



---

Article originally published in May/June 2016 edition of *The Outlook Newsletter*

### **Driver safer, longer... come to CarFit!**

Driving is a skill that can and should be continually improved. Even the most experienced drivers can become safer behind the wheel. For example...

\*Do you know how to adjust your mirrors to eliminate blind spots?

\*Is your steering wheel at the best height and tilt to prevent injury should your air bag deploy?

Get answers to these and many more questions at Pleasant Hill's 5th annual CarFit event on May 21<sup>st</sup>. This is a fun and FREE community event. It takes a mere 15-20 minutes of your time to ensure that you and your car are a perfect fit!

CarFit provides a comprehensive check of how well you and your car work together. Trained technicians and an Occupational Therapist are on hand to teach you tips to optimize your comfort and safety behind the wheel. Studies have shown the program helps to reduce collisions and injuries, so please join us!

Pre-registration is required. Please call Danielle Habr at (925) 671-5221 to sign up.

Can't make the event? Here are some other recommended senior driving resources:

- 1) AARP Safe Driver Course - check their website for local class options, including courses offered periodically at the PH Senior Center.
- 2) [seniordriving.aaa.com](http://seniordriving.aaa.com) - you may get a discount on your insurance if you complete AAA's defensive driving course.
- 3) <http://www.aota.org/olderdriver> - this site offers information to help you stay on the road.
- 4) Pleasant Hill Senior Van Service - Call (925) 671-5272 (or go to <http://www.ci.pleasant-hill.ca.us/Index.aspx?NID=402>) for more information about this wonderful, local transportation option!



---

Article originally published in March/April 2016 edition of *The Outlook Newsletter*

## Can Dancing Make You Smarter?

In 2012, a study conducted by the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York (which compiled data on seniors for over 21 years) revealed that dancing can make you smarter and ward off dementia. The study wanted to identify any physical or cognitive recreational activities that might preserve the mental acuity of study participants as they aged. They studied the effects of cognitive activities such as reading, writing for pleasure, crossword puzzles, playing cards, and playing musical instruments; as well as physical activities such as walking, dancing, swimming, housework, cycling, and golf. One of the surprises of the study was that dancing was superior to every other activity (both cognitive and physical) for reducing the risk of dementia. The study revealed the following reductions in the risk of dementia:

- Bicycling, swimming, and golf – 0% reduced risk
- Reading – 35% reduced risk
- Doing crossword puzzles 4 days a week – 47% reduced risk
- Dancing 4 days a week – 76% reduced risk

All exercise is good for you, but to reduce dementia, dancing is the clear winner! Why? Growing evidence shows that we increase our mental capacity by exercising our cognitive processes. We must use it or lose it. The best way to preserve mental acuity is to involve yourself in activities which require learning new things and split-second rapid-fire decision making. Dancing involves and connects several brain functions simultaneously including: kinesthetic, rational, musical, emotional, and social processes. Dancing requires “learning and doing,” on multiple levels at the same time, and this heightens neural connectivity and stimulates the creation of new neural pathways within the brain.

Check out dancing opportunities at Pleasant Hill’s Community Center, Senior Center and YMCA. For more dancing opportunities in Pleasant Hill, enter searches for “DVC Catalog-Dancing” and Zumba, Jazzercise and Sizzlin’ Latin classes in your web browser!



---

Article originally published in January/February 2016 edition of *The Outlook Newsletter*

### **Family Caregiver Retreat a Big Success!**

Hosted by the Pleasant Hill Commission on Aging, the first ever Pleasant Hill Family Caregivers Retreat was held on October 16, 2015. Here's a sample of what participants said they liked about the retreat.

- The sharing and common stories, excellent information and resources
- Informative, well organized, great guest speakers with knowledge to share
- The openness of the participants and speakers
- Caregivers sharing their experiences and recommendations

On a scale of 1 – 5 with 5 being excellent, participants rated their satisfaction with the overall event at 4.75. We are so glad that we could fulfill a real need in our community with this retreat. Additional comments included:

- I felt so welcomed to be here
- Greatly enjoyed the retreat
- Very grateful you had the retreat
- I sincerely hope you will continue with retreats in the future

A special thanks to our community partners: the Alzheimer's Association; Meals on Wheels and Senior Outreach Services; Kaiser Permanente; Allstar Medical Supply; LTP Continuum, which provided free breakfast treats and lunch for participants; and the Irvin Deutscher YMCA.

The facilities provided by Hope Center Covenant Church were just perfect for the retreat. Participants noted that it was a "comfortable setting" and that "the room setup was so pleasant."

The best news is that the Commission is already starting to plan the 2016 retreat for family caregivers!



---

Article originally published in November/December 2015 edition of *The Outlook Newsletter*

### **Are Video Games Good for the Aging Brain?**

Despite claims by many video and “brain” game developers, there is very little scientific evidence that playing video games will fend off mental decline in older adults. The best ways to keep our brains healthy are still daily exercise, a heart healthy diet, social interaction, and feeling that you are part of a community.

One type of video game that has been tested and did seem to have some lasting effects on improving the older player’s ability to do the tasks of daily living is a type called “speed-of-processing.” For example, in a video game where you are boating down a winding, rushing river you have to not only stay on course but also have to hit a button if a blue bird or a green fish pops up. The game should get harder and faster as you learn how to play it. Maybe a blue fish or a green bird will pop up and you better not hit the button in error (the color and the animal are not a match).

The brain’s ability to quickly react slows down as we age and we lose the ability to juggle multiple tasks. While more research is needed, this type of speed-of-processing video game may help you be better at dividing your attention between more than one thing at once in the real world and not just on the video screen. Game on!



Article originally published in September/October 2015 edition of *The Outlook Newsletter*

## **Family Caregiver Retreat**

**Free community event sponsored by the Pleasant Hill Commission on Aging**

**Friday, October 16th**

**9:00 am – 3:30 pm**

**Hope Center Covenant Church**

**2275 Morello Avenue, Pleasant Hill**

**Caregivers...take a much needed break...and learn ways to make your life easier and more fulfilling. You deserve it!**

We invite you to join us for a retreat where the focus is on you and your well-being. Come share a day of camaraderie, education, and resources with other family caregivers. You will take home extensive resource information and new ideas to support your daily routine. There is no charge for this wonderful event.

Retreat sessions will include:

- A sharing forum about caregiving challenges and success strategies
- Behavior modification approaches - how to manage difficult dementia behaviors
- Fall prevention recommendations - improve home safety, including medical equipment options and how to assist a person with mobility problems
- Medication management information - which medications can adversely affect older people and what kinds of questions to ask the doctor or pharmacist
- Wellness strategies - how you can better take care of yourself
- Guided yoga visualization and stress management techniques

The retreat is free and includes morning refreshments and a boxed lunch. All speakers are specialists in their fields from various organizations (such as Meals on Wheels and Senior Outreach Services, Alzheimer's Association, Kaiser Permanente, and the YMCA) who have graciously agreed to support this event.

Space is limited and registration is required. **Call Danielle Habr at (925) 671-5221 to register.**

We hope you can join us!



Article originally published in July/August 2015 edition of *The Outlook Newsletter*

## Is Your Home User-friendly?

There are many ways to make things easier and safer around the house. One area that can create special challenges is the bathroom. Here are some home modification ideas you may find helpful:

### Toilet Options:

- An ADA height toilet. An extra few inches make a big difference!
- A toilet safety frame. Armrests on the toilet add leverage and support.
- A riser seat, preferably with armrests. Make sure it bolts or secures to the toilet so there's no risk of it tipping.
- A grab bar beside or in front of the toilet.

### Shower and Tub Tips:

- A shower chair, preferably with a back and adjustable legs.
- A tub transfer bench (which extends over the rim) will allow you to get your feet in and out *while seated*.
- Grab bars create stability. Suction bars that clamp into place may work on smooth enclosures, but use them with caution. Tub safety rails that clamp to the tub rim are a good alternative to drilling into the wall.
- A handheld shower is convenient if you sit for showers.
- Have non-skid mats and rugs on the inside and outside of the shower or tub to prevent slipping. Keep the floor dry!

### Local Equipment Resources (ask about a senior discount):

- AllStar Medical Supply, 1930 Diablo Blvd., Walnut Creek, 925-932-3100
- Concord Medical Market, 3375 Port Chicago Hwy, Concord, 925-682-7722
- Economy Medical, 114 Center Ave., Pacheco, 925-686-3323
- Walgreen's, Costco and Target, in store and on-line



Article originally published in May/June 2015 edition of *The Outlook Newsletter*

## Prescriptions For Life

The sun is out and flowers are blooming. Two prescriptions for keeping the golden in your years are to prioritize friendships and fitness. And why not do both at the same time? Walking and swimming groups are alive and keeping people well right here in Pleasant Hill. The Irvin Deutscher YMCA offers daily classes in water aerobics, arthritis aerobics and lap swimming. In these classes fitness and friendships bloom together.

Hippocrates said, “Walking is man's best medicine.” One of the most popular trails in the Park District system is the Contra Costa Canal Trail. It is a paved pathway (accessible to wheelchairs) meandering along the Contra Costa Canal. Many walk its pleasant path; others rest at benches along the way or feed the ducks.

If you like company on your walks, just type in “*Walking for Fitness in Pleasant Hill*” in your browser ([http://walking-for-fitness.meetup.com/cities/us/ca/pleasant\\_hill/](http://walking-for-fitness.meetup.com/cities/us/ca/pleasant_hill/)) and multiple Meetup sites will appear. Into fitness and a fast pace? Have chronic pain? There is a walking group for you!

### **Walking and Water Fitness can:**

- Reduce risk of coronary heart disease and stroke
- Reduce high cholesterol
- Lower blood pressure
- Reduce risk of colon cancer
- Reduce body fat
- Increase bone density and help prevent osteoporosis and osteoarthritis
- Reduce risk of Type 2 diabetes
- Help with overall flexibility
- Increase mental well being

### **Stay young through staying fit:**

- Fit and active people have approximately half the risk of cardiovascular disease compared to unfit people
- Fit people have better coordination, greater flexibility and their bones are stronger. As a result, fit people are less likely to fall and suffer injuries such as hip fractures
- Fit people are less prone to depression and anxiety
- Fit people tend to sleep better

**Spring is in the air. Let's get out there!**



Article originally published in March/April 2015 edition of *The Outlook Newsletter*

## Senior Drivers: Ways You Can Improve Your Driving Safety

Here are five ways you can maximize your safety on the road:

1. **VISION** – 90% of the information used in driving comes through your eyes.
  - Adjust mirrors properly before you start to drive
  - Check rearview mirror every 10-20 seconds
  - Turn and look over your shoulder when changing lanes
  - Avoid night driving
2. **MEMORY and ATTENTION**
  - Put your sunglasses where you can easily reach them
  - Know where you are going before you start
  - Turn the radio off and keep conversations to a minimum
  - Drive on familiar roads to reduce stress
3. **STRENGTH and ENDURANCE**
  - Continue the exercise habit; take regular walks
  - Contact the Senior Center, YMCA, or Park and Rec Dept about exercise options
  - Get plenty of sleep and rest
  - Ask your health care provider about any health concerns before starting your routine
4. **HEALTH CONDITIONS and MEDICATION CHANGES**
  - Ask your doctor or pharmacist about side effects or negative drug interactions that may affect your driving
  - Be sure you know how you react to a medication before getting behind the wheel
5. **CHECK OUT YOUR CAR**
  - Maintain the correct fluid levels and air pressure in the tires
  - Promptly repair any damage that could influence driving safety (e.g. cracked windshield, broken mirror, burned out light)

Participate in CarFit on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, here in Pleasant Hill. This is a free senior driving safety event. Trained volunteers help you assess how well your car “fits” you (and offer suggestions for improvement, when appropriate), which will reduce your chances of having an accident and being injured in an accident. See the accompanying article for more details and information on how to sign up!

## CarFit

The Pleasant Hill [Commission on Aging](#) will host a CarFit event on May 2, 2015 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. for Pleasant Hill Seniors. CarFit is an educational program created by the American Society on Aging, and developed in collaboration with AARP, AAA, and the American Occupational Therapy Association.

The three goals of the community-based program are to:

1. Help older drivers improve the “fit” of their vehicles for safety and comfort;
2. Promote conversations among older adults and families about driving safety and the continued need for mobility options to keep people participating in the life of their communities; and
3. Link adults with relevant, local resources that can help ensure they drive safely longer.

CarFit uses a trained team, including occupational therapy practitioners, to assist older drivers with items such as:

- A clear line of sight over the steering wheel.
- Adequate space between the front airbag/steering wheel and the driver’s breastbone.
- Properly adjusted head restraints, and proper positioning on the gas and brake pedals.
- Proper seat belt use and fit, and safe positioning of mirrors to minimize blind spots.

The 20-minute appointment not only provides an opportunity to open a positive, non-threatening conversation about driver to vehicle fit, but it also provides specific community resources to help older drivers stay healthy and continue to drive for as long as safely possible.

For more information about this valuable program, please visit <http://www.car-fit.org/>. Appointments will be taken on a first-come/first-served basis. To register for an appointment, please call the City of Pleasant Hill at (925) 671-5221 by April 29.



---

Article originally published in Jan/Feb 2015 edition of *The Outlook Newsletter*

## Let's Talk

Are you having trouble talking with a parent, relative, or friend who has memory loss because of Alzheimer's disease or dementia? Here are some tips to keep the conversation lively and fulfilling for both you and your loved one. Remember that due to physical changes in the brain, your loved one's view of the world is very different than yours. You cannot change his or her behavior through arguments, rational reasoning, or confrontation.

### TIPS

- Be patient, cheerful, and reassuring. Your loved one may be scared most of the time because her familiar world has become bewildering.
- Respond to the feelings being expressed rather than the words.
- Don't take anything your loved one says personally. Paranoia, fear, anger, agitation, and hostility are all the disease talking to you...not your loved one.
- Allow plenty of time for your loved one to understand what you are talking about. Slow down the speed of your conversation.
- If your loved one says things that upset you, try your best to respond with kindness. If necessary, leave the room and take a break from each other.
- If you feel an argument coming on, distract your loved one to a different subject or activity.
- Repeat instructions the same way, over and over, if necessary. Break a task down into small steps and give instructions one step at a time.

Before it all gets to be too much, join a support group. The Alzheimer's Association sponsors a caregivers support group in Pleasant Hill, the 3rd Wednesday of each month, 4:30–6:00pm. For more information, call the local branch at 925-284-7942 or visit this website: [www.alz.org/norcal/index.asp](http://www.alz.org/norcal/index.asp).



---

Article originally published in Nov/Dec 2014 edition of *The Outlook Newsletter*

## Satisfying That Animal Urge

It's a well-established fact that pets are good for us. But there are drawbacks to pet ownership for seniors. They tie you down, they can be expensive, and they may not fit your current living situation. A great way to get your animal fix without a full-time commitment is to volunteer with a local animal rescue group. (It's also a great way to meet some pretty nice people!) We are fortunate to live in area with many such groups, a few of which are listed below:

**Contra Costa Humane Society** Located right here in Pleasant Hill, this group is looking for volunteer adoption counselors, photographers, animal transporters, drivers for their 'AniMeals Pet Food Bank' program, handlers for adoption events, and foster homes. Contact them at 925-279-2247 or [www.cchumane.org/support/volunteer](http://www.cchumane.org/support/volunteer).

**ARF** Tony La Russa's Animal Rescue Foundation saves dogs and cats which have run out of time at public shelters. They have a beautiful facility in Walnut Creek and a host of volunteer opportunities including dog/cat care volunteers, dog training assistants, learning center docents, and foster care. Contact 925-256-1273 or [www.arf.net/how-you-can-help/volunteer](http://www.arf.net/how-you-can-help/volunteer) Animal Services Martinez Shelter. Volunteers reunite lost animals with their owners. They help exercise, socialize, and train animals. Foster care is needed for animals waiting placement or recovering from surgeries or other medical issues. During warm months, cat, kitten, and puppy foster parents are desperately needed. Contact Cindy Smith, Volunteer Program Manager, at 925-335-8335 or [www.co.contra-costa.ca.us/828/Volunteer-Program](http://www.co.contra-costa.ca.us/828/Volunteer-Program). Community Concern for Cats. This all-volunteer cat rescue group rescues abandoned and homeless cats. They always need safe foster homes. Typical fostering commitments last 1 to 4 months, depending on the age and socialization level of the kitty. Contact them at 925-938-2287 or [www.communityconcernforcats.org](http://www.communityconcernforcats.org).

For something a little different, try the Lindsay Wildlife Museum in Walnut Creek. Home of the first wildlife rehabilitation program in the United States. The Lindsay cares for orphaned and injured California native wildlife. Over 5,500 animals are treated every year. They couldn't do it without a dedicated group of volunteers who help out in the wildlife hospital and also provide home care. Contact 925-935-1978 or <http://wildlife-museum.org/getinvolved/adult>.



Article originally published in Sept/Oct 2014 edition of *The Outlook Newsletter*

## Seniors Often Victims of Phone Fraud

According to FBI reports, there are about 14,000 illegal telemarketing operations that steal more than \$40 billion from unsuspecting citizens each year. Most phone fraud victims are over the age of 60. Telemarketing fraud happens when a con artist calls, posing as a legitimate telemarketer. These con artists try to cheat you out of your money. They will offer free prizes, vacation packages, or other incentives. They will usually demand you act right away and require some kind of up-front payment.

### What you can do

- **Be aware of the problem.** Check the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) consumer education website at [ftc.gov/phonefraud](http://ftc.gov/phonefraud) to learn more about common scams and what to watch for. The FTC offers free publications at 877-382-4357.
- **Never give out personal information over the phone.** If someone asks for your credit card number, mailing address, or any other private information, hang up the phone because it's a scam.
- **Screen your calls.** If you have trouble hanging up on pushy telemarketers, consider caller ID and only pick up if you recognize the caller's number. You can also let calls go to voice mail since telemarketers rarely leave messages.
- **Reduce the number of "nuisance" calls.** You can register your phone number for free at the National Do Not Call Registry at 888-382-1222 or [donotcall.gov](http://donotcall.gov).
- **Report it.** Any suspicious calls should be reported to the FTC (see [ftccomplaintassistance.gov](http://ftccomplaintassistance.gov) or call 877-382-4357) and to the State Attorney General. You will need to provide the telemarketer's phone number, and the date and time of the call.