

# New Horizons



Omaha Marian High School President Mary Higgins will retire at the end of the 2021-22 school year. Prior to joining the Marian staff in 2014, Mary spent 39 years at Creighton University as its softball coach, as an assistant athletic director, and as an administrator.

**Nick Schinker profiles Higgins on pages 8 and 16.**

## Senior Companion



This month, Lucille Frizzell is celebrating her 20th anniversary as a Senior Companion with the Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging.  
**See page 9.**

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# Dreamweaver Foundation’s project will create holiday cards for 3,000 older adults

The Dreamweaver Foundation – a nonprofit organization dedicated to fulfilling the dreams of terminally ill older adults – is hosting an open house where guests will create 3,000 handwritten cards which will be sent to local older adults to help brighten and cheer their holiday season.

Called the *Making Spirits Bright Holiday Card Open House*, the event is scheduled for Wednesday, Nov. 10 from 4 to 7 p.m. at the Dreamweaver Foundation’s Carson Headquarters, 14600 Branch St. in Omaha.

Holiday cards, art supplies, refreshments, and cheer will be provided.

“The past 18 months have been hard on seniors in our community,” said the Dreamweaver Foundation’s Executive Director Cheri Mastny. “Let’s lift their spirits by surprising them with handwritten holiday cards that have personalized notes of cheer.”



**Dreamweaver**  
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Mastny said the holidays aren’t always joyful for older men and women who are lonely and isolated.


“This open house is an opportunity for individuals and small groups to come together to make the spirits of seniors bright,” she added.

To learn more, contact [katrina.wulf@dreamweaver.org](mailto:katrina.wulf@dreamweaver.org).


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## COVID requires VAS to alter Medicare Open Enrollment appointments

Due to concerns created by COVID-19, Volunteers Assisting Seniors (VAS) has been forced to cancel its Medicare Open Enrollment appointments scheduled through Dec. 7 at Doane University’s Omaha campus.

The events were designed to help participants save money on their prescription drug costs in 2022 by reviewing their Medicare Part D or Medicare Advantage coverage.

Trained and certified VAS counselors will still be offering Medicare Part D or Medicare Advantage reviews by phone on weekdays. A limited number of phone reviews will be available on Saturdays.

A limited number of in-person appointments are being offered at the VAS office in the Center Mall, 1941 S. 42nd St., #312. Counselors and participants will be required to wear a mask during the review.

For more information, call VAS at 402-444-6617.

## Call Beth at 402-444-6536 ENOA looking for volunteers to become Ombudsman Advocates

The Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging is looking for men and women age 21 and older to join its Long-term Care Ombudsman Program which is co-sponsored by the Nebraska State Ombudsman Program.

ENOA’s Long-term Care Ombudsmen volunteer in local long-term care facilities and assisted living communities to protect the residents’ rights, well-being, and quality of life.

Ombudsmen must complete 20 hours of initial classroom training and 12 hours of additional training every two years.

Volunteers learn about the residents’ rights, aging issues, Medicare, Medicaid, communication skills, how to investigate the residents’ complaints, the importance of confidentiality, and about the federal and state rules, regulations, and laws regarding Nebraska’s long-term care facilities and assisted living communities.

Before being assigned to a long-term care facility or an assisted living community, new volunteers will make four visits to a site with an experienced Ombudsman Advocate to learn more about what the program entails. After a three-month probationary period, the new volunteers are certified as Ombudsman Advocates.

Certified Ombudsman Advocates will be assigned to a long-term care facility or an assisted living community where they’ll visit for two hours a week to meet with administrators, residents, and the residents’ family members to address concerns.

For more information, please call Beth at 402-444-6536.

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Keep them safe, entertained

# Preparing yourself, your home for a visit by the grandchildren

By Sandra Aris

Whether they live around the corner or three states away, a visit from the grandkids is something every grandparent looks forward to and enjoys. Keeping the children happy, entertained, and out of harm’s way, however, can be a challenge when your home has been an empty nest for years

Preparing your house for a visit from your grandchildren involves more than just hiding cords, baby proofing cabinets, and getting the youngsters a new toy. Certain tips and tricks can make their visit fun and keep you from worrying about their safety.

Here are a few suggestions:

• **Create a play-safe area.** Kids are notorious for laying their toys around the house and playing in whatever room or area they’re interested in at the moment. They may start off in the living room but can then easily move their toys to the bathroom or the garage. Designating one room or area in the house as the playroom can keep their

toys organized, minimize safety risks, and give the children a structured environment where to play. You’ll feel like your place is under control.

• **Be ready for medical emergencies.** First aid kits can come in handy and having a car seat inside your vehicle for potential hospital visits is important, especially with rambunctious toddlers and babies. Be prepared no matter if they need a bandage when they fall and cut their hand, an EpiPen for allergic reactions, or break their arm and have to go to the emergency room. Preparing for medical emergencies can seem tedious, but it’s important to be ready and have a plan to expect the unexpected.

• **Protect them with clothes.** For grandchildren just learning to walk or crawl, comfortable clothing can help maintain their balance and protect them from the inevitable falls. Shoes with sturdy soles not only protect the bottom of their feet but stops them from wobbling. Pants that can protect the high-injury zones on their body (knees and butt) can help them get back up easier.

• **Go grocery shopping.** For kids eating solid foods an extra trip to the grocery store is a necessity when you’re expecting the grandchildren. Portioned snacks such as bags of goldfish, string cheese, and cookies can be good treats while apple slices, baby carrots, and pretzels are healthy alternatives. Having a variety of snacks is important to give kids options and keep their bellies full.

• **Prepare for tiny hands and feet.** Your empty nester home is probably filled with convenient spaces to reach your medications, knives, glasses, and more. When dealing with curious and tiny hands and feet, setting items in easy to reach places is dangerous. Kids are prone to grab anything near them to play with, throw, eat, etc. Ensure that every item that’s normally found on countertops and tables is either put away or out of reach.

(Aris is a child safety expert.)



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# New Horizons

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Wife’s book chronicles couple’s battle with cancer, UNMC’s response

By Shauna Hockett

If you’re looking for an inspirational story that’s raw, genuine, real, full of uncertainty, but covered by the undeniable hand of God, you’ve come to the right place. As you read about our journey, prepare to be filled with hope and be reminded there’s good happening every day in the world.

My husband, Jeff, and I had been married just over three years when we received news on Nov. 7, 2014, that Jeff, barely past age 30, was diagnosed with



Indiana residents Shauna and Jeff Hockett.

Stage IV cancer. In the darkness of that doctor’s office, we prayed for the light of God to overshadow our fears and to bring miracles our way.

Jeff and I live in Indiana. At the time of his diagnosis with lymphoma and leukemia, he had just finished his master’s degree in business, was touring with a country band, and working full time.

About two months into Jeff’s treatment a stranger named Ann, entered our lives. Her stepson had been diagnosed with the same disease as my husband. Ann

and her stepson had sought treatment in Omaha, but sadly, he died a few days after his arrival at the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

Ann insisted Jeff and I receive a second opinion from the world-renowned UNMC physician Dr. Julie Vose. Ann paid for our flight to Omaha as well as for our lodging and a rental car. She also set up the appointment for us with Dr. Vose.



UNMC physician  
Dr. Julie Vose.

When we returned home, Jeff received more rounds of chemotherapy, but became sicker and weaker. He eventually developed a tumor at the base of his skull and received multiple rounds of brain radiation.

We made a second trip to Omaha and learned Jeff needed an allogeneic stem cell transplant in either Nebraska or Indiana. After lots of prayer and clarification, we decided to go to Nebraska for the transplant.

Then on July 28, 2015, an Indiana doctor told us Jeff would die from this awful disease and that end-of-life care should be discussed. Unwilling to give up, we were emergency airlifted to Omaha.

Dr. Vose’s – who put Jeff through some rigorous treatments – never gave up on my husband as she fought to save his life.

Jeff’s brother was a 100% match to be his donor, so on Sept. 28, 2015, my husband received his stem cell transplant.

We spent a few more months in Omaha as Jeff healed. Then in January 2016, we returned home to Indiana.

Life after cancer certainly has its challenges and the journey is never over, but Jeff and I continue to have faith God will continue to use our story to help others.

Throughout our ordeal, I blogged and shared updates with our friends and family. I was encouraged to write a book about our journey, and on Sept. 28, 2020, I released my book titled *Blood So Beautiful*.

For more information about the book, log online to [bloodsobautiful.com](http://bloodsobautiful.com).

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Nebraskans walk dogs 5.63 times weekly

Study examines the frequency of dogwalking, differences in age groups, parts of the country

How often do we walk our dogs? During the pandemic, 36% of American dogs gained weight. Last year, we were all guilty of feeding our pups extra scraps at the dinner table or gifting our dogs one too many treats while stuck in our homes. We were indulging and our pets followed suit.

One of the best ways we can keep ourselves and our pups physically active is by taking walks either daily or multiple times per day, depending on the age, health, and energy level of your furry friend.

Tractive recommends one walk per day for smaller breeds or other companion dogs like Chihuahuas, Dachshunds, or Pugs, while high-energy breeds like Border Collies, Dalmatians, Australian Shepherds, or Labrador Retrievers need multiple walks per day (20 to 25 minutes per walk).

How many of us are actually walking our dog multiple times per day? The team at OneVet conducted a survey to investigate. In a July 2021 online survey, it asked more than 2,100 dog parents across the U.S. to tell it how many times they walk their dogs in an average week. From there, they were able to find the states that walk their dogs the most and the least. Dog-walking habits were also uncovered by gender and generation.

Further, OneVet asked canine parents the following questions:

- What time of day do you prefer to walk your dog?
- Who do you trust to walk your dog—dogwalkers, neighbors, friends, or family?
- How does dogwalking affect your physical and mental health?
- Do you practice good dogwalking habits, checking hot pavement and poop pick-up?

Best dogwalker awards go to pooch parents in Alabama and New York. Residents in these two states walk their dogs the most in an average week. Alabama respondents walk their dogs 10.45 times per week on average (46% higher than the national average of 7.17 times per week). New York respondents take their pups for a stroll 10.14 times per week on average. Nebraska comes somewhere in the middle with 5.63 walks per week.

Where things get problematic is when OneVet looked at the average number of weekly walks for states like Oklahoma, Vermont, and Ohio. Pup parents in Oklahoma may be extremely pressed for time or have dogs that don't do well in heat because Oklahoma respondents only walk their dogs 3.67 times per week on average. That's not even the equivalent of walking your dog every other day. Vermont (4.25 walks weekly) and Ohio (4.71 walks weekly) also landed on the bottom. Shockingly, residents from 50% of states included in the OneVet survey walk their dogs less than once per day.

What does dogwalking cadence look like when OneVet zooms in on specific generations? According to survey results, Baby Boomers walk their dogs almost twice as often as Gen Z dog parents, which makes sense given many Baby Boomers are retirees with ample dogwalking hours on their hands. Meanwhile, Gen Z is comprised of busy students and college grads entering the workforce. At 8.24 and 7.12 weekly walks on average, Gen X and millennial dog parents are at least walking their dogs once per day.

OneVet's findings show many dog parents are skeptical when it comes to letting others walk their furry pal. An overwhelming majority of respondents, 93%, said they have never hired a dogwalker. Dog owners seem to only put faith in themselves or their significant others, and neighbors are the least trusted with Fido.

- Other eyebrow-raising insights include:
- 77% of dog parents check how hot the pavement is before walking their dogs during the summer.
  - 48% of dog parents will walk their dog in rain or shine while 41% have no qualms about walking their dog in the snow.
  - 25% of dog moms avoid walking their dogs at night because they feel unsafe. Only 10% of dog dads say the same. One third of millennials feel unsafe walking their dogs at night.
  - 15% of Gen X dog parents admit to leaving their dog's poop behind on walks.

Dogwalking is a proven method for releasing endorphins and alleviating stress in yourself and your pup. It's a reliable activity for exercise, but also for boosting moods and improving mental clarity. According to survey responses, three-fourths of dog parents said owning a dog keeps them more physically active, and 69% of dog parents said their mental health has improved since getting a dog. Only 3% said it has gotten worse.

Here are a few other behavioral and health benefits of dogwalking:

- It teaches your pup discipline and to follow instructions by matching your pace.
- It can help reduce harmful chewing or scratching.
- It lowers the dogwalker's blood pressure.
- Walking regularly strengthens the dogwalker's muscles and bones.

If you're a new or a longtime dog parent, you know a healthy pet is a happy pet.  
(OneVet provided this information.)

Food, exercise project needs participants

Men and women are needed for an exercise and food choice research study through the University of Nebraska Omaha's Department of Gerontology. The study is designed to better understand the relationship between exercise and food choices.


Participants must be ages 65 to 75, a healthy, non-smoker of stable weight, able to bicycle for 45 minutes, provide blood


samples, attend one Zoom session and three lab visits in Omaha including two overnight fasts and two supervised exercise sessions.

Compensation is available for participants who will also receive free food and an explanation of fitness and body fat.

For more information, please visit gerontology.unomaha.edu/eatfc or contact Sarah at shubner@unomaha.edu.

Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging





# Bringing Care to the Caregiver

“From supporting home-based care and caregivers to building safe and accessible communities – counties are leveraging local, state, and federal resources to help older adults and their families.”

Mary Ann Borgeson  
Douglas County Commissioner

## November is National Caregiver Month

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## Fremont Friendship Center

You're invited to visit the Fremont Friendship Center, 1730 W. 16th St. (Christensen Field). The facility is open Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Friday from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

A meal is served weekdays @ 11:30 a.m. Reservations, which are due by noon the business day prior to the meal the participant wishes to enjoy, can be made by calling 402-727-2815. A \$4 contribution is suggested for the meal.

- **Nov. 3:** Play Catch Phrase @ 10 a.m. and Horse Derby @ 10:30 a.m.

- **Nov. 4:** *It's All About Home Healthcare* @ 10 a.m.

- **Nov. 10:** Flag ceremony @ 10 a.m. followed by music by Pam Kragt @ 10:30 a.m.

- **Nov. 11:** Thank our veterans for their service.

- **Nov. 17:** Music by Julie Couch @ 10 a.m.

- **Nov. 18:** Presentation on *It's All About Falls* by Ashley, a Fremont occupational therapist @ 10 a.m.

- **Nov. 24:** Music by Billy Troy @ 10:30 a.m. followed by our annual Thanksgiving dinner @ 11:30 a.m.

The 43rd annual Parks & Recreation Craft Show is scheduled for Dec. 4 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the main arena at Christensen Field. The \$1 entrance fee comes back to the Fremont Friendship Center.

For meal reservations and more information, please call Laurie at 402-727-2815.

## Millard Senior Center

You're invited to visit the Millard Senior Center at Montclair, 2304 S. 135th Ave., this month for the following:

- **Nov. 1:** Book Club @ 1 p.m. will discuss *Four Winds* by Kristin Hannah.

- **Nov. 4:** Chair volleyball with UNMC nursing students @ 10 a.m.

- **Nov. 5:** Bring in treats to share.

- **Nov. 8:** THEOS (Together Helping Each Other Socially) @ 12:30 p.m. Call Mary at 402-393-3052 for more information on THEOS. Call 402-546-1270 by Nov. 5 for noon lunch reservations.

- **Nov. 10:** Board meeting at 9:30 a.m. Bring your questions or concerns to Tamara or any board member.

- **Nov. 10:** Making sundresses @ 10 a.m. for women in Haiti.

- **Nov. 15:** Bring four people @ noon if you want to play bridge.

- **Nov. 17:** Presentation on Medicare by Michael Hoyt.

- **Nov. 18:** Presentation on the importance of good nutrition by UNMC students @ 9:30 a.m.

- **Nov. 22:** Book Club @ 1 p.m. will discuss Erik Larson *Betty's Dead Wake: The Last Crossing of the Lusitania*.

The center will be closed on Nov. 11 for Veterans Day and on Nov. 25 and 26 for Thanksgiving.

For more information, please call 402-546-1270.

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## Alzheimer's Association: Make brain health an important part of your post-pandemic life

With COVID-19 vaccines rolling out across the country, many Americans are resuming their lives and returning to normal. The Alzheimer's Association's Nebraska Chapter is encouraging Nebraska residents to make brain health an important part of their return to normal.

"The past year has been extremely challenging for most Americans," said Angel Horton Frank, director of communications for the Alzheimer's Association's Nebraska Chapter. "Chronic stress, like that experienced during the pandemic, can impact memory, mood, and anxiety. As Nebraska residents begin to return to normal, we encourage them to make brain health a priority."

The Alzheimer's Association's Nebraska Chapter offers the following suggestions to promote brain health and to help Nebraska residents restore their mental well-being:

### • **Recommit to brain-healthy basics:**

Evidence suggests healthy behaviors took a back seat for many Americans during the pandemic. Gym memberships were put on hiatus, social engagement became more challenging, and many Americans swapped out healthful eating for their favorite comfort foods, take out meals, and frequent snacking while working remotely. One study published recently found participants gained nearly 1.5 pounds per month over the past year on average.

The Alzheimer's Association — through its U.S. POINTER Study — is examining the role lifestyle interventions, including diet, may play in protecting cognitive function. Right now, many experts agree people can improve their brain health and reduce the risk of cognitive decline by adopting healthy lifestyle habits, preferably in combination, including:

- **Exercise regularly:** Regular cardiovascular exercise helps increase blood flow to the body and brain, and there's strong evidence regular physical activity is linked to better memory and thinking.

- **Maintain a heart-healthy diet:** Stick to a meal schedule full of fruits and vegetables to ensure a well-balanced diet. Some evidence suggests a healthful diet is linked to cognitive performance. The Mediterranean and DASH diets are linked to better cognitive functioning and help reduce risk of heart disease as well.

- **Get proper sleep:** Maintaining a regular, uninterrupted sleep pattern benefits physical and psychological health, and helps clear waste from the brain. Adults should get at least seven hours of sleep each night and try to keep a routine bedtime.

- **Stay socially and mentally active:** Meaningful social engagement may support cognitive health, so stay connected with friends and family. Engage your mind by doing activities that stump you, like completing a jigsaw puzzle or playing strategy games. Challenge yourself further by learning a new language or a musical instrument.

- **Return to normal at your own pace:** Many Americans are eager for a return to normal life following the pandemic, but others are anxious. In fact, one recent survey found 49% of adults report feeling uncomfortable about returning to in-person interactions when the pandemic ends.

For those feeling anxious, the Alzheimer's Association suggests taking small steps. It may also be important to set boundaries



and communicate your preferences to others in your social circles.

- **Help others:** There's evidence to suggest helping others during the pandemic not only makes them feel better, it may also be good for you as well. Research shows helping others in a crisis can be an effective way to alleviate stress and anxiety. One study published during the pandemic found adults over age 50 who volunteer for about two hours per week have a substantially reduced risk of dying, higher levels of physical activity, and an improved sense of well-being.

To help others and yourself, volunteer in your community, run errands, deliver meals to a homebound older adult, or donate to a favorite cause.

- **Unplug and disconnect:** Technology has dominated our daily lives during the pandemic like never before. While technology has kept us connected through COVID-19, it has also created fatigue for many Americans. Experts warn excessive stimulation coming from our phones, computers, social media sources, and news reports can add to our already heightened anxiety levels. To avoid technology overload, experts advise setting limits on your screen time, avoid carrying your phone everywhere, and disconnecting from digital devices at bedtime.

- **Control your stress before it controls you:** In small doses, stress teaches the brain how to respond in healthy ways to the unexpected, inconvenient, or unpleasant realities of daily life. Prolonged or repeated stress, however, can wear down and damage the brain, leading to serious health problems including depression, anxiety disorders, memory loss, and increased risk for dementia.

Reports indicate Alzheimer's and dementia caregivers are especially vulnerable to physical and emotional stress.

The Alzheimer's Association offers tips to help manage caregiver stress. Meditation, exercise, listening to music, or returning to a favorite activity you've missed during the pandemic are some ways to manage stress. Do what works best for you.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has been an overwhelming time for all of us," Horton Frank said. "It's important for people to know there are steps we can take to lessen the stress and anxiety we might be feeling. It can be easy to take brain health for granted, but now more than ever, it's a good idea to make it a priority."

The Alzheimer's Association and representatives from more than 40 countries are working together to study the short and long-term consequences of COVID-19 on the brain and nervous system in people at different ages and from different genetic backgrounds.

For more information, please visit alz.org or call 800-272-3900.



# Studies show packaging meds can increase patient adherence, improve patient outcomes

By Zachary Carroll, Pharm.D. Candidate & David Kohll, Pharm.D.

Recently, individually packaging medications has become a new and innovative way for pharmacies to increase patient adherence. Some estimates claim patient adherence for chronic medications can be as low as 50%, so it's up to the pharmacies and pharmacists to find ways to increase this number to help pave the way for better patient outcomes.

Many people may think about the large \$100 million merger in 2018 between Amazon and PillPack that led Amazon to lead the charge in packaging patient medications, but many of those same people may not know their own pharmacy may have the same capabilities with increased customer service.

New automated packaging machines have been able to crack into the medication packaging market and prepare blister packs in a safe and timely manner for a large number of patients. This has led to an increase in the number of prescriptions filled as many individuals living in their home and those living in long-term care facilities have moved over to them due to the convenience of having a local company fill prescriptions.

However, the question remains if packaging these medications will lead to an increase in patient adherence or outcomes?

A study published in the *Journal of Psychiatric Practice* in 2017 investigated if blister packaging medications would improve prescription adherence in psychiatric patients. This was a randomized trial conducted at Veterans Affairs Medical Centers in the western United States that followed patients in monthly intervals for up to one year.

Patients were randomized into two groups, a blister pack group and a standard pill vial group. By the end of the one-year follow-up period, the patients in the blister pack group showed evidence of better medication adherence than those in the standard pill vial group. This study concluded blister packaging psychiatric patients' medications would lead to better patient adherence when compared to standard

medication packaging. Another study published in *Innovations in Pharmacy* in 2018 investigated if blister packing patient medications, medication therapy management programs, or both would lead to better patient adherence and clinical outcomes compared to traditional medication packaging (pill bottles) for diabetic patients.

The study used a 12-month follow-up and looked at patient pill count scores and Hemoglobin A1c levels to assess patient outcomes. At the end of the 12-month follow-up, the blister pack groups had a statistically significant increase in patient adherence compared to the traditional packaging group. Additionally, the blister pack groups had a statistically significant decrease in hemoglobin A1c at 12 months compared to the traditional packaging group.

This study concluded blister packing patient medications can lead to better overall clinical outcomes and increase patient adherence rates for patients with diabetes.

These two studies are great examples of scientific data showing packaging patient medications can increase patient adherence and even improve overall patient outcomes.

Although these studies followed specific patient populations (psychiatric and diabetic), it can be assumed the results could be extrapolated to other patient populations as well.

It's for these reasons many pharmacies have started to or are looking to start individual packaging programs for their respective patient populations.

Although every pharmacy may not be equipped to offer these services, many are and they're looking to grow their business model as well.

Being able to set up a local operation for patient packaging is great for the community and patients because it can grow local jobs, put money into the community, and allow for great customer service.

Additionally, it's important to know your physician may change your medication based on subjective information such as how you're feeling and objective information such as lab results.

If you aren't taking your medication correctly or as prescribed, these changes could lead to an increase in adverse effects. Therefore, it's important to ask if your pharmacy can or is willing to start offering medication packaging services for you so you can be as adherent as possible to your medications.

(Carroll and Kohll are with Kohll's Rx in Omaha.)



# Tips to help diabetics with low or no vision

If you're a diabetic with decreased vision, you're not alone. Diabetes is the leading cause of new cases of blindness in the U.S. Nearly half of all diabetics will develop diabetic retinopathy.

Diabetics know managing this condition requires monitoring everything from what you eat to how much insulin you need, not to mention keeping your medication organized. Vision loss changes how you take care of your condition, but a few adaptations can help you.

Here are some suggestions for diabetics who have low or no vision:

- Use a magnifier with your current monitor.
- Position a flexible-arm task lamp near your better eye.
- Obtain a monitor that has a larger-print display, back-lighting, or contrast.
- Obtain a talking monitor that announces your glucose result, battery level, and audio steps to set monitor features.
- Pair a Continuous Glucose Monitor with a smartphone.

Here are some adaptive devices for measuring insulin for diabetics with low or no vision:

- Use a syringe magnifier with a flexible-arm task lamp against a contrasting background.
- Depending on your insulin needs, use a Safe Shot Syringe Loader or a Prodigy Count-a-Dose to measure the correct insulin amount.
- Request a prescription for an insulin pen. Many are disposable, and one click represents one unit.

Here are some adaptations to help diabetics follow their nutrition plan:

- Portion your food with nested, large print, color contrasting, or color-coded measuring cups and spoons.
- Read food labels with a magnifier, a bar code reader, or sighted assistance.
- Save nutrition information in Braille, on large print notecards or an audio device like the PenFriend.

New tools and some creativity can keep you in control of your diabetes if you have low or no vision. Outlook Enrichment is here to help. Call 531-365-5051 to learn more.

## Metro Women's Club

The Metro Women's Club is hosting a social and luncheon on Tuesday, Nov. 9 at Anthony's Steakhouse, 7220 F St. The social begins at 11:30 a.m. followed by a noon lunch. Masks will be required.

Scott Gray, the Omaha Police Department's executive deputy chief, will be the featured speaker.

For more information about the luncheon or joining the Metro Women's Club, please call Virginia at 402-319-1121.

### Medicare Open Enrollment Appointments Available

**Review your Medicare Prescription Drug coverage or Medicare Advantage plan by December 7<sup>th</sup>.**

As an independent advisor, I am not tied to one carrier, which enables me to provide objective advice on the plan most suitable for you.

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# Higgins proud of her work at Creighton, Marian

By Nick Schinker  
Contributing Writer

If all the high school girls, collegiate women athletes, and adult women who benefitted from the vision, determination, and leadership of Mary Higgins were to give her an ovation, the applause would be deafening.

As an undergraduate at Creighton University in 1973, her drive and desire sparked the creation of the school’s softball team, which paved the way for other women’s sports and served to launch the Creighton women’s athletic program. Not long after graduating from C.U., Mary became Creighton’s Division I softball coach and led the teams for 17 years, guiding several into the national rankings and the Women’s College World Series. She earned many accolades including her induction as the first woman into the Creighton Athletic Hall of Fame.

After retiring from coaching in 1992, she served as Assistant Athletic Director, and then joined Creighton’s administration team as Assistant Vice Provost for Student Retention and Pre-Major Advising, where she coached students toward successful career paths.

In 2014, she left Creighton and returned to her high school alma mater, Marian High School, to become the first alumna in the school’s 59-year-history to be named president. A veteran of the school’s Alumnae Board and its Board of Directors, as president she has overseen fundraising for several major projects, including the current upgrade of – no real surprise – Marian’s athletic fields and facilities.

Next year, Higgins has new plans. Retirement.

First, there is one more accolade heading her way. The evening of Dec. 10, Higgins will be inducted into the National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA) Hall of Fame, the most prestigious award given by the NFCA, during its national convention in Las Vegas. It is an honor that is both fitting and well-earned.

In her letter supporting the NFCA Hall of Fame nomination, Kristen Galles, a summa cum laude graduate of Creighton University, an honors graduate of Washington University’s School of Law (in St. Louis), and Higgins’ former student manager, described Higgins as a trailblazer, inspirational leader, and role model.

*“Mary Higgins was Creighton University for 45 years – from the day she entered as a student in 1969 to the day she retired from the univer-*



During Mary’s 17 years as Creighton’s softball coach, the Jays won 564 games.



In 2014, Higgins retired from Creighton University and became the first Marian High School alumna to be named its president in the school’s 59-year history.

*sity entirely in 2014,” Galles wrote. “She was and is a servant leader who dedicated herself to Creighton and her Lady Jay Family.”*

Retirement or not, Higgins says, she will always love Creighton and Marian.

If Mary Higgins was an animal, she’d likely be a bluejay.

Her late father, Gene Higgins, was a Creighton graduate who worked in marketing and communications at Mutual/United of Omaha his entire career. Her mother, Dottie, 94, attended Creighton and remains a Creighton fan.

Higgins’ husband, Patrick Kennison, is a Creighton Prep grad. They met when Mary was a freshman at Creighton University, and he was a junior. “I was going out with his best friend, who dumped me,” she recalls. “We started talking, and we kept talking for years.” They will celebrate their 43rd anniversary this year.

They have two children, David “Dewey” Kennison, a graduate of Creighton University’s School of Law who is a partner at Baird Holm, LLP; and Julie Schaefer, M.D., a Marian and C.U. alumna as well as a graduate of the Creighton School of Medicine.

Believe it or not, both also met their future spouses at Creighton. They have produced a total of four granddaughters – Annie, 4 and Nora, 2, in Minnesota with Julie and her husband Joe Schaefer; and Margaret, 5, and Kate, 3, with Dewey and his wife, Molly Millea, in Omaha – all quite possibly destined to become Creighton alums.

“Well,” Higgins says, “we are all die-hard Creighton fans.”

Higgins grew up in St. Bernard’s Parish and attended kindergarten at Marian, back when it was offered until the school needed more space for the high school. In eighth grade, she moved

when her family built a home in the Keystone area.

Prior to the passage of Title IX in 1972 (which prohibits the exclusion on the basis of sex of any person from participation in, the benefits of, or discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance) there were no organized sports for girls or women through the American school system.

Higgins loved athletics and playing sports with her friends, eventually playing softball on a Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) team through Holy Name Parish, where her coach was George Reinhardt, the late father of *New Horizons* Editor Jeff Reinhardt.

She kept that love of softball into her college years, when at Creighton University as a resident advisor her senior year she noticed many students who happened to bring ball gloves with them to school, yet the college had no team.

“I went to the athletic administration to see if they would start a softball program,” she recalls. “Dan Offenburger was the athletic director, and fortunately, he had three daughters, so he listened.”

The answer was yes, and he put Higgins in charge. “He told me to go out and get uniforms, equipment, and put a schedule together,” she says.

She then convinced Offenburger to be the coach. Mary was the Jays’ catcher.

It wasn’t a fancy program. The schedule was patched together by calling other schools. The players were driven to away games occasionally by Tom Apke and other Creighton basketball coaches.

“Softball was the first women’s sport sponsored by Creighton University post Title IX,”

*--Please turn to page 16.*



# Lucille has made an impact in her clients’ lives

Lucille Frizzell, age 84, has been a Senior Companion Program (SCP) volunteer with the Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging for two decades. Sponsored locally by ENOA, the SCP is a national program of AmeriCorps Seniors, formerly the Senior Service Corps. Senior Companions help other older adults maintain their independence by visiting them at home to discuss the news, read mail, play cards, run errands, etc. SCP volunteers must meet income guidelines and complete an enrollment process that includes references and background checks. In exchange for volunteering 15 hours or more per week, Senior Companions receive a \$3 an hour tax-free stipend, mileage reimbursement, an annual physical examination, supplemental accident insurance coverage, and other benefits including an annual recognition luncheon. The stipend does not interfere with rent, disability, Medicaid, or other benefits.

Four days a week for six hours each day, Frizzell visits Alice Mueller, age 85, in Mueller’s midtown Omaha apartment. On a recent visit, Lucille and Alice talked with one another and watched TV as Mueller’s dog, Lucy (named after comic-actress Lucille Ball), sat between the ladies on a sofa across the room from the television. Frizzell who has four children (including one child she adopted) and lots of grand-

kids and great grandkids, became a Senior Companion after seeing a flyer advertising the program. She was tired of sitting around the house and wanted to meet some nice people. “I just fell in love with it (the SCP), and have made some good friends,” said the retired Omaha Housing Authority housekeeper. Mueller, age 85, looks forward to Frizzell’s 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. visits. “She keeps me company and makes sure I eat something and take my meds,” said the former Methodist Hospital housekeeper and mother of five who – like Lucille – has several grandchildren and great grandkids. During the first several months of the pandemic, Frizzell was unable to visit Mueller’s apartment. The ladies stayed in touch, however, through daily phone calls. “It was always nice hearing from her,” Alice said. The in-person visits restarted in July. “Lucille is genuine and compassionate about volunteering. I’ve seen the impact she’s made in her clients’ lives,” said ENOA’s Senior Companion Program Specialist Maddie Cunningham. “Lucille and Alice have an unbreakable relationship that’s centered around friendship and laughter. Lucille is an amazing volunteer and exactly the type of person I’d want to visit my mom if she ever needed the service.” For more information on the SCP, please call 402-444-6536.



Lucille Frizzell (in back) with Alice Mueller.



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## Caregiver Solutions Groups

Being a family caregiver can be difficult. Challenges may include balancing work and family life with caring for a loved one, feeling isolated, navigating senior care and medical systems, caring for a loved one who isn't the same person as before their disease arrived, and more. You don't have to navigate this alone. Join a free Flaherty Consulting Caregiver Solutions Group this month:

• **November 9**

Planning for the Holidays For Your Care Receivers  
St. Vincent de Paul Church  
14330 Eagle Run Drive

• **November 20**

Planning for the Holidays For Your Care Receivers  
Faith Westwood United Methodist Church  
4814 Oaks Lane

While there's no charge, registration is required to attend these sessions. CDC guidelines will be followed. Masks are mandatory and social distancing will be observed.

Contact Nancy Flaherty at 402-312-9324 to register for a meeting or for more information. Flaherty is also available for private consultations.

Visit [flahertyconsulting.net](http://flahertyconsulting.net) to learn more about other available resources and programs.

## Gratitude offers many benefits

By Paula Crozier

When I was growing up and having a bad day, I'd pout, cry, and run to my mother, looking for that comforting hug and whisper with a kiss that said, "Everything is all right, you're beautiful, wanted, and perfectly made in God's image." But I would rarely hear that. My mom was a '70's mom. She was a divorced nurse and frankly, not very emotional.

Instead, I'd hear her stoically say, "If you're going to have a pity party, go to your room. If you're having a bad day, look at all the blessings you have and think of three things you're grateful you have, because there are mil-

lions of children around the world who have much less than you." This was followed by, "I love you, go play."

But this was also the mom who poured iodine and hydrogen peroxide on skinned knees and rubbed the gravel out with a gauze pad. My mom was the one who rarely had bandages, but always had surgical scissors in her housecoat, partnered with medical tape and gauze—the kind that stuck to oily, scabs that never seemed to crust over as the gauze and new skin grew together into one. Nevertheless, I knew she loved me dearly; and feeling grateful was apparently up to me.

Fast forward 40 some years to now. My mom is no longer here. I have three grown girls, one whom has Down syndrome and my husband is often traveling. As an almost empty nester, how can I be grateful more consistently? I know gratitude brings a positive attitude, and calms me, but can we really consistently be in a state of gratitude? If so, what good does it do?

Gratitude has an impact on brain function. Feelings of positivity and gratitude cause the brain neurons to release more dopamine and serotonin, the brain chemicals that increase and enhance mood immediately.

These endorphins are natural antidepressants and with gratitude practiced daily through self-affirmations, gratitude journals, and exercise, these endorphins can almost create the same effects as medications. Don't stop taking medications without the advisement of your physician.

Practicing gratitude is like lifting weights for the brain. The neural pathways strengthen, and this increases overall happiness and wellbeing.

The emotion of gratitude, which we know increases dopamine creating happiness and calmer moods, directly influences our ability to build social reactions and interactions which can lead to building more positive relationships.

Our ability to socially interact on positive levels improves our social interactions which positively affects our overall self-image, which then creates even more positive neurological functions which in turns builds happiness. It all starts with simple grateful thoughts and actions.

Not only does our brain increase levels of dopamine with gratitude, but it has also been shown to activate the limbic system in the brain (the thalamus, hypothalamus, amygdala, hippocampus and cingulate gyrus). These areas, specifically the hypothalamus and amygdala control body temperature, energy, metabolism, stress control, and the release of the stress hormone, cortisol.

A 2006 study of individuals seeking mental health therapy, wrote letters of gratitude and reported a faster and more conclusive recovery over the placebo group who didn't write about gratitude.

Also, the hippocampus is responsible for memories and spatial relationships, and keeping these healthy correlates to memory retention. So, being grateful can be correlated to keeping memories.

When we're grateful, we feel better, we interact better, and we're motivated to care for ourselves. People who regularly practice gratitude reported decreased pain and inflammation and increased exercise, which increases endorphins, which triggers the hypothalamus and metabolism, which lowers cortisol release, which increases vitality.

With all these happy emotions, healthier brain functions, better exercise, lowered stress, and increased mood and motivation, we naturally exercise and work, and that creates a much deeper, natural sleep that allows us to awaken reenergized and ready to engage with our day.

Finally, we live in a chaotic world. There's so much going on and most of it on the news isn't positive. However, being grateful allows our brain to make small changes to become naturally more positive and that equates to being able to naturally handle stress and anxiety much better.

We can process negative things with a much better comprehensive viewpoint and directly not react and overreact to things that would otherwise adversely affect us.

Think of three things you're grateful for each day. Write them in a journal. Tell someone you're grateful they're in your life.

So, at Thanksgiving, when your loved ones go around the table and tell the one thing they're most grateful for, you go last. Tell them you're grateful for gratitude.

(Crozier is the Director of Marketing and Development at the Florence Home in Omaha.)



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# Study: Untreated hearing loss can impact cognitive health

The American Academy of Audiology is urging the public to be aware of the importance of good hearing health. The National Institutes of Health’s National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders states that approximately 28.8 million Americans could benefit from the use of hearing aids. While age is often cited as a factor, there are growing numbers of younger people reporting hearing difficulties.

A study published by the Lancet Commission on Dementia Prevention, Intervention, and Care cited nine risk factors for dementia. Midlife, untreated hearing loss is listed as one of those risk factors. The report also stated dementia typically starts many years before it’s recognized. Untreated hearing loss can impact the brain and your overall cognitive health.

There is also a link between untreated hearing loss and falls. According to a study conducted by the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, an increase in hearing loss in an individual, for instance going from normal hearing to an untreated mild hearing loss, is associated with a three-fold increase in fall risk.

One of the factors in maintaining healthy hearing is being conscious of the degree and amount of loud sound exposure. More than 40 million Americans, ages 20 to 69, have some type of hearing loss with approximately 10 million of those attributable to noise-induced hearing loss.

Managing sound exposure can protect hearing. Many hearing losses are caused by damage to the tiny sensory receptors, or hair cells, in the inner ear. The damage can be caused by too much noise, and it is permanent. However, steps can be taken to prevent this damage.

The simplest way to protect your hearing if you can’t avoid loud sounds is to wear hearing protection. An audiologist can help you identify the right hearing protection for you including custom hearing protection that can provide

a comfortable fit and good sound quality.

The American Academy of Audiology said lengthy or repeated exposure to noise above 85 decibels, can damage hearing. To put that into perspective, noise from fireworks can reach up to 155 decibels. A jet plane taking off is estimated to be 150 decibels. Shooting a gun is around 140 to 175 decibels (depending on the gun). An amplified music concert and an MP3 player with the volume turned all the way up can be as high (or higher) as 120 decibels. Movie action scenes in the theater have been known to reach 100 decibels. Outdoor sounds can pose a risk, too. Lawn mowers are around 85 decibels and chain saws can be 115 to 120 decibels. Compare these with normal conversation that is around 60 to 65 decibels.

The four main ways for protecting your hearing are:

- E: Earplugs
- A: Avoid loud sounds

- R: Reduce the level of sounds
  - S: Shorten time in loud environments
- “There is no doubt people are concerned about their health. Often, though, they don’t think about the importance of hearing health,” said Angela Shoup, Ph.D., president of the American Academy of Audiology.
- “An audiologist educates patients about safe versus unsafe levels for listening. They utilize tools and share resources that empower patients to protect their hearing. Additionally, they perform hearing evaluations and facilitate aural rehabilitation efforts for hearing loss, tinnitus, and certain balance problems.”

Audiologists are equipped to work with the public during the pandemic and are practicing within CDC and local health guidelines.

“Anyone suspecting that his or her hearing has diminished, should see an audiologist and get tested as soon as possible,” said Shoup.

The American Academy of Audiology has audiologists listed on its website by location at [audiology.org](http://audiology.org). Click on “find an audiologist.”

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UNO’s Department of Gerontology recruiting older adults, caregivers for research on social processing

The University of Nebraska Omaha’s Department of Gerontology is looking for healthy adults and caregivers for an older adult with a chronic disease (dementia, cancer, cardiovascular disease, etc.) to participate in a research study about the impact of aging on the neural and behavioral bases of social processing.

The study includes an online, at home component (seven hours over four days) and one in-person visit (two hours and 30 minutes) which will take place at the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

The experiment involves online questionnaires and interviews, computer tasks, saliva collection for hormone analyses, a blood draw, and brain imaging.

Participants must be ages 19 to 90, able to comprehend written and spoken English, have the mobility to travel to UNMC, and have completed a minimum of two years of high school or higher.

Persons with a neurological or psychiatric disease (stroke, depression), drug abuse issues, are taking an anti-depressant medication, using cortisone/prednisone, are on hormone replacement therapy, have vision, hearing, cognitive, or motor difficulties, are pregnant or breastfeeding, or who have metal implanted in their body aren’t eligible to participate in this study.

Compensation for study participation is available. Parking is complementary and located a short walk from the building where the experiment will take place. For more information, please contact Janelle Beadle, Ph.D. at 402-554-5961 or ABELabUNO@gmail.com.



Six steps towards healing, peace

Sometimes, when the weather changes, I’m reminded of past physical injuries. The ankle I broke in my 30s stings a little as does the wrist I broke when I was 70. There are other reminders my body has been through the mill. I limp a little since I broke my hip. I have other surgery scars. All of these reminders are occasions for me to give thanks for the resilience of the human body and for good medical care.

In our Third Chapter of Life, we carry reminders of the events in our lives that hurt us both physically and emotionally. Truthfully the memories of the physical hurts are easier to handle. It’s the memories of emotional hurts that can really drag us down.

The two kinds of emotional hurts I want to discuss here are regrets and unforgiveness. Regrets are often the “woulda-coulda-shoulda” conversations we carry on in our

done to our own spirit. Have we become hardened or cynical? Just notice.

Third, we make a commitment to forgive. This is a decision we’re capable of making if we want to be at peace.

Fourth, we spend some time looking at the offender’s humanity. Besides that bad thing, what are the redeeming qualities of this person? What do we like or admire if we allow ourselves to do so? Each person is more than any mistake he or she has made.

The fifth step is challenging. We ask ourselves if we’re responsible in any way for the hurt that was perpetrated. Many times, we can see how we contributed to the situation. Maybe I provoked the person or perhaps I was too passive. In the case of abuse, it’s important not to blame ourselves for what the other did.

Finally, we offer our forgiveness to this person within our own hearts and minds. Some gesture to represent forgiveness is helpful in putting closure on the event. Once we’ve forgiven, it’s important not to go back and stir up the old hurt. Continuous forgiveness means we let go whenever the old thoughts arise.

The physical scars I carry really don’t bother me that much and, with care, I can be rid of the old emotional scars and be at peace.

(Hemesath is the owner of Encore Coaching. She is dedicated to supporting people in their Third Chapter of Life and is available for presentations. Contact her at nanhemesath@gmail.com.)

Conscious Aging By Nancy Hemesath

heads. “If only I had married my first love, my life would have been happier.” “If only I had saved more for retirement, I would be more comfortable.” “If had been more patient with my children, we could have a better relationship now.” “If only I had visited my ailing mother more often, she would have been happier.”

The guilt trips continue but there’s no benefit from this expended energy. I suggest there are two things we can do when we experience regrets. The first is to forgive ourselves because we know more now than we did then. Most of us did the best we could with what information and circumstances we had at the time. Judging ourselves in hindsight only depresses us.

On the other hand, now that we know more, we can apologize if an apology is called for. Whenever possible we can take care of old business. We also have new opportunities to reach out to others so there will be no new regrets in our lives. Perhaps our mother is deceased, but her sister would love to have us visit.

The other emotional hurts we carry come from people we’ve never forgiven for past offenses. We may not even remember exactly what caused the hurt. Nevertheless, these old, buried feelings sap our energy deep below the surface. Families may be divided over money or some other slight leaving siblings at odds through the years. In our elder years, these grudges can haunt us, leaving us unpeaceful. Often people don’t know what to do with these old hurts.

Here is six-step process that has the potential to heal us and bring us peace. First, uncover the feelings we buried. Allow oneself to feel what we felt then and what we feel now. Writing feelings and thoughts down is a great way to get them out. Be honest about what we’re feeling — this isn’t the time to pretend the hurt isn’t there.

Secondly, we notice what the lack of forgiveness has

Intercultural Senior Center

You’re invited to visit the Intercultural Senior Center (ISC), 5545 Center St.

The facility – open weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. – offers programs and activities Mondays through Fridays from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Participants must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 to attend the ISC. Participants are asked to bring their vaccination cards with them when visiting the ISC.

The ISC offers a light breakfast, lunch, fitness classes, programs, and activities. Lunch reservations are due by 9 a.m. A voluntary contribution is suggested for the meal. Please call 402-444-6529 for reservations.

The center will be closed Nov. 11 for Veterans Day and Nov. 25 and 26 for Thanksgiving.

Monthly food pantries are available for adults ages 50 or older.

ISC’s SAVE bus can bring case management services to your doorstep.

For more information, please call 402- 444-6529.



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**Hemesath program is set for Nov. 10**

Nancy Hemesath’s presentation on retirement being the Third Chapter in Life is scheduled for Wednesday, Nov. 10 at Resurrection Evangelical Lutheran Church, 153 S. McKenna Ave. in Gretna. The social hour, which begins at 1:30 p.m., will be followed by the program at 2.

Hemesath will discuss retirement as a time for holistically developing the parts of life that have sometimes been neglected due to our work-life responsibilities.

For more information, contact Hemesath at nanhemesath@gmail.com.







# Plant a colorful selection of tulips

By Melinda Myers

Big, bold, and beautiful, these dazzling tulips are sure to brighten your gardens and neighborhood. Include a few or all 10 to create a colorful display throughout the spring that's sure to delight you and everyone who passes by your home.

Welcome spring with Red Emperor, one of the earliest tulips to bloom. It's not surprising it has remained popular for more than 80 years. Also known as Madame Lefebvre, this heirloom tulip features extra large, bright red blooms with a golden yellow base. As the flowers mature, they can be up to seven inches across.

From heirloom to flashy, it's easy to see why Mon-sella is one of the most popular tulips. The early blooming double flowers have fragrant layers of canary yellow petals with bold red stripes. A great choice for containers.

As early spring tulips begin to fade, the mid-spring varieties take center stage. To help plan for continuous color throughout the spring, consult *Longfield Gardens' Planning Guide for Tulips*.

Tulip Ad Rem has scarlet

red petals edged in golden yellow. As with other Darwin Hybrids, the flowers are enormous and this one also has a nice fragrance.

Blushing Apeldoorn is another mid spring bloomer with extra-large flowers. The blend of yellow, gold, orange, and red on each flower makes it a standout in any landscape. Plant several bulbs to create a stunning display or pair them with daffodils to extend the show.

Change things up in mid to late spring with the hot pink flowers of Cosmopolitan. The goblet shaped fuchsia flowers are held high on 18 to 20-inch stems. Be sure to plant extras for spring flower arrangements.

Team up Cosmopolitan with the violet-blue flowers of Purple Flag. Or shake things up by pairing this lovely purple tulip with flowers that bloom in its complementary colors yellow and orange.

As temperatures climb, the late blooming tulip Sky High Scarlet really shines. Its huge tomato red blossoms hold up well despite the heat that often shortens late spring tulip displays.

You and your neighbors will enjoy watching the transformation of World Expression tulips. The flowers start out a soft primrose yellow with scarlet red flames. As the blossoms mature, the petals whiten, and the flames deepen to a cardinal red.

Add a little Midnight Magic to your late spring garden. This double late tulip has multiple layers of petals in a blend of burgundy and garnet. Pair it with white for a formal look or energize the display by combining it with orange and yellow blooms. Be sure to cut a few of these large, rose-like flowers and enjoy their fragrance.

End the tulip season with a blaze of color. Sun Lover features vibrant orange petals with stripes of deep orange and red. The flowers open wider each day and are a dramatic addition to any bouquet.

Order tulip bulbs in late summer for the best selection. Shipping starts in early fall and once the bulbs arrive, they should be stored in a cool, dark place until you plant.

Tulips grow best when the bulbs are planted in late fall, after the first hard frost and before the ground freezes.

Once your tulip bulbs are in the ground, relax and wait for the beautiful spring tulip display. Your neighbors are sure to thank you for this colorful addition to the block.

(Myers is the author of more than 20 gardening books.)

# TSCL offers advice to follow during Medicare's Open Enrollment Period

An estimated 39 million Medicare beneficiaries spend up to 29% of their Social Security benefits on healthcare costs, according to a new survey by The Senior Citizens League (TSCL).

"That's a huge chunk of one's household budget, and chances are many of those people are paying too much for premiums, deductibles, and out-of-pocket costs," says Mary Johnson a TSCL Medicare policy analyst.

"One of the best financial moves Medicare beneficiaries can make is to review health and drug plan coverage and compare options during Medicare's Fall Open Enrollment Period which runs through Dec. 7," Johnson says. "It could save hundreds of dollars, making the difference between having to split pills or going without, versus covering all prescriptions and still winding up with a little cash left over."

With inflation soaring in 2021, TSCL has received dozens of emails from retired and disabled adults who say they have cut back on prescription drugs to cope with rising costs because they have no savings.

"Splitting pills, taking prescriptions every other day, or not refilling prescriptions is hazardous to health, especially when the drug is essential for conditions such as diabetes," says Johnson.

"The process of comparing plans can be a chore and confusing. But there are Medicare counselors in every state (see article about VAS on page 2.) who are available to help beneficiaries compare and select the best choice of coverage with free one-on-one counseling."

For the past 16 years, Johnson, has been helping friends and family members with comparing health and drug plans. "It takes patience, but this is likely to be the best return on comparison shopping you do all year," she says.

Here are some pointers:

- Get help (see page 2 article on VAS). Make an appointment with a counselor who can help you consider important pros and cons. There are hidden pitfalls to some choices. Dropping your coverage in favor of a low-cost health plan touting extra benefits may not be a good idea.
- Get your health expense records complete and up to date and then review the Annual Notice of Change from your current plans. Drug and health plans sent out their Annual Notice of Changes for 2022 during September and October 2021. Review those details to learn what might affect you in 2022.
- Start a list of costs, break down what you'll pay for all premiums and any out-of-pocket costs you typically pay. List what you spend out-of-pocket on dental, vision, and hearing services, as well as any expenses such as eyeglasses and hearing aids. If you're comparing your Medigap coverage with Medicare Advantage, you'll need to know what sort of services you're using and what you typically pay out-of-pocket for those services. Worksheets maintained for tax purposes, statements, and check registers may be an excellent source of this information.
- Learn about all your options for health and drug plans by using Medicare's health plan finder. TSCL recommends using this tool rather than attempting to check plans or insurers individually, which could rapidly become overwhelming and aggravating. Contact insurers for details later when you've narrowed down your best bets.
- Search for health and drug coverage based on the drugs you take. Plans vary tremendously on the price of prescription drugs. You can spend hundreds of dollars more per year than necessary. Search for health or stand-alone drug plans by inputting all the drugs you take to get your best choice of plans at the lowest cost.
- Make a list of each drug you take, the dosage, and the amount you take in 30 or 90 days. The Medicare plan finder will pull up a list of plans showing the lowest cost plan first. It's important to check the reasons why the plan costs less, including whether the plan covers all your prescription drugs. When checking plan cost details, check the difference in prescription prices between standard retail pharmacies and mail order pharmacies.

(TSCL provided this information.)

# ADRC Nebraska

## Aging and Disability Resource Center



The Aging and Disability Resource Center is the first stop for information related to aging or living with a disability.

Call us for information about connecting you to services in your area.

- Nebraskans age 60 and older.
- Nebraskans of all ages with disabilities.
- Serving the populations of Dodge, Washington, Sarpy, Cass, and Douglas.

In Eastern Nebraska, you can contact **ADRC at 402-444-6536, (toll free) 1-844-843-6364 or [adrcnebraska.org](http://adrcnebraska.org)**





## Elder Access Line

Legal Aid of Nebraska operates a free telephone access line for Nebraskans age 60 and older.

Information is offered on topics like bankruptcy, homestead exemptions, powers of attorney, Medicare, and Medicaid.

The number is 402-827-5656 in Omaha and 1-800-527-7249 statewide.

This service is available to Nebraskans age 60 and older regardless of income, race, or ethnicity.

The hours are 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 3 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and 9 a.m. to noon on Friday.

## Omaha Fire Department

The Omaha Fire Department's Public Education and Affairs Department will install free smoke and/or carbon monoxide detectors inside the residences of area homeowners.

To have a free smoke and/or carbon monoxide detector installed inside your home, send your name, address, and telephone number to:

**Omaha Fire Department  
Smoke/Carbon  
Monoxide Requests  
1516 Jackson St.  
Omaha, Neb. 68102**

For more information, please call 402-444-3560.

## Ralston Senior Center

You're invited to visit the Ralston Senior Center, 7301 Q St., Suite 100 this month for the following:

• **Nov. 9:** Bus to WinnaVegas Casino in Sloan, Iowa @ 7:30 a.m. The bus will return around 4 p.m. The cost is \$5. Contact Diane @ 402-885-8895 for reservations.

• **Nov. 10:** Board meeting @ 10 a.m.

• **Nov. 11:** Bingo from 1 to 3 p.m.

• **Nov. 24:** The Merrymakers present music by Kim Eames @ noon.

• **Mondays:** Doodlers and Dabblers (paint, draw, etc. or just relax) @ 10:30 a.m.

The facility is closed on Thanksgiving Day.

Lunch is catered in on Wednesdays. A \$4.50 contribution is normally suggested for the meal. Reservations are due by noon on Tuesday. Play games and bingo after lunch. Contact Molly @ 402-490-5768 for reservations.

Renew or obtain a Ralston Senior Center membership. Persons who renewed for 2021 before the center closed due to the pandemic won't be charged for the rest of 2021. Those who haven't renewed, will be charged \$5 for the rest of 2021. The annual cost will be \$10 in 2022.

The center may be used for weddings, memorial services, anniversaries, family reunions, birthdays, baby and wedding showers, etc. on weekends.

On days, the Ralston Public Schools are closed due to the weather, the Ralston Senior Center will also be closed.

For more information, please call Diane West @ 402-339-4926.

Please see the ad on page 3

## New Horizons Club membership roll rises

**\$100**

Karol Godsey

**\$25**

Linda Brady

**\$15**

Alyce Fuehrer

**\$10**

Rosalyn Vogt  
Virginia Busch  
Raah Nissi Home Care

**\$5**

Rosemary Hansen  
Marcy Madison  
Kathleen Koons

Reflects donations through 10/22/21.

## Volunteer Connect

The Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging has recently started a program called Volunteer Connect that provides a variety of resources and matches the interests of older adults who wish to volunteer with community-based organizations including non-profits and public agencies.

Volunteer Connect participants in Douglas, Sarpy, Dodge, Cass, and Washington counties must be ages 55 or older.

Please call Tia Schoenfeld at 402-444-6536, ext. 1045 for more information.

Here are some of the opportunities available through Volunteer Connect:

• **The American Red Cross, Nebraska/SW Iowa Region** needs greeters and drivers.

• **The Heartland Equine Therapeutic Riding Academy (HETRA)** wants

volunteers to do barn maintenance, side walkers, greeters, and volunteers with extensive horse experience.

• **The Food Bank for the Heartland** is looking for volunteers to answer phone calls (11 a.m. to 1 p.m.), greet people at the front door, direct people, and serve in the volunteer center.

• **No More Empty Pots** needs help packaging meals or boxes of produce.

• **Learning for All** needs English as a Second Language volunteers to work with its adult learners at least one hour per week online (via Zoom) or in person if the student and tutor are both vaccinated.

• **Washington County Recycling** wants volunteers Saturdays 8 a.m. to noon, Tuesdays 8 to 11 a.m. during spring/summer, and Tuesdays 1 to 4 p.m. through fall/winter.

• **CHI Health Creighton University Medical Center - Bergan Mercy Hospital** has several volunteer opportunities.

• Volunteers are wanted to knit/sew baby caps/clothing.

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# Mary overseeing Marian’s athletic facilities upgrade

*--Continued from page 8.*  
Higgins says. “After softball came volleyball, basketball, track, swimming – a whole slate of women’s sports.”  
She says Offenburger was an inspiration to her. “He was not forced to start women’s sports,” she says. “He wasn’t sued. He knew it was the right thing to do. I am forever grateful for his mentorship.”

Higgins earned her bachelor’s degree at Creighton in American studies and a Physical Education Teaching Certificate, K-12. While she was working on her master’s in physical education at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, Offenburger asked her to coach the Creighton softball team.

The letter from Kristen Galles supporting Higgins’ Hall of fame nomination sums up the early years:

*“After going 8-14 in her first year as Creighton’s softball coach, Mary realized that to compete nationally, she needed to offer athletic scholarships. That was the best way to attract talented softball athletes to a small, private, northern school like Creighton. Mary invited Donna Lopiano (president and founder of Sports Management Resources) to speak at the AIAW (Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women) Nebraska state softball tournament in 1977. With Donna’s help, Mary convinced Creighton to give her \$5,000 in scholarship money and to allow her to use most of it to recruit a pitcher around whom she could build a competitive team. Holly Hesse, now the head softball coach at Missouri State University, was that pitcher. She later added Jean Tierney and Mary Yori, both of whom became softball All-Americans. Candi Letts joined Mary Yori and Holly Hesse as Lady Jay recruits who now are longtime college softball coaches and NFCA members.*

*“Mary’s second team finished 20-11 and her third team (with Holly, Mary, Jean, and Candi) finished 32-13 and qualified for the 1979 AIAW Women’s College World Series. The 1978 and 1979 teams (Mary’s second and third years as a coach) won the AIAW Nebraska Small College State Championship. The 1980 team finished 46-17, while the 1981 team finished 51-7. Both teams again qualified for the AIAW Women’s College World Series. In other words, four of her first five teams won the AIAW state championship and/or qualified for the AIAW Women’s College World Series.”*



In retirement, Mary is looking forward to spending more time with her family.



Higgins in the Haddix Academic Center at Marian High School. The center serves simultaneously as a library, work space, and a place for quiet study.

Creighton University hosted the first six NCAA softball championships (1982 to ‘87) with Higgins as the tournament director. The Lady Jays twice qualified for the NCAA Women’s College World Series, finishing as high as fifth nationally in 1986.

After 17 years, and with a record of 564-298, Higgins decided to retire from coaching.

“We had two young children at the time,” she says. “There was no player database back then. To recruit, I had to travel. I was at tournaments every weekend, sitting in the bleachers. I’d watch the players and then go talk to the coaches. I kept track of everything in a notebook full of file cards.

“It was hard to be out of town nearly every summer weekend, and I wanted more time to be with my kids.”

That was 1992. She stayed at Creighton, serving as Assistant Athletic Director and then as Assistant Vice Provost for Student Retention and Pre-Major Advising, until 2014, when she left to return to Marian as its president.

Where she had plenty of work ahead of her.

Higgins was president of the Marian Alumnae Board from 2012 to 2014 and served on the Marian Board of Directors from 2005 to 2011, leading several committees and serving as board chair. She and her husband co-chaired MarianFEST in 2005. As president, Higgins is responsible for external affairs including fundraising, recruitment, and alumnae.

She is very good at every aspect of her job.

She raised \$9.2 million for a major building renovation and the Haddix Academic Center addition that transformed the look and feel of the school. In announcing the 2019 dedication, the school said the project “included a new main entrance, a secure, welcoming lobby; an airy, comfortable academic center; and an intimate chapel accented with symbolic stained-glass windows. A cafeteria upgrade provided for quicker service and a better menu.”

In addition to raising money for the renovation, donors provided another \$3 million for the school’s endowment.

The current \$6 million project will improve the school’s outdoor sports facilities and include an artificial turf soccer field and a new track, improvements Higgins says are long overdue.

“These facilities have not been touched since they were built,” she says.

Throughout a career that truly began when she was a college student, Higgins has overcome many challenges and logged many accomplishments, giving others credit when due. “I am proud of what we did at Creighton, and what we’ve done at Marian,” she says. “I was there for the start of women’s athletics, but I have seen so many C.U. coaches and student-athletes build on that and do great things.”

Beyond following Creighton sports, Higgins is a “bogey golfer” who practices yoga and exercises every day. In retirement, most of all she is looking forward to having more personal time. “My heart aches to be more available to my granddaughters at their young ages,” she says.

As for the Hall of Fame induction ceremony in Las Vegas, Higgins won’t be there. Not with the risk of COVID-19 and all its variants.

But, if she steps outside her home in Omaha that night at just the right time, one thing is certain.

She’ll hear the applause.