



IN THIS ISSUE: "How to Make Millions," Centenarians Honored, Leeza's Care Connection, Train Robberies, Travel vs. Aging, Centenarian Carter, "My Penguin Friend"

# The Good Life

News, Health & Leisure for South Valley Adults 50+ • Volume XI, Number 4 • November/December 2024



## No More Written Test for Driver's License Renewals for Those 70+

The California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) announced that drivers 70-years-old and older in California whose licenses expire in 2024 and beyond will no longer be required to take a written knowledge test.

"All drivers have been required to take a written test once they turn 70 as a policy requirement and not a requirement of law," said DMV Director Steve Gordon.

"We are eliminating the written knowledge test for those without traffic violations on their record to improve customer service. If thousands fewer people need to visit the DMV, or can spend less time in an office, the people who need to take care of their business in one of our offices can be better served."

For those renewing their license who are 70 and older, an office visit is still required for a vision exam and an updated photo.

Some renewal notices for customers with licenses that expire in 2024 may indicate a knowledge test is required, but it will be waived during the in-office visit.

The DMV encourages customers to start their application online to minimize the amount of time it takes to complete the process in an office.

First time drivers and those new to California will still be required to take a knowledge test, as will those renewal customers with poor driving records.

Those drivers up for license renewal who have points on their record will be eligible for

(continued on page 6)

## 2024 Walk to End Alzheimer's Exceeds Goal

Over 300 area residents participated in this year's Tulare and Kings Counties Walk to End Alzheimer's at Valley Strong Ballpark, home of the Visalia Rawhide, on October 5.

So far, more than \$35,000 has been raised to fight the disease.

"This year's event was a smash success" said Walk Manager Heather McCarthy.

This year's goal was \$30,000 and McCarthy knew before Walk Day that this event had already surpassed its goal.

"Even though this event has gone over its goal, there is still money coming in," McCarthy said. "The heart of this community is large."

"We are grateful to have found such a solid community partner in the Rawhide," she added. "They provide us with such a great venue, excellent staff and service, great resources, and everything we could ever ask for."

The top money-raising team this year was again the Quail Park Communities, which raised \$9,430, surpassing the \$6,000 they raised for last year's walk.



Quail Park Communities was once again the top money-raising team.

The Alzheimer's Association Walk to End Alzheimer's is the world's largest event to raise awareness and funds for Alzheimer's care and research.

More than six million Americans are living with Alzheimer's disease, making it the seventh-leading cause of death in the U.S.

This year's wrap-up celebration will be at Amigo's Restaurant & Cantina in Visalia on November 11.

Donations for this year's Tulare-Kings Walk to End Alzheimer's can be made to:

The Alzheimer's Association, 4900 California Ave., Suite 210B, Bakersfield, CA 93309.

Contributions can also be made on the "2024 Walk to End Alzheimer's - Tulare & Kings Counties, CA" page at [www.alz.org/walk](http://www.alz.org/walk) by clicking on the "Donate" button.

Donations received by December 31 will be credited to the 2024 Walk.

## Social Security Announces 2.5% Increase for 2025

Social Security benefits and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments for more than 72.5 million Americans will increase by 2.5% in 2025, the Social Security Administration announced on October 10.

On average, Social Security retirement benefits will increase by about \$50 per month starting in January.

Over the last decade, the cost-of-living (COLA) adjustment increase has averaged about 2.6%. The COLA was 3.2% in 2024.

Nearly 68 million Social Security beneficiaries will see a 2.5% COLA beginning in January 2025. Increased payments to nearly 7.5 million people receiving SSI will begin on December 31. (Note: Some people receive both Social Security benefits and SSI.)

Some other adjustments that take effect in January of each year are based on the increase in average wages. Based on that increase, the maximum

(continued on page 8)

## 2025-26 Master Plan for Aging to be Released in January

California's aging population is more diverse and growing faster than any other age group. By 2030, an estimated 10.3 million older Californians (age 60 and over) will make up 25% of the state's population.

California's Master Plan for Aging (MPA) affirms the priority of the health and well-being of older Californians and people with disabilities. It acts as a "blueprint" for state government, local government, the private sector and philanthropy to prepare the state for the coming demographic changes and continue California's leadership in aging, disability and equity.

"California's MPA is centered on Californians who are directly impacted by work across agencies in partnership with local government and community organizations," said Susan DeMarois, director of the California



Department of Aging. "The strength in the MPA is that it doesn't sit on a shelf."

The MPA is refreshed and updated every two years in close partnership with stakeholders. The next round, with new MPA initiatives for 2025-26, will be unveiled early next year.

The plan outlines five main goals and 23 strategies to build a "California for All Ages" by

(continued on page 14)





## 'Costs Still Outpace Social Security COLA Increases'

"The 2.5% COLA for Social Security benefits in 2025 is nowhere near enough to allow older adults to afford their true cost of living," said Ramsey Alwin, president and CEO of the National Council on Aging, following the announcement of the Social Security cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for 2025.

"The poverty rate for people age 65 and older remained at an unacceptable 14% in 2023," he continued. "Our research with the LeadingAge LTSS Center at UMass Boston shows that about half (or a little over 27 million) of households with adults age 60 and older have an average income below what they need to cover their basic needs. Social Security must keep up with this reality.

"Social Security recipients have worked hard their entire lives, played by the rules and

raised the next generation. With 11,000 people turning 65 every day until 2027, we cannot ignore that an increasing number of them cannot make ends meet.

"The Census Bureau calculated that Social Security benefits made up the entire income for 28% of recipients. The average Social Security retirement benefit in February 2024 was about \$1,862 per month (about \$22,344 per year), and many people get much less.

"We continue to advocate for the adoption of the Elder Index as a more accurate measure of the income older adults need to meet their basic needs. It includes the costs of housing, health care, transportation and food.

"Aging with dignity should be a right for all, not a privilege for a few."

## 'YOUR ACCOUNT HAS BEEN COMPROMISED'

# Tulare County DA Warns of New Financial Scam

District Attorney Tim Ward is warning of a financial scam targeting Tulare County residents, particularly seniors, with bogus claims that personal bank and investment accounts have been compromised.

"This scam is happening in Tulare County, and the Office of the District Attorney has prosecuted and is currently prosecuting offenders involved in the scam," said Tulare County District Attorney Tim Ward.

The scam begins as many others do, with an erroneous pop-up computer ad or a phone call. The message is that a government agency has discovered your financial accounts have been compromised or that you are the subject of an investigation.

To protect your funds, you are directed to withdraw large sums of cash and pass it off to an "agent" who will protect and reinvest your money. It's not a one-time occurrence. Once successful, the scammers will demand more.

"Victims in Tulare County have lost tens of thousands of dollars before law enforcement was able to intervene," Ward said. "We've been able to file two separate criminal cases against individuals acting as couriers or 'agents' of the scammers tasked with physically retrieving cash from victims. Those directing the scam are much more difficult to track as many of these scams originate outside of the United States."

The District Attorney's Office reminds the public to be vigilant and to recognize far-fetched schemes for what they are.

"State and federal agencies do not operate this way," Ward said. "If there is an issue, they



will contact you by mail. Even then you can cross-check contact numbers and addresses to make sure it is legitimate. The government will not call you or communicate through an internet pop-up ad."

It is important for family members, friends and caretakers to be on the lookout for this kind of activity in the senior community. Scammers often target seniors with scams being a major factor in financial elder abuse.

"In rare instances are funds able to be recovered," said Supervising TCDA Victim Advocate Nicole Burnham. "Prevention is the best medicine when it comes to scams.

"The Office of the District Attorney offers free, bilingual presentations on scams and other abuses targeting Tulare County seniors," she added. "To schedule a presentation, call us at (559) 636-5471."

If you or someone you know is a victim of this or any financial scam, contact your local law enforcement agency.

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# Leeza's Care Connection Offers Support for Caregivers

By Steve Pastis

Leeza Gibbons is best known as a co-host of "Entertainment Tonight" and for "Leeza," her syndicated daytime talk show. She is also an author and, since 2017, has hosted the Tournament of Roses Parade on local television.

In 2007, she was appointed by California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to a board that oversees the state's stem cell research agency.

Gibbons' current passion is Leeza's Care Connection, which helps caregivers learn ways to cope and manage their role.

She called what would become Leeza's Care Connection "a calling that came to me with great clarity" when her family was struggling with her mother's Alzheimer's disease.

"As part of that journey, our family did what most families do, we fell apart," she said. "We each kind of went to our own respective corners to lick our wounds of hurt and worry and anger. We felt alone and misunderstood."

"So basically, I created what we wish we'd had, a place for the care partners - the husbands, the wives, the sons, the daughters, the family friends - to gather together and lean on each other and to bear witness to a very difficult path.

"When I learned that care-



Leeza Gibbons and her mother, the inspiration for Leeza's Care Connection

givers are at an exponentially greater risk of getting the disease themselves, I realized we can make a big difference there," Gibbons said. "The assault on your immune system, the amount of stress, the lack of sleep, the anxiety, the lack of socialization, the isolation, all of these are risk factors for Alzheimer's disease. And for caregivers, they are front and center in their daily lives.

"We may not be able to cure these diseases yet, but that sobering statistic we can change," she added.

The programs at Leeza's Care Connection include those for both caregivers and their diagnosed loved ones.

"We have lots of programs and respite for people who are diagnosed with the disease," Gibbons said. "But what we realize is that better care for caregivers creates better outcomes for care receivers."

### The HUGS Program

"The first line of action for me, for any family, is who's in your care crew," Gibbons said. "Who are the people that can support you and understand you and see what you're going through? And it may not always be your biological family. It may not be those closest to you. You may have to identify people who get it."

To help families establish their "care crews," Gibbons

created a program called HUGS, which is "helping you grow strong."

"The whole reason to have this peer-to-peer mentor program is there are so many people who lost their loved one to neurological disease, chronic illness and Alzheimer's, and they developed ways to cope, techniques that work, sanity sanctuaries and ways to survive it," she said. "So when their loved ones pass, no one was asking them for that knowledge. They have a Ph.D. in caring. So I created a program that says we want to empower those people and make those people the mentors to the next ones who are standing where they have stood."

"The HUGS program is a proprietary curriculum offered virtually and in-person to really validate the experience of the caregiver, to help them grow what they innately already know about caring by teaching them to be more empathetic listeners, teaching them ways to communicate with individuals that can best be of service," she said.

Gibbons considers HUGS to be similar to a dating site.

"You, as the caregiver, get to be matched with the person that you think best fits your needs," she explained. "So if (continued on page 18)



# VETERANS DAY

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# Despite Medical Advances, Life Expectancy Gains are Slowing

We've seen dramatic increases in life expectancy over the 19th and 20th centuries, thanks to healthier diets, medical advances and many other quality-of-life improvements.

But after nearly doubling over the course of the 20th century, the rate of increase has slowed considerably in the last three decades, according to a new study led by the University of Illinois Chicago.

Despite frequent breakthroughs in medicine and public health, life expectancy at birth in the world's longest-living populations has increased only an average of six-and-a-half years since 1990, the analysis found.

That rate of improvement falls far short of some scientists' expectations that life expectancy would increase at an accelerated pace in this century and that most people born today will live past 100 years.

The Nature Aging paper, "Implausibility of Radical Life Extension in Humans in the 21st Century," offers new evidence that humans are approaching a biologically based limit to life.

The biggest boosts to longevity have already occurred through successful efforts to combat disease, said lead author S. Jay Olshansky of the UIC School of Public Health. That leaves the damaging effects of

aging as the main obstacle to further extension.

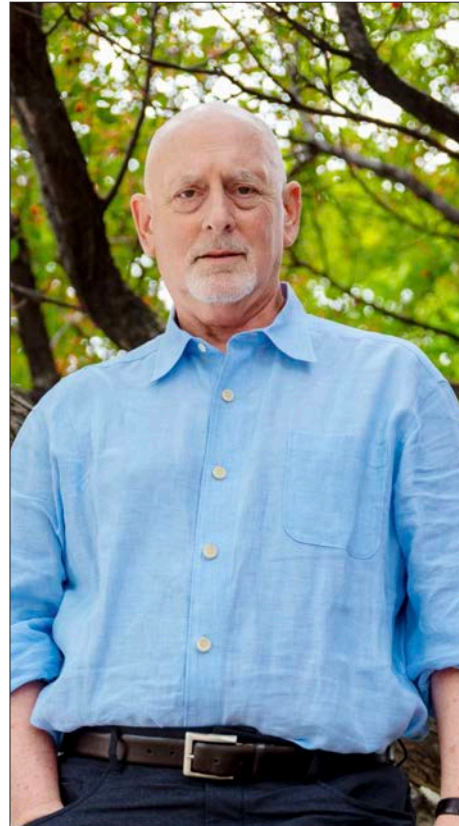
"Most people alive today at older ages are living on time that was manufactured by medicine," said Olshansky, a professor of epidemiology and biostatistics. "But these medical Band-Aids are producing fewer years of life even though they're occurring at an accelerated pace, implying that the period of rapid increases in life expectancy is now documented to be over."

That also means extending life expectancy even more by reducing disease could be harmful, if those additional years aren't healthy years, Olshansky added.

"We should now shift our focus to efforts that slow aging and extend healthspan," he said.

Healthspan is a relatively new metric that measures the number of years a person is healthy, not just alive. Life expectancy increased rapidly through the 19th century and first half of the 20th century. In 1990, some scientists predicted those rapid gains would continue, leading to "radical life extension." But a new analysis proposes that we may be nearing the limit of human longevity.

The analysis, conducted with researchers from the University of Hawaii, Harvard and UCLA, is



S. Jay Olshansky

the latest chapter in a three-decade debate over the potential limits of human longevity.

In 1990, Olshansky published a paper in *Science* that argued humans were approaching a ceiling for life expectancy of around 85 years of age and that the most significant gains had already been made. Others predicted that advances in medicine and public health would accelerate 20th century trends upward into the 21st century.

Thirty-four years later, the ev-

idence reported in the 2024 Nature Aging study supports the idea that life expectancy gains will continue to slow as more people become exposed to the detrimental and immutable effects of aging.

The study looked at data from the eight longest-living countries and Hong Kong, as well as the United States – one of only a handful of countries that has seen a decrease in life expectancy in the period studied.

"Our result overturns the conventional wisdom that the natural longevity endowment for our species is somewhere on the horizon ahead of us – a life expectancy beyond where we are today," Olshansky said. "Instead, it's behind us – somewhere in the 30 to 60-year range. We've now proven that modern medicine is yielding incrementally smaller improvements in longevity even though medical advances are occurring at breakneck speed."

While more people may reach 100 years and beyond in this century, those cases will remain outliers that won't move average life expectancy significantly higher, Olshansky said.

That conclusion pushes back against products and industries, such as insurance and wealth-management business-  
(continued on page 8)

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# Tulare County Supervisors Honor Centegenarians



Reaching your 100th birthday is a tremendous milestone worth celebrating, and on October 1 the Tulare County Board of Supervisors recognized local centenarians for achieving this monumental milestone and proclaimed Centenarian Day in Tulare County.

To celebrate their lives, legacy and longevity, the County Supervisors held a special ceremony at their regular board meeting to pay tribute to Tulare County's oldest seniors – residents who are at least 100 years old.

Congratulations to this year's honored centenarians, which included Kenneth Albert, Annabelle Enlow, Helen Davidson, Elizabeth "Betty" Lane, Bea Moring, Patricia Pope, Serapio Garcia, Pauline Benton, Antonio Alcaraz, Francisca Degracia, Maria Elizondo, Emilia Velasquez de Garcia, Mae Ewert, Augustina Cervantes, Geraldine "Gerry" Soultz, Guadalupe Montemayor, Elenor Terill and Astrid "Oz" Wagenshultz.

The special recognition was organized by the Tulare County Board of Supervisors and Tulare County HHS Adult Services Division.



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# Former President Jimmy Carter Turns 100 Years Old

On October 1, The Carter Center and the world celebrated the 100th birthday of former President Jimmy Carter, the longest-living U.S. president in history.

Born on October 1, 1924, in Plains, Georgia, Carter has dedicated his life to service and human rights. Early in life, he was an active member of the Plains community alongside his wife, Rosalynn, whom he married in 1946.

He was elected to the Georgia State Senate in 1962 and served as Georgia's 76th governor from 1971 to 1975. He became the 39th president of the United States in 1977 and held that office for four years.

In 1982, President and Mrs.

Carter founded the Carter Center, a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving lives by advancing democracy, resolving conflicts and eliminating preventable diseases.

The center has become a leading global health and human rights organization that has positively impacted more than 80 countries. The center pioneered election observation, deploying 125 missions, and has supported the elimination of neglected tropical diseases in 22 countries.

On September 17, the center hosted a star-studded concert event at Atlanta's historic Fox Theatre to honor the music-loving former president.

"Jimmy Carter 100: A Cel-



President Jimmy Carter

bration in Song" brought together more than 4,000 of Carter's family members, friends and biggest fans. The show can be viewed on demand at [gpb.org/jimmycarter100](http://gpb.org/jimmycarter100).

To help celebrate President Carter's centennial, the Carter Center encourages friends and supporters from around the world to contribute to a digital mosaic.

So far, nearly 5,000 people have submitted photos and tributes, many remarking on how he has inspired them through his exceptional life and work.

## Written Tests...

(continued from page 1)

the eLearning course, available in English, Spanish and Chinese. Drivers whose records meet any of the following conditions are still required to take the knowledge test:

- Two or more accidents during the two years immediately preceding the expiration of the license.
- Three or more accidents during the three years immediately preceding the expiration of the license.
- A DUI suspension during the two years immediately preceding the expiration date of the license.
- A violation point count greater than one within the two years immediately preceding the expiration date of the license.

For those Californians who are required to take a knowledge test, choosing an online option for testing significantly reduces the amount of time customers need to spend in an office.

This improves DMV customer service by reducing office congestion and wait times.

The DMV has spent the last few years digitizing and improving services and making almost all transactions conveniently available on a mobile phone, tablet, laptop or computer.

As part of its customer-focused digital transformation, the DMV is processing the following transactions through online, kiosk, phone, mail or business partner only:

- Simple vehicle registration renewals that are not past the due date nor require an address change.
- Driver's license renewals that do not require an in-person visit.
- Requests for copies of vehicle registration records, which show a vehicle's ownership history.
- Requests for copies of driver's license records, which show a driver's history.
- Replacing a lost or stolen driver's license card.

Some DMV services are available at [dmv.ca.gov](http://dmv.ca.gov).

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# Kaweah Health Rehabilitation Hospital Opens New Mobility Park

When you are relearning how to walk, sometimes it's the grass that trips you up and sometimes it's the rocks. Kaweah Health Rehabilitation Hospital's new mobility course, which had a ribbon-cutting on September 16, helps patients who have had life-altering injuries learn how to maneuver through various types of terrain.

"For older adults especially, mobility involves more than just walking on flat, controlled surfaces," said Molly Niederreiter, director of Rehabilitation and Skilled Services at Kaweah Health. "The mobility training course is an essential resource for lowering fall risks and helping patients return to normal life in their community."

"It's not only helpful for those recovering from major events like strokes or accidents but also for patients healing from elective surgeries, such as hip or knee replacements," she said.

Funded by Maison Law Accident & Injury Lawyers, the mobility training course features river rock, gravel, brick walkways, flagstone, pebbles, crushed rock, turf, curbs and various ramps.

This practice area will allow patients to safely develop the skills needed to navigate hazardous terrains while walking



Kaweah Health Rehabilitation Hospital opened its new mobility course on September 16.

or using a wheelchair, all under the guidance of Kaweah Health's skilled medical professionals.

After 30 years of serving the community, Kaweah Health is an expert in the field of acute rehabilitation, said Niederreiter.

"This is another tool in our toolbox to help us provide evidenced based interventions tailored to meet the needs of each individual," she said. "We thank Maison Law for helping make this happen."

By building confidence and practical experience, the Maison Law Mobility Training Course at Kaweah Health empowers patients to regain their independence and resume their normal lives beyond the hospital's walls.

Kaweah Health CEO Gary Herbst pointed out how special the Rehabilitation Hospital is with all the different care offered inside, including physical, occupational, and speech therapies.

"If you don't believe in mir-

acles, just come here," Herbst said. "What our physical therapists are able to achieve is miraculous."

Martin Gasparian, Esq. with Maison Law said his firm likes to focus on prevention with its community donations, but that isn't always possible.

"If we can't prevent accidents, we thought helping people get through all the physical difficulties following one would be the next best thing," Gasparian said.

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The Ruth Wood Open Arms House

## November Marks National Hospice and Palliative Month

November marks National Hospice and Palliative Month, offering an opportune time to reflect on the importance of support for families and patients facing end-of-life challenges.

Hospice care, typically provided to patients with a life expectancy of six months or less, focuses on managing pain and symptoms while addressing emotional and spiritual needs.

Kaweah Health Hospice, a not-for-profit agency in Tulare County, offers a range of services to support patients and their families. Tiffany Bullock, director of Kaweah Health Hospice and the Ruth Wood Open Arms House, emphasizes their commitment to personalized care.

"No one will ever be refused Hospice care based on ability to pay," Bullock said.

The organization provides several unique programs:

- A pediatric concurrent program that allows children with life-limiting illnesses to receive hospice services while still pursuing treatment.
- The CUBS program, designed to help children ages 5-12 cope with grief.
- A bereavement program offering support to families for up to 13 months after losing a

loved one.

In 2022, Kaweah Health Hospice expanded its services by adding the Ruth Wood Open Arms House. The facility, located on Iris Avenue, can accommodate up to six residents and features private bedrooms, common living spaces, and a serenity garden. The house aims to provide end-of-life care with dignity and comfort.

While hospice care costs are typically covered by residents and their families, the Kaweah Health Hospice Foundation may offer assistance to those unable to afford full payment.

"If we have a room available and the resident's family is unable to cover the full cost, we may be able to offer a reduced rate based on the patient's income," Bullock said.

According to Bullock, Kaweah Health Hospice ranks higher than the national average in quality and satisfaction results, as reported on the Care Compare website maintained by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

For those seeking more information about hospice services, the Open Arms House, or bereavement support, resources are available at [KaweahHealth.org/Hospice](http://KaweahHealth.org/Hospice) or by calling (559) 733-0642.

## Stockings for Seniors Drive Begins

The holiday season is a joyous time for many. Families gather to celebrate, spend time together, and look forward to the new year. This time of year can be difficult, though, for homebound senior citizens experiencing isolation, with limited resources and support.

To add a little holiday cheer to their lives, selected seniors will receive a stocking filled with donated cold-weather items and hygiene products during the annual Kings/Tulare Area Agency on Aging (K/T AAA) Stockings for Seniors Drive.

K/T AAA, CSET Senior Services and HHSAA Adult Services are partnering in this drive and invite the community to participate by providing seniors with needed supplies. Donations can make a difference and put a smile on a senior's face.

Tulare County businesses, community partners and residents are encouraged to donate items such as lap blankets, mittens, socks, scarves, beanies, toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo/conditioner, deodorant, Q-tips, etc., by dropping them off in the red donation



Red donation bins are located at many county offices, as well as at Starbucks.

bins located at many county offices, as well as at Starbucks. Donations will be accepted through November 29.

If you wish to make a monetary donation, you can donate online at [FriendsTC.org](http://FriendsTC.org), or send a check to 5957 S. Mooney Blvd., Visalia, CA 93277. (Write "Stockings for Seniors" in the memo line of your check.)

Amazon will deliver purchased items to the designated receiving location.

For a list of donation drop-off locations or for further information, call Bonnie Quiroz at (559) 972-0323 or (559) 713-2877.

## Social Security...

(continued from page 1)

amount of earnings subject to the Social Security tax (taxable maximum) is slated to increase to \$176,100 from \$168,600.

Social Security begins notifying people about their new benefit amount by mail starting in early December.

This year, for the first time, Social Security beneficiaries will receive a newly designed and improved COLA notice that makes it easier for customers to find the information they need most. The simplified COLA notice is now only one page, uses plain and personalized language, and provides exact dates and dollar amounts of a person's new benefit amount and any deductions.

Individuals who have a personal "My Social Security" account can view their COLA

notice online, which is secure, easy, and faster than receiving a letter in the mail. People can set up text or email alerts when there is a new message – such as their COLA notice – waiting for them in "My Social Security."

People will need to have a personal My Social Security account by November 20 to see their COLA notice online. To get started, visit [www.ssa.gov/myaccount](http://www.ssa.gov/myaccount).

Information about Medicare changes for 2025 are available at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov). For Social Security beneficiaries enrolled in Medicare, the 2025 benefit amount will be available via My Social Security's Message Center starting in late November. Those who have not opted to receive messages online will receive their COLA notice by mail in December.

## Life Expectancy...

(continued from page 4)

es, which increasingly make calculations based on assumptions that most people will live to be 100.

"This is profoundly bad advice because only a small percentage of the population will live that long in this century," Olshansky said.

But the finding doesn't rule out that medicine and science can produce further benefits, he said. There may be more immediate potential in improving quality of life at older ages instead of extending life, the authors argue. More investment should be made in geroscience

– the biology of aging, which may hold the seeds of the next wave of health and life extension.

"This is a glass ceiling, not a brick wall," Olshansky said. "There's plenty of room for improvement for reducing risk factors, working to eliminate disparities and encouraging people to adopt healthier lifestyles – all of which can enable people to live longer and healthier. We can push through this glass health and longevity ceiling with geroscience and efforts to slow the effects of aging."

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# Travel Could Be the Best Defense against Aging

Forget about retinol night creams, researchers from Edith Cowan University (ECU) believe travel could be the best way to defy premature ageing.

For the first time, an interdisciplinary study has applied the theory of entropy to tourism, finding that travel could have positive health benefits, including slowing down the signs of aging.

Entropy is classified as the general trend of the universe towards death and disorder. The entropy perspective suggests that tourism could trigger entropy changes, where positive experiences might mitigate entropy increase and enhance health, while negative experiences may contribute to entropy increase and compromise health.

"Aging, as a process, is irreversible. While it can't be stopped, it can be slowed down," said ECU Ph.D. candidate Fangli Hu.

Hu noted that positive travel experiences could enhance individuals' physical and mental wellness through exposure to novel environments, engagement in physical activities and social interaction, and the fostering of positive emotions.

"Tourism isn't just about leisure and recreation," she added. "It could also contribute to people's physical and mental



health."

### Travel Therapy

Travel therapy could serve as a groundbreaking health intervention when viewed through an entropy lens, Hu said. As an important aspect of the environment, positive travel experiences may help the body sustain a low-entropy state by modulating its four major systems.

Tourism typically exposes people to new surroundings and relaxing activities, and novel settings can stimulate stress responses and elevate metabolic rates, positively influencing metabolic activities and the body's self-organising capabilities. These contexts may also trigger an adaptive immune system response.

Hu said that this reaction im-

proves the body's ability to perceive and defend itself against external threats.

"Put simply, the self-defence system becomes more resilient. Hormones conducive to tissue repair and regeneration may be released and promote the self-healing system's functioning," she explained.

"Leisurely travel activities might help alleviate chronic stress, dampen overactivation of the immune system, and encourage normal functioning of the self-defence system," she said. "Engaging in recreation potentially releases tension and fatigue in the muscles and joints.

"This relief helps maintain the body's metabolic balance and increases the anti-wear-and-tear system's effectiveness.

Organs and tissues can then remain in a low-entropy state."

Travel encompasses physical activities such as hiking, climbing, walking, and cycling. Physical exertion can boost metabolism, energy expenditure, and material transformation, all of which help coordinate self-organising systems.

"Participating in these activities could enhance the body's immune function and self-defence capabilities, bolstering its hardiness to external risks," Hu said. "Physical exercise may also improve blood circulation, expedite nutrient transport, and aid waste elimination to collectively maintain an active self-healing system. Moderate exercise is beneficial to the bones, muscles, and joints in addition to supporting the body's anti-wear-and-tear system."

On the flip side, the research has pointed out that tourists could face challenges such as infectious diseases, accidents, injuries, violence, water and food safety issues, and concerns related to inappropriate tourism engagement.

"Conversely, tourism can involve negative experiences that potentially lead to health problems, paralleling the process of promoting entropy increase. A prominent example is the public health crisis of COVID-19."



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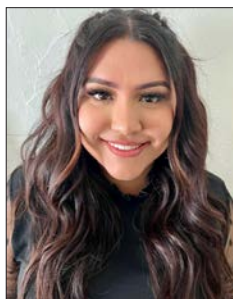
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# CALENDAR

## November 1- December 29 - Jana Botkin "Simply Home" Exhibition

This art exhibition will be at CACHE, 125 South B St., Exeter. Admission is free. For more information, call (559) 592-5900 or visit <http://cach-exeter.org/events>.

## November 1-15 - "Dia de los Muertos"

This exhibit at Arts Visalia, 214 E. Oak Ave., Visalia, will have its opening reception on Friday, Nov. 1, from 5-7:30 p.m. For more information, visit [www.artsvisalia.org](http://www.artsvisalia.org) or call (559) 739-0905.

## Friday, November 1 - F1rst Friday

F1rst Friday in Downtown Visalia, in partnership with The Arts Consortium, will present a free community event with art, food and fun from 5-8 p.m. For more information, visit [arts-consortium.org/calendar](http://arts-consortium.org/calendar).

## November 1, 8, 15, 22 - Friday Night Dances

The Tulare Senior Community Center, 201 N. F St., Tulare, will host this weekly event from 6-9 p.m. \$10 entry fee. For more information, call (559) 685-2330.

## November 1-2 - Visalia Gleaning Seniors Yard Sale

Visalia Gleaning Seniors will host this sale from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Gleaner Yard, 28600 Road 156 in Visalia. For more information, call (559) 733-5352.

## November 3, 10, 17 - Senior Pride Bingo Sundays

This weekly event is held at the Visalia Veterans Memorial Building, 609 W. Center St., Visalia. Doors open at 11:15 a.m. For more info, call (559) 651-6714.

## Monday, November 4 - Classic Cinema @ CACHE

The Center for Art, Culture & History (CACHE) will present Edmund O'Brien in "D.O.A." as part of its monthly movie series, at 125 South B St., Exeter. Showtime is 6 p.m. Discussion to follow. Admission is free.

Bring your own snacks. For more information, call (559) 592-5900.

## November 6, 13, 20 - Bingo

The Tulare Senior Community Center, 201 N. F St., Tulare, will host bingo starting at 1 p.m. Doors open at 12:30 p.m. For more info, call (559) 685-2330.

## Thursday, November 7 - "Documentation: Focus, Filter, Digitize, Backup"

The Sequoia Genealogical Society will host this 6 p.m. presentation by Kathy Burrow on creating files and finding aids for future genealogical research. Refreshments will follow. The free event will be held in the Olympic Room at the Tulare Public Library, 475 M St. in Tulare. For more information, call (559) 685-4518.

## November 7-January 4 - Tulare Senior Studio Group Art Exhibit

The Tulare Historical Museum, 444 W. Tulare Ave., Tulare, will host this art show. The opening reception will be on Thursday, November 7, from 5-7 p.m. For more information, call (559) 686-2074.

## Saturday, November 9 - Walk with a Doc

This informational walk and talk, sponsored by Kaweah Health and held at Blain Park in Visalia, begins with registration at 8 a.m., followed by a warm-up at 8:15 a.m., and "Talk with a Doc" at 8:30 a.m. The topic this month is "Reading Labels." For more info, call (559) 624-2416.

## Saturday, November 9 - 6th Annual Sporting Clays Classic

Hands in the Community is sponsoring this fundraising event at Sun Mountain Gun Club, 32868 Shotgun Lane, Coarsegold. For more information, call (559) 625-3822.

## November 9-10 - Rusty Roots Show

This event, featuring arts and crafts, clothes, antiques, jewelry, furniture and more on sale,

will be held from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, and 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Sunday, at the Tulare County Fairgrounds, 620 South K St., Tulare. For tickets or more information, visit [www.rustyrootsshow.com](http://www.rustyrootsshow.com).

## Monday, November 11 - 106th Annual Porterville Veterans Day Parade

This annual event in Downtown Porterville begins at 10 a.m. This year's theme is "Never Forgotten." For more info, call (559) 359-7922.

## Monday, November 11 - 2024 Lemoore Veterans Day Parade

American Legion Lemoore Post 100 will host this annual event in Downtown Lemoore beginning at 6 p.m. For more info, call (559) 816-6964.

## Tuesday, November 12 - Christmas Tree Walk

Main Street Hanford will host this event. For tickets or more information, visit [www.mainstreethanford.com](http://www.mainstreethanford.com) or call (559) 582-9457.

## Wednesday, November 13 - Valley Renal Support Group

The only kidney support group in four counties will meet at Evolution's Gym, 1425 E. Prosperity Ave. in Tulare, from 6:30-8 p.m. The meeting will also be on Zoom. For info, email Jennifer at [meow.2000@yahoo.com](mailto:meow.2000@yahoo.com).

## Thursday, November 14 - Bingo Night

Exeter Woman's Club will host this event at 201 Kaweah Ave., Exeter. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. For more information, call (559) 827-1933.

## Friday, November 15 - Senior Prize B-I-N-G-O

This event will be held at the Visalia Senior Center, 310 N. Locust St., Visalia, at 1:30 p.m. There is a \$2 "drop-in" fee. For more info, call (559) 713-4365.

## Saturday, November 16 - Walk with a Doc

This informational walk and talk, sponsored by Adventist Health and the City of Hanford, will be held at Freedom Park, 2000 9-1/4 Avenue in Hanford. It begins with registration at 8:45 a.m., followed by the walk and "Talk with a Doc" at 9 a.m. For more information, visit [www.walkwithadoc.org](http://www.walkwithadoc.org).

## Saturday, November 16 - Walk with a Doc

This informational walk and talk will be held at Del Lago Park in Tulare, begins with registration at 8 a.m., followed by a warm-up at 8:05 a.m., and "Talk with a Doc" at 8:30 a.m. The topic this month is "Holiday Grief."

## Monday, November 18 - Exeter Caregiver/Dementia Support Group

Quail Park on Cypress will present this 10:30 a.m. monthly session, facilitated by Kimberly Jensen, in the Café at Rocky Hill Community Church, 237 South E St. in Exeter. For more information, call (559) 737-7443.

## Monday, November 18 - Tulare Caregiver/Dementia Support Group

Quail Park on Cypress will present this 12:30 p.m. monthly session at the First Baptist Church, 469 N. Cherry St., Room 15, Tulare. For info, call (559) 737-7443.

## Monday, November 18 - "School Bells and Heritage: Exploring Exeter's Educational Past"

The Center for Art, Culture & History (CACHE) will host this 5:30 p.m. presentation at 125 South B St., Exeter. For more information, call (559) 592-5900.

## Tuesday, November 19 - Visalia Caregiver/Dementia Support Group

Quail Park on Cypress, 4520 W. Cypress, Visalia, will host this 10:30 a.m. monthly session. For more info, call (559) 737-7443.

## Thursday, November 21 - Fall Dance Series

This 18+ event, which features music by Southern Comfort, will be held at the Visalia Senior Center, 310 N. Locust St., Visalia, from 5 to 8:30 p.m. Admission is \$10. For more info, call (559) 713-4365.

## November 21-December 21 - Annual Holiday Show & Sale

Arts Visalia, 214 E. Oak Ave., Visalia, will host this event, which features a selection of handmade gifts. The opening reception is on Friday, December 6, from 5-7:30 p.m. For more information, visit [www.artsvisalia.org](http://www.artsvisalia.org) or call (559) 739-0905.

## Wednesday, November 27 - Thanksgiving Luncheon

This event will be held at the Visalia Senior Center, 310 N. Locust St., Visalia, at 11:30 a.m. Tickets must be purchased in advance. For more information, call (559) 713-4365.

## Wednesday, November 27 - Thanksgiving Luncheon

This event will be held at the Tulare Senior Center, 201 North F St., Tulare. For more information, call (559) 685-2330.

## December 1, 8, 15, 22 - Senior Pride Bingo Sundays

This weekly event is held at



The Mighty Oak Chorus will once again perform holiday song favorites at their Annual Christmas Special on Friday, December 13.

(continued on page 11)



# CALENDAR

(continued from page 10)

the Visalia Veterans Memorial Building, 609 W. Center St., Visalia, Doors open at 11:15 a.m. For more info, call (559) 651-6714.

## December 4, 11, 18 - Bingo

The Tulare Senior Community Center, 201 N. F St., Tulare, will host bingo starting at 1 p.m. Doors open at 12:30 p.m. For more info, call (559) 685-2330.

## Thursday, December 5 - 'Follow the Star' - The 2024 Festival of Trees

This benefit fundraising event will be held at St. Anthony's Retreat Center in Three Rivers. For tickets (\$50 per person) or more info, visit [www.stanthonyretreat.org](http://www.stanthonyretreat.org) or call (559) 561-4595. (See ad below.)

## Thursday, December 5 - Christmas Charity Festival

Kings United Way is hosting this fundraiser at the Hanford Civic Auditorium. For tickets or more information, call (559) 584-1536 or visit [www.kingsunitedway.org](http://www.kingsunitedway.org).

## Friday, December 6 - Wine & Chocolate Tasting

Main Street Hanford will host this annual event, featuring live music by local bands and artists, wine and gourmet chocolate tasting at participating downtown businesses. For tickets or more information, visit [www.mainstreethanford.com](http://www.mainstreethanford.com) or call (559) 582-9457.

## Friday, December 6 - F1st Friday

F1st Friday in Downtown Visalia, in partnership with The Arts Consortium, will present a free community event with art, food and fun from 5-8 p.m. For more information, visit [artsconsortium.org/calendar](http://artsconsortium.org/calendar).

## December 6-7 - Visalia Gleaning Seniors Yard Sale

Visalia Gleaning Seniors will host this sale from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Gleaner Yard, 28600 Road 156 in Visalia. For more information, call (559) 733-5352.

## December 6, 7, 13 & 14 - Zalud House Candlelight Tours

Tours of the Zalud House Museum, 393 N. Hockett St., Porterville, will be given at 6 p.m. Admission is \$3 for adults, \$1 for children. For more information, call (559) 791-7695.

## December 6, 13, 20 - Friday Night Dances

The Tulare Senior Community Center, 201 N. F St., Tulare, will host this weekly event from 6-9 p.m. \$10 entry fee. For more information, call (559) 685-2330.

## Saturday, December 7 -

### Senior Christmas Luncheon

This event will be held at Burton Middle School, 1155 N. Elderwood St., Porterville, beginning at 1 p.m. Doors open at 12:30 p.m. Tickets are \$10. For more information, call (559) 791-7695.

## Saturday, December 7 -

### Downtown Visalia Christmas at the Plaza

This event, featuring holiday treats, a Christmas market, local artists, a free train ride and pictures with Santa, will be held at Garden Plaza in Visalia from 12-3 p.m.

## Saturday, December 7 -

### 32nd Annual Spirit of the Holidays

The Exeter Kiwanis Club will host this event, featuring high quality wines, whiskey and locally prepared gourmet cuisine, at the Exeter Memorial Building, 324 N. Kaweah Ave., Exeter, from 5-8 p.m. Tickets are \$75. For more information, visit <https://exeterkiwanis.org>.

## Tuesday, December 10 -

### Christmas Tree Walk

Main Street Hanford will host this event. For tickets or more information, visit [www.mainstreethanford.com](http://www.mainstreethanford.com) or call (559) 582-9457.

## Wednesday, December 11 -

### Valley Renal Support Group

The only kidney support group in four counties will meet at Evolution's Gym, 1425 E. Prosperity Ave. in Tulare, from 6:30-8 p.m. The meeting will also be on Zoom. For info, email Jennifer at [meow.2000@yahoo.com](mailto:meow.2000@yahoo.com).

## Friday, December 13 -

### Mighty Oak Chorus 5th Annual Christmas Special

This event, featuring performances of holiday classics, will be held at the Rise Church, 1023 N. Chinowth, Visalia, beginning at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$15 for adults, free for children (12 and under). For more information, call (559) 280-5715.

## Saturday, December 14 -

### Walk with a Doc

This informational walk and talk sponsored by Kaweah Health and held at Blain Park, begins with registration at 8 a.m., followed by a warm-up at 8:15 a.m., and "Talk with a Doc" at 8:30 a.m. The topic this month is "Grief and the Holidays." For more info, call (559) 624-2416.

## Saturday, December 14 -

### Visalia Holiday Home Tour

Tour six beautiful homes decorated for the holidays from noon to 5 p.m., while listening to festive music sung by the Redwood Ranger Choir. Tickets are \$25 in advance, \$30

same day, and may be purchased at Quail Park at Shanon Ranch or the Redwood High School Finance Department, or online at [redwoodchoir.ludus.com](http://redwoodchoir.ludus.com). All proceeds go to the Redwood High School's Choral Department.

## Monday, December 16 -

### Exeter Caregiver/Dementia Support Group

Quail Park on Cypress will present this 10:30 a.m. monthly session, facilitated by Kimberly Jensen, in the Café at Rocky Hill Community Church, 237 South E St. in Exeter. For more information, call (559) 737-7443.

## Monday, December 16 -

### Tulare Caregiver/Dementia Support Group

Quail Park on Cypress will present this 12:30 p.m. monthly session at the First Baptist Church, 469 N. Cherry St., Room 15, Tulare. For info, call (559) 737-7443.

## Tuesday, December 17 -

### Visalia Caregiver/Dementia Support Group

Quail Park on Cypress, 4520 W. Cypress, Visalia, will host this 10:30 a.m. monthly session. For more info, call (559) 737-7443.

## Saturday, December 21 -

### Walk with a Doc

This informational walk and talk, sponsored by Adventist Health and the City of Hanford will be held at Centennial Park, 11731 Hanford Armona Road in Hanford. It begins with registration at 8:45 a.m., followed

by the walk and "Talk with a Doc" at 9 a.m. For more info, visit [www.walkwithadoc.org](http://www.walkwithadoc.org).

## Saturday, December 21 -

### Walk with a Doc

This informational walk and talk will be held at Del Lago Park in Tulare, begins with registration at 8 a.m., followed by a warm-up at 8:05 a.m., and "Talk with a Doc" at 8:30 a.m. The topic this month is "Winter Fitness."

## Tuesday, December 31 -

### New Year's Eve Gala

This event will be held at Porterville Veterans Memorial Building, 1900 W. Olive Ave., Porterville, beginning at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$10 in advance; \$15 at the door. For more information, call (559) 791-7695.

## January 3-4 - Visalia

### Gleaning Seniors Yard Sale

Visalia Gleaning Seniors will host this sale from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Gleaner Yard, 28600 Road 156 in Visalia. For more information, call (559) 733-5352.

## Thursday, February 13 -

### Heart of Seniors

This event, which will feature a luncheon, a fashion show, informational booths and keynote speaker Steve Gilliland, a highly respected motivational speaker, humorist and best-selling author, will be held at the Wyndham Visalia Hotel, 900 W. Airport Dr., Visalia. (More information in our next issue.)



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## Free Family Fun Night

Wednesday, December 4, 2024

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For more information on Festival of Trees, please visit us online at [stanthonyretreat.org](http://stanthonyretreat.org) or call us at (559) 561-4595 or email [Julia@stanthonyretreat.org](mailto:Julia@stanthonyretreat.org)



QUAIL CORNER

# Government Benefits for Seniors, Support Groups

Q&A with Kimberly Jensen

**I had to quit my job to care for my father. His income is very low and the cost of caring for him is coming out of my savings. Are there any programs that can help?**

The government offers benefits for seniors. Many government programs can help to provide financial assistance to seniors who need additional financial support. The following programs may make the financial aspect of caregiving easier.

### 1. Money for Veterans to Modify their Caregiver's Home

If your family member is a retired service member with service-connected disabilities, and they are still living at home, they may be eligible to receive a Temporary Residence Adaption Grant.

These grants can cover modifications like adding ramps and grab bars. They can also cover the installation of accessible bathroom fixtures and the widening of doorways.

The Temporary Residence Adaption (TRA) grants are offered by the veterans Administration to improve accessibility and improve a family caregiver home. The maximum TRA Grant amount is \$47,130. Those who are eligible are veterans who

live in the home of a caregiver where that caregiver home does not meet the veteran's accessibility needs.

The veteran must have certain severe service-connected disabilities that would make them eligible for a specially Adapted Housing grant to improve accessibility to their home, if they live in their own home.

You can get more specifics on eligibility requirements, and apply on the VA Disability Housing Grants website, (eBenefits.va.gov). Hopefully, this will help with toileting, showering and other activities of daily living.

### 2. Utility Bill Assistance

Utilities are a large drain on financial resources. The Low-Income Energy Assistance Program is there to help people with limited incomes. This program provides bill payment assistance for utilities and energy.

If you qualify, you may also be able to get funding for the weatherization of your home. Recipients may even receive money for energy-related repairs. In some cases, grants may offset the cost of solar panel installation.

This is an income-based program. Qualification for this program considers household



size and maximum income levels. You can learn more about this program and apply by contacting the National Energy Assistance Program at 1-866-674-6327 or emailing them at Energy@ncat.org.

### 3. Help with Medicare and Medi-Cal Payments

Low-income seniors can get help in paying their Medicare Part A and B premiums. The following programs can have significant savings for you.

Medicare savings programs pay Medicare Part A and B premiums. In some cases, they will also cover out-of-pocket expenses (deductibles, co-payments or co-insurance). Eligibility is determined by each state's Medicare program. Each state sets an income limit to qualify for the benefit. To find California's specific requirements and to apply, call the Medicare Office at (916) 636-1980.

The Medi-Cal Waiver Program is for eligible seniors who require a level of care that would ordinarily require admission into a skilled nursing home. The in-home caregiver services could be paid through the waiver.

The goal of the program is to prevent or delay nursing home admission and provide frail seniors with the necessary medical and support services. This enables them to continue living at home with the family caring for them as long as possible.

Each state has an Aging Ser-

vices Division dedicated to providing frail seniors with home and community services. The goal is to allow the seniors to stay in their own homes, instead of moving to skilled nursing. You can get great senior resource information by calling the Kings/Tulare Area Agency on Aging at (559) 624-8000.

It is important to remember that it does not pay for your stay at assisted living.

I know it is difficult and stressful just providing care for your father. I hope that this information will help to make the financial burden of caregiving less stressful for you.

**My husband has dementia, and he is getting more difficult to care for. I need a support group, but I cannot make it to one in-person. There is no one to care for him while I am gone, and I cannot leave him alone. Are there other options available?**

If you call me at (559) 737-7443, I can get your email address and send it to Toni Onkka LCSW. She is a licensed social worker/therapist who specializes in dementia. She has a Zoom caregiver support group once a month on the fourth Tuesday of every month from 1:30-3 p.m.

Once I send her your email, she will send you an invitation once a month about two days before the meeting. You can attend when you like and stay on the Zoom meeting as long as you can. She is wonderful at helping you to explore the difficulties you are facing and will help you to develop healthy coping strategies. I hope this helps!

*Kimberly Jensen has been working with Quail Park as a Senior Resource Advocate for over ten years and has helped hundreds of families find solutions to their senior problems.*

*If you have a question, you can send it to her at KimberlyJ@QPCypress.com or call (559) 737-7443.*

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# How to Make Home Modifications for Independence

Being safe and comfortable at home is a large part of living well. Home modifications and repairs can help everyone prevent accidents and maintain an independent lifestyle, especially older adults and people with disabilities.

Many older adults prefer to live in their own homes for as long as possible, but too often don't think about whether a home can adapt to their needs as they age. Making improvements before they are needed is a good way to ensure that a home is ready for aging in place.

Forward-thinking improvements can also prevent falls, which often result in the need for long-term care.

Changes can be made to improve both the accessibility and adaptability of a home. Accessibility improvements involve tasks like widening doorways and lowering countertop heights for someone who uses a wheelchair.

Adaptability changes, such as adding grab bars in bathrooms, are improvements to assist people for whom strength and balance may have become a challenge. These changes can usually be made without a major redesign or renovation.

You can get started making your home ready for long-term living by conducting a top-to-bottom assessment.



Changes can be made to improve both the accessibility and adaptability of a home.

### Home Assessment

Before making any changes, look at the entire home. Keep in mind items that may be needed now as well as in the future. This checklist can help identify areas that might need improvement. Everyone has different needs, but in general, a "no" answer may be cause for action.

- Are exterior walkways and entrances well-lit?
- Is there a step-free entrance to the home?
- Are entrance doors easy to lock, unlock, open and close?
- Does the main floor include a kitchen, bedroom and full bathroom?
- Are doorways wide enough for someone using a wheelchair, walker or service animal?

- Is wall-to-wall carpeting secure and in good condition (flat, not bunched up)?
- Are area rugs secured to the floor with non-slip padding?
- Are walkways free from obstructions and hazards like cords and furniture?
- Do stairways have sturdy handrails on both sides?
- Can bathroom and kitchen cabinets be easily reached?
- Is there a step-free shower entrance?
- Are grab bars available

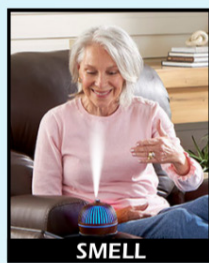
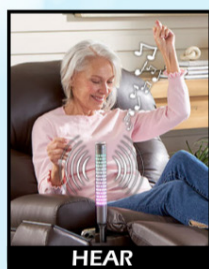
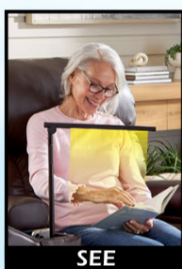
- near the shower and toilet?
  - Do bathtubs and showers have non-slip mats, adhesive strips or slip-free floors?
  - Will smoke detectors provide visual as well as audio alerts?
  - Are telephones easily accessible on all floors?
- More information about home modifications, including a detailed home assessment checklist and information about financial assistance, can be found at [eldercare.acl.gov](http://eldercare.acl.gov).

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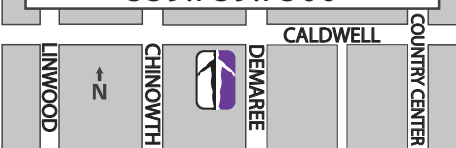


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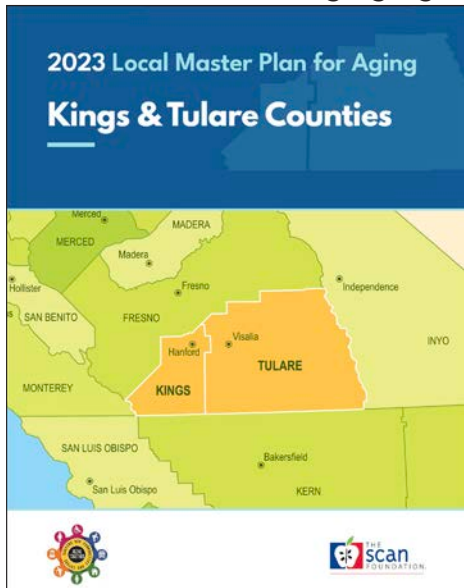
# New Master Plan for Seniors...

(continued from page 1)

2030. It also includes a Data Dashboard on Aging to measure progress and a Local Playbook to drive partnerships that help meet these goals.

Since its launch in January 2021, the Newsom Administration and the legislature have committed billions of dollars in unprecedented investments to advance the MPA, strengthen existing programs, and launch new services.

The *Third Master Plan for Aging Annual Report* is posted at <https://aging.ca.gov>. It describes the plan's "Five Bold Goals": 1) housing for all ages and stages; 2) health reimaged; 3) inclusion and equity, not isolation; 4) caregiving that works; and 5) affording aging.



Kings & Tulare Counties Master Plan prioritizes five main goals.

## Tulare and Kings Counties

Older adults in Tulare and Kings counties generally have fewer resources and are less likely to speak English than in other California regions.

According to 2020 data, 18% of Tulare's 72,000 older adults and 17% of Kings' older adults live in poverty, compared to the statewide average of 14.4% for older Californians; also, 10% of older adults in Tulare County and 9% in Kings County don't speak English, compared to the statewide average of 3.7% for older Californians.

The coming demographic shift requires California partners to plan and implement innovative solutions to equitably deliver services to meet the needs of older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers in culturally responsive ways.

Guided by the *MPA Playbook*, which was designed to assist state and local governments, and others to create an age-friendly and disability-friendly California, the Kings/Tulare Area Agency on Aging, one of 33 AAAs providing services for older adults and people with disabilities, developed its Local Master Plan for Aging (<https://ktaaa.org>).

The community-driven document prioritizes five main needs: caregiving, housing, nutrition and food security, transportation and outreach.



TheMahjong.com offers online play tailored for a senior audience.

## Mahjong Portal for Seniors Now Open

New Zealand has its own online gaming portal for seniors with a new Mahjong portal designed primarily for elderly players aged 65+. The goal of this project was to create the best Mahjong game tailored to the specific needs of a senior audience, helping them easily interact with the game elements.

According to the latest studies, Mahjong solitaire and other similar puzzle games, when played regularly, can help prevent neurological conditions associated with cognitive decline and may even enhance cognitive function. For instance, a study published in *Frontiers in Neurology* by the National Institute of Health demonstrated that playing Mahjong for 12 weeks improved executive function in elderly individuals with mild cognitive impairment.

The senior audience can significantly benefit from playing online puzzle games like Mahjong. However, many seniors find it difficult, or even impossible, to play modern browser games due to various challenges such as vision problems and limited hand or finger mobility.

For example, vision problems can make it hard to distinguish game elements on the screen. Or it can be difficult, and sometimes even painful, to click mouse buttons due to limited finger mobility. In response,

SharpMind created a web-site to allow the largest number of senior players to enjoy the game comfortably.

The main factors considered during the development of the new product were the following:

- Availability of special high-contrast modes for people with vision impairments;
- Ability to scale elements and customize the interface to personal preferences;
- Brightness and contrast adjustment options for UI and game board elements;
- High-quality customer support, recognizing that elderly users may be less familiar with modern technical environments and may need patient, friendly assistance; and
- Additional features such as special tile layouts, relaxing music and more.

As a result, TheMahjong.com addresses all these needs, providing senior players with a highly comfortable Mahjong online gaming experience.

TheMahjong.com joins TheJigsawPuzzles.com in its home of New Zealand.

According to Quantcast, the website TheJigsawPuzzles.com is the most popular entertainment website in the U.S. for people aged 65+, and it ranks among the top five overall websites in the U.S. for a senior audience.



TheJigsawPuzzles.com is very popular among seniors.

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# Are You at Risk for Dead Butt Syndrome?

Sitting too long at work or at home lays the groundwork for many health risks – depression, poor dietary habits and cardiovascular disease among them.

Another related issue, despite its silly name, can be serious: dead butt syndrome.

Technically known as "gluteal amnesia," the condition means that the muscles of a person's rear end forget how to do their job – namely stabilizing the pelvis and affecting the body's alignment – because of inactivity.

"Our bodies aren't designed to be seated for long periods of time," said Kristen Schuyten, D.P.T., a physical therapy clinical specialist at Michigan Medicine. "So if you're on your butt for hours a day, it's going to lead to issues."

### Five Things to Know

Dead butt syndrome marks a tug of war in your body. Over time, a sedentary lifestyle can cause your hip flexors to tighten – and the gluteal muscles to lengthen, which leads to inefficient muscle activation.

Both muscles need to shorten and lengthen in an opposing fashion. But that interconnected function is compromised when range of motion is restricted, Schuyten said. It also makes other muscles work harder to compensate.

It doesn't mean your butt is "dead." The term is symbolic.

"Your muscles are still

there," Schuyten said. "It's more that they're not activating efficiently."

Such "death" or deconditioning occurs far more quickly than the time required to reverse the effects. It takes nearly twice as long to revive a dying butt with exercise and movement than it does to develop the condition.

It may cause symptoms elsewhere: Some people with dead butt syndrome feel discomfort in places far from the namesake spot. That's because, physically speaking, "everything is connected," Schuyten explained.

Tight hip flexors can trigger back pain. Weak glutes can cause balance issues as well as knee and foot pain.

It can affect the physically fit. Even people who exercise regularly could be at risk, according to Schuyten, who works as a rehabilitation coordinator, treating active people such as ballet dancers.

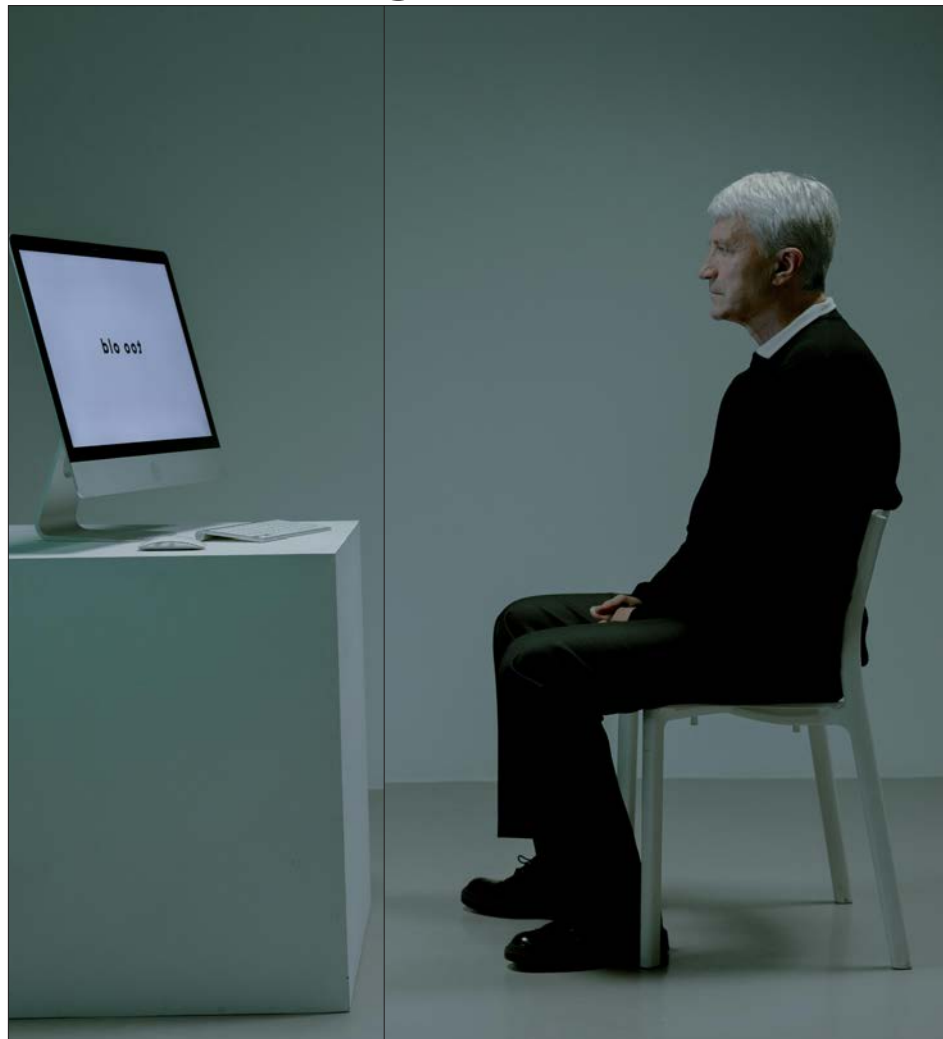
"They're not always activating the right muscles to do these very high-level activities," she said.

Incorporating squats and leg lifts into your workout can help, but performing with proper body mechanics is key as well.

### Prevention

A simple way to get your buns moving? Set a timer on your phone.

"Every hour, get up and walk



around or go up and down a flight of stairs," Schuyten said. People who are desk or car-bound during the day should do regular glute squeezes and hamstring stretches while seat-

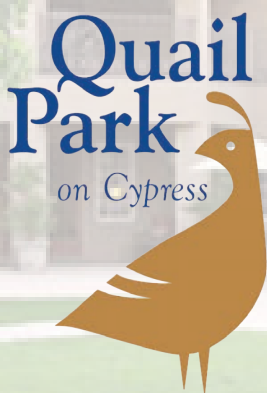
ed. Those simple steps help to lengthen tight areas, stimulate blood flow to warm up the tissues, and wake up a "dead butt."

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# Helpful Garden Tips for December

By Peyton Ellas  
Tulare-Kings Master Gardener

December is the coldest month of the year in our area, and the winter solstice occurs on December 21. It's the shortest day of the year, the first day of winter, and from then on the days will be getting longer.

Celebrations around the solstice are most often marked with greenery for the promise of a returning spring, yule logs and candles to increase the light for the day, and in general everything nature-related to remind ourselves we live on a living, changing, complicated planet in a vast universe.

What better companions to pondering these deep thoughts than applying our muscles and energy to a few winter garden tasks? If you're not up for working, at least try to get out in the garden a little that day. If it's raining and you can't track the sun, plant some wildflower seeds, as a rainy day is perfect for that task.

## Planting

Bare-root planting begins in December for roses, berries and deciduous trees. Plants that are frost-sensitive should not be planted until spring. Even for frost-hardy species, use a thick layer of mulch to protect plant crowns and roots from freezing.

In the edible garden, in addition to perennial herbs, you can still transplant seedlings of most cool-season vegetables. You can also plant lettuce and related salad green seeds in cold frames or a protected area.

## Maintaining

Watch for frost warnings and protect your sensitive plants. Plants will survive better if kept moist but not overwatered. Remove old fruits, called "mummies," left on fruit trees. Water citrus trees well this month if the rains aren't steady to have a good crop next year. Deep water your other trees during a dry spell that lasts more than two weeks, even if the trees are dormant.

You can begin to prune your deciduous trees, shrubs and

fruit vines, or wait until January, especially if plants aren't fully dormant and safety isn't an issue. Mow cool weather lawns, which should be actively growing now, at three inches high. This also applies to over-seeded Bermuda lawns.

If you had major problems with aphids, mites, scale or whitefly on your fruit trees or roses, spray with dormant horticultural oil spray after the leaves have fallen to kill overwintering adults. Handpick slugs and snails or set out iron phosphate as bait.

You must replace iron phosphate after a rain, but it is not toxic to people, pets, and beneficial insects, and doesn't appear to harm soil microorganisms either. In late December, spray early blooming peach and nectarine trees with copper fungicide to control peach leaf curl if you've had symptoms this year.

See any white moths around your winter veggies? The moth is looking for good spots to lay her eggs, which will hatch into the cabbage looper and eat holes in the leaves, sometimes decimating the crop. You can't do much about the moth, but seeing the moth is a signal to start looking under the leaves for the next several days to snag the small, green caterpillars before they do much damage.

Large plants can survive some damage, but seedlings can be devoured. I'm usually hand-picking for more than a month on my bok choy and broccoli seedlings. Chemical control is BT (Bacillus Thuringiensis), commonly sold under trade names such as "Caterpillar Killer."

Finally, keep up with cool season weeds by hand-picking or hoeing. You can also try piling on more mulch and shading them out. Hay and straw make good mulch in the edible garden.

## Conserving

Remember many caterpillars, especially on ornamental plants, do little harm and turn into desirable moths and but-



Blackberries

terflies. And all Lepidoptera are food for birds, lizards, toads and other creatures in the food chain. Use common sense and a little tolerance for damage to encourage a healthy garden full of interesting life, even in the urban neighborhood.

Leave a pile of branches from trees and shrubs for birds to shelter in if you can. And don't forget the water. Small creeks as part of a water garden design, mister-style sprinklers, or a bird bath with fresh water are all popular with our wild bird friends.

If you haven't already done so, cut the flowers off tropical and other non-native, orange-flowered milkweed varieties. The Monarchs that stick around because of a ready food source will not survive the cold winter; they need to migrate. Better yet, replace your non-native milkweed with a CA native variety.

Cover bare soil with plants, mulch or erosion-control fabrics to reduce losing more of your topsoil. If you have significant storm water runoff, consider installing a creek, rain basin, swale or French drain system.

I hope you have wonderful winter holidays, full of beneficial garden companions and delightful surprises.

## Questions?

The Tulare-Kings Counties Master Gardeners will answer your questions in person:

Visalia Farmer's Market, first and third Saturdays, 8-11



Rose

a.m., Tulare County Courthouse north parking lot.

Questions? Call the Master Gardeners:

Tulare County: (559) 684-3325, Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30-11:30 a.m.;

Kings County: (559) 852-2736, Thursday only, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

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White moth



Caterpillar



# Foiled Train Robbery Erupts into Violence

## Dusting Off History with Terry Ommen



Over the years, Tulare County has been known for many things – like its fertile soil, its abundance of water, and its beautiful Sierra scenery. Unfortunately, there was a time when the county had a well deserved reputation for something far less pleasant – train robberies.

Locals like Christopher Evans, John Sontag, the Daltons and other outlaws did their best to burn these crimes deep into the pages of Tulare County history.

From 1889 to 1898, Tulare County experienced at least five train robberies or attempts. People were killed, and property was taken and damaged. These violent acts put the county on edge and the rest of California and beyond on alert.

To make the point, in the September 12, 1896 issue of *War Cry Magazine*, a Salvation Army worker who had just arrived in the county for a new assignment, commented, "We landed all safe in the country of train robbers and where the devil does so much shooting."

The name "Tulare County" had become synonymous with train holdups!

But not all robberies were successful. In one holdup attempt, no money was taken, but news of the shootout was heard throughout California and beyond.

In 1896, Dan McCall worked as a woodcutter at the Hicks Ranch just north of Visalia. He



An image of Dan McCall as it appeared in the March 21, 1896 San Francisco Call newspaper.

had come to Tulare County from Santa Cruz a few years earlier. Obie Britt, a co-worker and also a wood chopper, had come to the county from Texas.

Woodcutting was hard work and one day McCall asked Britt if he was interested in getting more money for less work. He went on to explain that he was planning to hold up a train. Britt listened to the older man and soon a plan was in place that involved attacking a Southern Pacific train out of Goshen.

As the date approached, Britt, who was hesitant all along about the scheme, got cold feet. He secretly met with Tulare County Sheriff Alfred Merritt and shared the details of McCall's plan. Then the sheriff put his own plan in place.

In the afternoon of March 18, 1896, McCall and Britt began walking to Goshen to prepare for the evening heist. They hid along the Southern Pacific tracks about two miles south of Goshen (near Tagus) waiting for southbound train #19 to arrive.

As the tender car approached, McCall jumped onboard at the rear of the car, but unknown to McCall, Britt did not follow. McCall climbed onto the coal tender and moved forward. As he did, he surprised Tulare County sheriff deputies, Earl Daggett and Vic Reed who were both hiding in the coal in front of the tender. The two officers were on the train as part of Sheriff Merritt's plan to surprise McCall.

When the armed McCall saw the officers he yelled, "Hold up your hands," at which time the two surprised lawmen and McCall began exchanging gunfire on the moving train. McCall's bullets hit Reed in the left arm near the shoulder and Daggett took a serious hit to his right side. In the exchange, the two deputies both fired their shotguns, and fatally wounded McCall who fell from the tender onto the ground from the moving train.

After the shooting ended, train engineer William Wright stopped the train, but Reed told him to continue to Tulare to get treatment for the seriously wounded Daggett. In Tulare, a .41 caliber bullet was removed



Tulare County Deputies Earl Daggett (at left) and Vic Reed (Photo circa 1896)

from Daggett's body. He recovered and recuperated at the Grand Hotel in Tulare. McCall's body was recovered along the tracks and taken to Visalia. Both Vic Reed and Earl Daggett recovered from their wounds.

Further interrogation of Britt, who was never charged, revealed that Visalians Charles Ardell and Josiah Lovren were complicit in the train robbery plot. Both men were arrested.

At trial, Ardell was acquitted,

but Lovren was found guilty of conspiracy for supplying the guns to McCall. He was sentenced to life in state prison.

The train robbery attempt and subsequent trial was big news, and reported widely throughout California. The county was well on its way to becoming known as the center for train robberies. Dan McCall is buried in the "public ground" (pauper) section of the Visalia Cemetery.

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# Leeza's Care Connection...

(continued from page 3)

I'm going on the site and my mom has Alzheimer's, and she's wandering at night and my dad is having trouble coping, I'm going to try to find someone that I think will understand that.

"With HUGS, you connect with your mentor, either by text, by phone, in person or email, and it may be that you just need someone in the middle of the night to get you through a vulnerable moment," she said. "It may be that you develop a lifelong friendship with someone who understands what you're going through.

"So that's the program that we are rolling out across the country now, and I'm really excited about it."

Gibbons considers HUGS to be a very simple approach to a very complicated challenge.

"If it's specifically Alzheimer's disease, there's a process by which the caregiver begins to understand that arguing and correcting and trying to get your loved one into your world will never work," she said. "There are skills and techniques and behaviors of ways that are more effective to make your loved one feel safe and secure.

"For example, if your loved one is saying, 'I want to go home,' and you know, in reality, they are at their home, that feeling comes from a place of fear and insecurity. They're



Leeza Gibbons and friend

uncomfortable with something.

"So the caregiver learns how to read behind the language," she added. "And rather than saying, 'Mom, you are home. You've lived here for 20 years,' the caregiver can learn to say things like, 'Tell me about your home,' or 'Let's go for a walk and then we can talk about going home.' But trying to correct them just makes everybody anxious and frustrated. So there's a series of tips and techniques that make your life more efficient as a caregiver. And certainly, it makes it easier for you to maintain some emotional stability."

Gibbons described the journey of caring for someone with Alzheimer's as being emotionally volatile.

"One of the things that

caregivers need to learn instinctively is that they have to care for themselves first," she said. "It sounds cliché to say, take your oxygen first. However, it's still something that has to be learned.

"And for us, that means creating programs that empower caregivers, that energize them and that educate them," Gibbons said. "One of the real things that many caregivers will push back on is saying, 'I don't have time for a support group,' for example. 'I don't have time for an exercise class.' And yet, those are the very things that are going to give them the ability to run this marathon."

If a person is developing symptoms of Alzheimer's disease, the chances are they are at some level aware that something's wrong, according to Gibbons.

"They may not be able to articulate it or even identify it because of the changes that are going on in their brain," she said. "It would require us to assume that they can logically connect A to B. They can't."

Some people, however, become aware that they may be slipping into Alzheimer's.

"From my own personal experience with my mom, she knew something was going on with her," Gibbons recalled. "She'd seen her mother, my granny, go through the same thing. And yet our family members, all of whom had experienced that same relationship with granny, failed to see it in mom because we didn't want to. We didn't believe it. Mom was the rock of the family. She had an answer for everything.

"So she lined us up one day and said, look, I've paid this bill three times. Something's going on. And at first I really thought, well, mom's an alcoholic and that's why she's acting this way. And in reality, she probably was self-medicating with wine at night to deal with her stress and her fear.

"My mother was a rare exception when she said, 'Something is wrong, I think I have Alzheimer's.'

"That almost never happens," Gibbons said. "Not only was it courageous, but it was

also very helpful for us as a family because it kept us from unraveling.

"And she gave us basically her wishes and our marching orders," Gibbons said. "She said to the three kids and my dad, 'When I kick and scream and can no longer call you by name, I don't want to live with you. And kids, you have to tell daddy when it's time to let me go.' And she actually said, 'Here's the kind of place where I would like to go.'

"She identified some assisted living and some memory care units, and it was quite remarkable," Gibbons said. "Then when my mother was diagnosed, she was able to exhale because she knew that the expectations of her would be adjusted, and that we would understand if she was uncomfortable in a crowd. We would understand if the music was bothering her. We would understand if she didn't dress herself particularly correct. But also, she felt a real sense of purpose."

For families and those diagnosed with the disease, each case of Alzheimer's creates its own unique path.

"My mom did public service announcements about awareness of Alzheimer's disease and knowing that you're not alone and knowing that there is help," Gibbons said. "That made her feel purposeful.

"And we learned some tricks along the way that helped us," she continued. "My mother loved to smoke and she loved to drive, two things that were dangerous before Alzheimer's and especially dangerous with a diagnosed person. We never said, 'Mom, you can't smoke, your memory is going, you're going to burn the house down.' Instead, we let her keep her cigarettes and we took the lighters and all the matches away.

"So my mother would have that familiar cigarette in her hand. And she, after a while, didn't realize or she would say, 'Well, I can't find a match.'

"We would say, 'Let us help you. We'll look for that for you.' And by the time we would look for it, she'd be on to something else. She would say, 'I'm going to the car.' We would respond, 'Okay. Pick me up some milk.'

"And the car wouldn't start because we had disabled the battery," Gibbons said. "Then she would say, 'I need to get the mechanic.' We would say, 'You're right. We'll call the mechanic.' And she would ultimately forget that she had done the same thing the day before. Now, I'm not saying that's a solution for everyone. It worked for us in our family."

For more information about Leeza's Care Connection, visit <https://leezascareconnection.org>.



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# Entertainment



Jean Reno stars as a grumpy old man in "My Penguin Friend."

## Penguin Meets Curmudgeon in 'My Penguin Friend'

Among tales of remarkable human-animal friendships, few true stories have been as mysterious, or as profoundly touching, as that of the little Magellanic penguin who crossed the vast ocean, again and again, of his own accord, to visit the curmudgeonly fisherman who rescued him from peril.

This "penguin out of water" tale comes to theaters and streaming services as an emotional and poignant family adventure, a journey of friendship, courage, compassion and the power of love to reach across even the greatest emotional and oceanic distances.

Shot amid the tropical coasts of Brazil and vibrant penguin colonies of Patagonia, "My Penguin Friend" breaks the mold by featuring live penguins performing alongside a global cast led by international screen star Jean Reno and Oscar-nominated Adriana Barraza.

The film's challenging passage to the screen began in May 2011 when real-life fisherman João Pereira De Souza happened upon a lone young penguin stranded on the beach of Ilha Grande near Rio de Janeiro. Caught in an oil spill, the creature's small, rotund body had been nearly smothered under a layer of thick, toxic goop.

João could not turn his back on this innocent bird harmed by human carelessness and in such dire straits. So, he did the only thing he could: he took the little penguin home where he carefully cleaned its sticky feathers and tried to nurse the bird back to health.

Naming the penguin "Din-Dim" (pronounced Jin-Jin) after a child's mispronunciation of the Portuguese "pinguim," João certainly did not expect this wild animal to stay housebound for long.

In fact, João tried early on to release DinDim back into the ocean, walking away thinking he'd done everything possible. But later that same day, he heard the penguin's inimita-

ble squeak in his backyard. The penguin had somehow known how to get back to João's neighborhood. DinDim continued to resist leaving João's home for some time, and the two grew closer and closer.

When DinDim finally decided he was ready to swim away – likely headed 3,000 miles to Patagonia, at the tip of Argentina where Magellanic penguins raise their families – João expected this was the surely the last he'd see of his unusual feathered friend.

He was wrong again. To his astonishment, the following summer, right around his birthday, out-of-the-blue, João heard that telltale squeak in the yard.

There was DinDim, having crossed unknown ocean distances. No doubt, DinDim had tapped into a penguin's unique geolocation skills.

Since then, DinDim has returned to see João every June, year after year, finding his way, no matter the obstacles.

## Grandson Plans 'How to Make Millions before Grandma Dies'

In "How to Make Millions before Grandma Dies," a scheming young man moves in to care for his grandmother who has just been diagnosed with cancer.

Motivated by a desire to secure her fortune for himself, he quickly discovers that winning Grandma's favor is no easy feat.

This conniving grandson, driven by the desire for a multi-million-dollar inheritance, puts aside his dreams as a hopeful gamecaster, but Grandma proves to be a very tough lady – demanding, exacting and exceedingly difficult to please.


To complicate matters, he is not the only one aiming for the inheritance. He soon finds himself embroiled in a gripping competition, where he must go to great lengths to become the apple of Grandma's eye before time runs out, all in pursuit of a




A scheming grandson decides to care for his ailing wealthy grandmother in "How to Make Millions before Grandma Dies."

life-changing, multimillion-dollar inheritance.


"How to Make Millions before Grandma Dies," which was made in Thailand, is in limited theatrical release. It will soon be on streaming services.



**The Center for Art Culture & History EXETER**



Classic Movie Series – 6pm on First Monday of the Month



Jana Botkin Exhibition "Simply Home" - Oct. 19-Dec. 29

For more information, visit us at:  
**WWW.CACH-EXETER.ORG**  
**or 125 South B Street, Exeter**  
**(559) 592-5900**

"Downtown Christmas Open House" Thursday, Dec. 5, 2024, from 5 to 8 pm.

**CACHE Chat**  
*Tales of Exeter and Beyond*  
 "School Bells and Heritage: Exploring Exeter's Educational Past"  
 5:30pm on November 18



## Our place is by your side

At Gentiva Hospice, we specialize in honoring each person's journey and helping them and their loved ones make the most of every moment. By relieving pain and other symptoms and providing emotional and spiritual support to the whole family, we can help improve our patients' quality of life with compassionate care in the comfort and privacy of wherever they call home.

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They fought for us,  
**now let's fight  
for them.**



## WHAT IS FINANCIAL ELDER ABUSE?

- Unauthorized use of funds or property
- Withholding funds

## SIGNS OF FINANCIAL ELDER ABUSE:

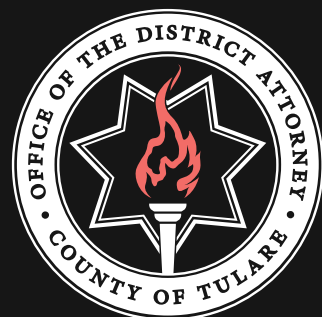
Sudden changes in property titles, wills, or bank accounts, unpaid bills, missing items, basic needs not being met, new credit cards, unusual purchases

## REPORT ELDER ABUSE

Adult Protective Services 24/7 Hotline:

**(877) 657-3092**

- PHYSICAL
- FINANCIAL
- EMOTIONAL
- NEGLECT



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DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
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