

Senior Post

Living well and gracefully through the golden years

**The
importance
of wellness
exams
after 50**

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THE DOMINION
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MetroCreative Connection

Aging and change go hand in hand. Although some may bemoan the gray hairs that start to arrive or stiffness in the knees that seems to sneak up on a person in middle age, such concerns are not necessarily enough to lose sleep over. However, many people 50 or older are nervous about the potential for cognitive issues like dementia as they grow older.

The Alzheimer's Association estimates that 6.7 million people have Alzheimer's disease in the United States. The Alzheimer Society of Canada estimates that there were 733,040 people living with dementia in the country as of January 1, 2024. Alzheimer's disease and other dementias can rob people of their memories, personalities and abilities to live satisfying, independent lives. While it may not be impossible to prevent all cognitive issues completely, there is reason to believe that reading could be an ally in cognitive care.

The American Academy of Neurology says that reading stimulates the brain and has been shown to slow down cognitive decline in old age. Reading also may help slow down memory loss.

The powers of reading were noticed more than 10 years ago when a 2013 study from researchers at Emory University measured readers' MRI scans as they read books. They found the deeper readers went into a story, the more areas of their brains were activated. This activity remained elevated for several days after participants finished their books. The more a person reads, the stronger complex networks in the brain become.

Additional evidence that reading can help the brain was noted by researchers at the Texas A&M School of Public Health. A 2024 study suggests that older people with mild cognitive impairment who engage in high levels of activities like reading, hobbies and word games have better memory, working memory, attention and processing speed than those who do not take part in such endeavors. Furthermore, a 2021 study published in Neurology found that high levels of cognitive activity, like reading and writing letters, can delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease by five years among those age 80 and over.

Reading can keep brains functioning optimally and potentially delay age-related cognitive decline.

SENIOR CENTERS AND FACILITIES

Monongalia County

Clay-Battelle Senior Center

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Core Senior Center

98 Pedler Run Road, Core • 304-879-5452

Senior Monongalians

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500 Dupont Road, Westover • 304-296-6583



Westside Senior Center, Westover

Preston County

Newburg Senior Center

100 Wolfe St., Newburg • 304-892-4662

North Preston Senior Center

WV Rt. 26, Bruceton Mills • 304-379-1165

Preston County Senior Citizens

108 Senior Center Drive, Kingwood • 304-329-0464

Rowlesburg Senior Center

44 Poplar St., Rowlesburg • 304-454-2012

Terra Alta Senior Center

212 E. Washington Ave., Terra Alta • 304-789-2415

Tunnelton Senior Citizens

1266 Senior Drive, Tunnelton • 304-568-2151

Valley District Senior Center

54 W. Highland Ave., Masontown • 304-864-6465

5 activities for modern empty nesters



MetroCreative Connection

The rewards of parenting are bittersweet. Raising children successfully means they will one day leave home and embark on lives of their own. Once the proverbial chicks leave the nest, individuals may be left with a lot of empty home and a lot of time to fill.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there were 22.5 million empty nesters in the country in 2020, with most having become empty nesters between the ages of 40 and 60. Statistics Canada says roughly one-third of adults between the ages of 20 and 34 lived with their parents in 2023. Although some parents whose children have reached adulthood still provide financial assistance to their grown children due to high costs of living, many empty nesters in their fifties have greater financial resources and much more time to fill their days with activities unrelated to parenting. But how does one spend those hours when they had been filled with parenting-related obligations and activities for so long?

The following are five unique ways empty nesters can stay busy and socially engaged as they seek to avoid empty nest syndrome.

1. Take care of yourself. After all those years of putting children first, now is the time to make yourself the priority. Explore all of the ways to engage in self-care. Maybe you were thinking about signing up for a monthly massage package at a nearby wellness clinic but procrastinated because of the added expense? Or you may have wanted to splurge on a facial or new hair treatment? Now is the time to make those appointments.

2. Prioritize hobbies. Identify rewarding hobbies that might have been pushed to the back burner for years. If you always wanted to learn a new language, why not immerse yourself in it and the associated culture by spending a month or more in a country where that language is spoken? Now can be a great time to pick up new hobbies as well. Aim for activities that are social in nature, like the ever-popular pickleball.

3. Travel far and wide. Travel is a popular pastime among empty nesters and retirees. When you no longer have to coordinate travel around school schedules and holidays, you can take advantage of great deals on off-peak travel and really see the country or even the world.

4. Indulge your social life. If parenting made it hard to attend certain social functions, now you'll have the time to engage with friends more regularly. You can reach out to old friends and start a weekly walking group, join a book club, sign up for a fitness class together, or even do a monthly wine and dine meet-up at new restaurants in the area.

5. Adopt a pet. When children were still at home you likely lavished attention on them each day. You can redirect some of that affection to a pet who needs a good home. Visit a nearby animal shelter and pick out a pup or kitten looking for a good home.

Empty nesters have more free time to redirect to their own passion projects and interests.

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Did you know?

A high cost of living

and advancements in medicine that have contributed to longer life expectancies would seemingly compel individuals to work longer, but data indicates the average professional is retiring shortly after turning 60. Data from the 2024 MassMutual Retirement Happiness Study indicates that the average retirement age among American retirees is 62. That's in spite of the fact that pre-retirees and retirees who participated in the study indicated that 63 is the ideal retirement age. Canadians are staying in the workforce a good deal longer, as Statistics Canada reports the average retirement age across Canada in 2023 was 65.1. That disparity



could be due to the Canada Pension Plan (CPP), which replaces part of retirees' income with a monthly, taxable benefit. The Government of Canada reports the standard age to start the CPP is 65.

Fitness classes for the over-50 crowd

MetroCreative Connection

Exercise is a pillar of a healthy lifestyle. When individuals exercise regularly and pair physical activity with a healthy diet and smart lifestyle choices, they can extend their life expectancies and sleep well knowing they're doing everything they can to increase their chances of enjoying a limitless retirement.

Adults over 50 know it's not always so easy to exercise. Hectic schedules can make it seem like there's little time for exercise. And even when adults make time to break a sweat, they might find that traditional workouts combining strength training with cardiovascular exercise are too time-consuming and possibly even a little dull. In such instances, fitness classes can take the place of more traditional exercise regimens. Various classes provide a challenging workout, and many can do so in an hour or less.

• **Pilates:** Improving balance, core strength and flexibility are three goals of Pilates. Pilates has an interesting history, as it was created by Joseph Pilates, a German prisoner of war who was imprisoned off the coast of England during World War I. Pilates and the exercising phenomenon he created ultimately made their way to the United States, where the routine was embraced by dancers looking for a way to aid their injury recovery. Pilates is now part of millions of individuals' exercise regimens. This low-impact exercise is designed to strengthen muscles and improve alignment and flexibility. Achieving greater balance after 50 pays untold dividends for older adults, who can decrease their risk for falls and fall-related injuries by increasing their steadiness.

• **Spin:** Spin classes are a wildly popular exercise program that utilizes cycling to

help people break a sweat. Cardiovascular exercise is beneficial for a number of reasons, including its connection to heart health and even cognitive health. But many people lament daily sessions on a treadmill or elliptical that they find boring. Spin classes involve the use of stationary bikes, but instructors typically guide class members through conditions that mimic outdoor cycling sessions. Resistance and pedaling speed changes throughout a spin class, which serves to keep individuals engaged and burn lots of calories.

• **Kickboxing:** Sometimes referred to as Krav Maga, kickboxing is another unique and challenging class offered at many fitness facilities. Martial arts like kickboxing assist with weight loss and can help people improve their muscle tone, flexibility and stamina. Adults over 50 who are not accustomed to physical activity may find their energy levels are low, but a few kickboxing sessions may produce noticeable differences in stamina. The balance benefits of kickboxing are similar to those provided by Pilates, so this activity may be particularly beneficial for adults over 50 looking to reduce their vulnerability to falls as they grow older.

• **Dance:** Dancing is widely seen as a fun activity, and rightfully so, as few things can be as enjoyable as cutting a rug. But dancing also provides a great cardiovascular workout. Local community centers and even some fitness facilities offer age-specific dancing classes, which the AARP notes are great for individuals who want to build core strength, improve bone health and protect their heart.

Adults over 50 who want to be more physically active can look to any number of fitness classes to break a sweat, build strength and have fun all at once.

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The importance of wellness exams after 50

MetroCreative Connection

Seniors are a growing and increasingly prosperous demographic. As the senior population increases, a greater emphasis must be placed on keeping aging individuals healthy. Wellness checks are important at any age, but they bear even more significance as individuals grow older.

Age brings with it many things, including experience and wisdom. But age also brings an increased risk for health problems. Aging men and women are vulnerable to chronic conditions like heart disease, COPD, cancer, and arthritis. It's noteworthy that many chronic health conditions fail to produce any symptoms until they have progressed to a point where treatment is difficult.

Annual wellness exams can help older adults take charge of their health and stay as healthy as

possible. It's possible for a person to preserve his or her health (and possibly life) through check-ups and easy tests. Here are some common screenings and health recommendations that come up in the prime of one's life.

- **Colorectal cancer screening:** A colon cancer screening is recommended for everyone at age 45. Colon cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States, and risk increases at age 45. Although people seldom look forward to a colonoscopy and the required prep, putting off this test due to a little discomfort may result in missing colon cancer at its earliest stage when it is most treatable.

- **Cholesterol screening:** This simple blood test can help evaluate the risk for heart disease. High cholesterol can contribute to the buildup of plaque in the arteries, making them narrower



SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES

Westside Senior Center

Westside Senior Center opened June 10, 2001, and is totally operated by volunteers. It is open from 9 a.m. to noon and 6-9 p.m. Monday through Friday at 500 Dupont Road in Westover.

Members are knitting scarves for veterans and active-duty military as part of Operation Gratitude's "Scarves for the Troops." Anyone is welcome to bring knitting needles and join in the project.

Food is collected every month for the Rock Forge Food Pantry.

Evenings are full of things to do. Monday and Friday, bring a musical instrument and play with the group. Tuesdays and Thursdays, there is card playing, and Wednesday evening is for bingo. There is also a well-equipped exercise room that includes a pool table.

Assisted Living at Evergreen

Assisted Living at Evergreen is an alternative to nursing home care. A variety of specially developed leisure activities include outings to Oglebay, holiday dinners and parties and weekly shopping trips. Housekeeping and personal laundry services are available. There are community areas, dining and family rooms, an activity center and a gazebo with fish pond for outdoor relaxing.



Assisted Living at Evergreen, Morgantown

and less flexible, according to Sharecare, Inc.

- **Mammogram:** Most health organizations recommend annual mammogram screenings from age 40 until menopause. Then it may be possible to have a mammogram every other year for those who are at average risk. It is important for women to discuss mammogram frequency with their doctors, particularly if there is a family history of breast cancer.

- **Diabetes:** ChenMed says diabetes may be more common in older adults, so regular screenings for this illness can enable early diagnosis and management.

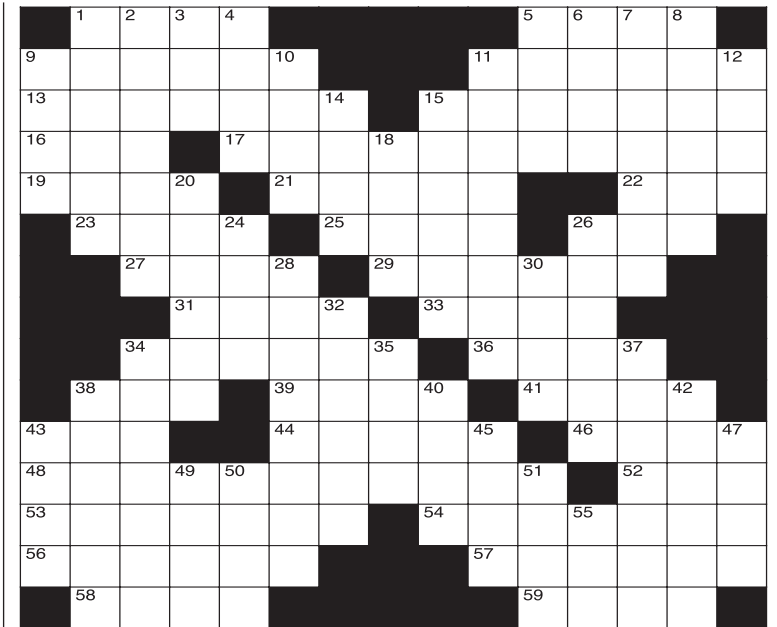
- **Testicular cancer screening:** This test generally is not recommended without symptoms. Some organizations suggest men with a family history or other risk factors consider performing self-examinations.

- **Vaccination needs:** Doctors can alert pa-

tients to recommended vaccinations during wellness exams. Seniors should receive an annual flu shot and updated COVID-19 vaccination as available. Pneumococcal vaccine can protect against pneumococcal disease that can lead to pneumonia, meningitis and bloodstream infections. Adults over 50 also should receive a vaccination for shingles, which can occur in older age in those who have previously experienced chickenpox.

There are additional advantages to routine health checkups. Doctors can inquire about fitness routines, stress, sleep, and diet to see if patients are within the guidelines for healthy living.

Older age may make a person wiser, but the risk for various health issues and certain diseases increases with age. Routine health check-ups can keep doctors and patients on the same page.



CLUES ACROSS

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. "Loser" rocker | 33. Palmer and Hepburn are two |
| 5. Partner to relaxation | 34. More than one |
| 9. Mixing | 36. Places down purposefully |
| 11. Winged nut | 38. Pitching statistic |
| 13. Expression of blame | 39. Type of sword |
| 15. Vast ocean | 41. Witnesses |
| 16. Comedienne Gasteyer | 43. Body part |
| 17. Multiply | 44. Mixes slowly |
| 19. Meat from a pig (French) | 46. Satisfy |
| 21. Related | 48. Strong belief |
| 22. Rocker Stewart | 52. One's physique (slang) |
| 23. Surprise completely | 53. More frightening |
| 25. Loon | 54. Soup cracker |
| 26. Canister | 56. Teaches |
| 27. Large, deep-bodied fish | 57. One who carries something |
| 29. Takes forcefully | 58. Actor Sean |
| 31. Oil cartel | 59. Changes |

CLUES DOWN

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. ___ Aires, city | 26. Male reproductive gland |
| 2. Coarse grass | 28. Controversial beliefs |
| 3. Type of gene | 30. Z Z Z |
| 4. Door handle | 32. One who confines another |
| 5. Competition | 34. Bishop |
| 6. Muslim ruler title | 35. Garlands |
| 7. Hunting expeditions | 37. Bird that flies by the coast |
| 8. Large mollusk | 38. Optical device |
| 9. Bind securely | 40. Greek goddess of discord |
| 10. Former U.S. presidential candidate | 42. Some are "Rolling" |
| 11. 2-point plays in football | 43. Formerly (archaic) |
| 12. Breezed through | 45. Thrust a knife into |
| 14. Type setting | 47. German river |
| 15. Felt for | 49. Atomic #26 |
| 18. Codified rules | 50. Make a grotesque face |
| 20. Small dome | 51. Primordial matter of the universe |
| 24. Chevrotain | 55. Chinese philosophical principle |

Solution on page 11

The important link between information and conversation

BY IRENE MARINELLI

for The Dominion Post



Whatever our ideology or our political stance may be, it would be both foolish and dangerous to ignore the importance of knowing both sides of the issues that swirl around us daily. I can't imagine anyone not admitting our

country is divided among political and moral lines. We see each other across a divide greater than the Grand Canyon. Hatred, racism and xenophobic fears all run rampant in our country.

Waiting for America's leaders to resolve this issue and solve our societal problems just doesn't work. We the people need to take back responsibility for our nation's welfare. We each need to examine our differences, while also understanding and accepting our similarities. Most of us, no

matter our political views, want peace in our land, an economy in which we and our children can thrive, safety for ourselves and our families, and a bright future for our children and grandchildren. These are not just American values, they are human values, whether we are recent immigrants or have ancestors who came over on the Mayflower. As with social and political issues, so it is with our relationships at home and out in the world. We humans are a tribal species. From our earliest beginnings, we have had to come together for protection and survival. Now, in order for our country and our democracy to survive, we must make a supreme effort to share our thoughts, our fears and our ideologies across party lines.....without rancor or blame. The importance of all Americans to have a shared vision, a sense of interconnectedness, cannot be overestimated.

This is where information shows its importance. Before we engage one another in conversation, we need to know that what

we say is factual. Factual information needs to be foremost in these conversations if they are to have any part in bringing us together. The internet, with all its various sites, is a blessing in many ways. It can also be a sinkhole filled with half-truths and sometimes even downright lies. The television news media is adept at putting their own spin on almost any issue. This is why, in order to be fully informed, we need to tune into several news stations instead of relying on only one favorite for information. It would also be prudent to make sure whatever news broadcasts we tune into bring us factual information without bias. After all, when we shop for a large appliance like a stove or a freezer, we search diligently for information about those products before making a purchase. Yet we quickly set our ideologies and our politics in cement based on only one or two sources of information. While it's a good idea to research an expensive appliance, it is obviously much more important to gather information about the

ideologies and political views of the men and women who run our town, our state and our country. Conversation without factual information is not helpful and it can be downright dangerous to the cause of unifying our country.

Even families can be divided by politics. We can recall seeing on the newscasts stories about families who refused to invite relatives to the Thanksgiving table because of the way they cast their vote in the election. There are families so divided along political lines that members no longer speak to one another. This is counterproductive to healing the divisions we face. Presidential elections can often inflame divisions, none more than the one we've just been through.

Can we reclaim our unity and live together in peace? That depends on each and every one of us doing our part to end division.

Irene Marinelli writes a regular column for Senior Post. Contact her at columns@dominionpost.com.

ASSISTED LIVING AND RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITIES

Monongalia County

Evergreen Assisted Living

3705 Collins Ferry Road, Morgantown
304-598-8401

Morgantown Health and Rehab (formerly Golden Living Center)

1379 Van Voorhis Road, Morgantown
304-599-9480

Madison Center

161 Bakers Ridge Road, Morgantown
304-285-0692

Mapleshire Nursing and Rehab Center

30 Mon General Drive, Morgantown
304-285-2720

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800 J.D. Anderson Drive, Morgantown
304-599-0497

The Suites at Heritage Point

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304-285-5575

Harmony at Morgantown

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304-503-4349

Preston County

PineRidge (formerly Heartland)

300 Miller Road, Kingwood
304-329-3195



PineRidge, Kingwood

Did you know?



The National Institute on Aging reports that people with dementia are often incapable of recognizing they are experiencing issues with driving a motor vehicle. Though some people confronting the early stages of Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia can still drive safely, the NIA notes they will likely need to stop as their condition more profoundly affects their memory and decision-making skills. The NIA suggests family and friends of drivers diagnosed with dementia keep an eye out for signs that could in-

dicade if their loved can continue to drive safely. Such indicators can include drivers forgetting how to get to and from familiar locales, such as their local grocery store or their homes. Concerned loved ones also can speak with a dementia patient's physician to determine how much their condition may be affecting their ability to drive. During these consultations, loved ones can ask physicians to recommend strategies regarding how to approach letting the person know it's no longer safe for them to drive.

Solution to puzzle on page 9

	B	E	C	K				R	E	S	T			
F	U	S	I	N	G			S	A	M	A	R	A	
R	E	P	R	O	O	F		P	A	C	I	F	I	C
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	S	T	U	N		T	W	I	T		T	I	N	
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	P	E	N	N						M	O	D	S	

SENIOR EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

If you are a senior and find yourself in need of emergency assistance, the following is a list of locations where heating, food, pet food, and other emergency help can be obtained.

Catholic Charities

827 Fairmont Road, Suite 203, Westover | 304-292-6597

Christian Help, Inc.

219 Walnut St., Morgantown | 304-291-0221

DHHR

Monongalia County

114 S. High St., Morgantown | 304-285-3175

Preston County

18351 Veterans Memorial Hwy., Kingwood | 304-329-4340

North Central West Virginia Community Action

Marion County

215 Scott Place, Fairmont | 304-363-4367

Preston County

428 Morgantown St., Kingwood | 304-363-2170

The Connecting Link

235 High St., Morgantown | 304-296-3300

Salvation Army - Monongalia County

1264 University Ave., Morgantown | 304-296-3525

Salvation Army - Preston County

124 Morgan St., Kingwood | 304-329-1245

Catholic Community Charities - Preston County

304-329-3644

The Raymond Wolfe Center is the only food pantry in Preston County that has specialized diet foods (diabetic, salt free, etc.). It also has some pet food available. Call to check availability.

The following locations are for Preston County residents only:

Wesley United Methodist Church

304-329-0707

St. Vincent DePaul Helpline

304-329-6229

Heat for Preston (January - March only)

304-329-2316

Terra Alta Council of Churches (Terra Alta residents only)

304-789-2509

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