

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

# Savvy Jersey Seniors



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

Volume 3, Numbers 11 & 12 • November/December 2022

## Welcome...and Happy Holidays!

In this holiday edition of *Savvy Jersey Seniors* for November and December of 2022, we present some first-person thoughts on three of the many interesting things that seniors across the region are doing, including:

- Transitioning from tugboat captain to award-winning artist,
- Writing a memoir after 50 years of teaching English Literature, and
- Volunteering at a community outreach program that includes a food pantry, clothes closet, and much more.



By the way, don't forget that we always welcome your ideas for any topic that you'd like to see us tackle. And, 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](http://savvyjerseyseniors.com).



### Nick Grassia: Retired Waterman Turned Award-Winning Artist

In 2013, Nick Grassia was a few years away from retirement and working on his post-retirement financial plan when he discovered a small local art school close to where he lives in Sewell, NJ.

As Nick tells the story, the school catered to children, but also offered a weekly one-hour evening session for adults.

Finally, three years later, Nick's career of 40 years in the maritime transportation industry ended with his long-anticipated retirement.

His life on the water had started at the Seafarers International Union Training Center, the Henry Lundeborg School of Seamanship, in Piney Point, MD.

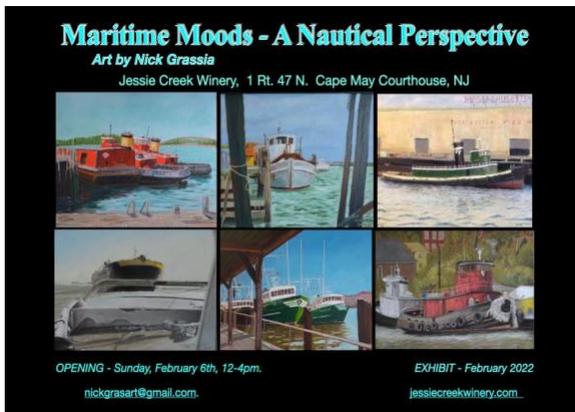
After Nick completed his training there, he progressed from deckhand to master, sailing primarily on seagoing tugs transporting petroleum cargoes in barges on the East and Gulf Coasts.

So, with the flexible schedule that so often comes with retirement and three years of art school under his belt, Nick started drawing. Not surprisingly, much of Nick's work reflects his career on the water.



"When I was a youngster, I dabbled in art and always had the dream of becoming an artist. But the dream took a back seat as family and career commitments took over.

"But that evening course proved to be the impetus that rekindled my interest in art. I started with some graphite pencil drawings and progressed to colored pencils and from there it was on to a large body of work in pastel.



"Retirement afforded me the opportunity to join several local artist groups. Meeting other artists and sharing experiences and ideas was very encouraging.

"It broadened my interests and drove me to explore other media. Currently I work mainly in acrylic.

"With the support of my local artist groups, I began exhibiting as part of group shows. And recently I've had the honor to be chosen for several solo exhibits at local galleries...and

have more scheduled for 2013. I've also had the good fortune to win several awards.

"And, while many of my paintings have been sold to individual collectors, I have also donated a number for a public collection at the Seafarers International Union Training Center, where I started my career on the water.

"It goes without saying," Nick adds, "that I am extremely grateful to all local artist groups, galleries, and individual supporters that encourage me on my artistic journey."



### **Virtual Museum Tours Can Improve Quality of Life**

By combining technology with interactive art activities, older people at home can have museums come to them—and this can support their physical, mental and social well-being, a new study reports.



"This participatory art-based activity could become a model that could be offered in museums and arts institutions worldwide to promote active and healthy aging," says lead author Dr. Olivier Beauchet, a professor of medicine at the University of Montreal.

Social isolation is linked to a number of health threats, including an increased risk of heart disease and stroke, as well as mental deterioration and even early death.

The study demonstrates how virtual museum visits can significantly improve the quality of life for homebound older folks. Those who took part in virtual visits saw their scores on measures of social isolation, well-being, quality of life and frailty significantly improve.

The biggest benefit of the 45-minute virtual museum tours, which also included a 15-minute question-and-answer session with a museum guide, appears to be reducing frailty.

### **Rotator Cuff Tear Is Common Pickleball Injury**

As regular *SJS* readers know, pickleball has become a wildly popular sport for older Americans, but seniors who enjoy playing it should know about potential injuries and how to avoid them.

The most common problem is with the rotator cuff tendon in the shoulder, which can cause pain. Issues can include tendonitis, bursitis, and even a tear in the tendon. Bigger tears are harder to fix and can make your arm weak.

### **Anatomy of a Rotator Cuff Tear**



"The unfortunate reality of the rotator cuff is that everyday use can cause tearing and damage," says Dr. Bruce Moseley, a surgeon at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.



"You don't necessarily have to do anything wrong or abnormal to get a rotator cuff tear—in many instances it just happens as a consequence of living," he says

For a lot of people, it's not an accident or injury that causes rotator cuff damage, but use over time. Pickleball requires people to reach overhead while using a lot of force, which can risk damaging or tearing the rotator cuff.

Tears aren't always preventable, but stretching and light or moderate strength training may keep it healthier and more flexible. "If you warm up and stretch before your activity and ice down afterwards, your shoulder will be better prepared for the activity and will recover quicker," Dr. Moseley says.

## More Seniors Turning to Alternative Medicine

Lots of older folks are turning to alternative medicine to help them with the pains of aging—but they don't necessarily think that's any of their doctor's business.

About 40% of older adults use at least one alternative medicine practice to help with body aches or mental strains, be it chiropractic care, massage therapy, meditation, yoga or another non-conventional option, according to the University of Michigan National Poll on Healthy Aging.



But only 18% of those who've tried an alternative medicine practice have actually talked about it with their health care provider.

Just about everyone surveyed said they believe that the mind impacts health, with 82% saying it has a major impact and 14% saying it has a minor impact.

The people surveyed said they had tried alternative medicine to treat or prevent pain, insomnia, or digestive issues, to relax or manage stress, to address a physical injury, or to help with depression or anxiety.



### Dr. Sylvia Baer: Author, Educator, Poet, and Poet Laureate of Cape May

What does one do with great-grandparents who lived under pogroms in Eastern Europe; grandparents who escaped the Holocaust to Uruguay, parents from diverse cultures and languages and your own immigrant experiences in the late 1950s? You write an intergenerational story that is uniquely personal and remarkably universal and title it "Learning Life: A Memoir."

Dr. Sylvia Baer's memoir is the first of three anticipated volumes from this nationally recognized author, poet, and Yale University (Davenport) Associate Fellow, who recently

celebrated her 50<sup>th</sup> year as an educator as well as her 2022 appointment as Cape May, NJ's first ever Poet Laureate.

Now celebrating a half century of teaching English Literature, Dr. Baer is an expert on the poetry of 19th century American poet Emily Dickinson and she has chosen and placed Dickinson's poems throughout the book, to reflect and amplify the insights of her own essays.

Rowan College of South Jersey (RCSJ) recently hosted her book signing event to an enthusiastic audience which actually included several of her former Literature and English

Composition students who now hold faculty and dean positions in liberal arts—a testament to the continuum of talent.

Through essays, photographs, poems, and thoughtfully placed excerpts from Dickenson, Baer introduces the audience to five generations of her extraordinary family.

"Sylvia Baer does in stories what great artists do in pictures," remarks Dr. Zorana Ivcevic Pringle, Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence's Director of the Creativity and Emotions Laboratory. "They break through layers of gloom and despair to make one feel what humans are capable of being—their kindness, courage, sense of justice, and above all, hope.



Sylvia's teaching philosophy sums it all up: "I don't want students at the end of my class to think 'I never want to read again!' I want them to feel like reading really matters in their lives," explains Dr. Baer.

"I think if you want to be a teacher, you have to find creative ways to empower and engage your students."

Describing herself, Dr. Baer says "I'm a writer. I write all manner of things and have my whole life. Lately I've focused on writing memoir pieces, but I've also written a number of poems for adults and for kids, academic articles, and a play.

"I've hosted a cable talk show, been editor of both an international academic journal and a small national poetry journal. Translation is another interest of mine which I've pursued in the work of Juana de Ibarbourou and haiku/photography artist Roberto Fernandez. Several years ago I curated an art show at Yale University featuring his work.

"Currently I also direct and curate a small art studio, Art Space, in New Jersey, where we've hosted over 30 multi-media artists. In addition, I've created and maintain a Poet-Tree outside my home in NJ where I hang poems (about 60) written by classic and contemporary poets. I encourage folks to read and then to take any poems they happen to like.

"Learning Life: A Memoir" can be found at Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and on local bookstore shelves.

### **Study Says Age Does Not Have To Limit Older People Sexually**

Aging can cause changes that may affect a person's sex life. Health conditions and changing hormone levels can impact an older person's sex life, but people can take steps to maintain sexual satisfaction as they age.

The fact is that age does not have to limit a person sexually.



## The Facts

- Older adults maintain their ability to respond to sexual stimulation, but response is slower and less intense
- Sexual interest does not decline but sexual activity may be less frequent
- Regularly engaging in sexual activity helps older adults respond to sexual stimulation
- Any major changes in response are associated with risk factors rather than aging

Older people may actually experience a sense of liberation they did not in their youth, as responsibilities and the risks of unwanted pregnancy are lower. Some researchers have studied sexual satisfaction in older adults and found positive results.

A 2019 of people 60 years and older found that sex was important to most people, with over 70% reporting being sexually attractive for their age.

Another study found that older adults reported no significant difference in intimacy. A third of older adults 60–82 years reported more sexual thoughts and sexual activity than the average younger adult.

### **Smart Phones Can Detect Most Common Heart Rhythm Disorder—Atrial Fibrillation**

Atrial fibrillation screening using conventional smart phones more than doubles the detection and treatment rate in older people compared to routine screening, according to the latest research. Professor Axel Bauer of Innsbruck Medical University, Austria says, "Screening using common smart phones significantly increased the detection rate of therapy-relevant atrial fibrillation."

Importantly, app-based pre-screening was only one part of the program, which also included electrocardiogram (ECG) validation and assessment of the findings by an independent physician.

Atrial fibrillation is actually the most common heart rhythm disorder, affecting more than 40 million people worldwide.

Those affected have a five times greater risk of stroke than their peers. Atrial fibrillation often has no symptoms and remains undiagnosed, leaving patients unprotected from stroke.



### **Frequent Naps Associated With High Blood Pressure and Higher Stroke Risk**

Frequent or usual daytime napping in adults is associated with a 12% higher risk of developing high blood pressure and a 24% higher risk of having a stroke compared to never napping.

Experts say napping, though not unhealthy, may be a sign of poor sleep quality.

A higher percentage of frequent nappers are men, have lower education and income levels, and report cigarette smoking, daily drinking, insomnia, snoring and being an evening person compared to people who reported napping sometimes or never.

The Mendelian randomization result shows that if napping frequency increased by one category (from never to sometimes or sometimes to usually) high blood pressure risk increased 40%.

### **Angels Community Outreach In Pitman, NJ: Food Pantry...And So Much More**

Angels Community Outreach was founded in June 2009 by then-12-year-old Katelyn Darrow. While the mission has significantly expanded since 2009, Angels Community Outreach originally started off as a clothing closet.



**ANGELS  
COMMUNITY OUTREACH**  
PROVIDING A HAND UP AND SPREADING KINDNESS

The organization still maintains its original facility at 334 South Broadway in Pitman, NJ, where clothing is hung on racks and shelves by gender and size.

Clients can come into the storefront and “shop” for free; nothing is sold at the clothing closet. It is all given to families and individuals in need.

Here’s how the Angels founder explains the story behind Angels. “Domestic violence is a significant part of my journey. A moment that defined me was when my mom, sisters and I had to pick up in the middle of the night and escape our abuser. We left wearing only the clothing on our back, abandoning many of our favorite possessions behind.

“A few years later we were faced with another obstacle—a house fire. I was in third grade at the time and for a year, as our house underwent extreme repairs, we lived with neighbors and friends. Going from place to place without an official location to call home, not knowing where we were going to live the next day, was difficult. Looking back, what impacted me the most was how people helped us.

“So many people in the community reached out to my family during our hardships. I’ll never forget the compassion and kindness that was shown.

“Now, giving back is my way of paying it forward. It’s heartwarming to help residents at the same domestic violence shelter that once assisted my family. We work with social services, homeless shelters and community leaders who refer clients to Angels Community Outreach. The clients are invited to come into the clothing closet storefront and go “shopping” at no cost. The center even has shopping carts and a dressing room!

“I know from personal experience that it can be difficult to keep your dignity in tough times. Sometimes, something as simple as a new outfit can put a smile on one’s face and make them feel beautiful.”

SJS was introduced to Angels by one of our regular contributors, Pitman, NJ resident Charlotte Ryan, a retired college instructor and long-time Angels volunteer.



"The Angels mission is to give a hand UP. We respond to basic human needs, promote dignity and hope in addition to providing social activities and holiday events to children in need," Ryan explains.

"The goal is to also spread kindness. Sometimes it is not always about the necessities it is taking the time to listen to someone or to do something for them to make them feel special."

So, in keeping with this mission, Angels provides:

- Clothing Closet- Food & Toiletry Bank
- Angels Sprinkles Squad: Birthday Assistance
- Veterans' Annual Luncheon
- Kibble Corner: Pet Food Pantry
- Bless This Dress Prom Dress Drive
- Easter Baskets Project
- Annual Holiday Parties for Kids in Need
- Back to School Project
- Halloween Costumes
- Thanksgiving Basket Give-a-Way
- Angels Toy Box Christmas Toy Drive



Ryan notes that Angels works on a referral basis. A potential client gets a referral letter from social services, principal, pastor, caseworker etc. Once they acquire a referral letter, Angels can set-up an appointment, where the client will fill-out a registration form and be introduced to the services that Angels provides.

Angels is open Tuesday, Wednesday, and Saturday from 9-12 for donation drop-offs or donations may be placed at any time in a convenient drop-off bin. For more information, go to [angelsoutreach.org](http://angelsoutreach.org) or text or call 856-625-8652.

### **Smart Socks May Reduce Hospital Fall Rates**

Use of the Smart Sock system may reduce hospital fall rates among fall-risk patients, according to a recent study.

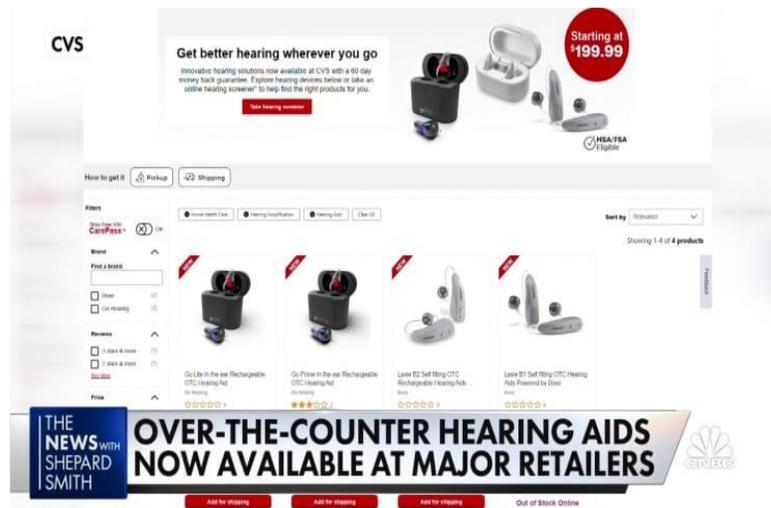
Tammy Moore, Ph.D., R.N., from Ohio State University studied Smart Socks, which consist of socks with built-in pressure sensors that detect when a patient is trying to stand, in combination with interrelated devices with sensors and a notification device worn by nurses—all of which reduces fall rates in patients at risk.

Moore reports that patients wearing Smart Socks had a lower fall rate compared with the historical rate (zero versus four per 1,000 patient-days) and the median response time for nurses was just 24 seconds.



### Over-The-Counter Hearing Aids Now Available Directly To Consumers

Affordable over-the-counter hearing aids are expected to bring relief to millions of Americans suffering from hearing loss under a landmark proposal announced by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.



The final rule creates a category of hearing aids that can be sold directly to consumers, without either a medical exam or a fitting by an audiologist.

"The rule allows consumers to have greater control over their hearing aid their purchasing decisions at stores nationwide or online without a professional hearing test, fitting adjustment or a prescription," FDA Commissioner Dr. Robert Califf says.

Until now, people with hearing loss have typically had to pay thousands of dollars for a device that could only be adjusted by a professional audiologist.

While roughly 15% of Americans report some trouble with their hearing, the FDA estimates that only 1 in 5 people who could benefit from a hearing aid actually use one.

### Women More Likely To Develop Alzheimer's

Almost two-thirds of Americans living with Alzheimer's disease are women, and women in their 60s are twice as likely to develop Alzheimer's as they are breast cancer.

They're also more likely than men to develop the brain disease, even after factoring in women's typically longer lifespans.

Research from 2019 suggests that sex-specific genes and crucial differences in the brain may help explain why women appear to be more at risk for this disorder.

"These new studies make clear that there are biological and perhaps environmental factors that account for sex differences," says UCLA's Gary Small, M.D. "Just like we take gender into account when determining risk for other health conditions, like depression or heart disease, we need to be aware of its impact on Alzheimer's."



## HOW MUCH WATER SHOULD YOU DRINK?

BODY WEIGHT	WATER INTAKE	8 oz GLASSES
80 lbs	40 oz / 1.2 L	5
100 lbs	50 oz / 1.5 L	6
120 lbs	60 oz / 1.8 L	8
140 lbs	70 oz / 2.1 L	9
160 lbs	80 oz / 2.4 L	10
180 lbs	90 oz / 2.7 L	11
200 lbs	100 oz / 3 L	13
220 lbs	110 oz / 3.3 L	14
240 lbs	120 oz / 3.5 L	15
260 lbs	130 oz / 3.8 L	16
280 lbs	140 oz / 4.1 L	18
300 lbs	150 oz / 4.4 L	19

Drink one extra 8 oz glass of water every 20 minutes while working in the heat



### How Much Water Should You Drink?

Different people need different amounts of water during each day. How much water you need can vary depending on your sex, size, activity level, and age.

According to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, there are some general guidelines. The average woman needs about nine cups of water per day, while men need about 12.5 cups per day.

One of the easiest ways to tell if you're getting enough water is if you're thirsty. You can use thirst as a guide for fluid intake.

If you are experiencing symptoms such as headache, dry mouth, dizziness, or general unwell feeling, these are usually late signs of dehydration.

You may also need more water if you are:

- Pregnant or breastfeeding,
- Living in a very hot climate,
- Exercising and sweating profusely,
- Running a fever,
- Suffering from diarrhea, or
- Vomiting.

### "For Adults Only": Thomas Edison State University—Never Stop Learning

Thomas Edison State University's 1,404 enrolled students who are between 50 to 87 years of age bear witness to the power of lifelong learning.

With classes that are entirely online, adult learners can complete a degree or embark on a new one—studying when and where they choose.

As TESU's Kelly Saccomanno explains, "Most adults cannot put their lives and careers on hold to sit in classroom at a specific time and place. At Thomas Edison State University, it's not necessary.



"The only time most students visit the Trenton campus is to attend Commencement. Students complete courses, take exams and earn their degrees wherever it is convenient for them. Whether it is through an online program, an examination program, prior learning assessment, earning credit through professional training or transferring past college credit, programs are built for adults with life experience.

"But getting back into the virtual classroom later in life can seem overwhelming. Especially when technology is involved. A Student Success Team assists adult learners with personalized service. Student solutions counselors answer questions regarding accessing student portals, password resets, navigating the University website and the course space, and all basic technical support," says Saccomanno.

As one of New Jersey's senior public institutions of higher learning and one of the oldest schools in the country designed specifically for adults, TESU has been serving the academic needs of busy adults—anytime, anywhere—for 50 years. With more than 100 areas of study and flexible credit-earning options that fit any learning style and every chapter of life. You can visit [tesu.edu](http://tesu.edu) to learn more.



#### **Case In Point: TESU Grad Michael Piscetelli**

A case in point is TESU grad Michael Piscetelli. There are two things that Piscetelli is sure of, says Saccomanno—his Thomas Edison State University education directly led to being hired by his current employer, and his degree and new position would not have happened without the encouragement of his wife.

Although he always had good jobs, he had lost better opportunities over the years because he didn't have a four-year degree and had begun to consider starting his own business.

"I got to a point where I was really down on myself and didn't like what I was doing.

My wife, Malenie, said, 'what do you want to do?' I said, 'I'll buy a business.'

"And she said, 'instead of doing that and putting all our savings at risk, why don't you go back to college, get a degree and get a better job?'" Piscetelli told TESU's *Invention Magazine* last year.

Piscetelli, a Barnegat resident who earned an associate degree in 1992, was only halfway to a bachelor's degree and was sure that obtaining that degree was going to take years. He

knew there had to be an alternative. Then he realized that TESU might hold the answer.

He credits the university's advising staff for supporting him throughout and his coursework in helping him ace a pivotal job interview. "Earning that degree completely changed my life. During my interview I did exactly what I had learned in my studies," he noted. "I prepared, I studied the company's background, and I structured the presentation just as I had in one of my courses."

Now he has that degree and his dream job with "the best company I have ever worked for."

### **Surgery Risk For Patients Over 65**

A new study has found that nearly one in seven older adults dies within a year of undergoing major surgery.

Especially vulnerable, according to the study reported in *JAMA Surgery* by researchers at Yale School of Medicine are patients with probable dementia (33% die within a year) and frailty (28%), as well as those having emergency surgeries (22%).

The study also found that advanced age magnifies risk—patients who were 90 or older were six times as likely to die than those aged 65 to 69.

### **Looking Ahead To SJS In 2023**

Here's a heads-up on what to look for in the first issue of *SJS* in the new year. Our January-February issue will introduce you to:

- Barrington's Janis and Harold Stuart and their fascinating hobby of metal detection, as well as
- the Senior Scholar program that allows older adult learners to attend classes at Rowan University in Glassboro free of charge.

### **The People Who Help Make SJS Happen:**

Our growing list of contributors now includes (in alphabetical order) Daryl Albury, Karen Berg, Lucille Bondi, Lou Ciavolella, Courtney Colletti, Deanne Farrell, Bev Harting, Churchill Huston, Antoinette Maciolek, Nancie Merritt, Vikki Monaghan, Joe Murphy, Charlotte Ryan, Kelly Saccomanno, Barry Sparks, Phyllis St. Onge, Phyllis Weber, and Jared Willmann.



### **Contact Us:**

And remember that if you have story ideas, comments, or criticisms, you can e-mail us at [savvyjerseyseniors.com](mailto:savvyjerseyseniors.com).

Or, if you're old-fashioned and want to support the USPS, you can reach us at Savvy Jersey Seniors, PO Box 100, Haddonfield, NJ 08033

