

GOLDEN YEARS

Pink Flamingo proceeds to benefit PMC oncology department

In recent years several departments at Providence Medical Center have been the recipients of funds from a cancer awareness event hosted by Our Savior Lutheran Church and this year is no different.

Plans are being finalized for the seventh annual Pink Flamingo Nite at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Wayne, which will be held Thursday, Oct. 27 and will focus on the theme "Believe There is Hope for a Cure - Be The Hope." It include a light supper, vendors, cancer information and a guest speaker, Kathleen Splitt.

Doors will open at 5 p.m. and meals will be served starting at 5:30 p.m. Vendors will be located upstairs in the church and will open for business at 5 p.m. They will include a variety of personal care items, clothing and housewares.

Proceeds from this year's Pink Flamingo event will be given to Providence Medical Center Oncology/Infusion Services.

"We will now be able to purchase two TV's that will go in each of our new infusion rooms for patients to enjoy while they are here for their appointments. Some of these appointments last several hours, so having a distraction and entertainment will really be appreciated by



our patients" said Carrie Fertig, Director of Outpatient/Specialty Services.

"We will then allocate any left-over funds from the TV purchase to the two workstations-on-wheels that the department needed to purchase this year," Fertig added.

"We can't thank Our Savior Lutheran Church enough for their generosity with the Pink Flamingo Nite donation each year. It's a fun event that our staff get

excited about a well"- Rachel Miller, Director of Foundation/Marketing.

Other items that have been purchased with funds from Pink Flamingo Nite include lymphedema sleeves for breast cancer therapy patients, a SmartCurve Breast Stabilization system to assist with mammographies and a recliner for the infusion room at the hospital.

Tickets for this year's event are now on sale and can be purchased at Our Sav-

ior Lutheran Church, all the banks in Wayne, Swans Apparel, IKT, Hair Envy, Providence Community Pharmacy, Wayne Area Economic Development Office in Wayne, as well as Missa Sue Salon in Laurel and The Quilt Shop in Wakefield. They will be available until Oct. 21.

Musical entertainment will be part of the evening's program.

A style show with cancer survivors as models will feature clothing from local clothing stores.

Those wishing to be models are asked to contact Kim Dunklau at (402) 369-1696.

In addition, a quilt raffle will be held for a quilt sewn by Vernae Luhr.

Tickets for the raffle are now on sale and can be purchased at Our Savior Lutheran Church and can be purchased at The Quilt Shop in Wakefield or by contacting Tracy Henschke (tracyhenschke@gmail.com) or Christina Junck at (402) 369-0676. They are \$5 each, three for \$10 or seven for \$20.

Sponsors for the event include Providence Medical Center, Our Savior Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Churches in America (WELCA) and Pac 'N' Save.

Supporting funds are being provided by Thrivent Financial.

Data shows Americans 65+ only group to experience increase in poverty

By Simona Combi
Public Relations Manager

The following is a statement from Ramsey Alwin, president and CEO of NCOA, on the latest U.S. Census Bureau data on poverty, income, and health insurance in 2020.

"We are deeply dismayed to see that poverty increased among Americans age 65 and older from 8.9% in 2020 to 10.3% in 2021, according to the latest U.S. Census Bureau data. In fact, older adults are the only age segment that experienced an increase. The result is 1 million more older adults who rely on scarce resources to make ends meet. In total, almost 6 million older adults live below the poverty level. At the National Council on Aging,

our goal is to ensure that every person



can age with dignity, regardless of race, ethnicity, or background.'

This increase shines a glaring spotlight on the fact that Social Security and Medicare, the bedrock of retirement security for so many, are not sufficient to lift all older adults above poverty."

"We know this all too well from our work with community organizations that enroll older adults in benefits to help them defray the high—and true—cost of living as we age.

"Inflation is at a persistently high rate of 8.3%, but that is only one hit to older adults' budgets. The Elder Index, which measures their true cost of living, shows that it costs about \$1,000 more for an older adult to afford daily costs (with hous-

ing and health care taking the biggest chunk) than the average Social Security retirement benefit, which was \$1,670 per month in January. That's why we are advocating for adoption of the Elder Index to establish eligibility for benefits.

"It is promising to see that the official poverty rate decreased by over half for people under age 18 since 1993, according to a new analysis. That's a testament to the power of the safety net, which was the biggest factor in this decline. This will help younger Americans lead healthy, productive lives, and age with dignity.

"We have the resources to ensure that all people can live without the threat of deprivation, but we need the political will to use them."

Library, Senior Center celebrates 25 years of service

The Wayne Public Library and Senior Center celebrate the 25th anniversary of the building this September.

Twenty-five years ago, the City of Wayne built a new structure to better suit the needs of the community than the original library.

The initial library, constructed in 1912, was 2,600 square feet, with a 1,500 square foot addition made in 1950.

In 1979, the City of Wayne proposed a comprehensive plan for the future of the city, which included a call for a new de-

velopment to accommodate an increasing need for a larger, updated library and a senior center.

"If Wayne is to continue to be the vibrant, progressive community it always has been and if we are to meet our Library and Senior Center needs now and into the 21st century, then the success of this fundraising campaign is imperative," the proposal said.

The building proposal outlined three specific benefits including "to touch and benefit the lives of all of us - parents,



Diane Bertrand, Senior Center Director, spoke during a recent Chamber Coffee. She and (from left) Library Director Heather Headley, Adult Services Librarian Sharon Carr and Youth Services Director Kim Warner thanked the community for its support over the last 25 years the building has been in existence.

children, grandparents; give another vital thrust to the dynamic development of Wayne, which will impact every family and business in the area; and provide our ever-growing Senior population with facilities and space which is easily accessible."

The new structure, at 410 North Pearl Street, opened its 13,000 square feet of space to the public in September of 1997.

The Senior Center has notably served the community and transitioned into a space for much needed support of Wayne's elderly population.

According to the manager, Diane Bertrand, few towns have the opportunity to have a city-owned and supported senior center. Older generations in those spaces do not have access to social events, nutritious meals, exercise programs and more like they do here in Wayne.

Bertrand has worked as the manager for seven years now, starting when the meals came from Chartwells, which services Wayne State College. Around six years ago, Bertrand decided to make a deal with the company that would allow her and her staff to make home cooked meals every Monday. After a year, the Senior Center hired a cook, Misty Brasch, and has made all meals in-house ever since.

Meals are a suggested contribution of \$5 and are always approved by a dietitian to include all necessary food groups and nutrients. People must make a reservation by calling the day before and can

find menus in the center, on their website and published in the Wayne Herald. The Northeast Nebraska Area Agency on Aging works with the center to help finance the meals.

Starting during the pandemic, they also offer Meals on Wheels to transport meals while socially distancing. Now, the service remains as a method of caring for those who do not feel comfortable or have a challenging time leaving their house. People can also drive up to the center to have their meal delivered to their car. Statistics for meals given have now exceeded pre-Covid numbers.

After the pandemic's gradual decline, seniors have recently increased their in-person participation.

"What hurt the worst was the isolation because they did not eat, they didn't drink and they fell into depression," Bertrand said. "We are much more than food. We are social. At first, people were afraid to come back in, but now we are safely running again."

Programs that the Senior Center offers include quilting events, bridge club, morning walking, Pitch & Pool, caregivers support meetings, Bingo and more. The Senior Center also acts as a base for the City Transit system.

If anyone would like to volunteer, they always appreciate help with delivering Meals on Wheels. "Without support from the city, we could not be where we are today," Bertrand said.

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Newman Club visits

(Photos courtesy of Anna Benes)

Wayne State College students in the college's Newman Catholic organization recently spent their morning visiting Country View nursing home to play Bingo, cards and socialize with local residents. The students (left) include (left to right) Anna Benes, Molly Johnson, Raeana Spech, Nathan Gusman, Emily Ferguson and Martina Braunsroth. Top left, Students Molly Johnson (left) and Martina Braunsroth (center) participate in a game of Bingo. Above, Wayne State College Sophomore Emily Ferguson engages in a conversation with a resident.



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Medication safety: Tips when starting new prescriptions and why creating a list is important

Jennifer Stoll
National Council on aging
Senior Research Scientist, Primary Care
Research Institute

This is the second article in a series from Team Alice, a project of The Center For Successful Aging at the University at Buffalo.

For most older adults, taking medications or supplements becomes a part of the daily routine and can improve quality of life for many. Still, as you get older, you should think twice about asking for a new medication or staying on medications that may no longer be necessary, as it could be dangerous to your overall

health care system failures because she was given an inappropriate drug for a woman of her age, triggering a six-week cascade to her death.

As we age, we become more sensitive to drugs because our bodies cannot process them as efficiently as when we are younger.

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health.

Why do medications affect older adults differently?

As we age, our bodies cannot process medication like when we were younger. The aging process can decrease our ability to absorb, process and remove medications from our system.

Because of this, some medications can create life-threatening conditions such as falls, memory problems, hospitalizations and even death, like in the case of Alice Brennan. Alice died tragically at the hands of medication harm and

In fact, some medications can cause more harm to people over 65 than help. The American Geriatrics Society has developed a tool for health care providers that guides them to make informed decisions about medication safety when prescribing potentially harmful medications to older adults.

Both patients and their doctors should become familiar with the Beers Criteria Medication List® list and consider the risks and benefits of these medications before they are prescribed and taken.

When a doctor prescribes a new medication, ask questions:

- What is the medication for?
- What are the benefits and risks of the medication?
- What are the potential side effects of the new medication?
- Are there any alternatives to taking the medication, such as physical therapy, change of diet or exercise?

Be on the lookout for any new or unfamiliar symptoms, as they could be a warning sign of new medication problems. Some examples of symptoms include: confusion, sleep problems, infections, nausea or diarrhea, feeling anxious, panic attacks, loss of appetite, weight loss, dizziness, falls and hallucinations.

If you do experience new symptoms, this may be a sign that your body is reacting poorly to the new medication.

Don't be afraid to ask questions. Talk to your doctor, pharmacist, or someone in charge of your medication. Don't stop asking until you know that the symptoms you are having are not related to the new medication.

Always notify your doctor, nurse, or

See MEDICATION, page 5



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Medication

(Continued from page 4)

pharmacist before making any changes to your medication.

What are “Never Meds”?

Because medications work differently as we age, they could become dangerous to you. Your doctor may advise you never to take them or stop taking them if you have already been prescribed them.

Did you know that when one of your doctors stops a medication, it is not automatically communicated to all members of your health care team, especially the hospital where you may be admitted

someday?

In Alice’s case, when she was admitted to the hospital with a minor knee problem, her medication list in the hospital’s system said that she was prescribed a muscle relaxant, Flexeril.

Although she was once prescribed it, her neurologist told her never to take it, so she did not and disposed of it.

However, Flexiril did not come off her medication list in her medical record, and the doctors in the hospital gave it to her, assuming it was a part of her medication routine without asking her or

telling her or her care partner. This was the beginning of Alice’s medication harm journey that ended in her death.

Something as simple as having updated medication lists could save your life. It might have saved Alice’s.

It is important to take charge and be proactive to ensure your health and safety. Here are some things you or a loved one should do to protect yourself from a similar fate, especially when going to the hospital or visiting a doctor.

Keep an updated list of all of your medications and include: over-the-counter medications, vitamins and supplements. Be sure to identify what you are taking them for.

Keep an updated allergy list and include any known allergies and your “Never Meds”—this will alert the health care providers that you shouldn’t take the drug.

Be sure to:

- Carry your lists with you at all times.
- Provide your care partner or someone you trust with updated copies of both lists.
- Check that your doctors have an updated and accurate record of your current medications.
- Ask your doctor to review your medication lists annually. There may be medi-

cations that you no longer need or can be reduced. Remember, less is more.

-Don’t wait to be asked about your medication lists. Make it clear to your loved ones, care partner and your health care team of any known “Never Meds” that you should not take.

Always notify your doctor, nurse or pharmacist before changing any medication.

Inspired by the tragic death of Alice Brennan due to medication harm and system failure, members from three senior centers in Western New York joined forces with the Western New York Deprescribing Partnership and the University at Buffalo Primary Care Research Institute to form Team Alice.

Their goal: to generate actionable lessons to protect others from medication harm. The senior center members, called Elder Voices, worked with members of Team Alice to generate messages on medication harm and the importance of self-advocacy. Their hope is to save the Alice’s of the world.

For more about The Alice Story, please visit Team Alice, a project of The Center For Successful Aging at the University at Buffalo., at www.teamalice.org. And visit Team Alice’s YouTube page for more information on medication safety.



It's time to get your flu shot: What you need to know during flu season

Kathleen Cameron
National Center on Aging

Much needed attention continues to focus on the importance of COVID-19 vaccines. Yet another very important vaccine for older adults is the seasonal influenza vaccine or “flu” shot. The importance of flu shots for older adults

The single best way to reduce your risk from flu and possibly serious complications is to get the flu shot every year. The good news is that flu shot availability is plentiful. Here are some flu facts to help explain why getting your vaccine is so important.

What is influenza or flu?

Are influenza (flu) and COVID-19 caused by the same virus? The answer is no. Influenza is a highly contagious respiratory infection caused by the influenza virus. The flu virus is different from the coronavirus, and two different vaccines are required for protection. Individuals who have had the COVID-19 vaccine or are planning to be vaccinated against COVID-19 can safely get the flu shot this year and every year.

Although they are caused by differ-

ent viruses, there are some similarities between COVID-19 and flu.

Just like COVID-19, flu is easily passed from person to person when someone coughs, talks, or sneezes.

You can also catch the flu virus from recently contaminated surfaces or objects that have the virus on them and then touch your mouth, eyes, or nose.

What are the symptoms of flu?

Some symptoms of flu are similar to the common cold, like sneezing, cough, sore throat, and chest discomfort. However, flu usually starts quicker and symptoms are much more severe than the common cold. Flu symptoms also include fever, body aches, chills, headaches, and feeling tired.

People often ask, “Can you get the flu from the flu shot?” No, you cannot. The flu shot is made from inactive (dead) virus that can’t cause influenza infection. However, you may get brief, mild side effects from the flu vaccine that can feel almost flu-like.

Why are older adults at higher risk for flu?

While each flu season differs in sever-

See FLU SHOT, page 7

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How to stay mentally sharp after retirement

If asked to describe how they envision retirement, many professionals might reference travel, time spent with grandchildren and various recreational pursuits. Few, if any, would mention cognitive decline. However, cognitive decline poses a significant threat to aging men and women, especially during retirement.

Researchers have long since recognized that certain cognitive abilities begin to decline with advanced age, even among elderly individuals who are healthy. However, despite that decline, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that dementias like Alzheimer's disease are not an inevitable part of aging. In fact, the CDC estimates that as many as 40 percent of dementia cases may be prevented or delayed. In addition, the CDC reports that it's not uncommon for routine memory, skills and knowledge to stabilize or even improve as the brain ages.

That's good news for retirees who want to spend their post-work life pursuing their passions and hobbies. Individuals also can embrace some strategies to stay mentally sharp in retirement.

- Consider delaying retirement. Even

if early retirement is a dream, it might be better to work a little longer than you had planned. A 2021 study published in the journal *SSM - Population Health* found that postponed retirement



is beneficial to cognitive function for all genders, races/ethnicities, educational levels, and professional status. The study

reported that individuals who waited until age 67 to retire experienced less cognitive decline than those who retired prior to turning 67.

- Make exercise part of your retirement

ees find that little structure loses it appeal quickly after calling it quits. When creating a new routine in retirement, include regular exercise. According to the Mayo Clinic, studies indicate that people who are physically active are less likely to experience a decline in their mental function. So daily exercise not only gives retirees something to do, but also benefits their brains.

- Enroll in an adult education course. A 2014 study published in the journal *JAMA Neurology* examined the association between lifetime intellectual enrichment and cognitive decline in the older population. The study's authors found that higher levels of late-life cognitive activity were associated with higher levels of cognition. The study's authors concluded that lifetime intellectual enrichment might delay the onset of cognitive impairment. Retirees can look into adult learning programs at local colleges and universities to see if anything piques their interest.

Retirement can be everything professionals hope it will be, especially for those who make a concerted effort to maintain optimal cognitive function after they call it a career.

routine. A lack of structure may seem enticing to individuals who have spent decades working. However, many retir-

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Flu shot

(Continued from page 5)

ity, during most seasons, people 65 years and older bear the greatest burden of disease. The burden from flu in 2020 was low due to COVID-19 protections—staying home, mask wearing, physical distancing, avoiding crowds, and less travel.

However, in previous years, CDC estimates that between 70-85% of seasonal flu-related deaths and between 50-70% of seasonal flu-related hospitalizations occurred in older adults.¹ People 65+ are at higher risk of developing serious complications from flu compared with younger adults. This increased risk is due in part to declines in immune response with age.

Older adults with chronic conditions, like heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease, such as asthma or COPD, are at highest risk for developing life-threatening complications from the flu.

Because of age-related changes in their immune systems, people 65 years and older may not respond as well to vaccination as younger people. Although immune responses may be lower in older people, studies have found that flu vaccine has been effective in reducing the risk of doctor visits and hospitalizations due to the flu.

In addition, a high dose vaccine and an adjuvanted flu vaccine are available; adjuvanted flu vaccine includes an additive that provide a higher immune response.

Both vaccines have been shown to more effective in older adults in producing a stronger immune response and reducing illness compared to the standard flu vaccine shot. Your doctor or pharmacist will recommend which flu vaccine is best for you.

Why are flu shots needed every year? If you're concerned about how to prevent catching the flu from someone, getting a flu vaccine is your best bet. CDC recommends that almost everyone 6 months and older get a seasonal flu vaccine every year, ideally by the end of October. However, as long as flu viruses are circulating, vaccination should continue throughout flu season, even into January or later.

Flu vaccines are updated each season to keep up with changing viruses. Also, immunity against the flu virus decreases over a year so annual vaccination is needed to make sure everyone has the best possible protection against flu. Because immunity may decrease more quickly in older people, it is especially important that older adults are not vaccinated too early like in July or August.

As of 2022, federal health officials now recommend a higher dose flu

vaccine for people age 65 and older. Known as Fluzone, or Fluzone High-Dose Quadrivalent, studies have shown it triggers a better immune response in older adults than the traditional flu vaccine.^{2,3} But if the Fluzone vaccine isn't available, a traditional flu shot is recommended.

What about the pneumococcal vaccine?

Pneumonia is an example of a serious flu-related complication that can cause death. People who are 65 years and older also should be up to date with pneumococcal vaccine to protect against pneumococcal disease, such as pneumonia, meningitis, and bloodstream infections.

Talk to your doctor to find out which pneumococcal vaccine is recommended for you. If you are not up to date on your pneumococcal vaccine, you can get that vaccine when you get a flu vaccine.

Does Medicare cover vaccines? Medicare Part B covers both the flu shot and pneumococcal vaccines with no out-of-pocket costs to Medicare beneficiaries.

Get your flu shot now! If you're wondering, "When will the flu vaccine be available?", the answer is right now. It's important to note that it takes about 2 weeks after the flu shot to develop antibodies or protection against the flu virus, so don't wait.

You can search by ZIP code to find flu vaccines near you at [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov). Check flu shot availability in your local area and make an appointment today. That way, you'll be protected when the flu

season starts in late fall/early winter.

Getting an annual flu shot is an impor-

tant way to stay active, healthy, and independent.

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