

Golden Gazette

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/OlderAdults

Volunteer Appreciation Month

FOSTERING CHILDREN NEVER GROWS OLD

by Mary Jane Dye, Editor, Golden Gazette, Department of Family Services

No matter your age, you can impact the community through opening your heart and home. For Liz Murphy and her husband Mark Heinitz becoming foster parents was fulfilling and life changing. Loving and helping children in need also cultivated understanding and compassion in their own two young daughters.

As Liz explains, serendipity was at play when she sat next to a mom at

her neighborhood pool. “We were just chatting when she told me that she was a foster parent,” says Liz. This mom also told her about the Fairfax County Foster Care and Adoption Program.

Fostering a child was something Liz and her husband had already discussed. He had a childhood friend whose family fostered many children while raising their own. “It really made an impression on



Liz Murphy and her husband Mark Heinitz enjoy looking at family photos that include their foster children.

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Virtual Scam Jam 2021 on Friday, April 23

by Melissa Smarr, the Silver Shield Task Force



Scam Jam's keynote speaker is Susan Hogan, consumer investigative reporter.

The Fairfax Silver Shield Task Force along with AARP are gathering top experts and law enforcement officials to present at a free informational virtual Scam Jam on Friday, April 23 from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. The event will be hosted on Zoom.

The keynote speaker is Susan Hogan, consumer investigative reporter for NBC News4. Her remarks will focus on how individuals can outsmart scammers.

Presenters and exhibitors will discuss scams targeting Virginians, such as internet, telephone and mail fraud. The COVID-19 rescue and vaccination schemes, and the latest identity theft shams. Registration is required at bit.ly/FfxScamJam. ☀

DON'T MISS A SINGLE ISSUE OF THE *Golden Gazette!*

The *Golden Gazette* is a free monthly publication published by the Fairfax County Government. It covers local news-to-use and human interest stories for older adults.

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The *Golden Gazette* also is read over the phone to subscribers who register with The Washington Ear. Go to washear.org or call **301-681-6636** to register for this free service.

GOLDEN GAZETTE

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READER SUGGESTIONS FOR CONTENT TO THE GOLDEN GAZETTE

We'd like your feedback! What topics would you like to see in future issues? How can we make this publication even better?

Email your suggestions to DFSGoldenGazette@fairfaxcounty.gov or call **703-324-GOLD**.

Fostering Children Never Grows Old

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my husband, and he always thought fostering may be in his future,” disclosed Liz. She decided to learn more about the Fairfax County Foster Parent Association by attending a meeting. “I was immediately impressed by how this network of parents supported each other,” she explains. She also noted that it was not just younger people who were interested in fostering, and she was surprised to learn about different types of fostering.

The Murphy’s experience as foster parents spanned five years with all types of fostering: emergency care, respite care, and longer-term care. Ultimately, they settled on longer-term care so that their daughters and foster child could establish a bond with each other. “We cared for a total of six children representing five different families,” says Liz, enthusiastically, and “we are lucky to maintain contact with the children from one of these families.”

Looking back, Liz realizes how much their family grew from the experience. “We all learned a lot about how poverty, unmet mental health problems and fractured family relationships can contribute to situations where parents are unable to care for their children,” she says. She recalls that their daughters asked tough questions about why their foster brother or sister could not live with their own mom and dad, how come they could only see their parents on certain days, and why did they seem sad and mad? “Unfortunately,” she sighed, “there were times when we could not provide answers and times when we, too, wondered how things would work out.”

Liz is now 64. She says that if she and her husband were to consider fostering at this stage of life, they would help children who are in their teens or older teens that are about to leave the foster care system because they are aging out. According to Liz, many of these teens have managed to complete high school, get jobs, and/or start college. They do not have a family safety net and could use a caring adult

to mentor them. “The level of support a senior can provide may vary based on the person’s resources and the level of involvement they want to have,” says Liz, “but, it’s worth it.”

Liz and Mark regularly communicate with two of the children who lived with them. When recollecting the children with whom they have lost touch, Liz says, “We pray that the love we shared with them has helped them navigate their lives today.”

Liz is currently volunteering for GrandInvolve—a nonprofit that helps children from Title 1 schools succeed academically. “I knew that I would continue to do something to help children after leaving the foster care program,” she says, and after learning about GrandInvolve many years later, she decided to join GrandInvolve’s efforts. Liz had learned a lot about the school system and its programs centered around helping children at risk. GrandInvolve was a perfect way to share her knowledge. “I am keenly aware of how difficult it is for any parent, especially a single parent, to work, care for their children, attend school functions and special sessions like Individualized Education Plan meetings,” Liz says sympathetically. She also knows that succeeding in school—especially during the early formative years—is vital.

There are many ways to support children in need and the Fairfax County Foster Care and Adoption Program. Find volunteer opportunities at bit.ly/DFS-VPS. For information about GrandInvolve go to grandinvolve.org. 🌟

“I knew that I would continue to do something to help children after leaving the foster care program.”

Raising a Relative’s Child? You Are Not Alone

by Angela Folly Morlu, Department of Family Services

If you are raising a child for a family member or friend, then you are a kinship caregiver. There is a long history of extended family members—aunts and uncles, grandparents, and even family friends—stepping in, to support and care for children when parents are not able.

Raising a relative’s child can be incredibly rewarding and have many benefits. Children in kinship placements (rather than non-relative placements) tend to experience more stability, fewer disruptions, and experience a sense of belonging from their continued connectedness to family and culture.

Kinship Families’ Face Unique Challenges



Fifi and Sophia with Amy Kean.

Often, kinship families don’t have access to financial assistance or critical community resources. Many youth have experienced trauma, and they may be

unable to give voice to their difficult emotions. As a result, kinship caregivers can benefit from training and support groups.

Amy Kean, mother of Fifi (12) and the biological aunt and recently adoptive mother of Sophia (11) explained, “Becoming a kinship caregiver can be an overwhelming and isolating experience. Finding support through the Kinship Café has been critical in helping me to recognize and more effectively address the unique issues that my family faces.”

Amy continued, “Participating in Kinship Support Groups has also helped me to become part of a community of caregivers who truly understand what I am going through. Knowing that there is a group of people who are willing to listen and share what

they have learned makes a huge difference to me and has helped me become a better parent to my girls.”



Chase with Annie Henderson.

Kinship Caregiver Supports

The Department of Family Services Parenting Education Programs invites kinship caregivers to connect with others who have similar experiences and challenges.

One way is to sign up for the new ARC Reflections class offered virtually beginning Wednesday, June 16, 6-8 p.m. ARC Reflections provides caregivers with tools to help children and teens learn to regulate themselves, feel connected, and build strengths.

Kinship caregiver, Annie Henderson said “The ARC Reflections training taught me how the experience of trauma can affect children and gave me the tools to better love and support my grandsons.”

“I learned how important it is to view a situation from their perspectives. They didn’t choose their circumstances, and I’m grateful I feel more equipped to care for them and provide what they need,” shared Annie.

In addition, parenting education programs offer support and a chance to develop a network among kinship caregivers through:

- ◆ Kinship Cafés held monthly on the second Wednesday between 6:30-8 p.m
- ◆ Kinship Support Groups held each month on the first and third Thursday between 6:30-8 p.m.

If you are interested in learning more, send an email or call us at **703-324-7720** for more information. ✨

Help Shape the Future of Your Community and Neighborhood!

from the Department of Management and Budget

Fairfax County has proposed its first-ever Countywide Strategic Plan which will chart a future path over the next 10-20 years. The draft plan was originally presented to the Board of Supervisors in Feb. 2020, but COVID-19 paused public progress until now.

The updated plan, released at the Board of Supervisors meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 23, was adapted to reflect the rapidly evolving conditions of the pandemic, and its long-term implications.



As our economy recovers from the pandemic and we enter a new phase of our

public health response, we face significant budget challenges that will require us to focus our limited resources on top community priorities and most urgent needs.

There are over 150 strategies in the countywide plan. Whether you are new to Fairfax County, have lived here all your life, or are somewhere in between—we want to hear from you.

Take the Survey!

While the proposed plan was based on input we received through many community meetings and multiple surveys, we need your feedback once again to help shape the Fairfax County priorities of the future. What kind of community do you want to see? What do you think we should focus on first? What are the issues and outcomes that matter most to you?

We invite you to take the Countywide Strategic Plan survey to help us prioritize our work. The survey is divided into nine priority areas, so you can feel free



to only respond to the area that is most important to you, or all of them, since they are all inter-related.

In alphabetical order, the nine areas are:

1. Cultural and Recreational Opportunities
2. Economic Opportunity
3. Effective and Efficient Government
4. Empowerment and Support for Residents Facing Vulnerability
5. Health and Environment
6. Housing and Neighborhood Livability
7. Lifelong Education and Learning
8. Mobility and Transportation
9. Safety and Security

Accessing the Survey

The survey has been translated into multiple languages and can be accessed at [fairfaxcounty.gov/strategicplan](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/strategicplan). The complete proposed Countywide Strategic Plan is available for review at the same site.

The results of this survey will be shared with our county leadership as they continue to adapt the plan prior to implementation.

General comments on the plan are welcome via email at strategicplan@fairfaxcounty.gov. ☀

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Fairfax Area Commission on Aging

by *Jacquie Woodruff, Director, Livable Communities Development, Fairfax Area Agency on Aging*

The Fairfax Area Commission on Aging (COA) is an advisory board mandated by the Older Americans Act. Commissioners for the Fairfax Area Commission on Aging are appointed by the Board of Supervisors and the City Councils of the City of Fairfax and the City of Falls Church.

At the March 17 meeting, the Department of Family Services (DFS) Communications team and the COA discussed communication supports for older adults, including website and Facebook content. The Commission also received an update on the DFS Equity Impact Plan. ✨

Medicare Virtual Workshop

from *Virginia Insurance Counseling and Assistance Program*

This virtual Medicare 101 Workshop, led by the Virginia Insurance Counseling and Assistance Program (VICAP), provides information on Medicare coverage options including Parts A, B, C and D, Medigap, and new changes to Medicare. Registration is required.

Tuesday, June 1, Medicare 101, Virtual, 1-2:30 p.m. Tysons-Pimmit Regional Library, Falls Church *Registration begins May 4, 2021

To register, call 703-790-8088, option 4 or go to librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov/event/7460515 If you need reasonable ADA accommodations, call 703-324-5851, TTY 711.

Medicare Fair!

This free virtual Medicare Fair is for people turning 65 or joining Medicare because of a disability. Learn about Medicare and all its parts to assist you with your initial enrollment decisions.

Wednesday, June 23, virtual, 3-7 p.m. Learn more at shiphelp.org. Registration opens in April.

Attend the COA Meeting

- ◆ Wednesday, **April 21** at 1 p.m.
- ◆ Zoom:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82120540888>
- ◆ Access Code: **COA-m1234!**
- ◆ Dial **888-270-9936** or **602-333-0032**
- ◆ Conference code **231525**.

ADA accommodations?

Contact Hilda Naranjo, **703-324-7496** or hilda.naranjoaraujo@fairfaxcounty.gov; TTY services, available via **711**.

Understand the Dates on Your COVID-19 Vaccination Card

from *the Fairfax County Health Department*

Some COVID-19 vaccines require two doses to be fully vaccinated. Here is what you need to know about getting the second dose of Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna.

When people receive their vaccine, they are given a COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card. The nurse who gives the shot fills this card out for you. The front side of the card will include your name, date of birth, the manufacturer and lot number of vaccine provided, the date the vaccine was given, and the location.

Once the nurse has filled out the first side of the card, she or he will flip the card over and write down the date when you are eligible for your second dose. Depending on the vaccine, this date will be either three weeks or four weeks later. The date on the back of your vaccination record card is not an appointment date. It is the date when you are eligible to receive your second dose.

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Your Vaccination Card

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According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, second doses administered within a grace period of four days earlier than the recommended date for the second dose are still considered valid. The second dose should be administered as close to the recommended interval as possible. However, if it is not feasible to adhere to the recommended interval and a delay in vaccination is unavoidable, the second dose of Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines may be administered up to six weeks (42 days) after the first dose.

All vaccines are administered by appointment. Your vaccine provider will provide details on scheduling

your second dose.

Bring your vaccination card with you to your second appointment.

The nurse will review it, then write in the manufacturer and lot number along with the date when you receive your second dose. Hold on to your card or take a picture of it. This is your documentation that you've been vaccinated. If you have vaccine questions, call the COVID-19 hotline at **703-324-7404**. ☀



ACTIVITIES

Working to Reduce the Technology Gap Among Older Adults

from the Department of Neighborhood & Community Services

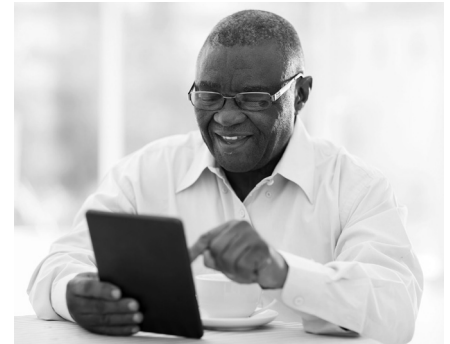
One year ago, senior centers in Fairfax County were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In response, the Virtual Center for Active Adults launched so that older adults and adults with disabilities could stay connected by participating in virtual classes and events. One major barrier for successfully participating in events is a lack of technology skills or fear of technology among older adults. Recognizing this, VCAA staff and their partners have been working to remove this barrier.

When the VCAA launched, one of the first classes offered was Learn Zoom Basic Skills to help older adults acquire the skills to join programs on Zoom. Although initially offered twice a week, the frequency of the class tapered to every other week as participants gained confidence using Zoom. In addition to the class, NSC offers tech support via email (NCSVCAA@fairfaxcounty.gov). The inbox is monitored by NCS tech educators who respond with advice and help troubleshoot issues. Lack of devices among older adults is another

barrier to connection. This fall a computer loaner program launched at Little River Glen Senior Housing. Conceived by NCS, ServiceSource and Senior Housing and funded by a donation from Nativity Catholic Church in Burke, seven tablets were purchased for the loaner program. If proven successful, loaner programs are planned for other senior housing locations.

VCAA partner ServiceSource has also created a Technology Grant Program to combat the technology gap.

The grant will be used to purchase tablets for older adults and people with disabilities most at need. To learn more, visit **servicesource.org/service/senior-services/**. ☀



CAREGIVING

Finding Caregiver Support

by *Giuliana Valencia, DFS Caregiver Coordinator*

Many family caregivers get satisfaction and meaning in caring for a loved one, but the increasing complexity of caregiving may be adding stress, anxiety, and depression. It has become common for caregivers to perform medical/nursing tasks and manage multiple health conditions, such as injections, tube feedings and managing medical equipment without proper support. If you are in this situation, ask for help. Talk with your loved one’s health care providers, ask questions, and speak up if you think their needs are not being met. Additionally, learn about the many resources available, such as education and training, so that you can become an effective caregiver.

For an in-depth conversation with a social worker about caregiving needs, call **703-324-5374, TTY 711**. Ask for a caregiver consultation, between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Caregiver Webinar: Carrying Out Caregiving: Checklist for Family Caregivers

This webinar, presented by Sally Hurme, AARP Elder Law Attorney, will explore all the legal tools a caregiver may need to have when being “just a caregiver” is not enough. Hurme will cover the tools—joint accounts, powers of attorney, advance directives, representative payeeships, and guardianships—and how best to use them. Join us on Wednesday, April 21 from Noon to 1 p.m. Register online at fairfaxcounty.gov/OlderAdults and scroll to the Free Events or call **703-324-5484**.

ElderLink’s Caregiver Support Call

Caregiving can be challenging, and burnout is a real concern. Sometimes finding the humor in a situation and laughing out loud with your loved one is the best choice for that moment. Join us on Tuesday, April 13 from 7–8 p.m. and have a conversation about using humor for well-being.



This session will be held via Zoom. A link and alternate phone number to join by computer or phone will be provided after sign-up.

Register online at fairfaxcounty.gov/OlderAdults and scroll to the Free Events.

Fairfax County Library: Access Services

Fairfax County Library offers a personalized reader advisory, books in alternative formats for individuals with print disabilities and delivery of materials to people who cannot physically visit a local library due to age, disability, illness, or frailty. They also provide deposit collections at select facilities and opportunities to learn about assistive technologies.

Find more at research.fairfaxcounty.gov/aging-and-disability or call **703-324-8380** or **TTY 703-324-8365**.

Fairfax Alerts!

If we can’t reach you, we can’t alert you. Family caregivers can receive email or text notifications of Fairfax County caregiver services and programs. These programs include case management, in-home respite, caregiver support and webinars, wellness workshops, and much more.

Visit fairfaxcounty.gov/alerts to create or sign into your Fairfax Alerts account and then select Area Agency on Aging. ✨

Long-Term Care Facility Discharges —What You Need to Know

by Camden Doren, NVLTCC, Department of Family Services

Being discharged from a long-term care (LTC) facility can cause a mixture of feelings for a resident and their families. Many are happy at the thought of returning home, while others are confused about the discharge process. All LTC facilities must provide notice of discharge to a resident, or authorized decision maker, in writing. The discharge regulations vary between a nursing facility and assisted living.

A nursing facility must provide written notice of discharge at least 30 days in advance and include:

- ◆ Reason for discharge,
- ◆ Proposed date of discharge,
- ◆ Location the resident will be discharged to,
- ◆ Information on how to appeal the discharge, and
- ◆ Contact information for the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program and other agencies responsible for advocacy on behalf of persons with mental illness and developmental disabilities.

Upon initiating a discharge within an assisted living facility, the facility is required to write in the resident's records that discharge planning has begun, and the resident is to be moved within 30 days.

Written notice of a resident's discharge should be provided at least 14 days prior to the resident leaving and should include information pertaining to the actual discharge date and location. In some instances, an emergency discharge may require less than the 14-day notice.



As a mandated program under the Older Americans Act, the Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is often called to assist residents and consumers to advocate for their rights to ensure quality of care and quality of life. For more information about resident's rights when it comes to discharge planning or other nursing facility and assisted living concerns, call the NVLTCOP at **703-324-5861, TTY 711**, or contact by email at **NVLTCOP@fairfaxcounty.gov**. ✨

Surviving Pandemic Anxiety: The Power of Positive Thinking

from Northern Virginia Resource Center for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Persons



Sometimes the mind does not know the difference between what is real, and what is not real. Most of us don't realize the power and control given to thoughts that influence our feelings and actions. Learning to recognize unpleasant thoughts and, then, creating positivism can help navigate stressful times.

Attend *Surviving the Pandemic Anxiety: The Power of Positive Thinking*, Saturday, April 10, 10- 11 a.m. via Zoom. This program also will be American Sign Language interpreted and captioned. For other ADA accommodations, email **info@nvrc.org**. Register at **nvrc.org/surviving-pandemic-anxiety-the-power-of-positive-thinking** ✨

VOLUNTEERING

Recognizing Volunteers During an Unprecedented Year

By Tanya Erway, Volunteer Solutions Recruitment Coordinator, Department of Family Services

This past year has been tumultuous and unpredictable. People around the globe were abruptly advised to keep their distance, wear masks, and stay home. This was indeed a hurdle, but one that's been surmountable with caution and creativity.

A friendly phone call, a caring card, a clean yard, and Meals on Wheels are ways volunteers from Volunteer Solutions have been letting others know they care. Many volunteers are taking part in new, pandemic-altered roles, while others are waiting to participate once they feel comfortable—or they become available. Either way, volunteers are valued!

National Volunteer Week was established by a Presidential Proclamation in 1974. April is the month where volunteers are officially recognized. This year, National Volunteer Week is April 18-24. We appreciate all who donate their time, talent, and resources specifically to older adults, adults with disabilities and caregivers.

In 2020, of the 20,970 clients served by the Department of Family Services (DFS), Volunteer Solutions served 10,755. Also, its volunteers provided 97,019 of the department's 138,061 volunteer hours.

Lastly, using the Independent Sector, the monetary value of volunteer hours for DFS was \$3,929,216.38

*National Volunteer Week
is April 18-24.*

in which Volunteer Solutions volunteers contributed \$2,761,160.74. We applaud volunteers!

A special “thank you” to volunteers who have been giving their time in these pandemic-altered roles:

- ◆ Meals on Wheels Coordinators update delivery route rosters and report meal counts.
- ◆ Meals on Wheels Runners ride with Fastran drivers and deliver meals.
- ◆ Virtual Social Visitors call and chat to decrease isolation and do well-being checks.
- ◆ Senior Center Virtual Activity instructors teach activities to older adult participants.
- ◆ IT On-Call troubleshoot IT issues via phone.
- ◆ Yard work volunteers clean up leaves and debris.
- ◆ Caring Cards volunteers write kind notes to help decrease feelings of loneliness.
- ◆ Virtual office assistants help staff update the database by making phone calls to volunteers.

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There are never too many leaves for volunteers who rake yards for seniors.



Volunteers serve as Meals on Wheels runners who take nutritious food to clients.



Recognizing Volunteers

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- ◆ 50+ Community Ambassadors help inform their social networks, family, friends, faith communities, etc., on programs for older adults.
- ◆ Virginia Insurance Counseling & Assistance Program counselors provide health insurance counseling to people with Medicare.
- ◆ Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsmen advocate for residents in long-term care.

Volunteering offers opportunities to create and maintain connections with others. It's rewarding and may offer more than a salary ever could. Volunteers give an invaluable gift that uplifts lives, which is needed now more than ever.

Thank you for making an impact! ☀

Submit county volunteer opportunities to Tanya Erway at Tanya.Erway@fairfaxcounty.gov

The Shepherd Center

The Shepherd Centers primary purpose it to assist older adults to live independently and to offer programs for enrichment and socialization.

- ◆ **Annandale/Springfield**
703-941-1419, shepherdscenter-annandale.org
- ◆ **Fairfax/Burke**
703-323-4788, scfbva.org
- ◆ **Great Falls**
703-586-9696, thescgf.org

- ◆ **McLean/Arlington/Falls Church**
703-506-2199, scmafc.org
- ◆ **Oakton/Vienna/Reston/Herndon**
703-281-0538, scov.org
- ◆ **South County**
703-799-0505, email scsc-transport@verizon.net
- ◆ **Western Fairfax County**
703-246-5920, scwfc.org ☀

NUTRITION

Having Difficulty Preparing Meals?

The Meals on Wheels nutrition program provides home delivered nutrition services targeted to persons 60 years of age or older as well as younger individuals who may have a disability and are temporarily unable to prepare meals for themselves due to illness or accident. Weekly meals are available for in-home delivery. Priority is given to older individuals with the greatest economic and social need, with special emphasis on low-income minority

individuals, older individuals with limited English proficiency, and individuals at risk for institutional placement. The program is targeted to support eligible adults to remain independent in their own homes with support by this program. The meals program currently provides a weekly, contact-free meal delivery of 11 flash frozen meals. Meals are delivered one time per week. Apply by calling the Department of Family Services, **703-324-5409**. ☀

Are You Eligible for SNAP?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) can be used like cash to buy food from authorized retailers and online from Amazon and Walmart but not delivery fees. Recipients receive an Electronic Benefit Transfer card. Your account is debited each time eligible food items are purchased. A secret Personal Identification Number is required.

Your household must meet certain requirements to be eligible for SNAP benefits. The application process can be done by computer or phone—no need to come in-person. Apply online at **commonhelp.virginia.gov/access**, or call **1-855-635-4370**. For details, call the Department of Family Services Customer Care Line at **703-324-7500**, TTY **711**. ☀

HEALTH

Be kind to those with a Hoarding Disorder—especially if that person is yourself!

by Karen Hanagan, Fairfax County Aging, Disability and Caregiver Resource Team

Hoarding is a real-life struggle. It is the need to obsessively collect things, even if worthless, or a tendency to hang onto items you really don't need. As with most conditions, understanding and empathy, along with a big dose of kindness and patience, can help those who suffer.

Mental Health Condition

Obsessive hoarding is a mental health condition aptly named "Hoarding Disorder." Since 2013, this disorder has been covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act, and you may seek treatment by a behavioral health practitioner.

As with other diseases, there are many levels. In extreme hoarding, some may face eviction, loss of children, illness from unsanitary conditions and even divorce. Mild hoarding may include excessively acquiring items that you don't have space for, e.g., the items may create a safety hazard and not needed.

First Step

No matter the level of hoarding, kindness is the starting point, so never refer to a person with this condition, including yourself, as "a hoarder." Focus should be on the unique qualities of the individual and not the person's clutter.

Defining Hoarding Disorder

If you are not certain there is a hoarding issue, use this list from The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, published by the

American Psychiatric Association. The manual defines Hoarding Disorder as:

- ◆ Persistent difficulty discarding or parting with possessions, regardless of their actual value.
- ◆ Difficulty is due to a perceived need to save the items and to distress associated with discarding them.
- ◆ Accumulation of possessions that congest living areas and substantially compromises these area's intended use. If living areas are uncluttered, it is only because of the interventions of third parties (e.g., family members, cleaners, or the authorities).

Significant distress or problems in important areas of functioning, e.g., at home or work (including a safe environment for the person and others).

Understanding the Condition

Due to a lack of understanding, hoarding often causes stress and may damage relationships, as is true of any chronic illness. Understanding how a person who has difficulty parting with items feels about their possessions will help to build empathy for their reluctance to get rid of them.

Here are some common thoughts about possessions that elicit strong feelings for those with the disorder.

- ◆ If I don't buy this now, I'll regret it forever
- ◆ Losing this possession is like losing a friend
- ◆ Throwing this away means losing a part of my life
- ◆ I am responsible for this possession
- ◆ I might need this someday
- ◆ It would be wasteful to throw this out

If you take a moment to feel the regret, panic, sadness, and failure

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Never refer to a person with this condition, including yourself, as "a hoarder."

Be kind to those with a Hoarding Disorder

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associated with the above statements, you may better understand the great sense of loss a person with this disorder feels when trying to discard items.

Accept and Give Kindness

If your life has been touched by a hoarding disorder, accepting or giving help is an act of kindness. Those with the disorder may wish to let especially calm, thoughtful, and empathic people into their lives. Let them help make your living space more comfortable. Ways to begin decluttering life include:

- ◆ Answer the question: Is this exactly the way I want my living spaces to be?
- ◆ Make a list of: **A)** what are the positive feelings from the “excess” items you have around you and **B)** what keeping them has done to your personal relationships and how keeping them interferes in other ways with daily life.
- ◆ Look at magazines with pictures of different living spaces. Decide which ones are how you want your home to look. Cut them out and adhere to the door or another visible spot.
- ◆ Consider working with a clinician who can guide friends and family helpers with you as a team. There are some who take Medicare.
- ◆ Hire a decluttering professional, there are many seasoned ones in the Washington, D.C. area.

Set Ground Rules for Helpers

- ◆ You may keep me focused by asking me things like, “In the long run, are you better off keeping it or letting it go?” but do not act like a drill sergeant or shame me.



Example from the International OCD Foundation Hoarding Centre. Clutter image rating for a bedroom—levels 1-9. Levels are progressive with 1 as the lowest.

- ◆ You may help me decide which things to donate, throw away, keep or put in storage but do not move my things without my permission.
- ◆ We will work until I get too tired or overwhelmed.
- ◆ Everyone involved might want to use tape or string to identify one reasonable section of the home and work only within that section, to lessen the overwhelming feeling everyone may have at the start of the job.
- ◆ Take breaks. Go out to lunch, now that the weather is warmer and outside meals are possible, and treat yourself to a nice meal during the clean-out process. Celebrate achievable goals and small victories.

Some of the leading researchers on this topic are David Tolin, Randy O. Frost and Gail Steketee. They have authored self-help books as well as guides for helpers, and list support groups. Anything you find on internet searches involving these three authors would be thoroughly researched and vetted. Their guidelines to be practical and easy to follow.☀

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April 2021 Community Calendar

Fridays, The Helping Hands Stroke Club. Virtual Support Group, Free, 1-2 p.m.

Due to the COVID-19, we are currently meeting on Zoom. If you would like to attend a meeting, please contact call **703-246-7120** or email erica.wrenn@fairfaxcounty.gov

Wednesday, April 7, 10 a.m., Lifelong Learning Institute, Free, monthly Zoom Forum

David K. Owens, former executive vice president, Edison Electric Institute, will discuss recent power grid issues within the U.S. Learn about how Puerto Rico and Texas are undergoing massive energy transformations. By 2050, 100% of Puerto Rico's power is expected to come from renewable sources. Learn more and join this and other monthly virtual forums at lilnova.org

Wednesday, April 14, 12:30–2 p.m., Grow the Lawn of Your Dreams, Zoom Garden Program.

Creating a beautiful lawn isn't difficult. Extension master gardeners show you how to develop healthy turf that can withstand pest pressure and dry weather. For the virtual plant clinics go to fairfaxgardening.org/current/

Saturday, April 17, Virtual Author Reading, 2-3 p.m., Free, Local author Shabnam Curtis: My Persian Paradox: Memories of an Iranian Girl.

Listen to Curtis read a few passages of her memoir and talk about her journey of seeking freedom and authenticity. Register at librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov/event.

Tuesday, April 20, 1-3 p.m. Virtual Lecture: Mount Vernon Genealogical Society, Arriving in America in the Early 19th Century

Genealogist Sharon Hodges discusses coming to America through New York City's Barge Office, Castle Garden, and Ellis Island. Nonmembers are welcome to attend one event each year free of charge. Register no later than April 12 at mvgenealogy.org/eventListings or by emailing your name to contact-us@mvgenealogy.org.

Wednesday, April 21, 11:30 a.m., Parkinson's Café, Free, Virtual.

There's more to life than Parkinson's. Come together virtually to chat, share experiences and enjoy coffee and doughnuts in the comfort of your home. Free. To RSVP, call **571-286-5000**. More information at parkinsonsocialnetwork.org.