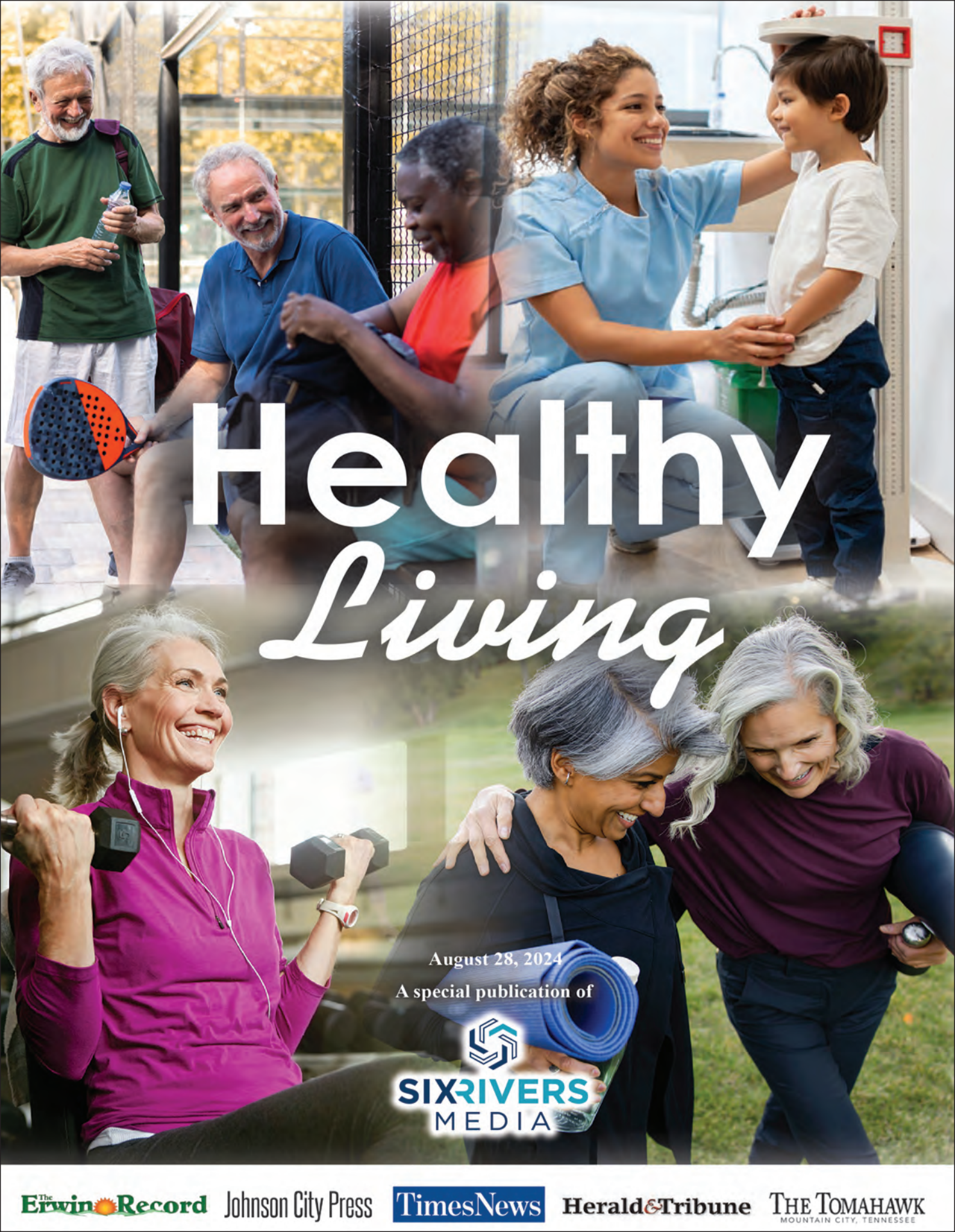




Healthy *Living*

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Healthy food, healthy living a priority at Second Harvest Food Bank of Northeast Tennessee

BY ANNA ADAMS

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KINGSPORT — Although Second Harvest Food Bank of Northeast Tennessee's primary purpose is to serve healthy food to people in need, Executive Director Rhonda Chafin said they strive to do so much more.



JARED BENTLEY

Rhonda Chafin is executive director of Second Harvest Food Bank of Northeast Tennessee.

The food bank serves 46,000 people monthly in eight counties in the East Tennessee region. They serve the elderly who have trouble getting access to nutritious food, children who may not have a meal after school, single mothers providing for their families and more. However, the food bank also helps those in need improve their living situation. "We're not only working to give an emergency food box," Chafin said, "but we're also trying to connect them to services to stabilize their lives."

Food insecurity can happen for many reasons, and if a person is struggling in multiple areas of their lives, they may need more help than free meals. Second Harvest Food Bank of Northeast Tennessee is one of 400 organizations in the area that is connected to the Unite Us platform. If the food bank hears that someone needs more than food, they refer them to other services provided by different agencies.

"If we can stabilize them at the free clinic, or if we can help stabilize them with good housing or if we can help stabilize them in some other areas, that might also help them stabilize their life so they're not part of the 46,000," Chafin said. "And we may be able to even pull them out of poverty."

She said the food bank focuses on long-term solutions, and healthy eating can be a solution to diabetes, heart conditions and overall health. This could be particularly impactful for senior citizens.

"We consider healthy food to be medicine," she said. "Because it may keep them, if they are on medicare or medicaid, it may keep them out of the hospital to save on healthcare costs."

COMMUNITY KITCHEN

The food bank is building a community kitchen to provide up to 800 meals daily for children after school. It is projected to be in full operation on Oct. 1. Chafin said the kitchen will provide opportunities to multiple people.

"Our plan is to hopefully roll out, in year two, a training program that will help us with the manpower," she said. "And that training program could be from our high school culinary programs on certain days. It could also be on certain days that we could have individuals come in from probation and parole reentry. ... So they could go out and get a job and they would get a good reference from us."

She said if any recipients of the kitchen meals expressed needing a job, the food bank would put them in the cook program to train them.

"We're really open and we think it's an opportunity for this type of training," Chafin said.

MAKING AN IMPACT

Providing nutritious food is not the most simple task, and the



BY ANNA ADAMS/AADAMS@SIXRIVERSMEDIA.COM

Second Harvest Food Bank of Northeast Tennessee Executive Director Rhonda Chafin speaks with workers on the progress of the new community kitchen.

food bank partners with the government and other organizations to make it possible.

"It is a challenge on a regular basis," Chafin said.

However, she said they're meeting their goals for providing healthy foods. The 2023 impact report showed that over 4 million pounds of fresh produce was distributed.

"It is top quality, fresh produce that comes to us on a regular basis," Chafin said.

The bank's summer feeding program and the after school program allows the food bank to be reimbursed if they meet the specific criteria of meal components given by the federal government.

Second Harvest Food Bank of Northeast Tennessee is in its second year of launching Project Diabetes. The program focuses on promoting healthy eating habits, so those who struggle with diabetes or heart problems will have mitigated effects of the disease. Chafin said the habits will also help prevent diseases before they come.

"We believe it's going to impact people downstream to start eating healthy so we can maybe head off diabetes or heart conditions, that overall unhealthy lifestyle," she said.

"We also raise money to buy food," she added. "So we really try to make healthy purchases."

She said they make an effort to buy healthier options of cereals, such as multi-grain cornflakes instead of fruit loops, low-sodium canned vegetables and nut bars.

As executive director, Chafin said she tries to participate in distributions to ensure the organization is making an impact and productive decisions. Seeing how grateful recipients are when they drop off food, and how needed the food is, left an impression on Chafin.

"That's what keeps me going," she said. "And it's what keeps these team members, because they see it every day."



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8 healthy snack ideas kids will love

Parents know that growing children need a lot of food. According to pediatric dietitian Hanna Leikin, MS, RD, CSP, LD, kids need a higher calorie demand per body weight compared to adults to support bone development, muscle growth and other bodily functions. Perhaps that's why it seems like a stocked refrigerator or pantry can become barren in just a few days when kids are in the house.

Children are frequently looking for snacks between meals, which means that parents need to have a variety of snack foods at the ready for their youngsters. But it can be a struggle to find healthy snacks children will eat. With that in mind, parents can consider these eight healthy alternatives to less nutritional fare like chips or sugary treats.

1. Fruit on a stick: It seems any food enjoyed on a stick is fun to eat. This is certainly an item for older kids, as parents won't want to worry about younger children getting injured with the pointy wooden skewers. Simply slide a variety of chopped or sliced fruit onto the skewers and make a healthy, colorful snack. For an added bonus, include a small cup of low-fat vanilla yogurt for a fruit dip.

2. Baby carrots and hummus: Who can resist baby carrots? After all, they seem tailor-made for kids' small fingers. Pair with a homemade or store-bought hummus, which is full of protein and fiber. You can even find dessert hummus, which may prove particularly appealing to children's palates.

3. Crackers and cheese: Choose whole-grain crackers and a low-fat cheese. This provides the crunch of chips without the fat and calories. In addition, cheese adds protein and the benefits of calcium and other nutrients found in dairy.

4. Nut butters and pretzels: Kids need unsaturated fats to spur brain growth and overall development. Nuts and nut butters offer these good fats. The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases says peanut butter can be given to kids as young as four months old, and that early exposure may prevent peanut allergies. Additional nut butters include almond and cashew. Let kids dip pretzels into the nut butter for a filling snack.

5. Overnight oats creations: Let kids take part in building jars or containers of overnight oats with their favorite ingredients. When old-fashioned rolled oats are mixed with low-fat milk (or dairy alternatives), raisins, granola, fresh fruit, chia seeds, and even low-fat yogurt and left to sit overnight, the result is a spoonable treat that's ideal for meals and snacks. Plus the fiber in oatmeal will help keep children feeling fuller longer.

6. Frozen smoothie bowl: This is a great alternative to ice cream. Simply blend your child's favorite frozen fruits (and toss in a few veggies) with low-fat Greek yogurt. Serve in a bowl with toppings like granola, finely chopped nuts or coconut flakes.

7. Energy balls or bars: Mix dates, nuts, seeds, and rolled oats and press into bar shapes or roll into bite-sized balls when kids need a sweet and energizing snack.

8. Turkey and cheese roll-ups: Ensure that kids are getting enough protein by offering a lean protein source like sliced turkey. Roll up a slice of turkey or sliced chicken breast around a cheese stick for a portable and fun snack.

Healthy snacks for children are easier to dream up than one may think. It can take children several times of seeing a new food on his or her plate before being inclined to try it, so parents should stay the course with healthy snacks even if kids are initially reluctant to try them.





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A photograph showing an elderly woman with short grey hair, wearing a white top, sitting in a chair. She is smiling and looking towards a caregiver who is partially visible on the right side of the frame. The caregiver is wearing a green top and is assisting the woman.

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Healthy outdoor opportunities abound in Unicoi County

By **BRYAN STEVENS**

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Research consistently shows that getting outdoors for some exercise and fresh air, even for short outings, can reap a multitude of health benefits.

Unicoi County residents, as well as visitors, have a wealth of options when it comes to getting active in the great outdoors.

“Rocky Fork State Park offers many hiking trails that range from easy to strenuous, to accommodate any hiker,” explained Amanda Lank, a seasonal interpretive ranger at the park, which is located in the mountains around Flag Pond.

“For younger hikers or an adult just starting out, I would recommend Rocky Fork Trail that is a half mile in, that merges to Flint Creek Trail to the left,” she said. “You follow the creek along the way and get to see the beautiful cascades, all while being under the cover of our many shade trees. The incline is very mild and there are many areas you can walk to the creek’s edge and even dip your toes in.”

She noted that Rocky Fork Trail is only a mile in total, which is an achievable goal for most families.

“Many people come to visit Rocky Fork to just get out of the house and take a relaxing stroll,” Lank said.

“Taking even a short 15-minute walk a day is proven to help reduce stress levels and promote healthy habits,” Lank said. “By hiking you are improving your mental health and your physical health by immersing yourself in nature.”

Lank noted that hiking also helps nurture and foster new interests.

“You may not know you are really into wildflowers or fungi until you get out there and discover them yourself,” she said. “Breathing in our fresh mountain air is also great for the lungs.”

It’s important to Lank that all guests at Rocky Fork have an enjoyable experience during her programs.

“When you come prepared to be outside, your experience will always go much better,” Lank said.

When promoting upcoming events on the park’s calendar, Lank makes a point to put reminders about things people might want to bring with them, such as water for hydration, snacks or bug repellent, to ensure that her program guests are as prepared and comfortable as possible.

“All of the rangers at Rocky Fork offer a wide array of programs, suitable for different age groups and fitness levels,” Lank said.

“I enjoy holding sunrise hikes because you are not only starting your day with something beautiful, you are starting your day with a hike and getting your blood moving in your body,” Lank said. “I feel it really sets the tone for the rest of the day.”

She noted that the park will be having future sunrise hikes, as well as birding programs, that start early in the morning on weekends. Also planned are mid-day nature walks to learn about the plants growing along the creek.

Longer day hikes are available, as well as full moon hikes. She said there is also planning in the works to offer an owl calling program.

Lower in elevation than Rocky Fork are Fishery Park and the Erwin Linear Trail in the town of Erwin.

“The public use of the Linear Trail includes residents, families, seniors, fitness enthusiasts, pet owners, school teams, tourists, commuters and more,” explained Valerie Bradley, communications director for the town of Erwin.

Bradley noted that the Linear Trail offers easy accessibility, safety, amenities and a chance for community engagement for families wanting to get outdoors for fresh air and exercise.



CONTRIBUTED

Rocky Fork State Park leads a group of hikers to Whitehouse Cliffs Overlook at Rocky Fork State Park to enjoy a sunrise. The hike also offered a chance to get outdoors and clear the mind with some physical exercise.

The trail parallels Interstate 26 along both the North Indian Creek and Nolichucky waterways for a little more than 4 miles.

“Walking on the Linear Trail or at Fishery Park offers significant health benefits, including improved physical health,” Bradley noted.

“Walking in a natural setting helps reduce stress,” she added. “These activities provide low-impact exercise suitable for all fitness levels, promoting both physical and mental well-being by allowing individuals to disconnect from daily stressors and enjoy the calming effects of nature.”

New additions at Fishery Park have made the attraction even more appealing to the public.

“The new playground located at Fishery Park has been well-utilized by the community, offering a space for children to engage in physical activity and social interaction,” Bradley said. “Parents and caregivers often bring their children to the playground, fostering a sense of community and providing a safe environment for play that is also ADA accessible.”

Bradley said there are no current plans for any additions to the Linear Trail or Fishery Park.

“The renovations to the tennis/pickle ball courts were finished in June, so we are looking forward to those getting more use,” Bradley said.

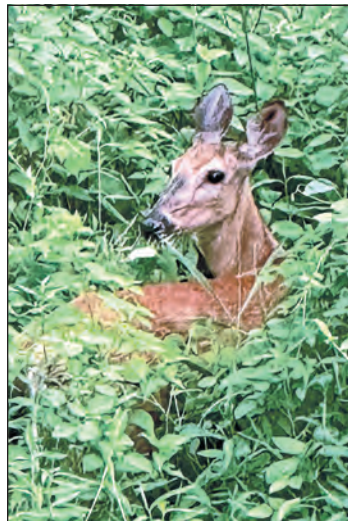
She noted that those renovations were made possible through a grant with the Tennessee State Department of Health to promote health and wellness in the area.

Other possibilities for outdoor activity in Unicoi County include the Unaka Bike Trail in Erwin, recreational activities on the Nolichucky River and hiking

the Pinnacle Mountain Tower Trail in the town of Unicoi.

Three recreation areas are available within the Cherokee National Forest in Unicoi County. Limestone Cove Recreation Area offers picnicking and fishing opportunities. Rock Creek Recreation Area offers swimming, picnicking and camping for tents and recreational vehicles. Chestoa Recreation Area offers picnicking, fishing and swimming opportunities. It is a take-out area for whitewater rafters who ride the river from Poplar, North Carolina through the wild Nolichucky Gorge. Canoeists also put-in here for a more relaxed float downriver or to fish for trout and smallmouth bass.

Unaka Mountain, also managed by the Cherokee National Forest, offers back-country hiking trails and scenic drives to such destinations as the Beauty Spot and the Overlook.



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A white-tailed deer seen along the Erwin Linear Trail is an example of the wildlife that also benefits from this greenbelt in Unicoi County.

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How exercise builds a stronger heart

The benefits of physical activity are well-documented. Adults may be reminded of the short- and long-term benefits of exercise when visiting their physicians for annual well visits or to treat an illness. Though exercise is often viewed as a means to losing weight, it's equally important for people of all ages to recognize the many other ways physical activity benefits the body, including its role in heart health.

The World Health Organization reports that cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) are the leading causes of death across the globe. A host of variables can lead to a CVD diagnosis, and a sedentary lifestyle is among them. By including exercise in their daily routines, individuals can build a stronger heart that benefits their bodies in myriad ways.

EXERCISE, THE HEART AND LUNG FUNCTION

The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute notes that regular moderate- and vigorous-intensity physical activity strengthens the heart muscle. A stronger heart is more capable of pumping blood to the lungs, which the NHLBI notes ensures a stronger blood flow to the muscles.

EXERCISE AND BLOOD OXYGEN LEVELS

Exercise helps to increase oxygen levels in the blood by improving the ability of the heart to pump blood not only to the lungs, but throughout the body. That's a notable benefit, as the Cleveland Clinic notes hypoxia, a condition marked by low blood oxygen levels, can lead to adverse health conditions, such as damage to individual organ systems, including the brain.

EXERCISE AND CORONARY HEART DISEASE

Coronary heart disease is a condition marked by the buildup of plaque in the cor-



onary arteries, which the NHLBI notes supply the heart muscle with oxygen-rich blood. Moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic activity has been linked to a lower risk for coronary heart disease because it can help people lower their blood pressure; reduce a type of fat in the blood known as triglycerides; increase "good" cholesterol levels; help the body manage its blood sugar and insulin levels; and reduce levels of C-reactive protein (CRP), which is a sign of inflammation associated with a higher risk of heart disease.

These are just a handful of the ways that exercise can help individuals build a stronger heart. Individuals who have already been diagnosed with heart disease and

have lived a largely sedentary lifestyle are urged to speak with their physicians about safe ways to incorporate exercise into their daily routines. Vigorous aerobic activity may not be safe for people who have heart disease, so anyone

in that situation should not simply begin exercising on their own.

A healthy heart is a building block of a long life. More information about exercise and heart health can be found at [nhlbi.nih.gov](https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov).

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BY THOMAS GAETANO/FOR THE HERALD & TRIBUNE

You can enjoy Yoga in the Park in Jonesborough on Sundays.



BY THOMAS GAETANO/FOR THE HERALD & TRIBUNE

Jimmy Neil Smith Park is home to Jonesborough's Yoga in the Park.

Pursuit of fitness through yoga continues in Jonesborough

By THOMAS GAETANO
For the Herald & Tribune

In a shady area of Jimmy Neil Smith Park near the Storybook Trail, a group of people gathered in a circle on a Sunday afternoon to practice yoga under the instruction of Maria Lovelady, who is one of several instructors participating in the Town of Jonesborough's Yoga in the Park program.

"This is my second year doing Yoga in the Park," Lovelady said. "It has always had a really good reception."

Jimmy Smith Neil Park is located on 111 West College Street, and the location of the yoga classes can be accessed by climbing the wooden staircase behind the Chester Inn Museum, the International Storytelling Center and the Christopher Taylor House. The outdoor yoga classes occur every Sunday afternoon at four and last for one hour.

The instructor added the free event is regularly attended by those with a wide variety of fitness levels and ages.

"It's accessible to everybody," she said.

Liz Sapia was one attendee who participated with her child.

"I've been coming to this for a couple of years now," she said. Sapia added that Lovelady was her favorite instructor among them and that over the years she improved her ability to focus her mind; blocking out distractions from other activities in the park.

Lovelady explained the fitness practice offers several benefits to a person's thinking, breathing and flexibility. The technique is intended to improve the mind-body connection. On Aug. 11, there were 24 attendees, and some brought children along to enjoy the time in the park.

"A lot of people think it is really relaxing," she said, "but it can actually be really challenging."

When the class began, the participants were advised to be aware of the condition of their body as they attempted the poses.

"You should not be feeling any pain," announced Lovelady, specifying that sensations of numbness or tingling is a sign to come out of the pose. The attendees were also advised that breaks could be taken as needed to consume water on the hot afternoon.

As the yoga class continued, the instructor walked around to help the participants to properly perform the poses after having first asked who among them was comfortable receiving help.

Most of the guests chose shady spots while they engaged in poses, many of which the instructor said encouraged the twisting ability — a necessary for movement but could also be an unnatural feeling to practice.

Other poses included the cat and camel and mobility exercises and poses that challenged muscles in the back of the leg, according to Lovelady's instruction.

For more information about the free fitness program Yoga in the Park, including the schedules and background experience of the various yoga teachers, go to www.jonesborough.com/yoga.

How to safeguard your vision when spending time outdoors

The great outdoors beckons billions of people across the globe every day. There's much to be gained from spending time outdoors. According to the American Psychological Association, exposure to nature has been linked to improved attention, lower stress, improvements in mood, and reduced risk of psychiatric disorders.

With so much to gain from spending time in the great outdoors, it's no wonder so many people embrace opportunities to get outside. When doing so, it's important that individuals take proper precautions, such as wearing sunscreen and staying hydrated. But it's equally important to protect your eyes before soaking up some spring-time and summer sun.

- Purchase prescription sunglasses, if necessary. Sunglasses are vital to protecting the eyes from the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays. If you wear prescription eyeglasses indoors, then you



should also wear prescription sunglasses when spending time outside. Even contact lens wearers may want to invest in prescription sunglasses for those times when they're engaging in physical activity outdoors. Sweat makes its way into the eyes when exerting oneself outdoors, and that can make contacts uncomfortable. Airborne allergens like pollen also can make contacts less comfortable when outside, and prescription sunglasses can

help people avoid such discomfort while protecting the eyes from UV rays.

- Wear a hat or visor. Hats and visors also help to protect the eyes from UV rays. The National Eye Institute recommends wearing sunglasses even on cloudy days, but it's easy to forget them when leaving home or the car on an overcast morning or afternoon. Hats or visors can serve as a safety net on cloudy days when you forget to bring your sunglasses.

- Avoid rubbing your eyes. Whether it's airborne allergens or debris, things can get into the eyes when spending time outdoors. In such instances, your first instinct might be to rub your eyes. However, University of Utah Health notes that rubbing your eyes can be very dangerous and increase risk for illness. Virus droplets can attach to hands and enter the body through the conjunctiva, a thin layer of tissue that lines the inner eyelid. This can cause

infection in the eye. Dust and dirt on relatively clean but unwashed hands also can enter the eyes upon rubbing them, potentially leading to irritation and infection. So it's best to avoid rubbing eyes when they feel irritated and opt for eye cleaners and eyelid wipes instead.

- Keep your hands clean. Though it's best to avoid touching your eyes with your hands, doing so is an instinctive response for many people. Frequent hand washing can keep hands free from bacteria and dust that can enter the eyes after they are touched or rubbed. No one knows how clean or dirty surfaces outside their own homes are, and surfaces outside may be particularly dirty or dusty. Frequent hand washing reduces the likelihood that dirt and debris will find its way into your eyes.

When the great outdoors beckons, individuals can take various steps to protect their eyes from damage and infection.

What to expect at your next eye exam

Regular eye examinations are important components of a personal health regimen. Visiting an eye doctor can alert a person to potential vision impairments, and certain symptoms that show up in the eyes could be indicative of notable health problems. The American Academy of Ophthalmology says everything from brain tumors to aneurysms to high cholesterol can be detected in the eyes.

For those who do not have any apparent vision problems, most doctors recommend following a chart based on age. The insurance experts at Aetna suggest the following age-based intervals:

- Ages 20 to 39: Every five years
- Ages 40 to 54: Every two to four years
- Ages 55 to 64: Every one to three years
- Ages 65 and up: Every one to two years

Individuals who wear glasses or contact lenses, have a family history of eye disease, or have a chronic condition that puts them at risk for eye disease, like diabetes, should get vision exams

more frequently.

Despite the significance of eye exams, many people do not visit an eye doctor until something is amiss with their vision or eyes. Perhaps individuals would be inclined to visit the eye doctor more frequently if they knew what to expect during an exam. Here's what people can expect the next time they step into a private eye doctor's office or a vision center, courtesy of The Cleveland Clinic and Warby Parker.

- Visual acuity: The eye doctor will ask you to read an eye chart while looking through a device called a phoropter. This device has several lenses that can be adjusted to help you see better and find the right corrective lens prescription.

- Visual field: The doctor will check peripheral vision by holding up a finger or an object and moving it gradually to the side of your face. Additional movements may include up and down. Some offices use a computer program to conduct this test.

- Automatic refraction: Visual acuity can be measured with this test, during which an autore-

fractor shines light into the eye and measures the eye's response. It's commonly used with children or adults who may struggle to communicate what they're seeing.

- Pupil function: The eye doctor will briefly shine a handheld light into each eye and then move the light away to watch how the pupils constrict and dilate.

- Slit lamp exam: This test involves a slit lamp, which is a type of microscope that enables the eye doctor to see the eyes in close detail.

- Tonometry measurement: Glaucoma occurs when intraocular pressure is high. Some eye doctors will conduct tests to determine the pressure. One way is with a non-contact tonometry test, which is a puff of air squirted at each eye. With applanation tonometry, the doctor first administers a mild numbing agent to the eye, and then uses a pressure-sensitive instrument to



gently tap on the surface of the eye to get a pressure reading. A rebound tonometry test requires a handheld device that makes brief contact to the eye and doesn't require local anesthesia.

- Pupil dilation: The eye doctor will administer eye drops that dilate the pupils, which enables a better view of the retina, optic nerve, cornea, and surrounding blood vessels during an ophthalmoscopy.

- Special photography: The eye doctor may utilize specialized imaging equipment that will take digital images of the eyes to diagnose various retinal, optic nerve and corneal conditions.

These are some of the things people may experience during a comprehensive vision exam.

Simple ways to get a better night's sleep

Sleep is a vital component of a healthy lifestyle. The National Institutes of Health says good sleep improves brain performance and mood and helps reduce the risk of many diseases and disorders, including heart disease and obesity. In fact, sleep is as important for good health as diet and exercise.

Too often people do not get enough sleep or poor quality sleep. Sleep needs change as a person ages, with young children and teens requiring between nine and 10 hours per night. Most adults need at least seven hours each night. According to Dr. Kenneth Wright, Jr., a sleep researcher at the University of Colorado, a person can make up for a poor night's sleep by sleeping in the next day, but habitual loss of sleep cannot be recuperated in a weekend.

Men need to focus on sleep to feel their best. These sleep strategies, courtesy of The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the NIH, can promote better sleep.

- Be consistent. The body will adapt to a sleeping schedule when you go to bed and wake in the morning at the same time each day. Try not to vary your schedule between weekdays or weekends, or even when on vacation.

- Limit exposure to light at night. The body naturally responds to darkened conditions by stimulating the production of melatonin, which is a hormone that helps regulate the sleep-wake cycle. Too often people keep lights on at night or look at phones or watch television, which can adversely affect melatonin production and contribute to a poor sleep environment.

- Exercise each day. Aim for

daily exercise, which can make it easier to fall asleep at night. Avoid exercise a few hours before bed, however.

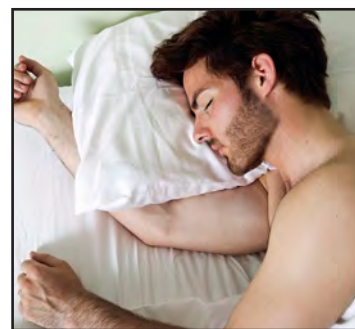
- Spend time outside each day. At least 30 minutes of sunlight and fresh air each day can promote a better night's sleep.

- Watch your naps. Naps should be short and taken before mid-afternoon.

- Skip caffeine and alcohol later in a day. Caffeine consumption can impede the ability to fall asleep because it is a stimulant. Although alcohol is a depressant and can make it easy to fall asleep, the sleep that is taking place after consuming alcohol, particularly late at night, will not be quality, restorative sleep.

- Keep meals at night very light. Heavy meals that force the body to spend hours digesting can interrupt sleep onset and quality.

- Maintain a dark, cool and quiet bedroom. A dark, cool and



quiet bedroom is a positive sleep environment.

If sleeping habits do not improve after making these changes, individuals should speak with a health care provider to determine if there is an underlying condition that is compromising sleep, such as restless leg syndrome or obstructive sleep apnea. Although sleeping pills can offer relief once in a while, they should not be seen as long-term solutions to sleeping disorders. Doctor can be useful allies in helping individuals get better sleep.

The link between sleep and healthy aging

A good night's rest can be just what the body needs to feel revitalized and ready to tackle a new day. Indeed, rest is important for people of all ages, including seniors.

The National Council on Aging notes the brain needs sleep to regulate the body, restore energy and repair damage. Recognition of that is vital for aging men and women, some of whom may be more vulnerable to sleeping problems than they realize. In addition to being more vulnerable to age-related health problems that can interrupt their sleep, thus affecting its quality, aging men and women may find their sleep routines change over time. For example, a 2019 study published in the journal BMC Geriatrics found that active elderly people reported it took them longer to fall asleep as they got older.

The NCOA says it's a misconception that older adults need more sleep than younger people, noting adults of all ages require the same amount of nightly rest. However, things may change for seniors in regard to how much time they

need to spend in bed. The NCOA notes this is because adults may be more likely to experience poor sleep quality and continuity. When that occurs, adults still need the recommended minimum of seven hours of nightly sleep, but they may need to spend more time in bed since it's taking them longer to fall asleep.

It's important that aging adults recognize that they can spend too much time sleeping as well. A 2019 study published in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society found that too much sleep is linked to the same health problems as too little sleep, issues that include an elevated risk for heart disease and falls.

Sleep issues affecting older adults also may be a byproduct of various contributing factors. The NCOA notes that frequent contributors to sleep concerns include:

- Pain that affects the back, neck, or joints

- Mental health issues, including anxiety and depression

- Neurodegenerative disorders that are more frequent among aging populations, such

as dementia and Alzheimer's

- Sleep apnea or disordered breathing at night

- Restless leg syndrome, a condition that tends to worsen with age and is characterized by an urge to move limbs often

- Nocturia, a condition marked by a need to urinate at night

- Stimulating medications or medication interactions

- Decreased exposure to sunlight

- Sedentary lifestyle

Aging men and women who are experiencing difficulty

sleeping should know that such issues are treatable and not something that needs to be accepted as a normal part of growing older. For example, individuals whose sleep is routinely interrupted by a need to urinate can avoid certain beverages, including alcohol and caffeinated drinks.

Sleep and healthy aging go hand in hand. Aging adults experiencing difficulty sleeping can consult their physicians and visit ncoa.org to learn more about overcoming sleep-related issues.



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Why academic medicine matters to patient outcomes

What do Duke Health, Vanderbilt Health, the Mayo Clinic and ETSU Health all have in common?

They are built on a foundation of academic medicine.

This means that they each hold close ties to a medical school, such as East Tennessee State University's Quillen College of Medicine, where faculty train medical students and residents to become the next generation of physicians.

Why should that matter when it is time to choose a doctor?

Academic medicine centers consistently rank among the top for patient care. They are among the most trusted to provide the best outcomes. Often, these centers take on the sickest patients needing the most complex care, because they are the best equipped to do so.

That's because providers at academic medicine institutions are on the cusp of innovation. As they educate the next generation, they are constantly challenging themselves to stay up-to-date on

the latest findings and research. These providers also oversee the work of resident physicians. Residents are physicians who have completed medical school, received their medical degree, and are equipped with the latest knowledge in patient care.

"This means that patients receive care from a team of physicians. The team includes a physician resident along with an experienced faculty physician in the field," said Dr. Sheri Holmes, Chief Medical Officer for ETSU Health. "This means you receive care from the brightest minds of tomorrow and the experts of today, working together for your best possible outcome."

Clinical groups associated with medical schools, such as ETSU Health, are also able to recruit specialists who may have never otherwise moved into rural regions. Many of the specialists at Niswonger Children's Hospital are ETSU Health providers, including neonatologists, gastroenterologists, pulmonologists, endocrinologists and more.

That's why Niswonger Children's Hospital is "powered by ETSU Health."

"The research that's done at ETSU is critical in driving [Niswonger Children's Hospital] in being a forward-thinking and a forward-acting institution," said Dr. Jack Owens, a neonatologist with ETSU Health and the medical director of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Niswonger Children's Hospital. "That's partly why I think we have a children's hospital in this community. We don't have a metropolitan center with a children's hospital as an anchor. So, it took some vision and foresight for somebody to consider that we need a medical school here and we need a children's hospital here."

Just as residents work alongside ETSU Health's primary care providers, fellows work alongside their specialists, increasing access to these vital services for the community.

Fellows are physicians who have completed medical school and a

residency program and are board-certified. These physicians are receiving additional training and supervised experience in an area of very specialized care.

Fellowships occur in areas of medical sub-specialties such as rheumatology, endocrinology, gastroenterology, pulmonology, infectious disease and more.

By recruiting and training fellows within these specialties, ETSU Health increases access to care within the Appalachian Highlands.

With 30 clinical sites and more than 250 healthcare providers, ETSU Health is on the front lines of efforts to improve the health of Northeast Tennessee by offering leading-edge healthcare in dozens of specialties.

ETSU Health is the outward-facing brand that includes the pursuits of ETSU's thriving Academic Health Science Center and the clinical components of ETSU Physicians & Associates and Northeast Tennessee Community Health Centers Inc. For more, visit ETSUHealth.org.

Food is fuel: ETSU physician educates teens at Elizabethton Boys & Girls Club

BY LAKEN GREENE

lgreen@sixriversmedia.com

An ETSU physician is teaching teens about the importance of nutrition through her grant-funded TEEN Project.

"What we put in our bodies as fuel is one of the primary ways that we make the choice to be healthy," said ETSU Health Pediatric Endocrinologist Dr. Evelyn Artz. "Being thoughtful about what we're putting in our body is going to help us to be healthier...nutrition is a huge part of a healthy lifestyle."

Artz began teaching nutrition classes at the Elizabethton Boys & Girls Club in August 2023, after receiving a grant from the American Academy of Pediatrics. The grant led to the creation of Artz's TEEN-Teen Education on Exercise and Nutrition-Project, something that aligns well with her work.

"The diseases that we see now we used to only see in adults—like type two diabetes, fatty liver disease, high cholesterol, high blood pressure (and) sleep apnea," Artz said. "A lot of that is related to our diet and lack of physical activity, so that's kind of a passion of mine is just trying to talk to people about that."

As a pediatric endocrinologist, Artz primarily deals with patients who have hormonal issues, weight-related issues—like early onset weight gain or excessive weight gain—and the effects of weight gain.

Through the TEEN Project, Artz is optimistic that sharing mindful nutrition-related programming to the younger generation will enable them to make better choices than their predecessors.

"I think we all struggle with our weight more than people did 50 years ago," Artz said.

"Hopefully I'm helping (teens) to be a little bit more mindful about what (they are) eating."

Artz holds a TEEN Project session once a month at the Boys & Girls Club in Elizabethton. She said that teens get to participate in a variety of activities and trips relating to nutrition and living a healthy lifestyle.

In the past, teens have learned how to cook healthy meals and snacks, and at the end of these sessions, teens received a bag of groceries to take home so that they can continue to cook healthy alternatives.

"Hopefully, they start to think, maybe I can make something at home rather than going through the drive thru," Artz said.

Teen participants also got to visit Sycamore Shoals for outdoor activity, as well as the Food City in Elizabethton,

where Food City's nutritionist took the group on a grocery store tour to learn about eating right and finding the best options.

"It's been a really fun process," Artz said.

While the awarded grant can only fund the TEEN Project through October, Artz is optimistic that the lessons learned throughout the process will change the course for generations to come.

"(With) improvements in our diet and physical activity, we can prevent many chronic diseases," Artz said. "Starting that process when kids are young and having that just become part of the decisions that they make is really essential to being a healthy adult...hopefully, we're going to be able to prevent some of these chronic diseases that we're now seeing at a much younger age."

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Cardiology Mountain City

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Behavioral health, family medicine, pediatric care, women's health, respiratory care therapy

ETSUHealth.org



Alzheimer's disease and the various dementias

Dementia is an umbrella term that alludes to various conditions arising from damage to brain cells that affect the cells' ability to communicate. This damage can affect a person's ability to think clearly and his or her behavior and emotions, says the Alzheimer's Association. There are several types of dementia, and Alzheimer's disease is one of them.

It is important to recognize that dementia is not a normal part of aging. Many conditions contribute to dementia. Alzheimer's disease (AD) is the most common form of dementia, accounting for between 60 and 80 percent of all diagnoses, says the Alzheimer's Society. The symptoms of dementia include:

- memory loss that can include both short-term and long-term memory issues
- difficulties with thinking, problem-solving or language that are severe enough to impact daily activities
- changes in mood or behavior

Symptoms of AD can overlap with other types of dementia. However, unlike other dementias that may affect only one part of the brain, AD generally affects most of the brain. The most common early symptom of AD is difficulty remembering new information. That's because AD typically affects the part of the brain associated with learning first, says the Alzheimer's Association. As the disease progresses, which it's bound to do because it is degenerative, symptoms become more severe. Disorientation, confusion and behavioral changes may become more pronounced. Over time, even speaking, walking and swallowing can become difficult due to changes to the brain.

The National Institute on Aging says abnormal buildup of proteins known as amyloid plaque and tau tangles are implicated in dementia occurrence. People with AD also may experience a loss of connections between neurons in the brain. Neurons are responsible for transmitting messages between different parts of the brain, and from the brain to muscles and organs in the body.

AD is not the only type of dementia. Here's a look at some lesser known forms of the disease.

-Vascular dementia: After AD, vascular dementia is the next most common form of the condition. Vascular dementia occurs when there is trouble with the blood supply to the brain, which often occurs after a stroke.

-Dementia with Lewy Bodies: This dementia is linked to the presence of Lewy bodies, which are clumps of proteins in the brain. Symptoms of this dementia mimic both Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease, which can make it hard to diagnose.

-Frontotemporal dementia: This dementia affects the frontotemporal lobes, impacting language, thinking and behavior.

-Mixed dementia: This occurs when two or more dementias are happening at the same time. AD and vascular dementia usually are responsible for mixed dementia.

A visit to the doctor is warranted whenever personality, memory and language issues present. It can take time to diagnose dementias, so any symptoms that adversely affect the brain should be reported to a physician immediately.

6 ways to reduce stress



Overall, these habits can exacerbate stress and lead to additional health problems.

5. Meditate: The Mayo Clinic says attention is focused to help calm the thoughts in the mind and give a sense of peace and calm. Meditation can include guided imagery, mindfulness and visualization exercises.

6. Connect with others: Meaningful relationships can create feelings of belonging. Feeling cared for and supported can help people cope with stress and be more resilient. Building connections involves reaching out to community, family or friends. Sometimes just talking things out with others as a sounding board can alleviate stress, especially when others share that they have experienced similar situations.

Stress can be detrimental to men's overall health. Taking steps to reduce stress can improve quality of life.

Stress is a significant public health challenge. The Ipsos Global Advisor survey for World Mental Health Day 2022 found that most Americans feel the United States health care system places less importance on mental health than physical health, and the majority of adults reported experiencing high levels of stress over the last two years. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says mental health problems may occur as more adults deal with stress. In August 2022, more than 32 percent of adults in the U.S. reported having symptoms of anxiety or depression in the last two weeks.

The stress response gets a person through tough times, as the body rallies to evade a threat. Typically, when the danger subsides, the body can go back to business as usual. However, when stress is ongoing, it can cause harm like chronic inflammation. In addition, the constant activation of the immune system raises the risk for many adverse health effects, including heart disease and stroke.

Men and women experience

stress differently. Debra Bangasser, Ph.D., and her colleagues at Temple University found that, in response to significant life stress, men are more likely than women to experience effects on the cognitive processes like memory. High job insecurity is a notable stress trigger for men.

It's key to keep stress at a minimum for personal well-being. These strategies can help.

1. Get active: Exercise will not make stress disappear, but it can relieve some of the emotional responses and clear thoughts to let you deal with problems more readily.

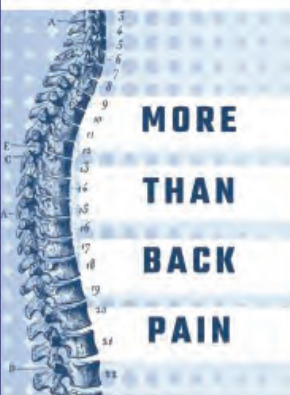
2. Use laughter: Harvard Health says laughter reduces stress hormones and is a way to experience joy, optimism and hope.

3. Reduce loud noises: Sometimes loud noises can trigger a stress response. It can make it hard to think and take you away from being mindful. Avoiding loud scenarios or wearing earplugs or noise-canceling headphones can help.

4. Avoid unhealthy habits: Some people turn to alcohol or smoking to deal with stress.



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Embracing a summer of healthy living in Kingsport

BY REBEKAH MCNERNEY

rmcnerney@sixriversmedia.com

KINGSPORT — With summer in full swing, Kingsport residents are finding new ways to engage in healthy living, thanks to the dedicated efforts of local organizations.

Leading the charge is Healthy Kingsport, a group committed to fostering a healthier place to live, work, learn and play.

“We focus on fostering an environment for individuals to actively embrace healthy living by utilizing resources within our three areas of focus: healthy community, healthy schools, and healthy workplaces,” said Desteny Clemons, director of Healthy Kingsport at the Kingsport Chamber.

HEALTHY COMMUNITY

Encouraging every person in the region to take “Small Starts” towards a healthier lifestyle is at the core of Healthy Kingsport’s philosophy. They redefine “health” to encompass not just physical health but also social, emotional and mental well-being.

“This has helped us cultivate and reimagine innovative ways to promote a healthier environment,” Clemons said.

Healthy Kingsport hosts a variety of health and wellness events, such as the largest health expo in the region, the Walk for Wellness Health Expo along with mini health fairs and farmers markets.

Their programs include the senior ambassadors club and the Pharmacy Fit program, promoting healthy eating, exercise and overall well-being. Additionally, the organization facilitates community walks, tobacco and vape-free initiatives, healthy food drives and community health challenges.

HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Healthy Kingsport is also committed to creating a healthier environment within schools for students, teachers and parents, Clemons said.

Efforts include providing access to water bottles, water refilling stations and initiatives against tobacco and vaping. They also organize motivational speakers and youth leadership programs, and promote mental health awareness.

By collaborating with local organizations, Healthy Kingsport fosters social and emotional connections through student/parent engagement nights, parent universities, back-to-school events and field days, Clemons said.

HEALTHY WORKPLACES

In the workplace, Healthy Kingsport offers tools to increase health and overall well-being. They tailor their initiatives to the specific needs of businesses by working on policy changes, creating health challenges and implementing tobacco-free policies.

Clemons said the program provides health and wellness tips, educational speakers and host lunch-and-learns on various topics.

Healthy Kingsport also engages employees through events like employee engagement activities and health and wellness days.

“We believe that the health and well-being of our community is the combination of various factors,” Clemons said. “Not only a healthy diet and exercise but also a healthy work/school environment, knowledge of mental health resources, and having the appropriate tools to make educational decisions about one’s health journey.”

UPCOMING INITIATIVES AND EVENTS

Healthy Kingsport has several events lined up for the upcoming months:



CONTRIBUTED

Senior Walking Club: Starting Aug. 7, a weekly walking club welcomes anyone aged 50+ to join every Wednesday at 12 p.m. at the Fort Henry Mall theater entrance for a one-mile walk inside the mall. This initiative aims to foster social connections, build friendships and improve physical and mental well-being.

Diabetes Education: Beginning Aug. 27, a free Health Extension for Diabetes program will be offered biweekly at the Kingsport Chamber. This program, through UT Extension, is available to residents and workers in Sullivan

County and focuses on managing diabetes and preventing complications.

Senior Social: On Sept. 28, Healthy Kingsport will host a Senior Social, bringing a nostalgic prom night to adults 50 and up, featuring music, dancing, food and a photo booth.

Farm to Table – Like No Udder: On Oct. 11, a farm-to-table dinner event will showcase local produce and culinary talent.

KINGSPORT PARKS AND RECREATION

Renee Ensor from the Kingsport Parks and Recreation department highlighted various options for residents looking to stay healthy and active in nature.

“We have many activities for the youth, including our softball, baseball, and basketball programs starting in the fall,” Ensor said.

“There’s also a walking trail at Borden Park, and we have pickleball courts at V.O. Dobbins for all ages.”

Ensor also emphasized the accessibility of the Kingsport Greenbelt, which includes 10 miles of paved trails suitable for casual walkers and bikers.

“We want many people to get out and enjoy the parks and facilities that Kingsport has to offer when it comes to staying healthy and being active,” Ensor said.

HEALTH EXTENSION FOR DIABETES

A FREE community-based diabetes educational program and support group for people 18 and older who have been diagnosed with type 1 or type 2 diabetes.

Bi-weekly | 5pm-6pm

AUG. 27	NOV. 5
SEPT. 10	NOV. 19
SEPT. 24	DEC. 3
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This program provides participants with:

- Self management resources
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- Health coach access

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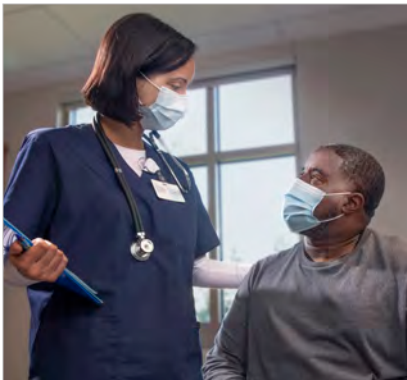
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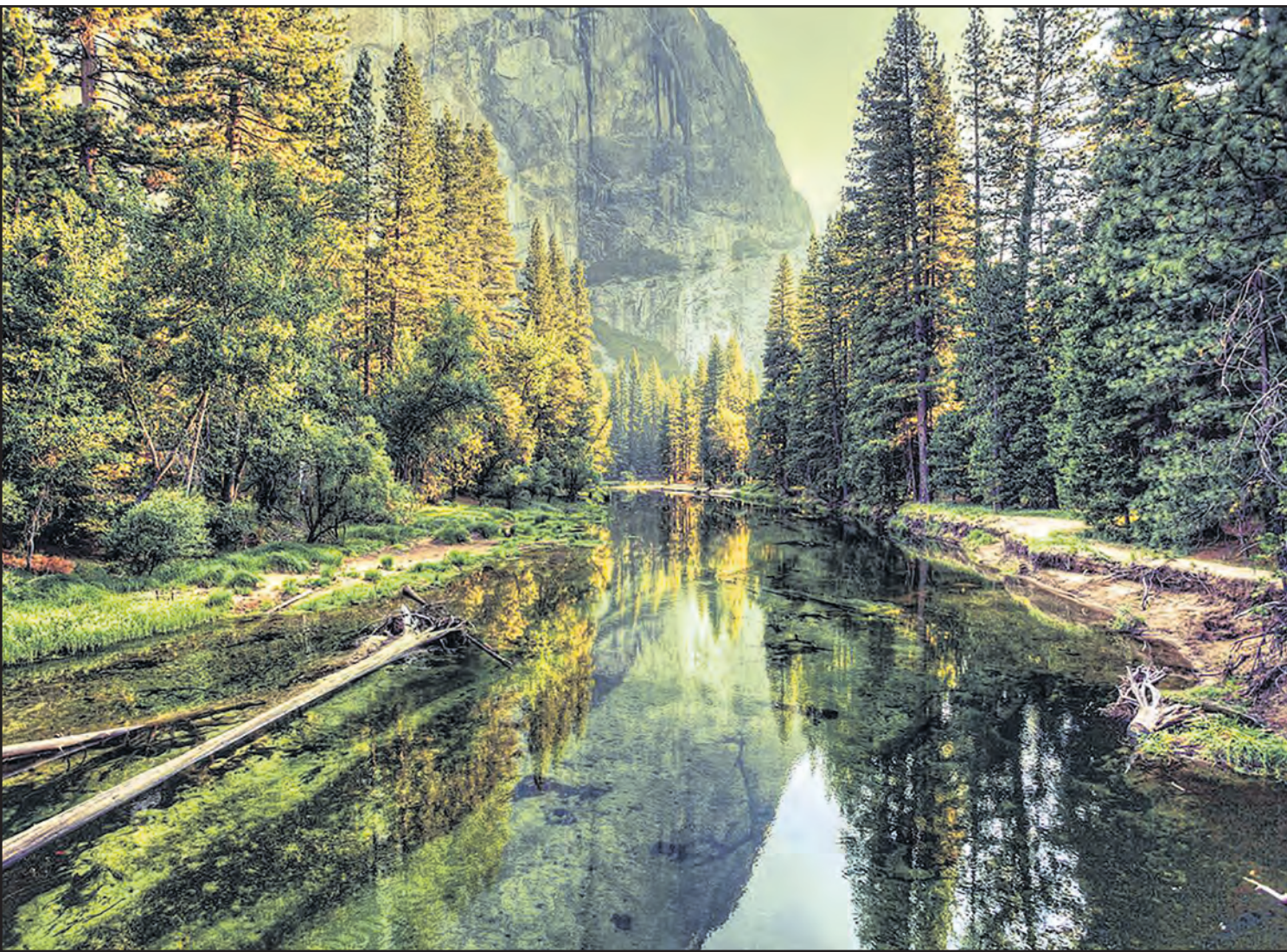
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The healing power of nature

Being in good health and avoiding various diseases often comes down to a combination of factors. Individuals may be aware that nutrition and exercise play important roles in personal well-being, but it appears that nature may provide its own medicinal benefits as well.

A number of studies have examined the potential healing components of being in nature. The World Health Organization released a report in 2023 titled "Green and Blue Spaces and Mental Health," which indicated that time in nature improves mood, mindsets and mental health. This occurs regardless of whether that nature was "country" regions or urban areas. The following are some of the ways nature can have a healing effect.

-Immunity protection: Trees and plants emit aromatic compounds called phytoncides. When inhaled, these compounds can ignite healthy biological changes similar to the concepts of aromatherapy. When people walk in forests or other green areas, they often experience changes in the blood that are associated with protection against cancer, improved immunity and lower blood pressure, says Dr. Qing Li, a professor at the Nippon Medical School in Tokyo.

-Get a brain break: When spending time in nature, attention is focused on the scenery, the animals and the rest of the environment. This may help quiet the rush of thoughts in the head that clutters the ability to think freely.

-Reduce stress: Stress is a catalyst for a number of adverse health conditions. The Mayo Clinic says stress can cause headache, muscle tension, fatigue, changes in sex drive, and a weaker immune system, among other things. Being outside in nature and away from work and home responsibilities can help reduce stress levels. Dr. Mathew McGlothlin, senior medical director with WellMed Medical Group, says being in nature provides stress relief.

-Get vitamin D: The body naturally produces vitamin D from sun exposure. The National Institutes of Health says it is optimal to have sun exposure for five to 30 minutes a day, most days a week, to absorb UVB rays and effectively make vitamin D. Vitamin D is a nutrient the body needs to build and maintain strong bones. Vitamin D also regulates many other cellular functions in the body, and may be able to prevent cognitive decline.

-Inspires exercise: People may be more inclined to be physically active while outdoors. Hiking, cycling, swimming, and even strolls in the park all make the outdoors more fun. Exercise promotes heart health and helps people maintain a healthy weight.

Nature can have a healing effect, and more time outdoors can promote mental and physical well-being.

Healthy exposure to the sun



Spring and summer are times of the year when the great outdoors beckons more strongly than it does in fall and winter. Temperate climates and abundant sunshine encourage people to leave their homes and bask in the warm rays of the sun.

Spending time outdoors is good for mental health and it's a natural way for people to get adequate vitamin D, also known as the sunshine vitamin. The National Institutes of Health say exposure to sunshine for five to 30 minutes a day, most days a week is optimal to make vitamin D. A large percentage of the population is deficient in vitamin D. The NIH says there are many studies correlating vitamin D insufficiency with increased risk of numerous chronic conditions, including hypertension, diabetes, myocardial infarctions, and brittle bones. However, sun exposure to make vitamin D needs to occur without sunscreen for maximum impact. That begs the question of just how safe it may be to spend time outdoors without sun protection, and what are the risks of doing so? Also, do the risks of vitamin D deficiency outrank those involving sun exposure and cancer causation? It's a conundrum, to be sure.

The good news is that most people can safely enjoy the sun and obtain vitamin D. Here are some tips and safety precautions.

- Keep in mind that the sun's rays are strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Therefore, if you must spend time in the sun, do so outside of this time period.

- Promptly apply sunscreen. After a short period of unprotected sunshine of no more than 30 minutes, put on sunblock right away. Also, reapply as indicated on the packaging depending on activity. Harvard Health says that sunscreen cannot block all UV rays, and even usage of sunblock will not staunch all vitamin D production.

- The National Cancer Institute suggests using an SPF of at least 15, but some doctors recommend SPF 30.

- Ultraviolet radiation is the number one cause of skin cancer. Utilize wide-brimmed hats, sunscreen and protective clothing to prevent cumulative sun exposure, which can lead to basal cell and squamous cell skin cancers.

- Keep in mind that episodes of severe sunburns, usually before age 18, can raise the risk of developing melanoma. Children should be just as mindful of sun exposure as adults.

- It is challenging to define what "too much sun" actually is, says the European Code Against Cancer. Strength of the sun (UV index), skin type and the strength of sunscreen all merit consideration. A person with very fair skin exposed to an ultraviolet index of 6, which is easily reached at noon in summer, can suffer sunburn in as little as 10 to 15 minutes.

It's a fine line to balance healthy sun exposure to obtain vitamin D and avoiding sun damage to the skin. But it's best that people walk that tightrope with sun safety in mind.



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Johnson City Parks & Recreation looking to expand



JOHNSON CITY

Johnson City Parks & Recreation offers much more than sports.

BY BRANDON SMITH

bsmith@sixriversmedia.com

The Johnson City Parks & Recreation department has something for everyone, and Director April Norris says there will only be more to come.

“We have such a wide array of programs, parks, structures and events that there is quite literally something for everyone, whether it’s for the youth, adults, or seniors,” said Norris.

There are different divisions within Johnson City Parks & Recreation that handle specific areas of interest, but ultimately the body oversees 24 parks as well as community centers, mountain bike parks, sporting arenas, swimming pools, dozens of miles of walking trails and a dog park, among many other services. A full list can be found on the Johnson City website.

“The biggest thing right now, of course, is pickleball,” Norris said. “We have a sizable number of pickleball courts, some of them lighted so that people can play at night.”

Johnson City Parks & Recreation aims to have more adult athletic programs in the near future.

“Adult athletic programs are coming, and as a parks and recreation department, we don’t just focus on the physical. We focus on physical health and mental health, and we want to stress that as we expand,” said Norris.

“Even for people who do not exactly participate in lots of physical activity, maybe if you’re older, we have a magazine called “Healthy Lifestyle” at Memorial Park Community Center, which is something that people can pick up there and learn how to stay active in their own ways.”

Norris hopes a recent “revamp” of Johnson City’s official website will make the role of Johnson City Parks & Recreation more efficient. Ultimately, the goal is for the website to feature one central calendar for events hosted by the department, according to Norris.

“We are hoping the new revamp of the website will bring more people in and make it easier for them to see what’s going on because that’s what we want. We want people involved. We want people to get out there and be a part of this growing community that we have here in Johnson City.”



JOHNSON CITY

Norris says pickleball is currently very popular.



JOHNSON CITY

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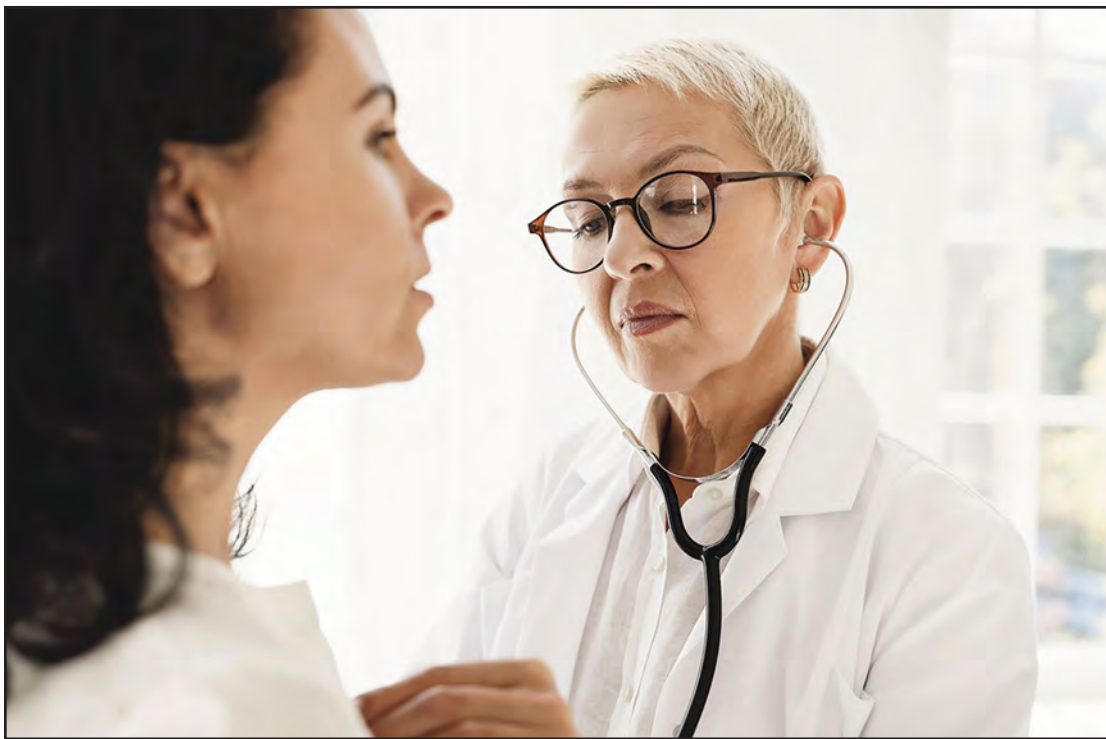
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Risk factors for AFib



A healthy heart is vital to a long life. Aging individuals recognize that link, and many take steps to protect their heart health, which may include changing their diets or exercising with greater frequency.

Recognizing certain threats to heart health is another important step individuals of all ages can take as they seek to live long, healthy lives. One such threat is atrial fibrillation, which is often referred to as "AFib." Johns Hopkins medicine notes AFib is a type of abnormal heartbeat caused by extremely fast and irregular beats from the upper chambers of the heart. Johns Hopkins notes a person with AFib may have a heart that beats more than 400 times per minute, which is caused by faulty electrical signals that make the atria (the two upper chambers of the heart) contract much faster than normal.

The American Heart Association reports that AFib increases the risk of heart-related death and stroke. But individuals may be curious about their risk for AFib. Though some of the risks for AFib, such as family history, may be beyond an individual's control, others can be managed with the goal of reducing

the likelihood of developing the condition. The AHA notes that people who have one or more of the following conditions are typically at higher risk for AFib.

-Age: Age is a significant risk factor for AFib. Johns Hopkins notes that adults older than 50 are at elevated risk for AFib. In addition, the AHA reports that medical researchers suspect the number of AFib cases will rise considerably in the coming years as people are living longer. Recognition of age as a significant risk factor for AFib might compel more individuals to take additional risk factors for the condition more seriously.

-High blood pressure: The AHA reports that longstanding, uncontrolled high blood pressure can increase a person's risk for AFib. This link between AFib and high blood pressure underscores the need for annual health examinations, which often uncover the condition known as "the silent killer" due to the fact that it does not necessarily produce noticeable symptoms.

-Existing heart conditions: Heart valve problems; hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, which is marked by a thickening of the walls of the heart chamber; acute coronary syn-

drome, an umbrella term used to refer to conditions in which blood supplies to the heart are suddenly blocked; and a history of heart attack are just some of the heart conditions that increase a person's risk for AFib. Anyone with a personal or family history of these and other heart conditions is urged to discuss AFib with their physicians.

-Alcohol consumption: Binge drinking increases risk for AFib, according to the AHA. The organization defines binge drinking as five drinks in two hours for men and four drinks in two hours for women. If individuals want to consume alcohol, Johns Hopkins emphasizes

the need for moderate consumption, which is defined as one drink or less per day for women or two drinks or fewer per day for men.

-Activity levels: Though physical activity is an essential component of a healthy lifestyle, the AHA notes that AFib is common in athletes. The condition can be triggered by a rapid heart rate known as a supraventricular tachycardia, which can be a byproduct of exercise.

AFib can pose a serious threat to individuals from all walks of life. Recognition of that threat and how to reduce AFib risk can be part of anyone's long-term health regimen.




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Understand the menopause transition

The human body is capable of various amazing feats, but many will attest that the ability of women to nurture and grow what will become another person is the body's most impressive characteristic.

Healthline states a woman can get pregnant and bear children from puberty, when they start getting their menstrual periods, to menopause. The average woman's reproductive years are between ages 12 and 51. While puberty and pregnancy are topics widely discussed in a woman's life, the same may not be said for menopause.

WHAT IS MENOPAUSE?

The World Health Organization characterizes menopause as the end of a woman's reproductive years. After true menopause, a woman cannot become pregnant naturally. Menopause is marked by the end of a monthly menstrual cycle often referred to as a "period." Natural menopause is deemed to have occurred after 12 consecutive months without menstruation. Menopause can occur for other reasons, such as if the reproductive organs are damaged due to illness or removed for the treatment of a certain condition. This is called induced menopause.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING MENOPAUSE?

During menopause, the ovaries stop producing reproductive hormones and stop releasing eggs for fertilization, says the Cleveland Clinic.

WHAT IS PERIMENOPAUSE?

Some people incorrectly describe the years leading up to the last menstrual period as menopause. However, menopause only occurs after the last period has occurred. It is a finite date. The menopausal transition before that takes place is actually called perimenopause. It is a period of time that most often begins between ages 45 and 55. The National Institute on Aging says perimenopause traditionally lasts seven years, but it can go on for as long as 14 years. The duration may depend on lifestyle factors, race and ethnicity.

During perimenopause, production of estrogen and progesterone made in the ovaries varies greatly. That can mean menstruation can be heavy at times or light. It may occur once a month or even multiple times per month. The menopausal transition affects each woman differently. It is a good idea for women to use a menstruation tracker and remain aware of symptoms to discuss with the gynecologist.

WHAT IS POSTMENOPAUSE?

Postmenopause is the time after menopause has happened. Women will remain in postmenopause for the rest of their lives. While many symptoms ease up in postmenopause, there still may be mild symptoms attributed to the low levels of reproductive hormones.

What are common symptoms of the menopause transition?

As one transitions from childbearing years into postmenopause, certain symptoms can occur.



- Irregular periods
- Hot flashes/night sweats
- Vaginal dryness
- Urinary urgency
- Difficulty sleeping
- Emotional changes
- Dry skin, eyes or mouth
- Worsening premenstrual syndrome symptoms
- Breast tenderness
- Headaches
- Racing heart
- Joint and muscle aches
- Weight gain
- Trouble concentrating
- Changes in libido

Women are urged to discuss their symptoms and concerns about menopause with a health care professional. Various treatments can alleviate symptoms and make the transition more comfortable.

Mental health and elder abuse awareness at center stage

By JOHNSON COUNTY SENIOR CENTER

Submission

The Johnson County Senior Center continues its focus on healthy living and promotes a greater understanding of mental health—one's emotional, psychological, and social well-being—and how it influences an individual's ability to handle stress, relate to others, and make decisions.

In June, the senior center highlighted Elder Abuse Awareness, informing its members about this often devastating and under-reported crime.

According to the Department of Justice, only one in 24 elder abuse cases are reported to the police, and 90% of those cases occur in the victim's home. The DOJ estimated that two-thirds of the perpetrators in this crime are the victim's own family.

The six types of elder abuse include physical abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, sexual abuse, neglect or abandonment by caregivers, financial exploitation, and healthcare fraud. Of those listed, the fastest growing form of elder abuse is financial exploitation – the unauthorized or improper use of the victim's funds and assets.

Due to the rise in elder abuse cases around the globe, in 2006, the International Network for Prevention of Elder Abuse designated June 15 as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

A recent guest speaker at the center was Nancy Wills, a local retired social worker who served in both the Department of Human Services and Adult Protective Services. She spoke about senior scams, how to identify elder abuse and situations she handled while working with APS.



Senior Center members wear purple to support Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

"Please understand these scams are nationwide, not just here," Wills said. "As an elderly person, you are targeted by scammers because many seniors live alone and are easily frightened. My advice is, please don't answer the phone if you don't recognize the number. If you answer the phone and it's a telemarketer, hang up. Don't even listen to them. If your family calls asking for money for some strange reason like your grandchild is in jail and needs money to get out, hang up and call that grandchild. Always double-check to be safe."

In addition to Wills' presentation, the center also held a special Bingo sponsored by Paul Brian with AirMed. Attendees were asked to wear purple in honor of Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

To learn more about the Johnson County Senior Center and its upcoming events, stop by the center Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. to pick up a monthly newsletter, or call (423)727-8883.



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Sun exposure and skin cancer

The phrase “get some sun” is heard far and wide between the months of May and September. Many people spend much of their weekends outdoors between Memorial Day and Labor Day, and that means exposure to the sun.

As the mercury rises and more and more people emerge from their winter and early spring hibernation, a rundown of the link between sun exposure and skin cancer can remind readers of the need to exercise caution when heading outdoors in the months to come.

SUN AND SKIN CANCER RISK

Exposure to the sun is a risk factor for skin cancer. According to the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR), exposure to ultraviolet radiation is the primary cause of skin cancer. Ultraviolet radiation comes from natural sources, like the sun, but also from artificial sources like tanning beds. The AIM at Melanoma Foundation notes that exposure to the ultraviolet radiation is the main risk factor for melanoma, which the Melanoma Research Alliance notes is the deadliest form of skin cancer.

DOES PAST EXPOSURE AFFECT MY RISK TODAY?

AIM at Melanoma notes that cumulative sun exposure and episodes of severe sunburns increase the risk of developing

melanoma. According to the Skin Cancer Foundation, research has shown that the UV rays that damage skin also can alter a tumor-suppressing gene, giving cells less of a chance to repair before a progression to cancer takes place.

A single blistering sunburn in childhood or adolescence more than doubles a person’s risk of developing melanoma later in life, while five or more sunburns more than doubles that risk as well. The damage to skin caused by a sunburn is indeed cumulative, so the more sunburns a person gets, the greater that person’s risk of developing skin cancer becomes.

SO IS A TAN DETRIMENTAL TO OVERALL HEALTH?

AIM at Melanoma notes that the tan many people hope to get and keep throughout late spring and summer is detrimental to their overall health. AIM notes that a tan develops when the skin tries to protect itself from UV rays by producing pigment as a protective shield. The more pigment the body produces, the darker the skin becomes. So a tan is evidence that the skin has been damaged by exposure to UV radiation. In fact, AIM notes that each time a person develops a tan, that individual’s risk of developing skin cancer increases.

Spring and summer weather beckons people outside each day. When that call comes, individuals must make an effort to protect their skin from overexposure to the sun.

Ballad Health continues to promote healthy living among community

BY GRACE TEATER

gteater@sixriversmedia.com

As the region's largest healthcare provider, Ballad Health continues to be a leading contributor in promoting healthy living among the community.

Be it through nutrition counseling, mobile health clinics, or its recent moves to increase access to mental health services, Ballad's resources stretch far and wide across the Appalachian Highlands.

HEALTHY LIVING

Balanced nutrition plays an important role in maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

With Ballad's Nutrition Counseling program, patients can meet one-on-one with a registered dietitian nutritionist to establish goals, discuss eating habits and food preferences. Other elements of the program include meal planning, nutrition education and cooking classes.

Nutrition Counseling is also essential in treating certain medical conditions. These include diabetes, high cholesterol, digestive issues and food allergies or intolerances, among others.

Ballad has various Outpatient Medical Nutrition Therapy Clinics throughout its 20-hospital system as well.

Similarly to nutrition, staying active is essential to healthy living.

Located at 200 Med Tech Parkway, Suite 200 in Johnson City, The Wellness Center offers over 400 group fitness classes each

month and includes an indoor aquatics facility, multi-functional gymnasium and free weights training area.

The Wellness Center has also been recognized by The Arthritis Foundation as an "Official Arthritis Flagship Facility."

INCREASING ACCESS

Physical fitness aside, Ballad recently expanded the scope of its mental health services as well.

In February, Ballad opened its new Behavioral Health Child and Adolescent Outpatient Services clinic. The clinic is a part of Ballad's Niswonger's Children Network and is intended to provide mental health services for ages six to 18 years old and intensive outcare options for those nine years and older.

Additionally, Ballad relocated its Behavioral Health Adult Clinic and expanded its services to include intensive outpatient programming for those over 18 years old.

In 2022, Ballad began taking some of its health care offerings on the road to promote community health in more rural communities as well. The Community Mobile Health Clinic aims to increase primary care access and offer preventive services in rural communities, regardless of the patient's insurance status.

Typical services include vision and hearing screenings, cancer and biometric screenings, among others. The mobile clinic puts an additional emphasis on women's health as well, including STI education and treatment, annual care services and referrals to more specialty OB/GYN services.

For more information on community health resources with Ballad, visit <https://www.balladhealth.org/community-health>



CONTRIBUTED BY KATE TAYLOR

The region's largest health care provider — Ballad Health — continues to play an important role in promoting healthy lifestyles among the community.

The potential health benefits of pickleball

Anyone who lives in close proximity to a pickleball court can no doubt attest to the popularity of the sport. According to the 2023 Topline Participation Report from the Sports & Fitness Industry Association, pickleball participation grew by 159 percent between 2019 and 2022. Such figures are a testament to the popularity of a sport that has reinvigorated millions of players' enthusiasm for physical activity and team sports.

The thrill of competition and the joy of social interaction undoubtedly have contributed to the popularity of pickleball, but those are not the only benefits to participating in this fast-growing sport. Indeed, there are many potential health benefits to pickleball as well.

Pickleball provides a fun way to embrace physical activity. It's easy to lose interest in an exercise regimen characterized by time on a treadmill and traditional strength training in a gym setting. Though cardiovascular exercise and strength training are vital components of successful exercise regimens, it's important that individuals make their fitness routines enjoyable, which increases the likelihood that they will remain committed to less sedentary lifestyles. The SFIA report found that players deemed pickleball 150 percent more enjoyable than walking for 30 minutes.

Pickleball provides social benefits that positively affect long-term health. According to Duke Recreation & Physical Education at Duke University, pickleball has earned a reputation as an inclusive, community-building activity. The socialization aspect of pickleball should not be overlooked when discussing the health benefits of the sport. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, loneliness can increase a person's risk for mental health issues like



depression and additional problems like heart disease, dementia and stroke. By engaging in social activities like pickleball, individuals can reduce their risk for loneliness, which can improve their overall quality of life and may lower their chances of developing potentially deadly health problems.

Pickleball can lead to a healthier heart. A study from Apple that is examining the effects of pickleball participation on heart health has thus far found that playing pickleball helps players reach moderate to vigorous heart rate zones. Cardiologist and Harvard Medical School professor of medicine Dr. Calum MacRae notes that ample time in moderate heart rate zones has been found to improve cardiac fitness.

Pickleball can benefit brain health. MacRae, one of the Apple study's lead investiga-

tors, notes that pickleball is one of various activities that also can improve memory and recall over time. The physical benefits of pickleball may not be lost on players, but some may be surprised to learn the sport offers cognitive health benefits as well. A 2023 study published in the journal *Frontiers in Psychology* found

that pickleball participation led to significant improvements in personal well-being, life satisfaction and happiness.

Pickleball courts are packed, and players may or may not realize all they are gaining from participation in this wildly popular sport.



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The good, the bad and the confusing about cholesterol

Cholesterol can be a complicated subject that many people might admit they do not fully understand.

Most people have been taught that cholesterol is a bad thing. And for a while it was thought that dietary cholesterol, which is the cholesterol found in food, had a big impact on raising cholesterol in the blood. However, Healthline reports that more recent science indicates this is not the case for most people. Is it any wonder that cholesterol is still a mystery to so many?

WHAT IS CHOLESTEROL?

Cholesterol is a fat-like, waxy substance that occurs naturally in the body. Although widely believed to be harmful, cholesterol is actually necessary for the body to function. Healthline says the body needs it to make hormones and vitamin D, and cholesterol contributes to the membrane structure of every cell in the body.

WHAT ARE LIPOPROTEINS?

When people talk about heart health and cholesterol, they're really speaking about lipoproteins and not about cholesterol itself. Lipoproteins are structures that carry cholesterol through the blood. There are two main types of lipoproteins: high-density lipoprotein (HDL) and low-density lipoprotein (LDL). HDL is typically called the "good" cholesterol, because it moves extra cholesterol from the bloodstream to the liver where it is cleaned out, says the Cleveland Clinic. LDL is the "bad" cholesterol because, when amounts of it are excessive, that contributes to plaque buildup in the arteries. You need some LDL to carry cholesterol to the body's cells, but having too much can be



troublesome. HDL carries some LDL away from the arteries but other steps are needed to lower HDL. Another lipid in the blood includes triglyceride, which is a type of fat. High levels of triglycerides also can put a person at risk for heart issues, including atherosclerosis, which is a hardening of the blood vessels.

DIETARY CHOLESTEROL VS. BLOOD CHOLESTEROL

The amount of cholesterol in the blood and the amount in one's diet are two different things. Typically, eating foods that contain cholesterol does not directly correspond to an elevated blood cholesterol level. Blood cholesterol is

mainly determined by the amount of fats and carbohydrates in the diet, as well as genetics. Some people are simply genetically prone to high cholesterol levels. Even for people whose blood cholesterol is affected by dietary cholesterol (hyperresponders), research shows dietary cholesterol only moderately increases LDL, and in these cases it does not seem to increase their risk of heart disease, offers Healthline.

HOW TO MAINTAIN GOOD CHOLESTEROL HEALTH?

According to Piedmont Healthcare, there are ways to control cholesterol and lipoproteins so they are beneficial to the body.

- Choose foods lower in saturated fat and be mindful of foods that can impact blood sugar levels.

- Quit smoking

- Reduce stress levels, which may help you avoid eating high-fat foods as a coping mechanism.

- Exercise regularly

- Weight loss can both increase HDL and lower LDL

- Choose low-fat or nonfat dairy products and lean meats

- Incorporate more fiber into your diet, which will help remove excess LDL.

There is much confusion about cholesterol among the general public. But learning the basics of cholesterol can help individuals make more informed decisions about their diet and overall health.

Tell or show: Nutrition programs tackle food access in SWVA

BY MIKE STILL

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NORTON – Officials at two Southwest Virginia organizations agree that you can tell folks to eat healthy or show them find ways to do it.

Wendy Welch, director of the Southwest Virginia Graduate Medical Health Consortium, and Brittany Woodby with Appalachian Sustainable Development's Appalachian Harvest sales and regional marketing arm both said that access to nutritious food can be limited by several things – income, a lack of available food stores in some communities, and even age or disability that may limit one's ability to prepare fresh foods.

"Saying to people that you need to eat better and not give them the means to do it is just cruel," said Welch, whose organization has sponsored a pilot Community Nourishment Program in two communities in Wise County and Norton in the past three years.

GMEC works with Appalachian Harvest by distributing food boxes packaged at AH's Duffield Food Hub facility, Welch said, but that is just one part of the CNP program. The program has brought student health professionals from area colleges and medical schools to see that nutritional needs involve more than a list of healthy foods.

"Medical students knocking on doors get a lot of up-front education about community nutrition," Welch said.

Finding that elderly people may not have transportation for regular grocery shopping or may not be able to manipulate kitchen utensils to peel vegetables is one lesson students have learned, Welch said. Residents in an apartment complex may not have access to enough area to raise a vegetable garden, she added, or people may not realize what they can do with some fresh vegetables in a food box.

"Showing people recipes or how to combine fresh ingredients with packaged foods can be the difference between just getting calories or getting adequate nutrition," Welch said. "Perfect is the enemy of good when it comes to good nutrition."

Appalachian Sustainable Development has been bringing together area farmers to find markets for their produce for more than two decades, said Woodby. While helping farmers find ways to adjust since the tobacco farm buyouts of the late 1990s, ASD's efforts also help provide fresh produce to folks who may not be able to get it on a regular basis.

"ASD has received state and federal grants over the years that we could have used to buy and provide packaged commodities like peanut butter, cheese and some canned goods," said Woodby, "but we wanted to help people get access to fresh, nutritious food."

"We don't want you to be just full when you can be full and healthy," Woodby added.

Woodby said food access became more critical around 2020 with COVID-19 and growing food insecurity in the region for lower-income residents. The Appalachian Harvest food box program since then has produced seven million pounds of food in 123,000 food boxes processed through the Duffield hub.

Many of Appalachian Harvest's food boxes get distributed by community groups and churches across the region, Woodby said, and they provide supplements to packaged food.

"Appalachian Harvest is a delight to work with," said Welch. We distribute boxes based on need and not just a box per household. Our students learn that a single mother may be feeding more than one child, so they learn to ask, "How many boxes do you need this week?"

Educational events conducted by Community Nutrition Program students also seek to help adults and children alike try new foods and learn recipes that allow them to make use of those foods.



FILE PHOTO

LMU third-year medical students Megan McDowell, standing, and Kesha Shah offer a tasting board of different foods to a child at the Community Nurturing Project's Thanksgiving 2023 event at the Ramsey housing community in Norton. CNP offers monthly activities to Ramsey residents and helps medical students learn the importance of building human connections in the communities they will serve as doctors.

"Someone may get fresh kale in a food box and wonder what they're going to do with it," said Welch. "You can show them how you can fry some bacon and pout the grease over the kale leaves like it was lettuce, and a lot of people are going to recognize it as wilted lettuce. Recipes go a long way to helping people see how they can use nutritious foods and make them tasty too."

CNP and Appalachian Harvest also find ways to use produce for fun events, like pumpkins for kids to carve for Halloween, said Woodby.

Appalachian Harvest tries to provide fresh meats as part of food boxes, said Woodby. Often that depends on whether community groups have facilities to store and refrigerate meats, but the Duffield hub site can add ground beef and other cuts of meat as available at least once a week for people picking up boxes at that location.

Appalachian Harvest's food hub also provides job training for people working at packaging boxes or loading distribution trucks, said Woodby.

GMEC has also brought the Community Nourishment Program to work in conjunction with Family Crisis Support Services in Wise County, said Welch.

Woodby said anyone looking for food box distribution points and schedules in their community can call Appalachian Harvest at (276) 623-1121.

For more information on the Southwest Virginia Graduate Medical Education Consortium's Community Nourishment Program, visit online: <https://swvagmec.com/cnp/project/>



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What to know about heatstroke

Fun in the sun is a big part of the appeal of summer. Outdoor recreation and relaxation kicks up a notch each summer, contributing to a vibe that is as welcoming as it is warm.

Summer is indeed all about recreation, but individuals also must remain safe when spending time outdoors. Heatstroke is a potentially deadly condition that can be prevented with some basic knowledge of what it is and how it manifests.

WHAT IS HEATSTROKE?

The Mayo Clinic notes that heatstroke is caused by the body overheating. When individuals suffer heatstroke, it is usually because they have been exposed to high temperatures for long periods of time or have been physically exerting themselves in such conditions.

HOW SERIOUS IS HEATSTROKE?

The medical examiner's office in Maricopa County, Arizona noted that heat deaths surged by 50 percent in the city of Phoenix in 2023. Rising temperatures related to climate change have made it less safe to be outdoors on certain days. The risk for heat-related death is serious in places like Phoenix when the mercury rises, but anyone anywhere can succumb to the heat if they are not careful. By no means are deaths due to heatstroke or other heat-related illnesses exclusive to individuals in traditionally warm locales like Phoenix. Despite that vulnerability, various organizations, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, note that heat-related illnesses are preventable. Prevention involves recognition of symptoms prior to going outdoors and a willingness to go inside should any symptoms begin to arise.



SYMPTOMS OF HEATSTROKE

Heatstroke can manifest in various ways, producing symptoms that may include:

- Elevated body temperature: The Mayo Clinic notes that a core body temperature of 104 F or higher is a main sign of heatstroke.
- Altered mental state: Someone suffering from heatstroke may begin to feel confused, agitated, irritable, and/or delirious. In addition, such individuals may begin to behave erratically, which can involve slurred speech.

- Changes in sweating patterns: People may begin to sweat differently depending on why they are suffering from heatstroke. When heatstroke is brought on by hot weather, a person's skin will feel hot and dry to the touch, notably leading to a lack of sweat. When heatstroke occurs because of strenuous exercise in hot weather, the skin may feel dry and slightly moist.

- Nausea and vomiting: Heatstroke can make people feel sick to their stomach

and even induce vomiting.

- Flushed skin: This recognizable symptom is marked by skin turning red as body temperature spikes.

- Changes in breathing: Heatstroke can cause rapid, shallow breathing.

- Elevated heart rate: The Harvard Medical School notes that the heart experiences stress when the human body sheds heat. That stress can cause the heart to beat faster and pump harder.

- Headache: Some people with heatstroke experience a throbbing headache.

PREVENTING HEATSTROKE

The CDC notes that drinking plenty of water, cooling off in air conditioned rooms, limiting time outdoors on particularly hot days, taking frequent breaks if you must be outside, and wearing light-colored, loose-fitting clothing and sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher are some ways to beat the heat and avoid heatstroke.

Heatstroke is a notable, yet preventable threat. Making an effort to avoid heatstroke while spending time outdoors this summer can ensure the season is safe and fun.

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Tips to prevent pickleball injuries

Pickleball has inspired millions of devotees. According to the Association of Pickleball Professionals, roughly 36.5 million individuals played pickleball in 2022, and 45 percent of players who participated in a YouGov study conducted between August 2021 and August 2022 indicated they planned to play more pickleball in the coming six months than they had in the previous six months.

Pickleball is thriving, and that's great news for those who love the game. Unfortunately, pickleball also has proven beneficial to orthopedic practices. A 2023 analysis from UBS estimated pickleball injuries could cost Americans nearly \$400 million in 2023. Seniors are especially vulnerable to pickleball injuries, as a 2021 study published in the journal Injury Epidemiology found that 86 percent of emergency room visits related to pickleball injuries affected individuals 60 and older.

Injuries are a part of any sport, and pickleball is no different. Though there's no foolproof method to guarantee pickleball players don't get hurt playing the game they love, the following are some tips that can reduce injury risk.

-Gear up. Pickleball is a competitive sport, but there's a tendency among some players, particularly novices, to take a casual approach to the game. Veteran players may know better, but anyone new to the game should be sure to wear the appropriate gear when playing. Athletic shoes with ample traction can reduce the likelihood that players will slip or fall. The right racket also can reduce risk for elbow injuries. The sporting goods experts at Dick's Sporting Goods note that paddles should feature a light to medium weight, comfortable grip and a large sweet spot. The right paddle will be different for everyone, so novices are urged to speak to veteran players for advice on which paddle might be best for them.

-Embrace physical activity. Pickleball can be a great workout, and players can reduce their injury risk by embracing physical activity even when they are not playing. Leg exercises can help build lower body strength, but strength exercises that focus on the upper body also can reduce injury risk.

-Loosen up before playing. Taking the court right after getting out of the car is a recipe for injury. Arrive five to 10 minutes before a game and use that time to loosen up. A short walk and some subsequent stretches can help players make sure their bodies are not too tight to play. Some brief warm-up exercises and stretching can reduce muscle tension and make the body less vulnerable to injury.

-Hydrate before, during and after a game. The experts at Johns Hopkins Medicine note that water cushions the joints, which helps athletes maintain their flexibility. Flexibility can reduce injury risk, particularly in a sport like pickleball. The 2021 study published in Injury Epidemiology noted that 60 percent of pickleball injuries are sprains, strains or fractures. Remaining flexible can reduce athletes' risk for sprains and strains. Johns Hopkins recommends adults consume between six and 12 ounces of water for every 20 minutes of sports play and to drink between 16 and 24 ounces afterward.

Pickleball is wildly popular, even though pickleball injuries are common. Players can embrace various strategies to reduce their injury risk.



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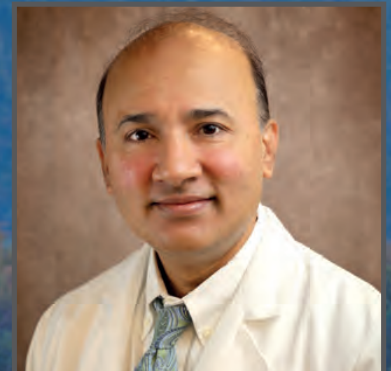
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