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New Horizons

Entrepreneur found culmination of her creative, community advocacy in theatre

By Leo Adam Biga

When Omaha native Amy Ryan suddenly went from mental health counselor to Pizza Shoppe owner in 1995, she applied her natural bent for others to make the lagging business a Benson success story.

A decade later she opened the adjoining PS Collective arts space as an extension of her social entrepreneurship and community advocacy. Already known by then for supporting down on their luck and emerging creatives, she took things to the next level with that new space. Besides, she always identified as a creative herself as a singer-songwriter, poet, aspiring author and self-described dreamer. Under her leadership the restaurant and PS Collective became anchors in the revitalized Benson Business District (BBD) as places to feed body, mind and soul.

As BBD's main attractions increasingly became establishments with liquor licenses she noted the need for a public gathering spot that catered to nonprofits, artists,



NEW HORIZONS PHOTO

families, older adults and other underserved audiences. Rather than let the former Benson vaudeville and movie theatre a few doors to the east become another bar or adult venue she set her sights on acquiring it to serve a greater good purpose. Long out of use as a theater, she made rescuing the building a personal cause – sharing her vision for turning it into a community hub,

social-cultural sanctuary and arts-entertainment space with anyone who would listen. She eventually formed a nonprofit that purchased the site. She then raised millions for refurbishing it to its former glory as well as adding state of the art tech and accessibility features.

The work of bringing the old theater back to life proceeded during the pandemic. The new Benson

Theatre opened the end of 2021. Programming started in early 2022 with a mission to uplift, inform and entertain as big as its founder's oversized heart and imagination. Ryan oversaw it all as executive director, a role she admittedly had to grow into.

As opening the theater meant more to her than running it, she looked to step down as ED from nearly the start. The theater announced her departure on May 31. A July 14 farewell party saw many turnout to celebrate the work of Ryan, whose involvement continues as a BT Advisory Committee member.

“My time at Benson Theatre has been a remarkable chapter filled with meaningful connections and transformative moments,” Ryan said.

FINDING HER PURPOSE

Even though Ryan no longer oversees daily affairs nothing's changed regarding her vision for the theater being a welcoming, positive

--Ryan continued on page 9.

Every Tuesday is #GivingEveryTuesday



Each Tuesday, SHARE Omaha features a unique cause theme for the #GivingEveryTuesday campaign, and encourages giving and support for nonprofits related to the theme.

#GivingEveryTuesday is a series of weekly opportunities to come together to give, volunteer, and show kindness in shared moments with communities, causes, and countries around the world. The theme for August 6: Seniors.



Bridge: One of the most underrated games ever?

Bridge is the perfect balance of fun and logic. There's a misconception that bridge is very difficult to learn, but it really just requires practice to become familiar with it. Learn about how and where to play local bridge games on **Page 16**.

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NEW HORIZONS PHOTO

The grand portico at the Ford Birthsite is reminiscent of the columns of the White House's West Wing portico.

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Gerald Ford's 50th anniversary of inauguration in August, the only president with local connections

By Andy Bradley
Contributing Writer

“My fellow Americans, our long national nightmare is over.” –

Gerald R. Ford, 38th president of the United States.

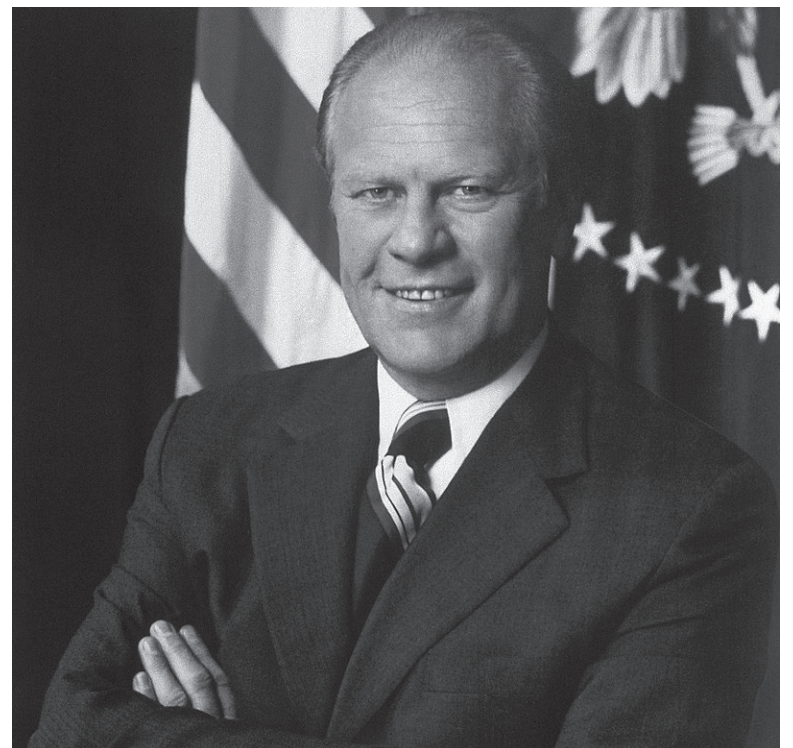
These famed words are from Gerald R. Ford's inauguration speech on Aug. 9, 1974. They marked the sudden transition from the embattled Richard Nixon administration to Gerald Ford's – a transition that occurred 50 years ago this month.

Other memorable – and eerily relevant words for our union today – included: “Our Constitution works ... our great republic is a government of laws and not of men.” Additionally, he reflected, “This is an hour of history that troubles our minds and hurts our hearts.”

Gerald Ford ascended to the presidency in the wake of the tsunami known as the Watergate scandal. He was the only president to serve, while never being elected. (He lost his only bid for the presidency to Jimmy Carter in 1976).

Omaha boasts a sliver of a claim to that presidential history – one that is short in duration and certainly more bitter than sweet in the heart of the former president.

Gerald Ford was born July 14, 1913, in Omaha. He resided a mere 16 days in the basement of a three-story Victorian mansion at 3202 Woolworth Ave., owned by his paternal grandfather, CH King. The



COURTESY PHOTO

Gerald R. Ford lived in Omaha for a couple of weeks after his birth in July 1913.

infant was named Leslie King and was born to Dorothy Garnder King and Leslie King, Jr.

Historical records show the infant, and his mother were under persistent threat of violent abuse from his father. In short order, she escaped the abuser and fled with infant in arms to her sister's home in Oak Park, Ill. Later she made her way with her baby to be with her parents in Grand Rapids, Mich. There she met Gerald Rudolff Ford, whom she married 11 months later after divorcing King. The couple changed Leslie's name to Gerald R. Ford.

His parents never let on that he was adopted, and Gerald was in the dark until he was 17. At that time, his

birth father showed up unannounced at the ice cream shop where he was working and announced he was Gerald's true father. Gerald was shocked but rejected King's attempts at reconciliation. The young Ford always considered Gerald and Dorothy his true parents and Grand Rapids his true home.

A talented, bright and athletic young man, he went on to study and play football at Michigan. After graduation, he rejected offers to play professionally, focusing instead on his law studies at Yale. His assistant football coach duties at Yale helped fund his law school tuition.

Jurisprudence degree in hand, he returned to Grand Rapids and established a

--Ford continued on page 3.

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Programs changing this month at AARP NE Information Center

By Tony Harris
AARP NE Information Center



Did you know that falls are the leading cause of both fatal and nonfatal injuries to older Americans. In fact, according to the National Council on Aging, every 11 seconds an older adult goes to an emergency department to treat an injury caused by a fall.

On August 21 at 1:30 p.m., anyone is invited to attend the AARP Nebraska Information Center's monthly program to hear from experts from the Visiting Nurses Association who will talk about ways older adults can prevent falls.

The Information Center is open on Tuesdays, Wednes-

days and Thursdays from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m.

If you are interested in becoming more involved, stop by the Information Center to learn more about the many opportunities to get involved in the community by becoming an AARP Nebraska volunteer.

For more information call the Information Center at 402-916-9309.

--Ford continued from page 2.

successful law practice. He developed a keen interest in politics and ran successfully as a Republican for Congress in 1948, unseating the Republican incumbent. He was reelected a dozen times, serving nearly a quarter century in the House chamber.

In 1965, at the age of 52, he became House Minority Leader, a position he retained for eight years. When Vice President Spiro Agnew resigned his vice presidency under inauspicious circumstances in October, 1973, Nixon pegged Ford to take his place. Months later, as the Watergate investigation lingered on and Congressional hearings captivated the nation, Nixon's problems became insurmountable. Under pressure from within his own party, he abandoned office on Aug. 9, 1974, leaving the White House to Gerald Ford.

Ford did run for the presidency in 1976, but lost a hotly-contested election to Jimmy Carter. His popularity had waned after he pardoned Richard Nixon. In addition, voters were edgy because the country was suffering through double-digit inflation, sky-rocketing unemployment, and crippling energy shortages.

Despite losing to Carter, Ford was remembered for several important achievements during his 896 days in office. Perhaps the greatest accomplishment was the negotiation of a nuclear arms non-proliferation treaty with Russia. Lesser known was Ford's signing of the Housing and Community Development Act, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in housing and mortgage credit lending.

Despite her husband's plummeting popularity, his wife, Betty, enjoyed broad public support and wide adulation – both during his presidency and after. She focused national attention on breast cancer, a somewhat taboo discussion at the time. Two years after vacating the White House, she riveted the country's attention to the perils of substance abuse, sharing candidly with the nation her struggles with alcohol and pain medications.

In 1982, she established the world-renowned Betty Ford Center in Rancho Mirage, Calif., where the couple retired. Gerald Ford died there in December, 2006, at the age of 93.

Despite his short and generally inconspicuous tenure, a local businessman, the late James Paxson, recognized the historical significance of Ford's birthplace in the heart of the Field Club neighborhood.

The three-story mansion, built on the corner of 32nd Avenue and Woolworth, and owned by CH King, was abandoned by the elder King in 1913. It was subsequently turned into apartments. A fire destroyed the 15-room wooden structure in 1971 and

the sprawling home was bulldozed. That's when Paxson, who passed away in 1995, purchased the land, and turned it over to the city for the purpose of constructing a neighborhood memorial to Gerald Ford's birthplace. His \$250,000 gift to the city helped accomplish that purpose. Paxson was president of Standard Chemical, a manufacturer of livestock chemicals.

The memorial as it appears today was built in two phases, and the Fords were present to dedicate each section, the first on Sept. 21, 1977, followed by a rose garden dedicated to Betty Ford on July 12, 1980.

The memorial today features flower gardens; a time capsule to be opened in 2076; a gazebo featuring informative narratives and presidential memorabilia; marble memorial walls itemizing past U.S. presidents, Nebraska governors, and city mayors; and busts of both Gerald and Betty Ford. In addition, an attractive portico features white columns suggestive of the portico columns adjoining the West Wing of the White House.

The quaint memorial is showing its age. Signs of disrepair and abandonment are visible throughout. The engraved names of presidents, governors and mayors, for example, haven't been updated in years. Portions of retaining walks bordering the property have collapsed and sections of the wooden portico structure are crumbling.

Matt Calcevich, the director of Omaha Parks and Recreation, agreed that the site "is not in great condition." He said consultants have suggested that repairs and upgrades would cost \$3 million. Those funds are not currently allocated in the city's budget. The total deferred maintenance needs for city parks are \$80 million, he said, and budgeting priorities for park upgrades focus first on safety, then projects in higher use areas. Ford Birthplace repairs don't meet either of those criteria.

Nevertheless, Calcevich is eager to see the property restored to its glory days. He is working with the Omaha Parks Foundation, a non-profit organization that raises private dollars for the needs of area parks, to identify donors for the project.

"They are actively seeking funding," he said. "We are closer to this being solved than not."

While the Gerald Ford Presidential Library in Grand Rapids is the epicenter for all things related to Ford and his legacy, the humble birth site and gardens in this quiet Field Club neighborhood remains Omaha's one and only link to an American president.

This story was compiled from various sources, including the Omaha World-Herald, History.Com, the Nebraska State Historical Society, WOWT and others.

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New Horizons

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Ad Mgr.....Mitch Laudenback, 402-444-4148
Contributing Writers.....Leo Biga & Andy Bradley

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Foster Grandparent Program volunteer assists teachers, students in the classroom

By Ron Petersen

Volunteers play a critical role in helping students, pre-kindergarten through postsecondary, throughout the Omaha metro.

Volunteering makes a difference in a child's education along with allowing them to make the school better and make a difference in the community.

"I just love working with the kids," ENOA volunteer Betty Burton, said about volunteering.

The Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging's (ENOA) Foster Grandparent Program has a mission to provide meaningful opportunities for individuals age 55 and older to remain physically and mentally active by serving as a positive role model to children and youth in their communities.

Foster Grandparents assist children needing special attention in education, health-care and social development.

They volunteer in schools, Head Start Programs, hospitals, and child development centers. Through regular interaction with a Foster Grandparent, children needing special attention have an opportunity to improve their physical, mental, emotional, and social development.

Betty Burton, who has been volunteering in the Foster Grandparent Program for 22 years, visits first graders five times a week at Conestoga Elementary School.

During her visit, Burton have found plenty of things to do, which includes reading the students books, being an extra set of eyes in the classroom for the teacher and she is there to talk to the students if they need help.

"I listen and talk to the kids. If they are upset, I can talk to them and give them a hug. I tell them that I love them, and it makes their day," Burton said.

To be eligible to volunteer in the Foster Grandparent program, volunteers must be at least age 55, meet an income guideline and be able to serve a minimum of 10 hours per week. All applicants must complete an enrollment process including references and background checks.

In return for their commitment of 10 hours per week, volunteers receive a tax-free stipend of \$4.00 per hour, mileage reimbursement and may receive a meal while



NEW HORIZONS PHOTO
Through the Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging (ENOA) Foster Grandparent Program, Betty Burton gets to volunteer in the Omaha community.

on duty. In addition, volunteers receive supplemental accidental insurance coverage, and other benefits.

"My message to those people who are looking to volunteer is to give it a try," Burton said. "Most of the time you'll be very happy. I look forward to going every day."

For more information call 402-444-6536.

Planning for a successful future

"Unlock the Keys to a Secure Future" is the topic for the September 10 Solutions Group facilitated by Flaherty Senior Consulting. It will be held at 10 a.m. at St. Vincent de Paul Church in the parish center lower level.

Teresa Jordan of Care-MATRIX Senior Housing Experts, LLC will talk about crafting comprehensive plans for mature adults, aged 55 and older. Jordan will address everything from financial considerations to end-of-life arrangements. She'll focus on the essential steps that

will help ensure peace of mind and preparedness for whatever lies ahead. This session is designed for those planning for themselves, as well as those assisting aging parents. Jordan will help equip participants with the knowledge and tools needed to navigate this important journey with confidence.

The meeting is open to anyone interested in learning how to plan for the future, but registration is required.

Flaherty Senior Consulting offers four Solutions Groups, held at various locations, that support fam-

ily caregivers and answer questions and challenges they face, with a focus on those caring for loved ones with dementia. Groups meet every other month.

Visit www.flahertyconsulting.net for more information on the Solutions Groups and/or private consultations with Nancy Flaherty, president of Flaherty Senior Consulting and a certified dementia practitioner.

For more information, contact Nancy Flaherty, Flaherty Senior Consulting, at 402.312.9324 or flahertyconsulting@cox.net.

Omaha author's first novel hits the shelves

By Ron Petersen

One of the first tips any experienced author will hand down to a budding scribe is: "Write about what you know." Letting personal experience guide the writing is not only the easiest way to get words onto the page, but the best way to make a passage meaningful, insightful and highly engaging.

Over the years, some of the best writers in the world have used their own lives as the basis for both fiction and non-fiction classics and that's something every aspiring artist should take note of, including Omaha's own, Thia Lynne.



"Escaping into books and stories has gotten me through some very difficult times in life," Lynne said. "The first book I wrote (besides an education children's story) was the story of my life. It was helpful to me in writing it and it has been helpful to others who have suffered different types of abuse or the death of a child."

Lynne grew up moving around the country because her father was in the Navy.

Being the second oldest of four kids, Lynne was told by her father that she had a wild imagination, which was perfect.

"In a family with four children born in 1956, 1957, 1958, and 1959, as the second child, somehow I became the entertainer," Lynne said. "I was made to be a storyteller."

Later, Lynne went on to get her degree in elementary education from Indiana University and a master's degree in special education from Grand Canyon University. It was a degree that hit close to home.

"Because my first son was born severely disabled and only lived past his first birthday, when I planned to teach special education, I only wanted to help students with learning differences. A principal convinced me to take a job teaching students with severe disabilities, and it was obviously the direction God was sending me," Lynne said. "I learned that I had a deep desire to help people of any ability level to achieve their highest dreams, whatever that might be."

In 2019 after retiring from teaching high school special education in Georgia, Lynne looked after her mother who had Alzheimer's before her mother ended up in a nursing home, just eight months later. The following year, one of Lynne's sons, who was in the Air Force, got transferred to Omaha, which is where her family found home.

"On a visit to see him, we found Omaha to be a great place with lots to see and do for people our age. We were so excited to finally have a place to call home that would reunite us with our son after nearly twenty years living apart," Lynne said.

Lynne had already started writing her first novel, but once her family got settled in Omaha, she decided it was time to put her talents and experiences to the test, by writing a book called *Escape From Rest Haven*.

"I always loved telling stories – I've always been a storyteller and I wanted to put it in a permanent form," Lynne said.

Escape From Rest Haven is about a woman named Anna, who is trying to help her mother who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease. Anna must put her mother into a nursing home and then must clean out her run-down trailer house.

"It is a clean novel that should have broad appeal," Lynne said. "Many of the statements made by the protagonist's mother were actual statements made by my own mother with Alzheimer's disease. There is a lot of humor to be found even in life's most difficult situations."

In the process, Anna discovers a secret about her mother who always seemed to be troubled and unreliable. Her mother was an assassin for an international organization called The Cooking School. They coded their hits in women's magazines.

Questions Anna always had were being answered in a way she never would have imagined. Anna's Aunt Edith shows up and reprimands her for placing her mother in danger by placing her in care. "Mama" couldn't control what she said anymore so The Cooking School had to put a hit on her. A surprising romance emerges – not for Anna but for her mother.

"There's a lot of fun and adventure," Lynne said.

"Anna's mom still has amazing skills and uses them to help save the day."

Lynne has received great feedback and in response she wrote two more books in the series, *Lost in Liberia* and *Trapped in Egypt*.

"Everyone who has 'Escape' has made statements like, 'I couldn't put it down.' That's the best compliment a writer can get," Lynne said. "With the way the publishing world has changed in recent years, there are many writers of great stories trying to get noticed. I've enjoyed a lot of their books. Storytelling appears on multiple forums in our online world. Wading through it all can be daunting. Even though most of my books are novels, I would hope that they would be able to impart themes of value that would inform and inspire."

Lynne has already started writing a fourth book based on an autistic student she once had in her classroom. His dad had kidnapped him and taken him to another state. He convinced the

child that he was making a movie, and the boy was an actor.

"My student called himself Robbie, though that wasn't his real name. He told me that there were words that he called 'words in the air' because conjunctions made no sense to him," Lynne said. "I hope to show how interesting it is to get to know people who live and express themselves in various ways that most would consider disabilities. I find them to be fascinating and would like to take others with me into these relationships. I titled the unfinished work *Untying the Words*."

Whether it's about past experiences or imagination, Lynne's book starts with an event from the past and builds it into a wonderful story.

"I think most writers work out detailed outlines before they start," Lynne said. "For all my books, I start with an idea and wade through much like we do in everyday life. Sometimes my characters surprise me and I end up with a conclusion I wasn't expecting. That's a part of the fun and I write because it's fun."

Lynne's books can be found on Amazon.com and in select bookstores, including The Bookworm.

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Ralston Senior Center

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

- **August 7 & 21:** Bingo @ 12:15 p.m.
- **August 8 & 23:** Bingo @ 1 p.m.
- **August 14:** Board meeting @ 9:30 a.m.
- **August 28:** Music provided by Mike McCracken from Merry-makers @ noon

Lunch is catered in on Wednesdays @ 11:30 a.m. A \$5.50 contribution is normally suggested for the meal. Reservations are due by noon on Tuesday. Games and bingo will be played after lunch. Contact Darla @ 402-331-1529 for reservations. Obtain an annual Ralston Senior Center membership for \$10.

Contact Ron Wilson @ 402-734-3421 for further information.

Fontenelle Forest

You're invited: Feather Our Nest 2024 at Fontenelle Forest.

This year's event will honor several of the lifelong educational ambassadors that have made a significant impact on the Forest. From 1974 through 1985 Fontenelle Forest's Chief Naturalist, Andy Saunders, shared his passion for the natural world through guided hikes, educational programs, and cultivating a team of knowledgeable volunteers.

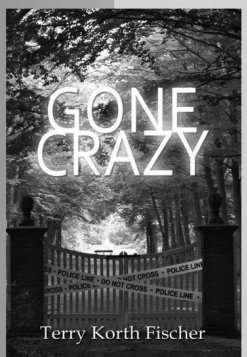
Among the many people Andy inspired, were a group of seven Fontenelle Forest volunteers who created a database of the all plants, animals, and fungi found throughout the Forest and Neale Woods. In 2008, the first iteration of the Fontenelle Forest Nature Search website launched. Today, Nature Search has over 2,000 documented species.

Are you interested in making a lasting difference in our community? Consider sponsoring Feather Our Nest in 2024. Your contribution will not only support this special event, but will also invest in the mission and programs of Fontenelle Forest.

This amazing resource is free to the public to access by visiting FFNatureSearch.org.

Explore the flora and fauna found throughout Fontenelle Forest using the Nature Search database, hear from our honorees about what the Forest means to them, bid on unique silent auction packages, plus enjoy cocktails and seasonal offerings from Heirloom Fine Foods.

New Release Rory Naysmith Mysteries by Terry Korth Fischer



Irascible Detective Rory Naysmith is at it again in sleepy, smalltown, Winterset, NE. *Gone Crazy*, a cozy crime-whodunit including murder, mayhem, and a quirky dog-sitter. Oh, and suspects in search of hidden treasure.

...This third book in the series about small town Americana, Detective Rory Naysmith and his friends, cohorts and assorted villains is as delightful as the first two books.—Lenora Rain-Lee Good, author



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Consider all vaccines for the Fall and Winter

By Dr. Lindsay Huse, Director of the Douglas County Health Department

The Douglas County Health Department (DCHD) is charged with serving everyone in Nebraska's most populous county. That's 339 square miles and nearly 600,000 people living within our jurisdiction. We serve rural and urban folks alike and all of them are our concern. In this third column in New Horizons,



Huse we have a reminder that vaccinations are important to maintaining good health. DCHD also hopes our friends who live in the communities outside Douglas County will benefit from this information.

One of public health's most successful initiatives has been the promotion of regular vaccinations to fight communicable diseases. While the focus this time of year may be on back-to-school shots, it's time for adults to consider some

vaccines as well. Preventing disease helps everyone and saves money and medical resources.

The Douglas County Health Department (DCHD) reminds you that August is Immunization Awareness Month, and getting vaccinated helps to make sure some once-common diseases no longer are common. We don't want them to make a deadly comeback.

The CDC said all adults need the following vaccines: The COVID-19 vaccine, the flu vaccine, and the Tdap vaccine which protects against tetanus, diphtheria, and whooping cough. That is especially true if you will be around children, because whooping cough can be extremely hard on kids.

Those 65 and older should be current on the pneumococcal vaccine (pneumonia and more), and the shingles vaccine. As always, we encourage you to first ask your provider. Vaccination is one of the most effective and safe ways to keep our society healthy and thriving.

Benefits of cooking for the psyche

If you've ever fallen victim to summertime sadness, don't let your self-esteem take the heat—get grillin' instead! Unbeknownst to many, home-cooked meals aren't just good for you and your wallet; they're also an unappreciated form of self-care. July happens to be National Grill Month and Culinary Arts Month, which means it's time to reach for the "Kiss the Chef" apron—but not before getting up to speed on how cooking feeds the soul.

Cooking has provided sustenance—for body and mind—since the beginning of time. Of course the earliest forms of cooking were much more primitive than the elaborate dinners that we're used to today, but the purpose of food hasn't changed: energizing the body, feeding your overall function and engaging the senses in an experience unlike any other.

We've certainly come a long way from crude paste bread, after all! As food became less about survival and more about enjoyment, experimental cooking was born—and with it, the opportunity to explore new ways to make long-established recipes that have brought comfort and nutrition for thousands of years. So how does this play into a well-nourished well-being?

When you play chef, your brain receives the ingredients for success. Intentionally investing time, patience and dexterity into your three meals a day can make a difference in your day-to-day life. In fact, the benefits extend far beyond getting your gut health in check.

Psychologists have found that creativity and emotional function go hand in hand. It doesn't matter if you're mixing up cookies from the recipe on the back of the chocolate chip bag or you're creating a whole new concoction off the top of your head: you're stimulating the brain in a way that boosts concentration and confidence, and can even lower feelings of depression as you gain new skills and purpose.

Food connects you to the past, present and future. Meals are a social activity by design. Recall helping mom or dad in the



COURTESY PHOTO

Preparing healthy meals at home can support your immune system and reduce the risk of illnesses such as heart disease, cancer, high blood pressure, and diabetes.

kitchen when you were younger, hovering over a grill full of meat with the designated grill-master at family holidays, or setting all aspects of life aside just to enjoy dinner around the dining table with loved ones.

Cooking with others harbors feelings of community and belonging. It brings people together in what's equivalent to a team-building activity: working toward one central goal—or multiple goals for that matter, if you're making side dishes as well! Similarly, as you cook recipes that run in your family or are traditional to your culture, you'll not only feel a connection to those you share your history with, in the form of a meal—you'll feel close to your ancestors who once made those same meals, too.

The next time you're feeling down, don't just turn to fast food for a quick dinner. If you can manifest the energy to cook something warm and fulfilling, you'll benefit from a full stomach and a nourished mind, too. Happy cooking—and bon appétit.

This health tip is brought to you by Tabitha.

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 \$4.25 contribution is suggested for the meal.

This month's activities will include:

- **August 1:** Presentation from Nye @ 10 a.m.
 - **August 7:** Music with Pam Kragt @ 10:30 a.m.
 - **August 8:** Mobile Library @ 9:30 a.m.
 - **August 8:** Singalong with Jeanne @ 10 a.m.
 - **August 14:** Music with the Links @ 10 a.m.
 - **August 15:** Focus on Nutrition Minute @ 10:15 a.m.
 - **August 19:** Bill Chrastil tickets go on sale
 - **August 21:** Merry Maker's presents Mike McCracken @ 10:30 a.m.
 - **August 22:** Early Bird Bingo followed by a presentation by Shalimar and Pinnacle Bank: Fraud @ 9:30 a.m.
 - **August 23:** Chair Volleyball Tournament with Nye Services @ 10 a.m.
 - **August 27:** Board Meeting @ 1:30 p.m.
 - **August 28:** Special Music with Bill Chrastil @ 10 a.m.
- Craft class on Tuesday afternoons @ 1:30 p.m.
Tai Chi offered every Tuesday and Friday from 9:15-10 a.m.

If you can't stay for lunch with our friends and you currently participate in any activity at the center, you may now order a Grab-n-Go meal to take home for your lunch. Grab-n-Go meals must be reserved the day before by noon and the person ordering the lunch must come in to the center to pick it up at 11 a.m. The number of Grab-n-Go lunches are limited to a first come first serve basis. Suggested donation is \$4.25.

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

Florence Senior Center

You're invited to visit the Florence Senior Center, 2920 Bondesson St.

At the Florence Senior Center, lunch is served at 11:30 a.m. A select menu is offered Monday thru Friday. Meal reservations must be made one day in advance. Please call by noon the day before for a meal reservation.

The center hosts activities such as Tai Chi, annual picnics/special events, bingo, cards, gym & game room access, special guest speakers and socials.

They also provide health and nutrition programs.

For more information, please call Colleen Metz @ 402-444-6333.

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 at 1516 Jackson St. Omaha, Neb. 68102.

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

River City Theatre Organ Society

The River City Theatre Organ Society is hosting its annual concert at the Rose Theater, 2001 Farnam St., on Sunday, Aug. 11 at 3 p.m.

Theatre pipe organist Dave Wickerham will be the featured guest performer.

Through Aug. 1, prepaid and discounted tickets for older adults are available via mail for \$15 each by sending a check made out to the RCTOS to RCTOS, 8825 Executive Woods Dr., # 85, Lincoln, Neb. 68512.

Tickets are available at the door the day of the concert for \$20.

For more information, log on to rctos.com (Events) or call 402-421-1356.

Volunteer Connect offers a variety of opportunities

Do you have some spare time, a skill to share, and wish to contribute to your community? Private and non-profit agencies are looking for your help.

Please contact Mary Parker with the Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging's Volunteer Connect program at 402-444-6536, ext. 1045 for more information on the following volunteer opportunities:

- Heartland Family Services is looking for volunteers on August 16 to assist with Safe Haven Golf Tournament fundraiser. On August 16, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Eagle Hills Golf Course in Papillion three shifts are available. Those interested may contact Adriana Van Pelt Community Resource Coordinator by email at HeartlandFamilyService.org or call Adriana at 402-552-7405.
- Florence Home is looking for volunteers to work with their Life Enrichment staff to help provide meaningful activities for all of their residents.

- Intercultural Senior Center Ongoing Volunteer Instructors are needed for English, Technology, Citizenship, and more; class sessions run weekdays from 10:20-11:20 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. Current offerings include English as a Second Language, Beginning Spanish, Technology, Citizenship, Sewing, Adult Literacy, and more.



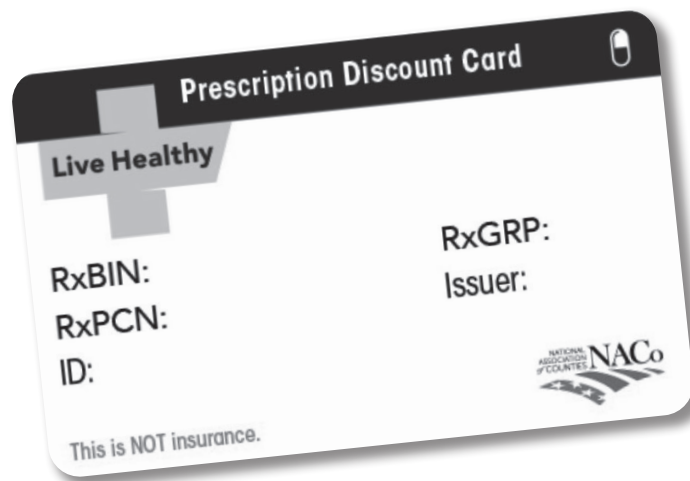
- New Cassel has a variety of volunteering opportunities for events and resident activities.
- Volunteers assisting Open Omaha to give a behind-the-scenes look at more than 60 of the metro's most fascinating spaces and places that shape our city. This one-weekend-only event is a city-wide open house. August 3-4 at 9:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. 12:30 p.m. - 4 p.m.

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This program is offered in a joint effort of Douglas County and the National Association of Counties (NACo).



For more information
call **1-877-321-2652**

or visit

nacorx.org

This plan is not insurance.
Discounts are only available at participating pharmacies.

ReConnect, Inc. provides new opportunities for formerly incarcerated men, women and families

By Ron Petersen

ReConnect, Inc., who has a primary goal to empower citizens by providing them the tools needed to transform their lives and the communities in which they live in order for them to inspire other individuals to strive for success.

ReConnect, Inc. helps out those who receive a second chance in Omaha and have been committed to the provision of services that help people gain the personal skills needed to maximize their potential and overcome barriers that interfere with their ability to reach their full potential.

“We tend to recycle everything in this community except for people. It’s time that we expand resources that will allow us to help rehabilitate people in our society. Also, we want to prevent them from going into the prison system,” Founder and Executive Director of ReConnect, Inc., LaVon Stennis-Williams said. “We do know what is working with helping stabilized families and providing for those who have mental issues. Some parents are passing on some of their issues down to their children so we must interrupt and come up with some way to help make

everyone successful. It all starts with the household, so we have to provide them with the resources that they need.”

ReConnect, Inc. first became a non-profit organization in 2014, which provides prevention and intervention support and services to youth and adults involved in the criminal justice system or at risk of involvement.

“ReConnect is my second chance. As an attorney I had made a poor choice and helped a client do something illegal, and I ended up being convicted for it. I saw gaps in the services, and I knew that there was more needed,” Stennis-Williams said. “ReConnect became an opportunity to fill in the gaps that I saw were missing.”

Stennis-Williams is also a published author, certified life coach, and visionary business owner who has used her effective and proven entrepreneurial skills and business acumen to launch four successful business ventures.

The business ventures included a general practice law firm titled Choice Mediation and Risk Management Firm as well as LSW Strategies, LLC, a personal and business development consultancy company, US



NEW HORIZONS PHOTO

LaVon Stennis-Williams, ReConnect, Inc. provides prevention and intervention support and services to youth and adults involved in the criminal justice system or at risk of involvement.

Bank, and Omaha Small Business Network.

ReConnect, Inc., her most recent business venture, has served over 500 individuals both in the prison systems and post-release from incarceration. They also serve families who are impacted by a loved one’s negative behaviors.

“We started off serving 13-15 people, mainly youth. We now serve 1,500 people a year in areas people are incarcerated or formerly incarcerated and families that were involved in our criminal justice system,” Stennis-Williams said.

The three programs Re-

connect, Inc. offers includes Reconnect 2 Success, Triage Youth Program and the Family Matters program.

Reconnect 2 Success involves a reentry initiative that provides a continuum of support and services to ensure people do not fall through service gaps or back into the prison system.

The Triage Youth Program is designed to help youth overcome criminogenic risk factors and behaviors that have led or may lead to their involvement in the court systems.

“Once you have high risk factors, you get the services,” Stennis-Williams said. “We address the adult clients because as juveniles they fell through the cracks” Finally, the Family Matters program is about family mediation and support services for families of incarcerated or formerly incarcerated parents or at-risk youth.

“We try to interrupt the

issue or cycle of the inter-generational involvement,” Stennis-Williams said. “We have a high success rate because we see how our kids are doing through graduation announcements. Sometimes they come back as military recruiters or they comeback to say ‘hello.’ We see that growth because the past three years we have had 94% of kids that completed the program without getting new charges.”

There currently isn’t any future plans or changes made for ReConnect, Inc., but there is always work needed to be done when it comes to making sure that their services stay relevant, keeping staff properly trained and that they continue to do a good job of building community collaborations.

“We’re important because if we can make people reach their full potential and become contributing citizens we benefit as a city. We have kids that have hope, so they don’t have to rely on stereotypes or stigmas of growing up to go to prison,” Stennis-Williams said. “ReConnect has grown because we meet the problem as it is emerging. We had to change juveniles committing serious crimes. Crime has changed and there is a growing need for programs like ours because the issues keep growing. You see this trend by the lack of the support in their family life. We want to give the families extra support beyond typical program hours so we can see more success.”



Join the Long-term Care Ombudsman Program

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.

Long-term Care Ombudsmen must complete 20 hours of initial classroom training and 18 hours of additional training a year.

For more information call 402-444-6536, and ask for Marsha Peters at Ext. 1039 or Sharon Greco at Ext. 1002



State of Nebraska
Department of Health
and Human Services
Long-Term Care
Ombudsman Program



UNO Research Study

The CAPACITY Lab in the Department of Gerontology at UNO is seeking older caregivers to an individual with Mild Cognitive Impairment, Alzheimer’s disease, or Frontotemporal Dementia for a research study.

The study will involve an online visit over zoom for approximately 90 minutes. The experiment involves online questionnaires, interview, and computer tasks with a research assistant. Compensation is available to those who complete the survey.

To be eligible for the study, you must be 50 years of age or older, currently an unpaid family caregiver to an individual with Mild Cognitive, and have impairment, Alzheimer’s disease, or Frontotemporal dementia for 5 hours a week or more, and for at least 6 months. Must be able to have comprehension of written and spoken English, have completed a minimum of two years of high school or higher, and have a normal or corrected to normal vision and hearing

Participants cannot have a neurological or psychiatric disease, vision or hearing issues, cognitive or motor difficulties and you cannot be currently pregnant or breastfeeding.

If you are interested, please call Naomi Adjei at 402-554-5961 or email us at UNOCapacity@unomaha.edu.

--Ryan continued from page 1.

resource that contributes to a thriving Benson community.

"We're still trying to figure out ourselves but our mission is to enhance, engage and enrich the community with educational and creative experiences as a shared space and to foster the wellbeing of people through community engagement," said Ryan.

BT is home to everything from dramatic stage readings and productions to film screenings to live music concerts to community forums to workshops. She acknowledged the theater gave expression to her life as a searcher, convener, social worker, community builder, catalyst and arts lover-patron-sponsor.

"It's a culmination of all those experiences. It's my best effort. I think of social work and entrepreneurship as art forms actually. It's an application of the creative mind in expanding possibility, potential and impact."

That this North Omaha champion followed her nurturer instincts in a neighborhood she loves added meaning to the journey.

"That's what I love about the Benson community. It's always kind of held its own as a working-class, small business-owner community, and that included the arts with the Benson Theatre (originally called the Benalto). "So I love the nature of the neighborhood for those reasons. It's just inspiring to be around."

Giving back comes from her family. Her maternal grandmother co-founded the Pearl Methodist (now Living Hope United Methodist) food pantry. Ryan's mother was an elementary school educator in North Omaha and wrote the curriculum for the City Parks and Recreation Sun Dawgs program. Her father created a program to help people transition from prison back into the community.

The Omaha Northwest High graduate traces her entrepreneurial spirit to her paternal grandfather, whose company Craft Guild became Jostens.

Her family includes creatives. A sister is a visual artist. A niece is an opera singer. Her son is a professional guitarist. Thus, she regards her work in step with her family's practice of creating and giving.

"I humbly do my best to follow in their footsteps," she said.

CREATING A PLACE FOR ALL

Benson Theater expanded that work. She described it as a "working urban community model" she'd like to see replicated elsewhere.

"We know that arts and education in a shared space can create economic development for those around it.

It can give access to a platform for people for education, creativity and holding civic discussions.

Part of being a shared community space is being mutable to respond to community needs and desires.

What we're able to do is respond to people that reach out to us. It's really lovely how the programming



NEW HORIZONS PHOTO
Amy Ryan is an experienced executive with a demonstrated history of working in nonprofit management, development, historic renovation, and social entrepreneurship, with a focus on social welfare and economic impact within an urban community.

has come around to address what people want."

Even a sampling of one month's programming illustrates the diverse interests and audiences it serves, with dates devoted to an Irish film festival, a French cabaret concert, the Nebraska drag wars, a Nebraska Writers Collective event and the Benson High School Hall of Fame awards ceremony.

"It's so neat that we just lay open that calendar and people from the community fill it," she said. "When people apply to book the space we go through a checklist to make sure the event is inclusive and equitable and adds value. But we're finding that it just is naturally opening itself up to filling space for the needs and less about us directing it. That's exciting to see because Benson Theatre really is a place-based community space whose mission and programming are guided by the community. We take the ideas, counsel and programming of experts, community members and stakeholders and give it a stage."

Examples of BT programming responding to community interests include:

- Screenings and panels of the documentary *Indivisible* about the disruptive, oppressive history of redlining in Omaha.

- The original stage play *More Than a Number* developed by Omaha-based Anastasis Theatre Co. in collaboration with inmates at the Nebraska State Penitentiary.

Benson Creative District moderated a discussion about area issues and potential improvements. Participants included representatives from the Benson neighborhood and merchants associations, BFF (Benson First Friday) and residents.

"Those civic discussions are exactly what I'm talking about," Ryan said. "It's so neat to see people showing up. I think people appreciate their voices being heard. These are discussions where people ex-

press ideas on how to make a better neighborhood and society."

BT is working with UNO's School of Business on developing financial literacy programs-classes to assist aspiring and emerging entrepreneurs and others with the basic tenets of money management, business plans, grant writing, et cetera.

For this be-all-things-to-all-people nonprofit to work, Ryan said, it depends on partnerships and collaborations, something she established long before the theater even opened. She leveraged long-term relationships to enlist individuals and organizations as partners, board members, donors. Old friend Chip Davis, the musical maven behind Mannheim Steamroller and American Gramophone, has been a key supporter. Many others have contributed as well.

"Nothing can happen from one person in a community setting. It will only work if it's a community of people joining in and being involved," Ryan said.

She and her small team made the theater as inviting as possible for potential users.

"When a nonprofit partner uses the space we provide all the services for their operations including a tech director and security in order set them up for success. Fees are structured to be much lower so that they're affordable."

Moving forward, she said, "the biggest challenge is being sustainable," adding, "The overhead is pretty substantial to operate this space. The annual operating budget is a million dollars. The first couple years have been getting the operations right, securing the mission and practicing inclusivity in real-life rather than just talking about it. There's so much that goes into contracts with artists and educators and with rentals. There's so much that goes on with infrastructure and keeping the theater in good shape. We're just now at a place of having those systems and operations down pat."

She hoped for more refinement around developing sustainable programs.

"We want to get to 30 percent earned revenue from ticket sales, rentals, concessions, catering. That's not much, so we'll always need community support, grants, donations."

LIFE OF SERVICE BRINGS RYAN BACK TO THE FUTURE

There have been growing pains, as with any startup, including personnel changes. As an ED who nurtured the project from conception to realization, she put in long hours at the theater and out in the community.

"I'm kind of a workhorse. I've always been that way."

Like most entrepreneurs, she's a self-starter and grinder. At first, she struggled asking for help.

"Entrepreneurs are usually independent thinkers. Our attitude is, I'll do it myself, or, I've got this. That's the way the culture of entrepreneur-

ship is. When I took over the Pizza Shoppe it was like, well, you've got to figure this stuff out on your own. But then you get into nonprofit organizations where nothing will work without community support, partnerships and a team."

She eventually gave herself the grace to acknowledge her weaknesses, to seek advice and to lean into supporters and experts.

"I love that lesson of being open and transparent, about communicating what we need help with, what we need to grow or expand and change. That only comes from that place of being okay with asking for help. My favorite question to ask others and to receive is – how can I help you – because those words change everything for you when you're having a hard time. You're able to open up possibilities with just that one simple question."

She has tried devoting more time for her own self-care. When things get tough she has the support of close family and friends.

There have also been sacrifices. The price she paid being an entrepreneur was the time and energy it took from the writing life she once envisioned. Now that she's free of the theater's day-to-day demands, she sees an opportunity to re-engage with that old love.

"I will come back to it soon because that's my art and passion and what I love to do – write. I have lots of books started. I'm pretty excited about some of them."

She also sees herself eventually returning to doing counseling and consulting work.

"I look forward to going back to a one-on-one relationship with people instead of the public. I'm 29 years into serving in public spaces. I think it's a good time for me at my age to do some other things having to do with my own personal development. I'm excited to have that opportunity now that it's come around."

She doesn't worry about suffering from founder's syndrome by resisting letting go of the reins or meddling with the new leadership.

"I don't think so. My biggest joy was creating it from dirt piles to a lovely space. Every time I walk in I'm excited all over again by how much more beautiful and useful it is then I could have imagined. Part of what we do is pass the torch to other people who come in with fresh eyes and energy."

She's passed the torch satisfied that "a strong foundation for a promising future" has been laid.

That doesn't mean she won't miss being BT's matriarch.

"Something I loved was being at the events, greeting people as they came in, interacting, and being the mom at the back of the room smiling as people cheered on their peers and were moved by the discussions and performances."

Don't be surprised to see Ryan at BT beaming like the proud mother she is at how her baby's grown and continues feeding the community.

Visit <https://bensontheatre.org>.



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Vaccines to consider getting later this year

By David Kohll, Pharm.D.

We appreciate the community trusting and relying on Kohll's for the latest vaccine information and allowing us to administer your vaccines. We administer the vaccine at our Kohll's locations, in your home, at long-term care facilities and at your corporations. Please contact Kohll's if you'd like us to vaccinate you. Getting vaccinated is a simple way to prevent some horrible viruses that will negatively impact you. We want to help everyone stay healthy!

Covid: FDA has continued to monitor the circulating strains of SARS-CoV-2. Based on the most current available data, along with the recent rise in cases of COVID-19 in areas of the country, the agency has further determined that the preferred JN.1-lineage for the COVID-19 vaccines (2024-2025 Formula) is the KP.2 strain, if feasible. This change is intended to ensure that the COVID-19 vaccines (2024-2025 Formula) more closely match circulating SARS-CoV-2 strains. Moderna, Pfizer and Novavax are currently making the new covid vaccine which may be available some time in August.

When the new covid vaccine becomes available, everyone from 6 months and older should be vaccinated with the new covid vaccine. Even if it has been less than four months since you received the old version of covid vaccine, you should still be vaccinated with the new version. There is no waiting period between when you received the old covid vaccine and when you should receive the new covid vaccine.

Influenza (Flu): The major change for flu vaccine is the high dose or Fluad is not only recommended for those over 65 years old, but also for those who have had transplants and are on immunosuppressant medications.

Additionally, the flu vaccine for 2024-25 will protect against three different influenza viruses instead of four.

Shingrix: Recommended for Adults 50 years and older should get two doses of Shingrix, separated by 2 to 6 months. Adults 19 years and older who have or will

have weakened immune systems because of disease or therapy should also get two doses of Shingrix.

Shingrix was first administered a little over 10 years ago. Long term studies recently published indicate it is still effective. Therefore, after receiving your initial 2 doses, no further booster vaccine of Shingrix is required at this time. 1-7

Pneumonia vaccine: A new pneumonia vaccine by Merck was recently approved and will be available soon. Capvaxine which has 21 strains of pneumonia. Currently if you are over 65 years old or between 19-64 and have chronic conditions you should get Prevnar 20. When Capvaxine becomes available which will be soon, if you haven't received your Prevnar 20 then you should be vaccinated with Capvaxine.

Coming down the pipeline are a 24 and 30 strain pneumonia vaccine. We'll keep you updated as these vaccines navigate through the FDA and CDC approval process.

RSV: There has been two RSV vaccines available Abrysvo by Pfizer and Arexvy by GSK. There is now a 3rd RSV vaccine available, mResvia by Moderna. Moderna's RSV vaccine is unique that it is made by mRNA technology. The new recommendations for RSV are as follows: 75 and older should get an RSV vaccination if they haven't already received an RSV vaccination in the past.

60-75 years old should get an RSV vaccination if they have chronic risk factors and they haven't received an RSV vaccination in the past.

Pregnant mothers should get RSV vaccine by Pfizer (Abrysvo) between 32 and 36 weeks 6 days to help prevent RSV in newborns.

You can get an RSV vaccine anytime, but the optimum time is between August and October.

Revaccination of RSV will likely occur in the future based on recent studies, but at this time a revaccination schedule has not been established.



We want to hear from you.

- Do you have questions about the Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging, its programs, or services?
- Do you have a comment about the agency and how it serves older adults in Douglas, Sarpy, Dodge, Cass, and Washington counties?
- Do you have a story idea for the *New Horizons* newspaper, or would you like to receive a **FREE** copy each month?

Please send your questions, comments, and story ideas to:

enoa.info@enoa.org

We appreciate your interest in ENOA and the *New Horizons*.



ENOA

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Healthier vending machine choices

Vending machines can be the site of many unhealthy food options. While this may be the case, there are options that are healthier than others.

When you pick the options that are not as healthy, it can lead to you feeling more tired throughout the work day and could lead to a higher risk of obesity. If there is a vending machine at your workplace, try talking to your supervisor about adding some healthier options if they are not available. If this is not the case, bring healthier options from home.

You want to pick out things that have some nutritional content and not a ton of calories. Since you are unable to see the nutrition

label for snacks in a vending machine when making the choice, try searching online to find this information so that you can identify which snacks are the healthier choice. It is also important to consider what the portion size is for the item and keep in mind that the package may contain more than one serving.

The nutrition content for a "healthier" snack should follow these guidelines:

- Less than 250 calories
- Less than 35% of calories from fat
- Less than 350 mg of sodium. No trans fat
- Less than 5% of daily value for fat
- More than 1 g of fiber
- Less than 10 g of added sugar

Healthier options that you should pick:

- Beef jerky (or turkey jerky)
- Low-calorie popcorn
- Fresh or dried fruit
- Unsweetened apple-sauce
- Snacks to avoid:
 - Candy bars
 - Bags of chips
 - Packages of cookies
 - Pastries
 - Sodas
 - Energy drinks
 - High-calorie fruit juices

Submitted by Karen Rehm, Wellness Services Manager, Nebraska Safety Council. To schedule a "Healthier & Happier You" presentation, contact Karen at 402-483-2511 ext. 102 or send an email to Krehm@nesafetycouncil.org.

Having a cancer policy with Medicare is very important



A lump-sum cancer policy pays cash benefits to you, the policyholder, if you are diagnosed with cancer. You can choose how you wish to spend the money! For example, one client bought a \$10K lumpsum policy for a very affordable premium. Just over 6 months later he was diagnosed with prostate cancer. His policy immediately paid him \$10,000.

According to the American Cancer Society, the average risk of developing cancer in the United States is 41.6% for men and 39.6% for women. However, your risk may be higher or lower depending on your individual risk factors, which can include: Age-The median age at diagnosis for all cancers is 66 years; Lifestyle-Limiting tobacco and alcohol, eating a healthy diet, and avoiding too much sun exposure can help reduce your risk; Family history-A family history of cancer can also increase your risk; Environment-Exposure to certain substances at work, outdoor air pollution, and other environmental factors can also increase your risk.

Having a Cancer policy alongside Medicare can provide important supplementary coverage that helps offset expenses not fully covered by Medicare alone. Here are some reasons why a Cancer policy might be beneficial:

Financial Protection: Medicare covers many medical expenses, but there are gaps such as deductibles, copayments, and coinsurance. A Cancer policy can help cover these out-of-pocket costs specifically related to cancer treatment, such as chemotherapy, radiation therapy, surgery, and prescription drugs. Medicare does not cover transportation and

pocket maximums.

There are guaranteed issue Cancer plans with no underwriting for ages 60-79, or stand-alone cancer plans that may have underwriting. Even smokers can get a cancer plan! These policies are inexpensive, \$20-\$50/month depending on your age and desired coverage levels. If you get a cancer diagnosis, the plan will pay the cash benefit to you. You can use this money however you would like, to help with the added expenses, the loss of income, or to take a nice long trip. You can sign up for these any time of the year with coverage effective immediately. Reach out to get a no obligation quote today!

Cancer policies can provide peace of mind by filling in the gaps left by Medicare coverage.

It's important to carefully review the terms and coverage details of any Cancer policy you're considering. Additionally, consider your personal health history, family medical history, and financial situation when evaluating whether a Cancer policy is right for you alongside your Medicare coverage.

Mary Hiatt is President of Mary the Medicare Lady (A non-government entity.) She is a member of a pharmacist-led organization that helps her clients source savings for medications. She offers Educational Workshops on Medicare, Drug Savings, How to Stop Phone Calls, and more at no charge. Not connected with or endorsed by the U.S. government or the federal Medicare program. See www.hiattagency.com or contact licensed independent agent mary@hiattagency.com or call or text 402-672-9449 for more information.

lodging for treatment, experimental treatments, special nutrition, and other ancillary services that can become necessary during cancer care.

Income Replacement: Cancer policies can help replace lost income if you're unable to work due to cancer treatment or recovery. This can alleviate financial strain during a challenging time.

As a Back-Up to Part D Plans: Most Medigap/Medicare Supplement plans pay the 20% coinsurance of any Part B service, including chemotherapy and radiation, for you. However, you may consider a cancer policy even with a Medigap plan because the cancer policy can help with your costs under Medicare Part D. These can be drugs to treat the cancer itself, or drugs to treat the side effects from the chemotherapy or radiation.

As a Back-Up to Medicare Advantage Plans: Most people with Medicare Advantage plans need cancer coverage due to the expense of chemotherapy and radiation, which is billed under Part B and requires a 20% coinsurance. This is a big gap, and a Cancer plan can help protect them against Medicare Advantage Maximum Out of Pocket limits as high as \$8850 on Part A and B services. In addition, this maximum out of pocket amount does NOT include your prescriptions. Those are covered under Part D and have separate out of

Sarpy County Historical Museum to host 90th Anniversary Celebration

Papillion graduate Retired US Air Force Lt. Col. Connie Engel, will return to her roots to speak at the 90th Anniversary Celebration for the Sarpy County Historical Museum on August 17.

Connie was named Distinguished Graduate, and was awarded the ATC Commander Trophy of class 77-08, the first U.S. Air Force Undergraduate Pilot Training class to include women.

Engel entered the Air Force on Novem-

ber 4, 1971, as a nurse and later became the only OB-GYN nurse practitioner in the entire Air Force. Engel entered the Air Force Reserve in 1984 and retired in 1995 as a lieutenant colonel. She was inducted into the Women in Aviation Pioneers Hall of Fame in 2016.

The celebration will be held at Trinity Church located at 848 Gold Coast Road in Papillion from 1-4 p.m. For tickets, call Kori Rose at 402-292-2880.

King Crossword

- ACROSS**
- 1 Manhandle
 - 5 Annex
 - 8 Trig function
 - 12 Within (Pref.)
 - 13 "Ben- —"
 - 14 Toledo's lake
 - 15 "Sure, of course"
 - 17 Bakery buy
 - 18 "Yippee!"
 - 19 Apple music service
 - 21 Pride parade initials
 - 24 "Let me think ..."
 - 25 Valley in California
 - 28 Indy event
 - 30 Wall climber
 - 33 Rocker Rose
 - 34 Plains grazers
 - 35 Formerly known as
 - 36 Earth (Pref.)
 - 37 Stink
 - 38 "It's — real!"
- DOWN**
- 1 Calico's call
 - 2 "My Way" writer
 - 3 Beehive State
 - 4 Jesuit university
 - 5 Sushi fish
 - 6 Press for payment
 - 7 Zwei follower
 - 8 Blood part
 - 9 Ore source
 - 10 Aswan's river
 - 11 Congers
 - 16 Sailing hazard
 - 20 Subsequently
 - 22 Party cheese
 - 23 Stunning gun
 - 25 Pester
 - 26 Chopper
 - 27 Story thread
 - 29 Pepsi rival
 - 31 Victory sign
 - 32 Longing
 - 34 Telly watcher
 - 38 Cleveland squad
 - 40 Like lions
 - 42 Expert
 - 43 Filches
 - 44 Israeli carrier
 - 45 Guitarist
 - 47 Funny person
 - 48 Visitor to Siam
 - 49 Ogler's look
 - 52 Altar affirmative
 - 53 Jazz lover

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	31	32
33				34					35		
36				37				38			
		39	40			41		42			
43	44				45		46		47	48	49
50					51	52	53				
54					55				56		
57					58				59		

This Month's Crossword Puzzle

		4	7				5	
5						9	6	4
	6			8				2
		8				3	9	
	5			2				3
7			4		6			1
	1		8					6
6				1				2
		2			5	3		

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

This Month's Sudoku

Intercultural Senior Center

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

The Intercultural Senior Center facility – open weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. – offers programs and activities from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. from Monday to Friday.

The ISC offers offer a morning snack, and regular and vegetarian lunch.

Come and exercise at the ISC. It's never too late to learn and have fun, join their language classes, technology, jewelry and crafts, and field trip options. The garden is green and growing, volunteers are welcome. If people need assistance with their benefits, the ISC can help them out.

Enjoy coffee and chat every Friday between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m.

Lunch reservations are due by 9 a.m. A voluntary contribution is suggested for the meal. Their dining room will have lunch options available at 11:30 a.m., and after lunch, you can continue to practice your technology skills, attend crafts, and enjoy other fun activities.

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

For more information, please call 402-444-6529 or visit the ISC website at interculturalseniorcenter.org.

Camelot Friendship Center

You're invited to visit the Camelot Friendship Center, 9270 Cady Ave., for regular activities, which include Chair Yoga, card games, Tai Chi, Pinochle, 10 Point Pitch, and bingo. This month's events include:

- **August 8:** Presentation with Archwell Health "Managing Downsizing & Life Changes"

- **August 13:** Mary Link performs compliments of Merymakers @ 11:45 a.m.

- **August 15:** Presentation by Elder Law of Omaha "Identifying and Avoiding Fraud" @ 11:45 a.m.

- **August 15:** "Jackpot Bingo" @ 12:15 p.m.

- **August 16:** Book Club meets @ 12:30 p.m.

- **August 20:** Presentation with Alecia Stepp "Survival Tips for Caregivers" @ 11:45 a.m.

No Tai Chi July 3, 4, 9, 11, 16 & 18

Every Wednesday – Chair Volleyball @ 10 a.m.

Every Monday – Card Game: Manipulation @ 10 a.m.

Every Monday – Pickleball @ 10 a.m.

Grab N Go meals are available.

For more information, contact Barb at 402-444-3091 or barbara.white@cityofomaha.org.

Elder Access Line

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

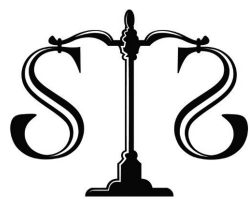
Information is offered to help the state's older men and women with questions on topics like bankruptcy, homestead exemptions, powers of attorney, Medicare, Medicaid, and Section 8 housing.

The number for the Elder Access Line is 402-827-5656 in Omaha and 1-800-527-7249 statewide.

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

The Legal Aid of Nebraska hours of operation are 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 3 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and 9 a.m. to noon on Friday.

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Being present: Just show up

"Just show up." This is the advice I got from my young friend who, in her mid-thirties, is battling stage four cancer. Having spent a month in constant pain due to multiple complications that have kept her in ICU, she knows what is important to her.

My question to her was "What can I do when I feel totally helpless to relieve any of your suffering, when even the doctors are struggling?" Her immediate response was "Just show up." I, and others, have visited her hospital room almost daily, if only for a few minutes. Sometimes she knew we were there and sometimes, maybe not. I was pleased to hear that these short visits made a difference to her. She then added that each small kindness was so appreciated. What to me is a minor act, such as delivering her mail, is so important her. Every kind act, no matter how small, tells her someone cares, tells her she is loved. Feeling cared about and loved makes all the difference in her life when so little is in

Conscious Aging

By Nancy Hemesath

her control. Enduring her physical pain and set-backs would be unbearable if she did not know she is loved. Being loved translates into the will to live.

I cannot help but wonder about those who suffer without support networks. I think of the elderly who have no visitors. I think of the homeless who have lost touch with their families. I think of the mentally ill who cannot connect with supportive family and friends. I think of prisoners who have been cut off and isolated due to past mistakes.

No one of us can address all these needs. I am grateful for so many volunteers who do "show up" for others. There are those who visit nursing homes, those who serve meals to the hungry, those who write letters to the incarcerated. These are all ways of showing up. I remember my month in re-

hab and am still touched by those who visited, brought flowers or coffee. I agree with my friend that "just showing up" made such a difference to me.

How easy it is to fall into patterns of ease, not concerning ourselves with people who have needs and difficult challenges. It takes intention to wake up and be alert, to notice needs of those who need us to "just show up." The effort need not be time-consuming nor expensive. It takes awareness and a desire to "just show up." Who in our lives needs us to be there — to "show up" for them today?

(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.)

Observing National Immunization Awareness Month this August

August is National Immunization Awareness Month. This annual observance is designed to remind everyone that staying up to date on vaccinations is an important way to protect not only their health but the health of everyone around them.

Vaccines are a public health success story. Today, we are fortunate to have a broad spectrum of safe and effective vaccines, which if received on schedule, protect patients of all ages against vaccine-preventable diseases.

Current vaccines protect against childhood disease including chicken pox, measles, and whooping cough, while protecting adults from the flu, Tdap, and shingles.

Vaccines have also eradicated or nearly eradicated life-threatening diseases, such as smallpox and polio.

Children as young as 1-2 months old should be vaccinated against childhood illnesses and school-age children may need vaccine updates before they can return to school this fall. Ensuring that every child sees their doctor for a well-child visit and to receive any needed vaccine or vaccine updates is one of the best ways a parent can protect their child's health and that of the community.

Because the immunity created by a vaccine can lessen overtime, it's important that children receive their vaccines on the recommended schedule. Adults may also need vaccine updates or to receive recently

approved vaccines such as the RSV vaccine for adults 60 years of age and older.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, routine childhood vaccination levels among school-age children in the U.S. decreased, likely due to missed well-child medical visits.

Globally, a report by UNICEF and the World Health Organization found that childhood vaccination coverage worldwide increased with about 4 million more children receiving full immunizations in 2022 compared to 2021, but were still below pre-pandemic levels.

VACCINES MEET STRICT SAFETY AND EFFECTIVENESS MEASURES

In the U.S., safety measures are strict and prioritized to ensure that vaccines are safe for patients. Before any vaccine is approved for use, it is tested for safety and effectiveness through clinical trials and then must be approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and recommended by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices.

While some people experience mild side effects after receiving a vaccine, such as swelling at the shot area, mild fevers and chills, serious reactions are extremely rare. Overall, the safety of all vaccines is closely monitored to ensure their continued safe use. If patients have questions about a vaccine including any potential side effects, they should speak to their healthcare provider.

(Information provided by Trust for America's Health).

Exploring the benefits of traveling for older adults

By Paula Crozier

Traveling holds immense benefits for individuals of all ages, and this rings especially true for older adults. Scientific research and insights from popular blogs consistently highlight the advantages of travel in enhancing physical health, mental well-being, and overall quality of life for seniors.

According to a study published in the Journal of Aging Research, travel can contribute significantly to the physical health of older adults. Regular movement associated with travel, such as walking tours or exploring new environments, helps improve cardiovascular health and mobility. Additionally, exposure to different climates and environments can boost immune function, providing a natural defense against illness. Popular travel blogs emphasize the rejuvenating effects of travel on physical health, promoting activities like hiking, swimming, and cultural exploration as beneficial for maintaining vitality and fitness in older age.

Traveling also has profound impacts on mental well-being and cognitive function. Research published in the Journal of Travel Medicine suggests

that travel can reduce stress and anxiety levels in seniors, contributing to a lower risk of depression. Experiencing new cultures, cuisines, and landscapes stimulates the brain, promoting cognitive flexibility and creativity. Traveling also helps older adults stay mentally sharp and engaged, and offers opportunities for learning and personal growth through interactions with diverse people and customs.

Loneliness and social isolation are significant concerns for many older adults, but travel provides ample opportunities for social interaction and emotional fulfillment. Scientific studies have shown that shared travel experiences strengthen familial and friendship bonds, leading to increased happiness and a sense of belonging. Traveling can instill a sense of purpose and renewed zest for life among older adults. Research from the International Journal of Tourism Research suggests that travel helps seniors redefine their identities beyond retirement, fostering a positive outlook on aging.

While the benefits of travel for older adults are clear, it's essential to consider practicalities and precautions. Consultation

with healthcare providers before embarking on a trip is advisable to ensure safety and address any medical concerns. Additionally, choosing destinations and accommodations that cater to the needs of older adults such as accessibility and healthcare facilities, can enhance vacations.

From physical health improvements to mental well-being, enhanced social connections, and a heightened sense of purpose, traveling offers older adults a wealth of benefits that contribute to a fulfilling and active lifestyle in later years. By embracing travel opportunities, one can enrich his or her lives, broaden horizons, and create lasting memories that enrich the golden years.

Paula is the Director of Marketing and Development at Florence Home Healthcare Center, Royale Oaks Assisted Living and House of Hope Assisted Living and Memory Care. In her spare time, Paula is rediscovering all the things she did as a child that she can still do like painting, coloring, hiking and bike riding.

Millard Senior Center

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

- **August 6:** Luau lunch: Hot dogs (provided by Archwell) and sides @ 11 a.m.
 - **August 7:** Board Meeting @ 9:30 a.m.
 - **August 12:** Bunco @ 12 p.m.
 - **August 14:** African dress club meets: Put together sundresses and shorts for the Orphan Grain Train @ 9:30 a.m.
 - **August 20:** Archwell coming to discuss strokes @ 10:45 a.m.
 - **August 26:** Book Club: "Remarkably Bright Creatures" by Shelby Van Pelt @ 1 p.m.
 - **August 30:** Wear your best football swag to root for your favorite team
- Tai Chi on Mondays and Fridays @ 9:30 a.m.
Hand-N-Foot Wednesdays @ 8:30 a.m.
MahJongg Wednesdays @ 1 p.m.
Chair Volleyball Thursdays @ 9:30 a.m.
Dominoes Thursdays @ 12:30 p.m.
For more information, please call 402-546-1270.

Respite Across the Lifespan

Life can bring on stress for many of us. Finding ways to relieve stress are important to our overall health and well-being. Caregivers are not immune to this stress.

Please contact Respite Across the Lifespan at edben-nett@unmc.edu or 402-559-5732 to find out more about respite services and to locate resources in your area.

UNO Research Study

The CAPACITY Lab in the Department of Gerontology at UNO is seeking healthy adults, and caregivers to an older adult with a chronic disease (e.g., dementia, cancer, cardiovascular disease), to participate in a research study about the impact of aging on the neural and behavioral bases of social processing.

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

Parking is complementary and located a short walk from the building where the experiment will take place. The experiment involves online questionnaires and interview, computer tasks, saliva collection (for hormone analyses), blood draw, and brain imaging.

Compensation is available to those who complete the survey.

To be eligible for the study, you must be between the ages of 19-90 years, have comprehension of written and spoken English, have mobility to travel to UNMC to participate and have completed a minimum of two years of high school or higher.

Participants also can't have a Neurological or psychiatric disease, can't be taking antidepressant medication, using cortisone/prednisone, or on hormone replacement therapy, can't have vision, hearing, cognitive, or motor difficulties, can't be currently pregnant or breastfeeding or can't have a metal implanted in the body.

If you are interested in the study, please call Janelle Beadle at 402-554-5961 or email us at UNOCapacity@unomaha.edu.



Mary Hiatt

Retirement & Insurance Advisor
Call or Text: 402.672.9449
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redcross.org/smokealarmIA



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American Red Cross

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How Nebraska's new voter ID law will work

Nebraska's new voter ID law (LB514) requires all registered Nebraska voters to present a photo identification (ID) when voting in an election in the state of Nebraska.

Every election in Nebraska after the May 2024 primary will require voter ID.

Photo IDs:

- Nebraska driver's license (from DMV).
- Nebraska state ID (from DMV).
- Nebraska college ID (public or private).

- Nebraska political subdivision ID (state, county, city, school, etc.)
- United States Passport.
- Military ID.
- Tribal ID.
- Hospital, assisted-living facility or nursing home record.

ID must have your name and photo. ID can be expired.

How voter ID will work:

- Voting in person at the polls: Present a photo ID or vote provisionally.
- Voting early at the election office: Present a photo

ID or vote provisionally.

- Voting early by mail: Write driver's license/state ID number on ballot application or enclose a copy of photo ID or reasonable impediment certification with your ballot application.

- Voting in by-mail precincts or by-mail special elections: Write driver's license/state ID number on ballot return envelope or enclose a copy of photo ID or reasonable impediment certification in your ballot return envelope. Active-duty military members, active-

duty military spouses, and citizens overseas covered by UOCAVA (Uniformed & Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act) are exempt from voter ID.

If you forget your ID, you will fill out a provisional ballot.

For your ballot to count, you will need to present a photo ID to your county election office on or before the Tuesday after the election.

If you don't have an ID, you can get a state ID for free (for voting purposes)

from the Nebraska DMV. You will need to bring certain documents to get a state ID, so check with the DMV website ahead of your visit.

If you need a copy of your birth certificate to get a free state ID, you can get a free certified copy of your Nebraska birth certificate from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

This is only available if you do not have an ID and need a state ID for voting purposes.

If you cannot get an ID due to disability/illness, religious objection to being photographed, or lack of documents to obtain a free state ID, you can complete a reasonable impediment certification.

Visit VoterID.Nebraska.gov for more information.

Be on the patrol for fake calls

Cybercriminals are impersonating U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents. The scammers call you and claim that CBP has intercepted drugs or money shipments that are addressed to you. They insist that you must confirm personal details to help them resolve the case. If you refuse to cooperate, the scammers threaten to send police to arrest you.

To seem more credible, the scammers may provide actual CBP employee names and numbers that they find online, as well as fake case and badge numbers. In some cases, there is a recorded message that says to press a number to speak to a "CBP officer" about an intercepted shipment. The real CBP stresses that these calls are complete scams and that the agency never requests money or personal information like Social Security numbers over the phone.

The CBP will not call you to request money or financial information. If you receive a call asking you to share personal information, it's best to hang up and contact the government agency directly at a verified number.

If you receive an unexpected phone call urging you to take action, be extra cautious. It could be a scam.

For more information, visit KnowBe4.com.

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Flaherty Senior Consulting

Join Flaherty Senior Consulting for a series of Solutions Group gatherings that will address the questions and challenges caregivers face.

Solutions Groups provide opportunities for caregivers to learn how to deal with various issues, obtain skills and knowledge, engage in discussions, and interact with others in similar circumstances.

Upcoming meeting dates and locations are:

• **June 6, Aug. 1,
Oct. 3, Dec. 5**

The Servite Center of Compassion
72nd St. and Ames Cr.

• **June 19, Aug. 21,
Oct. 16, Dec. 18**

St. Timothy Lutheran Church
93rd and Dodge streets

• **July 9, Sept. 10,
Nov. 12**

St. Vincent de Paul Church
14330 Eagle Run Dr.

• **July 27, Sept. 28,
Nov. 30**

Faith Westwood
United Methodist Church
4814 Oaks Ln.

The Solutions Groups are facilitated by Nancy Flaherty, MS, CDP, president of Flaherty Senior Consulting. She has extensive experience working with family caregivers and caregiver groups.

Visit flahertyconsulting.net or call 402-312-9324 for more information.

Flaherty also provides private consultations with family caregivers to help them develop individual plans for their loved ones.

For information on private consultations, Solutions Group meeting times, and/or to register to attend a Solutions Group, email Nancy at flahertyconsulting@cox.net or call/text her at 402-312-9324.

La Vista Senior Center

You're invited to visit the La Vista Senior Center, located at 8116 Park View Blvd. The facility provides activity programs and meals Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Please call 402-331-3455 for general Community Center hours.

Meals are served weekdays at 11:30 a.m. Reservations are due by noon the business day prior to the date the participant wishes to attend and can be made by calling 402-331-3455.

A \$4.25 contribution is suggested for the meal if you are age 60 and older. If you are under age 60, then the meal cost is \$11.

In addition to meals being served daily, the La Vista Senior Center offers a variety of activities such as: Bingo, outings, cooking classes, computer classes, movies with popcorn, arts and crafts, a variety of card games, quilting, tai chi, exercise classes, musical entertainment and various parties.

Please visit our website at cityoflavista.org/seniors for updated information or call 402-331-3455.

9	2	4	7	6	1	8	5	3
5	8	1	2	3	9	6	4	7
3	6	7	5	8	4	1	9	2
2	4	8	1	7	3	9	6	5
1	5	6	9	2	8	7	3	4
7	3	9	4	5	6	2	8	1
4	1	3	8	9	2	5	7	6
6	9	5	3	1	7	4	2	8
8	7	2	6	4	5	3	1	9

This Month's
Sudoku Answers

M	A	U	L	A	D	D	S	I	N	E
E	N	T	O	H	U	R	E	R	I	E
O	K	A	Y	F	I	N	E	R	O	L
W	A	H	O	I	T	U	N	E	S	
		L	G	B	T	H	M	M		
N	A	P	A	R	A	C	E	I	V	Y
A	X	L	B	I	S	O	N	N	E	E
G	E	O	R	E	E	K	B	E	E	N
		T	M	I	R	E	A	R		
R	E	L	A	T	E	C	O	R	A	L
O	L	I	N	R	I	C	E	W	I	N
B	A	N	E	I	D	A	N	O	N	E
S	L	E	D	C	O	T	S	T	A	R

This Month's
Crossword Answers

Volunteers Assisting Seniors moved in July

Toni Roberts, Executive Director, Volunteers Assisting Seniors, has announced that the organization will be moving to a new office location. The new location will be 900 South 74th Plaza, Suite 403, Omaha Nebraska 68114.

The office will be closed the week of July 15-19, and resume regular appointments at the new location on July 22nd.

The Volunteers Assisting Seniors phone number will not change: 402-444-6617.

Volunteers Assisting Seniors is part of Nebraska SHIP (State Health Insurance Assistance Program) and has a 50 year history of providing quality Medicare counseling services to the metro area. The mission of the organization is to empower Medicare eligible

people, their families, and caregivers with the information necessary to make informed decisions about Medicare.

The Nebraska SHIP and Volunteers Assisting Seniors highly trained, certified volunteers use the complexity of Medicare to your advantage and help you develop a plan of action specific to your individual situation. We are not insurance agents and do not sell products.

The counseling services

are free and unbiased.

For more information or an appointment to discuss Medicare please contact *Volunteers Assisting Seniors*. You can also follow *Volunteers Assisting Seniors* on Facebook at "VAS Nebraska." Information about Medicare and Fraud are included. "Fraud Friday" is a Facebook feature providing the latest information about phone and email scams.



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Playing your cards right can help keep the mind sharp

By Ron Petersen

The game of Bridge has a similar allure for an estimated one million players around the world, including such fanatics as Warren Buffet and Bill Gates, with the majority of the players being over 50.

Researchers have discovered that mentally challenging games such as bridge are well suited for older people because the games offer intellectual and social stimulation on a routine basis.

“The social component of the game is very important,” President of the board for the Cornhusker Unit of the American Contract Bridge League (ACBL), Scott McIntyre said. “A lot of people tend to play the same game every week with the same partners and same people. There’s a lot of friendships we see get developed.”

Bridge is a card game played with four players divided into two teams of two people each. The players sitting across from each other at the same table form partnerships as North South and East West.

Before getting to the heart of the matter, there is one thing you need to know and that makes bridge different than other card games: The lingo.

The two teams are also called “pairs.”

In a pair, whoever is playing the hand is the “declar-



Bridge players from around the country gathered for a tournament earlier in 2024 in Kansas City.

COURTESY PHOTO

er” because that person has declared the “trump suit” or has made the hand to be played without a trump suit, which is called “notrump.”

The “dummy,” which comes from the French word for silent, is the declarer’s partner and places the hand face-up on the table after the “bidding” is done and the “opening lead” is made by the player on declarer’s left.

The other two players are the defenders for that hand. These are just a few of the terms you must know when playing bridge. A bridge deal consists of two phases: Bidding and card play. In this phase, players bid for the minimum number of tricks they think they can take to win the deal.

The dealer makes the first call. He is the “opener.” Then the auction proceeds

clockwise. There may be several bidding rounds.

The bidding ends when three players in succession say Pass, meaning that they do not want to bid higher. The final bid becomes the “contract.”

A bid in bridge consists of:

- A number from 1 to 7 called “level.”
- A suit (spades, hearts, diamonds or clubs) or “notrump” (NT).

The number refers to the total number of tricks (six plus the number indicated in the bid) one pair has contracted to make. The suit indicates the trump suit.

For instance, the North-South pair has bid 4H. It commits to making 10 tricks with hearts as trumps.

If a player thinks that the last bid made by one of his opponents is too optimis-

tic, he can double it when it is his turn to speak. This double can be redoubled by an opponent.

The purpose of bidding is to relay information about the strengths and weaknesses of your hand to your partner. It will help you determine the easiest contract to make based on your respective hands. It is therefore important to know the meaning of each bid.

“It takes a while to learn — you have to make a commitment to learn the game,” McIntyre said. “You can sit down and learn other card games in 15 minutes, but with bridge I am still learning. You’ve got to learn a language, but it’s as complicated or as simple as you want to make it. There’s a lot of problem solving involved if you want to play bridge and I think that is what people enjoy about it. Every hand you play is a little bit different.”

McIntyre, who started playing regularly in 2006, has seen a decrease in memberships over the last 18 years.

“The games are definitely smaller — we’ve seen our membership decline from close to 500 people to under 389 members now,” McIntyre said. “Some games we would get up to 20 tables, but you don’t see that happening anymore. Not as many people grew up playing cards. The average age of a bridge player is in their mid-70s. There aren’t as many new people coming into the game.”

For those who are looking to get involved and to give bridge a go, there are clubs around town for people to play at including The House of Cards, and the Omaha Bridge Studio. These clubs offer multiple games every week. The Bellevue Area Bridge Club and the Bluffs Bridge club each have a

weekly game.

“It satisfies one’s competitive spirit — there’s a lot of bridge players that will play golf, tennis or pickleball, and they want to win, and it’s fun to win,” McIntyre said. “When you get into bridge, you’ll play for a couple hours and get compared to the other people you are playing with, which is what people enjoy. The competition helps bring people back.”

Winning a club game might result in a 1.5 Matchpoints (MP) award. Winning a tournament game against more, and more skilled, opponents might net 20 MP’s.

“There are a couple of national tournaments every year where even greater awards are given. A common goal for serious, recreational bridge players is to accumulate 500 MP’s and attain the rank of Life Master,” McIntyre said. “There are ranks below Life Master; Club Master (20 MP’s), Regional Master (100 MP’s), and more. There are ranks above Life Master; e.g. Gold Life Master (2500 MP’s), Platinum Life Master (10,000 MP’s), and Grand Life Master (10,000 MP’s and a National Title).”

A sanctioned game must be run by a director, while the club games can be managed by one director. Bigger tournaments have concurrent games running and may have five or six directors working at one time.

“The director’s job includes herding the players to the proper table where they will play the correct boards. (The pre-dealt hands that are passed from table to table are called boards). They also rule on irregularities and rule infractions that arise,” McIntyre said. “At the end of the game, they announce the winners who are awarded Masterpoints based on how well they finished, the size of the game and whether it was an open game or limited to new players.

The ACBL will get to host a Regional Tournament from August 5-11 at the Omaha Marriott where the best players around the country will travel to Omaha to compete.

“Serious bridge players travel from all over to win master points,” McIntyre said. “Over 550 people from all over the country played in last year’s tournament.”

For more information about bridge in Omaha, visit omahabridge.org.

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