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NEWS AND POSSIBILITIES FOR SENIORS

# Milestones™

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**Editor:** Alicia M. Colombo  
215-765-9000, ext. 5081  
PCA, 642 N. Broad St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19130  
Email: [MilestonesNews@pcaCares.org](mailto:MilestonesNews@pcaCares.org)

**Advertising:** Teresa Heavens  
215-765-9000, ext. 5053  
Email: [Teresa.Heavens@pcaCares.org](mailto:Teresa.Heavens@pcaCares.org)

**Subscriptions & Distributions:**  
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## EDITOR'S COLUMN



Courtesy: Alicia Colombo

Milestones Editor Alicia M. Colombo with her 100-year-old grandmother Jennie Crudele.

## Celebrating a century of wisdom

By Alicia M. Colombo

On a hot and humid summer afternoon in late June, dozens of cars – some adorned with streamers and balloons – pulled up in front of my parents' South Jersey home. The smiling occupants waved and shouted well wishes from afar.

Not even the COVID-19 pandemic was going to keep my large Italian family from celebrating my Grandmom Jennie's 100th birthday. The party we'd planned months earlier would have to wait until it's safe to gather closely in large groups again. But we found another way to honor the woman who has supported and loved all of us over the last century.

When asked how it feels to be 100, Grandmom Jennie replied with a smile, "I don't feel a day over 89!" That statement isn't far from the truth. My grandmother is the epitome of healthy aging. I've had many family members live into their 80s and 90s, but none with as high a quality of life as Grandmom Jennie still has at 100.

After immigrating to the United States from her native Italy as a young child, grandmom lived in South Philadelphia for more than 90 years. She was a homemaker and carried on by herself for more than

37 years after her husband, my grandfather, died. In March 2019, after being hospitalized, grandmom moved to Washington Township, N.J. to live with my parents. She quickly made new friends and enjoys sitting outside every day, something she couldn't do in her South Philly rowhome.

When I look at my grandmother, I see the woman who sewed clothes for my Cabbage Patch dolls, made hand-painted ceramics, and still cooks Italian specialties and baked goods for her family – from scratch, of course! She enjoys reading, prays the rosary daily and loves dogs.

My grandmother has the most amazing support system – and THAT has made all the difference in her life now. Her many caring neighbors, friends, family and church community provide continued physical, emotional and spiritual support.

I have always said that I would never want to live to be 100, unless I am still healthy and independent. My grandmother has provided a formula for aging gracefully: stay engaged with stimulating hobbies and activities; maintain positive, mutually beneficial relationships; and enjoy life – with few regrets or complaints.

Alicia M. Colombo is editor of Milestones.





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# Boomers vs. Millennials: Is there a GENERATIONAL DIVIDE?

By Jay Nachman

Some millennials have been known to mock the stereotypical attributes of baby boomers, and vice versa. But are generational stereotypes even true?

Are baby boomers, those born between 1944 and 1964, bad at technology? Do millennials, those born between 1980 and 1994, want “participation trophies” just for showing up?

Dr. Dustin Kidd, a professor at Temple University’s Sociology Department, doesn’t think these perceived generalizations are true. Generational divides are fabricated, he said. They refer to age and cultural differences that can be found at specific cut-

off points. “But there’s nothing in nature that creates those cutoff points,” Kidd said. “That’s a cultural construction that’s really problematic.”

It’s a problem, because there isn’t a stable environment in which a category system, like generations, can be tested. Generations happen in the context of world history where there is no constant and everything is a variable.

“Whenever you do those tests, it becomes a question of context for those groups,” Kidd said. “Is it just a U.S. context? Is it just an urban context? Is it a white context? Is it just a developed world context? There’s so much actual variation within the groups. Even though we are using the concept of

generations, to say that they’re all like each other just doesn’t hold up. It’s become more of a pop culture concept than a true sociological concept.”

Pat Rocchi, 68, a retired communications consultant who worked with millennials during the tail end of his career, found the stereotype that millennials don’t work as hard as boomers to be “a big myth that has taken on a life of its own.”

“I worked with many millennials, and I found that they were as hard-working as anybody else and that they were very devoted to their families,” said Rocchi, a Bella Vista resident and father of a millennial daughter and son. “Because of that, they did not make work the be-all and end-all that the boomers did. I believe that the reason millennials made that choice is because of the fact that they saw what devotion to work did to their parents, the boomers. For many people, it broke up their marriages and boomers got laid off anyhow.”

When it comes to work, Charlene Holsendorff, a career management specialist and baby boomer, has seen clear differences between the way baby boomers and millennials approach job searches. For many years she delivered a workshop, “Overcoming Age Bias in the Job Search.” Based on her research and personal experience, she found that baby boomers underestimated what they did in their careers and made age an issue in their own minds.

She advises job-seeking boomers to “get a handle on their own thinking first, because it’s going to influence how you come across to other people. The other main thing is getting a handle on what you bring to the table. And that is what I am finding to be the huge difference between baby boomers and millennials. Millennials are

the generation where it’s all about them. They have a huge handle on what they bring to the table. Overly so.”

Holsendorff, who grew up in West Philadelphia and now consults from her home office in Montgomery County, said she’ll hear baby boomers say they don’t want to brag or take all the credit on work projects. “That is a conversation that I rarely hear from millennials. It’s fascinating,” she said.

If the generational divides don’t exist, is there any truth to the generational stereotypes? Not really, believes Kidd. As one example, he’s had lots of millennial students who weren’t particularly tech-savvy, despite stereotypes that indicate millennials are digital natives born surrounded by technology. At the same time, there is heavy use of social media and technology by members of older generations.

Kidd does believe that there are real issues among the two groups that are worth discussing. “I think there’s a conversation to be had around whether older groups could and should have done more to address major issues from climate change to systemic racism, and a sense that millennials are driven too much by emotions and not actually working toward careful policy and institutional change,” he said.

But ridicule and contempt for any generation is simply ageist and should be called out. “If you have a disagreement, you should focus that disagreement around your actual ideas rather than dismissing someone because of their age or generation category that they fall into,” Kidd said. In other words, when arguing a point, keep it civil, without the name calling.

OK, boomers and millennials?

*Jay Nachman is a freelance writer in Philadelphia who tells stories for a variety of clients.*



# The benefits of technology: Staying connected

By Jay Nachman

The digital divide, which separates those who have internet access and those who do not, has often been separated by age. Only 59% of all Philadelphians over 75 have internet access at home. For minority seniors 60-plus, 69% of Latino seniors and 67% of African American seniors have internet access, according to data from the American Community Survey. But as you'll see from the seniors featured here, bridging that divide has great benefits that are well-worth the effort.

When Mort Levine of Center City wants to play chess with his 9-year-old granddaughter Talia in London, he just connects with her on Zoom. The 77-year-old retired rabbi uses video conferencing software to display the chess board from a games website and interact with Talia. It's the next best thing to being together in person.

"Most of the time she wins," he said. "It's not whether you win or lose; it's spending time with your grandchildren."

Social media gives Levine the opportunity to connect with his far-flung family, which includes six grandchildren, ranging in age from 5 to 13, who live in Europe, Canada and Virginia.

Levine and his wife Carmie also use Apple's FaceTime video chat program and the WhatsApp cell phone app to stay in touch, more so now while society is shut down.

"We've always had ways of communicating, but we do it more often now," he said.

Tech-savvy seniors are using social media to stay connected with family, friends, members of the community, or simply for fun and games. Such interaction supports mental health, happiness and engagement, all of which contributes to healthy aging. But finances keep many seniors offline.

Recent data from the Pew Research Center indicates that cost is a barrier to home internet for most adults. This is certainly

true in Philadelphia, where 41% of older adults have incomes less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Level and 10% experience deep poverty. Some programs have been developed to enable internet access for low-income households, including Comcast's Internet Essentials and the government's Lifeline. More needs to be done to help seniors conquer the divide. Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA) continues to advocate to increase low-cost or free broadband internet access to all Philadelphians. PCA President and CEO Najja Orr recently testified for the United States Senate Special Committee on Aging to address these issues.

An internet connection provides seniors with access to news, information and resources. Francis Gibbs, president of the Philadelphia Housing Authority's (PHA's) Warnock Village Resident Council in Germantown, uses social media like a virtual town hall – with her as the town crier. Using Facebook and Instagram, she shares information about her church or happenings in the community, such as letting people know when to register to vote. She'll also use Facebook to alert community members who need to know when there is food available for distribution.

"You get [information], and you pass it on to the people you know on social media," said Gibbs, 70.

Social media is also a way for her to see what's going on with her family. Her son Romaine is a senior bishop at Next Level Church Inc. in Philadelphia. Before the COVID-19 shutdown, his services were shown live on Facebook. Now, with the

quarantine, his services are shown nationally on Zoom. Naturally, Gibbs alerts everyone about it on her social media channels. Two of her grandsons are rappers, and she watches the performances they post on social media, too.

"There's a lot of wonderful things you can do with social media and it keeps your mind occupied," said Gibbs, who also uses apps on her phone to play games.

Cynthia Sampson, 66, is president of the resident council of the Plymouth Hall PHA apartments in North Philadelphia. She grew up near the airport, in Philadelphia's Paschall neighborhood. That makes her a "Paschall Rascal," which is also the name of the Facebook group that her hometown friends and neighbors use to keep up with one another's families and general happenings – the way old friends like to do.

"I keep in touch with all my friends on Facebook," Sampson said.

She will also use Facebook to get the word out about health fairs and other important events in the community.

Sampson is a music lover and she uses Instagram to keep up with some of her favorite musicians, like Kelly Clarkson; Charlie Wilson, formerly of the Gap Band; and the Isley Brothers. Two years ago, while scrolling through Instagram, she learned that the Isley Brothers were going to be performing in Virginia, where she has relatives. So she hopped on a bus to see the band and her relatives. Because as great as the virtual world can be, living life in the real world is important, too.

*Jay Nachman is a freelance writer in Philadelphia who tells stories for a variety of clients.*





# Finances force grandparents to live with family

By Shannon Reyes

In just 10 years, the number of grandparents living with their grandchildren has grown significantly. Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA) estimates that nearly 41,000 grandparents live with their grandchildren in Philadelphia. From 2008 to 2018, the number of cohabitating grandparents has risen by almost 9,000. The majority of these grandparents tend to be women and close to half identify as non-Hispanic black.

So, why is this trend on the rise? PCA's Director of Research and Evaluation Allen Glicksman, Ph.D., says the trend may be due to economic issues, since children are living with parents well past their college years and possibly continuing to live with their own parents even when they have their own children. Data supports this notion, since 72% of cohabitating grandparents own or rent the home they live in.

Glicksman also hypothesized that in other cases grandparents may be living with their grandchildren to help with the rent or mortgage. In a 2003 article by Glicksman, titled "Gods Living and Dead:



Generativity Among Soviet-Born Elders in the United States," Glicksman found that Soviet-born grandparents who immigrated to the U.S. with their grandchildren from the Soviet Union continued to reside with them in the United States. For them, using their Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to offset costs was their way of helping the family.

"They were pleased with the situation," Glicksman said. "Being able to help with the rent, made them feel more like a contributing member of the family."

Lutheran Settlement House's (LSH's) Senior Center Director Meg Finley concurs. She says that most of LSH senior center members who live with their grandchildren do so because of money.

"I think it's largely financial," Finley said. "The parents of the [cohabitating]

grandchildren have built-in childcare, which is expensive. Then you also have both grandparents and parents paying rent."

Finley has also seen a small sample of grandparents who have taken in children or grandchildren, who are battling addiction or who are in recovery and have children of their own. However, she sees the majority of cohabitating arrangements made because of financial advantages.

Data also suggests that most grandparents who are living with grandchildren live below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. All grandparents younger than 60 in the survey live below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines, as well as 75% of grandparents older than 60. More than half of all cohabitating households receive Supplemental Nutrition Assis-

tance Program (SNAP) benefits. Finley also notes that with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, even more grandparents are cohabitating to help care for grandchildren, as their children work at essential jobs while schools and day cares were closed. As others lost their jobs during the pandemic, Finley said that grandparents have even become the sole providers.

"I think it's an extra burden for a lot of grandparents, right now. If their kids are out of work, the grandparent is supporting the whole family with SSI," Finley said. "We've seen a huge impact on our food pantry and food insecurity in the city as a result of COVID."

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

## Crossword puzzle solution

(See page 15 for clues.)

S	O	N	E			T	S	M	A	S		S	E	T	R	
I	N	E	C		S	L	S	O	R	A	L	S		E	R	A
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E	S				P	E	R	U								



Recipe Box



# Corn, sweet corn

With August in full swing, so is corn season. The versatile kernels of those ears can be found in just about any dish, including summer salads, side dishes, entrees and even desserts. During this time of year, corn is plentiful and available at most local farmers markets. For the freshest and sweetest corn, always look for the ones that are most plump with tassels that are brown and sticky to the touch.

Pick some corn up today, and get creative with the recipes below.

Cilantro-Lime Shrimp Foil Packs

- Ingredients:**
- 1 lb. medium shrimp, peeled and deveined
  - 3 ears corn, quartered
  - 1 zucchini, cut into half moons
  - 2 limes, sliced into rounds
  - 2 cloves garlic, minced
  - 2 tbsp. butter
  - 2 tsp. ground cumin
  - 1 tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
  - 2 tbsp. freshly chopped cilantro
  - Extra-virgin olive oil, for drizzling
  - Kosher salt
  - Freshly ground black pepper

**Directions:**

In a large bowl, combine shrimp, corn, zucchini, garlic, cumin, red pepper flakes and cilantro. Drizzle with olive oil, sea-



son with salt and pepper, and toss until combined.

Lay out four pieces of foil. Divide shrimp mixture between foil and top each with a pat of butter and lime slices. Seal packs.

Heat grill to high. Add shrimp packs and grill until shrimp is pink, about 10 minutes.

Corn Salad

- Ingredients:**
- 4 cups of fresh corn kernels
  - 1 cup of cherry tomatoes, halved
  - 1/3 cup feta, crumbled
  - 1/4 red onion, finely chopped
  - 1/4 cup basil, thinly sliced
  - 3 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
  - Juice of 1 lime
  - Kosher salt
  - Freshly ground black pepper



**Directions:**

Toss all ingredients together in a large bowl, then season with salt and pepper.

Source: Delish

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# AREA EXPERTS ON OPENING WITH CARE DURING COVID-19

As restrictions ease in the city of Philadelphia and beyond, it's important to remember that COVID-19 is still an active pandemic. So, if you decide to venture outside for food, recreation or shopping, make sure to proceed cautiously.



## LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR: WEAR A MASK

The Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) has launched a citywide "Mask Up" marketing campaign designed to encourage all residents, workers and visitors to wear a face covering in public. According to a recent survey, about 75% of Philadelphians agree that everyone in the city needs to wear a mask every time they leave the house. Both the City of Philadelphia and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania require that face coverings be worn in any indoor public space, and outdoors when less than six feet away from others.

### REMEMBER:

- Wear your mask when you are around people you don't live with.
- Always practice social distancing, even while wearing a mask.
- Wear your mask correctly. It must cover your mouth and nose.
- A mask protects both the person wearing it and others.

## PHILLY PREPARES TO WELCOME YOU BACK

As part of Pennsylvania's COVID-19 recovery plan, the Greater Philadelphia region's hospitality industry, including hotels, transportation providers, attractions, restaurants and other popular tourist sites, is focusing on increased cleanliness and new social-distancing protocols as it begins to slowly welcome back guests. For its part, Visit Philadelphia, the five-county region's tourism marketing organization, wants to make people aware of the steps being taken to ensure their safety and to make them comfortable.

According to tourism industry research, domestic leisure travelers will lead the industry's recovery in 2020. Many American travelers' renewed interest in taking trips close to home is welcome news for Greater Philadelphia, which is situated within a five-hour drive of a quarter of the U.S. population.

"Domestic leisure travel is expected to initiate the recovery," says Erik Evjen, director of data analytics and insights, Tourism Economics. "Our analysis finds a substantial amount of pent-up travel demand, which will be primarily chan-



neled to regional, drive-to destinations. In this sense, Philadelphia is well-positioned to capitalize when the first stage of recovery begins, given its proximity to major traveler markets."

Those who live here know the benefits of Philadelphia for tourism. "The region is very popular with leisure visitors," said Jeff Guaracino, president and CEO of Visit Philadelphia. "It offers a good variety of things to do. Some hotels are even beginning to accept reservations for future stays. When our destination is ready to open, we'll be ready to welcome locals and visitors to explore."

However, the lingering risk of COVID; a very weak economy; and the loss of key entertainment, such as concerts, shows, sports and other large public events through February 2021, may keep both visitors and residents from enjoying what Philadelphia does have to offer.

Cleanliness and sanitation is impor-

tant to visitors. Most people surveyed said that public health is the primary consideration when choosing to travel. Many want hand sanitizer or wipes available to guests, staff to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) and other customers to also wear PPE.

"With locals beginning to get out and explore again, we want them to feel as comfortable as possible and know that Greater Philadelphia hotels, attractions and businesses are putting their health right on par with their employees," said Guaracino, president and CEO of Visit Philadelphia.

Attractions and businesses throughout the region are following guidelines set by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Measures include protective barriers to prevent in-person contact, masks, temperature checks, social-distancing signage, capacity limits and enhanced cleaning regimens.

## GREEN MEANS GO – BUT SAFELY

Philadelphia – the only U.S. city featured in National Geographic Traveler's Best Trips 2020 issue – is beginning to open back up, with the move to a modified green phase in July. That means the return of museums, zoos, shopping malls and so much more. Now that people are starting to explore the city responsibly and host socially-distant celebrations, here's some of what you can do in and around Philadelphia.

In June 2020, outdoor dining returned – with safety precautions – to restaurants, bars, breweries and more in the five-county region. You can dine outdoors in Philadelphia, and indoor dining is available in Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery counties.

Many of the most popular tourist attractions have also re-opened their doors. At many of the re-opened attractions, visitor capacity is limited and advanced reservations are required. So, if you are planning to visit, it's probably a good idea to call head or check out the website for the latest information regarding safety precautions and hours of operation.

"We're excited to see Philadelphia's most popular sites and attractions re-opening for locals and visitors to enjoy," said Guaracino. "And we're proud that all of these destination-defining places are putting the health and safety of their visitors and employees first. That's a great comfort to people and helps them make informed decisions when they're figuring out how and where to spend their time and money."

## ENJOY THESE POPULAR PHILLY LANDMARKS AND MORE!

**Franklin Square:** The Liberty Carousel, Philly mini-golf, playgrounds, fountain show and SquareBurger are open at this popular 7½-acre city park. – 6<sup>th</sup> & Race Streets; 215-629-4026; [HistoricPhildelphia.org](http://HistoricPhildelphia.org)

**The Franklin Institute:** Philadelphia's science museum reopened in July with a new exhibit (through Jan. 3) "The Presidents By Madame Tussauds" that features life-like wax figures of every American president and historical figures, like Ben Franklin. – 222 N. 20<sup>th</sup> St.; 215-448-1200; [FI.edu](http://FI.edu)

**One Liberty Observation Deck:** This sky-high attraction offers stunning views of Philadelphia. 1650 Market St.; 215-561-DECK (3325); [PhillyFromTheTop.com](http://PhillyFromTheTop.com)

**Philadelphia Zoo:** Meet the new sloth bear cub, Keematee, at America's first zoo. – 3400 W. Girard Ave.; 215-243-1100; [PhiladelphiaZoo.com](http://PhiladelphiaZoo.com)

**Philadelphia's Magic Gardens:** Artist Isaiah Zagar's masterpiece is one of the region's most Instagrammable places. Snap a selfie in this mosaic wonderland constructed from bicycle spokes, bottles and other knick-knacks. – 1020 South St.; 215-733-0390; [PhillyMagicGardens.org](http://PhillyMagicGardens.org)

For more information at about Philadelphia attractions, visit the Independence Visitor Center, 6th and Market streets, call 1-800-537-7676 or go to [VisitPhilly.com](http://VisitPhilly.com).







# The Stroke Lady

## On a mission of advocacy, education

By Barbara Sherf

Each year, approximately 800,000 Americans suffer a stroke. And with every stroke, every second matters.

Just ask Toby Mazer, director of community outreach at Flourtown's Whitemarsh House, where residents live to recover from traumatic brain injury, cerebral aneurysm, stroke, brain tumor, and other neurological conditions.

Located in a quiet neighborhood on West Mill Road in a 200-year-old Victorian home complete with a wraparound porch, residents get individual treatment programs in a residential setting.

Through her personal and professional dealings, Mazer is known as "The Stroke Lady."

Her late husband, Howard, was a surgeon at South Jersey Regional Hospital. On July 18, 1989, he suffered a ruptured brain aneurysm while operating and blood was coming out of his head. Howard was flown by a medical helicopter to Thomas Jefferson University Hospital.

"In the morning he kissed me goodbye," said Mazer. "He was 48 and seemed perfectly fine. At about 10 a.m., I got a call from the hospital."

Howard was in a coma for three months and on a ventilator for eight months.

He spent a year at Jefferson, then six months at Magee Rehab. During that time, Mazer, who has a master's degree in public health, turned her attention to the neurosciences. She spent more than a year researching stroke and brain injuries, then parlayed her knowledge into working at the Jefferson Stroke Center as director of stroke neuroscience outreach development, where she spent the next 22 years.

Mazer received \$100,000 from Johnson & Johnson to establish a nonprofit to change the perception of stroke throughout the region. With this grant, the Delaware Valley Stroke Council was formed. She also joined the Board of Directors of the National Stroke Foundation.

"It was my vision that things had to change and there had to be a better way in terms of stroke treatment," she said. Mazer went to all the major teaching hospitals in Philadelphia and 35 other hospitals in the region to explain the symptoms and critical timing necessary to treat stroke victims. (See next page for more information.)

"Initially, if a patient went into Chestnut Hill Hospital they called the Jefferson Stroke Team to get a stroke professional to make a diagnosis through telemedicine," Mazer said. "If they needed an intervention, we worked with the helicopter companies in the region to bring them to Jefferson. Telemedicine really changed the way stroke is viewed and treated all over the country."

At the end of 2015 she decided to retire, but didn't take to the lifestyle. One morning in April 2017 she saw a small ad in the newspaper for someone with a background in Traumatic Brain Injury and neurology. She secured an interview at Whitemarsh House that afternoon and met with Executive Director Lawrence Anastasia. Mazer was offered the community outreach director job the next day.

"He knew I knew what I was doing and had connections through the Delaware Valley Stroke Council and that I knew all of the discharge planners," she said.

Mazer is a strong believer in engaging residents and integrating them into the community. "They come to the main house for meals and participate in a structured, individualized day program of activities," she said. "They are not just sitting around watching TV. It gives them purpose."

Whitemarsh House has residents who attend Montgomery County Community College, volunteer with Chestnut Hill Meals on Wheels, and work at a local boutique and auto repair shop. In addition, residents frequent the nearby Wawa, local movie theatres, various eateries and even Fort Washington State Park.

Mazer sees herself as an advocate and educator. "What happens with most people is that after they're sent home, families may not be able to handle their needs," she said. "They aren't the same person they were before the stroke, auto accident or head injury. I work with them and the office of Long-Term Living to get them set up for a waiver program and help them through the admission process."

As for Howard, after about five years, he was able to use a computer and do the family finances again. "It wasn't all roses, but he did have a quality of life and that's important," Mazer said.

It's important that people who've had a stroke don't feel that their lives are over. Try to integrate into the community and develop individual goals.

"I feel that my mission in life and the reason I was put on this earth is to help those people who have been neglected and need me," said Mazer, who declined to give her age. "You can say I'm post-retirement age, and I'm going to stay with Whitemarsh House until they carry me out."

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



# Take action **FAST** at first signs of a stroke

With some minor health problems, you're fine to take a wait-and-see approach. Everyone gets the occasional ache or pain that goes away on its own. But when it comes to stroke, there isn't a second to spare.

Stroke cuts off blood flow and oxygen to the brain. The longer your brain is deprived of oxygen, the more brain cells die and the more damage occurs. Quick treatment can save your life and prevent long-term or permanent damage.

But how can you spot a stroke? Just think **FAST**, an easy-to-remember acronym for the key signs of a stroke and what to do:

## **F** Face drooping.

Does the person's face look lopsided? Is it numb? Ask them to smile. Is it uneven, or drooping on one side? Answer yes, and you've got a stroke symptom.

## **A** Arm weakness.

Is one arm weak or numb? Ask the person to raise both arms in the air. If one arm drifts downward, that's another sign.

## **S** Speech difficulty.

Ask the person to repeat a very simple phrase, such as "The sky is blue."

Can they do it? Is their speech slurred or hard to understand? Yes could mean they're having a stroke.

## **T** Time to call 911.

If you see any one of these signs in yourself or another person, call 911 right away. Even if you're not totally sure or the symptoms go away, it's important to call and make sure to say, "I think this is a stroke." Note the time. Medical personnel need to know when symptoms began because it affects treatment. Most strokes are caused by a clot. When that's the case, the drug that works best needs to be given within 4 1/2 hours of when symptoms began.



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American Red Cross volunteers carry a Spanish flu victim in 1919. The pandemic killed more than 50 million people worldwide, more than double the number killed in World War I.

# How the Spanish flu saved my grandfather's life

By Dorothy Stanaitis

Monday, April 10, 1917 was brisk and cold in Philadelphia. The remnants of a late spring snowstorm were visible on the banks of the Delaware River, although the city streets were dry.

Eight-year-old George Saik, his brother and two sisters were eating oatmeal sprinkled with brown sugar in the kitchen. Their father, David (Daoud in Lebanese), was upstairs getting ready to go to work at the Remington Arms Munitions Plant in nearby Eddystone, Pennsylvania. He worked in Building F, where 7-inch shrapnel shells were filled with black explosive powder.

The job was as dangerous as it was important, since the U.S. had declared war on Germa-

ny earlier that week. And, David was glad to have steady work to support his family.

The family's breakfast chatter was suddenly interrupted by the startling sound of a crash and several loud thumps. David had fallen down the stairs. Everyone was in a state of confusion. The little girls cried, mother screamed and George was terrified.

David collapsed because he was very sick – with the dreaded Spanish flu. This was the first wave of the illness, a year before the full impact of the epidemic hit Philadelphia. Eventually, it would kill more than 16,000 Philadelphians, one in every four who contracted it.

George understood that the flu was serious. So, when his mother sent him to get the doctor, he ran faster than he ever had his life. The doc-

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# This alto octogenarian is a one-woman orchestra

By Lawrence Geller

Joan Johnson is not only a musician. She is practically a one-woman orchestra, who plays the piano, guitar, obo and harp.

Residing in a retirement community in the lower Northeast section of Philadelphia with her husband, Stephen, a retired minister, she says she really misses the big instruments. "But as you can see, there's just no room in this small apartment for the harp, let alone the grand piano, we had to leave behind in North Carolina last fall."

Joan, an octogenarian, started her musical journey with the keyboard when she was 5, taking to it like a duck takes to water. Later, in high school, when the band leader had an extra oboe in need of a player, it was Joan who stepped up. "I like a challenge," she said.

**Joan Johnson loves a challenge! In her 50s she learned a new instrument – the majestic harp.**

Marriage and raising three children were her next life challenge. For some relaxation from the stresses of motherhood, she took up the guitar. Meanwhile, all of her children were studying the piano.

Moving quite frequently due to her husband's ministry, Joan taught music in public schools while also conducting church and children's choirs. In addition to being a talented instrumentalist, Johnson is also a vocalist. She sings alto.

In one poor mill town with a low level of educated adults, "Joan saw it as a challenge and started a choir," said her husband Stephen. "By the time we left, that choir had become so good it became the core group in a much larger church choir."

Arriving at Stephen's next assignment, there were no openings for a music teach-

er. But there was a need for a tutor. Joan stepped into the breach and realized she needed some courses in remedial reading. One such course after another led to a master's degree.

With that degree in tow, "I was then able to obtain a position as the director of an adult literacy program in a community college, supervising 15 part-time instructors," she said.

Getting a GED (General Education Development) certificate is quite an accomplishment for adults who missed so much education for one reason or another earlier in their lives. "The students and their families were so proud," Johnson said. "We decided to have a commencement ceremony topped off with cap and gown."

Stephen was quite impressed with his wife. "There was a lot of hugging; cheering; and, yes, even some crying. And I was so proud of Joan for all that she accomplished."

If you can see there is any thread in Joan Johnson's life, it's that she loves a challenge. So in her '50s, she took on a new challenge with a new instrument waiting to be conquered — the majestic harp.

When one watches a harp player on television, the camera mainly focuses on the hands plucking the strings. Occasionally, you get to see the legs moving long pedals, seemingly incidental to the playing. But it is not incidental at all.

"Those pedals are the like the black keys on the piano; and very, very hard to master," Johnson said. But master it she did, thereby enabling her to play professionally at weddings and other events.

While all her children studied piano, only one is now a musician. He plays professionally in New York.

"The piano?" she was asked.

She smiled, "The guitar."

*Lawrence Geller is an actor, writer, activist and creator of the Anne Frank Theatre Project.*



Courtesy: Joan Johnson

Joan Johnson, seen here at the piano, plays four instruments, sings alto and teaches music.



The PA Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) program's mission is to help you protect against, detect, and report Medicare fraud. Health care fraud damages Medicare's financial viability and has a direct impact on the health

care YOU receive. Fraud can increase out-of-pocket costs and can impact your health by decreasing quality of care - you could receive unnecessary or harmful care or be denied necessary treatment or equipment.

Scammers are now using the Covid-19 pandemic to defraud Medicare and Medicaid. They might contact you by phone, by email, or a knock on your door. The aim is always the same: to get personal information like your credit card information, or your Medicare ID number and use it to defraud Medicare. Scammers are exploiting the fear surrounding the pandemic to peddle fake Covid-19 tests and supplies, and unproven and potentially harmful cures or vaccines. Some are even impersonating contact tracers! So, what can you do? The following practices will go a long way to keeping yourself safe from these criminals:

1. **Protect and treat your Medicare ID number and card like a credit card.**
2. **NEVER provide your Medicare or credit card number to anyone who contacts you through unsolicited calls, texts, or emails.**
3. **If you need a test or a treatment, call your personal doctor first.**

If you have questions about or suspect Medicare fraud, or would like to volunteer with the SMP program, please call toll-free: 1-800-356-3606 or visit [www.carie.org](http://www.carie.org).

*Help is always free and confidential.*



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## Spanish flu

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tor sped back to George's house, which proved the situation was serious. David was put on bed rest and isolated from the family to prevent spreading the infection.

In addition to worrying about David's recovery, there would be lost wages and the possibility that he could lose his job if the

illness lasted long, as it so often did.

It was a bad day for the Saik family. Then, at 9:55 a.m., it became a bad day for the entire nation. A series of three explosions tore through Building F at the Remington Arms Munitions Company, killing 139 people and injuring 130 others. Everyone who worked with David died instantly. By keeping him home that morning, the dreaded flu actually saved his life.

Later that deadly day, about 10 miles from Eddystone, in Lansdowne, 8-year-old Mary Gilroy went to the store with her sister. The shop keeper invited the girls to go upstairs and see the Remington Arms fire from a bedroom window. Even from that distance, the sight of smoke and flames was frightening. It would be many years before Mary could bear to even think of it again.

The next few days were rife with rumors of sabotage. Some blamed the Germans for the explosions. Others accused the Russians. Many Russians worked at the plant and the revolutionary Leon Trotsky was implicated by some. After much investigation, no conclusion was reached.

Attention soon switched from the possibility of sabotage to community anguish, as grief-stricken families buried their loved ones. On April 13, a cold, rainy day, 12,000 people stood silently under a sea of black umbrellas as 52 unidentified victims were laid to rest. Each casket was covered by an American flag and a wreath of

flowers. A granite monument was placed over the graves.

But there was little time for mourning. Shrapnel shells were needed for the war. So, in a few days, the Remington Arms plant was up and running again.

Twenty-five years later, during World War II, Mary Gilroy was now married with several children and living in Philadelphia. One evening, there was, again, talk of sabotage on the radio. It reminded Mary of what happened at the Remington Arms plant when she was a little girl. She started to tell her children, including Milestones writer Dorothy Stanaitis, about that terrible time. Her husband, George Saik, abruptly interrupted her. He had never heard her tell that story before, and it riveted his attention!

As a little boy, George's father was spared death in the explosions at Remington Arms Munitions Company because of a bad case of the Spanish flu.

*Dorothy Stanaitis, a certified Philadelphia Tour Guide, writes about history and culture.*

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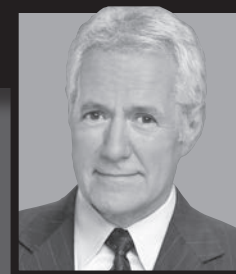
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Health Brief



Take care of your ticker this summer

August is the month readily described as “the dog days of summer.”

As temperatures continue to reach high levels and we’re becoming more active, it’s important to remember what keeps us going: the heart.

According to leading cardiologists, warmer temperatures already place an immense strain on the heart as it works harder and beats faster in order to keep the body cool. People with heart conditions don’t always adapt as easily, increasing their risk for heat stroke. On top of that, some prescribed medications, like beta blockers or diuretics, can further deplete the amount of water in the body, causing the heart to work even faster.

That’s why it’s important to look after yourself and take the necessary steps to improve your heart health. Many of the tricks are simple and don’t require much planning. One of the easiest things to do while it’s hot is to be mindful of the foods you’re putting in your body. While summer tends to be all cookouts and barbecues, foods

high in cholesterol and sodium are the last things we should regularly put into our bodies. Sodium sucks out the much-needed water from our cells in an attempt to put less strain on the heart.

Eating a healthier diet also helps keep blood pressure and weight in check all of which makes your ticker work a little easier despite the hot temperatures.

Also, pairing a healthy diet with any sort of exercise, even if it’s going for a 30-minute walk will aid in improving your heart’s overall function. If you can find a cool pool just to wade in, your heart rate goes up, but it’s better in the long run. Finally, with life a bit more laid-back in the summer, taking the time to decompress and relax is one of the best ways to ensure you’re doing your heart a favor. Electronic devices go off and your mind goes on. All of these things, despite the temperatures, can mean you’re giving your heart some love.

Sources: UHHospitals.org; American Senior Communities

Crossword

Status Report

Across

- 1 Former movie dog

5 Home of the Incas

9 Exploits

13 American philanthropist

14 Ship’s deck

15 Zola novel

16 On the fritz

19 Uplifts

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21 Dutch cheese

22 Info

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31 Female vocalist

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34 Taro and skunk cabbage

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51 No way to live

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55 Coin of little worth

56 Hwys.

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58 Adam’s grandson

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2 Vital essence

3 *Chapeau’s* perch

4 Better than average

5 Introduction

6 Shade trees

7 Gypsy

8 Militaristic

9 Overthrow

10 Stated

11 Organic compound

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14 Group of eight

17 Dimmed

18 Bristles

22 College buildings

23 Raccoon-like mammal

24 Prolific songwriter

25 Respond to stimuli

26 Establish

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28 Ascend

29 Lets up

31 Thin soup

34 Indiscriminately

35 Uniform

37 American saint

38 Tocsin

40 Protagonists

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The solution can be found on page 6.

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