

AGING IN ATLANTA

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JOIN US AS WE EXPLORE WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HAPPY AND HEALTHY BEYOND 55

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED



Chamblee's Kim Fredrickson, pictured above at her boutique, hosted many eclectic events before moving her business online last year. COURTESY OF KIM FREDRICKSON

For Rick Butgereit (right), getting into biking during the pandemic offered a way to get fit without hurting his knees. It also became a new way to connect with his kids. COURTESY OF RICK BUTGEREIT



HEALTH

Let this be a wake-up call to start living healthier

Unhealthy diet greatly raises risk of dying from COVID-19.

By Jane E. Brody
c.2021 The New York Times

The pandemic has shed a blinding light on too many Americans' failure to follow the well-established scientific principles of personal health and well-being. There are several reasons this country, one of the world's richest and most highly developed, has suffered much higher rates of COVID-19 infections and deaths than many poorer and less well-equipped populations.

Older Americans have been particularly hard hit by this novel coronavirus. When cases surged at the end of last year, COVID-19 became the nation's leading cause of death, deadlier than heart disease and cancer.

But while there's nothing anyone can do to stop the march of time, several leading risk factors for infections and deaths stem from how many Americans conduct their lives from childhood on and their misguided reliance on medicine to patch up their self-inflicted wounds.

After old age, obesity is the second leading risk factor for death among those who become infected and critically ill with COVID-19. Seventy percent of Americans adults are now overweight, and more than a third are obese. Two other major risks for COVID, Type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure, are most often the result of excess weight, which in turn reflects unhealthy dietary and exercise habits. These conditions may be particularly prevalent in communities of color, who are likewise disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

Several people I know packed on quite a few pounds of health-robbing body fat this past year, and not because they lacked the ability to purchase and consume a more nutritious plant-based diet or to exercise regularly within or outside their homes. One male friend in his 50s unexpectedly qualified for the COVID vaccine by having an underlying health condition when his doctor found he'd become obese since the pandemic began.

A Harris Poll, conducted for the American Psychological Association in late February, revealed that 42% of respondents had gained an average of 29 "pandemic pounds," increasing their COVID risk.

So what can we learn from these trends? Tom Vilsack, the new Secretary of Agriculture, put it bluntly a week ago in Politico Pro's Morning Agriculture newsletter: "We cannot have the level of obesity. We cannot have the level of diabetes we have. We cannot have the level of chronic disease ... It will literally cripple our country."

Of course, in recent decades many of the policies of the department Vilsack now heads have contributed mightily to Americans' access to inexpensive foods that flesh out their bones with unwholesome calories and undermine their health. Two telling examples: The

Obesity continued on S3

Our pandemic year: New challenges, new habits

By Helen Cauley | For The AJC

The last year has brought unprecedented, sweeping change to almost every aspect of life. Months of staying at home upended the way life used to be – and may never be again. Some people embraced the change as an opportunity to shift gears, try something new, take on different challenges. Here are three people who used the last year to expand their horizons.

Rick Butgereit, 61, Sandy Springs

Rick Butgereit admits he had packed on a few pounds before the pandemic. A friend's nagging got him into weightlifting and running. But within a few weeks, knee pain drove him to a doctor who diagnosed arthritis. Butgereit realized low-impact options like rowing, swimming and biking were his best bet. Since the father of six and stepdad of two had a stash of old mountain bikes at home, he went with wheels first – with reservations.

"I honestly didn't understand why people would want to do it," said Butgereit, the chief marketing officer of a software company. "But I started riding about 2 to 5 miles and started liking it. On a bike, the view always changes. I never got bored, and I started losing time doing it."

Soon neighborhood outings expanded to area trails. It wasn't long before he needed a sleeker bike, a mirror and padded pants and gloves.

"Bikes were hard to get last spring, and I didn't get one until May," he said. "This one has 27 gears, and I can easily ride 15 to 20 miles on it."

The extended rides had side benefits as well. The knee pain disappeared. Butgereit started losing weight. His kids, who have Apple watches, bought him one to track his progress.

Change continued on S2



Kathryn Stebbins of Johns Creek has been taking courses in making jewelry at Kennesaw State's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. She found she learned better from in-person classes than online. COURTESY OF KATHRYN STEBBINS

COOKING

2020 changed cooking for the better in many ways

By Ben Mims
Los Angeles Times

I remember the last thing I cooked before the shutdown last year. I had made my baking friend Edd Kimber's Salted Black Cocoa Sablés, and as I served the cookies to a couple of friends I'd invited for dinner, one of my guests, commenting on the developing news, remarked, "I mean, I'm not even sure if we

should be here right now, doing this." We all murmured quietly in agreement and then anxiously grabbed a cookie. The next day, the shutdown was announced.

Prior to this day, by and large, cooking enthusiasts cooked more for pleasure than out of sheer obligation, while many others had to cook out of necessity, like parents, caregivers and those in multi-generational households

where not cooking is not an option. But after that day, those of us who were able to enjoy leisurely cooking had to switch to cooking for survival. The new mission? Keep the pleasure going in something that now existed in a world temporarily devoid of it.

Suddenly, the audience for cooking magazines and newspaper sec-

Cooking continued on S4



In 2020, with endless time on our hands, searing chicken breasts, roasting vegetables, making a pot of rice — these skills became paramount to a whole new generation of formerly reluctant cooks.

DREAMSTIME

AGING IN ATLANTA

Change

continued from S1

“I shared my workouts with my kids’ devices, and that keeps me accountable,” he said. “I wasn’t going to let them burn more calories than me.”

So far, Butgereit has lost 50 pounds and often joins his sons on rides of 25-plus miles along the Silver Comet Trail.

“The more I ride, the more people I meet who give me suggestions and ideas to improve,” he said. “I really look forward to it more than I did running!”

Kathryn Stebbins, 62, Johns Creek

Before the COVID crunch, Kathryn Stebbins had just signed up for a course in jewelry-making at Kennesaw State’s Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. Though she’d been into beading, the class was her first foray in more wearable art.

“I liked that jewelry making was different,” she said. “I decided to give it a try just before things shut down. But as soon as I could, I signed up for the next session.”

She attended her second class masked and in-person with no one else but another student and the instructor. “I really felt like I got first-hand learning,” Stebbins recalled. “She could show me exactly how to do things. It was much easier than the virtual classes, where I couldn’t see as well.”

Stebbins has stayed with the artform and is now taking a third techniques course. “I’m mostly doing earrings and bracelets, and some necklaces,” she said. “Each class comes with materials and has different projects you can finish each week. But I’ve also gone online to get different patterns and gone to local craft stores for materials.”

The next step is figuring out what to do with her



Kathryn Stebbins of Johns Creek says the next step for her after learning how to make jewelry will be to figure out what to do with her creations. COURTESY OF KATHRYN STEBBINS

‘I liked that jewelry making was different. I decided to give it a try just before things shut down. But as soon as I could, I signed up for the next session.’

Kathryn Stebbins

creations. “I’ve given away pieces to friends and family, but I’ll probably get my daughter, who’s savvy on Instagram, to put up a few pictures and see what people think,” she said.

Stebbins’ husband, Robert, manages a wood craft store and has long had projects of his own. “Now he thinks it’s fun to see me trying something new,” she said.

Kim Fredrickson, 59, Chamblee

The owner of the Hello Gorgeous in Chamblee, Kim Fredrickson, started the business more than five years ago as an eclectic gift boutique and community gathering place.

“I wanted a place where all people could find something,” said Fredrickson. “We also had pop-ups for local vendors and musical performers. We had baby showers and political events. Having a brick-and-mortar store was an incredible gift.” But by early March 2020, Fredrickson

knew things were shifting. Few customers came in. She sent the staff home and tried to run the business by herself. Within two weeks, she shut it down.

“It was nerve-wracking,” she said. “No one wore masks. They were sneezing and coughing. I cleaned with bleach wipes as soon as they left. I just couldn’t relax.”

Fredrickson soon realized the internet was the way to keep things going. But she admits she wasn’t adept at the technology.

“I have never been a techie,” she said. “Fortunately, I have always surrounded myself by staff who know different things. They’ve taught me about Zoom and photography for the website. There have been some big learning curves.”

Now the store is exclusively online, and Fredrickson has learned some valuable lessons in the transition.

“The big takeaway for me is knowing we can evolve, change and trans-



Chamblee’s Kim Fredrickson moved her retail business online in 2020, overcoming some steep learning curves, she said. PHOTO COURTESY OF KIM FREDRICKSON

form,” she said. “We have to keep going and being creative. I recognize that every day is a gift. And I’m grateful for the community that has supported us.”

Becoming an online-only retailer has also expanded the business in ways Fredrickson never imagined.

“We’ve now reached out all over the U.S., and a few weeks ago, we had our first international sale from Scotland,” she said. “I love that I can create a place online with the same happy feeling we had in the store.”

‘The big takeaway for me is knowing we can evolve, change and transform. We have to keep going and being creative. I recognize that every day is a gift. And I’m grateful for the community that has supported us.’

Kim Fredrickson

ASK THE EXPERT BONNIE DOBBS

Know eligibility terms for Medicare

Take advantage of Social Security, Medicare benefits.

Q: What is the difference between Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security?

Medicaid is both a federal and state program for low-income individuals to help offset the costs of medical care and prescription drugs. Medicare is insurance, and Social Security is money. You become eligible for Medicare by working 10 years equivalent to 40 quarters and paying into Medicare (FICA) taxes. You are eligible for Social Security by paying into Social Security taxes during your working years.

Q: Can a doctor come to my house?

Yes. We have come full circle. House calls have been quietly coming back into existence thanks to the aging population and portable technology. COVID-19 has brought this way of seeing your doctor to the forefront. It is a safe way to get in-person care. Usually, a doctor and/or nurse practitioner use portable technology for a variety of services. Seeing a patient in the home also provides a snapshot of their environment and insight for other services such as imaging, tests and referrals.

Q: What is telehealth, who pays and how do I get it?

Telehealth is a virtual doctor appointment. You pay the Part B deductible and 20% if you have original Medicare for doctors,



Cue the birthday music please! If you are turning 65 and have not received your Medicare card, you can go to ssa.gov/benefits/medicare and request one. If you are working past 65, you can sometimes delay Part B and apply two months before retiring.

PCP/specialists, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, licensed clinical social workers in specific circumstances, mental and behavioral health, physical and occupational therapy and speech language pathologists. Check with the plan to confirm your costs if you have Medicare Advantage. You

can get telehealth using audio or video or both. Yes, even if you have a flip phone.

Q: What do I need to do if I am turning 65 or retiring past 65?

Cue the birthday music please! If you are turning 65 and have not received your Medicare card, you can go to ssa.gov/benefits/medicare and request one. If you are working past 65 and your employer has 20 or more employees and Medicare equivalent coverage, you can delay Part B and apply two months before retiring. Do not wait until the last minute. When you are ready to apply, go to medicare.gov and search form L-564E, print and have your employer complete it. Then go to ssa.gov/medicare-partb-SEP, complete your portion and upload the employer completed L-564E form. Do not wait until the last minute. Save that money! Learn about the appropriate time to enroll.

Q: I am moving out of or into the U.S. What do I need to know about my Medicare coverage?

Bon voyage! If you are moving out of the country, contact Medicare to stop your Part B benefits, which means you will not be paying the Part B premium. Also stop your Part D whether you have a stand-alone drug plan or an Advantage plan. If or when you do move back into the country, restart your Part B with Medicare, and get a Part D plan. Contact Medicare about two months before you move out of or back

into the country. You can request to unenroll in your drug plan the month before you move out or request to start the month before you move back into the country. Otherwise, you will get a Part B and Part D penalty. Penalties are for as long as you have Medicare.

Q: I have SSI or SSDI. When will I qualify for Medicare?

The major difference is that SSI (Social Security Income) determination is based on age/disability and limited income and resources, whereas SSDI (Social Security Disability Income) determination is based on disability and work credits. SSI recipients qualify for Medicare upon receipt of SSI. In most states, an SSI recipient will automatically qualify for Medicaid. A person with SSDI will automatically qualify for Medicare after 24 months of receiving disability payments.

Q: How easy is it to research drug plans?

You can search Medicare’s Drug Finder Tool at medicare.gov to find the plan that offers the lowest premiums and copays for your specific medications in your service area. Part D drug plans can be tricky to understand, with all the deductibles, copays, the donut hole and restrictions. A broker can explain all of this to you. Eliminate hours of research by giving us a call at 770-373-7541 and letting our brokers help you. Our services are always free.

Sponsored by Medicare & Other Red Tape LLC

FASHION

Brooches are back, baby – targeting men

Linda Dyett
c. 2021 The New York Times

Widely considered stodgy and trite, brooches have been seriously out of fashion ever since the power-suit-ridden “Dynasty” years. Grandmothers have drawers full of them. Catherine O’Hara, playing the loony Moira Rose on “Schitt’s Creek,” wears them incessantly – even when going to bed.

Jewelers rarely list them on their e-commerce shopping menus (but they do sell them). And from the 1950s through the ‘80s, they acquired a reputation “as daytime, luncheon jewels,” said Marion Fasel, a fine-jewelry historian. Who, if anyone, has lunched since the ‘80s?

All of this means, of course, that the brooch is ripe for a revival.

In the 2020s, “it’s men who are in charge of making brooches cool again,” Fasel said. Régé-Jean Page showed up on “Saturday Night Live” recently wearing an Alexander McQueen suit that came with three pearl brooches sewn onto the lapel. Jared Leto chose a huge, corsage-y Gucci brooch at the Golden Globes, where Anthony Anderson went for a Chopard flower.

At the Grammys, Trevor Noah wore the Tiffany-Schlumberger gold-spiked, diamond-studded Apollo brooch, and DaBaby went for a diamond DG pin on his Dolce & Gabbana jacket, only to switch to a Chanel jacket affixed with a diamond C on each lapel.

A number of brooches today are marketed specifically to men, and they’re different from the



A number of brooches today are marketed to men, and they’re different from the dainty, ladylike pins of the past. The McQueen lily brooch in antique silver not only looks slightly past its prime, but also, on close inspection, as noted by New York gem dealer and jewelry historian Benjamin Zuckerman, has minuscule skulls and crossbones atop its pistils. He described the piece as “ominous and arresting.”

A Gucci cotton brooch labeled Embroidered Hare – technically, it’s mostly crocheted – evokes handicrafts, yet on the company website it’s attached to the business suit lapel of a young male model. For Victoria Pass, an associate professor of fashion history at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, “brooches like these can change the whole look of a masculine tailored suit, turning it into something more gender fluid.”

“Here is a new way for men to express themselves,” said Carlton Jones, a designer and stylist in New York. “Brooches have begun to be that statement.”

AGING IN ATLANTA

Obesity

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government subsidizes the production of both soybeans and corn, most of which is used to feed livestock.

Not only does livestock production make a major contribution to global warming, much of its output ends up as inexpensive, often highly processed fast foods that can prompt people to overeat and raise their risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and kidney disease. But there are no subsidies for the kinds of fruits and vegetables that can counter the disorders that render people more vulnerable to the coronavirus.

As Vilsack said, “The time has come for us to transform the food system in this country in an accelerated way.”

Early in the pandemic, when most businesses and entertainment venues were forced to close, toilet paper was not the only commodity stripped from market shelves. The country was suddenly faced with a shortage of flour and yeast as millions of Americans “stuck” at home went on a baking frenzy. While I understood their need to relieve stress, feel productive and perhaps help others less able or so inclined, bread, muffins and cookies were not the most wholesome products that might have emerged from pandemic kitchens.

When calorie-rich foods and snacks are in the home, they can be hard to resist when there’s little else to prompt the release of pleasure-enhancing brain chemicals. To no one’s great surprise, smoking rates also rose during the pandemic, introducing yet another



Too many Americans fail to take measures to combat obesity, the second leading risk factor for death from COVID-19. GRACIA LAM/THE NEW YORK TIMES

risk to COVID susceptibility.

And there’s been a run on alcoholic beverages. National sales of alcohol during one week in March 2020 were 54% higher than the comparable week the year before. The Harris Poll corroborated that nearly one adult in four drank more alcohol than usual to cope with pandemic-related stress. Not only is alcohol a source of nutritionally empty calories, its wanton consumption can result in reckless behavior that further raises susceptibility to COVID-19.

Well before the pandemic prompted a rise in calorie consumption, Americans were eating significantly more calories each day than they realized, thanks in large part to the ready availability of ultra-processed foods, especially those that tease, “you can’t eat just one.” (Example: Corn on the cob is unprocessed, canned corn is minimally processed, but Doritos are ultra-processed.)

In a brief but carefully designed diet study, Kevin D. Hall and colleagues at the National Institutes of Health surreptitiously gave 20 adults diets that were rich in either ultra-processed foods or unpro-

cessed foods matched for calorie, sugar, fat, sodium, fiber and protein content. Told to eat as much as they wanted, the unsuspecting participants consumed 500 calories a day more on the ultra-processed diet.

I’m not a fanatic when it comes to food. I have many containers of ice cream in my freezer; cookies, crackers and even chips in my cupboard; and I enjoy a burger now and then. But my daily diet is based primarily on vegetables, with fish, beans and nonfat milk my main sources of protein. My consumption of snacks and ice cream is portion-controlled and, along with daily exercise, has enabled me to remain weight-stable despite yearlong pandemic stress and occasional despair.

As Marion Nestle, professor emerita of nutrition, food studies and public health at New York University, says, “This is not rocket science.”

She does not preach deprivation, only moderation (except perhaps for a total ban on soda).

“We need a national policy aimed at preventing obesity,” she told me, “a national campaign to help all Americans get healthier.”

SOCIALIZING

Regain conversation skills lost to COVID-19

Tips can work for family, friends, those you don’t know well.

By Galadriel Watson
Washington Post

Up to three times a week, I Zoom with acquaintances to practice speaking French. Shortly into the chats, a variation of, “What have you done lately?” comes up. These days, the answer is always: “Not much.”

The activities of our daily lives are no longer conversation starters, but I don’t want to give up these social activities simply because I have little to say. So I asked experts how we can keep conversations flowing and meaningful. Here are their suggestions, some of which can apply both to chats with people you don’t know well, and conversations with family and friends for whom you have no exciting updates.

“I’ve had the same experience” with acquaintances, said Gillian Sandstrom, a senior lecturer of psychology at the United Kingdom’s University of Essex. When her tennis club had a group Zoom session, the momentum quickly stalled. But, Sandstrom said, we shouldn’t give up.

“Conversations put us in a good mood,” she said. They make us feel valued, respected and understood. Plus, “we don’t know how we’re doing unless we compare ourselves to how others are doing.” During the pandemic, she said, hearing that someone else is in the same boat may help us feel better.

While Sandstrom gets the sense that close friends

and family have stayed in touch, it’s clear we’re not crossing paths with casual acquaintances and strangers like we used to. And that can affect our mood. A couple of her studies – in which participants chatted to fellow university students or to a barista – found that interactions with “weak ties” bump up happiness. So we shouldn’t retreat behind masks and distancing. It can make “a huge difference,” she said, “just to feel seen and connected.”

But what if you’re an introvert? “I am unequivocally an introvert,” Sandstrom said, and yet she approaches folks as often as the opportunity comes up. With a casual chat, you can always walk away.

Here are her top conversation-sparking tips:

■ Find common ground. It’s no wonder acquaintances often mention the weather; it’s perhaps the one thing that affects everyone. So if you’re outside, you could comment on spring flowers or point out a playing dog. “Draw attention to something that’s in your shared space,” Sandstrom suggested.

■ Be observant and curious. Study your speaking partner and then pose a question about what you’ve noticed. For example: I see your earrings are shaped like airplanes. What’s the story behind those? “People like it when others show an interest in them,” Sandstrom said.

■ Look forward. “We can look forward to things that draw some enjoyment,” said Sandstrom, mentioning a study that found that holidaygoers can receive a significant boost in happiness thinking about

upcoming holidays. And if you’ve known the person you’re speaking with for a while, “thinking back on old times is good, too.”

■ Do something different. We can also make what we can of the present. Between chats, read a new book or cook a different recipe. “We can make efforts to introduce novelty,” Sandstrom said, and then we’ll have things to talk about.

“We have to have social interactions with other humans” for our emotional and neurological health, said Celeste Headlee, radio journalist and author of “We Need to Talk: How to Have Conversations That Matter” and a TEDx speaker on the topic of conversations.

In a best-case scenario, our exchanges would be in person. Now, they’re often over Zoom. However, Headlee highly encourages picking up the phone instead. A phone call doesn’t exhaust us in the same way as Zoom: There’s no constant eye contact, no nonstop self-evaluation, no reason to sit still for so long.

Headlee also cited a study that found listeners can better understand their conversation partners’ emotions when only hearing their voices, rather than also seeing them visually. By using the phone, Headlee said, we quickly “have a very accurate picture of someone’s emotional state.” Plus, a recent study found that phone calls during the pandemic were associated with decreases in stress, loneliness and difficulties maintaining relationships.

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AGING IN ATLANTA

Cooking

continued from S1

tions like our own – primarily adventurous and experienced home cooks who enjoy perusing the gourmet aisle of grocery stores or leisurely strolling the paths of farmers markets – swelled with novice cooks who, because of the pandemic-induced shortages and fears of grocery shopping, were more heavily reliant on shelf- and freezer-stable ingredients. This new audience needed simply to feed themselves, period.

Across food media, brands had to recalibrate their focus and lean into recipes that required the minimum of skill. We were all in the same boat now. People who hated cooking or never cared much for it had to learn. After years of conversations with friends and associates in the food world about how we wished more people cared about cooking, our dream had come true, although not in the environment we’d hoped.

As a reaction to the pandemic and the new restrictions it placed on our routine lives, a can-do attitude flourished. Can’t go out for a latte? Make a simulation at home that also gives your arm exercise from lots of whisking. Can’t get a loaf of bread from the bakery? Take up sourdough bread and learn how to keep a starter alive. The patience for making complicated project-style recipes started to grow thanks to endless hours, days and weeks at home with nothing to do.

Now that dinner party fare was a thing of the past, my colleague Genevieve Ko and I at The Times focused on delivering short, simple, teaching-based recipes in our “How to Boil Water” series. We took turns developing a new recipe each weekday and hosting Instagram Live videos to show how to make the dishes in a sort of live-react cooking show format. Searing chicken breasts, roasting vegetables, making a pot of rice – these skills were now paramount to a whole new

generation of formerly reluctant cooks.

But once summer hit, the killing of George Floyd and the racial fallout that followed changed the world. In food media, that cultural awakening spurred conversations about recipe appropriation and the need to showcase creators. We asked ourselves, “Who gets to tell certain food stories? Who gets to develop certain recipes?” The focus of recipe development shifted from ingredients and techniques to the makers – the rightful ones.

Black authors who had been overlooked or pigeonholed into developing only African or American Southern dishes were pushed into the spotlight, their recipes promoted with a fervor to right the wrongs of the previous century of food media treatment. Anyone who had been paying attention rightfully no longer accepted traditional Black, Asian or Latin recipes from a white developer. This sort of “recipe colonialism,” which had been de facto

for decades among many media outlets – paying lip service to diverse content without actually employing diverse employees or crediting correct sources – now looked cringingly dated at best and outright racist at worst.

The new breadth of voices and dishes appearing in magazines, newspapers and online led to a more engaged audience that no longer simply wanted “basics” as presented through a white “American” lens but was eager for fundamental techniques and dishes from around the world that could teach them about different cultures too. The world of recipes and what audiences have the attention span and knowledge to absorb had been inextricably altered. Readers were more educated and wanted recipes from real authorities, the cooks and chefs with real experience and cultural ties to their food. Readers now saw a curry masquerading as a “stew” and were finally ready to engage in the long-needed conversation about no longer

accepting those appropriations.

Once the holidays hit, the cooking conversation shifted once more, if only for the season. Nostalgia and the awareness of lost or separated loved ones made the outlook of holiday meals a bleak one. Some opted to cook smaller meals, while others couldn’t handle the thought of a smaller meal and stuck doggedly to tradition, no matter the waste or leftovers it created. But I understood that predilection. When all you have is the ritual of cooking a holiday meal – arguably the seasonal task we look forward to the most – to get you through a looming stretch of bleak winter isolation, shouldn’t you be able to have your whole turkey and tray of stuffing if it helps you stay sane?

Now, a year after the pandemic started, many people are getting vaccinated – or will be by the end of May – and so the kind of convivial cooking we enjoyed before the pandemic is once again possible. I’m sure many people might rejoice at

the thought of being able to go back to restaurants and will forgo cooking for months in celebratory protest. But I know many more who will relish getting to put their past year’s worth of new skills and cultural knowledge on display for small gatherings of friends and family.

I anticipate this swing back to entertaining – at least on a small scale – with people excited to finally eat a meal they didn’t make for themselves. The joy of cooking for others will return. But it will carry with it an awareness about sourcing and credit – where did those techniques really come from, who really created those dishes – allowing us, I hope, to appreciate their contributions with respect, reverence and learning.

Just as important, cooking will once again provide the backdrop to what really matters in life: seeing our family, catching up with friends and making memories that will sustain us through hard times of all kinds in the future.

HEALTHY EATING

Versatile asparagus full of flavor

Most common is green; purple, rarest; white is most fibrous.

Florence Fabricant
c. 2021 The New York Times

Spring is a new beginning. At the produce stand, spring starts with “A” for asparagus, one of the most versatile of vegetables. Asparagus can be served raw, steamed, boiled, sauteed, roasted, stir-fried, deep-fried, pureed for soup or a dip, and baked in custards, tarts and souffles.

Selecting

Begin with color. Green is the most common, purple the rarest and white, which is prized in Europe, the most fibrous. You will also find a variety of thicknesses: Skinny pencil-thin spears are best raw, whole for crudites or cut in salads. Medium stalks (the most common) are sold by the bunch, typically about a pound or 12 to 15 spears. Really big, meaty asparagus stalks – those an inch thick – can stand alone, with three to four to a serving.

Storing

Asparagus will hold up for a few days wrapped in a damp paper or cloth towel in the refrigerator’s humidifier drawer. Or stand the stalks up in the refrigerator in a container with about 2 inches of water in the bottom.

Preparing

Except for the skinniest asparagus, the woody end of each stalk should be snapped off where they break naturally. If you plan to slant-cut your asparagus in inch-long pieces for a stir-fry, or cook and puree for soup or a dip, there’s no need to peel beforehand. For other dishes, however, all but the top quarter of the spear should be peeled. A regular vegetable peeler will do fine, although there are efficient specialized utensils with a peeling feature built in that grip the stalk. To boil asparagus, simply lay the spears flat in a skillet and cover with water. For steaming, tall, narrow asparagus pots will keep the spears upright, although a steamer basket big enough to hold them lying down in a deep saute pan or skillet works fine. Thicker stalks should be more thoroughly cooked.



Asparagus can be served raw, steamed, boiled, sauteed, roasted, stir-fried, deep-fried, pureed for soup or dip, and baked in custards, tarts and souffles. It'll keep for a few days if in damp paper or a cloth towel in the fridge's humidifier drawer. KARSTEN MORAN/NEW YORK TIMES

Serving

As with corn, there’s a whole cottage industry of specialized asparagus tools and servers. Porcelain and Majolica plates and platters decorated with asparagus patterns, as well as indented silver asparagus tongs for serving, are the stuff of antiques markets. Books on manners once addressed the propriety of eating asparagus like finger food, but it depends on the preparation. Spears drenched in hollandaise require a fork. Trendier preparations include pureeing asparagus for a guacamolelike dip or shaving them raw with a vegetable peeler for a refreshing green tangle in a spring or summer salad.

ASPARAGUS WITH BROWN BUTTER

Total time: 30 minutes
Yield: 4 to 6 servings

2 dozen medium asparagus stalks, 1 ½ to 2 pounds
6 tablespoons unsalted butter
Salt and ground black pepper
2 tablespoons minced flat-leaf parsley

1. Snap off the ends of the asparagus where they naturally break. Use a vegetable peeler to peel the outside of each stalk about ¾ the way up. Line a serving platter with a couple of layers of paper towels.
2. Fill a skillet large enough to hold the asparagus with 2 inches of water. Bring to a boil, add the asparagus, then cover and cook for about 6 minutes, until just tender. Use tongs to lift the asparagus from the water, draining well, and place on the platter. Place the cover of the skillet or a sheet of foil over them to keep warm.
3. Pour off any water from the skillet and wipe it dry. Place the butter in the skillet and heat on medium until it turns nut-brown and fragrant; remove from the heat immediately. Slip the paper towels out from under the asparagus, season them with salt and pepper and pour the hot butter over them, turning to coat well. Sprinkle with parsley and serve.

Jacques Pépin

SHAVED ASPARAGUS WITH ARUGULA AND PARMESAN

Total time: About 20 minutes Yield: 4 to 6 servings

½ pound large or medium asparagus
2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
3 tablespoons fruity extra-virgin olive oil
Salt and pepper
6 ounces arugula, washed and dried
Chunk of Parmesan, for shaving
Sliced prosciutto (optional)

1. Snap off and discard the tough ends of the asparagus. Using a mandoline, sharp vegetable peeler or thin-bladed knife, slice the asparagus lengthwise into paper-thin ribbons.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together the lemon juice and olive oil to make a dressing. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
3. Place the asparagus ribbons in a shallow salad bowl. Season lightly with salt and pepper and coat with half the dressing. Add the arugula, tossing gently to distribute the asparagus. Drizzle with the remaining dressing.
4. With a vegetable peeler, shave thin curls of Parmesan over the salad. Accompany with a platter of sliced prosciutto if desired.

David Tanis

VISUAL ARTS

Artist’s cancer journey leads to inspiring mural

By Marc Narducci
Philadelphia Inquirer

PHILADELPHIA — When artist Michele Tremblay was diagnosed with leukemia in February 2017, her first stay at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital, where she underwent treatment, lasted 28 days. One of her friends, Christina Morin Graham, visited almost daily.

During those visits, Morin Graham noticed how dreary the view was from Tremblay’s third-floor room on the oncology unit.

“All you could stare at was a stucco wall, with smears running down it – the opposite of something that should make somebody feel good,” Morin Graham said. “If you’re trying to heal from a major health concern, you want to surround yourself with things that are positive and inspiring.”

Since Tremblay is an accomplished paper sculptor and painter, Morin Graham had a suggestion for her: When the hospital stay was over, why not use her talents to spruce up the wall – a project that might also give her hope?

“When I got out of the hospital after 28 days, I thought I was going to die,” said Tremblay, 65, a Philadelphia resident and married mother of three grown children.

As she started regaining her strength, though, Tremblay kept thinking about how depressing her hospital view had been, and she made a decision: She would attempt to create a mural for the wall so patients and caregivers on Jefferson’s third floor would have something beautiful to look at.

“Even if you get five seconds of joy, that’s five seconds you aren’t thinking about whatever version of cancer you have,” said Tremblay.

But where to start? The wall’s size alone – 20 feet high and 83 feet wide – was daunting.

“I was originally going to [take on the project] by myself,” Tremblay said, but quickly realized she couldn’t do it alone. So she contacted her friend Polly Apfelbaum, a fellow alum of Temple University’s Tyler School of Art and an accomplished artist whose work has graced galleries and collections worldwide.

“I have this big project, and I need help,” said Tremblay to Apfelbaum.

Apfelbaum jumped in, and the women began what would become a three-year collaboration to develop and create a glorious concept for the wall mural.

“It was really a labor of love for us,” said Apfelbaum, who lives in Elizaville, New York. “Michele’s spirit and generosity was such a beautiful thing.”

Their resulting design is a lively, happy, and playful work they christened “Floating Dogwood,” which bursts with color and depth.

“This project took a lot of grit,” said Mural Arts Philadelphia Executive Director Jane Golden of the many adjustments needed to bring the mural to fruition.

The mural, noted Golden, is especially beautiful while the sun is setting.

“This is about resilience,” Golden said about the mural. “I think of what a resilient, wonderful person Michele is.”



Michele Tremblay and Polly Apfelbaum’s mural “Floating Dogwood,” seen near the corner of 11th and Chestnut Streets in Center City, Philadelphia.

MONICA HERNDON/PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

AGING IN ATLANTA

CAREERS

Tips to achieve a long life and fulfilling career

Positive approach can make later-life work satisfying.

By Matt Fuchs
Washington Post

Joan Virginia Allen of Ojai, California, practiced elder law before switching jobs at age 60 – and deciding to try to work another 60 years. “I wanted to challenge what society says about getting old,” she said. Now, at 82, she’s a fully booked life coach. She’s also part of a trend. People age 75 and over, including our fresh-on-the-job president of the United States, are the fastest-growing group in the labor force, said Susan Weinstock, vice president of financial resilience at AARP.

Over the decades, these workers have embraced healthy-living in terms of diet, exercise and mindfulness. They have also relished challenges, maintained a sense of purpose and continued to learn from job experiences. All of these habits have positioned them to add value at work by sharing wisdom gained over their long careers with younger colleagues. It’s a virtuous circle; their approach to work and living leads to their job success, and their job success reinforces their approach to work and life.

Not all older employees, of course, are happy about having to work beyond a certain age. Many are facing financial pressures and have delayed retirement for the paychecks, not necessarily the thrill of their jobs. Richard Besdine, an 80-year-old professor of medicine at Brown Uni-

versity, said those compelled to work may see fewer wellness benefits from staying active through employment. Those who can’t control their schedules are especially vulnerable to health issues.

Here are some strategies that may help employees:

They see business as pleasure

When he was 71, Eric Kandel won the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for discovering the role of neurons in storing memories. Had personal achievement been his priority, he might have retired, with no higher honors to chase. Instead, at 91, he still runs his lab at Columbia University’s Zuckerman Institute, supervising a team of researchers, some of them six decades his junior.

“I do these things because they give me great pleasure,” Kandel said.

One reason work provides pleasure is because it requires meeting challenges. Kandel likes to “slug it out” in his lab, often grappling with unfamiliar concepts to inform his research. “You write about something and – boom – all of a sudden it becomes clear to you,” he said.

Besdine also thrives on the demands of his field, “voraciously” reading medical literature and holding an early-morning journal club for colleagues to discuss important papers. Continuing to work “isn’t a health decision, it’s a pleasure decision,” he said. The personal benefits are “side effects. The fundamental driver has been that I want to know every strat-

egy to keep old people vital, both physically and cognitively. And now I am one!”

This attitude is protective. People who revel in challenges are more likely to do well on cognitive tasks, said Lisa Feldman Barrett, a psychology professor at Northeastern University and author of “Seven and a Half Lessons About the Brain.” Her brain scan studies suggest that unusually successful aging may be related to how tenacious a person is.

They exercise and eat healthfully

Most of my interviewees eat Mediterranean diets rich in omega-3s. Half of them reported being vegans or vegetarians. Some are avid gardeners who enjoy their own fresh produce.

They take few or no supplements, but some do consume one item that might have anti-aging properties: coffee. Donald Weaver, a neurologist and chemist at the Krembil Brain Institute in Toronto, found that roasted coffee beans release compounds that may break up proteins linked to Alzheimer’s.

They manage stress

The ability to relax is key to avoiding burnout. Musette Henley, a 79-year-old working in customer relations for the U.S. Postal Service in Chicago, has recharged for many years by walking to Lake Michigan and meditating while watching the water.

Sybil Jordan Hampton of Arkansas retired as president of a philanthropic foundation at age 61 and started a consulting practice catering to nonprofits. Now 76, Hampton is still consult-

ing – and still relying on what she called “the wonderful life lessons that my parents, grandfather and community gave us for living well in trying circumstances.”

In 1959, when she was part of the second class of Black students to integrate Little Rock Central High School, her parents gave her two pieces of advice: work hard, and listen to classical music. So, for 60 years, she has spent time relaxing to classical music at night. She also starts many mornings by reading the hopeful prayers of enslaved people in the antebellum era. “I am extraordinarily upbeat with tremendous faith in the face of darkness,” she said.

Music and other forms of de-stressing promote long-term cognition and boost memory and creativity. Sleeping soundly and following wakefulness patterns help the brain efficiently maintain the body’s energy balance, a process known as allostasis, said Barrett, the Northeastern professor. “If you don’t replenish energy spent, you pay a little metabolic tax, and (those taxes) may add up faster for an older person.”

They find meaning as ‘wisdom workers’

Historically, elders found utility in nurturing their grandkids. Today, with families more geographically dispersed, “there’s

less opportunity in your backyard,” said Chip Conley, founder of the Modern Elder Academy, which helps mostly middle-aged workers – but a number of older people, too – reinvent their careers, often to influence younger generations. Many seniors still find meaning and community in retirement, but others find it by prolonging their careers.

Kandel, the Nobel Prize winner, continues working partly for the enjoyment of supporting early-career scientists. “I’ve been doing my job for 60 years, and they’ve been doing it for two or three,” he said. “But some are better than I was at their stage. I encourage them along those lines.”

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AGING IN ATLANTA

WORK FROM ANYWHERE

Choose your view on a workation getaway

With remote work, your office can be a little more scenic.

By Kathy Witt
Tribune News Service

Working 9 to 5 looks completely different these days, thanks to remote work. As much as some people embrace it, others are tired of looking at the same four walls. Well, what if those four walls opened to views of white sand beaches and palm trees, layers of snowcapped and forested mountains or so many acres of rolling pastureland you feel you've (happily) fallen off the grid?

Shake up the workday routine by running away to one of these workation destinations. (As long as you get the job done, what does the boss care—or does the boss even need to know?)

California beach pad steps from the ocean

The easy-breezy elegance of the private Cottages at Lido House, arranged in country club-style ambiance on the Balboa Peninsula, is a magnet for stressed-out execs whose work/life balance has been upended by the pandemic. Part of Marriott's peerless Autograph Collection of distinctive independent hotels, the five three-story hideaways, each named after local islands and given a custom-curated designer interior, celebrate that effortless, iconic sensibility for which California's Newport Beach is famous.

The Balboa Cottage is described as having a "retro-playful aesthetic (that) joins California effervescence with East Coast sensibility." The Bay Cottage, a Newport-meets-Nantucket haven, reflects a "jet-set perspective infused with contemporary décor." Each sumptuous yet homey cottage has plenty of room to stretch out and relax and enjoy the good life or plug in and get to work in an inspirational setting with a beachy vibe.

Enjoy dinner at the Mayor's Table, the onsite restaurant plating seafood delectables inspired by the Pacific Ocean. Sip handcrafted cocktails at Topside, the only rooftop venue in Newport Beach. Amenities include swimming pool, Boost Spa, marina and those beautiful white-sand beaches, beckoning just steps away. www.marriott.com

Norman Rockwell meets the ski slopes of Vermont

The covered bridges and spotted dairy cows add an idyllic and bucolic touch to Stowe, Vermont, the ski capital of the east. Considered the quintessential Norman Rockwell small town with its church steeples, red barns and charming antique shops, it feels like a simpler time and place, one perfect for getting your balance back.

Located in the Green



Take care of business, then take a dip in the hotel's sun-kissed pool at the Cottages at Lido House, Autograph Collection. MARRIOTT/TNS



Savor the view from your private deck at the Cottages at Lido House. MARRIOTT/TNS

Mountains at the foot of Mount Mansfield—Vermont's highest peak—Stowe is a winter playground with Nordic and cross-country skiing, dog-sledding, fat biking, sleigh rides and snowmobiling. The perfect work-away-from-home for these activities and more is Topnotch Resort.

The clean, minimal design of the guestrooms and suites encourages focus for a business-before-play mindset while Topnotch's two- and three-bedroom resort homes are an ideal solution for large families looking to get away and still spread out. With open floor plans, mountain views, granite kitchens, designer baths, fireplaces and more, accommodations are both roomy and cozy, designed for equal parts entertainment and relaxation as well as work. When the workday ends, there's the Topnotch Spa for a massage or facial. You're not going to get this at home. www.topnotchresort.com

Historic hemp farm in Kentucky countryside

Tune in to a historic two-bedroom log cabin; peace out on 1,000 acres of rolling Kentucky pastureland on Mt. Folly Farm, an official Kentucky landmark. Located in Winchester, about 20 miles east of Lexington, it is equipped with Internet plus ground floor library, workspace - even an empty filing cabinet. The cabin has all the amenities of an office, without actually being an office.

That's because it's an off-the-grid hideaway on a working organic hemp farm, one where guests are free to hike, stroll, bike and go birding and, depending on COVID regulations, help with planting the farm garden and feeding the goats.



Located on the Natchez bluffs overlooking the Mississippi, Clermont Bluffs offers the peaceful seclusion of an estate while still being an easy walk to Main Street. CLERMONT BLUFFS BED AND BREAKFAST/TNS

The cabin offers views all around, from the front lawn with its large oak trees to the goat holler to the greenhouse and farm gardens to the granary where farm owner Laura Freeman and her crew stone-mill corn and grain. Just yonder is Laura's Mercantile at the Crooked House, a farm store stocked with Laura's Hemp Chocolates, Homestead Alternatives Hemp Tincture, heritage grains from Mt. Folly and other regional specialties, available to guests and operated on the honor box method.

Inside are equipped kitchen and modern bathrooms, dining room and family room. Antique furnishings help tell the story of the cabin's history. www.visitwinchesterky.com

Futuristic Lakeshore loft with Chicago city views

Just wow. The Extreme WOW Suite at the W Chicago-Lakeshore is 1,600 square feet of drop-dead fabulous. Tricked out with urban design elements, its expansive windows overlook either cityscape or Lake Michigan from 22 floors up above Chicago's hustle-bustle Loop neighborhood.

Signature king-size W bed, semi-private dressing salon, custom-built wardrobes, two full baths and in-room soaking tub. Gorgeously equipped



On the to-do list at the Extreme WOW Suite at the W Chicago-Lakeshore: a soak in the designer bath. MARRIOTT/TNS

kitchen, fully stocked bar and polished gathering space for drinks and so much more - all dressed up in sleek décor with pops of color, curving couches, luxury linens and plump pillows.

The suite is ready for indoor play with retro arcade game and flatscreen TVs and to get down to business with USB outlets and high-speed Wi-Fi. The hotel offers a fitness center and heated indoor pool, the restaurant, CURRENT, serving European cuisine with local flair and multicultural flavors, and a gathering hotspot called the Living Room, known for craft cocktails and DJ

music. www.marriott.com

Bed and breakfast on the bluffs

Known as the Bed and Breakfast Capital of the South for its more than 40 bed and breakfast and historic inns, Natchez is home to the Clermont Bluffs Bed and Breakfast, a charming enclave for spiriting off to work with an inspired view: that of the bluffs overlooking the mighty Mississippi.

Not only that but this Victorian-era home, picture-perfect with its estate setting, also takes in the bottomlands, a network of deep crevasses where pre-Europeans encamped on

the riverbanks, fishing and hunting.

The large luxurious rooms were designed to blend modern comfort and historic charm. Each room has a king bed, brand new tile bathrooms, comfortable sitting space for in-room relaxation, smart TVs, fine linens and ample pillows. www.clermontbluffs.com

Author and travel and lifestyle writer Kathy Witt feels you should never get to the end of your bucket list; there's just too much to see and do in the world. Contact her at KathyWitt24@gmail.com, [@KathyWitt](https://twitter.com/KathyWitt).

AGING IN ATLANTA

SPORTS

Pickleball: A sport ‘sweeping the country’

Much of the appeal is social for tennis-pingpong hybrid.

By Frank Fitzpatrick Philadelphia Inquirer

If you overlook its pointlessly peculiar name and the fact that it’s played with a modified whiffle ball and a gigantic pingpong paddle, you just might enjoy pickleball. That is what millions of Americans have discovered. In the last three years, according to the Sports and Fitness Industry Association, the racket game, invented by a future congressman and apparently named for his family’s dog, has been the nation’s fastest-growing participation sport.

“It’s been sweeping the country,” said Jane Souewine, a 65-year-old East Norriton, Pennsylvania, resident who plays in a community league. “I’ve been amazed at how popular it’s become.”

Now that popularity appears to be accelerating as Americans cloistered by COVID-19 are increasingly hungry for social activities. In the Philadelphia area, residents of all ages, but especially seniors, are playing pickleball indoors and outdoors, in leagues and informal groups, on converted tennis courts and those built to satisfy the new demand.

“You can find it just about everywhere,” said Greg Waks, an Upper Merion Township supervisor and an avid participant. “Yes, the name is strange. It isn’t one that embodies skill or strength or athleticism or precision. It sounds like something made up by bored kids. But the more people see and experience it, the less strange it sounds. It’s growing like crazy.”

A hybrid of pingpong and tennis, pickleball is played on a badminton-sized court, at 44 feet by 20 roughly one-third as large as a tennis court. Using wood or composite paddles, participants serve underhanded, then smack a perforated, dense-plastic



Rich Francisco (left) and Greg Waks play pickleball as a pair recently at Upper Merion Community Center near Philadelphia. PHOTOS BY CHARLES FOX/PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

ball back and forth across a net that at 34 inches is 2 inches shorter than its tennis counterpart.

Though the rules are simple and the physical demands few, much of its appeal is social. Since no expensive equipment or special abilities are required, almost anyone can play. Leagues tend to be as low-pressure as the sport’s funky name might suggest.

“It’s just a very fun two hours,” said Souewine, who participates in a league at the Upper Merion Community Center. “It’s athletic. It’s social. It’s inexpensive. It checks a lot of boxes.”

How to play pickleball

Kate Corr, 60, of Collegeville said she played doubles pickleball – by far the most common format – a few times a week with former tennis friends at gatherings that serve the same function that card parties or coffee klatches did in a more sedentary age.

“It’s a fun, social sport,” said Corr, the mother of six. “We bring a cooler of beer. If there’s more than four of us, we rotate in and out. If you’re sitting and waiting, you can have a cocktail. If you’re playing, you’re playing, but you can still kind of chit-chat and catch up.”



The popularity of pickleball, a hybrid of pingpong and tennis, is exploding. Marisa Gallegos uses her paddle as a fan between matches recently at Upper Merion Community Center near Philadelphia.

Pickleball’s pace tends to be slower than tennis or squash, and participants must remain several feet behind the net. And with a smaller court and a ball that travels at lower speeds, seniors and the unathletic can get their exercise without straining themselves.

“You don’t have to hit the ball as hard as in tennis, so you have a lot more long rallies,” said Jeremiah Thomas of Doylestown, 37, a onetime college tennis player whose serves in that sport were once measured at 142 mph. “It’s almost like chess. You can set up a point, react to things.”

“You can play with people of varying skill levels. I can make points off the

top players in the world. In tennis, I’d have no prayer of doing that.”

Popularity of the sport, founded in 1965 but only recently gaining momentum, has been spread primarily through word-of-mouth or serendipity. Thomas discovered it in online search after a devastating knee injury made tennis nearly impossible. Waks stumbled upon it at the Upper Merion CC, Souewine at an adult-education course.

Courts have been popping up throughout the area – at tennis clubs, YMCAs, community centers, 55-and-over developments, public parks and private country clubs. They’re egalitarian. Seger Park in South Philadel-

phia has them, as does the Waynesborough Country Club in Paoli. Dozens of formal and informal leagues, like the whimsically named Garnet Valley Gherkins Pickleball Association, have been created to sate this growing appetite.

Thomas, who owns Camp Curiosity, a 50-acre site for children’s camps in Doylestown, has installed several courts there, both indoor and outdoor. Area leagues utilize them, and on occasion they’re open to the general public. Demand has been so great that he’s adding more.

“Recently we’ve ordered a dozen more,” said Thomas. “We’ll have 17 outdoor courts ready to go by June.”

Waks, an Upper Merion supervisor and attorney who’s been playing for the last five years, said he had little trouble finding courts.

“I play three times a week at the Upper Merion Community Center,” he said. “My condo community has two private pickleball courts. There are retrofitted [tennis] courts at Bob White Farm Park, which is nearby. You can find leagues or pickleball groups online, and there are always tournaments.”

It’s been a relatively short journey since that day in 1965 when Joel Pritchard, later a Republican congressman, and a few friends decided to play badminton at his home on Bainbridge Island, Washington. When they couldn’t find a shuttlecock, they improvised with a whiffle ball and homemade paddles. Searching for a name, someone spotted the Pritchards’ dog, Pickles, and the new sport was christened. (Some claim the name actually derived from the rowing term “pickle boat,” in which a crew is assembled with oarsmen from different boats.)

An estimated 3 million people play. The large sporting-goods manufacturers have discovered pickleball, and once rudimentary equipment has

evolved. For \$200, you can buy a six-layer, carbon-fiber paddle.

There are three types of balls. Because there’s no wind, and they don’t tend to bounce as well there, the indoor ball is lighter. Its perforations are larger and more numerous, making it less likely to skid. The outdoor ball is heavier and more rubbery. And those used by elite players are made from a harder plastic.

Locally, that equipment can now be found at major sporting-goods retailers like Dick’s and Walmart, at tennis and other racket-sport centers and at numerous online sites.

Executives of Pickleball Central.Com, a Washington state company that is the largest online seller, told the Puget Sound Business Journal that they expected revenue, estimated at \$20 million in 2020, would grow by 25% this year.

“We started in September 2006 as a hobby website,” said Anna Copley, the company’s co-founder. “After three years, the sport of pickleball was booming, and our little side business had grown into a full-time enterprise serving thousands of customers.”

Statistics show that 64% of pickleball players are, like Souewine and Corr, 55 and over. In some senior-laden areas, the game has developed an enthusiastic following. At The Villages, the massive Central Florida retirement community, there are more than 200 courts.

“It’s a sport anyone can play, even as you get older,” said Corr. “There’s not a lot of running. It’s more quick hands and hand-eye coordination. It’s not real tough on the joints.”

For those reasons it allows for more balanced competition between age groups than most sports. Thomas discovered that early in his transition to pickleball.

“I was playing this 65-year-old, and he destroyed me,” Thomas said. “That really got me hooked.”

FAMILY

Dad always buried his feelings – until Zoom

By Laura Fraser Washington Post

My 92-year-old father lives in isolation, eagerly awaiting his vaccine. Like many people who reside alone, he’s had a rough time during the pandemic. He’s lucky to be in a retirement complex that, unlike most, has escaped the direct ravages of COVID-19. But for a man who had already lost his wife, a daughter, two siblings and scores of friends, the pandemic added the crushing loss of flesh-and-blood contact with those who remain. Yet, partly thanks to technology, he may emerge from this strange time with a few closer relationships, and that includes the one with me.

Dad, a retired physician, is a stoic. Once, on a skiing trip, I saw him sew up a gash in his own leg without using anything to numb the pain. I’ve rarely seen him show much emotion, and when my sisters and I were little he wouldn’t tolerate our tears, either. He was a poor, Depression-era farm child whose elders thought that hugging and comforting him would make him soft, even after his father died when he was 11. As a little kid, he had to man up. It’s fair to say his feelings

have been on lockdown his entire life.

For the first few weeks of March 2020, when his complex shut out the virus-spreading outside world, Dad made the best of it, reading piles of books and phoning friends. By April he sounded less chipper. “I feel like I’m in jail,” he said, and the comparison was apt: His only human contact, once a day, occurred when someone knocked on his door to deliver lukewarm meals. I worried that isolation might affect his mental health, accelerating the confusion and cognitive limitations that come with very old age. He was particularly gloomy when he found out a group of his friends were getting together via Zoom and he didn’t know how to join in.

“What the hell is Zooming?” he asked.

My dad’s still sharp; he has a textbook memory for medical questions, even if that textbook was last updated in the ’90s. But he dislikes new technology, and neither his flip phone nor his ancient beige box of a computer had a camera. My husband and I bought a cheap laptop, loaded it with his email account, photos, Zoom and a password written in indelible ink on the

keyboard, and mailed it off. After many tries, voilà! There he was on Zoom, with his crooked nose from the time a horse kicked him, and the familiar warm brown eyes. I hadn’t been sure I would see that face again, and I teared up.

“That’s all there is to it?” Dad asked. My sisters and their kids dialed in, and Dad held a smile so long I thought his computer had frozen.

We Zoom at least weekly. I discovered that Dad, who can get antsy after a few minutes when he sees us in person, is calmer on video, less distracted and fidgety. He doesn’t have to worry about entertaining us, as he does when we fly halfway across country to visit, or feel bad about getting tired when we’ve come all the way to Denver from San Francisco. Because our visit is scheduled and timed, he also doesn’t fret that we will disrupt his smooth daily routine. He can just relax. While many of us who work from home complain of constant Zoom fatigue, we take for granted how technology has helped us communicate during this pandemic. In some cases, surprisingly, it has allowed us more intimacy.

Zooming has cracked open a window into my



The author, Laura Fraser, and her father, Dr. Charles Fraser, 92, chat via Zoom. Laura Fraser is in San Francisco and her father in Denver. What she thought would be a stopgap communication changed how they relate to each other. CAROLYN VAN HOUTEN/WASHINGTON POST

father’s heart. When we ask him questions about his past, he responds with more detail and more emotion. He told us about the fun he had as a child going snake hunting with a .22, and the time he dammed a creek near the one-room schoolhouse he attended in rural Ohio so he could swim. He reminisced about what it was like for a farm boy to tour the Mediterranean in the Navy and about the wilderness horseback trips he took with our late mom.

One night I lingered on photos of Mom, his fellow adventurer for 60 years of marriage, gone for nearly 10 years now. “I miss her every day,” he said – something we knew, but he rarely expressed.

I shared a photo of my

sister Jan, who died four years ago. She appears as a pigtailed blond toddler, bouncing on a trampoline with a fierce expression on her face. “That’s my favorite picture of Janny,” Dad said. “She was just so full of joy and energy.” Something he never told her during her lifetime.

What I thought would be a stopgap type of communication to help Dad during the pandemic has changed the way we relate to each other. His new skill with video calls will help us stay close even after the pandemic, since I live 1,000 miles away and one of my sisters is a two-hour drive distant.

A few weeks ago, over Zoom, Dad was able to see his great-granddaughter for the first time. He was

delighted to learn that my nephew and his wife named her after my mother, Virginia. “I just can’t wait to hug her,” he says. His mood has lifted. He laughs as little Ginny bumbles and coos. He does something else that’s new for him. Before he signs off, he tells us he loves us.

Editor’s update: Laura Fraser reports that her dad is now fully immunized and excited about meeting his new great-granddaughter soon, as both her parents have also been vaccinated. She’s in the process of getting her vaccines and plans to visit him as well.

Laura Fraser is the author of the travel memoir “An Italian Affair” and an editor at Rewiring America. She is based in San Francisco.

JOHNCARE

John Petrick loves the simple life. The feeling of warm wood under his table saw, crisp wind in his face during his morning bike ride, and the spin of the reel on his fishing rod when he's hooked a "big one." Perhaps he revels in simplicity because, beneath the surface, John's heart health is rather complicated.

Between diagnoses of ventricular tachycardia (VT), atrial fibrillation (AFib) and congestive heart failure one thing is certain – John's heart is, by his own definition, "an odd puzzle." So when he needed a health provider who would truly listen and care, John chose Wellstar.

There, his primary care physician referred him to an entire team of heart care experts – a cardiologist, two electrophysiologists, an advanced heart failure and transplant cardiologist and a cardiac psychologist – who all work together to keep John's entire health in check. That way, John can focus on more important things – like going fishing.

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