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# How seniors can find a suitable volunteering opportunity

**BY METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION**

Volunteering is a rewarding experience that engages people from all walks of life. While young adults and adults in middle age may find it hard to squeeze volunteering into their schedules, retirees are free of many of the professional and personal obligations that prevent younger adults from volunteering.

Retirees can reap some unique benefits from volunteering. Volunteering can provide retirees new opportunities to socialize, which can help them avoid feelings of social isolation and loneliness that many seniors confront after retiring. Volunteering also can provide an opportunity for seniors to utilize their professional expertise to the benefit of others.

With so much to gain from volunteering, retirees can start looking for opportunities in their communities. Many such opportunities exist, and the following tips can help retirees find the most suitable one for them.

- **Identify your motivation to volunteer.** Identifying why you want to volunteer can be a great first step. Many retirees who had long and distinguished careers in the professional arena aspire to give back by employing their



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expertise in new ways. For example, retired attorneys may want to volunteer with a nonprofit organization that provides free legal advice to those who cannot afford to hire their own legal representatives. Once retirees have identified why they want to volunteer, they can then look for opportunities that align with that motivation.

- **Consider any potential limitations you have.** Some volunteering opportunities are physically demanding, which makes them difficult for retirees. Seniors may

not be able to handle a volunteering opportunity that requires heavy lifting or one that asks volunteers to spend hours on their feet. Be honest about any physical

limitations, and discuss any uncertainty you might have with your health care provider before committing to a volunteering gig.

- **Decide how much**

time you can volunteer. Volunteering is often characterized as a rewarding experience that offers homebound seniors a chance to get up and go. But some retirees already have active social lives, so it's imperative that prospective volunteers identify how much time they have to volunteer. Many organizations allow volunteers to determine how much time they spend volunteering, but others may ask more of volunteers in regard to a time commitment. For example, volunteering to organize community events may require a significant time commitment that some retirees do not necessarily want to make.

There are many great reasons to volunteer. Retirees considering volunteering can give the prospect ample consideration before they begin searching for the right opportunity to give back.



Jenny Ernsberger  
jernsberger@kpcmedia.com  
**General Manager**

Ann Saggars  
asaggars@kpcmedia.com  
**Print & Design Manager**

Stevie Lockridge  
slockridge@kpcmedia.com  
**Special Sections Graphic Designer**

Sue Carpenter  
scarpenter@kpcmedia.com  
**Special Sections Editor**

**ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES**  
Mitch Anderson  
Michele Trowbridge  
Machele Waid  
Holly Bireley  
Elijah Balek

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# Can cataracts be prevented?

## BY METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Vision should be cherished at every stage in life. However, as one ages and vision changes become more profound, it is even more important to stay abreast of what can be done to care for the eyes in the hopes of preventing certain conditions, including cataracts.

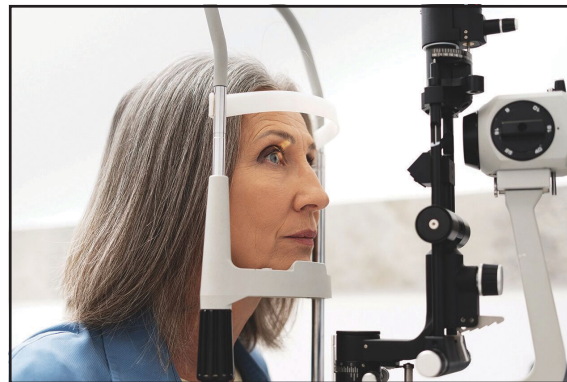
Cataracts are the clouding of the eye's natural lenses. The World Health Organization estimates that cataracts affect more than 94 million people globally. Cataracts also account for nearly 45 percent of all blindness cases.

Even though cataracts are considered an unavoidable part of the aging process, some people wonder if they can be prevented. Reedsburg

Area Medical Center says that, while one cannot entirely stop the biological aging of the lens, delayed onset and reduced severity of cataracts is possible through targeted lifestyle choices.

According to EyeHealth Northwest, by age 80, more than 90 percent of adults will either have a cataract or have already undergone surgery for them. Technically cataracts cannot be prevented, but these steps can help push cataract development further into later life.

- **Wear sunglasses with UV protection.** The consensus among experts is that prolonged exposure to ultraviolet B rays accelerates the breakdown of lens proteins. Consistent use of sunglasses that offer 100



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percent UV protection can greatly slow this protein degradation. Wraparound frames will block light from the periphery as well as the front.

- **Lower oxidative stress.** Preventing oxidative stress, a primary driver of lens opacification, can be achieved through diets rich in antioxidants, says Premier

Eye Care of Eastern Idaho. Lutein, zeaxanthin and vitamin C act as shields for the eye. Eye Physicians of Long Beach says the risk of age-related cataracts reduces by around 26 percent for every additional 10 mg of carotenoids added to a person's diet.

- **Manage diabetes.** The National Institutes

of Health says individuals with diabetes face a 63 percent higher likelihood of requiring cataract surgery compared to those without the condition. Managing high blood sugar will prevent sorbitol from depositing in the lenses and causing cloudiness earlier in life.

- **Quit smoking.** Smoking is a key factor in cataract development, says Optometrists.org. Smokers have a 1.66 times greater risk of developing cataracts than non-smokers because the toxins in tobacco smoke can deplete the body's natural antioxidant stores.

Although it may not be possible to turn off aging and prevent cataracts entirely, cataracts can be delayed and made less impactful through lifestyle changes.

# Skin cancer prevention for seniors

## BY METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Wisdom and age frequently go hand in hand. But when it comes to knowledge of the latest medical advancements, some older adults may not be up-to-date.

Medical recommendations evolve over time. After all, it wasn't too long ago people were told to avoid foods containing high amounts of dietary cholesterol because it would raise their own blood cholesterol

levels. Now MedlinePlus says the general consensus is that eating dietary cholesterol has a minimal impact on blood cholesterol for most people. And people in their 70s may have raised children thinking it was fine to lay the child in the crib over the baby's stomach. Now the advice is "back is best."

Medical professionals now know that exposure to ultraviolet rays of the sun and tanning beds can contribute to the development of skin cancer. But just a few generations ago people

were slathering on baby oil and using suntan reflectors to accelerate tanning. The risk of skin cancer is raised for those who have had cumulative exposure to the sun. So it is essential that seniors practice sun safety every day so they are not adding to the damage that already may have occurred. It's also foolish to think, "I've made it this long without skin cancer, and it takes decades to develop, so I'm never going to get it."

No one knows how long they will live and it's

important to take care of oneself to live as strong, healthy and long as possible. To that end, seniors can employ these sun safety tips, courtesy of the Skin Cancer Foundation.

- **Learn the facts.** Suffering just five sunburns over your lifetime more than doubles your chances of developing melanoma, and each successive tan or sunburn raises the risk even further. Suntans damage the skin's DNA and age it before its time. Also, skin undergoes changes that reduce defenses against disease and healing. One bad burn as a senior may be the final straw.

- **Use sunscreen.** Sunscreen may not have been widely used when today's seniors were young. Just because that was the norm then doesn't mean things can't change now. It's never too late to reduce your skin cancer risk by lathering on sunscreen daily — even when the sun doesn't

seem particularly strong. Seniors should look for a broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 30 for daily use.

- **Wear protective clothing.** Choose tightly woven, long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and wide-brimmed hats to protect you. You can purchase clothing that has sun protection built right in.

- **Avoid being outside during certain times of day.** Stay out of the sun when it is at its peak. Radiation is typically the strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. That's when the risk for skin damage is highest, says the American Cancer Society.

- **Seek shade.** When spending time outdoors, seek shady spots, whether you're under an umbrella or in tree-lined areas.

Sun safety for seniors is generally the same for people of all ages. But it becomes a more urgent necessity due to cumulative sun exposure that comes with age.

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# How seniors can build their social networks in retirement

## BY METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Social isolation and loneliness can have a notably adverse effect on a person's overall health. According to the World Health Organization, roughly 12 percent of older individuals experience loneliness, which can have a negative impact on their physical and mental health, quality of life, and even their life expectancy.

Seniors have much to gain when they take successful steps to avoid social isolation. Seniors who are concerned about the prospect of social isolation or loneliness or those already experiencing such feelings can try these strategies

to build their social networks in retirement.

- **Reconnect with old friends.** It's easy for adults to lose touch with old friends. By the time many adults reach middle age, professional and personal obligations can leave little time for a thriving social life. Successful professionals may be preoccupied with work projects, and while parents may be juggling their own hectic schedules with their children's obligations. Come retirement, much of those responsibilities have ended, making this a perfect time to reconnect with old friends who also might have extra free time on their hands.

Reach out through social media, text message or even a phone call, and let the situation unfold organically from there.

- **Take advantage of community offerings.** Many communities sponsor events for seniors, like bus trips to local museums or stadiums, in an effort to encourage seniors to get out of the house. Retirees can take advantage of these opportunities, which tend to attract like-minded individuals with the same interests. A bus trip to a theater production will attract fellow arts lovers, and shared interests are a solid foundation for friendship.

- **Start a local club**

**or group.** Starting a local club based on a particular activity is another great way for seniors to build a social network in retirement. Take to social media and express your interest in starting a local book club or walking group. Like community-sponsored bus trips, clubs and groups tend to attract like-minded individuals, providing a built-in pathway to friendship.

- **Reconnect with your faith.** Houses of worship also offer a great way to meet locals and build relationships based on a shared identity. Faith-based communities provide a sense of belonging that can help

retirees overcome social isolation and loneliness.

- **Open yourself to new experiences.** Trying something new is another great way to make new friends. Many local agencies like parks departments or community recreation offices offer seniors in-person workshops covering a wide range of activities. These offerings are a great way to discover a new pastime and meet new people along the way.

Social isolation and loneliness poses a significant threat to millions of seniors. But there are many ways for seniors to build their social networks in retirement.

# Safety and smarts necessary when exercising with arthritis

## BY METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Physical activity is a vital component of a healthy lifestyle. While the recommendations for exercise may vary for each individual, general guidelines from public health agencies typically

suggest most people should get around 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise per day.

People with arthritis may be hesitant to head to the gym or engage in home workouts because the instinct to rest is strong when joints feel stiff or

painful. However, health care advocates note that movement is one of the most effective treatments for arthritis.

Recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says arthritis remains a leading cause of disability in 2026. Roughly

one in four adults in the United States have been diagnosed with some form of arthritis. The Arthritis Foundation says exercise is not just a lifestyle choice, but an essential component of joint health. People who engage in physical activity report a 40 percent reduction in pain on average. Here is a prescription for safely navigating physical activity while managing arthritis.

- **Emphasize exercise that improves flexibility.** The Better Health Channel says people with arthritis should focus on exercises that reduce stiffness and keep joints moving through their full range-of-motion. Examples include gentle neck rotations, shoulder rolls and finger stretches daily, especially in the morning during flare-ups.

- **Incorporate low-impact aerobic movements.** Cardiovascular exercises improve heart health and help with weight management, which is essential for people with arthritis. The Arthritis Foundation says losing just one pound of body weight can remove four pounds of pressure from the knees. Walking,

cycling and water exercises are low-impact ways to get the cardio a body needs, says the Mayo Clinic.

- **Make resistance training part of your routine.** Building strong muscles can help protect the joints by acting as shock absorbers. People can use bodyweight exercises like chair squats, resistance bands or light dumbbells to build muscle. The Arthritis Foundation recommends focusing on the muscles surrounding joints experiencing the most pain, such as quadriceps for knee arthritis or abdominals to protect the hips and spine.

- **Assess pain.** Experts suggest using something called the "two-hour rule" to determine if exercise added to or diminished arthritis pain. If joint pain is higher two hours after exercising, then it's important to reduce the duration or intensity of exercise the next time. During a flare-up, do not stop moving entirely, but shift to gentle range-of-motion stretching only, suggests the Mayo Clinic.

Exercise can remain a key component of daily life, even for those with arthritis.

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