

# NEWS AND POSSIBILITES FOR SENIORS

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Returning to living at home, in the community, is the goal of nursing-home residents who participate in Philadelphia Corporation for Aging's Nursing Home Transition program.

# Program helps seniors transition from nursing home to community

### By Marcia Z. Siegal

A space heater is turned on in Ilian Coaxum's bedroom, even

Lillian Coaxum's bedroom, even though the day is relatively balmy. While others might find the room overly warm, Coaxum likes it toasty. In the kitchen, her home care aide is cooking one of Coaxum's favorite meals. Coaxum eats at a time of her choosing, wakes up when she wants to and socializes with whom she wants. Though frail, she moved out of a nursing home and into her own apartment nearly two years ago to enjoy more independence. "I feel so content," says Coaxum, 77, who resettled into her current apartment in the city's Wynnefield section with the help of Philadelphia Corporation for Aging's (PCA's) Nursing Home Transition (NHT) program.

The program helps residents of long-term

care facilities return to living in the community. An NHT transition coordinator from PCA works closely with the individual, as well as with facility discharge planning staff and community agencies, to plan for and support the resident's return to the community. That support may include assistance in finding and establishing housing, making a current home accessible through home modifications, connecting the person to services such as adult day or home health care, and providing training for independent living. After the transition is made, individuals may be eligible for a variety of home- and community-based services.

Prior to moving to Kearsley Home Apartments in 2017, Coaxum had been a resident of Fairview Care Center of Bethlehem Pike in Chestnut Hill. She'd moved from her North Philadelphia apartment to Fairview because • continued on page 8

### December 2018 • Free

# Home for the Holidays Unhappy holidays: When you're teary instead of merry

**By Constance Garcia-Barrio** 

A tsunami of ads for everything from eggnog to tinsel drowns us in demands to make merry this time of year. "There's enormous pressure on us to put on a happy face," said Michelle Spencer, Psy.D., a psychologist in the Older Adult Protective Services department at Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA). "By Thanksgiving, I have holiday fatigue."

For many of us – whether we celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah, or Kwanzaa — the December holidays don't come with a Hallmark halo, but rather a gauntlet of potential problems. The passing years may have left us divorced or widowed, like me, or with family members living at a distance. We may also wrestle with thorny relationships and grief. However, we can take steps to navigate the season's rough spots, go beyond a mask of merriment and find true peace.

### **Avoiding conflict**

Some folks may find themselves at odds with relatives. "This year may be especially tough for families, given the state of our country and the world and differing opinions about issues," said Sarah Epstein, • continued on page 16





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# Health Brief



# Tips to stay safe, happy this holiday

The holidays can be a time of great joy and celebration. However, the season also can bring additional hazards to our homes. Below are tips for avoiding some of the most common accidents and causes of illness found in the home this time of year.

### **Prevent fires**

The American Red Cross offers these fire safety tips:

- Place Christmas trees and other holiday decorations at least three feet from heat sources such as fireplaces, portable heaters, radiators, vents and candles.
- Keep live Christmas trees as moist as possible by giving them plenty of water. Monitor the water level each day and remove dried branches to reduce the risk of fire.
- Before hanging holiday lights, check them carefully to ensure that there are no frayed wires or broken bulbs.
- Make sure to unplug all holiday lights before you leave the house or go to bed each night.
- Never leave burning candles unattended.
  Test the betteries in all of sever how s'as
- Test the batteries in all of your home's smoke detectors each month. If the alarm doesn't sound when tested, replace the batteries. If it still doesn't function, replace the detector.

### **Avoid foodborne illness**

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) offers these food safety tips:

• Keep food out of the temperature "danger zone." Bacteria grow rapidly between 40 and 140 degrees. After hot food is safely cooked, it must be kept above 140 degrees to prevent bacterial growth. Leftovers must be refrigerated within two hours of removal from a heat source. Throw away all perishable foods that have been left at room temperature for more than two hours.

- Safely store leftovers. Leftovers can be kept in the refrigerator for up to four days. Frozen food will remain safe indefinitely, but it may lose moisture and flavor when stored in a freezer for longer than three to four months.
- Safely reheat leftovers. When reheating leftover food, be sure it reaches 165 degrees, as measured with a food thermometer. Reheat all sauces, soups and gravies by bringing them to a rolling boil. Cover all leftovers when reheating to ensure food heats all the way through.

### Stay safe, warm at home

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offers this advice for safely heating your home this winter:

- Have your heating system serviced professionally each year to make sure that it is clean, working properly and ventilated to the outside.
- Have a certified professional inspect and clean all fireplaces and chimneys each year before first use.
- Install a carbon monoxide (CO) detector to alert you of the presence of the deadly, odorless and colorless gas. Malfunctioning heating systems and stoves are common causes of CO leaks. Watch out for symptoms of CO poisoning, which include headaches, dizziness, weakness, upset stomach, vomiting, chest pain and confusion. Replace your CO detector every five years.

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# Holiday connections: How the latest technology brings families together

### By Mary Anna Rodabaugh

The holidays are a time to celebrate family. Sometimes, family members travel long distances to spend time with one another. When life's circumstances or sheer distance prevent holiday travel, today's computer technology can step in and bridge the divide. Smartphones, computer tablets and even "smart" speakers make it easier than ever to connect "face-to-face" with loved ones across the country and the world.

Technology can bring generations together in surprising ways. By learning how to operate tablets and smart devices, seniors can connect with younger people who might intuitively use the technology.

Computer instructor Bill Thompson helps seniors connect by teaching software training workshops at senior community centers throughout Philadelphia. His workshops explore the advantages and shortcomings of desktop computers, laptops, tablets and smartphones. He also provides lessons on cyber scams and cyber security. "What we're doing here is bridging the gap between the old and the young," he said. "The young people are smart, but the older people are wise. [The young people] are just waiting for you to be their heroes."

### Smart technology

Smart technology has led to the development of interactive devices to assist people with a variety of tasks such as searching the internet, checking email, and sending and receiving photos or videos. Today, there are a number of devices that will allow you to see people while you are talking to them. This is called video conferencing or video chat.

Many seniors use instant messaging, which is like sending a text message to another user over the internet. Some rely on video chats to feel close to loved ones who live far away. Free video conferencing applications, or apps, such as Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, Facetime and Skype, allow you to see and speak with a person using most smart devices

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or computers. All you need is an internet connection and a forward-facing camera, which is standard on most smartphones and tablets. These apps, which are free of charge, can be downloaded onto your device. People you wish to call must have the same app to connect to your video conference. If you do not own a smart device, you can use Skype on a desktop computer that has a web camera.

"One of my students is an immigrant and stays in touch with his family in his home country using Facetime and Skype," Thomp-

son said.

### New devices

The smart technology world has seen a lot of new devices enter the market in recent years. In early 2017, Amazon released the first generation of its Amazon Echo Show, a smart speaker with a 7-inch touch screen color display. The device, which resembles a small computer tablet, responds to voice commands to display the weather, relay the news, play videos or conduct video chats with other Echo users. A second-generation Echo was released in early October. The new device has a 10-inch high-definition screen for more lifelike videos. Users still can make video calls only with other Echo users. Many features associated with the Echo are programmed using the free Amazon Alexa app on a smartphone or tablet. Therefore, users will need to own a smart device and have an internet connection to use the Echo.

The IBL Link View is another smart device. It has an 8-inch color touch screen and runs the Google Assistant application. To keep in touch with loved ones, the View has Google Duo, a video calling app. Users create an address book of individuals who use Google Duo. This allows them to make a video call to other Google Duo users. Once the video call is initiated, both users can see each other live on their screens. Much like the Echo, the View responds to voice commands and requires an internet connection to function. It is set up through the free Google Home app on a smartphone or tablet. The device can also play music, video and display recipes us-



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ing a downloaded app – all things that can be shared among users.

### Navigating the smart-device world

If smartphones and tablets are unfamiliar territory and you would like some help bridging the digital divide, Generations on Line (GoL) has a free app called Easy Tablet Help for Seniors, which guides users through the basics of tablet function, from how to pinch and zoom to how to conduct a video call. The app is available for free in the Apple App Store for Apple iPads and in Google Play for android and Kindle Fire devices. While it will work on a smartphone, the screen is too small to be practical. For more information about GoL, call 215-222-6400, email KBurke.GoL@ comcast.net or go to generationsonline.org.

Carolyn Ruff, 65, of Germantown takes advantage of Center in the Park senior center's weekly "Sip and Swipe" technology classes taught by volunteer instructor Debra Karlan. Participants follow the prompts on the GoL app and can ask Karlan questions.

"I've seen a range of technology proficiencies in my short time coaching the program, but they're so thrilled to learn this stuff," Karlan said of her students.

So whether you use a smart speaker to keep in touch with family members who live across the county, make a video call on your smartphone to see what presents your grandchildren received or simply impress your family with your technological know-how, computer technology can bring you and your loved ones together.

Mary Anna Rodabaugh is a writer, editor and writing coach.

# Tips, resources to help make long-distance caregiving more manageable

Long-distance caregiving presents unique challenges. As you gather with friends and family this holiday season, think about your elderly loved ones who are far away. Holiday gatherings offer opportunities to discuss concerns about the well-being of older loved ones.

Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA) joins the national "Home for the Holidays" campaign, which encourages discussion of important issues affecting older Americans. The annual initiative is led by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) in collaboration with the Eldercare Locator, a public service of the U.S. Administration on Aging. This year's campaign is entitled "Caring Across the Miles: Resources for Long-Distance Caregivers."

Below are some long-distance caregiving tips compiled from The National Institute on Aging and the Mayo Clinic.

### Be in the know

Learn as much as you can about your loved one's illness(es) and medicines, as well as what health and social service resources might be available. This information can help you understand what is going on, anticipate the course of an illness, prevent crises, assist in your loved one's health care management and improve communications with your loved one's doctors.

### **Centralize information**

Make sure at least one family member has written permission to receive medical and fi-

### **Crossword puzzle solution** (See page 19 for clues.)

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nancial information. To the extent possible, one family member should handle conversations with all health care providers. Put all vital information – including details about medical care and social services, contact numbers, and financial and insurance information – in one place, perhaps in a notebook or in a shared, secured online document. If needed, make copies of this information for other caregivers, and keep the information up to date.

### Get, stay in touch

Sometimes a social worker is good to talk to for updates, as well as for help with making decisions. You might also talk with a family member or friend who can provide a realistic view of the situation. If you are caring for a parent, this person could be your other parent.

Don't underestimate the value of a phone and email contact list. It is a simple tool to help you keep everyone updated on a loved one's needs.

If your loved one is in a long-term care facility, it's good to think about a workable approach for making numerous calls. For one family, having a private phone line installed in their father's nursing home room allowed him to stay in touch. For another, giving Grandma a cell phone (and teaching her how to use it) gave everyone some peace of mind.

### Ask for help

Stay in touch with your loved one's friends and neighbors. Ask your loved one whom he or she would prefer to have visit, then ask those people to check in with you. These visitors might be able to help you understand what's going on with your loved one on a regular basis.

### Seek professional help

If necessary, hire someone to help your loved one with meals, personal care and other needs. A geriatric care manager or social worker also might be helpful in organizing your loved one's care. The Area Agency on Aging (AAA) where your loved one lives can help you find local resources. The AAA for Philadelphia County is Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA). Contact the PCA Helpline at 215-765-9040. Information on caregiving is available online at pcaCares.org/caregivers.

### Plan for emergencies

Set aside time and money in case you need to make unexpected visits to help your loved one. If you are working, consider inquiring now about the process for taking unpaid leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), in case you need to do so in the future.

### Seek support

Many long-distance caregivers feel guilty about not being able to do enough or spend adequate time with a family member in need of care. Remind yourself that you're doing the best you can. It might be helpful to join a support group for caregivers. You might benefit from the tips of others, as well as the knowledge that you're not alone.

# Tips for visiting a loved one

• Plan your visits. Talk to your family member or friend ahead of time and find out what he or she would like to do while you are there. For

instance, does your mother need to get some new winter clothes or visit another family member? If you are not the primary caregiver, check with that person as to what help he or she may need. Decide on the priorities and leave other tasks for another visit.

- Remember to actually spend time visiting with your loved one. Try to make time to do things unrelated to being a caregiver. Maybe you could find a movie to watch with your loved one, plan a visit with old friends or other family members, or take a drive.
- Look for signs of problems. During your visit, check to see how well your loved one is managing daily tasks. Is he or she able to drive safely, eat regular meals, keep up with personal grooming, and



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pay his or her bills? Is he or she taking medications as prescribed? Ask your loved one's friends and neighbors if they've noticed any behavioral changes, health problems or safety issues.

Providing care for an older loved one at a distance can be extremely challenging, and it is important to seek support. By planning ahead and making use of available resources, caregivers can navigate these challenges effectively.

A Home for the Holidays consumer brochure, available online at n4a.org/ h4h2018, offers information and help finding assistance when caregivers can't be present physically.

# 'A Very Philly Christmas' showcases historic homes decorated for the season

### **By Dorothy Stanaitis**

Philadelphia is well-known for its many iconic holiday activities and festive displays. Native Philadelphia seniors will fondly remember the decorated windows of the former Gimbels department store and the holiday light show at the former Wanamaker's, now Macy's, in Center City. The elaborate neighborhood light displays in South Philadelphia are also a time-honored tradition that's continued through the years. Each year, busloads of tourists come to share our city's bounty of holiday attractions. But our city wasn't always so festive at this time of year.

In 1749, Peter Kalm, a scientist from the Royal Swedish Academy, found himself in Philadelphia on Christmas Day. He felt homesick for the holiday traditions and celebrations of the Christmas season in his native Scandinavia, noting in his writings that Christmas in Quaker Philadelphia was no more remarkable than any other day. He was surprised to see stores open, and no special baking of bread for the Christmas festival or porridge on Christmas Eve.

Times certainly have changed. Among the city's current holiday activities, there is one celebration that allows you to step back into

### The amazing history of these elegant estates adds depth and richness to the experience of visiting them.

yesteryear to experience a holiday celebration that would have amazed even Kalm.

"Christmas in Fairmount Park" has welcomed visitors to a month-long celebration of the holidays each December for the past 47 years. Five of the best-preserved examples of 18th and 19th century American architecture



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Cedar Grove mansion, located in West Philadelphia, features a variety of original family furnishings from the early 1800s.

in the nation are all decked out in the season's finest. Once home to the elite of Philadelphia, these mansions are sumptuously decorated by garden clubs and auxiliary groups. This year's theme "A Very Philly Christmas," offers weekend programs of food, fun and merriment. Weekdays are drop-in days when you can just take in the quiet beauty of these stately homes at your leisure.

### **Experience the history**

The amazing history of these elegant estates adds depth and richness to the experience of visiting them. Perhaps you'll feel the anguish of Rebecca Rawle when her Laurel Hill Mansion in East Fairmount Park, the home she inherited from her first husband, was confiscated during the American Revolution because she and her second husband, Samuel Shoemaker, mayor of Philadelphia at the time, remained loyal to Great Britain. It became her life's passion to regain it, which, after several years, she finally managed to do.

The magnificent view of the Schuylkill River from Rawle's Laurel Hill Mansion is rivaled in beauty by the dramatic outlook of its neighboring mansion, the lovely Lemon Hill. Located south of Laurel Hill in Fairmount Park East, it was named for the lemon trees grown in a greenhouse by Robert Morris, the financier of the American Revolution.

Another beautiful home is the famous Strawberry Mansion, located in the northeastern part of Fairmount Park, near the Fairmount Park Trail. The main section of the house was built by Judge William Lewis, who was famous for drafting the first law abolishing slavery in the United States. The home's second owner, Judge James Hemphill, added Greek Revival wings on either side of the original mansion building. This house features period furnishings and antique toys, among many other early American artifacts.

An amazing collection of 18th century antiques can also be found at Woodford in Northeast Fairmount Park, which was home to William Colman, a close friend of Benjamin Franklin, who spent many happy hours there.

And no one wants to miss the very unusual two-sided wall of closets that opens into either of two bedrooms on the second floor at Cedar Grove, another elegant mansion. The • continued on page 19



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# **Transitions**

• continued from page 1

she had been unable to handle basic activities of daily living, such as bathing and dressing. However, after five years, "I felt it was time to move out," said Coaxum, who relayed her wishes to facility staff.

After determining that she would be a suitable candidate for community living with appropriate support and that Coaxum had no housing to return to, Fairview staff referred Coaxum to PCA's NHT program to help with discharge planning. A team consisting of a Fairview discharge planner, a social worker, occupational and physical therapists, and a nurse worked with Coaxum and her NHT transition coor-

dinator, Khadijah Knox, to cre-

ate a transition plan. Knox helped Coaxum identify and visit apartments and apply for residence. Coaxum settled on Kearsley Home Apartments because the building is five minutes from her church, Community Bible Tabernacle, which has been a mainstay in her life.

When Knox asked Coaxum what she needed in order to move, she said, "Everything!" A beautiful wood bureau from Coaxum's former North Philadelphia apartment, the only piece of furniture she had brought with her to Fairview, came with her to Kearsley. So, too, did an array of family photos and other mementos.

By the time Coaxum moved in March 2017, NHT staff had already purchased all the things she needed and set up the apartment in advance. "Everything was ready when I walked in the door," said Coaxum. "There was a bed and another bedroom bureau, sheets and blankets, pillows and pillowcases, a kitchen table and chairs, pots and pans, and dishes and silverware. The bed was all made up. The kitchen cabinets and refrigerator were stocked with food."

In addition to providing household necessities, the NHT team put services in place to assure Coaxum's physical well-being. Knox arranged for a personal care aide 12 hours a day, seven days a week, to help the NHT participant with the basic activities of daily living, such as bathing and dressing, as well as meal preparation, shopping, laundry and



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light housekeeping. Through the program, Coaxum also received a personal alert system with a button to push in case she experienced a health or other emergency.

With her transition to community living complete, Coaxum now participates in a PCA long-term care program for older adults who are frail enough to receive care in a nursing home but choose to remain at home, in the community. A service coordinator from this program keeps in contact with her through visits and phone calls to monitor the delivery of long-term care services, check on Coaxum's satisfaction with those services, and determine whether to adjust her care plan.

Coaxum cherishes her apartment home. "I'm grateful to PCA," she said. "And I thank God for his goodness."

For more information about Philadelphia Corporation for Aging's (PCA's) Nursing Home Transition (NHT) program, which serves nursing home residents 60-plus, call the PCA Helpline at 215-765-9040 or go to pcaCares.org, click on "Get Assistance," and then "Find a Service Provider," then type "PCA Nursing Home Transition" in the search window. Individuals under 60 who are interested in transitioning from a nursing home should call Liberty Resources at 215-634-2000.

Marcia Z. Siegal is Public Relations Manager for Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA).

# **Seniors share favorite holiday memories**

**By Mary Anna Rodabaugh** 

The holidays are full of fond memories. Who can forget watching Santa Claus climb up the Philadelphia Fire Department's hookand-ladder truck outside the former Gimbels department store at 8th and Market streets? For many Jewish seniors, watching your mother carefully light the candles of the menorah was a time-honored family tradition. Holiday memories are timeless. Following are the favorite holiday memories of four Philadelphians.

### **Christmas spirit**

Alberta Green, 66, fondly recalls the unique holiday light displays and decorations throughout her West Philadelphia neighborhood. "I remember walking in the snow and looking at people's houses on Robinson Street," she said. "In West Philly, everybody used to decorate their houses. The windows would be decorated and there would be Christmas lights on every house from one end of the street to the other. You talk about something that was beautiful! When it snowed, we would go down to Cobbs Creek Park between Market and Arch streets. We'd bring pieces of cardboard and spend all day sledding down those two big hills in the park. I almost slid right into the creek a few times."

The looks on children's faces as they await Santa's arrival is the most joyous part of the holiday for many. Carmella Contessa, who is in her late 70s and lives in South Philadelphia, fondly remembers Christmas preparations for her son, John, when he was about 4. "We were getting all the Christmas stuff ready on Christmas Eve," she said. "He was so excited, peeping out our front windows on South Bonsall Street and asking, 'Is Santa Claus coming?' I told him 'Yes, but you better get to bed.'" Contessa said that John's excuse for being up so late was that he wanted to make sure Santa came to the right house. "Then, all of the sudden, I hear John shout, 'Here he comes!' then fly up the stairs to his bedroom," Contessa recalled. John yelled, "Tell him I'm already sleeping." When Contessa looked out the window, she saw her neighbor coming out of his house dressed as Santa Claus. "We laughed all night long," she said.

### The joy of Hanukkah

Marvin Schechter, 87, now lives in Northeast Philadelphia, but remembers growing up in Newark, New Jersey, and celebrating



the holidays of his Jewish faith there. "In the '40s, when I was 10 years old, we didn't have a Christmas tree or a Hanukkah bush, but my mother would wrap up the gifts we were to get during the eight days of Hanu-

kah and pile them up in the living room," he said. "For some reason, I got up in the middle of the night and decided to unwrap my gifts early. I opened them and found a couple that I liked. One was an erector set. So, I built a Ferris wheel and went back to bed like nothing had happened." The next morning, when Schechter's mother came into his room and said, "Marvin," he knew he was in trouble. She asked him what he had been doing in the living room. "I told her I couldn't sleep and building a Ferris wheel seemed like a good idea at the time," Schechter said. Naturally, his mother was upset that he'd ruined the surprise by unwrapping all of his gifts. He told Mom that he was surprised by his gifts and that he'd be happy during the eight days of Hanukkah. "I think my punishment was three days without dessert," he recalled. "Somehow, I survived."

iStock

Arthur Feldman, 89, Northeast Philadelphia, does whatever he can to keep the spirit of Hanukkah going throughout the many generations of his family. "Hanukkah is more for my grandkids than my sons," he said. For his grandchildren, Feldman has a menorah and Hanukkah gelt, which is money. "I enjoy family, and I enjoy holidays," said Feldman, who has a 7-month-old great-granddaughter. "I enjoy celebrating and whatever has to do with my religion."

Mary Anna Rodabaugh is a writer, editor and writing coach.

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# December 2018

### MONDAY **SUNDAY** TUESDAY 2 3 HANUKKAH (begins at sundown) Holiday Bazaar. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Center Deck the Halls. String lights & spread South Street Winter Wonderland. cheer during this annual decorating in the Park. 215-848-7722. Christmas parade & tree lighting. 4-6 event. 1 p.m. Center in the Park. 215-Reverse Mortgage Workshop. 10 a.m. p.m. Headhouse Shambles. 215-413-Center in the Park. 215-848-7722. 848-7722. 3713. 10 9 Maintaining Healthy Spending Habits. Online Safety Class. 6 p.m. Bustleton Financial Planning 101. 6 p.m. Learn strategies to budget & manage Library. 215-685-0472. Wynnefield Library. 215-685-0298 your money. 10-11:30 a.m. Center in the Park. 215-848-7722. **16** 17 18 Holiday Luncheon. Wear your favorite Great Poets & the Cultures that Shaped holiday sweater. 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Center Joint Replacement Class. Noon. Penn Them: Who was Dante? 2 p.m. Parkway in the Park. 215-848-7722. Medicine, University City. 215-662-8000. Central Library. 215-686-5322. Yoga for Adults. 7 p.m. Northeast Regional Library. 215-685-0522. 23 25 24 **CHRISTMAS DAY** Chinatown Walking Tour & Dim Sum Disney on Ice Presents 'Mickey's Search **Re-enactment of Washington Crossing** Tasting. 10 a.m. Chinatown Friendship Party.' Noon. Wells Fargo Center. 215the Delaware. 1 p.m. Washington Gate. Register: 215-352-4324. \$

# Milestones Events that end with a "\$" require an

entrance fee or advance ticket purchase. Free events may request donations or sell items. Please call the number listed for pricing or other details.

### Send your calendar items to:

ATTN: Milestones Editor PCA, 642 N. Broad St., Philadelphia, PA 19130 Phone: 215-765-9000, ext. 5081 Fax: 215-765-9066 Email:

### milestonesnews@pcaCares.org

Event submission deadline: 25th of the month for publication in month after next.

336-3600. (Through Dec. 31 at various times.) \$

### **NEW YEAR'S EVE**

30

Headhouse Farmers' Market, 10 a.m.

Headhouse Shambles. 215-575-0444.

Walnut Street Theatre's Winter Won-

derettes. 7:30 p.m. Tickets: 215-574-

3550.\$

Fireworks on the Waterfront. 6 p.m. & midnight. Penn's Landing. 215-629-3200.

**31** 

Crossing Historic Park. 215-493-4076.

### SATURDAY

### **WORLD AIDS DAY**

Artists' Book Fair. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Parkway Central Library. 215-686-5322.

Manheim Steamroller Christmas. 8 p.m. Kimmel Center. 215-893-1999. \$





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# You better watch out: Avoid holiday scams

The holidays can create a frenzy of distractions that allow scammers to target people who may be too busy to notice the red flags of a scam. Don't let the rush of holiday shopping and other errands make you susceptible to fraud. The Better Business Bureau (BBB) urges consumers to remain vigilant and alert during the holiday season. Be on the lookout for these popular holiday-time scams.

### **Package tracking**

Beware of emails pretending to be from legitimate businesses with links to package tracking information. These emails often appear to come from UPS, FedEx or major retailers. Avoid clicking on links or opening attachments to emails until you have confirmed that they are not malicious. Known as "phishing," these emails infect your computer with a virus or download malware. Common red flags of a phishing scam include email addresses that don't match with the alleged sender or messages that contain typos or grammatical errors.

### **Guard your cards**

While you're struggling with bags of presents, identity thieves may see an opportunity to steal your wallet or to look over your shoulder to copy your debit or credit card numbers. Don't lose track of your wallet. Know where your credit and debit cards are at all times, and cover the keypad when entering your pin number while purchasing items or getting money from an ATM. Make sure you put your card back in your wallet after each purchase.

### Fake data breach claims

Taking advantage of data breach fears, scammers will call pretending to be retailers asking for personal information to prevent unauthorized use of your account. If you are unsure of a caller's claims, call the company's published customer service number directly and ask to speak to the fraud department. When you call the company, it is generally safe to give out personal information if asked.

### Too-good-to-be-true offers

You receive a text or email message informing you that you've won a gift card from a major retailer, such as Target. To claim it, you must go to a website link and enter a PIN. The message's link opens an authentic-looking website with the company's colors and logo. However, these messages allow scammers to collect personal information and sometimes

even financial details, claiming the information is necessary to confirm your identity or cover taxes/shipping of your "free" prize.

### Beware how you pay

Scammers often request payment by cash, money wire or gift card, which cannot be tracked. It's safer to pay by credit card or check. If you're making a purchase or donation online, check that the webpage where you enter your payment information has "https" in the address. This means your financial information is secure.

### **Donations to fake charities**

During the holidays, people often make charitable contributions to help those in need. Scammers know this and try to take advantage of consumers' altruism. Before making a donation, consumers are advised to research the charity and verify its tax-exempt status; ask questions about the charity and how much of the donation will fund services; pay only with a credit card or check; and watch out for scammers' tricks, such high-pressure tactics to donate immediately.

Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro offered the following tips to help consumers avoid charity scams:

### Do your research:

- Search the charity's name online with words like "complaint" and "scam."
- Use the IRS' tax exempt organization search at apps.irs.gov/app/eos to confirm if the donation is tax-deductible.
- Call the Office of the Attorney General at 717-783-2853 or get more information at attorneygeneral.gov/protect-yourself/ charitable-giving.

### Ask questions:

- What are the charity's website, address and mission?
- How much of your donation will go directly to services, not fundraising?

### Watch out for scammers' tricks:

- Scammers can spoof caller ID to make their fundraising calls look like they're from your local area code or from an organization you know.
- Scammers pressure you into donating immediately before you have time to do any research. A legitimate charity will welcome your donation at any time.

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# **Recipe Box**

# Season's eatings: This holiday, try these tasty, simplified recipes

If you're looking for a new recipe to make for your next holiday party or potluck, here are three simplified options. You might also consider making them all for a unique three-course holiday meal of a snack or side dish, hearty entrée, and refreshing dessert.



### Super simple latkes

Latkes (pronounced LAHT-kas) are fried potato pancakes that are a Jewish staple during the celebration of Hanukkah. The cooking oil represents the traditional belief that a miracle occurred in 168 B.C. when a one-day supply of oil left for the Second Temple in Jerusalem's eternal light lasted eight nights. Some scholars suggest that latkes became popular because the potato crop was harvested around the time of Hanukkah in Europe. The following recipe will make about nine potato pancakes in about 30 minutes.

### Ingredients:

- 1 (30-oz.) bag of frozen, shredded potatoes
- 1 cup sweet onion, finely diced
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 tsp. black pepper
- 3 tbsp. flour
- Salt, to taste

Vegetable oil, enough for frying Toppings (optional): Sour cream and/or applesauce

### Directions:

Defrost the shredded potatoes in a colander. Press with paper towels to remove excess moisture. There won't be much.

Add onion, eggs, salt, pepper and flour to the potatoes. Mixture should be thick and cohesive.

Pour about a <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>-inch of oil into a heavybottomed frying pan and heat oil until it just starts to steadily bubble. (If the oil bubbles very vigorously, then it is too hot and needs to cool off.)

When the oil is ready for frying, place about 2 tablespoons of the potato mixture into the oil and press it down to form a pancake.

Fry the pancake for about 3 minutes. Flip it, and fry for another 3 minutes until golden brown on both sides. (If the pancake cooks too fast, reduce the oil's temperature. If it takes longer to cook, turn the oil up so the pancakes don't get soggy.) Repeat with remaining potato mixture.

Place the pancakes on a paper towel-lined plate and serve immediately, or place them on a baking sheet in a 250-degree oven to keep warm until ready to serve. Top with sour cream and/or apple sauce, if desired.

Source: Geniuskitchen.com

### Chicken gumbo with fresh okra

Kwanzaa, which occurs annually from Dec. 26 through Jan. 1, is an African celebration of family, community and culture. A traditional Kwanzaa feast includes rich and comforting dishes such as chicken and sausage gumbo.

### Ingredients:

- 4 tbsp. canola oil, divided
- 1 lb. boneless, skinless chicken thighs,
- cut into 1-inch pieces
- <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> tsp. fine sea salt
- 1/4 tsp. ground black pepper
- 4 tbsp. all-purpose flour
- 1 cup diced onion
- 1 cup diced green pepper
- 1/2 cup diced celery
- 2 cups sliced okra (zucchini can be substituted)
- 2 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 (28-oz.) can diced tomatoes
- 1 tbsp. hot sauce, or to taste
- <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> lb. cooked chicken sausage, sliced into <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>-inch rounds
- 12 large shrimp, fresh or frozen, peeled and deveined (optional)
- Cooked long-grain white or brown rice

### **Directions**:

In a large skillet over medium-high heat, heat a tablespoon of oil. Season the chick-

# Festive cranberry-pineapple Jell-O salad

If you're looking for a healthier holiday dessert option, this recipe is for you. Not only is this recipe tasty and low-fat, it's also inexpensive and easy to make. You can substitute sugar-free Jell-O and/or cranberry sauce without sacrificing taste or consistency. This recipe makes 14 half-cup servings.

### Ingredients:

- 1 can (20 oz.) crushed pineapple in juice, undrained
- 2 pkgs. (3 oz. each) Jell-O strawberry, cherry or raspberry flavor gelatin
- 1 can (16 oz.) whole berry cranberry sauce 1 fresh crisp pear or granny smith apple,
- chopped <sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> cup chopped walnuts
- Whipped topping (optional)

### Directions:

Drain pineapple, and reserve juice in a measuring cup. Add enough cold water to reserved pineapple juice to measure 3 cups. Pour liquid into a saucepan. Bring to boil.



en with salt and pepper, and add to skillet. Brown chicken on all sides, about 5 minutes total. Remove browned chicken with a slotted spoon and place in a slow cooker. Scrape up any brown bits from the pan and add them to the cooker as well.

Add remaining 3 tablespoons oil to the pan, and heat until hot. Add flour and cook, stirring constantly, until golden brown, 3 to 4 minutes. The mixture will be extremely hot, so be careful not to splatter. Add the onion, green pepper and celery to the pan and cook until the vegetables start to wilt, about 2 minutes. Add the chicken broth and stir until smooth and incorporated. Pour mixture into the slow cooker. Add the okra, bay leaf, tomatoes and hot sauce. Cover, and turn cooker to low. Cook for 7 to 8 hours, adding another half-cup of chicken broth or water if necessary. Thirty minutes before serving, add the sausage and turn cooker to up high. Five minutes before serving, add the shrimp. Serve over cooked rice.

Source: Wholefoodsmarket.com



Remove saucepan from heat. Add dry gelatin to water, and stir until completely dissolved (about 2 minutes). Pour liquid into medium bowl, and immediately stir in cranberry sauce. Stir until dissolved.

Refrigerate for about 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> hours or until slightly thickened. Stir in chopped apples or pears, nuts, and crushed pineapple. Refrigerate at least 4 more hours or until firm. Serve with whipped topping, if desired.



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# Unhappy holidays

continued from page 1

a marriage and family therapist with Philadelphia's Council for Relationships. "If you know that a certain person with whom you often disagree will attend a gathering, try calling him or her in advance," Epstein suggested. "You might say, 'I really want to see you, and I know that we sometimes butt heads. Could we make a pact, just for Christmas, not to talk about XYZ?'"

If you're hosting a get-together, you might set a similar ground rule to defuse possible arguments. For instance, you could declare politics as out of bounds for the evening, Epstein said.

Deciding not to argue may work, too. If you know that a certain person pushes your buttons, you may steel yourself to avoid responding to him or her, Epstein advised. "As the person approaches, tell yourself, 'Here's the button-pusher. Here she comes!' Then you don't engage. You might say, 'Maybe we can talk about this issue over coffee another day.'"

And there's no need to suffer through a gathering that's gone sour. "If a holiday celebration is going sideways, I leave," said PCA's Spencer. "Give yourself permission to leave when it doesn't feel good."

### **Dealing with grief**

As the years march on, many of us deal with deeper issues than navigating challenging family dynamics. The peacemakers, as well as the difficult folks, may have died, so the holidays can mean sharp grief. Several of my loved ones have passed away, including my parents, husband and some friends. To help get you through the holidays without your loved ones present, you can turn to the traditions of your childhood to feel closeness with departed family members, Spencer suggested. "My grandmother liked oranges," she said. "I'll eat an orange to feel closer to her, less isolated."

I find it helps to lean into the memories. For me, that has meant visiting the cemetery where lots of my family members are buried, saying a prayer, and leaving a rose or Christmas wreath at the gravesite. If it's too cold, I stay home, pull out photo albums, and sometimes write a letter to the deceased. I used to have 10-megaton fights with my mom, who died 15 years ago. But time has softened things, and I don't mind telling her so. I write a letter of remembrance and leave it beside my mom's photo for several days. My heart feels lighter afterward.

### **Reaching out**

At the holidays, we can reach beyond the family circle for connection. Musician Lynn Mather, 74, of Mount Airy, visits shelters – sometimes alone, sometimes with friends – and sings during holiday dinners there. "Over the last 15 or 20 years, I sometimes find my-self unoccupied, and my family isn't around," she said. "People enjoying Christmas dinner at St. Vincent's in Germantown or St. John's Hospice downtown seem to like hearing familiar carols, and it does my heart good to sing them."

Mather surrounds herself with friends in other ways. A few days before Christmas, she invites friends to her home for a songfest and storytelling. "Everyone brings light refreshments to share, and we have a great time," she said.

Idella Hinton, 70, of Germantown, sometimes finds that it's just her and her husband at home on Christmas. "I listen to music and bake," she said, "so that folks can enjoy homemade treats when they do come." Hinton, who is regaining her mobility after a stroke, also makes the most of outings during the year so that she's ready for the holidays. "I make up little packages of presents – scarves, gloves, hats, lotion and whatnot – and give them to people who may need them at Christmas," she said. "If you focus on somebody else, you're going to feel better."

Sometimes, to avoid loneliness, it helps to recall organizations in your network, and then plug into them by offering your help, suggested Sheryl Ross, Psy.D., a clinical psychologist in the Einstein Health Network who provides outpatient therapy for seniors. "Consider participating in craft fairs at senior centers," Ross said. "Even if you don't make crafts, you can volunteer to wrap gifts. You could also send holiday cards to troops overseas. In addition, your church or synagogue may need another pair of hands to help with holiday activities."

Exercise may also prove a boon for the holidays. "Walking for 20 minutes or more not only benefits your body," Ross said. "It can also help lift depression."

Check in with yourself before the holiday rush and recall how you felt during the previous year's holidays, Ross suggested. "If you felt down and you think that may happen again, short-term therapy could help," she said. "Make appointments to see you through your most sensitive time."

# Home for the Holidays

# Reader shares her family's beloved Polish Christmas Eve traditions

Holiday traditions vary based on one's cultural background and religious beliefs. For one Milestones reader who answered a recent invitation to submit her personal story related to this month's theme, the celebration of Christmas involves cultural food and religious practices of her family's native land, Poland. Below is a description of these Christmas traditions and an original poem.

**By Dorothy V. Scott** 

As the grandchild of Polish immigrants, I grew up in a Catholic-Polish home. Among

my most treasured holiday traditions is the Polish celebration of wigilia (pronounced vee-geel-ya), which is a Christmas Eve feast of 12 courses. Plates for this special

meal are set out on beds of straw, just like baby Jesus in his straw-lined manger. The meal includes a variety of non-meat Polish dishes, often including beetroot soup (borscht), dumplings stuffed with mushrooms, potato pierogis, fish, cabbage and sauerkraut. During the meal, we share oplatek (pronounced o-pwatek), a thin wafer made of flour and water that's similar to the communion wafer received during Catholic mass. We often sing traditional, religious carols during the celebration. But in 1990, I added a modern favorite: "Santa Must Be Polish,"

**READER** Prince") that I first heard while shopping in Center City during the holidays.

Dorothy V. Scott, 75, has lived in the Manayunk section of Northwestern Philadelphia since she was 4. She has been an active member of Journey's Way senior center for more

sung by Bobby Vinton (a.k.a. "The Polish

# Her Polish Christmas traditions

than 20 years.

A 12-course wholly-meatless meal was prepared. When the first star appeared, wigilia was shared. Plates of courses were set on a bed of straw. Their table center-placement Mom oversaw. When we broke oplatek, what did we hear? We all wished each other well for the New Year. We exchanged presents after Midnight Mass. On to their kids, these customs parents did pass. Wigilia dinners were served in a church hall. For tickets, we gave the rectory a call. We liked to sing "Santa Must be Polish," too. Yes, that custom of ours is still somewhat new.

### Finding joy

Finally, a few other suggestions, some of them quirky, have worked for me. Let Hanukkah, Kwanzaa or Christmas be the deadline for something you'd like to accomplish. On Nov. 8, 2017, I had a knee replacement, and I promised myself that I would walk a mile by Christmas. My quiet Christmas last year became a day of triumph. Some years, if I feel sad, I attend a story hour at the local library or bookstore. I hear good stories and take in the toddlers' buoyant energy.

Give yourself the love and freedom to discover and do what works for you, during the holidays and all year long.

Native Philadelphian Constance Garcia-Barrio writes about many topics, including black history.



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# The manners, mores of social media

### By M.L. Polak

Living downtown in the heart of the city a long, unexplained absence and say, "Hey, it slipped by.

there's a new diner nearby that opened three weeks ago. Wanna check it out?" The aforementioned diner happens to be on the ground floor of some yuppie condo, leaving me to wonder if they still actually have yuppies.

While I am not truly psychic, I can predict the diner will be middling-good, with not much chrome decor but with great rice pudding, the true test of culinary cojones,

and everything else

will pretty much be standard fare, priced only \$10 more than at "real" diners.

Which is fine, since I am still decompressing from a recent family-type dinner gathering, while myself being family-less. My diner friend, on the other hand, regales me with his adventures as an invited guest for a recent Thanksgiving dinner at the palatial Main Line home of his lifelong Scrabble buddies. His experiences truly confirm my theory: Those who "go somewhere" for big holidays such as Christmas are invariably miserable, and those who are not invited anywhere for such occasions are also miserable. You can't win, and everyone must go through a period of recovery afterward; it's inevitable.

Meanwhile, my breakfast companion, so far to the left he makes Bernie Sanders look like a right-wing-zealot, then commences his perilous narrative. The dinner itself was hellacious, he confides, because another guest, someone's mother, was still - after all this time - strongly pro-Hillary Clinton. Naturally, the mother sinks her fangs into my friend's tender haunches, conversationally speaking, and obliterates him for his political views.

After dinner, the guests calmed down sufficiently to play some postprandial Scrabble. An intelligent fellow well into retirement, my friend had his share of little high-score Scrab-

ble triumphs that evening, including a word that, as it turns out, wasn't actually a word, although he truly believed it was a word, or is often its own reward, and, even better, oc- at least, should be. But neither his hostess casionally an old friend will re-emerge after nor host challenged him at the moment, so



Until his hostess, who was not just a Facebookaddict, but someone who chronicles every single iota of minutiae of her existence on Facebook, posted my friend's malfeasance on her Facebook wall a few hours later, blabbing how her dinner guest ruined everything because he was such a "big cheater."

Because of that indiscreet Facebook post, my friend mournfully relates, everyone in his social set was instantaiStock neously made aware of

the misleading and vile charge. The situation turned into such a monstrosity that he feels he can never go back there ever again - not next vear, not ever.

No wonder he now views the world as stuffed to the gills with roving armadas of citizen journalists just waiting to pounce on regular people at the slightest deviation from morally correct behavior, making everything into "an escapade."

Remember what life used to be like? Surely boring but at least unchronicled. Now, we take our boredom leavened with a hefty dose of overeager if insatiable technology, and Facebook creator Mark Zuckerberg just gets richer and richer.

A confession: I have never so far in my lifetime sent a text message. I have neither a smartphone nor a TV. How long can I hold out? Forever, if I play my cards right.

Once upon a time, I knew my friend's hostess. That was way before Facebook. I hope people begin to accept the consequences of their actions online and go back to not living their lives out loud but instead riding in the "Amtrak Quiet Car of Life," ruminating on the nuances of existence but forgetting about compulsively sharing all the details.

M.L. Polak writes, edits, draws cartoons and gardens in Philadelphia.

Solution

50 Wont

*The solution can be* 

53 Part of H. R. H.

hit of '28

59 Bien lead-in

60 Adolf's Eva

62 Dispatched

56 Kahn-Donaldson

61 "Today \_\_\_ man"

63 Alan or Norman

64 Hyde Park sight

found on page 5.

# **Historic homes**

• continued from page 6

home also features a wide variety of original family furnishings from the early 1800s. Originally located in the Frankford section of Philadelphia, Cedar Grove was moved to its current location in the southwestern part of Fairmount Park in 1926-28.

### Holidav events

To make the visits to these historic holiday homes convenient and economical, adults can purchase a discounted ticket for \$30 that includes admission to all five mansions and house-to-house transportation on the Phlash Holiday Loop, which is a seasonal transit service managed by the Independence Visitor Center that visits 22 stops located near popular attractions, from the Delaware River Waterfront to Fairmount Park. Children under 12 can visit the holiday homes for free.

There are many weekend activities going on during the holidays for you to enjoy. You can take your grandchildren to "The Neighbors Program" on Saturday, Dec. 8, held at each estate and featuring entertainment by the talented folks living near the mansions.

You might want to go with some friends, although children are also welcome, Sunday, Dec. 9, to the "Flavors of the Season" events, which feature free food demonstrations and delicious samples.

Perhaps you just want to spend a quiet solo visit savoring the beauty of each distinct mansion. Whatever you choose, have a wonderful time at a Very Philly Christmas.

# **Enjoy 'Christmas in Fairmount Park'** this month

You can find information about the houses, holiday events, and holiday hours of operation, as well purchase tickets, at holidaysinthepark.com. Click on "Your visit" and scroll down for an interactive Google map and directions to each of the houses, which are all located within East and West Fairmount Park, clustered near the river. Below is information about the mansions.

- Cedar Grove Mansion: 1 Cedar Grove Dr., 215-763-8100, philamuseum.org/historichouses
- Historic Strawberry Mansion: 2450 Strawberry Mansion Dr., 215-228-8364, historicstrawberrymansion.org
- Laurel Hill Mansion: 7201 N. Randolph Dr., 215-235-1776, laurelhillmansion.org
- Lemon Hill Mansion: Sedgeley and Lemon Hill drives, 215-232-4337, parkcharms.com/lemon-hill
- Woodford Mansion: 3400 West Dauphin Dr., 215-229-6115, woodfordmansion.org

Dorothy Stanaitis, a certified Philadelphia tour guide, writes about history and culture.

# **Milestones wants** to hear from YOU!

We welcome your story ideas, feedback and suggestions. (Story-specific comments or questions will be forwarded to the writer.) Submissions of letters or articles for publication must be signed and dated and include your address and phone number. Submission constitutes permission to edit and publish in any form or medium.



Send ideas, comments & submissions to:

Attn: Milestones Editor PCA, 642 N. Broad St. Philadelphia, PA 19130 Email: milestonesnews@pcaCares.org

PCA reserves the right to not publish any submission; receipt may not be acknowledged; and submissions will not be returned.

# Crossword

# Sweet notes

### **Across**

5 Sunblind

6 Shane star

8 Have the lead

tune

1	Prince Charles'	21	Fall quaff
	pastime	22	Stage direction
5	Heeling	23	Niche occupant
10	Monks	25	Wine and dine
14	Box-office biggy	26	Despoil
15	'I girl just like	29	Coxcomb
		30	In the works
16	Budget item	31	Bugged
17	Kahn-Heusen hit	33	Testing spot
	of '55	36	Endure
20	"Maid of Athens	37	Dracula, for one
	we part"		
Do	own		
1	Неар	10	The Surrey With
2	Kitchen emanation		on Top
3	'73 Bluenotes hit,	11	Ranch, in "Gian
	with The	12	Broadway backe
4	Bull or Miss	13	Cordwood meas

". . . and he made 18 him \_\_\_\_ of many colors" 7 *Gypsy* \_\_\_\_, Porter 19 Nasal 24 Coagulate 9 Feather's partner 25 Corrode 26 Alto lead-in

### Rock salt 45 one 49 Adriatic 'Giant'' backer 33

48 Crèche trio River into the *With the* 27 "\_\_\_\_first you don't 42 Abridgement succeed . . ." 28 Marry in haste 29 Punishing cap Cordwood measure 32 Arles assent 34 Jungle swingers 35 Bible or Sun

Inlet

Do museum work

Kind of pole

41 Persona non

37

38

40

38 Thirtysomething's

39 Giant, of yore

41 Judge's need

42 Hawk's opposite

43 Name, in Wilde

Mel

40 Subject

play

- 44 City on the Somme 45 Stems 46 Think the world of 47 Agitate '62 Sondheim song 50 Israeli dance 51 Smell \_ 52 Downcast 54 Madame Bovary 55 Paper quantity 57 Wane
  - 58 Bigwig

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
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