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LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE FOR SENIORS

WINTER 2023



AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH
RICH LITTLE

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Tips for Joint Care: How to Manage Arthritis and Stiffness in Winter Months

After the brutal summer we had, many of us have been looking forward to the cooler temps that winter provides. However, for some, cold weather doesn't just mean cute sweaters, scarves, and boots. It also means aches and pains as many older adults grapple with arthritis and joint stiffness. The cold weather seems to amplify the discomfort, making each movement a potential source of pain.

Understanding the Impact of Cold Weather on Joints

The relationship between cold weather and joint discomfort is a complex interplay that often leaves individuals searching for answers. While the precise mechanisms are not entirely understood, many physicians speculate that the drop in temperature can affect the viscosity of the synovial fluid within joints. This fluid is crucial for smooth joint movement, and when it thickens in the cold, it can increase stiffness and pain—leaving many of us unable to move.

Tips for Joint Care in the Cold

Fortunately, you can take steps to help ease your arthritis discomfort. Best of all, it doesn't really take much effort on your part. It's just about making smart decisions. So, if you're one of the many older adults suffering, here are some tips for joint care and managing arthritis and stiffness during the winter months.

Layer Up

Cold weather is all about layering. But the concept of layering extends beyond just cozy sweaters. Applying it to joint care involves providing extra layers of support. Thermal clothing, compression sleeves, and even heated wraps can create a barrier against the cold, helping to maintain an optimal temperature around your joints.

Stay Active, Stay Warm

Battling the winter blues often involves the temptation to stay indoors, but maintaining an active lifestyle is paramount for joint health. Opt for indoor exercises like yoga or tai chi, and consider swimming in heated pools to keep your joints moving without subjecting them to harsh conditions.

Hydrate for Joint Lubrication

It's easy to remember to stay hydrated during the summer months, but it's easy to overlook hydration in the cold. However, proper water intake is a fundamental aspect of joint health. Staying hydrated supports the synovial fluid that lubricates joints, enhancing flexibility and reducing friction-induced discomfort. Make it a point to carry water around with you all day and to sip frequently. Warm beverages and soups are another great way to stay hydrated in the winter.

Warm-Up Routine

Warm-up exercises aren't just vital for starting a workout session. Implementing a thorough warm-up routine to start your day could prove to be essential and a great tip for joint care, especially on those extra cold mornings. Gentle stretches and range-of-motion exercises can help increase blood flow, preparing your joints for the day ahead and mitigating the impact of the cold. Take a moment each morning after getting out of bed to focus on stretching.

Nutrition for Joint Support

Consider adopting an anti-inflammatory diet rich in omega-3 fatty acids, antioxidants, and vitamin D. These nutrients have been associated with joint health and can provide additional support during the challenging winter months. Not to mention, a diet high in these very nutrients aids in heart health.

Create a Cozy Environment

Transform your living spaces into sanctuaries of warmth. Ensure that rooms are comfortably heated, utilize soft blankets, and invest in heating pads or warm compresses to offer direct relief to achy joints.

Listen to Your Body

Perhaps the most crucial aspect and tip for joint care is attuning yourself to your body's signals. If you experience heightened pain or stiffness, be kind to yourself. Modify activities when necessary and allow for adequate rest. Remember, your well-being is a priority.

Move with Ease this Winter with Joint Care

Navigating the intricacies of arthritis and joint stiffness during the colder months demands a thoughtful and holistic approach. By integrating these comprehensive tips for joint care into your daily routine, you can create an environment that not only shields your joints from the harshness of winter but also fosters their well-being.

Get the Chronic Care You Need at VIPcare

Along with these tips, it's essential to work with your primary care provider to establish a treatment plan that will help manage your arthritis and stiffness. Chronic conditions, even arthritis, can be managed, helping you to find relief and live a comfortable life.

At VIPcare, our primary care providers take a proactive approach to treating chronic conditions such as arthritis. Your provider will take an integrated approach by utilizing check-ups, screenings, and treatments to manage your chronic condition and provide you with relief.

If you suffer from multiple chronic conditions, VIPcare also offers Chronic Care Management, a Medicare-approved program available to Medicare beneficiaries. The Chronic Care Management program provides you with one primary contact for all your chronic care needs, including making an appointment, following up on labs and tests, or even having a prescription refilled. To learn more about how VIPcare can help you with your chronic care needs, call 850-204-0416 to schedule an appointment at a VIPcare clinic near you.

[FROM THE EDITOR]



Emily Echevarria

Marketing Communications Director and Editor-in-Chief

As 2023 winds down and my brain is exhausted from the holiday hustle, I needed a little inspiration for this editorial. I prompted ChatGPT, a popular artificial intelligence tool, to write a Winter editorial for a lifestyle magazine for older adults, and this is how it started:

"As we usher in the dawn of 2024, I extend my heartfelt wishes for a year brimming with hope, resilience, and joy. Within the pages of this Winter edition, we invite you to embark on a journey of reflection, inspiration, and discovery. As your advocate for positive aging, I am committed to supporting you on this journey, fostering a community where dreams can flourish and achievements can be celebrated."

While I applaud the otherworldly optimism of my robotic co-editor, I have to say that after a year filled with so many challenges for caregivers and older adults, my heartfelt wishes for 2024 are slightly more tempered. One thing it did get right is that I do remain committed to the advocacy work of making a better community for seniors to thrive, whether that's getting the word out about programs here at Council on Aging or lobbying our state legislators. I'm also looking for fresh ways to meet those aims, perhaps through experimentation with AI, and also the simple act of exploring new ideas.

Speaking of fresh ideas, we've got an article featuring a relatively new to the area nonprofit that offers profound support for children dealing with grief, but also for their caregivers. Valerie's House offers a special place for grieving

children to heal and connect with others who have lost someone close to them. While we focus on grandparents raising and supporting grandchildren after a loss of a parent, this unique organization is for children experiencing any loss of a loved one. Read more on page 13.

We've also got a piece on page 16 on the fascinating Virtual Dementia Tour, which allows users to get a look into the sensory experience of life with dementia or cognitive decline. For caregivers and elder care professionals, this program gives a clearer perspective of the struggles a person with dementia may face. We've also included cozy Winter soup recipes from some of our favorite local restaurants and a review of the agency's artistic fundraising gala event last fall.

We are honored to feature an exclusive interview with the legendary comedian and impressionist Rich Little. I hope you enjoy his reflections on a lifetime in the spotlight and the lessons he's gathered along the way.

As ChatGPT said in its rambling suggested text, I do hope this season offers a chance to reflect and refresh for the coming year, whatever that means for you. Maybe it's simply getting through the Winter doldrums, or perhaps it means connecting more with your community wherever possible. If there's any way I or Council on Aging may be able to assist you in those aims or others, please don't hesitate to reach out to me directly at 850.266.2507.

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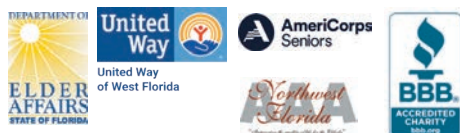
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Janet Rice McCoy, RSVP Manager
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UPCOMING EVENTS

2024 SPRING SCHEDULE

Want to learn more? Ready to get involved? Anyone 55+ is invited to these Escambia County RSVP informational and educational events. Visit uwwf.org/rsvp-events for more information.



SNACKING WITH SENIORS

Tax Time Tips

Jan. 5 from 9 am - 10 am

Bayview Senior Center
2000 East Lloyd St.

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INFORMATION/NEW MEMBER ORIENTATIONS

Jan. 11 from 1 pm - 2 pm

Jan. 31 from 10 am - 11 am

Feb. 22 from 10 am - 11 am

Mar. 12 from 1 pm - 2 pm

Mar. 28 from 10 am - 11 am

United Way of West Florida
7100 Planation Rd. Suite 18

Registration is required for Orientations!

CHECK OUT THIS SPRING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY!

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A Difference of Priority

by Josh Newby

AFTER A DISAPPOINTING FLORIDA LEGISLATIVE SESSION IN 2023 whose headline legislation seemed primarily concerned with culture wars and enabling a presidential run, I am happy to report that early indications hint that those elected to represent us will get back to their real mission in 2024. The Governor's budget blueprint outlines generous increases to vital programs we use to serve you: Community Care for the Elderly, Home Care for the Elderly, and the Alzheimer's Disease Initiative. There is even some potential for funds earmarked to defray low-income senior housing costs. This is all positive stuff and indicates that the Governor and his administration understand the needs elder adults face in this economy.

While we're on the subject of "this economy," much ink has been spilled about how positive economic indicators (stock market growth, decreasing inflation, low unemployment) seem to contradict the reality of what we are paying at the grocery store and what we are in turn getting paid at our jobs. While I won't venture into the conversation about what constitutes a recession, or for that matter how little average Americans care about the ten-year bond rate, I will take some liberty and say that rising rental, energy, and food costs are absolutely burying the common person. That anecdotal observation snaps into focus when you consider the common senior, who in the past two years has seen not only those expenses increase, but also insurance, prescription drugs, and the cost of caretaking. All this on a Social Security income.

Now, it is true that Social Security Cost of Living increases are tied to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) in an attempt to mitigate a real-value reduction in that

amount via inflation. However, the CPI simply doesn't take into account what elders actually spend money on, which is why there has been a push in recent years to tie SSDI amounts to CPI-E (CPI for the Elderly).

I say all of that to note that if you see a gap between your personal economy and the economy that CNBC is telling you about, consider that there is also likely an even bigger gap (let's call it a gulf) between a senior's personal economy and yours. That's not to say we should be thankful our own situation is not worse, but it is to call attention to the differences between our worlds and the worlds of those who do care about the ten-year bond rate—and those in Tallahassee and Washington.

In 2024, I am making it a personal goal to recognize that our battle is not with those below us on the ladder, who are justifiably receiving higher appropriations this summer. Rather, our battle is with a system that continues to deemphasize our experiences, invalidate our bank accounts, and tell us that all is fine and dandy when it is not. My fear is if those gaps and gulfs widen even more, we whom our elected officials represent will simply no longer feel the pressure to make meaningful changes that impact our collective bottom lines. They will simply be too buffered by their own account balances (and the laws they have passed to protect those balances) to really care if they get protested against or voted out. The difference is not one of perspective but of priorities.

For now, I applaud the about-face the Florida legislative branch appears to be making for 2024, and I encourage them to continue marching in that direction alongside this agency and our clients, resisting the temptation to again simply cater to those who will be fine anyway.

It's a Wrap!

Guests Celebrate Council on Aging's *Perfectly Aged* Calendar with an Unveiling Gala at the Pensacola Yacht Club

On October 18, Council on Aging of West Florida celebrated the beauty of aging represented in our 2024 *Perfectly Aged* calendar. At the calendar unveiling gala, hosted by the Pensacola Yacht Club, guests celebrated each calendar model as we unveiled their month individually. During cocktail hour, pianist John Ripley serenaded guests while they enjoyed a sponsored Home *G/N*-stead cocktail or glass of champagne from Flying with Ease's champagne dress model. Flying with Ease also provided two picturesque painted models to complete the art opening aesthetic! The Pensacola Yacht Club prepared and served dinner, and Mr. Big and the Rhythm Sisters ended the night with a bang! Our models, sponsors, and guests showed up for the agency and the aging adults we serve in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties. We couldn't do it without all of you! Lakesha Davis, our photographer, and owner of Gulf Coast Panorama captured fantastic shots.

Perfectly Aged calendars are available for purchase in office, by calling (850) 432-1475, or visiting perfectlyaged.org.



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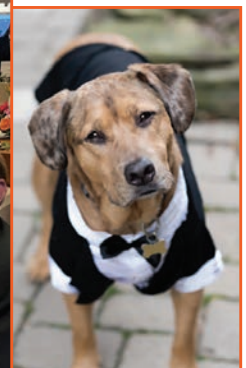
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Grandparents Raising Grandchildren After a Loss

Valerie's House Grief Support Groups Aid Grandparents Caring for Grieving Grandkids

by Jennifer Elzweig, Valerie's House Pensacola Program Manager



THE NUMBER OF GRANDPARENTS RAISING THEIR GRANDCHILDREN HAS SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED IN RECENT YEARS. For various reasons—parental substance abuse, incarceration, or death—many grandparents have assumed the role of primary caregivers. This transition can be emotionally overwhelming as they cope with their own loss while trying to provide the best possible care for their grandchildren. In this difficult circumstance, peer-to-peer grief support groups play a crucial role in offering solace, guidance and camaraderie. These groups serve as safe spaces for grandparents to share their experiences, receive empathetic understanding and discover strategies to navigate the complexities of raising a second generation.

Grandparents who step in as primary caregivers often find themselves experiencing a mix of emotions, including grief, sadness, anger, and even joy. The loss of their adult child and the subsequent assumption of

parental responsibilities can be a profound emotional challenge. Managing their own grief while providing stability and love to their grandchildren is taxing. They may struggle with finances, energy, caregiving and so much more while experiencing their own feelings of loss. In these situations, traditional grief support groups might not fully address the unique circumstances of grandparents. In these circumstances the importance of peer-to-peer grief support groups tailored specifically for grandparents raising grandchildren becomes clear.

Local nonprofit, Valerie's House, offers free ongoing support for all families experiencing loss by death or other separation. The organization has grown to become a source of hope for countless families in the area. Known as a safe space that provides emotional healing and understanding, Valerie's House plays a crucial role in helping the children and families in Northwest Florida navigate through the challenging journey of grief.



Valerie's House Grief Support Groups foster empathy and understanding, creating a sense of belonging and validation without fear of judgment. Within these groups, participants can gain invaluable insights and practical strategies from those who have already navigated the complexities of raising grieving grandchildren. Knowledge-sharing and unwavering support in these peer groups strengthen their resolve and enriches the lives of both the grandparents and their grandchildren.

Valerie's House expanded its services to Pensacola in late 2020, launching its first peer-to-peer support group in April 2021 at borrowed space from Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwest Florida. The Pensacola Chapter of Valerie's House is the only non-profit 501(c)(3) organization in the community whose sole mission is to help children and families work together through the loss of a loved one.

Crista O'Keefe Brandt spearheaded the expansion into Pensacola. Like organization Founder, Angela Melvin, who lost her mother at a young age, Brandt lost her mother to cancer when she was only 11 years old. She says her grief remained repressed for many years and the alienation made it difficult to learn and grieve in a manner that was healthy.

"My purpose is to turn my tragedy into someone else's gift. I am here to help the 'me's' of today so they know they are not alone in their grief," Brandt said.

Brandt's passion is to help children who are in the same place that she was: alone, lost, sad, and angry. Armed with her own experiences and a heart full of empathy, Brandt set out to make a difference in the lives of others, one family at a time.

In late 2022, The Pensacola Chapter of Valerie's House received a donation to purchase a permanent location to fuel growth and meet the demand for services in the area. This new space, The Chadbourne Foundation Home, is located in historic East Hill at 904 East Gadsden St., in Pensacola. The house, unlike an office, offers a colorful and inviting, non-clinical environment

"My purpose is to turn my tragedy into someone else's gift. I am here to help the 'me's' of today so they know they are not alone in their grief."





that increases the opportunity for peer relationships to form, fosters a sense of belonging and comforts and normalizes children's grief experiences.

Being with others with a shared experience decreases feelings of isolation and encourages the development of coping skills, social skills and positive life attitudes. The house is a grounding place for families. With a team of dedicated grief support specialists, counselors and volunteers, Valerie's House offers a range of free, ongoing, age-appropriate peer-to-peer support groups to children ages 4 to 18 and provides respite and peace for their caregivers.

All kids need help processing grief. Most people don't realize that grief doesn't always mean sadness, and it can manifest emotionally in other ways. Grief always comes out and with the tools and support to know how to process it, negative consequences can be avoided. Grief may be expressed as anger, loss of concentration, depression, risk-taking behaviors, defiance, worry, guilt, confusion, shock, etc.

Valerie's House also relies on community volunteers and contributions to support their work. Providing dinner for a family night, donations of supplies and financial support are vital to their continued success. Upcoming Salon Dinner gatherings will allow participants to learn more about Valerie's House while enjoying an intimate, upscale event. Email jenni@valerieshouse.org

for information on volunteer opportunities and events or to schedule a tour of Valerie's House.

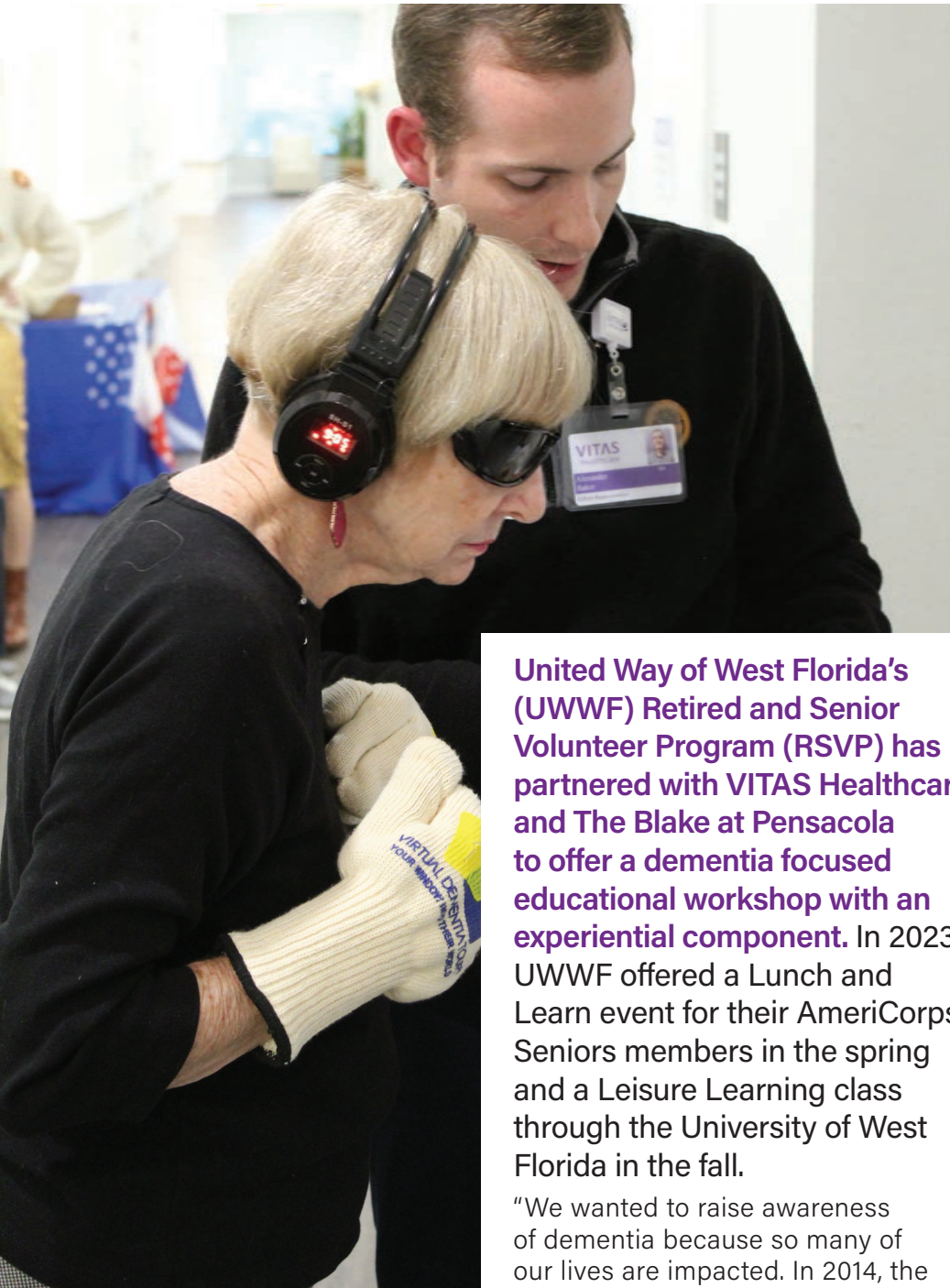
For information on how to receive help or to refer someone who may be struggling, call 850-582-8255 or visit the website at valerieshouse.org/pensacola.

10 Key Points to remember when talking to children and teens about death and dying from the National Alliance for Children's Grief

1. Grief is individual.
2. Use simple, clear age-appropriate language.
3. Children and teens want to be told the truth about the death.
4. Be honest.
5. Take time to prepare for difficult conversations.
6. Accept this is an ongoing conversation.
7. Listen.
8. Model healthy grieving.
9. Allow and validate emotional expression.
10. Grief is long-lasting.

Virtual Dementia Tour: Walk in Their Shoes

by Janet Rice McCoy



United Way of West Florida's (UWWF) Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) has partnered with VITAS Healthcare and The Blake at Pensacola to offer a dementia focused educational workshop with an experiential component. In 2023, UWWF offered a Lunch and Learn event for their AmeriCorps Seniors members in the spring and a Leisure Learning class through the University of West Florida in the fall.

"We wanted to raise awareness of dementia because so many of our lives are impacted. In 2014, the

Center for Disease Control estimated seven million American adults aged 65 and older have dementia. That number is expected to double by 2060," President and CEO of UWWF, Laura Gilliam said.

Dementia is not a normal part of aging, but it is a medical condition that impacts a significant number of people as they grow older. Dementia turns a person's world upside-down.

David Acuff, executive director at The Blake at Pensacola, said "Dementia is not a specific disease. It is the umbrella term used to describe changes in the brain that significantly interfere with daily living. Specific forms of dementia include Alzheimer's disease, vascular dementia, Lewy body dementia, frontotemporal disorder and other diseases impacting brain function."

"Those impacted have diminished ability to focus and pay attention, visually perceive the world, speak cohesively, and solve problems. They may have a hard time managing their emotions and their personality may also change," Acuff explained.

Family members and caregivers are also impacted by many of these changes, as they are unable to understand what is going on inside their loved one's brain. They do, however, experience the outward manifestations of their loved one's or patient's cognitive impairment.

"It is important for family members and caregivers to have a window into the world of dementia. They need to experience the limitations, distractions, and frustrations their

loved ones and patients confront every day," General Manager of VITAS Healthcare Joseph Brooks said.

"To meet this need, several staff members at VITAS Healthcare in the Florida panhandle have been trained as certified facilitators to conduct the Virtual Dementia Tour®. Despite the name, this is a hands-on rather than an online digital experience," Brooks explained.

Based on her research, geriatric specialist P.K. Beville developed The Virtual Dementia Tour® and founded Second Wind Dreams®. This nonprofit agency is dedicated to providing educational programs designed to help caregivers understand the physical and mental challenges of living with dementia.

"We offer the Virtual Dementia Tour® to our team twice a year. This allows staff to experience the physical and cognitive challenges individuals with dementia face daily. The experience fosters understanding, empathy, and compassion—enabling staff to provide enhanced person-centered care," Acuff said.

"For our RSVP members and Leisure Learning students, the executive director at The Blake of Pensacola provided an overview of dementia. Then, certified facilitators from VITAS Healthcare conducted the Virtual Dementia Tour®," Gilliam explained.

"Before the tour starts, participants are garbed with special glasses, gloves, inserts and headphones. These devices simulate the limitations and sensations a person with dementia experiences," VITAS Representative Alex Baker said.

The glasses have limited vision to mimic cataracts and glaucoma. The thick oversized gloves diminish touch and mimic clumsiness from

arthritis. The shoe inserts have sharp bumps making it difficult to walk similar to neuropathy. The headphones play a steady stream of static-like jabbering often described by many with dementia.

"After suiting up in the special gear, a facilitator verbally gives the participant a list of tasks of daily living to complete. Then the participant enters a darkened room with a bed, couch, and table and chairs. A strobe light flashes for added distraction," VITAS Director of Market Development Libby Walther said.

Julie Still-Rolin, Director of Leisure Learning at the University of West Florida, said "Dementia is a lived experience. During the Virtual Dementia Tour®, I was supposed to complete tasks that I easily do every day—clear dishes off the table, open a pill bottle to get medication, put a belt in the loops of a pair of pants. The noise. The light flashes. The darkness. The impaired mobility. It was slow going and seemed impossible at times. I would get frustrated and say to myself, 'Good enough. What's next?' I only had time to attempt three of the five tasks on my to-do list."

"It really was rough. The shoe inserts were the worst. The pain in my feet was such a distraction. It was hard to focus on the tasks that I was supposed to complete. That said, I recommend this experience for everyone. At some point in our lives, each of us will have contact with someone who has dementia. I will be more patient and tolerant because I've had a glimpse into their world. I've walked in their shoes, if only for a few moments," AmeriCorps member Vickie Jacob explained.

VITAS Healthcare periodically partners with community organizations, such as the United Way of West Florida, to offer the Virtual Dementia Tour® to family members, caregivers, and members of the community. Call 850-477-5586 regarding upcoming opportunities.

The Central and North Florida chapter of the Alzheimer's Association occasionally offers an educational event that includes the Virtual Dementia Tour®. Call 850-502-5947 for more information.

More information on an in-home Virtual Dementia Tour® for family members and facilitator training for elder care professionals is available at secondwind.org.





Soup's Up!

Onions, ginger, noodles, garlic, bean sprouts and broth! What do these enticing ingredients have in common? They are all contributors to winter's coziest cuisine—Soup! With the advent of the colder months, it's time to visit your farmer's market for some fresh local vegetables. Without the summer heat, firing up the oven or stovetop for some slow roasting or quick sautéing is the perfect way to enjoy a night in. This holiday season, invite a loved one to help cook, and, more importantly, to enjoy these soups with you. Brought to you by three popular Pensacola chefs, these soup recipes provide a taste of winter on the Gulf Coast. Whether you're hunting for a side dish for your holiday dinner or an easy-but-hearty weeknight meal, we have a recipe for you. Read on, and don't forget your grocery list!

Intro by Sophia Schriever

Fall Harvest Soup

by Jen Knight at End of the Line Café

Ingredients

2 Tablespoons Earth Balance vegan butter	5 cloves garlic, minced
2 cups shiitake mushrooms, trimmed and sliced	1 cup dry lentils, rinsed and picked
2 cups lion's mane mushroom, trimmed and pulled into 1-inch pieces	1/4 cup ginger, grated
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil	2 cup grape tomato, halved
2 carrots, peeled and diced	6 cup vegetable broth
2 medium onions, diced	2 Tablespoons apple cider vinegar
3 stalks celery, diced	1/2 teaspoon turmeric
1 small butternut squash, peeled, seeded, and diced	3/4 teaspoon sea salt, or to taste
	1/4 teaspoon freshly cracked pepper, or to taste
	2 Tablespoons nutritional yeast flakes

Method

1. In a skillet, heat butter over medium heat and sauté shiitake and lion's mane until golden. Set aside. In a large pot, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add carrots, onions, squash and celery, sauté about 7 minutes until onions are translucent.
2. Add shiitake, lion's mane, lentils, tomatoes, ginger, vegetable broth and turmeric. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to low and simmer until lentils are soft and soup has reduced—about 45 minutes. Lastly, add apple cider vinegar, sea salt, pepper and nutritional yeast flakes. Stir until well combined.

Udon Dashi Bowl

by Dot Chap at Khon's on Palafox

Servings: 1
Prep time: 30 min.



Ingredients

Broth

2 Tablespoons dashi (seafood base)
1 Tablespoon soy sauce
1 Tablespoon fish sauce
1 Tablespoon sugar
Pinch of black pepper
2 cups water

Pork Meatballs

1 pound ground pork
2 Tablespoons soy sauce
2 Tablespoons fish sauce
1 Tablespoon garlic, minced
3 Tablespoons green onion, finely sliced

Additional Ingredients

Fresh Shrimp
1 serving fresh or frozen Udon Noodles
Yellow onion, thinly sliced
Green onion, thinly sliced
Bean sprouts
Basil
Cilantro
Toasted garlic
Jalapenos, sliced
Black pepper

Method

1. Combine broth ingredients and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer.
2. While broth simmers, combine pork meatball ingredients and shape into golf ball-sized meatballs.
3. Add desired amount of shrimp and meatballs to broth and cook until both are cooked through. Be careful not to overcook shrimp. Add Udon noodles.
4. Serve in a noodle bowl and garnish with remaining ingredients.

Notes:

You can find dashi in powder form at most of Pensacola's Asian markets.

Famous Vegetarian French Onion Soup

by Lesa Touchette at Elbow Room

Servings: 10-12
Prep time: 45 min.



Ingredients

10-12 slices of Swiss cheese
3 medium yellow onions
1 six-inch Hoagie or bread of choice
10 cups water
3 teaspoons Better Than Bouillon Vegetable Broth
1 teaspoon celery salt
1 teaspoon ground thyme
1 Tablespoon granulated garlic
1 1/2 Tablespoons onion powder
2 bay Leaves
2 ounces Braggs Amino Acid
2 ounces sherry
Ground oregano, to taste
Cracked black pepper, to taste

Method

1. Prep onions: Slice and sauté onions on medium low, covered, until onions are translucent. Uncover and cook on medium high until onions are browned.
2. Prep toast: Slice bread 1/4 inch thick. Spray slices with oil and sprinkle with garlic and oregano. Bake on low until crunchy on both sides.
3. Make broth: Bring water, broth, celery salt, thyme, garlic, onion powder, black pepper, bay leaves, Braggs Amino Acid and sherry to a boil.
4. Assemble in a cup or mug. Place caramelized onions and broth in a bowl or mug, top with toast, and cover with a slice of Swiss cheese. Microwave for 60 seconds or broil in the oven until the cheese is melted. Garnish with sliced green onion.

Notes:

To make it vegan, substitute Daiya Swiss cheese style slices.
To make gluten free or keto, substitute toast with gluten-free or keto bread.



An Exclusive Interview with Rich Little

by Kelly Oden



RICH LITTLE, born Richard Caruthers Little on November 26, 1938 in Ottawa, Canada, is an acclaimed impressionist and comedian whose remarkable career has left an indelible mark on comedy.

Little discovered his knack for impressions at a young age, and he honed his skills by impersonating family members, teachers and local personalities. He got his start, along with high school friend Geoff Scott, performing for local organizations and nightclubs around Ottawa.

Little moved to Toronto in the early 1960s, and his breakthrough moment arrived when he landed a spot on *The Judy Garland Show* in 1964, marking the beginning of a decades-long career in the United States. His uncanny ability to impersonate Hollywood icons and political figures has earned him a reputation as the master of voices.

Throughout the 70s and 80s, Little became a household name with frequent appearances on popular variety shows such as *The Ed Sullivan Show*, *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson* and *The Dean Martin Celebrity Roasts*. His versatility allowed him to embody an impressive array of personalities, from John Wayne to Richard Nixon, earning him accolades and admiration from audiences and his peers alike.

Little is also a consummate live performer, headlining in Las Vegas and touring internationally. His popular one-man shows highlight his extraordinary talent as well as his wit and charm as a performer. In fact, at 85 years old, Little is still performing four nights a week at The Laugh Factory in the famed Tropicana Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas.

Little's career has spanned nearly seven decades, and his comedic talents have earned him the nickname 'The Man of a Thousand Voices.' Little has become a respected figure in the entertainment industry and has earned many accolades, including a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and the prestigious Comedy Star of the Year award from the American Guild of Variety Artists.

Coming of Age had the pleasure of speaking to Rich Little about his life and his remarkable career.

COA: When did you realize that you had a knack for voices?

RL: When I started imitating the teachers in high school. I saw what a great reaction I got from the rest of the class, and I thought I was onto something.

COA: As a teenager, you started an act with your friend Geoff Scott. What were those early acts like?

RL: Geoff was a good friend of mine. We were very close, and we had sort of a double impersonator act. We started performing all over Ottawa, which is the capital of Canada. We did a lot of shows for the Knights of Columbus, the Shriners and various other organizations. We got paid, gosh, sometimes five or ten dollars. That was back in the late 1950s.

COA: When and why did you come to the U.S.?

RL: I came to the U.S. in 1964 to do *The Judy Garland Show*.

COA: What was it like being on a major U.S. television show and working with Judy Garland?

RL: Oh, it was great. But she never came to rehearsal, so her reaction when it was shot live was genuine. I mean, usually the person you're doing the show for would do the routine a few times at rehearsal, but she never came to rehearsal, so her reaction was quite genuine. That's what made my routine quite popular—the fact that she's laughing and having a great time while I'm doing all these voices.

COA: She did seem genuinely tickled and surprised by your performance. Did you keep in touch with her?

RL: Not really. No. After the show was over, that was about it. I saw her a couple more times. I saw her in England shortly before she passed away with Johnnie Ray. They were sitting at a table, but it was too crowded, and I didn't go over. That was the last time I saw her.

COA: You went on to perform on many variety and game shows. You also performed with other famous comedians and actors. One of those comedians was Lucille Ball. When did you work with her and what was that like?

RL: Oh, she was very professional, Lucille Ball. She didn't stand for any nonsense. I was smart enough to know all my lines at rehearsal, which kind of impressed her. I don't think anybody ever did that before. So, that impressed her, and I got off to a great start. As I say, she was friendly and she was very nice, but she didn't stand for any fooling around. If you didn't know your lines or didn't listen to her, she could be a little rough, but I always got along well with her.

COA: You were a popular guest on *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson* and a guest host more than 20 times. One day, that invitation ended for unknown reasons. What was it like to work with Johnny Carson? Did you ever find out why you stopped being booked for the show so abruptly?

RL: Well, I think Johnny Carson was the best talk show host of all time, but as a person, he was very friendly, but you didn't really get to know him. He kept to himself and was not very social. So, the only time I really got to talk to him was during the commercial breaks and we always got along great. Then suddenly, I was no book on the show. I had hosted it





23 times and there never seemed to be any problems, but I just suddenly wasn't booked on the show anymore. When I tried to find out why, I never really got an answer. I guess it was something I must have said, or something somebody might have said to the producer or director that probably wasn't complimentary. I don't know. I never found out what it was. There were a lot of people that were no books on the show for one reason or another. I found out later that they had a list of people that they didn't book anymore. It was kind of a shame because I met him just before he passed away in a restaurant and he was very friendly. He kept saying to me, 'Rich, are you still doing me in your act?' I said, 'Yeah, of course. John!' He said, 'Well, I'm not on television anymore.' I said, 'That doesn't matter. People remember you. They will for years, for heaven's sake.' He said, 'Oh, I don't think so.' I said, 'No, they will. I'm still doing you and it's getting a great reaction.' And isn't it funny, I'm still doing him today, 40 years later.

COA: That's fantastic. It's hard to believe that he thought that people wouldn't remember him.

RL: Well, he just thought because he wasn't on TV that he would be long forgotten, but he's forgetting that there's still people that remember him—older people like me. And then, of course, you can see a lot of his shows if you look him up. Even some young people know who he is. Not many, but a few.

COA: He was an icon, for sure. Tell me a little bit about your Las Vegas show at the Laugh Factory in The Tropicana.

RL: I've been there for seven or eight years now. I was originally just going to go in for a few months, but here we are seven years later, I'm still there. My act is sort of the history of my career. I talk about doing *The Judy Garland Show* and then how I went on to do a lot of other shows. I'm also an artist, so I show a lot of the drawings of celebrities that I impersonate. Every time I do somebody, I'll show a sketch of them on the screen. I also show a lot of clips from some of the television shows. When I do George Burns, I show myself with the real George Burns. There's an awful lot of me performing live and a lot of film clips of the actual person, so it makes an interesting show. When I show some of my art, instead of just showing the picture, we figured out a way that the picture can talk so I can answer myself. I show a picture of say, John Wayne, and then John Wayne asks me a question and I make the mouth move on the drawing. That way, I can have a two-way conversation.

COA: It's cool that you have this sort of multimedia experience and that you've incorporated technology into your show. Not a lot of comics have done that and not a lot of older comics, for sure. How has technology influenced the way put together an act? Does it come naturally to you?

RL: No, nobody has done that before, I don't think. I wanted to have a two-way conversation. Well, you can't do that when you're one person. So, then I thought up the idea because I'd seen pictures of dogs talking. I thought, I bet humans can do it, too, using sketches of people. And that's what I did. That's how I have a two-way conversation with a picture I drew, and it's sort of interesting that I'm doing two things at once.



COA: Do you love a live audience more than making a television show without an audience?

RL: Well, a lot of TV shows were done in front of an audience, but some weren't. The variety shows usually didn't have an audience, although I think Lucile Ball did, but most of them didn't. When they did have a live audience, it really helped a lot. Otherwise, it's just like doing a movie, you know? But I enjoy performing in front of a live audience because every audience is different. Sometimes things that worked one night, don't work the next. Maybe I didn't time that joke right or maybe they didn't hear me properly or they just didn't get it. So, it's a constant challenge when you're up on stage because every audience is different.

COA: Do you interact with your audience in the show?

RL: I do a bit. I ask them questions. I'll ask who they think people are when I show a drawing. When I show a drawing that I did of Richard Nixon and I say to the audience, 'Who do you think this is?' You know what they all yell out? Tricky Dicky. I say, 'No, no, we've never had a president called Tricky Dicky to my knowledge. His real name is Richard Milhouse Nixon.' It's so funny because they all think of him as Tricky Dicky. I wonder if they put that on his tombstone (laughs).

COA: I read that President Nixon didn't recognize himself in your impersonation of him. Is that true?

RL: Yeah, that's true. I did it in front of him one time down in San Clemente. He had no idea what I was doing or who I was imitating. He just sort of stared at me with that blank stare, and he turned to his wife, Pat, and said, 'Why is this young man speaking in this strange voice?' But I thought I did a great impression of him that day because when I left the event, his wife Pat went with me (laughs). Not true.

COA: How do you approach impersonating someone? How do you study and embody that character?

RL: Well, you need to watch them a lot and get sort of inside them and see what makes them tick. It's not just the voice. You've got to look for mannerisms and other things. Some people come quickly, and some don't come at all. It's just a constant struggle to do an impression of somebody new that comes on the scene. Either you get it or you don't. Some people are easy to do, and some people are hard.

COA: Is there someone who stumped you?

RL: Oh, yeah. Many people. How do you imitate Robert Redford, Tom Hanks or Tom Cruise? They are very difficult. I don't think you can do any of those people.

COA: Do you think that people nowadays have less distinctive voices than people used to have?

RL: Yes. That's true. They don't have such distinct voices. You know, back in the 40s and 50s you could imitate a lot of people because they're very distinctive—Humphrey Bogart, Jimmy Stewart, John Wayne. They had distinctive voices. They weren't always easy to do, but they were better than imitating some of the people today, like Matt Damon or George Clooney. The older stars were easier to do. They were larger than life and they were always the same in movies. Whereas today, a lot of actors play different parts, so it's hard to identify them in one movie. I mean, Humphrey Bogart was always Humphrey Bogart no matter who he played. That's easier to do than somebody modern like Brad Pitt. Brad Pitt would be very hard to do. Even Angelina Jolie doesn't do him anymore (laughs).

COA: That's hysterical. Thank you for that. Have you ever had celebrities give you negative feedback or be mad about how you impersonated them or what you said while you were impersonating them?

RL: Paul Lynde from *Hollywood Squares* hated my impression. When I did him on *Hollywood Squares* or on *The Tonight Show*, he would just look into the camera lens and say, 'Who is he doing? Who is that? Get a day job.' He hated it.

COA: Do you try to balance the humor with respecting the boundaries of the people that you impersonate?

RL: Yes, but I pretty much do them the way they are. I'm not blue or anything like that. You know, a lot of the comics today are quite blue. They use the "F" word and everything and I wouldn't do that. But sometimes I get a little sexual because there's a double meaning and they can take anything they want out of the joke, but I really haven't said anything blue. It's all double entendre really.

COA: How about the presidents? Did any of them particularly love or particularly dislike your impersonation of them?

RL: Well, Reagan loved it. Reagan loved my impression of him. He was the greatest audience you could ever dream

of. He had such great concentration on you when you were telling him a joke or imitating him. He was just glued to you. I realized later that the reason he did that was that he couldn't hear. He was reading your lips. Sometimes when I performed in front of Reagan, Nancy would have to kind of whisper to him what I was saying because he couldn't hear too well. When he made all those western movies, I think the blanks probably ruined his hearing. The same with Jimmy Stewart. He couldn't hear very well. It's terrible when you can't hear. They think you've gone senile, but you really just can't hear.

COA: We talked a little bit about how celebrity voices have changed. What about audiences? Have you seen a change in the dynamic between comedians and their audiences over your decades of working?

RL: No, not really. Audiences are pretty much the same, but for me, the older people are good audiences. They've been around a long time. I've performed at The Villages in Florida and that's great because those people know everybody I'm doing. Interesting enough, when you get older audiences like that, they like it a little blue, you know? They're really my people. When I perform at the Tropicana, the audience is mostly older people. I hardly get any younger people, but I had a kid at the show who was 15 years old the other day and he was laughing his head off. I couldn't figure out why because I thought he probably doesn't know anybody I'm doing. When the show was over, I beckoned him over and I said, 'My God, you seemed to enjoy my act.' He said, 'Mr. Little, you're funny. You are great, but I was confused.' I said, 'What were you confused about?' He said, 'I just wondered when you were performing why you kept changing your voice.' Then sometimes younger people will come up and say, 'I love your show, and especially when you did the drunk.' I said, 'Drunk? What drunk? I didn't do a drunk.' Then I realized they're probably thinking about Dean Martin. They don't know who he is, but they think of him as a drunk, because that's the way I kind of portray him. But Dean wasn't that much of a drinker in real life. I think in the Rat Pack, he was the one who drank the least. I think Sammy and Frank drank much more than Dean did.

COA: How was the experience of doing *The Dean Martin Celebrity Roast*?

RL: It was great. It's a lot of pressure because you're performing with some of the greats. I tried to forget about that and just concentrate on what I was doing. But it was great fun to do those roasts. They wanted me to do a lot of them. If there were three or four people that I could imitate, then I was on the roast. So that's why I did 24 roasts because of the people that I imitated on the dais.

COA: I know that in addition to your comedic talents, you're involved in a handful of charitable endeavors. You recently re-released your memoir, *Little by Little: People I've Known and Been* to benefit the Gary Sinise Foundation. Tell me why you wanted to re-release your book and why this charity is close to your heart.

RL: Well, there's nobody I admire more than the troops. They put their life on the line in terrible situations. I was never in service myself, but I can imagine what they went through. I'm sure it was much worse than even the movies we see. To be in combat—I can't imagine. So, I have great admiration for all those people in the armed forces. Gary Sinise came along, and I knew that about 90 percent of the money that would be raised would go to the organization's mission. They don't take too much off the top.

COA: What advice would you offer to young comedians or impressionists who are trying to get into the entertainment industry today?

RL: You've got to get a good manager. You have to get somebody who believes in you and can work for you and push you. It's hard to do it yourself. It's tough to get a good manager or an agent because you never know whether they are really interested in you or just in making money. So, you've got to get somebody that you can trust. And sometimes it doesn't work out that way. You find out they've been stealing from you for years. So, you need to get someone that you really have trust in and has clout and can get you on the right things.





COA: Beyond your own act, I understand that you took over Peter Sellers' role in the *Pink Panther* because he was very sick and couldn't speak. How was that different from doing a comedic impression?

RL: Well, you have to do a very accurate impersonation of whoever you're doing because if they've passed on or lost their voice and you come along and do it for them, you've got to do it exactly the way they are. I dubbed for Peter Sellers, David Niven, Ernest Borgnine, Tony Curtis and Gene Kelly. I've done their voices over the years, and I don't think the public knew. I was able to do it accurately. The only one I struggled to do was Stacy Keach, who was doing Mike Hammer. He was in the slammer and England, and I got to do a few of his television shows. I don't think it was very good. But anyway, I've done that over the years.

COA: Is there anything on the horizon for you that people should look out for? Any tours or anything beyond your show at the Tropicana?

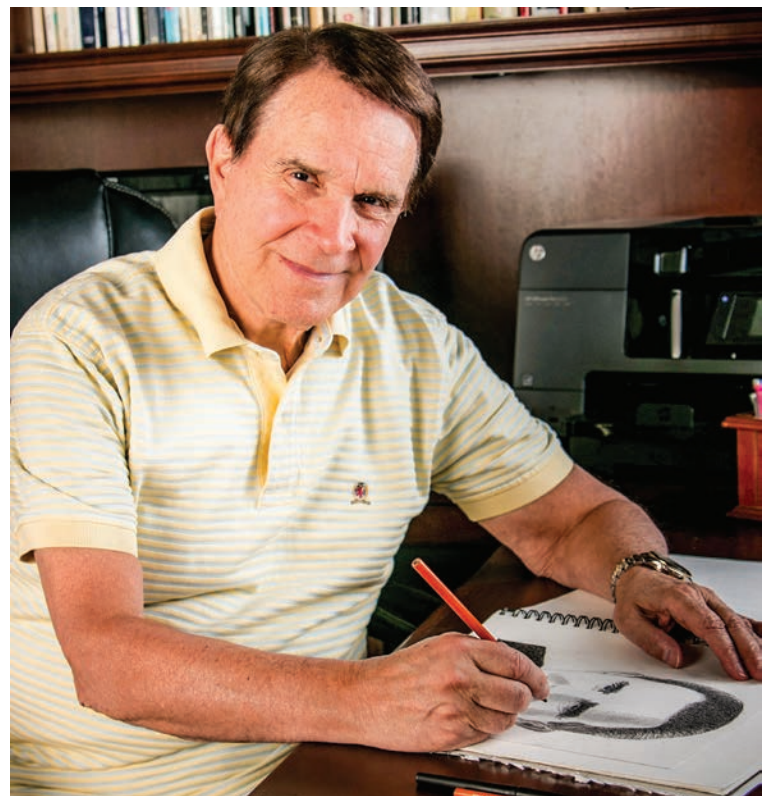
RL: I don't do many shows on the road anymore, and I don't do any television. The only network TV show that I do is *Mike Huckabee*. Nobody wants me for any other TV show. They think either I'm too old or I'm passé or I'm not up to date. But I've done *Mike Huckabee* about six or seven times, and I always have a great time. I have a great relationship with him. I think he's coming to my show next Monday.

COA: That is interesting. We are a magazine for seniors, and you are still working, still performing and still very sharp of mind at 85. Do you have any secrets for maintaining your mental and physical health as you age?

RL: Well, I work out every day and performing all the time keeps my mind active.

COA: That's great. Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me today. I'm a fan of your Humphrey Bogart impression because I used to watch a lot of Bogart movies with my father. Any chance you can say goodbye as Bogie?

RL: (As Humphrey Bogart) That's great that you like Humphrey Bogart because Bogie likes you, too. Here's looking at you, kid.



Call for Submissions!



We are in search of the next Pensacola bride, groom or couple to grace the cover of *Pensacola Magazine Weddings 2024*

If you have recently been married in or around the Pensacola area and have an interest in appearing on the cover of the annual Weddings issue of *Pensacola Magazine*, visit ballingerpublishing.com/weddings2024 and submit up to **three** high-resolution images of your wedding for a chance to be featured on the next cover!

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Editorial-style shots by a professional photographer are preferred. Please include the full name(s) of the bride, groom and photographer. Visit ballingerpublishing.com/weddings2024 for submission guidelines and complete details.

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What's The News?



Kites on the Coast Returns March 2024

March 15-17, 2024

The third annual Kites on the Coast will return to Pensacola Casino Beach the weekend of March 15-17, 2024, with high-flying, intergenerational fun centered on the classic pastime of kite flying. The weekend will include two professional kite teams including massive show kites and speedy stunt kites along with food trucks, kid's activities, vendors and more. After sunset the kites will still be flying for a lighted night fly. Kites on the Coast is a free community event with sponsorships and donations benefiting Council on Aging of West Florida. For more information visit KitesontheCoast.org or find us on Facebook. If you are interested in sponsorship or participation, please contact Farrah Hale at 850.266.2513.

Granny Get-Down

Council on Aging's Senior Volunteer Program's annual fundraiser cook-off competition Granny Get-Down is back March 9, 2024, at the Bayview Senior Center. For this appetizing event, Senior Volunteers go head-to-head in a cooking and baking competition, offering tasting portions of an array of specialties for the public to sample. Judges will crown the Senior Companion or Foster Grandparent volunteer with the best cooked and baked goods. Tickets are \$10 and can be purchased by calling our office at 850.432.1475.

Proceeds from the event benefit two senior volunteer programs: Senior Companions and Foster Grandparents. Senior Companions volunteer helping another older adult continue to live independently at home, and Foster Grandparents serve in schools mentoring children in the classroom.



Foster Grandparents Program Receives International Paper Grant

The Foster Grandparent Program was awarded an Environmental Grant from International Paper for \$2,400. This grant supports our Educational Insights See-Through Compost Container as a hands-on STEM project to teach students how to create their own responsible source of energy.

Giving Tuesday Raises Funds for Meals on Wheels

The 2023 Giving Tuesday campaign supported Meals on Wheels, our nutritious meal delivery services for homebound seniors. Meals on Wheels is a lifeline for those who rely on weekly deliveries to provide not only nutrition, but a friendly visit from a volunteer delivery driver. This year's campaign raised \$3,300 for this vital community program. Thank you to all our donors and supporters!

Thank You.

Many thanks to our donors. We appreciate your generous support. Gifts received from September 2023 – December 2023

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Willie Harlow
Windermere Memory Care

Council on Aging of West Florida is a local independent 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that has served seniors and their families since 1972. Council on Aging of West Florida helps seniors in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties live healthy, safe and independent lives in their own familiar surroundings by providing community-based, in-home programs and services such as Meals on Wheels and Alzheimer's respite care. For more information, call 850-432-1475 or visit www.coawfla.org.

A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the division of consumer services by calling 1-800-435-7532 toll free within the state. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval or recommendation by the state. The registration number assigned to Council on Aging of West Florida, inc by the florida department of agricultural and consumer services is ch201. Council on aging of West Florida does not use a professional solicitor or professional fund raising consultant for the purposes of soliciting funds. 100% of donations go to Council on Aging of West Florida, Inc.



We Thank You

What an exciting year it has been! In September 2023, we opened the doors of the new Baptist Hospital, Bear Family Foundation Health Center and Behavioral Health Unit on our campus at the corner of Brent Lane and I-110.

Three years ago, the Baptist Health Care Foundation embarked upon the largest capital campaign effort in our organization's history. Just as our founders did more than 70 years ago, we came to the community with a vision of transforming health care for our community for generations to come. Just as the community responded then, so, too, did you.

We are thrilled to share that, because of the generosity and collective power of philanthropy in our community, we received \$16.036 million in gifts to our ***Transforming Baptist for the Future*** campaign.

To our patients, team members, physicians, providers, boards of directors, volunteers, donors, community members, partners — our new campus has become a reality today because of you. Thank you for believing in Baptist as we continue to transform health care for our community for generations to come.

