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SUMMER 2020

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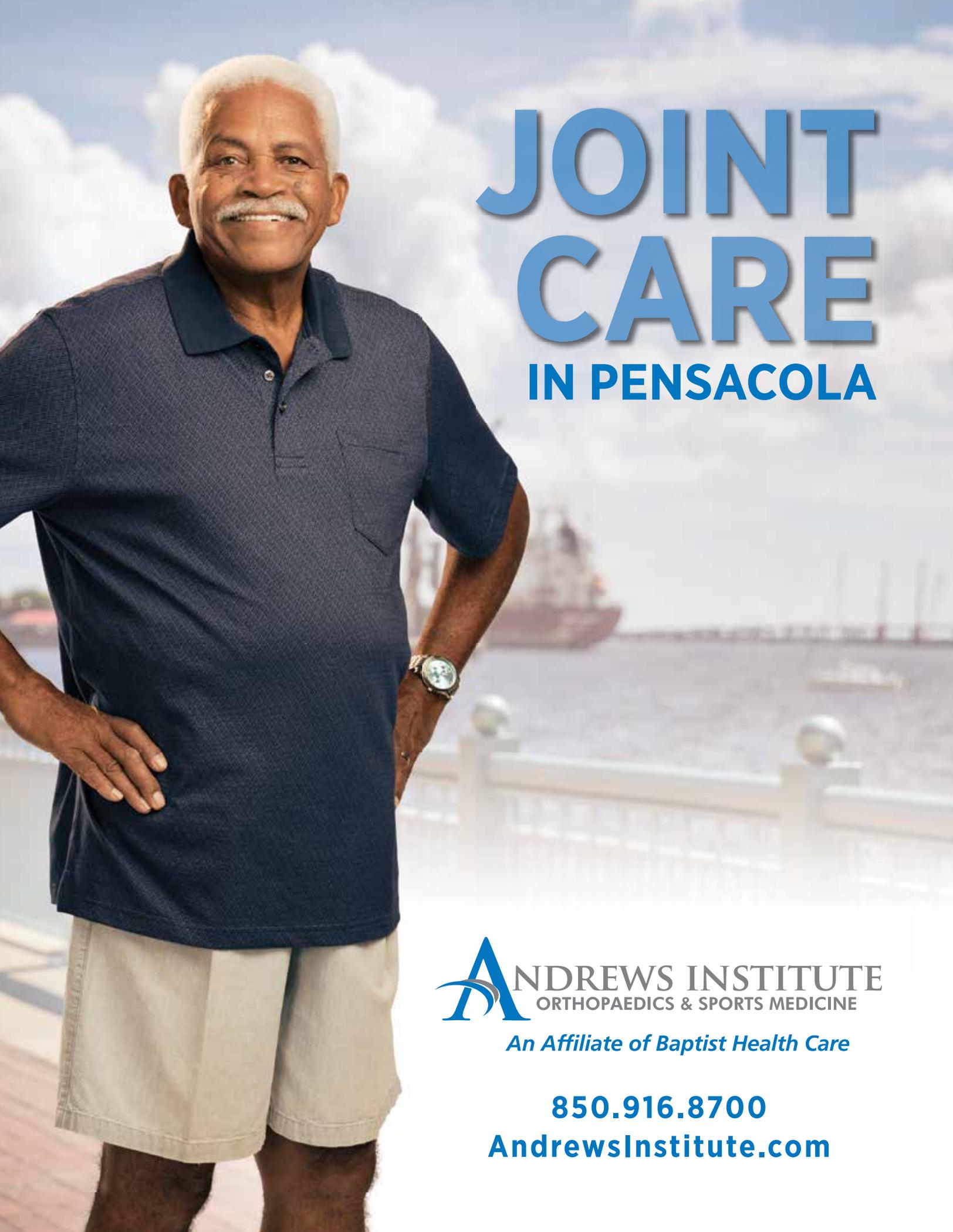
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[FROM THE EDITOR]



Josh Newby

Marketing Communications
Director and Editor-in-Chief

I penned my spring editorial on Feb. 17 of this year, roughly a month before the Coronavirus pandemic began to seriously disrupt life as we know it. At that time, you might have seen a mention or two of it in the news, or on social media, but it seemed, at least to me, very much a distant issue that might at most cause some minor inconveniences. How wrong I was.

The virus has taught us a lot, though we've learned very little about it. Personally, it taught me that people would rather look for answers in broad, sweeping conspiracy theories than in nuanced and ever-changing scientific deliberation. It taught me that the public health has to be balanced with economic concerns, because one doesn't mean much without the other. And it taught me to value a haircut, a night out with friends, and even a grocery trip.

The full economic shutdown, which lasted a little over a month in our area, was more difficult to endure for some than the virus could ever be. We have gone from fearing the virus to resenting it, from trusting the science to treating it as optional. We were granted reprieve from the craziness of our normal lives only to long for it. What I would give to stand in line for a movie, or sit in a crowded restaurant, or plan for the future without some kind of asterisk. Life has changed a lot in the past four months, and frankly I am about tired of talking and thinking about it.

But, of course, talk and think about Coronavirus we must, because it is going to be a part of our collective consciousness in some way for at least a while longer. In

that spirit, but not to belabor the point, we have sought to bring you interesting perspectives and unique ideas related to the disease that are not simply the same facts and opinions regurgitated time and again. For example, we've got a letter from our board chair that was actually written in the wake of 9/11 but whose sentiments bear a striking resemblance to today. This issue also features portraits of seniors talking about how the virus has affected them, in their own words.

Of course, other issues in life still persist, so check out our stories on podcasts, saving for your grandchildren's college years, and even a feature on the benefits and myths surrounding vote-by-mail.

Finally, we talk to community and entertainment mainstay Linda "Sonshine" Moorer about her upbringing, her life and a couple causes close to her heart. She's a fascinating person with a story to tell (when she's not busy telling other people's stories). Learn more on page 32.

Please let me know if Council on Aging can assist you in any way. This is not the time to go it alone. We've got free meals, in-home services, respite care and everyday items available to you. I've even helped senior adults set up their computers for video calling the grandkids! My personal line is (850) 266-2507. I'd love to hear from you and to help you. Until next time, enjoy life—you've earned it, especially now!

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Your subscription to *Coming of Age* comes automatically with your membership to Council on Aging of West Florida. If you have questions about your subscription, call Josh Newby at (850) 432-1475 ext. 130 or email jnewby@coawfla.org. Please do not hesitate to contact Josh with any questions or comments about your service, and thank you.

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Is there an issue of one of our magazines that you just have to have? Was your relative seen in a recent issue and you lost it? Give Ballinger Publishing a call at (850) 433-1166 ext. 26, and they will find one for you.

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Council on Aging of West Florida welcomes your letters and comments. Send letters to Council on Aging c/o Josh Newby at 875 Royce St., Pensacola, FL 32503, emails to jnewby@coawfla.org or contact editor Kelly Oden at Ballinger Publishing, P.O. Box 12665 Pensacola, FL 32591 or kelly@ballingerpublishing.com.

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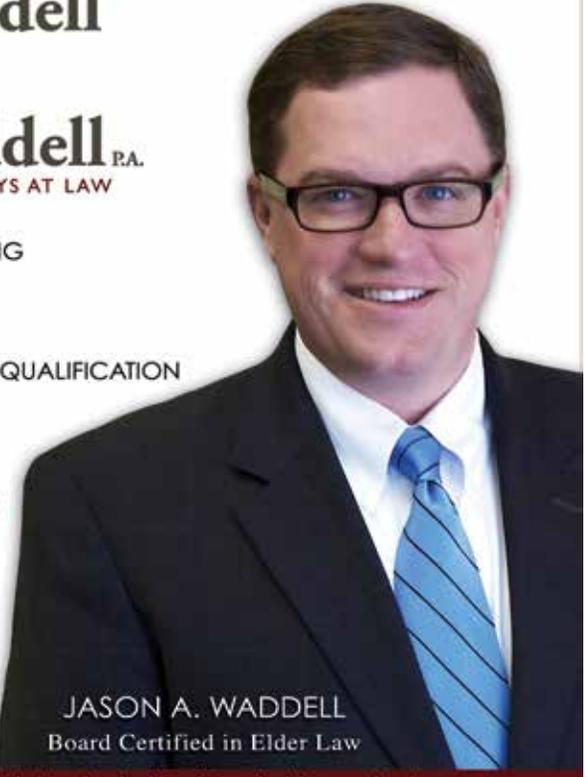
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Cover: Linda "Sonshine" Moorer photographed by Guy Stevens

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Council on Aging of West Florida, Inc. is compliant with the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance Standards for Charity Accountability.



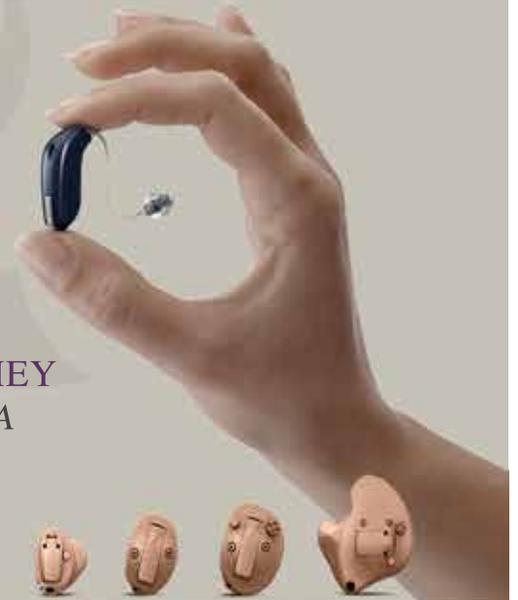
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Good Grief! What's Next?

by John Clark

I guess we could be forgiven if we asked ourselves that question, “What’s next?” We are in the midst (not the end) of a global pandemic killing thousands of our fellow citizens and people all over the globe with no real end in sight. We face a hurricane season predicted to be above average, forest fires in our area which raged out of control for days, killer hornets (can you believe it?), climate change affecting our weather, and massive unemployment in our country and the world largely caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

One morning on my way to work and shortly after the Governor ordered most businesses to close and people to remain at home (except for essential services), I made my usual detour to the McDonald’s drive-through for my senior coffee. I commented to the

employee that if McDonald’s or the Waffle House were to completely close, then I guess it would indeed be the end times. Not sure if she appreciated my sense of humor. With the whole world turned upside down, it sure does seem that we are living in a surreal time and world. Our entire agency operations were thrown into turmoil, and many of our services were drastically changed—literally overnight. Yet, make no mistake, so much of what the Council on Aging does is essential and always has been essential.

Suddenly we could not provide senior dining services at our 20 sites in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties, but had to switch to a pickup-and-go service. Our senior volunteers could no longer mentor children in schools, our day care center closed as participants felt it best to remain at home, some of our employees felt it was best if they were allowed to work from home while others preferred to continue working from the office. We could no longer do face-to-face case management assessments and had to rely on telephonic

contacts. At the same time, our elder clients had to continue receiving their in-home services and home-delivered meals and our demand for home-delivered meals spiked because of the fact that elders were safer if they remained at home and many had no way to secure meals or food. To meet the challenge of this increased demand, we were fortunate to receive increased emergency funding from the federal Older Americans’ Act (OAA) program and generous support from local donors. But we were also fortunate that our essential workers and volunteers remained on duty.

We hear lots of talk about our hero truck drivers, our grocery store employees, our medical personnel, and others who must continue working during these difficult times. Well I am here to tell you about some other heroes, but I see them every day. These are our hero Meals on Wheels volunteers who continue to deliver meals each week to homebound elders, our senior dining site managers who continue to work and ensure that meals are distributed daily

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in our pick up and go program, our nutrition office staff who schedule meal deliveries and order meals, our social services staff who continue to assess clients needing help and arranging needed services, our telephone intake workers who assess clients daily for meal services, and our office staff who respond to numerous calls and walk-ins guiding them to the correct agency or person who can be of assistance. Then, of course, we have our in-home workers with our vendor agencies such as TLC Caregivers and Home Instead Senior Care who continue to work and go to the homes of elders needing services. Yes, these are all heroes and truly essential workers AND unsung heroes. What could we say to adequately thank them all?

I know this has been a difficult time for us all and for some it has meant life or death. As I said, it seems surreal. But we need to remember the saying, "And this, too, shall pass away." In the meantime, we need to continue doing good, being grateful, and caring for one another.



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Podcasts to Tune Into

by Dakota Parks

Despite the image that comes to mind of a busy business executive rushing around on a train in a big city listening to a podcast during their commute, a recent study by Edison Research revealed that 80 percent of podcast listening happens at home. Doing the dishes, lounging on the couch, working in the garden—all of these activities can be accomplished listening to a podcast. Podcasts come in all shapes and sizes from comedy, conspiracy theories, sports, politics, finance, business or flat out talk show entertainment. We took the time to round up some of the best podcasts out there to entice your ears and curiosity. All of these programs are available on multiple streaming platforms: Apple Podcast, iHeartRadio and Spotify.



Aliens Like Us

Acclaimed actor, comedian and host Rhys Darby explores outer space mysteries and alien conspiracy theories. He unearths questions like: do aliens exist? Why do people travel to stay in UFO themed hotels? What's up with Area 51? Each week he brings on a new guest to talk about a specific issue in the realm of alien theories. Just released in February, this new podcast is bound to make you laugh and question the next plane you see up in the sky.

Conan O'Brien Needs a Friend

This is a weekly podcast hosted by American comedian and talk show host Conan O'Brien. As the story goes, after 25 years on television at the Late Night desk, Conan never made any lasting friendships or connections with his celebrity guests, so he started a podcast to get to know his guests better—and maybe make a friend. Each episode stars a celebrity guest and their feelings on being Conan's friend.





Ask Me Another This rowdy comedy meets trivia podcast is produced by NPR, and it's a roaring good time described by the hosts themselves as an "amusement park for your brain." The hosts Ophira Eisenberg and musician Jonathan Coulton bring on various comedians and guest stars to play games, trivia, brain teasers and puzzles. Not only can you shout out answers along with them, but you may learn a useless fact or two.



Make Me Smart Produced by American Public Media with co-hosts Kai Ryssdal and Molly Wood, this show covers topics about technology, economics, American culture and even trending literary recommendations. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the show has upped its gears to a daily news podcast where listeners can tune into coverage on the most pressing issues of the week.



Stuff You Missed in History Class You may be familiar with the Website and TV Show How Stuff Works. This podcast series is produced by the same How Stuff Works writers and is hosted by Tracy V. Wilson and Holly Frey. It tackles bizarre and frequently untold historical stories—most importantly, the stories often left out of history classes.

From beekeeping, plagues and capital punishment to the illustrious pineapple trade and something called The American Hippo Meat Plan, there are definitely enough stories for everyone to find something entertaining.

Freakonomics Radio Based on the bestselling book "Freakonomics," by Steven Dubner and Stephen Levitt, this podcast tackles the way economics impacts every part of our lives including pop culture, health and leisure activities. According to Alert One, this program has become the top-rated podcast for adult and senior listeners. However, the audience is widescale and the weekly Podcasts cover a wide range of topics. Most recent podcasts even tackle COVID-19 economics including the food industry, education and reopening the economy.



Death, Sex and Money The triple entendre of topics labeled too taboo to talk about, this podcast explores topics about love, marriage, finances and the death of loved ones. Hosted by Anna Sale in a talk show format, she brings celebrities and guests on the show to interview and share their stories. Recent shows include topics about coping with death from COVID-19 to tales of love stories in quarantine and even advice for overcoming intimacy speed bumps.





Put a Stamp on Voting

by Sonya Daniel, Deputy Supervisor of Elections, Escambia County

The 2020 election cycle is off to a most unusual start as we deal with the effects of COVID-19. With the March Presidential Preference Primary behind us, preparations are well underway for the August Primary and November General elections. “We are preparing and voters should too,” David H. Stafford, Escambia County Supervisor of Elections, said. “We are faced with some very unique challenges with social distancing, personal protective equipment, and disinfecting polling places.” This is a perfect opportunity for voters to consider voting by mail.

Voting by mail, formerly known as absentee voting, is a convenient and secure way to vote without having to go to your precinct or an early voting location. As a senior member of our community, if you’re concerned about voting in person in the August and November elections, you can simply request a mail ballot and we’ll send one to you.

Because of the unprecedented nature of this election cycle, return postage for mail ballots will be paid in the upcoming primary and general elections.

If you’ve never voted by mail, here’s how it works:

- Voter requests a ballot online, by phone or in writing. Voters can track the status of their ballot from request through counting at [EscambiaVotes.com](https://www.escambiavotes.com).
- Supervisor of Elections mails ballots approximately five weeks before the election.
- Voter receives the ballot, along with instructions, a secrecy sleeve, and a return envelope with paid postage. Voter marks the ballot, places it in the secrecy sleeve, and then seals it inside the return envelope.

- Voter signs and dates the outside of the return envelope inside the red box and returns the ballot by mail or hand delivery by 7 pm on Election Day to the Supervisor of Elections office or early voting site.
- Supervisor of Elections receives the ballot envelope and verifies the voter signature. If there is a missing or mismatched signature, the voter is notified and offered an opportunity to cure the deficiency up to two days after the Election Day.
- Ballots are opened and counted under the guidance of the County Canvassing Board (a county judge, county commissioner, and the supervisor of elections) in a public meeting. Initial results are released within 30 minutes after the polls close on Election Day.
- A public manual audit is performed after each election. A contest and several precincts are randomly selected, and ballots are hand counted and compared against the reported results.

Some of the advantages of voting by mail include:

- Voting from the convenience of your home and avoiding lines on Election Day.
- Receiving your ballot more than 30 days before the election to have time to review the candidates and issues.
- Request a new ballot if you make a mistake on the first one.
- Vote-by-mail results are the first results released after the polls close at **7 pm on Election Day**.

Dates to remember for the August Primary:

- **July 4** is the deadline to mail ballots to military and civilians stationed overseas.
- **July 9** begin mailing civilian ballots.
- **July 20** is the last day to register to vote or change your political party.

- **Aug. 8 through Aug. 15** is the mandatory Early Voting period (other dates may be added) at multiple locations in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties.
- **Aug. 8** is the last day to request a vote-by-mail ballot be mailed to you.

The local Elections Offices can answer questions to make sure every voter is prepared for the upcoming elections.

Escambia County: 850-595-3900 or visit www.escambiovotes.com

Santa Rosa County: 850-983-1900 or visit www.votesantarosa.com

If you want to request a ballot, it's fast and easy. Here's a few ways to do it:

ESCAMBIA COUNTY:

- Complete the online form at EscambiaVotes.com/vote-by-mail
- Call us at (850) 595-3900
- Send a signed, written request to: Supervisor of Elections, P.O. Box 12601, Pensacola, FL 32591

SANTA ROSA COUNTY:

- Complete the online form at www.votesantarosa.com/Voter-Information/Vote-by-Mail
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- Send a signed, written request to: Supervisor of Elections, 6495 Caroline St, Ste F, Milton, FL 32570



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Phenomenal Philanthropists: Overcoming Fear through Compassion

by Lauren Clark

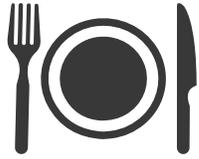
“There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about” – Margaret J. Wheatley

In the beginning of this pandemic, many of us felt like all of the social and economic systems that hold up life as we know it were collapsing. The closure of one industry or service exposed just how many others are dependent on it. In their personal lives, many found themselves relieved after canceled plans and began to reevaluate priorities. Both the relief of discovering what doesn't matter to us and the paralyzing fear of learning what we truly depend on to survive, leaves us with the knowledge of what we really need as individuals and as a society. COVID-19 has taken a lot from us all, but it has shown us one thing that I hope we carry with us forever: what we truly care about our nation, families, individuals and communities.

As the development coordinator at Council on Aging, I have had the unforgettable gift during this time of talking to so many people who share their hearts and passion with me as we connect and find ways to serve others. Bill Chapman came to Council on Aging in early March, when fear was rampant, and donated dozens of bottles of Ensure for our clients. He was one of the first people I saw wearing a mask, and it startled me as the reality of it sunk in. He saw my hesitation and explained that he was wearing it due to his fight with lung cancer. As I shared my condolences, he cut me off with his own – that he didn't bring more donations. Though I assured him that it was a wonderful donation, he decided to host a drive for more donations with his company, Mosquito Squad Pensacola, a few weeks later.

Pam Rogerson dropped off dozens of masks for our staff and volunteers and shared with me everyone

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“Everything is wonderful with Meals on Wheels.”

“I’m crying happy tears now. Council on Aging quite literally saved mine and my dog’s life. Thank you so much.”

“Through Council on Aging, I’m able to take care of the woman who changed my life.”

she had made masks for, including friends, neighbors and strangers that she was concerned about. Volunteers checked in to see what else they could do, if we needed anything specific, and people who had never heard of us before called to see if they could drop off supplies or help check on our senior clients. Many of these individuals told stories of why they wanted to help - a few even well over 65 trying to help their peers.

Council on Aging’s staff and Board of Directors debated fundraising at a time like this and asked ourselves how to be considerate of what our community was going through while sharing our own needs. We worried both about exploiting the disaster and of being too tentative and losing funds that we depend on to exist. Ultimately, we knew we had to ask for help as the need rose and the community delivered. Within a few short weeks, we received over \$30,000 cash from more than 70 donors and a stock donation worth \$25,000! Meals on Wheels donations soared: checks coming in with notes about the donor’s concern for those whom they have never met. Both the Florida Blue Foundation and the Healthcare Professionals Association of Northwest Florida made large donations to help us purchase emergency shelf-stable meals for the seniors dependent on our nutritional service.

It is hard to pick which donation moved me most,

though there is one that I know I will carry with me for the rest of my career. A close friend of mine was spiraling and feeling helpless watching the world panic and fall apart. I did my best to ground him by sharing what helps me in times like this: the good work of serving others that I am able to help make happen through COA. I told him how scared I was too and discussed all of the magical moments I have had of donors sharing their heart and opening mine up in the process. After I hung up the phone, I instantly received a notification that he donated \$150 to Council on Aging and quite a few meals to a senior in need. We both learned a lifechanging lesson about the sense of purpose that philanthropy brings.

We often just think about philanthropists as millionaires sharing a piece of their fortune with a charity, but philanthropy is so much more than that. Philanthropy is how we make sense of our place in the world and can do just one good thing when everything else feels like it is spinning out of control. Philanthropy is how we come together as a community to use our collective power and change the world. As the person blessed to hear so many donor stories, I want to thank you for sharing your heart with me as we have figured out together how to put fear aside and give ourselves to the things that matter and what we truly care about.



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Grandparents Help the Innovators of Tomorrow

by Lilly Paradise

There is nothing a grandparent loves more than to support their grandchildren's future. While summer is a good time to kick back and relax, college is right around the corner. Florida universities plan to open back up in the fall and students are eager to get back into the classroom. Unfortunately, the unknown for many college students is whether or not they can afford their tuition, let alone a dorm room. There are many financial plans available for grandparents interested in putting their grandkids through college. The 529 college plan is one way you can help get your grandkids through college. Education trust funds and student loans are also available for grandparents who are interested in lending a helping hand.

Patricia Windham, a financial advisor at Wells Fargo Clearing Services, LLC, explained how anyone interested can sign up for the 529 college plan. "An adult custodian opens the plan with a minimum dollar amount and adds funds as he or she can. Most 529

plans will accept an initial deposit of \$250 to open the account and then the custodian can add periodically a minimum amount of \$50.00," Windham said.

"529 plans were made possible by federal legislation but are

implemented at the state or institution level. Nearly all states have approved and adopted these qualified tuition programs (QTPs). Most states let nonresidents participate in their plans; although, the state tax benefits may be greater for residents than for non-residents."

There are many benefits to the 529 college plan including planning out account balances with no income limitations as well as substantial contribution amounts. "The Tax Cut and Jobs Act expanded the federal definition of qualified expenses to also include up to \$10,000 per year per beneficiary for tuition at an elementary or secondary public, private or religious school," Windham said. Keep in mind, this not true for all states.

With the help of financial advisors, college savings plans are available to use and they are more than happy to help your grandchildren dive into their future endeavors.

“It’s a way you can give to your grandkids tax free. When they go to college, the money is there. My philosophy always was that parents give their kids so many toys and stuff throughout the years, so they really don’t need another toy that they may not play with. That is why we’ve always given them money, so now it’s baring fruit.”

– Malcolm Ballinger

The job market is competitive these days, which is why having a college degree is so important to the younger generation. According to Jobvite, a financial blog, 74 percent of employers believe hiring will become more competitive in the next 12 months and 31 percent of employers are concerned with the quality of the individual.

Educational trust funds are another form of savings your grandchildren could use. Your grandchild may not know it, but this is one of the most amazing gifts to receive during a birthday or special occasion.

Education trust funds are perfect if you plan on financing the education of multiple grandchildren or future generations that have not been born yet. To set up this trust fund, you will need to decide when it will take effect. Furthermore, you will need to identify a trustee and a beneficiary. The trustee controls the trust fund and the beneficiary receives the loans. Contact your financial advisor for more information.

Florida pre-paid plans are also available to use and have options that can cater to your needs. Prepaid plans allow you to purchase a plan with a fixed payment selection to secure future college expenses for less. This is guaranteed by the state of Florida and the age requirements are newborn to 11th grade. A prepaid plan covers a full ten years after your child’s high school graduation or college enrollment year.

Plan pricing for a prepaid plan is lower than what college is predicted to cost in the future. These plan payments are invested to cover the difference. Florida prepaid actuaries will even estimate future funds based on in-state tuition and fees, inflation, and historical usage patterns. If you have any questions about this plan, contact Florida Prepaid customer service at 1-800-552-4723 or by email at customerservice@florida529plans.com.

Malcolm Ballinger, owner of Ballinger Publishing in Pensacola, FL, explained ways the education trust fund has helped get his grandchildren through college. “When my oldest grandson was born, my son started an educational fund, and over the years, for birthdays or Christmas, we have put money in it. My three direct grandchildren all share this fund and when they go to

college they can start withdrawing from it,” Ballinger said.

“It’s a way you can give to your grandkids tax free. When they go to college, the money is there. My philosophy always was that parents give their kids so many toys and stuff throughout the years, so they really don’t need another toy that they may not play with. That is why we’ve always given them money, so now it’s baring fruit,” Ballinger said.

If you are a military veteran, you are also eligible to receive a college savings plan. The Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 is available for veterans to use towards college. Although this is aimed toward immediate family members, grandparents who have legal custody of their grandchildren are eligible to receive this grant. It includes a monthly housing and book stipend as well as payments of tuition and other fees.

Student loans are also a great way to receive money for college. The Federal Parent PLUS program is a federal direct student loan offered to parents of dependent students. However, grandparents are not eligible to receive money from this program unless they have adopted their grandchild. There is the option to cosign private student loans on behalf of your grandchild.

Although student loans are useful in many ways, it is important to know the disadvantages. Specific student loans come with the



responsibility of paying for it over time. Financially, student loan debt will make it difficult to support other lifestyle goals. Penalties for student loan debt include added fees and wage garnishment.

The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, signed in 2009, is used for the low income, veterans, and education purposes. The act gives up to \$1,000 towards educational stipends for older volunteers. Fortunately, this act represents a shift in the younger generation towards volunteerism. According to the National and Community Service, this act was put in place “to create new knowledge about how to solve social challenges in the areas of economic opportunity and provide problem-solving

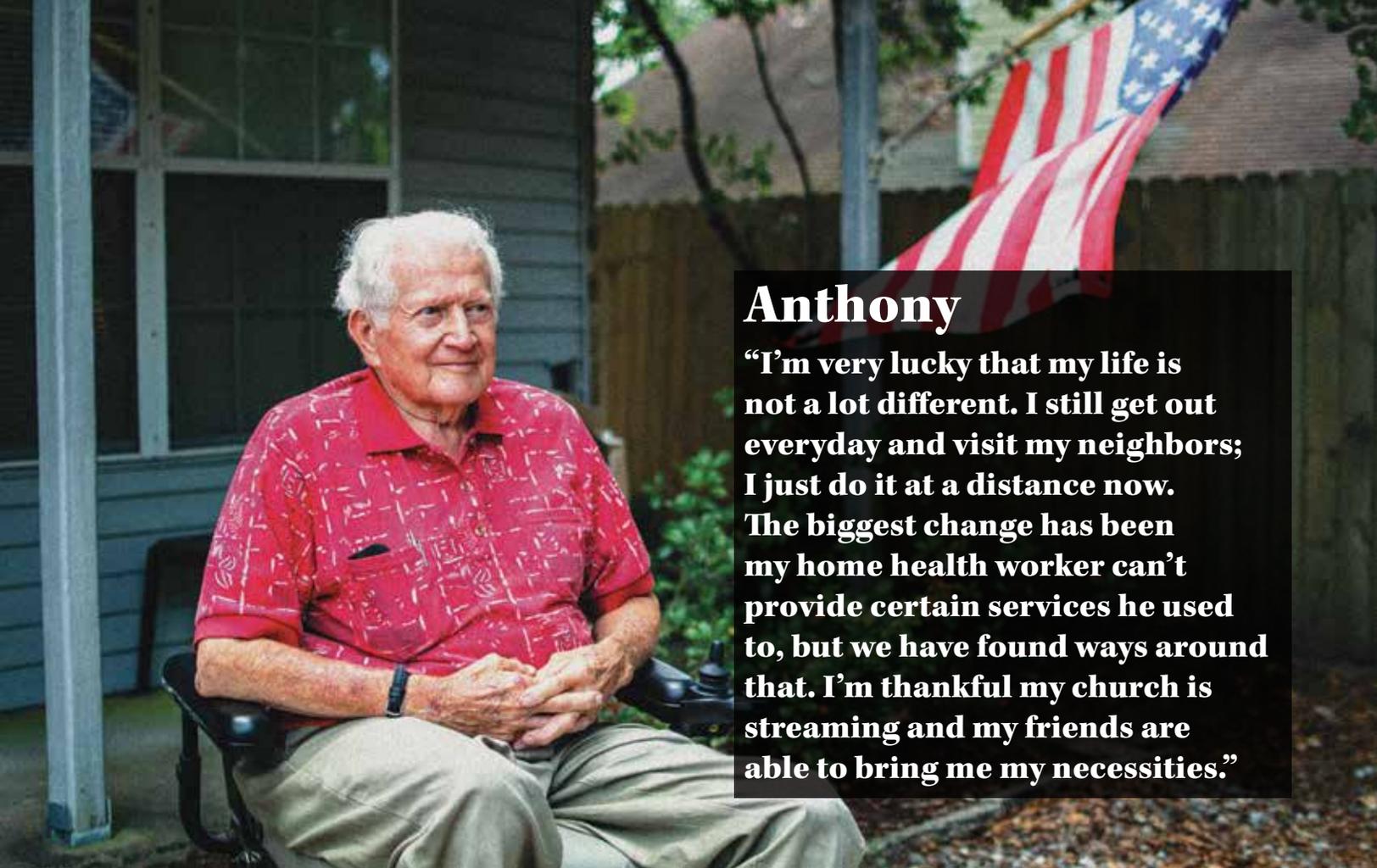
infrastructure in low-income communities.” The benefits may be used for the volunteer's own education or transferred to a child, foster child or grandchild.

Grandparents take pride and joy in providing any help they can. The 529 college plan, educational trust fund, and student loans are just some of the ways you can financially support your grandchildren through college. Overall, the goal of each of these plans is to reduce the stress of getting through college. Therefore, students have more time to focus on their studies and are able to receive the degree they always dreamed of. If you are interested in any of these college saving plans, set up an appointment with your financial

advisor. Your grandchildren will be eternally grateful.

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Anthony

“I’m very lucky that my life is not a lot different. I still get out everyday and visit my neighbors; I just do it at a distance now. The biggest change has been my home health worker can’t provide certain services he used to, but we have found ways around that. I’m thankful my church is streaming and my friends are able to bring me my necessities.”

How They’re Coping: Seniors in The Midst of a Pandemic

Story & photos by Josh Newby

During this pandemic, we’ve heard from scientists, politicians, business owners and economists. So much so that most of us could probably recreate their speeches and predictions almost word for word. But of course it is seniors who have been the most physically impacted by the Coronavirus, and it is from them that we’ve heard very little. Well, here they are, in their own words.

Joanne

“I lost my freedom. They say I can’t even go to the grocery store, which for me used to be the big outing of the week. I know that sounds silly. I’ve learned that most people are generally congenial, but they are short-tempered. We all are right now.”



Mi'cha'el

“I’m doing great, honestly. I’m praying for everyone. You’ve got to be good with it or you’ll go down with it. I’m washing my hands, keeping my family close, and it’ll be all right. God is good, but people can be crazy. Just don’t let it block your mind.”



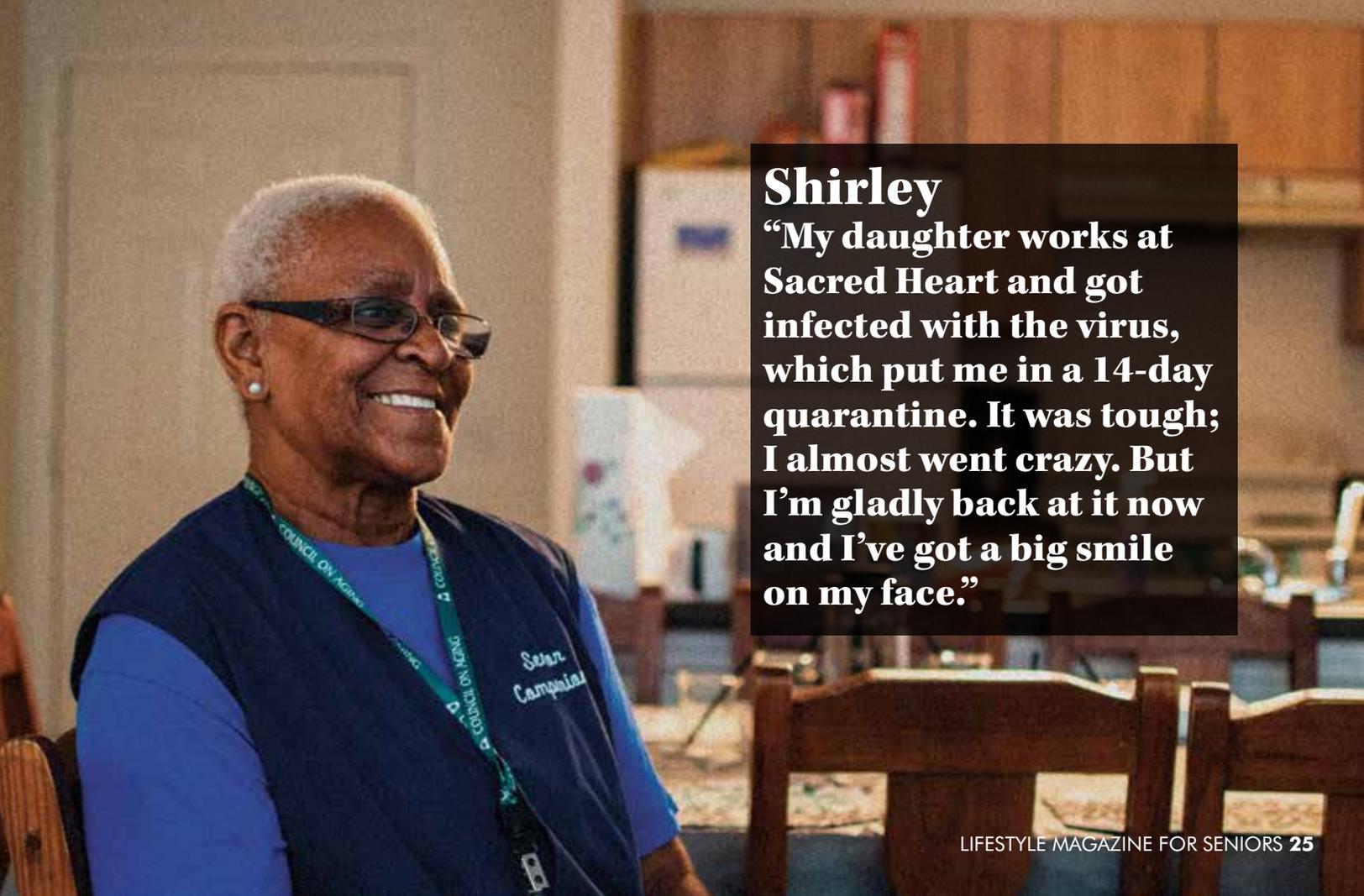
Rose

“I am staying home, other than going to the doctor and the grocery store. I don’t know anybody that has gotten the virus and I’ve stopped watching the news; I’m so tired of it all. I’m ready to get back to it, but I feel really sorry for the kids who can’t go to school or do things they used to.”



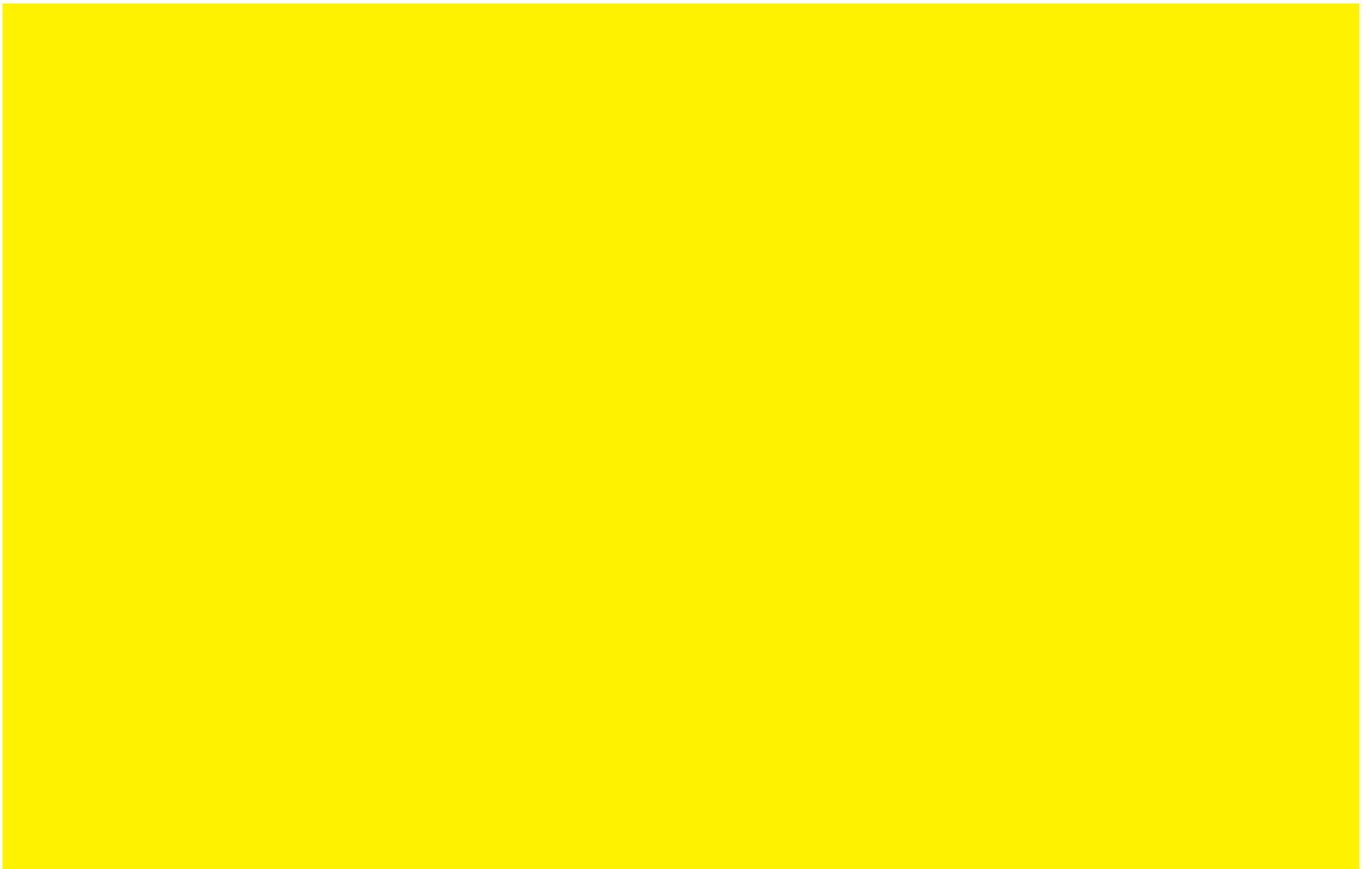
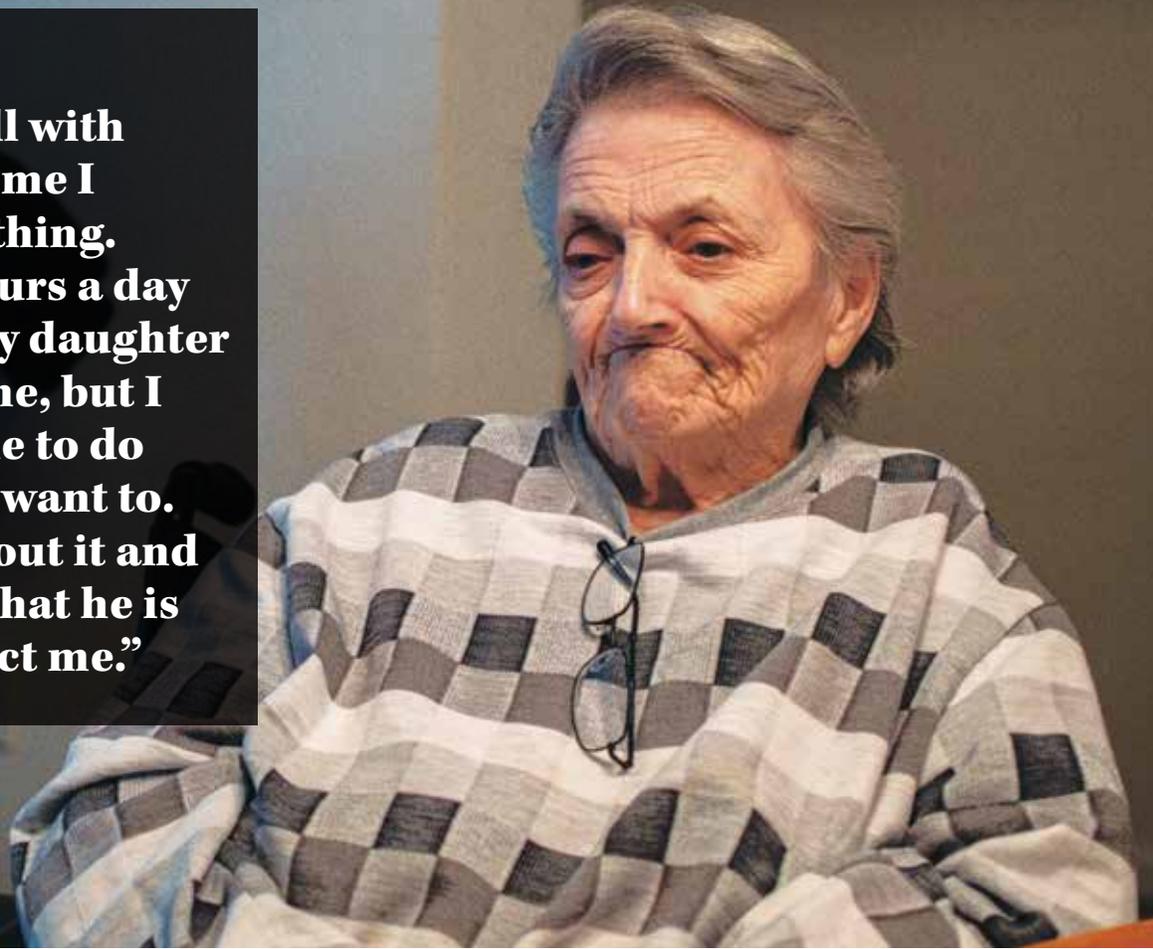
Shirley

“My daughter works at Sacred Heart and got infected with the virus, which put me in a 14-day quarantine. It was tough; I almost went crazy. But I’m gladly back at it now and I’ve got a big smile on my face.”



Twila

“I don’t do well with people telling me I can’t do something. I’m here 24 hours a day anyway and my daughter takes care of me, but I miss being able to do something if I want to. I’ve prayed about it and I believe God that he is going to protect me.”





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Soul Attack

Absorbing the Impact of Terrorism

by Kathleen Vestal Logan, MS, MA

Fear reigned, travel stopped, the enemy was unknown, no one could picture what the future held. Just like now, except it was after September 11, 2001, or 9/11, as we call it. Here's an opportunity to recall that time and compare it to our present national crisis: COVID-19. Perhaps you could ask yourself as you read: What were my reactions then? Are they the same or different this time? Do men and women react differently to crises? If so, in what ways? What did I learn then that can help me survive/thrive in this crisis?

Oh, oh, oh! Stunned at the sight of the World Trade Center collapsing upon itself, I stood watching the television, hands clenched against my heart. The Pentagon, too, was hit, and I pictured our military friends who worked there. Then flight 93 crashed into the countryside in Pennsylvania. What diabolical scheme is at work? I anguished. Surely this can't be real!

Tuesday, September 11, 2001, I had watched planes and buildings crash and crumble into piles; Wednesday, I knew attention would turn to the individuals inside them; by Thursday night, I sobbed in our bathroom, overcome by the enormity of it all. Each night when I went to bed and my husband put his arms around me, I could only think of those who would never again have that sweet pleasure. How do we comprehend the incomprehensible?

Immediate public cries for retaliation and revenge were strong, especially among men. But what are women thinking and feeling? I wondered. How are they dealing with this shattering event? Am I normal?

Trying to make sense of a world gone amuck, I did what most women do under stress: I called my friends. And I kept listening to their thoughts over the next several months as we struggled through our common crisis.

Initial Reactions

The first stage was one of raw emotions. How do you feel? I asked. My friends answered: Vulnerable! Exposed! Fearful! Scared! Stressed to the max! Furious! Exclamation points ended every response. Under stress, we tend to go to extremes in our behavior; our normal reactions are exaggerated. Many of us pulled within ourselves and our families; I cancelled plans to attend weddings in Texas and

Washington, D.C. My sister-in-law, though, behaved quite differently. "I had the opposite reaction to your wanting to hunker down. Instead, I wanted to go out, to challenge the terrorists with my own boldness. We flew back to California on Sunday, September 16. We'd have gone sooner but couldn't get a flight.

For mothers, our first thoughts were for the safety of our children, whatever their ages. Those with little ones picked them up from school, kept them close, hugging them often. Shelby confessed, I have a deep need to have my kids home, to touch them, to reassure myself they're okay. My own son was a Marine, and I called him at his duty station just to hear his voice. He'd been married a year, and I had started having that desire for a grandchild. Cancel that thought! I'm glad they don't have any children. What kind of world is this that people can take joy in killing humans in such a twisted way? Who wants to bring children into such evil chaos?

At the gym in late September, I ran into a friend, a world traveler, who confessed, "I just took my first plane trip since the crash. I never worry about that stuff. I was fine until they announced they were closing the door of the plane. Suddenly I felt my scalp prickle; my heart pounded, and I was sweaty all over. I totally panicked! I just wanted to run down the aisle and get off! I really had to breathe deep and talk hard to myself to get calmed down. Statistically I knew nothing was going to happen, but that didn't matter one bit!"

National grief compounded personal grief. A good friend died of cancer September 11; she and her husband lived here in Florida, but their children were all on the west coast. The funeral had to be postponed because

the families couldn't arrange timely transportation. Shirley's teenage nephew died, and she struggled to cope. "I feel like someone stole part of my soul. I can't tell if it's just the terrorist attack or what happened to my nephew, but yesterday I had to go to a counselor. I knew I had to do something because I feel dead. There's nothing left to give, I'm all used up. I feel such anguish. I couldn't go to work at all. Layering his death on top of the terrorists' attack has done me in. All I want to do is sleep all the time. Fear made us super-attuned to details never noticed before, and danger lurked in peculiar places. I am fearful, I admit it," Shirley confessed. "When I was driving through town yesterday, I smelled something bad, something unusual, and I thought, He's got us! I really thought Osama bin Laden had poisoned the air. Fear is everywhere!"

Treasured friendships allowed us the luxury of reflection and sharing innermost thoughts. My book group met very early in October, though one friend said, "After it happened, I thought we should have called an emergency meeting!" That morning, each of us took a turn responding to the questions: How are you feeling? What effect has 9/11 had on you? Beth, our confident, creative adventurer, was having nightmares. Shirley was numb: "Now my mother-in-law is dying. How much can one person bear?" Lynne worried about her son in the Army reserves. "He's special forces and supposedly won't be called unless their unit goes to another area of the world. But who knows what could happen? Lots of reserves have already been called up."

Patty instantly reordered her outlook on life. "I've been taking care of my daughter who has been sick. That's been a good

distraction for me. But sick as she is and probably always will be, it just doesn't seem as big and bad as it did before. My perspective on everything has changed."

Spirituality

As weeks passed, thoughts began to change and focus on major life issues such as spirituality and religion, patriotism and death. Still unable to face flying, I left three days early for a conference in south Florida, making the 11-hour trip in a van with four other women.

Tracy was 29 and single; Krissy was 32, married and pregnant with her first child; Kathy was 26 and married. Sally and I were in our 50s. During those long hours, we talked about our lives since the attack. It was quickly clear that age played a role in our reactions. Whereas Sally and I had been through the Vietnam War years and the assassinations of President Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., Kathy noted, "This will be a signature event for my generation; nothing like this has ever happened in our lives." As an older friend had said sadly in September, Now, maybe the younger people will understand why we are so connected to Pearl Harbor and World War II.

For Tracy, it was a wake-up call: "I do think about our country now. Before, I wouldn't have imagined worrying about anthrax. I probably should have cared about the rest of the world, but I didn't. I had no idea they hated us so much!" Krissy agreed, noting her own expanded awareness of the world. "I watch the news now. I didn't know all this stuff was going on."

We all tried to distinguish between religion and spirituality. For me, I see



these terrorists posing as religious people to draw in extremists and malcontents. Islam does not promote such evil killing. Sally felt Satan comes in many forms. This time he came as Osama bin Laden. Trying hard to do the right thing, Tracy suggested we should pray for bin Laden, too. But that was too much for one woman who quipped, "Oh, I'm praying for him. I'm praying he'll die!" Obviously, this attack had taxed our ability to obey the commandment to "love your neighbors and pray for your enemies."

For Kathy, "It showed me that God has a time for each of us which gives me a sense of peace about this trip and about dying. I'm okay with it. With everything awful, there is something good. I see that this has brought the country closer to God. Attendance at our church doubled the Sunday after it happened. And we're all much more patriotic. Krissy

added, Even my five-year-old nephew is singing 'God Bless America.'"

Although unaccustomed thoughts of death emerged among the younger women, they were surprisingly serene in their outlook. Even as she was bringing a child to life, Krissy was able to say, "Yes, thoughts of death are new for me since 9/11. I never thought of things like that before. I think of dying more now, but I'm not as scared."

Adaptation

It takes time to incorporate change into our lives, especially one so life-altering. At first, the sorrow was so intense it felt like an Army tank pressing on my chest. Then, one day in early October, the sadness lifted briefly, and I forgot this awful thing had happened. Abruptly, it clamped down on me again, and I wondered if these changes in my life—our lives—were temporary or forever.

Beth's comments demonstrate her process of adaptation. "Early in October," with tears in her eyes, "I'm having nightmares. I dream that I'm flying, though I don't know what that means. I feel like I'm waiting for the other shoe to drop, for the next terrorist attack. I wake up each day feeling dread.

"By mid-October: I'm doing better. I walk the dog, look at the water and sky, and I'm thankful to be here. There has been a change in me; it's sorta like prayer. That's when I think, how can I impact the world? How can I be a better person? I focus more on the here and now. I take time to appreciate my life and my bounty. My fears about safety, our nation, have quelled. I feel resigned to a long-term conflict. What will be, will be."

"Early November: I'm feeling better now that we've taken military action. I do believe this anthrax

thing is terrorist-related, however, because anthrax just doesn't exist in the world other than in labs."

"Mid-December: The intensity of the events has faded somewhat, but my need to celebrate life has strengthened. I want to shield myself in tradition right now."

"Mid-March: It feels grim when I look at the future because I still expect an escalation, yet I don't have the same level of anxiety that I did initially. My concern is there intellectually, but I don't dwell on it. I can have fun now, and am enjoying my life and my family." Beth was deliberate and resolute in her efforts to live past the numbing crisis. Adaptation requires such conscious involvement.

Altered Lives

As Beth went through the resolution process, there were changes in her life—some subtle, some profound, all of them permanent in some way. So it was for each of us. For many, there was a conscious awareness of the possibility of death. "In preparing for our long car trip," said Krissy, "My husband and I planned more than usual. We got our bills paid and paperwork in order. I'm not afraid, but if something happens to me, I want him to go on living." Or as Shirley put it, "My blood sugar is running high, and I know it's stress! But I'm not so afraid now. If something happens, it happens. I want to live, but I'm okay if my time is up."

All of us examined our values and priorities, sometimes finding them in need of reordering. For Kathy, "This has made me think about all the things my husband and I do have: so many freedoms, food on the table. Before, there was always so much more stuff that I thought I had to have."

A shift in racial views also occurred for some. Sue, an African-American friend, pointed out that, though terrorism is new to whites in America, blacks have been dealing with it for generations. In a different conversation, Sally confirmed Sue's observation: "This has given me a new understanding of racial hate. As Americans, we've done this to our own people, but never called it terrorism! Now, I wonder...what do we need to be saying and doing in the world before something else comes up?" Tracy reminded us, "These fears work two ways. I know one family that moved back to Pakistan last week because they were afraid of terrorism here, afraid that Americans would hurt them."

Middle-Easterners especially were aware of increased scrutiny. In October, I ran into a woman who was about to take her first flight. "We're flying up east this weekend and I'm scared to death! I worry about bombs in suitcases. And if I see an Arab-looking man, I'm getting off the plane!" I protested, "Not all Arabs are bad people, just a few," She relented. "I know that, but right now, they just have to understand how we feel. Clearly, 'we' did not include Arabs."

Women also experienced a need to identify what was good in the aftermath of crisis. Kathy said, "I'm trying hard to figure this out. I make an effort to be positive. People have been nicer to each other. We consciously cherish the gift of life. Casual smiles on the street invite connection, and we are rediscovering the deep-rooted value of family dinners."

Procrastination is a thing of the past since tomorrow can't be taken for granted. Throughout history, women have traditionally been keepers of hearth and home, stringing together

the fragile threads of family. Now, we don't have the luxury of time. As one woman said in December, "Since September 11, we've quit living as if we had forever and are much more aware of our choices. We made a deliberate decision to be together for the holidays."

For me, the very ordinariness of our Christmas traditions was comforting. Our Marine Corps son and daughter-in-law were able to come here, making it as special a Christmas as we've ever had, knowing how many military families were not together.

Resolution

As months passed, the excruciating panic, anxiety, and fury of 9/11 began to abate, yet the event indelibly altered the boundaries of our lives. No longer were we insulated and isolated from the rest of the world. Was the situation now normal as we knew it? No! But were we normal in our responses to it? Yes. I chuckled with the awareness of this when my daughter-in-law called, excited. "Mom! Are you sitting down?" Clearly something good was happening. My heart skipped a beat as I listened. "I told Kelly I couldn't wait, that I had to call you right now with the news. He just found out that he's been awarded his bachelor's degree and can now apply for Officer Candidate School. Isn't that wonderful?"

I agreed it was terrific, and we chatted cheerfully for a while. When I hung up, I whispered, "I'm going to be fine. I do want a grandchild after all."



photo by Guy Stevens

Linda Moorer

A RAY OF "SONSHINE"

INTERVIEW BY KELLY ODEN

While Linda Moorer may be her given name, locals know her by her nickname, Sonshine—a nickname that accurately describes her personality, her approach to life and her spirit of generosity. Sonshine earned her nickname by focusing and working hard in the community to make a positive difference by inspiring and serving those in need.

Growing up the sixth child of eight siblings outside of Montgomery, Alabama, gave Sonshine a unique perspective on life. Her mother, an educator, and her father, a farmer, instilled the qualities of hard work and appreciation into their eight children.

Always an outgoing child, Sonshine was involved in many clubs and organizations throughout her public school years. Inspired by her mother and older sister, she attended college at Alabama State University, earning a degree in

business management. Later, she attended Southern Tech to earn a second degree in computer systems.

Sonshine's radio career began at AM station WXVI in Montgomery in 1988. She later moved to WKXN in Greenville and eventually settled in Pensacola where she has worked at WRRX for more than 10 years.

Her tagline, "The Hardest Working Lady in Show Business," isn't just a tagline—it's an accurate reflection of her work ethic and dedication. Sonshine has maintained the number one position in the market for several years and continues to grow her listenership by continuing her mission of being powerful and strong voice for the community.

Coming of Age had the pleasure of speaking with Linda "Sonshine" Moorer about her life, her career, her faith and more.

Linda “Sonshine” Moorer: An Exclusive Interview

COA: I know you're from Alabama and I know you come from a large family. Can tell me a little bit about where you were born, where you grew up and what your family life was like?

LM: Well, I am from a large family of eight children. I am number six. I was born and raised in a little town outside of Montgomery, Alabama, in Lowndes County. We didn't have very much. We were raised poor, but we were raised with strong values. My mother was an educator and my father was a farmer. The story I like to tell and that gave me such inspiration to look forward in my life is that my mother had eight children and after that she went to school to get her GED and went on to school. She was in the education field until 1999. She had always been a strong leader for us and she taught us that if there's anything that you want, you've got to work hard for it. That's a philosophy that I live by today. Growing up like that, I think that's why my work ethic is as strong as it is today

COA: What were you like as a little girl? Were you outgoing and talkative or were you shy?

LM: I was never shy. I'll never forget—when I first started doing radio over 32 years ago, my mother said to me, "You finally got what fits you." That was a great thing right there. As

a family with eight children, we didn't have a whole lot, so we had to make do. We had to share everything that we had. My parents didn't have the money to give us a lot of things, but what they gave us was strong values that would take us through our lifetime. They taught us how to be appreciative of the things we had.

COA: With your mom being an educator, were you a good student?

LM: Sometimes. I'll put it like this; I was in everything I could think of. I was captain of the cheerleading squad from junior high on through my senior year. I always loved doing things. I was the chaplain of my class for several years. I won two modern dance contests. I was always active.

COA: Tell me about your college life.

LM: My older sister was a push for us to follow. She was the one to open the door by going to college. She worked her way through school. I worked my way through school as well. It was not easy. Again, I say in order to achieve anything, you have to work hard to get it. I got my first degree in Business Management and I went back in 1989 to get a second degree in Office Computer Programming. It was not easy at all, but you have to move with the times and that's something that we



all had to do, so that's what I did. I went back to school to better myself. When computers and everything were taking over, I had to have that knowledge in order to be able to keep up. Those fields are still relevant today. Radio is always evolving.

COA: How did you get into radio?

LM: I was working at another place when I got into radio. The gentleman that used to buy the advertising for the company was not at work that day and when the radio salesperson came by—I'll never forget his name, it was Bernard. When he came by he said he had to have

“

You see there's a force, a supernatural power that I believe in strongly. I'm talking about my faith. I study the word of God so that I can continue to be that positive force and I can continue to speak the positivity that I do to the community. He is the source of my everything.”

this, so I said let me pretend to do the commercial. Of course they had these little hand recorders and that's what I did. Several weeks later, I got a phone call from a gentleman by the name of Tom Burns and he said to me, "With a voice like that, why aren't you using it on radio?" He was the general manager of the radio station in Montgomery, Alabama. I said, "Why don't you put me on your payroll?" I went and talked to him and about two or three weeks later, there I was. I started off working part-time on the weekends, and after that, they offered me a full-time position mid-days. It's 32 years later now and I've been doing it ever since. You know, in radio your job never ends. Your job is not Monday through Friday. It's Monday through Sunday. But when you want to be successful at something, you don't mind giving all your time. You're going to do your best so that you

can be a success. You know, radio was always said to be a man's job, but as you can see now there are plenty of successful women who are doing very well with it, but we had to work hard.

COA: What was your experience like coming up in radio as an African American woman in the 1980s and 1990s?

LM: Not only then. Being a black woman in this business I have to work harder knowing that I am performing 150 percent. The fact of it is, being a woman and being a black woman, I've got to work harder to prove myself even more. How it is today anyways, not only in radio, is that women have to work harder and get paid less. I think that is not fair because of the fact that we do the job and being a black woman and working as hard as I do, I think it should be equal. But that's



the time we live in and it's not there yet.

COA: What level of improvement have you seen from the 80s to now in terms of gender and race and how you've personally been treated in that industry?

LM: There has been quite a bit of change. I think now there are so many strong women out there. As a matter of fact, a woman owns the company I work for. It's easier for me now, but I still have to work hard to prove that I can do what I am doing.

COA: Have you seen a change in attitude toward you as you grow older? Is age a factor?

LM: I'm giving more as I have matured than I was when I was younger. With the experience and the knowledge that I have of the business, I give more. I have to speak loudly to be heard. But what I've also learned is that when you know that you're doing right, you speak loudly and you stand firm on it. That's what I do now. I speak loudly and I stand firm because I know what I'm talking about.

Linda “Sonshine” Moorer: An Exclusive Interview



COA: Do you address issues of race, gender or aging on your program?

LM: I always inspire. I've always been positive with my show and I always try to tell my audience to know that they can do anything that they want, but you've got to work hard for it. Nobody's going to give you anything. So work hard and make sure you get your education. Once you do, stay focused and build the character that you need to take you to the next level. I'm always going to be a force that tells them they can do it because I did it and I know they can do it. I started out in the 80s and now there are many doors that are open that weren't open for me. I try to inspire them to continue to be positive and to go on and reach their goal. Don't give up.

COA What types of guests do you typically have on your show?

LM: Everyone from John Legend to the mayor—I have a continuing conversation with the mayor on my show. I have local pastors on my show to make sure we keep the community inspired. TV host Dr. Ian Smith is a regular guest on my show. I keep the mayor on my show to keep my listeners politically knowing what is happening here in Pensacola. I have a lot of the city council members on my show to let the people know that these are the people you can talk to in order to get answers when you need them. I try to do a full circle. I'm so into health. Dr. Ian Smith is all about health, too. I try to inspire people not to look at their age—look at what you do. Age is only a number. You can do what you want to

“I’m giving more as I have matured than I was when I was younger. With the experience and the knowledge that I have of the business, I give more.”

do if you take care of the only body that you have. I stress that strongly. I teach the community how to exercise and I teach the community how to eat because those are two components that work together to take care of the body. I often say it's 80 percent what you eat and 20 percent movement. Then your body will take you a long way—just like a car. If you continue to change the oil, it will last you a long time and take you where you want to go.

COA: How was it talking to John Legend?

LM: Oh my God. John Legend is so knowledgeable. He is such an advocate. I did not know he was such an advocate. He is such a soft man, but he has such a powerful voice that speaks so loudly with his strength and belief in pushing for the right thing. He is awesome. Not only can he sing and play that piano, but he's a strong leader as well.

COA: You're known for being very positive and inspirational. How do you keep that positivity, particularly with everything happening in the world right now?

LM: You see there's a force, a supernatural power that I believe in strongly. I'm talking about my faith. I study the word of God so that I can continue to be that positive force and I can continue to speak the positivity that I do to the community. He is the source of my everything. I study his word so that I'll be able to deliver words that are going to be positive to help somebody else. If you know the truth, then you can tell somebody that there's a positive force that's beyond what you think that can take you to another level. That's what keeps me going—the power that I have learned through my life with my faith. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and that's the thing that I don't see, but I believe in. Faith is something I can't see, but I believe in it because I know that's there's a supernatural power that's bigger than what we have here. That's what keeps me going.



COA: Coming of Age is a magazine for mature adults, so I was wondering what you do to stay young at heart and healthy in your body?

LM: I center myself around people that are like-minded. Like I said, age is only a number. I have a daily routine because I know what works. I'm going to take care of

the body. I'm not going to become a couch potato. I know that in order for me to continue to be the support that I am for those who listen to me and look to me for help, I've got to be able to take myself to a level to do that. So I exercise, I eat right, I drink water and I do not consume sugar. I do not put anything into the

temple that's going to slow me down. This is what keeps me going. So many people ask, "How do you do this? How do you maintain that?" It's called consistency. You cannot do anything partially and expect it to work. Consistency works. That's what keeps me going. I feel like I am 25.

COA: You're very community involved. What organizations do you like to support?

LM: I have a nonprofit of my own. It is called Sonshine Community. I am also on the board of several other nonprofits. I'm on the board of Crimestoppers and of Women United. Through my show, I've created a number of branded events throughout the year that the community can count on. For instance, in November, they know I'm going to feed the community a Thanksgiving feast. For Christmas, they know I'm going to take care of the children with their Christmas presents. I give bikes, clothing—you name it. I have a back to school event every year to make sure that they have the supplies they need. If you don't have the tools, how can you be successful? For Easter, I let them know he rose for us, so I have an Easter event every year. These are things that have been branded for the last 12 years and the community looks forward to them. They know that they can depend on me for that.

If I can help you, I will—down to paying a power bill if you really need it. I'll take money out of my pocket if I feel like you're really in need.

With my nonprofit, Sonshine Community, I go out and I try to talk to young girls about holding off on sex. I teach being celibate. Celibacy is the way to go—especially now with all the diseases out there. I promote education. I also help elderly people who need help. I deliver food to people who need something to eat year round. Sonshine Community is for everybody. If you're in need, Sonshine is there.

COA: How can readers listen to your radio programs?

LM: Well now, when you want to hear the best show on the Gulf Coast, all you have to do is tune in. I do shows on two radio stations. Monday through Friday from 9 am until 2 pm, I'm on WRRX Magic 106.1. That's the urban station here in Pensacola. From 2 pm until 7 pm, I am on Soft rock 94.1. If you want Sunshine, you can find me all day long Monday through Friday. If you want a little southern soul to let your hair down, join me on Saturday mornings from 8 am until 2 pm on Magic 106.1.

What's The News?



Meals on Wheels Expands

Council on Aging of West Florida is expanding its Meals on Wheels program to cover all elderly adults 60 and over who qualify for the service. The additional meals will be prepared by Primal Nosh and Nancy's Catering & Events, and will be delivered to the clients' homes as part of an initiative to help seniors during Coronavirus.

This initiative is part of a larger statewide partnership between the Department of Elder Affairs and the local elder services providers. The two entities hope that this will match the needs of the business community and workers with the needs of the elderly and meal delivery services.

Locally, Council on Aging has seen about a 30 percent increase in demand for Meals on Wheels, as seniors are continually cautioned against venturing outside unnecessarily. Additionally, fears about supply chain interruption have fueled hoarding tendencies, leaving

few options for the elderly adults who do area visit grocery stores. This expanded need for meals, coupled with restaurants' increased need for income during the economic shortfall, will be a win-win for all parties involved.

"We're very excited to offer vulnerable senior adults more nutritious options as we weather this crisis together," said Council on Aging President/CEO John Clark. "Food is among the most fundamental of necessities, and this program will allow us to keep up with demand while providing our clients with safety during this difficult time."

All meals delivered by local restaurants to senior adults must meet nutritional regulations set by the state, including providing one-third of the recommended daily caloric allowance for the elderly.

"We are grateful to provide homestyle, freshly made meals to our most vulnerable population, our senior citizens during this challenging time," said Gus Silivos, chef and owner at Nancy's.

It is projected that this program will remain through at least the end of 2020, as social distancing especially for those 60 and up continues to be recommended by local and state health departments. Senior adults interested in signing up for the expanded Meals on Wheels program should call (850) 432-1475 to complete an assessment.

Council on Aging of West Florida receives bronze certification in LGBT cultural competency

Council on Aging of West Florida is pleased to announce its recent bronze certification in LGBT cultural competency, as bestowed by SAGECare, the leading training and consulting group on LGBT aging issues. SAGECare is the country's largest and oldest organization dedicated to improving the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender older adults.

The Bronze Certification verifies that all Council on Aging management staff partook in sensitivity training in March of this year and that the organization as a whole is committed to treating all older individuals with dignity and sensitivity, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identification. SAGECare is recognized by AARP, Forbes, The Washington Post and other world-renowned companies as the leader in cultural competency for a generation whose sexuality remains largely stigmatized.

"Our agency's mission is serving, supporting and advocating for all aging adults in our area," said John Clark, President/CEO of Council on Aging of West Florida. "This certification underlines that dedication with an enhanced compassion that this population needs and deserves. It is heartbreaking to hear of aging adults who still feel uncomfortable being fully themselves in our society. With this robust training, we are better equipped to handle their unique needs."

Many lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender older adults still feel shame about who they are, largely a result of the time they grew up in. Consequentially, their mental and physical health suffers. Council on Aging believes that all aging adults deserve to not only survive, but to thrive in their environment. This training and certification allows the agency to further that goal.

All of Council on Aging of West Florida's programs and services provide essential social benefits to adults 60 and over regardless of sexuality or gender identity. Furthermore, the agency boasts a progressive non-discrimination policy, including health coverage for transgender individuals, an anti-bullying policy and standards of behavior that promote diversity and equality.

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Council on Aging of West Florida is a local independent 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that has served seniors and their families since 1972. Council on Aging of West Florida helps seniors in Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties live healthy, safe and independent lives in their own familiar surroundings by providing community-based, in-home programs and services such as Meals on Wheels and Alzheimer's respite care. For more information, call 432-1475 or visit www.coawfla.org.

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