

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 September and October of 2023, we present contributor Joanne Rafferty's thoughts on volunteering for the regional meals-on-wheels organization, MANNA, after moving back into Center City from Hopewell, NJ.



The MANNA name, by the way, is actually an acronym that stands for Metropolitan Area Neighborhood Nutrition Alliance.

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, remember that 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—stories like the one that follows from Joanne. Just drop us a note at savvyjerseyseniors.com.

MANNA: Twenty-One Million "Medically-Tailored Meals" Created and Delivered Across the Region

Here is Joanne's story about how one of the organizations for which she volunteers has helped more than 40,000 Philadelphia and South Jersey folks by creating and delivering more than 21 million "medically tailored meals" to people suffering from 85 different illnesses.

"In mid-January I moved back to Center City Philadelphia from Hopewell, NJ. While I was eager to re-discover the city's arts and cultural offerings, I was also eager to find interesting volunteer opportunities in the city.





"Friends had told me about MANNA (Metropolitan Area Neighborhood Nutrition Alliance) and its 33-year history of improving the health and quality of life of more than 40,000 Philadelphia and South Jersey area neighbors by creating and delivering more than 21 million nourishing meals. So, I went to their website and learned that MANNA uses medically-tailored meals created in their in-house kitchen and professional nutrition counseling to improve health for people with more than 85 different serious illnesses.

"Intrigued, I decided to take the online orientation and sign up as a volunteer. For the past five months I have worked weekly in their kitchen packaging meals and serving as a driver delivering meals to clients in Philadelphia and South Jersey neighborhoods.

"Since my time available for volunteering varies from week to week, I can look at the website to see the kitchen work needs for the week ahead or look at the weekly email of driver needs and sign up for the activity and day that fits my schedule that week.

"I have learned that volunteers have been at the heart of MANNA since its founding. Each year, more than 9,400 volunteers work in the kitchen chopping, dicing, and packaging meals, as well as delivering meals to clients' homes, enabling MANNA to provide clients with three meals a day, seven days a week at no cost to them.



"And I must say that I'm very proud to be one of those 9,400. The kitchen-help shift for packaging meals is three hours and can start as early as 7 AM. (The last shift is 5 PM.)



"I choose to work the 10 AM or 1 PM shift. In my MANNA-provided disposable apron, gloves and hairnet. I join eight other volunteers at one of the tables with large plastic containers of the menu items for the meal we are packaging.

"We fill the containers with food still warm from the ovens and put the meals on a machine that covers them with shrink wrap. After adding labels, we load them on racks which are stored in the walk-in freezers until delivery. The pace is brisk, but there is always time to learn a bit about my fellow volunteers on the line.

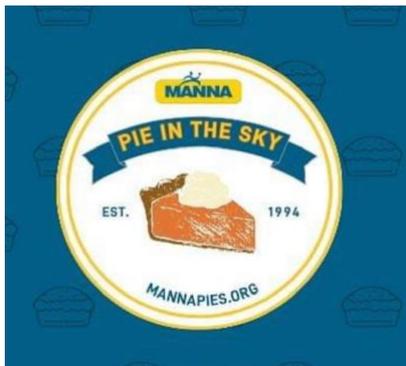
"Some are part of a group from a local business doing a volunteer project together, others are graduate students, community members, or retirees like myself. The sense of camaraderie on the line is palpable, the time passes amazingly quickly, and there's never a doubt it is time well-spent!

"I enjoy delivering the meals, too. At 9 AM I drive to the MANNA kitchen at 420 N 20th Street (near the Barnes Foundation), and frozen meals for the week for about six clients are brought to my car. Each bag of food has a colored dot on it, designating the type of diet the client must have. Since the bags are heavy, and I never know where I'll find parking, I bring my fold-up wire food cart to bring the meals to the clients' doors. Some clients are in row house apartments, and some are in senior citizen buildings. The clients all live within 10 minutes of each other. I put the first destination into my GPS, call the client to let them know I am coming and am on my way.

"Each shift is little more than two hours. The clients are always so very appreciative, both of the meals MANNA provides and of my efforts delivering them. And I find it enjoyable and satisfying work, a win-win for us both," Joanne concludes.

Help MANNA—Buy a Holiday Pie...Or Three!

If you're interested in learning more about MANNA, just go to MannaPA.org. But you can help out AND jump start your holiday dessert reparations by taking advantage of MANNA's "Pie in the Sky" fundraiser.



It's MANNA's largest annual fundraiser—when they bake, sell and distribute over 10,000 pies during the Thanksgiving holiday season.



Volunteers help with the baking and packaging, and community members can buy a pie—apple, berry, sweet potato,

pumpkin, pecan, gluten-free blueberry, or new Soom Chocolate Tahini. Visit mannapiess.org for more information.

Time to Re-Think Your Blood Pressure Meds?

We all know that high blood pressure—also known as hypertension—occurs when blood pushes against the walls of your vessels (arteries) more forcefully than normal. Medications are one way to manage high blood pressure.

What you may not know is that many medications for high blood pressure have been around for decades...and that some older medications can cause serious side effects.

According to Rachel Bond, MD, and Michelle Weisfelner Bloom, MD, FACC, FHFSa, writing for GoodRx, some blood pressure medications used in the past may no longer be the best choice for controlling your blood pressure.



There are four classes of medications recommended by the most recent medical guidelines: thiazide diuretics, angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors, angiotensin receptor blockers (ARBs) and calcium channel blockers.

If you take medication to lower your blood pressure, Drs. Bond and Bloom urge you to check with your healthcare provider to make sure you're on the right treatment.

New Drug for Hot Flashes and Night Sweats

The Food and Drug Administration has approved a new non-hormonal medication to treat the hot flashes and night sweats that often plague people during menopause. While not quite as effective as the standard treatment—estrogen or estrogen coupled with progestin—the new prescription drug, fezolinetant, will be welcomed by those who struggle with vasomotor symptoms—episodes of intense heat along with sweating and flushing—and won't or can't take hormonal therapy, such as breast cancer survivors.



The pills will be marketed as Veozah to treat moderate to severe hot flashes, the most common symptoms caused by menopause which can last for several years or as long as a decade or more.

"I'm so excited about this FDA ruling," said Dr. Mary Rosser, an assistant professor of women's health at the Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons and director of Integrated Women's Health at Columbia. "We're talking about something that is going to be powerful."



Don't Underestimate Value of 11 Minutes of Daily Exercise

Just 11 minutes of moderate physical activity per day may lower one's risk of premature death, according to an analysis recently published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*.

The researchers analyzed data from nearly 200 studies involving a total of more than 30 million participants from around the world, who self-reported their activity levels for at least three years. The team then

looked at the association between physical activity and 22 distinct health outcomes, including 14 types of cancer, making it one of the largest analyses of its kind.

The results indicated that people who were moderately active for 75 minutes per week—meaning they engaged in activities like hiking, walking briskly, cycling to work or playing actively with their children—had lower risks of overall mortality, heart disease, stroke and various cancers relative to people who were not active.

The researchers estimated that 1 in 10 premature deaths, defined by the World Health Organization as deaths between ages 30 and 70, tallied in their analysis could have been prevented if everyone had engaged in moderate physical activity for 75 minutes per week.

The new research underscores the idea that even a little physical activity is better than none.

Cardiac Survival Rates Less Than Many People Think

Many people learn what they know about CPR from television. In 2015 researchers reported that survival after CPR on TV was 70%. In real life, people similarly believe that survival after CPR is over 75%. Those sound like good odds, and this may explain the attitude that everyone should know CPR, and that everyone who experiences cardiac arrest should receive it.

But the true odds are grim. In 2010 a review of 79 studies, involving almost 150,000 patients, found that the overall rate of survival from out-of-hospital cardiac arrest had barely changed in thirty years. It was 7.6%. Bystander-initiated CPR may increase those odds to 10%. Survival after CPR for in-hospital cardiac arrest is slightly better, but still only about 17%. The numbers get even worse with age. A study in Sweden found that survival after out-of-hospital CPR dropped from 6.7% for patients in their 70s to just 2.4% for those over 90. Chronic illness matters, too. One study found that less than 2% of patients with cancer or heart, lung, or liver disease were resuscitated with CPR and survived for six months.



Diabetes Drugs and Weight Loss

Ozempic, a Type 2 diabetes medication, is a drug in a new category of medications changing how ordinary people, as well as medical experts, think about obesity, a condition that affects nearly 4 in 10 people 60 and older.

The drugs include Ozempic's sister medication, Wegovy, a weight loss drug with identical ingredients, which the FDA approved in 2021, and Mounjaro, approved as a diabetes treatment in 2022. (Ozempic was approved for diabetes in 2017). Several other drugs are in development.



The medications reduce feelings of hunger, generate a sensation of fullness, and have been shown to help people lose an average of 15% or more of their weight. But how these medications will affect older adults in the long run isn't well understood. (Patients need to remain on the drugs permanently or risk regaining the weight they've lost).

Because Medicare doesn't cover weight loss medications, and they can cost more than \$10,000 a year, seniors' ability to get the new drugs is restricted. There is an exception: Medicare will cover Ozempic and Mounjaro if an older adult has diabetes, because the insurance program pays for diabetes therapies.

Water Aerobics: A Fun Way to Work Out

Aquatic exercise is a fun way to work out that doesn't put pressure on bones, joints or muscles. Water creates natural resistance that supports the weight of the body and reduces impact on joints and muscles. Water exercise and therapy can also reduce intensity of pain, improve range of motion, build strength, and generally improve the level of functioning in everyday life.

Here are some situations in which it could benefit you and why:

- *You have joint problems.* If you have joint pain or stiffness, arthritis, backaches, achy knees or sore hips, aquatic exercise may not cure your symptoms, but it can give you temporary relief. The buoyancy of water lessens stress on your joints. Water slows movement and allows time to focus on posture and alignment, helps reduce inflammation and improves joint range of motion, all of which can reduce pain.

- *You have heart disease.* The American Heart Association recommends at least 150 minutes (2.5 hours) a week of aerobic or heart-pumping physical activity such as running, walking and swimming to remain healthy. Water aerobics can be used simply to get exercise or as a form of therapy.



- *You are stressed.* Exercise helps relieve stress, and water exercise is no exception. For most people, participating in water exercise and therapy can be a way to decompress. Exercise reduces your body's level of stress hormones and stimulates the production of endorphins, chemicals in the brain that elevate your mood.

- *You are overweight.* If you're seriously overweight, you may not be able to tolerate the stress of land-based exercise. The buoyancy of water takes that stress off your joints. When you exercise in water, you put less weight on your joints, making it possible, if you're carrying extra weight, to increase your endurance and spend more time working out.

- *You want to make more friends.* Any group exercise, including water exercise, builds community. You'll meet people with similar needs and find support and bond. For many, especially older adults, time in the water offers a fun way to interact with others while improving their health.

When Is Cataract Surgery a Good Idea?

You've always had good eyesight, but you've started to notice a gradual blurring of your vision and you're experiencing a halo-like glow around lights at night. Could it be time for cataract removal surgery? Cataracts are very common as people age. In fact, more than half of all Americans aged 80 and older either have cataracts or have had surgery to remove cataracts. A cataract is cloudiness of the natural lens inside the eye. The lens is the clear part of the eye that helps to focus light.

At first, you may not even notice that you have a cataract. But over time, cataracts can

make your vision blurry, hazy, or less colorful. They may affect your ability to read, drive, or do other activities of daily life. Over time, cataracts can lead to vision loss—your eye doctor can help you decide when treatment is recommended.

“Most cataracts are age-related, meaning they happen because of normal changes in the eyes as you get older,” says Wesley Adams, MD, ophthalmologist, UPMC Williamsport.



“But cataracts may also be caused by diabetes, eye injuries, or after surgery for another eye problem, such as glaucoma or retina surgeries.

“Mild cataracts may not initially need treatment or may only need a change in your glasses prescription. When a cataract becomes bad enough, or begins interfering with your activities of daily living, surgery is generally recommended.”

Splitting Pills Can Be Unsafe

Splitting pills is a common practice some people use to save money on prescription medication. But is it a safe practice? It’s safe to split a particular medication if the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved it for splitting.

Here’s how to know if the FDA approves a medication for splitting:

- You’ll find the FDA approval to split printed in the “HOW SUPPLIED” section of medication printout and package insert. This is the paperwork you’ll get from the pharmacist when you pick up your prescription.
- The tablet will have a score mark, or indentation, where you should split it.

If you’re unsure or have any questions, ask your pharmacist or health care provider. According to SafeMedication.com, you should never split the following:

- Anti-seizure medication.
- Blood thinners.
- Combination medications that contain more than one active ingredient.
- Chemotherapy medications.
- Contraceptives.

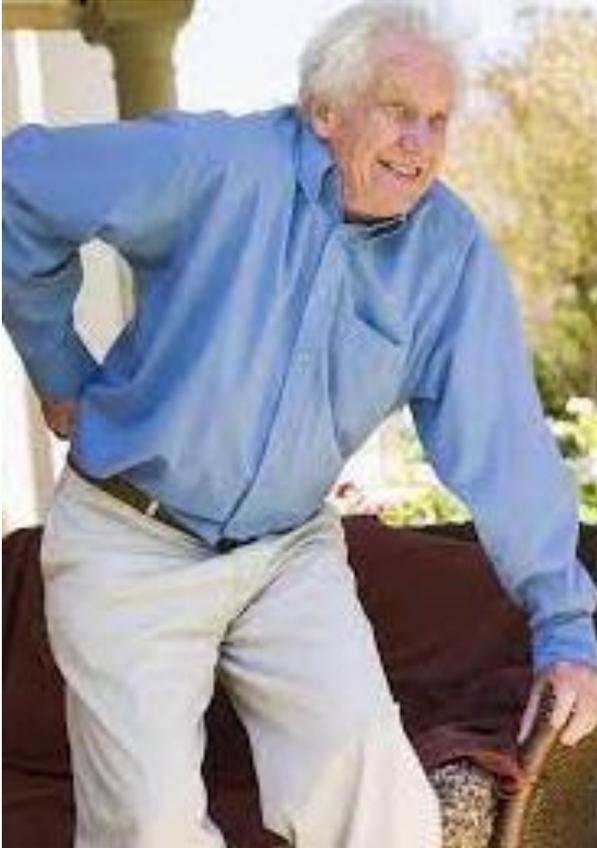


If the FDA approval to split isn’t on the medication printout or insert, it’s not safe to split. That’s true even if the medication appears to have a score mark.

Your medication dosage helps you control health symptoms and keep health conditions from getting worse. If you’re splitting pills to save money, you may end up taking less than the amount prescribed. Taking less medicine than you need can affect your physical and mental health.

80% of Us Will Experience Back Pain

If you've ever asked, "Is back pain normal?" the answer is yes. In fact, back pain is common. About eight in ten people will have back pain at some point during their lives.



But knowing back pain is common brings little comfort when you're the one in pain. It can feel anything but normal. Severe pain can make even the smallest movements feel excruciating.

Most back pain goes away on its own, improving over the course of several days. But some people have chronic back pain. This is pain that lasts for more than three months.

Some back pain comes on slowly, like a dull ache that gets worse over time. But acute back pain is pain that comes on suddenly, often without warning. People sometimes describe it as their back "locking up."

Muscle strain and muscle spasm are two common causes of acute low back pain. You can strain a muscle by moving in ways you don't usually move. Lifting something heavy is one of the most common causes. But sometimes you can strain a muscle doing familiar activities, like reaching to pull off shoes. You may not even know what you did to cause the pain. Doing the same movement over and over can also cause pain over time.

Most acute back pain will go away on its own. However, it may take a long time. As long as the pain continues to improve each day, it's a good sign.

Six Myths About Falling

Many people think falls are a normal part of aging. The truth is, they're not. Most falls can be prevented—and you have the power to reduce your risk. Exercising, managing your medications, having your vision checked, and making your living environment safer are all steps you can take to prevent a fall.

Here are six common falling myths:

- *Falling happens to other people, not to me.* Many people think, "It won't happen to me." But the truth is that 1 in 4 older adults fall every year in the U.S.
- *Falling is something normal that happens as you get older.* Falling is not a normal part of aging. Strength and balance exercises, managing your medications, having your vision checked, and making your living environment safer are all steps you can take to prevent a fall.
- *If I limit my activity, I won't fall.* Some people believe that the best way to prevent falls is to stay at home and limit activity. Not true. Performing physical activities will actually help

you stay independent, as your strength and range of motion benefit from remaining active. Social activities are also good for your overall health.

- *As long as I stay at home, I can avoid falling.* Over half of all falls take place at home. Inspect your home for fall risks. Fix simple but serious hazards such as clutter, throw rugs, and poor lighting. Make simple home modifications, such as adding grab bars in the bathroom, a second handrail on stairs, and non-slip paint on outdoor steps.



- *Muscle strength and flexibility can't be regained.* While we do lose muscle as we age, exercise can partially restore strength and flexibility. It's never too late to start an exercise program. Even if you've been a "couch potato" your whole life, becoming active now will benefit you in many ways—including protection from falls.

- *Using a walker or cane will make me more dependent.* Walking aids are very important in helping many older adults maintain or improve their mobility. However, make sure you use these devices safely. Have a physical therapist fit the walker or cane to you and instruct you in its safe use.



Can Kundalini Yoga Lead to a More Efficient Memory?

Yoga is known for its benefits to both the mind and body. And a gentle form of yoga may be an ideal early intervention technique for older women at risk of Alzheimer's disease, new research suggests.

In a small study involving kundalini yoga, participants reported that its stress-relieving effects translated to more efficient memory.

Kundalini yoga involves chanting, singing, breathing exercises, meditation and gentle poses with the aim of increasing awareness in the mind and body. Previous scientific research has found that yoga can help regulate blood pressure and increase cardiorespiratory fitness, as well as benefit

the hippocampus, or the region in the brain that is associated with memory.

In this study, scientists examined the effects of kundalini yoga versus memory enhancement training (MET) on the hippocampus in 22 women mostly in their 60s.

All had reported a decline in memory function, and also had one or more cardiovascular risk factors, such as a recent heart attack and diabetes, which are known to increase the likelihood of developing Alzheimer's.

Both the yoga and MET groups had an hour training session a week, in addition to daily homework or practice sessions, for a total of 12 weeks.

Using MRI scans, the researchers studied participants before and after the 12-week period and found that yoga may benefit the region of the hippocampus impacted by stress. They also saw more of an increase in connectivity in the region, compared to participants who did MET, which may suggest long-term neural benefits of the practice.

Participants who did MET, however, were found to have more improvement in their brains than yoga participants when it came to integrating information from their senses into their memories, which, according to the study, could support better memory reliability.

Arthritis Can Affect Any Body Joint—Including Your Feet

Arthritis can affect any joint in the body, including the ones in your feet. In fact, many types of arthritis can affect the feet, but the most common type is osteoarthritis.

Treatment of foot arthritis includes both medications and non-medication options. You may not think about your feet until you feel something wrong with them. But when they hurt, it can be hard to go about your daily activities.

Arthritis means pain or inflammation of a joint—the area where two bones meet. There are 33 joints in each foot, so plenty of opportunity for arthritis.

When it comes to feet, a lot of different things can cause arthritis, including:

- Osteoarthritis
- Gout
- Autoimmune arthritis (like rheumatoid arthritis or psoriatic arthritis)
- Post-traumatic arthritis

There are different causes for each specific type of arthritis:

- Joint wear and tear (osteoarthritis)
- A prior foot injury like a fracture (post-traumatic arthritis)
- Overactive immune system (autoimmune arthritis)
- High levels of uric acid in the blood (gout)



Overusing a joint usually can lead to the development of arthritis over time. It can also make other types of arthritis worse.

So, if you have any of the types of arthritis listed above, overuse or movement-related injury can trigger a flare of your arthritis. Cold and rainy weather can also worsen arthritis symptoms. Gout causes symptoms to quickly develop, often overnight. This pain is usually pretty severe. Pain, swelling, redness, and warmth often start in the big toe joint but may also involve the whole foot. Other types of arthritis start slower, taking weeks, months, or even years to develop.



Symptoms are usually limited to joints. So, arthritis typically spares the arches and heels because there are no joints in these areas.

Treatment for foot arthritis depends on the cause. But there are some treatments that may help all types of arthritis. These include both medications and non-medication options.

Medication options include:

- Over-the-counter pain medications (like acetaminophen and ibuprofen)
- Topical pain medications (like diclofenac gel)
- Herbal supplements (like turmeric)
- Prescription medications (which tend to be specific to the type of arthritis)

Non-medication options include:

- Better foot support: Changes in your shoes or orthotics can help you stand and walk.
- Physical therapy: Physical therapists (PTs) can personalize programs to relieve stress on your foot joints. They can also help with foot support and mobility assistance devices.
- Weight loss: Extra weight puts extra stress on the joints. So less weight to carry often can reduce pain.

The good news is that you have many options, including maintaining a healthy weight, taking your medications as directed, and avoiding shoes such as high heels.

Seven Surprising Retailers That Offer Senior Discounts

AARP reports that supermarkets aren't the only retailers offering discounts to seniors.

Big retailers, such as Kohl's and Rite Aid, offer the same discount across the chain. At other smaller, independent chains, such as Goodwill, it can vary by store.

With that in mind, here's a list of seven retailers that reward you for getting older.

1. Kohl's

Locations: Over 1,100 stores in every state but Hawaii

Age for discount: 60

Deal: On Wednesdays, shoppers 60 and older can get a 15 percent discount on in-store purchases. Dollar-off coupons, including Kohl's cash, will be applied before the age-specific discount.

However, other percent-off coupons can't be combined

with this deal. Also, the discount is good for one checkout per Wednesday.



2. Rite Aid



Locations: Over 2,200 stores in 17 states including California, Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, New York and Washington

Age for discount: 65

Deal: Shoppers get 5X Rite Aid Reward points on the first Wednesday of every month. You must be a member of the free Rite Aid Rewards program. Members also get a

free consultation with a store pharmacist. Every 1,000 points equals \$2 of BonusCash redeemable on future eligible purchases.

3. Pep Boys Locations: Over 900 stores in 36 states including Alabama, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Texas, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and North Carolina—plus Puerto Rico

Age for discount: 55

Deal: Customers 55 and older with a valid ID get a 10 percent discount on any in-store purchase.



Walgreens

4. Walgreens

Locations: Over 9,000 stores in all 50 states plus the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands

Age for discount: 55

Deal: On the first Tuesday of the month, customers age 55 and older who are members of the myWalgreens rewards program get 20 percent off in-store on regular-price items. Prescriptions and clinical services are excluded from the discount. You can't use coupons on top of the discount.

The discount is also available online with code SENIOR20. You must be logged into your Walgreens.com account to get the deal. (AARP members are eligible for additional savings at Walgreens.)

5. Goodwill

Locations: Over 4,000 stores in all 50 states and the District of Columbia

Age for discount: 55

Deal: One day a week, typically Tuesday or Wednesday, shoppers age 55 and older get 15 to 25 percent off their purchases. The deal is valid in-store and may not be offered at every location.





6. Michaels

Locations: Nationwide

Age for discount: 55

Deal: Michaels Rewards members 55 and older get 10 percent off their purchase, including sale items in-store and online. If you don't have a Michaels Rewards account, you can still receive a 10 percent discount on in-store purchases. You may need to show a valid ID at checkout as proof of age.

7. Ross Dress for Less

Locations: Over 2,000 stores in 41 states including Alabama, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Washington

Age for discount: 55

Deal: Every Tuesday, shoppers 55 and older get 10 percent off purchases. You must notify the associate at the time of purchase, and an ID may be required.



Some Random Thoughts on Aging...



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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