

# AGING IN ATLANTA

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

PRESENTED BY



## Is a thank you note required for gifting?

Experts share how to handle unacknowledged gifts without losing your holiday spirit.

By Rose Kennedy  
For the AJC

"Thank you." Those two small words can warm any gift giver's heart, yet many older adults rarely hear or read them – from grandkids, adult children or even friends and siblings.

Whether it's distance, isolation or social norms, thoughtful gifts too often go unacknowledged.

What does a family matriarch or patriarch do then? Continue shopping and shipping, or stop buying and mailing since no one seems to appreciate your effort? Atlanta-area etiquette and civility experts offer some advice.

### Give a grace period

"My family lives in another state and some live in another country, so I give them time to respond, especially at Christmastime," Peggy M. Parks, a certified image consultant and president of Parks Image Group, told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

If you still haven't heard back after a week or two, Parks recommends following up with a phone call.

"Ask nicely if they received the gift," Parks said. "You cannot trust mail services these days as we did in the past."

"If they admit to getting the gift, you're free to let them know you were worried they hadn't, and also let them know you were hurt that you never heard back," she suggested.

### Reflect before reacting

When you do reach out, maintain a courteous and neutral tone, etiquette coach Inga Bailey of the Atlanta Swann School of Protocol told the AJC.

If a relative you've had tension with doesn't acknowledge your gift, resist the urge to take it personally or respond in the heat of the moment. Instead, take a step back

**Etiquette** continued on S2



A senior couple get a good cardio workout as they go for a hike in the forest. For good brain health, elevate exercise as a top priority as you age.



"Friends and family and how we engage with the community are extremely important," says Avril Loy Maynard, a public health specialist. "Think of the brain as a muscle, you want to stress and challenge it." PHOTOS COURTESY OF ADOBE STOCK IMAGES

Simple habits, brain-boosting activities and lifestyle changes can help keep your mind strong as you age, research shows.

By Mark Woolsey  
For the AJC

**K**eeping your mind sharp after 55 may seem challenging, but understanding how the brain changes with age can help. According to the American Brain Foundation, natural aging can lead to a decline in cognitive efficiency – affecting memory, information processing, and focus. Neurons don't talk to each other as efficiently, fewer new ones are created, and brain volume can even shrink. "Messenger chemicals" like dopamine and serotonin also drop, affecting emotions and memory.

"The brain is a very mysterious and wonderful place," says Toni Miles M.D., Ph.D., professor emeritus

of epidemiology at the University of Georgia. But "the brain has a sell-by date."

A variety of other factors can also affect brain health with age. The risk of dementia – including Alzheimer's disease – rises as people get older. Ongoing research suggests that the COVID-19 may contribute to "brain fog," even for people who did not contract the virus. In addition, depression and possibly ADHD can play a role in cognitive changes.

It may sound like a steep hill to climb, but a lot of keeping the mental gears turning boils down to advice you've already heard, whether you're in your 30s, 50s or 70s. Here are some things to keep in mind:

### Prioritize exercise

Many who work directly or indirectly with brain health elevate exercise as a top priority.

"Things that are considered healthy for the heart rate are healthy for the brain," says Avril Loy Maynard, a public health specialist and director of the women's heart health program at Piedmont Medical Cen-

**Mind** continued on S2

## How to turn new year goals into lasting change

Meditation helps improve the ability to concentrate and stay present, which is crucial for achieving aims.

By Yolanda Harris  
For the AJC

As the new year approaches, many individuals set their intentions for various goals, from eating healthier to starting a new business or improving finances. Achieving these goals requires a solid plan, and incorporating meditation can be a valuable tool in your journey.

Far from just being a practice for relaxation, meditation helps you enhance your focus, boost self-awareness, reduce stress, and develop a mindset that's aligned with your aspirations. Celebrities like Oprah Winfrey, Jeff Weiner, Jerry Seinfeld and basketball legends LeBron James and Michael Jordan

have credited meditation with their success.

### Achieve goals through meditation

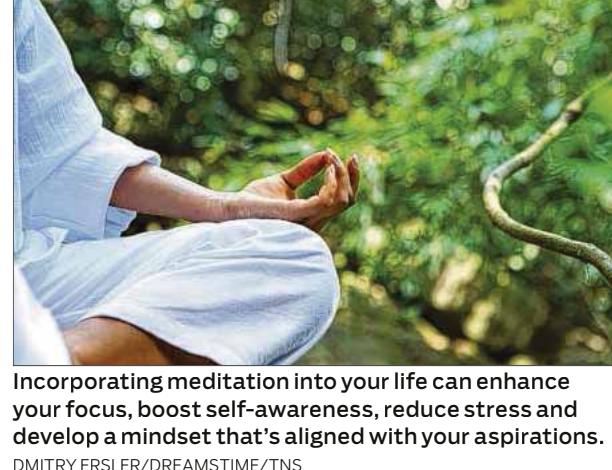
With numerous distractions vying for our attention, it's easy to lose sight of our goals. Meditation, particularly mindfulness meditation, helps you improve your ability to concentrate and stay present, which is crucial for goal achievement. It involves focusing your attention on the present moment, which can help you tune out distractions and clarify your priorities.

Other benefits:

- Reduces stress and increases resilience
- Enhances self-awareness and goal clarity
- Increases motivation and drive
- Enhances creativity and problem-solving
- Improves health and energy
- Builds patience and persistence

### Elevate mindset

Laura Smallwood,



Incorporating meditation into your life can enhance your focus, boost self-awareness, reduce stress and develop a mindset that's aligned with your aspirations.

DMITRY ERSLER/DREAMSTIME/TNS

a certified Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) teacher and Registered Yoga Teacher (RYT-200) based in Atlanta, began her journey with mindfulness meditation in her 50s and highlights its significance as we age. "Over the course of our lives, our tendency is to get more stuck in habitual ways of thinking, feeling, moving, and seeing the world," she stated. "As a

result, we miss the wonder, joy, beauty, and happiness that is also part of our experience."

Mindfulness meditation

shifts the focus away from

worry and regret, allowing for greater joy and fulfillment.

### Calm the mind

Juan Dowling, a long-

time massage therapist,

tai chi instructor and

Meditation continued on S2

## Here's how to keep reading the AJC as it goes all digital

After 157 years, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution enters a 'new chapter.'

By Hunter Boyce

hunter.boyce@ajc.com

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution newspaper is coming to an end quite soon. This year will be its last. For those reading this on its printed pages, it's not the end of the AJC. The longstanding newspaper is taking a new direction by becoming an all-digital news outlet.

Print edition readers who wish to continue accessing the AJC without interruption during this transition will need to update their subscriptions. Here's how.

### How to keep reading without interruption

Printed edition sub-



Copies of notable Atlanta Journal-Constitution headlines have been saved in columnist Bill Torpy's basement. The newspaper is taking a new direction by becoming an all-digital news outlet. BILL TORPY/AJC

scribers – including those with packages featuring the AJC's digital content – must switch to a digital-only subscription before Jan. 1, 2026. That will ensure they do not miss a single headline as the printed edition comes

AJC continued on S2

# AGING IN ATLANTA

## Mind

continued from S1

ter. "Cardiovascular exercise is very good for the brain."

And don't forget the value of muscle-building exercises as well, says Dr. Karima Benameur, an associate professor of neurology at Emory.

The Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control says short bursts of physical activity can boost memory and thinking skills, while regular physical activity can reduce the risk of cognitive decline and dementia. Physical activity has also been shown to have a beneficial effect on depression.

"You don't have to run a marathon," says Miles. "(Instead) you can walk the dog on a regular basis." Or ride a bike. Go dancing. Do vigorous yardwork. Or just take a walk on your own.

Some exercise, of course, does more than simply elevate the heart rate and improve blood flow to the brain. Maynard says moving the body in ways that directly benefit the brain are ideal.

"In Zumba I'm thinking, 'Am I going to turn right, am I going to turn left?' she says. "There is a benefit to those things that have the intricacies as well because that's the cognitive component."

### Good sleep

Experts note that vigorous exercise also wears the body out and prepares it for a good night's sleep,

a crucial component in cognitive health.

"That's numero uno. Sleep deprivation will rot your brain faster than anything I know," says Miles, noting that circulating cerebrospinal fluid cleans out brain waste that's accumulated during the day.

Benameur adds that for a long time the recognized standard was eight hours of shut-eye. That notion has been dispelled.

"Some people get eight hours and they feel great," she says, "But some people feel great if they get six."

Another route to restful sleep is timing your blood pressure medication, says Miles. She says some research has shown that blood pressure medication, if not a diuretic, may well have a pronounced impact on sleep if taken right before bed.

Part of what gets you to sleep is a drop in body temperature and blood pressure, she says. Taking your meds or maybe half them right before bed signals to your body that it's time to sleep.

### Nutrition's role

Diet and nutrition being major considerations in keeping the wheels turning, experts point to the Mediterranean or MIND diets with their emphases on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes and plant-based oils, with fish as the main protein source.

Dr. Charles Bernick, senior director of cognitive disorders at the Cleve-



Researchers say social and intellectual engagement are also key in maintaining mental sharpness. That can look like anything from going to a bingo night to checking out recreation programs at a local senior center. ADOBE STOCK IMAGES

land Clinic's Center for Brain Health says epidemiological studies show that diet, as well as exercise and sleep, "are associated with a lower risk of Alzheimer's, presumably delaying the onset of it."

"The biggest risk of Alzheimer's is genetics and aging, both of which you can't do anything about," he says. "But you can modify the risk by controlling these other factors."

Benameur says that any problem with cognition can be traced back to a source and that the majority of those causes are reversible. For example, memory issues can be traced to a lack of paying attention.

"In a simple way, the way we process informa-

tion is you have to be able to focus and get information in," she says. So if your attention is compromised, the data never gets encoded in the brain, creating memory issues.

### Mindfulness

Attention figures closely into another piece of the mental sharpness puzzle, that of meditation and mindfulness practices.

Maynard's take is there's not enough data to determine whether those can help dementia patients, "but if it's something like brain fog, a scattering of thought, not being able to get things finished, there's data that says mindfulness can help with that."

Meditation is training your mind to be present and attentive, Benameur

says. Instead of fighting one's thoughts, she says, it's about being able to observe those thoughts and "just sit with them."

If you slow them down and you're able to be present, your attention improves, she maintains.

Counseling can help, says Dr. Rachel Feit of Evolve Behavioral Health, who works with patients with an ongoing diagnosis, a brain tumor or aphasia for example. She says she "meets patients where they're at."

Her goal is to "build a relationship of trust so that if there are areas we can improve on, it makes them more adaptive and functional."

**Keep socializing**

Researchers say social

and intellectual engagement are also key in maintaining mental sharpness.

"Friends and family and how we engage with the community are extremely important," says Maynard. "Think of the brain as a muscle, you want to stress and challenge it."

That can look like anything from going to a bingo night to checking out recreation programs at a local senior center, playing word games, taking lifelong learning courses and getting involved with a faith community.

"The more engaged you are probably has some impact on brain plasticity," says Bernick. "That's the ability of the brain to form new connections."

A Harvard Health report suggests learning a new skill, particularly a more complex endeavor like quilting or digital photography yielded wide-ranging improvements in memory. Miles seems to have taken that to heart, taking a course and becoming a lifeguard this past summer.

Maynard says one of the best examples of proving mental faculties is her own father-in-law, who is 83 and lives in a 55-plus community. He has a regular weekly regimen of golf, tennis and bowling.

"And his girlfriend, yes, his girlfriend and he go dancing and have learned complicated and intricate choreography," she says. "That keeps him young, keeps him sharp (and) healthy."

## AJC

continued from S1

to an end in 2025.

To transition to a digital-only subscription, readers can visit AJC.com/digital-switch. By completing the prompts provided there, printed edition subscribers will continue to receive their newspaper deliveries throughout 2025. On Jan. 1, 2026, their subscription will then seamlessly change to digital-only.

Printed edition subscribers can transition to digital-only for \$9.99 per month or \$99 per year. Subscribers can also contact the AJC's customer care team at 404-522-4141 or by email at [customercare@ajc.com](mailto:customercare@ajc.com) for assistance with their transition to digital-only.

### A new chapter for the AJC

The AJC's origins go back 157 years. Now over a century-and-a-half later, it will print its last newspaper on Dec. 31. Why? According to Andrew Morse, its presi-

dent and publisher, it is the start of "a new chapter for the AJC."

"After 157 years, we did not make this decision lightly; for many of us, reading the paper with our morning coffee is as ingrained in our routine as brushing our teeth or scrambling eggs," Morse wrote to the newspaper and website's readers back in August. "Embracing our digital future means we can focus every resource and every ounce of energy on producing world-class journalism and delivering it to each of you in the most impactful way."

A new AJC mobile app, new membership perks, more original video content – there's a lot in the works.

"One thing that will not change is our unwavering commitment to essential, factual reporting," Morse wrote. "Our mission has never been more important, and we will continue to invest in distinctive journalism, well-sourced beat reporting, and surprising and delightful storytelling."

## Etiquette

continued from S1

and consider the situation from all angles.

"Ask yourself, 'Was this a one-time oversight or is it a pattern?'" Bailey said.

A delay in communication could simply mean they're traveling or dealing with holiday chaos.

### Try again

Once you've had time to reflect, consider giving the recipient another chance. Reaching out again can help you gauge the situation.

"I would give them a second chance on another occasion, but if I don't

hear back from them, I would take them off my gift list," Parks said.

### Downgrade your gift giving

You can certainly opt to adjust your gifting, but do so quietly and avoid complaining to other family members or mutual acquaintances.

Even when others fall short, model the behavior you'd like to see by continuing to send prompt and thoughtful thank-you notes, Bailey encouraged.

"Always remember the spirit of giving: Proper etiquette reminds us that true generosity expects nothing in return."



When mailing your gifts this holiday season, you may not receive a handwritten note, text, email or call in return.

DREAMSTIME/TNS

## Meditation

continued from S1

martial artist, has been practicing meditation for decades. He uses it to master his craft. Juan describes meditation as a way to "pause the mind."

"In the Western world, our minds tend to run continuously from one thing to the next," the Roswell resident stated. "The actual process of meditation allows the mind to reach a place of peace and tranquility."

In our fast-paced world, multitasking is often a necessity, but it can lead to imbalance and unnec-

essary stress. Juan advises that taking time to quiet the mind throughout the day helps promote balance. One way to calm the mind is through breathing meditation: "By managing and harnessing the breath, we can control racing thoughts," Juan stated. "The breath is the link to every emotion."

To begin goal setting for the new year, Juan recommends focusing on one goal at a time before adding another. "Sit quietly and breathe for 2 to 3 minutes," he suggests.

"Close your eyes and focus on breathing deeply from the abdomen."

Finding a teacher can enhance your experience.

### Ready to begin?

To start your meditation journey, look for classes at local recreation centers or libraries, or explore options on YouTube. You could also download recommended meditation apps reviewed by reputable sources like The New York Times.

Smallwood teaches in-person mindfulness courses in Decatur through Atlanta Mindfulness, including a free introductory course, and also offers online courses

at East Coast Mindfulness ([eastcoastmindfulness.com](http://eastcoastmindfulness.com)). The Atlanta Mindfulness Meditation Community welcomes new-comers for guided lessons every Sunday. For more details, visit [atlantamindfulness.com](http://atlantamindfulness.com). You don't need to sit cross-legged in the lotus position to attend; mindfulness meditation involves various postures including sitting in a chair, standing, lying down, walking, or through yoga.

By utilizing meditation, you can stay focused on your goals and turn your aspirations into lasting changes in the new year.

## Travel efficiently with these apps

They're free and easy, and will help you save time and stay organized.

**By Judith Garrison**  
For the AJC

Having travel plans in the palm of your hand is effortless with smartphones. While it's still wise to carry printed copies of your itinerary and confirmations in case of limited cellular service, a digital version provides quick and convenient access.

Everyone travels differently, and today's wide range of apps offers something to suit every style. Create a dedicated travel folder on your phone's home screen, add these apps with your membership information, and you'll have everything you need at your fingertips for your next trip.

### Planning for the getaway

Storing plans in one location keeps you organized. TripIt builds your trip's itinerary from forwarded emails and organizes logistics, everything from accommodations to activities.

Keep family and friends informed by sharing the link. The free version contains minimal storage but does the trick. Upgrade to TripIt Pro for \$49 for a year, which increases storage ability and provides real-time alerts like last-minute gate changes

at the airport. The perks of the upgrade are well worth the small yearly fee.

Once plans are made, add them to Google Calendar, a free web service. Most travel services now offer the ability to add reservations automatically to your personal calendar.

### Getting from one location to another

Navigating an location is a job for Google Maps. Whether you're walking or driving, Google Maps can chart the route. This free, web-based service provides downloadable maps for ease in planning, as well as a text or email of the final route directly to your smartphone.

If you're planning on lots of walking, alter your settings, opting for the "wheelchair accessible" feature, which will avoid steep hills. Regardless of your physical ability, it can be a lifesaver when

handling luggage.

Another navigation app, Waze, provides real-time alerts and permits drivers the ability to be interactive, warning other Wazers of what's down the road. Save your frequently traveled routes and set for your personal calendar.

When getting from location to location or country to country, Rome2Rio charts options regardless of mode of transportation. From train to ferry to airline, identify the route and time that fits your plan and budget. This free service is available worldwide.

If you're driving, Gas Buddy finds the closest fuel source as well as the lowest price. If you're not behind the wheel, the rideshare app Uber reserves airport, hotel or home pickup. Often, costs for an Uber driver can be more affordable than a taxi fare. Set up an account and store



Everyone travels differently, and today's wide range of apps offers something to suit every style.

MIRKO VITALI/DREAMSTIME/TNS

a payment method for on-the-go reservations.

### Everything upon arrival

Staying connected to family and friends at home is always important. WhatsApp provides free messaging and video calling worldwide. Likewise, Zoom offers free video calls as well as the ability to share screens. The free service provides up to 40 minutes of conversation with two alternative paid options for extended time. Keep track of everyone at any time: Life360 pings your location in real time.

For medical information, Medisafe permits you to choose what you need, whether it be reminders to take doses, track schedules and appointments or simply a location where everything is stored. Family members can also be notified if doses are missed.

For international travel, XE Currency Converter is essential when converting currency. It provides up-to-the-minute exchange rates worldwide, keeping you on track with money and what you're spending. The latest iPhone software update adds functionality to the basic calculator, allowing for currency conversion.

Google offers many free essentials, including Google Translate. Whether you speak or type text, it easily converts from English to another language. Use the camera option to scan menus or signs for immediate conversion.

## AGING IN ATLANTA

## Want to escape the cold? Fort Myers will warm you up.

Thomas Edison and Henry Ford spent their winters here and contributed to this Fla. city's legacy.

By Karon Warren  
For the AJC

Many years ago, Thomas Edison and Henry Ford would spend their winters in balmy Fort Myers, Florida, and it's easy to see why: gorgeous beaches, lots of sunshine and, of course, warm days.

During your winter getaway, you could enjoy these and much more, including a tour of the Edison and Ford Winter Estates; the Edison Museum; sailing to Cabbage Key for lunch, including the cheeseburger Jimmy Buffett made famous; and searching for shells on Sanibel Island, the world's best shelling beach.

## Step back in time

At the Edison and Ford Winter Estates, you'll start your journey at the museum shop, where you can purchase your tickets. Then, you will cross the street to explore the neighboring homes where the men lived.

Edison arrived in the area in 1885 from New Jersey after his doctors' recommendation to spend the winters in warm weather. Upon arriving in Fort Myers via the Caloosahatchee River, he purchased 13 riverfront acres and built his home.

"Edison was attracted to the property for a variety of reasons, but one thing that caught his eye was bamboo," said Breanna Alexander, marketing and public relations coordinator for Edison and Ford Winter Estates. "It is a mystery, but there was bamboo on the property in 1885 that Edison later used to create a filament while he was experimenting with the light bulb invention. He would later import many different varieties of bamboo that you can see on the site today."

Ford visited Edison in 1914 and bought the neighboring property just two years later.

"Edison and Ford have about a 16-year age difference, so they had a mentor-type of friendship," Alexander said. "Ford really looked up to Edison as an inventor, and the two soon became close friends."

Seeing the homes provides insights into these two men, their families and work lives. Back across the street, the Edison Museum provides a deep dive into Edison and his many inventions, as well as a look at Ford's legacy and vehicles.

In the Edison Botanic Research Laboratory, you can see where Edison and Ford worked to find



The lobby of the Luminary Hotel & Co. provides the perfect place to relax and enjoy a cocktail or a cup of coffee. PHOTOS BY KARON WARREN FOR THE AJC

a source of rubber that could be grown and cultivated in the United States. Don't forget to stroll through the estate's gardens, which feature more than 1,700 plants representing more than 400 species from six continents.

## Grab a cheeseburger in paradise

You can't visit Fort Myers without enjoying the glorious sunshine and time on the water. A perfect way to do this is by setting sail with Captiva Cruises to Cabbage Key, an island reminiscent of "Old Florida" from times gone by.

As you make your way to the island, the captain will share a bit of history on the area. Once you arrive, head to the restaurant, where you can try the burger believed to be the inspiration for Buffett's iconic song "Cheeseburger in Paradise." Don't forget to sign and leave a dollar bill on the wall (or ceiling) to mark your visit.

For a taste of Italy, grab a meal at Bruno's of Brooklyn in downtown Fort Myers. Think veal piccata, lasagna and meatballs, and lobster ravioli.

"Bruno's offers a taste of Old World Italy with a modern twist, crafting dishes that celebrate our heritage while exploring new, unforgettable flavor profiles," said Calcedonio Bruno, chef and owner.

If you can't get enough of Old Florida, don't miss The Veranda in downtown Fort Myers. Since 1978, this iconic restaurant serves Southern regional cuisine ranging from chicken Orleans and Atlantic salmon to filet mignon and USDA prime New York strip. But it's the restaurant's ambiance and first-class service that will have you feeling like you are dining in a bygone era.

## Search for seashells on the seashore

If your favorite beach memento is a collection of seashells, Sanibel Island is the place to go.

Nicknamed the "Seashell Capital of the World," Sanibel Island offers 12 miles of beaches where you can peruse the sand and water for your next collectible. Given

that more than 400 types of seashells wash ashore every day, it shouldn't be hard to find a few to take home with you.

Once you have all the shells you want, take time to relax and watch the waves roll in. A great spot for doing this is Pink Shell Beach Resort on Fort Myers Beach. Book your stay for a full beach vacation, or purchase a resort day pass to enjoy the beach and pools for a beach vacation within a vacation.

## Get comfortable in downtown Fort Myers

Just steps from Fort Myers' bustling historic downtown, the Luminary Hotel & Co., Autograph Collection is the ideal place to stay when in town. Not only can you explore the city's thriving shopping, dining and entertainment offerings nearby, but you also can relax in modern comfort that celebrates the city's historic figures.

"Luminary Hotel & Co. was built on the belief that Fort Myers' story deserves to shine," said Joe Collier, president and founder of Mainsail Lodging & Development. "Inspired by Old Florida's timeless charm, the hotel reflects a place where the river's rhythm, warm hospitality and spirit of discovery shape everyday life."

As you wander the property, you'll see vintage photographs and artifacts from around the city. In addition, there are elements that honor the visionaries who defined Fort Myers: Think Capt. Francis Hendry, one of the city's first settlers; Alice McCann, the city's first telephone operator; and Tootie McGregor, one of the city's "founding mothers."

The hotel also offers several dining and beverage options, including The Silver King Coastal Kitchen with its Mediterranean-inspired menu, the Beacon Social Drinkery Rooftop Bar overlooking downtown and the river, and Dean Street Coffee Roastery & Retail.

Yes, Edison and Ford knew what they were doing when they chose Fort Myers for their winter getaways. Just one visit, and you may start doing the same.



If you're looking to sample a taste of Italy, head to Bruno's of Brooklyn in downtown Fort Myers for dishes such as veal piccata, lasagna and meatballs, and lobster ravioli.



Whether for the day or the week, Pink Shell Beach Resort on Fort Myers Beach is a great place to relax. The spot also offers plenty of beachfront entertainment.

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## AGING IN ATLANTA

# Stayin' Alive Crew keeps moving

This dance team proves you're never too old to spread holiday cheer.

By Rachel Brown Kirkland  
For the AJC

Elaine Burgett first heard about the Stayin' Alive Crew from a friend. And from the moment she saw the Atlanta-based nonprofit dance team composed of performers 50 and older, she was hooked.

"I wasn't quite 50 yet, but when I saw them, I thought, 'I want to do that,'" Burgett said.

She turned 50 in 2020, auditioned and made the team right away. Now she's a co-director, using the group to live out a life-long love of movement. She never had much formal dance training — "a jazz class in college," she said — but she was the little girl dancing in front of the mirror and the adult drawn to fitness classes.

Stayin' Alive gave all of that a home.

The dance team holds about 60 performances a year, including at nursing homes and senior residences and more. They've appeared at Atlanta Hawks games, Georgia Tech, Kennesaw State and other locations around metro Atlanta.

Retired since 2019, Burgett said the group supports each other in ways that go beyond applause. They bring meals, ride along to doctor's appointments, share time outside the dance studio and help with the behind-the-scenes tasks that keep the nonprofit going.

"It really turned into something so much more than a dance group," she said. "We are a dance family."

For member Christi Elliott-Earby, the appeal was as much relational as it was artistic. A friend in the dance world urged her to audition, but the strong bonds she saw drew her in.

"When you get older, it's really hard to make good, long-lasting friendships," Elliott-Earby said. "I'm naturally a people person and need people around me and thought this might be a great opportunity."

What she found was a



The Atlanta-based nonprofit Stayin' Alive Crew holds about 60 performances a year at nursing homes and senior residences. The dance team has also appeared at Atlanta Hawks games and at Georgia Tech, Kennesaw State University and at other locations around metro Atlanta. Member Christi Elliott-Earby says the group "works hard and plays hard." COURTESY OF STAYIN' ALIVE CREW

**I have learned that it doesn't really matter what your age is — as long as you keep moving, your body will keep moving. Age really is just a number.'**

Christi Elliott-Earby

you keep moving, your body will keep moving," she said. "Age really is just a number."

The audition process surprised her. She was asked for ID to prove she met the minimum age, given a number and photographed, then sent to warm up before dancing for a panel that included former pro-team cheerleaders.

"They're serious," Elliott-Earby said. "This is not (somewhere where you) just come and shake your booty."

When the acceptance email came, she said, she felt like she'd won the lottery.

Co-director and founder Janette Hinton said auditions stay at or near capacity. Dancers range from 50 to 74 — the oldest owns a jazzercise studio. Some members danced together years ago on a for-profit senior team, but Stayin' Alive was organized as a nonprofit so they could perform for senior centers, fundraising events, races, parades, ballgames and even 100th birthday parties.

Hinton, who once choreographed dance at Six Flags Over Georgia, said the group says

"yes" to as many engagements as they have dancers to respond to. Members commit to half of all events and 66% of rehearsals.

"We take it seriously, and they'll make jokes about how strict I am," Hinton said. "I take ownership of what goes out there because I do a lot of the choreography myself."

Members pay for a discounted gym membership where they rehearse and buy their own costumes. Sometimes the group brings in outside choreographers. But beyond their sparkly red uniforms, there's another dimension.

"When you have these connections with women with the same passions ... you live longer," she said. "Dance is only one part of (Stayin' Alive). It's not the priority. It's the relationships that you develop."

As the holidays approach, the crew will slip on Santa hats and take their Christmas routines around metro Atlanta.

"If we can inspire you to keep moving and keep active and take care of yourself in your later years, then our purpose has been done," Hinton said.

## Give an experience instead of a gift

Meaningful experiences this holiday season can bring families closer together and cut down on stressful shopping.

By Rose Kennedy  
For the AJC

For gift givers over 55, choosing an experience rather than a physical item is a smart option — especially for teens who have everything, adult children who prefer minimal clutter these days, or elderly relatives who could use some company.

Here are four ideas to promote family bonding this holiday season.

### Hills & Dales Estate holiday estate tour

This annual estate tour offers a festive way to enjoy lavish decor and seasonal scents, without having to lift a finger to deck the halls. Built in 1916, the home has been preserved by the fourth generation of the Fuller E. Callaway family. Visitors using wheelchairs can access the first floor and portions of the garden.

■ 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays, Saturday-Dec. 27. \$30 adults, \$28 seniors, \$18 students, under 7 free. Hills & Dales



This annual Hills & Dales Estate holiday tour offers a festive way to enjoy lavish decor and seasonal scents, without having to lift a finger to deck the halls. COURTESY OF HILLS & DALES ESTATE

Estate, 1916 Hills and Dales Drive, LaGrange.

### Atlanta Christkindl Market now in Lawrenceville

Kids, foodies, those of German heritage, and anyone who enjoys lively celebrations will enjoy this event from the German American Cultural Foundation. It includes a Ferris wheel, authentic German goodies from schnitzel to pretzels, modern festival foods, blocks of vendors, and plenty of Christmas pageantry. If you feel drawn to giving a tangible gift as well, consider tagging along to buy your recipient a handmade trinket or textile. This year, Christkindl Market has relocated from its traditional Buckhead venue to

Lawrenceville, offering more room to explore and free parking.

■ Through Dec. 24, 3-8 p.m. Wednesdays-Thursdays, 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Fridays-Saturdays, 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Sundays; 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Dec. 23, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Christmas Eve. Free admission. Lawrenceville Lawn, 210 Luckie St., Lawrenceville.

### Woodland Walk at Reflection Riding Arboretum & Nature Center

Families of all ages and couples alike can enjoy this peaceful stroll and lesson in native tree identification at Reflection Riding. The nature center features wetlands, woodlands, and grasslands, along with crisp air and

hiking trails to the top of Lookout Mountain. Located about two hours from downtown Atlanta, the trip can easily include a stop in one of the small towns decorated for the holidays along the way.

If the outing is a hit, consider gifting a membership for future visits.

■ 1-2:30 p.m. Dec. 6, 13, 20, \$21, under 2 free, 400 Garden Road, Chattanooga, Tennessee.

### 11 Miles of Christmas and Trimming the Charlie Brown Tree in Kennesaw

Give one a holiday gift they won't forget. Sign them up for the Atlanta Outdoor Club's annual D5-level hike — a tough but joyful trek for the 21 and older crowd. The group takes on Big Kennesaw Mountain at a moderate pace, stopping to decorate a small tree on top of Little Kennesaw before continuing to Burnt Hickory Road.

Membership is free but needed to participate.

Go the extra mile to plan transportation for your gift recipient, along with water bottles, snacks, and even holiday attire.

■ 8-12:30 a.m., Dec. 14, free but must sign up for membership, Kennesaw Mountain National Park, 900 Kennesaw Mountain Drive, Kennesaw.

## Here are 6 festive ways to celebrate December

By Lesly Gregory | For the AJC

Winter plus the holidays is a winning formula for activities across Atlanta in December. Whether you want to find a way to give back, enjoy some timely music or spend some time with the family, there's no shortage of festivities to fill up your calendar.

### TAKE TIME TO GIVE BACK

#### JLSR's 10th annual Benefit Celebration

Join the Jeffrey Lipscomb Sr. Foundation for a night of connection, reflection and philanthropy. This nonprofit organization is dedicated to providing support, healing and hope to families who have lost a parent. Featuring complimentary cocktails and a seated dinner, this event gives you an opportunity to make a difference in the community. With meaningful tributes throughout the night, you'll also get to hear how others give back. For those interested in mingling and networking in a more casual setting, there is an alternate ticket option with access solely to a cocktail hour, dessert and the benefit program.

■ Saturday, 7-11 p.m. Individual gala tickets are \$188.58, standing room only tickets are \$92.55. You can purchase a table for up to six guests with premium seating for \$1,602.45. Westside Cultural Arts Center, 760 10th St. NW, Atlanta. [jlsrfoundation.org/events](http://jlsrfoundation.org/events).

### Sneakers & Starlight

Put on your best sneakers and celebrate 30 years of advocacy for children in foster care. This semi-formal gala event supports Atlanta CASA, an organization that advocates for children in the foster care system in Fulton County. Blending style and soul, you'll enjoy gourmet treats, signature cocktails and live entertainment while hearing inspiring stories from those whose lives have been touched by CASA volunteers. There will also be a silent auction and raffle to help raise additional funds. Individual tickets include parking, dinner and one drink ticket.

■ Dec. 13, 6-9 p.m. Tickets are \$60 per individual and \$540 for a table of 10. VIP sponsor packages are available, starting at \$2,500. Crowne Plaza Midtown, 590 West Peachtree St. NW, Atlanta. [atlantacasa.org/30y-events](http://atlantacasa.org/30y-events).

### ENJOY THE SONGS OF THE SEASON

#### Holiday Concert at The Cathedral of St. Philip

Join members of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra's brass and percussion sections, along with conductor Dale Adelmann, for a holiday concert full of traditional carols, hymns and beloved standards. Beautiful music combines with the acoustical grandeur of the Cathedral of St. Philip for a night you won't forget. Celebrating its eighth year, this concert is fast becoming a local holiday tradition.

■ Dec. 12, 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$23.18 for seniors and \$28.52 for general admission. Student and patron tickets are also available. The Cathedral of St. Philip, 2744 Peachtree Road NW, Atlanta. [eventbrite.com/e/2025-holiday-concert-with-members-of-the-atlanta-symphony-brass-tickets-1531274716899](http://eventbrite.com/e/2025-holiday-concert-with-members-of-the-atlanta-symphony-brass-tickets-1531274716899).

### Irving Berlin's 'White Christmas': The Musical

Enjoy the presentation of a classic with this infamous musical featuring a well-known score that includes the perennial title song, "White Christmas." Hear the story of two veterans, with a song-and-dance act, out looking for love. Full of wholesome music and standards you might find yourself singing along to, this play is perfect for audiences of all ages — easily getting you into the holiday spirit.

■ Now through Dec. 21, showtimes are 7 p.m. Fridays-Sundays along with a 2 p.m. matinee on weekends. Standard ticket prices are \$45 for adults, \$25 for children 12 and under and \$40 for seniors 65 and over. Premium ticket options are also available. Legacy Theatre, 1175 Senoia Road, Suite C, Tyrone. 404-895-1473. [legacytheater.com/show/white-christmas](http://legacytheater.com/show/white-christmas).

### CELEBRATE WITH THE FAMILY

#### Magical Flight to the North Pole

Get whisked away to the heart of Santa's secret, and enchanting, world with a first-of-its-kind journey to the North Pole. This experience includes a flight to Santa's Workshop, an immersive walk through experience and the chance to make a Christmas wish. Help Santa and Mrs. Claus avert a crisis and save Christmas. You can combine this fun, unique experience with other holiday activities at Stone Mountain, including holiday shows, walking through over 2 million lights, festive music, a light show and a Christmas parade. There's something for everyone.

■ Now through Jan. 4. Friday-Sunday only through the start of December, then daily from Dec. 26-Jan. 4. Ride times vary, but are only in the evenings, running in 15 minute intervals. Tickets are \$29.99 per person. Stone Mountain Park, 1000 Robert E. Lee Blvd., Stone Mountain. [stonemountainpark.com/activity/events/magical-flight-to-the-north-pole](http://stonemountainpark.com/activity/events/magical-flight-to-the-north-pole).

### 'The Nutcracker'

Bringing together the Gwinnett Ballet Theatre and Sugarloaf Youth Ballet, this production of "The Nutcracker" will enchant the entire family no matter their age. With beautiful dancing, intricate sets and colorful costumes, this quintessential holiday story comes to life. Over 100 professional and student dancers participate in this performance as toys come alive and Clara sets out on a very important journey to the Land of Sweets.

■ Dec. 12-14, and Dec. 18-21. Shows start at either 3 p.m. or 7 p.m. but not all days feature two performances. Ticket prices range from \$32.35-\$76.90. Gas South Theater, 6400 Sugarloaf Parkway, Duluth. 770-813-7500. [gassouthdistrict.com/events/detail/gbt-the-nutcracker-2025](http://gassouthdistrict.com/events/detail/gbt-the-nutcracker-2025).

## AGING IN ATLANTA

## Georgians share their favorite perks of growing older

**The best part of getting older is perspective... I've learned what's worth stressing over.**

**By Andrea Clement**  
For the AJC

Some say aging is a privilege. After all, not everyone gets the opportunity to grow older in life. Georgians ranging in age from their 50s to 80s shared their thoughts about some surprising perks they've discovered about life after 55. Here are a few of their favorite revelations.

"I used to struggle with self-esteem and boundaries when I was younger, but life experience has changed that. Today, I'm content, enjoy time with

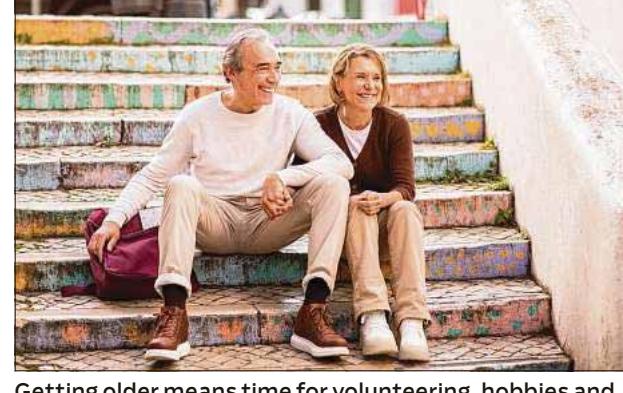
family and friends, love to travel, and only answer to one boss: my granddog, Sulley."

— **Susan Fisk, 70, Hoschton**

"I never imagined that after retiring as a litigation paralegal, I'd be volunteering with children and sharing my love of reading. It's so rewarding to discover that life after work can open new doors... ones that bring even more joy and purpose than I expected."

— **Denise Lobodinski, 69, Marietta**

"The best part of getting older is perspective. After living through hard times, I've learned what's worth stressing over – and what's not. I appreciate people and small moments so



Getting older means time for volunteering, hobbies and travel for many. DREAMSTIME/TNS

much more now. I've also learned to let go, move on and give myself grace. Oh, and wear your sunscreen!"

— **Julie Soltis, 58, Hoschton**

"One of the best parts of getting older is simplifying

life: letting go of what doesn't matter and surrounding yourself with peace. It's a time to enjoy the comfort of home, good books and a loyal dog by the fire, free from the need to impress or fit in."

— **David Jackson, 65, Lawrenceville**

"You become more attuned to your daily blessings. I find myself being calmer and really enjoying the grandchildren."

— **Jimmy Terrell, 78, Winder**

"I didn't expect that at 78, I'd still be so active doing things like traveling, visiting family and going out with friends. I'm grateful for good health, great genes and the freedom to do what I want, when I want. Every day, I thank God and my angels for these blessings."

— **Saida Vazquez, 78, Braselton**

"Since retiring, I've enjoyed having time to pursue hobbies like hiking and feeding my curiosity. I joined a hiking group about 20 years ago and still

walk with them weekly, plus another walking group in town. I also volunteer at Fernbank Museum and with SUGA, where I get to learn new things and share interesting tidbits with others. Though single, I'm far from alone. I'm surrounded by people who share my interests. Being part of a community takes effort, but it's well worth it. My best advice: pursue – and share – your passions."

— **Virginia Dunbar, 73, Decatur**

People are finding many ways to soak up every moment of their golden years. As famed Rolling Stones rocker Keith Richards once said, "Getting older is a fascinating thing. The older you get, the older you want to get."

## Families mark Hanukkah with old, new traditions

Across Georgia, holiday celebrations shine with community spirit and timeless meaning.

**By Rachel Brown Kirkland**  
For the AJC



Come mid-December, Laury and Terry Bagen will join with dozens of family members for an evolving tradition they've celebrated their entire lives.

For eight days, they'll light an additional candle each evening on the hanukkah – the nine-branched Hanukkah menorah – in their home, until all eight candles plus the central helper candle, the shamash, are shining in a window.

The tradition is a reminder of what Jewish practice calls the "miracle of the oil" – a story from later rabbinic tradition commemorating the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in the second century B.C.E. after a small band of Jewish fighters known as the Maccabees revolted against the Seleucid Empire that had suppressed Jewish worship.

When they reentered the desecrated Temple, they found only enough consecrated oil to light the menorah for one night. According to tradition, the oil miraculously burned for eight days, long enough to prepare and consecrate new oil. Jews – some 132,000 of whom live in metro Atlanta, according to the American Jewish Year Book 2024 – have celebrated Hanukkah ever since as a testimony to light, faith and resilience.

"What we celebrate at Hanukkah is gratitude and faith and endurance," said Terry Bagen, a mother and grandmother who lives in Sandy Springs with her husband, Laury.

This year, Hanukkah runs from the evening of Dec. 14 through the evening of Dec. 22.

## Family traditions

The Bagens will again acknowledge the holiday through a series of activities, including a large family celebration of about 75 people. Laury will don his magician's costume, acting out stories that both teach and entertain. They'll eat latkes (traditional potato pancakes) and sufganiyot (jelly-filled doughnuts). These deep-fried foods recall the miracle of the ancient oil.

Participants will also enjoy music and exchange a few gifts, but the deeper themes of

**'It reminds us that no matter how small we might think we are, and no matter how small we actually are, our actions, our behavior, our impact is significant. We start with one candle... and by the end of the experience, we've created tremendous light.'**

Rabbi Brian Glusman, Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta

Hanukkah will be front and center.

In addition to family gatherings, they'll also take their celebration into the broader community, including taking grandchildren to events at the Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta where Rabbi Brian Glusman has served for 15 years.

Glusman said Hanukkah's gradual lighting of the menorah – growing from one light to an entire candelabra – has profound significance.

"It reminds us that no matter how small we might think we are, and no matter how small we actually are, our actions, our behavior, our impact is significant," he said.

"We start with one candle... and by the end of the experience, we've created tremendous light."



Cyla Bagen and Eloise Bagen, grandchildren of Laury and Terry Bagen, enjoy Hanukkah celebrations. Though Hanukkah is considered a minor festival in the Jewish religious calendar, it carries significant cultural and emotional weight. COURTESY



Laury Bagen puts on a Hanukkah performance for his family. Come mid-December, the Bagens will join with dozens of family members for an evolving tradition they've celebrated their entire lives. COURTESY

... and by the end of the experience, we've created tremendous light. In today's world, that's especially significant. Our world today needs more light. We need more blessing."

Though Hanukkah is considered a minor festival in the Jewish religious calendar, it carries significant cultural and emotional weight. Because of its proximity to Christmas, it's also become more visible in recent years, Glusman said, with decorations and celebrations proliferating similarly to how Christmas has become bigger and more extravagant. But the way Hanukkah plays out in individual lives can look different.

Terry's family often has three types of celebrations – the large clan gathering; one that's small and intimate with just her, Laury and a few children and grandchildren; and a third celebration for her and her siblings' families who live in the same neighborhood.

**Mitzvahs and memories**

Even when they were children, the Bagens have fond memories of Hanukkah observances – though each celebrated in different ways. For Laury, gatherings were small and quiet, often

just him, his parents and his siblings in their home surrounded by blue and white crepe paper, large stars of David and a warm appreciation for who they were as Jews.

"The Jewish religion is really based on community. We pray as a community, we educate ourselves as a community," Terry said.

They also emphasize giving back, Laury said. Sometimes that means helping the grandchildren clean out the toy room and donate what they no longer want.

"That's our new tradition for Hanukkah, to do a good 'mitzvah,' do a good deed," Laury said.

At other times, Hanukkah can take a serious turn. One year, one of Terry's beloved aunts was hospitalized. Distant family members flew in from out of state to say their goodbyes in what they were told would likely be her last 24 hours – the first day of Hanukkah that year. But, as if following the miracle of the oil, the aunt lived several more days, passing away just as Hanukkah concluded.

"I've always believed in the story of miracles and light and faith before that, but now it's one of my deepest convictions that even a minor holiday has great things to teach us," Terry said.

## CorStrata: Delivering wound care virtually

Company provides nurses trained in advanced wound care to work with hospitals and home health companies.

**By Elizabeth Green**  
For the AJC

she said, has allowed for a unique employment opportunity for nurses, and the company maintains a waiting list of interested providers. The mode, she said, is attractive for nurses who are used to "running the floors" as they move from patient to patient in a hospital setting.

They work with bedside nurses and physicians using images or visualizing the wound via virtual call and questions of providers and patients in order to understand the situation and contributing factors. Existing health conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure, along with medications patients are taking, Piette said, affect treatment and healing. Wounds range from diabetic foot ulcers to venous and arterial ulcers and bed sores. Diabetes patients sometimes experience peripheral neuropathy, which means they often can't feel a festering foot condition, which can quickly compound a foot wound, she said. Wounds are staged by acuity, and Piette said pressure wounds are especially prone to being misstaged, which can affect healing quality.

The company celebrates a decade of service this year, and Piette attributes some of that longevity to the fact that the entrepreneurship cycle is typically longer in the health care industry than in other verticals. The other reason is that CorStrata has been able to fill a real need.

"Wounds are not a disease, per se. Wounds are really the implication of multiple chronic conditions," she said. "As a consequence, nobody owns wound care, and it's kind of like the Wild West – who really is in charge of wounds?"

The company provides nurses specially trained in the area of advanced wound care to work remotely with organizations like hospitals and home health companies, which might not otherwise have access to them.

## The remote experience

Piette and her co-founder, Joe Ebberwein, both had experience with remote patient monitoring working in the home health and hospice spaces.

"It was there that we really understood the power that technology could bring to processes. It's not the technology itself; it's what the technology enables. We took a model that basically had been in radiology in the early 2000s. Radiologists were never in the right place at the right time. So what happened to them? They've become virtualized," Piette told the AJC.

"We've done the same thing with a very scarce commodity as well, which are board certified wound nurses."

Most wound nurses, she said, practice within hospitals, making access difficult for patients outside that setting.

CorStrata nurses operate independently within virtual visits. The company, Piette said, chooses providers with "real world experience" in different care settings.

Delivery of care virtually,

## Expansion and responsibility

Rural and critical access hospitals that are smaller in size, Piette said, have benefited particularly from the availability of virtual wound care, as have home-based care patients needing hospital-level care.

The company's pre-COVID launch, she said, served to accelerate its growth.

"Finally, the world realized, 'Oh my goodness, telehealth has a place,'" she said. "That was kind of a pivotal point for us in terms of acceptance, and since then, with the greater acceptance of telehealth, we've been building on our customer base."

A push toward value-based care from entities like commercial payers and Medicare Advantage, she said, has also helped. CorStrata, she said, has also received support as a portfolio company for the Advanced Technology and Development Center, the technology incubator situated on the Georgia Tech campus.

The company is now serving patients in all 50 states and has its eyes on expanding internationally.

## AGING IN ATLANTA

# How to improve accessibility at home for aging in place

From grab bars to stair lifts, there are affordable options to make your home safer and more comfortable.

By Lesly Gregory  
For the AJC

As aging in place becomes more common, you may need to make home modifications to improve accessibility. These changes will not only keep you safe, but allow you to get around with ease.

"More people try to age in place the best they can," Kelly Vandever, Realtor and seniors real estate specialist with Keller Williams told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. "They're looking to make changes to their existing place and stay there."

Luckily, modifications to the entire home aren't typically necessary. Focusing on key areas of the home can have a big impact.

"It's about creating independence and helping people get around regardless of challenges," said Dennis Lippy, president at Accessible Living Atlanta and Certified Age in Place Specialist.

### Avoid bathroom falls

According to Lippy, 70% of injuries at home happen in the bathroom. Risk can come from slippery surfaces and simply stepping in and out of tubs and showers. One of the easiest ways to reduce this risk is by installing grab bars, and they've come a long way from their institutional look.

"Grab bars today can look like a soap dish or even a towel holder,"



One of the easiest ways to reduce the risk of falls is by installing grab bars, and they've come a long way from their institutional look. PHOTOS COURTESY OF MOBILITY PLUS/BENJAMIN ROUSE

Lippy said.

Adding a fold out bench in the shower, and moving water controls down lower is another way to help reduce the risk of a fall.

For those in a wheelchair or using a walker, Lippy said a zero clearance shower can make it safer in the bathroom as well.

### Move about at home

Mobility issues outside of high risk areas can be harder to pin down. Mary Block, mobility consultant and owner of Mobility Plus Alpharetta, describes one action as "furniture surfing," where a person moves around by holding onto furniture or a door frame.

"This behavior isn't sturdy and is too dependent on a person taking the right steps," she told the AJC.

Aesthetically pleasing grab bars, or even a security pole, which extends from the floor to the ceiling can improve safety.

### Limit the stairs

When it comes to stairs, sometimes it's best to limit



To narrow down your options for accessibility improvements, consult a professional who can evaluate your home based on your specific challenges.

the need to climb them at all. For those with mobility issues, Vandever suggests having the primary bedroom on the main floor as well as other rooms needed more frequently – like an office or guest room.

If stairs are unavoidable, Block likes to suggest a stair lift.

"Stair lifts are life changing for people, especially if they've decided to age in place," she advised.

"They can give you more time in your home and are very affordable when you compare to assisted living

costs."

These lifts can come in handy both inside and outside the home – working on internal stairs as well as steps that lead up to an entrance. According to Block, these lifts are easy to remove once installed and don't pose a huge construction challenge.

For outside stairs, ramps are another option, if you have the space.

"You must have one foot of ramp for every inch of rise in your steps, which can make it pretty long in some cases," Block said.



Stair lifts work well both inside and outside the home – both on internal stairs and steps that lead up to an entrance. "Stair lifts are life changing for people, especially if they've decided to age in place," said Kelly Vandever.

According to Lippy, ramps inside a garage can get long enough to take up an entire parking spot. If you don't have that kind of room to give up, there are alternatives like a lift.

Lippy also suggested stair modifications to make them deep enough or the right height to safely walk up and down.

### Bring in a professional

To narrow down your options for accessibility improvements, it's a good idea to consult a professional.

They'll evaluate your home based on your specific challenges getting around.

"We try to be proactive with our aging popula-

tion since you never know what's going to happen the next day," Lippy said.

Don't forget to take the resale of your home into consideration as well.

"If people are going to do modifications, they should do whatever needs to be done to be safe, but look at what the options are. Items that can easily be installed and uninstalled could be easier to deal with than making permanent changes," Vandever said.

Whether it's adding accessibility, or simply researching what's out there, it is possible to stay comfortable in your home as you age no matter what health conditions come up.

## PAID ADVERTISEMENT

### Questions You Can't Ignore During the Medicare Annual Election Period

During the annual enrollment period through Dec. 7, eligible individuals can choose a Medicare Advantage or Prescription Drug Plan for 2026. Jonathan Morse, Georgia Medicare President from Humana, offers guidance on researching and choosing a plan.

#### What is Medicare and what should people know about selecting a plan for 2026?

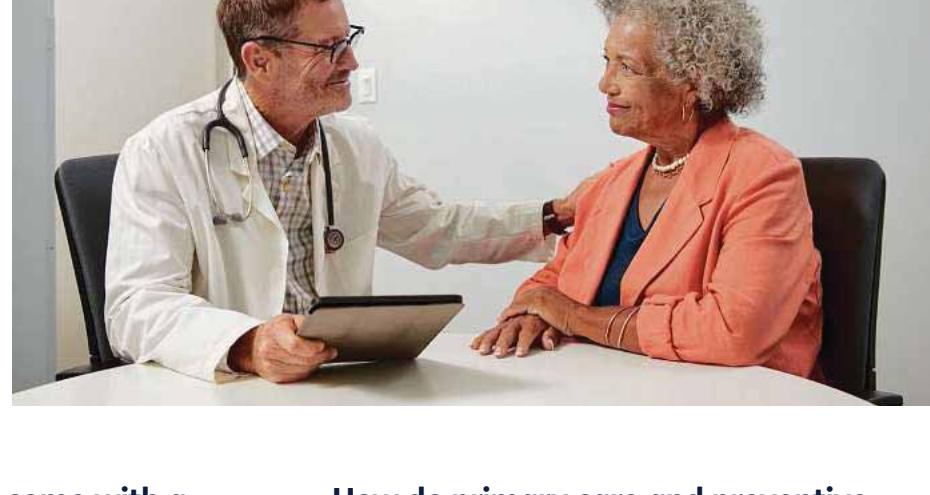
Medicare is health insurance for individuals 65 and older or those who are younger and eligible because of a qualifying disability. Original Medicare is offered by the government and covers medical bills and doctors' visits, and Medicare Advantage plans are provided by private insurers, like Humana. Medicare Advantage plans include all that Original Medicare does and may also offer additional benefits, such as dental, vision, or hearing coverage.

#### What other benefits come with a Medicare Advantage plan?

With Medicare Advantage plans, your covered medical costs will never go above a maximum out-of-pocket amount, which you know beforehand, and you'll have access to large networks of doctors, hospitals and pharmacies. Medicare Advantage plans offer predictable costs and consistent benefits for members, helping them plan for their healthcare needs with confidence. There's truly a lot to take advantage of with a Medicare Advantage plan.

#### How do primary care and preventive care fit into a Medicare Advantage plan?

Primary care is where you get regular checkups, manage ongoing health issues, and build a relationship with a provider who understands you and your health history. Despite its importance, a recent survey revealed that more than half of those aged 65 and over are not regularly seeing a primary care provider. Preventive screenings are critical to helping maintain long-term wellness and staying independent for as long as possible.



For more information, visit [Humana.com/MedicareBasics](https://Humana.com/MedicareBasics)

Humana is a Medicare Advantage HMO, PPO and PFFS organization. Enrollment in any Humana plan depends on contract renewal.