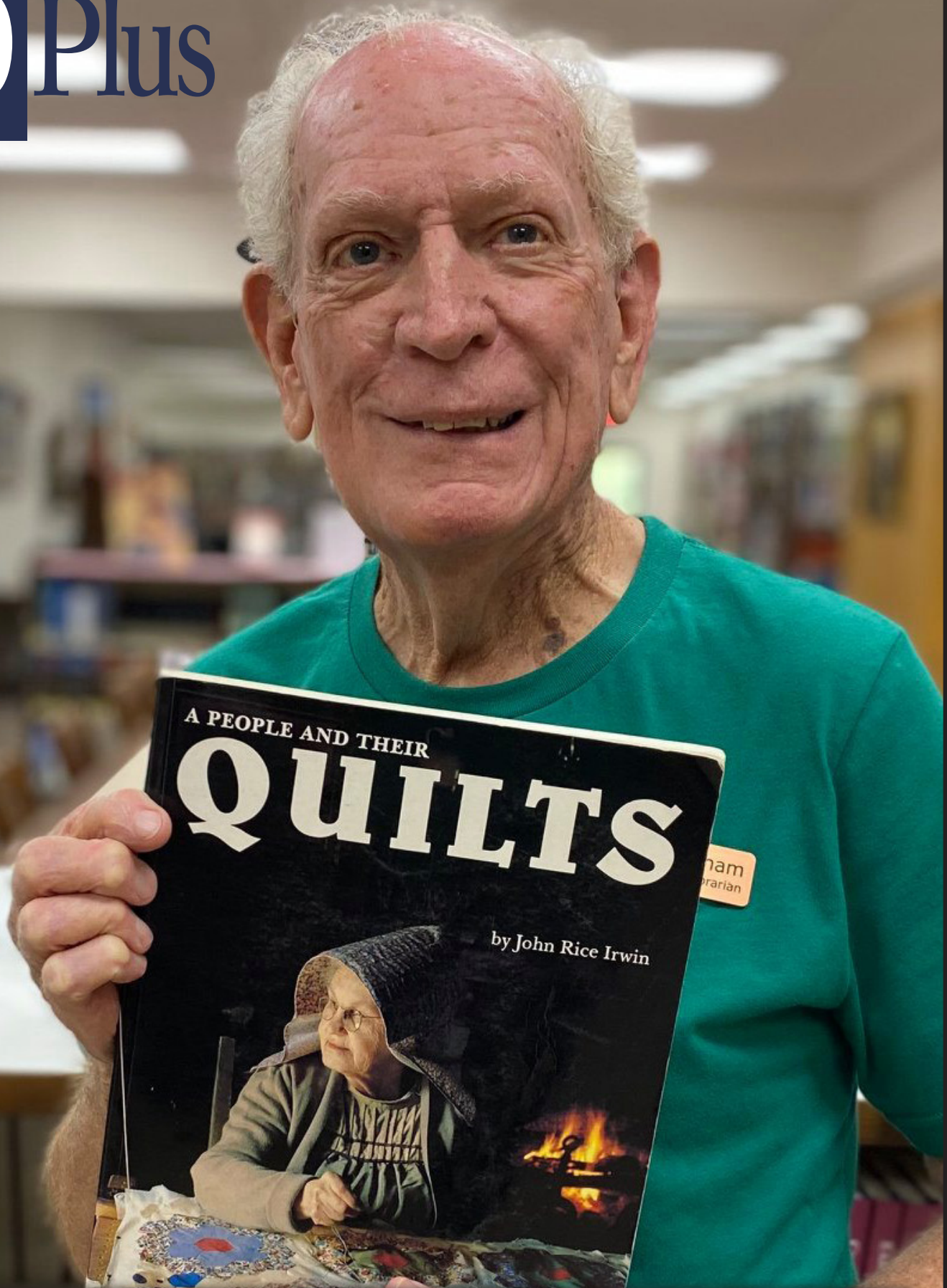


# Living 50 Plus

THE EXPOSITOR

SEPTEMBER 2021



## Outrunning Old Age

“Age is just the number of times you’ve traveled around the sun.” - Jimmy Graham



# Living 50 Plus



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# Jimmy Graham is outrunning old age

**RACHEL AUBERGER**  
staff writer

For Jimmy Graham, age is just the number of times you've traveled around the sun, not an indicator of the number of things you should be attempting to accomplish.

"Do what make you happy. It's never too late to try new adventures. Just don't stop living," the Sparta native and retired Navy serviceman, says is the advice he gives himself and others at his stage in life. "Old age comes fast, try to stay ahead of it."

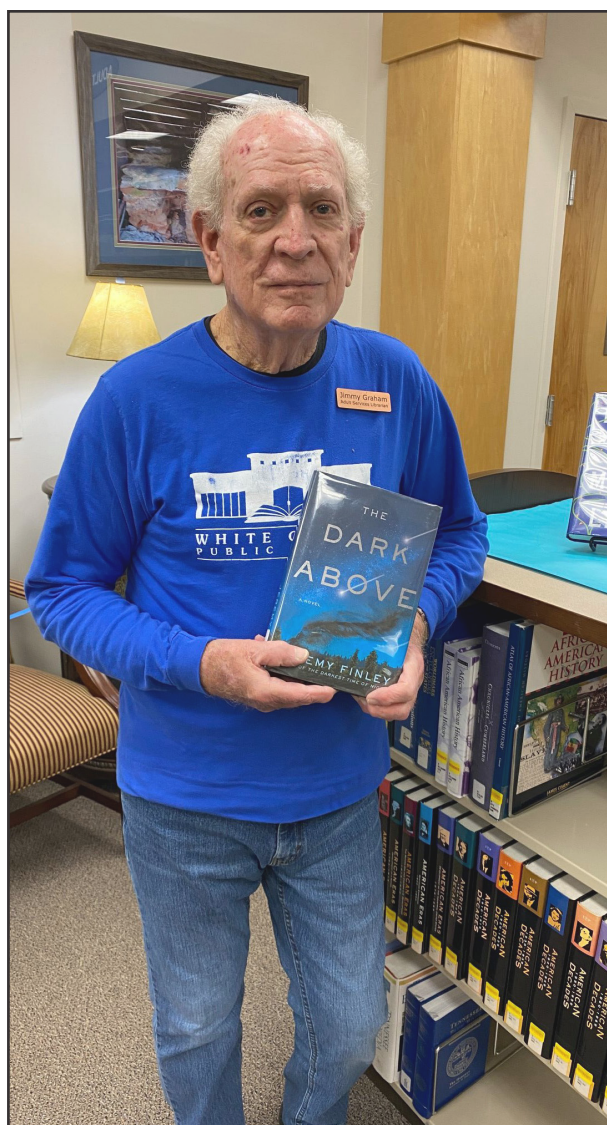
For Graham, staying ahead means staying busy, which is something he has been doing since he dropped out of school in the tenth grade.

"That is something I have always regretted," Graham says about not completing high school, "but I attended night classes and in 1985, at the age of 52, I received my GED."

Between the time he stopped attending White County High School and the time he earned his diploma, Graham certainly wasn't idle. For three years, he worked a variety of odd jobs: everything from grocery store clerk to farm hand to delivery boy to gas station attendant. Then at the age of 18, he headed off to Detroit, Michigan where he worked for Dodge Motors for three more years.

"Then Uncle Sam called me, and I joined the Navy," he said, adding that his advice to the 20-something year old version of himself is the same now as it was then, "Work on improving yourself mentally, physically, and socially. Set goals and work hard to reach them."

After leaving the Navy, Graham returned to Sparta where he married his life-long sweetheart, Evelyn Rose Billings and returned to the civilian workforce. Graham just continued enjoying those trips around the sun with his wife and their son, working and doing family things until it was time to retire in 1985. But, as is the story of his life, being idle didn't really suit Graham and after just



But when his wife passed away, Graham decided to head back to the workforce again - still trying to stay ahead of old age.

"I applied through the Title 5 program for placement, and they sent me to the White County Library," he said.

Graham started out as a clerk, but after a few years, he became the Adult Services Librarian where he has been striving to teach his personal motto to others: Live life one day at a time and enjoy people along the way.

"I wanted to start some programs for adults that were entertaining," Graham said of his vision for his new position and newly found passion and latest life-adventure. "I wanted the community to know that the library is not just for children."

So Graham started a craft workshop for adults on Saturday afternoons and began sharing his vast knowledge as well as his desire to always be learning and improving himself with other adults who were beginning to learn to love improving themselves as well. Wanting to do more and reach more people and bring the joy of socialization to other adults, Graham began hosting demonstration workshops at the nursing homes in Sparta, taking a craft to each home once a month.

"When COVID shut us down, I started doing the workshop videos and having them posted to our Face-

book page once a month," Graham wasn't going to let a virus slow him down - he is still trying to keep ahead of old age after all.

He used the time to inspire his creativity and found a way to keep the Adult Summer Reading Program intriguing throughout the shutdown as well.

"We started a Quilters Show and Tell video for our Facebook page," he explained. "Quilters could bring in their treasure and I would interview them about the quilts. We would do one video a week. Both programs have a really good viewing record."

When he's not busy with the library and creating new programs to keep adults mentally and socially active so that they can join him in out-racing age, Graham enjoys taking his grand-pup, Scout, on walks around the fence rows while checking in on his son's sheep and horses. He also uses his time to enjoy watching both the White County Warriors and Warriorettes play basketball, root on the Big Orange basketball team, and



collect Musical Carousels, of which he says he has near fifty.

Of course, the goal is the same as it has always been - to keep adding up trips around the sun and outrunning that term "old age", but Graham understands that the reality is he has had quite a few trips around the sun.

"For me, I want to stay healthy and active. Make new friends and keep working. Enjoy life, do what I can when I want. Don't wait," he said of his plans for the next several trips he makes around, but then added a big way to mark a particularly significant trip around the sun he is planning to make. "My wish is to live to 100 and celebrate with a ride in a hot air balloon over the Upper Cumberland."

So, in 12 years, keep your eyes on the skies, because Jimmy Graham may be up there still out running old age.



three weeks of retirement, back to work he went.

Over the next thirteen years, Graham helped Greenwood Mills open a textile plant in McMinnville, and later made over thirty trips to Pakistan to help the company build, open, and train operators of a plant there as well, before retiring yet again in 1999.

"This time I stayed retired for a little while," he said. "From 1999 until 2014 I stayed home with my wife."



# Recommended vaccines for adults

Newborn babies endure quite a bit in the first few days and months of their lives. Routine immunizations help newborns overcome these obstacles, and as newborns get old they receive vaccines to prevent measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis, and chicken pox.

A common misconception suggests that vaccines are only for the young. However, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that the protection pro-

vided by some childhood vaccines can wear off. In addition, some people may be at risk for certain vaccine-preventable diseases due to lifestyle, existing health conditions and age. As a result, it's important for adults to make sure their vaccines are up-to-date.

Those who are unsure of their vaccine status should discuss their health history with their doctors. In the meantime, adults should know that the following vaccines

are recommended for people of various ages.

- **Influenza:** An annual flu shot is highly recommended. Doctors and health officials indicate that getting the flu vaccine is the single most effective way to prevent seasonal flu or reduce the duration and severity of the illness should it be contracted.

- **Tdap:** This vaccine contains strains of tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (whooping cough). All three are implicated in serious illnesses or death, according to WebMD. Just about every person, young and old, should receive the Tdap vaccine. The CDC says that every adult should get the Tdap vaccine once if they did not receive it as an adolescent. Then a Td booster shot every 10 years is sufficient.

- **Shingles:** People who have been exposed to varicella (chicken pox) in their youth are at risk for shingles as they grow older. The CDC says nearly one out of three

people in the United States will develop shingles in their lifetime. A shingles vaccine can protect against shingles and complications from the disease. Adults who are 50 and older should get the vaccine, which is administered in two doses.

- **Pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine (PPSV23):** This vaccine protects against serious pneumococcal diseases, including meningitis and bloodstream infections. It is recommended for all adults age 65 and older.

- **Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV 13):** This protects against serious pneumococcal disease and pneumonia. Adults 65 years or older who have never received a dose of PCV13 should discuss PCV13 with their physicians.

Vaccines protect the very young from various diseases, but there are many vaccines that are still vital to health in adulthood.

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# Shopping for assisted living facilities

People age, oftentimes their living arrangements need to be adjusted. Needs evolve as children move out or other situations arise. One of the scenarios that may come to pass as a person ages is the need for more specialized help that just isn't possible at home.

When failing physical or mental health affects one's ability to be independent and live safely at home, moving into an assisted living facility may be the next step. The National Center for Assisted Living indicates assisted living offers the little bit of help some people need when they can no longer manage living alone. Typically these facilities provide assistance with bathing or dressing, medication management and other care, while also catering to people who may not require the around-the-clock medical care most often associated with nursing homes.

Vetting is an important component of finding assisted living facilities. Family caregivers need to educate themselves about



services, costs and other resources provided by assisted living facilities.

AARP says assisted living facilities provide residents with a range of services that can include supervision, meals, housekeeping, laundry, and personal care. Residents usually have their own apartments or private rooms. Because they are mostly regulated at state

level in the United States, there is a lot of variety among these facilities. That means family caregivers need to assess their needs and desires in a facility to find the right one that fits. Assisted living facilities offer a home-like environment, and the amenities available vary based on cost.

Paying for assisted living differs from pay-

ing for nursing homes. Largely government-subsidized health programs like Medicare and Medicaid pay for nursing home care. Those who would be best serviced by assisted living may find they may not qualify for government support, nor may the facilities accept anything other than private payment or long-term care insurance to cover room and board.

Other considerations in assisted living facilities are size, specialties, atmosphere, location, and the ability to transition to higher forms of care. Assisted living may fill a void currently, but it's often not a permanent situation for all, and eventually certain residents may have to move on to skilled care facilities.

Potential residents and their families should visit various assisted living facilities to get a feel for what they are like. Speak with the staff and residents, request a meal and get a sense of the environment. Apart from cost, how the home feels is one of the most important factors in shopping around for this type of residence.

## How exercise can help you live longer

There are many reasons to get in shape. Weight loss is a prime motivator, as is reversing a negative health effect, such as high cholesterol or increased diabetes risk. Routine exercise also can improve life expectancy.

WebMD says exercise keeps the body and brain healthy. That's why exercise should be an important component of daily life no matter one's age.

Research published in the journal *Immune Aging* found that how people age is 75 percent lifestyle and only 25 percent genetics, which underscores the importance of the lifestyle choices people make.

### Cardiorespiratory fitness

Many health experts say that cardiorespiratory fitness may be just as valuable a metric to determine overall health as blood pressure and lipid levels. People with a high aerobic capacity can deliver oxygen to tissues and cells efficiently to fuel exercise, according to data published in 2014 in the journal *Aging & Disease*. In a study involving 11,335 women, researchers compared VO<sub>2</sub> max, also known as aerobic capacity, in women with mortality data. Women who were fit from a cardiovascular perspective had

a lower death rate from all causes, irrespective of the women's weight.

### Manage stress and mood

Exercise has direct stress-busting benefits that can promote longevity. The Mayo Clinic says physical activity can increase the production of endorphins, which are the body's feel-good neurotransmitters. In addition, exercise can imitate the effects of stress, helping the body adjust its flight or fight response accordingly, and help them cope with mildly stressful situations. While engaged in exercise, people may forget about their problems as they are focused on the activity at hand.

### Improve bone health

Strength training and physical activity can stave off the effects of frailty and osteoporosis, which affects bone strength. A study published in the *Journal of Internal Medicine* in 2017 found that hip fractures are associated with diminished quality of life and survival among the elderly. One in three adults aged 50 and over dies within 12 months of suffering a hip fracture, and older adults have a five- to eight-times greater risk of dying within three months following a hip fracture. Build-

ing muscle strength, balance and bone density through exercise can reduce falls and frailty, helping to prevent fracture-related health risks.

### Addresses sarcopenia

The health and wellness resource Healthline defines sarcopenia as the loss of muscle mass specifically related to aging. Doctors once considered this muscle loss inevitable, and it can affect stamina

and lead to weakness. However, new indications suggest that exercise is the main treatment regimen for sarcopenia, particularly resistance training. This is designed to improve muscle strength and help balance hormone levels by turning protein into energy for older adults.

These are just some of the ways exercise can help older adults live longer, healthier lives.

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# Why seniors are at greater risk for COVID-19

It has been more than a year since the world learned about the novel coronavirus COVID-19. Since December 2019, there have been tens of millions of reported cases and nearly two million deaths worldwide attributed to COVID-19, according to data from the Johns Hopkins University Center for Systems Science and Engineering.

Experts are still unclear how prevalent the virus really is because a large number of cases are not reported due to mild or asymptomatic infections. But there's no denying COVID-19 can be very risky for one large segment of the population.

The chances for severe illness from COVID-19 increases with age, with older adults at the greatest risk, offers the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The CDC further indicates that eight out of 10 COVID-19 deaths reported in the United States have been in adults who are 65 and older. Compared to younger adults, older individuals are more likely to require hospitalization if they contract the illness. People between the ages of 75 and 84 are at eight-times more likely to be hospital-



ized and 220 times more likely to die from COVID-19 than the youngest patients.

There are some key reasons why older adults are at higher risk. Vineet Menachery, an immunologist at the University of Texas Medical Branch who studies coronaviruses and their effects on aging immune systems, older adults are more likely to suffer from underlying conditions that

can hinder the body's ability to recover from illness. In addition, a greater propensity for inflammation in the body and changes in the way the immune system responds with age are other mechanisms that increase seniors' risk for COVID-19. Furthermore, COVID-19 affects the part of the lungs that delivers oxygen to the bloodstream and removes carbon dioxide.

As a person gets older, the lungs are not as elastic and this can affect gas exchange and other functions. Being older coupled with having cardiovascular disease, asthma and diabetes also can raise the threat level of COVID-19.

Seniors must be extra diligent to engage in behaviors that reduce their risks. Epidemiologists recommend the following:

- Wash or sanitize hands whenever possible, especially upon entering and leaving public buildings.
- Shop and travel during off-peak hours, such as early in the morning, to avoid crowds.
- Use contactless payment methods rather than handling money.
- Ask friends and family to do your shopping and run errands for you.
- Wear masks over the nose and mouth and stay at least six feet away from others.
- If the COVID-19 vaccine is available to you, ask your doctor more about it and get vaccinated if it's safe to do so.

Learn more about at-risk groups at [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/index.html).



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# You're never too old to chase your dreams

**RACHEL AUBERGER**  
staff writer

Nina Weston lived an average life, growing up in Sparta, getting married, having a family, doing “normal” life things and enjoying her quiet, small-town living, until about eight years ago she decided to take on a new adventure that would not only change her life, but the lives of those she came in contact with.

“I was a pretty active kid but always a little overweight. After I had my second baby, I gained a lot of weight and when he turned 2. I got tired of feeling bad and the extra weight, so I started watching what I ate and walking every night,” the mother of two and grandmother of five said that in an effort to change her body, she wasn’t eating enough and actually became too thin. “So, I’ve been overweight and underweight. It wasn’t until my late 30’s that I started really getting into the gym with a good friend of mine. I was also a smoker and realized I couldn’t breathe when I exercised.”

Weston decided to make serious changes and quit smoking and began to learn the healthy balance between exercise and food and developing healthier habits.

“In my early 40’s, I realized I wanted to start teaching fitness classes, then decided to become a personal trainer and it just grew from there,” she said. “I knew the struggle and wanted to help others to maintain a healthy lifestyle.”

Weston’s adventure into health and fitness took a major turn when she contacted the Sparta YMCA six years ago to inquire about being a spin instructor, something she had just become certified



to do.

“I’ve been there ever since,” she laughed, because her duties now include being the facility’s Fitness and Wellness Director, Personal Trainer, and Group Fitness Instructor.

Most recently, Weston’s fitness adventure has led her to be named the Coach for the Tennessee Special Olympics Powerlifting team for the 2022 USA Special Olympics Games. Along with another coach from Williamson County, Weston will help coach 8 athletes that were selected from all over Tennessee to the USA games in Orlando in June of 2022.

“I have not met some of these athletes yet and I am so excited to get to work with them and their coaches over the next year,” Weston, who has been coaching the Area 9 Upper Cumberland Special Olympics Powerlifting team for five years, said. “It will be amazing to witness these athletes shine on a national level. These athletes work so extremely hard to be

their best and I am so honored to get work with them. It is amazing to watch these athletes grow in their sport.”

For the 52-year-old Weston, she says the fun is just getting started, and she hopes to continue to help others in the community get healthy - regardless of their age or ability.

“I would love to expand our fitness programming for all abilities,” she said of

future goals and added that she wants to keep living and promoting healthy lifestyles across her community. “I want to continue living life, staying healthy, continue my career in Fitness and never stop learning new things.”

Weston said that she firmly believes the time is always right to start a new adventure or chase a dream.

“You are never too old to achieve your dreams, I’m just getting started,” she said, but then quickly added that the opposite is also true and if she could time travel, she would have told the 20-year-old version of herself to get moving. “You’re also never too young to start achieving your dreams and help lead our young people to greatness.”

To those, who like Weston, are starting to live the second half of their life, who are looking at things a little differently these days, she says that there is still plenty of time to do great and daring things. “Don’t stop living your best life, if there is something you’ve always wanted to do, do it. Take those adventures.”



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Dr. Alissa Hudson



# How seniors can approach exercise



Exercise is a vital component of a healthy lifestyle. By making exercise part of their day-to-day routines, people of all ages, including men and women over the age of 65, can greatly improve their overall health.

The American Academy of Family Physicians notes that seniors should aspire to be as active as possible. Exercise is a great way to incorporate physical activity into your daily routine and has been linked to reduced risk for diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and osteoporosis. Though adults with chronic illnesses may be hesitant to exercise, the AAFP notes that it's possible for men and women who have been diagnosed with such conditions to exercise safely. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that regular physical activity is one of the most important things seniors can do for their health and can potentially prevent many health problems associated with aging.

#### Frequency of exercise

Seniors, particularly those who have not exercised much in the past, may not know how much exercise they need to reap the full rewards of physical activity. Though it's best to discuss exercise with a physician prior to beginning a new regimen, various public health agencies advise seniors to get at least 2.5 hours of moderate aerobic exercise each week. Brisk walking is one example of moderate aerobic exercise. Seniors who want to sweat a little more when exercising can

replace moderate aerobic exercise with one hour and 15 minutes of vigorous exercise, such as jogging, each week.

#### Is strength training safe for seniors?

The CDC advises seniors to incorporate muscle-strengthening activities into their weekly fitness routines twice per week. Lifting weights, working with resistance bands, heavy gardening, and even some forms of yoga qualify as muscle-strengthening activities. Exercises that use your body weight for resistance, such as sit-ups and push-ups, also can help build strength. Always speak with a physician before beginning a muscle-strengthening exercise regimen and, if possible, work with a personal trainer, especially if you're a novice.

When to stop a workoutIt's imperative that seniors recognize when to stop working out. Exercising more than is recommended by your doctor can increase the risk of illness or injury. In addition, stop exercising if any of the following symptoms appear:

- Dizziness or shortness of breath
- Chest pain or pressure
- Swollen joints
- Nausea
- Tightness in muscles or joints
- Pain anywhere in the body
- Throbbing or burning sensations

Exercise can help seniors stay healthy and feel more energetic throughout the day. Before beginning a new regimen, seniors should discuss physical activity with their physicians.



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# Evaluating seniors' biggest expenses

New parents may not be able to visualize that one day their largest expenditures won't be centralized around providing necessities for their children. Adults go through many years of paying for diapers, toys, clothing, food, and education for their children. Yet, when the children have flown the coop, spending patterns change, and even more changes await come retirement. According to a 2020 survey from the financial services firm Edward Jones, 68 percent of workers soon to retire said they had no idea how much they should be setting aside for expenses, particularly health care and long-term care. Professionals approaching retirement would be wise to analyze the Consumer Price Index - Elderly (CPI-E). It is a good reference to estimate which future expenses will cost the most after retirement. The Bureau of Labor Statistics looks at consumer spending and uses various data to determine the rate of inflation in key areas that apply to older adults starting at age 62.

Individuals may be surprised to learn about where they'll be spending the bulk of their money when they get older. Here's a look at some key categories.



- **Housing:** According to data from the Employee Benefit Research Institute, in 2017, the most recent year for which data is available, housing accounted for roughly 49 percent of all spending for seniors. Focus should be centered on lowering those costs when a fixed income is imminent. The possibilities include paying off a mortgage; downsizing a home to have a lower rent or mortgage payment; refinancing

a home to a fixed-rate loan so that costs are predictable; and taking on a tenant to offset costs.

- **Food:** The cost of food will not change dramatically, but it can eat into your budget. Even though food costs may decline when there's only two mouths to feed, food and beverage spending may go up due to more leisure time and dining out. Utilize senior discounts by shopping

on days when stores offer percentages off purchases. Save money on restaurant spending by eating out at lunch instead of dinner, splitting plates or skipping appetizers.

- **Healthcare:** Experts warn that while many expenses decline in retirement, health care spending increases. According to Fidelity, the average 65-year-old couple retiring in 2020 in the United States needed roughly \$295,000 just to cover their retirement health care expenses. Those with family histories of severe illnesses or those with preexisting conditions will need even more. It's also important to realize that roughly half of the population will need long-term care at some point, offers The Motley Fool, and that requires advanced budgeting as well. Many people find that Medicare supplement plans can bridge the gap in expenses that government-run plans will not cover. Saving through a health savings account (HSA) when employed also can create extra cash on hand for retirement expenses.

Understanding which retirement expenses will be high can help people plan better for the future.

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# Saving strategies as retirement draws near

Professionals on the cusp of retirement are often excited about what lies ahead. Some prospective retirees may look forward to traveling once they no longer have to go to work each day, while others may plan to return to school. Regardless of how adults envision spending their retirement, they're going to need money when they're no longer being paid by their employers.

As retirement nears, some professionals may be concerned that they haven't saved enough. There's no one-size-fits-all answer in regard to how much money people will need in retirement. People who are worried they haven't saved enough can try various strategies to build up their account balances before they officially call it a career.

- Take advantage of catch-up contributions. Adults who are 50 or older are eligible to take advantage of catch-up contributions. These are designed to help people over 50 contribute more to certain retirement accounts, such as a 401(k) or IRA, than statutory limits would otherwise allow. There are limits that govern the amount of money people can designate



as catch-up contributions, but taking advantage of this perk can help people save more as retirement draws closer.

- Consider relocating. A recent study from the Employee Benefit Research Insti-

tute found that housing costs accounted for 49 percent of seniors' spending. Professionals nearing retirement who live in areas traditionally associated with a high cost of living can begin to rethink their long-term

housing strategy. Relocating to an area with a lower cost of living is one option, while those who prefer to remain in their current town or city can consider downsizing to a smaller home to reduce their property taxes and monthly utility bills.

- Continue investing. Conventional wisdom suggests moving away from investing in stocks the closer you get to retirement. Though that's a sound strategy, professionals who are trying to build their retirement savings in the final years before retiring could be missing out on significant growth by abandoning stocks entirely. Speak with a financial advisor about stock-based investments and your risk tolerance. Maintaining a diversified portfolio with a little risk can be a great way to grow your savings as retirement draws near.

Professionals approaching retirement may be dealing with a mix of excitement and anxiety, particularly if they're concerned about their retirement savings. Various strategies can help quell such anxiety and make it easier for professionals over 50 to build their savings as retirement nears.

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effective community  
supervision in order  
to enhance public safety.**



**Bledsoe County Correctional Complex  
(423) 881-6180**