

Senior Living

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SPECIAL SECTION



Joyce Drake opened her balcony doors at The Woods Apartments and offered live concerts.

VINNY TENNIS | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

ISOLATION INSPIRATION

Meet these seniors who have found a silver lining in COVID-19

MARGARET GATES | MGATES@LNPNEWS.COM

Back in the days before COVID-19 became a household word, George Nettleton would go to the gym every day, where a frequent part of his workout was trading jokes with one of the fitness professionals. While the pandemic put an end to those face-to-face workouts, Nettleton figured it didn't need to put an end to the laughs.

Soon, he was emailing his daily jokes, or leaving little cartoons at the door for the staff who delivered meals to his home at Willow Valley Communities — just a little something to lift spirits first thing in the morning. Not surprisingly, more and more people decided they could use that little lift, and Nettleton now has about 50 residents and staff members on his daily email list.

With five file folders full of material — some of it funny, some thought-provoking — he isn't about to run out any time soon.

"What's the use of a collection if you don't share it," says Nettleton, 79. "This is something that's kept me going. When people write back and say thank you, that gives me a lift as well."

Nettleton is one of many Lancaster

County seniors who have found a silver lining in the cloud of COVID-19, whether it's helping others, finding a new purpose, learning a new skill or revisiting an old one, or simply accomplishing a longtime goal.

Here are just a few:

Susan Doyle, 74

After retiring four years ago, Doyle decided to fulfill a longtime goal of playing the guitar. She began taking lessons close to home from Eric Dieter of Quarter Bend Guitar Studio and continued with lessons after moving to Homestead Village. Quarter Bend Guitar Studio uses a collaborative approach to teaching guitar, offering lessons in a group setting. When COVID-19 hit Lancaster County, all that



SUBMITTED

Susan Doyle discovered that virtual guitar lessons could be a great diversion during these times of isolation.

changed, and Doyle changed right along with it. Quarter Bend pivoted to virtual guitar lessons on Zoom, providing a student portal on its website, access to a computer program to aid in collaborative recordings, and opportunities for students to grow in music appreciation and theory.

"Guitar has been a great outlet for me during the lockdown," Doyle says. "It's been a wonderful diversion and allowed more time to focus on my goals."

Fred Kiemle, 86

When Kiemle moved to Landis Homes from South Carolina, he brought a grand piano with him that found a new home in the community's auditorium. Kiemle worked in sales most of his life, but the piano remained an occasional hobby that stuck with him since his first lessons in the second grade. During the pandemic, he found himself tickling the ivories in the auditorium more often — and attracting a small, mask-wearing audience. Soon, Landis Homes was asking him to perform regularly on the community's closed-circuit TV channel so all 875-plus residents on campus could enjoy. His repertoire includes old standards, Broadway hits, show tunes and other songs that were popular in

his youth. He's also done a variety of themed concerts, from spirituals and hymns to movie songs.

"Since I started doing these programs, I've had to practice more," Kiemle says. He's also had to put some thought and planning into what he will perform, since he's no longer playing simply for his own pleasure. "It's good for me. It gives me a project. I'm a great believer that music is very, very good for the soul, for our well-being, so hopefully when I play these old songs they will help people remember the good old days, before the pandemic."

Joyce Drake, 84

Like Fred Kiemle, Drake says she didn't play the piano nearly enough before COVID-19. Nevertheless, her piano, a gift from her husband, has followed her from one home to the next, from New Jersey to Tennessee. Last year, it followed her back to Pennsylvania when she moved to The Woods Apartments at Moravian Manor Communities. When the pandemic hit, another resident asked Drake to open the deck doors of her second-floor apartment so others could hear her play.

"It gave me great purpose every day



SUBMITTED

Martha Fulmer completed so many painting kids that she started giving away her artwork as gifts.

Inspiration

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to plan a daily ‘concert’ of classical, Broadway and what I call my ‘COVID music,’ ” she says, referring to her folder of up-lifting songs, from “Put on a Happy Face” to “The Impossible Dream.” Drake’s hour-long, mid-afternoon concerts drew an audience of passers-by who would stop and applaud. “I do believe it got me through those first weeks when our social contact was very limited and we were scared,” Drake says. “It helped me as much (or more) than it helped the residents of Moravian Manor Communities.”

Sandy Asher, 77

A playwright and author, Asher has written over 20 books for young readers, including six picture books. She also works with local schools and libraries to coordinate programs that encourage literacy, often with the help of her registered therapy dog, Gracie, who listens to children read. As schools and libraries closed and children remained in isolation, Aaron’s Acres extended a COVID-inspired invitation to Asher to share videos of herself reading her picture books, with one additional requirement — the videos had to include Grace the Reading Dog, since kids would likely relate more enthusiastically to animals than to authors.

“I figured out how to do that, and even managed to upload the videos to my own YouTube channel,” Asher says. “Quite a challenge to deal with the camera, read the story and show the illustrations, all around the dog’s ever-moving head and the occasional appearance of (her other pet) Friday Cat as well.”

A Montessori school in Michigan, Prime Stage Theatre in Pittsburgh and Lancaster Public Library also have shared the videos online.

Barb Baxter, 75

Baxter, a watercolor artist, accepted a 14-day Isolation Art Challenge on Facebook at the outset of the pandemic and created 13 paintings over the 14 days. Since then, she’s done additional art challenges with a group of women with whom she traveled to Italy for a watercolor workshop several years ago. Baxter’s “painting tribe” includes five women from four states. They call themselves “Tuttis,” inspired by an Italian toast between friends sharing a meal.

“Our Tutti Challenges arise by chance, when someone finds a great reference photo and we all paint it,” Baxter says. “The result is amazing — five different interpretations in watercolor and oil. It’s fun to compare our different styles of painting.”

Helen Zorbaugh, 86

Zorbaugh recalls growing up in Spring Grove, York County, and trying to learn how to stitch from her mother, a talented quilter and embroiderer. “She always said I made my stitches too big,” says Zorbaugh, who eventually set her needles aside.

When her mother died more than a decade ago, Zorbaugh was going through her belongings and came across a large box of embroidery thread and several pillowcases stamped with decorative patterns. For some reason, she put the contents into a leather pouch and brought them home, thinking one day she might get around to embroidering the pattern on those pillowcases, but she never did. When Zorbaugh moved to Homestead Village three years ago, she brought the leather pouch with her and put it in a faraway place, forgotten again, until she found herself isolated by COVID-19 earlier this spring. Suddenly, she remembered her mother’s pillowcases and set to work embroidering them. She has now completed two.

“I felt proud of myself after not doing it for so long that I could pick it up. I felt it was a good job accomplished,” Zorbaugh says. “There are two more pillowcases in the bag, so I might tackle them sometime. They’re predicting the flu and virus will be bad this season. That might be a good time to finish them.”

Martha Fulmer, 83

Homestead Village’s Life Enrichment office plans activities on and off campus to enhance residents’ quality of life, focusing on education, fitness, the arts, leisure, spiritual growth and outreach. When COVID-19 hit, they looked to alternatives such as Let’s Make Art, a subscription service providing pre-made art kits along with tutorials. Fulmer jumped at the chance to receive a painting kit and now has done so many paintings that she has started to give them away as gifts. She says she likes the painting kits because the artwork is lightly sketched out, so she can enjoy painting without having to worry about the design concept. She also follows the tutorials on YouTube.

“I had always enjoyed painting, and even took lessons many years ago; but life got busy, so painting had to wait,” Fulmer says. “Now I’m having so much fun. I find inspiration everywhere.”



Pat and Ray Horn work in their garden plot at Masonic Village in Elizabethtown.

Mimi Shapiro, 74

Shapiro, of Lancaster, earned a certificate from Coursera for a 10-week online class on “The Science of Well-Being,” by professor Laurie Santos of Yale University. The class looked at misconceptions about happiness and showed how to understand what well-being really is. Shapiro learned about meditation and even had homework, including sleeping, exercise and generosity.

“I kept notes, with quotes, which was really helpful during this crazy time,” Shapiro says. “The only thing we can really control is our attitude.”

Eva Hochberg

Hochberg, of Lancaster, works as a translator, so she already knows several languages, including French, German and her native Hungarian. Last fall, she started brushing up on Russian, but she always had a secret dream to someday learn Hebrew. With stay-at-home orders in place, Hochberg doubled up on her Russian studies and still had time to begin learning Hebrew using Duolingo language-learning software.

“Every morning, I would know that, going to bed, I would be a bit smarter than when I got up,” she says.

Hochberg has used her time in isolation to pursue a second dream as well — learning to play a musical instrument. She chose the ukulele and took several lessons from a German friend who, unfortunately, had to return to Germany due to the pandemic. Undeterred, Hochberg discovered instructional YouTube videos in Hungarian and made ukulele practice part of her daily routine.

“Now, I can play one beautiful music piece ... together with my husband, who plays the guitar,” Hochberg says. “The stay-in-home period is perfect for home concerts, just recently transmitted by Skype to my mother on the Old Continent!”

John Clough

Clough is no stranger to helping others. He’s been involved for decades with the nonprofit Angel Flight Mid-Atlantic, a network of volunteer private pilots who donate their time, aircraft and fuel to transport people to medical appointments. Since the pandemic, the Garden Spot Village resident has found a new way to stay on the move and serve others. Clough, a Garden Spot Village resident since September 2010, faithfully delivered groceries ordered from Shady Maple Farm Market and orders placed at the community’s own Linden Store. He even delivered flowers for Mother’s Day.

“I thoroughly enjoy serving others,” Clough says. “And making people happier is oh so much fun. I love every minute of it.”

Rosalyn Ward, 80

When the pandemic hit, residents of the Mennonite Home, the health care campus of Mennonite Home Communities, found themselves separated from family, friends and face-to-face visits. Responding to a call for cards or notes to ease their loneliness, Ward decided to write a letter because she thought it would be more personal than a store-bought card. Soon, she was writing every week, sharing the goings-on around her home at Woodcrest Villa, the community’s residential campus just up the road. Topics ranged from pet antics in the dog park to spring blooms to discovering new foods.

Over 200 copies of each letter went to all of the Mennonite Home’s personal care and health care residents. Some residents even took Ward up on her invitation to chat by phone. “We had wonderful conversations,” she says. Others wrote

letters in return.

“It made me feel wonderful to be able to do it,” Ward says. “In retrospect, I realized the letters were in some ways journalistic for me. I told them what’s going on. It was more chatty. There wasn’t anything heavy in there. It was a way for me to do some journaling that I probably otherwise wouldn’t have done.”

With some COVID-19 restrictions easing, Ward is no longer writing letters to Mennonite Home residents, but that doesn’t mean she’s stopped writing. She now sends monthly letters to shut-ins from her church, Grace Lutheran in Lancaster.

Ray Horn, 72, and Pat Horn, 72

Ray, a retired college professor, is chair of the Garden Club at Masonic Village at Elizabethtown, which includes 73 gardeners and 61 plots. The gardeners have always shared their bounty with Masonic Village’s restaurants and residents, but with the COVID-19 situation unfolding in March, they knew there could be greater needs on campus and at local food banks. Using several unused plots, Ray worked with 12 gardeners to start victory gardens (while social distancing), harvesting tomatoes, peppers, cauliflower, Romaine lettuce, cabbage, broccoli, beans, potatoes, kale, cucumber, Swiss chard, Brussels sprouts, herbs, beets, carrots, butternut squash, raspberries, string beans, spinach, radishes, turnips, corn and more. In addition to delivering to food services staff and having a table of produce from which residents can select, the gardeners have donated to the Community Cupboard of Elizabethtown and employees of Masonic Village.

“We all care about each other here at Masonic Village and all step up when there is a challenge. This is who we are,” Ray says. “Selfishly, the garden is a great place to go in times like this.”

For her part, Pat coordinated a team of 30 Masonic Village residents that made over 4,000 face masks for residents and staff members, with guidance from staff at the Masonic Health Care Center to ensure the masks met specific guidelines. Pat researched techniques, such as using grocery bags as a third lining for the masks, and networked with residents, family and friends to secure supplies, such as elastic, when they were scarce.

“Our mask team continues to supply Masonic Village administration with masks to distribute as they see fit,” Pat says. “Our sewers are dedicated to helping others.”

Debbie Mink, 68

Sixteen years ago, while teaching fourth-grade in Crawford County, in northwestern Pennsylvania, Mink took a class that touted the benefits of having teachers write along with their students. So she began writing a fictional story on bullying, working on it over weekends and then bringing it into the classroom for her students to critique. Over the years, as those fourth-graders turned into high-schoolers, they would occasionally ask Mink if she ever finished her book. The answer was always no.

Then three years ago, she showed the first chapter to a retired English teacher who also happened to be her neighbor at Willow Valley Communities. That neighbor started gently nudging her to finish the book, but Mink was just too busy doing other things — until COVID-19 hit. Between a trip to Australia and her husband’s surgery, Mink found herself in quarantine for a total of six weeks, and suddenly she had plenty of time on her hands. She self-published her book, “Choices,” in May.

Geared toward fourth, fifth and sixth graders, “Choices” tells the story of Frank, a fifth grader who bullies classmates he views as different because they have conditions such as ADHD or dyslexia. “It’s a cross-section of students I had over the years. I put their different character traits in there,” Mink says. “It’s a good book for elementary teachers to read with their class. Bullying is so big.”

With her writing and COVID-19 still on a roll, Mink has already written a second book, “Adapting to Vision Challenges — Together,” a memoir sharing Mink’s personal journey as her husband loses his sight and she deals with glaucoma.

And, yes, there may be a third book in the works, this one about time travel. Mink isn’t sure if she’s going to write it. COVID-19 may have a say in it.

“The coronavirus definitely had something to do with (the other books), because otherwise I would have been busy doing other things,” she says.

Dealing with COVID-19 doesn’t necessarily have to be as dramatic as writing a book or learning a new instrument. Former Lancaster city mayor Janice Stork writes in an email that she simply enjoyed having more free time to do things she enjoys, like gardening and cooking.

“I had my living room repainted and after it was done I rehung all my artwork in new places and it has given me a fresh look at my art,” Stork writes.

In addition to writing his daily uplifting emails, George Nettleton has also enjoyed having more time to delve into his hobby of genealogy. His wife, Ruth, he says, has rediscovered cross-stitching.

Nettleton says it’s important for seniors to find a way to cope with the new normal of COVID-19, because it’s not going away anytime soon.

“My concern is that a number of people are sitting in their easy chair, watching TV and hoping this thing will blow over.”



Painting by Barb Baxter.

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ROLLING WITH THE PUNCHES

Retirement communities find new ways to meet social and daily-living needs amid health concerns

KIMBERLY MARSELAS
FOR LNP | LANCASTERONLINE

For 66 years, Marion and Robert Brubaker have been inseparable, from their 48 years in music ministry at York's Zion United Church of Christ to a post-retirement move to Willow Valley Communities in 2017.

When Robert needed more assistance with everyday activities, he moved into The Glen, the community's skilled nursing facility. Marion made the trip from their apartment to visit with Robert at least every other day, sharing ice cream or coffee, reminiscing and reminding him to play piano to keep his spirits up and his mind sharp.

Those visits stopped suddenly when COVID-19 forced Willow Valley to restrict visitors from entering its health care unit. Robert, 90, and Marion, 85, were limited to short phone conversation for much of this spring.

But now the Brubakers are seeing each other again once a week, thanks to an innovative approach to in-person visits called Connections Cottages. Quickly built onto the outside of each health care facility at Willow Valley, a cottage allows visitors — physically separated by a window pane — to speak to and see each other in a comfortable, climate-controlled setting.

"The first time, I told him I thought he looked good," Marion said. "I told him he looked good for 90, and he laughed."

New ways of visiting are just one of the many adjustments local retirement communities have made as they try to balance health concerns with the social and daily living needs of residents.

Tablets and in-room TVs are offering virtual interactions and entertainment; meal delivery and grocery shopping temporarily re-



Marion Brubaker uses one of the Connections Cottages at Willow Valley Communities to visit with her husband, Robert.

placed dining room options for thousands; and some communities encouraged the expanded use of telemedicine and home health services to reduce trips off campus.

Many of those services are likely to remain long term — most likely supplementing traditional, in-person services — after the threat of COVID-19 abates. In the short term, they may be just what retirement communities need to continue attracting new residents during a time of crisis and uncertainty.

"The pandemic really highlighted why living in a retirement community is an excellent choice for many people," says Adam Marles, president and CEO of LeadingAge PA, an association representing aging services providers statewide. "Our members reacted swiftly, providing grocery deliveries and enhanced access to technology, screening access to their campuses to mitigate spread, and creating ways to stay connected and engaged even though day-to-day life had to change."

Entertained by electronics

Before COVID, Masonic Villages in Elizabethtown offered 25-30 trips a month and routinely brought in entertainers while offering a wide variety of educational, spiritual and artistic opportunities for residents. Since the pandemic start-

ed, the community has heavily promoted use of its K4 Village Connect portal to keep residents engaged, according to Mark Eyer, director of retirement living. K4 Connect allows users to easily video call family members from laptops, tablets and mobile phones, and staff can use the portal to share new information including in-room menu options and virtual event listings.

The community adapted its wellness and recreation programming, too. Residents raved about group fitness classes offered over an in-house television station, as well as "brain games" and health challenges organized by staff.

Virtual hosting allows more classes at more times, and residents can "drop in" at the last minute. Classes will double from seven to 16 weekly when in-person activities resume.

At Landis Homes, president Larry Zook set up an Amazon Echo Show to communicate with his mother. He also encouraged social services and pastoral staff to pursue use of iPads and other equipment to keep residents in touch with one another and friends outside the Lititz community.

One resident virtually attended the funeral of the sister she'd lived with her entire life; Another who was dying was able to reconnect with a retired church leader from the country where she'd serve as a missionary "for a very

meaningful, sacred time of connection."

"Prior to the COVID pandemic, we had not made these tools available, though we could have," Zook wrote in a blog post. "These communication technologies have offered rays of sunshine that will bring joy and serve residents, clients and their families, and team members well for many years to come."

Health and helpers

At Masonic Homes, staff from the community's home care division began caring for and interacting with residents whose loved ones were no longer allowed on campus.

"Home care staff have filled in to help with grocery shopping, filling medications and medsets, doing laundry, assisting with transportation to appointments and offering companionship," says Kathleen Noll, home care manager.

The expectation is that more independent resi-

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Communities reinvent marketing strategies

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October should have been a time of celebration for Lancaster County's continuing care retirement communities. For the 10th year in a row, they were set to hold the Explore Retirement Living Open House, a collaborative effort in which all 18 communities throw open their doors to prospective residents on the same day.

Over the past decade, the event has drawn more than 15,000 visitors, many of them hopscotching to multiple communities over the course of the day, says Amanda Hall, marketing associate at Homestead Village in East Hempfield Township and an organizer of the annual event.

But this is no typical year. As with so many things in the time of COVID-19, the 2020 open house has been canceled, and along with it one of the biggest marketing opportunities of the year.

"The event was something that had longevity. People would visit and maybe not move in for several years. ... It was a great way for people to get a preview of a community and get introduced to the concept of continuing care," says Sarah Short, director of residency planning for Landis Homes, which drew over 400 visitors to its Lititz campus for last October's open house.

The 2019 open house brought over 400 people from 213 households to the campus of Fairmount in Ephrata, resulting in 16 move-ins during the last year, says Mitchell Hanna, director of marketing.

"We created a lot of buzz in 2019 because we were showing a new apartment building," Hanna says. "It is disappointing we had to

cancel this year because I really felt the momentum would continue for the 2020 open house."

One of the major benefits of the event is that it allows the retirement communities to pool their resources for maximum exposure. Part of that initiative is a direct mailing to 150,000 households, something many of the local retirement communities would not be able to do on their own.

"To reach beyond Lancaster County, to go beyond that and be able to reach people in the Philadelphia market, reach people in Delaware, New Jersey and Maryland really is important to how we express why Lancaster County is such a destination to retire to," Hall says.

Thinking outside the box

A canceled open house isn't the only sales and marketing hurdle facing local retirement communities. The pandemic shut down campuses for months, making it all the more difficult to woo prospective residents by drawing them onto campus. Communities have had to cancel their individual open houses and educational programs and close their dining and wellness facilities, many of which are normally open to the public.

The decision to move into a retirement community isn't typically an impulsive one, Short notes. It often can take years. In fact, many prospective residents come back year after year to open house events before making a decision. After that, they may end up on a waiting list.

"We're constantly mar-

STRATEGY, page 4

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Strategy

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keting in advance for what will become available,” Hall says. “It’s like planting a seed. The more times people can come on campus the more it feels like home.”

In the wake of this new normal, communities have gotten creative.

Some, like Woodcrest Villa, are beefing up their websites with additional content and 360 tours of residences, says Connie Buckwalter, director of marketing for Mennonite Home Communities. Landis Homes has a drone video of its 114-acre campus in the works, Short says.

After canceling five open house events this spring, Fairmount began promoting video tours of residences and other campus amenities on its website, Hanna says.

Willow Valley Communities had to put the brakes on its discovery tours — popular tours in which they take visitors around campus on shuttles to visit the Clubhouse, Cultural Center, residences and other community amenities. Instead, they created a video of that shuttle tour, advertised it like a regular event, and hosted a live question-and-answer session along with it.

“It’s working out really well,” says Maureen Leader, public relations and communications manager for Willow Valley Communities, noting they’ve had virtual attendees from 30 states. “We used to be limited by how many shuttles we can get. We had someone from South Dakota, someone from California. They just can’t fly in for a tour, but they can sit in a living room and tour Willow Valley Communities.”

Homestead Village saw a similar benefit after hosting a recent virtual seminar,

Hall says. The community typically holds six to eight on-campus events each year featuring speakers on a variety of topics. As part of the event, they might also have residences open for visitors to explore. It’s just another way to get people on campus and introduce them to Homestead Village, she says.

“That definitely threw us for a loop to not be able to have those types of events,” Hall says.

With a financial adviser in this year’s speaker lineup, Homestead Village pivoted to its first virtual event last month with the help of Rodgers & Associates, which hosted a live webinar on a timely financial topic via Zoom for prospective and current residents. Viewers were able to type their questions during the presentation.

“For dipping our toe in the water, we were pleased with our response,” Hall says. “The nice thing was ... it actually allowed us to reach people outside of Lancaster County and outside of the state. We had people participate that normally wouldn’t be able to come to our on-campus event.”

That even included a viewer from Oregon, she says.

The new normal

Now that local retirement communities are allowing on-campus visits, prospective residents can get in-person tours again, but it’s certainly not the same.

Much like a major college campus event for prospective students, an open house throws the doors of each community wide open. Chefs might have dishes to sample, current residents might volunteer to open their homes or answer questions, and tours include many campus amenities, from wellness centers to woodworking shops. None of that is currently

possible in the age of COVID-19.

At Woodcrest Villa, visitors for a private in-person tour must go through a temperature screening, use hand sanitizer and wear masks at all times, Buckwalter says. Rather than ride along in the community’s vehicle to see various sites on campus, visitors must follow in their own vehicle. They can only tour vacant residences, and those residences are thoroughly sanitized afterward, she says.

“We used to serve coffee, soda and have candy out but now we don’t do that,” Buckwalter says. “Now we give away little bottles of hand sanitizer with our logo on.”

But more than food and amenities, Buckwalter laments that something deeper is missing from these campus visits during the pandemic.

“They don’t really get to interact with residents in the way they normally would, which is disappointing for all of us because one of the aspects of living in a community that can be most beneficial is the socialization and relationships people form with other residents,” she says.

Even so, any kind of visit is better than no visit.

“There’s really nothing that can take the place of actually coming and checking out your future home for yourself,” Buckwalter says.

Then there’s Arlene Yager. A native of Lancaster County, she once worked as an admissions counselor at Landis Homes before marrying a Canadian and moving to Canada over 30 years ago. When her husband died in March, Yager decided to move back home to be closer to friends and family. In late September, she’ll move into a one-bedroom apartment in Landis Homes’ Harvest View building, sight unseen.

“I have a younger brother



Visitors to Landis Homes tour the community’s hybrid homes during last year’s Explore Retirement Living open house..

and sister-in-law who are my go-between, and they have helped me choose cupboards, flooring, window treatments, paint, etc., using FaceTime,” Yager says. “While it would have been nice to be there to make choices, I really didn’t feel the need to make a special trip down. Plus, some of my closest friends from 30 years ago are in this same home and keep me posted on everything! Many pictures have been sent to me!”

While some people like Yager are forging ahead with their retirement community move, others are

apprehensive about any kind of community visits at this time.

Woodcrest Villa has had fewer move-ins this year, and the number of inquiries has dropped, but not as much as one might think, Buckwalter says, noting there is still a healthy level of interest.

With a strong waiting list, Landis Homes has filled up every home that has opened during the pandemic, Short says.

The challenge is building for the future, especially in these times of limited face-to-face interaction.

“There is a concern that individuals will shy away from moving to retirement communities with the poor light in which retirement communities and nursing homes have been painted during the pandemic,” Hanna says. “However, I have been heartened by the number of requests I have received in recent weeks to be added to our wait list or to take a personal tour of the campus. So I am pretty confident that people will see the benefits of living in retirement communities as the dust settles.”

Needs

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dents will opt for such support even as visitor limitations are eventually relaxed.

“What these circumstances have done is enabled families to see how home care can be extra support to allow people just to enjoy their visits as family members and not as caregivers,” Noll says.

At times, those in-home staff members became a critical link to outside services. They used smartphones and tablets to enable telehealth visits, becoming an advocate for the resident or a liaison with a medical provider.

According to a 2019 Leading Age report, use of resident engagement and electronic health documentation technologies were becoming commonplace technologies at the nation’s largest not-for-profit senior living facilities. Anecdotally, use of once less-popular remote patient monitoring, communication and telehealth

tools have now exploded.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services also expanded its coverage of telehealth in skilled nursing facilities (and beyond) due to the pandemic, and many retirement communities expect related services will continue post-COVID-19.

Combined, all of those technology changes have been a comfort to seniors who might have felt isolated in a home without them, Marles notes.

“Our members have strong and reliable internet service and staff that can assist as residents learn the new technology,” he says. “Then, through wellness programs, communities can help residents stick to their doctors’ guidance if the individual would like the help. Since it’s so new, not all senior living organizations have begun to use this as an additional selling point, but it is yet another example of how retirement communities make retirement easier for those who decide to make the move.”

Kelly Eakin, director of sales and marketing at Masonic Village, says her community’s resourcefulness reaffirms a commitment to caring.

“We’ve had several residents tell us how relieved they were to be (here) since big decisions were made on their behalf, and they felt more secure than they would have living in their former home,” she says.

Back at Willow Valley, Marion Brubaker is happy to be enjoying socially distanced outings with a few friends in a courtyard near her apartment building. She bakes and cooks meals for herself, relying on groceries now delivered straight to her door. And while she misses live church services and the classical musicians who performed on campus regularly, she says she is happy to live in a place focused on her health and safety.

“I don’t worry down here,” she says. “They really take care of us.”



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What is a cognitive test and do you need one?

CAROLE DECK
FOR LNP | LANCASTER ONLINE

Memory lapses happen occasionally to everyone at any age. For older adults they can cause concern.

Forgetfulness in later life is a normal part of the aging process, according to the National Institute on Aging (part of the National Institutes of Health). Like forgetting where you put your glasses, or someone's name you've known for years, or the title of a recently watched TV movie.

These aren't reasons to worry about serious mental deterioration or the onset of dementia, the NIA reports. Rather, they're age-related changes in the brain that cause some seniors to take longer to learn new things, to have more difficulty remembering information or to misplace items.

Cognition function is a combination of processes in the brain that affects almost every aspect of a person's life. It includes thinking, memory, language, judgment and ability to learn new things. Cognitive impairment is when someone has a problem with cognition, and it can range from mild to severe. It can also impact a person's well-being and quality of life.

Cognitive assessment testing has increased over the past 10 years, the result of an annual Medicare benefit in the Affordable Care Act that includes a prevention plan for detection of cognitive impairment by a primary care physician, says Dr. Emily M. Pressley, a psychiatrist and chief medical officer at Lancaster Behavioral Health Hospital.

Cognitive assessment testing checks for problems with cognition.

"Early screening is important in identifying cognitive problems, especially those which can be treated or preventable," Pressley says.

She agrees with the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, an independent, volunteer panel of national experts in disease prevention and evidence-based medicine, which recommends cognitive impairment screening in adults 65 years of age and older. Those younger should only be tested if there's cause to suspect cognitive impairment.

Most patients who visit her office for an evaluation

come as a result of a family member noticing behavioral changes or memory problems. Seniors should be screened for cognitive impairment if they, family members or others have concerns about changes in their memory or thinking.

The most common tests to measure mental functions through a series of questions and/or simple tasks are:

- Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA)
- Mini-Mental State Exam (MMSE)
- Mini-Cog

Pressley uses the MoCA test because she says it's more precise. In July, the MoCA gained recognition when President Donald Trump, at age 74, told news media that he "aced" it.

The screening assessment, to assist health professionals in the detection of mild cognitive impairment, was developed by Dr. Ziad Nasreddine in Montreal, Canada, in 1996. In a July 23 interview with the financial website MarketWatch, Nasreddine explained that the MoCA isn't an IQ test nor does it determine a person's skill level.

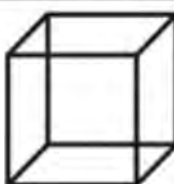
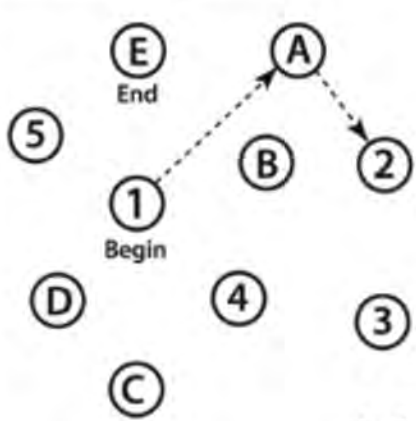

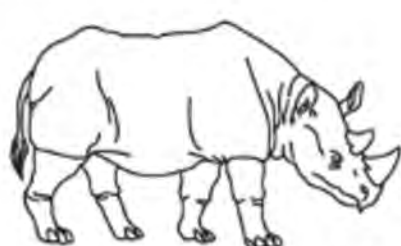
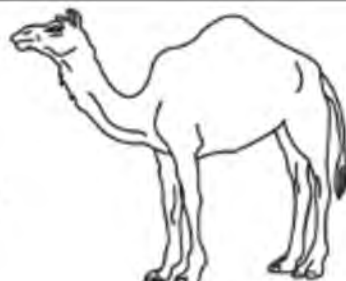
"The test is to help physicians detect early signs of Alzheimer's and it became very popular because it was a short test, and very sensitive for early impairment," Nasreddine said.

The test is easy for those without cognitive impairment.

If the test results provide evidence of cognitive impairment, Pressley says the next step is to identify the cause. Additional physical diagnostic testing plus medication evaluation and screening for depression may be necessary. More extensive neuropsychological testing could be needed, too. A family member or someone who has frequent contact with the person can provide beneficial information for a diagnosis.

Pressley says preventable, treatable causes of cognitive impairment may include medication side effects, specifically anti-anxiety medications, sleeping pills, cholesterol drugs, narcotic pain medications, antihistamines or incontinence drugs, to name a few. Other possible causes of cognitive problems are thyroid disease, vitamin deficiency, stroke, tumor or trauma.

If a medication causes the

| MONTREAL COGNITIVE ASSESSMENT (MOCA) Version 7.1 Original Version | | | | NAME: Education: Sex: | Date of birth: DATE: | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| VISUOSPATIAL / EXECUTIVE | |  | Copy cube <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: 10px auto;"></div> | Draw CLOCK (Ten past eleven) (3 points) | | POINTS <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px; width: 100%;"></div> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| MEMORY | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Read list of words, subject must repeat them. Do 2 trials, even if 1st trial is successful. Do a recall after 5 minutes. | | <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">FACE</td> <td style="text-align: center;">VELVET</td> <td style="text-align: center;">CHURCH</td> <td style="text-align: center;">DAISY</td> <td style="text-align: center;">RED</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1st trial</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">2nd trial</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> | | FACE | VELVET | CHURCH | DAISY | RED | 1st trial | | | | | | 2nd trial | | | | | | No points | | |
| | FACE | VELVET | CHURCH | DAISY | RED | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1st trial | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2nd trial | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ATTENTION | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Read list of digits (1 digit/ sec.). | | Subject has to repeat them in the forward order [] 2 1 8 5 4 Subject has to repeat them in the backward order [] 7 4 2 | | | | ___/2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Read list of letters. The subject must tap with his hand at each letter A. No points if ≥ 2 errors | | [] F B A C M N A A J K L B A F A K D E A A A J A M O F A A B | | | | ___/1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Serial 7 subtraction starting at 100 | | [] 93 [] 86 [] 79 [] 72 [] 65 <small>4 or 5 correct subtractions: 3 pts. 2 or 3 correct: 2 pts. 1 correct: 1 pt. 0 correct: 0 pt</small> | | | | ___/3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| LANGUAGE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Repeat : I only know that John is the one to help today. [] The cat always hid under the couch when dogs were in the room. [] | | ___/2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Fluency / Name maximum number of words in one minute that begin with the letter F | | [] _____ (N ≥ 11 words) | | | | ___/1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ABSTRACTION | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Similarity between e.g. banana - orange = fruit | | [] train - bicycle [] watch - ruler | | | | ___/2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| DELAYED RECALL | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Has to recall words WITH NO CUE | | <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">FACE</td> <td style="text-align: center;">VELVET</td> <td style="text-align: center;">CHURCH</td> <td style="text-align: center;">DAISY</td> <td style="text-align: center;">RED</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">[]</td> <td style="text-align: center;">[]</td> <td style="text-align: center;">[]</td> <td style="text-align: center;">[]</td> <td style="text-align: center;">[]</td> </tr> </table> | FACE | VELVET | CHURCH | DAISY | RED | [] | [] | [] | [] | [] | Points for UNCUED recall only | | | ___/5 | | | | | | | |
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| Optional Category cue | | <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">FACE</td> <td style="text-align: center;">VELVET</td> <td style="text-align: center;">CHURCH</td> <td style="text-align: center;">DAISY</td> <td style="text-align: center;">RED</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">[]</td> <td style="text-align: center;">[]</td> <td style="text-align: center;">[]</td> <td style="text-align: center;">[]</td> <td style="text-align: center;">[]</td> </tr> </table> | | | | FACE | VELVET | CHURCH | DAISY | RED | [] | [] | [] | [] | [] | Points for UNCUED recall only | ___/5 | | | | | | |
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| Multiple choice cue | | <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">FACE</td> <td style="text-align: center;">VELVET</td> <td style="text-align: center;">CHURCH</td> <td style="text-align: center;">DAISY</td> <td style="text-align: center;">RED</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">[]</td> <td style="text-align: center;">[]</td> <td style="text-align: center;">[]</td> <td style="text-align: center;">[]</td> <td style="text-align: center;">[]</td> </tr> </table> | | | | FACE | VELVET | CHURCH | DAISY | RED | [] | [] | [] | [] | [] | | | | | | | | |
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| ORIENTATION | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| [] Date | | [] Month | | [] Year | | ___/6 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

President Donald Trump says he “aced” this cognitive test earlier this year. A score of 26 or better is normal.

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TERRE HILL'S 'HOMETOWN GARDENERS'

Octogenarian sisters keep community park in bloom

CAROLE DECK
FOR LNP | LANCASTERONLINE

It takes a village to raise a child. But it takes two sisters to tend the flower gardens at Terre Hill Community Memorial Park.

For years the gardens were maintained by the public works staff. But the formation in 2016 of the Weaverland Valley Authority, a joint sewer/water authority between Terre Hill and East Earl Township, reduced the staff by two, says Bob Rissler, Terre Hill mayor and public works supervisor. Two more staff members retired, and a lack of funding to replace them left a need for volunteers.

Doris Weidner and Janet Weber, seasoned gardeners, enthusiastically stepped up to fill the need. At ages 80 and 81 respectively, the two octogenarians volunteer their time and skill to keep the 22 gardens — three are water gardens — in peak condition.

"It's not easy finding volunteers these days. We are so fortunate to have Doris and Janet agree to take care of the gardens," Rissler says.

These energetic sisters start their gardening season in May and end it in late October. A highlight for the two this spring was planting 125 geraniums the week before Memorial Day. Weidner says it was good therapy for the COVID-19 blues. Her sister agrees and thinks the geraniums are especially lovely this year.

"There's nothing better than sunshine, good fresh air, getting exercise and helping your community," Weber says.

At 6 a.m. each weekday morning the sisters tackle their gardening chores in the 10-acre park. With hoes, trowels, pruning shears and spades in hand, the two take about three hours to feed, weed, deadhead, prune and water the gardens. The sisters also take care of weeding the park's four picnic areas. Staff does the mulching.

Along with the geraniums, Weidner and Weber also planted periwinkle, lily of the valley and dahlias. Weidner says this year has been

challenging with heat and an abundance of weeds.

"Seeing the results and having people appreciate the beauty of the gardens is better than receiving money for our work," Weidner says.

The sisters always loved flowers growing up and helped their mother in the family garden. As adults they planted flowers at their homes. Favorites are dahlias, roses and geraniums. Volunteering to help with the park gardens three years ago rekindled an interest in flower gardening for the two.

"We used to hang out at the park as kids," Weber says.

Both now widows, the sisters were raised in Terre Hill, married and moved away. Weidner and her husband, Joseph, lived in Maryland. She moved back to Terre Hill and has been a resident for 20 years. Weber and husband Dick moved to East Earl, just outside of Terre Hill, where she currently lives.

"What makes Terre Hill special and encourages us to volunteer is the people," Weidner says.

Rissler has nothing but praise for the sisters' dedication to keeping the gardens picture-perfect. Since they took over, he says, the gardens are more manicured than in the past.

"Thanks to the sisters our gardens are the envy of other municipalities who ask how we do it," Rissler says.

The park is a favorite for visitors from around the county with its Timbers Playground, pavilions, basketball and lighted tennis courts, playing fields, fitness trail — and the beautiful, well-tended gardens.

Weidner and Weber also volunteer in the park kitchen for community events. In August, they helped with Friday lunches in the park.

American botanist and horticulturist Luther Burbank said, "Flowers always make people better, happier and more helpful; they are sunshine, medicine and food for the soul."

Rissler says he believes this quote describes the attitude of Weidner and Weber, who are Terre Hill's "hometown gardeners."



Sisters Doris Weidner, front, and Janet Weber planted 125 geraniums at Terre Hill Community Park this year and regularly tend the flower beds.

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