



IN THIS ISSUE "Lives Well Lived," Seniors Top Charts in 2023, the Aging Farmer, Strawberries vs. Dementia, Caregivers of Veterans

# The Good Life

News, Health & Leisure for South Valley Adults 50+ • Volume X, Number 5 • January/February 2024



## Senior Suicides on the Increase

By Steve Pastis

While the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics reported that the number of suicides of people 10-24 years old went down by more than 8% between 2021 and 2022, the numbers were far less encouraging for seniors during those years. Suicides increased by 6.6% for those 45-64, and 8.1% for those 65 and older.

The increase was seen both nationally and locally.

"There was a sharp increase among those 55 and older," said Noah Whitaker, who served as the director of Tulare County's Suicide Prevention Task Force for ten years. "There were eight deaths in the county in 2021; 18 in 2022."

### Why?

There are several main reasons older people are at a greater risk of suicide.

"Often times, there may be a dozen or more risk factors ongoing over many years, and now they're facing the death of a spouse or a new diagnosis of dementia or worsening pain," psychiatrist Christine Moutier, M.D., chief medical officer at the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, said in a recent interview. "Any one of those can be a piling up of risk factors,"

Loneliness and lack of personal autonomy are other factors. Retirement usually means a breakdown in connections, leading to increased loneliness. Also, seniors often perceive

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## Heart of Seniors Event Set for Feb. 15

The Heart of Seniors Expo & Fashion Show, hosted by the Senior Coalition, will be held on Thursday, February 15, at the Visalia Wyndham Hotel, 9000 W. Airport Dr., Visalia.

The event will include a vital resource fair with vendors, a fashion show - featuring senior models escorted by American Ambulance team members - and a luncheon.

The resource fair opens at 9 a.m., with the program beginning at 10:30 a.m. Tickets are \$10 per person, and include lunch. Early registration is recommended as seating is limited and the event is again expected to sell out.

"Now that we are over a year out of COVID, it's good to get together again," said Stefani Salierno, event chair and Senior Coalition president.

The program, which will include a showcase of the latest in fashion for the mature woman, will feature keynote speaker Cynthia B. Johnson, professor of communication



The 2023 Heart of Seniors, the first since 2019, sold out completely.

and psychology at COS, as well as division chair of language and communication studies.

Her presentation will be "Strengthening the Mind," which will focus on the cognitive approach of how to facilitate more internal power.

"Valentine's Day just would not be the same without the Heart of Seniors event," said Staci Correia, treasurer of the event. "It has become a tradition for all of us. The fact that we can bring all of these

community services together under one roof and share how they can help our local seniors is just amazing, and to hear first hand from our seniors how much they enjoy coming every year is worth all the time and effort."

To purchase tickets for the luncheon or for more information about the event, including sponsorship opportunities, call (559) 300-9101 or (559) 624-9579, or visit <http://heartofseniors.com>.

## First Post-Pandemic Senior Games Held

The 2023 Visalia Senior Games, the first since the pandemic, were held over the weekend of November 4-5. This year's games featured competitions in pickleball and table tennis.

"It was great to be back in action after not hosting the Visalia Senior Games since 2019," said Holly Ellis, recreation supervisor for the City of Visalia Parks and Recreation Department.

"We experienced lower participation numbers than previous years, which can be attributed to the time of year, and to various other tournaments and events that occurred in the surrounding communities," she said, noting that pickleball, disc golf and archery competitions were happening at about the same time.

When registration closed on October 20, the planned competitions in archery and disc golf were cancelled due



The pickleball champs of the 2023 Visalia Senior Games.

to low registration numbers, according to Eric Ferreira, recreation coordinator for the City of Visalia Parks & Recreation Department.

Registration was "less than anticipated but we did somewhat anticipate having fewer people," he said. "All over California, we're seeing a decrease in participation since the pandemic, even for the (larger senior games)."

Even so, the South Valley tradition will continue.

"We plan on hosting the Visalia Senior Games again in 2024, bringing it back to the original games season - spring," said Ellis.

For news, updates and information about how to participate in the next Visalia Senior Games, visit [www.liveandplayvisalia.com](http://www.liveandplayvisalia.com) or follow @VisaliaParks.



## Caregivers of Veterans Spend More than Other Caregivers

Family and others who provide care for veterans spend on average \$11,500 of their personal income on out-of-pocket costs related to caregiving each year – 1.5 times higher than what other family caregivers spend (\$7,242), according to AARP data.

And 43% of veteran and military caregivers experienced at least one financial setback such as having to take on more debt or dip into personal savings, according to research from AARP and the National Alliance for Caregiving.

Across the country, more than 6.5 million veteran and military caregivers provide \$14 billion in unpaid labor for America's wounded warriors every year – putting their own financial well-being at risk.

"The financial challenges veteran and military caregivers face are too often invisible or ig-

nored," said Pete Jeffries, national director of AARP's Veterans & Military Families Initiative. "Caregiving responsibilities and expenses add up over time. From high prescription drug costs to handling medical tasks for combat-related injuries, these caregivers need support to make it easier for loved ones to live independently in their homes for as long as they can."

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers support and resources for caregivers of veterans enrolled in VA health care through the VA Caregiver Support Program. This program provides caregivers with access to VA health care benefits, caregiver education, financial aid, mental health services and up to 30 days of respite care.

But only 34% of veterans have used their earned benefits at VA health care, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

### VETERANS CORNER

## The Four Basic Types of Claims

The four basic categories that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) uses to identify the types of claims submitted are as follows: Original, Reopened, New and Secondary claims.

An Original claim is the first claim you file for disability compensation from the VA and can be submitted at any time after your discharge from the military. This claim for benefits may be filed by a servicemember (active duty), veteran or the survivors of deceased veterans. By law, when this claim is filed, it must be on the official form designated by the VA.

The Reopened claim for benefits is a claim that was filed as an original, but for some reason it was not granted a service connection by the VA, and that decision has become final. This means that you received your decision from the VA, and more than a year has elapsed since you were notified of that decision – and during the one-year period you did not appeal the decision.

The VA cannot reopen these claims unless the veteran submits new and relevant evidence. "New evidence" means evidence that the VA has never seen or considered in connection to the specific benefit being claimed. "Relevant evidence" is evidence that is relevant to and has direct bearing on the issue to be decided. For the VA to be able to reopen a claim, both the new and relevant aspects must be met.

A New claim is for benefits that may or may not have been submitted in the past. A new claim differs from a reopened claim because the decision on the claim is totally independent of any previously submitted claim. Usually, these claims are decided entirely on new evidence and may include claims for:

- an increased disability evaluation.
- a claim for special monthly compensation.
- a claim for individual unemployability (a veteran is unable to work because of disabilities; requires a certain combined rating amount).

A Secondary claim is a claim for disabilities that have developed as a result of or have been worsened by another service-connected condition. In such cases, it is recognized that an original service-connected disability may cause a second disability. The second disability may not otherwise be considered service-connected.

An example of this type of disability would be as follows:

A veteran has a service-connected disability for a knee injury that causes her or him to walk with a limp. Through time, the veteran subsequently develops arthritis in the hip. Although this arthritic condition was not incurred or aggravated by service, the VA may establish service connection if the arthritis is deemed a result of the knee condition.

*Ken Cruickshank, the Veterans Services Officer for Tulare County, is a retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer. Contact him at the Veterans Services Office at 3348 W. Mineral King Ave., Visalia; by phone at (559) 713-2880; or by email at kcruciks@tularecounty.ca.gov.*



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# Study Finds Way to Predict Which Organs Will Fail First

By Bruce Goldman  
Stanford University

Like any typical car or house or society, the pace at which parts of our bodies fall apart varies from part to part.

A study of 5,678 people, led by Stanford Medicine investigators, has shown that our organs age at different rates – and when an organ’s age is especially advanced in comparison with its counterpart in other people of the same age, the person carrying it is at heightened risk both for diseases associated with that organ and for dying.

According to the study, about one in every five reasonably healthy adults 50 or older is walking around with at least one organ aging at a strongly accelerated rate.

The silver lining: It may be possible that a simple blood test can tell which, if any, organs in a person’s body are aging rapidly, guiding therapeutic interventions well before clinical symptoms manifest.

“We can estimate the biological age of an organ in an apparently healthy person,” said the study’s senior author, Tony Wyss-Coray, Ph.D., a professor of neurology and D. H. Chen Professor II. “That, in turn, predicts a person’s risk for disease related to that organ.”

Hamilton Oh and Jarod Rut-

ledge, graduate students in Wyss-Coray’s lab, are lead authors of the study, which was published online December 6 in *Nature*.

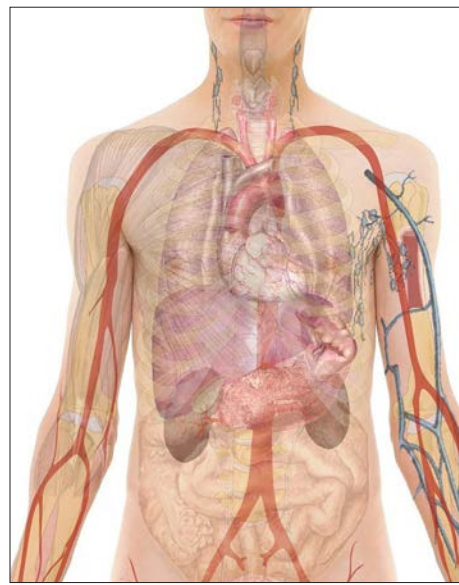
## Biological vs Chronological Age

“Numerous studies have come up with single numbers representing individuals’ biological age – the age implied by a sophisticated array of biomarkers – as opposed to their chronological age, the actual number of years that have passed since their birth,” said Wyss-Coray, who is also the director of the Phil and Penny Knight Initiative for Brain Resilience.

The new study went a step further, coming up with distinct numbers for each of 11 key organs, organ systems or tissues: heart, fat, lung, immune system, kidney, liver, muscle, pancreas, brain, vasculature and intestine.

“When we compared each of these organs’ biological age for each individual with its counterparts among a large group of people without obvious severe diseases, we found that 18.4% of those age 50 or older had at least one organ aging significantly more rapidly than the average,” Wyss-Coray said. “And we found that these individuals are at heightened risk for disease in that particular organ in the next 15 years.”

Only about one in 60 peo-



ple in the study had two organs undergoing aging at that fast clip. But, Wyss-Coray said, “They had 6.5 times the mortality risk of somebody without any pronouncedly aged organ.”

Using commercially available technologies and an algorithm of their own design, the researchers assessed the levels of thousands of proteins in people’s blood, determined that nearly 1,000 of those proteins originated within one or another single organ, and tied aberrant levels of those proteins to corresponding organs’ accelerated aging and susceptibility to disease and mortality.

They started by checking the levels of nearly 5,000 proteins in the blood of just under 1,400 healthy people ages 20 to 90 but mostly in mid-to-late

stages of life, and flagging all proteins whose genes were four times more highly activated in one organ compared with any other organ. They found nearly 900 such organ-specific proteins, which they whittled down to 858 for purposes of reliability.

To do this, they trained a machine-learning algorithm to guess people’s age based on the levels of those nearly 5,000 proteins. The algorithm tries to pick proteins that best correlate with a trait of interest (in this case, accelerated biological aging in a person or in a particular organ) by asking, one by one, “Does this protein enhance the correlation?”

The scientists verified the algorithm’s accuracy by assessing the ages of another 4,000 or so people who were somewhat representative of the U.S. population.

Then they used the proteins they identified to zero in on each of the 11 organs they selected for analysis, measuring levels of organ-specific proteins within each individual’s blood.

While there was some modest aging synchrony among separate organs within any person’s body, that person’s individual organs largely went their separate ways along the aging path.

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# SHIP/HICAP – A Place and Guide for Medicare

By Dori Silveria

Nearing age 65 and not sure when to enroll in Medicare? Have you ever received a bill from Medicare and weren't sure which course to take?

You are not alone.

Between now and 2030, an average of 10,000 U.S. Baby Boomers will turn 65 every day. Navigating the multifarious options of Medicare health insurance, including billing, is part of that transition.

SHIP/HICAP, the Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program, a federal and state-sponsored, volunteer-supported program, provides free and unbiased assistance to people who need their questions about Medicare answered.

The California Department of Aging (CDA) provides oversight of the program through contracts with the local Kings/Tulare Area Agency on Aging (K/T AAA).

For more than 40 years, a team of staff members at the Kings/Tulare HICAP provide information, and often relief, to Medicare consumers on what is often referred to as the "Medicare maze."

Destiney Hernandez, Social Worker II with HICAP, is one of those team members. During a recent counseling session with Abel Garcia, Medicare recipient and HICAP client, insurance coverage variables such as benefit coverage, billing, consumer rights, as well as coordination of Part B and Part D, were all a challenge to understand.

"I have veteran's benefits, as I am a Purple Heart recipient, so I have no issues with prescriptions, but my wife's prescription needs were high-costing," said Garcia.

Not knowing where to go, a family friend recommended he go to HICAP. And that's what he did.

"Abel lost his wife, so when he came for services, he was dealing with not only his loss but living with a disabled adult



Destiney Hernandez, HICAP Social Worker II, with Abel Garcia, HICAP client

child, his grandchild, and the continuous incoming bills for Part B services his wife had received before her passing," said Hernandez.

Gradually breaking down each step, Hernandez and Garcia worked together by "reviewing bills to ensure proper payments were made by Medicare, providers were charging appropriately, previous Medicare supplements had processed payments, and applying for several financial assistance programs through the providers."

"HICAP assisted Abel in saving \$6,583.62," said Hernandez.

Medicare eligibility and enrollment are basic for most people. You must be 65 years of age or older. If you are younger than 65, you may qualify for Medicare if you have End-Stage Renal Diseases (ESRD) or have been awarded Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).

Enrollment also requires

U.S. citizenship or permanent residence, and having 40 working credits on file with the Social Security Administration (SSA). Once acquired, SSA auto-enrolls people into Medicare who already receive Social Security payments.

Most people will receive their Medicare card three months before their 65th birthday. If you're not getting Social Security payments, you have a seven-month window in which to enroll through the Social Security office or apply online.

There are two main approaches from which you must decide when enrolling in Medicare coverage: Original Medicare (Parts A/B/D) or a Medicare Advantage plan (Parts C/D). Retiree or employer coverage also factors into how Medicare coverage works.

Through Medicare Savings Programs, Medicare also provides "Extra Help," including Medi-Cal, to lower costs of Part A, Part B, and Part D. HICAP can

assist with applications. HICAP goes a long way toward simplifying the Medicare expedition.

Garcia described the help Hernandez provided as, "Excellent! All the staff are friendly. The program helped me gain confidence when it came to understanding my bills and the process to pay. I felt less stressed as I saw the medical bills decrease or go away. I was able to afford my regular bills, such as house and utilities, without worrying about going into collections for overdue bills."

Although HICAP doesn't pay medical bills, counselors assist with reviewing Medicare statements and organizing bills received from providers. When necessary, HICAP counselors advocate for Medicare beneficiaries by requesting providers rebill Medicare.

### Volunteers Needed

If you already have Medicare and are looking for ways to help others understand it, consider becoming a volunteer.

SHIP/HICAP needs volunteers in four areas:

**Community Educators** speak to groups, companies, civic, tribal, faith-based, employer and retiree organizations.

**Counselors** provide one-on-one assistance to beneficiaries and their families or representatives.

**Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) Liaisons** educate and inform on how to protect, detect and report suspected Medicare fraud.

**Special Projects Workers** answer phones and assist with outreach events.

If you are interested in learning more or want to volunteer, call the local SHIP/HICAP office at (559) 713-2875 or 1-800-434-0222 for an appointment.

If you have already decided to volunteer and need more information, visit the K/T AAA at [www.ktaaa.org](http://www.ktaaa.org) or call Blanca Alvarez, volunteer coordinator, at (559) 713-2874.

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# American Farmers are Aging, According to USDA Census

Today, you are more likely to meet a farmer over the age of 65 than under the age of 44. Most farmers have been in the industry for more than a decade, and over 60% of them work another job in addition to farming.

Farmers are the oldest workforce in the country. According to the last USDA Census of Agriculture, the median age of a farmer is 57.5 years. This is more than two years older than any other job.

For generations, farming was considered a family calling, but today one-third of farmers and ranchers are over 65, and their children are less likely to continue the tradition.

From growing food and medicine to raw material for clothing and textiles, farming is vital. Today two million farms are spread across rural America, a loss of 200,000 since 2007. Similarly, farmland has been declining.

Since 2002, the United States lost more than 40 million acres of farmland, fertile ground that has been repurposed for commercial buildings, housing and other purposes. In addition, a relatively new phenomenon is taking the farming industry by storm: foreign adversaries strategically targeting the nation's fertile farm ground.

Family farmers are left struggling



Farmers are the oldest workforce in the country.

just to survive as they face this along with everyday economic stressors and ever-growing industry overregulation. These factors drive the next generation away from farming entirely.

The aging of farmers on top of regulatory, economic and foreign pressures puts the future of the nation and world's food supply in peril. It is estimated that the global population will increase by over two billion by 2050, meaning farmers will need to produce 70% more food to meet demand.

In 2021, America's farms contributed \$164.7 billion to gross domestic product. Farms

directly employ 2.6 million people and open the door to nearly 10 times this number of jobs in other agricultural and food-related sectors.

Demand for agricultural products and farmers is expected to grow over the next decade. It is estimated that there will be 85,600 openings for farmers, ranchers and other agricultural managers by 2031.

Despite this demand, operators of small farms are expected to continue to exit the sector and the next generation is not filling the gap. Among the many factors contributing to this are reduced earning potential due to inflation and in-

creased input costs, access to healthcare, a lack of pathways into the sector, and punitive laws that make transferring the family farm to the next generation difficult.

Most farms operate akin to small businesses and are often family enterprises. The demands of tending the land, marketing and selling a crop, purchasing inputs for the next season, and maintaining equipment require time and skill that typically result in at least two members of the family needing to be on the farm full-time during the planting and harvesting seasons.

While the median annual wage for farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural managers is estimated to be \$75,760, incomes vary each year due to fluctuations in product prices and input costs.

Also, historic inflation has ravaged the economy. Farmers and ranchers have felt this through soaring input costs: seed costs, labor, insurance, taxes, land values, cash rents, fertilizer, fuel, chemical, animal feed, machinery and interest expenses.

*This article was excerpted from a report by the U.S. Senate Committee on Aging, without the political comments. To read the full report, visit <https://shorturl.at/himt5>*



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# AI-Generated Women Scam Men Searching for Love

Artificial intelligence (AI) is being used to deceive and scam individuals on various platforms, including texts, social media and dating apps.

Victims have reported losing thousands of dollars to individuals they believed were real women, only to discover that they were interacting with so-

phisticated AI programs. These scammers not only stole their money but also manipulated their emotions.

Security experts have ana-

lyzed videos and photos shared by victims and identified several signs of manipulation. The videos often feature heavily filtered faces with unnatural eyes and a chin that blends into the neck. Additionally, the experts noticed generated faces on bodies and different shaped hands in the pictures. The words written on signs, claiming love or affection, were likely computer-generated. Experts also advise people to look for other indicators, such as uneven tooth shapes or unusual-looking earrings.

The scammers use AI to generate messages that move the relationship too quickly, often expressing love or asking personal questions to gauge their victims' financial situation. This information is then used to calculate how much money they can potentially extract from their targets. Dating experts suggest meeting in a safe, public place soon after connecting online to verify the authenticity of the person.

Victims who fell for the scams shared their experiences, expressing regret for trusting strangers with their finances. One victim, Jim, lost \$60,000 after being convinced to invest in the stock exchange by someone he met online. Another victim, also named Jim, sent thousands of dollars in gift cards to individuals he believed were interested in him romantically. Both men now caution others against trusting strangers with their money, regardless of how convincing the stories or pictures may be.

Unfortunately, the prevalence of romance scams, with or without AI involvement, has increased. According to the Federal Trade Commission, \$1.3 billion was lost in such scams in 2022. It is crucial for individuals to remain vigilant, verify the authenticity of their online connections, and avoid disclosing personal and financial information to unknown individuals.

## New Scam Targets Church Members

A new scam is targeting church members in California. Texts and emails are being sent to parishioners from someone pretending to be the church minister.

These texts and emails ask church members to donate money, most often in the form of gift cards.

If you receive an email text requesting a contribution, you are advised to contact the office of your church for verification before sending any money.

**The deadline for the March/April 2024 issue is Thursday, February 15th**

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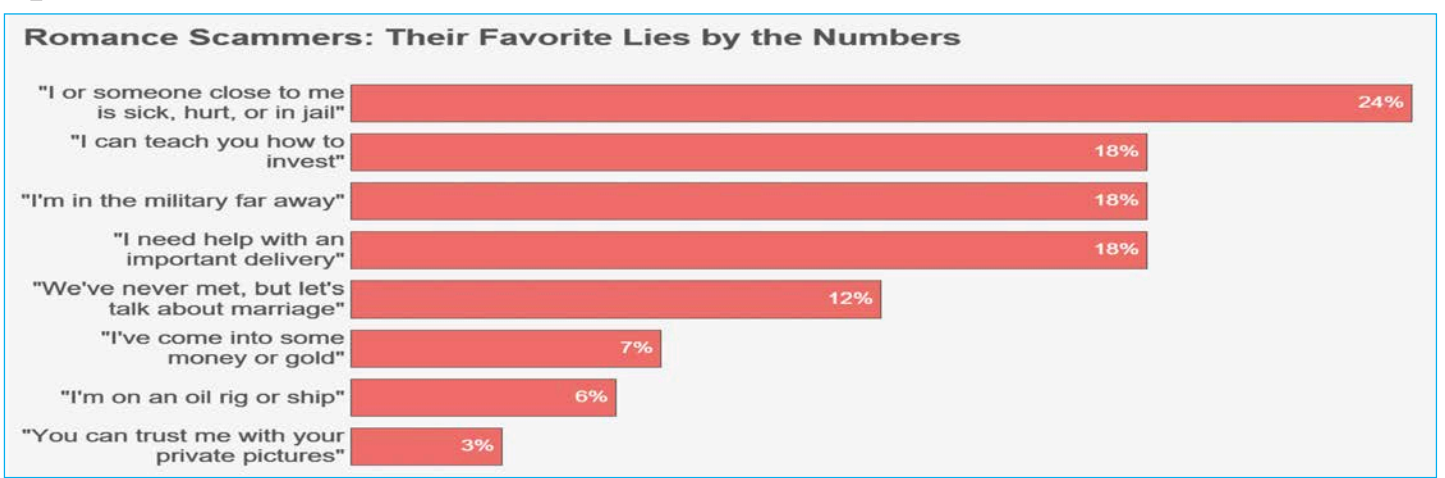
# FTC Report Exposes Romance Scammers' Favorite Lies

Romance scammers tell all sorts of lies to steal your heart and money, and reports to the FTC show those lies are working. In 2022, nearly 70,000 people reported a romance scam, and reported losses hit a staggering \$1.3 billion. The median reported loss was \$4,400.

These scammers pay close attention to the information you share, and don't miss a beat becoming your perfect match. You like something, so that's their thing too. You're looking to settle down. They're ready too.

But there is one exception - you want to meet in real life, and they can't. Reports show their excuse is often baked right into their fake identity. Claiming to be on a faraway military base is the most popular excuse, but "offshore oil rig worker" is another common (and fake) occupation. In short, there's no end to the lies romance scammers will tell to get your money.

Reports show romance scammers often use dating apps to target people looking for love. But reports of romance scams that start with unexpected private messages on social media platforms are even more common. In fact, 40% of people who said they lost money to a romance scam last year said the contact started on social media; 19% said it started on a website or app. Many people



reported that the scammer then quickly moved the sweet talk to WhatsApp, Google Chat or Telegram.

You may have heard about romance scammers who tell you they're sick, hurt, or in jail - or give you another fake reason to send them money. But did you know that many romance scammers operate by offering to do you a favor? They may claim to be a successful cryptocurrency investor who'll teach you how it's done. But any money you "invest" goes straight into their wallet. In another twist, they might say they've shipped you a valuable package (not true), which requires you to send money for "customs" or some other made-up fee.

Reports also show that scammers who convince you to share explicit photos will then threaten to share them with your social media contacts. It's called sex-

tortion, and these reports have increased more than eightfold since 2019. People aged 18-29 were over six times as likely to report sextortion than people 30 and over. About 58% of 2022 sextortion reports identified social media as the contact method, with Instagram and Snapchat topping the list.

The way romance scammers take your money is another important piece of the story. People reported sending more money to romance scammers using cryptocurrency and bank wires than any other method; together, they accounted for more than 60% of reported losses to romance scams in 2022.

While not the costliest payment method, gift cards were the most frequently reported - 24% of people who reported losing money to a romance scam in 2022 said it was taken using gift cards.

So how can you spot a romance scammer in the act?

- Nobody legit will ever ask you to help - or insist that you invest - by sending cryptocurrency, giving the numbers on a gift card, or by wiring money. Anyone who does is a scammer.
- If someone tells you to send money to receive a package, you can bet it's a scam.
- Talk to friends or family about a new love interest and pay attention if they're concerned.
- Try a reverse image search of profile pictures. If the details don't match up, it's a scam.

Help stop scammers by reporting suspicious profiles or messages to the dating app or social media platform. Then, tell the FTC at ReportFraud.ftc.gov. If someone is trying to extort you, report it to the FBI. Learn more at [ftc.gov/romancescams](https://ftc.gov/romancescams).



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# Senior Community Satisfaction Stabilizes with Increased Staffing

According to the J.D. Power 2023 U.S. Senior Living Satisfaction Study released in November, senior living communities have managed to maintain steady levels of resident and family member satisfaction despite steadily rising costs, which as of the third quarter of 2023 have increased 5.4% on an annual basis industry-wide.

“Coming out of the pandemic, the major challenge for senior living providers was staffing,” said Andrea Stokes, hospitality and senior living practice lead at J.D. Power.

“The good news is that we’re no longer seeing declines in resident satisfaction linked directly to staff reductions or facilities management. However, the new challenge is residents’ perception of value for money paid for independent living. Rents continue to rise considerably, and lower ratings provided for prices paid for services received are creating a drag on resident satisfaction.”

### Key Findings of the Study

- Staffing and community scores rise in assisted living communities: The average satisfaction among the families/decision-makers of assisted living/memory care community residents is 837 (on a 1,000-point scale), up eight points from a year ago. The increase is driven

by improvements in satisfaction with community staff (+11 points) and with resident activities (+9).

- Cost pressures limit improvement in independent living communities: Satisfaction with value – or price paid for services received – among independent living residents is 604, 15 points lower than a year ago.

- Accessibility of senior management in assisted living/memory care: When family members/decision-makers of assisted living/memory care residents perceive it is “very easy” to contact the community’s executive director, overall satisfaction scores increase 118 points on average. Yet less than half (48%) of family members/decision-makers say this is the case at their loved one’s community.

- Activities offerings play a key role: In both independent living and assisted living/memory care, satisfaction with resident activities has increased year over year, likely due to providers continuing to reinstate many in-person group activities.

The U.S. Senior Living Satisfaction Study measures resident satisfaction with the nation’s largest providers of independent living for seniors and family member/decision-maker satisfaction with the largest providers of assisted living/memory care service providers.



## Seniors Fastest Growing Homeless Group

Older adults are the fastest-growing age group of those experiencing homelessness, composing nearly half of the homeless population, according to an October 2023 Department of Health and Human Services HHS report *Addressing Homelessness Among Older Adults: Final Report*. And the number of older adults experiencing homelessness is expected to triple by 2030, the report says.

The report shows that compared to their housed counterparts, older adults experiencing homelessness have higher rates of health service utilization and more health and health-related concerns, including:

- Significantly shorter life spans;
- Higher prevalence and severity of physical and geriatric conditions like memory loss, falls, difficulty performing activities of daily living, cognitive impairment, and functional impairments;

- More complex health needs, comparable to housed individuals who are 10-20 years older; and

- Higher rates of mental health and substance use disorders.

In the section on innovative programs to address the specific challenges older adults experiencing homelessness face, the report refers to the work of three LeadingAge members: the Hearth program in Boston; Serving Seniors in San Diego; and the St. Paul’s Programs of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly in San Diego.

“Access to housing assistance can be difficult given the current lack of availability and the high and growing demand among low income older adults. Consequently, large numbers of older adults who are eligible for rental assistance either have a long wait time for assistance or do not end up receiving the assistance,” the report says.



## FREE Resource Site For Caregivers

The holidays can mean added demands on caregivers for older adults, and here at **Prestige Assisted Living at Visalia**, we’re here to help with a free resource page on our website at [www.prestigecanhelp.com](http://www.prestigecanhelp.com).

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# Strawberries May Reduce Middle-Age Dementia Risk

By *Tim Tedeschi*  
*University of Cincinnati*

New research from the University of Cincinnati (UC) found that daily strawberry consumption could help reduce the risk of dementia for certain middle-aged populations.

In 2022, UC's Robert Krikorian, Ph.D., and his team published research that found adding blueberries to the daily diets of certain middle-aged populations may lower the chances of developing late-life dementia. He said the current research into strawberries is an extension to the blueberry research.

"Both strawberries and blueberries contain antioxidants called anthocyanins, which have been implicated in a variety of berry health benefits such as metabolic and cognitive enhancements," said Krikorian, professor emeritus in the UC College of Medicine's Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience. "There is epidemiological data suggesting that people who consume strawberries or blueberries regularly have a slower rate of cognitive decline with aging."

In addition to containing anthocyanins, Krikorian said strawberries contain additional micronutrients called ellagitannins and ellagic acid that have

been associated with health benefits.

The beneficial effects observed might be related to moderation of inflammation in the strawberry group.

About 50% of individuals in the U.S. develop insulin resistance, commonly referred to as prediabetes, around middle age, which has been shown to be a factor in chronic diseases. Krikorian said the metabolic and cardiovascular benefits of strawberry consumption have been studied previously, but there were relatively few studies on its cognitive effects.

"This study assessed whether strawberry consumption might improve cognitive performance and metabolic health in this population and, if so, whether there might be an association between cognitive enhancement and reduced metabolic disturbance," he said.

### Research Methodology

A total of 30 overweight patients between 50-65 years old with complaints of mild cognitive decline were enrolled and completed the study. Krikorian said this population has an increased risk for late-life dementia and other common conditions.

Over a period of 12 weeks, the participants were asked to



Photo by Anton Darius/Unsplash

abstain from berry fruit consumption of any kind except for a daily packet of supplement powder to be mixed with water and consumed with breakfast. Half of the participants received powders that contained the equivalent of one cup of whole

strawberries (the standard serving size), while the other half received a placebo.

The participants were given tests that measured certain cognitive abilities like long-term memory. The researchers also tracked their mood, intensity of depressive symptoms and metabolic data over the course of the study.

Those in the strawberry powder group had diminished memory interference, which is consistent with an overall improvement in executive ability.

"Reduced memory interference refers to less confusion of semantically related terms on a word-list learning test," Krikorian said. "This phenomenon generally is thought to reflect better executive control in terms of resisting intrusion of non-target words during the memory testing."

The research was recently published in the journal *Nutrients*.

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### CALENDAR

**Monday, January 15 -**

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**Monday, February 19 -**

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*Gayle Segue - Visalia*

**References Available**  
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# CALENDAR

**January 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 - Bingo**

The Tulare Senior Community Center, 201 N. F St., Tulare, will host bingo starting at 1 p.m. Doors open at 12:30 p.m. For more info, call (559) 685-2330.

**Thursday, January 4 - Genealogy 101**

The Sequoia Genealogical Society will host this 6 p.m. presentation. Refreshments will follow. The free event will be held at the Tulare Public Library, 475 M St. in Tulare. For more information, call (559) 685-4518.

**Friday, January 5 - F1rst Friday**

F1rst Friday in Downtown Visalia, in partnership with The Arts Consortium, will present a free community event with art, food and fun from 5-8 p.m. For more information, visit <https://arts-consortium.org/calendar>.

**January 5, 12, 19, 26 - Friday Night Dances**

The Tulare Senior Community Center, 201 N. F St., Tulare, will host this weekly event from 6-9 p.m. \$10 entry fee. The January 26th dance has a Roaring 20s theme. For more information, call (559) 685-2330.

**January 5-6 - Visalia Gleaning Seniors Yard Sale**

Visalia Gleaning Seniors will host this sale from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Gleaner Yard, 28600

Road 156 in Visalia. For more information, call (559) 733-5352.

**January 7, 14, 21, 28 - Senior Pride Bingo Sundays**

This weekly event is held at the Visalia Veterans Memorial Building, 609 W. Center St., Visalia. Doors open at 11:15 a.m. For more info, call (559) 651-6714.

**Wednesday, January 10 - Valley Renal Support Group**

The only kidney support group in four counties will meet at Evolution's Gym, 1425 E. Prosperity Ave. in Tulare, from 6:30-8 p.m. The meeting will also be on Zoom. For more info, email Jennifer at [meow.2000@yahoo.com](mailto:meow.2000@yahoo.com).

**Thursday, January 11 - Winter Dance**

This event, featuring music by Bobby Seals, will be held at the Visalia Senior Center, 310 N. Locust St., Visalia, at 5:30 p.m. Tickets are \$10 and must be purchased in advance. For more info, call (559) 713-4365.

**Saturday, January 13 - Walk with a Doc**

This informational walk and talk sponsored by Kaweah Health and held at the Visalia Mall, begins with registration at 8 a.m., followed by a warm-up at 8:15 a.m., and "Talk with a Doc" at 8:30 a.m. The topic this month is "Goal Setting." For more info, call (559) 624-2416.

**Monday, January 15 - Exeter Caregiver/Dementia Support Group**

Quail Park on Cypress will present this 10:30 a.m. monthly session, facilitated by Kimberly Jensen, in the Café at Rocky Hill Community Church, 237 South E St. in Exeter. For more information, call (559) 737-7443.

**Monday, January 15 - Tulare Caregiver/Dementia Support Group**

Quail Park on Cypress will present this 12:30 p.m. monthly session at the First Baptist Church, 469 N. Cherry St., Tulare. For more info, call (559) 737-7443.

**Tuesday, January 16 - Visalia Caregiver/Dementia Support Group**

Quail Park on Cypress, 4520 W. Cypress, Visalia, will host this 10:30 a.m. monthly session. For more information, call (559) 737-7443.

**Saturday, January 20 - Walk with a Doc**

This informational walk and talk, sponsored by Adventist Health and the City of Hanford, will be held at Freedom Park, 2000 9-1/4 Avenue in Hanford. It begins with registration at 8:45 a.m., followed by the walk and "Talk with a Doc" at 9 a.m. For more information, visit [www.walkwithadoc.org](http://www.walkwithadoc.org).

**Saturday, January 20 - Visalia Philatelic Society Meeting**

Visalia Philatelic Society will meet at Quail Park on Shannon Ranch, 3440 W. Flagstaff Ave., Visalia, at 1 p.m. Lunch is \$10; membership is also \$10. For information, call (559) 527-8245.

**January 20-21 - Gemboree Tule Rock & Gem Show**

The Tulare Gem and Mineral Society will host this event from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday the Exeter Veterans Memorial Building, 314 N. Kaweah Ave. in Exeter. Admission is free.

**Thursday, February 1 - Genealogy 101**

The Sequoia Genealogical Society will host this 6 p.m. presentation. Refreshments will follow. The free event will be held at the Tulare Public Library, 475 M St. in Tulare. For more information, call (559) 685-4518.

**February 2-4 - Visalia SpringFest**

This three-day home and patio event returns to the Visalia Convention Center. On Friday, seniors attend for free. For more information, visit [www.visalia-homeshows.com](http://www.visalia-homeshows.com). (See article on page 13.)

**Friday, February 2 - F1rst Friday**

F1rst Friday in Downtown Visalia, in partnership with The Arts Consortium, will present a free community event with art, food and fun from 5-8 p.m. For more information, visit <https://arts-consortium.org/calendar>.

**February 2, 9, 16, 23 - Friday Night Dances**

The Tulare Senior Community Center, 201 N. F St., Tulare, will host this weekly event from 6-9 p.m. \$10 entry fee. The January 16th dance has a Valentine's Day theme. For more information, call (559) 685-2330.

**February 4, 11, 18, 25 - Senior Pride Bingo Sundays**

This weekly event is held at the Visalia Veterans Memorial Building, 609 W. Center St., Visalia. Doors open at 11:15 a.m. For more info, call (559) 651-6714.

**Monday, February 5 - Bingo**

The Elks Lodge, 3100 W. Main St., Visalia, will host bingo from 6-8 p.m. Doors open at 5 p.m. For more info, call (559) 734-6762.

**February 7, 14, 21, 28 - Bingo**

The Tulare Senior Community Center, 201 N. F St., Tulare, will host bingo starting at 1 p.m. Doors open at 12:30 p.m. For more info, call (559) 685-2330.

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# CALENDAR

**Saturday, February 10 - Walk with a Doc**

This informational walk and talk sponsored by Kaweah Health and held at the Visalia Mall, begins with registration at 8 a.m., followed by a warm-up at 8:15 a.m., and "Talk with a Doc" at 8:30 a.m. This event will include a "10-Year Walk with a Doc Celebration." For more information, call (559) 624-2416.

**Tuesday, February 13 - Galentines Day Brunch**

This event, which celebrates friendship among gal pals, will be held at the Visalia Senior Center, 310 N. Locust St., Visalia, from 9:30-11 a.m. The cost is \$17. For reservations or more info, call (559) 713-4481.

**Wednesday, February 14 - Sweetheart Luncheon**

This event will be held at the Visalia Senior Center, 310 N. Locust St., Visalia, at 11:30 a.m. The cost is \$6 for Visalia seniors. For reservations or more info, call (559) 713-4481.

**Wednesday, February 14 - Valley Renal Support Group**

The only kidney support group in four counties will meet at Evolution's Gym, 1425 E. Prosperity Ave. in Tulare, from 6:30-8 p.m. The meeting will also be on Zoom. For more info, email

Jennifer at [meow.2000@yahoo.com](mailto:meow.2000@yahoo.com).

**Thursday, February 15 - Heart of Seniors**

This event, which features a luncheon, fashion show, informational booths and a keynote speaker, will be held at the Wyndham Visalia Hotel, 900 W. Airport Dr., Visalia. (See article on page 1.)

**Saturday, February 17 - Walk with a Doc**

This informational walk and talk, sponsored by Adventist Health and the City of Hanford, will be held at Centennial Park, 11731 Hanford Armona Road in Hanford. It begins with registration at 8:45 a.m., followed by the walk and "Talk with a Doc" at 9 a.m. For more info, visit [www.walkwithadoc.org](http://www.walkwithadoc.org).

**Monday, February 19 - Exeter Caregiver/Dementia Support Group**

Quail Park on Cypress will present this 10:30 a.m. monthly session, facilitated by Kimberly Jensen, in the Café at Rocky Hill Community Church, 237 South E St. in Exeter. For more information, call (559) 737-7443.

**Monday, February 19 - Tulare Caregiver/Dementia Support Group**

The First Baptist Church, 469 N. Cherry St., Tulare, will host this 10:30 a.m. monthly session. For more info, call (559) 737-7443.

**Tuesday, February 20 - Visalia Caregiver/Dementia Support Group**

Quail Park on Cypress, 4520 W. Cypress, Visalia, will host this 10:30 a.m. monthly session. For more info, call (559) 737-7443.

**Friday, February 23 - Downtown Historical Walk**

This tour of Downtown Visalia with local historian Terry Ommen, who has researched Visalia's history for over 30 years, will begin at Visalia Senior Center, 310 N. Locust St., Visalia, The 50+ tour, which runs from 9:30-11 a.m., costs \$8. For reservations or more info, call (559) 713-4481.

**Friday, March 1 - F1rst Friday**

F1rst Friday in Downtown Visalia, in partnership with The Arts Consortium, will present a free community event with art, food and fun from 5-8 p.m. For more information, visit <https://artsconsortium.org/calendar>.

**March 1-2 - Visalia Gleaning Seniors Yard Sale**

Visalia Gleaning Seniors will host this sale from 8 a.m. to 2

p.m. at the Gleaner Yard, 28600 Road 156 in Visalia. For more information, call (559) 733-5352.

**Thursday, March 7 - Genealogy 101**

The Sequoia Genealogical Society will host this 6 p.m. presentation. Refreshments will follow. The free event will be held at the Tulare Public Library, 475 M St. in Tulare. For more information, call (559) 685-4518.

**March 9-10 - Rusty Roots Show**

This event, featuring arts and crafts, clothes, antiques, jewelry, furniture and more on sale, will be held from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Saturday, and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Sunday, at the Tulare County Fairgrounds, 620 S. K St., Tulare. For tickets or more information, visit [www.rusty-rootsshow.com](http://www.rusty-rootsshow.com).

**March 16-17 - Lemoore Gem, Mineral & Jewelry Show**

This event, hosted by the Lemoore Gem and Mineral Club, will be held from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday, and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday, at 470 Champion St., Lemoore. For more information, visit <https://lemooregemandmineralclub.org>.



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# Senior Suicides...

(continued from page 1)

themselves as being a burden to their family and friends.

"People get to a point where they don't think they have purpose for their life," said Erika N. Jackson, a licensed marriage and family therapist in Visalia. "It's really difficult if they don't have the family they need for their support."

"Suicide is incredibly complex," said Whitaker. "In my opinion, a lifetime of experience can mount up on a person."

Whitaker also offered another reason for the CDC statistics.

Seniors tend to use more lethal means, he explained, noting that teens make 100 attempts for every one that becomes a suicide, so teens are more likely to survive the attempt. Seniors, however, have one suicide for every two events.

"An older person will be more likely to use a firearm," he explained.

"I think (family and friends) should watch for when a person is acting out of character, like when a person who was outgoing is now isolated," said Jackson, "or when a person gives their belongings away. I would also say when they are losing interest in previously enjoyed activities."

She added that some people at risk of suicide say

things like, "It will all be over soon. I encourage family members to ask what they mean by that. Let's not make thoughts of suicide secretive. We always want to make sure to take them seriously."

Jackson also said that it is important for seniors to have family support, feel loved and have "things they can still look forward to."

## Where to Get Help

Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency created the Older Adult Hopelessness Screening Program (OAHS), which assesses levels of hopelessness in older adults and offers early intervention services to reduce suicide risk, improve quality of care and prevent the onset of serious mental illness.

"One individual (helped by the program) had terminal cancer and was suicidal," said Whitaker, who recalled what one of the individual's children said about OAHS, "The last few months of my father's life, you gave him a life."

The Kings/Tulare Area Agency on Aging, which was created in 1965 to advocate for issues and concerns facing adults as they age, uses technology to combat loneliness. It offers a program that uses iPads to connect otherwise isolated seniors.

"The Senior Access for Engagement (SAFE) Program provides supportive services to older adults in their home, senior centers, nursing homes and assisted living facilities," said Polo Ortiz, manager of Adult Services for Kings County Behavioral Health. "SAFE providers promote psychosocial supports and identify possible signs and symptoms of mental illness, assisting older adults with appropriate referral linkage to mental health treatment."

SAFE serves isolated older adults ages 60 and older at-risk of or beginning to experience mental health problems, such as depression related to aging and isolation. SAFE also serves primary caregivers of older adults with mental illness, but caregivers accessing this service must live in a non-licensed setting and not be paid for caregiving.

SAFE services include:

- Visitation to older adults in the home or community to provide social support;
- Caregiver support group;
- Linkages to respite for caregivers;
- Referral and linkage to other community-based providers for other needed social services and primary care; and
- Wellness and socialization

engagement via events, and activity opportunities for the seniors/older adult population and caregivers.

Respite for Caregivers aids caregivers needing periodic relief from their supervision and caregiving duties of older adults. Respite for Caregivers also gives caregivers the opportunity to engage in activities and to utilize social supports needed to alleviate their stress and promote well-being.

The program also provides assistance to primary caregivers for the supervision and caregiving of his or her family member

Kings County seniors can also call for assistance at 988, the 24-hour Suicide and Crisis Lifeline; or the Warm Line, which offers non-emergency, non-crisis support by simply enabling seniors to talk to someone.

## How to Help a Loved One

"The more strands you can weave into a safety net, the stronger the net is," said Whitaker.

He suggests talk therapy, medication, social engagement and nutrition.

"Nutrition is a major driver of emotional balance," he explained. "Poor diets can lead to poor mental health."

## Bipartisan Bill Reintroduced to Combat Valley Fever

On December 13, Congressmen David G. Valadao (CA-22), David Schweikert (AZ-01) and Kevin McCarthy (CA-20) introduced the Finding Orphan-disease Remedies with Antifungal Research and Development (FORWARD) Act.

This legislation would support various research programs with the goal of developing new drugs, treatments and vaccines to combat valley fever.

"Valley fever has a huge impact on our neighbors and communities in the Central Valley, and we must prioritize the development of new treatments and vaccines to combat the spread of this disease and save lives," said Valadao. "The FORWARD Act is an important step towards finding a cure for valley fever, and I'm proud to support it."

"I'm pleased to reintroduce the FORWARD Act this Congress as our Valley Fever Task Force makes significant progress in improving care, treatment, and research into this

terrible disease that has devastated so many lives in our communities," said Congressman Schweikert.

## Background

Valadao is a member of the Valley Fever Task Force along with Schweikert and McCarthy. The bipartisan Task Force, which was founded in 2013, is committed to raising awareness and advancing policies to combat valley fever.

The FORWARD Act would:

- Establish a working group at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to advise on strategies that confront gaps in science that can help detect, treat and eradicate valley fever;
- Encourage the development of valley fever vaccines, cures and treatments by directing the FDA to include Valley fever in its priority review voucher program; and
- Provide additional resources to support research efforts and add antifungal development to the existing CARB-X program.

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The tiny house displays attract many seniors at Springfest.

## 31st Annual Visalia Home & Patio Springfest Set for February 2-4

The 31st Annual Visalia Home & Patio Springfest, featuring more than 300 booths, will be held at the Visalia Convention Center February 2-4.

This year's home show showcases everything for the home and garden, and much more. The Plaza Courtyard will present tiny homes and accessory dwelling units, unique sheds, barbecue islands, awnings, and a variety of garden art and pottery.

Inside, attendees will find affordable decorating and home improvement options provided by family-owned local contractors and experts. There will also be smart home products, great lighting options and security services. The Visalia Home Depot will be on hand to help with DIY projects and home repairs.

In the Garden Center, there will be a variety of nurseries, garden clubs and flower societies to help with spring planting. And UC Master Gardeners will host

hourly seminars to give suggestions and answer questions.

The Marketplace will include gift ideas for Valentine's Day and treats including chocolate moonshine and caramel-covered apples. Local musicians will perform while attendees enjoy local fare by Jarvis Taco Shack, Sadie Mae's Southern BBQ, Graze Craze and Rotie Coffee.

Seniors will find a variety of local resources from community organizations including Visalia Gleaning Seniors, Porterville Quilter's Club, the Visalia Veterans Mural Restoration Committee and Habitat For Humanity.

Senior Day is back this year. On Friday, seniors attend for free. Saturday and Sunday admission is \$5. Show hours are Friday from 9 a.m.-4 p.m.; Saturday from 9 a.m.-5 p.m., and Sunday from 10 a.m.-4p.m.

For more information, visit [www.VisaliaHomeShows.com](http://www.VisaliaHomeShows.com) or call (800) 700-7469.

## Kaweah Health, Stanford Medicine Work Together to Grow Cardiac Surgical Care

Kaweah Health is welcoming Dr. Michael K. McLean, cardiothoracic surgeon and Stanford Medicine faculty member. Dr. McLean is the first of three Stanford Medicine cardiothoracic surgeons who will live and work in Visalia as part of the Kaweah Health Cardiothoracic Surgery Program, working together with the Stanford Medicine Cardiac Surgery Program.

"The Kaweah Health cardiothoracic program has a long history of providing award-winning care, and with Stanford Health Care, we will work to help ensure that our community continues to have access to some of the best surgical heart care available for many years to come," said Kaweah Health CEO Gary Herbst.

McLean will provide surgical expertise in heart bypass surgery, valve repair and other advanced cardiac procedures. He attended medical school at Wake Forest University in North Carolina, with a residency in general surgery at SUNY at

Buffalo School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, and cardiothoracic surgery training at the University of Southern California.

His special areas of training include minimally invasive valve surgery, congenital heart surgery, endovascular aortic surgery, minimally-invasive thoracic surgery, esophageal surgery, and heart and lung transplantation/procurement.

In addition to Stanford Health Care, Kaweah Health also maintains an affiliation with the nationally recognized Cleveland Clinic Heart, Vascular and Thoracic Institute. These affiliations allow Kaweah Health's heart program to share best practices in patient care, outcomes, quality reporting and offer patients access to the broadest possible range of solutions from skilled, experienced doctors, nurses and technicians.

To learn more about Kaweah Health's affiliation with Stanford Medicine, visit [www.KaweahHealth.org/Stanford](http://www.KaweahHealth.org/Stanford).

## Which Organs...

(continued from page 3)

### Organ Age Gap

For each of the 11 organs, Wyss-Coray's team came up with an "age gap": the difference between an organ's actual age and its estimated age based on the algorithm's organ-specific-protein-driven calculations. The researchers found that the identified age gaps for 10 of the 11 organs studied (the only exception being intestine) were significantly associated with future risk of death from all causes over 15 years of follow-up.

Having an accelerated-aging organ carried a 15% to 50% higher mortality risk over the next 15 years, depending on which organ was affected.

People with accelerated heart aging but initially exhibiting no active disease or clinically abnormal biomarkers were 2.5 times as high a risk of heart failure as people with normally aging hearts, the study showed.

Those with "older" brains were 1.8 times as likely to show cognitive decline over five years than those with "young" brains. Accelerated brain or vasculature aging – either one – predicted risk for Alzheimer's disease progression as well as the best currently used clinical biomarkers do.

There were likewise strong associations between an ex-

treme-aging (more than two standard deviations above the norm) kidney score, and both hypertension and diabetes, as well as between an extreme-aging heart score and both atrial fibrillation and heart attack.

"If we can reproduce this finding in 50,000 or 100,000 individuals," Wyss-Coray said, "it will mean that by monitoring the health of individual organs in apparently healthy people, we might be able to find organs that are undergoing accelerated aging in people's bodies, and we might be able to treat people before they get sick."

Identifying the organ-specific proteins that best indicate excessive organ aging and, consequently, elevated disease risk could also lead to new drug targets, he said.

Wyss-Coray, Oh and Rutledge have co-founded a company, Teal Omics Inc., to explore the commercialization of their findings. Stanford University's Office of Technology Licensing has filed a patent application related to this work.

Researchers from Washington University; the University of California, San Francisco; the Albert Einstein College of Medicine; and Montefiore Medical Center contributed to the work.

Bruce Goldman is a senior science writer in the Office of Communications at Stanford.

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## QUAIL CORNER

# Speaking to a Doctor in Front of a Husband with Dementia

Q&A with Kimberly Jensen

**Question:** *How do I handle speaking with the doctor at the hospital if my husband has dementia and the doctor wants to speak in front of him?*

**Answer:** That is a great question! Many family members have difficulty when their loved one has dementia, and the hospital staff want to speak about medical issues in front of them. It is too overwhelming for them to hear the quick conversation that the doctors are trying to convey to update both of you on his medical condition.

Many times, the doctor or nurse will ask your loved one with dementia a question that they cannot cognitively understand. This only causes frustration and agitation.

While the person with dementia is in the hospital, I always recommend the following:

Ask the doctors to make sure to limit questions to the patient that might not be capable of answering correctly. Instead, ask that they speak to you in private, outside of the hospital room door.

Help the hospital staff and doctors understand your loved one's normal functioning behaviors. Ask them not to use physical restraints. They may use medications to cope with agitation and behaviors. Make

sure to watch and see if the medication increases their agitation or if it calms them down. If it calms them down, then it is doing its job. If it tends to agitate them more, then ask the hospital staff if they can try another anti-anxiety medication. Some medications work on certain people, and some do not. Be the eyes and ears of your loved one.

Make sure to have a family member, friend or caregiver stay with your loved one, even during medical tests. This might be difficult to do, but it will calm the person down and make them less frightened. Having a familiar face helps to keep them calmer.

Immediately inform the doctor if you notice your loved one is suddenly getting worse or acting differently. Medical issues such as fever, infection or medication side effects can cause an extreme state of confusion that is not normal for them.



Encourage your loved one to consume fluids throughout the day so that they do not get dehydrated. They will not be able to recognize if they are thirsty or hungry. Make sure to have the hospital staff take them to the restroom throughout the day to eliminate the hazard of them falling.

Help them order food off the menu that they prefer to eat. Open their food containers for them and encourage them to eat. Remove the tray from in front of them when they are through. Assist them with their eating if necessary.

Speak or communicate with your loved one in the way he or she will best understand and respond.

The unfamiliar sights and sounds of the hospital will make a person with dementia even more confused. Be supportive and understand. Help the hospital staff understand that he has dementia and is not being difficult without reason. Be his advocate and his voice

when he cannot respond or understand the words being spoken to him.

Bring a familiar blanket, magazine or item from home that will keep him focused on something other than the distracting surrounds.

Make sure to take care of yourself. Take breaks when he is sleeping, in surgery or having a procedure done. Take deep breaths and go for a walk, read a book, or take time to call family to keep them updated on his condition.

**Question:** *This year was the first year that my spouse did not celebrate the holidays with me. I feel more alone than ever before. How do I get passed this sadness?*

**Answer:** I am so sorry for your loss! When a lifelong partner passes away, it feels like half of you is missing. Holidays will not feel the same. Your sadness and loneliness are a normal part of the grieving process. The issue for you is in taking that next step forward. It is not easy to do this on your own.

Reach out to others around you who have experienced the loss of their spouse, to see how they managed through this difficult time. Speaking with a family therapist will help you to not only share your true feelings, but they will help to guide you in a positive direction. Bereavement groups help you to share with others how you are feeling. They in turn will help you better understand other spouses' struggles with a loss. You are not alone!

See if you can visit your family for a bit to get out of your empty house. Go on a trip with a friend, get involved with your church or start focusing on getting your health on a better path. Walking increases the oxygen to the brain and makes you feel more productive than staying in your home.

Love is the greatest gift on earth. It creates a huge vacuum in our lives when it is gone. Try to find others who can help support you and your new journey forward. Take baby steps. Eventually you will see that the sky is blue again and the sunrise is beautiful. Give yourself the grace and time that you need to heal.

*Kimberly Jensen has been working with Quail Park as a Senior Resource Advocate for over ten years and has helped hundreds of families find solutions to their senior problems. If you have a question, you can send it to her at KimberlyJ@QP-Cypress.com or call (559) 737-7443.*

## Nutrition Tips for Older Adults

As the calendar turns to a new year, many people resolve to start eating healthier. However, trying to keep up with the latest reports on nutrition as we age can be difficult - it seems like the advice is always changing.

But there are a few universal truths to nutrition as we age, and it's important to understand how our needs change in our senior years and why that is. And with that, we can make dietary choices that help with bone strength, heart health and even cognitive ability.

To do so, on a basic level, each day you want to ensure you're including each of the following categories in your diet:

- Fruits and vegetables;
- Whole grains (brown rice, whole wheat pasta);
- Dairy (skim or low-fat milk, or alternatives like soy or almond milk); and
- Lean protein (seafood, chicken, eggs, no red meat).

Starting there, you'll help yourself mitigate some of the changes that occur as part of the aging process, which can

include:

### Reduced Appetite

As we age, between our metabolism slowing down and a reduction in muscle mass, we need fewer calories than before, leading to less of an appetite. But by eating less, it can reduce the amount of important nutrients and minerals we need to stay healthy.

Eating a healthy diet, even in reduced amounts, can help provide the health benefits we need.

### Heart Health

Heart disease is one of the leading health risks and causes of death among older adults. It becomes important as we age to scale back red meat, fried foods and sweets that can lead to risks to our heart.

To help build better nutrition in our later years, consider the following tips:

### Make a Plan

Meal planning can be an easy way to incorporate healthy habits. Sitting down weekly and mapping out your meals will allow you to buy healthy options from the

grocery store. Leaving meals to the last minute forces you to just have what's on hand, or resort to old favorites.

### One Change at a Time

It can be difficult to change eating habits later in life. If you or a loved one has been eating a certain way for decades, change isn't likely to come overnight. So barring an acute health concern, try to phase changes in gradually.

Just as you can't wake up one day and run a marathon, trying to do it all at once will just lead to frustration. Maybe start by switching to whole wheat pasta while leaving the rest of the meal as you normally would. Or substitute chicken for steak while enjoying the rest of your usual diet.

Build each small change into a habit and then move on to another one. Before long it will be second nature.

*This article is courtesy of Prestige Assisted Living at Visalia. To learn more about their wellness programming or community, or to book a tour, visit [prestigecare.com/Visalia](http://prestigecare.com/Visalia) or call (559) 735-0828.*

# Gen Z-ers Plan to Care for Parents, but Don't Know Costs

Gen Zers who plan to be involved in their parents' senior care anticipate their parents moving in with them or them serving as their parents' primary or supportive caregivers

Caring.com, a senior living referral service and a site for senior care reviews, recently published a report that examines how Gen Z-ers plan to care for their parents as they age.

The report shares insight into Gen X-ers' and Baby Boomers expectations of their children's involvement in their future senior care. Experts surveyed 1,500 American adults, from Gen Z-ers to Baby Boomers.

According to the 2023 survey, 72% of Gen Z adult respondents plan to be involved in their parents' future care. How-

ever, only 61% of adults in Gen X and the Baby Boomer generations believe their children will be involved in their future senior care. Gen Z-ers who plan to be involved anticipate that either their parents will move in, or they may take on a primary or supportive caregiver role.

Sixty percent of Gen Z respondents plan to provide "full" or "partial financial support" for future care costs. Meanwhile, only 45% of Gen X and Baby Boomer respondents anticipate their children will fully and partially cover future care costs.

Despite Gen Z's willingness to care for their aging parents, only 16% are aware of the average annual cost of full-time senior care: \$50,000 to \$70,000. Furthermore, less than four in 10 Gen X and Baby Boomers



have talked to their children about their future care plans.

"Our survey clearly outlines discrepancies between Gen Z's plans, and Gen X and Baby Boomers' expectations regarding future senior care needs and associated costs," said Susann Crawford, VP of Sales at Caring.com. "While aging may be a sensitive and scary topic to bring up, these family discussions help ensure that everyone is on the same page and initiate the future planning process."

Survey results also highlight why 10% of Gen Z respondents do not plan to be involved in their parents' care. Among this group:

- 33% say they "don't think they will have enough money";
- 31% say they "don't think

they will live close enough"; and

- 29% say "someone else will do it."

Additionally, among Gen X and Baby Boomer respondents who do not believe their children will provide care:

- 40% say their children "won't be willing to spend the time or money it would take";

- 38% say their children "don't think they will close enough"; and

- 32% say their children "won't have enough time to provide care."

The survey was conducted online on October 3, 2023. To access full survey results or get more information about the survey, visit <https://shorturl.at/nvBDY>.

## Long-Term Care Insurance 2024 Tax Deductible Limits Announced

The IRS has announced decreased tax-deductible limits for long-term care insurance for 2024, according to the American Association for Long-Term Care Insurance (AALTCI).

"This is a significant change in practice after yearly increases," said Jesse Slome, director of AALTCI. "The 2024 deductible limits are still significant and few people, especially business owners, are aware that premiums paid for long-term care insurance may be tax-deductible."

The just-announced 2024 limits for an individual age 70 or over is \$5,880, according to AALTCI. The 2023 maximum deductible limit for that age band is \$5,960.

"This is still a significant tax deduction," Slome explained. "Most policies are purchased by couples, which means they could deduct up to \$11,760 next year depending on their age."

Only long-term care policies that meet the federal government's tax-qualified requirements qualify for a potential tax deduction, Slome noted. "Most of the linked benefit or hybrid life insurance policies, the ones more popular today, do not qualify for a possible tax benefit."

"Two types of individuals can gain the most benefit from the IRS deductions," he added. "First, business owners, who may be able to deduct the full cost of their insurance protection and have a paid-in-full

policy when they reach retirement age."

Secondly, people who have retired from jobs can benefit. "That's when income levels enable more people to reach the required health expense threshold to make premiums deductible," Slome acknowledged.

"That potential tax deduction can be a huge benefit after retirement and something seniors should take into consideration when looking into their long-term care protection options."

The following are the new 2024 deductible limits per-individual (2023 limits in brackets) from <https://www.aaltci.org/tax>:

Attained Age Before Close of Taxable Year 2024 Limit (2023)

- Age 40 or less: \$470 (\$480)
- Older than 40 but not older than 50: \$880 (\$890)
- Older than 50 but not older than 60: \$1,760 (\$1,790)
- Older than 60 but not older than 70: \$4,710 (\$4,770)
- Older than 70: \$5,880 (\$5,960)

The American Association for Long-Term Care Insurance advocates for the importance of planning and supports insurance and financial professionals who provide long-term care financing solutions.

To see prior year's long-term care insurance tax deductible limits, visit the organization's website at <https://shorturl.at/imEG3>.

The deadline for the March/April issue is Thursday, February 15th

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# ENTERTAINMENT



The Rolling Stones



The Beatles



Brenda Lee

## Seniors Top Rock, Pop and Holiday Music Charts

Musicians in their 70s and 80s had an impact on the recording industry in the last few months of 2023. The Rolling Stones, the Beatles and Brenda Lee all topped the charts.

### The Rolling Stones

"Hackney Diamonds," the first Rolling Stones album with all new songs since 2005, debuted at number one on the British musical charts in October. This marked the 11th time that the band has topped the album charts.

The song "Angry" was nominated for a Best Rock Song Grammy. The album's other 12 songs include collaborations with Stevie Wonder and Lady Gaga.

AARP is sponsoring the Rolling Stones North American tour

that starts in Houston on April 28. The band will perform in 16 cities across the U.S. and Canada, performing many of their classic hits, as well as songs from their new album.

### The Beatles

On November 2, the Beatles released "Now and Then," a soft rock ballad written and recorded by John Lennon around 1977. The song existed as an unfinished demo until being completed by his two surviving bandmates, Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr, who incorporated overdubs and guitar tracks by George Harrison, who died in 2001.

The song debuted on the UK Singles Chart at number 42, on the following day. The next week it rose 41 positions to reach

number one on the chart. It was the band's first number one single since their 1969 single "The Ballad of John and Yoko."

In the U.S., "Now and Then" debuted at number one on the Billboard Digital Song Sales chart. The song reached number one on the Billboard Adult Alternative Airplay chart for the week ending December 9.

### Brenda Lee

Brenda Lee, 79, an American singer known for such hits as "I'm Sorry" and "I Want to Be Wanted," topped the U.S. Billboard Hot 100 in late 2023, making her the oldest artist ever to top the chart.

Lee, who started recording in 1957 at the age of 12, saw her song, "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree," which was re-

corded in 1958, reach the top spot 65 years later.



A 'Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree' ad from 1960



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In the "Finale and After the Final Rose" episode of ABC's "The Golden Bachelor," broadcast on November 30, Gerry Turner proposes to Theresa. (Photo by John Fleenor, courtesy of Disney)

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Pictured at left is documentary filmmaker Sky Bergman with her grandmother, Evelyn Ricciuti. Pictured above is artist Ciel Bergman.

# 'Lives Well Lived' Showcases the Greatest Generation

"My 103-year-old Italian grandmother enjoyed exercise, making the best lasagna you've ever tasted, and being with family," wrote documentary filmmaker Sky Bergman in her director's statement for "Lives Well Lived."

"I started filming her cooking about five years ago when she was 99 years old," wrote Bergman. "I filmed her at the gym because I thought, no one will believe that my grandmother is still working out. I asked her if she could give me a few words of wisdom, and that was the beginning of this adventure."

"In our society, the elderly are often overlooked," she continued. "'Lives Well Lived' celebrates the incredible wit, wisdom and life experiences of older adults living full and meaningful lives in their later years. Their stories are about perseverance, the human spirit and staying positive during the great personal and historic challenges."

Bergman is currently working on two new film projects, but she continues to promote her seven-year-old documentary, "Lives Well Lived."

"It's an evergreen film," she told *The Good Life*. "It continues to do well. I think that a film like this will never go out of date."

Over the past seven years, the documentary has won awards at film festivals from San Diego to Maine. It has also been well received by older audiences as well as university students. Bergman said the people in-

terviewed in "Lives Well Lived" all have a resilience. "The people in the film are really positive people. They have a sense of purpose. Everyone had an amazing story to tell."

The stories come from people who escaped the Nazis, and those who fought in World War II. Forty people were interviewed for the documentary.

"They're the greatest generation because they lived through World War II," said Bergman. "People today are going through other things - the pandemic, climate change."

### Other Projects

Bergman is currently working on two other films, "Mochitsuki" and "Prime Time Band."

Bergman described "Mochitsuki" as a "wonderful ceremony" and "a coming together of generations." The ancient tradition of preparing mochi to celebrate the Japanese New Year



Emmy Cleaves, who enjoys yoga, is one of the 40 seniors interviewed in "Lives Well Lived."



Evelyn Ricciuti, the inspiration for "Lives Well Lived," at the gym

goes back hundreds of years.

The film focuses on one intergenerational community as they participate in the ceremonial pounding of the cooked rice, the forming of the warm mochi cakes, and finally eating the results. A preview for the film can be seen at [www.mochifilm.com](http://www.mochifilm.com).

Bergman's most current project spotlights the Prime Time Band, a group of musicians mainly in their 60s to 80s.

"This film explores their musical renaissance, highlighting how rediscovering music in later years can bring a renewed sense of purpose. It's a celebration of diverse lives harmonizing through the power of music."

"The Prime Time Band" features older musicians perform-

ing with young school students. Bergman sees it as the "circle of life."

### Life Stories Wanted

The "Lives Well Lived" website encourages seniors to submit their stories for possible inclusion in the website's gallery. Visit [www.lives-well-lived.com/add-your-story](http://www.lives-well-lived.com/add-your-story) to participate.

The site is only accepting first-hand accounts, and Bergman has no plans to conduct another round of interviews for a "Lives Well Lived" sequel or series.

"I need to stop interviewing people or I'd never get a film done," she said.

To find out where to watch "Lives Well Lived," visit [www.lives-well-lived.com/watch-the-film](http://www.lives-well-lived.com/watch-the-film).



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# Four in Five Seniors Find This Road Sign Ageist

Since the controversial "elderly people" road sign, designed by a child in a drawing competition, was introduced over 40 years ago, it has repeatedly come under attack for its ageist imagery depicting a physically challenged couple bent over walking sticks.

The Silver Marketing Association, based in the U.K., which campaigns for ethical and respectful marketing for older people, carried out a survey of 55 to 80-year-olds in partnership with older people's campaigning group EngAgeNet, and the findings show that the sign is seen as both ageist and offensive by a large majority of respondents.

The association is now asking the U.K. Government and local authorities for the sign to be re-designed or removed entirely.

"The time has come to get this discriminatory image off our roads, and to realign the stereotyped, ageist image of the UK's older generation," said Debbie Marshall, association managing director. "We recognize that older people may be slower to walk across the road than youngsters, but they are not some kind of a roadside hazard, and the picture on the sign does not reflect the respect that we should have for our elders."

In partnership with EngAgeNet, the Silver Marketing



Association survey asked more than 400 representatives from older people's forums across the country for their views of the wording and imagery used on the sign, and if they feel it best reflects their place in society. Over half (53%) considered the image "very ageist" and a further 26% felt it to be "ageist," while 70% found it "offensive."

Respondents were also asked their view of the wording and 64% found this ageist and 67% found it offensive.

When asked what alternative they would prefer, 69% voted for an age-neutral image, and 72% voted for age-neutral wording.

"I have always hated that sign, even when I was younger and a driver," said 89-year-old Betty Stoakley, a resident at a Dorset Care Home. "It makes some kind of a bad joke about old age. Its very existence separates older people from the rest of society."

"I am also delighted that we, the older generation, have

been asked for our opinions," she continued. "Older adults in the U.K. are too often overlooked, yet we have decades of life experience."

"I prefer the use of the word senior to replace elderly," said Ellen Coughlin of Hampshire "'Senior' is a respectful way of describing an older person, 'elderly' is not."

Another respondent, Philippa Russell of Chichester, commented, "Traffic travels so fast nowadays and it's not only about age - it's just as bad if you have a small child or you are a disabled person trying to cross safely. I would like big, bold signs with a catchy image that there are likely to be people crossing and telling motorists to slow down."

"It's high time we rethink the symbols and icons commonly used in public to represent ageing and older age groups," commented Jess Kuehne, senior program manager of ageism at the Centre for Ageing Better. "So often these images reinforce negative and narrow views about ageing and growing older, attitudes which research shows can have a damaging effect on the way we view and treat ourselves and others."

"This sign has been a bone of contention for many older people for years and many organizations and individuals have spoken out about it... but absolutely nothing has been done," said Tony Watts at EngAgeNet. "At a time when society has recognized the need to respect minorities by changing negative or demeaning language or imagery, it's stunning that no-one can see that ageism is also a big issue."

"We want the Department of Transport to change this discriminatory sign and language and to substitute it with one which is age-neutral," he continued. "Of course, motorists need to be aware if there is a crossing near a care home where residents may have limited mobility. However, the current sign is ageist and discriminatory and needs to go."

"We surely cannot go another 41 years depicting our valued older generation in this way."

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# Devil's Brew Was Stirring in Visalia's Past

Human attraction with alcoholic beverages is a worldwide condition. It's been that way for millennia. Its taste and its effects on the consumer causes many to seek it out. For some drinkers, Benjamin Franklin had it right when he said, "Wine makes daily living easier, less hurried with few tensions and more tolerance."

For others, the concoction was evil with destructive effects. In 1898, Visalia newspaperman Alonzo Melville Doty spoke for them when he poetically wrote, "He once had wealth and people say, he owned half of the town; but now he begs because strong drink, has rudely thrust him down."

Visalia history is filled with stories about alcohol and those who consumed it. Not all ended in tragedy, of course, but many did, leaving families reeling from its deadly effects.

Regularly, the Visalia newspapers would proclaim its evil outcomes with headlines like this one published in 1863, "Whiskey held high carnival last Saturday night and Sunday morning, knock down drag out was the order of the day..."

One incident in Visalia in 1866 involved alcohol, wild and reckless gun play, and a Visalia physician. Dr. John Benn was a well-respected medical doctor who had been a California volunteer physician for the Union troops stationed at Visalia's Camp Babbitt just two years earlier. The Irish medical man stayed in Visalia to practice after he was mustered out of military service.

On the evening of November 30, 1866, without warning as he walked on Main Street, he drew his pistol and fired it into the air several times. A friend walking with him cautioned about the dangerous act. Shortly thereafter, the street was bustling with activity.

One of his stray shots had killed an 18-year old boy named Zera Barr, the son of a prominent Visalia family. One of the doctor's bullets had shattered a window in Baker's Drug Store and struck the young man sitting inside, killing him instantly.

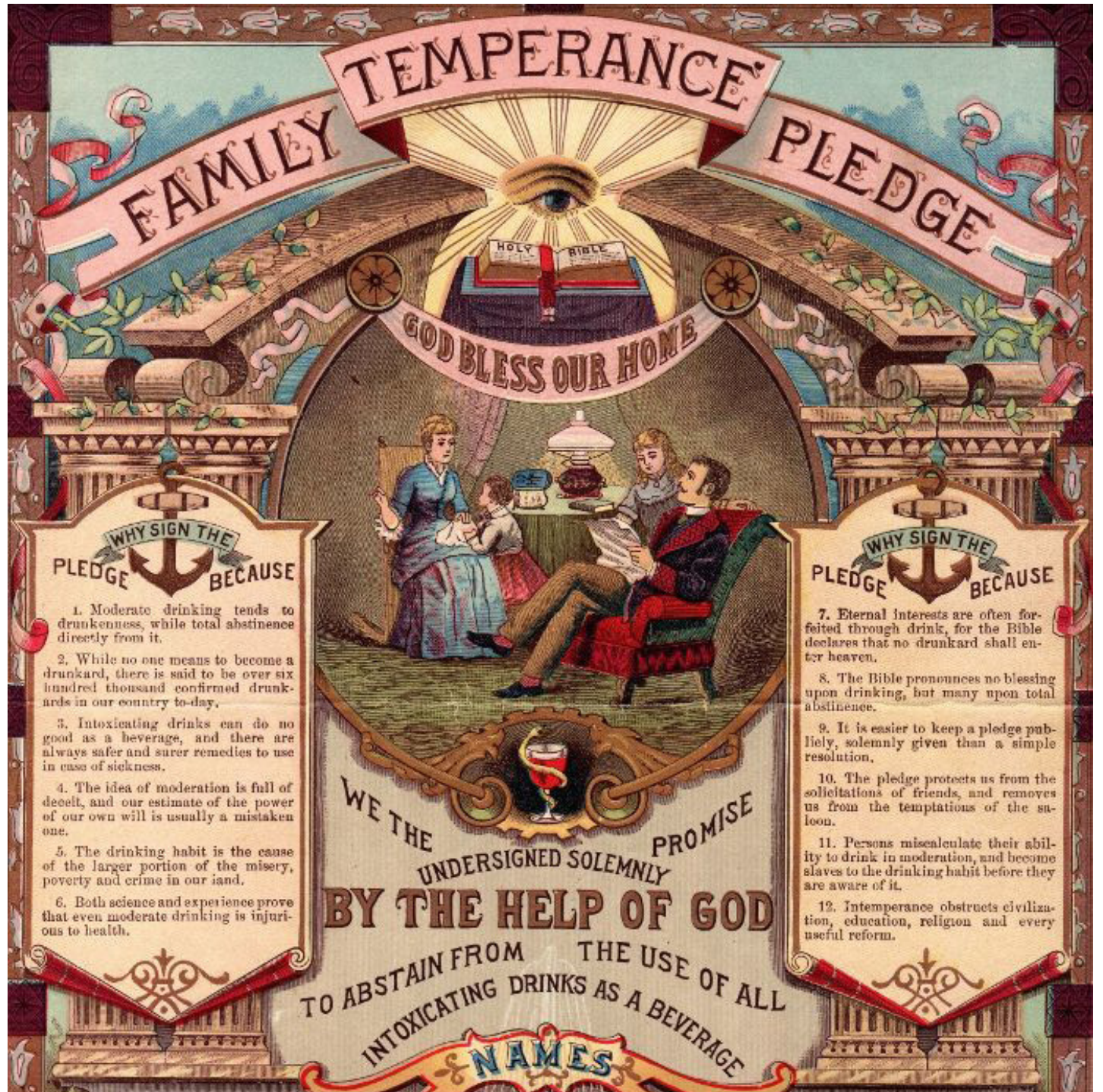
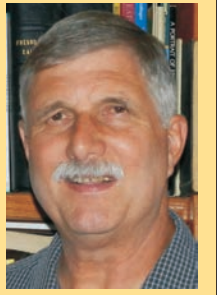
The Visalia newspaper called the killing a "terrible tragedy" and bluntly reported that the "bullet had been fired in unconscious carelessness by a man, whose reason and judgment were obscured by the effects of liquor." The doctor had been under the influence of alcohol.

The boy's family, the community, and the doctor mourned the loss of the young man, and memories of the reckless incident lingered in Visalia for many years. The doctor was forced to live with his careless act until he died in 1884.

Another tragedy in which alcohol played a part involved

a man who had great potential to do good things, but his insatiable urge to drink cut his life short. Jim McCrory had been a Visalia Deputy Marshal, volunteer firefighter and business owner, and was on the fast track to do amazing things, but he had a serious drinking problem.

Dusting Off History  
with Terry Ommen



Anti-alcohol groups used temperance pledges to discourage the use of alcohol. This example is from about 1900.

When sober he was a pleasant and cordial, but when drinking he became mean and violent. After killing several, his problem forced him to leave town.

On December 24, 1872, he unexpectedly returned to Visalia and word spread quickly. He spent his time drinking heavily and by the end of the day he sat inside the El Dorado Saloon highly intoxicated. While in a drunken stupor, he shot a man inside, not just once, but multiple times at close range, killing him. Lawmen quickly took McCrory into custody.

An angry group of citizens gathered at the Tulare County jail and demanded that the sheriff turn the killer over to them for vigilante justice. The sheriff refused. The citizen mob forcibly removed McCrory from his cell, took him to the Court Street bridge that spanned Mill Creek at Center Street, and there they lynched him. Alcohol had claimed more victims.

Not all drinking related in-

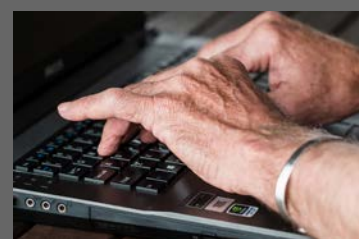
idents resulted in death. One took place in Lovern's Saloon on Main Street in Visalia in 1892. A Civil War veteran named Riley was passing through Visalia on his way from Santa Monica to Yountville, California. Described as nearly 60 years old and feeble, the man stopped off for refreshments at the saloon and to play some cards.

An argument started at one of the card games between Riley and a professional Visalia gambler named Rupert Tomlinson, alias "Tom the Roller." Tom-

linson, the younger of the two, picked up a bottle of gin and hit Riley in the head three times. The victim's face was badly injured, and he was taken to the Visalia House where he was treated by Dr. Pendergrass.

The traveling veteran survived and went on his way. Tomlinson escaped prosecution for his vicious assault and stayed in Visalia.

There is no question about it, the use and abuse of alcohol played a significant role in shaping the history of Visalia.



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