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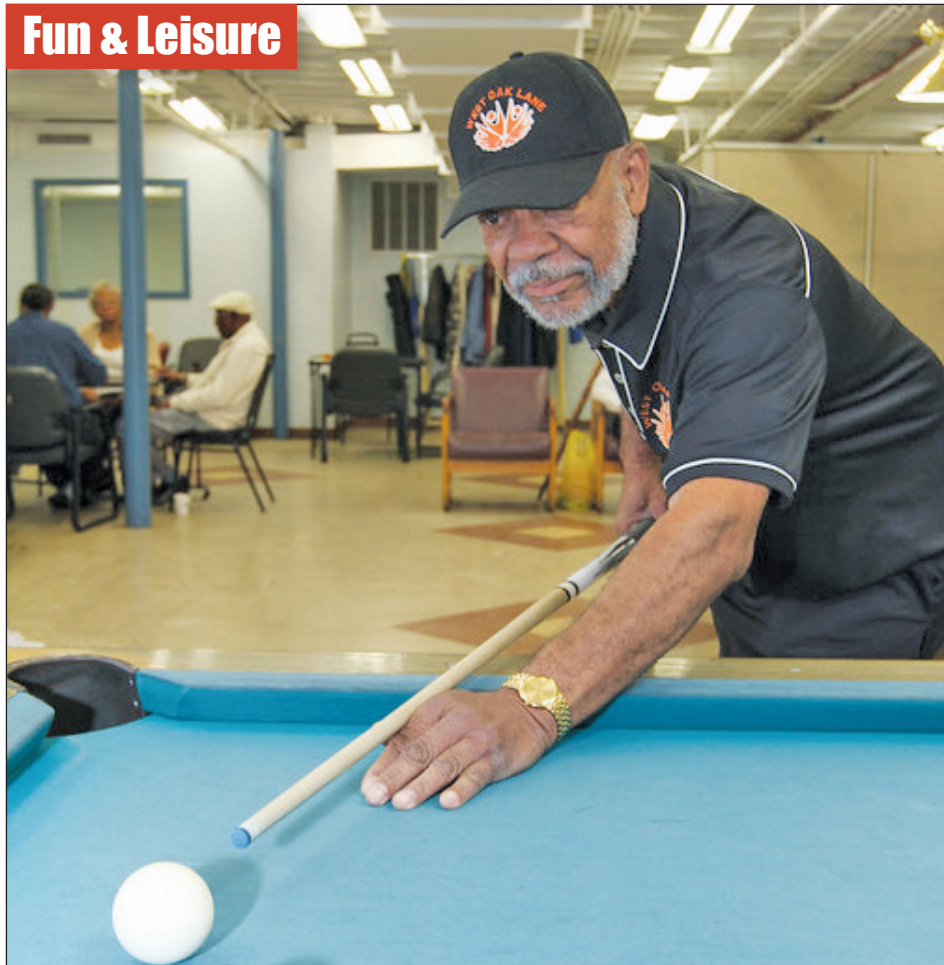
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EDITOR'S NOTE:
 Please enjoy our
 combined July/Aug
 issue. September's
 issue will feature
 Get Physical.

Fun & Leisure



Paola Noguerras

Held annually, the Philadelphia Senior Games allow Philadelphians, 50 and older, to compete in a variety of activities, including billiards.

Veteran enjoys participating at the Philadelphia Senior Games

By Beth Goldner

The Philadelphia Senior Games offers something for everybody—just ask Ralph N. Wyche, known to most as “Sarge,” a participant for the past five years.

Over the years, Wyche has participated in a host of events at the Games. This year he took part in the softball throw, the football throw, and his favorite — billiards. Wyche plays bil-

liards regularly at the West Oak Lane Senior Center, where he is a member of the pool team. He lives just a block away from the center and has been playing with the team for more than four years.

“One of the best parts of the Senior Games is that you don’t know who you’ll be matched up with,” Wyche said. And although some friends of his from the senior center are often there,

• continued on page 15

Fun & Leisure

Taking up a musical instrument can benefit seniors

By Barbara Sherf

Ask many seniors and their musical instructors in and around Philadelphia and they will attest that you can indeed teach an old dog new tricks when it comes to playing a musical instrument—and those tricks are leading to improved memory and mental acuity, as well as a sense of accomplishment.

Musician Rich Rudin, 67, who opened Maplewood Music Studio in Germantown nearly 40 years ago (and more recently opened a branch in Chestnut Hill), is seeing more and more adult learners picking up an instrument not only for the joy of playing, but also to keep their brains active.

“Picking up an instrument and studying music is probably the single best thing you can do to keep your brain active and functioning well as a senior,” said Rudin. “Learning a language is a close second, but music is its own language and it uses so many senses, including the sense of wonder. That sense of wonder will

• continued on page 13



Barbara Sherf

Recent University of Montreal’s School of Speech and Language study suggests that music training can change brain function and possibly prevent some of the affects of aging.

PCA

PHILADELPHIA CORPORATION FOR AGING

WHO IS PCA?

Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA) is a nonprofit agency dedicated to serving Philadelphia seniors. In addition to bringing you Milestones newspaper, PCA offers:

- Care in the home
- Home-delivered meals
- Home repairs and modifications
- Protective services
- Senior centers
- Caregiver support
- Employment and volunteer programs
- Legal services
- Transportation



- Ombudsman services
- Health education
- Information and referral

For more information, call the PCA Helpline at 215-765-9040 or visit pcaCares.org.

Health Brief



iStock

The benefits of play for older adults

Playing isn't just for kids. In fact, evidence suggests that the concept of "play" may be just as important for older adults as it is for children.

Decades of research have shown that play is a critical part of childhood development. Playing helps children build and fine-tune motor skills, figure out how things work and use their imaginations to solve problems. As we get older, though, we may dismiss the idea of "playing" as frivolous, a waste of time that distracts from life's more important matters. However, play has a number of benefits for older adults that are often overlooked, according to Stuart Brown, M.D.

Brown is founder of the National Institute for Play, a nonprofit public benefit organization dedicated to bringing the practices and benefits of play into public life. He has studied the power of play for decades and has spoken publicly about play's benefits for adults and children alike. According to Brown, play holds neurological, physiological and psychological benefits for older adults.

What constitutes play can differ from person to person. Brown defines play as any activity that is purposeless, fun and pleasurable. For seniors that can take many forms, including:

- Physical activities, including walking, jogging or dancing

- Social gatherings and parties
- Reading and creative writing
- Games and puzzles
- Playing make-believe with young relatives
- Arts and crafts

Play can help seniors enhance their cognitive abilities and reduce memory loss by keeping their brains active and engaged. Play may prevent illness in seniors by reducing stress hormones in the body and lowering blood pressure. Play can also help to lighten moods, create bonding experiences and lead to stronger relationships among older adults.

An important part of reaping the benefits of play is to change how we think about it. We shouldn't view play as a waste of time, but rather as an important part of self-care. Brown stresses that people don't need to play every second of the day to enjoy play's benefits, but they should allow themselves to have a little fun as they go about their daily routine.

In his book "Play," Brown compares play to oxygen, writing, "It's all around us, yet goes mostly unnoticed or unappreciated until it is missing." Anytime you think play is a waste of time, remind yourself of its many benefits and allow yourself to have a little fun!

Source: National Institute for Play

Milestones

Published by Philadelphia Corporation for Aging

Call 24/7 to report suspected elder abuse.
PCA Helpline: 215-765-9040
Outside Philadelphia toll-free:
888-215-765-9041 (TDD)
www.pcaCares.org

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Fun & Leisure

Flying out of Philadelphia International Airport: What you should know

By Shannon Reyes

The bags are packed, the resort is booked and you're ready to go. While a good bit of time can go into planning a vacation, seldom does the same consideration go into getting to your destination. There are a number of factors for seniors to consider when flying. In particular, medical concerns and physical limitations may impact one's ability to navigate the airport and airline screening process. There's also planning for traveling with assistive devices, medical equipment and even furry companions, which are becoming more common on trips.

"In addition to service animals, there has been a rise in the number of emotional support animals," said Diane Gerace, public affairs director of Philadelphia International Airport. "For our passengers' convenience, we offer pet relief areas to serve them both inside and out."

For those who are looking to travel out of Philadelphia International Airport, there are several special accommodations available to older adults, adults with disabilities and those with medical concerns. These accommodations are available to the public but in some cases require notice prior to the date of travel.

Airport amenities

With one of its stated values being "people first," Philadelphia International Airport offers several amenities for those with special needs.

- Companion care restrooms provide extra space so that family members or other

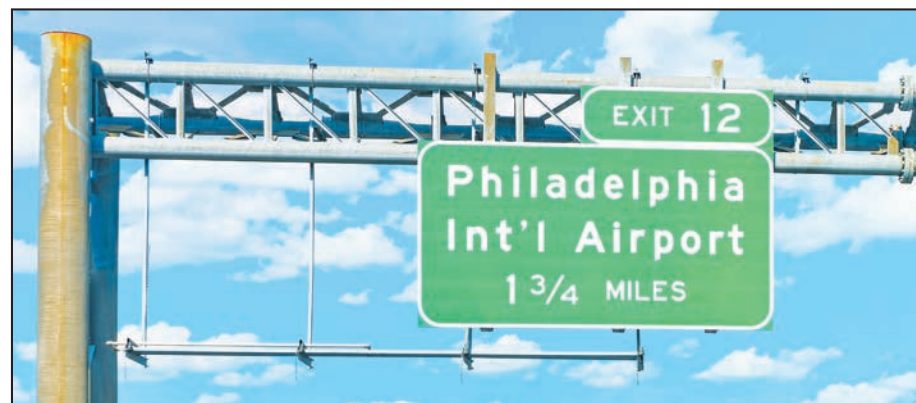
individuals traveling together can assist each other.

- A wayfinding app for visually impaired travelers allows passengers that are partially or fully visually impaired to navigate the airport with greater ease through a downloadable app. "Aira-Visual Info on Demand" allows passengers to connect with agents who act as "visual interpreters" by viewing the passenger's surroundings through their smartphone camera and interacting with the passenger.
- Animal relief stations provide artificial grass areas located throughout the airport that allow service and emotional support animals to relieve themselves prior to boarding or after a flight. Stations are located inside each terminal, outside baggage claims and on Departures Road.

Security screenings

All passengers must complete a security screening by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) prior to boarding any flight. The following accommodations are available to older travelers and those with medical conditions.

- The screening: Passengers 75 and older are allowed to keep their shoes and a light jacket on during the security screening. If an alarm is triggered, then the passenger may be submitted to further screening or a pat-down, but he or she can request to be seated during this process. Passengers who are unable to stand for screening will be screened using alternative methods.



iStock

- Medical/disability notification card: For those with medical considerations, a TSA notification card is provided online. Passengers can print out this card and present it to a TSA agent prior to their screening so that the agent is aware of the medical concern and can provide the necessary accommodations.
- Passenger support specialist: A passenger support specialist can be requested through the helpline (see below) or through a TSA officer or supervisor. The specialist is a trained TSA security officer that can assist with a variety of needs that may arise during screening, including helping with language barriers and special needs and providing emotional support.
- TSA Cares helpline: Passengers can call the helpline at (855) 787-2227 up to 72 hours prior to their departure to discuss screening policies and procedures.

visually impaired and require guidance through the airport by grasping the arm of an attendant.

- Non-traveling gate passes: Individuals can be granted a non-traveling gate pass in the event that they are accompanying an older adult, a person with disabilities or a person who requires language support. This provides the accompanying individual access to ensure they can assist the passenger through the onboarding process.
- Priority boarding: This is available to those who may need extra time to get seated, including older adults, as well as those with disabilities, medical conditions and service animals. Those who require wheelchair or arm assistance are also given priority boarding.

When traveling through Philadelphia International Airport, it is important to communicate any special needs. Those who have concerns can call to address them prior to flying.

"American Airlines works with all customers, regardless of ability, from curbside to boarding, to ensure their needs are being met," American Airlines spokesperson Andrew Trull said.

More information on Philadelphia International Airport can be found at www.phl.org. Passengers with questions may call the airport customer service number at 215-937-6937 or email contactPHL@phl.org.

Shannon Reyes is the public relations specialist at Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA)

Research Participants Needed

Participate in a study about how older adults understand language.

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65-80 years old • Native English speaker • No neurological history

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Participants will be compensated for their time.

For more information, contact Dr. Gayle DeDe:

215-204-2453 or gayle.dede@temple.edu

TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

Fun & Leisure

Free and fun in Philly this summer

By Barbara Sherf

The City of Brotherly Love comes alive with an exciting energy this time of year. With longer days and warmer weather come free lively outdoor events, as well as a host of indoor attractions.

Donna Schorr, director of communications for visitphilly.com (and also a senior), notes that a myriad of options give those on a fixed income choices like a visit to the Liberty Bell, live concerts including student recitals at The Curtis Institute of Music and a handful of pay-what-you-wish opportunities at some of Philadelphia's top museums.

"Philadelphia is particularly good for seniors in the 25 blocks from river to river, where many venues cater to people with disabilities or mobility issues," said Schorr. "We are finding multigenerational families looking to see our city but who need to factor in cost and in some cases the ease in getting into an event."

For those looking for free activities to keep the grandkids from being bored during their summer break, Schorr said the options and activities are just about limitless.

"Grandparents are generally in better health these days and are often sharing their favorite finds with their grandchildren, and we encourage that family time and memory-making together," said Schorr.

One little gem of a science museum tucked in the midst of the historic district is the Science History Institute (SHI) (www.sciencehistory.org) at 315 Chestnut Street.

Jacob Downs, a SHI docent, said visitors are delighted when they come to the counter and learn there is no fee. "We've been here since 2008, and it is a hidden treasure. We rely on donors and rentals to keep this going," he said.

Linda Lachapelle of Rosemont was at SHI recently with her son, daughter-in-law and three active grandsons.

"You often think of the Franklin Institute when thinking of a science museum, but this place is great. It's a good size, there are some hands-on exhibits, and the best part is that it's free," said Lachapelle.

A wheelchair-accessible pedestrian gate is available at the parking-lot entrance on Third Street, between Chestnut and Market streets. Those who don't want to pay for parking can



visitPhilly

use a free SEPTA senior pass and hop on the handicapped-accessible Philly PHLASH purple buses, which are free for seniors. "PHLASH allows sightseers to get off at 20 stops," Schorr added.

If you're near Eighth and Spruce, you might want to take a detour into Pennsylvania Hospital, the first hospital chartered in the country.

"It has an historic wing with a lot of things people don't realize are there," Schorr said. "It's a fascinating place for anyone into both history and medicine."

Jim Cheney, founder and blogger at UncoveringPA.com, has put together "The Ultimate List of Completely Free Things to Do in Philadelphia," which includes more than 70 free activities.

While we celebrate Independence Day this month, Cheney suggests considering a free visit to what is top on his list—a tour of Independence Hall.

Himself a senior with grandkids in tow, Cheney notes that even if you need assistance walking, there are plenty of options for activities in and around Philadelphia.

"There are plenty of free things to do in the city that are accessible for those with mobility issues," Cheney said, "such as the viewing area at Cira Green South, a residential, retail, and office complex with green roofs near 30th Street Station, the daily free concerts at the Macy's Organ, and the glass mosaic Dream Garden in the Curtis Center."

Cheney adds that seniors should consider cool or air-conditioned places to wander in over the summer.

"Some great indoor options for seniors include the U.S. Mint, the Ryerss Museum and the Thaddeus Kosciuszko National Memorial, one of the least visited National Park Service sites in the entire country," Cheney said. "If the grandkids are coming to visit, the entire family can have fun at Smith Memorial Playground and Philly's free public pools."

For more information, go to www.Phlash.com, VisitPhilly.com and UncoveringPA.com.

Author and speaker Barbara Sherf captures the stories of businesses and individuals.

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Ask the Expert

PCA Heatline helps when temperatures soar

QUESTION:

In the event of a heat wave or during excessively high temperatures, what resources can PCA provide?

ANSWER:

When a heat health emergency is declared by the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA) activates its Heatline emergency call center. The Heatline is a great resource for anyone who has concerns about heat and heat-related illness. Once the Heatline is activated, it is staffed throughout most of the day. Trained staff operate the phone lines and counsel callers on precautions to take to avoid heat-related emergencies. These not only includes tips on cooling down but also the locations of cooling centers throughout the city.

Some of the most important tips for staying cool include:

- Drink lots of water. Drink cool water every 15 to 20 minutes, even if you're not thirsty. The more active you are, the more you should drink.
- Avoid coffee and alcohol. Caffeine and alcohol cause your body to lose water, which can be a threat to your health in hot weather.
- Stay air-conditioned. If you don't have air-conditioning, go somewhere that does. Use a fan only when the outside air is cooler than the air inside.

This service is not just for seniors. Anyone can call the Heatline. We also encourage people to call on behalf of others who may be in need of relief from the high temperatures. During a heat health emergency, it is especially important that everyone is vigilant about the heat and how it can affect those that are most vulnerable, including older adults, people with disabilities and children.

Chris Gallagher is the Helpline/Call Center director at Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA).



PCA's Chris Gallagher

It's your turn!

Send Milestones your questions about aging-related issues. We will print select questions – along with answers from experts at Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA) – in upcoming issues. Submit your name, address, phone number and question to: milestonesnews@pcaCares.org or:

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July 2019

MONDAY

1
Explore Your Ancestry. Learn strategies to discover your family's history in this six-session series. 2-4:30 p.m. West Oak Lane Library. 215-685-2843. (Mondays through August 5)
Open Chess Play. All levels welcome. 5 p.m. Fox Chase Library. 215-685-0547.

TUESDAY

2
Independence Day Celebration. Kick off summer with a lunchtime celebration. 11:45 a.m. to 1:45 p.m. KleinLife: NE Phila. 215-698-7300.

SUNDAY

7
Pay What You Wish Family Festival: Art Splash Opening Weekend. A day of family-friendly programming. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Phila. Museum of Art. 215-763-8100.

8
Bop & Cha-Cha. Learn some new dance moves! All ages invited & no experience necessary. 6:30 p.m. Greater Olney Library. 215-685-2846. (Mondays)

9
Lifelong Learning Movie Series: Itzhak (2017). Enjoy an interesting film and lively discussion with educator Dr. Moylin Mills. 1-3 p.m. KleinLife: NE Phila. 215-698-7300.

14
Second Sundays: Meditation. Unwind with a meditation class in the beautiful Benjamin Rush Medicinal Plant Garden. 10 a.m. The Mutter Museum. 215-560-8564. \$

15
Snapchat Workshop. Learn the ins and outs of Snapchat and how to use photo filters on your smartphone! 10 a.m. Center in the Park. 215-848-7722, ext. 225.

16
Bitmoji Workshop. Make a Bitmoji on your smartphone! 10 a.m. Center in the Park. 215-848-7722, ext. 225.
Lifelong Learning Movie Series: 13 Minutes (2015). Enjoy an interesting film & lively discussion with educator Dr. Moylin Mills. 1-3 p.m. KleinLife: NE Phila. 215-698-7300.

21
Family Magic show with Ran'D Shine. Fun-filled interactive magic show for all ages. 2 p.m. Parkway Central Library. 215-686-5322.

22
Cheese: A Taste of Cross-Cultural History. Taste & discuss ingredients through the lens of cultural history, led by local cheese maker Jamie Png. Registration required. 6 p.m. Parkway Central Library. 215-686-5322. \$

23
Adult Reading Summer Film Series: Platoon. 5:30 pm. Lawncrest Library. 215-685-0549.
Email Basics & Internet. Learn how to navigate email with help from a digital resource specialist. 12 p.m. Frankford Library. 215-685-1473.

28
East Passyunk Car Show & Street Festival. Day-long showcase & competition featuring dozens of classic cars & vintage automobiles. 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. East Passyunk Ave. & Broad Street. 215-336-1455.

29
National Chocolate Day. Learn about sweet treats & enjoy a piece or two. 11 a.m. Center in the Park. 215-848-7722, ext. 225.

30
Adult Reading Summer Film Series: No Country for Old Men. 5:30 pm. Lawncrest Library. 215-685-0549.

Milestones

Events that end with a "\$" require an entrance fee or advance ticket purchase. Free events may request donations or sell items. Please call the number listed for pricing or other details.

Send your calendar items to:

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Philadelphia, PA 19130
Phone: 215-765-9000, ext. 5081
Fax: 215-765-9066

Email:
milestonesnews@pcaCares.org

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

WEDNESDAY

3

Family Game Day. Enjoy board games, puzzles & charades with family & friends. 2 p.m. Wynnefield Library. 215-685-0298.

10

Delaware Underground Tour. Trip including stops at Delaware History Museum, the Center for African American Heritage & the Underground Railroad exhibit at New Castle Court House Museum. 8:15 a.m. to 6 p.m. Center in the Park. Register: 215-848-7722, ext. 225. \$

17

Facebook Workshop. Learn the basics of the world's most popular social network. 10 a.m. Center in the Park. 215-848-7722, ext. 225.

24

Shakespeare in Clark Park: King Lear. Enjoy the free performance & bring a picnic dinner. 7 p.m. Clark Park. 215-764-5345. (Through July 28).

31

Grand Opening of Franklin Square Fountain Show. The 180-year-old fountain has been updated with dazzling choreographed shows featuring dancing water, lights & music. Franklin Square. 215-629-4026.

THURSDAY

INDEPENDENCE DAY

4



11

Chair Yoga. Center your body & mind with this free class led by a certified instructor. 11 a.m. Torresdale Library. 215-685-0494.

Screening Under the Stars: Captain Marvel. 8-11 p.m. Great Plaza at Penn's Landing. 215-922-2386.

18

Instagram Workshop. 10 a.m. Center in the Park. 215-848-7722, ext. 225.

July Birthday Party. Celebrate July birthdays with entertainment from singer Marvin Diamond. 12:30 p.m. KleinLife: NE Phila. 215-698-7300.

Screening Under the Stars: Crazy Rich Asians. 8-11 p.m. Great Plaza at Penn's Landing. 215-922-2386.

25

Nutritious & Delicious with Eileen. Learn simple changes to meals for the betterment of your health. 11:45 a.m. KleinLife: NE Phila. Register by July 18: 215-698-7300.

Screening Under the Stars: Creed 2. 8-11 p.m. Great Plaza at Penn's Landing. 215-922-2386.

FRIDAY

5

Bring Your Grands to the Movies. Invite your grandchildren to watch a kid-friendly movie. Snacks included! 1 p.m. Center in the Park. 215-858-7722, ext. 225. \$

Farmers' Market. Purchase fresh & local produce. All proceeds benefit Cook for a Friend Program. Tuesdays. 12-2:30 p.m. KleinLife: NE Phila. 215-698-7300.

12

Adult Coffee & Coloring. Unwind & enjoy a beverage with other community members. Coffee & supplies provided. Noon. Whitman Library. 215-685-1754.

19

Grand Opening at The Oval. A midsummer pop-up park in the shadow of the Art Museum. 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Eakins Oval. 215-607-3477.

Youtube Workshop. Learn how to access videos from around the world, including helpful "how to" videos. 10 a.m. Center in the Park. 215-848-7722, ext. 225.

26

Adult Coffee & Coloring. Unwind & enjoy a beverage with other community members. Coffee & supplies provided. 12 p.m. Whitman Library. 215-685-1754.

SATURDAY

6

PhilaLandmarks Open House. Experience the old Philadelphia and learn about 200+ years of revolutionary history. 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Powel House. 215-880-4150. \$

13

40th Street Summer Series. Live music, free snacks & crafts. 6 p.m. 40th & Walnut Streets. 215-243-0555, ext. 227.

Farmers Market at Cherry Street Pier. Organized by The Food Trust & featuring goods from local vendors. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Cherry Street Pier. Saturdays through November. 215-923-0818.

20

Islamic Heritage Festival. Music, food, crafts & a global open market bazaar. 2-8 p.m. Great Plaza at Penn's Landing. 215-922-2386.

Lancaster Avenue Jazz & Arts Festival. Live performances, crafts & food. 12-7 p.m. Saunders Park Green. 267-777-5843.

27

Guided Nature Walk through Pennypack Park. Enjoy a guided walk from Philadelphia Amphibian & Reptile Survey expert Bill Brown. 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Pennypack on the Delaware Park. 215-425-8350.

Yoga. Enjoy free yoga in the gazebo. 10 a.m. FDR Park. 215-964-8999.

Jamaican native finds own path through art

By Constance Garcia-Barrio

At one of Kingston, Jamaica's, traditional Christmas markets, a big, boisterous December 25 street fair featuring loads of toys and presents, Jamaican native Rupert E. Salmon, aka Ikruwarmaneazy, got an unexpected gift. "I looked at toys made of wood, straw, cloth and clay, and I knew in that instant I could make them myself," said "Ikru," an artist and member of the Philadelphia Senior Center. "I was about 8 years old at the time, and I've never stopped making art."

That dedication has brought dividends. In May, Ikru, now 71, exhibited "The Sunflowers," a two-dimensional representation of sunflowers, at City Hall as part of PCA's annual Celebrate Arts and Aging festival. The piece sold to well-known jurist Federica Massiah-Jackson, a judge in the Philadelphia County Court of Common Pleas, for \$2,500. "I was overjoyed," Ikru said.

Ikru honed his natural ability over decades. "My mother, Ruth Salmon, was a cook, but she had an eye for art," he said. "At home, when I was unsure how to make something, she would say, 'Try it this way,' or 'Try it that way.'" To this day, Ikru can use burlap sugar bags to make pants and vests or carve a tree stump into a gorgeous sculpture. He studied at the Jamaica School of Arts in Kingston and received a bachelor of arts in realistic painting and sculpting in 1967.

After his graduation, Ikru taught crafts to students ages 11 to 18 at the Jamaica School of Arts and Crafts and other institutions. In time, he traveled abroad to teach craft work-

shops under the auspices of the Jamaica Cultural Commission. His career was soaring, but political unrest and the sudden disappearance of some friends and allies during Jamaica's 1987 elections unsettled him. He decided to leave the country.

Ikru arrived in Hartford, Connecticut, where his wife—who was doing domestic work—and children had established themselves in 1986. "It was hard, like starting all over again," he said. Nevertheless, Ikru worked, studied, and painted. In 1987, the year he arrived in the U.S., Ikru had an exhibition of his paintings in Hartford's Pump House Gallery. "I sold a painting there for \$300," he said, "and I felt encouraged." He also took classes in carpentry at the Hartford Technical School. "At times I had little to eat," he recalled. "It was very stressful. Gray hair started popping out on my head."

In search of more opportunities, Ikru and his family moved to Boston in 1988, and to Queens, New York, in 1989. "I had exhibitions at York College and at Roy Wilkins Park in Queens," he said. "I also worked in a hardware store and did a little carpentry." Selling his artwork on the street also helped to make ends meet.

In 2006, two of his grown daughters—he has five children and three grandsons—urged him to move to Philadelphia so he would live near them. He took their advice. He soon began selling his work as a street vendor near City Hall. He also did pencil portraits of passersby. Good fortune smiled on him when a Temple University professor saw his work and invited him to give presentations in art classes at the university.

In addition, Ikru became a fixture on weekends at Old City's Knapp Gallery, now closed. The gallery not only displayed his paintings but provided space for his sidewalk performances on the keyboard. "I write poetry and set many of my poems to music," said Ikru, who has a book of poems and drawings he hopes to have published. His paintings and poems also became well known at the Lighthouse, a building in Phoenixville that Ikru and two friends helped to turn into an arts café. A BYOB restaurant, it also featured stage shows and arts and crafts.

About four years ago, Ikru fell and hurt his back. "I've slowed down a bit," he said, "but I still ride my bike and take long walks." The



Evangelina Iavarone

Ikru, 71, stands with his art submission "The Sunflowers" at City Hall. His work sold for \$2,500 at PCA's Celebrate Arts and Aging month-long exhibit.

more leisurely pace gives him added time to paint, draw, sculpt, knit, sew, crochet, carve wood, sing, and write poems, noted Ikru, who used to dance as well in his younger days. His jaunts around the city from his Wynnefield home have allowed him to visit lots of senior centers. One ambitious—and lucky—walk took him from West Philly to South Broad Street. "I happened upon the Philadelphia Senior Center that day, and I've been coming

ever since," he said.

Ikru will take at least a short break from his usual spot in the Philadelphia Senior Center's art studio. "I'm going to use money from selling the painting for a trip to Jamaica," he said. "I haven't been back in years. I'll eat great food, go to the beach, and visit places I used to know. I can't wait."

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

Crossword puzzle solution

(See page 15 for clues.)

| | | | | | | | | | | |
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| M | E | S | Z | E | N | A | E | S | O | P |
| A | N | D | A | V | O | I | D | S | O | N |
| W | I | N | D | P | L | A | C | O | V | A |
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| A | C | E | S | O | R | A | T | E | L | I |
| B | E | D | E | N | E | W | E | R | O | M |

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SENIOR CENTER SPOTLIGHT

Communication fuels pride, belonging at West Oak Lane Senior Center

By Michael Hanisco

Communication is key at West Oak Lane Senior Center, according to Cathy Brown, the center's director of operations. Since assuming the director role three years ago after stints as the center's assistant director and activities coordinator, she has stressed the importance of keeping an open line of communication with her staff, center members and the community.

"I think that's what we're blessed with. We have a lot of communication around here," Brown said. "We talk about what works and what doesn't work. We try a little bit of everything ... We want to try different avenues to include people. That's our deal: to include people, not exclude them."

During their regular meetings, Brown reminds her staff about the importance of reaching out and listening to the seniors they serve.

"I try to remind them that we don't have to come up with it all [on our own]," Brown said. "We serve a lot of people. Ask them: 'How can we serve you?' We can think of some wonderful things, but if it's not what they want, then we're not serving people in the ways they need. To me, that communication, that back and forth, is really what helps us."

In recent months, that communication has led to the creation of new clubs, including a veterans group, and several age-defying classes like belly dancing, kickboxing and Chicago Step/Salsa.

"We continue to create new clubs and activities because it makes [the center] feel smaller. People can ... get to know each other on a more personal level," Brown said. "We try to group people together. They like to be able to say they belong to this, that or the other."

During a recent morning visit, the center was buzzing with activity. Forty-seven seniors had just departed for a day-trip to Atlantic City. A chair exercise class was taking place on the first floor. Downstairs, the center's newly formed veterans group held their monthly meeting; about 20 members gathered around a conference table, making plans for a group trip over the summer. In a separate room, half a dozen center members shot pool while others played cards.

"We're also blessed with a mix of space—rooms with little nooks and cubbies off to the side, which works out really, really well," Brown said.

In yet another room downstairs, a group of seniors followed [member?] David Powell in informal dance instruction as they awaited the arrival of their salsa instructor.

Powell has been coming to West Oak Lane for about six years. When he's not dancing, he can probably be found at a billiards table. He shoots almost every day and serves as treasurer of the pool club. "This is like a second home to me," he said. "The center has allowed me to try some new things in retirement."

"We want to try different avenues to include people. That's our deal: to include people, not exclude them."

Powell also serves as the center's unofficial in-house photographer. After picking up photography as a hobby, he volunteered to photograph all of the center's special events. He posts his photos to two rotating monitors inside the building. In addition, some of his framed pictures greet visitors in the entranceway. In explaining his desire to pitch in with his photographic talents, he cited a shared mindset among members to "do all you can to support the center."

Members like Powell make it clear that they take pride in the role they play at West Oak Lane, not only as members, but also as contributors to a space they consider their own.

Taking a break from dancing, Carrie Wright demonstrated that point. She said she had first come to West Oak Lane for the salsa class at the invitation of her neighbor, Sybil Bacone. This was just her second visit to the center, but she planned on returning often.

"It's great to be here and to know that you don't just have to sit at home and dwindle away," Wright said.

Michael Hanisco is the multimedia communications specialist at Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA)

Musical benefits

• continued from page 1

enhance the experience of anyone at any age, and the coordination of all these things is a big boost to the brain."

According to a study conducted by the University of Montreal's School of Speech and Language, musicians have faster reactions to sensory stimuli than non-musicians. And that fact has implications for preventing some of the effects of aging, says lead researcher Simon Landry in a statement on the university's website. While more research is needed, the study suggests that musical training can change brain structure and function for the better.

"The more we know about the impact of music on really basic sensory processes, the more we can apply musical training to individuals who might have slower reaction times," Landry said. "So if we know that playing a musical instrument increases reaction times, then maybe playing an instrument will be helpful for [such people]."

Mount Airy resident Ann Mintz, 72, played the piano as a child and enrolled in lessons four years ago under Maplewood piano instructor Larry Cohen.

"While I find it satisfying, I have always had a strong disposition toward doing things well, which is a barrier at this stage in life. It took me a long time to get over that and just play for the joy of it," said Mintz, who along with her husband, Cliff Wagner, hosts house concerts at her home. "While I love good music, I had anxiety about not being able to perform well."

Mintz has gotten over those doubts, as evidenced by her playing in student recitals and at jam sessions with other musicians.

Fairmount resident Seth Laucks, who works for Living Branches: Senior Living Residential Community and collaborates with Alzheimer's Association Delaware Valley Chapter said that in his work, he has seen evidence of the psychosocial impact of introducing music to individuals later in life.

"Often I am working with people experiencing a sense of loss and diminished independence who are feeling like they are not in control," said Laucks. "Music helps give them a sense of accomplishment and mastery over some aspect of their lives. Sometimes a song will spark a memory; dancing or moving to music or playing an instrument might encourage that as well."

Rudin said that most seniors he encounters know what instrument they wish to play, despite some encountering obstacles due to physical challenges.



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"I think seniors are capable of learning well, and if they practice they can learn relatively quickly, but the physical technique aspect goes slower, particularly if they have arthritis or other physical limitations," he said.

Jazz musician and instructor Ken Ulansey shared a story about a senior who had a mission in mind when taking up the saxophone.

"I had a soon-to-be-90-year-old man come to me who always wanted to play jazz and decided to learn enough to sit in for one song with the band at his 90th birthday party, much to the delight and surprise of family and friends," Ulansey said. "The powerful effect of playing music on humans is undeniable. Music has the ability to transport us to a different time and place, to stir emotions and memories we have long forgotten."

Mark Rothstein, 71, of Ambler started playing jazz piano under Rudin a year ago because he had always wanted to but also because he had read about the beneficial effects of playing music on memory.

"Our family has had some nasty encounters with dementia, and I just had a nagging feeling that I'd better keep my brain as active as possible," said Rothstein. "I always enjoyed listening to music and regretted not taking it seriously enough to learn an instrument. So when I retired as a chemist at the age of 69, I decided a year later to learn. Rich's technique of taking complex, strange things—chords—and simplifying them make it much more learnable."

For Rudin, who has been playing piano since he was about 5, there's no question about the benefits that music brings.

"I know firsthand how music has not only enriched my life but also keeps my brain active," Rudin said. "I'm well aware of the studies about the benefits of music, but even without reading more studies, I feel the positive effects each and every day."

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Meeting 'Miss Pepsi': Accidental oracles in public places

By M L Polak

Growing older, have you ever noticed you might feel “blah,” and then suddenly, sometimes, if you are fortunate, you get an unsolicited, instantaneous “telegram from the Universe” presenting a positive or perhaps even symbolic message that totally turns you around and lifts your spirits, and you are soon back to yourself? I call this phenomenon “accidental oracles in public places.”

They are, indeed, accidental, and I never suspect them until afterward, when I realize, upon reflection, that I have received such a visitation. Here's a recent incident.

It was the Saturday morning before a Monday national holiday and I was the only person in line at the bank, just a small alcove at Broad and Locust in downtown Philadelphia. I had come to cash a check. There was just one other customer being waited on at the service window of the only teller on duty. And yet the line wasn't moving. The teller and the other customer were deep in conversation. What was taking so long?

The customer seemed to be relating her entire life story to the teller, who was listening intently and paying not a whit of attention to me waiting as the minutes ticked by. Though I didn't want to pry, I couldn't help but overhear snippets of the conversation, apparently a dramatic medical saga of an illness the woman had endured. And yet, despite my growing impatience, I was really in no great rush. True, I was headed to help a friend at her sidewalk sale around the corner, but there was time. I wasn't really due there until after 12 noon. I silently berated myself for being so selfish and continued to wait my turn.

Eventually the other customer picked up her purse and left the teller window, walking past me and stopping to apologize for the delay. No apology needed, I warmly replied. “I am so proud to say I am a cancer survivor,” declared the woman, who appeared to be in her 60s. I congratulated her and took her hands. Something about her was magical. “My whole family had cancer,” she said. “Lord love them all. My brother. My sister. My mother. She went to the hospital and they cut her open and it was everywhere. All that time, she thought it was arthritis. She had no



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idea. I wanted my outcome to be different. Unlike the rest of my family, I wanted to beat cancer. I wasn't going to let it take me.”

As it turns out, she had triumphed over a rare form of the disease. “Not many have heard of that kind of cancer,” she said, “and because it's so serious there aren't always many survivors.” And now she'd been cancer-free for more than a year. Such an exuberant survivor, with boundless hope and an indomitable will to live. She said her doctors had removed the unaffected cells and stored them prior to giving her several courses of chemotherapy to eradicate the malignant cells, and then when that course of treatment was complete, they'd returned the “good cells” to her body. The regimen, she said, had been a resounding success.

And so she literally felt reborn. “I was a new person—new cells, new body,” she said. “And so I realized that since I had a new body, I should give myself a new name. I told everyone to call me ‘Miss Pepsi,’ because I love to drink it.” Although the chemo had taken away her ability to taste food, she could still feel the fizzy tingle of Pepsi on her tongue, which was enough to inspire her. “Everyone needs something in their life they are happy about.” She nodded sagely before we parted to our separate weekends and disparate lives. As for my mood, those clouds of impatience had definitely lifted. I will never forget “Miss Pepsi.”

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

Senior games

• continued from page 1

participating in the Games always provides him with an opportunity to meet new people. “Everyone is really nice, and the Games are a nice atmosphere to be in,” he said. Wyche stays in touch with some of the people he has met at the event.

Wyche, however, is in it for more than just the fun of being with people he knows and meeting new people. He also enjoys some healthy competition. In preparation for the Games, he practices billiards every day, playing about 15 games a day. Wyche has had a lot of fun over the years participating in the Senior Games, and he admitted that he’s had his share of wins, too. One year he took home seven medals. But he said that his proudest moment was two years ago, when he won first place in the billiards competition.

When talking about the Senior Games and the time he spends at the senior center with his pool team, Wyche conveyed that there is a bigger picture in all of this. Being part of the Games is a great experience, but he stressed how important it is in general for seniors to have something to do that they enjoy, to keep their minds occupied and to spend time with people they enjoying being with. “It’s refreshing,” Wyche said, to be actively engaged with others.

Wyche, a Vietnam veteran, was a sergeant in the United States Army. He also retired in 2006 from a 40-year career at the United States Postal Service, where he was a manager of distribution operations.

Being engaged in the community as a whole is important to Wyche, and being part of both

The Philadelphia Senior Games has it all: Olympic-style sports such as basketball and swimming, games such as Scrabble, dominos, and pinochle, and, of course, bowling and billiards — all for adults 50 and older. From the physical to the mental to the downright fun, there are countless ways to get involved in the Senior Games, held in June every year. There’s even a place for those who love line dancing or Zumba. The Games also brings with it events particularly relevant to the senior community: This year, there was a self-defense clinic and a health expo. For more information, visit www.phila.org.

the senior center and Senior Games are just some of the ways he stays active. The satisfaction he gets from being part of his community comes across in his upbeat attitude. Among his many involvements, Wyche is both a deacon and a trustee at his church, Bethesda Christian Fellowship Church of God in West Oak Lane. He is involved directly in his neighborhood, too, making his surroundings shine by cleaning up, cutting grass, and landscaping.

You don’t have to be an athlete, per se, to participate in the Senior Games, and there really is something for everyone. Wyche’s involvement illustrates how the Games can be a way of staying active, connecting with others—and maybe even collecting a medal or two along the way.

Beth Goldner is a writer, editor and creative writing instructor.

Crossword

Tracked

Across

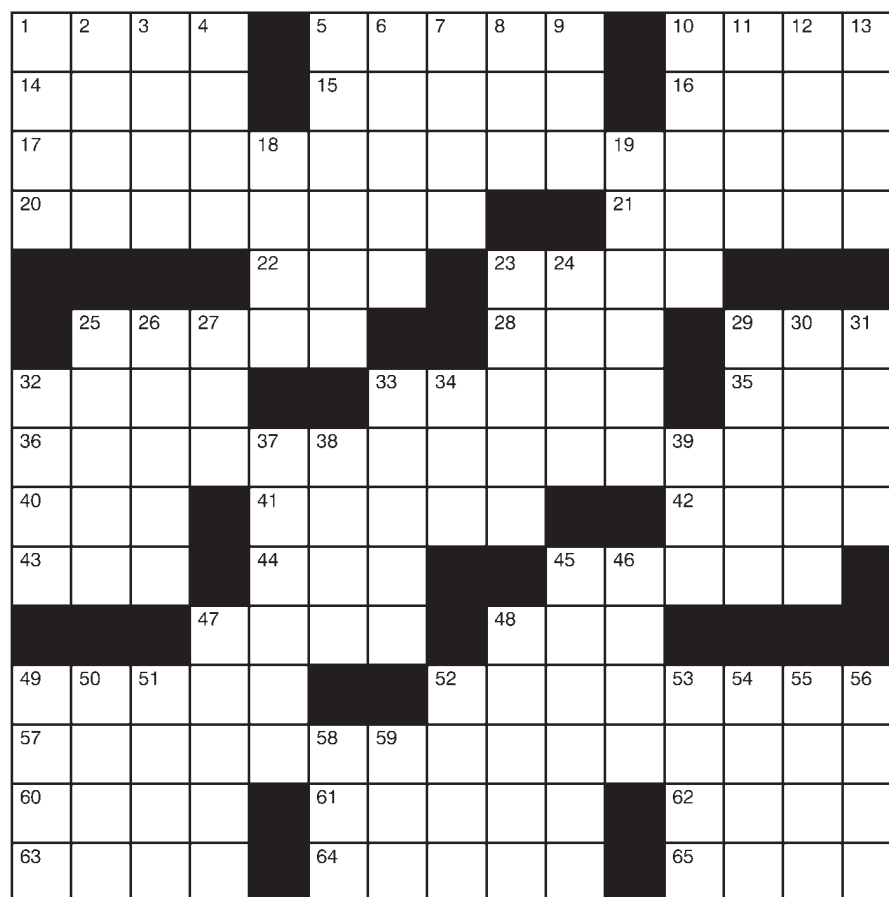
- | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 Eliot’s Adam | 23 Ref. work | 40 Tea ___ Sympathy | 52 Aesthetically satisfying |
| 5 Less dated | 23 Prefix for type or vision | 41 Eschew | 57 1975 Kentucky Derby winner |
| 10 Leave out | 25 Pillow covers | 42 Before long | 60 Stake |
| 14 Beaker boomers | 28 Squeal | 43 Parisian possessive | 61 Boitano rival |
| 15 Pontificate | 29 Lbs. and oz. | 44 Asian discipline | 62 Mouse catcher |
| 16 End’s place | 32 Close hermetically | 45 Famous fabulist | 63 Clarinet necessity |
| 17 Track attraction | 33 Rhone tributary | 47 Not yours | 64 Hammer ends |
| 20 Literary Maugham | 35 Part of to be | 48 Without exception | 65 Snick and ___ |
| 21 Penn and Princeton | 36 Across-the-board bet | 49 <i>Il Trovatore</i> instrument | |

Down

- | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 Cave dwellers | 12 <i>Bus Stop</i> playwright | 30 Scout unit | 49 At a distance |
| 2 Role in <i>Ariadne auf Naxos</i> | 13 Polanski film | 31 Stitched | 50 <i>And Then There Were ___</i> |
| 3 Consider | 18 High-school highlight | 32 Did the butterfly | 51 November exhortation |
| 4 To be, in Rome | 19 Dressed like a Highlander | 33 Images | 52 Church part |
| 5 Lasso loops | 23 ___ the boards | 34 Six, in Sicily | 53 JFK sights |
| 6 Slipped | 24 Merit | 37 Lapis ___ | 54 Rotare |
| 7 Unit of power | 25 Pont Neuf’s river | 38 Allege as fact | 55 Dies ___ |
| 8 WWII abbreviation | 26 Workers | 39 Draft org. | 56 Edible mushroom |
| 9 Ump | 27 Matterhorn, e.g. | 45 Changes | 58 Saturate |
| 10 Martini additive | 29 Linden, e.g. | 46 Director Kazan | 59 Otto’s realm: abbr. |
| 11 Lead-in for skirt or cab | | 47 Lubricated | |
| | | 48 <i>Stormy Weather</i> composer | |

Solution

The solution can be found on page 10.



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