



# Celebrating 50 Years **New Horizons** Omaha's Cajun music connection

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By Leo Adam Biga

When the chill Prairie Gators light into their Cajun fusion tunes expect audiences to step lively to the uptempo, high-pitched, accordion-led beats. These mostly home-grown cats are the only Nebraska band specializing in this distinctive French Louisiana style.

Their social media tagline says it all: "Omaha's Cajun music connection."

Co-founder, accordionist, lead vocalist and Master Gator Steve Kunasek long admired the music from afar. "I was a habitué at the Howard Street Tavern. I appreciated music, especially Americana, blues, Cajun, Zydeco, bluegrass, old-time country music. Stuff like that." Because the pull of roots music was so strong, he taught himself to play the mountain dulcimer but didn't perform publicly.

## **SAVORING THE CAJUN EXPERIENCE**

The premier Cajun band Beau Soleil and renowned Zydeco artist



Clifton Chenier made an impression during Omaha stops. He was already into Cajun when he met his future wife, Candy Blanchard, a New Orleans native of Cajun descent. Her ancestors were among the French-Nova Scotia refugees to settle along the Bayou. In the late '90s he experienced an epiphany on his first visit to Cajun's birthplace, South Louisiana. With Candy's kin

and their down-home ways he fell fully under the spell of that culture and state of mind rooted in heritage and hospitality.

"Well, it's hard not to," he said. "It's in the United States but it's a special deal. I mean, really – the language, the food, the architecture, the climate, the wildlife, the music, of course. It's a special place."

As for the infectiously buoy-

ant melodies, he said, "I just took to it. I like music that moves." He absorbed the sounds and traditions, teaching himself to play the diatonic button accordion used in Cajon music. Years before he taught himself to play an old German accordion. Though nearly 40 when he came to the Cajun model, he dedicated himself to being a student of the instrument and the music.

"I have an aptitude and I just kept at it."

Mastering anything comes with repetition and Kunasek's practicing happened in the basement of his South Omaha home. Gators guitarist and banjo player Mark Richardson joined him Sunday afternoons.

"It was like a sacred time for me," said Richardson.

Kunasek soaked up as much Cajun, Creole and Zydeco as he could find. "Listened and listened and listened," he said. He wore out a CD of Zydeco artist Queen Ida. The more serious he got he immersed himself in the heart of Cajun

--Gators continued on page 8.



## **2025 ENOA's** *Spirit of Aging Awards*



This year, as part of its celebration of Older Americans Month, the Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging has presented its fifth annual *Spirit of Aging Awards*. Winners were selected in the **Advocacy, Medical/Healthcare, Donor, and Volunteer** categories. See article on page 13.

Thanks to each of the winners from the Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging, its staff, and the men and women the agency serves in Douglas, Sarpy, Dodge, Cass, and Washington counties.



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# Eligibility for medicaid can be determined in long-term care

*This article is 4th in a Series on Long Term Care*

Medicaid requirements are established by each state. Most recipients of Medicaid long-term care assistance come from the low-income aged, blind, and disabled group of eligible beneficiaries.

Those who apply to Medicaid for payment of Long-Term Care services must generally meet three criteria. They must:

- Belong to a Medicaid-eligible group (categorically needy or medically needy.)
- Have a medical or functional need—inability to perform activities of daily living (ADLs.) Those who are able to receive care in the home may also qualify. Medicaid case management agencies evaluate individuals to determine if their medical or functional needs require long-term care services.
- Have income and assets at or below specified levels. If the individual exceeds these limits, they must “spend down” their resources to qualify.

## MEDICAID INCOME REQUIREMENTS

First, let’s define Community Spouse: this is the spouse of a Medicaid recipient who remains in the home, they’re not the one applying for financial assistance. The sole income of the community spouse does not have to be counted as being spent on the recipient’s care. Also, if the community spouse has a low monthly income, it is possible for the community spouse to receive an allowance from the income of the Medicaid-recipient spouse.

Once individuals become eligible for Medicaid long-term care, they’ll have to direct almost all their available income toward the cost of their care. Medicaid covers the balance. Each recipient is permitted to retain only a nominal amount, such as \$50 or \$80 each month, for personal use. Those who receive Long Term Care services in their home are given a higher income allowance to allow them to maintain their home.

When determining Medicaid eligibility, an individual’s income is categorized as countable or not countable. Examples of income counted in determining Medicaid



eligibility include wages, interest & dividends, social security benefits, veteran’s benefits, pensions. Remember that any income the community spouse receives in his or her own name—Social Security, pension, or dividend income, for example—may be retained fully by the community spouse and will not be counted.

Income not counted towards eligibility includes temporary aid to needy families, supplemental security income (SSI), food stamps, Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program benefits, foster care payments, certain housing or utility subsidies.

In some states, residents whose countable incomes exceed the state’s income limit may still qualify for Medicaid payment of nursing home costs if they establish a Miller Trust, which is designed specifically for this purpose. The amount of the applicant’s income that exceeds the Medicaid limit is assigned as payable to the trust. In turn, the trust pays out monthly to the nursing home facility.

## MEDICAID ASSET/ RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

Just like income eligibility, an applicant’s assets are either countable or non-countable.

Countable Assets include cash, checking and savings accounts, certificates of deposit and money market accounts, stocks, mutual funds, bonds, and other investment holdings, IRAs, Keoghs, and other retirement funds, and nonresident property. In most states, the cash value of any policies with face values (generally) over \$1,500 will be counted toward the asset limit.

If the value of total countable assets exceeds the Medicaid eligibility limit, the applicant must spend down these assets to the limit before Medicaid assistance is available. Certain allowances are made for married couples that

enable a community spouse to retain countable assets up to a certain limit.

Noncountable Assets include the primary residence as long as the equity value in the home is less than (generally) \$500,000. The exempt value of the primary residence is unlimited if the applicant has certain family members living there, such as: a spouse, a child under age 21, a blind or permanently disabled child. Also excluded are one automobile of any value if it is used by a household member, and household and personal items, burial plots and the purchase or prepayment of various items and details of burial.

Spending down is the process of depleting private or personal resources to become eligible for Medicaid. Many people enter a nursing home or obtain Long Term Care services by initially paying the costs out of pocket, and then they apply for Medicaid once they’ve depleted their resources to the point of meeting eligibility requirements.

## LOOK-BACK AND PENALTY PERIODS AND TRANSFERS OF ASSETS

If, during the 60 months before applying for Medicaid, an improper transfer of property was made, it could result in a penalty period. The penalty period is the waiting period—the period during which Medicaid will not pay for care. It begins when the individual enters a nursing home and otherwise meets Medicaid’s eligibility requirements.

If an asset is improperly transferred, Medicaid will still count the transferred asset. When such transfers are added to other countable assets, and the total exceeds the maximum level allowed for Medicaid qualification, the result will be a period of ineligibility—in other words, a waiting period—before Medicaid coverage begins.

Certain transfers are allowed and will not be penalized. These include transfers to a spouse, to a third party for the benefit of the spouse, and to disabled individuals.

## MEDICAID ESTATE RECOVERY

The fact that property or assets are exempt or non-countable for purposes of

--Medicaid continued on page 3.

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# Artists showcase their skills at the Florence Senior Center



NEW HORIZONS PHOTOS

The Florence Senior Center located at 2920 Bondesson St., brought artists together for a 10-week workshop, where they collaborated with Nebraska’s Art Council’s Kim Darling, and embraced a variety of artistic mediums, from painting and sculpture to mixed media and collage, to explore and share their journeys.

The exhibition marked the culmination of their efforts, highlighting the transformative process of artmaking as a tool for self-discovery and connection. Each piece represented a voice that contributes to the rich tapestry of life experiences.

The program provided a space where participants could reflect, communicate and find empowerment through their artwork, ultimately discovering the strength of their own stories.

The Creative Aging Arts Program provides grants to hire an artist to lead workshops at senior centers, assisted living facilities, libraries and nonprofit organizations serving older adults. Applicants select from a list of teaching artists trained in best practices of engaging older adults.

During a residency, artists will share their expertise through sequential arts lessons, helping participants hone their skills in a variety of disciplines.

Programs will also foster intentional social engagement among participants, culminating with a special event to showcase their work with peers and the community.



**--Medicaid continued from page 2.**  
determining Medicaid Long Term Care eligibility does not necessarily protect them in the future. For any noncountable property held by the Medicaid recipient at his or her death, Medicaid reserves the right to take from the estate the amount it paid for nursing home or skilled facility care. This is done through a process called estate recovery.

The state may claim a portion of personal property owned jointly. Recovery of assets from an estate may be made after the death of an unmarried Medicaid recipient or the surviving spouse, when the Medicaid recipient has no surviving child under age 21, or who is blind or totally disabled. In cases where asset recovery from an estate would create undue hardship, the right to immedi-

ate recovery may be waived by the state.

*Mary Hiatt is a Retirement & Insurance Advisor and President of Mary the Medicare Lady (A non-government entity.) She is Certified in Long Term Care Programs, Policies, & Partnerships and Annuities. She offers Educational Workshops on Medicare, Long Term Care and more at no charge. She works with reputable estate planning Attorneys to help her clients get Medicaid. Not connected with or endorsed by the U.S. government or the federal Medicare program. Medicare Supplement insurance plans are not connected with or endorsed by the U.S. government or the federal Medicare program. See [www.hiattagency.com](http://www.hiattagency.com) or contact licensed independent agent [mary@hiattagency.com](mailto:mary@hiattagency.com) or call or text 402 672 9449 for more information.*

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# ‘The greatest show on dirt:’ 75 years of the College World Series in Omaha

By Andy Bradley  
Contributing Writer

So many memories. So hard to know where to begin. The College World Series (CWS) is celebrating 75 years in Omaha this month, an amazing feat considering the NCAA rotates its college championships from city to city, with the Women’s CWS in Oklahoma City the only other exception.

The college baseball championship series started in 1947 in Kalamazoo, Mich. It moved to Wichita for one year in 1949, before pulling up stakes and settling down in Omaha for this extraordinary run. In 1948, the city opened the 10,000 seat Municipal Stadium, later named Rosenblatt Stadium after former Omaha mayor Johnny Rosenblatt. The Omaha Cardinals, a Single A minor league affiliate of the St. Louis Cardinals, was the premier tenant. But the city was eager to secure additional occupants.

Wichita officials weren’t happy with the financial results of their sponsorship and were in the process of wooing a minor league franchise. So that opened the door to Omaha city ambassadors who ventured uninvited to Wichita to present a bold promise to NCAA officials – move the contest to Omaha and the city will assume the entire financial risk. This was, in hindsight, a particularly audacious pledge considering the championship lost money in Omaha for 10 of its first 12 years. Only 17,805 fans attended the entire series in 1950.

More than a decade later, city leaders grew weary of the financial boondoggle and made a concerted effort to ratchet up support from businesses, civic organizations and the community at large. They formed the nonprofit, College World Series, Inc., in 1967 under the tutelage of John Diesing, Sr. and other city fathers.

At the time, matinee games attracted so few people that a foul ball lifted into the first base stands might actually be retrieved by a kid sprinting over from the third base seats; to save costs, miserly officials required said fan to return the ball in exchange for a cheap

facsimile.

It was a long uphill grind to reach viability, but leaders were both visionary and resolute. In 1968, the first year after the formation of College World Series, Inc., attendance reached 58,373, an average of 6,486 per session. It would be another dozen years before total attendance topped 100,000.

Leaders inaugurated one particularly creative and effective initiative – selling books of 10 inexpensive general admission (GA) tickets. Buyers had absolutely no guarantee that a GA ticket would get them through the gate. But the ploy packed the outfield bleachers where young patrons smuggled in beach balls and engaged in spirited taunting with the monied folk in the main grandstand. A party atmosphere ensued and the CSW gained a reputation for being the place to be in June.

Perhaps the greatest stimulus to CWS’ growth was the national attention the game garnered when ESPN started covering it in 1980. Fan support spread from locals to a national following – patrons from 46 states eventually purchased season tickets – and renewed them year after year. In 2023, 1.6 million fans tuned into the CWS on ESPN. Coast-to-coast television coverage gave the series the shot in the arm it desperately needed. For many, a road trip to Omaha in June topped their bucket list.

## DIAMOND ON THE HILL

Over the decades, Rosenblatt stadium, which came to be affectionately known as the “Blatt,” developed a special feel, a mysterious aura – a cathedral of sorts. The “Diamond on the Hill” became its nickname. Certain traditions, annual expectations and anticipations added to the mystique – most of which had nothing to do with the game itself. A few examples.

Lines formed a dozen deep for ice cream at Zestos, just a baseball throw from right field. Adjacent to Zestos – Dingerville, whose tenants of this makeshift RV encampment proudly hoisted flags from all CWS entrees. Popup souvenir shops lined the steep 13th Street incline to the vesti-



COURTESY PHOTO

**The iconic statue outside the College World Series venue in Omaha, Charles Schwab Field, is called “The Road to Omaha”. This 1,500-pound bronze sculpture, created by artist John Lajba, depicts three players celebrating a teammate after a game-winning hit. It was originally unveiled in 1999 at Rosenblatt Stadium and was later rededicated at Charles Schwab Field in 2011.**

bule of the stadium. Scores of homeowners in the surrounding neighborhoods sacrificed their lawns to shelter our cars or RVs for \$10 a day. And, of course, everyone demanded a photo op with John Lajba’s Road to Omaha sculpture, which was moved to TD Ameritrade upon Rosenblatt’s demise.

But perhaps the greatest memories revolved around individuals whose names and personas became synonymous with the series.

- Organist Lambert Bartek, for example, entertained fans of all ages at Rosenblatt for more than 50 years, retiring in 2010 at the age of 91. Before Rosenblatt was shuttered, disassembled and plowed under for a parking lot, his Hammond organ was refurbished and moved to its new cathedral at TD Ameritrade (now Charles Schwab).

- Stadium announcer Jack Payne contributed to the folksy atmosphere for 37 years. Before every game he encouraged fans to introduce themselves to those sitting all around them – just like in church. Jack retired from the CWS in 2000 at the age of 77.

- The meticulously groomed field was the handiwork of legendary groundskeeper Jesse Cuevas, who manicured every blade of grass and smoothed every inch of dirt for more than three decades.

- Coaches whose larger-than-life mystique grew even more exalted in Omaha. USC’s Rod Dedeaux coached the Trojans to 60 CWS wins and five consecutive championships in the

1970s; LSU’s Skip Bertman logged 29 wins and five titles, all while elevating the SEC powerhouse to the unlikely darling of the CWS among locals; and Cliff Gustafson of Texas, who, in his 29 years as coach, led the Longhorns to Omaha 17 times. Texas remains the team with the most CWS appearances at 29.

## WINDS OF CHANGE IN THE AIR

But long-standing traditions and comfortable familiarity and mega personalities would not be enough to save this crown jewel on the hill. Eventually powerful forces and circumstances forced the city’s hand to either change and adapt or be swept away in a cloud of wistful nostalgia.

Three overlapping factors contributed to the demise of the “Blatt,” according to Texas Rutter, a supervisor for the Metropolitan Entertainment and Convention Authority (MECA), which manages Charles Schwab and CHI Health Center.

First, the NCAA wanted the event to be surrounded not by ice cream parlors and RV parks, but by upscale hotels, restaurants and a vibrant night life that would appeal to all those raucous fans in the outfield.

Second, the booming reputation and popularity of the Henry Doorly Zoo left officials scrambling for more parking. The stadium, after all, had been built on zoo property, and represented an enticing and obvious solution to the zoo’s critical needs.

Finally, unbeknownst to most fans, Rosenblatt

was crumbling. Despite several prior upgrades and expansions, old age was tearing the bowels of the edifice asunder. Expensive and unavoidable infrastructure repairs were looming.

So city officials could either call it a day and flip off the floodlights of the CWS for good, or move forward with a bold alternative – erect a shiny new edifice in the shadows of downtown and banks of the Missouri River to ensure CWS’s Omaha future indefinitely. They chose the later. Under the watchful leadership and sponsorship of then Mayor Mike Fahey, the city charged ahead. Complementing the new ballpark were gallant plans to build a new arena, convention center and hotel, all within walking distance of each another.

Fahey’s vision of a new stadium downtown was roundly criticized in some circles; he actually survived a recall effort in 2008 in protest of his new stadium, so plans surged forward and Kiewit Construction dug the first shovel of compacted clay on Jan. 21, 2009.

Klye Peterson, an Omaha Creighton Prep graduate, former Stanford pitcher and major leaguer, is a color analyst for ESPN who has covered the CWS at both stadiums. He told New Horizons, “A lot of people didn’t want it, which I understand. But that got us another 25 years. That’s a big deal.”

The 24,000-seat stadium debuted on April 18, 2011, with a contest between Creighton and Nebraska. In return for the city’s commitment to build a \$131 million stadium, the NCAA agreed to a 25-year contract, good now through 2036.

While some were lukewarm about the stadium’s design – somehow exuding a more sterile or uninspiring aura than Rosenblatt – fans kept coming – and coming from everywhere. It was truly one of those “If you build it . . .” stories. Series attendance is now nearly 400,000, 24,800 a session – higher per-game attendance than 10 major league teams.

And the economic impact has been undeniable. Last year, the series generated an estimated \$115 million

--CWS continued on page 5.





COURTESY PHOTO

Charles Schwab Field is the home to the NCAA Division I Men’s College World Series and Creighton Bluejays baseball program, Charles Schwab Field Omaha seats 24,000 and features a 360-degree walk-around concourse for a perfect view of the field.

--CWS continued from page 4.  
in economic activity for the city.

MIDWEST HOSPITALITY

Through the years, the CWS became a hit not just for fans, but for the players and coaches and media professionals who have been fortunate enough to navigate the “Road to Omaha,” as the NCAA dubbed the series back in 2008.

Peterson, who has contributed to ESPN broadcasts since 2003, said “our producers and directors and camera folks – everybody looks forward to coming here. We’ve got camera guys who have done this for 30 years, and they don’t have to do it anymore . . . they’re at the ballpark for 12 hours a day, but they want to come back. I think the community in the city itself makes them want to come back.”

In other words, Omaha’s celebrated midwestern hospitality makes the city and the series shine. Returning guests, whether fans, players or pros, grow attached to certain venues and the friendliness they experience there.

“There’s this place, the Happy Bar, where our sound guys go to every year,” said Peterson. “That’s their place. They’re told ‘we’ll stay open late tonight because we know it rained, and you guys weren’t off the air until 11.’ That stuff matters a ton because they feel like they have friends; they don’t feel like they’re going to do a job. And that’s what this city has done.”

Peterson also praises area service clubs. All eight

teams are assigned a service organization like Rotary or Kiwanis, which provides an added layer of logistical support and hospitality.

“It’s huge, said Peterson. “Clubs ask, ‘What do you need? We can do that.’ It’s massive and it’s not rocket science. It’s just human decency and hospitality. And that’s what this place has been and always is good at. The care factor for this city has been through the roof for 75 years.”

PAST PERFORMANCE DOES NOT GUARANTEE FUTURE RESULTS

Despite rave reviews from fans, coaches, players and NCAA officials alike, Peterson cautions the city not to take the series for granted.

A tsunami of change has inundated the sports world in general and college sports in particular, and neither college baseball nor the CWS series is immune. For example, power may be shifting away from the NCAA, the city’s staunch ally for years, and into the offices of power conference brokers, such as the ACC and SEC. Last year, all eight teams in the CWS were from those two conferences.

“You can’t take it for granted that City X, wherever it is, won’t come forth and say ‘we’ll build you a \$150 million ballpark. We’ll put it right downtown’.”

“The sports landscape is just so vastly different than it was five years ago, let alone 15 years ago when they cut this original deal,” Peterson said. “Ultimately, what is the College World Series going to look like? Peterson asked. “Where does it go?”

In future NCAA negotia-

tions, Peterson urges the city to promote its experience running an annual successful event for generations. “When you’ve been doing it for 75 years, the institutional knowledge that goes with putting the event on is massively important.”

“It’s the gold standard in college sports.”

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 \$5 contribution is suggested for the meal if you are age 60 and older. If you are under age 60, then the meal cost is \$9.50.

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

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# Replenish the same kind of energy as we get older

"I just cannot do what I used to." A common complaint of people in our age group is that of fatigue. If it is physical fatigue, we know what to do. Eat right. Take our meds. Get plenty of sleep. Exercise. We have all heard it many times.

But what if the fatigue is emotional? Our energy is depleted by all that is swirling around us. It may be worries about family and friends, financial worries, or big picture concerns about large issues. Last month I spoke of the importance of raising our voices.

Some of us may feel like we don't have the energy to engage in speaking up. How do we replenish that kind of energy?

I frequently think of the metaphor of filling the well. One cannot continue to take water from the well if there is no new water flowing into it. Personally, I refill my well in times of quiet and reflection. I read inspirational books, listen to meaningful podcasts, do a little journaling and simply tend to my inner self. For some this would include calming music, prayer, going for a walk, tending plants, chair yoga or tai chi. It is whatever nurtures the soul, the inner person. These kinds of

## Conscious Aging

By Nancy Hemesath

practices are essential to renewing our spirit and our energy.

Because we are social beings, alone time is not enough. There is also the need to gather energy from friends, family and other communities. Sometimes we need to be able to share our concerns and be heard by others. We need encouragement when energy flags. Paradoxically, we are also energized when we are a support to others who need us. We are fortunate when we can both listen and speak about matters of significance to us with others. Our own thinking clarifies when we share our thoughts aloud. We are reminded that we are in this together.

A third stimulant to energy is that of action. Powerlessness is a drag on the spirit. Doing even a small action is empowering. Providing meals is a classic example of supporting another who is grieving or ill. Writing cards and letters is a way to extending support or influence beyond ourselves. Making even a

small donation to a cause we care about is a way to make a difference. Emails and calls to our legislature is an action that may move the needle, if just a little. Volunteering for causes and campaigns of importance to us gives us a sense of agency. Just showing up to support causes of importance to us is a contribution.

We may not be able to do all we once did in our communities and organizations. We still have the capacity to fill our wells and contribute to the world around us. As we nurture our inner spirit, engage with others, and take small actions, our emotional fatigue lifts. I suspect that, while the quantity of our contributions may be less, the quality will be more significant.

*(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](mailto:nanhemesath@gmail.com).)*

## Taking time to recognize World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD), which began in 2006, will be held around the world this year on Saturday, June 15.

We would love to think that abuse doesn't happen to older adults, but it does.

Seniors are often targeted because they tend to be trusting and polite.

They also usually have financial sav-

ings, own a home, and have good credit—all of which make them attractive to scammers.

If you suspect neglect is occurring to someone you know, please report it to Nebraska Adult Protective Services (APS). 1-800-652-1999. The APS hotline is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Reports can be made anonymously.

## Programs changing this month at AARP NE Information Center

By Tony Harris  
AARP NE Information Center

As we age, self-care and wellness are critical components of staying healthy and aging in place.

On June 18 at 1:30 p.m., anyone is invited to attend the AARP Nebraska Information Center's monthly program, where you can learn more about



the importance of wellness and the things you can do to promote self-care from Dala Wallace, a Clinical Manager with the Visiting Nurse Association.

Located at 1941 S 42nd St. in suite 220, the Information Center is open on Tuesdays, Wednesdays 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.



Fremont Friendship Center

You're invited to visit the Fremont Friendship Center, 1730 W. 16<sup>th</sup> 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 \$5 contribution is suggested for the meal.

This month's activities will include:

- **June 4:** Music with The Links @ 10 a.m.
- **June 5:** Presentation from Nye @ 10 a.m.
- **June 11:** Music with Pam Kragt @ 10:30 a.m.
- **June 12:** Mobile Library @ 9:30 a.m.
- **June 12:** Singa-long @ 10 a.m.
- **June 18:** Music with Tim Javorsky @ 10:30 a.m.
- **June 19:** Presentation: Senior Companion Program from ENOA @ 10 a.m.
- **June 25:** Music with Billy Troy provided by the Merry Maker's Association @ 10 a.m.
- **June 26:** Nutrition News @ 10:15 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.

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:

- **June 6:** Jeremy Daffern from NE Commission for Hard of Hearing & the Deaf @ 11:45 a.m.
- **June 19:** Jackpot Bingo @ 12:15 p.m.
- **June 20:** Book Club @ 12:30 p.m.
- **June 24:** Team Trivia Challenge @ 12 p.m.
- **June 27:** Billy Troy performs compliments of Merry-makers & Dreamweavers @ 11:45 a.m.

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

Every Monday – Pickleball @ 10 a.m.

Every Monday – Bingocize @ 10 a.m.

Every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday – Kings in the Corner @ 10 a.m.

Every Wednesday – Chair Volleyball @ 10 a.m.

Everyday – Card Games @ 10 a.m.

Grab N Go meals are available.

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

Millard Senior Center

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

- **June 4:** Board Meeting @ 10 a.m.
- **June 9:** Bunco @ 12:30 p.m.
- **June 11:** In honor of both Mother's and Father's Day, the center will be serving Brunch @ 10:30 a.m.
- **June 11:** P.A.W.S (Puzzles and Words with Seniors working with Montclair Elementary kids). This is the last one until Fall @ 9:30 a.m.

• **June 15:** Father's Day

• **June 23:** Book Club: @ 1 p.m.

Tai Chi on Mondays and Fridays @ 9:30 a.m.

Bingo every Tuesday and Friday @ 12 p.m.

Sportswear Fridays. Wear your favorite team attire every Friday.

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.

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June 15



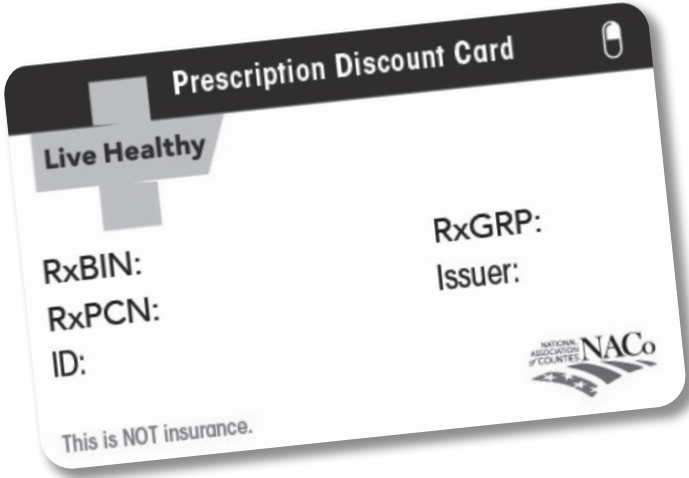
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--Cajun continued from page 1.

country to check out its music scene. These sojourns were part pilgrimage and training ground at the source of it all.

“I studied it extensively. I went to festivals in Louisiana. Saw the real deal. Even took some lessons in Elfin, West Virginia in a Cajun week they had.”

He commissioned Louisiana master Mark Savoy to hand-craft two Cajun accordions he plays to this day. Though he doesn’t speak French, Kunasek learned the French lyrics of classic Cajon songs he sings.

“I had a little French in college which really helped my pronunciation.”

He appreciates that bandmate Allen Hug has taken the time to learn the French lyrics himself, allowing them to vocally harmonize together.

For a then-novice musician like Kunasek it helped that the music uses a limited range of octaves and keys that comprise its largely two-step and waltz rhythms.

“The thing about Cajun music is that it is fairly simple. You can be as complicated as you want as far as accordion. You can add a lot of variation on the grace notes. Or you can play very simply.”

MUSIC, CULTURE AND HISTORY

The Gators’ extensive repertoire includes about a hundred traditional Cajun tunes. The group sometimes dip into other genres.

Internationally recognized blues artist Hector Anchondo of Omaha “knows and loves” the Gators and attests to how well-steeped they are in the music.

“They do a great job of achieving a really great authentic and rootsy Cajun sound.”

The Omaha Entertainment and Arts Awards recognized the band for the faithfulness of their Americana ethnic sound.

Kunasek and some bandmates have written original Cajun influenced songs, with lyrics in English. One by Kunasek, “Petit Babouin” or “Little Papio,” tells about the early Nebraska territory and the historic creek where grazing buffalo, deer and other wildlife congregated and fur traders such as Peter Sarpy and Lucien Fontenelle watered their horses.

A fact Kunasek likes pointing out is that Nebraska was part of the Louisiana Purchase, which by association gave the territory a connection to the South.

“I like to say we live in upper Louisiana,” said Kunasek, whose DIY ethos meshes with Cajuns’ earthy self-independence.

For years he’s made a living as a market gardener – growing and selling vegetables, native grasses, perennials, cut flowers. He mostly gets around town on a bicycle.

The music settlers carried with them from wherever they came took root in their new homes as bluegrass, Cajun, country. Mass exposure to ethnic and regional sounds occurred in the early 20th century



NEW HORIZONS PHOTO  
The The Prairie Gators is Omaha’s Cajun music connection. You can find them playing on the street and occasionally at backyard events.

with the introduction of electricity, radio and the phonograph, leading to cross-pollinating genres that gave birth to hybrid styles such as Zydeco.

“Everybody was listening to each other around the country for the first time and Cajuns latched onto that,” said Kunasek, adding that they added elements of Appalachian and other styles.

Returning veterans from the world wars craved hearing the music they grew up with on front porches performed in dance halls and juke joints. Enough dispersed to spread Cajun flavors in food and music. The Great Migration brought Black Louisianans to places like Nebraska to add their spice to the mix.

“There’s a Cajun diaspora,” Kunasek said. “A lot of people who grew up in South Louisiana have left over the years and relocated. Oftentimes playing a gig we’ll get somebody from Louisiana saying, ‘You know, when I was little I used to listen to this music’ in Ville Platte or Eunice or some other town down there. They say, ‘I’m so glad you guys are doing this because it just reminds me of home.’”

More recently New Orleans natives displaced by Hurricane Katrina resettled in Omaha.

Said Gators drummer Steve Monson, “We met a lot of Katrina refugees who got bussed here. Several were housed at the Benson Tower. When we were playing the bars in Benson we’d run into some of them.”

“There were several benefits we did in the aftermath of Katrina,” said Kunasek. “They were happy to hear something from home.”

Gators guitarist Allen Hug notes the appeal of all things Cajun. “Frequently when we’re out doing our thing we meet people who’ve fallen in love with Louisiana culture. We’ve been hired for private events by people who have themed parties like this,” he said.

Kunasek’s predisposition to the accordion and ethnic music is based, interestingly enough, in his Czech ancestry, as he grew up on Czech accordion music.

“They play polkas, they play mazurkas, they play waltzes. They’re very much like the Cajuns. They work hard, they party hard.”

SHARING THE LOVE

The Gators formed 25 years ago. Original members included Kunasek, Richardson, Ivy Dow on saw,

washboard, recorder and flute and fiddler Tom Berthold. The players have changed out over time. Joe Watson and Josh Dunwoody were regulars. For some gigs there’s 12 or more on stage, constituting a veritable orchestra. Sometimes it’s just Kunasek and Hug. Guest musicians of different stripes often sit in.

Some instruments the Gators use are not Cajun approved but Kunasek said, “We don’t care, we break the rules up here. We stick with Americana.”

With the Cajun niche to themselves in Nebraska, the Gators, whatever their numbers, draw attentive, appreciative audiences wherever they play.

“Down in Louisiana oftentimes they just dance to it, they’re not really listening,” Kunasek said. “They hear it since they’re little kids. It’s on the radio. It’s everywhere, it’s just background for them. But here in Nebraska we really have an opportunity to showcase the music. And they’ll sit and listen. That’s gratifying.”

Said Hug, “Audiences we play to include people from all over the world. They recognize the fact the lyrics to the songs we perform are all in French. They’re totally intrigued by what we’re doing and that’s a cool part of it too. I like that.”

Because Kunasek knows Cajun is a rare, somewhat unfamiliar commodity here, he tries educating audiences during performances,

“I try to tell them what the song’s about, what I’m singing, because very few understand French. I just try to make people aware there’s this genre of music in South Louisiana they’re listening to that has a long history and that it’s just as good as bluegrass or old time country or any of those Americana styles.”

Before Monson ever joined the Gators he noted the care Kunasek took to provide context for audiences. “I liked the fact that the background and the stories would come before the song. There’s always that engagement. I think that peaks a lot of people’s interest.” Monson said he was like a lot of folks, “Not necessarily knowledgeable about it but the music itself is so infectious it was easy to attract musicians like me who said, ‘Oh, I like this.’ I’m one of those guys. It’s beautiful and simple to play as a drummer.”

All the Gators like how danceable the music is.

“What really stands out about Cajun music from those other similar types of music is how upbeat it is and how easy it is for people to dance to,” said Hug. “It’s not unheard for us to have people of all ages dancing to our music for hours. That’s really incredible.”

After Kunasek formed the Gators 25 years ago, he said, “We were playing on the street. Just fooling around. We got coffee shop gigs, really small things.”

The band built a following playing Benson and Old Market venues. They did a residency at the Barley Street Tavern and became staples at

events like the Omaha Summer Arts Festival, the College World Series and Porchfest.

Their short busy season happens during Mardi Gras, when they are in demand performers at various holiday themed events. They perform at Day of the Dead events. The Old Market Farmers Market and the Omaha Farmers Market in Aksarben Village are longtime annual gigs. The band released a CD several years ago.

Kunasek finds “pretty gratifying” the immediate feedback audiences provide.

There’s some dispute over who deserves credit for the name Prairie Gators, which Monson described as a “Midwest meets the swamp” metaphor. About its origin, Kunasek says, “Oh, that’s controversial but I’ll defer to my wife. She says that she came up with it.

So we’ll just stick with that.” Before they became Gators themselves, Monson and Hug were fans. Monson is a member of an even older Omaha band, the Linoma Mashers. Whereas Monson, Kunasek and two of the band’s other regulars, Richardson and Steve Groves, are all retirement age, Hug is young enough to be their son.

“I grew up with Steve Kunasek’s little brother Dan.

Over 20 years ago we used to just go watch the Prairie Gators play and really enjoyed the music.

I’ve always played guitar and been drawn to roots and old-timey music. I just liked it. It was really an honor to get invited to come and play with these guys.”

KEEPING THE TRADITION ALIVE

With the exception of Hug the Gators are not exactly spring chickens. Who will carry on the legacy whenever Kunasek and his Cajon cronies call it quits?

Said Kunasek, “I don’t worry about that. I live in the moment. We have a great time with the music and the people. Louisiana’s going to carry it on no matter what. There are Cajun bands all over the country, even as near as Des Moines, and Minneapolis. We just happen to be the one in Omaha.”

Monson is hopeful the ground-work they’ve laid will take seed. “I would imagine there’s enough interest out there. We never know where it’s going to come from. But, yeah, I would think that somebody will take the reins.” An encouraging sign, he said, is that newcomers who join Gator jams are usually young people. The veterans are happy to share what they know with a next generation of perhaps even better players and interpreters than themselves.

Until then, Kunasek and Co. will let the good times roll. Wherever you catch them you’re likely hear the Master Gator’s signature sign-off, “Later, Gator.”

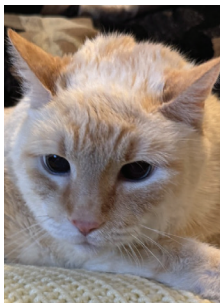
Follow the Gators’ wanderings on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/p/The-Prairie-Gators>.



# Pawsitive support for pets and their people

By Ron Petersen

Mary Mires cherishes the companionship of her 20-year-old cat, Big Boy. Weighing in at eighteen pounds, caring for Big Boy isn't as easy as it used to be—but thanks to the support of ENOA's Pawsitive Friendship grant, Mary has been able to continue caring for her beloved pet.



**Big Boy** has received the grant, made possible through Meals on Wheels America and PetSmart Charities. The grant provides eligible individuals with essential pet care, including food, supplies, vaccinations, heartworm, flea and tick medication, licensing, and veterinary services.

"Oftentimes we see individuals who can't afford the care their pets need and end up sacrificing their own needs to ensure their pets are cared for," said Danielle Bliven, who manages the



*NEW HORIZONS PHOTO*  
**Mary Mires and her cat, 'Big Boy' benefited from the pet grant, provided by the Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging.**

Pawsitive Friendship grant. "This grant eases that burden, allowing pet owners to

prioritize their own well-being too." Eligible recipients are

referred to the program by staff members associated with the services they receive through ENOA.

"This year, the pet grant was able to help 112 individuals and 151 pets," Bliven shared. "That included over 700 pounds of dog food and 800 pounds of cat food."

Participants have expressed deep gratitude for the program and state:

"It makes it easier for someone disabled to get the shots and the license their pet needs. I wouldn't even be able to have a dog without the support."

"It has been a godsend—allows me to apply cat food money to other bills and groceries for me."

"It helps me keep my best friends and me in my home. My cats help me when I am having an off day."

"It relieves the senior financially and emotionally to give care to their pets. For many, their pets are their family, company, companion. This is huge for their well-being."

Mary Mires said the pet grant was especially helpful in getting Big Boy his vaccinations without leaving home. "He's doing well for his age," Mires said. "He's in good health, and we get along pretty well."

The pet grant funds for the 2024-2025 cycle have been spent and no more referrals are being accepted at this time.

## 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 the Omaha Fire Department.

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

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- 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?

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**enoa.info@enoa.org**

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



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# Piece by Piece: The power of goal setting at any age

**Lesley Brandt**

**The Move Coordinators**

There's something powerful about setting a goal. It gives us direction, purpose, and a reason to keep moving forward. Yet, too often, we hesitate, wondering if we're too old to start something new, if the challenge is too big, or if the journey will take too long.

But here's the truth: It's never too late to set goals, chase dreams, and achieve something meaningful.

Setting goals keeps us engaged, motivated, and continually growing regardless of our age or stage. Whether you want to downsize your home, improve your health, learn a new skill, or reconnect with old friends, the key is to focus on placing the next puzzle piece instead of worrying about completing the whole picture.

We can set goals confidently, build momentum, celebrate success, and even challenge ourselves to reach goals that keep us striving for more.

## THE POWER OF GOAL SETTING AT ANY AGE

Goal setting isn't only for the young—it's for the young at heart. Research shows that having goals improves mental well-being, provides a sense of purpose, and keeps us active and engaged in life.

Beyond the research, goal setting is about living fully, regardless of age. It's about

recognizing that there's still much to experience, accomplish, and enjoy.

- Want to declutter your home and simplify your space? Start today—one shelf at a time.
- Want to improve your health? A daily walk around the block is a significant first step.
- Want to try something new? Set a goal to learn a new skill, hobby, or even volunteer in your community.

The key is to stop waiting for the perfect time, because the ideal time is always right now.

## PIECE BY PIECE: PROGRESS LIKE A PUZZLE

One of the biggest reasons people abandon goals is that they focus too much on the entire journey instead of simply the next step.

If you dump out a thousand puzzle pieces and think, I have to finish this all at once, you will feel overwhelmed. But if you focus on placing the next piece, the picture slowly comes together—one moment, one decision at a time.

- Break your goal into small, achievable actions. If you want to declutter your home, don't try to tackle the whole house at once—start with one drawer, shelf, or closet.

- Give yourself daily or weekly goals. If you want to improve your health, start with small, sustainable actions—like stretching for five minutes daily or drinking more water.

- Trust the process. Progress happens when you consistently complete small tasks, not when you wait for a massive burst of motivation.

Momentum builds when you focus on progress, not perfection.

## CELEBRATE SUCCESS ALONG THE WAY

Too often, we only celebrate when we've reached the finish line. Every puzzle piece placed is a step toward completing the whole.

Success isn't only about achieving the final goal—it's about recognizing and appreciating the effort you're putting in along the way.

- Acknowledge small wins. Finished organizing one drawer? That's progress.

- Track your milestones. Keep a simple journal of what you've accomplished each day or week.

- Reward yourself. Treat yourself to something special when you complete a significant step—a nice meal, a day out, or simply enjoying your hard work.

Taking the time to celebrate helps you stay motivated and makes the journey more enjoyable.

## PUSH YOURSELF WITH REACH GOALS

Setting achievable goals is great, but reaching goals keeps us curious, challenged, and striving for more. A reach goal is something just outside your comfort zone—it stretches you in healthy, exciting ways.

- If your goal is to walk three times a week, a way to reach that goal is to participate in a community walking group.

- If your goal is to sort through paperwork, a reachable goal might be digitizing your essential documents or helping someone else organize.

- If your goal is to reconnect with others, a reachable goal could be joining a club, church group, or class.

Reaching goals gives us something bold to strive for. They remind us that growth doesn't end—it evolves.

## YOU'RE THE ONE PUTTING THE PUZZLE TOGETHER

Setting goals isn't about age—it's about mindset. It's about believing that you still have dreams to chase, growth to experience, and stories to write.

No matter what your goal is, remember:

- You are never too old to set a goal.

- Each puzzle piece adds to the bigger picture.

- Success happens as you build, not only when you finish.

- You have more inside you than you think.

So what's your next piece?

Maybe it's cleaning out a drawer, calling a friend, walking around the block, or deciding about a future move. Whatever it is, start today. Don't worry about the whole picture. Focus on one piece at a time.

The puzzle isn't meant to overwhelm you. It's intended to be completed, one piece at a time.



# How do we think more positively about aging

Wrinkle creams, micro-needling, chemical peels... The list of anti-aging cosmetic products and procedures seems endless. In modern society, many people are chasing after the secret to keep their skin taut and their body looking young, but the truth is that having negative opinions about aging will impact their health in the long run.

The secret to living joyfully and aging gratefully is thinking about aging in a more positive light — and here’s how you do just that.

Challenge your biases toward aging. An “implicit bias” is an automatic thought that correlates with things you’ve been told or that you’ve heard in the past.

For example, you might see an older person with the newest iPhone and think, “I doubt they even know how to use that.” Perpetuating ageist beliefs, even if unintentional, negatively affects the physical, mental and emotional health of older adults, which can lead to social isolation, depression and increased loneliness. When your next implicit thought pops up, take time to reevaluate your mind-

set, and over time, your automatic first thought will begin to reflect your rational second thought until that bias is quashed.

Challenge the way you think about your aging journey. Your wrinkles are a reflection of everywhere you’ve been and everything you’ve experienced, and your body has been a dependable vessel since your birth.

Aging is part of the journey of life, so there’s no use in shaming yourself for showing signs of it. A highlight from Dr. Maxwell Maltz’s self-help book, “Psycho-Cybernetics, a New Way to Get More Living Out of Life,” states: “Your actions, feelings, behaviors—even your abilities—are always consistent with the ‘self-image.’ In short, you will act like the sort of person you conceive yourself to be.

You literally cannot act otherwise, in spite of your conscious effort.” Age is only a number, and by thinking of yourself as growing less important or impactful as you age, you may not be able to accomplish what you want to in this lifetime.

See aging for what it truly is. Sometimes you have to see it to believe it! Many older adults do not let their age define them and continue to enjoy the activities they’ve loved for years.

Connecting with older adults in your community is as beneficial to them as it is to you, no matter your age.

Taking this notion to the next level, Tabitha is creating S2age Living, the first-of-its-kind in the nation, intergenerational community, opening this fall is built to encourage supportive neighboring. The S2age will be home to older adults (55+) and Bryan College of Health Sciences students who will both benefit from the mindful wisdom, guidance and newfound, supportive connections they can provide one another.

By utilizing these tips in your everyday life, you will be putting effort toward a future of inclusion, dignity and empowerment for older adults throughout the world.

*This health tip is brought to you by Tabitha.*

## Taking a look back at old New Horizons newspapers: June

### Nursing home bill signed by Kerrey

Nebraska legislators last month gave final approval to a bill designed to encourage nursing homes in violation of health department codes to comply more quickly.

Legislative Bill 235 passed on a 40-7 vote and was signed by Gov. Bob Kerrey. The State Health Department is charged with implementing the law.

Any home found in violation of state regulations where health or life-threatening conditions exist would have to halt admissions until violations are cleared, up to 11 months.

The bill also fines homes that retaliate against employees or residents who file complaints.

Jim Brown, president of the Nebraska Health Care Association,

the largest nursing home organization in the state, said he has mixed feelings about the legislation, but is not opposed to it.

“We’re certainly going to live with it,” he said.

### Election date set

June 27 is election day for Silver-Haired Senators in odd-numbered legislative districts.

All registered voters 60 and older residing in these districts can vote for the senior citizen candidate of their choice.

Those elected will participate in the three-day Silver-Haired Unicameral this fall.

For a listing of polling places and candidates, call 397-3150 ext. 320.

COURTESY PHOTO

In the June of 1983 issue of the New Horizons, an article featured a Bill that was passed and signed by Gov. Bob Kerrey.

## King Crossword

- ACROSS**  
1 Knock  
4 Boxer Ali  
9 "60 Minutes" ailer  
12 Leading lady?  
13 Edmonton player  
14 2016 Olympics city  
15 Moisturizer  
17 Finale  
18 Name  
19 Buzzing insect  
21 Neglect  
24 Steerer's place  
25 "So that's it!"  
26 QB's goals  
28 Nasal partitions  
31 Lopsided win  
33 Feeling down  
35 Tank filler  
36 Chef's garb  
38 Up to  
40 "Alice" waitress  
41 Suffix with "techno"
- 43 Break fluid?  
45 Sentence fragment  
47 Overly  
48 Wish otherwise  
49 Famed Boston desserts  
54 Carte lead-in  
55 Mountain crest  
56 — -mo  
57 Orange tuber  
58 Did yard work  
59 Layer
- DOWN**  
1 Game caller  
2 Glam Gardner  
3 Chest muscle  
4 Short-horned grasshopper  
5 Inflatable sleepers  
6 Land in la mer  
7 Extract via percolation  
8 Fighting forces  
9 Ineffectual type  
10 Predicament  
11 Pop  
16 Sch. URL ender  
20 Staff symbol  
21 TV explorer  
22 Denny's rival  
23 Baked potato topping  
27 Used a chair  
29 Conference leader?  
30 Body lotion ingredient  
32 — Bora (Afghan region)  
34 Give orders  
37 Daytona 500 acronym  
39 Was foreboding  
42 — firma  
44 Dandy guy  
45 Use a rosary  
46 Luau dance  
50 "A mouse!"  
51 WWW access enabler  
52 Right angle  
53 Tofu source

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

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

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



# Be aware of romance scams

By Kelly C. Bourne

Romance scams occur when a criminal creates a false persona and feigns romantic interest in someone intending to develop a relationship and, in time, scam money from them. The scammer's social media will be of someone

that is attractive, successful, interesting, rich, etc. The photograph on the profile page will certainly have been stolen from another person. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) estimates that around 64,000 Americans lost a total of \$1.14 billion to romance

scams in 2023. Victims of this type of scam can be any age, but seniors, especially the widowed and divorced, are frequent targets.

The scam can begin on a dating site, a social media site like Facebook or with a text or email from a stranger. The scammer will pretend to have a great deal in common with their target. He'll shower the victim with attention and compliments. These scammers are masters at manipulating the emotions of their victims. Almost certainly the scammer will tell his or her victim that he or she is in love and the two of them were destined to be together.

Once the relationship has reached a level of trust the crook will convince the victim to loan or give them money.

They will have stories of woe about family members who need medical care, wrecked cars that need to be replaced, costly business setbacks, back taxes owed, emergency home repairs or money needed to buy tickets to visit you. No matter how much money you lend or give them, there will always be another crisis that only more of your money can solve.

Romance scams continue until the victim runs out of money or figures out that they're being fleeced. At that point the scammer will "ghost", i.e., ignore all communications with the victim.

It may seem that being emotionally manipulated and financially drained would be the worst thing that can happen to a victim of a romance scam, but unfortunately there might be worse to come.

Some scammers convince their victims to move money between bank accounts for them. If the victim agrees to do this, they've become a

"money mule". Even victims who were tricked into this role can be charged with money laundering by federal authorities.

One huge indicator of a romance scam is that the criminal won't ever meet you in person or on a video call. Meeting face to face would reveal that they're pretending to be someone else. There will be an endless stream of excuses like illnesses, accidents, computer problems, work conflicts and family emergencies explaining why they can't meet.

Other indicators that you might be the victim of a romance scam include:

- A relationship that escalates from being strangers to being "in love" in an extremely short period of time.
- Your new "friend" has interests that are identical to yours. Do you know any two people that enjoy exactly the same music, books, restaurants, movies, sports teams, vacation spots, art, food, etc.?
- You're spending much less time with old friends, family members, activities, etc. This might indicate that the scammer is working to isolate you.
- Your new "friend" suggests that you move your conversations to a private platform like WhatsApp. This is a frequent strategy by scammers for several reasons. First, dating platforms are moderated which provides some protection against romance scams and other scams. Second, communications via WhatsApp are encrypted making it extremely difficult for authorities to later track down the perpetrators. Third, giving someone your WhatsApp number reveals more information to them than should be done early in a relationship.

• Your new "love interest" tells you they've made a lot of money in certain investments and suggests that you invest in it too.

• Your new "friend" won't answer questions about their personal life or the background details they provide are vague or inconsistent.

If you believe you're the victim of a romance scam you should do the following:

- Immediately cut off all communications with the scammer.
- If you gave them money, contact your bank or credit

card provider to see if recovery is possible. If your money can't be recovered, they can help prevent the scammer from stealing any more money from you.

- If there's a chance that the scammer learned your financial or social media account passwords change them immediately.

- Report this scam to the FTC (Federal Trade Commission) at ReportFraud.ftc.gov. Your money may be gone but you can help prevent others from becoming victims.

- Scammers frequently give or sell their victims' names to other scammers. To avoid being the victim a second time be extremely leery of any calls, texts or emails in the future. Victims are often approached with offers claiming to be able to recover money they've lost to a scam for an upfront fee. This is another scam. Don't fall for it.

Steps that can help avoid falling for a romance scam:

- Perform an Internet reverse search of your new friend's photograph. If the photo turns out to be someone else, it confirms that you're being scammed.
- Ask questions about their life and background. Don't accept vague responses or excuses.
- Search the Internet to see if this person has a presence online. Is it consistent with what you're being told? If he or she has no online presence at all, that's also suspicious.
- Refuse to give or lend money to someone you haven't met yet in person.
- If you feel the relationship is getting too intense too quickly then back away from it either temporarily or permanently.

Being the victim of a romance scam can happen to anyone. It's nothing to be ashamed of. Victims include people that are educated, sophisticated, technically savvy, young and old. If you suspect that it's happening to you then reach out to a close friend or relative and get their opinion. Researching the individual and any financial investments they recommend online is also a very good idea.

Kelly's newest book, "Ransomware, Viruses, Social Engineering and Other Threats: Protecting Your Digital Assets" is available on Amazon.



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# ENOA celebrates its Spirit of Aging Award winners

The administration on Community Living celebrates Older Americans month each May.

This is a time to acknowledge and reflect on the resilience and strength that older individuals have had throughout their lives – their successes, failures, joys and difficulties. It is also a time to celebrate and thank those groups and individuals who support the community’s older individuals through their contributions in the fields of advocacy, volunteerism, donations and healthcare.

As part of the national salute, the Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging (ENOA) presented its fifth annual Spirit of Aging Awards in the Advocate, Volunteer, Donor and Medical-Homecare categories.

Nominations for the Spirit of Aging Awards came from ENOA staff.

Jane Harpster is the 2025 Spirit of Aging Awards winner in the Advocacy category.

Jane Harpster is an employee of Notre Dame Housing. Notre Dame Housing (NDH) originally started out at as an all-girl Catholic school. When attendance started declining Notre Dame Academy (at that time) merged with Rummel Catholic High School (all boy school) and created what is today Roncalli Catholic High School.

When the school shut down the building became the home for the Notre Dame Sisters. The Notre Dame Sisters are involved with their community in various ways, and one need they noticed was that of affordable housing for those 55 years and older.

With that they decided to open their doors to the community to what is today Notre Dame Housing that serves those 55 years and older and offers HUD and tax credit housing.

“It was important for you to understand how Jane Harpster continuously strives and accedes the mission of Notre Dame Housing,” the nomination stated. “Jane daily contributes to the maintenance and housekeeping of the building. She takes pride in making sure the inside and outside look beautiful. Jane also goes above and beyond in helping our residents or those in our community



with any issue they have. She stops at nothing to help them.”

“When the surrounding community and those who lived in Notre Dame Housing were exhibiting food insecurity and the Notre Dame Sisters suggested starting a food pantry at Notre Dame Housing, Jane did not hesitate to jump right in and manage the food pantry. She advocates the needs of all to vendors to provide the most nutritious variety of foods offered in the pantry.

Jane loves getting to know all who come and participate in our food pantry and wants to make sure they feel at home while they are here.”

“Jane, with the help of other Notre Dame Housing employees make sure that residents and those from the community have access to nutritional and health related education along with other resources they might need beyond food insecurity,” the nomination read. “Due to the advocating, education, resources, and homelike feel, Notre Dame Housing food pantry continues to gain more participants from the general public and some of those coming from a distance. They have told us they continue to come back because of all Jane does and the atmosphere she has created.”

The Furniture Project is the 2025 Spirit of Aging Awards winner in the Donor category.

Since 2013, The Furniture Project has put in time and effort in helping families in the community.

As stated on The Furniture Project website, the story of The Furniture Project (TFP) began in 2013 when Drew Gerken and his colleagues from the Omaha Fire Department responded to a call at a family’s home who had no furniture. When the firefighters asked where they slept, the children showed them their suitcases and explained how they used their clothes to sleep on the floor and cover themselves like a blanket. The firefighters were deeply touched by the

family’s situation, and they knew they needed to take action. They quickly rallied the community via social media and, in just one day, were able to furnish the family’s small apartment with high-quality furniture and household items. This experience inspired Drew to continue his work, and The Furniture Project was born. Not only do they do their best to fulfill the order of needed items, but they even try to get colors, styles, etc. the participant/family prefers,” the nomination read.

“One of my participants received even more furniture than what I had put on the referral form after speaking with the participant themselves and learning of more need that I wasn’t aware of,” the nomination read. “The Furniture Project will deliver the furniture if the participant is not able to get it from their warehouse themselves. The referral form is so easy to fill out and they email you confirmation once the participant has received the donation, which is typically within a few months if not sooner after putting in the referral.”

Creighton University Department of Physical Therapy is the 2025 Spirit of Aging Awards winner in the Medical-Homecare category.

Since 2010, the collaboration between Creighton University and ENOA exemplifies a shared commitment to the health and well-being of older adults, as well as to the education and development of future healthcare professionals.

The partnership began with Creighton’s School of Pharmacy, where students had the opportunity to gain experience in research and public speaking, while also providing important health information to ENOA’s volunteers. Over time, this collaboration expanded to include the Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy departments, who’ve contributed to Falls Prevention Clinics, health fairs, balance clinics, and vital checks. Notably, Creighton’s Physical Therapy department hosts an annual event where 80-90 students provide one-on-one care to Foster Grandparents and Senior

Companions, offering lifestyle recommendations and fostering positive health practices.

“The impact of this partnership extends far beyond the events themselves,” the nomination read. “ENOA staff regularly commend the professionalism and compassion of the students who express their gratitude through personal thank-you notes to each volunteer. This act of gratitude reflects their genuine appreciation for the volunteers, leaving the volunteers deeply moved. The partnership’s success is a testament to the faculty’s meticulous planning and commitment to both community service and student development.”

Don Halsey is the 2025 Spirit of Aging Awards winner in the Volunteer category.

Don Halsey has been a dedicated Ombudsman volunteer at Omaha Care and Rehab since December 2022.

“In the three years he has volunteered, I don’t believe Don has missed a weekly visit to assist his residents with their concerns,” ENOA

staff member wrote in her nomination of Halsey for the award. “He will participate in meetings at the facility even after he has made his weekly visit. Don is always willing to allow potential new volunteers to ‘shadow’ him on his visits and many are so impressed by his dedication they decide to become volunteers.”

In addition to volunteering with the Long-term Care Ombudsman program, Don is also a volunteer for the Meals on Wheels program.

“Don is truly a committed volunteer for the entire ENOA organization,” the nomination read. “Don regularly delivers meals seven times a month for Meals on Wheels. He is also eager to fill in as a substitute for someone that can’t be there on a given day. He serves as a mentor for new volunteers by having them ride along and explains our procedural details. Don truly has a warm and friendly personality that resonates with those around him.”

ENOA honored the award winners on May 20.



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\*This is Universal Design; not ADA Standards.





# Paying attention to nutrition labels

Nutrition labels can seem like a foreign language if you have never learned how to read them properly. People look at nutrition labels for a variety of reasons, but whatever the reason may be many consumers would like to know how to use this information more effectively and easily. The following label-reading skills will make it easier to use the Nutrition Facts labels to make quick, informed food decisions to help you choose a healthy diet.

Step 1: Start with serving size (amount typically eaten at one time) to look for both serving size and the number of servings in the package. Compare your portion size (amount you actually eat) to the serving size on the panel.

Step 2: Check out the total calories to find how many calories are in a single serving.

Step 3: Nutrients are the main portion of the Nutrition Facts Label. This is where you can see how many grams of macronutrients such as Total Fat, Total Carbohydrate, and Protein. Nutrients to get less of include saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars.

Eating too many of these nutrients are associated with an increased risk of developing health conditions, like cardiovascular disease and high blood pressure.

Step 4: Let the Percent Daily Values (DV) be a guide to help evaluate how a particular food fits into your daily meal plan. Percent DV are for the entire day, not just one meal or snack.

*Submitted by Karen Rehm, worksite wellness specialist. To contact Karen at 402-483-1077 or send an email to krehm36@gmail.com.*

## 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 am. 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.

Arts and crafts will be held on the third Wednesday of each month. They also provide health and nutrition programs.

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



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SCAN THE CODE TO SIGN UP!

# Service members and Veterans honored for their service, sacrifice



NEW HORIZONS PHOTO

Five Service Members and Veterans were awarded quilts by the Quilt of Valor Foundation at the Fremont Senior Center in April. The Quilt of Valor Foundation appreciates the service and sacrifice of those who are serving or have served in the Armed Forces and protect our freedoms. Their goal is to cover Service Members and Veterans touched by war with comforting and healing Quilts of Valor.

# Why choosing a community in your own neighborhood is so important in memory care

**By Paula Crozier**

As Omaha's population of older adults increases, the need for specialized memory care housing has never been more urgent, especially with a significant portion facing Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. This rise has placed pressure on families to find safe, comfortable, and compassionate care options for their loved ones. Memory care housing is not just a housing solution—it is a vital, life-enhancing support system tailored to meet the specific cognitive and emotional needs of residents.

What makes memory care housing unique is the level of specialized care and attention provided. Facilities that focus on memory care offer secure environments designed to reduce confusion, prevent wandering, and support residents through structured daily routines. Trained caregivers with expertise in dementia care deliver round-the-clock support, ensuring that each resident receives personalized attention. In addition to medical and behavioral support, memory care communities often integrate therapeutic activities such as music, art, and reminiscence therapy, enhancing quality of life and promoting meaningful engagement.

For families, quality memory care extends beyond the resident's well-being. Knowing their loved one is in a safe, nurturing environment offers peace of mind. Family involvement is encouraged through regular communication, support groups, and educational workshops, fostering a collaborative care model where families are seen as partners, not just visitors.

Emerging research has reiterated the importance of neighborhood familiarity in promoting a sense of social health for people living with dementia. The Neighborhoods: Our People, Our Places, an international study, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and the National Institute for Health Research, explores how people with dementia interact with their local environments. It finds that familiar neighborhoods play a crucial role in maintaining independence, identity, and agency. Local landmarks, routine interactions, and accessible public spaces offer continuity in a life often disrupted by cognitive decline. Living near one's own community—where the sights, sounds, and rhythms are known, even while in a secured community—can provide emotional stability and reduce the "shrinking world" effect that often follows a dementia diagnosis.

This perspective introduces a valuable lens for memory care providers as an active partner in health. According to the study, neighborhoods offer a profound opportunity—facilitating social connection, mobility, and access to support. The study champions the concept of "lived place," highlighting how even small, everyday interactions in familiar environments support social health, autonomy, and dignity. In practice, memory care communities located within or near residents' original neighborhoods may be uniquely positioned to leverage these benefits—making location a critical consideration for families.

Keeping our loved ones in a memory care community as close to their own neighborhood benefits older adults by prioritizing comfort, safety, and dignity. When considering a community, look where your loved one has lived for most of their adult life, understand that the sounds, sights and neighborhoods are paramount to the "comforts of home."

*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.*



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 5, Aug. 7, Oct. 2, Dec. 4**  
The Servite Center of Compassion  
72nd St. and Ames Cr.

• **June 18, Aug. 20, Oct. 15, Dec. 17**  
St. Timothy Lutheran Church  
93rd and Dodge streets

• **July 8, Sept. 9, Nov. 11**  
St. Vincent de Paul Church  
14330 Eagle Run Dr.

• **July 26, Sept. 27, Nov. 29**  
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.

For more information, email Nancy at flahertyconsulting@cox.net or call/text her at 402-312-9324.

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 Monday to Friday.

The ISC offers a morning snack, and regular or 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.

Lunch reservations are due by 9 a.m. A voluntary contribution is suggested for the meal.

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.

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.

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

This Month's  
Sudoku Answers

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

This Month's  
Crossword Answers

Older adults compete in 2025 Senior Olympics



NEW HORIZONS PHOTOS

Older adults from around the area competed in the Senior Olympics held at the Papillion Landing Field House located at 1022 W Lincoln St. The day included entertainment, lunch and awards.



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# Club in Papillion connects adults in the community

By Ron Petersen

Older adult clubs serves as a community focal point, for people above the age of 60. Older adult clubs is one of the most widely used services among older adults in the United States.

The National Council On Aging did a study on older adult clubs, which include:

- Approximately 70% of senior center participants are women; half of them live alone.

- Compared with their peers, senior center participants have higher levels of health, social interaction, and life satisfaction and lower levels of income.

- The average age of participants is 75.

- 75% of participants visit their center 1 to 3 times per



COURTESY PHOTO

The Papillion Landing 55+ Club is a place where older adults can enjoy a vibrant retirement filled with activity, the company of great friends, continued learning and opportunities to use their talents to serve others.

week. They spend an average of 3.3 hours per visit.

One club in the eastern Nebraska area, the Papillion

Landing 55+ Club, is not a senior center in the traditional sense, but it's a place where adults can enjoy a vibrant retirement filled with activity, the company of great friends, continued learning and opportunities to use their talents to serve others.

"We do everything that most senior centers do," Papillion Landing 55+ Club coordinator, Donna Montealegre said. "We play games, we do arts and crafts, we travel on Wednesdays, and we serve lunches."

The 55+ Club strives to be a strong connection to our Papillion community for those who participate in the programs.

A few of the programs include game days, craft

activities, jam sessions and Wandering Wednesdays, which is where they will hop on the bus and explore the many great destinations in the city and region have to offer.

There is even a fitness class, called the Our Silver Sneakers fitness class, led by a certified Papillion Recreation Department fitness instructor, is an activity session geared toward all abilities.

The class incorporates yoga, bands, stretching and other exercises for participants, standing or sitting.

"We have a variety of activities that happen every month," Montealegre said. "We have arts and crafts which happen every other month on a Thursday. For seniors that might not be retired, every other month on a Friday evening we do a Painting Picasso night. Both classes are only \$10. We have an end of the summer party coming up as well."

Each spring and summer, members participate in walking challenges and their results are incredible. Other fitness activities we enjoy from time to time include line dancing, Tai Chi and self-defense classes. The 55+ Club also hosts healthy cooking classes to teach members about practical, nutritional cooking.

The 55+ Club even has educational activities include historical speakers, workshops about health and emergency preparedness topics. Whether you'd like to earn your CPR certification or share your love of reading with others in our book club, learning never ends at the 55+ Club.

The 55+ Club provides members with opportunities to be part of the community. The club hosts events that invite the community in to meet members and enjoy their talents. They also coordinate opportunities for our members to take part in community activities as well as participate in service projects.

"We're here in Papillion, and we want people to come see us and see what opportunities you might have," Montealegre said.

The 55+ Club currently has a great group of attendees who would love to welcome many new faces. For more information about the Papillion Landing 55+ Club, contact Donna Montealegre at 402-597-2059 or by email at [dmonteleagre@papillion.org](mailto:dmonteleagre@papillion.org).



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