

January 2025

Does living in a walkable neighborhood improve the likelihood of successfully aging in place?

For older adults who want to age in place, their neighborhood plays a key role in how successful they'll be. Researchers recently explored how living in a walkable neighborhood—one where residents can walk to attain their daily needs—impacts personal well-being and independence in ways that are different than for older adults living in car-dependent neighborhoods. The data for this study comes from a household popula-

tion survey of 1,064 adults living in 16 neighborhoods in Dublin, Ireland, and its suburbs. About half of the surveys were conducted in neighborhoods that were walkable and about half were conducted in places that were car-dependent, allowing researchers to compare people living in different types of neighborhoods.

FINDINGS The survey results reveal that for older adults, walkable places matter for happiness.

This relationship comes about via a higher likelihood that residents will feel healthier, more socially connected, and more trusting of others in walkable neighborhoods, and this in turn affects their happiness. Walkable parts of cities, or walkable towns and suburbs, best enable older adults to age in place. Mixed-use neighborhood designs, which enable residents to shop, socialize, or visit green spaces within walking distance of their homes,

have direct and indirect effects on happiness for people of all ages. A key component of this happiness is that walkable places better enable social connections and trust in others. And perhaps because of this—and the fact that people tend to walk more in walkable places—residents are more likely to report feeling healthier and happier, especially as they age.

From the Director

We are about to begin the new year, a time when many of us make resolutions. Very prominent among those is a resolve to improve our fitness and overall well-being.

Friends in Action can help with both of those. A key factor to wellness is maintaining social connections and avoiding becoming isolated. The Friends in Action Senior Center offers many opportunities to interact with your peers. They include lunches, coffee hours or one could join one of the many social groups including bridge, writing, mahjong, writing, genealogy, pickle ball, and more. If none of those are appealing, we can provide a pleasant space for

you to meet with a group you pull together engaging in an activity of your choosing.

We can help with fitness goals as well. The benefits of physical activity and fitness training are well known. But in case you need a little convincing, let me share what one of our fitness members has said.

"I have always loved horses and have been riding for 70 years. My participation in the strength and balance classes at FIA have made me a better equestrian. Not only am I stronger physically, I also have a better sense of body awareness and better posture. The classes have enabled me to continue to ride at an effective level and to be an asset, not a detriment to my horse who is also facing his own aging issues. To celebrate our mutual aging, we joined the Century Club of the Dressage Foundation. To be eligible the combined ages of the horse and rider must be equal or exceed 100. We competed at a dressage show on November 4 and earned this honor. I am so happy the fitness classes have made my continued riding enjoyable because riding is my passion and a large part of my life".

Kathy Schultz

To help achieve your fitness goals, the Friends in Action Fitness Program offers an exercise room with cardio machines and exercise equipment including steps, bands, and light to moderate weights. We also offer a wide array

of fitness classes designed specifically for older adults. They range in intensity from light to moderate with a great deal of emphasis on core strength and balance. We offer Yoga (in our inviting yoga studio), Core Pilates, Chair Exercise, Zumba, and Strength and Balance training. See the schedule on the back page for specific information on the classes.

If you are unsure which class would be best or if exercise classes don't appeal to you, our certified exercise staff are available to answer any questions and provide guidance to help decide which class might be best for you or to provide guidance for individual exercise. In your decision making, keep in mind that the first class is free. You must, however, sign the liability waiver form before taking a class.

To help you get your significant other started and to make it more attractive for couples, we have added a family rate and to encourage those who would rather exercise on their own we have instituted a fitness room only rate.

Fitness room only \$20 per month

Family one month pass \$80

Family three month pass \$215

On an entirely different subject, some of our clients and

Continued on Page 2

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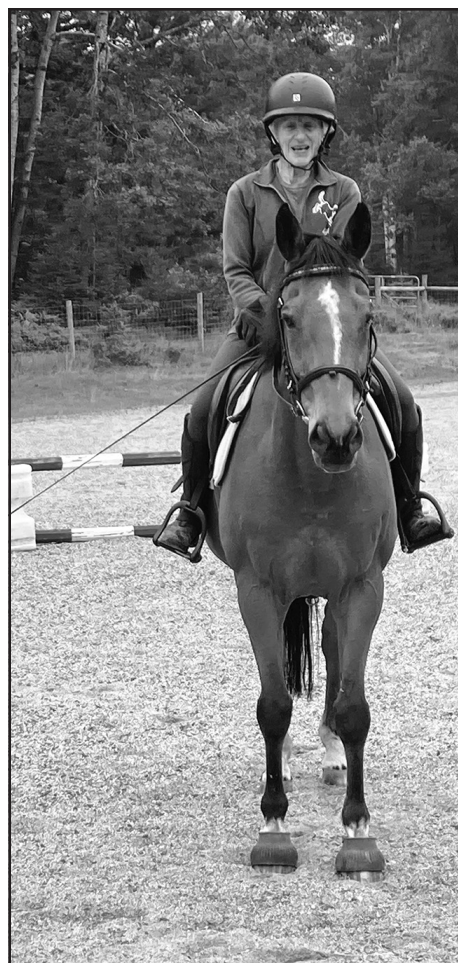
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Director’s Letter Cont.

Continued from Page 1

volunteers have expressed concern about emergency preparedness in the Café. We, the staff and board members are vigorously pursuing corrective actions where necessary. Those include ensuring emergency exit pathways are clearly posted, exits are clear of wheelchairs and walkers, and first aid kits are re-supplied. We have also formed an ad hoc committee with representation from the Board of Directors, Staff, Volunteers and clients. The purpose is to provide a mechanism to identify issues in the Café and make sure they are rectified. We also have put a suggestion box in the Café. We have already received a couple of suggestions and we are taking action. One suggestion was to establish a buddy system to help ensure that in the event of

an emergency, the less mobile individuals have someone identified to help them exit the building. We think that is a good idea. See the companion article for more information.

Lastly, we are currently engaged in our annual appeal. As I am sure most of you are aware, there is no charge for most of our activities. On the other hand, we do pay a significant amount for rent and staff labor and our principal source of income is from donations. If you haven’t already done so, please consider making a donation. To make it easier, we have placed a donation box in each activity room.

Every donation helps regardless of amount.

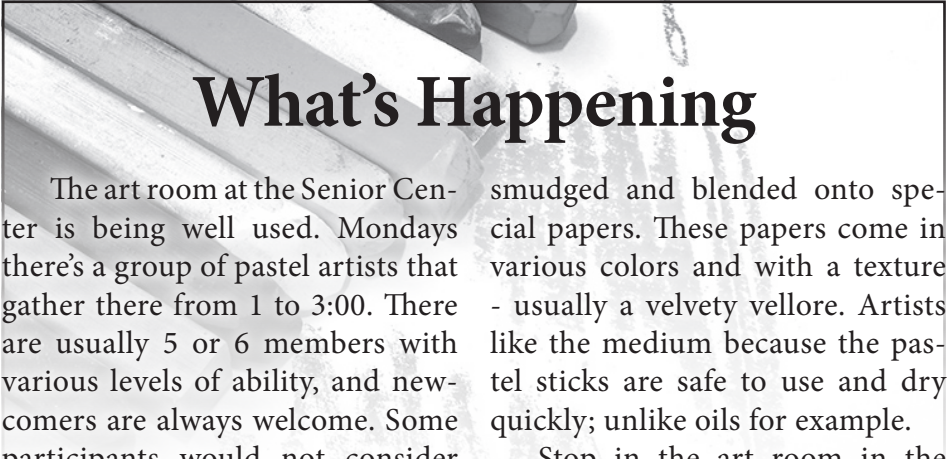
-John

Buddy System

We appreciate your feedback regarding emergency preparedness. One of the biggest issues is egress in the event of an emergency’ particularly for those guests who are less mobile. It has been suggested, and Friends in Agrees that using a buddy system is a viable solution. That is, each individual that feels as if exiting the building in an emergency might be difficult, would pair up with another guest who is able to assist them should an emergency arise. This will be a verbal commitment by the buddy to provide reasonable assistance but that assistance does not include medical assistance beyond what any good Samaritan

might render, nor is the buddy expected to put themselves in jeopardy.

Although Friends in Actions concurs with this approach, we cannot create and manage a buddy assignment system, nor will we require anyone to have a buddy as a condition of entering the facility. We do, however, recommend that guests who need assistance ask a friend or table mate to be their buddy in case of an emergency and we encourage our guests who think they can do so safely, to make the commitment. It is further recommended that guests reconfirm the commitment at the start of each visit.



What’s Happening

The art room at the Senior Center is being well used. Mondays there’s a group of pastel artists that gather there from 1 to 3:00. There are usually 5 or 6 members with various levels of ability, and newcomers are always welcome. Some participants would not consider themselves artists, but you can see some of their work in the hallway upstairs and decide for yourself.

Due to a recent donation, materials could be available for anyone. So, if you have never tried pastels or haven’t done it in a while, this would be a great opportunity to find a hobby and socialize. Pastels are like a chalky crayon that is

smudged and blended onto special papers. These papers come in various colors and with a texture - usually a velvety vellore. Artists like the medium because the pastel sticks are safe to use and dry quickly; unlike oils for example.

Stop in the art room in the Senior Center and you will find the folks to be friendly, often encouraging and complimenting each other. Several members of the group had never worked with pastels when they first came to the class but now feel quite successful! Who doesn’t enjoy learning to create something?

Build Your Own Memory Kit Workshop!

Healthy Peninsula and the Blue Hill Library are hosting a memory-kit building workshop on Wednesday, January 8th from 1-3 pm in the Howard Room of the Blue Hill Library. This event is geared toward people living with dementia, their caregivers, and loved ones. Memory kits spark conversation and reminiscence for people living with dementia, memory loss, or cognitive impairment. Items in these kits are often chosen to stimulate sensory experiences, such as touch, hearing, sight, and smell. Attendees will be provided with the materials necessary to

make a season-themed kit that they can take home after the workshop. We will also teach attendees how to make a memory kit from household items. Attendees are encouraged to bring items or photos that they would like to include in their or a loved one’s kit. The Workshop is Free but space is limited. Please register with Healthy Peninsula by January 6th. Beverages and snacks will be provided. For more information or to sign up for the workshop please call Healthy Peninsula at (207) 374-3257 or email info@healthypeninsula.org

How well do mindfulness-based interventions support older adults’ brain health?

Given the growing numbers of older adults, experts are increasingly eyeing the potential of mindfulness to enhance their quality of life, improve brain health, and reduce cognitive decline. Mindfulness is paying attention to what is happening right now Mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) are programs that teach mindfulness to manage stress and improve well-being, often in groups over several weeks. Although mindfulness is increasingly studied and talked about, there is still a gap in understanding how MBIs influence key lifestyle behaviors critical for brain health, like physical activity, sleep, and diet. This research aims to fill that gap. In the largest study of its kind, researchers conducted a comprehensive literature search, focusing on randomized clinical trials of MBIs targeting modifiable lifestyle behaviors affecting brain health across the adult lifespan. They reviewed 79 articles that met their criteria, from a pool of 4,462 potential articles. Their goals included exploring the range of research methods in these trials and

estimating the effects of MBIs on key lifestyle pillars of brain health.

FINDINGS The analysis found that MBIs significantly improve key lifestyle behaviors affecting brain health, including reduced sleep disturbances, lower tobacco and alcohol use, and increased physical activity—pointing to MBIs’ diverse benefits. No link was found with social activity, and data on diet and cognitive activities were insufficient. These findings underscore the need for consistent measures in research and highlight how intervention design influences outcomes MBIs designed for specific conditions or populations (eg, insomnia) were more effective in improving sleep compared to standard MBIs (eg, mindfulness-based stress reduction). This suggests that MBIs can be customized to meet individual needs. Ultimately, this study indicates that MBIs can be pivotal for innovation in senior living, since they are not only effective but also versatile, scalable tools within “brain health services” for primary and preventive care.

MEDICARE 101
Offered every second Thursday
from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. in the
FIA Senior Center
Registration Required
Call Eastern Area Agency on Aging (EAAA)
1-800-432-7812 | 207-941-2865



Volunteer of the Month

Can fostering a homeless cat significantly reduce loneliness in older adults?

Jane Hutchins certainly deserves recognition for all her years of volunteering for Friends in Action. She was there when the first weekly Coffee Hour was set up in the basement of St. Dunston's Church about 16 years ago. At that time only coffee was offered. The participants have changed through the years and Jane is the last of the original crowd. The Coffee Hour moved several times and before finally settling in at its present location in the Friends in Action Cafe. The offering has expanded to include a table full of delicious and healthy snacks; crackers and

cheese, pastries and fruit. Jane looks forward to the opportunity to put on the coffee hour including food prep, serving, and cleanup and making sure supplies are sufficient for the next Coffee Hour. She is tireless. On occasion, she also has volunteered for Rotary dinners and for community fundraisers. She'll help out in any way needed. Today she explains how her involvement as a volunteer saves her from an overwhelming loneliness. She looks forward to every Tuesday and Thursday morning when she can help run the Coffee Hour.

Many older adults struggle with loneliness and social isolation, which increases the risk for serious medical conditions and can even cause premature death. At the same time, approximately 63 million homeless dogs and cats end up in shelters every year. Pairing older adults who live alone and have no other pets with cats from animal shelters is one way to address both loneliness and pet overpopulation simultaneously. Researchers paired older adults (age 60 or better, living alone, and not currently a pet owner) with foster cats from a local animal shelter. Participants were screened for living in an acceptable and safe environment for an indoor cat and had to pass functional and cognitive assessments. Validated assessments for physical and mental health, and for loneliness, were collected prior to placement with a cat, and again one and

four months after placement. If a participant chose to adopt their cat, an additional assessment was done 12 months post-placement with the cat. The study provided food and all supplies needed for fostering a cat. **FINDINGS** There was a statistically significant improvement in loneliness among the human participants by four months after placement of a foster cat. A similar four-month improvement that was close to being statistical significance was also observed for mental health. The majority (95.7%) of participants who remained in the study for a minimum of four months chose to adopt their foster cat permanently. As a result, fostering a shelter cat with the option for adoption may be an effective solution for alleviating loneliness and improving mental health in older adults.



Our number: 207-664-6016

ASK Northern Light Health Home Care & Hospice

What is the difference between Palliative Care and Hospice Care?

Palliative care physicians oversee patients with serious illnesses and help coordinate care with multiple specialties with the goal to relieve symptoms and decrease the stress of the illness on the patient and their families. They encourage open communication regarding goals of care and advance directives.

Patients can be in palliative care for many years.

Hospice care is for patients that have a medical condition where they are not expected to live for more than six months, though some do. The focus is not that you are dying, but rather how you can live your life to the fullest until you die. Any services that were treating the condition, such as chemotherapy for cancer, are discontinued, and the priority is quality of life and managing your symptoms to ensure you are comfortable.

MENU				
January 2025				
Thursday, January 2nd Meatball Stroganoff, Roll, Veggies and Fruit	Thursday, January 9th Apple Glazed Pork, Roll, Veggies and Fruit	Thursday, January 16th BBQ Chicken Breast, Roll, Veggies and Fruit	Thursday, January 23rd Breakfast For Lunch. Eggs, Pancakes, Breakfast Potatoes, Sausage and Fruit	Thursday, January 30th Chicken Kabob, Roll, Veggies and Fruit
Tuesday, January 7th Mexican Beef Lasagna, Spanish Rice, Veggies and Fruit	Tuesday, January 14th Lemon Pepper Pollock, Roll, Veggies and Fruit	Tuesday, January 21st Hamburger Steak/Gravy, Roll, Veggies and Fruit	Tuesday, January 28th Chicken Caesar Salad, Roll, Veggies and Fruit	HAPPY 2025 NEW YEAR

11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. Pickle Ball – Gymnasium

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____ Telephone _____

Email _____

Amount enclosed \$ _____

This gift is:

In Memory of: _____

(or) In Honor of: _____

I have remembered Friends in Action in my will ____.

Please send me information on "FRIENDS FOREVER" PLANNED GIVING ____