Urban Aging L3C THE Issue 23 | Winter 2020

Info, Insight & Inspiration for Metro Detroit's Maturing Adults





ON MY MIND By Patrica Ann Rencher



Like many of you, I'll be spending an unprecedented holiday season. Alone. But I encourage you to consider doing what I've decided to do - devise a plan to make the holidays as joyful, happy and productive as possible.

I'm not generally in town during the holidays and so I don't put up decorations. This year, however, I will go to my basement, unearth some buried, long-forgotten decorations and put them up! I'm going to organize a neighborhood caroling outing for Christmas Eve. Several of my neighbors have expressed an interest and I'm sure we can do so safely. It will bring us joy and bring joy to our many senior neighbors who also live alone.

I'm going to write some letters. Yep. Letters. A dying artform that mental health professionals say lifts the spirits of those in isolation who are experiencing loneliness, anxiety or grief, especially during the pandemic. The social connection and emotional support that letters offer can in some ways be better than a phone call.

For some, I'll send cards, enclosing a heartwarming note, updating them on my adventures and sharing a funny anecdote or two about family or mutual friends – some still living, some not.

And when I tire of writing, I'll call people who I care about, but haven't been in touch with throughout the pandemic. You know those people, the ones you often think about but never pick up the phone to call.

Time gets away from us and we're too busy to respond to those mental nudges.

For those people who've lost loved ones this year, I'll send a special note acknowledging their first holiday without their loved one and wish them peace and strength and grace, as they navigate this first.

And, finally, I'll repeat as often as necessary the scripture, "You have

what you say." I will make this a joyful, happy and productive holiday. Hope yours is too.

Peace & Blessings, Pat

Publisher

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Urban Aging News Issue 23/ Winter 2020

SENIOR VOICES

Senior Voices is a new series, sponsored by the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan - Detroit Journalism Engagement Fund, to amplify the marginalized voices of seniors and those who serve them.

Senior Suggestion: Home Insurance Grants and Support for Seniors



Serving as membership chair for the Winship Community Association and as secretary of the Sinai Grace Guild keeps 69-year-old June Mack busy. She's also making her home conducive to living there as she ages by adding a security system and walk-in shower to her home.

"Having lost five family members to COVID-19, I am even more intent upon preparing to age in place," she says.

She says assistance is needed to protect their life investment. "The affordability of home insurance is another issue. Seniors just can't afford it. I know it takes money, but a grant program to meet this need would be so helpful."

Mack is an avid reader and researcher who finds time to go to the grocery store and pharmacy for other seniors. She says her commitment to the Sinai Grace Guild

is inspired by her desire to establish a senior group that connects neighbors to resources.

"So many of them need home repairs but can't afford them and they're afraid to move out of their paid-off homes. Even if you can pay for repairs, contact with affordable, vetted contractors is another need," she says. Mack cites helpful resources that do exist, saying, "Home weatherization programs keep utility bills affordable."

Old Detroit / New Detroit and those who remained to fight



Seniors who persevered in Detroit through more challenging times say they expect the focus on equity and inclusion to adequately address their needs as well. Gary Gray, who is 70, says the city is not senior-friendly and while he sees some positive signs, it is not enough to ensure his investment in years was well-spent.

"My home and investment value have diminished beyond my control, due

to inadequate city services, crime, and slow 911 response. I anticipate that the pandemic will also have a disproportionate economic impact on Detroiters," Gray says. "The city's resurgence is leaving too many seniors and long-time Detroiters behind. We don't want to just survive, we want to thrive. Unfortunately, no one has figured out how we can get there from here."

He adds that these issues affect all Detroiters, and that the uncertainty over the outcome is a source of anxiety which ultimately affects the quality of life in Detroit.



Senior Suggestion: A Helping Hand to Enter the Job Market



At age 68, Charles "Chuck" Reese returned to school to get a master's degree in public health administration with a concentration in gerontology. As a non-traditional entry-level employee in a specialized field, he says finding a position was more difficult than he anticipated. "Resumes went out and no responses came back." The thought never occurred to him, he says, that it might be because of his age. Fortunately, he has employment in

a job that he calls rewarding. Reese says he sees the need for a nonprofit organization that will assist seniors with the finer points of job readiness and work to combat the barrier of ageism.

The 72-year-old says, "Older workers are a valuable, untapped resource. An ideal program would match senior skills with senior-friendly employers and educate employers on seniors." He says senior attributes include workplace

dependability and a positive impact on the bottom line.

"If people want to return to the workforce, they should have that opportunity. It's not for everyone, but there are groups of well educated, experienced older adults who would like to re-enter the workforce. They just need someone to focus them in the right direction and advocate for them."

SENIOR VOICES

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Senior Suggestion: A City Department for Seniors



Delores Brown is a senior advocate with Women for Whitmer who says the City of Detroit needs a onestop shop where seniors can take their concerns and needs to all departments at one time. "Unless you are a resourceful person, you'll give up looking because the services and resources are so scattered."

The 73-year-old holds an honorary doctorate in spiritual counseling. She's served seniors throughout the pandemic by coordinating food box distributions and connecting them to health services and other essential resources. As community coordinator for Our Wellness Hub, Brown

supported COVID-19 patients with alternative housing and healthcare resources, all through a partnership with Renovis Health and the Conner Creek Health Center.

"My service with the governor, AARP and the Detroit Police Department's 7th Precinct Community Action Coalition allows me to learn something new every day that can help somebody. In the meantime, I urge everyone who knows a senior who may be isolated to give them a call, check on them, and offer to help. They are feeling left behind."

Brown also worked with the Hannan

Center to assist seniors in casting their votes. "The lettering was too small and the ink was too light for seniors to read. Seniors needed assistance to complete the absentee applications and the ballots. I believe we should have a training department within the Elections Department to assist seniors before our next election," she says.

"I've recently traveled the state to gain insight on senior issues. Detroit isn't unique. Many seniors are not living in dignity. They are concerned about their health care, housing and home repair, prescription costs, affordable home care and the pandemic's mandate to socially isolate."

Active Grandparents - Keeping connected



Like so many seniors, 68-year-old Mearon and her 73-year-old husband, Clyde Lewers both want to stay active during the pandemic. Because safety comes first, they've restricted their activities to comply with COVID-19 precautions while staying committed to physical and mental health.

"Clyde is diabetic and I have high blood pressure," says Mearon. "Because we're considered high risk, we follow the guidelines to reduce our chances of contracting the virus while staying active."

Weather permitting, the couple celebrates their 30-year marriage

with early morning walks so they won't come in contact with too many people. They also started new activities closer to home, like potting plants together to decorate their patio. Each has back problems, so Clyde practices yoga and Mearon uses diagraminstructed stretching exercises. She has signed on to YouTube's beginner yoga classes.

They exercise their brains by interacting with fellow members of organizations they belong to and by keeping current with the activities and programs.

"We are both very active in

organizations which require us to read, write, and analyze. I look forward to our meetings," Mearon says. "Having some form of human contact and mental stimulation is important."

Mearon says she reads bedtime stories to her grandchildren in Georgia and Canada, and watches movies with them over FaceTime and Zoom regularly.

"While other couples may be struggling during the pandemic, it has brought us closer together as a couple and reminded us of what is really important - the simpler things in life."

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First in a three-part series

By Nancy Combs

"Home is the nicest word there is," reflected early 20th century American author Laura Ingalls Wilder. While in these COVID times many have grown weary of home, there's no arguing the seminal importance of having one. A home that's safe and warm is a basic human need, not to mention an emotional bedrock in times of trouble - and the best possible repository for memories.

But for many of Detroit's older homeowners on limited incomes, the houses they raised their kids in and lovingly maintained over decades can quickly spiral into the biggest challenge of their lives. Without financial assistance, a leaky roof or faulty furnace could make home inhabitable. This could necessitate moving – living with a family member, in an apartment, assisted living facility, or even a nursing home.

"It's a great need – mind-boggling, actually," said Phyllis Edwards, executive director of Bridging Communities, a Southwest-Detroit-based grassroots organization that enhances quality of life for seniors by coordinating resources and support. Edwards is also a member of Agencies United for Healthy Aging.

"You reach an age where you are supposed to be living your best life. Instead, so many of our seniors are living in inadequate housing," Edwards said. "The basement is backing up with water. People have holes in their roofs they can't afford to fix, broken windows. Not to mention hazards from out-of-code electricity, cords and other slip-and-fall risks."

Just one of these issues can spark a cascade of related problems. A homeowner may face the impossible choice of paying for a roof repair, or paying their property tax – buying that new furnace, or paying their car insurance.

"A lot of seniors are living silently under cover," said Jeanine Hatcher, executive director of GenesisHOPE Community Development Corporation on Detroit's east side. "They can't maintain their homes, but it's not financially beneficial for them to leave." Meanwhile, Hatcher

added, these same folks have long been anchors of their neighborhoods, the first to volunteer to deliver meals, plan a block party, or participate in advocacy training.

A number of programs provide grants or zero-interest loans to help qualifying homeowners pay for necessary home repairs. But these programs are often siloed, without a central contact or unified application process. And some require long lead times due to the sheer number of requests.

In Detroit and Wayne County, "the needs unfortunately exceed the available resources," said Karen MacDonald, executive director of community and economic development at Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency. "But we continue to seek these resources for our clients, and we continue to advocate for their needs," she said.

Just as important, MacDonald added, "we document, to share data with the state and other community action agencies on what works."

Part Two of this series continues conversations with civic and community leaders who are aligning resources and building effective partnerships.

Key among them is Nicole Wyse, associate director for the City of Detroit's Housing and Revitalization Department. "Seniors and households with children under 6 are our main demographic when it comes to Home Repair Programs," she said. "We especially want our seniors to be able to age in place and stay Detroiters."

Wyse reviewed programs the city is offering – including a Senior Emergency Home Repair Program, with a substantial waiting list, and the Zero Percent Interest Home Repair Loan Program to which homeowners can get almost immediate access. "Thanks to the mayor and city council, funding for the Senior Emergency Home Repair program has increased from \$500,000 in 2016, to \$5 million in 2020, but the need is still greater," she said.

Through HRD, Detroit is hoping to launch Housing Resource Centers in mid-2021. This new program will be a collaboration of city agencies and non-profit organizations to help provide easier access to housing resources, such as the home repairs that seniors are seeking.

Contact Information on next page

Contact information for state and local agencies offering assistance:

City of Detroit Resources

City of Detroit Home Repair Resource Guide

in partnership with University of Michigan Poverty Solutions https://poverty.umich.edu/files/2019/10/Detroit-Home-Repair-Resource-Guide-2019-reduced-size.pdf

City of Detroit Housing and Revitalization Department www.bit.ly/EmergencyHomeRepair 313.224.6380

0% Interest Home Repair Loan Program

www.detroithomeloans.org

10-year, interest-free loans from \$5,000 to \$25,000 to help Detroit homeowners invest in and repair their homes. Forms and Intake Centers on website.

Detroit Lead Safe Housing Initiative

GetTheLeadOut@detroitmi.gov (313) 224-6380

To qualify: Must be a child under age 6 living or regularly visiting the home.

Senior Emergency Home Repair Program

Website states: "There is currently a waiting list for the Senior Emergency Home Repair Program that is more than a year long. HRD is unable to assist clients with immediate needs. If you are a low-income homeowner over the age of 62, or are over the age of 55, AND receive Social Security Disability, you may be placed on a waiting list to receive services. If you would like to be added to the waiting list, please call 313-224-6380." https://detroitmi.gov/departments/housing-and-revitalization-department/residents

Michigan Department of Health & Human Services (MDHHS)

State Emergency Relief (SER)

Assists with home repairs to correct unsafe conditions and restore essential services. May include repair or replacement of a non-functioning furnace, hot water heater or septic system. www.Michigan.gov/mibridges

Bureau of Community Action and Economic Opportunity Weatherization Assistance Program

Provides free home energy conservation services to low-income Michigan homeowners and renters. Services administered by local Community Action Agencies and nonprofits reduce energy use and lower utility bills. www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-71547_5531_62128---,00.html

Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA)

MSHDA's Homeownership Division provides programs and products for both homebuyers and homeowners – those trying to purchase a home, improve a current property, or facing foreclosure. www.michigan.gov/mshda/0,4641,7-141-45866---,00.html

Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency (Wayne Metro)

Designated Weatherization Operator for MDHHS www.waynemetro.org/energy-and-water-assistance/
See website for services in your region, including weatherization, electricity bill assistance, various other energy services and funding to assist with water bills. (313) 388-9799

CARES Recovery Program, including emergency home repair www.waynemetro.org/cares/

Community-based Organizations

For neighborhood-specific services offered, see City of Detroit intake centers at www.detroithomeloans.org/where-to-get-an-application/

Bridging Communities (Southwest Detroit)

(313) 361-6377

www.bridgingcommunities.org

GenesisHOPE Community Development Corporation

(313) 571-0937

www.genesishope.org/

Matrix Human Services

(313) 526-4000

www.matrixhumanservices.org

Please contact **Urban Aging News** by March 1, 2021 with your feedback if you engage any of these resources.

Write to urbanagingnews@yahoo.com, or call 313.204.5140.

We hope to include your feedback in Part Three of this series,

SENIORS SEEK WELLNESS DURING TRYING TIMES



Sharon Williams, CEO of Williams Jaxon Consulting, LLC, is an industry leader in both the healthcare and community-based services industries. Her broad experience provides a unique perspective on effective engagement across these two diverse ecosystems to maximize integrated care initiatives and improve quality of care and quality of life for consumers.sharonr.williams@comcast.net

In the wake of the coronavirus disruption, older adults and caregivers are seeking support to maintain health and wellness. One solution is teaching them about disease prevention and health promotion Evidence Based Programs. EBPs are based on scientific evidence and are demonstrated to improve the health of older adults. Participants are educated about important health information, including proven strategies for managing chronic conditions and preventing falls. EBP classes connect participants with other Social Determinant of Health services and encourage better connectivity/communication between participants and healthcare providers, according to Kathy Cameron of the National

Council on Aging's Center for Healthy Living.

U.S. aging demographics are shifting and the percentage of older adults has increased. especially those 75 and older. The NCOA website notes that aging demographics influenced an uptick in chronic diseases and falls. These conditions are the leading causes of death and disability for older adults. They also contribute to rising healthcare costs.

Fortunately, falls and some chronic diseases are preventable. Studies have shown that EBPs positively impact older adults' management of health behaviors, improve health and functional status, and overall well-being.

Evidence Based Program classes range from Diabetes Prevention. Chronic Disease Self-Management transplant patients. NKHM's Ann Education programs, to balance classes and Tai Chi. Classes are delivered via local organizations. Partial funding for certified EBPs comes from the Older Americans Act, Title III-D funding. States that receive these funds must spend them on EBPs to improve health and well-being and reduce disease and injury.

EBP content follows national standards and also reflects local community needs. Classes are facilitated by peers/professionals and are available in multiple languages. Many class facilitators are former participants. EBP classes are traditionally offered both in-person and online. The pandemic curtailed many in-person activities, but EBP organizations have continued classes on virtual platforms like Zoom. The pandemic increased the urgency to maintain healthy lifestyles as healthier people have greater potential to fight and survive COVID-19.

Shannon Skowronski of the U.S. Health and Human Services' Administration for Community Living reports that from 2010-2020 more than 424,000 older adults and people with disabilities participated in OAA Title III-D funded EBPs. Nearly 13,000 of these participants were Michiganians.

The National Kidney Foundation of Michigan has offered EBPs statewide for 12-plus years, including chronic disease

management classes to University of Michigan health system's Andrews says they feature other classes, such as the Diabetes Prevention Program, to support their core mission of preventing and reducing kidney disease. They also provide classes such as Matter of Balance for fall prevention and Enhanced Fitness. NKFM's Jodi Burke says healthcare organizations are increasingly recognizing the value of these non-clinical interventions.

Staying healthy in the midst of the pandemic can be a challenge, particularly for older adults and those with disabilities. Resources like Evidence Based Programs empower older adults with guidance on selfdirected health and wellness practices.

For more information on EBP: **Administration on Community** Living:

www.acl.gov/programs/healthwellness/disease-prevention, (800) 677-1116 for local resources

National Council on Aging www.ncoa.org/center-for-healthyaging/basics-of-evidence-basedprograms/ 571-527-3900

For more information about **Southeast Michigan EBPs:** National Kidney Foundation of Michigan www.nkfm.org/communitiesfamilies 734.222.9800

Detroit Area Agency on Aging www.detroitseniorsolution.org/ 313.446.4444

State Ombudsman Advocates for Seniors

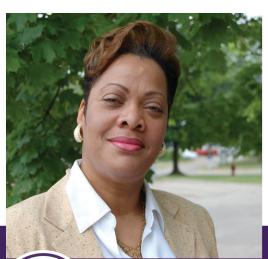
As the health concerns brought on by COVID-19 continue to challenge seniors, the Michigan Long Term Care Ombudsman Program is advocating for residents in licensed nursing homes, adult foster care and homes for the aged. To keep family and friends informed, the Ombudsman program conducts question and answer Zoom sessions every first and third Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. Participants can join by phone or online.

These one-hour sessions begin with a brief presentation then specific questions are addressed. Questions can be submitted at 517.827.8010 or by email to MLTCOP@meji.org.

For Zoom link: www.mltcop.org
To join by phone, call 1.929.205.609
Meeting ID: 829 7146 7655
Participant ID # Password: 838159







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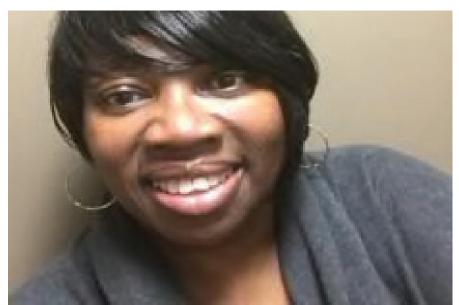
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STRATEGY TO FUND LONG TERM CARE WHILE LEAVING A LEGACY



Gail Sanders is a licensed, independent life/health insurance agent and the owner of Your Pure Benefits, a company focusing on community education and working to relieve the pain of family funeral costs. She can be contacted at 313.444.2409.

If you didn't invest in long term care insurance while you were young, you probably believe it's too expensive now, so it's too late. LTC includes a variety of services needed to meet medical and non-medical needs as we age or become unable to care for ourselves. Because Medicare and other insurances do not cover most LTC expenses, this gap-filler is essential insurance. But how can you finance it now?

Use the cash value in an insurance policy for current needs

Did you know that you can cash out your whole life or universal life insurance policies to help fund your long-term care insurance needs? Whole life and universal life insurance policies are yours until the date of maturity, as long as you pay the premiums. They are both cash value policies with invested funds, so you can cash out the policy. Therefore, a cash value policy has options while you are still living. For example, the owner may cash out the policy early, take out a policy loan, provide college funds or meet other needs.

One of the most important matters to consider is the maturation date of your whole life policy. This is the earliest date you can cash the policy out and receive the full policy value. Often you can cash out whole life and universal policies early, however, the policy value does decrease. Usually the maturity dates are at ages 100 or 121.

Find out if your life insurance includes emergency care

However, some of your existing policies do pay out in the event that you get



sick and are unable to continue working. They may even fund nursing home or in-home care. So, it's wise to review your policy to see if other coverage, like disability insurance, emergency medical insurance, catastrophic illness, or long-term care, is already included in the policy you now hold.

Some policies also allow you to cash out if you're injured in an accident. Because most people have not reviewed their policies in years, they may be surprised to learn that they are entitled to these extra coverage options. Speak to your insurance agent annually to review your policy and any options you might opt to exercise.

Give a gift of insurance to build a legacy

I encourage parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles to consider the gift of life insurance, it will mean so much to that young man or woman to receive much needed help to attend college, fund a business start-up, or purchase a car. Who knows how this gift could be used at such a major turning point in a young person's life. The gift of a policy for a loved one, especially a young one, can establish a strong legacy. Monies invested in a cash value policy can be cashed out to pay for:

- Retirement
- Starting a business
- Creating a legacy by donating to a charity or school
- Funding a child's or grandchild's college education
- Buying a house, or paying off personal and business debts
- Long term care

RESPITE CARE, A BRIEF RELIEF FOR THE CAREGIVER

Respite Care is a quirky phrase that's often misunderstood but it's a service that's desperately needed to relieve most family caregivers. Respite means to provide relief to persons who are caring for loved ones.

Respite Care gives family time away from caregiving responsibilities, essential to caregivers' well-being and mental health. Families who do not qualify for Medicaid-financed respite programs often have the greatest need. Depending upon the limited programs that are available to these families, respite care can include covering the cost of adult day care, in-home visits, or an outside facility.

This level of care is not typically covered by private insurance companies, but many may provide chore services, minor home repair, laundry services and meals. Ask your loved one's health plan provider and check the patient's long-term care policy for coverage. Veterans benefits offer respite care and Medicare does provide respite care only if the patient is enrolled in a hospice program.

Programs offering free respite care:

Michigan Alzheimer's Association, Respite Care Assistance Program

- Application requires a physician's diagnosis: Alzheimer's disease or related dementia
- One-time only \$500 reimbursement
- Applicant must be the person providing the majority of care for the person with dementia
- Service must be provided in the area in which the person with dementia resides
- Safe Return Medical I.D. bracelets for wanderers

Contact Caitlin Goyer at cegoyer@alz.org, or 248.996.1066.

St. Patrick Senior Center

Assessment determines hours of respite provided Contact Adrainne Piner at 313.833.7080 x 213

Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers

Macomb, Oakland and St. Clair County residents Services depend upon availability of their trained, background-cleared volunteers. Email or call www.ivcinfo.org, 586.757.5551

Hilarity for Charity respite grant

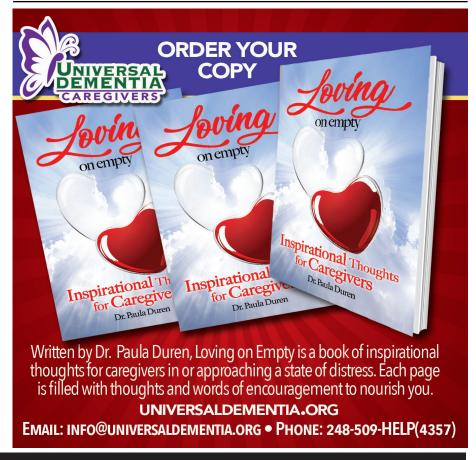
• Online application available to U.S. & Canadian residents

Hilarity for Charity respite grant

- Online application available to U.S. & Canadian residents
- Must be living at home with Alzheimer's disease or related dementia
- Caregiver must be facing financial and emotional hardships
- Visit www.wearehfc.org for more information

MI Health Link

- For those with both Medicaid and Medicare enrolled in a MI Health Link program administered by Aetna, AmeriHealth, HAP, Michigan Complete, Molina, or WellCare
- Several ways to get more information:
- Contact your member services or your care coordinator to request service
- Enroll by calling 800. 975.7630
- Call the Medicare and Medicaid Assistance Program at 800.803.7174
- Visit www.mhlo.org or call 888.746.6456 for more information



LIFE AND DEATH GIFTS: ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION



Tanya H. Smith

On average, 22 people in the United States die each day as they await an organ or tissue transplant. "African Americans don't join the donor registry and we have the greatest need," says Tanya Smith, community program specialist for the Detroit Minority Organ Tissue Transplant Education Program. "I think if most people understood the registry, the opportunity to leave an additional legacy, and the process of organ or tissue donation, then they would step up."

MOTTEP Gift of Life Michigan focuses on minority organ donation through education and recruitment of donors to its registry in metro Detroit's multicultural community.

"Our goal is to decrease the number and rate of people in need of organ and tissue transplants," Smith says. "Extending someone's quality of life at the end of our own life is one of the greatest gifts we can give."

More than 3,500 Michiganians are waiting for a life-saving organ transplant. Of those, 80% are African Americans between 45-55 years of age, whose health challenge were caused by a genetic disorder or lifestyle choices.

Individuals can join the registry through the Secretary of State office.

Once signed up, a red heart logo is affixed to the driver's license. Donor volunteers should be sure to discuss this decision with family members.

Later, when a patient cannot be saved and they are pronounced brain dead with irreversible unconsciousness and a complete loss of brain function, hospital staff then contacts the Gift of Life Organ Donor Registry to determine if the patient has registered to provide the gift of life to others. If they have not, staff asks the family to consider helping others through a donation. Once the family agrees, organs and tissues are recovered through a dignified surgical procedure conducted with the highest level of care and respect for the donor. After the organ recovery, donor families can proceed with their funeral or burial plans. Organ and tissue donations do not interfere with open casket viewings.

For those suspicious of the process, Smith says it's important to know that the medical professionals who are dedicated to saving your life are completely separate from the surgical team that is called later for the donation process.

Smith says donors can specify the organ they wish to donate. Some choose all of their organs while other donors specify. The greatest need among African Americans is for kidneys.

There are no health or age restrictions. Even people living with HIV can join the registry. Their organs go to someone who is also HIV positive. Members of the LGBT community are encouraged to join as well.

"One organ donor can save the lives of up to eight people and tissue donors are able to help up to 75 people," Smith says. "It's so important for African Americans to consider this gift, the greatest opportunity to extend someone else's life, even in a pandemic."

Learn more or register for the Michigan Organ Donor Registry at www.golm.org or by phone at 313.785.9055.



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Area Agency on Aging 1-B

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800-852-7795 • aaa1b.org

Victory for LGBT in Reauthorized Older Americans Act



The first bipartisan piece of LGBT-inclusive legislation to become law during the Trump administration passes in a moment of high COVID-19 vulnerability among LGBT elders.

The Older Americans Act reauthorization was signed into law with provisions that will help ensure that LGBT elders get the services and support they need to remain independent.

SAGE, the world's largest and oldest organization dedicated to improving the lives of older LGBT people, has spent years working with allies in Congress, the LGBT community, and the aging sector

to push for this inclusion. This legislation is especially timely given the sobering risks LGBT elders face during the COVID-19 pandemic and their heightened need for inclusive services and care.

The reauthorization will require state and local departments of aging, including state units on aging and area agencies on aging, to be held accountable for undertaking outreach to LGBT older people who need services. It will also hold them responsible for engaging in both data collection and reporting on the needs of LGBT older people and whether their agencies are meeting those needs.

PRACTITIONER ASSISTS COLOSTOMY PATIENTS AS ONLY A FELLOW OSTOMATE CAN



Sarah Mays was diagnosed with stage 4 colorectal cancer at 33, resulting in the need for a colostomy bag. Wearing this bio-collection system also gave her a new identity: ostomate.

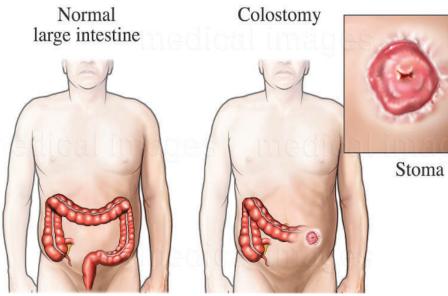
Ostomates are patients who have undergone the surgical procedure to create an opening, called a stoma, from the end of the intestine out to the surface of the abdomen. This allows waste from the body's digestive or urinary system to empty into a colostomy bag or pouch.

Mays who is now 41 uses this life experience to serve others with the same medical need, establishing the Supplying Transitional Ostomy Medical Assistance ministry of which she is executive director. STOMA provides needed supplies to ostomates who can't afford supplies, or can't access them, so that they will not resort to re-using pouches or extend the life of this essential equipment by using plastic bags and tape.

"When the seal around the pouch starts to break down, they're using duct tape around the seal and damaging their skin just to have a pouch on," Mays says. "They're provided supplies at the hospital, but once they get home and use up the sample pouches, there's no way to get more supplies if they don't have insurance."

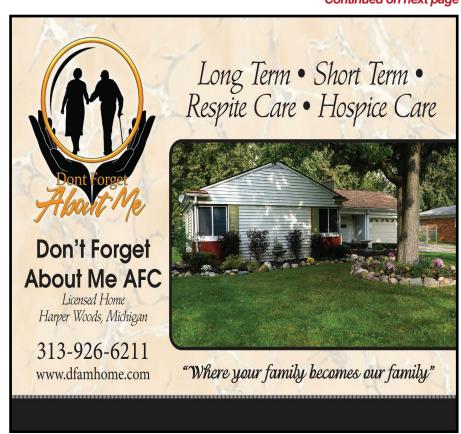
Compounding the problem, Mays says, is the fact that while in the hospital, a certified ostomy nurse provides information on ostomy products, dietary information and how life will change after surgery. However, few home visiting nurses are certified or equipped to assist ostomates.

"Nurses have to be specially trained on wound care ostomy and most visiting



nurses are not," says Mays. "Because they are not experts in the treatment of the stoma, ostomy issues and incontinence, patients and their caregivers are left to struggle on their own."

Continued on next page



Continued from page 14

Mays established STOMA in 2015 after experiencing difficulty obtaining ostomy supplies while traveling. STOMA outsources donated, unused ostomy supplies for free to the uninsured or the under-insured, or if the insurance is pending or there are other financial hardships. While STOMA is not a supplier, the ministry does provide some ostomy supplies along with counseling, referrals and resources, all at no charge. Educational materials are made possible through a partnership with the United Ostomy Association of America. STOMA holds a monthly support group, now via Zoom.

She also mails products to ostomates throughout the country and 60% of the donations go to those in other states.

"I think the fact that she's an ostomate makes her such a great teacher and resource. We were struggling with the bag, I was spending a fortune and the homecare RNs didn't know how to help us prevent leakage. Sarah has saved our lives," says caregiver Stephanie Donaldson.

Mays says her passion is making home visits – even during the

pandemic - and educating ostomates and their caregivers on pouching systems, stoma swelling, leakage, sanitation, and stoma sizing because that's the information people don't get from the hospital.

"My goal is to bridge the hospital-to-home educational gap for anyone who has a colostomy, ileostomy or urostomy bag, leaving them confident to take care of themselves," she says. "A lot of my home visits are for leakage around the pouching system, but leaking can be fixed."

Mays funds STOMA herself and with love offerings from her family and church. She says her faith fuels her home visits during this pandemic.

"I wear PPE, I pray and I have faith. Adjusting to life with an ostomy can be overwhelming and families need help. Evidence shows that patients who are properly educated after ostomy surgery have significantly better outcomes."

For more information, call 877.557.8662, or email stoma_supplies @yahoo.com.



ANIMATRONIC PETS

In the "What will they think of next" column, place life-like cats and dogs - mechanical pets being distributed by the Michigan Elder Justice Initiative's Michigan Long Term Care Ombudsman Program. The faux felines and canines are meant to provide comfort to seniors in nursing homes and adult foster homes, to combat the additional social isolation and loneliness brought on by COVID-19.

Facilities participating in the program will focus on residents living with dementia and those with cognitive decline, because they are deemed most apt to embrace a pet.

"I love the idea that the dog is interactive and talks back and that the cat purrs and, depending on which sensory spot you pet, it rolls over," says Salli Pung, the Michigan State long-term care ombudsman.

"That interaction has got to help people make a real connection and feel like they have a companion there. Relationships are what are so important to everyone in life, to feel needed and wanted. I think that is what these pets can offer."



HOMECARE WORKERS ARE ESSENTIAL

"Think of the home care and child care workers who take care of our most vulnerable family members...
Think of Black and Latina women."



-HENRIETTA IVEY

Those who plan to remain in their homes and age in place may well find that they'll need a homecare worker to help them do so. Classified by the state as homecare specialists, homecare workers provide care through Medicaid-funded programs like the Medicaid Waiver and the Home Help programs.

Before COVID-19, homecare specialists were classified as non-medical, non-essential workers and were not recognized by the state as members of the healthcare workforce.

Without that recognition, some homecare workers don't receive employment benefits, there's no union representation and the average pay is \$9.49 per hour. In April, however, Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer temporarily increased their wages by \$2 an hour to ensure the state's most vulnerable residents continued to receive care during the pandemic, as well as to acknowledge that they

are front-line workers risking their lives to care for others.

Henrietta Ivey is the founder of the Black Women in Homecare organization. She says this workforce is important to families who want to keep their loved ones at home and that she hopes the policy changes brought on by the pandemic will be expanded because homecare workers deserve as much.

"We provide essential services, like bathing, toileting, and meal prep for your loved ones," Ivey says, "but we do so much more. We handle disease management, check vitals and administer medication, all the tasks families are unwilling or unable to do."

Of this female-dominated workforce, Ivey says, some 80% are women of color. Black Women in Homecare, along with ally organizations like Impart Alliance, seeks to educate the public about the critical shortage of homecare workers, their right to

earn a living wage, and their lack of benefits when in-between clients. "We want inclusiveness in the healthcare workforce and respect for the work we do. We are deemed non-essential workers but we are very essential to the people we care for," Ivey says.

In fact, poverty rates are high among these homecare workers. According to AARP, more than half of them rely on some form of public assistance with a third relying on public healthcare coverage like Medicaid or Medicare.

A 25-year homecare veteran and licensed pharmacy technician, Ivey says she finds the work rewarding, but the below-living wage hourly pay and other barriers negatively impact the recruitment and retention of workers to meet the needs of aging baby boomers. Re-classifying homecare specialists as members of the state's healthcare workforce could increase pay, ensure benefits and training, and bring equity to their profession, says Ivey.

A Henry Ford Health System study revealed older adults have positive health outcomes when they have a homecare worker, resulting in decreased hospital admissions and re-admissions, and reduction in debilitating social isolation. Their presence also helps to reduce the caregiver burden on the family. "We have a passion for this work, but we need to be able to live, too. Ultimately, this issue will impact all families, whether you're on Medicaid or private pay."

Ivey encourages millennials, former homecare workers, and allies to support the women who do this work. "Caregivers are people who have a heart to care for others and as we age, we hope to encounter homecare caregivers who are properly compensated and respected for the work they do."

For more information, contact Black Women in Homecare by emailing henriettaivey975@gmail. com, or calling 313.544.8921.

Growing older in metro Detroit survey: Weigh in on issues and needs



Researchers want to hear YOUR voice!

- What is it like to grow older in metro Detroit?
- What matters most to you in these areas:
 - * Housing
 - * Health care
 - * Transportation
 - * Economic stability
 - * Neighborhood safety / stability
 - * Other areas of importance to you
- Who do you turn to for help when you need it?
- What do you think people in Detroit think about older adults?

Hannan Center and SAGE Metro Detroit are working with researchers at the University of Michigan to learn more about issues affecting older adults and the services currently available for them in Detroit metro.

Your responses will be confidential, so if you would like to share your thoughts: **Call** 734-681-0854 to respond

Answer the questions at the following link: https://tinyurl.com/AgingInDetroit Send an email to info@sagemetrodetroit.org

There are also opportunities to get involved with this project. If you are interested simply share your contact information, your name, phone number, email, when you provide your responses.



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For information on AmeriHealth Caritas VIP Care Plus (Medicare-Medicaid Plan) and other options for your health care, call Michigan ENROLLS at **1-800-975-7630** (TTY 1-888-263-5897). Office hours are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.

AmeriHealth Caritas VIP Care Plus is a health plan that contracts with both Medicare and Michigan Medicaid to provide benefits of both programs to enrollees. We are in Macomb and Wayne counties.





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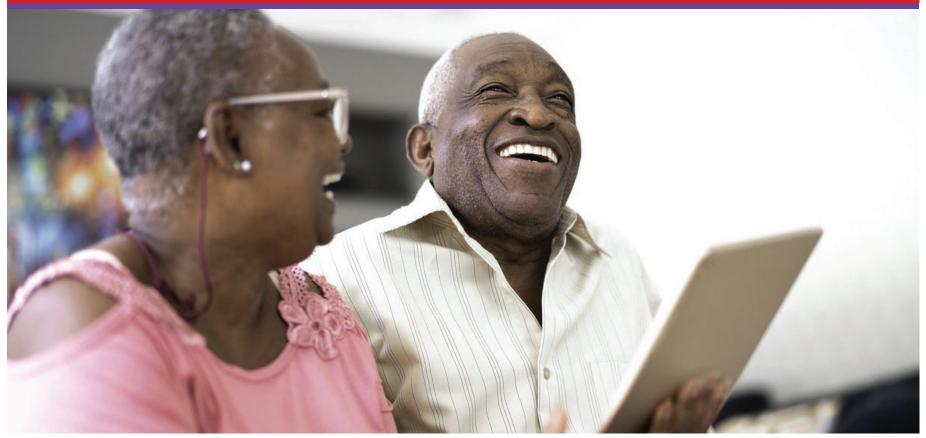
Seven days a week, 8 a.m. - 8 p.m.

www.amerihealthcaritasvipcareplus.com

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SOCIAL ISOLATION PRESERVES HEALTH BUT CHALLENGES WELL-BEING





Brenda Whitehead Ph.D., is an associate professor of psychology at the University of Michigan-Dearborn and conducts research on adult stress and coping mechanisms.

In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, researcher Brenda Whitehead conducted a study to identify what brought comfort and joy to seniors. Older adults said they were eased when connecting with family and friends, interacting on digital platforms (video chats, emails, social media, texts), engaging in hobbies, being with pets, spending time with spouses or partners, and when relying on faith.

"One thing I learned in my research is that most older adults are incredibly resilient and creative in how they approach and manage challenges," Whitehead says.

As the holidays approach many older adults are experiencing

pandemic fatigue. Their risk of exposure is compounded by the fact that they are a high-risk, vulnerable population - making them more likely to be isolated.

"Balancing health while reducing risk is a challenge, but just as we protect our physical health, long-term isolation can adversely impact our mental health," the researcher reports. "Early on we were able to do it, but it's harder now. As humans, we can't isolate long term without impacting our mental health."

She says, "Now is the time to value and draw upon one's lifetime experiences of weathering things."

She says seniors should not see themselves as a burden and should

ask for help.

"Early in the pandemic, religious communities and neighbors were very aware of the more vulnerable and isolated among them and did a great job offering help and support; but as the pandemic has gone on, and we have adapted to this strange new normal, many older adults are feeling forgotten. Family and friends should make the effort to remind them that they are happy to help," she says.

Whitehead also recommends that while it is normal to feel stress, grief or anxiety about this holiday season, it's best to acknowledge these feelings and find other ways to make it the best holiday season possible by being creative.

Here are Whitehead's ideas for "comfort and joy" during the holiday season:

Find ways to CONNECT, whether in-person or virtually.

- · Send holiday cards, letters or emails to friends and family
- Connect via Facetime or Zoom during holiday meals or traditions
- Watch holiday movies "together" while on video calls
- Arrange a bundled-up, socially distanced outdoor gathering:
- BYO hot cider, cocoa, and holiday cookies
- Walk around the neighborhood and admire the holiday decorations
- Create new traditions with those in your household like a special movie night or game night or taking a holiday photo shoot with your pet

Find ACTIVITIES that bring you joy. Stay busy with activities you love.

- Create special ornaments or hand-made gifts
- Bake holiday treats
- Design holiday cards
- Read festive, uplifting books
- Listen to joyful holiday music

Connect to your FAITH which research shows is powerful

- Pray or meditate on the meaning of the season within your faith tradition
- · Listen to, sing, or play faith-based music
- Get ACTIVE! You can even make this a video-chat activity!
- Take a walk in the snow, assuming it's physically safe for you to do so
- Dance to "Jingle Bell Rock"
- Play Simon Says, or "Santa Says," or Follow-the-Leader with children, over video chat
- EXERCISE!!! This does wonders for mental health

Get GRATEFUL

- Really think about and appreciate your blessings, no matter how small. Do you have a warm home? Caring friends? Physical health? Favorite entertainment?
- · Create a daily gratitude list of what you're thankful for

Take POSITIVE action

- Find ways to HELP someone else
- Go caroling around your neighborhood or play holiday tunes on your instrument from your porch
- · Write letters or call those who are isolated alone
- Spread joy to neighbors with baked treats
- Find a charity to support!



Early Memory Screenings keep Seniors Connected to Care



The Alzheimer's Foundation of America provides free, virtual memory screening allowing one-on-one, confidential screenings from a qualified health professional. Screenings are conducted through secure videoconference technology (i.e. Zoom, FaceTime, Skype) in real-time using a smart phone, computer, tablet or other device with a webcam and internet capability.

Screenings are by appointment Mondays and Wednesdays from 10 am to 4 pm and Fridays from 10 am to 2 pm. The 10 - 15 minute screenings are simple, quick and noninvasive, and consist of a series of questions to gauge memory, language, thinking skills and other intellectual functions. Once the screening is completed results are reviewed. Memory screenings are not a diagnosis but can indicate whether someone should see their doctor for more extensive testing.

This service, part of AFA's National Memory Screening Program, began during the COVID-19 pandemic shutdowns to ensure that people could be screened from the safety and comfort of their homes. Memory screenings are a significant first step toward finding out if someone has a memory problem. Such problems could be caused by a number of medical conditions, including vitamin deficiencies, thyroid issues, urinary tract infections and depression, which are treatable or curable.

If the memory problem is the result of a dementia-related illness such as Alzheimer's disease, early detection leads to early treatment and therapeutic intervention, as well as a better opportunity to participate in a clinical trial and take a more active role in developing health, legal and financial plans.

Appointments can be made by calling AFA at 866.232.8484

NEWS BRIEFS

TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Freedom Road Transportation

Provides a unique mobility retention option, funding travel for those who need to engage a driver if they are seniors over 60, disabled or low-Income, making less than \$22,000 a year.

The nonprofit program provides mileage reimbursement to riders who are paying their own drivers. Each rider gets 55 cents per mile reimbursed, for up to 200 miles per month. Miles can also include a variety of other types of travel arrangements. Riders submit a monthly mileage form and reimbursement checks are sent to their driver.

The service is available to residents of Oakland, Macomb, Wayne and Washtenaw Counties. To apply, visit www.freedomroadtransportation.org, or call 248.232.1259. info@freedomroadtransportation.org



Independence Rides needs volunteer drivers:

Drivers for this membership-based transportation service for seniors and the visually impaired undergo training and background checks. New riders are accepted based on driver availability. For details, visit: www.independencerides.com, or call 313.618.1578.

DDOT

Provides yellow mitt flags to help blind and wheelchair passengers easily notify bus operators they wish to board. Yellow mitts can be obtained by contacting DDOT's ADA coordinator at 313.833.3655, TTY: 7-1-1, or email DDOT-ADA@detroitmi.gov. For more information, see www.DDOT-www.DDOT-ADA@detroitmi.gov.

COVID-19 RESOURCES

MI COVID Alert - An anonymous, free app that lets those who sign up know if they been exposed to COVID-19. When users confidentially submit a positive test result into the app, those who have been in recent proximity and may have also been exposed to the virus are alerted. When a person tests positive, they receive a randomly generated PIN from the local health department or State of Michigan case investigators that allows them to share their test results anonymously on the app – sending a push notification to those who have possibly been in close contact - within six feet for at least 15 minutes. The free app is available from Apple and Google.

The Coronavirus Community Care Network - COVID-19 testing site at the Joseph Walker Williams Community Center, 8431 Rosa Parks Blvd, Detroit, Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Free tests available by appointment to residents of Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb counties, no prescription needed. Call 313.230.0505 for appointment and transportation, if needed.

Older Adults Affected by COVID-19 - Detroit seniors who are isolated or quarantined, or who suffer from complications from COVID-19, can call for help. Those who are aware of such problems can also call the St. Patrick Senior Center staff at 313.833.7080 and let them know how to reach the senior.

NEWS BRIEFS

Wayne County Health Division COVID-19 – Open Monday – Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 734.287.7870.

United Way 2-1-1 Hotline - Helps access resources during times of crisis. Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

FOOD RESOURCES

Detroit recreation centers - Distribution hubs for Detroit Area Agency on Aging, Gleaner's Food Bank, and other community partners. For schedules, locations and real-time service updates on food distribution sites from more than 30 partners, visit www.detroitmi.gov/food, or call the COVID-19 Hotline at 313.876.4000.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Put more food on the table with **SNAP** which helps those with limited incomes buy food. they need to stay healthy. Call 313.259.1574, ext. 3160 or email SNAP@NKFM.org to apply.

PRESCRIPTIONS & SUPPLIES

Those affected by COVID-19 who can't afford prescription drugs can contact World Medical Relief for the Affordable Prescription Program. The agency also offers male and female incontinence supplies – many free of charge. Medical and wound care supplies are available at a reasonable cost. Contact Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m., at 313-866-5333, email, info@worldmedicalrelief.org, or visit www.worldmedicalrelief.org.

MENTAL HEALTH

Easterseals Michigan - One of seven Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics in Michigan, providing comprehensive person-centered, trauma-informed and evidence-based outpatient mental health and substance use services – regardless of insurance status or ability to pay. Call 248.475.6400 or 800-75-SEALS, or visit www.easterseals.com/michigan.

Wellplace-Michigan – Functioning as an access center for the Detroit Wayne Mental Health Authority, the center's live operators serve as the front door for those seeking mental health or substance abuse information and services. Available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, and 365 days per year. Call 800.241.4949.

Michigan Stay Well

Hotline counselors available, 24 hours per day, 7 days per week for emotional support counseling. Call 888.535.6136.

Roll up your sleeve and get a flu shot before the holidays! It's not too late, but it does take two weeks to develop immunity. Doctors recommend flu shots for adults over 65; people with health conditions such as diabetes or heart disease; and groups such as African Americans and Latinos. These adults are often sicker with the flu and have a higher rate of serious effects. Protecting yourself against the flu also helps to protect others. The more people who get flu shots, the better the community. To learn more and see where to get flu shots, including free flu shots, call your local health department or visit nkfm.org/flu. or call 800.482.1455

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES DURING PANDEMIC "DOWN TIME"



Many are taking the "down time" necessitated by the pandemic to finish those things they never completed, acquire new skills, or learn something new.

Detroit at Work and Detroit Public Schools Community District have partnered to offer adult education programs. Adult learners can upgrade their academic skills, complete high school, pursue GEDs, and participate in job placement and other services. Tuition is free and there are safe, online options including laptops and internet access for those who commit to the program and meet other requirements. Open to Detroit residents only, for information or to sign up, visit: www.detroitatwork.com/adult-education-gedhigh-school-completion

Time to return to or enroll in higher education?

Detroit Reconnect assists seniors who want to further their education, as well and those who want to encourage their children and grandchildren to either return to college or enroll for

the first time. In collaboration with post-secondary institutions in Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb counties, the program provides free college and career navigation including application and enrollment assistance, financial aid application support, and debtforgiveness support for previously incurred educational debt to create a personalized pathway to and through college. The program is affiliated with the Detroit Regional Chamber's Detroit Drives Degrees adult education initiative.

To learn more, contact Michelle Cyrus at 734.210.1003 or mcyrus@ detroitchamber.com

Library lends tutors and laptops

Tutors - To ensure you're successful in these programs, the Detroit Public Library offers free support at www.tutor. com, to those who live or attend school in Detroit. You'll need a library card to access and can get one online and sign up for the service at detroitpubliclibrary.org.

Laptops - With support from Lawrence

Technological University, the Detroit Public Library rents laptops for 90 days to adult users. While there is no charge, there is a replacement fee of \$500 if laptops are lost or damaged. The laptops come with Wi-Fi capabilities and also include an integrated camera, speaker and microphone, as well as the Microsoft Office Suite. Borrowers will receive a flash drive to store work and files. Laptop requests can be made in person or over the phone at any open Detroit Public Library location.

Just want to take classes for enrichment and fun?

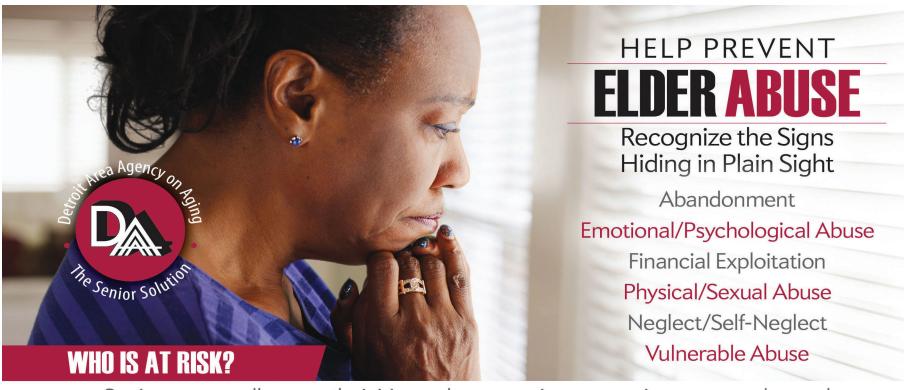
Older Michiganians can enjoy more than 150 small group classes for FREE! Classes are taught by older adults who are former teachers or social workers who are able to empathize and go at the right speed for older adults. Supported by the Michigan Health Endowment Fund, in partnership with GetSetUp, classes are designed to keep the mind active, allow seniors to engage with others, increase the ability to live independently and to learn new things - and most importantly,

to have fun! See www.getsetup.io/partner/michigan and use coupon code MICHIGANHEALTH to waive any fees. If you need help, email help@getsetup.io or call 1-888-559-1614.

WDET's reading service assists the differently abled

Those who are unable to see, hold or comprehend conventional printed matter because of a disability, including a learning disability, can resource the Detroit Radio Information Service.

DRIS loans free, specially built radio receivers to access printed and visual news, and information published in local papers is read. A service of WDET 101.9 FM and Wayne State University, news from local and suburban newspapers and coupon circulars are read over this private, closed-circuit radio signal. Radios are mailed to subscribers. Applicants must be registered with a Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped or certified by a qualified healthcare provider. For additional qualifying conditions and to apply, see www.wdet.org/dris



Seniors across all ages, ethnicities, cultures, socio-economic groups and sexual preferences. Those experiencing dementia/diminished capacity, blindness/visual impairment, reading/language barriers, addiction or mobility challenges.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Visit Detroit Area Agency on Aging's website **DetroitSeniorSolution.org** to learn how you can help prevent elderly & vulnerable adult abuse through:

- → Outreach Presentations
- → Education & Training

- → Caregiver Support & Concerns
- → MMAP Medicare Medicaid Assistance

HOW TO FILE A REPORT

You can file an anonymous, confidential report by contacting Adult Protective Services **855-444-3911** or the Detroit Area Agency on Aging at **313-446-4444** x **5607**



Serving Detroit, Hamtramck, Harper Woods, **Highland Park & the 5 Grosse Pointes**

1333 Brewery Park Blvd. Ste. 200 Detroit MI 48207 313-446-4444



If you have Medicare questions, I can still help!

Through COVID-19 and beyond, meeting your Medicare needs is what drives us at Humana.

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Call a licensed sales agent 800-649-0059 (TTY: 711)

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