop flights, and fares are considerably higher.

A good place to stay in Grand Canyon National Park is Yavapai Lodge, about $230 a night, (928) 638-4001. In Canyon de Chelly, I recommend the Thunderbird Lodge, $125 a night, (928) 674-5842. In Monument Valley, stay at Gouldings Lodge for about $200 a night, (435) 727-3231.

Restaurant options are limited. Often the only (or most convenient) place to eat is in the lodge where you are staying.

Moab is the exception. Since it is a fair-sized town, there are many choices. I recommend the Moab Brewery, Fiesta Mexicana, and the Blu Pig for BBQ and craft beers. I also recommend the Blue Coffee Pot Restaurant, on Route 160 near the Grand Canyon, for authentic Navajo cuisine.

Don is the 2020 first-place winner for travel articles from the North American Mature Publishers Association. To read more stories from Don, go to adventuretransformations.com and click on “Articles.”

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**BLACK HISTORY JUBILEE**

June 24+

The African American Heritage Society of New Kent is celebrating their fifth anniversary with a two-day Black history jubilee. On Fri., June 24, they will lead tours of New Kent between 11 and 3 p.m. On Sat., June 25, they’ll host a Black history conference from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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Places for you to cut the rug your way

By Diane York

When people think of dancing, they may think of twirling around a ballroom with a partner. Sure, there are wonderful dances like the waltz, the Texas two-step, foxtrot, salsa, tango and rhumba. There is West Coast swing and shag, too, and they are all wonderful.

But freestyle dancing allows you to express yourself in a personal way. With freestyle dance, there is no wrong way, no steps to remember — not even the need for a partner — so you can express your own personal style.

As local dance lover Keltcie Delamar said, “To me, dance is a pure expression of spirit... It is both an exercise in ‘letting go’ and in going with the flow. The real key is the energy of the place, which is fed by music, environment and the people.”

The times have never been better for dancers who want to express themselves. Here in Richmond, known as “the Austin of the East Coast,” there are dozens of venues open with danceable music. Self-taught, self-styled dancers like Delamar, 65, are having the time of their lives.

Because freestyle dance doesn’t even require a partner, you can go to venues alone and move to the music with other like-minded people. In any place that has live music, you’ll find people dancing on a dance floor, in the aisles, and anywhere they can find space.

However, Delamar pointed out, the style of music is critical. It must match your taste in order for you to “feel it” and be inspired to stand up and dance.

Dance lessons can help

If you are not comfortable jumping in with freestyle dance, you can always take lessons first and then establish your own style later.

Montee Curling, 70, has been dancing for 16 years. He went to a dance in 2006 and, as he put it, “The dancing bug bit me.” He took lessons at Rigsby’s Jig and has been dancing ever since at venues all over Richmond. Swing dancing is his favorite.

“To me, swing dancing is a very healthy activity, a great cardio workout, and loads of fun,” Curling said.

In addition, any type of dance can be healing, as well. Pat Conner, 76, cared for her husband with Parkinson’s disease for years.

“Music and dance have been a lifesaver for me. They make me happy. It helps us all deal with the difficult things in life,” Conner said.

Add music and dance, and you might wind up with romance.

Take Stuart and Sandy Harris, 83 and 72, respectively, who found it to be true. They are well-known attendees at music events all over Richmond, and they met while out dancing several years ago.

They believe their happy marriage is due to regular doses of dancing. “Dance is the expression of joy. Nothing is better than us dancing together and sharing that joy,” Sandy said.

Many places you can dance

Where is all this freestyle dancing occurring? All over town!

While many restaurants closed during the pandemic, now that COVID is less of a concern, restaurants are back, some with local bands.

Also, during the pandemic breweries and wineries multiplied at an astounding rate throughout the area. Many have bands to dance to on weekends.

In Northside, there is Bryan Park Grille on Lakeside Ave. and JJ’s Grille at Crossridge Shopping Center on Staples Mill. The Shriner’s Acca Temple has one of the largest and best dance floors in Richmond and holds live music open to the public several times a year.

Uptown Alley, Steambell Brewery, Independence Golf Course (summer), and the County Seat, all in Southside, have regular live music events.

In Mechanicville/East End, the Midway Lounge at Calabash Seafood has another great dance floor.

Hardwood Brewery at West Creek, Pour House on Pump Road, Rare Olde Times at Pump and Patterson, and the Tin Pan are among the many live music venues in the West End.

If you have been to Scott’s Addition in the last few years, you will have noticed that it is brimming with breweries, restaurants and lots of great music. Tang and Biscuit, Mainline Brewery and River City Roll are just three fun places to go.

Downtown Richmond has the Camel, Broadberry, the National and, in the heart of Shockoe Slip, the beautiful Tobacco Company.

Up the road in Ashland, Huddle Up, located in a shopping center with plenty of parking, has good bands every weekend.

Hopefully, the VMFA will soon resume its Thursday night jazz program. If you want your dance music in a magical setting, the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden has music events all summer long in the evening. Check their website for dates.

So, find a venue you are comfortable with, check out the event calendar on their website or Facebook page, and go for it!
Spice up your edible garden with a theme

By Lela Martin

During the pandemic, about 15 million people became new gardeners, and research shows that the majority of them are growing or plan to grow edible plants.

Always grow the herbs and vegetables that you and your family enjoy. May is a good month to get many of those plants in the ground.

Whether you’re new to gardening or a seasoned grower, mix it up by selecting a theme for this year’s garden. Here are a few ideas to get your creative juices flowing. Some of these ideas are better suited for a garden bed, while others can be adapted to container gardening.

Pizza pie

A pizza-themed garden should include tomatoes and the toppings you crave.

If you want to be visually thematic, place the tomatoes in cages in the middle and grow wedges of the other plants to form a circular garden. Use wood strips or metal edging to delineate “slices.” Each slice could be a different ingredient: bell pepper, oregano, onions and basil, for example.

Planting yellow and orange marigolds around the edibles in the circle will deter not-so-desirable insects. The color of the marigolds will be a nod to the gooey cheese on a pizza.

Determine the dimensions of your pizza plot by making sure you have enough room for the number of plants you want to include. Check seed packets and starter plant tags for spacing recommendations.

Savory Shakespeare

As a former English teacher, I love Shakespearean gardens, which can be found throughout the English-speaking world. While Shakespeare’s plays mention 175 plants, a more manageable garden could showcase some of the herbs in Shakespeare’s plays.

If you don’t have room for a large garden, you could grow these herbs in containers. Label plant stakes with the name of the herb and the play.

Consider some of the following: lavender, mint and savory (also spelled “savorie”) from A Winter’s Tale; thyme from A Midsummer Night’s Dream; chamomile from Henry IV, Part 1; rosemary from Hamlet; and parsley from Taming of the Shrew. What about including a resin bust of the bard himself?

Make sure to tend your garden, because, as Shakespeare writes in Henry VI, Part 2, Act 3, Scene 1, “Now ‘tis spring, and weeds are shallow-rooted; Suffer them now and they’ll o’ergrow the garden.”

Herbs from the Bible

The work of a gardener is also described near the beginning of the Bible in Genesis 2:15: “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it” (NIV).

The Bible mentions about 125 plants, including some that won’t grow in Zone 7. To try your hand at a Bible herb garden, consider edible herbs from the book of Exodus such as coriander/cilantro and sage.

To try your hand at a Bible herb garden, adapting to container gardening.

Herbs from the Bible Part 2

Native Americans taught early European settlers the basics of companion planting. Grow corn, squash and beans together to see the benefits that each veggie lends to the others.

Legumes such as beans have a relationship with Rhizobium bacteria in soil, which convert nitrogen into a form that plants can use — corn requires a lot of nitrogen. In return, cornstalks provide a natural trellis for pole beans to climb.

Another benefit: the tall canopy of corn foliage may confuse squash borers from finding the squash. Meanwhile, the broad, spreading leaves of squash vines reduce weeds and hold moisture for both the corn and beans.

Try purple, orange, or green cauliflower (1 plant per square foot); golden beets (9 plants); purple, red, white or yellow carrots (16); and Easter egg radishes (16). In one bunch of radishes, the skin colors range from white to pink to crimson to purple.

Three sisters

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Three sisters
Dinners

From page 3

Open events

All Coming Together Virginia events are open to the public. The dinners, which feature both potluck and prepared food, began in homes, but as the number of participants grew, they had to move to church fellowship halls, such as the Ginter Park Presbyterian Church.

Before the pandemic, 60 to 80 people would attend. During the pandemic, the group held “dinners” on the online platform Zoom.

Every conversation has a facilitator and a talking stick. Talking sticks were traditionally used by Native Americans to allow people to take turns speaking without interruption, passing a stick from person to person to share stories, ideas and opinions.

The dinners have themes, for example, “The first time I realized there’s such a thing as race.” May’s theme is “People over prison, challenges facing the incarcerated.” June’s theme is “Making room at the table.”

The Richmond group also has a movie and book gatherings they call circles. In the April circle, a group discussed the book Reclamation, by Gayle Jessup White, a Black descendant of Jefferson and Hemings. The memoir describes White’s personal journey to understand her heritage, what it means to be a Black woman in America, and racial reconciliation.

The book circle for July will discuss How the Word is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America by Clint Smith.

The organization also sponsors trips — to museums and to other locations important to the history of slavery in America, such as Monticello, Jefferson’s home in Charlottesville, and Hampton and Fort Monroe, Virginia. The first Africans involuntarily brought to North America in servitude landed at the ironically-named Port Comfort, and Union soldiers at Fort Monroe took in runaway slaves seeking freedom.

The organization trains facilitators to go to churches, retirement communities, neighborhood associations and other places to find people who want to discuss race-related topics.

This spring, they facilitated a conversation with Richmond police officers, at the officers’ request, responding in part to the 2020 murder of George Floyd and the events that followed.

Later this year, members will engage in a three-month series of dinner discussions titled, “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” People will share their experiences with changing neighborhoods — for example, the gentrification that drives out some longtime residents — and discuss advocacy strategies.

For more information about the national group, visit comingtothetable.org; to find out about upcoming local meetings, visit comingtothetable-rva.org.

Letters to editor

From page 2

I caution [immune compromised] readers to raise this concern with a doctor before being injected rather than accept commercials at face value.

Keep up the great work.

Steven Chucala
Woodbridge, VA

Dear Editor:

Americans are struggling to afford the highest drug prices in the world. Now, at the behest of Big Pharma front groups, Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Marco Rubio (R-FL) introduced the DRUGS Act, a bill that would rob millions of Americans like me of critical daily medicines.

I depend on online Canadian pharmacies to afford my medication, which costs two or three times as much at U.S. pharmacies. If the DRUGS Act passes, the medications and savings that I get through online Canadian pharmacies will no longer be accessible to me and millions of other Americans.

The Big Pharma special interests supporting the DRUGS Act claim that the bill would address illegal sales of opioids online; however, the bill fails to even mention the words opioids or fentanyl. Instead, the bill targets ‘non-domestic’ pharmacies — international pharmacies that millions of Americans depend on for safe and affordable drugs. Safe, licensed international pharmacies require valid prescriptions and don’t sell controlled substances.

Americans like me are in critical need of access to affordable prescription drugs. Our representatives and Senators should say no to the DRUGS Act.

Garry Smith
Charles Town, WV

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

May 21

The Asian American Society of Central Virginia is hosting a free Asian American celebration on Sat., May 21 from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. at the Greater Richmond Convention Center. For more information, visit aasocv.org/aac2022.

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Bring the natural benefits of sunlight indoors.

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

A floor lamp that spreads sunshine all over a room

The Balanced Spectrum® floor lamp will change the way you see and feel about your living or work spaces. Studies show that sunshine can lift your mood and your energy levels. But as we all know, the sun, unfortunately, does not always shine. So, to bring the benefits of natural daylight indoors, use the floor lamp that simulates the full spectrum of daylight. You will see with more clarity and enjoyment as this lamp provides sharp visibility for close tasks and reduces eyestrain. Its 27-watt compact bulb is the equivalent to a 150-watt ordinary light bulb. This makes it perfect for activities such as reading, writing, sewing, needlepoint, and especially for aging eyes.

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

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

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Thank you for reading Fifty Plus!
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-out-of-doors, and enabled me to visit the homes of my children for longer periods of time. The various speeds of it match my need for safety, it is easy to turn, 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.

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

Call now toll free and order one today! 1-888-681-0847

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