

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 4, Numbers 1 & 2 • January/February 2023

## Welcome!

In this latest (double-issue) edition of *Savvy Jersey Seniors* for January and February of 2023, we present some first-person thoughts on three of the many interesting things that seniors across the region are doing, including:

- Becoming a "senior scholar" by enrolling in free college classes for students 65+,
- Crossing the bridge to take advantage of the diverse cultural opportunities along the Avenue of the Arts in Center City Philadelphia, and
- Pursuing fascinating hobbies such as metal detecting...for fun and profit.

Just a reminder 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).

## Grandparents' Day at Haddonfield's Children's Outdoor Sculpture Zoo on April 29

In case you're looking for something special to do with the grandkids, check out Grandparents' Day at the Children's Outdoor Sculpture Zoo in Haddonfield on Saturday, April 29, from 11 AM to 3 PM. The area's elementary and pre-school age children can enjoy activities including:

- Drawings for jobs as "Visiting Curators" for five permanent Zoo animals,
- Free children's books on animals and art (courtesy of *BookSmiles*),
- Animal face painting and balloons,
- Free *Barnum's Animal Crackers* and plastic animal miniatures, and
- Great family photo opportunities with the Zoo's animals.





Since its creation in 2019 by the Haddonfield Outdoor Sculpture Trust (HOST), the Children's Outdoor Sculpture Zoo has become a significant regional attraction for pre-school, nursery school, and elementary school age children.

Located in the Tatem Memorial Garden at 338 Kings Highway East in the borough of Haddonfield, NJ, it is the only Outdoor Sculpture Zoo in the nation dedicated exclusively to children. For more information, go to [haddonfieldsculpture.org](http://haddonfieldsculpture.org).

**Senior Scholars: Free College Classes for New Jerseyans 65+**

Here's a little-known savvy senior's secret. University classes are offered to NJ residents over the age of 65—tuition-free with the caveat of seat availability, i.e., the class enrollment must reflect a few empty seats.

If you think you might be interested, here's a first-hand report from *SJS* contributor Charlotte Ryan of Pitman, a former college professor herself.

"Shhhh. Don't spread it around. Rowan University has offered this opportunity for more than 10 years. The Senior Scholar Program, the quaint term for this program, has a current enrollment of 25. I have enjoyed nine semesters of Rowan classes from Human Movement Dynamics (a fascinating class exploring kinisphere, the area of space occupied by the dancer's body), to an Oceans in Crisis class. I now understand ocean salinity, ocean metal mining, and of course the impact of pollution.

"It is a most rewarding experience on many levels. I've found intergenerational engagement to be mutually beneficial. For seniors, it provides new perspectives for us from students' views as well as allowing us to experience a genuine sense of appreciation from traditional students of our senior experiences.



"For example, this is a comment from current ceramics student Lilli Lowenhar regarding her experience with Senior Scholars: 'Working alongside the senior scholars has brought unique depth to my schooling here at Rowan. I cannot count the number of occasions in which their advice on any subject has aided me in some way or another. I find their presence extremely enriching and rewarding and I look forward to continuing to see them in the ceramics studio as I progress with my education.'

"Not surprisingly, the students' positive feelings about the program are reflected in the comments of the senior scholars themselves. Here's an example from senior scholar Joanne Fisher. 'As soon as I retired from Rowan University, I went immediately into the jewelry metal arts program at RU. My first thought was will I be able to fit in with the 'kids?

'I had a lot of fun learning this art and as I improved, I was able to answer questions and help the newer students coming from the introduction class. Later I added a ceramics class where other senior scholars assisted me since I knew nothing about ceramics. These classes have kept me active and engaged plus whenever I can, I can give back by helping other students.'"

Ryan explains that "the senior scholar program designed by the NJ legislature allows Garden State residents over 65 to attend classes at participating state colleges with no tuition costs. Sr. scholars are responsible for supplies and lab fees. Colleges can choose to participate or not and also may limit the number of senior scholars per class. The program's goal is to keep us busy so we don't make mischief. We have lifetimes of experience and can contribute different points of view to discussions. What is history for a college student is memory for us."

Senior scholar Cynthia Kline Campbell shared this perspective with Professor Ryan. "As a young woman, I remember preferring night classes because they had people who were working, often in that field. So, discussions were more interesting and entertaining than just what the prepared lesson covered. Today we have YouTube. You can watch the presentation as often as you like, but you can't ask questions, and often can't hear the questions asked. And with a stationary camera, you're an observer, not a participant.

"But with Senior Scholars in the group exchanges go both ways, over a longer time. We get to see what is relevant to the next generations. Younger people get to know the hazards of new adventures before they go down that road. They can observe how time focuses the mind, and experience shapes the path. Their paths will be bolder, the future will have global challenges, more opportunities, and better tools.

Senior scholar Rich Rodack adds that because Rowan's Senior scholar program offers courses free of charge to people 65 and older, there are many courses to choose from. "For example I've taken Earth Science courses, geography, political science, and geology. It is great to learn and interact with professors and students."



Ryan adds that faculty members also comment on the enrichment senior scholars bring to

the class discussion. Dr. Charles Schutte, Rowan faculty member calls it "A win-win for all! I really see senior scholars as role models for the younger learners in the college classroom. I start off every semester by asking students why they are taking my class.

"For most students, the answer is that it fulfills a requirement in their curriculum. But the senior scholars are there simply because they want to learn and because they care deeply about the course content, which is a better way to approach learning."

Ryan closes her window into the world of senior scholarship with this thought: "I highly recommend the clandestine exploration of academic opportunities available at your local colleges and universities...shhh we don't want to overwhelm university empty seats, just fill them with our own living histories."



### **Metal Detecting...for Fun and Profit**

SJS got introduced to metal detecting as a hobby by Janis and Harold Stuart of Barrington.

Simply put, metal detecting is the search for valuable objects with a metal detector. Metal detectors come in a variety of configurations for use on land or underwater. These valuable objects are usually antiquities, such as coins, jewelry, relics, gold, and other artifacts.

We asked Janis to write a short article about the Stuart family hobby and here's what she shared.

"My husband and I started to enjoy metal detecting in the 1990s. Harold used to go with his friend Rich and when he came home he usually had a handful of coins...but that was all. But one time he came home with two gold rings and the

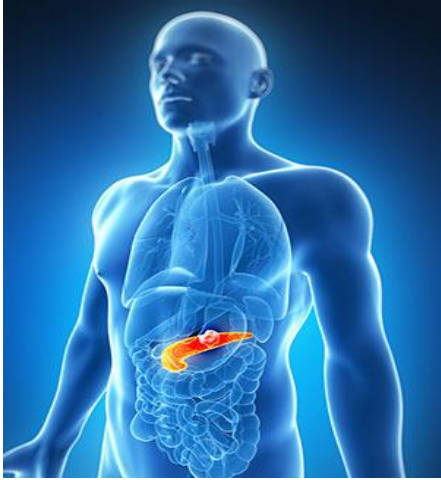
one with diamonds fit me perfectly. That week was his regular metal detecting meeting and he encouraged me to come and wear the ring. And he ended up winning the prize for the best find of the month.

"That night the club was having its election of officers and I was nominated to be Secretary. I accepted and for the next 15 years I also edited the club's newsletter, *The Digger*.

"The great thing about metal detecting is that anyone can do it," adds Janis. So, in our next issue, we'll take a closer look at how to get started...in case you think you would enjoy prospecting for fun and profit.

### **Good News About Pancreatic Cancer...Plus Eight Warning Signs**

Twenty years ago, getting a pancreatic cancer diagnosis was very often devastating. The cancer usually wasn't caught until later stages, partly because the pancreas is tucked behind the stomach, making it hard to detect tumors. Plus, many of the warning signs—abdominal discomfort, back pain, unintended weight loss and fatigue—are easy to overlook or write off as something else, entirely. And they often arise late in the game.



Today, however, the five-year survival rate for pancreatic cancer has more than doubled from where it was two decades ago, at around four percent, according to a recent AARP report. And if the disease is caught early and the tumor is small and confined to the pancreas, the survival rate is around 42 percent, according to the American Cancer Society (ACS).

A surge in research funding is partly responsible for this good news. With stronger support, pancreatic cancer research is making huge advances. Scientists are developing new ways to screen for the cancer so that it can be caught earlier, and they are designing new drugs and procedures to help treat it.

Shubham Pant, M.D., associate professor at the MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, is hopeful that some of these breakthrough treatments will help to “double the rate of survival in the next five years.”

Up to 25 percent of pancreatic cancer patients have unique molecular alterations in their tumors. Now researchers can study these differences using technologies such as molecular profiling, which allows doctors to target treatments individually. A large study published in 2020 in *The Lancet Oncology* found that pancreatic cancer patients who received tailored drug therapy based on their tumor’s unique characteristics lived an average of one year longer than those who did not receive targeted therapy.

Treatment is more likely to be effective the sooner the cancer is caught. So, says AARP, watch for these warning signs:

- Abdominal discomfort in the mid to upper abdomen that often radiates to the back,
- New onset diabetes or worsening blood sugar levels, especially with weight loss,
- Darkening of urine and lightening of stool,
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes),
- Itching,
- Nausea and vomiting,
- Fatigue, and loss of appetite and unintentional weight loss.

### **Avenue of the Arts in Philadelphia Is Just a Bridge Toll Away for Jersey Seniors**

Just because you live in South Jersey certainly does not mean that you shouldn’t check out the dozens and dozens of cultural events and opportunities across the river in Center City Philadelphia.

After all, they’re just a bridge toll away.







One of the easiest ways to become aware of the fascinating array of possibilities...theater, dance, music, museums, and the like is to join the 2,700 folks just like you who are members of the Friends of the Avenue of the Arts (FAA), a/k/a South Broad Street from City Hall to Washington Avenue.

We asked *SJS* reader and FAA executive committee member Joanne Rafferty, formerly of Hopewell, NJ but now back living in Center City, to tell our readers a little bit about how she became involved and what the group does.

"In 2011 my husband and I retired and moved from our South Jersey home in Washington Township to an apartment in Center City Philadelphia. We had just settled in when we came down to the building sitting room one evening to discover a wine and cheese reception organized by a group called Friends of the Avenue of the Arts.

A group of residents, visitors and people who work and live on or near South Broad Street, FAA is a part of Avenue of the Arts, Inc., founded 30 years ago to support the arts organizations and businesses in the area and to encourage beautification projects, cultural vitalization and economic development along the Avenue.

"The Friends fosters a sense of community by sponsoring more than 40 different activities and events annually for its members at venues on and near the Avenue. We joined FAA that evening (annual dues are now \$30 for an individual and \$50 for a family).

"Over the next eight years through our membership in FAA we made new friends and learned about our new city.

We joined members to attend performances at small theaters (such as Tiny Dynamite, Lantern, InterAct, the Arden, and the Wilma), we might not have found on our own, to listen to Philadelphia Chamber Music Society concerts, and to enjoy lively jam sessions with local jazz artists at the historic CLEF Club, an annual FAA event.



"We went on group tours of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts' exhibits, the Museum of the American Revolution, the Masonic Temple and City Hall. We enjoyed drinks and hors d'oeuvres at area restaurants with FAA members and helped to bring in new members with these events.

"I joined the Membership Committee to help plan these events and outreaches at apartment and condo buildings around the Avenue and became the Secretary of the Executive Committee.

The organization grew from about 500 members when we joined to now more than 2,700.

Several hundred of these members are from New Jersey, and every year we have a cocktail party at a South Jersey restaurant to celebrate our suburban Friends and encourage new members from across the bridges.

In 2019 I went to live with my daughter in Hopewell, NJ and care for my twin grandsons. While I loved those years with my family, there is now a nanny to help with their care, and last month I was able to return to the city and my friends at FAA. I moved back to the same Center City neighborhood, and I am currently helping to plan an FAA wine and cheese outreach for my apartment building. It will give me the opportunity to meet more of my fellow residents, to tell them about the Friends and to bear witness to what a difference it can make in their city life.



"And on Fridays I am Grammy, back in Hopewell playing with my delightful grandsons," says Rafferty. "It's the best of both worlds, I think!"



### **Interested in Joining FAA...Mark April 23 on Your Calendar**

The Friends of the Avenue of the Arts will be hosting a get-acquainted event to introduce the organization and its array of more than 40 events annually to prospective members from South Jersey on Sunday, April 23, from 1 to 3 PM at the Double Nickel Brewing Company in Pennsauken.

For more information, visit [avenueofthearts.org](http://avenueofthearts.org). There is a small charge to attend, but SJS will pick up the tab for the first five South Jersey residents who sign up. So, if you're interested in checking out FAA on our dime, just drop us a note at [savvyjerseyseniors.org](http://savvyjerseyseniors.org).

### **More Than One Million Diabetics Now Rationing Insulin in US**

More than a million people with diabetes, or 16.5% of insulin users, in the United States rationed their insulin in the past year, according to a recent study.

People were considered to be rationing if they responded positively to questions in the survey about skipping insulin doses, taking less than needed or putting off buying their insulin. Most cited the cost of insulin as the major reason for rationing.



Adults under the age of 65 rationed more frequently than those who were 65 and older. More who were older and rationed less were covered by Medicare.

Two other groups who were more likely to ration insulin than their counterparts were middle-income people and Black Americans. "We found high rates of rationing of a life-saving drug, and that should really be something of concern for everyone," says Adam Gaffney, lead author of the study. "We need urgently policy change to ensure that everyone has access to this critical medication without cost barriers," Gaffney adds. "And we need to do that today."

### **More "Everyday People" Are Becoming Caregivers**

More than half of Americans aged 50 and up are helping an older adult manage tasks ranging from household chores to care for medical conditions, a new national poll shows.

Researchers say the findings highlight the critical role that everyday people are playing in the lives of older family members, friends, and neighbors. "Not everyone who helps an older person considers themselves a caregiver," says Courtney Polenick, an assistant professor at Michigan Medicine.



Fifty-four percent of those polled said they'd helped an older adult with "care tasks" in the past two years. Most often, that meant helping with health care encounters—like making or attending appointments and communicating with medical providers. But people also commonly helped with home repairs, yard work, grocery shopping, making meals and managing finances. In addition, about one in six respondents helped an older person with personal care, like bathing and dressing.

In close to half of cases, people were helping a parent. But it was also common for respondents to be helping a friend or neighbor, a spouse, or another relative.



### **Six Simple Renovations To Help Seniors Age In Place**

Seventy-seven percent of adults aged 50 and older want to remain in their homes for the long term, reports AgingInPlace.org. But many of them need to make renovations to their homes in order to do so. Here are lower-cost renovations that could make it possible for you, or a loved one, to age in place:

- *Update your lighting*—As people get older, they tend to experience issues with vision. Unfortunately, that could lead to falls and injury.



Installing smart lighting and technology that allows you to have lights turn on automatically when you enter a room can lead to fewer accidents at night or in general.

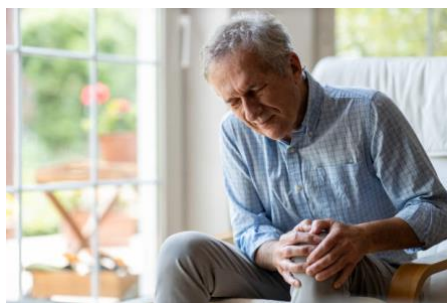
- *Add stability bars in key locations*—Stability bars do a great job of allowing seniors to maintain their balance. These bars can be installed in locations such as the bathroom, kitchen or even the bedroom. They are especially important in the bathroom.
- *Put non-slip floor mats in high-usage areas*—Certain types of flooring have the potential to get really slick, increasing the risk of someone slipping and falling. Place non-slip mats in strategic locations like the kitchen and bathrooms.
- *Refinish your floors*—While carpeting can reduce the risk of falling in a home, it clearly won't work everywhere. But the right finish on hardwood or laminate flooring could also lead to fewer accidents.
- *Install a shower seat*—The combination of slick surfaces, soap and running water can spell trouble for older adults who have problems with balance. That's why installing a shower seat makes a lot of sense.
- *Secure existing home fixtures*—Tightening a loose staircase railing could help prevent a fall. Similarly, securing rugs with non-skid pads underneath could prevent accidents. Secure power and electrical cords to prevent a tripping hazard. Remove clutter from rooms and counter tops.

### **Crossword Puzzles Aid Aging Brains**

People of a certain age are bombarded with ads for brain games promising to help keep their minds sharp. Now, a new study suggests that a pretty old-school pastime—the humble crossword puzzle—may actually be better for the aging brain than new-fangled video games. “This is the first study to document both short-term and longer-term benefits for home-based crossword puzzles training compared to another intervention,” says lead study author Davangere Devanand, M.D., a professor at Columbia University Irving Medical Center in New York City.



The new study assigned 107 adults ages 55 and older with mild cognitive impairment to do online crossword puzzles or brain-training games involving memory tests, matching tasks, spatial recognition challenges, and processing speed tasks. People assigned to do crosswords scored better on cognitive tests at 12 and 78 weeks than their counterparts who did the brain-training games. When researchers looked at the severity of cognitive impairment, they found that only crosswords were beneficial for people with more advanced symptoms. Individuals with milder symptoms appeared to benefit from both crosswords and from brain training games.



### **Seven in Ten Older Adults Report Joint Pain**

Seven in 10 older adults in the United States report joint pain or arthritis, with nearly half reporting that it limits their daily activities, according to a national poll sponsored by AARP. The poll found that nearly half of those reporting arthritis symptoms say they have pain every day (45 percent). Nearly half of those with joint pain say the pain limits their usual activities at least somewhat (49 percent), while over one-third (36 percent) say it interferes with their day-to-day life.

Three-quarters believe arthritis and joint pain are a normal part of aging and two-thirds take over-the-counter pain relievers (aspirin, acetaminophen, ibuprofen, or naproxen).

"Older adults with fair or poor physical or mental health were much more likely to agree with the statement that there's nothing that someone with joint pain can do to ease their symptoms, which we now know to be untrue," says Preeti Malani, M.D. "Health providers need to raise the topic of joint pain with their older patients, and help them make a plan for care that might work for them."



### **Multivitamins May Prevent Decline in Thinking Skills**

A daily multivitamin daily might help keep your brain free from any decline in thinking skills, a new study suggests.

In a trial of more than 21,000 men and women, taking a multivitamin every day did improve cognition among 2,000 participants. All were aged 65 and older.

"Our results are promising as they point to a

potentially highly accessible, safe and inexpensive intervention that may provide a layer of protection against thinking declines in older adults. But more work is needed before widespread recommendations about regular use can be made," says researcher Laura Baker.

Baker's team found that taking a multivitamin over the course of three years reduced thinking declines by about 60%. The benefits were greater among people with heart disease, which is important because they are already at risk for thinking declines.

### **Acts of Kindness Can Increase Your Happiness**

Volunteering at a food bank, mentoring a younger person, treating a friend to a cup of coffee—acts of kindness like these not only can combat isolation and make you feel connected to others but also can have a positive effect on your happiness and well-being.

That's because doing something for someone else triggers hormones affecting our moods, our stress levels, our brains and even our life spans.

Here are five ways that acts of kindness—large or small—can improve your physical health:

- *Makes you happier*—A kind act, whether toward a group, another person or even yourself, boosts some of your hormones, the body's chemical messengers.





One of these is oxytocin, which is responsible for warm fuzzy feelings of contentment and happiness and when we hug someone we love or complete a difficult job. Another hormone that responds positively to acts of kindness is serotonin, an ingredient of many antidepressants. It decreases feelings of anxiety and increases happiness. Being kind also releases endorphins, the body's natural painkillers.

• *Lowers blood pressure*—In a domino-like effect, kindness boosts oxytocin, which releases nitric oxide, a chemical that plays a critical role in maintaining a healthy blood pressure. Nitric oxide counteracts the narrowing of arteries that accompanies aging and disease, improving blood flow through the body and lowering blood pressure.

• *Improves heart health*—A 2016 national survey revealed that those who volunteered were less likely to have dangerous belly fat, a factor in heart disease, and high glucose levels, markers for diabetes.

• *Strengthens the immune system*—Oxytocin also reduces inflammation in the body. Inflammation can be caused by stress, diet or the environment, and is linked to diseases like diabetes and cancer. Research has found that it may also speed up the aging process.

• *Helps you live longer*—Buying your friend a cup of coffee could increase your lifespan. It does this by reducing cortisol, the basic stress hormone in the body. Cortisol inspires the fight-or-flight response when we face danger, but too much cortisol for too long a period can be harmful.

### Seniors Recognize Benefits of Aging

Eight in ten Americans agree society puts too much value on appearing youthful, but a new poll also identified the benefits of getting older.

Notably three-quarters of the respondents agreed that age is not something to fight or fear, but rather an opportunity to live a more fulfilling and emotionally healthy life.



Furthermore, most have actually seen areas of their lives improve with age (71%), such as confidence (49%), their sense of self (45%) and their relationships with family members (44%). In fact, most people who have outgrown their 20s say that they feel more fulfilled (69%) and satisfied (71%) with their lives. Two-thirds of respondents feel younger than they are—nearly a decade younger, on average. The top four benefits of aging, according to the poll, are:

- Learning new things about themselves or the world every year,
- Having more life experience,
- Gaining wisdom
- Being more confident.

Seven in ten say they're embracing their age, believing that getting older is not as bad as they thought it would be.



## Research Says Seniors Have Higher Emotional Well Being

Bodies lose their vigor with the passing of the years, but in the emotional realm, older people seem to rule supreme.

Unlike physical fitness or cognition, where you may see slowing or declines, emotional regulation and experience are often as good, if not better, as we age.

What is the secret behind this grizzled levelheadedness? Researchers have found that, on average, older people have more satisfying social contacts and report higher emotional well-being. Research has revealed even more. Some neuroscientists believe that because seniors process information a little slower with age, that makes them think before they act, instead of reacting quickly.

Seniors also have a positive bias, even without realizing it. Their default mode is, "Don't sweat the small stuff." They more often let go of a situation they experience as negative, especially with friends and family. They tend to be better at picking their battles.

---

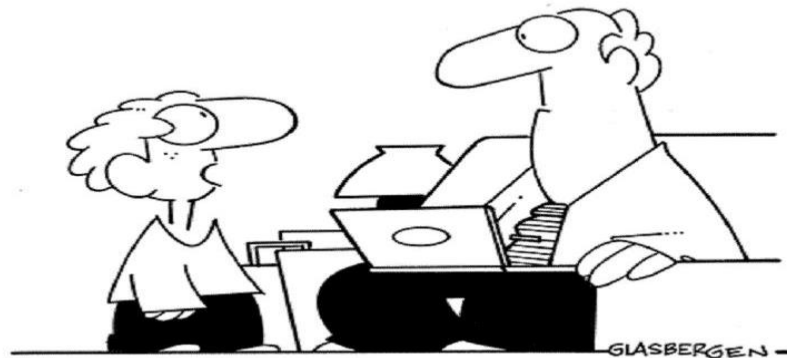
### The People Who Help Make SJS Happen:

Our contributors have included (among others and 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, Joanne Rafferty, Charlotte Ryan, Barry Sparks, Phyllis St.Onge, Janis Stuart, 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).

© Randy Glasbergen  
[glasbergen.com](http://glasbergen.com)



**"There wasn't a law that required you to grow up? You did it voluntarily???"**

“

DAVID BOWIE

seniorplanet.org

Aging is an extraordinary process where you become the person you always should have been.

