

A photograph of an elderly couple smiling outdoors. The man is on the left, wearing a brown t-shirt, and the woman is on the right, wearing a green button-down shirt over a pink top. They are both looking towards the camera. The background is a soft-focus green landscape with trees.

Prime Times

The RV life

may be for you — but prepare well before heading out

Older workers

postponing retirement for a variety of reasons

Many Maine Seniors

experience food insecurity despite resources that try to fill the need

Music & Memory

program improves the quality of lives through personalized music

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The RV life may be for you — but prepare well before heading out

BY VALERIE TUCKER
Correspondent

Today's RVs comfort, convenience and amenities make them an affordable travel choice for seniors. According to the Recreational Vehicle Industry Association, there are approximately 35 million RV enthusiasts in the U.S. Some modern RV campsites offer luxurious extras, like hot tubs and fitness centers.

Today's online services and additional accessories, like backup cameras, make the RV adventure a lot less stressful. Join one or several of the many RV community forums online to learn what others have to share. YouTube offers endless tutorials of every possible aspect of RV travel and troubleshooting. Talk to other RV owners to learn what they wish they had known when they started traveling. A variety of publications describe what each campsite offers, along with policies, costs and a rating system. New RVers can find dozens of books and DVDs about maintenance, repairs, troubleshooting and the RV lifestyle.

Still, even with the thousands of RVs on the road, buying a home on wheels can be intimidating for seniors. Rod and Renee Worster, owners of Rod Cycle and RV in Madison, offer an inventory of new and used RVs, fifth wheelers, and campers, along with a store stocked with RV accessories and parts. They also have an option for those who are hesitant.

"People who don't know if the RV lifestyle is for them can rent one from us and try it out," Rod said. "We'll get them off on the right foot."

Their service department offers general service, warranty work, and repairs, so when the weather starts to become a little too chilly and his customers want to head for warmer destinations, he and his staff know how to get the rig on the road for a trouble-free trip. After more than 35 years in business, they also have an encyclopedic knowledge of RV-related information and lots of good advice for future RVers.

The folks at Good Times Unlimited in Farmington are part of a second-generation family business who also knows the RV lifestyle and how to make every detail stress free.

"Think of the RV the way you would your new home," sales manager Debbie Davis tells her new customers. "Be familiar with how systems operate and what your limitations are."

RVers should consider fire and carbon monoxide safety, just as they would at home.

"We spend time with our customers going over all of the operations of their RV's systems, including propane, water, electrical and towing equipment" said Davis. "We also offer helpful extras that make towing and maneuvering safer and easier."

Weather safety means avoiding trips to areas during hurricane and tornado seasons. Most smart phones have weather apps that provide timely updates. Know where the safety alarms



(smoke and carbon monoxide) and emergency exits are located. Plan the trip well in advance to get a campsite that can accommodate the RV. Ask if there are restrictions for ages and pets. Seasonal rates can change, just as they do for hotels and airlines, so check for bargains.

"Planning in advance can help a camper find better rates," Davis suggested. "Always make sure to ask if a senior rate is available."

Practice parking the vehicle with an experienced RV driver. Make it a routine to check the wiring and the signal lights regularly, towing equipment if applicable, and carry replacement bulbs and fuses. Check the RV's locks and get spare keys. Make sure to lock storage compartments, doors and windows. If dry camping in remote locations, consider adding alarms to the vehicle's doors and windows and always double-check before answering the door.

Leave a copy of a travel plan with friends or family. With modern technology, travelers even can take a GPS that will transmit the RV's location to those who want to know. Start with short trips to get used to the daily routine. Get copies of prescriptions for glasses and contacts, and check whether medications

might need to be kept at certain temperature ranges.

Travelers should make a list of dump sites (to clear waste water tanks) on their itinerary and check in advance to be sure any public site is open. Some states are eliminating stations because of the sanitation concerns and maintenance costs. Practice hooking up the waste tank and water tank hoses before the first big trip, and regularly monitor how securely they fasten to the RV's waste outlet.

Monitor tire pressure and write down the height, weight and length of the RV and the maximum tire pressure allowable. An RV that exceeds its gross vehicle weight rating leads to early tire wear and failure, wear and tear on suspension and shock absorbers, and unsafe stopping in an emergency situation. Get an RV roadside service policy. AAA, Coach-Net and Good Sam offer good RV roadside service plans. Buy good fire extinguishers and learn how to use them.

Patrick Moody, from the Portland AAA office, suggested adding RV roadside assistance coverage before taking that first trip.

Current members can add RV coverage for \$30 per year," he said. "This allows you to use your existing four annual tows for RVs,

motorcycles, and travel trailers that you own, borrow, or rent, up to 100 miles each.

That coverage expands up to 200 miles on one tow per household for AAA Premier members.

RESOURCES FOR RVERS:

Good Sam (goodsamclub.com)

Passport America
(passportamerica.com)

Road Less Traveled
(roadlesstraveled.us)

Go Camping America
(gocampingamerica.com)

Trailer Life Directory
(trailerlifedirectory.com)

RV Bookstore (rvbookstore.com)

Workamper (workamper.com)

"Next Exit-Interstate Highway Guide"
(paperback)

"Wright Guide: Camping With the Corps"
(paperback)

"Wright Guide To Free and Low Cost
Campgrounds" (paperback)

Older workers postponing retirement for a variety of reasons

BY WANDA CURTIS
Correspondent

While many people look forward to the day when they can hang up their hat and go fishing or go RVing, Maine Department of Labor reports that more seniors today are electing to postpone their retirement. DOL statistics show that the labor force participation rate for seniors in Maine and nationwide has increased during the past two decades. Approximately 25 percent of Maine's work force are now those 55 years or older.

Glenn Mills, the chief economist at the Maine DOL's center for workforce research said that nationwide about one-third of seniors in their upper 60's and one-fifth of seniors in their early 70's participate in the labor force. However, he said, very few work beyond the age of 75.

Those statistics reflect what's taking place in Maine as well, he said.

Laura Hudson, Director of Communications and Marketing for the Department said recently that multiple factors have contributed to the rise in labor force participation for seniors in Maine and across the nation. Baby boomers account for many of those now working past retirement age and many jobs today are less physically strenuous than in the past, which makes it easier for more people to continue working. She also said that the high divorce rate has led to fewer people being supported by a spouse.

Sandra Butler, who is a member of the Older Workers Committee for the State Workforce Board in the Department, said that when considering retirement, Social Security is only one leg of a three-legged stool of financial support. Many people are unable to survive on Social Security earnings alone so they must rely on savings and retirement funds to make up the difference. People who haven't been able to save or don't have a retirement fund are often those staying in the workforce longer.

Butler said that many caregivers have to keep working longer than they had intended due to the high costs of health care.

In addition to the economic reasons for remaining in the workforce, Butler said that many seniors want to continue working because they find their work fulfilling and often enjoy the contact with other people.

Augusta pharmacist Sally Brown, 75, said that she's remained in the workforce because she enjoys her profession and also because she needs the money to pay for her dream home. Brown said that she started out in a premed program in college but didn't really like it and eventually switched to nursing. But didn't like giving injections to her patients so made the decision to become a pharmacist.

"I enjoy helping people and I like helping them to understand what their medications

"I think they can relate to the clients to whom they provide care because they realize that they may find themselves in the same position of needing care not too far down the road."

MIKE STAIR, PRESIDENT AND CEO, CARE & COMFORT



Contributed photos
Receiving the 2017 Silver Collar award on behalf of Care & Comfort, recognizing the company as one of Maine's premier employers of Seniors, are left to right, Lori Chamberlain, Shannan Godin, Cheryl Moran (Dept of Labor), Michele Vigue, Mike Stair (President & COO), Rachel Boucher, Karen Adams, Stacy Dostie, Fred Webber (Chair, State Workforce Board), Scott Moore, Michelle Pomelow, Keeley French, and Tiffany Chase.

are for," Brown said.

After working in Connecticut for many years, Brown made the decision to move to Maine and build a log cabin. She'd always dreamed about living in a log cabin and decided that it was time to fulfill her dream so she purchased land and hired a builder.

"If I quit working now, I'd have to give up my home because I couldn't afford it," Brown said.

So although she sometimes finds the 12-hour shifts long and tiring at the end of the day, Brown looks as spry as her younger cohorts as she sprints across the floor in her sneaker shoes to attend to her next customer at Hannaford's pharmacy.

Brown said she has found her employer to be accommodating to senior workers. She isn't treated any differently than any other employee, she said.

Many employers report that seniors are some of their most valuable employees because older workers tend to be more dependable and their knowledge and experience can be an asset to a business.

Hudson said that Maine State Workforce Board's Older Worker Committee has designated the Silver Collar Employers Award to honor Maine employers "whose policies and practices match the needs of mature employees, valuing their skills and experience, their strong work ethic, flexibility, and enthusiasm."

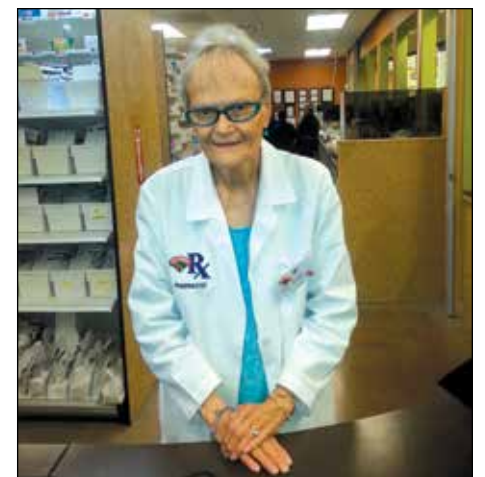
One central Maine employer who was a recipient of the Silver Collar Award last year was Care & Comfort. Mike Stair, president and chief operating officer of the business said that they employ about 400 people in a variety of health care professions and that one-third of their workers are 50 years or older and many are 60 years or older.

He said that while he doesn't want to downplay the importance of younger workers, some of their best employees are seniors.

"I think they can relate to the clients to whom they provide care because they realize that they may find themselves in the same position of needing care not too far down the road," said Stair.

According to Stair, his company makes every effort to accommodate the needs of their older workers by offering flexible scheduling to accommodate the needs of all their workers. He said that employees can select the schedule that allows them to fulfill their outside responsibilities or to go to medical appointments while still meeting the needs of their clients.

Lori Chamberlain, the director of human resources at Care & Comfort, said that seniors also serve as a role model for younger workers. She said that they are valued for their skills and many years of experience as well as being dependable and well prepared. The company offers extensive



Wanda Curtis photo
Augusta pharmacist Sally Brown, 75, said that she's remained in the workforce because she enjoys her profession and also because she needs the money to pay for her dream home.

training and support for seniors and other employees who find the technology aspect of their position to be challenging.

Maine DOL offers training opportunities for seniors who would like to acquire new skills and have the opportunity to try out new positions in the workforce. For more information, contact Maine DOL at 623-7900 or visit www.maine.gov/labor.

It shouldn't be a secret: UMA Senior College has a lot to offer

BY UMA SENIOR COLLEGE
Special to the Sentinel & KJ

Are you in on one of the best-kept secrets in Central Maine? It's UMA Senior College (UMASC). Though Senior College has been around since 2001, there are senior citizens in our area who haven't heard of it, or if they have, don't understand what it is.

We understand that some seniors may find the idea of "college" off-putting, but in reality our organization offers an experience that is quite different from a regular institute of higher learning. In fact some have said that Senior College is "how college ought to be."

At UMA Senior College we believe that learning is not only about improving the mind, but also about having a good time doing it. We are proud of the wide variety of classes that we are able to offer. In addition, our students enjoy the opportunity to meet new friends and to maintain connections with old pals. In fact one of the stated purposes of Senior College is to enrich the social life of people of retirement age. Best of all, there are no exams, and homework, if any, is optional.

Students participate for the joy of learning, and the sole compensation for our instructors is the opportunity to teach students who are eager to learn and who are at least fifty years old. Except for a part-time administrator, the entire operation is run by volunteers at no public expense.

Take a course at a price you can afford with no grades or pressure. Interact and learn with classmates and instructors your own age.

At UMASC our classes typically meet two hours a week for eight weeks; topics are suggested by students or are chosen by volunteer instructors on subjects about which they wish to share knowledge or experience. Opportunities may include excursion activities such as visiting light houses or waterfalls or museums in Maine. Also, there are classes on watercolor painting, poetry, wood carving, or the natural world. Sometimes there are courses of practical value on topics such as financial and legal matters pertinent to older people, computer and internet skills, or issues related to seniors' health such as improving balance and choosing the right diet.

History courses on the Revolutionary and Civil Wars have always been popular. For the more studious, there are literature courses, classes involving political or philosophical issues, or the relationship between science and religion. Recently, we have added some "activity" courses: one on bridge for beginners, and one on petanque (somewhat similar to lawn bowling). Both have spawned offspring with groups forming clubs that continue to play.

There are also poetry groups, book groups, walking groups and a dining club that are free to our members (except for the meals). We also offer free "Brown Bag" lectures every



Tuesday in January and February on a variety of topics.

Typically we offer about twenty-five courses each semester and not all these topics are offered every semester. Annual membership in UMASC is \$25 (valid in any of the seventeen senior colleges in Maine) and \$30 tuition per course (scholarships available). Almost all of the books or other materials are provided free of charge.

Equally exciting is the UMASC Concert Series which brings top-notch popular, folk, bluegrass, and classical music eight Sunday afternoons a year to all area residents. Most concerts are held in UMA's Jewett Auditorium. Ticket prices are intentionally kept low at \$10 for adults, \$5 for students, and children are free. The 2018-19 series includes Leila Percy & Friends: Celebrate Songs of the Great American Songbook, October 28; George Lopez, November 18 (snow date December 2); A Don Campbell Christmas, December 16 (snow date December 23); Choro Louco, January 13 (snow date January 27); Boneheads, February 10 (snow date February 24); Sandy River Ramblers, March

10 (snow date March 24); Castlebay, April 7 and Masanobu Ikemiya, May 19.

UMASC's newest program is The Forum on the Future Series, designed to provoke discussion on the kind of future we want for our grandkids or on topics of pressing interest to senior citizens. During the 2018-19 academic year, expert featured speakers and panelists will give presentations on: Respectful Dialogue, September 30; Health Care, November 4; The Second Amendment, February 3 (snow date March 3); and Making Poverty Personal, March 17 (snow date March 31). There is always ample opportunity for audience members to interact with the speakers, and these events are free and open to all.

UMA Senior College is fortunate to have had tremendous support from UMA. The University has provided office space, rooms for classes and office help. Our work is managed by standing and ad hoc committees which are overseen by a capable and dedicated board of directors which has proven to be both efficient and effective.

Learn more about the Senior College

activities that can and will enhance life. We hope you will join with us in making our later years fun and full of learning. For more information, call 621-3551, or email us at UMASC@maine.edu; our web address is umasc.org. Check out our website for information about this fall's offerings and additional information about the concerts and Forums on the Future.

Classes typically meet two hours a week for eight weeks. Opportunities may include excursion activities such as visiting light houses or waterfalls or museums in Maine. Classes may include watercolor painting, poetry, wood carving, or the natural world. Sometimes there are courses of practical value on topics such as financial and legal matters pertinent to older people, computer and internet skills.

How empty-nesters can transform their homes

After bringing home a bubbly baby boy or girl, it can be hard for parents to imagine that a day will come when their kids are off to college and then onto their own apartment or house. After spending decades nurturing and caring for children, parents are then left with a suddenly quiet house and probably much more time to spare. If saying goodbye to the kids also means extra house, there's the option to downsize or make that extra space more useful.

Homeowners who choose to stay put can renovate vacant rooms into spaces that meet their newfound needs.

• **Hobby haven:** If you've always meant to set up a crafting room, home-brewing station or an artist's studio, now is an ideal time to do just that. Figure out which supplies you will need and begin reworking that former bedroom into a new sanctuary for leisure interests.

• **Guest suite:** If you've never had a spare bedroom to entertain guests, a child's former bedroom can fit the bill. It may not be that difficult to transform such spaces into relaxing and inviting rooms for overnight guests. Be sure there is at least a queen-



sized bed and a dresser or chest of drawers to stash belongings. Select paint colors and linens in neutral tones so the room will be inviting to guests.

• **Living room redo:** When there's an entire soccer team coming over to hang out, that

large sectional sofa or modular seating may be ideal. Now that the kids are out of the house and their friends are no longer coming over for movie night, living rooms can be made more intimate with small-scale seating. A small sofa and two comfortable chairs may be a more fitting option.

• **At-home gym:** Save on gym membership fees by building a mini studio right at home. Choose one of the larger bedrooms and then fill it with some fitness equipment, such as an elliptical trainer, a bench press bench and some free weights. Store rolled-up mats in the closet for yoga or Pilates sessions.

• **Expanded bathroom:** If space has always been at a premium in the bathroom, borrow area from an empty bedroom and turn it into a spa. Install a soaking tub separate from the shower, and fill the room with other amenities, such as a warming lamp or even a small sauna.

• **Home office:** Working from home a few days a week may be more plausible when nearing retirement, as it will be a smoother transition from heading to the office each day to spending more time at home. Turn a bedroom or den into an office space with a new desk and bookshelves.

An empty nest can be a bittersweet experience, but parents can make such situations work for them by transforming their homes to better reflect their current needs.



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Many Maine Seniors experience food insecurity despite resources that try to fill the need

BY WANDA CURTIS
Correspondent

One of the critical issues which thousands of seniors in the U.S. are facing today is food insecurity. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines "food insecurity" as "a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life."

Older adults are often more at risk for food insecurity because they live on fixed incomes, may have decreased mobility and often have health problems which limit the type of food they can eat.

According to the Good Shepherd Food Bank's online report "Older Mainers, Empty Plates: Senior Food Insecurity in Maine," there are roughly 45,600 seniors in Maine experiencing food insecurity and an additional 56,000 are facing the threat of hunger. They report that Maine's senior food insecurity rate is the 12th highest rate in the nation. They expect the situation to get worse as Maine's population ages.

Despite the bad news that many seniors in Maine are experiencing food insecurity, the executive director of the Waterville Homeless Shelter, Betty Palmer, said that a number of organizations and individuals are doing an excellent job in addressing the needs in Central Maine. "There's been a great improvement in food security, food equality—good healthy food filling somebody's tummy – and thinking about feeding neighbors," said Palmer. "From gleaned fields to picking up food from local businesses to food hubbing, a lot of people have been working together to meet the needs of this area."

Palmer said that the Homeless Shelter has an emergency food pantry which is open for area residents Friday 1-3 p.m. or they can call 872-8082 other days if they have an emergency situation. She said they feed an average of 30 households on any given Friday and several other households throughout the week. She said that they also provide emergency suppers to go at 6 p.m. each evening.

"If there's nothing in the cupboard, they can get a meal to go," said Palmer. "We provide a lot more meals to go during the winter—sometimes a dozen a day."

According to Palmer, the first time that a person comes to the food bank they aren't required to fill out any paperwork. The next time, they will be asked to provide a copy of their ID and to fill out some paperwork regarding household income. She said that most of the people who have requested food have met the federal poverty guidelines that they are required to meet.

Another area resource is the Waterville Food Bank located at the Pleasant Street United Methodist Church, 61 Pleasant Street in Waterville. They are open for food distribution to Waterville residents Monday-Thursday 9-11 a.m. and Monday evening 5:30-7 p.m. Anyone picking up food must provide proof that they are a Waterville resident by bringing in a piece of mail received within the past 6 weeks with their address. They are also required to show a photo ID. The food bank's screening process takes place between 8:30 and 10:30 a.m. For more information, call 616-0363.

The Augusta Food Bank, 161 Mt. Vernon Avenue in Augusta, serves residents of Augusta and Manchester. They are open for food distribution Monday-Thursday 12:30-2:30 p.m. However, food distribution is by appointment only. Residents must first register by calling 213-2233 between 11 and 11:30. Then they can call 213-2233 each month between 9:30 and 11:30 a.m. to schedule an appointment to pick up their food.

The food distribution manager Melissa Shea said that in addition to the seniors who come in to pick up food each month, food is also delivered monthly to homebound seniors

"There's been a great improvement in food security, food equality – good healthy food filling somebody's tummy – and thinking about feeding neighbors. From gleaned fields to picking up food from local businesses . . . a lot of people have been working together to meet the needs of this area."

BETTY PALMER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WATERVILLE HOMELESS SHELTER



Wanda Curtis photos
Above, the Augusta Food Bank is one of many resources in the area that distribute healthy foods to seniors.

At right, a sample of the food boxes that are distributed by the Augusta Food Bank by appointment only.



and others in the area who are homebound for medical reasons. They must have a letter from a medical provider. This program is not for people who just lack transportation to pick up food. It is only for people who are homebound and can't pick up the food due to medical reasons. The Salvation Army Food Bank, 11 N. Pearl Street in Augusta, serves residents of Augusta, Hallowell, Chelsea, Sidney, Waterville and Winslow. Residents of those areas who qualify may pick up food Tuesday-Friday 9 a.m.-12 noon or 12:30-4 p.m. They will be asked to provide a copy of their photo ID and either a birth certificate or social security card for children. They will also be asked to fill out paperwork regarding income but a staff member reports that they do make exceptions in some emergency situations when people don't meet income guidelines. For more information, call 623-3752.

Another important resource in overcoming food insecurity among seniors is Spectrum Generations. Their community engagement specialist, Sarah Brown, said that Spectrum Generations has been serving the nutritional needs of Maine's central and mid-coast communities for more than four decades.

"We believe good nutrition is the first step to remaining healthy," said Brown. "We offer in-home delivered meals through Meals on Wheels for those who qualify or Maine-Ly Delivered Meals for private pay consumers. We are currently receiving 18 new calls a week for home delivered Meals on Wheels service. We are currently feeding more than 1,000 older and disabled adults per day through our Meals on Wheels program, social dining at our community centers and our USDA commodities food program.

"With the support of our farmers and partners, 35 percent of the food in our meals is grown right here in Maine and is nutritionally appropriate for those on the program. Through our Meals on Wheels program, we are able to help support those older and disabled adults who may be homebound, have poor health, lack transportation and provide a weekly wellness check."

For more information about programs offered through Spectrum Generations, call (800) 639-1553. The list of agencies addressing the nutrition needs of seniors in this article is not all inclusive. For a more complete listing of agencies who help to provide nutritional food for seniors, contact the Good Shepherd Food Bank at 782-3554.

There are many churches in our areas who offer a soup and sandwich program. Please contact your local church to get more information on those who offer this service.



Medicare and Medicaid

As essential as ever after 50 years as law

BY JOHN NALE, ATTORNEY
Special to the Sentinel & KJ

As elder law attorneys we know how important the Medicare and Medicaid programs are to our elderly clients. The Medicare program provides health care coverage to millions of disabled Americans and many millions more elderly Americans. The Medicaid program provides health care coverage to the many millions of Americans who are at or below the federal poverty level. These programs have provided numerous benefits and services to enable millions of Americans to live longer and healthier lives.

The Medicare and Medicaid programs have existed for more than 50 years now. The programs are part of the American way of life. When President Lyndon B. Johnson signed Medicare and Medicaid into law on July 30, 1965, he stated, "No longer will

older Americans be denied the healing miracle of modern medicine. No longer will illness crush and destroy the savings they have so carefully put away over a lifetime so they might enjoy dignity in their later years. No longer will young families see their own incomes, and their own hopes, eaten simply because they are carrying out their deep moral obligations."

President Johnson was right. With modern medicine we are living longer and healthier lives; we will be able to keep our savings, our dignity, and our peace of mind and we can have health care even if we can't afford it.

Good healthcare means less cost in the long run. We must maintain these programs; we must maintain the quality of life that comes with these programs. We must support public policy that realizes and respects the benefits and the people who benefit from these programs.

Music & Memory program improves the quality of lives through personalized music

BY KATHRYN CARLSON
Special to the Sentinel & KJ

More than 28,000 people in Maine are currently living with Alzheimer's disease. Care for them is being provided by a staggering 69,000 friends and family members. These friends and family members often watch their loved ones transform into a person with aggression, into someone who no longer recognizes the world around them or into a person who can no longer express themselves.

Music & Memory is an evidence-informed program that has the ability to bring our loved ones out of their shell, spark memories of their past and increase their awareness of what is around them.

The premise behind Music & Memory is that the part of the brain that stores music is one of the last parts to be affected by Alzheimer's. Because of this, when music an individual listened to when they were younger is played, those memories associated with the music come back to them.

Music & Memory certified organizations have documented non-verbal clients singing to their favorite music. Others have played instruments they no longer remember playing. Spectrum Generations recently had the opportunity to bring Music & Memory to the organization through the MaineHealth Alzheimer's Partnership, funded by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), and quickly started planning how best to implement the project.

To become Music & Memory certified, staff members Kathryn Carlson and Hannah Tompkins attended three sessions totaling four hours of training, which covered topics such as how to select music that will generate the best responses, the management of the program, and hygiene practices regarding equipment. Spectrum Generations is now recognized, and registered as a Music & Memory Certified Organization.

Spectrum Generations is looking forward to assisting caregivers of those with Alzheimer's improve their relationship with their loved ones through music. For more information, call 1-800-639-1553.

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Eat well. Live long.

Don't let cooking for one force you to TV dinners

BY TERRI HIBBARD
Correspondent

One is a lonely number, especially when it's mealtime. It's so much more enjoyable to share a meal, conversation and laughter with family or friends.

Preparing a nice meal just for yourself can be a pain. It is, however, very important to one's physical and mental health.

Older adults, often women who have lost a spouse through divorce or death, tend not to eat well and that can lead to poor health, depression, more isolation and—let's face it—absolutely nothing good.

When you're alone, it's tempting to have crackers, cheese and a cup of tea. I know, I've done it. Or just take a Lean Cuisine dinner out of the freezer, zap it, eat it and be done. I've done that too.

Neither of these quick fixes is a good idea. Crackers and cheese are fine as an appetizer or snack, but where are the green vegetables? The fiber? The nutrition? TV dinners are quick but these things are (Yikes!) prepared food. And we all know what nutritionists say about prepared food. It's the stuff blamed for a multitude of health problems (along with our tendency to avoid exercise).

Take a careful look at the ingredients and nutritional information on a frozen meal touted as "healthy." You'll need a magnifying glass, but it's worth the effort. Also, there are lists of the best and worst frozen "healthy" dinners online. Evol butternut squash and sage ravioli, for example, is rated as one of the best. The ingredients don't raise red flags, but the nutrition does: 310 calories, 9 g fat, 4.5 g saturated fat, 650 mg sodium, 44 g carbs, 2 g fiber, 6 g sugar, 14 g protein. Buyer beware.

Cooking takes time—and sure, you'd rather watch another episode of Game of Thrones or read a Gerry Boyle mystery, but you can do both with a bit of planning.

And who says you have to eat alone? You probably know other singles who would love to share a meal with you. Invite one. Cooking three or four servings takes little more time than cooking one. So share a meal now and then. You'll enjoy the company and feel generous. Besides, you'll have leftovers for another meal or two.

If it's not convenient to invite someone in, deliver a meal to somebody who needs it. There now, you are such a good person!

In my town, Brunswick, we have music on the mall (the city park) every Wednesday evening in summer. Lots of Maine towns do something similar. Pack a bag lunch and eat it at the concert with a crowd of happy people and come home totally uplifted.

Plan meals around a lean protein, a vegetable (although there's nothing wrong with a sliced fresh peach or a handful of



cherries instead of a veggie) and a carb, such as brown rice, farro, quinoa, or a farmers market potato.

When Nature's Place small chicken breasts are on sale at Hannaford, buy a bag. They're right-sized for one person. Buy sustainable fish (not farm-raised in Asia), Nature's Place ground turkey and local ground beef. Divide into portions to freeze.

Mix turkey or beef with finely chopped onion, spices and an egg, mold into patties, freeze on waxed paper on a plate and then place in a bag after it is frozen. One of these patties on a bun with lettuce and tomato along with a side of whole-grain chips and cucumber slices is a quick and healthy meal. Or substitute good-quality deli turkey (Butterball Thanksgiving Roasted tastes best) in that sandwich for a quick meal.

Buy bone-in quality chicken or beef and spend a half-hour or so making a big pot of soup with lots of carrots, celery, onions, quinoa, brown rice or potatoes. Share with a friend and still have several containers for the freezer. Take a few minutes to make a batch of cornbread to go with a soup supper and that's a dinner a friend will rave about.

Tortilla Pizza. Bake a tortilla in your toaster oven just long enough to make it solid, top with a spoonful of (homemade) pizza sauce, a handful of mozzarella cheese, and chopped peppers, red onion and black olives. Return to the oven and bake until tortilla is crispy and veggies heated through but crunchy. YUM!

Quesadilla. In the microwave, sauté finely chopped peppers and onions. Spread half of a large flour tortilla with refried beans leaving edges clear, add cheese and veggies, sprinkle with oregano, cilantro and maybe a bit of cumin. Dip your fingers

in cold water and wet all around the edge of the tortilla. Fold like a turnover and press edges to seal. Fry slowly until nice and brown on each side. Top with chopped lettuce, salsa and sour cream. Also works with ground beef or turkey filling.

Tostadas. Spread corn tortillas with a little oil, crisp them up (carefully – they burn easily) in a toaster oven and spread with guacamole or refried beans, cheese, lettuce, sour cream and salsa. Or partially crisp them and top with shredded Mexican cheese and continue baking until cheese is melted and tortillas are crisp. Same toppings.

Guacamole. Mash an avocado, sprinkle with salt and lime juice (I buy key lime juice in the liquor aisle at the grocery store), add a tablespoon or more of salsa. Taste and keep adding juice or salt until it's just right.

Tacos. Everyone knows how to make tacos. But do you know you can substitute heated black beans or chicken or flaked fish (from last night's dinner) for the ground beef or ground turkey?

Can you tell I lived in Arizona for several years and learned to love Mexican food?

Tuna, chicken, crabmeat or tiny canned shrimp salad roll.

Mix your preferred protein with finely chopped celery (optional: add sweet peppers, red onion, grated carrot), mayo, salt and pepper. Stuff into a buttery roll grilled in a skillet. For a special chicken salad, add dried cranberries and chopped walnuts. Or put some greens and dressing in a bowl, and put your protein salad on top for a main dish. Any of these proteins can be added to cooked pasta for a main dish salad. Add cucumbers and frozen peas to pasta salads.

Stir-fry. Takes 6 to 8 minutes to chop whatever fresh veggies you have (zucchini, onion, celery, carrots, peppers), and another five minutes to brown up small pieces of a chicken breast. Remove cooked chicken and quickly cook the veggies in a big skillet with olive oil. Top with packaged or bottled sauce. Serve over brown rice.

Baked chicken, fish or pork chop. Dip your choice in a beaten egg, then bread crumbs (I prefer Panko crumbs). Season with salt, pepper and Italian or poultry seasoning. If I have an apple, I bake slices of it in the pan with the pork chop. Bake a potato alongside the protein and zap a veggie.

Pasta. If you want fast, angel hair cooks in 2 to 4 minutes. Buy the protein pasta for added nutrition. In the summer, I chop a fresh, very ripe tomato and put it in a bowl with olive oil, salt and pepper. Microwave on low heat for a minute or more. If you have fresh basil, chop a bunch of leaves. Cook pasta, drain and pour hot pasta into your warm bowl of tomatoes. Sprinkle with basil (use dried if that's all you have), stir and enjoy. Or for a quick pasta alfredo, plop a big spoonful of sour cream on hot cooked pasta, stir well, sprinkle with grated parmesan and lots of pepper.

Tossed salad on the side, please.

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“Should I give my house to my children?”

BY SALLY M. WAGLEY, ESQ
AND DANIEL J. ECCHER, ESQ.
Special to the Sentinel & KJ

A question I often hear from clients is: “Should I give my house (or camp) to my children?” Clients often believe that deeding the house to others will save the property in the event of nursing home expenses. They may also want children to help with taxes, insurance and maintenance or they may be concerned about probate. It is essential for any client considering this move to know the risks and benefits.

Possible benefits:

If the client is able to go five years without needing nursing home care, but later does need such care, the property will not count against the client if the client seeks financial help from the MaineCare (Maine Medicaid) program.

If the property is not in the client's name at death, the state and other creditors will not have a claim against the property.

As a condition of transferring the property (especially a camp), children may agree to pay all or part of the property-related expenses.

The client may, if desired, maintain a degree of control over the property with a life lease or life estate.

Possible risks (and some ways to reduce risks):

Nursing home expenses: If the client needs nursing home care within five years after deeding the property, and if the client needs to apply for MaineCare (Maine Medicaid) within that time frame, the client will be penalized for the gift. The client will either have to go without the needed care for a period of months or ask the children to pay these costs.

Loss of control: Having given the property away, the client will need to get approval from the children if the client wants to sell or refinance the property. (The client can, however, maintain the right to live in or use the property by insisting on a life lease.)

Child's creditors or divorce: If the child gets into financial trouble or bankruptcy or gets divorced, the child's creditors or ex-spouse may be able to obtain an interest

in the property. (The transfer of the property to an irrevocable trust may offer some protection against a child's creditors or ex-spouse.)

Child's unexpected death: If a child unexpectedly dies before the parent, the property may go to the child's own heirs. (The irrevocable trust or a joint ownership arrangement may be helpful in this circumstance as well.)

Tax consequences: If the client transfers a residence to a child and later decides to sell it, there will be a capital gains tax, as the client will no longer be able to use the IRS primary residence exclusion. The client may also lose property tax exemptions. In addition, the child may later, upon selling the property, pay a higher capital gains tax than if the child inherited it (unless a life estate or similar arrangement is used).

Questions to ask:

Before assisting a client with the transfer of property, I ask the client a number of questions, including:

How is your health?

What are the chances that you might need long term care in the next five years?

Do you have long term care insurance?

Do you have enough money to pay for nursing home care for all or most of the next five years?

Are you willing to give up a degree of control to your children?

In short, there is no simple answer to the question “Should I give my property to my children?” While this may be a reasonable step for some clients, for others (especially older people with chronic health problems and little savings) the risks may be too great. Any client considering this move should first obtain legal advice from an experienced elder law attorney.

The information provided here is for educational purposes only, and should not be construed as legal advice or an answer to a specific legal problem.

Sally M. Wagley, Daniel Eccher and the other attorneys at Levey, Wagley, Putman & Eccher, P.A. (a firm in Winthrop), practice elder law, estate planning and estate administration, leveyandwagley.com.

There is no simple answer to the question “Should I give my property to my children?” While this may be a reasonable step for some, for others (especially older people with chronic health problems and little savings) the risks may be too great.



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Maine's Leading Senior Resource

Untreated hearing loss can lead to isolation, depression and the risk of dementia

BY WANDA CURTIS
Correspondent

One of the most common chronic health issues among seniors is hearing loss. The Hearing Health Foundation reports on their website hearinghealthfoundation.org that 48 million Americans have compromised hearing. They report that one in three people in the U.S. between the ages of 65 and 74 has hearing loss and nearly half of those older than 75 years old have difficulty hearing.

Mark King, a board certified hearing instrument specialist with Beltone in Augusta, works with people every day who have varying degrees of hearing loss. He said that a good indication that someone is experiencing hearing loss is when they frequently ask other people to repeat themselves or frequently need to turn up the volume on the TV.

A person with hearing loss, he said, may also notice in restaurants or social settings that they hear voices but can't understand what's actually being said.

According to King, multiple factors can contribute to hearing loss. He said that many people are affected by age-related hearing loss but that usually multiple factors contribute to it.

"Often there can be a hereditary component or loss from prior diseases of the ear," said King.

"Many times we see something as simple as impacted ear wax as a cause. In Maine, we see our share of noise-induced hearing loss in those who work in forestry, paper mills, boat building, or use snow blowers, and firearms. Noise associated with power tools is also a concern. "Diabetes and ototoxic drugs are also contributing factors." (Oxotoxic drugs can include antibiotics such as gentamicin, loop diuretics such as furosemide and platinum-based chemotherapy agents such as cisplatin. A number of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, NSAIDS, have also been shown to be ototoxic.)

King explained that changes occur in the brain with aging that can affect processing of the spoken word and those changes are then compounded by hearing loss. He said that any proper hearing evaluation isn't complete without word recognition testing.

"That speech-related testing part is so critical in evaluating both hearing challenges and potential outcomes if hearing aids are recommended," King said.

In regards to hearing aid technology, tremendous strides have been made in outcomes and features. He said that research and development have been a game changer in the past few years.

"Our higher-level products can actually be adjusted by me from anywhere in the world through a patient cell phone app as an example," said King. "At the same time, the more moderate technology level hearing aids we offer, for those with a quieter lifestyle, have improved dramatically as well in clarity and speech understanding. Not everybody has a need or a budget for some of the most sophisticated products. So the focus is on a patient's needs. That is why it is necessary for us to offer all levels



Wanda Curtis photo

Mark King, BC-HIS Certified Hearing Instrument Specialist, displays an image of an eardrum on his computer screen at the Beltone office in Augusta.

of devices."

When deciding upon a hearing aid device, King said that the degree of hearing loss, lifestyle, and budget must all be considered. He said that the process begins with a hearing evaluation.

In regards to cost, he said that many types of digital hearing aids are available in the \$1,000-\$3,500 price range. Some health insurance plans will now cover at least a part of the cost for hearing aids. It also may be possible to make payment arrangements with hearing aid providers

For those who meet the income guidelines and other qualifications, there are also programs offered through the Lions Club, the Beltone Hearing Care Foundation and the Starkey Hearing Foundation which may help with the cost of hearing aids.

"There are a huge number of people who need help," King said.

Untreated hearing loss not only helps to isolate seniors from the rest of the world around them but can also contribute to cognitive decline. A

study by Johns Hopkins University researchers (published in the February 2011 "Archives of Neurology") showed people with hearing loss are significantly more likely to develop dementia over time than those who retain their hearing. Researchers studied 639 people with and without hearing loss. They found that compared with participants with normal hearing, the participants with mild, moderate, and severe hearing loss "had twofold, threefold, and fivefold, respectively the risk of developing dementia over time." The researchers concluded that the more hearing loss the participants had, the higher their likelihood of developing dementia.

According to King, untreated hearing loss has also been linked to depression among seniors. In light of that, and the other research findings, he urges seniors to seek treatment as soon as possible.

"The best advice that I or any other professional could give you is don't wait," said King. "Encourage others to get tested if you notice them missing out. The good news is

"Noise-induced hearing loss is something that many times we can protect against. We can't change the course of a hereditary component or even an age-induced loss, but noise we generally can. Any Home Depot or Lowe's store has a variety of noise protection options at a reasonable cost."

**MARK KING, BOARD-CERTIFIED HEARING INSTRUMENT SPECIALIST
BELTONE**

that the latest studies show people are getting tested and are treating hearing loss more quickly now once they are aware of it – much sooner than they used to. This has helped in improving outcomes dramatically along with preservation of their processing."

Another age group at risk for hearing loss, King said, is the millennial population because of their use of earbuds. He said many of them rely daily on earbuds for their cell phone use and for listening to music. He said the sound pressure that the earbuds generate can be dangerous and can contribute to noise-induced hearing loss.

"Noise-induced hearing loss is something that many times we can protect against," said King. "We can't change the course of a hereditary component or even an age-induced loss (should you have one) but noise we generally can. Any Home Depot or Lowe's store has a variety of noise protection options at a reasonable cost. Every little bit of hearing conservation helps you a great deal down the road."

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Healthy Living for ME

Helping older Mainers find ways to enjoy healthier living

FROM SPECTRUM GENERATIONS
Special to the Sentinel & KJ

Through a network of local leaders, community organizations and health systems, Healthy Living for ME delivers programs to help adults manage chronic health conditions, prevent falls and foster well-being.

Healthy Living for ME provides a single-point of entry to a statewide network of workshops that empower adults to address and better manage their health issues. Workshops offer focus on improving balance and preventing falls and helping adults manage chronic conditions including high blood pressure, chronic pain, heart disease, COPD, arthritis and diabetes.

Healthy Living for ME's programs are evidence-based and proven to make a positive difference in quality of life measures such as feeling more in control, less stressed, and able to do more of what makes you feel well.

Classes include strategies and exercises to teach participants how to take an active role in managing their health and well-being, and are offered in four categories: Falls Prevention, Diabetes Prevention & Self-Management, Caregiver Support and Chronic Pain & Disease Management.

The Living Well suite of classes include Living Well for Better Health, Living Well with Diabetes, and Living Well with Chronic Pain. These are evidence-based programs which provide education on dietary choices, active lifestyles, and pain management to instill confidence and a modified lifestyle in participants, and have shown a positive impact on the management of diabetes, arthritis, obesity and other chronic diseases, and prompting an increase in participant's confidence.

Other classes offered include: A Matter of Balance: Managing Concerns about Falls, which emphasizes practical strategies to reduce fear of falling; Tai Chi for Health and Balance, offering low-impact exercise and slow, fluid movements which aim to strengthen joints and muscles to prevent falls and relieve pain for those with arthritis; and Enhance@Fitness, a group exercise program which helps adults at any fitness level become more active, energized and



empowered to sustain independent lives.

Savvy Caregiver is also available through Healthy Living for ME, and it helps caregivers better understand the changes their loved ones are experiencing and how to best provide individualized care for their care recipients throughout the progression of Alzheimer's or dementia.

Visit healthylivingforme.org to find a nearby class or call 1-800-620-6036.

Healthy Living for ME brings together Spectrum Generations, SeniorsPlus, and Aroostook Agency on Aging – three of Maine's Area Agencies on Aging – in a partnership to deliver statewide chronic disease self-management and falls prevention classes. For more information visit healthylivingforme.org



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It's here. It's legal.

But it's not so easy to use medical marijuana

BY TERRI HIBBARD
Correspondent

If you're alive and paying attention, you've heard that in Maine it is now legal to use marijuana (also known as cannabis) to relieve pain and other symptoms of specific illnesses. Strangely enough, a patient can't ask her doctor for a medical marijuana prescription and go to the pharmacy to fill it. That would be simple, but, no, that's not the way it works.

The state of Maine has legalized the use of marijuana for both recreational and medical purposes, but the federal government has not. And that's why the system is complex and round-about to say the least.

In this state, a person is eligible to use marijuana to treat an illness if his or her medical records indicate a diagnosis of: Cancer, HIV/AIDS, glaucoma, hepatitis C, Crohn's disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), nail-patella syndrome, Alzheimer's disease, cachexia or wasting syndrome, severe nausea, chronic intractable pain, severe and persistent muscle spasms including multiple sclerosis, seizures including epilepsy, and Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Let's say you're a person in her 70s and you've been dealing with the pain of arthritis for way too many years. You've given up doing many things you used to enjoy— golfing, biking, dancing or knitting— because pain pretty much eliminates the pleasure you might get from such activities. If pain keeps you awake at night, you're going to be tired and cranky with little enthusiasm and energy for life.

You've used various over-the-counter pain relievers with their assorted side-effects and then opted for prescription medications, some very pricey and some with even nastier side-effects. Where do you go from here?

Grace is a retired teacher who managed well enough with her rheumatoid arthritis until she was struck by Lyme disease, not once but twice.

"The second time knocked me for a loop," she said.

We are not using Grace's full name because she is understandably cautious about letting the world know she has marijuana.

Grace first asked her regular medical provider for help and began with antibiotics. When there was no relief from symptoms, she began following a homeopathic regime. That didn't do the job either. Over-the counter pain pills weren't powerful enough, so Grace began to rely on prescription-strength ibuprofen to manage her pain. Eventually, however, the ibuprofen "was killing my stomach."

After researching online and reading

everything she could about medical marijuana (cannabis), Grace asked around and found a doctor who certified her for medical marijuana use. Most health care professionals are not willing to get into the certification process because the federal government still lists it as an illegal substance.

Grace began treatment with a CBD (cannabidiol) salve that helped relieve some painful areas, but she still had too much pain and too little sleep for a normal life.

"I was a mess," she said.

Grace then began taking capsules of CBD oil. Again, some relief but not enough to restore the life she lived before Lyme disease—a reasonably healthy, ordinary life.

Then the dispensary staff suggested she add a tincture of THC (tetrahydrocannabinol, usually dissolved in alcohol) to her regimen.

"I put a few drops on a Nabisco Nilla wafer and it works great."

Even after exertion that leaves her exhausted and in pain, she says, "In minutes the pain is gone."

Grace now uses a combination of both CBD capsules (one morning and evening) and the THC tincture to relieve pain and provide restful, restorative sleep.

"They work together, for me. This is easy and it won't hurt me. You don't get high— unless you take too much or take it with alcohol (wine, beer or a cocktail)."

The downside of using this regimen is the cost: Grace paid \$150 to be certified by a health care provider who is not her doctor; she will renew her certificate at a cost of \$100 a year. And about every two months she buys a 15 ml (0.51 fluid oz.) bottle of THC for \$75 and a 100 ml (or 3.4 fluid oz.) bottle of CBD for \$200. (She fills her own capsules purchased at a health food store.) Her annual cost is about \$1,650 per year. Of course, medical insurance pays none of this cost.

But, that's all right with Grace.

"I really do not want to jeopardize my quality of life, or even shorten it, by taking drugs that I know will hurt me," she said. "I want to live a normal pain-free life."

Grace recognizes the irony of her preferred pain medication.

"As a teacher, I counseled kids against marijuana; it was an evil thing," she said.

A few legitimate studies have shown medical marijuana to be effective for pain relief— especially in older people — and, unlike opioids and other pain relievers, marijuana has no known side-effects when used appropriately for relief of health issues.



Terri Hibbard photos

Matt Belanger, behind the counter, talks with a potential customer about the types of medical marijuana (cannabis) products available at The Wellness Connection dispensary in Bath. Used to treat a great variety of health problems, the essential elements of cannabis – CBD, THC and others – can be used in a tincture, eaten in sweets or other foods, inhaled as a vapor, smoked or rubbed on the body as salve. Belanger has been trained to know what types of cannabis the store sells, what works best for what conditions and explain things carefully to a newcomer.



The Wellness Connection in Bath has a bright, professional but welcoming atmosphere. There are similar Wellness Connection stores in Gardiner, Brewer and Portland.

Marijuana

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

So, if you are ready to try medical marijuana, where do you start?

First, learn all you can about it. There is a lot of information online, not all of it unbiased.

A publication in the European Journal of Internal Medicine (ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/29398248) in March of this year titled "Epidemiological characteristics, safety and efficacy of medical cannabis in the elderly." During a six-month period, 2,736 patients over 65 years of age were

treated with cannabis. The conclusion: Therapeutic use of cannabis is safe and efficacious in the elderly population and may decrease the use of other prescription medicines, including opioids. The only adverse side-effects were dizziness (9.7 percent) and dry mouth (7.1 percent).

For details about Maine's medical marijuana law go to maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/public-health-systems/mmm/index.shtml. Follow the links on this page to access everything you need to know about using medical marijuana in our state.

More MARIJUANA, **PAGE 15**

Making the best choice at a dispensary

How would a new user of medical marijuana know what to ask for at a dispensary?

At the Wellness Connection, customers are encouraged to ask all the questions they want and need to ask, said Patricia Rosi, CEO.

"We cover a broad range of topics. We make people feel easy. This is a non-judgmental zone. There is no time limit.

"If you've never used cannabis, it's important that you know we have expertise, we know about our products."

Every staff member at the four Wellness Connection dispensaries in Bath, Brewer, Gardiner and Portland goes through "robust training" about the products, how they are grown and how they are used to treat various health problems.

Training is on-going, Rosi said, because there are many medical studies taking place on the use of medical marijuana, particularly in Israel, where clinical studies such as those used for traditional pharmaceuticals are now underway.

"We have been collaborating with clinical and academic institutions to develop patient surveys in order to demonstrate the benefits of cannabis," Rosi said. "For instance, we participated in a survey of 1,000 New England patients or Symposiums organized by Dartmouth."

Dispensary products are pricey so, without any FDA control or industry standards, how can a customer be sure that what she or he is paying for is the correct potency and strain for a particular ailment?

"We routinely test for potency and purity of the products we offer thanks to our internal quality control laboratory," said Rosi.

"When it comes to strains and genetics, the industry is developing some standards. Our expert cultivators carefully select any new varietal for its properties. Several industry-wide projects are aiming at mapping the DNA of strains."

Still, how does anyone new to medical marijuana know what to buy to relieve, for example, arthritis pain? What would a staffer at a Wellness Connection dispensary recommend?

"There is not one thing," Rosi said. "It is usually a combination of products and the use of multiple ways to access them: inhaling vaporized oils, eating (edible products), smoking and/or applying salve where pain is most acute. It could take a combination of products to achieve the desired relief. Starting with a small dosage and having follow-up conversations with our team ensures that together we identify what works best.

"It's about finding your own regimen" she said. "There is not one form or product."

Many varieties and uses of cannabis

The best-known element in marijuana is THC. It's the stuff that gives a high and has been immensely popular for decades despite its illegal status. THC is one of the cannabinoids (compounds) that exist in cannabis/marijuana. Concentrations or percent of each type of cannabinoid varies from plant to plant and strain to strain.

A few components important for healthcare are:

Cannabidiol (CBD) relieves convulsions, inflammation, anxiety and nausea—many of the same therapeutic qualities as THC but without psychoactive effects. It is the main cannabinoid in low-THC cannabis strains, and modern breeders have been developing strains with greater CBD content for medical use.

- Cannabinol (CBN) is mildly psychoactive, decreases intraocular pressure and seizure occurrence.

- Cannabichromene (CBC) promotes the analgesic effects (pain relief) of THC and has sedative (calming) effects.

- Cannabigerol (CBG) has sedative effects and antimicrobial properties, as well being able to lower intraocular pressure.

- Tetrahydrocannabinol (THCV) is showing promise for type 2 diabetes and related metabolic disorders.

- Excerpted from safeaccessnow.org

Terri Hibbard

"I really do not want to jeopardize my quality of life, or even shorten it, by taking drugs that I know will hurt me. I want to live a normal pain-free life."

GRACE, USER OF MEDICAL MARIJUANA



The display case at this Bath dispensary looks a lot like that at a jewelry shop. Wellness Connection employee, Justin McCutcheon, is at right.

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Marijuana

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

You might also want to watch "A life of its own: the truth about Medical Marijuana," an Australian documentary available on Netflix.

Next, ask your primary care doctor about it. Chances are, he or she will tell

you (as mine did) that you are welcome to give it a try "but I don't certify patients."

I also asked the doctor who has been treating my back pain with osteopathic manipulative treatment (OMT). No go. He has patients who use medical marijuana but, he said, he doesn't want to get into the certification process.

Googling "Maine health care professionals who certify patients for marijuana use" will turn up many pages about medical marijuana, but no names,

locations or phone numbers of doctors or nurse practitioners who can certify.

A spokesperson at the Maine Medical use of Marijuana Program in Augusta (287-3282) said that more than 300 medical practitioners have met the requirements to certify patients, but there is no list of names available to the public and no way to know whether those who asked for the paperwork are actually certifying.

Apparently there aren't many health

care professionals here who openly acknowledge this part of their practice. It is, after all, an illegal drug in the eyes of federal authorities. Plus, there are plenty of "patients" who simply want easy access to pot.

My primary care doctor gave me the name of a doctor who will certify but if yours doesn't know one, just ask around

More MARIJUANA, PAGE 15

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Marijuana

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

—family, friends and co-workers. Someone will know someone who is a medical marijuana patient. Post the question on Facebook.

The thing that seems unreasonable is that to get certified to use medical

marijuana, a person has to pay \$150 to \$250 to a medical professional who doesn't know him or her. This health care professional looks at the medical record proving eligibility and gives a certification card. That's basically it. The health care professional is totally uninvolved in actual care of the patient during the year, but will recertify the person for an additional \$100 to \$200 fee the following year.

With certification in hand, a patient can now go to a dispensary to get marijuana.

There are currently eight dispensaries in Maine listed at: maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/.../Maine-Dispensaries-town-and-phone.pdf

Then the question becomes, what type and strength of the marijuana do you need and how do you know what you're getting at a dispensary since there is no FDA control and no industry standards yet.

Again, ask around, visit more than one dispensary and ask plenty of questions.

“As a teacher, I counseled kids against marijuana; it was an evil thing.”

PATIENT WHO NOW USES MEDICAL MARIJUANA FOR RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

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- Tia Walker, The Inspired Caregiver: Finding Joy While Caring for Those You Love



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Aging Well Living Well expo by SeniorsPlus set for October 5

BY SENIORSPLUS

Special to the Sentinel & KJ



Contributed photo

Make new friends and enjoy the fall scenery. The Aging Well Living Well Expo presented by the nonprofit SeniorsPlus returns on Friday, October 5 at the Grand Summit Hotel and Conference Center at Sunday River in Bethel, Maine. The day-long event offers almost 30 workshops. The keynote address will be by Dr. Marilyn R. Gugliucci.

Make new friends and enjoy a day of fun and enlightenment. The eleventh annual Aging Well Living Well Expo will be held Friday, October 5 at the Grand Summit Hotel and Conference Center at Sunday River in Bethel, Maine. Featuring workshops and lectures, the day-long event is a learning opportunity for adults.

The Aging Well Living Well Expo is presented by the nonprofit SeniorsPlus, the designated Agency on Aging for Western Maine. Tickets for the Expo, which runs from 8:15 a.m. to 4 p.m. on October 5, are \$25 per person and include breakfast and lunch, as well as entrance to workshops. Tickets can be purchased by calling 1-800-427-1241.

Raffle and chondola ride tickets may be purchased for an additional fee. Seats are limited; advance registration is strongly recommended. Details at seniorsplus.org.

Attendees are invited to explore serious learning, such as understanding Medicare options and age-proofing your home, as well as first-time explorations like learning about rocks and gems and bird watching. The workshops to be presented at the Expo cover a spectrum of topics including law, health, exercise, cooking and art. Workshop titles range from "Mindful Movement as Medicine," to "Self Defense for Seniors," to "Medical Marijuana." Workshops run 75 minutes each.

The Expo begins with a breakfast keynote address by Dr. Marilyn R. Gugliucci, Professor and Director of Geriatric Education and Research, Department of Geriatric Medicine, University of New

England, College of Osteopathic Medicine (UNECOM). Ms. Gugliucci's talk at the Expo, "Granny's Got Her Groove On: Society, Aging, Sex, and You!" will expound on the pursuit of intimacy and sexual satisfaction in later life.

"The Expo always draws a crowd because it's fun and interesting as we offer programs designed to encourage active aging and improved quality of life. Plus the food is good!" said Betsy Sawyer-Manter, President and CEO of SeniorsPlus. Almost 300 attendees attended the Expo last year. A complete schedule of programming can be found at the SeniorsPlus website seniorsplus.org.

SeniorsPlus is grateful for the support of its major sponsors of Expo: Turner Publishing, Inc., Subaru of America, Healey & Associates, Senior Planning Center, The Chapman House Home for Senior Women, Homecare for Maine, Martin's Point Health Care, Beltone and Healthcentric Advisors.

The mission of SeniorsPlus is to enrich the lives of seniors and adults with disabilities. Established in 1972, the organization believes in supporting the independence, dignity and quality of life of those we serve.

SeniorsPlus covers Androscoggin, Franklin, and Oxford counties, where it is the Agency on Aging and the Aging and Disability Resource Center. The agency focuses on older adults, adults with disabilities, and families, and offers a network of support, including information and assistance, short-term case management, Medicare counseling, caregiver support and respite, prevention education, and Options Counseling. It provides nutritional services including Meals on Wheels and community dining in our tri-county, largely rural territory. Annually, SeniorsPlus serves 17,000 individuals.



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