

SALEM NEWS

Age Out Loud: Theme of 2017 Older Americans Month

Your children may comfort you with words like, *"You're only as old as you feel,"* but the fact is, everyone ages. The senior years – also known as the Golden Years – bring challenges.

Of course, as youth, the road of life stretches out way ahead with lots of time to think about old age and related issues at some later date. In the middle years the focus is on raising the family, obtaining the things you need and desire and working toward retirement. Before you know it, time has passed and if you haven't begun to plan your senior years, you are there and know that you can't procrastinate any longer.

As we move toward May, Older Americans Month will kick into gear and is a good time to consider long term care planning. The Administration on Aging offers a great deal of helpful information online. Here are a few thoughts for you to ponder as you consider how you will address the aging issues ahead of you.

Myth: Most people do not need long term care.

Fact: 70 percent of people turning 65 can expect to need some form of long term care at some point in their lives.

Myth: Since there's no cure for Alzheimer's there's no need to plan.

Fact: Planning ahead has benefits for you and your family.

Myth: Falls are inevitable as we age.

Fact: Falls are preventable.

Myth: I can save enough money on my own to cover costs.

Fact: Less than 1/3 of Americans age 50-plus have begun saving for long term care.

Myth: Under Medicaid my home is exempt.

Fact: Eligibility criteria include home equity limit and most states recoup long-term care expenditures from beneficiary estates.

There is a great deal to think about. What will you need to meet your long term care needs? Long term care includes anything that you will need to meet your daily needs: bathing, dressing, toilet, eating, and other things individual to you. Then there is the question of who will clean your home, manage money and taking your medication, preparing and cleaning up after meals, shopping for groceries and clothes, using the phone, caring for your pets and responding to emergency alerts like fire alarms. When you can no longer take care of yourself, where will you live? How do you need to modify your home?

Brain health, healthy eating that meets your nutritional needs and physical activity are discussed at www.choosemyplate.gov/older-adults.

There also is the matter of sleep and aging. The National Institutes of Health advise that older adults need the same amount of sleep as younger adults, 7-9 hours each night. But older adults commonly sleep lighter and wake up through the night. They also become sleepier earlier in the evening and wake up earlier in the morning. Poor sleep can lead to depressed mood and attention and memory problems, excessive drowsiness during the day, falling more at night and using more sleeping aids at night. Poor sleep results in poor quality of life. NIH further advises that disturbed sleep and waking up tired are not normal to aging. Talk to your doctor.

If you haven't thought about your plans for your elder years, now might be a good time to start. It's never too late to begin planning to give you better advantages to your Golden Years.

Addiction has no address, but Family Recovery Center does. For more information about the education, prevention and treatment programs for substance abuse and related behavioral issues, contact the agency at 964 N. Market St., Lisbon; phone, 330-424-1468; or e-mail, info@familyrecovery.org.

FRC is funded, in part, by United Way of Northern Columbiana County.

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