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## Chats with the Chair



Madeleine Appel  
about it.

I usually resist writing New Year's resolutions. I know I am unlikely to keep them so it seems a bit fake to make them!

But this year I've decided that even thinking about what I could do better in and with my life is probably worth the effort!

I will NOT make a resolution to lose weight...I should but after 79 years, I know that's a non-starter. Maybe, just maybe, I will ride my exercise bike which mocks me as it stands near a window. But that's

I will NOT make a resolution to enter a record of my checks into the computer on a monthly basis instead of waiting to do a marathon session at the computer as tax time rolls around...I know it would be a futile gesture.

I will NOT resolve to learn how to use a variety of applications on my electronic

devices...I know that is an even greater exercise in futility!

But here is what I DO resolve:

- to be more patient with the everyday frustrations in life--the little ones as well as the big ones; to roll with the punches
- to pick my head up out of the current book I'm reading or the television show I'm watching and listen, really listen, to what my husband is saying
- to drink two bottles of water a day instead of one
- to follow my gut instincts instead of finding excuses as to why they are probably wrong (they generally aren't)
- to text my grandchildren more frequently...it's how they communicate (I will NOT succumb to Facebook, Twitter or Snapchat though I do peak at Instagram when I can figure out how to make it work!)
- to delegate more to the wonderful members and volunteers at N4NN so we can expand our programming in the coming year
- to stop saying a knee-jerk "no" to new ideas that, after a night's sleep, I know I will find a way to say "yes" to
- And most importantly, to live each day given to me fully, positively, with joy and gratitude

As this year 2017 begins, may it be filled with opportunities we take advantage of, health, tolerance, respect for those who differ from and with us, and peace.

Happy New Year to all!

*- Madeleine*

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## Meet Your Volunteers: Dick Vane

*(This is the first in a series of informal profiles of N4NN's terrific volunteer corps written by volunteer Mary Yurkovich)*



Dick Vane came to the Neighbors4Neighbors Network because he was not wanting to sit at home in retirement. "I thought I could be of help to elderly people because I identify with them," he says. For about 12 months, Dick has been volunteering both with the Jewish Family Services and N4NN.

Although fairly new to his volunteer activities, Dick is not new to Houston. Born in Detroit, he moved here in 1961 after graduating from the University of Michigan with a degree in architecture. He worked with other firms for a while, but in 1967 he opened his own architectural firm of Osborn and Vane, which still exists today. He is married with two children and five grandchildren who lead busy lives in Austin. His son, a lawyer, is a lobbyist, and his son-in-law is a physician who works with medical inventions. His daughter is a psychologist while his daughter-in-law reviews children's books for the Statesman, the Austin daily paper.

One of the activities Dick works on with the Jewish Family Services is to counsel men and women who are job hunting. Most of these people are in their 50's and 60's and need help mentoring, including knowing where to look, assessing their skills and building their strengths.

His involvement with Neighbors4Neighbors began when he went to our monthly Luncheon. There he met a widower in the program. They hit it off and now meet weekly. Dick helps him with transportation to the medical center and other needs. He enjoys the discussions on public affairs at N4NN's members' homes, and thinks that making more culturally stimulating opportunities for retired people who do not always find it easy to get out would benefit them.

So he's now working together with Rodi and Bob Franco on putting together community cultural events sponsored by N4NN-things that will help keep older adults active and interested.

As for his own stimulation, Dick enjoys drawing cartoons and submitting them to New Yorker Magazine, even though none of them have been accepted yet! He also likes writing stories for his grandkids. He invented a character called Kurf, who takes them on many adventures. "It gives me an appreciation of what writers go through," he says. He started this project when they were young and still keeps it up. "It's one of the things I'm most proud of," he says, with a smile.

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[Congratulations and Condolences ...](#)

## CONGRATULATIONS TO...

Members Linda and Andy Burger on the birth of their beautiful first grandchild, Ellie Miriam Burger.

## CONDOLENCES TO...

Member Clara Welsh on the passing of her beloved son, Chris Welsh.

The family of our dear, Blanche Roubein of blessed memory. The Neighbors4Neighbors Network family has lost an energetic and enthusiastic member who enriched us with her stories, memories and enthusiasm.

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## Memoirs Are Good For You

A number of Neighbors4Neighbors Network members have taken memoir courses, and we have had the privilege of hearing some of those memories at our luncheons.

Now comes a story by Susan B. Garland in the December 9, 2016 New York Times that finds that writing one's memoirs brings a sense of peace. Not only that, says gerontologist James E. Birren, "reminiscing can improve the confidence of older adults. By recalling how they overcame past struggles, they are better able to confront new challenges...and they may be able to forgive themselves for their mistakes. Moreover, a life review can help with grieving..." Mr. Birren developed the discipline of guided autobiography.



Our own Lili Gordon turned her memoirs into her first book, *Siberian Yankee*, and is now well into the process of turning out the sequel. Not only has the writing brought Lili comfort and confidence, it is helping fund N4NN. Lili is donating the proceeds of the book-which is being snatched up by schools as well as individuals-to our support.

Blanche Roubein of blessed memory enthralled all of us with the story of her life in Iraq and the Jews' expulsion from that country. In so doing she was comforted by the memories of her early childhood, surrounded by love and luxury.

Jeanne Saletan and Sara Simon have also taken memoir writing classes. Jeanne shared a delightful episode in which she proved to herself that she could handle being stranded with a dead battery in the middle of a shopping center parking lot. We hope to hear from Sara's trove of memories this year.

Guided life story writing classes are available at colleges and congregations, libraries and adult learning centers and, here in the N4NN neighborhood, at the Evelyn Rubenstein Jewish Community Center. While Ms. Garland notes that most guided autobiography classes are taught in person, there are interactive websites available where you can connect with others and a trained instructor online.

And, if writing your own story and vignettes about particular experiences doesn't appeal to you, perhaps one of your family members would be happy to "interview" you or call N4NN and we'll find a volunteer to do the interviewing and capture your memories. We also have a volunteer who does this professionally and would be glad to work with you. Our oldest son spent two days with my husband and me, taping our memories and family history, prompting us with his questions. I am happy that some of the family tales are preserved not only for our grandchildren but for their children to come. Reliving my memories of my own parents gave me an even greater appreciation for their struggles, courage and impact on their community than I already had.

*- Madeleine*

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## Another Ride Option

Wingz has now joined regular taxis, Uber and GoGo Grandparent as alternate means of private transportation in Houston. Thanks to research by volunteer Jay Schaffer we can offer the following information:



- Wingz is based in San Francisco but currently operates in Dallas, Houston, Austin and their surrounding areas
- Reservations may be booked via their website ([www.wingz.com](http://www.wingz.com)) or on a mobile app you can download to your phone and where you can get a real time quote.
- You have to have a credit card on file to make a reservation
- Wingz calculates a flat rate upfront based on estimated distance, number of passengers, luggage and includes base fare, airport fee, toll fee(s) and any other fees that may apply. Once the ride is booked, the calculated flat rate will never change
- Free cancellation up to 2 hours before passenger pick-up time. If less than 2 hours before pick-up time and the reason is out of the passenger's control (like your flight is delayed by more than 30 minutes or cancelled) free cancellation also. In other cases of cancellation and your driver is already on the way, there isn't a valid reason (as above) or you double-booked a ride and two drivers show up you will have to pay half the ride fare.
- You will have to pay full fare if the driver has waited for 15 minutes at home

and you don't get in the cab or 30 minutes at the airport; if you cancel after your pick-up time; in case of any other no shows.

- Wingz drivers must meet the following requirements:
  - Attend formal training
  - Pass a full background check
  - Pass a DMV record check every three months
  - Vehicle inspection by certified auto mechanic
  - Valid drivers license
  - Up to date personal auto insurance
  - Documentation of vehicle registration.
- Drivers are covered with a one million to 1.5 million per accident limit for passengers depending on market requirements.

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## Making Your Money Work Responsibly



Many years ago in what seems like another lifetime, I was a journalist in New York City, working on a political and business newsletter published by the publishers of the old Look Magazine. We were a small, close staff, sharing our lives in and out of the office.

Several of my colleagues went on to illustrious careers, including Jane Bryant Quinn, who now writes the Your Money Financially Speaking column in the AARP Bulletin.

From time to time, I'll share her thoughts from the Bulletin for those of you who don't receive or read it. In December Jane wrote on socially responsible investing (SRI). Jane notes that choosing stocks that reflect your values probably will not hurt your bottom line. Multiple studies, she says, shows that SRI stocks "perform at least as well as the total market over the long term. In some cases, they do better."

SRI, she says, looks for companies that have a high ESG rating. The E stands for good environmental stewardship; the S stands for socially fair behavior toward employees, customers and overseas suppliers, and the G stands for "sound corporate governance."

Jane refers readers to Morningstar, an investment research company which tracks 207 stock and bond mutual funds devoted to ESG securities. Some of the funds "lean negative" meaning "no companies involved with tobacco, liquor, gambling, weapons, nuclear or perhaps fossil fuels. Others focus on the positive: clean energy, improved waste management systems," etc. You can check them out online. Jane advises that you can check the rating of "any fund that interests you at Morningstar.com" for free.



## Texas Nursing Homes -- A Challenge

"Fifty-one percent of Texas nursing homes received ratings of one or two stars in the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' five-star quality rating system. That put Texas last in the nation," says an article in the December 2016 AARP Bulletin.



It goes on to quote a ProPublica finding that "over the past three years Texas ranked third in the average number of "serious deficiencies" found at its nursing homes."

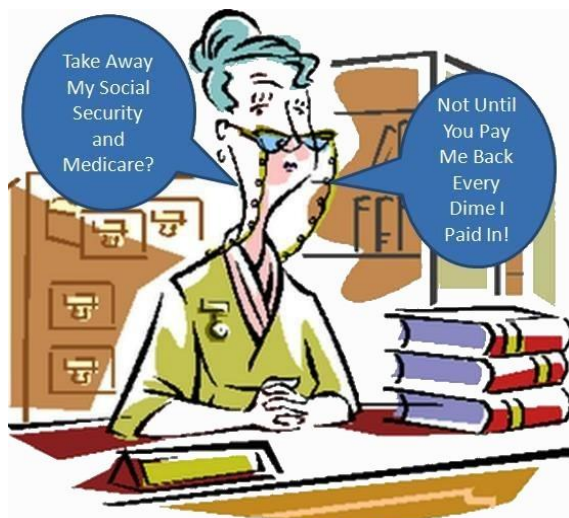
The Texas Health Care Association lays the blame on chronic low pay and high turnover of nursing home staff. And, according to the Association, care is only getting worse in Texas. Violations of health standards increased by 20 Percent from 2010 to 2014, according to a study commissioned by the trade organization.

The AARP is "advocating [at the state legislative level] that the state establish a system of escalating sanctions against facilities that incur repeated violations."

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## Consensus: We Support Social Security



"Irrespective of age, race, gender or party affiliation, Americans support expanding, not cutting Social Security," according to an online October The Blog in the Huffington Post.

The Blog quotes the following statistics:

70 percent of 18-29 year olds, 65 percent of 30-45 year olds, 76 percent of 46-65 year olds, and 70 percent of those over 65 all support expanding, not cutting Social Security.

It doesn't matter to which party you belong either.

As to how we would pay for the existing or an expanded program, the consensus seems to be to require "the wealthiest Americans to contribute their fair share." The Blog notes that the "rising inequality and stagnating wages for all but the wealthy have made it incredibly difficult for families to save even for short-term emergencies." Defined benefit pensions are a memory and, according to the article, the 401Ks that are supposed to replace them aren't working.

That leaves three out of five older adults to rely on Social Security for most of their income and one out of three for almost all of their income.

Revamping Social Security is high on the list of priorities for the new administration, so keep current on the proposals submitted to Congress and sharpen your pens and your computer skills and be prepared to communicate your thoughts, whatever they may be, to your federal elected officials.

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## Happy Birthday ...



Best wishes for a happy January birthday and many more to come to N4NN members:

Waneta (Bitsy) Carnell  
Susy Askanase

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## Links to More Activities

*(If you know a link to an entity that sponsors senior programs that are open to the public, please send the link to N4NN volunteer, Vicki Davison, at [doinmypart@aol.com](mailto:doinmypart@aol.com))*

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**Platou Community Center:** 713-726-7107, 11655 Chimney Rock (in Westbury) offers stretching exercise class, quilting, games, line dancing, ping pong leagues and a weight loss support group. The Center is open Monday-Thursday from noon to 8 p.m. and Friday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Call for class days, times and hours.



The **City of Bellaire** has a program that is open to anyone. It offers field trips, movies, lunches, bridge, bridge and games, advanced card games, crafts and conversation. To see the schedule go to [www.ci.bellaire.tx.us/729/LIFE](http://www.ci.bellaire.tx.us/729/LIFE). Click on the Life Newsletter to see a full schedule of activities. Or contact 713-662-8290 or Victoria Arevalo at [Varevalo@bellairetx.gov](mailto:Varevalo@bellairetx.gov).

The **Weekley Family YMCA** at 7101 Stella Link Blvd., 77025, has a Silver Sneakers exercise program in which some of our members participate. Call 713-664-9622 or go to [www.ymcahouston.org](http://www.ymcahouston.org). On the left under "Find Your YMCA", select "Weekly Family", when the Weekly Family page comes up, click on Health in the menu across the top, select Active Older Adults, then you will see the description of the Silver Sneakers Program.



**Bayland Community Center** at 6400 Bissonnet has exercise classes at various levels, including Tai Chi. Go to [www.pct3.com](http://www.pct3.com), click on Community Centers, Click on Bayland, scroll down to activities (on right side of page) or call 713-541-9951.

**The Fonteno Senior Education Center** at 6600 Bissonnet St. 77074, has a long list of classes in various areas of interest, including Legal, health, and General. Here is just a sampling of exercise type classes:



Zumba - Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8:00 -9:00 AM

Senior Boot Camp - Monday, Thursday and Friday from 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Hatha Yoga - Tuesday from 9:00 - 10:00 AM

Forrest Yoga - Thursday from 9:00 - 10:00 AM

Line Dancing - Thursday from 1:00 -2:00 PM

Tai Chi - Friday from 9:00 - 10:30 AM

The Center is just a little further out on Bissonnet than Bayland. To contact, go to [FontenoSEC@pct3.com](mailto:FontenoSEC@pct3.com) or call 713-981-4703.



### **Jewish Community Center: Join neighbors**

and friends at the JCC for fun and exciting programs including bus trips, cultural programs, lifelong learning courses, Kosher lunch program, films, Jewish learning, art classes, exercise, social programs and much more. Learn more at <http://www.erjcchouston.org/adultsonthego>

### **West University Parks and Recreation Department:**

[www.westutx.gov](http://www.westutx.gov)

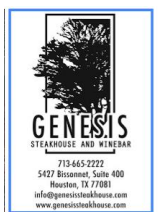


Once you are on the web page, hover over the Services tab and click Senior Services in the Parks and Recreation column, or call the West U Senior Services Division of the Parks and Recreation Department at 713-662-5895.

**Houston Congregation for Reform Judaism Senior Chai Program:** [HCRJ Senior Chai](#) sponsors programs dedicated to those 60 and over which is open to all in that age demographic. The programming of social, educational and recreational activities is generously underwritten in memory of Mozelle and David Barg and Esther and Robert Shelby. Contact [admin@hcrj.org](mailto:admin@hcrj.org) or call 713-782-4162 to learn more about the classes and trips currently being offered.

## Coming Events

### January Events



**January 10, Tuesday, 11 a.m.,**  
Tuesday, N4NN monthly luncheon, Genesis Steakhouse and Wine Bar  
(corner of Chimney Rock and Bissonnet), **Guest Speaker: Candy Twyman**  
**of the Better Business Bureau**

**January 15, Sunday, 2:30 p.m., Houston History Lecture**, home of Annette Novominsky, 6223 Queensloch. *Betty Chapman, past chairperson of the Houston City Archeological and Historical Commission will inaugurate N4NN's new arts lecture series. Hope to see many of our N4NN members there.*

**January 26, Thursday, 2:30 p.m., N4NN monthly discussion group**, home of Kay and John Vararro, 5835 Paisley Street. Topic tbd.

### February ERJCC/Interfaith Ministries Program

**February 3, Friday:** A program commemorating the four United States Army Chaplains who gave up their life jackets and, ultimately their lives, to save the life of troops on the U.S. A. T. Dorchester after it was torpedoed will be held February 3 at 11:30 a.m. at the Merfish Center, 9000 South Rice. Event highlights include posting of the colors, tributes to the Four Chaplains, a solo of "America the Beautiful" and recognition of each branch of the service by their song. Lunch will be served. The \$8 cost includes lunch. Register by going online to <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event2722607> or contact Morgan Steinberg at 713-595-8170.

## Laugh Outloud



*Thanks to Annette Novominsky for supplying us with laughs. This month's humor centers around little known origins of familiar phrases-born out of poverty in most cases:*

In the "good" old days, baths for the lower income folks consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then all the other sons and men, then the women, and finally the children. Last of all the babies. By then the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it. Hence the saying, "Don't throw the baby out with the bath water!"

Houses had thatched roofs with thick straw-piled high and no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the cats and other small animals (mice, bugs) lived in the roof. When it rained, it became slippery and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off the roof. Hence the saying, "It's raining cats and dogs." There was nothing to stop things from falling into the house. This posed a real problem in the bedroom where bugs and other droppings could mess up your nice clean bed. Hence, a bed with big posts and a sheet hung over the top afforded some protection. That's how canopy beds came into existence.

In those old days, they cooked in the kitchen with a big kettle that always hung over the fire. Every day, they lit the fire and added things to the pot. They ate mostly vegetables and did not get much meat. They would eat the stew for dinner, leaving leftovers in the pot to get cold overnight and then start over the next day. Sometimes stew had food in it that had been there for quite a while. Hence the rhyme, "Peas porridge hot, peas porridge cold, peas porridge in the pot nine days old." Sometimes they could obtain pork, which made them feel quite special. When visitors came over, they would hang up their bacon to show off. It was a sign of wealth that a man could "bring home the bacon." They would cut off a little to share with guests, and would all sit around and "chew the fat."

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## Thanks to Our Generous Donors

Neighbors4Neighbors Network is so grateful to the generous donors who support our organization and make it possible. Donors in September, October, November and December include:

Jeanne Saletan  
Sybil and Ralph Balasco  
Rita Blumenfeld  
Celine and David Hecht  
Tammy Wolfe  
Annette Novominsky  
Audrey Weiss  
Linda and Andy Burger

Additionally, we are thrilled to announce that **The Edward and Helen Oppenheimer**

**Foundation** has given us a significant two-year grant which will enable us to continue to thrive and expand.

To all these generous benefactors, our heartfelt thanks.

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## Think N4NN For Gifting, Honoring, or Memorializing

An annual membership to Neighbors4Neighbors Network makes the perfect gift for a 65+ parent, relative or friend.



N4NN helps members take care of their homes, their shopping, their technology.

N4NN connects members to new friends, new opportunities to socialize and new ways to volunteer.

N4NN helps members solve problems and get help when they hit a bump in the road.

An annual membership costs \$175 for an individual and \$300 for a household. For information on purchasing a membership contact Michael Kahlenberg, Program Coordinator for N4NN at 832-998-6466 (N4NN).

*If you wish to honor or memorialize a family member or friend and support N4NN at the same time, donations to N4NN may be made by check made out to JFS/N4NN and mailed to Neighbors4Neighbors Network c/o Jewish Family Service, 4131 S. Braeswood, Houston, Texas 77025, attn.: Michael Kahlenberg.*

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## The Marketplace

N4NN Connect is most grateful to its ad sponsors, RELOCATE AND RENOVATE, MEDIC PHARMACY, AND GREAT CALL

If you wish to sponsor an ad or an event, contact Michael Kahlenberg, N4NN Program Coordinator, at 832-998-6466

We save you time, money and stress.



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- \$10 off the one-time activation fee

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**Michael Kahlenberg**, Program Coordinator  
**Madeleine G. Appel**, Chair Steering Committee  
**Gail W. Issen**, Editor

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