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Chats with the Chair



Madeleine Appel

Some of us are in the earliest stages of grandparenthood ... our grandchildren are infants.

They enchant us. They bemuse us. They fill us with joy. We find every wave of the tiny fist, every toothless smile, every new connection of the synapses mesmerizing and amazing. (And they are!).

Some of us are in the early childhood stage. A small hand grips our finger as first steps

are taken. We listen closely to the first word, the first phrase, the first complete sentence.

We attend our first Grandparents Day at pre-school. We creak our way to the floor to play with the dollhouse and build block skyscrapers...and wonder how we will ever get up again. There are the treasured moments when a little one sneaks into our bed in the early dawn to cuddle and talk and make such cherished memories...and then to watch cartoons!

Then there is elementary school and Little League, soccer and Girl Scouts, ballet and tuba or violin or drums. Endless recitals and sports games and more Grandparents Days. iPads appear and constant pleas to borrow our smart phone on which to play a game to while away a car ride or boring adult conversation at the restaurant. We still babysit but it's not so much sitting as driving carpools and calling out spelling words.

And suddenly the grandchildren are pre-teens and teens. They sprout. The little boy whose hand you held is now three feet taller than you are. His voice is deep. He swings a mean bat, and when you remind him that school work needs to be done even if there IS a baseball game, he tells you not to worry...his degree will be in MLB (Major League Baseball!). Or he hands you a highly sophisticated electronic magazine on OCD, gender issues and mental health that he and three classmates have produced as a class project. The little girl who shared secrets with you is now making As as she studies her meticulous class notes. Or she is writing a blog of book reviews and studying international law at age 12. She dyes the tips of her hair with red jello, wears the latest teen fashions (and knows exactly what she wants when she shops) and is constantly on her smartphone (aren't they all!). She, too, is taller than you.

I haven't sent any grandchildren off to college yet. But if, G-d willing, I am around to do so, I know I will weep the same tears I wept as I sent my sons off to college ... finding it hard to believe that the tiny infant I crooned over just yesterday is now off on his or her great adventure into the larger world. The tears will be momentary ... all our little birds must fly the nest and learn to navigate on their own.

But in this time of incessant "small" (and as I write this, I pray they will be small) wars and social disharmony and societal rifts, I will send them off with fear mingled with hope that they will traverse their world and adulthood in safety and health.

Meanwhile, I will enjoy the coming of age time in which they now exist ... still child enough to create chaos while hunting the hidden matzo at the Passover Seder or hunting the hidden Easter Egg in the backyard but showing hints of the adults they will become as they discuss with me the pros and cons of bombing Syria or the presidential election or why Germany went to war.

The tables are beginning to reverse themselves as the grandchildren take MY hand to help me out of the car and take the hammer from my husband's hand to affix a bird feeder. And it is as it should be. L'dor V'dor. From generation to generation.

Successful Fair

Neighbors4Neighbors Network's second annual Safety Fair and More was a satisfying success! Close to 100 visitors made the rounds of vendor tables to learn about everything from hearing aids to home health care providers to transportation opportunities and captioning telephone devices. More than 30 social service agencies, care providers and vendors of products to make life safer and easier for older adults and their families participated.

Workshops on preventing falls, fire safety, general business and Medicare scams and care for aging pets were well received.

Sponsors included Evergreen Private Care and Cantor Mark Levine whose generosity made possible a bus to transport to the fair residents of Goldberg Towers and another nearby senior apartment complex, Bisel Hearing Aid, Renovate and Relocate, S. Gerber & Associates, Multi-Medical, Griswold Home Care, Dignity Memorial, Cap Tel, Belden's, Go Go Grandparent, Great Call, Jewish Family Service, Jewish Federation, and United Way of Houston.

Special thanks to Benjamin Chorn, Daniel Baryadin, Steven Plumb, Nathan Plumb and Jeremy Penner, members of Boy Scout Troop 806 from Beren Academy who helped set up for the Fair and to their leader, Loren Chorn.



Do Not Open ...



Recently the evening news featured the unnerving story of one of us elders who answered a knock on the door. The man on the doorstep identified himself as working for a roofing company the elder has used for many years, a company that had just finished re-roofing her house and put a sign in her yard when the job was finished.

The senior is a beloved member of Neighbors4Neighbors Network. The man said that debris had been left on the roof and he needed to check it out. Our member let him in and went to her sunroom, as he instructed, to observe. After a few moments, when the man had not appeared, she started back down her hall and met the man coming from other parts of the house. She asked what he was doing and he, again, said he

was checking things out. He told her that the company had overcharged her \$60 and he wanted to repay her but only had a \$100 bill. Did she have change? When she responded that she didn't know, he volunteered to look in her handbag. At that point, realizing she had not asked for identification, she asked for it. And he quickly departed.

Our member then discovered family silver and other family heirlooms missing, but what tore her heart out was the loss of her most treasured keepsake: a cameo of her likeness as a young woman that her husband had commissioned while in the military stationed in Italy at the end of World War II. "He [the thief] stole part of my heart," our member says.

Please let this be a warning to all of us not to open our door to strangers even in a uniform if they don't have an appointment. And even if you have a contractor coming, feel free to call N4NN to ask for a volunteer to be with you while the work is being done. Uniforms are easy to buy second hand, and scams are all too frequent.

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Medicare Cards

It seems that us elders are going to be receiving new Medicare cards. The new cards are the result of the Medicare Access Act of 2015 and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015.

The goal of the new cards is to decrease the identity theft vulnerability on the part of those of us eligible for Medicare. They will be mailed out between April 2018 and April 2019.



The now not-so-new law requires that Social Security numbers be removed from all Medicare cards by April 2019.

While the goal of protecting us from identity theft is laudable, as usual, there are unintended consequences. The new cards may open us up to new scams. So, the Better Business Bureau advises us to

- Remember that CMS and Medicare will never contact you by phone or email to ask for personal information relating to the issuance of the new cards. Any such contact would be a scam.
- The new Medicare cards will be issued at no charge. If you are asked for money or payment of a fee for the new card, someone is attempting to scam you.

Lullaby and Goodnight!



I am a night person...always have been. The greatest luxury of retirement has been giving myself permission to sleep until 8:15 a.m. and then read the newspaper (yes, I am addicted to holding a newspaper-not an iPhone-in my hand) in bed.

In an article in the Senior Living Section of the April 13, 2017, Houston Chronicle, Alice Adams talks about the crucial nature of a good night's sleep. She references a report from the National Institutes of Health that indicates children and adolescents need more sleep than adults and seniors need about the same amount of sleep as younger adults-7 to 9 hours a night.

But older adults often don't get the needed amount of sleep time. Ms. Adams quotes Dr. David Hillman, chair of the Sleep Health Foundation: "one reason is that they (older adults) often have more trouble falling asleep. A study of adults over 65 by the National Institute on Aging found 13 percent of men and 36 percent of women take more than 30 minutes to fall asleep.

Not me...I usually fall asleep right away, lulled by some late night show-despite all the advice that one should turn off ALL electronics before going to bed. It's the 4 a.m. trip to the bathroom that starts my brain chugging again and causes sleep to elude me.

Dr. Hillman goes on to note that "older people sleep less deeply and wake up more often throughout the night, which may be why they nap more often during the daytime." And, of course, when you nap more often during the daytime, you have a harder time sleeping at night.

Ms. Adams also quotes Dr. Agngela Catic, an assistant professor at Baylor College of Medicine and a geriatrician at the Michael E. Debakey Veterans Affairs Medical Center:

"As we age, our immune system doesn't function as well and we rely on sleep, on getting a good night's rest, to help us recover from colds, allergies, etc.." As the cycle of short spurts of sleep at night and naps during the day persists, older adults may find that they are not as mentally sharp, can't focus and "are more at risk of accidents."

Dr. Catic offers these tips to avoid tossing and turning at night:

- Turn off the TV. (This doesn't work for me...my mind keeps churning when I

shut my eyes unless there is something mindless to distract me! But all the experts say this is the first step to better sleep so do as I say, not as I do!)

- Don't take a prescribed or over-the-counter drug for sleep. These products "may create unwanted side effects that may significantly impair your sleep."
- Sleep in loose-fitting, comfortable garments, and never sleep in the clothes you wear during the day.
- Close all blinds and curtains. Total darkness is your goal.
- Go to bed and get up at regular hours.
- Exercise during the day. Do not exercise just before you go to bed.
- Don't nap during the day.
- No alcohol, cigarettes, caffeine, cell phone or making emotional phone calls just before bedtime.
- Don't toss and turn. If you aren't asleep in an hour after you go to bed, get up and "do a soothing activity" like reading a book. Bright lights trigger brain activity.
- Try a cup of Sleepy Time or herbal tea or warm milk and/or spray the bed area with lavender scent (lavender is supposed to relax you). I've been using a lavender room spray recently and at the very least, its gentle scent is soothing!

Sweet dreams, everyone!

– *Madeleine*

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Next Stop -- A Trailer Home?

Living as we do in a high wind/hurricane/tornado tested urban area, I am not advising you to go out and buy a trailer home. But I was intrigued with a story in the April 3, 2017, Time Magazine: "The Home of the Future."

The author, Karl Vick, tells the story of senior trailer parks (the ones he visited were in Florida) owned by the trailer owners who live in them. "Trailer parks can be thought of as gated communities for people who aren't so wealthy," says Charles M. Becker, an economics professor at Duke University whose contact with trailer parks arose through his wife's family.



The author's point in the story is that the senior tsunami is here; left to themselves to provide for their financial future in retirement, one in three Americans "has not put aside a thin dime toward retirement" and Social Security "is good for only so much. Pensions are nearly a thing of the past." So how do you afford to stay in your own home as you age-which most seniors want to do? You sell your bricks and mortar home

and buy a mobile home for "a fraction of the price." And you invest in the trailer park in which you buy a lot-it's like buying a condominium "apartment."

Trailer parks have a stigma attached to them: home to the poor, operated by landlords who milk the tenants. However, Wall Street, according to Vick, has discovered that trailer parks make good investments: local authorities seldom approve new parks so the supply is limited but, given the aging population that populates many parks, demand is growing. Vick writes: "With a bit of ready cash-in Florida between \$20,000 and \$40,000 [realized when seniors sell their brick and mortar homes]-park residents can...buy the park in which they live in addition to the trailer. And if the cash is not ready, loans are available, either from banks or from nonprofit Resident Owned Communities USA, based in New Hampshire. The reasons to do this are excellent. In most states, a mobile home is taxed as a vehicle, and loses value the same way a car does. It becomes a "home," however, once its owner buys the land it stands on. And at that point, its value can appreciate."

Seniors who live in them love the trailers and the parks that host them. Neighbors look out after each other (sound familiar?!). Vick cites an incident where one older resident raised her blinds at a certain time each day. When she failed to do so one day, her neighbor was at her door to make sure she was ok. When someone goes into the hospital (and that is not an infrequent occurrence), neighbors look after their trailer home. "Shared adversity tends to create a web that in moments of need can be leaned upon." Community activities range from cribbage to potluck dinners. In upscale parks residents must pass background checks and there is such a thing as an upscale trailer with fireplace, spa tub and walls made of Sheetrock.

Vick quotes residents who told him that trailer park living means companionship and safety. "When that ambulance pulls up, there's going to be someone around to look after my place while I'm gone," said one. Another said, "We don't all have both oars in the water, and we're not all rowing in the same direction...but we are all aging. That's the one thing we have in common...we all are well aware that the grim reaper is very close to us. We're all in it together."

- I hope that N4NN provides some of that companionship, helping hands and esprit d'corps that our generation who have pulled up stakes and put down roots in trailer parks have found. I note that the folks Mr. Vick interviewed were all living in parks in Florida-a state where retirement is an industry, and retirees can more easily join together. And even after reading the story, I still worry about the dangers of riding out a storm in a trailer. But the article gave me food for thought and reimbursed my belief that finding a community of seniors right in our own neighborhood makes aging in place feasible...and N4NN is another avenue that makes realizing that goal possible.

Madeleine

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Steering Committee Elections



Wanted: 5 N4NN members or volunteers interested in serving on the N4NN Steering Committee. Each year at the June monthly luncheon 5 members rotate off the Committee and 5 new members are elected.

The committee meets once a month on Mondays, usually at 4:30 in the afternoon but sometimes at 7 in the evening. The Committee oversees the day to day activities of N4NN and develops policies to guide the organization. Anyone with an interest in keeping N4NN active and successful is eligible for consideration. Fundraising, marketing and programming skills are particularly needed but any N4NN member, volunteer or a community volunteer interested in helping seniors remain in their own homes is welcome to submit their name. Deadline for submitting names is May 24. Contact Madeleine Appel at 713-665-0770 or mgappel@comcast.net.

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More Transportation Options

A few months ago we did a short piece on a new Uber connected ride option designed for seniors- GoGo Grandparent. Without



needing a Smart Phone or the download of an app to that Smart Phone, you can just dial 1-855-464-6872 and order a car as you need it. You need to register first and have your credit card on file. Call the same number to sign up. The Uber ride fare is \$3.30 base fare plus .87 per mile plus .11 per minute with a minimum fare of \$5.35. GoGoGrandparent Concierge Fee is .19 per minute.

Now comes an announcement of a new locally based similar service: RideWithFamilyTree. Family Tree is a caregiver service that is now partnering with Uber to provide transportation also. Again, you don't need a Smart Phone. You don't need to download an app. You simply dial 1-800-337-1513 and ask for an immediate ride or schedule a ride in the future. You give the concierge your credit/debit card at the time of the call and the trip is charged after it is completed. Regular Uber rates are charged (see above) plus \$5 per round trip and a 10% service charge. The additional advantage to RideWithFamilyTree is that, if you call in advance you can also ask for a caregiver or nurse to accompany you, and Family Tree will arrange for the companion. The cost of the caregiver/nurse is separate and over and above the ride.

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W.A.T.E.R. Assistance



Need help paying your City of Houston water bills? The City of Houston's W.A.T.E.R. Fund may be able to assist you. The Fund assists low-income citizens who are 60 years of age or older and who live in a single-family dwelling. Limited assistance is also available to disabled or other low-income customers.

Applicants can receive up to \$100 each six months towards their water bills. If the water bill is less than this amount, qualified seniors may use any remaining portion in the following months to pay those water bills. This can continue to to \$100 or six months from the date of the application, whichever comes first. At the end of six months, customers may re-apply for further assistance.

Applicants must fill out an application and provide complete documentation of income, identity, residency and disability of all current residents in the household.

Call 713-371-1400 for more information and an application.

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Happy Birthday ...



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

Dr. Shelly Liss
Annette Novominsky
Kay Varvarro

If we have missed a May birthday, please let Madeleine know (mgappel@comcast.net or 713-665-0770)

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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)

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. Click on the Life Newsletter to see a full schedule of activities. Or contact 713-662-8290 or Victoria Arevalo at 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. 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, 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 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

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 or call 713-782-4162 to learn more about the classes and trips currently being offered.

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Coming Events

Tuesday, May 9, 11 a.m.: N4NN Monthly Luncheon at Genesis Steakhouse and Wine Bar. Speaker will be Thomas Call, volunteer for RSVP program, speaking on Medicare Fraud.

Tuesday, May 23, 2:30 p.m.: N4NN Monthly Discussion Group, home of Annette Novominsky, 6223 Queensloch, Houston 77096

N4NN also sponsors three member-organized informal groups: Our Men's Koffee

Klatsch meets twice a month (schedule changes from month to month) and several of our members get together to play Rummikub at members' homes a couple of times a month. Our Bridge Group meets a couple of times a month. For information on the Men's Koffee Klatsch, contact Jay Schaffer at js7984tx@gmail.com for the Rummikub players, contact Annette Novominsky at anovominsky@icloud.com and for the bridge group, contact John Varvaro at meyink@comcast.net.

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Laugh Outloud



Many thanks to member Annette Novominsky for keeping N4NN Connect supplied with smiles!



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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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Thanks To Our Generous Donors

Neighbors4Neighbors Network is so grateful to the generous donors who support our organization and make it possible. Donors in April, 2017, include:

Madeleine and Michael Appel

To these kind benefactors, our heartfelt thanks.

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The Marketplace

N4NN Connect is most grateful to its ad sponsors, MEDIC PHARMACY, RELOCATE AND RENOVATE AND GREATCALL.

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

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N4NN members can use a discount code to purchase devices and the one-time activation fee by calling GreatCall's Care Center at 1(866) 490.0807 using Member Code JF/N4NN.

- 30% off all Devices
- \$10 off the one-time activation fee

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