

Complimentary

Holiday 2010

Outlook

For the Bay Boomer and Beyond...

by the Bay

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Maze**

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for Older Adults**

Teaching Children the
**Financial
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OutLook by the Bay

For the Bay Boomer and Beyond...

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Website Coordinator	EliteWebStudio.com
Subscriptions	S. Hill subscriptions@OutLookbytheBay.com \$24.95 per year Bimonthly (6 issues per year)
Contact	OutLook By The Bay 626-C Admiral Drive, #608 Annapolis, MD 21401 410-849-3000

ISSN# 1948-044X

OutLook by the Bay is distributed throughout Anne Arundel County, in sections of the Eastern Shore and Baltimore. It is available free in senior centers, county libraries, hotels, coffee shops, doctor offices, supermarkets, senior communities, book stores, restaurants, private clubs, real estate offices, health clubs, hospitals, at all of our advertisers and mailed to select homes in the Bay area.

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Bay View words from the desk

While out of town this fall, we received an e-mail from one of our grandkids. Seven-year-old Juliet had a bit of a traumatic life experience--the kind that can age parents and grandparents in a heartbeat. Her reaction and response serves as a lesson that is worth repeating and remembering, especially at this time of year. She had written to let us know that she'd been helping her mom open some tightly sealed

cardboard boxes. Her mom was not aware that she was doing this. In a moment of enthusiasm, Juliet slipped and stabbed herself in the arm with an exacto knife. There was lots of blood and a quick trip to the emergency room. She wrote to tell us the story:

Hello Mooma and Poppy I hope you'r having a good time on the boat so far. I miss you so much I wish I could see you live. Just wait until I see you when you'r off the boat. I got stitches can you believe it! So far life is going really great.

LOVE YOUR PAL JULIET

Medical emergency or not, Juliet still views life as good. (And to stop the avalanche of letters to the editor and child protective services, no, Juliet's mother did not know she was using the exacto knife and she certainly wasn't aware that she could get access to it.) Juliet's intention was to help her mom by opening the packages; the knife slipped and pierced her arm. In one of those moments mothers have all experienced, the thought of passing out at this dreadful sight was the first reaction, but mothers aren't allowed such indulgences. Juliet's mom allowed the lightheaded-ness and nausea to pass and scooped up the child and ran out the door. It was the door to her shop and shopkeepers don't close down easily. But as luck would have it, Juliet's 14-year-old brother was on hand to take over.

"Don't tell Dad!" said Juliet's mom as she raced for the car. Dad doesn't take these things lightly. After all, this is his only daughter as well as his youngest child. So as Juliet was rushed to the emergency room, her brother did exactly what he was told not to do: he called dad. He told him Juliet had sliced an artery and that there was a knife hanging out of her arm and mom was rushing her to the hospital! It wasn't an artery, it was a bad gash but his story was a lot more interesting as he explained it to his dad. (I'm glad I wasn't on the call list.)

Juliet was taken to Righttime Medical Center where she was promptly seen and stitched up. When we returned from our journey, Juliet proudly displayed the Band-Aid on her arm. We made sympathetic noises as she proclaimed, yet again, that, "Life is still good."

Imagine that? This sweet child sharing such a positive spin on life. This may have been one of the most traumatic moments in her entire seven years. Well, I hope so, because there are certain things you don't tell grandmothers.

According to Juliet's mom, she never shed a tear. Not through the trauma of the stab wound or the Novocain shots or even when the stitches were sewn in. This child came out of it saying life is good.

Isn't it wonderful that we're so often reminded in so many ways of how great it is just to be alive? Trauma seems to come and go, but we still hang on to what is good.

When Juliet analyzed what had taken place, she probably realized her arm was OK and that which was most important to her was still there -- mom, dad, home and her family. It was a count-your-blessings moment. The message is especially meaningful now during holiday time as we're reminded that yes, regardless of the traumas and ups and downs that life throws us, life is still good.

For the end of the story: Juliet will have an ever-so-slight scar on her arm, her dad made it to the medical center in time to see her stitched up and as for Juliet's brother who snitched? Well, his Mom had him write a paper on why "life is good."



Tecla Emerson Murphy
Publisher and Editor-in-Chief



Tecla Murphy

Holiday 2010

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On the Cover:

Decorating their home for the holidays, Ed and Nancy Frey are looking forward to holiday visits from their grandchildren. Three years ago they were enticed to move permanently to the Eastern Shore after having enjoyed many weekends at their Grasonville home. Ed had retired after 35 years with the apparel industry followed by four years of substitute teaching in Westminster. Nancy taught for a few years before becoming a homemaker and mother of two daughters. Now living in Symphony Village, Ed plays golf as often as possible and Nancy enjoys volunteering with hospice and the local historical society.

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Letters to the Editor:

Please address your letters to: editor@OutLookbytheBay.com

What I've Learned After 50 Plus Years

I enjoyed the personal advice from people over 50 (Summer '10). It would make a nice regular column. Margo's advice definitely encompasses the dilemma of addressing your life lessons to your grown children. You really want to pass on to them what you have learned. However, not passing on your wisdom is a lesson in self-control. Very difficult.

~ Penelope K., Delaware Water Gap, PA

Maryland Mountain Club

As a Mountain Club member for many years, I very much appreciated the article in the Fall issue. Ms. Downing wrote a very good article that helps promote the club! You have great writers and editors that create a very interesting magazine. I salute your worthy efforts.

~ J. Bonnett, Towson

Not Just for Bay Boomers

Thought you might want to know that seniors aren't the only ones enjoying your magazine. Grandkids Adeline and her brother Porter can't wait to go through the latest issue.

~ J. Feeney, Hingham, MA



Response to "Medicare for the Less Than Savvy Senior"

If you need information about Medicare, Parts A, B, C, and/or D, you should call the Anne Arundel County Department of Aging and Disabilities at 410 222-4464, ext. 3080, for the SHIP program. This is the Senior Health Insurance Information Program. As a volunteer counselor, I can tell you that the staff and volunteer counselors can explain Medicare, Medigap, Part D prescription plans, etc. We can also provide you with Medicare books, pamphlets and information sheets. I hope this helps. Amy Rubino is the director of the program. Her extension is 3042. Good luck.

~ Dottie Beauregard, volunteer counselor

Dear Dottie,

I sincerely appreciate your reply and information. Actually, I live in Pennsylvania, am still somewhat confused and still asking questions. I might go with AARP, not sure. What do you think about AARP and the insurer - I think it is United Healthcare. I am currently using Aetna as a supplemental insurance because that is what I had before, but they do not cover very much.

If I lived in Annapolis, I would not hesitate to come to your office tomorrow!

Thank you again for your reply.

~ Sincerely, N.B. Finale, Pennsylvania

Medicare for the Less Than Savvy

I read N. B. Finale's article on Medicare in your fall issue. Not only was it witty and interesting -- it was very relatable. I am a 45-year-old widow and struggle each year trying to figure out what insurance is best for me and my two children. There are so many confusing options and it is overwhelming to make decisions which could possibly limit my medical care. For the past few years I have purchased a plan that I feel covers everything -- and it basically does at a price of \$1,200-plus per month -- not including co-pay and deductible. This seems outrageous, but I worry that I will not be covered if I don't "pay up."

There is no guidance counselor for adults. There should be. What a great business they would have -- someone who could understand the system and crunch the numbers on insurance plans and give solid advice on what would work. They could guide us through all of the issues that come up, things that we might not have learned at home -- and that we certainly didn't at school.

Thank you for your enjoyable candor on this subject. I think we can all relate to the frustrations of figuring out the system.

~ Katrina M., Bradford, MA

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HOL/10

Gifts for the Gardener

By Neil Moran

For the Bay Area gardener, it's once again time to look forward to next year when we will grow our best garden ever, right? To do so you need the right tools. I contacted a few gardening friends, including a couple of experts, to see what they would recommend giving the gardener on your Christmas list. What I got were suggestions for the practical, necessary and whimsical. Perhaps these ideas will help with your Christmas shopping this year.

One practical idea came from George Africa, owner of the Vermont Flower Farm in Marshfield, Vermont. It's possible that George's knees are getting a little weak because he recommended a garden kneeler that makes it easier to get down—and up—from the garden. I thought this was a good idea for anyone in need of a little physical assistance in the garden. In addition to arms that help you kneel onto a built-in cushion, it also can be flipped over and made into a chair. The chair platform is adjustable so you can set it to the desired height.

Sheila Bergdoll Stevenson, a Midwest gardener, is just looking to replace her old garden tools. Sounds simple enough. However, before you buy the traditional garden tools, check out some really nifty innovations to the standard garden tool that will help save you a lot of backbreaking work.

For instance, a shovel isn't just a shovel these days. There is the "Super Shovel," from Gardeners Supply, that has some menacing looking teeth at the end of the shovel for penetrating stubborn soils. Then there's the latest in hoes, like the stirrup hoe. A regular hoe does a good job of moving and smoothing soil, but it doesn't cut through weeds so well, leaving the upper arms aching. The stirrup hoe slices through the weeds, leaving the soil in place. This adds up to less work for you.

Another dilemma is whether to buy a garden tool with a wood or fiberglass handle. It is kind of like the proverbial "paper or plastic?" question at the supermarket. The answer, in terms of which is better, may be just as elusive. I've had experience with both types of handles over a number of years and can tell you it's a coin toss. Fiberglass is a good choice because it won't wear out quite like wood and you can leave it out in the rain without feeling guilty. However, it can break off where the handle joins the tool, relegating it to the dumpster. If a wooden handle breaks there is the possibility of fixing it.

A garden gift I recently received is more on the whimsical side--garden chimes. The first sound of the chimes in the spring brings back a summer of memories. Not just any chimes will do, however. The frequent gusts of wind around our region can bust a cheap set of chimes pretty easily. The chimes that dangle from a circular piece of wood sound nice, but I've had a couple of these break in the wind. I am now using aluminum chimes that are a little on the pricey side, but so far are holding up pretty well.

Here's a recommendation from Kathy Purdy, who lives in upstate New York and is author of the popular blog, "Cold Climate Gardening." She says you can't beat the Cobrahead weeder for "down in the dirt" type gardening or the custom-made and more versatile Hoe-dag, a tool for planting, tilling and weeding.



Sites to help with your Christmas shopping:
www.Gardeners.com • www.CleanAirGardening.com
www.AceHardware.com • www.VermontFlowerFarm.com
www.gardenersSupply.com • www.ColdClimateGardening.com

Cindy Severance, who lives in upper Michigan, wants one of those fancy compost tumblers to turn her organic matter into a rich garden amendment. I've put a lot of thought into this and recommend the following. First, make sure the composter is large enough for the amount of organic matter you intend to use. Second, make sure it is critter-proof. These days I'm leaning toward the round tumblers that you can rotate with the handle attached to the side.

Julie Hagstrom, of Okemos, Michigan, had a long list of garden items for Santa, including good leather-palmed gloves, garden clogs or shoes (washable), rain gauge, gazing globe (remember those?), work apron with pockets for tools and a tote for hand tools. Finally, here is what Janet Moran Stack, an art teacher in Livonia, Michigan, has on her Christmas gift list: a new watering can. Here again, it sounds simple enough. However, some of the cheap ones really aren't worth the plastic they're made from. Quite often the seams split or the spout breaks off. The Dramm line of watering cans is arguably the best on the market.

Here is what I'm asking Santa for: new garden knee pads. Knee pads have really taken some of the agony out of the tedious job of weeding for this baby boomer. 

Neil is the author of the money-saving garden tips booklet, *Store to Garden: 101 Ways to Make the Most of Garden Store Purchases*. It can be purchased at <http://tinyurl.com/2377rkv>, or from the author via www.neilmoran.com

Teaching Children the Financial Facts of Life

By Don Chomas



By default, parents are usually the primary source of a financial education. However, many young people may receive allowances—or even sizable inheritances—without a sound base of knowledge in saving, budgeting, investing and financial planning. To help the children in your life develop a responsible attitude about money, it might help to consider these points:

Be a role model. There is a significant relationship between the way children view money and your own spending habits. Instead of viewing money and personal finance as a forbidden topic, discuss your own financial goals and plans. The level and amount of information shared is up to you, but bring the younger generation into at least a portion of your plans. How you deal with money, whether it's the monthly bills or planning the family vacation of a lifetime, provides important and long-lasting lessons about money management and the value of money.

Encourage savings and investments. One of the simplest ways to encourage a responsible attitude about money is to encourage children to save. This could include designating a portion of a child's allowance to a savings account, or making gifts of cash directly to an account in their name. Discuss account statements together, and stress the concept of “paying yourself

first” with dedicated, regular deposits. For younger children, set modest, attainable savings goals. For older children, encourage the development of a long-term savings plan for the purchase of a large-ticket item like a computer or car.

Consider an occasional “matching grant” to encourage regular deposits and help keep goals visible. Take the time to explain basic investment types such as cash instruments, stocks and bonds. Make investing interesting, perhaps by engaging in conversation about companies that sell popular children's products such as toys or clothing.

Develop financial empowerment. Achieving responsible spending habits means encouraging well-thought-out choices. Guide and advise rather than dictate how money should be saved and spent. Keep goals visible with pictures or create charts that plot the growth of funds needed. Take children on window-shopping trips to compare prices and products and adopt the mindset that every trip to a store is an exercise leading to a potential purchase. To limit impulse buying, consider instituting a rule that prices and products are compared at a minimum of three locations.

Give to others. Involve children in your financial decisions regarding philanthropy. Discuss the merits of gift applications you may have received and weigh the advantages and limits of each. Explain the tax advantages of charitable giving but, at the same time, stress the altruistic goals of giving. Even a

contribution to a canned food drive or the creation of a holiday basket for a needy family can grow into a family-wide event. By helping children contribute time or money to a charitable cause, you can teach them that money is important in ways other than personal consumption.

Developing a sound knowledge of basic financial practices can often go a long way toward helping the children in your life achieve lifelong financial security. 

Don is a financial adviser at Morgan Stanley Smith Barney located in Bethesda and may be reached at 800 455-6622 or www.f.a.smithbarney.com/chomasrifkin

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“Achieving responsible spending habits means encouraging well-thought-out choices. Guide and advise rather than dictate how money should be saved and spent.”

Decorations Done in an Afternoon

By Edree Downing

The number one rule for holiday decorating is to keep it simple. You have enough to do without adding elaborate decorations to your list. Here are some quick, easy and effective ways of giving your home a holiday lift, while enjoying the wonderful scent of fresh greens.

Start by determining what areas you would like decorated such as the dinner table, mantle and front door. Then go out and prune those bushes that should have been pruned last spring. These can include magnolia, pine, cedar, holly, rhododendron or anything else that's still green. Soak them outside in a bucket of water overnight to keep them fresh longer. Arrange a mix of the different varieties either on a flat surface, such as the coffee table or dining table, or put in a vase. They can also be wired together in a sprig for the door. Add Christmas balls, festive bows or any small ornaments that you would put on the tree. For greens that decorate the mantle, tuck in pine cones and Christmas lights.

If you don't have lots of shrubbery around your home, purchase a small Christmas tree and cut off different lengths of branches. Bare twigs can also be used by spray-painting them white or gold and tucking them into your arrangements. Candles in appropriate holiday colors that are tied with bows are always a nice addition to any arrangement. Cookie cutters tied with red ribbon and tucked into the greens are always a favorite of grandkids. And poinsettias, the Christmas flower, can be purchased inexpensively and grouped together to add a wonderful splash of color to a dark corner. Don't be afraid to add a decorative touch outdoors. My friend Kassie likes to use sticky hooks on her windows to hang bunches of evergreens tied with a red ribbon. A sprig of greens can also be tied to the light post or mailbox. Add a spotlight that focuses on the house for an extra holiday touch.

All this can be done in an afternoon. Do it early in December and then it's out of the way, leaving you free to tackle all the other holiday hoopla that's sure to follow. 📌

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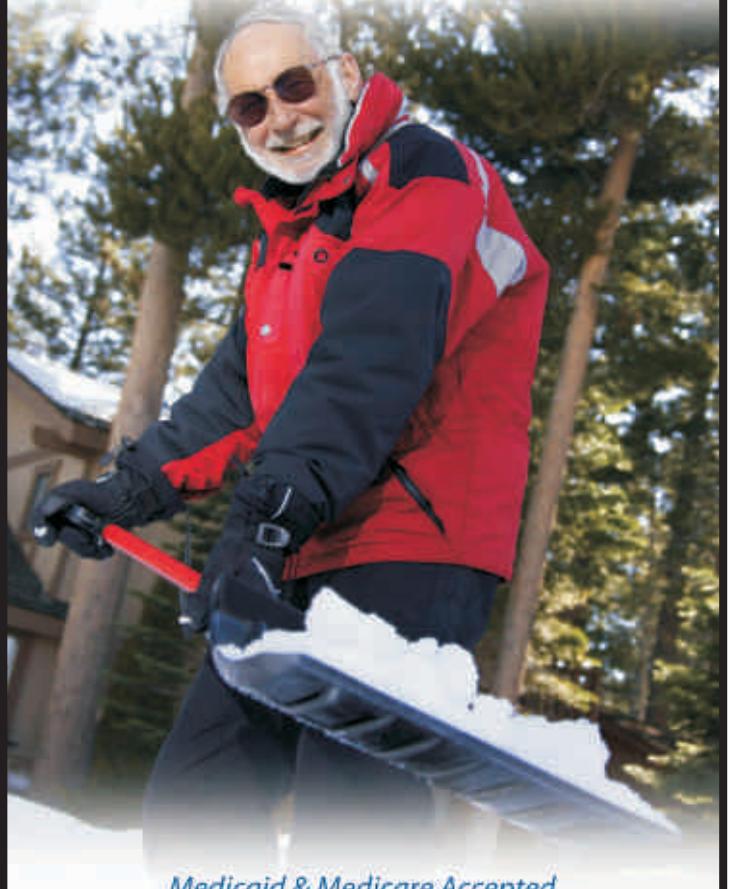
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Literally Keeping Your Wits About You

By Leah Lancione

The topic of brain cells and how to preserve or regenerate them is a hot one. With all the debate over whether the government should fund medical research using human embryonic stem cells, it's clear that people are concerned with finding treatment for neurological disorders and diseases such as Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, dementia, ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease), multiple sclerosis and more. The American Academy of Neurology (AAN) and the American Neurological Association (ANA) have both gotten government funding of biomedical research that incorporates the use of human embryonic stem cells. Whether you're for or against the use of such cells, you likely agree that there is virtue in trying to preserve brain functions. Although studies regarding what degrades and what stimulates brain cells continue, there is evidence that certain practices may indeed help preserve your brain functions.

Exercise

In an article entitled, "Smart Ways to Keep Your Brain Sharp and Dementia at Bay," writer Leslie Garcia quotes Dallas neurologist Malcolm Stewart as saying, "It's very important that we change people so they're physically and mentally active. The pathology of aging is going on, but you're able to reduce the damage; you're able to keep the function up."

Apparently, exercise stimulates hormones (endorphins) in our brain that deal with memory. Chances are if you are more active, which causes more oxygen to flow to your brain and other organs, the sharper your mind is. Dr. Stewart also says that exercise increases activity in the frontal lobe of the brain, sending signals that increase the amount of the brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) that rouses memory cells. He calls BDNF Miracle-Gro for memory cells.

WebMD published an article called "Train Your Brain With Exercise" in which John J. Ratey, MD, an associate professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, explains that "exercise is like taking a little

Prozac or a little Ritalin at just the right moment." He says exercise ultimately benefits the brain just as much as it does the body since "it affects mood, vitality, alertness and feelings of well-being."

Further evidence that exercise can significantly improve brain cell function was cited by *Science Daily* www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/06/070628162055.htm in an article entitled, "Exercise Stimulates the Formation of New Brain Cells." According to the article, exercise works similarly to antidepressants' role in treating depression. The study performed on rats reveals how both exercise and antidepressants increase the formation of new cells in an area of the brain that is important to memory and learning. This could explain the often overheard comment of experiencing a "rush" after taking a brisk walk or completing a workout.

Nutrition

Everyone knows that the better you eat, the better you feel. Well, proper nutrition goes beyond just looking and feeling great. "Scientists know that certain nutrients and other key chemical compounds are essential to human brain function," according to the article: www.ars.usda.gov/is/ar/archive/aug07/aging.0807.htm The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Research Service (ARS) has conducted tests to determine the effects of diet on brain function, loss or maintenance of brain cells and neuron communication. The article reports that even though people do lose brain cells naturally as they age, "There is a lot of individual difference." ARS neuroscientist James Joseph reports that the deterioration of mental agility may be triggered more by the inability of brain cells to communicate effectively, rather than by the loss of brain cells.

Studies are looking into whether a conscientious diet can help protect the brain from brain cell communication and signals that relate to memory and cognition (the process of thought). Dr. Joseph confirms what any nutrition-conscious person already thought: "Vitamins and minerals found in plant foods provide protective antioxidants." And he adds that "fruits, vegetables, nuts,



seeds and grains contain thousands of other types of compounds, which contribute significantly to the overall dietary intake of antioxidants." (These are molecules that protect the body from damage caused by harmful molecules called free radicals.)

In one of Dr. Joseph's studies published in the *Journal of Neuroscience*, and conducted on rats, it was shown that antioxidants do have a protective result. The rats fed vitamin E, strawberry extracts and spinach extracts (all with high antioxidant levels) did not experience the age-related decline of cognitive function as did those that were fed regular diets. Although it is uncertain whether the study results on rats can translate to humans, it does suggest that a healthy diet can make a difference.

Play with Your Mind

There's always a lot of talk about exercising your body and getting fit. Well, you can also train your brain to be more active, alert and able to process information efficiently. In a March 2009 article titled "How to Save New Brain Cells" in *Scientific American Magazine*, research found that "the more they (neurons, brain cells) are challenged, the more they flourish." The article explains that thousands of cells in the adult brain are born every day, however, they die after a couple of weeks unless challenged to learn something new like memorizing lists, solving crossword puzzles, doing Sudoku, reading, playing chess and doing other deliberate brain activity-stimulating tests and activities. The educational website www.brainmetrix.com is like a virtual gym that offers brain training programs like testing your memory, creativity and reflexes as well as math and word teasers that aim to get your brain in shape. 🧠

'Tis the Season for Your Flu Shot

By Robert G. Graw, Jr., M.D.



This season, as the leaves start to fall and temperatures drop, it's important for seniors to focus on getting ready for winter. Aside from taking basic health precautions, like washing your hands frequently to fend off coughs and colds, there are several important vaccinations that can protect you from harsher winter illnesses.

Both flu and pneumonia, most prevalent during the fall and winter months, pose serious health risks to seniors. Flu viruses have the highest mortality among young children and the elderly. Pneumonia, a prevalent pneumococcal bacteria causing upper and lower respiratory tract infections, can also affect seniors more seriously, based on their lower stamina or preexisting vulnerabilities, such as respiratory disease, a history of smoking, asthma or chronic lung problems. A California outbreak of pertussis, also known as whooping cough, has heightened concerns about it spreading. With this type of infection, many adults develop severe upper respiratory tract infections, with persistent cold symptoms and coughing. Pertussis can be fatal for young children, so getting vaccinated protects them, and you, from the resurgence of this damaging illness. Be aware that newborns are particularly vulnerable, since they have no immunity until they receive their childhood vaccinations during the first six months of life. It is recommended that seniors through age 64 receive a pertussis booster vaccine, now included in the tetanus and diphtheria boosters, to promote immunity to the illness.

During this busy season, remember to get your flu shot, which covers the seasonal flu as well as the H1N1 virus. For seniors over age 65, there is a special high-dose flu shot. The flu vaccine is available in a shot or nasal spray, called FluMist. In addition, be sure you are up to date with your pneumonia and pertussis vaccines, as advised by your physician. These vaccinations protect you, as well as your children, grandchildren and neighbors.

For those who travel, it's important to research carefully the specific diseases present in the regions where you are going. This information can be easily obtained from the Centers for Disease Control at www.cdc.gov or from your physician. Be sure to get all necessary vaccinations

sufficiently in advance of anticipated travel in order to receive maximum protection from the vaccines.

Remind others how important it is to get the appropriate vaccines, and always keep a good record of your own so that you, your family and your physician have a good reference. By focusing on vaccines this fall, you can help yourself and your family stay active and healthy all year long. 

Robert G. Graw, Jr., M.D., a practicing physician, is the founder and CEO of Righttime Medical Care. He is also the grandfather of four. rgraw@myrighttime.com



Sisters and Girlfriends Like Fine Wines, Get Better with Age

By Joanne R. Alloway

Do you have a sister, a sister-in-law, a cousin or a stepsister you love and can confide in? Maybe not, but do you have a girlfriend that is just like a sister? All a woman needs is a girlfriend or two she can readily lean on, trust and be herself with. Over the years this woman becomes your rock, your confidant and your support system. They are like wines – sweet, dry or sparkling -- that mellow over the years.

Sisters

Natural sisters often fit the friend bill well because they've grown up together and have lived through much history together. Sibling rivalry aside, sisters make great friends as they age. Sisters lived through many of life's rites of passage together. Often sisters have survived unwanted, harsh comments from other family members. A bond forms from longevity that can only be understood and appreciated by another woman, or sister. For example, if a sister gets divorced after many years of marriage, family members all have opinions, and they don't hesitate to share them with you, good or bad. But a sister is always there to offer support and love and not judge, despite what her own opinion might be. The divorced sister knows this and is comforted

to have a sister to turn to in any situation because she knows she would do the very same for her. As the years pass, so does the support system and so does the give and take. Thus the saying, "sisters are forever" surely rings true.

How We Find Our Girlfriends

In our grade school days, we had a lot of friends at school and sometimes in our neighborhoods. We were with them all the time, they were in our class, in Girl Scouts and swim clubs and we bonded. In high school, friendships got more selective because we had more choices in classes, sports and after-school activities. These girlfriends tended to become more permanent, since they were selected based on interests and homogeneity. A good example would be why high school reunions are so popular, especially after the 10- and 20-year graduation mark. It has also been found that more women attend reunions, sparked by the fact that they like to catch up with former classmates. It is

amazing how much fun the reunions can be. To find your class reunion, try www.schoolsandreunions.com While college reunions are also popular, they don't rival high school reunion attendance numbers. This is not to say that two women who met at college are not friends for life, because this is one of the strongest female bonds after natural sisterhood. Two or more women who live through up to four years of college, sweating it out together over grades, boyfriends, dorms, jobs, money and other campus life stresses have as similar a bond as sisters do. They even get to know the families of their campus friends well enough to continue visiting after graduation. It is not uncommon for former college roommates to end up living near one another after graduation, searching for jobs in the same cities and even marrying brothers and family members. We also meet our girlfriends during adulthood while raising children and volunteering in schools and other activities. The bond between sisters and girlfriends is indeed powerful.

Getting Older with Sisters and Girlfriends

Like fine wine, relationships with sisters and girlfriends just seems to get better as we age. We realize as never before that having reared children and nurtured husbands, having had careers and decorated and maintained households, we deserve some time to ourselves. We need to relax with like-minded women and enjoy the fruits and the labors of our lives. We like being close and reminiscing, but also enjoy staying in the present and planning our future.

Women never run out of conversation. Upon returning home, our husbands might comment, "You've been gone for hours. What on earth do you girls talk about?" They just don't get it! With girlfriends, there



Don't miss an opportunity by worrying about what could have been.



is always something going on, something to plan or to discuss. There are times to just listen as well. With friends you've known or had in your family forever, there is no need to explain a situation. A girlfriend just understands where you are coming from. You understand and respect each other. If your friend thinks her husband is cheating on her, you just let her talk until she asks you for your opinion, if she does. Maybe she's just venting. If you were in her shoes, what would you expect her to do? As a good friend, anticipating her mood and her needs is what she needs most, along with your confidentiality.

Girlfriends and sisters need each other for so many different things. When they sit down for lunch or dinner with a glass of wine, it is a lovely moment. Sometimes it's a celebration – a new job, a brand new grandchild or a new downsized home. Even a divorce can be celebrated! While we now have distance between us in many instances, and making a visit not feasible, we still have our phones and e-mail. And lately there's a lot of interest in girlfriend weekends and vacations. You don't have to make a complicated agenda for these trips: talk, eat, sleep, have some activity, shop and solve the problems of your world, and do it all again the next day. It may sound simple-minded but it's the best therapy a girlfriend can get and give. And yes, we still need the men in our lives, but they are our friends in a different way. Try www.dealbase.com/girlsgetaway-hoteldeals or www.nadjaspajamaparty.com for some interesting ideas.

*Joanne R. Alloway is a freelance writer, author and consultant living in Annapolis. She is one of three sisters. She published a memoir, *Suddenly an Angel – My Grandson's Story, My Family's Faith* in 2009.*

Reducing Christmas Clutter

By Edree Downing

Are you still acquiring holiday treasures? Those charming little knickknacks that once a year need to be unpacked and then packed up again? Maybe it's time to start distributing some of that collection, which each year becomes more and more of a problem to store. We had a lifetime of Christmas decorations that filled 10 large bins at my house. For the last five years we've been doling out our collection bit by bit. My family loves receiving the different pieces that were used during their childhood. And then we all enjoy the telling of where a particular decoration came from as there is invariably a story that goes with it.

Not only do we have a fair share of holiday collectables, but over the years we've accumulated quite a nice assortment of holiday books. Many of these have been inscribed with a note from the gift giver, which makes them even more special. This year we're passing on *The Little Match Girl* that godmother Suzan inscribed with a nice Christmas message more than 30 years ago and *A Christmas Carol* from the children's grandmother, which will have to be taped as the pages are falling out. Sorting through and passing these timeless classics on to our children's homes will allow them to read and enjoy them with their children. And a real plus is that during our Christmas visits we get to read them to our grandkids. It's a win-win situation all around.

As meaningful as some of the holiday collection has been and as much as we've enjoyed it over the years, we have found that we're enjoying these treasures a lot more because others are storing and loving them.



Libraries: More Than Books on Loan



By Terry Saylor

Have you visited your public library lately or any library -- online? If you haven't, you are in for a treat when you see all the information available to you, with or without a library card.

For starters, let's begin with your local public library. If you don't know your local library website, go to www.sailor.lib.md.us Under Library Services, click on the Maryland Public Library Directory, then choose your county and then its library Web address.

Start at the library home page. Look around, just like you would if you visited the library building.

- Access the library catalog; see what you can borrow with a library card. Some libraries show the cover of the book and give you a summary.
- Familiarize yourself with library policies, locations and hours. Find out what programs and events are scheduled at the branches. Download their newsletter for even more information.
- Read library guides that link to Internet sites. The guides cover a variety of topics and the sites have been reviewed and recommended by professional information specialists and may save you a Google search.
- Find resources on Sailor, Maryland's Public Information Network. For instance, try the Auto Repair Reference Center or the History Reference Center.
- A favorite stop is "Ask us now!" You can ask a question 24/7. In Maryland the librarians participate in an international "info experts" cooperative. Your question may be answered by a librarian anywhere in the world, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

With a Maryland library card, a wider electronic world opens up. A library card is free, so get one if you don't already have one. In Maryland, you can register from home using an online form or go to your local branch with the card application form downloaded and printed from the library website. Remember that home page visit? Look for the link to getting a library card there. Once you have your library card, you can type in the title of any book, click on "hold" and you'll receive an e-mail when it's ready to be picked up at your branch. If your library does not carry the title you are seeking, it can go outside of its system to locate almost any book that has ever been printed. After it is located, it is delivered to your branch for you to pick up.

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Maryland public libraries participate in the Maryland Digital/ eLibrary Consortium. This means that as a card-carrying member of your local public library, you are able to download

Other services found at your library:

Download a form to fill out for last will and testament:
subscriptions.uslegalforms.com/gale/categories.php?c=Wills

Genealogy search:
ancestrylibrary.proquest.com/aleweb/ale/do/login

Access magazine articles:
libguides.aacpl.net/magazines

Assistance with a job search:
libguides.aacpl.net/jobs

Current global issues:
find.galegroup.com/gic/start.do?prodId=GIC&userGroupName=aacpl_itweb

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www.learnatest.com/LEL/index.cfm/

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audiobooks to your computer or other media player. Popular fiction, the Bible, children's materials, Pimsleur language files, Books on Tape, Listening Library are just some of the variety of materials available. Depending on the vendor, the materials are "checked out" for 14 or 21 days and may be renewed. And you can have more than one out at a time. All can be found in the library catalog and on the Maryland Digital Library website. And if you are print-disabled, you may qualify for a free subscription to LEAP, the Library eBook Accessibility Program.

And there's more that you can do from your desktop. Look for the link to electronic databases. From there, click to a long list of topics from biography to genealogy to newspaper archives. All of these have been selected by professionals who have researched and selected sites to help you with your work and enjoyment. No need to search Google when the sources are at your public library.

After you've been to your public library electronically, you can wander to other academic and special libraries. Link to Libcat, a guide to library resources on the Web: www.librarysites.info Once there, choose your state and a list of the many different types of libraries will appear.

Are you a Maryland college graduate? From Libcat, you can find the academic libraries in the state and look at what is available online. Why not begin with your local community college library? While some online access may be restricted to registered students and faculty, some are also available to the public. Or maybe you have taken a class but never looked at the college library website; if you are a registered student, you have greater access. Take time to do that and you may find even more interesting resources. The college library catalog is always available to the public. There may be library guides that link to Web sources that are accessible.

At other academic institutions, seek out their "special collections." Many resources are free for the viewing. For instance, the University of Maryland College Park digitized all the Terrapin Yearbooks and selected images from their National Trust for Historic Preservation Postcard Collection. The Naval Academy Nimitz Library digitized images from

The Army-Navy football games from 1890-2009.

The U.S. national libraries are also at your fingertips as well as libraries worldwide. Start with the Library of Congress www.loc.gov From the bar at the top of the screen you can click on "Ask a Librarian," "Digital Collections" and "Library Catalogs." From the "Ask a Librarian" page you can get to many free electronic resources. Don't miss the "Virtual Reference Shelf." From the second row of links on the Library of Congress home page, click on World Digital Library. Locate "Portals to the World," which is a connection to "electronic resources on the nations of the world selected by Library of Congress subject experts."

The National Agricultural Library (NAL) www.nalusda.gov and the National Library of Medicine (NLM) www.nlm.nih.gov offer extensive materials online. For instance, many of the Deborah Griscom Passmore Watercolors in the Special Collections at the NAL can be viewed under "History, Art and Biography." An exhibit on forensic views of the body at the NLM that closed in 2008

OutLook's Bits & Bytes

Do you enjoy a walk or jog during these crisp days but are not sure of the route? Go to www.walkjogrun.net to view detailed maps with their suggestions for routes and distance.

can be "toured" at the link to "Online Exhibitions & Digital Projects." Let your fingers do the walking and enjoy the visits.



Terry Ann Saylor is a retired academic and public librarian. She can be reached at terrysaylor@yahoo.com



Living well

Take Charge of your Health

Get the most out of life through a Self-Management Workshop.

Why does a Self-Management Workshop help people with chronic conditions? The course helps people learn skills to manage their symptoms and get the most out of life. Although there are many chronic conditions, the problems and the symptoms associated with each one are often similar. Many people with chronic conditions experience:

- Loss of energy
- Sleeping Problems
- Pain
- Depression
- Breathing Difficulties
- A Concern for the Future

"Living Well...Take Charge of your Health" Workshops run for 2 1/2 hours, once a week. The course is led for 6 weeks by two trained Lay Leaders who live with chronic conditions themselves.

UPCOMING SESSIONS

November 5 - December 16 November 9 - December 14
at the Centreville Senior Center at the Kent Island Methodist Church

Are you interested in becoming a participant?
CONTACT: Anne Slater at 410-827-5810
or sign up at the location of the class.

From Porcelain Crowns to Pharaoh's Horses

By Kathryn Marchi

How many of us can say that we have a hobby, a passion and a career that when combined, satisfies our very soul while providing financial support? Eileen Johnson is one creative and talented person who was able to draw from all three and enjoy each at various times in her life. In time she found a way to blend them into business and pleasure. To this day, Eileen is continuing to pursue her combined passion.

Born in New Jersey to a naval architect father and a professional artist mother, Eileen was surrounded by creativity and encouraged to explore her own. She was always drawing, sketching, painting and working on any art projects she could find. At six years of age, Eileen was given her own sewing machine and began stitching doll clothes for dolls in the neighborhood.

At age eight, she discovered horses. In exchange for riding lessons, Eileen cleaned stalls and did other jobs around the farm. This love of horses became a passion that would continue throughout her life.

Entering high school at 13, Eileen took a class in jewelry and metallurgy. She learned soldering, how to work in sheet metal and how to set stones. As a project, she designed and made an intricate sterling silver cuff bracelet. With that, she was hooked on designing and making jewelry. This became a hobby that she would enjoy throughout her schooling.

At 16, Eileen began working in a dentist's office where she became

fascinated by the method for making dental crowns and bridges. By coincidence, she was told by a school guidance counselor that a manual dexterity test indicated she might be a candidate for a career in dental lab technology. Eileen then found an excellent school at the University of Kentucky where in 1974 she graduated with an associate's degree in applied science of dental technology. Not only did she train in the skill of making dentures, partials, maxio-facial restoration, crowns and bridges, she also specialized in business management. After working in the dental technology field to garner more experience, Eileen opened her own dental laboratory in 1978. This was her career and the intricate work involved certainly had its roots in her hobby of hand-crafting jewelry. During this time, Eileen reconnected with her beloved horses and bought her first horse in 1976. She would ride and own horses from that time on.

It is clear that jewelry and dental technology are required craftsmanship, but how did Eileen's passion for horses enter the equation?

After 25 years of running her own dental lab, Eileen decided to retire. As a gift, her aunt gave her a family heirloom from her grandfather -- a gold pocket watch and fob with an intricate engraving of the "Pharaoh's Horses," a replica of a well-known painting by British artist, John Frederick Herring. Still dreaming of making jewelry, Eileen decided that this beautiful engraving would be her signature piece and would help launch her new business in jewelry. A passion, a hobby and a career now evolved into one!

After a year spent in England pursuing her interest in horses, she returned to the United States and began making plans for the future. Securing a copyright certificate on the Pharaoh's Horses design, she named the new business, "Tempi," which means "change." Finding her home on Maryland's Eastern Shore, she built a studio and began to create pendants, earrings, cuff links, key fobs and charms, all with the "Pharaoh's Horses" design. These jewelry pieces were



“This was her career and the intricate work involved certainly had its roots in her hobby of hand-crafted jewelry ... A passion, a hobby and a career now evolved into one!”

made in sterling silver, ancient casting bronze, golde (a yellow alloy) and 14-karat gold. Eileen crafted and finished each piece by hand, carving and molding the prototypes with the same tools used in her dental business. The dream of owning her own jewelry design business was launched.

As Eileen enjoyed riding her horse and visiting area horse shows, she began to include other riding disciplines in her designs such as horses used for dressage. She also developed prototypes for specific horse breeds, foxes and companion dogs to horse lovers. As the pieces became better known, Eileen was asked to expand into depictions of waterfowl and birds. The Calvert Maritime Museum recently asked her to include boats specific to the Chesapeake Bay such as the log canoe, bugeye and skipjack.

Eileen was also asked by Friends of Rappahannock to use their logo in a design to celebrate their 25th anniversary. The Mystic Maritime Museum in Connecticut has also expressed interest in her work. Locally, her jewelry can be found at Atkins' Arboretum, the Rotary Artisans' Fest and other displays in Centreville and at recognized horse shows along the East Coast. At present, Eileen's goal is to exhibit her jewelry at the Easton Waterfowl Festival. 

For more information please visit:
www.tempidesignstudio.com or
freestyle@tempidesignstudio.com



Pine Cones for Holiday Decorations

By Neil Moran

One of the more fascinating gifts of Mother Nature is the cones of conifer trees. Conifer cones can be used in many different craft projects, have an interesting seed dispersal method and they smell nice! There are a number of conifers that produce cones, including pines, spruces, firs, redwood, cedar, juniper and cypress. Cones come in all shapes and sizes, and even colors. For instance, the immature cones of a Norway spruce are a pretty pink-purple color. Those of the blue spruce are light tan in color. Some are very small, such as the one-inch black spruce cones. Some are very large like the two-foot long sugar pine. Can you imagine one of these falling on your head?

Cones also make it easy to identify a conifer tree because of their shape, texture and uniqueness. For example, spruce cones have a papery feel, pine cones are more woody to the sight and touch. So if you find a woody cylindrical cone about six inches long on a conifer it is likely that of a white pine.

Cones captivate the interest of botanists and even casual observers of nature. They are gymnosperms, which are a rather primitive group of plants. Unlike flowering plants, which botanists call angiosperms, that are mostly pollinated by insects, gymnosperms are pollinated by the wind. Trees such as the Scotch pine have separate male and female cones. It takes some female cones, such as that of the Scotch pines, three years to mature and bear seed.

The seeds of cones are trapped in the scales of each cone. Typically, warm weather releases the seeds of mature conifer cones, usually while the cone is still on the tree. The winged "nut" is dispersed in the wind where it can travel quite a distance. To ensure survival of the species, a single tree produces literally thousands of seeds within the cones it bears. These seeds flutter about in the wind-- some even ending up in streams and rivers where they may be transported for miles to a spot where they can germinate and become a tree.

I've been lucky on occasion to be able to gather cones that had fallen to the ground in a wind storm with their seeds still intact. I've taken these cones and spread them out on a table in a sunny spot in a greenhouse. Within hours the scales will open and release copious quantities of seeds. And should you get some of the sticky sap on your hands from the cones, simply wash it off using cooking oil like you would soap.

It's the sap of the cone that produces the fragrant aroma. This aroma has been duplicated synthetically in cleaning products (think Pine Sol) and those Christmas tree-shaped air fresheners. Pine and spruce trees also produce sugars, which turn into resin and turpentine, which is used in manufacturing.

Did you know?

- The coulter pine has the heaviest cone in the world. At up to 10 pounds apiece it is no wonder the loggers dubbed them "widow makers." The Indians ate the nuts, or seeds, of these cones.
- Some cones need the intense heat of fire to open up their scales and release their prize. The Jack pine and pinyon pine are two trees with such cones. The Indians also ate the nuts of the pinyon pine and used parts of the tree for medicinal purposes.

• The lodgepole pine cone is only a couple of inches long. However, they're popular with crafters because they are easy to work with.

• The sugar pine not only has the longest pine cone in the world (up to two feet), but is also the tallest of the pines. The Indians used the sticky sap like glue and chewed it like gum.

• One of the more widely distributed pines in North America is the ponderosa pine. It's nickname, "prickly ponderosa," comes from the prickly scales of the cones. It is one of the most "environmentally beneficial choices" in wood products, according to the Western Wood Products Association.

• The state flower of Maine is the white pine cone and tassel, but it's not technically a flower. Indians use the sticky sap as a bandage.

• Pine nuts are harvested from the larger species of pine. They are actually the seeds of pines and are high in protein and dietary fiber.

For an interesting site that contains The Legend of the Silver Pine Cone as well as crafts and decorations that can be made using pine cones, log onto: www.familycrafts.about.com/cs/pineconecrafts/1/blsilverpinecon.htm



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Cast Your Dice for the Right Cooking Equipment

By Melissa Conroy

My parents own a cast iron Dutch oven and skillet set that have served our family for more than three decades. While we have shattered glass cooking pots, warped aluminum frying pans, melted the plastic handles off electric skillets and scratched stainless steel pans, our cast iron set has remained indestructible, dependable and indispensable. Over the years, we have called upon our Dutch oven and skillet to produce hundreds of chilies, stews, soups, casseroles, cornbreads and desserts. They've been propped over campfires, left out in the rain, used to crack nuts, brought to church picnics, accidentally dropped, abandoned in the fridge for weeks and banged on by bored children, yet they continue to serve our cooking needs and will likely do so for many years to come.

As cold weather descends upon us and you start thinking of warming soups, hearty chilies and comforting roasts, consider investing in a set of cast iron pots and pans. Cast iron should be a staple part of every kitchen because it has so many wonderful benefits.

Cast iron is generally formed from pig iron and other scrap iron and scrap steel which is melted, then poured into a mold. Cast iron cookware has quite a long history: The Chinese people discovered how to make a fire hot enough to melt iron as early as 500 B.C., but it took Europeans until the 12th century to figure this out for themselves. Aside from a hot-enough fire, cast iron is quite simple to make and quickly became popular as a form of cookware because of its many advantages.

Cast iron is extremely durable and can take quite a bit of abuse without cracking, warping or breaking. It can cope with extremely high levels of heat which is why it is so popular to use over an open fire. Because of its excellent heat-diffusion ability, cast iron cooks foods evenly and is terrific for long simmers and slow-cooked items. When food is cooked in cast iron, small amounts of iron are released into the food, particularly if it has a high acidic content like tomato sauce does. Also, cast

iron imparts a rich, satisfying flavor to food. Chili, for example, is much better when allowed to simmer in a cast iron pot. For excellent flavor, nothing beats a stew or chicken and dumplings cooked in cast iron over a campfire. Properly cared for, cast iron will last a lifetime, if not more. It is entirely possible that you can pass down your beloved cast iron cookware from generation to generation.

All cast iron really needs from you is a little attention and it will continue to perform. In fact, the more you use cast iron, the better it gets. However, a brand-new cast iron pot or skillet requires some preparation before it is performing at optimal rate. Cast iron needs to be seasoned, meaning it needs to be given a coat of fat and oil. While cast iron is shiny and smooth right out of the box, it performs best when it is black and slightly sticky. Seasoning protects the cast iron from rust and makes a stick-free surface. When you fry in a seasoned cast iron pot, you generally don't need to add oil because the seasoning makes it nonstick.

To season a new cast iron pan, first scrub it with soap and water because it usually has a protective oil coating which needs to come off. Then dry it by placing it on a burner and heating it dry. It must be dry before seasoning it. When it has cooled off, rub it inside and out with a generous amount of Crisco, vegetable oil, bacon fat or lard. Put an extra layer of the grease on the bottom of the pan and shove it inside the oven at 300 degrees for at least an hour. If you have a lid for your pan, it needs the same treatment also, so make sure to season it too.

There is some debate about the best way to wash dirty cast iron. Some purists insist that cast iron should only be rinsed out and wiped with a paper towel, but a good chili or rump roast can leave a lot of gunk behind. Other people say that if you use soap on cast iron, you should always re-season it afterwards. Personally, I generally use mild soap and water on my cast iron and it works just fine. Also, if you wash your cast iron before the food in it starts drying out, a quick scrub in plain water is often sufficient to get it clean. However, don't wash hot iron in cold

water as there is a chance you could damage it. Also, you really only need to worry about cleaning the inside of the pan. Since the outside does not come in contact with food, it just needs a rinsing unless it is really dirty. Lids only need a rinse since they don't normally have contact with food. Dry your cast iron thoroughly after washing to prevent rust.

If you notice rust, if your food starts sticking to the bottom or you over-scrubbed your cast iron with soap, all you need to do is re-season the pan. Keep it clean, seasoned and well-used and over time, your cast iron will build up a wonderful coat of black that imparts its own unique flavor and smoky goodness to your cooking. And it's versatile, for everything from frying up homemade French fries to making corn bread for a chili feed. Enough singing the praises of cast iron; here is a recipe especially suited to it.

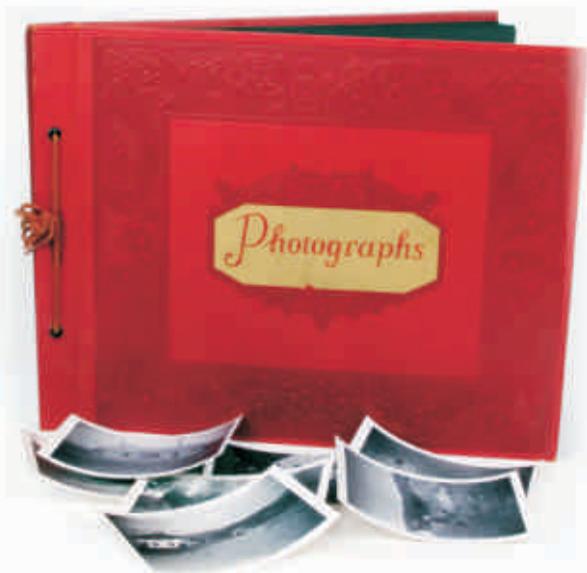
Mom's Famous Pork Chops

1 lb pork chops
1 can cream of mushroom soup
1 can water
cooked rice

- 1) Brown pork chops on both sides in either a cast iron Dutch oven or cast iron skillet
- 2) Pour mushroom soup and water over them, cover
- 3) Let simmer an hour or until tender
- 4) Serve over rice



Books Bound By Love



By Leslie J. Payne

I sat in my living room about nine years ago, encircled by boxes containing decades of photographs. There was no logical reason for keeping so many photos except that I had fallen in love - at that point about nine times as each niece or nephew arrived. Each time I became an aunt I renewed my quest to record every breath, curl of a finger or cute expression of the new baby. My obsession continued into their childhoods and beyond.

Surrounded by photos I sorted them into piles. At that time Mary, my oldest niece, was 16, an age when kids question who they are in life. It hit me that a book about her, full of photos and stories of her life, would be a creative way to express my love and encourage her during those often turbulent teenage years. I got busy.

When Christmas arrived, I was a tad nervous as I presented Mary with her gift, a four-by six-inch album of photos from every stage of her life accompanied with memories and stories. As she opened the book, her smile was the best gift I received that year.

Online photo book options:

If you don't have the time and do have the money, consider using an online photo book creator.

You pick the page designs and layout, and then upload the photos via the Internet.

Here are some sites to try:

www.smilebooks.com, www.shutterfly.com
www.snapfish.com, www.ritzpix.com

Later when her friends compared the holiday gifts they received, she was the only one given a "biography" about her life. She was the envy of all her friends.

That gift launched a family tradition that would span more than a decade. My other nieces and nephews receive their own book at their sixteenth Christmas. The gift, however, has evolved over the years. Now I use a notebook with page protectors to include photos, stories and family history. Included are photos

from years ago and recent digital prints off the computer. Finally, I make a CD with the many other photos I've recorded of their life.

Parents usually don't have time to make such a gift; they're too busy raising the child. However, grandparents, aunts and uncles often can make the time. Think of all the memories and stories you can pass on to your teenagers. If you don't tell them about their special qualities or bits of family history, who will? Take time to enjoy working with your hands as you create an inexpensive and treasured keepsake. Here are some steps to take:

Gather memorabilia

- ◆ Photos of the subject
- ◆ Drawings they gave you as a child
- ◆ Thank-you notes, letters or printed e-mails they've sent you
- ◆ Ticket stubs and programs from events you attended together
- ◆ A few photos representing family history
- ◆ A photo of yourself at the same age as your subject

Buy supplies

- ◆ Photo album or three-ring binder
- ◆ Acid-free construction paper
- ◆ Photo-safe mounting tape
- ◆ Decorative stickers and stamps
- ◆ Page protectors
- ◆ Scissors
- ◆ Computer, scanner and printer

Make a plan

You can choose various ways to put together your book: chronological by age and year, theme-related by holidays, birthdays, sports, events, character traits of the subject or a random blend. Sort photos of your child according to your plan. Crop photos to eliminate distractions if necessary. Consider grouping photos to put two or more on a page.

Add Words

Stories related to the photo can be printed out by computer or written by hand. Have fun with fonts and writing style. Use a favorite poem, quote, blessing or scripture verse with photos. Blend in family history, descriptions of who they favor from generations past or a piece of family lore.

Do the layout

Be sure page colors complement the colors in the photo. Not all photos need words, a few stickers, stamps or nothing else also works.

Remember to add in drawings or notes you have from when the child was younger.

Begin it and end it

Have a title page followed by a personal introduction. Tell your young people how much they mean to you, the personal qualities and talents you admire in them and how grateful you are they are part of your life. End the book with a recent photo of you. Write a few words about how you look forward to witnessing the rest of their teen and adult years and express your love. Finally, close with your handwritten signature and the date. Add some empty page protectors after the last page. Most likely, they will add more keepsakes. 

Leslie J. Payne lives in Annapolis and is now a great-aunt. She's grateful for a grand total of 24 nieces and nephews. Visit her on her Web page at www.lesliejpayne.com



OutLook's
Bits & Bytes

If you're interested in staying in shape, try this site at www.active.com It's a source of endless information on activities for the active participant such as a local triathlon or swim meet or bike race in your area. There's an amazing amount of additional info for anyone who likes to get out there and move.

Relax: Celebrating the Holidays with Mindfulness



By Pat Jurgens

Whatever your cultural or religious tradition, the holiday season will be more enjoyable if you cultivate mindfulness. A powerful Eastern practice founded in Buddhism, mindfulness meditation has attracted thousands in the West who seek peace amidst the complexity of modern living. Many of us meditate every day, wanting to calm our minds and hearts. Modern applications have been developed in psychotherapy, management training, dispute resolution, law enforcement and health care. Mindfulness meditation can relieve anxiety, depression, stress, anger and other negative emotions.

What is this magic? And how can it prepare us to meet the ups and downs of the holiday season? Essentially the practice of mindfulness is focused breathing and the awareness of your breath. Breathe in, breathe out...in, out. It is simple, but not always easy. Thoughts may race around, worries collect, distracting feelings accumulate and ruminations pull at us. Whenever this happens, we bring our mind back to the present moment.

Mindfulness meditation can be practiced sitting, lying down or walking. As you breathe in and out, you notice the rise and fall of your own chest, holiday music in the next room, the cry of gulls out the window or a fog horn in the distance. You feel your stomach relax, watch your emotions dissipate and see problems past and future letting go. You are as you are; things are how they are. At this moment everything is all right.

Another approach is cultivating mindfulness in daily life. Stress during the

holidays is almost inescapable. There are grown children arriving from out of town, grandchildren to buy presents for, parties to host or attend with friends, activities to plan, a house to clean, meals to prepare and special foods to bake. You can probably name a dozen to-do's in one breath.

Practicing mindfulness requires you to take time to be alone and centered in the midst of activity around you.

Try this:

- Set your alarm half an hour early and sit quietly before others arise in the morning. Or retire to your bedroom earlier than usual and take time to go inward. Make this a priority, part of your daily schedule.
- Do a quiet activity with mindfulness. Knit, crochet, quilt, whittle or even cook. Breathe in, breathe out... Put your mind at rest, and when it wanders, bring it gently back to the task at hand.
- Do a physical exercise with mindfulness. Swimming laps is repetitive and can be very meditative; so can the treadmill or cross trainer. And, of course, yoga is the essence of meditation, using the breath with each asana (pose).

The holidays are full of things to do, places to go and people to see. Make it your intention this holiday season to slow down and focus on one thing at a time.

- Play Christmas carols on the piano or guitar. No matter if you're not a virtuoso -- allow yourself to enjoy the experience.
- Eating mindfully can be a true delight. Special holiday baked goods like German stollen, Russian hoska and African American sweet potato pie have

an aroma and flavor to be savored. It's amazing how good food tastes when we pay attention to every mouthful.

- Wrapping gifts. Maybe like me, you wait until the last minute before rushing home with ribbon and paper to wrap presents. Try setting aside an evening well before the gifts are presented. Rather than rush through it as a job, enjoy cutting and smoothing the paper; feel the silky texture of the ribbon.

Mindfulness can be practiced with our friends and family members. When was the last time you gave undivided attention to a loved one who was distressed? Problems and conflicts can arise during the holidays, as people carry stress from past as well as present situations. We don't need to have answers for others; listening deeply with an open mind and heart is a gift in itself.

Think of other ways you can increase the well-being of others:

- Baking cookies with love in your heart and distributing them to neighbors and friends can be practiced with mindfulness rather than feverish haste.
- Giving a person who lives alone a ride to their place of worship or to the shopping mall may make their holiday.
- Reading or telling stories from your cultural or religious tradition at a daycare center or library can make children happy.

Finding ways to express generosity by sharing your time and energy is living in mindfulness.

This holiday season just pause every now and then, and become aware of your breath. Notice what there is to notice, right then and there. Let go, and let it be as it is; a present moment, wonderful moment. 

Pat has practiced meditation on and off for the past 30 years. She can be contacted at: 4louises@comcast.net

Further reading:

- Kornfield, Jack. *Buddha's Little Instruction Book*. New York: Bantam, 1994.
- Kabat-Zinn, Jon. *Wherever You Go There You Are; Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life*. New York: Hyperion, 1994.
- Thich Nhat Hanh. *The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching; Transforming Suffering into Peace, Joy, and Liberation*. Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1998.

Did you have a dream when you were young? What's keeping you from pursuing it?

Break the Ice with Table Topics By Cindy Rott

Did you ever wish that your Norman Rockwell family could gather around the Thanksgiving table and have meaningful conversations that weren't limited to "pass the peas?" Well we would all like a Rockwell family, but if that is impossible, how about great conversations with whomever we are with? Table Topics is a simple deck of cards that magically starts fantastic conversations. The deck is great for family gatherings, girls' night out, book clubs or even date night. Table Topics stimulated some of the most interesting and informative conversations I have had with my family in years. There are no winners, losers or even rules of play. Just start a conversation and roll with it.

Each card has an intriguing question to be asked. The decks come in many different conversation topics including audience-specific ones such as: Family edition, girls night out, the '70s, gourmet, book club, a tailgate edition, as well as many others. The questions can be serious, silly, thought-provoking or a little of everything. Often the questions spur further questions and conversations. A small sampling includes the following: "If you could do something dangerous with no risk what would you do?" "Is it more fun to be a parent or a child?" "What five foods do you wish were banished from the earth?" "Where were you when Neil Armstrong walked on the moon?" "What's your favorite way to eat chocolate?" "Would you rather have a chat with your great-great-grandparents or your great-great-grandkids?"

A smaller to-go version costs \$9, which includes 40 questions. For \$25 you can purchase the complete set of 135 questions. The cards come in a clear plastic cube and are printed on heavy stock paper that allows them to be reused many times as the conversation will be different with different groups. Even the same group might answer questions differently, depending on everyone's mood.

“Table Topics is a simple deck of cards that magically starts fantastic conversations.”



Recently three generations of my family gathered. After we finished eating, we passed the cards around and began to play. The players received a small pile of cards so they could ask questions that really interested them and skip the ones they didn't like. We didn't establish many rules except that you had to be respectful, i.e., quiet when someone else is talking. We also encouraged the kids when they were done talking to ask someone else what their thoughts were. This kept the questions going and encouraged the older set to say their piece.

The kids couldn't wait to voice their opinions, which grandparents and parents alike were thrilled to hear, especially from the normally less talkative teens. Our 'house rules' were established: Everyone didn't have to answer every question, but everyone had to say something at some point. Grandparents and little kids alike had an excellent time laughing, learning and engaging in a bit of good-natured disagreement.

Table Topics is a great icebreaker. Scatter the cards around the room at a cocktail party, use them as coasters at the Thanksgiving table, leave them on the coffee table or pack them in your purse for traveling. No more boring conversations of how the weather is up North, or the price of gas.

I bought my set at Paper in the Park in Severna Park, and liked it so much that I went back and bought two sets as gifts. (Bonus: They even wrapped them for me.)

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Try Coffee for a Warm Winter Treat

By Carla Lucente and Stacey Jackowski

Coffee was discovered in Ethiopia by a goat herder who found his goats “dancing” after eating the red berries of a dark-leaved bush – the coffee plant. Different cultures experimented by cooking the fruit and seeds of the coffee plants. As the plants were traded, imported and exported around the world, each culture began cultivating the plants and preparing coffee in their own way.

Coffee beans actually come from the fruit of the coffee plant, called a cherry. Each cherry produces two coffee beans. There are two primary species of coffee: Arabica and Robusta. Robusta has twice the amount of caffeine as the Arabica.

BUYING: Try to find a local coffee roaster in your neighborhood. (We have a few in the Annapolis area, including Caffe Pronto.) They will have a large selection of fresh, whole beans from a dark roast to a light decaf. If not, your local grocery store will offer a wide variety as well. Look for small, independent coffee roasters selling whole beans. Look for a “roast date” on the packaging and use coffee within two months of that date for optimum freshness. It is best to buy coffee in small quantities instead of bulk.

FLAVORED COFFEE versus SYRUPS: Flavored coffee is merely coffee with artificial flavoring sprayed on the beans. Instead, buy a coffee that you like and add flavored syrup, like hazelnut or vanilla, after brewing. Monin is a popular brand carried at most retailers.

STORING: Coffee is best stored in an airtight container or Ziploc bag in a cool, dry area. Contrary to popular belief, neither the refrigerator nor the freezer is the place to store your coffee. The coffee beans will act as a sponge and absorb any smells or flavors. Condensation affects the quality of the coffee beans. Store your coffee beans at room temperature.

WATER: Use filtered water when brewing your coffee. Clean water is not only going to make your coffee taste better, but will also help your coffee equipment stay cleaner.



SWEETENERS: There are several different types of sweeteners. Flavored syrups can be found at your local coffee roastery or grocery store. Look for brands that use “pure cane sugar” instead of corn syrups. They will have a truer flavor and are better for you. If you need a sugar-free option, most of the flavors are available sweetened with Splenda or Stevia. These flavored syrups along with a little half-and-half will replace your expensive and artificially-flavored “creamers,” and will produce exceptional flavor.

BREWING: It is preferable to grind your beans immediately before brewing. Coffee that is ground will go stale 100 times faster than whole bean coffee! The recommended recipe: two level tablespoons of ground coffee to six ounces of water. Each cup marking on home brewers is usually six ounces, not eight ounces as is a measuring cup. Once again, use fresh water for optimum taste.

DRINKING: Coffee should be enjoyed within 30 minutes of brewing to prevent the coffee from “cooking” and producing a bitter flavor.

We prefer to drink our coffee in a ceramic mug; it tastes better and protects the environment at the same time.

Carla and Stacey's tip of the month:

Save your coffee grounds and use them to fertilize your tomatoes.

BEAUTY TIP:

Use a tablespoon of used coffee grounds for an exfoliating hand scrub. The oils from the coffee will soften your hands.

A CHRISTMAS CUP OF JOY

2 shots espresso or 6 ounces fresh brewed coffee
Steamed milk
1 tbs. chocolate sauce
1 tsp. peppermint syrup

Place the chocolate sauce and peppermint syrup in a mug. Add your espresso or coffee and stir. Add milk to taste and ENJOY! 

Carla and Stacey are chefs and co-owners of b.b. Bistro in Annapolis. They specialize in locally grown, seasonal food and locally roasted coffee and can be reached at 410 990-4646.



Yesterday is gone and done with. Work on making an impact today.

Still Time to Book That Winter Cruise

By Rosie Cavin Gollehon

Boats are being winterized and shrink-wrapped and the marinas are quiet. The snowbirds are flying south to spend the winter on the balmy shores of the Atlantic Ocean or the Gulf of Mexico, leaving the harsh winter in our area behind.

For many of us this is not an option, but there is still time to get away for a week or more and escape winter for a little while. It is never too late to book a cruise.

If you have been dreaming of a special destination that can be reached by ship, there is a cruise for you. Exciting destinations, featuring sun-drenched islands, pristine beaches and turquoise waters, ancient cities and cultures, stunning icescapes and exotic adventures await you on every journey.

Experienced cruisers know the ship often is a destination in itself. That is not surprising if you can imagine life aboard an ocean liner. You feel special and pampered the moment you step on board. On many cruise lines you receive white glove service from staff members who anticipate your every need. You can enjoy gourmet dining in several different themed restaurants, sip a cocktail in one of the many fabulous lounges while listening to a piano being softly played in the background.

World class entertainment from Las Vegas-style revues, magic acts and shows by top comedians are offered nightly at no extra charge. During the day, the activities can range from cooking classes to dance classes, bingo games to bridge tournaments. You can also simply relax in a deck chair reading a book, or lounge by the pool soaking up the sunshine.

There are hundreds of ships out there, in all sizes and to fit all budgets. Thousands of exotic ports of call beckon the cruiser, with itineraries lasting from three days to more than 120 days for a world cruise.

With so many options, where should you begin? First, determine when you might want to go on a cruise. Keep in mind that the holiday periods over Christmas, New Years, Valentine's Day, etc., are very popular and therefore the rates are always higher. In addition, the rates vary greatly from cruise line to cruise line, depending on the category. The cruise industry is divided into mass market, premium and luxury categories.

Let's look at some of the possibilities for winter cruises. Right at our doorstep is the Port of Baltimore and this winter three cruise lines are setting sail for warmer climates:

- Royal Caribbean's Enchantment of the Seas offers nine- and 12-day sailings to the Bahamas and the Caribbean.
- The Carnival Pride leaves Baltimore every Sunday for seven-day cruises to the Bahamas until February.
- The Celebrity ship Mercury sails 9, 10, 11 and 14 nights to the Eastern Caribbean.

Several cruise lines also sail to the eastern and western Caribbean islands from Fort Lauderdale, Miami, Tampa and Port Canaveral.

Cruises to more exotic destinations, such as South America and Antarctica, are popular during our winter months, when it is summertime in the Southern Hemisphere.

Longer cruises from 14 to 21 or more days include breathtaking ports in Southeast



Asia, Africa, Australia and the Arabian Peninsula and the South Pacific islands.

Around-the-world cruises take 100 or more days and usually begin in January. Don't have that much time? Segments of the itinerary can be booked for various lengths of a world cruise.

This is by no means a comprehensive list of cruise lines, ships or destinations, but just a small selection from the vast array of possibilities. If these suggestions have piqued your interest, but you don't quite know where to start, consult a travel professional. He or she will help you find the cruise that's just right for you, address your questions and concerns and advise you on what travel documentation is needed and much more.

Travel professionals know their suppliers and products and have access to insider information. They have the experience and dedication to provide you with a product that fits your needs. A good agent will ask lots of qualifying questions to make sure they match you with the right destination, cruise line and ship. They know the best times of year to travel to a destination and when not to go. Sometimes adjusting your dates slightly can save quite a bit of money.

Rosie is the owner of Blue Diamond Travel, an independent contractor for Cruise Holidays of Annapolis and can be contacted at 443 817-2350.

OutLook's
Bits & Bytes

If you're looking for information on a drug that you've been prescribed, log onto www.fda.gov/drugs for all the latest information. It also lists any drug recalls as well as information on recently approved drugs.

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12 Gifts of Christmas

The OutLook staff put together a list of a dozen different but fun gifts, which any of us would love to find tucked under our tree on Christmas morning. To make Santa's job a bit easier, we've even included websites to find some of these treasures.



A birdfeeder, preferably squirrel-proof, and birdseed. A good bird identification book to go with it would be even more of a treat.
www.Duncraft.com



So many of us are now travelers, a scale to weigh luggage would be very handy. www.ebags.com



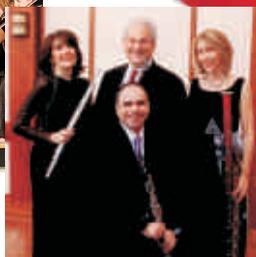
Fruit delivered fresh to our door once a month for a year.
www.organicbouquet.com



A basket filled with different coffees or teas. www.baltcoffee.com



A magazine subscription focusing on a special interest: Conde Nast Traveler, Sailing World or Cooking Light
www.magazinesubscriptions.com



Membership to the AACCA concert series
www.annearundelconcerts.50megs.com

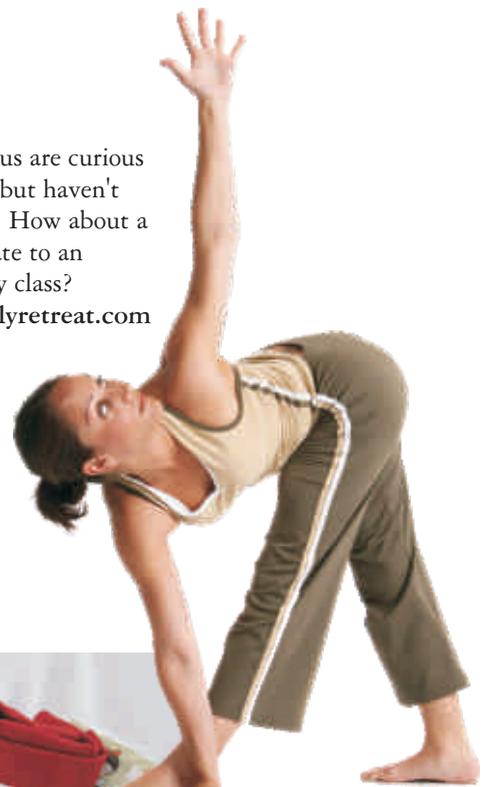
7

A gift card offering two hours of the gift giver's specific talent: computer instructions, gourmet cooking, piano lessons or kayaking.



8

So many of us are curious about yoga but haven't done it yet. How about a gift certificate to an introductory class? www.ridgelyretreat.com



9

A gift box focused on a particular interest such as cookie baking, (mixes, cookie cutters, cookbook), sprinkles), gardening, (seed packets, hand tools), or for the beginning or wannabe knitter, (needles, yarn, instruction book). www.benevolentbaskets.com

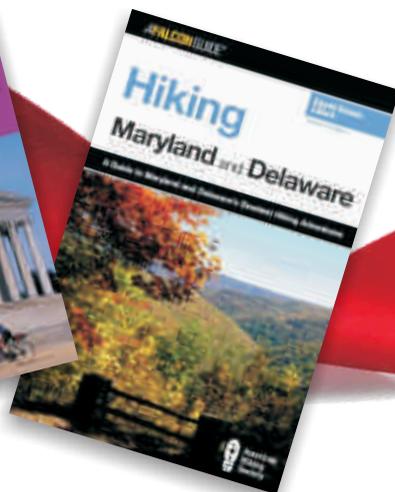
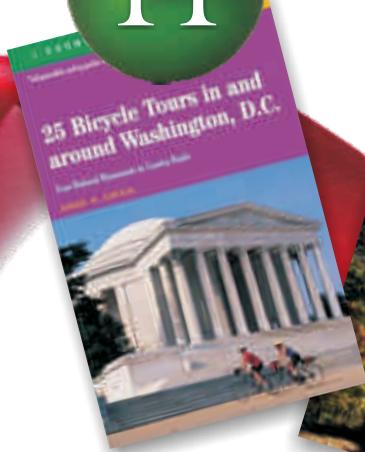


10

Tickets to a local theater www.TheColonialPlayers.org or www.KennedyCenter.org

11

A book on best hikes or bike trails in Maryland www.Amazon.com



12



And then for when we're not out there getting our daily dose of exercise, a one-year subscription to Netflix, which allows a choice of two or three DVDs to watch per month www.Netflix.com



My Trophy Kitchen

By Maureen Smith

I've become hooked on watching HGTV. Which one of the three houses will they select? The one with the view that's pricey; the one with the 'man room' in the basement but that is too far from work or the fixer-upper that's close to a park? It's always nice to see them three or more months later, all settled in, finally married with baby and friends coming over for a toast.

Best of all are the comments from the young couples: "Oh, we'll have to put in granite countertops." "This is so '80s." "This bathroom will have to go." My rejoinders: What's wrong with kitchen tile? Weren't the '80s just yesterday? How could you destroy the charm of the claw-foot tub? I'm now convinced that this show is what inspired us into the bizarre idea of redoing our kitchen. Why should we live with an outdated kitchen? It will be good for resale when we opt for assisted living. It all started with a burner going out on our stove, which reminded us that the ice maker was no longer working in the fridge and the parquet floor had no more layers left to sand. My cabinet drawers didn't pull out and I'd forgotten what goodies were in the very back -- spices older than I am. Suddenly, we are looking at our miserable kitchen with new eyes. Even our children are getting new kitchens, so maybe they won't be too upset about us spending their inheritance.

My decorator friends convinced me that with a major redo I would need help. It's a process, they said. This was an understatement. The first decision is to find a kitchen planner (KP). It is important to collect thousands of kitchen pictures so the

KP can determine your taste. A good KP will also visit your home and make suggestions like pushing back walls or taking out the downstairs bathroom (which is one of the reasons we bought the house in the first place). All of these were immediately nixed. We are told that we have to 'think out of the box.' We're trying.

At this point we were inspired by an architect friend visiting us from Los Angeles. He shared his four points to consider when undertaking any major redo: First, consider what already exists that is of great value and quality that should not be messed up. Second, think of what already exists that has value, but isn't quite right and could be improved. Third, determine what exists that is unwanted or beyond repair that should simply be taken out. Fourth, decide what is missing, needed and perhaps is the stimulus for initiating the whole project.

These four points were a big help. We decided that we like the layout of our kitchen. We just want appliances that work and maybe a new look that will make the cover of *Southern Living* magazine. We decided to go for it.

Before this decision my life was relatively calm. Now I'm losing sleep worrying about my choice of two different kinds of wood for the cabinets. Will it be too much for my small kitchen? Was tile a good idea for the floor? Will it be too hard on the legs and too cold on the feet? Should I go with the light, medium or darker shade of green for the walls? There are astronomical numbers of countertop choices. Then I worry about these privileged sort of worries I have while there are so many real problems in the world. At the floor place, the marble

place and the appliance place, I run into other redoers equally confused and conflicted by all the decisions facing them. Should we form a support group?

The real irony of this whole project is that in our stage of life, cooking has become very simple. Large dinner parties are a thing of the past. When we get together with friends, we discuss which restaurant we wish to visit. Our china, crystal and silver stays neatly tucked away in a chest. One contractor suggested that perhaps this will be our "trophy kitchen." Sounds good to me.

During construction we set up a little kitchen area in our TV room with a chest holding a microwave and toaster oven on top. Our refrigerator was moved to the deck. It's amazing what food can be put on a plate with these basic appliances. In fact I began to wonder if we really needed a kitchen. For weeks it has been pointless to clean because the workmen would be back the next day creating more dust. Besides, I have no idea where my cleaning materials are hidden. The dining room has become our storage place for every item from our kitchen and the living room has been crunched to one end to provide a place for the cabinets when they arrive. We carved out a narrow path to the front door from our den for escape purposes. Not a pretty picture.

Now I am proud to report that this project is ending. Baseboards and trim are being installed, knobs put on cabinets and each new appliance is sliding into its place. The counters arrive this week and then the real work begins for me -- finding places for all the stuff we took out of the kitchen in the beginning. This is stuff that we have lived without remarkably well for weeks. Now come decisions about what to keep and what to pitch. Already the outdated spices and canned goods have been jettisoned. Pictures will go back on the walls and baskets back on top of cabinets. Best of all, to the relief of my friends, I can once again carry on a conversation without the word "kitchen" being in every sentence.

One thing. I was joking about making this a trophy kitchen. I've signed my husband up for cooking classes. 

“One contractor suggested that perhaps this will be our 'trophy kitchen.' Sounds good to me.”

AACC Offers a Vibrant Learning Community for Older Adults

By Terry Portis, Ed.D.

Self-directed learning communities have formed all over the country in recent years. Members manage their own learning with peers and pursue interests and discussions with people who have a similar goal. This kind of rich learning environment is especially important for middle-aged and older adults who want to remain engaged and vibrant throughout their entire life. One of those communities, the Peer Learning Partnership (PLP), was formed at Anne Arundel Community College (AACC) about five years ago. The PLP has about 200 members led by a volunteer board that plans courses, activities and discussion groups in collaboration with AACC staff.

Interesting and Challenging Courses with Your Peers

Ten to 12 courses are offered in the fall, winter and spring. Thanks to PLP's popularity, courses are now offered in the summer. On average, classes meet once per week for six weeks in two-hour sessions. Volunteer facilitators are PLP members who have some background, expertise or just a high level of interest in the subject matter.

Recent courses have included:

- Digital Photography Workshop for Beginners
- Energy: What Does the Future Hold?
- Great Books
- Western Philosophy 1: Knowledge and Certainty
- Sherlock Holmes: Fiction and Reality
- The Constitution as Interpreted by Supreme Court Decisions
- Russian Music in the 19th Century
- Fantasy and History of the Trojan War
- Well, It's About Time

Discussion Groups

Along with the courses, PLP membership includes participation in discussion groups known as Fridays with Friends. These year-round Friday forums are known for their lively discussion, great interaction and engrossing themes. Topics for Fridays with Friends include current events, investments, science and technology, history, books, films, travel and the music lovers' group.

The People of PLP

PLP is about courses, discussion groups and occasional social get-togethers, but the people coordinating it are what make this program such a success. The following are short bios of some of the PLP leaders.

Dr. Steve Cohen is the current president of PLP. He is retired from the National Aeronautic and Space Administration's Goddard Space Flight Center. Cohen had a 38-year career as a physicist and geophysicist studying earthquakes.

Jim Don retired after a career that included several high-profile executive positions and included "adventures in Africa." At one point, he was the president of a company that had 55 facilities and 8,000 employees.

Dr. Maggie Brinsley is a native of England and holds a Ph.D. in history. She retired from Towson University as assistant dean of the College of Graduate and Continuing Education. Her efforts led to the founding of the PLP in 2005.

Joanne Rich retired after 31 years in education and has had an active role in the American Association of University Women. Rich is known for her vivid storytelling and zeal for learning.

Paul Schatzberg's life was shaped during his early years when he experienced firsthand the beginnings of the Holocaust. Schatzberg's career has included being a scientist and a scholar, spending 38 years at the David Taylor Research Center.

Bill Daney's career included 33 years in the Navy and at NASA. His extensive technical and electronics engineering background included work with polar-orbiting weather satellites to improve collecting information about the earth's atmosphere and environment.

Vee Holt's life has included sailing, singing and work for the Central Intelligence Agency. At the CIA she worked on statistical editing of open research reports. Always busy and involved, Holt has also served on the boards of the Anne Arundel County Public Library and the Annapolis Chorale, among others.

Supporting Students

The PLP recently made a three-year commitment to the Anne Arundel Community College Foundation to provide scholarships to two students each year. The PLP membership recognized that many students who attend AACC could not afford to do so without the help of generous donors.

Getting Involved

Membership in PLP is only \$26 for six months and allows people to participate in the discussion groups, social activities and classes. Each class is an additional \$26. These fees are kept low because many volunteers give their time to lead, serve and teach in the program. For information, call the Center on Aging at AACC, 410 777-1806 or visit the PLP website at www.aacc.edu/plp

Terry Portis, Ed.D., is the director of the Center on Aging at Anne Arundel Community College.



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Did you ever stop to thank someone who helped you along the way? It's not too late.

Share the World With Your Own Travel Club

By Leah Lancione

If you're a globetrotter or aspire to be one, but don't want to travel alone, why not consider starting your own travel club or group? Just think about the possibilities: Not only can you plan trips with friends and family members, and consequently, schedule group discounts, but you can hold meetings to share travel tips, share photos and get sneak peeks at places you haven't yet visited.

So, how do you establish a travel club? First, start by inviting friends, former colleagues, and family members who you know love to travel. Send out invitations to an initial startup meeting or party. Make it interesting with hors d'oeuvres from various places you've visited and put your photo albums out to spike attendees' interests in taking a trip soon. Ask guests to bring a friend or two who may be interested in joining the group. The more attendees, the more brainstorming ideas you'll have to make meetings constructive.

Once you've met a few times at your home, offer the idea to the group to have the meetings at varying locations. Or you can suggest meetings at restaurants, coffee shops like Starbucks, or at different members' houses each week, two weeks, or month, depending on how often you choose to gather.

Think about taking a collection (nothing too steep) each week so you can subscribe to various travel magazines, like

Travel & Leisure, www.travelandleisuremagazine.com *Conde Nast Traveler* www.cntraveler.com or one of AAA's online or print magazines like www.aaagoingplaces.com

These magazines offer valuable tips on getaways, hotel and resort deals, destination sights and excursions, and virtually everything regarding the arts, culture, food and entertainment options for any place in the world. If you don't want to purchase a subscription, buy magazines, guides and/or books at your local book retailer.

Also consider asking a travel agent such as www.bluediamondcruising.com to visit your meeting to offer expert advice and tips on travel. Agents can either come with a specific topic, like budgeting, vacation packages, what to pack, creating itineraries, appropriate places and times for large group travel, or what spots are best for particular seasons, or to completely discuss a particular destination in detail. Or, the travel expert can simply be on hand to answer questions from members. If you're not opposed to having strangers join the club, once you get an "in" with a travel agent, he or she may permit you to post meeting announcements on the company's website or in the office lobby. Meetings can also feature travel writers, photographers or other tourism industry personnel to share their valuable recommendations.



“Not only can you plan trips with friends and family members ... you can hold meetings to share travel tips, share photos and get sneak peeks at places you haven't yet visited.”



For more information, visit the following websites used or reviewed for this article:

www.travels.com
www.concierge.com
<http://midatlantic.aaa.com>
www.budgettravel.com
www.traveler.nationalgeographic.com

During meetings, think about having members sign up for responsibilities. Someone can be responsible for doing research, another can handle reservation-making and others can take meeting notes to record ideas, discussions and active travel. Another important task is examining and then educating the group on domestic and international travel laws and regulations as well as airport specifics like parking, luggage parameters and security instructions.

Some travel websites and magazines suggest starting out with a group trip to someplace within driving, bus or train distance before planning excursions in faraway destinations. This will give you an opportunity to test your packing skills, gauge the cohesion and compatibility of the group and therefore make any adjustments before traveling to some lesser known place.



OutLook's
Bits & Bytes

Do you or a loved one need glasses and are hesitant to put out all that cash? Go to www.39dollarglasses.com and submit your prescription and for \$39, they will send you a new pair of glasses.

LifeStages

The Center on Aging
at Anne Arundel Community College



www.aacc.edu/aging
410-777-1806

AACC's Center on Aging serves baby boomers and seniors with programs such as LifeStages, focusing on challenges and opportunities at midlife and beyond; senior courses, for individuals 55 and older; Peer Learning Partnership, a community of learners who facilitate seminar-style courses and discussion groups; and The Guild for LIFE (Learning is for Everyone) which coordinates lectures and tours.



Will the Latest and Greatest Technology Gadgets Really Improve Your Life?



By Leah Lancione

Every year a new crop of technology gadgets hits the marketplace, setting techno-savvy individuals into a frenzy. If you're hip to all the current crazes that claim to make communications, word processing, web browsing, music listening, video viewing and even reading easier, you know that in 2010 Apple introduced the iPad, Google presented the Android, HTC manufactured the Android power device causing Sprint, Verizon, Motorola and other wireless carriers to develop "droid" smart phones of their own. All of these devices continue to be popular in the world of technology. Though the BlackBerry smart phone is several years older, it is still widely used. So, from the BlackBerry to the droid, iPhone to the iPad, it's easy to get lost in the techno hullabaloo.

The question is: Do you need these gadgets? Will your life somehow be enhanced by one of these mobile devices? Do you have the urge to watch videos from your phone or shop online via your cell phone? You may have just gotten used to the idea of using a laptop and now folks are telling you to upgrade your technology.

iPad - So, exactly what is an iPad?

The iPad is an advanced tablet computer (a slate or tablet-shaped mobile computer device equipped with a touch screen or stylus). Apple CEO Steve Jobs launched the iPad in January 2010, hoping to take the computer world by storm—at least those folks who like reading online/electronically. The iPad's back-lit LCD display is almost 10 inches and features a touch screen for applications that can be viewed horizontally or vertically. So you can flip through pages of a book, thumb through your photo galleries, watch a movie, or write an e-mail with just the touch of a finger. And since the half-inch thick device only weighs 1 ½ pounds, it is ultra-portable. You can take it with you virtually anywhere. The product also claims to have 10 hours of battery life when in full use. Software is available for more than 2,000 applications including business, file management, office and printing features,

but this is an additional cost to the \$499 price tag of an iPad.

Though Apple takes the lead on this, many other manufacturers have come out with their own tablet computers, so clearly there is a market for e-readers. If the idea of reading digital literature appeals to you, this is definitely a purchase worth considering. Just don't buy one expecting it to function like a laptop or PC. If you know the ins and outs of your PC or laptop and are comfortable buzzing around on it, you may be frustrated with the iPad and other tablet computers because they just can't do all that computers can unless you buy additional plug-ins and accessories.

Androids - Mobile device operating system are hot items in the market, especially since every carrier from Google (the originator) to Verizon, Motorola and Sprint offer various incentives like a free second phone, fancier styles/bodies, special service promotions and more, just to encourage buyers to choose their product. The problem is, with every new model that comes out with new and improved bells and whistles, the other versions somehow get classified as outdated.

iPhone - Similar to the iPad in that it has many optional applications that enable multitasking to the extreme, the iPhone is a mobile phone with a touch screen, camera, Web accessibility, iTunes and iBooks capability for listening to music or reading, video recording and more. Who said a cell phone was just for calling someone to chat or for emergency calls? The most current model, the iPhone 4, also has maps and GPS, a keyboard for "texting" (sending text messages), third-party applications like Skype (video conferencing/calling over the Internet), news alerts, sports updates, alarms and more. Just imagine being able to call your child or grandchild on their birthday or some other holiday and being able to see their face on your cell phone!

The competition in the cell phone world is also steep. There are countless smart phones that make a cell phone a lot more than just a communications device.

Suddenly, these mobiles become multimedia marvels!

Blackberry - still seems to be a necessity for many multitasking business persons who just can't seem to disconnect from their work. Even when they're home, they feel the urge to check their e-mail during dinner, surf the Web while lying in bed, and again sending out messages to colleagues to get a head start on the next day! This smart phone does allow business people the capability of merging business operations, like e-mail, Web browsing and other social networking, with regular cell phone uses. Different Blackberry models (featuring an assortment of styles, appearance and applications) include the Pearl, Torch, Storm, Curve and more.

The truth is, whether one of the latest and greatest technology gadgets will somehow make life easier depends on your comfort level. If you crave simplicity, stick with a laptop or PC and a standard cell phone. Chances are, if you don't consider yourself a technology whiz and don't want to spend the time learning how to access the myriad of "apps," then stick with a phone that has voice mail, text messaging capabilities and a camera. That's a cell phone at its simplest, but hey, do you really need to send out e-mails, or shop online when you have a computer for those tasks? Again, it all depends on your personality and lifestyle.

OutLook's
Bits & Bytes

Here's a fun site for the holidays:
www.Photo.Stamps.com Load
your favorite photo and they'll turn
it into holiday postage stamps.

Your Legal Team



Robert R. Smith, Esq. and **Gilda O. Karpouzian, Esq.**, are practicing lawyers in Maryland with more than 30 years of experience. Their answers below are based on assumptions that Maryland law applies. Mr. Smith can be contacted at 410 268-5600 or info@fjbslaw.com and Ms. Karpouzian can be contacted at 410 280-8864.

Dear Legal Team:

We love our kids but are finding that our grandkids are lots more fun. They give us lots of attention and respect. We want to pass over our children and leave what we have to our grandkids who have not reached the age of their majority. If we do this, can the courts overturn it if our kids decide to go after it?

~Grandmom

Dear Grandmom:

The question you raise is whether you can disinherit your children and leave your assets to your beloved grandchildren. Evidently your children no longer fall within the "beloved" category.

As long as an individual adult is legally competent he or she can decide how their assets should be divided and who should be receiving them from their estate. The last will and testament that one executes disinheriting children should clearly have language listing the children that are being disinherited and language providing some information as to the reason for not allowing for such children. You can also have language included in the last will and testament that allows zero to be provided to any child if such a child contests your will by filing caveat proceedings.

As to the grandchildren not being adults, you can leave assets in trust for the benefit of the minor grandchildren and designate a trustworthy individual or entities to act as trustee for the benefit of the grandchildren. Your last will and testament would have to include language about the creation of the trust. Through language in the will, you will have to provide the age at which each grandchild is to receive their inheritance free of the trust. The trust that will be created by your direction in your will authorizes creation of the trust upon your death and appointment of a trustee or trustees as you direct in your last will and testament. The trustee appointed by you in your last will and testament will have the authority to pay to the grandchildren income from the trust and other additional funds as directed by you in your will.

If you do not want to create a trust via your will, and you want the grandchildren to receive their inheritance at age 21 and not older, then your will can leave the assets in trust for the children by the use of a statute entitled Uniform Trust to Minor Act (UTMA), which provides for the powers and authority of the trustee to act on behalf of the grandchildren who have not yet reached the age of 21 at your death and for the assets to be distributed to the grandchildren as each reaches the age of 21.

You should consult a lawyer in drafting such a will to leave assets to grandchildren and disinherit your children to make sure that your wishes are followed through after your death.

Dear Legal Team:

My neighbor's perfectly healthy tree roots encroach on my property, causing plumbing and foundation problems to my house. I would like to dig up the roots that are on my side of the property. Can I do that? Can I hold my neighbor responsible for the damage his tree roots have caused?

~Frustrated neighbor

Dear Frustrated Neighbor:

First, as a general matter, courts have uniformly held that you as a landowner do

have a self-help remedy to clean up and care for your own property. Thus you have a right to cut encroaching branches, vines and roots back to your property line. You are limited, however, to cutting back growth to your side only. You may not enter the adjoining landowner's property to chop down a tree or cut back growth without your neighbor's consent. Courts will not, however, generally impose liability against your neighbor for damages resulting from the natural growth of trees, such as clogging your sewer line. The common sense of the common law has recognized that it is wiser to leave the individual to protect himself rather than subject the other to the annoyance and burden of lawsuits which would likely be innumerable and in many instances purely vexatious. Maryland courts, for example, decline to impose liability upon an adjoining landowner for the "natural processes and cycle" of trees, plants, roots and vines." In such cases you must assume responsibility for the care and preservation of your own property. As one Maryland court stated, "Along with the benefits derived from property ownership come certain obligations. Property maintenance of one's own property is one of those obligations." So we wish you happy digging. 

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Self confidence is overrated - you're more productive when you're scared.

Your Holiday Bird

Delight Your Guests With a Taste of the Nontraditional

By Louise Whiteside



Can you count the number of times you've eaten the same holiday dinner? For me, it was oven-roasted turkey with cornbread stuffing and giblet gravy. For you, it was oven-roasted turkey with a traditional stuffing and a traditional gravy. If you know how many times you've had that same Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner, my guess is your age was about the right number. Well, tradition is tradition, and you may still prefer to feast on the classic holiday bird, bursting with stuffing and roasted to perfection under a butter-soaked cheesecloth. Nothing wrong with that! However, if you're in the mood to try a few innovative cooking techniques and new taste experiences, here are some alternative suggestions for preparing that celebrated holiday fowl.

Deep-Fry It

Deep-frying whole turkeys – a technique that started in the South – has now become immensely popular nationwide. Rather than producing a greasy turkey, the deep-frying process seals the outside, yielding a deliciously juicy bird with a crispy skin. Deep-frying equipment suitable for both indoor and outdoor cooking is available at local hardware and department stores. A few rules of thumb to keep in mind when deep frying a turkey:

- A bird weighing no more than 14 pounds is best for deep-frying.
- Do not stuff the bird.
- Make sure the bird is completely dry before immersing it in hot oil.
- Many chefs recommend injecting a turkey with a seasoned marinade.

- Cooking times are very short for deep frying, about three minutes per pound.
- Keep a fire extinguisher handy for either indoor or outdoor deep frying.
- Be careful to follow the manufacturer's directions for the equipment you use.

Slow-Cook It

For a tasty, juicy turkey this holiday season, and to save oven space and time, cook your holiday bird in your slow cooker. In most cases you'll need either a small turkey or a large Crock-Pot. A slow-cooked turkey may be stuffed before cooking. Rub a layer of olive oil on the bird; then dry-rub it inside and out with your favorite seasonings, including salt and pepper. For the best flavor, season a bird 24 hours in advance of cooking. Place vegetables around the bird, if desired, and begin cooking at the high setting. Internal temperature of a fully cooked bird should be 180 degrees. No basting is necessary, but if you wish to have a crisp top, baste once or twice with whole cream or egg whites.

Grill It

Grilling your bird on a gas or charcoal grill will keep it moist and flavorful, giving it that wonderful taste of charcoal or wood chips. Before grilling, inject the bird with the marinade of your choice or mix together:

- 6 tbs. chicken stock
- 1 tbs. bourbon
- 1 tbs. Cajun seasoning

Season the inside of both cavities with Cajun seasoning or salt and pepper. Set up your grill for indirect grilling, with the heat source off to one side, rather than directly under the food. Place the bird breast side up, with a drip pan underneath, cover the grill and cook until the skin is nicely browned and the internal temperature is 180 degrees. Cover with aluminum foil if the bird is browning too quickly. Let it rest 10 minutes before carving.

Other alternatives you may want to explore include rotisserie cooking, smoking and pit cooking.

If you're experimenting with a new cooking method – and you have the time – give it a trial run: Deep-fry a chicken or a smaller piece of meat in advance, and let your family test it out before the big day. Try out some unusual rubs or marinades. Have fun and be creative; your holiday dinner may never be the same. One exception: The kids can still have their drumsticks!



Helpful Websites

- www.gumbopages.com/food/poultry/fried-turk.html
- www.eatturkey.com/consumer/cookinfo/fryturk.html
- www.ehow.com/how_2110201_cook-turkey-crock-pot.html
- <http://recipes.howstuffworks.com/how-to-cook-a-turkey2.htm>

References

Raichlen, Steven. *Steven Raichlen's BBQ USA: 425 Fiery Recipes from All Across America*. New York: Workman Publishing Co., Inc. (2003)

Faith is taking that first step even though the end result is unclear.

Are Organic Foods Really Better for You?

By Ellen Kittredge



This is a very relevant question to ask when deciding how to spend your food budget. Frequently, though not always, organic foods cost more than non-organic or conventionally raised foods. Is the higher price really worth it?

Improving your health is only one reason to buy organic, more importantly, according to a recent Washington State University study, which looked at the nutritional differences between organic and conventional strawberries, it seems organic really is a better choice.

Researchers tested 26 commercial strawberry operations in the state of California over a period of two years to reach the conclusion that organic strawberries really are better for you. Specifically, they found that the organic strawberries had significantly higher concentrations of antioxidants and vitamin C.

Researchers were also surprised to find that the organic fruit lasted about a half-day longer than conventional strawberries. They had expected the conventional strawberries to have a longer shelf life, but this was not the case.

Released in September, the study focused on just one food, where previous research had confirmed the health benefits of organic produce.

Evidence cited in the Washington State University study seems to corroborate the findings in a March 2008 survey of published research on organic foods. According to the report, "New Evidence Confirms the Nutritional Superiority of Plant-Based Organic Foods," which examined 97 published studies since 1980, "organic plant-based foods are, on average, more nutritious." The review was published by the Organic Center, a

nonprofit research group dedicated to publishing peer-reviewed studies demonstrating the benefits of organic foods.

In this review of the published studies, the researchers looked at:

- four measures of antioxidants (total phenolics, total antioxidant capacity, quercetin and kaempferol);
- three precursors of key vitamins A, C and E;
- two minerals (potassium and phosphorous);
- nitrates (higher levels are a nutritional disadvantage);
- total protein.

They found that the organic foods within these matched pairs were nutritionally superior in 145 matched pairs, or 61 percent of the cases.

So, next time you are looking at the price tag, and trying to determine whether or not you should put a certain item in your basket, think of the evidence, and remember that you really are getting your money's worth.



Ellen Kittredge is a nutrition and health counselor practicing in Annapolis and Bethesda, who helps her clients experience real and lasting weight loss, eliminate cravings, gain more energy, and improve overall health and well-being. She can be contacted at www.ellenkittredge.com



“So, next time you are looking at the price tag, and trying to determine whether or not you should put a certain item in your basket, think of the evidence, and remember that you really are getting your money's worth.”

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Is it Time for a Change of Lifestyle?

By Chris Block

Have you been thinking of scaling down, while moving up to a more comfortable lifestyle? Well there's never been a better time. You've heard about the active adult (55-plus) neighborhoods, but what are the benefits of living in this type of community?

Everything is right there. Many of these communities have all of the amenities of resort-style living. Look for communities where these amenities are complete, to ensure the lifestyle you deserve without the fear of future assessments due to insufficient funding of unbuilt amenities. There is a tremendous variety in these communities. Look for a quality lifestyle where everything is right there, such as indoor and outdoor pools, weight and exercise rooms, card rooms, game table, billiards, catering kitchens for parties, crafts room, ballrooms, business centers, lounges, bars, social activities and more.

Change of Pace and Lifestyle. The active adult communities allow you new experiences, new scenery and new activities. All of this while living in a community where all your fellow neighbors are practically at the same stage of life as you are and who share many of the same interests. As was college, this is a great opportunity to be surrounded by your peers with a similar perspective on life.

Active Lifestyle. The active adult communities are called "active" for a reason. There are social and athletic clubs, happy hours, movies, crafts and so much more. The clubhouse is the hub of

organized and spontaneous social activities, and most have a dedicated manager to help residents coordinate. There are a tremendous number of lifestyle amenities including health and wellness programs, tennis courts, golf and walking trails. Often the community includes many acres of open space for your enjoyment. And that is just the outside. Indoors, many offer a full selection of indoor recreation, including crafts rooms and classes, arts, hobby shops, theater groups, musical programs and professional entertainment groups which regularly tour many of these communities. All of the available activities present the opportunity to meet new friends and the proximity of the neighborhood makes getting together easier.

Livable Home Designs. You will find flexible design options with a focus on comfortable one-level living. The intent is to make life more comfortable, easier and safer for independent living for a person of any age. Homes in active adult communities are built with livable designs in mind. This may be a pleasant change from your current home, which was built before such things were anticipated. Building with the latest advances in materials and energy-saving technology will provide trouble-free service for many years.

Convenient Location. This allows residents to stay close to old friends and family. Many of these active adult communities are located within easy reach of all large metro areas. Residents can find a suitable community without having to leave

their current friends and associates as well as children and grandchildren. Some residents are employed in the area and can still maintain their jobs, full or part time.

Access to Services and Safety. When previewing different communities, be sure to look for one with easy access to food stores, shopping centers, restaurants, hospitals, churches, libraries and airports. Most active adult communities are within a short drive to many of the fundamental daily comforts as well as the necessary facilities. Being within 30 to 45 minutes of everything you will ever need can make a big difference in peace of mind and quality of life. Active adult communities are historically safe, where neighbors look out for each other. 

Chris Block is the executive vice president of Caruso Homes and the community manager at Symphony Village, an active adult community in Centreville. For additional information, call 410 758-8516 or visit on the Web at www.symphonyvillage.com

“You’ve heard about the active adult (55-plus) neighborhoods, but what are the benefits of living in this type of community?”



OutLook's Bits & Bytes

Are you interested in getting your memoir going and don't know where to start? Log onto www.ohlife.com Write whatever you like. It will store your words until you want to continue. Perhaps with all those stored-up words you'll get that memoir or the next great American novel started.

We all waste too much time on the "what if's" - just get out there and do it!



Art of Doing Nothing

By Kater Leatherman

I've decided that taking time to do nothing is the new cool thing for three very good reasons. First, technology is driving us to distraction, a mild word to describe its impact on us. Second, most of us are sick and tired of having to cram more into our already busy lives. And third, there's all the stress that surrounds us every day, notwithstanding the stuff we inflict on ourselves.

Perhaps it's time to take a break, get off the treadmill and lighten your load. You can drop the guilt; nothing on your "to do" list is worth it. Forget about an agenda or goal. Doing nothing doesn't require one. And, let go of the notion that it is a waste of time because even for an interval, it comes with juicy benefits. Like connecting to your lovable, authentic self.

If the thought of this feels strange, start by doing little nothings, even if it's for five minutes. You want to experience the benefits so that it will begin to pull you by the hair when you forget to stop and do nothing. Just be relaxed and present without distractions. You can even allow your mind the freedom to wander as long as it doesn't cause you stress.

While this sounds simple in theory, the reality is much harder. We're so accustomed to multitasking that doing nothing can make us feel sad, unproductive, guilty and/or bored. So be patient. At the very least, doing nothing will give you a sense of having more time.

Here are six ways to help you reclaim and enjoy the almost lost art of doing nothing:

1. Doing nothing includes "no things," so avoid using a screen, i.e., computer, television or iPhone.
2. Sit quietly in nature. Just appreciate its majesty while you breathe and listen to the sounds.
3. Practice doing nothing while you are waiting in line at the doctor's office, on a bus or for a plane. Just observe what you see.
4. Get a massage, which allows you the gift to receive. Avoid talking to the masseuse/masseur, which requires effort.
5. Napping is very nurturing to the body, mind and soul.
6. Practice spending time in silence. 

Kater Leatherman is a home stager and professional organizer. She teaches yoga at Ridgely Retreat in West Annapolis. Her book, *MOVING ON: One Woman's Quest to Create S P A C E for Change*, can be purchased at www.katerleatherman.com



Top 10 Reasons to Fund your Funeral in Advance

1. Exempt Assets

The plan may be considered an excluded asset in order to qualify for Medicaid & Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

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If you chose to relocate, the coverage is transferable from one funeral home to the other.

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When you set aside funds in advance, the death benefit increases, similar to a savings account.

4. Make Tax Time Easier

By transferring funds from an investment such as a CD or money market account, you don't have to worry about taxation on growth or 1099 forms.

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6. A Program for Everyone

We have plans to fit your needs in terms of payment options & health conditions.

7. Consumer Friendly

Any funds left over after paying your funeral costs will be returned to the beneficiaries or your estate.

8. Protect Your Loved Ones

By funding your funeral in advance you avoid placing a financial burden on your family.

9. 30-day Free Look

If you should change your mind, you have 30 days to cancel and receive a full refund.

10. Solid Program, Solid Decision

Advance planning is endorsed by attorneys and financial professionals as an effective way to provide for final expenses and preserve your assets for your beneficiaries.



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Baltimore Museum of Art

Current Offering: *Front Room: Guyton\Walker*
The artistic duo Buyton\Walker offers a view of contemporary art influenced by Andy Warhol. Their sprawling installation is comprised of brilliant components. The work extends into contemporary art spaces in the West Wing of the Museum and incorporates digitally manipulated screen-printed images and sculptural elements such as paint cans, drywall and tables.

On View: through Jan. 16, 2011

Also on View: *Advancing Abstraction in Modern Sculpture*

More than 30 modern sculptures by David Smith, Hans Arp, Naum Gabo, Julio Gonzales, Henry Moore, Louise Nevelson and others provide examples of works that moved beyond the figure by creating a new language of abstract forms.

On view: through Feb. 19, 2011

Location: 10 Art Museum Drive near North Charles and 31st streets, parking at nearby meters and garages

Getting there: Maryland Transit buses 3 and 11
Admission: free

Hours: Wednesday to Friday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Closed Monday and Tuesday.

Food service: Gertrude's Restaurant offers fine Chesapeake-style dining for lunch and dinner Tuesday through Sunday. Closed Monday. Brunch begins at 10:30 a.m. Saturday and Sunday.

Of note: The gift shop features books for adults and children as well as art-related novelties.

Contact information: www.artbma.org or 443 573-1700

WASHINGTON, D.C.



National Gallery of Art, East Building

Current Offering: *Arcimboldo 1526-1593: Nature and Fantasy*

This is a don't-miss, it's too amazing exhibit. The canvases of Giuseppe Arcimboldo, The

Italian painter, are worth a visit for their inventiveness and humor. The artist used a "conceit" to create still-life paintings that are also portraits of famous rulers such as the Hapsburg, Rudolf II. Contemporaries designated such pieces as "jokes, fancies and curiosities." In the context of his time, however, Arcimboldo was actually using the portrait that reversed into a still life to help to justify the still life as a worthy subject for art. He was a groundbreaker, creating a new genre. The portraits are contrived, although clever, but turned upside down, they present masterful still lifes. The 16 works in the show constitute the majority of his known works.

On View: through Jan. 8, 2011

Location: between 3rd and 7th streets at Constitution Avenue, NW

Getting there: Metro: Red Line at Judiciary Square, Yellow or Green lines at Archives and Blue or Orange lines at Smithsonian

Admission: free.

Hours: Monday to Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Food service: Seated dining room and a food court.

Of note: Two outstanding museum shops. Open daily during museum hours.

Contact information: www.nga.gov or 202 737-4215



National Museum of Natural History

Current Offering: *Losing Paradise: Endangered Plants Here and Around the World*

The American Society of botanic artists presents 45 illustrations of plants threatened with extinction. This exhibit is designed to call attention to this global issue as about one-fifth of the world's flora is endangered.

On View: through Dec. 12, 2010

Also on View:

Celebrating 100 Years at the National Museum of Natural History A photographic presentation of the museum's history using selected archival and modern photographs to highlight the building itself as well as its staff, collections, exhibitions and scholarly and scientific outreach.

On View: through Mar. 20, 2011

Location: 10th Street and Constitution Ave., NW

Getting there: Metro: Blue and Orange lines at Smithsonian (Mall exit)

Admission: free

Hours: Daily 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. except Dec. 25

Food service: Two cafes and an ice cream/espresso bar. Food is available 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Of note: Six gift shops are open during museum hours.

Contact information: www.mnh.si.edu or 202 633-1000.



The Phillips Collection

Currently Offering: *TruthBeauty: Pictorialism and the Photograph as Art*

This group of late 19th century photographers alleged that "photography is more than a factual representation of the world and can in fact be considered art." How far we have come since then! These artist photographers tried to make their pictures look like paintings to distinguish them from commercial photographs. The show includes more than 130 works by Hill and Adamson as well as Julie Margaret Cameron. Master photographers Alfred Stieglitz, Gertrude Kasebier and Alvin Langdon Coburn are included, as well as the more recent photographers, Edward Weston and Imogen Cunningham.

On View: through Jan. 9, 2011

Coburn and the Photographic Portfolio

A companion exhibit to TruthBeauty, which includes 16 of Coburn's photographic images, this show highlights his accomplishments as a printer and book illustrator. During his life (1882-1966), Alvin Langdon Coburn excelled at hand-pulled photogravures, a technique prized for faithfully capturing the smooth, continuous tones of the original photograph. Coburn personally etched his plates, ground his inks and pulled proofs. This artistry is demonstrated in the following works on display: portfolios London (1909) and New York (1910), as well as illustrations for books by H.G. Wells and Henry James.

Also on View:

Side by Side: Oberlin's Masterworks at the Phillips
This loan exhibition juxtaposes works from two outstanding collections—that of the Phillips in Washington, DC, and the Allen Memorial Art Museum at Oberlin College in Ohio. The 25 works from Oberlin range from the 16th to the 20th centuries and are

presented beside related works from the Phillips, arranged loosely in groupings of landscapes, nocturnes and self-portraits. Typical of the Phillips' philosophy of art appreciation is the mixing of works of different periods and nationalities. *Side by Side* takes advantage of this approach to "reveal new affinities between works of art." Highlights from the Allen Memorial Museum include Hendrick ter Bruggen's *Saint Sebastian Tended by Irene* (1625), one of the most important examples of northern baroque painting in the United States; Rubens's *The Finding of Erichthonius* (1632–33); and *The Fountain of Life*, a superb 16th-century painting probably painted in Spain after a work by Jan van Eyck.

On View: through Jan. 16, 2011

Location: 1600 21st Street, NW, near 21st & Q

Getting there: Metro: Red Line at DuPont Circle

Admission: Weekdays to the permanent collection is by donation, unless there is a special exhibit. The weekend fee is \$10.

Hours: Tuesday to Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Thursday until 8:30 p.m. and Sunday 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Closed Monday.

Food service: Informal cafeteria.

Of note: Gift shop highlighting books and cards.

Contact information:

www.phillipscollection.org or 202 387-2154



Corcoran Gallery of Art

Current offering: *Spencer Finch: My Business, with the Cloud*

This exhibition is the first in a new series, Now at the Corcoran, which will present new and site-specific work by emerging and mid-career artists. Spencer Finch uses a multimedia approach in an attempt to "capture the elusive space between perception and the outside world, probing the intersections of science, nature and memory." He reinterprets historical accounts using industrial materials to play with "light, color and time to remind his viewers that looking is never as simple as it looks." The centerpiece of Finch's presentation is a site-specific sculpture of a passing cloud strategically located in the museum's central Rotunda. Related photographs and drawings link the work to the "atmospheric and metaphoric properties of light, water, vapor and the sky."

On view: through Jan. 23, 2011

Location: 500 17th St., NW

Getting there: Metro: Orange Line at Farragut West and Red Line at Farragut North

Admission: Seniors \$8, adults \$10

Hours: Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Thursday 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Closed Monday and Tuesday.

Food service: Corcoran Café offers an informal dining area with a food cart featuring quality items Wednesday, Friday to Sunday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Thursday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Of note: Small gift shop with contemporary items.

Contact information: www.corcoran.org or 202 639-1700



The Textile Museum

Current offering: *Colors of the Oasis: Central Asian Ikats*

An astonishing 69 examples of Ikat fabric will be on display at the Textile Museum, offering a rare opportunity to see this weaving form from Bukhara, one of the Central Asian Oases. The city fostered commercial production of ikat fabrics in the early 19th century. Production areas soon included Samarkand and Tashkent as well as the Fergana Valley further west. This exquisite fabric was produced by "highly skilled and specialized designers, dyers, weavers, finishers and tailors" and their robes were prized by royalty. "In political, economic and private spheres, ikat textiles were given to mark life transitions, thus transforming the recipient's identity and communicating symbolic changes in status, spirit and values. Gifts of ikat were also transfers of wealth; a dowry or bride-price may have included a dozen or more valuable robes, panels and yards of ikat material." Although this unique art form almost died out during the Soviet era, it is thriving again in Uzbekistan, inspiring fashion and home designers.

On view: through March 13, 2011

Location: 2320 S. St., NW

Getting there: Metro: Red Line at DuPont Circle.

Admission: Suggested donation of \$5.

Hours: Tuesday to Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Closed Monday.

Of note: Excellent gift shop featuring textiles and books.

Contact information:

www.textilemuseum.org or 202 667-0441



National Museum of African Art

Current offering: *Grass Roots: African Origins of an American Art*

The coiled basket is both a basic piece of household equipment used for processing rice and a decorative object that reflects the culture and taste of its makers. More than 200 examples from both Africa and the United States are displayed together in this traveling exhibition. *Grass Roots* demonstrates the enduring contribution of African people and culture to American life in the southeastern United States.

On view: through Nov. 28

Location: 950 Independence Ave., SW

Getting there: Metro: Orange and Blue lines at Smithsonian, all lines except Red Line at L'Enfant Plaza

Admission: free

Hours: 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily except Dec. 25

Of note: Extensive gift shop of African art, books and fabric.

Contact information: www.africa.si.edu or 202 633-4600



Hirshhorn Museum of Art

Current offering: *Colorforms*

Vivid color used in abstract ways abounds in this exhibit of paintings and installations dating from the postwar era to the present. For centuries, color has been the most dramatic, if not the primary way that artists express feeling. Contemporary artists draw on new technologies to create pieces such as James Turrell's architectural light installation and Wolfgang Laib's installation, "Pollen from Hazelnut," in which a field of pollen appears to hover above the ground. Although these works are drawn from the museum's permanent collection, they are displayed in new juxtapositions and pieces such as Olafur Eliasson's "Round Rainbow" and Serra's "Morro Bay" are on view again—as well as a gallery of Larry Poons' dot paintings from the early 1960s.

On view: through Jan. 2, 2011

Location: Seventh St. and Independence Ave., SW

Getting there: All lines except Red Line at L'Enfant Plaza

Admission: free

Hours: daily 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., sculpture garden 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Of note: Gift shop specializes in modern and contemporary art, jewelry and imaginative toys.

Contact information: www.hirshhorn.si.edu or 202 633-1000

Tricia, an avid patron of the arts, can be reached at triciah@erols.com



Yoga May Be the Key to Unlocking Physical and Mental Wellness

By Leah Lancione

We live in a world where television commercials, the Internet and magazines are always advertising the latest fitness craze or workout trend. Amidst all the ballyhoo, yoga is a method of achieving mental, physical and spiritual well-being that has stood the test of time. According to a WebMD feature entitled, “Can’t Do Yoga? Think Again,” yoga has been practiced for more than 5,000 years, and currently close to 11 million Americans are estimated to be enjoying its benefits. The article explains that yoga can benefit folks of all shapes, sizes, ages and physical abilities. So whether you are a man or a woman, super-fit or a little rusty, yoga can increase your strength, flexibility and balance—all important factors in aging. That’s not to mention the relaxing and meditative components of yoga that have been known to relieve stress, stimulate circulation, improve mood, increase energy and enhance spiritual and/or self-awareness. Though yoga is more clinically researched and practiced outside American borders, many doctors and physical therapists are beginning to prescribe yoga for its therapeutic benefits. Programs have even been developed and tailored to address specific physical ailments like arthritis, multiple sclerosis and Parkinson’s disease. WebMD observes that some VA hospitals offer yoga programs to patients recovering from strokes, brain injuries and other illnesses. Breast cancer survivors and women in menopause also claim yoga helps ease troublesome symptoms. Some studies even

suggest that yoga can stimulate memory.

The AARP website’s health tools <http://healthtools.aarp.org/galecontent/yoga/4> offers a comprehensive look at yoga, its various styles or “schools,” as well as its many health benefits. The health resource describes yoga as being separated into eight parts—with each part associated with mental, physical or spiritual well-being. Four parts are focused on mental and physical exercise and getting the mind and body in sync, whereas the other four pertain to meditation. The six types of yoga are: hatha, raja, karma, bhakti, jnan and tantra. Hatha is the most commonly followed practice in America. Hatha yoga is divided into different schools, the most common being Iyengar, which emphasizes form and alignment of the body through techniques and sequences, and ashtanga, which is a more rigorous routine with dance-like sequences and postures that induce elevated body heat and sweating and deep breathing.

Before choosing which school of yoga to pursue, be sure to consult your doctor or health care practitioner. You may also want to find a yoga instructor who may have extra training in exercise routines that are appropriate for your particular ailment or physical condition. Although yoga can be practiced for life, with devotees gaining more flexibility, strength and fulfillment the more they perform the physical poses, or “asanas,” you will notice that after just a few sessions you are able to move better, stretch longer and control your body better. Before you know it, you’ll be tackling more challenging and strenuous asanas.

After a brief introduction to yoga such as this article, women are probably more likely to be fingering the phone book for yoga studios nearby while men are rolling their eyes at the idea of spreading a mat or towel on the floor with a bunch of people in a warm room to stretch their limbs, retrain their bodies in bizarre poses and meditate. Well men, guess what? Some of our most notable athletes engage in yoga to enhance their athletic prowess and physical and mental dexterity. There’s even a book entitled: *Real Men Do Yoga: 21 Star Athletes Reveal Their Secrets for Strength, Flexibility and*

Peak Performance by John Capouya. Check it out at your library or just do a Google search on the subject and you will see that yoga users include football players Dan Marino and Eddie George, former Los Angeles Lakers star Kareem Abdul-Jabar and current NBA greats Shaquille O’Neill and LeBron James, tennis superstars Pete Sampras and John McEnroe, and even boxing ex-heavyweight champ Evander Holyfield. These athletes have learned that yoga increases flexibility, strengthens muscles and improves focus.

Besides, there’s no requirement to wear a leotard to practice yoga—just comfortable, loose-fitting attire, a yoga mat or towel, and an open mind. Although a good physical therapist or yoga instructor will personally guide you through the right stances, breathing techniques and proper posture, it might be a good idea to check out a book on the subject. These instruction manuals will fill you in on the basic movements and motions. That way you’ll be a little more prepared or aware of how your body should look during these maneuvers.

So, are you ready to start repeating the “om” mantra? If so, check out any of the many local facilities. 

Ridgley Retreat in West Annapolis offers many different classes in yoga such as Beginning Yoga, Candlelight Yoga, Pilates Mat Class, Tai Chi, Svaroopo Yoga as well as many others for both men and women. For more information log onto www.RidgleyRereat.com or 443 433-0462.

“Yoga is a method of achieving mental, physical and spiritual well-being that has stood the test of time ... yoga has been practiced for more than 5,000 years, and currently close to 11 million Americans are estimated to be enjoying its benefits.”



A Holiday Downer: Seasonal Affective Disorder

By Kassie Foundos

The coming of autumn can be energizing for many people. The cool, crisp days of fall are filled with football games, changing leaves and certain scents in the air. For others, however, it is the beginning of a season of moodiness and depression. Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) usually starts in the fall and continues throughout the winter months. The shorter days bring the symptoms on and they can include:

- less energy and difficulty concentrating
- sleepiness
- withdrawal from usual social activities
- carb-binging and weight gain
- general malaise
- moodiness

While it is not yet known what causes SAD, women have it more frequently than men. It can start in adolescence and stay with you your entire life. Medications for depression can help as well as light therapy.

The lights replicate the light from the sun and are quite helpful for many SAD sufferers. There are two types of lights available. The first is a bright light treatment. You sit in front of a special light box for a half hour to an hour during the morning hours. There is also a light that mimics dawn. This entails a dim light that turns on while you are sleeping and grows to bright sunlight over time. These work well with most victims of this disorder, but need to be used on a consistent basis or the symptoms could return. For more serious depression, consult your physician or a mental health expert.

The good news for those who suffer from SAD is that when the days start getting longer in the spring, the symptoms usually clear up on their own.

Kassie can be reached at BayWoods of Annapolis at 443 837-1208 or at kfoundos@BayWoodsofAnnapolis.com

OutLook's
Bits & Bytes

Are you trying to unclog the sink or clean up an oil spill in the driveway or would you like to know how to prevent ice dams from forming in your gutters? This helpful site at www.doityourself.com gives step-by-step instructions for the handyman looking to do the work himself.

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What would you do if you only had 24 hours left?

The Natural Cure for the Common Cold

By Melissa Conroy

Colder weather is upon us, and that means long nights of burrowing under quilts, evenings spent sipping tea in front of a fire and days indoors with friends and loved ones. Unfortunately it also means that colds, coughs and flu bugs are rampant. Since we spend much more time indoors during cold weather, ill people are much harder to avoid and germs spread more easily. Although our pharmacy shelves are loaded with assorted pills, liquids and other remedies to help relieve the symptoms of colds and flues, these medicines can't prevent us from becoming sick or help us to recover sooner.

Thankfully Mother Nature has provided us with a score of useful plants, herbs and vitamins that are powerful defenders in the battle against the cold and flu season. Before modern scientific methods brought us such things as antibiotics, flu shots and decongestants, people turned to nature to find relief from their illnesses. When "bug season" hits, there are many herbs and vitamins that are extremely useful. Here is a list of some of the most common natural herbs and vitamins for the cold and flu season. They won't cure you instantly, but they can make you feel better and help speed up the healing process. Also, be aware that some herbs and natural supplements can interfere with certain medicines, so be sure to check with your doctor before starting an herbal remedy,



Astragalus: This root has been used in traditional Chinese medicine for quite a long time and is popular as either a cure for or to prevent the common cold. You can purchase this root in capsule form and some Asian groceries carry the root in dried form. Traditional Chinese medicine often recommends that people drink a soup or tea of astragalus root once a week during the cold and flu season to boost their immune system. However, astragalus can negate the salutary effects of certain drugs, so ask your doctor about taking this supplement if you are on any medication.

Echinacea:

Also known as the "coneflower," echinacea is a group of nine flower species that are related to the daisy family. Echinacea has long been used to help people either avoid colds or reduce the severity of a cold because it is suspected to increase the body's white blood cell count. Although there is some debate over its effectiveness, thousands of people swear by its usefulness. Echinacea comes in pill, liquid or tea form. At the first onset of a cold, take echinacea several times a day in whatever form you prefer. However, echinacea should not be used for more than seven to 10 days.



Garlic: While your spouse may avoid you after you have downed a big plate of garlic-infused pasta, you might also ward off a cold with that same popular spice. Garlic contains allicin, which has antibacterial properties and is thought to be the reason why the spice can help you fight off a cold. You can purchase garlic tablets at the health store or simply get creative in the kitchen and load up your cooking with garlic. Some die-hard health nuts even eat raw garlic cloves.

Ginger: Ginger has long been popular as both a spice and a medicine.

Queasy stomachs can be soothed with ginger, and the spice is helpful in the battle against the common cold because it is an antiseptic, an antioxidant and has antiviral properties. Try making a tea by peeling and grating fresh ginger and adding it to two spoons of honey, some cayenne pepper and two spoons of lemon juice. Add hot water, steep three minutes and drink.



Goldenseal: This wildflower (it doesn't grow well in cultivation) contains berberine, a component that can fight against infection.

Goldenseal is often used in conjunction with echinacea, and you can usually find capsules that contain both of these flowers. Like echinacea, goldenseal should not be taken for more than a week or two at a time.



Vitamin C: Most people automatically reach for orange juice when it comes to a cold because vitamin C is one of the most popular supplements people take when sick or trying to keep from becoming sick. You can either take it the natural way through fruits and vegetables or avail yourself to the many vitamin C supplements and cough drops out there. However, do be aware that recent research has not uncovered much evidence that vitamin C is that helpful. It can shorten the duration of your cold, but be aware that extra OJ is not the cure-all.



Zinc: This important mineral strengthens the immune system and may also interfere with virus replication in the throat, so it is no wonder that zinc lozenges and treatments have been popping up in pharmacies in the past several years. Zinc shows promising evidence that it can cut the duration of your cold, so at the first sign of a cough or snuffle, try zinc. You can purchase cough drops like Cold-Eeze and Walgreens Natural Zinc Cold Remedy Lozenges. Additionally, there are products like Zicam, which comes in either a spray or a gel you dab on the inside of your nose. Zinc can have the side effects of creating a metallic taste in your mouth or (if you use the spray or gel) temporarily deadening your sense of smell. However, since a cold generally reduces your sense of smell and taste anyway, this temporary loss is a small price to pay for getting better soon.



While no herb or vitamin can cure the common cold or flu, the natural world has provided us with many ways to speed up the healing process and get us back on the road to recovery sooner. A little zinc, a cup of echinacea tea or a bowl of creamy garlic soup might be just the thing to help you feel better during these cold, germ-ridden winter months.





Family Relationship Stress

Several years ago, I relocated to be close to my son, daughter-in-law and granddaughter. Because he is my only child and I was widowed when he was young, my son and I have always been close. But now it seems that I do nothing right. He acts impatient and critical with me whenever he sees me, which are increasingly rare occurrences. I understand that he has a family of his own, but I am incredibly hurt by his behavior. My attempts to talk to him about this have been unsuccessful.

Let me first empathize with you about these difficult circumstances and then give you some questions to ponder. Your responses may help you to more fully understand what is happening and to move toward a closer relationship with your son and his family.

No matter what the root cause of this rift, the result is one of pain and rejection for you, and perhaps for him as well. Particularly because you were close at one time, the loss of this bond cuts deeply. Above all, be gentle in accepting the feelings of grief that arise from this loss. A family rift can be just as devastating as a death. If, at any time, you feel unable to cope with your negative emotions, please see a therapist or physician immediately.

Answer these questions with honesty, but without self-judgment. They are designed to help you find solutions rather than to determine fault.

- Was there an identifiable point that instigated this change in your relationship? What was happening when it began? Try to identify what led up to this distance between you. The answer may provide clues to its resolution. If there was a provoking incident, do what you can to clarify misunderstandings and make appropriate amends.

- How is your relationship with your daughter-in-law and granddaughter? Remember that your son now comes as a package deal. If there is tension between you and your daughter-in-law, you must address it in order to mend this rift with your son. Include your son's family when you issue invitations and focus on building warm and respectful individual relationships with both your daughter-in-law and granddaughter.

- What else is going on? Consider that your son may be taking other stresses out on you. Yes, that is unfair, but all of us are sometimes guilty of imposing our unpleasant moods on those we love the most. Perhaps his work is not going well, his finances are troubling or there are problems in his marriage. This is not a pass for bad behavior, but understanding these possible contributors may allow you to avoid taking his slights personally.

- What are your other sources of support and entertainment? Since you are new to the area, join a group, church or volunteer organization and develop a life for yourself with an array of friends and activities. Possibly, your son's irritability is influenced by feeling responsible for your well-being and happiness. When your son sees you busy and involved with your own life, rather than being dependent upon him for sole support, he may feel relieved of a burden that even he is unaware of feeling.

- How can you communicate your concerns? After you have addressed any of the above issues, take another look at your relationship. If necessary, consider again talking to him about this rift or writing him a letter with your concerns. Keep a positive focus on the future rather than rehashing what has already transpired. It's not easy, I know! If you plan a discussion, practice what you are going to say first. If you are writing a letter, do several drafts and review them carefully prior to sending them.

Finally, let me suggest a terrific book that all families could benefit from by reading. *Healing from Family Rifts* by Mark Sichel is filled with wisdom, empathy and sound suggestions to help keep all of our family relationships humming along more smoothly.

Although its intended audience is for those among us who have been cut off from a family member, this uplifting book will help anyone foster more rewarding and satisfying relationships with their loved ones. Broken down into 10 practical steps, the book includes real-life success stories, effective communication guidelines and even tips for developing that full life outside of your family ties. It is available at local bookstores, Amazon and many libraries. Check it out. 

Victoria Duncan is a licensed professional counselor who works with individuals and couples to address a full spectrum of client issues. She welcomes your questions at Victoria2Write@aol.com

OutLook's Bits & Bytes

The local libraries provide services for homebound people such as mailing books free of charge. Log onto www.aacpl.net or call 410 222-6270 or e-mail lbm@aacpl.net for details in Anne Arundel County.

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Navigating the Medicare Maze

By Amy Rubino



That was one heck of a health care reform package providing a single system to cover millions, insurance that protects both individuals age 65 and older and younger disabled person, basic and extensive medical and hospital care, an annual premium of \$110.50 per month and a program accepted by virtually all hospitals and most providers. Does something sound wrong? That is because we are not discussing the 2010 health care reform package, but rather the monumental passage of Medicare back in 1965!

Reflect for a moment. Without Medicare, there would be no assurance that people over age 65 and people who are disabled would have health insurance. Reflect for another moment. People with Medicare typically have health issues. Statistically speaking, almost one-half of the people with Medicare have three or more chronic health conditions. Medicare has been the stalwart insurance program providing health insurance to our graying population for more than 45 years. Overwhelmingly, our nation strives to protect Medicare—any political mention of “cutting benefits” creates an imposing reverberation from voters.

Yet while we venerate Medicare, we grumble as we wade through the mire to understanding the particulars of Medicare. We know it is vital that we make important decisions related to our Medicare, yet we feel defeated as bewilderment overtakes us. No doubt about it, Medicare is a massive program. With Medicare covering more than 47 million people, is it any wonder that we feel the odds stacked against us as we try to find the answers we need to make an informed choice?

Medicare is a complex program. Medicare benefits range from Medicare Part A (hospital), Medicare Part B (medical), Medicare Part C (advantage plans), and Medicare Part D (prescription coverage). With all the facets of Medicare is it any wonder we feel overwhelmed by the overload? Medicare is managed by two federal agencies: eligibility is determined by the Social Security Administration, whereas Medicare benefits are regulated by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Medicare advantage plans, Medicare supplement plans and Medicare Part D are sold by private companies.

What is needed is a roadmap to successfully navigate the labyrinth of Medicare. We are well-advised to begin learning about our Medicare at least three months prior to turning 65. One of the first steps is to contact Social Security to discuss enrollment in Medicare Part A and Medicare Part B. Social Security's role, as related to Medicare, will be to (1) determine if you are eligible for Medicare Part A and B, (2) determine the premium costs for your Medicare and (3) enroll you into Medicare Parts A and/or B. Social Security does not answer questions about the benefits of Medicare, Medicare Part D, Medicare advantage plans and Medicare supplement plans.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is the agency responsible for administering the Medicare program. The website, www.medicare.gov is comprehensive and provides links to answer most Medicare questions. The website provides a tool to compare your options for Medicare Part D, Medicare advantage and supplement plans. There is also the option of

calling the Medicare hotline at 800 633-4227 to talk directly with a customer service representative. The hotline is staffed 24 hours/seven days a week. CMS provides many publications free of charge. The principal publication, *Medicare and You*, is essential to a person who is new to Medicare.

However, even with all the state-of-the-art hotlines and websites, there is still a time when we just need another person to help. But not just any person will do. We're not sure we really trust sales agents since they have financial gain if we sign up. We want a knowledgeable, trustworthy person to answer our Medicare questions.

Medicare provides grants to every state to provide a peer-mentoring service. The program is called the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP). SHIP relies on specially-trained volunteers who can help us understand our Medicare benefits and choices. SHIP counselors are unbiased; they do not sell insurance. Rather, SHIP counselors provide a person with the tools needed to make the important decisions related to Medicare.

SHIP is a free service that is typically offered through the local area agency on aging. In Anne Arundel County, SHIP is offered at the Department of Aging and Disabilities. To make an appointment with an Anne Arundel County SHIP counselor, simply call 410 222-4464. If you live in another county in Maryland, call 800 243-3425 for your local SHIP program. If you, or a family member wants the SHIP program in another state, simply call 800 633-4227 for the correct contact number.

Medicare decisions are vital. To sum up, allow adequate time to learn about your Medicare at least three months prior to becoming Medicare-eligible. Use the correct avenues to get the answers needed. Read *Medicare and You*, visit www.medicare.gov or call 800 633-4227. If there are still questions, ask your local SHIP program if they can assist. 

Amy Rubino is SHIP director at the Anne Arundel County Department of Aging and Disabilities and can be reached at 410 222-4464.

Gingerbread Men are Tasty Ornaments

Here's a yummy recipe to make with grandkids on a freezing December day. These cookies keep well and can be made right after Thanksgiving to hang on the Christmas tree. They'll stay crisp right through the holidays, but make enough so that the Christmas elves can snatch one or two.

Gingerbread Man

- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, softened
- 1/2 cup dark brown sugar packed
- 1 egg
- 3/4 cup dark unsulfured molasses
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1/4 tsp. baking powder
- 2 tsp. ground ginger
- 3 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 scant tsp. ground cloves
- 1/2 tsp. nutmeg
- 3/4 tsp. salt



Cream butter and sugar until fluffy. Beat in the egg and molasses. Sift together dry ingredients and slowly add to butter mixture. Chill dough for an hour. Roll out to a thickness of 1/8 inch on floured surface. Cut into desired shapes. Place on cookie sheet and decorate with raisins or leave plain. Bake 10 minutes until crisp. Cool on wire racks. After they've cooled they can be decorated with a simple white icing. We double this recipe as we have many cookie cutters that we like to use.

After decorating, tie a thin piece of red ribbon around the neck, attach a hook and then hang them on the tree. 

OutLook's Bits & Bytes

If you're willing to share your bounty this year, contact Holiday Sharing at www.dhr.state.md.us/county/ann/pdf/holid.pdf for the names of families or senior citizens who could use help with the holidays. If you choose to, you can deliver food and gifts to the family or Holiday Sharing will take care of it for you.

Approach Life With A New View Visit Soon. Try the Food. Sample a Sunrise.

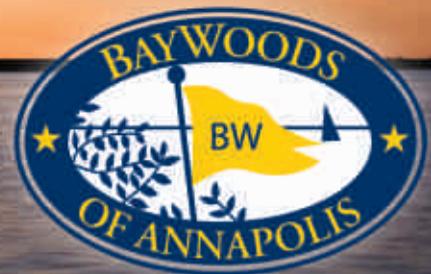
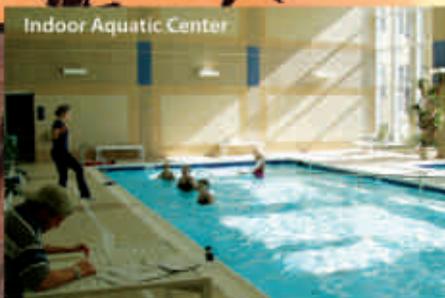
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Christmas Train

By David Baldacci
Warner Books, New York, 2002

Since I am a devoted “train buff,” the title of this book caught my attention immediately. I also am a fan of David Baldacci, so I thought how could I lose with a combination like that.

I found that this book is not like the other books I have read by Baldacci, which tended to be thrillers filled with intrigue. But this book does have its share of twists and turns, with many subplots.

The book concerns a disillusioned journalist who is forced to take the train to get from Washington, D.C., to Los Angeles to meet his girl friend for a Christmas ski trip to Lake Tahoe. This sounds like a pretty tame story, but Tom Langdon has no idea of the adventures, interesting people and holiday magic that are awaiting him.

We are introduced to train crew members, an arrogant Hollywood producer, a nervous young couple running away to get married against their parents' wishes, a former girl friend, a flamboyant director and his equally flamboyant assistant, a thief, etc. I think you get the idea. This novel has many themes, stories and rather incredulous adventures within its 288 pages. It is a quick read, and could get you in the holiday spirit in spite of yourself. There is even an avalanche, trapping the train in the winter storm.

I found *Christmas Train* to be a fun book to curl up with and read in a short amount of time. You just have to recognize that it is pure Hollywood, and I could see it made into a movie. It reminded me a little bit of *Murder on the Orient Express*, even though there was no murder. The ending is rather unbelievable, as is a lot of the story, but that is probably what made it enjoyable. You close the book with a smile on your face, and isn't that what you want with a holiday book?

~Peggy Kiefer

Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet

By Jamie Ford
Ballantine, New York, 2009

After some 40 years an elderly man finds himself once again at the Panama Hotel in Seattle. Suddenly Henry Lee is overcome with memories of his life during World War II when he was a 12-year-old boy. Back then his Chinese heritage was so often confused with Japanese that his father made him wear a button that announced, “I am Chinese.” Still, it was 1942, and he was ostracized by classmates. He found himself alone and lonely at the all-white Rainier Elementary School. He worked scholarshiping in the school cafeteria and kept to himself until the day that Keiko Okabe, a Japanese student, appeared as a worker. They became good friends, despite national and family barriers. When Keiko's family was “evacuated” to an internment camp near Puyallup, Henry wrote her letters, but then the day came when she no longer wrote back.

This story of friendship and heartbreak, conflict between generations and nationalities, depicts Seattle during wartime where people who called it home were forced to leave with only a few belongings. It is the reality of a boy suddenly thrust into manhood as his world changes. It's about losses and regrets, but also about love and hope. We go on, no matter where the path leads.

~ Pat Jurgens

Have a Little Faith: a True Story

By Mitch Albom
Hyperion Books/Harper Collins, New York, 2009

There may not be a “perfect holiday book,” but *Have a Little Faith* is truly a charmer and it offers parallels between two related faiths—Judaism and Christianity—in a gracious, whimsical fashion. This little volume does not ask the reader to believe, rather it tells of its author's experiences and the faith they evoke in him. Mitch Albom is a noted author, playwright, journalist and screenwriter, whose book *Tuesdays with Morrie* was an international bestseller.

But *Have a Little Faith* is a far superior book, because it reflects the spirit of a wiser, more mature author. Mitch Albom includes us on his personal journey over a period of eight years. The story focuses on his relationships with two men of faith—Albert Lewis, an esteemed Jewish rabbi with a congregation in South Jersey, and a struggling evangelical street preacher, Henry Covington, in Detroit.

Although a Jew, Mitch had not been serious about his faith; he's more what Christians would call a “Christmas and Easter” observer. When asked by his family's long-time, 82-year-old, rabbi, “Will you do my eulogy?” Mitch is brought to a new threshold of faith. As he says, “And as is often the case with faith, I thought I was being asked a favor when in fact I was being given one.”

When Mitch stumbles across Henry Covington, a reformed drug user and dealer, who praises his lord for the littlest thing and blesses Him in the face of all adversity, Mitch just shakes his head. Is this a scam? Can one really rejoice as the roof literally falls in? Yes, Henry is grateful for the tarps they string over a hole to keep out the rain! Henry has been personally saved from his addiction and from death at the hands of druggies. His faith is simple and complete. Each day is a blessing and he lives to pass that on.

As the seasons of the book pass—spring, summer, autumn and winter--the setting alternates from South Jersey to Detroit. The narrative unfolds as the reader comes to know and honor two men whose deeply held religious convictions carry them and their congregations forward on the road of life.

At one point, Mitch says, “In the beginning, there was a question. In the end, the question gets answered. God sings, we hum along, and there are many melodies, but it's all one song—one same wonderful, human song. I am in love with hope.”

Enjoy this book over the holidays. Better yet, buy several copies; you will be passing them on.

~ Tricia Herban

Ask the Undertaker

“During this holiday season I ask each of you to take a moment and reflect on the year. Think for just a moment of a family you may be close with that experienced a loss of a loved one ... let them know your thoughts are with them this holiday season.”

By Ryan Helfenbein



The holiday season is upon us. Seeing distant relatives, exchanging gifts with close friends and family, and, of course, eating too much. It is typically a happy time, filled with laughter and reminiscing. Unfortunately, it can also be a difficult time for some, especially if they encountered the loss of a loved one during that year. One question we often get in our industry is, “How can I help a friend, family member or even myself get through the holidays when a loved one is no longer with us?”

I am not a grief therapist, rather I'm just an average undertaker who has had many experiences with families encountering grief in what would normally be a happy time of year. And there are some simple and thoughtful ways to help a family and friend through this time.

First, you don't want to forget about the recently departed. Don't shy away from talking about them. Telling stories of memorable moments shared together is one of the simplest ways of helping someone through these months. Maybe this is through a card or a simple e-mail with a few old photos of cherished memories together. We find that with technology today, Facebook and Twitter become popular sites to create a page to remember the deceased. This allows many friends and relatives to visit and post their memorable moments and photos in order to help close friends and families through this time of heartache.

I had the unfortunate opportunity of serving the family of a young woman who passed away suddenly in an accident a few weeks ago. As we were sitting together, the young woman's mother-in-law suggested that the

mother of the deceased visit her daughter's Facebook page where there were many wonderful testimonials about her daughter. I feel confident that this will continue through the holiday season. Yes, tears may fall and a hug or two may be necessary when reminiscing with families who experienced a loss this year, but I promise, it will benefit all who are involved.

If children are involved, here are a few tips to help them through this holiday season. Have the children draw a picture or write a few sentences that tell about their lost loved one. If the children are comfortable, perhaps have them even share this at the table during the holiday meal, when other family and friends are gathered. If you plan to have a Christmas tree, have the children create an ornament in memory of the deceased and create a small ceremony to place it on the tree. Allow the children to be creative. Using memorabilia and photos are simple ways to help create an unforgettable ornament. I have actually even heard of “memory trees” created in a large families home where each family member places a photo or memorable item on the tree while sharing a happy memory of the deceased.

During this holiday season I ask each of you to take a moment and reflect on the year. Think for just a moment of a family you may be close with that experienced a loss of a loved one. A phone call or maybe just a pat on the shoulder as you walk by them one afternoon is all it may take for them to know that your thoughts and prayers are with them during this 2010 holiday season. 

Ryan, a licensed funeral director and certified planning counselor, can be reached at Ryan@fhnFuneralHome.com or 410 758-3987.

Lights in the Bay

By Hank S. Parker

In the darkness of December, tidewater Maryland begins to glow. All along the Bay—in Severna Park and Solomon's, Havre de Grace and Hoopersville, Chestertown and Chesapeake City—the shoreline shimmers with holiday lights. In Annapolis two public, light-spangled spectacles draw thousands of sightseers every year.

The first, Lights on the Bay (Nov. 19 to Jan. 2), presents more than 60 illuminated exhibits along a scenic drive at Sandy Point State Park. The other, Eastport Yacht Club's annual Parade of Lights on Dec. 11, features a slowly-circling procession of local boats bedecked in kaleidoscopes of imaginative, nautical-themed and sometimes hilarious displays.

These are impressive shows, sure to kindle the holiday spirit of even the most Scrooge-like among us. But few are aware that, year-round, beneath the Bay's waters, there lurks an even more impressive display of lights: bioluminescence.

Bioluminescence is natural light produced by living organisms. We're all familiar with a terrestrial version: fireflies. But the phenomenon is rare on land, largely limited to lightning bugs, glow worms and a few species of fungi. In contrast, it is common in the ocean.

Have you have spent time on the Bay at night? If so, you have likely seen the sparkle of a boat's wake or the pinpoint pricks of light in the swirl of a dipped oar. The physical disturbance has stirred up living creatures. Some respond by undergoing a chemical reaction catalyzed by an enzyme. The enzyme, luciferase, combines with a pigment molecule,

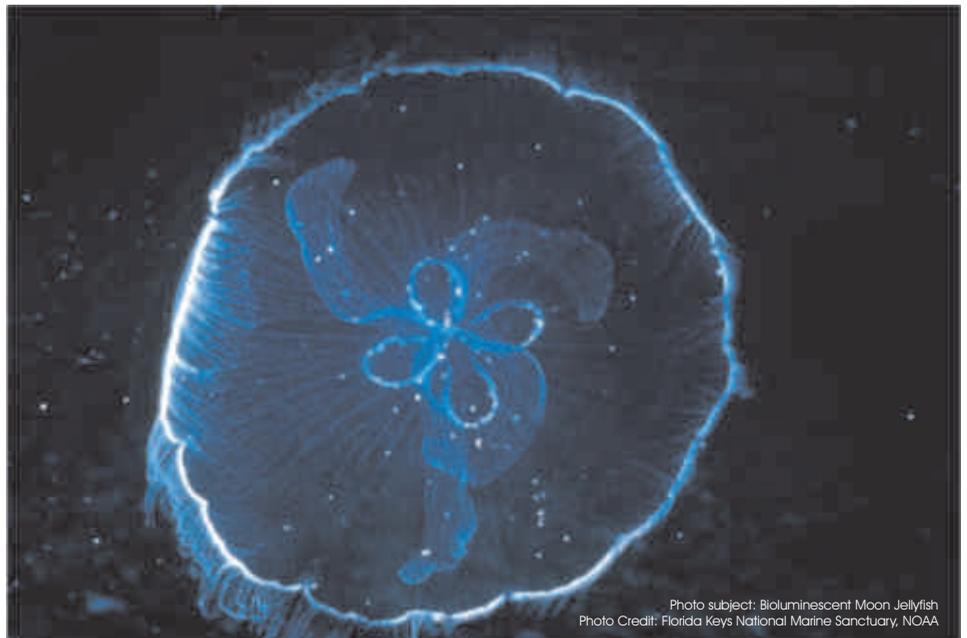


Photo subject: Bioluminescent Moon Jellyfish
Photo Credit: Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, NOAA

“The shallow waters of Chesapeake Bay harbor many bioluminescent life forms including various microbes, plankton and jellyfish.”

luciferin, releasing light energy (but not heat) in the process.

The shallow waters of Chesapeake Bay harbor many bioluminescent life forms including various microbes, plankton and jellyfish. The tiniest are some species of bacteria, notably the human pathogen, *Vibrio cholerae*, which, regrettably can be abundant in local waters. Other common light-producers are *Ceratium* and *Noctiluca* (translation: “night light”), types of microscopic one-celled motile algae known as dinoflagellates. Larger light-emitting Bay denizens include soup bowl-sized moon jellies which produce a bluish light when agitated. The smaller, translucent and gelatinous sea walnut, a type of comb jelly (not a true jellyfish), is also bioluminescent. Sea walnuts often cluster together. When disturbed, the mass emits a luminous green glow. No, it's not brighter near Calvert Cliffs.

The submarine light show in Chesapeake Bay can be impressive, especially in late summer. But it pales in comparison with what goes on in the deep sea.

Even in the clearest ocean waters, the sun's rays penetrate only a few hundred feet below the surface. This means that 90 percent of the oceans' volume is perpetually dark—dark, that is, except for biological light. And there is plenty of biological light: Scientists estimate that four-fifths of

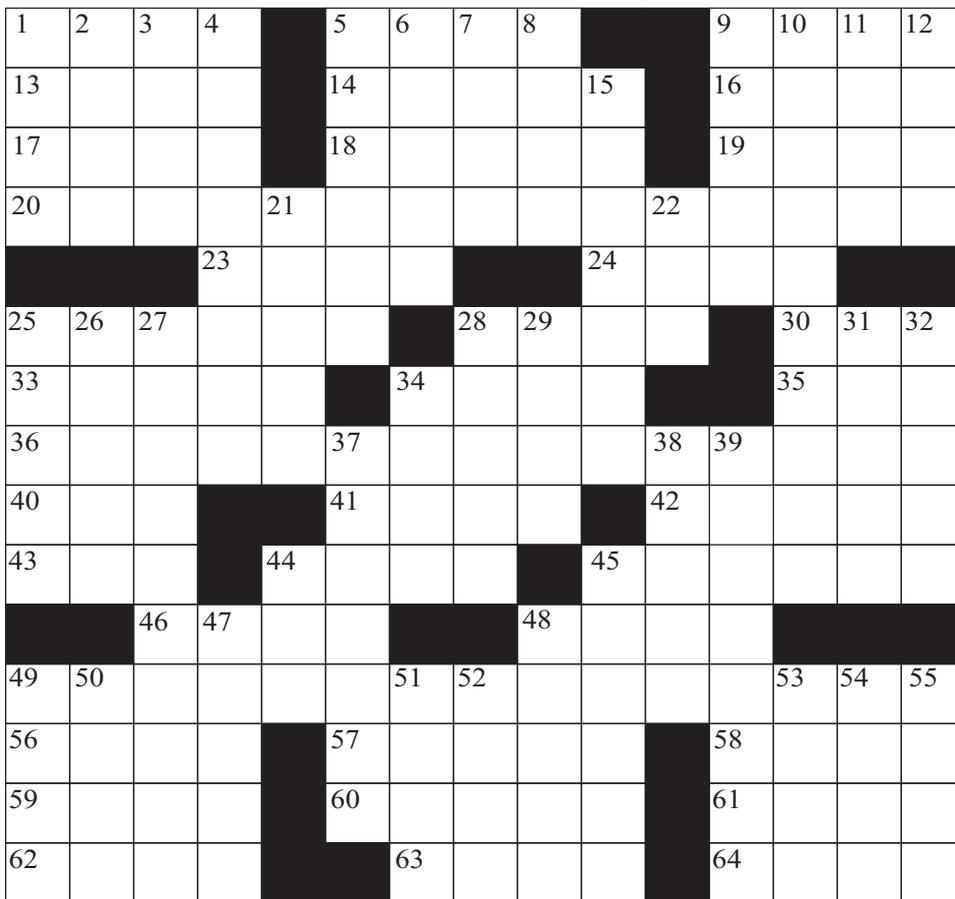
deep sea creatures—notably shrimp, fish, jellyfish, marine worms and squid—may be luminescent. Their light is concentrated in special organs, called photophores, which are arrayed in species-specific patterns. In the vast expanse of the dark deep sea, this may help individuals to locate and recognize potential mates and avoid incompatible—or dangerous—liaisons.

Photophores may also function in predator-prey interactions. The bizarre-looking deep sea angler fish sports an elongated dorsal fin, complete with light organs, just above its gaping jaws. When illuminated, the fin acts as a lure for unwary victims. Alternatively, bioluminescence may be a defense mechanism. The bright flash given off by disturbed sea creatures may startle or confuse predators.

Bottom line: bioluminescence has adaptive value in the eternal whirl of the survival of the fittest. But when you go down to the sea at night and watch a light show beneath the waves, you need not think of nature red in tooth and claw. Instead focus on the beauty of a timeless natural spectacle. It rivals the holiday lights any time. 

Henry S. (“Hank”) Parker can be contacted at hspbp@gmail.com

Fun Crossword Puzzle



Dave Fisher (© Dave Fisher - puzzles.about.com)

ACROSS

1. Brand of bug killer
5. Safe opener?
9. Latin 101 word
13. "____, Brute?"
14. Put in jail
16. Letters on a pricetag, maybe
17. "____ my wit's end!"
18. "____ mia!"
19. Apple offering
20. Event for December 31st, perhaps
23. Part of a Christmas song chorus
24. Online reading, maybe
25. Pied-_____
28. Start of a Caesar quote
30. _____mail
33. Scott _____ (1993 N.L. rookie of the year)
34. I _____ Pony (Beatles title)
35. Part of a Gabor name
36. Something to do on January 1st
40. Detroit-to-Philadelphia dir.
41. Decorates a cake
42. Something to dunk
43. ALF's relatives
44. Inquires
45. Some ticket writers
46. Leer at

48. Ring _____
49. It descends on December 31st
56. Common Web abbreviation
57. Electric, gas and water agcys.
58. Buck ender
59. _____'Orleans (Louisiana district)
60. Segment
61. Burst of wind
62. Camera types
63. Attention getter
64. NCOs

DOWN

1. Horse controller
2. You lookin' _____?
3. "I tawt _____!" (Tweety Bird quote)
4. Airport shop, often
5. Gender
6. Soprano Lucine
7. rivals of 19 across
8. Poor, as excuses go
9. Girlfriend in Grenada
10. Women's publication launched in December, 1971
11. Sea in Kazakhstan
12. Animal welfare grp.
15. Gaylord _____ ("Show Boat" character)
21. _____ living (bring home the bacon)
22. Big music publishers
25. Napoléon led one
26. Raise a glass to
27. Sexy star of the sixties
28. Workbench items
29. They're sometimes inflated
31. "God _____ refuge...": Psalm 46
32. Angry outbursts
34. Opening word in 23 across
37. Acts like bread dough
38. City near Venice
39. Carry alls
44. Sharpton and Capp
45. Reinforced undergarment
47. Neuters a stallion
48. Certain powders
49. Not that
50. "_____ have to do"
51. Certain swab
52. 180s, slangily
53. Cut _____ (dance)
54. Popular American TV show
55. Units for realtors



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Campaign and grants from the United Way of Queen Anne's county, Queen Anne's Arts Council, and the Maryland State Arts Council, an agency dedicated to cultivating a vibrant cultural community where The Queen Anne's Chorale is funded in part, by directed or designated support, from federal employees through the Combined Federal arts thrive.



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"Well, I finally did it. I finally decided to enter the digital age and get a cell phone. My kids have been bugging me, my book group made fun of me, and the last straw was when my car broke down, and I was stuck by the highway for an hour before someone stopped to help. But when I went to the cell phone store, I almost changed my mind. The phones are so small I can't see the numbers, much less push the right one. They all have cameras, computers and a "global-positioning" something or other that's supposed to spot me from space. Goodness, all I want to do is to be able to talk to my grandkids! The people at the store weren't much help. They couldn't understand why someone wouldn't want a phone the size of a postage stamp. And the rate plans! They were complicated, confusing, and expensive... and the contract lasted for two years! I'd almost given up when a friend told me about her new Jitterbug phone. Now, I have the convenience and safety of being able to stay in touch... with a phone I can actually use."

Questions about Jitterbug?

Try our pre-recorded Toll-Free Hotline 1-877-751-0025.

The cell phone that's right for me. Sometimes I think the people who designed this phone and the rate plans had me in mind. The phone fits easily in my pocket, but it flips open and reaches from my mouth to my ear. The display is large and backlit, so I can actually see who is calling. With a push of a button I can amplify the volume, and if I don't know a number, I can simply push one for a friendly, helpful operator that will look it up and even dial it for me. The Jitterbug also reduces background noise, making the sound loud and clear. There's even a dial tone, so I know the phone is ready to use.

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