LOWLINC
LIVING INDEPENDENTLY IN OUR COMMUNITY

NEWSLINC

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Message from the President/Board Chair

by John Beisheim

Winter is slowly departing now, but it leaves behind the severest damage that I have seen since we moved to LOW in 2011. From the storm damage and the power outages, however, emerged the idea for an innovative new service called "Neighborhood Companions." This is being led by the Volunteer Committee with assistance from the Member Outreach Committee. Basically, it is intended to establish a process in which LOWLINC volunteers will establish and maintain contact with LOWLINC members within each neighborhood in LOW in times of storms, power outages, etc. It will stress preventative measures, as well as direct support during the outage event. We will talk more about this new service in the future as the process and procedures become more defined.

You may have seen ads in Lake Currents for part-time staff positions in LOWLINC for an Executive Director and two Coordinators. This is a resource investment by LOWLINC that will allow us to sustain and expand our member services while enabling the Board to lead strategic initiatives for growth identified in our 2021 strategic plan. I am pleased to say that we received a strong response from candidates for each position and are progressing well with interviews. We expect to be making more announcements in April.

With the decline in COVID, our social events are now open, led by the Social Activities Committee. Be sure to check the schedule of events on our website and mark your calendars. If you are interested in learning more about becoming a LOWLINC member or volunteer, you are invited to attend a social event to learn more about us.

In closing, I want to thank Carol Simpson, who left our Board in March, for her service and her contributions on our Board as the leader for fundraising, including the successful 2021 Art of Wine. Carol introduced LOWLINC to a new strategic partner, RTC (Regional Transportation Collaborative). RTC has provided grant funding for volunteer driver recognition and retention. Transportation remains a key LOWLINC service. In 2021, LOWLINC drivers drove nearly 33,000 miles, 24,000 of which were for transportation of our members, within which 20,000 miles were for transportation to medical appointments. We are also in discussion with RTC about availability of a 14-passenger van, which will include wheelchair lift access. In addition, RTC is funding a major needs assessment to study transportation needs in the area of Locust Grove and Culpeper. Such a study is essential to defining our long term transportation strategy. RTC will also fund driver training for the van and the Rappahannock Rapidan Community Services van, for which we will soon be recruiting drivers.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COLLABORATIVE · RTC

New In-Home Artificial Intelligence Device Shows Promise

by Steve Hein, LOWLINC Vice President

Some of the night owls among us may remember one of those Saturday Night Live parody commercials a few years ago for “Alexa Silver,” an imagined version of Alexa for older adults – it’s louder, responds to being called the wrong name, remembers where you left your glasses, and has an “uh-huh” feature for long conversation. Well, now such a version of an in-home voice-activated personal assistance device for older adults actually exists – minus the humorous antics of that Saturday Night Live comedy sketch.

Intuition Robotics, an Israeli-based artificial intelligence (AI) company, has launched its new digital care companion, ElliQ. The company bills ElliQ as “the sidekick for healthier, happier aging,” saying it “accompanies older adults on their journey to age independently while motivating them to live healthier lives.” Developed with more than five years of cutting-edge AI research and tested with older adults, ElliQ is the first-ever proactive and empathetic AI care companion device designed with older adults living at home in mind. Combining psychology, behavioral sciences, and advanced cognitive AI capabilities, ElliQ was designed to empower older adults to live active, engaged, and connected lives at home while alleviating the effects of loneliness and social isolation to support their social determinants of health. ElliQ also connects older adults to their families, caregivers, and the outside world.

Research data released by the company shows high engagement scores in its testing program. Older adults interacted with ElliQ an average of 20 times a day for an average of 20 minutes a day, using ElliQ mainly for health and wellness support while spending time with ElliQ as a companion. This was due to its ability to project empathy and build trust with the user. Through acknowledgment, proactive engagement, and referencing previous conversations, ElliQ is more of a presence that accompanies older adults, as opposed to just another “smart” device in the home.

The device offers a range of companionship, health and wellness, communication, entertainment, and assistive features, including the following:

Physical exercise videos through a partnership with Silver Sneakers

Health content through a collaboration with Mayo Clinic

Access to transportation support with Uber Health

Daily conversation and inspiration

Regular check-ins and notifications to a loved one if there is a need

Health and wellness goal setting and tracking

Reminders for events, appointments, and more

Ability to easily send and receive text messages and conduct video calls

Memory recording and sharing, music, jokes, trivia, news, and engaging activities

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New In-Home AI Device *(continued from page 2)*

Subscription pricing begins at $29.99 per month (for an annual plan) which includes unlimited use of the hardware and software, warranty, automatic software updates, media content, games, and support. There is also an initial $249.99 enrollment fee that includes account setup, shipping and handling, installation support, 4 wellness coach sessions, and 3 concierge transactions.

Wide acceptance and use of this type of device, as well as whether it will fulfill the company's promises, remain to be seen. However, it is encouraging that from conceptual design, through research, development, and testing, the focus was on the older adult user living independently at home – an unusual, and welcome, approach from a technology company.

Volunteer Spotlight: Elaine Cook and Lisa Ward

In this issue, we shine the spotlight on the 2022 co-chairs of the Social Activities Committee, Elaine Cook and Lisa Ward. This important committee has faced many challenges over the past two years because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the its effect on our ability to socialize with others in person. But now that the pandemic has subsided, these two volunteers are off and running, planning a wide variety of social activities for LOWLINC members and volunteers alike and following in the footsteps of previous Social Activities Committee chairs and members in providing this vital service to LOWLINC members and our community at large.

Elaine retired in 2018 and joined her husband, Reggie Gavett, to live at the lake full time. Avid campers, they bought a travel trailer and go camping as much as they can with their two dogs – even spending four months work-camping at Grant Village in Yellowstone National Park. She started volunteering with LOWLINC, along with her husband, in 2019. "I really enjoyed the volunteers and members and the purpose of the Social Activities Committee," she says. "I was fortunate to meet Lisa, my co-chair, at an event at Old House, and we discussed the committee and agreed to co-chair. Our teamwork has made it possible, along with all the members of the committee, to bring an exciting array of activities to LOWLINC."

Lisa and her husband, Chris, moved to the Lake in 2018 eager to get involved in social activities in their new community, when they learned about LOWLINC and began serving as volunteers. Later on, they joined the Social Activities Committee and helped plan and host activities for members. "When I was approached to be committee chair, it was a bigger job than I would have sought out," says Lisa. "When it was suggested that Elaine might co-chair and take over most of the behind-the-scenes computer work, among other duties, I agreed to do my part." Lisa found some new interests during COVID restrictions, including piano lessons, water aerobics, and pet sitting.

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Volunteer Spotlight *(Continued from page 3)*

Lisa and Elaine love to hear your ideas about social activities and are willing to help members and other volunteers with their ideas. They encourage you to check out the many social activities posted on the LOWLINC website and listed in the Member Flyer each month!

Tips and News Briefs

Experts Disagree about Permanent Daylight Saving Time Most of us like the long days of summer, but the push to consider making Daylight Saving Time permanent here in the United States is not something health and sleep experts agree on. The American Academy of Sleep Medicine's position on this issue is that adoption of year-round Standard Time, rather than Daylight Saving Time, aligns the best with human circadian biology and provides benefits for public health and safety, noting that bright mornings help people wake up and stay alert; dark nights allow for the production of melatonin, the hormone that triggers sleep.

However, there's not enough good research related to this issue to draw strong conclusions. One study in 2017 from Denmark, published in *Epidemiology*, analyzed a database of more than 185,000 people from 1995 to 2012. This study found that the fall transition back to Standard Time was associated with an 11 percent increase in depressive episodes. The spring switch forward though, did not have a similar effect. A 2019 study, published in the *Journal of Health Economics*, which looked at how light affects people at opposite ends of a single time zone, found that an extra hour of light in the evening led to an average of 19 fewer minutes of sleep. There are economic and energy conservation arguments, as well. For example, some businesses argue that more light in the evenings gives consumers more time to spend money.

Regardless of the limited research and good arguments on either side, the movement toward permanent Daylight Saving Time in the United States has been gaining momentum, especially as the U.S. Senate recently approved legislation to do just that (House action is pending). Some of us remember when we tried this before – in 1974 – before public discontent caused us to shift back to changing the clocks twice a year. Stay tuned, and in the meantime, enjoy the "extra" hour of light this spring and summer!

Four Tips to Stay Motivated to Exercise (from the National Institutes of Health)
Physical activity is a great way for older adults to gain substantial health benefits and maintain independence. Try to make exercise a priority. Remember that being active is one of the most important things you can do each day to maintain and improve health. These tips may help you stay motivated to exercise.

1. Find simple ways to make exercise fun and enjoyable.
2. Find ways to fit exercise into your day.
3. Make exercise a social activity.
4. Keep track of your exercise progress.

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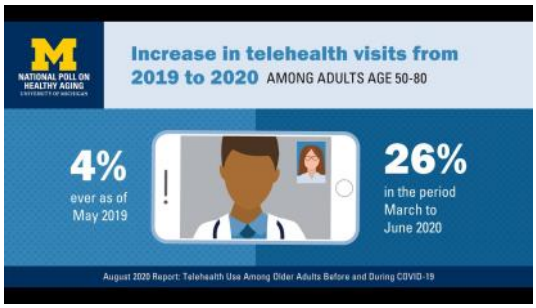
Health & Wellness Tips and News Briefs *(Continued from page 4)*

Find new ways to increase your physical activity, and update your exercise plan as you progress. Remember to build rewards into your plan by writing down something you will do for yourself when goals are achieved. Treat yourself to something special: watch a movie, read a new book, or go on an outing. Celebrate your successes! To get the most out of exercise and physical activity, they need to be a regular part of your life.

Medicare To Fund More Telehealth

Medicare announced it will continue to expand telehealth services in 2022, paying for beneficiaries to use online mental health services and other treatments. In making this announcement, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services noted that, "The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the gaps in our current health care system and the need to bring treatments to patients wherever they are." New features include covering the cost of some mental health services obtained over the phone, like counseling and therapy services, substance abuse treatment, and mental health telehealth visits by rural health clinics.



Did You Know?

… Practicing These Flying Etiquette Tips May Keep Tensions Down

Are you getting ready to take your first airline flight in a long time? Pandemic-related schedule changes, lack of recent travel experiences, and personal safety precautions and concerns have all led to more incidents of "air rage." Remembering your manners – and being patient – may help ease your concerns about flying again. Keep these five tips in mind when you're ready to board a plane again:

- Be prepared for the security checkpoint.
- Don't hog the overhead compartment.
- Be sensitive to your seatmate(s).
- Give the armrests to the middle seat passengers.
- Think before reclining.

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Did You Know? *(Continued from page 5)*

… These Spring Cleaning Tips Help Welcome the Season into Your Home

Spring has sprung! Now, it's time to get our homes in order after a long, cold winter. Are you ready for spring cleaning? Try these simple tips to help get your home clean, healthy, and organized.

Work in small chunks of time: Not sure where to start? Simple – anywhere. Spring cleaning does not need to be completed in one day. Instead, break up tasks into small chunks of time throughout the week, weeks, or month. This will make cleaning up much more manageable and motivating.

Make getting rid of clutter a priority: Decluttering helps you free up space, decrease stress, and even relieve insomnia. Removing clutter from your home also reduces your risk of tripping and falling. Work to separate items into three categories: keep, donate, and trash.

Leave the heavy lifting to someone else: To prevent injuries, do not try to move heavy objects or furniture on your own. It's important to stay safe while spring cleaning, especially if you have reduced strength or mobility issues.

Check your medicine cabinets: Check the expiration dates on all of your medications, both prescription and over the counter. If you find expired medications or medications you no longer need, properly dispose of them through a drug take-back program at your pharmacy, or you can consult the FDA's flush list.

Give your kitchen a refresher: Take some time to clean out your refrigerator and pantry. Make sure no old, expired food items have been pushed to the back and forgotten. Organizing your refrigerator and pantry by categories can help make preparing meals easier too.

Of course, you probably don't want to tackle all of these at the same time, but choosing to do some spring cleaning may help put a little bit of spring into your home.

… LOWLINC's Partnership with the University of Mary Washington Provides Tech Help to Members

Member Shirley Cornwell with Garry

A student from the University of Mary Washington Honors Program is working with LOWLINC to fulfill his sophomore year requirement to complete a community project. UMW sophomore Garry Lewis is providing one-on-one coaching to LOWLINC members on how to use the basic functions of their smartphones such as texting, taking and sharing pictures, voicemail, and downloading and using apps. Garry has worked with 12 individual members in Saturday afternoon sessions since February. LOWLINC has had a partnership with the University of Mary Washington Honors Program since 2017. Earlier students who worked with LOWLINC completed projects including development of a smartphone user manual for older adults and creating members' oral histories.

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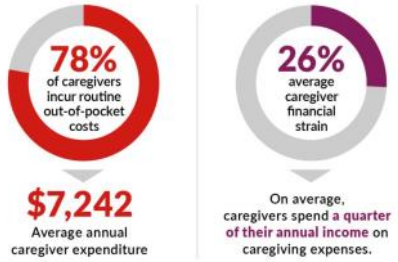
Did You Know? *(Continued from page 6)*

… Caregiving Takes a Financial Toll, Too

Caregiving not only can take a physical and emotional toll, it can take a financial one as well. A new study by AARP of nearly 2,400 unpaid caregivers in the spring of 2021 shows just how much housing and medical expenses can add up.

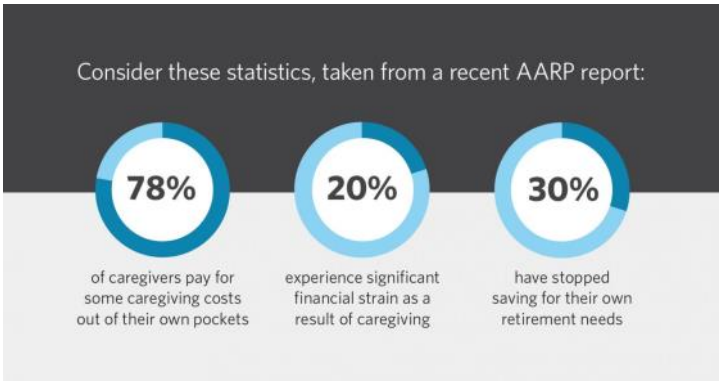


In the United States, about 48 million individuals provide unpaid care to an adult family member or friend. Nearly 8 in 10 caregivers report having routine out-of-pocket expenses related to looking after their loved ones. The typical annual total is significant: $7,242. On average, family caregivers are spending 26% of their income on caregiving activities.

About half of caregivers say they used their own money for household-related expenses. Nearly one-third, 30%, covered rent or mortgage payments for their loved ones, while 21% financed home modifications. Medical costs (paying for health care, therapists, in-home care, or medical equipment) accounted for 17% of caregiver spending. Notably, only 5% of caregivers reported having no expenses in the past year for their loved one.

Many employed caregivers face stress juggling both their jobs and caregiving. In addition to expenses, in fact, caregiving can cut into caregivers' income. About one-third of respondents reported two or more work-related strains, such as having to change their schedule or take leave, which leads to an average annual outlay of more than $10,000.

About half of caregivers say they have experienced financial setbacks. This may mean they have had to curtail their spending, dip into personal savings, or cut back on retirement contributions or plans. The recent COVID-19 pandemic magnified sacrifices for caregivers, with 42% of respondents spending even more time and money on caregiving than before.



THRIVE BEYOND 55

A health, safety, and crime prevention conference specifically designed for citizens 55 & older

Tuesday, May 10, 2022, 9 AM - 3 PM
At The Lake of the Woods Church

Speakers & Topics Include:
Attorney H. Van Smith - Protecting Your Assets
Special Agent Michael French – The 411 on Scams
Deputy Ron Kesner – The Faces and Facts of Triad
Randy Clouse, Office of the Attorney General – Keynote Speaker

Admission is FREE – please register by sending an email to OCTriad@gmail.com with your full name or if you have no access to email, please call 540-661-6156 and leave your full name and a contact number. Registration is open until April 27th or until capacity has been reached.

Lunch Provided - On-site Vendors - Door Prizes
Presented By Triad and Orange County Sheriff's Office and Hosted By The Lake of the Woods Church

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LOWLINC (Lake of the Woods, Living Independently in Our Community) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit fee-based volunteer service organization whose mission is to enable LOW's older residents to remain safely and independently at home. Our operating model is based on the nationwide village model.

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