

Living Well

Jan./Feb./March 2008
Volume 4, No. 1

A magazine published
by the Lincoln Area
Agency on Aging

HOSPICE GIVES BACK

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DIRECTORS CORNER

It always takes me several weeks each January to remember to write the new year's number on documents and checks. And, as I grow older, I marvel at how much more quickly time goes by than it did when I was 15, or 5. Waiting for Christmas or my birthday took an eternity when I was little ... now they come by far too quickly for my liking.



Some of us make resolutions at the beginning of the year. Some of us think that only serves to remind us of the failure of previous resolutions, so we've stopped doing that. A new year is like a freshly washed blackboard. We feel like we can write anywhere we want. We can make plans, start new projects, schedule time with people we enjoy, read that book we've wanted to start, learn something new, give some of this year to a worthy cause, see places we've never seen before or count our blessings.

And sometimes, we can decide not to do something we don't like to do. During a vacation last year, I missed two weeks of news: world news, national news, local news. To my amazement, I missed very little information that made a difference in my life and avoided a great deal of news that makes me feel bad or worry. I cannot abandon my involvement with what's happening in the world around me, but I can decide to limit my exposure to the litany of very negative information that rains down on me each day.

So, my empty blackboard is going to be filled with as many positive, uplifting experiences as I can find in 2008. I wish you the very best as you pick up your chalk and begin this new year.

June Pederson
 Director, Lincoln Area Agency on Aging

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Living Well is a service of the Lincoln Area Agency on Aging (LAAA). The suggested contribution (tax-deductible) for the magazine is \$8. Contributions in any amount welcome! This magazine is for the 32,000 citizens, 60 years of age and older, who reside in the counties of Butler, Fillmore, Lancaster, Polk, Saline, Saunders, Seward and York in the state of Nebraska, United States of America. However, all readers of all ages are welcome!

This publication's purpose is to educate and inform persons on topics, programs, issues and activities that are of concern to the mature population, their families and community organizations. Specific emphasis is on articles pertaining to the services of LAAA. Contents may be reproduced with credit to the magazine.

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ON THE COVER:

Susan J. Brasch, right, and her mother, Ruth Ann Lyness, find support and ways to provide service through LAAA.



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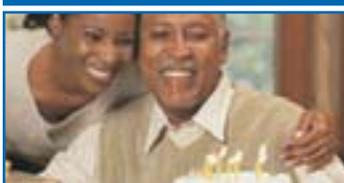
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Gramercy Hill, more than 20 years of care

Gramercy Hill opened its doors in 1985. Today the facility houses 150 independent and assisted living residents.

Gramercy Hill became part of the Capital Senior Living Corporation in 1999. The Capital Senior Living Corporation is one of the largest operators of residential communities for older adults.

Housekeeping, free utilities, access to emergency calls and three meals a day are provided to residents.

“Three meals a day is something most retirement communities don’t provide, as well as free transportation to doctor’s appointments,” said Barb Tyler, director of sales.

Residents are encouraged to lead an active and healthy lifestyle. The book mobile, podiatrists and music groups periodically visit Gramercy Hill in addition to other guests. Trips, such as shopping and holiday light tours also are organized for residents.

In-house, Gramercy Hill boasts a library, chapel, barber shop and exercise room where daily classes are held. Activities are also offered, including bingo and crafts.

A registered nurse is on staff to care for assisted living residents. The staff administers medication as well as assists those who need help with dressing and bathing.

Periodically, Gramercy Hill updates its facility, to provide the best home possible for its residents. Most



Residents Opal Feel, center, and Opal Bohe, right, chat with a staff member in the Gramercy Hill lobby.

recently, new carpet was installed.

Gramercy Hill is conveniently located at 6800 A St., near a variety of banks, restaurants and shops.

“Even though Gramercy Hill is one of the older retirement communities in Lincoln, our reputation through the years has consistently been excellent in regard to our building and staff, and more importantly, for care of our residents,” Tyler said.

HELP IS AVAILABLE FOR THOSE WITH DEBT PROBLEMS

Debt is a problem when it becomes hard to make payments or when credit is used to make payments.

Do not wait to act. Until the problem is faced head on, the debt will continue to increase, according to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension in Lancaster County.

The extension office offers tips for those concerned about debt:

- Don’t wait to act.
- Stop using credit.
- Make getting out of debt a family affair.
- Organize financial records.
- Learn about your debt.

- Create a written pay down debt plan.
- Find ways to cut expenses.
- Find ways to increase income.
- Make sacrifices to eliminate debt.
- Once you are out of debt, stay out of debt and begin a savings plan.

Communication is another important part of handling debt. Be honest with yourself, your family and your creditors. Also, don’t hesitate to make sacrifices. A smart step in reducing debt is to reduce or eliminate extra expenses.

If more assistance is needed to

handle debt or you have concern for a family member with debt, contact the UNL Extension in Lancaster County at 402-441-7180 or visit its Web site, <http://paydowndebt.unl.edu/>, or the LIFE office of the LAAA at 402-441-7070 or 800-247-0938.



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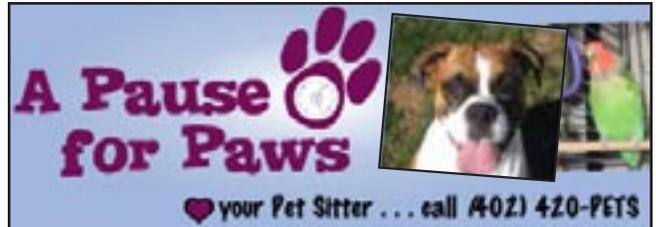
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GOT GREEN LIGHTING?

If you choose green or environment-friendly lighting, you could save money, help the environment and decrease energy use.

Compact florescent light bulbs, or CFLs, were introduced in the 1970s but were not as efficient as brands today. ENERGY STAR is a label for the most efficient CFL, according to Environmental Defense, one of the most influential environmental groups in the nation.

ENERGY STAR, co-managed by the U.S. Department of Environmental Quality and the U.S. Department of Energy, rates light bulbs, based on a list of guidelines, to place an ENERGY STAR label on a product. Using ENERGY STAR bulbs saves money because they don't require replacement as often as regular bulbs and can be filed as a credit on 2006 income taxes. More criteria may be found at the Environmental Defense Web site, www.edaf.org, in the "Make the Switch" section.

Russ Reno, spokesman for Lincoln Electric System, said LES recommends the ENERGY STAR label to its customers when they ask about energy efficiency.

"When we consult with customers who want to save money, we strongly advise that they look for the ENERGY STAR label," Reno said.

LES also offers a program on the subject, Energy Savings 101, and has provided information to its customer base about CFLs through mailing inserts. Energy Saving 101 has been offered at a local home and garden show and upon request by local groups.

LES requested the help of its customers to prioritize sustainable energy programs on topics like CFLs at two public hearings Dec. 11 at Lincoln High School and Dec. 13 at Lincoln North Star High School.

The first step to energy efficient lighting is to switch out the bulbs in the most frequently used lights in your home, Reno said.

LES research has found that if homeowners use CFL bulbs, they will decrease their cost of lighting by two-thirds. Lighting cost averages only 7 percent of the average home's electric bill in one year, Reno said.

CFL bulbs cost \$3 to \$25 and are rated from 6,000 to 25,000 hours with power from five to 25 watts. Special offers on ENERGY STAR certified light bulbs may be found at <http://www.energystar.gov>.

Energy saving light bulbs vary and may be used indoors or outdoors. There are six shapes and various options in feature, brightness and color.



Greg Lima turns on an ENERGY STAR outdoor light fixture displayed at Lincoln Lighting, 40th and O streets. The fixture claims the brand because it only accepts energy efficient CFLs.

It is important to be aware of the elements used to craft a CFL bulb. Users should take caution when changing a bulb if it breaks.

If an energy efficient bulb is broken, take these five important steps:

1. Open nearby windows.
2. Sweep up fragments with a broom, not your hands.
3. Place fragments in a sealed plastic bag.
4. Wipe the area clean with paper towel to remove any extra glass.
5. Dispose of the broken pieces properly.

CFLs have several advantages. CFLs contain four milligrams of mercury, which is far less than a thermometer's 500 mg. In addition, approximately 80 percent less mercury is emitted in the production of CFLs, as opposed to regular light bulbs.

When a CFL is burned-out or broken, the disposal process is the same. Recycling is the best option. To find out where the nearest CFL recycling center is call 800-CLEAN-UP or visit <http://earth911.org>.

LAAA Area Wide Advisory Council

The Advisory Council exists as an advisory body to the Lincoln Area Agency on Aging and to its signatory member counties; to the appointed and elected officials of the local governing units within the eight-county "planning and service area;" to groups and organizations whose interest, service, or regulation, in whole or in part, affect the lives and interests of older persons; and to the advisory and governing arms of the Aging Network at both state and national levels.

The Advisory Council's actions shall take the form of recommendations.

Execution of the Advisory Council's recommendations rest with the appropriate local, state or national officials or organization directors.

Purposes of the council include:

- To support and further the goals and mission of LAAA.
- To act as the advocate for older citizens of the eight county area regarding their concerns, needs, problems and issues.
- To identify and define the most pressing needs and concerns of the area's older adults.
- To assist in the development of effective plans to meet those identified needs on a prioritized and continuing basis.



LAAA Area Wide Advisory Council members include, from left, standing, Dee Fullerton, June Pederson, Marge Noble, Dee Aguilar, Kay Kahla, Kathy Stokebrand, Ruthelen Sittler, Elly Brauning, Bill Scanlon, Bob Courtney, James Stansberry, Denise Boyd and Rebecca Meyer; sitting, Bonnie Armstrong, Christina Snell, JoEllen Vrbka, Alan Gissler, Barry Moore, Carl Tesch and John Ludden. Not pictured: Ann Hall, Martha Hettenbaugh, Laura Hunt, Dr. Dawn Munn and Don Olson.

- To develop, or cause to be developed, needed services, programs or efforts to meet those identified needs and concerns.
- To monitor and evaluate aging services and programs for older adults to ensure that service objectives are being set in concert with the identified needs and concerns and that those objectives are being met.
- To act as a sounding board for staff by providing review and input on new or revised initiatives, strategies and projects.

Appointment of representatives to the Lincoln Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council shall be the responsibility of each county's elected governing board providing, however, that the representatives of the primary county shall be appointed by the mayor of the City of Lincoln with the concurrence of the Lincoln City Council.

Homestead Tax Exemption Available

The Homestead Tax Exemption provides partial or total property tax relief on the value of a home. In order to qualify, applicants must be at least 65 years old and/or disabled, own the home in which they live and meet program income guidelines. The amount of the property tax relief depends upon the value of the home and household income.

Effective Jan. 1, 2007, efforts by State Senator Jeanne Combs, LAAA Advisory Board member Bob Courtney and representatives from AARP Nebraska came to fruition. The increasing value of homes was negating the benefits of the tax relief, which had a maximum exemption value. Applicants who previously benefited were disqualified as the value of their homes rose.

Courtney and AARP Nebraska representatives presented research, facts and figures to Senator Combs, who introduced the bill. Three years later it was passed by Nebraska lawmakers. The state pays counties the amount of money "lost" in reductions so the bill is not a detriment to local governments.

Courtney said the maximum exemption can now be raised to 100 percent of the county's average home price. Reduction ranges from 25 to 100 percent.

Courtney became interested in the exemption and its benefits while volunteering for Saline county elder care.

"Every year, more and more people were losing a portion of or the ability to qualify for property tax reduction," he

said. "It concerned me because there were taxes they just couldn't afford. One woman, for example, was paying one third of her disposable income to property tax. We were taxing people out of their homes."

Each year applications must be submitted between Feb. 1 and June 30. Late applications result in a lost exemption for that year. After an application is submitted, county assessors review claims and assign home value. The state compares these values with applicants' income tax returns.

Program information and applications are available through the County Assessor. For more information visit <http://www.revenue.ne.gov/homestead.htm>

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- Can you medically qualify for a new Medicare supplement?
- Understanding what Medicare Advantage Plans are.
- Solicitation of the above insurance products and others

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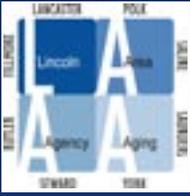
If you are under age 65 and have Medicare Parts A & B and you are not on Medicaid, you may be able to qualify for a Medicare Advantage health plan. I would like to help you learn about your health care options. **Please give me a call.**

If you are having a hard time affording your prescriptions, there may be help out there for you. There are Medicare Savings Programs that you can qualify for if you are low income and have limited assets. There are also private organizations that may be able to help you. **Please give me a call.**

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<http://lincoln.ne.gov> keyword: aging

KEY FOR SERVICES: L = Lancaster only

MISSION

The Lincoln Area Agency on Aging is the principal agency which plans, coordinates and advocates for older people in our eight-county area. Our mission is to enhance daily living, expand personal choices and educate the community in an effort to ensure the independence and full life of the people we serve.

LIVING WELL MAGAZINE

402-441-6156

This free quarterly magazine features stories of interest to older adults and is mailed directly to their homes.

LIVE AND LEARN

A monthly TV show for and about older adults on 5-CITY TV, Channel 5 and video-on-demand on lincoln.ne.gov Web site.

FIRST SERVICE

Information and Referral

LIFE provides help for individual older persons and their caregivers to resolve questions, and concerns, occurring with aging. Services include referrals, counseling, social work and care management. First Service is the starting point in determining alternatives, and arranging services for individuals and their families in the LAAA eight-county service area.

Call 402-441-7070 or 800-247-0938.

SENIORS FOUNDATION

A charitable foundation focusing on enhancing and enriching the quality of life and independence of all older adults in Lincoln and Lancaster County.

402-441-6179 or <http://www.seniorsfoundation.org>

ACTIVAGE CENTERS

Social events and activities, health and educational programs. Noon meals, selected evening meals with entertainment, special holiday meals, brown bag and shelf-stable meals for at home. Transportation to the centers is available for a fee. Seven centers in Lincoln and five in Lancaster County. L 402-441-7158

ACTIVITIES & CLASSES

- **Health** - Physical activity and exercise classes to improve health and fitness. L 402-441-7575
- **Travelogue** - Travel films by professional photographers. L 402-441-7158

CAREGIVING

402-441-7070 or 800-247-0938

- **ElderCare Connection** - Caregivers receive information, support and assistance. <http://www.eldercare.gov>
- **Caregiver Support Groups** - Discuss issues and problems of caregiving with other caregivers.
- **Senior Companion Program** - Homebound older adults receive companionship. L 402-441-7026.
- **Caregiver Support Services** - Caregivers receive stress management, exercise, health and wellness assessments, and nutrition counseling. 402-441-7575

LONG-TERM CARE OPTIONS/ CARE MANAGEMENT

402-441-7070 or 402-247-0938

- **Care Management Services**
- **LifeLine Emergency Response System** - 24-hour emergency access by pressing a button.
- **Long-Term Care Ombudsman** - Protects the rights of residents in long-term care facilities.
- **Resident Services** - Service coordination to maintain the independence of those at Burke Plaza, Mahoney Manor and Crossroads House in Lincoln and in Geneva. Fillmore and Lancaster only.
- **Senior Care Options** - Long-term care and assessment for Medicaid-eligible persons seeking nursing home care.
- **Supportive Services Program** - Eligible older persons can receive assistance with the cost of in-home services and adult day care.
- **Medicaid Waiver Services** - State funded in-home services for those who are Medicaid eligible who choose to live at home or use community-based services.
- **Harvest Project** - Mental health and substance abuse services. L 402-441-7070

EMPLOYMENT

402-441-7064 or 800-247-0938

- **OperationABLE** - Job searching for persons 50+. Works with employers who have job listings.

FINANCIAL

402-441-7070 or 800-247-0938

- **Financial Counseling** - Information on Medicare, private insurance policies, reverse mortgages and home equity loans.
- **Medicare & Medicaid Fraud** - SMP seeks to reduce waste and fraud in the Medicare and Medicaid Program.
- **SHIIP** - Senior Health Insurance Information Program. Information concerning Medicare and Medicaid.

ON AGING SERVICES

HEALTH & FITNESS

402-441-7575

- **Lifetime Health Program**
- **Forever Strong Health Club** - Fitness equipment and consultations with certified personal trainers.
- **Senior Health Promotion Center** - The University of Nebraska-Medical Center and LAAA provide Health screenings. L 402-441-6687
- **Alzheimer's Disease** - The LIFE office provides information and referral. 402-441-7070 or 800-247-0938 <http://lincoln.ne.gov> keyword: aging
- **Widowed Person Service** - Support for people who are widowed. L 402-441-7026
- **Fit to Care** - Tips from a registered nurse, dietician and certified personal trainer to help decrease the effects of chronic tension often associated with caregiving. Free service.
- **Health Education Programs** - A variety of topics assisting individuals to make healthy lifestyle choices.
- **Health Screenings** - Screenings include blood pressure, cholesterol, glucose, bone density and more.
- **Exercise** - At several locations; pilates, yoga, stretch and tone classes. Daily fitness programs on 5-CITY TV, Channel 5. L

HOUSING & HOME REPAIRS

- **Home Handyman Service** - Handyman services from moving to leaky faucets, painting and broken light fixtures. L 402-441-7030
- **Assisted Living and Nursing Facilities** - Listings are available from the LIFE office. 402-441-7070, 800-247-0938 <http://lincoln.ne.gov> keyword: aging

NUTRITION

402-441-7158

- **Nutrition Consultation** - Older adults receive assessments, intervention planning, counseling, follow-up and coordination with other service providers.
- **Meals** - Noon meals, selected evening meals with entertainment, special holiday meals and light menu choices are available at some centers.

TRANSPORTATION

- **Transportation to the ActivAge Centers.** L 402-441-7158
- **Lancaster County Rural Transit** - Fixed schedule transportation from rural Lancaster communities into Lincoln. L 402-441-7031
- **Other options in the community** - Listings available at 402-441-7070 <http://lincoln.ne.gov>, keyword: aging

VOLUNTEERING

- **RSVP/Retired & Senior Volunteer Program**
Volunteer experiences for those ages 55+. Coordinates between community needs and the talents of the volunteers. L 402-441-7026
- **Foster Grandparent Program 402-441-7026**
- **Guardian and Conservatorship 402-441-7070**
- **Long-Term Care Ombudsman 402-441-7070**
- **Senior Companion Program 402-441-6105**
- **SHIIP 402-441-7070**
- **Widowed Persons Service 402-441-7026**

MULTI-COUNTY PROGRAMS

- Butler County Senior Services 402-367-6131
- Fillmore County Senior Services 402-759-4921
- Polk County Senior Services 402-764-8227
- Saline ElderCare 402-821-3330
- Saunders County Senior Services 402-443-4896
- Seward County Aging Services 402-761-3593
- York County Aging Services 402-362-7626

CONTACT US

All Counties: 800-247-0938

- Butler County: Becky Romshek 402-367-4537
- Fillmore County: Brenda Motis, and Rhonda Stokebrand 402-759-4921
- Polk County: Amy Theis 402-747-5731
- Saline County: Trudy Kubicek 402-826-2463
- Saunders County: Mary Dailey 402-443-1097
- Seward County: 800-247-0938
- York County: Lori Byers, and Nancy Hoblyn: 402-362-7626
- Donna Mulder, Aging Program Coordinator: 800-247-0938
- Martin Morse, Case aide: 800-247-0938
- Lisa Osborne, Rural Medicaid Waiver Supervisor: 800-247-0938
- Sue Kramer, SCO and Waiver intake: 800-247-0938
- Avis Blase, Rural Waiver Services Coordinator: 800-247-0938
- Nancy Kohler, Rural Waiver Services Coordinator: 800-247-0938
- Wendy Hanshaw, Rural Services Coordinator: 800-247-0938
- Sandy Oswald, JoAnn Currie and Shirley Vickinovac, Senior Care Option: 800-247-0938

WANT TO RECEIVE LIVING WELL VIA E-MAIL?

If you would like to receive Living Well by e-mail instead of in the mail, please call Debb Baines of Lincoln Area Agency on Aging at (402) 441-6146 or e-mail dbaines@lincoln.ne.gov

File Your Income Taxes Properly

Meeting the deadline, midnight April 15, stands as one of the most important parts to filing income taxes.

If there's a special reason the deadline won't be met, Form 4868 must be filed with the Internal Revenue Service. If an extension is granted, income taxes must be filed by Aug. 15 with interest added.

Taxes paid to the IRS have been collected since 1913. The income tax return forms are verification for the government that ensure each applicable person has paid yearly taxes for the income they have earned. Taxes must be paid by individual or joint taxpayers on income and investments; small businesses and self-employed people; large and mid-size businesses; and tax exempt and government entities, which includes charities.

Forms may be picked up at your local library or post office, or may be downloaded from the Internet at <http://www.irs.gov/>. Residents must complete Form 1040 in either the long form with itemized deductions or the 1040 EZ with standard deductions. Nonresidents fill out Form 1040 NR and exempt people fill out Form 8843. Residents may now file taxes online at the IRS Web site.

Be aware of available deductions. For example, interest on mortgage or student loans, medical expenses that exceed 7.5 percent of yearly income, business expenses and charitable giving are all allowable deductions.

To complete the forms, several pieces of documentation are needed including: a Social Security number, a copy of the W-2 form, which is documentation from an employer on

the past year's earned income and the amount that was deducted for tax purposes. If self-employed, Form 1099, which shows income, is required. If you have income from investments and dividends, it must be reported on the 1099-B. For a list of other items to make note of when filing see <http://www.irs.gov/faqs/index.html>.

It's important to make copies of all documents and forms in the event of an audit. Report all income earned in the year because the IRS receives that information and expects it to be documented. Be aware if using an online company and software to file taxes because some cost money.

For questions regarding filing income taxes, find a local IRS office by clicking on your state at <http://www.irs.gov/localcontacts/index.html> or calling 800-829-1040 between the hours of 6 a.m. and 9 p.m.



The income tax filing deadline approaches April 15, but assistance is available for filing.

INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE

Downtown ActivAge Center: Beginning Feb. 4, Monday through Thursday, by appointment. Call 402-441-7506 for more information or to schedule appointments.

Northeast ActivAge Center: On Tuesdays. Call 402-441-7151 to schedule appointments.

Tax incentives given for saving energy

The Energy Policy Act, HR 6, was passed in October 2005 to help save energy and taxpayers' money.

HR 6 allows homeowners to receive tax credits for energy-saving improvements in calendar year 2006. The credit will reduce the bottom line of the bill, which is more beneficial than a deduction.

For example, a 10 percent credit will be given to home improvements that meet or exceed the standards set by the 2000 International Energy Conservation Code. Homeowners should check with suppliers to ensure that energy-saving improvements will comply with requirements for a tax credit.

The allowed energy-saving improvements include those made to the home, windows, doors, cars, solar energy systems and fuel cells. For a full list of details, see <http://energytaxcredit.com>.

In addition, some other requirements apply to receive tax credit:

- Improvements must be made between Jan. 1, 2006, and Dec. 31, 2007.
- Home improvements must be installed in the owner's main home.
- Certification is required from a supplier of the purchase(s).
- A maximum amount of tax credit applies to each category of energy-saving improvements, but each category varies.

Buser Welcomed

Saline County welcomed Kim Buser Sept. 10 as program manager.

Buser previously worked as the general assistant specialist in Lancaster County and as director of the Blue River Family Center in Crete.

She noted the transition to program manager could have been stressful; however, thanks to assistance from the board in Saline County and supportive staff, she settled in with ease.



Kim Buser

“I am impressed and grateful for the active and supportive board and the staff in the office,” Buser said.

Her goals include building upon what already has been established and increasing services available to older adults in the county.

“I have big shoes to fill,” she said. “It’s a challenge to make sure I am living up to the gold standards previously set.”

Buser lives in Crete with her husband, Matt, a 911 dispatcher in Lincoln, and sons, Danny, 8, and Erik, 17.

Much of Buser’s free time is spent keeping up with her sons’ busy schedules. The family also enjoys traveling when time allows.

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Know Your Strangers

By John Henry (Jack) Zohner

Growing up in a rural community I never knew a stranger. My family seemed to know everyone. Mom and Dad could make those “magic connections” to others. For instance, they knew things like Mary’s sister’s neighbor was Joe and he works at the hardware store. Through this method of association it seemed like they knew everyone in Butler County. It wasn’t that they sat around gossiping, it’s just the connections people naturally make living in sparsely populated areas.

That closeness was valuable in many ways. Our community members watched out for each other like one big, happy family. The world has changed through the years and some of those “magic connections” are harder to find. The result is we often do business with people we don’t know. Our safety net is in jeopardy.

We live in a time where we must really be aware there are people that like our money a little too much. They want some of it and that’s not okay. Those money seekers have a mentality similar to squirrels that spend the vast majority of their day hunting for food, likewise they spend a large part of their day thinking of ways to get our money. We need to stay ahead of them to protect our best interests.

There are basic ways to secure our material possessions like locking our doors and windows. Of course, car keys should be removed from the ignitions and doors locked when in an unsecured area. The door between the garage and house should be locked.

Discarded mail should be properly disposed of to help prevent identity theft. Never give out banking information or Social Security numbers to the wrong people.

Other things to watch for are people that contact you with a “special” offer. Get nervous if they say you won a contest that you did not enter. Get especially nervous if they request money to claim your prize. Never send money!

Try to distance yourself to reduce your risks. Recently my wife and I got rid of the telephone number we had for more than 20 years. Most of the calls we received were from telemarketers or people taking “surveys.” We had second thoughts about giving up that phone number. We were worried friends would have trouble contacting us. The reality was our friends were given our cellular numbers and we receive no unwanted calls on our cellular phones. It was a great decision.

Some of the calls were from “charities” that only give 11 percent or so of the money they collect to the actual charity. The rest of that money often goes to “administrative expenses.” It’s important to know the good charities that really provide a benefit to our communities and the not-so-

good charities. When in doubt, contact the Better Business Bureau for a list of reputable charities.

The Better Business Bureau can be contacted by phone or on line. Their Web site is <http://www.bbb.org>, and it is full of important facts. There are hundreds of charities listed with accreditation information. Their history records of businesses are impressive.

The Better Business Bureau also can help by giving you their referral magazine called “The Solution.”

There is another great way to know your strangers and that source of information is your friends. It’s always good to ask what their experiences have been. We are all in this world together. Friendship and trust is more valuable than ever. Keep safe and do business with people you “know!”



Jack Zohner is the owner of John Henry's Plumbing, Heating, & A.C. of Lincoln, Neb. He is past president of the Plumbing, Heating, & Cooling Contractors and the Lincoln Heating & Air Conditioning Association.

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-John Henry (Jack) Zohner

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www.seniorsfoundation.org

Arnold Lei began receiving hospice care in his daughter's home in November 2006. Six months later, he credited his hospice team and family's support for an improved quality of life. He was grateful for Sarah, the nurse he saw at least twice a week, and for Jennifer, the home health aide who got his clothes ready and gave him a bath. He was thankful for Mary Beth who tended to his grooming and massage needs, for a church member who visited often and for the volunteers who provided respite for his family.

But the people in Arnold's life are even more grateful to him. Hospice is like a thank you gift from society for a man that had sacrificed so much in his 77 years.

As a former Senior Companion with the local Lincoln Area Agency on Aging, Arnold volunteered his support and friendship to many seniors in need over the years.

"Once, I was out with heart and hip operations. My seniors would wait to have a Senior Companion until I was back and I could see them. They didn't want anybody else," Arnold said.

He was proud of this work and was quick to tell about his part in media coverage of the program.

Arnold's giving nature goes back even further. He served as a U.S. Marine Corps soldier in Korea.

"I've walked through more mine fields than anybody can shake a stick at and yet I'm still here," Arnold said. "I got shot at. I had gangrene at 17. I always seem to come out of it."

Indeed he did, and hospice was a part of helping Arnold thrive as he neared the end of his life. Arnold had lung cancer and liver cancer. In November, his doctor told his family he had a couple of weeks to live.

"He wasn't in very good shape," said Sarah Yokel, Arnold's hospice Nurse. "He had a lot of pain issues."

But thanks to his hospice team, Arnold's pain was under control.

"The hospice staff will try anything," Arnold said. "If one thing doesn't work they get in touch with the doctor and then we try something else. My pain used to be at a nine or 10, and now it's at a three or four."

Medications also helped with nausea.

Pam, Arnold's daughter, said that her greatest benefit of hospice was not having to transport her father to the doctor each time there was a need.

She said, "Sarah is in close contact with the doctors and she gets things going. I rely on hospice 100 percent. I tell Sarah, 'You're my right hand.'"

With pain and nausea under control, Arnold and Pam agreed that Arnold's quality of life had improved greatly. He was eating better, enjoyed new friendships with the hospice team

People think hospice is gloom and doom. I found out that it's a place where you can be happy.

— Arnold Lei



Arnold Lei expresses gratitude to hospice care in a story from May 2007. Lei is pictured with a hospice Nurse Sarah.

and laughed more.

"We have a lot of fun here," Arnold said. "We joke a lot. This is a hugging house. Everyone gets a hug."

When asked why he wanted to share his story, Arnold said, "I want other people to know about hospice so that they too can have the pleasure and care that I've been given, and I've been given a lot. I've fooled a lot of people. Everyone thought I'd be gone. People think hospice is gloom and doom. I found out that it's a place where you can be happy. It's just been wonderful since I've been on hospice care."

This story was written in May 2007. Arnold's journey ended a few months later on July 2.

If interested in becoming a Senior Companion, call Elisa Stutheit at 441-7026

It's never too late to Live and Learn.

— That's the line used to close the television program Ruth Ann Lyness co-hosts on Lincoln's cable access channel, 5 City-TV.

It's also a phrase that applies to the Lincoln Area Agency on Aging for both Lyness and her daughter, Susan J. Brasch.

For six years, Lyness has hosted the LAAA-sponsored video magazine "Live & Learn," along with Peggy Briggs, Don Gill, Harland Johnson and Delores Lintel. The interview program is for and about older adults in the Lincoln area. According to Lyness, hosting the show is volunteer work that's sprinkled with a bit of glitz.

"I wasn't expecting to be a performer," she said. "I never expected to have an on-air commitment, but I love doing it."

Brasch, one of Lyness' five children, also has been involved as an LAAA communicator.

A local artist, Brasch helped conduct art classes for the agency's Prime Time Open Studios Project.

"I enjoyed working with the folks who attended because they wanted to be there," Brasch said.

"I enjoyed their enthusiasm and willingness to grow and be creative."

That willingness helped pave Lyness' path to the TV studio. Her professional career started in the classroom as a teacher. She eventually became the English consultant for Lincoln Public Schools. Now 79, she has been retired 16 years and lives in Lincoln with her husband, Phil.

On the "Live & Learn" program, she has interviewed notable public figures such as former Sheldon Art Gallery Director Norman Geske, U.S. Sen. Chuck Hagel and



Back Back to generation

National Poet Laureate Ted Kooser.

"It's a way to keep a finger on the pulse of the community," Lyness said. "Retirement shouldn't mean retirement from the world but just from whatever our profession was before."

At age 57, her daughter's view of retirement translates into something a bit different.

"We don't say the 'R' word in my family," said Brasch, who has been a professional artist for 27 years. "In my view, retirement will be adapting basically to what I'm doing now. I do not see myself being that different or

having a cutoff time.”

Lyness, who now resides in an independent living apartment in the Eastmont Towers Community, agreed that retirement differs from person to person.

“In retirement there are so many choices,” she said. “Only in childhood do we have that much choice about how to spend our time.”

Brasch said she and some of her colleagues have discussed alternative ways to spend their retirement.

“We’ve talked about buying an old house and having a commons, with each of us having a room,” she said.

Whatever the future holds for this mother and daughter, they hope LAAA can remain a part of it.

“We are boosters,” Lyness said. “I had no idea of the breadth and scope of the agency until I became a ‘Live & Learn’ host. Older adults have no rapport with many of the things we see on TV or movie screens today. With the things that go on with LAAA, we have lots of rapport.”

It all goes back to the sign-off line about living and learning.

The “Live & Learn” program is shown periodically on 5 City-TV, channel 5 on Lincoln’s Time Warner cable system. A schedule can be found through InterLinc, the city of Lincoln Web site, at <http://www.lincoln.ne.gov>, or by calling 402-441-6688. “Live & Learn” is also available by video-on-demand through InterLinc.

Brasch, who continues to facilitate art through the “PlayShops” program for older adults, can be contacted at Studio 9 in the Haymarket, 402-474-4080, or by e-mail at sjbraschstudio@aol.com.



Ruth Ann Lyness, left, and her daughter Susan J. Brasch spend some quality time together. Both have worked closely with LAAA through various projects.

Switching to digital TV

The country will switch from analog to digital television Feb. 17, 2009, and preparation is simple, if you know what to do.

According to the Federal Communications Commission, Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau, broadcast stations are switching because a digital picture is more efficient to transfer to your TV than an analog version and can provide better picture and sound.

The FCC also had this advice.

Q: How do I prepare to switch?

You must have a TV with a digital tuner or have a digital-ready monitor with a digital-to-analog converter box to transmit the signals to an analog TV. An antenna is also required to receive the digital signal.

Q: Do I need to get a digital-ready TV if I don't subscribe to cable or satellite?

Yes, all TVs will have to be digital-ready by Feb. 17, 2009.

Q: How can I tell if my TV is already digital capable?

If you purchased your TV in the U.S. on or after May 25, 2007, the salesperson was required by the FCC to inform buyers if the TV is not digital and will require a converter box when the signal switches to digital. If your TV is analog, it will also have text on the purchase box stating so.

Q: What if I cannot afford to buy a digital TV?

Jan. 1, 2008, through March 31, 2009, households in the U.S. can request two coupons, worth \$40 each, to help pay for a converter box. The box will cost between \$50 and \$70 and will be on shelves in January. For more information on how to request coupons see <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/dtvcoupon/index.html>.

Q: Why is the government helping subsidize the switch to digital?

Because digital TV uses less space when transmitting a signal and the associated frequencies will be used for police, fire, emergency rescue and advanced commercial wireless services.

Q: Are there services to help me make the switch?

The government and television providers are working to inform the public. One Web site, <http://www.dtvtransition.org/>, allows the viewer to take an online quiz to determine if their household is ready for the switch. After your household has been identified, it will give more information about how each household can prepare for the switch to digital.



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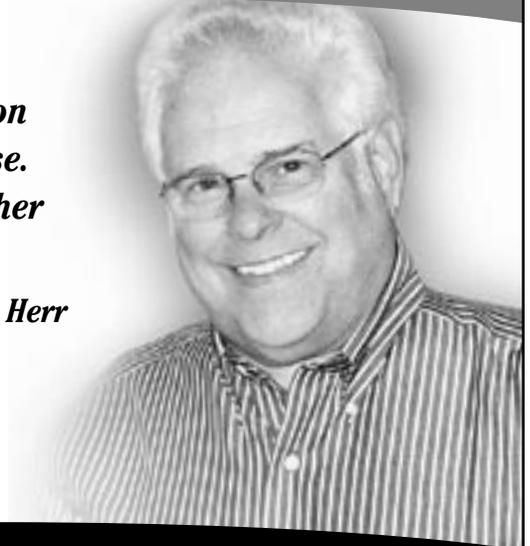
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LINCOLN AREA AGENCY ON AGING NEWS AND EVENTS



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INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE

Starts Feb. 4, 2008, Monday through Thursday, by appointment, at the Downtown ActivAge Center. Please call 402-441-7506 for more information or to schedule appointments. Assistance is also available at the Northeast ActivAge Center on Tuesdays. Call 402-441-7151 to schedule an appointment



WIDOWED PERSONS SERVICE (WPS) MEETINGS

WPS is a program sponsored by the Lincoln Area Agency on Aging. The program is concerned about the newly widowed in our community and offers various groups for widowed men and widowed women. Those in WPS have experienced widowhood and know how difficult this period can be and want to let you know there is help available, should you need it. No fees. If you would like to visit with a trained volunteer or receive more information, please call 402-441-7026. You are invited to attend these get-togethers:

- **Friendship Group** meets every Sunday from 2 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. Open to widowed people of all ages. Call 402-441-7028 for the current location.
- **Widow's Breakfast** meets every Thursday at 8 a.m. at Stauffer's Café, 5602 S. 48th St.

— **Widow's Luncheon** meets the first Thursday of each month at 11:30 a.m., visiting a different restaurant monthly. Call 402-441-7028 for the current location.

— **Just Pals**, a social group for widowed persons, meets once monthly on a Saturday night, visiting a different restaurant monthly. Call 402-441-7028 for the current location.

— **"Charlie Brown's Kids,"** a group for children who have lost a parent through death, meets the first and third Thursday of each month from 6 p.m. - 8 p.m. at Sheridan Lutheran Church, 6955 Old Cheney Road. Bring a brown bag supper. Also sponsor "Parents Night Out" one evening each month. Call 402-483-1845 for information.

HEALTH PROMOTION EVENTS

LIFETIME HEALTH Healthy Happenings - Winter 2008
Call 402-441-7575 for more information or to register.

STRETCH AND TONE

Exercises in this class focus on increasing flexibility and strength and improving balance to avoid injury. Most exercises are conducted with participants seated or standing near a chair, \$28 per session

North Gate Garden Estates

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30 a.m. - 10:15 a.m.

Session One: Jan. 8 - Feb. 28

Session Two: March 4 - April 24

EASING INTO YOGA

This class is designed to introduce the practice of yoga. You will learn breathing, posture, balance and stretching techniques as well as weight-bearing poses to help increase bone density. This practice will improve your general health and overall sense of well being, \$28 per session

Auld Recreation Center

Tuesdays, 9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Session One: Jan. 8 - Feb. 26

Session Two: March 4 - April 22

Lake Street ActivAge Center

Wednesdays, 9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Session One: Jan. 9 - Feb. 27

Session Two: March 5 - April 23

Continued on page 22

LINCOLN AREA AGENCY ON AGING

Continued from Page 21

GENTLE YOGA

Beginning yoga poses are covered with emphasis placed on going at your own pace and getting to know the poses in a way that's right for your body. Gentle yoga is great for beginners or those wishing to reduce stress. Meditation, breathing and a long relaxation are also included in the flow of the class. \$45 per session

Belmont Recreation Center

Thursdays, 10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Session One: Jan. 10 - Feb. 28

Session Two: March 6 - April 24

FOREVER STRONG HEALTH CLUB

Downtown ActivAge Center

Open weekdays from 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Certified Personal Trainers Tuesdays from 1 p.m. - 3 p.m., Thursdays from 9 a.m. - 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. - 3 p.m. or by appointment. Free, but contributions are accepted.

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The best gift a caregiver can give the person they are caring for is their own good health! These free services are funded by the Older Americans Act and designed to keep caregivers healthy. Our professional staff offers wellness assessments, nutrition and personal training consultations at times and locations that are convenient for the caregiver. Call 402-441-7575.

HEALTH EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Lifetime Health offers a variety of 30 - 60 minute programs designed for civic and community groups. Attendees receive valuable information on mental wellness, illness and injury prevention and physical activity-related topics. Check the Lincoln Area Agency on Aging Web site or call 402-441-7575 for a list of current programs.



ARTHRITIS SELF-HELP COURSE

This six-week course covers basic information about arthritis, strategies for decreasing pain, ways to relax and deal with stress, proper use of exercise, medications, strategies for dealing with depression, nutrition, methods of heat/cold applications and problem-solving techniques. A \$10 fee includes books, handouts and self-help items.

Joanne Maxey/Clyde Malone Center

Fridays, 10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Feb. 1 - March 7, 2008

SAHARA ULTRASOUND BONE DENSITY SCREENING

The Sahara Clinical Bone Sonometer uses ultrasound to estimate bone density in the calcaneus or heel. Free for people 60 and older; \$7 for people under age 60. Call 402-441-7575 to register.

Joanne Maxey/Clyde Malone Center

– Feb. 13- 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

LIFETIME HEALTH FITNESS CLASSES ON 5 CITY-TV

Watch 5 City-TV on Time Warner Cable channel 5 for these 30-minute exercise programs designed for mature adults.

- 6 a.m.: Pilates
- 6:30 a.m.: Forever Strong Strength Workout
- 7 a.m.: Exercise for a Lifetime
- 7:30 a.m.: Yoga - Refresh & Renew
- 8 a.m.: Pilates
- 8:30 a.m.: Forever Strong Strength Workout
- 9 a.m.: Exercise for a Lifetime
- 9:30 a.m.: Yoga - Refresh & Renew

AGING NEWS AND EVENTS



ACTIVAGE CENTERS

Healthy noon meals, holiday meals and sack lunches for home. Many centers offer rides to grocery stores. Income tax assistance, influenza inoculations, and Farmers' Market Coupons applications are available seasonally. Make your meal reservation two days in advance. There is a suggested contribution of \$3 for those 60 and older and a \$6 price for those younger than 60. Transportation to your neighborhood center is available for \$1 each way. Holiday meals are a suggested contribution of \$5 for those 60 and older and a price of \$7 for those younger than 60. For the center nearest to you, or to receive a calendar, call 402-441-7158. For on-line information about the center of your choice, go to the City of Lincoln Web site at <http://lincoln.ne.gov>, keyword: aging, choose "ActivAge Centers" from the sidebar on the left, click on the center you wish to view. You will need Adobe Acrobat Reader to view.



LEISURE EVENTS

PRIME TIME ART CLASSES

Learn from an art professional and expand your creative world! Nine-week classes are being scheduled starting in January and March. No art experience needed. The fee is \$20. Sponsored by Lincoln Parks & Recreation and the Lincoln Area Agency on Aging. Classes are funded by the Dillion Foundation. Call F Street Community Center at 402-441-7951 for more information and registration.

CLOSINGS

LAAA facilities, LAAA ActivAge programs such as centers, classes, events, and LAAA transportation services will be observing these holidays:

- **New Year's Day - Jan. 1**
- **Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday - Jan. 21**
- **Presidents' Day - Feb. 18**

During times of severe weather, listen to KFOR 1240 AM for storm closing information. ActivAge programs usually close if the Lincoln Public Schools have closed due to weather conditions. This includes LAAA facilities, centers, classes, events, Travelogue, and transportation services.

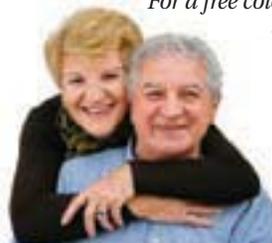
"Rest is not idleness, and to lie sometimes on the grass under trees on a summer's day, listening to the murmur of the water, or watching the clouds float across the sky, is by no means a waste of time."
- J. Lubbock

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LINCOLN AREA AGENCY ON AGING NEWS AND EVENTS



TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR RETIREMENT

Saturday Mornings in March, 10:30 a.m. - noon
Gere Library; 2400 S 56th St., Lincoln, Neb.

Contact: LAAA LIFE Office 402-441-7070
or Lois Rood at 402-570-2333

Session 1: March 1

Medicare and Medicaid

Speaker: Houston Doan, Insurance and Financial
Counselor, Lincoln Information For the Elderly.

- Medicare Part A – Hospital Insurance and Medicare Part B – Medical Insurance
- Medicare Part D – Prescription Drug Benefit
- Medicaid – Benefits and Eligibility

Speaker: Tami Barrett, Elder Rights Coordinator and
Local Long-Term Care Ombudsman. Advocating on
behalf of long-term care residents.

- Own Your Future, the governor's long-term care planning awareness campaign
- Surrogate decision-making, living wills and medical power of attorney
- Living options for every stage: Alzheimer's care, nursing home, assisted living, adult day care, home health care and hospice care
- The role of the long-term care ombudsman
- Nebraska SMP: empowering seniors to prevent healthcare fraud

Session 2: March 8

The Four Cornerstones of a Successful Retirement

Speaker: Richard Miller, Branch Manager, Bankers
Life & Casualty

- Medigap Coverage – Medicare Supplement Plans A-J
- Long-term care and home health care
- Final expenses and survivors' income
- Retirement income and savings

Session 3: March 15

Medicaid Planning

Speaker: Stephen Schmidt, Estate Planning Attorney;
Blazek & Associates

- The Medicaid system
- Durable power of attorney
- Implications regarding your assets
- The Deficit Reduction Act of 2005
- Penalties and look-backs
- The community spouse
- The role of long-term care insurance in estate planning

Session 4: March 22

Reverse Mortgages

Speaker: Bruce Bellamy, Home Mortgage Consultant,
Wells Fargo Home Mortgage

- What is a reverse mortgage?
- Is a reverse mortgage right for you?
- Using the reverse mortgage to buy long-term care
- Combining a reverse mortgage with an annuity for greater freedom and flexibility

Session 5: March 29

Wills and Trusts

Speaker: James Blazek, Estate Planning Attorney;
Blazek & Associates

- The difference between a will and a trust
- The difference between revocable and irrevocable trusts
- Is a trust right for you?
- How much does it cost to set up a trust?
- What should I know about estate taxes and gifting?

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402-496-3432

Tami Barrett & Houston Doan, Lincoln Information for the
Elderly: 402-441-7070



The Aviators entertained the crowd during last year's LifeLong Living Festival, organized by LAAA. KFOR will now be hosting the event, which is scheduled for May 17, 2008. (File photo)

Festival Planned

The 12th annual Lincoln Area Agency on Aging LifeLong Living Festival will kick off with a new sponsor at its helm this year. KFOR is now the host and will work closely with Lincoln Area Agency on Aging to put on another successful event.

"It's an exciting event and we want to build on the momentum the Lincoln Area Agency on Aging has created," said Julie Robinson of KFOR.

KFOR boasts the largest radio audience in the Lincoln area. The full-service radio station has been broadcasting since 1924.

The LAAA LifeLong Living Festival serves as the area's largest and longest running information and product show designed for older adults and their families. KFOR plans to go with the same format LAAA used.

There will be more than 100 booths from businesses and organizations with information, products and services for older adults with active lifestyles.

Live music as well as a live broadcast by KFOR also will be provided throughout the event.

The festival is scheduled for May 17 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. It will be held at the Agricultural Hall on the state fairgrounds.

For more information about the event or a business or organization interested in having an exhibit, contact Vicki Marker, promotions coordinator, at 402-325-7735.

LAAA Speakers Available

Where Do You Go For Answers on Aging? Need a speaker for you organization or club?

We have a great range of topics for you to choose from at the Lincoln Area Agency on Aging. We're anxious to share with you our expertise on topics concerning Aging. In some instances, we can even tailor a presentation for your group.

To request and/or schedule a speaker, call 402-441-6156 or, go to our online form at lincoln.ne.gov and type aging in the search box. Please note that every effort will be made to accommodate your request, but not all speakers are available at all times. Below are a list of topics and a contact to schedule a speaker. The person listed is not necessarily the speaker.



June Pederson

LAAA and/or Aging Issues
441-6156
DBatten@ci.lincoln.ne.us

Deb Batten

Live & Learn
441-6156
DBatten@ci.lincoln.ne.us

Tami Barrett

Long-Term Care Ombudsman
441-7070
tbarrett@ci.lincoln.ne.us

Richard Blair

Seniors Foundation
Lincoln Seniors
Transportation Program
441-6179
RBlair@ci.lincoln.ne.us

Denise Boyd

Nutrition
441-7159
dboyd@ci.lincoln.ne.us

Houston Doan or Brad Kastl

Medicare & Medicare Part D
441-7070
hdoan@ci.lincoln.ne.us
bkastl@ci.lincoln.ne.us

Bob Esquivel

Lincoln / Lancaster ActivAge Centers
441-7158
BEsquivel@ci.lincoln.ne.us

Tracie Foreman

UNMC Senior Health Promotion
Clinic
441-7575
TForeman@ci.lincoln.ne.us

Elisa Stutheit

Foster Grandparent Program
Senior Companion Program
441-7026
estutheit@ci.lincoln.ne.us

Jean Holt

LIFE Office
441-7070
JHolt@ci.lincoln.ne.us

LIFE Office

Long Term Care Options
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JHolt@ci.lincoln.ne.us

Lifetime Health

Caregiver Support Services
441-7575

Laurie McAdams

RSVP / Volunteering
Widowed Persons Service
441-7026
LMcadams@ci.lincoln.ne.us

Peggy Apthorpe

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Attitude Tune-Up
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Allen, TX 75013

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Fullerton, CA 92834-6790

These Web sites provide more information on the law and include sample letters:

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Nebraska Attorney General's Web site
<http://www.aarp.org/states/ne/>
Nebraska AARP Web site
<http://www.idtheftne.org/>
Identity Theft Action Council Nebraska
<http://www.lincoln.ne.gov/city/mayor/aging/>
Lincoln Area Agency on Aging



Sue Jeffrey, left, Maggie Wilson, Katie Robb and Ben Petersen

Sue Jeffrey, PT/GCS: Certified Geriatric Specialist
Maggie Wilson, DPT: Women's Health/Incontinence
Katie Robb, DPT: Pediatrics
Ben Petersen, DPT: Progressive spinal muscle energy techniques/Sports injury.

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Getting Ready for Winter

Contributed by DeLayne Peck, Administrator for LAAA's LIFE Office

If you haven't already, it's time to prepare for winter weather. Nebraska winters are unpredictable. Our weather can quickly change from mild to wild. The disastrous October Storm that dumped 13 inches of snow 10 years ago is a chilling reminder. The storm stranded thousands of Nebraskans without heat, lights and phone service.

Here is what the experts recommend for winter preparedness:

Stay in Touch with the Weather: The National Weather Service forecasters provide routine weather programming at all times. During life-threatening weather conditions, radios send out a special alarm tone. This is critical, because weather can turn deadly very fast. Ice storms and flash flooding are two examples that can occur when people are sleeping or unaware of the forecast. Both can be deadly if people do not have an emergency plan or enough warning to get to a safe place.

With a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio, you will be alerted to dangerous weather and have time to take shelter. NOAA Weather Radios also broadcast warnings and information regarding technological disasters, such as chemical releases or oil spills. They can be purchased at most stores that sell electronic devices. Most run on batteries or have battery back-up.

Know the Difference Between Watches and Warnings: A winter storm **WARNING** means a winter storm is headed for your area. A blizzard **WARNING** means strong winds, blinding wind-driven snow and dangerous wind chill are expected. Stay in or seek shelter immediately!

Dress Appropriately: The air temperature does not have to be below freezing for someone to experience cold emergencies such as hypothermia and frostbite. Wind speed can create dangerously cold conditions even when the temperature is not that low. Dress in layers so you can adjust to changing conditions. Avoid overdressing or overexertion, which can lead to heat illness. Wear a hat, preferably one that covers your ears, since most body heat is lost through your head. Wear mittens as they provide more warmth to your hands than gloves. Cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs.

Watch Your Step: Avoid going out in slippery conditions. Each year, one in three people age 65 or older experiences a fall serious enough to require medical attention. Falls lead to hip fractures and other serious injuries and are the leading cause of death due to injury. In many cases, the resulting disability makes it impossible for a person to continue to live independently.

It is important to clear steps and walkways of snow and ice, but beware of snow shoveling. Research has shown the energy used to shovel snow is similar to playing singles tennis or speed walking at 5 mph. If there is any reason that shoveling snow might be dangerous for you, such as a heart condition, consult your doctor before picking up a shovel. Keep rock salt and sand on hand to melt ice and improve traction on walkways.

Organize Supplies: Experts recommend organizing a storm kit. Your kit should contain: at least a three-day supply of food that won't spoil and a non-electric can opener; three gallons

of water per person, per day; a battery-powered radio; a flashlight with extra batteries; a good old-fashioned telephone with a cord (Cordless phones don't work in a power outage); first-aid kit; extra supply of prescription or over-the-counter medicines; personal care and sanitary items. And don't forget your best best friends — remember to stock up on pet food and care items.

Communications: Have a good plan in place for how to communicate with family and friends. Think of how, in your situation, you could let family and friends know that you are fine or that you are in need. What if you can't travel because of downed trees and power lines? What if your phone is out? What will you do? Get to know your neighbors and involve them in your planning. In the best Nebraska tradition, neighbors help neighbors when bad weather strikes.

Finally, make and keep a list of important phone number on paper. Be sure to add the LIFE Office, 402-441-7070 or 800-247-0938 to your list.



Taking inventory of storm kit supplies in your car or home can prove valuable during winter weather.

Spotlight on Jim's Home Health Supplies

Jim's Home Health Supplies in Lincoln focuses on a friendly approach to business and is interested in each client's needs.

"We value every customer that we encounter," said Becky Austin, outside sales and marketing director. "Many are elderly or have physical disabilities. We pride ourselves by helping them become more independent in their daily lives."

Between its two locations, 35th and Old Cheney and 48th and Holdredge, Jim's sells and services walkers, scooters, power chairs, lift chairs and stair lifts, respiratory equipment including CPAP and Oxygen, bath safety items and aids to daily living.

Since its beginning as a "Mom and Pop" operation in 1966 when Jim's was a pharmacy, the company has grown but Jim's employees have taken great care to maintain the per-

sonal atmosphere and have become friends with many of its customers. Lehn Straub bought the business in 1992 and continued the focus on personal service for its customers.

Jim's strives to be available for its clients. The service department is on-call for emergency situations all day, everyday.

"Jim's ensures that customers receive the most appropriate equipment for the individual," Austin said. "We're willing to take the time to give the individual attention needed for the client to be successful with their equipment."

Quality and affordability are combined to help clients make the right decision that they will be happy with in the long run.

Jim's will work to make each client comfortable with their medical supplies and educate them to help provide the most appropriate usage.

“We value every customer that we encounter.”

— Becky Austin



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HOW ARE YOU SLEEPING?

Good sleep plays a pivotal role in an individual's health and quality of life. Somnos Sleep Disorders Center provides comprehensive testing, diagnosis and follow-up for a wide range of sleep disorders including sleep apnea, narcolepsy, leg movement disorders and other sleep disturbances.

Operations Manager Troy Stentz said sleep apnea is the most common disorder encountered at the center. Physicians who suspect a sleep disorder, such as sleep apnea, refer the patient to Somnos for an overnight study. Sleep studies are interpreted by a pulmonologist or board certified sleep medicine physician. Dr. John Trapp, the center's medical director, is board certified in both pulmonary and sleep medicine.

"Many pulmonologists are also trained to diagnose and treat sleep disorders," Stentz said. "It is logical that sleep apnea, a breathing disorder, would be treated by a physician who focuses on the respiratory system."

Apnea is a disorder in which the affected person has periodic pauses in breathing during sleep that may last up to several minutes in duration. These respiratory events are associated with low oxygen levels that can cause brief sleep disturbances.

"Apnea events can occur several times per minute all night long and cause frequent awakenings that the individual may not even remember the next day," Stentz said. "The patient will come to us and say, 'I feel as tired when I wake up as I do when I go to bed at night.'"

A referred patient schedules an appointment with Somnos. Patients check into the center about one to two hours before their usual bedtimes. Sensors are applied to the outside of the body to record and monitor the patient's sleep. Scalp electrodes monitor brain activity and allow the technician and physician to determine whether a patient is asleep or awake and what "stage" or type of sleep they are in. Other sensors monitor muscle activity, breathing effort and airflow, heart rhythm and oxygen levels.

"We look quite carefully at the respiratory system and respiratory effort," Stentz said. "These are determined with elastic bands that record the expansion and contraction of the diaphragm and lungs, and an oximetry sensor that measures oxygen levels in the bloodstream."

Somnos, a family-owned business, has been providing services to Nebraska since 1990 and operates a four-bedroom center in Lincoln and a two-bedroom facility in Grand Island with a total of 15 staff members. The team knows the importance of providing a comfortable, home environment for sleep studies.

"During the overnight, a person stays in a private bedroom," Stentz said. "It's not like a stereotypical hospital room but rather like a hotel room or a bedroom in a person's home. We don't want an environment that feels like a medical lab."

In the morning, sensors are removed and the study is then scored by a senior technician with additional years of experience and specialized training. A staff physician reviews and interprets the study and provides a report to the referring doctor including details about study findings, overall impression and treatment recommendations.

If sleep apnea is diagnosed, Somnos can provide CPAP equipment, a medical device that provides compressed room air to maintain the patient's upper airway during sleep. A second overnight study may be performed to determine the most effective CPAP setting to treat a patient's sleep apnea.

Potential or current patients with questions are welcome to call Somnos at 402-486-3410 to speak with center staff. Staff members can provide information on the referral process, insurance coverage of sleep studies and educational materials on sleep and sleep disorders.

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A Rewarding Career

Staff meetings, finances, construction projects and problem solving are just a few items that occupied JoEllen Vrbka as administrator at Butler County Hospital in an average day.

“It was rewarding to accomplish the things we did,” Vrbka said. “The Butler County Hospital is a great facility.”

Vrbka spent 17 years as the hospital’s administrator, retiring in 1996. Before becoming administrator, she worked as director of nurses. As a registered nurse, Vrbka enjoyed the contact with people the job provided.

As administrator, Vrbka worked with the governing board, medical staff and department heads to provide quality care to the area. She considers dealing with financial aspects the most difficult part of the job. To improve her finance skills, Vrbka completed an independent study program through the University of Minnesota, receiving a certificate in Health Care Administration.

Throughout the years as administrator, Vrbka noted many changes within

the medical field. The most prevalent being the advancement of technology including the use of CAT Scans and traveling MRIs in rural hospitals.

Vrbka elected to ease into retirement. She accepted a leadership assignment, working part time for several years with the Blue River Valley Network. The network consisted of a group of physicians, nursing directors and department heads. The network includes eight rural hospitals. She also earned a seat on the LAAA Advisory Board.

“Through the board you can learn what programs are being offered and bring it back to your local community,” she said.

Vrbka currently lives with her husband in Brainard, Neb. They have three children and nine grandchildren.

Despite retirement, Vrbka stays involved in the community. Through the “Ugly Quilts” project, she has worked with her church to provide quilts for the poor. During the past year, they have created more than 80 quilts.

She also has spent time traveling with family. They have visited the Czech Republic, England, Canada



As a member of her church's "Ugly Quilts" charity group, JoEllen Vrbka displays their latest creation. The group donates quilts to those in need. Vrbka concluded a demanding career as Butler County Hospital's administrator in 1996.

and various places throughout the United States.

Vrbka enjoys retirement and looks back on a rewarding career.

“For a lot of it I was in the right place at the right time,” she said. “I’ve enjoyed working with the people I’ve worked with. The governing board, hospital and medical staff made my job easy.”

Residents Rights Week Celebrated



Above: Amy Wergin, a 103-year-old resident at Tabitha Health Care Services in Lincoln poses for a picture with Gov. Dave Heineman. Right: Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman signs a proclamation Oct. 10 during Residents' Rights Week.



People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities throughout the country were honored Oct. 7-13 during “Residents’ Rights Week.”

Gov. Dave Heineman signed a proclamation Oct. 10 to recognize the observance in Nebraska. An estimated 50 long-term care residents from the southeastern part of the state attended the ceremony at the Capitol in Lincoln.

“Residents’ Rights Week” celebrates the importance of individual rights and resident-centered decision-making. This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Nursing Home Reform Law, which recognizes those rights.

In Nebraska, approximately 15,000 individuals reside in 234 nursing homes.

Give the Gift of Bright Lights

Bright Lights offers summer gift certificates. Education is a gift and Bright Lights offers summer educational programs that are “fun” learning.

The Bright Lights’ program in Lincoln was developed for elementary and middle school students, emphasizing “hands-on, minds on” learning. Interesting educational activities are provided during intensive, three-hour daily blocks of time and some special all-day classes. This allows a special student in your life, grandchildren, neighbors and others, to pursue focused interests beyond the nine-month classroom setting.

Grandparents can give the gift of learning that stretches and challenges your grandkids’ interests and hobbies. Please consider Bright Lights gift certificates that can be purchased in denominations of \$25, \$50 and \$95.

Bright Lights welcomes children from outside of Lincoln. Taking classes during a week-long visit to see relatives works well for many families. Classes full of children from different schools and towns who share an interest in a class like Fishing, Secret Codes or Clay is exciting.

Imagine the benefits of the full-day camps for middle school students interested in exploring a career like architecture, medicine or engineering for \$190.

Middle School students can take part in an International program at Lux Middle School with more than 70 students from Japan. The tuition for the 15-hour classes is \$95 with morning or afternoon options. All classes and camps will be held during June 9-13, June 23-27 and July 7-11, 2008.

Bright Lights offers more than 100 classes and six day camps each year. Last year, 1,300 children attended 1,800 classes. Registration for summer begins April 1 when the new schedule is available on line at <http://www.brightlights.org> or in a hard copy. Classes like Claymation, American Girl, Mystery Writing, Podcasting, and Robotics are lead by teachers selected on their subject area expertise and their ability to work with children. Remember — class choice is first-come, first-served.

If you are interested in a gift certificate, contact Becky and she will mail you the certificate and a letter that showcases the gift. The letter will show education as a gift and highlight some of the opportunities. Becky’s phone number is 402-420-1115 ext. 43, her e-mail is brock@brightlights.org. You can also e-mail or call Becky with your address or your children’s address to receive a brochure in the spring.

Bright Lights is a Lincoln-based organization established in 1987.

As a tuition-based, 501(C)(3) non-profit business, with no tax or United Way support, Bright Lights welcomes community volunteers year-round. Donors are essential to the program. Need-based scholarships are another service of Bright Lights. Perhaps you can buy a scholarship for a child you never met?

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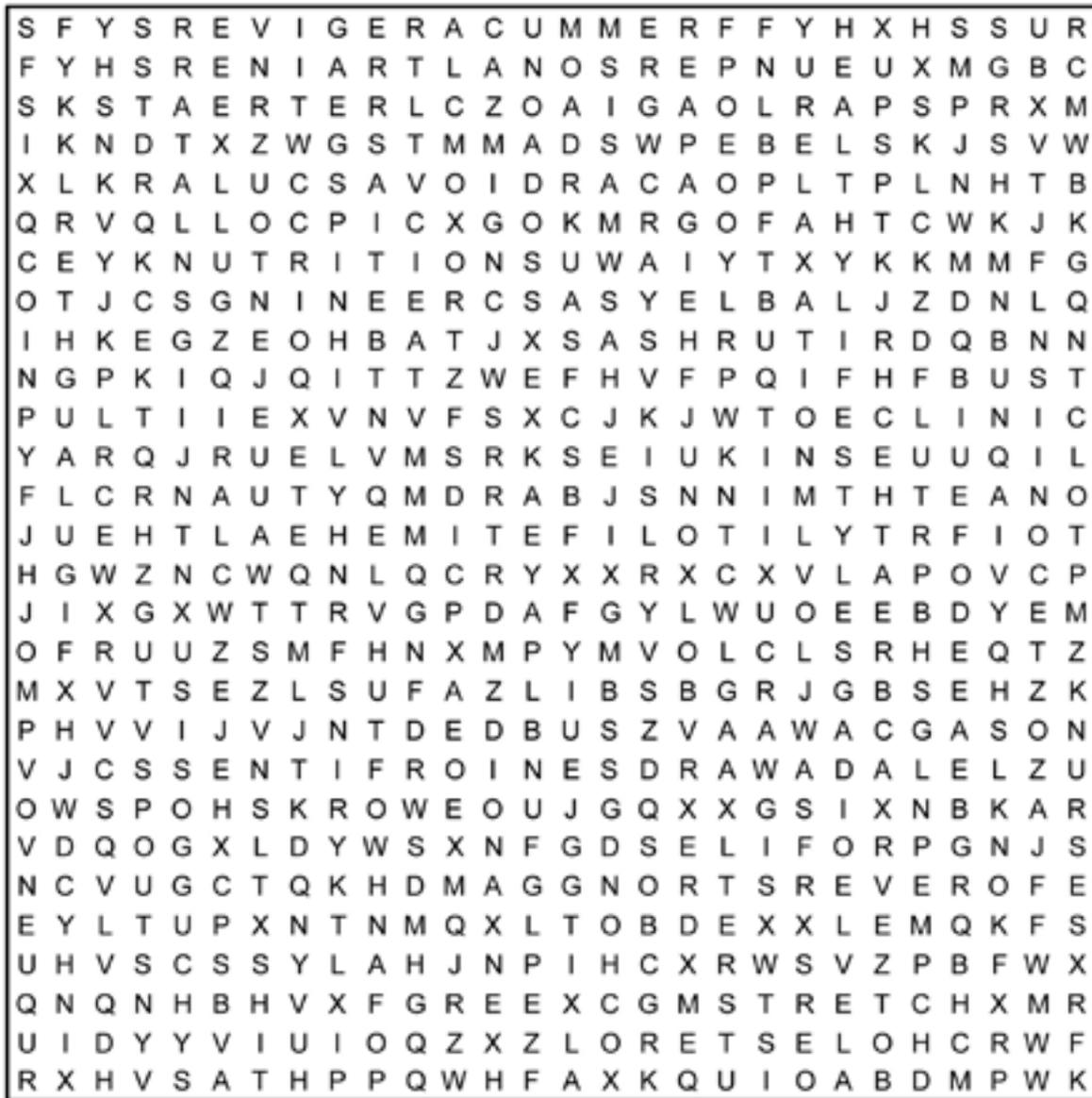
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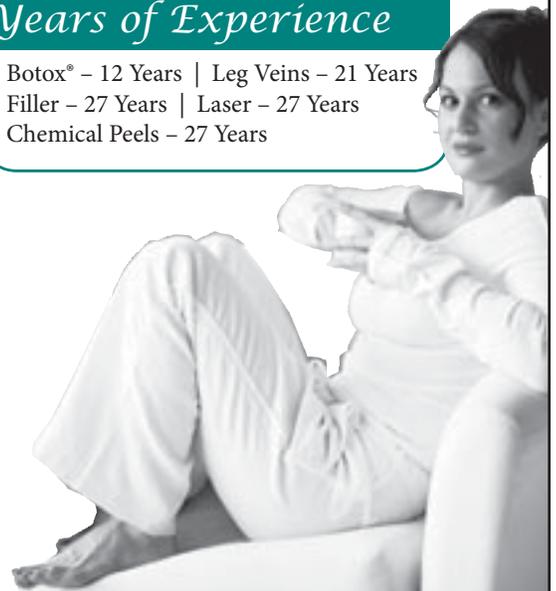
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The Art of Staying Busy Leads to New Book

At age 92, Norman Geske is not one to rest on his laurels...or rest very much at all. The former Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery director at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln recently published a book and hopes to soon write another.

Geske, Sheldon's Director Emeritus, celebrates the release of "Beyond Madness: The Art of Ralph Blakelock, 1847-1919." The hardcover volume contains 139 images of the works of Blakelock, an American Romantic painter who Geske said was largely misunderstood as a mad genius.

"He was neither mad, nor was he a genius," Geske said. "He was an enormously gifted artist who was underestimated. He created a number of works that were innovative in their time."

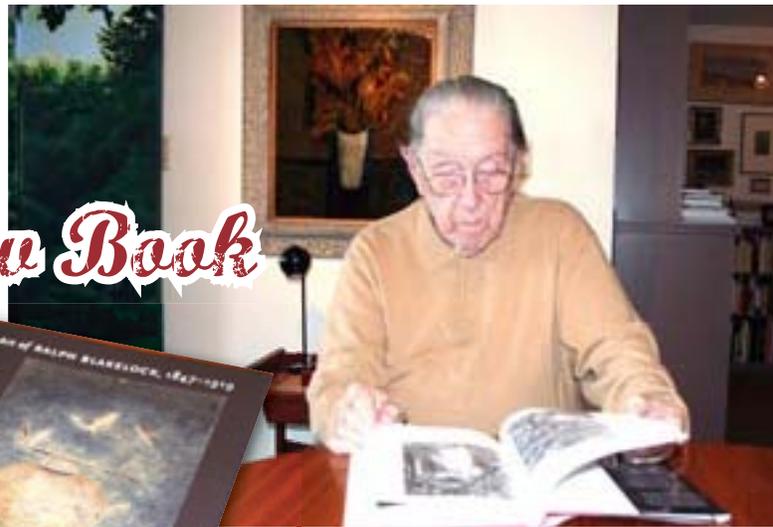
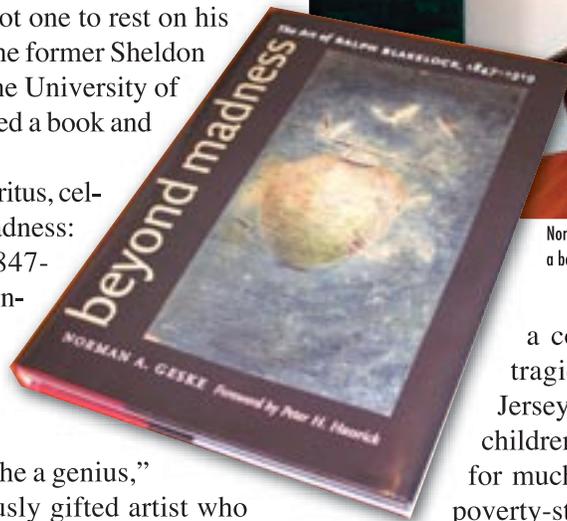
Toward the end of his life, Blakelock's creations were worth thousands of dollars. And, those works, mostly landscapes, also were frequently copied. Blakelock is "perhaps the most forged" artist in American art history.

So, Geske set out to re-authenticate him. In the late 1960s, Geske acquired a bundle of small paintings and drawings for the Sheldon Gallery that had been found by one of Blakelock's descendents. That spurred Geske to put out a call to all art museums in the United States, asking for Blakelock's works to be sent to Lincoln for examination.

A group of art experts did photo studies of the paintings, and even x-rayed them to determine if they were the real thing. Most of the researched works were forgeries.

Now, nearly 40 years later, Geske has compiled some of Blakelock's authentic creations into a 336-page book.

"I was interested in the artist and I wanted to see a little justice done," Geske said.



Norman Geske, former Sheldon Art Gallery director, has recently published a book, featuring the paintings of American artist Ralph Blakelock.

The book, however, is not just a collection of pictures. Blakelock's tragic life is also revealed. The New Jersey native who was the father of nine children, was obliged to sell his paintings for much less than their worth and became poverty-stricken. The self-taught artist was eventually diagnosed with schizophrenia and committed to a sanatorium. Geske said that has actually largely contributed to Blakelock's appeal.

"The public often likes the idea of an artist being crazy," Geske said.

However, as the title of his book suggests, Blakelock's works were "beyond madness."

"He was a disturbed and unhappy man, but that did not affect his achievements as an artist," Geske said. "I don't think we should judge him on the basis of his personal illness. Let's judge him on the basis of his art."

Geske, who now is the author of ten publications, would like to write another. During the years he has fallen in love with the city of Paris, and would like to pen an account of his feelings about the city.

"It is the greatest city in the world," he said. "There is no place like Paris for the depth of richness of culture that's there."

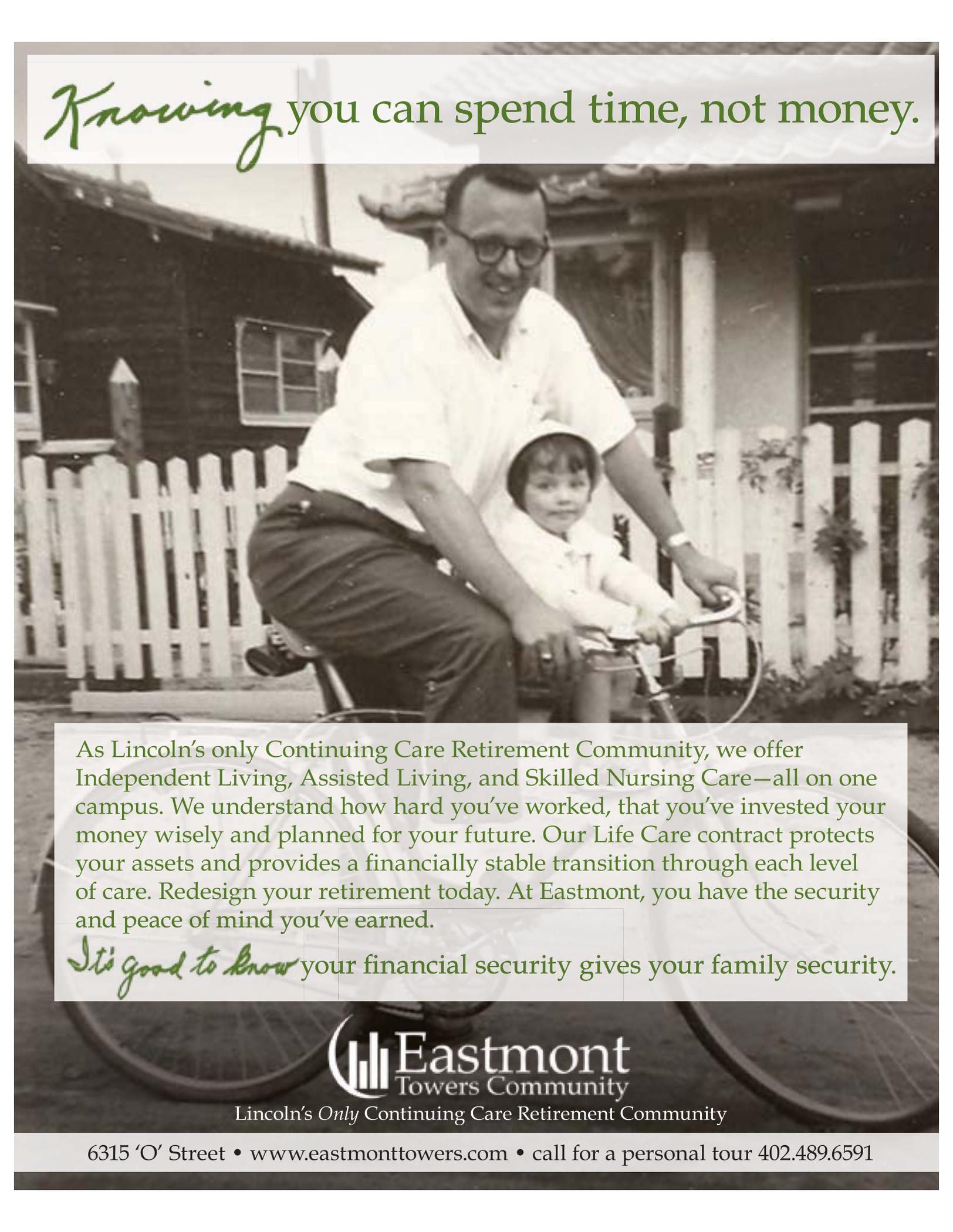
Geske also remains active on several local art-related boards and committees and has organized an exhibition of Ralph Blakelock's paintings, which was shown at Sheldon earlier this year.

"I have to have something to do," Geske said. "Keeping busy is the secret."

"Beyond Madness: The Art of Ralph Blakelock, 1847-1919" is available for purchase through the Sheldon Museum Store. More information is also available at <http://nebraskapress.unl.edu/product/Beyond-Madness,673318.aspx>.



Ralph Blakelock's landscape paintings are featured in Norman Geske's new book, "Beyond Madness: The Art of Ralph Blakelock, 1847-1919".



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