



# Milestones

A Publication of Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA)

News and Possibilities for Seniors

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**NEXT MONTH:**  
**Health Care**

[ National Grandparents Day 2017 | Sunday, September 10 ]

## Grandfathers pass along traditions



Paola Noguerras

Patriarch John Groce expresses his affection for great-granddaughter Mali Groce, 2.

By Marcia Z. Siegal

Telling stories, sharing traditions, offering warmth and love – grandparents hold a unique place in the lives of their families. They are keepers of family history and ethnic heritage, are rich in life experience and often are passionate about passing on what they know.

John Groce and Dick Fong are grandfathers from different cultural backgrounds who shared with Milestones what being a grandparent means to them, how they help to perpetuate their cultural heritage within their families, and the role they and their grandchildren play in each others' lives.

### 'A mighty force'

John Groce never knew his grandfathers. "Both of them died before I was born," says the African-American grandfather of nine and great-grandfather of six. "I never had a role model, so being a grandfather meant on-the-job training."

He did, however, learn a lot from his maternal grandmother. Along with his mother and sister, Groce lived with her for several years and observed that a grandparent can be a mighty force. "My grandmother demanded respect," Groce says. "She played no games with anyone. Whatever she wanted, she verbalized."

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## Senior Centers

### Getting the scoop on senior centers

By Constance Garcia-Barrio

Call them reconnaissance missions. I didn't pack guns and knives like James Bond, but I did carry a sharp curiosity. I had heard conflicting rumors about senior community centers – I could expect little more than bingo and bologna, according to one story, but truckloads of activities, according to another – so I prepared to snoop by visiting three local centers this summer.

First I traveled to The Center at Journey's Way (JW) at 403 Rector St. in Roxborough. The sign at the

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Frank Burd

Stringing a bead during a class at The Center at Journey's Way is Priscilla Edwards.

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**Editor:** Abbey J. Porter  
215-765-9000, ext. 5080

**Advertising:** Joan Zaremba  
215-765-9000, ext. 5051

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## Health Brief

# Senior centers offer health programs

You may not think of a senior community center as a place to get and stay well, but it might be just what the doctor ordered. Senior centers offer a variety of health and wellness programs. Older adults can visit centers to participate in exercise and fitness activities, nutrition and cooking classes, blood pressure checks and other health screenings, and seminars on a variety of health-related topics.



Provided by PCA

### Common Threads

This is a type 2 diabetes self-management program for adults 60-plus. Participants learn to plan a healthy menu, prevent low blood sugar, and manage medication and receive a schedule of suggested physical activity. They also learn how to manage diabetes-related problems such as depression, glaucoma and foot sores.

### Healthy Steps for Older Adults

This comprehensive program helps adults 50-plus avoid falls. The single four-hour session includes a physical falls risk screening, referrals to health care providers, follow-up evaluations and a free 64-page take-home guide. Participants learn what hazards to look for around the house and what changes to make in their homes to reduce the risk of falling.



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In addition to each center's daily wellness programs, Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA) provides evidence-based health education programs developed with older adults' specific needs in mind. The following programs have been shown to be effective and are available, at no cost to seniors, at most of the 28 senior community centers and satellite meal sites throughout the city. Unless otherwise indicated, these programs are offered in two-and-a-half hour weekly sessions for six weeks.

### Help Yourself to Health

This in-depth chronic disease self-management program empowers adults 60-plus to manage health conditions including diabetes, asthma and high blood pressure. Participants learn a wealth of information and tools to take charge of their health conditions and any associated symptoms, such as pain, depression and physical limitations. Participants will be introduced to new ideas for condition management by others who are experiencing the same symptoms.

### Keep it Moving

This program focuses on helping adults 60-plus manage and ease chronic pain. Participants learn tips and strategies to take charge of pain, whether they have arthritis, fibromyalgia, lower back or neck ailments, or other conditions that cause discomfort, stiffness and/or inflammation.


### EnhanceFitness

This is an inclusive exercise program. Whether participants are always up and on the go or are in a wheelchair, the instructors are trained to ensure that people of all fitness levels can take part. Each fun-filled class is offered twice a week for an hour. The movements focus on cardiovascular exercise, strength training, balance and flexibility – key components older adults need to maintain health and function as they age.

### Walk with Ease

This program is designed to reduce the pain associated with arthritis. The program is offered twice a week, and each class is presented in two parts: an educational workshop that covers topics such as pain management, how to set achievable goals, exercise and nutrition; and a group walking segment that takes place outdoors. Participants are encouraged to walk farther with each class and to complete the full six-weeks.

\* \* \*

For more information about these and other health programs available to seniors, contact your local senior center. To find a center in your neighborhood, call the PCA Helpline at 215-765-9040 or go to [pcaCares.org](http://pcaCares.org) and click on "Services for Seniors," then "Senior Centers." 

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## Senior Centers

# Senior community centers are portals to activities, education and wellness

By Alicia M. Colombo

Adults 60 or older will find a warm welcome at the senior community centers and satellite meal sites located in neighborhoods throughout Philadelphia. Senior centers provide vital services, from serving meals to providing help with transportation, along with a range of recreational and education activities. Their group trips and programs, which cater to a variety of interests and hobbies, make senior centers social hubs for older adults. Individual centers' offerings vary, but many include classes on computer use, art, music, dance and other exercise, along with social, volunteer and cultural activities.

"Social engagement is so important for each of us as we grow older. Staying active and connecting with others has both cognitive benefits and physical health benefits," said Mary Catherine Dabrowski, senior center



supervisor at Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA), which funds 28 senior community centers and satellite meal sites in Philadelphia. "Everything you do in a senior community center keeps you active and engaged."

Baby boomers and other younger seniors tend to feel that they are "not old enough" to attend a senior community center, Dabrowski said, but this could not be further from the truth. "There are benefits for people of all ages," she said. "The multi-generational experience in a center actually inspires people to look forward to the years ahead and to aging well."

Many senior centers serve as extensions of the neighborhoods where they are located. They are places where seniors can meet and mingle with like-minded cohorts. "As we grow older, we encounter many losses in our lives. Belonging to a group in which others have gone through similar losses and can



Paola Nogueiras

**St. Anne's Senior Center member Barbara Seuss looks on as student Layla Jama Cohen decorates a wooden mosaic tile as part of an intergenerational art project.**

support you through difficulty is priceless," Dabrowski said. "Relationships at senior community centers are often built around shared experiences. Friendships of all types form in a senior center."

The stories that follow focus on just two Philadelphia senior community centers.

### At home in Chinatown

On Lok Social Service Center for Seniors, located at 213 N. 10th St. in the heart of Philadelphia's Chinatown district, is a small building with few staff members that has become a second home for seniors from throughout the city. The center draws on the artistic and cultural interests of Asian seniors, offering programs such as Chinese music, line and social dance; English and Chinese language classes; exercise with a cultural twist, including tai chi and qi qong; and Chinese brush-painting classes. The center also connects seniors with local and citywide resources.

"On Lok helps seniors in the community to live healthy and satisfying lives," said Echo Chung, center director. "The most important general service the center provides is that of language translation between English and Chinese, in both Mandarin and Cantonese."

Linkage to vital community resources is especially important for seniors who are low-income or have mobility issues. The center's staff, along with some of its members, help

seniors apply for various benefits, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) and the state property tax/rent rebate. "We help them fill out application forms that are in English or which they may have trouble understanding," Chung said.

Centers are more than the buildings that house them – they are like family. Christine "Wing" Fung, 73, has been a member of On Lok for 10 years and travels by train from Huntingdon Valley in the Far Northeast several times a week to participate in On Lok activities. She started off teaching English classes at the center but was so drawn in by the atmosphere that she became a member. "After I retired, I stayed to help out in the office so I could help seniors apply for benefits," Fung said. "A lot of the members don't speak English, so I really have to help them fill out the forms."

Many of the center's members emigrated from China and now live in Philadelphia's diverse Asian neighborhoods, including Chinatown, the Northeast and South Philadelphia. "We all come because we can speak Chinese and feel at home here," said Fung, who was born in Hong Kong and moved to Philadelphia in 1969. "When we all retired, we wanted to do something with the community."

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## Senior Centers

# Campira class: Members connect while exercising mind and body

By Linda L. Riley

Carmen Perez has short-cropped white hair, and she had a big smile for everyone when she arrived at Norris Square Senior Community Center on a recent Monday morning wearing a red shirt with "CAMPIRA: Camina Y Respira" on the back. True to her shirt, she was there for the campira class, which she said she likes "because it makes me stronger in the morning."

"Campira" comes from the Spanish words "camina" – walk – and "respira" – breathe. The practice, which originated in Puerto Rico, covers a full range of mind and body exercises, combining elements of aerobics, yoga and meditation.

"A lot of people do exercises for the arms and body – this is for every part of you," said Bethzaida Butler-Lopez, who leads the class and is the director of the center, located in North Philadelphia.

Norris Square's members are primarily Spanish-speaking and come from many nations, including Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. Class was conducted – and participants spoke – in Spanish, with Butler-Lopez translating for this reporter's benefit.

Participant Andrea Lopez said that for her, "the best part is meditation, because I learn how to control my sadness. I can release my mind – my mind just goes."

Perez and Lopez were among a dozen women between ages 60 and 80 taking part in the class. Butler-Lopez switched on a recording of lively Latin music and led the women – strutting, stretching, swinging their arms, and counting each set from "uno, dos, tres, quatro" to a loud shout of "diez!" when they reached 10 repetitions.

After about 15 minutes, Butler-Lopez cranked up the sound and the group formed a line, snaking out of the classroom, into and around the adjacent lunchroom, back in and around again – 10 times. A few Pokeno players stood up from their board game and joined in the impromptu parade, stepping along in time to the beat, some waving their hands over their heads, others clapping, everyone smiling. After a few circuits, some people dropped out and began filling plastic



Linda L. Riley

**A member of the campira class at the Norris Square Senior Community Center performs a stretch.**

cups with ice water from a pitcher at the front of the classroom. One was Marta Martell, who was dressed in a festive pink and white skirt, white blouse and brown jacket. She sat, swinging her feet exuberantly, continuing to keep time with the beat.

After the women had taken their seats, Butler-Lopez led them in a series of seated yoga stretches. At one point, they clamored for Martell to show off her flexibility, and she obliged, kicking one leg high in the air like a seated can-can dancer, to cheers and applause.

Then Butler-Lopez called out, "Levántate" – stand up – and participants stood and faced the walls, stretching their arms up as far as they could. After they'd sat again, she had them tap, tap, tap gently on their faces – "stress points," she explained – forehead, sinuses, above the lip, on the chin.

Finally, the women sat, hands palm-down on their thighs, feet flat on the floor, for meditation guided by a recording of a man speaking calmly and quietly in Spanish. During the meditation, Rosa Pagàn, who up till then had participated cheerfully and enthusiastically,

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## Critic's Corner

# Film: 'Never Again' is a 'romantic comedy for grownups'



By M. L. Polak

Eric Schaeffer's classic 2001 film, "Never Again," is a prime example of a favorite movie genre of mine, what I call the "geezer rom-com." Imagine an earthy midlife boy-meets-girl romantic comedy for grownups – or, if you will, geezers – wherein two adults over 50 have sworn off falling in love again "forever."

The late Jill Clayburgh plays Grace, a newly empty-nested mom whose daughter has just left for college. Grace is lovely but has been inadvertently celibate for more than a decade, so she lets her friends browbeat her into try-

ing to meet men again. We suffer along with her as she endures the obligatory awfulness of an internet blind date. Quelle horreur!

Jeffrey Tambor, still cerebrally hunky at the time of this film, plays Christopher, an exterminator by day, jazz pianist by night.

Naturally, since Grace and Christopher meet by chance at a gay bar to hilarious and often disastrous consequences, what then transpires is an outrageous carnival of multiple mutual misunderstandings. Christopher mistakes Grace for a transsexual; Grace assumes Christopher is gay or possibly bisexual. In actuality, Christopher is at a gay bar because

he's wondering if he really might be gay, since he keeps dating totally inappropriate women 20 years his junior and suddenly finds himself detached and unable to, um, perform.

It takes a while before they – and we – realize they're both incurable heterosexuals and thoroughly out of their element.

Because of their shared sense of dating doom, each affirms "never again" when it comes to actual romance. Despite doing so, Grace and Christopher begin a wacky and wild sexual relationship in earnest, amped up by Christopher's outrageously outspoken mom and prophetic best friend, a moving

violation involving a galloping white horse, a knight of indeterminate gender, and a creaky suit of armor. Fortunately for Grace and Christopher – and us – their dogged efforts to banish mutual tenderness fail. The result, if you suspend all judgments of taste, decency and propriety and just let yourself be carried along, is a film that may overcome you with laughter.

*M.L. Polak's writing has appeared in The New York Times, The Philadelphia Inquirer, the Washington Post, The Philadelphia Daily News, Andy Warhol's Interview and elsewhere.*

## THROUGH THE LENS: A LOOK AT SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES



Linda L. Riley

Paola Nogueras

Linda L. Riley

Linda L. Riley

Frank Burd

Frank Burd

Paola Nogueras

**Top row, from left:** Rosa Pagàn exercises during the campira class at Norris Square Senior Community Center; Janet Bond, a member of St. Anne's Senior Center, enjoys coloring with student Erich Bitler as part of an intergenerational art project at the center; Marta Martell stretches her arms for a campira exercise; and toes tap to lively music during campira.

**Bottom row, from left:** Beading is among the classes taught at The Center at Journey's Way; Dee Easley poses with knitted crafts at the Center at Journey's Way; and, from left, Nicole Bagniewska, Helena Serwacki, Layla Jama Cohen and Barbara Seuss pose with their artwork at St. Anne's Senior Center.

[ National Grandparents Day 2017 | Sunday, September 10 ]

## A grandmother's grace, resilience

By Abbey J. Porter

When I joined Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA) in November, the world of aging services was new to me. I did, however, have some insight into what it can mean to grow elderly – and a model of how one can do so with grace and resilience.

My grandmother, Mary Jane Fenton – “Yangee,” to me – turned 100 in January. Her twinkling eyes and ready smile belie her years and the many challenges she has overcome, as well as those she now faces.

When I talked with my grandmother shortly before her landmark birthday, Yangee herself seemed barely able to conceive of the occasion. “It’s rather unbelievable,” she said. And despite the difficulties that have come with advanced age, she displayed her typically positive attitude: “I offer thanks to God to have seen me through thus far in life. And I give thanks for the good things that have happened to me ... I think on the whole I’ve been very fortunate.”

My grandmother’s centennial celebration included a reception at ManorCare Health Services, the nursing home where she has lived for the past year and a half, in my hometown of Jersey Shore, a small community in North-central Pennsylvania.

Yangee has a history with ManorCare: Thirty-seven years ago, when the facility was called Leader Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, she was its head administrator. A few people she hired still work there; now, they help to care for her – bringing meals and medications, putting in her hearing aids, escorting her to activities.

Yangee’s time as a nursing home administrator capped off a long career in nursing. Her journey into that profession began in Philadelphia, not far from PCA. Recently, Yangee talked with me about that journey and the highs and lows of her first 100 years.

### The big city

My grandmother spent three years in nurses’ training at the Hospital of the Protestant



Beverly J. Porter

**Centenarian Mary Jane Fenton sets an example of growing older with grace for granddaughter Abbey J. Porter.**

Episcopal Church in Philadelphia (now Temple University Hospital – Episcopal Campus) at Front Street and Lehigh Avenue, in Kensington. The locale was a far cry from the small coal-region town of Winton in Northeast Pennsylvania, where she had grown up.

Born Mary Jane Washburn, she was one of five children of a coal miner and a homemaker. Her childhood pastimes included playing with her pet pig and picking huckleberries to sell for 10 cents a quart.

Episcopal Hospital kept her busy with both nursing and coursework, but on days off, she remembers, she and fellow students took the El into the city. “Of course, we didn’t have any money to spend, but we just enjoyed being in a big city and going to some of the stores, just to see what they were like,” she said. Those stores included Gimbels, Strawbridge & Clothier, and Wanamaker’s.

Yangee chose Episcopal for her training partly because of its religious identity. She had been raised Episcopalian; her father had helped to build a little church in Winton. Her faith would continue to play a central role throughout her life.

For my grandmother, becoming a nurse was natural. “I believe I had that in my mind from early adulthood,” she mused. “I like helping to take care of people.” At the time, only a quarter of women worked, and occupational options for young females were limited. The choice “was principally learning to

be a teacher or a nurse, and I chose nursing,” she said.

Her training took place during the Great Depression. Her older sister, Florence, helped to buy her books and uniforms with money she earned from housekeeping. Yangee doesn’t remember paying tuition; the hospital may have traded admission for nursing work.

Shortly after graduating as a registered nurse in 1938, she was hired at the former Presbyterian Hospital (now Penn Presbyterian Medical Center) in University City. She spent much of her time in the maternity ward’s newborn section, where she fed, bathed and otherwise cared for her charges. In her free time, she sometimes rode horseback in Fairmount Park.

### Making her way

In 1939, Yangee left Philadelphia for St. Albans, West Virginia – and marriage to the Rev. Arthur Kirkby Fenton Jr., an Episcopalian priest. She became a school nurse and drove from one rural school to another in her black Dodge. Sometimes she had to get out and walk “quite a distance” to reach a school when there was no road.

Eventually, she left school nursing to work as a private duty nurse in hospitals and private homes. While the pay was poor, the work was rewarding.

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## In Season

### Grape expectations: Low-sugar jelly is easy to make

Pennsylvania vineyards are home to more than two dozen grape varieties that flourish in the state's diverse climate and soil conditions. Many of the grape varieties harvested during the growing season of September and October, including merlot and chardonnay, are used to make wine. But two of the most popular varieties, Niagara and Concord, are great for making jelly. Here's an easy recipe that you can make yourself that uses half the sugar of a traditional jelly recipe.

#### Grape Jelly

(Makes about seven 1-cup jars; serving size: 1 tbsp.)

#### Ingredients:

5½ cups prepared juice (made from about 5 lbs. fully ripe Concord grapes)  
2 cups water  
3½ cups sugar, measured into separate bowl, divided  
1 box pectin for low-sugar recipes  
½ tsp. butter or margarine  
Glass mason jars with screw-on lids

#### Directions:

To sterilize the jars and lids, wash in hot, soapy water and rinse with warm water. Pour boiling water over flat lids in an unheated saucepan. Let stand in hot water until ready to use. Drain jars well before filling.

Stem grapes and crush thoroughly, one layer at a time. Place in large saucepan; add water. Bring to boil. Reduce heat to low; cover and simmer 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Place 3 layers of damp cheesecloth or a jelly bag in large bowl. Pour prepared fruit into



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cheesecloth. Tie cheesecloth closed; hang and let drip into bowl until dripping stops. Press gently. Measure exactly 5½ cups prepared juice into 6- or 8-quart saucepot. (If necessary, add up to a half-cup water to reach 5½ cups.)

Mix ¼ cup of sugar and the pectin in small bowl. Add to juice in saucepot; mix well. Add butter to reduce foaming. Bring mixture to a rolling boil on high heat, stirring constantly. Stir in remaining 3¼ cups sugar. Return to rolling boil and boil exactly 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Skim off any foam with metal spoon.

Ladle immediately into prepared jars, filling to within ¼ inch of tops. Wipe jar rims and threads. Cover with two-piece lids. Screw bands tightly. Place jars on elevated rack in canner machine or in a large, deep saucepot, on a wire rack. (Water must cover jars by 1-2 inches. Add boiling water, if necessary.) Cover; bring water to gentle boil. Process 5 minutes. Remove jars and place upright on a towel to cool completely. After jars cool, check seals by pressing middles of lids with finger. (If lids spring back, lids are not sealed, and refrigeration is necessary.)

#### Notes:

Pectin is a natural carbohydrate found in berries, apples and other fruit that has gelling properties similar to gelatin. Pectin is sold as a light-colored powder. Pectin brand names include Certo and Sure-Jell – and is used to make jams, jellies, fillings, juices, drinks and baked goods.

Source: HGTV.com



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## Embracing my identity as an older person

By M.L. Polak

One day I woke up and was old. It was nothing planned; it just happened. I lost my looks, such as they were. How does someone suddenly go from resembling Chita Rivera in her youth to looking like Newt Gingrich in her 60s, and a very elderly Newt Gingrich at that?

Not only that, I began noticing that older men looked more like women, and vice versa. Men's skin grew soft and smooth. Women's faces grew stronger and more square. And everyone, men and women, began to resemble their dogs more, especially the jowly ones.

What would the evolutionary logic to that be anyway? Beats me.

As for my friends, half of them passed away, or in the case of animals, "Went to the Rainbow Bridge," Lord rest their souls. The other half moved away to kinder, gentler places easier on the eyes – and pocketbook. Places like anarchic Vermont, hippiesque West Virginia, cowboyesque New Mexico and sunny California – truly lovely places where you needed a car, or you were stuck.

Well, I waited and watched while my friends moved once, twice, and even a third time, seeking that perfect Golden Age Paradise, wherever it would be. While I stayed put in dowdy old Philadelphia, so-called "Cradle of Liberty," unable to make up my mind where to go.

But here's the funny thing. While I was figuring out what to do next, Philly became amazingly hip under a high-tech geek mayor, and suddenly it was a destination city in its own right. Yoga on downtown sidewalks! Clever pop-up shops and gardens everywhere, even around the corner from my instantaneously trendy Center City townhouse. Some actually called it Manhattan's Sixth Borough, though to me that was rank over-praise.

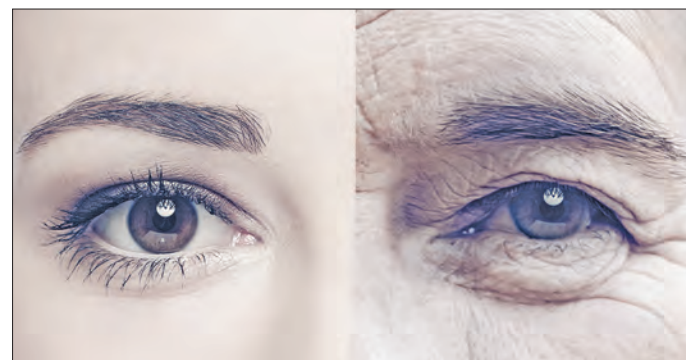
So, it wasn't like I was marooned in an awful place anymore. Not really awful. But the folks I still knew here were acquaintances more than friends. New millionaires and the like, while I'm a leftover Marxist. Meanwhile, I began to discover, to my dismay, that being older means that instead of discussing heady stuff like conceptual art, or was David Foster Wallace visionary or insane or an insane vi-

sionary, the people I still know here will say things in that whiny-spinster-addressing-their-cat way of theirs, something like, "How are you do-ing?" or "How do you feeeee-el?" and "Did you go out-side to-day?"

Dude! I'm old, but having those kinds of conversations makes me crazy. Despite being older, I've discovered your mind is still your mind. At least for the stuff you remember. I mean, certain things that you've been thinking your whole life, well, you're still thinking them. For example, I still think certain Hollywood guys are really cute, no matter how ridiculous that may be. Guys like Jude Law or Robert Downey Jr., and here I am supposedly mature, if not verging on decrepitude.

That still leaves room for Corey Stoll. (Bald is beautiful!)

But I do have a sense of dignity and proportion. For example: Once, years ago, I saw



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Mel Gibson running up Spruce Street in downtown Philly, shortishly handsome, live and likely late for a dinner date, blue eyes sparkling, and I actually said "Hi." Well, that was then.

These days, chastened into knowing my proverbial place, I'd never for a minute say "Hi" to some Hollywood hunk if I saw him on the street because a) it would be silly, and b) he'd all too likely turn, nod and say, "Have a great day, Grandma." Yikes!

M.L. Polak's writing has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, the *Washington Post*, *The Philadelphia Daily News*, *Andy Warhol's Interview* and elsewhere.

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# September 2017

## National Senior Center Month

## Healthy Aging Month

### SUNDAY

**3**  
**Blue Corn Organic & Green Festival.** 12-4 p.m. Great Plaza at Penn's Landing. 215-922-2FUN.

**GRANDPARENTS DAY** **10**  
**Mexican Independence Day.** 2-8 p.m. Great Plaza at Penn's Landing. 215-922-2FUN.  
**Verdi's "Rigoletto."** Presented by Amici Opera Company. 2:30 p.m. Dock Woods. 215-224-0257. (Also Sept. 13: Dinner & Opera at Franco & Luigi's, 6 p.m. Dinner reservations: 215-755-8903) \$

**17**  
**Brazilian Day Philadelphia.** 1-7 p.m. Great Plaza at Penn's Landing. 215-922-2FUN.  
**Jazz Vespers.** Live music with spiritual readings & meditation. 5 p.m. Lutheran Church of the Holy Communion. 215-567-3668.

**24**  
**Fall Festival.** Activities include live music, beer garden, apple cider pressing, pumpkin carving and more. 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Spruce Street Harbor Park. 215-922-2FUN.

### MONDAY

**LABOR DAY** **4**  


**PATRIOT DAY** **11**  
**Bed Bug Basics.** Workshop to discuss what these pests are, why they are such a big problem, and do's/don'ts. 5:30-7 p.m. The Penn State Center. 215-474-2200, ext. 8, option 2.

**NATIONAL HIV/AIDS AND AGING AWARENESS DAY** **18**  
**Breast Cancer Support Group.** 1 p.m. Center in the Park. Register: 215-848-7722.

**25**  
**African-American Journeys.** 1 p.m. Center in the Park. 215-848-7722.

### TUESDAY

**5**  
**Discussion Groups.** Ageless Grace with Juan @ 10 a.m. The Next Chapter @ 1-2:30 p.m. Center in the Park. Register: 215-848-7722. (Tuesdays)

**12**  
**Fraud Prevention Workshop.** Presentation by Phila. Credit Union. 10 a.m. Center in the Park. Register: 215-848-7722.  
**Vocal Recital.** Bass baritone Ronald Campbell with piano accompaniment. 1 p.m. PSC - Avenue of the Arts. 215-546-5879.

**19**  
**Harvest Health: Chronic Disease Self-Management Program.** Helps seniors 60+ manage high blood pressure, kidney disease & other conditions. 9 a.m. Center in the Park. 215-848-7722. (Continues Tuesdays through Oct. 24)  
**September Birthday Party.** Music by vocalist Gary Faille. 11:45 a.m. KleinLife: Northeast Phila. 215-698-7300.

**26**  
**Mahjong.** 1-3 p.m. Center in the Park. 215-848-7722. (Also Sept. 12)

### WEDNESDAY

**6**  
**Farmers' Market with Greensgrow Farms.** Fresh, local produce. Accepts SFMNP produce vouchers, cash & EBT cards. 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. KleinLife: Northeast Phila. 215-698-7300. (Also Sept. 13, 20 & 27) \$  
**Rubber Stamping Club & Card Making Class.** 2:30-4:30 p.m. Center in the Park. 215-848-7722. \$

**13**  
**Stroke Education.** Class to guide patients & families through the recovery process with information about nutrition, medication & lifestyle changes. 2-3:30 p.m. Mercy Fitzgerald Hospital, Sister Marie Lenahan Wellness Center. 215-748-9592.

**ROSH HASHANAH (begins at sundown)** **20**  
**Blood Pressure Screening.** 9:30-11 a.m. Center in the Park. 215-848-7722.  
**Granny Peace Brigade Philadelphia Observes International Day of Peace.** March, ceremony, performances & keynote. 10:30 a.m. Porch, 30th St. Station. 215-870-3886.

**27**  
**Parks on Tap.** Philly's roving beer garden, includes wine, games, food & entertainment. 5-10 p.m. Powers Park. 215-422-3011, parksonatp.com. (Through Oct. 1. Hours: Wed. & Thurs., 5-1 p.m.; Fri. & Sat., 1-11 p.m.; Sun., 12-10 p.m.)

### THURSDAY

**7**  
**Get to Know American Government.** 10:45 a.m. Journey's Way. 215-487-1750. (Continues Sept. 14 & 21)  
**Legal Services Presentation.** Medicaid Waivers, Medicare & property taxes. 11 a.m. PSC - Allegheny. 267-286-1455.  
**Stroke Education Class.** 2 p.m. Mercy Phila. Hospital. 215-748-9592.

**14**  
**Rosh Hashanah Luncheon.** Rabbi-led service, festive lunch, & High Holiday celebration led by Bob Cisik & cantor Jill Mann. 10 a.m. to 1:45 p.m. KleinLife: Northeast Phila. 215-698-7300. \$

**21**  
**Diabetes Self-Management Program.** 9:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. Center in the Park. 215-848-7722. (Continues Thursdays through Oct. 26)  
**7th Annual Sing-Along for Peace.** Granny Peace Brigade & High Taft-Morales of the Phila. Ethical Society observe International Day of Peace. 6 p.m. Southwest corner, Rittenhouse Square. 215-870-3886, gpbp03@gmail.com.

**28**  
**Yom Kippur Yizkor Program.** Reflect on the past year & honor loved ones lost. Program led by Rabbi Berlinger. 10-11:40 a.m. KleinLife: Northeast Phila. 215-698-7300.

### FRIDAY

**1**  
**Bariatric Surgery Information Session.** Options for when your weight threatens your health & quality of life. 8-9:30 a.m. Nazareth Hospital, Marian B Conference Room. Register: 855-537-7968.

**8**  
**CareerLink Workshop: Build Your Job Skills, Find a Career!** Meet with a certified PA CareerLink Navigator to develop a resumé, search for jobs, learn about job skills training & connect directly with PA CareerLink resources. 11 a.m. Blanche A. Nixon/Cobbs Creek Library. Register: 215-686-7502.

**15**  
**Denim & Diamond Cabaret.** Food & line dancing. 11 a.m. St. Charles Senior Center. 215-790-9530. \$  
**Hot Summer Nights Outdoor Concert: City Rhythm Orchestra.** 7 p.m. NE Older Adult Center. 215-685-0576.  
**Senior Center Month Open House.** Class demos & raffles. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Center in the Park. 215-848-7722.

**AUTUMN BEGINS** **22**  
**Meet State Rep Kevin Boyle.** Learn about resources for seniors & get free SEPTA senior pass (must be 65, have photo ID or birth certificate). 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. NE Regional Library. 215-685-0522.  
**Latin Dance Party Featuring Trio Renacer.** 7 p.m. Northeast Older Adult Center. 215-685-0576. \$

**YOM KIPPUR (begins at sundown)** **29**  
**CareerLink Workshop: Build Your Job Skills, Find a Career!** Meet with a certified PA CareerLink Navigator to develop a resumé, search for jobs, learn about job skills training & connect directly with PA CareerLink resources. 11 a.m. Lucien E. Blackwell West Phila. Regional Library. Register: 215-686-7502.

### SATURDAY

**2**  
**Art Star Pop-Up Market.** 12-5 p.m. Spruce Street Harbor Park. Curated arts & crafts vendors, beer/food vendors, games, hammocks, live entertainment & more. 215-922-2FUN. (Saturdays through Sept. 30)

**9**  
**Philadelphia Honey Festival.** 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wyck Historic House, Garden & Farm. 215-848-1690, phillyhoneyfest.com. (Also Sept. 7, 5-9 p.m., Glen Foerd on the Delaware & Sept. 10, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Bartram's Garden)

**16**  
**Fall Flea Market.** 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Hayes Manor Retirement Residence. 215-473-1552.  
**Self-Care for the Caregiver Workshop & Lunch.** St. John Neumann Adult Day Services. 11:30 a.m. 215-698-5656.  
**Showcase of the Arts.** Lunch, raffles & vendors. 12 p.m. Older Adult Sunshine Center. 215-472-6188. \$

**23**  
**Kinship Care Conference.** Grandparents raising children. 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. West Phila. High School. 215-875-4955.  
**Fall Into Wellness Health Fair.** 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Chestnut Hill Friends Meeting. 215-919-0023. \$  
**Philadelphia Walking Tour.** Highlights 100+ sites. 8 a.m.-8 p.m. 267-225-5780. \$

**30**  
**Women's Wellness Workshop Series: Mental Health.** Seminars on health & lifestyle issues affecting African & Caribbean immigrant women. All are welcome. 5:30-7 p.m. African Cultural Alliance of North America (ACANA). 215-729-8225.

## 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.

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# Widows share grief and strength through support group

By Sally Friedman

"Please don't look for a group of sad women," warned Susan Gross, leader of the W Connection, a group for widows, as she gave directions to the group's meeting room at Temple Rodeph Shalom on North Broad Street. "Just follow the sound of laughter!"

Gross was right.

Any outsider walking into the room that night and expecting solemnity might have been startled. Around a large table sat more than a dozen women passing around snacks, clearly delighted to be together.

But that's not to say that the W Connection is frivolous or unfocused. Its goal is to provide a safe and warm haven, both for women new to widowhood and to those already years into the experience. And that became clear as one of the group's monthly sessions got underway.

## Hard lessons

For Gross, a local founder of what has become a growing national network, the group gave her footing early in her own widowhood and has become her passion. The retired Philadelphia teacher, who married her teen sweetheart and expected to grow old with him, has had her own hard lessons in what it can mean to become a widow.

"I was absolutely overwhelmed and immobilized," she recalls. "My husband had serious health problems, but somehow, he always managed to overcome them. And then along came 2003, the time he didn't. He was only 62 years old."

Gross found herself totally blindsided. Alan had been her first and only love. What would become of her?

That is the primary question that draws women to the W Connection, which was founded in New York City by two women who had suddenly become widows and wanted to help others navigate the life-altering experience. At the same time, Rodeph Shalom Synagogue saw the need for an ongoing and vibrant group for widows, one that would continue for as long as it served a need.

Gross brought the local version of the W Connection to the synagogue in 2010 and has led the group since then.

Catherine Fischer, director of community engagement for the historic synagogue, was involved early in the project and helped foster it. She recognized in Gross the natural



Paola Noguerras

**Author Susan Gross addresses the W Connection widows' support group.**

ability to lead and, in Fisher's words, "take the ball and run with it."

"Even in a welcoming place like a synagogue or church, widows can be marginalized," Fisher says. "A group like this one can be enormously empowering in helping them rebuild their lives."

At their recent meeting at Rodeph Shalom, several women did their own recalling of how the W Connection has nurtured and, yes, empowered them.

## Learning to cope

"Join hands," Susan Gross said, and the women around the table did so as she recited a non-denominational prayer. Then she checked in with each woman, asking the simple question, "How do you feel different?" And that meant for better or for worse. Some women were doing well; some were troubled. But just sharing how they were doing seemed to help as they graded their status from 1 to 10. "Everything's good right now," said one widow, who gave herself a 9. Another woman had written a haiku, which had been enormously satisfying. And another, a widow for only 11 months, was, she admitted, struggling. "But just coming here makes a wonderful difference," she said.

What happens around the table each month is more easily felt than explained. But as the women shared their journeys, several common threads emerged:

- Widowhood is tough at any stage of marriage.
- Widows learn quickly who will bolster them – and who will not.

- Women who have not learned to make their own way through financial issues may have the toughest time coping.
- Working women, in some cases, have the advantage of distraction.
- Dating is complicated. Remarriage is more so. But friendships with both women and men can be nourishing and rewarding.

While there is a free flow of personal experiences and ideas, meetings often have themes such as finances, children's needs, paperwork and fears.

## Dealing with loss

Each woman's story is, of course, unique.

Hillary Oser was 58 when her husband, David, died before her eyes of a massive heart attack. "I had expected that we would grow old together," she said. "His death at 62 was definitely not what I had planned."

But a week after her husband died, Oser was back at work as an occupational therapist. "I had one daughter in college and one who had just returned from Israel, and I knew I had to be strong for them," she said. "So I would see a patient, and then cry in the car. Work was my saving grace."

Oser had one other advantage: She knew how to handle her finances. "No one is going to do things for you unless you ask, and maybe not even then," she said. "Self-reliance is my life's motto."

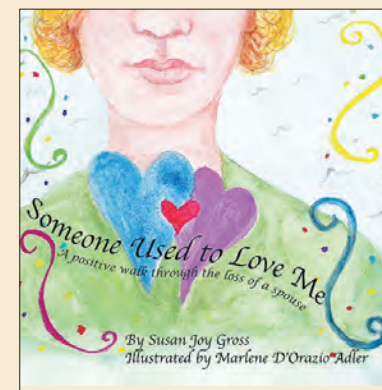
Mary Oehler, whose husband died in 2013, found that without him, in her words, her world "had gone silent."

"I so miss his voice," she said. "He was my teacher, my newscaster, my guide." But Oehler also realizes that this loss may lead her to growth, a concept she has learned, she explained, through the W Connection. As much as she has mourned her husband, Oehler also seeks greater competence, confidence, independence and growth. But she never forgets that those things come at a high cost.

For Bebe Netter Schwartz, life will never be the same. But that doesn't mean it won't be satisfying and even wonderful.

Schwartz's husband, Stacey, a hard-driving lawyer, died suddenly of a heart attack just after her beloved father died of the same cause. "I lost the two most important men in my life in a matter of a couple of weeks," she said. "Who can be ready for that?"

• continued on page 22



## Book chronicles widow's experience

Almost immediately after her husband died, Susan Gross thought about writing a book from her new, widow's perspective. But that didn't happen until years later, in 2015, when the book that had lived in her came to be in the form of "Someone Used to Love Me."

"It was definitely like a birth," she says.

Written in the style of Dr. Seuss and illustrated by friend and gifted artist Marlene D'Orazio Adler, the book is a love story of sorts, told in Seussian rhyme and dedicated to Gross' children and grandchildren — and her late husband, Alan. The book begins with this simple statement:

Someone used to love me,  
Someone used to care.  
Someone shared my secrets,  
But now someone's not there.

As the book continues, it traces the stages of a marriage from when "your frame of reference is two" through how everything changes when illness descends. Then death.

Like so many widows, Susan asks in her book how she can live a new life as ... one.

She doesn't mince words about the loneliness and feeling of abandonment that surface when coupled friends disappear. When holidays are the worst days. And when a new kind of emptiness, ironically, fills one's spirit.

But she also affirms that she is taking "small important steps" into her future.

And Gross ends her touching book with her basic philosophy of loss – and life:

"To be continued."

## Portals

• continued from page 4

A week at On Lok typically includes computer and iPad classes; karaoke; the singing of Mandarin and Cantonese folk and modern songs; a Chinese culture class on ancient literature; and Mandarin language class.

The Mandarin class is especially popular. "Most of the seniors are Cantonese immigrants from the southern part of China," Chung said. "They want to learn Mandarin, China's official national dialect."

That's just one of the many ways On Lok serves its members, Chung said: "To give seniors the ability to live independently and to maximize their health and well-being is our goal. We are the bridge to the seniors and community."

### Port Richmond partnership

St. Anne's Senior Center, located at 2607 E. Cumberland St., has been a fixture in Port Richmond since 1970. After serving the community as a full-service senior community center for 47 years, St. Anne's became a satellite meal site in July. That means shorter hours and fewer staff members than a full-fledged center.

Nonetheless, the change "doesn't limit what we can accomplish," said Karen Rouse, manager for St. Anne's. "As a satellite, we give members the things they need." Those things include daily meals, social services (a counselor is on-site three days a week) and transportation. "But beyond that," she said, "we give them what they want: recreation and socialization."

In response to seniors' needs and preferences, the center has chosen an early schedule; it is open weekdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. "Most of our programming was in the morning and early afternoon; we were an early group," Rouse said. "So, the activities are being organized [in much] the way the center traditionally offered them. We can still do much of the same things, but we just have to be creative with the time constraints."

Ongoing activities at St. Anne's include coffee hour, a support group, pottery class and nutritionist/cooking demonstrations.

St. Anne's attracts 125 active members each week and is still gaining new members. "They may come in ... to see what the center has to offer, then decide to stay or join," Rouse said.

The site's longtime partnership with Greensgrow Farm, located across the street, has been going strong for more than 10 years.



Frank Burd

The center has a small raised-bed garden plot at Greensgrow, where senior volunteers tend and pick herbs and small tomatoes and peppers. The center's staff coordinates with its gardening volunteers and on-site nutritionist to use freshly grown produce and herbs in cooking demonstrations. During the growing season, Greensgrow brings a farm stand to the center every other Friday so members and others from the community can purchase fresh, locally grown, organic produce.

Another successful community partnership is the annual intergenerational art project involving children ages 8 to 12 who attend the Portside Arts Center Summer Day Camp Program. Seniors volunteer to mentor the children, working closely with them on an art project. Last year, the collaboration produced a mural that now hangs in front of St. Anne's. This year, participants made a wooden sculpture using popsicle sticks and other objects.

"We're called a satellite because we're only open four hours a day, but we're so much more than a meals program," Rouse said. "We are doing everything we did before. We haven't seen a change in consumers. If anything, the interest in our services and programs continues to increase."

\* \* \*

To locate a center in your neighborhood or for more information about center activities, call the PCA Helpline at 215-765-9040 or go to [pcaCares.org](http://pcaCares.org) and click on "Services for Seniors," then "Senior Centers."

Contact Alicia Colombo at [acolombo@pcaphl.org](mailto:acolombo@pcaphl.org).

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## Traditions

• continued from page 1

Groce says his grandmother was not educated past third grade. However, she taught herself to read and write proficiently, was wise in life experiences, and “was able to transmit a lot of knowledge,” he says.

### A tradition of respect

Respect for elders is a key aspect of African and African-American culture, Groce says, that is borne out in successive generations of his family. “The young people in my family don’t do things in my presence they might think of doing with their friends if it would be disrespectful to me,” he says. “For instance, they know that foul language is not permitted.”

Groce’s grandchildren range in age from 25 to 48 and his great-grandchildren from 1 to 22. As a central figure for them during their maturation, he notes, he’s been careful to observe certain rules. For instance, if a great-grandchild is jumping on the furniture, he says, “I would say, ‘That’s not good for you and not good for the furniture’ and tell him to stop.” Nonetheless, he says, “If I had only one piece of advice to give about being a grandparent, it would be, ‘Know when to hold ‘em and know when to fold ‘em. Stay in your own lane.’ It’s the parents’ job to discipline their children.”

### Celebrating a heritage

Groce, who holds a doctorate in education, was the first in his family to go to college. With the help of his education and career as a social worker and professor of social work, he is intent on passing on both his academic knowledge and the life lessons he has learned. “One of the things I try to teach the younger generations is to be proud of their African history and heritage,” the patriarch says.

As the family elder, Groce often performs the traditional African libation ceremony at the start of occasions such as weddings and funerals, and during baby-naming ceremonies. The ritual is a way to pay homage to one’s ancestors in keeping with the African tradition of honoring elders. During the ceremony, Groce recites a prayer calling on the spirits of the family’s ancestors to be in attendance. The names of those who have recently died are called out. Groce raises a ceremonial cup of African water, then pours the liquid onto the earth or the dirt of a potted plant. (Wine can also be used.) The ceremony



Paola Noguerras

**Grandfather Dick Fong displays a photo of his family.**

makes an impression on even the youngest children, he says.

As Groce’s family has grown over generations, some members have adopted faiths other than the Christianity in which Groce and his late wife of 60 years, Rosetta, raised their children. Despite these differences, the libation ceremony remains a common thread during special occasions, Groce says. Faith and a strong belief in the importance of family, along with an appreciation of African traditions, bond the family members.

“We’ve got different ways of worshiping,” Groce says, noting that some of his offspring are Islamic, while others celebrate the Kemetite religion, a spiritual tradition that originated in ancient Northeast Africa. “We come together to celebrate holidays in all these faiths,” he says. “We also celebrate Kwanzaa.” (Kwanzaa is a secular festival observed by many African-Americans from December 26 to January 1.)

In addition to being a part of all these celebrations and major life ceremonies, “I try to be there for everyone’s birthdays,” Groce says.

### Bonds of faith

Faith is the bedrock of Groce’s family. “The youngsters know that they are not the center

of the universe, that all of us are connected to God and that we answer to a higher power,” Groce says. He has also helped to instill in the younger generations how important it is to give back – to support faith institutions and social causes and to share their abilities, whatever they may be, to benefit others.

When Groce turned 85 earlier this year, 200 people joined him to celebrate at a local catering hall – including all of his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, who were intent on expressing the love they share with him. “I’m lucky,” he says. “I’ve been able to watch my children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren grow up. And that means a whole lot.”

### Long-distance lessons

Since Dick Fong and his wife, Eva, immigrated to America from Hong Kong in 1958, they have raised four children and become grandparents to 12. The Fongs are long-distance grandparents, with their children scattered in locations throughout the United States. This is a situation not uncommon in immigrant families as successive generations move far and wide to pursue higher education and careers. Despite the miles, the sense of family and tradition remains strong, Fong says.

He strives to pass on important lessons to his younger family members. “The No. 1 lesson is to help others,” says Fong, a devout Christian. “We come into the world with nothing, and we leave the world with nothing. The purpose of life is to give back to society.” He proudly reports that some of his older grandchildren have undertaken religious missions to developing countries and that two of his grandsons were honored as “young givers” by their local newspaper.

### Chinese values

In his native Cantonese, Fong would be addressed as “Ya-ya” by his son’s children and “Kong-kong” by his daughter’s children. (Names for paternal and maternal grandparents differ in Cantonese.) Some of his grandchildren address him with those terms, even though they neither speak nor understand the language. Still, Fong is able to share traditional Chinese values with them: If you have “hing fook” (luck), you must share it. You must share “moi” (love) with others. You always display “yang” (let others have their way) and “noi” (endurance), accepting others’ differences of opinion with respect and restraint.

Fong and his wife immigrated to the United States in search of educational opportunities and economic advancement. That dream has come true for them and their children and grandchildren. The couple earned pharmacy degrees and forged successful careers in the pharmaceutical industry. Fong’s children, too, hold advanced degrees. His grandchildren, who range in age from 13 to 22, are studious and industrious, he says. In addition, most of them play musical instruments. Fong is close to all of them. Despite the geographical distance, he says, “I try not to miss a high school or college graduation.”

### Cohesion and caring

The Fong family stays close partly through regular multi-generational gatherings held during holidays and other special occasions. Over the past decade, the family has begun renting a large house for these event at an agreed-upon location so that everyone can be together under one roof.

Fong says he also remains close with his grandchildren through phone calls, visits to their homes and FaceTime video chats. Chinese tradition places great emphasis on family cohesion and caring for one another. When one member of the family is not feeling well, for example, everybody in the family prays for that person.

The caring Fong shows to his grandchildren is reciprocated. Recently, for example, a college-aged grandson informed him that he would be flying in from the Midwest for the weekend to help Fong celebrate his 80th birthday. There was an underlying motive for the trip. The young man wanted to visit partly out of concern because his grandfather is facing serious health issues. Fong’s grandson wanted to show his support for his grandfather.

Chinese tradition bestows reverence on elders, especially male elders. In that tradition, “whatever a grandfather says is final, even if you disagree,” Fong says. In the United States, however, while Fong is revered, he does not go unchallenged. “My grandchildren do things the American way, but that is OK,” he says. “They know you do not talk back to elders, that you must show respect, but in America, everybody is equal. Everyone can voice their opinion.” Fong even defers to his grandchildren as appropriate. “They know more than me,” he says of that tech-savvy generation. “Everything is at their fingertips.”

Contact Marcia Z. Siegal at [msiegal@pcaphl.org](mailto:msiegal@pcaphl.org).

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## Parades, drug stores were part of 1940s neighborhood life

By Dorothy Stanaitis

All of the men in Philadelphia wore hats in the early 1940s, and they all pulled those hats off and held them reverently over their hearts as the flag passed by.

That Sunday's parade wasn't a big one, and it wasn't very important except to the proud marchers of the Benevolent Paternal Order of Elks strutting through the streets, which were lined with enthusiastic groups of people who had been pulled away from parlor radios or front porch rockers by the exciting and unexpected sound of band music echoing through the usually quiet neighborhood.

More eager spectators kept running up to join the groups as news of the parade reached

the fringes of the area – news that was passed by word of mouth or shouted out by boys riding by on bikes. There were few phones in private homes to spread the news. Most people depended on the corner drug stores if they needed to make a call.

And those bicycle boys were usually found sitting on the curb by their local drug store waiting to notify people if a call came in for them on the store phone. The boys hoped to be tipped 5 cents, the cost to place a call, but they were glad enough to accept a few pennies if that was all that was offered.

The drug store played other important roles in the community besides being the telephone message center. The store's soda fountain was the social spot for families celebrating special occasions with hot fudge sundaes or for dat-

ing couples stopping by to share an ice cream soda – and, of course, there were the girls coming in from the office or shop for “a Coke and a smoke” before heading home for dinner.

But the drug store also had a far more important function in the neighborhood: It served as a first-aid emergency center. When frantic mothers brought their injured children to see “Doc Herman,” the local pharmacist, he always seemed able to handle the crisis either with mercurochrome antiseptic or the dreaded, stinging iodine and a Band-Aid. He also knew when it was necessary to send the injured party off to see an M.D., and no one questioned his judgment. Since the news of accidents and even deaths could come in on the drug store phone, Doc Herman also had to



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be a therapist, counselor and adviser to many who received those calls. He was a valued and important figure in the community.

The Benevolent Paternal Order of Elks parade marched past Herman's Drug Store. Doc, Mrs. Herman and their young son, Freddie, stood at the door to watch the parade go by. They didn't applaud or cheer as many others did. A smile and a nod of the head from the esteemed Herman family was approval enough.

The Hermans never made it downtown for the really big and important parades like the Thanksgiving extravaganza that ushered Santa into town for his month-long stay in Gimbels department store or the rowdy and boisterous New Year's Day Mummies Parade. The Hermans were usually working. The drug store was a seven-day-a-week operation, one of the few places of business allowed by the strict Pennsylvania “blue laws” to be open on Sundays. Prescriptions could be filled and phone calls received and made from the row of three phone booths. On Sundays, those booths almost always were filled and had lines of people waiting to use them. Those days, most of the workforce was home and had time to chat with family and friends. No department stores, hardware stores, food stores or other places of business were allowed to be open on Sunday, so the excitement of a parade was a welcome diversion.

In the afternoon, as the Elks parade wound down and the marchers headed back to their meeting hall, they were followed by applause from those grateful for the free entertainment that had enlivened a long, lazy Sunday afternoon.

*Dorothy Stanaitis is a retired librarian and freelance writer.*

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## Chestnut Hill rabbi offers hope through her optimistic, humorous book

By Barbara Sherf

Rabbi Sheila Peltz Weinberg recently authored her second book, "God Loves the Stranger," in which she shares inspiring stories, poems, teachings and meditations that show how, in a world full of strangers, one can find peace and harmony.

A resident of Chestnut Hill, Weinberg chose "God loves the stranger" (Deuteronomy 10:18) as a title because of the power those four words embody for her.

"Whether we – or the strangers around us – are suffering, filled with joy, seeking truth or searching for grace, my goal with this collection is to offer hope, reassurance and a reminder that none of us is ever alone," Weinberg says. She adds that she was pleased with the grid design of the book's cover, which features 21 photos of human eyes depicting a variety of eye colors and skin tones.

Born and raised in the Bronx, Weinberg was interested in Judaism but did not consider becoming a rabbi until later in life when it became a viable option for women.

While living in Mount Airy for a dozen

years as a single parent raising two children, Weinberg enrolled in rabbinical school at a time when females in the profession were still rare.

Weinberg served as a congregational rabbi for 17 years. She has also worked in the fields of Jewish community relations and Jewish education and as spiritual director to a variety of Jewish clergy, including students and faculty at Hebrew Union College in New York City. Weinberg is creator and co-leader of the Jewish Mindfulness Teacher Training Program.

She also created a CD, "Preparing the Heart: Meditations for Jewish Spiritual Practice" and is the author of "Surprisingly Happy: An Atypical Religious Memoir," published in 2010 by White River Press.

Weinberg brings a sense of optimism and humor to her latest book. One passage describes what she thought was the purchase and consumption of decaffeinated tea at a time when she was told not to drink anything caffeinated:

"I love black tea, especially strong tea like Irish breakfast. So, I bought a few boxes of

decaffeinated Irish breakfast and had happily gone through one box already, thinking how great this tea was. Then I noted it didn't say decaffeinated on the box. It was only in my mind. In my desire. In my sweet delusion."

Weinberg uses the story as an example of how the mind fills in and creates a universe that makes sense. She also touches on people's propensity to "stuff things in."

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***"Let us not be strangers. God loves us all."***

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"It's something I am familiar with personally, and a lot of it comes out of the speed of our lives," she says. "We can hop on a plane, talk on our cell phone, and the internet is everywhere. We can do things quicker, but should we? My experience has been that it takes a toll. Meditation and yoga sustain me and nurture me. In our culture it's about doing, having or knowing, but just being isn't

validated enough." She adds that, at 71, she is slowing down and practicing yoga at Blue Banyan studio in Mount Airy.

Weinberg also discusses living – and aging – well.

"I tell my students, 'We are not in charge here, folks; put it in the hands of a higher power,'" she says. "As for aging, I think some of us do it well and some of us have luck. If you are surrounded by the right people and have practices that deepen our sense of well-being and strengthen our values, then that's good because otherwise we can easily feel lost and feel like a stranger. That is my message: Let us not be strangers. God loves us all."

As for her next chapter, Rabbi Weinberg is promoting the book and conducting online courses and retreats by "offering of myself to others – whether they be students, colleagues, longtime friends or strangers." She balances her work with travel and being with her husband, two grown children, a stepson and six grandchildren.

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*Barbara Sherf is a personal historian and laughter yoga leader. She can be reached at [Capture-LifeStories@gmail.com](mailto:Capture-LifeStories@gmail.com).*



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## Getting the scoop

• continued from page 1

center – “JW does not discriminate based on country of origin, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion or sexual expression” – made the place sound like a branch office of utopia. As a black woman in a largely white neighborhood, I felt reassured. Seeing the varied skin tones of some of JW’s 951 members once I stepped inside made me feel more welcome still.

I found JW humming with activity. A woman was setting up a crafts table packed with knitted hats, scarves, lined handbags, water-bottle slings, booties and various other items that had been made at the center. “This is for our ‘Christmas in July’ celebration,” said De-lores Easley, 74, a center member who teaches knitting and crocheting as a volunteer. “We used some of the fancier yarns for these items,” she added, noting that all proceeds would benefit Journey’s Way.

The “Christmas” sale would also include necklaces, bracelets and other beaded items made by members. “I’ve been beading since the mid ‘90s, when my husband developed heart failure,” said beading instructor Linda Washington, 67, who finds the activity relaxing. “In class, we talk about design elements and visual interest, but mostly we just have fun.”

Besides crafts, I learned that JW has pulse-pumping activities like ping pong, line dancing and workouts in the fitness room, as well as more leisurely ones like meditation, yoga, billiards and cards — and, yes, bingo.

“We like to pique our members’ intellectual and cultural curiosity,” said center director Rebecca Kochman. “We have poetry and writing workshops, a lecture series, and trips to interesting sites, including some out-of-state. Speakers also cover a range of health and wellness topics.” JW members also enjoy outings to restaurants. And for pure pleasure, there’s the free mini-massage.

### Multiple options

Next up was a visit to Center in the Park (CIP). Located at 5818 Germantown Ave. in Vernon Park, CIP is surrounded by grass and trees. And the center’s gardening club gives new meaning to the phrase, “Get down and dirty.” Members maintain a garden whose flowers provide a feast for the eyes and a colorful backdrop for the center’s Stretch-4-Life class during good weather. For those who prefer to be indoors, yoga classes involve “turn-



A tiled sign at Center in the Park in Vernon Park celebrates the center’s many facets.

Frank Burd

ing and reaching in all directions in a gentle but dynamic way,” according to the description on a flyer.

The lively card games at CIP made me wish I had kept up my pinochle and bridge skills. On the other hand, I could have jumped into a Scrabble match or some of the facility’s other daily “brain games.”

Too bad I’m so unhandy with crafts, since CIP has knitting, crocheting, sewing, painting, adult coloring and rubber stamping classes.

Joseph Wragg, 71, a retired machinist, had come to the center seeking another kind of self-expression. “I’ve always wanted to play the piano,” he said, referring to the music lessons offered at CIP, “but I never had a chance to learn.”

“Members can fulfill some of their long-held dreams here,” said program director Cleo Smalls. “We encourage them to try new things.”

Wragg had also come to ask for help with his state rent rebate application. Senior community centers have counselors who help members apply for various assistance.

### An Asian connection

My third stop, Philadelphia Senior Center on the Avenue of the Arts (PSC – Arts), 509 S. Broad St., has much to distinguish it. “With 1,700 members, we’re the nation’s third largest center,” said manager Julie Nelson.

The Asian Pacific Resource Center, which is part of PSC – Arts, literally gives the entire center a unique flavor. PSC – Arts, like other centers, serves free or low-cost meals; the center also serves free afternoon tea. “The menu includes Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese and other Eastern dishes,” said Philip Lai, manager of the resource center.

Besides the crafting, card and board games, and language classes, which are also found at other centers, PSC – Arts offers classes in calligraphy, mahjong, line dancing to Asian music, Mandarin Chinese and English as a second language. “We also help members from Asia apply for benefits so that there’s no language barrier in seeking assistance,” Lai said.

Both CIP and PSC – Arts have a branch of the Red Hat Society, a national group of women who get together for the sole purpose of enjoying themselves. That got me thinking. As a Red Hatter, I could kick up my heels. On the other hand, if I took part in some of the center’s volunteer opportunities, I could give back to both the center and the wider community.

PSC – Arts has the same keep-it-moving philosophy as the other centers, offering Zumba, ballroom dancing and a bowling league. Health presentations and screenings promote physical well-being while chess, Scrabble and other activities help to keep the mind agile. “We address the whole person,”

Nelson said. A men’s group and an LGBT support group round out the center’s offerings.

### Putting a rumor to rest

Any one of the centers I visited buried the bologna-and-bingo rumor, let alone the wealth of resources of the three of them combined. Each place had something that set it apart, but together, the three centers also had lots in common: free or low-cost meals, a variety of classes and recreational activities, and volunteer opportunities within the center or the community.

As if all those perks hadn’t convinced me to attend a center – or to visit different centers, since they all have free basic membership – one of the ladies at Journey’s Way reminded me of yet another benefit: “Sometimes, romances start here.”

\* \* \*

More information is available at:

- The Center at Journey’s Way: 215-487-1750 or [journeys-way.org](http://journeys-way.org)
- Center in the Park: 215-848-7722 or [centerinthepark.org](http://centerinthepark.org)
- Philadelphia Senior Center on the Avenue of the Arts: 215-546-5879 or [PhilaSeniorCenter.org](http://PhilaSeniorCenter.org)

*Constance Garcia-Barrio is a freelance writer and author of a novel based on African-American history in Philadelphia.*



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## Grandmother

• continued from page 8

After moving to Pennsylvania in the 1940s, Yangee joined the staff of Jersey Shore Hospital as a nurse in 1958. Later, she was offered the position of hospital administrator – a leap from the role she was used to. “I guess I was a bit frightened,” she recalls of the transition. “I didn’t have anybody to teach me; I was pretty much on my own.” As to why she was selected for the job, Yangee said, “I don’t know. Somebody must have gotten the strange idea I was capable of doing it ... I think I must have had nerve more than anything else.”

After she left the hospital in 1970, George M. Leader – then Pennsylvania’s governor – offered her the job of administrator of Leader Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, which was then under construction. She served in that role until retiring in 1980.

Looking back on her career, Yangee said, “My favorite [part] was taking care of people.”

Along with working, my grandmother also raised a family. She and my grandfather had three children: Mary Ella; my mother, Beverley; and Kirk. Today, Yangee is a great-great-grandmother.

## Challenge and change

Yangee has lost many people who were close to her, including my grandfather, who died in 1974 of blood cancer. When, at 80, she was diagnosed with a rare, aggressive form of breast cancer, the oncologist wasn’t sure whether, at her age, she would want to undergo the surgery that would give her a shot at beating the disease. After thinking it over, Yangee announced that she would have the operation. “I guess I’m just not ready to leave my loved ones,” she said.

## Widows

• continued from page 14

The former exercise instructor joined the W Connection in 2010. Why does she stay? “Because these women are now part of me,” she said. “They remind me that I’m not alone just because I’m a widow. They are my companions on the road forward.”

For Schwartz, that road has included a significant other who is helping her to live a life that’s meaningful. “He is kind and good, and after some adjustments, my adult children also have welcomed him into all our lives,”

From my grandfather’s death until 2014, Yangee lived alone in the modest white ranch house they had built. Two and a half years ago, when living on her own had become increasingly difficult, she moved into an apartment in my mother’s home. In April 2016, she entered ManorCare.

Her room is cozy: A multicolored afghan lies folded neatly on the bed, paintings and photos decorate the walls, and a favorite flowered chair occupies one corner. But while Yangee is quick to express appreciation for the livability of her room and the attentiveness of the staff, the transition from her own home to a nursing facility has been challenging. She sums up that challenge with one word: “independence.”

“I have become dependent,” she said. “That’s very different after having been accustomed to doing things for yourself.”

“I miss my home; I miss it terribly,” she said. “If you have your own home for as many years as I did and then come down to one room and not have any of the privileges I did ... it’s quite an adjustment. But I’m trying to make that adjustment.”

She is philosophical about life’s difficulties. “We all have hard things to go through,” she said, “but I think the way we handle them is so very important ... We help ourselves a great deal by trying to help other people.” She added, “I do think your faith has a lot to do with getting you through life, and your relationship with our Lord.”

Yangee’s indomitable spirit was on display on a recent summer afternoon when my mother and I had picked her up for an outing to our family cabin. As we set off, looking out to the road ahead and the shining, blue-green day, my grandmother’s voice floated brightly back to me where I sat behind her: “Here we go.”

*Abbey J. Porter is editor of Milestones. Email her at [aporter@pcaphl.org](mailto:aporter@pcaphl.org)*

she said.

“You grieve as who you are, and I’ve definitely seen this in this amazing group of women,” Schwartz said. “For me, that means remembering, cherishing what was, and also celebrating what will be.”

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For information about the W Connection, visit [wconnection.org](http://wconnection.org) and click on “W chapters,” then “Philadelphia.”

*Barbara Sherf is a personal historian and laughter yoga leader. She can be reached at [CaptureLifeStories@gmail.com](mailto:CaptureLifeStories@gmail.com).*

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## Don's Column

# Memories of reading and rooting



By Don Harrison

When the kids were little, Dr. Suess was still alive, churning out children's classics while we waited expectantly for each one. In no time, the kids could recite from "Yertle the Turtle" (King of the Mud) and "Green Eggs and Ham."

Reading to one's children is one of the joys of parenthood – for the parents and for the kids, even when the children already have learned to read. And it needn't be nursery rhymes or Winnie the Pooh. (I recall reading to my kids from "Moby Dick.") It's the sound, the rhythm, the bonding.

To quote from "Horton Hears a Who":

"A person's a person/No matter how small."

### The old ballgame

After the Phillies scrapped their Baker Bowl at Broad and Lehigh streets and moved into tenancy seven blocks away at Shibe Park (Connie Mack Stadium), they alternated with their American League landlord, the

Athletics (the A's). Both teams were terrible, but that didn't stop us kids from debating endlessly which was better, a controversy that didn't end until the Athletics moved out (they're now in Oakland), leaving the Phillies playing in a one-team town.

My boyhood hero was a slugging A's outfielder named Bob Johnson, known to all as "Indian Bob" (part Cherokee, we were told). When he came to bat, we kids in the field seats would set up an uproar of war whoops. This kind of ethnic clamor is no longer acceptable, of course, but it was all part of baseball back then.

There were no blacks on the field back then. The games I remember occurred pre-Branch Rickey, pre-Jackie Robinson. And before baseball went truly multiracial, as it should have, with a strong Hispanic influence.

It's a different ballgame today.

With one exception: The Phillies are still losing.

*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.*

## Campira

• continued from page 5

began to cry silently, tears rolling down her cheeks. Afterwards, several participants formed a circle around her, hugging and comforting her.

"Her daughter passed recently," Butler-Lopez explained.

To bring the class to a close, she called for the women to join hands as she gave thanks for the class and for being part of this caring community.

Campira's exercise, stretching and meditation are designed to benefit the mind and body, and their effects may be measured in the strength and serenity participants gain over time.

But the value of the warmth and support participants provide one another is immeasurable.



**Lively Latin music accompanies the campira class at Norris Square Senior Community Center.**

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More information is available from Norris Square Senior Center at 215-423-7241 or [catholichealthcareservices.org/norris-square-senior-community-center](http://catholichealthcareservices.org/norris-square-senior-community-center).

*Linda L. Riley is the former editor of Milestones.*

## Crossword

### Tricky

### Solution

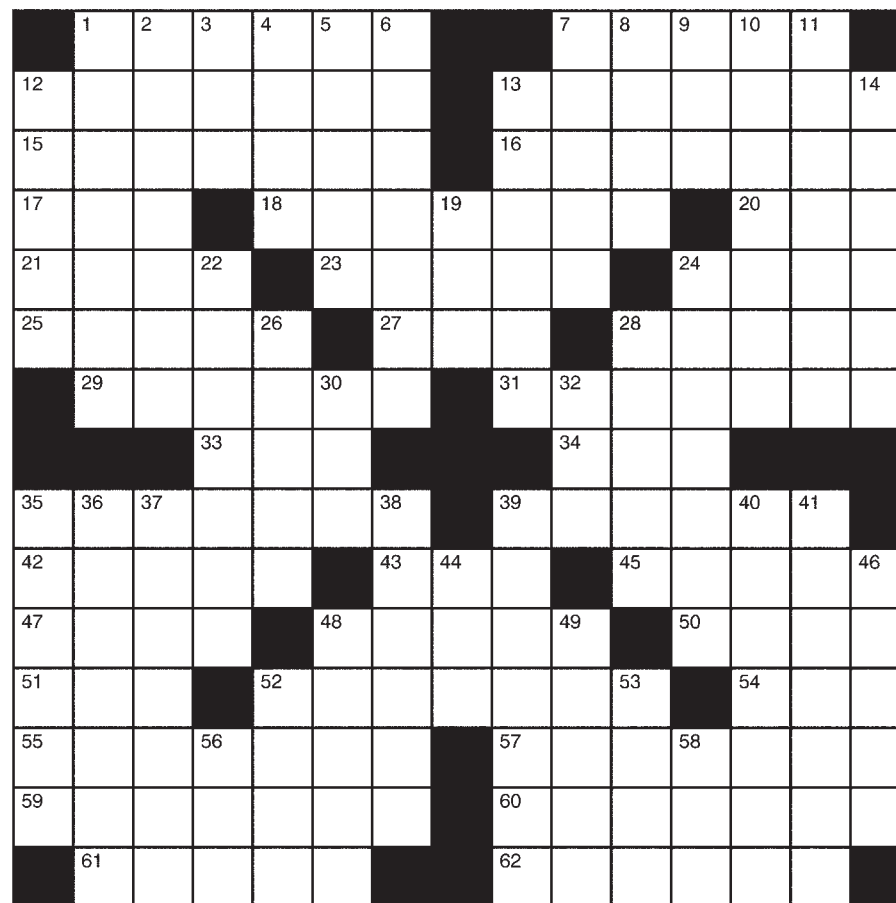
The solution can be found on page 6.

#### Across

- |                        |                           |                           |                        |
|------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 Eagerness            | 21 Decomposes             | 33 Something in the sky   | 50 Bed part            |
| 7 Clutch               | 23 England, in 1812       | 34 Man of Accounts: abbr. | 51 Mad. Ave. concerns  |
| 12 Opening             | 24 "_____ the day"        | 35 Grim ones              | 52 Straightest route   |
| 13 Must-used materials | 25 Not exits              | 39 Common Ones            | 54 Eur. land           |
| 15 Pole Climber        | 27 Golf Equipment         | 42 Baleful things         | 55 Reinstates          |
| 16 Tennis call         | 28 It's captial is Khaniã | 43 Article                | 57 Real                |
| 17 GI addr.            | 29 Famous trial           | 45 Organ controls         | 59 Indianapolis VIPs   |
| 18 Obliteration        | 31 Victim of SRO          | 47 Peddler's item         | 60 Stood               |
| 20 Astrological sign   |                           | 48 Well done!             | 61 Ship members        |
|                        |                           |                           | 62 Caught one's breath |

#### Down

- |                      |                       |                           |                         |
|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Theodolites        | 11 Having a cap       | 32 Sound of vexation      | 41 Fought, as cocks     |
| 2 Harmonizing        | 12 _____ Barton       | 35 Western poster word    | 44 Shakespeare's prince |
| 3 Contraction        | 13 Tokens of honor    | 36 Slippery ones          | 46 Rosinante            |
| 4 Frost              | 14 Door mechanism     | 37 Graf Zeppelin          | 48 Weaving threads      |
| 5 Frighten           | 19 Holy _____         | 38 Syllable with an ictus | 49 JFK's PT One         |
| 6 Not owners         | 22 Cork               | 39 Proofreader            | 52 _____ Rabbit         |
| 7 Splendor           | 24 Turkish Soldiers   | 40 Jean Baptiste Poquelin | 53 Finales              |
| 8 Kind of notice     | 26 U-2s, accordingly  |                           | 56 Yellow bugle         |
| 9 Suffix for enzymes | 28 Cod, <i>et al.</i> |                           | 58 Reduction            |
| 10 Put off           | 30 Contraction        |                           |                         |





# Your family Our focus

## Health Partners Medicare

Health Partners Medicare puts the focus on you. With a wide choice of plans, you can select the benefits and cost that are right for you.

**Choose us for:**

- 24/7 customer service
- Specialist visits with no referrals
- Unlimited inpatient hospital stays
- Broad network of doctors and hospitals

Learn more today. Call 1-844-257-8383 (TTY 711) from 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. seven days a week or visit [HPPMedicare.com](http://HPPMedicare.com).

# \$0

**or Low Plan Premiums  
or Low Cost PCP Visits  
Annual Hearing Exam  
Annual Vision Exam  
Fitness Center Membership**

Health Partners Plans



Health Partners Medicare is an HMO plan with Medicare and Pennsylvania State Medicaid program contracts. Enrollment in Health Partners Medicare depends on contract renewal. This information is not a complete description of benefits. Contact the plan for more information. Limitations, copayments, and restrictions may apply. Benefits, premiums and/or copayments/coinsurance may change on January 1 of each year. You must continue to pay your Medicare Part B premium. Health Partners Medicare complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.

ATENCIÓN: Si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-866-901-8000 (TTY: 711).

注意：如果您使用繁體中文，您可以免費獲得語言服務熱線。請撥打 1-866-901-8000 (TTY: 711)。