

WESTMORELAND COUNTY

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

INSIDE LINE

MAY/JUNE 2007

PLANT AN HERB GARDEN

It's easy to get a green thumb with container gardening, and you'll have fresh herbs on hand all summer! Just follow these simple steps:

Step 1: Cover the pot's drainage hole with a terra-cotta shard or a coffee filter. No drainage hole? Drill one in the bottom of the pot. For smaller pots, the hole should be a half inch in diameter; for larger pots, one inch. Fill the container about two-thirds full with your potting mix.

Step 2: Map the layout of your herbs by arranging the still-potted plants in the container. First place the trailing herbs (which will grow over the pot's side), such as thyme, oregano, and chives, around the edge. Medium-height herbs such as tarragon, sage, and marjoram fill in the next section. The tallest herbs (lavender, fennel, rosemary) go in the center. Leave three to four inches between plants. Five to eight herbs will fit in a larger

pot; three to five in a smaller one.

Step 3: Remove herbs from their original pots and place them in the soil. If the roots are tightly bound, use your hands or a fork to gently loosen them so they can spread out into the new soil. Use a spoon or your hands to fill in soil around the seedlings, leaving two inches to the top of your container so there's enough room to water. Herbs shouldn't be planted too far underground – where soil gets compacted – or their roots will suffocate.

Step 4: Pack the soil firmly around your herbs and water them immediately. Herbs do best outside and love full sun, so don't start your garden until it's consistently 65 degrees during the day. Let soil dry out between watering.

Tip: Plant basil and mint in their own pots. Both can grow very large and may overwhelm other herbs. Enjoy!

RELAY FOR LIFE EVENTS SCHEDULED

Relay For Life is a fun-filled overnight activity that mobilizes communities across the country to celebrate survivorship, remember those who lost their lives to cancer, and raise money for the fight against cancer. During the event, teams of people gather together and take turns walking or running laps. Each team tries to keep at least one team member on the track at all times.

But, Relay is much more than a walk around a track. It is a night for people who have shared the same experience to comfort and console one another. It involves all segments of our community in cancer education, gives the Society a stronger presence in our area, and gives our community the opportunity to understand and help achieve the Society's mission.

In 2006, there were 201 Relay For Life events

that took place across Pennsylvania, raising over \$19 million for the fight against cancer. Become a part of the phenomenon at the following Relay For Life 2007 events: Ligonier (Weller Field) – May 18 & 19; Murrysville (Franklin Regional High School) – May 25 & 26; Apollo (Apollo Ridge High School) – June 15 & 16; Latrobe (Latrobe Memorial Stadium) – June 23 & 24; Mon Valley (Monessen City Park Walking Track) – June 23 & 24; Norwin (Norwin High School) – July 21 & 22; Mt. Pleasant (Mt. Pleasant YMCA) – August 4 & 5; and Alle-Kiski Valley (New Kensington Memorial Park) – August 4 & 5. Sign up today by contacting Leigh Ann George at the Westmoreland County American Cancer Society office at 724-834-9081.

BE YOUR HAPPIEST SELF

One of people's biggest stumbling blocks is thinking happiness is something you can reach out and grab. Real happiness comes from knowing yourself. Six suggestions essential to contentment are:

Take your time and learn how to pause. Stop several times a day for five minutes to reduce stress. Take something off your agenda each day to give yourself a breather. Instead, stay in the shower a little longer, sit on the front porch and watch the sunset or linger over your morning cup

of coffee. This helps take you out of automatic pilot so you start acting, instead of reacting to your life.

Know your bragging rights by highlighting your own good points, which in turn will build inner confidence. Don't be afraid of sounding as if you have a big head because promoting yourself is directly connected to your self-esteem. The better you become at promoting yourself, the more confident you'll be about taking risks, bringing you closer to your dreams.

Please yourself instead of everyone else. Living life in line with your own priorities puts you on the fast track to happiness. Each day, remind yourself of your strengths and accomplishments.

Know your passions and zero in on your interests. Doing things that excite you makes you feel more connected in the present moment and boosts your mood. Try to be open to a variety of interests which may spark a new hobby or new friends.

Just say no and stop feeling overwhelmed by other people's requests. It holds you back from doing what your truly desire. Saying no is about deciding what you want to do, rather than what other people want or think you should do. Give yourself time to respond when someone asks a favor of you. This will give you a chance to figure out how you

really feel, and your actions will better reflect your true needs.

Stop your inner bully. Telling yourself that you're going to have a bad day is truly a self-fulfilling prophecy. Negative thinking can actually alter your body's chemistry by triggering the release of stress hormones. You can think your day happier by channeling positive thoughts, which will make you more likely to go after what you want. Give yourself the same encouragement that you would give a friend to help you feel better.

ARTHRITIS

Arthritis is actually an umbrella term used for a group of more than 100 medical conditions, the most common of which is osteoarthritis (OA). OA occurs mainly in older adults and is characterized by progressive loss of the joints' protective cartilage. Over time, this loss limits a person's ability to use the joint. Arthritis strikes women more often than men and it has been found that people with arthritis have an increased risk of heart disease. Arthritis is caused by previous joint injuries, being overweight, infections such as Lyme disease or an autoimmune disease, such as rheumatoid arthritis or lupus.

Pain along with stiffness and swelling around the joints are the main

symptoms of arthritis. You might experience joint pain when climbing stairs, walking short distances or even doing everyday activities like getting in and out of cars and tying your shoelaces. See a doctor. Early diagnosis and treatment can often mean less joint damage and less pain. Once diagnosed, your doctor will recommend a combination of treatments that may include prescription anti-inflammatory pain relievers, weight management, a nutrition plan and regular exercise. In severe cases, joint replacement surgery may be advised. Some options:

- **Get moving.** Exercise helps lessen pain, increases range of movements and reduces fatigue. Walking is the ideal exercise for most people with arthritis. It burns calories, strengthens muscles and builds dense bones – all without jarring fragile joints.
- **Strength-train.** Lifting weights builds stronger muscles, which will help protect your joints.
- **Lose weight.** Extra pounds translate to added stress on joints.
- **Eat better.** Incorporate more fish, omega-3 oils, whole grains, calcium and vitamins C and D into your diet.

- **Take up gardening.** Digging in the dirt can be therapeutic for sore hands.
- **Take a warm bath.** It will ease aching joints.

For more information, go to the Arthritis Foundation's website at www.arthritis.org or call 1-800-568-4045.

“IT’S TOO DARN HOT”

By the Environmental Protection Agency

Summer is near and each year more people die from “excessive heat events” than from hurricanes, lightning, tornadoes, floods, and earthquakes combined. Anyone can be adversely affected by excessive heat, but older adults are particularly vulnerable.

Excessive heat events are prolonged periods when temperatures reach 10 degrees Fahrenheit or more above the average high temperature for a region.

Existing health conditions such as chronic illness, mental impairment, and obesity can also heighten an individual's vulnerability. Persons taking certain medications are likewise susceptible. In addition, people who live on the top floors of buildings without air-conditioning are more likely to be exposed to excessive heat. Participating in strenuous outdoor activities and consuming alcohol during unusually hot

weather likewise exacerbates heat-related health effects.

The body normally cools itself by increasing blood flow to the skin and perspiring. Heat-related illness and mortality occur when the body's temperature control system becomes overloaded. When this happens, perspiring may not be enough. High levels of humidity can make it even harder for the body to cool itself.

Heat stroke is the most serious health effect of excessive heat events. It is the failure of the body's temperature control system. When the body loses its ability to cool itself, core body temperature rises rapidly. As a result, heat stroke can cause severe and permanent damage to vital organs. The good news is that heat stroke can be prevented by taking the following steps:

- Visit air-conditioned buildings in your community if your home is not air-conditioned. These may include: senior centers, movie theaters, libraries, shopping malls, or designated “cooling centers”.
- Take a cool shower or bath.
- Drink lots of fluids. Don't wait until you are thirsty to drink. If a doctor limits your fluid intake, make sure to ask how much to drink when it's hot.

Avoid beverages containing caffeine, alcohol, or large amounts of sugar. These drinks cause dehydration.

- Ask your doctor or other health care provider if the medications you take could increase your susceptibility to heat-related illness.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, and loose-fitting clothing.
- Visit at-risk individuals at least twice a day. Watch for signs of heat-related illness such as hot-dry skin, confusion, hallucinations, and aggression.
- Call 9-1-1 if medical attention is needed.

The EPA Aging Initiative is working to protect the environmental health of older adults through the coordination of research, prevention strategies, and public education. For more information visit www.epa.gov/aging.

YOUR OPINION COUNTS

Aging Westmoreland is a coalition of professionals and caregivers working together to identify unmet issues for senior citizens and their caregivers. The goal of the coalition is to meet the needs and address concerns of senior citizens, which cannot be resolved by

individual agencies and services.

The coalition's current goal is to develop a brochure, [Resources to Make the Journey Easier](#), explaining steps the caregiver can take to find help and information for seniors at different levels of need. These may include home help, placement information and hospice service. The brochure will be provided to physicians' offices and given regularly to their patients.

Aging Westmoreland is holding two Caregiver Forums for the public to express their needs and concerns. The first forum will be held at Baldock Health Center in North Huntingdon on May 22, 2007 at 1:00 p.m. Contact Rose at 724-864-7190. The second forum is scheduled at Weatherwood Manor in Greensburg on May 23, 2007 at 7:00 p.m. Please contact Marge at 724-853-2084.

FARMERS MARKET VOUCHERS AVAILABLE

The 2007 Farmers Market Nutrition Program provides eligible seniors with vouchers to purchase produce grown or growable in Pennsylvania. This program, sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, provides up to \$20 in vouchers per person, and the vouchers can be used at participating Farmers Markets from June 1, 2007 until November 30, 2007. The eligibility guidelines are:

- You must be age 60 or older (as of December 31, 2007)
- A Westmoreland County resident
- Income must be less than:
\$18,889 per year for one person
\$25,327 per year for a married couple

A list of participating Farmers Markets will be available at the distribution sites. Applicants must bring proof of age and residency. Examples of these proofs are:

- Driver's license
- Photo identification card
- Birth certificate
- Social Security documents
- Utility receipts
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 office. The form requires both the signature of the senior and the individual picking up the voucher, therefore, the proxy form needs completed prior to receiving the voucher. Residents of personal care and domiciliary care homes are not eligible.

The schedule for the county's senior centers is listed below.

All times are 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

New Kensington Senior Center

724-335-8597
Wednesday, June 20

McKenna Senior Center

724-837-8832
Thursday, May 31

West Newton Senior Center

724-872-4976
Tuesday, June 5

Latrobe Senior Center

724-539-0237
Wednesday, May 23

Herminie Senior Center

724-446-3282
Thursday, June 7

Mount Pleasant Senior Center

724-547-4593
Tuesday, May 22

New Florence Senior Center

724-235-2800
Monday, June 11

Laughlintown Senior Center

724-238-7942
Wednesday, May 30

Jeannette Senior Center

724-527-3200
Friday, June 8

Avonmore Senior Center

724-697-4014
Monday, June 18

New Alexandria Senior Center

724-668-7055
Wednesday, June 6

Monessen Senior Center

724-684-6105
Thursday, June 7

East Vandergrift Senior Center

724-568-2692
Thursday, May 24

Other sites will be scheduled later. For more information, contact the Westmoreland County Area

Agency on Aging at 724-830-4444 or toll-free 1-800-442-8000 or contact your local senior center.

SEARCHING FOR A JOB?

If you are 55 years of age or older, a resident of Westmoreland County, and your income falls within our guidelines, you may be eligible for our training program.

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) at Westmoreland County Community College enrolls low-income older adults to update old skills or get training in new skills, allowing you to earn while you learn in preparation for re-entering the job market. All positions earn \$6.25 per hour, 20 hours per week.

For more information, please call Mimi Owens 724-925-4098 or Rebecca Dunn 724-925-4231 or toll-free 1-800-262-2103 and ask for the Lifelong Learning Center.

Available Training Positions

Clerical Trainee – Office work, familiarity with office machines helpful but not required. Primary duties may include receptionist activities, copying and collating materials for mass mailings, assisting with fundraising activities, and maintaining information areas. Positions available throughout Westmoreland County.

Dietary Aide – Must be knowledgeable in minimal

food preparation techniques and have the ability to work with senior citizens.

Docent – Training provided in archiving, researching, and preserving local history.

Library Aide – Positions available throughout Westmoreland County. Individuals should possess an inquisitive, helpful attitude.

Maintenance/Groundskeeper – Positions available throughout Westmoreland County.

“DECODING THE MEDICATION MAZE” COMING TO LIGONIER IN JUNE

The Westmoreland County Area Agency on Aging is sponsoring a free Medication Management Seminar for older adults on Thursday, June 21, 2007 at the Mill Creek in Ligonier.

Various community professionals will address a variety of topics related to medication management including Paul Ament, Registered Pharmacist with Excelsa Health/Latrobe Area Hospital, Connie Frazier, Registered Dietician and Certified Diabetes Educator with the Joslin Diabetes Center of Western Pennsylvania Hospital and Dr. Richard Morgan, Author and retired Minister.

The Mill Creek is located just off Route 30 East in Ligonier. Registration begins at 8:00 a.m. with the program promptly starting at

9:00 a.m. The program will conclude at 2:00 p.m. There will be time after the seminar for Westmoreland County residents to sign up for Farmers Market vouchers.

Older adults are invited to register and attend at no charge. A complimentary continental breakfast and luncheon are included. The Mill Creek is handicapped accessible.

You may register no more than two older adults by sending the registration form in this newsletter to the Area Agency on Aging. You must pre-register for this seminar as space is limited. Registration is on a first come, first served basis. You may copy this form. You will receive a letter confirming your reservation. I hope to see you there!

INSIDE LINE STAFF

Karen Theis, Editor

Production Assistants:

**Sharon Casario, Debbie Sikora,
Trudy Thiem, Diane Peters,
Maureen Wisyanski,
Lyn Sarosi, Beverly Trovato &
Helen Krajnak**

INSIDE LINE is published bimonthly by the Westmoreland County Area Agency on Aging, 200 South Main Street, Greensburg, Pennsylvania 15601 (Phone 830-4444), the Westmoreland County Commissioners and the PA Department of Aging.