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# AGING **best**

Area Agency on Aging



*Lois McDermitt is dedicated to keeping her heart healthy with good nutrition and daily exercise.*

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## SENIOR NEWS INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Happy Heart Month: 1 - 2  
Living a Healthy Life: 3  
Ombudsman Creativity: 4  
Vaccine Fraud: 5  
Volunteers Needed: 5  
Activities: 6

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## ♥ HAPPY HEART MONTH ♥

It's hard to think of February without picturing hearts. Candy hearts, paper hearts, glass hearts and romantic cards cover the shelves of most stores. Love, past and present, is on our minds and in our hearts.

What many Americans are unaware of is that February is about real hearts. In 1963 President Lyndon B. Johnson made the declaration that from then on the month of February would be known as American Heart Month. His decision was based on recent data showing the toll heart disease was taking on Americans. He knew it was time to start spreading the word and looking at possible ways to prevent it.

Lois McDermitt was a healthy young mother at the time. Heart health was not something she had heard much about. It would be decades before she would truly understand its importance. One of 15 children, Lois began to see a pattern of heart problems within her family. When she received her own diagnosis of diabetes, she knew it was time to take control. "It wasn't just for

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my own health," she said. "I knew I needed to set an example for my kids and grandchildren. This is their medical history as well." Lois began by making dietary changes recommended by her doctor and reducing her weight. Exercise was the next thing she added. Along with her husband, Don, she began to walk daily. They made time to take an outside walk if the weather permitted. If not, they walked inside their local hospital.

The onset of COVID-19 changed the hospital walking situation. Determined not to give up, Lois was able to borrow a small treadmill from a relative. Lois, 83, and Don, 87, walk 30 minutes a day on it. "You have to make time to take care of your heart," she said. "If you don't, it's not going to take care of you. It's never too late to start."

According to the National Institute on Aging, the heart, like our skin and hair, does change as we age. Individuals ages 65 and up have an increased risk of heart disease. The good news is there are many preventative steps we can take to decrease the risk. We have the power to strengthen and improve our heart health at any age. Just adding or making small changes can have a positive impact on our overall heart health. The first step, making the

commitment, is often the hardest. From there we just need to move forward with the recommended changes:

- Become more active. Walk in place or walk around the house. Dance, garden, bowl or whatever keeps you moving. Just adding a little more activity each day not only improves heart health but is likely to bring you more energy.
- Maintain a healthy weight. Obesity impacts heart health in many ways.
- Quit smoking. Regardless how many years you have smoked, quitting at any time can have a positive effect.
- Follow a heart-healthy diet. Eat plenty of fruits, vegetables and fiber. As we age our bodies have even more need for the nutrients they provide. Avoid salt, saturated fats and sugar. Opt for whole foods instead of processed items.
- Follow your doctor's advice. Keep conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol under control.

For more information on heart health visit the American Heart Association's website at: [www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org). Aging Best has upcoming workshops to help with heart health as well. For more information please call 573-540-1100 or email [mmckeage@agingbest.org](mailto:mmckeage@agingbest.org).

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## LIVING A HEALTHY LIFE

Aging Best is excited to announce spring 2021 dates for Living a Healthy Life workshops.



*Virtual workshops make it possible to attend from your place of choice.*

The workshops help attendees learn new strategies to cope with chronic conditions. "Diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, anxiety, depression, multiple sclerosis and sleeping disorders are just a few," said Maureen McKeage, Community Education & Training Specialist for Aging Best. "Any condition that stays with you for a long period of time fits into the chronic category." The basic Living a Healthy Life workshop can be attended by phone or computer. "It's a very easy setup," says McKeage. "We guide participants through the entire process."

Participants meet virtually once a week for six consecutive weeks. There are several upcoming workshop with dates still available.

Living a Healthy Life allows participants to improve overall health and mobility while connecting with others for friendship and support.

Aging Best is also offering a workplace edition of the Living a Healthy Life series. This version also emphasizes balancing work and home life in addition to offering the benefits of the Living a Healthy Life program.

This is a great way for employers to encourage staff members to explore new ways of coping with chronic conditions and improving overall health. The program also focuses on reducing stress and learning techniques for better relaxation.



The workplace program meets virtually two times per week for a period of six consecutive weeks. For more information or to register for a Living a Healthy Life workshop contact: Maureen McKeage 573-540-1100. Online registration is available by emailing [mmckeage@agingbest.org](mailto:mmckeage@agingbest.org).

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## OMBUDSMAN VOLUNTEER HANDLES COVID CHALLENGES

Lew Pitchford has been volunteering at Columbia Manor Care Center since January 2003. He has made weekly visits without fail. "I try to arrange my schedule or any trips I take so I can be there on Tuesdays," he said. "I really don't want to miss a day. Our duty is to advocate for the residents. We are not working for the nursing home. Administration is very receptive to my comments and always does something about it."



*Lew Pitchford finds creative ways to continue connecting as an Ombudsman volunteer*

All residents deserve to have someone who cares about them. It is important to have someone who is willing to listen and respond to their needs. Lew certainly fills that need and brightens the day for every resident he sees. The COVID-19 situation has definitely been

challenging for the Ombudsman team and volunteers. It has in no way stopped Lew from doing everything he can to connect with the residents, though. He has continued to find ways to have conversations. The Activities Director now even assists Lew with phone visits.

Lew has been an inspiration to other volunteers who were struggling to connect with residents or even to get staff to accept their calls. Some of the other volunteers are trying the same techniques and are having successful phone visits. "We are proud to have Lew on our team," said Donna Wobbe, Regional Ombudsman Program Director. "I know he will continue to inspire other Ombudsman Volunteers to never give up!"

After serving 24 years in the Army, Lew Pitchford earned his master's degree in radiological health and is a retired radiation safety officer for the University of Missouri. Thank you for your service, Lew!

Volunteering as an Ombudsman is a great way to get involved and make a difference in the lives of many. For more information on opportunities in your area please call 800-369-5211 or email [dwobbe@agingbest.org](mailto:dwobbe@agingbest.org).



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## VACCINE FRAUD PREVENTION

The COVID-19 vaccine is on the minds of most right now. To answer questions,



*Stay informed, and avoid COVID-19 vaccination fraud and scams.*

the Missouri Novel Coronavirus Hotline (877-435-8411) is now available. Though the hotline can answer most general questions, for more specific information about the vaccine in your area the best place to start is with your local doctor, Health Department, pharmacy or hospital. The dates and availability will change from county to county, so it's always best to start locally.

At this time individuals ages 65 and over are among those eligible for the vaccine. It is also important to know that persons in this age group are often the target of scam artists. The Missouri SMP (Senior Medicare Patrol) wants older adults and their caregivers to be on the lookout for potential COVID-19 vaccine fraud and scams. They can be very convincing, so it is important to be

aware of the facts. Below are a few tips that can help older adults avoid scams:

- You cannot pay to put your name on a list to get the vaccine or to get early access to it.
- No one from Medicare or the Health Department will contact you.
- No one from a vaccination site or insurance company will ask for your Social Security number or private information by phone.
- No one will come to your home to offer you early access.
- Be aware of people offering other products, treatments, medicines to prevent the virus.

Sadly, scammers tend to show up when we are most vulnerable. Be aware, and never hesitate to double-check before giving your information to anyone.

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Aging Best has volunteering activities available such as delivering pet care products to homebound seniors and making reassurance phone or virtual calls.

For more information on these and other ways to volunteer at Aging Best please call 800-369-5211 or email [mschulte@agingbest.org](mailto:mschulte@agingbest.org).



Aging Best makes weekly meal deliveries to residents of Oak and Paquin Towers in Columbia. At left, Pam Stroup is assisted by volunteer Don Garrett. A resident of Oak Towers, Don is always ready to help with the setup and delivery of meals to the many apartments receiving them.



Thanks to the partnership and food provided by Second Chance, Aging Best is able to distribute pet food to seniors in need of assistance caring for their furry companions.



California Nutrition Center has turned into a winter wonderland. The festive themes keep the staff and volunteers feeling festive as they work daily to provide meals and services to residents of Moniteau County.



Clarke Senior Center in Jefferson City has also created a festive view for curbside participants to enjoy. The center cooks and distributes hot meals every Monday - Friday.



Fayette Senior Center's Board Member/Volunteer Leona Jones is surrounded by hearts as she makes daily reassurance calls to seniors throughout Howard County. Aging Best is always looking for volunteers to assist with calls in our 19-county region.