



Senior Advocate

Dedicated to the Well-Being of Oakland County Seniors

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I CAN SEE CLEARLY NOW...

An older gentleman was diagnosed with a cataract and had it removed successfully. Following surgery, he was looking in the closet for his pair of brown checked pants. After going through all of the pants he owned, the only checked pair he could find was blue. It finally dawned on him that the cataract had altered his vision so much that this blue pair had appeared brown. Now, colors were clearer and brighter. It also occurred to him that he may have been a fashion nightmare for some time before the surgery.



The eye's lens is made of water and protein and is located behind the color part of your eye. Normally, it is clear and light passes through it easily to send the image we are viewing to our brain. As you age some of the protein may clump together and start to cloud an area of the lens which can distort that image. This is a cataract and it can grow larger and cloud more of the lens over time. Most cataracts are related to aging and by age 80, more than half of all Americans either have one or have had cataract surgery. There are other causes of cataracts such as eye disease or injury, genetic conditions or certain radiation exposure. Smoking, alcohol abuse, certain drugs, prolonged exposure to sunlight and some medical conditions

such as diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity can increase your risk of cataracts.

At first, the cloudiness may affect only a small part of the eye's lens and you may be unaware of any vision changes. As the cataract grows larger, you may start to notice these signs and symptoms:

- Cloudy, blurry or dimmed vision
- Colors seem faded or yellowed
- Headlights, lamps or sunlight may seem too bright and glaring or may have a halo around them
- Driving at night seems increasingly difficult

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The hands on page one belong to Sally Swayne.

Sally is the chairperson of the Oakland County Senior Advisory Council, a role she has served with dedication and enthusiasm. She is the Council representative from District 2 in northwest Oakland County.

Sally has been active in local government and in serving the needs of seniors in Oakland County.



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Over the years I have become more vocal. Call it age, call it experience or just chalk it up to wanting to be heard after a shy childhood, but I am much more vocal about my opinions than I used to be. Now, just let me say that does not mean I just blurt out what I believe to be the truth without regard to the situation or the feelings of others. Sometimes, that is more rude than truthful and is better kept to myself. What it does mean is that I feel more confident in asking questions and disagreeing if the answers don't seem just or correct.

I have learned a lot from the seniors I have come in contact with over the years. One area of my job includes working with the Oakland County Senior Advisory Council that advises Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson on issues of concern to older adults. They are a politically diverse group with a variety of skills and experiences. What they have in common is their interest in making Oakland County a great place for seniors by speaking out about the issues that affect them.

Roy Wheatley began serving on the Advisory Council when Lassie was a pup (just a joke, Roy) and recently retired from the group. He was never afraid to express his thoughts on what were the problems facing older adults that could be addressed at the County level. Roy also gave credit when credit was due to programs and services that benefited older adults. His vitality and commitment will be missed on the Council and we are hoping that he will drop in once in a while to keep us in line. He has always been a supporter of this newsletter. This one is for you, Roy.

We all have different experiences in life that shape our opinions of what are the most pressing issues that we face today. For some it is costs of housing, utilities or health care while for others it is how to find the services to live safely in the home of your choice. Transportation, finding resource information and funding for local senior centers are concerns that are raised frequently. These are

only a few of the subjects that affect the lives of Oakland County residents every day and you can undoubtedly think of others.

There are a variety of ways that you can make your views known such as local forums or town hall meetings held by the Area Agency on Aging 1B or the Michigan Office of Services to the Aging. There are also a lot of other ways that you can make a difference in your community. Local senior centers and other organizations that serve seniors are in need of your support more than ever to keep the programs going that enhance the lives of older adults. Your contributions of time or financial support, whether small or large, helps to sustain their services. Talk with them to find out how you can help.

What is important to you? And more important, what are you going to do about it? Let them know what you think. Find out how you can help. Don't be shy.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary".

Mary Strobe

Senior Citizens Services Coordinator



The Art of Aging Conference: Arrive, Achieve, Advance, sponsored by the Wayne State University Institute of Gerontology, will be held on Thursday, March 24, 2011 at the Greater Grace Temple on 7 Mile Road near Telegraph. This is a wonderful opportunity to participate and observe how staying active and engaged contributes to healthy aging. For information and a registration form, call Donna MacDonald at (313) 577-2297. Registration begins January 1 for the first 400 seniors. Don't wait, because this event sells out every year.

- Double vision or multiple images in one eye
- Frequent prescription changes in your glasses or contact lenses

You can develop cataracts in one or both eyes. It does not spread from one eye to another. If you are age 60 or older, you should have a comprehensive eye exam every two years to detect cataracts or other vision disorders. Make an appointment for an exam if you notice any changes in your vision. If you develop sudden vision changes, such as double vision or blurriness, see your physician right away. Early treatment for many eye diseases can save your sight.

Surgery is the only effective treatment for cataracts. It involves removing the cloudy lens and replacing it with an artificial lens. Cataracts only need to be removed when vision loss affects your quality of life or interferes with your ability to perform everyday activities such as driving or reading. The decision whether surgery is right for you should be made along with your eye care professional. An eye care specialist (ophthalmologist) performs the procedure. Always discuss the risks and benefits of your surgery with the doctor before the procedure.

The operation generally is done under local anesthesia (you stay awake), takes less than an hour and is almost painless. Most people who have cataract surgery go home on the same day. You will need someone to drive you home. If you have cataracts in both eyes that

require surgery, it will be performed on each eye at different times, usually four to eight weeks apart.

For most people, there is no rush to remove cataracts because they usually don't harm the eye. If you choose not to have surgery right away, talk with your eye doctor about how often you should return for check-ups to see how things are progressing. To manage symptoms until you decide to have surgery, try to:

- Make sure your eyeglass or contact lens prescription is accurate
- Use a magnifying glass to read
- Improve lighting at home with more or brighter lamps
- When outside during daytime hours, wear sunglasses or a hat to reduce glare
- Limit your night driving

These measures may help for a while, but when vision loss interferes with your activities, consider surgery.

Many doctors feel that a healthy lifestyle can help reduce your risk of cataracts. These are the same recommendations that help you prevent other illnesses. They include maintaining a healthy weight, eating a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables, quitting smoking, protecting yourself from the ultraviolet light of the sun and having regular eye exams. For more information about what is best for you, check with your health care provider.

The new Oakland County Senior Resource is now available online at www.oakgov.com/seniors. There are 36 chapters with information from *Adult Day Care* to *Vision & Hearing*. Each chapter can be printed separately or the complete directory can be printed together. (Warning for your printer: the complete directory is over 100 pages.)



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You can now access this newsletter online at the Oakland County Senior Website. The address is www.oakgov.com/seniors.

We welcome and encourage you to send us your articles, photographs, suggestions and comments.

E-mail strobem@oakgov.com or call Mary Strobe at (248) 858-0213, or write to us at: 1200 N. Telegraph Rd. Bldg. 34E Pontiac, MI 48341-0432

VOLUNTEER TO MAKE WISHES COME TRUE

Celebrating its 25th year, The Rainbow Connection makes dreams come true for Michigan children with life threatening illnesses. From something as simple as a computer or as unique as meeting the President of the United States at The White House or a glorious trip to Disney World, we have fulfilled the dreams of over 2000 Michigan children.

The Rainbow Connection also provides support services, information and referral, special holiday get-togethers and picnics and, perhaps most important of all, a listening ear to over 600 local families each year.

“These families are suffering and we are here to make the burden a little lighter by bringing a smile to the face of these brave children and giving them something to look forward to as they struggle through painful medical procedures,” explains Mary Grace McCarter, Executive Director at The Rainbow Connection.

“People ask how so few of us accomplish so much and I remind them there are actually hundreds of us when you include our volunteers,” says McCarter.

In fact, without the help of volunteers The Rainbow Connection would struggle to meet the time sensitive needs of the children and families it serves. This time of year volunteer opportunities include wrapping gifts for the children, office assistance answering phones and mailing letters, bulk mail preparation for newsletters and invitations, and volunteering at various fundraising events for the children. The Rainbow Connection

Cont. on p. 5



PARK WEST GALLERY “ART WITH A HEART”

Park West Gallery houses more than one thousand pieces of beautiful artwork in its 63,000 square foot opulent Greco Roman designed building. But Park West, rated the number one art gallery in Metropolitan Detroit in a survey conducted by WDIV-TV Channel 4, offers much more than just the finest pieces of artwork anywhere in the world.

Owners Albert and Mitsie Scaglione have made it their mission in life to give back to the community which has afforded them the opportunity to be successful in business. Park West Cares, which the couple established last July, has donated \$1.5 million worth of clothing and works of art to literally thousands of charities and educational organizations worldwide.



The Park West Foundation, which the Scaglione's founded in 2006, has provided assistance to hundreds of young men and women who, because of state law, have been forced to opt out of Michigan's Foster Care system at the age of eighteen.



The Park West Foundation has taken these individuals under its protective wing and helped them find clothing, housing, jobs and even made it possible for some of them to continue their education at a college or university.

Albert and Mitsie also invite any 501(c) 3 charities to host fundraisers and parties at the gallery, free of charge.

The Scaglione's practice the old stricture: “To Whom Much Is Given, Much Is Expected.” At Park West Gallery, an apt motto might be “Art with A Heart.”

Park West Gallery is located at 29469 Northwestern Highway in Southfield. For more information about Park West Gallery go to www.parkwestgallery.com



FLASH SOMEONE

(WITH YOUR BEAUTIFUL
SMILE, THAT IS!)

It is a common myth that as you age, you and your teeth will sleep in different places. There is no reason that seniors cannot keep their teeth for a lifetime since losing teeth is a result of poor dental health and not the aging process.

Taking care of your teeth can be good for the rest of your body too. There is a close connection between your oral health and your overall health. The mouth is normally full of bacteria, but they are kept in check with good oral hygiene which includes daily brushing and flossing. Saliva is a natural cavity fighter and has properties that help fight against bacteria and viruses. Healthy gums provide a barrier to prevent these germs from entering the bloodstream and causing problems in other parts of your body.

Taking care of your teeth can ensure that you keep them. Here are some things to keep in mind to help you maintain a healthy smile and prevent some illnesses:

Remember the basics. Brushing at least twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and a soft-bristle brush are as important as ever. Brushing before going to bed is especially important to prevent bacteria from attacking your teeth while you sleep. An electric toothbrush can be helpful, especially if you have arthritis or other conditions which make it difficult to brush well. Strapping your manual toothbrush to a larger object that is easy to hold may make it easier to handle.

Taking care of your gums is equally as important as brushing your teeth. Gingivitis is caused when bacteria grow in the plaque found in cracks and crevices between and around your teeth. Gingivitis can develop into more serious periodontal disease which can lead to tooth loss. Daily flossing can help you save your teeth by removing plaque between teeth and below the gumline that your toothbrush cannot reach. Research has shown that some types of bacteria found in oral plaque are also found in the atherosclerotic plaque in arteries of the heart. This plaque can

lead to heart attack.

Some medical conditions, treatments or medications will lessen the amount of saliva in your mouth. It is important to prevent dry mouth since saliva helps wash away bacteria and neutralizes acids in the mouth. Sip water regularly and try sugar free gum or candy to keep your mouth moist. Saliva substitutes are available over-the-counter and are marketed as moisturizing mouth toothpaste, rinses or sprays. If you use a mouth rinse, choose one that does not contain alcohol. Avoid drinks containing alcohol or caffeine, salty, dry foods and foods or beverages with a high sugar content. You may also want to discuss with your health care provider whether one of your current medications may be contributing to dry mouth and if alternative medications might be available.

One of the key preventative strategies for ensuring that teeth last a lifetime is to visit your dentist twice a year. Seeing the dentist regularly can prevent problems that may become more complicated and difficult (substitute painful or expensive here) to treat later. Dentists also perform a head and neck examination to detect signs of oral cancer.

Good daily care of your teeth and mouth combined with regular check-ups can improve your overall health as well as giving you a winning smile.

4 BASICS OF ORAL HEALTH

1. Brush twice a day.
2. Floss daily.
3. Keep your mouth moist.
4. Visit your dentist regularly.

Volunteer...Cont. from p. 4

looks to retired people to share their skills and talents to better serve wish families.

“We learn so much from our volunteers,” says McCarter. “We would be lost without them!”

To learn more about volunteer opportunities at The Rainbow Connection and/or to complete an application to volunteer go to www.rainbowconnection.org or just call (248) 601- 9474 and ask for Jennifer, the Director of Volunteer Services.



As winter nears and the temperature drops, it's a good idea to get ready for the cold months ahead. Here are some tips from the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging on how you can make your home or that of a loved one stay warm and safe:

- Do not use the stove or oven to heat the home.
- Keep a flashlight handy in case the electricity goes out. Don't use candles.
- If using a space heater, make sure the wires are in good shape and out of the way to avoid tripping over them.
- Make sure smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors are checked every year.
- Make sure water pipes are insulated. This keeps them from freezing and bursting.

For more information about Low-Income Home Energy and Weatherization Assistance Programs contact Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency at (248) 209-2760.



GIVING WISELY

Requests for charitable donations come throughout the year from any one of hundreds of local, national and even international charities. Surveys show that monetary donations to charities are decreasing while the demand for services grows larger. Organizations are trying to serve the most critical needs of as many as possible with fewer resources.

Many families are also doing more with less which makes it important to carefully consider the charities to support and how to best assist those organizations with their work. There are two important ways to offer your help. The first is providing monetary support to those groups who you know are good stewards of the donations they receive and whose missions you wish to support. The second is getting directly involved with the charity of your choice by volunteering your time to assist them in carrying out their work.

Before providing support to any organization you should know something about it. Choose a charity whose goals and mission match what is important to you. If someone calls or writes to you with a very moving plea about why you should “Save the Bowtruckles,” don’t be persuaded to back a cause that you have no interest in. Ask about the goals of the organization, what percentage of donations is used toward programs and how much is used for administration and fundraising expenses.

Only donations to 501(c)(3) charitable non-profit organizations are deductible on your personal income tax form as a charitable donation. It is also good to know if the group is licensed to solicit funds from the public. To find out if a charity is licensed, visit www.michigan.gov/ag and click on the Charities hotlink. If it is not listed or you need more information, contact the Attorney General’s office at (517) 373-1152.

Here are some other tips to consider when supporting a charity:

- Make contributions by check (not cash), payable to the organization and not to an individual.
- Ask for a receipt with the charity name, date, donation amount and the intended use of the money.
- Never give a credit card number to a solicitor who has called you. Use caution when donating online or by telephone and ask how they safeguard your information.
- If volunteering your time, do you have skills that would be valuable to this charity?
- Does your availability match the times when help is needed?
- Do you know others who can recommend working with this organization?

The vast majority of charities are wonderful, conscientious organizations, but you need to do your homework before you invest your time and money. Choose wisely when considering where you will give.

For more details on this and other consumer protection visit the Michigan Attorney General’s website at www.michigan.gov/ag.



Americans watch an average of five hours of television every day. Here are a few tips on how to stay healthy by exercising while you watch.

- Keep small weights and other exercise equipment near the TV so you can exercise during a show.
- Get up and move during commercial breaks. Clean your house or do sit-ups to pass the time.
- Sit on a stability ball. This helps improve your balance and posture, and it works your abdominal muscles.
- Find a good music channel to dance to.
- Move around while you watch TV. Even something simple like shaking your legs or stretching your arms burns calories.

WHERE'S BROOKS?



Hint: Well, that seems like a good idea. For the answer, see page 11.

Sudoku puzzles have unique solutions that can be reached logically without guessing. Enter the digits from 1 to 9 into the blank spaces. Every row must contain one of each digit. So must every column, as must every 3 x 3 square. This puzzle is rated Medium. The solution is on page 8.

			3					
1					6			
			8			1		2
	3	9	7	8		4		
	2					3	8	
			4				1	
5				4		9	6	1
	4	7			9			



RECIPE CORNER

Elaine Young of South Lyon responded to my request for old recipes and sent in this family favorite:

"This was brought here from Germany by my great grandmother, who had received it from her mother. It's called Mustard Potatoes and you can either use it as a main dish or with the meal."

MUSTARD POTATOES

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 to 6 sliced potatoes
- 1/2 lb of bacon diced (you can also use turkey bacon)
- 4 eggs, hard boiled and sliced
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1/4 cup vinegar
- 1/4 cup mustard

DIRECTIONS:

Peel and slice potatoes then boil till soft then drain.

While potatoes are boiling, in fry pan, cook bacon and onion together until done and drain any fat from pan.

Add sliced eggs and mix with bacon and onion together.

In measuring cup mix together the vinegar and mustard and pour on to bacon, eggs and onions and mix thoroughly.

In a bowl, put drained potatoes, then add the mixture from the fry pan, mix thoroughly and serve. Enjoy.

WINTER- TIME

by Robert Louis Stevenson

Late lies the wintry sun a-bed,
A frosty, fiery sleepy-head;
Blinks but an hour or two; and then,
A blood-red orange, sets again.

Before the stars have left the skies,
At morning in the dark I rise;
And shivering in my nakedness,
By the cold candle, bathe and dress.

Close by the jolly fire I sit
To warm my frozen bones a bit;
Or with a reindeer-sled, explore
The colder countries round the door.

When to go out, my nurse doth wrap
Me in my comforter and cap;
The cold wind burns my face, and
blows
Its frosty pepper up my nose.

Black are my steps on silver sod;
Thick blows my frosty breath abroad;
And tree and house, and hill and lake,
Are frosted like a wedding-cake.

Sudoku Puzzle Solution

8	9	4	3	1	2	7	5	6
1	7	2	9	5	6	8	4	3
3	6	5	8	7	4	1	9	2
6	3	9	7	8	1	4	2	5
4	2	1	6	9	5	3	8	7
7	5	8	4	2	3	6	1	9
5	8	3	2	4	7	9	6	1
2	4	7	1	6	9	5	3	8
9	1	6	5	3	8	2	7	4



It sits there quietly, waiting for me. As the days go on it can grow bigger, more unsightly and intimidating. The rest of the family avoids that spot, turning their eyes as they walk through the kitchen. Finally the time comes and I gather my tools to face it once again, knowing that my efforts are only temporary. With determination, I attack and divide the monster into three smaller foes: the recycling, the shredding and the trash. They are dispatched and the latest battle against the clutter of the junk mail is won, for now. But, it will return next week and threaten to take over the kitchen counter once again.

All right, it really isn't that dramatic but the buildup of clutter can be an ongoing source of stress. When you are surrounded by more things than you can manage, it can feel like life has gotten out of control. As the problem gets bigger, it seems more cumbersome and we put it off which just increases the mess and the stress.

Clutter fills more than our shelves and closets. Our brains can become cluttered with too much junk as well. We tend to overload our brains with lots of stimuli and try to cram many activities into our waking hours. Stress can take its toll on both physical and mental health. When our brains are under strain, it can lead to forgetfulness, irritation and the inability to do day-to-day tasks.

So, what can we do to reduce the clutter in our lives and the problems that can be associated with it? Try one of the following tips to diminish the physical and mental "things" that can litter our lives.

We all collect "stuff" along the way. Getting rid of items can be downright difficult, but the things we keep require cleaning, storing and protecting (not to mention a lot of dusting). Simply begin with one small area, such as a drawer, a shelf or a corner. Make decisions on what is needed and what is loved. You might share some of the loved items with family or friends that would enjoy them. Clear out any bits and pieces that you are not using. Items in good condition can be donated to a local charity. Throw away worn out, unread

LESS IS MORE

or useless matter. If there are things that you cannot part with, place them in a box and write a date on it of six months from now. If the box remains unopened until the expiration date, you can clearly do without the contents. Donate or trash the box unopened. You'll be surprised at just how refreshing it is to reclaim even a little bit of space.

You can reduce the amount of paper that is delivered to your home. To rid your mailbox of general junk mail, contact the Direct Marketing Association. Register online at www.dmachoice.org or complete the mail-in form on their website, print it out and send to it to:

Direct Marketing Association
Mail Preference Service
PO Box 643
Carmel, NY 10512

Registration online is free, although you will be asked to provide a credit card number to confirm your identity. Registration by mail will cost \$1, which is payable by check or money order (made payable to "DMA").

To remove your name and address from national credit bureau lists for unsolicited credit card and insurance offers that come in the mail, call 1-888-5-OPTOUT (567-8688) or visit www.optoutprescreen.com. Calling the "opt-out" line, or visiting this website, will allow you to remove your name from lists sold by the major credit reporting agencies for a period of five years or permanently,

depending on the amount of time you choose. You can limit the number of catalogs and other mail solicitations at www.catalogchoice.org. Contacting these sites may not stop all unwanted mail. To stop additional solicitations, you must contact each source directly and request that your name be removed from their mailing lists.

For those who use the internet you can reduce your paper mail even further. E-bills that come to your e-mailbox or automatic bill payment are options from many places of business. Online banking and bill paying is available from most financial institutions.

Just like stacks of paper on the counter, over-scheduling and over-stimulating our lives can contribute to cluttering our mind. If you feel like there are not enough hours in the day, it may not be the clock, but the number of activities that you are trying to pack into it. Being too busy can lead to doing some activities strictly out of habit without taking stock of what you would really enjoy doing with your time. Only say yes to the things that really matter to you. Learn to say no.

Multi-tasking has been the cry of the chronically busy as a way to be more efficient. Just say no. It doesn't let you concentrate on the task and finish what you intended to do. Focus on one project and complete it before you go on to the next. When you don't feel distracted by other plans, you can get into the flow of what you are working on and feel more engaged and productive.

Many of us suffer from being over-connected. Televisions, radios, telephones and computers can be constant companions and contribute to "audiovisual clutter." Being bombarded with stimuli can be a tremendous source of tension. Try life unplugged some of the time. Most of us do not need to be reachable by phone or e-mail, 24 hours a day. Get to know the "off" switch of your cell phone, especially when enjoying quality time with your family, friends or by yourself. Take a vacation from the news. Turn off the TV. Constant noise can be stressful so try to put some silence into each day. It may be difficult at first but you might be surprised at how nice and relaxing it is to sit in quiet.

Removing the clutter from your life can help both your physical and mental well-being. Start small, do one task at a time and simplify the cluttered areas of your life.

The Lewis E. Wint Nature Center in Clarkston has fun and informative programs all the year round. For those looking for a unique activity for their grandchildren or for someone who just wants to learn more about nature and wildlife, there are many opportunities for fun. Seniors age 62 + receive discounted park entry rates. Some programs have nominal fees. The park also offers prospects for those who would like to volunteer. The park is located at 9501 Sashabaw Rd in Clarkston, 48348. For more information about the Wint Nature Center, call 248 625-6473 or visit www.destinationoakland.com.

Clutter and real difficulty in discarding things can be the first signs of a bigger problem. Hoarding can affect emotions, thoughts and behaviors. Symptoms of hoarding include being unable to part with clutter, acquiring unneeded or seemingly useless items, inability to organize items or difficulty managing daily activities or making decisions. If you or a loved one experiences these signs, talk with a physician or mental health care provider as soon as possible.



Photo by Niklas Pivic



A good sense of humor can't cure all ailments, but it can help you feel better, even if you have to force a fake laugh through your grumpiness. When you start to laugh, it lightens your mental load and actually causes positive physical changes in your body. Laughter fires up and then cools down your stress response and increases your heart rate and blood pressure, producing a good, relaxed feeling. So read some jokes, tell some jokes, watch a comedy or hang out with your funny friends.



THE SEARCH STARTS **HERE**

The Oakland County Clerk/Register of Deeds website has a fresh new look, a new online genealogy search and more tools that make it easier than ever before to order public records. The redesigned website at www.oakgov.com/clerkrod is cleaner and much simpler to navigate and has reached their goal of being as efficient and friendly as possible."

Since 2005, the clerk has tripled the number of online offerings, adding such services as online marriage license applications, access to campaign contribution records for local candidates and political committees, a business name database and an email-based election reminder. One of the most popular online services is Court Explorer, which allows users to access and order legal records.

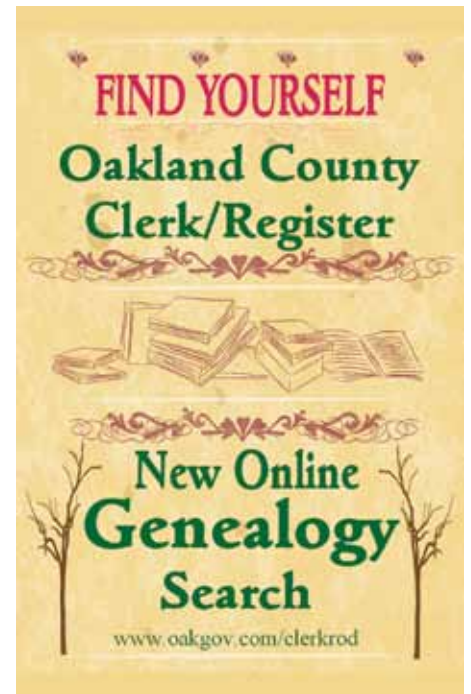
Each year the Clerk/Register of Deeds Office processes more than 150,000 online orders for copies of legal records, property documents and birth, death and marriage records. The Clerk's website receives about 650,000 "visits" annually from computer users.

The new Genealogy Search Service will allow users to search marriage and death records by name to find out whether a record exists in the Oakland County archives. Marriage records, for example, will show the name of the bride and groom and the marriage date. For more information, the full record can be ordered online. Death records can be searched by name and year of death. (Note: Birth records are not public records and may only be obtained by the individual named in the record or their parents.)

The new genealogy search will offer access to records dating back to 1941. However older records will gradually be phased into the system. Normal online order fees will apply.

Users will notice other changes, including a cleaner "wide page" format and large "buttons" for accessing information. In addition to information about ordering public records – legal, property, birth, death and marriage documents – the website also offers valuable information and links to other sites on a range of topics. For example, users can find out more information about the clerk's Absentee Ballot Tracker, watch a video on how to vote, find voting precinct maps, read the Clerk's Quarterly newsletter and access important contact information.

There is a new survey on the website for users to let the Clerk's office know how it is doing and give suggestions on how to improve service further.



Help protect yourself against check theft and fraud by switching from paper checks to electronic payments for your Social Security, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or other federal benefits. Getting payments electronically eliminates the risk of stolen checks and is more convenient, because your money is available on payment day each month. Signing up is quick and easy. For direct deposit, call (800) 333-1795 or visit www.GoDirect.org. This program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of the Treasury and the Federal Reserve Banks.

For Social Security and SSI recipients without bank accounts, the Treasury Department recommends signing up for the Direct Express® Debit MasterCard® card. The Direct Express® card is a prepaid debit card that offers another safe and convenient alternative to paper checks. To sign up for the Direct Express® Debit MasterCard® card for Social Security and SSI benefit payments, call (877) 212-9991 or visit www.USDirectExpress.com. Some fees for optional services may apply.

DON'T LET YOUR MONEY GO DOWN THE DRAIN

In the land of the Great Lakes, we tend to take water for granted. While other parts of the United States are forced to limit their water usage, we seem to have an ample supply. So why should we use less water? The simplest answer is that conserving water saves money on both the costs of the water we use and the pollution that can be caused by overuse.

The amount that is saved can be significant for both those on a municipal water system and also for those with well and septic systems. If you live in an area serviced by a municipal system, the greater your water use, the more you pay for water and sewer service. In some communities, costly sewage system expansion has been avoided by communitywide household water conservation. If you depend on your own well and septic system, the hundreds of gallons of water released each day will, over a period of years, saturate the soil near the septic system absorption field to the point where extensive repair or replacement is necessary. Conserving water can extend the life of the system and delay the need for those costly repairs.

What can be done in the average household to conserve water and save money? With a few conservation techniques, the average household can conserve amazing amounts of water.

Let's start in the bathroom where about 75% of our water usage occurs. Water efficient showerheads are inexpensive, easy to install and can save hundreds of gallons of water each month. Shorten your shower by a minute or two and you'll save even more. Make sure there are water-saving aerators on all of your faucets. Turn off the water while brushing your teeth and when you shave.

Did you know that leaks, on average, can account for more than 10,000 gallons of water wasted in the home each year, enough water to fill a backyard swimming pool? Your bill and water meter are tools that can help you discover leaks so monitor for unusually high use. A leaky or dripping faucet is simple to fix and can save your money from going down the drain. Check your toilet tanks for leaks with this simple method. Put a little food coloring in your toilet tank. If, without flushing, the

color begins to appear in the bowl within 30 minutes, you have a leak that should be repaired immediately. Most replacement parts are inexpensive and easy to install.

We're more likely to notice leaks indoors, but don't forget to check outdoor faucets, sprinklers and hoses for leaks. Know where your master water shut-off valve is located. This could save water and prevent damage to your home.

On to saving in the kitchen and laundry: For cold drinks keep a pitcher of water in the refrigerator instead of running the tap. This way, every drop goes down you and not the drain. When washing dishes by hand, don't let the water run while rinsing. Fill one sink with wash water and the other with rinse water. When using a dishwasher, run only when it is full and if your dishwasher is new, cut back on pre-wash rinsing. Newer models clean more thoroughly than older ones. Scrape food off of plates instead of rinsing and use the garbage disposal sparingly. Wash your fruits and vegetables in a pan of water instead of running water from the tap. Collect the water you use for rinsing fruits and vegetables and reuse it to water houseplants. Don't use running water to thaw food. Defrost food in the refrigerator for water efficiency and food safety.

When doing laundry, match the water level to the size of the load, if your washer has that feature. If not, then run your washer only when it is full. Washing dark clothes in cold water saves both on water, and the energy to heat it, while it helps your clothes to keep their colors.

Ask about water and energy saving features that are available when purchasing new fixtures or appliances. Save money now and conserve water for future generations.

WHERE'S BROOKS?

Answer: Brooks is reviewing his immunization record with a nurse from the Oakland County Health Division. They are discussing the Tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis (Tdap) immunization.

Vaccine protection for pertussis, tetanus, and diphtheria fades with time, so adults need a booster shot. Adults should receive a tetanus and diphtheria booster (called Td) every 10 years. Now that a vaccine to protect against pertussis is available, adults should substitute a Tdap vaccine for one of the boosters. The dose of Tdap can be given earlier than the 10-year mark. Getting vaccinated with Tdap is especially important for grandparents and caregivers of babies. Infants under 12 months are too young to have received all of their vaccinations against this serious illness and adults in contact with babies under a year need to ensure that they have received their booster shot to protect their baby.

Pertussis is known for uncontrollable, violent coughing which often makes it hard to breathe, but in adults the disease can mimic a cold. Pertussis is often serious in infants and young children and can be fatal, because the prolonged coughing is too hard on their small bodies.

“This is a win-win situation. I increase my immunity to serious diseases while protecting the little ones I come in contact with, like my grandchildren.”

For more information about Tdap and other vaccines, contact your physician or the Oakland County Nurse on Call at (800) 848-5533.

CONTACT INFO

Oakland Co. Health Division (OCHD):

Nurse on Call: (800) 848-5533

Oakland Co. Sheriff's Dept.

(248) 975-9700 for free 911 cell phones

Oakland County Parks:

(248) 858-7596

Area Agency on Aging:

(800) 852-7795 www.aaalb.com

Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program:

(800) 803-7174

Medicare

(800) 633-4227 www.medicare.gov

Social Security Administration:

(800) 772-1213 www.ssa.gov

Legal Hotline:

(800) 347-5297

OCHD Senior Resource Directory:

www.oakgov.com/seniors/directory

Michigan Office of Services to the Aging:

www.miseniors.net

State Long Term Care Ombudsman:

(866) 485-9393

AARP:

www.aarp.org/statepages/mi.html

US Administration on Aging:

<http://www.aoa.dhhs.gov/default.htm>

National Council on Aging:

<http://www.ncoa.org>

Healthy Aging for Older Adults:

www.cdc.gov/aging

Prescription Drug Disposal:

www.operationmedicinecabinetmi.com

L. Brooks Patterson, Oakland County Executive
Health Department, Bldg. 34E
1200 N. Telegraph Road
Pontiac, Michigan 48341

