

Getting the most out of your medical appointments

By SAL SELVAGGIO AND MARK MOVERMAN

If you've had any kind of appointment at a health professional's office in recent years, you have certainly realized that the Marcus Welby model of doctor-patient interaction has evaporated. A much shorter visit with your provider is often now the standard for a visit, which can leave a patient feeling rushed and a bit flustered. The term "provider" was used here because the current model of health care delivery often involves an assistant, nurse, or other intermediary between you and the person who is authorized to give you definite answers to questions you may have, such as your doctor. You can be left unsure that questions or data you have given to these intermediaries have made their way up the information chain correctly.

This is why it is important to have a checklist prepared beforehand so that the questions you

have won't be forgotten in the 15 or so minutes of face time you have with your doctor.

The following suggestions and checklist can help make your next appointment more accurate and fruitful to both you and your doctor.

Consider starting a health journal or notebook, where you can develop questions and note pertinent health issues as they occur to you. This can be done on paper or digitally on your computer, iPad, or phone. Refer to it a day or so before your visit, write your questions down, and bring it to your appointment. This way, you won't have to try to remember your questions the morning of your appointment, only to realize when you return home that you forgot to ask them.

Take notes during or shortly after your visit. Add that information to your journal so you can have an accurate recall of what happened at that visit.

See **MEDICAL CHECKLIST**, Page 4

A checklist of items to bring to your appointment:

- Medical insurance cards
- Identification
- Credit cards
- Medication list (Consider bringing your meds to your appointment. Your doctor may see that you no longer need one or more of your medications)
- Vaccination history
- Family health history
- Symptoms, if any, from your journal

Other considerations and questions you may have:

- What symptoms should I watch out for?
- What are the purposes of any tests recommended?
- What are my treatment options? How effective is each treatment option? What are the benefits versus risks of each treatment option?

- Is there more than one condition (disease) that could be causing my problem?
- What side effects might I have from prescribed medications?
- Can a generic medication be prescribed?
- What should I do if I miss a dose of medication?
- When should I be seen next?
- Are there alternatives to any recommended surgeries?
- Should or can I stop or reduce any of my medications?
- Can you recommend someone who can give me a second opinion, perhaps someone who is an expert on this condition? (This can be important if the doctor hasn't been able to arrive at a diagnosis or help your situation to your satisfaction).

NORTHWEST NEIGHBORS VILLAGE

a community network of support
PO Box 39135
Washington, DC 20016
202-935-6060
www.nnvdc.org

Northwest Neighbors Village (NNV), founded in 2007 and opened in 2009, is a nonprofit organization created to help the residents of Northwest Washington live comfortably and safely in their homes and neighborhoods as they age.

Join or volunteer

NNV welcomes new members and volunteers. For more information, go to www.nnvdc.org or call the office at 202-935-6060.

NNV Board Members

Officers

Morgan Gopnik, president
Ann Van Dusen, vice president
Beverly Lunsford, secretary
Sam Smith, treasurer

Directors

Steve Altman
Richard Avidon
Jessica Berenson
Shanti Conly
Judie Fien-Helfman
Bert Foer
Alice Hayes
Merilee Janssen
Gene Sofer
Jan Solomon
Karen Zuckerstein
Janean Mann, emerita
Frances Mahncke, emerita
Robert Parker, emeritus
Stewart Reuter, emeritus
Jo Ann Tanner, emerita

Staff

Stephanie Chong,
executive director
Heather Hill, volunteer and
member services
coordinator
Leslie Pace, communications
coordinator

Newsletter team

Pat Kasdan
Janean Mann
Pat Mullan

A message from our President: Building Community Together

By MORGAN GOPNIK

It has been my privilege to serve as President of Northwest Neighbors Village for the past year, working with the remarkable staff and volunteers to bring our vision to life: a generous, supportive community where older adults are valued, age with dignity, and enjoy opportunities for growth and engagement. These values inform everything we do, and we are grateful to every member of our growing community.

As we approach the end of another challenging year, I'd like to share just a few of the Village's achievements and urge you to renew your commitment to this important cause.

- In one year, our trained corps of volunteers provided over 6,000 hours of direct services to keep our older neighbors safe, mobile, and connected. These services included rides to appointments, grocery shopping, assistance with computers and technology, and much, much more.

- Our Village became a trusted resource for timely information on Covid-19 and helped hundreds of older adults access the vaccine as soon as it became available.

- We offered a 7-week online Tech Training Series to bridge the generational technology gap and help make "Zoom" a household word for our members.

- We deftly adapted to new health guidelines by transforming formerly in-person gatherings into a robust mix of virtual

events, including yoga, a speaker series, Happy Hours, bingo, and other online opportunities for engagement and connection.

- Turning lemons into lemonade, we opened many of these virtual events to the broader community, allowing over 700 people to learn about the Village and bringing in many new members and supporters.

- Village volunteers and members connected through new and existing "affinity groups" including small-group Neighborhood Chats, Conversational Spanish, Coping with Uncertainty, the Racial Equity Book Club, and a Walking Group.

- Perhaps most significant, the NNV Board voted to eliminate membership fees for lower-income seniors, providing over \$15,400 in membership subsidies to address significant unmet needs among older adults in our community.

This month, Northwest Neighbors Village begins its End-of-Year Campaign, providing a critical component of our annual budget. I hope you will think of the many ways the Village supports our community and join me in making a meaningful donation. (A generous matching gift challenge makes this a particularly good time to give!) With all the tension and strife we see around us, there's never been a better time to demonstrate the power of generosity, togetherness, and mutual care.

[Donate to our 2021 End of Year Campaign now!](#)

Technology corner: Voice, Amazon & Alexa

By KAREN ZUCKERSTEIN

Voice, Amazon, Alexa —together these are emerging as important forces in products aimed at the senior market. Voice is an important interface for many older adults. While many seniors are never very far away from their smartphone, others have never become comfortable with the technology and are confused by all the apps, icons, pop-ups, swiping, tapping, pressing, etc. And, as we age, some of us will develop vision problems or encounter difficulties maintaining a stable, firm touch on our screens or keyboards. So, voice is increasingly seen as a critical interface connecting seniors to technology. This is not exactly new—medical alert systems that involve pressing a button worn on the wrist or as a necklace have been around for a long time and depend on connecting via voice to an emergency responder on a telephone-enabled speaker box.

Amazon recognized several years ago that voice connections would work both for seniors and for the people who support them. Central to Amazon's approach is [Alexa](#) — the voice that emanates from smart devices—in particular, the Echo Dot and Echo Show—that answers questions, searches the internet, and connects with other “smart” devices:

“Alexa, what’s the weather today?”

“Alexa, where did I leave my phone?”

“Alexa, call my sister at home.”

“Alexa, what appointments do I have today?”

“Alexa, please lower the temperature to 70 degrees.”

Amazon seems to have made a significant commitment to this market. In 2020 it launched its Care Hub, an application that links caregivers to older adults and allows the older adult to reach an emergency contact through Alexa. On some devices, it can also set alerts and reminders; and a fee-based service that launches this year will include a staffed, 24/7 urgent response team. Furthermore, Amazon's product team includes the Amazon Alexa Product Team for Aging and Independence—so we should expect a steady stream of innovation for these products.

I looked to see what my favorite product review site—Wirecutter (a New York Times-owned company)— had to say about these products. The Amazon Echo Dot (\$30)—essentially a “smart” speaker—was Wirecutter's best-in-category budget

pick for Smart Emergency Contact Systems. According to Wirecutter, “A new emergency calling feature means you no longer have to call out a name; just say ‘Alexa, call for help,’ and Alexa devices will call a

designated emergency contact as well as send a text and smartphone notification (via the Alexa app) to that person.” Wirecutter added that the Echo Dot is great for playing music, listening to news and weather reports, playing trivia games, and calling friends. And Alexa can control most other smart devices accessible via voice commands.

The Amazon Echo Show (\$230) is a “smart” screen (resembling a tablet) that makes keeping in touch easier and more personal than a simple phone call. The Echo Show is one of two best-in-category picks by Wirecutter for “Smart Displays and Video Communication Devices.” (The other pick was the Apple iPad.) Wirecutter calls Echo Show “a simple video-chat system,” saying: “Alexa allows users to instantly chat with loved ones and caregivers. The device also doubles as a....wireless hub, allowing control of more smart-home devices than you can get with any other voice platform.” The Echo Show also provides a way for family members and friends to drop in for a two-way video chat. Reminders can be set for appointments and medications. Moreover, with a 10-inch screen, blind or low-vision users can create a shopping list by holding an item to the camera and asking “Alexa, what am I holding?”

These devices operate on Wi-Fi, so a stable Wi-Fi service is essential to accessing these technologies. Users also have to be comfortable with the privacy issues associated with these devices. Alexa is always listening, and some people will be uncomfortable with this always-on feature. In addition, the capabilities that can be given to caregivers with these systems could be intrusive, since devices can be configured to allow caregivers to listen or drop in at any time.



Creating a long-term care workforce in D.C.

By SAL SELVAGGIO

As a dedicated volunteer and supporting member of NNV, I have become involved in an issue vital to all of us, now and certainly into our future. D.C. currently has a critical shortage of trained healthcare workers--the very people who will be attending to our needs in our own homes, in long-term care settings, and in rehab facilities. Unless we do something to get potential workers into the educational pipeline now, our community will face very difficult and potentially life-threatening situations.

By working with the [D.C. Long-term Care Coalition](#) (LTCC), NNV is extending its commitment to help our members, and the area's older population in general, to live our best lives and attend to our future healthcare needs. Meaningful progress has been made recently. The D.C. Council passed and funded the Nurse Education Enhancement Act which will expand training capacity and make it available free to Washington residents. In addition, the Council directed the District to develop a targeted Geriatric Healthcare Apprenticeship program, hopefully to be funded by a U.S. Department of Labor grant.

To get this new apprenticeship program moving forward, the LTCC is preparing background information to present to the District government, but they need help! Volunteers will help investigate the basics of good apprenticeship programs and help draft fact sheets, position papers, and possibly grant applications. The current team includes people who understand D.C.'s bureaucracy as well as issues specific to home healthcare aides and certified nursing assistants, but additional researchers, writers, and editors are needed.

Please feel free to contact me at Selvaggio.sal@gmail.com if you would like to become involved with this important initiative and help us make D.C. a more welcoming, age-friendly city.

Calendar

NNV's calendar of events is regularly updated. Please check our [website events page](#) for current listings.

MEDICAL CHECKLIST, *continued from Page 1*

At the end of your appointment, repeat back to the doctor any instructions or important information given to you to ensure that you understand what the doctor actually said.

On a final note, it's important to have any medical condition understood to your satisfaction. There are many resources available today that weren't available when Marcus Welby was giving sage advice on TV. The internet has made these resources more accessible, but you need to know which sources are reliable. You should ask your doctor if the information you have been researching is reasonable before you proceed with any course of action that could potentially put you at risk.

If you feel that you would like assistance with your medical visit, NNV has a medical note-taking service available for full members.

Newsletter Update

By Judie Fien-Helfman

Thank you to everyone for your responses to the survey about NNV's Newsletter. Responses were thoughtful and filled with recommendations as to how NNV can best provide you with timely news.

As a result, the Board established a working group to assess NNV's current communication vehicles - emails, snail mail, newsletter etc., for their value, frequency, and use in sharing NNV and community information in a timely way. In particular they will determine the purpose, target audience, frequency, and content of each vehicle with a goal of building a "village community," and providing timely, interesting news.



NNV

Virtual Speaker Series

Northwest DC is home to numerous dynamic, informed individuals. Join us for one or all of these discussions, designed to engage and inform you. Please check our website for the most up-to-date listing of future [Virtual Speaker Series](#) programs.

Many past speakers have given permission to record their programs. These are available on [Vimeo](#).

Old Urban Naturalist

By JANE WHITAKER

Winter is coming! The clues are all around us. In late July I saw my first goldenrod blooming and I knew that big changes were forthcoming long before our leaves turned color and started falling. Small mammals were starting to gather stores for the long winter; some birds were beginning to flock; and some late summer migrants from the south such as dragonflies and butterflies were appearing.

Animals of all varieties - mammals, birds, and insects - are preparing for the coming months of scarcity and cold temperatures. Most store extra fat and some cache food.

Migration is one way that birds and some insects prepare. It is defined as movement of a group of animals from one region to another. In the case of birds, it is movement to a habitat more conducive to survival. It is generally initiated by a drop in temperature or food availability.

In North America, birds fly south to the southern United States, the Caribbean, or South America. Some start their journeys in early August, while others may start migration as late as November. Waterfowl are generally the last to fly south. Their time to migrate is dictated by ice forming on the lakes where they feed.

The small insect-eating birds start their journeys when it gets cool enough that their food supply becomes scarce. The migration routes and times are amazingly predictable. Both day length and temperature changes can alter hormones that compel our feathered friends to prepare for their journeys. Metabolic changes will help them store fat for their long flights.

The length of their journeys and the birds' ability to go to the same locations each year is remarkable. We know that birds and insects (Monarch butterflies) will hitch rides on favorable wind currents. For example, bird watchers will watch the weather for a northern front coming down from Canada to catch sight of Canadian species moving through their locations. Some birds follow the Appalachian mountain ranges for direction as well as for upwelling currents.

It has now been proven that birds imprint the movement of the stars around the North Star during their first summer so they can find their way home in the spring. This was done by putting birds

inside a planetarium and observing the orientation of the birds when the stars were moved. It was shown that vision was the factor used in orientation, not the magnetic pole.

However, it is also believed that the magnetic



Turkey Vulture

field, and in some cases smell (homing pigeons), can help birds find their way home. Sea birds captured in Great Britain were moved to Boston and released. They found their way back to their exact nest site in Britain in about 12 days! Turkey vultures migrate to South America in the winter and find their way back to the exact barn where they nested the

previous year. Birds are truly amazing.

Bears, woodchucks and chipmunks hibernate, but in different ways. Chipmunks store a large cache of nuts in an underground burrow that they seal off. They stuff their cheeks with nuts and go into a torpor with a body temperature 20 degrees lower than their normal temperature, and maintain that temperature for weeks at a time only to



Chipmunk

awaken enough to eat some of their stored food. Woodchucks lower their body temperature even more and go into a deep sleep until spring using their body fat to keep themselves alive.

Black bears, on the other hand, eat ravenously as winter

approaches. They store pounds of fat to keep them going over the winter-- sometimes more than 200 pounds. A bear will often den in the same place each year. Where the den is located depends on the particular habitat the bear occupies. Some will den in hollow trees, under



Black Bear

cabins, and in large rock piles. Their body temperature only drops about 10 degrees and they are not in a deep sleep. Babies are born in January and are nursed until spring.

What do we humans do to prepare for winter? Floridians know all about Snowbirds who drive from Canada and New York to warmer climes for the winter. Most of us haul out our winter coats and boots, buy extra food and get a supply of good books to read. Are you ready for winter? It is coming!

Passages

Marjorie Rachlin

February 23, 1922 – August 21, 2021

Marjorie Rachlin, 99, passed away peacefully on Aug. 22, 2021 in her D.C. home with family and friends at her side. Born in 1922 and raised in a Cleveland business family, she earned her B.A. at Wells College, then took a job with a publisher in New York City. There she encountered a labor union periodical that led to her career of more than 50 years in the labor movement. Marjorie dedicated her life to the labor union movement, to the support of women's rights, to sustaining the environment, and to the support of the arts.



Marjorie began her union career in labor education in 1947 at the Textile Workers of America in New Jersey. After a Fulbright year in London studying labor relations, she moved to Washington where she was Education Associate for the International Association of Machinists for eight years. She co-authored with Larry Rogin the 1968 book "Labor Education in the United States," the first comprehensive survey on the subject. In 1970, she joined the George Meany Center for Labor Studies in Silver Spring, Md., where she taught programs on teaching techniques for union officers and staff and led leadership programs for women union members for more than 30 years. In 1988, she was recognized with a scholarship in her name for her seminal contributions to the Southern School for Union Women. *Forest Hills Connection* recently published a [fascinating story](#) on Marjorie's work with the Association of Flight Attendants union.

Marjorie's advocacy as a feminist included support of women's causes and women candidates for office. According to Ellen Malcolm, founder of Emily's List, "Marjorie Rachlin was a passionate advocate for helping women run for office. She found so many ways to lend a helping hand and cheer them on. The Congress of the United States looks different today because women like Marjorie Rachlin stood up and said, 'I'm going to change that.'"

After retirement, Marjorie followed her love of nature to volunteer with the invertebrates at the National Zoo, to advocate for bird habitats in Rock Creek Park and elsewhere, and to write nature articles. She brought her legendary intellectual curiosity and leadership skills to book clubs, art museums, community organizations, and social and political causes. Most importantly, she enjoyed spending time with her friends.

Her husband Jack Rachlin passed away in 2017. She is survived by her sister Nancy B. Allchin of Baltimore, and by nieces and a nephew -- Carol, Nancy Joy, and Douglas Allchin. She will be missed by her grandnieces and grandnephews along with countless others of all ages whose lives have been enriched by her love, guidance, and example of audacious and outspoken advocacy for truth.

Memorial contributions may be made to [Bread for the City](#), Southeast Center, 1700 Good Hope Rd. SE, Washington, DC 20020.

Robert Lubic

March 9, 1929 – September 16, 2021

Professor Robert Bennett Lubic Esq., age 92, of Chevy Chase, DC, passed away at home on Thursday, Sept. 16, 2021. A beloved husband, father, grandfather, and teacher, Bob was also a writer, avid reader, chess player, and world traveler.



Born in Pittsburgh, Pa., he lived in Washington for more than 65 years. He graduated from the University of Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Law School (JD), and Georgetown University Law School (Masters in Law). After a stint at the FCC and a private law firm, he taught business and international law for 40 years at the Washington College of Law, American University.

Bob was the Associate Dean during the riots in 1968 and received the outstanding teacher award from his students. In 2016, his daughter Wendie interviewed him for NPR's StoryCorps where he talked about being the "Hippie Dean." [Listen here.](#)

He played a major role in creating a dozen study-abroad law student programs in Jerusalem, Israel; Moscow and Leningrad, Russia; Warsaw, Poland;

See **PASSAGES**, Page 7

France, London, Japan, Hong Kong, and China. He co-taught in each location. He taught at the International Christian University in Tokyo for a year, East China University in Shanghai for a semester, and the University of Puerto Rico for a year.

In addition, Bob lectured in many cities in the 140 countries he visited, from South Africa, Sri Lanka, Australia, South Korea, and Iceland, to countries throughout Europe and South America. He was a well-recognized mediator and arbitrator both in the United States and abroad. Bob created an Internet program for use in resolving international disputes (before Zoom). In addition to his publications, he wrote and published a novel. Bob was an avid chess player and, as a member of the Cosmos Club competition chess team, he organized and played in chess tournaments in the United States, London, Paris, and Cuba. A voracious reader, he kept well occupied during the pandemic playing chess online with his family and friends. His memory of world history was to be admired.

Bob is survived by his devoted wife of 62 years, Benita Alk Lubic, three children, and five grandchildren.

Memorial contributions may be made to Doctors Without Borders – Haiti Earthquake Response: ProjectHOPE.org.

David Schulz

April 17, 1933 - October 15, 2021

We were saddened to hear of David's passing. A full obituary was not available at press time and will be published in due course.



"Keep a supply of canned fish (salmon, tuna, sardines) or chicken on hand, for the basis of a nourishing meal if you feel lazy and do not want to cook from scratch."

Do you have any time saving or safety suggestions to share? Send them to Leslie (lpac@nnvdc.org).

Nothing hits the spot like soup

By BARBARA OLIVER

Beets are chock full of vitamins and minerals and low in calories and fat. Among the top antioxidant vegetables, they are an excellent source of iron and potassium. This hot soup has a kick that satisfies hunger. Nonfat yogurt provides a cool, creamy contrast in texture, along with calcium and protein.

Five Spice Beet Soup

Ingredients:

4 beets about 2-2 ½ inches in diameter (approximately 3 ½ cups)
3 cups vegetable broth, divided
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 medium-size red onion, thinly sliced (2 cups)
1 celery stalk with leaves, stalk chopped, leaves sliced
2 teaspoons peeled grated fresh ginger
¼ teaspoon (or more) Chinese five spice powder
Low-fat or fat-free sour cream or nonfat plain yogurt



BARBARA OLIVER

Directions:

Scrub and trim unpeeled beets; cut each into 6 wedges. Place beets in a 4-cup glass measuring cup. Add two cups broth; cover with a paper plate and microwave on high until beets are tender, about 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, heat oil in a heavy, medium saucepan over medium heat. Add onion and chopped celery; cover and cook, stirring often, until almost tender and translucent, about 12 minutes.

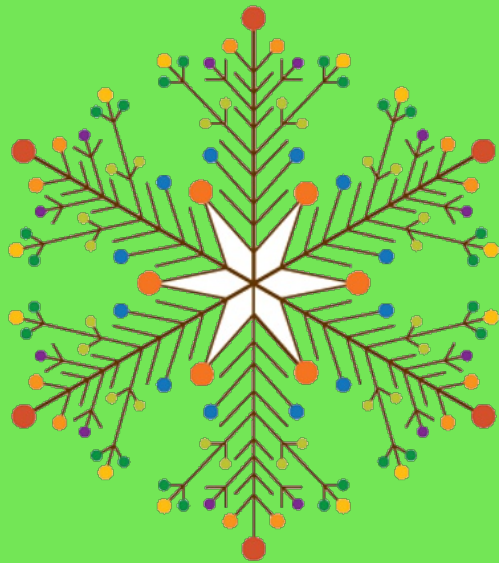
Add beet mixture and remaining 1 cup broth to onion/celery in pan; cover and bring to simmer; cook for 4 minutes. Mix in ginger and five spice powder. Transfer to blender; cover and puree.

Season soup to taste with salt and pepper and, if desired, additional five spice powder. Rewarm soup, if necessary. Ladle into four bowls. Top with dollops of sour cream or yogurt and sliced celery leaves.

Notes:

- Can substitute a 4-cup (1 quart) casserole dish or microwave safe bowl for 4-cup measuring cup.
- Chinese five spice powder comprises star anise, fennel seeds, Szechuan peppercorns, cloves, and cinnamon. Available in most grocery stores. It packs a punch. Use sparingly if you've never tasted it.
- I like to swirl the sour cream through the soup before eating, it takes the raw edge off the spices.

Source: Adapted from Bon Appétit, 2009



Enjoy the spirit of the season at NNV's virtual holiday luncheon!

Mark the holiday season with your friends and neighbors at NNV's twelfth Annual Holiday Party. The party will be virtual again this year and promises a fun time for all!

Our Virtual Holiday Celebration will take place on Friday, Dec. 10 from 1-2:30 pm. Festivities include games, virtual holiday tables, and the announcement of the 2021 Volunteer of the Year Award recipient.

Please submit your nomination for the volunteer you think has provided exceptional service this year by sending an email to info@nnvdc.org or calling 202-935-6060 by Nov. 19. All members and volunteers who attend the Holiday Party will receive a special treat delivered to their home prior to the party. Be sure to secure your spot so you don't miss out!

[Click here to RSVP](#) or call 202-935-6060.