

AGING IN ATLANTA

PRESENTED BY



JOIN US AS WE EXPLORE WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HAPPY AND HEALTHY BEYOND 55



Don Carter in Gainesville is Georgia's newest state park, as well as the first state park at Lake Lanier.

PHOTO COURTESY GEORGIA STATE PARKS

OUTDOORS

Some nice views of all the colors of Georgia fall

Best spots can be found near home, or just a weekend drive's away

By **Nancy Clanton**
nancy.clanton@ajc.com

It happens every year, yet it never gets old. Mother Nature packs away the green wardrobe she's been wearing the past few months and dresses in hues of orange, yellow, red and brown.

Once the days get shorter and the nights get cooler, we wait for the leaves to change colors – peak season in Georgia is October and November. We plan afternoon drives and weekend escapes just to see the yearly transformation.

If you're one of those who enjoys observing the changing season up close, we have some ideas for you.

TAKE A DRIVE

Emory University

201 Dowman Drive, Atlanta 30307. 404-727-6123

It's a myth you have to leave town to see the best leaves. The campus of Emory University is so lovely it regularly ranks among Best College Reviews' 50 most beautiful campuses in autumn, coming in at No. 21 this year.

"Georgia is warm in many ways. The colors of the fall at Emory truly warm the soul. The 600-acre heavily forested campus is populated with pine, maples, oak, and magnolias (that) bring every autumn color in the rainbow. Peavine Creek, a branch of the Peachtree Creek, runs through the campus carrying fallen leaves peacefully to the sea. Located in the lovely Druid Hills, Emory takes sustainability seriously with every tree removed guaranteeing one to be planted in its place; it is also a Tree Campus USA. Even more natural beauty can be found at the Lullwater Preserve with walking trails,

woods and Candler Lake."

Russell-Brasstown National Scenic Byway

GA Highways 17/75, 180, 348 and 75 ALT, Blairsville

One of Georgia's Scenic Byways, Russell-Brasstown begins north of Robertstown at the intersection of GA-17 and GA-75. Then you'll drive until reach the top of Brasstown Bald, looking down from the highest point in Georgia at a mountain full of fall leaves.

Cohutta-Chattahoochee Scenic Byway

5845 Highway 2, Dalton 30721

Dalton might be known as the carpet capital, but during autumn it's what's above the forest floors that attracts people. The 54 miles of this scenic byway will take you through Chattahoochee National Forest and some movie-set towns draped in autumn colors. If you start on the Prater's Mill end, you can pull into the parking lot to see more changing leaves and a National Register of Historic Places working water mill powered by Cohulla Creek.

MAKE IT A WEEKEND

Blue Ridge

Just an hour and a half north of Atlanta is the charming town of Blue Ridge. In addition to art exhibits and musical performances, hop on the Blue Ridge Scenic Railway for a trip through the Appalachian foothills.

Starting at the historic depot in downtown Blue Ridge, you'll take a four-hour, 26-mile round trip journey along the Toccoa River through the North

Fall continued on **G4**

Even in Atlanta's mild winters, seniors are among the most vulnerable to feeling Seasonal Affective Disorder

Seasons of SAD

By **David Caraviello**
for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

When it comes to winter, Atlanta has it relatively well. Though a freak, traffic-snarling snowstorm or a Super Bowl weekend ice storm may grab headlines, the average temperatures in even the coldest months of the year can hover around 50 degrees, according to the National Weather Service. The city averages less than 3 inches of snowfall annually and gets between nine and 10 hours of sunlight even on the shortest day of the year. Atlanta in winter will never be confused with Buffalo, Chicago or Minneapolis.

But even here, the arrival of the coldest and darkest days of the year can bring about a defined change in some people. Maybe they feel sluggish and don't want to get out of bed. Maybe they're easily agitated and quick to anger. Maybe they lose interest in favorite activities and struggle to shake a sense of unhappiness. Maybe they crave carbohydrate-rich foods and put on weight. Maybe they withdraw from friends and family and retreat into a kind of hibernation until the weather warms anew.

Those are all trademark symptoms of seasonal affective disorder (SAD), which according to the National Institute of Mental Health is a recurrent type of depression that typically accompanies the onset of winter and can last for several months. Although SAD can affect any age group or gender, seniors are among the most vulnerable – particularly

SAD continued on **G2**

Even in Atlanta, the onset of the year's coldest, darkest days can spur a change in some people. KYLIE ROBERSON/ADOBESTOCK



Fall leaf color can be seen along the Richard B. Russell Scenic Highway (Ga. 348), which begins just outside Helen in White County. The highway runs through the Chattahoochee National Forest. FILE

AGING IN ATLANTA

AJC sets virtual event for Oct. 6

By Kiersten Willis
kiersten.willis@coxinc.com

Interested in learning more about how you can live healthily, navigate estate planning and more? The Atlanta Journal-Constitution’s fall Aging in Atlanta event can inform you.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution is once again bringing the Aging in Atlanta event to the community. The event will include a free, virtual panel discussion Wednesday, Oct. 6.

You can sign up for the exclusive event now. It will broadcast from 4-5 p.m. on Facebook and YouTube.

In this sixth year of our event, we’ll offer content that the 55-and-older community can use in all areas of life – from health to finance.

Kevin Riley, Editor of The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, will once again moderate the panel. Kroger is the presenting sponsor and will provide several panelists for the virtual event. Returning panelists include Shannon Pawley, J.D., LL.M., managing attorney for the Estate and Asset Protection Law Firm; Michelle Blalock, PharmD, a pharmacist at the Kroger Co.; and Brenden Underwood, outreach coordinator for Georgia Relay. Dr. Paula Bloom, practicing clinical psychologist and Area Chief of Behavioral Health at Kaiser Permanente, also will join the panel.

Topics will include staying healthy, accessing senior resources, estate planning and asset protection, immunizations and managing prescription medication.

Go to ajc.com/agingevents to RSVP. Once there, you can submit questions in advance for our speakers. Registration automatically gives you a chance to win a \$50 Kroger gift card.

EVENT PREVIEW

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution Aging in Atlanta Fall 2021 Virtual Event

4 p.m. - 5 p.m.
Wednesday, Oct. 6 on Facebook and YouTube.
RSVP at ajc.com/agingevents

SAD

continued from G1

those who live alone. They may have limited mobility and can feel isolated due to the pandemic or for other reasons.

“While SAD can affect adults of all ages, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, those older than 60 have certain lifestyle and health factors that can put them at a higher risk for all types of depression,” Dr. Paul Kurkjian, a psychiatrist at Miller Children’s and Women’s Hospital Long Beach, California, wrote in the Long Beach Press-Telegram. “This is why it’s especially important that as you age, you constantly stay mindful of your feelings and combat the possibility of experiencing symptoms of depression – especially during the wintertime.”

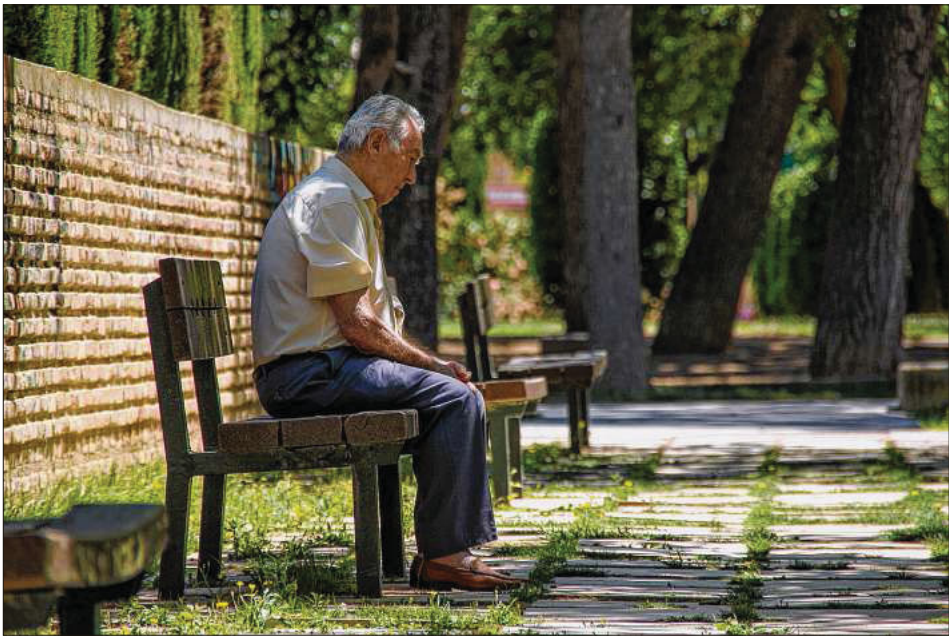
The chemical connection

Herb Kern was a youthful 63-year-old with a good job as a research engineer, but he felt the change come over him each winter like clockwork: His mood would darken, his energy level would drop and he felt withdrawn from the world. Getting out of bed and getting dressed each morning took additional effort. He did all he could to avoid interacting with others, just wanting to be left alone.

That’s the account Dr. Norman Rosenthal tells in his book “Winter Blues: Everything You Need to Know to Beat Seasonal Affective Disorder.” It was Rosenthal and his team at the National Institute of Mental Health that discovered and named SAD in the early 1980s, with Kern as their breakthrough case. Rosenthal and colleague Alfred Lewy decided to treat Kern using light boxes to simulate summertime, lengthening his winter days with three extra hours of light before dawn and after dusk.

“Within three days, Herb began to feel better,” wrote Rosenthal, now a professor of psychiatry at Georgetown University School of Medicine, and the worldwide authority on SAD. “The change was dramatic and unmistakable. He was moving into his spring mode several weeks ahead of schedule.”

And ever since, sunlight – or the lack of it – has been viewed as the key element in the onset and diagnosis of SAD. Not surprisingly, incidences of SAD increase with latitude; the shorter the days in the wintertime, the higher rate of its onset. In



Although seasonal affective disorder can affect any age group or gender, seniors are among the most vulnerable. DANIEL NEBREDÁ/PIXABAY

Georgia, the rate of SAD is about 3.9%, according to Penn State University researcher Kara Duriez, compared to 6.1% in New York and 7.2% in New Brunswick, Canada.

Although much of the academic research into seasonal affective disorder has focused on polar regions, SAD can occur anywhere – even in sunny Florida, where it impacts roughly 1% of the population. And SAD has a cousin known as “winter blues,” which is a milder form of seasonal sadness that does not meet the clinical threshold for depression. Winter blues affects about 10.6 % of people at Georgia’s latitude, according to Duriez, although the symptoms are far more moderate and often go away on their own.

That’s not the case with SAD, a genuine form of depression, which the Cleveland Clinic says impacts 5% of adults in the United States. Though it typically first arrives in early adulthood, older adults can face specific risks – not just due to the lack of warm, cheering sunlight, but in how that absence affects the chemicals in their body.

SAD researchers know that the hormone melatonin, secreted by a gland in the brain in response to darkness, has long helped humans regulate their daily and seasonal cycles. The less light during a day, the more melatonin the body may produce and the more tired and sluggish a person may feel. And despite what was once believed, melatonin levels do not decline with age – an American Journal of Medicine study in 1999 found that healthy older men and women had melatonin levels that were similar to those found in younger people.

Lack of sunlight also lowers levels of vitamin D, which according to

Interim Health Care is a nutrient especially important to seniors because it aids in bone health. The lack of it can also heighten depressive symptoms. And then there’s serotonin, a hormone that helps regulate mood. Scientists believe that more sunlight creates more serotonin, improving a person’s feelings of happiness. But in winter, those sunlight levels drop. And as people age, the neurons that create serotonin become more vulnerable to degeneration, Johns Hopkins researchers found.

“The transporters are lost when these neurons die, and serotonin levels go down,” the Johns Hopkins team wrote in a 2017 study’s news release. “The older they are, the more likely a person is to have lower serotonin levels.”

It can all combine to create a vexing dynamic. Serotonin levels, which help regulate the body’s mood, declining with less sunlight and age. Vitamin D levels dropping due to less sunlight. And then melatonin levels, which promote sleep, remaining elevated due to increased darkness and in spite of advancing age. For some older adults, it’s a recipe for a SAD winter – and that’s before any difficult personal circumstances are added on top.

Pandemic and loss

The twinkling lights and good cheer of the holidays often keep seasonal affective disorder at bay. For many sufferers, it’s not until bleak, cold January – and the beginning of the long, dark haul until spring – when the depression truly sets in. But for older adults who have suffered the loss of a spouse, the holidays can trigger SAD rather than staving it off.

“Because the season is a festive time that is marked by family renew-

als, a deep sense of loss and mourning can be pervasive when a loved one is missing. The ‘empty chair’ that was occupied by a wife, parent, other close family members and close and dear friends can often reawaken feelings of grief with renewed intensity,” Dr. Allan Schwartz, a licensed clinical social worker, wrote on the website MentalHelp.net.

“In addition, there is the problem of seasonal changes that come with life during the winter months. Shorter days, fewer hours of sunshine, cloudy skies, cold and damp weather all combine to cause seasonal affective disorder for those (who) are already vulnerable to its influences. In other words, depression can raise its ugly head during time that is supposed to be festive. In fact, it has been my observation that the contrast between the joy that others are feeling and the sadness that one does feel increases the sense of loss and abandonment during this time of year.”

Whether SAD arrives in December or January, though, the results are often the same: withdrawal, loss of interest in friends or activities, sleeping too much and an unshakable sense of sadness. And then there’s the pandemic, which had experts worried about an increased incidence of SAD last winter due to isolation from other people. Those concerns are sure to be heightened again over the winter of 2021-22 due to the stubborn nature of the coronavirus delta variant, which has stoked COVID-19 cases to near-record heights in Georgia.

For older adults, who may be separated from children and grandchildren by distance or have difficulty with mobility, such worries can be even more pronounced. Thankfully, telehealth pro-

grams have made consulting with mental health experts easier than ever before. And the same tactic that helped Herb Kern four decades ago remains a tried and true SAD therapy today: exposure to bright light.

We’re not talking about standard indoor lighting, but medical-grade light boxes far brighter than your living room light bulb.

“Indoor illumination is relatively dim, around 50 to 200 lux,” said Dr. Paul Desean, director of Psychiatric Consultation Service at Yale New Haven Hospital in Connecticut, using a measure of light brightness. “Offices are typically 200 to 400 lux, while outdoor light is thousands of lux.”

Light boxes, by contrast, can deliver 10,000 lux.

“Sixty to 80% of SAD suffers benefit from light therapy,” Rosenthal wrote in the journal Psychiatry in 2008. “Mornings seem the best time for light therapy to work, although the treatments can be divided during the day. Most people respond to light therapy within two to four days of initiating treatment. Although the amount of time needed varies, most people need between 30 and 90 minutes ... of light therapy per day.”

Although more severe cases may require the use of antidepressants, experts also encourage several at-home therapies. They include maintaining a regular sleep schedule, taking daily walks, keeping in touch with friends and family members and enjoying energy-boosting foods like coffee, whole grains, beets and dark chocolate. A Chinese study found that playing music can help as well.

A positive attitude toward winter can also help. In 2014, Stanford researcher Kari Leibowitz spent 10 months in Tromsø, Norway, a city 200 miles above the Arctic Circle, and in polar twilight for two months each year. She expected to find residents inactive and depressed; instead, she found them lively, enjoying warm beverages and looking forward to ski season. “They loved the opportunities for coziness provided by the winter months,” she wrote.

Of course, there is no ski season in Atlanta, and winters here can be wet and dank rather than snowy and fairy-tale-like. But Leibowitz left Tromsø believing that in the battle against SAD, state of mind matters. “Being active is part of a happy life – and especially, a happy winter,” she wrote. That’s true in any city and at any age.

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA RESEARCH

Study: Pecans can improve cholestrol

Tree nut is high in both healthy fatty acids and fiber.

By Nancy Clanton
nancy.clanton@ajc.com

Your elevated cholesterol levels might be driving you nuts, so it’s only right that a nut – specifically, the pecan – can help lower them.

A new study by researchers at the University of Georgia’s College of Family and Consumer Sciences reports the tree nut can dramatically improve your cholesterol.

Researchers reported participants who ate pecans experienced a 5% drop in total cholesterol and a 6-9% drop in LDL. For context, they compared their results to a meta-analysis of 51 exercises designed to lower cholesterol. Results of that meta-analysis showed only a 1% reduction in total cholesterol and 5% in LDL.

According to the study,

after just eight-weeks, participants at risk for cardiovascular disease showed significant improvement in total cholesterol, triglycerides and low-density lipoprotein, otherwise called LDL or “bad” cholesterol.

“This dietary intervention, when put in the context of different intervention studies, was extremely successful,” Jamie Cooper, a professor in the FACS department of nutritional sciences and one of the study’s authors, told UGA Today. “We had some people who actually went from having high cholesterol at the start of the study to no longer being in that category after the intervention.”

Georgia is historically the top pecan producing state in the country, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, yielding about 33% of the nation’s total production.

You can read the full study in the Journal of Nutrition.

HEALTH

Are you at risk for prostate cancer?

Risks, screening and treatment options to know.

By Andrea Clement
for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Approximately 1 in 8 men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer during his lifetime, according to the American Cancer Society, which projects 248,530 new prostate cancer cases and 34,130 prostate cancer deaths for 2021. The risk is 75% higher for Black men, according to the Prostate Cancer Foundation.

Prostate cancer is one of the most heritable cancers, explained Brian Helfand, M.D., Division Chief of Urology, NorthShore University HealthSystem. Therefore, genetics largely determines one’s risk of developing malignant prostate tumors.

Check family history

“With some rare exceptions, there are few environmental factors that contribute to increased

prostate cancer susceptibility,” Helfand said. “Recognized risk factors for prostate cancer are increased age, Black race and family history of prostate cancer.”

Dr. Helfand recommends asking family members about their history of prostate cancer, as well as any history of breast, ovarian, pancreatic, or colorectal cancers.

Regular screenings

Regular screenings enable asymptomatic men to be diagnosed after an elevated PSA value or abnormal prostate exam.

“Prostate cancer screening should include a blood test for PSA (prostate specific antigen) as well as a digital rectal exam,” said Helfand. While screening guidelines vary, he recommends annual screenings starting at age 40 for men with risk factors (family history, race, etc.) and at 50 for males with average risk.

“Men with advanced prostate cancer who have not been screened can

present with difficulty urinating (e.g. weak urinary stream, increased urinary frequency, etc), weight loss, or bone pain,” Helfand explained. However, “most men who present with urinary symptoms do NOT have prostate cancer. These men are most likely to have benign enlargement of their prostate (known as benign prostatic hyperplasia). This benign condition can usually be treated by medications or elective surgery.”

Lifestyle and diet

“There is limited data regarding specific foods or behaviors that reproducibly [impact] a man’s risk of prostate cancer. However, evidence derived from men with advanced prostate cancer suggest that men at a more ideal body weight and who exercise more frequently generally have better cancer outcomes,” Helfand said, including:

- Regular exercise: 30 minutes, three times weekly
- Heart-healthy diet: fewer simple sugars and

more fruits, vegetables and proteins

- Limit barbecued/smoked meats which may contain toxins that promote prostate cancer

Treatments

Prostate cancer treatments depend upon the patient’s prognosis and cancer stage. Helfand summarized options for patients requiring treatment:

- **Surgery** - for more aggressive forms of prostate cancer, a combination of minimally invasive robotic surgery and radiation is a common treatment
- **Radiation** - includes a variety of methods such as implanted seed radiation (brachytherapy), external beam, and proton therapy
- **Medication** - a newer but promising prescription eliminates testosterone (androgen deprivation therapies)
- **Ultrasound & cryoablation** - High-intensity focal ultrasound and cryoablation are a few newer, more experimental approaches.

AGING IN ATLANTA

ASK THE EXPERT BONNIE DOBBS

Your Medicare questions answered

Aging in Atlanta sponsor Bonnie Dobbs advises

Q: Can I get one of those “Medicare commercial plans” like seen on tv?

A: Maybe! Everyone is saying “Show me the money!” They want a plan that adds the \$148.50 back to my social security check, free rides to the doctor, home delivered meals and prescriptions, dental, vision, hearing, gym membership and tele-doc appointments.

The truth is you must qualify to get the \$148.50 back, because it’s income based. And the meals, dental, vision, hearing, gym membership, over the counter and food cards are offered through Medicare Advantage plans. Limited discounts are offered through some Medicare Supplement plans. Most plans have been offering telehealth visits since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Q: What are LIS and IRMAA?

A: LIS (Low-Income Subsidy or Extra Help) is for low-income individuals. It helps provide discounts on medications. Depending on your level of LIS, your cost could be \$0 for lower tier and up to \$9.20 or a percentage up to 15% of the cost for higher tier medications.

IRMAA (Income Related Monthly Adjustment Amount) is an extra fee charged to high income individuals. If you are single and made up to \$88,000 (single) or \$176,000 (joint filing), you will pay more on a sliding

scale. There is a two-year look back to determine the amount. For example, for 2021, you would look for the Modified Adjusted Gross Income on your 2019 taxes. For 2022, you will look at your 2020 return. There are certain situations where you may file an appeal if you have a life changing event. Visit medicare.gov for more information and to get the form if you have an usual situation and want to appeal.

Q: When do I enroll in Part B? Can I delay Part B?

A: I have seen people pay Part B premiums for years when they did not need to be enrolled in Part B. If you’re getting an individual plan, do not disenroll from Part B or Part D. If you are over 65 and continuing to work (or you are covered under your spouse’s coverage, you can delay enrolling in Part B. If you have any doubts about whether you are required to enroll in Part B, talk with someone in your HR or benefits department. Save your money! Make sure you need to be enrolled in Part B.

Q: What is better – my employer plan or Medicare?

A: This is a good question. It all depends on how generous your company’s plan is and what your out-of-pocket costs are. Use a broker to do a comparative analysis on your employer plan versus an individual Medicare plan. Remember: If you decide to keep your employer coverage, your



ABOUT OUR EXPERT

Bonnie Dobbs is the founder of Medicare & Other Red Tape, LLC, an Atlanta brokerage specializing in Medicare and Medicaid coverage.

Just after obtaining her insurance license, a member of Dobbs’s family developed Alzheimer’s. While visiting the nursing home and memory care facilities, she found families were often confused about Medicare and decided to commit herself to helping the aging community. She has studied relentlessly ever since and shared her knowledge with thousands of people through classes, seminars, workshops and panel discussions. You can contact Bonnie at 770-373-7541.

employer must have 20 or more employees or you’ll have to pay a penalty.

Q: I want to enroll in your best plan. What plan is that?

Most of us are used to a family insurance plan provided by our employers. Whatever the monthly premium and co-pays, the entire family is all on the same plan. But Medicare is different. It’s all about you. There is no one-size-fits-all plan. There are many plans tailored to different individual needs.

Please do not fall for advertising. Your favorite celebrity’s endorsement is no substitute for doing your due diligence.

The power to stay connected with family and friends.

Hi Cindy a group of us are meeting for lunch Wednesday would you be able to join us? great we're meeting at noon at Mario's on oak street

If you or someone that you care for have trouble hearing over the phone, Georgia Relay can help with services like Captioned Telephone (CapTel®). CapTel allows users to listen while reading every word the other person says on an easy-to-read screen.

CapTel is a registered trademark of Ultratec, Inc.

To learn how you can obtain a CapTel phone at low or no cost, call 1-888-269-7477 (Voice/TTY) or visit www.GeorgiaRelay.org today!

HEARTIS | BUCKHEAD

HERE'S TO LIVING LIFE BOUNTIFULLY

OPENING 2022 |

Brimming with energy and sophistication, Heartis Buckhead is a luxurious boutique community for passionate people looking to fill their lives with their favorite things. Enjoy modern touches, expansive views, and endless activities for all the beautiful days ahead.

Independent Living

Maintain your freedom and sense of adventure with spacious apartments that promote engagement, well-being, and unique experiences.

Licensed Assisted Living

The support you need, when you need it. We provide personalized assistance and programming so residents can live a Vibrant Life®.

Memory Care

Generations is our signature support program that focuses on each individual's strengths to create and celebrate moments of achievement.

BE VIBRANT. BE YOU.

GENERATIONS

HEARTIS
SENIORS. LIVING.®

Accepting reservations now. Lock in your pre-opening pricing. Visit heartisbuckhead.com or call 678-721-8840 today.

2051 Peachtree Road NE
Atlanta, Georgia 30309
678-721-8840
heartisbuckhead.com

WELCOME CENTER
2045 Peachtree Road NE
Suite 150
Atlanta, Georgia 30309

License pending.

TERRACE POOL DECK

AGING IN ATLANTA

CREATIVITY

Quilter shares legacy with new generation

Artist learned from grandmother, now teaches via Zoom.

By Isadora Pennington
Atlanta Senior Life from Reporter Newspapers

“It’s kind of like jazz,” Marquetta Johnson said as she gestured at the quilts on display in her studio. She describes her work as simultaneously improvisational and steeped in legacy and tradition. Johnson shared an example: the great jazz pianist and composer Thelonious Monk said that to create improvisational music he had to work hard at it. Similarly, Johnson knows how to make quilts and what typically goes together, which allows her to create with the freedom of inspiration.

“When you know the basics of what works together, you’re like an alchemist; you can kind of just put it together. I would say the same thing about a quilter.”

Surrounded by finished pieces, materials and tools, Johnson speaks about her journey as a teaching artist and professional quilter from her small home workspace. A soft light filters in from the window and patio door, illuminating the cozy space. The smell of incense lingers in the air and birds chirp cheerfully at the feeders just outside. Stacks of in-progress pieces are positioned throughout the room, and finished quilts hang on the walls. An old iron sizzles idly atop a table. Her workstations, set up to accommodate her wheelchair, are peppered with handwritten notes that outline her current projects and to-do lists. When I arrived, she was sewing, and the sewing machine gently whirled in her hands as we talked.

Johnson has been working with textiles since she was young. As a girl, she had a boundless energy that sometimes got her in trouble. Calling it “a kind of mercurial energy,” it wasn’t until later that she discovered the value in her compulsion to move and create. She struggled



Marquetta Johnson works from her home studio; she incorporates traditional methods like lap sewing, mixing the old with the new, and adding elements that she feels broaden the appeal of her artwork to a larger audience.

MEET OUR PARTNERS



Working closely with the American Press Institute, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution is embarking on an experiment to identify, nurture and expand a network of news partnerships across metro Atlanta and the state.

Our newest partner, Atlanta Senior Life from Reporter Newspapers, is a free, monthly publication that produces local content of interest to metro Atlanta’s active senior community. Since 2016, Atlanta Senior Life has been distributed in local community centers, libraries and leading retailers.

Over the next several weeks, we’ll be introducing more partners.

We’d love to hear your feedback on how on our partnerships are working, and we are happy to answer any questions.

You can reach out to Managing Editor Mark A. Waligore via email at mark.waligore@ajc.com. After all, your feedback will only help us improve.

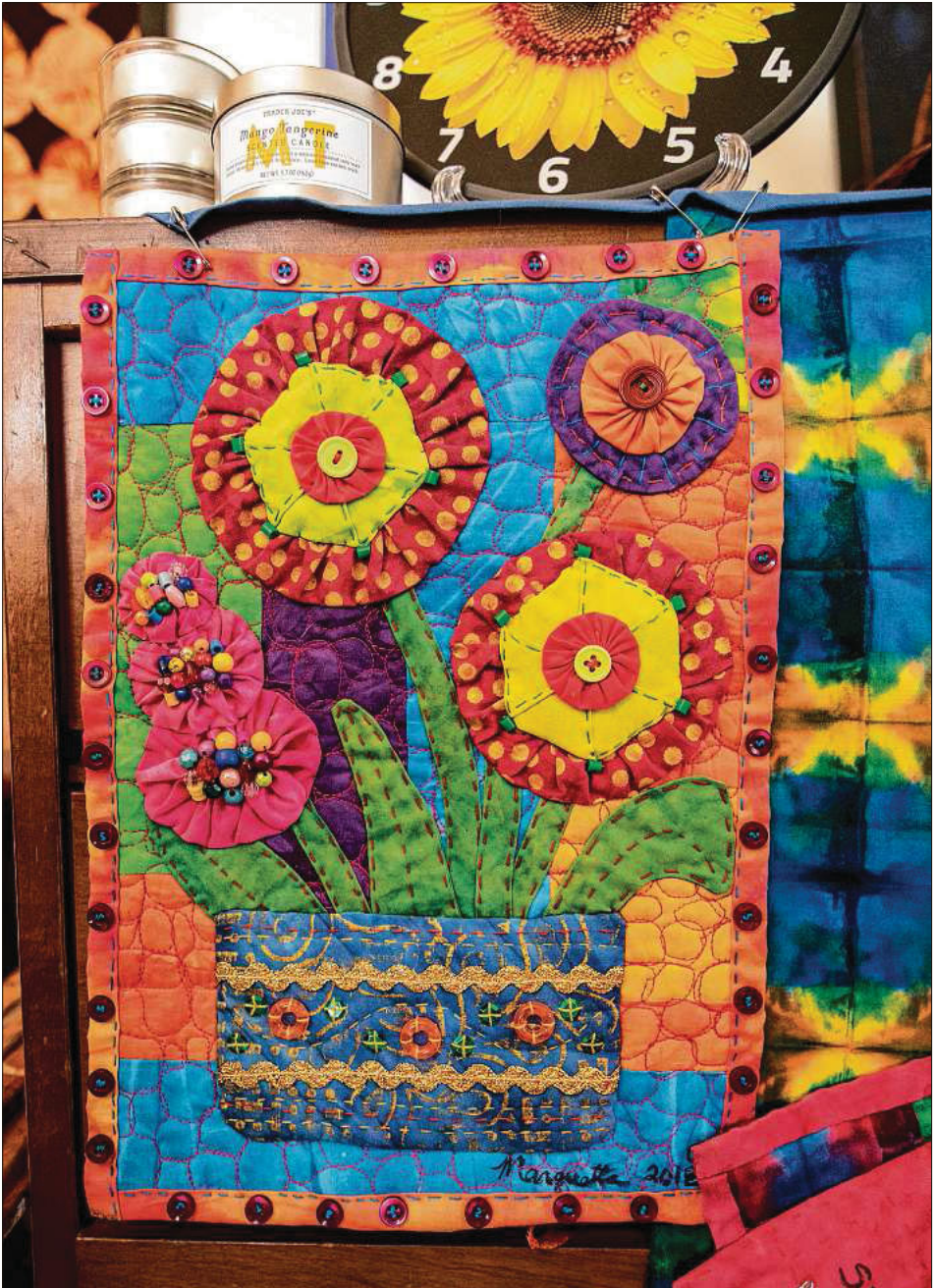
gled with self-regulation. One particularly attentive teacher saw something in her and taught her how to crochet, which set her on a path of creativity and helped her to channel her energy into learning and art. “Crocheting is like mindfulness training that can help you learn how to be still,” Johnson said.

“That’s the first step in learning how to be quiet.”

Creativity is not out of the ordinary for the women in Johnson’s family. Her great-grandmother was a seamstress and a quilter who was so skilled she could create entire outfits based on pictures from Sears catalogs. Her grandmother also had these same skills

but was more of a folk artist, working as a painter in a figurine factory in Chicago before relocating to New York and later returning to Atlanta in the 1970s and again taking up quilting. “That just let me know that even with the circumstances of life for African Americans in the ’30s and ’40s, she was still able to find joy through creativity,” Johnson recalls.

Her mother was taught how to quilt and sew, but she had been part of a generation that was enamored with city living and desired store-bought items as opposed to handmade. And so, it was ultimately her grandmother who set out to teach her all the tradi-



“When you know the basics of what works together, you’re like an alchemist; you can kind of just put it together,” Marquetta Johnson said. PHOTOS BY ISADORA PENNINGTON



Johnson’s great-grandmother was a seamstress and a quilter; her grandmother, also a quilter, was more of a folk artist, working as a painter in a figurine factory.

she is leading classrooms in schools, civic organizations, community centers, the High Museum of Art, or most recently a foray into Zoom lessons, she can use her knowledge of the fundamentals of art and her passion as an artist to inspire and challenge children to pursue art.

On any given day you can find Johnson quietly working in her home studio, dyeing and painting custom fabrics, cutting, piecing and sewing her quilts. But she is just as devoted to her work as an educator. Her enthusiasm for art is contagious, as is her joyous approach to creation. Johnson says that while she would always appreciate more studio representation, what she truly desires is to be a link in the chain connecting creatives from the past to the future.

“What I want to do is encourage young people to take up needles, to take up thread, and change the world with it.”

tional tools and methods for quilting.

Today, Johnson is building upon those skills and seeks to bring a legacy of skills from the 20th century into the 21st century. She incorporates traditional methods like lap sewing into her practice, mixing the old with the new, and adding elements that she feels broaden the appeal of her artwork to a larger audience.

“What I’m trying to do

is figure out a blend of things that creates a style that is contemplative,” Johnson says. “That’s where I’m trying to go with it. I’m not trying to provide you with a memory or something that’s familiar; I want you to have an opportunity to have that visual experience that is simply led by the elements of art.”

Johnson has been a teaching artist for more than 20 years. Whether

Fall

continued from G1

Georgia countryside. The first leg will take you on a one-hour trip to the sister towns of McCaysville, Georgia, and Copperhill, Tennessee. A two-hour layover will give you time to shop, grab a bite or just stretch your legs before taking the one-hour return trip through the scenic forest and back to the depot in Blue Ridge.

Prices range from \$59.99 to \$94.99, depending on which car you choose. Discounts are available for first responders, military and passengers age 65 and older.

Helen

Even though the town has fewer than 500 full-time residents, it’s the third-most visited city in Georgia. Many of those visitors come to celebrate Oktoberfest in Helen’s Bavarian charm.

The Festhalle’s 50th Oktoberfest blowout begins Sept. 9 and runs weekends until the end of the month. Then the festival kicks into full gear and runs through Nov. 7. Helen is nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains on the Chattahoochee River and offers shopping, bingo and wine tours to visitors.

Lodging includes hotels, cabins, resorts,



The Russell-Brasstown Scenic Byway provides easy access to Georgia’s highest point, 4,784-foot Brasstown Bald. COURTESY OF EXPLOREGEORGIA.ORG

and bed and breakfast inns.

Don Carter State Park

5000 N. Browning Bridge Road, Gainesville 30506

Don Carter is Georgia’s newest state park, as well as the first state park at Lake Lanier. In addition to water activities, the park has 1,316 acres to explore by foot, bicycle or horseback. If you don’t see gorgeous fall foliage, you might have your eyes closed.

Although this would be an easy day trip, the park has options for you to stay a weekend or a week.

- 8 cottages
- 44 tent, trailer and RV campsites
- 12 primitive tent campsites

On Sept. 22, you can join a park naturalist on a guided First Day of Fall Hike, a 1-mile trek to welcome the autumn season. For more information, call 678-450-7726.

Parking in Georgia’s state parks is just \$5, and visitors can buy a \$50 annual ParkPass that helps fund renovations, trail work, dock replacements and more. ParkPasses are not valid at state historic sites. Overnight guests pay the daily ParkPass fee only once during their stay, regardless of duration.

Senior citizens can get half off an annual ParkPass by presenting a copy of their driver’s license. Seniors also receive \$20 off membership in Friends of Georgia State Parks & Historic Sites, plus 20% off.

GRANDPARENTS

Bonding activities you can share with grandchildren

By Kiersten Willis
kiersten.willis@coxinc.com

Every year after Labor Day, Grandparents’ Day occurs.

Marian McQuade, an advocate for older adults, helped establish the holiday in the 1970s. She campaigned throughout the decade for a day to honor grandparents, according to The Old Farmer’s Almanac.

“It’s not for grandparents like me to get presents,” the late McQuade told the Los Angeles Times in 2003. “It’s to alleviate some loneliness.”

Grandparents’ Day became official in 1979 after President Jimmy Carter signed it into law.

Although Grandparents’ Day 2021 has passed, grandparents can be celebrated any day of the year. Inspired by AARP, here are some ways you can celebrate with your family in Atlanta.

Plan a family day

In the spirit of togetherness, spend the day visiting local attractions, which offer discounted tickets for older adults.

The World of Coca-Cola is an ideal place for the young and the young at heart. You can enjoy a 3D theater, explore the local soda’s history and taste beverages from around the world. Tickets are \$16 for adults ages 65 and over.

Hours vary. 121 Baker St. NW, Atlanta, GA 30313. 404-676-5151. worldofcoca-cola.com.

When the weather permits, spend a day outdoors at a state park. Adults older than 62 who present their driver’s license can receive annual ParkPass discounts of 50%. They can also get \$20 off membership in Friends of Georgia State Parks & Historic Sites and other discounts. The pass offers access to more than 60 parks.

1-800-864-7275. gastateparks.org.

Volunteer together

Giving back can be a great way to bond. There are several local organizations where you can do so. Are you passionate about conservation? Trees Atlanta offers volunteer opportunities, including ones for ages 12 and up

during the April-September maintenance season. There are group opportunities for all ages during planting season, beginning in October.

9 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday-Friday. 225 Chester Avenue, Atlanta. 404-522-4097. treesatlanta.org.

Atlanta Mission also offers ways to volunteer from home amid the COVID-19 pandemic, including sending birthday cards and dropping off lunches.

Always open. 2353 Bolton Rd. NW, Atlanta. 404-588-4000. atlantamission.org.

Cement your history

One of the best things you can share with grandkids is family history. StoryCorps has a permanent Atlanta fixture where guests can preserve their histories virtually. In-person recording booths will reopen in October.

Remote recordings by appointment, 10:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. Tuesdays; 10:30 a.m. Saturdays. 130 West Paces Ferry Road Northwest, Atlanta. 800-850-4406. storycorps.org/atlanta.

AGING IN ATLANTA

SOCIAL MEDIA

‘Grandfluencers’ are debunking aging myths

Popularity grows from their honest, real perspectives.

By Leanne Italie
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Joan MacDonald’s health was in shambles at age 71. She was overweight and on numerous medications with high cholesterol, rising blood pressure and kidney trouble.

Her daughter, a fitness coach, warned that she’d wind up an invalid if she didn’t turn things around. She hit the gym for the first time and learned to balance her diet with the help of a brand new tool: an iPhone.

Now 75, MacDonald is a hype beast for health with a bodybuilder’s physique and 1.4 million loyal followers on Instagram.

She’s among a growing number of “grandfluencers,” folks 70 and up who have amassed substantial followings on social media with the help of decades-younger fans.

“It’s so rare to find someone her age being able to do all these things,” said one of her admirers, 18-year-old Marianne Zapata of Larchmont, New York. “It’s just such a positive thing to even think about.”

Both aspirational and inspirational, older influencers are turning their digital platforms into gold.

MacDonald has paid partnerships with the sportswear and supplement brand Women’s Best, and the stress-busting device Sensate. And she just launched her own health and fitness app not so many years after learning how to use digital technology herself.

On TikTok, four friends



Lagetta Wayne, 78, an avid gardener in California who shows off her cooking skills, says she owes her social media success — 130,500 followers — to having a teenage granddaughter.

KIKI ROSE VIA AP

who go by @oldgays — the youngest is 65 — have 2.2 million followers, including Rihanna. They have an endorsement deal with Grindr as they delight fans with their clueless answers to pop culture questions.

Others focus on beauty and style, setting up Amazon closets with their go-to looks and putting on live makeup tutorials. Lagetta Wayne, at 78, has teens asking her to be their grandmother as she tends to her vegetables and cooks them up in Suisun City, California, as @msgrandmagarden on TikTok.

Most people ages 50 and up use technology to stay connected to friends and family, according to a 2019 survey by AARP. Less than half use social media daily for that purpose, relying on Facebook above other platforms.

Just 37% of those 70 and older used social media daily in 2019, the research showed. Since COVID-19 struck, older creators have expanded their horizons beyond Facebook and gotten more voracious, often driven by the growing num-



Senior influencer Sandra Sallin, 80, likes to show off her love for lipstick and her many adventures, usually from her home in Los Angeles. She’s among a growing number of seniors making names for themselves on social media.

CHRIS PIZZELLO/AP 2021



Jessay Martin (from left), 68, Robert Reeves, 78, Michael Peterson, 65, and William Lyons, 77, are known on social media as the Old Gays. They have a following of 2.2 million people, including Rihanna.

RYAN YEZAK VIA AP

ber of feeds by people their own age, said Alison Bryant, senior vice president for AARP.

In the California desert town of Cathedral City, Jessay Martin is the second youngest of the Old Gays at 68.

“I thought I was going to spend the rest of my life relaxing pretty much, and

I do, but this is picking up more for us. I had a very structured week where Monday I worked the food bank at the senior center, Tuesday and Friday I did yoga for an hour-and-a-half, Wednesday I was on the front desk at the senior center. I was just sort of floating by, not being social, not putting myself out there

in the gay community. And boy, has the Old Gays changed that,” Martin said.

Like MacDonald, they do a lot of myth-busting about what’s possible in life’s sixth, seventh and eighth decades.

“They’re showing that anybody can do these things, that you don’t have to be afraid of aging. The 20 and 30 somethings don’t often think about that,” Bryant said. “The authenticity that we’re seeing in some of these older influencers is really refreshing. That’s part of the complexity of their narratives. They’re bringing other parts of their lives to it.”

Sandra Sallin, a blogger and artist, has slowly built her following to 25,300 on Instagram. A lover of lipstick who focuses on cooking and beauty, Sallin also shares photos from her past and other adventures.

“I wanted to expand my world. I felt that I was older, that my world was shrinking. People were

moving, people were ill,” Sallin said. “So I started my blog because I wanted to reach out. After that, I heard about this thing called Instagram. It was really hard learning it. I really stumbled my way in. I’m shocked because most people who follow me are 30 and 40 years younger. But there are people who are older, who have kind of given up and say, ‘You know, I’m going to start wearing lipstick.’”

Toby Bloomberg, a 69-year-old in Atlanta, is a Sallin supporter. She discovered Sallin after Sallin competed on the short-lived Food Network show “Clash of the Grandmas.”

“She talks a lot about aging. That’s quite an unusual phenomenon on social media, which is obviously dominated by people far younger than we are,” Bloomberg said.

Mae Karwowski, founder and CEO of the influencer marketing agency Obviously, has more than 100 influencers in her network between the ages of 60 and 80. With more than a billion users on Instagram alone, she points to the successes on that platform of 93-year-old Helen Ruth Elam (baddiewinkle), 67-year-old Lyn Slater (iconaccidental) and 100-year-old style legend Iris Apfel.

“Mainstream media, I would say, presents a really narrow viewpoint on this age group. What’s great about social media is you can follow a really cool 75-year-old woman who is just doing her thing in Florida and that’s fun,” Karwowski said. “The 21-year-old fashion model influencer is managed. She has a team. A lot of these 70-plus influencers are doing it all.”



The Atlanta Journal-Constitution AGING IN ATLANTA

PRESENTED BY:

YOU’RE INVITED

The Atlanta-Journal Constitution is committed to facilitating conversations on the topics important to aging well in Atlanta and providing you resources to live your best senior life — especially in today’s challenging environment.

Aging in Atlanta has returned with monthly print sections featuring more local content than ever. Our fall virtual panel event moderated by Kevin Riley; Editor of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution will feature local experts speaking on topics that matter most to you.

TOPICS TO INCLUDE:

- ✓ Kaiser Permanente physicians will discuss mental and physical health
 - Dr. Paula Bloom, Area Chief of Behavioral Health will be featured on the panel
- ✓ Estate planning and asset protection
- ✓ Upcoming flu season and immunization
- ✓ Managing prescription medications
- ✓ Accessing senior resources

WHEN/WHERE:

Wednesday, October 6 | Virtual

Event will broadcast from 4 to 5 p.m. on AJC Facebook and AJC YouTube

RSVP:

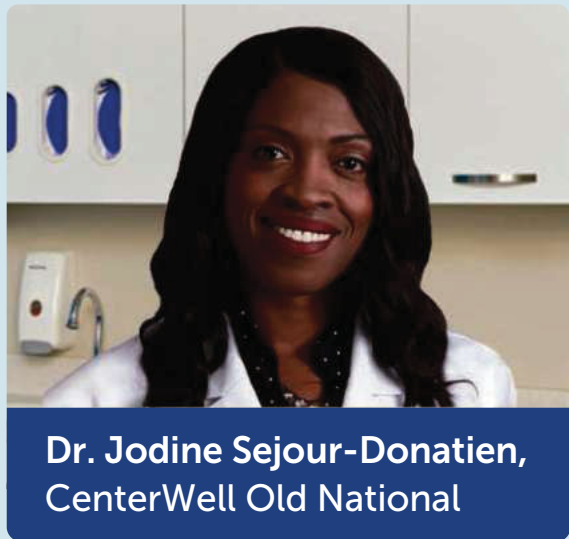
Visit ajc.com/agingevents

By registering for the event, you will have a chance to win a \$50 Kroger gift card. We encourage you to submit questions on the topics above for our speakers when you register.

We launched a monthly Aging in Atlanta newsletter this spring. Visit us at ajc.com/aging to sign up and to learn more about our special print sections and our upcoming virtual event.



Say hello to primary care centered on seniors



- Meet Dr. Sejour-Donatien**
- Dr. Jodine Sejour-Donatien is the Regional Medical Director
 - Board Certified and specially trained to treat seniors
 - 16 years of healthcare experience



Join us for the Grand Opening of CenterWell Old National

You're invited to celebrate with us at the grand opening of CenterWell Old National. Be our guest and feel free to bring a friend, because this is one community event you won't want to miss!



- Tour our new senior primary care center
- Enjoy live music with DJs from WPZE-FM
- Food and giveaways
- And more!

DATE: Wednesday, September 29th, 2021
TIME: 10:30am - 2pm
LOCATION: CenterWell Senior Primary Care
6085 Old National Hwy., Suite G
South Fulton, GA 30349

Become a patient or schedule a tour today
Call 678-680-6354 or visit SeniorFocusedAtlanta.com
Monday - Friday, 8am - 5pm



We accept Aetna, Humana and Wellcare Medicare Advantage plans.



Follow us @CenterWellPrimaryCare to learn about activities and events

CenterWell has taken precautionary measures and complies with relevant public health guidance at its activities. However, there remains a risk of contracting COVID-19, and you should carefully evaluate these risks before participating in events and activities. Individuals with increased chances of serious complications from COVID-19 should carefully evaluate these risks before participating in any activities. To protect the health and safety of participants and our staff, CenterWell activities are only recommended for fully vaccinated individuals. CenterWell does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex. ATENCIÓN: Si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-877-320-2188 (TTY: 711). 注意:如果您使用繁體中文, 您可以免費獲得語言援助服務。請致電 1-877-320-2188 (TTY: 711).

GCHKU9VEN