ATTENTION SENIORS AND EMPTY NESTERS
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11 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW to Pass a Home Inspection... not after!

A new report has been prepared which identifies the 11 most common problems, and what you should know about them before you list your home for sale.

Same is true for veterans whose service-connected disability is the primary reason they require nursing home care, regardless of disability percentage.

In addition, for those with a qualifying hospital stay, Medicare in a State Veterans Home may cover rehabilitative care. Our contracted rehab staff is highly trained and work to ensure that residents gain back as much independence as possible prior to returning home.

Our team of caring professionals makes meeting our residents needs their number one priority. Veterans Homes are located in Orting, Port Orchard, Spokane and Walla Walla. Whether you are Active Duty, National Guard & Reserves, recently separated, retired or have been a veteran for decades, we are here for you and your family!

It is our honor serving those who served and we wish our communities a Happy Veterans Day!

Your Washington Department of Veterans Affairs stands ready to serve you today and every day! To contact us, please visit www.dva.wa.gov, email us at benefits@dva.wa.gov or call us at 1-800-562-2308.

Showing community support, community attendees wave their flags in support during an Auburn Veterans Day Parade. Photo by Gary Lott, WDVA.

Our State Veterans Homes have been around since the 1890’s, and offer many patriotic and recreational events as we serve and honor Veterans and their families. For Veterans with service connected disability ratings of 70% — 100%, nursing care is provided at no cost. This means veterans may keep all of their VA, military and personal retirement income. The same is true for veterans whose service-connected disability is the primary reason they require nursing home care, regardless of disability percentage.

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A fighting chance for the heart of community

By Adam Worcester
Contributing writer

EVERETT — COVID-19 knocked it down, but like a resilient boxer, the Carl Gipson Senior Center is back on its feet and stronger than ever.

“Isolation was a big issue,” he said. “The elderly didn’t have many other options at all.”

A retired City of Everett worker, Gipson helped VOA officials navigate the paperwork and sign a 10-year agreement to operate the center on the city’s behalf.

“It’s important for seniors to have a place to congregate and get involved in activities and socialize and be together,” Gipson said. “I’m just real appreciative of the fact that the city wants to have a senior center program.”

Armstrong said the VOA plans to dramatically expand fitness and activity classes to appeal to younger seniors.

It also wants to schedule more field trips for activities outside the center.

“Trips are a good way to bring people in, and get them excited and engaged,” Armstrong said. “To survive we have to be appealing to people in their ’70s and ’60s. We want to diversify and expand the number of groups we’re serving.”

In addition to activities, the center will continue to be a place seniors can access a variety of mental health and counseling services provided by Homage — which is currently using the center’s kitchen to prepare free meals.

“We are eager to keep working with Homage on multiple levels,” Armstrong said.

VOA is also re-evaluating the center’s pricing structure.

In the past members paid $30 a year, plus extra fees for various classes. Armstrong wants to simplify it so the annual fee includes classes.

Meanwhile, he is working with city and health officials to explore opening the center for four hours a day in November and December.

“The pandemic has been fairly devastating for a number of seniors, especially those who live alone,” Armstrong said. “It’s so important for people to have a place to connect, and also to get services.”

“It’s such a cool opportunity. We’re thrilled to be in this position to serve that community.”

Carl Gipson Senior Center has served as a gathering place for older adults over many decades. From hosting Veteran’s Day Hall dances, to providing home cooked meals, the re-opening of its doors is anticipated by many.

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Dr. Robert Hughes
Getting ready for 2022 Medicare annual enrollment

By Jesse Gamez
Intermountain Medicare President, Humana

The annual Medicare Advantage and Medicare Prescription Drug Plan enrollment period is approaching. From October 15 to December 7, millions of eligible people for Medicare can sign up, switch or leave a health care plan to fit their coverage needs for 2022. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Medicare information and resources are available to help you choose the plan that’s right for you while staying safe. Websites, online educational events and one-on-one meetings with sales agents are all great ways to learn about your Medicare plan options. At the same time, it’s important to access Medicare resources online while protecting your personal information and avoiding fake offers or other scams.

Here are some tips for how to prepare for the Medicare annual enrollment period.

Use an online tool

Go to the Medicare Plan Finder on Medicare.gov to compare plans, benefits and get an estimated cost for each plan based on an average member. If you are interested in Medicare Part D, which helps cover the cost of prescription medications, you can also enter the names of prescription medications you take to ensure those medications are covered by the plan you are considering.

On Medicare.gov, you can also learn about and enroll in Medicare Advantage plans, sometimes called Part C or MA Plans, and visit an insurance company’s website to understand more about what they offer. Insurance companies that offer Medicare Advantage plans can provide detailed information about their plans and services, plus prescription pricing information and other benefits. You can also check whether your primary care physician or other providers are in-network with the Medicare Advantage plan.

Connect with experts

Many insurance companies are offering online workshops to review 2022 Medicare Advantage plan options. Also, check to see if you can schedule a one-on-one meeting with an insurance company sales agent in person or by phone or video chat. Before you attend an education event or meeting, it’s a good idea to prepare a list of questions so that you can ensure you get the information you need. Does the plan include vision, hearing and dental coverage? Will telehealth services be covered? Is transportation to your medical appointments covered? And what is the estimated cost for each plan based on an average member?

Protect yourself against scams

The federal Medicare agency has warned that scammers may try to use the pandemic to steal Medicare beneficiaries’ Medicare numbers, banking information or other personal data. Scammers may try to reach out to you by phone, email, text message, social media or by visiting your home. Only give your Medicare number to your doctor, pharmacist, hospital, health insurer or other trusted health care provider. Do not click links in text messages and emails from unknown sources, and hang up on unsolicited phone calls.

If you are not comfortable accessing plan information online, you will have the option to meet in-person with an agent this year. Or Medicare.gov has an option for setting up a phone call. To learn more, go to Medicare.gov or call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227).

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A commitment to building a community free of racism and intolerance

By Communities of Color Coalition
Community Partner Contributing Writer

Communities of Color Coalition (C3) is a nonprofit run by, and serving Black Indigenous People of Color in Snohomish County. With over fifteen years of service to our communities, we remain committed to the values and integrity set forth by the communities of Origin. The Communities of Color Coalition (C3) mission is educating and advocating for social justice and human rights, especially for people of color and other under-represented groups that have been systematically oppressed. We do this through a transformative process that centers and supports those in recurring existential distress, especially for people of color, Indigenous communities, and those with disabilities. We do this by valuing those human rights, demonstrating systems that contribute critical decision-making and responsiveness for community members that produce inclusive results. These efforts, by the Communities of Color Coalition, demonstrate that direct services can produce policy change through our supportive civic engagement plans. A few of our current initiatives include:

- Our fresh fruit and vegetable program which distributes fresh food to families.
- Keeping seniors living homes accountable to their residents.
- Providing transportation and assistance for community members who receive vaccinations,
- A rental assistance program that offers support for those in need.
- A wellness program that encourages healthy lifestyles.
- With our continuing 50% of outreach and promise to serve older adults and people with disabilities, our Communities of Color Coalition demonstrates that through collective action, we have the power to correct injustice and develop sustainable and equitable practices that support the betterment of all.

Through the Covid-19 pandemic, we have continued our commitment to service by collaborating with organizations such as Homage. In doing so, we have been able to continue hosting properly social distanced community events in facility parking lots such as drive through food pantries, and informational booths. As a member of the Vaccine Equity Partnership (VEP), we provided additional support for seniors through appointment setting assistance and transportation to vaccination sites. We recognize the value of our senior community to the overall health of Snohomish County. Our Bus ADP depicting transit helps to remind us all of the importance of “Senior’s 1st.” Our organization currently operates with more than 60% of our unhoused seniors being women, ages 65+. Communities of Color Coalition, is a trusted source for the older adult community, and seniors are an integral part of C3 as an organization.

Panel members at this year’s Communities of Coalition’s 9th Annual North Puget Sound Conference on Race virtually gathered to present on Justice and Wholeness: Re-emergence as Black, Indigenous, People of Color. Their voices in order to meet the immediate and emergent needs of each community.

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Vietnam veteran finds joy in volunteering

By Diana J Noble
Contributing Writer

Homage Senior Services volunteer and Vietnam Veteran, Pat Maloney describes life following retirement as a “shock to the system.” After serving two tours in Vietnam, earning three degrees and 40 years as a biomedical engineer and leadership skills instructor, it’s no wonder Pat “couldn’t stop the motor” when his professional life came to a close.

Pat’s naval career began in 1966 at age 17. While on the naval air-craft carrier USS Constellation, he documented his experiences as a plane captain. They ranged from the mundane to downed planes, ship accidents, pilots who became prisoners of war, an onboard incident where a 16-plane accidentally fired a shot that barely missed him, shore leaves, and President Lyndon Johnson’s ship visit. Years later, he found his Vietnam-era journals and turned them into books he self-published for family and friends.

Reflection at the time, Pat says, “I went in clueless and grew up fast. I learned to adjust to new circumstances and that I managed to come out with a good head on my shoulders.” Statistics show he is one of the lucky ones. The US Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that about 30% of Vietnam Veterans have had post-traumatic stress disorder at some point in their lifetime.

Today, Pat plays drums, key-board and guitar, builds birdhouses, gardens and creates a newsletter for the local arm of The Knights of Columbus, a Catholic fraternal organization. He also volunteers for the Red Cross and Homage Senior Services.

With the Red Cross, Pat responds to requests from service members’ families in times of emergency. Examples might include a family member’s death, a house fire, an ill spouse—any reason a service member’s chain of command to finding paperwork to the service member’s chain of command to finding resources that address the family’s troubles. Pat makes it happen with a joyful heart.

As a Peer Counselor with Homage, Pat visits with senior peers who “need more meaningful connections with others.” Due to the pandemic, in-person visits are now weekly phone calls but the friendships have stayed intact. Staying social is vital to a senior’s quality of life. A visit can boost their emotional and physical health and give them a sense of belonging. Many of Pat’s clients speak of their childhood, career, relatives, hobbies or travel. Some also share their daily struggles. In those cases, Pat does everything he can to line up support, such as help paying bills, preparing meals, completing home improvements, house cleaning, etc. Most of all, he lets lonely seniors know that someone cares. Pat’s a busy man, always finding ways to “keep his motor going” through service to others. Right now, he has writing a fourth book for his grandchildren titled, Who Killed Frosty, a tongue-in-cheek take-off on the 1969 animated TV show. When asked if he prefers to be called Patrick or Pat, he laughed and replied, “You can call me anything you want as long as you don’t call me late to dinner.”

Pat Maloney paper work to the service member’s chain of command to finding resources that address the family’s troubles, Pat makes it happen with a joyful heart.

“Zarlingo’s past leadership role in the Silver Lake neighborhood will serve him well in representing his district; his past engagement on city-wide issues of zoning, the comprehensive plan, wetlands and commercial and residential development services will serve the city as a whole.” - Everett Herald, 7/25/21

BEN’S PRIORITIES

• Bring a responsible approach to homelessness—Offer help to those in need while taking action to protect businesses, customers, and neighborhoods.

• Ensure adequate and stable funding and programs for public safety—It’s essential that residents, visitors and shoppers feel safe in Everett.

• Balance the budget with careful spending and avoid taxes that discourage sales and investment. Encourage businesses that will bring family wage jobs and increase the tax base.

BEN IS ENDORSED BY:

Ben is endorsed by the Herald, Marysville Mayor John Nehring, and current/former Everett Councilmembers Scott Bader, Scott Murphy, Jeff Moore, Ethel McNeil, Shannon Affholter, and neighborhood chair Dana Oliver.

About Ben

Ben and his family have called Silver Lake home since 1991 and immediately joined the Silver Lake Neighborhood Association. He has demonstrated a commitment to public service, volunteering as a director of the association for many years. Ben has worked on service projects with United Way and Forterra, both in the neighborhood and elsewhere in Everett and spent several years as a robotics coach and math volunteer at a public school.
How to preserve your family cassette and videos

By Margaret Riddle Contributing Writer

Looking at our region’s earliest recorded history is often just that: Looking. For most of us, what we know of the past, before recorded sound, has come to us in photographs, newspapers, other written accounts and stories passed down through generations. Even photos—pictures taken in the spring of 1892—are priceless, but what did the birth of the new sound like, with the noise of trees being cut and their stumps dynamited, newcomers greening newcomers, large and small business deals being made, and everywhere the noise of construction? What sounds were heard in lumber camps and shingle mills or in family conversations at Sunday dinners? Some sounds have completely faded from our lives.

While the earliest audio recordings date back to the 19th century, it was not until the 1940s that they became common in average households, radio having introduced news, music and drama into homes a decade earlier. Family recordings of conversations and un-copyrighted music date mainly from the World War II era, a time when various small machines were being invented and, more importantly, becoming affordable. My family had a wire recorder in the late 1940s, a machine that duplicated magnetically on commercial steel “piano wire.” Clarity was good, but over the years, the wire spools unraveled and were damaged. Over time, both the spools and the machines that played them have been discarded.

Sorting through our combined family collections, my husband and I have done a decent job of duplicating and passing on family photos, slides, home movies, cookbooks and written memories. In recent years, we mostly put aside those few reel-to-reel tapes and dozens of cassettes simply because their preservation has been difficult. The difficulty was due to the large number of different formats, and some made obsolete in a commercially competitive world. Today we have an explosion of audio files in the form of podcasts and quickly captured cell phone videos, making the decision today to be a matter of what to save and how.

Everett Library Historian Lisa Labovitch points out that AV preservation has become a lot easier in the last few years. In her words:

“There are many online services that will send you a postage-paid box for your materials and will send you back digital copies. This can be intimidating for individuals who do not want to ship precious family material. I also found it easy to connect a cassette or tape recorder to my PC, using a USB cable and free software to copy an oral history tape I made in 2001 with my mother.

“Better is to work to transfer to digital and cloud storage and share them now. We hope that others will do the same in years to come, using new technology. Some successful examples of this come from our local heritage groups. Museums including Granite Falls, Edmonds Museum and the Hibulb Cultural Center have incorporated sound in their displays.

From the 1970s on, Snohomish County heritage organizations have periodically conducted oral history programs, most recording seniors on cassette tape, home video or digital recorders. Northwest Room historians at the Everett Public Library have recorded a number of seniors in the early 1970s, collecting their life stories on reel-to-reel tape. Preserve Oregon has practices at that time called for transcription and then storing the cassettes on edge, lengthwise, in a climate-controlled environment and periodically playing them at each time stopping the tapes to rest in a different position, hopefully avoiding sound bleed through.

These tapes were later copied to digital by novelist and filmmaker Denise Ohio, making it possible for the library to better preserve and share them. You can listen to some of these stories on the Everett Library website, posted in the Northwest Room’s Everett Voices collection.

Other local historians who have done extensive oral history taping include Len Nickels and David Cameron of Index, collecting stories on various historical topics. Neighborhood groups and the Everett Museum have also interviewed local seniors in the past. Check out the Edmonds Historical Museum website for their collection of video interviews online and Alderwood Manor Heritage Organization’s interview transcriptions on their website.

Now surprisingly, many of the people we talk with have exchanged the majority of their memories with their collection of tape and video interviews. Some older adults may find themselves alone, and making a new friend can help them smile! Homage Senior Companion volunteers are 55+ and can earn hourly and mileage reimbursements from Senior Companion volunteers are 55+ and can earn hourly and mileage reimbursements from Homage, too. Call or email to learn more! preserving history for the future.

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RSVP VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

By Paulette Jacobson
RSVP Program Director

Sponsored by Catholic Community Services, the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) is America’s largest volunteer network for persons over 55 and the only program where the collective contribution of the senior volunteer is recorded. RSVP is funded by Congress through the Corporation for National and Community Service and by Snohomish County Human Services, and the Washington State Commerce Department. RSVP exists to help volunteers find fulfillment in their volunteer work.

RSVP volunteers tell you that when you give of yourself, share your knowledge and time, the great gift of you seems small compared with the satisfaction, accomplishment and personal responsibility you feel when you give of yourself, share your time and skills, you help.

Volunteer Opportunities: SHIBA (Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors)

As part of the insurance commission’s consumer protection services, SHIBA provides free, unbiased, and confidential assistance with Medicare and health care classes. The volunteer advisors are trained to help the latest Medicare and health care coverage information.

Located in the beautiful new Edmonds Waterfront Center, volunteer advisors can help.

Assess health care coverage needs. Determine general eligibility for health care coverage programs. Evaluate and compare Medicare plans and programs. Provide enrollment help with Medicare. Speak with 1-800 Medicare on the phone. It is not required that you work from home using their own cell phones. It is not required that you come into a central office.

SHIBA Volunteer Office administrators will help.

Make referrals to other agencies providing computer expertise. On-going required training is 3 hours.

SHIBA will provide new volunteers 8 hours of Basic Training classes and up to 6 months of mentoring. The on-going required training is 3 hours per month for nine months out of the year. As a SHIBA volunteer you will be trained to guide consumers through the Medicare maze to help them to make the right decisions regarding health insurance.

SHIBA Advisors work a 3 to 4-hour shift (depending on demand) each week. Time commitments increase during Open Enrollment (October 15 — December 7). Basic computer skills and the ability to manage Zoom technology are a must. Many advisors work from home using their own cell phones. It is not required that you come into a central office.

SHIBA Volunteer Office administrators will help.

SHIBA Volunteer Office administrators will help.

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About Scott Murphy

Scott and Kippy have lived in the community for nearly thirty years and raised their three children in Everett. Choosing to seek election to the Port Commission, Scott will have served the past nine years on the Everett City Council ending this December 2021.

Scott has been a Certified Public Accountant for 16 years and currently serves as President of Goldfinch Bros., Inc. Scott also serves as a Board member for Mountain Pacific Bank and is a Board member for the Everett Public Facilities District (Angel of the Winds Arena). His past community service includes: Snohomish Health District Board, Past Chair of the Community Foundation of Snohomish County and Past President of North Everett Little League.

Scott is endorsed by seven current and former Port Officials and over 100 community members. See list at scottmurphyforport.com.

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- CPA and Former Everett City Councilmember
Richard Anderson
Extinguishing the dangers of house fires

By Shamari Guzman, South County Fire Contributing Writer

Fire prevention is a year-round goal for South County Fire, and in October, we place an even stronger emphasis as we celebrate Fire Prevention Month.

Older adults are more vulnerable in a fire due to a combination of risk factors including mental and physical limitations, greater use of medications and the likelihood of living in older homes that do not meet today’s fire safety standards.

Smoke alarms are your first indication of fire or smoke. Once the alarm sounds, individuals may have as little as two minutes to safely escape. Since most fires occur at night when people are sleeping, and because smoke can put you in a deeper sleep, it is important that your alarms are working properly.

Most common issues we see are lack of sufficient smoke alarms in the home, outdated smoke alarms and missing batteries.

Smoke alarms should be placed in each sleeping area, outside the sleeping area (central in the hallway), and on each level of your home. For example, a two-story home with three bedrooms should have a minimum of five smoke alarms. Smoke alarms expire after 10 years, including both battery-operated and wired units. Expired smoke alarms may beep when you replace the battery, but that does not mean that it will detect fire or smoke.

According to the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA), the leading cause of home fire deaths in older adults’ homes is smoking.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9
Our firefighters are equipped with tools that will help locate people and pets, even in the harshest conditions and we have specialized oxygen masks specially made for our furry friends.

The leading cause of fire injuries is cooking. To keep you and your loved ones safe from fire, never leave smoking material unattended, and never smoke in bed. When cooking, do not leave the kitchen when frying, boiling, or broiling and always set a timer as a reminder.

If a fire does occur escape quickly, call 9-1-1, and never re-enter the home, even for your beloved pets. Pets are resourceful and many times escape on their own safely. Our firefighters are equipped with tools that will help locate people and pets, even in the harshest conditions and we have specialized oxygen masks specially made for our furry friends.

We know that each resident has unique needs when it comes to home fire safety. Our South County Fire team is ready to answer your questions and if needed can provide you and your loved ones with life-saving smoke alarms. To learn more, visit www.southsnofire.org and click on Community Programs or call us at 425-320-5800.

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

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- How can I enhance my Medicare coverage?
- Are prescription drugs covered in all plans?
- Which doctors and specialists can I visit?

Don’t look for answers by yourself. A trusted partner can make Medicare simple!

Attend a FREE Virtual Medicare Meeting

Thursday October 7th
1:00 pm

Or attend a FREE In Person Medicare Meeting

October 18th at 100 pm
Oasis Park Retirement Lynnwood

October 19th at 3pm
Windsor Square
Senior Living Marysville

November 1st at 11am
Creekside Retirement Woodinville

November 8th at 2pm
Gencare Granite Falls in Granite Falls

For more information visit: apodentures.com/dentures-everett-wa

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A salesperson will be present with information & applications. For accommodations of persons with special needs at meetings, call 425-232-3375 (TTY: 711).

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Honoring sacrifice this Veterans Day

By Nancy Brosmer, M.S., C.C. Lead Mental Health Counselor, Homage Contributing Writer

“On the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month” World War I ended with an armistice or truce. President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed this day Armistice Day. President Dwight D. Eisenhower officially renamed Armistice Day to Veterans Day in 1954.

Veterans Day honors Veterans of all wars. These are people who join the military understanding that their service may involve losing their life for their country. They are strong and courageous. From the American Revolution in 1775 to Desert Storm/Desert Shield, the United States lost 41,892,128 of its bravest citizens. In our longest war ever, the Global War on Terror, we have lost over 900,000 soldiers (VA.gov 2020 and Brown University, 2021).

This day holds considerable significance for me. My father was an officer in the Army and was severely injured during the war. He spent a year in a military hospital away from his family, and he spent the rest of his life living with pain. My husband was a high-ranking enlisted member of the Air Force and served multiple tours of duty overseas. He retired after almost 24 years of serving our country and passed away from service-connected disabilities that were a direct result of his service overseas during wartime.

CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE

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drugs with serious side effects!

When these nerves begin to "die" they do so because they have been deprived of nutrition flow. As you can see in Figure 2, they begin to degenerate due to lack of blood flow to the nerves in the hands and feet which causes the nerves to shrink and become diseased, they shrivel up. This damage is commonly caused by a result of damage to the small blood vessels that surround the nerves. This exam consists of a detailed, sensory, vascular testing, and an analysis of neurological and vascular evaluation. Treatment at Evergreen Acupuncture Clinic:...
AARP survey shows solid support for WA Cares Fund and its key benefits

By Doug Shadel AARP

We all hope to age as independently and as successfully as possible, but long-term care services can be expensive, and far too many of us are not financially prepared. Thankfully, Washington state’s long-term care system is recognized as a national model for its focus on choice and home-based long-term care services, and we’re strengthening that system by launching the WA Cares Fund.

The survey of 800 registered voters reveals that 80% say it’s important that WA Cares allows participants to pay family members — something that private long-term care insurance options do not usually allow.

More than three-in-four voters (76%) say it’s important that WA Cares offers proper spinal support or massage to help with pain.

Nearly three-in-four voters (74%) say it’s not confident or only somewhat confident in their ability to pay for their long-term care needs.

Beginning January 2022, Washington workers will contribute 58 cents per hour of earnings from each paycheck to the WA Cares Fund. The median income for Washington workers is $52,075, so the annual premium would be $3,062. Employees only pay into the program during their working years and will not have to worry about losing coverage if they change jobs or lose their job or retire.

Anyone who has needed long-term care for the family or for someone they care about knows preparation is key. For some families, the WA Cares Fund may be the help they need. The program can offer others the time and resources to plan for long-term care. Most of all, it will give families the security of knowing they have a resource to help get the care they need, when they need it. The program can offer others the time and resources to plan for long-term care.

We support the WA Cares Fund and encourage Washingtonians to learn more about the benefits it provides and how it helps them and their families.

We encourage all Washingtonians to support the WA Cares Fund and tell their representatives it’s important that Washington become the 23rd state to have a public long-term care program.

**By Doug Shadel AARP**

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**By Doug Shadel AARP**
Alzheimer’s drug targets mild cognitive impairment

By Judith Graham
Kaiser Health News

The approval of a controversial new drug for Alzheimer’s disease, Aduhelm, is shining a spotlight on mild cognitive impairment — problems with memory, attention, language or other cognitive tasks that exceed changes expected with normal aging.

After initially indicating that Aduhelm could be prescribed to any- one with dementia, the Food and Drug Administration now specifies that the prescription drug be given to individu- als with mild cognitive impairment who are very early-stage Alzheimer’s, the group in which the medication was studied. Yet this narrower recommendation raises questions. What does a diag- nosis of mild cognitive impairment mean? Is Aduhelm appropriate for all people with mild cognitive impair- ment, or only some? And who should decide which patients qualify for treat- ment? dementia specialists or primary care physicians?

Controversy surrounds Aduhelm because effectiveness data has been proven, its cost is high (an estimated $56,000 a year, not including expenses for imaging and monitoring foods), and its potential side effects are sig- nificant (41% of patients in the drug’s clinical trials experienced brain swell- ing and bleeding).

Furthermore, an FDA advisory com- mittee strongly recommended against Aduhelm, but the agency is investigat- ing the process leading to the FEN decision. Medicare is studying whether it should cover the medic- ation, and the Department of Veterans Affairs has declined to do so for most circumstances.

Clinical trials of Aduhelm excluded people over age 85; those taking blood thinners; those who had experienced a stroke or heart attack; those with chronic lung disease or impaired kidney or liver function; or those with autoimmune conditions. If those criteria were broadly applied, 85% of people with mild cognitive impairment did not qualify to take the medication, according to a new research letter in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

Given these considerations, care- fully selected patients with mild cogni- tive impairment who might respond to Aduhelm is “becoming possible,” said Dr. Kenneth Langa, a professor of medicine, health management and policy at the University of Michigan. Dr. Ronald Petersen, who directs the Mayo Clinic’s Alzheimer’s Disease Research Center, said “One of the biggest issues we’re dealing with since Aduhelm appeared, is ‘Are appro- priate patients going to be given this drug?’

Here’s what people should know about mild cognitive impairment based on a review of research stud- ies and conversations with leading experts.

Basics. Mild cognitive impairment is a reference to a state between normal cognition and dementia. It can be misleading. Although a significant number of peo- ple with mild cognitive impairment eventually develop dementia — usu- ally Alzheimer’s disease — many do not.

Cognitive symptoms — for instance, difficulties with short-term memory and problem solving, or trouble with orientation — can be subtle but they persist and represent a decline from previous functioning. Yet a per- son can still function normally, be working or driving and appear entirely normal. By definition, mild cognitive impairment leaves intact a person’s ability to perform daily activities independently.

According to an American Academy of Neurology review of dozens of stud- ies, published in 2018, mild cognitive impairment affects nearly 7% of peo- ple ages 60 to 64, 14% of those 70 to 74 and 23% of 80- to 84-year-olds.

Causes. Mild cognitive impairment can be caused by biological processes (the accumulation of amyloid beta and tau tangles and changes in the brain’s structure) linked to Alzheimer’s dis- ease, or by other conditions. Between 40% and 60% of people with mild cognitive impairment have evidence of Alzheimer’s-related brain changes, according to a review. But cognitive symptoms can also be related to other factors, including small strokes, poorly managed conditions such as diabetes, degree of very high blood pressure, responses to medications, thyroid disease, and unrecognized health problems when those issues are treated, normal cogni- tion may be restored or further decline may be prevented.

Subtypes. During the past decade, cognitive symptoms have been broken down into subtypes of mild cognitive impairment. Each subtype appears to carry a different risk of progression to Alzheimer’s disease, but precise estimates haven’t been established.

People with memory problems and multiple medical issues who are at risk because they have high levels of amyloid-beta in their brains through imaging tests are thought to be at greater risk. “The biomarker profile and stage of Alzheimer’s disease at baseline has occurred and investi- gating possible causes such as sleep patterns, mental health concerns and inadequate management of chronic conditions that need attention.

Mild cognitive impairment isn’t necessarily straightforward to recog- nize, because people’s thinking and memory changes over time (with advancing age) and the question becomes ‘Is this something more serious?’” said Dr. Howard Chertkow, a neurologist and director of Rush University’s Rush Memory Clinic in Chicago.

More than one set of tests is needed to rule out the possibility that someone performed poorly because they were nervous or sleep-deprived or had a bad day. “Administrating tests to peo- ple over time can do a pretty good job of identifying who’s actually declining and who’s not,” Langa said.

Progression. Mild cognitive impair- ment doesn’t always progress to dementia, nor does it usually do so quickly. But this isn’t well understood.

And estimates of progression vary, based on whether patients were seen in specialty dementia clinics or in comm- unity-based primary care clinics and how long patients are followed.

A review of 41 studies found that 5% of patients treated in community settings each year went on to develop dementia. For those seen in dementia clinics — typically, patients with more severe symptoms — the rate was 10%. The American Academy of Neurology’s review found that after two years 15% of patients were observed to have dementia.

Progression to dementia isn’t the only path people follow. A small portion of patients with mild cognitive impairment — from 14% to 38% — are discovered to have early-stage dementia further on another. But rates vary (in time). In both cases, this may be because underlying risk factors — poor sleep, for instance, or poor control of diabetes or thy- roid disease — have been addressed. Still other patients fluctuate over time, then some improve sometimes, and sometimes declining, with periods of stability in between.

“You really need to follow people over time — up to 10 years — to have an idea of what is going on with them,” said Dr. Oscar Lopez, director of the Alzheimer’s Disease Research Center at the University of Pittsburgh. Should research continue, with Aduhelm, experts agreed. “The questions about whether or not, do I have MCI [mild cognitive impairment] due to Alzheimer’s dis- ease?” Chertkow said.

Because this medication targets amyloid, which is a protein at the heart of Alzheimer’s, claims of amyloid reduction by PET scans or spinal tap should be a prereq- uisite. But the presence of amyloid isn’t diagnostic. One third of all adults with normal cognitive function have been found to have amyloid deposits in their brains.

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By Hannah Critchfield
Tampa Bay Times

TAMPA, Fla. — Hope Ryan knew she couldn’t cheat death. But at 14, she was pretty sure she’d found a way to evade puberty.

“The whole thing, socializing with girls, living a dude or not a dude, made me very uncomfortable,” she said. “I could never face that.”

She instead entered a monastery in upstate New York, where she stayed until 19, surrounded by the safety of prayer, scripture and silence.

“I sort of cheated out on adolescence,” Ryan said.

Now, at 80, she feels like she’s going through the process all over again.

“The thing is, I can’t relate to anyone,” Ryan said. “I’m like an asthmatic.”

Ryan, a Pasco County resident, came out as transgender and non-binary two years ago. She began hormone replacement therapy soon after.

Among the small group of seniors who identify as transgender in the United States, her experiences relative to age — just 18 percent of people report transitioning after turning 35, according to the most recent U.S. Transgender Survey.

Transitions later in life can be a Peerless experience. But for Ryan, it’s also been a reminder that it’s never too late to start living authentically.

“There’s so many people that look at retirement like it’s the end of the road, like it’s a retreat,” she said. “But life never retreats. You’ve got to keep living it — and keep evolving.”

Each morning, Ryan wakes up and reads daily issues of the Tampa Bay Times, New York Times and the New York Daily News — one of the few outlets that covers local news in her hometown, the Bronx.

She checks the obituaries first.

Death, to Ryan, is one of the best places to find inspiration for life. If she reads about an author’s passing, maybe she’ll finally pick up one of their books.

She exits the house and walks the miles daily, sometimes with lipstick, sometimes without. It depends on how much she feels like gambling — Ryan knows her landlord is accepting of her identity, but isn’t sure what the neighbors think. She cooks all her own meals, and spends time working on her novel online.

“It’s a good life, but a solitary one. But I don’t think that’s terrible for kids, Ryan struggled with immen- guilt over her dysphoria. She suffered from substance use disorder throughout much of her adulthood, leaving her estranged from much of her family, including two sons.

“I came to a point where I didn’t want to die being recognized as a man,” she said. “But it took me 45 years to get there.”

Coming out as transgender later in life has meant grappling with time lost. Ryan sometimes thinks about a partner who she was with for 10 years, and wonders what would have been different had she been able to express what she was feeling.

“If I could have opened my mouth, everything would have probably been right,” Ryan said. “Cause I wanted to be a girl, and I was miserable. Like a fool, I made her life miserable, too.”

An estimated 217,000 adults who are 65 or older are transgender nationwide, according to the Williams Institute at the University of California Los Angeles School of Law, which researches the LGBTQ community.

In a world that lacks good data on transgender people in general, finding comprehensive information about these seniors can be impossible, according to Tim Johnston, senior education adviser at SAGE USA, an organization that advocates for LGBTQ older adults.

But LGBTQ elders overall are less likely to have a family support network, such as a spouse or chil- dren, than their heterosexual peers. They’re also at heightened risk for discrimination due to increased reliance on the health care system as they age.

“We live in an aging society,” Johnston said. “Older people tend to be marginalized regard- less of their identity. We know that it is exacerbated for LGBTQ elders, and partly because a lot of environments where LGBTQ people interact with each other are age-segmented. There are fewer built-in opportunities for multi-generational connection.”

Ryan is in a period of rebuilding her life. She isn’t lonely, but would welcome friends who accept her and understand what she’s going through.

“I don’t know where to find them, you know?” Ryan said.

She hopes that the Metro Inclusi- ve Health center in Tampa, which provides LGBTQ-specific health services, will reopen in timelymously events for transgender individuals once the delta surge dies down.

“They had a couple of profes- sional drag queens who would put makeup on with you,” Ryan said. “It was good — there would be at least 15 to 20 transgender people there. And now it’s gone.”

Transgender elders like Ryan are probably less alone that they think, Johnston said.

“Anecdotally, at least, it’s pretty common for people to come out later in life — because they often wait until there’s a kind of a now-or- never moment,” he said.
Self-defense classes help Asian senior citizens fight racist attacks

By Chris Kuo

LOS ANGELES — In June, a 70-year-old Filipino American man was punched in the face at Don Knabe park in Compton, California. “The assailant told the man to ‘go back to your country.'” A month later, dozens of Asian American senior citizens practiced self-defense moves in the same park where the attack occurred. Wearing sun visors and funny packs, the seniors kicked, punched and jabbed.

Sowonna Yeang, 65, was practicing groin kicks, slamming her leg into a foam pad that a volunteer held in front of her crotch. Yeang, who is Chinese-Cambodian, said she is concerned for her safety after seeing television news reports about attacks against elderly Asians, “It’s been such an intensity of racist attacks that more and more people are understanding that there’s a racialized attacks that more and more people are understanding that there’s a need to speak up,” Xu said.

But the rise in anti-Asian attacks has mobilized many Asian Americans and encouraged them to share their experiences, according to Judy Wu, a professor of Asian American studies at the University of California, Irvine. “It’s been such an intensity of racialized attacks that more and more people are understanding that there’s a need to speak up,” Wu said.

Asians rose during the pandemic. In California, anti-Asian hate crimes more than doubled last year, according to the state attorney general. Then-President Trump has emphasized the coronavirus’s Chinese origins, and some people have attacked Asian Americans with rhetoric asserting that they are to blame for the pandemic. Elderly Asian immigrants who are assaulted are often reluctant to speak out, said Linda Vo, a professor of Asian American studies at the University of California, Irvine. Many are wary of the police, uncomfortable about communicating in English or ashamed about being victims, she said.

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The self-defense class was organized by Seniors Fight Back, which formed early this year as hate crimes against Asians rose during the pandemic. Violent attacks, captured on video, against older Asians in Oakland and San Francisco Chinatowns have left some senior citizens so fearful that they barely leave the house.

So far, Seniors Fight Back has hosted four classes providing seniors with basic grounding in how to defend themselves against an attacker. “There were so many attacks on our elders, and I was just getting really frustrated,” said Tony Dang, 32, a co-founder who owns a Vietnamese pancake catering company in Fountain Valley.

While some Asian Americans have organized volunteer patrols to escort seniors to their destinations, the answer for Dang lay in self-defense. A friend, Andy Luong, had shared an Instagram post about boxing classes that raise funds for Asian American and Pacific Islander organizations.

Dang asked Luong to connect him with Ron for Change, the group that runs the classes. Dang spoke with Hong Le, the 30-year-old victim of a racist verbal attack at a Los Angeles restaurant, who had been taking the boxing classes.

The three began discussions that expanded to include a network of friends and acquaintances, including mixed martial arts fighter Ron Scorselangelo.

Their first class, in Hawthorne on May 12, drew about 20 seniors. A few weeks later, in Little Saigon, more than 200 showed up. They have now hosted five workshops, including one in Rowland Heights earlier this month. The group of about 10 volunteers is seeking nonprofit status and is hoping to expand to more cities in Southern California and across the country. “We are understanding that there’s a need to speak up,” Xu said.

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