

AGING IN ATLANTA

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

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MENTAL HEALTH



"The whole world has gone through shock, trauma and grief, and symptoms of depression and anxiety show up . . . a trained mental health professional who understands that this is a valid, normal experience can help you do something about it," says Atlanta counselor Laura Morse. ADOBE STOCK IMAGES

Learning to ask for help

By H. M. Cauley | For the AJC

Experts agree that the signs of deteriorating mental health can come in a range of guises, from disrupted sleeping and eating patterns to being unreasonably disagreeable. It's often difficult to immediately recognize when someone's mental state is endangered, but Wilma Jenkins is ready to help older adults identify and cope with the causes. At 82, Jenkins has lived with her own depression for more than 30 years after two siblings died.

"They self-medicated themselves to death, and it wasn't until they were gone that we began to talk about depression in the family," she said. "For so long, there's been such a stigma associated with mental illness that no one wants to talk about it, especially in my African American community."

When Jenkins retired in 1993, she signed up with the Atlanta Regional Commission's senior volunteer network. Last year, she trained to give workshops on mental health and conducted one in February 2020 before COVID-19 commenced. She's been sheltering alone in her South Fulton home ever since.

"And I'm continuing to deal with depression," she said. "Not being able to go out and do things is not so good for me. Sometimes I'll just get in my car and drive; that's helped me be less depressed. Sometimes I pick up lunch and eat it in the park. I'm

also in two book clubs that have Zoom meetings, and every Sunday I have a Zoom meeting with my family."

Recognizing that an older person is depressed can be a challenge, said Tori Sorrells, part of Piedmont Healthcare's Sixty Plus services, a group of social workers who deal exclusively with older adults whose mood disorders are often a form of depression. "An older adult who has other things to manage, like chronic pain, may focus on those complaints and underreport anxiety," said Sorrells. "But they're often at higher risk for these issues because of things like bereavement — they've outlived many of their friends and family. They may experience loneliness and isolation."

The pandemic has played into those problems, Sorrells said.

"In order to be physically,

Depression continued on S2



Seen here on the way to her 80th birthday party two years ago, Wilma Jenkins acknowledges both a family and a personal history of depression. PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

"For so long, there's been such a stigma associated with mental illness that no one wants to talk about it, especially in my African American community."

Wilma Jenkins

HEALTH

Power of poetry resonates right now

Lyrical flow of words and ideas can help us deal with loss.

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

Many, perhaps most, of us have spent this past year struggling to find ways to mourn the losses, weather the stresses and revive the pleasures stolen by the COVID-19 pandemic. We've monitored Zoom funerals, weddings, graduations, christenings, bar and bat mitzvahs, alternately laughing and weeping at inanimate screens as we tried to make sense of a world turned upside down.

But I wonder how many have turned to poetry as a source of comfort, release, connection, understanding, inspiration and acceptance.

One person who has long valued poetry as both a personal and professional aid is Dr. Norman Rosenthal, a psychiatrist in Rockville, Md., who pioneered the use of light therapy for seasonal affective disorder. A clinical professor of psychiatry at Georgetown Medical School, Dr. Rosenthal said he has used poems as a therapeutic assistant, with rewarding results among his patients.

"I have loved poetry ever since I was able to read, and it has been a personal source of comfort and solace to me at different times in my life," he told me. "As a therapist, I have collected poems along the way that I thought had the power to heal, inspire or, at the very least, bring joy."

Now anyone can access and benefit from the short poems he has found to be so therapeutic and the soul-restoring messages he has gleaned from them. Dr. Rosenthal has compiled them in a new book, "PoetryRx: How 50 Inspiring Poems Can Heal and Bring Joy to Your Life," complete with helpful takeaways and discussions of the circumstances under which they were written.

While we herald vaccines as potential saviors from a devastating virus, Dr. Rosenthal said, "Poetry can serve as a vaccine for the soul." In a world that is so marred by loss and deprived of pleasure, he believes poetry can help fill in the gaps, offering a brief retreat from a troubled world and hope for a better future.

For Margaret Shryer, a Minnesota great-grandmother, poetry has been like a good friend, a reliable source of inspiration and consolation that has helped her remain sane during the months mostly confined to her apartment in a senior residence.

"Poetry generally picks me up," she told me. "There's a nugget of truth in every poem, and I flip through them to find ones that resonate with me and will get me going. I read them aloud. Every time you go back to a poem, you read it with a different set of ears. To people who think they don't like poetry or understand it, I say, 'What about lyrics? That song you love? That's poetry.' Some of the most moving poetry can be found in lyrics."

Brody continued on S3

COOKING

Carbonara fritatta combines the best of both old worlds

G. Daniela Galarza
Washington Post

Years ago, a friend and I got into a months-long back-and-forth about carbonara. The pasta dish of cheese and pork, creamy with eggs and silky with starchy pasta water, is one of Rome's most revered exports. There are maybe hundreds of ways to make it, and lots of little rules,

and my friend and I probably tried them all.

Sometimes we'd cook together, arguing over whether the pasta water was salty enough or the cheese was grated finely enough. Sometimes we'd cook it in our separate kitchens, texting updates and photos as we went along, comparing hits and misses.

I loved these sessions,

and how my friend, who'd had many more versions of carbonara, in Italy and beyond, added little insights to my general cooking knowledge that got me thinking about pasta, Italian cooking theory and even life in different ways. At some point, I think, we settled on a formula we agreed was "our

Carbonara continued on S4



The stalks of asparagus can be roasted at the same time as the carbonara fritatta bakes. REY LOPEZ FOR THE

WASHINGTON POST

AGING IN ATLANTA

CELEBRATING NURSES

Join in honoring front-line heroes

AJC staff

Now more than ever, nurses deserve recognition and our heartfelt gratitude for their daily acts of heroism as they battle a pandemic on the front lines.

On Tuesday, May 11, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution's Celebrating Nurses Awards will honor 10 front-line heroes. The 16th annual event will be virtual again this year.

From administering vaccines to caring for patients day in and day out, nurses are living and working under an extraordinary set of circumstances.

Nurses inspire us all, and now we have the opportunity to celebrate their grueling work and sacrifices.

In November, we asked you to nominate a registered nurse or nurse leader who has made a significant difference in the lives of their patients and patients' families through compassion and selfless service.

Celebrating Nurses aims to honor nurses who have developed innovative approaches that contribute to the improvement of the quality of nursing care and who have improved the lives of those in need through selfless, courageous, creative and compassionate acts.

During the virtual awards ceremony, presented by Wellstar, we will share their stories of how these extraordinary caregivers have made a difference in their communities.

Few have experienced more stress, strain and sacrifice during the pandemic than nurses, and few are more deserving of celebration.

For this year's event, we received more than 1,000 nominations, and the 16th annual awards celebration will honor the top 10 chosen by an independent panel of judges.

We also will present the Nursing Leadership Award, sponsored by Mercer University. This award recognizes nurse leaders serving in an administrative capacity and who demonstrate advocacy, vision and collaboration to improve patient care and the nursing workplace.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution's Celebrating Nurses Awards are sponsored by Wellstar, Northside Hospital, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, Piedmont Healthcare, and Mercer University.

You can attend the event for free on May 11, noon-1 p.m. but it does require registration. You can register today at AJC.com/CN.



When nurse practitioner Tasneem Malik isn't at her full-time job at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, she is most likely volunteering at the Clarkston Community Health Center. Her parents taught her that a life of service is a life well-lived.

CREW ATLANTA

Depression

continued from S1

cognitively and emotionally healthy, we need to move, eat a healthy diet, get enough sleep, manage stress and be socially connected," she said. "Yet in the pandemic, we've told older adults to go home and shelter in place, and at home they're often alone. And senior centers have typically not been open, so many older adults saw an immediate drop in their social connections which has contributed to depression and increased anxiety."

At the same time, Laura Morse, a licensed professional counselor in Atlanta, sees older adults reluctant to ask for help.

"Many older clients come from a generational or cultural view where you didn't ask for help or talk about your feelings," she said. "They're aging, they may miss their families, they don't have access to friends or a sense of purpose like they used to. And now the whole world has gone through shock, trauma and grief, and symptoms of depression and anxiety show up."

Whether a person asks on their own or has a family member or physician who notices changes in appetite, sleep and activity, Morse said professional help can make a difference. "A trained mental health professional who understands that this is a valid, normal experience can help you do something about it; there are ways to change. Therapy can help people feel understood and heard in a space where they can say anything without retribution."

Fifty-nine-year-old Eric Schwartz said he's been in therapy "long term" for mild depression and sees nothing but benefits.

"I have the sense there are people who think if you see a therapist something is wrong with you, and you can't fix your own problems," said the Northlake resident. "But that didn't deter me from seeking help. The fact is, adulthood is hard, with the demands of being a functioning parent, spouse and contributor to society, and



Fifty-nine-year-old Eric Schwartz said he's been in therapy "long term" for mild depression and sees nothing but benefits. PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

"The fact is, adulthood is hard, with the demands of being a functioning parent, spouse and contributor to society, and balancing all that while taking care of yourself, is not easy... For me, the benefits have made me a better father, husband and worker who's functioning at a much higher level."

Eric Schwartz

balancing all that while taking care of yourself, is not easy. And if for any reason you didn't escape childhood without some damage, it's even more challenging. For me, the benefits have made me a better father, husband and worker who's functioning at a much higher level. I'd like to let people know it's OK to ask for help. In fact, it's a sign of strength. Don't let a stigma prevent you."

Schwartz, a management and technology consultant, was laid off during the pandemic and has been sheltering at home with his spouse. He's coped by keeping up his professional network, exercising, participating in educational webinars and doing more volunteer work with his congregation at The Temple in Midtown, where he chairs the racial justice committee.

"We do a lot of education and some advocacy around criminal justice reform and voting rights, and that has kept me busy," he said. "In

fact, I've been able to do a lot of it because I had the strength and awareness of what I need to do for self-care to function well."

Keeping a close eye on seniors' mental health is the Atlanta Regional Commission, where Mary Newton has been the Innovations Team project coordinator since 2015. Grants have enabled the team to start a community coaching program that sends a staffer into neighborhoods to connect older adults with a variety of services, including those around mental health.

"There's a common misperception that isolation and depression are normal parts of growing older, but when I grew up, my grandmother and grandfather lived in the same house as us," said Newton. "Our system of socialization has changed. We're also not marrying as much, so there are more single people. And the Baby Boomer generation has been more independent, but when people retire, they don't neces-

RESOURCES

Help for yourself or a loved one who exhibits signs of mental health distress is available through the following resources:

The Georgia Department of Human Services, division of Aging Services, lists connections for individuals as well as caregivers on a range of age-related concerns. (404) 657-5258, aging.georgia.gov.

Empowerline is a resource from the Atlanta Regional Commission for aging, disability and caregiver concerns. Live chats connect callers to professionals. (404) 463-3333, empowerline.org.

Piedmont Sixty Plus Services offers a variety of support for older adults. A chat line makes instant connections. (404) 605-3867, piedmont.org/sixty-plus/sixty-plus-home.

Psychology Today is one of the largest online sites for mental health support and includes a link to find local therapists. Psychologytoday.com.

sarily have the same family connections. So mental health challenges are often exasperated by isolation and loneliness."

The country is seeing higher numbers of mental health cases, particularly as the largest generation of older adults moves into retirement and beyond, said Newton.

"The problem is mushrooming, and it's very real," she said. "Being lonely and isolated is as bad as smoking 15 cigarettes a day."

The good news is that help is available, though it might require some searching to find the right treatment, said Morse.

"Don't stop asking for help because someone says, 'I don't have the answer.' There are many ways to get that answer. Just don't stop looking."

COPING

The importance of finding, keeping your routine

When outside forces upend your normal life, you can fix it.

Jason Diamond
c. 2021 The New York Times

I was laid off in December. I can't say I wasn't anticipating it. Everything was falling apart everywhere, including the media world. But when it happened, the first thing I worried about — before questions of how I'd make money or what I'd do about insurance — was if I'd lose the routine that I had developed, lost and then worked so hard to get back.

We all had our routines before the pandemic, and so many of them were upended. Just about any personal routine, if it wasn't halted outright, changed somehow, from the mundane to the essential. The older man I used to see slowly savoring an espresso every day at the coffee shop had to take it in a to-go cup and drink it outside. Until lockdown, a friend had gone uptown to see his parents every Sunday morning, but he had to stop. Children stopped going to school and much of the workforce stopped going to offices. Trying to maintain a routine was difficult enough with the world feeling as if it was going to pieces; trying to set new ones without any clear indication of what the future held felt downright impossible.

Life is a series of routines. We go to sleep, we wake, we work, we play. But for some, routines and rituals help us function against the chaos of the world and, in many cases, our minds. Some minds just aren't made for routines; that's why I've had to work extra hard and discipline myself to live and work a certain way.

I grew up constantly uncertain, thanks to an unstable home life as a child, parents who moved around a lot and, starting at 16, being without a home of my own. The trauma from those experiences began to prey on me, it wore me down and mingled with my diagnoses of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, depression and obsessive-compulsive personality disorder, making it almost impossible for me to concentrate, work, and generally be productive and happy on a daily basis.

At some point, by chance, I started to realize that the more I implemented boundaries and schedules — waking and eating and meditating at specific times, working out, writing down the next day's schedule — the more I started to feel not only some control but also happiness. By setting routines for myself, I was able to shield myself from chaos.

"It helps you feel like you're in control," Charles Duhigg, who wrote "The Power of Habit," said in



MONIKA AICHELE/THE NEW YORK TIMES

an interview. "It helps you remember how to do things that — maybe because of your ADHD — you'd forget because of short-term memory."

In his book, Duhigg explores the sort of ouroboros — the ancient symbol of a snake eating its own tail — I was performing on myself. I needed some sort of cue, a routine and then a reward. I hadn't thought of rewards as part of the process, but they are essential.

For me, I thought the reward was peace of mind. What I didn't realize was I was also giving myself other little trophies: If I went to the gym five days every week, there was a little voice in my head that would say, "You've earned two slices of pizza." When I'd clean the house on Sun-

day morning, I'd always crack open a beer by afternoon. And sometimes you aren't even conscious of the rewards you're giving yourself for routine, and I find those are the most important ones. With those rewards, I'm being good to myself, telling myself I did something, so I earned something.

"You're forcing yourself to anticipate rewards," Duhigg said. "All of that is really good."

But sometimes, outside forces overwhelm the ability to maintain. After five years of consistent routines, the pandemic hit. The first day working from home, my routine fell apart. We were told it would be a week, then two, then next month, then late summer, then maybe after Thanksgiving. Sooner or later, we'd go

back to the office, maybe. I started sleeping in later; when the gym closed, I had to figure out a new way to work out; and as every little thing I had considered part of a normal day for me started to go away, I didn't realize how depressed I was.

One day, I went to walk my dog and decided, for no reason whatsoever, that the soundtrack that morning would be Brian Eno's "Ambient 1/Music for Airports," an album the composer wrote and recorded to help calm anxious travelers. I told myself I'd walk for the duration of the first track — 17 minutes, 22 seconds — before going home. I was doing something I did every morning, but as I turned a corner, I realized I was also setting myself up for the day, and I felt

a comfort I hadn't felt in months. Eno's wordless, drifting tape loops of piano rhythms simply served as the background noise to my unplanned walking meditation — and a reminder of how necessary it was.

That was when I started putting my routine back together. Within a week, I was back on some sort of normal schedule of when I woke up, when I walked the dog, when I let myself look at Instagram. I was getting to as comfortable a spot as one could be in during a pandemic. Then I got the Slack message that I was needed in a meeting with a human-resources person. I knew what was coming next.

Obviously, I was feeling all of those things one feels when they lose a job. It hurt. My finances were going to take a hit. The one main channel of communication I had with anybody besides my wife was cut off.

But I realized there was nothing I could do besides pick myself up and start making out my schedule for the next day. Tomorrow, and every single day after that, my routine and rituals were in my hands only. And nobody could take that from me.

This article is part of a series on resilience in troubled times — what we can learn about it from history and personal experiences. Jason Diamond's most recent book is "The Sprawl."

AGING IN ATLANTA

Brody

continued from S1

I used to believe that poetry did not “speak” to me, but I now see how wrong I was. I lived for 44 years with a husband, a lyricist, whose beautifully crafted, heartfelt lyrics touched my every fiber and continue to uplift and inspire me a decade after his death. The special beauty of Dr. Rosenthal’s book for me is his discussion of what each poem is saying, what the poet was likely feeling and often how the poems helped him personally, as when he left his birth family in South Africa for a rewarding career in the United States.

Amanda Gorman’s *The Hill We Climb* inspired and inspiring poem that stole the show at President Biden’s inauguration in January has shown millions of Americans the emotional and social power of poetry and, I hope, prompted them to use it themselves.

Dr. Rafael Campo, a poet and physician at Harvard Medical School, believes poetry can also help doctors become better providers, fostering empathy with their patients and bearing witness to our common humanity, which he considers essential to healing. As he put it in a TEDxCambridge talk in June 2019, “When we hear rhythmic language and recite poetry, our bodies translate crude sensory data into nuanced knowing – feeling becomes meaning.”

According to Dr. Robert S. Carroll, a psychiatrist affiliated with the University of California, Los Angeles, Medical Center, poetry can give people a way to talk about subjects that are taboo, like death and

dying, and provide healing, growth and transformation.

Referring to the pandemic, Dr. Rosenthal said, “This crisis affects more or less everyone, and poetry can help us process difficult feelings like loss, sadness, anger, lack of hope. Although not everyone has a gift for writing poetry, all of us can benefit from the thoughts so many poets have beautifully expressed.”

Indeed, the book’s first section features the poem *One Art* by Elizabeth Bishop, about loss that can comfort those who are suffering.

“When people are devastated by loss they should be allowed to feel and express their pain,” Dr. Rosenthal said in an interview. “They should be offered support and compassion, not urged to move on. You can’t force closure. If people want closure, they’ll do it in their own time.”

Closure was not a state cherished by Edna St. Vincent Millay, who wrote that

“Time does not bring relief; you all have lied
“Who told me time would ease me of my pain!”

However, Dr. Rosenthal pointed out that for most people, time does bring relief, despite what his friend Kay Redfield Jamison wrote in her memoir “*An Unquiet Mind*.” For her, relief “took its own, and not terribly sweet, time in doing so.”

Poems, I now realize, thanks to Dr. Rosenthal, can be a literary panacea for the pandemic. They let us know that we are not alone, that others before us have survived devastating loss and desolation and that we can be uplifted by the imagery and cadence of the written and spoken word.

HEALTHY LIVING

Online classes combat social isolation

Moving, grooving go a long way in helping seniors.

By Bailey LeFever
Tampa Bay Times

PINELLAS PARK, FLA. — Most mornings, Joyce Lindsay flips on the TV in her living room and starts moving. She shakes to the music during Zumba classes, stretches her limbs wide during yoga flows, and eventually stops for a moment of calm.

Sometimes she does as many as four classes, nearly three hours of working out. She said the exercise helps ease the pain she feels from her arthritis.

“I’ve been inside so much since the coronavirus, but now I feel so alive,” Lindsay said. “I have gotten my life back.”

The 70-year-old began taking online classes in March through the Area Agency on Aging Pasco-Pinellas. The program is funded by Florida’s Department of Elder Affairs to help ease the social isolation of seniors caused by restrictions put in place for the pandemic, said Ann Marie Winter, the agency’s executive director.

“Social isolation is not going away,” Winter said. “It was an issue before the pandemic, it was an issue during the pandemic and it will continue to be an issue after the pandemic.”

Many of the agency’s clients are homebound and weren’t able to go to



Bill McDonald, 75, participates in an online meeting from his home in New Port Richey, Florida, through the Area Agency on Aging Pasco-Pinellas. CHRIS URSO/TAMPA BAY TIMES/TNS

senior centers or join adult day care programs before the pandemic, she said.

“So this is an opportunity for those clients to participate as well, even when COVID is hopefully no longer an issue,” Winter said.

The online platform, Uniper, offers taped and livestream courses on topics ranging from travel and cooking to exercise and meditation. Participants can also interact with other viewers, turning their screens on and chatting in various peer-led discussions, Winter said.

“It’s kind of like Zoom, but it’s made specifically for seniors,” she said.

The program’s server is secure, and there are no commercials or ads shown on the platform, Winter said. The agency is also

working with the Senior Actors Guild and Education Services of Clearwater to bring two performances to the platform – *Defying Gravity*, which focuses on preventing falls, and *Phoney Baloney*, where the topic is scams.

“It’s something we’ve been thinking about for some time,” Winter said. “It took a while to find a program that was specifically geared to seniors and had an interactive portion to it.”

The center hopes to create some of its own programming on the platform as well, Suarez said. Some ideas include a chat room to talk about senior issues, health and wellness classes and presentations for World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

Many seniors will likely still prefer in-person activ-

ities, but there’s continued interest in virtual programming, said Jeff Johnson, state director for AARP. “I think there are people who have always wanted this as an option,” he said. “And certainly there are people who don’t have other options right now.”

The pandemic has forced some to acclimate to Zoom, FaceTime and other forms of communication, Johnson said. And now, taking online classes might feel less daunting for some seniors.

“My sense is that a lot of people are still being very cautious about doing anything in public and there’s still obviously a need to connect,” he said. “There’s a need to keep your mind and body active to keep moving and learning and growing.”

JOIN US! Register for our next virtual Aging in Atlanta event on May 19 at ajc.com/agingevents

A Retirement Community for All Seasons

St. George Village, Roswell’s premier senior living Life Plan retirement community, is full of delightful discoveries in every time of year. Like our beautiful campus that beckons you to enjoy the walking trails, gardens, putting green and dog park in every season. Or our activities schedule that features events to challenge and nurture mind, body and spirit all year round.

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AGING IN ATLANTA

Carbonara

continued from S1

best.” But what I realized after we’d come up with our (personal!) winning recipe was that what I like most about carbonara is that it’s

endlessly adaptable. Some will say, of course, that if it contains anything besides pasta, pancetta, cheese, eggs, salt and pepper, it’s not carbonara. If that’s you, consider joining this support group. One weekend afternoon, after I’d slept in and forgot to have any-

thing meaningful to eat all day, I was craving something like carbonara, but wanted to go heavier on the protein. Thus, frittata carbonara. It can certainly be brunch or lunch, but with a side of roasted asparagus drizzled with balsamic vinegar, why not make it dinner tonight?



Frittata Carbonara With Balsamic Asparagus combines a traditional pasta dish with a roasted vegetable, making for a flavorful lunch or brunch, depending on your mood or circumstances.

FRITTATA CARBONARA WITH BALSAMIC ASPARAGUS

Active time: 20 minutes | Total time: 40 minutes. 4 to 6 servings

Carbonara is a traditional Italian pasta dish with egg, cheese and pork. Here, those flavors are baked into a frittata, similar to a crustless quiche. It comes together quickly: cook chopped bacon (or use guanciale or pancetta), then whisk it into eggs with cream and Parmesan before pouring the mixture back over the rendered pork fat. It puffs nicely as it bakes. Roast asparagus at the same time, toss it with a bit of balsamic vinegar — use a well-aged one here, if you have it — and serve it on the side. Storage notes: Leftover frittata can be refrigerated in an airtight container for up to 3 days.

- 12 ounces (15 to 25 stalks) asparagus, woody ends trimmed off
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt, or more as needed
- 4 slices (about 7 ounces) thick-cut bacon, cut into ½-inch strips
- 8 large eggs
- ½ cup heavy cream
- ¼ teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper, plus more as needed
- 5 ounces Parmesan cheese, grated or shredded, plus more for garnish, if desired
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar

Position the racks in the lower third and middle of the oven and preheat to 400 degrees. Spread the asparagus on a large, rimmed baking sheet, drizzle with the olive oil and sprinkle with a pinch of salt. Using tongs, toss until coated.

In an 8- to 10-inch-wide ovenproof, preferably nonstick skillet over medium to medium-high heat, cook the bacon, using a wooden spoon or spatula to move it around so it cooks evenly, until it renders its fat and just starts to crisp around the edges, 8 to 10 minutes. Remove from the heat, but leave the bacon in the pan.

In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs, cream, ¼ teaspoon of salt and the pepper until smooth. Stir in the Parmesan and add the bacon, leaving the remaining bacon grease in the pan. Add the egg mixture back into the pan and cook over medium heat until the frittata starts to set around the edges, about 5 minutes.

Bake the frittata and the asparagus at the same time. Transfer the skillet to the center rack of the oven and bake for 10 to 12 minutes, or until the frittata is puffed and fully set. Place the asparagus on the lower rack in the oven and roast for 10 to 12 minutes, or until bright green and tender. Remove the asparagus from the oven, drizzle with the balsamic vinegar and toss to coat.

Slide or flip the frittata onto a plate, garnish with Parmesan and more cracked black pepper, if desired, slice and serve with the balsamic asparagus.

Nutrition (based on 6 servings) | Calories: 445; Total Fat: 37 g; Saturated Fat: 16 g; Sodium: 787 mg; Carbohydrates: 5 g; Dietary Fiber: 1 g; Sugars: 2 g; Protein: 23 g

GARDENING

Use partner plants to shoo insects off veggies

Science shows us how seeds sprout to battle nearby bugs.

Margaret Roach
c. 2021 The New York Times

Before pushing that cart of vegetable seedlings to the checkout line, consider a stop in the seed aisle. On offer: potential organic pest control.

A packet of radish seeds could help fight the flea beetles on your new tomato transplants, and nasturtiums sown among your zucchini may limit the damage done by squash bugs.

Those are just two of the many strategic pairings suggested in Jessica Walliser’s book “Plant Partners: Science-Based Companion Planting Strategies for the Vegetable Garden,” which takes a new look at a popular subject that has long relied on folklore and conjecture rather than research.

She knows that what you have heard about companion planting was probably which crop “loves” which other one, like some kind of Match.com for vegetables. Whatever you have heard, it probably did not include “tomatoes love radishes” or “zucchini love nasturtiums” — or more specifically, that certain insect pests of tomatoes and summer squash don’t love those things and can be thrown off course by them.

Walliser — a horticulturist, self-described “science nerd” and the author of two other books on garden insects — wanted to know which pairings would help control pests and improve pollination, providing those and other ecosystem services to desired plants. Not satisfied with anecdotal recommendations, she turned to the scientific literature.

Admittedly, other than a few studies at botanic gardens and university extension facilities that mimicked the smaller scale of home garden beds, most of the literature she found was derived from research in agricultural settings. Nevertheless, the insights represented a leap forward from folklore, so she dug in.

If one idea unites the partnership possibilities Walliser discovered, it is this: Whether in farm fields, home gardens or the natural landscape, diversity is a powerful tool. Monoculture — too much of any one thing — always leaves us more vulnerable to loss.

Rather than replicating the rigid, old-style rows of a farm field in your vegetable garden, Walliser recommends a modern, vibrant jumble of vegetables, fruits, herbs and flowers.

And the goal, she writes, should be creating a habitat that supports beneficial insects, which means avoiding pesticides and other chemicals that kill indiscriminately.

Pest control plus

Gardeners have often looked to companion plants for pest control, as well-matched partners can attract natural enemies like syrphid flies and parasitic wasps to act as biological-control agents. But smart pairings can minimize weeds and improve soil, too.

A well-chosen, properly timed cover crop — like winter rye, oats, field peas, and crimson or white clover — acts as living mulch, limiting weeds. And some (includ-



A garden with chamomile among brassicas is a good example of how you can partner some plants with the crops you love to deter insects from ravaging your vegetables. JESSICA WALLISER VIA THE NEW YORK TIMES

ing rye and oats) provide not just physical barriers, but are allelopathic, containing natural weed-suppressing chemicals. After the active growth phase, their remains, if left behind, provide extended control.

Cover crops can help build better soil, too, when they are turned under — that’s why they are referred to as green manure. Legumes, in particular, including the clovers and peas, fix nitrogen in the soil as they grow, and adjacent plants may benefit.

Other well-chosen plant partners can attract pollinators, whose work improves the yields of insect-pollinated crops. In cucurbits, those additional pollinators could reduce the frustration of shrunken zucchini or cucumbers that didn’t size up to maturity because of insufficient pollination — or plants didn’t bear fruit at all.

What about those marigolds?

Sometimes the problem with traditional companion recommendations is not that they’re ineffective — it’s just that the why and how have been misunderstood. For example, the smell of marigolds doesn’t function as a repellent for every unwanted pest, as was inferred from conventional wisdom.

“The idea that ‘their scents send pests packing’ isn’t necessarily how it works,” Walliser said, citing the two marigold-vegetable partnerships that have been well studied: against onion root maggot flies and cabbage root maggot flies.

Rather than repelling the flies, the marigolds’ volatile organic compounds may serve to mask the scent of the plant the insect is seeking, interfering with egg laying. “They can’t home in on their host plants, because of the marigolds,” said Walliser, who is quick to add: “I’m not telling you not to plant marigolds — but by understanding better what’s at work, you can make more informed pairings.”

Setting a botanical trap

A particular insect may seek to lay eggs on a vegetable, or use it as food, or both. To disrupt such host-seeking behaviors, Walliser suggests a scaled-down version of trap cropping, a tactic used for centuries in farming. Well-placed plants, grown at a distance from insects’ desired ones, become a decoy — a sacrificial offering. That’s how those

radishes work if planted among young tomatoes: The flea beetles have at the radish foliage, not the tomato leaves. A radish trap crop can also protect young eggplants and peppers. Bok choy works as a decoy, too, but if you use radishes instead, you can salvage the roots to eat.

Where to plant the trap crop? That depends on which insect you’re trying to lure away. If it’s highly mobile (like the Colorado potato beetle or squash bugs) or it’s the offspring of something highly mobile (like imported cabbage worms, the larvae of the cabbage white butterfly), then plant the trap crop on the perimeter of your garden, several feet from the crop you’re protecting.

But if you’re fighting tiny pests with limited mobility, like aphids, mites, flea beetles and whiteflies, Walliser recommends planting the trap crop very close, in alternate rows with the crop you want to protect.

Sow or transplant the trap crops a couple of weeks earlier than the crops that need protection, so they get the pests’ attention.

Herbal remedies, vegetable-garden style

Who doesn’t want herbs like basil in the vegetable garden?

“I was so pleased to find out that the power of basil was pointed out in various studies,” said Walliser, who plants it liberally in her home garden near Pittsburgh.

Studies show it can help against thrips that stunt tomato plant growth and cause early fruit drop, and may limit egg laying by adult moths whose larvae are the all-too-familiar (and voracious) tobacco and tomato hornworms. It also works against yellow-striped armyworm moths.

Pair your potatoes with catmint to deter Colorado potato beetles; partner calendula with collards to keep aphids at bay. To limit cabbage worms, plant brassicas with sage, hyssop or chamomile.

Other useful herbs include many umbellifers, members of the carrot family (Apiaceae). Flowers of dill, fennel, cilantro, parsley and chervil may attract predators of various species of aphids and caterpillars, luring helpers like parasitic wasps, tachinid flies, ladybugs and lacewings.

Umbellifers can help with aphid control among lettuce and leafy greens; with cabbages, try leaving the cilantro to flower.

LIVING WELL

Here’s the buzz on drinking without indulging in alcohol

The Washington Post

The Washington Post Food staff recently answered questions about all things edible (and potable) with Julia Bainbridge, author of “Good Drinks: Alcohol-Free Recipes for When You’re Not Drinking for Whatever Reason,” and M. Carrie Allan, a cocktails and spirits writer. Here are edited excerpts from that chat.

Q: I’ve seen so many ads for beautiful (but expensive) tonics and cookbooks meant for alcohol-free drinks. Are these necessary to make a good cocktail that doesn’t just taste like punch at a kid’s party?

A: I love experimenting with ingredients, tossing things together to see what works, but I have a lot of experience with drinks at this point and a pretty good sense of how flavors will come together or won’t. For folks starting out (or wanting new ideas!), it seems to me having some commercial tonics and syrups, or the recipes you can glean from a good cookbook, would be a real boon and might



A hibiscus fizz, otherwise known as a “mocktail,” is a nonalcoholic beverage made with well-balanced, interesting flavors. RIKKI SNYDER/THE NEW YORK TIMES

reduce the fear of risking a bunch of ingredients to experiment and produce something you’re not happy with.

— M. Carrie Allan

Q: I am a big fan of a gin and tonic, but how would I make one without alcohol in it? Does alcohol-less gin exist or would I have to do some experimentation with add-ins (syrup?) to the tonic?

A: Alcohol-free gin absolutely exists! M. Carrie Allan has recommended a couple (New London Light, Monday Gin). You also might want to try Damrak

Virgin. It’s not robust or juniper-y like classic London Dry, but it’s bright and citrusy and works well in a highball.

— Julia Bainbridge

Q: I’ve enjoyed pairing Acid League Wine Proxies and Jorg Geiger grape/apple/pear blends (from Delmosa) with food. Do the NA liquor alternatives pair well, or are they mostly good for sipping/blending in mixed drinks?

A: If you’re someone who likes, liked or could imagine yourself liking pairing cocktails with food, then go for it. Personally, though, I prefer to drink wine-like beverages and juices with food and save cocktails for being enjoyed on their own or with snacks. One thing, though: Very few of these nonalcoholic liquor alternatives are meant to be sipped or drunk on their own; a good place to start for understanding how best to use them in mixed drinks is actually their own brand websites (such as the ones for Ghia, Gnista and Seedlip), which often include recipe sections.

— J.B.

AGING IN ATLANTA

GETTING OUTDOORS

How to enjoy our national parks

Before you pack up and go, here are a few helpful tips.

By **Natalie B. Compton**
(c) 2021, The Washington Post

Every year, hundreds of millions of people visit beloved U.S. national parks. While most visitors may have a good time, others could have used some advice before their visit.

Even though visiting a national park may seem like a straightforward endeavor, expert insight can help you make the most of it. That is particularly true this year because the pandemic continues to affect park rules (such as masking), accessibility (some have reinstated reservation systems) and more.

The Washington Post spoke to four national parks experts to get the best tips ahead of your trip.

Plan your trip in advance

Once you decide on taking a national park trip, start doing your homework. Cynthia Hernandez, public affairs specialist for the National Park Service, recommends that visitors start their research months ahead of time to plan a visit with fewer crowds, secure a campsite, and book any necessary permits or reservations.

Then, the day before your trip, or the day of, check park websites or the National Park Service app to make sure nothing has changed.

“We just really want visitors to be informed so they can have a great trip,” Hernandez says. “No one wants to show up and realize that a specific entrance to the park is closed.”

Doing your homework also means finding out about perks such as fee-free days, which you can take advantage of if you’re on a budget, or avoid if you’re hoping to dodge crowds. The park system has a wealth of great alternatives to the big marquee parks where most visitors flock.

Visitors should be prepared to follow coronavirus protocols at parks. Masks are required at indoor park facilities and outdoor ones where social distancing is not possible.

Check the essentials list and prepare for the elements

Hernandez says it is important for visitors to be prepared for sudden changes in temperature and weather, particularly during the summer.

“Pack extra layers of clothing, and definitely more water than you think you need,” she says. “We have a good 10-essentials



A starry sky frames Joshua Tree National Park, one of the more awe-inspiring parks in the American West. If you're inclined to go, make sure you plan ahead to get the most out of your trip. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PHOTO BY HANNAH SCHWALBE



A grizzly bear takes a stroll in Yellowstone National Park. Remember that wild animals are wild: That can mean dangerous to humans who mistakenly think of them as pets. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PHOTO BY KIMBERLY SHIELDS

list of things you could use in parks, like maps, water, good shoes, a first aid kit, that kind of thing.” That list is available at [nps.gov/articles/10essentials.htm](https://www.nps.gov/articles/10essentials.htm).

In addition to the park’s environment and climate, it’s important to keep your own health and fitness in mind.

“They should think about their physical limitations before embarking on a hike,” Hernandez says. “Going down a trail, it might seem kind of easy . . . but by the time they turn around, it’s uphill and you have used up a lot of your water supply toward the end of the day – it’s just not a good situation to be in.”

Leave wild animals alone

A surefire way to have a horrible time at a national park is to get injured during your visit. Every year, there are reports of park visitors approaching wild animals and suffering injuries as a result. No matter how good you

think the picture will be, don’t try to get close to animals for the photo op.

“I’ve seen people try to put their kids in front of black bears [for pictures],” says Phil Francis, chairman of the Coalition to Protect America’s National Parks. “Not too smart.”

Not only is it illegal to intentionally disturb wildlife (including feeding, scaring, touching them, etc.), each park has different rules for how much distance visitors should keep from wildlife. Most, but not all, require a minimum of 25 yards for the majority of animals, and 100 yards for predators including wolves and bears.

Stay on dedicated trails for safety and environmental reasons

Staying on trails is beneficial to the parks and their visitors. Not only does keeping to designated trails protect the park landscape from ero-

sion, it helps keep people safe from dangerous terrain.

“There’s a reason trails are where they are,” Francis says.

According to data compiled by Outforia, an outdoors and nature guide website, the most common causes of death at U.S. national parks are from falls. Reduce that risk by sticking to marked trails.

Hold on to your trash until you leave the park

With the immense number visitors traveling to parks each day, keeping parks clean is a major undertaking.

Get familiar with the “leave no trace” ethos so you can dispose of waste properly and minimize your impact on the parks. That is particularly important during the pandemic. Will Shafroth, chief executive of the National Park Foundation, says parks have had staffing problems in the past year, and that garbage cans received less maintenance as a result.

My Private Ranger guide Kent Taylor, who runs private park tours, says visitors should follow the old camping adage and “pack out what you pack in,” disposing garbage well outside of the park regions.

He avoids throwing his trash out in park trash cans, or even in communities around the parks.

“At Yellowstone, 35,000 people a day are visiting that park. How much trash is generated by that?” Taylor says. “Take [your trash] outside the park so it would be one less thing that the parks have to deal with.”

DECOR

Crafting ideal home office

Knoll director of design shares his unique experience.

As senior vice president and design director of Knoll, Benjamin Pardo is responsible for product and showroom design worldwide. The brand, which was established in New York in 1938 and redefined the American office, has a modern design portfolio that includes furniture, textiles, leathers and accessories.

Pardo joined The Washington Post’s Home Front online chat. Here is an edited excerpt:

Q: What makes your home office special?

A: My home office draws on distinctly modern approaches in one space. It synthesizes the evolution of the Knoll point of view, bringing together the work of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Eero Saarinen and, of course, Florence Knoll herself. Softer touchpoints drive home comfort, too. I have a space to ideate, all while being surrounded by beautiful and functional objects.

Q: What contemporary Knoll designs reference your favorite classics?

A: The Fiber chair family from our Muuto brand, which offers a new perspective on Scandinavian design, is a great example of a contemporary interpretation of a classic form. Saarinen thought long and hard about the figure of an object in architectural space. His landmark chairs reflect this idea with proper back support, which allows you to sit fully back in the chair.

Q: What’s your favorite lounge chair for a modern and comfortable living room where children also live?

A: You need a Womb chair by Saarinen. Designed as a chair for Florence Knoll to sit with her dog, Cartree, it’s a classic.

Q: We have a Finn Juhl teak dining table but have been given conflicting information about how to care for the wood. Do you have advice on using teak oil or similar products to maintain the wood?

A: Teak needs oil. It should be conditioned every three months; it’s most important when teak is outdoors. Your dining table will look

wonderful after a quick treatment with the proper wood restorative. I prefer my teak tops outdoors to stay in the natural state bleached by the sun. But both are great options, so do what you prefer.

Q: Do you have a favorite piece in your home?

A: My favorite is always the most recent. I just got four classic Nakashima spindle-back chairs in a small dining nook for breakfast in the country.

Q: Is there any material that you’re partial to?

A: I love the way Warren Platner used polished steel rods as a decorative and structural element in an entirely different way from Bertoni. His table and chair designs require precise alignment. The result makes a statement in any room. Paired with Saarinen’s chairs, you can create a setting with an enduring mid-century vibe.

Q: What modern furniture do you recommend for outside?

A: I suggest the 1966 Schultz collection. These pieces were developed by Richard Schultz with Florence Knoll. She needed outdoor furniture for her new home in Coral Gables, Fla. It set the standard for contemporary classic outdoor furniture.

Q: I see you collect the work of Ettore Sottsass. What is your favorite piece?

A: I started with his ceramic totems. I own “Chiara di Luna,” “Chocolate” and other untitled works. I have two Japanese Sottsass lacquer pieces in my home office. Then I moved on to glass and other manageable objects. They work well with the Mandarin chair by Sottsass for Knoll and the wonderful Muuto baskets for quick storage.

Q: Do you have any tips on how to spot an authentic piece when purchasing vintage furniture to avoid buying a knockoff?


A: Start by going to our website, [knoll.com](https://www.knoll.com), to see the pieces, forms, materials and dimensions of works. We have an entire section devoted to classics, and the Knoll archive has a complete history of our products. Next, choose a reputable dealer. Check the labels for Knoll’s address. Be sure to check back fabrics on upholstery.



Ranger Wes Harding talks to a young visitor while removing trash in Mammoth National Park. Remember to “leave no trace” of your visit. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PHOTO/CORTNEY ADAIR

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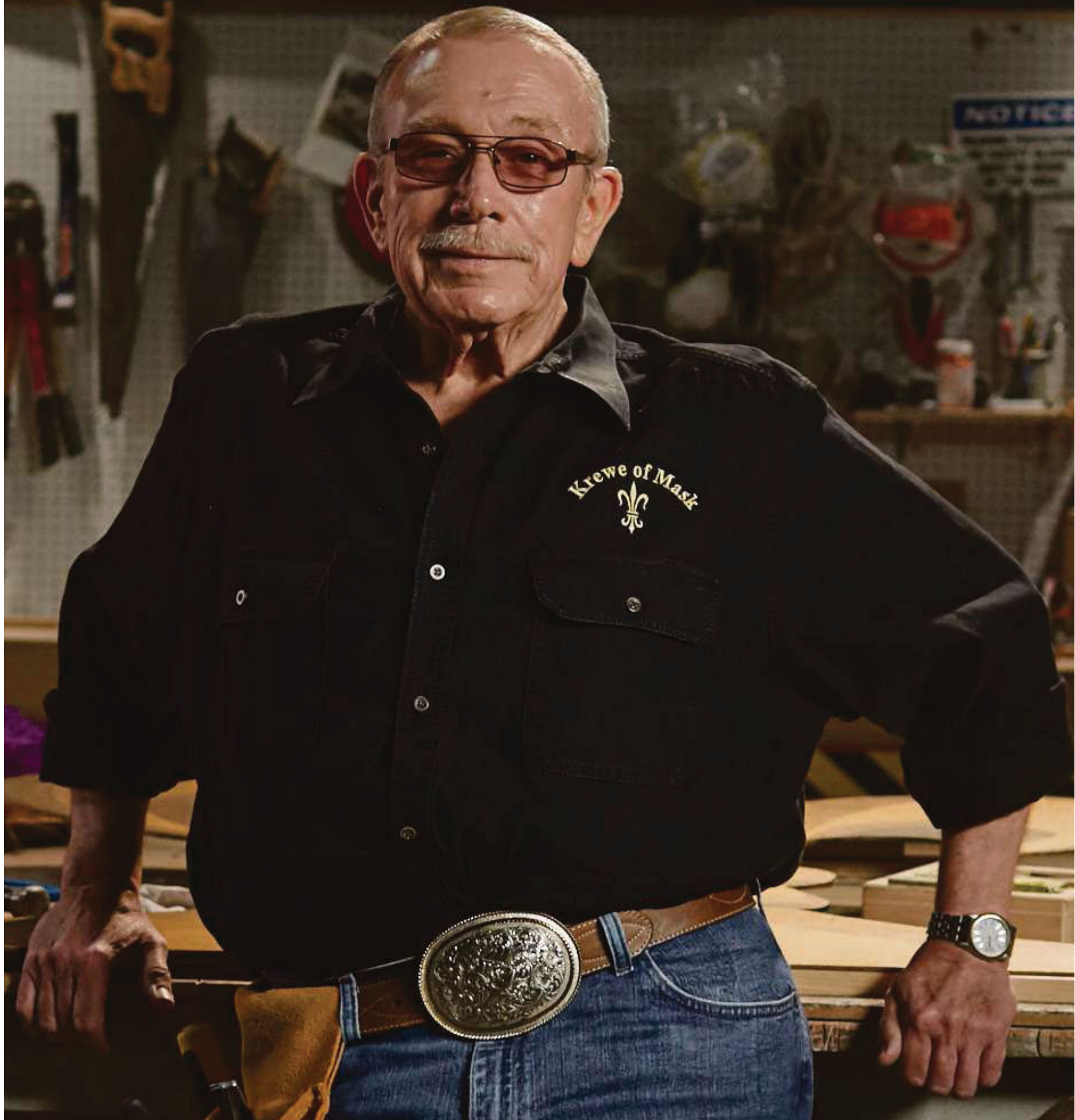
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JOHNCARE



John Cashen is a survivor in more ways than one. In 2005, the New Orleans resident lived through Hurricane Katrina and later reunited with his family in Georgia. John summoned that fighting spirit again when he was diagnosed with lung cancer in summer of 2019.

Although specialist after specialist recommended surgery, John – determined to find a non-invasive solution – found a true partner in his cancer journey at Wellstar Health System. There, radiation oncology experts used stereotactic ablative radiotherapy (SABR) to deliver precise, targeted radiation in high doses, eliminating John’s cancer without surgery.

These days, John relishes time spent with his grandchildren and builds authentic, Mardi Gras parade floats, bringing a bit of New Orleans to his adopted home state of Georgia.

[wellstar.org/peoplecare](https://www.wellstar.org/peoplecare)



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