



The HomeLife Connection

Welcome to the Summer 2019 HomeLife Connection

Caregiver of the Quarter



Kelli Mayer

We wish to congratulate our caregiver of the quarter, Kelli Mayer! She has been an outstanding caregiver by providing our clients with dependable and reliable care. Kelli has a strong work ethic and an empathetic heart. Right from the start we knew she would be a good fit with HomeLife. Her availability is flexible, and she works around the needs of our clients.

Here is what Kelli's supervisor shared:

"Kelli has demonstrated an outstanding work ethic and overall exceeds expectations. HomeLife Senior Care prides itself on our mission statement, which is comprised of values such as integrity and respect. Kelli holds true to these values, which is part of what makes her such an amazing employee. We know that our clients and staff can depend on her."

It's caregivers like Kelli that make what we do possible. She's a role model and we are proud to have her on our team!

Summer greetings from the Home Care Aide team! In June 2019 our department celebrated the retirement of our Hiring Recruiter, Angela Spinelli. She will be greatly missed, but we wish her all the best with her retirement. We are excited to announce that her position has been filled by Racheal Gonzalez. Racheal is doing a wonderful job as our new recruiter and is continuing to hire fantastic caregivers.

Each month we offer training classes on topics such as dementia, Alzheimers and how to improve personal care skills. We would like to invite our clients' loved ones to attend these trainings as well. If you're interested, please contact our office for more information. We would be honored to have you join us.

Our training department welcomes another new addition to the team, Simon! Simon is a patient care simulator and is used to provide our caregivers with quality, hands-on training. We pride ourselves on employing well trained caregivers and Simon has been a great addition to our program.

This year HomeLife Senior Care donated a brand new patient care simulator, Rescue Randy, to the East Contra Costa Fire Protection District Association. We are grateful to have been able to give back to our wonderful community.

*Kara Escobedo
Home Care Aide Director*



East Contra Costa Firefighters, Kara Escobedo and Rescue Randy

Greetings from Scheduling!

We would like to welcome our new Scheduling Assistant, Darlene MacDonald. Darlene has been a fabulous addition to our team. She has a kind heart and cheerful spirit that our caregivers and clients enjoy. Darlene was a caregiver with HomeLife for many years prior to becoming a scheduling assistant. Her caregiving experience has contributed to a well-rounded understanding of client needs and the importance of caregiver placement.

We would like to thank our clients and caregivers for communicating with us regarding their schedules. We enjoy getting to know everyone and the feedback we receive. We have many caregivers working around the clock to care for our clients and we appreciate every one of them!

*Wendy Carrasco
Scheduling Director*



FINANCE & CONSUMER RESOURCES

Trim Your Electric Bill with These Energy-Saving Tips

As of the summer of 2018, the average US household spends \$183 a month on their electric bill alone, and prices are steadily rising, according to the US Department of Energy.

The first step to demystifying your electricity bill, and hopefully reducing it, is to take stock of where you use the most energy. You can find a professional energy auditor to help you assess your home's energy use, potentially for free, through your electric company or the Department of Energy's website: www.energy.gov/energysaver/heat-and-cool/home-energy-audits. If you follow their efficiency upgrade recommendations, you could reduce up to 30% off your energy bill.

Here are their top tips:

Heating/Cooling

Heating and cooling take up the largest chunk of your monthly energy bill, but these tips can save you money while staying comfortable.

- Clean your heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) unit every 30 days to keep the system running efficiently.
- Keep the blinds open in the winter and closed in the summer to minimize the need for running the air conditioner.
- Using a ceiling or floor fan instead of your air conditioner can help to keep temperatures and costs lower in the summer.
- Seal leaks, doors and windows. Weather-stripping and sealing leaks can reduce energy use by 15% to 30% a year, estimates the Department of Energy.
- Buy a programmable thermostat. For as little as \$20, you can automatically set your thermostat back 7°-10°F for 8 hours a day. Doing so can save up to 10% on your heating and cooling costs.

Water Heaters

Water heaters are typically large energy consumers. The Department of Energy suggests lowering the temperature on your water heater from the standard 140°F to 120°F. This can reduce water heating costs by 4%-22% annually, without any noticeable difference in water temperature.

Lighting

One of the simplest and most cost-effective ways of saving money is to use LED bulbs, which last as much as 50 times longer and are 90% more efficient than traditional bulbs. Replacing your five most used lights with Energy Star approved LED bulbs can save you \$75 per year.

Appliances

Washing your clothes in cold water can substantially cut costs, since about 90% of the electricity used by washing machines is used to heat the water. The average household can save up to \$40 per year using this tip. Also consider air drying your clothes when possible. Dryers are the most energy-hungry appliance in the average home. A typical dryer can consume as much energy per year as an energy efficient refrigerator, washing machine, and dishwasher combined.

When it comes time to replace your old appliances, consider an Energy Star efficient unit. While it might cost more for the initial investment, an Energy Star certified refrigerator will yield an average savings of \$270 in energy costs over five years.

Energy Vampires

A typical American home has 40 products that are constantly drawing power, even if they're not in use. Energy vampires like your phone charger, computer, television and coffeemaker, are responsible for 10% of your electricity use and can cost the average household \$100 a year, according to the Department of Energy. Use a "smart" power strip and keep everything plugged into this single source, making it easy to turn off everything at once when these appliances are not in use. Smart power strips also automatically cut power to devices that are in standby mode.

Discounts

It is also worth contacting your utility company about potential senior and low-income discount programs, energy-efficiency rebates and off-peak rates which can provide up to 30% discounts on standard rates.

Contributor for The Senior's Choice



ROTATING TOPIC

How to Cultivate New Friends as You Age

As baby boomers age, more and more folks will reach their 80s, 90s—and beyond. They will not only lose friends but face the daunting task of making new friends at an advanced age.

Even in your 90s, the notion of being a sole survivor can seem surprising. Perhaps that's why 91-year-old Lucille Simmons of Lakeland, Fla., halts, midsentence, as she traces the multiple losses of friends and family members. She has not only lost her two closest friends, but a granddaughter, a daughter and her husband of 68 years. "There's only one living sibling—and I'm having dinner with him tonight," said Simmons.

Five years ago, Simmons left her native Hamilton, Ohio, to move in with her son and his wife. She had to learn how to make friends all over again. Simmons takes classes and plays games at her community. She also putters around her community on a golf cart (which she won in a raffle) inviting folks to ride along with her. She spends quality time with relatives (whom she regards as friends) and non-family friends.

Friendship in old age plays a critical role in health and well-being, according to recent findings from the Stanford Center on Longevity's Sightlines Project. Socially isolated individuals face health risks comparable to those of smokers, and their mortality risk is twice that of obese individuals, the study notes.

Baby boomers are more disengaged with their neighbors and even their loved ones than any other generation, said Dr. Laura Carstensen, who is director of the Stanford Center on Longevity and herself a boomer, in her 60s. "If we're disengaged, it's going to be harder to make new friends," she said. Carstensen said that going back to school can be one of the most successful ways for an older person to make a new friend.

Genuine friendships at any age typically require repeated contact, said Dr. Andrea Bonior, author of "The Friendship Fix: The Complete Guide to Choosing, Losing and Keeping Up with Your Friends." She advises older folks to join group exercise classes or knitting or book clubs.

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5 Natural Ways to Improve Oxygen Levels

The feeling of being out of breath (dyspnea) is a sensation that is well known to those who suffer from Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease. Although it is common for those experiencing shortness of breath to use oxygen therapy (oxygen tanks) to cope, the downsides can include fatigue, headaches, and dry or bloody noses. Further, when depending on oxygen tanks as a primary oxygen supplement, there exists a severe risk: the body can learn to actively suppress its natural respiratory system. Following is a list of 5 natural ways to improve your oxygen levels that should help in reducing your dependence on tanks.

Change Your Diet: Antioxidants allow the body to use oxygen more efficiently increasing oxygen intake in digestion. When looking to boost antioxidant intake, the foods to focus on are blueberries, cranberries, red kidney beans, artichoke hearts, strawberries, plums and blackberries, most of which can be consumed in various juices and smoothies. Another critical protein to consider are essential fatty acids like Vitamin F, which work to increase the amount of oxygen the hemoglobin in the bloodstream can carry. These acids can be found in soybeans, walnuts and flaxseeds.

Get Active: Exercise is key to a healthy life. Through aerobic exercise, such as simple walking, the body is able to better utilize oxygen while removing waste through the lymphatic system. As recommended by the American Heart Association, 30 minutes a day of regular walking has greater effects on the circulatory system than spending an hour or more in the gym 2 to 3 times a week. Aside from the physical health benefits, walking has been shown to improve mood, confidence, and reduce stress.

Change Your Breathing: Exercising your lungs regularly is crucial to maintaining ones respiratory health. However, what is often an impediment to one's breathing is the method in which they breathe. It's recently been discovered that sick people breathe using the upper chest and

inhale more air, which causes reduced oxygen levels in the body. In contrast, the correct method to proper breathing, is slow, from the diaphragm, and through the nose, rather than the mouth.

Cleanse the Air: Often the triggers of flare-ups in those with COPD is poor air quality. Because of this, it is imperative to maintain the purest quality of air possible within the home and workplace. There are a number of air purifiers on the market that can filter the worst of our environmental pollutants. Another helpful "low-tech" tool in reducing pollution in the air and purifying oxygen is a beeswax candle. Unlike traditional candles, beeswax candles do not emit smoke. Instead they produce negative ions that help in the removal of air pollution.

Hydrate: The human body is roughly 60 percent water, so it cannot be understated how critical

water is to how the body functions: allowing body cells to grow, lubricating our joints and regulating body temperature. When looking to get the full benefits of oxygenation, drink filtered water. Restructured or ionized water is micro-clustered with smaller groupings of water molecules. This provides high levels of hydration and oxygenation at the cellular level. Keep in mind that caffeinated beverages, alcohol and high sodium foods all dehydrate the body, so keep water with you during the day and get in the habit of drinking it throughout the day. Health professionals recommend 8 8-oz. glasses of water a day.

<http://seniordirectory.com/articles/info/5-natural-ways-to-improve-your-oxygen-levels>

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How to Cultivate New Friends as You Age

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She also suggests that seniors get involved in "altruistic behavior" like volunteering in a soup kitchen or an animal shelter or tutoring English as a second language.

"Friendships don't happen in a vacuum," she said. "You don't meet someone at Starbucks and suddenly become best friends."

Perhaps few understand the need for friendship in older years better than Carstensen, who, besides directing the Stanford Center on Longevity, is author of "A Long Bright Future: Happiness, Health and Financial Security in an Age of Increased Longevity."

Carstensen said that going back to school can be one of the most successful ways for an older person to make a new friend.

Bonior recommends that seniors embrace social media. These social media connections can help older people strike up new

friendships with nieces, nephews and even grandchildren, said Alan Wolfelt, an author, educator and founder of the Center for Loss and Life Transition.

"It's important to create support systems that don't isolate you with your own generation."

Many older folks count their children as their best friends — and Carstensen said this can be a big positive on several levels.

"I don't think it matters who your friends are," she said. "It's the quality of the relationship that matters most."

By Bruce Horovitz

<https://khn.org/news/feel-like-the-last-friend-standing-heres-how-to-cultivate-new-buds-as-you-age/>



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SPOTLIGHT ON CAREGIVERS

Advice from a Caregiver on Stress Reduction Strategies

Lisa Bailey is a kindergarten teacher and caregiver to children and her husband who is undergoing cancer treatment. She shares her top coping strategies in this article for living a balanced life as a caregiver. You may find some of these strategies helpful in your own journey.

- Make all choices from a solid base of integrity. I try to make medical and personal choices from the base of my Christian faith, which helps free me from second-guessing myself.
- Be clear about today's reality. Don't imagine things are worse than they are. Enjoy the good parts of today and don't let worries for tomorrow take over your emotions and thoughts.
- Talk honestly to family and friends. Honest, frequent communication with close family and friends about caregiving concerns is much easier than trying to play catch-up later.
- Learn the medical lingo. It will help you as a caregiver and a medical advocate to learn as much as you can about your loved one's medical situation. The Internet is a helpful resource but be cautious about which websites can be trusted. Ask questions of the doctors and nurses. Check the accuracy of your information if you are at all troubled or in doubt.

- Be aware that pain, stress and medications may release the patient from their social "filter" and they may say some difficult things at times. Listen and be compassionate as best you can.

- Control what you can control. Lots of articles about stress-management advise letting go of control; I have found that being in control of some areas of my life has greatly reduced my stress.

- Let go of what you cannot control. For me this means leaning on my faith; for others it may be working with meditation or other techniques that will focus and center you.

- Get help with house work and yard work—paid or unpaid. Help with household chores has helped me prioritize my most important tasks.

- Prepare meals in advance and freeze them. I do bulk cooking and freeze pre-prepared meals.

- Plan your work; then work your plan. Keep bills and insurance paperwork organized and pay bills on time. Be proactive about taking care of tasks and errands. Don't let things pile up.

- Nest. Everyone needs a comfy place to relax and rest. Make a comfortable nest for your loved one and for yourself by having a comfy chair with afghans, pillows, fresh flowers, candles, books and great music to your nest.

- Journal for yourself. There are so many ways to re-center yourself, but none works as well for me as journaling. Even if you have never kept a journal, try starting one to help you clarify feelings, manage your stress and plan the work you need to do as caregiver.

- Find joy in living life, whatever the circumstances. Whether illness or infirmity limit the scope of you and your charge's activities—remember to bring meaning to your lives through activities you both enjoy: a good meal, movies and shows, music, reading aloud, playing card or board games, and trying new activities that may be creative and enriching.

- Keep a vision for the future. None of us comes here to stay; we know that. But we also know that we can "grow until we go," and we should. We make plans for our future.

- Give. While I have learned through my husband's illness to receive the gifts of help, encouragement, prayer and love from other people, giving to others in return keeps us feeling emotionally and spiritually full and is always worth the effort.

- Release yourself from expectations for perfection. As humans, we all experience "feet of clay" when we do not have infinite energy, wisdom or capabilities to manage our lives. This is normal. Get through each day as best you can, and don't dwell on mistakes.

- Take good care of yourself. Eat good food, remember to exercise, rest and learn to say no to outside demands. See your doctor and dentist for checkups. Get away from the house regularly—and not just to run errands, but to do an activity you enjoy to renew your spirit.

<https://caregiver.com/articles/stress-reduction-strategies/>