

# The Howard County Beacon

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**IN FOCUS FOR PEOPLE OVER 50**

**VOL.12, NO.1**

*More than 30,000 readers throughout Howard County*

**JANUARY 2022**

## Wanted: Nature lovers of any age

*By Barbara Ruben*

Barbara Schmeckpeper spent her career as a molecular biologist parsing the minutia of genes at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. But when she retired 20 years ago and looked up from her microscope, she found a wider world beckoning.

First, she volunteered to pull weeds at a local park, which led her to volunteer with organizations that work on environmental education and watershed issues.

Later, she co-founded the Howard County Legacy Leadership Institute for the Environment (HoLLIE) and volunteered with the Howard County Conservancy and the Anne Arundel Watershed Stewards Academy.

Schmeckpeper, who is 77 and lives in Columbia, admits it was a surprising change of pace.

"I became so focused on my own work [in the lab] I hardly knew the outside. That's why it was so wonderful to retire early," she said.

"It is my grandchildren who are impelling me. The impact of climate change on my grandchildren and their children has really driven me to want to educate people."

Whether they became environmentalists in their youth or discovered the urge to protect the Earth after retirement, many older Howard County residents are volunteering to protect local watersheds, confront global climate change and safeguard the natural world for their grandchildren. And the county offers numerous opportunities to both learn and pitch in.

One of these is the group Schmeckpeper co-founded in 2009, HoLLIE. Every year, it offers an eight-week course on climate change and other global environmental issues, as well as about more local concerns, such as the Chesapeake Bay



PHOTO BY HOWARD COUNTY CONSERVANCY

**Connecting students to nature is part of the job for volunteers helping out the Howard County Conservancy. More retirees are reacting to climate change and becoming environmental activists and volunteers out of concern for the future of their grandchildren and later descendants.**

and Patuxent River.

While the institute began as a program for those 50 and older, it soon expanded to include adults of any age.

After last year's virtual session, the

course will resume in person starting on Feb. 3, primarily at the B & O Ellicott City Station Museum. The all-day sessions will

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# New year, new project

By *Stuart Rosenthal, Publisher*

I don't know about you, but I frequently find my New Year's resolutions generate a sense of déjà vu. There are just some things about me that I want to improve, or tasks I'd like to accomplish, that hang around from year to year.

A friend who knew I like to keep notepaper in my front pocket (so I can incessantly write down or remind myself of things I need to do) once made me burst out laughing when he suggested I write a to-do list of things I've already done! THAT was a suggestion I could get into.

Well, that's sort of what I'm doing this year. In the last few weeks, I've finally accomplished (well, started) something that I've long aimed for, and I'm going to call it my New Year's resolution anyway.

As you may recall from earlier columns, last spring I took a seven-week "sabbatical" from the *Beacon* to test drive my "retirement plan" — composing original piano pieces. That's something I used to do in middle and high school and always loved.

Doodling around on the piano (which I studied for 12 years) and coming up with interesting note combinations and rhythms were things that made me look forward to my daily piano practice as a kid.

So, in May and June I pulled out some of

the short pieces, themes and sketches I wrote down as a youth and worked on developing them into compositions of a respectable length (we're talking 3 to 5 minutes).

I produced three new pieces and reacquainted myself with two from high school that my friends and family tell me are nice to listen to. I also learned how to use music notation software so I could make sheet music for the pieces.

That checked off a couple of resolutions I've been making, or thinking of making, for years. (It also convinced me that my retirement plan of pursuing my passion for music is a good one.)

It also brings me to this year's already-begun resolution — to share my music with the world. I have been recording those five pieces and making videos of myself playing them.

And just the other day, I set up a YouTube channel (Stuart's Melodies), website ([stuartsmelodies.com](http://stuartsmelodies.com)) and, heaven help me, registered for my first Facebook page. I'm also getting ready to contact a music distribution company about putting my audio tracks on Spotify, Apple Music and the like.

I don't know how many people make "join the world of social media" (or really

"become an exhibitionist") one of their New Year's resolutions, but that's basically what I'm doing.

So, is this what the world's been waiting for? Will millions beat a path to my door?

You tell me. It would certainly be a big kick to have you listen to my pieces and perhaps download them and/or the sheet music. Learning that a *Beacon* reader somewhere has decided to play one of my pieces would be especially gratifying.

Two pieces are there as I write this; the other three are in process and should be up in the next few weeks. You can download the recordings and sheet music at no charge from my website. There is an option on the site to pay whatever you want for downloads, but payment is optional.

I fervently hope to write and post more pieces in the future. (You can sign up on the website to be notified when new works are added.)

I couldn't have done this without the help of others, so I want to thank the *Beacon* staff (especially Margaret Foster, Roger King and Gordon Hasenei) for taking over my duties last spring during my sabbatical, Jon Seipp (audio engineer extraordinaire) for recording my pieces, my friend and indefatigable videographer and video editor David Hughes, and music and software mentor Jason Sherwin (a composer of note, by the way).

I hope you will check out my music in one way or another.

A few of my videos are also now available

PHOTO BY FOURTH PHOTOGRAPHY, LLC



**Beacon publisher, Stuart Rosenthal, has returned to playing and composing for the piano after many years away from the keyboard. You can listen to his newest compositions at [stuartsmelodies.com](http://stuartsmelodies.com).**

at the Beacon Virtual 50+Expo, which I encourage you to visit even more for the wonderful speakers and classes, and for the useful information provided by dozens of exhibitors. That's all available free online through January 31 at [beacon50expo.com](http://beacon50expo.com).

Thanks for listening! Feel free to send me an email via [stuartsmelodies.com](http://stuartsmelodies.com) or to post comments on YouTube or Facebook. I look forward to hearing from you.

The entire *Beacon* staff joins me in wishing you a happy, healthy, peaceful and meaningful 2022.

## The Beacon

IN FOCUS FOR PEOPLE OVER 50

The *Beacon* is a monthly newspaper dedicated to inform, serve, and entertain the citizens of the Greater Baltimore area, and is privately owned. Other editions serve Howard County, Md., Greater Washington, DC and Richmond, Va. (Fifty Plus).

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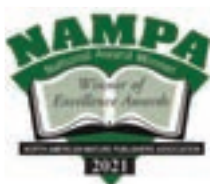
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Submissions: The Beacon welcomes reader contributions. Deadline for editorial is the 1st of the month preceding the month of publication. Deadline for ads is the 1st of the month preceding the month of publication. See page 27 for classified advertising details. Please mail or email all submissions.

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

*Mail your Letter to the Editor to The Beacon, P.O. Box 2227,*

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

**Dear Editor:**

The November [Greater Washington] edition of the *Beacon* arrived this week, and I must say, I was really impressed. First, reading about all the awards the newspaper has won this year. What a wide range of interests and information you've introduced to your readers!

Then, in this particular issue, the number of informative stories regarding flu shots and stem cell clinics and palliative

care. That story went well in combination with the work you did on my piece [November's cover story, "What's next for Diane Rehm?"], presenting another option with which to view end-of-life care. Good work and good reading all!

Please continue to send me your newspaper. I know it will add to my reading pleasure.

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Photo by Matt McClain

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## TWO BIRDS, ONE STONE

Enroll in a health study to try a remedy for knee pain and depression

## BOTTOMS UP?

Alcohol has a stronger effect on us as we age, so make allowances if you drink

## Why a good night's sleep boosts memory

By Andrew E. Budson, M.D.

Few things are as beneficial for your memory as a good night's sleep. Let's understand why.

To remember information, you need to pay attention to it. If you're tired, you simply cannot pay attention as effectively as you would if you were well rested.

That statement seems straightforward, but it brings up another question: Why do you get tired?

You may feel tired and have trouble paying attention either because you've been awake too many hours and sleep pressure is building up, or — even if you've had a nap — because it is the middle of the night and your circadian rhythm (your internal clock) is telling you to sleep. In either case, you'll have trouble paying attention, and thus trouble remembering.

### How new info is processed

When you learn new information during the day, it is temporarily stored in the hippocampus, a seahorse-shaped part of your brain behind your eyes. The hippocampus has a limited storage capacity. If you exceed it, you may have difficulty adding new information — or you may actually overwrite an old memory with a newer one.

Fortunately, that doesn't usually happen. Each night while you sleep, the con-

nections between neurons (called synapses) shrink to reduce or eliminate the memories you don't need — such as what you ate for breakfast last week and the clothes you wore yesterday. This selective pruning of synapses during the night prepares you to form new memories the next day.

Sleep also helps us consolidate the memories we want to preserve, transferring them from transiently accessible memories to those that can be recalled years later. Memories for facts and skills both show greater retention over a 12-hour period that includes sleep versus a 12-hour period while awake.

Much of this consolidation occurs during stage 2 sleep — a light sleep phase that typically occurs in the hours prior to awakening. This means that if you get up early without a full night's rest, you may be impairing your ability to hold onto your memories.

### What happens while you dream?

Although you dream in several stages of sleep, your most interesting and vivid dreams usually occur during rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, so-called because while your eyes are moving rapidly, your body is otherwise paralyzed.

It is during REM sleep that your newly consolidated memories become interconnected with your prior memories, including those of your life as well as your library

of facts and knowledge.

This connection between your recent memories and your prior memories and knowledge is one reason you may wake up with a new and valuable perspective on a problem — or perhaps even a complete solution!

This actually happened to Dmitri Mendeleev, who was struggling for months with how the atomic elements should be placed in the periodic table. In a dream on February 17, 1869, he glimpsed where all the elements belonged and, after writing down what he dreamt, found only a single, small correction was needed.

### Emotions are processed, too

Have you ever been terribly upset about something and, by the next day, it felt at least somewhat better?

Sleep can also strip off the emotions related to painful memories while still retaining the memory content. Thus, you'll be able to remember what upset you without having to relive the full emotional intensity of the event.

### What if you can't fall asleep?

Melatonin isn't a traditional sleeping pill, but it can help regulate your sleep cycle if that's the problem. Acetaminophen can relieve little aches and pains that can

keep you up at night.

All other sleeping pills, however, whether prescription or over the counter, sedate you and actually make your memory worse, both for what you learned earlier that day and what you're trying to learn the next day! Non-pharmacological treatments for sleep are by far the best.

Caffeine blocks chemical receptors in your brain so that, temporarily, you cannot feel the sleep pressure. Thus, caffeine can enable you to be more alert, be more attentive, and remember better.

But as you probably know from your own experience, caffeine can only delay the mounting sleep pressure, which eventually leads to overwhelming tiredness.

### The bottom line

Want to maximize your memory, whether you are studying for an exam, preparing for a client meeting or looking forward to your 50<sup>th</sup> reunion?

You'll be more likely to remember the information for the exam, the documents for the meeting and the names of your classmates if you go over the material you wish to remember daily for several days, each followed by a refreshing seven to nine hours of sleep each night. Sleep well!

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## Simple, low-cost, low-tech brain training

By Heidi Godman

We're all looking for ways to boost our brain power. And fortunately, there are plenty of simple, low-cost, low-tech ways to help sharpen cognition.

"Low-tech, mentally stimulating activities, especially ones that are challenging, help our brains create new connections. The more connections we have, the more paths our brain has to get information to where it needs to go.

"This can help with improving cognition overall or in specific areas, depending on the activity," said Dr. Joel Salinas, a behavioral neurologist and faculty member of the Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies.

### Try these activities

Mentally stimulating activities make you do a little cognitive light lifting; they

require some work to process or produce information. These kinds of activities can include any of the following:

**Learning a language.** Bilingual people have greater mental flexibility and agility, and may have some protection from the risk of developing dementia, compared to people who speak one language.

Learning a second language later in life may even delay cognitive decline. To get started, listen to language recordings, take an online class, or download an app such as Babbel or Duolingo.

**Listening to or making music.** Music can activate almost all regions of the brain, including those involved with emotion, memory and physical movement.

Get in on this benefit by listening to new kinds of music, or by learning how to play an instrument. Check out songs from

other countries, or start learning to play an instrument by watching free videos on YouTube.

**Playing card and board games.** Games strengthen your ability to retrieve memories (if you play Trivial Pursuit, for example) or think strategically (Monopoly or checkers).

Playing card games is helpful because it requires you to use a number of mental skills at once: memory, visualization and sequencing.

**Traveling.** Visiting a new place exposes you to sights and sounds that enhance brain plasticity, forming new connections in your brain.

You might not be able to travel due to COVID-19, but simply exploring areas nearby may produce brain changes. Consider driving to a town you've never visited

before, or going to an outdoor park with unfamiliar terrain (perhaps mountains or thick forests) to gain new perspectives.

**Watching plays, films, concerts or virtual tours of museums.** Cultural activities stimulate the brain in many ways. While you may not be able to enjoy these activities indoors right now, it might be possible to experience them outside or online.

Choose something that requires a little effort to understand it, for example a Shakespearean play or a foreign film (try to figure out what the characters are saying without reading the subtitles). If you're watching a concert, choose one with complex classical compositions.

If you're looking at an online museum exhibit, try to pick up on the details the

# What can cause a swallowing problem?

By Howard LeWine, M.D.

**Q: I recently began having a problem swallowing foods. What could this be? It is really starting to bother me.**

**A:** Swallowing difficulty (doctors call it dysphagia) can happen for a variety of reasons. It is not always caused by a serious medical problem, but it is always a problem that needs to be sorted out.

Dysphagia is an urgent problem if you are losing weight or if you are coughing or choking after eating. If that's the case, call your doctor immediately.

Sometimes swallowing difficulty can be a side effect of a medicine. Several medications (particularly those used to treat psychiatric symptoms) can interfere with your mouth and throat muscle coordination.

Some medicines also cause significant dryness of the mouth, which can contribute to swallowing difficulty.

This symptom could also come from inflammation or scarring (also called a stricture) in the esophagus. These problems

usually come from acid reflux or from pills that are causing irritation in the esophagus.

A stroke, Parkinson's disease or other less common neurologic illnesses that affect the function of muscles or nerves can also cause swallowing problems.

Sometimes a feeling of a lump in the throat can interfere with swallowing. This can happen if you have acid reflux, but it may also be a symptom of anxiety. (It's possible for a lump to be caused by cancer, but that's very unlikely without other symptoms.)

You should schedule a visit with your doctor so that all of these possibilities can be considered. Tests that your healthcare provider might recommend include:

—A video swallowing study. This test uses an X-ray technique called fluoroscopy to videotape your swallowing while you consume samples of foods or drink.

—Esophagogastroduodenoscopy (EGD). EGD allows your doctor to view the esophagus, stomach and duodenum

(the first part of the small intestine). For the test, a camera on a flexible, narrow cord is inserted down your throat.

—Barium swallow. For this X-ray test, you swallow a liquid that shows up on X-rays, so your doctor can view your esophagus.

—Laryngoscopy. This test allows your doctor to see your larynx. For the test, a camera on a flexible, narrow rod is inserted into your nose or mouth.

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# Understanding and reducing stroke risk

By Family Features

Strokes, the second-leading cause of death globally, affect millions of people each year. A stroke can cause lasting disability and unimaginable pain for those impacted and their loved ones.

This year, 14.5 million people globally will have a stroke and 5.5 million people will die as a result, according to the World Stroke Organization.

Learn how to reduce your risk for stroke, how to identify the signs and symptoms, and why timely response and treatment are critical.

## What raises risk?

A stroke occurs when a blood vessel

that carries oxygen and nutrients to the brain is either blocked by a clot (ischemic stroke) or bursts (hemorrhagic stroke). When either of these happen, part of the brain cannot get the blood and oxygen it needs, causing brain cells to die.

While strokes can be devastating and deadly, up to 90% are preventable. By managing conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity and atrial fibrillation (AFib); ceasing smoking; eating a healthy diet; getting regular exercise; and taking all prescribed medications, you can decrease your risk.

Treating AFib, an irregular heart rhythm disorder, is particularly important, as it is associated with a five-fold increased risk of ischemic stroke.

## Signs and symptoms

When a stroke occurs, acting F.A.S.T. can help you get timely treatment needed to survive. That is to say, if you recognize the signs and symptoms of a stroke — Face weakness, Arm weakness and Speech slurring — it's Time to call for help.

While F.A.S.T. is a commonly used acronym to identify the signs of stroke, it is important to understand the relationship between a stroke and the time it takes to receive care.

## Time is of the essence

When brain cells die, brain function is lost. In fact, 1.9 million brain cells are lost every minute someone is having a stroke.

Quickly identifying signs of a stroke and seeking immediate treatment can save your life or reduce long-term disability. Reducing the amount of time between the onset of stroke and treatment can make a difference in how well your brain, arms, legs, speech and thinking are able to recover.

“Stroke can be a deadly and devastating neurological event,” said Mark Dickinson, worldwide president of Cerenovus, a division of Johnson & Johnson that offers a broad portfolio of devices used in the endovascular treatment of stroke. *[Ed. Note: Cerenovus sponsored this article.]*

See **STROKE RISK**, page 7

## Brain training

From page 4

artist used to convey a message.

**Doing word puzzles.** Working on word puzzles (such as a crossword, Jumble or Scrabble) has been shown to help people improve their scores on tests of attention, reasoning and memory.

Try a different kind of puzzle each day (for example, a crossword one day, a Jumble the next), and increase the level of difficulty as puzzles get easier.

## Maximizing benefits of brain training

Don't limit yourself to one mentally stimulating activity. Some evidence suggests that the more of these activities you do, the more your risk for mild cognitive impairment will decrease.

And combining mentally stimulating activities with exercise, learning, or socializing may have an even more potent effect on cognition. For example:

- Get physical and dance while you listen to new music.

- Watch a video lecture about an artist before checking out an exhibit of the person's work.

- Socialize by playing a board game online with friends during a video call.

Don't think of these activities as brain-training chores. Just enjoy them because they're fun and enhance your life. The fact that they sharpen your cognition is just an added benefit!

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*Ed. Note: For this month's crossword,*

*Jumble and Scrabblegram, see the Beacon's "puzzle page" on page 44 of this issue.*

*And for a wide-ranging cultural experience at home, consider the "Billion Dollar Art Gallery" — a memory stick that contains images and details about more than 500 artworks from museums around the world that can be viewed individually or played as a video, accompanied by original music, on your TV or computer screen. \$39.99; available on Amazon.*

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## Carotid Artery Disease

Just like the arteries in the heart and elsewhere in the body, the carotid arteries in the neck can become clogged with fatty deposits. Narrowing of a carotid artery (also called carotid artery stenosis) can increase the risk of stroke.

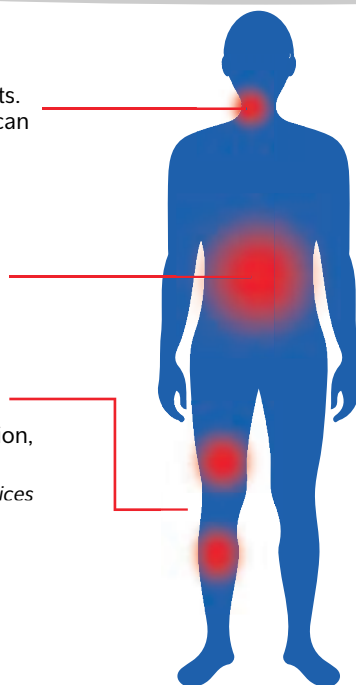
## Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm

You may have no symptoms which is why screening is necessary. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), 80% of ruptured aortic aneurysms result in death

## Peripheral Artery Disease

In the U.S. alone, more than 18 million people have symptoms of PAD. This disease occurs when plaque builds up in the arteries, preventing blood flow to the legs and feet. PAD can lead to infection, ulcers, and in severe cases, amputation.

Source: Health & Human Services



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# Healthy diet, lifestyle can prevent strokes

By *Densie Webb*

Studies show you can reduce your stroke risk by 80% by eating a healthful diet and making healthy lifestyle changes.

The risk for stroke increases with age, the incidence doubling with each decade after the age of 45. More than 70% of all strokes occur after the age of 65. Making healthy choices becomes even more important with each year that passes.

In the U.S. Health Professionals study and the Nurses' Health Study, poor lifestyle choices accounted for more than half of all strokes.

Study participants who adhered to the five pillars of stroke prevention — did not smoke, had a body mass index of less than 25, took part in at least 30 minutes a day of

moderate activity, consumed alcohol in moderation or not at all, and scored within the top 40% of a healthy diet score — had an 80% lower risk of stroke compared with participants who followed none of those healthy diet and lifestyle measures.

An analysis of 13 studies found that following a Mediterranean-style diet alone — characterized by high amounts of olive oil, nuts, fruits, vegetables and cereal; moderate amounts of fish and poultry; low consumption of dairy products, red and processed meat, and sweets; and low to moderate consumption of wine — was associated with a 30% reduced risk of having a stroke.

Diet can reduce the risk of stroke in a variety of ways, including helping to lower blood pressure, lowering blood cholesterol

and triglycerides (compounds that may clog arteries), preventing blood clots from forming, reducing inflammation, helping to regulate blood sugar, increasing the “good” bacteria in the colon, and aiding in weight management.

Diet is a critical part of stroke prevention, regardless of age. Pairing a healthy and balanced diet with the four other pillars of stroke prevention can significantly reduce your risk and protect your health

against other disease conditions as well.

According to the American Stroke Association, one in four stroke survivors will have a second stroke. Because the risk of having a second stroke is high, following a healthy diet and lifestyle is the best approach for protecting your future health.

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## Stroke risk

From page 6

“Yet when care and treatment is sought in a timely way, the chances of survival and recovery can increase significantly,” Dickinson said.

### Treatment options

Seeking treatment for stroke immediately means you have more treatment options available to you, such as being eligi-

ble to receive tissue plasminogen activator or mechanical thrombectomy (MT) for ischemic stroke, the most common type of stroke. MT, a minimally invasive blood clot retrieval procedure, helps improve the chances you'll survive an ischemic stroke and make a full recovery.

Treatment options for hemorrhagic stroke include surgery to remove, repair or clip a ruptured aneurysm.

To learn more about stroke, or find a doctor near you, visit [bit.ly/strokestroke](http://bit.ly/strokestroke).

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# Chicken and mushroom orzo “risotto”

By Family Features

Winter is a critical time to eat healthy foods, which can keep your immune system in tip-top shape to fend off viruses. Many fruits and vegetables support a healthy immune system.

Researchers have concluded there are a variety of micronutrients important for supporting a healthy immune system. They're all familiar: vitamin A, B, C, D, E, iron, selenium and zinc.

You can get vitamin A from fresh fruits and vegetables like carrots; vitamin C from citrus, strawberries and tomatoes; and vitamin E from nut butters.

Eating salmon, tuna, egg yolks, mushrooms or fortified dairy products can help

your body produce vitamin D. Zinc, iron and selenium can be found in whole grains, meat, nuts and beans.

Four of the nutrients necessary to maintain a healthy immune system (vitamin D, selenium and B vitamins and zinc) can be found in mushrooms. Try this healthy comfort dish made with mushrooms this winter.

## Roasted Chicken Thighs and Veggies with Mushroom Orzo Risotto

Recipe courtesy of Emily Weeks of “Zen and Spice”

Cook time: 50 minutes

Total time: 1 hour, 10 minutes

Servings: 4

**Chicken:**  
8 boneless, skinless chicken thighs  
salt, to taste  
pepper, to taste  
6 tablespoons unsalted butter  
16 ounces crimini mushrooms, quartered  
3 zucchinis, sliced in half moons  
3 large carrots, thinly sliced  
4 sprigs fresh rosemary, leaves removed and roughly chopped

4 cloves garlic, minced  
**Orzo:**  
4 cups chicken or vegetable broth  
1 tablespoon unsalted butter  
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil  
1 small yellow onion, diced  
2 garlic cloves, minced  
16 ounces crimini mushrooms, finely chopped

1 cup uncooked orzo pasta  
1/8 teaspoon black pepper  
1/3 cup white wine or cooking wine  
1/3 cup shredded Parmesan cheese  
To make chicken: Preheat oven to 450° F. Pat chicken dry. Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Melt butter in large skillet over medium-high heat. Sear chicken until browned, 4 to 5 minutes on each side.

In large bowl, toss mushrooms, zucchini, carrots, garlic and rosemary. On large baking sheet, spread vegetables. Nestle chicken into vegetables. Drizzle with butter and juices from pan.

Bake 20 minutes until chicken is cooked through and vegetables are tender.

While the chicken and vegetables are in the oven, warm the broth in a small pot over medium-low heat.

Using skillet from chicken, add butter and olive oil over medium heat. Add onion, garlic and mushrooms. Cook, stirring occasionally, until onions soften, 3 to 4 minutes.

Add orzo and black pepper. Stir and cook 2 minutes. Add white wine and cook until evaporated, about 1 minute.

Add warm broth to orzo 2/3 cup at a time, stirring until liquid is absorbed. Repeat with remaining broth, waiting until last batch is absorbed before adding more. Remove from heat and stir in Parmesan.

Serve in individual bowls with chicken and roasted vegetables atop mushroom orzo risotto.

Find more ways to add mushrooms to meals at [mushroomcouncil.com](http://mushroomcouncil.com).



### BEACON BITS

Jan. 16

#### FASCINATING FERMENTATION

Learn about the fermented foods of early America and prepare an African recipe using the fermentation process in this workshop that takes place on Sun., Jan. 16 from 1 to 3 p.m. at the Benjamin Banneker Historical Park and Museum in Catonsville. Tickets cost \$5. For more information and to register, visit [bit.ly/BannekerFermentation](http://bit.ly/BannekerFermentation). Call (410) 887-1081 with questions.

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# Health Studies

## INFORMATION ON AREA CLINICAL TRIALS

# Knee pain causing the blues? Study could help

By Margaret Foster

If your knees hurt, you're not alone. About half of people over age 50 experience some kind of knee pain.

But it's more than just an achy knee; your mind is affected, too. In fact, researchers have found a connection between chronic knee pain and depression. According to a 2014 review of 16 studies, depression plays a significant role in knee pain.

A study is underway now at the University of Maryland to see if an FDA-approved drug, Cymbalta, could be a cure for both ailments.

"Those who have knee osteoarthritis often experience great pain, and that pain

can influence their mood. The main goal of this study is to help patients by treating both knee pain and mood problems by using a combination of exercise and medication," Dr. Alan Rathbun, principal investigator, said in an email.

You're eligible for the 24-week clinical trial if you're over age 40, have knee osteoarthritis, and are experiencing symptoms of depression. Participants will complete a total of 11 visits to the Baltimore VA Medical Center and University of Maryland Medical Center in downtown Baltimore.

"In addition, we hope participants will attend as many as three supervised exercise training sessions per week during the

six months of the study. These can be flexibly scheduled based upon the participant's availability," Rathbun said.

The one-on-one exercise training sessions take place in the VA Annex building, also located in downtown Baltimore. The exercises are tailored to each person's ability.

Participants will be encouraged to walk for up to 50 minutes, three times a week, challenging themselves a bit more each training session.

Gift cards, free parking, free Cymbalta, and free one-on-one supervised exercise training are part of the compensation package.

But most of all, Rathbun pointed out,

participants will be helping future generations — and maybe even themselves.

"Participants will be contributing to scientific knowledge and helping patients with knee osteoarthritis live happy and healthier lives," he said.

"They may benefit from a decrease in arthritis knee pain and experience improvements in mood. Participants may also learn long-term strategies to decrease their knee pain, improve their emotional health, and increase their daily physical activity levels."

For more information, call (443) 226-0349 or email [DEKODE@som.umaryland.edu](mailto:DEKODE@som.umaryland.edu) and mention the "DEKODE" study.

### BEACON BITS

Jan. 14+

#### RED CROSS AND YOU

Learn about the work of American Red Cross volunteers and how you can impact your community in a virtual information session on Fri., Jan. 14 from noon to 1 p.m. For more information and to register, visit [redcross.org/volopenhouse](http://redcross.org/volopenhouse). Additional dates are available.

Jan. 15+

#### WINTER BEAD & JEWELRY SHOW

The 14<sup>th</sup> annual winter bead and jewelry show takes place Sat., Jan. 15 and Sun., Jan. 16 in the Main Exhibition Hall at 2210 Fairgrounds Road in West Friendship. For more information, visit [bit.ly/BaltBeadShow](http://bit.ly/BaltBeadShow).

### BEACON BITS

Ongoing

#### HEART-HEALTHY RESOURCES

Learn ways to prevent heart disease at the website for Million Hearts, a national initiative to prevent 1 million heart attacks and strokes within five years. For heart-healthy recipes, prevention tips and recent research, visit [millionhearts.hhs.gov](http://millionhearts.hhs.gov).

Jan. 17

#### MLK DAY

Join the Visionary Art Museum for MLK Dare to Dream Day 2022. Activities take place throughout the day on Mon., Jan. 17 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. To reserve free tickets, visit [bit.ly/DaretoDream22](http://bit.ly/DaretoDream22).

- Are you 55 years or older and do not have problems with your memory?
- Are you free of Diabetes?
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- Are you overweight?

If yes, you may be eligible for a clinical study of a supplement.

The purpose of this research study is to look at how a drink supplement containing ketones affects the brain.

#### Participation will include:

- Drinking a supplement or placebo three times a day for 28 days at home
- Having blood draws, MRI scans, and cognitive testing.

# Clinical Study of a Ketone Drink

Participants will complete 4 study visits. You will have a screening visit followed by 3 additional visits.

Principal Investigator:  
Dimitrios Kapogiannis, M.D.  
NIA Study # 20-AG-N087  
National Institute on Aging  
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National Institute on Aging



# Alcohol use is rising among older adults

By Catherine Brown

Recent studies have found that alcohol use among adults 60 and over has increased during the past 20 years, especially among women.

The University of Michigan's 2021 National Poll for Healthy Aging, for instance, found that 20% of older adults drank four times per week; 27% had at least six drinks on at least one occasion in the last year; and 7% reported experiencing alcohol-related blackouts.

"As the Baby Boomer [population] ages, people in it are bringing higher levels of alcohol [use] with them," Dr. George Koob, director of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), said in an interview with the *Beacon*.

According to a 2017 analysis from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 20% of adults 60-64 and 11% of adults over 65 reported that they engaged in binge drinking.

For men, binge drinking refers to consuming five or more drinks at a time at least once in the past month; for women, binge drinking is characterized as consuming four or more drinks at a time at least once in the past month.

## Aging magnifies ill effects

The increase in alcohol usage among older adults can be problematic, particu-

larly because negative impacts develop alongside — and can be magnified by — the changes that naturally occur because of the aging process.

The following age-related issues make alcohol misuse more dangerous for older adults:

—**Higher blood alcohol concentration.** Aging lowers the body's tolerance for alcohol.

"As we age, the amount of water in the body tends to decline," Koob said. "Because alcohol is more concentrated in body fluids than in fat or muscle or bone, the reduction in body water leads to higher blood alcohol concentrations in older drinkers relative to same weight younger drinkers."

Alcohol also stays in the system longer for older adults.

—**Increased risk of falls.** The risk of falls increases as people age, even more so when they drink alcohol.

In addition, the odds of being injured in a fall are "higher for older adults who drink than those who do not," Koob said.

—**Negative impacts on the brain.** During the aging process, the brain begins to shrink, leading to a decline in cognitive functioning and memory. But drinking alcohol reduces brain volume, too. When those normal changes are combined with misuse of alcohol, the impacts on the brain are significant.

—**Health complications.** Alcohol use contributes to or complicates other health issues often experienced by older adults, including diabetes, high blood pressure, osteoporosis and liver problems.

—**Interactions with medications.** Alcohol interacts in potentially dangerous or even fatal ways with many medications and herbal remedies used by older adults, including aspirin, acetaminophen, sleeping pills, pain medication, and medication for anxiety and depression.

Koob also pointed out that it can be more difficult to detect alcohol-related problems in older adults. "If someone is retired or living alone," Koob said, "their alcohol use might not impact job performance or their ability to maintain social obligations."

Read more at [bit.ly/alcoholagingbrain](http://bit.ly/alcoholagingbrain). If you cannot control your drinking, be honest with your doctor and family. Visit [howardcoaa.org](http://howardcoaa.org) or call (410) 663-1922 for an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting near you.



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The **Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT)** program also offers Captioned Telephones, provided by the State, to those who qualify. The MAT program includes a variety of equipment options to support clearer communication, including amplified phones. Visit our website to see if you or a loved one qualify for no cost assistive equipment through the MAT program.

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# THE 50+ Connection

NEWS and EVENTS from the  
Howard County Office on Aging and Independence

A Publication of the Department of Community Resources and Services

Volume 12, No. 1 • January 2022

## Find Fitness Options to Meet YOUR Needs

**"EVERY day is another chance to get stronger, to eat better, to live healthier, and to be the best version of YOU."**

While the author is unknown, this sentiment has been shared many times by fitness experts across the country, including the Office on Aging and Independence's (OAI's) 50+ Fitness Coordinator, Michelle Rosenfeld. During the pandemic, Michelle's guidance inspired many older adults in Howard County to stay fit through virtual classes. Now that the new year is here, she encourages everyone to check out ALL the options OAI has to offer, virtually, and in-person at the 50+ Centers.

If exercising without leaving home appeals to you, the virtual fitness pass offers 19 classes a week for just \$38 a month. View the January virtual program guide at [www.howardcountymd.gov/50pluscenters](http://www.howardcountymd.gov/50pluscenters) for class descriptions and sign up instructions. If you enjoy working out with free weights and state-of-the-art equipment in person, the Go50+ Fitness Pass (\$75/year) gives you access to the fitness rooms at the Bain, Elkridge and Ellicott City 50+ Centers, as well as the Gary J. Arthur and North Laurel Community Centers and the Roger Carter Recreation Center. *For the safety of all, masks must always be worn on-site.*

### We Can Help You Get Started

Free fitness center orientations are offered on the first and third Wednesday of the month at 11:00 a.m. at the Bain 50+ Center, and the second Wednesday of the month at 10:30 a.m. at the Ellicott City 50+ Fitness Center. Registration is required. Beginning this month, **personal training sessions/packages** will also be available at Bain; for more information, contact Michelle Rosenfeld at 410-313-7394.

### Group Exercise Package Resumes

The Ellicott City 50+ **Group Exercise Quarterly Pass Package** returns in January. This package is \$75 for three months of unlimited classes and allows you to participate in any or all of 10 classes offered each week, including All in One, Gentle Yoga, Yoga Fusion, Power, Pilates®, and Zumba Gold®. Instructors teach to mid-level intensity and demonstrate high and low options as well. Interested? Register on-line, sign up at the center or call 410-313-0727 for details.



Malarie Burgess, Exercise Specialist  
Howard County Office on  
Aging and Independence

If you have never exercised before, haven't exercised in a while, are unable to leave home, or feel functionally unable to participate in an exercise program, OAI suggests scheduling an exercise consultation with Malarie Burgess, Exercise Specialist.

**"A one-on-one consultation can help you establish a fitness program that considers the recommendations of your health care provider, your personal goals and the results of your fitness assessment,"** says Burgess.

### A Message from Howard County Executive Calvin Ball



Happy New Year Howard County! We ended 2021 on a high note, celebrating the groundbreaking of a new East Columbia 50+ Center, and our efforts to support older residents will continue this year. With the start of 2022, we're thrilled to bring hope and renewal to our community through thoughtful action towards our Age-Friendly Initiative. Just two years ago, we started this journey together to infuse our communities with the resources and supports they need to grow, thrive and live with dignity. More than 100 community members and stakeholders have invested 4,000 hours over the past 15 months, mainly virtually, to prepare our Age-Friendly Action Plan, which will be released this month. This plan is a direct result of the hard work and contributions of our community.

Last November, we officially submitted the Action Plan to AARP for approval, with more than 80 recommendations that will guide our progress toward becoming an age-friendly community over the next three years. This plan is a blueprint for our neighbors, corporate and non-profit partners, faith-based and civic organizations, and government agencies to make our home an even greater place in which to grow up and grow older. While Howard County government will lead the effort, it will take input from individual residents, community groups, small and large businesses and non-profit organizations to truly make our action plan a reality. To learn more, visit [www.howardcountymd.gov/agefriendly](http://www.howardcountymd.gov/agefriendly).

As we all make our resolutions for the year ahead, our focus remains on ensuring all residents can live full, thriving and healthy lives right here in Howard County.

### 30-Minute Consultations Available at Three Centers

**Elkridge 50+ Center — Second Tuesday; 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.**  
6540 Washington Boulevard, Elkridge 21075

**Bain 50+ Center — Third Wednesday; 9:00 to 11:30 a.m.**  
5470 Ruth Keeton Way, Columbia 21044

**North Laurel 50+ Center — Fourth Thursday; 9:00 a.m. to noon**  
9411 Whiskey Bottom Road, Laurel 20723

"A consultation can also benefit those living with a health condition that affects their ability to exercise, those who have been told by a provider to become more active, or those returning to activity after being discharged from therapy," explains Burgess. Interested participants should contact one of the three centers listed above to register.

For more information about HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROGRAMS at Howard County 50+ Centers, call 410-313-5400 (VOICE/RELAY) or visit [www.howardcountymd.gov/50pluscenters](http://www.howardcountymd.gov/50pluscenters).



## Set Your Nutrition Goals!

by Carmen Roberts, MS, RD, LDN

Nutritionist, Howard County Office on Aging and Independence

**T**his New Year, make a resolution to improve your health and wellness in 2022. Start the New Year off on a healthy note by trying one or more of the following steps to help reach your goals.

- 1) Pick just one.** It can be overwhelming to try too many new things all at once — you may not know where to start and end up giving up too quickly. Instead, pick just one goal and write it down. Putting it on paper (like any “to-do” list) is a good way to start.
- 2) Make a plan.** Instead of setting an *impossible* goal to lose 50 pounds in two months, start with a more *realistic* goal to lose one pound each week by reducing your calorie intake by 500 calories a day. Then, plan how you will reduce those calories (by eliminating added sugar in your coffee or replacing calorie-laden desserts or snacks with healthier options). Writing down what you eat each day will help you stay focused on your goal.
- 3) Start small.** First, look at your current health habits: are you eating out too frequently, or not getting enough exercise? Then set small, achievable goals. If you usually grab fast food for dinner on the way home, prep meals the night before instead, then use the time to take a 30-minute walk outside when you get home. You will save hundreds of calories by eating a healthier meal at home, and you can burn over 100 calories by taking a brisk walk. These small changes alone could yield a weight loss of at least a pound a week.
- 4) Get others involved.** Communicate your goals to your friends and family so that they can help you along the way. Invite a friend to go on a morning walk with you or swap healthy recipes with a neighbor. If you're caring for your grandkids, get them involved in cooking with you. As a bonus, you will create wonderful shared memories!
- 5) Reward yourself.** Celebrate your success by rewarding yourself. Create rewards that support your healthier lifestyle, like buying new athletic shoes or a pedometer to track your daily steps.

If you would like to receive help getting on track with your nutrition goals, schedule a **free in-person or virtual nutrition consultation** with Carmen Roberts. For more information and available dates, contact your nearest 50+ Center or visit [www.howardcountymd.gov/50pluscenters](http://www.howardcountymd.gov/50pluscenters).

## Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment



January 1 through March 31 is the **Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment period for individuals enrolled in a Part C plan** as of January 1, 2022. If you're unhappy with your current plan or want to explore other options, during this time you can:

- Switch to a different Medicare Advantage Plan with or without drug coverage
- Go back to Original Medicare and, if needed, also join a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan

If you switch Medicare Advantage Plans or go back to Original Medicare (with or without a Medicare drug plan), your new coverage will start the first day of the month after your new plan gets your request for coverage. Keep in mind, if you go back to Original Medicare now, you may not be able to buy a Medicare Supplement Insurance (Medigap) policy.

Please note: the Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment Period is NOT for those who already have Original Medicare.

**Howard County State Health Insurance Program (SHIP) can help you navigate your coverage options. Call 410-313-7392 (VOICE/RELAY) to schedule a remote counseling appointment with a Certified SHIP Counselor.**

## January Events

### Stop Exercising to Lose Weight

**Virtual Webinar via Webex • Monday, January 10 • 2:00 p.m.**

Join OAI's Exercise Specialist, Malarie Burgess, to learn more about the many benefits of regular exercise that have nothing to do with your appearance. View the webinar via Webex at <https://bit.ly/3yf5s84> and use password HPN2022.

### Explaining the Process:

#### How OAI Supports Our Caregivers, Our Heroes

**Online via Webex • Tuesday, January 18 • 10 a.m. to noon**

Learn about caregiver support options and resources available through the Office on Aging and Independence Caregiver Support Program and Home and Community-Based Services Teams. FREE; pre-registration is requested at <https://oaicaregiverwebinar2022.eventbrite.com>. Webex login information will be emailed to all registrants. For more information, call 410-313-5955.

### Seasoned Sisters

**Wednesdays beginning January 26 • Noon to 1:30 p.m.**

East Columbia 50+ Center, 6600 Cradlerock Way, Columbia 21045

Come laugh, learn and grow with women who have lived a little, laughed a lot, and are seasoned by life experiences. SeniorsTogether's new group is led by a trained facilitator and welcomes women interested in sharing thoughts, lifting up and connecting with one another. RSVP by January 24 to Karen Hull at 410-313-7466 or [khull@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:khull@howardcountymd.gov).

### 2022 Howard County Child Care Fair

**Saturday, January 22 • 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

North Laurel Community Center, 9411 Whiskey Bottom Road, Laurel 20723

Coordinated by the Office of Children and Families, the Child Care Fair provides parents, guardians, grandparents and child care personnel with a one-stop-shop for information on child care, pre-school and summer programs. Admission is free but pre-registration is encouraged at <https://2022childcarefair.eventbrite.com>. For more info, call 410-313-1940.

### Beacon Virtual 50+ EXPO

Through January 31, join the Office on Aging and Independence (OAI) online for the Beacon Virtual 50+ EXPO, featuring informative OAI videos, plus keynote speakers, classes, entertainment, and exhibitors. Visit the EXPO 24/7 at [www.beacon50expo.com](http://www.beacon50expo.com). Special thanks to OAI's Bronze Sponsors, Maryland Vascular Specialists and Lorien Health, for their event support.



## Howard County

Office on Aging & Independence

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This publication is available in alternate formats upon request. To join the subscriber list, go to <https://bit.ly/3o4GAee>.

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# Law & Money



How do you know you're ready to retire? See three signs below.

## Let someone know where your money is

By Lisa Brown

A few weeks ago, I received a call at 8:30 a.m. from a stressed-out woman in Florida. Her brother, a retired Delta Air Lines pilot, was in a coma. Bills needed to be paid but no one in the family, including his wife, had any information about his savings, investments, debt or other finances.

She believed he had approximately \$800,000 in investments. All he ever told them was that he “put his money with an adviser who specializes in working with Delta pilots.” After calling several financial advisers, they had yet to find any money.

Fortunately, they had found three local bank accounts, and her brother had signed a power of attorney document, which helped secure money from the banks.

But even that turned out to be a frustrating experience, since the woman and her siblings needed to work with three different banks to get access to the money or close the accounts.

Meanwhile, the bills were piling up and there wasn't enough money available to sustain his expenses much longer. When he was admitted to the hospital in August, the relatives had no idea his health would deteriorate so quickly.

To provide some immediate help, I recommended his loved ones obtain his latest tax return. This document likely has the name and contact information of the accountant who prepared the tax return, if he had a professional provide that service.

In addition, the tax return will document

his income. “If you find the income, you can find the assets,” I told her. That's because earned interest, dividends, pension income and withdrawals from retirement accounts will be reported on the tax return.

I also encouraged her to call the Delta Air Lines human resources department. There could be a lingering life insurance benefit or 401(k) balance there.

### Don't let it happen to you

This is a heart-wrenching example of why everyone needs to have their estate plan updated and make sure their financial affairs are in order at all times.

In addition, someone — a spouse, siblings, adult children — needs to know all of the financial details and how to access the money, life insurance and other important documents. Sadly, in this situation, even the pilot's wife had no knowledge of her husband's financial affairs and accounts.

None of us wants to be caught in this situation. Here are some recommendations to consider taking now to ensure this situation doesn't occur with you or a family member:

#### —Collect key financial documents.

Ask your loved one to gather copies of the following documents:

- Will, revocable trust and financial power of attorney;
- Bank, brokerage accounts and Social Security statements;
- Cost basis of all investments in taxable brokerage accounts or stock certificate form;

- Website log-in credentials for any financial assets and insurance policies;

- Estimate of monthly living expenses;

- List of all beneficiaries for Individual Retirements Accounts, annuities and life insurance policies, including names, dates of birth and addresses;

- A list of any other assets and debts, such as house, car and jewelry.

- Most recent tax returns.

As you begin collecting documents, the most important one to help uncover current assets is the tax return. It can help nail down what assets your loved one owns, as well as the income they have coming in from pensions, annuities, real estate investments, business interests and Social Security.

The tax return's Schedule B is key. This document is filed to report the interest and dividends received each tax year. A few years ago, this document led me to discover that one of my older relatives owned \$300,000 in a bank stock — hard to believe, but true.

If you can't find any paper statements or log-in information to financial websites to track down each asset, start by asking the tax preparer for a copy of the 1099 form for each asset so you will know which companies to contact.

Once you have a full list of assets, debts and current statements, including all insurance policies and the tax return, set them aside in a large envelope marked “Important Documents: Tax and Financial.” If you

refresh this package once a year, it should take less than one hour to maintain.

#### —Make certain key documents are signed.

These include current copies of a will, financial power of attorney, healthcare power of attorney and any trust documents.

Put these documents in an envelope marked “Legal Documents.” A copy of the Social Security card, as well as birth and marriage certificates, can be placed there, too. This envelope only needs to be refreshed each time an update is made to the will or other legal paperwork.

#### —Make copies for advisers and others

Provide copies and access to files to people who serve as professional advisers — including attorneys, accountants, financial planners and insurance agents.

In addition, share contents of your envelope with your relative's executor, financial and healthcare agent, and/or another relative who lives nearby.

Spending a few hours getting organized now can save hours of time-consuming searches and expenses should a loved one become ill or incapacitated.

It may seem like an awkward and difficult task, but all of us must be prepared in case of a sudden turn of events. Doing so will allow the family to focus on who and what matters most in a difficult situation.

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## Reluctant to retire? 3 signs you're ready

By Liz Weston

Many people don't have much choice about when they retire. Illness, job loss or caretaking responsibilities push them out of the labor force, ready or not.

But some people have the opposite problem: They do have a choice, and yet they can't quite bring themselves to quit working.

Some love what they do and never want to retire.

Others are paralyzed by fear of the unknown, financial planners say. They may worry about living without a paycheck, spending down the money they worked so hard to save, or figuring out how to struc-

ture their days in the absence of a job.

“A lot of the people I see are financially ready before they're emotionally ready,” said Cathy Gearig, a certified financial planner in Rochester Hills, Michigan.

If you're struggling, here are three signs you may be ready to retire:

### You've faced your fears

Retirement is often depicted as an endless, stress-free vacation. In reality, retirement requires some potentially stressful “paradigm shifts,” or fundamental changes in people's approach to life, said Barbara O'Neill, author of *Flipping a Switch: Your Guide to Happiness and Financial Security in Later Life*.

Instead of earning a paycheck, for example, retirees have to create one from their savings and other resources. If something goes wrong — the furnace dies, or their investments don't do well — they can't just earn more money to make up for any shortfall.

Those who have been diligent savers often struggle with the idea of spending their money once they're in retirement.

“It's really emotional for people,” said Janice Cackowski, a certified financial planner in Willoughby, Ohio. “They're so used to seeing their account balances increase over the years [that] they find it really difficult to pull money out of their accounts.”

Other fears — such as being afraid of becoming irrelevant or simply being bored — can cause people to postpone retirement, according to some financial planners.

Gearig said some of her most successful clients, including business owners and top executives, have prioritized work to the point where they can't imagine life without it.

“Honestly, the biggest fear I see is, ‘What am I going to do with myself if I don't go to work all day?’” Gearig said.

Once you know what frightens you about retirement, you can begin to address those fears, financial planners say.

# Retirement

From page 14

## Your plan has been stress tested

If your fears are financial, you can hire a fee-only financial planner to review your retirement plan. Choose a planner who is a fiduciary, which means they're committed to putting your best interests first.

Getting an expert review is a good idea in any case. The planner can help you maximize Social Security benefits, navigate Medicare or other health insurance options, decide the best way to take a pension, plan for possible long-term care, and figure out a sustainable withdrawal rate from your savings.

"This will be your only retirement. It's paramount that you get it right," said Adam Wojtkowski, a CFP in Walpole, Massachusetts.

Using sophisticated planning software,

the advisor also can stress test your plan to see how it works in the event of a major market downturn, a surge in inflation, higher tax rates or the premature death of you or your spouse, said Shelly-Ann Eweka, senior director of financial planning strategy for finance company TIAA.

Certified financial planner Michelle Gessner of Houston runs her clients' plans through various combinations of events. Then she runs a "maximum spend" test to see how much money they can spend before the plan fails and they run short of money.

"I'm really beating the heck out of these plans, and then [clients] can see hey, look, it still works," Gessner said. "And if it still works, maybe [they] don't have to be afraid anymore."

## You know what you're retiring to (not just from)

Many retirees struggle, at least at first,

to find a sense of purpose and a structure for their days. Having a plan for how you'll spend your time can help, said Ian Weinberg, CFP, of Woodbury, New York.

That plan might include a bucket list of travel and experiences you can start checking off. Or you could create a pie chart or schedule of how you want to divide your time among various pursuits: hobbies, volunteering, physical fitness, family time, travel and so on.

Retirement also can be unexpectedly lonely, especially if you're single or your partner is still working.

If your primary social interactions were with coworkers, you may need to find some new friends, said Patti B. Black, a CFP in Birmingham, Alabama. Black recommends checking out volunteer groups, clubs and classes.

You may need some time to prepare yourself mentally and emotionally for retirement. Just don't let the preparation continue indefinitely, since the future is never guaranteed, Gearig pointed out.

"Just jump in and enjoy the ride," Gearig said.

—AP/NerdWallet

### BEACON BITS

Jan. 19

#### OPPORTUNITY FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

The Howard County Economic Development Authority hosts a virtual introduction to the Catalyst Loan Fund, which helps small, minority- and women-owned businesses obtain financing to expand their business with a Video Lottery Terminal. Hear some success stories and learn how to apply for a Catalyst loan in this event on Wed., Jan. 19 from 10 to 11 a.m. Register by Jan. 18. For more info, visit [bit.ly/CatalystLoan](http://bit.ly/CatalystLoan).

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# How one drug boosts Medicare premium

By Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar

Medicare’s “Part B” outpatient premium will jump by \$21.60 a month in 2022, one of the largest increases ever. Officials said a new Alzheimer’s drug is responsible for about half of that.

The increase guarantees that healthcare will gobble up a significant chunk of the recently announced Social Security cost-of-living allowance — a boost that had worked out to \$92 a month for the average retired worker, intended to help cover rising prices for gas and food that are pinching seniors.

Medicare officials told reporters last month that about half the increase is due to contingency planning if the program ultimately has to cover Aduhelm, the new \$56,000-a-year medication for Alzheimer’s disease from pharmaceutical company Biogen. The medication would add to the cost of outpatient coverage because it’s ad-

ministered intravenously in a doctor’s office and paid for under Part B.

## Drugs are significant cost factor

The issue is turning into a case study of how one pricey medication for a condition afflicting millions of people can swing the needle on government spending and impact household budgets.

People who don’t have Alzheimer’s would not be shielded from the cost of Aduhelm, since its expected use and cost are great enough to affect the premiums of everyone on Medicare.

The new Part B premium will be \$170.10 a month for 2022, officials said. The jump of \$21.60 is the biggest increase ever in dollar terms, although not percentage-wise. As recently as August, the Medicare Trustees’ report had projected a smaller increase of \$10 from the current \$148.50.

“The increase in the Part B premium for 2022 is continued evidence that rising drug costs threaten the affordability and sustainability of the Medicare program,” said Medicare chief Chiquita Brooks-LaSure in a statement.

Officials said the other half of the premium increase is due to the natural growth of the program, and to recover from adjustments made by Congress last year to temporarily reduce Medicare premiums as the coronavirus pandemic hit.

## Controversial drug isn’t a cure

Alzheimer’s is a progressive neurological disease with no known cure, affecting about 6 million Americans, the vast majority old enough to qualify for Medicare.

Aduhelm is the first Alzheimer’s medication in nearly 20 years. It doesn’t cure the life-sapping condition, but the Food

and Drug Administration determined that its ability to reduce clumps of plaque in the brain is likely to slow dementia. However, many experts say that benefit has not been clearly demonstrated.

Medicare has begun a formal assessment to determine whether it should cover the drug, and a final decision isn’t likely until at least the spring. For now, Medicare is deciding on a case-by-case basis whether to pay for Aduhelm.

Cost traditionally does not enter into Medicare’s coverage determinations. But in this case, there is also plenty of debate about the effectiveness of Aduhelm. [See “New Alzheimer’s drug breeds skepticism,” in the November Beacon.]

Last November, an FDA advisory panel voted nearly unanimously against recommending its approval, citing flaws in company studies. Several members of the panel resigned after the FDA approved the drug anyway over their objections.

A nonprofit think tank focused on drug pricing pegged Aduhelm’s actual value at between \$3,000 and \$8,400 per year — not \$56,000 — based on its unproven benefits.

But Biogen has defended its pricing, saying it looked carefully at costs of advanced medications to treat cancer and other conditions.

The company also says it expects a gradual uptake of the Alzheimer’s drug, and not a “hockey-stick” scenario in which costs take off. Nonetheless Medicare officials told reporters they have to plan for contingencies.

Two House committees are investigating the development of Aduhelm, including contacts between company executives and FDA regulators.

Medicare covers more than 60 million people, including those 65 and older, as well as people who are disabled or have serious kidney disease. Program spending is approaching \$1 trillion a year. —AP



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Ongoing

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# Leisure & Travel



PHOTO BY JOHN BILLOUS/SHUTTERSTOCK

Rehoboth's boardwalk lights up for the holidays, then settles down for the season. See story on page 20.

## Asheville, N. Carolina: Artsy and eclectic

By Barbara Ruben

Thomas Wolfe set his autobiographical novel *Look Homeward, Angel* in the sprawling Victorian boarding house he grew up in a century ago in Asheville.

Today, legions of tourists look toward this small western North Carolina city for its thriving farm-to-table restaurant scene, dozens of art galleries and quirky vibe.

Dubbed the Paris of the South, the city of 93,000 residents surrounded by the dusky folds of the Blue Ridge Mountains routinely lands on numerous best travel destination lists.

In 2021, *USA Today* named it one of 10 "beautiful North American mountain destinations you need to see." Travelocity found it to be the top spot for socially distanced, family-friendly weekend getaways this year as well.

And in July, *Money* magazine declared Asheville one of the best cities in the world for beer drinkers, with the most breweries per capita in the U.S.

At 470 miles from downtown Washington, Asheville is a day's drive away, and several airlines offer non-stop flights.

### Start with art

Asheville is known as an epicenter of art in the South, with more than 25 art galleries downtown alone.

Past and present merge in Woolworth

Walk, a 1938 F. W. Woolworth store re-born in 2001 as a showcase for 170 local artists, with everything from pottery to photography to jewelry for sale. A reconstructed 1950s soda fountain offers original menu items, such as egg creams, ice cream sodas and club sandwiches.

A mile and a half from downtown Asheville, the River Arts District stretches along the French Broad River, where once churning mills now house more than 200 artist studios.

A multi-million-dollar redevelopment project completed last spring includes a two-mile greenway along the river, with a paved sidewalk and bike lanes dotted with public art.

Here the North Carolina Glass Center offers free glassblowing demonstrations, as well as walk-in sessions to create your own glass ornament, paperweight or cup.

The Wedge Studios, housed in a brick former warehouse, is comprised of three stories of painters, illustrators, sculptors and folk artists. If you work up a thirst, the first floor is the Wedge Brewing Company, with more than a dozen beers to choose from.

Asheville's art extends to its architecture. The city is home to the most Art Deco style buildings in the Southeast outside of Miami.

Built in this style of the 1920s and 30s are City Hall, with its fanciful pink and

PHOTO BY KEVIN RUCK/SHUTTERSTOCK



With an artsy vibe and a vibrant live music scene, the historic city of Asheville, N.C., is home to one of the largest collections of Art Deco buildings in the Southeast. While you're there, drive along the Blue Ridge Parkway or hike in the Blue Ridge Mountains nearby.

green tiled octagonal roof, and the S&W Cafeteria Building, with soaring arched windows topped with terra cotta and blue tiles. Today, the building houses a newly created food hall with offerings from a number of local chefs.

Downtown residential streets in the Montford Area Historic District are lined with early 20<sup>th</sup>-century bungalows and Arts & Crafts style houses, along with 19<sup>th</sup>-century Victorians. Some have been turned into bed-and-breakfast inns.

Thomas Wolfe's yellow boyhood home is located downtown and is open for tours. His novel presented a realistic and not always positive portrayal of the town and its residents. Though names were changed (the city was called Altamont), the uproar caused the 1929 book to be banned by the local library.

Wolfe's mother owned the house, which she operated as a boarding house, and she and Wolfe lived among the 19 boarders for about 10 years.

### Holiday opulence

Asheville's most famous architectural spectacle by far is Biltmore, America's largest home. It's decked out for the holidays starting in November each year.

The estate sprawls across 8,000 acres

about six miles from downtown Asheville. Built by mega-millionaire George Vanderbilt in the 1890s, the castle-like building features 250 rooms, including 35 bedrooms, 43 bathrooms and 65 fireplaces.

Frederick Law Olmsted, who designed the grounds of the U.S. Capitol, created the estate's numerous gardens, including a conservatory and a rose garden featuring more than 250 varieties. In the spring, the gardens bloom with one of the largest azalea collections in the country.

This time of year, a holiday theme blooms across the estate, which also includes hotels and stores. In all, there are more than 100 decorated trees, 10,000 ornaments, and 100,000 twinkling lights.

The house, with a 35-foot Fraser fir in the banquet hall and 1,000 poinsettias, opens in the evening for candlelight tours, with lit fireplaces and live music. Biltmore Christmas decorations are on display through Jan. 9.

You don't have to be a millionaire to enjoy Biltmore, but this opulence doesn't come cheap. Evening holiday tickets start at \$119; daytime at \$106. Both include audio tours. Tickets at non-holiday times start at \$76. There are no senior discounts.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE BILTMORE COMPANY

The public is welcome to tour George Vanderbilt's 250-room French Renaissance mansion, the Biltmore, completed in 1895. Holiday decorations enliven the 35-bedroom chateau, "America's largest home," until Jan. 9, 2022. But take note: tickets are pricey.

See ASHEVILLE, page 19

# Asheville

From page 18

## A local food mecca

If you work up an appetite from exploring, Asheville is home to more than 250 independent restaurants and no fewer than 14 farmers markets.

Restaurants offer far more than Southern cooking, focusing on fresh, local ingredients, including such Appalachian traditional produce as ramps (wild onions), serviceberries (dark purple berries that grow on trees, melding the taste of blueberry and strawberry), apples and wild mushrooms. Meat is often sourced from local farms, and goat and cow cheeses from nearby dairies.

Here are few of the standouts: The Market Place features American farm-to-table cuisine, leaning heavily on meat dishes with local produce that range from \$18 to \$40. It's open for dinner only on weekdays, and for brunch and dinner on Saturdays and Sundays.

A vegetarian option is the Laughing Seed Café, with salads, sandwiches and pizzas; many have vegan and gluten-free options. Most items are \$15 to \$18.

To fully appreciate Asheville's stellar views, enjoy the sunset while dining at one of the city's many rooftop restaurants. One option is the Montford rooftop bar that tops the DoubleTree Hotel at the edge of downtown. In addition to a variety of

drinks, it offers a selection of flatbreads, salads and desserts that can be enjoyed alongside a 180-degree view of the mountains that grow a deeper blue as the sun slowly sinks behind their ridges.

## If you go

Buncombe County, where Asheville is located, currently requires masks to be worn at all public indoor locations.

Some Asheville businesses may require proof of vaccination, particularly restaurants that offer indoor dining.

Nonstop round-trip flights on Delta start at \$189 from BWI in January. No-frills Allegiant airline makes nonstop trips from BWI several days a week for \$136 round-trip.

The Blue Ridge mountains offer a beautiful backdrop for Asheville. If you can't get enough of their misty, gentle peaks, consider driving one way on the Blue Ridge Parkway, often cited as one of America's most beautiful drives. It connects to Skyline Drive, which can be accessed in Shenandoah National Park and has a few exits in Asheville. But beware that the twists and turns of the parkway and the 45-mile-per-hour speed limit make this a two-day trip.

And because Asheville is nestled in the mountains, expect some snow this time of year. The annual average is 10 inches, but like Maryland and Virginia, every few years it gets a year's worth in just one storm, sometimes in December.

Asheville has a variety of hotels and B&Bs. While there are somewhat cheaper chain hotels a couple miles from the center of the city, consider staying downtown so you can walk to many restaurants and galleries. There's not a lot of street parking downtown, but there are plenty of garages. DoubleTree prices start at \$154 per night.

If you're looking for luxury with historic ambience, the Omni Grove Park Inn, built

of massive granite stones in 1912, fits the bill. Guests have included presidents ranging from Franklin Roosevelt to Barack Obama as well as such varied stars as Michael Jordan, John Denver and Harry Houdini. The Grove Park Inn has an annual national gingerbread house competition. Room rates start at \$464/night.

Tourist information is available at explore-asheville.com and romanticasheville.com.

## BEACON BITS

Jan. 14+

### WINTER CHALLENGE TO HELP PARKS

From Fri., Jan. 14 to Thurs., Feb. 10, help the Howard County Conservancy raise \$10,000 to keep the parks open and free for all by participating in the Winter Challenge. Donate \$40 per individual or \$60 per family and enter the raffles by participating in a challenge. All winners are announced via Zoom on Wed., Feb. 16 at 7 p.m. For more information, visit [bit.ly/HCCWinterChallenge](http://bit.ly/HCCWinterChallenge).

Jan. 18

### CLIMATE CHANGE

Learn about how climate change is impacting the weather during every season in this online conversation hosted by the Howard County Public Library and led by The Climate Reality Project. This event takes place Tues., Jan. 18 from 7 to 8 p.m. For more information and to register, visit [bit.ly/HCPCLClimateChange](http://bit.ly/HCPCLClimateChange). Call (410) 313-7800 with questions.

Jan. 18

### CREATE A DIGITAL SCRAPBOOK

Learn how to digitize photos and older video formats and to edit audio and video content. This event takes place Tues., Jan. 18 from 11:30 a.m. to noon at the Glenwood Branch Library. For more information and to register, visit [bit.ly/HCPCLDigitalScrapbook](http://bit.ly/HCPCLDigitalScrapbook). Call (410) 313-5577 with questions.



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# Delaware's beaches delight in wintertime

By Glenda C. Booth

A trip to the beach in winter can combine both peace and play.

For the peace, sit and watch the waves roll in, gulls glide by and clouds float over the sea. In the off-season, the sun-screened partying crowd is likely gone, and youngsters are in school.

But there are also playful events that can spark the holiday spirits. Lewes, Delaware, puts on an outdoor light show between December 3 and 31, when more

than 200 homes and businesses display festive holiday lights. Entrants compete for awards with names like Jingle Bell Lane, Clark Griswold and It's a Wonderful Life.

At Rehoboth Beach, seven miles down the road, Santa sets up shop on the boardwalk, and 10,000 twinkling lights illuminate the scene.

Of course, some retirees like the Delaware shore enough to stay all year. In May 2021, *Parade* magazine reported that Lewes and Rehoboth were tied with Montana as the

number-one retirement destination in 2020.

## Uncrowded Lewes

Located at the mouth of the Delaware Bay, where Cape Henlopen curves out like a finger, Lewes (pronounced LOO-iss) offers an interesting mix of history, nature and respite.

Its two beaches offer broad, sandy expanses for meditative strolls. At the ocean-side Cape Henlopen State Park, Atlantic waves come crashing onto the shore. For gentler waves and beautiful sunsets, visit Lewes Beach on the Delaware Bay, located within walking distance of downtown Lewes.

In mid-town, the eye-catching Zwaanendael Museum always commands attention, its architecture reminiscent of a cathedral or fairytale castle. Built in 1931 with a stepped façade, gable of carved stonework and red-and-white shutters, the building was modeled after the town hall of Hoorn in the Netherlands.

Inside, visitors learn that 28 men from the Dutch West India Company settled Lewes in 1631 to create a whaling port, nourish the fur trade and grow tobacco.

From 1664 to the colonies' independence, the Brits took over. Nevertheless, Lewes claims the moniker "First Town in the First State."

Another exhibit documents the 1986 discovery of a British warship that sank in a storm. The state retrieved 20,000 items from the ship, some now displayed at the museum. Visitors also can glimpse English and German stoneware, a Dutch tobacco pipe and blue-and-white Dutch Delftware.

## Walking tours through history

The Lewes Historical Society's complex offers multiple venues that offer a walk through the town's history.

Check out the Ryves Holt House, which was built in 1665 and is the oldest building in the state that remains on its original foundation. It mushroomed from one room to nine and for served as a tavern for 20 years. The nearby Plank House, c. 1690, is an example of Swedish building techniques of that time.

The imposing menhaden net reel, used to dry out huge wet nets, is a reminder that fishing for menhaden (small fish used mostly for fertilizer and feed) was the town's main industry for more than 75 years, until 1966.

In the canal downtown, tour the Lightship Overfalls, a decommissioned floating lighthouse that now functions as a museum

See **DELAWARE**, page 21

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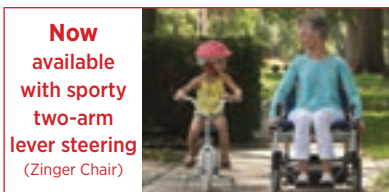
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# Delaware

From page 20

and National Historic Landmark.

From 1823 to 1972, the Overfalls warned vessels about hazards like dangerous shoals. Its foghorn could be heard for five miles, and was so loud it caused some crewmembers to go deaf, according to an exhibit aboard the retired ship.

Lewes was not always peaceful. In 1813, a British naval fleet bombarded the town, and the battle left a cannonball lodged in the foundation of one building.

Today, the so-called Cannonball House is home to Lewes Historical Society's Maritime Museum. An exhibit there explores the 22-hour battle, the attacking Brits and how locals fought back.

Lewes' Maritime History Trail leads visitors to the Life-Saving Station, established in 1884 to rescue mariners and ship cargo. The station was a precursor to the U.S. Coast Guard.

After absorbing history lessons, visitors can head to Cape Henlopen State Park and Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge, to take in the region's rich natural history in an ever-changing landscape. The state park has six miles of coastline, barrier dunes, beaches, maritime forests and the

Seaside Nature Center.

Prime Hook Refuge is a winter viewing site for waterbirds like snow geese, pintail ducks and marsh hawks. In January, visitors may see bald eagles carrying sticks to spruce up last year's nest — a sign of spring in the dead of winter.

## Rehoboth's winter persona

President Joe Biden put Rehoboth Beach on the map with his \$2.7 million house purchase in 2017, but he'd been visiting the area for years.

Known as "the nation's summer capital" for millennials who romp there, Rehoboth slows down during the winter, to the relief of some locals.

However, Rehoboth's broad, mile-long boardwalk, dubbed by *National Geographic* magazine as a "top U.S. boardwalk," is popular year-round. Most of the top-tier restaurants and shops near the boardwalk remain open all year, and many oceanfront hotels offer off-season rates.

Throughout December, Santa will have his own house on the boardwalk, welcoming youngsters to make their entreaties.

Several blocks from the boardwalk, the Rehoboth Beach Historical Society & Museum offers a return to the beaches of the past with its vintage postcard collection,

dioramas and old-style bathing suits.

A few miles inland, the Schellville Enchanted Winter Celebration will unfold on six acres near the Tanger Outlets.

The free annual event will feature a roller-skating rink under a tunnel of lights, a Christmas village of 18 houses, a Christmas tree maze with an Enchanted Elf Village, and 16 snow machines to supply "ammunition" for snowball fights. Open Thursday-Sunday from 5 to 9 p.m. through Dec. 31. Bring your own skates or rent some for \$5.

Five miles away in Milton, Delaware, the Winter WonderFEST stages a drive-through light show so bright you may

need sunglasses. Cars are charged \$20 or \$25, depending on day of the week. Open 5 to 10 p.m. nightly through Jan. 2.

On a winter trip to Delaware's beaches, you won't likely be sunbathing, surfing or boogie boarding, but you can soak up the serenity of the sea and get into a festive mood.

*Lewes Lights*, [leweslights.org/home](http://leweslights.org/home), provides a self-guided driving tour of holiday twinkles. See [lewes.com](http://lewes.com) or [leweschamber.com](http://leweschamber.com) for the Maritime History self-guided driving tour. Or, for a virtual holiday tour of nine venues, visit Lewes Historical Society, [historiclewes.org](http://historiclewes.org).

Rehoboth Beach activities are listed at [beach-fun.com](http://beach-fun.com) and [downtownrb.com](http://downtownrb.com).

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# Arts & Style



Howard County Conservancy volunteer Ken Walsh helps connect kids to nature. Our cover story continues on page 23.

## Lifelong carver prefers using chainsaws

*By Ashley Stimpson*

In 2009, when Evelyn Mogren was in her late 40s, she attended her first chainsaw-carving festival.

“I did laps around the exhibitors,” she remembers, “just bugging the carvers to death.”

Finally, one generous carver offered to teach Mogren, right then and there. He placed a hunk of wood in front of her and a chainsaw in her hands. He told her to do what he did.

“He would chop, and I would chop,” Mogren, now 61, said in an interview with the *Beacon*. Later in the day, Mogren’s carving of a pig garnered some of the highest bids in the charity auction.

“It was like fate,” she said, snapping her fingers.

From that day on, Mogren pursued the noisy artform. Today, her massive chainsaw carvings can be seen all over Howard County: the bear that welcomes visitors to Robinson Nature Center, the Lorax hidden in the woods at Camp Ilchester, and myriad animals carved into the tree stumps of Mogren’s many clients.

### A hobby since childhood

Mogren, a self-described “farm girl” and former environmental scientist, isn’t surprised by her artistic passion. Her love of coaxing figures from wood has been a lifetime hobby she has returned to again and again.

She remembers her very first carving experience, back in the third grade in Knightstown, Indiana. Her teacher, Mrs. Gregg, gave her a piece of plaster of Paris. Mogren chipped away until she had created a dog’s head. In junior high school, she carved a “bulky ol” boat for a friend.

In high school, Mogren took a wood-working class and carved horse bookends and elaborate nativity scenes. Forty-some years later, she still owns and cherishes those pieces.

Discouraged from pursuing art as a career by her parents (“There’s no money in that,” they told her), Mogren pursued her other love: science.

But during her years working for the Environmental Protection Agency and then a stint as a stay-at-home mom, Mogren never stopped carving.

She took a course in Scandinavian flat-plane carving, where she learned to properly sharpen knives and carve gnomish figures from small blocks of wood.

More importantly, she learned about the National Wood Carvers Association — and that it published a magazine, called *Chip Chats*. The magazine provided not only inspiration but also the contact information for a Howard County wood-carving club.

While her kids were in

See **CHAINSAW ART**, page 25

**Columbia artist Evelyn Mogren, who has enjoyed carving and woodworking since a youngster, today wields nine heavy chainsaws in creating sculptures from logs and tree stumps.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF EVELYN MOGREN



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## Chainsaw art

From page 22

school, Mogren became active in the group and expanded her carving repertoire to include Christmas ornaments and animal figurines.

She also started working again as an adjunct professor in science at Anne Arundel Community College. Although the college offered a course in ice sculpting — another artform done with a chainsaw — the class was cancelled because it didn't attract enough students.

Mogren decided she would learn to

carve with a chainsaw anyway. That's when she saw the sign for the chainsaw-carving festival that sealed her fate.

### At home with tigers, dragons

Mogren's Columbia home of 26 years passes as a gallery of sorts, where a prowling tiger and a gnarly dragon greet surprised passersby.

The back of her house is also teeming with sculptures as well as art supplies. A pile of donated logs occupies a large corner of the yard.

"I'm a bit of a magpie," she said, referring to the bird notorious for collecting

shiny objects. In a former dining room, Mogren keeps a library of inspiration: old drawings, science magazines, back issues of *Chip Chats*. These items come in handy when someone calls about a commission.

The two-car garage is where Mogren keeps her tools, including nine chainsaws, which are surprisingly heavy. Mogren admits that her work is "hard on the body."

She compares carving to dancing: "You balance, you brace," she said, swaying her body to show me. Hoping to carve for at least another five years, she does yoga and rides a bike to keep fit.

Mogren said her favorite part of chainsaw carving is the conceptualization phase: merging her clients' vision and her own fanciful ideas into a piece while also "keeping in mind the shape and flaws of the wood, the outdoor elements and water."

She enjoys watching her art transform over time after being exposed to the elements. "Unlike cement statues, [the carvings] age and change," she said.

When former clients call to say their carving has a hole in it — from moisture or bugs — Mogren has a quick solution.

"I tell them to put a flower in it."

### BEACON BITS

Feb. 1+

#### PET BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP

The Baltimore Humane Society hosts a free support group for anyone whose pet has died, has been lost or is ailing. The support group takes place the first Tuesday of each month from 7 to 9 p.m. and is led by a bereavement counselor. For more information, visit [bit.ly/BmoreHumaneSupport](http://bit.ly/BmoreHumaneSupport). RSVP by calling (410) 833-8848, ext. 219 or emailing [cemetery@bmorehumane.org](mailto:cemetery@bmorehumane.org).

Jan. 19

#### U.S. NAVAL ACADEMY BRASS BAND ENSEMBLE

Under the direction of Commander Diane E. Nichols, the United States Naval Academy Brass Band Ensemble presents a free concert at the Gordon Center on Wed., Jan. 19 at 7:30 p.m. For more information and to register to attend, visit [bit.ly/USNABand](http://bit.ly/USNABand).

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Ellicott City

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Highland

Schooley Mill Park (12975 Hall Shop Road)

Marriottsville

Alpha Ridge Landfill Wood Waste Area  
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Savage

Savage Park (8400 Fair Street)

Woodbine

Western Regional Park (14800 Carrs Mill Road)



[www.HowardCountyRecycles.org](http://www.HowardCountyRecycles.org)

# Nature lovers

From page 1

be held on Thursdays through March 23. The course costs \$120.

During the course sessions, experts from NASA, NOAA, the University of Maryland and other schools and agencies meet with the participants.

## Teaching kids about nature

Schmeckpeper, who grew up on a Minnesota lake, is particularly interested in water quality. As a volunteer with the Howard County Conservancy, she waded through streams, studying their tiniest inhabitants, with ninth-grade students.

That field trip was part of a new curriculum on climate change that the conservancy and three county schools launched for middle schoolers last fall.

"I'm working directly with kids. I just love it. I would never have thought this is something I [would] like so much," she said. "It's a crucial thing for kids to start thinking about climate change as early as possible," she added.

The conservancy educates both children and adults about the natural world at a 325-acre farm that's now a nature reserve in Woodstock. About 150 to 200 volunteers a year help educate students there.

Because the conservancy focuses on daytime programs with school children,

around 70 percent of volunteers are retired, said Executive Director Meg Boyd, who is 51 and came to the conservancy with a land conservation background.

"Older volunteers bring such a wealth of experience and skills to our community of naturalists. We always say that, to volunteer with us, you do not need to be a nature expert; you just need to love nature," she said.

## From banker to teacher

Ralph Massella is another conservancy volunteer who became an environmentalist as he grew older. The Catonsville resident, 71, spent his career as a mortgage banker.

About 25 years ago, he participated in a program that included a week of wilderness survival. "I learned which trees grow where, how to survive, what plants are edible. That opened up this whole world," he said.

"I liked to hike and camp as a kid, but I never got into this level of understanding. I

feel terrible for not paying attention earlier, [not] having a clue. That [experience] really lit me up."

After retirement, Massella became a volunteer ranger for Patapsco Valley State Park, but found himself doing park cleanup tasks.

In contrast, at the conservancy he enjoys being able to interact with kids. Because the programs are primarily outdoors, they've continued through the pandemic.

Last fall, Massella helped students learn about the tree canopy and soil erosion, and how aquatic life less than an inch long can help gauge the health of a stream.

But in some ways, rather than optimism for the future, Massella said he felt frustration after the COP26 global climate change conference in Glasgow in November.

"The U.S. is the funniest place on earth... We burned down everything, dug up every-

See **NATURE LOVERS**, page 25

## FROM PAGE 26

### ANSWERS TO SCRABBLE

SCRABBLE GRAMS SOLUTION	SCORE
U N S H A R P	74
U I N T E R	60
N K W F I J	74
L C E W A R O	61
W A R F A R F	63
<b>PUR SCORE 773-020</b>	<b>332</b>

### ANSWERS TO CROSSWORD

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### BEACON BITS

Ongoing

#### AMERICAN RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE

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Jan.

#### DROP-IN ART-MAKING

Bring the grandkids to the Walters Art Museum on Saturdays or Sundays during January for free art-making activities that can be done in the museum or taken home. For more information, visit [bit.ly/WaltersArmaking](http://bit.ly/WaltersArmaking) or call (410) 547-9000.

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## Nature lovers

From page 24

thing, and now we're telling people around the world they can't do that. We're the most patronizing people on the planet," he said.

"I don't know if we'll ever get all our ducks in a row. We're not getting anywhere. People are more interested in making money than saving the planet."

Although Massella is worried about the future his two grandchildren will face, he said he's glad to be a small part of the solution by educating children about their role in helping the environment.

### 'A privilege and a duty'

HoCo Climate Action is another group working to engage residents to confront climate change. The organization began in 2007 as a four-week discussion circle on climate and grew from there.

Today, its newsletter is distributed to more than 1,400 subscribers. Many members are older adults, including the group's entire six-member steering committee.

"Many of our members are retired, concerned for the next generations, and now have the time to volunteer and work on climate issues," steering committee member Liz Feighner wrote in an email.

"We believe that acting during this critical window of time is both a privilege and a duty. What we all do now will determine whether future generations can thrive in a

stable climate and equitable world."

The group works on many fronts. Its members have attended numerous rallies, and HoCo Climate Action sponsored a bus to the 2014 People's Climate March in New York — one of the largest climate protests held in the country.

The group has also collaborated with communities across Maryland to ban fracking in the state and increase the amount of solar and wind energy used in the county.

Working with students is also a priority. The group has shown the climate change documentary, "This Changes Everything," at Howard Community College, and makes presentations at the college's annual sustainability day. Before the pandemic, it gave high school students rides to Washington climate rallies and youth events.

Back at the Howard County Conservancy, Schmeckpeper said it might be easy to get discouraged at the rapid pace of climate change already taking place — from out-of-control wildfires in the West to devastating floods, such as those that so impacted Ellicott City.

But she has no interest in wringing her hands and giving up.

"What I enjoy about the conservancy is it is so careful to impart hope. It's not all gloom and doom," Schmeckpeper said.

"If kids sense something is hopeless, they become hopeless and they turn off and don't try. We can't let that happen. I'm going to keep doing this 'til I drop."

Learn about these and many other local environmental groups and volunteer opportunities from Live Green Howard, a project of the county government. For a list of organizations, visit [livegreenhoward.com/community/local-environmental-groups](http://livegreenhoward.com/community/local-environmental-groups).

## BEACON BITS

Jan. 13+ **SINATRA AND FRIENDS**

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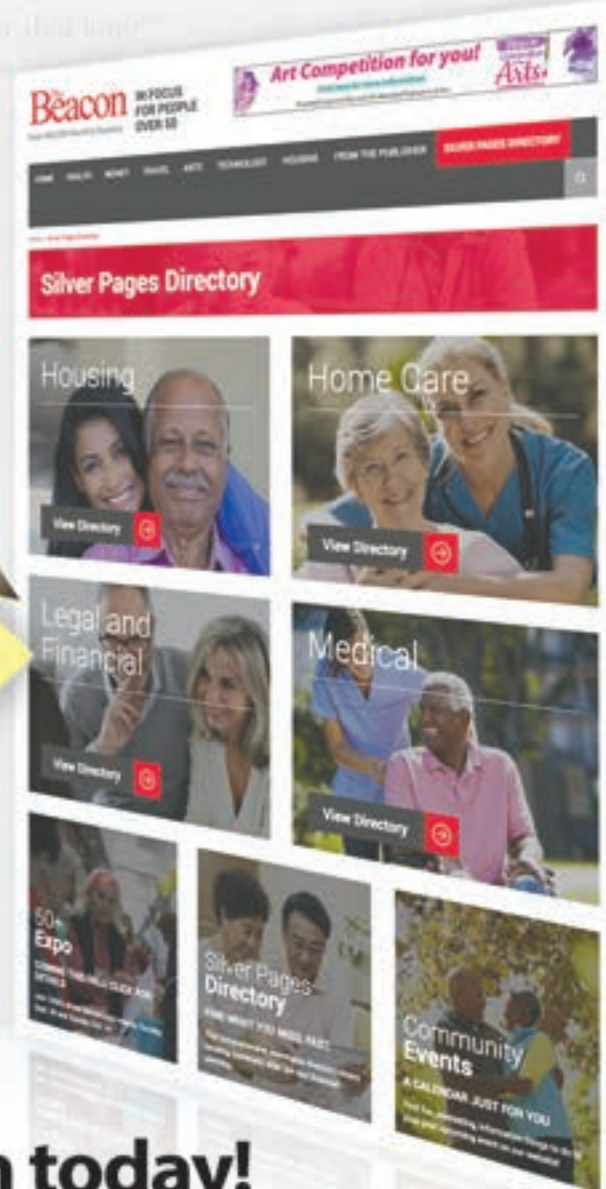
Orchestra in this program that takes place Thurs., Jan. 13 through Sun., Jan. 16.

The concert is livestreamed on Fri., Jan. 14 at 8 p.m. Tickets for the in-person concert range from \$25 to \$90; the livestreamed event costs \$9.99. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit [my.bsomusic.org/events](http://my.bsomusic.org/events).

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# PUZZLE PAGE

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A <sub>1</sub>	A <sub>1</sub>	E <sub>1</sub>	R <sub>1</sub>	R <sub>1</sub>	W <sub>4</sub>	F <sub>4</sub>	RACK 5	

PAR SCORE 270-280 FIVE RACK TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_  
 BEST SCORE 332 TIME LIMIT: 25 MIN \_\_\_\_\_

**DIRECTIONS:** Make a 2- to 7-letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. Finally, 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All the words are in the Official SCRABBLE® Players' Dictionary, 5th Edition.

**Scrabble answers on p. 24.**



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### To The Wise

### By Stephen Sherr

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14						15					16			
17						18					19			
			20		21			22		23		24		
25	26	27				28	29				30			
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53	54					55				56				
57				58					59					
60			61		62		63	64		65		66	67	68
69					70					71				
72					73					74				

**Across**

1. "Mamma," maybe (with 6 Across)
6. See 1 Across
10. Share a boundary with
14. Foe that Harry first met at Madame Malkin's Robe Shop
15. Evidence of Satan's presence
16. Prefix with -rail or -lith
17. Weather Channel graphic
18. Outermost puzzle piece
19. Pocket bread
20. 2019-20 NCAA football champs.
22. "\_\_\_ only as directed"
24. Sue Grafton book \_\_\_ for *Lawless*
25. "SLOW," sometimes
31. Amazes
32. To and \_\_\_
33. One trip around the sun
34. Sit and stand
35. Participates in a pre-execution ritual
37. Demanding gamemaster
40. Late Night host following David, Conan, and Jimmy
42. Some golfers' projectiles
44. "I double dog \_\_\_ you"
45. Gave it your best shot
47. Tidy
48. Mauna \_\_\_ (highest Hawaiian peak)
49. Ambush
51. Tenn. below
52. First four letters of many letters
53. Hook and line (but not sinker)
57. Unproductive habit
58. Start to INITIATE
59. Limit of a tempest or a teacup
60. Group of soldiers
62. Swipes a credit card
65. Drainage channel
69. Item on an iPhone screen
70. "I love the gray \_\_\_ between right and wrong" (Dan Brown)
71. TV studio sign
72. Outdoor wedding protection
73. Some are famous, with 74 Across
74. See 73 Across

**Down**

1. One before HST
2. One of the songwriting Gershwin Brothers
3. "Far out!"
4. Burns with steam
5. Simple mannequin
6. Tribulation
7. Like most prime numbers
8. Member of a disreputable gallery
9. Semi-formal, at least
10. Bob Dylan used one to "go electric" at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival
11. Beer mixed with whiskey
12. Reverse a tubal ligation
13. Part of an IHOP Quick 2-Egg Breakfast
21. Malnourished
23. Summers on the French Riviera
25. Marilyn Monroe's was 24 inches in her Blue Book Modeling Agency files
26. "For sale by \_\_\_"
27. Compensation for loss
28. The Polar Express, for one
29. Stressful spot
30. Panty or pantry
36. Image on the Treasury Department's seal
38. Mountain nymph of Greek mythology
39. Approaches the train station
41. Seville : Senor :: Hamburg : \_\_\_
43. He sang lead on *Yellow Submarine*
46. Painter of *The Burning Giraffe*
50. One in a long distance relationship
52. Game tile
53. Apple or pineapple
54. "An \_\_\_ of performance is worth pounds of promises" (Mae West)
55. Kate Middleton wore one on her wedding day
56. Recipient of survivor's benefits
61. Angry Birds explosive
63. Possible answer in 20 Questions
64. Got into position on a Ferris wheel
66. La Brea hazard
67. Spanish knight, El \_\_\_
68. Many mins.

**Answers on page 24.**

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