Editor’s Column
By Alicia M. Colombo, Milestones editor

Happy New Year, and welcome to 2020! Weren’t we supposed to have flying cars by now? The movies and literature often depict an overly ambitious timeline for progress. The same can be said for New Year’s resolutions.

How many years have you had the same resolution(s)? If you’re like most people, you have the best of intentions come the New Year. But by the end of January, you’re back to your old habits. Why? Because you didn’t actually make a resolution; you just made a statement.

A resolution is “a firm decision to do or not to do something,” “a quality of being determined,” or “the action of solving a problem.” Simply uttering the words “This year, I’m going to lose weight, quit smoking, save money, etc.” is not enough.

You need a plan and most importantly, you need to follow through.

In 2019, I took a new approach to my goal setting for the year. I ditched the “sudden death” method of going all-in until the first slip-up, then abandoning my goals until next year. After my best friend posted a “Fall Bucket List” on social media in September, I had what Oprah would call “an aha moment.” My friend’s list included things she wanted to accomplish before the season ended. To see it stated so simply and resolutely was life-changing for me.

The problem with most goal setting is that we don’t include a realistic timeline or break down momentous goals into small, manageable steps – both crucial to success. I suggested to my friend that we get together in the beginning of the year to write down our goals in specific terms and include seasonal steps. She created a vision board. I developed a color-coded spreadsheet. We agreed to check in every season to report our progress and challenges.

I set four major goals for 2019 – lose weight, improve mental health, maintain work/life balance, and renovate my home. I wrote down specific steps of what I wanted to accomplish in each area and by when, using the four seasons as quarterly deadlines.

It was a great plan, really. But life intervened and I became overwhelmed with all that I wanted to accomplish. Even so, I was undeterred. I continued to make progress in some areas, even after I realized I couldn’t do it all in a year. But in that year I did a lot. I crossed something off my Bucket List: I went to Disney World for Christmas, and it was amazing. I also renovated two rooms in my house: the kitchen and scrapbook room, both of which I now use and enjoy regularly. Books were read. Concerts were attended. Gratitude was practiced. More time was spent with people who really mattered. Through it all, I discovered that I can persevere and succeed, despite setbacks.

I have learned that one major life goal plus one project is enough for me, so 2020 will be the year of health. Now, all I have to do is decide between a two-week trip to Italy and a fully remodeled bathroom.
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Jannie Blackwell: A conversation with Councilwoman, city servant

By Kerith Gabriel

In an office littered with memories honoring a lifetime of service to Philadelphia, City Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell sits in the only chair that doesn’t have a stack of papers, plaques or other items resting atop.

On this day, Blackwell has invited a Milestones reporter into her office on the fourth floor of City Hall. She’s spent nearly three decades in this room serving Philadelphia’s Third District, which encompasses a large swath of West Philadelphia, Southwest Philadelphia and University City. At first glance, the room might appear as if Blackwell is a bit of a hoarder, but she’s in the process of sorting through and cleaning out 27 years of memories as Councilwoman.

“Oh, there’s more I’ve already brought home,” Blackwell, 74, says, pointing to the trophies, plaques and other honorable merits received over a midlife in city politics. “These are just the ones I received since people knew I’m on the way out.”

The “way out” Blackwell is referring to is the end of her time as City Councilwoman, as the seven-term incumbent — first elected in 1992 — was unseated by Council newcomer Jamie Gauthier last May. It’s news that finally appears real as the final days of Philadelphia’s Third District, which Blackwell has to come to grips with, remaining entrench in city politics as long as one could ever ask for.

“I’ve seen so much over that time, so much,” said Blackwell. “The [former Mayor Frank] Rizzo days, the fights in the District, the fights in the City Council ... so much history of this district, whose goals align more with gentrifying the district instead of growing and revitalizing it.

This notion was a sour grape for Blackwell even during this conversation. Though in an effort to take a higher road she chose not to place any blame but instead remain apologetic to the people she’s spent much of her life in service to.

“Jannie to the life she’d know today back when she was a city school teacher. He asked Jannie to assist him as his aide in City Council in 1975, the beginnings of what amounted to a near 20-year career as a city politician. The front row seat she’s referring to was actually her husband’s, ensuring that the Blackwell family literally remained seated in the same chair in city politics for 44 years.

“I met [Lucien] when I actually was teaching his children at [Henry C.] Lea School in West Philadelphia and I remember when he asked me to quit because they created a new seat in the 188th District and they need somebody to listen to,” Blackwell recalled. “All my life I wanted to be a school teacher but he said, ‘if you do this, you’ll affect the lives of not only students you teach but the lives of students across the city and beyond.’ He was so dedicated in trying to make a difference, and I could see how passionate he was about it, so I left.”

The lives of students aren’t the only thing Blackwell touched. In her time in City Council she worked with community officials and other constituents to steer a revitalization of West Philadelphia, namely University City, which from an infrastructure standpoint has received a boom courtesy of the colleges and universities that have spread out to outlying areas. As it pertains to working with PCA, Blackwell’s office was instrumental in the relaunch of the Firehouse Active Adult Center on 53rd and Haverford avenues.

But it’s perhaps the rapidity of that revitalization that may have cost Blackwell her seat as she’d tell reporters following her loss in the May primaries that a pro-development PAC bought control of the district, whose goals align more with gentrifying the district instead of growing and revitalizing it.

“I hope the people of my district know I always did everything in my power to help them,” Blackwell said. “If I could do it, I would. It may not be right away, but I did what I could. Even now, knowing I’m leaving, I’m still doing all I can to ensure the work I told people would be done will still happen whether it’s under my watch or not. I owe it to them for putting their faith in me and I know that.”

There’s calm to Blackwell as she says all of this as if she has the grand plan to do so even though by the time you may read this, all of the accolades that adorn her tiny City Hall office will be gone and her time serving Philadelphia will have come to a close. Perhaps it’s the feeling of looking around her office and seeing all of the good she’s done serving as proof that there’s nothing to regret.

While she’s not sure what’s next, Blackwell even during this conversation.

“I’ve seen so much over that time, so much,” said Blackwell. “The [former Mayor Frank] Rizzo days, the fights in City Council ... so much history of this great city; if one could say I’ve seen it all know that I have.”

Kerith Gabriel is the communications manager at Philadelphia Corporation for Aging.
It can be difficult to get out of the house once the temperatures drop, but don’t let the cold hold you back. Everyone may want to stay inside, but there are plenty of events going on throughout the city every winter to keep you moving. Warm up your grandkids’ day with some exciting after-school fun, or take the initiative to go out on the town by yourself or with some friends for the day.

**Blue Cross RiverRink Winterfest**

This waterfront park is constantly changing with the seasons. The roller skating rink has been turned into an ice rink, and all the little shops around it are now selling Winter-themed goods. Come by any day of the week to enjoy this free festival. Bring the whole family out for an exciting time of games, activities, food and more. There’s an arcade room just for the kids, and there’s a warming cabin and plenty of fire pits for you if you get too chilly. It’s never a bad time to take advantage of Philadelphia’s expansive waterfront.  

**Creative Cleansing Colors**

Unlock the benefits of art therapy at this painting workshop. All are welcome to express themselves however they like through their artwork. Supplies will be provided for you at the event, just bring your imagination and creativity. Don’t worry about your artistic skill level. Art therapy can be helpful for just about anybody, even if you’ve never picked up a paintbrush before. Jan. 24. 6:30 p.m. $50. Holme Cultural Center, 2840 Holme Ave.

**Philadelphia Flower Show**

Winter hasn’t killed off all the blooms. Get some flowers to keep in your home at this annual flower show hosted by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. Let the bright colors and gentle aromas of all these beautiful plants entice you as you browse the seemingly endless displays. This show never fails to impress, and leaves us hanging on, wondering how they’ll upstage their previous shows. This year’s theme is Riviera Holiday.  

**Travel and Adventure Show**

There is no better time to plan an escape from Philadelphia. It’s not that we don’t want you to stay here. We just want you to go somewhere with better weather. You may feel motivated at this point to go on a tropical vacation, or anywhere that’s warmer than here. No matter where you want to go, you will find inspiration at this expo of travel destinations and the plans to take you there. See the world and live your life to the fullest.  

**Hello, Dolly!**

This legendary musical has made a huge comeback. It first hit the stage on Broadway in 1964 and was brought back to life in 2017. After a warm reception, the show has been expanded to a tour across North America. Secure your seats to this spectacular four-time Tony Award winning show. Who knows if it’ll be taken off the stage once again? We really hope not, especially with all the praise the show has received. Don’t miss your chance to see Carolee Carmello reprise the title starring role.  

**Celine Dion**

The iconic singer is making her way back to Philadelphia on tour for the first time in about 10 years. We know some of you may have been wondering when you’d get to see her again. Bring your friends that are fellow fans for an unforgettable night filled with her beautiful voice. Your heart won’t go on if you don’t catch her while she’s in town.  

Alex Nagy is a freelance writer and a full-time journalism student at Drexel University.
Chinese Almond Cookies

Ingredients:
120 grams almond meal/flour (1 cup)
180 grams all-purpose flour (1 ½ cup)
120 grams sugar (2/3 cup minus
1 Tbsp.)
¼ tsp. salt (kosher or sea salt; use half
if using table salt)
1 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. baking soda
120-150 mL. neutral flavor oil
(vegetable, canola, etc.) (½-2/3 cup,
more or less)
1 large egg yolk
Roasted unsalted almonds (for
decoration) (optional)

Directions:
Gather all the ingredients. Center a
rack in the oven and preheat the oven to
350°F.
Combine all the dry ingredients in a
stand mixer. With your mixer on low-
medium speed, mix all together.
Slowly add oil and mix until a cohe-
sive dough forms. The dough should
be just sticky enough to hold its shape
when you try to roll into a ball. If it looks
more like crumbs, add 2-3 tsp. (10-15
mL) vegetable oil at a time.
Weigh the dough to make 0.4 oz/10 g
(1 inch cookies) OR 0.7 oz/20 g (1 1/2
inch cookies) rounded portion and roll
it into a ball with your palms. Place it on
a baking sheet lined with parchment pa-
er and repeat until all the dough is used
up. You can make a 10 gram ball using a
teaspoon measuring spoon.
If you want to put a piece of almond
on the cookie, hold the cookie ball on
your palm and gently press the almond
into the dough.
Beat the egg yolk in a small bowl. Us-
ing a pastry brush, lightly glaze the top of
the cookie balls with the egg yolk.
Bake for 15-20 minutes, or until the
cookies become slightly golden. Let
them cool on a wire rack and store in an
airtight container.

Source: Just One Cookbook

Spicy Pork Noodles with Scallions and Bok Choy

Ingredients:
7 oz. thin rice noodles or rice sticks
2 tbsp. canola oil, divided
1 head bok choy (about 1 lb.),
chopped, greens and whites separated
3 scallions, sliced, greens and whites
separated
2 tbsp. minced fresh ginger
¼ cup chili-bean sauce or chile-garlic
sauce
1 lb. ground pork
2 cups unsalted chicken broth
3 tbsp. reduced-sodium tamari or
soy sauce
1 tsp. sugar
1 tbsp. cornstarch
1 tbsp. water
Crushed red pepper for garnish

Directions:
Cook noodles according to package
directions. Drain and rinse under cold
water. Set aside.
Meanwhile, heat 1 tbsp. oil in a large
flat-bottomed wok or cast-iron skillet
over high heat. Add bok choy whites
and cook, stirring for 1 minute. Add bok
choy greens and cook until wilted, about
1 minute more. Transfer all bok choy to
a medium bowl.
Add the remaining 1 tbsp. oil, scallion
whites, ginger and chili-bean (or chile-
garlic) sauce to the pan. Add pork and
cook, crumbling with a wooden spoon,
until no longer pink, 3 to 5 minutes. Add
broth, tamari (or soy sauce) and sugar.
Mix cornstarch and water in a small bowl
and add to the pan. Bring to a boil and
cook, stirring until slightly thickened,
about 1 minute. Stir in the reserved noo-
dles and bok choy; cook, stirring until
heated through, about 1 minute. Served
topped with scallion, greens and crushed
red pepper, if desired.

Source: Eating Well
PCA Emergency Fund: Help us help Philadelphia’s older adults

By Shannon Reyes

As temperatures dip, most people turn up their heaters to combat the brutal weather. But for many of the city’s older adults turning on the heat is not an option, as Philadelphia has one of the highest senior poverty rates in the country.

“Requests for emergency funds during the winter months are greatly needed and appreciated as many older adults cannot afford the expenses related to paying to heat their homes,” says Holly Lange, president and CEO of Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA).

Since 1979, PCA has managed the Emergency Fund for Older Philadelphians, which provides immediate funds to older adults facing a financial burden. Over the last 40 years, the Emergency Fund has delivered more than $3.9 million in emergency assistance to seniors in need.

During the winter months, individuals with limited means face incredibly tough choices, often deciding whether to heat or eat. Last year, 55% of Emergency Fund aid was used for heat.

“Poverty among our older adults is growing,” says Chris Gallagher, PCA Helpline director and manager of the Emergency Fund. “Unfortunately, donations to the fund have not kept pace with the rising need in the city.”

As of mid-December, PCA’s Emergency Fund totaled just more than $35,000. In November alone, funds disbursed for oil totaled nearly $20,000. Last year, the fund disbursed more than $186,000 to those in need. Rising prices of heating oil have also played a significant part in the increased need for funds. During the winter of 2018-2019, the average price of oil jumped 50 cents to $3.10 per gallon, stretching the Emergency Fund to its limits.

In addition to providing heating oil to homes, the Emergency Fund also provides aid for housing, food, medicine and other utilities. All disbursements from the fund are capped at $100 with the exception of payments for heating oil, which are instead capped at 100 gallons. Referrals for Emergency Fund assistance are only accepted from recognized social service agencies and the clergy. For more information, call the PCA Helpline at 215-765-9040.

“It was quite a relief to get the assistance I needed. I was getting to the point where my gas was going to be shut off and I was getting very concerned,” a 2018 recipient of emergency funding told PCA under condition of anonymity.

To donate, visit pcaCares.org/donate. Donations can also be marked “Emergency Fund” and mailed to PCA, 642 North Broad St., Philadelphia, PA 19130. For information on corporate and foundation giving opportunities, contact Teresa Heavens, PCA director of marketing and communications, at 215-765-9000, ext. 5053, or email teresa.heavens@pcaCares.org.

Shannon Reyes is public relations specialist at Philadelphia Corporation for Aging.
January 2020

**Mummers Parade**
9 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Broad & Chestnut streets
1-800-537-7676.

**New Year’s Celebration Lunch**
11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Center in the Park.
Register: 215-848-7722.

**Trip to Mohegan Sun & Pocono Downs**
Depart at 9:15 a.m. & return at 7:30 p.m.

**Positivity Through Art**
Workshop mini-series incorporating art therapy & mindfulness.
12:45-2:45 p.m.
Tuesdays through Jan. 28.
KleinLife: NE Phila.
215-698-7300.

**Smartphone Smarts: iPones**
10 a.m.
Marconi Older Adult Program.
215-218-0800

**Movie House Productions**
1 p.m.
PSC – Arts.
215-545-5879.

**Resource Fair**
Census 2020 info, utility assistance & health services.
10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Lutheran Settlement House.
215-426-8610, ext. 1204.

**Winter Concert**
Featuring singer Irina Fogelson & musician Arthur Palay.
12:30 p.m.
KleinLife: NE Phila.
215-698-7300.

**Bagels & Bible**
Informal Torah study over snacks following Saturday services.
Noon.
Congregations of Shaare Shamayim.
215-677-1600.

**Smartphone Smarts: Androids**
10 a.m.
Marconi Older Adult Program.
215-218-0800.

**Martin Luther King Jr. Trivia Day**
Test your history knowledge while honoring the civil rights leader.
10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Center in the Park.
215-848-7722.

**Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service**
Mlkdayofservice.org

**Health & Social Resource Fair**
Start the new year in a healthy way with free health screenings & giveaways.
1-4 p.m.
Parkway Central Library.
215-686-2860.

**Rain Check Workshop**
Join the Philadelphia Horticultural Society to learn how to reduce pollution in our waterways.
6 p.m.
Fishtown Community Library.
Register: 215-988-1699.

**History of the Flower Show**
Learn the history behind this iconic Philadelphia tradition.
6 p.m.
Parkway Central Library.
Register: phsonline.org

**Women Justices of the Supreme Court**
Learn about the lives of the four extraordinary women who served on the nation’s highest court.
12:30 p.m.
KleinLife: NE Phila.
215-698-7300. $
There is a website for just about everything.

One particular site sparked me to offer a class to seniors on writing a love letter to their families (and friends) that talks about their legacy through the stories, hopes and desires for their family and sharing their legacy lessons.

According to the familyloveletter.com site, “the family love letter is an indispensable planning tool allowing you to enhance the legal planning and legacy documents you may have prepared bringing clarity, reducing stress, and minimizing the conflicts, which often follow an incapacity or death.”

In writing my own family love letter, I found it easiest to do a simple “brain dump” and then organize the letter into different categories.

Space won’t permit me to post my entire love letter here, but I am providing the opening and closing sentences, some of the topics covered and a few actual entries to get you started:

Dear Family and Friends,
Thank you for helping me to live well, laugh often and love much! I also embrace another saying: cherish every memory, love every moment and embrace every possibility.

Stories make you rich
People want to hear stories. It’s what connects us. I’ve written a book of stories, hundreds of articles, taught storytelling and participated in professional storytelling competitions.

Making mistakes
I’ve learned to look somebody in the eye if possible, or pick up the phone and apologize when you need to apologize. We are all human and mistakes happen. I’ve learned that people will forgive you if you offer a sincere apology.

Doing the hard work
After writing the book about my dad’s stories and then seeing him develop dementia, I learned how important it was to
Writing a family love letter

By Barbara Sherf

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After writing the book about my dad’s stories and then seeing him develop dementia, I learned how important it was to...
Love letter
• continued from page 10

help other families capture their life stories. It is perhaps the most valuable work I have done. In writing this and some of my stories and teaching memoir classes, I have found it to be the most difficult, but most rewarding writing one can do. It’s like peeling away at an onion and getting to the core of what really matters most.

Relationships
I’ve learned that people do come into and out of your life for reasons.
I’ve learned to surround myself with a good group of girlfriends, who have listened and supported me as I hope I have for them. I’ve learned to stand by old friends who may have drifted, but also to develop new friendships along the way.

Good neighbors are hard to find. I’ve learned to invest time with my neighbors.

Pets
Get one (or more) and if you can do a rescue, even better. To date, we’ve had three rescued golden retrievers who made us laugh and walk and brought us unconditional love every day.

Stuff
I have learned that I am enough. I have enough.

Sharing
I’ve learned to give my talents and money to good causes, but I have also learned how to say “no” when giving of myself was harming me or taking away from some of my goals.

Caregiving
I learned to be a caregiver without complaint, but that to be a good caregiver you must take good care of yourself. I would jump in again without hesitation to help care for a loved one. No regrets.

Listening
I’ve learned that if you want to be heard, speak up…if you want to be seen, stand up, and if you want to be appreciated, zip the lip, shut up … and listen.

Closure
I’ve learned the importance of putting my affairs in order as much as possible while still on the planet and the importance of peeling away at my onion.
I am no saint, but I’ve learned to forgive myself and try to be a better person. I’ve learned to dance in the rain and the power of gratitude. For all of you and for all of these life lessons, I am truly grateful.

This much I know is true.

As a note to the reader, I am such a planner that I have my obituary written and instead of making New Year’s resolutions I update it every January.

Perhaps I will share some tips on writing your own obituary in a future story or column.

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

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☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE DATE OF BIRTH ______/______/______

MD-17580-1014

Crossword puzzle solution
(See page 15 for clues.)
PCA joins Home for the Holidays campaign

By Shannon Reyes

For many, the holiday season signifies a time of togetherness, where families unite to celebrate and carry out time-honored traditions. They are a time to reconnect with families and aging loved ones.

In partnership with the Eldercare Locator and the U.S. Administration for Community Living, the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) has launched its Home for the Holidays campaign. This annual campaign encourages families of older adults to take advantage of the holiday season, using that time to talk to their older loved ones about services or supports they may need.

This year’s Home for the Holidays theme is Modify Your Home for Healthy Aging, which spotlights home modification and repair services available to older adults through their local Area Agency on Aging (AAA). Philadelphia’s AAA, Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA), offers these services for older adults in the city through its Senior Housing Assistance Repair Program (SHARP). These services include home assessments, minor repairs and home modifications.

“The SHARP program provides repairs and home modifications which help older adults remain in their homes safely, so they do not need to seek out alternative housing options,” says Mark Myers, PCA director of facility operations and housing programs.

Myers encourages families to talk to aging loved ones sooner, rather than later as houses tend to fall in disrepair quickly when there is a leaky roof or other issues affecting the home. The harsh winter months can be exceptionally taxing on a home as cold weather can cause water pipes to burst and heating systems to fail.

Home modifications are also offered through PCA for older adults with accessibility barriers in their homes, including difficulty climbing stairs or getting in and out of the shower or bath. PCA staff members are able to install handrails, intercoms, bathtub grab bars, hand-held showers, tub benches and other home modifications.

“Catching a problem early is very important,” says Myers. “A well-maintained and safe home leads to good health and stability.”

If a loved one does identify an issue with an older family member’s home, he or she can refer to PCA for the SHARP Program for a home assessment.

Similar home repair and modification programs are available through most AAAs throughout the country. To find the closest AAA, individuals can use the Eldercare Locator at eldercare.acl.gov. The Eldercare Locator is a public service of the Administration on Aging (AoA), an agency of the U.S. Administration for Community Living. More information about n4a and AAAs can be found at n4a.org

Shannon Reyes is public relations specialist at Philadelphia Corporation for Aging.
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One year ago this month, we lost beloved Milestones Editor Emeritus and longtime journalist Don Harrison when he passed away at the age of 90. Don loved to write about the “good old days” and regale readers with tales of his time serving in the U.S. Army during the Korean War and the “Golden Age” of journalism. Conversely, he also shared his dismay at the state of the nation today and what seems to be the collapse of newspapers as we know it. Eleven years ago, Don and I mind-melded in sharing our feelings on two epic local and national events that had recently occurred.

Below is an excerpt from Don’s Column in Milestones January 2009:

Newspaper people are usually a little cynical about politics, but after Barack Obama spoke at the National Conference of Editorial Writers a few years ago, everyone was talking about him. It had been more of a conversation than a speech—laid back, no notes, no questions answered, no hedging. “That guy could be the first black president,” said someone. I don’t recall who, but he was a prophet unmatched since Nostradamus.

The column went on to describe Obama’s historic victory. If you’ll allow me to mix the trivial with the cosmic, we in Philadelphia enjoyed a two-fer, the election came right on the heels of our Phillies’ historic victory. All that euphoria, in less than a week. Alicia Colombo described it well: “Twice in the same week, I experienced something that I wasn’t sure I’d ever live to see. On a Friday afternoon, I ventured onto jam-packed Market Street with 2 million other championship-starved Philadelphia sports fans to witness, first-hand, the Phillies World Series Parade. The following Tuesday, still numb with giddy disbelief … I anxiously watched the election returns and was [again] overcome with joy. Perhaps, decades from now, someone less experienced at life will ask of me, “Where were you when a black man became president?” And I’ll reply, “I was celebrating with strangers, united by a common understanding that we were proud to be Americans and hopeful for the future of all mankind.”

For those of us [who are] older, these events have been especially momentous. As Barack Obama is about to step up to the plate, he faces overwhelming challenges, including some problems which may actually be unsolvable. I hope our expectations are not too high; we must realize that even under the best of circumstances, change can be a long, frustrating process.

Reading this column again makes me want to relive the “good old days” when Americans were filled with hope instead of cynicism. Whether or not you support Trump, it is undeniable that Americans are fiercely divided. Hatred and name-calling have become the norm on a massive scale, even in public forums of social media and the evening news. I long to return to a time of togetherness, when Americans were level-headed and could disagree without quickly escalating into anger.

In the wise words of the late Don Harrison: “Now, it’s time for patience. And for all that hope.”

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Five real health resolutions for 2020

You’ve heard all the slogans and catch-phrases.

Clean slate. New Year, new you. Blah, blah, blah.

Sounds great, but we all know that New Year’s resolutions are made in December, launch in January, creep a bit into February and are forgotten by March. Instead, make a promise to yourself to have a healthier you. Do little things and plan for events that force your body to feel better, have more energy and de-stress. Instead of the resolutions that are hard to keep, consider these five things you can do in 2020 to truly be a better you.

**Book all medical appointments for the year**

All of them. The regular checkups, the specialists you know that people of a certain age should go see and all of your dental appointments. The feeling of having all of that planned out in one shot not only will make sure you’re on a path to healthy living but it’ll instantaneously serve as one heck of a de-stressor at the same time.

**Citrus is your friend**

Love oranges, tangerines, grapefruits? Good! Eat more of them. According to the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, vitamin C aids in collagen production which helps with eliminating (or at least staving off) wrinkles. So even if you can squeeze some lemon or lime in your water for taste, you’re also helping your skin look radiant at the same time.

**Buy a plant, or several**

There is proven research out there that suggests the mere presence of indoor plants lowers stress levels. Taking care of your plants regularly can actually activate endorphins in the brain, calm your autonomic nervous system and lower blood pressure. So wherever you pick one up, do it. Your mental health is counting on you.

**Clean your cell phone weekly**

According to a microbiologist at the University of Arizona, our cell phones carry 10 times as much bacteria as most toilet seats! As we get older, our immune systems aren’t packing the muscle they used to. Any little steps we can take to give them a break is helpful. A simple wipe with a disinfectant wipe, alcohol prep, or even a warm cloth with soap and water should do the trick.

**Avoid fake news**

Older adults are perhaps the biggest victims of being subjected to scams and other things that can be perceived as fake news. However, staying informed is vital, so what do you do? Well, you may not know it, but there are a ton of great apps out there that source only bona fide local, regional and national news organizations. One good example is the Flipboard app, which allows you to pick your interests and will source outlets that fit your parameters and looks great on any digital device.

**Sources:** Good Housekeeping
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