

# COMING *of* AGE

LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE FOR SENIORS

SUMMER 2023

Sweltering  
Seniors get a  
Chill Summer

Caregiving  
for a Loved  
One with  
Dementia

Healthy Hobbies  
for Aging Adults

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH  
**MAMIE HIXON**



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# What is Preventative Care and Why is it Important?

Preventative care. It's a term that seems to be passed around everywhere these days. At the doctor's, in television ads, in mail advertisements, and especially when searching for insurance. But what is preventative care, and why is it so important?

Preventative care means taking measures to prevent disease or conditions from happening. It's basically the steps you take to stay healthy. More and more primary care providers and clinics are putting an emphasis and focus on preventative healthcare. And it's in your best interest that they do so.

## It's Time to Be Proactive

When it comes to healthcare, most people, including physicians, tend to be reactive, meaning they only react when something is wrong. For example, many people only go to the doctor if they're sick. In a way, that makes sense. But the problem with that mindset is that there's a good chance you'll spend more time and money trying to fix a problem you may have been able to prevent in the first place.

You must pursue Better Health and take a proactive role in your health to achieve it. You can't just sit back. You need to practice prevention. Examples of preventative care include:

- Immunizations
- Annual checkup
- Cancer screenings
- Flu shot
- Diabetes Screening

These preventative care examples help to prevent major illnesses and diseases. However, it's important to note that preventive care happens before a problem is identified and that services provided due to an already-identified problem may not be considered preventative care. Examples of non-preventative care include:

- Primary care visits related to a specific health care need
- Diagnostic tests and screenings to learn more about a known condition

Now that you know what preventative care is, let's discuss why you need to practice it.

## The Importance of Preventative Healthcare

Just because you're healthy doesn't mean you can avoid the doctor or ignore your health. It's great that you're healthy; now, you need to do all you can to stay that way. Preventative care offers so many benefits, such as:

**Improves your long-term health** – Preventative care catches things before they become serious problems. It allows you to get ahead of an issue. For example, by attending your wellness

checkups and physicals, you and your provider can monitor things such as your blood pressure and cholesterol – two things that often become serious health concerns. By continuously monitoring these types of things, you'll be able to notice a change if there is one and be able to work with your provider to address it immediately before it becomes problematic.

**Increases your lifespan** – When you catch health problems or concerns early, you're usually better able to treat them and prevent them from becoming a domino effect with other conditions. Plus, by taking steps to improve your health and maintain it, you'll be preventing health issues down the road, which ultimately improves your lifespan.

**Keeps healthcare costs down** – One of the most significant benefits of preventative care is that it can save you money! Most health insurance plans will cover the cost of preventative care services, making it more appealing to visit the doctor regularly. Chronic diseases can force you to have to pay quite a bit to treat and manage. But by catching the disease early or possibly even preventing it from happening, you're able to save drastically on medical expenses.

## Ways to Practice Preventative Care at Home

Preventative care doesn't just apply to health services provided by your doctor. Prevention begins at home. You must take steps individually to ensure you're doing your part to stay healthy. This includes eating a healthy diet and getting regular exercise.

Diet and exercise control and prevent a host of medical conditions. And they are two things you are in complete control of. These two components help with weight management, which is imperative to health. By maintaining a healthy weight, you lower your risk for diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.

Getting enough sleep is also a big step you can take for preventative care. Sleep is essential in keeping your brain and body healthy. Lack of sleep can leave your immune system weak and susceptible to diseases. You should establish a good sleep routine that you can stick to and ensures you get at least eight hours of sleep each night.

## Prevention is the Key to Better Health

It's these little steps that you're able to take that have a tremendous health payout. Your health is your most important asset. And you need to do all that you can to nourish it. So, if you haven't started yet, start your journey to Better Health today by scheduling an appointment with Dr. John Ehrmann from VIPcare. It's time to start living your best life, and that happens with preventative care. Call 850-780-0877

# [FROM THE EDITOR]



## Emily Echevarria

Marketing  
Communications  
Director and  
Editor-in-Chief

While I, like many people, become quickly bored of small talk about the weather, it feels almost impossible to write a summer editorial without bringing up the obvious focal point of summer season in our region—the extreme heat and intense humidity. Not to mention the sauna-like aftermath of seemingly daily rainstorms! Luckily in my line of work, endless chatter about the heat of summer gives me an opportunity to sing the praises of our generous community that shows up to support our annual Senior Chill Out event. This AC unit and fan donation drive collects hundreds of fans and ACs for seniors in the community.

The need is unfortunately still great, and while we have distributed the donations from that day, we are still accepting funds, fans, and AC units to help protect older adults from the dangers of heat related health complications. Check out page 10 for a review of this year's Senior Chill Out and for information on how you can support this cause.

We've also got several pieces with inspiration on ways to stay busy this summer and beyond. If you're looking to get out in the community and engage with others or maybe hone a talent or hobby, our article on page 16 gives a rundown of classes, workshops, and groups for education and skill building that also have surprising health benefits. From art to gardening to continuing learning opportunities, there are so many beneficial opportunities to connect with others and with your own passions.

If a low maintenance summer getaway is on your list, look at Coastal Day Trips on page 20. These unique nearby locales offer something for the nature lover or the smalltown explorer and are perfect to visit with the grandkids or a friend. With artsy downtowns, waterfalls, and wolves close enough for a day trip, your next adventure is just a short jaunt from home.

For this issue's celebrity interview, we're focusing on a titan of education with a big splash of personality, Mamie Hixon. She's a figure that looms especially large for anyone who has utilized the resources of the University of West Florida Writing Lab, and her work at the Lab and decades-long career in education are showing no signs of slowing down. Read more about her life and career starting on page 22.

I hope this summer offers an opportunity to explore, whether that means exploring an interest or a new way to stay active and social, or branching out to explore a new place with family or friends. For those older adults that find themselves struggling this time of year, perhaps due to isolation, or difficulties with health or in the home, please reach out for help. Tell a friend, family member, or medical professional about your challenges, or call our agency and we can hopefully point you to resources or support.

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When calling or emailing us your change of address, please provide Council on Aging of West Florida with both the old and new addresses to expedite the change.

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### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

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**On the Cover: Mamie Hixon**  
Photo by Alana Cox



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# Should Things Have to Get Worse to Get Better?

by Josh Newby

**H**umans are amazingly good at adaptation. It's hardwired into our biology for evolutionary growth and is arguably why we're perched up here at the top of the food chain. Some would assert that we're too good at adaptation, to the point where we endure challenges and problems we really wouldn't if they were just a bit worse.

Let me explain. I've recently become obsessed with what's called the region beta paradox, a phenomenon that explains why people and societies and systems can recover more efficiently from distressing situations than from less distressing ones. For example, if you are just a bit sad every single day, you might say to yourself that it is manageable and thus be a little bit sad every day for the rest of your life. If you were severely depressed, however, you would seek treatment of some kind after being really miserable for a relatively short time, then be completely happy. Or, if you are in a mediocre romantic relationship, you may never leave, but if you were in agony because of abuse or neglect, you would take the hard step to leave then be ultimately happier. In both of these scenarios, incremental adaptation to small inconveniences results in less net happiness than a more tragic situation would.

That's where government steps in. Government has to provide the most good for the most people, and since we don't exist in some sort of hypothetical utopia, the best way to cater to the lowest common denominator is for life to be a little inconvenient for everyone at the expense of nirvana for a few and misery for most. And over time, we mentally adapt to these small indignities in a way that makes them feel normal.

Well, I'm here to tell you that those challenges are not normal, but we hear every day from clients who insist they are. The senior who juggles which bill he or she will be behind on this month (medical insurance) before swapping to the other bill (electricity) the following month. The elder adult whose transportation takes three times as long as the actual appointment, because at least said transportation is free or low-cost. Or the client whose rent keeps steadily rising even as the quality of their living condition steadily declines.

We learn to endure this death by a thousand cuts, but we shouldn't, and that's where advocacy comes in. Life can and should be better for the most vulnerable among us. They shouldn't have to wait until the situation gets really bad for the public infrastructure to step in, at which point the problem will be so expensive and insurmountable that the system fails. Unfortunately, I worry that things will have to get worse before they get better because of the region-beta paradox, because those who are charged with our safekeeping don't hear from their constituents that things are already really bad.

Our agency recently fielded about 40 calls from tenants at a local senior housing complex. The AC had been out for over a month, there was mold and mildew as a result, and even a rat infestation in some units. Our local elected officials and the health department and code enforcement took notice real quick. But what would've happened if only one of those challenges existed? AC is broken but the unit is in otherwise good shape? "Eh, call us if it gets worse." Well, for many in our community it is objectively worse; they just don't realize it. Let's help the others before it gets worse for them too. It shouldn't have to get even worse before it gets better.



# Sweltering Seniors Get a Chill Summer

by Farrah Hale

**A**FTER THE FINAL SPRIG OF LINGERING WINTER FROST LEAVES THE AIR, the summer heat is already sneaking in to make its debut. The sweltering Florida heat may bring in tourists from around the world, but those high temperatures pose a threat to our vulnerable communities. For the past 20 years, Council on Aging of West Florida has partnered with all five area Lowe's stores to collect air conditioners, fans, and monetary donations to protect at-risk seniors in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties.

The event has become a well-known staple in our community, yet each year we are pleasantly surprised to see the amount of love and support that pours in from area businesses and individuals. This year, the Pete Moore Automotive Team Senior Chill Out was held Friday, June 2, 2023, from 6 am to 6 pm. The event was publicized throughout the day by Sue Straughn and WEAR Channel 3 along with Cat Country 98.7 and AM1620 NewsRadio, which brought people out in droves to take part in the daylong donation drive.

After last year's record-breaking year, we were unsure if we would come close to the number of donations received in 2022. However, agency staff and volunteers





collected more than \$70,000 in monetary donations, along with 329 AC units, and 512 fans. Of course, credit is due to our generous donors Pete Moore Automotive Team, Ascend Building Materials, Florida Power and Light, Central Credit Union, Boutwell Heating and Air, Gilmore, Ross and Company Real Estate Partners, County Commissioner Lumon May, William Trushel, Engineered Cooling Services and so many more. Although these donations are the catalyst to a successful Senior Chill Out, the smaller monetary and tangible donations of air conditioners and fans is the fuel that keeps it and our vulnerable seniors alive.

Throng of volunteers and donors flock to Lowe's each year to participate in Senior Chill Out. This event easily restores humanity in a world full of turmoil. As sweat drips off our foreheads, and our hair sticks to the back



of our necks, we begin to understand how necessary air conditioning is in the South. It is comforting to know that at least for a moment, our seniors are on everyone's mind. I know I will sleep soundly knowing that we will keep approximately 800 seniors cool this year.

Council on Aging gives thanks to the community for supporting this event. Senior Chill Out keeps our seniors safe and comfortable during the coming months of Florida summer heat.

#### Get Involved!

Council on Aging is still accepting donations for weatherization efforts to keep seniors safe and cool throughout the hotter months. Visit [seniorchillout.org](http://seniorchillout.org) to make an online donation or drop off donations of new box fans or window AC units at our office at 875 Royce St.





# LUNCH & LEARN



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2023

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Bayview Senior Center  
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**AUG 23**  
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**Continuing Education: Our History & Your Future**

Pensacola State College  
1000 College Blvd., Building 96

**SEPT 18**  
11AM-1PM

**Smartphone Tech Tips with TDM Technologies**

Bayview Senior Center  
2000 East Lloyd Street

**JULY 20**  
9AM-12PM

*Service Activity*  
**Stuff the Bus: School Supply Drive**

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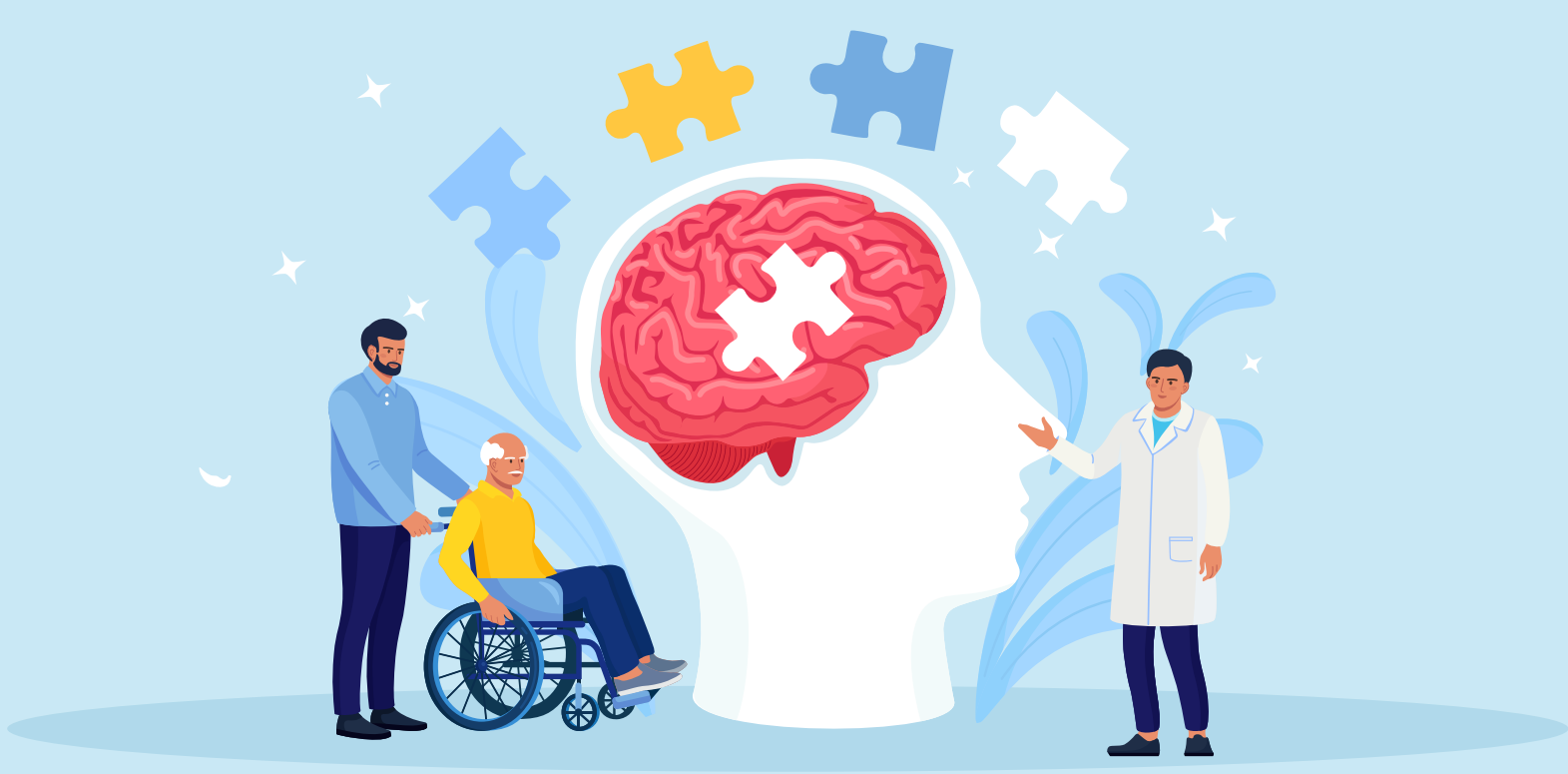
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# Caregiving for a Loved One with Dementia

by Leslie Provis, MSW, West Florida Memory Disorder Clinic

**L**EARNING THAT YOUR LOVED ONE HAS BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH ANY TYPE OF DEMENTIA CAN BE DEVASTATING, overwhelming and difficult to navigate. Oftentimes, family members and friends are stunned by the news and their life comes to a screeching halt. Caregivers are immediately confronted with the unknown. There are so many questions about expectations of their loved one's ability to function in day-to-day activities and how the disease will progress. They are faced with what may seem a scary and daunting task of planning for the future.

Prior to receiving an accurate diagnosis (though, a true, 100 percent diagnosis can only be verified by examination of the brain upon one's passing, as this was the case for Robin Williams, famous actor and comedian who was discovered to have Dementia with Lewy Bodies), tests are conducted to rule out probable causes of memory loss. Blood tests, EEG, MRI of the brain and other types of neuropsychological assessments are typically ordered by the neurologist. Collected results determine the type of dementia. Depending upon the area(s) of the brain affected, the disease may impact a person's ability to communicate, understand, interpret, relate, express emotions and complete activities of daily living. This process alone can cause great distress and fear for all involved.



While it is imperative to make necessary preparations to ensure your loved one receives appropriate care and support, it is equally important to focus on creating meaningful and caring moments with them. That said, it is also crucial for the caregiver(s) to remember what to do when the oxygen mask drops, as in an airplane. Put your mask on first, then on the other person. Caregivers must take care of themselves so that they can be fully present and capable of helping their loved one. Of course, that is easier said than done. Some ways of alleviating caregiver stress and ways to engage in self-care include asking for help from family and friends, utilizing respite care and adult day care facilities, setting aside time to do favorite hobbies and participating in support groups.

Self-care can improve both physical and mental health; help manage stress, lower risk of illness, and increase energy. Once your oxygen mask is snug and secure, you have a better capability to take part in your loved one's life more enthusiastically and compassionately. (Three wonderful resources noted at the end of the article.)

When deciding on ways to interact with your loved one, their cognitive and physical abilities should align and adapt as needed when proposing and initiating an activity. A few examples of activities include putting away dishes, folding laundry, walking the dog, jigsaw and word search puzzles, coloring, and listening to music.

Think about the person's interests prior to experiencing cognitive symptoms and adapt them as appropriate. Maybe dancing is something that has always brought them joy. However, their mobility is limited, and it is not safe or even possible for them to stand independently or at all. A suitable alternative may be to play their favorite music, sit beside them, clap, pat your knees, and sing along. What may seem like a boring or non-stimulating activity, such as folding towels or even napkins, is something that helps to keep your loved one 'active.' And let us not forget that it is not so much the activity itself, but the invaluable and precious time spent with your loved one.

#### **Here are a few fantastic resources for caregivers:**

Mary Beth Mann with Assisted Living Locators, hosts a monthly Dementia Education Forum, second Tuesday of the month, from 1-3 pm at Bayview Senior Center in Pensacola.

ACTS2 offers free telephone-based training and support sessions, Ms. Tomeka Norton-Brown is the primary contact. For more information, visit [acts2ooject.org](http://acts2ooject.org)

Stacy Gad and Jennifer Hernan-Costello with Aging Advocate has an outstanding caregiver handbook, *Creating Meaningful Moments with a Person with Dementia*. For more information, visit [agingadvocates.com](http://agingadvocates.com)

For more information, please reach out to [Leslie.provis@medicalcenterclinic.com](mailto:Leslie.provis@medicalcenterclinic.com).

Council on Aging is home to The Retreat adult day care program, which offers an engaging day experience for individuals with cognitive decline or other impairments. Caring staff get to know each participant and tailor activities to the needs and abilities of participants, and caregivers have peace of mind knowing their loved one is in a stimulating, safe environment. Retreat Director Jessica Ayers, BSW, shares some tips for caregiving for a loved one with dementia.

Activities and social involvement is so important for the well being of both the dementia patient and caregiver. Engaging dementia patients in an environment where they can spend time with others keeps their minds and bodies stimulated. Activities such as painting, coloring, and creating art pieces, works not only for mental awareness but also fine motor skills. Another very important tool is music. Music allows a person to reminisce and engage in movement through dance and exercise and connecting with others. If someone loves animals, seek animal therapy or just provide animal interactions for a person's emotional connection to other things. A great tool for dementia patients who are perhaps middle to late stage, would be robotic therapy toys, such as dogs, cats and birds!

Social engagement is not only beneficial to the dementia patient but also the caregiver because it allows them to have a sense of satisfaction knowing their loved one has found purpose again. If they are able to leave their loved one with a respite program for a few hours, it also allows the caregiver to have time to themselves.

Leslie D. Provis, MSW, License No. ISW 17916, is the Social Worker and Clinic Coordinator at West Florida Memory Disorder Clinic (MDC) in Pensacola. Ms. Provis received her Master of Social Work from the University of West Florida. In her role within MDC, she serves Alzheimer's and dementia patients, and their caregivers providing support, encouragement, resources and education. Additionally, she conducts dementia-related training and presentations to healthcare facilities, first responders and caregiver/patient support groups.



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- Jim E.

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# Create, Connect & Engage

## Healthy Hobbies for Aging Adults

by Morgan Cole

**WE ALL KNOW ABOUT THE MANY HEALTH BENEFITS OF STAYING ACTIVE AND ENGAGED THROUGHOUT OUR LIVES**, especially when it comes to aging adults. What you may not know is that there are benefits of continuing to pursue (or discover new) hobbies that might surprise you. Medical and scientific research has come a long way in the past decade, proving how pursuits beyond just eating well and getting exercise can make a significant difference in the health of today's seniors.

According to the National Institute on Aging, one of the most significant obstacles to physical and mental wellness in retired seniors today is isolation. Whether you live alone, or you and your spouse live a solitary lifestyle, isolation is a key driver of loneliness. Loneliness is widely known to increase feelings of depression or anxiety, which can have a negative impact on many other aspects of your health. Whatever your hobbies or passions are, it's important to pursue something that makes you happy. Whether you're looking to engage in a hobby or want to learn something new, the possibilities are endless. We have brought you information on some of the healthiest hobbies for aging adults and details on where you can engage in these activities at various places throughout the community.

### Continued Education

It's never too late to educate yourself or to learn something new. If you look back fondly on childhood memories of classrooms, papers and professors, why not take a class or try going back to school? Local colleges and universities offer numerous opportunities for continued education. Enroll in a class or two that interest you or consider going back full-time to take a deeper dive into just about any topic that interests you. According to *Forbes*, more people over age 50 are back on campus seeking their degree, so you're in good company. Plus, learning is another enjoyable way to help keep your mind strong. You can also explore one of the many online opportunities available for those continuing their education.

Both Pensacola State College (PSC) and the University of West Florida (UWF) offer a variety of educational courses on various topics that are open to the community. Classes are reasonably priced and delivered in a variety of formats, such as non-credit short courses, workshops, seminars and conferences, with classes held both online and at various locations



throughout the community. Course offerings include a vast array of topics such as creative arts, hobbies, home and garden, sports and fitness and online courses. A variety of personal enrichment courses are available for specific topics of interest like painting and drawing, photography, acting,

vocal and instrumental instruction, computer science, foreign languages, aerobic exercise, swimming, handcrafts, home improvements and more. To learn more about continuing education opportunities visit [uwf.edu/continuing](http://uwf.edu/continuing) or [pensacolastate.edu](http://pensacolastate.edu).





## Gardening

We know, we know, gardening is on every list of hobbies for seniors—but for good reason. While you may not think of it as such, gardening is an effective low-impact workout that uses muscles from head to toe, plus it gives you the added benefit of being outside. Gardening also offers physical and mental health benefits, especially for older adults. Not only does it support heart health and mood, according to AARP, it may also help reduce the risk for dementia. Numerous studies have also shown that gardening for just half an hour a day is a great way for seniors to meet their body's physical activity needs. According to the Mayo Clinic, Gardening can help reduce your blood pressure, improve mood, increase your body's levels of vitamin D and help decrease stress. Gardening also serves as a great way to connect with other people.

If you love to garden or have a green thumb, consider joining a local gardening club or group such as the Pensacola Camellia Club or the Pensacola Federation of Garden Clubs. Both organizations

serve as great resources for those looking to learn and connect with other like-minded gardeners in the community. Established in 1937, the Pensacola Camellia Club is one of the oldest clubs in the country. The club meets monthly and holds a variety of events and shows throughout the year. To learn more, visit [pensacolacamellioclub.com](http://pensacolacamellioclub.com). The Pensacola Federation of Garden Clubs is another local group that will help connect you with a local gardening club based on your goals or interests. The club hosts numerous classes, workshops, plant shows and gardening events throughout the year to keep members engaged and connected. Visit [pensacolagardencenter.com](http://pensacolagardencenter.com) to learn more about getting involved.

If you're more interested in putting your green thumb to work, consider donating your time and talents at a community garden. One nonprofit garden that's always seeking generous volunteers is the From the Ground Up Community Garden located in downtown Pensacola. Visit [fromthegroundupgardenpensacola.com](http://fromthegroundupgardenpensacola.com) to learn more about getting involved.

## Give Back to Your Community

There are endless opportunities to give back to your local community, many of which allow you to socialize with people who share similar interests. One volunteer opportunity that many seniors take on is tutoring elementary students with their reading, which offers a rewarding mentoring role. Another volunteer option could be at a local arts center where you may be able to benefit from free admission to performances and galleries. Whatever you choose, organizations are often more in need of people's time than they are money, so finding an organization or position that is important to you and getting involved can be an invaluable gift for others. There are numerous nonprofit organizations that are always in need of individuals willing to lend a helping hand. Here are some local organizations and programs that offer great volunteer opportunities for local seniors:

- **Foster Grandparent Program:**

This volunteer-based program through the Council on Aging of West Florida is designed specifically for seniors wishing to give their experience and talent to help children develop the skills, confidence and strength they need to succeed in life. Foster Grandparents can serve in local day cares and public or private schools as well as Head Start or after-school program or their choice. For program details and eligibility requirements, visit [coawfla.org](http://coawfla.org).

- **Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP):**

Sponsored by the United Way of West Florida, this free federal program matches seniors with volunteer opportunities at nonprofits throughout Escambia County based on their skills, experience and lifestyle. For complete program details, visit [uwwf.org/rsvp](http://uwwf.org/rsvp).



- **Ronald McDonald House Charities of Northwest Florida:** This local nonprofit organization serves as a home away from home for families with sick and hospitalized children. They are always seeking individuals and groups of volunteers to cook meals for families staying in the house and to assist with other house duties or administrative needs. Visit [rmhc-nwfl.org](http://rmhc-nwfl.org) to learn more about volunteering.
- **Help Animals in Need:** Lend a helping hand at a local wildlife sanctuary or animal shelter such as the Wildlife Sanctuary of Northwest Florida or the Pensacola Humane Society. From helping with special events and collecting donations to assisting with walking and bathing animals, these organizations are always seeking dedicated volunteers. Learn more about volunteering with these organizations by visiting their websites.
- **Help Feed the Hungry:** Donate your time at a local homeless shelter or food bank such as the Salvation Army, Manna Food Pantries or Feeding the Gulf Coast. You could also consider organizing your own food drive to benefit one of these worthy organizations.
- **Join Friends of West Florida Public Library:** If you love books, the library is the perfect place to volunteer. This nonprofit membership organization has been supporting our public library for more than 40 years and is always seeking motivated volunteers. Opportunities exist for individuals of varying interests, skills and schedules. Learn more online at [mywfpl.com](http://mywfpl.com).

## Fitness & Exercise Classes

You may not think of exercise as a hobby, but it can be both enjoyable and healthy without having to be painful or boring. As you age, it is particularly important to take part in some sort of fitness activity on a regular basis to stay healthy. The National Health Institute (NHS) reports that many adults over the age of 65 spend around ten hours per day sitting or lying down. This lack of physical activity can cause reduced mobility, leading to other aches and pains when doing simple tasks. There are also mental health benefits to exercise, with numerous studies showing that having an active lifestyle can help decrease feelings of loneliness and depression in retired seniors and help manage feelings of stress and anxiety.

If you're looking for something to help you stay fit or want to incorporate more physical activity into your life, consider taking a walk around your neighborhood or at a local park. Another great way to get active and stay fit is by attending a group fitness or exercise class. Group classes can help you develop more of a regular routine and are also a great way to connect and socialize with other

seniors in the community. You never know, once you find an activity you like and get into a routine, you might find yourself looking forward to your workout sessions! To help you get started, we have gathered details on some of the community centers offering no or low-cost exercise and fitness classes for local seniors:

- **Bayview Senior Resource Center:** Located at 2000 East Lloyd Street in Pensacola, the Bayview Senior Center offers exciting programming to help keep local citizens ages 50 and up active and engaged. From line dancing, ballroom dancing and Tai Chi to chair yoga, body balance and instructor-led exercise classes, the Bayview Senior Center offers a variety of opportunities to help keep local seniors active.
- **Fricker Resource Center:** This community resource center offers a wide variety of leisure and cultural activities, special events and services that encourage health, exercise, fitness, relaxation, enjoyment and learning. The facility offers a fitness room with cardio equipment and free weights, a gymnasium and a kitchen. Outside the facility, there is also a playground, a baseball field and open space for walking.





- **Vickery Resource Center:**

Located at the heart of the Roger Scott Athletic Complex in Pensacola, this community resource center serves as a host to a variety of activities and special programming. Surrounded by Roger Scott Pool, Tennis Center and Sports Complex, this facility offers fitness classes and exercise programs specifically for local seniors. The Vickery's summer programming also includes weekly games of pickleball, volleyball or basketball for seniors.

For complete details on available amenities and to view the complete calendar of scheduled programming for each of the above community centers, visit [cityofpensacola.com/facilities](http://cityofpensacola.com/facilities).

## Take an Art Class

From improving cognitive function to reducing stress and promoting relaxation, art classes for seniors can lead to a happier and healthier life. Art has numerous cognitive benefits, particularly for older adults. Engaging in creative activities such as painting, drawing and sculpting have been linked to improved brain health and also help stimulate the mind. Some specific cognitive skills that can be improved through art classes include

problem-solving, critical thinking and spatial reasoning, according to the National Institute of Health. A study on creativity and aging conducted by George Washington University also detailed the benefits of art for seniors, including how art encourages risk-taking and playfulness, strengthens our sense of identity and improves cognition and memory.

Overall, the cognitive benefits of art classes can help to keep the mind active and engaged. Art provides a space for self-expression and exploration, allowing individuals to connect with their own emotions and experiences in a healthy way. Whether working on a painting, sculpture or any other form of art, the process of creation can be a deeply meditative and rejuvenating experience. So why not try taking an art class to experience some of these many benefits firsthand? Not only can art classes be a fun and creative outlet, but they can also serve as a means of enhancing social connections and combating loneliness. If you are looking for a fun way to unleash some of your creativity, try taking an art class at a local community center or museum. Here are a few places that offer art classes and workshops in the community to help you get started.

- **First City Art Center (FCAC):** As a working nonprofit art center, FCAC offers a wide range of classes and workshops designed to engage adults and the community in the arts. Their offerings include monthly classes and workshops for beginners through seasoned practitioners, in many media including glass, pottery, ceramics, sculpture, painting, drawing and other visual arts. Visit [firstcityart.org/education/classes](http://firstcityart.org/education/classes) for details.
- **Pensacola Museum of Art (PMA):** The PMA's Education Department offers a variety of creative programming to connect the community with art and visual culture through classes, participatory projects and interactive exhibition experiences. Through scheduled classes, workshops and demonstrations, these programs encourage students to learn artistic techniques and become more engaged with their own ingenuity. To learn more, visit [pensacolamuseum.org](http://pensacolamuseum.org).
- **Creative Workshops at Apple Market:** Explore watercolor painting, macrame crafts and more at monthly art workshops hosted at the newly renovated Apple Market in Pensacola. Visit the Apple Market Facebook page for details on upcoming workshops and more.



# Coastal Day Trips

by Kelly Oden & Nicole Willis

**WHO DOESN'T LOVE A ROAD TRIP?** Open road, open skies and the promise of adventure at every turn. While Pensacola offers more than enough amenities and adventures for the average visitor, homeowners and long term guests may want to explore the inland areas of Florida's panhandle and discover the beauty and history that exists off the beaten path. Fortunately, the Pensacola area is just a hop, skip and a jump from a variety of historical sites, quaint towns, unique natural wonders and wildlife encounters. These locations are perfect for a quick day trip or even a long weekend. Either way, you'll come back renewed and ready for a long day at the beach.



## Downtown Fairhope

Fairhope, AL  
[fairhoppers.com](http://fairhoppers.com)

From upscale dining to cozy cafes, Fairhope has it all. This city's downtown atmosphere is laid-back, but has no shortage of interesting things to do. Whether you're looking to have a relaxed evening perusing art galleries and sipping on a glass of wine, or want to shop and enjoy live music, downtown Fairhope provides all these opportunities and more. Any art-lover would enjoy the Eastern Shore Art Center which features many local artists that work in a variety of mediums. The city also hosts the "First Friday Art Walk," in which shop owners, restaurants, and artists open their doors for the public to browse and mingle. The Art Walk is often accompanied by live music and entertainment. For an upscale shopping and dining experience, visit Provision, an indoor modern market with a wine bar and cafe. After shopping, swing by the Fairhope Pier to catch the sunset. Gambino's Italian Grill is an excellent place to finish your day with a delectable steak or pasta dinner. Whatever you decide to do, Fairhope is sure to impress all who visit.



## Defuniak Springs

Defuniak Springs, FL  
[defuniaksprings.net](http://defuniaksprings.net)

The quaint town of Defuniak Springs sits on the banks of the spring-fed Lake Defuniak, which is a true rarity—one of only two such almost perfectly circular bodies of water in the world. The other is located in Switzerland. A collection of Victorian homes surrounds the lake and adds to the nostalgic charm. Founded in the 1880s as a railroad stop for the L & N Railroad, DeFuniak Springs retains its old Florida look and feel. In fact, the Walton County Library on Circle Drive is the oldest library in Florida still operating in its original building. It houses an interesting assortment of antiques, including an impressive medieval weapon collection and many first-edition books. The former L&N railroad depot now houses the Walton County Heritage Museum. The town became the winter home of the New York Chautauqua, an educational movement that attracted thousands of visitors to Defuniak Springs in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Chautauqua Vineyards & Winery, a 40-acre vineyard located 12 miles north of Defuniak Springs offers tastings and virtual tours of their wide variety of wines.





## Ponce de Leon Springs

Ponce De Leon, FL

[floridastateparks.org/park/ponce-de-leon-springs](http://floridastateparks.org/park/ponce-de-leon-springs)

Named for the famed explorer who sought the fountain of youth, Ponce de Leon Springs may not grant you eternal youth, but its majestic beauty will certainly relax your mind while its crisp cool waters are sure to revive your senses. The crystal clear water maintains a year-round temperature of 68 degrees. Approximately 14 million gallons of pure water emerges daily from the Ponce de Leon Spring. Spring water emanates from the aquifer deep underground. While the spring is the main attraction, the park also offers ample opportunity for hiking, birding, fishing, snorkeling and even geocaching.



## Seacrest Wolf Preserve

Chipley, FL

[seacrestwolfpreserve.org](http://seacrestwolfpreserve.org)

Wild animals are fascinating and potentially dangerous creatures. If you love the idea of spending time with wolves, this is the trip for you. Seacrest Wolf Preserve (SWP) is a nonprofit organization that has been promoting the education and conservation of native wildlife since 1999. At SWP, humans and wolves can meet, offering rare connections and educational experiences. The preserve currently offers two hour long private VIP tours Monday through Friday, and VIP guests can enter into the enclosures to interact with the wolves. Private VIP tours require at least two people and cost \$250 each and each additional person after the first two costs \$150. All of SWP's tours include opportunities for photos with the animals. SWP also offers more affordable group tours on Saturdays. Group tours are by reservation only and cost \$50 per person. For visitation hours and more details, visit the SWP website.



## Florida Caverns State Park

Marianna, FL

[floridastateparks.org/park/florida-caverns](http://floridastateparks.org/park/florida-caverns)

Florida Caverns State Park is the only state park in Florida to offer cave tours to the public. Inside the dry (air-filled) caves, visitors will see incredible formations of limestone stalactites, stalagmites, soda straws, flowstones and draperies. The park's caves have a long and interesting geologic history beginning about 38 million years ago when this area was submerged beneath high sea levels. Shells, coral and sediments gradually accumulated on the seafloor and as sea levels fell, these materials hardened into limestone. During the last million years, acidic groundwater dissolved crevices just below the surface creating cave passages large enough to walk through. Stalactites, stalagmites, flowstone and other fragile cave-drip formations were formed by a similar dissolving process by the naturally acidic rainwater. The caves provide a habitat for the blind cave crayfish, cave salamanders and three species of cave roosting bats. The park also contains the Chipola River and Blue Hole Spring, which provide areas for fishing, canoeing and boating. Florida Caverns State Park is popular for camping, picnicking, fishing, hiking and horseback riding.



## Falling Waters State Park

Chipley, FL

[floridastateparks.org/park/falling-waters](http://floridastateparks.org/park/falling-waters)

Florida's highest waterfall is the star of the show at the breathtaking Falling Waters State Park. To see the waterfall, visitors follow Sink Hole Trail, a boardwalk flanked by huge trees and fern-covered sinkholes. Falling Waters Sink is a 100-foot deep, 20-foot wide cylindrical pit into which flows a small stream that drops 73 feet to the bottom of the sink. The water's final destination remains unknown. Located a few miles south of I-10, the quiet and serene park also offers visitors the chance to see beautiful native and migrating butterflies in the butterfly garden, take a dip in the lake or have a family picnic. Hikers enjoy trekking through the green, gently sloping landscape of North Florida. Full-facility campsites nestled in a shady pine forest provide the perfect excuse for an overnight stay at Falling Waters.





# Mamie Hixon

## AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

BY KELLY ODEN

**M**AMIE WEBB HIXON IS AN ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA (UWF), the director of the UWF's Writing Lab and a dedicated and involved member of the Pensacola community. Her love of the English language, both literary and technical, is clear to anyone who meets her. Hixon's genuine smile and infectious laugh quickly put most people at ease with the woman whose nicknames—the grammar guru, the grammar goddess and the Hixonator—can sometimes be intimidating. Hixon's style—high heels, bold jewelry and coordinated outfits with an African flair—hails back to her family and the public school teachers who inspired her. In fact, much of her inspiration seems to come from her experiences growing up here in Pensacola, and she has returned the favor by becoming an inspiration to the community.

Hixon and her family moved to Pensacola when she was four years old. Hixon's love of language began in a shotgun house that had been converted into a

private school by Mrs. Lillie James, mother of four-star general Daniel "Chappie" James. Hixon's parents paid four dollars a week to send her to "one of the very few schools for colored children—as they said back in the day," Hixon recalls. Mrs. Lillie, (called "Miss Lillie" by her students) started the school in the 1930s. Initially, Mrs. Lillie taught her own 17 children and later opened the school to the public.

After earning her bachelor's degree in English from Talladega College in Alabama, Hixon returned to Pensacola and began her decades-long teaching career with the Escambia County School System. She later transitioned to Pensacola Junior College (now known as Pensacola State College), and later, to the University of West Florida where she continues to help shape the minds of future grammarians, teachers and lovers of literature.

*Coming of Age* sat down with Mamie Hixon to discuss her life, her career, her city and her thoughts on aging.



**COA: Tell me a little bit about where you are from originally and how your family came to live in Pensacola.**

**MH:** Indianola, Mississippi—the hometown of B.B. King. My family decided to find our promised land not by leaving Mississippi to go north to Chicago, Detroit or New York, but instead to come a little bit farther south to Florida. We ended up in Pensacola, so this was my family's Promised Land for better opportunities—for my dad who worked at Naval Air Station Pensacola (NAS) and my mother, who was a domestic.

**COA: What did your father do at NAS?**

**MH:** He was an aircraft mechanic. I was four years old when we moved here, and they put me in the L.A. James School for Colored Children, a private school. Miss L.A. James was the mother of General Daniel "Chappie" James, and that experience is what catapulted me into education. In her classroom, as a four-year-old, she would have me spelling to the first through sixth graders. She had me spelling words they couldn't spell.

**COA: If you were already so far ahead of them when you got there, did your education start at home?**

**MH:** That's an interesting question. I wasn't really home-schooled, per se, but I just always had an interest in words. The first word I learned how to spell was Frigidaire, the name brand. My parents were very impressed with that. I



consider my parents fourth or fifth-grade scholars. They did not receive a formal education but they knew the difference that it made and they knew that I needed one. So, I think they put things in my path that were part of their own experience. They didn't have a library of books, but my father ended up buying a set of Encyclopedia Britannica because someone came by selling them and he thought that was something I should have. My siblings are seven years younger, so I spent seven years as an only child. He bought those books and I also had a steady diet of comic books. I was introduced to the classics much later. That type of literature was not part of my parent's experience or part of their knowledge that they could pass on to me. I later read about writers like Ntozake Shange who met famous people, from musicians to scholars, including W.E.B. DuBois, because they were in her parents' circle. I didn't have that kind of experience. The people in my parents' circle were teachers, the Negro teachers, who in some cases lived close by, or they were church members. Those were the people my parents knew, and that was back in the day when teachers were highly regarded. They were revered. I had some of the best to train me.

**COA: What was it like going to Miss Lillie's school? Is that what you called her?**

**MH:** Yes, that's exactly what we called her. Well, I was a good student, so I didn't have to sit on the porch with a dunce cap. I remember getting one spanking. I don't recall what I did. But that was part of the ritual. I wrote a narrative in *When Black Folks Was Colored* about Mrs. Lillie and the school. When you were disobedient, you had to lie on top of her desk, pull your britches down and get a spanking with a paddle. I guess that would be considered abuse now. Other than that, it was just this wonderful daily ritual that we had. When we knew Chappie was going to be flying over, she had us go outside so we could stand and wave. It was a ritualistic, very structured regimen that we went through daily. We started with the Pledge of Allegiance and then the multiplication tables, the alphabet, spelling, geography and, of course, playtime. It wasn't rest time but playtime. We played all of the Little Sally Walker and Little Blackbird games out on the lawn. I had great teachers: Miss Lillie, Miss Christine, Mrs. Benson and also Mrs. Cannoli. That colored school taught us everything we needed to know about life, love, giving, living and not quitting because that was their family mantra. It was what she considered the 11th Commandment: Thou shalt not quit.

**COA: You entered high school at the time that schools were being integrated, correct?**

**MH:** Yes. I wrote a piece about it and I called it "My Choice." That piece is in *Images in Black: A Pictorial of Black Pensacola*. I wrote about my choice. I made the choice to stay. I said something in my piece to the effect of, 'Let me stay where I feel comfortable, where my teachers will recognize me for the content of my character and not the color of my skin. Where they will praise me and not condemn me or criticize me in a negative way.' So, I stayed there at Washington High School and graduated as valedictorian of my class. I made the choice to stay, and I'm happy. I ended up making the choice to go to a historically black college. Actually, I received a scholarship because I was valedictorian. I went to Talladega College in Talladega, Alabama, where I received my Bachelor of Arts degree in English.





**COA: What was that experience like?**

**MH:** Oh, I would do it again. That was one of the best experiences of my life. Not only was Talladega a historically black college, but it was also a very small one. There were only about 60 of us who graduated in 1967. When I was there, the student population was around 300, if even that much. One of the things that I particularly enjoyed was meeting all of these people because I'm a communicator and a connector. I loved connecting to all these people—black people my age—who were all valedictorians and salutatorians themselves because Talladega had the reputation of choosing the *crème de la crème*. So, here I thought I was smart, but I wasn't. I met these people from other places who had a different kind of education—a much better education in some cases. In many cases, it was because they were not from the South, but even some from Southern schools had a higher level of education. But what I really remember about Talladega is its smallness and its family-like atmosphere. Every meal was family style. We'd sit at a round table of ten people. The waiters would bring the entree, a bowl of salad, a starch, gravy and bread. We lived in dormitories, and that, too, gives me a good, strong feeling—the camaraderie in the hallway. We would get in the hallway and line dance. We'd sit in each other's rooms and have slumber parties, study and play cards. The dorm life—that was an exhilarating life. The dorm was always

just full of energy and even intellectual conversations and debates. Being at Talladega gave me other opportunities, too. I ended up going to Dartmouth during the summer for an exchange program. There, I met a group of Africans who were students there and who didn't consider themselves Black, but just African. That experience also placed me in a program called the Southeastern Vermont Community Action Program. One summer I lived in Newfane, Vermont. Another summer I lived in Ludlow, where I was a teacher's aide at the school. These are small towns in Vermont, which was, and probably still is, a predominantly white state. I was there working with people that had never seen a Negro. To the children, their innocence led them to go home and say, "Mom, I have a pretty teacher, and she has this wonderful tan." We had an open house, and the parents all showed up, and they were surprised. Finally, one of them revealed to me what the surprise was all about. They said, "We didn't know you were Black. I've never seen a real Black person." That's what Talladega exposed me to—those kinds of opportunities. From sports to musicals to operatic concerts—all of these gave us cultural experiences as well as cross-cultural experiences.

**COA: After Talladega, you came back to Pensacola and you taught at public schools. Tell me about that.**

**MH:** I immediately got a job at my alma mater, Booker T. Washington High School. In my first year of teaching, I thought, "I've wanted to teach all my life, but this is stressful." I didn't like it, and I had to have a conversation with myself. I finally said, "Okay, so, all the theory and the education you learned in those education classes—release that. It's not working. These are people. These are not just students who've been described by theorists as having a certain kind of student behavior. They're just people. Look at them that way." That's what really opened the door and allowed me to cross the boundaries of teaching that I needed to cross in order to communicate with my students—not just as the person of authority or the person with knowledge, but just as one person to another. I've been at it ever since. That was 1967, so it was 56 years ago that I started teaching.

**COA: How did you come to teach at the university level?**

**MH:** Dr. Hobbs was chair of the English department at Pensacola State College, which at that time was known as Pensacola Junior College (PJC). She asked me to come in for an interview because Lillie James Frazier, the daughter of Mrs. Lillie, said to her, "I'll be retiring soon and you need another Black faculty member—a good Black faculty member. I have the person for you." So, Lillie James Frazier recommended me for the job, and I got it. While I was working at PJC, I had finished my master's degree at the University of West Florida (UWF) and the department head, Dr. Stanton Millet, said, "We're trying to open a writing lab. Would you come with your knowledge and help train graduate students who are going to be working there?" I was still working at PJC, but a couple of nights a week, I was going into the writing lab helping the graduate students come up with ways to help other students at UWF pass what was called the Test of Standard Written English (TSWE), which all prospective UWF graduates were required to pass. At some point, Dr. Millet said, "I think we need to expand the Writing Lab. We're going to



do a search for someone to direct the Lab, and it won't really be a search because the job description will say, 'a short, black female with red hair.' That's exactly what he told me. He said, "You're in if you want the job." Mind you, I was reluctant. To be honest, when I went to PJC, I actually thought that teaching junior college students would be difficult because they were going to require some knowledge level, some pedagogy that I didn't have. Such was not the case. I was well equipped and well prepared and felt the same going to UWF. My goal was not to become a college English professor. My goal was just to teach English, and here I am an assistant professor and writing lab director. My goal was to enter into a profession that I thoroughly enjoy, and, knock on wood, so far, it's been a marvelous journey. There's a poem by Mona Lake Jones called "A Marvelous Journey." So far, my journey as a teacher has been a marvelous journey.

**COA: You've lived in Pensacola most of your life. It is your home. Why have you stayed?**

**MH:** Because I'm a homebody. I love its slowness, for lack of a better word. I love its accessibility. I love its people. I'm just rooted here. I know a lot of people and a lot of places. I can connect those places to people. It's where I found a level of happiness. It's where I found support and encouragement. It's where I found me. This is where I have come of age again—right here through teaching and community service. It's the place that knows me and it's the place I know.

**COA: You are known for your fashion sense. You have a wonderful sense of yourself and what you want to wear. Where does that come from?**

**MH:** I got it from my mom and my Aunt Maggie, who both had jewelry boxes in their rooms. I still have my mom's jewelry box. They were sharecroppers and maids. The maids could at least put on starched, white, ironed dresses to go to work in, but the sharecroppers didn't have such a luxury. They wore jeans or overalls. But on Sundays, they dressed up—stockings, heels, clothes, jewelry and hair. My dad loved to see my mom dress up and as a result, he loved seeing his girls dress up. He would take us shopping along Palafox Street. He liked the expensive shops. He would pass by a lot of shops and go to these nice boutiques. He would just allow my sisters and me to pick out clothes. I thought we were rich. He'd say, "Now, you only get one dress. Which one do you want?" I figured out the scheme. I would figure out the one he wanted and I would pick the other one. He'd say, "Okay, just go ahead and get both of them." I'd leave with five dresses. I've just always loved to dress up. My mother had a seamstress and I have a seamstress. I still have one. She's a Jamaican woman who lives in Detroit now. I mail designs and fabric to her. I have this knack for designing. I can't draw but I can visualize what works on my body. I don't have the runway model figure, but I can hook up the figure that I do have. I love colors. I just love style. I think if you're going to go out in public, you just need to look good from head to toe. I came up with this quote 20 or 30 years ago: "If you can't dazzle your students with brilliance, you can mesmerize them with color and style." Apparently, I've been able to do that because my students always say, "You don't ever wear the same thing twice."





**COA: You are 77 years young. What is your secret to growing old gracefully, healthfully and happily?**

**MH:** Just living my life and doing what I normally do. I just do the same thing I've always done. "Walking, teaching and dancing in high heels," is my motto. I'm still doing that. As long as I can walk in high heels, I will, even if I have to bring them down to two inches instead of four, which I still refuse to do. If I have to use a cane, I'm ready for that, too. I have already begun to think how my seamstress can cover them with rhinestones, pearls or whatever is necessary to make me look good and make me still feel as if, 'Okay, I might be 93, but if I can still dance and walk, if I can still think and if I still have my mental faculties, this is all good.' I once heard Cher say, "When am I going to start feeling old?" That's my motto, too. When am I going to start feeling old? Knock on wood—I don't feel it at the moment. So far, I've just been blessed not to have a lot of aches and pains. I don't eat healthily or the way I should because in addition to clothes, I love good food. So, I guess the secret is just to stop thinking about being old. Some people remind me, though. I had a person who said, "Oh, you're still living?" I said, "Yes, I am." But on the other side, I had a student walk up to me and say, "Aren't you Mamie Hixon? You taught me at Tate High School in the 70s." You know what? That means I'm still recognizable. I didn't know the student. They were in the ninth grade, so naturally, they don't look the same at all, but they recognized me. I thrive on that: being recognizable.



**COA: You were a caretaker to your mother. What was that experience like and do you have any advice for people in that role?**

**MH:** My mother had Alzheimer's for 24 years. That's the other thing that I have done in my life that I'm appreciative of. I wrote a piece called "Child I Never Had," and that was my mom. She was the child I never had, and I just considered it an honor to have been able to be her mother and to help my sister Lois who resigned from her job to take care of mom full time. That is one thing I've done in my life that truly pleases me. It also pains me to know that some people have to, as adults, take care of their parents, but to them they find it to be an inconvenience. I never saw it that way. I think that's a responsibility we should have—to take care of our parents. As for advice, take care of yourself first or at the same time. You have to change your persona to be a caregiver if you're a caregiver for a parent. You just need to recognize the fact that mom or dad was in charge but now you are in charge. Join a support group with other people who have shared experiences so that you all can talk because you'll need to talk to somebody. If you can, keep that person at home in familiar territory. My mother's physician always said that mom endured as long as she did—24 years with Alzheimer's—because she was in a familiar house. My sister and brother-in-law moved into her house to take care of her. And we don't know what she—or any other Alzheimer's patient who has lost the ability to speak—understands or recognizes. It could be that they understand a lot more than we know because they can't



communicate that to us. But my mom's doctor always felt that she could hear those familiar voices and see those familiar faces. They might not know who you are, but you are familiar.

**COA: I know you're involved in many organizations and charities. What are some of those that are closest to your heart?**

**MH:** My sorority. I'm what is called a Golden Member. This is my 57th year in the sorority. I'm a Golden SOROR. My sorority is Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated. It is a sorority of which Kamala Harris is a member. Many famous people are members as well. Robin Roberts is one. Kamala Harris was actually initiated as a pledgee, whereas Robin Roberts is an honorary member. I've been active in my chapter in Pensacola since I left college. I put together a proposal for a fundraiser called Pink in the City. We've raised money for Cancer, Alzheimer's and the American Heart Association. I think we're adding the March of Dimes because of the mortality rate among Black pregnant women. That particular project is very close to my heart.

**COA: Any plans to retire?**

**MH:** No. If I still have my mental faculties, why should I? I think if I'm able to teach and I still enjoy it, why retire? I just never thought about retiring since I do like work. I know that I am a workaholic. I don't see that as a derogatory term. I like working.

**COA: What do you think people would be surprised to know about you?**

**MH:** Oh, that's a good question. I have been a member of the same church for 73 years. As one of the organizing members of the Readers & Writers Ink Book Club, I have been with the book club for 26 years. As chartering president of the local chapter of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, I've been a member for 30 years. I've had the same landline phone number since 1970. I've been a member of the AKA Sorority, Inc. for 57 years.

In my total of 56 years of teaching, I have never missed a class. I recall having had laryngitis in 2001 when my doctor cautioned me about using my voice. Of course, I ended up going to my classes that day.

I have a pen and notepad or a stack of Post-its in every single room in my house just in case my creative juices start flowing. I want to ensure that I have a place at the moment for recording my musings, wonderings, questions and ideas for teaching. Since the computer age, I have begun to store some thoughts in a folder on my computer desktop, but there's nothing like old-school pen and paper.

I wrote my own obituary more than 30 years ago, not because I thought I had a terminal illness but because of my several experiences helping bereaved families compose obituaries of lost loved ones. The process becomes tedious and time-consuming for the family members who should be able to grieve rather than being left with the task of trying to recover history. Writing my own obituary gave me the opportunity to edit it myself and to give it an ethnographic style and the personality of a memoir.





# What's The News?



## Council on Aging at the Library

Did you know Council on Aging of West Florida has a monthly presence at the local library? We have a table with information and a representative at Tryon Branch on the first Wednesday of each month from 10 am to 11 am, and every other month at the Main Branch from 10:30 am to noon (July, September, November). At these table sessions, we can answer any questions and give out brochures and information to seniors and caregivers.

## In Memory of Betty Kuhl Nickinson

Former Council on Aging of West Florida Board Chair Betty Kuhl Nickinson passed away April 23, 2023. She was a beloved board member of Council on Aging and served as chair 1991-1993, and also served her community in myriad other ways. She served on the Board of the Chamber of Commerce, worked for the Florida Department of Children and Families Services, University Hospital, among other civic activities, serving people and the community.

## The Community Assessment Survey for Older Adults is Coming Soon

Council on Aging is working in conjunction with Northwest Florida Area Agency on Aging to conduct the Community Assessment Survey for Older Adults in the coming months. For this survey, randomly selected households of people aged 60 and over will receive a half page postcard containing a web link and instructions for how to take the survey online. For those that do not wish to complete the survey online, there will also be the option to wait a few days for a paper survey that can be filled out and returned. The Community Assessment Survey for Older Adults is a statistically valid survey designed for older adults and measures six community dimensions: Community Design, Employment and Finances, Equity and Inclusivity, Health and Wellness, Information and Assistance, and Productive Activities. Overall community quality is also assessed. Data from the

survey will be distributed by the involved agencies to the public as well as civic leaders and others to help better serve older adults in our communities. We ask that those receiving the survey respond to the surveys and reach out to Council on Aging if you receive the survey and have any questions.

For those that don't receive the initial survey, there will be an opportunity for the anyone 60 and over to make their voice heard by taking the survey during a public input period following the official sample survey. Look out for a link and call for responses at [coawfla.org](http://coawfla.org) and at [Facebook.com/coawfla](https://www.facebook.com/coawfla).

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Fill in the grid with digits in such a manner that every row, every column and every 3x3 box accommodates the digits 1-9, without repeating any.

		5						6
9	2	8	6		3			5
			7	5		8	4	
	9		3	6	1	2		
8		3						9
		1			5	6	3	
	3		5		7			
7			2		6	9	5	3
1	5					7		

					8	4		2
9		5		2		6	8	
4	8		9	6				
7		8		3	6			
5					9	8	3	
		3			2		7	4
8	6			7	4			3
	3		6		5			8
		4				7		9

## Answer Key

8	7	9	4	7	1	5	2	9	3	4	7	6	8
3	5	9	6	1	2	8	4	1	6	9	5	3	7
1	2	4	7	8	5	3	9	6	7	4	2	1	8
7	3	6	5	1	8	9	2	4	7	3	8	6	5
4	1	2	8	9	6	7	5	3	4	2	1	9	8
2	8	3	7	6	1	5	9	4	8	2	7	3	6
6	5	9	7	3	6	1	2	8	4	7	5	3	1
3	1	6	7	5	9	8	4	2	1	7	3	8	6
5	2	8	6	4	3	1	7	5	9	8	2	6	4
9	4	7	5	1	2	8	3	9	6	8	7	4	5

2	5	4	3	8	1	7	6	9	2	8	5	7	3
1	3	7	6	9	5	2	4	8	1	8	6	9	5
8	6	9	2	7	4	1	5	3	7	8	3	6	9
6	9	3	8	1	2	5	7	4	9	8	3	6	5
7	4	8	5	3	6	9	2	1	7	4	9	8	3
4	8	2	9	6	7	3	1	5	8	2	9	6	7
9	1	5	4	2	3	6	8	7	5	2	1	7	4
3	7	6	1	5	8	4	9	2	6	3	7	8	1

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