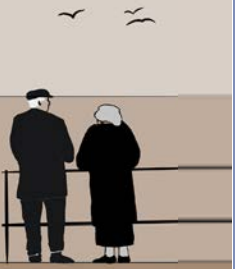




IN THIS ISSUE: "A Man on the Inside," Romance Scams, "Lives Well Lived: Generations," Visalia Cultural Center Museum?, Daisy Wastes Phone Scammers' Time

The Good Life

News, Health & Leisure for South Valley Adults 50+ • Volume XI, Number 4 • January/February 2025



Pickleball was the most popular competition at last year's games.

Registration Opens for 2025 Visalia Senior Games

Competitors can now register for the 2025 Visalia Senior Games.

The Visalia Senior Games kick-off is scheduled for Thursday, March 27, and games will run through the weekend. The closing ceremonies will be on Sunday, March 30.

"Senior Games 2025 is fast approaching, and we're excited to welcome athletes back for another slate of competition and fun," said Jason Glick, Visalia Parks & Recreation director.

"The format for the 2025 games is all our events packed into a long weekend, which is what participants shared they'd like most to see," he continued. "This allows folks both locally and from out of the area to enjoy the competition and camaraderie of four days of games, all back-to-back, with plenty of time to still enjoy all that Visalia has to offer."

Participants in Visalia and from throughout California and the western United States are once again expected to take part in one of the area's premiere 50+ events.

This year's games include cornhole, 3-point contest, pickleball, disc golf, track and field, table tennis, swimming and archery.

Each event has a registration deadline approximately one week before the competition, with late registrations accepted as space allows. A sponsorship from Kaweah Health has paid all athlete fees for participants.

"We're excited that the athlete fee for the Visalia Senior Games is being waived this year, thanks to the generous spon-

(continued on page 16)

2025 Heart of Seniors Event Set for Feb. 13

The Heart of Seniors Expo & Fashion Show, hosted by the Senior Coalition, will be held on Thursday, February 13, at the Visalia Wyndham Hotel, 9000 W. Airport Dr., Visalia.

The event, which marks its 10th anniversary year, will include a vital resource fair with vendors, a fashion show with senior models escorted by American Ambulance team members, and a luncheon.

The resource fair opens at 8 a.m., with the program beginning at 10:30 a.m. Tickets are \$10 per person, and include lunch. Early registration is recommended as seating is limited and the event is again expected to sell out.

The event will be free and open to the public from 1-2:30 p.m. for those interested in gathering information about local services available to seniors.

"This event is important to seniors in our area because there is such a wide variety of information provided by the vendors that attend," said Nicole Redstone, event spokesperson. "We feel that it's not just a really fun and entertaining day, but also a place for our community's



The 2025 Heart of Seniors keynote speaker will be comedian and Speaker Hall of Fame member Steve Gilliland.

seniors to ask questions, get information and find real resources they can utilize in the future when they need them.

"This will be our tenth year and last year we sold out in one week," she added.

The program, which will include a showcase of the latest in fashion for the mature woman, will feature keynote speaker Steve Gilliland, comedian and a member of the Speaker Hall of Fame.

"Valentine's Day just would not be the same without the Heart of Seniors event," said Staci Correia, treasurer of

the event. "It has become a tradition for all of us. The fact that we can bring all of these community services together under one roof and share how they can help our local seniors is just amazing, and to hear first-hand from our seniors how much they enjoy coming every year is worth all the time and effort."

To purchase tickets for the luncheon or for more information about the event, including sponsorship opportunities, call (559) 300-9101 or (559) 331-5242, or visit <http://heartofseniors.com>.

Betty White to be Honored with New Postage Stamp

On November 15, the U.S. Postal Service announced that a stamp honoring Betty White (1922-2021) will be included among the stamps scheduled for release in 2025.

Emmy Award-winning actress White is best known for her roles in the classic sitcoms "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" and "The Golden Girls."

White won an Emmy Award for Outstanding Actress in a Comedy Series for the first season of "The Golden Girls" and was nominated every year of the show's run.

She also guest-starred on a number of television programs including "Ally McBeal," "The Ellen Show" and "That 70s Show," and won an Emmy in 1996 for Outstanding Guest Actress in a Comedy Series, on an episode of "The John Laroquette Show."

White had a recurring role

in ABC's "Boston Legal" from 2005 to 2008 as the calculating, blackmailing gossip-monger Catherine Piper, a role she originally played on "The Practice" in 2004.

She also appeared in the 2009 motion picture "The Proposal" with Sandra Bullock and Ryan Reynolds.

In 2010, she was honored with the Screen Actors Guild Achievement Award; starred on TV Land's first original sitcom, "Hot in Cleveland," with Valerie Bertinelli; and hosted "Saturday Night Live" after a campaign received support from 500,000 Facebook users.

White, who gained younger generations of fans as she entered her nineties, was also respected as a compassionate advocate for animals.

Dale Stephanos created the digital illustration based on a



2010 photograph by Kwaku Alston.

Greg Breeding, an art director for USPS, designed the stamp.

CHP Secures Grant for Older Driver Safety

The California Highway Patrol (CHP), in partnership with the Office of Traffic Safety, announced the receipt of a \$225,000 federal grant to launch the "Keeping Everyone Safe" (KEYS) program.

This program is designed to enhance traffic education and health awareness for drivers aged 65 and older and aims to ensure older drivers remain safe, confident, and informed on the road.

A vital feature of this program is the "Age Well, Drive Smart" class. This free, two-hour course addresses older drivers' unique challenges, such as age-related changes, crash risk factors, safe driving strategies, and Department of Motor Vehicles licensing requirements.

This class also provides helpful self-assessment resources. Classes are offered at all CHP Area offices and taught by experienced CHP public information officers, who bring the class directly to community locations for added convenience. In addition, they will engage with older drivers at local events and community gatherings.

"Ensuring the safety of California's older drivers is essential as they remain active on our



roads. This federal grant allows us to provide targeted resources and support to help them drive confidently and safely," said CHP Commissioner Sean Duryee. "Our goal is to enhance their independence while reducing risks, making our state's roads safer for everyone."

The CHP is committed to supporting California's older drivers with the education and resources they need to continue driving safely and confidently.

For more information on the KEYS program or to enroll in an upcoming "Age Well, Drive Smart" class, contact your local CHP office.

This program is funded by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

The mission of the CHP is to provide the highest level of safety, service and security.

VETERANS COLUMN

Meet Tulare County's New Veteran Services Officer: Cecil Webster

Hello, please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Cecil Webster, and I am the new Veterans Service Officer (VSO) for Tulare County. I served five years in the U.S. Navy as a Photographer's Mate stationed at NAS Lemoore and on the USS Peleliu in Long Beach. After my end of service, I graduated from Fresno State and began my 20-year (and counting) career with Tulare County. I became the VSO in August of this year.

The Veterans Corner editorial series will continue to provide information on some of the many benefits our veterans may be entitled to, but for my first article, I want to give an overview of veterans in Tulare County and what the Veterans Service Office can provide.

These are unique times. There are three generations of veterans right now: the Boomers, Gen X and Millennials. I am a part of the Gen-X generation. Not only are there three prominent generations to serve, but the Gen Z population is starting to make its presence known as well.

Tulare County's veteran population is estimated at 14,591 or 1% of the state's 1.3 million veteran population, but don't let the 1% give you any false notions. California has 58 counties and Tulare County has the 22nd most veterans.

Getting a little deeper, if you take the surrounding counties of Fresno, Kings and Kern because residents often move amongst the counties, the Central Valley represents over 7.5% of the veterans in California. Let's compare this to the total populations of Tulare, Kings, Kern and Fresno. The total population of these four counties only represents 6.5% of California's population. This means the Central Valley has 6.5% of the population, but 7.5% of the veterans.

So, there is a significant population that could use our services. The County Veterans Service Office provides a myriad of services to the vet such as helping them apply for:

- Disability Benefits
- Compensation
- Pension
- Education and Training
- Burial Benefits
- Dependent's and Survivor's Benefits
- College Fee Waivers

We can also provide veterans with information regarding healthcare and home loans. This is not an exhaustive list of our services, so please call or stop by to make an appointment to speak with one of our amazing representatives to help you navigate the world of VA benefits.

Cecil Webster, the Veterans Services Officer for Tulare County, is a former U.S. Navy, Photographer's Mate 3. Contact him at the Veterans Services Office at 3348 W. Mineral King Ave., Visalia; by phone at (559) 713-2880 or by email at cwebster1@tularecounty.ca.gov.



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The Good Life

News, Health & Leisure for South Valley Adults 50+ • Volume XI, Number 4 • January/February 2025

Publisher/Webmaster - Larry Kast
Managing Editor/Art Director - Steve Pastis

For advertising information, call:
Steve at (559) 280-9774, or Larry at (559) 732-5030

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Protect Yourself Against Romance Scams

“Beatrice” fell hard when she met her Spanish lumberjack on a dating site in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. He was 66, somewhat attractive and looked uncannily like Beatrice’s late husband who died just months before the pandemic hit.

“I was missing not having him here to talk about, you know, what was going on in the world and everything,” Beatrice said.

“So, somebody suggested to go online through a dating service... and this guy’s pictures show up and he’s just, you know, no George Clooney, nothing gorgeous, but in fact, he had a resemblance to my husband.”

For Beatrice, who was in her late 60s and looking to start over after the loss of her husband, it was a perfect storm.

The Rise of Romance Scams

Americans are more connected than ever before thanks to social media and dating apps that allow us to stay in touch with old friends all over the world and to develop new relationships online. Yet, even with these new platforms, many of us report feeling lonelier than ever.

As Americans increasingly go online in search of meaningful relationships, scammers are following suit. According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), in 2022, almost 70,000 people reported being a victim of a romance scam.



AI Illustration by April Pastis

Romance scams are a type of confidence scheme. Scammers work to gain a victim's trust and then provide false information or misrepresentation to gain a financial benefit by relying on the compassion of the victim. These schemes are constantly evolving and becoming more innovative.

All age groups are vulnerable, though older Americans may be particularly vulnerable and targeted as they typically have more assets and are less

familiar with online scams. According to the FTC's report *Protecting Older Consumers (2022-2023)*, older adults reportedly lost nearly \$240 million to romance scams in 2022.

While the tactics used by romance scammers evolve with the times, the core tactic is the timeless art of social engineering - manipulating and influencing people to gain their trust.

People of all ages are vulnerable as it is human nature

to seek trusting relationships. Romance scams exploit this human quality mercilessly.

Red Flag Indicators

You may be the target of a romance scammer if the person you are communicating with online shows any of these indicators:

- Claims they live, work or are traveling abroad.
- Lacks proper grammar, although they claim to speak English.
- Claims to be notably younger than you.
- Quickly professes love to you.
- Has a story that is inconsistent.
- Has a minimal online presence.
- Sends general photos (mostly fake/AI generated) of themselves traveling, shopping or dining at luxurious locations.
- Sends or requests explicit photos or videos.
- Mentions the idea of meeting and being together soon.
- Provides periodic excuses for being unable to make a video call (e.g., Facetime).
- If a video call happens, you're unable to see their face clearly.
- Requests to have conversations/texts be moved to a separate app (e.g., WhatsApp, Telegram).

(continued on page 22)

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Election Poll Shows Seniors Prioritized Economic Concerns

On November 15, AARP released a poll of voters from the 43 most competitive congressional districts in the 2024 election season.

Voters ages 50 and older were key in the election. Data shows that across the country, older voters made up 55% of the electorate, and that winning the 50+ vote was key to winning races up and down the ballot around the country.

AARP's survey found House Republicans won voters 50+ by a 50% to 47% margin while these districts were a dead heat among voters overall, allowing Republicans to maintain a narrow advantage in the House of Representatives.

"Our polling showed that older voters were the most motivated to cast their ballots, and they showed up in an outsized way on election day," said Nancy LeaMond, AARP executive vice president and chief advocacy and engagement officer.

"A majority of older voters said a personal economic issue - inflation, jobs and the economy, or Social Security - was top of mind as the most important issue in determining their vote this year."

In AARP's poll, 8% of older voters were swing voters - those who split their ticket between parties for President and for Congress. Among these swing voters, the top issues



were economic issues, and specifically inflation, jobs and the economy.

Other key takeaways from the poll among voters ages 50 and older include:

- Security issues - immi-

gration/border security, jobs and the economy, and threats to democracy.

- Economic issues - jobs, inflation, and Social Security - stood out as major motivating factors for Hispanic and Black 50+ voters, along with swing voters.

- A majority (55%) of older voters said that Social Security is or will be a major source of their income, and 80% said it was an extremely or very important issue in determining their vote.

- Among older voters, Democrats in Congress had a two-point advantage when asked who voters would trust most on the issue of Social Security.

- The group of older voters that said Social Security would be very or extremely important to their vote trusted Democrats in Congress over the GOP to address Social Security by a six-point margin and vote for the Democratic candidate by a three-point margin.

- 31% of older voters self-identified as a family caregiver. These voters narrowly preferred Kamala Harris and their Democratic candidate for Congress, and prioritized Social Security and threats to democracy as their top issues for how they decided to cast their ballots.

Kaweah Health Conducts First Barostim Procedures

On December 20, Kaweah Health successfully performed its first two Barostim procedures, a minimally invasive treatment option designed to improve the lives of patients living with heart failure. This expands heart care treatment options for the South Valley community.

The procedure involves implanting a small device inside the chest, which sends gentle electrical signals to the carotid artery in the neck. These signals help the brain better control blood pressure, heart rate, and

fluid levels. It especially helps patients with hearts that struggle to pump blood effectively.

"Barostim is designed to be an alternative option for patients whom medications alone do not adequately alleviate symptoms and those who are not eligible for cardiac resynchronization therapy via a pacemaker," said Kaweah Health vascular surgeon, Dr. LaMar Mack, who performed both procedures.

Kaweah Health's team of heart and vascular experts, including Dr. Mack, cardiologists,

and support staff, collaborated to bring this advanced therapy to the region. The procedure allows patients to benefit from improved heart function, fewer symptoms, and an overall better quality of life.

By offering the Barostim procedure, Kaweah Health reinforces its commitment to providing the latest medical advancements to the South Valley.

For more information on heart and vascular services, visit KaweahHealth.org/Heart or call (559) 624-6520.

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Older Americans Act Reauthorization in Limbo

Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act, which provides vital services to millions of people 60 and older, might be on pause until March, despite a unanimous Senate vote on Dec. 10 to renew this vital piece of legislation.

Older Americans Act reauthorization would boost existing funding and add several new programs and services for older people. With only days left before the end of the 118th Congress, there was a push in the House to pass the bill and send it to President Biden for his signature.

"We are very proud that the Senate came together – Democrats, Republicans and Independents – to expand and strengthen the Older Americans Act over the next five years," said Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee Chair Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and ranking member Bill Cassidy (R-LA) in a joint statement.

However, on Dec. 17, a bipartisan deal was struck by Congressional leaders that will delay the current government funding deadline to March 14, *Politico* reported. That means existing programs and services will continue at current fiscal levels, and it will be up to the next Congress to pass a comprehensive budget package.

Older Americans Act reau-



thorization will likely get caught up in this "kick the can" strategy but will continue to operate at fiscal year 2024 levels, according to Bob Blancato, executive director of the National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs.

"The lack of a reauthorization should not hurt it this time, but if the DOGE group gets to work and starts working on programs that have not been authorized – funding from March on might get a little dicey," he said in an email.

Why This Matters

While Meals on Wheels may be one of its best-known programs, the Older Americans Act supports many other initiatives, including:

- Information and referral

services

- Congregate meals at senior centers
- Health and wellness programs
- In-home care
- Transportation
- Elder abuse prevention
- Caregiver support
- Research and training
- Grants for services to Native American elders
- Adult daycare

The Older Americans Act requires congressional reauthorization every five years.

According to Sanders and Cassidy, the Older Americans Act addresses the urgent, unmet needs of millions of seniors in the U.S., and what society can do to help reduce hunger and improve the health and well-

ness of some of the most vulnerable people in America.

"Not only does the Older Americans Act save lives and ease human suffering, it saves money by keeping seniors out of the hospital. We are actively working with our colleagues in the House to get this critical legislation signed into law this year," they said in a joint statement.

More Funding and Additional Services

If signed into law as-is, the legislation would reauthorize Older Americans Act funding from \$2.3 billion this year to \$2.76 billion in Fiscal Year 2025 – a 20% increase compared to last year.

The Act's reauthorization also makes improvements to the law to better support family caregivers and direct care workers and takes steps to better serve tribal seniors, older workers and those with disabilities.

The measure is being "held at the desk," meaning it may be pending a referral to the committee if the House anticipates using a Senate bill, a process of resolving differences with the Senate. Messages from the Senate, including Senate-passed bills and Senate amendments to House-passed measures, are referred (or not) *(continued on page 19)*

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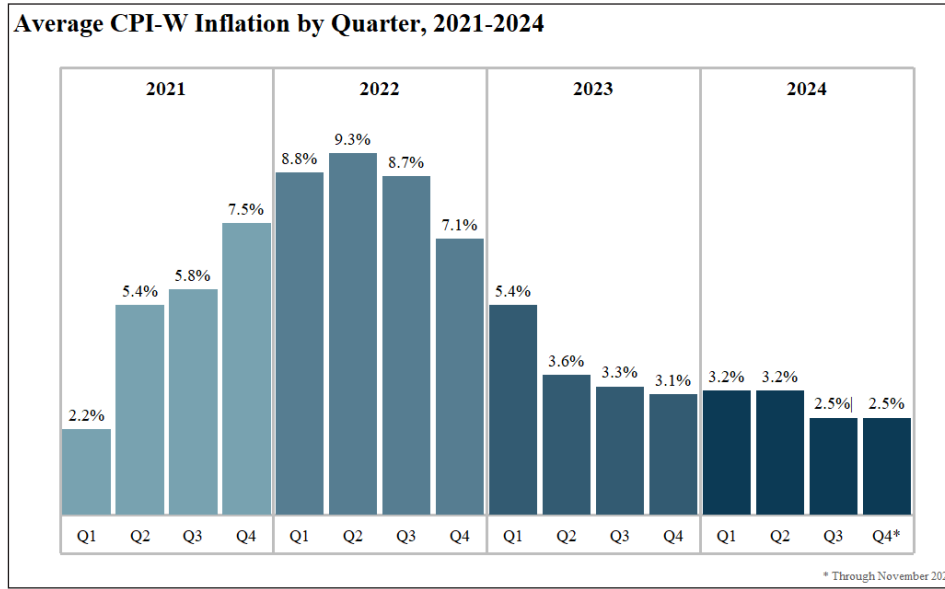


Senior Citizen's League's First Prediction for 2026 COLA: 2.5%

The Senior Citizen's League (TSCL) predicts that the 2026 Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) will come in at 2.5%, based on the latest Bureau of Labor Statistics data. This figure would be equal to 2025's COLA, signaling modest inflation in the year to come.

TSCL will update this prediction every month until the Social Security Administration announces the 2026 COLA in October 2025. In 2024, TSCL's model predicted that inflation, and therefore the COLA, would drop as early as Q2.

The Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners (CPI-W), the government's inflation index to calculate COLAs, came in at 2.6% for November, the second



month of Q4. This December 11th release continues a recent trend of falling inflation, as the CPI-W averaged 3.2% yearly inflation in Q1 and Q2 2024 before

falling to an average of 2.5% in Q3, the quarter used to calculate Social Security COLAs.

Key Insights

- Inflation is returning to

pre-pandemic levels: While the incoming Trump Administration made combatting inflation a central part of its campaign, the fight may already be nearing its end. After reaching a peak of 9.3% in Q2 of 2022, inflation, as measured by the CPI-W, has steadily declined. If the CPI-W does not increase dramatically this month, Q3 and Q4 2024 will be the first consecutive quarters since the start of 2021 with inflation below 3%.

- The TSCL COLA model expects inflation to remain relatively low in 2025, yielding a similar COLA to this year's 2.5%. The model incorporates the CPI-W, Federal Reserve interest rates, and the unemployment rate into its predictions, which TSCL updates every month. The model is accurate to about 0.01% on test data.

- Seniors still feel left behind. In a TSCL survey of 3,249 American seniors conducted this fall, 69% of respondents said they worry persistent high prices from inflation will drive up their spending and cause them to deplete their retirement savings and other assets.

- Seniors are worried about benefit cuts. In the same survey (which had similar percentages of Democrat-leaning, Republican-leaning, and independent voters), 74% of seniors worried that Congress or the President would enact new laws or rules that cut their Social Security benefits. Nearly as many, 70%, worried about cuts to Medicare benefits.

- The incoming administration can reassure seniors by increasing the program's funding in its tax plan. When asked what the federal government should prioritize when addressing Social Security's finances over the next two years, 81% agreed that Congress should increase taxes to address Social Security's finances. The proposal they were most likely to support was raising or eliminating the limit on income subject to Social Security's payroll tax (\$176,100 in 2025).

"While it's great to see inflation cooling, that doesn't mean seniors' economic challenges are over," said TSCL Executive Director Shannon Benton. "Years of inadequate COLAs have left older Americans behind, and TSCL will continue fighting until Social Security offers a guaranteed minimum COLA of 3%.

"If the Trump Administration wants a quick win with seniors, the best place to start is not just protecting Social Security but reforming it," she continued. "Seniors want to see stronger COLAs that better represent their experience of inflation. They also demand financial reforms to ensure the program lasts not just through the end of their retirements, but their grandchildren's."

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AARP to Showcase Pioneering AgeTech Innovations at CES 2025

AARP will return to CES 2025 on January 7-10 to spotlight the latest trends in AgeTech and showcase new innovations from the startups and companies in the AgeTech Collaborative from AARP.

Newly appointed CEO Dr. Myechia Minter-Jordan will join industry thought leaders in sharing insights on key topics and innovations shaping the future of care and healthy aging.

The AgeTech Collaborative will help lead the Digital Health Summit, where experts will explore the role of technology in transforming healthcare for older adults.

"At AARP, we are making aging easier by driving innovation that improves the quality of life for people as they age. AgeTech isn't just about living longer – it's about living better, healthier and happier lives,"

said Dr. Minter-Jordan.

This year's CES will feature the AgeTech Summit from AARP, where thought leaders, industry experts and advocates will gather to explore the transformative potential of technology for aging.

The Age-Tech Collaborative from AARP will showcase how emerging technologies can make aging easier for individuals and their families. With more than 500 companies across diverse industries and product categories, the event plays a unique role in connecting innovators and solutions that are shaping the future of aging.

Over the past three years, AgeTech solutions across various sectors have been featured at CES, including entertainment, travel, gaming, housing, health and mobility.

According to the AARP



The 2024 AgeTech Collaborative from AARP

2025 Tech Trends survey, two-thirds of adults ages 50 and older (66%) see technology as a means to enrich their lives by making daily tasks and aging easier. Additionally, nearly half of adults (46%) recognize technology's potential to enable a healthy life, with strong interest in brain health technologies such as brain training exercises and wearables to track sleep and stress levels.

Presentations

AgeTech Collaborative presentations will include:

- "Innovation in Residence: Testing Tomorrow's Tech Today," which will explore how health tech in living labs is paving the way for innovation in aging at home.
- "Vital Voices: Champions

for Women's Health and Innovation," with Maria Shriver, which will explore women's health challenges such as Alzheimer's, cancer and menopause, and the tech shaping their future.

• "The Future of Assistance: Robotics Transforming Daily Life," which focuses on how advanced robotics, initially for military use, now enhances daily life and industries.

In addition, daily programming will include key speakers and panel discussions focused on innovation. A full list of sessions can be found at <https://ces.agetechcollaborative.org>.

For a list of the startups to be showcased in the exhibitor space, visit: <https://ces.agetechcollaborative.org/startups/>.



Presenters at last year's event ranged from celebrities to CEOs.

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Seven Items You Should Never Carry in Your Wallet

By Shelly Lott

We tend to carry all kinds of personal items in our purses or wallets. While it is necessary to carry your driver's license and credit cards, it can be dangerous to carry other documents and information. If your wallet is lost or stolen, your bank account and identity could be at risk.

Never Carry These Items in Your Wallet

Open your wallet and take time to ensure these items aren't inside of it.

Social Security Card

Never carry your Social Security card. Instead, memorize your Social Security number.

Very few establishments ask for your Social Security number or need a copy of your card. If you're asked for this, you should ask why the business needs it and how it can guarantee your information will not be compromised.

Data breaches are an everyday occurrence now, and if a business has your Social Security number on file and gets hacked, all of the information it has on record can be stolen.

Birth Certificate

Never carry this with you. If you do need to provide it, call ahead and ask whether a copy will be sufficient. If you must present the original, take it with you just for that appointment.

Passport

Your passport is essential to enter most foreign countries. But if you aren't traveling abroad, you should not carry it with you.

A thief may be able to use your passport to open bank accounts, get a copy of your Social Security card, travel using your name and more. When you are traveling abroad with your passport, make a copy or keep a photo of it on your phone, and lock the original in the hotel safe.

Clark Howard Agrees:

"Always take a picture of the key pages of your passport and store them in whatever photo storage app you use," Clark says. "Because if your passport vanishes – you lose it, stolen, whatever – having that page makes it much easier to get an emergency-issued passport."

"I always use the hotel safe. We've had people who have said it was stolen out of the hotel safe. But I think the much greater danger that we've heard from years of experience is that you get pickpocketed or mugged. So I don't like carrying it around."

Every Single Credit Card

You don't need to carry every single credit or debit card that you own. Instead, carry only the ones you need at the time. Many people have lots of credit cards but don't use them often.



Money Expert Clark Howard

It is best to leave them at home unless you need them that day.

Receipts

Some receipts contain personal information. Keep them at home instead of in your wallet or purse.

Spare Keys

If a thief steals your spare keys they have access to your home. Changing the locks on your house can be time-consuming and expensive. Instead, leave a set of spare keys with a trusted relative or friend.

Insurance Cards

Carry your Medicare and/or insurance cards with you only when going to an appointment. Otherwise, it is best to leave them at home.

If Your Wallet Is Stolen

Contact financial institutions: Report the loss as quickly as possible. You may need to contact both your bank and credit card company. Your credit card

numbers can be canceled and new transactions can be denied to help prevent financial loss.

File a report: File reports with the Federal Trade Commission and the police.

Add a security alert to your credit report: All three credit bureaus – Equifax, Experian and TransUnion – have security alerts that can help protect your identity if your wallet is stolen.

Monitor your credit: Sign up for a free credit monitoring service such as Credit Karma or Credit Sesame so you'll be alerted right away if something happens in your financial life that you didn't authorize.

Freeze your credit: If you have not already placed a freeze on your credit with Equifax, Experian and TransUnion, do it right away.

Final Thought

It may be easy to let cards and other items accumulate in your wallet. But try to take time every few weeks to comb through it. You'll thank yourself if you ever lose your wallet!

Clark Howard is a consumer advocate who focuses on saving more, spending less and avoiding getting ripped off. In addition to a nationally syndicated radio show, his website www.clark.com features articles and advice as well as podcasts and videos.



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Meal Delivery Services 'Significantly Reduce Senior Hospitalizations'

The WellSky Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to improving quality of life for vulnerable populations, announced the results of a study showing the critical impact of meal delivery services in reducing hospital readmissions among older adults post-discharge from an acute setting.

The study was done in partnership with Meals on Wheels America, the national leadership organization supporting more than 5,000 community-based programs across the U.S. addressing senior hunger and isolation.

The research explored how health care organizations and community-based Meals on Wheels programs could team up to improve health outcomes for seniors, while also aiming to better understand key insights into social determinants of health, including food insecurity, and their impact on supporting the overall well-being of seniors.

The data showed a dramatic 85% decrease in hospitalizations just 30 days after the intervention, with the reduction increasing to 93% at the 90-day mark. Additionally, 98% of participants reported that the meal service aided in their recovery after hospital discharge, and 61% said the service helped reduce their feelings of social isolation during recovery.



AI Illustration by April Pastis

"These findings provide clear, measurable evidence of how Meals on Wheels services can drastically improve older adult health outcomes," said Ipyana Spencer, chief health officer at Meals on Wheels America.

"Not only were hospitalizations reduced, but the local Meals on Wheels providers also addressed key social determinants of health, like food insecurity and social isolation,

which can be overlooked in traditional health care approaches."

The study monitored seniors discharged from two hospital systems in New York and Florida by conducting wellness checks at the time of discharge to evaluate their need for meal assistance.

Using a technology-based screening tool, patients were asked targeted questions, and those identified as food inse-

cure were referred for meal delivery services.

Two local Meals on Wheels America member programs, Meals on Wheels Rockland (NY) and Senior Resources Association (FL), participated in the study to provide the home-delivered meal intervention.

The patients' health outcomes were then tracked over a 90-day period. The results also show the value of integrating community-based services with health care providers to ensure seniors receive the full spectrum of support they need post-discharge.

"The data confirms that collaboration between health care and community organizations plays a critical role in improving senior health outcomes," said Spencer. "By strengthening these connections, we successfully reached senior patients in need through the hospitals and secondary referral sources, resulting in better health and overall well-being."

Better coordination between health care organizations and community-based organizations like Meals on Wheels can bridge critical gaps in care, ensuring that seniors stay healthy and avoid unnecessary hospital readmissions.

To learn more about the WellSky Foundation, visit wellskyfoundation.org.

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New Study Suggests Eggs Reduce Risk of Alzheimer's

A new study published in *The Journal of Nutrition* suggests an association between eating eggs and a reduced risk of Alzheimer's dementia in older adults.

These findings are important as the prevalence of Alzheimer's dementia – the most common type of dementia – is expected to increase with an aging population.

Researchers continue to explore how diet could impact risk for Alzheimer's dementia. Whole eggs, with most of their nutrients found in the egg yolk, are a rich source of choline and contribute other nutrients known for supporting brain health, including the omega-3 fatty acid DHA and lutein.

The study, involving community-dwelling older adults in the United States, without apparent dementia, from the Rush Memory and Aging Project cohort, reported that weekly consumption of eggs (more than one egg per week) was associated with a 47% reduction in risk of developing Alzheimer's dementia.

The study included 1,024 older adults with an average age of 81.4 years. Participants' dietary habits were self-reported and other dietary factors were accounted for as part of the analysis. Over an average follow-up period of 6.7 years,



280 participants (27.3%) in the study were diagnosed with Alzheimer's dementia.

Researchers reported that dietary choline was the main driver of the relationship between eggs and lower risk of Alzheimer's dementia – accounting for 39% of the association. One large egg contains 150 milligrams of choline, providing 25% of the recommended daily value.

"Eggs are one of the few commonly consumed foods that are naturally rich in choline, a nutrient that we are researching to further understand its role in supporting both cognitive development in infants and young children and main-

tenance during the aging process," shared Taylor Wallace, Ph.D., the principal investigator. "This study adds to the growing body of evidence that dietary choices can have a significant impact on reducing the risk of Alzheimer's dementia and supporting lifelong cognitive health."

This study builds on previous research, which found even limited egg consumption (approximately one egg per week)

was linked to a slower rate of memory decline compared to those who did not consume eggs. This is the first time a research study suggests an association between consuming eggs and Alzheimer's dementia risk has been identified and highlights the potential of simple dietary interventions in supporting normal brain health.

This study comes at a time when one in 10 Americans aged 45+ are currently dealing with subjective cognitive decline. By 2030, the number of people 65 and older with Alzheimer's dementia may grow to a projected 12.7 million.

These results are encouraging but there are limitations to consider. Alzheimer's dementia is a complex disorder. These data show an association with reduced risk of Alzheimer's dementia, but do not establish cause-effect.

This study relied on self-reported dietary data from the participants, which could have included inherent errors. Further research is needed to confirm these relationships in other diverse populations.



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Delivering handmade holiday gifts to the staff of Kaweah Health on December 11 were (left to right): Alicia Lozano, Quail Park Memory Care Residences of Visalia life engagement assistant; and Memory Care residents Shirley Dewitt, Rosa Cardenas and Valentina Reyna. Also pictured are Amandeep Kaur, Kaweah Health manager of case management and bed allocation; and Kim Vliem, Kaweah Health administrative assistant for care management and throughput.

Quail Park Memory Care Residents Present Holiday Gifts to Kaweah Health Staff

In a display of heartfelt gratitude, residents of Quail Park Memory Residences of Visalia delivered handmade holiday gifts to the staff at Kaweah Health on December 11.

A few of the residents presented handcrafted holiday gifts, including clay candle holders, hand-painted kitchen towels and festive ornaments. These items were created by the Quail Park residents in November and December as part of a community effort to thank the healthcare workers who support them during challenging times.

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Prevention, Screening Save People from Five Cancer Types

In five cancer types, prevention and screening have been major contributors to saving lives

NIH modeling study looked at the individual and combined impacts of cancer prevention, screening, and treatment.

From 1975 to 2020, prevention and screening efforts averted 4.75 million deaths from five cancer types: breast, cervical, colorectal, lung and prostate.

Improvements in cancer prevention and screening have averted more deaths from five cancer types combined over the past 45 years than treatment advances, according to a modeling study led by researchers at the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

The study, published on December 5 in *JAMA Oncology*, looked at deaths from breast, cervical, colorectal, lung, and prostate cancer that were averted by the combination of prevention, screening and treatment advances.

Researchers focused on these five cancers because they are among the most common causes of cancer deaths and strategies exist for their prevention, early detection and/or treatment. In recent years, these five cancers have made up nearly half of all new cancer diagnoses and deaths.

FROM 1975 to 2020

PREVENTION AND SCREENING EFFORTS

AVERTED 4.75 MILLION DEATHS

FROM FIVE CANCER TYPES

- BREAST
- CERVICAL
- COLORECTAL
- LUNG
- PROSTATE

cancer.gov

"Although many people may believe that treatment advances are the major driver of reductions in mortality from these five cancers combined, the surprise here is how much prevention and screening contribute to reductions in mortality," said co-lead investigator Katrina A. B. Goddard, Ph.D., director of NCI's Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences. "Eight out of 10 deaths from these five cancers

that were averted over the past 45 years were due to advances in prevention and screening."

A single prevention intervention, smoking cessation, contributed the lion's share of the deaths averted: 3.45 million from lung cancer alone. When considering each cancer site individually, prevention and screening accounted for most deaths averted for cervical, colorectal, lung and prostate cancer, whereas treatment

advances accounted for most deaths averted from breast cancer.

"To reduce cancer death rates, it's critical that we combine effective strategies in prevention and screening with advances in treatment," said W. Kimryn Rathmell, M.D., Ph.D., director of NCI. "This study will help us understand which strategies have been most effective in reducing cancer deaths so that we can continue building on this momentum and hopefully increase the use of these strategies across the United States."

The researchers used statistical models and cancer mortality data to estimate the relative contributions of prevention, screening, and treatment advances to deaths averted from breast, cervical, colorectal, lung and prostate cancers between 1975 and 2020.

In total, the modeling showed, 5.94 million deaths were averted from these five cancers between 1975 and 2020. Of these, prevention and screening interventions accounted for 4.75 million, or 80%, of the averted deaths.

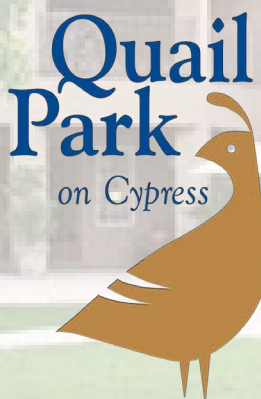
The individual contributions of prevention, screening, and treatment varied by cancer site:

- In breast cancer, 1 mil- (continued on page 18)

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CALENDAR

January 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 - Thursday Night Dances

These dances, featuring music by Jerry Hall & Trick Shot, are held 7-10 p.m. at the Porterville Veterans Memorial Building, 1900 W. Olive Ave., Porterville. Tickets are \$5. For more information, call (559) 782-7521.

Thursday, January 2 - Pen and Ink with Musical Compositions Opens

This exhibit at Arts Visalia, 214 E. Oak Ave., Visalia, featuring work by Aaron Gomes, will have its opening reception on Friday, January 3, from 5-7:30 p.m. For more information, visit www.artsvisalia.org or call (559) 739-0905.

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.

Friday, January 3 - 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 artsconsortium.org/calendar.

January 5, 12, 19, 26 - 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 information, call (559) 651-6714.

Wednesday, January 8 - 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 information, email Jennifer at meow.2000@yahoo.com.

January 8, 15, 22, 29 - 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 information, call (559) 685-2330.

Thursday, January 9 - 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.

January 9 - February 15 - Varied Impressions Art Exhibit

The Tulare Historical Museum,

444 W. Tulare Ave., Tulare, will host this exhibit featuring aspects of Tulare County and all its colors, lifestyle, agriculture and diverse heritages. The opening reception will be on Thursday, January 9, from 5-7 p.m. For more information, call (559) 686-2074.

Saturday, January 11 - Stuffy Clinic

Family Services will offer free flu shots and wellness screenings (as well as stuffed toys for the first 200 children) from 10 a.m. to noon. For more information, call (559) 732-1970.

January 11-March 30 - "Opposites Attract"

This group art exhibition featuring the work of Amie Jones and Jordan Long 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>.

Friday, January 17 - 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 information, call (559) 713-4365.

January 18-19 - Gemboree Tule Rock & Gem Show

The Tulare Gem and Mineral Society will host this event from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday the Exeter Veterans Memorial Building, 314 N. Kaweah Ave. in Exeter. Admission is free.

Monday, January 20 - 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, January 20 - Tulare Caregiver/Dementia Support Group

Quail Park on Cypress will pres-

ent this 12:30 p.m. monthly session at the First Baptist Church, 469 N. Cherry St., Room 15, Tulare. For information, call (559) 737-7443.

Tuesday, January 21 - Visalia Caregiver/Dementia Support Group

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

January 31-February 2 - Visalia SpringFest

This three-day home and patio event returns to the Visalia Convention Center. For more information, visit www.visaliahome-shows.com.

February 2, 9, 16, 23 - 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 information, call (559) 651-6714.

February 5, 12, 19, 26 - 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 information, call (559) 685-2330.

February 6 - March 1 - Mirabel Wigon and Visalia Senior Center

This exhibit at Arts Visalia, 214 E. Oak Ave., Visalia, featuring environmentally themes work and selected paintings, will have its opening reception on Friday, February 7, from 5-7:30 p.m. For more information, visit www.artsvisalia.org or call (559) 739-0905.

February 6 - March 1 - Black History Month

The Tulare Historical Museum, 444 W. Tulare Ave., Tulare, will host this Black history exhibit on loan from the Hudson Institute of African American Heritage & Global Arts Museum. *(continued on page 13)*



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"Opposites Attract" – Jan. 11 - Mar. 30
Opening Reception – Jan. 11, 4:30-6:30pm




A group exhibition featuring the work of Amie Jones (at left) and Jordan Long (above).

CACHE Chats
Tales of Exeter and Beyond
with Dwight Miller

"Framing the Gateway: The Story Behind Exeter's Iconic New Sign"
5:30pm on February 17

For more information, visit us at:
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or 125 South B Street, Exeter
(559) 592-5900

CALENDAR

(continued from page 12)

The exhibit will showcase the faith, culture and history of the African-American people. The opening reception will be on Thursday, February 6, from 5-7 p.m. For more information, call (559) 686-2074.

Friday, February 7 - Downtown Historical Walk

This tour of Downtown Visalia with local historian (and columnist for *The Good Life*) Terry Ommen, who has researched Visalia's history for over 30 years, will begin at Visalia Senior Center, 310 N. Locust St., Visalia, The 50+ tour, which runs from 10-11:30 a.m., costs \$8. For reservations or more information, call (559) 713-4481.

February 7-8 - 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.

Friday, February 7 - 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 artsconsortium.org/calendar.

February 7, 14, 21, 28 - 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.

Wednesday, February 12 - 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 information, email Jennifer at meow.2000@yahoo.com.

Thursday, February 13 - Heart of Seniors

This event, which features a luncheon, fashion show, informational booths and a keynote speaker, will be held at the Wyndham Visalia Hotel, 900 W. Airport Dr., Visalia. (See article on page 1.)

Thursday, February 13 - Galentines Day Brunch

This event, which celebrates friendship among gal pals, will be held at the Visalia Senior Center, 310 N. Locust St., Visalia, from 9:30-11 a.m. The cost is \$15. For reservations or more information, call (559) 713-4481.

Friday, February 14 - Sweetheart Luncheon

This event will be held at the Visalia Senior Center, 310 N. Locust St., Visalia, at 11:30 a.m. For reservations or more information, call (559) 713-4481.

Saturday, February 15 - A Night of Wine Cheese & Chocolate

The Tulare Historical Museum will host this annual fundraiser, featuring wine, cheese and chocolate tasting, as well as foods from Italy, Portugal and the United States, from 6:30-9 p.m. Tickets are \$50 and are available at the museum. For ticket or sponsorship information, call (559) 686-2074 or (559) 805-6731.

Monday, February 17 - 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, February 17 - 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 information, call (559) 737-7443.

Monday, February 17 - "Framing the Gateway: The Story Behind Exeter's Iconic New Sign"

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

Tuesday, February 18 - Visalia Caregiver/Dementia Support Group

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

Friday, February 21 - 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 information, call (559) 713-4365.

March 7-8 - 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.

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'Having a Purpose on this Earth'

Q&A with Kimberly Jensen

Question: My spouse passed away last June, and I am getting depressed and bored in my home alone. All my neighbor friends have passed away or moved. What can I do to make me feel like I have a purpose on this earth?

The beginning of a new year is the best time to make positive changes in your life. Having a purpose to look forward to is important to keep your body and brain active. There are powerful and healthy chemicals that are created in your body when you do actions that you enjoy. Laughing and socializing with others is critical for good mental health and wellbeing.

Exercise

This is one of the most beneficial activities that you can do. Walking not only helps to strengthen your inner core muscles. It helps to maintain better balance and lessen your fall risk. Walking also increases the oxygen in your bloodstream which is great for your body and brain. Find a park with a nice walking path and make this a routine of your day. You might run into others at the park that would enjoy a walking companion.

Walking also benefits so many other aspects of your life. It helps you to sleep bet-

ter, lose that unwanted weight, promotes increased energy, improves heart health and reduces your stress.

You can start short distances at a time. Try to increase the distance every time you walk. Before long you will be able to make it around the entire park. Success can be yours! You just must put your mind to it and get out of your old routine.

Make a Plan for Your Day

Write down the important tasks that you need to accomplish every day. Make sure that 'self care' is on that list. In doing this simple task the night before, you can manage your time better the next day and keep on track.

By making a to-do list, you can check things off as you go and not get distracted by non-important tasks. The schedule for the day will be a guide that will help you get things done and give you a feeling of success once it is completed.

Bill paying, tax preparation and cleaning are far from fun. They are, however, tasks that are important and necessary to complete before you move onto the activities that bring you joy. Waking up in a clean house will make you feel lighter and more energized for the day to come.

Putting off those important



tasks drags you down emotionally. You will no longer be burdened once they are completed.

Get Enough Sleep and Wake up Early

According to the National Institute on Aging, older adults need the same amount of sleep as younger adults. We all need between 7-9 hours of sleep per night to function well throughout the day. When we do not get enough quality sleep, we become irritable, forgetful, depressed and become a greater fall-risk.

It is common for seniors to go to bed earlier and wake up earlier. Many seniors wake up throughout the night for a variety of reasons. If you are trying to get a good night's sleep, keep a regular sleep schedule. Whether you are traveling or not, go to bed at the same time every day.

Do not take naps throughout the day. Getting your sleep during the daytime is going to have you waking up throughout the night and will interrupt your deep sleep pattern.

Stop drinking fluids after 6 p.m. I understand that keeping hydrated is important but try not to drink after 6 p.m. otherwise you will be waking up throughout the night for multiple trips to the restroom. Alcohol and caffeine will cause sleep disturbances. They are not your friends in the evenings.

Develop a healthy and relaxing bedtime routine. Take time before you go to bed to wind down. Take a soothing bath or shower, listen to soft music or read a good book.

Try not to watch television or work on the computer/ tablet prior to sleeping. The light from these units makes it more difficult for you to relax. Use low lighting as you prepare to go to sleep and do not exercise within three hours of bedtime. That is better done first thing in the morning.

Use Art to Show Your Creativity

Everyone has a bit of creativity. Whether we are gifted with the ability of writing, painting, woodwork, needle point, knitting or crafting, we can share our talents with others as gifts.

Write the story of your life in a journal for your children and grandchildren to enjoy. So you don't feel so overwhelmed, stick to funny stories, romantic stories or stories that they might not know about you. This makes it a wonderful Christmas gift and will give you a whole year to write.

Knitting or crocheting are relaxing and productive activities. Making scarfs for children at an elementary school will not only bring you joy, but your talents will be greatly appreciated.

Amazon and many bookstores sell color books for adults that have beautiful and detailed pictures. Buy thin colored markers and once you are through, frame your art for all to see. This is a wonderful and relaxing task to do before you go to sleep.

If you like to do woodworking, make small trains, airplanes or birdhouses and give them away as gifts to children in the hospital or underprivileged children. By keeping your mind, body and hands working, it will bring you purpose, comfort and joy.

Seasonal wreaths are fun and easy to do. Hobby Lobby has everything that you will need to create a masterpiece to hang on your door for every season. Make one for your neighbor to enjoy too.

Find Reasons to be Grateful

Recognizing what it is that you are grateful for is a priority for healthy mental wellness. Too often we think of what we do not have instead of recognizing what we do have. Helping others that might be struggling is a way of showing that we can still make a difference in this world.

Doing good deeds for others makes us feel like we are participating in our life in a positive way. Many seniors who reach age 100 or above believe that they have good longevity because of what they have done for others, instead of focusing on their aches, pains and abilities that they no longer have. This is the key to mental wellness and strength.

Having a purpose-filled and meaningful life, staying active and achieving connection with others, helps to manage stressors in our lives and guard ourselves from loneliness and depression. Get a good sleep and wake up fully charged for a new wonderful day!

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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Introducing Daisy, the AI Granny Wasting Scammers' Time

O2 in the United Kingdom has unveiled the newest member of its fraud prevention team, "Daisy." As "Head of Scammer Relations," this state-of-the-art AI Granny's mission is to talk with fraudsters and waste as much of their time as possible with human-like rambling chat to keep them away from real people, while highlighting the need for consumers to stay vigilant as the UK faces a fraud epidemic.

Created using a range of cutting-edge AI technology and trained with the help of one of YouTube's best known scam-baiters, Jim Browning, Daisy is a lifelike AI Granny completely indistinguishable from a real person. Able to interact with scammers in real time without any input from her creators, O2 has put Daisy to work around the clock answering dodgy calls.

Daisy combines various AI models which work together to listen and respond to fraudulent calls instantaneously and is so lifelike it has successfully kept numerous fraudsters on calls for 40 minutes at a time.

As part of Virgin Media O2's ongoing "Swerve the Scammers" campaign, Scambaiter Daisy has been created in response to new research from O2 revealing 7 in 10 (71%) of Brits would like to get back



Daisy is able to waste phone scammers' time simply by talking.

against scammers that have tried to trick them or their loved ones. However, not wanting to waste their own time ranked as the top reason why the public wouldn't bait scammers themselves (53%).

With more than two thirds of Brits (67%) concerned about being the target of fraud and one in five (22%) experiencing a fraud attempt every single week, O2 is fighting back.

After several weeks of taking calls in the run up to International Fraud Awareness Week (November 17-23), the AI Scambaiter has told frustrated scammers meandering stories of her family, talked at length about her passion for knitting

and provided exasperated callers with false personal information including made-up bank details.

By tricking the criminals into thinking they were defrauding a real person and playing on scammers biases about older people, Daisy has prevented them from targeting real victims and, most importantly, has exposed the common tactics used so customers can better protect themselves.

Influencer and reality TV star Amy Hart has worked with Daisy to produce a shocking video to show how she's taking on phony fraudsters like the one who targeted her. After receiving a call from someone who said

they were calling from her bank on the morning of her friend's wedding, Amy fell victim to a scam which saw more than \$6,270 drained from her bank account in a matter of minutes.

The harrowing experience has left Amy passionate about spreading the word on scams and exposing their tactics to help keep others safe.

"I know first-hand just how sophisticated nasty fraudsters can be, that's why I've teamed up with O2 and AI Scambaiter Daisy to take the fight back to them, keeping them busy with calls going nowhere," Hart said.

"But whilst I love a wind up, it's scary to see the lengths scammers go to steal everything from passwords to bank details regardless of who they're speaking to," she continued. "Whether you're young or old, anyone can be a victim of a scam. That's why we can never be too careful when it comes to unexpected calls or texts."

"If you have even the tiniest doubt about who you're speaking to, the best thing to do is to hang up the phone and call back on a trusted number."

"We're committed to playing our part in stopping the scammers, investing in everything from firewall technology to block out scam texts to

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Introducing Daisy...

(continued from page 15)

AI-powered spam call detection to keep our customers safe," said Murray Mackenzie, director of fraud at Virgin Media O2.

"The newest member of our fraud-prevention team, Daisy, is turning the tables on scammers - outsmarting and outmaneuvering them at their own cruel game simply by keeping them on the line.

"But crucially, Daisy is also a reminder that no matter how persuasive someone on the other end of the phone may be, they aren't always who you think they are. With scammers operating fulltime call centers specifically to target Brits, we're urging everyone to remain vigilant and help play their part in stopping fraud by forwarding on dodgy calls and texts to 7726 for free."

Swerve the Scammers

O2 has invested heavily in the fight against fraud, rolling out AI-powered spam-fighting tools and new caller identifi-



Daisy can keep phone scammers busy 24 hours a day.

cation services free to all mobile customers to help protect them. The operator also blocks millions of fraudulent texts and calls from reaching customers phones every month.

However, with scammers constantly evolving their processes and using increasing-

ly sophisticated methods, the business is encouraging Brits to leave scambaiting to the AI experts. Instead, the public can help block scammers by forwarding suspected scam calls and text messages.

By reporting dodgy calls and messages, the telecoms company is able to investigate and block the mobile numbers used by fraudsters and can also use scam texts to help refine its blocking services, making it

easier to identify and stop new trends faster in future.

Last year, Virgin Media O2 blocked 89 million texts.

To help make life easier for customers, O2 has pulled together a new webpage offering tips, tricks and advice so they know what to look out for.

Virgin Media O2 is calling for wider action to prevent fraud. The company recently exposed the scale of the UK's fraud problem after finding that nearly seven in ten Brits (69%) reported that they've been targeted by scammers.

Last year alone, Virgin Media O2 intercepted and blocked more than \$312,000,000 in suspected fraudulent transactions - equivalent to stopping one every two minutes.

Warning that not enough is being done to protect consumers, Virgin Media O2 is calling on the government to take accountability for stopping fraud at its source by appointing a dedicated fraud minister and creating a single centralized, specialized and properly resourced national policing body responsible for investigating all instances of fraud.

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Senior Games...

(continued from page 1)

sorship from Kaweah Health," added Glick. "This support ensures that registration costs for our athletes remains low. We appreciate their commitment to our community, health, and wellness."

Registration is open online now for each event in the Visalia Senior Games 2024 by visiting www.visalia.city/seniorgames.

Visalia Senior Games is under the umbrella of the California Senior Games Association, which promotes healthy, active lifestyles for adults ages 50 and better.

For questions or more information, contact the Visalia Parks & Recreation Business Office at (559) 713-4365 or email recreation@visalia.city.

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Bergman's 'Lives Well Lived' Documentary Now Has a Book

By Steve Pastis

Sky Bergman's documentary "Lives Well Lived" is doing very well. PBS recently renewed its contract with her to broadcast the film for another four years.

Even so, Bergman was inspired to write a book about the same subject. She made the decision for two main reasons.

"I had so many people that asked me to do so," she explained. "They would watch the movie and take notes, and watch it multiple times. A number of people asked me to please do something so they could have the words of wisdom of all these amazing people.

"I think the second reason was because I really got interested after doing this film in connecting generations," Bergman said. "That's been a really big focus of my work and the new films that I'm working on as well.

"And so in the second half of the book, I took the opportunity to talk about how you can interview a loved one and connect with an older adult," she said. "What are the advantages of having intergenerational connections, and how can you bring something like this to your community, educational institution or corporation?"

"And then I decided to interview people around the globe," Bergman said. "I interviewed 40 people around the globe that were doing very interesting work connecting generations, whether it was through climate change, or an intergenerational symphony or housing.

"All these different ways that people are connecting generations to hopefully make it something that becomes more the norm because we live in such an age-segregated world and I feel the world is suffering as a result.

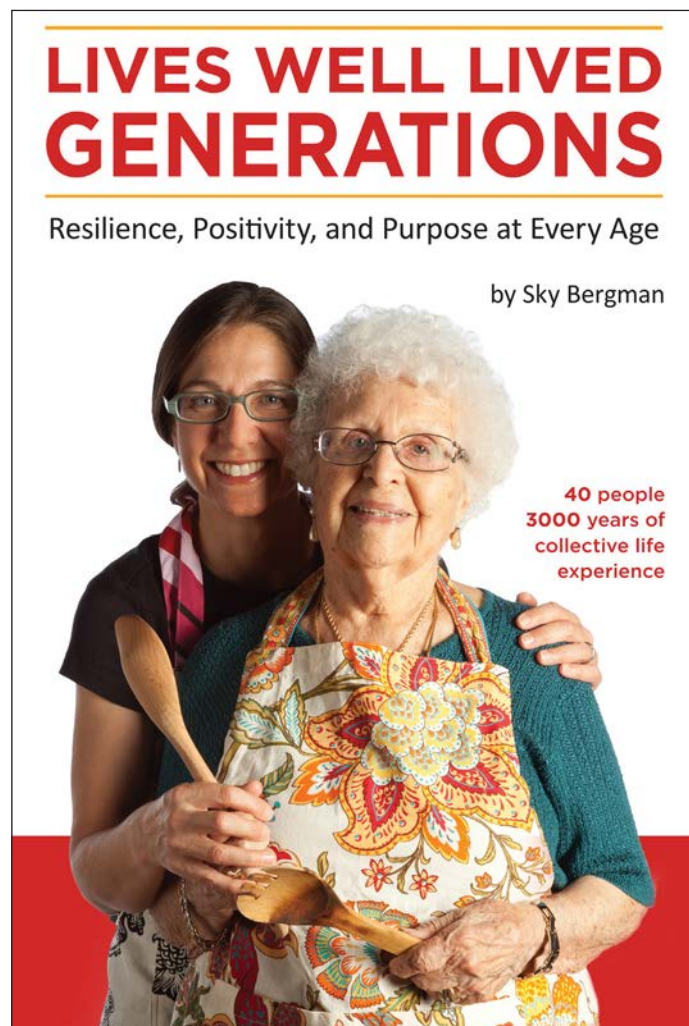
"What can we do to bring generations together?" she wondered. "I think that was my attempt to inspire people to look at some of the programs that are out there and maybe become part of those programs, or at least start a dialog with somebody from a different age group, and maybe make a friend from a different age group.

"So that was why I wrote the book," Bergman said. "It was really two-fold, one was to get the lessons that I learned along the way in writing the book, and the second was to inspire intergenerational connection."

Grandmother Evelyn

Bergman described her grandmother Evelyn Ricciuti, who inspired the book and the documentary, as "amazing."

"There's not a day that goes by that I don't think about her



The cover of Sky Bergman's new book shows her with her grandmother. (Above right) Sky Bergman

and think about all she inspired me to do," she said. "I know she would be totally thrilled with everything that has happened along the way with the film.

"She did get to see it on the big screen and then she passed away six weeks later, so she did at least get to see it there with a live audience and have some inkling maybe of what was going to happen with the film," Bergman said.

"She was very humble," she added. "She didn't understand why I was doing a film that was inspired by her, and she didn't think that she was anything special, but to me she was the world. I think what a gift it was that I lived long enough to really have the time to appreciate her and to spend with her.

Resilience

Bergman uses the word "resilience" when describing many of the people she interviewed for the book.

"When I think of the word 'resilience,' I think it's really a matter of living through life's events," she said. "There's going to be ups and downs, and a moment when things are not going well. How do you overcome that and get through that?"

"I think that resilience and positivity, which I feel go hand-in-hand, are being able to get through that moment," Bergman said. "But also what I found in the people that I interviewed was that they were able to look back at memories with a sense of positivity, even though they were the toughest of times. Somehow they were able to look back on things and make the best of that situation."

She shared something that Lou Stone, one of the people she interviewed, said to her.

"I would visit him when he

was 97 and I would ask him how he was doing, and he'd say, 'You know, it's not like when I was 95.'"

Finding a Purpose

Bergman advises older adults to find a purpose.

"We need a purpose no matter what our age," she said. "And I use the term 'older adults' rather than 'seniors.' I would say that to anyone, no matter what your age. I see it in the university students who are in one major and then all of a sudden they're like, 'Oh, my God, this is not what I want to be doing,' and they're floundering because they don't know what their purpose is going to be yet.

"I think that for many people, the other time that they feel that shift is when they retire from a job that they've done their whole life," she continued. "A lot of times when people ask us who we are and what we do, we just describe ourselves by the job that we do. When we retire from that job, we don't know how to describe who we are in the world and what we're doing.

"The people that were really the most satisfied and the most content as they age were people that found a new sense of purpose," Bergman said. "For me, one of the really important things to learn along the way of making the film and the book was that really no matter what age we are, that sense of purpose is vitally important."

One of those she interviewed had been a pediatrician.

"When he retired, he started making mozzarella for his daughter's deli every morning, and that was his sense of purpose, just to get up and make sure that was done every day."

For another, her new purpose was teaching English as a second language every morning.

"For somebody else it could be learning something new," she said. "I also think as we age, many people have a sense of purpose that's also tied to giving back in some way so that we feel useful and we feel like we can still contribute. I think that's what makes it so important is that we feel like we are involved in something bigger than ourselves."

Loneliness

The biggest surprise to Bergman while writing the book was that the surgeon general compared loneliness as a health factor to smoking about 15 cigarettes a day.

"As we age, we really need to be sure that we have a good sense of support and a good sense of community and that we're not isolated," she said. "There is a loneliness epidemic that is happening in this country, and I think that is something to really be cognizant of.

"I talk about it in the book that one of the common factors that everyone in the book or in the film had was a sense of purpose, and another was community, and the third was positivity and resilience," she said.

"Sense of community was vitally important as well, and it didn't necessarily have to be that it came from your family. It could be friends.

"Friendships are work," Bergman said. "It takes work to continue your friendships. It's a little more difficult when we're not at the workplace anymore and we don't see people on a daily basis.

"I think we have to make it happen and really push to

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Prevention, Screening Save Lives...

(continued from page 11)

lion deaths (out of 2.71 million that would have occurred in the absence of all interventions) were averted from 1975 to 2020, with treatment advances contributing to three-quarters of the deaths averted and mammography screening contributing to the rest.

- In lung cancer, prevention through tobacco control efforts accounted for 98% of the 3.45 million deaths averted (out of 9.2 million), and treatment advances accounted for the rest.

- In cervical cancer, the 160,000 deaths averted (out of 370,000) were entirely through cervical cancer screening (i.e., Pap and HPV, or human papillomavirus, testing) and removal of precancerous lesions.

- In colorectal cancer, of the 940,000 deaths averted (out of 3.45 million), 79% were due to screening and removal of precancerous polyps, with treatment advances accounting for the remaining 21%.

- In prostate cancer, of the 360,000 deaths averted (out of 1.01 million), screening via PSA testing contributed 56% and treatment advances contributed 44%.

"These findings suggest that we need to continue to have strong strategies and approaches in all of these areas,"



Dr. Goddard noted. "It's not just treatment advances alone, or prevention and screening alone, that is helping us to reduce cancer mortality."

The authors pointed out that more recent prevention and screening strategies, such as HPV vaccination and lung cancer screening, were not in wide use during the study period and could further reduce cancer death rates. Other op-

portunities for reducing cancer deaths include making screening more accessible, such as with HPV tests that allow for self-collection, and developing new treatments.

The authors acknowledged that the five cancer sites included in the study account for less than half of all cancer deaths and that the findings for these cancers may not necessarily apply to other cancers, espe-

cially those for which there are not effective prevention, screening, or treatment interventions.

"We need to optimize the uptake and use of prevention and screening for these five cancers so that all Americans can benefit, especially underserved populations, as well as develop novel prevention and screening strategies to avert deaths due to other, very lethal cancers, such as those of the pancreas and ovary," said co-lead investigator Philip E. Castle, Ph.D., M.P.H., director of NCI's Division of Cancer Prevention.

In addition, the authors noted that the findings are based on population averages in the United States and may not be generalizable to specific population groups. The study also did not consider the potential harms of interventions, such as false-positive results and overdiagnosis during screening, nor did it measure other outcomes, such as quality of life.

For more information about cancer, visit the NCI website at cancer.gov or call NCI's contact center, the Cancer Information Service, at 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237).

For more information about NIH and its programs, visit www.nih.gov.

The Wide World of Senior Fashion



Instagram fashionista Margret Chola

Zambian Grandmother Becomes Fashion Icon

An 85-year-old grandmother in rural Zambia has become a fashion icon.

Margret Chola attracted more than 225,000 Instagram followers after posing in her granddaughters clothes.

"I feel different," she said in an interview with the BBC. "I feel new and alive in these clothes in a way that I've never felt before."

Her granddaughter Diana Kaumba is a New York City stylist who was in Zambia on the second anniversary of the passing of her father. During her trip she asked if her grandmother wanted to try on her outfits.

Her grandmother did and the rest is Instagram history.

'Elderly Should Wear Elderly Shoes'

In 2023, the global population exceeded 8 billion, with the elderly population aged 60 and above accounting for 14.2%. In this global aging trend, the diverse needs of the elderly urgently need to be met, according to a press release from Zuliz, a Chinese shoe manufacturing company that targets the senior market.

"The company adheres to a user-oriented approach, developing 'Professional Elderly Shoe Lasts' by precisely collecting foot shape data in seven dimensions, winning the trust and love of elderly consumers," states the release.

"With years of dedicated effort, Zuliz maintained strict quality control, becoming the initial drafting unit of the China's 'National Standard' for 'elderly shoes.' The brand has implemented rigorous quality control on every product and every production process.

"In 2023, Zuliz was listed among the 'Top 500 Asian Brands,' becoming the only brand on the list focused on the elderly industry. It is reported that Zuliz's market share in the China elderly shoe market is far ahead, with one in three elderly people in China wearing Zuliz shoes."



Zuliz, a leading Chinese shoe manufacturer, opened its first overseas outlet in Singapore.

The press release continues. "Professionalism builds trust, join us and develop business together! The silver economy is rapidly rising, and the elderly care industry has broad prospects. We look forward to working with Zuliz to create a bright future for the elderly shoe brand!"

Another press release states that, "Over the past decade, Zuliz has been dedicated to solving the footwear problems

of the elderly, becoming the leader in the Chinese elderly shoe industry and a pioneer of professional elderly shoe categories."

If you agree that "the elderly should wear elderly shoes," as they state in a release, you finally have an option.

Meanwhile, we're still working out how to "precisely collect foot shape data in seven dimensions."

FDA Updates Definition of 'Healthy' Foods

On December 19, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced a final rule to update the definition of the nutrient content claim "healthy." There is an ever-growing crisis of preventable, diet-related chronic diseases in the U.S. that requires immediate action.

The updated healthy claim marks an important step in fulfilling the FDA's nutrition priorities, which are part of a whole-of-government approach to address this crisis. This rule will help ensure that consumers have access to more complete, accurate and up-to-date nutrition information on food labels.

The healthy claim has been updated to help consumers find foods that are the foundation of a healthy dietary pattern and could also result in the development of healthier foods. Manufacturers can voluntarily use the healthy claim on a food package if a product meets the updated definition.

"It's critical for the future of our country that food be a vehicle for wellness. Improving access to nutrition information is an important public health effort the FDA can undertake to help people build healthy eating patterns," said FDA Commissioner Robert M. Califf, M.D.

"It is vital that we focus on the key drivers to combat chronic disease, like healthy eating. Now, people will be able to look for the healthy claim to help them find foundational, nutritious foods for themselves and their families."

To qualify as "healthy" under the updated definition, food products must contain a certain amount of a food from at least one of the food groups or subgroups outlined by the Dietary Guidelines for Amer-



icans including fruits, vegetables, protein foods, dairy and grains. Foods that qualify for the healthy claim must also meet certain limits on saturated fat, sodium and added sugars.

Under these changes, more foods that are key to healthy eating patterns will qualify for the healthy claim, which could make them easier for consumers to identify when shopping. These foods include nuts and seeds, higher fat fish such as salmon, olive oil and water.

The updated definition for the healthy claim aligns with current nutrition science, the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the scientific evidence supporting the updated Nutrition Facts label, which now requires the declaration of added sugars. For example, the updated "healthy" claim definition for the first time sets certain limits for added sugars.

Diet-related diseases, including heart disease, cancer, and diabetes, are the leading cause of disability and disease in the U.S. and contribute to America's status as having the lowest life expectancy among large, high-income countries.

Data show that 77% of people exceed the current dietary recommendations for satu-

rated fat; 79% of people have dietary patterns low in dairy, fruits, and vegetables; 63% of people exceed current dietary recommendations for added sugars; and 90% of people exceed the daily recommended limits for sodium.

"Food labeling can be a powerful tool for change. Food labeling, like 'healthy,' may help foster a healthier food supply if manufacturers choose to reformulate their products to meet the new definition," said FDA Deputy Commissioner for Human Foods Jim Jones. "There's an opportunity here for industry and others to join us in making 'healthy' a ubiquitous, quick signal to help people more easily build nutritious diets."

The FDA welcomes the opportunity to work with all interested parties to support the use of the updated healthy claim. The agency, as part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has already entered into a partnership with Instacart to make it even easier for consumers to find products with the healthy claim through online grocery shopping filters and a virtual storefront.

The FDA is also continuing to develop a "healthy" symbol that manufacturers could use

to indicate their food meets the criteria of healthy. The symbol would be another way, in addition to using the term healthy, to convey to consumers that a food meets the "healthy" claim criteria.

Symbols may be particularly helpful for those who are less familiar with nutrition information to identify foods that can be the foundation of a healthy eating pattern.

The FDA recently issued a draft guidance with new Phase II voluntary sodium reduction targets and has conducted consumer research and plans to issue a proposed rule on front-of-package nutrition labeling on food products to help consumers quickly and easily identify how foods can be part of a healthy diet.

Together, the FDA's work to update the healthy claim, develop a "healthy" symbol and front-of-package nutrition labeling, and help reduce sodium in foods plays an important role in a government-wide approach to improving nutrition and reducing diet-related chronic diseases in the U.S.

These efforts can help consumers more easily identify foods recommended by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and may assist them in reducing their consumption of certain nutrients that can be found in foods that are commonly considered ultra-processed. This action is also a signature deliverable for the White House National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition and Health.

The FDA is committed to continuing its comprehensive science-based activities to create a healthier food supply, empower consumers with information, and support lifelong healthy eating patterns.

Older Americans Act...

(continued from page 5)

at the discretion of the speaker, according to the Congressional Research Service.

Some notable additions to the Older Americans Act by the Senate include an increase in authorized funding and key provisions from the Strengthening Advocacy for Long-Term Care Residents Act to improve the Long-Term Care Ombudsman program:

- It instructs the Administration for Community Living to establish categories of duties for volunteers and appropriate training requirements for volunteers based on those categories, reaffirm Congress' intent that the Ombudsman program should be led by a full-time national director, and require a study and report with a recommendation for the

number of ombudsmen per long term care facility bed.

- Includes a provision of the Supporting Our Direct Care Workforce and Family Caregivers Act, instructing the Administration for Community Living to create a technical assistance center to support the recruitment, training, and retention of direct care workers. The ACL established this center in 2022; this provision codifies the existence of this center in statute and expands its work to include supporting family caregivers.

- Includes language to ensure proper implementation of a statute that allows Area Agencies on Aging to contract with outside entities to bring in revenue that these agencies reinvest in their work to serve older Americans.

"The 2024 OAA reauthorization reflects a holistic approach to aging, recognizing that older adults need more than just health care to thrive," wrote Ohio elder law attorney Joseph Motta.

"By addressing social, economic and health-related factors, the OAA aims to create a society where older adults can age with dignity and security. And the emphasis on caregiver support and equitable service delivery ensures that communities are better equipped to provide the necessary care and assistance."

The reauthorized Older Americans Act also incorpo-

rates elements of the Native ELDER Act, a bill sponsored by Senators Lisa Murkowski (I-AK) and Tina Smith (D-MN).

These provisions would improve federal programs and services for Alaska Native, American Indian and Native Hawaiian elders.

Since first signed into law in 1965, the Older Americans Act has provided vital services to millions of vulnerable seniors in 56 state and territorial units on aging, more than 600 Area Agencies on Aging, more than 270 Title VI Native American Aging Programs, and more than 20,000 community service providers.

**NEXT DEADLINE
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14**

Helpful Garden Tips for February

By Peyton Ellas
Tulare-Kings Master Gardener

Is it spring yet? Many days in February can feel spring-like. Early wildflowers might appear, and some trees will start to leaf out. But we still might get frost, fog, rain, snow and even hail. It's a transition month: which means change, which means expect variety, in the weather and in our gardens. Enjoy watching the seasonal shifts beginning this month.

Planting

You can transplant most trees, perennials, spring-blooming bulbs and summer flower annuals this month. Plant so that the center of the plant is an inch above the soil level and use a three-inch layer of mulch. Clippings, including leaves and small twigs from your own garden, or even straw works if you don't have ready access to wood chips. Keep mulch several feet away from tree trunks and from the base of roses and other woody shrubs.

In the vegetable garden, it's time to plant asparagus, chives, cilantro, leek, green onion, parsley, potatoes, English peas, radish, spinach, kale and strawberry. You can also transplant cauliflower, cabbage, broccoli, Brussels sprouts and beet seedlings. Set out dahlia, gladiolus, lily and canna.

Maintaining

Check your irrigation and make needed repairs for both sprinkler and drip systems before you need them.

Pruning can still be done on berries, grapes, deciduous fruit trees and roses. Do not prune spring-flowering shrubs or trees until they finish blooming. After pruning fruit trees, apply a dormant spray before the buds swell but when the air temperatures are at least 45 degrees Fahrenheit.

Products containing copper are used to control some diseases, like peach leaf curl. Products containing oil kill insects and their eggs that over-winter in the cracks and crevices of the tree. Choose a calm day with no imminent rain in the forecast and follow the directions on the container exactly. If you haven't had any pest issues, you don't need to spray.

Earwigs and mollusks are active this month. Opaque bottles placed sideways in the garden bed, small tins with oil or stale beer, or rolled newspapers or cardboard tubes can all be traps. Check them each morning and drop insects in a bucket of soapy water. The chemical control for slugs and snails is iron phosphate, which is not toxic to pets, beneficial insects or people. As always, follow the package instructions.

Weeds give us an ever-ready garden therapy opportunity. Try to remove weeds before they set seeds.

At the end of the month, fertilize deciduous fruit trees. Do not fertilize citrus or avocados yet.

As temperatures warm, watch for early signs of fire



Peach blossom

blight. Trees and shrubs in the rose and apple family are especially susceptible. It is a fungal disease most active as daytime temperatures rise to the high 70's Fahrenheit. Very early signs are tan or black sap oozing from dead bark when trees start actively growing. Later, blossom and fruit tips die back and look scorched, thus the name.

The best control is to prune out diseased branches. Cut back the dead or dying branches well beyond reddish or brown streaks or patches that appear under the bark in affected wood.

Fire blight is hard to eliminate but most trees can survive minor infections. Avoid over watering or fertilizing affected trees because rapid vigorous growth often increases the infection.

Although the disease can reduce fruit production, it is not harmful to humans, and harvested fruits are safe to eat. Continue to monitor and prune affected branches as signs appear. You can safely fertilize after blossom drop occurs.

Conserving

Watch your native bee nesting box for action this month. Be wary of spraying pesticides/herbicides when bees and native wasps are active. Social defensive wasps have given all wasps a bad reputation, but most wasps are very small, don't sting humans and can be terrific allies in the garden. They can help with pollination, but they also are carnivorous for part of their lives, so they eat insects that cause harm to our plants.

The website insectidentification.org has useful photos



Beet root

and information. Think of how we can form better partnerships with our wild friends. Even small gardens can be sanctuaries for wildlife and humans. Three design principles: scale, balance, and harmony are not only about creating the garden but apply to caring for it as well.

When we walk into a balanced garden, we understand we are not alone in this endeavor and although it may feel like we are in a battle some of the time, it's a war we won't win without our nature friends.

Happy Gardening!

Questions?

Call the Master Gardeners:
Tulare County: (559) 684-3325, Tues & Thurs, 9:30-11:30.
Kings County: (559) 852-2736, Thursday Only, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

Visit our website for past articles, sign up for our e-newsletter, or email us with your questions: http://ucanr.edu/sites/UC_Master_Gardeners/

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Dahlia



The Southern Pacific Railroad Depot shortly after it opened in 1916 (above left) and the Southern Pacific Railroad Depot restaurant as it appears today.

Is Visalia Ready for a Cultural Center Museum?

Well, Visalia Heritage, Inc. thinks it is, and the local history group has the “cred” to back it up. Since 1978, they’ve been an effective supporter and financial backer for many big projects including the Visalia Cemetery Chapel restoration, the children’s library restoration at the Visalia/Tulare County Library, and rehabilitation efforts at the Fox Theatre. Its mission is to “advocate, support and encourage preservation of historical structures and resources,” and they have taken it seriously.

Now the 46-year old non-profit has its sights on another big project – the creation of a cultural center museum for Visalia. The Heritage board of directors believes the center could be transformational for the community by showcasing the history of the town and the people that made it. Visalia, the Tulare County seat and the oldest existing town between Los Angeles and nearly to Stockton, does not yet have a cultural center museum, even though many smaller communities in the county do.

The center would house artifacts, family heirlooms, historical exhibits and archival material. It would showcase cultural displays that would reflect the rich history of the many groups that contributed to the history of the town. The center could become a centerpiece for the community.

Walter Deissler, president of Visalia Heritage, emphasized its importance. He said, “A cultural center museum is essential for preserving our local heritage. It will foster community pride and enrich the lives of residents and visitors alike. It will serve as a bridge between our past and future and celebrate the diverse stories that shape our identity and inspire future generations to appreciate and honor our rich cultural tapestry.”

Visit Visalia, the local tourism organization, supports the center idea as well. Executive Director Sherrie Bakke said, “Visalia welcomes visitors from around the globe. The cultural center would provide a place for us to share Visalia’s very interesting history and celebrate the many diverse cultural contributors of

our community.”

According to Bakke, not only would a cultural center highlight Visalia’s history, there would be economic benefits as well. “Research shows cultural centers generate positive economic impacts to the local community from tourism. With more than one million people entering Sequoia National Park from Highway 198, a cultural center would entice travelers to stay in Visalia one more night,” she said.

Even though a site for the center has not been selected, Visalia Heritage is looking closely at the historic, now vacant, Southern Pacific Railroad depot at 107 E. Oak Street. The former home to the Southern Pacific Railroad Depot restaurant closed during the COVID pandemic and never reopened. Now the building is for sale, and Deissler and the building owners have been talking. They are receptive to the plan.

The building is a landmark in Visalia. The Spanish style structure was built by the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1916, replacing the 1893 wood framed depot that had been on the site. The architectural style of this stucco building is similar to other S.P. depots throughout the country.

In 1940, when train travel declined, the depot closed. For years the building stood vacant. Eventually, the train station was sold to the Cobb family, who in 1971 repurposed it into the Depot restaurant. In 1975, Andrew Piperis bought the building and business. He ran it until his death in 2008. Then Jan, his widow, continued to operate it. Three years later, she sold it to the Vartanian family, who still owns the building today.

The Visalia Heritage board believes the landmark building would make a wonderful cultural center museum. Not only is the architectural style of the building appropriate, it is in a compatible neighborhood.

On November 14, 2024, Visalia Heritage hosted a community meeting to share their cultural center ideas and solicit feedback. Richard Peterson, president of the U. S. Cultural and Heritage Tourism Marketing

Dusting Off History with Terry Ommen



Council, facilitated the meeting held in the Peter Carey Gallery at The Lofts at Fort Visalia. It was a standing room only crowd with over 100 in attendance. Of those who spoke, all expressed support for the project. Following the meeting, participants were given a tour of the nearby Depot.

Early sentiment and feedback supports the creation of a cultural center museum, but is

the community as a whole sold on the idea? What about the leaders of the city? Visalia Heritage would like your input and ideas!

If you’d like more information about Visalia Heritage or would like an opportunity to comment on the cultural center museum plan, visit their website at www.visaliaheritage.com, email visaliaheritageinc@gmail.com, or call (559) 972-4872.

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Romance Scams...

(continued from page 3)

- Asks for money, often via non-traditional methods such as cryptocurrency or gift cards.
- Asks if you've ever invested in cryptocurrency and/or foreign exchange market.
- Sends a business link of a cryptocurrency and/or foreign exchange trading platform.
- Is combative with you or tries to divert your attention when you question their intentions.

Lastly, if your bank contacts you to express concern you are being victimized, this is perhaps the most significant red flag that you are being targeted.

As romance scammers continue to evolve, so do the methods they use to steal money from their victims. In 2022, 60% of all payments sent to romance scammers were via cryptocurrency or bank wires. Other common payment methods include gift cards (7%) and payment apps (3%). Scammers typically prefer these methods as they offer some level of anonymity and once funds are sent by the victim, the transaction can't be reversed.

Tips to Avoid Losing Money to a Romance Scam

Although this can be an uncomfortable topic, make sure you, your family and your friends are familiar with romance scams. The more you know about these scams, the better prepared you are to prevent being a victim. Scammers are looking for easy targets. Don't be an easy target.

- Be suspicious of unsolicited phone calls and text messages. Don't answer calls or texts from any unknown numbers. Never give out personal information over the phone or text.

- Let calls go to voicemail and don't be afraid to hang up. Recognized numbers could also be a scam due to IP spoofing. If it's important, the person will leave a message or follow up with a text.

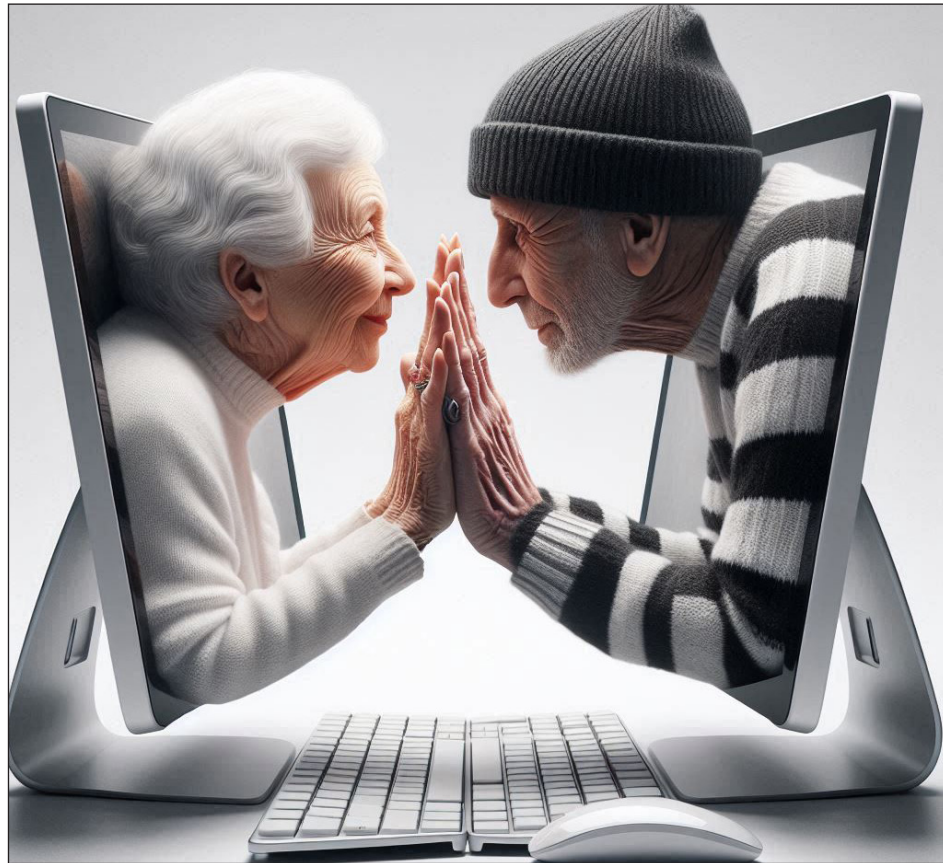
- Don't respond to unknown text messages and block/report them as spam.

- If you receive a call or text from a reputable entity (e.g., health provider, bank, company), respond using contact information you know is legitimate. Go to their official website for contact and support information.

- Limit what you share online. Scammers can use details shared on social media and dating sites to better understand and target you to form a connection and take advantage of what is going on in your life.

- In addition, requests for inappropriate photos or financial information could later be used to extort you.

- Go slowly and ask questions. Creating a false sense of urgency is a fundamental



AI Illustration by April Pastis

tactic of social engineering. Don't let the individual rush you to make a decision. Be wary of sending money, bank account information, personal photos or other sensitive personal information to someone you've never met in person.

- Do your research. Research the individual's photo and profile using online searches to see if the image, name or other details have been used elsewhere.

- Keep it on the platform. Many times, scammers will push to move the conversation off the dating or social platform. Generally, they request to text or email. This is to avoid the detection controls in dating website chats.

- Listen to your gut. If the individual seems too good to be true, talk to someone you trust about it.

- Don't send money or cryptocurrency. Never send money to anyone you have only communicated with online or by phone. If you meet someone on a dating site, app or social media and they want to show you how to invest in crypto, or ask you to send them cryptocurrency, it is a fraud.

Think You've Been Scammed?

Romance scammers are highly skilled manipulators who exploit our emotions. They often work in organized groups and use well-rehearsed scripts to deceive their victims. Anyone can fall victim to a romance scam, regardless of age, education or intelligence.

If you believe you have fallen victim of a romance scam:

- Do not blame yourself.
- Falling for a romance scam is not a sign of weakness, but rather a result of sophisticated and manipulative tactics. You are a victim, and it is not your fault.
- Stop communicating with the individual immediately.
- Talk to someone you trust and describe what's going on.

- Notify the website or social media platform where the scammer first made contact.

- This can lead to the scammer's profile being removed, protecting other potential victims.

- Report the incident to local law enforcement.

- Submit a fraud complaint with the Federal Trade Commission.

- Regularly check bank and credit card statements for any unusual activity.

- If personal financial information has been shared, consider freezing credit reports or changing account details.

Even if it's too late to recoup your losses, details may help others from becoming a victim. Call the HSI Tip Line at 877-4-HSI-TIP to report suspicious criminal activity, including possible romance scams. Callers may remain anonymous.

Human Trafficking

Unsuspecting Americans are not the only victims in these online fraud scams. In many cases, the perpetrators themselves are victims of human trafficking, who are forced to work with no pay, little sleep, and no freedom to leave.

The global COVID-19 pandemic left many people financially devastated and desperate for hope. In many cases, victims respond to online ads promising employment overseas with high salaries.

People with certain skill sets are especially targeted, such as those with English and/or Chinese language proficiency. Then they are deceived and arrive at a secure compound comprised of "fraud dens" that are run by Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCO). Their passports are confiscated, and they are forced to pay back their "debt" by working long hours. They also face physical and sexual abuse, restrictions on movement and starvation.

Many of these "fraud

dens" are in countries with pervasive government and law enforcement corruption. However, online fraud scams are highly profitable, and this crime model is quickly spreading throughout the world.

How HSI Combats Romance Scams

Most romance scams originate overseas and are often run by TCOs, which pose significant multi-jurisdictional challenges to U.S. law enforcement.

To combat TCOs involvement in romance scams, HSI partners with other U.S. agencies including: U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, DHS Office of the Inspector General, DHS Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Internal Revenue Service, Commodity Futures Trade Commission and Federal Trade Commission.

To combat TCOs, HSI and its partner agencies have worked with the Department of Justice to produce a coordinated enforcement and prosecution effort. This effort involves law enforcement working jointly with prosecutors, foreign law enforcement partners and the financial industry. This collaboration has led to a more cooperative law enforcement effort that will eventually lead to the disruption and dismantlement of the TCOs that victimize our citizens.

HSI identifies and seizes assets derived from romance scams, disrupting criminal enterprises and taking away their profits. When possible, working in conjunction with the U.S. Attorney's Office and foreign governments, HSI will return funds to victims in restitution. Oftentimes, TCOs are engaged in many types of illicit financial crimes, not just romance scams.

HSI leads the DHS Center for Countering Human Trafficking (CCHT) to advance counter human trafficking law enforcement operations, protect victims and enhance prevention efforts. CCHT works jointly with other headquarters components to further enhance investigative efforts and identify TCOs using fraud scheme to exploit and traffic individuals for financial gain.

HSI and its partner agencies work to spread awareness of deceptive employment ads and online fraud scams. Our Victim Assistance Program provides a critical resource to HSI investigations and criminal prosecutions. We work to help victims who have escaped from "fraud dens" and identify the perpetrators to shut down the TCOs and assist victims of human trafficking.

(This article was originally on www.hsi.gov.)

Entertainment

Ted Danson Goes Undercover in a Retirement Home

Retired professor Charles (Ted Danson) feels life has nothing new in store for him. A year after his wife's passing, he's become stuck in his routine and grown distant from his daughter Emily (Mary Elizabeth Ellis).

But when he spies a classified ad from private investigator Julie (Lilah Richcreek Estrada), he's inspired to roll the dice on a new adventure. Charles' mission: to go undercover inside the Pacific View Retirement Home in San Francisco and solve the mystery of a stolen family heirloom.

Everyone, residents and staff alike, is a potential suspect, and it's up to Charles to solve the case without landing on the radar of Didi (Stephanie Beatriz), the all-seeing, all-knowing director of Pacific View. But keeping a low profile proves difficult as the affable Charles quickly endears himself to his fellow residents.

Being a "man on the inside" sends Charles on an exciting journey that makes him realize there's a lot more life left to be had – and allows him to reconnect with Emily in the process.

From creator Mike Schur, "A Man on the Inside" is based on the Chilean film "The Mole Agent," a 2021 Oscar nominee for Best Documentary feature. Schur and Danson team up for the first time since their television show, "The Good Place."

"'The Mole Agent' was recommended to me by a bunch of people when it came out," said Schur. "I knew almost nothing about it, and I just fell for it so hard. I think it's a really special piece of work. The hero, Sergio, is so wonderfully wrought,

'Lives Well Lived'...

(continued from page 17)

make new friends and feel like we are part of a community, but I think it's proven to be very, very important for our physical and mental health," she said.

Everyone Has a Story

"I would say that everyone has a story to tell if we just take the time to listen," Bergman said. "Some of them may be more compelling than others, but certainly everyone has an amazing story to tell if you just sit and take the time to listen."

"I could have done this Lives Well Lived project anywhere," she added. "You pick 40 people and I probably would have been able to get an interesting story. Not everyone can tell the story really well so not everybody's good on camera, but I would venture to say that everyone has an amazing story to tell, at least one in their past."

Lives Well Lived is available in bookstores as well as online on Amazon and Barnes and Noble websites.



Retired professor Charles (Ted Danson) is on the trail of a missing heirloom.

so real, just a lovely human being. It's also a beautiful meditation on aging, a subject we are uniquely terrible in this country at confronting, dealing with or discussing. It showed the reality of aging for people along a very broad spectrum – some folks who were doing great and some folks who were not – and that really grabbed me."

Schur urged Danson to

watch "The Mole Agent."

"I found the opening scenes with the 80-plus-year-olds trying to figure out how to work a cell-phone very sweet and funny," Danson said. "Then Sergio – that perfect, perfect man – showed up and he was so touching and charming right off the bat. I was very excited to do it."

"I realized about 10 years ago, once I began to see that



A "man on the inside" can gather helpful information with wine and a smile.

satellite view of the curvature of my life, that what I really want to do as an actor is find out what it means and feels like to be funny at every age," he added. "Not trying to hold onto youth or be an advanced-age Sam Malone, but to be 76 and know what it's like and explore the humanity and humor that comes through my 76-year-old body."

"Removing some of the awkwardness and stigma from those conversations between mid-40s folks and mid-70s folks about their lives, what they need, and what they should and shouldn't do is a pretty worthy goal," said Schur. "I would love if this show could be watched by people of all generations and discussed by them. And if it led to the realization that aging can be hard and weird, but also it's natural, and should be talked about straightforwardly and lovingly."

"The message society gives to older people that we also give to ourselves is the opposite of what we told our kids: you can be anything you want," Danson said, "At a certain age, we stop having that affirmation for ourselves. We tell ourselves we need to slow down and pass the baton."

"In this dialogue between different generations, aging people need to make sure they're leading purposeful lives and not giving up before their last breath," he said. "And younger people should help older people cross the finish line rather than suppress them or try to put them in a box that makes them feel safe as a child with an aging parent. That message is what made me want to be part of this."



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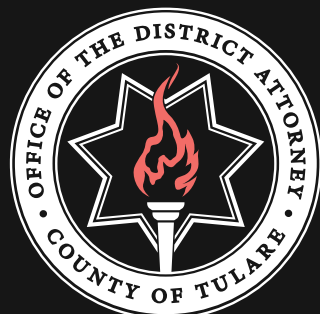
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