Volunteers help children read, write

By Marcia Z. Siegal

Older Americans Month, observed during May, highlights the contributions of older people. This year’s theme, “Engage at Any Age,” emphasizes that you are never too old (or too young) to take part in activities that can enrich your physical, mental and emotional well-being. It also celebrates the many ways older adults make a difference in our communities, according to the Administration for Community Living, which leads this national, annual observance.

* * *

Opportunities for seniors in Philadelphia to remain active abound, including ones that bring generations together. Among these intergenerational activities are the literacy and letter-writing programs at KleinLife: Northeast Philadelphia, a community center serving all age groups. These programs, sponsored through RSVP (formerly known as the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program) Philadelphia, are beneficial for both older adults and the children they engage throughout the school year. (For more information about RSVP Philadelphia, see article on page 16.)

Reading buddies

“There’s nothing more gratifying than to help a child,” said Philip Kamen, 83, a mentor for the past six years with RSVP Philadelphia’s Reading Buddies Program. The program, which takes place at KleinLife, matches third-grade students one-on-one with senior mentors who help them develop reading skills. Thirty students from the Anne Frank Elementary School in Northeast Philadelphia arrive at KleinLife by bus Thursday mornings for the hour-long weekly sessions held October through May.

Students come prepared with a book the teacher determines is appropriate for their reading level. During the sessions, the students read to their senior “buddies” and discuss the book with them. “The thing that impresses me most is the progress I’ve seen in the kids I’ve mentored,” Kamen said. “Every kid I’ve worked with has become a better reader since we’ve started working together.”

Diane Wolfe Gray became an artist by accident at 75. She was heading to her nearby library when she encountered a librarian she knew. “She told me, ‘I have an artist coming to teach here. She has the concept that anyone can draw,’” Gray said.

That librarian’s comment set her on an unlikely path. She decided to take three drawing classes at the library and launched a new passion for art. “The teacher gave us big sheets of paper and told us to draw large and freely,” Gray, 85, said. “She said not to pinch the

• continued on page 12

Health Brief

Healthy bone, left, resembles a web or honeycomb. With osteoporosis, right, the bone weakens and spaces develop, which increases the risk of fractures.

Take steps to help prevent osteoporosis

Osteoporosis, which means “porous bone,” is a disease that makes bones weak and brittle. When viewed under a microscope, healthy bone looks like a honeycomb. In osteoporosis, the holes and spaces in the honeycomb are much larger than in healthy bone. Bones that have lost density or mass are more likely to break.

Is it serious?

Broken bones can be very serious for older adults, especially since fractures are most likely to occur in the hip, spine or wrist. Twenty percent of seniors who break a hip die within a year from complications or surgery. Many patients who survive require long-term nursing home care. In addition to broken bones, osteoporosis may cause permanent pain, loss of height or hunched posture, limited mobility, and isolation or depression.

Who is at risk?

Osteoporosis occurs most often in people 50 and older. Approximately 10 million Americans have osteoporosis, and another 44 million have low bone density, placing them at increased risk for developing the disease. For women, the incidence is greater than that of heart attack, stroke and breast cancer combined. About half of women and a quarter of men will break a bone in their lifetime due to osteoporosis.

Health problems that increase the likelihood of developing osteoporosis include autoimmune, blood, gastrointestinal and neurological disorders; breast or prostate cancer; diabetes; Parkinson’s disease; chronic liver or kidney disease; and COPD. If you have any of these conditions, talk to your health care provider about what you can do to keep your bones healthy.

In addition, some medications, including steroids, can be harmful to your bones. It’s important to talk with your health care provider about the risks and benefits of any medicines you take and how they may affect your bones. Do not stop any treatment or change the dose of your medicines unless your health care provider says it’s safe to do so. If you need to take a medicine that causes bone loss, work with your doctor to determine the lowest possible dose you can take to control your symptoms.

What can I do?

According to the National Osteoporosis Foundation (NOF), diet, exercise and a healthy lifestyle are key to preventing and managing the disease. NOF recommends the following steps to improve bone health and prevent osteoporosis and broken bones.

- Get the calcium and vitamin D you need every day.
- Do regular weight-bearing and muscle-strengthening exercises.
- Don’t smoke and don’t drink alcohol in excess.
- Talk to your health care provider about your risk for osteoporosis and ask when you should have a bone density test.
- Take an osteoporosis medication when it’s determined to be right for you.

Source: National Osteoporosis Foundation
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An interview with Emmy Award-winning, veteran actor Ed Asner

By Frank Burd

Milestones writer Frank Burd interviewed Ed Asner when the renowned longtime actor performed his one-man show, “A Man and His Prostate,” at Bucks County Playhouse last month. Burd met him backstage after the performance, which he is touring with.

You’re 88 and still performing. How do you remember all your lines?

Rote. You constantly go over the lines and make them familiar to you and you to them. And pretty soon, you’ve got a show.

How did you get started in acting?

I went to school in Chicago, thinking of a career in political science. They announced that they were going to start a closed-circuit radio station. So I asked my roommate, who was involved with the theater group, “Should I try out for this radio show? They’re gonna do Richard II.” He said, “Let me hear you read.” So I stood at one end of the room and I read something, and his jaw fell open. He said, “Where’d you learn to read like that?”

In the spring, he told me “They’re going to do ‘Murder in the Cathedral’ for the summer production. So check the book out and go audition for it 'cause you can do any of the roles in it.” I was trying to impress this girl at the time … It’s a long story, but I ended up doing the lead.

Tell me about the development of the play you’re in now, “A Man and His Prostate.”

Ed Weinberger was a writer-producer on “Mary Tyler Moore.” And he went on to great success in other shows after that. And this is his story. It happened to him on a cruise ship to Italy. And he wrote it exactly as it happened.

This play seems to have a dual purpose – both comic and educational.

The majority of it is dedicated to humor, of course, but we get to that middle section where I read off the names of all those famous people who have died of prostate cancer. It’s a chilling fact that every 16 minutes, a man dies of prostate cancer.

Is your health pretty good?

It’s all right for an old cocker.

What’s the biggest difference between acting at 88 versus acting at 48?

I can’t leap tall buildings. Not that I really ever could.

I’d love to hear the story of what happened regarding the cancellation of your “Lou Grant” TV show.

The head of CBS, William Paley, wanted me off the air because of my political stance on El Salvador at the time. I was part of a group to raise money for drugs and medicine to help the people there and for free elections, although one of the [CBS] vice presidents said it had nothing to do with that but that they were afraid that with the ending of “Mash,” they would lose Monday nights. When we were replaced for the summer, at least 1,000 people protested for two weeks outside CBS. And we weren’t brought back.

Can you share some good memories from those shows?

It was all glory. Beautiful. Seven years with Mary [Tyler Moore] were wonderful. It was like a trip to Disneyland to go to work every day. “Lou Grant” was tough. It was not a comedy. We had to work harder. We also had to adapt to a new system and nobody knew their ass from a hole in the ground. We weren’t going to have our half-hour comedy with three cameras and an audience of 300 people. It was an hour show with one camera, no audience. It took a while to figure it out, without an audience reaction.

For seniors, aging and staying independent is not always simple. The Mercy LIFE services offered at home and in our adult day centers help seniors remain independent, active, and healthy.

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• Our Certified Recreational Therapists offer a variety of activities that promote physical movement and keep the mind active & creative, while having fun with other seniors.

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Ed Asner has won seven Emmy Awards, the most for any male actor. His 60-year career includes voiceovers and film production.

Mercy LIFE
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A Member of Trinity Health
At home with famed Philadelphia political cartoonist Signe Wilkinson

By Barbara Sherf

Famed Philadelphia Daily News and Philadelphia Inquirer cartoonist Signe Wilkinson was the first female political cartoonist to receive the Pulitzer Prize, which happened in 1992. These days, though, Wilkinson is more interested in learning how to navigate her 9-month-old granddaughter’s SUV-sized stroller along Philly’s none-too-even sidewalks.

The Center City resident has raised two “perfect” daughters with her husband, Jon Landau, an immigration attorney, and now helps to care for her first “perfect” grandchild. These are among the major life feats that give her the most pride.

Sometimes ideas for her political cartoons, which appear on Philly.com as well as in print, come to her while she rows on the Schuylkill River. But more often it is while she reads three newspapers and a myriad of websites each morning that ideas occur. After sketching several ideas, she runs her favorites by editors and then hits the drawing board, literally.

Wilkinson admits she was always the one doodling in class. Her late junior high art teacher, Kathy Brown, suggested she take art classes at Moore College of the Arts on Saturday mornings.

“The city was more interesting to me at that time,” Wilkinson says. “I remember walking down Sansom Street as a teen and thinking, ‘Whoa, this doesn’t look like anything I know.’” She also credits the late Sig Titone, a Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA) artist and printmaker, for encouraging her.

Wilkinson moved into the city in the 1970s to attend PAFA, as well as the University of the Arts. Her studies in fine art drawing helped pave the way for drawing caricatures.

“In 1973, I started out as a freelance journalist at The Daily News,” Wilkinson said. “I had illustrated some articles with cartoons and enjoyed doing that. Soon I began submitting political cartoons. Great cartoonists require a simple style, good drawing and a clear message on timely issues. There is a wide range of newsworthy topics, but you have to settle on one. When I hit the mark, I usually know it, and it is often backed up by reader response.”

In 1982, she got her first full-time job with benefits at the San Jose Mercury News in California. After three years, a new baby and an offer to work full time at The Daily News, she and her husband decided to move back to Philadelphia. She has worked at The Daily News for the past 32 years and for three years drew a Sunday Inquirer cartoon, called “Penn’s Place,” that depicted life in and around Philadelphia.

“Cartoons are satire and not fact,” she said. “In drawing the likes of Donald Trump, who is not a delicate man, you portray him for what he is and you look for the spirit of his actions and then exaggerate that spirit.”

She acknowledges the difficulties of dealing with a 24/7 news cycle that causes havoc, particularly with late-night and early-morning tweets from the aforementioned president.

While working for Philadelphia’s newspapers, she served a year as president of the Association of American Cartoonists and also illustrated a nationally syndicated cartoon, called “The Family Tree,” that was published in newspapers across the country and is still available online.

She also counts helping to restore Fairhill Burial Ground in North Philadelphia, where Lucretia Mott, a famous Quaker abolitionist • continued on page 19
Meet the new Milestones editor: Avid scrapbooker, Philadelphia sports fan

By Alicia M. Colombo

As we embark on Older Americans Month and PCA’s Celebrate Arts & Aging festivities this May, I recall my own personal growth as an artist. I used to have a very narrow interpretation of art. As a child, I thought that being an artist was limited to having the innate talent of music, painting or sculpting. To me, being an artist meant that you were able to create something beautiful with your hands. That was a talent that I clearly lacked, so an artist I was not – or so I thought. It wasn’t until I was in high school that my Junior ROTC leader made me realize that art did not have strict limits. When I said that I wasn’t artistically talented because I couldn’t play a musical instrument or draw a picture, he told me that my talents were creativity and writing.

It was as obvious to him then as it is to me now that I was meant to be an artist. I believe that art lies more in the seeing than in the doing. Having an imagination and an eye for color, design and space is as important to the creation of art as being able to draw. From a very young age, I was always creative. I am known for telling and writing some very imaginative stories. This is probably why I am often disappointed to see a movie based on a beloved book. It seems the picture in my head is never adequately showcased on the screen.

As time went on and I became a young woman, I took an interest in photography. Pictures of scenery and images that depict unique perspectives caught my eye. A photo of a beautiful sunset or monument is so much more interesting than a self-portrait, or “selfie” as it is known on social media today.

My two artistic passions – writing and photography – collided spectacularly when I was 17 and discovered my favorite hobby. Scrapbooking is the perfect way to use creativity to showcase my treasured photographs and mementos. Writing, or journaling as it’s often known to scrapbookers, is also an integral part of scrapbooking. The words on a scrapbook page are like the punctuation of a sentence; the work is not complete without it.

Scrapbooking at its core is the placement of pictures and other items onto a page. You can cut out pictures from magazines or use your own personal photos, then incorporate various... continued on page 8
Recipe Box

Lemony linguine with spring veggies

This easy-to-make recipe serves four and incorporates a variety of nutritious vegetables into an appealing one-dish pasta meal. The peas and spinach are in season this month; they will be especially delicious cooked fresh.

Ingredients:
8 oz. whole wheat linguine or fettucine
4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
½ tsp. salt
½ tsp. ground pepper
3½ cups water
1 (9-oz.) package frozen artichoke hearts
6 cups chopped mature spinach (or 8 ounces frozen)
2 cups peas, fresh or frozen
1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese, divided into two 1/4-cup portions
1/4 cup half-and-half
1 tbsp. lemon zest
3-4 tbsp. lemon juice

Directions:
Combine pasta, garlic, salt and pepper in a large pot. Add water. Bring to a boil over high heat. Boil, stirring frequently, for 8 minutes.
Stir in artichokes, spinach and peas and cook until the pasta is tender and the water has almost evaporated, 2 to 4 minutes more.
Remove pot from heat and stir in 1/4 cup cheese, half-and-half, lemon zest and lemon juice to taste. Let stand, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes. Serve sprinkled with the remaining 1/4 cup cheese.

Note: Instead of cooking pasta in a huge pot of water, this one-pot pasta recipe uses just 3 1/2 cups of water. When the pasta is al dente, most of the water has evaporated and the bit that's left is thickened with the starch that cooks off the pasta. Adding lemon and Parmesan cheese to the leftover cooking water creates a delicious silky sauce.

Source: Eatingwell.com

What does independence mean to you?

Milestones newspaper is looking for personal stories from Philadelphia seniors about their own interpretation of "independence." For some, independence means immigrating to the United States and escaping the tyranny of another land. For others, it may mean remaining in your own home as you age instead of moving in with a family member or going to a nursing home. Perhaps you have your own unique story about independence. We invite you to share it with us.

To submit an essay (300-500 words) or story idea, email us by Friday, May 11 at milestonesnews@pcaCares.org.

Milestones, published by Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA) for more than 15 years, is the premier publication for older adults in Philadelphia. For more information about Milestones or to download past issues, go to pcaMilestones.org.
Of love and war: Meeting the challenge of mothering adult daughters

By Sally Friedman

During a recent week, two of my three adult daughters seem to have conspired to inflict misery on me at once. Yes, in duplicate!

In separate encounters, there were cross words (dare I say, hostile words?) with all of us left a bit bruised and dealing with the inevitable hurt feelings.

Not at all the stuff of Hallmark Mother’s Day cards.

Worst of all, those encounters came after 11 p.m., which seems to be the preferred time in our daughters’ lives for confrontations. Then they go off to sleep, and I am left nursing my emotional wounds as dawn breaks.

Adult children – such a strange oxymoron.

And such a perplexing time of life for those of us who have presumably done our bit, long ago with parenting and now lay claim to real people with real lives out there in the big world.

So we assume, in our blissful ignorance, that now that we’re all bona fide adults, we’ll be living out those tender Hallmark moments.

Hmm.

Despite all indications to the contrary, parenthood goes on ... and on ... and on. Those emotional muscles need to stay flexed for those glorious times when one or the other of these grown-up “children” decides that you’re (check one) too intrusive, not interested enough, too controlling, hopelessly dysfunctional, overly critical, or, as in the recent accumulation, not “centered.”

I felt like a margin run amok. Not centered? Say what? But when you have a daughter who’s a psychologist, you take it as it comes.

I earnestly believe that we who parent young adults need some sort of voluminous guidebook, or at least a compact little manual of do’s and don’ts for these testing times when those adult children seem to have regressed back to 9 and are bent on replaying old resentments to a new beat.

That’s when you’re reminded that while other jobs you’ve had earn you benefits and long, built-in vacations, parenthood of adult children is bereft of both.

If I were the perfect mother, I’m sure I would not have flinched when one or the other of our daughters told me that she’d decided to go trekking in Nepal or had made plans to break her ironclad lease or had fed her baby Thai food, figuring that he should develop a sophisticated palate at 8 months.

If I really knew how to handle adult daughters, I would have smiled benignly at the sight of the one I had once dressed in little pleated plaid skirts and dainty blouses who later appeared at a family gathering in something resembling military fatigues and combat boots.

Clothes are a flashpoint. So are issues of time management and why it makes sense to not jam 10 pounds of activity into a nine-pound time frame.

So we argue. Maybe that is the dirty little secret of mother-daughter alliances. We love each other madly, and yes, we sometimes raise our voices not in song but in anger.

I do try to be wise and nonjudgmental, especially about giving advice about their child-rearing. I try to be aware of their boundaries. Discreetly supportive. Sometimes, I even succeed. I button my lip as I watch them handle issues with their own children in ways I feel are — well, let’s just say “unwise,” and let it go at that.

But tell me, please, how to keep your cool when the adult daughter who has borrowed your best pearls for a wedding announces that she lent them to Sharon who lent them to Lisa who left them in a hotel in Hartford?

So I get a little out of patience. I’m wishing that these very grown-up daughters were back in those first 10 years of life when they earnestly believed that I was basically passable and occasionally even wise, funny and fun.

How weird that I’m regressing, even as these three get more brilliant, competent and all-knowing.

Nonetheless, I’m trying to learn the golden rules of parenting adults:

Listen more than you talk.

Let them figure out how to handle their own kids, no matter how brilliant your solutions.

And bite your tongue when you start saying those no-win words to adult children: “If I were you...” Because let’s face it. You’re not!

Sally Friedman has written for the New York Times and other publications.
Celebrate the arts year-round with free and discounted admissions

‘Celebration,’ a mixed-media work by Bettie Jones, 84, is on display at West Philadelphia Senior Center this month.

40th Street Summer Series
May 19, June 23, July 14, Aug. 18 and Sept. 15
Free outdoor concerts.
40th and Walnut streets, behind the Walnut Street Library; 215-243-0555; universitycity.org/40th-street-summer-series

Boating on the Schuylkill River
Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., April 22 to Oct. 27
This 45-acre National Historic Landmark is free to the public and open year-round.
Bartram’s Garden Community Boathouse
5400 Lindbergh Blvd.; bartramsgarden.org; 215-729-5281

‘Deception,’ an acrylic painting by Gwendolyn Bundy, 72, is on display at Center on the Hill this month.

First Sundays at the Barnes Foundation
First Sunday of the month
The Barnes Foundation
2025 Benjamin Franklin Parkway; barnesfoundation.org; 215-278-7000

‘Heavenly Rose,’ a digital collage by Geeta N. Ahya, 76, is on display at West Philadelphia Senior Center this month.

First Wednesdays at Please Touch Museum
First Wednesday of the month, 4-7 p.m.
$2 off admission
Please Touch Museum; Memorial Hall, 4231 Avenue of the Republic; 215-581-3181; pleasetouchmuseum.org

The Old City Experience: First Fridays
First Friday of the month, 5-9 p.m.
Cutting-edge paintings, sculpture, ceramics, photography and fiber art on display at monthly open house events at galleries in Philadelphia’s arts district.

‘Family Outing,’ an acrylic painting by Vivian N. Bridges, 89, is on display at West Philadelphia Senior Center this month.

Philadelphia Corporation for Aging presents
Celebrate Arts & Aging

Senior art exhibits and free receptions
As part of PCA’s Celebrate Arts & Aging festival in May, three exhibits of work by senior artists are on display this month. Free artists’ receptions, will be held at each.

• Center on the Hill, 8855 Germantown Ave. (adjacent to the Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill). Exhibit: May 1-31, weekdays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Reception: May 29, 4-6 p.m.
• City Hall, 1401 JFK Blvd., 4th and 5th floors. Exhibit: May 6-31; weekdays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Reception: May 9, 5-7 p.m., 5th floor
• West Philadelphia Senior Community Center, 1016-26 N. 41st St. (41st & Poplar streets). Exhibit: May 1-31, weekdays, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Reception: May 16, 4-6 p.m.

PCA’s Celebrate Arts & Aging 2018 festival is sponsored by Always Best Care Senior Services, Health Partners Plans, JEVS at Home and PECO.
**SUNDAY**

6

**MONDAY**

7

**TUESDAY**

1

**WEDNESDAY**

2

**THURSDAY**

3

**FRIDAY**

4

**SATURDAY**

5

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### Older Americans Month

**MOTHER'S DAY**

13

**PICTURE**


**CELEBRATION**

14

Celebration of Art & Aging Week Activity: Artists & Artisans will exhibit & sell wearing, jewelry, linocuts, quilting, diaries & more. 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Journey’s Way. 215-487-1750. (Continues May 15)

**WEDNESDAY**

15

Agape Grace with Jean. 10 a.m. Center in the Park. 215-648-7712.

**SUNDAY**

16

Seniors Unlimited Spring Choir Concert. 3 p.m. Center in the Park. 215-648-7712.

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### PCA's Celebrate Arts & Aging

**MEMORIAL DAY**

20

**PICTURE**

Amici Opera Company Presents: Cilea’s Adriana Lecouvreur. 2 p.m. Pechin. 215-224-0257.

**MOTHER’S DAY**

21

**PICTURE**

Amici Opera Company Presents Bizet’s Carmen. 1 p.m. Stage One. 215-224-0257.

**THURSDAY**

24

**PICTURE**

Priscilla. 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Center in the Park. 215-648-7712.

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### National Senior Health & Fitness Day

**SATURDAY**

26

**PICTURE**

Memorial Day Weekend at National Constitution Center. Honor America’s fallen military heroes with a variety of family-friendly programs & activities, including flag etiquette & folding workshops, arts & crafts, & interactive shows. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Center in the Park. 215-648-7712.

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### Outrageous Bingo

**TUESDAY**

28

**PICTURE**

Outrageous bingo. Door prizes. 50-50 call tickets, food & drink. Benefits the center. 1 p.m. St. Charles Settlement House Community Center. 215-780-9538.

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### Philadelphia Renissance Fair

**THURSDAY**

31

**PICTURE**

Philadelphia Renissance Fair. 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Fun Mitzvah. Philadelphiafair.com. (Sund. & 12 & 13)

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### Armies Forces Day

**SATURDAY**

32

**PICTURE**

Amici Opera Company Presents Bizet’s Carmen. 5 p.m. Rodenbroch UMC. 215-224-0257.

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### MilesOnline

**SUNDAY**

33

**PICTURE**

Visit our website at: www.milestonesnewspaper.com. If you’ve missed an issue, please call the number listed for pricing or other details.

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### Calendar Background

“Mother Gardner’s arithmetic” by Andrea DelGiudice, 2018. This work will be on display at City Hall through June.
Ask the Expert

Enjoy art classes at your neighborhood senior center

QUESTION:
I have always been interested in learning to make arts and crafts. Are inexpensive classes for seniors available? (Anonymous)

ANSWER:
Philadelphia's many senior community centers and satellite meal sites, many of which are funded in part by Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA), provide a variety of options for older adults who want to explore their artistic side. Most centers are equipped with dedicated arts and crafts spaces, and many also have a kiln on-site for ceramics and pottery classes.

Available crafting classes include crochet, jewelry-making, quilting and scrapbooking. Art classes include papier maché at Philadelphia Senior Center on the Avenue of the Arts and the Asian Pacific Resource Center in Center City, an art café with painting lessons at Marconi Older Adult Center in South Philadelphia, and mosaic art and art for stress relief at KeinLife: Northeast Philadelphia. In addition, Southwest Senior Center repurposes items like paper, wire and leather as beautiful art through its found-art class. Although many of the classes offered at senior centers require a nominal fee to cover supplies and instruction, some are free. For more information about arts and crafts programming and costs, contact your local center. To find a center in your neighborhood, see the ad on page 13. For more information, call the PCA Helpline at 215-765-9040, or go to pcaCares.org and click on "Services for Seniors," then "Senior Centers."

Karen Washington is assistant director of program management at PCA.

Celebrate arts

pencil and to just go ahead. It turned out that I could draw everything." She was motivated to take additional lessons elsewhere and to explore new art forms on her own.

Creating signature art

This year, Gray’s acrylic dot painting, “Flowered Clown,” is the signature artwork for Philadelphia Corporation for Aging’s (PCAs) 16th annual Celebrate Arts & Aging festival. “Our goal is to encourage older people to experience the wealth of artistic possibilities our region has to offer and to showcase the outstanding work of senior artists,” PCA President and CEO Holly Lange said. “We also know that staying active and engaged is one of the keys to healthy aging, and the arts specifically have been shown to have a broad range of physical, mental and emotional benefits.”

This year’s celebration will feature more than 150 works of art created by older adults on exhibit throughout the city. These works will include paintings, drawings, mixed media collages and photographs. Many of the participating artists are new to art, others are long-time professionals. They come from diverse ethnic groups and nationalities. All attest to the joys of creativity.

The three art exhibits will take place at City Hall – fourth and fifth floors, 1401 JFK Blvd. in Center City; Center on the Hill, 8855 Germantown Ave. in Chestnut Hill; and West Philadelphia Senior Community Center, 41st and Poplar streets. Receptions with opportunities to meet the participating artists will be held at each site. (For more information on the exhibits and receptions and other arts opportunities this month, see page 9.)

Showcased at City Hall, Gray’s signature artwork is a self-portrait based on another phase of her life, when she spent five years entertaining as Cascabel, the Flowered Clown.

At 65, she retired from work as a marketing consultant for the Institute for Scientific Information and decided to expand upon longstanding avocations of singing, dancing and acting. Gray attended nonprofessional clowning classes through a program offered by the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse. Subsequently, she entertained as Cascabel at nonprofit venues throughout the Philadelphia area – “cheerfully enchanting those she encountered,” as she recited in the performance.

Her painting was inspired by a photograph someone took during one of her performances. Gray’s face is made up in white, accented by bright red lipstick and black-rimmed eyes. She wears a curly blonde wig, an elaborate flow- ered costume and a headpiece.

Dot paintings like hers are created by making repeated imprints with implements that produce round dot shapes. Gray uses everything from crochet hooks with flat round backs to the round end of a paint brush. She begins an artwork by painting the canvas totally in black, then creates a drawing in white chalk over the dark background. Then she paints the dot patterns directly over the drawing, dipping implements in acrylic paint to create dots of various sizes and colors. To create the image of Cascabel, she used purple, red, yellow, brown and green dots to overlay the costume and headpiece on the drawing.

Finding inspiration online

This portrait was one of Gray’s first dot paintings, and it resulted from another fortuitous encounter. “I was reading an email that was embedded with a YouTube video and decided to watch it,” she said. “As I did, videos about something completely different – dot art – kept popping up.”

She thought the dot art was so pretty that she started watching more YouTube videos to learn how to do it. Gray also gets ideas from those videos for what tools she needs to do the work. “It’s been very exciting,” said Gray, who now creates most of her paintings in the dot style.

One of the best pieces of artistic advice she received during her early painting endeavors was from her former watercolor teacher, Miriam Triester, then at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Temple University.

Gray was taking a class in watercolor painting – the only formal art training she’s received since her first lessons at the library. Watercolors proved to be a challenging and frustrating medium after the exacting style of the pencil drawings she had done previously. “When I tried painting with watercolors, it was messy; it was awful,” she said. “I wanted to quit. Things did not come out like the drawings. My teacher told me ‘You have to have the courage to persist and keep on improving.’”

After the class ended, she stayed in the classroom to continue working by herself. “It began to hit me that I could learn to use watercolors,” she said. If the teacher had not encouraged her to persevere that day, she said she would not be the artist she is today. “Art has been a blessing in my life,” she said.

PCA’s 2018 Celebrate Arts & Aging festival is sponsored by Always Best Care Senior Services, Health Partners Plans, JEVS at Home and PECO.

Marcia Z. Siegal is public relations manager for Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA).
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Artist finds new outlet in making ‘malas,’ prayer beads for meditation

By Linda L. Riley

Tina Pritchard has felt compelled to create beauty, in one form or another, for as long as she can remember. In service of that drive, she has embarked on an eclectic variety of pursuits, from textile arts to baking to gardening, some income-producing, others not. Her most recent undertaking is making malas, strings of prayer beads used in meditation.

As a teen, Pritchard sewed her own clothes, then branched out to make evening gowns for a family friend who was a concert pianist. She was taught to sew by my mother and did not have any formal training until many years after high school, when she studied fashion and textile design at the former Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science (now Philadelphia University). After high school, she enrolled in the radio-TV-film program at Temple University, where she learned film editing. She dropped out for financial reasons and became a pastry chef, working first for caterers in Philadelphia and then for Whole Foods. “I made beautiful cakes and tarts, and I was at one point known as the cookie queen,” she says.

After leaving that job, she and a friend began a business providing gardening services and she discovered yet another outlet for her creativity.

“I’m basically a perennial gardener,” Pritchard says. “I specialize in taking care of flower beds. It’s all about weeding, thinning, cutting back and transplanting to create beautiful displays and let plants take center stage as they come into bloom.”

She doesn’t have a garden of her own, but her second-floor apartment in Lansdowne is bright and airy, with wide windows and cheery yellow walls. A beautiful antique wooden desk, a Windsor chair and a comfortable couch establish a welcoming living room. But it’s in the dining area that her creativity flourishes these days. There, a wooden table is centered on a colorful hooked rug she made. The design of bright blue, yellow, red and gold squares set off by black strips is reminiscent of stained glass windows. Sitting on a vintage wire chair, its back twisted into the shape of a heart, she ponders the pattern she is creating with blue and white beads in the shape of a heart, she ponders the pattern on a vintage wire chair, its back twisted into reminiscence of stained glass windows. Sitting

“Then I ordered one and when it came, I thought, ‘It’s really beautiful, but why did I buy this when I could make it?’”

Except for the guru bead, her malas are made with 8-milimeter beads because they are large enough to feel their individuality when fingering them one at a time; the uniformity means there’s no distraction. “The beads really run the gamut,” she says. Jade, jasper, carnelian, bronzite and garnet are just a few of the gemstones she uses in the malas, which she sells to her students, clients and friends.

The guru beads are the only ones that are not necessarily gemstones. “Finding the guru beads is challenging,” she says. She has used a seed from a Bodhi tree carved into a lotus, a tiny wooden elephant, and a shiny stone, among others. Some have come from bead stores; others are thrift store finds – necklaces that she can take apart to harvest the individual treasures.

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Bending her head, closing her eyes and fingering a mala, she demonstrates how the beads slide between her fingers, one by one. “Using mantras that have different qualities to them, you start with focusing on the breath,” she says. “ ‘So-hum’ is one of the really basic ones. One translation is ‘I am that.’ But it also mimics the breath – ‘so’ on the inhale, ‘hum’ on the exhale.”

Pritchard said that she appreciates both the limitations of the art form and the creative freedom it offers. “Working with malas, I have certain parameters – 108 beads, a tassel, a guru bead,” she says, which she finds a welcome contrast to artistic pursuits that are more open-ended. At the same time, the mala offers ample opportunity for creativity in choosing from the wide variety of beads, combining colors and working out the design. “Once I’ve picked the beads, I can get lost in doing the design,” she says.

At least for now, it seems making, using and sharing her malas may be the ideal form for exploring and expressing her creativity. “It’s a natural outcome of my yoga and meditation practices and my love of design,” she says.

With whatever she does, she says, it’s all about the aesthetics: “It’s just a matter of making things beautiful.”

Linda L. Riley is an award-winning journalist, book author and former editor of Milestones.
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“I can enjoy the luxury of living in the community with access to care whenever I need it.”
-Ricardo
Pen pals

In today’s digital world of emailing, instant and text messaging, and social media, students often have fewer opportunities to develop formal writing skills. Through the RSVP Philadelphia Pen Pal Program, volunteers and students correspond throughout the year. The activity helps students practice writing. The pen pals meet face-to-face for the first time at the pizza parties for the program held at the students’ schools in May.

The program matches two classes of Northeast Philadelphia sixth graders – one from MaST Community Charter School and another from Hamilton Disston Elementary School – with RSVP Philadelphia volunteers. The student-senior pen pals write to each other monthly. Letters are delivered to the school and to KleinLife, not to correspondents’ personal addresses.

Donald and Leveah Rosensweig volunteer with both the pen pal and reading buddies programs. “When you retire, I think it behooves you to get personally involved in giving back to the community in some way,” Donald said. A former teacher, Leveah, 79, believes that beyond the letter-writing, “the one-on-one social aspect of the pen pal program is especially important” and helps to boost students’ self-esteem. “The children see that an older adult is interested in them,” she said.

The young pen pals like to ask about things “like my family, my hobbies and where I went on vacation,” Leveah said. She answers their questions in her letters back to reciprocates with an interest in their families and activities. In her letters, she also emphasizes the importance of doing well in school.

Donald, 85, often shares his longtime love of baseball with his correspondents as they write about their lives and their mutual interests. His pen pals frequently write about the professional teams they follow and the sports they play. Like his wife, Donald also wants the students to focus on academic achievement. “I always try to impress upon the kids how important it is to be involved in school and get good grades,” he said. “I tell them to make the most of every day.”

Marcia Z. Siegal is public relations manager for Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA).
Critics’ Corner

Don’t believe bad reviews of ‘The Leisure Seeker’

By Frank Burd

When I know I am going to the movies to see a particular film because I like the director, the actors or the theme, I deliberately try to avoid any other information about the movie. I want my experience to come from what is on the screen and not what someone else says about the film. I am so glad that I did that when I went to see the outstanding film, “The Leisure Seeker,” starring Donald Sutherland and Helen Mirren. It’s one of the best films I’ve seen in a long time. Yet when I read the reviews when I got home, I learned that many critics didn’t like it.

The story is a simple one. An elderly couple sneak away from their home in Massachusetts. They hop in their 40-year-old Winnebago camper, which they call “The Leisure Seeker,” and head south to Florida to fulfill one of John’s (Donald Sutherland’s) dreams: to visit the home of Ernest Hemingway in Key West.

They have issues. John’s wife, Ella (Helen Mirren), is about to be admitted to a hospital to deal with her progressing cancer. John is developing dementia and at times has no idea where he is but at other moments is lucid. They have run away from their children, who are freaked out by their parents’ adventure.

At the start, I am concerned about John’s ability to drive, but he proves his prowess on the first leg of the journey. But there are many other issues that do challenge the couple.

Many critics called the film predictable and a waste of the viewer’s time, despite the fine talents of the leads. I couldn’t agree less. What is so great about the movie is its simple honesty. It proceeds at an easy yet fluid pace. Whether they are trying to connect with a waitress in a restaurant or watching slides of their life together under the stars at the trailer parks they stop in, we care about this couple. Once, we used the term “coming of age” to indicate an adolescent’s rise into adulthood. This is another kind of coming of age, and it is powerful.

Frank Burd is a writer of fiction, plays, history and poetry, when he’s not photographing.

Ed Asner interview

• continued from page 4

What was it like for you, a liberal, to play the captain of a slave ship on the TV miniseries, “Roots?”

It was a good role and a variation from anything I’d done before. In fact, I was playing a good German who wanted to make it better for the slaves. But yes, in performing a function in this occupation, I did sell my soul.

You’ve done lots of voices for animated characters. How does being a voice actor compare to other acting skills of yours?

I love doing it. I act as intensely and as prodigiously. I suppose I benefit by not being seen.

You support many charities, including elderly Holocaust survivors and the Rosenberg Fund for children.

I support such groups whenever I can and do whatever I can and give money whenever I have it.

I’d like to hear what’s next for Ed Asner.

I’m doing a movie in L.A. in June. I may be doing one in New Jersey before that.

If you’d gone into poly sci, what would you be doing today? What fight would you be fighting?

I thank God I didn’t do it. Because the falsity, the bull***t we have put out – “give me your tired, your poor, your downtrodden” – and then to watch what we do to immigrants, what we did to the African-Americans, what we do to the Latinos who come here – the aura that we put out over the world is false. And the militarism which we practice is excessive. “America über alles.” It’s scary.

Frank Burd is a writer of fiction, plays, history and poetry, when he’s not photographing.
Making unusual, unconventional tote bags from my accumulated totes

By M. L. Polak

By chance several years ago, I started making funky tote bags that incorporated superhero/heroine figures, after a video editing project got temporarily derailed. There I was in my office, staring at the shelves surrounding my desk, and seeing all this – dare I say – crap.

I had just started trying to make a dent in the odd array of stuff I had accumulated over time, including toys. When I took some superhero action figures to sell to a small neighborhood shop, I was told they were essentially worthless. So I donated the wind-up nun that breathed fire and a few other pieces to Uhuru Thrift Shop. Then I went home and looked at Zeus, Superman, Spiderman and friends, and I got an idea. I purchased a green plastic tote themed items, including tiny ghosts, skulls and fake bugs. I have one with plastic multi-colored spiders that is gorgeous!

They are pieces of artwork in the form of a purse. When my friend Kathy moved from Philly to New Mexico, she took a tote decorated with a toy Chihuahua in a serape and folkloric hat to her new home in Albuquerque.

It started as just a hobby for me, and a way to control some of my accumulated clutter, but it’s turned out to be very relaxing, and it kept me from going crazy when I couldn’t finish editing my film.

Call it what you will – recycling, adaptive reuse. The tote bags have given a new life to old products and brought joy to their new owners. So far, they’ve sold in brief engagements at a green products festival run by the Sustainable Business Network, a special showcase at a stylish hair-design parlor, a local giftware boutique, a Center City thrift shop or two, sidewalk sales and flea markets, and online. One design-conscious older fellow bought several totes for his young granddaughter to store her dolls and playthings and tchotchkes in. Someone else uses hers for a magazine rack. A little boy wanted one to show off his superhero collection.

On the labels, I use a “nomme de purse,” TashaMaria Tromer, after my late Gramma Rose, whose surname was Tromer. I think the totes combine the minimalistic flair of 21st-century narrative with memorable yet austere design. Plus, they’re fun to make, fun to give, and fun to get!

M.L. Polak writes, edits, draws cartoons and gardens in Philadelphia.
Don's Column

Stamp collecting: A world view

By Don Harrison

When I was a boy, back in the 1940s, stamp collecting was a very popular hobby with all ages and stations in life. Franklin D. Roosevelt was known to be a collector. All nations issued postage stamps, and collectors sought to travel the world by collecting as many stamps as they could. If I decided to resume my boyhood hobby of stamp collecting, I’d need a new album to take on the stamps of all the new nations established since those years.

The subcontinent of Asia, for example, includes four huge countries that were not independent at the time – India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Nearby is Myanmar, which constituted French Indo-China. Thailand was Siam, Malaysia was Malaya and Indonesia was the Dutch East Indies.

In some cases, the new nations were the same as the old colonial fiefdoms. On the other hand, the former Soviet Union included the Baltic and Caucasus republics and those huge Central Asian “–stans.” And Africa is crisscrossed by new nations.

Yes, in the unlikely event I would resume stamp collecting, I’d need a new – and much larger – album.

Since my boyhood years, I’ve been to many foreign climes, including renamed cities – Mumbai (formerly Bombay) in India and Guangchou (formerly Canton) in China – and Islamabad, which Pakistan created as a new capital. My world has outdistanced the world of my childhood stamp collection, but it’s a fascinating world.

Happy birthday to me!

Birthdays used to be a big deal, but no longer. I’ve lived through too many to take them seriously. It’s just another day in the month (but thanks anyhow).

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

Cartoonist

• continued from page 5

Author, speaker and writer Barbara Sherf tells the stories of businesses and individuals.

Activism to me is just doing it, digging in and doing the work,” Wilkinson said.

These days, she has cut back from illustrating six cartoons to four in order to spend more time with her family and to pursue personal projects, like learning to paint watercolors.

Her cartoons can be found at GoComics or signetoons.com.

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