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*Meet Artist
Linda Lavigne!*

Story on Page 5

April 2015
Vol. 29, No. 4

Taking Care

When Stroke Strikes... Survival Tips for Caregivers

by LISA M. PETSCHÉ

Strokes are the leading cause of long-term adult disability in the country. Approximately 600,000



Lisa Petsche

Americans experience one each year.

Areas of functioning that may be affected include mobility, personal care, communication, mood, personality, behavior, memory and problem-solving ability. Paralysis or weakness on one side of the body is the most obvious sign.

Like survivors, family members initially experience a wide range of feelings. These can include shock, relief (that their loved one survived), denial, fear, anxiety, anger and sadness.

Once the survivor is medically stable, an inpatient rehabilitation program may be recommended. The goal is to reduce disability and, where permanent disability remains, learn to manage it in the best possible way.

Meanwhile, the survivor and family face an uncertain future – for example, how much functioning the person will recover and if and when

he or she will be able to return home.

Coping with Uncertainty

How can family members manage the stress and stay positive during this unsettling time? The following are some survival tips:

- Learn as much as possible about stroke, and share the information with family and friends.
- Encourage your loved one (if able) and close family members to share in decision-making. Do not shoulder all of the responsibility.
- Attend some therapy sessions with your loved one. Focus on progress made and encourage him to do the same.
- Take things one day at a time so you do not get overwhelmed.
- Find at least one person you can talk to openly, who will listen and empathize.
- Look after yourself. Schedule regular breaks from visiting your loved one. Ask relatives and friends to fill in the gaps.
- Nurture your relationship with your loved one. If he is unable to converse, share news about family, friends and current events, read aloud, listen to music or watch TV together.
- Keep life as normal as possible.

Continue to involve your loved one in family activities and community events. Register him with the local accessible transportation service if necessary.

Planning for the Future

Once your loved one has reached his potential, the focus will shift to discharge planning. If he will be returning home, the rehab team makes referrals to community resources as appropriate.

The discharge plan addresses issues around medical management, self-care and home management skills, mobility, accessibility (home and community), safety and finances, as well as social and emotional needs (of both survivor and caregiver).

You may have to take over practical tasks such as managing finances, preparing meals and maintaining the home. You may also have to assume the role of hands-on caregiver, assisting with dressing, grooming, bathing and toileting.

Preventing Burnout

Given the demands of caregiving, a certain degree of stress is inevitable. Here are some strategies to keep it manageable and prevent burnout:

- Guard your health – eat nutritious meals, get adequate rest, exercise and see your primary physician regularly.
- Find something relaxing you can do to give yourself a daily break – such as enjoying a cup of tea, reading, writing in a journal or listening to music.
- Stay connected to friends and outside activities.
- Simplify your life. Set priorities and do not waste time or energy on unimportant things.
- Give yourself permission to feel all the emotions that surface. Accept that there will be difficult moments, but do not dwell on them.
- Acknowledge that you cannot and should not do it all alone. Ask other family members to share the load and be specific about what you need.
- Take advantage of caregiver respite services in your community. The local office on aging is a good source.
- Talk with other caregivers. Join a community support group on an Internet group if it is hard to get out.

Lisa M. Petsche is a social worker and a freelance writer specializing in boomer and senior health matters. She has personal and professional experience with elder care.

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AGENCY ALERT: Challenges... and other topics!

by **KATHLEEN ERNCE**
 Executive Director
 The Senior Citizens Council
 Augusta, Georgia
 kernce@seniorcitizenscouncil.org

Rebooting your mind in harried moments... when your to-do list is miles long, it is natural to feel uncomfortable doing nothing. Instead taking a timeout, even for a few seconds, during your day places distance between your thought and your emotions. Pausing before answering a difficult question gives you time to formulate your true response instead of delivering a canned response. Pausing before entering your home after work creates an intermission between what you do for a living and being with those you love. This month tap into the power of the pause each day through your breath. We take an average of 20,000 a day so you have many chances to reboot. The following exercises can be done anytime



Kathleen Ernce

and anywhere:

Shift your attention to your breath. Notice it moving in and out of your body and begin to slow is down. It is comfortable, close your mouth and breathe thorough your nose.

Breathe in for four counts 1-2-3-4, letting your stomach rise, pause, and then exhale for a six count 1-2-3-4-5-6. Repeat.

Simply making your exhales longer than your inhales helps trigger your body's relaxation responses. Even on your busiest days, you have immediate access to this power.

One of the items on your to-do list may include kicking your spring-cleaning into high gear, James Wallman's new book *Stuffocation* examines how accumulating too many objects breeds unhappiness. "In our busy, cluttered lives more is no longer better. It is worse," writes Wallman. He suggests investing in experiences – like planning a family trip instead of upgrading electronics. A major purge can seem overwhelming – so start small by using the "Bag and Box" method. For example, to tackle an out-of-control linen

closet, box up sheets and towels and take items out as needed.

After a month, you will have an idea which and how many items you use and what you could do without. You can do this de-clutter technique room by room, pantry, or cabinet at a time and soon your entire house is free of clutter.

April 15 or filing our Income Tax is another challenge when we can "reboot our minds in harried moments." A few tips and tax deductions to consider as we gather our tax related items.

Medical and dental expenses – the expenses that are deductible including health insurance premiums (including Medicare, Medicare supplement, Prescription plans premiums) long term care insurance premiums, nursing home or assisted living home costs and most out of pocket healthcare related costs.

If you have lived in your home for a long time and decided to "downsize" in 2014, the equity in your home up to \$250,000 for a single taxpayer and \$500,000 for married tax-

payers filing jointly is not taxable.

Retirement plan contributions – Both retired or semi-retired may continue to make tax-deductible contributions to retirement plans.

The best way to increase your "useable income" includes interest and dividends on investments. The taxes on this income is lower than ordinary interest income.

You may deduct all the necessary expenses you incur to do business so long as they are reasonable in amount, including travel, the costs of business equipment such as computers and outside or home offices.

Retirees who continue to make tax-deductible contributions to various charities up to certain special limitations.

Standard deductions applies if you do not itemize your deductions. Don't forget, if you are age 65 or older you are entitled to a higher standard deductions.

sources: Nolo.com; Senior's Scoop, March, 2015; SpryLiving.com, March, 2015.



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Senior NEWS

Serving Augusta & the CSRA

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Senior News & Views of Georgia

Poets' Corner

Editor's Note: If you have written a "well-worked" poem which you would like considered for publication, please forward it to: Senior News, P. O. Box 8389, Warner Robins, GA 31095-8389. Please include your name and address on your poem. We will publish selected poems (or excerpts) as space permits.

EASTER BY JESUS

by Paul R. Goniea, Sr.

Easter is the greatest gift, that we have ever gotten

We can follow Jesus, to eternal life, unearned – though we've been rotten.

What a gift! And, what a giver! I love Him, more than life itself.

His blood, has washed my sins away. He's precious, beyond wealth.

Our sins buried Jesus, in a dark, dank cave.

Without Easter's message, there's no hope for tomorrow.

Easter's message tells us, there's an end to all sorrow.

Love Jesus! And crave, that you sin no more.

And, you can't imagine, what God will have in store! (For You)

LET HIM IN THE SHIP

by Tom Garman – August 19, 2000

For the Author: This poem was dedicated to all my Classmates... passed and present... of the Goshen High School Class of 1945 at our 55th reunion, August 19, 2000.

St. Mark 6:49-51a (KJV)

49: But when they saw Him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out:

50: For they all saw Him, and were troubled. And immediately He talked with them, and said to them, Be of good cheer: It is I; Be not afraid.

51: And He went up to them in the

ship, and the wind ceased.

We are helpless facing the storms of our times: the lightning-sharp grief of losing our earthmate, or a child or a friend! We long for the thunder of our sorrow to distill into the quiet rain of our tears. Darkness impends wherever we look... let Him in the ship!

We are heirs to many, many years: our bodies slowly submit to time and the "slings and arrows" or our fortunes. The bloom of youth has slipped away, and our weariness becomes harder and harder to overcome. Familiar faces around us are moving on... let Him in the ship!

But let us count those blessings that tell us we still can make a difference. We have love and caring and experience to share with others. We can comfort where there is grief, rejoice with those rejoicing and teach those whose hearts and minds are hungry. All this not alone, because... we must let Him in the ship!

"The color of green is never enough"

by DANIEL W. GATLYN, USN Ret. Minister/Journalist

We live on the dark side of sanity – for valuable items are just out of reach, and primarily because we have based priorities on the "color of green!" Most will readily admit that our appraisal of advancements are predicated upon cash flow, and how much we can amass. Never mind what we do with it, once it is shuffled in our direction. The prime difficulty of such is that mentalities surrounding our methods, and what

we will do about it, are diametrically opposed!

I am watching the flock of Presidential hopefuls for 2016 – and somewhere in their delicate (sic) prognosis are the statistics surrounding how much loot has found the coffers – how much an election requires – how much deficit we can survive with – and how many tears our corner cries when we find a shortage! There seemingly is never an "over supply"!

The story is told of a Teacher, who challenged her pupils to outline what they would do with a million dollars! It became rather quiet for a

few minutes – only the sound of papers being shuffled, and an occasional clatter as someone cleared a throat; when suddenly one lad raised his hand and voice; stating very emphatically that he needed another 100,000!

A bit comical, but the surfacing of a truth! There is never enough!

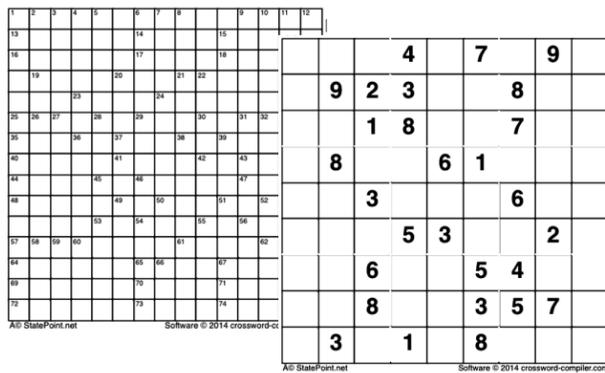
There is not enough in the election cycle – not enough in National budgets – not enough in industry – not enough in National Defense – not enough in the

Church Treasure- – and never enough in the personal pocket of citizens! We speak primarily of Americans, for Third World (generally speaking) has learned to cope on only a fraction of what comes our way!

The irony of the equation, is that we (primarily since the days of Roosevelt) have endeavored to live an Emporium lifestyle, while drawing a K-Mart salary! It is commonplace to pay far more interest on car notes, furniture, houses, and vacations than is reasonable – while the cycle of spending on "family toys" is perpetually elevated!!! We are forever sounding a note of disapproval over "out sourcing" of jobs (and the like) – knowing that prices on items of display in Wal-Mart (and other) would "go double" if we manufactured such items stateside! But what can you expect from minds (and pocket books) of people who spend more money annually on chewing gum (and dog food), than the amount extended to aid the hungry (and such). Even those who regularly receive food stamps, and other subsidies – spend foolishly on needless items – and beg for more! We curse those who legislate/regulate an unholy National budget that is unsustainable – while the average household does the same!!

Just receipts and disbursements are virtuous arrangements, and will cover managed obligations; but, will not continuously and indiscriminately stretch for a diet of "caviar and Acapulco!"

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Available for your enjoyment on our website at www.seniornewsga.com/games

~ PLEASE VISIT OFTEN ~

On the Cover

Meet Artist Linda Lavigne!

by CAROLYN BRENNEMAN

Photos by Linda Lavigne

COVER:
Wine and Fruit on Oil

Meeet Linda Lavigne, a naturalist artist who inspires us with her

colorful watercolor and oil paintings. A resident of Evans, she showcases her work in various exhibits and art shows in the CSRA. Linda is a vibrant, warm-hearted, and extremely talented mother and grandmother.

Linda and her family moved to Georgia from Thibodaux, Louisiana, 20 years ago. After settling down in Evans, she decided to spread her wings in a new direction and began her art career by taking drawing classes and watercolor classes. Today, Linda is a well-known and accomplished artist who is inspired to create vibrant images that demonstrate natural beauty all around us. So, just what inspires her? Natural surroundings, landscapes, nature scenes and wonders of beauty.

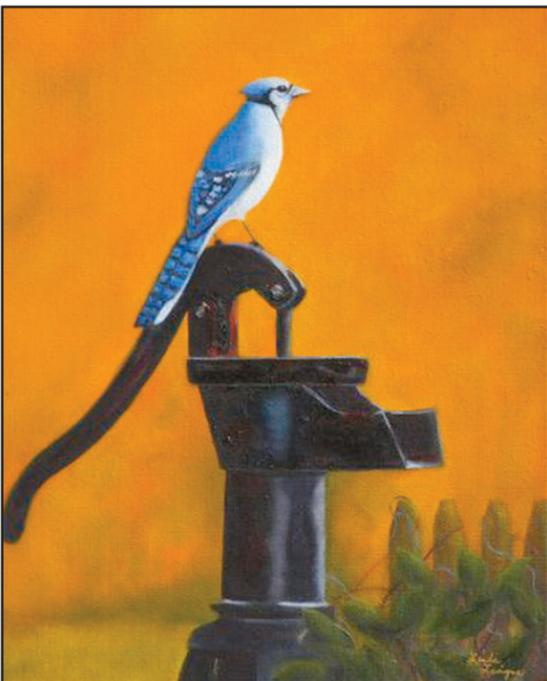
“Partly because of my Louisiana heritage, I love family, close friends and just celebrating life,” says Linda. “My enjoyment comes from creating vibrant images that demonstrate the natural beauty that I see all around.” And Linda shares her experiences with her grandchildren. She has inspired one of her grandsons to begin sketching and one of her granddaughters has followed in Linda’s footsteps and is painting. As a matter of fact, many of the paintings can be seen at the Inner Bean Coffee Shop in Augusta.

And, of course, Linda’s work is currently displayed at the Infinity dealership on Washington Road. Last month, she presented her work at the 3rd Annual River Island Show. Linda is very passionate about painting and her work reflects the beauty, composition, and rhythm that contributes to great art. She uses a strong color palette and large canvases for oil and watercolor. She photographs many of her images used in her paintings and is naturally drawn to nature scenes. Linda is now experimenting with using colored pencil creating her art. Painting has enriched her life and her grandchildren’s life in many ways.

Checkout Linda’s new website, <http://llavign3.wix.com/lindasbrushstrokes> today. We can contact her at llavigne@knology.net or call 706.833.3469.



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Additional Senior Services & Events Information Available at www.seniornewsga.com

AUGUSTA/CSRA METRO AREA Senior Services & Events Directory

The Senior Citizens Council
4210 Columbia Road, Suite 13A, Martinez, GA 30907; 706-868-0120
www.seniorcitizenscouncil.org

The Senior Citizens Council is open Monday through Friday for the following services:

- Advocacy Programs Department – including: Caseworker Services - Caregiver Respite, Referral Information and Support (CRRIS); Bill and Money Management (MAP); Senior Health Insurance and Education (SHINE) - the Center for the Prevention of Elber Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation.

- The Senior Corps Department: Foster Grandparent Program (FGP) and Senior Companion Program (SCP) for income-eligible persons age 55 and older who “serve up to 20 hours a week with special needs children or adults.” Call us at 706-868-0120 for complete details. The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) for individuals looking for “fun and rewarding ways to make a difference in the community” or just get out-of-the-house a few hours a month. RSVP recruits individuals age 55 and over for the opportunity to apply their skills, expertise, and experience to help meet critical community needs while meeting other like-minded folks in our community. RSVP pairs talented volunteers with a variety of local nonprofit, health care, governmental, and faith based organizations to assist these groups with meeting the needs of those they serve. Please call us at 706-868-0120 for details on any of our programs or make an appointment for a needed service. Our physical address is 4210 Columbia Road, Suite 13A, Martinez, GA 30907, Monday through Friday,

8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

CSRA Senior Centers

Over 60? Enjoy socializing, parties, cards, crafts, Bingo and travel? Interested in staying healthy and active? Tired of eating lunch alone? If you answered YES to these questions, then you need to check out a Senior Center near you!

- Blythe Area Recreation Department Patricia Strakosch; 3129 Highway 88, Blythe, GA 30805; 706-592-6668
- Carrie J. Mays Recreation Center Sheryl Jones; 1015 11th Ave., Augusta, GA 30901; 706-821-2831
- East View Community Center Roberta Sullivan; 644 Aiken St., Augusta, GA 30901; 706-722-2302
- HH Brigham Senior Center Heather Kooms; 2463 Golden Camp Rd., Augusta, GA 30906; 706-772-5456
- McBean Community Center Willamae Shaheed; 1155 Hephzibah-McBean Rd., Hephzibah, GA 30815; 706-560-1814 or 706-560-2628
- Sand Hills Community Center Lillie Rosier; 2540 Wheeler Rd., Augusta, GA 30904; 706-842-1912 or 706-842-1916
- New Bethlehem Community Center, Inc. Millicent E. West; 1336 Conklin Ave., Augusta, GA 30901; 706-722-0086
- Bessie Thomas Community Center Jeff Asman; 5913 Euchee Creek Dr., Grovetown, GA 30813; 706-556-0308
- Burke County Senior Center Jackie Brayboy; 717 W. 6th St., Waynesboro, GA 30830; 706-437-8007
- Glascock County Senior Center Anita May; 568 Brassell Park Ln., Gibson, GA 30810; 706-598-3050
- Grovetown Senior Center Jennifer Thomas; 103 W. Robinson Ave., Grovetown, GA 30813; 706-210-8699
- Betty Hill Senior Citizens Center Cathie Birdsong; 330 Waters Work Rd., Sparta, GA 31087; 706-444-7532
- Harlem Senior Center Tina Sidener; 405 B West Church St., Harlem, GA 30814; 706-449-8400
- Jefferson County Senior Center Marie Swint; 209 E. 7th St., Louisville, GA 30434; 478-625-8820
- McDuffie Senior Center Melinda Hill; 304 Greenway St.,

Thomson, GA 30824; 706-595-7502

- Jenkins County Senior Center Shirley Chance; 998 College Ave., Millen, GA 30442; 478-982-4213
- Lincoln County Senior Center Pam Parton; 160 May Ave., Lincolnton, GA 30817; 706-359-3760
- Sylvania Senior Center Cathy Forehand; 209 E. Ogeechee St., Sylvania, GA 30467; 912-564-7727
- Taliaferro County Senior Center Allene Oliver; 119 Commerce St., Crawfordville, GA 30631; 706-456-2611
- Warren County Senior Center Gwanda Murray; 48 Warren St., Warrenton, GA 30828; 706-465-3539
- Washington County Council on Aging Jane Colson; 466 Maurice Friedman Rd., Sandersville, GA 31082; 478-552-0898 (Mon., Tues, and Thurs.) 478-552-0013
- Wilkes County Diana Hall; 108 Marshall St., Washington, GA 30673; 706-678-2518
- Shiloh Comprehensive Community Center Elizabeth Jones; 1635 15th St., Augusta, GA 30901; 706-738-0089

H. H. Brigham Senior Center

2463 Golden Camp Rd., Augusta
Contact: Patricia A. Jenner
706-772-5456; 1 a.m.-3 p.m.

Aiken County Parks, Recreation & Tourism

902 Vaucluse Rd., Aiken, SC 29801; 803-642-7559;

www.aikencountysc.gov/tourism

Courtney Senior Center

49 Roy St., Wagener, SC; 564-5211

- Senior Bingo: 3rd Fri., 2 p.m., Free
- Canasta Club: Wednesdays, 12 noon, Free

Harrison-Caver Park

4181 Augusta Rd., Clearwater, SC;

593-4698

Aiken County Recreation Center

917 Jefferson Davis Hwy., Graniteville, SC; 663-6142

Roy Warner Park

4287 Festival Trail Rd., Wagener, SC;

564-6149

Hearing Loss Association of Augusta

Meetings are held on the 3rd Monday, September-April except for December, at University Hospital, 1350

Walton Way, Dining Rooms 1-3. Social begins at 5:30 p.m. and meeting at 6 p.m. For information on the organization please contact Gayle Tison, President, at http://emptyg3@knology.net.

Morris Museum of Art

1 Tenth Street at Riverwalk in Augusta Riverfront Center. Call 706-724-7501 for more information or visit the Museum’s website at www.the-morris.org.

Caregiver Support Group

Are you caring for a spouse or parent? Join other caregivers to share experiences, gather practical resources and find the support you need. The group meets the 3rd Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Friedman Branch Library located at 1447 Jackson Road in Augusta. For more information contact Georgia Jopling, Caregiver Specialist, Area Agency on Aging, 706-210-2000 or 888-922-4464.

Augusta Museum of History

560 Reynolds Street in downtown Augusta. Call 706-722-8454 for events information.

Voices of the Past Museum Theater

- *A Petersburg Boat Pilot*: Sat., April 11, 11:30 a.m., 12:30 & 1:30 p.m.
- *The Other Tubmans*: Sat., April 18, 11:30 a.m., 12:30 & 1:30 p.m.

EVENTS from page 6

"Dance with Us"

The Augusta Chapter of USA Ballroom Dance invites beginners to pros to our FIRST SATURDAY of each month social dance at the American Legion Post 63, 90 Milledge Rd., Augusta. Members, \$8; guests, \$10. No partner need! Free dance lesson and a great food table. For a group of 6 or more first time guests we can make arrangements for you to come free.

For more information call Bob Anzuoni at 803-215-4010 or visit www.augustadancing.org.

Augusta Christian Singles Dance

Meets in the Ballroom Dance Center, 525 Grand Slam Dr., Evans every Saturday night. Dance lessons from 6:30-7:30 pm; Dance from 7:30-10:30 pm. Admission is \$10.00 guests; \$8.00 Members. 18 years and older. Casual Dress. Alcohol and smoke free environment. web site: christian-dances.org; call 762-233-1978; like us on Facebook.

Fraternal Order of Eagles #1197

1999 Scott Rd., Augusta. Like to dance – join us 8-12 p.m. every Saturday. Live country band. Cover charge \$5 at the door. Bingo: Sun., 1:30 p.m.; Mon. & Thurs., 6:30 p.m. Kitchen open one hour prior to Bingo. Steak supper 1st Sat. For details call 706-790-8040 or 803-270-0981.

AARP Augusta Local 266

There is more to AARP than a newspaper and a magazine. The local chapter meets at the Kroc Center, The Salvation Army, 1833 Broad Street, Augusta. For additional information or to join, call Mrs. Stella Nunnally, Chapter President, at 706-724-0045.

Friday Night Dance

Every Friday, 8-11 p.m., American Legion Post 63, 90 Milledge Rd., Augusta. With band or DJ. \$10 cost. Free coffee and cake. Everyone welcome. Call 706-733-5184.

Augusta Area Newcomers Club

The Augusta Area Newcomers Club is a non-profit organization that helps people who are new to the area get acclimated, make friends, and get involved with charitable organizations. We offer a variety of activities such as golf, book groups, and dining out. For information please contact hospitality@augustanewcomers.net or call Susan Salisbury at 706-814-6297.

Find Your Voice

Aiken Toastmasters meet on the first and third Thursday of each month, 6:45 p.m., at Odell Weeks Center on Whiskey Road in Aiken. Guests are always welcome. For additional information call 803-648-7833.

DBSA (Depression Bi-Polar Support Alliance)

Meets the 3rd Tues. of every month at 6:30 p.m., First Baptist Church of Augusta, Walton Bldg., Room 105., 3500 Walton Way Ext., Augusta. Call 706-722-0010 for complete details or the Friendship Center (see Augusta phone book for number).

Pieceful Hearts Quilt Guild

Meets on Monday nights, 7-9 p.m., and Thursday mornings, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church, Martintown Rd., North Augusta. For details call 803-279-6456 or 706-790-4975.

Augusta Chapter Of The Embroiderers' Guild Of America

Anyone with an appreciation of embroidery is welcome. Chapter consists of women with diverse backgrounds, experience, and ages who share an interest and pleasure in needlework. Meetings include a review of local needlework activities, some hands-on stitching, refreshments, and socialization. Meets the 1st Mon. of each month at Alliance Missionary Church, 2801 Ingleside Dr., Augusta. For additional information call Natalie Farrell at 706-736-5508.

Alzheimer's Caregiver Support Group

Meets 3rd Tues., 6:30 p.m., Brandon Wilde Retirement Community, Evans. For details call 706-854-3591 or 706-

854-3501.

CSRA Parkinson Support Group

Meets monthly, St. John Towers Dining Room, 724 Greene St., Augusta. For details call 706-364-1662.

Area Agency on Aging Offerings

Learn through a 30-Minute session, 3rd Thurs. each month, 1 p.m., KROC Center Augusta, Senior Lounge, 1833 Broad St. Registration not required. Contact Lee Walker, Resource

Specialist, 706-922-8348 or 706-210-2018.

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Ageism and its end

by **BRENDAN HARE**

Until I turned sixty-six, retired, and officially joined the ranks of “the olds,” I lived for decades as an unreflecting and unapologetic ageist. I’m not a mean-spirited person. I pride myself on being open-minded and progressive. I’ve always tried to guard against bias in my thoughts and actions, and to fight bigotry wherever it cast its sulphurous gloom. But somehow, my prejudices about old people seemed to be natural, to reflect the facts of life, to share in the universal consensus. Being old was simply bad, wasn’t it? This felt like a solid fact, an incontrovertible position and, in the U.S. of A., also a basically uncontroversial one. In America – youth-worshipping, plastic-surgery-tweaked America – ageism stands as one of the last widely acceptable social prejudices.

Everyone, it seems, indulges in it, even the most conscientious among us. It’s reflected in our workplaces, courts, laws, and public policies. In movies, on television shows, on the nightly news, and in pharmaceutical commercial after pharmaceutical commercial, we chuckle and grin to see seniors portrayed as cute, helpless, and feeble, stumbling through what’s left of their lives in a fog of befuddlement. We’ve developed a whole vocabulary to express such prejudices: Uh oh, are you having a senior moment? Can you hear me? Where are your keys? Do they still allow you to drive? Maybe just in the slow lane, with one turn signal flashing for no reason? Well, be careful. Are you sure you can handle all this by yourself? Wow, you’re so capable and independent. So youthful! How inspiring. I mean, for someone your age. But you know what they say, “eighty is the new forty.” What are your plans for the time you have left? A little bingo? A few laps around the old mall? Or maybe you’ll stay in, catch up on your programs? Wait! Did you remember to take your meds? Are you sure? Good for you.

The term “ageism” is an abstraction. It strains to capture a varied and complex phenomenon. As used here, ageism comprises systematic neglect, segregation, isolation, and bigotry. Like other prejudices, it works by constructing artificial barriers. On one side of the wall, older people languish, mistreated and misunderstood, viewed less as persons than as ready-made types. On the other side, younger people lose access to a vast store of wisdom and experience, and are tempted to adopt a false vision of life – to live as if old age were something that only

happened to other people. In this way, ageism acts like an environmental toxin. As it spreads, it imperils us all, old and young alike.

It is probably impossible to measure how much society loses by tolerating prejudice against the old. But for seniors, the consequences of ageism are troublingly apparent. First, it sets up a dangerous loop: Age discrimination tells seniors, Time has made you infirm, obsolete, and worthless. In response – as is natural – seniors feel pressure to accept and internalize this view of themselves, with disastrous consequences for their mental and physical health. Studies have correlated experiences of ageism with memory loss, cardiovascular sickness, and low self-esteem. One study suggested that experiencing age discrimination diminished older people’s will to live. Another reported that seniors who harbored negative views about old age faced life expectancies that were, on average, seven and a half years shorter than those of their peers. All of this is staggering when we consider how ubiquitous ageism is: In one study, seventy percent of seniors surveyed reported that they had been insulted or mistreated on the basis of their age.

Ageism, again like other forms of prejudice, is rooted in ignorance, lack of experience, and countless failures to exercise curiosity, imagination, and empathy. A couple of

years ago, I began conducting research for a project about aging in America. One of the people I interviewed, a resident in an assisted-living facility for seniors, asked the facility to arrange to put me up in a spare room for a night. He thought that spending a full twenty-four hours there would help my research. I declined as politely and as firmly as I could. To be honest, the prospect made me deeply uncomfortable, as if old age were contagious – as if I might lose twenty years in one night. I got over this eventually. But it made me realize that, for much of my life, I’d had relatively little exposure to the old. In this regard, I’m not alone. Our society has tacitly segregated ourselves on the basis of age. We are educated alongside people who share our birth year. We spend our working lives with people who are, in most cases, about our own age, or within a decade or two of it. When it comes time to retire – and there’s a socially acceptable age for that too – many of us flee to sunny places, to be close to other retirees, lest we get caught lingering in the noisy world of the whippersnappers. Consider: If you are young, do you have a friend or acquaintance outside your family who is over seventy? If you are old, who do you know under thirty?

Life teaches us that nothing stays the same for long. I’m happy to predict that ageism, too, must

change. I think it will be washed away, or at least significantly eroded, by the fast approaching “silver tsunami.” America will soon experience a demographic upheaval of a scale not witnessed since the Baby Boom. During the next two decades, as these Boomers age, the number of Americans over sixty-five will double. There will be approximately eighty million of us, and we’ll constitute about a fifth of the national population. Thanks to remarkable advances in medicine and technology, we can look forward to better health and longer average life expectancies. We will also, on average, be wealthier than many of our younger cohorts. In short, we are primed to live long and live well, and to serve as the standard-bearers of an idea whose time has come: ageism, in all its forms, is unacceptable. More than this, we’ll be able to demonstrate that it is possible, even natural, to lead a vibrant, engaged life well into old age. Indeed, it is our responsibility to do so, and not only for ourselves. We owe it to the youngsters to show them how it’s done. After all, with any luck, one day they’ll get to be old too.

Brendan Hare is a retired attorney and the author of “From Working to Wisdom: The Adventures and Dreams of Older Americans,” available at Amazon. For more info, visit fromworkingtowisdom.com.



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