

LivingWell

Spring 2021 • Volume 17 • Issue 2

A publication of



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Cadence by Biking Lincoln**

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Accessing Health
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Virtually**

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of Hearing in a
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***An Influence
Beyond Years:
Kubicek and Lutz
Say Goodbye*** *page 4*

After serving Aging Partners and the older adult community for a combined 60 years, Program Supervisor Sandy Lutz, left, and Care Management Coordinator Joyce Kubicek retire.



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Director's Corner



In this issue's cover feature, we highlight two of our local leaders in the Aging field – retiring Aging Partners program coordinators Joyce Kubicek and Sandy Lutz. With over 65 years of combined service, they have seen many changes and evolutions when it comes to serving our senior population. They will truly be missed, and I thank them for all they've done to assist older adults and to help guide Aging Partners throughout the years.

It's also a great time to thank all of the Aging Partners personnel who've performed extraordinarily and have dealt with many potential roadblocks that challenged our consumers during 2020, which

was a year like no other. With each challenge, I saw our Aging Partners personnel step up with the safety, health and well-being of our consumers at the forefront.

I was especially proud of the job they did in assisting the thousands of older adults who received their vaccinations during the large-scale immunization clinics at Pinnacle Bank Arena in Lincoln and other locations. The clinics were a massive undertaking by the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department – more than 5,000 people age 80 and over received their first dosage at the initial Feb. 5 event alone. The number served was impressive, but the genuine emotion stirred by the outpouring of thanks

and gratitude from those in attendance was my biggest takeaway. It left me feeling very humbled and proud of our Aging Partners staff and volunteers.

As we say thanks and congratulations to Joyce and Sandy upon their retirement, it's assuring to know they've mentored excellent replacements who will continue to be guided by the same compassion, commitment and spirit. **LW**

Randall S. Jones

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This publication's purpose is to educate and inform persons on topics, programs, issues and activities that are of concern to the mature population, their families and community organizations. Specific emphasis is on articles pertaining to the services of Aging Partners. Contents may be reproduced with credit to the magazine.

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Staying Involved

An Influence Beyond Years: **Kubicek and Lutz Say Goodbye**

With a combined 60 years experience serving Aging Partners and the area's aging population, Care Management Coordinator Joyce Kubicek and Program Supervisor Sandy Lutz have made a positive impact on the community through their vision for aging care and the services they helped build and flourish.

Kubicek retired Jan. 20, while Lutz retired March 31.

Throughout their respective careers, they've made differences in the lives of community members and in the way of building services, or in the training of staff to be able to carry on Aging Partners' mission.

Kubicek and Lutz both described their work with the agency as fulfilling and enjoyable.

Kubicek Cares for Clients, Staff

More than 42 years ago, Kubicek joined the Lincoln Information Service for the Elderly (LIFE, became Personal and Family Services at Aging Partners in 2010) office as a counselor, excited about the prospect of helping older adults.

Five years into her career, Kubicek became the training and education coordinator before becoming the social work supervisor a few years later. In 1997, Kubicek led the Personal and Family Services section as aging program coordinator and stayed in that role until she retired.

Raised by her grandparents in

a small, rural farming community, Kubicek was instilled with a good work ethic and love for her elders.

"My grandmother pushed us to be able to take care of ourselves," she said. "I use the things I learned from her with my clients. In this work, you have to solve mysteries and work to understand people and their world view."

Kubicek enjoyed serving others with Aging Partners and acquired knowledge about many things along the way. For instance, she notes that not everyone has their life together, but everyone has a story to tell.

"I learned if someone is 90 and has something to say, you ought to be listening," she said. "Age alone doesn't tell you much about a person."

Kubicek received the 2005 Leadership Link National Management Association Manager of the Year Award and the 2008 Mayor's Award of Excellence. Her biggest honor, however, came from helping many start their careers in the aging field.

"Even though I'm leaving, I know there are all these great people who will carry forth the good work we've done," she said. "I can't claim credit for all of it, but I might have trained, hired or encouraged them; and I feel good about the team we have."

Kubicek often redirected any praise to those around her, knowing her success relied on the successes of her team. Nevertheless, she did play a significant role in helping

ensure care managers had what they needed to properly assist those in the community.

"Joyce has led a compassionate and caring team of care managers to help seniors with their needs," said Randall Jones, Aging Partners executive director. "Joyce always put our clients first and expected the same from her staff."

Kubicek consistently focused on personal interactions, encouraging staff to be good stewards of the resources available and keeping staff focused on providing direct service — either via the phone or face to face with older adults with the emphasis on providing support to the individuals who need help the most.

Kubicek served as a great community partner, working with other agencies to help as many as possible. She also participated in panels and spoke about the agency, in recent years with the Caregiver Education Group.

"At Aging Partners, we seek to fit our services and the services of the community to the individual rather than fitting the older individual into the services," she said. "We meet clients where they are and make the services fit their needs."

Kubicek says the biggest changes she has seen in her time in the aging field has been the rise in number of older adults — due to baby boomers — and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Aging Partners has continued to effectively serve the growing aging population; and during

the last year, the agency has worked to provide resources through various methods.

“We tried to be creative and think of ways we could do what we normally do in a different way,” Kubicek said. “We took more time with clients and gave one another more support so we could keep helping people.”

Kubicek considers herself an alumni of the Aging Partners team along with those who mentored her.

“Each individual in a team has things they are good at; but when you put the team together, there is something bigger than individual solutions,” she said. “I’m leaving a piece of my heart at Aging Partners, and I can think of no better place to leave it.”

Kubicek will press on with her regular community involvement during retirement, such as delivering Meals on Wheels, and staying active with her church and book club. She will continue to serve on the Nebraska Caregiver Coalition as a community representative. She also plans to spend more time with her two sons, daughters-in-law and husband, Stan.

Lutz Leads, Leaves with Confidence

Having had decades of experience in the developmental disability field, Lutz said she was impressed with the work being done at Aging Partners and wanted to be part of it.

“I admired the work they did and the people who worked there,” she said.

In October 2002, Lutz began as an Aging Partners care manager with the Black Bag Project, which allowed her to accompany Dr. David Paulus as he made medical visits to homebound individuals. Lutz helped clients obtain necessities such as food, clothing, equipment, home



From left, Aging Partners Program Supervisor Sandy Lutz and Care Management Coordinator Joyce Kubicek retire March 31 and Jan. 30, respectively.

modifications, home health care and benefits.

Prior to the three-year grant-funded program ending, Lutz transferred to the Medicaid Waiver Program as services coordinator, allowing her to help medically fragile older adults remain in their home through the provision of various services and home care providers.

She was promoted to Medicaid Waiver supervisor, assisting staff in

developing their understanding of the waiver program and monitor the program’s integrity.

Lutz was later promoted to program coordinator, managing Aging Partners’ Financial, Legal, Harvest Program, Aged and Disabled Resource Center and First Service Programs until four years ago, when she was promoted to program supervisor, overseeing Aging Partners’

Continued on page 6.

An Influence Beyond Years: Kubicek and Lutz Say Goodbye

Continued from page 5.

Community Activities and Services division. There, she oversaw the Medicaid Waiver program, Health and Fitness, Transportation, Senior Centers, Emergency Response service, Home Handyman, Activities and Events, Durable Medical Program and Food Service/Kitchen Departments.

“These programs are amazing and help individuals go and be more active in their community,” she said.

Lutz helped expand the Medicaid Waiver program from 400 clients to almost 900 in the eight-county service area.

“The demand for these services has increased with the growing senior population, and she has successfully managed the program to address that growth,” said Randall Jones, Aging Partners executive director. “Her leadership has been creative, and she has always sought ways that Aging Partners can meet the ever-changing needs of seniors in our community.”

Lutz put her creative efforts toward helping form the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC), which provides Nebraskans with disabilities, adults age 60 and over, their caregivers and advocates with a single point of contact for free information, referral and assistance for community services and long-term care options.

“It was so much fun to be at the ground level to connect with different partners in our service area to transform and put together how the ADRC would be provided,” Lutz said.

She also assisted in coordination of the Health and Fitness Center move, bringing in new equipment and helping as fitness classes began being provided remotely.

The biggest change Lutz experienced in her time with the agency was during the pandemic.

“It was pretty amazing to change how we provided services and do it quickly,” she said. “We adapted and it was amazing to watch our staff step up.”

Lutz also appreciated how Aging Partners began providing more services to non-English speakers and other cultural members of the community.

“In the beginning of my career, it might have been an anomaly,” she said. “Whereas now, it’s just what we do.”

In a way to meet the needs of older adults and their caregivers, Lutz, a licensed mental health counselor, was able to begin and facilitate a weekly caregiver support video chat.

“I don’t think the community understands everything that we do,” she said. “We provide countless services in many different ways; and it changes too. We

are always recreating what we do in a different way. We are always evolving.”

Lutz appreciated being able to meet so many individuals who have lived full, interesting lives as they faced their final days with dignity and faith, grit and stubbornness. She’s also thankful for those with whom she worked.

“Aging Partners has so many like-minded professionals working and heading in the same direction to do the best for clients,” she said. “They are amazingly intelligent and caring people who always find a way to bring comfort and peace to the lives of others.”

The incredible staff provides Lutz with the peace of mind to step aside, having confidence the staff will grow their abilities and provide even better services in the future.

“I have been so very fortunate to be a part of this incredible agency,” she said.

Now retired, Lutz is looking forward to spending more time with her children, grandchildren and her husband, Ric. **Lw**



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Dislodging the Pandemic Cadence by Biking Lincoln

When the pandemic hit last March, Anita Breckbill began working from home. The 63-year-old University of Nebraska-Lincoln music librarian also spent the first week of the pandemic snacking throughout the days in front of her computer.

"After that week, I knew something had to change," she said. "So I started eating differently and began biking."

Breckbill has enjoyed biking since she learned to balance on two wheels as a kid and liked biking for her commute to and from work.

"There's something about being outside that opens things up for you, feeling the wind in your helmet and the repetitive movement," she said.

Breckbill noticed however that she always biked the same routes. So she set a goal to ride every street in her neighborhood.

"I enjoyed looking at the houses and landscaping and decided to just keep going," she said.

Then Breckbill began riding into nearby neighborhoods, riding each street there, too. She developed a plan to bike every city street in Lincoln. She dubbed it her "pandemic biking," and it became somewhat of an experience in itself.

"I began biking in March when daffodils were blooming in the yards," Breckbill said. "As the weeks went by, the tulips came, then viburnum. Gradually the hydrangea and cone flowers began blooming, amongst decorative grasses. Later, it was asters, then pumpkins on porches and Christmas displays."

She noted themed streets and the types of homes from little to big, to condos and duplexes.

Setting Goals and Shifting Gears

Breckbill liked having a goal during the pandemic while there wasn't a lot of variation in her daily life.

She began highlighting the streets she canvassed on a paper map. While biking, she also utilizes the Strava app, which charts the route and prints a neighborhood map for the ride.

"When I biked the grid, I didn't need a map," Breckbill said. "But after several frustrating curvy-street biking days, I learned to print out in advance a map of the area I was biking and hold it on my handlebars for easy reference."

If she gets home and sees on her app map that she missed a street, Breckbill makes sure to go that way another time.


For some neighborhoods, which are particularly difficult to bike to such as Airpark, she loads her bike on her car's bike rack and drives there.

At first, Breckbill would bike for about an hour. But as the neighborhoods became farther from her home and she got stronger, the rides began taking over two hours and covered more than 20 miles.

Breckbill also observed other positives such as losing weight, seeing improvements in her general health and having her balance get better.

"When I don't bike, I can tell my body moves differently," she said. "Biking makes me feel better."

Breckbill notes that she doesn't bike on snow, ice or typically when the temperature is below 40 degrees. So when Nebraska weather makes it tough to get out, she turns to her stationary bike. It doesn't help with her goal, but it does still provide health benefits.

Hoping to complete her goal this spring, Breckbill hasn't set sights on a new goal yet — although she is considering riding the bike trails from south Lincoln to Beatrice down to Kansas. 

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During the pandemic, Anita Breckbill took to Lincoln's streets on her bike.



Breckbill's map showing the city streets she's traversed.

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Cotton Joins Seniors Foundation, Helps Community through Aging Partners

The Seniors Foundation recently named Gina Cotton as its executive director. The foundation was created in 1981 to provide financial support for older adults who seek help through Aging Partners.

Cotton is excited to serve the community in her new role.

“Older adults have so much to offer,” she said. “If we just take a minute and sit down with them, they can give us so much wisdom.”

Cotton will utilize her marketing and fundraising background to extend and enhance services to seniors through the foundation’s support of Aging Partners.

“We are pleased to have Gina Cotton’s leadership as the foundation’s executive director,” said Randall Jones, Aging Partners executive director. “Her passion for seniors and her experience in the fundraising field will help the foundation connect donors with meaningful ways to support Aging Partners services in the community.”

One of Cotton’s goals is to help educate the public about the services Aging Partners provides.

“The role Aging Partners plays in the community is vital,” she said. “I passionately believe every senior deserves to live life with dignity. Even though Aging Partners is under the city budget, it doesn’t cover everything; so the Seniors Foundation works to help assist as much as we can.”

For 2021, Cotton plans to focus much of the Seniors Foundation’s efforts to support Aging Partners’ preparation to move from its current location to Victory Park in east Lincoln.


“This new location will be such a benefit to seniors,” she said.

Cotton has reached out to past Seniors Foundation presidents and board members for tips on making the transition easier.

“I want to thank the board members,” Cotton said. “This is the most active board I’ve ever seen. Their work


has been important, and it is noticed. The fact that the board has been in existence for 40 years is a testament to how great of a job they’ve done.”

The Seniors Foundation typically holds its main fundraising event, the Keystone Luncheon, annually. As the last two luncheons have been canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Cotton and the Seniors Foundation board are working to hold an outdoor fundraising event in June.

To learn more about the Seniors Foundation or to donate, visit seniorsfoundation.org. The foundation is a tax-exempt nonprofit, allowing it to receive funding strictly for 501(c)(3) designation. 



Gina Cotton, Seniors Foundation executive director

 **Older adults have so much to offer. If we just take a minute and sit down with them, they can give us so much wisdom.”**

– Gina Cotton, Seniors Foundation executive director

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Finding Ways to Continue Serving, Providing, Protecting in Challenging Times

After a year of shutdowns and changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we just might see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Meanwhile, Aging Partners and local health officials work continually to provide services for older adults while taking into consideration the current climate of the COVID-19 virus in the community.

“In the coming months, we want to try to adapt our services safely,” Aging Partners Director Randall Jones said.

As the risk of COVID-19 spread decreases, it is likely services will start up, albeit slowly. The use of precautions, personal protective equipment and social distancing are expected to continue for many months.

While some in-person services may pick up, the future is unknown and safety is the utmost priority.

Aging Partners Senior Centers are currently assisting local health departments as needed as they answer questions and register older adults for COVID-19 vaccinations.

While hoping to get back to normal eventually, Aging Partners has made a few adjustments it seeks to continue in the future.

“We found out we have a real interest for our remote fitness classes online,” Jones said. “During the pandemic, we began providing some classes online. I expect that will continue.”

The hope is to have in-person classes too, especially as warm weather approaches and they can be done outdoors more safely.

Rural America

How the pandemic affects us can largely depend on where we live. For those living in rural counties, things look differently than they do for those in close proximity to Nebraska’s capital.

In rural communities, some individuals live miles away from others or don’t have access to the types of services those in urban areas can find nearby and use frequently.

“In our smaller towns in the county, the availability to these services may mean traveling into Seward for doctor appointments, groceries or pharmacies by having family members or neighbors helping them out or using public transportation,” said Kathy Ruzicka, Seward County Aging Services program manager.


Older adults in smaller counties are missing Aging Partners’ services such as foot care clinics, blood pressure checks, exercise classes — and many are missing human contact and socialization from these events.

In Butler County, congregate meals were offered five days a week before the pandemic. Now, the Senior Center is offering to-go meals. However, less people are taking advantage of this because the meals served as a social time for many.



“Most of our older adults miss being able to come here and have meals together,” said Diana McDonald, director of Butler County Senior Services. “The biggest challenge with seniors is they can’t get their socialization — that’s where many are struggling.”

McDonald noted how many are trying to stay connected to others — through phone calls or exercising together when possible. But for those who are hard of hearing, talking on the phone or through a mask can be frustrating. For those on limited incomes, they may not have access to electronic devices or internet to make video calls; and many are just too anxious to get out of their homes and risk contracting COVID-19.

Aging Partners is doing its best to provide services it can while keeping those it serves as safe as possible. In the coming months, Aging Partners will release any opening information through newsletters, emails and news releases. Any other information can also be found at aging.lincoln.ne.gov. 

Pandemic Predicaments: Discovering the Complicated Nature of Aging in Nebraska Amid Physical Distancing

As restrictions and physical distancing became prevalent with the COVID-19 pandemic, no one knew what effects this would have on contributing to loneliness.

This topic has become increasingly important though for agencies and organizations involved in the health and well-being of older adults.

In July 2020, faculty from the University of Nebraska at Omaha Gerontology Department and the University of Nebraska Kearney Communication Disorders Department came together with the eight Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) to develop a survey addressing the unintended social and psychological consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on aging adults living in Nebraska communities.

The study, titled COVID-19 and Its Impact on Aging Nebraskans: A final report for Nebraska's Area Agencies on Aging, showed a variety of interesting results.

COVID-19 has exposed the social, psychological and digital vulnerabilities of rural and underserved adults age 60 and over throughout the state.

Those who work with older Nebraskans need to understand the differences with the rural and urban experience not only during a pandemic, but into the future as the population continues to age. This is especially important in rural areas where services, resources and health care professionals are limited.

The two-page surveys were distributed and collected through a contact-free method to persons participating in the Meals on Wheels/Home-Delivered Meals program. Of the nearly 4,000 voluntary surveys, about half were returned.

The survey covered three themes: how life had changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, social connections, and access and reliability to technology.

How Life Changed and Social Interactions

Older adults continue to be at high risk for COVID-19 due to existing health conditions, along with suffering the effects of physical distancing to maintain safety.

About 81 percent of COVID-19 deaths are people

age 65 and over. Of those deaths, in addition to COVID-19, patients had 2.9 comorbidities.

"This highlights the importance of taking care of yourself and exercise at any age," said Julie Masters, UNO Gerontology professor and Terry Haney Chair of Gerontology.

Globally, the pandemic has halted many typical daily activities.

Survey results showed 70 percent of participants believed their lives had changed because of the pandemic, and 57 percent reported leaving their home less. Senior centers, church groups, and other forms of gathering have often been canceled. Social and physical distancing are encouraged to prevent the spread of COVID-19; but it may be causing more loneliness, particularly for older adults who often live alone and are now less likely to leave their home.

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Loneliness was a pre-pandemic issue that has been amplified with the need for sheltering in place and limiting access to usual destinations including shopping, senior centers and places of worship. Thirty-five respondents reported feeling more lonely due to the impact of the pandemic, showing loneliness was further exacerbated by physical distancing and other measures to protect older adults.

Some older adults are seeking to avoid isolation by connecting with others via technology — 89 percent using their phone to connect with family and friends. Nearly 75 percent of respondents noted that they had interacted with someone by phone or video chat, or in person within the last day, but some had gone nearly a week since their last interaction.

Having someone to talk to is important to combat loneliness — and 98 percent of survey participants said they had someone they could contact if they needed help or wanted to visit by phone or video chat. For many, that was a case worker from an AAA.

“The effort extended by the AAAs cannot be underestimated in supporting persons in their service areas,” Masters said. “The AAA’s ability to pivot and figure

out a way to stay connected to clients in the midst of a pandemic is extraordinary. Every AAA was finding a way to stay in touch with people. Maybe doing this low-tech/high-contact plan has some usefulness.”

Technology Access

One of the most surprising results for researchers was the availability to internet access. Forty-six percent of survey participants had no internet access, and 9 percent responded that their access was unreliable.

Western Nebraska residents were more likely to have internet compared to those in urban areas, where resources are more available.

“For those in western Nebraska communities, the internet may be the only way for them to get certain

Continued on page 14.



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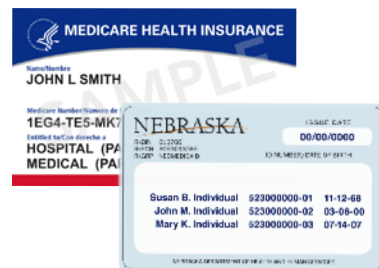
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Pandemic Predicaments: Discovering the Complicated Nature of Aging in Nebraska Amid Physical Distancing

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information that is only available online,” Masters said.

However, many rural areas have challenges with access to reliable or any internet at all. Some older adults also may not have the finances nor see the need for it. No matter the reason, the pandemic has highlighted the limitations faced by aging Nebraskans in accessing technology.

This is also consequential as the nation shifted to telehealth, the distribution of health-related services and information through technology.

More than one quarter of the survey participants had received health care services via the phone or video chat, and nearly 70 percent

had only began doing that since the pandemic began.

Internet access is quickly becoming a necessity and is often required for the use of telehealth as society has a reliance on technology and an expectation for older adults to embrace it. Providing older adults access to devices such as smartphones could be a way to address deficiencies, but they must be comfortable using these devices. Smartphones also are dependent upon cellular providers with adequate coverage — in rural areas, many locations may not have service by more than one or any cellular provider.

“This report highlights that Nebraska isn’t prepared to pivot

quickly to a full telehealth solution for older adults,” Masters said.

“There needs to be more complete infrastructure for internet. Yet, recommending telehealth to people of limited means, digital knowledge and language proficiency is shortsighted.”

Not only is having internet access important for older adults, but it’s also crucial to provide training on how to use the technology and engage in safe online practices to avoid fraud and exploitation.

Aging Partners and Moving Forward

Survey results highlighted the benefit of the AAAs and services

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during the pandemic, providing each agency with their specific data.

“The infrastructure was already there so they could adjust how to provide home-delivered meals, outreach and other services,” Masters said. “It was difficult, but they did it. We would be in a world of hurt without them.”

Aging Partners is taking results into consideration as decisions are made for the future.

“The important lesson we learned was the number of older adults who have access to technology is higher than we thought, but still close to 50 percent don’t,” said Randall Jones, Aging Partners executive director. “We’ve got to structure programs to be available remotely and also in-person. We can’t assume the older population has the same use of computer technology that many do or are accustomed to it.”

Survey results showed 25 percent of Aging Partners respondents had not left their home to do something other than get the mail or newspaper in over a week.

“That emphasizes the challenge we have with social isolation,” Jones said. “That study also confirmed some feel more isolated than they did due to COVID-19. We have to work to consciously engage our programming and help deal with that social isolation.”

One way Aging Partners looks to help is by offering a new evidence-based strength training program called Geri-Fit.

“With many not getting out of their homes, that can have a negative impact on the use of their muscle strength,” Jones said. “Lost muscle strength can cause imbalance.”


Geri-Fit is designed specifically for older adults as a way to help

rebuild strength that’s been lost through the aging process to help ensure a higher level of function as individuals continue to age. The program has received financial support from CHI Health, and the agency hopes for it to be available with the reopening of in-person fitness classes.

During the pandemic and beyond, the agency will continue to have care managers and service coordinators regularly keep in touch with clients, helping to provide extra care and decrease loneliness.

The agency also hopes to reopen senior centers when it’s safe.

“We are hopeful in the coming months we can begin transitioning to open senior centers, and older adults can come back in and eat meals at a center,” Jones said.

“That’s what is needed from a social isolation standpoint.” 

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Dewey's Passion Began in His Youth, Continues Today

When Ken Dewey was young and most of his friends were playing outside, he was more interested in the weather. And while many 10-year-old boys were collecting baseball cards, Dewey was gathering weather data and graphing the monthly highs and lows of his home city of Chicago.

When a tornado approached and passed over his home, 10-year-old Dewey scoured local newspapers and surveyed the damage just a mile from his home.

"I wanted to know why the atmosphere threw a tantrum," he said.

Dewey's love for weather and climate continued to flourish. While attending a suburban Chicago college, he served as a daily observer for the campus weather station. Another tornado enabled Dewey to witness the damage of extreme weather.

"I became a fan of taking photos of extreme weather," he said. "I am fascinated by flood, snowstorm and other types of weather damage."

Dewey earned his master's degree from Northern Illinois University and doctorate from the University of Toronto. In 1974, he came to teach at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Why Nebraska?

Known for its nice citizens and quickly changing weather, Dewey looked forward to studying weather and climate on the Great Plains, centered between the extreme heat of the south, northern cold, moisture of the east and dry air from the west.

"We don't own a climate in Nebraska; we have weather that can change on a dime and come from any direction," he said. "We are a zone of incredible contrast in weather day to day, month to month. By moving here, I got to see any type of weather you can except a hurricane."

Dewey, a professor of climatology in the College of Arts and Sciences' School of Global Integrative Studies, taught meteorology and climatology for 46 years before retiring May 2020. He served as department chair twice and completed research. It was about halfway through his career when Dewey switched directions and focused on community outreach.

"That was a critical point in my life; I wanted to give back to the residents of Nebraska," he said.

In 1998, he started recording daily temperatures and precipitation and other resources on LincolnWeather.unl.edu. Not long

after, he joined the UNL Speakers Bureau to speak to groups across the state before turning his attention to teachers and younger students to explain weather and bring weather science into classrooms.

In 2002, Dewey helped establish WeatherFest, an annual, free event held on the Nebraska Innovation Campus to provide severe weather education and preparedness to the public. One of the largest public events at UNL, it draws about 3,000 attendees and about 60 exhibits on science, environment and climate.

Dewey helped start an annual weeklong UNL National Weather Camp in 2011 for high school students interested in meteorology or climatology careers. While spurring others into science, the camp encourages those from out of state to join UNL's meteorology program.

His passion and outreach helped Dewey receive the Public Education Award from the National Weather Association in 2018.

Many of these events were canceled in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but Dewey looks forward to continuing his outreach in retirement. He'll stay active in sharing weather



Ken Dewey explores the Northwest Territories in the Arctic.



Ken Dewey chases a storm in central Nebraska.

information on his personal Twitter account, the Lincoln Weather and Climate website, and on KLIN's radio show Jack and Friends.

Expanding Boundaries

The biggest achievement of Dewey's career, he said, has been inspiring others to become more curious about weather, climate and science in general. Especially championing young women into science by incorporating equal representation of women and men in every situation and event with his involvement.

Dewey also enjoyed traveling to speak in all 50 U.S. states, taking four trips to cover the continental 48, and two additional trips to Alaska and Hawaii. Additionally, he's been to every Canadian province.

"Travel is part of my passion to meet other people," he said. "I've been exploring since I was 10, and I



Ken Dewey receives the Public Education Award from the National Weather Association in 2018.

continue exploring."

Dewey's career, weather photography and travel is documented in his book "Great Plains Weather."

Dewey calls Nebraska home for more than just the weather.



Ken Dewey, retired University of Nebraska-Lincoln professor of climatology receives his 45-year service award from Chancellor Ronnie Green in September 2019.

"My entire career was here, and I got to experience Nebraska — the people, students, as well as the weather and climate," he said. "My passion for weather all began when I was little, and this is the place where I fulfilled my dream." **LW**

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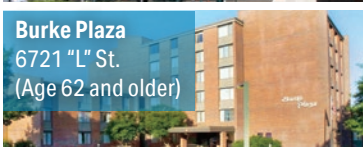
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Being Deaf or Hard of Hearing in a Mask-Wearing World

Effective Communication Breaks Barriers

As Helen Keller said, “Blindness cuts us off from things, but deafness cuts us off from people.” Communicating with others is a vital part of being in the community — both for hearing and deaf or hard of hearing individuals.

Statistics show 20 percent of the U.S. population has some form of hearing loss, and 1 percent is deaf. Hearing loss affects one in three age 65 and over, and half of those older than 75 have difficulty hearing.

Being deaf or hard of hearing and interacting in the community can be a daily frustration; and, unfortunately, adding in a pandemic has only increased the challenge. Using masks has been encouraged to decrease the spread of the COVID-19 virus; however, masks can cause difficulty for deaf or hard of hearing individuals who often rely on facial cues and lip reading to understand what others are saying.

Removing a mask to speak with a deaf or hard of hearing individual is not an effective option. Everyone should work to communicate without compromising anyone’s safety.

“The biggest barrier is effective communication and knowing how to communicate,” Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) Executive Director John Wyvill said.

When talking with friends, a physician, dentist or store clerk, being able to communicate concerns

and understand instructions is vital.

The use of clear masks or a face shield can help by allowing the individual to lip read, but it’s not a one-size-fits-all solution. Just like glasses, they can fog up and still make it difficult for communication. Even the use of live video chat software can make lip reading difficult when the sound lags from the video.

“We understand the need for the masks and other precautions, but we just want to make sure everyone has a plan for effective communication,” Wyvill said.

Have a Communication Plan

From businesses to individuals, having a communication plan can help avoid frustration. It doesn’t have to be complicated, simply a plan of action.

“A plan could be when a deaf or hard of hearing person comes into a store, this is what we do,” Wyvill said. “Companies should train employees to know their options. Effective communication helps us all.”

The NCDHH advocates for the deaf and hard of hearing community, but it also works with individuals and businesses to provide communication strategies and suggestions.

Most accommodations to provide effective communication can cost very little — a notepad, white board, or the use of a

cellphone to type or an app to help. Speaking louder doesn’t always help — it amplifies the sound, but doesn’t help with comprehension.

Many might be timid to express their need for alternative means of communication, but having confidence in addressing the topic will only help others support them in their everyday conversations with others.

“The biggest issue is comprehension and understanding of the communication barrier and having the confidence to address it carefully,” Wyvill said. “Recognizing there is a problem is half the battle, and the other half is having the options to deal with it.”

Wyvill, who is deaf-oral, has worked with his bank to use the commercial window, allowing him to lip read and communicate his needs to the teller.

It’s important to remember things are different from person to person, and business to business.

“What works for me may not work for someone else,” Wyvill said. “We should try to be understanding and flexible. We are a very diverse and vibrant community. English as a second language is not only for the deaf, but for a lot of people. Anything to help effective communication will help us all. You never know who you are going to run into next and that makes Lincoln and Nebraska so special.”

Advocating in the Community

The NCDHH has been working with government and medical agencies during the pandemic to ensure they have effective communications in place, both inside their facilities and working with the public. For video conferences, NCDHH encouraged agencies to include sign language interpreters and closed captioning to relay important information on COVID-19, precautions, mandates, testing and vaccines. They also advocated for sign language interpreters to receive the COVID-19 vaccination to ensure they were safe working in the community.

Individuals facing communication difficulties and businesses needing guidance shouldn't hesitate to call the NCDHH.


"The biggest step to knowledge is knowing what you don't know and asking for help," Wyvill said. "We



respect you far more if you call and ask than muddle through it all. Call us, we're free and here to educate and advocate."

NCDHH's mission is to promote and advocate for Nebraskans who are deaf, deaf-blind or hard of hearing; to achieve equality and opportunity in social, educational, vocational and

legal aspects impacting their daily lives; and to enhance and monitor access to effective communication and telecommunication technology.

"It's important to speak up for your rights and get the communication you need," Wyvill said. "Most times, people are pretty receptive." 



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Emergency Preparedness Can Save Lives

It's important that everyone, especially older adults, prepare for an emergency. Knowing what to do during a tornado, snowstorm, electrical outage, infectious disease outbreak or other extreme event can make all the difference when seconds count.

Aging Partners works with local government agencies to ensure the older adult population is prepared and represented in any emergency or disaster planning.

"When the government responds to an emergency, we advocate for the needs of the aging adult population," said Randall Jones, Aging Partners executive director.

The agency also makes its own plans to ensure services continue when there's a disaster or disruption in the community. While it's important for government agencies to have plans, it's vital that individuals make plans too.

"Through the pandemic, I think everyone has learned the importance of self-sufficiency and developing a personal plan for facing various emergencies," Jones said. "We can help make plans for our services to continue, but individuals dependent upon medication, caregivers and other things need to make backup plans, too."

What to Consider

In Nebraska, April to June is the peak season for tornadoes, although they can occur at any time of the year.

Tornadoes, which come from thunderstorm cloud systems, include violently rotating columns of air that descend into the familiar funnel shape. Weather conditions typically generate tornadoes in warm, humid earth surface air, cold air at the middle atmospheric levels and strong upper level jet stream winds. Tornadoes can travel up to 60 mph, and wind speeds can approach 400 mph. While they can

occur at any time of day, tornadoes in Nebraska typically occur between 4 p.m. and 8 p.m.

According to the National Weather Service, a tornado watch means a tornado is possible; a tornado warning means a tornado has been sighted or indicated and to find immediate shelter.

When taking shelter, pick a spot where you may be best protected, such as a basement or underground shelter. If you don't have a basement, use a small, windowless interior room near the inside wall of your home on the ground floor, such as a bathroom or closet. Do not position yourself underneath heavy appliances on the floor above. Remember, a mobile home does not provide sufficient protection in a tornado.

When choosing a location to take shelter, be sure to take your mobility into consideration. If you have difficulty with stairs or rely on a lift chair, choose a different location. You could also consider the purchase of a lightweight chair used to carry a person down a stairway, also known as an EMS or evacuation chair.

One key element of disaster planning can also include checking in with loved ones regularly. Talk to your friends, neighbors and family frequently about what type of support you would need during an emergency.

Let neighbors and family know where you plan to take shelter and arrange for someone to check on you after an emergency. You can choose an out-of-town person to call when circumstances may make it easier to call long distance than locally from a disaster area. If you live in a rural area, contact your local fire department or ambulance service to express your needs.

Know what to do in a power outage and how to connect or start a backup

power supply or essential medical equipment. Teach those who may need to assist you in an emergency how to operate necessary equipment. It might be helpful to include operating instructions on the device in case the individual in need is unconscious.

For insurance purposes, taking inventory of household furnishings and other possessions and supplementing that with photos or video and keeping them in a safe deposit box or other safe place could prove beneficial.

Recognize that in an emergency situation, restrictions such as those related to COVID-19, may need to be temporarily violated to save lives. One example could be dismissing social distancing to maximize the number of people allowed in a shelter area.

Emergency Kit

Once you've made an emergency plan, you should also make a 72-hour emergency preparedness kit with enough supplies for everyone in your household, including pets. Consider making a kit for home and a to-go kit to take to a shelter or other location if you need to evacuate. You could put your supplies into a rolling hamper with handle, large backpack or small suitcase for easy transport.

Here are some suggestions to consider including in your emergency kit:

- Enough nonperishable food and water for three days, per person.
- Manual can opener for food.
- Battery- or crank-operated radio for weather updates. Include spare batteries.
- Battery- or crank-operated flashlight. Include spare batteries.
- First aid kit.
- Medical alert bracelet or list of all current medications, dosages and frequency.




- Seven-day supply of medications and medical items.
- Copies of important documents such as your insurance policy.
- Cellphone and charger.
- Contact information for friends and family.
- Blanket or warm clothes.
- Whistle or air horn to alert emergency personnel to location.
- Pet supplies, food and water.
- Extra set of keys.
- Extra battery for a motorized wheelchair or scooter.
- Hearing aids and extra batteries.
- Eyeglasses and/or contacts and solution.
- Dust mask and work gloves.

Keep your kit in a cool, dry place. A good location would be where you go in the event of a tornado. Review your kit annually to ensure food and medicines are not expired. For a full list of supplies for your emergency supply kit, visit www.ready.gov/kit.

Make a Plan

It's important if you need any special assistance during an emergency to have a support network of family, friends and other caregivers. You should share and practice your disaster plan with them. Make sure they have an extra key to your home and know where you keep your emergency supplies and how to use lifesaving equipment or administer medicine.

Understand how your medical, physical and cognitive needs may affect your ability to respond to a disaster or emergency. If you have a communication disability, let others know the best way to communicate with you. If you are dependent upon medical equipment in your home that requires electricity, talk to your health care provider about how you can prepare for its use during a power outage.

For more information on putting together an emergency plan, visit ready.gov/seniors and ready.gov/disability. 



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Telemedicine: Accessing Health Care Services Virtually

While telemedicine has been around for years, virtual health care visits have skyrocketed since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Bryan Health ezVisit, for example, has seen an 800 percent increase in use.

Some individuals are now using virtual health care services out of necessity, and many clinics are connecting physicians and patients, typically over a form of video communication.

These telehealth consults enable doctors to triage patients without the risk of potential COVID-19 spread, and patients can get quick treatment for their symptoms. Physicians also can determine if a patient needs to come in for a more thorough exam.

For common minor illnesses, the use of an urgent care virtual visit may be helpful. Bryan Health ezVisit, for example, provides 24/7 direct-to-consumer virtual care. Patients answer a few questions about their health symptoms using a computer, phone or tablet. A board-certified doctor reviews symptoms and recommends treatment for minor illness, such as flu, fever, ringworm, pink eye, and sinus infections, bladder infections and yeast infections. If more information or testing is required, patients are referred to the care they need.

For more in-depth and specialized care, Bryan Telemedicine offers partnerships with hospitals and clinics through virtual acute care programs, support programs and outpatient specialist programs in areas such as cardiology, endocrinology, infectious disease, urology, pulmonology and more. Through these programs, hospitals are able to bring highly specialized providers to the inpatient setting where access to specialties may be limited.

“In these cases, a patient schedules a visit with their specialty provider and then visits a local health care facility where the clinic staff assists them in interacting via the telemedicine technology,” said Jill Hull, executive director of operations at Bryan Telemedicine and Teledigm Health.

Clinic staff can help facilitate in-depth assessments such as blood draws, x-rays and other special imaging. A telemedicine stethoscope can

be used to listen to heart sounds, and remotely controlled cameras help ensure high-quality care and a great patient experience. A physician will review the information, see the patient with the use of fully encrypted video and provide the same quality of care a patient would receive if they were in person.

This service is especially helpful in rural locations that would otherwise rely on specialists to travel to the facility and host occasional outpatient clinics.

“Now, we can bring those same experts in via telemedicine,” said Andrew Whitney, director of virtual platforms at Bryan Telemedicine and Teledigm Health.

Bryan Telemedicine works with 80 facilities across nine states, a majority of those are rural locations, helping provide affordable, convenient and trusted care to small communities.



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Advantages and Disadvantages

Since telemedicine might not be a perfect fit for everyone or every medical condition, make sure you discuss the best option for care with your physician.

Potential benefits include limiting physical contact, reducing potential exposure to additional illnesses, reducing office wait times, reducing time away from work, and addressing health issues wherever a patient is located — ideal for those who are homebound or without transportation.

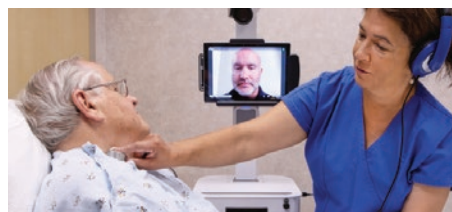
Telemedicine also allows physicians to visit multiple patients across a region without traveling, giving them the ability to see rural patients on a more frequent basis and at a lower cost.

Using telemedicine, however, can be difficult without the proper internet access or electronic devices. Those on a limited income or who live in areas where internet access isn't available or reliable are at a disadvantage.

Older adults have found the option of telemedicine care from home very useful, especially during the pandemic. However, even with the resources available, some may not prefer or be comfortable with telemedicine or skilled with the electronics needed to use it.

You should always check with your health insurance to see whether telehealth visits are covered. During the COVID-19 outbreak, government health care programs opened regulations and Medicare began reimbursing patients for telehealth services. Previously, the government limited telehealth to particular circumstances such as patients living in rural areas and those typically needing to travel to consult with a doctor at another location.

The hope is that regulations continue to stay in place past the pandemic for those who wish to utilize telemedicine options. **lw**



Bryan Telemedicine offers a different way to interact with specialty doctors from afar.

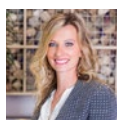


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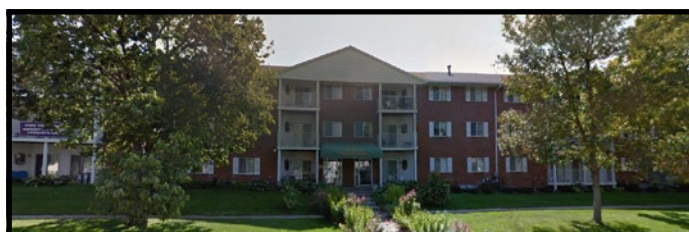


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Embracing Eastern Practices Can Increase Lifespan

By Tracie Foreman, Aging Partners Health and Fitness

For Jeanne Louise Calment, daily meditation was one of the practices that helped her become the world's oldest reported living person in 1997, reaching the shocking age of 122 years. Residing at a care facility in France at the age of 115, Calment annoyed staff and residents with her daily 6 a.m. routine of chanting and deep breathing exercises.

Kane Tanaka of Japan practiced tai chi daily until, at age 106, she could no longer stand on her own for long periods of time. Throughout the next 10 years, she would practice the forms in her wheelchair until her death in 2019 at the age of 116.

Historical documentation confirms warriors from as far back as the Ming Dynasty practiced modified tai chi and qigong movements to calm their minds and strengthen their bodies before going into battle.

Japan, India and China report a combined total of a little more than 115,000 individuals living past the age of 100. Centuries old practices such as Yoga, Tai Chi, Qigong and Mindful Meditation have their roots in these eastern regions and are practiced by a large percentage of those populations. Over the past 50 to 75 years, these practices have mainstreamed into U.S. culture.

When interviewed, relatively few centenarians reported that hardcore cardiovascular exercise contributed to their longevity. The most common responses were a healthy diet, positive attitude, good work ethic, friendships and family support, good genetics, as well as a conscious commitment to mental, physical and spiritual balance.

The most common types of exercise mentioned were walking outside, bicycling, daily tai chi and/or qigong practice. Many centenarians reported participation in meditative practices like yoga, in combination with active breathing exercises.

Western research into longevity teaches us to combine practices from many areas including nutrition, physical exercise and cognitive activities.

Cardiovascular exercises are great for those wishing to lose weight, build stamina, strengthen core muscles and improve bone health. Weight training is fundamental for weight loss, strength building, toning and building lean muscle mass. Stretching enhances flexibility, promotes core stability, eases joint and muscle pain, and improves balance.

Each of these types of exercises have been determined to enhance bodily functions including digestion, circulation, cardiovascular function, kidney function, colon health and mental clarity. Alternative and complementary practices like tai chi, qigong, meditation and yoga help increase mental awareness, reduce stress and create a mind-body connection that can aid in the healing process. They may even prolong life. The response to yoga was positive among Lincoln's older adult population. Class participants began to share their stories of improved health, better balance, increased energy and enhanced mental clarity. Yoga gained popularity in the 1960s, then became more popular after research projects in the 1970s determined the practice improved overall health. Aging programs began to offer yoga as an alternative to mainstream fitness for older adults. As the world began to open doors to ancient healing practices, our seniors opened their minds and bodies to the benefits of these alternative approaches to good health.



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Suman Barkhas came to Lincoln through an invitation from the Health Department. Born in Mongolia and trained in China, Barkhas worked as an instructor and master trainer in Eastern practices like martial arts, yoga, tai chi, qigong and meditation at the Oregon Research Institute. Aging Partners recognized the opportunity in bringing an alternative approach to their existing fitness platform. Several of their instructors participated in the training and have continued to train under Barkhas throughout the past 10 years.

While it may not be a life goal to reach the age of 122 years, most of us would agree living healthier and longer is what we'd like to do.

With trained staff in place, Aging Partners now offers Tai Chi: Moving for Better Balance, qigong and yoga classes, as well as strength and dance classes via ZOOM. Community classes will reopen as COVID regulations allow.

For information on these and other classes offered by Aging Partners, please call 402-441-7575 or visit our website at aging.lincoln.ne.gov. 



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Personalize Your Plate

There is not a “one size fits all” approach to our nutrition and health. It’s important to take into consideration that we are all unique with different goals, preferences and backgrounds. By “personalizing our plate” and acquiring skills that can help us prepare, plan and incorporate a variety of healthy foods into our diet, we can help our bodies receive the optimal amount of nutrients for a healthy life.

Cooking and Preparation

Cooking and preparing meals at home can help you stay on track with your healthy eating goals and may even help save money. Cooking well doesn’t mean cooking fancy. You don’t have to be a master chef to create a nutritious and delicious meal. Keeping staple foods on hand in your pantry and freezer can help create a variety of meals when you need something quick or don’t feel like cooking. Shelf-stable foods include canned beans and vegetables; canned meat, such as tuna or salmon; whole grains, such as brown rice or whole wheat pasta; oils and seasonings. Other ideas include frozen foods, such as vegetables and fruit, and lean proteins such as chicken or fish.

Getting creative with new recipes, various spices and different cooking methods can help keep your meals fun and exciting. Consider prepping meats and vegetables in advance to help save time. Incorporate new spices or marinades to enhance the flavor of your foods and consider different cooking methods, such as roasting, grilling or baking.

Meal Planning

Organize your meals by taking into account what foods you already have on hand and your schedule for the week. Make a list of what items you intend to purchase and stick to it! Making a list helps ensure that you stay on track with what you need. Create “stretch meals,” such as casseroles, stews and stir-fries that can be used for leftovers, incorporated into another dish or frozen in individual containers for future meals.

Eating healthy doesn’t have to be expensive, but it’s important to take budget into consideration. Scan the grocery ads and consider buying some foods in bulk. Meats can always be frozen and used at a later date. Fresh fruits and vegetables in season also may be less expensive. Frozen and canned fruits are a smart choice

year-round. Choose fruits canned in 100 percent juice and vegetables with “no salt added.”

Varying our Diet

Following MyPlate and incorporating a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins and low-fat dairy is important to provide your body with essential vitamins and minerals. The more colorful your foods are, the more vitamins and minerals they provide. It can be easy to get into a rut of eating the same foods each day. Aim to incorporate a variety of foods each day and consider trying a new recipe once or twice a month.

Visit with a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist

There is a lot of information on TV and in the news about healthy eating, and it may seem a bit overwhelming sometimes. Meeting with a registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) can help weed out nutrition misinformation and provide sound, easy-to-follow nutrition advice. An RDN can also help you set and



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prioritize goals that are individually tailored to your health history, favorite foods, as well as your eating and exercise habits. ^{LW}

Source: www.eatright.org



Hawaiian Chicken

Makes 5 servings

Ingredients

- 1 teaspoon oil or margarine
- 2 1/2 pounds chicken, boneless skinless
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper
- 1 can pineapple juice, frozen concentrate (6 oz.)
- 2 fluid ounces water

Directions

Defrost the pineapple juice. Grease a large frying pan. Heat the pan on low. Put the chicken parts in the hot pan. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Cook until the chicken begins to brown. Add the defrosted pineapple juice to the pan. Swish the water in the can and add it to the pan. Cover and cook slowly, turning now and then, for 50 minutes or until the chicken is fork tender. Put the chicken on a warm platter. Skim the fat from the chicken juices in the pan. Boil down the juices until they are slightly thickened (about 5 minutes). Return the chicken to the pan. Reheat it for a few minutes.

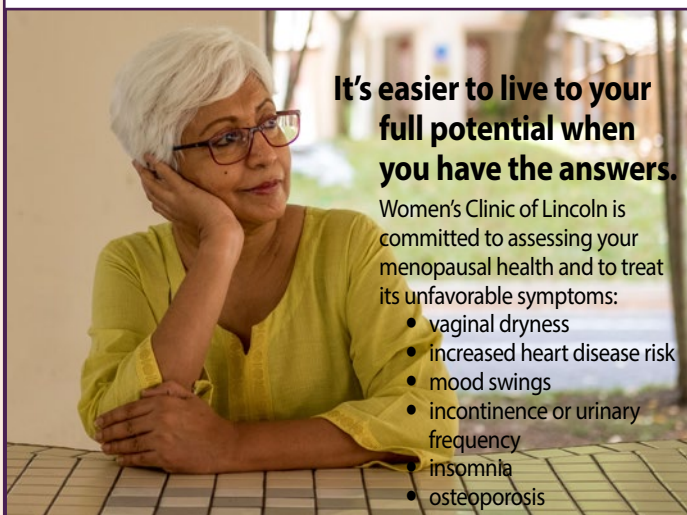
Source: www.eatright.org



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Living At Home

Staying Self-Sufficient

By Mitch Sump, Aging Partners program coordinator

Hello, spring! Hopefully, as you read this, the weather is nicer than when I wrote it. As I type, the city is still recovering from a 15-inch snow and record cold temperature of 31 below zero.

This month, I focus on one of our programs you hear about quite often but maybe don't know that much about – Aging Partners' Lifeline Emergency Response System (ERS). Our Lifeline program has a long and proud history going back to the Ladies Auxiliary at St. Elizabeth Hospital. They held fundraisers in order to purchase the initial units.

They also took turns volunteering as the original monitoring service. As the program grew, it required more attention than the group was able to provide. That's when a monitoring company was hired.

Lifeline is an ERS that helps users maintain their independence while offering a sense of security to them and their loved ones. ERS programs have been around since the early 1970s; but as technology has improved, so have the systems, capabilities and appearance. A woman I know who worked for one of the first ERS companies has a collection of pendants and wrist buttons from the era that, at the time, were quite stylish. That isn't the word I would

use to describe them now!

The ERS operates with the user having a pendant or wrist button to push when they have a concern or need help. Many systems also have an "auto fall detection" feature available. Whenever someone asks me about this feature I do like to point out one of its quirks. The "auto fall" feature detects sharp drops such as if you dropped your button or tripped and fell unimpeded. They don't always detect what I like to call controlled drops such as sliding off a chair or slowing your fall by grabbing onto something. This quirk is actually built into the system so it doesn't go off every time you sit down.

When the button is pushed or a



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fall is detected, the monitoring company will speak to the user either through a base unit or the button itself on some models. The monitoring company will ask the user if they need help and then will dispatch assistance if necessary. Now, here is the first difference between Lifeline and some others on the market — we ask our clients to give us at least one, but preferably two or three contacts who are relatives, neighbors or friends who can be called to assist the user. The older systems immediately dialed 911; but for the majority of our calls, that isn't required. The only time our monitoring company calls for emergency responders is when they can't speak with the user and can't get hold of any of the contacts. Your contacts also have the option to summon the emergency responders.

Lifeline has a system to meet your needs and budget. Another difference between Lifeline and other ERSs on the market is that we don't ask you to buy the equipment, and we will never ask you to sign a contract for a certain length of service.

Our basic service that makes use of your landline phone system is the 6900 Series. It has a base unit that you talk to the monitoring company through. The range of the button is approximately 500 feet. Factors such as what your home is built with and landscaping can reduce that in some instances. When our installers set up your unit initially, they do a walk-through of your home to ensure your button is working to give you the peace of mind you deserve.

A number of people no longer have a landline. In cases like this, we recommend the 7000 Series that uses existing cellphone coverage in your home's area. It is not required that you have a cellphone to have this unit. Other than how the system is monitored, its function is exactly like the 6900 Series.

Another option is the GoSafe Series. If you are independent, this is probably the series for you. It is self-contained and allows you to talk to the monitoring service through the button. It can literally be worn and used anywhere in the United States!

If one of these seems like it would be of use to you, call us at 402-441-8816.

Once again my editor is counting words so I need to go. Enjoy (hopefully) our nice spring weather and stay safe! 



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Homestead Tax Exemption Can Benefit Seniors

Nebraska is a great place to live thanks in part to programs such as Homestead Tax Exemption, which helps many older adults afford to stay in their homes. This program offers property tax relief for individuals and couples who own a home and are 65 years of age or over, as well as younger individuals with certain disabilities. Only one member of a couple needs to be age 65. This is a county-based program that may offer from 10 to 100 percent property tax relief, depending on the value of your home.

Every year, individuals must apply for a Homestead Exemption to receive the benefit. Homestead Property Tax Exemption forms were mailed by the county assessor in February, provided the individual applied for the exemption in the prior year. If individuals have never applied for the Homestead Exemption, they need to visit or contact their county assessor office to request the forms. The forms may also be downloaded from the County Assessor or State Department of Revenue websites.


The exemption is based on an adjusted household income, which is different than the IRS adjusted gross income. If you file income taxes, you would start with the adjusted gross income on your tax form, and then add back any untaxed Social Security benefits you received. Once you have that figure, you subtract health expenses, such as Medicare Part B premiums, Medicare supplemental payments, Part D premiums and copays, and long-term care insurance premiums, as well as eyeglass and dental expenses. If you do not file income taxes, add up your 1099 reported income for the previous year and start with that figure. When you have your household income from the previous year, subtract health expenses to arrive at an adjusted household income. This year, a single person with an adjusted household income of \$43,801 or less, or a couple with an adjusted household income of \$52,001 or less, should receive some property tax relief, depending on the value of their home.

Adjusted household income figures increase every year. It is important that you stay informed on the newest household income figures and check every year to make sure you don't miss an opportunity for property tax relief. This is especially true if you or your spouse have experienced some



higher-than-usual medical expenses this past year.

There is still time to file for your Homestead Tax Exemption. The filing period is Feb. 2 through June 30.

If you have questions about Homestead Tax Exemption or want assistance with the form, please call Aging Partners at 402-441-7070 or 1-800-247-0938 for more information. 



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- **See the spring catalog at olli.unl.edu.**

OLLI is offering limited in-person courses and is using the online platforms ZOOM and CANVAS to provide educational programming. CANVAS programming is on demand.

Here are a few examples:

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- Mari Sandoz, Story Catcher of the Plains
- Nebraska's Mexican Migrants
- A Guide to Seniors' Housing Related Issues
- Healthcare Economics Today and Tomorrow
- The Path to Immunity: Nebraska's COVID Vaccination Plan
- An Unladylike Profession: Women War Correspondents
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***Jerry Sellentin
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Caregiver Corner

Caregivers Work to Keep Isolated Individuals Engaged

The pandemic has changed the way we go about our daily lives, especially for those caring for loved ones and others. Despite pandemic restrictions, home health care and assisted living and nursing facility caregivers have been able to play a more significant role in keeping older individuals connected and engaged with their families and friends on top of their regular duties.

Home Health Agencies

Caregivers working in the homes of those needing assistance keep them safe, healthy and engaged.

“Our caregivers are offering clients more help in ways to stay connected to family and friends,” said Kim Riggle, Synergy HomeCare owner.

Caregivers have been helping clients make phone and video calls, using Facebook and writing letters and cards. They also offer companionship by talking or playing games. And for those clients wishing to go out and do some shopping, caregivers assist them to do so in a safe way.

“Some of our clients love to cook; but maybe they can’t quite do it by themselves, so they’ll teach their caregiver a favorite recipe,” Riggle said.

Over time, caregivers build personal relationships with clients and will make a special meal for a client or swing by while in the neighborhood. One Synergy caregiver even gave a client a cut and perm in her home since she wasn’t able to leave. Some other caregivers went and spent a few hours during the holidays with clients because they knew they’d be alone.

“We hear about our caregivers

swinging by to say ‘hi’ or maybe picking up something from the store for a person,” Riggle said. “When you’re a caregiver and you are really great, it’s not just your job. It’s who you are in your heart and mind, and it’s infused in your life.”

Synergy caregivers were also able to help reunite a couple after not being able to see each other due to COVID-19 restrictions at the rehabilitation facility the husband lived in following a stroke. Caregivers and his wife were able to help him get the care he needed at home, and he has seen an increase in his ability and movement while living a happier life at home.

Synergy HomeCare follows all CDC guidelines such as doing temperature checks, wearing masks, gloves and using hand sanitizer. Caregivers are also encouraged to wipe down a client’s home.

“We coach our caregivers when they go into a home to wipe down the switch plates, doorknobs and countertops,” Riggle said. “And before they leave, they wipe down whatever they’ve touched and high-touch areas. This demonstrates good care habits to clients.”

Assisted Living

Many assisted living facilities began taking precautions in March 2020, closing to visitors. Caregiving staff worked to keep residents’ spirits up. At The Lexington Assisted Living Center, staff worked to engage residents in activities when possible and acquired extra iPads to allow more virtual visits.

“We are trying hard to keep our residents active and in touch with



Jodi Freeman of DreamCatchers Ride visits with residents of the Lexington.



Jimmy Thimsen, Synergy Client Care Director, spending time with a client to teach how to take a selfie.

their loved ones,” said Beth Dyer, resident services director. “The virtual visits are a different modality than what they’re used to, and they have a learning curve. But it’s neat to watch as they adjust to it and learn how to push the buttons. A lot of them are very comfortable using smartphones and doing FaceTime visits now.”

The Lexington has hired musicians to stand in the parking lot common garden area when the weather was nice for residents to watch out of their apartment windows. For a resident celebrating her 100th birthday, staff put together a drive-by parade and showered her with birthday cards.

While inside, staff take extra care to ensure residents are keeping as



Lexington staff member Jen Matthews, right, assists resident Tippy Tussey with a virtual weekly visit with her family.

active as possible and monitoring closely for declines in ability or health and getting the proper physicians or therapists involved if needed.

One staff member who drives residents to appointments demonstrated extra effort by knocking on doors to talk with residents and walk with them in the hall for a little exercise.

“He didn’t have to do that; but he got such joy out of it, and residents appreciated the extra face-to-face interaction,” Dyer said.

Knowing the holidays would be difficult for residents, staff helped as best they could.

“We wanted our residents to know that even though their biological families couldn’t be here, their Lexington family could be,” Dyer said.

Residents’ families were supportive, too. Families brought in home-baked cookies or Christmas treats, thanking staff for their work to keep residents safe.

“We are doing our best to not contract COVID-19 and bring it into the building,” Dyer said. “Families have been supportive and patient. We know it’s hard on them, too, to not see their loved one in person.”

The Lexington follows proper CDC guidelines and works with the Department of Health and Human Services and Nebraska Medicine’s Infection Control Assessment and Promotion Program (ICAP) to ensure staff and residents are doing all they can to remain safe. Staff and residents appreciate the support they’ve received from the community, including treats, flowers and animal visits.

“Our partners in the community have been amazing,” Dyer said. “The way Lincoln citizens, businesses and agencies have been supportive of assisted living and similar facilities have put so much time and effort into giving us the information and resources we needed to do whatever we needed to care for our residents and staff. It has been so greatly appreciated, and Lincoln should be proud. It takes a village, and we couldn’t have done it without everyone else.” **LW**

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A family caregiver is a person who provides ongoing care for an individual unable to care for themselves. Caregiving is rewarding, but also demanding and stressful. To supply “help for the helpers,” the Nebraska Lifespan Respite Network offers information, education and support.

For more information, including funding sources or becoming an independent respite provider, just call or click:

**866-RESPITE (737-7483) or
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MISSION

Aging Partners plans, coordinates and advocates for older people in an eight-county area. Our mission is to enhance daily living, expand personal choices and educate the community in an effort to ensure the independence and full life of the people we serve.

Being Well

NUTRITION

402-441-3480

- **Meals** - Noon meals, selected evening meals with entertainment, special holiday meals and light menu choices are available at some centers.

HEALTH AND FITNESS

- **Health Center** - Exercise classes, fitness equipment and certified personal trainers. ▲ 402-441-7575
- **Senior Health Promotion Center** - University of Nebraska Medical Center and Aging Partners provide health screenings. ▲ 402-441-6687
- **Caregiver Support Services** - Caregivers receive stress management, exercise, health and wellness assessments, and nutrition counseling. 402-441-7070
- **Fit to Care** - Free tips from a registered dietician and certified personal trainer to help decrease the effects of chronic tension.
- **Health Education Programs** - A variety of topics assisting individuals to make healthy lifestyle choices.

- **Health Screenings** - A variety of screenings include blood pressure, cholesterol, glucose and bone density.
- **Exercise** - Pilates, yoga, stretch and tone classes are available at several locations. Daily fitness programs on LNKTV City (ALLO Channel 2, Spectrum Channel 1300 and Kinetic Channel 5) and LNKTV Health (ALLO Channel 3, Spectrum Channel 1301 and Kinetic Channel 10). ▲
- **Alzheimer's Disease** - Information and referral. 402-441-7070 or 800-247-0938

Living at Home

INDEPENDENT LIVING SUPPORT SERVICES

402-441-7070 or 800-247-0938

- **Care Management Services** - Providing professional assistance in assessing needs, planning and coordinating home care.
- **Lifeline Emergency Response System** - 24-hour emergency access at the press of a button.
- **Supportive Services Program** - Eligible older persons can receive assistance with the cost of in-home services.
- **Durable Medical Equipment** - Providing items that address short- and long-term needs. Lightly used and/or new in-the-box items in stock including crutches, walkers, canes, wheelchairs, bath chairs and toilet risers.
- **Home Handyman Service** - Minor home repairs and maintenance including mowing, leaky faucets, painting, broken light fixtures, and heavy housework services. ▲ 402-441-7030
- **Subsidized and Independent Housing Resource Listings**

LONG-TERM CARE OPTIONS/ CARE MANAGEMENT

402-441-7070 or 800-247-0938

- **Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC)** - The Aging and Disability Resource Center assists seniors and persons of all ages with disabilities to obtain information, services and supports.
- **Home and Community-based Waiver Services** - State funded in-home services for those who are Medicaid-eligible and choose to live at home or use community-based services.
- **Senior Care Options** - Long-term care and assessment for Medicaid-eligible persons seeking nursing home care.
- **Assisted Living and Nursing Facilities Resource Listings**

Planning Ahead

HEALTH INSURANCE AND FINANCIAL COUNSELING

402-441-7070 or 800-247-0938

- **Medicare** - what you need to know when you turn age 65; working past age 65; Parts A, B, D and Advantage Plans; Medicare supplements, yearly changes, updates and open enrollment; complaints, errors and appeals; low-income assistance programs.
- **We also help with:** Social Security overview; Medicaid; long-term care insurance; budgeting and bill paying; and Homestead Tax Exemption.
- **Legal Counseling** - Free legal advice and referral services for those who meet financial guidelines.

SENIORS FOUNDATION

The charitable foundation that plans, advocates for, and supports the programs and services of Aging Partners. To contribute or volunteer, call 402-441-6179 or visit seniorsfoundation.org.

Staying Involved

SENIOR CENTERS

Social events and activities, health and educational programs. Noon meals, selected evening meals with entertainment, special holiday meals, brown bag and shelf-stable meals for at home. Transportation to the centers is available for a fee. Five centers in Lincoln and three in Lancaster County.

▲ 402-441-7158

LINCOLN/LANCASTER COUNTY SENIOR CENTERS

- Asian Center: 402-477-3446
144 N. 44th St., Suite A, Lincoln
- Belmont Center: 402-441-7990
Belmont Recreation Center
1234 Judson St., Lincoln
- Bennet Center: 402-416-7693
American Legion Hall
970 Monroe St., Bennet
- Firth Center: 402-416-7693
Community Center
311 Nemaha Blvd., Firth
- Hickman Center: 402-416-7693
Hickman Community Center
115 Locust St., Hickman
- Lake Street Center: 402-441-7157
St. James United Methodist Church
2400 S. 11th St., Lincoln
- Downtown Center: 402-441-7154
1005 "O" St., Lincoln
- Northeast Center: 402-441-7151
6310 Platte Ave., Lincoln

Other Services

INFORMATION AND REFERRAL

402-441-7070 or 800-247-0938

Provides help for older adults and their caregivers to resolve questions and concerns about aging. Services include referrals, counseling, social work and care management. Start here to determine alternatives, and arrange services in the Aging Partners service area.

TRANSPORTATION

- **Ride within Lincoln to the Centers**
▲ 402-441-7158
- **Lancaster County Public Rural Transit**
Scheduled transportation to and from Lincoln and rural Lancaster County areas. Handicap accessible.
▲ 402-441-7031
- **Other Options in the Community**
Listings available at 402-441-7070.

LIVING WELL MAGAZINE

This quarterly publication features stories of interest to older adults and is mailed directly to their homes. To suggest a story idea or advertise with *Living Well*, call David Norris at 402-441-6156 or email dnorris@lincoln.ne.gov.

To receive *Living Well* by email instead of in the mail, call 402-441-6146 or email delrod@lincoln.ne.gov.

LIVE & LEARN

A monthly TV show for and about older adults on LNKTU City (ALLO channel 2, Spectrum channel 1300, Kinetic channel 1005) and LNKTU.lincoln.ne.gov, or Live & Learn's YouTube channel at <http://lincoln.ne.gov/LiveAndLearn>.

- Mondays at 11 a.m.
- Wednesdays at 5 p.m.
- Thursdays at 7 p.m.
- Fridays at 11:30 a.m.
- Sundays at 3:30 p.m.

These are minimum airing times. Show re-airs at various other times throughout the month.

CARE MANAGEMENT

All Counties: 800-247-0938

Care Management Coordinator

Jean Holt

- Butler County
Becky Romshek, 402-367-4537
- Fillmore County
Rhonda Stokebrand, 402-759-4922
- Polk County
Amy Theis, 402-747-5731
- Saline County: 402-441-7070
- Saunders County
Allison Blake, 402-416-9376
- Seward County
Becky Romshek, 402-367-4537
Amy Theis, 402-747-5731
- York County, Jerri Merklinger
402-362-7626

MULTI-COUNTY PROGRAMS

- Butler County Senior Services
Diana McDonald, 402-367-6131
- Fillmore County Senior Services
Brenda Motis, 402-759-4922
- Polk County Senior Services
Erin Dickey, 402-764-2252
- Saline County Aging Services
Lori Moldenhauer, 402-821-3330
- Seward County Aging Services
Kathy Ruzicka, 402-761-3593
- York County Aging Services
Lori Byers, 402-362-7626

MULTI-COUNTY SENIOR CENTERS

Butler County

- David City Senior Center
592 "D" St., David City
402-367-6131

Fillmore County

- Exeter Senior Center
217 S. Exeter Ave., Exeter
402-266-2133
- Fairmont Senior Center
519 6th Ave., Fairmont
402-268-2831
- Geneva Senior Center
1120 "F" St., Geneva
402-759-4921

Polk County

- Osceola Senior Center
441 Hawkeye St., Osceola
402-747-8227
- Polk Senior Center
230 N. Main St., Polk
402-765-2311
- Shelby Senior Center
230 N. Walnut St., Shelby
402-527-5158

Saline County

- DeWitt Senior Center
202 E. Fillmore Ave., DeWitt
402-683-4325 or 402-520-0873

Seward County

- Milford Senior Center
105 "B" St., Milford
402-761-3367
- Seward LIED Senior Center
1010 Manor Drive West, Seward
402-643-4466
- Utica Senior Center
520 "D" St., Utica, NE 68456
402-534-3435

York County

- McCool Junction Senior Diners
c/o Village Hall
323 E. "M" St., McCool Junction
402-724-2525
- York Leisure Home (meal site only)
215 N. Lincoln Ave., York
402-362-5900
- York Area Senior Center
725 Nebraska Ave., York
402-362-2496

SENIOR CARE OPTIONS (SCO) AND MEDICAID WAIVER

- 402-441-7070 or 800-247-0938

Aging Partners News and Events

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Health and Fitness

Aging Partners Fitness Center

555 S. 9th St.

Monday through Friday

8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Please Note: services available are subject to change due to the current COVID-19 pandemic. At the time of submission, the fitness center is not open to the public. Please call to check on our status or request to be placed on our email contact list so we can keep you updated.

During the pandemic, the fitness center will be operating on appointments only. Please call to make an appointment for the fitness center. This will be necessary while health directives related to social distancing and limits on the amount of people gathering are in place.

All ages are welcome at the fitness center. Cardio equipment, strength training equipment, free weights, balance and other

exercise aids are available. There is a \$10 monthly suggested contribution for age 60 and over and family caregivers of any age. A \$15 fee is required for under age 60. A certified personal trainer is available at no additional cost **by appointment only**.

*For most Health and Fitness classes, there is a \$4 per class suggested contribution for age 60 and over and family caregivers of any age. A \$5 per class fee for under age 60 is required. Punch cards are available. Preregistration is required for all classes by calling 402-441-7575. Please register early as classes that do not have sufficient enrollment will be canceled. **Please note that all classes are subject to cancellation or changes at any time due to the current COVID-19 pandemic.***

Aging Partners Health and Fitness Classes go Online with Zoom

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed a lot of things. One thing it has not changed is our need to stay active and exercise to maintain physical and mental health and prevent injury.



To flatten the curve of COVID-19, we will continue to offer some of our health and fitness classes online. The online experience cannot compare to in-person group classes, but they have some great advantages.

Classes can be done from the comfort of your own home, eliminating the need for preparation or travel time. Each student will have a front row seat to better views of instruction and postures.

Zoom classes will open up 15 minutes before and after our scheduled online classes to allow for socialization, sharing and questions from students.

Contributions are welcome and can be mailed in. Suggested amounts are \$4 for age 60 and over and family caregivers of any age or \$5 fee for under age 60 for classes meeting one time per week and \$2/\$3 for classes meeting two times per week. Punch cards are available. Your contributions enable us to continue offering the online classes.

We will continue to have an abbreviated schedule this spring due to the pandemic. Classes that will be offered via Zoom include Tai Chi: Moving for Better Balance, Qigong, Dance for Life, Chair Yoga and a new class titled Movement and Strength with fun in between.

Please call 402-441-7575 to register for your Zoom classes during the months of April, May and June. You will be sent information about how to access Zoom and the specific classes you are interested in. Prior to the classes, you will need to download the Zoom app on your device. You will need to register in order to receive the access code to enter a class.

Evidence-Based Tai Chi: Moving for Better Balance Classes

Evidence-based programs are supported by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Injury Prevention Program and the state of Nebraska Unit on Aging. ***Because all Tai Chi – Moving for Better Balance Classes are progressive, no registrations will be accepted after the fourth class of each session.***



Tai Chi: Moving for Better Balance (Level I)

Tuesdays and Thursdays
11 a.m. to noon
April 13 through July 1

This class is for people new to tai chi or those wanting to continue working on the basic Tai Chi: Moving for Better Balance eight forms. It is a fall prevention program that uses the principles and movements of tai chi to help older adults improve their balance and increase their confidence in doing everyday activities. Suggested contribution is \$2 per class or \$48 per session.

Tai Chi: Moving for Better Balance (Level II)

Tuesdays 1 to 2 p.m.
Fridays 11 a.m. to noon
April 13 through July 2

This class is for people who have completed one or more sessions of Tai Chi: Moving for Better Balance Level I. Classes are designed for people who want to continue with the traditional eight forms with less instruction and some variations. Suggested contribution is \$2 per class or \$48 per session.

The following classes are open to join at any time during the session, but registration is still required.

Qigong Refresh and Recharge (12-week sessions)

This ancient, meditative practice focuses on slow, gentle movements which help to relieve aching muscles and stiff joints, improve balance, flexibility and increase energy. Movements begin from a chair, move to standing forms, closing with seated stretches and stimulating breath exercises. This class is appropriate for individuals at all levels of ability.

- Mondays, 10 to 11 a.m.
April 26 through July 26
(no classes May 31 and July 5)
- Thursdays, 2 to 3 p.m.
April 8 through June 24

Continued on page 38.

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US TODAY!

402-420-7000

2 Locations in Lincoln:

201 S 68th St Place &

3901 Pine Lake Rd, Ste 111

LeadingCancerCare.com

Aging Partners News and Events

Continued from page 37.

Dance for Life (12-week sessions)

Each class focuses on balance, strength and cardio health through a unique combination of dance steps done to popular oldies music. Synchronized movements isolate and strengthen muscle groups, increase heart rate and improve core stability. Participants warm up from the chair, move to standing, transition to dance then cool down with standing and seated movements.

- Mondays, 2 to 3 p.m.
April 26 through July 26
(no classes May 31 and July 5)
- Wednesdays, 10 to 11 a.m.
April 7 through June 23

Movement and Strength with Fun in Between (new class) (12-week session)

Tuesdays, 2:30 to 3:15 p.m.
April 13 through June 29

A fun, fit-filled 45-minute class consisting of a warm-up, followed by two low-impact aerobics songs and two strength sets repeated until cool down.

Chair Yoga

Fridays, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.
April 16 through July 2

Chair yoga is one of the gentlest forms of yoga available. It is a unique style that adapts yoga positions and poses through creative use of a chair. Poses are done seated or the chair is used for support during standing and balance poses. Emphasis will be on breathing, balance and taking

things at your own pace. Chair yoga is suitable for all ages, fitness levels and physical conditions. Beginners welcome.

Foot Clinics/Senior Health Promotion Services

Aging Partners Foot Clinics and UNMC Senior Health Promotion Services are being held at temporary locations due to COVID-19 and will be by appointment only during the months of April, May and June. This is to assure that all social distancing and sanitation guidelines are followed. Please call 402-441-7506 to make an appointment for clinic services. Please Note: foot clinics are subject to cancellation or changes at any time due to the current COVID-19 Pandemic.

Services available to people age 60 and over include comprehensive

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foot care, blood pressure, blood glucose, cholesterol screenings, osteoporosis screenings and health education. Ear care will not be available. \$15 suggested contribution will help these services continue. Please note: Services available are subject to change due to the current COVID-19 pandemic.

For location and schedule, please call 402-441-7506 or 402-441-7575

Free Online Environmental Health Education Programs presented by Lincoln Lancaster County Health Department

Join us for practical information about environmental health issues that impact us all! Environmental health is the branch of public health

that focuses on the relationships between people and their environment – water, air and waste. It is a dimension of wellness that impacts every person, every day.

- **Hazardous Waste – What Is It and What Can I Do About It?**

Wednesday, May 12, 10 to 11 a.m.

This program will help you identify hazardous waste in your home and direct you to safe disposal options. Lincoln's Hazardous Waste Center will show you how we take care of your waste after you leave it to ensure that we are good stewards of the environment.

- **Safe Cleaning Products**

Wednesday, June 9, 10 to 11 a.m.

In the last year we have been cleaning more than ever, but it

is important to select cleaning products that contribute to our overall health and the health of the environment. This session will introduce less toxic alternatives that can be purchased or made from everyday ingredients.

These programs are sponsored by Aging Partners, Conservation Nebraska and Lincoln Lancaster County Health Department. Call 402-441-7575 to register for these programs and a link will be sent to you. **lw**

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A special invitation to the 57,200 age 60 and over adults, their families and caregivers residing in Butler, Fillmore, Lancaster, Polk, Saline, Saunders, Seward and York counties in Nebraska.

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