

WESTMORELAND COUNTY

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

INSIDE LINE

Volume 29, No. 1

Spring 2014

BARBER & BRAHMS

The Westmoreland County Area Agency on Aging is pleased to announce that tickets are available for the Westmoreland Symphony Orchestra's "Barber & Brahms" concert on Saturday, April 26, 2014 at 8:00 p.m. at the Palace Theatre in Greensburg.

This performance features violinist, Bella Hristova and musical selections from Pärt's "Fratres", Barbers' "Violin Concerto", and Brahms' "Symphony No. 2 in D Major".

Tickets will be distributed by a random drawing. Please send your request with the following information:

- Name
- Address
- Telephone number
- Number of tickets (1 or 2)
- Self-addressed, stamped envelope to:

Jean Healey

Westmoreland County Area
Agency on Aging
200 S. Main Street

Greensburg, PA 15601-3110

Your request must be postmarked no later than March 31, 2014. You must be a Westmoreland County resident age 60 or older to receive these tickets.

PROTECTING THE DECEASED

Identity thieves use the identities of nearly 2.5 million deceased Americans each year to fraudulently open credit card accounts, apply for loans and get cellphone or other services, according to fraud prevention firm ID Analytics.

Almost 800,000 of those deceased are deliberately targeted, that is approximately 2,200 a day. The identities of the others are used by chance. The thieves make up

a Social Security number that happens to match that of someone who has died. It's called "ghosting," and because it can take six months for financial institutions, credit-reporting bureaus and the Social Security Administration to receive, share or register death records, the crooks have time to begin charging. And, most likely no one is monitoring the deceased one's credit.

The crime begins with thieves sifting through obituaries. With a name, address and birth date in hand, they can illicitly purchase the person's Social Security number on the internet for as little as \$10. This time of year, criminals may file tax returns under the identities of the dead, collecting refunds from the IRS. However, family members are not responsible for such charges but ghosting can still cause much angst. So protect yourself by taking these steps after a loved one's death:

- In obituaries, list the age but don't include birth date, mother's maiden name or other personal identifiers that could be useful to ID thieves. Omitting the person's address also reduces the likelihood of a home burglary during the funeral.
- Using certified mail with "return receipt," send copies of the death certificate to each credit-reporting bureau (Equifax, Experian and TransUnion), asking them to place a "deceased alert" on the credit report. Mail certificates to banks, insurers, brokerages and credit card and mortgage companies where the deceased held accounts. If you're closing an individual account, make sure the institution lists "Closed: Account Holder Is Deceased" as the reason. For joint accounts, remove the deceased's name.
- Report the death to Social Security by calling 800-772-1213.

- Contact the department of motor vehicles to cancel the deceased's driver's license, to prevent duplicates from being issued to fraudsters.
- A few weeks later, check the credit report of the person at www.annualcreditreport.com to see if there's been any suspicious activity. Several months later, go to the same site to get another free report from a different credit-reporting bureau.
- For more tips, visit www.idtheftcenter.org and type "deceased" in the search box.

THE SENIOR CENTER SHOP

Looking for a place to shop with unique gifts and affordable prices? The Senior Center Shop located on the first floor of the Historic Troutman's Building, 200 S. Main Street, downtown Greensburg could be the option for you.

The shop, a cash-only business, features handcrafted items made by individuals at the senior centers throughout Westmoreland County. The senior centers are non-profit corporations and subcontractors of the Area Agency on Aging. The centers are required to raise a "local share" or matching monies and the shop helps them meet their local fundraising goals.

Some of the best sellers are knitted slippers, scarves, hats and baby sets; toss pillows and quilts; aprons, placemats, dish towels and net scrubbers; wreaths and wall hangings. Many items can be custom ordered to fit any décor and seasonal items are also available.

Jean Henrie, the Shop Manager will be happy to assist you Tuesday through Friday, from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm. For more information in regards to the shop, please call 724-830-1830.

PERSONALIZED MEDICINE

By *The National Institutes of Health*

You're one of a kind. It's not just your eyes, smile, and personality. Your health, risk for disease, and the ways you respond to medicines are also unique. Medicines that work well for some people may not help you at all. They might even cause problems. Wouldn't it be nice if treatments and preventive care could be designed just for you?

The careful matching of your biology to your medical care is known as personalized medicine. It's already being used by health care providers nationwide.

The story of personalized medicine begins with the unique set of genes you inherited from your parents. Genes are stretches of DNA that serve as a sort of instruction manual telling your body how to make the proteins and perform the other tasks that your body needs. These genetic instructions are written in varying patterns of only 4 different chemical "letter," or bases.

The same genes often differ slightly between people. Bases may be switched, missing, or added here and there. Most of these variations have no effect on your health. But some can create unusual proteins that might boost your risk for certain diseases. Some variants can affect how well a medicine works in your body. Or they might cause a medicine to have different side effects in you than in someone else. The study of how genes affect the way medicines work in your body is called pharmacogenomics.

It's becoming more common for doctors to test for gene variants before prescribing certain drugs. For example, children with leukemia might get the *TPMT* gene test to help doctors choose the right dosage of medicine to prevent toxic side effects. Some HIV-infected patients are severely allergic to treatment drugs, and genetic tests can help identify who can safely take the medicines.

Pharmacogenomics is also being used for cancer treatment. Some breast cancer drugs only work in women with particular genetic variations. If testing shows patients with advanced melanoma (skin cancer) have certain variants, 2 new approved drugs can treat them. Even one of the oldest and most common drugs, aspirin, can have varying effects based on your genes. Millions of people take a daily aspirin to lower their risk for heart attack and stroke. Aspirin helps by preventing

blood clots that could clog arteries. But aspirin doesn't reduce heart disease risk in everyone.

NIH-funded researchers recently identified a set of genes with unique activity patterns that can help assess whether someone will benefit from taking aspirin for heart health. Scientists are now working to develop a standardized test for use in daily practice. If doctors can tell that aspirin won't work in certain patients, they can try a different treatment.

Getting a genetic test usually isn't difficult. Doctors generally take a sample of body fluid or tissue, such as blood, saliva or skin, and send it to a lab. Most genetic tests used today analyze just one or a few genes, often to help diagnose disease. Newborns, for example, are routinely screened for several genetic disorders by taking a few drops of blood from their heels. When life-threatening conditions are caught early, infants can be treated right away to prevent problems.

The decision about whether to get a particular genetic test can be complicated. Genetic tests are now available for about 2,500 diseases, and that number keeps growing. Your doctor might advise you to get tested for specific genetic diseases if they tend to run in your family or if you have certain symptoms.

The latest approach to personalized medicine is to get your whole genome sequenced. That's still expensive, but the cost has dropped dramatically over the past decade and will likely continue to fall. Since your genome essentially stays the same over time, this information might one day become part of your medical record, so doctors could consult it as needed.

You can start to get a sense of your genetic risks by putting together your family's health history. A free online tool called "My Family Health Portrait" from the U.S. Surgeon General can help you and your doctor spot early warning signs of conditions that run in your family. To get started, visit <https://familyhistory.hhs.gov/fhh-web/home.action>.

But personalized medicine isn't just about genes. You can learn a lot about your health risks by taking a close look at your current health and habits. Smoking, a poor diet, and lack of exercise can raise your risks for life-threatening health problems, such as heart disease and cancer. Talk to your health care provider about the steps you can take to understand and reduce your unique health risks.

LIFE IS A BOWL OF CHERRIES

The cherry fruit is part of the Rosaceae family and this also includes almonds, peaches, apricots and plums. Cherries are small and fleshy red or reddish black fruits that contain a hard drupe. It is believed that the Romans discovered the sweet cherry fruit in the Asia Minor in about 70 BC. They then introduced them in the first century AD to Britain.

In the United States, there are more than 1,000 different varieties of cherry tree, almost all of them blossoming over a three-week period in late May and early June. Of these 1,000, only about ten varieties are produced commercially, but they're put to good use: every tree produces about 7,000 cherries or, if you prefer to think about it in real terms, about thirty pies' worth.

The American crop of more than 300 million pounds of cherries, of which almost 75% of tart cherries come from Michigan and sweet cherries are grown in large numbers in Washington, has no shortage of health benefits. Like most fruit, they are fat, sodium and cholesterol free, and they are also a particularly good source of Vitamin C and potassium. Rich in bioflavonoids and other antioxidants, raw fresh cherries maintain many of their antioxidant qualities if frozen immediately after harvest. Luckily, freezing not only preserves but also concentrates and improves the taste. Some cherry facts:

- Cherries are very easily perishable and they rarely ripen after harvest. Therefore, you need to refrigerate them soon after their purchase. These can remain fresh in the fridge for at least 2 days.
- Studies have shown the cherry fruit to have plenty of health benefits. These are known to provide pain relief for people who suffer from arthritis and inflammation. In addition, it can also reduce muscle pain and back pain.
- Red cherries are also very high in melatonin. These are known to destroy the toxins that cause diseases. The cherry fruit is also high in antioxidants that help to fight cancer and heart disease.
- Sour or tart cherries are used more often as an ingredient in jams, pies, soufflés, and cooked fruit compotes; while the sweet cherry is usually used for snacking.

GET YOUR LIFE IN ORDER

Many of us struggle to part with our belongings because they have sentimental value or we worry we might need them one day. However, you can give yourself permission to get rid of anything that's cluttering your life, no matter what it is and regain control of what stays and what goes, rather than the clutter controlling you. It also helps to find a person or organization that will cherish your gently used belongings as much as you do. Make a few of the following small changes each week and you'll flip your lifestyle from chaotic to collected.

Bedroom:

- If you have more garments tossed over a bedroom chair than in the closet, use three canvas-lined baskets to sort the items you're not ready to put away. One for clean clothes that need to be hung, another for dry cleaning or tailoring and the third for dirty laundry. Just make sure to tackle each basket before it overflows!
- Shoes should be divided into three categories: off-season, special occasion and everyday wear. Store off-season shoes under your bed in a flat storage bin and stow special-occasion pairs in clear plastic boxes at the top of your closet. Hang the shoes you wear most often on a rack over the door.
- To ward off tangled necklaces and mismatched earrings, hang them with clear tacks on a small bulletin board in your bedroom or closet. You'll be able to quickly see which pieces best match your outfit.

Kitchen:

- Transfer snacks like cookies, crackers, and chips to clear plastic containers. The tight seal helps food last longer and you will be able to see when you're low on an item.
- Install wire shelving in your pantry or cupboard. This makes items easier to see, allows air to circulate and cuts down on dusting and cleaning. Use sliding wire baskets to free up space under your sink.
- Post a pad on the fridge and have family members write down every food item as they finish it off. It saves you from doing a grocery list each week.

Kids' stuff:

- Provide hooks and durable plastic tubs labeled with each child's name to provide storage for books, sports gear and jackets.
- Plan a week's worth of outfits on Sundays and store them in a hanging five compartment canvas labeled Monday through Friday. School-age kids can easily locate their clothes and dress themselves more quickly.
- Transfer important dates from school handouts, church bulletins and sport information onto a family schedule, posted on a large dry-erase calendar. Use a different-color marker for each child to indicate at a glance who has a piano lesson or dance class that day.

Media:

- Remove liner notes from CDs (the booklet inside the front cover) and toss or recycle the bulky plastic cases. Store your CDs with the liner notes in nylon binders, organized alphabetically or by genre.
- Clear out your inbox by using your e-mail program to create a set of folders for your correspondence (with labels like "kids' activities" or "monthly bills"). You can usually do this by clicking "File," then "Folder," then "New." For each message, decide whether you're going to act on it, file it or delete it.
- There is no rule stating you have to organize all your photos into albums. If your photos are still in their original developing envelopes, simply mark the outside with the date the pictures were taken. Store the sleeves chronologically in acid-free photo storage boxes and write the year in the space provided.

Home office:

- Once a year, ask everyone in your household to empty out wallets and make photocopies of licenses, credit cards and other pieces of identification. Add the copies to file folders marked with each person's name and store in a safe, central place, such as a locked filing cabinet.
- Back up electronic files by saving them on an external storage device, such as a CD, Zip disk or memory stick, or on an online server.

- Business cards can accumulate. Ask yourself if you can see getting in touch with the person within the next year. If you can't, toss the card. Scan remaining cards into your computer, or insert into a business card binder and file by category.

Car:

- Keep the maps you use regularly in the glove compartment and stash the others in a plastic container or alphabetized accordion file in the trunk. Invest in a GPS device and do away with the maps altogether.
- Keep a large, flat basket in the trunk and use it as temporary storage for things you have to transport.

Travel:

- Before your next trip, type out a master list of everything you need, from underwear to spare camera batteries. Store the list on your computer and print it out each time you travel.
- If you're a member of an airline, hotel or car rental program, keep all your membership numbers together on a laminated card in your wallet. You'll have them at your fingertips when making reservations or redeeming your rewards.

THE SENIOR FUND

Honor the memory of a loved one or celebrate a special occasion with a gift to the Seniors' Fund. You will support our mission by enriching lives of the most needy, and the honoree will be notified that a tribute gift has been received. All tribute gifts are tax-deductible and can be made payable to "Community Foundation of Westmoreland County – Seniors' Fund". Please send to the attention of Seniors' Fund Coordinator, Westmoreland County Area Agency on Aging, 200 South Main Street, Greensburg, PA 15601.

INSIDE LINE STAFF

Jean Healey, *Editor*
Sharon Casario,
Production Assistant

WATCH YOUR MOUTH!

It's not just what comes out of your mouth that is important, it's also what is in it. The American Dental Association reports that many consumers aren't even aware of oral cancer of the mouth and throat, even though it causes twice as many deaths as cervical cancer.

Only half of all people who are diagnosed survive for five years, according to the American Cancer Society. The death rate is high because oral cancer often isn't diagnosed early enough, making treatment less effective.

A five-minute checkup by a doctor or dentist could save many lives. What you should look for:

- Patches of white, red or mixed white and red. Feel for sore places on the

lips, roof of the mouth, cheeks and gums.

- A sore on the lip or in the mouth that doesn't heal.
- Bleeding in the mouth.
- Loose teeth.
- Difficulty or pain when swallowing.
- A lump in the neck.
- A continuing earache.

THE BOSTON MARATHON

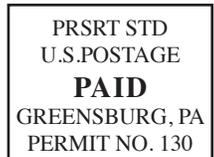
The first annual Boston Marathon was held in April 1897. It was originally a local event, but its fame and status have attracted runners from around the world. For most of its history, the Boston Marathon was a free event, and the only prize awarded for winning the race was a wreath woven from olive branches. However, corporate-

sponsored cash prizes began to be awarded in the 1980's, when professional athletes began to refuse to run the race without cash awards. The first cash prize for winning the marathon was awarded in 1986.

Women were not allowed to enter the Boston Marathon officially until 1972. Roberta (Bobbi) Gibb is recognized as the first woman to run the entire Boston Marathon (in 1966). In 1967, Kathrine Switzer, who had registered as K.V. Switzer, was the first woman to run with a race number. She finished, despite a celebrated incident in which race official Jack Semple tried to rip off her numbers and eject her from the race. In 1996, the Boston Athletic Association retroactively recognized as champions the unofficial women's leaders of 1966 to 1971.

Westmoreland County Area Agency on Aging

Historic Troutman's Center
200 South Main Street
Greensburg, PA 15601



STARTING SEEDS INDOORS

March (or 6 to 8 weeks before the last frost) is the time to start planting your indoor seed packets! Start by using a commercial seed starting mix and sterile containers. If using recycled containers, make sure these are cleaned and sterilized with a 10% bleach/water solution. Seeds will thrive in any container that is at least two inches deep and has good drainage.

Starting your own seeds is easy. Fill your containers to one fourth of the top with the moist, seed starting mix and gently pat down. Next, sprinkle the seeds or place them individually and cover only as much as the seed packet indicates. Some small

seeds do not need any covering at all. Ensure good contact of the seed with the soil by patting down the seeds. Mist the soil well, add a label and place the container in a clear plastic bag or cover with plastic wrap. Place in the warmest room in your house and be sure that the seeds never dry out during the germination period.

In approximately five days your seedlings should have sprouted. Remove the plastic and place the container in a cooler environment with plenty of sunlight. Fluorescent tubes can also be used. Keep the light on for 16 to 18 hours a day, two to four inches above the seedling, adjusting the height of the lights as the plants grow.

The soil must be moist, and once the second set of leaves appear, water soluble fertilizer can be added, using only a half-strength solution. If the plants are too crowded, some should be removed. Carefully ease the roots out with a popsicle stick, lifting plants by their leaves and replant in a potting soil mix at the same depth they were growing. Continue watering, fertilizing and giving sufficient light.

After mid-May, the danger of frost has passed and your plants can be placed in a protected shaded spot outside for a few hours each day, increasing the time daily over a week. Finally, transplant the plants into your garden or containers and enjoy!