

Worthington Corners

December 2020 COA Newsletter



Worthington Council on Aging
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For the health and well-being of our seniors and community, the COA must continue to suspend in-person senior activities for the foreseeable future. We hope your holidays are filled with love, family and happiness. Wishing you a wonderful New Year in 2021!



Worthington COA Holiday Luncheon

December 17th from 11am-1pm



The Rabbit Hole Restaurant will be preparing a very special Holiday Luncheon for Worthington seniors! The menu will be announced. There will be curbside pickup at the restaurant on December 17th, 11am-1pm. RSVP no later than December 11th by calling or texting 413-238-1999, and indicate the requested number of senior meals.

**Fully underwritten by the Rolland Fund*

The Worthington Library reopened on November 10th. The shelves are full of new books, awaiting readers. For everyone's safety: masks are required, and one adult at a time is allowed in the building. A green light outside indicates that it is all right to come in. The library will continue curbside service. Call 413-238-5565 or email the-worthingtonlibrary@gmail.com. Library hours: Sat 12-3; Tue 3-7; and Thur 3-7.

*"The blessings of peace,
the beauty of hope, the spirit of love,
the comfort of faith—may these be your
gifts this Christmas season."*

The COA surprised the former COA Director, Sandy Epperly, on her 80th Birthday!



Below: COA Council; left-right, Camille Smith, Susan VanBuren, LeAnn Mason, Phyllis Dassatti (secretary), Helyn Myrick, and Laurie McNulty



Two Worthington seniors have recently written a delightful children's book. The book is titled "Worth the Wait" and is about the highly unusual fact that Sandhill Cranes have been nesting and breeding in Worthington for the past several years. This story is about a little girl who lives in Worthington and her relationship with the cranes and what she learned about them in the course of

a year.

The book is written by Lynne Scott who was a special education teacher for 28 years. The illustrator is Laurie Lemrise and the 18 full-page watercolors by Laurie are a very special feature. Lynne and Laurie's book is for sale for \$20. They have decided that all the proceeds from every sale will go to the Children's Advocacy Center in Northampton. The book is factually accurate as to its subject and is appropriate for Kindergarten to 4th grade. This is a great opportunity to holiday shop for any children in your circle of family and friends without having to go to a store during these difficult times. Please contact Lynne Scott at (413) 238-4264 or via her husband's email: calebcpa@verizon.net.

The Maples Senior Housing in Worthington is seeking support and votes from the community in the Florence Bank Customers' Choice Community Grants program. To help the Maples be one of the recipients of these much-needed funds, we are asking you to vote. If you are a customer of Florence Bank, and/or you have family or friends who are, you can help by asking everyone you know to vote for the Maples. Voting can be done online at www.florencebank.com/vote or by filling out a paper ballot and dropping it off at any of the branches. **Voting is now in progress and continues through December 31st, 2020.** Thank you for your support.

Joyful Holiday Activities

There are so many studies that prove the importance of staying mentally and physically active along with socializing can improve your overall well-being. And although holidays can be stressful, confusing or lonely, to help spread some cheer, here are some activities that you can do this season.

⇒ Wrap presents together. Be creative using colorful paper and bows.



⇒ Watch movies. Here are some fan favorites: *It's a Wonderful Life*; *Scrooged*; *Home Alone*; *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*; *Polar Express*; *A Christmas Carol*; *A Christmas Story*; *Miracle on 34th Street*; *White Christmas*; *The Grinch*; *Elf*

⇒ Bake Favorite Family Recipes

⇒ Make a Memory Ornament

⇒ Take a stroll or drive to see all the holiday lights

⇒ Use a fitness DVD that caters to your gender and physical capabilities

⇒ Play some board games

- ⇒ Tap into your creative side with painting or drawing
 - ⇒ Schedule virtual interactions
 - ⇒ Find ways to be comfortable outside
 - ⇒ DO ANYTHING THAT BRINGS YOU JOY!
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Can you tell the difference between flu and coronavirus symptoms?

Unfortunately, the short answer is no, you can't really differentiate between the flu and coronavirus. The best thing to do is call your doctor and explain your symptoms—also self-quarantine until you know what's going on. Because some of the coronavirus symptoms are similar to those of bronchitis, the common cold, the flu and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), it will require a test to tell the difference.

If you have symptoms of fever, cough, congestion, sneezing, sore throat, runny nose, vomiting, diarrhea or any other symptoms of infectious illness, stay home, call your doctor and follow his or her recommendations.

Both the flu and COVID-19 are spread through infected droplets and particles in the air, and can cause severe illness—even death. Unfortunately you can have the coronavirus and the flu at the same time.

Cold and flu season precautions consist of the following: hopefully everyone got their flu shot in September/October timeframe per the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. You can also ask your doctor if you should get a pneumonia shot. Take care of yourself with good nutrition, plenty of rest, proper hydration, regular exercise and stress management. And always stay home if you don't feel well. It is also especially important to continue to protect yourself from the coronavirus. Washing your hands frequently, cleaning and sanitizing, wearing a face mask and physically distancing and encouraging your family and friends to do the same. Maintaining these habits will help prevent COVID-19 and other fall and winter illnesses.

-Johns Hopkins Medicine, Health, September 2020

Reliable Resources for mental health issues

Remember the number 1-800-273-TALK: This is the national suicide hotline. Other valuable resources: Mentalhealth.gov; samhsa.gov; and womenshealth.gov. To learn about substance abuse or help getting treatment, go to findtreatment.gov.

No matter what your interests or fitness level, here are some healthy fitness apps you might want to give a try: *Map My Walk*; *Yoga Studio*; *SilverSneakers GO*; *The Johnson & Johnson Official 7-Minute Workout*; *7-Minute Chi*; *MyFitnessPal*; *flip50*.

Seniors Aware of Fire Education



This year's holiday season will be very different for many people because of COVID; one of the things many people will do is decorate their homes with bright lights to shine during this dark time. Here are a few suggestions on how to brighten your corner of the world safely:

- ⇒ Buy lights and electric decorations that are listed by an approved testing agency.
- ⇒ Replace old lighting that has frayed wires, broken plugs, sockets or switches.
- ⇒ Never overload outlets.
- ⇒ Use no more than 3 strands of lights on a single extension cord.
- ⇒ Consider using energy efficient LED lights that stay cool.

For outdoor lights consider:

- ⇒ Using only lights rated for outdoor use.
- ⇒ Plug outdoor decorations into a ground-fault circuit interrupter.
- ⇒ Anchor outdoor lights and decorations with insulated holders or hooks.

Have a SAFE and happy holiday season.

--Worth Noyes, SAFE Educator
Williamsburg & Cumington Fire Departments

The Senior SAFE program is sponsored by many of your fire departments and the Massachusetts Department of Fire Services.



Would you like to receive your newsletter, in color, by email instead of snail mail?

If so, please email Kristen at **regionalcoanews@gmail.com** to be put on the email list. Include your address so I will know which mailing list to take you off of. Thanks!

Charity – where does it begin?

Everyone has a favorite cause to support. This time of year, we are inundated with requests to part with our money for a really good organization! So, how to tell if this is a good idea or not? How to tell how much is enough?

First, can you afford it? Your budgetary "needs" should be considered first, like rent or mortgage, heat, and groceries. After that, we have "wants", savings, and discretionary spending. Charity contributions are considered discretionary – I cannot think of an exception to this.

Second, which cause do you like? As an ecologist and farmer's daughter, I lean toward environmental, conservation, and agricultural / food issues. We may support medical research, literacy, veteran's programs, animal welfare – the list goes on. We may support local fundraisers or children's programs or the library.

Third, is the cause being considered a valid one, a good one? Valid means not a scam! A good one means considerations such as how much money is spent on management, i.e., does a large percentage of income go to the actual cause. I still like Charity Navigator (**www.charitynavigator.org**) for analysis of many causes, though they will not feature our local scene. One benefit of this resource is that they now show Advisories: charities "that raise concerns". A second benefit is that you can donate anonymously to a listed organization! That means fewer mailings coming in the mail! Less inundation!

With charity in my heart,
Jean O'Neil, TRIAD committee member
413-268-2228, jeanoneilmass@gmail.com

Experts say they're usually fine — but here's what to consider when choosing your specs

by Sarah Elizabeth Adler, AARP
September 24, 2020



Who needs reading glasses? All of us do, eventually, thanks to a condition called presbyopia — a gradual loss of the ability to clearly see things up close — that becomes noticeable for most people beginning in their 40s. Because presbyopia is caused by age-related changes to the lens of the eye, it isn't preventable or reversible. But experts say that the right pair of reading glasses, including those readily available at retailers like a dollar store or pharmacy, can help bring small print and other objects, like your smartphone screen, back into focus.

Here's how to find your perfect pair.

Over-the-counter reading glasses

"Reading glasses from a drugstore are, in fact, perfectly safe," says ophthalmologist Michelle Andreoli, M.D., a clinical spokesperson for the American Academy of Ophthalmology, who notes that over-the-counter reading glasses, including low-cost dollar store options, can help you focus up close and will not damage your eyesight. But, she adds, once your up-close vision starts changing, you can expect it to continue to worsen into your mid-60s. That means the reading-glass strength you start out with will need to increase as the years go by. "A good rule of thumb is that any strength of [reading glasses] will last someone between 45 and 65 about two years," Andreoli says.

Experts say the best way to determine what strength you need in the first place is with a yearly eye exam, which can tell you what power (notated with a number like +1.00 or +2.50) you need. The higher the number is, the stronger the glasses are. If you haven't been to the eye doctor or want a way to double-check in the store, Andreoli recommends grabbing a greeting card from the stationery aisle to carry out a DIY test: Hold the card at a comfortable reading distance and try on several pairs until you find the ones that work best.

If you're stuck between two pairs? "In most cases, when two reading-glass powers seem equally suitable, choose the glasses with the lower power," says optometrist William Reynolds, president of

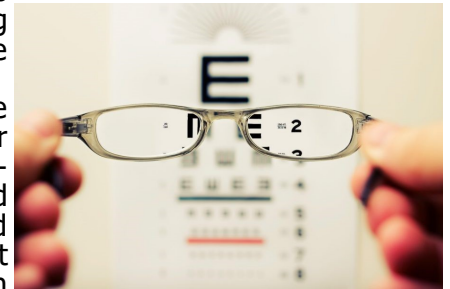
the American Optometric Association. "Picking reading glasses that are too strong typically will cause more discomfort problems than reading glasses that are a little too weak."

Another thing to keep in mind is the activity you'll be using the reading glasses for. Working on the computer, for example, typically takes place at a greater distance than reading a book, and thus requires a lower strength.

Prescription reading glasses

The over-the-counter route isn't right for everyone, Reynolds says, including people who have astigmatism

(meaning the eye's cornea or lens isn't perfectly round) and those who need a different strength for each eye.



In those cases, prescription reading glasses from the eye doctor are a better option. The most popular choice of prescription reading glasses are progressive lenses, Reynolds says. They combine multiple prescriptions in one lens, with a gradual top-to-bottom change, allowing someone to wear just one pair of glasses to correct far-away, middle-distance and up-close vision.

For people who otherwise have no vision problems, Andreoli says that reading-glass lenses that are clear (non-prescription) on top are another popular option available from the eye doctor. They can be worn continuously and eliminate the need to take your reading glasses on and off throughout the day.

Fredric Grethel, a board member of The Vision Council, a nonprofit optical industry trade association, notes that prescription reading glasses might also be a better choice for someone who wants more options, such as blue-light blocking lenses or an antireflective coating — not to mention a greater selection of fashionable frame choices. "The world has really changed from some years ago," Grethel says of the numerous reading-glass options — both over-the-counter and prescription — available today. "Now they're fashionable, they're fun, and they can give you personality."



How to Strengthen Your Lungs to Fight COVID-19

by Michelle Crouch, AARP
July 31, 2020



As you know, COVID-19 is a respiratory disease that can cause serious lung damage and breathing problems — along with a host of other health issues. And as the virus continues to spread, you may be wondering if strengthening your lungs will help you fight it off if you are infected.

"One of the first things that happens with COVID is that you get short of breath and your oxygen saturation begins to fall," says Raymond Casciari, a pulmonologist at St. Joseph Hospital in Orange, California. "The better condition your lungs are in, the better off you will be."

To get your lungs into better shape, the top critical-care pulmonologists we interviewed all agreed that the best option — hands down — is regular old physical activity, the kind that gets your heart rate up. "Anything that makes you breathe faster is basically a breathing exercise," says Joshua Denson, a pulmonary and critical care specialist and assistant professor of medicine at Tulane University School of Medicine. "My first advice would not be, 'Go sit in a chair and breathe deeply.' I'd say, 'Get on a bike and ride 20 minutes a day,' or 'Go for a brisk walk.'" Aim for activity that ramps up your breathing.

Staying active is especially important for older Americans, because lung function decreases as you age. Over time, the muscles that support your breathing become weaker, lung tissue loses elasticity and the air sacs inside your lungs become baggier. Studies show exercise can slow that decline and boost lung function.

Aerobic activity also helps air get into the deepest parts of your lungs that you don't use when you are sedentary, says Bruce Levy, chief of the Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston.

"If there are any secretions or pollutants you've breathed in, aerobic activity helps you clear them out of your lung and decreases your risk of infection or pneumonia," he says. "Aerobic fitness also helps your body obtain oxygen from the environment and use it in the most efficient manner," he says. "If you happen to get COVID, if you've been doing cardio, that's going to help you."

What's important for lung health, Levy and others say, is to exercise at an intensity that quickens your breathing rate and leaves you feeling breathless, whether it's swimming, biking or walking briskly.

"Some older adults are deathly afraid of feeling 'short of breath,'" Casciari says. "I have to convince them that it's a good thing."

How breathing exercises can help: Deep breathing exercises are another way to get air deep into your lungs and clear secretions. Although they're not as effective as physical activity, they are better than doing nothing for people who are sedentary, pulmonologists say, and they can be particularly helpful for people who have mobility issues.

"If you're bedridden, or caring for someone who's bedridden, doing some controlled breathing can be very useful because there is no other way to train," Levy says. "If you are not exercising, the base of your lungs can partially collapse, which increases the risk for infection if you breathe in a virus."

Levy notes that if you already exercise regularly (and don't have a chronic lung condition), breathing exercises may not confer any additional respiratory benefit, but they certainly won't cause any harm. Besides, you may reap other benefits: Research shows slow, controlled breathing can help lower your heart rate, stabilize your blood pressure and ease anxiety.

Good News!

By Deborah Hollingworth

Already December! The Good News is that the deep frost arrived late and with the last spurt of warm weather there was still time to plant more tulips. There's hopeful news about a Covid vaccine, and the election is behind us. Perhaps there is reason to believe that the next few months will not be so stressful.

Dealing with Covid may mean not seeing the whole family for holidays, but senior centers are coming up with new ideas to celebrate. Whether it's a drive by and pick up Turkey dinner, or holiday gift cards that may arrive in your mail box, we are inventing new ways to reach out to family and friends. The theme song for the long winter that lies ahead is....don't hibernate....keep in touch.

Zoom meetings for coffee and chat, book clubs, writing groups, puzzle exchanges, cooking classes and/or recipe exchanges and exercise classes are still happening.

Senior centers are also making calls to "phone buddies", so if you'd like a phone call, for no reason other than to chat, let them know. As the days get shorter and colder, it's important to keep in touch.

Times like these, we need to be inventive, thoughtful and on the look out for ways to help.



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This Newsletter is sponsored in part by a grant from The Executive Office of Elder Affairs.

'Mass Appeal': *Special Senior Edition!*

Council On Aging Directors from throughout Western Mass have been working with Mass Appeal co-host Patrick Berry on a special edition of the show that will focus on older adults. What began as a collaboration to highlight area Senior Center holiday performers, morphed into an entire show dedicated to the topic of aging adults in our area.



Tune in to WWLP Channel 22 for Mass Appeal on Tuesday, December 8th at 11am for an hour filled with information and local entertainers performing both original holiday pieces as well as traditional favorites. Topics that co-hosts Alanna Flood and Patrick Berry will delve into the physical, psychological and emotional well-being of older adults, caregiver stress, nutrition, and fitness. When a group of dedicated, compassionate, committed Senior Center Directors teams up with a talented television duo, the results are definitely worth watching!