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Volume 44  
Number 27

Wednesday, December 10, 2025



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# CAST presents 'A Christmas Carol'

The show blends humor, heart and high energy, to help kick off the season's festivities.

The Clearfield Arts Studio Theatre will stage "A Christmas Carol" at 7:30 p.m. Dec. 11-13 and Dec. 18-20.

This year's production features the Charles Dickens classic, adapted by Charles Ludlam, who created a delightfully ridiculous yet remarkably faithful retelling of the classic holiday tale. Suitable for all ages, the show blends humor, heart and high energy, making it the perfect addition to the season's festivities.

Audiences will follow the journey of Ebenezer Scrooge as he is visited by the ghosts of his late partner, Jacob Marley, as well as Christmas Past, Christmas Present and the Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come. Through these encounters, Scrooge confronts his misanthropic ways, discovers redemption, reconnects with loved ones, and ultimately becomes a second father to Tiny Tim.

Ludlam's witty adaptation highlights both the lighthearted and heartfelt moments that have made Dickens' story a timeless favorite.

During intermission, guests may enjoy popcorn, candy and other refresh-



— Courtesy photo

The Clearfield Arts Studio Theatre will stage "A Christmas Carol" at 7:30 p.m. Dec. 11-13 and Dec. 18-20. Tickets are \$14 and may be purchased online at [www.ClearfieldArts.org](http://www.ClearfieldArts.org), at the CAST office from 5-6 p.m. Thursdays or at the box office beginning 30 minutes before each performance.

ments for a donation to the CAST Scholarship Fund. Audience members will also have the opportunity to purchase raffle tickets for a chance to win a festive gift basket, with proceeds benefiting both the CAST Scholarship Fund and the Children's Aid Society.

The production is directed by Lew Duttry and Julie Tobias and is sponsored by CNB Bank, Denny's Beer Barrel Pub and Penn Highlands Healthcare.

CAST also reminds patrons that 2026 season tickets are currently on sale and make great gifts. For more information,

visit [www.ClearfieldArts.org](http://www.ClearfieldArts.org), find CAST on Facebook and Instagram, or call 814-765-4474.

CAST is a nonprofit

arts center located at 112 E. Locust St. in the heart of Downtown Clearfield.

Tickets for 'A Christmas Carol' are \$14 and may

be purchased online at [www.ClearfieldArts.org](http://www.ClearfieldArts.org), at the CAST office from 5-6 p.m. Thursdays or at the box office beginning 30

minutes before each performance. Advanced ticket sales are recommended, as some performances are close to selling out.

## LIHEAP applications now being accepted

The Department of Human Services announced that the 2025-26 Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program season has started taking applications. Normally opened in November each year, the program was delayed due to the federal government shutdown. The 2025-26 season is

scheduled to run through April 10, 2026.

To protect Pennsylvanians during the delay, Gov. Josh Shapiro worked with the Public Utility Commission and utility providers to start the winter shutoff moratorium earlier on Nov. 1 (it usually begins in December each year). This ensured

that Pennsylvanians who could not access LIHEAP in November because of the shutdown did not risk having their heat or electricity shut off as temperatures dropped.

LIHEAP is a federally funded DHS program that helps eligible households pay their heating bills by sending payments direct-

ly to their utility company or fuel provider. States receive LIHEAP funding through a federal block grant — these dollars were recently issued by the Trump Administration after the federal shutdown ended. Pennsylvania typically receives more than \$215 million in LIHEAP

See **LIHEAP**/Page 7

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# Winter SURVIVAL GUIDE

## HOW TO PREVENT FROST ON YOUR WINDSHIELD - AND REMOVE IT IF IT FORMS

If you've ever rushed to get ready on a winter morning only to find your windshield covered in frost, you know how frustrating it can be. Is there any way to prevent this from happening? What can you do if it's too late? Here's a quick guide.

**Tips for preventing frost from forming**

Scraping your car windows in the frigid cold is never fun, but you can use several tricks to prevent frost from forming in the first place.

- In the evening, place an anti-frost cover over your windshield. In the morning, simply remove it. This accessory is both effective and easy to use, and you can find various models for around \$30.
- Mix one part water with three parts white vinegar and spray this solution on your dry windows. After spraying, wipe the surface with a cloth. Repeat this

process regularly throughout winter to help prevent ice crystals from forming on the glass.

- Visit a repair shop to have your windows treated with a special water-repellent product. This treatment makes the ice stick to a protective layer rather than the glass, making scraping much easier.

**Removing frost that's already formed**

If you didn't have time to prepare and your windshield is frozen solid, don't panic. Start your vehicle and turn on the defrost function, setting the fan to high. Lower the sun visors to help trap warm air against the glass. This will speed up the defrosting process. For even better results, consider purchasing a de-icing solution from a local supplier.

Stock up on frost-fighting products at your local automotive product retailer.

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## Obituaries

### Lilly Y. "Bonnie" Kline

Lilly Y. "Bonnie" Kline, 84, of Philipsburg, PA, died on Monday, December 1, 2025 at Heritage Ridge Senior Living at Windy Hill in Philipsburg, PA.

Born on June 26, 1941, Lilly was the daughter of the late John Malinich & Faye (Reams) Malinich. She married Ashley Kline on July 16, 1960 in (Sanborn), rural Houtzdale. Ashley survives at home. Lilly was a member of the Church of the Nazarene in Philipsburg, PA. She was also a member of Gideons International. She retired from Windy Hill and was also a seamstress. Lilly was a 1960 graduate from P.O. High School. In her free time, she loved to sew. In addition to her parents, Lilly was preceded in death by a brother, William Malinich. She is survived by two sons, Jeffrey W. Kline & his wife Brenda of Philipsburg, PA, and Gary L. Kline & his wife Wanda of Fountain Inn, SC; a sister, Mary Ann Williams & her husband Ron of Charleston, WV; a brother, Leroy Malinich of Hyde, PA; four grandchildren, Cody Kline, Courtney Kline, Brittney Kline, and Adam Kline; and one great-grandchild, Hudson Wayne. A funeral was held on Saturday, December 6, 2025 at the Heath Funeral Home & Cremation Services, LLC, and Rev. John Versaw officiated. Interment was held at Umbria Cemetery in Osceola Mills, PA.

### Linda Rae Thomas

Linda Rae Thomas, 79, of Philipsburg, PA, died on Thursday, December 3, 2025 at Centre Care Rehab in Bellefonte, PA.

Born on June 15, 1946, in Philipsburg, PA, Linda was the daughter of the late Edward Milton & Mary (Gearhart) Dixon. Linda married Ronald Thomas on November 15, 2014 in Osceola Mills, PA; he preceded her in death on June 13, 2021. She was also married to Daniel Pighetti who preceded her in death on January 11, 2008. She was a member of the Bald Eagle C & M A Church in Tyrone, PA. Linda retired from Murata Erie in State College, PA. She graduated from Imperial Beach High School in San Diego, CA. Linda was preceded in death by three sisters, Joyce Cowfer, Judy Rice, and Carol Gonder; a brother, James Dixon; and an infant daughter, Tina Ann Shimel. Linda is survived by a daughter, Rhonda A. Trude & her husband Terry of Morrisdale, PA; a brother, Sanford Dixon of Lakeland, FL; two grandchildren, Taylor Koch / Ryan Koch and Kody Trude; one great-grandchild, Cole Koch; and a step-daughter Brenda Maines & her husband Keith. She is also survived by her companion Merle Gonder and previous husband Ron Shimel. A funeral service was held on Saturday, December 6, 2025 at the Heath Funeral Home & Cremation Services, LLC, and Rev. D. Z. Lewis, Jr. officiated. Interment was held at Umbria Cemetery.

### William Dean Miller

William Dean Miller, 42, of Osceola Mills, PA, died on Wednesday, December 3, 2025 in West Decatur, PA.

Born on April 20, 1983, in Philipsburg, PA, William was the son of Robert Miller, Jr. of Lily, KY & Rhonda R. Crowell of Osceola Mills, PA. William had worked at Hi-Way Pizza Shoppe in Philipsburg, PA. He was preceded in death by a nephew, Jesse Brown. William is survived by two daughters, Savannah Miller & her companion James Hargrove of Philipsburg, PA, and Kaylin Miller & her companion Avery Gisewhite of Curwensville, PA; Three sisters, Heather Miller of Philipsburg, PA, and Tiffany Miller & her companion Brion Brown of Osceola Mills, PA, Nicki Miller and her husband Donald. of Clearfield, PA; three brothers, Robert Miller III of Osceola Mills, PA, Joshua Miller & his companion Jennifer Haney of DuBois, PA, and James Miller of Erie, PA; and one grandchild, Hunter. A funeral was held on Tuesday, December 9, 2025 at the Heath Funeral Home & Cremation Services, LLC, and Rev. Robert Bruinooge officiated.

### Dennis McFarland

Mr. McFarland, 72, of Pinecroft, died Friday, December 5, 2025 at his residence.

He was born May 21, 1953, in Tyrone, a son of the late Donald and Shirley (Estep) McFarland. On May 30, 1981, in Bellwood, he married Gloria J. Briggs who survives along with three children: Dustin L. (Jessica) McFarland and Brittani M. McFarland and her significant other Wade Hardy, of Bellwood and Cody A. McFarland and his fiancé Sarah Bougher of Altoona. Also surviving are two granddaughters Madison and Kaitlynn and three grandsons Dylan, Logan and Weston and a brother Donald McFarland of Roy, Utah. Dennis was a 1971 graduate of Tyone High School and had been employed by New Enterprise-Road Construction. He was a lifetime member of Pinecroft Volunteer Fire Company. There were no services.

### Terence L. Flanagan

Terence L. Flanagan, 65 of Clearfield passed away at Mountain Laurel Healthcare & Rehabilitation Center, Clearfield on Saturday, November 29, 2025.

Born May 11, 1960, in Clearfield, he was the son of Robert D. and Shirley A. (Curtis) Flanagan. Terence was a 1978 graduate of Clearfield Area High School, where he was voted Class Friend because he treated everyone as if they were friends. A highlight of his high school years was being on the baseball team. He was a member of the Clearfield High School Alumni Baseball Team, which he thoroughly enjoyed. Later in life, Terence enjoyed sitting on his rocker on his front porch waving at everyone who passed. He was a past member of the Old Town Sportsman Softball League, Fraternal Order of Eagles Clearfield No. 812 and VFW Post 1785. He was employed by SGL Carbon, St. Marys, PA for 14 years where he worked as an equipment operator. Terence is survived by his children, Robin Enochs, of Clearfield, Eric Flanagan (Lacey), of Curwensville, Kimberly Veach (John), of Moore, OK; eight grandchildren and three great-grandchildren; and several nieces and nephews. He is also survived by his beloved pets, Daisy and Duke. He was the last of his generation. He was preceded in death by his parents, one older brother, Robert and his twin brother, Thomas. All services for Terence were private.

Obituaries Courtesy of:

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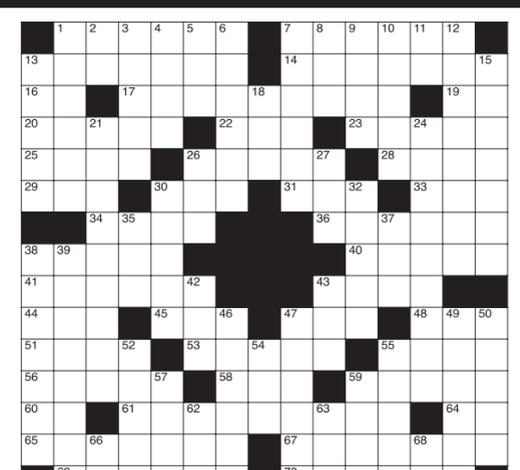


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**Crossword Puzzle**  
Solution on page 7



- CLUES ACROSS**
- 1. Spiritual leaders
  - 7. A type of solution
  - 13. Fortified wine
  - 14. Edible mollusk
  - 16. They precede C
  - 17. A way to compare
  - 19. Government lawyer
  - 20. "Game of Thrones" actor Ciaran
  - 22. The eighth month (abbr.)
  - 23. Very willing
  - 25. \_\_\_ ex Machina
  - 26. Makes happy
  - 28. Type of berry
  - 29. A doctrine
  - 30. Popular Dodge truck model
  - 31. Dekagram
  - 33. Naturally occurring solid
  - 34. Company officer
  - 36. Villains
  - 38. Cricket frogs
  - 40. Influential German psychologist
  - 41. Endured
  - 43. A female domestic
  - 44. You can get stuck in one
  - 45. Cigarette (slang)
  - 47. Fiber optics network
  - 48. Group of blood disorders (abbr.)
  - 51. Employee stock ownership plan
  - 53. Belonging to the bottom layer
  - 55. Sound
  - 56. MLB legend Hank
  - 58. Very attractive person
  - 59. Late beloved sportscaster Craig
  - 60. South Dakota
  - 61. Mocking
  - 64. Symbol for gold
  - 65. Longtime Braves pitcher Julio
  - 67. Humor
  - 69. Shawl
  - 70. Preliminary patient assessment

- CLUES DOWN**
- 1. Animal disease
  - 2. Commercial
  - 3. Necklace material
  - 4. Containers
  - 5. A way to save for your future
  - 6. Colorado Heisman winner Rashaan
  - 7. Dipped down
  - 8. Head injury (abbr.)
  - 9. Lay about
  - 10. Intestinal
  - 11. Opposite of yes
  - 12. Caused to be loved
  - 13. Spiritual leader of Islam
  - 15. Businesslike
  - 18. Not in
  - 21. Number above the line in a fraction
  - 24. An animal with its own day
  - 26. Pouch
  - 27. Swedish krona
  - 30. Start over
  - 32. Field flowers
  - 35. Fourteen
  - 37. A visual way to interact with a computer
  - 38. Up-to-date
  - 39. Campaigns
  - 42. Touch lightly
  - 43. "Boardwalk Empire" actress Gretchen
  - 46. Violent seizure of property
  - 47. Supporter of the Pope
  - 49. Anxiety
  - 50. Body fluid
  - 52. One who's faking it
  - 54. Title of respect
  - 55. Chilean city
  - 57. City in central Japan
  - 59. Silk garment
  - 62. A form of dance
  - 63. Automobile
  - 66. The man
  - 68. Justice Dept. head honcho

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# 2025 SEASON OF SHARING RECIPIENT: Dreams Go On



Mirror photos by Patrick Waksunski  
**Top:** Riders experience riding outside. **Bottom:** Aiden Andrews, 10, of Duncansville hangs a ring as part of an activity while riding Romeo JAC.

## Altoona Mirror Season of Sharing

**HISTORY:** The Altoona Mirror Season of Sharing is a holiday fundraiser that aims to combine the power of the local newspaper, the expertise of the Central Pennsylvania Community Foundation and the generosity of our central Pennsylvania readers.

Season of Sharing has become a holiday tradition, and the money raised benefits a specific charity or charities each year.

Over the past 20 years, Season of Sharing has raised more than \$468,512 for local charities, with last year's total of \$74,244 to the Central PA Humane Society.

**PAST RECIPIENTS:**

- 2005 U.S. Armed Forces Mothers
- 2006 Brian Morden Foundation
- 2007 Shriners Hospitals for Children
- 2008 Gloria Gates Memorial Foundation
- 2009 Food for Families Soup Kitchen
- 2010 Zack Hinich Foundation
- 2011 Big Brothers Big Sisters of Blair County
- 2012 Home Nursing Agency's Healing Patch
- 2013 Miracle League of Blair County
- 2014 Mountain Lion Backpack Program
- 2015 Family Services Teen Center & Shelter
- 2016 Salvation Army Emergency

**Disaster Services**

- 2017 Hurricane Relief (Florida Keys, Houston, Puerto Rico)
- 2018 Blair County Suicide Prevention Task Force
- 2019 Skills Of Central PA
- 2020 Altoona Food Bank
- 2021 Blair County Library System
- 2022 St. Vincent De Paul Assumption Chapel Food Pantry
- 2023 Sweat For Vets
- 2024 Central PA Humane Society

**THIS YEAR'S RECIPIENT:** Dreams Go On provides therapeutic horseback riding sessions to adults and children who are physically challenged, receive mental health, behavioral health or family therapy services. Certified instructors and dedicated volunteers teach responsibility, trust, rules, patience, compassion, self-confidence, teamwork, and safety.

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**HOW TO DONATE:** The first and easiest way is to fill out the coupon below and mail it along with an envelope to the address listed below.

You can also drop off the coupon and your contribution at the Altoona Mirror, 301 Cayuga Ave., Altoona PA 16602.

The funds raised through the Season of Sharing will be administered by the Central Pennsylvania Community Foundation. 100% of the donations to the Season of Sharing will go directly to that year's charity.

Of course, donations to the Season of Sharing are tax deductible.

Deadline for donations is Jan. 31, 2026.

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# LIHEAP: apply for 2025-2026 season

(Continued from Page 1) funding each year, including \$216 million in 2023 and \$229 million in 2024.

“Pennsylvanians deserve the safety and health benefits that come from being able to heat their homes and keep themselves and their families warm through the winter,” said DHS Secretary Val Arkoosh. “LIHEAP helps hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians each year by providing cash and crisis grants directly to the eligible household’s utility company or heating fuel provider, and I am very glad that we are finally able to begin this important work. I encourage anyone who may need help

with heating costs to apply for LIHEAP and keep your home safe through this winter.”

LIHEAP assistance does not need to be paid back and is available in the form of cash or crisis grants. The minimum 2025-26 LIHEAP cash grant is \$200, and the maximum cash grant is \$1,000. Individuals and households may receive one cash grant per LIHEAP season.

Separately, Pennsylvanians who qualify for a LIHEAP crisis grant will be eligible for a minimum grant of \$25 and a maximum grant of \$1,000. Individuals and households are eligible for a crisis grant if they meet the income guidelines and are in jeopardy of having their heating utility service terminated, have already had their heating utility service terminated, or who are out of or have less than two weeks’ worth of deliverable fuel, such as fuel oil, propane, coal or wood. Households may apply for and be eligible for more than one

crisis grant — up to the \$1,000 maximum — if they experience more than one emergency per LIHEAP season.

LIHEAP benefits are applied for each year, so if an individual was approved or denied previously, DHS encourages them to apply again for the 2025-26 season. Individuals and families are financially eligible for LIHEAP if their incomes are at or below 150% of the Federal Poverty Limit. For an individual, that is a gross income of \$22,590 per year, and for a family of four, that is a gross income of \$46,800 per year.

Pennsylvanians can apply for LIHEAP and other public assistance programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program at [dhs.pa.gov/COMPASS](http://dhs.pa.gov/COMPASS) or by calling 1-866-550-4355. Pennsylvanians do not need to know their own eligibility to apply.

More information about LIHEAP is available on DHS’ website at [dhs.pa.gov/liheap](http://dhs.pa.gov/liheap).

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**Pet-friendly holiday decorating**

Decorating is one of the great joys of the holiday season. Stores adorn their front-facing windows with amazing displays and homeowners often deck out residences from top to bottom with all measures of holiday wonderment.

Approximately 94 million households in the United States feature a pet, according to the American Pet Products Association. Many of those households will be decorating for the holidays and must figure out ways to keep homes safe for all residents including those covered in fur. These tips can ensure a pet-friendly season with lots of holiday decor.

- Choose shatterproof decorations. Select shatterproof ornaments and other decorative items that are durable and non-toxic. Items made from felt, fabric or wood tend to be safer than items that can break.
- Pick pet-friendly plants. Poinsettias and mistletoe may be traditional, but they can be toxic to pets. Additional options like Christmas cactus can be safer. Artificial plants are another alternative to consider.
- Opt out of open flames. It is best to avoid traditional candles when pets are around. Instead, there are plenty of those powered by LED lights that even mimic the flicker of real candles.
- Avoid tinsel and ribbons. Digestive issues or blockages can affect pets who ingest tinsel or ribbons. Select pet-safe ribbons or garlands, and skip the tinsel entirely.
- Avoid edible decor. Candy canes on trees or popcorn garlands are festive, but they may prove too tempting for pets to resist. Animals can get sick and may knock over the Christmas tree or other items to access the food.
- Secure decorative items. Position the Christmas tree in an area that is not easily accessible. Avoid putting it near furniture that can be used as a jumping-off point. Make sure the tree stand is sturdy enough to prevent tipping, and consider using wire or string to tie the tree to a ceiling or wall anchor for further stability.

# Altoona Mirror Plus!



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

## AASD technology director ready for next chapter

By **MATT CHURELLA**  
mchurella@altoonamirror.com

Bryce Cossitor is ready for the next chapter of his life after nearly three decades with the Altoona Area School District, from which he will retire Friday as the outgoing technology director.

After retirement, Cossitor plans to pursue some consulting work through the Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials, as well as spend more time with his family and friends at the Altoona Community Theatre, where he's been a member since 1986.

Cossitor joined Altoona Area as its technology coordinator in 1998 and has been in the technology director position since it was created, which was about the same time that the district left the Altoona Area Vocational-Technical School's computer consortium, he said.

Before joining the district, Cossitor was a computer programming instructor for the Altoona Area Vocational-Technical School, now known as the Greater Altoona Career and Technology Center. While he was teaching there, Cossitor ran his own computer consulting and custom programming business for about 10 years, he said.

Being responsible for Altoona Area's cyber security, data integrity system every day was a "big task" that often felt like "a huge house of cards" because, if one thing failed, it often impacted many other aspects, Cossitor said, adding "a huge amount of stress" will be removed from his life next week.

"At the same time, it's like saying goodbye to something that you raised," Cossitor said.

When Cossitor started teaching, International Business Machines personal computers, which didn't have hard drives and required floppy disks to store data, were used, he said.

"At that point, there was no internet, per se. You had bulletin boards that you could dial into with a phone line using a modem for any kind of communication," Cossitor said. "That was the primary way of talking to others across what we now know as the worldwide web and the internet."

The internet has evolved from emails to instant messaging programs and social media platforms, Cossitor said, adding he's seen everything progress throughout his career.

### Irreplaceable friend, mentor

Cossitor's knowledge of technology from an educational and business standpoint is unmatched within the district, Superintendent Brad Hatch said.

"You can't replace a Bryce," Hatch said. "His wealth of knowledge and experience is really irreplaceable. Not to mention that he's a great friend and he's a great administrator to everyone in the school district."

Cossitor always kept the district ahead of the curve in terms of technology integration, instructional technology and cybersecurity, Hatch said, noting Altoona Area was one of the first local school districts to initiate a one-to-one program.

"He was at the forefront of that, where our kids were issued devices and took devices home," Hatch said of Cossitor.

"He's a good friend and he's someone who we will sadly miss."

But the technology department is being left in good hands, Cossitor said, noting he didn't retire earlier because he wanted to ensure a smooth transition for his team.

The school board of directors hired Justin Arthur as the district's new technology director in August. Arthur began his career as a teacher and technology instructional coach at Altoona Area and later served as Hollidaysburg Area School District's technology director for 11 years before returning to the district.

In August, Arthur said he enjoyed working with Cossitor when he was an instructional coach for the district, and he plans to continue Cossitor's work by doing great things for Altoona Area.

Cossitor said it's difficult to have a crystal ball and know what's going to happen with the future of technology. But officials shouldn't fall behind in the utilization of technology either, he said.

"You can't always afford the biggest and the best in education, but we can't ignore the fact that these kids need to be taught using the tools that they're going to see in the real world when they graduate," Cossitor said, adding artificial intelligence is "a perfect example of that."

"You can't put blinders on it, ignore artificial intelligence and think, 'You know, that's just not a good teaching tool,'" Cossitor said, noting AI can be a good tool — if it's used properly and students are introduced to it in a way that helps them understand the dangers of not being a good digital citizen.

### Not just technology

Cossitor was also an integral part of the district's fine arts community for many years, Hatch said, noting he worked with his son, Ben Cossitor, to produce several school musicals over the past few years.

Bryce Cossitor served as the music director for Ben, who is the high school drama and fine arts teacher in charge



Mirror photo by Matt Churella

**Altoona Area School District Technology Director Bryce Cossitor (right) speaks with high school Principal Andrew Neely at a school board meeting in August. At that meeting, Cossitor's retirement, effective Friday, Dec. 5, was approved.**

of directing the school's musicals and plays.

Ben Cossitor said the experience of collaborating with his father was "really rewarding."

"Getting the chance to collaborate in that capacity was one of the joys of the past few years," Ben said, adding his father is often his voice of reason.

"I think he is that for many people," Cossitor said, noting he went through the school system in the '90s and watched his father build the district's technology program from the ground up.

"One of the reasons why he got the position he got was because he's so knowledgeable, and he does just have this annoying ability of always being right about what you're asking him for," Ben Cossitor said.

Watching his father perform and direct shows at the Altoona

Community Theatre also helped Ben form his own passion for fine arts, he said.

"Sometimes I don't even realize all the ways that he's kind of inspired me," Ben said.

Bryce Cossitor said he's been on and off the theatre's board of directors for many years.

Although he's not currently serving on the board, Cossitor said he's looking forward to spending more time at the theatre and directing his church choir at Saint Rose of Lima.

Something else he's looking forward to are his family's usual vacations to Disney's theme parks, Cossitor said, noting they already have two trips planned between now and the spring.

Cossitor's office at the district was filled with pieces of Disney memorabilia, including items from

"Star Wars" and "Guardians of the Galaxy."

"I talk about how stressful this job is, but our vacations to Disney have been a release for me and for our whole family where I can let all of that go and be kind of a kid again," Cossitor said.

"Plus, I'm not going to say that I don't go there in awe of all of the technology that puts those parks together and keeps them running. That's all fascinating to me, too," he said.

In addition to consulting for the Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials, Cossitor said he's had interest from some local companies to provide educational consulting for them.

"I'm not ready to just pack it up and sit at home," he said. "I'm going to continue to do some work, but as a consultant, it's a little easier to walk away from it."

### The Cossitor file

**Name:** Bryce Cossitor

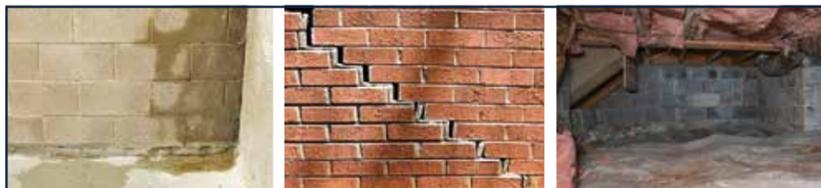
**Age:** 65

**Education:** Hollidaysburg Area School District, Class of 1978; Penn State Altoona, associate degree in computer science, 1985; Saint Francis University, bachelor's degree in management and information sciences, 2004; Wilkes University, master's degree in school business, 2021

**Employment:** Prior to graduating from college, Cossitor was a manager for a men's clothing department store. In December 1985, he was hired by the Altoona Area Vocational-Technical School and worked there until joining the Altoona Area School District in 1998

**Family:** Wife, Sue Cossitor; children, Ben Cossitor and Lauren Cox

**Hobbies:** Performing, directing and singing



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## EXPERT ADVICE



The Associated Press  
Former Olympic swimmer Rowdy Gaines swims on Nov 11 at a pool in Salt Lake City.

## Gold medalist has tips for older swimmers

BY STEPHEN WADE  
The Associated Press

Olympic gold-medalist Rowdy Gaines has swimming tips if you're an older swimmer, or returning to the pool after years away.

Gaines won three Olympic gold medals at the 1984 Los Angeles Games and is widely known as the "voice of swimming" for his coverage of the Olympics with American network NBC.

Swimming is an all-around exercise with water providing mild resistance. It's low-impact, offers a complete workout and is suitable for all ages.

"Of course I'm biased, but I will stack swimming against any other exercise out there, especially as we age," Gaines told The Associated Press. "And swimming is one of the few sports you can do forever."

Gaines missed out on a shot at winning a handful of medals at the 1980 Moscow Olympics, which the United States boycotted. Gaines set 10 world records between 1978 and 1984 and was the heir in American sprinting to Mark Spitz and a predecessor to Michael Phelps.

Gaines is 66 and said his 90-year-old father, Buddy, is back training for a meet for older swimmers early next year. He said his father has not swum seriously in, perhaps, 70 years.

Gaines stayed away from advice around strokes, detailed workout plans, and specific training suggestions. His tips are geared for older swimmers and those returning after a long layoff — perhaps decades.

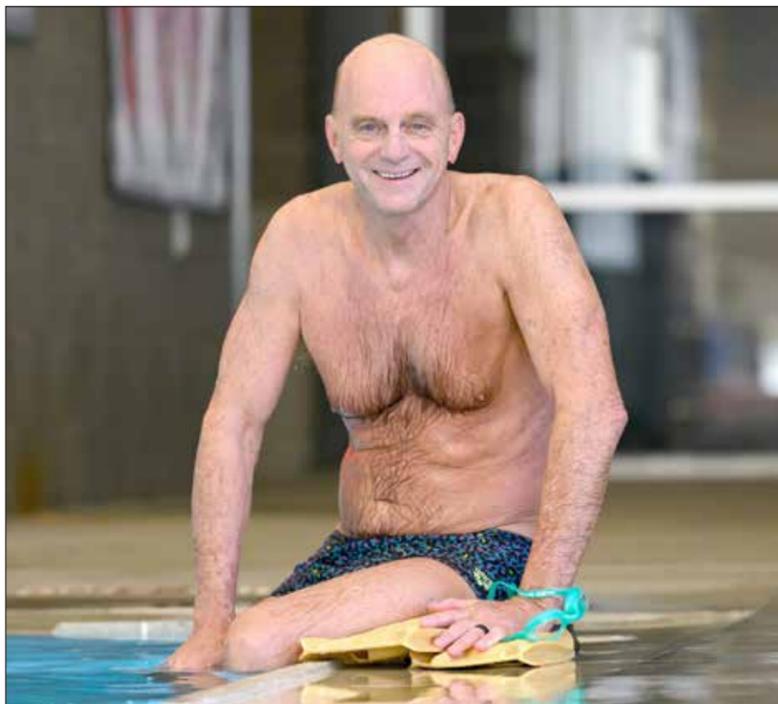
Defog your goggles, slip into the pool, grab your kickboard and let's get motivated.

### Get your technique down

Take time to work on your technique. Most recreational swimmers use the freestyle stroke, also known as the front crawl. But his advice also applies to breaststroke, backstroke and butterfly.

With freestyle, Gaines preaches taking long, smooth strokes — not short, choppy ones. And for freestyle swimmers, keep your head in the water and aligned with your body.

"Water rewards efficiency," said Gaines, who won his three gold medals in the 100 free and two relays. "It has nothing to do with power. I think a lot of first-timers feel like they have to power their way through the water and that is not true."



### Be patient

Build distance and endurance slowly. Maybe a few decades ago you could swim nonstop for 30 minutes. You won't be able to after a long time away.

Start with a 200-yard workout. Swim 25 yards and rest until your heart rate slows. Do this eight to 10 times "and then get the heck out of the pool," Gaines said.

"You don't want to overdo it to start with and then get frustrated and think you can't do it," he said. "You need to increase your total distance little by little."

Gaines suggested the goal is a 20-30 minute workout, three times per week. Swimming relies on getting a feel for the water, which requires steadfastness.

"Three days a week is the sweet spot," he said. "If you are doing less than three days a week, it's really tough to develop the consistency you need."

### Injury prevention

This is common sense, but take time to warm up. Do this on dry land, perhaps, before hitting the water. Do stretches, work your shoulders, and work on some strength training.

It's no secret that some swimmers

experience lots of shoulder pain.

"You have to listen to any pain," Gaines said. "Pain is a lot different than fatigue or strain. Pain is real. If you are feeling fatigue and strain, that's good. If you are feeling pain, that's bad."

If something hurts, stop and change your workout.

If you swim freestyle, Gaines suggested adding in a bit of backstroke to loosen the shoulders and add strength. Breaststroke is also easier on the shoulders. Butterfly, however, is tough on the shoulders.

### Mind set — the mental game

Gaines emphasized keeping it fun and getting comfortable in the water. Not fighting it.

"Learn to feel the water," he said. "The small goal of just feeling the water is much more important than many other things. Swimming is not easy. You are not always going to feel good swimming. But you are going to feel great when you're done."

He also emphasized varying your workout — meaning time, distance and strokes to keep it fun and interesting.

See **Swim tips**/Page 2

## Index funds, ETFs help retirees

BY CHRISTINE BENZ  
Morningstar

Older adults likely began their investing careers before exchange-traded funds existed and have stuck with traditional mutual funds.

But as retirement approaches, many investors look at their portfolios with a fresh set of eyes and make adjustments.

And the more I work with in-retirement portfolios, the more I like ETFs and traditional index funds for several reasons:

### 1. They lend themselves well to cash flow extraction

For retirees who are using income distributions from their investments to help cover living expenses, the small fees levied by index funds and ETFs ensure that more of those payouts flow to them.

For total-return-oriented retirees who are rebalancing (trimming appreciated securities) to meet living expenses, index funds and ETFs also work well. These are typically pure plays on a given asset class, making it simple to identify which assets to scale back to deliver the retiree's cash flow and restore the portfolio to its target asset allocation.

### 2. Maintenance is a cinch

In addition to making it easy to extract cash flows, index funds and ETFs also do well in limiting a retiree's oversight obligations. Many retirees have better things to do than monitor news about their holdings. Retirees employing index funds do need to watch their total portfolios' asset-allocation mixes, but most core-type index funds and ETFs change little on an ongoing basis. Moreover, because index-tracking ETFs and funds track a benchmark rather than trying to beat it, manager changes matter much less than with active funds.

### 3. Not hard to control risk

Many retirees prize risk controls, and people sometimes say that active funds "earn their keep" in down markets.

While mild-mannered active equity funds, especially those focused on valuation and quality, might help lower a portfolio's overall risk, the most dependable way to reduce a portfolio's loss potential is by adjusting the stock/bond mix, not the underlying holdings.

### 4. Tax efficiency stakes may be higher

Taxes are another area where index funds and ETFs shine in retirement. Equity index funds and especially ETFs are incredibly tax-efficient relative to their actively managed counterparts.

Managing for tax efficiency is important at every life stage, but most important in retirement. Investors' portfolios are often at their largest right before and during retirement; the share of the portfolio parked in taxable accounts is also apt to be highest then.

See **Retirees**/Page 3

## Dietary experts advise caution with 'fibermaxxing'

The Associated Press

U.S. consumers who have had their fill of finding protein added to everything from cereal to ice cream are about to meet the next big food fad: fiber.

Americans have been boosting their protein intake for years; even Pop-Tarts and Starbucks are selling protein-enhanced products. But the number of new products promoted with high or added fiber saw a big uptick in the U.S. this year, according to market research firm Mintel. Hundreds

of videos on social media celebrate the benefits of dietary fiber and share recipes to help viewers get more of it.

There's even a term for trying to meet or exceed the recommended daily fiber intake: fibermaxxing.

"I think fiber will be the next protein," PepsiCo CEO Ramon Laguarta said during a recent conference call with investors. "Consumers are starting to understand that fiber is the benefit that they need."

### Fiber's benefits

Unlike muscle-building protein, fiber isn't sexy. It's a carbohydrate found in plants that your body can't break down. It helps feed gut bacteria and move food through the digestive system.

"Folks don't want to talk about it at a dinner party," said Debbie Petitpain, a registered dietitian nutritionist and a spokeswoman for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

There are two main types of fiber. Soluble fiber dissolves in

water and forms a gel-like material that feeds gut bacteria. It's found in foods like oats, peas, beans, apples and carrots. Insoluble fiber doesn't dissolve in water and moves food through the digestive system. It's found in whole wheat flour, popcorn, wheat bran, nuts, green beans and potatoes.

Studies have shown that fiber lowers cholesterol levels, regulates blood sugar and promotes weight loss, since high-fiber foods tend to make eaters feel more full.

It may also protect against heart disease, diabetes, diverticulitis and colon cancer, according to the American Heart Association.

Petitpain said rising use of GLP-1 weight loss drugs could be one reason for the renewed focus on fiber, since GLP-1s naturally slow digestion and fiber can prevent constipation. She said fiber has seen similar spikes in interest when people wanted to alleviate symptoms from high-fat diets like Atkins or keto.

See **Fiber**/Page 4

# How to locate an age-friendly doctor

**D**ear Savvy Senior, My husband and I are relocating to a nearby state to be closer to our daughter and will need to find a new primary care physician when we arrive. We are both in our late 70s and are interested in getting a geriatrician to oversee our health care going forward. Any suggestions for finding someone? — **Searching for Care Dear Searching,**



**Jim Miller**  
Savvy Senior

age-related problems such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension, incontinence, osteoporosis, cognitive decline, frailty, depression, or trouble with balance

and falls.

Geriatricians are also particularly adept at tackling medication problems. Because many seniors take multiple medications at the same time for various health conditions, and because aging bodies often absorb and metabolize drugs differently than younger adults, unique side effects and drug interactions are not uncommon. A geriatrician will evaluate and monitor your medications to be sure they are not affecting you in a harmful way.

Geriatricians can also help their patients and families determine their long-term care needs, like how long they can remain in their own homes safely without assistance, and what type of services may be necessary when they do need some extra help.

Unfortunately, there's a shortage of geriatricians in the U.S., so depending on where you are moving, finding one may be difficult.

To help you locate one in your new area, use Medicare's online find and compare search tool. Just go to [Medicare.gov/care-compare](http://Medicare.gov/care-compare) and click on "Doctors & Clinicians" and type in your location, then type in "geriatric medicine" in the Name & Keyword box. You can also get this information by calling Medicare at 800-633-4227. The American Geriatrics Society also has a geriatrician-finder tool on their website at [HealthinAging.org](http://HealthinAging.org).

If you're enrolled in a Medicare Advantage plan, contact your plan for a list of network geriatricians in your new area.

Keep in mind, though, that locating a geriatrician doesn't guarantee you will be accepted as a patient. Many doctors already have a full patient roster and don't accept any new patients. You'll need to call the individual doctor's office to find out.

## Age-Friendly PCPs

If you and your husband are in relatively good health or if you can't find a geriatrician in your new area, a good primary care physician (PCP) that practices age-friendly care would also be a viable choice.

To search for new PCPs, use the previously listed Medicare tools. Once you locate a few, call their office and ask if they're accepting new patients and if they practice the 4Ms of age friendly care, which include: What Matters (your goals and priorities); Medication safety and appropriateness; Mentation (cognition and mood); and Mobility (ways to keep you moving).

You can also research new doctors at sites like [Healthgrades.com](http://Healthgrades.com) and [Vitals.com](http://Vitals.com).

If you're finding it hard to get into a new practice, you might even consider looking for a geriatric nurse practitioner or advanced practice registered nurse to serve as your PCP.

*Send your questions or comments to [questions@savvysenior.org](mailto:questions@savvysenior.org), or to Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070.*



The Associated Press

Former Olympic swimmer Rowdy Gaines swims Nov. 11 at a pool in Salt Lake City.

## SWIM TIPS: Break up boredom with variety

(Continued from Page 1)  
**Hydration and training aids**

Swimmers need to stay hydrated. It's not generally a problem for recreational swimmers, but swimmers perspire while swimming. The warmer the pool, the more this might be a problem. Gaines reminded that pool temperatures vary, but 80 degrees F is about right. Warmer temperatures can lead to more dehydration.

He also suggested training aids such as swim fins, paddles or pull-buoys, which are also another part of adding variety.

"I really don't like to swim, but I love the feeling

of being done," Gaines said. (Remember, this revelation is from a decorated Olympic athlete.) "I crave that feeling when I get out of the water. It's the endorphins. It's definitely mental for me."

Gaines said he swims six days a week, usually between 2,000 and 2,500 yards. He said about 40% is freestyle with three 20% sections of backstroke, breaststroke and kicking. "You want to have variety for that recreational swimmer because swimming can be boring," Gaines said. "However, swimming can almost be meditation, even for that three-day a week, recreational swimmer."

# Undervalued holiday flower has upside-down blooms

By JESSICA DAMIANO  
The Associated Press

If I asked you to name a holiday flower, my guess is poinsettia, amaryllis or paperwhite would be the first to come to mind. But there's another, underused seasonal plant that deserves attention.

Allow me to introduce you to cyclamen.

There are roughly two dozen species of the perennial plants, some with rounded leaves and others with heart-, kidney- or ivy-shaped foliage. Some boast white or silver marbling or speckles on their leaves.

But their flowers are the main attraction. Available in white and shades of pink, red and purple, the houseplants boast unusual, upside-down flowers with delicate, backward-curved petals — and they bloom only in winter.

Place cyclamen plants in a spot that provides soft or indirect light, such as in front of an east- or north-facing window, or to the side of a brighter one. These plants do not like the heat; they thrive best at temperatures that hover around 60 degrees.

Cyclamens also like humidity, so consider growing them in a bathroom or



Associated Press photos

White cyclamen plants bloom in Glen Head, N.Y.



Cyclamen blossom in Freiburg, southern Germany.

placing pots on a rimmed pebble tray to which you've added water, but not so much that the pebbles float. As the water evaporates, it will create a humid microclimate around the plant. Watering is a balancing

act. Too much, and the plant's roots will rot. Too little, and they'll droop. Your best bet is to water cyclamen through the drainage hole at the bottom of its pot, placing it in a shallow bowl of water until

the soil is lightly saturated, then removing the pot from the bowl and allowing it to drain before returning it to its home perch.

Take care not to splash the plant's crown — the juncture between the bottom of the main stem and the roots — with water. It is highly susceptible to rot.

Provide a monthly dose of a balanced houseplant fertilizer diluted to half-strength when the plant is in its growing phase.

Stop watering and fertilizing as soon as the plant's leaves turn yellow, which signals that it's preparing for dormancy. Moving it to a cool, dark room will help the plant during this phase. Most, if not all, of the leaves will die and drop; you can trim off any that remain.

Brush off a bit of soil from the top of the plant's tuberous root to expose it to air while it's dormant. This will help prevent rotting.

Your cyclamen will look dead during summer, but will show signs of new life in the fall. When you spot new growth, cover up the top of the tuber with potting mix. Then move the plant back into bright, indirect light, and resume watering and fertilizing for another round of cheerful holiday blooms.



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### SELLING IN A BUYER'S MARKET

I have been warning everyone over the last 6 months that the market was in transition. We are now starting to see the signs that a buyer's market is squarely upon us. Selling your home in a buyer's market requires different strategies and we are here with advice and help.

The first step is to have a knowledgeable agent help you with pricing using the latest tools. Buyers are extremely well informed and not having the information you need for pricing could cost you thousands. We have tools only available to Realtors and you need this advice.

Once you have the market information, you will need to price your property slightly below the market price. There is no room in a declining market to 'test the market' with a higher price. You need to be aggressive to get the few buyers out there to pay attention to your home among the other homes offered for sale.

The condition of your home is going to matter more than ever in a buyer's market. In a hot seller's market, you could list your home without making repairs and improvements. Fewer homes on the market meant more buyers would compete to purchase the scarce inventory. In a buyer's market with lots of inventory and fewer buyers, the buyers will be much more choosy. Couple this with the 'HGTV' mentality of buyers — who expect stainless steel appliances, hard countertops (granite), remodeled bathrooms and hardwood floors and you now have a challenge on your hands as a seller.

Your agent should be able to make specific suggestions for repairs and improvements and be able to give you a 'good, better, best' version based on affordability and the return you should expect. A good example is a client who wanted to refinish her basement prior to listing — bad investment as basement remodels typically get 50 cents on the dollar when you sell.

The last step is the marketing. Now more than ever, you need to stand out among the crowd of listings. Cell phone photos won't cut it. Our incredible marketing uses professional photography and broadcast quality video, including drone shots and 3D tours. And, we showcase all of this online and on our TV show — Curb Appeal and Cocktails with Perry Wellington Realty that airs live on WJAC-TV Fridays at 12:30 p.m. Perry Wellington Realty — with the latest tools and state of the art marketing and our low 2.5% commission rate — we make your home stand out when there are fewer buyers. Our approach will get your property the attention it needs to sell in this changing market.

If you have questions, you can contact me at 814-695-5323 office 934-5246 cell or email at [broker@perrywellingtonrealty.com](mailto:broker@perrywellingtonrealty.com)

Adam Conrad Jr. MBA, DRE®, CRB®, SRS®, SRES® e-Pro, is the broker/owner of Perry Wellington Realty, licensed in PA, Florida, Maryland and WV and a Certified Residential Appraiser licensed in PA. Adam is the Owner and Director of Education and owner of Vintage Real Estate Academy, real estate school. Adam has lectured in business and entrepreneurship at Pennsylvania State University and other colleges. He hosts a TV Show on NBC affiliate WJAC-HD channel 6 weekly on Fridays at 12:30pm. He is also an author and contributor to Inman news. Perry Wellington has been the number one broker in AHAR for 8 consecutive years. This statistics courtesy AHAR 2017-2024.

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# Eyer makes health an investment

By GEORGE THOMAS KATTOUF  
For the Mirror

If you are retired or approaching retirement, you most likely have strategized to determine the best investments to ensure a comfortable lifestyle throughout the so-called golden years. If you have been wise and disciplined, you have the security of knowing that you are free to enjoy the carefree time you have earned.

However, there is another type of savings that many miss due to the emphasis on money. To a much lesser extent, a health saving account is rarely emphasized, yet it is on par or more important than fiscal management. I am not talking about an actual account in which you can see the interest earned.

Instead, I am focusing upon what you are doing now or have done in the past to keep yourself physically strong, flexible, and in good cardiovascular condition. Look at it this way—every time you exercise, choose the right foods, and socialize with friends and family, you are making a health span deposit to carry with you throughout your senior years. Eighty-one-year-old Arlene Eyer has invested wisely in her health, and it shows.

Growing up in Ashville created the foundation for Eyer's focus on fitness.

"I was raised on a small dairy farm. My dad had nine cows, and we sold milk to Penn Crest. My recreational activities were climbing trees and playing with baby kittens. When I got older, we had more chores. I loved the animals and the freedom of the farm," said Eyer.

Aside from pick-up games in the neighborhood, Eyer did not engage in sports during her school years. She was a cheerleader in high school. She also got a great deal of unintended exercise during her school years and beyond.

"Living on a farm in the country, if you wanted to go to school or work, you had to get up early and shovel snow. Then you prayed that the plow would not plow you back in again. And sometimes, if you timed it right, the plow guy came along while you were shoveling, and he would take pity on you and open the lane for you," said Eyer.

Eyer had a beauty shop until her husband opened an auto supply store. He did not want her to have to work as a hairdresser.

He said, "Arlene, you're not working in the beauty shop anymore. It's just too much." It was hard on my legs," explained Eyer, who agreed to join a gym at the recommendation of her husband.

She joined the former Blair Raquet Club, now Gorilla House. Initially she played singles tennis and then met friends at the facility and began playing doubles. Unfortunately, her tennis experience came to an end due to a mishap.

"I have a pond at my house, and I stupidly ran across the rocks to put a flower in the pond. I slipped and broke my wrist and that was the end of the tennis," said Eyer.

Though tennis was out, that did not stop her from pursuing a fitness quest. She joined a yoga class at the same location and eventually some of the class encouraged her to partic-

## THE FITNESS TRACK



Arlene Eyer, 81, works out a local gym.

Courtesy photo

ipate in the 55 and over fitness group.

"It's been about 10 years that I've been in that group, and it's held on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. It has made the biggest difference in my life by keeping me active. Angie watches you and makes sure you do it right. If you have a problem, she's always there to tell you how to do it right or what you need to do to get better," said Eyer, referring to Angela Ross, the owner of Gorilla House and instructor for the Low Impact class.

At one point in time, Eyer had a concern that she would have to have a hip replacement. She could not feel her left leg and had to brace herself to prevent a fall. Through physical therapy, she was able to regain function and then relied on Ross to fully return her to function, which she did through machines that enhance leg strength.

"She is so kind and a role model to everyone. At 81, she is crawling on the floor performing inch worms, push-ups, and Superman

movements. She is able to press weights over her head. Arlene is an impressive woman," said Ross.

Stationary bikes, jump ropes, carrying weights around the gym and intense rowing on machines are just some of the activities that are part of the Low Impact class.

This functional training has enabled Eyer to enjoy the daily activities that could challenge someone her age who hasn't maintained strength and aerobic conditioning.

"I like being active and getting stuff done. We were just on a cruise and walked six miles with family. They were all younger, and I kept up with them. It's good to be able to do that. You have to be in shape. I'm a great grandmother and I am on the floor playing with my great granddaughter," said Eyer.

Eyer is not afraid to add humor to her physical exploits.

She attempted to get on the television program Survivor about 20 years ago which led to a memorable

video application.

The video was made in February. Her daughter, Brenda, found a bikini that Eyer used to wear and it still fit. Garbed in a long fur coat over the bikini, she climbed a ladder and positioned herself on a snow-covered branch. With a muzzleloader in hand, she shot a squirrel that was prepared by her son-in-law, a taxidermist, and supported by a fishing line. After the smoke cleared, she completed the video with a literal flash.

"Oh, I got that critter. I don't want you to think I'm just some dumb blonde. I think I could be a good participant on your show.' It was so funny. I was covered by the bathing suit. My grandkids want to see the video. I said, 'Okay, you can watch it at my funeral,'" said Eyer, who enjoyed the experience, even though she was not selected for the program.

Eyer eats healthy food but does not deny herself simple pleasures.

"If I'm hungry for cookies, or a dish of ice cream, I eat it. I think it's a matter of balance. I like eating fruit and vegetables. I cook and don't like to buy a lot of processed foods," said Eyer.

She admits she could work out at home but prefers the guidance and camaraderie a group class provides.

"We are a tight knit group, and everybody knows everybody. When somebody has a birthday, we all sing. It's just a nice group. It's just more fun if you exercise with others, and you push yourself more," said Eyer.

*George Thomas Kattouf of Altoona is the developer of the website AgelessTimeless.com. He has been instructing martial arts for over four decades in the Altoona Area at the Academy of Martial Arts and encourages seniors to stay fit through martial arts training. If you or someone you know in Blair County is age 50 or older and would be a good candidate for the Fitness Track, email Kattouf at george@agelesstimeless.com. Tune in to the YouTube channel AgelessTimeless to learn more.*

# RETIREEES: Keeping your expenses low helps

(Continued from Page 1)  
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# Safe driving classes are set

Seniors for Safe Driving will be offering multiple events in the new year. The first course will be held from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Jan. 26, 2026, at UPMC Altoona, followed by another from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Feb. 23, 2026, at Homewood Retirement Center, Martinsburg. One more will be held from 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. April 28, 2026, at the Moshannon Valley YMCA in Philipsburg.

The refresher courses will highlight multiple driving scenarios that seniors might encounter, including yielding and intersections; keeping up with vehicle technology; defensive driving tactics and sharing the road; effects of medications and alcohol on driving; and more.

The programs are approved by PennDOT and are designed for drivers age 55 and older.

To register, call 1-800-559-4880 or go online at seniorsforsafedriving.com

# FIBER: Quick increases can cause painful gas

(Continued from Page 1) **How much fiber do we need?**

Most people in Western countries could use more fiber because their diets are low in vegetables, fruits and whole grains, said Sander Kersten, director of the Division of Nutritional Sciences at Cornell University.

Under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's guidelines, adults should aim for 14 grams of fiber for every 1,000 calories they consume. That's about 25 grams of fiber for women and 38 grams for men each day. Pettipain said Americans generally only get about two-thirds of that amount.

For reference, 1 cup of raspberries contains

8 grams of fiber, while a banana contains 3.2 grams, according to the USDA. One-half cup of avocado contains 5 grams of fiber and 1 cup of lima beans contains 13.2 grams. Fiber One, a bran cereal, packs 18 grams of fiber into a 2/3-cup serving.

**What are good ways to increase fiber?**

Kersten said long-term studies about the benefits of fiber have looked at the consumption of whole foods and not packaged products with added fiber.

"The way it is consumed as an additive and part of a diet that doesn't contain a lot of fiber may be different than a naturally fiber-rich diet," Kersten said. "You can eat a very processed, Western diet and consume

foods that are enriched, but we don't know if it confers the same benefit."

Whole foods also help the body in other ways, Pettipain said. An apple contains 4.8 grams of fiber as well as water, vitamins and minerals, for example.

Here are some recommendations from the Mayo Clinic for adding fiber to your diet:

- Choose a breakfast cereal with 5 grams or more of fiber a serving. Top it with a sliced banana or berries.

- Choose breads with at least 2 grams of fiber per serving and try other grains like brown rice, whole-wheat pasta and quinoa.

- When baking, substitute whole-grain flour for white flour. Add wheat bran

to muffins and cookies.

- Try to eat five or more servings of fruit and vegetables daily. If you eat canned fruit, make sure it's canned in fruit juice and not syrup, and make sure canned vegetables are low in sodium.

**Think twice about fibermaxxing**

There is no defined upper limit for fiber intake, Kersten said. But increasing fiber can cause painful gas and bloating, especially if it's done quickly.

Pettipain said people should increase their fiber intake gradually and drink plenty of water.

"You're feeding gut bacteria a food, and you can't break it down. You rely on them, and if you give them second, third and

fourth servings, there's not enough of them to handle the extra load," Pettipain said.

Certain populations should also be extra careful about their fiber intake, Pettipain said. People who are sensitive to gluten or allergic to foods like soy, shellfish or psyllium husk should read labels carefully since some foods with added fiber contain those ingredients. More broadly, Kersten questions the trend of focusing on one nutrient, whether it's protein or fiber.

"We don't need nutrients, we need foods. Ultimately, what you want to be striving for is a healthy diet, and you should choose foods that are considered to be an important part of a healthy diet," he said.

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# Medicaid cuts having rural impact

FRANCONIA, N.H. (AP) — The closing of a health center in rural New Hampshire has raised concerns that the projected cuts in Medicaid are already taking a toll.

Last month, a site of the Ammonoosuc Community Health Services in Franconia, a town of around 1,000 people, closed for good.

Ammonoosuc officials and a Democratic senator have blamed Medicaid cuts for the closure of the facility that served 1,400 patients from Franconia, Easton, Lincoln and Sugar Hill. These are all tiny communities around the White Mountains, whose patients typically are older and sicker than in other parts of the state.

The closure of the Franconia center reflects the financial struggles facing community health centers and rural health care systems more broadly amid Medicaid cuts and a feared spike in health insurance rates. The government shutdown, which ended last week, was driven by a Democratic demand to extend tax credits, which ensure low- and middle-income people can

afford health insurance through the Affordable Care Act, or ACA.

More than 100 hospitals closed over the past decade, according to the Center For Healthcare Quality and Payment Reform, a policy and advocacy group, and more than 700 more hospitals are at risk of closure. A branch of the HealthFirst Family Care Center, a facility in Canaan, New Hampshire also announced it was closing at the end of October due in part to “changes in Medicaid reimbursement and federal funding” for these facilities.

On average, the federally-funded community health centers like the one in Franconia are losing money, relying heavily on cash reserves, making service changes and sometimes closing locations to stay afloat, NACHC found. Nearly half have less than 90 days’ cash on hand, according to the association. And the future is even more bleak with at least 2 million community health center patients expected to lose Medicaid coverage by 2034 and 2 million more who are newly uninsured turning to

the centers for care.

Ed Shanshala, the CEO of Ammonoosuc, said the Medicaid cuts are to blame for the closure of the Franconia center.

Shanshala runs a network of five health centers in New Hampshire which relies more than \$2 million in federal funding — out of a \$12 million budget. He faced a \$500,000 shortfall due to the cuts and realized closing Franconia would save about half that money. It also was the only facility where they leased space.

“We’re really left with no choice,” Shanshala said, adding the closure would save \$250,000. Finding additional cuts is hard, given that the centers provide services to anyone under 200% of federal poverty levels, he said. And if he cuts additional services, Shanshala fears some patients will end up in a hospital emergency room or “stop engaging in health care period.”

Susan Bushby, a 70-year-old housekeeper, talked about how much she loved the staff and feared going to a new health center. She wouldn’t know her way around a larger facility and

wouldn’t have the same rapport with the people there.

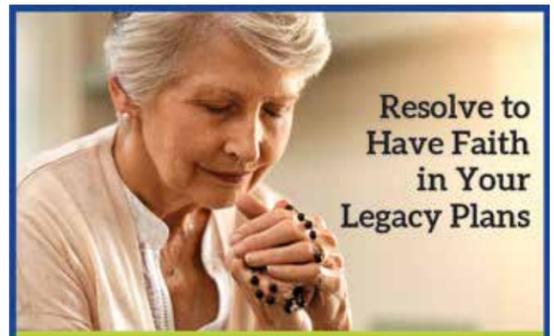
“I was very disturbed. I was down right angry,” said Bushby, who was brought to tears as she discussed the challenges of starting over at a new health center. “I just really like it there. I don’t know, I’m just really going to miss it. It’s really hard for me to explain, but it’s going to be sad.”

Marsha Luce, whose family moved from Washington, D.C. area, in 2000, is especially concerned about the impact on her 72-year-old husband, a former volunteer firefighter who has a left ear and part of his jaw removed due to cancer. He also has heart and memory issues.

She worries about longer waits to see his doctor and the loss of relationships built up over decades in Franconia.

“It’s going to be hard,” she said. “But it’s a relationship that’s going to be missed.

It’s a relationship that you can talk to people and you tell them something and you go, yeah, well, I’ve had cancer. Oh, let’s see. Oh, yeah. There it is in your chart. Do you know what I mean?”



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# Why doing good makes us feel good during holidays, beyond

BY CHRISTINA LARSON  
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The holiday season is a time for giving thanks, giving gifts — and for many, a time for giving back.

Food banks, services that deliver meals to seniors and other U.S. charities typically see a surge in volunteering between Thanksgiving and the end of the year. But there are good reasons to volunteer at any time of the year.

Alfred Del Grosso volunteers weekly to work the lunch shift at Shepherd’s Table, a food bank in Silver Spring, Maryland. “I feel more connected to the broader community,” he said.

Most Thursdays, the retired chemist from Kensington, Maryland, also lends an unpaid hand to help clear fallen trees and brush from local trails with the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club. “It’s mostly volunteers who help maintain the trails,” he said.

Researchers who study human evolution and social psychology say that giving back is deeply rooted in human nature. Volunteers say they feel closer ties to the communities they serve.

“When we feel grateful for all we have, that motivates us to do good things for other people who have helped us, and also to do good things for new people,” said Sarah Schnitker, a psychologist at Baylor University.

“There’s a nice upwards reciprocal spiral between gratitude and generosity,” often enhanced at holiday times, she said.

For many in the U.S., the season most associated with giving, receiving and volunteering runs from Thanksgiving through Hanukkah and Christmas to New Year’s.

But around the world, a giving season or festival is present in many cultures,

said Amrisha Vaish, a developmental psychologist at the University of Virginia.

“Nearly all cultures have events or public festivals that allow people to express gratitude,” she said. “In Hinduism, Divali is a time of lights and festiveness and good eating, but also a time in which people give gifts to really express what people have meant to them.”

For Muslims, Ramadan, which ends with the festival of Eid al-Fitr, is a time for reflection, gratitude and acts of charity. Many Buddhist traditions also emphasize gratitude.

The common purpose of such seasons, which also include non-religious acts of service, is to reinforce our natural cooperative tendencies, Vaish said.

“In human evolutionary history over hundreds of thousands of years, we’ve had to become cooperative in order to work together and survive as a species,” she said.

“We don’t have sharp claws, high speed, many other natural abilities. But what we do have is that we’re super cooperators; we can do more in groups than alone.”

Of course, humans aren’t always cooperative and generous — sometimes we’re also selfish and stubborn.

The tension between selfishness and altruism was recognized even by Darwin, said Michael Tomasello, a psychologist at Duke University. “That’s why life is so complicated. We have all these motives mapped together.”

But reflecting with gratitude on what we have, and seeing others do good, can encourage our most generous tendencies, experts say.

On an individual level, “giving, volunteering and generosity have the ability to increase our sense of meaning and purpose in

life,” said Jenae Nelson, a developmental psychologist at Brigham Young University.

“There’s a quick dopamine hit sometimes called the ‘helpers high.’ But there’s also that deeper reward of helping us to establish purpose and meaning,” she said. “By helping other people and believing that small acts can change the world, you can bring coherence to your own life.”

After Mia Thelen retired as a nurse in Owosso, Michigan, she began volunteering for the American Red Cross, starting out by minding the office phones during blood drives before gradually taking on more organizational and administrative responsibilities.

“It’s a good way to spend your time, making the lives of others a little easier,” Thelen said. “I wanted to do something that helps the community.”

“And I’m learning a lot: learning computer skills, learning communication skills. I have great co-volunteers.” She enjoys feeling more connected with her neighbors.

Another common holiday tradition — sending greeting cards to family and old friends — also provides a chance to enhance or renew social ties, which people are often surprisingly reluctant to do, said Lara Akin, a social psychologist at Simon Fraser University.

Her research has shown that “people are actually hesitant to reach out to old friends, they worry about being a burden or an inconvenience,” she said. But on the flip side, “people who’ve just heard from old friends report it as a really positive experience.”

So go ahead and write those cards or make those phone calls, she said. Use the holidays as an excuse to reconnect, and share a laugh or a warm mulled drink.



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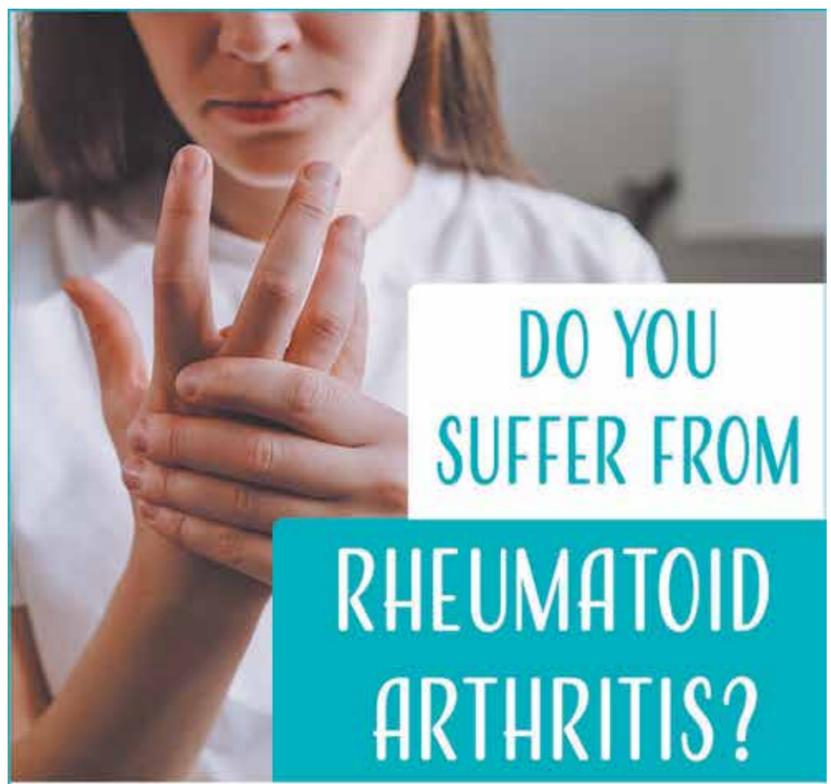
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