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Inside

This Issue:
Heart Health

Colonial re-enactor
tells black soldier's story ... 8



Dancing for fun, health,
yields many benefits... 16



Photo by Abbey J. Porter

Training in martial arts helps seniors to develop greater balance and confidence



Student Steve Arbitman (right) works on a self-defense technique with instructor John Chen of the Ba'z Tai Chi and Kung Fu Studio in Manayunk.

By Abbey J. Porter

On a Tuesday night, in a wooden-floored room at the back of a building at 5235 Ridge Ave. in Manayunk, a dozen people face a mirrored wall. Together, they extend their arms and legs in a series of deliberate, fluid movements, breathing with the motion. John Chen, a smooth-faced man with a black and grey ponytail, calls out instructions from the front of the group. He is the owner of Ba'z Tai Chi and Kung Fu Studio, and his is not the only gray hair in the room.

Among Chen's students is Steve Arbitman, 69. "I decided I needed some kind

of martial art to stay in shape, back when I was 49 and the big 5-0 was coming up," says Arbitman, who first tried martial arts in college. He has practiced at Chen's studio for two decades now and is one of many older students who finds martial arts worthwhile.

While the term "martial arts" might summon images of people punching and kicking each other, hundreds of martial arts exist today, not all of which focus on physical combat. Chen teaches a form of traditional kung fu, a Chinese art, that emphasizes "forms" – a prescribed series of movements meant to simulate defense against attackers. He also teaches the Chinese art of tai chi,

• continued on page 22

Heart Health

Senior centers help build healthy habits

By Marcia Z. Siegal



Peggy Makay discovered she was prediabetic after having a blood glucose screening at a health fair held by KleinLife: Northeast Philadelphia, a multigenerational community center. Soon after, she enrolled in KleinLife's diabetes prevention workshop series, presented in collaboration with Temple Health. A recent Thursday found her and several other members of the center seated around a table for lesson seven of the 15-week program.

Under the guidance of Temple Health Lifestyle Coach Edoris Lomax, participants reported the past week's progress in tracking their physi-

• continued on page 17



Photo by Paola Nogueras

Enjoying volleyball at KleinLife: Northeast Philadelphia are Edward Powers (right) and Larry Funk.

Health Brief 2
Calendar 12-13
Don's Column 23
The Milestones
Crossword 23

Next Month:
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Health Brief

Prevent and treat diabetes to reduce risk of having a heart attack or stroke



Milestones file photo

In recent years, the American Heart Association has identified diabetes as one of the seven major, controllable risk factors for cardiovascular disease. Adults with diabetes are about 50 percent more likely to die from a heart attack than adults without diabetes, according to a study of 700,000 people conducted over 10 years by the University of Leeds in England.

"We've made significant advances in the treatment of heart disease over the past two decades," said Claresa Levetan, M.D., endocrinologist at Chestnut Hill Hospital. "In general, your chances of surviving a heart attack or stroke today are far greater than ever before, but for those with diabetes, the improvements in survival rates are less than half those of the general population."

Diabetes alone is now regarded by many clinicians as the strongest risk factor for heart disease. If you have diabetes, it's not enough to control your blood sugar levels. The blood vessels in patients with diabetes are more susceptible to high cholesterol and high blood pressure, due to higher glucose levels, than those of a person without diabetes. More than 90 percent of patients with diabetes have high blood pressure or high cholesterol. If you add smoking and/or obesity, additional risk factors for cardiovascular disease, the scales tip even more toward having a heart attack or stroke.

The good news is, the guidelines to prevent heart disease and those to pre-

vent diabetes are very similar.

- Keep your blood glucose in healthy range. Your fasting blood sugar should be consistently under 100. If you don't know your A1C level, the measure of your blood glucose levels over the previous three months, ask your doctor.
- Get at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise at least five days per week.
- Eat a balanced diet of whole, unprocessed foods that focuses on a variety of high-quality fruits and vegetables.
- Keep blood pressure below 140/80, especially if you have diabetes.
- Keep cholesterol and triglycerides in normal range, with a focus on low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, commonly referred to as "bad" cholesterol. LDL should be no higher than 100 mg/dl in adults with diabetes.
- Keep your weight and body mass index (BMI) in normal range. The healthiest range for BMI is 19-25.
- If you smoke, get the help you need to stop.

"There are plenty of physical and clinical factors that we can't control, but type 2 diabetes just isn't one of them," Levetan said. "The best way to prevent or delay death from heart disease is simply to prevent diabetes. Get with your doctor, get a plan and stick to it. You may add an additional 20 or even 30 years to your life."

Source: Chestnut Hill Hospital

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Heart Health

Making healthy choices is much easier than you think

By Alicia M. Colombo

Has your doctor told you that your blood pressure is too high or that you're carrying too much weight? Maybe you're starting to feel fatigued or out of breath more often than you used to. These are just some of the signs that lifestyle changes may be needed to improve your health. If the thought of dieting and strenuously exercising discourages you, don't despair. Improving your health is not an all-or-nothing proposition. By making just a few simple changes to your eating habits and activity level, you can start to make a big difference in how you look and feel.

The popular book series, "Eat This, Not That!," demonstrates that you can live a healthy lifestyle without dieting or totally eliminating the foods you love. As someone who lost more than 100 pounds and kept it off for 15 years, I can tell you that diets absolutely do not work. For long-term health, you need to make a lifestyle change. That means consistently making smart choices while still enjoying occasional treats. "Eat This, Not That!" offers an abundance of tips and information for free on its website at www.eatthis.com. The chart below offers easy food swaps that will cut calories, sugar and fat.



Milestones file photo

Eating a green salad and drinking a full glass of water before meals can help you eat less and feel satisfied.

Portion size

Making better choices in the kinds of food you eat is just the first step to getting

healthier. It doesn't give you free range to overindulge; you still need to pay attention to how much you eat. According to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (www.eatright.org), a "serving" is how much of a food you should eat to meet recommended daily nutrition requirements. The weight or amount of a serving size varies by each food and is indicated on the nutritional label of packaged foods. In many cases, a package contains several servings.

Here are some comparisons to help you visualize common serving sizes:

- 1 teaspoon of margarine = a woman's fingertip
- 3 ounces of meat = a deck of cards
- 1 cup of pasta = a baseball
- 1½ ounces of cheese = four stacked dice
- ½ cup of fresh fruit = a tennis ball

A portion is the amount of a food you choose to eat at any one time – which may be more or less than the suggested serving size. So, if you are eating two or more servings of a particular food, the amount of fat, sodium, calories and cholesterol will be at least doubled. To help put serving size into perspective, try dishing out the amount of food you would normally eat for a meal or snack. Then put that amount of food into a measuring cup or on a food scale and compare it to the recommended serving size. You do not have to weigh and measure everything you eat in order to stay on track, but doing so from time to time may help keep your portion sizes in check.

Comfort food 'light'

Comfort food makes us feel warm inside, often by conjuring treasured memories of our childhood or our mother's home cooking. But you don't need all the fat, sugar and carbohydrates often associated with these dishes to replicate that good feeling. By using a slow cooker, you can infuse dishes with flavor and enjoy the comforting aroma of home cooking wafting through your home for hours. Here are a few recipes that are packed with protein and fiber but not a lot of fat or calories.

Yankee pot roast

(Serves 12; serving size: 1½ cups)

Ingredients:

- 2½ lbs. beef chuck pot roast
- Salt and pepper
- 3 unpeeled medium baking potatoes (about 1 pound), cut into quarters
- 2 large carrots, cut into ¾-inch slices
- 2 stalks celery, cut into ¾-inch slices
- 1 medium yellow onion, sliced
- 1 large parsnip, cut into ¾-inch slices
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tsp. dried rosemary
- ½ tsp. dried thyme
- ½ cup 99 percent fat-free, reduced-sodium beef broth

Directions:

Trim excess fat from beef and discard. Cut beef into serving-size pieces; sprinkle with salt and pepper. Combine potatoes, carrots, celery, onion, parsnip, bay leaves, rosemary and thyme in slow cooker. Place beef over vegetables. Pour broth over beef. Cover; cook on low 8 ½ to 9 hours or until beef is fork-tender. Transfer beef to serving platter. Arrange vegetables around beef. Remove and discard bay leaves before serving. To make gravy, ladle cooking liquid into 2-cup measuring cup; let stand 5 minutes. Skim off fat and discard. Measure remaining cooking liquid and heat to a boil in a small saucepan. For each cup of cooking liquid, mix 2 table-

Eat This	Not That
• Plain fat-free yogurt with fresh fruit	• Sweetened yogurt with fruit
• Sirloin	• Filet mignon
• Fresh fruit	• Juice or dried fruit
• Grated cauliflower	• White rice
• Low-sodium chicken broth to sauté	• Oil
• Poached egg	• Fried or scrambled egg
• Apple slices with cheese or peanut butter	• Crackers
• Spaghetti squash	• Pasta
• Seltzer water	• Soda
• Lettuce leaves for wraps	• Bread or tortillas
• Ground turkey	• Ground beef

Source: eatthis.com

• continued on page 20

• continued on page 20

Meditation provides a path to peace

By Marcia Z. Siegal

Anita Grace Brown teaches mindfulness meditation. As she describes it, "The aim is not quieting the mind or attempting to achieve a state of eternal calm. The goal is simple: We're aiming to pay attention to the present moment, without judgment. Easier said than done; we practice. Our minds often get carried away in thought. That's why mindfulness is the practice of returning, again and again, to the present moment."

Meditation is an ancient mind and body practice that is estimated to date back as far as 5,000 B.C. It is believed that meditation originated in India and derived from the teachings of Vedantism, an ancient Hindu philosophy. Today, there are many forms of meditation, both religious and secular. Most share the practice of concentrated focus upon a sound, object, visualization, the breath or movement in order to increase awareness of the present moment – a state called mindfulness – as well as to reduce stress, promote relaxation, and enhance personal and spiritual growth.

A personal journey

Scott Spencer came of age at the height of the 1960s counterculture when there was great interest in exploring altered states of consciousness. He became interested in meditation as a drug-free way to experience a heightened level of awareness. Over the years, his commitment deepened to embracing Buddhism as well. "The world is so busy with so many things to do, and people are so driven, that just stopping, even for a few minutes, can be very beneficial," he said of his daily meditation practice.

Meditating for an hour at home each morning and often at other times, as well as in group settings, he typically focuses on his breathing – "not to control it or to breathe in a particular way – just observing the breath. I put myself in a very concentrated state, not to get distracted by anything," Spencer said. In the process, his mind quiets and a sense of peace helps him to deal with difficulties of all sorts, from mundane issues like driving in traffic to more profound challenges like physical pain or the loss of a loved one. "You just open your heart to everything that comes

along," he said.

"We all have this this excessive chatter in our heads about what we are supposed to be doing and how we are not doing enough," he said. With meditation, "you learn to detach and to be kind to everybody, including yourself. You can look at yourself with more compassion," he said.



Photo by Abbey J. Porter

Anita Grace Brown says of the meditation she teaches: "The goal is simple: We're aiming to pay attention to the present moment, without judgment."

Wider applications

As evidence of its efficacy mounts, mindfulness meditation training is increasingly being offered in schools, workplaces, the military, fitness centers, senior facilities and other organizations to help people reduce anxiety and stress, build resiliency, and improve health.

Diane Reibel, who holds a doctorate in physiology, turned to meditation more than 20 years ago after being told she would have to learn to live with the chronic pain and anxiety of her immune disorder. Unable to accept that dire advice, she decided to explore alternative medicine. "After practicing meditation for several months, I found that I was struggling less emotionally and experiencing a general sense of well-being, even in the midst of my chronic ill-

• continued on page 14

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Founder of Mount Airy Learning Tree marks 35 years of sharing knowledge

By Barbara Sherf

When Mount Airy resident Barbara Bloom and a core of dedicated volunteers started the Mount Airy Learning Tree (MALT) 35 years ago, they didn't have a clue how popular the organization's mostly evening and weekend classes would become.

The community service organization that began instruction in 1981 with 17 classes and 125 registrants now averages 750 classes and 5,000 students per year.

Though armed with an undergraduate degree in English, a master's in American civilization from the University of Pennsylvania and another master's in adult education from Temple University, Bloom was intrigued by the concept of neighbors teaching neighbors.

"At first people were like, 'You want me to teach basic plumbing?' But when we looked around, there were infinite possibilities regarding what people wanted to learn and teach," said Bloom, 75, who now lives in Chestnut Hill with her husband and Havanese dog, Dudley, rescued from the Philadelphia Animal Welfare Society shelter. "The concept was based on a model started in Manhattan, Kansas, where people with untapped skills were recruited to teach their neighbors." Bloom noted that the idea helped not only neighbors but also local business owners to connect in a meaningful way.

"The plumber is happy to share his expertise on small jobs that he really may not want to do, and in turn, when a more complex plumbing issue arises, the student already has a relationship with that individual to call upon," Bloom said. "There is a trust and bond created."

Bloom noted that she was one of the first co-teachers of a class that first year. The topic was Wonder Woman. "My colleague was a 12-year-old who knew more about the comic character than I did. It was a great experience," said Bloom, who has taught and taken numerous classes over the years.



Photo by Barbara Sherf

Mount Airy Learning Tree founder Barbara Bloom relaxes at home with her dog, Dudley.

This semester, she is enrolled in two documentary screenings at the Lutheran Theological Seminary. At 4:30 p.m. March 12, she will see "Maggie Growls," a documentary film portrait of the unstoppable Maggie Kuhn, who in 1970 founded the Gray Panthers, a series of multi-generational local advocacy networks, after being forced to retire from a job she loved. At 4:30 p.m. March 19, there is a screening of "BaddDDD Sonia Sanchez," featuring poet Sanchez's rich readings with jazz-accompanied performances of her work.

Bloom says MALT's handful of founders were intent on reflecting and celebrating integration as part of the organization's mission.

"Part of the mission was to echo [the] diversity in the community," she said, adding that she "worked hard to do age diversity as well as that of economics and skin color" in MALT's board and staff.

"We held [classes in] everything from learning to play Tibetan bowls to water aerobics to business," she said. "I always sort of snuck in."

Bloom attributes the group's name to one of the early organizers. "Eversley Vaughn, one of our first organizers, quoted the famed photographer, musician, writer and film director, Gordon Parks. In Parks' book, 'The Learning Tree,' it says, 'Everything you need to know you can learn under this tree.' It seemed appropriate for what we were setting out to achieve," she said.

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Revolutionary War hero Ned Hector's legacy lives on through local re-enactor

By Alicia M. Colombo

Noah Lewis always had an interest in history and in learning more about his African-American heritage, but it was his late wife's example as a teacher and volunteer classroom aide that led him to become a professional Revolutionary War re-enactor.

His wife, Mary, had been a teacher and truly loved children, so after she retired from teaching to become a full-time mother, she continued to volunteer as an aide at schools. Tragedy struck the young family when she was pregnant with their fourth child and was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. "Mary didn't want to endanger the baby, so she took no treatments," Lewis said. At the 30th week, the baby was delivered, and they named her Mary-Joy. A month and a half later, Mary passed away. Lewis' other children were then ages 2 through 8.

Tribute grew into a mission

Lewis was in the midst of a 40-year-career in electronics. He was a certified biomedical technician who specialized in installing, repairing and calibrating heart-monitoring equipment for local hospitals before opening his own electronics repair shop. He decided to use his knowledge of science in tribute to his late wife's work in the classroom, and began to volunteer in his daughter's school. "I would go to my daughter's fifth-grade class to give presentations on electricity and biology," he said.

At the time, Lewis was doing genealogical research and talked with his daughter's teacher about it. "I hit a brick wall at the 1800s and couldn't go back any further," he said. "Since it was around the time of the American Revolution, I began to study that. My daughter's teacher asked if I had any information I could present on the subject of Colonial America. After thinking it over, I decided to give it a try."

Lewis had been reading a book about black genealogy by African-American historian Charles Blockson. In the book, Blockson discusses Edward (Ned) Hector, a Revolutionary War hero from an area in Montgomery County now known as Con-



Photo courtesy of Noah Lewis

Noah Lewis, pictured dressed in full Revolutionary War regalia, tells the often unknown story of African-Americans' role as soldiers in Colonial America.

shohocken. "My previous opinion had been that Colonial African-Americans were only poor, uneducated slaves and just manual labor in the military," Lewis said. "When I read about Ned, it totally changed my opinion."

He adopted Ned's persona for his presentation. "That first costume was ridiculous by a re-enactor's strict standards," he said. "I wore light blue hospital scrub pants tucked into knee-high white socks and a woman's blouse." His children were embarrassed, but that first presentation in 1996 was such a success that he returned to the school many times and started to present the program to other schools in 2000. Today, Lewis has presented on African-Americans' lives in Colonial America at more than 50 schools.

He's discovered through his re-enactments that many people believe, like he used to, that Colonial blacks were only slaves and manual laborers who did nothing to help the country they lived

in. Lewis uses every opportunity he can to share the knowledge that blacks actually played a crucial role in establishing America. "Yes, there was slavery during the Colonial period, but there was a lot more than that before 1800; there was opportunity as well," he said.

An important role

Hector's story piqued his curiosity, especially since Lewis' father is a retired master sergeant in the U.S. Army and a war veteran. "My interest in history was from the perspective of cause and effect," he said. "My focus did not mainly center in memorizing dates ... I wanted to learn more about this man and his times."

And learn he did. He found out that between 3,000 and 5,000 African-Americans had served the Colonial cause. Gen. George Washington commanded one of the most integrated armies prior to 1948, when the segregated U.S. Army was re-integrated in preparation for the Korean War. "African-Americans played an important part in the struggle for freedom," Lewis said. Many of the people who helped to rescue Washington's trapped army at Brooklyn Heights in New York were black sailors, he pointed out, and blacks served as Colonial spies in the British Army.

"People don't get what that means," he said. "It means that we, who are enjoying the rights and freedoms that we have now, are doing so in part because of the black people who died. Without the contributions of all these black people, we would not have won our freedom. Please understand, I am not implying we blacks won the American Revolution all by ourselves. We couldn't have won without the French, Irish, Native Americans or the many other groups. It was an integrated effort. Our power as Americans has always been from our diversity. It always will be in our diversity. The only shame is that we don't appreciate each other as we should; therein is my mission."

As his knowledge continued to grow, so did his dedication to preserving the history of Ned Hector. Shortly after his first grade-school presentation, he closed his electronics repair shop and soon after decided to pursue making a living by presenting living history at schools, historical sites and his-

torical re-enactment events. "It gets challenging to make a living with this," he said. "I target schools. I enjoy kids; I enjoy educating. From my perspective, there are two types of re-enactors. The actor-types want you to believe you met the person; they stay in character no matter what. The educators, who feel the most important thing is the information, are concerned with accuracy. You'll find me dropping in and out of character to get that information across."

A deep connection

So, who was this man, Ned Hector? "He's you and me," Lewis said. "He's an everyday person, but he was also a hero. He was a teamster and bombardier who would transport artillery and help to fire the cannons. He was a brave man. He engenders a lot of respect."

During the Battle of Brandywine, Lewis said, Hector's artillery unit was ordered to retreat because it was being overrun by British troops. "Ned said, 'I will save my horses or I will die myself.' Then he gathered up whatever guns he could and saved his horses and the wagon with the supplies," he said. "I think he was the first black to live in Conshohocken and to have a street named after him. He's the only black person from the 1800s I know of who has something named after him during this time period. That's pretty significant."

After 20 years of studying and portraying Ned Hector, Lewis feels he knows the man on a deep level. He chuckles as he confesses, "One of the scenarios that I play out in my head is meeting him in the afterlife. This big hulking man is going to walk up to me and laugh, because this short, puny guy is pretending to be him. I imagine that Ned Hector was a big, strapping man, based on the physical nature of his work."

Lewis has co-authored a book, "Edward 'Ned' Hector: Revolutionary War Hero – Time Traveler" that's available in paperback and e-book on www.amazon.com. For more information about Ned Hector, go to Lewis' website at www.nedhector.com.

Contact Alicia M. Colombo at acolombo@pcaphl.org

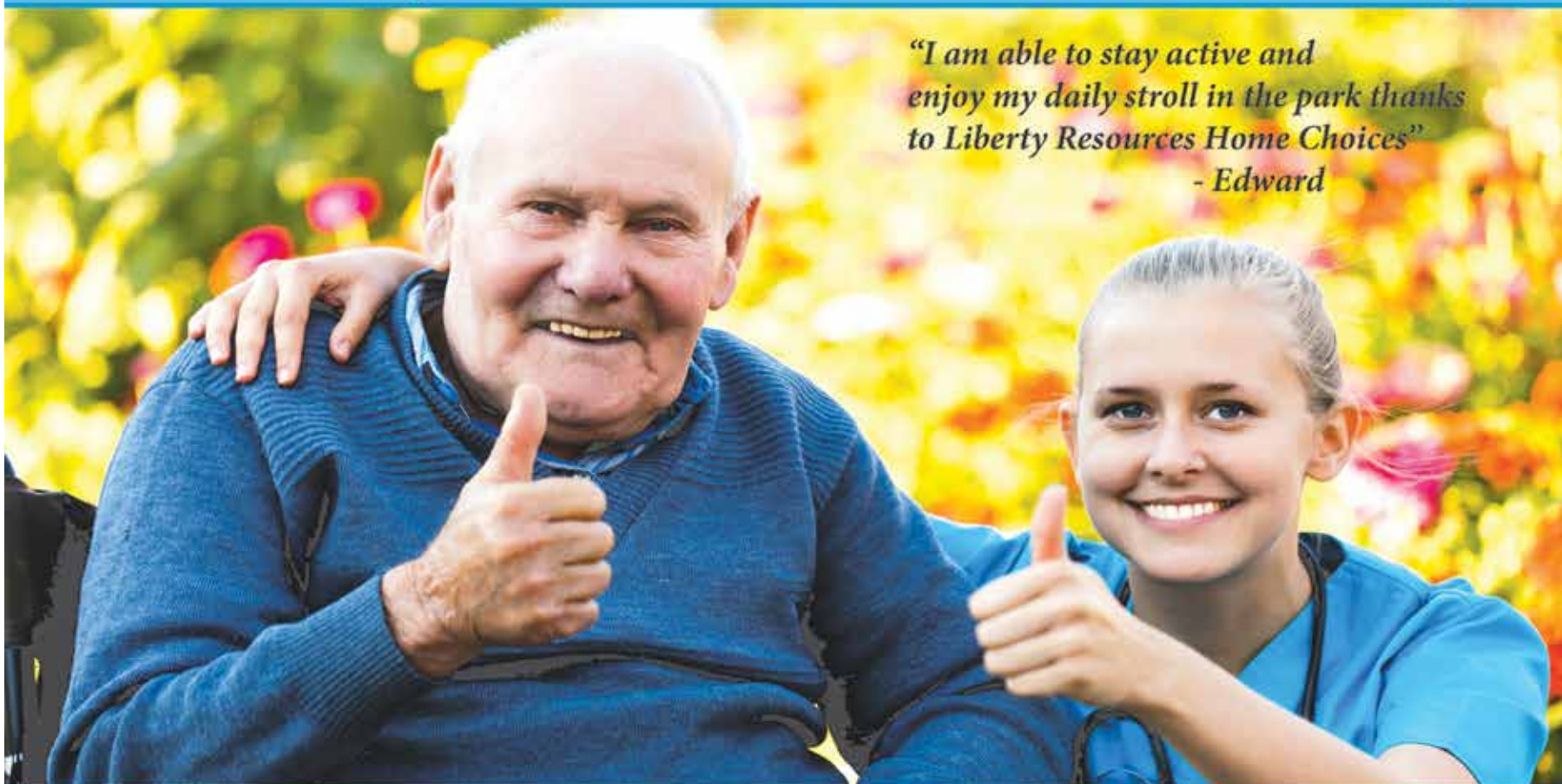
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Nostalgia

Revisiting the 'Honeymoon Express'

By Dorothy Stanaitis

When the train stopped at Elkton, Maryland, everyone aboard looked up to watch the sheepish couples scurry off.

Elkton was the elopement center of the area, and rows of cab drivers/guides were lined up at the station waiting for the nervous young people to arrive.

Each driver knew of a chapel or a wedding parlor where a marriage could take place with as much or as little fanfare as the couple desired. The driver would be willing to stand as a witness during the ceremony and could also recommend a restaurant or hotel where newlyweds would be welcome. After all, elopement was the major "industry" of the area in 1929.

My mother and father had spent long hours secretly planning their elopement day. A family wedding had not been possible for three reasons: 1) The bride's family objected to her marrying the son of a poor immigrant family. 2) The groom's family objected to his marrying someone outside of their own ethnic background, and 3) they couldn't have afforded much of a wedding anyway, as the country teetered on the brink of the Great Depression. Elopement seemed the only solution.

Their weeks of planning had included finding and furnishing a small apartment in Philadelphia, near the lampshade factory where they both worked.

Each payday, they would visit the local Woolworth's on Market Street to pick up some of the household items they needed. Since both families collected most of the elopers' meager salaries, there wasn't a lot left for them to spend, but by careful saving and shopping, they were able to fill several paper bags with dish towels, bath towels, inexpensive cups and saucers, glasses, and flatware for the table.

After the last secret shopping trip, as they hurried to their little apartment with a few bags of treasures, one of the packages split. A carving knife, a paring knife, a can opener, and a shower of forks and spoons spilled out onto the pavement. Several kind passersby helped them collect and rebag their items, but the incident



Milestones file photo

left them with frayed nerves. What if someone who knew them had seen and told their families that they were collecting household items, perhaps to prepare and furnish an apartment? After all, at 20, neither one met the legal marrying age of 21, and their families had the power to prevent their union. It was time to buy the train tickets to Elkton.

On the day they chose, my mother woke early and quietly dressed in a beautiful silk outfit that she had sewn herself. She was worried that her mother or sisters might wake and ask why she was dressed in such finery so early in the day. She was shaking with nerves, but she managed to slip out before they woke.

When she met my father at the train station, she worried that everyone on the train would know she was running off to be married when they saw her pretty dress. She felt nervous, self-conscious and miserable. Before long, she and my father were quarrelling. But their spat was quickly forgotten in the bustle to leave the train with as much dignity as possible in the face of all the grinning passengers who remained on board. Then they had to dicker with a cab driver for a wedding package at a rate that they could afford.

With all of that accomplished, the Rev. Edward Grasion united them in marriage according to the ordinance of God and the laws of Maryland, and they were free to take the train back to Philadelphia, their cozy apartment and the daunting task of telling their families what they had done.

The telling was easier than they had expected. My father's family cried a little, worried a little but soon adjusted. My mother's mother, a widow, sighed in resignation, said that she had expected this and wished them

• continued on page 21

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February 2017

Sunday

Super Bowl

5

Sundays on Stage: Take the A Train. Musical group Follow the Drinking Gourd presents a family-friendly show about the explosion of art, music, literature & dance during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s-30s. Doors open at 1:30 p.m.; show 2 p.m. Parkway Central Library. 215-686-5322.

12

Flyers Day at Winterfest. Meet & skate with Flyers alumni, shoot pucks to win prizes, & experience Flyers 50th Anniversary attractions. 12-5pm. Blue Cross RiverRink. 215-922-2FUN. **Philadelphia Chamber Music Society Presents: Chellist Peter Stumpf.** Program of all-Bach cello suites. 3 & 6 p.m. American Philosophical Society. 215-569-8080. \$

19

Jazz Vespers. Service consists of mostly jazz music with some meditation & prayer. Artists' reception follows. 5 p.m. Lutheran Church of the Holy Communion. 215-567-3668.

26

The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia Presents: The Sounds of America. Featured works include classical style, film music & award-winning music written for video games. 2:30 p.m. Kimmel Center. 215-893-1999. (Feb. 27 @ 7:30 p.m.)

Monday

6

Diabetes Prevention & Management. Chestnut Hill Hospital Endocrinologist Claresa Levetan discusses risk factors & health impacts. 12:30 p.m. Center on the Hill. 215-247-4654.

13

Silver Surfers: Internet Programs for Seniors. 1 p.m. Marconi Older Adult Program. 215-717-1969. (Mondays & Wednesdays)

Presidents Day

20

Breast Cancer Support Group. 1-2:30 p.m. Center in the Park. Register: 215-848-7722.

27

Be Kind to Your Heart Dance Party. DJ, refreshments & raffles. 12:30 p.m. Marconi Older Adult Program. 215-717-1969. \$

Tuesday

7

Black History Month Challenge. Trivia about accomplishments of African-Americans throughout history. 1 p.m. Center in the Park. 215-848-7722. **Computer Class: Customize Windows 10 to Work Better for You.** 10 a.m. Marconi Older Adult Program. 215-717-1969. (also Feb. 29)

14

Valentine's Day

Heart to Heart. Party with dancing, music & refreshments. 1 p.m. Center in the Park. 215-848-7722. \$ **Valentine's Day Party.** Music, refreshments & door prizes. 10 a.m. St. Anne's Senior Center. 215-426-9799. \$ **Valentine's Day Spaghetti Dinner.** Performance by CAPA Jazz Band & secret gift exchange of \$10 value. 11 a.m. St. Charles Senior Center. 215-790-9530. \$

21

Pilates for Everyone. 10 a.m. Marconi Older Adult Program. 215-717-1969. (Tuesdays) \$

28

African-American Journeys. 1 p.m. Center in the Park. 215-848-7722. **Philadelphia Chamber Music Society Presents: Hagen Quartet.** Works by Beethoven, Bartok & Brahms. 8 p.m. Kimmel Center 215-569-8080. \$ **Yoga for Vision.** Learn eye exercises to benefit vision & explore your intuitive aspects through restorative yoga poses & meditation. 10:30-noon. Center on the Hill. 215-247-4654. \$

Wednesday

1

Rubber Stamping & Card Making Class. 2:30-4:30 p.m. Center in the Park. 215-848-7722. (Feb. 15) \$

8

Brain Health Workshop. 10-11:30 a.m. Center in the Park. Register: 215-848-7722. (Wednesdays)

15

Balance & Stability Workshop. Learn exercises to develop muscles. Wear comfortable clothes & secure shoes. 2-3:30 p.m. Center on the Hill. Register: 215-247-4654. \$ **Blood Pressure Screening.** 10-11:30 a.m. Center in the Park. 215-848-7722. **Pajama Party.** Come dressed in cute or funny PJs. Play games, share stories, eat popcorn, dance & more. St. Charles Senior Center. 215-790-9530.

22

Banking Basics. Pa. Dept. of Banking & Securities provides information about how to keep money safe & avoid fees. 10 a.m. Center in the Park. Register: 215-848-7722. **Live Right: Healthy Eating & Nutrition.** Presentation & tasting by nutritionist. 11 a.m. St. Anne's Senior Center. 215-426-9799. **Songsters Black History Month Concert.** 1 p.m. Center in the Park. 215-848-7722.

Thursday

2

Groundhog Day

Astral Concert. Harpist Emily Levin & saxophonist Jonathan Wintringham perform classical music. Sponsored by Lincoln Financial Foundation. 1:30 p.m. Phila. Senior Center - Ave. of the Arts. 215-546-5879. **Nourish Yourself Through Mindful Eating & Energy Medicine.** Learn balance & stress management. 10 a.m. Center on the Hill. 215-247-4654. \$

9

Speaker Series: Philadelphia Flower Show. Jenny Rose Carey, director of Pa. Horticultural Society's Meadowbrook Farm in Jenkintown, discusses process of early-blooming plants & gives preview of Holland-themed show. 12-1:30 p.m. Center on the Hill. 215-247-4654. **Black History Month Concert.** PSC choir performs historical tribute through song. Noon. Phila. Senior Center - Ave. of the Arts. 215-546-5879.

16

Legal, Financial & Ethical Care Planning. Delaware Valley Chapter of the Alzheimer's Assn. presents information about legal & medical planning, role of legal advisors, financial documents, paying for long-term care, ethical issues of decision making for care & more. 1-3:30 p.m. Center on the Hill. 215-247-4654. **Philadelphia Chamber Music Society Presents: Brentano Quartet.** Works by Bach, Beethoven, others. 8 p.m. Kimmel Center. 215-569-8080. \$

23

A Healthy Gut for a Healthy Life. Rabiya Bower, RD, LDN and nutritionist for Flourtown Giant discusses the connection between body organisms & health. Information about probiotics & food samples provided. 12:30 p.m. Center on the Hill. 215-247-4654.

Friday

3

National Wear Red Day

(Women's heart disease awareness: www.goredforwomen.org) **Philadelphia Chamber Music Society Concert.** Flutist Julietta Curenton, soprano Karen Slack & pianist Lura Johnson perform works by Ravel, Caplet, Poulenc, others. 8 p.m. American Philosophical Society. 215-569-8080. \$

10

Men's Gathering. 9:30-11:30 a.m. Center in the Park. 215-848-7722. (Fridays) \$

17

Yoga Exercise Class. 10:15-11:30 a.m. Center in the Park. 215-848-7722. (Fridays) \$

24

Pamper Day. Unwind & enjoy an afternoon of pampering & relaxation. 1 p.m. Center in the Park. 215-848-7722. \$ **Philadelphia Chamber Music Society Presents: Cellist Peter Wiley & Pianist Anna Polonsky.** Works by Brahms, Debussy & Chopin. 8 p.m. American Philosophical Society. 215-569-8080. \$

Saturday

4

Black History Program: Tales of Philadelphia by Alice of Dunk's Ferry. Re-enactor Denise Valentin tells the story of slavery in the city and its changes over Alice's 116-year lifetime. 11 a.m. Phila. History Museum at the Atwater Kent. 215-685-4830. \$

11

Chess Club. All ages & levels welcome. 2 p.m. Fumo Family Library. 215-685-1758. (Every other Saturday)

18

The Philadelphia Orchestra Presents: Brahms Symphony No. 3. Legendary conductor Herbert Blomstedt turns 90 this season & celebrates the 30th anniversary of his Philadelphia Orchestra debut. 8 p.m. Kimmel Center. 215-893-1999. (Feb. 19 @ 2 p.m.) \$

25

Barber Shop Talk. Breakfast & health discussion for men only. 10 a.m. Jefferson Hospital. Register: 1-800-533-3669. **Community Grief Workshop with Author Kevin J. Wilson.** Book signing of "Table for One" & discussion about overcoming the loss of a loved one. 1 p.m. Whitman Library. 215-685-1754.

Milestones

Events that end with a \$ require an entrance fee or advance ticket purchase. Events that are free may request a donation or offer items for sale. Please call the number listed for information on pricing or other questions about an event.

Send your calendar items to: Attn: Calendar Editor, PCA Communications Dept., 642 North Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA 19130-3409 • Phone: 215-765-9000, ext. 5081 Fax: 215-765-9066 • Email: acolombo@pcaphl.org

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Meditation

• continued from page 5

ness," she said. At the time, she was a researcher studying the causes of heart disease, but she decided to make mindfulness her life's work instead.

Now, as director of the Mindfulness Institute of the Jefferson-Myrna Brind Center of Integrative Medicine in Philadelphia, Reibel has taught mindfulness-based programs to patients, as well as to doctors and other health care providers, in a variety of settings. She and her colleagues also study the physiological effects and health outcomes of mindfulness training, including its effects on older adults.

Trainings with seniors

Some of the institute's mindfulness programs take place in continuing care facilities, where the average age of participants is 80-plus. "We run mindfulness-based stress reduction programs for older adults," Reibel said. Sessions incorporate mindfulness practices including mindful stretching (yoga) and are adapted to meet participants' physical limitations. For instance, participants practice yoga in chairs rather than on the floor.

Participants learn to be "in the moment" by paying attention to whatever is happening in the present moment, with a receptive and curious attitude. They practice mindful walking, eating,

listening, stretching and breathing. They are asked to do a mindfulness practice for 25 minutes a day. Afterwards, many of the elders have reported that the sessions have had a positive effect on their health and quality of life. "They are better able to enjoy what is happening in their lives in the moment and to look at life more holistically," Reibel said.

Scientific data on the effects of mindfulness meditation is still accumulating, including through the research being conducted by the Jefferson-Myrna Brind Center. A number of national studies indicate that mindfulness training results in improved brain function in areas such as attention, learning and memory processes, and emotion regulation.

Reibel said that there is already a lot of "takeaway" from the programs she has presented in continuing care facilities. A number of participants have reported to her that they were less focused on their physical limitations and were less anxious and depressed. While many still had chronic pain, they felt better able to manage it and were happier. "My life is changed. I feel like a new person," one participant told her. Participants also have reported that these improvements continued well after the training. "They feel that mindfulness helped transform their lives for the better," Reibel said.

For more information on meditation and mindfulness classes, see the list of resources on page 17.

Contact Marcia Z. Siegal at msiegal@pcaphl.org.

Learning Tree

• continued from page 6

In terms of finding good instructors, Bloom said there are many out there.

"It's not that hard nowadays," she said. "Often a good teacher is someone who has learned a new skill and has a desire to share something they love with other people."

As for the future of MALT, Bloom believes that while there are a number of internet-based courses out there, MALT participants enjoy the in-person instruction.

"People want to connect and be part of a community," she said. "I just see the programs continuing to expand."

MALT Executive Director Judy Weinstein agrees that the organization will continue to thrive.

"As our world becomes more divided, MALT brings diverse people together around common interests," she said. "In the past 35 years, the Mount Airy Learning Tree has helped 100,000 people expand their understanding of hundreds of topics. We are proud to have been the conduit for learning for so many in the community."

To view MALT courses, go to mtairylearningtree.org or call 215-843-6333 to request a catalog.

Barbara Sherf is a personal historian and laughter yoga leader. She can be reached at CaptureLifeStories@gmail.com.

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Shayna Marma

☐ **Learn to Use Free Apps for Storing Your
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Mercedes Soloman

☐ **The Joys and Oys of SEXcessful Aging:
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Terri Clark

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☐ **Art History of Philadelphia**
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☐ **Line Dancing**
Sheila Zagar

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Mail to PCA Education Day, 642 N. Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA 19130 or email events@pcaphl.org.

Every effort will be made to place you in the classes you select. Registration confirmation will be sent a week prior to the event.



Heart Health

Seniors dance their way to greater health, happiness and social connections

By Marcia Z. Siegal

Peter Silverman started folk dancing in 1962 when he was in college. "In the '60s and '70s, it was big on campus and very social," he said. "Hundreds of kids would come every night." He loved the dancing and the music of different cultures and still does. After a decades-long hiatus, he's folk dancing again and connecting with like-minded dancers in his age group.

Folk dances are popular dances developed by people in different countries that reflect the traditions and customs of those areas. Typically transmitted from generation to generation, they include the lively Polish mazurka; the exuberant hora, which originated in the Balkans and Southeastern Europe and is now a mainstay of Israeli folk dance; and the festive Greek kalamatiano.

Bernice Wissler and her husband, Ken, are among Silverman's fellow dancers at "Folk Dance on Fridays," where they learn line and circle dances from the Balkans, Israel, France, Hungary, Greece, Scandinavia and other locales around the world. Held at Center on the Hill, located in the Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill, the class is taught by folk dance aficionado Bill Wadlinger. The Wisslers were particularly attracted by the program's health benefits. While the couple walk and do other forms of exercise, "we weren't doing much physical activity in an original way," Bernice said. They thought folk dancing might be a way to remedy that and "that it would be good cardio for our hearts," she said.

Dance for health

Bernice Wissler was right. Dancing is good for your heart – and more. The article "Dance your way to fitness" on the U.S. National Library of Medicine's website (medlineplus.gov) notes that "dancing combines the benefits of aerobic plus weight-bearing exercise. When you dance, you get many physical and mental health benefits, including better heart health, stronger muscles, better balance and coordination, stronger bones, lower risk of dementia, improved memory, reduced stress, more energy, and improved mood."

Photo on page 1: Elena Verzieri enjoys a lesson at her "Folk Dance on Fridays" class. (Photo by Paola Nogueiras)



Photo by Paola Nogueiras

Enjoying a "Folk Dance on Fridays" class (from left) are Carol Wadlinger, Ken and Bernice Wissler, and Peter Silverman.

The American Heart Association recommends that all adults get a minimum of 150 minutes of moderate physical activity or at least 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity (or a combination of both) every week. Regular physical activity has been shown to reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and certain forms of cancer and to reduce depression, the association points out. The most effective way to incorporate physical activity into your lifestyle is by doing something you like, experts say.

If you like to dance, there are hundreds of choices available. Ethnic styles of dancing alone offer numerous possibilities. Zumba, a Latin-infused dance-fitness program, is one of the most popular forms. In Zumba, participants incorporate moves from salsa, merengue, samba and hip-hop to the beat of Latin music to build endurance, strength and flexibility. The "Dance your way to fitness" article notes that you can use almost as much energy in a typical aerobic dance session as you can jogging or swimming laps. There is also a modified Zumba program, Zumba Gold, available for seniors and others who prefer a lower-intensity workout.

Zumba-ing away

Janet Ford teaches Zumba and Zumba Gold at fitness centers and senior community centers. "I love getting people to move to the music and to enjoy the journey of being over 50 and fit," she said. She calls her class "a happy hour with wonderful side effects." Ford said that "the best side effect is that it's a great cardio workout, and it's fun. I make it easy to follow. You can come in off the street into my class and within five minutes, you'll be dancing. It's not about counting steps. It's more like a party instead of a class."

Joyce Coleman takes Ford's Zumba class at PCA's Southwest Senior Center, 6916 Elmwood Ave. "I love her class," Coleman said. "She helps me do things I thought I might not be able to do. The class makes me feel more energetic. I feel it's good for my body, my mind and my soul."

Barbara Rush, her Zumba classmate, concurs. "I'm a five-year cancer survivor," she said. "I continue to look at all kinds of things to build myself up more. Now I'm Zumba-ing away, and I love it."

Coleman said that the class inspires

friendship and that members often socialize outside the center.

A social network

While you can dance alone in your room and still derive health benefits, the social aspect of many types of dance is among the activities' most significant health benefits. According to the National Institute on Aging, studies show a strong correlation between social interaction and health and well-being among older adults, while suggesting that social isolation and loneliness may have significant adverse physical and cognitive effects.

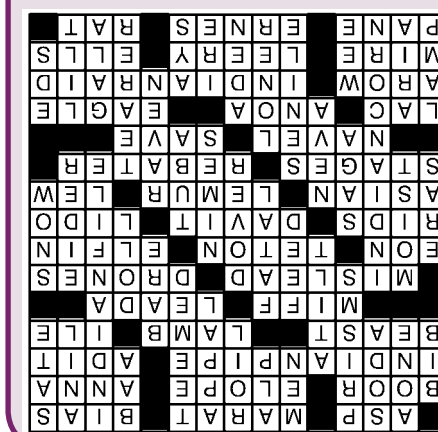
Donna Hendel is a regular participant in folk dancing at Center on the Hill and other venues. She is quick to point out the value of the sociability she enjoys through this pursuit. She and her husband moved to Philadelphia eight years ago. "We had no family and did not know anyone here," she said. "We started folk dancing again and met many new wonderful people." Pointing to the circle of folk dancers at Center on the Hill that particular day, she said, "When I am folk dancing, I'm not just dancing with people. I dance with my friends."

For more information on dance classes and events, see the list of resources on the next page.

Contact Marcia Z. Siegal at msiegal@pcaphl.org.

Solutions to the Milestones Crossword puzzle

(See page 23.)



Senior centers

• continued from page 1

cal activities and fat intake.

"I have trouble with snacks," Makay said. "I have ice cream every night of the week. I'm an 'ice creamaholic.'"

"What about trying fruit instead?" a group member suggested.

"I baked chocolate chip cookies with my grandchildren, and I took home three. I lost weight last week, but not as much as expected," another member said.

"You made progress," Lomax said. "To lose more weight, try something new. Add another activity, like a brisk 20-minute walk.

"We have two goals for the pro-

gram: increase our physical activity and reduce our weight," Lomax said. "According to the National Diabetes Prevention Program, eating healthy meals and doing regular physical activity is the best way to lower weight and lower the risk for type 2 diabetes."

In addition to the workshops, KleinLife offers tai chi, Zumba, line dancing, Wii bowling, a cardio workshop, strength training, three types of yoga and more.

Healthy choices

KleinLife: Northeast Philadelphia is one of 22 senior community centers and six satellite meal sites in neighborhoods throughout Philadelphia that are funded by Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA). Healthy lifestyle programs and activities at centers run the gamut from nutrition and fitness to disease and stress prevention, health screenings,

counseling and social support – and pure recreational fun.

At the Mann Older Adult Center in North Philadelphia, Mixolidia Mangual likes to start her day by exercising on the treadmill. Like many senior community centers, the Mann Center is an approved site for the Silver Sneakers program, offered through health insurance companies nationwide. Designed exclusively for older adults, Silver Sneakers engages participants in fitness activities like strength training and aerobic and flexibility exercises, both individually and through group classes.

"My doctor told me I have to exercise 30 minutes a day," Mangual said. "He sent me here." In addition to exercising in the gym, she participates in the center's art class, knitting and crochet sessions, healthy brain activities and walking group.

Mangual points to another health benefit she derives: "It's good for the brain to be here – much better than staying at home and just watching TV."

Volunteering

Georgina Acevedo has been coming to the Mann Center since immigrating to Philadelphia from Puerto Rico 25 years ago. "This is my second home," she said. Acevedo spends her time doing sewing projects; helping maintain the center's vegetable garden and indoor plants; playing brain games; attending health education programs; and, especially, volunteering. She helps to plan and decorate for special events and volunteers to help with whatever else is needed, "even if it is washing dishes," she said. She has twice chaired the center's advisory council, which counsels center management on programming, expenditures and outreach.

The volunteer opportunities common to senior centers can be replete with health benefits and may even contribute to living longer. Experts say volunteering can help to decrease the risk of depression, provide a sense of purpose and fulfillment, increase self-confidence, and reduce stress. It can also help people stay mentally and physically active and experience the "happiness effect" – the phenomenon that doing good makes you feel good.

Mealtimes

Meals are central to what centers have to offer. All senior community centers and

satellite meal sites serve a nutritious and tasty lunch five days a week. For many seniors, it is the heartiest meal of the day and a prime opportunity for social interaction.

Food can also be important for sociability. At the Mann Center, located in the heart of North Philadelphia's Latino community, many members like to start their day with "Breakfast Nook Socialization." They look forward to their morning cup of coffee, made and dispensed by members who volunteer. People sit in chairs lined up in the center hallway with coffee cups in hand, along with the breakfast they've brought from home. A buzz of lively conversation permeates the area.

Mercedes Tollinchi is a regular participant. "I've been coming three years now," she said. "It's lonely at home. You come here and you have a good time. You make new friends. And the coffee is very good."

Mann Center counselor Maria Bossard said she has seen the center make a profound impact on people's lives. In one recent case, a woman came to the facility in despair. "She had lost her mom and was depressed, and she had serious issues with weight," Bossard said. "I showed her around and introduced her to other seniors. She started attending and volunteering in a lot of activities. She helped me type the center newsletter. She began singing in our choir. She volunteered to help organize and decorate for our parties. As time went on, she also ended up going to the gym and changing her eating habits."

The center can be a catalyst for that kind of change, Bossard points out. "This woman turned her life around. She became happier – and she became healthier," she said.

To find a center in your neighborhood, call the PCA Helpline at 215-765-9040, or visit www.pcaCares.org.

Some participants' names have been changed to protect their privacy.

Contact Marcia Z. Siegal at msiegal@pcaphl.org.

How to find the activities in this issue

A wide variety of activities and classes held at senior community centers and other venues throughout the city can be found in the "Events" section of Philadelphia Corporation for Aging's (PCA's) website, www.pcaCares.org. To search by type of activity, location or date, click on "Events" in the top navigation bar. Choose a general category, such as Exercise or Nutrition Education, under Basic Search; or, under Advanced Search, type in a more specific term, such as Zumba, yoga, tai chi, meditation or the name of the venue. You can also search within a date range.

Dance

- Folk dancing class at Center on the Hill, 8855 Germantown Ave.: Fridays, 1 - 2:30 p.m., except for scheduled breaks: \$7 per session at the door or \$60 for 10 classes. For more information, call Bill Wadlinger at 215-233-9399, email bill@beaverfolkdance.org, or go to www.phillydance.com and look under the Friday listings.

- www.philadelphiadance.org/class-es: A calendar of area dance classes.
- www.phillydance.com: A seven-day guide to folk, social and traditional dancing in and around Philadelphia,

including lessons, special events and festivals.

Martial arts

- Ba'z Tai Chi and Kung Fu Studio: Call 215-882-2804 or visit <http://ba ztaichi.com>.
- World Wide Martial Arts Association: Call 402-250-4618 or visit <http://wwmaa.org>.
- Philadelphia Aikido: Call 215-275-5727 or visit www.philadelphia-aikido.com.
- Daddis Mixed Martial Arts: Call 215-467-1008 or visit www.phillymma.com.

Meditation

- The Mindfulness Institute of the Jefferson-Myrna Brind Center of Integrative Medicine: Offers Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programs for the public and professionals, including a six-week course, "Mindfulness Tools for Daily Living for Seniors." For more information, call 215-955-1376, email mbsr@jefferson.edu or go to www.jefferson.edu/mindfulness.
- Smiling Heart Yoga: Yoga and mindfulness meditation training for individuals and organizations by Anita Grace Brown: www.smilingheartyyoga.org.



Mercy LIFE: Keeping Seniors Healthy and Independent

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The right match: Finding the dog for you

By Abbey J. Porter

Dog owners of any age will likely tell you that their pets make their lives better. Dogs can provide incentive to get out and walk, and there's nothing like coming home to a wagging tail to lift one's spirits.

Those sentiments are backed by research. A study published in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society demonstrated that independently living seniors with pets tend to have better physical health than those who don't. Study results also suggested that pets can have positive effects on mental well-being.

"Owning a dog can be a great way to meet other people, get exercise and become involved in activities that are enriching for both dog and owner," said Gina DiNardo, vice president of the American Kennel Club (AKC), which promotes purebred dogs and responsible dog ownership. (For a list of activities to do with your dog, see next page.)

Choosing carefully

Many seniors can enjoy the benefits of canine companionship. But owning a dog is a big responsibility, and it's important that dog and owner be well-matched to help ensure a successful human-canine partnership. That means thinking ahead about the kind of dog that will suit your lifestyle and choosing your future companion carefully.

When it comes to deciding whether to get a dog – and what kind of dog to get – AKC recommends asking yourself the following questions:

- How active are you? How much exercise are you willing and able to give your dog?
- Where do you live? Are you on a farm or in a small city apartment?
- How big is your family? Do you live alone or are there other family members whose wishes need to be considered?
- How often do you travel?
- Do you have financial resources to care for a dog?
- If you get a dog, should you get a puppy or an adult?

"There are many different breeds suitable for seniors of all activity levels," DiNardo said. To pinpoint the best breed



Milestones file photo

Doing some homework before getting a dog will help to ensure the right match between canine and human.

for you, she suggests doing internet research, going to a dog show and consulting people who own dogs. "A senior may want a breed that does not have too high an energy level so he or she can provide adequate exercise for the dog and can spend time relaxing together," she said. While each person needs to assess his or her own "best fit," AKC recommends the following breeds for seniors:

- Toy Manchester terrier
- Chihuahua
- Yorkshire terrier
- Pomeranian
- Toy fox terrier
- Whippet
- Papillon
- Miniature dachshund

AKC also offers a breed selector tool at www.akc.org/find-a-match. Seniors interested in obtaining a purebred dog can visit marketplace.akc.org/puppies to find a responsible breeder.

An alternative avenue to dog ownership is adopting an animal from an organization like Philadelphia Animal Welfare Society (PAWS), which places nearly 400 dogs each year.

Matchmaking

"I think there are some misconceptions about animals in the shelter," said Allison Lamond, community outreach and volunteer coordinator for PAWS. "The assumption

• continued on next page

The dog for you

• continued from previous page

is that they must be broken in some way, which could not be further from the truth ... A lot of times, there's nothing wrong with the animal."

Lamond knows from personal experience that shelter dogs can make excellent pets. For proof, she need only look to her PAWS adoptees, Pinky – who is "super-snuggly and super-sweet" – and 16-year-old Emmy – "the most perfect dog I've ever met."

Potential adopters "should be realistic about what they're looking for," Lamond said. For example, she said, people who want a low-energy dog shouldn't choose a puppy. They should think about what their day is like, she said, including how many hours they're home.

Figuring out what kind of dog will match one's lifestyle is where the PAWS staff comes in. "Our staff are definitely considered matchmakers," Lamond said. "Ultimately, we want the dog and the person to be perfect for each other."

When picking out a dog, she said, "I think it's important for people to know where the animal came from." Adopters should be sure to ask about the history – especially the medical history – of any dog they consider taking home. Doing so allows them to make sure they're comfortable taking on any special needs the dog has and gives them a chance to discuss any concerns with the staff.

"The staff here is really passionate about what they do," Lamond said. She notes that PAWS staffers conduct behavior testing on the dogs and have a pretty good idea of what each animal's ideal home would be. "We absolutely want an animal to go home and stay in that home."

For more information on AKC, call 919-233-9767 or visit www.akc.org. For more information on PAWS, call 215-238-9901 or visit phillypaws.org.

Abbey J. Porter is editor of Milestones. Email her at ajporter@pcaphl.org.

Having fun with your dog

Owning a dog can be a great way to socialize, exercise and get involved in new activities. The American Kennel Club (AKC) suggests the following 10 actions you can take with your canine companion.

1. **Take your dog to visit friends and neighbors who are ill.** Nothing cheers up a person like the wag of a dog's tail.

2. **Go on trips: Dogs can add another element of fun to a vacation.** Check ahead for lodging that accepts dogs. If flying, ask about travel accommodations for your dog when you make your reservations.

3. **Enroll in an agility, obedience, rally or other performance training course.** (Information on these activities is available at www.akc.org.)

4. **Take daily walks.**

5. **Help your dog train to achieve his or her AKC Canine Good Citizen**

certification, designed to reward dogs that have good manners at home and in the community.

6. **Get involved in a social organization or club with other dog owners.**

7. **Keep your dog active and alert by giving him tasks to complete.** Teach him to fetch the paper, carry groceries in a pack or empty the dryer.

8. **Encourage breed behavior.** Find activities that will encourage your dog to fulfill his breed's purpose, such as herding, retrieving or tracking.

9. **Keep up with the latest dog news and information in your community.**

10. **Become active in the sport of purebred dogs.** Many seniors are involved in the 16,000 AKC dog events held each year in obedience, conformation and agility. The events offer opportunities to get involved, stay fit, meet new friends and just have fun!

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Comfort food

• continued from page 4

spoons flour with ¼ cup cold water until smooth. Stir flour mixture into boiling cooking liquid, stirring constantly 1 minute or until thickened.

Vegetarian chili

(Serves 4; serving size: 1½ cups)

Ingredients:

- 1 tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1 cup chopped yellow onion
- 1 cup chopped red bell pepper
- 2 tbsp. minced jalapeno pepper (optional)
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 can (28 oz.) sodium-free stewed tomatoes, crushed
- 1 can (15 oz.) black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 can (15 oz.) chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- ¼ cup tomato paste
- 1 tsp. sugar
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- 1 tsp. dried basil
- 1 tsp. chili powder
- ¼ tsp. black pepper
- Sour cream and shredded cheddar cheese (optional)

Directions:

Heat oil in large skillet over medium-high heat until hot. Add onion, bell pep-

Milestones file photo



This lighter version of stuffed shells uses reduced-fat cheese and chopped spinach to maintain the rich taste of this favored Italian dish while cutting down on fat and calories.

per, jalapeno pepper (if using) and garlic. Cook and stir 5 minutes or until vegetables are tender. Transfer to slow cooker.

Add remaining ingredients except sour cream and cheddar cheese; mix well. Cover; cook on low for 4 to 5 hours.

Garnish with sour cream and cheese, if desired.

Note: Jalapeno peppers can sting and irritate the skin, so wear rubber gloves when

handling peppers and do not touch your eyes.

Spinach and ricotta stuffed shells

(Serves 6; serving size: 3 shells)

Ingredients:

- 1 package (16 oz.) jumbo pasta shells

1 package (15 oz.) reduced-fat ricotta cheese

7 oz. frozen chopped spinach, thawed and patted dry

½ cup grated reduced-fat Parmesan cheese

1 egg, lightly beaten

1 clove garlic, minced

½ tsp. salt

1 jar (26 oz.) marinara sauce

½ cup (2 oz.) shredded reduced-fat mozzarella cheese

1 tsp. olive oil

Directions:

Cook pasta shells according to package directions until almost tender. Drain well; set aside. Stir together ricotta cheese, spinach, Parmesan cheese, egg, garlic and salt. Set aside.

Pour ¼ cup marinara sauce in bottom of slow cooker. Spoon 2 to 3 tablespoons ricotta mixture into 1 pasta shell and place in bottom of slow cooker. Repeat with enough additional shells to cover bottom of slow cooker. Top with another ¼ cup marinara sauce. Repeat with remaining pasta shells and filling. Top with any remaining marinara sauce and sprinkle with mozzarella cheese. Drizzle with oil.

Cover and cook on high for 3 to 4 hours or until mozzarella cheese is melted and sauce is hot and bubbly.

Source: *Crock-Pot The Original Slow Cooker: Comfort Food Diet Cookbook*

Healthy choices

• continued from page 4

The academy offers the following tips to make it easier to control your portion sizes:

- Eat from a plate, not a package, so you know how much you eat.
- Stop eating when you are satisfied, not full. If there's still food on your plate, save it for another time.
- Use a smaller plate, bowl or glass to help you eat and drink less.

- Skip the "super sizes" and value meals.
- Share a restaurant entrée with a friend – or eat just half and take home the rest.

Balancing calories

To achieve and maintain the best overall health, you need to balance the food you eat and liquid you drink with the calories you burn through activity. But exercise is not just for people who are trying to lose weight. According to the National Institute on Aging (NIA), the benefits of physical activity include maintaining or improving your mood, overall well-being, strength, balance, fitness and independence. Being active can

also reduce isolation and feelings of depression, as well as help to ward off or control chronic conditions like diabetes, heart disease and osteoporosis. NIA recommends that people age 65-plus be as physically active as their abilities and health will allow, with a goal of at least 150 minutes of physical activity each week. If that seems overwhelming, you can break it into small chunks. If you do two or three short sessions of exercise each day, you can reach that goal. But even if you can't, doing anything physical is better than doing nothing at all.

You don't have to spend a lot of mon-

ey joining a gym or hiring a personal trainer. Think about the physical activity that you enjoy and do more of it – such as walking, bicycling, gardening, housecleaning, swimming or dancing. Try to make time to do what you enjoy on most days of the week. And then increase how long you do it, or add another fun activity. For more exercise tips, go to NIA's physical activity website at go4life.nia.nih.gov.

Contact Alicia M. Colombo at acolombo@pcaphl.org

'Honeymoon'

• continued from page 10

well. Their only wedding gifts that day were a book of yellow trading stamps and an iron from her.

However, in the weeks to come, a set of beautiful china and a cut-glass punch bowl arrived as word of the marriage spread to uncles, aunts and cousins. Those items remain in the family today, but many of the other gifts they received were sold as the Depression wiped out savings and put several family members out of work, including the young groom.

Nonetheless, despite that rugged beginning to their marriage, my parents enjoyed many happy years together, and on their 60th wedding anniversary, my brother took them on a sentimental journey back to Elkton to relive their special day.

Their first stop was the Elkton train station to have a light lunch in the coffee shop. My brother mentioned their

anniversary to the waitress who served them, and she seemed very interested in their story. When they were ready to leave, she kept talking and seemed to want to detain them. She insisted that their lunch was a treat and finally said that she wanted them to wait. She had called the local newspaper with their story, and a reporter and photographer were on the way to learn more.

My father was flabbergasted, but the waitress explained that although they had had many 50th anniversary couples, she had never met a 60th.

When the newspaper people arrived, photos were taken and interviews conducted. My parents were given flowers and a tour of the city. Although many things had changed in Elkton over time, my parents loved every minute of their tour. Their only regret was that they had come by car and couldn't take the train home, as they had 60 years earlier.

Dorothy Stanaitis is a retired librarian and a freelance writer.

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Martial arts

• continued from page 1

which focuses on controlled, meditative movements, typically performed at a slow pace.

Arbitman, who holds a black belt in kung fu, notes that Chen's students do make contact with each other, but it's light. "It's different from the hard stuff you see in karate," he says. "We're not in there beating on each other. We don't need to wear protective gear."

He counts confidence as the No. 1 benefit he has reaped from his martial arts practice. "It's not like I'm going to walk into a bar and beat everybody up," he says. "But I do get a certain confidence from it" – the kind of confidence, he says, where he can walk around without being afraid. He has another kind of security as well: "I have confidence in my balance. That's important for a senior." Arbitman points to flexibility and leg strength as additional benefits.

"This is a practice people can continue doing regardless of how old they are," says Arbitman, who, like Chen, has taught martial arts classes specifically for older people. "Seniors of ordinary ability can learn martial arts, even if they're just starting in their 80s."

Tai chi, with its gentle movements, is especially well-suited for older students. "I think many martial artists find tai chi at the end of their careers," Arbitman says, "because they want to continue doing martial arts but can't continue doing the things they were doing that require all that muscular strength."

A lifelong practice

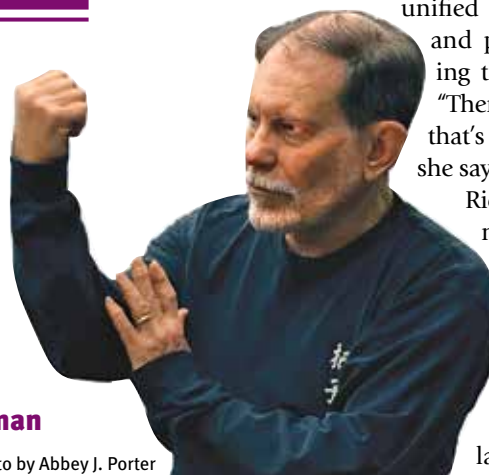
Arbitman is far from alone in his pursuits, says Michael Makoid, president of the nonprofit World Wide Martial Arts Association (formerly the United States Martial Arts Association) in Santa Fe, New Mexico. "I'm seeing more seniors," says Makoid, who travels the country teaching martial arts.

At 71, Makoid is a lifelong martial artist and a practitioner of judo, a Japanese art that emphasizes throwing or otherwise taking one's opponent to the ground, and multiple forms of jiu jitsu, a Japanese art that focuses on grappling, or ground fighting.

"This is a practice people can continue doing regardless of how old they are,"

— Steve Arbitman

Photo by Abbey J. Porter



Makoid does think that some of the "harder" martial arts – such as certain forms of karate, which rely a good deal on force – may be less appropriate for seniors than arts like judo or tai chi, or aikido, which aims to redirect the opponent's energy and uses throws, joint locks and evasions.

Cecelia Ricciotti would agree. The owner of Philadelphia Aikido at 3901 Conshohocken Ave. in Wynnefield Heights, she has taught aikido in the Philadelphia area since 1978. Ricciotti is, as far as she knows, the only female eighth-degree aikido black belt in the world.

"One of the great things about aikido is that you can practice into your old age," says Ricciotti, 71, who has half a dozen students in their 70s and more in their 60s.

For the most part, Ricciotti's practice remains unchanged by her advancing years – although, she says, "I certainly don't let people throw me around anymore like I did in my 60s."

Ricciotti reaps multiple benefits from her training. "It's wonderful to be able to keep your balance," she notes. "The things that start to go when you're older are your balance and flexibility. If you can keep those things from deteriorating, your quality of life is better." Her mantra: "Keep your body moving; keep it moving; keep it moving."

The veteran "aikidoka" also counts among the effects of her practice "the confidence to know that wherever you go, you can handle yourself. That's something that's hard to measure."

In addition, she says, the school draws people from all walks of life into a community whose members are

unified by learning things and physically challenging themselves together. "There's a community that's very, very strong," she says.

Ricciotti suspects many seniors may be hesitant to try martial arts. "I think older people are afraid," she says. "It's hard to be a beginner late in life and allow yourself to learn

something new. But, boy, if you can get past that and just embrace learning, you can do almost anything."

And she notes that aikido is a relatively safe martial art. "We have a really good safety record," she says, adding that she has practiced for more than 40 years without injury.

No regret

Despite some suggestions that older adults should avoid "harder" martial arts, one 53-year-old shows he is more than capable of battling it out in the sparring ring.

After Charlie Schill's brother Mike died of complications related to multiple sclerosis in 2013, Schill wasn't sure what to do with himself. He had reached the end of a long, difficult road: Not only had he cared for Mike for seven years, but he had lost his father in 2007 and his mother in 2010. Schill, who was then 50, figured he could feel sorry for himself, or he could do something.

"I was sitting around and just wanted to change my life," he recalls. So he signed up for classes at Daddis MMA, or Mixed Martial Arts, at 1931 Washington Ave. in South Philadelphia. "I've never regretted it. My life has changed in so many ways," he says, noting that he has lost more than 50 pounds. "It's so much fun to do, you don't even know that you're exercising."

What Schill does is Muay Thai, a full-contact combat sport that originated in Thailand. One of its signature techniques is a club-like kick with the shin. "You swing your leg like a bat," Schill explains. When sparring in Muay Thai, he says, one has to be prepared to deal with elbows, knees, kicks and punches. He has had his share of black and blue marks, but so far

no serious injuries.

When Schill signed up for the initial six months at Daddis, he didn't think he would make it to the first class. "But I kept going and going and going," he says. Now, you might say he's hooked. He participates in three Muay Thai classes a week, plus one boxing class and one yoga class. After an hour's practice, he says, "I feel so much better, and energized for the whole day."

The most challenging aspect for Schill is the cardiovascular warm-up that starts off Muay Thai sessions, which includes jumping rope, shadow boxing, stretching, and doing situps and pushups. "It's pretty intense," he says.

But the effort has paid off; Schill credits his martial arts practice with a mental and physical turnaround. "It just changes your whole mindset," he says. "You say to yourself there's nothing you can't do or try. It just affects your whole life."

He has become more physically active, even taking up jogging and running in some 5K races. "What I can do now and what I could do three years ago is just light years' difference," he says. "It's your whole mind, your body – it's everything. You go from 'no' to 'yes.'"

Schill insists that other seniors can adopt a similar practice – if they have the right attitude. "If you're willing to put the time in and the work, anybody can do it," he says. Technique is what matters, he says, not strength. "Technique beats out force all the time."

Starting a practice

For seniors considering starting a martial arts practice, Makoid of the World Wide Martial Arts Association recommends first consulting with a physician and getting the OK to exercise. Then, he says, prospective students should carefully scrutinize any school, or "dojo," they are considering – especially with the current rash of "Mc-Dojos" that has sprung up.

"Do some work to find out the quality of instruction at the dojo and their affiliation with national organizations," he says. For example, a legitimate judo school should be affiliated with USA Judo or one of its member organizations, such as the United States Judo Federation or the United States Judo Association. Get on the phone or on the web, he urges, and look at the school's credentials, which may or may not be legitimate. "You just have to do a little bit of

• continued on page 23

Don's Column

Handling life's many twists and turns



By Don Harrison

For most of my long life, I have seen one doctor once a year for a routine physical, but lately, I have had one doctor per inch.

And now, I have more. It seems I have had a stroke. So this column is taking a little longer to complete than normal.

It's not as bad as it could have been. No paralysis, no loss of speech – but a stroke, nonetheless. I'm housebound for the duration – however long that may last – totally depending on friends; neighbors; physical therapists; and most of all, my wife, whose life has been disrupted as much as mine.

It's the loss of independence that hurts the most. I got a taste of it at Bryn Mawr Rehab Hospital, where I received wonderful care from some great people (Hi, Rashid), but it was, sad to say, pretty restrictive.

Yet, no one knows better than I how less able I have become. As long as I can, however, I'll stay in touch with you, for

what it's worth.

Since state budget cuts forced PCA to turn to its own resources to produce Milestones, I've been "editor emeritus," rather than editor. And it's been fine.

The credit for Milestones' success since then belongs to Linda Riley, a PCA staff member who added Milestones to her duties – and her capable sidekicks, Alicia Colombo and Marcia Siegal. They maintained its professionalism – and it shows.

Linda is preparing to retire and is turning the Milestones reins over to Abbey Porter, a new addition to the PCA staff. Well done, Linda, and good luck to Abbey.

Time for the meds – see you next month.

Milestones Editor Emeritus Don Harrison served as deputy editor of the Daily News opinion pages and as an assistant managing editor and city editor of the Philadelphia Bulletin.

Martial arts

• continued from previous page

investigative work," he says, "to find out how your teacher is qualified, and from whom."

When a senior starts practicing, Makoid says, he or she should take it slowly to start and build up gradually. Also, he advises, "Do not do anything that injures you." A little muscle pain, on the other hand, is to be expected when doing activities you haven't done before.

But he believes the effort can pay off for seniors. Makoid recalls Donia, a student of his who, when her husband asked what she wanted for her 50th birthday, requested judo lessons. She studied with Makoid for 34 years and became a fourth-degree black belt be-

fore her death at 84. Then there was John, another judo student, who was still practicing at 87. "When he stood on the mat, he dropped 35 years," Makoid says. "It was amazing to see the transformation." Both students practiced until the time of their deaths, and as far as Makoid is concerned, they set a good example. "I don't see why you can't practice till you die," he says. "That's what I plan."

For information on the martial arts schools mentioned here, as well as finding classes offered at area senior community centers, see the list of resources on page 17.

Abbey J. Porter is editor of Milestones. Email her at ajporter@pcaphl.org.

The Milestones Crossword

First Americans

ACROSS

- 1 Snake
- 4 French revolutionist
- 9 Slant
- 13 Uncouth chap
- 14 Run away
- 15 Tolstoi heroine
- 16 Bell-shaped flower
- 18 Mine entrance
- 19 Zoo attraction
- 20 Young farm animal
- 22 ___ de France
- 23 Offend
- 26 ___ band: direct
- 28 Deceive
- 31 Lazy ones
- 34 Very long time
- 35 Wyoming range
- 37 Fairylike
- 38 Frees from
- 40 Ship's crane
- 42 Italian resort
- 43 Person from Pakistan
- 45 Madagascan monkey
- 47 Author Wallace
- 48 Frontier vehicles
- 50 Type of merchant
- 52 ___ oranges
- 54 Except

- 55 Varnish ingredient
- 57 Celebes ox
- 59 Onetime gold coin
- 63 In a series
- 65 Frontier hazard
- 68 Fenny tract
- 69 Suspicious
- 70 Building sections
- 71 Window ___
- 72 Sea eagles
- 73 Disloyal person

DOWN

- 1 Excellent
- 2 Fountain item
- 3 Solid figures
- 4 Chess pieces
- 5 High mountain
- 6 Stir up
- 7 Dismay
- 8 Abounded
- 9 Pasture sound
- 10 Method of marching
- 11 Indigo source
- 12 Fill to the limit
- 13 Infant garb
- 17 On a slant
- 21 Unadorned
- 24 Nourish

- 25 Deadly
- 27 Toy
- 28 Dewy
- 29 Grub for Geronimo
- 30 Eastern state capital
- 32 Duck
- 33 Weather outlook
- 34 Periods
- 36 City in southern France
- 39 Heroic tale
- 41 Band instrument
- 44 Russian river
- 46 Inky flier
- 49 Doddering
- 51 Shredder
- 53 Hermit, for one
- 55 Illuminator
- 56 Diva's forte
- 58 Arabian gulf
- 60 Festive
- 61 Lively tune
- 62 Sullivan and Meese
- 64 Tiny
- 66 Cholera
- 67 Roll-call responses

Solution

The solution for the crossword puzzle can be found on page 16.

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