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AD BARGAIN

Serving Our 45th Year!

Volume 45
Number 22

Wednesday, November 4, 2026

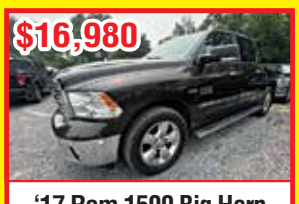
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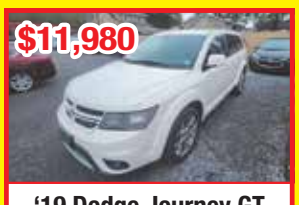
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# Harnessing hope



Mirror photo by Patrick Waksmunski

**Veteran Michael Smith of Altoona places a bridle on Mojave at Victory Therapeutic Horsemanship in Tyrone.**

## Victory Therapeutic Horsemanship named Season of Sharing recipient for 2026 campaign

Local organization offers healing to veterans struggling with mental illness

By Colette Costlow
ccostlow@altoonamirror.com

TYRONE — The Altoona Mirror's annual Season of Sharing fundraising campaign will impact a local program geared toward veterans adjusting to life after the military.

Longtime participant Michael Smith wrote on the Season of Sharing nomination form that Victory Therapeutic Horsemanship provides life-changing equine-assisted services.

"This organization personally saved and changed my life for the last eight years," he wrote.

Founded and run by a combat veteran, Victory Therapeutic Horsemanship is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that uses grants and donations to provide equine therapy to local veterans battling mental illness.

The program has made considerable impacts on the lives of many local veterans, said Jodi Cessna, executive director of the Central Pennsylvania Community Foundation, which manages the Season of Sharing funding effort. She personally knew a veteran who volunteered for the program.

"They said they weren't sure if they'd still be with us without that organization," Cessna said. "That puts it into perspective."

Built on a hillside in Tyrone, the organization plans to expand its arenas, including a fenced-in section on flatland to accommodate disabled veterans.

Victory Therapeutic Horsemanship is open to disabled veterans of all ranks and ages who may regularly deal with mental illnesses following their service, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety.

Starting at the entry level, veterans participate in 90-minute sessions over eight weeks before advancing to more difficult levels focused on building different skill sets. After completing five levels, participants are invited to volunteer at the ring in Tyrone.

Many veterans have reported leaving the ring feeling more relaxed, as they're encouraged to communicate with the program's horses.

"When our team met to review the applications for Season of Sharing, we found all of them to be very worthy," said Mirror Publisher Dan Slep. "Throughout the process, the team kept coming back to Victory Therapeutic Horsemanship. Helping our veterans is such an honor and learning what the program has to offer and their needs, we felt it was the right choice for this year's recipient of Season of Sharing."

### Inspired by horses

Victory Therapeutic Horsemanship founder and executive director John Zanella said Equine therapy saved his life about 20 years ago.

After serving in the Army for 18 years, Zanella had 12 deployments before he was medically discharged. During his medical evaluation boards, a board of physicians recommended an equine therapy program in his home state of Washington.

"I was pretty skeptical that therapy horsemanship would ever work, and I went and gave it a fair shake," he said.

He entered the program with a clean slate, trying to continue without relying on his childhood experience of handling horses.

"It literally saved my life," he said. "It was the one thing I had going for me. I was the cliche, the broken old sergeant with too many deployments, PTSD and physical injuries."

During his time at the equine therapy program, he became a PATH-certified instructor. He eventually moved to Pennsylvania to live with his son, and he started working with horses again, noticing the need for a veterans' horseback-riding program in the area.

"There's this big void and this huge veteran population out here that was not being serviced," he said.

### By veterans, for veterans

Zanella, with help from friend and now deputy director Rebecca Davidson, developed the idea for a horseback riding program in 2014 and officially launched it in 2015.

The first major step of launching Victory Therapeutic Horsemanship was securing funding, Davidson said, because they have no paid staff or personnel, and funds go directly to the program.

Starting at Harmony Horsemanship Center in 2015, the program moved to a horse facility in Port Matilda in 2016 before growing roots at an old barn property in Tyrone in 2017. She said the rings, trails and fencing didn't exist at first, so they had to raise a lot of money over the years to build the arena. Other existing stables were either updated or modified for office space.

See **Victory**/Page **5**

Altoona Mirror Season of Sharing

**INSIDE**

**Donation form — Page 4**
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## PUBLIC AUCTION

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 10 @ 4:00 PM**

Located at Cross Keys Auction Center one mile North of Duncansville, PA 16635 – off route 764 onto Kuhn Lane. Doors open at 2:30 PM.

**ANTIQUES – HOUSEHOLD – TOOLS**

Will be selling items from several local homes. Partial listing: Whirlpool automatic washer and electric dryer, small appliances, a lot of household items, collector items, Sears radial saw and a lot of hand tools, building supplies, antiques, and hundreds of related items. Conducting two auctions.

Watch Auctionzip.com ID #1220 for photos. Terms: cash, approved check, or credit card with a 5% fee. Announcements made on the day of the auction take precedence over any and all printed material.

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## PUBLIC ESTATE AUCTION

**FRIDAY NOVEMBER 13, 2026 @ 5:00 P.M.**

**DOUBLE K AUCTION HOUSE**

**1821 DORSEY AVENUE, IRVONA PA 16656**

**ANTIQUES & COLLECTIBLES:** (2)Oak 2 Over 2 Dresser W/Mirror, Lane Cedar Blanket Chest, 2 Over 4 Oak Dresser, Toy Sewing Machine, Green Depression Center Bowl, (3)Pyrex Refrigerator Dishes, Small Carousel Horse, Coffin Style Incense Burner, Singer Sewing Machine Oil Tin, Lightning Glider Runner Sled, 1958 Reflections Philipsburg Hospital Yearbook, 50 State Quarters W/Display Board, Cutco Utensil Set, Regent Sheffield Steak Knife Set, Prestige Knife Set, Cutco Steak Knife Set in Presentation Box, Empire Small Blowmold Snowman, Yellowware & Watt Ware Bowls, Assurance Cell Phone, Wii Fit Console, (2)Wii Fit Micro Wheels, (22)Wii Games, Wii Game System, Ballentine Beer Tray, (2)Clover Leaf Flat Keys, (2)Pyrex Divided Dish (1)W/Lid (1)Without Lid, **NIB** Atari Flashback 9 Game System, Framed Photograph Small Boy on Bike, Stanley Line Level, Lee Sport Jean Jacket, My Arcade Game Station Retro Console, Sahlaney Furniture Houtzdale Lane Cedar Dresser Box, Rock & Roll & Other 45 Record, (4)LP Records, Lee Rider Jeans, Ceramic Lighthouse, Academic Made in Germany Compass Set, (New Ecstatic, Nautica, Lady Stetson, Pear Diamonds, White Diamonds & Paris Passion Perfumes), Few Marbles, Atari Flashback Console, Pink Depression Cake Plate, Snow Horse Child Sled, Corelle Dish Set, Green Metal Porch Glider, Treadle Sewing Machine Base, Riccs & Bro. Brass Ships Clock, (2)Sunshine Biscuit Tin Boxes, High Wheel Cultivator, Chinese Vase, Sergeant #52 Scraper, Cane Bottom Sewing Rocker, Maple Gate Leg Table W/7 Chairs, Little Hostess Toy Tea Set in OB, Table Lamp, Mahogany Secretary, Wicker Rocking Chair, Steamer Trunk W/ Tray, Victorian Settee, 5 Gal. Milk Can, Metal Water Can, Nail Keg, (2) Kerosene Lamps, Holy Bible, Painted Hand Saw, Framed Lee Parkinson & Robert Doards Prints, Framed 1226/5500 Caution Approach By Hayden Lambson, American Expedition Wild Turkey Clock & Outdoor Adventure Turkey Mirror, Jim Killen Wild Thing Turkey Themed 10 Place Stetting Dish Set, Hunting Themed Thermometer, Covered Bridge Potato Chip Burlap Bag, (Tanned (2)Gray & Red Fox, Coon, Mink, Opossum & Skunk), Metal Christmas Train Engine, White Ceramic Christmas Tree, Disney Happy Holiday Lighted Tigger, Foam Santa head, B/O Musical Happy Santa & Walking Santa in OB's, B/O Battery Operated Walking Musical Bunny, Musser's Potato Chip Tin, Badger' Brass Fire Extinguisher, (3) Beam's 175 Whiskey Decanters in Presentation Boxes, Beam's 146 Decanter, Winchester Salutes Wells Fargo 125 Years Tray, (2)Brass Elephants, Herring & Cockatoo), Holiday Ceramic Turkey, Pot Belly Stove Lamp, Moroccan Style Table Lamp, Century Tube Tester, Fishing Creel, Utz's Potato Chip Tin, Hercules Dynamite Box, (Curwensville Sanitary, Cherry Lane Westover, Forsht's Duncansville Milk Bottles), Golden Finger Tavern Plaque, Painted Slate, Benjamin Franklin Tankard, Mickey Mouse & Pluto Lamp, Whiskey Bottle Lamp, Small Brass Bell, Cap Gun & Holster, Tonka Jeep, Electro Auto. Slot Machine Jackpot Bank in OB, California Pottery Lazy Susan

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## PUBLIC ESTATE AUCTION

**Wednesday, November 11, 2026 Contents: 9 AM**
**www.rgilliganauctions.com**

Ron J. & Ron S. Gilligan & David C. Zentner will conduct a Public Contents Estate Auction for Sue E. Porter and the Late Chuck Porter located at 230 Whitman Ave., Pleasant Gap, PA. 16823. (Nice Clean Auction).

**For Auction:** Ron Cox Thimble drone gas racecar. Antique spinning wheel, Vintage PSU pendant, Ernie Irvin Snap-On Clock, Nutcracker blow mold, runner sled, ice cream freezers, Pyrex, Joe Paterno signed football, Beaver Stadium football, Wagner #12, #5 cast iron skillets, other cast iron skillets, 3,5, 8 & 10 Gallon Crocks, 4 & 5 gallon whiskey jugs, (2) Titan brass letter openers, Marigold carnival glass, pink depression glass, Acro Agate child's delphite pieces, Ed Ruth & David Taylor figures, block of knives, baking items, kitchen related items, aluminum roaster, granite canners, canning jars & supplies, Oak curved glass china closet w/ claw feet, solid Oak pedestal extension dining table w/ claw feet & 6 chairs, marble top plant stand, Headboard w/ like new king size mattress & box springs, antique Sheraton 5 dr. chest of drawers, modern oak roll to desk w/ chair, pine lift top desk, oak dresser w/ mirror, 2 - antique platform rockers, modern solid oak glider rocker, Lazy Boy upholstered recliner, leather recliner, Mission style daybed, Waterfall dresser w/ mirror, pine coffee table, Hon metal file cabinet, Meilink safe, computer desk, Like new leather sofa & matching loveseat, Beautiful Ridway grandfather's clock w/ 3 brass weights, Samsung flat screen TV, Fisher stereo system in cabinet w/ Fisher speakers, Sony AV receiver, Sony DVD player, 2 – Heat Surge electric heater fireplaces, Frigidaire med. size chest freezer, Like New Magic Chef refrigerator, metal patio table w/ 4 chairs, pine dropleaf picnic table, Stack-on 2 section rolling toolchest, Karcher gas pressure washer w/ Honda engine, Ridgid 5 hp commercial vacuum, assorted hand tools, port. Kerosene heater, hardware, United bench top grinder, Duracraft bench top drill press, Werner 4 ft. fiberglass stepladder, 10 x 10 pop-up tent, lawn chairs, & misc. items. Terms of Contents: Cash or Check only by conclusion of auction. Food & Job Johnny Available day of auction - tents if needed. Auctioneers: Ron J. & Ron S. Gilligan & David C. Zentner, #AU339-L & #AU3430-L & #AU5442-L.

**All oral info day of auction takes precedence over any & all written ads.**
**Owner & auctioneers not responsible in case of accidents.**

## ESTATE TRAIN & TOY AUCTION

**Saturday, November 7, 2026 - 9 a.m. - Centre County, PA.**
**www.rgilliganauctions.com**

**Vintage Lionel - American Flyer - Marx - MTH - Rail-King - Williams Ives - Die-Cast Toys - Rolling Stock – Accessories – HO Gauge Trains**

Ron J. Gilligan, Ron S. Gilligan, and David C. Zentner will conduct this public estate train auction at the Ferguson Township Lions Club, 424 W. Pine Grove Rd., Pine Grove Mills, PA 16868.

Lionel pre-war 263 E Blue Comet Engine and Tender, Lionel 2350 New Haven, Lionel 2032 Erie AA, Lionel 752E Prewar Streamline Liner, Conrail 1998 Safety Award-Juniata Shops, Lionel 225E/2224W Prewar Train Set, Williams 2360 B&O Passenger Set, MTH Sante Fe Passenger Set, MTH Standard Gauge Blue Comet, Lionel Union Pacific Berkshire 8002, Lionel 628 Northern Pacific Switcher, Lionel 6220 Bell Switcher, Lionel 2341 Jersey Central FM, Lionel Erie Lackawanna SD-40 6-8458, Lionel Union Pacific 6-8480 Passenger Set, Ives Diecast Windup #6…..Lionel Steam, diesel, turbine, switcher, trolley, and passenger equipment; Santa Fe, Union Pacific, New York Central, Erie, Pennsylvania, B&O, Milwaukee Road, Canadian Pacific, Lionel 2321 Lackawanna FM, New Haven, and other road names; Lionel 2360 Congressional Set, Lionel 671-2671W Passenger Set, Williams 2332 GG1, Lionel 2332 GGI, Lionel 52 Fire Car, Lionel 55 Tie-Jector car…prewar and postwar train sets; Lionel 115 Station…passenger, box, tank, hopper, gondola, caboose, flat, stock, crane, dump, log, milk, mail, cleaning, missile, and specialty cars; transformers, stations, trestles, bridges, crossing gates, signals, lights, loaders, platforms, and operating accessories. Featured numbers include 2046, 736, 675, 2033, 1664, 2343, 2321, 622, 6464 series, 2020, 2025, 2056, 2245, 2344, 624, 628, and 6220…..Doepke toy firetruck, Marx Pressed Steel Truck…American Flyer Trains Including: American Flyer Prewar 9900 Burlington Stream Lines, American Flyer Prewar 565 Engine and Tender, Hudsons, diesels, prewar and passenger sets, freight and passenger cars, cabooses, hoppers, reefers, boxcars, handcars, trestles, stations, lights, and operating accessories…Marx - MTH/ Railking - Ives - & Williams Trains Including: Engines, Santa Fe and Blue Comet sets, passenger equipment, freight cars, street lights, towers, bridges, stations, accessories, Marx pressed-steel truck, Williams GG1, and B&O passenger set…Toys & Accessories Including: Ny-Lynt, Matchbox, Plasticville, Ideal, Kilo Toy, ERTL, Sears, Scalextric, Tyco, Athearn, Lone Star, Banner, HO and N-gauge items, die-cast vehicles, race sets, buildings, figures, and railroad collectibles….Terms: No internet, absentee, or phone bids; no buyer's premium. Cash or check only by the conclusion of the auction. Food and restrooms available; auction held indoors; chairs provided. Auctioneers: Ron J. Gilligan, Ron S. Gilligan, and David C. Zentner — #AU339-L, #AU3430-L, and #AU5442-L.

**All oral information given on auction day takes precedence over written advertising.**
**Owner & auctioneers are not responsible for accidents.**

## 2 DAY - PUBLIC AUCTION

**Thursday, November 12, 2026 & Friday, November 13, 2026**
**(Benner Twp., Centre Co.)**
**Real Estate to be sold Friday November 13 at 12:00 Noon**
**Contents: 9 a.m. Each Day - www.rgilliganauctions.com**

Ron J. & Ron S. Gilligan & David C. Zentner will conduct a Public Auction for Shirley Gryczuk located at 111 Aster Ave. Bellefonte, PA. 16823. Past Univ. Park Airport & off Seibert Rd.

1st DAY: New Honda Hydra-static HSS 918A Snow Blower, Pyrex nesting mixing bowls, Pyrex lidded bowls, many Corning casseroles, vintage cameras, Carl Zeiss Transit level, Universal #4 Lard & fruit press, country cupboards, modern Arts & Crafts bookcase, Mid-Century modern table, new cookware, lots of PSU items, Wendall August Nittany Lion Shrine alum. Platter, dozens of peanut butter glasses, silverware, Little Lion year books 1965 & others, silverware, Lots of Like New & New Talbots & Orvis Clothing including outfits, sweaters, blouses & Etc., Sizes medium to large, size 12. New Shoes size 8 & 8 ½, scarves, Like New Talbots Camel Hair size 12 blazer, Books: Room full of Books about Perennials – Gardening – Landscaping – Native plants – Trees – Birds – Grasses, & others, Lots of full bottles of soap, & good cleaning supplies, Paper towels, toilet paper, many – many nice large flower pots, Many nice misc. items not listed – everthing good out of a nice house. (see photos on our website listed above).

DAY 2: BEAUTIFUL Boston #GP156 black ebony Baby Grand Piano designed by Steinway & Sons SN 135040II, Gibson F25 Acoustic guitar in case, Cellini accordion in case, Cardovox Super 1 accordion in case, Yamaha receiver, Yamaha CD/player changer, Denon turntable, Polk audio floor model speakers, Sony thin flat screen TV, – GUNS: Winchester Mod. 64 30-30 WIN lever action Rifle, Winchester Mod. 61 22 WIN Mag RF pump Rifle, Ithaca Mod. 37 featherlight 16g pump shotgun, J. Stevens Arms Springfield Mod. 15 single shot 22 Rifle, West Cut hunting knife, Nikon Stereoscopic Microscope Model SMZ-2, FISHING: Fenwick World Class 9' 6 weight flyrod w/ Pfleuger reel mod. 1494 1/2 w/ case, Many Fenwick fly fishing rods, G.P. Loomis 9' 5 weight #GL# 2 pc flyrod w/ case, Lots & Lots of dry flies, streamers, Perrine fly boxes, alumn. Fly boxes, Orvis fly reel, Orvis Battenkill fly reel, Brook Trout diorama by W.H. Hatch (1872-1944) in oval glass, & much more, L. H. Hall Fishing watercolors, modern David White transit & tripod, vintage drafting sets -- Antique large brass sleigh bells, Red Racer Express antique child's wagon, Vintage floor model Master Machine Knitter, Lots of costume jewelry, old watches, 14k open heart pendant, 2 – Sterling plates, vintage Christmas balls & old misc., Brass Penn State Christmas ornaments in boxes, foundry pup, firkin, pink depression, glass fish on stands, Noritake chocolate pot set, white opalescent hobnail pcs., blue moon & star candy dish & sugar & creamer, green white opal. Water lily bowl, Sadler English teapot, Fenton custard bell & other bells, marbles, Mid Century modern wall clock, modern metal floor lamp, art glass blue opal. Jack in Pulpit vase, brass school bell, Royal Doulton figurine, Eastern tall art glass vase, Thomas Museum series machinist tool chest, Sisco hardwood machinist tool chest, antique trunks, (2) Oak treadle sew machines, Singer 834 Stylist sewing machine, Sharp stainless steel microwave, Modern Maytag Washer & Dryer, Susan Graham painting & other paintings – modernistic, Furniture: Stressless Leather chair w/ ottoman, Johnston modern metal round dining table w/ 4 chairs, nice 6' lighted curio cabinet, Penn State Arm chairs, Stanton Cooper modern sofa & arm chair, 2 – large 2 pc. pine cupboards, Hoosier style cupboard, 4 & 2 dr. file cabinets, drafting table, antique marble top dresser, Cherry TV Stand, (5) Nice 6' Cherry bookcases, (2) Hollagan modern oversized arm chairs w/ ottoman, Real Estate: 3-bedroom modern ranch-style home situated on an approximate 0.62-acre lot built in 2010. This home has (3) bedrooms, (2) baths, kitchen, living room, and a master bedroom with master bathroom. This home also has a full concrete block walk-out basement, electric heat pump with central air, 2-car attached garage, macadam driveway, public water, & public sewer. For more info. call Ron at 814-237-0189. No Internet, absentee, or phone bids will be accepted - no buyers' premiums. Terms: 10% down day of auction - balance due in 45 days. Terms of Contents: Cash or Check only by conclusion of auction. Food & Job Johnny Available day of auction – tents. Auctioneers: Ron J. & Ron S. Gilligan & David C. Zentner, #AU339-L & #AU3430-L & #AU5442-L

All oral info day of auction takes precedence over any & all written ads.
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# 2026 SEASON OF SHARING RECIPIENT:
## Victory Theraputic Horsemanship





Mirror photos by Patrick Waksmunski

**Top: Victory Therapeutic Horsemanship deputy director Rebecca Davidson is pictured with founder/executive director John Zanella and Bella Donna. Right: Veteran Andres Rivera of Altoona brushes Stratis.**

Altoona Mirror Season of Sharing

**HISTORY:** The Altoona Mirror Season of Sharing is a holiday fundraiser that aims to combine the power of the local newspaper, the expertise of the Central Pennsylvania Community Foundation and the generosity of our central Pennsylvania readers.

Season of Sharing has become a holiday tradition, and the money raised benefits a specific charity or charities each year.

Over the past 21 years, Season of Sharing has raised more than $516,695 for local charities, with last year's total of $48,183 to Dreams Go On.

**PAST RECIPIENTS:**

**2005 U.S. Armed Forces Mothers**
**2006 Brian Morden Foundation**
**2007 Shriners Hospitals for Children**
**2008 Gloria Gates Memorial Foundation**
**2009 Food for Families Soup Kitchen**
**2010 Zack Hinish Foundation**
**2011 Big Brothers Big Sisters of Blair County**
**2012 Home Nursing Agency's Healing Patch**
**2013 Miracle League of Blair County**
**2014 Mountain Lion BackPack Program**
**2015 Family Services Teen Center & Shelter**
**2016 Salvation Army Emergency Disaster Services**
**2017 Hurricane Relief *(Florida Keys, Houston, Puerto Rico)***
**2018 Blair County Suicide Prevention Task Force**
**2019 Skills Of Central PA**
**2020 Altoona Food Bank**
**2021 Blair County Library System**
**2022 St. Vincent De Paul Assumption Chapel Food Pantry**
**2023 Sweat For Vets**
**2024 Central PA Humane Society**
**2025 Dreams Go On**

**THIS YEAR'S RECIPIENT:** Victory Therapeutic Horsemanship is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that was founded to provide veterans in central Pennsylvania a much needed equine therapy program.

Studies have repeatedly shown that therapeutic riding has a massive positive effect on combat veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI), and coping with pain and physical injuries. Through working with horses they aim to empower our veterans and offer a gratifying outlet in which to work through their ailments. Equine therapy is proven to improve the quality of life of veterans and their families.

They provide their programs at absolutely no cost; proudly serving those who served our country.

**HOW TO DONATE:** The first and easiest way is to fill out the coupon below and mail it along with an envelope to the address listed below.

You can also drop off the coupon and your contribution at the Altoona Mirror, 301 Cayuga Ave., Altoona PA 16602.
The funds raised through the Season of Sharing will be administered by the Central Pennsylvania Community Foundation. 100% of the donations to the Season of Sharing will go directly to that year's charity.

Of course, donations to the Season of Sharing are tax deductible.

Deadline for donations is Jan. 31, 2027.

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(Complete as you would like to be acknowledged or published)

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Altoona Mirror Season of Sharing

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FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION, VISIT WWW.CENTRALPAGIVES.ORG

# VICTORY: 'It literally saved my life,' veteran says of program

(Continued from Page 1)

"Each year is something," she said. "There's always a project to improve the facility."

Building a facility is one thing, but Davidson said spreading the word about their program was another.

While keeping their Facebook account updated, she and Zanella attended every outreach event they could, including programs sponsored by local Veterans Affairs facilities or other organizations that sponsor nonprofits. They also host outreach days each year where the directors sit at the Tyrone Area Public Library and offer information to interested veterans.

**"Helping our veterans is such an honor and learning what the program has to offer and their needs, we felt it was the right choice for this year's recipient of Season of Sharing."**

*Dan Slep, Altoona Mirror publisher*

Starting with under 10 veterans, Davidson said they expanded over the years to serve 40 veterans a week. Some reside in Blair County, while others travel as far as Pittsburgh.

"It's become pretty much all veterans," she said, not including herself.

The COVID-19 pandemic changed their program, she said, as they transitioned to having only veteran volunteers who had also first participated in the program.

"I think that is a big draw for guys and girls to come in, because they know it's somebody who's like them and who's been through something similar," she said.

Victory Therapeutic Horsemanship requires each participant to complete five, eight-week program stages from March to November, Davidson said. Veterans start with introduction, basic, apprentice and intermediate before qualifying for advanced, a continuing group for those who stick with the program.

She said riders at the advanced stage don't know everything about horseback riding, but instructors can challenge veterans or help them perfect specific skills.

"As long as they're participating in the program and getting something out of it, they don't ever have to leave," she said.

## Real results

Michael Smith has been with the program the longest, she said, with eight years of experience under his belt.

Smith, an Army veteran, found out about Victory Therapeutic Horsemanship through the local Veterans Affairs office and the local court system. Since then, he's learned how to combat his mental illnesses through equine therapy.

"I was struggling for a long time, and this is the only thing that worked for me," he said. "I'm very humbled and honored to be a part of this program."

While Smith rode his horse around the ring last Friday, Army veteran Andres Rivera was brushing his horse. He said this program isn't just about riding horses and navigating trails, but rather understanding horses and controlling your nerves when approaching one.

"Because they can feel your heartbeat about four feet away, it's very important to breathe," he said. "Anything we do out here, you're able to transition to your personal life."

With little experience working with horses, he signed up for the program in 2022 while searching for an alternative therapy that could spark real change in his well-being.

Over the past four years, he, along with his wife and four sons, noticed a change in himself.

"Night and day," he said. "I think it's a huge difference, and it's a necessity for me that I need to keep working on it."

One of the program's newest members, Mike Carper, is currently taking an introductory-level course with the nonprofit organization.

During his most recent class, he said they learned how to walk their horses around the ring, and "it wasn't like we came out here and put the saddle on and went out for a ride."

Living in Claysburg, Carper, a 12-year Army veteran, has many family members with military backgrounds from various American wars, so he said it's cool that he's connecting with horses the same way his ancestors did.

He's noticed a change in himself since he started the program.

"You can tell a difference just when you come in that morning, and you leave two hours later," he said. "Once you're around the horses more, you can see their signs of relaxation. When you're both relaxed, it's better for everybody."



Veteran Dustin Misosky of Johnstown brushes Bella Donna.



Mirror photos by Patrick Waksmunski

Victory Therapeutic Horsemanship founder/executive director John Zanella watches veteran Michael Smith of Altoona ride Mojave.

## Spreading goodness

Davidson has also noticed drastic changes within veterans who stick with the program.

"We've had veterans who, when they started, hadn't left their houses in weeks," she said. "Everything out in the world was a reminder of something."

Over time, she said they start to know their horses have their backs and will alert them if something is wrong. Knowing that people like them are enrolled in the program as well, veterans begin to soften their shells.

"We're not therapists," she said. "It's up to them if they want to tell us anything, but a lot of times they like that they don't have to do that."

As horses are a huge expense for the nonprofit, Davidson said they hope to build more arenas on the property and offer disabled veterans who can't commit to a long program a weekend equine therapy retreat instead.

Being a registered nonprofit, she said all of their funds go toward the program, which includes their seven horses, program insurance and hay, feed and veterinary care.

Gaining more Victory Therapeutic Horsemanship supporters is a huge challenge, Zanella said, which is why being this year's Season of Sharing recipient means so much to him and his program.

"Being selected for the Season of Sharing was a great honor and has the potential to do us quite a bit of good," he said.

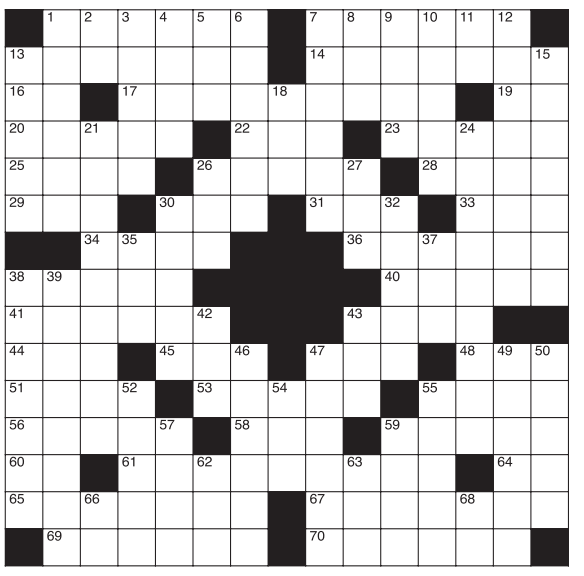
Slep said donations — both big and small — will add up to help Victory Therapeutic Horsemanship assist veterans in our communities.

"We encourage our readers to help contribute in any way to help support this great cause," Slep said.

*Mirror Staff Writer Colette Costlow is at 814-946-7414.*

# AD BARGAIN Crossword Puzzle

Solution on page 6



### CLUES ACROSS

1. Spiritual leaders
7. Containing salt
13. Fortified wine
14. Edible mollusk
16. Blood type
17. Make a comparison
19. Government lawyer
20. "Game of Thrones" actor Ciaran
22. 8th month of the year (abbr.)
23. Very willing
25. __ ex machina
26. Satisfies
28. New Zealand mountain
29. A doctrine
30. Popular Dodge truck model
31. Dekagram
33. Naturally occurring solid material
34. Company higher-up
36. Villains
38. Cricket frog genus
40. Influential early psychologist
41. Endured
43. Servant
44. You can get stuck in one
45. __ and feather
47. Passive optical network
48. French ballet dynasty
51. Employee stock ownership plan
53. Forming a bottom layer
55. Sound
56. Yankees slugger Judge
58. Dickens character
59. Beloved late sportscaster Craig
60. "The Mount Rushmore State"
61. Sarcastic and critical
64. Atomic #79
65. Longtime Atlanta Braves pitcher
67. Humor
69. Shawl
70. Preliminary assessment of patients

### CLUES DOWN

1. Animal disease
2. Commercial
3. Craft supplies
4. Containers
5. A way to save for your golden years
6. Common Arabic greeting
7. Bulged downward
8. Acquired brain injury
9. Lay about
10. Intestinal
11. Not yes
12. In a way, pleased
13. Messianic figure in Islam
15. Resulting from intense conviction
18. Not in
21. Number above the line in a fraction
24. Lawn pest
26. Pouch
27. Ancient language (abbr.)
30. Start anew
32. Wild flower
35. Fourteen
37. Graphical user interface
38. Facing the same way
39. Campaigns
42. Touch lightly
43. "Boardwalk Empire" actress Gretchen
46. Violent seizure of property
47. One who supports the Pope
49. Malaise
50. Body fluid
52. Inauthentic person
54. Title of respect
55. Moth genus
57. Central Japan city
59. Silk garment
62. Draw from
63. Automobile
66. A male
68. Powerful government lawyer

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# Paws & Claws

## Purrfecting keeping cats as pets

Cats and dogs continually battle (like cats and dogs) to hold the title of most popular pet. Each type of animal has its unique qualities that appeal to prospective pet parents.

According to the American Pet Products Association, 53 million households in the United States have a cat, representing 39 percent of all homes. The American Veterinary Medical Association also notes the popularity of cats, pointing to data indicating that nearly 48 percent of pet-acquiring households choose cats.

Bringing a cat into a home offers companionship, but cats have some unique emotional and physical needs. Also, while cats are often perceived as low-maintenance compared to dogs, they are not to be left entirely to their own devices. Today's prospective cat owners can familiarize themselves with the responsibilities necessary for optimal care.

★ **Nutrition:** Cats need to be well-fed. The APPA reports that annual spending on cat food rose to around $337 per household. Owners are increasingly selecting premium diets and specialty add-ins. Feline obesity is a major health concern, so proper nutrition and weight management are key.

★ **Veterinary care:** Spaying or neutering a cat is a critical step. Altering pets helps prevent overpopulation and can reduce certain health risks and urine marking. Routine checkups also are important, as these interactions with a vet can help prevent parasites and catch potential illnesses early on. Cat owners should also consider microchipping their pets, which facilitates recovery if the cat becomes lost.

★ **Indoor enrichment:** Cats will need stimulation to thrive. Scratching posts, puzzle feeders, window perches, cat trees, and toys can help prevent behavioral issues rooted in boredom. Cat owners should interact with their pets each day. Although they often seem aloof, cats still benefit from physical contact and affection.

★ **Litter box care:** The Petfood Industry says that the standard baseline is to have one litter box per cat, plus one extra. Pet owners should scoop waste daily and perform full-box cleanings weekly to keep the cats from being stressed and soiling elsewhere in the home.

★ **Outdoor caution:** While many cats can enjoy outdoor time, pet owners run the risk of illness or tussles with other outdoor animals when they let their cats wander outside unattended. Most cats are safer remaining indoors.

Welcoming a cat into a home requires owners to commit to the animal's physical health and emotional well-being, perhaps for as long as 20 years. This is a large undertaking and one that merits careful consideration.



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'16 Jeep Compass - 2.4L, 4x4, 102K

'15 Jeep Patriot - 2.4L, FWD, 125K
'15 Subaru Outback - 2.5L, AWD, 146K
'15 Ford Edge - 3.5L, AWD, 105K
'15 Jeep Cherokee - 3.2L, 4x4, 179K
'15 Nissan Pathfinder - 3.5L, 4x4, 162K
'15 Ford F150 - 2.7L, 4x4, 139K
'14 Ford Edge - 3.5L, AWD, 140K
'14 Chevy Traverse - 3.6L, AWD, 157K
'14 Ford F150 - 3.5L, 4x4, 189K
'14 Honda CRV - 2.4L, AWD, 116K
'13 Dodge Durango - 3.6L, AWD, 140K
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'13 Ford Escape - 2.0L, 4x4, 139K
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# Obituaries

## Trevor James "Tucker" Cornman

**Trevor James "Tucker" Cornman, 29, of (Hudson) RD Philipsburg, died Wednesday, October 21, 2026, at his residence**

Trevor was born on March 12, 1997, in Clearfield, a son of James and Kimberly (Vaughn) Cornman of (Hudson) RD Philipsburg. He attended the Philipsburg - Osceola Area High School. He was currently employed at the Wal-Mart Distribution Center, Woodland; and as a truck driver for Wal-Mart. He attended the New Life Center, Philipsburg. He was also a member of the Snow Shoe Rails to Trails and the C.B.C. "Crazy Buggy Crew." Trevor enjoyed rifle shooting, riding side by sides and motorcycles, working on his trucks and fishing. Trevor was preceded in death by his maternal grandparents, Mervin J. and Sandra M. (Gee) Vaughn; his paternal grandparents, Lenus C. and Jennie E. (Peters) Cornman; and an infant brother, James, Jr. He is survived by his parents, James and Kimberly; three sisters: Vicki D. Covert (George), of Curwensville, Darika R. Vieard (Dan), of Osceola Mills and Shayla J. Cornman, of DuBois; nieces and nephews: Abby and Emily Covert, Xander Vineyard, Carter, Carson and Levi Vieard; numerous other extended family members; and his beloved German Shepherd, Rex. Memorial contributions may be made in Trevor's memory to the Beezer-Heath Funeral Home & Cremation Services, 719 E. Spruce Street, Philipsburg, Pa 16866. Online condolences and memories may be shared at www.beezerheathfh.com.

## Dennis L. Smeal

**Dennis L. Smeal, 78, of (Gearhartville) RD Philipsburg, passed away Sunday, October 25, 2026, at Mount Nittany Medical Center, State College, Pa., after a brief illness.**

Dennis was born on August 20, 1948, in (North) Philipsburg, a son of Arthur J. and O. Irene (Williams) Smeal, both of whom preceded him in death. He was a 1966 graduate of the Philipsburg - Osceola Area High School. He was employed throughout his working career as a ground hand / truck driver for the IBEW Local #1319, Kingston, Pa. He retired with over 40 years of service with the union. He is survived by his wife, Sandra L. (Shoemaker) Smeal, whom he married on September 22, 1967. He is also survived by his children: Dennis L. "Denny" Smeal, Jr. and his wife, Jeanette (Korth), of Madera, Pa., Daniel 'Dan" Smeal and his fiancee, Dana Laird, of Philipsburg and Holly Lingenfelter and her husband, Thor, of Zelienople, Pa.; five grandchildren: Nathan and Kendre (Verbeck) Smeal, Dr. Andrew Lingenfelter, Ehlana and Bryce Palmer, Julia Lingenfelter and Joseph Hawkins; three great-grandchildren: Story and Lilac Smeal and Leo Palmer; a sister, Janice Beals and her husband, Mahlon Beals, II, of (Gearhartville) RD Philipsburg; a brother, Ivan L. Smeal and his wife, Naomi, of (Gearhartville) RD Philipsburg; and numerous brothers- and sisters-in-law, nieces and nephews with whom he was very close. Among his favorite pastimes, he was an avid Pittsburgh Steelers fan. A Celebration of Life Funeral Service was held on Thursday, October 29, 2026 with Matt Welker, officiating. Online condolences and memories may be shared at http://www.beezerheathfh.com.

## Larry E. Sedgwick

**Larry E. Sedgwick, 80, of Osceola Mills, PA, died on Monday, October 26, 2026 at his home.**

Born on October 12, 1946 in Clarion, PA, Larry was the son of the late Ernest Sedgwick & Anita (Stevens) Sedgwick. He married Edna J. (Reams) Sedgwick on March 9, 1968 in Osceola Mills, PA. Edna survives at home. Larry was an Army Veteran of the Vietnam War Era. He was a member of the VFW Post 5020 in Osceola Mills, the Amvets Post 159 in Philipsburg, the VFW Post 3450 in Philipsburg, and the American Legion Post 437 in Philipsburg. He retired from working in building maintenance. Larry was a 1964 graduate from the Mo Valley High School. In addition to his parents, Larry was preceded in death by two children, Jerry Sedgwick and Stacey Sedgwick; a sister, Priscilla Houlk; and three brothers, Jack Wesley Sedgwick, Kenneth Paul Sedgwick, and Richard Ray Sedgwick. In addition to his wife, Edna, Larry is survived by a daughter, Melissa Paranich & her husband Jason of Ginter, PA; two sons, Richard L. Sedgwick & his wife Mary Jo of Osceola Mills, PA, and Bradley E. Sedgwick & his companion Mary of DuBois, PA; two sisters, Ruth Brulinski of Ohio, and Shirley Gregorchick & her husband Ronald of Johnstown, PA; four brothers, Robert Sedgwick & his wife Becky of Brockway, PA, James Sedgwick of Maryland, Daniel Sedgwick & his wife, Sue of Houtzdale, PA, and Randy Sedgwick & his wife Tammy of Texas; five grandchildren, Dalton, Chase, Seth, Patience, and Jaden; and four great-grandchildren. A funeral service was held on Saturday, October 31, 2026 at the Heath Funeral Home & Cremation Services, LLC, at 701 Lingle St. Osceola Mills, PA 16666. Rev. James Evilsizor officiated. Interment at Umbria Cemetery in Osceola Mills, PA. Military Honors accorded by the Osceola Mills Honor Guard. Memorial contributions may be made to the Heath Funeral Home & Cremation Services, LLC, P.O. Box 157, Osceola Mills, PA 16666. To sign the online guestbook, go to www.heathfuneral.com

## Denise Ann Locke

**Denise Ann (Basal) Locke passed away at the age of 71 on October 30, 2026 surrounded by her family.**

Denise was born on May 4, 1955 in Ashville, PA the daughter of Robert and Jean (Bearer) Basal. Denise was a 1973 graduate of Penn Cambria High School. Following graduation she was employed at what was Bell Telephone. Denise retired from Verizon in November of 2007. She enjoyed flowers, extensive travel, and shopping, especially with her sister Bobbi and her best friend Linda. She is survived by her beloved husband William "Bill" Locke; siblings, Bobbi Jean, Ginny, Charlie, and Joe; sister-in-law, Carol Locke along with many cherished nieces, nephews, and extended family members and dear friends. She is preceded in death by her parents; and her brother-in-law, Dennis Fontanella. Family and friends were received at Gibbons-Penksa Funeral Home, 1688 Liberty St. Ashville, PA 16613. Interment at Calvary Cemetery. Arrangements are under the care of Gibbons-Penksa Funeral Home, Ashville. Condolences can be made at www.gibbonspenksafuneralhome.com or at our Gibbons-Penksa Funeral Home Facebook Page.

**Obituaries Courtesy of: Heath's Funeral Home; Bennett & Houser Funeral Home, Inc Kruise-Spewock Funeral & Cremation Services, Inc; McQuown Funeral; Gibbons Funeral Homes; Beezer-Heath Funeral Home & Cremation Services**

Altoona Mirror Plus!
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2026

# Forward motion



Courtesy photos

National Geographic motion designer James Sweeney stands beside a statue of Walt Disney and Mickey Mouse on his team's trip last year to the historic Disney Studios in Burbank, Los Angeles. Below: James Sweeney holds two Emmys earned from motion designing winner National Geographic documentaries.

## BG graduate wins second Emmy for graphic work

By Colette Costlow
*ccostlow@altoonamirror.com*

James Sweeney, a two-time Emmy winner, spent his teenage years doodling in the back of classrooms at Bishop Guilfoyle Catholic High School.

"But I paid attention in class and developed my love for the arts," he said in his own defense.

Now working as a motion designer for National Geographic, Sweeney has created trailers and design concepts for the business's programs, such as "Billy & Molly," "A Real Bug's Life" and "Dancing with the Stars," clinching a few awards in the process. He recently received his second Emmy for his graphic work on the trailer for "Chris Hemsworth: A Roadtrip to Remember."

Sweeney said there's never a dull moment at work.

"I can't believe where I'm at," he said. "It's a lot of fun, something I would have never dreamed of a few years ago."

One of eight children, Sweeney was number five in the lineup.

"I like to say I started the second half of the family," he said tongue-in-cheek.

Mother Kathleen Sweeney said her son was always drawing and writing, creating home movies inspired by films such as the "Star Wars" series. Sweeney's parents purchased him a computer for his movie projects.

"He started early when he was a kid," his mother said. "He's very creative."

Sweeney and his siblings were homeschooled together before they attended secondary school at Bishop Guilfoyle Catholic High School. While shifting from private to public school was a bit of an adjustment for Sweeney, he said, "Having a crowd at home helped."

At Bishop Guilfoyle, he said art was one of his favorite classes where he connected with former art teacher Jana Sidler.

"I enjoyed having that as an outlet after math, history and science, stuff I wasn't really a huge fan of," he said. "Art was at the end of the day, and I was like, 'Oh, I can enjoy and create something unique.'"

He remembered being assigned an art project during one of his classes, so he designed an architectural model of Bishop Guilfoyle by memory that included classrooms and the gym.

"I had fun with it; it wasn't a chore," he said.

After his teacher shared his project with all of her classes, she approached Sweeney and asked him about pursuing architecture in the future. He wasn't considering a career in that field, but he said her encouragement opened his eyes to different paths.

After graduating from Bishop Guilfoyle in 2011, he attended Franciscan University in Steubenville that fall to study communications and media studies. He learned many different media, including radio production and graphic design.

He was familiar with Franciscan University's campus, as two of his siblings attended college there before him, but he was still unsure about enrolling there himself.

"But I'm so grateful and blessed I did; it was the best four years of my life, not just because of the things I learned, but because of meeting new people and learning about myself and the things I can do in my field," he said.

### Making motions

He graduated with a bachelor's degree in 2015 and returned to Altoona searching for work opportunities.

Finding a job out of college wasn't an immediate success, he said, noting that trial and error were involved in the process. He attended a baseball winter meeting conference in Nashville, Tennessee, and interviewed with both professional and minor league baseball teams, but none made a lasting impression on Sweeney.

Sure enough, the Altoona Curve reached out to Sweeney, and he became the minor league's creative service director in March 2016.

Sweeney worked with scoreboard projections and cameras, mainly helping with the creative details the minor league baseball team produces for its fans.

"It was a blast," he said. "It was some of the most fun I've had since I started working."

Because Altoona Curve jobs are seasonal, he said he searched for a full-time job before landing the Multimedia Designer position for the Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater.

Amy DiSalvo, former Associate Director at Arena Stage, said Sweeney was always busy developing graphic designs for the theater's social media and video campaigns.

"He was really good at staying with the Arena Stage's brand while giving each play its own identity," she said.

Sweeney stayed at Arena Stage for more than two years before becoming a junior motion designer for National Geographic in February 2019. Eventually, he worked his way up to motion designer.

"All I needed was a foot in the door," he said. "God works in mysterious ways, and here I am today."

As a motion designer, Sweeney works on the graphic designs incorporated into upcoming company trailers. His trailer work includes "Freaky Fridays," "Cleopatra's Final Secret," "Billy & Molly" and "Blink." He also created design concepts for season 34 of "Dancing With The Stars" and a graphics package for the series "Hidden History with Kahlil Greene."

One of his favorite projects was designing graphics for "A Real Bug's Life," which gives viewers an inside look at real insects that survive various environments.

Playing off 1998's "A Bug's Life," Sweeney said "A Real Bug's Life" is geared toward an older audience. But he said he could "flex a kid's creative muscle" while designing the trailer's graphics.

Sweeney said there are typically multiple National Geographic programs ongoing, which helps them think on their feet.

"You can see your work spread across millions of views," he said. "It's amazing."

### Two-time Emmy winner

Sweeney doesn't have a case to display his two Emmy trophies yet.

In 2025, "Billy & Molly: An Otter Love Story" won an Emmy for Outstanding Promotional Announcement, with Sweeney credited as motion designer. He won again one year later for his contributions to "Chris Hemsworth: A Roadtrip to Remember," also credited as motion designer.

The company used only a few graphics in "Chris Hemsworth: A Roadtrip to Remember" to avoid making Hemsworth's emotional story about his father's Alzheimer's diagnosis seem promotional.

"It's heartfelt, and it shows the human side of Chris," Sweeney said.

Sweeney lives in Northern Virginia with his wife, Lisa, and their two-year-old daughter. They're currently expecting their second child.

Kathleen said Sweeney is most passionate about his growing family.

"His family will always come first," she said.

Watching her son's dreams come true, Kathleen said she's grateful that Sweeney gets to go to work each day and do something that he enjoys.

With artificial intelligence threatening creative jobs and the marketing landscape, Sweeney said the technology can never replace a human being's unique perspective. Art created by individual people will always stand out from generated images and projects.



"Maybe now there's more of an opportunity to stand out rather than people relying on the same tools," he said.

*Mirror Staff Writer Colette Costlow is at 814-946-7414.*

### The Sweeney file

**Name:** James Sweeney

**Age:** 33

**Hometown:** Altoona

**Education:** Bishop Guilfoyle (2011), bachelor's degree in communications and media studies from Franciscan University (2015)

**Family:** Wife, Lisa; two-year-old daughter and a second child on the way

**Hobbies:** Baking, watching television with his wife

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# Retiree lessons to revisit in time

## Lessons for later on target-date funds, TIPS funds and asking for help

By Christine Benz
*Morningstar*

As much as there are immutable truths in investing and money matters — costs matter and getting started earlier is best, for example — many of the precepts we hold true as investors depend on the data. When the data change, so should our thinking. Here are three retirement-related topics I've altered my thinking on, because I was off-base in the first place or gained new information.

### The DIY model for retirement

When I was newer in my career, I was pretty much on "Team DIY." I wasn't anti-adviser, but surely investors who are willing to roll up their sleeves could do it themselves and cut out the fee.

What I underrated, however, is that financial advisers do much more than portfolio management. They help their clients articulate and quantify their goals, stay the course in rough markets, and minimize their tax bills.

And as I've studied retirement decumulation in greater depth, I've become aware of just how devilishly complicated it all is. A quality financial planner can help retirees go beyond the 4% spending guideline and figure out the best way to source withdrawals with an eye toward limiting the long-term tax drag.

A planner can also help with Social Security claiming strategies, Medicare and IRMAA, and long-term care decision-making. And perhaps most important: They can oversee decision-making in case of illness or cognitive decline, as well as having an up-to-date record of all accounts. That's why my main financial advice for people embarking on retirement is "Get some help."

### All-in-one investments for retirement

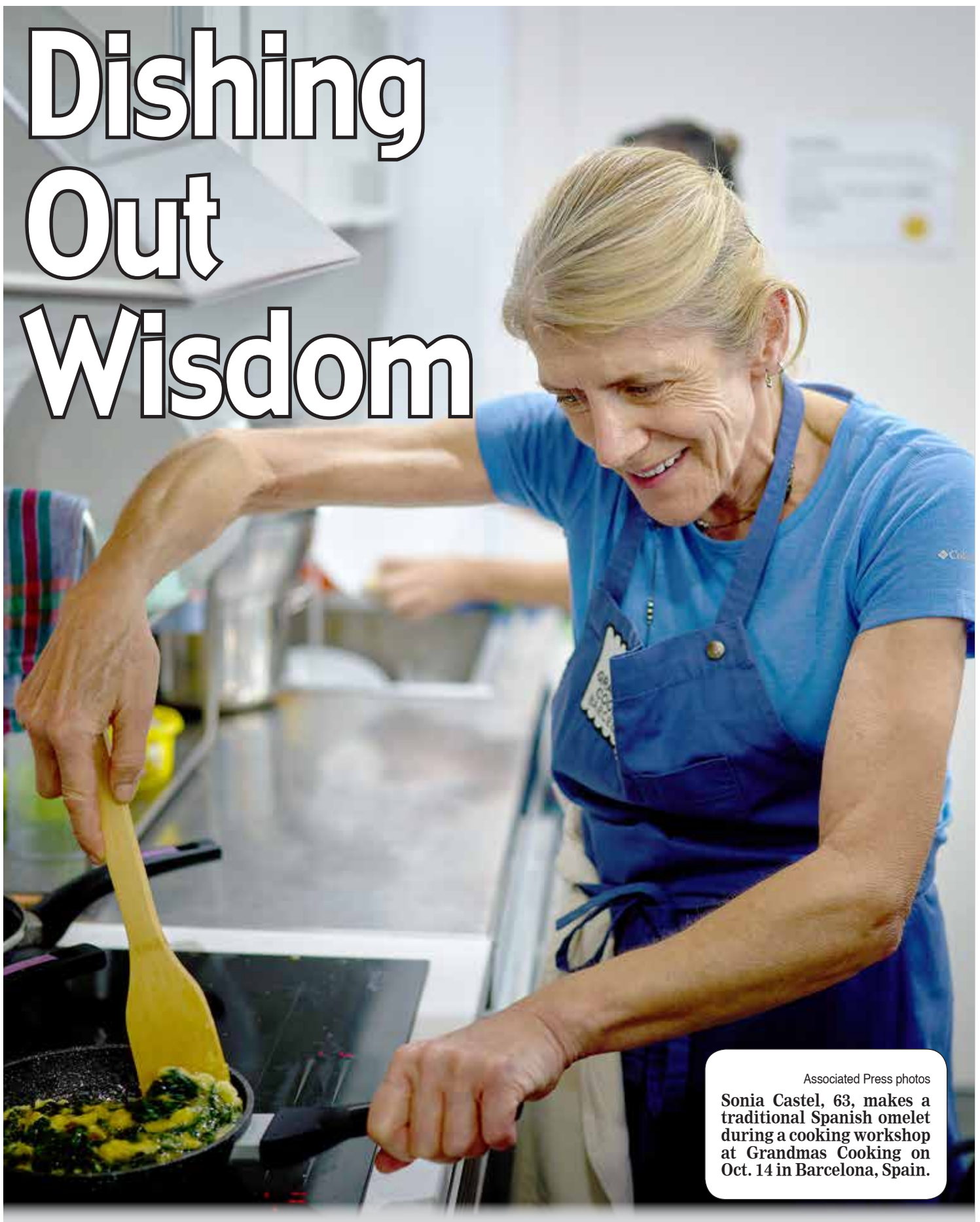
I've always loved all-in-one investments like target-date funds for people saving for retirement because they outsource asset allocation to professional investors and consistently rebalance back to the target. Those are jobs that individual investors often struggle to do themselves.

I've been lukewarm on all-in-one funds for people in decumulation mode, however, for a few reasons. One is that because of variations in nonportfolio cash flow sources, retirees' ideal asset allocations are more varied: All else being equal, the person pulling from a pension can likely tolerate more equity exposure than the one who isn't, for example.

Another quibble with all-in-one funds is that they don't give the retiree the latitude to choose where they go for cash in a given year.

See **Lessons**/Page **4**

# Dishing Out Wisdom



Associated Press photos

**Sonia Castel, 63, makes a traditional Spanish omelet during a cooking workshop at Grandmas Cooking on Oct. 14 in Barcelona, Spain.**

## Barcelona 'grandmas' find nourishment themselves while passing on knowledge

By Albert Stumm
*The Associated Press*

BARCELONA, Spain — Once the potatoes are cooked and the eggs half set, Sonia Castel places a plate over the sauté pan and instructs one of her students to grab the handle.

Castel, 63, thrums on the counter for a drumroll as Mason Kauffman, one of a group of American exchange students in the cooking workshop, holds the plate steady and steels himself to flip the pan. After a countdown of 3, 2, 1, cheers erupt as he makes the flip, sliding the eggs back into the pan to finish cooking a Spanish tortilla, or omelet.

"I was so nervous," says Kaufmann, a junior at New Hampshire's Plymouth State University, smiling broadly.

After each student has a turn, Castel pulls them into a hug and practically demands a kiss on the cheek. "You have to pay for the lesson!"

The workshop at Grandmas Cooking Barcelona offers tourists, schools and other visitors "authentic Barcelona cooking classes with local grandmas and grandpas." It aims to share traditional Spanish and Catalan dishes and techniques that have become harder to find in the city's restaurants.



**Nuria Isanda, 75 (third from left), teaches tourists how to prepare and present traditional Spanish dishes during a cooking workshop at Grandmas Cooking in Barcelona, Spain.**

The benefits run both ways. The program helps provide purpose to older people who might be struggling with loneliness, says its founder, Veronica Baena.

### Visitors can learn to cook the way grandma might

"Yes, it's a gastronomic experience, but above all it's about the empowerment of older people," says Baena. "The idea was to try to recover their own personality, their own selves and integrate them into the international Barcelona."

Baena founded Grandmas Cooking Barcelona in 2017 after seeing grandparents dropping off and picking up grandchildren at her son's school. She learned some didn't have much else going on in their lives anymore, so she invited a couple of them to cook at her house. Now, there are 20 older women — and one man — who share cooking tips, life lessons and more than a few jokes at civic centers, social service organizations and other locations in the city.

See **Wisdom**/Page **4**

# 'Picasso of Pumpkin Carvers' brings art to Halloween



The Associated Press

**Farmer Mike Valladao carves a pumpkin at the Safeway World Championship Pumpkin Weigh-Off on Oct. 12 in Half Moon Bay, Calif.**

By Terry Chea
*The Associated Press*

HALF MOON BAY, Calif. — When fall arrives and leaves start changing color, Mike Valladao, a systems engineer at a cybersecurity company, slips into his alter ego, "Farmer Mike," also known as the "Picasso of Pumpkin Carvers."

Farmer Mike has been chiseling whimsical faces and comical creatures into big pumpkins for more than four decades. Wearing his trademark orange overalls and farmer hat, he's sculpted hundreds of gourds into ghoulish faces, seaside landscapes, witches, dragons and pop culture figures such as Yoda and Charlie Brown.

Valladao doesn't have any formal artistic training, but he's always looking for inspiration. He gets ideas from looking at art in a museum or just walking down the street.

"Sometimes I'll look at somebody and I'll think, oh, I like the teeth or I like ears or the way the nostrils flare," Valladao said.

This year, "Farmer Mike" celebrated 40 years of Halloween artistry at the Half Moon Bay Art & Pumpkin Festival, which is held in mid-October and is best known for its giant pumpkin weigh-off. At the two-day festival on the coast south of San Francisco, Valladao works on stage so people can watch.

See **Pumpkins**/Page **3**

# Kagarise shows consistency pays

THE FITNESS TRACK

By George Thomas Kattouf
*For the Mirror*

Experiencing fitness later in life is often commensurate to a well planned system to bring about financial security. Being financially secure requires a consistent plan to save and invest from an early age which allows dividends to be enjoyed during retirement. The same premise exists with a long term health plan.

The sweat and dedication vested in youth and throughout adulthood can lead to a very active and healthy senior lifestyle. In other words, you get what you give.

Glenn Kagarise is a native of Williamsburg. He spent his high school years playing football as a running back and a defensive cornerback. Martial arts training became a passion after high school and still plays a significant role in the life of this 70-year-old.

"I originally started with Pai Lum Kung Fu in Altoona and earned my blue belt. Then, I studied Wado Ryu and earned my black belt," said Kagarise, who notes that the stretching, kicking and cardio of martial arts training has enhanced his overall fitness level throughout his life.

He also studied some jiu-jitsu and eventually merged his experiences to form his own martial arts system called the International Combat System. He taught this system for many years in Williamsburg.

As with many exercise devotees, it is not only one facet of fitness which leads to good health later in life.

"I started running when I was about 43. A buddy of mine ran ultras (marathons), and he got me involved in running. I ran for quite a few years and I tore my meniscus. I still run races, but the type of training I do is different than just going outside and running distances," Kagarise said.

Though he has modified his training methodology, he still is able to compete in races as part of the Blair Regional YMCA series. In October 2024 and 2025 he competed in the 5K (3.1 mile) walk and finished first in his age group with a pace ranging from 12:53 to 13.06 minutes per mile.



Courtesy photo

**Glenn Kagarise, 70, of Williamsburg, is the subject of this month's Fitness Track. Kagarise, who is a former football coach for the Williamsburg Community School District, has embraced martial arts and running to maintain great fitness.**

Going to a fitness facility or putting on a pair of running shoes is not the only means of staying in shape. In many of the Blue Zone areas where a greater percentage of the population live to be one hundred and beyond, an active lifestyle is one of the components of becoming a centenarian. Kagarise had a position as a maintenance supervisor in the Williamsburg School District, which required a great deal of walking throughout the day.

The duties at Williamsburg School District did not end with his supervisor's duties. He coached the junior high school football team for twenty years and varsity for three years.

"Once you get into coaching, some people say it becomes a disease. You just can't find a cure for it. Being with kids and interacting with them as you see them improve is gratifying," Kagarise said.

His training method these days is very consistent.

"I do a lot of calisthenics," Kagarise said. "I try to keep all my body parts working. I think that's key to making sure the whole body is being worked. I do just about anything you can think of as far as calisthenics including jumping jacks. I do a lot of weight training with the dumbbells. I include biceps, triceps, traps, and lats for the upper body. For the lower body I include core exercises and a full leg workout."

Kagarise has a rebounder, which he uses to increase his cardio stamina without compromising his joints. A rebounder is similar to a small circular trampoline. He runs or does jumping jacks on the device for about forty seconds and then gets off and performs other exercises. He may repeat this combination a number of times. This is part of his daily routine. Once a week, he uses a heavy bag to practice various kicks and punches.

Kagarise gets his motivation from his family and Christian faith.

"Most of my inspiration comes from my two boys and my grandson. My oldest son is a very good runner, and my grandson is into weight training. My other son is a hard worker all around. My relationship with Jesus Christ is the most important thing in my life. So, without Him, I wouldn't be able to do anything" Kagarise said.

He is conscientious about what he eats but openly admits to having a weakness for hamburgers.

Kagarise has solid advice for those seeking good health. "Being persistent and consistent," is his rapid response.

Despite his diligent exercise lifestyle, Kagarise has an observant perspective about his own age.

"I feel pretty good. Some days I feel like I'm 50, and other days I feel like I'm 80. So yes, it fluctuates," Kagarise said.

If you want to see Kagarise in action, check out the Blair Regional YMCA Turkey Trot Race on Nov. 27, or his YouTube channel, Glenn Kagarise@glennkagarise5027.

*George Thomas Kattouf of Altoona is the developer of the website AgelessTimeless.com. He has been instructing martial arts for over four decades in the Altoona Area at the Academy of Martial Arts and encourages seniors to stay fit through martial arts training. If you or someone you know in Blair County is age 50 or older and would be a good candidate for the Fitness Track, email Kattouf at george@agelesstimeless.com. Tune in to the YouTube channel AgelessTimeless to learn more.*



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ASK THE BROKER

## DON'T CATCH A FALLING KNIFE

The market is in transition. What was a strong seller's market is now becoming a buyer's market. It's not completely switched, but it is changing - fast - and being knowledgeable about what to do in this market can make or break you when you're listing your home.

Sellers have been fortunate to be in a seller's market for a few years now. They could list their home and expect good showing activity in the first few days, sometimes even getting buyers to battle it out with multiple offers.

For Sale By Owners were moderately successful since inventory has been sparse and buyers have been numerous.

Now that we are moving to a buyer's market, sellers will have to change up their strategy with fewer buyers available and interest rates on the rise. In financial arenas, there is a term used when a stock is dropping rapidly in price – 'don't try to catch a falling knife' which means don't let it hit bottom before trying to purchase the stock.

This notion is also applicable to real estate – buyers will often wait until they sense the bottom of the market before buying, fearing that they will overpay for a house while prices are still dropping.

When prices are going down due to a drop in demand, the smart seller initially prices their home to sell right away. That aggressive strategy can make a seller's home more attractive because buyers want to capture the deal before someone else does. It's the fear of losing out. And, often times, that game plan inspires more than one buyer to get "in the game" with a bidding war driving the price up higher.

All things being equal, a lower priced home will almost always sell first. So, sellers who are sitting on market for a month or more may decide to drop their price in small incremental drops to try to spark offers. That won't make a difference in a buyer's market. You will need to make drastic 8-10% price drops for your home to bring buyers in.

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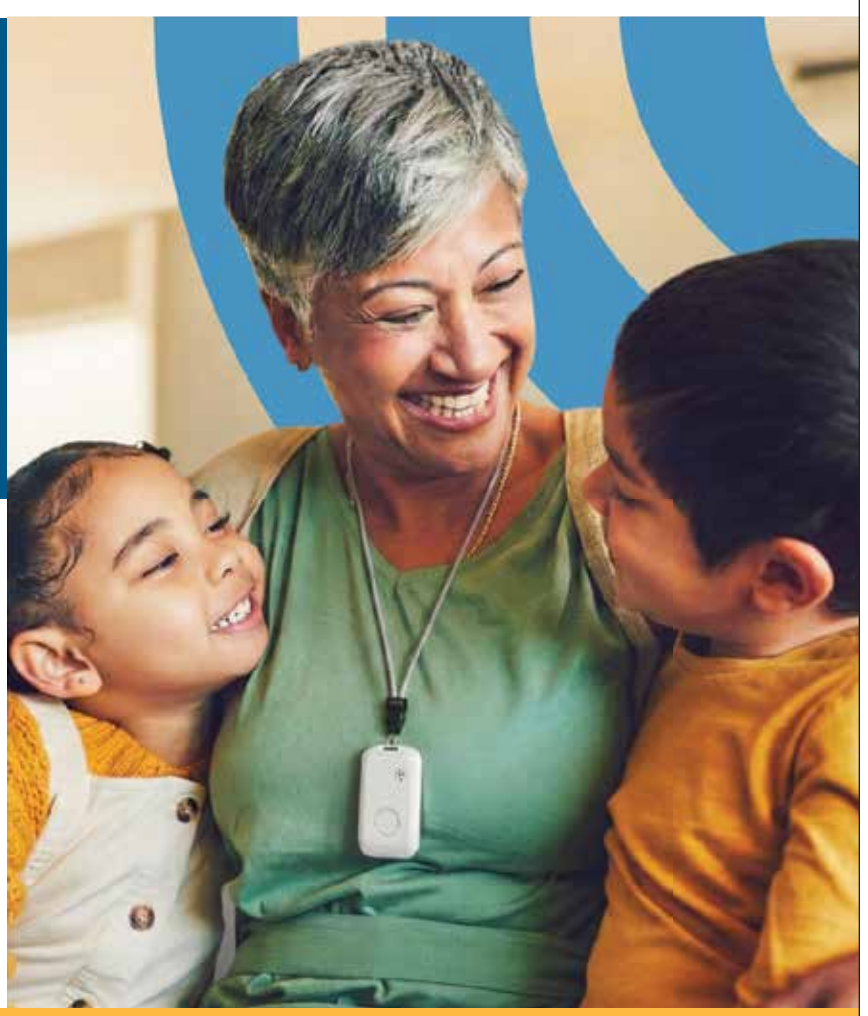
Adam Conrad Jr. MBA, CRS®, DREI®, CRB®, SRS®, e-Pro is the broker/owner of Perry Wellington Realty, licensed in PA, FL, MD, and WV. Adam is the Owner and Director of Education of Vintage Real Estate School. He is also a Licensed Certified Residential Appraiser and Title Agent. Adam has lectured in business and entrepreneurship at Pennsylvania State University, Saint Francis University, and other colleges. He hosts a weekly TV show on NBC affiliate WJAC on Fridays at 12:30 p.m. He is also an author and contributor to Inman News. All statistics courtesy of the Allegheny Highlands Association of Realtors (1/1/18 – 12/31/25).

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# Get help timing your Social Security



Jim Miller

Savvy Senior

**Dear Savvy Senior,**
Can you recommend any online tools or services to help soon-to-be retirees figure out the best time to start collecting Social Security benefits? My wife and I are approaching retirement, and we don't have much savings, so we want to make sure we choose a strategy that maximizes our lifetime benefits.

**— Need Some Help**

**Dear Need,**
You're asking a really smart question. When you start Social Security can make a big difference in your lifetime income, so it's worth taking some time to compare your options before you file. Here's what to consider before you claim.

## Key factors

You can claim Social Security retirement benefits as early as 62. But claiming before your full retirement age permanently reduces your monthly benefit. For most people approaching retirement today, full retirement age is 67. If you claim at 62 instead of 67, your monthly benefit will be about 30 percent lower. On the other hand, if you wait past your full retirement age, your benefit increases by 8 percent for each full year you delay, up to age 70.

But age isn't the only factor. Your health, family longevity, whether you plan to work in retirement, taxes, and spousal or survivor benefits can all affect your decision.

For example, when one spouse is the higher earner, delaying that person's benefits can increase the survivor benefit the other spouse may receive. That can be particularly important for married couples.

It's also worth knowing that Social Security representatives can explain the rules and tell you how your benefits are calculated, but they generally won't tell you when you should start collecting. That's a decision you'll need to make based on your own situation.

## Gather information

A good first step is to visit ssa.gov/myaccount to get your personalized Social Security statement. It estimates your retirement benefits at different claiming ages based on your actual earnings history.

You should also consider how long you may need your benefits. A quick estimate is available at ssa.gov/oact/population/longevity.html. For a more detailed estimate, try livingto100.com. Knowing your potential life expectancy can help you weigh starting earlier for income against waiting for larger monthly payments.

It's also important to look at your other sources of retirement income, such as pensions, savings and part-time work. These can affect how much you need from Social Security in your early retirement years.

## Online calculators

Once you have your benefit estimates and a better idea of how long you may need your Social Security, online calculators can help you compare different claiming strategies.

Open Social Security at opensocialsecurity.com is a free tool that lets you compare different claiming ages and estimates which strategy may provide the most total spendable dollars over time.

Or, if you want to dig a little deeper, Maximize My Social Security at maximizemysocialsecurity.com costs $49 for one year. It lets you run what-if scenarios for married couples, divorced or widowed individuals, including situations where one spouse claims while the other continues working.

## Professional help

If you prefer face-to-face guidance, consider working with a fee-only CFP professional who has experience with Social Security claiming strategies. They can help you compare different claiming ages and coordinate Social Security with your other retirement income.

You can find fee-only planners through the National Association of Personal Financial Advisors at napfa.org. A planner can be especially helpful if you're divorced, widowed or have other complicated circumstances that could affect your benefits. Ask about fees before hiring someone.

Taking some time to compare your options now can help you make a more informed decision about when to claim. And if you decide to delay your Social Security benefits, remember that you generally still need to deal with Medicare at 65.

*Send your questions or comments to questions@savvysenior.org, or to Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070.*

# PUMPKINS: No names on creations

(Continued from Page 1)

## His carvings have drawn requests

Valladao stumbled into his artistic hobby after he began growing big pumpkins at his San Jose home in the mid-1980s. He didn't know what to do with the massive gourds, so he pulled out a knife and started slicing faces into them.

"I'm an engineer by trade and I tend to look at it as building something the same way I would build a piece of hardware, one layer at a time," he said.

In 1986, festival organizers saw a picture of Valladao's pumpkins and invited him to showcase his carving skills in Half Moon Bay, where his family opened the town's first feed and seed store in the 19th century. He grew an 800-pound pumpkin once, but it was a lot of work, so he doesn't participate in the giant pumpkin contest.

His art has since taken him to different parts of the country, including an appearance on "The Tonight Show." He has gotten requests to carve pumpkins at venues such as the San Diego Zoo, the California Academy of Sciences and the State Fair of Texas.

## 'It's about the illusion of depth'

He uses Atlantic pumpkins that weigh from 100 to 1,000 pounds. They have thick skins that allow him to cut protruding facial features shallow or deep.

"It's really about the illusion of depth," Valladao said. "I can make it so that it's three-dimensional, such that the eyes are inset and the nose sticks out. So it's a little bit of carving, but it's just adding a little more magic to it."

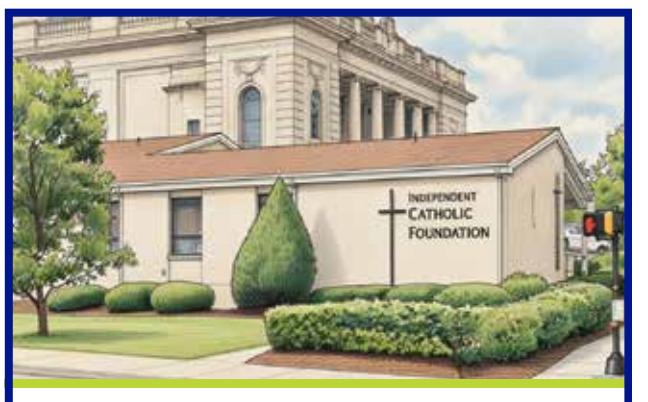
Valladao said he doesn't name his creations because he recognizes the ephemeral nature of his art, which only lasts a few days.

"It never really bothers me when a pumpkin starts to age because in some cases they'll build character," Valladao said.

And there are always more pumpkins to be carved.

After 40 years at Half Moon Bay, Valladao doesn't have any plans to hang up his carving knives.

"It's fun, it's enjoyable and, quite frankly, it's a piece of me," he said.


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Metro

**It's perfectly fine to change your mind on these important topics related to your retirement, especially when you have more information available to you.**

# LESSONS: TIPS seem different

**(Continued from Page 1)**

In a year like 2022, for example, the retiree can't tell the target-date fund to take their withdrawal from cash only; the withdrawal from an all-in-one fund comes out pro rata from the stock and bond holdings in the portfolio.

I've concluded, however, that those objections are fairly minor relative to the positives that target-date funds bring into retirement, especially for retirees who continue to manage their own investments. Cognitive decline is an increasing risk factor as we age, and slimming down the constituent holdings in a portfolio, as owning an all-in-one fund enables you to do, helps limit the opportunity for missteps. And while taking pro rata distributions from stock and bond holdings isn't ideal in many scenarios, that drawback is offset by the benefits of the rebalancing going on inside the fund. For those reasons, I've warmed to the idea of all-in-one funds, especially for smaller accounts where the retiree doesn't want or need as much control over the asset allocation.

## Individual TIPS over TIPS funds

Finally, I've changed my mind on using individual Treasury Inflation-Protected Securities bonds rather than a TIPS fund.

Despite the benefits of being able to match individual bonds' maturities to retirees' anticipated spending needs, I've generally been on "Team Bond Fund" rather than "Team Individual Bond" for fixed-income allocations. That's largely because of the complexity involved in amassing and managing a portfolio of individual bonds that's adequately diversified. By the time the investor does that, she's basically running something that looks a lot like a bond fund. I've argued that buying bond funds that roughly match your anticipated holding period is a better option — and a relative bargain if the fund is low-cost.

TIPS seem like a slightly different case, however. For one thing, they're backed by the full faith and credit of the U.S. government, so there's no need to diversify across issuers as there is with bonds that carry credit risk. Moreover, building a laddered portfolio of TIPS bonds enables a retiree to match their holdings to anticipated cash flow needs, along with a built-in inflation adjustment to protect purchasing power. The TIPS fund holder, by contrast, has to put up with some interest rate sensitivity along the way, which can offset the purchasing-power protection of the bonds in the portfolio. In 2022, for example, short-term TIPS funds lost about 3%, while intermediate- and long-term TIPS funds lost roughly 4%–5%. And while it's not the fault of TIPS funds, investors haven't used them especially well, often buying after inflation scares.

I'd still like to see more innovation in bond funds whose holdings mature on the same date; defined-maturity bond funds seem like a step in the right direction. But for investors seeking a precise hedge against inflation, a laddered portfolio of TIPS bonds is hard to beat.

# WISDOM: Platform makes them feel valued

**(Continued from Page 1)**

## Passing down wisdom helps too

Early on, Baena recruited a friend's neighbor, Nuria Isanda, because of the irresistible aromas wafting from her kitchen window.

Isanda, 75, said her recipes are rarely found these days in a city whose restaurants increasingly cater to tourists. Such dishes cooked by older people might not even be appreciated by their own families, who may visit on weekends and "don't even thank them for the food."

The workshops, Isanda says, "can be the platform that makes grandmas feel valued and useful."

At the recent workshop for study-abroad students, held in a rented kitchen at a civic center, Isanda showed them how to make zucchini ribbons, thread them onto skewers and dress them with a vinaigrette. Students also smeared crackers with goat cheese and blueberry jam, or decorated ensaladilla rusa, a potato salad laced with hard-boiled egg, chopped pickles and tuna.

## Don't crack eggs on the bowl, other tips

Isanda and Castel passed along cooking tips, like to always crack eggs on a counter, not the edge of a bowl, to keep out the shells.

They also stressed the sustainability of traditional cooking. For example, don't waste anything, even carrot peels, onion skins and the ends of cut vegetables. Save them in a bag in the freezer. When the bag is full, make vegetable stock.

Castel joined Grandmas last year after retiring from a career in hospital admissions. Relating with so many foreign people has made her feel more connected and "more alive."

"The joy of sharing food is a social act, and they leave happy," she said. "Grandmas gives me that, and you can't put a price on it."


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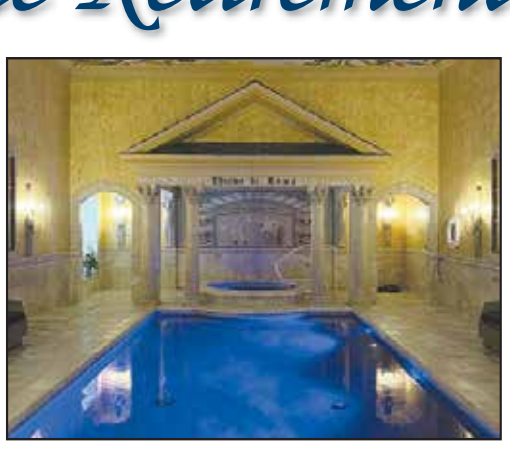
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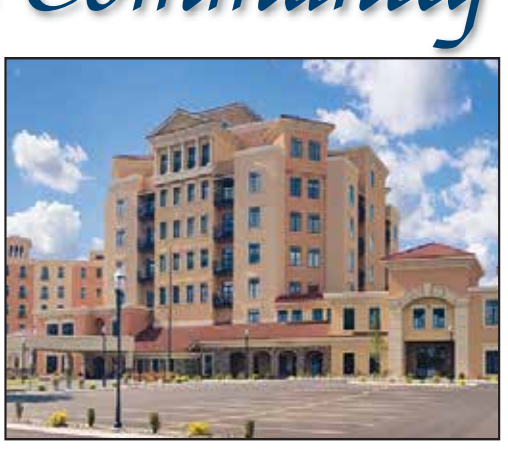
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