

Spotlight on Aging

VOLUME XXIX, ISSUE 11

A newsletter for D.C. Seniors

November 2018



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

By Laura Newland
Executive Director, D.C. Office on Aging

November is Alzheimer's Disease Awareness and Caregivers Month! Last year at this time, our very own Aurora Delespin-Jones wrote a guest column on her personal experiences as a family caregiver. We received such great feedback from readers that I asked her to follow-up this year with the next chapter of her story. Thank you to those who

felt compelled to share your stories with us.

I'm incredibly grateful to Aurora for her work in reaching out to our city's caregivers. The passion she conveys shows up in the work she does each and every day here at DCOA. To our caregivers, thank you for all that you do to keep our families and communities together.



GUEST COLUMNIST

Aurora Delespin-Jones
Deputy Director, D.C. Office on Aging

It's hard to believe it's been a year since I last wrote to readers in recognition and celebration of National Caregivers Month. I'm happy for the opportunity, and so grateful that many of you let me know that my article helped you.

And with this opportunity to engage you again, I would like to share with you my experience of "Release!" in hopes that you approach the holiday season with a commitment to letting go and living well. For those who have lost, and those who keep on giving, I celebrate you!

When I set out on the journey to care for me after caring for Mom, I discovered why airplanes, automobiles and engines of all types, shapes and sizes suddenly stop, give out, and crash when the needle points to "E" — you can go no further.

When the wind ceases, you can sail no longer — only drift until the next breeze blows. When there is no fire from the piston, the motor won't turn over because the fuel tank is emptied. You stop still, motionless, numb... Crash! Left alone in the wilderness of an unfamiliar, hazed, desolate and airless space in time, you realize the pain

in your reality — Mom is gone. She'll never return.

She's gone. Leaving me with a list of things to do and nothing more.

Gone. With no instructions, game plan, or road map to guide me through this terrible abyss. Gone. Never to be able to comfort her, speak to her, give her loving embraces with a soothing confidence in my ability to take care of her. Gone. With no warmth in consolation or words of wisdom; no sternness of motivation; no admonition leading me to resolve conquering all my fears, doubts, self-destructive thoughts, motives and behaviors that would keep me from achieving my dreams. Gone.

I crashed on Monday, Dec. 6, 2015. My mom passed Friday, Nov. 27 — the day after Thanksgiving. All that was left was her bed and oxygen tank still in the same place as it was eight months before, when Mom entered hospice. It had been more than a week since making my first call to the nurse about having these items removed. I told the nurse the bed was beginning to bother me emotionally and mentally.

See **GUEST COLUMN**, page 31

Get Involved

Wednesday, Nov. 7

10:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.

DCOA sponsored Community Health, Wellness & Resource Fair
500 K St. NE – Ward 6
Contact: Sherrell Briscoe, 202-727-0357

Thursday, Nov. 8

10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

DCOA will provide information on all available resources and services
Atlas Performing Arts Center
1333 H St. NE – Ward 6

Friday, Nov. 9

8 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Pepco Energy Assistance Summit
2nd Floor Conference Center
701 Ninth St. NW
Contact: Rachelle Nigro, 202-872-2793

Wednesday, Nov. 14

Arrive before 9 a.m.

Mobile Market
Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs & Capital Area Food Bank
4801 16th St. NW – Ward 4
Contact: Ingrid Gutierrez, 202-671-2823

Thursday, Nov. 15

10 a.m. – noon

Train to become a DCOA Ambassador
Register at sadia.ferguson@dc.gov or 202-727-0374

Thursday, Nov. 15

11 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

DCOA in collaboration with Parks & Recreation
Community Health, Wellness & Resource Fair
1401 7th St. NW – Ward 6
Contact: Adrian Sibert, 202-671-4794

Thursday, Nov. 15

5:30– 7:30 p.m.

Full Collaborative Meeting
DCOA will provide an informational table
The Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative
Bald Eagle Recreation Center
185 Joliet St. SW – Ward 8
Contact: Eric Mullins, 202-889-1425

Wednesday, Nov. 21

9 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Safeway Feast of Sharing
Walter E. Washington Convention Center
801 Mt. Vernon Pl. NW – Ward 2

Empowering D.C. Caregivers via DCOA's Savvy Caregiver Program (SCP)

Join DCOA's Savvy Caregiver Program (SCP) to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes to care for your family member with Alzheimer's disease or other dementia.

The SCP is a series of six classes for caregivers in D.C. who provide care for older adults, age 60 and over, and adults with disabilities, age 18 and older, living with Alzheimer's disease or related dementias. The program is delivered in two-hour sessions, over a

six-week period.

When: Tuesdays, Nov. 13 to Dec. 18, from 10 a.m. to noon

Or

Thursdays, Nov. 15 to Dec. 20, from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Where: D.C. Office on Aging, Conference Room 114, 500 K St. NE, Washington, DC 20002

For more information/RSVP: Contact Linda Irizarry at 202-535-1442 or linda.irizarry@dc.gov.

Upcoming Savvy Caregiver Program Sessions

Topics	Tuesdays 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM	Thursdays 4:30 PM to 6:30 PM
Introduction to Savvy Caregiver	Nov. 13	Nov. 15
Strategies for Self-Care	Nov. 20	Nov. 22
Contented Involvement	Nov. 27	Nov. 29
Stages of Dementia	Dec. 4	Dec. 6
Caregiving Skills	Dec. 11	Dec. 13
Strengthening Family Resources	Dec. 18	Dec. 20



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR



District Scores Big at Ms. Senior America Pageant



Ms. Senior D.C. Phyllis Jordan was selected to compete in the Top 10 of the Ms. Senior America Pageant. She is only the third queen from the District to compete in the finals. The first was Sandra Bears, Ms. Senior D.C. 2005; the second was Mary McCoy, Ms. Senior D.C. 2012. Ellen Odellas Van Edwards, Ms. Senior D.C. 2003, was awarded a third Prize Konze Award at the pageant for her work with children as a member of Kapitoll Klowns.

Excitement was high among the District contingent in the audience as the District of Columbia was called first during the Top 10 Announcement at the Ms. Senior America Finals, at the Superstar Theatre at Resorts Hotel in Atlantic City, NJ. Ms. Senior D.C. Phyllis Jordan had won the opportunity to compete among the top 10 of 39 contestants who were all age 60 and older. The finalists also included Illinois, South Carolina, Tennessee, Colorado, New York, Utah, Virginia, New Jersey and Arizona.

Ms. Senior D.C. shared during her philosophy of life and evening gown segment of the competition that “communication is key.” Her rose gold metallic gown with flowing fishtail swished as she elegantly glided across the stage.

The talent segment intro asks the question of the audience, have you ever wanted to be evil? Jordan then sang Eartha Kitt’s “I Wanna Be Evil” with her playful impersonation of the singer.

Colorado representative Gayle Novak



Ms. Senior D.C. Phyllis Jordan, performing Eartha Kitt’s “I Wanna Be Evil,” during the Ms. Senior America Pageant in Atlantic City, NJ, Oct. 14-19.

was crowned Ms. Senior America. Her talent during the pageant was a perform-

ance from *Mama Mia*, “Money, Money, Money.” Runner-ups included New Jersey, Utah, Tennessee, and Alicia Diamond Windsong from Virginia, respectively.

The District also was represented as the MC Steppers danced during the First Preliminary and Finals to a medley of Chaka Khan tunes, and concluded their finals performance with “Uptown Funk” by Bruno Mars to a standing ovation and cheers from the audience. Toni Jackson, Ms. Senior D.C. 2014 and Wendy Bridges, Ms. Senior D.C. 2015 joined the dance group for their third stint on the Ms. Senior America Pageant stage.

A special congratulations goes to Sandra Bears, Ms. Senior D.C. 2005 who was awarded an Honorary Senior America Banner. A Top 10 Finalist in 2005, this year Bears served as emcee for the Senior America Showcase on Tuesday night.



The MC Steppers, a crowd favorite, performs during the Ms. Senior America Pageant Finals to songs by Chaka Khan and Bruno Mars.

Also in the showcase this year was Billie LaVerne Smith, Ms. Senior D.C. 2016, who played a Duke Ellington favorite on the piano, “Don’t Get Around Much Anymore.”

Smith and Toni Jackson sang with the National Queen’s Choir, which performed during the showcase, pageant preliminaries and the pageant final.

Great job, District of Columbia! Way to represent us on a national level. Now America knows D.C. residents age 60 and older are “Aging with Style!”

Spotlight on Aging

Spotlight On Aging is published by the Information Office of the D.C. Office on Aging for D.C. senior residents. Advertising contained in the Beacon is not endorsed by the D.C. Office on Aging or by the publisher.

500 K St. N.E.,
Washington, D.C. 20002
202-724-5626
www.dcoa.dc.gov

Executive Director
Laura Newland

Editor
Darlene Nowlin

Photographer
Selma Dillard

The D.C. Office on Aging does not discriminate against anyone based on actual or perceived: race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, familial status, family responsibilities, matriculation, political affiliation, disability, source of income, and place of residence or business. Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination which is prohibited by the Act. In addition, harassment based on any of the above protected categories is prohibited by the Act. Discrimination in violation of the Act will not be tolerated. Violators will be subjected to disciplinary action.

The Office on Aging is in partnership with the District of Columbia Recycling Program.

Guest column

From page 30

And I needed the obstacles to my healing removed. I needed a release from that state of petrified paralysis so I could be put back together again — brand new, bigger, better, stronger, wiser, more knowledgeable, more sensitive, and kinder to myself.

I needed a release to be able to share a God-given gift to help others who care long, hard, sacrificially and genuinely for those they love, and help them to better understand their future journey through the lenses of my precious hours caring for Mom.

So I wrote my pain on the pages of a journal, and began to frame a journey to healing by recording my past.

1. During this season, write your feelings. Capture your frustrations and express your efforts to yourself. Go back and read the raw recordings periodically.

2. Focus then on your progress — no matter how small — and bullet them as steps or tips for someone else’s benefit.

3. Create a resource list for supplies, supports or other needed resources you found.

4. Share with other caregivers who may need relief.

5. Embrace their feedback, especially their praises of you!

Do this often, and before you know it, you will tune in to yourself and begin to map a plan to let go, and to celebrate the strength, capacity and power within you to sustain in the journey — or to release and live well!