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Saturday, May 17 • Bishop Guertin High School • See Activities, pages 12-13



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## ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION

**MAY 17** Visit the table at the Silver Linings Senior Healthy Living Expo in Nashua.

**JUNE 14** Support the Ride to End ALZ bike ride fundraiser by riding, donating or volunteering.

**JUNE 20** Support "The Longest Day" and "48 Peaks Challenge" fundraising events.

# Spring into action for Alzheimer's awareness

■ **Strong support system:** Alzheimer's Association operates a 24/7 helpline, hosts virtual and in-person workshops, and offers a variety of support groups.

By Kaarin L. Clausen  
Special to the Union Leader

With the onset of spring, there is an air of vim and vigor among New Englanders. Some may feel the season provides them with a renewed sense of purpose, while others are eager to participate in activities both in and out of doors. For the MA/NH chapter of the Alzheimer's Association, it's time to ramp up for a series of events dedicated to supporting a cause near and dear to the hearts of many — research, support and resources for individuals with Alzheimer's disease or dementia.

The association's spring event calendar begins at the New Hampshire Union Leader's Silver Linings Senior Healthy Living Expo — scheduled for Saturday, May 17, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Bishop Guertin High School in Nashua. The Silver Linings Expo provides a face-to-face forum for the public to hear directly from experts, advocates and care providers on issues facing the aging population. The free expo includes valuable information, demonstrations from vendors, door prizes, giveaways and presentations on a wide range of topics, including Alzheimer's and dementia.

Melissa Grenier, New Hampshire regional manager for the Alzheimer's Association, enjoys

attending the expo because she's able to provide support to people who may not have known where to find resources as they care for loved ones with Alzheimer's.

"I enjoy meeting people at the expo and seeing the looks on their faces when they hear information that resonates with them," Grenier said. "Or they might tell us that a family member was recently diagnosed, and they didn't know we even existed. The event helps provide information on our programs and services, and it's very well run. It's great to see the different agencies that are represented there, and we're always happy to participate when we can."

## Dementia resources and support

According to the 2024 Alzheimer's Association New Hampshire fact sheet, there were 26,500 people with Alzheimer's living in New Hampshire in 2024. In addition, 48,000 Granite State caregivers have dedicated 77 million hours to unpaid care. Since 1980, the Alzheimer's Association has offered support to anyone facing Alzheimer's, advocating for the needs and rights of those facing dementia and advancing critical research. The organization works towards methods of treatment, prevention and, ultimately, a cure.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY NH/MA ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION

Participants pose for a photo during the Seacoast Walk to End Alzheimer's on Oct. 6, 2024.

Grenier said one of the most important services provided by the MA/NH chapter of the Alzheimer's Association is their 24/7 helpline. The toll-free support line is available 365 days per year and connects callers with the association's national call center in Chicago. On behalf of the caller, the call center then reaches out to local chapters to enable follow-up regarding their questions or issues. To reach the 24/7 Helpline, call 800-272-3900.

In addition, the Alzheimer's Association offers a multitude of virtual and in-person educational workshops throughout New Hampshire and Massachusetts, held at libraries, hospitals, senior centers and conferences. Grenier hopes to reach the vast number of patients, family members and caregivers affect-

ed by the disease and provide them with relevant information — always free of charge.

"There are so many people in New Hampshire who are impacted by Alzheimer's or dementia and don't know what to do," she said. "Education is power. So I think once people get some of their questions answered, they might feel more comfortable seeking out a diagnosis from their doctor, connecting with other community resources or talking with family members about their concerns."

She also encourages people to become involved in one of the many support groups offered by the Alzheimer's Association. A variety of groups provide support for caregivers, family members at the beginning or end of the disease process, LGBTQ+ family members and

“

*"Sometimes people will reach out and not really know exactly why they're calling. But then we'll dig a little deeper and hear their story and can provide suggestions on what may help."*

MELISSA GRENIER  
N.H. Alzheimer's Association

adult children who are caregivers for a parent.

For a deeper dive into issues that families are facing related to Alzheimer's or dementia, the association also offers care consultations — confidential family meetings with a counselor who provides educational resources or emotional support about dementia-related issues, such as moving a loved one into an assisted living facility, as well as the grief, regret or frustration that comes with making those difficult decisions.

"Sometimes people will reach out and not really know exactly why they are calling," explained Grenier. "But then we'll dig a little deeper and hear their story and can provide suggestions on

See **Alzheimer's**, Page T4

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# Alzheimer's

From Page T2

what may help — whether it's a support group or home agency recommendation. They can use us as much or as little as they'd like."

## Spreading awareness and hope

Because the Alzheimer's Association does not charge for its services, several events are scheduled this spring to fundraise for the support and research offered and implemented by the association. The Ride to End ALZ, scheduled for June 14, is one of the organization's largest annual spring events — special to New Hampshire in that only a few chapters in the country host a simi-

lar event.

During the ride, approximately 500 cyclists enjoy the spectacular views of New Hampshire's coastline, as well as picturesque towns and woodlands in Massachusetts, while fundraising and spreading awareness about the disease. Riders are treated to a light breakfast before the event, pit stops stocked with snacks and other amenities along the way and a post-ride beach bash featuring live music, barbeque, dips in the ocean and cold beer. Riders are required to meet a \$500 minimum to participate, and 90% of the money raised directly benefits Alzheimer's and

dementia research.

To commemorate the longest day of the year — the summer solstice on June 20 — the Alzheimer's Association hosts "The Longest Day." During this event, participants choose their own fundraising activity that lasts for a whole day between sunrise and sunset. One of the most popular activities in "The Longest Day" is the "48 Peaks Challenge."

In this challenge, 400-plus hikers climb the 48 4,000-footers in the White Mountains of New Hampshire to raise vital funding for the care, support and research efforts of the Alzheimer's Association. Some hikers choose to

hike Mount Washington, while others choose easier climbs or family-friendly hikes. Established in 2015, the fundraiser passed the \$1 million milestone in 2024. For more information on "The Longest Day" and the "Ride to End ALZ," visit [act.alz.org](http://act.alz.org).

The success of these events lies in the combined efforts of participants, staff and volunteers. Grenier said there are many opportunities for people to become involved in the Alzheimer's Association, from staffing a table to advocating for public policy.

"We're a volunteer-driven

See **Alzheimer's**, Page T5



PHOTO PROVIDED BY MA/NH ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION

A rider gives a thumbs up to the camera during a recent Ride to End ALZ (Alzheimer's) fundraising event.

“The face of Alzheimer's is me. And it's not my end. It's the beginning of a different journey. I have a lot of good and happy life left. There's joy and it's precious.”

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Alzheimer’s

From Page T4

en organization,” she said. “We have volunteers who provide public education or run support groups. We have volunteers that are public policy advocates or participate in outreach events. Depending on what someone wants to commit to, they can do four hours of work per week or a whole day. We’re more than happy to train them and rely heavily on our volunteers to get out and help us spread the word.”

Grenier said the Alzheimer’s Association believes it is important to grow their protections and supports for patients and family members, as

well as safeguard what is already working and in place. Some volunteers speak with local legislators and ask for support of recently submitted bills, or they visit the State House and provide testimony during hearings. Members of the organization recently met with Gov. Kelly Ayotte and requested her support for issues they “have in the works.”

“It was really nice to spend time with Gov. Ayotte and start building that relationship,” said Grenier. “Alzheimer’s disease is what we call ‘a purple cause.’ It’s not blue, and it’s not red. Everyone is affected by it, and so I think

that makes it a little easier to get bipartisan support.”

Grenier also wants to make sure people know that resources provided by the Alzheimer’s Association are available to anyone dealing with a dementia-related illness — not only those with Alzheimer’s specifically.

“When I’m out in the community, I tell people to please reach out to us,” she said. “We’re always looking for new and creative ways to share information about the disease and what we do in order to better meet the needs of Granite Staters.”

For more information, visit [alz.org/manh](http://alz.org/manh).



PROVIDED BY MA/NH ALZHEIMER’S ASSOCIATION

Participants listen to a presentation during a “Living with Alzheimer’s for Caregivers” program on March 28, 2023, in Keene.



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## RENMAR DME

# Round-the-clock service and support for durable medical equipment

■ **Meeting patients needs:** From short-term rentals to equipment necessary for hospice care, Renmar can help.

By Robert Levey  
Special to the Union Leader

Renmar DME, located in Bow, provides durable medical equipment — ranging from hospital beds and patient lifts to complex power wheelchairs — directly to homes, assisted living facilities, and hospitals.

According to owners Alison Mark-Theriault and Jonathan Bergin, who worked together at a global medical device manufacturing company before purchasing Renmar DME in 2019, their mission is “putting patient needs first.”

“We pride ourselves on being a local, community-driven business,” noted Mark-Theriault. “Our team members live and work in New Hampshire, and we are dedicated to delivering reliable, compassionate service. We have built our business by helping people with short and long-term equipment needs.”

These needs extend beyond short- and long-term equipment sales to include repairs and rentals. Mark-Theriault described rentals as a great option for many people.

“They provide flexibility for those who need items temporarily or quickly,” she explained. “Renmar delivers equipment fast for all requests, regardless of whether it is required on the same day, next day, weekend or a holiday.”

Rental use examples include someone recovering from surgery who temporarily needs a lift recliner or those who need a hospital bed or power chair while visiting relatives. “Others



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Many patients experience delays when trying to obtain wheelchairs and other equipment paid for by private insurance, and Renmar DME can help with rental equipment during that gap in time.

want to rent a power scooter for the county fair for the weekend,” added Mark-Theriault.

Another common reason for renting equipment is to cover an interim need while an insurance customer awaits equipment ordered through their health insurance provider.

“When the insurance paperwork is complete, we pick up the rental equipment after they receive their insurance-paid item,” said Mark-Theriault.

Renmar DME also provides hospice support services when end-of-life care is needed. “Since buying Renmar DME, we have grown from being the smallest to becoming one of the largest hospice DME providers in New Hampshire,” Bergin said.

Noting their delivery techni-

cians and customer service team work directly with hospice patients and families, Bergin said they provide education on how equipment functions, troubleshoot problems, and coordinate deliveries.

“Renmar DME team members understand that it’s a very difficult time for the patient and their families, and we show respect and compassion during our interactions,” he explained.

Company technicians are available 24/7 to support any equipment emergencies and emergency orders 365 days per year. “We respond immediately to oxygen emergency delivery orders and when a patient is being discharged from a hospital,” he added.

In addition to their mission-driven philosophy, Bergin said

their attention to customer feedback is an important differentiator. “Many have asked for a bed that lowers more than a standard ‘low’ hospital bed to help patients at high risk of a dangerous fall,” he said.

Taking this feedback into account, Renmar has found and now offers a “Floor Bed” — a product that eliminates the risk of falling out of bed. “It lowers flush with the floor beside a custom safety mat that eliminates the risk of falls,” Bergin said.

Looking to the future, Mark-Theriault said they will continue to focus on process improvements to optimize timely results and better service for their clients. She mentioned their approach to wheelchairs for private sale and insurance ben-

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*“Renmar delivers equipment fast for all requests, regardless of whether it is required on the same day, next day, weekend, or a holiday.”*

**ALISON MARK-THERIAULT**  
co-owner of Renmar DME

eficiaries with critical medical diagnoses as one example.

“There are many scenarios where patients need a custom wheelchair delivered with rapid turnaround,” she said. “Insurance payers, such as Medicare, Medicaid and private insurance companies, require many steps and documentation and often take much longer than the customer can tolerate.”

One solution to this problem is wheelchair rentals. “Any customer working with us on an insurance-paid or privately paid wheelchair has the option to privately rent a similar chair at half the price of a typical rental,” said Mark-Theriault. “We are one of the few companies who have a fleet of rental powerchairs and complex manual wheelchairs.”

Aside from their technical capabilities, both Mark-Theriault and Bergin said their organizational success stems from their “amazing team.”

“We strive to make Renmar DME the best place to work for our team members and appreciate the hard work they all do,” added Mark-Theriault.

To learn more about Renmar DME, visit [renmarinc.com](http://renmarinc.com).



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# Common financial scams that target seniors

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Financial scams are as old as the concept of currency. But consumers' vulnerability to scams has seemingly increased in the 21st century, when the internet and devices like smartphones have enabled scammers to gain access to potential victims' financial information and gain virtual entry into their homes.

Seniors are targeted by financial scammers with such frequency that the term "elder fraud" has entered the English lexicon and is now widely recognized as a notable threat to individuals age 60 and older. The Elder Justice Initiative aims to support and coordinate U.S. Department of Justice efforts to combat financial fraud that targets older adults. Those efforts include a number of initiatives to educate older adults about elder fraud, including warning seniors about some notable scams.

## Social Security Administration impostor scam

When perpetrating this scam, criminals typically contact prospective victims via telephone and falsely claim that suspicious activity has prompted the suspension of their Social Security number. Scammers may also indicate money must be withdrawn from a potential victim's bank and stored on gift cards for security's sake. It's important to note caller ID spoofing is often utilized when perpetrating this scam so an incoming call appears to be coming from the Social Security Administration.

## Tech support scam

This scam involves criminals claiming to be representatives from widely recognized companies who are calling to inform seniors that viruses or malware have been detected on their devices. Some also may claim a target's computer has been hacked. The Federal Trade Commission notes perpetrators of this scam pretend to be tech support and request victims enable them to remotely access their devices or computer. Granting such access provides an avenue to view sensitive information, but scammers also may diagnose nonexistent



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Elder fraud refers to financial scams targeted at seniors age 60 and older.

problems and charge a fee. But the scam does not always stop there. Some call back later and offer a refund to account for services that can no longer be rendered or to correct an overcharge. The scammers then request victims' specific banking details under the guise of "correcting" these alleged oversights.

## Lottery scam

The lottery scam involves scammers calling potential victims and informing them they have won a foreign lottery or sweepstakes. Perpetrators of this scam typically identify themselves as lawyers, customs officials or lottery representatives. The telemarketers behind this scam may be based in Jamaica, but the U.S. Embassy in Jamaica warns that those behind the scam will ask winners to pay various fees, including shipping and customs duties, until victims' funds are exhausted.

## Romance scam

The FTC warns that popular dating sites, social networking platforms and chat rooms provide opportunities for scammers to exploit potential victims. The aim of these scams, which many victims are too ashamed to report even after they realize they've been victimized, is to convince targets to send money in the name of love. But the EJI warns that online love interests who ask for money are almost certainly scam artists.

More information about these and other scams is available at [justice.gov/elderjustice](https://justice.gov/elderjustice).



# Activities like reading and exercise promote cognitive health

Metro Creative Connection

Maintaining physical health as a body ages is an important consideration, and often one of the first things that comes to mind when people think about being healthy. However, individuals also must pay attention to cognitive health.

A 2023 study from the National Center for Biotechnology Information at the National Institutes of Health indicated that some decline in cognitive abilities is a natural part of the aging process. Attention, memory, executive cognitive function, language, and visuospatial abilities all exhibit measurable declines with age, according to the study.

Just because some measure

of cognitive impairment occurs as the years march on doesn't mean that seniors are powerless against Father Time. Certain behaviors and activities can help improve cognition.

### Physical activity

It is important to stay physically active, not only for the body, but also for the brain. Harvard Health says research shows when animals exercise regularly, the number of tiny blood vessels that bring oxygen-rich blood to the brain increase. More oxygen can reach an area of the brain that is responsible for thought and help improve brain function. Exercise also lowers blood pressure, cholesterol levels and blood sugar, all of which can be beneficial to



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the brain.

### Engage in relaxing activities

People who are depressed, sleep-deprived or anxious tend to score poorly on cognitive function tests. While this may not be an indicator of cognitive decline, it is important to en-

gage in behaviors that promote happiness and restfulness for mental health. Meditation, yoga, deep breathing exercises, and activities that help a person smile and laugh can be good for the brain.

### Stimulating activities

Stimulating activities, like word games, gardening, dancing, or playing a musical instrument, can help maintain cognitive function and enhance memory, says Healthline. Doing things that require mental effort can help stimulate and maintain cognitive function and also may improve emotional well-being.

### Read more often

Various studies indicate that

reading can promote strong mental health. In addition to keeping a person entertained or informed, reading exercises the brain. There are new words to learn, new scenarios to imagine and locations to envision. Sharing a summary of what was read with others also helps work the brain in different ways, all of which are good for cognitive health.

### Make new recipes

Browsing through a recipe, shopping for the ingredients, putting the ingredients together, and producing the finished product all can work the brain. A person is reading, engaging in math, predicting the results, and utilizing the senses during the process of cooking.



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travLBudi

# Travel agents figure out how to ‘make it all seamless’

## ■ Experience counts:

With 20 years in the business, Linda Bucknam is known for being a good listener and talented planner.

by Darrell Halen  
Special to the Union Leader

Linda Bucknam, owner of travLBudi, helps families make their vacation dreams come true.

And no family is too big or too small, no trip too long or too short. One recent client, a grandmother celebrating her 75th birthday, wanted to celebrate with a Disney trip that included her two adult children and seven grandkids.

Bucknam, whose travel agency is based in Bow, has the knack for customizable and group vacations.

She's been in business 20 years, and her work includes helping seniors — arranging for their travel and giving them the tips, information and resources to make their journeys go smoothly.

Kate Russo, 63, and her husband, Paul, 72, Bow residents, have used Bucknam's services to organize several trips, domestic and international, over several years. These include visits out west to National Parks, three weeks in Italy, and a trip to the Dominican Republic.

"She's very dedicated when she deals with our travel plans," said Kate Russo, whose daughter used Bucknam to help arrange her honeymoon. "That's how she deals with everybody. She's got a big heart. She wants to help you have an incredible experience. She made our trips memorable.

"Our family uses her because you get to sit down with her



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Where is your next dream vacation? Travel agents can help with travel plans, booking activities, securing special accommodations and more.

and talk about what you want, what you think you want. And then she goes over the details — where you want to go and what you want to do. She really listens to what your requests are, and she doesn't try to dissuade you. She just figures out a way to make it all seamless."

Seniors who worked with travLBudi on past or future trips include a pair of sisters visiting family and sites and attending a military tattoo in Scotland; a couple celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary with a European cruise; former soldiers who wanted to see Normandy and Vietnam; and several passengers over 60 who enjoyed Viking and AmaWaterways river cruises.

Some seniors tell Bucknam their travel goals are on their "bucket list."

"I'm finding grandparents are trying to do (trips) with their children and their grandchildren," said Bucknam, who has organized several multi-generational trips for clients. "I do feel that this year and last year, travel picked up more for the older generation, wanting to experience some things before they're no longer here or are not capable of doing it."

Some seniors, Bucknam said, know where they want to go but don't know how to get started. But later, when they return, they tell her their journey was the best trip of their life.

"I try to read my clients before

I set them on anything first. I (say), 'This is how I feel, you're going to have this experience. If it's not something you think you'll enjoy, let's find something you think you will enjoy,'" said Bucknam, whose clients can reach her 24/7 while traveling.

Some senior travelers may have special needs: motorized wheelchairs, dietary needs, safety bars, elevators. Bucknam addresses those needs to make the trip easier for them.

For all her international travelers, Bucknam provides a two-page document that provides important suggestions and recommendations. Suggestions include apps to download, whom to notify before leaving, and how to handle currency

“

*"She's very dedicated when she deals with our travel plans. That's how she deals with everybody. She's got a big heart. She wants to help you have an incredible experience."*

KATE RUSSO  
travLBudi client

and translate languages.

Bucknam suggests travelers buy travel insurance and use a credit card that has no foreign transaction fees.

Alaska is a popular destination for seniors. Cape Cod is of interest, too. Some people want to be near golf courses and places where it's safe for seniors to drive. Some prefer quiet bed and breakfast places, rather than large, noisy hotels where they might feel overwhelmed.

"When they go to the Caribbean they want small hotels, they don't want chains. They want one- or two-floor hotels," Bucknam said.

Foliage, she said, is another big draw.

"They love seeing that," Bucknam said. "They don't want to drive hours so they'll ask me: How far is it to get to the lake? Is there a nice place to stay in Vermont? Is there a nice place to be on the coast of Maine that is suitable for the elderly?"

For more information, visit [travlbudi.com](http://travlbudi.com).





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DEAN SHALHOUP/UNION LEADER FILE PHOTO  
Claire Dow, of Merrimack, takes the self-administered hearing test offered by HearingLife at last year's Silver Linings Senior Healthy Living Expo at the Nashua Senior Activity Center. Waiting for the results are audiologist AnnMarie Reebenacker, right, and Heather Firicano.

SAVE THE DATE

Nashua Senior Healthy Living Expo is May 17

The second annual Silver Linings Senior Healthy Living Expo in Nashua will run from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, May 17, at Bishop Guertin High School, 194 Lund Road, Nashua.  
The free expo includes valuable information, demonstrations from vendors, door prizes, giveaways and presentation on a wide range of topics.

2025 Speakers

Medicare 101  
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The Scam Landscape:  
Staying Safe  
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2025 Expo Vendors (preliminary list)

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  - Langdon Place of Nashua
  - Trend Acupuncture
  - AARP New Hampshire
  - Easterseals New Hampshire
  - Strategic Caring Solutions
  - The Modern Group, brokered by EXP Realty
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  - Right Step Therapy
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  - Brightview Concord River and Brightview North Andover
  - Nashua Crossings Benchmark
  - Renmar DME
  - Aging and Disability Resource Center (Servicelink)
  - Pacifica Physio LLC
  - Comfort Living Solutions
  - Senior Helpers of Southern New Hampshire
  - HearingLife
  - Advanced Insurance Solutions
  - RxWound and Modern Regenerative Health



DEAN SHALHOUP/UNION LEADER FILE PHOTO

Assisted by his son, Carter, Perry Cataldo, a benefits specialist with Choice Benefit Services in Auburn, answers questions for Nancy Caron, a longtime Nashua resident and retired bank executive, at last year’s Silver Linings Healthy Living Expo at the Nashua Senior Activity Center.



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## NAVIGATORS SENIOR ADVISING

# Helping seniors navigate an elaborate maze of life decisions

■ **Comprehensive advising:** From housing to health care, finances and social services, Jolie Whitten is a problem solver.

By Kathleen D. Bailey  
Special to the Union Leader

When Jolie Whitten arranges prepared meals for her senior clients, it isn't always Meals on Wheels. "There are other options," she said. "We can arrange for chefs. Sometimes our clients are serious 'foodies.'"

Whitten, founder, owner and operator of the Merrimack-based Navigators Senior Advising, believes the best way to age is your way, and she'll work to make it happen.

Whitten, who holds degrees in marketing and sociology, has spent almost 25 years in serving the senior population. "Right after college, I was working with nursing homes, assisted living facilities, independent living facilities," she said. She worked with everything from large corporations to nonprofits.

"My favorite part," she said, "was always developing businesses and working with seniors and their families."

Her interests came together in Navigators Senior Advising. "People," she said, "are my career."

## The right move

There are two "lanes" to her services, Whitten said. One is helping elders find the right senior living community, and the other is aging in place.

According to Whitten, her business is different from some nationally advertised senior services. "They are all about placement," she said. "They'll do a digital 'push' and email you a



METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Choosing a senior living facility is more than just a financial decision. Prospective residents should also consider the facility's location, size and social climate.

list of facilities. But I take care of people personally, paying attention to their unique needs."

Her senior living service begins with a free consultant conversation. "What are your needs, what are your desires? What is your geographical range? What are your financial capabilities?"

It's not always about money, Whitten said. There's the size and nature of a retirement facility. Some of the larger ones, with activities ranging from crafting to golf, may be too much for a shy person or one who just wants to relax in retirement. Some CCRC (Continuing Care Retirement Communities) include independent, assisted and nursing home care, and that may overwhelm a client.

"Your financial planner may say, 'ABC Senior Living is great,' but it may not be a good fit. They say, 'It's a lovely community,' but is it a lovely community that will work for you?"

With her clients, she looks at factors such as do they want more social engagement? Do

they want cultural events? Do they need a level of care?

However, she added, location and financial capability do play a large part in choices.

When the client's wish list is completed, Whitten will go with them on tours of the facilities. "I don't just give the name out," she said. "We go together, and we look at the pros and cons."

In one instance, the client was "considerably younger" than her husband, who suffered from dementia. "She had done a stellar job of caring for him at home," Whitten recalled, "but she couldn't do it anymore. We met, and we found a lovely place for her husband." They were able to find the right physician, the right memory care unit, and even the right hospice at the end.

"It was a journey," Whitten said. "But she was able to enjoy her life." For caregivers, that balance is important, she added.

## Staying home successfully

Aging at home, also called aging in place, has become a

trend in recent years, according to Whitten. "When I first started my career, the average age for seniors moving in with family was 78," she said. "Now it's 89."

Seniors are living longer and staying healthier longer, which makes it possible for them to stay at home longer, according to Whitten. There are more services available for them. "Thank God there are so many options," she said, adding, "but you don't always know who's trustworthy."

Whitten does, and will connect them with whoever they need. If they are having trouble managing finances, she can link them up with a bookkeeper. "You can meet monthly or on a quarterly basis," she said. She can connect her clients with honest, bonded contractors to make the home senior-safe. She can recommend housekeepers, home health aides, and landscapers, along with meal services.

One senior woman cared for her husband for years, according to Whitten, until her own health concerns surfaced. Whitten helped her find a health care facility for her husband. She helped the wife find a Realtor to help sell her home and find a more manageable condo, and helped her find the right person to assist in downsizing. "We helped find the right physician for her," Whitten said. "Now she can age in place and still visit her husband."

## Have senior advice, will travel

With the changes in soci-



*"We get to live life like we want even longer."*

**JOLIE WHITTEN**

Owner of Navigators Senior Advising

ety since the 1960s, Whitten finds her services needed. For example, there's the "sandwich generation," a phenomenon she knows from personal experience. "The vast majority of women are working outside the home," which sparks a need for both childcare and elder care. "Women of the sandwich generation," she said, "are very busy."

But the other factor, she added, is that seniors don't necessarily want to live with family members. Today's seniors, especially the Baby Boomers, are healthy and active. They are socially and culturally engaged, and independent. She applauds the idea of "accessory apartments," which give independence and privacy but keeps them engaged with family.

Sometimes moving in isn't an option. While Whitten covers New Hampshire, southern Maine and northern Massachusetts, today's mobile lifestyle complicates parental care even more. She regularly gets calls saying, "Mom is in Dallas, we're in Iowa, what are we going to do?" "We're all upwardly mobile," she said. "We don't live near Grandma, Mom or Aunt Sally."

But whether it's in a senior community, in one's home or in a space carved from the main house, the options are there, Whitten said. "We get to live life like we want even longer."

For more information, visit [navigators.care](http://navigators.care).





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## DELPHI ENHANCED PRIMARY CARE

# Perks of 'concierge medicine' might appeal to senior patients

■ **Quicker access, more face time:** Traditional primary care physicians see 18 to 25 patients a day; Delphi doctors see 6 to 10 patients a day.

By Kathleen D. Bailey  
Special to the Union Leader

Andrew Vailas, owner of Delphi Enhanced Primary Care, remembers one patient who came into the Bedford office with a "small issue." His doctor met with him for a lengthy session and solved the problem. But in an "oh, by the way" moment, another issue surfaced.

The services of a gastroenterologist were required, and the doctor set up a referral. "Most gastroenterologists are booked for six weeks out," Vailas said. "Our doctor got on the phone with another doctor, and we were able to get him in in two days."

The patient was diagnosed with cancer, which was caught early, "and he's now on the way to recovery," Vailas said, adding, "how often do we hear, 'If only we'd caught it sooner'?"

Delphi Enhanced Primary Care follows a model known as "concierge medicine." The concept is catching on with consumers who want a more personalized health care experience.

Vailas explained, "The concept is that you pay a minimal fee each month and have access to your own doctor." It's

a "foreign concept" in today's world, he said. In a traditional medical setting, "You may be assigned a particular doctor, but that doesn't mean you get to see them."

In the good old days, he said, people had a family doctor. "He or she knew you, they knew your family."

But in today's world, medical personnel don't always have time to treat patients the way they want to be treated. Some doctors have 1,500 to 2,500 patients in their "panel," Vailas said. Because of the amount of patients, most "health care" is actually "sick care," or reactive medicine. "They do not get to the root cause," he said.

"At our facility each doctor has a maximum of 600 people on their panel," he said.

Most primary care physicians see 18 to 25 patients a day, he said. In an 8-hour workday, that means 3 to 5 patients an hour. "Our doctors see 6 to 10 patients a day," he said.

He added, "In traditional models the doctor spends anywhere from 7 to 10 minutes with a patient. That's not good for anyone."

For a monthly fee of \$120, clients are guaranteed access to their doctor. While most pa-



METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

The 'concierge medicine' model requires patients to pay a monthly fee in exchange for quicker access to their doctor and more personalized care as patients would see their assigned doctor every visit.

tients can be seen the same day they call, if they call later in the day, they may be seen the following day. In rare occurrences, house calls may be made. But no patient will wait longer than 48 hours, he said.

"We bill the insurance," Vailas said, "and we do referrals to specialists such as imaging and physical therapy." Patients are still responsible for deductibles and copays, he added.

A client may be seen the same day they sign up, and they are given the doctor's direct line for after-hours care, he said.

"It's a holistic approach," he said. "We treat them when

needed, and we guide them through the health care maze." His doctors can steer their patients away from higher-priced MRI and CAT scan providers, he said. "A hospital will charge \$3,000 to \$5,000, while an independent provider charges as little as \$700," he said. He's also started working with employers to get "concierge care" for their employees.

While the \$120 is an extra monthly expense, Vailas pointed out that similar care in New York or Boston could cost up to \$10,000 or \$20,000 per year. "It's the cost of a good dinner out," he said of the \$120.

The idea is similar to programs such as Car Shield, where the consumer pays a monthly fee to ensure auto care. It's also similar to a Disney Fast Pass, Vailas pointed out.

The concept is good for the patient and good for the physician, he said, noting that doctors are becoming "burned out."

And the service is especially good for seniors, Vailas said. "We have a lot of seniors signed up. The older you get, the more health care issues you have."

The emergency room is not the greatest option for frail elders, "unless it's a true emergency," Vailas said. The same-day or 48-hour turnaround gets them in and gets them seen.

And older people appreciate the personal relationship, he said. "Having a doctor there for you is very valuable," he said. "There's no better advocate for you than your own doctor."

One of his doctors recently did a home visit to a senior, and received a thank-you note, Vailas mentioned. "The patient could not have been more appreciative," he said. "They were essentially immobile."

Delphi Enhanced Primary Care currently has two physicians, Jennifer Fishbein, M.D. and Jeffrey Calegari, D.O., F.A.C.P. They work out of the Bedford office and also have privileges at local hospitals, he said.

For more information, visit [delphihc.com](http://delphihc.com).



*"In traditional models the doctor spends anywhere from 7 to 10 minutes with a patient. That's not good for anyone."*

ANDREW VAILAS

Owner of Delphi Enhanced Primary Care



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# Volunteering is good for your health

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According to an article published by the American Heart Association and Jeffrey Burr, a professor of gerontology at the University of Massachusetts Boston, “compared to non-volunteers, volunteers have less depression, less anxiety, higher self-esteem, greater happiness, and a greater sense of meaning in life.” Burr and the AHA note the health benefits of volunteering occur among all ages, but here’s how seniors especially benefit.

- Reduces stress: The Mayo Clinic reports that volunteering reduces stress and increases positive, relaxed feelings by

releasing dopamine.

- Lowers depression: Research has shown that volunteering leads to lower rates of depression, particularly among people 65 and older.

- Provides a sense of purpose: AmeriCorps reports volunteering can provide a sense of purpose in older adults, which can help replace feelings of inadequacy due to loss of major role identities, such as wage earner or parent.

- Reduces blood pressure: According to researchers at Carnegie Mellon University, older adults who volunteered for at least 200 hours annually decrease their risk of high blood pressure by 40 percent.

- Eliminates feelings of isolation: Volunteers working together link people to others and their communities. This can help people overcome feelings of isolation, which may come from being new to a community or being a senior and having a smaller social circle.

- Keeps the mind active: Volunteering engages a person in new skills, requires them to solve problems and keeps them mentally stimulated through various activities.

- Improves physical health: Volunteer activities can involve physical tasks that can contribute to improved physical health because they constitute moderate exercise.



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To learn more, contact Catherine Cournoyer, VP/Senior Care Advisor, at 603.934.0440 or [Cournoyer@StrategicCaringSolutions.com](mailto:Cournoyer@StrategicCaringSolutions.com).



# Aging and dehydration are intertwined — watch for warning signs

Metro Creative Connection

The human body is ever-changing. Though it's not often so easy to detect the changes the body goes through, such alterations may become more noticeable with age.

One age-related change that's easy to overlook is related to thirst. The Cleveland Clinic notes seniors typically do not feel as thirsty as they once did. That compels seniors to consume less fluids, which in turn makes them more vulnerable to dehydration.

**Why is my risk for dehydration higher now than when I was younger?**

Seniors may ask this question, and body composition changes that correspond to age

are often to blame. According to the Cleveland Clinic, seniors' bodies do not demand water in the same way they did when they were younger. So people tend to drink less water as they age. Some also suffer from decreased kidney function that also compromises fluid levels in the body. These things mean many seniors have less water in their bodies than they used to, which increases their risk for dehydration.

**How serious is this threat?**

The threat posed by dehydration is serious. In fact, the Cleveland Clinic notes that dehydration is a common cause of hospitalization among adults age 65 and older. The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality also notes that adults 65 and

over have the highest hospital admission rates for dehydration of any group.

**How do I know if I'm dehydrated?**

As noted, aging adults do not typically feel as thirsty as they did when they were younger. That's important to remember, as the Cleveland Clinic notes that thirst might actually be a sign of early dehydration. The following are some additional physical signs of dehydration:

- Fatigue and weakness
- Dizziness or a loss of coordination
- Dry mouth and/or a dry cough
- Headache
- Muscle cramps, which can be caused by a loss of electrolytes through sweating

- Chills or heat intolerance
- Flushed skin

These symptoms are notable in their own right, but some may make seniors vulnerable to additional issues. For instance, dizziness or a loss of coordination resulting from dehydration may make seniors more vulnerable to falls.

Falls are a significant threat because they increase the likelihood of broken bones and other serious injuries, but a fall also can adversely affect mental health. A fall that causes injury may lead seniors to withdraw from certain activities, including recreational sports or other physical activities often performed alongside fellow seniors. Withdrawing from such activities can lead to isolation and

depression.

**How can I avoid dehydration?**

The good news is that hydrating is pretty easy, particularly when seniors are aware of their vulnerability to dehydration. The Cleveland Clinic urges seniors to consume sufficient fluids each day, even spicing up water with a fruit slice if necessary. In addition, seniors are urged to avoid caffeine, which can force more trips to the bathroom to urinate and thus lose fluid. Cucumbers, celery and, of course, watermelon also can be incorporated into seniors' diets each day, as these foods are high in water content.

To research further the risks of dehydration and prevention ideas, visit [clevelandclinic.org](http://clevelandclinic.org).

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