### Pittsfield Senior Center Activities

- AARP tax preparation
- Are You OK? wake-up program
- Art Studio!
- Berkshire Writers Room
- Bingo
- Breakfast Club
- Brown Bag
- Card Games, Bridge, Pitch
- Ceramics
- Chair Caning
- Coffee Shop
- Comedy Dungeon!
- Community Outreach
- Computer Workshop
- Exercise Classes-Osteo
- Foot Clinic
- From Stage to Screen
- Gift Shop
- "Hand and Foot" card game
- Health Education Workshops
- Income Tax Preparation
- Information/Referrals
- Knitting and Crochet
- "Legal Education"
- Line Dancing
- Lunch Served Daily
- Mah Jongg
- Meditation
- Molari Blood Pressure Visits
- Pinochle
- Poetry
- Pool Tables
- Quilting
- Seasonal Celebrations
- Scrapbooking & Card Making
- Scrabble
- Shake Your Soul dance-exercise
- SHINE Medicare Counseling
- Supportive Day Program
- Tai Chi, Tai Chi w/ weights
- Transportation
- Traveling Friends
- TRIAD
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Woodcarving, Woodworking
- Yoga

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- Clock Out  Page 2
- Biosphere One  Page 2
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- Photo Op  Page 5
- Rubicon  Page 7

### EAT SLEEP REPEAT
Ready for Retirement Quiz

Thinking about retirement? Take this quiz to test your smarts and learn how to plan for your ideal retirement.

Question 1
It doesn't matter how old you are when you begin to take your Social Security benefits. You get the same amount no matter your age. True or False?

Question 2
Even if your 401(k) fees seem small, they can have a big impact over time. True or False?

Question 3
I'm over 50, so it's too late to begin planning for my retirement. I've missed the boat. True or False?

Question 4
Green card holders cannot collect Social Security benefits. True or False?

Question 5
You will get out of Social Security the amount you put in. True or False?

Question 6
There is a simple and easy tool to calculate your Social Security benefits. True or False?

Question 7
I can't collect Social Security benefits if I'm still working. True or False?

Question 8
There are things you can do every day to get you closer to your retirement goal. True or False?

Question 9
It's a good idea to pay down debt prior to retiring. True or False?

Question 10
Taking a spousal benefit first, then your own, can raise your Social Security benefit in a big way. True or False?

See answers on insert page

A Path Away From Pollution

The third Monday in September marks the start of Pollution Prevention Week. In 1990, the U.S. Congress passed the Pollution Prevention Act, charging the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with the responsibility of implementing the act. Over the past 30 years, the EPA and companies have teamed up to develop methods and technologies to dramatically reduce pollutants and contaminants in our environment.

The top three biggest sources of pollution are transportation (cars and planes), food production, and energy production. Electric car companies like Tesla have created vehicles that emit no pollution into the air. With the advent of renewable sources of electric energy and the development of more efficient batteries that allow for long-range travel, electric cars may become the primary mode of transportation around the world. Airplanes can emit less pollution if they are designed to be more efficient, fly more efficient flight paths, and use alternative fuels.

Farm pollution, particularly the runoff of fertilizers from agricultural land, harms waterways and oceans. Animal waste, too, leaches into soil and water. Farms prevent pollution by applying fertilizers in proper amounts at specific times of the year and using no-phosphorous fertilizers. They can also do their best to prevent water runoff and stabilize soil to minimize landslides. Forested buffer zones near waterways can also catch and filter runoff before it even reaches the water.

Burning fossil fuels to produce energy releases both carbon and other pollutants like mercury and methane into the environment. Alternative energy sources like solar and wind power help reduce pollution, but there are other solutions. Technologies exist to separate carbon dioxide from emissions, capture it before and after combustion, and then safely store it so that it never enters the environment. These excellent innovations could help clean up our Earth. All we need is the will to do the hard work.

Activity Connection, September 2019

FRIENDS

Endure!

Chair Caning

Thursday @ 12:30
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The Downside of Having a Sweet Tooth

Regular consumption of sugary drinks heightens the risk not only of tooth decay, obesity, fatty liver disease and Type 2 diabetes, but also of heart disease and premature death.

Sweet dreams, sweet spot, sweet as pie, sweet young thing: All have a positive connotation. But what about sweet tooth, which Americans seem to have cultivated to great excess? The health effects of this obsession with everything sweet are anything but positive.

In fact, recent reports have found that regular consumption of sugary drinks heightens the risk not only of tooth decay, obesity, fatty liver disease and Type 2 diabetes, but also of heart disease and premature death, even in people free of other risk factors.

You may have encountered contrary findings — reports that seemed to exonerate sugar consumption as a health hazard. Companies that produce sugar-laden foods and drinks would like you to believe that ailments linked to sugars result from excess calories, not sugars themselves. Don’t believe them; most reports holding sugar blameless are from sources tied directly or indirectly to financial support from the industries that depend on caloric sweeteners.

For example, one prominent contrarian, Dr. James M. Rippe, has received a monthly retainer from the Corn Refiners Association, whose members produce high-fructose corn syrup and which provided $10 million for his lab’s studies that found fructose to be no more hazardous than the natural blood sugar, glucose. To a layperson unfamiliar with subtle nutritional influences, these and similar findings may appear convincing, but they rarely survive independent scientific scrutiny. More about this later.

The newest indictments of sugar-sweetened beverages began in April with the publication in Circulation, the journal of the American Heart Association, of causes of death among 37,716 men and 80,647 women initially free of heart disease who were followed for 28 and 34 years, respectively. Cardiovascular mortality was 31 percent higher and the total death rate 28 percent higher among those who consumed two or more sugar-sweetened drinks a day when compared with people who rarely if ever drank them.

Then in May, a team headed by Jean A. Welsh, a nutritional epidemiologist at Emory University in Atlanta, published an analysis of deaths among 13,440 participants in a long-term study seeking to identify factors that elevate the risk of stroke among African-Americans and residents of the Southeast.

They found that regular consumption not only of drinks containing added sugars but also naturally sweet fruit juice raised the risk of an early death by as much as 44 percent.

Thus, sweet dangers are not limited to beverages sweetened with added sugars, like sodas and energy drinks, that often contain the much maligned high-fructose corn syrup.

Naturally sweet drinks like pure orange, apple and grape juice and drinks sweetened with honey are culprits as well. Artificial sweeteners, on the other hand, did not confer an added risk in any of the recent studies.

Furthermore, the health risks associated with sugar relate to overeating so-called free sugars, not those naturally present in whole foods like fruits, vegetables and milk.

The latest findings underscore the advice from experts on diet, health and weight control to avoiding drinking one’s calories, except perhaps for a glass of wine with dinner. And, it turns out, serious health risks are not limited to liquid sources of sugar; the sugars found in processed solid foods, including many that do not even taste sweet, can be hazards, too, if overconsumed.

Sugar-containing processed foods are ubiquitous and can add up quickly for unsuspecting consumers. In the documentary “That Sugar Film,” the filmmaker quickly developed health problems after eating “healthy” foods like cereal and juice containing 40 teaspoons of sugar a day, the average Australian’s intake. (Americans average 42.5 teaspoons of sugar a day.) The film noted that if all sugar-containing food items were removed from supermarket shelves, only about 20 percent of products would remain.

To clarify the effects of our high-sugar diet, I consulted an expert, Kimber L. Stanhope, a researcher in nutritional biology at the University of California, Davis, whose work is free of industry support and funded primarily by the National Institutes of Health. In a comprehensive 34-page review of research published in Critical Reviews in Clinical Laboratory Sciences in 2016, she linked consumption of added sugar to metabolic disease — cardiovascular disease, Type 2 diabetes and nonalcoholic fatty liver disease — as well as high blood levels of uric acid, a risk factor for kidney stones and gout.

In studies done in her lab among young adults consuming their normal diets, the risk for developing heart disease and kidney stones rose in direct proportion to the amount of high-fructose corn syrup they consumed. Diet and health data from a major national survey showed that “the average level of added sugar consumption in the U.S., 15 percent of daily calories, is associated with an 18 percent increase in risk for cardiovascular disease mortality.” A sweet death, indeed.

One problem with the studies done in Dr. Rippe’s lab, Dr. Stanhope said, is that the sugars tested were added to milk, which itself diminishes the risk of metabolic disease and thus can mask the damaging effects of fructose.

Continued on insert page
S.H.I.N.E.  
(Serving Health Insurance Needs of Everyone)  
Call for appt. 499-9346  
Tuesdays @ 12:00

Foot Clinic  
By Appointment 499-9346  
Thurs Sept 5th 9:00

September Breakfast Club  
Martial Arts Institute of the Berkshires describes their efforts to improve the balance, focus and self-discipline of seniors as they learn to defend themselves.  
Thurs Sept 12th 8:00 a.m. $3.00

Pittsfield Tree Watch  
Nurture the roots of your tree interest!  
Thurs Sept 12th 4:00 Coffee Shop

New Member Day  
Find your way!  
Let us know you’re coming 499-9346  
Wed Sept 18th 10:00 a.m.

September Card Party  
Go all in!  
Thurs Sept 19th 1:00 p.m.  
Four-somes are best. $2.00

Legal Education  
Have legal questions evaluated.  
Thurs Sept 19th 1:00 p.m.  
By Appt 499-9346

Blood Pressure Clinic  
By Appt 499-9346  
Tue Sept 24th 9:00

Flu Clinic  
(Already?)  
Please bring insurance card!  
Patients 65+ bring Medicare card!  
Wed Sept 25th 1:30 p.m.

Brown Bag Day  
Fri Sept 27th 10:30 a.m.
"Fructose and glucose are not metabolized the same way in the human body," which can account for the adverse effects of fructose, Dr. Stanhope said. Glucose is metabolized in cells throughout the body and used for energy. Fructose is metabolized in the liver, resulting in fat production and raising the risk of heart and fatty-liver disease. In addition, she explained, "fructose doesn’t stimulate the satiety-promoting substance leptin," prompting some people to overconsume it, especially in soft drinks containing high-fructose corn syrup, and other tempting foods as well.

Following consumption of fructose, brain studies showed that people respond positively to pictures of highly palatable foods like cookies, candy and ice cream.

Nonetheless, Dr. Stanhope said, definitive independent studies are still missing that can resolve the conflicting findings from industry-funded studies. She lamented that the needed studies are unlikely to be done given the extreme difficulty in getting financial support from government sources that favor innovation and treatment, not disease prevention.

Meanwhile, her advice to consumers is to cut their sugar intake by two-thirds: Reduce the current 15 percent average daily calories from added sugars to 5 percent, as recommended by the American Heart Association, easiest if done gradually. Learn to routinely peruse packaged food labels for the kinds and amounts of sugars they contain.

Looking at containers in my freezer, I found, for example, that a half-cup of Talenti gelato can contain 22 grams of sugar while Breyer's "frozen dairy dessert" had only 15 grams.

Changes in nutrition labeling currently being phased in can help consumers distinguish between health-neutral naturally occurring sugars, like those in fruits, vegetables and dairy products, and those added by manufacturers that could incur a health risk.

September Senior Center Events

Everyday! 11:30 a.m. Meal Site
Noted novelist Pat Conroy has opined that “A recipe is a story that ends with a good meal.” That should be common knowledge to daily Meal Site folks who are accustomed to a narrative of equal parts socialization and nutrition. Reap the rewards everyday. Reserve a day ahead. 1-800-981-5201.

Tuesdays! 12:00 p.m. SHINE (by appt.)
S.H.I.N.E. (Serving Health Insurance Needs of Everyone) counselors help you navigate the oft treacherous maze of health insurance programs. Call Froio at 499-9346, or Elder Services directly at 499-0524.

Thursday, September 5 9:00 a.m. Foot Clinic ...kickin’ it!
Step by step, the Foot Clinic is alive and kickin’! In the capable hands of Lisa Christman, R.N., you’ll find that all of your foot care needs are thoroughly managed. Her attentive ministrations are good for the sole, and the soul! Please call for appointment, 499-9346.

Monday, September 9 & 23 10:00 a.m. The Councilman is In!
The Froio Center hosts councilman Kevin Morandi’s invaluable “open office” sessions. His informal Q & As take place a day before City Council meetings, maximizing the potential for a responsive “public-to-council” conduit.

Thursday, September 12 8:00 a.m. Breakfast Club
Breakfast Club renews the season with a presentation by the Martial Arts Institute of the Berkshires. They hope to instill in people, seniors included, an improved sense of balance, focus, self-confidence and self-discipline, all while learning how to defend themselves! Breakfast Club: always informative, always delectable.

Thursday, September 19 4:00 p.m. Pittsfield Tree Watch
Tree Watch explores your deep-rooted tree interests. Keep counsel with a cabal of committed tree enthusiasts. 4:00 p.m. in the Coffee Shop

Wednesday, September 18 10:00 a.m. New Member Day Tour (Tour du Jour!)
Unearth the basic facts, and the nuances, of the Senior Center. There’s more than meets the eye and we relish the opportunity to convey the full essence de Froio. Let us know you’re coming. 499-9346.

Thursday, September 19 1:00 p.m. September Card Party
Mathematician John Tukey, known for his extravagantly on-point exploratory data analysis and algorithms, said “An approximate answer to the right problem is worth a good deal more than an exact answer to an approximate problem.” Monthly card party-goers will appreciate that as viable table strategy. Bottomless coffee, prizes and snacks! Unless otherwise arranged, foursomes are best.

Thursday, September 19 1:00 p.m. Legal Education
Attorneys from Pittsfield Family and Probate Court evaluate your legal issues and offer helpful direction. By appointment, 499-9346.

Tuesday, September 24 8:45 a.m. Blood Pressure Clinic (by apt.)
MOLARI Health Care monitors your blood pressure. Call 499-9346 for an appointment.

Wednesday, September 25 1:30 p.m. Flu Clinic
Much as we’d like to deny it, flu season is fast approaching. To combat that fact, Marc Boulais and the Stop & Shop pharmacy will hold their annual on-site Froio Flu Clinic! Please bring insurance card; patients 65+ please bring Medicare card.

Friday, September 27 10:30 a.m. Brown Bag
Be a part of this monthly nutritional grocery program. Inquire about Brown Bag and SNAP benefits.
**A Brain Scan May Predict Alzheimer’s.**

The biggest change: soaring prescriptions. About 40 percent of those with mild impairment had been taking Alzheimer’s drugs; after a PET scan that detected amyloid plaques, the proportion more than doubled. In those with dementia, use of dementia drugs climbed from 63 to 91 percent after a positive PET scan.

Stopping those drugs after a negative scan happened far more rarely, “a very common dynamic in medicine,” Dr. Langa pointed out. “Once a treatment is started, it’s hard to stop it.”

The second round of the Ideas study will assess whether these changes led to better health. Were patients less likely to go to emergency rooms or to be hospitalized? Did costs rise or fall?

The researchers expect to publish those findings early next year. If they show that patients benefited, the Alzheimer’s Association will ask Medicare to reconsider its earlier decision and cover PET scans for the subset of patients with atypical or unexplained symptoms.

Those questioning broader access worry, however, about “indication creep,” when a drug or test approved for patients with a particular condition becomes used for others. They also worry about crushing costs for Medicare.

“Even if a scan cost zero dollars, I wouldn’t recommend it,” said Dr. Ken Covinsky, a geriatrician at the University of California, San Francisco. “Do you really want to know that you have amyloid in your brain, years ahead of cognitive problems that may never develop?”

Proponents of making PET scans more widely available argue that knowing their amyloid status may motivate patients to make lifestyle changes. Stopping smoking, exercising and eating more healthily are all found to reduce dementia, even among those at higher genetic risk. Perhaps, too, patients will be more likely to begin advance care planning.

“Those are good things to do whether you have amyloid or not,” Dr. Covinsky argued.

For now, costs probably prevent many people from seeking PET scans for diagnosis. If Medicare will pay — and possibly even if it won’t — more patients may find ways to be scanned.

“You’ll always have people who use it inappropriately, but hopefully we can keep that to a minimum” by educating doctors, said Maria Carrillo, chief science officer at the Alzheimer’s Association.

But ultimately, “we’re not here to tell people what to do,” she added. “There are people who really want that validation, and that’s a personal decision.”

Juli Engel may be among them.

Once the neurologist documents her mother’s incapacity, she can take steps to prevent Sue Engel from driving, and to move her into assisted living when needed. As a geriatric care manager, “I know the trajectory of this disease,” she said.

Because she also knows that both her maternal grandparents had Alzheimer’s, she is considering her own future, too. Does she have amyloid in her brain?

Her family is full of scientists, and “it’s our bent to want to know these things,” she said. “I think we’re entitled to that.”


---

**Answers:**

**Retirement Quiz**

Continued from page 2

**Answer 1 False**
The longer you wait to start collecting after you become eligible at 62, the higher the amount you will receive. For each year you delay, your Social Security benefits will increase between 7 percent and 8 percent up to age 70, depending on your year of birth.

**Answer 2 True**
Too often people choose investments in their 401(k) plans without understanding the fees the investment companies charge. High fees can reduce your retirement savings by thousands of dollars over time.

**Answer 3 False**
It’s never too late. Preparation is the key to a successful retirement. Examine your financial circumstances. Map out your goals and dreams and then try them out. There’s much more to retirement planning, but these two parts will help you see what you’ll need to do before retiring, regardless of how old you are now.

**Answer 4 False**
Those working legally in this country pay into the system just as U.S. citizens do, and their contributions help support current beneficiaries.

**Answer 5 False**
Social Security is not an individual investment program. The total amount of your benefit depends on how much you earned, when you retire and how long you live.

**Answer 6 True**
Try the AARP Social Security calculator, which will estimate your benefits and help you decide the best age to file a claim.

**Answer 7 False**
No, you can receive benefits while working. But if you are younger than the full retirement age (currently 66) and earn more than a certain amount, your monthly benefits will be temporarily reduced. Once you reach full retirement age, however, your benefits will be increased to make up for what was lost.

**Answer 8 True**
Whether keeping to a budget or managing your health, there are small things you can do every day to get you ready to enjoy your retirement.

**Answer 9 True**
You don’t want to be dealing with mounds of debt as you work those last few years before retiring. Calculate your current debt load and start paying off larger debts as soon as you can. This includes any car loans, mortgages, large credit card balances and personal loans that you’ve been carrying around for a while.

**Answer 10 True**
If you’ve reached full retirement age, you can delay taking benefits based on your own work record and, instead, apply for benefits as a spouse on your spouse’s record. Your check would be equal to 50 percent of your spouse’s - and because you held back on your own benefits, you would accrue "delayed retirement credits" that would bump up your own future check by 8 percent a year until age 70, 32 percent in total.

**AARP Bulletin, July 2019**
A Brain Scan May Predict Alzheimer's. Should You Get One?

One expert warns of "unintended downsides," including overuse of only modestly effective medications.

Juli Engel was delighted when a neurologist recommended a PET scan to determine whether amyloid — the protein clumps associated with an increased risk of Alzheimer's disease — was accumulating in her mother's brain.

"My internal response was, 'Yay!'" said Ms. Engel, 65, a geriatric care manager in Austin, Tex., who has been making almost monthly trips to help her mother in Florida. "He's using every tool to try to determine what's going on."

Sue Engel, who's 83 and lives in a retirement community in Leesburg, Fla., has been experiencing memory problems and other signs of cognitive decline for several years. Her daughter checked off the warning signs: her mother has been financially exploited, suffered an insurance scam, caused an auto accident.

Medicare officials decided in 2013, shortly after PET (positron emission tomography) amyloid imaging became available, that they lacked evidence of its health benefits. So outside of research trials, Medicare doesn't cover the scans' substantial costs ($5,000 to $7,000, the Alzheimer's Association says); private insurers don't, either.

Juli Engel thinks Medicare should reimburse for the scan, but "if necessary, we'll pay for it out of pocket," she said.

Her mother already has an Alzheimer's diagnosis and is taking a commonly prescribed dementia drug. So she probably doesn't meet the criteria developed by the Alzheimer's Association and nuclear medicine experts, which call for PET scans only in cases of unexplained or unusual symptoms and unclear diagnoses.

But as evidence mounts that brain damage from Alzheimer's begins years before people develop symptoms, worried patients and their families may start turning to PET scans to learn if they have this biomarker.

They have few alternatives. Scientists at Washington University in St. Louis announced on Thursday that they've developed a blood test for amyloid that can predict the development of plaques in the brain, but it is years away from use in doctors' offices.

Some experts fear PET scans offer few benefits, at substantial costs. "There are lots of incentives, including financial incentives, for doing more testing and interventions," said Dr. Kenneth Langa, a researcher at the University of Michigan and author of a recent article in JAMA Internal Medicine about diagnosis of early Alzheimer's disease. "My hope is we'll think hard about the unintended downsides."

What downsides? Amyloid plaques occur commonly in older people's brains, but not everyone with amyloid will develop dementia, which probably involves multiple factors.

Nor does a negative PET scan mean someone won't develop dementia.

Biostatisticians at the University of California, Los Angeles, have calculated that a 75-year-old man with amyloid has a 17.2 percent lifetime risk of developing Alzheimer's dementia; for a woman that age, with a longer life expectancy, the figure is about 24 percent.

That's primarily because Alzheimer's rates climb steeply at older ages, when people grow more likely to die of other causes before they can develop symptoms. (With additional biomarkers, or with the condition called mild cognitive impairment, the lifetime risk rises.)

But older people may also be among the 30 percent or so of those with amyloid deposits who, for unexplained reasons, retain normal cognition.

"If we start treating everyone with preclinical Alzheimer's, we'll treat a lot of people who would never have gone on to have dementia at all," Dr. Langa said.

Moreover, what treatments would those be? Multiple trials have failed to find drugs that prevent, reverse or slow Alzheimer's disease, perhaps because these treatments were introduced too late in the disease's course.

Results from a different approach, an infusion drug being tested in older people with amyloid but without cognitive impairment, remain several years away.

"As a clinician, would I like amyloid information about my symptomatic patients? Yes," said Dr. Ronald Petersen, a neurologist and director of the Mayo Clinic Alzheimer's Disease Research Center. "Am I going to be able to do something about it? Not at present."

The drugs approved for Alzheimer's, primarily Ariecept and Namenda, have modest benefits in some patients for a limited time. Neither has been shown effective for mild cognitive impairment, often a precursor to dementia.

Yet a recently published study, undertaken to provide Medicare with more information in hopes of reversing its reimbursement decision, shows that positive amyloid PET scans lead to far greater use of these and other medications.

The Idea study (the name is shorthand for "Imaging Dementia — Evidence for Amyloid Scanning") analyzed the treatment of 11,409 Medicare beneficiaries with mild cognitive impairment or dementia (average age: 75) nationwide. PET scans detected amyloid in 55 percent of the patients with mild impairment and 70 percent of those with dementia; those results influenced their cases in several ways.

Continued on insert page
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**Historic Time**

We are living the pain of this historic time.

I hold close to the light, the never changing right of universal truth.

Once again evil has lifted its ugly head and we must rise from the bed of compliance and resist.

From time to time in the midst of good work and progress, we are called upon to resist and restore the good in humanity.

It is up to us to stand as a buffer between right and might, between good and evil, between the light and the darkness which threatens the honest and good values we need to survive so that our children will grow strong and true.

The despicable monster rests through the decades until there comes a time that is ripe for it to rise again like a mutant phoenix to overshadow hope and grace and erase all the good that we have done.

This is such a time.

We must fight the battle again and we must win.
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**September**

**Meal Site**
Daily @ 11:30
Call a Day Ahead!
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