

LivingWell

Fall 2026 • Volume 22 • Issue 4

A publication of



AGING
PARTNERS

Protecting Smile and Health: Oral Care Matters at Every Age

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Day Trips Offer Adventure, Fun and Lasting Memories

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More Than a Meal: Supporting Nutrition, Independence and Connection

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After years of leadership under Bob Michl, OLLI will continue its mission of lifelong learning under new leadership from Melissa Hayes-Connolly.

OLLI at UNL Builds on a *Legacy of Growth*

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Saving Seniors Money

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				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

November

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

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Director's Corner

Autumn is officially in full swing, bringing crisp air, vibrant foliage and a fresh season of opportunity. This month, we're focusing on two essential pillars of a vibrant life: caring for your physical well-being and staying actively engaged with the world around you.

First, October is designated as National Dental Hygiene Month, making it the perfect time to give your smile the attention it deserves. Oral health is deeply connected to your body's overall wellness, serving as a gateway to heart, bone and immune health. Inside this issue, you'll find expert tips on keeping your smile healthy and shining bright.

Beyond physical health, staying fulfilled means nurturing your passions. We're shining a spotlight on the power of staying active, picking up new hobbies

and finding meaningful ways to stay involved in the community. Whether it's discovering a new creative outlet, volunteering or simply staying physically active, taking time for what brings you joy pays lifelong dividends for your mind and spirit.

Thank you for letting us be part of your wellness journey. Here's to a healthy, active and smile-filled fall! 



Randall S. Jones



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This publication's purpose is to educate and inform persons on topics, programs, issues and activities that are of concern to the mature population, their families and community organizations. Specific emphasis is on articles pertaining to the services of Aging Partners. Contents may be reproduced with credit to the magazine.

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OLLI staff from left: Karen Case, staff assistant; Karla Chavez, event coordinator; Melissa Hayes-Connolly, director; Bennett Woody, communications associate; and Jeanette Wellsandt, program coordinator.

OLLI at UNL Builds on a *Legacy of Growth*

Retirement doesn't have to mean slowing down. At the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL), adults 50 and older are discovering new passions, friendships and educational opportunities. As longtime Director Bob Michl retired after helping transform OLLI into one of the nation's largest, most vibrant programs, new Director Melissa Hayes-Connolly is building on that momentum with an eye toward the future.

Growth under Michl's Leadership

After a career in education that included serving as a coach,

curriculum and instruction director, and principal, Michl joined OLLI in 2018 as curriculum coordinator, overseeing committees and working closely with volunteer faculty. What he expected to be a rewarding part-time job became something much more.

"As I learned more about the organization and loved what I was doing, I dug in pretty hard," he said.

When the director position opened in 2021, Michl stepped into the role, overseeing the organization's operations while guiding its continued growth.

The transition came with challenges as he balanced his new and old responsibilities until a replacement was found. At the

same time, OLLI was navigating the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"While many programs across the country struggled, OLLI at UNL thrived after we quickly moved our classes online," Michl said. "This provided a way for people to learn, socialize and connect with others."

That challenging time also created new opportunities as OLLI at UNL began attracting members across the country, including Hawaii. Its reach has continued to grow, with membership now at about 1,700 people.

Michl credits much of OLLI's success to its more than 300 volunteers, who contribute their

time, talents and ideas. They serve on committees and the advisory council, develop curriculum, teach classes, facilitate discussions, host online sessions and fill many other essential roles.

Today, OLLI offers nearly 100 courses during each of its five terms per year.

"I enjoyed working with OLLI's staff and volunteers as the director," Michl said. "We've seen growth in membership, enrollment and fiscal stability."

While Hayes-Connolly assumed the role in March, Michl assisted until April 3 to help ensure a smooth handoff. Hayes-Connolly said Michl's willingness to stay involved demonstrated his commitment to OLLI's success.

For Michl, retirement has taken on a new meaning through his involvement with OLLI.

"This organization means a lot to me and helped me realize the value of staying active," he said. "I didn't have a plan after working as a high school principal, but now I know I don't need another job — I'll become an OLLI volunteer, student and teacher. I'm still going to be actively involved in this organization."

Moving Forward

Bringing her extensive experience in higher education, university administration, teaching and curriculum development, Hayes-Connolly sees tremendous opportunity to strengthen what's already been established. She notes one of OLLI's greatest appeals is its passionate members.

"I saw this as a chance to be with students who are here purely for the joy of learning," she said. "They want to engage their minds, meet new people and be part of a community. What teacher wouldn't want those types of students?"

With experience building academic programs, Hayes-Connolly is exploring ways to extend OLLI's reach while preserving its successful culture.

"Bob has done a great job of getting us on a financially sound foundation, which enables us to try new things," she said. "We can explore ways to expand our curriculum, strengthen membership and serve lifelong learners."

As someone who's eligible to become an OLLI member herself, Hayes-Connolly wants to reach Generation X adults and help them build new relationships before they leave the workforce.

"If they become involved through travel, evening classes, events or special interest groups, they'll already have those connections and be ready to stay engaged," she said.

She also hopes to amplify OLLI's visibility through new marketing and communication strategies, greater use of social media and data-informed decision-making to better understand members' interests and needs.

Michl believes Hayes-Connolly's experience positions OLLI for continued growth, noting, "Melissa's strengths will give OLLI the opportunity to do some amazing things moving forward."

What Members Experience

Today, OLLI at UNL is supported by a full-time staff of five. Whether members want to discuss international affairs, learn photography, play table tennis, tour Italy or explore the science behind craft beer, OLLI offers hundreds of opportunities to learn, connect and explore.

Educational travel has become another signature offering, ranging from local excursions to international trips such as Egypt, Italy or Portugal, combining exploration and camaraderie with like-minded people.

"OLLI provides a community and an opportunity for people to find their people," Hayes-Connolly said. "Whether it's through classes, interest groups, travel or special events, OLLI is member-driven. Our members help shape what we offer and create the

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OLLI at UNL Builds on a Legacy of Growth

Continued from page 5.

community that makes this organization so special.”

Because many classes are offered both in person and online, OLLI welcomes members from across Nebraska and beyond. While nearly every state is home to an OLLI program, many individuals choose OLLI at UNL for its extensive curriculum, welcoming culture and strong sense of community.

Looking ahead, Hayes-Connolly is exploring ways to expand OLLI’s reach across Nebraska through new partnerships, additional programming in Omaha and greater access for rural communities.

Learn More about OLLI

OLLI at UNL offers affordable annual memberships at \$75 from Aug. 1 through July 31. A mid-year membership, valid Jan. 1 through July 31, is \$50. Members have access to five terms of low-cost classes offered throughout the year. Registration for Term 2 classes opens Oct. 13. To learn more about OLLI, visit olli.unl.edu.

OLLI’s annual Fall Symposium, “America at 250: Our Past, Present and Future,” will be on Oct. 24. The event



explores the nation’s founding principles of equality, human rights and democracy through a panel of expert presentations. The symposium runs from 8:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. and includes a buffet breakfast.

The symposium is open to OLLI members and the public. Registration is \$20 for in-person attendance and \$15 for virtual participation. Registration closes Oct. 8. To register, visit www.campusce.net/UNLOLLI or call 402-472-6265. 

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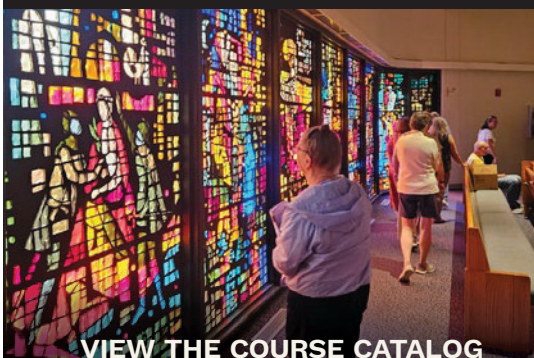
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Protecting Smile and Health: Oral Care Matters at Every Age

A healthy mouth is an important part of healthy aging. It's about more than having a healthy smile — good oral health can help a person chew comfortably, enjoy nutritious foods, speak clearly, smile with confidence and take part in everyday activities. All of these can affect a person's health, independence and quality of life.

"Oral health is so much more than only our teeth," said Erin Haley-Hitz, a registered dental hygienist at Morning Glory Dental and past president of the American Dental Hygienists' Association. "As we age, it becomes even more important because it helps us stay healthy, independent and connected."

Painful or missing teeth, ill-fitting dentures and oral problems can make eating nutritious foods difficult, potentially affecting overall health and independence.

"Chronic inflammation and untreated oral disease left untreated can lead to complications with conditions such as diabetes and increase risk of cardiovascular disease," Haley-Hitz said. "While oral health isn't the sole cause of these diseases, a healthy mouth supports overall health. While we want people to live longer, we also want people to live better. A healthy mouth makes that more possible."

Concerns for Older Adults

Years of grinding, clenching and wear can damage teeth, but losing teeth is not a normal part of aging. Tooth loss is often the result of preventable conditions such as decay and gum disease. When problems are identified early, treatment can often preserve natural teeth.



Erin Haley-Hitz, a registered dental hygienist at Morning Glory Dental and past president of the American Dental Hygienists' Association, stresses that oral health is important for people of all ages.

"Every time we remove a tooth, we reduce a person's ability to chew," Haley-Hitz said. "Nutrition becomes especially important as we age, so preserving natural teeth whenever possible helps support overall health."

Waiting until pain develops can mean an oral health problem has progressed significantly. Age-related medical conditions and medications can also affect oral health and may complicate dental procedures and recovery.

Dry mouth is another common concern for older adults. Many medications, including some used to treat blood pressure, allergies, anxiety and Parkinson's disease reduce salivary flow and function. Reduced flow and quality of saliva increases the risk of cavities and

oral infections while also making it harder to chew, swallow, speak and taste food.

"Saliva is one of our mouth's natural defenses," Haley-Hitz said. "It helps to cleanse the teeth, neutralize acids and lubricate the mouth and tissues. Therefore, it's really important to share with your dental team if you are on



A healthy mouth supports overall

health. While we want people to live longer, we also want people to live better. A healthy mouth makes that more possible."

– Erin Haley-Hitz

any medications, so we can find solutions and strategies to help manage dry mouth.”

Older adults are at a greater risk for oral infections when teeth, dentures or oral tools are not cleaned properly. Gum disease can progress silently without causing significant pain, making regular dental evaluations especially important.

Prevention is Key

The key to oral health is prevention: brush twice daily with fluoride toothpaste, clean between teeth, eat a nutritious diet, stay hydrated and avoid tobacco and vape products. Many people benefit from dental visits about twice a year, although the appropriate frequency depends on an individual’s oral health, risk factors and treatment needs.

“Preventive care is generally less costly, less invasive and more comfortable than treating advanced oral disease,” Haley-Hitz said. “It’s important to discuss with your dental team about what schedule and preventative care plan is appropriate for you.”

Those with dentures or partial dentures should continue routine dental visits to evaluate oral tissue health, screen for oral cancer and ensure dentures continue to fit properly.

Dental professionals can identify problems early. Schedule a dental appointment if you notice sores that don’t heal within two weeks, discolored patches, lumps or swelling, loose teeth, numbness, persistent bad breath, and ongoing pain or bleeding. Changes in chewing, swallowing, speaking or denture fit also warrant evaluation.

“Don’t wait until something hurts,” Haley-Hitz said. “Regular dental visits give us an opportunity to evaluate oral health, screen for



oral cancer, identify problems early and provide preventive care before small problems become more serious. How often someone needs to be seen depends on their individual needs and risk factors.”

For individuals relying on others for daily care, she encourages caregivers to attend dental appointments so providers can demonstrate effective techniques and identify ways to make daily care easier.

Adaptive Tools

Aging can make brushing and flossing more difficult because of reduced strength, mobility or dexterity. There are many adaptive tools available that can help make daily oral care more manageable.

Electric toothbrushes, foam grips, thicker-handled toothbrushes, floss holders and water flossers are among the tools that may help make daily care easier for people with limited dexterity. For those facing dry mouth, chewing gum or mints with xylitol can help stimulate saliva production and reduce risk of tooth decay and inflammation. Alcohol-free mouthrinses may be appropriate for certain individuals depending on their oral health needs.

“The best tools are the ones a

person can use consistently and comfortably,” Haley-Hitz said. “There is no ‘one size fits all’ approach to oral hygiene. Your dental team can help you find tools and techniques that work for you.”

Access and Affordability

Not having dental insurance shouldn’t keep someone from seeking care. Traditional Medicare generally does not cover routine dental care, though some Medicare Advantage plans offer dental benefits.

Reduced-cost dental care may be available through federally qualified health centers, the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department, and the University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Dentistry. Some dental offices also offer membership plans, that can make routine dental care more affordable for patients without insurance.

“Oral health is an investment in healthy aging,” Haley-Hitz said. “A healthy mouth isn’t just for young people. We want everyone to stay healthy so they can communicate, eat, participate in the activities they enjoy and maintain their independence. A healthy, pain-free mouth can help make that possible.” 

Middendorf Honored for Exceptional Service to Lincoln's Aging Community

For more than three years, Ben Middendorf has been a welcoming presence for older adults at Aging Partners.

He began serving as manager of the Downtown Senior Center in December 2022 before helping with the transition to the Victory Park Senior Center, where he has been the manager since May 2023.

On June 1, Middendorf received the Mayor's Award of Excellence, which recognizes City of Lincoln employees who consistently provide exemplary service and demonstrate a personal commitment to the community. He was nominated by Beth Schuster, Aging Partners community activities and services supervisor, who commended him

for his dedication to creating an environment where older adults feel welcomed, valued and connected. She also highlighted his patience, approachability, compassion and genuine respect for those he serves.

"Ben demonstrates unwavering dedication, empathy and commitment in creating an exceptional experience for each senior at our Victory Park Center," Schuster said in her nomination letter. "He consistently goes the extra mile, turning challenges into opportunities, and making each person he meets feel valued and heard. His impact is felt in every interaction."

In his role at Victory Park Senior Center, Middendorf oversees a variety of programming and daily

operations. He schedules musical performers, leads exercise classes, coordinates presentations from community organizations, plans crafts and trivia activities, manages lunch reservations for approximately 300 meals to be served each week, helps schedule van transportation and supervises the front desk receptionist.

Middendorf said he believes the recognition reflects his commitment to work he considers a calling.

"There's a real sense of vocation in serving older adults," he said. "I get the opportunity to do that here every day, whether that be serving them a meal, connecting them with old and new friends alike, or coordinating with other departments for services



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Aging Partners Victory Park Senior Center Manager Ben Middendorf, left, receives the Mayor's Award of Excellence from Leirion Gaylor Baird in June.

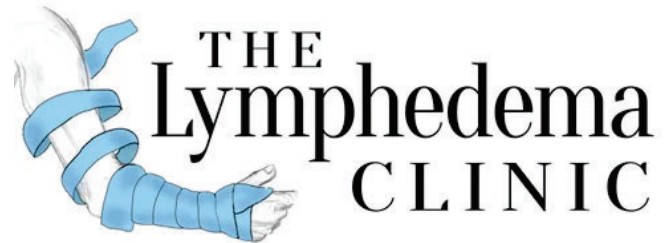
or resources to help them. I know I feel that same sense of service from everyone who works at Aging Partners, which always gives me encouragement and motivation to keep trying to do my best for older adults!" 

Helpful Medicare Tips to Keep You Safe

- ✓ Protect your Medicare number – Don't share it with people you don't know and trust
- ✓ Don't Give personal information to unsolicited callers – Social Security and Medicare do not call you! They mail letters if there is a change that impacts you.
- ✓ Use official Medicare resources –
 - Call 1-800-633-4227 for Medicare or visit www.medicare.gov
- ✓ Beware of scam calls – Even though plans may change during annual enrollment, the threatening calls are just that, fictitious.
- ✓ There is not a Medicare card with a chip in it!
- ✓ Don't click on suspicious links.
- ✓ Contact your trusted insurance professional, your State's health insurance assistance program (SHIP) or Aging Partners with questions.



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Grief: Learning to Live With Loss

Grief — a deep emotional response to significant loss — is a natural part of life. It can follow the death of a loved one or the loss of health, ability, job, independence, relationship, or home.

“Everyone experiences grief, but no one is good at it,” said Geri Hepp, who has worked in the aging field for more than 30 years and currently teaches gerontology at University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Losing a person can be especially difficult because grief affects emotions, but also routines, relationships and sense of identity.

“Grief never goes away,” Hepp said. “We learn to live with it. The intensity lessens, but it’s always there.”

You Don’t Get Over Grief, You Learn to Live with It

After losing someone, reminders of that person can appear everywhere — in an activity, family gathering, a tradition or song.

David Lux, a retired senior pastor at Saint Paul United Methodist Church, has walked many families through grief and has experienced profound loss himself.

“Everyone grieves in their own way, but it’s important to grieve,” he said. “There’s a temptation to avoid thinking about the person you’ve lost, to put away pictures and reminders, but that just tears away at you from the inside. It’s important to be able to express grief and the sense of loss.”

Lux explains that grief is not linear, saying it can come and go — sometimes surfacing when people least expect it. He adds allowing ourselves to grieve is part of learning to live with the absence of a loved one.

Hepp adds that grief also can take different forms depending

on the relationship, the circumstances of the loss and the uncertainty it creates about the future. Losing someone close can affect a person’s sense of security, confidence and identity.

She said, losing a parent, for example, can bring a profound sense of change. It may mean becoming the oldest remaining generation in the family and feeling the responsibility to carry on traditions and legacy.

“It’s a different feeling of loss because those two people gave you your start in life, helped form your values and beliefs as well as who you are as a person; and one day, they’re gone. You lost that foundation for the family, and family dynamics have changed,” Hepp said.

The loss of a sibling also can be extremely difficult to process. Siblings often are among the longest relationships in a person’s life, and losing one can mean losing someone with whom a person has shared decades of memories and experiences.

Not all losses happen suddenly. Some unfold slowly over time because of an extended illness or disease such as dementia.

“When the people close to us have memory loss or degenerative disease, the loss of that person begins earlier than the physical loss,” Hepp said. “We are able to see the losses day by day, and we see they’re losing memory or the ability to do certain things; their independence and their world is beginning to shrink.”

Hepp experienced this firsthand when she lost her husband four years ago. She also had been his caregiver while he battled dementia.



David Lux



Geri Hepp

“When he did pass, the grief of losing him was different. While I had lost him bit by bit, parts of him were no longer the same. But when he physically passed, it was more intense because I knew I wasn’t going to see him again,” she said.

As people live longer, they may experience more losses — friends, siblings, spouses and other loved ones. One loss can also bring earlier losses back to the surface, reminding people of those they have lost and prompting them to reflect on their own mortality.

Supporting Those Grieving

In the days following a death, grieving loved ones often receive an outpouring of support. But as time passes, life moves on — even though their grief does not. Simply reaching out and listening can be one of the best ways to help.

Lux lost his son to a brain tumor earlier this year. He said supporting those left behind means resisting the urge to offer advice and instead giving them space to talk.

“I grieve not only for the loss of the relationship we had, but for his wife and children,” he said. “I think it’s important to just be a good listener. I just need to be open to letting them vent or whatever they need to do. We can encourage people by being open

in such a way that they can talk about their grief in your presence.”

Support also matters long after the funeral. Staying in touch, checking in and remembering important dates such as birthdays, anniversaries and holidays, can make a meaningful difference, especially during difficult times.

“You can have both great joy and deep sorrow at the same time,” Lux said. “Part of grieving is getting to the point you can experience joy again but appreciate the life of a person who isn’t with you physically.”

Because the person grieving lives with the loss every day, Hepp said it eventually can feel isolating when others return to their routines and stop reaching out.

“In order to grieve in a healthy way and move forward, you need to find a core group of people that will support you when you’re having a tough day — people to call and talk to,” she said. “That person doesn’t even have to say anything, but rather just be willing to listen. When grieving, I believe it’s important to have a strong network — whether that be family, friends and for some people — their faith.”



Grief never goes away. We learn to live with it. The intensity lessens, but it’s always there.”

– Geri Hepp

Faith and Grief

For both Hepp and Lux, faith has been a source of comfort as they grieve.

“My faith allows me to trust in the goodness and grace of God to see us through,” Lux said. “Sometimes there’s a lot of struggle, especially if you’ve been praying for someone to be healed and they die.”

Lux’s son experienced several months of remission when the tumor disappeared, which Lux considered a gift.

“I was thankful for the prayers and believed they played a big part in that, along with what Josh was doing to take care of himself,” he said. “But the tumor came back. We were thankful for those extra months he was in relatively good condition. Things don’t always turn out the way we want or pray for them, but there is still a strong sense of love and support we experience from God.”

The experience also reminded Lux not to wait to express love and

care for the people who matter.

“I trust in God’s grace in the life after this one also,” he said. “I’m thankful for the understanding of grace and peace that comes after death for that person. And I look forward to someday reuniting with Josh and the others who have gone before.”

Encouragement and Seeking Help

Grief can be difficult to navigate alone. Valuable support can come from people who are willing to listen — whether a friend, family member, pastor, grief support group or counselor.

“We often think we don’t want to burden others, but those asking want to be burdened,” Lux said. “Everyone needs someone to talk to.”

While grief is a natural response to loss, additional help may be needed when it begins to interfere with daily life.

“There will be hard days, and there are days that are easier. On the hard days, you need someone you can reach out to and know they will be there to support you, whoever that is,” Hepp said. “When it gets to the point that you are isolating yourself and feeling hopeless, that’s when you need to speak to a doctor or find a counselor. It isn’t a sign of weakness. It’s a sign of a traumatic event that has impacted your life, and you need help working through it.”

Grief does not mean leaving behind the love and memories of a person. With time, support and space to grieve, people can learn to carry their loss while continuing to find meaning, connection and moments of joy in the life ahead. 



Medicare Open Enrollment Begins Soon

By Molli Stolz, Aging Partners benefits counselor

Open enrollment is the time each year when Medicare participants can review and make changes to their prescription drug coverage. This year, between Oct. 15 and Dec. 7, Medicare prescription drug plans announce any new changes to their plans for the following year, giving participants the opportunity to adjust their coverage based on those changes.

Medicare Advantage plan participants may also make changes to their plans at this time. If changes are made to drug plans or Advantage plans, the new plan ends Dec. 31 and begins Jan. 1. Once a new plan is selected and enrollment is complete, the old plan will automatically end on Dec. 31. No further action is needed. Medicare Advantage plans offer an additional enrollment period that begins Jan. 1 and ends March 31.

Why is Open Enrollment Important?

For most people, this is the only time a person can switch Medicare drug plans. If no change is made during this time, the current drug plan will continue for another year. Several changes can occur during this period, including adjustments to drug tiers and pricing, changes to deductibles, updates to premium costs and revisions to the maximum out-of-pocket limit.

Drug plans can also be eliminated at this time. In such cases, insurance companies often “crosswalk” participants to a new plan — typically one offered by the same company. If no action is taken during open enrollment, the plan will begin on Jan. 1. Participants need to make sure that the plan they

are cross walked into will work for their medications. If medications have changed for the individual, it becomes especially important to check on plan options to ensure the most cost-effective coverage. Watch for mailings beginning in September from your current drug plan.

Even if Medicare coverage and a drug plan were just started because of a recent retirement, it is important to check that the drug plan is still the best one for the coming year.

The government uses the open enrollment time to make changes to Medicare as well. This includes premiums or deductibles for Medicare A and B, plus any additional changes to the drug plans.

How to Compare Drug Plans During Open Enrollment

The easiest way to compare drug plans is to use Medicare.gov. Individuals can either create an online Medicare account or use the “plan finder” tool. This requires no online account to be created and is used to compare Medicare drug or

advantage plans. Aging Partners has created an online tutorial to walk individuals through navigating the plan finder on the Medicare.gov website. This tutorial can be located on Aging Partner’s website and social media accounts.

While comparing drug plans, it is important to have an accurate list of medications. Using the bottles of medications helps ensure that the name of the medication, dosage, number and type of pills are all correct before being entered into the plan finder. Individuals will need their red, white and blue Medicare cards and the Medicare number in order to complete an enrollment. 1-800 Medicare is available to troubleshoot any technical issues that may come up while using the plan finder.

For personalized assistance comparing plans or enrolling, Nebraska SHIP offers free, unbiased counseling by appointment at 402-471-2841. Enrollment clinics are also held throughout the community during the open enrollment period. 



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Foster Grandparents Share Time, Care with Young Children

Upon retiring in 2020, Willie quickly realized she needed something to fill her time. That's when she came across Community Action's program and asked if they needed volunteers.

With seven grown children of her own, Willie stepped into the role as Grandma Willie, helping in the Head Start infant classrooms through the Foster Grandparent Program.

The program that places adults age 55 and older in classrooms as volunteers is the result of a collaboration between AmeriCorps Seniors and the Community Action Partnership of Lancaster and Saunders Counties. Foster

Grandparents in two early childhood education centers in Lincoln support children's school readiness by helping them develop social-emotional, language, motor and other skills.

"I like to see them grow and develop," Willie said. "They're always smiling and happy to see me."

Foster Grandparents provide support for children ages 0 to 5, including those with special or exceptional needs. Activities vary depending on the classroom and the children's needs. They may read books, play games, sing songs, support language development, engage with children during

mealtimes, sit with children who need extra support and more.

Willie says she has spent time helping children with washing their hands, playing games, singing, reading books, and giving and receiving plenty of hugs.

"I love on them just like they're my own," she said. "They've become like family."

She said the feeling is mutual. She enjoys being there for whatever the children need, whether that means playing with them, helping with daily activities or simply offering a little extra love and attention.

"I just spoil them with love and send them home," Willie said.

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To get started, contact Sam Bates at (402) 875-9320 or send an email to sbates@communityactionatwork.org



AmeriCorps Seniors

Produced and published at taxpayer expense.

How to Volunteer

To serve in the Foster Grandparent Program, volunteers must be at least 55 years old and able to serve 15 to 35 hours per week during the year-round Head Start school year. Flexible scheduling is available.

Volunteers may also be eligible to receive a stipend, as well as paid vacation and holidays, if they meet income requirements of 200% or below the federal poverty level. The program also covers mileage or bus passes and provides meals while volunteers are working. The current annual combined household income limits are:

- \$31,920 for a household of one
- \$43,280 for a volunteer and their spouse (living in the same household)

Foster Grandparents receive training in childhood education, as well as information about senior health and wellness.

Those interested in this role, should contact Sam Bates at 402-875-9320, sbates@communityactionatwork.org or visit <https://www.communityactionatwork.org/grandparents.html>. 



Willie serves as a Foster Grandparent at Community Action's Head Start program, providing encouragement, one-on-one support and a caring presence to help young children learn and thrive.



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Restoring Confidence Through Basic Care

For most people, picking up shampoo or toothpaste is part of a routine shopping trip. But for many older adults living on a fixed income, purchasing basic hygiene products can mean sacrificing other necessities such as food, medication or utilities. Stretching limited funds can leave many aging adults without access to products essential to their health, dignity and well-being.

That's where the Lincoln Hygiene Network is making a difference. The nonprofit works with 24 local partners to ensure children, families and older adults in Lincoln and Lancaster County have access to basic hygiene supplies at no cost. Since its founding in 2021, the organization has distributed

more than 629,000 items, serving more than 60,000 community members.

"We help fill that gap, so people don't have to choose between food and something that's part of their health and well-being," said Dustin Oltman, executive director, Lincoln Hygiene Network.



One of the organization's most impactful initiatives is the Senior Hygiene Closet, which provides adults age 55 and older with free essential products each month. Approximately 500 seniors routinely use the program, receiving items such as conditioner, denture care kits, deodorant, incontinence products, laundry detergent sheets, lotion, razors, shampoo, soap, toothbrushes and toothpaste.

Accessing Products

Through its network of community distribution partners, aging adults can select up to three hygiene items each month at four convenient locations:

- Asian Community and Cultural Center, 144 N. 44th St., Suite A
Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
- Barnabas Community, 931 Saunders Ave.
Tuesday, noon-3 p.m.;
Thursday, 9 a.m.-noon and 6-8 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Clarity card required, sign up at no cost at Barnabas.
- Good Neighbor Community Center, 2617 Y St.
Monday-Thursday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.;
Friday, 9 a.m.-noon.

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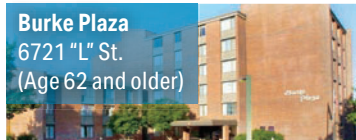
Mahoney Manor
4241 N. 61st St.
(Age 50 and older)



Crossroads House
1000 "O" St.
(Age 55 and older)



Burke Plaza
6721 "L" St.
(Age 62 and older)



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- Ponca Tribe of Nebraska/Ponca Health Services
1600 Windhoek Drive
Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Serving enrolled members of federally recognized tribes.
Lincoln City Libraries also distribute hygiene products; however, they may not be specific to older adults.

For more distribution sites, visit lincolnhygienenetwork.org/get-products.

By helping meet these everyday needs, the Lincoln Hygiene Network is doing more than providing personal care products; it's helping older adults maintain their physical and emotional health, confidence and independence.

"I really need these items, but I would have to use my food money. Thank you very much; this has helped me," said a Barnabas Community participant.

Donating

There are several ways to support the Lincoln Hygiene Network. Monetary donations allow the organization to purchase hygiene products through partnerships with manufacturers and suppliers at significantly reduced costs, helping each dollar go even further. The nonprofit also accepts in-kind donations of

new, unused hygiene products of any size. In addition, the organization welcomes opened packages of unused incontinence products. Donation stations are located throughout the community. To find a convenient drop-off location, visit lincolnhygienenetwork.org/productdropoff. 



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Day Trips Offer Adventure, Fun and Lasting Memories

From April through September, Aging Partners hits the road for monthly Day Trips filled with beautiful sights, delicious food and memorable experiences.

Participants travel in comfort aboard an Arrow Stage Lines

bus, with each trip including transportation, admission or activity tickets and occasionally lunch. Most trips range from \$75 to \$105, while the Sandhill crane trip was \$150 this year.

Day Trips make a great gift for yourself, a friend or a loved one.

This year's destinations included:

- Sandhill crane viewing at Rowe Sanctuary in Gibbon, Neb.
- Scatter Joy Acres exotic zoo followed by dinner and a show at Lofte Community Theatre in Manley, Neb.
- Strategic Air Command & Aerospace Museum followed by a stop at Baker's Candies in Greenwood, Neb.



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- “Home of Great Beginnings” and the historic Glenn Miller Birthplace in Clarinda, Iowa.
- Nebraska State Fair, including a concert by KC and the Sunshine Band.
- Nebraska City’s AppleJack Festival, with a tour of Arbor Lodge and its grounds.

Next year’s Day Trip destinations will be announced in January 2027 and featured in the Winter 2027 edition of Living Well. They are sure to offer another unforgettable season of adventure, fun and new memories. **LW**



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More Than a Meal: Supporting Nutrition, Independence and Connection

Preparing nutritious meals can become more difficult as people age, particularly for those with limited mobility, stamina or access to transportation.

Aging Partners Nutrition programs help address those challenges by providing weekday meals in group settings throughout its eight-county service area. Meals are served at senior centers, churches, senior housing facilities and community buildings, with transportation available in some areas.

For older adults who cannot leave home or prepare a nutritious meal, home-delivered meals provide another option. And the benefits go beyond the meal itself.

Nutrition and More

Access to nutritious meals can help support health and independence for older adults.

“We have folks recovering from a surgery, procedure or illness, and they’re just not strong enough to make meals yet,” said Brenda Motis, Fillmore County Senior Services director, in describing the benefits of a home-delivered meal. “There’s also those who are getting to the point in their life that it’s hard to cut vegetables and cook them, or they don’t have the stamina to stay in the kitchen to cook a meal.”

For Fillmore County resident Marilyn Widler, a bad fall a few years ago left her unable to stand long enough to fix meals in the kitchen. Since then, she has received home-delivered meals almost daily.

“If I didn’t have this program, I would have to leave my home and go to some kind of assisted living,” she said. “I’m not able to cook, but I love to eat.”

Aging Partners’ meals are designed to provide balanced nutrition. While

meals served through the Nutrition Program must provide at least one-third of the daily recommended dietary intake for older adults and meet federal dietary guidelines, Motis points to yet another important benefit — the connection that comes with meal delivery.

Daily Check-in

Home-delivered meals provide more than food at the door. Volunteers also have an opportunity to check on the people they serve, and Aging Partners encourages them to report any health or other concerns they observe.

“Our volunteers lay eyes on and check on the recipients,” Motis said.

That simple interaction can provide peace of mind for family members who may not be able to visit their loved one every day, just like Widler’s two sons.

“My sons know I’m getting good, healthy food and enjoying it,” she said. “The volunteers also are such a joy — whether it’s raining or snowing, they show up, ring the doorbell, come in and say ‘hi’ with a smile. I look forward to that every day. I don’t know what I’d do without this program.”

“We have families comment that it gives them a sense of relief to know every weekday someone else is checking in on their loved one to ensure they are OK,” Motis said. “It’s a win-win for folks who need it.”

Bringing Meals to Rural Communities

In rural communities, access to nutritious food can be an even greater challenge when restaurants and other food options are limited.

“Even with the establishments available, they

often have the same menu options, but meals through the senior centers and home-delivered meals provide a wider option of items,” Motis said. “Just having this option available is highly important.”

When an older adult does not have a meal site or delivery available nearby, Aging Partners can use contracted meal services to provide fresh-packed meals shipped directly to the home. The meals can be stored and heated as needed, offering an option for people who might otherwise have difficulty accessing a meal program.

Flexible Options

Meal programs also can offer flexibility based on an individual’s needs.

“Some folks just call and pick a few meals off the menu,” Motis said, adding some participate in meals daily and others choose a limited number of meals each week.



Adults age 60 and older who participate in group or home-delivered meal programs can make a voluntary suggested contribution toward the cost of the program.

For home-delivered meals, participants generally must be age 60 or older and unable to attend a congregate meal site. County programs manage their own home-delivered meal services, so availability and specific arrangements can vary.

Making a Difference, One Meal at a Time

Volunteers are essential in making home-delivered meals possible.

“We’re always appreciative of the volunteers we have,” Motis said. “It’s simple, and it’s not only good for those who receive them, but it warms my heart when I deliver meals.”

Some businesses support the program by encouraging employees to volunteer and sending someone to help deliver meals a few times each month.

“I get more out of it than I put into it,” said Deb Bixby, who has volunteered to deliver meals in Geneva twice monthly since January 2010. “It makes me feel good that I’m serving others; that experience, in turn, is a blessing to me. The rewards outweigh the serving.”

Whether a meal is shared with friends at a senior center or delivered to someone’s front door, the program provides more than nourishment. It can help older adults remain independent, stay connected to their communities and continue living safely in their own homes.

Find a Meal Program

Aging Partners provides nutrition services in Butler, Fillmore, rural Lancaster, Polk, Saline, Seward and York counties. In 2025, more than 142,000 meals were enjoyed on-site or delivered to homes.

Inside Lincoln city limits, Eventide, formerly Tabitha, Meals on Wheels has delivered hot, noon meals to Lincoln-area older adults. Meals are available five days a week at full or reduced cost based on income and assets. Recipients must be 60 or older and unable to prepare meals or access other meal options. Delivery volunteers are also needed. Learn more at eventide.org/senior-living-services/meals-on-wheels or call 402-486-8589.

Call your local senior center or county program to learn about meal sites, home delivery, eligibility and modified-diet options:

- Butler County: 402-367-6131
- Fillmore County: 402-759-4922
- Polk County: 402-764-2252
- Saline County: 402-821-3330
- Seward County: 402-646-7110
- York County: 402-362-7626
- Rural Lancaster County: 402-441-7070 



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Nebraska Report Highlights Strong Civic Spirit, Growing Challenges

A robust state is built by people willing to get involved, so civic participation plays an important role in the health of Nebraska communities, according to Lily Sughrue, Civic Nebraska director of civic health.

“Civic health is how we connect with one another and share in public life,” she said. “It’s in the way we engage with our communities.”

The 2025 Nebraska Civic Health Index, published by Civic Nebraska in partnership with the National Conference on Citizenship, measures civic trust, civic access, civic action and civic knowledge. The report compared Nebraska with other states and

found it ranks among the nation’s leaders in spending time with neighbors, maintaining close ties with family and friends, working to improve local communities, while facing growing challenges with trust, political participation and access to reliable local news.

Nebraska ranks third nationally in volunteering, sixth in spending time with neighbors and seventh in regularly following the news, despite access to local news becoming more difficult. Eleven counties no longer have local journalists, contributing to expanding news deserts and reduced engagement with community issues.

“People are still finding ways to receive and engage with local news,” Sughrue said.

Despite the strengths, data shared in the report from the Nebraska Rural Poll found declining trust and a weakening sense that residents can influence their communities, particularly in rural Nebraska. The share of rural residents who feel powerless to make a difference increased from 24% in 2019 to 40% in 2024. Voter participation is also declining among some groups, including women, rural residents and middle-income earners.

“This report is for everyday people to get their hands on and



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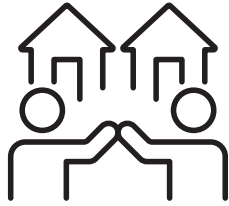
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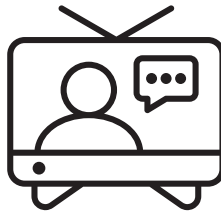
3rd

volunteering



6th

spending time with neighbors



7th

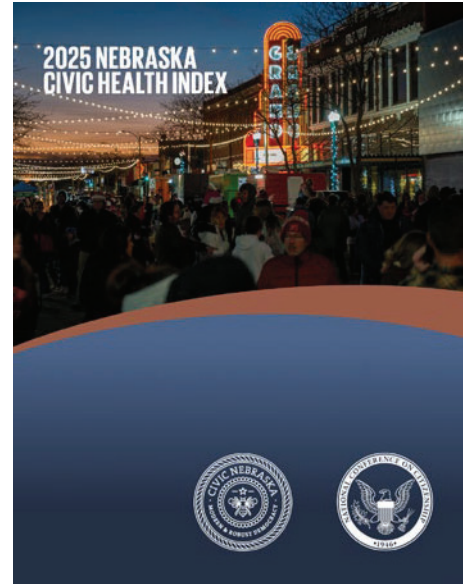
regularly following the news

understand the different areas of civic life we can improve,” Sughrue said. “It’s meant to help communities identify strengths, address challenges and encourage local action.”

With Nebraska’s strong tradition of volunteerism and neighborliness, residents can continue to strengthen civic life by serving on local boards, attending public meetings,

joining community conversations or participating in Nebraska Documenters, a program that trains and pays residents to document under-reported local government meetings. More information is available at flatwaterfreepress.org/documenters.

The Civic Health Index is available online at civicnebraska.org/2025-index, and printed copies



The Civic Health Index helps provide an understanding of where Nebraska stands in the nation in civic trust, civic access, civic action and civic knowledge.

may be requested by calling Civic Nebraska at 402-904-5191. ^{LW}



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Smisek Finds Comfort, Purpose in Crafting

Part of Joy Smisek's story is woven into every stitch of her creations.

What began as a way to relax after work has become a symbol of resilience and independence, carrying her through decades of health challenges, the loss of both legs and countless obstacles as she continued creating handmade gifts for family and friends.

Smisek said her love of embroidery began in the late 1980s after she purchased a set of quilt blocks.

"I enjoyed doing it, so I bought enough to make a quilt," she said. "I'd come home after working at the nursing home and start embroidering. It helped me calm down, relax and be able to go to bed. I've been doing it ever since."

Smisek's resilience was formed long before she discovered embroidery. At just 7 months old, she was severely burned in a fire that injured her legs, caused her to lose her toes and left doctors giving her only three days to live.



Joy Smisek, surrounded by quilts and other crafts she has created, finds joy and purpose in crafting.



Despite losing both legs, Smisek continues to sew and create. She operates her sewing machine using her hand on the foot pedal, finding a way to keep doing what she loves.

More than six decades later, she continues to defy those odds.

Despite those early challenges, Smisek became a certified nursing assistant at a Lincoln nursing home. In 1993, at age 33, her doctor placed her into early retirement because of the worsening condition of her feet.

"He told me there was a possibility I could lose my legs," Smisek said.

That became reality when her right leg was amputated in 2001. In 2025, she lost her left leg, becoming a double amputee.

After losing her second leg, Smisek wasn't sure whether she would be able to sew again. But one day after returning home from therapy, she decided to pull out her sewing machine and give it a try. Using her hand to operate the foot pedal, she successfully sewed a small blanket — an

accomplishment that demonstrated her determination not to let her circumstances define her but instead return to the hobbies that had always brought her comfort.

"I was really proud of myself," she said. "I guess anything will work if you give it a try."

Smisek continues to make quilts, wreaths, embroidery, crochet and cross-stitch projects, often gifting them to family and friends, or occasionally selling them.

Although she now quilts less often than she once did, she has completed several quilts throughout the years.

One of her most meaningful projects was a family quilt she created for her dad and his wife featuring his siblings, children and grandchildren.

"They knew I put a lot of work into it, and they thought it was just gorgeous," Smisek said. **LW**



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Aging Partners Health and Fitness

Stay Steady: Simple Balance Exercises Seniors Can Do at Home

by Aging Partners Health and Fitness

By taking just a few minutes each day to practice balance, older adults can improve their stability, confidence and ability to stay active. While balance naturally changes with age, regular exercise can strengthen the muscles and coordination needed for everyday activities such as climbing stairs, gardening, shopping or simply walking across the living room.

“The encouraging news is that balance can often be improved at almost any age,” said Stevie Lang, Aging Partners’ personal trainer. “Simple exercises performed consistently can help strengthen the legs, improve coordination, and reduce the risk of falls.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, falls are one of the leading causes of injury among older adults. The good news is that balance and strength exercises are some of the most effective ways to reduce that risk.

Before beginning any new exercise program, consult your healthcare provider, especially if you have heart disease, dizziness, recent injuries or have experienced a fall in the past year. Exercise in a well-lit, clutter-free area, wear supportive shoes and keep a sturdy chair or countertop nearby for stability.

1. Single-Leg Stand

One of the simplest and most effective balance exercises is standing on one leg.

Stand behind a sturdy chair and lightly hold the backrest. Lift one foot a few inches off the floor while balancing on the opposite leg. Hold for 10 to 20 seconds before lowering your foot. Repeat on the other side three times.

As you become more confident, reduce the amount of support you use while always staying close to the chair.

“Many people are surprised by how challenging this exercise is at first,” Lang says. “That’s perfectly normal. Improvement comes from regular practice, not perfection.”



2. Heel-to-Toe Walk

This exercise improves coordination and helps develop a steadier walking pattern.

Stand near a wall or countertop. Place one foot directly in front of the other so the heel touches the toes of the opposite foot. Walk slowly for 10 to 20 steps while looking straight ahead instead of at your feet. If needed, lightly touch the wall for extra confidence.

3. Sit-to-Stand

Standing up from a chair is one of the most practical movements we perform every day.

Sit in a sturdy chair with your feet flat on the floor. Lean slightly forward and stand without using your hands if possible. Slowly lower yourself back into the chair with control. Repeat eight to 12 times.

This exercise strengthens the thighs, hips and core muscles that play a major role in maintaining independence.



Simple exercises performed consistently can help strengthen the legs, improve coordination, and reduce the risk of falls.”

– Stevie Lang

4. Side Leg Raises

Strong hip muscles provide important support for balance. Stand beside a chair and hold it with one hand. Slowly raise one leg out to the side without leaning your upper body. Pause briefly before lowering it. Repeat 10 times on each side.

Focus on slow, controlled movements rather than lifting the leg as high as possible.



6. Weight Shifts

This exercise teaches your body how to maintain stability while moving from one side to the other.

Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. Slowly shift your weight onto your right leg while lifting your left foot slightly from the floor. Hold for several seconds before returning to center. Repeat on the opposite side. Perform 10 repetitions per side.

Make It Part of Your Routine

You don't need to spend hours exercising to notice benefits. Practicing balance exercises for 10 to 15 minutes, three to five days each week, can improve strength and stability over time.

Lang recommends pairing exercises with an existing habit.

"If you do a few balance exercises after brushing your teeth or before lunch every day, they become part of your routine," she said. "Consistency is much more important than intensity."

Always move slowly, breathe normally and stop if you experience pain, dizziness or feel unsteady.

Better balance isn't just about avoiding falls. It also means maintaining the confidence to continue doing the activities that bring joy and independence. Whether you're walking the dog, visiting friends, traveling or playing with grandchildren, stronger balance can help you enjoy life with greater freedom.

Every improvement begins with a single step — and today's simple exercises can help you stay active for years. **LW**

5. Heel Raises

Strong calf muscles help keep you steady while standing and walking.

Stand behind a chair with both hands resting lightly on the back. Rise onto your toes, hold for two or three seconds, then slowly lower your heels. Complete 10 to 15 repetitions.

As your strength improves, gradually increase the amount of time you hold the raised position.



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Annie Pike

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(402) 540-5862



apike@remax.net



Annie Pike-RE/MAX
Concepts

Five Safety Tips Before You Exercise

1. Clear your space. Remove throw rugs, electrical cords and other tripping hazards before you begin.
2. Keep support nearby. Perform exercises next to a sturdy chair, countertop or railing until you feel confident.
3. Wear supportive footwear. Shoes with nonslip soles provide better stability than slippers or socks.
4. Stay hydrated and take your time. Move slowly, breathe steadily and rest whenever needed.
5. Know when to stop. If you feel dizzy, short of breath, experience chest pain or lose your balance, stop exercising and contact your healthcare provider if symptoms persist.

Kitchen Tips and Tricks

Whether we consider ourselves a pro or a beginner in the kitchen, discovering new tips and tricks can help save us time, effort and frustration!

Ripening fresh fruit: Transform a hard peach to ready-to-eat by placing it in a paper bag. The concentrated ethylene gas helps the fruit ripen faster. Don't seal the bag too tightly or use a plastic bag, as too much moisture may contribute to mold growth. Storing fruit next to or near apples can also help speed up the ripening process, as apples contain a higher amount of ethylene gas.

Roasting vegetables: Place a cookie sheet in the oven to preheat. This will help to evenly distribute the heat on the vegetables without having to flip them.

Prevent pots from boiling over: Place a wooden spoon across the top of the pot to help prevent over-boiling. Wood is not good material for conducting heat and the hot water stays away from the handle.

Repel bugs: Place a bay leaf in a container of flour, pasta or rice to help repel bugs.

Making soup less salty: Add a wedge of raw potato or apple to help absorb excess salt. Simmer for 10 minutes and then remove the wedges.

Skim the fat: Spoon off excess fat from stews and sauces by cooling in the refrigerator and then skimming off the grease. If you're short on time, add a few ice cubes and remove as soon as you see the grease sticking to them.

Removing eggshells: Add baking soda to water when boiling eggs for easy shell removal. This will help the egg whites separate from the shell and make it easier to peel.

Save fresh herbs for later use: Place herbs on a baking sheet and freeze. Once frozen, seal in a zip-close bag (make sure to push all the air out) and label. You can also chop or blend herbs and freeze them in an ice cube tray with olive oil.

Prevent brown sugar from hardening: Even in an airtight container, brown sugar can turn hard. Toss a few marshmallows in an airtight container with sugar to help it stay soft. Keeping brown sugar in the freezer can also help prevent hardening. If the sugar is already hard, try putting a wet paper towel in with the sugar and microwave for 20 seconds. The water will add moisture back into the sugar and help soften.

Extend produce freshness: Line the bottom of your refrigerator's crisper drawer with paper towels. This will absorb the excess moisture that causes the produce to go bad.

Kitchen Tools

There are several kitchen gadgets that can help make the prepping and cooking process easy and fun!

Apple Core/Slicer: We've all heard the saying "an apple a day keeps the doctor away," but this may be difficult if we don't have the right tools. An apple slicer is a great way to get in our daily apple in a safe and easy way. Simply place the slicer on top of the apple and press down.

Vegetable Spiralizer:

Spiralized vegetables are a fun and creative way to get more fruit and vegetables.

Use on zucchini,



You or someone you know may have a problem with gambling?

Help is just a phone call away!



4435 O Street, Suite 110
Lincoln, NE 68510

3116 18th St., Suite 55,
Columbus, NE 68601

402-476-2300

ChoicesTreatmentCenter.net

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24 Hours a day, 7 days a week.

Local Helpline: 402-476-2300

Nebraska Helpline:

1-833-238-6837

National Helpline:

1-800-MY-RESET

The Nebraska Gamblers Assistance Program (GAP) pays for confidential counseling with certified problem gambling providers to Nebraskans and their families who suffer a gambling addiction. A list of all GAP-certified counselors in Nebraska is found at:

problemgambling.nebraska.gov

carrots, potatoes, cucumbers, apples and more! Spiralizers usually contain three blades: a round one for spaghetti, a small flat blade for ribbons, and a large wide blade for spiral strands. Spiralized vegetables are great to use as an alternative to pasta or as an addition to soup or stir-fry!

Vegetable Chopper: Chopping vegetables can be a daunting and difficult task. A vegetable chopper is an ideal way to get diced vegetables without all the blood, sweat and tears (onions, anyone?) They usually come with several different blades, giving a range of cutting and dicing options. Consider dicing vegetables such as peppers, onions and tomatoes but also other foods such as cheese and eggs.

Food Thermometer: Seeing is not believing! A food thermometer is the only reliable way to ensure



the safety and “doneness” of meat, poultry and egg products. There are different types of food thermometers with the most common being digital instant-read, dial instant-read, and

the oven thermometer. Place the food thermometer in the thickest part of the meat or casserole, making sure not to touch the bottom of the pan. 

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Staying Self-Sufficient

By Mitch Sump, Aging Partners program coordinator

Growing up in a small, rural town before online shopping and next-day delivery existed, I learned a few awesome self-sufficient tricks that were often less expensive than commercial products. They might even work better!

Window Washing

I give credit where credit is due; and this one comes from my beautiful bride, Kathy. When she can corral me into it, we use a homemade mixture to clean the outdoor windows. The solution is a mix of 1 gallon of hot water, one-half cup white vinegar, 1 tablespoon of dish soap and 1 tablespoon of rinse aid. The latter is sold under Jet-Dry, Cascade Rinse and Rinse & Shine.

The dish soap helps loosen dirt, the vinegar cuts grease, and the rinse aid lets the rinse water sheet off, so you don't need to dry. She wets the windows with a garden hose and then scrubs the window with the solution, before rinsing it off with the hose. We have done the scrubbing by using a rag while standing on a ladder; but a few years back, I bought her an extendible window tool. If that's not love, I don't know what is!

Tool Cleaning

Another great tip passed down from my dad is using sand and old motor oil to clean outdoor tools. Start by filling a 5-gallon bucket three-fourths full of coarse

sand. You can purchase sand at most hardware stores or use the sand from the tubes you have in your car for winter. Pour in approximately 2 quarts of used motor oil. You can use brand new but if you know a mechanic, you may be able to get used oil for free. After removing the excess dirt from tools with a scraper, plunge them in and out of the sand several times. The sand removes dirt and rust. Finish by wiping down the tool with a rag. The light film of oil left behind keeps it from rusting when not in use.

Removing Problem Insects

I am a firm believer that if a critter isn't bothering me, I don't

Rock Steady Boxing Fight Back Against Parkinson's

Rock Steady Boxing is a non-contact boxing program for people with Parkinson's disease. These classes have proven that anyone at any stage of Parkinson's, can lessen their symptoms and lead a better quality of life.

Build strength, improve balance, find community and stay moving – together.



“Joining this class was the best choice I've made for battling this lifelong disease.”
- Frank, class participant

Bryan MEDICAL CENTER

Evening & Day Classes!

Learn more:

BryanHealth.org/RockSteadyBoxing



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bother it. However, occasionally you need to do something when pests get a little too close. Mixing 4 tablespoons of dish soap, a quart of hot water and peppermint oil into spray bottle is a quick and inexpensive way to remove wasp and hornets from nests. Plan to spray the nests at sunrise or sunset when they are less active. The dish soap clogs their breathing pores and coats their wings, disabling them quickly so you can dispose of them. The peppermint oil isn't required but its scent acts as a natural deterrent to keep pests from returning.

Drain and fruit flies are a major problem during times of high humidity or when fresh garden fruits and vegetables are abundant. Inspired by a 4-H presentation at the county fair recently, here are some simple methods to eliminate

these pests. Drain flies live in your floor, shower, tub and sink drains, and reproduce in the buildup of hair, soap film and mold inside the pipes. First, remove as much hair as possible either by hand or using a zip strip hair remover tool. They cost around \$3 at most hardware stores. Then pour a cup of baking soda down the drain followed by two cups of vinegar. The foaming chemical reaction kills flies and larvae, and cleans mold and soap buildup from the pipe. After an hour or so, run hot water for five minutes to flush the pipes.

For fruit flies, fill a glass half full of apple cider vinegar and add



a teaspoon of dish soap. Cover the top with plastic wrap and then use a toothpick to punch a few holes through the wrap. Fruit flies will enter; and once they touch the vinegar-soap solution, they are trapped and drown.

These simple, time-tested tricks prove that tackling everyday household headaches doesn't have to be expensive or complicated. **lw**

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Call 402-441-7070 in Lincoln or toll-free, 800-247-0938.

AGING PARTNERS

600 S. 70th St., Bldg. 2
Lincoln, NE 68510

402-441-7070 or 800-247-0938

lincoln.ne.gov/Aging

Serving Butler, Fillmore, Lancaster,
Polk, Saline, Saunders, Seward and York
counties.

Key for Services: ▲ = Lancaster only

MISSION

Aging Partners plans, coordinates and advocates for older people in an eight-county area. Our mission is to enhance daily living, expand personal choices and educate the community to ensure the independence and full life of the people we serve.

BENEFITS COUNSELING AND LEGAL ASSISTANCE

402-441-7070 or 800-247-0938

- **Medicare** – what you need to know when you turn age 65; working past age 65; Parts A, B, D and Advantage Plans; Medicare supplements, yearly changes, updates and open enrollment; complaints, errors and appeals; low-income assistance programs.
- **We also help with:** Social Security overview; Medicaid; long-term care insurance; budgeting and Homestead Tax Exemption.
- **Legal Counseling** – Free legal advice and referral services for those who meet financial guidelines.

NEIGHBORLNK

This program connects qualified, authorized volunteers with homebound seniors (age 60 and over) and persons with disabilities who seek additional support such as grocery pickup and delivery, errands such as food and medication delivery, and friendly phone visits.

▲ 402-441-6076 or 402-441-7575

HANDY HOME SERVICES AND TRANSPORTATION

- **Durable Medical Equipment** – Providing items that address short- and long-term needs. We have various lightly used and/or new in-the-box items in stock including crutches, walkers, canes, wheelchairs, bath chairs and toilet risers. 402-441-7032
- **Handy Home Services** – Minor home repairs and maintenance including mowing, leaky faucets and broken light fixtures. ▲ 402-441-7030
- **Ride within Lincoln to the Centers** – Schedule a ride to your Aging Partners Center (handicap accessible). ▲ 402-441-7158
- **Lancaster County Public Rural Transit** – Scheduled transportation to and from Lincoln to rural Lancaster County areas. (handicap accessible). ▲ 402-441-7031

A listing of other options in the community is available at 402-441-7070.

- **Alzheimer's Disease** – Information and referral. 402-441-7070 or 800-247-0938
- **Caregiver Support Services** – Caregivers take care of family members and friends. But who takes care of the caregiver? Support groups provide hope, information and a safe environment to share concerns. ▲ 402-441-7575
- **Health Education Programs** – A variety of topics assisting individuals to make healthy lifestyle choices.
- **Nutrition** - Noon meals, selected evening meals with entertainment and special holiday meals are available at some centers. 402-441-3480

HEALTH, FITNESS AND NUTRITION

- **The Schmieding Foundation Center for Active Living Fitness Center** – Cardio and strength training equipment. A certified personal trainer is available by appointment. ▲ 402-441-7575
- **Exercise** – Tai Chi, chair yoga, Qigong and dance classes are available at several locations. Daily fitness programs on LNKTV City (Spectrum channel 1300) and LNKTV Health (Spectrum channel 1301). ▲
- **Senior Health Promotion Center** – University of Nebraska Medical Center and Aging Partners provide comprehensive foot care along with blood pressure, cholesterol, glucose and bone density screenings by appointment. ▲ 402-441-7506

INFORMATION AND REFERRAL

402-441-7070 or 800-247-0938

Provides help for older adults and their caregivers to resolve questions and concerns about aging. Services include referrals, counseling, social work and care management. Start here to determine alternatives and arrange services in the Aging Partners service area.

LIVING WELL MAGAZINE

This quarterly publication features stories of interest to older adults and is mailed directly to their homes. To suggest a story idea or advertise with Living Well, call Jenny Hammond at 402-441-6156 or email jhammond@lincoln.ne.gov.

To receive Living Well by email instead of in the mail, call 402-441-6146 or email delrod@lincoln.ne.gov.

LIVE & LEARN

A monthly TV show for and about older adults on LNKTV City (Spectrum channel 1300) and LNKTV.lincoln.ne.gov, or Live & Learn's YouTube channel at lincoln.ne.gov/LiveAndLearn.

- Mondays at 11 a.m.
- Wednesdays at 5 p.m.
- Thursdays at 7 p.m.
- Fridays at 11:30 a.m.
- Sundays at 3:30 p.m.

These are minimum airing times. Show re-airs at various other times throughout the month.

SENIOR CENTERS, EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Social events and activities, health and educational programs. We offer noon meals, selected evening meals with entertainment and special holiday meals. Transportation to the centers is available for a suggested contribution. Four centers in Lincoln and three in Lancaster County. ▲ 402-441-7158

Lincoln/Lancaster County Centers

- Belmont Senior Center
Inside Belmont Recreation Center
1234 Judson St., Lincoln
402-441-7990
- Northeast Senior Center
6310 Platte Ave., Lincoln
402-441-7151
- Washington Street Senior Center
Inside Grace Lutheran Church
2225 Washington St., Lincoln
402-441-7157
- Victory Park Senior Center
600 S. 70th St., Lincoln
402-441-7154
- Bennet Senior Center
Inside American Legion Hall
970 Monroe St., Bennet
402-416-7693
- Firth Senior Center
Inside Firth Community Center
311 Nemaha Blvd., Firth
402-416-7693
- Hickman Senior Center
Inside Hickman Community Center
115 Locust St., Hickman
402-416-7693

LONG-TERM CARE OPTIONS/ CARE MANAGEMENT

402-441-7070 or 800-247-0938

- **Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC)** – The Aging and Disability Resource Center goal is to assist Nebraskans in accessing services and support to help meet their long-term care needs.
- **Home and Community-based Waiver Services** – State funded in-home services for those who are Medicaid-eligible and choose to live at home or use community-based services.
- **Assisted Living and Nursing Facilities Resource Listings**

SENIOR CARE OPTIONS AND MEDICAID WAIVER

402-441-7070 or 800-247-0938

- **Nursing Facility Level of Care** – Long-term care and assessment for Medicaid-eligible persons seeking nursing home care.

MULTI-COUNTY CARE MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Providing professional assistance in assessing needs, planning and coordinating home care.

Jean Holt, Coordinator

All Counties: 800-247-0938

- Butler County
Becky Romshek, 402-367-4537
- Fillmore County
Rhonda Stokebrand, 402-759-4922
- Polk County
Becky Romshek, 402-747-5731
- Saline County
Kelly Grimes, 402-441-7070
- Saunders County
Shannon Mitchell, 402-416-9376
- Seward County
Shannon Mitchell, 402-416-9376
- York County
Becky Romshek, 402-367-4537

MULTI-COUNTY PROGRAMS

Coordinator Jill Engel

- Butler County Senior Services
Jillian Boss, 402-367-6131
- Fillmore County Senior Services
Brenda Motis, 402-759-4922
- Polk County Senior Services
Sarah Theis, 402-764-2711
- Saline County Aging Services
Lori Gude, 402-821-3330
- Seward County Aging Services
Alisha Fisher, 402-646-7110
- York County Aging Services
Lori Byers, 402-362-7626

MULTI-COUNTY SENIOR CENTERS

Butler County

- David City Senior Center
592 "D" St., David City
402-367-6131

Fillmore County

- Exeter Senior Center
217 S. Exeter Ave., Exeter
402-266-2133
- Fairmont Senior Center
519 6th Ave., Fairmont
402-268-2831
- Geneva Senior Center
996 "G" St., Geneva
402-759-6729

Polk County

- Osceola Senior Center
441 Hawkeye St., Osceola
402-747-8227
- Polk Senior Center
230 N. Main St., Polk
402-765-2311
- Shelby Senior Center
230 N. Walnut St., Shelby
402-527-5158

Saline County

- DeWitt Senior Center
202 E. Fillmore Ave., DeWitt
402-683-4325

Seward County

- Milford Senior Center
105 "B" St., Milford
402-761-3367
- Seward LIED Senior Center
1010 Manor Drive West, Seward
402-643-4466
- Utica Senior Center
520 "D" St., Utica
402-534-3435

York County

- McCool Junction Senior Diners
c/o Village Hall
323 E. "M" St., McCool Junction
402-724-2525
- York Leisure Home (meal site only)
215 N. Lincoln Ave., York
402-362-5900
- York Senior Center
725 Nebraska Ave., York
402-362-2496

SENIORS FOUNDATION

The charitable foundation that plans, advocates for, and supports the programs and services of Aging Partners. To contribute or volunteer, call 402-441-6179 or visit seniorsfoundation.org.

Aging Partners News and Events

Call 402-441-7575 for Health and Fitness classes or 402-441-7158 for event information.
lincoln.ne.gov/Aging

Start Electronically Receiving Your Copy of *Living Well* Magazine Today!

When you receive *Living Well* magazine by email, you have direct access to many services. Click on any website listed and you are linked directly to a service or advertiser's website.

There are wonderful stories in every issue of *Living Well*. Visit the Aging Partners website to find current and past issues. Contact Deb Elrod at 402-441-6146 or delrod@lincoln.ne.gov to sign up.



Health and Fitness

Schmieding Center for Active Living Fitness Center

600 S. 70th St.

Monday through Friday
8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Lancaster County residents over the age of 60

Cardio equipment, strength training equipment, free weights, balance, and other exercise aids are available. There is a \$10 monthly suggested contribution for ages 60 and over. A certified personal trainer is available by appointment at no extra charge.

For all Health and Fitness classes, there is a \$4 per class suggested contribution for age 60 and over. A \$5 per class fee for those under age 60 is required. For all workshops, there is a \$8 per week suggested contribution for age 60 and a required \$10 per week fee for those under age 60. Preregistration is required for all classes by calling 402-441-7575. Please register early. Classes that do not have sufficient enrollment will be cancelled.

Evidence-Based Tai Chi Classes

NOTE: Because all Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention classes are progressive, no registrations will be accepted after the fourth class of each session. Tai Chi class sizes are restricted due to space limitations; therefore, classes fill up quickly.

Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention Level I

Eastridge Presbyterian Church

1135 Eastridge Drive

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1 to 2 p.m.

Dec. 1 through Feb. 9, 2027

(no class Dec. 24)

Registrations only accepted after Nov. 1

This class is beneficial to people with or without arthritis and can help prevent falls. Each session includes breathing techniques and warm-up and cooldown exercises. Participants will practice one or two movements per lesson, progressively leading to completing the core movements. Suggested contribution is \$4 per class or \$80 per session (20 classes).

Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention Level II

American Lutheran Church

4200 Vine St.

Mondays and Wednesdays

10 to 11 a.m.

Aug. 31 through Nov. 4

(no class Sept. 7 and Nov. 2)

Nov. 30 through Feb. 3, 2027

(no class Dec. 21, 23 and Jan. 18)

This class is only available to those who have completed at least one full session of the Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention Level I. Suggested contribution is \$4 per class or \$72 per session (18 classes).

StrongBodies Strength Training

Victory Park Center

600 S. 70th St., Classroom 105

Tuesdays and Thursdays

Beginners: 8:15 to 9:30 a.m.

Intermediate: 9:45 to 11:30 a.m.

Intermediate: 11:45 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Sept. 15 through Dec. 15

(no class Nov. 3 and Nov. 26)

Jan. 12, 2027, through April 1

Strength training for older adults has been widely studied and is shown to increase muscle mass and strength, improve bone density, and reduce the risk of osteoporosis, diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, depression, and obesity. It also boosts confidence, sleep, and overall vitality.

StrongBodies is an evidence-based fall prevention program that uses dumbbells, adjustable ankle weights, and body weight exercises. Classes meet twice weekly for 12 weeks, class size is limited. Suggested contribution is \$4 per class or \$96 per session (24 classes).

Chair Yoga

Eastridge Presbyterian Church

1135 Eastridge Drive

Chair yoga is one of the gentlest forms of yoga available. It is a unique style that adapts yoga positions and poses through creative use of a chair. Poses are done seated, or the chair is used for support during standing and balance poses. Emphasis will be on breathing, balance and taking things at your own pace. Chair yoga is suitable for all ages, fitness levels and physical conditions. Beginners are welcome.

- Mondays, 9:30 to 10:30 a.m.
July 20 through Oct. 12
(no class Sept. 7)
Nov. 2 through Dec. 21
Jan. 11, 2027, through April 12
(no class Jan. 18 and Feb. 15)
- Wednesdays, 9:30 to 10:30 a.m.
July 22 through Oct. 7
Nov. 4 through Dec. 23
(no class Nov. 11)
Jan. 13, 2027, through March 31

Dance for Life

Classes focus on balance, strength and cardio health through a unique combination of dance steps done to popular oldies music. Participants warm up from the chair, move to standing,

transition to dance then cool down with standing and seated movements.

- American Lutheran Church
4200 Vine St.
Mondays, 1:30 to 2:30 p.m.
Sept. 14 through Dec. 14
(no class Nov. 2 and 9)
Jan. 4, 2027, through April 5
(no class Jan. 18 and Feb. 15)
April 19 through July 19
(no class May 31 and July 5)
- Auld Pavilion
1650 Memorial Drive
Wednesdays, 10 to 11 a.m.
Sept. 16 through Dec. 9
(no class Oct. 28 and Nov. 11)
Jan. 6, 2027, through March 24
April 7 through May 19

Qigong Refresh and Recharge

This ancient, meditative practice focuses on slow, gentle movements which help to relieve aching muscles and stiff joints, improve balance, flexibility and increase energy. Movements begin from a chair, move to standing forms, closing with seated stretches and stimulating breath exercises. This class is appropriate for individuals at all levels of ability.

- American Lutheran Church
4200 Vine St.
Tuesdays, 9:30 to 10:30 a.m.
Sept. 15 through Dec. 15
(no class Nov. 3 and 10)
Jan. 5, 2027, through April 6
April 20 through July 20
- Auld Pavilion
1650 Memorial Drive
Thursdays, 1:30 to 2:30 p.m.
Sept. 17 through Dec. 10
(no class Oct. 22, 29, Nov. 26 and Dec. 3)
Jan. 7, 2027, through March 25
April 8 through May 20

Aging Partners Foot Clinics

Aging Partners Foot Clinics are for individuals age 60 and older and require an appointment. Clinics are held at multiple locations, all adhering to sanitation guidelines. Please see below for locations and contact numbers to schedule your visit.

- Northeast Center (second Monday of each month), 6310 Platte Ave. To schedule an appointment, call Center Manager, Ciji Mays, at 402-441-7151.

- Victory Park Center, 600 S. 70th St. UNMC Senior Health Promotion Services/Foot Clinics offer the following services only at Victory Park on most clinic dates throughout the year: comprehensive foot care, blood pressure, blood glucose, cholesterol screenings, osteoporosis screenings, ear care and health education. There is a \$25 suggested contribution. For more information or to make an appointment for clinic services at Victory Park only, call 402-441-7506 or 402-441-7575.

For rural Lancaster County foot clinics, call 402-416-7693 to schedule an appointment. These clinics are held every other month.

- Bennet Senior Center, American Legion Hall, 970 Monroe St.
- Firth Senior Center, Firth Community Center, 311 Nemaha St.
- Hickman Senior Center, Hickman Community Center, 115 Locust St.
- Malcolm Resource Center, Malcolm Village Hall, 137 E. 2nd St.

Aging Partners Events

Call 402-441-7158 for information and reservations.

Senior Center Meals

Call the individual centers at least two days in advance to reserve a meal. See page 35 for a complete list of centers.
\$5 suggested contribution age 60 and over;
\$10 fee under age 60.
\$5 suggested transportation contribution for age 60 and over.

Belmont Senior Center: 402-441-7990

Belmont Recreation Center,
1234 Judson St., Room 002

- Chair Yoga
2nd and 4th Tuesdays, at 10 a.m.
- Digital Literacy Sessions
Friday, Oct. 2, at 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Call to sign up for a 30-minute digital literacy session with a UNL student.
Must bring own device.
- Music BINGO with Elliott Piper
Friday, Nov. 6, at 10 a.m.

Bennet Senior Center: 402-416-7693

American Legion Hall, 970 Monroe St.

- Spooky Movie Classic and Popcorn
Tuesday, Oct. 20, at 10:30 a.m.

- Health and Fitness with Jon Alford, Peak Performance
Thursday, Oct. 22, at 10:30 a.m.
- Veterans Day Coffee and Conversation
Tuesday, Nov. 10, at 12:15 p.m.
This all-ages event is open to the public.
- Aging Partner foot care clinic
Thursday, Nov. 12, at 9 to 1 p.m.
Appointments required. Call Monte at 402-416-7693 to make an appointment! (\$25 suggested contribution).
- Master harpist Heidi Beran performs beautiful Christmas standards.
Thursday, Dec. 17, at 10:30 a.m.

Firth Senior Center: 402-416-7693

Firth Community Center, 311 Nemaha St.

- Annual Halloween Costume Contest
Monday, Oct. 26, at noon
- "Medicare Open Enrollment" presentation and one-on-one consultations by Nebraska SHIP
Monday, Nov. 16, at 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Master harpist Heidi Beran performs beautiful Christmas standards.
Monday, Dec. 21, at 10:30 a.m.

Hickman Senior Center: 402-416-7693

Hickman Community Center, 115 Locust St.

- Live Music with Denise Howe
Wednesday, Oct. 7, at 10:30 a.m.
- "Cooking With Leftovers" presentation by Aging Partners Nutrition
Wednesday, Nov. 18, at 12:15 p.m.
- Master harpist Heidi Beran performs beautiful Christmas standards.
Wednesday, Dec. 23, at 10:30 a.m.

Northeast Senior Center: 402-441-7151

6310 Platte Ave.

- BINGO
Wednesdays, at 10 a.m.
- Pitch Card Party
Tuesdays and Fridays, at 10 a.m.
New players welcome!
- Lincoln Fresh Food Truck
Oct. 6 and Nov. 3, from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.
Distribution of free fruits and vegetables.
- Art with Anna
Second Thursday of each month, at 10 a.m.
Learn beginner painting techniques.
This class is free and class size is limited to 10. Call 402-441-7151 to sign up.

Continued on page 38.

Aging Partners News and Events

Continued from page 37.

- Live Entertainment at 10 a.m.:
Oct. 9 – Johnny Ray Gomez
Oct. 31 – Rick Clarence
Nov. 6 – Denise Howe
Nov. 20 – Mary Link
Dec. 4 – Music BINGO
Dec. 18 – Heidi Beran

Victory Park Senior Center:

402-441-7154

600 S. 70th St.

- Alzheimer's Association Presentation and Caregiver Resource Fair
Thursday, Oct. 1, at 2 p.m.
"Building Brain Healthy Habits and Taking Care of the Caregiver" presentation followed by a Caregiver Resource Fair featuring legal assistance, respite care, memory support groups, education, home health, mobility options, mental health resources and more!
- October birthday party with folk, bluegrass, '60s pop, country music by Tonal Anomaly.
Thursday, Oct. 8, at 10 a.m.
- Annual Halloween Party and Costume Contest
Friday, Oct. 30, at 10 a.m.
- Music BINGO with Elliott Piper
Monday, Nov. 2, at 10 a.m.
- Victory Park Veterans Day Program
Tuesday, Nov. 10, at 10 a.m.
Contact Ben Middendorf at 402-441-7154 by Friday, Nov. 6 to participate and have your photo and

a description of your service included in our ceremonial presentation.

- November birthday party with patriotic music by Melodie and Jeanne
Thursday, Nov. 12, at 10 a.m.
- "Identity Theft" presentation by Nebraska Attorney General's Office
Tuesday, Dec. 8, at 1 p.m.
Explore how to monitor credit, report suspicious activity, and use fraud alerts or credit freezes. Learn how to protect personal information, reduce risk and respond effectively if compromised.
- December birthday party with holiday music by harpist Heidi Beran
Thursday, Dec. 10, at 10 a.m.

Washington Street Senior Center:

402-441-7157

2225 Washington St.

- BINGO
Tuesdays, at 10:15 a.m.
- "Brain, Body Connection and Successful Longevity" presentation by Aging Partners
Thursday, Oct. 15, at 10:30 a.m.
- Halloween Party
Friday, Oct. 30, at 10 a.m.
- Medicare Review by Nebraska SHIP
Friday, Nov. 6, from 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Call 402-441-7157 to schedule an appointment.
- Holiday music by harpist Heidi Beran
December date to be announced
Call 402-441-7157 for details.

Support Groups

Caregiver Support Group

St. Mark's United Methodist Church
8550 Pioneers Blvd., Room 137
(Enter through door 6 on North side of St. Mark's)
2nd Tuesday of every month
5 to 6 p.m.

Caregivers take care of family members and friends. But who takes care of the caregiver? Support groups provide hope, information, and a safe environment to share concerns. The Aging Partners Caregiver Support Group is led by a Licensed Independent Mental Health Practitioner.

Eligible caregivers are:

- An individual of any age providing care for an older adult, ages 60 and over.
- Providing care for a person with Alzheimer's disease, brain injury or a related brain disorder.
- Over the age of 55 and raising a grandchild.

No registrations needed, walk-ins welcomed. 

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