

WESTMORELAND COUNTY

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

INSIDE LINE

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2007

WCCC NEWS

The following programs/classes will be held this fall by the Westmoreland County Community College:

- AARP Driver Safety Program (55 Alive) – Registration begins September 1, 2007 for September, October and November classes.
- Volunteer Fair – September 20, 2007 from 2-6 p.m. in Founders Hall gymnasium. The event is free and open to all ages.
- Boomers and the New Face of Aging – October 4, 11 and 18th from 6-9 p.m. The class will be taught by Dr. Richard Morgan. To register, call

WCCC's Registration Center at 724-925-4204 or 1-800-262-2103.

ROASTED PUMPKINSEEDS

Here is a tasty result of your creative efforts. Rinse off any pulp from the seeds, then air-dry for two to three hours. Toss with 2 Tbsp. of melted butter. Place seeds in a single layer on a cookie sheet. Sprinkle with garlic salt and fresh ground pepper. Add Parmesan cheese or cayenne pepper for extra flavor, if desired. Bake at 275°F until golden brown (approximately 15 minutes). Serve as a snack or as a salad topping.

CARVE A JACK-O-LANTERN

Put a smile on your pumpkin's face, as well as your own, by following these safe and simple carving tips.

- **Cut an opening.** There's an easier way to open your pumpkin than carving around the stem. Lift your pumpkin and push it down firmly onto a large round cookie cutter. This way you

can set and light your candle on a flat surface, then place the pumpkin over it, which is safer and prevents singed fingers. Use a votive candle inside a glass holder so the melting wax is contained and won't tip over.

- **Remove the "guts".** Use a grapefruit spoon to remove all of those stubborn pumpkin's strings and seeds. Scrape the pumpkin walls so that they're about one inch thick to make carving easier. Clean off the pumpkin's outer surface with a damp towel.
- **Poke your pattern.** Instead of drawing a pattern with a marker, tape a paper pattern to the flattest side of your pumpkin and transfer the pattern onto the pumpkin with a plastic poking tool, a pushpin, or a nail. Carving will be easier!

- **Connect the dots.** Remove the paper pattern, then set the pumpkin upright on a flat surface or stabilize it in your lap. Using a carving saw, begin cutting along the poked-hole pattern. If you find yourself pushing too hard, use your scraper to make the inner wall thinner. When done, smooth any jagged edges with the cutter and wipe down the pumpkin a final time.
- **Make a fire escape.** Since your hole is on the bottom, you need to carve a chimney in the top so that the heat can escape. Cut a one-to-two inch hole on the top of your pumpkin with a carving saw.

Tip: Sprinkle cinnamon and nutmeg on the inside of your pumpkin before lighting the candle. The flame will heat the area for a yummy pumpkin-pie scent.

MRI AIDS CANCER DETECTION

By The National Institutes of Health

When a woman is newly diagnosed with cancer in one breast, there's up to a 10% chance that doctor exams and mammography will miss a tumor in the other breast. A large NIH-funded study has now found that

magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) can greatly improve detection of cancer in the second breast.

The study involved nearly 1,000 women who were recently diagnosed with cancer in one breast. Each patient's second breast was deemed cancer-free after mammography and clinical breast exams. Within three months of these exams, the women had MRI scans.

MRI detected 30 cancers in the second breast that had been missed by the other methods. The study also showed that if an MRI scan did not detect cancer in a woman's second breast, she had only a slim chance of later developing cancer in that breast.

One important advantage of breast MRI, the researchers explained, is that it can detect most cancers in the second breast at the time of initial cancer diagnosis. With early detection, both cancers can be treated at the same time. This increases the odds of successful treatment.

Women who have newly diagnosed breast cancer should talk with their doctors about whether to undergo an MRI of the second breast. Adding MRI scans to a rigorous clinical exam and mammography could lead to more informed treatment decisions and may give greater peace of mind to women with breast cancer. For more information go to

www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/types/breast.

SPINAL HEALTH

The term "stenosis" is Greek and means "choking". In lumbar spinal stenosis, the spinal nerve roots in the lower back are compressed, or choked, and this can produce symptoms of pain, tingling, weakness or numbness that radiates from the low back and into the buttocks and legs, especially with activity. Spinal stenosis in the neck can be more dangerous by compressing the spinal cord itself and possibly leading to major body weakness or even paralysis. This would not occur in the lumbar spine due to the spinal cord not being present.

Spinal stenosis is related to degeneration in the spine and usually will become significant in one's fifties. Patients usually seek treatment for lumbar spinal stenosis if they no longer wish to live with significant activity limitations, such as leg pain and/or difficulty walking. Spinal stenosis can occur in a variety of ways in the spine. Major types of stenosis include:

- **Foraminal Stenosis,** a bone spur developed from a degenerating disc that presses on the nerve root. This type of stenosis is also called lateral spinal stenosis. This is the most common form of

spinal stenosis and occurs at the lowest lumbar level, which includes a large part of the sciatic nerve.

- **Central Stenosis**, a choking of the central canal in the low back area which can compress the sack containing a bundle of loose nerve filaments. It is most common at the second from the lowest lumbar spinal level and higher. It is largely caused by a bulging disc and an overgrowth of ligaments.
- **Far Lateral Stenosis**, a nerve that has left the spinal canal and is compressed by either a bony spur protrusion or a bulging or herniated disc.

These differences in anatomy may result in similar symptoms, which is why all forms of stenosis are typically referred to as simply 'spinal stenosis'. However, if surgery is recommended, the differences are very important in guiding the surgeon. Also, a MRI scan, CT scan or both are used to pinpoint the stenosis. Most spinal stenosis can be managed through non-surgical means. The three most common treatments are:

- **Exercise Program**, although not a cure, is very important to remain active as

tolerated. A good physical therapist may be helpful.

- **Activity Modification** might include, walking while bent over and leaning on a walker or shopping cart instead of walking upright; stationary biking while leaning forward on the handlebars; or sitting in a recliner instead of a straight-back chair. Patients are typically more comfortable while flexed forward.
- **Epidural Injections** of cortisone can temporarily relieve symptoms of spinal stenosis. While these injections are not curative, they can alleviate the pain in about 50% of cases. If you are

experiencing back pain and discomfort or if the pain has become disabling, please contact your physician for professional help and advice.

EAT TO BEAT BREAST CANCER

Stay a healthy weight. Females who gain more than 45 pounds during adulthood double their risk of postmenopausal breast cancer. While it is important to acknowledge that there are no conclusive studies saying diet can beat or prevent breast cancer, research does suggest that eating or avoiding certain

foods can have an impact. Even women merely looking to lead healthy lives and lose weight can benefit from eating the following foods.

- **A tablespoon of ground flaxseed a day.** Flaxseed, a substance with a strong, nutty taste, contains lignans and omega-3 fatty acids.
- **One or more servings of low-fat or fat-free dairy a day.** One study suggests that women who have at least one serving of low-fat dairy each day reduce their risk of breast cancer before menopause by almost a third.
- **4 to 6 servings of high-fiber food a day.** A fiber-rich diet has been linked to weight loss, which in turn can decrease breast cancer risk.
- **9+ servings of fruits and vegetables a day.** Research shows that these foods are packed with phytochemicals, substances that fight many diseases. Keep in mind that cooking veggies can deplete them of their nutrients, so try to eat them raw, or cook them with as little water as possible.
- **2 to 3 cups of green tea a week.** Green tea contains

epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG), which can slow down the growth of breast cancer cells.

- **Fish 3 to 4 times a week.** Cold-water fish, salmon, mackerel, tuna, herring, halibut, cod, and sardines are rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which protect against breast cancer by killing off early-stage breast cancer cells.
- **Focus on good fats.** Monounsaturated fats, found in canola, nut, and olive oils have been shown to prevent the disease. Keep about 20 percent of your total daily calories as fat.
- **Steer clear of sugar.** Refined sugars trigger the production of insulin, and studies found that women with high insulin levels are more likely to see cancer reoccur, or die of the disease.
- **Avoid alcohol.** There's plenty of research to show alcohol increases breast cancer risk. It is not recommended to have more than one or two drinks a week.

IDTHEFT

Every year there are millions of ID theft victims, with the average fraud amount of over \$6,000 each. Here are ways to keep your personal information and your money safe.

- **Keep careful watch over your wallet and destroy credit card offers and other sensitive junk mail or old financial papers.** The majority of ID theft cases still result from information taken from lost or stolen wallets, checkbooks, credit cards, and personal papers, not data swiped from the internet. Shred financial documents. Put a stop to unsolicited credit card offers by calling 888-567-8688 or visiting www.optoutprescreen.com.
- **Never leave bills in plain sight in your home.** Shockingly, almost half of all ID thieves are friends, acquaintances, relatives, or in-home employees of their victims. Keep all your financial records in a locked safe or file cabinet.
- **Check your credit report for errors and suspicious activity.** You are entitled to one free report annually from each of the three credit reporting agencies – Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion – so get one every four months. Log on to www.annualcreditreport.com or call 877-322-8228 to get your free reports.
- **Limit your bank card usage.** Credit cards are safer, because no matter how many purchases a criminal makes using one, the law mandates that you're only responsible for up to \$50 of unauthorized charges.
- **Know when your monthly bills should arrive, and call if they're more than a few days late.** A criminal may have your bills sent to another address so you won't detect any suspicious charges.
- **Carefully examine your credit card, bank, and phone statements, and alert companies immediately of any unauthorized charges.** This will limit the potential damage of a thief tapping into your accounts.
- **Maintain an up-to-date list of your credit card account numbers, expiration dates, banking and**

investment account information. Also, keep customer service phone numbers so that if your wallet gets stolen, you can quickly alert the appropriate companies.

Computer tips:

- **Install a firewall (which prevents others from seeing what you do online), a virus protection program (which keeps viruses from collecting data), and anti-spyware software (which prevents a thief from recording what you type into your computer) on your home computer.** Most systems include a firewall, but if yours doesn't, then you may have to purchase one separately. VirusScan or Virex for viruses and Windows Defender for spyware are free at www.microsoft.com.
- **Keep your operating system current.** New fraud risks are continually being identified so download the updates frequently.
- **Never open an unexpected attachment in an email.** It could contain a virus or spyware.
- **If you are selling your old cell phone or giving it to a charity, call the manufacturer to get instructions for deleting all of your information from the phone.** Hackers can easily recover phone numbers and anything else stored in the handset.
- **Never check the "remember me on this computer" box when using someone else's computer.** It is safe to check this box on your home computer as long as you have installed a firewall, virus and spyware protection.
- **When shopping online, make sure the site's URL has a padlock icon and/or contains an "s" after "http", both of which indicate the site is secure.** Also, do not leave your credit card number on file with online retailers. Thieves can steal that information from companies' databases.
- **Choose difficult passwords that do not include any obvious information like your date of birth.** Create passwords that are at least eight characters long and

contain both letters and numbers.

What if ID theft happens to you? Call any one of the three credit reporting agencies – Equifax (888-766-0008), Experian (888-397-3742), and TransUnion (800-680-7289) – to place a fraud alert on all three of your credit reports. Close all accounts that have been tampered with and file a police report.

Most businesses, including banks and credit card companies, will require proof that your identity was indeed stolen. For tips on making your case, go to the Federal Trade Commission's website at www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/credit/idtheft.htm. You will also find a handy checklist to help you organize your proof and keep records of your correspondence with various companies and agencies as you go through the fraud claim process.

Whatever you do, try not to panic. Your best strategy is to be organized, patient, and persistent as you work with companies to clear your accounts. The more information they have, the faster your claim will go through and the sooner you'll start to win back your identity.

GIVING THANKS!

The Westmoreland County Area Agency on Aging is pleased to announce that tickets are available for the

Westmoreland Symphony Orchestra's "Giving Thanks" concert on **Saturday, November 17, 2007** at 8:00 p.m. at the Palace Theatre in Greensburg.

This performance features flutist, Dora Seres. Musical selections include Kabalevsky's "The Comedians", Nielsen's "Flute Concerto", and "Symphony No. 2" by Beethoven.

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)

and a 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 October 10, 2007. You must be a Westmoreland County resident age 60 or older to receive these tickets.

2007 HEALTH AND EDUCATION EXPO OCTOBER 24, 2007

As the Westmoreland County Area Agency on Aging celebrates its 40th Anniversary, we join Westmoreland Human Opportunities, the Westmoreland County Health

and Welfare Council, Westmoreland Casemanagement & Supports, Inc., and the Westmoreland County Board of Commissioners in sponsoring the 2007 HEALTH AND EDUCATION EXPO. Caregivers, seniors, persons with disabilities and the general public are welcome to attend.

There will be many activities, free health screenings and information, light refreshments, free parking and a live radio broadcast by 1480 WCNS. A variety of vendors are participating, providing their assistance and information to address every health and care issue imaginable.

Those attending will have access to stroke screen, computerized foot analysis, blood pressure, breathing screen, body fat analysis, oxygen levels, vision, hearing and glaucoma screens, spinal screen, massages, reiki and nutrition information – **ALL FOR FREE**. Flu shots will be available at no charge with certain health plans, although some people may be charged depending on their Medicare and supplemental health plan coverage. Please be prepared with cash or check if yours' is not one of the accepted insurance plans.

Mark your calendar for:

Wednesday, October 24

9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

**Four Points Sheraton
Greensburg**

Come anytime, stay as long as you like and bring

a friend. No pre-registration is required.

Need a ride???

Seniors age 60 and older can use senior transportation with a one-day advance reservation through their local taxi company. The Westmoreland County Transit Authority (WCTA) offers reduced fare trips as follows:

- Free pass for riders over age 65
- ½ fare for people with disabilities.
- ½ fare for people with a Medicare card but not yet 65.

For WCTA

information, call 724-834-9282 or 1-800-221-9282.

You don't want to miss this once-a-year OPPORTUNITY to obtain all this valuable information in one place. For more details, contact the Area Agency on Aging at 724-830-4488 or 1-800-442-8000.

REMEMBER THIS FALL

- Change your clock and change your smoke detector batteries.
- Your flu shot. Contact your local senior center for their dates.
- October 27th the Westmoreland County Food Bank 5K Harvest Run & Walk at the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg. Call 724-468-8660.

- October 5th (10 a.m. – 6 p.m.) flu/pneumonia shots given at the Aerobic Center. Call 724-834-2153 to schedule your appointment.
- Senior exercise classes at the McKenna Senior Center and Jeannette City Hall provided by the Aerobic Center instructors. Call 724-834-2153 for more information.
- Contact the Senior Community Service Employment Program at Westmoreland County Community College at 1-800-262-2103 for available training positions.
- The Arthritis Foundation will be providing two free arthritis educational seminars to be held in Westmoreland County this September and October. For more information and dates, call Courtney Capra at 412-566-1645, ext. 16.

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