Never too old to play

Since 1963, communities across the nation have come together to celebrate Older Americans Month. May is Older Americans Month, and we have a special opportunity to show our appreciation for the elderly who have given so much to make our country great. This year’s theme, Never Too Old To Play, encourages older Americans to stay connected, active, and involved in their own lives as well as in their surroundings.

We are all kids at heart, and play is good for all of us. The more engaged we are, regardless of our age, the more likely we are to appreciate activities, events, and friendships. Multigenerational interactions produce lots of good things for our communities and promote better understanding and acceptance of others. For more than 30 years, there was a student-senior Thanksgiving dinner in Buford. The students served the seniors and the seniors shared wisdom and life experiences with the students. The play came about when the teens and seniors danced the afternoon away.

Play comes in many shapes, but the common denominator is having fun. On several occasions, seniors and students have worked together to paint landscapes that are proudly displayed at the Lawrenceville Senior Center. Not to be forgotten, at-home seniors can knit items to be given to newborn babies or foster children. The physical activity benefits the knitters and the young recipients appreciate being able to stay warm and comfortable. Take a moment to “play” with some seniors in your community every day in May.

Under pressure? — By Adrienne Noble, Information & Referral Specialist

Often when seniors call for our Home Delivered Meals program, we discover that they have been diagnosed with high blood pressure (HBP). HBP is a serious condition that can lead to coronary heart disease, heart failure, stroke, kidney failure, and other health problems. Knowing your blood pressure numbers is important, even when you’re feeling fine.

Your blood pressure is the measured force of blood pushing against the walls of your arteries. Each time your heart beats, it pumps out blood into the arteries. Your blood pressure is highest when your heart beats, pumping the blood. This is called systolic pressure. When your heart is at rest, between beats, your blood pressure falls. This is the diastolic pressure. You most often will see blood pressure numbers written with the systolic number above or before the diastolic number. A reading of:

- 120/80 or lower is normal blood pressure
- 140/90 or higher is high blood pressure
- Between 120 and 139 for the top number, or between 80 and 89 for the bottom number is pre-hypertension

People who have HBP can take steps to control it and reduce their risk of related health problems. Key steps include following a healthy lifestyle, having ongoing medical care, and following your treatment plan.

For resources on health care facilities that may assist with having your blood pressure checked, contact me at (678) 377-4150.

Veggies for you!

Make veggies easy
- Stock up on frozen vegetables for quick microwave preparation
- Plan some meals around a cup of vegetable soup and a salad
- Keep a bowl of cut-up vegetables for a quick snack
- Choose a different vegetable-based salad instead of a lettuce salad or a burger. For example, try a salad made mostly of carrots, broccoli, beans, and lentils. Go light on the salad dressing

Make veggies tasty
- Buy fresh vegetables in season. They cost less and are likely to be at their peak flavor. Freeze or dehydrate them for later use
- Grill vegetable kabobs including tomatoes, mushrooms, green peppers, and onions, or sauté the same vegetables on top of the stove with a little oil
- Toss cans of kidney beans, wax beans, green beans, and chickpeas with a low-calorie vinaigrette for a fast bean salad

Make veggies healthy
- Sauté veggies with a splash of olive oil instead of deep frying
- Add fresh or dried herbs to flavor vegetables instead of butter and salt. For example, tomatoes go well with basil and oregano. Try rosemary on carrots
- Broil sliced vegetables such as zucchini, bell peppers, eggplant, and tomatoes until they blacken around the edges. Serve warm with a low-calorie dressing of lemon juice and black pepper

Act fast: save a life — By Julie Lucas, Office Assistant to Health Services

May is National Stroke Awareness Month and a good time to learn the warning signs of a stroke. A stroke, sometimes called a “brain attack” occurs when a clot blocks the blood supply to the brain or when a blood vessel in the brain bursts. According to the National Stroke Association, when someone is having a stroke, acting “F.A.S.T.” increases their chances of having a complete recovery or experiencing limited damage. When a stroke is treated with medication within three hours, most patients will do very well. The drug will not be as effective after three hours from the onset of the stroke, so time truly is of the essence. Knowing what to do if you or someone else may be experiencing a stroke could save a life — possibly even your own.

Use F.A.S.T. to remember warning signs of a stroke:

**Face:** Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?

**Arms:** Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?

**Speech:** Ask the person to repeat a simple phrase. Is his or her speech slurred or strange?

**Time:** If you observe any of these signs, call 911 immediately.

Adapted from National Stroke Association

Gwinnett County Senior Center Locations

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<tr>
<th>Buford</th>
<th>Lawrenceville</th>
<th>Norcross</th>
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<tr>
<td>2755 Sawnee Avenue&lt;br&gt;(770) 614-2527</td>
<td>Rhodes Jordan Park&lt;br&gt;225 Benson Street&lt;br&gt;Lawrenceville, GA 30046&lt;br&gt;(770) 822-5180</td>
<td>5030 Georgia Belle Court&lt;br&gt;Norcross, GA 30093&lt;br&gt;(770) 638-5683</td>
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Senior Services Helpline (678) 377-4150  www.GwinnettSeniorServices.com