

AGING IN ATLANTA

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HEALTH

Meeting strangers expands our world

Even in COVID-19 era, talking to others lifts emotional well-being.

Jane E. Brody

c.2020 The New York Times

I'm a lifelong extrovert who readily establishes and relishes casual contacts with people I encounter during daily life: while walking my dog, shopping for groceries, working out at the Y, even sweeping my sidewalk. These ephemeral connections add variety to my life, are a source of useful information and often provide needed emotional and physical support. Equally important, they nearly always leave me with a smile on my face (although now hidden under a mask!).

In recent months, under stay-at-home orders due to the coronavirus pandemic, many people lost such daily encounters. I, on the other hand, have done my best to maintain as many of them as possible while striving to remain safe. With in-person time with family and close friends now limited by a mutual desire to avoid exposure to COVID-19, the brief socially distant contacts with people in my neighborhood, both those I've known casually for years and others I just met, have been crucial to my emotional and practical well-being and maybe even my health.

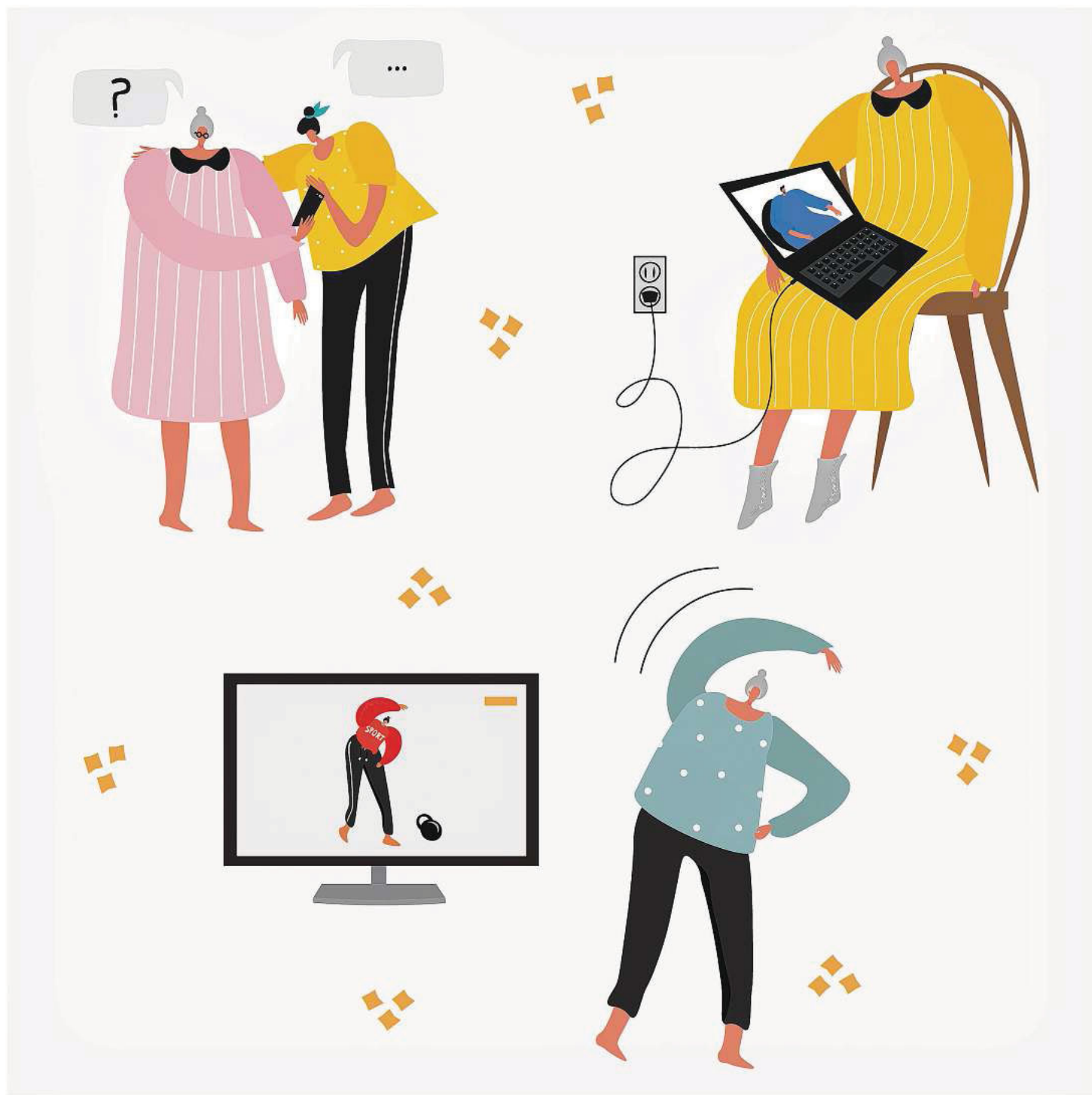
The benefits I associate with my casual connections were reinforced recently by a fortuitous find. During a COVID-inspired cleanup I stumbled upon a book in my library called "Consequential Strangers: The Power of People Who Don't Seem to Matter ... but Really Do." Published 11 years ago, this enlightening volume was written by Melinda Blau, a science writer, and Karen L. Fingerman, currently a professor of psychology at the University of Texas at Austin who studies the nature and effects of so-called weak ties that people have with others in their lives: the barista who fetches their coffee, the person who cuts their hair, the proprietor of the local market, the folks they see often at the gym or train station.

In an interview, Fingerman noted that casual

Brody continued on G7

PLUGGED IN

SENIORS ARE MAKING TECHNOLOGY WORK FOR THEM



STOCK.ADOBE.COM

By Curt Holman | For the AJC

A popular but misleading belief holds that seniors are regularly befuddled by technology. In fact, a 2017 Pew Research Center study found seniors are the fastest growing online demographic, with 73% of people over the age of 65 in the United States using the internet, up from 14% in 2000. And that was before the 2020 pandemic accelerated the trend by encouraging the elderly to stay at home.

Used effectively, smart technologies can not only help compensate for the social isolation brought on by COVID-19, they can give seniors more control of such personal necessities as shopping and medical care.

Carlton Molette, 81, a playwright and retired university professor who lives in Southwest Atlanta, was in some ways an early adopter, having bought his first word processor in the late 1970s.

He used to enjoy going to the bank and shopping at big

box stores as part of his regular routine, but COVID-19 has forced him to seek online equivalents. "My use of technology has ramped up a lot," he says. He now deposits checks with his smartphone and keeps up with his family and writer's groups via Zoom.

"I haven't been inside a grocery store since the first week of March. It's all delivered by Instacart." Molette

Technology continued on G2

COOKING

You won't want to share this roasted cauliflower

Melissa Clark

c.2020 The New York Times

I am the lone cauliflower eater in my house. Whenever I cook one, it's all mine, from the tips of the fractal florets to the bottoms of the succulent stems. I've been known to devour an entire head in one sitting — in which case it's not something I serve with dinner. It is dinner — and a satisfying one at that.

Although cauliflower is delightful in many incarnations, my go-to cooking method is roasting the cut-up florets at high heat, which caramelizes them, turning them

irresistibly golden and floppy. The technique is as straightforward as they come: After oiling the florets and spreading them out on a sheet pan, I blast them at 425 degrees, which browns them deeply, but without charring the edges or setting off the smoke alarm.

The only real variables are the seasonings, and the options are many.

With its sweet, cabbage-like flavor, cauliflower is not exactly a blank canvas of a vegetable. But it can play nicely with others, especially sharp, salty, spicy ingredients, which help highlight its gentler side.

Here, crushed olives, fresh

lemon juice, garlic and red-pepper flakes provide the needed fire and tang, while cumin adds an earthy note.

Then there's a thin, lacy coating of Parmesan that bakes up into a crisp wafer surrounding each floret. A little like fricos — those brittle Northern Italian cheese crackers that are so fantastic with a Negroni — you'll be hard pressed not to peel the golden bits off the pan and pop them directly into your mouth. If you're not sharing, I highly recommend this maneuver; do it standing over the pan before adding the olive dressing. Oth-

Cauliflower continued on G6



Cauliflower paired with olives, pancetta and Parmesan brings out the vegetable's most irresistible side. JOHNNY MILLER / NEW YORK TIMES

AGING IN ATLANTA

Technology

continued from G1

enjoys being able to track his orders. “The store where they shop is a mile away from my home, so the lag time between the message ‘XYZ has finished shopping’ to when they pull up in the driveway is very short.”

He also has a regular monthly delivery from Amazon of items that have discount prices when bought in bulk.

Molette says one of the things he misses most is the natural food store Sevananda in Little Five Points. “I’m vegan, so instead of buying nuts from Sevananda, I’m buying nuts online, and they’re not the same. The absence of my favorite source of really healthy food has been a bit of a problem,” he says.

Seniors can adapt to the many available apps and other online services for shopping, food deliveries and banking, although it may take some trial and error to find the best that suits an individual’s needs. Virtual medical care can be a little more complicated.

Visiting the doctor virtually

The combination of technological improvements and social distancing has driven new approaches to medical care, especially through virtual doctor visits and other types of “telehealth,” which can include remote hospital monitoring, psychiatric services and more.

Wellstar family physician Dr. Georgia Forrest champions virtual visits for older patients. “Virtual visits offer several advantages. Patients can decrease their exposure to communicable diseases such as COVID-19, and reduce their travel time and expenses. Pro-



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viders can often bridge care gaps; we also see reduced hospital visits and overall, an improved access to care with telehealth. This is especially true for people in rural areas and in long-term care facilities,” Forrest says.

She adds, “Virtual visits can also make for shorter wait times, and it can be easier to have family members involved if they don’t have to be there in person.”

Forrest suggests patients should expect virtual doctor visits to be structured like in-person visits, with a patient providing vitals and meeting with a medical assistant before seeing the provider, all through a device with Wi-Fi.

She emphasizes the importance of preplanning the virtual visit with everyone involved, including the provider, the office staff, the patient and members of the patient’s family as needed. “Plan your virtual visit ahead of time, especially the first one,”

she says. “What platform will it be on? If the patient doesn’t have internet, where will they get it? All of these things need to be planned in advance to make the visit as smooth as possible.”

She acknowledges technology can be a challenge not only for senior patients, both in terms of mastering it and sometimes simply having access to high-speed internet and appropriate devices. She says that the patients aren’t the only ones who may need to become more tech-savvy.

“A lot of providers don’t have the technical skills they need and have to be trained for virtual visits. It’s a two-way street,” Forrest says.

Forrest expects that virtual visits will continue to be common even after the pandemic has passed. “These won’t replace a live doctor visit. For some seniors in rural areas or on tight incomes, the options are still limited. And we still want personal touch and human connection.”

Is There a Doctor on the Line? Success Tips for Virtual Visits

- 1. Be Prepared:** Work with your doctor and the medical office in advance of the virtual visit. Be sure to complete medical forms and request samples before your appointment.
- 2. Get Equipped:** Be sure to have medical equipment ready to use during the virtual visit, such as a thermometer, blood pressure monitor and scale.
- 3. Grab Your Medications:** Make sure you have all of your prescription medications available at hand to show the doctor.
- 4. Test Your Connections:** Test your video and audio equipment and connections before your scheduled appointment. Consider these questions: Does the camera work? Is there sound? Can I see the screen and can my doctor see me? Also, be sure to select a quiet and comfortable place for the visit.

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CAPITAL INVESTMENT ADVISORS

Financial advisor provides guidance

Wes Moss is a Managing Partner and Chief Investment Strategist at Capital Investment Advisors. He is also the host of WSB Radio’s Sunday show, “Money Matters with Wes Moss.” We recently spoke with him about how his company works with families.

Q: What is Capital Investment Advisors?

Capital Investment Advisors is a fee-only financial advisory firm. We help families with \$500,000 or more in retirement savings allocate and rebalance their investment holdings and strategically develop a consistent stream of income. As a fee-only firm, we act in a fiduciary manner for our clients meaning we act in their best interest and do not sell products.

Q: What are the benefits of working with a financial advisor?

An advisor can positively benefit a portfolio through three ways: insight on portfolio construction accounts, help with wealth management tasks, and ultimately the empowerment provided by the right advisor. This last piece includes things like setting goals, establishing an investment philosophy that fits your risk tolerance and keeping your emotions in check.

A few more specific examples of areas where you can benefit from working with a financial advisor include: tax-efficient asset location, estate planning, tax and accounting services, insurance review, charitable giving strategies, family-owned business strategies, asset allocation

and ultimately, an accountability partner for working toward long term goals.

Q: When should I start working with a financial advisor?

We’ve found the best time to engage a financial professional is when you’re facing a major life change. That change might look like a retirement offer from your company. Do you need to choose between a lump sum or a pension?

It might be we’re welcoming a new member to your family, and you want to put together a plan for your financial future. Or perhaps you and your spouse want to have someone trustworthy to turn to when there’s a big financial decision to be made as you age.

Whatever your life change may look like, a financial advisor can help offer financial guidance and an outside perspective.

Q: How can I learn more about Capital Investment Advisors?

Visit our website at YourWealth.com. You’ll find information about our firm along with our latest educational articles, videos and podcasts. If you’d like to meet with a member of our team to see if we’d be a good fit for you, simply hit the Schedule Appointment button at the top of our page or go to yourwealth.com/contact/schedule-appointment.

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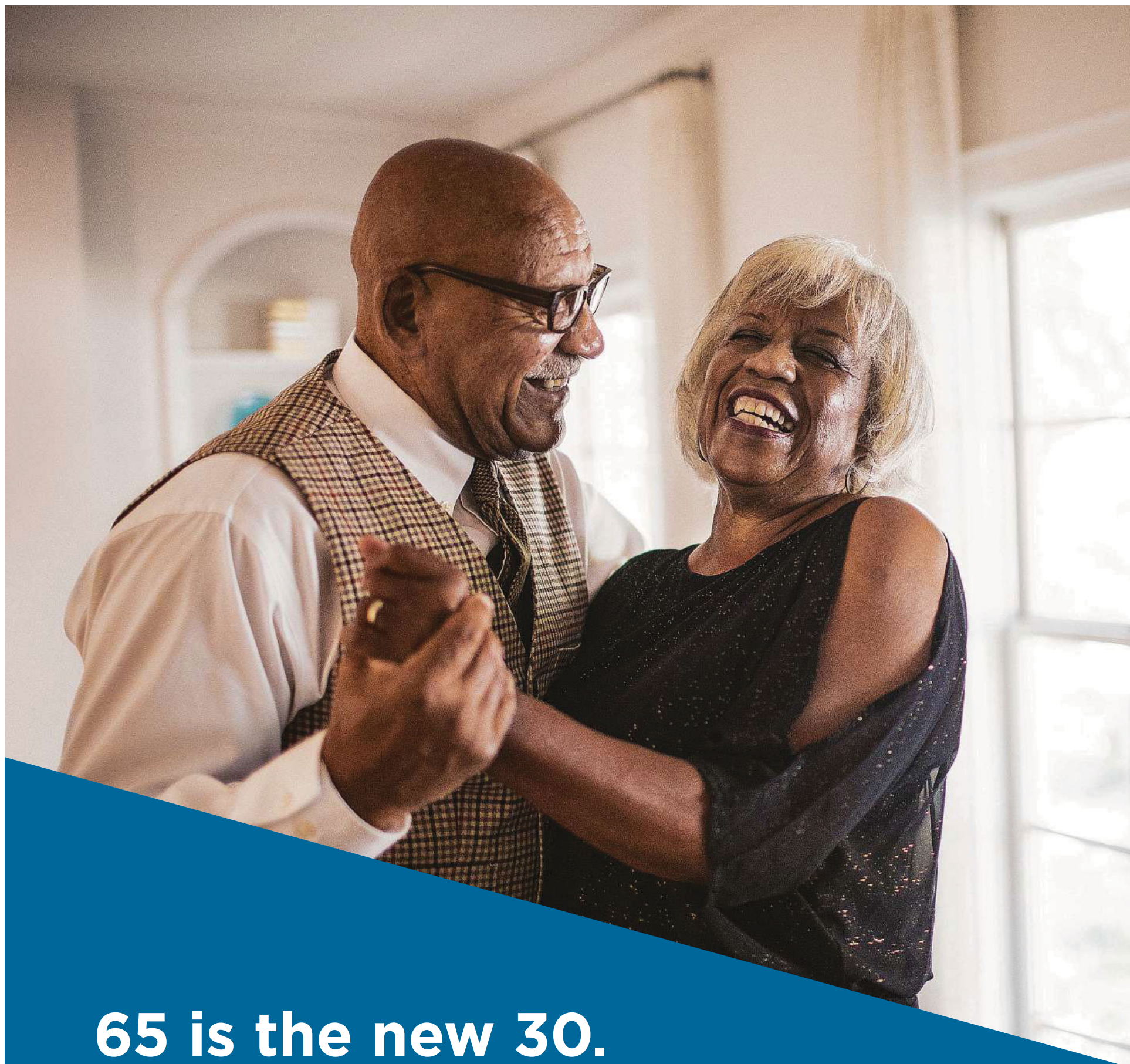
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AGING IN ATLANTA

TRAVEL

Children’s museum features Barbie exhibit

Follow the popular doll through the decades in Indy.

By Kathy Witt
Tribune Media Services

Barbie has taken up residence in the Crossroads of America, along with Ken, Midge, Alan, Christy and other fashion-forward friends – not in her Dreamhouse, Townhouse or even Malibu beach house, but at the Children’s Museum of Indianapolis (childrensmuseum.org).

“Barbie You Can Be Anything: The Experience” opened last month and will remain at the museum until the spring of 2021. For those who grew up playing with Barbie, it is a big dose of nostalgia and chance to stroll down memory lane to see the most popular fashion doll ever produced in dozens and dozens of colorful vignettes showing off her creativity and career choices, star power and sense of style.

As the original female empowerment brand, Barbie was born out of a desire to show girls they have choices, and there are plenty of examples on display – from artist to judge to builder to robotics engineer. In fact, Ruth Handler, the woman who created Barbie more than 60 years ago, believed that “through the doll, the little girl could be anything she wanted to be.”

Teacher, rapper, rock star, boxer. Detective, flight attendant, airline pilot, paleontologist. From princess to presidential candidate, ballerina to business exec, this exhibit inspires not only girls, but all who visit – children and adults alike. Barbie has pursued more than 200 careers – and has done so while impeccably dressed for the part, right down to her boots or ballet slippers. With every ensemble and accessory, Barbie has reinforced her role model status to show that regardless of gender, ethnicity or background,

individuals can follow their path, be challenged, make a difference and celebrate their choice.

Ever an inspiration in exploring the possibilities, Barbie also encourages everyone to extend their experience of the exhibit right into the streets of Indy for a fun, Barbie-centric getaway of shopping, dining and enjoying the city.

Barbie would feel perfectly at home at Just Pop In (justpopinpopcorn.com), a groovy California modern farmhouse, reminiscent of her own Malibu Beach House, in Indy’s free-spirited Broad Ripple neighborhood, where you can relax outside on the wraparound porch beneath a shading arbor. The house specialty is 21 flavors of gourmet popcorn, including spicy ginger curry and smoking goose bacon and cheddar, plus small plates and wine, beer and bubbles.

Foodie that she is, Barbie operates a bistro food cart and would find Just Pop In a great place for stocking up, but it’s also the perfect place to grab a snack to go, like a tin of the signature Indy Style, a sweet-salty blend of caramel and cheddar popcorn.

When the need for caffeine calls, head to Bovaconti Coffee (bovaconticoffee.com). It’s so Barbie with its pink walls and mod floor, and offers the types of drinks Barbie serves at her own coffee shop: lattes, cappuccinos and espressos, plus cold-pressed juices and kombucha. Located near Indy’s Fountain Square, the shop is tucked in the historic Bovaconti Jewelers building and offers outdoor seating, a parade of pups with their humans and a hip vibe.

As the world’s foremost fashionista, Barbie would not want to miss 8FIFTEEN (8fifteen.com), a luscious designer boutique featuring both new and established designers, to update her wardrobe. After all, Barbie’s Dream



Barbie is the most popular fashion doll ever produced and the No. 1 fashion doll property in the U.S. MATTTEL/TNS

Closet has room for more than 30 fashions as well as accessories and shoes, and she would want to refresh it each season, especially with the help of the 8FIFTEEN stylists. The stylists are personable and approachable, the space welcoming and irresistible; it feels like girlfriends getting together to dish on shoes and shopping.

As someone who has dabbled in building and architecture in her long and varied career, Barbie would be adept at home improvement and rehab projects. Like many visitors, she would be drawn to the newly opened Two Chick’s District Co. (twochicksdistrictco.com), a home goods boutique founded by the mom-and-daughter duo of HGTV’s “Good Bones” series. Furniture, home decor, housewares, florals, even apparel – it’s all here and, as Barbie herself would note, very fashionably merchandised. At the front of the

shop, a sleek wine bar pours a selection of lovely pick-me-ups and serves a selection of snacks and sandwiches.

The artist and fashion designer in Barbie would appreciate overnighting amidst the luxurious appointments, curated art and splashes of color of the Pop Collection Suite at the Conrad Indianapolis (https://conrad-hotels3.hilton.com). Relax in the sculptured soaking tub then stretch out before a stone fireplace in the 800-square-foot guestroom. Room service beckons.

Another Barbie-esque option is an award-winning three-bedroom bungalow in the Broad Ripple Village (vrbo.com/934652?unitId=1482598).

The cottage-style home, once featured on a historic home tour, has a private backyard sanctuary with custom fire pit, water feature and relaxing basket swings – made for girlfriends, wine and wonderful times.

FUN FACTS

■ Consider this: The average person holds just over 12 jobs in a lifetime – jobs, mind you, not necessarily careers. Barbie has had more than 200 careers: astronaut, photographer, film director, chef, nurse, scientist, surgeon – even a superstar – making her a true action figure and an overachiever of the first order.

■ Barbie explored the final frontier four years before Neil Armstrong set foot on the moon. The year was 1965 and Astronaut Barbie rocketed into toy stores, wearing a spacesuit, helmet and can-do attitude.

■ Barbie broke the glass ceiling in 1985, taking to the boardroom as “Day to Night” CEO Barbie. She had already made her way into the operating room in 1973, a time when few women were working physicians.

■ Barbie runs for president in every election and has since 1992. (In 2016, she ran with the first all-female ticket.) With 2020 being an election year, expect to find Barbie on the campaign trail. In fact, Barbie has teamed up with She Should Run, a nonpartisan nonprofit working to increase the number of women considering a run for public office.

PLAN YOUR VISIT

At the Children’s Museum of Indianapolis, childrensmuseum.org,

Advance tickets are required for all visitors.

For information about visiting Indianapolis, click into visitindy.com.

A ‘NEW MISSION’

Retiree, cousin make nearly 8,000 masks

Family, health care workers, community members benefit.

By Mark Mirko
Tribune Content Agency

Jane Allely has thousands of reasons why dust is gathering on her living room shelves. Allely says she retired earlier this year with plans to stay home and clean, but that was before COVID-19. Instead, her time is now spent making masks.

Allely and her cousin Nancy Whitham have made more than 7,784 masks since April.

“It’s my new mission in life,” said Allely, of Ashford, Conn.

As COVID-19 was tightening its grip on people’s lives, Allely was asked by her 31-year-old grandson if she could sew some masks for him to wear at his essential grocery store job. She made him several masks and decided to keep going. Nearly 8,000 masks

later, and she hasn’t stopped.

Allely, who prefers the name “Cricket” is joined in the effort most days of the week by Whitham, who lost her job to the pandemic.

Cricket and Whitham say the first one thousand masks made were delivered or mailed to friends and family as far as Florida and California. Masks have also been donated to schools, teachers and health care professionals.

The two sit at sewing tables in the center of Cricket’s living room. Surrounding them are yards of donated fabric and leggings, dozens of thank you cards and, understandably, dusty shelves.

“Dust isn’t fatal,” Cricket jokes.

Using an acrylic template, Whitham cuts the fabric into rectangles, the shredded leggings into straps then Cricket assembles them using a donated sewing machine she received after wear-



Retiree Jane “Cricket” Allely (left), 74, sews masks with her cousin Nancy Whitham in Cricket’s living room in Ashford, Conn. Together, the two have made and donated nearly 8,000 masks. MARK MIRKO/HARTFORD COURANT/TNS

“This is my community. This is who I care about and this is who I want to stay healthy.”

Nancy Whitham

ing out her original.

The masks are then handed back to Whitham who steams the pleats before hanging the masks on a donated antique peddler’s cart outside. A

handwritten ledger keeps track of the count and information about distribution times.

On Cricket’s sewing table sits a dish of snacks for her Bernese Moun-

tain Dog, Prudence, and a baby monitor with a video to alert her and Whitham when visitors have arrived, in case Prudence does not bark. Whitham says it’s important for someone to go out to the cart when visitors arrive.

“We have to give them the whole rundown, we have to tell them about the holes to get their filters in and I always have to tell them, ‘You can-

not take just one. You need one for the wash,’” Whitham said.

“This is my community,” she said. “This is who I care about and this is who I want to stay healthy.”

Cricket says she plans to continue making masks as long as needed, saying that it’s going to help prevent colds and the seasonal flu, “It’s going to be a thing.”

AGING IN ATLANTA

GARDENING

Being messy might be best way to clean up yard

Debris can protect beneficial insects and the food web.

Margaret Roach
c. 2020 The New York Times

In the fall, it used to be you cleaned up every last leaf like mad. It was considered good garden sanitation. But now we know otherwise: That’s bad for the environment, killing beneficial insects that love all the leaf litter, which keeps them warm during the winter, and interrupting the food web.

If we arm ourselves with power tools and aim to skip no section of the garden and leave no debris behind, we risk making a place that’s too tidy for the good of its inhabitants. Part of the environmental benefit of making the landscape in the first place could be erased. Except in the vegetable beds, where pest and disease pressures call for a more forceful hand – or where the remains of a sickly ornamental plant may need teasing out here and there – when it comes to cleanup, less is often more effective.

So how do you make a responsible plan that acknowledges both ecology and your horticultural goals? Maybe it’s better to think of fall garden cleanup as an editing job – not some wholesale, wall-to-wall regimen like vacuuming the living room.

Becca Rodomsky-Bish, of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and Margaret McGrath, a Cornell plant pathologist (both serious home gardeners beyond their day jobs), shared advice about how to proceed.

The case for a messier cleanup

Within or below the leaf litter that accumulates in the autumn, so much unseen life exists. Given the chance, it will weather the offseason there.

“If you clean up every leaf pile in the landscape, you’re not only removing or destroying overwintering insects,” said Rodomsky-Bish, the project manager for the annual citizen-science project Great Backyard Bird Count and a passionate habitat-style backyard gardener. “You’re also removing insulation for insects burrowed in the ground that rely on the leaf litter to survive harsh winter temperatures

– like so many species of ground-nesting bees.” Instead, she suggested, “Let’s be a little bit messier.”

Messier, because the litter is critical habitat for various insects and other arthropods, like bumblebees that provide pollination services. It offers pupation sites for caterpillars of many moth species that birds rely on to feed their young. Detritivores – like millipedes that recycle plant debris – shelter beneath it for the duration, as do some spiders that contribute extensive pest control to our environments.

When we mow over, shred or vacuum up leaves, or rake them away from the tree they fell from, we diminish the potential good that the leaves and their various inhabitants – all essential players in the food web – can do.

Faded plants left standing all winter can play a critical role, too. They may contain seed or fruit, or offer hiding places for spending the offseason or reproducing, as the pithy stems of goldenrod, blackberry and elderberry (favored by some mason and carpenter bees) do.

This year, in particular, it’s urgent, Rodomsky-Bish said, as droughts, wildfires and other climate-related events are believed to have driven migratory birds off course, before they had time to replenish their fat stores, and even to their deaths.

Identify where things can (and can’t) remain looser

Nature’s example – letting everything lie where it falls, or where the wind blows it – is the inspiration, but it may not prove feasible for every square foot of the garden.

While many gardeners have reduced mowed turf in the name of biodiversity, most still have some lawn. Allowing leaves to mat it down all winter risks damaging the grass. Either mow over the leaves (if there’s just a thin layer), returning their organic matter to the soil, or rake and move them to the garden’s perimeter or to vegetable beds where they can serve as mulch.

You may want to be tidest along the front walkway and other high-traffic spots where slick leaf buildup isn’t practical or looks too messy.



Faded plants left standing all winter can play a critical role in the overwintering of beneficial insects, as well as birds and mammals. They may contain seed or fruit, or offer hiding places. MARGARET ROACH VIA THE NEW YORK TIMES

Other little nods to horticulture: In beds where early blooming minor bulbs like winter aconite (*Eranthis*), crocus or snowdrops might not be able to push up through heavy leaves, rake those spots now; in the spring, you won’t be able to do any raking until after the bulbs flower. And leave little pockets of open soil beneath the spots where you hope biennials and self-sowing annuals will grow; mulch will stifle their success.

Around ornamental plants with a reputation for harboring diseases that can survive in fallen debris – think peonies, roses or fruit trees showing signs of trouble – move spore-filled material away from the immediate area.

One worry voiced by some gardeners, Rodomsky-Bish said, is that less scrupulous cleanup creates a habitat for ticks, creatures of the leaf litter. So here’s a compromise: Don’t cart away bagged leaves; instead, move them away from areas near the house that you frequent most. Establish looser outer spaces that can accommodate leaf litter, a small brush pile and a gentler overall management style.

The social pressure to be tidy

In neighborhoods where a manicured front lawn with not a leaf in sight is the norm or even dictated by the homeowners association code, there could

be pushback.

An alternative: “I love the look of edge mowing, which we use at Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s visitor center,” Rodomsky-Bish said, referring to the practice of mowing a strip of turf adjacent to paths, sidewalks and roadways, so looser areas are set off inside these groomed swaths. “It’s a very effective way to minimize cleanup, but still create this beautiful space that looks at once maintained and natural.”

In the vegetable garden, clean up

Know your enemy, advised McGrath, an associate professor at Cornell’s Long Island Horticultural Research and Extension Center in Riverhead, New York. That’s the first tactical step toward vegetable-garden health.

When she talks to gardeners about disease management, she stresses the importance of removing diseased crop debris when the disease is caused by a pathogen that can survive winter in it. Not all can.

“I am especially concerned about fungal tomato pathogens such as anthracnose, Septoria leaf spot or early blight surviving,” McGrath said, “along with various bacterial diseases. So that debris goes out to the municipal compost with other yard waste my husband and I don’t want to compost or chip.”

Although she has the ability to distinguish one pathogen from another (if

you don’t, her webpage for gardeners can help), McGrath’s practice in her own vegetable plot is a thorough cleanup. “Personally, I like a clean vegetable garden, so I remove everything in fall,” she said. “By the next season, you will want a clean planting area anyway, unlike in your ornamental beds.”

Best practice: Remove diseased or fallen foliage as it occurs throughout the season – and also any tomato, eggplant or pepper fruit showing signs of anthracnose fruit rot.

“Those fruits, or affected tissue removed from a salvageable one, really shouldn’t go in the compost unless a gardener knows they have a good and long compost process,” she said.

In some cases – with certain bacterial speck, spot or canker of tomatoes, for instance – pathogens can survive the winter on stakes and cages.

“Hose them off to remove debris and soil, then disinfect with a bleach-and-water solution of 1:9 dilution,” McGrath said. The gear needs to soak in disinfectant for 10 to 30 minutes.

Sanitation is the organic gardener’s best tool for insect pest reduction, too. Thorough cleanup, pulling plants and removing them to a distance can reduce overwintering opportunities for common opponents – that includes squash bugs; Brassica pests, such as various cab-

bageworm species; and cucumber and bean beetles.

A thorough cleanup, however, doesn’t mean leaving the soil bare, McGrath noted. Be sure to promote soil health by keeping the surface covered. She keeps hers mulched year-round. Use grass clippings or leaves that you’ve moved off the lawn. Or make some “straw” mulch, as she and her husband do, by chipping the remains of ornamental grasses in the spring after they’ve been cut down.

Weed while you work

And as you go, you should also make notes. Look around critically: Document what worked and what didn’t, on paper or with photos. Take particular notice of how rich, or lacking, your fall-in-to-winter garden is in habitat-supporting elements like fruit- and seed-bearing native shrubs (and messiness), and look for spots where you can raise those quotients later.

Also: Are some plants overrunning one another and in need of dividing, either now or in spring? Is a soil test indicated in a bed where plants underperformed? Labs usually aren’t as busy in the fall.

Bring inside or stash tender plants that won’t survive outside. Weed until the ground freezes, targeting seed-laden weeds. If there are dead branches in out-of-reach trees and shrubs, make a date with an arborist; winter will make them worse.

What about messy birdhouses? “Let your nest boxes stay filled with nesting material all winter,” Rodomsky-Bish said. “In a really bad storm, they might be appealing as shelter.”

Clean them out just before birds come investigating, in early spring.

And with spring in mind, she said, here’s another important reminder: The commitment to the ecological element of your smart cleanup must continue then.

Rushing to start gardening too early risks squandering your fall efforts. Cornell ecologists recommend waiting until after at least five consecutive 50-degree days, giving your garden’s inhabitants a chance to awaken and move along, beginning the cycle again.

HYDRANGEAS

Three new panicle hydrangeas debut in spring

Limelight Prime, Fire Light Tidbit and Quick Fire Fab.

By Norman Winter
Tribune News Service

The mornings have become like “flower glow” at The Garden Guy’s house thanks to three new panicle hydrangeas making their debut in the spring of 2021. I have been amazed at what I am seeing, and to an extent what I am feeling, with these new introductions.

I have grown hydrangea paniculatas before, and coordinated the choosing of Limelight Hydrangea as a Mississippi Medalion award winner. There is something special however, with these three new varieties. Is it that 2020 has given me a new appreciation for life and nature? Could it be that cool temperatures arrived earlier than usual giving relief and perhaps a dose of climate perfection for the hydrangea blossoms?

On the other hand, the word seems to be out

about these hydrangeas and at all levels of the process: grower, garden center and buyer. At each stage the competition for plants is at the max. If you want these, I urge you to get in the acquisition game now and stay there until you are planting yours in the spring.

You are thinking, well, The Garden Guy hasn’t even told me what they are yet, so how can I want one? True, they are Limelight Prime, Fire Light Tidbit and Quick Fire Fab. Right now, I’ll say you don’t want one, but at least three of each.

If you have loved Limelight, you’ll love Limelight Prime even more; this will be like having your best friend in the garden. While I celebrate the glow in the morning, know that the afternoon is like a having an heirloom or antique display of mauve shades that should be to be on canvas and in a gold frame for all the world to see,

You might be wondering, how could you improve on the most pop-

ular hydrangea in creation? It blooms earlier, which will be a plus for gardeners in colder zones. As the blooms age they develop a richer palette of pinks, mauves and red. The stems are stronger supporting the flowers upright, giving you cuts for the vase by the bucket full, if you are so inclined. Last but certainly not least is that it is a more friendly size for today’s urban landscape reaching 4-6 feet tall and 4-5 feet wide.

Fire Light Tidbit gives you the immediate idea of a diminutive size. That is wonderfully true in that it reaches 2-3 feet tall and as wide. The flowers at The Garden Guy’s house however are enormous, borne on sturdy stems and reminiscent of exquisite porcelain of changing color. I’m growing mine in a bed with Limelight Prime and Pugster buddleias and it is so exciting.

The last and certainly nothing least is Quick Fire Fab. This one is the larger of the three new introductions and can reach 8

feet tall and 6 feet wide. It is the earliest blooming panicle hydrangea on the market giving the landscape three months of dazzling performance. The blooms are incredibly unique in that each floret is cross or X shaped, called cruciform in the taxonomic world. These flowers too will go through a regimen of color change as they age.

These new hydrangeas offer a huge hardiness range from zones 3-8 and will be the surefire solution to you winning the green thumb award. They are not picky about soil pH and ask only for well-drained soil with reasonable or average fertility. They bloom on new wood so you are encouraged to prune by one-third in late winter or early spring.

Proven Winners has become synonymous with hydrangeas. Peruse their website and you will find more hydrangeas than you ever knew existed. Warning, your first response may be: Honey, we need a bigger landscape!



Fire Light Tidbit gives you the immediate idea of a diminutive size. The flowers at The Garden Guy’s house however are enormous, borne on sturdy stems. NORMAN WINTER/TNS

AGING IN ATLANTA

Cauliflower

continued from G1

erwise, summon your will-power and refrain until serving time. Your dinner mates will thank you.

To get the right texture, look for strawlike shred-ded Parmesan rather than the powdery ground cheese. It will give you the heartiest, crunchiest texture. But the ground kind will work in a pinch.

Because this cauli-flower is meant to be a main course rather than a side dish, I add a generous amount of diced pancetta to the pan, which melts its brawny drippings on the florets. This said, if you're looking for a vegetarian dish, or something a lit-tle lighter, just leave the pork out.

Then pile the burnished florets into a bowl. And, if you're like me, be quietly thrilled that they're all yours.

ROASTED CAULIFLOWER WITH PANCETTA, OLIVES AND CRISP PARMESAN

Yield: 2 main-dish servings or 4 side-dish servings
Total time: 45 minutes

- 1 large head cauliflower (about 1 1/4 pounds), trimmed, cut into bite-size florets (about 8 cups)
- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, plus more as needed
- 1/2 cup olives, crushed, pitted and chopped
- 1 fat garlic clove, finely grated or minced
- 1 1/2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice, plus more to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon red-pepper flakes, plus more as needed
- 4 ounces pancetta or bacon, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 3/4 teaspoon cumin or caraway seeds
- 1/2 cup shredded (not ground) Parmesan
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley or mint for serving

1. Heat oven to 425 degrees. Place cauliflower on a rimmed baking sheet and toss with 1/4 cup olive oil and 1/2 teaspoon salt until well coated. Roast for 15 minutes.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together olives, garlic, lemon juice, 1/2 teaspoon red-pepper flakes and a large pinch of salt. Drizzle in the remaining 1/4 cup olive oil, whisking well.
3. After the cauliflower has roasted for 15 minutes, add pancetta and cumin seeds to pan. Gently combine. Sprinkle Parmesan on top and roast for another 15 to 20 minutes, until cauliflower is tender, the pancetta rendered, and cheese is golden brown and crunchy.
4. Spoon olive dressing all over roasted cauliflower while still hot and toss to combine. Taste, and add more salt, red-pepper flakes or lemon juice, if needed. Scatter parsley over the top before serving.



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AGING IN ATLANTA

Brody

continued from G1

connections with people encountered in the course of daily life can give people a feeling that they belong to a community, which she described as “a basic human need.”

As she and Blau wrote in their book, consequential strangers “are as vital to our well-being, growth and day-to-day existence as family and close friends. Consequential strangers anchor us in the world and give us a sense of being plugged in to something larger. They also enhance and enrich our lives and offer us opportunities for novel experiences and information that is beyond the purview of our inner circles. They are vital social connections – people who help you get through the day and make life more interesting.”

My tendency to “chat up” total strangers I meet in the course of just living has resulted in a slew of acquaintances who have filled my days with pleasures, advice, information, needed assistance and, most important of all during this time of enforced semi-isolation, a valuable sense of connections to people who share my environment.

COVID-19 lockdowns have reminded so many of us of how important our relationships are to our quality of life – not only relationships with the friends and family members we love and know well and who know us well, but also with more casual ones that help us maintain a positive outlook during dark and distressing times.

Fingerman’s research has also shown that people who are more socially integrated are also more active physically. “Being



Casual connections with people we encounter in the course of daily life can give us the sense of belonging to a community. GRACIA LAM/THE NEW YORK TIMES

sedentary kills you,” she said. “You have to get up and move to be with the people you run into when exercising.” Consequential strangers also help your brain, she said, because “conversations are more stimulating than with people you know well.”

A fellow researcher in the field, Katherine L. Fiori, chairwoman of undergraduate psychology at Adelphi University, who studies social networks of older adults, has found that activities that foster “weaker ties” than are formed with family and close friends foster greater life satisfaction and better emotional and physical health.

“The greater the number of weaker ties, the stronger the association with positive feelings and fewer depressed feelings,” Fiori said in an interview. “It’s clearly not the case that close ties are all that older adults need.”

And not just older adults, all adults. Fingerman said research has shown that, in gen-

eral, “people do better when they have a more diverse group of people in their lives.” But as Fiori observed, “Unfortunately, COVID has severely curtailed our ability to maintain weaker ties. It can take a lot more effort to do this online.”

When COVID-19 descended with a fury on New York City, many people I knew who had second homes “escaped” the city in hopes of avoiding the virus. I, on the other hand, chose to stay in my Brooklyn neighborhood where every day I encountered people I knew casually as well as others in my extended network of friends and acquaintances I’d made at the Y, in local stores, and when walking and cycling in Prospect Park.

In my country house, especially during the dark, cold days of early spring, I would have been far more isolated. Yes, I could walk my dog and ride my bike without having to wear a mask because I would have met almost no one else on

route. But I would also have been deprived of conversations with the many “consequential

strangers” I encountered daily during my outdoor excursions in Brooklyn, including the 7 p.m. “shout-out” in support of our essential workers.

To counter the loneliness and maintain her many casual connections, one of my Y buddies started a group email that not only filled in for the daily conversations she was missing but also gave her a continuing support system when faced with an injury and struggling with doom-and-gloom isolation.

In their book, Blau and Fingerman emphasize the importance of creating and being in environments that foster relationships with consequential strangers. Decades ago when The New York Times erected cubicles for its writers and editors, it destroyed an environment that

was conducive to sharing information and fostering camaraderie, prompting me to work from home most days and save the time and effort needed to dress for work and commute. I suspect that when COVID limitations are finally lifted, many more office workers will do the same and sacrifice casual work-based relationships.

As the authors wrote, “Where we live, work, shop, and mingle has everything to do with the weak ties we cultivate, and therefore our quality of life.” As they described a central theme of their book, “Casual acquaintances inspire us to venture beyond our comfort zones.” And until we do, we’ll never know what we might gain from relationships with “people who don’t seem to matter.”

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