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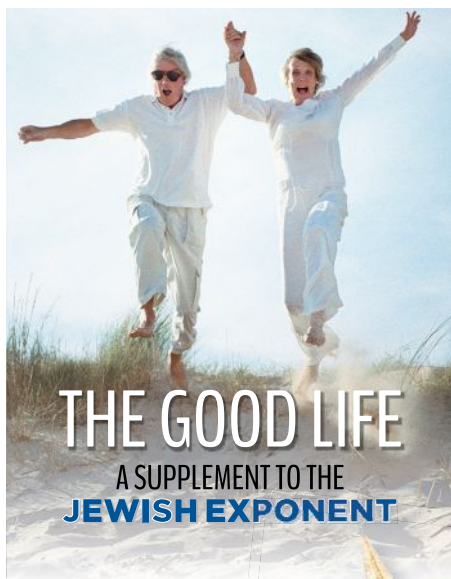
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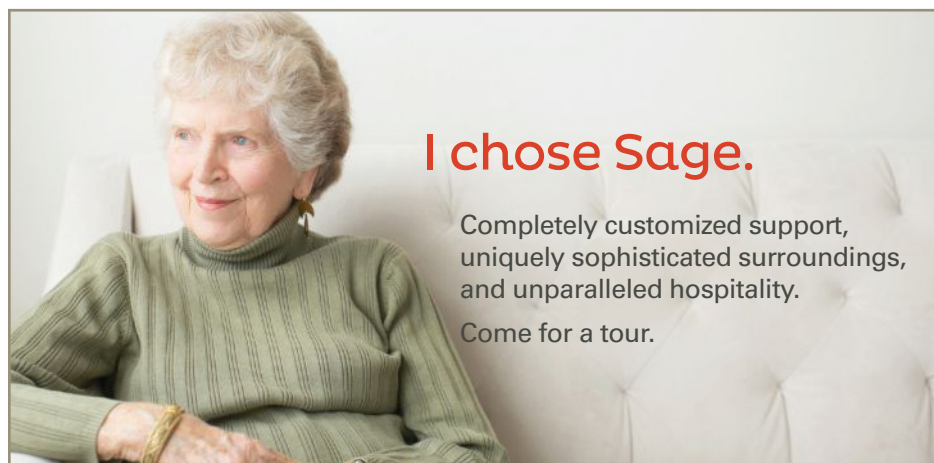
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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
JOSHUA RUNYAN

MANAGING EDITOR
ANDY GOTLIEB

SENIOR STAFF WRITER
JON MARKS

STAFF WRITERS
RACHEL KURLAND
LIZ SPIKOL
MARISSA STERN

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JENI MANN

ART/PRODUCTION COORDINATOR
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SENIORS CAN 'SHORE' HAVE FUN DURING THE SUMMER

BY MARISSA STERN | JE STAFF

One of the summertime perks of living in Philadelphia is that during the hot vacation months, we can easily take day and weekend trips to New Jersey for one of the best things the state has to offer: the sand and the ocean.

Don't be mistaken, though — we don't "go to the beach." We go down the shore.

And seniors find ways to spend their time under the boardwalk as much as anyone.

Many times, people will seek out second homes in the beachier parts of the state — Margate, Avalon, Cape May, the list goes on. And as June inches closer, so too does the appeal of walking on the boardwalk, enjoying the cool ocean breeze, indulging in an overflowing tub of Johnson's caramel popcorn or salt water taffy or some Polish water ice. ... Is anyone else hungry?

For senior adults, this time could be a perfect one to spend on the beach with grandchildren or gamble in Atlantic City.

Even if gambling isn't your scene, there are plenty of other ways to enjoy the warm weather.



Rose Valentine, 75, has lived on Long Beach Island, N.J. for 15 years after she and her husband decided to live there permanently following his retirement, though they split their time between LBI and South Carolina.

She is a past president of the Jewish Community Center of Long Beach Island and does public relations for the organization, though she is quick to point out, "this isn't your normal JCC."

"We're a full-year synagogue," she clarified. "But most of the people — 70 percent of the people — are not there during the winter."

The synagogue offers programs and events targeted for the whole congregation, but older adults do tend to gravitate toward certain programs, she said. They have mah jongg nights and movie nights and Zumba classes, which many senior adults enjoy.

Living in a place where many people do not stay for the full year is challenging, Valentine said. Having the JCC and synagogue there has helped her create a life for herself and her family.

"When you live in an area where people aren't there all year," she said, "I think most people need some kind of an anchor or place where they belong. Most of us did not raise our children there; it's not where we spent our adult life. So you need to find a place where you can find friendship, activities and a sense of belonging — I could not really live there if the JCC was not there."

She grew up originally on Long Island, N.Y. and went to the beach "every day" as she put it. Later, she moved to Livingston, N.J. and started renting a house on LBI for 25 years. Her children came with her, and they would spend time there in the summer.

Eventually, she and her husband bought a house and their son followed suit, so now it has a special meaning for her whole family.

"It's our place," she said.

Her grandchildren love coming to the beach and spending time in LBI. They're "beach bums," Valentine said with a laugh.

Two of her younger grandchildren, who are 7 and 8, love to come and stay with them, and Valentine enjoys taking them to the JCC for different activities, such as the movie nights.

The environment of LBI is good for seniors and for families, she said, because it's quieter than say, Atlantic City, with its bright lights and busy lifestyle.

"It's really about family," she said. "Being together without the distractions of normal life and being together and going to the beach — getting away from the other things."

One of her favorite things to do is ride her bike on the boardwalk and go to the beach with her grandchildren.

Being a grandparent is what many seniors in the area focus their time on during the summer, she said.

But they come together through activities the JCC offers, such as Shabbat on the Beach. The synagogue is holding three of these this year, she said, rather than the usual two because it's so popular.

"We get about 150 or so people to come on the beach and do a Kabbalat Shabbat and people go out to dinner together," Valentine said. "People bring their children; I bring my grandchildren. It becomes a three-generation thing — it's quite lovely."

Further up the coastline, many Jews congregate to other beach towns, such as Ventnor, Margate and Longport.

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SHORE

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BEACH AND SKYLINE IN
ATLANTIC CITY



“The community lends itself to many opportunities for seniors to enjoy themselves and the beachy environment.”

JOSH CUTLER, PROGRAMS DIRECTOR
OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER OF MARGATE

City and the bustling boardwalk of Ocean City, Margate tends to draw a larger Jewish crowd than the other towns. But it offers plenty of activities for seniors in all of Atlantic County.

And like what Valentine notices in LBI, many families tend to flock to these towns for just a few months during the summer as well.

Josh Cutler, programs director of the Jewish Community Center of Margate, said the population grows rapidly from late April/ early May through October, as residents spend time at their second homes in Margate, Ventnor or Longport.

The JCC offers many programs specifically geared for seniors, from summer mah jongg courses to dinner-and-a-movie events, which usually show recent movies. The one coming up in June will play *Joy* starring Jennifer Lawrence, for example.

They also have done brunch and learn programs throughout the year, which just wrapped up, said Cutler, who has been with the JCC for 12 years. Shabbat services by the ocean are another popular event, he added.

The community lends itself to many opportunities for seniors to enjoy themselves and the beachy environment, he said, noting



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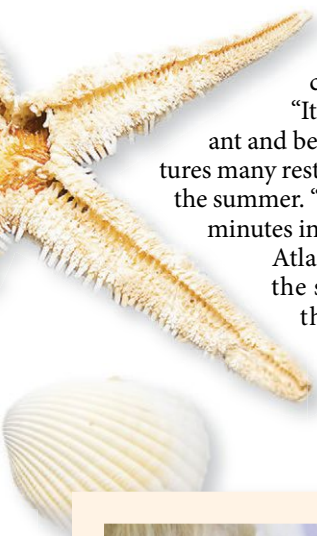


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the proximity to Atlantic and Ocean cities.

"It itself is a wonderful community and pleasant and beautiful," he said of Margate, which also features many restaurants and shops that get crowded during the summer. "But you [also] have these two options in 10 minutes in either direction."

Atlantic City was always a hot spot for Jews in the summer. Walking through any casino — though, perhaps, now they may be less crowded than they used to be — people of any age could be seen sitting at the slots taking a gamble on their luck.

On the other end, Ocean City — a dry



"When you live in an area where people aren't there all year, I think most people need some kind of an anchor or place where they belong ... you need to find a place where you can find friendship, activities and a sense of belonging — I could not really live there if the JCC was not there."

ROSE VALENTINE

town — offers a busy boardwalk scene, lined with stores and eateries (Manco and Manco's pizza, anyone?) and offers amusements and a water park perfect for the grandchildren.

Both are easy for seniors to get to by taking a jitney or other form of public transportation, he said, which is another bonus.

Cutler's favorite part of the season is the "bookends," the beginning and the end of the season when it quiets down. But he also loves the thick of the summer as he also runs the JCC's day camp, which many kids go to while staying with their grandparents at the shore.

For seniors — or active adults, as he called them — the JCC provides an added sense of community.

"We have a fantastic facility, fantastic programming and it gets them out of the house. It gives them a place to go and convene, and gives them something to do," he said. "It adds a social component to their summer." ●

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KEEP ROLE-ING ALONG

BY LIZ SPIKOL | JE STAFF

It's a clear, cool day in Chelsea. Outside of Murray's Bagels, a young man and woman with a stroller sit to rest on a bench next to an elderly woman.

The pair attempts a private conversation, but the old lady intrudes: "How old is the baby?" she asks. And: "How long have you two been married? Did you meet in the city?"

The young man starts making things up — saying the child's name is Hampus, and that the pair (who are actually just friends) met at a *Star Trek* convention. "We were both dressed as Klingons ... I knew right away she was the one." The old lady is slightly confused but remains polite. "Well, enjoy," she says. "You're perfect together, it's very clear."

And ... cut.

The above is a scene from *Orange Is the New Black*, the phenomenally popular Netflix drama about women in prison. The young couple play recurring characters on the show, but the Jewish buttinski on the bench — billed in the script as "Old Lady" — is just in that scene, in which she serves as the clueless elderly foil for the savvy youngsters.

It's a role that Sylvia Kauders, the actor who plays "Old Lady," knows something about.

Over the course of her prolific acting career, she has been billed variously as "elderly woman" (*Rescue Me*), "Old Jewish lady" (*Smash*; *American Splendor*), "Seder guest" (*Crimes and Misdemeanors*), "Old Woman" (*30 Rock*), "Lady at Deli Counter" (*The Wrestler*), "Tiny Old Lady" (*Lipstick Jungle*), "Grandma" (*The Mother*) and "Elderly Wife" (*The Big*

Wedding). At least three times she's been credited as a lady on a bench — and, in the case of *Orange Is the New Black*, filmed outside of the real Murray's Bagels, she was clearly intended to be the Old Jewish Lady on the Bench.

Kauders, who lives in Center City and now blends volunteerism with acting, isn't offended when she gets pigeonholed.

For one thing, much of her acting career — from Broadway to the big screen — has involved major roles. For another, she has had recurring parts on TV shows like *The Sopranos*, *Spin City*, *Dream On* and *Law & Order*. And her characters in her two most recent films — the Coen brothers' *Inside Llewyn Davis* and *Love the Coopers*, with Steve Martin, Diane Keaton and John Goodman — were people with names, not just stand-in ciphers.

And then there's this: "I am, indeed, an old Jewish lady," Kauders said.

Kauders grew up in South Philadelphia at Sixth and Mifflin streets and went to Upper Darby High School — "Tina Fey and me!" she said. She knew from a young age that she wanted to be an actor.

"I was in second grade the time I did my first play," Kauders said. "I was an understudy, and the kid who had the part got sick and I went on — you know, one of these great stories."

After this *All About Eve*-style debut, Kauders was hooked, although her mother wasn't enthused by Sylvia's plans to be an actor.

"My mother wanted me to be a schoolteacher. My aunt and uncle were both schoolteachers — my aunt was one of the founders of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers — and we



admired her so, we wanted to emulate her. But I really didn't want to be a teacher. I wanted to be an actor."

Still, Kauders went to the University of Pennsylvania to study "all the good subjects" — "history, social studies, English, *not* mathematics." She had a fantastic time at the school, and understood her mother's insistence on a good education.

"Penn taught me how to think, bless them for it," Kauders said.

She has remained an active and appreciated alum; there's an endowed lecture series in her name at the Kelly Writers House.

But when she first graduated and went to look for a job, she got a wakeup call.

"A woman at an employment agency said to me, 'My dear, you have a wonderful education, but you don't know how to *do* anything.'"

So she went to secretarial school, took a typing and shorthand course, and learned how to *do* something. Those skills, she said, were the key to getting hired.

"In my day, it was very rare that women moved into professional jobs [from the beginning]," she said. "You always started as somebody's secretary."

Aside from dealing with chauvinism, she often wondered if her Judaism held her back.

"I would ask myself, 'Did I not get this job because I'm Jewish?'"

She could tell when it was having an impact on someone's perception of her. Her first job after secretarial school was as a secretary at a patent office.

"The guy there tried every which way and Saturday to ask me whether I was Jewish or not without coming out and saying it," she remembered. "I think it was against the law to ask me at that time. So he said to me, 'What's your nationality?' I said, 'I'm American!' He asked what's this, what's that, and finally I said to him, 'You know something? I think patent law would be very boring. I don't think I'm interested.'"

He was incensed, but the bright, strong-willed Kauders probably wasn't cut out to be a secretary anyway; instead, she began a long, successful career in Philadelphia city government — for five different mayors — and in public relations. She still loved acting, and did it every chance she got, but she had to be practical, too.

"You don't really kid yourself if you think as an actor you're going to be busy all the time," she said. "You can't count on steady work. You've gotta have a steady job."

She would, however, take advantage of a slow season in public relations by doing plays. Things could get a little confusing, though. After acting in the stage play *Crossing Delancey*, she went up to New York to audition for the movie version.

A natural blonde, Kauders temporarily dyed her hair brown to make a more persuasive case as the character. When she came back into town, she headed straight to a special event connected to her PR work — with an unfamiliar mass of dark hair. She had to tell people, "Hello, I'm Sylvia Kauders — the same Sylvia."

Though she juggled the two careers rather successfully, her proudest moment is actually connected to municipal promotions.

"I created a program called Wednesday is for Women," she said. "The city representative felt that the tours of City Hall were neglected, so I created this program on a Wednesday that the women would come, the municipal guides would take them on a tour of City Hall, they'd come back to the Mayor's Reception Room and we would do

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a party on a particular subject. It was a great, great success.”

Wednesday is for Women ultimately won a Silver Anvil Award from the Public Relations Society of America.

“We went to Chicago to get the Silver Anvil, and I’m going to tell you, that was the high point in my life — winning the Oscar of the public relations field. It makes you feel very good; it validates you in your career choice.”

She has experienced similar satisfactions from acting, but then, it’s a trickier field with plenty of rejection, some of which can hurt for a long time.

“We actors get used to the rejections, but you don’t ever like it,” Kauders said. “And I always examine it: I always try to figure [it] out.”

Fortunately, she’s learned how to size up a particular opportunity and assess her chances.

“I went up to New York not long ago for an audition, and I looked at my competition, and I wanted to say to them, ‘Go on home, girls. This is mine.’ And it was, too. I got it. They liked the attitude that I struck. These were like sweet little old ladies, and this was not a sweet-little-old-lady part.”

One of her favorite recent roles was as Ginny in *Inside Llewyn Davis*. Kauders is an avid supporter of the Free Library, and has great respect for language and words. Good scripts make all the difference, she said, which is why working with the Coen brothers was so much fun.

“Two brilliant guys like that, and to hear them laugh at your delivery of their lines ... The only thing that I mind is that they



haven’t starred me in a movie with George Clooney so that I can go visit his house in Tuscany.”

As exciting as that was, Kauders is even more proud of a much more local acting gig she just had — a public reading of *Lost in Yonkers* for residents of her apartment building.

“A friend of mine who’s an actress asked me to work with her on a role,” Kauders explained. “She said that age-wise, she was now too old to be cast in it, but she always wanted to do the role of Bella in *Lost in Yonkers*. So she came over and we did some work on it and she said, ‘You know, it’s really a shame we can’t do this anywhere.’”

Kauders, who doesn’t generally see obstacles, said, “Sure we can.” I booked our community room and on Saturday, April 9, we had a free reading — not a performance — but a reading of this play.”

Kauders cast friends and neighbors in the other parts, and the building’s residents came out in force.

“We filled the house and they loved it. They loved it. We had such a wonderful time.”

Kauders said there’s one guy who still tells her how wonderful it was every time she sees him in the elevator. She seems as pleased by that as if he was Joel Coen, Ethan Coen and George Clooney all wrapped into one.

“He said he’d even pay to see it!” she said with delight. “I’m still basking in the glow of the approbation of the audience. You can always practice your craft. There’s always a way.” ●

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HELLO IMA, HELLO ABBA: SUMMER CAMP FOR THE YOUNG AT HEART



BY RACHEL KURLAND | JE STAFF

Summer camp: a time for roasting marshmallows for s'mores, exhausting your supply of bug spray that your mother made you pack, hiking through the wilderness and fostering friendships.

But kids aren't the only ones enjoying their time in the crisp, mountain air. For some adults, it's not too late to head back to camp this summer, too.

Susan Silverman has been an avid camper since she was a kid herself.

She will be heading to Camp Nock-A-Mixon in Kintnersville for her ninth summer this June, three of which were spent as a counselor when she was in college.

Her job at the camp has varied over the years, but she is mainly in charge of running the cooking class, where she and the campers make one or two recipes each week based on a different theme.

She also has been a supervisor to the junior and middle girls and still teaches swim to the junior girls, tutors Bar and Bat Mitzvah students and transports staff to the bus or train station on their days off.

"I love interacting with the kids. I love interacting with the staff. I enjoy being away from home in summer," said Silverman, who lives in Chalfont during the other three seasons of the year.

And during that time, she teaches preschool at several Bucks and Montgomery county schools, as well as Hebrew school.

Silverman has such a strong connection to summer camp because she attended Adventureland Day Camp in Bensalem for 18 years growing up.

"I am still friendly with some of those kids that I grew up with," she added. "When I worked at Nock-A-Mixon in college, I made some really good friendships that I still have. There's just something so special about spending your summer with a group of girls or boys that you just have special bond with that you can't get with anybody else."

The majority of the campers at Nock-A-Mixon are Jewish, and Silverman said she hopes her own children maintain these special bonds over the years.

Chalfont isn't a predominantly Jewish area, so she emphasized that "it's important for me that my kids developed relationships with Jewish children."

"They have these bonds with these kids that they don't have with anybody else," said Silverman, who belongs to Congregation Beth Or in Maple Glen.

In addition to her own children fostering friendships, she has

the opportunity to share her summer camp experience with her children, Jeffrey, 20, and Carly, 17 — though they do get to have some of their own independence, too.

Both attended Nock-A-Mixon for nine years. Jeffrey spent one summer as a counselor, and Carly will follow that same path this year.

“It’s such a great experience,” Silverman said. “I just feel so honored and so blessed that I was able to work at a camp so that my kids were able to go to camp.”

She said the camp owners, Mark and Bernice Glaser, know every single kid. Her son attended the camp before she started working there, so she was able to see the other side of camp as a parent.

When she received the infamous summer camp letter from her soon-to-be sixth-grader Jeffrey — with some lines like “I miss you,” “I’m lonely” and “come get me” — she called the camp.

Within 10 minutes, both Glasers checked in on him and called Silverman back, saying he was now walking up from the lake and having a great time with new friends.

It’s the subtle behind-the-scenes extra care and attentiveness that makes summer camp so special.

When she was a camper, the summer was all about being with her friends and playing sports.

“Now, as an adult at an overnight camp,” Silverman continued, “you just meet people from all over. One of the things I really like about driving counselors on their off days is that [Nock-A-Mixon has] staff from England, and the kitchen and maintenance staff is from Hungary and Poland, so none of them have cars.”

When she drives them around, “we get to chat, and it’s just so interesting learning about them. It kind of makes me feel young at heart.”



Susan Silverman's job at Camp Nock-A-Mixon has varied over the years, but she is mainly in charge of running the cooking class, where she and the campers make one or two recipes each week based on a different theme.

Bart Davis is also young at heart and will be 69 by the time the festivities start at Camp Galil in June. He has worked there for 21 summers, now going on 22.

Camp Galil, located in Ottsville, was founded by an international youth movement, Habonim Dror North America, the progressive Labor-Zionist youth movement.

Davis primarily works as a liaison between the camp and parents

See **CAMP**, Page 16

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CAMP

Continued from Page 15

to ensure that everyone is enjoying their summer while also providing support to counselors and campers.

It may not always be exciting, but it's a core part of running the camp smoothly.

"Sometimes it's as mundane as 'my son needs to make some course selections for next year,' and sometimes it's more detailed than that," he explained.

A retired elementary school teacher from Northeast Philadelphia, Davis enjoys spending his summers with "energetic, intelligent young people."

He went to Boy Scout camp when he was a kid — Treasure Island in Point Pleasant, which has since been shut down due to storm flooding damage.

Kids at Camp Galil mug for the camera. Bart Davis, who turns 69 soon, will be a familiar face to them, having worked there for more than two decades.

At Galil, Davis runs activities like teaching kids how to carve a soapstone, which he's been doing since 1995.

Treasure Island was a different type of summer program than Galil, but things like bonfires and campfire songs are always relatable across camp lines.

He added that Jewish summer camps foster a special connection for campers and staff alike.

"If they're very well connected" in the Jewish community, Davis continued of his campers, "it will not have much of an impact. If they're not very well connected to the Jewish community, they become very aware of Israel and very aware of Jewish culture. They're immersed in it 24/7."

For example, teaching Israel can be as simple as baking and decorating a cake in the shape and design of the country in order to explain what Israel looks like and where major cities are located.

"There's a lot of education that goes on, but it's all informal Jewish education," he said. "And they make lifelong friends in the Jewish community, and that's important."

"In the long run, we push a lot of responsibility on our campers. Most of the people who work at the camp besides our Israelis are homegrown. What I enjoy most is watching kids grow up and learn to take responsibility and learn to work as a team with their friends to accomplish things.

"That's probably the most satisfying thing: watching young people grow up and become leaders." ●

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MAKING SENSE (AND DOLLARS) OF MEDICARE

BY JON MARKS | JE STAFF

YOU'RE 65 OR OLDER, and here are your options:

Climb the highest mountain.

Go skydiving.

Play quarterback for the Eagles. (Hey, if Sam Bradford doesn't want the job ...)

Make sense of Medicare.

Before you answer, know that the mountain is really, really steep, the parachute's been a bit cranky of late and Eagles' fans aren't the most patient, especially if they think their grandma can throw the ball better than you.

So, Medicare it is. Gulp.

For starters, you're wondering, "Why do I keep getting all this mail, and what am I supposed to do with it?" It's as if a little bird told every insurance company in the country you're turning 65. Instead of sending you birthday greetings, they're sending you Medicare and Medigap — we'll get into all that later — plans.

Sifting through the rubble and trying to make sense of it isn't easy, which is why nonprofit agencies like APPRISE are out there for free consultations. They'll explain all the options to you, look at your specific circumstances and try to point you in the right direction.

The only thing they won't do is make an actual recommendation.

"We go through an overview of Medicare and how it works," explained Barbara Rutberg, a former Upper Dublin High English teacher who's been volunteering for APPRISE the past four years. "We offer all services and counseling.

"Depending upon the needs of the individual and specific conditions, we'll suggest several choices. But we do not recommend. We're unbiased. We try to point out the pluses or minuses."

According to Rutberg, there's so much confusion about just what Medicare is and what benefits you're getting, depending on which part of the plan you sign up.

And there's no easy answer to all this.

The simplified version is that when you turn 65 you are automatically enrolled in coverage for Part A, which deals with hospitalization, nursing care and home health services.

From there, it gets complicated.

Part B covers lab tests, surgeries and doctor visits — assuming that your doctor accepts Medicare, which has become more the exception than the rule in recent years. That's because of the low fee reimbursements and hassles in filing claims.

For most people, there's a \$121.80 monthly premium to belong to Part B, but because it only covers so much — leaving patients with huge deductibles and other costs — many look to supplement that.

That's where things get even more muddled, as folks decide

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MEDICARE

Continued from Page 17

whether to supplement with a Medicare Advantage Plan, aka Part C, or go with a Medigap plan.

Under Part C, you may pay a smaller yearly deductible and a small co-pay for doctor visits. But the cost of that annual premium could skyrocket. That why you're getting besieged with mail from insurance companies touting that *plan you've simply got to have*.

The problem is that what might work best for your best friend or your neighbor might not work best for you.

"The number of people who come to us because they made mistakes is depressing," said Donna Omdahl of 65 Incorporated, a Mil-

waukee company that charges \$399 for complete Medicare counseling. "We go through the process with each applicant, starting with where they are now. And try to figure out what might work best for them.

"Through education, they're able to decide."

Much of that education can come straight from the horse's mouthpiece itself — **medicare.gov** — which offers step-by-step instructions about how to proceed when applying for Medicare.

It tells you what services are offered under each plan, gives you an approximate cost and provides names and addresses for doctors, hospitals, nursing facilities, medical equipment suppliers and other important information.

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mail all this information to you — assuming you can find someone to help request it.

But, according to Omdahl, there's a glitch in the system (surprise!) that confuses people who don't understand the difference between original Medicare and a Medicare Advantage Plan.

They assume that once they choose one they're covered, along with a reliable prescription drug plan (Part D), across the board. That's not necessarily true.

While most Medicare Advantage Plans include some kind of drug coverage, original Medicare requires signing up right away. Otherwise, you may have to pay a penalty. Then you pick the plan you want, with the monthly premium added to your Medicare premium.

Got all that?

"The thing is with the original Medicare, you have to pick two of the options," said Omdahl, whose company offers education seminars to clarify the misconceptions. "But it isn't clear on the website. Consequently, people think they have to pick one of each.

"The basic idea is we need to have proper care as we get older. Once you understand that and understand there are two distinct parts to the decision of how to package it, things become clearer."

When you go with a Medicare Advantage Plan, it supplements the costs basic Medicare doesn't cover. Of course, there's a hefty premium for that on top of the basic Medicare fee. And there's likely a deductible, too.

Medigap plans, on the other hand, have a considerably lower premium and little or no deductible. But if you wind up in the hospital for surgery or some other condition that requires a stay and various tests, your out-of-pocket costs can be prohibitive.

In essence, those on Medigap are betting on themselves that they won't have any major issues. While it's nice to be optimistic rather than thinking the sky is falling any minute, it may not be the most pragmatic.

Logic suggests the older we get, the more likely our bodies are to break down in some way. To deny that to save a few bucks up front may not be the smartest move — especially if six months or so later you're paying big bucks because something went wrong.

But it's your life.

And it's up to you to decide how Medicare should work for you. That's assuming you're not still under your working spouse's health care plan, which would limit you to Part A, because the rest is already covered by insurance. In that case, the two of you need to figure out the best way to proceed.

But don't listen to just anyone. Listen to those who know your situation and will help make the best choice for your particular circumstance.

"Many people tell us, 'My neighbor said this,' or 'My brother-in-law said that,'" explained Rutberg, who said the local APPRISE office includes volunteers with legal backgrounds, as well as those in pharmaceuticals and health care. "If you listen to them, you can choose something much more costly as a result.

"But in many ways with Medicare and Medicaid and all the different drug plans, they couldn't have made it more confusing."

Hopefully, some of this will clear up the confusion.

If not, try to set up a meeting with a representative of APPRISE, which often can take place in your local library or another public venue. And if you think it's worth it to spend the money up front to ensure you won't be spending a whole lot more money later for making the wrong decisions, contact one of the fee-based companies.

If none of that helps, there's only one question left:

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VOLUNTEER



SOME OLDER ADULTS BEGIN UNRETIREMENT PROCESS

BY LIZ SPIKOL | JE STAFF

“UNRETIREMENT” — THAT’S THE LATEST BUZZWORD to describe a trend among older adults, particularly baby boomers, who reject conventional notions of retirement.

Maybe they start a second career. Maybe they join the Peace Corps. Maybe they devote themselves to learning new skills or transforming their communities. For Jewish older adults, the lure of volunteerism may be especially strong, as the concept of *tikkun olam*, and giving back, is central to the Jewish value system.

Wyndmoor resident Glenna Shire, 68, has been retired for five years but finds she can’t help getting involved in projects if it’s something she feels strongly about.

A teacher for the deaf for 30 years, Shire recently had the opportunity to share her knowledge about deaf culture with a group of West Philadelphia girls, ages 9 to 14. The girls are in a Salvation Army program called Be Your Best, which provides lessons on everything from setting a table to mastering a strong handshake.

It’s an eclectic curriculum, thanks to program leader Collette McBratney, who brought Shire into the class after meeting her at a

Glenna Shire (fourth from left) stands with the Be Your Best Crew she taught to sign.

hair salon and hearing about her career.

"Those young ladies in West Philadelphia need to understand differences and not be afraid," said McBratney, 67, who also works fulltime for Independence Blue Cross. "With Glenna, there's a lot of animation and energy because she's a straight shooter. There's authenticity along with her expertise."

Shire talked to the girls about what deaf people are like, and busted the myths that persist about deaf culture. She also taught them some American Sign Language (ASL).

"My particular thrust was to show that there are differences [between people] but that it doesn't have to be a bad thing," Shire said. "It can be a valuable thing."

By explaining the various ways that deaf people process information, she said, "it shows there are all different kinds of listening. Not every deaf person signs. I showed them how difficult it can be to lip read, how tiring it can be. We talked about the accommodations that deaf people have to have to level the playing field. They got to see that everyone does things in a different way, but it doesn't have to be weird or bad. Respect was an important value."

The girls tried some sign language for themselves and seemed to enjoy it.

"ASL is done on the hands, and it's a very expressive language," Shire said. "It's a nice way to show you can express your feelings in a different manner, rather than lashing out."

McBratney believed Spire's visit made a big difference.

"I think what they thought a deaf person was like changed — they appreciated that a deaf person wants to dance, too," she said. "[Now, after Glenna's visit], they wouldn't let fear prevent them from making a friend."

McBratney also thought that Shire's age was an advantage, prompting the girls to think about their own future plans.

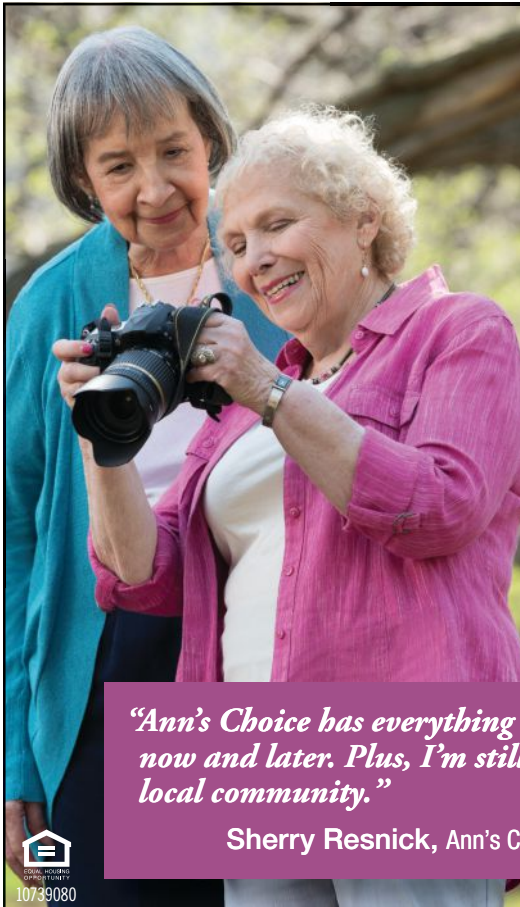
"Here's Glenna — was she always a doctor? How did she do it? I think [it's good] seeing a person who has come through a career but also balanced that with children or grandchildren and has retired to do something good."

Older adults, McBratney said, suggest to kids that "there's a citizenship — there's a giving back to other people."

Major Philip Ferreira, director of operations for the Salvation Army of Philadelphia, agrees.

"We consider volunteers very valuable to us. Older people bring a lot to the table," he said. "Senior volunteers — regardless of

See [UNRETIRED](#), Page 22



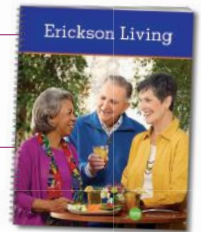
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UNRETIREMENT

Continued from Page 17

socioeconomic background — offer experience, knowledge and come with a different level of understanding. They have work experience, family experience, which helps with relationships.”

He also said they have a good eye for things that need to get done.

While many older volunteers become docents, give lectures, provide companionship and the like, others prefer to be more physically active.

We consider volunteers very valuable to us. Older people bring a lot to the table. Senior volunteers — regardless of socioeconomic background — offer experience, knowledge and come with a different level of understanding. They have work experience, family experience, which helps with relationships.

MAJOR PHILIP FERREIRA, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS
FOR THE SALVATION ARMY OF PHILADELPHIA

That’s certainly true of the many older volunteers for the vast 1,800-acre Wissahickon Valley Park. There is nothing they don’t do, including much of the rigorous physical labor that’s required to maintain the park’s trails and structures. They pick up trash on cleanup days, lead hikes, organize projects and interface with government employees.

They are, said Friends of the Wissahickon’s volunteer coordinator John Holback, tremendous assets.

Though the young Holback gets some gentle ribbing from sen-

ior volunteers about his age — “you were born *when?*” — he’s got a terrific rapport with them, and a great deal of respect for what they contribute.

“There are older guys [among our volunteers] who have three times my life’s worth of experience,” said Holback, noting their deep knowledge of the park and its history.

“You say, ‘You know, some of the shingles on the Mount Airy shed are falling apart. Can you do that?’ And they’ll be like, ‘Oh yeah, we did that back in ’92. We’re happy to do it again, no problem.’ They get it. And that’s passing knowledge onto me, and I can pass it along. That’s another benefit [of older volunteers] — passing along their experiences and information.”

Holback said older adults are also good role models for younger people.

“The cool thing about older people coming out is you get a diversity of backgrounds,” he said. “And it’s inspiring to see someone who has fake heart valves or whatever out there working.”

Next up for Shire is an effort to get a Rock Steady boxing program for people with Parkinson’s going in the suburbs. She donated some time to a similar program in Florida recently, and was moved by what she saw.

“I shed a number of tears,” she said, but she remains undeterred. “That’s what the volunteering means to me: If you work hard and try to find your inner core, that’s how you can be the best you can be.” ●

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YOUNG AT ART:

FIVE WOMEN WHO DEFY 'LITTLE OLD LADY' STEREOTYPES

BY LIZ SPIKOL
JE STAFF



ELLEN CARVER

In a recent *Buzzfeed*-style video, the AARP asked a handful of millennials to imitate "old people" doing a range of activities, from jumping jacks to crossing a street.

One young woman in track pants and ballet slippers does an "old person" pushup by collapsing on the floor in a heap. Three guys asked to read text messages squint at their imaginary phones; one of them actually scratches his head in mock bewilderment. They move in bent-over slow motion when asked to be "old," aping a cartoonish style that'd be perfectly at home in a high school production of *Our Town*.

The video is depressing but it's hardly surprising.

Ageist stereotypes are deeply embedded in the popular imagination. Even the words we use — "seniors," "elderly," etc. — connote reductionist old-school Geritol commercials rather than convey a vibrant, dynamic range of experience.

Yet that dynamism is, in fact, the reality for older adults; how could it not be, given that, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the 65-and-older

population in the U.S. went from 44.7 million in 2013 to 46.2 million in 2014? That's a lot of people to lump under a single banner.

Such labels hit women especially hard, as they're already subject to gender bias. Studies have shown a serious discrepancy between the way we perceive older men (distinguished and sexually viable) and older women (sexless and unhealthy).

But Judaism reverses things; women increase in value, in fact, the older they get. An adage derived from Leviticus goes, "An old man in the house is a burden but an old woman in the house is a treasure."

Here are **five terrific** Jewish women "of a certain age" who make all restrictive labels obsolete. They're blogging, publishing, rowing, teaching, singing — they're busy busy busy. They're decidedly out of the house — and that's precisely what makes them the treasures they are.

See **YOUNG**, Page 24

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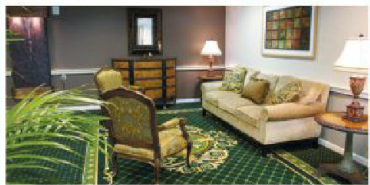
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YOUNG

Continued from Page 23

Name: Ellen Carver

Currently: Lower Merion

Hometown: Philadelphia

Age: "Ha!"

What you're doing now: "I am president and co-director of the Head of the Schuylkill Regatta, which is Philadelphia's largest regatta. I came to rowing late in life beginning 18 years ago. I joined a learn-to-row program, had an excellent coach and, the second I got into a boat I fell in love, and began rowing every morning.

"My first race was the Head of the Schuylkill, in a quad with other women from my learn-to-row program. Fast forward to 2009 ... a friend asked me to help with publicity for the regatta. It had just gone from a one-day race to two days and needed visibility and some creativity. The opportunity to build something was always a trigger for me so I dove in.

"[Since I started with the regatta] we changed the culture of it, expanded the volunteer corps that now numbers more than 350, continued to increase competition, the number of spectators and sponsorship. In 2015 we had more than 8,500 competitors and an estimated 30,000 to 40,000 spectators.

"This is a huge undertaking with a gazillion moving parts. It is truly a labor of love. We bring people to the city from 10 countries and 29 states, fill hotel rooms, and everyone has a great time. Can you think of anything better?"

Your favorite things about growing older: "Perhaps it's the opportunity to keep reinventing myself. I love the idea of being able to do something like immersing myself in rowing and the rowing community. I am also so lucky to be able to go back to the studio and do artwork, my first love and something I put on the back burner because I was too busy raising three children, volunteering and working full time.

"A very favorite thing about growing older is realizing things about myself — and what I've learned. It's not really about what you've done but what you've learned and being in a position to pass some of that along — whether it's to a child, someone you work with, someone you row with.

"Sometimes I am accused of lecturing, but I am passionate about passing on the wisdom of 'gray hair' (not!) to those I care about the most. And, saving the best for last, being married to the same person for all these years and the opportunity to grow older together."

Name: Dotty Brown

Hometown: Scarsdale, N.Y.

Currently: Merion Station

Age: "65 plus plus"

What you're doing now: "I spent 30 years at *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, mostly as an editor in various capacities. My last job was editor for print and multimedia.

"I took my new multimedia experience and decided to start a blog when I left the paper in 2011 on a subject I myself was facing: what to do with the rest of my life. I began interviewing people about their transition to what I called 'the next great thing.' Then, out of the blue, Temple University Press came to me and asked me to do a book on the history of Boathouse Row. (They asked me because of my journalism background and also because I had taken up later-in-life rowing.)

"Surprisingly, no such book existed. I loved digging through old minute books and interviewing lots of folks who spearheaded the fight for women to get onto the water (the boat clubs had no women until the 1970s, with the



exception of the pioneering Philadelphia Girls Rowing club, which was all women).

"But that's just one chapter in a book that also looks at Thomas Eakins (himself a rower); the impact of architect Frank Furness (few people realize he designed Undine Barge Club and had a great impact on the Row's architecture); the Kelly legacy; the unbelievable 1964 Olympic win by Vesper, and some great people like Edward T. Stotesbury, who is only now remembered for a regatta (the least of his Philadelphia contributions), and Joe Burk (a big name in Philadelphia in the 1940s). My book comes out in October."

Your favorite things about growing older: "Challenging myself in ways I never have before."



Name: Peggy King
Hometown: Greensburg, Pa.
Currently: "Downtown Philadelphia"
Age: 86

What you're doing now: "I went into several years of depression following the death of my husband and then the unexpected suicide of my bipolar son, Jonathan, in 2000.

"I lost any interest in singing until just a few years ago, when I happened to hear a local Philadelphia jazz group, the All-Star Jazz Trio, headed by Andy Kahn, Bruce Kaminsky and Bruce Klauber. I started sitting in with them occasionally and gradually started doing some gigs around town. That led to official 'comeback' engagements at 54 Below in NYC and the Catalina Jazz Club in Hollywood.

"I'm still performing and recently released my first new CD in more than 35 years, *Songs a La King*, on Fresh Sound Records."

Your favorite things about growing older: "My favorite thing about growing older is that I am a true survivor. I no longer have to prove anything and can enjoy my life for how it is now. I have the love of my daughter, Suzy, the joy of still being able to sing (the thing I most love doing), and the support of both old fans and new who still flock to my performances."

See **YOUNG**, Page 26

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YOUNG

Continued from Page 25

Name: Rosalie Minkin
Hometown: Brooklyn, N.Y.
Currently: Philadelphia
Age: 77



What you're doing now: "For 30 years I created socio-drama programs for drug treatment centers, hospitals, community organizations and educational institutions. I taught sociodrama to corporations, lawyers, financial planners, youth offenders, police departments and members of street gangs.

"Years ago I founded an intergenerational socio-drama troupe called Full Circle and a teen group called The Choice Connection. Now I've completed two manuals titled *The Art of Sociodrama*.

"Simply stated, sociodrama refers to the drama of our society. No one in the group enacts personal issues but plays a role related to a social theme. I want to use sociodrama in corporations here, teaching how to work together, as well as use it in school systems.

"I shall never retire. I paint, sketch and am currently seeking a consulting position. I also have six grandkids, all of whom love playing on the floor with me. After all the challenges in my life, I make sure I smile."

Your favorite things about growing older: "I am an *elder*, not an *old lady*. My new mantra at this age is: 'When I follow my passion, I am here to stay.'"



Name: Sharon Geller
Hometown: Philadelphia
Currently: Center City
Age: "Old enough to be included in this article."

What you're doing now: "After spending 10 years in the corporate world, I followed my heart and decided to pursue acting.

"I'm a comedic actress who's appeared on *Saturday Night Live* four times. My radio and TV commercials have won awards, my character voices can be heard on Fox TV's cartoon, *The Centsables*, and I'm in the East Coast touring company of *Old Jews Telling Jokes*. In addition to appearing on QVC as a spokeswoman, I teach comedy improv at the Walnut Street Theatre.

"I also present an 'Improv for Lawyers' workshop at Drexel, at the American Bar Association and at legal firms around the country and do workshops in corporate communications. This summer, I'll portray Sarah Palin in my show, *The Debate of the Century: Trump vs. Clinton, Moderated by Sarah Palin*, at the Democratic National Convention."

Your favorite things about growing older: "Senior discounts, being old enough to be in *Old Jews Telling Jokes* and my cougar status." ●

Contact: lsipikol@jewishexponent.com; 215-832-0747



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