

WESTMORELAND COUNTY

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

INSIDE LINE

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WESTERN PA RETIREES SKIP RELAXING, INSTEAD HEAD BACK TO SCHOOL

by Debra Erdley, The Tribune Review

Colleges dealing with empty desks as the pool of high school graduates shrinks might want to think again about students like Dona and David Albert and Sally Loughran. The Alberts, of Oakland, and Loughran, of Greensburg, love the opportunities they've mined at the University of Pittsburgh and Seton Hill University. They are part of a group that's becoming more familiar on campuses: retirees.

With 8,000 to 10,000 baby boomers turning 65 every day, there's no question their numbers are growing. Many colleges and universities have always opened their doors to retirees. Some, such as Seton Hill University in Greensburg, allow those 62 and older to audit classes at no cost, provided there are extra seats. Others boast well-organized programs like Pitt's Osher Institute, a part of the university's college of general studies, where those 50 and older pay an annual membership fee of \$225 that entitles them to audit more than 300 courses the university offers undergraduates. They can take advantage of scores of five-week enrichment classes in everything from conversational French and symphonic music to the life of a Civil War soldier. Although such programs are longtime fixtures at many campuses across the country, they typically attract a limited number of takers. Many have some connection to the school as former employees, faculty spouses or alumni. But that might be changing as America's baby

boomers – the group born between 1946 and 1964 – gradually move out of the work force and seek new options.

Jennifer Engel, director of Pitt's Osher Institute – one of 119 lifelong learning centers supported by the Bernard Osher Foundation – said the program that started a decade ago boasts 1,100 members. Although many take classes for enrichment, others audit undergraduate classes, and some have gone on to enroll in certificate or degree programs. “We have one woman who was an instructor for us who is in her 70s who just received a certificate in gerontology,” Engel said.

Tara Gruenewald, a gerontologist at the University of Southern California's Davis School of Gerontology, said studies have shown improvement in the cognitive functions of older people who remain intellectually and socially engaged through such programs. “I think we're going to see a push. We're going to see a demand from our elders in terms of folks who want to be engaged intellectually and socially and physically,” Gruenewald said.

For longtime Greensburg resident Sally Loughran, returning to Seton Hill, from which she earned a degree in 1963, was natural. Loughran, 73, wanted to sharpen her knowledge of art history so she could offer better insights to patrons at the Westmoreland Museum of American Art, where she is a volunteer docent. “I've been auditing classes there now for 20 years,” Loughran said. “It's educational to see how kids that age think these days. Every time I go back, I'm impressed with what good thinkers they are.”

That works both ways, said Maureen Vissat, an assistant professor of art at

Seton Hill. “Having Sally in my classes on a regular basis is a tremendous resource for students. She is brilliant and passionate about art history. Students benefit from her knowledge as well as see a model for the beauty of lifelong learning,” Vissat said.

Southwestern Pennsylvania has become a beacon to some seeking such options. Dona Albert, 65, traveled the world with her husband, David, during his career with the Air Force. The Alberts were living in Alabama when they opted to retire in Pittsburgh, in large part because of the opportunities universities offered. “It was important to be able to come to a city and get involved in volunteer work and take classes so we could start rebuilding our lives. And Pittsburgh was listed as one of the best places to retire, if you didn't want to just fish and play golf,” Dona Albert said, noting that the city has Osher Institutes at Pitt and Carnegie Mellon University. For David Albert, 68, who once taught at the Air Force Academy, Pitt's program offered opportunities to explore new academic interests and exercise his teaching muscle. He has taught enrichment courses on the Battle of Gettysburg and the Life of the Civil War Soldier, and is preparing a five-week course on the Battle of Antietam. “It's absolutely a way to keep your mind active and meet people,” he said.

Martin Sliwinski, director of Penn State's Center for Healthy Aging and a professor of human development and family studies, said colleges have an important role to play in providing such opportunities. “Funding in the state and counties for adult programs is appallingly low, so we really do rely on what the universities can offer in terms of their outreach at the community level,” he said.

FARMER'S MARKET VOUCHERS AVAILABLE

The 2015 Farmer's Market Nutrition Program provides eligible seniors with vouchers to purchase produce grown in Pennsylvania. This program, sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, provides four \$5.00 vouchers to be used at participating Farmer's Markets from June 1, 2015 until November 30, 2015. A list of participating Farmer's Markets will be available at the sign-up sites. Applicants must bring proof of age and residency. Examples of proof are:

- Driver's license
- Photo identification card
- AAA transportation card
- Birth certificate
- Utility receipts

Social Security and Medicare cards **are not** acceptable forms of identification.

Homebound individuals may have someone apply for them with the required documentation of age and residency, as well as a completed proxy form. The proxy form will be available at the sign-up sites and the Area Agency on Aging offices. The form requires both the signature of the senior and the individual picking up the vouchers; therefore, **the proxy form needs completed prior to receiving the vouchers.** Residents of personal care, domiciliary care homes and convents are not eligible.

You must be age 60 or older (as of December 31, 2015), a Westmoreland County resident, and meet income guidelines (up to \$21,775 per year for a single person and \$29,471 per year for a couple). Income for all individuals residing in a household must be considered. There is a one-time sign-up per season. The scheduled sign-up sites and times are listed below.

McKenna Center for Active Adults
971 Old Salem Rd., Greensburg
724-837-8832, Wednesday, June 3
9:00am-12:00pm

Latrobe Center for Active Adults
15 Avenue C, Latrobe
724-539-0237, Thursday, June 4
9:00am-12:00pm

Avonmore Center for Active Adults
458 Railroad St., Avonmore
724-697-4014, Friday, June 5
9:00am-12:00pm

Mt. Pleasant Center for Active Adults
424 Washington St., Mt. Pleasant
724-547-4593, Monday, June 8
9:00am-12:00pm

**New Florence Center
for Active Adults**
216 Ligonier St., New Florence
724-235-2800, Wednesday, June 10
9:00am-12:00pm

Monessen Center for Active Adults
1925 Grand Blvd., Monessen
724-684-6105, Wednesday, June 10
9:00am-12:00pm

**East Vandergrift Center
for Active Adults**
400 McKinley Ave., East Vandergrift
724-568-2692, Thursday, June 11
9:00am-12:00pm

**New Alexandria Center
for Active Adults**
207 Main St., New Alexandria
724-668-7055, Friday, June 12
9:00am-12:00pm

Valley Center for Active Adults
135 Kalassay Dr., Ligonier
724-238-7942, Thursday, June 18
9:00am-12:00pm

Jeannette Center for Active Adults
211 Gaskill St., Jeannette
724-527-3200, Friday, June 19
9:00am-12:00pm

Herminie Center for Active Adults
101 Sewickley Ave., Herminie
724-446-3282, Monday, June 22
9:00am-12:00pm

**West Newton Center
for Active Adults**
103 Main St., West Newton
724-872-4976, Tuesday, June 23
9:00am-12:00pm

**New Kensington Center
for Active Adults**
1039 Third Ave., New Kensington
724-335-8597, Wednesday, June 24
9:00am-12:00pm

Trafford Municipal
Trafford Municipal Building
412 Brinton Ave., Trafford
Wednesday, July 1
10:00am-12:00pm

Senior Life-Greensburg
123 Triangle Drive, Greensburg
Monday, July 6
10:00am-12:00pm

Scottdale Firehall
405 Porter Ave., Scottdale
Tuesday, July 7
10:00am-12:00pm

Derry Station
200 W. Second Ave., Derry
Wednesday, July 8
10:00am-12:00pm

Lower Burrell Manor
200 Sylvan Dr., Lower Burrell
Thursday, July 9
10:00am-12:00pm

Export Italian American Club
5930 Kennedy Ave., Export
Monday, July 13
10:00am-12:00pm

South Greengate Commons
164 S. Greengate Rd., Greensburg
Tuesday, July 14
10:00am-12:00pm

**Area Agency on Aging
Monessen Satellite Office**
100 B 7th St., Monessen
724-684-3141
Tuesday, July 7 & 28 and
ongoing after August 3
10:00am-2:00pm

Delmont VFD
2360 State Route 66, Delmont
Wednesday, July 15
10:00am-1:00pm

Norwin Community Resource Ctr.
231 Jennie Dr., N. Huntingdon
Friday, July 17
9:00am-12:00pm

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church
200 Leger Rd., Mack Hall
N. Huntingdon
Tuesday, July 21
9:00am-12:00pm

Level Green Community Building
123 Murrysville Road, Level Green
Thursday, July 23
9:00am-11:00am

**Area Agency on Aging
Troutman Building**
200 S. Main St., Greensburg
724-830-4444
Monday, July 27 & August 31
10:00am-1:00pm

St. Barbara Church
111 Raymaley Rd., Harrison City
Tuesday, August 4
9:00am-12:00pm

Cloverleaf Estates
200 Cloverleaf Circle, Delmont
Thursday, August 6
10:00am-12:00pm

Senior Life-Greensburg
123 Triangle Dr., Greensburg
Monday, August 10
10:00am-12:00pm

Allegheny Township
136 Community Building Rd.
Leechburg
Wednesday, August 19
10:00am-12:00pm

HEARING LOSS

by the National Institutes of Health

What is Hearing Loss?

Hearing loss is a common problem caused by noise, aging, disease, and heredity. Hearing is a complex sense involving both the ear's ability to detect sounds and the brain's ability to interpret those sounds, including the sounds of speech. Factors that determine how much hearing loss will negatively affect a person's quality of life include:

- The degree of the hearing loss
- The pattern of hearing loss across different frequencies (pitches)
- Whether one or both ears is affected
- The areas of the auditory system that are not working normally – such as the middle ear, inner ear, neural pathways, or brain
- The ability to recognize speech sounds
- The history of exposures to loud noise and environmental or drug-related toxins that are harmful to hearing
- Age

A Common Problem in Older Adults

Hearing loss is one of the most common conditions affecting older adults. Approximately 17 percent, or 36 million, of American adults report some degree of hearing loss. There is a strong relationship between age and reported hearing loss: 18 percent of American adults 45-64 years old, 30 percent of adults 65-74 years old, and 47 percent of adults 75 years old, or older, have a hearing impairment. Men are more likely to experience hearing loss than women. People with hearing loss may find it hard to have a conversation with friends and family. They may also have trouble understanding a doctor's advice, responding to warnings, and hearing doorbells and alarms.

Types of Hearing Loss

Hearing loss comes in many forms. It can range from a mild loss in which a person misses certain high-pitched sounds, such as the voices of women and children, to a total loss of hearing. It can be hereditary or it can result from disease, trauma, certain medications, or long-term exposure to loud noises. There are two general categories of hearing loss:

- **Sensorineural hearing loss** occurs when there is damage to the inner ear or the auditory nerve. This type of hearing loss is usually permanent.
- **Conductive hearing loss** occurs when sound waves cannot reach the

inner ear. The cause may be earwax build-up, fluid, or a punctured eardrum. Medical treatment or surgery can usually restore conductive hearing loss.

What is Presbycusis?

One form of hearing loss, presbycusis, comes on gradually as a person ages. Presbycusis can occur because of changes in the inner ear, auditory nerve, middle ear, or outer ear. Some of its causes are aging, loud noise, heredity, head injury, infection, illness, certain prescription drugs, and circulation problems such as high blood pressure.

Presbycusis commonly affects people over age 50, many of whom are likely to lose some hearing each year. Having presbycusis may make it hard for a person to tolerate loud sounds or to hear what others are saying.

Tinnitus: A Common Symptom

Tinnitus, also common in older people, is a ringing, roaring, clicking, hissing, or buzzing sound. It can come and go. It might be heard in one or both ears and be loud or soft. Tinnitus is a symptom, not a disease. It can accompany any type of hearing loss. It can be a side effect of medications. Something as simple as a piece of earwax blocking the ear canal can cause tinnitus, but it can also be the result of a number of health conditions.

If you think you have tinnitus, see your primary care doctor. You may be referred to an otolaryngologist – a surgeon who specializes in ear, nose, and throat diseases – (commonly called an ear, nose, and throat doctor, or an ENT). The ENT will physically examine your head, neck, and ears and test your hearing to determine the appropriate treatment.

Hearing Loss Can Lead to Other Problems

Some people may not want to admit they have trouble hearing. Older people who can't hear well may become depressed or may withdraw from others to avoid feeling frustrated or embarrassed about not understanding what is being said. Sometimes older people are mistakenly thought to be confused, unresponsive, or uncooperative just because they don't hear well.

What Can I Do if I Have Trouble Hearing?

- Let people know you have a hearing problem.
- Ask people to face you and to speak more slowly and clearly. Also,

ask them to speak louder without shouting.

- Pay attention to what is being said and to facial expressions or gestures.
- Let the person talking know if you do not understand what he or she said.
- Ask the person speaking to reword a sentence and try again.

How Can I Help a Person With Hearing Loss?

Here are some tips you can use when talking with someone who has a hearing problem:

- In a group, include people with hearing loss in the conversation.
- Find a quiet place to talk to help reduce background noise, especially in restaurants and at social gatherings.
- Stand in good lighting and use facial expressions or gestures to give clues.
- Face the person and speak clearly.
- Speak a little more loudly than normal, but don't shout.
- Speak at a reasonable speed.
- Do not hide your mouth, eat, or chew gum while speaking.
- Repeat yourself if necessary, using different words.
- Try to make sure only one person talks at a time.
- Be patient. Stay positive and relaxed.
- Ask how you can help.

Hearing problems that are ignored or untreated can get worse. If you have a hearing problem, you can get help. See your doctor. Hearing aids, special training, certain medicines, and surgery are some of the choices that can help people with hearing problems.

HEARING AID ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

Know someone who needs hearing aids and can't afford them. The Starkey Hearing Foundation-Hear Now program provides help. Call 1-800-328-8602 to discuss eligibility with a Hear Now representative or email hearnow@starkey.com to request an application for assistance. You can also repurpose those old, used, and no longer used hearing aids by donating them (all donations are tax deductible). Package the hearing aid carefully, include your name and address, and mail them to:

Hear Now Donation
6700 Washington Avenue S
Eden Prairie, MN 55344

CENTERS OFFER FUN & FELLOWSHIP

Are you looking to meet new friends? Are you searching for a place to volunteer and give back to your community? Are you interested in trying an exercise class in a supportive environment? Our Centers for Active Adults may be the answer to all these questions! Westmoreland County's Centers for Active Adults provide a wide array of opportunities from Tai Chi and day trips to aerobics, book clubs, and computer classes. Stay engaged in your community – visit a Center for Active Adults today!

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724-872-4976

Westmoreland County Area Agency on Aging

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

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WHAT IS NIXLE?

Nixle is a Community Information Service dedicated to helping you stay connected to the information that matters most to you, depending on your physical location. You stay connected to your local police department, your children's schools, your local community agencies and organizations, and the important information from other locations throughout the country that are relevant to you. This service is built on the most secure, reliable, and high-speed distribution platform, ensuring that you receive trusted and immediate, geographically relevant

information. Information is immediately available over your cell phone by text message, by email, and over the web. Your account can be customized so you receive the information that matters most to you. Whether it is where you live, work, or have friends or family throughout the country, the information is immediately available to you over your mobile phone, email and computer. What messages would you receive through Nixle? Only authenticated agencies and community organizations can securely publish information. There are four types of messages: Alerts (many would refer to this as an emergency type alert); Advisories (less urgent need-to-know

information); Community Information (day-to-day neighborhood to community-level information); Traffic (very localized traffic information).

For further information or to register for this free service, go to Nixle's website at www.nixle.com.

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