

An Anthology of
Timely Tidbits, Personal Stories, and Fascinating Factoids for

Savvy Jersey Seniors



Advice, Humor, and Miscellaneous Words of "Wisdom"
For & About Seniors

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Welcome!

In this latest edition of *Savvy Jersey Seniors* for July and August of 2023, we present contributor Nancie Merritt's thoughts on the benefits of aging. You'll remember Nancie from her piece on a boating adventure on the Chesapeake in our 2022 Labor Day issue.



We also have a first-person account from *SJS* reader Mary Ann Oster on what it was like to be one of the 10,000 senior athletes competing in Pittsburgh at the National Senior Games this summer.

And, of course, we also have our usual potpourri of information that we feel might make a difference to our senior friends across South Jersey.

By the way, please don't forget that we always welcome your ideas for any topic that you'd like to see us tackle. As we've noted previously, we're especially interested in the avocations and hobbies of our readers.

In that vein, we really want to hear about the volunteer efforts that seniors across South Jersey are making on behalf of the literally thousands of non-profit organizations that serve our region. Just drop us a note at savvyjerseyseniors.com.

Participating In The National Senior Olympics—A First-Hand Account

Here's pickleball fanatic and champion Mary Ann Oster's account of her participation in this summer's National Senior Games.

Mary Ann and her SO both qualified individually and, while Mary Ann and her doubles partner lost a disputed opening round heartbreaker, her SO Steve Willmann and his doubles partner captured fourth place nationally.



"Our qualifying for the National Senior Olympics (35 year Games history) in Pittsburgh coincided several years ago with the COVID pandemic isolation and looking for something safe, social and active to do.

"Friends dropped by with a portable net, paddles and wiffleball and introduced us to pickleball, a blend of

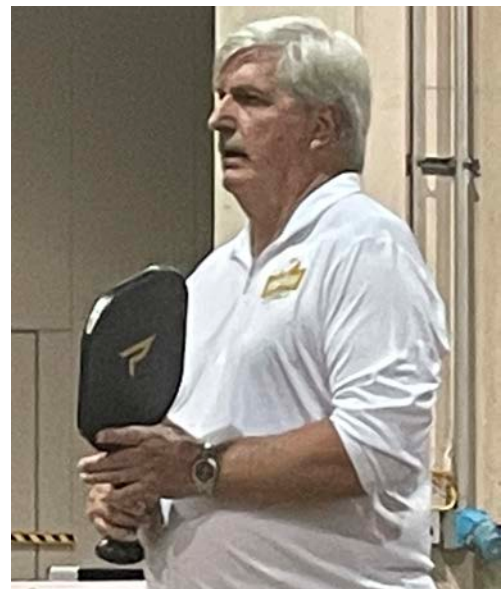
tennis, badminton, and ping pong. Steve (racquetball) and I (tennis) have played other racquet sports although many fellow pickleballers start with no experience. The bottom line is that we were immediately hooked!

"Several local 'fun' tournaments led to a Maryland Senior Olympics tournament. Similar to the Olympics, the Maryland version features 20 medal sports including pickleball, swimming, basketball, volleyball, track & field, and even cornhole. The "senior" qualification is being over 50 years old. Top medal winners qualified for the Nationals held this past July.

"The National Senior Olympics included 11,576 athletes 'together for a display of healthy active aging' representing all 50 states, Barbados, Bolivia, Canada, Chile, Germany, Mexico, Trinidad & Tobago and US Virgin Islands.

"As one would expect, competition was strong with 1,600 participants in pickleball alone, divided by age, Singles—mens and ladies, and Doubles—mens, ladies, and mixed.

"The real thrill was meeting other athletes at the Convention Center, hotel, shuttle busses, restaurants and at the Celebration of Athletes and Parade of States during the Pittsburgh Pirates baseball game. We had several Maryland friends who also competed in pickleball.



"The encouragement and support we gave to each other was inspirational and a true bonding experience!

"The message we would like to convey to seniors: it is NEVER too late to explore new avenues. Just another way of saying that every participant is a winner!"

Who Knew? Lemons Offer Incredible Health Benefits

There's more to lemons than meets the eye. This fruit may pair well with some of your favorite dishes, but it also offers incredible health benefits. Lemons are packed with nutrients. Here are just a few reasons to embrace lemons and their juice:

- Relieves a sore throat. Warm water mixed with honey and lemon is a popular home remedy for people with sore throats. The mixture can provide soothing benefits for a sore throat during cold season.



- May prevent and help fight cancer. Studies have shown lemons may have anti-cancer benefits. The chemical makeup of lemons can help prevent the development of oral tumors, according to one study.

Others have linked citrus fruits and their juices to antitumor effects. Even chemicals in citrus fruits' peels have been linked as potential anticancer agents.

- Prevents kidney stones. Lemon juice is shown to help prevent kidney stones by raising the urine's citrate levels. Citrate binds to calcium, which helps keep kidney stones from forming.
- Aids in digestion. The peel and pulp of lemons contain a soluble fiber called pectin. It promotes the production of digestive enzymes in the liver, helping eliminate waste from your body. Fiber-rich fruits can also help promote regularity, lessening your risk of constipation.
- Helps regulate blood sugar. Eating fruit high in fiber can help keep your blood glucose in line, helping to prevent increases. This can lower the risk of diabetes, or it can help people with diabetes manage their condition.
- Promotes weight loss. The pectin in lemons and their juice helps you feel fuller for longer, which will make your weight loss much more manageable. Studies show that an increase in fiber intake, especially from low-density sources like fruit, can lead to lower body weight and fat.

Median Age of Americans Hits Record High of 39

The median age of Americans hit a record high of nearly 39 in 2022, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

In 2000, the median age was 35, and in 1980 it was 30—meaning half of Americans were older, half younger.

These findings add to the evidence that like many European and Asian countries, the United States is graying, reducing the workforce, and stressing economic and social programs.



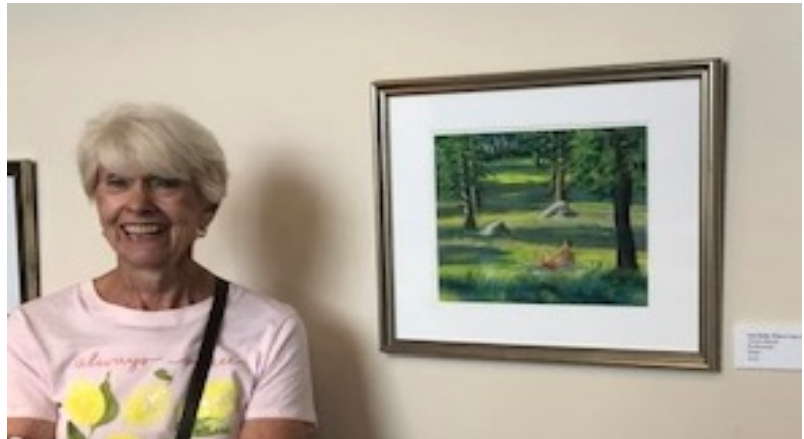
Low birth rates are the primary reason for the rising median age.

The oldest state is Maine, which has a median age of 44.8, with New Hampshire (43.3) not far behind. Utah (31.9), the District of Columbia (34.8) and Texas (35.5) are the youngest, according to the Census Bureau.

Some Thoughts On The Benefits of Aging: Important...But Often Overlooked ?

Regular *SJS* readers will remember prize-winning artist Nancie Merritt's thoughts on her "Adventure on the Radio...on the Chesapeake" in our 2022 Labor Day issue. Now Nancie's back with some thought-provoking observations on the benefits of aging.

"We all read about and experience the many, many negative things about the aging process. As seniors we are well aware of all the doctor's visits, surgeries here and there and weight piling up faster than snow in a blizzard.



Nancie next to her prize-winning pastel "Sunbathe Where You Can," at the 2022 Gloucester County Senior Art Show.

"Then there are the numerous medications along with all the limitations we endure as we get older. But I propose that there are some important, but overlooked benefits to aging.

"Top of the list of benefits for me is that I am retired and no longer need hassle over a train commute to and from work which for me was 6:15 AM to 6:00 or so PM counting travel time. Also, there is the reduced stress that accompanies working with career goals, managing interactions with co-workers and bosses along with the commute.



"One of my favorite benefits is the ability to get up early and dawdle over coffee and a good book for an hour or two before breakfast, meaning that my morning routine is around two to three hours. In colder weather I enhance these times with a fire in my (easy peasy, no mess) gas fireplace. I love the ability to linger over a relaxed, leisurely start to the day.

"On the other hand, some of my cohorts like to stay up late watching TV or reading, then enjoy sleeping late in the morning. Before making any morning phone calls or texts, I always need to recall if the person I plan to reach is an early riser or one who likes to sleep in.

"Not having to work also provides the extra benefit of not having to adhere to a dress code. I love being able to wear jeans whenever and wherever I want. This benefit coincides with more relaxed attire accepted nearly everywhere.

In addition, there is no need to adhere to the latest fashions. Of course, we want to look our best, however, we can pick and choose what we feel looks best on us regardless of current trends.

"Having raised children, if you traveled that route, we mostly find them off with their own careers and their own families. Another benefit is having children who have grown up and are on their own, our reward for our role as parents. And grandchildren are a wonderful blessing. We treasure our time with them. However, it is also a welcome benefit to be able to hand them back to mom and dad at the end of an evening or weekend of babysitting.



"Also, among some of the benefits are the discounts we are eligible to receive. From memberships to organizations, theaters, college courses and on and on, we are offered discounts because of our age.

"And locally, of course, there is that five percent discount for shopping at both ShopRite and Acme on Tuesdays. Speaking of shopping, we can do all our in-person shopping during the week when many younger people are working. Parking is always available during those hours and stores are not crowded.

"I count myself among the fortunate in that I had a good job that afforded me a good retirement income. So, I have been able to spend some of my time traveling. Travel as a senior means that I am not restricted to a set number of vacation or personal days or holidays as when I was working.



"When planning a vacation, I do not need to be concerned about how work will be done while I am gone for a few days. In one of my peak travel years, I took five trips; unthinkable while working. And I can choose to fly mid-week when the prices are lowest. That could never have happened during my career days.

"And there are some physical benefits as well. As an octogenarian, I have noticed that perspiration does not present as much of a problem. (This is likely related to why seniors have trouble with dehydration.) Also, my hair is not as oily as it was when I was young either. In fact, since it turned grey (under all that coloring), it has more body than ever before even though it has been thinning. I do need to use a facial moisturizer now and never needed it before. As my senior sisters will agree, that monthly visitor is not missed at all. And no more worries about an unwanted pregnancy. Also, only recently this year, my hot flashes have diminished to almost nothing. Still there, but hardly noticeable.

"And remember, you can always play the age card when you do not do something or forget something that you should have done. No one can really argue with that."

[Editor's Note: Nancie's art has been exhibited in local galleries and she regularly has paintings on display at the Hammonton Art Center in Hammonton, NJ. In addition, she is the editor of her community's newsletter, the Weatherbee, in Four Seasons at Weatherby in Woolwich Township, NJ.]

Atrial Fibrillation (A-Fib): Is It A Bigger Threat To Women's Brains?

A new study finds that women with a common form of irregular heartbeat may be at greater risk for cognitive decline than men.

Atrial fibrillation, or a-fib, is linked with a higher risk for mental decline and dementia, possibly because it also more than doubles a person's risk for mini-strokes. These episodes, which often go unnoticed, can lead to impaired brain function.

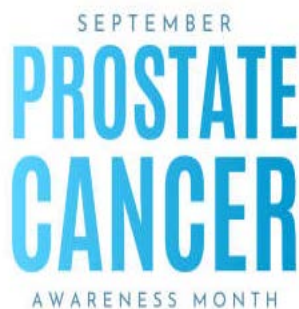
"Women tend to be diagnosed later with a-fib than men, so they already have additional risk factors for cognitive decline, such as [high blood pressure], heart valve disease or heart failure," said lead researcher Kathryn Wood, an associate professor in the School of Nursing at Emory University in Atlanta.



She said women also have a higher risk of stroke and death once a-fib is diagnosed. When strokes do occur, women have double the risk of severe, disabling or fatal stroke compared to men.

People with a-fib have a five-fold increased risk of stroke compared with those without the condition, so having patients take blood thinners to prevent stroke is a key to treating a-fib, Wood said.

Women with a-fib, however, are significantly less likely to receive blood thinners than men, adding to their risk for the silent mini-strokes that may lead to gradual cognitive decline, she said.



Risk Of Prostate Cancer Increases With Age

Prostate cancer is most prevalent in males over age 50 years. African American males and those with a family history of the disease may be at higher risk after age 40 years.

Prostate cancer is one of the most common types of cancer in males worldwide. Age is the most significant risk factor for prostate cancer, as a person's risk increases with age.

Prostate cancer screening involves looking for signs of the disease before it causes symptoms so doctors can treat the cancer before it spreads. Some doctors recommend regular screening for males aged 55–69 years. However, this should be a personal decision.

The risk of prostate cancer increases with age. Based on 2018 research, doctors diagnose roughly 1 in 350 males younger than 50 years old with prostate cancer and about 1 in 52 males between the ages of 50 and 59 years. In males older than 65 years, the incidence of prostate cancer is almost 60 percent.

According to the United States Preventive Services Task Force, males aged 55–69 years should discuss the potential benefits and risks of prostate cancer screening with a doctor before deciding whether to begin screening.

Talk To Your Doctor About Insomnia

As people get older, they often experience changes in routines, behaviors, medications, and overall health. These can increase the risk of developing a sleep disturbance such as insomnia.



For example, a person may develop a new underlying condition, take new medications, and alter their lifestyle following retirement, all of which can put them at a higher risk of developing insomnia.

In addition, evidence suggests that a person will experience changes in their circadian rhythm as they age. These changes mean changes that an older adult may find that their average sleep per night decreases to between 5 and 7 hours until about age 60 when it plateaus.

There are several possible risk factors and causes of insomnia in older adults. They include both underlying medical or psychiatric conditions, as well as reactions to medications.

A person should speak with a healthcare professional if they experience symptoms of insomnia or other sleep disorders. Lack of sleep can affect daily activities, mood, and overall function. Treatment can help improve symptoms and a person's quality of life.

People can aid diagnosis by keeping a sleep diary or journal, so they are aware of symptoms and their duration when speaking with healthcare professionals.



Smartphones Can Monitor Blood Pressure

Engineers at the University of California San Diego have developed a simple, low-cost clip that uses a smart phone's camera and flash to monitor blood pressure at the user's fingertip.

The clip works with a custom smart phone app and currently costs about 80 cents to make. The researchers estimate that the cost could be as low as 10 cents apiece when manufactured at scale.

Researchers say it could help make regular blood pressure regular monitoring easy, affordable and accessible to people in resource-poor communities.

Another key advantage of the clip is that it does not need to be calibrated to a cuff. To

measure blood pressure, the user simply presses on the clip with a fingertip. A custom smart phone app guides the user on how hard and long to press during the measurement.



FTC May Amend Funeral Rule

Rules established before the internet age may be in for a major overhaul to protect consumers in today's everything-online world, and the first business niche to go under the Federal Trade Commission's (FTC) update microscope is funeral home operators.

When the FTC established its Funeral Rule in 1984 – a requirement that funeral home operators disclose prices up front—the rule only required funeral providers to show a Casket Price List (CPL) and Outer Burial Container Price List when someone asks in-person about those items or their prices, and before showing the items or pictures of them.

Interestingly enough, the current rule doesn't require disclosure by phone or any other means except "in person"—which, by the way, can be at a hospital or another place.

"Funeral homes are allowed to provide prices by phone or email or online. And if they do, they must be accurate. But they're not required," said Teresa Murray, Consumer Watchdog, at U.S. PIRG (Public Interest Research Group).

Tips For Remembering When To Take Your Meds

Taking your medication as prescribed is one of the most important things you can do for your health. Not following doctor's orders about how and when to take your medication can impact you in many ways. It can impact your quality of life, your health outcomes, and your overall healthcare costs.



If you often find yourself forgetting to take your medications, these tips to remember taking medications may help:

- Use weekly pill boxes. Labeled with each day of the week, plastic pill boxes are a cheap and easy way to organize your pills. You can buy them with one row — or with two rows if you take pills both in the morning and evening.
- Download a pill-tracking app. Going high-tech can help you remember to take or refill your medications. Consumer Reports recommends CareZone, Medisafe, and Round Health as free pill apps with good online privacy policies.
- Use "smart" medication containers. Connected to the Internet, "smart" bottles and "smart" pill boxes beep to let you know when it's time to take your next dose. Some also count the number of times you open them, so you know if you've taken your dose for that day or time.

- Ask your pharmacist about convenience packaging. With convenience packaging, you receive all your medications bundled together and labeled with the dates and time of day to take them. This can help you avoid confusion if you take more than one medication several times a day.

Is Your Skin Sensitive To The Sun...Because of Your Meds?

Is your medicine making your skin sensitive in the sun? According to a recent report from AARP, these five drugs can put you at greater risk for sunburn-like symptoms, a rash or other unwanted side effects:

- Antibiotics: tetracycline (Panmycin), doxycycline (Vibramycin), ciprofloxacin (Cipro), ofloxacin (Floxin)
- Antifungals: griseofulvin (Gris-PEG)
- Antihistamines: loratadine (Claritin), cetirizine (Zyrtec)
- Statin cholesterol medications: simvastatin (Zocor), atorvastatin (Lipitor), lovastatin (Mevacor), pravastatin (Pravachol)
- Diabetes medications: sulfonylureas like glipizide (Glucotrol), glyburide (Micronase)



Excess Weight Can Affect Your Brain

Most people know that carrying around extra weight can be harmful for the heart. But did you know it can affect your brain as well?

Everybody's brain changes as they age, according to the National Institute on Aging. Memory slipups can happen more frequently, and multitasking may become more difficult. Excess weight, particularly the kind stored in your belly, stored just adds fuel to the fire, experts say.



In recent research, excess weight has been shown to:

- Reduce blood flow to the brain. In a 2020 study involving brain scans of more than 17,000 people, researchers found that as weight went up, blood flow in the brain went down. Slower blood flow in the brain has been linked to cognitive decline and dementia.
- Shrink the brain. Using MRIs, researchers from the University of Pittsburgh found that people who were overweight had 4%

less brain volume, and their brains looked eight years older on average than those of people who were of normal weight. People with obesity had 8 percent less brain volume and brains that appeared 16 years older.

- Reduce cognitive abilities. Research points to a link between extra weight and everyday thinking and reasoning skills, collectively known as cognitive function. A study published in 2022 found that excess fat, and especially belly fat, was associated with lower cognitive scores.

What's Passing For Senior Humor These Days (With Apologies to Hooters!)

Two guys grow up together, but after college one moves to New York and the other to Washington. They agree to meet every ten years in Florida to play golf and catch up with each other.

At age 32 they meet, finish their round of golf and head for lunch. "Where you wanna go?" "Hooters." "Why Hooters?" "They have those servers with the big you-know, the tight shorts and the gorgeous legs." "You're on."

At age 42, they meet and play golf again. "Where you wanna go for lunch?" "Hooters." "Again? Why?" "They have cold beer, big screen TVs, and side action on the games." "OK."

At age 52 they meet and play again. "So where you wanna go for lunch?" "Hooters." "Why?" "The food is pretty good and there's plenty of parking." "OK."



At age 62 they meet again. After a round of golf, one says, "Where you wanna go?" "Hooters." "Why?" "Wings are half price and the food isn't too spicy." "Good choice"

At age 72 they meet again. Once again, after a round of golf, one says, "Where shall we go for lunch?" "Hooters." "Why?" "They have six handicapped parking spaces right by the door and they have senior discounts." "Great choice."

At age 82 they meet and play again. "Where should we go for lunch?" "Hooters." "Why?" "Because we've never been there before." "Okay, let's give it a try."

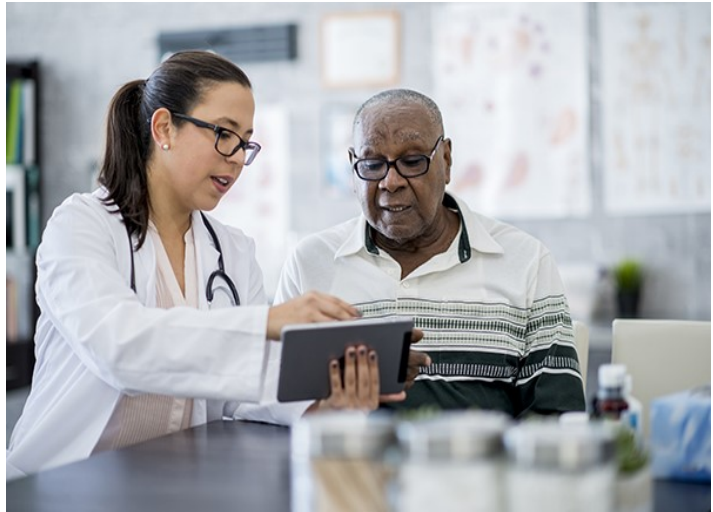
Five Ways To Get The Most Out Of A Visit To Your Doctor

Have you ever left your doctor's office realizing you forgot to ask an important question? Or were you frustrated because you didn't fully understand the doctor's instructions? These tips may help:

1. Decide what questions are most important to ask the doctor. Before your appointment, pick three or four questions or concerns that you most want to talk about with the doctor. You can tell him or her what they are at the beginning of the appointment, and then discuss each in turn. If you have time, you can then go on to other questions.
2. Stay focused on why you are there. Although your doctor might like to talk with you at length, each patient is given a limited amount of time. To make the best use of your time, stick to the point. For instance, give the doctor a brief description of the symptom, when it started, how often it happens, and if it is getting worse or better.

3. Be honest with your doctor. It is tempting to say what you think the doctor wants to hear, for example, that you smoke less or eat a more balanced diet than you really do. While this is natural, it's not in your best interest.

4. Share your point of view about the visit with your doctor. Tell the doctor if you feel rushed, worried, or uncomfortable. If necessary, you can offer to return for a second visit to discuss your concerns. Try to voice your feelings in a positive way.



5. Remember, the doctor may not be able to answer all your questions. Even the best doctor may be unable to answer some questions. Most doctors will tell you when they don't have answers. They also may help you find the information you need or refer you to a specialist. If a doctor regularly brushes off your questions or symptoms as simply a part of aging, think about looking for another doctor.

Some Random Thoughts On Aging...

"The wisest are the most annoyed at the loss of time."
— *Dante Alighieri*

"There is a fountain of youth: it is your mind, your talents, the creativity you bring to your life and the lives of people you love. When you learn to tap this source, you will truly have defeated age."
— *Sophia Loren*

"You don't stop laughing when you grow old, you grow old when you stop laughing."
— *George Bernard Shaw*

The People Who Have Helped Make SJS Happen:

Our contributors have included (in alphabetical order) Daryl Albury, Karen Berg, Lucille Bondi, Lou Ciavolella, Courtney Colletti, Deanne Farrell, Bev Harting, Churchill Huston, Janis Stuart, Antoinette Maciolek, Nancie Merritt, Vikki Monaghan, Joe Murphy, Mary Ann Oster, Joanne Rafferty, Charlotte Ryan, Arlene Scornavacca, Barry Sparks, Phyllis St. Onge, Phyllis Weber, and Jared Willmann.

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And remember that if you have story ideas, comments, or criticisms, you can e-mail us at savvyjerseyseniors.com.

