

# living

## SENIOR



VALUABLE  
SERVICE  
OF SMTD

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OUTDOOR  
EXERCISES

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FACTS  
ABOUT  
ALZHEIMER'S

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# Interesting facts about Alzheimer's disease

Of the roughly 55 million people around the world living with dementia, 60% to 70% are estimated to have Alzheimer's disease, reports the Mayo Clinic.

Alzheimer's disease is a progressive brain disorder marked first by mild memory loss that can worsen and lead to problems with communication and an inability to perform the activities of daily life. The condition is named for Dr. Alois Alzheimer. In 1906, Alzheimer noticed changes in the postmortem brain tissue of a woman who had died of unusual mental illness, which included symptoms of language problems, memory loss and unpredictable behavior. Her brain

showed many abnormal clumps and tangled bundles of fibers. According to the National Institute on Aging, doctors now know those clumps are amyloid plaques and the tangles are hallmarks of the disease.

The National Institutes of Health says Alzheimer's disease is the seventh leading cause of death in the United States and is the most common dementia among older adults. While most people are familiar with Alzheimer's, there is much more anyone can learn. The following are some interesting facts about Alzheimer's.

## Gradual decline

The most common symptoms of Alzheimer's involve a gradual decline in memory, reasoning, language, coordination, mood, and behavior.

## Causes

The Cleveland Clinic says the buildup of plaques and tangles from an overabundance of amyloid and tau protein production block the communication between nerve cells and cause brain cells to die, thus contributing to Alzheimer's. Nerve cell death starts in the hippocampus,

the area of the brain that controls memory. Doctors are not entirely sure what causes this protein build-up.

## Family sees first

Many times family members are the first to recognize a friend or loved one forgetting newly learned information, especially recent events, places and names.

## Look for hints

Issues with thinking and reasoning may include not wearing the right clothes for the weather or not knowing to use oven mitts when taking hot items out of the oven.

## Change begins early

Changes in the brain can begin years before initial symptoms appear, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Age is the biggest risk factor for Alzheimer's. Researchers believe that genetics may play a role, but a genetic predisposition to Alzheimer's does not make it an inevitability.

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Alzheimer's disease was first diagnosed at the start of the 20th century. Now, 117 years later, it remains a major health issue affecting millions of people worldwide.

STOCK PHOTO Living Senior





## Retiring firefighter

Congratulations to Rockford Fire's Driver/Engineer Ron Nunez on the completion of your 22-plus years of dedicated service to the City of Rockford and the Rockford Fire Department. We hope you enjoy your well deserved retirement!

ROCKFORD FD PHOTO *Living Senior*



## Deputy Chief retires

All of us at North Park Fire wish Deputy Chief Steven Pash a happy retirement after serving 48 years with the Loves Park Fire Department. Your dedication is amazing! A friendly face that will be missed when visiting the administration building, it is only fitting that your name will now be on that same building.

NORTH PARK FD PHOTO *Living Senior*

## ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

### Live healthy

A healthy lifestyle, which includes adequate physical activity, a nutritious diet, limited alcohol consumption, and not smoking, may help people avoid Alzheimer's.

### Robbed of personality

Alzheimer's can rob a person of his or her personality. As the disease becomes more severe, mood swings, anger, depression, and anxiety may occur. This

is combined with the patient forgetting who family members are and potentially lashing out or being disinterested in visitors.

### No cure

There is no cure for Alzheimer's, but doctors use medical management to improve quality of life for patients and their caregivers. Treatments may help maintain brain health and manage behavioral symptoms.

(METRO CREATIVE)

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## Did you know?

A woman's reproductive years begin with the start of menstruation and end with menopause. These natural phenomena begin at different times for each woman. However, there is a range of ages when they're most likely to take place.

According to Menopause Health, the average age of menopause, which is defined as the absence of menstrual periods for a duration of 12 months,

differs based on geographic location.

Studies have shown that in North America menopause occurs between the ages of 50.5 and 51.4. Menopause typically begins at different times for Europeans (between the ages of 50.1 to 52.8), Latin Americans (43.8 to 53), and Asians between (42.1 and 49.5).

Additional research has

uncovered that a later onset of menopause is associated with positive health effects, which include longer life expectancy, reduced all-cause mortality, decreased risk of cardiovascular disease, and reduced risk of osteoporosis and fractures, among others.

Healthline states that menopause is a gradual process that begins with a

transitional period known as perimenopause. Perimenopause typically lasts for around four years.

Changing hormone levels will cause irregular periods or other symptoms, such as dry skin, weight gain, mood changes, and loss of fullness of the breasts. Hot flashes also affect more than 75 percent of women approaching menopause.

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# Three fun, effective outdoor exercises for seniors



The benefits of spending time in the great outdoors are significant. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, spending time outdoors may improve mental health and help to reduce stress, and the vitamin D the body absorbs while outside can have a positive effect on blood cells and the immune system.

Seniors can benefit from the great outdoors as much as anyone. Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium, which strengthens bones.

That's especially beneficial for seniors, as the National Council on Aging notes that bone density often decreases after age 50, which can increase the risk of fractures.

That's especially so in women over the age of 50, as a 2021 report from Amgen, Inc., indicated women can lose up to 20 percent of their bone density within five to seven years of menopause.

Spending time in the great outdoors also provides a social benefit, encouraging individuals from all walks of life, including seniors, to get out of their homes and spend time with other people.

With so much to gain from spending time

outside, seniors can consider these three outdoor exercises as they seek to maintain or improve their overall health.

**1. Walking:** Walking is free and effective. In fact, WebMD notes that a brisk 30-minute walk can improve blood flow, contribute to a stronger heart, strengthen bones, and even help people sleep better at night.

In addition, a 2022 study published in the journal JAMA Neurology found that people between the ages of 40 and 79 who walked about 9,800 steps per day were 51 percent less likely to develop dementia than people who didn't walk much at all.

**2. Cycling:** Riding a bike is both fun and a great form of outdoor exercise. Though many studies regarding the health effects of cycling have looked at the value of riding a bike to work, a scenario that does not apply to retirees, the results of such studies still offer insight into just how valuable it can be to ride a bike.

For example, a 2020 study published in the journal The Lancet found that people who cycled to work were 24 percent less likely to die of heart disease and 11 percent less likely to develop cancer. Seniors,

whether they are still working or retired, can incorporate cycling into their daily routines and enjoy all the fun and health benefits that riding a bike provides.

**3. Hiking:** Hiking is a bit more strenuous than walking, particularly when individuals choose to traverse steep and/or rocky terrain.

WebMD notes that hiking after age 60 can help people reduce their risk of falls and fractures; lower their risk for a host of ailments, including coronary heart disease, colon cancer and diabetes; reduce blood pressure, even in adults who have already been diagnosed with hypertension; and maintain healthy bones and joints.

Hiking is not a one-size-fits-all activity, so seniors, especially those who would characterize themselves as novice hikers, are urged to speak with their physicians prior to hiking trails that are not flat.

Seniors can consider these three fun activities and others as they answer the call of the great outdoors.

Walking, cycling and hiking offer a great reason to get out of the house and reap the health-related benefits of spending time outside.



# Make a day of it

*Short trips seniors can enjoy*

Vacations to faraway destinations can make lasting memories that families cherish forever. Though day trips might not require the planning of more traditional vacations, these brief getaways can still be a great way to spend a day, especially for seniors.

Day trips typically are based around visits to historic attractions, shopping districts, restaurants, or museums. Since they don't require much in the way of advanced planning, and tend to be easy on the wallet, day trips are ideal for those looking for short getaways.

When considering day trips, seniors should look for locales that are no more than two to three hours away. Such proximity ensures travelers will have plenty of time to see the sights and still get home at a reasonable hour. Need day trip inspiration? Here are some ideas to get started.

## **Botanical gardens**

Botanical gardens are beautiful and relaxing places to spend a day. The Botanic Gardens Conservation International reports that there are between 296 to 1,014 botanical gardens and arboreta in the United States, while there are roughly 70 botanic gardens across Canada. People can tour topiaries, exotic plants, butterfly retreats, acres of rolling landscape, and even bonsai collections.

## **Historic cities and villages**

Touring historic places of register, like Colonial Williamsburg or areas of historic significance, can be a hands-on way to learn about the country's history. They can provide more personal experiences than books and movies alone.

## **Zoos and aquariums**

Interacting with wildlife is on the itinerary when visiting zoos and aquariums, and such establishments typically offer discounted admissions to seniors.

## **Wine tasting**

A recent study from Wine & Vines magazine said there are 8,391 wineries in North America, and that number is on the rise. One is likely to find a winery to visit and sample the wares close to home. Make a day of it by bringing a picnic lunch.

## **Restaurant crawl**

Certain town centers and tourist destinations organize restaurant events where day trippers can enjoy tasting menus from various establishments for a single price. Day trips also can culminate at one



Day trips are enjoyable ventures that seniors can enjoy when they want to get out but not necessarily get away.

STOCK PHOTO Living Senior

specific restaurant. A new restaurant can be visited each month.

## **Museums**

Museums are ideal day trip destinations because many are indoors. That means weather never needs to be an issue while

visiting. With historic artifacts, paintings, sculptures, or niche items like pop art or collectibles, there are museums for just about every interest. For example, railway enthusiasts can visit the National Railroad Museum in Wisconsin, one of the oldest railroad museums in the country.

(METRO CREATIVE)





# social media: *It's not just for kids anymore*

Perhaps due to the popularity of social media among a generation of young people who grew up with it, platforms such as Instagram and Facebook are often associated with people born in the 21st century. However, a 2018 study from the Pew Institute found that 65 percent of adults between the ages of 50 and 64 used Facebook and 68 percent used YouTube.

Social media is often on the receiving end of negative attention, but it's also a potentially valuable tool that can help men and women over 50 stay connected with their communities. That's not always so easy for adults who no longer have children at home. And as its name suggests, social media can help users connect with others who share their interests. Such connections also can be hard to make for adults over 50.

Adults over 50 may be more comfortable with social media now than they were a decade ago, but it's still a good idea to brush up on basic security measures that can help men and women

protect their privacy as they utilize platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

- **Protect your personal information.**

No social media user has the right to access your personal information, including your address, date of birth or other data unique to you. Avoid interacting with anyone who requests personal information, employing the function to block such users from connecting with you when possible. It's also important to keep information about travel plans private. For example, sharing details of an upcoming vacation can serve notice to potential criminals that no one will be in your house, making it a potential target for burglars.

- **Aim for quality, not quantity, when building social media networks.** Avoid accepting friend requests from individuals you don't know. Cyber criminals often gain access to victims via social media, so limit your social media network to people you know and trust.

- **Turn off location information.**

The technology behind social media is impressive and even makes it possible to determine where users are when they tweet or post to other platforms. But many users, especially those concerned about their privacy, don't want to share location information with anyone, much less strangers. Turn off location information and routinely double check to make sure it's still turned off.

- **Discuss others' privacy concerns before posting to social media.** Social media isn't for everyone, and some people may not want photos of themselves or their children posted to platforms like Facebook or Instagram. Prior to posting pictures or information about other people, confirm that they're OK with you doing so.

Adults over 50 are engaging with social media. But no matter how comfortable users become, it's still best to keep various social media safety protocols in mind.

# Money management tips for retirees

What constitutes a perfect retirement is different for everyone. Some people may imagine spending their golden years fishing their days away, while others may aspire to finally embrace their inner globetrotter. Though individuals' retirement dreams differ, every retiree will need money, which only underscores the importance of a wise and disciplined approach to money management.

Average life expectancies have risen considerably over the last several decades. According to estimates from the United Nations Population Division, the average life expectancy in Canada for both sexes is just under 83 years, while it's slightly more than 79 in the United States. Those figures are a welcome sign, but they may inspire a little fear among seniors who are concerned that they might outlive their money. No one knows how long they will live, but everyone can embrace a handful of money management strategies to increase the chances that they won't feel a financial pinch in retirement.

- **Study up on the tax implications of withdrawing from your retirement accounts.** Every retirement investment vehicle, whether it's an IRA or a 401(k), has tax implications. Money withdrawn too early may incur tax penalties, and even money withdrawn long past retirement age could elevate retirees into a new tax bracket that could prove costly. A financial advisor can help retirees determine the tax implications of withdrawing money from their retirement accounts and may even develop a detailed guideline of when withdrawals should be made and how much should be withdrawn in a given year in order to minimize tax liabilities.

- **Prioritize your own needs.** Though retirees, particularly those with children and grandchildren, may feel an obligation to help their families in difficult financial times, generosity can be very costly for adults who have stopped working. Retirees may or may not have opportunities to generate new income, and even those who do likely won't make enough to meet their daily financial needs. Given that reality, retirees must prioritize their own financial needs, including their immediate needs and those they will have for the rest of their lives. Though it might be difficult to turn down loved ones' requests for financial help, retirees must make sure they can pay their bills and maintain a quality of life that won't jeopardize their long-term health.

- **Examine your housing situation.** Equity in a home is a feather in the cap of many retirees. Retirees who own their homes and live in locations with high property taxes might be able to cash in on their equity by selling their homes



and downsizing to a smaller home with lower property taxes. If moving is not a consideration, discuss a reverse mortgage with a financial advisor. A trusted financial advisor can highlight the advantages and disadvantages of reverse mortgages, which are a great option for some people to improve their financial well-being in retirement.

- **Stick to a budget during retirement.** The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that roughly 70 percent of individuals who turn 65 will need long-term care in their lifetimes. That's just one expense retirees must budget for, and

it's more sizable than some people may recognize. In fact, the Fidelity Retiree Health Care Cost Estimate found that the average retired couple age 65 in 2022 will need roughly \$315,000 to cover health care expenses in retirement. And health care costs are just one of many expenses retirees can expect to have. Budgeting and avoiding overspending can ensure retirees have the money they need when they need it.

No one wants to outlive their money in retirement. Various strategies can help retirees effectively manage their money so they can enjoy their golden years without having to worry about their finances.





# Travel options for retirees

Retirement provides individuals with ample time to engage in activities they enjoy. Many seniors spend that newfound free time relaxing and seeing the sights.

Seniors are a travel-friendly demographic. The World Tourism Organization says that, in 1999, more than 593 million international travelers were age 60 years and older. Seniors are projected to take two billion trips annually by 2050. As Baby Boomers and Generation Xers continue to retire, a larger portion of the overall population will have time to travel.

When seniors plan trips, they have many ways to get around in style.

## CRUISING

Cruising can be an ideal way for older adults to travel. Cruise ships depart from ports across the world and travelers can choose from an array of itineraries. People can travel on cruises that are at sea for as few as three to five days to others that are out for weeks at a time.

One reason seniors enjoy cruising is because it's all-inclusive with little extra planning required. Step aboard a cruise ship and enjoy a floating hotel complete with food, lodging, entertainment, shopping, gambling, and much more. Organized excursions at ports of call can add to the thrill of cruising.

## GUIDED TOURS

Escorted tours are another option seniors may want to consider. By working with reputable tour operators, seniors can engage in affordable, safe and comfortable tours via bus, train or other modes of travel. Tour companies take the work out of the trips by handling the details and showcasing the best locales. Tour experts know when to schedule meals and sightseeing to avoid the crowds so that everyone can sit back and relax on their adventures.

## RV EXCURSIONS

Travel by recreational vehicle is a great way for individuals with time on their hands to see the sights up close and personal. When RVing, the time spent traveling is the adventure, and the destination is simply the cherry on top.

The RV industry exploded during the pandemic because it provided a safe way to enjoy a vacation and get away from home. MARVAC Michigan RV & Campgrounds says currently more than nine million households own an RV in the United States. There's no age limit to buying an RV, although the RV Industry Association says the average owner is 48-years-old and married.

RV-friendly campsites and parks enable travelers to mingle with each other,

providing affordable and fun ways to travel.

## TIMESHARES

Seniors who got in on the timeshare bandwagon early in life can choose to enjoy their travel years even further. The timeshare model enables buyers to purchase the right to use particular homes, condos, hotel rooms, resorts, or other accommodations for specific periods of time. For example, some timeshare agreements are for one week each year in a designated location. Seniors with more time on their hands may want to revisit timeshare agreements to increase the frequency in which they can use properties or to find timeshare companies that enable swapping properties with others so that different locales can be enjoyed.

## VISITING FAMILY

Retirees may aspire to spend more time with family members who do not live nearby. Families may want to consider mother-daughter residences or properties with small guest houses so that seniors can stay in the residences when visiting but have some privacy at the same time.

Seniors have many travel options, and retirement is the ideal time to get out and enjoy time away from home.



# How to start a



# seniors' social club

Various changes are associated with aging, and these can be physical, mental and emotional.

Though each person manages these changes in their own way, there's no denying that social interaction can benefit people from all walks of life as they navigate their golden years.

The Foundation for Senior Care says socializing can give seniors a sense of purpose, stimulate the mind, relieve boredom, potentially prevent feelings of depression, and give individuals something to look forward to. The senior living center Aston Gardens says socialization provides a significant boost to the cognitive health of older adults, helping to prevent or delay conditions that can affect memory.

Individuals looking to cultivate healthy social interactions may turn to clubs and other groups. If there's a dearth of opportunities, individuals can start and promote their own social club using this useful guideline.

## TURN TO SOCIAL MEDIA

Meeting details can be posted in a

community bulletin or on a message board at a local house of worship. However, the internet can be a speedy messenger and help like-minded people figure out how to connect.

Facebook groups are one way to organize social clubs, as is the website Meetup.com. The latter is a large online network of offline groups that meet all over the country and the world. The website makes it a snap to organize a local group or find an existing club.

## DECIDE ON THE PURPOSE OF THE GROUP

Social clubs can meet and be organized around any number of themes or interests. Social clubs may meet to discuss gardening, crocheting, reading, or other shared hobbies. Friends also may be interested in doing food and beverage sampling. In such instances, a luncheon social club makes perfect sense.

## CHECK FOR COMPETITION

Conduct a search of groups already meeting within a 50-mile radius to see if an existing group already meets your

criteria. If not, proceed full speed ahead as you establish your own club.

## ESTABLISH CONSISTENT MEETING TIMES

Most people prefer a schedule so they can plan their days accordingly. Choose a regular meeting time and place to hold the social club; otherwise, it can be confusing to accommodate everyone. Inconsistency also can make it hard to get the club off the ground.

## START SMALL AND THEN BUILD

For those new to hosting social clubs, it may be better to begin with only a few members as everyone gets into a groove.

As the group becomes more established, it can be opened up to more members. Although it may be wise to cap membership so that things are more easily managed.

Social clubs are a great way for seniors to stay connected and active. When there isn't one that meets a person's interests, it's relatively easy start one from scratch.

(METRO CREATIVE)





# How to plan for a post-50 career change

Professionals change careers for many reasons. Some do so in pursuit of a higher salary, while others seek a more even balance between their personal and professional lives.

Career changes can renew a person's passion for working, which can grow stale for individuals who have been doing the same job for years on end. Though there's not necessarily a bad time to change careers, there are times when making such a transition carries more risk. Such is the case for individuals over 50. Many individuals over 50 may not have the financial obligations they had when they were younger, as children may have grown up and moved out of the house. That can make changing careers after 50 more palatable. However, some individuals in their 50s may be hesitant to leave the security of an established career behind in favor of something new. Hesitance about job prospects after 50 also can make some less likely to take the plunge into a new career.

Though hesitancy about a career change after 50 is understandable, a recent survey from the American Institute for Economic Research found that 82 percent of workers who responded to the survey were able to successfully transition to a new career

after age 45. In addition, projections from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated that labor force participation among individuals aged 65 and over would increase significantly by 2022, nearly doubling the rate of participation in 1990. Those figures suggest that a midlife career change is not necessarily the same thing as a late-career career change. That should give professionals the confidence they need to successfully transition to a new career.

Individuals mulling a career change after 50 also can take these steps to make such a transition less risky.

- **Pay down as much debt as possible.**

Financial freedom can be an ally for individuals 50 and over who want to change careers. Career changes often require a pay cut, so individuals who can pay off their mortgages, consumer debts and/or auto loans prior to making a career change may find the transition to a lower income goes more smoothly than it might if they're still carrying such sizable financial commitments.

- **Make plans to delay retirement.**

As BLS data indicates, individuals who want to delay retirement certainly won't be alone. Delaying retirement affords individuals more time to save, and a

financial advisor can help adults over 50 come up with a new retirement plan that reflects their willingness to work longer. Delaying retirement also means delaying withdrawals from retirement savings accounts, which can provide peace of mind against a loss of income resulting from a career change.

- **Downsize your lifestyle.** Even a post-50 career change that will require a significant drop in income can be doable for professionals who downsize their lifestyles. Empty nesters can consider moving into a smaller home, while travelers can cut back on the number of trips they take each year. Cutbacks won't necessarily be easy, but they can be worth it for individuals looking for new career challenges.

- **Go back to school.** Much like young people go to college before entering the professional arena, adults over 50 who want to change careers may need to go back to school to improve their career prospects. Remote learning and part-time schooling can make juggling a career and school more manageable.

A successful career change after 50 is entirely possible for individuals willing to make some sacrifices to be happier in their professional lives.



# Valuable service of SMTD still 'Here to get you there'

By Marianne Mueller  
REPORTER

SMTD (Stateline Mass Transit District) bus service provides safe, affordable transportation in Roscoe, Roscoe Twp. Rockton, Rockton Twp., and South Beloit. SMTD stands firm in the motto, "We're here to get you there."

To further help those who need a safe, reliable mode of transportation SMTD expands into different towns with a special service for medical needs provided in Rockford, Loves Park, Machesney Park, Beloit and the Town of Beloit. Additionally they go to 173 and Shirland Ave to hook up with RMTD and BTS.

Under the direction of SMTD Executive Director Sharon Hecox seven Board members are appointed by local municipalities in Roscoe and Rockton each have two members and South Beloit has three.

Each bus is handicap accessible, making it possible for easier transport. "We offer transportation with a smile," Hecox says.

"We have become a very large part of the communities that we serve," said Hecox. "Our start-up money came from both the communities and organizations who generously gave us seed money. Some were municipalities and others were non-profits."

"Initially when we first started SMTD people would ask, 'Will people ride?'"

"Our ridership has grown from 207 rides in the first month; this past May alone we provided 2,158 rides, which does not include free shuttles for this year's OSD Festival. In its first year SMTD and the Rockton Lions Club formed a partnership which today equals thousands of shuttle rides during four-day festival.

"We started with four busses which were received under a grant with the help of Congressman Don Manzullo," Hecox shares. "We currently have seven in our fleet and our anticipating the delivery of two Super Medium Duty buses this fall, which were awarded under State of Illinois, Capital Vehicle Procurement Grant; Grant CVP.

"Over the years, we have retired buses (salvaged) and have received nine new buses, besides the original four," Hecox said.

"Formerly each of these municipalities contracted with an independent contractor to provide transportation for their senior and disabled populations only. With the formation of the Stateline Mass Transit



District service was expanded to include anyone in the community," Hecox said.

Also behind launching the SMTD was strong support from RMTD on behalf of what was at that time an unformed SMTD for the benefit of three local communities. "Rockford Mass Transit District has been a mentor and a friend of SMTD. Without their years of shared expertise and knowledge SMTD could not keep the busses rolling,"

Hecox said.

Another supportive hub of SMTD is the Rockton Township. "The Township has been integral in the success by working with the SMTD through IGA for Executive Director Services," Hecox said. "They have always believed in the Regional necessity for the transportation in the area.

"A lot of people do not know that the Township covers most of Rockton and a good portion of South Beloit Communities in addition to unincorporated areas. Involvement from the very beginning was not only to provide transportation to unincorporated Township residents but to participate in the Regional need."

With affordable ride pricing seniors can feel comfortable getting where they need to go weather shopping or to a Doctor's appointment. Young adults can grab a ride to work, or anywhere else they may want to go. Teenagers or middle to grade school age children may be picked up at home and taken to Boys and Girls Clubs, to a swimming pool, to the library or to any number of activities.

"These days more kids are not getting

their license right at 16 and this provides a safe and reliable transportation option," said Hecox.

"Anyone can be picked up at any specific location. SMTD changes the lives of students and those who cannot get jobs or may have no transportation because of disabilities; some are able to work and to lead productive lives,"

Special Education teacher; Vocational Internship Program instructor at Hononegah High School Justin Wieman said.

The Vocational Internship Program provides work space experience.

"We have a partnership with Sharon at the SMTD. She does and instruction and answers questions and every student get signed up," Wieman said. "Once they realize the independence that SMTD offers to be able to travel for work, leisure, and to get out more on their own it makes a huge difference in their lives. Hundreds of students and graduates of the Vocational Internship Program who have made the transition into the work force have used the service every year and it has been life changing; it is so important to what it does for a culture."

"We feel so fortunate and the cost is amazing and it helps those who are 18-21 who have intellectual disabilities," Wieman adds.

In addition to cash payment, SMTD sells advance coupons for Ticket to Ride online at [www.SMTD.biz](http://www.SMTD.biz) as well as through the Token Transit app. Individuals are able to purchase online or in person advance coupons for rides. Currently, SMTD averages approximately 54% of its ridership are using advance sale ticketing.

Also, for up to the date information on SMTD, riders can join SMTD's text club at 815-269-9199. Riders can get up to date information—such as alternate ride scheduling numbers-- sent directly to their phone.

SMTD once again provided a FREE park and ride shuttle service at the 2023 Old Settlers Days in Rockton. This annual summer festival draws thousands of visitors and features a parade on Saturday. This year, Old Settlers Days took place at Settlers Park in Rockton, IL on June 15-18. SMTD expands into different towns with a special service for medical needs provided in Rockford, Loves Park, Machesney Park, Beloit and the Town of Beloit. Additionally they go to 173 and Shirland Ave to hook up with RMTD and BTS.

MARIANNE MUELLER PHOTO Living Senior





# Aphasia *and its* side effects

Film fans were shocked to learn recently of the health struggles of beloved action movie star Bruce Willis. Willis's health issues were made public in 2022, and since then the star has largely retreated from the public eye.

Willis was initially diagnosed with aphasia, a disorder that affects a person's ability to communicate. Aphasia affects speech, how people write and their comprehension of spoken and written language, according to Mayo Clinic. For Willis, aphasia ultimately proved to be only one component of what was later diagnosed as frontotemporal dementia.

The Cleveland Clinic says aphasia can be a byproduct of illness – like dementia or injury, or a complication of a stroke or traumatic brain injury. When blood fails to supply cells in the brain with oxygen, those cells

die and can produce deficits. Aphasia also may result from conditions that disrupt how the brain works, and those conditions may be temporary, like migraine headaches. While aphasia predominantly affects adults, it can affect children, too. The National Aphasia Association says nearly 180,000 Americans develop aphasia each year.

Families may feel that something is not right when a loved one has trouble finding words, reading or communicating effectively. There are different types of aphasia, and each kind can impact a different component of speech or understanding.

Doctors may discover aphasia when they are treating patients for traumatic brain injuries or by looking at images of the brain. If a physician suspects a patient has aphasia, the doctor may recommend a consultation with a

speech-language pathologist, who can perform comprehensive examinations and testing.

Sometimes aphasia symptoms can start to resolve on their own without treatment. Others may need help regaining the ability to communicate through various methods, says Johns Hopkins Medicine. These can include:

- speech-language therapy
- nonverbal communication therapies, such as computers or pictures
- group therapy for patients and family members
- simplifying language by using short, simple sentences and repeating words or phrases as needed

Aphasia affects communication but it might improve over time. For those who are left with some loss of language skills, therapy may help to address those deficits.





# RECREATIONAL VEHICLES: A BUYERS' GUIDE

A recreational vehicle, also known as an RV or a camper, can be a worthwhile investment for people who want to travel at their leisure. RVs offer the benefit of traversing the open road without having to sacrifice the comforts of home.

The RV market has been hot over the last couple of years as people have looked to RV-ing as a safe way to travel. According to the RV Industry Association, shipments of travel trailers and motorhomes were expected to hit their highest level on record in 2021, with more than 533,000 units sold by year-end.

Sizable purchases are seldom easy, and purchasing an RV is no exception. In addition to choosing the right vehicle, RV owners must learn maintenance, how to drive a large vehicle, towing, and campsite etiquette. Buying an RV is a long-term investment. These pointers can help the purchase go smoothly.

## NEW OR USED?

Purchasing a used RV can help people save money. However, upgrades and repairs may be costly. New RVs have the latest technology and no risk of prior

wear and tear. Insurance premiums will be higher for a new vehicle, and a new purchase can be expensive depending on the features chosen.

## FIGURE OUT FEATURES AND SIZE

Take a hard look at what you are seeking in a camper. Do you want something that is just an alternative to tent camping? Are you interested in an RV that can sleep a crowd?

Do you have a tow hitch and a vehicle capable of towing an RV? These questions and more will determine the style and size of the RV that's right for you. Class A RVs are large, bus-shaped rigs between 20 and 45 feet in length. Class B are sleeper vans and are smaller than Class A. Class C rigs offer size but driveability and are built into a regular truck chassis.

For trailer-style RVs, the options are foldable trailers, travel trailers, toy haulers, and fifth wheel trailers. They vary in size and features; but you'll need a truck to tow them.

## USAGE FREQUENCY

When considering an RV, think about

how often it will be used and where it will be stored when not in use. Garage storage may be challenging on a larger rig, and some housing communities frown upon parking RVs in driveways. This may affect the size you choose as well as the features you need, according to KOA, the RV camp site leader.

## SECURE FINANCING

As with other vehicles, shop around for the best rates on financing; you don't necessarily need to go with the dealer.

Also, when buying a trade-in or used rig, hire a third-party inspector to go over systems to ensure they're in working order.

These are just a few things to consider when looking to purchase an RV.

Buyers should do their homework to get a vacation vehicle that fits their needs and budgets.

RV sales have skyrocketed during the COVID-19 pandemic with families preferring to spend vacation time in a more isolated setting.

STOCK PHOTO Living Senior





# Symptoms suggestive of cataracts

The eyes are amazing organs that utilize various parts working in conjunction with one another.

When working correctly, eyes enable crisp vision and process a vast array of vivid hues. When the eyes are compromised by illness or other conditions, various impairments may be the culprit.

Cataracts often affect aging individuals. The American Academy of Ophthalmology says a cataract forms when the natural lens in the eye, which is responsible for refracting light rays that come in the eye to help a person see, becomes cloudy. As a result, vision can be compromised and seem like a person is looking through a foggy or dirty car windshield, says the AAO.

The National Eye Institute advises that cataracts are common as people get older. More than half of Americans age 80 years or older either have cataracts or have had surgery to remove cataracts. Cataracts may initially produce mild symptoms of blurry or hazy vision, or surroundings may seem less colorful.

Over time, cataracts can lead to vision loss if not treated. The following are some common symptoms of cataracts:

- Cloudy or blurry vision that still occurs despite the usage of corrective prescription glasses or contact lenses
- Colors look faded



- Compromised night vision
- Halos appearing around lights
- Oncoming headlights, lamps, or sunlight seem too bright
- Double vision
- Frequent changes to visit prescriptions

Researchers have identified certain things that may contribute to the changes that occur in the lenses that lead to the formation of cataracts. Exposure to ultraviolet light from the sun or other sources is a main risk factor. Diabetes, hypertension, obesity, smoking,

prolonged use of corticosteroid medications, and other factors come into play as well.

All About Vision says cataracts can be broken down into various types, and some are much more common than others.

- **Nuclear:** These cataracts are the most common and form in the center of the lens, gradually worsening.
- **Cortical:** Cortical cataracts generally start as spoke-like opaque areas at the edges of the lens that grow inward. They tend to be responsible for more night glare.
- **Congenital:** Some people are born with cataracts.
- **Trauma-induced:** These cataracts form anywhere and often develop into a rosette shape.

• **Post subcapsular cataracts:** Initially developing at the central back surface of the lens, these cataracts often develop faster than other types. Vision around bright light and colors is affected.

Eye doctors generally diagnose cataracts during dilated eye exams. The NEI says anyone age 60 or older should get dilated eye exams every one to two years.

Surgery may be recommended only at the point when cataracts start to severely interfere with daily activities. Until then, people can mitigate cataracts by updating eyeglass prescriptions, turning lights up when possible and wearing anti-glare sunglasses.





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