

Social Isolation: A Health Risk for Seniors

*"You know that old trees just grow stronger
And old rivers grow wilder every day
Old people just grow lonesome
Waiting for someone to say, 'Hello in there,
hello'"* - John Prine

Social isolation and loneliness have a negative impact on your health. According to the National Institutes of Health, of the 13.8 million non-institutionalized older adults in the U.S., about 28%, live alone. Although this does not necessarily correlate with social isolation and loneliness, it can become a greater factor when seniors quarantine at home to avoid exposure to the corona virus. Chronic illness, hearing loss and loss of family or friends increase the risk. Research has shown that social isolation can mean increased falls, heart disease, depression, cognitive decline and hospital readmission, in addition to increased early mortality in older adults.

Social isolation is more of a problem in rural communities where there are fewer local opportunities for interaction as well as transportation challenges. In Delta County where an estimated 26.8% of the population is aged 65 or older, many opportunities for social connection have dried up due to the pandemic. The concerts, fairs, and other community events that enriched our lives in past seasons have been cancelled or gone online this year. Unfortunately, many seniors are unable to access the internet so they miss out on these replacement events.

There are ways you can help with this crisis:

- **Stay in touch** with your elder family members and friends. Make it a part of your week or day to call them or, if they are nearby, to visit – with social distancing and face mask precautions of course.
- **Check in with older neighbors** on a regular basis. You might offer to help with errands, light yard work or handy tasks to keep them

to keep them safe at home and connected with the neighborhood. The NFSC website posts service requests and sends emails about these tasks twice a week. Check to see if there is something you can help with.

- Some seniors may be willing to learn how to communicate via Facetime or Zoom; **help them to connect with others via the internet.**
- Letter writing is an art familiar to older generations – **send letters or cards on a regular basis** and encourage them to respond in kind. Our NFSC pen pal program can match you with an elder who is homebound or a volunteer eager to connect.
- **Give elders something to take care of.** Pet ownership can relieve feelings of isolation and loneliness and provide opportunities for exercise and contact with other pet owners. Even tending a garden – indoors or out – can satisfy the need to nurture.

Form a one-on-one friendship with another senior through Senior Connections. The Region10 Area Agency on Aging has a Senior Companions program matching isolated seniors with older volunteers for help with light chores, errands and friendship. To find out more or to volunteer, call Meg Nagel at 970-765-3123 or email her at meg@region10.net

Movies in the Morning



Movies in the Morning (Covid Edition) is back at the Paradise in Paonia! Join your friends and neighbors on the 2nd Thursday, September 10th, at 10 am for another blast from the past, "The Road to Bali" starring Bob Hope, Bing Crosby and Dorothy Lamore. As always, the movie is free for those 65 and older. Seating is limited to 25 so make your reservations by calling Sunshine at 303-984-4788 or sending an email to:

director@paradisepaonia.com

September 2020



NEWS

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September Birthdays

Happy Birthday to:

Eileen Keaveny – September 5
Linda Driscoll – September 16
Elaine Brett – September 30

Calendar

• Boost Your Brain & Memory -

8 week series via Zoom. Meeting at 5 pm on 9/2, 9/9, 9/16, 9/23, 9/30. Please call 970-527-3482 or email us at: nfseniorconnections@gmail.com if you are registered but unable to attend.

• Ag & Art Tour - Downtown Paonia

Sept. 5, 3 - 7 pm: See northforkcreative.org for details

• Movies in the Morning

"The Road to Bali" Thursday, Sept 10, at 10 am at the Paradise Theater in Paonia. Call 303-984-4788 to reserve your seat. See article for more information.

• Memoir Writing

Every Wednesday, 1:30 - 3 pm - various outdoor locations or online via Zoom. Contact Yuri Chicovsky at yurichicovsky@gmail.com for more information

• Senior Lunch

- Every Monday, Wednesday, Friday - pick up at Paonia Senior Center at noon.
- Every Monday, Wednesday, Friday - pick up at Hotchkiss Senior Center at noon.

• Valley Organic Lunch Program for Seniors

- Every other Friday in September - Old River Road Trading Post, Paonia - call or text Chrys at 970-417-2299 to RSVP by the Wednesday before. Pick up 12:30 to 1:30.

• Caregivers' Support Group

- Thursdays, 1 - 3 pm via Zoom. Contact Dr. Jess Deegan for information and to join the conversation either by computer or by phone. Email: drdeeganii@gmail.com or phone: 970-510-0724

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