

Caregiving and Medicare tips for 'Successful Aging'

By **KAYE BAKER**
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Not being prepared to face the challenges that life throws at you on a daily basis can cause undue stress. Being an organized caregiver and knowing your Medicare options are two crucial aspects to relieving this stress. Finding solutions to the barriers that keep you from aging well are why radio hosts John Wenzlau and Millie Oakeson bring expert guests to their weekly radio show, "Successful Aging," on Independent Talk 1100 KFNX. This past week, they spoke with Amy Goyer, AARP's national Family and Caregiving Expert, and Cindy Lee, a Medicare counselor volunteer with the Area Agency on Aging.

Being a full-time or part-time caregiver or caring for a loved one who lives out of state is no easy task and can drain you of energy you desperately need. Caregiving technology could be the vehicle that saves you valuable time and worry and the resource you need to be-

come more organized.

Goyer said, "Technology is changing caregiving through apps, robots and websites."

Goyer has gone almost completely paperless and relies almost exclusively on her smart phone to help keep her organized. Technology solutions can help with caregiver support, care coordination (managing your caregiver team), daily well-being and health safety to name a few. Goyer uses technology to take notes at doctor visits, for grocery shopping lists, to-do lists to accomplish daily and long-term goals, to share calendars and budgets between caregivers and meditation apps to help calm her loved one and herself. For information on how to use technology in your caregiving tasks, there is a wealth of knowledge on the AARP website - www.aarp.org/caregiverphoenix.

Another stress inducer is Medicare questions. For those of us who don't understand Medicare, it's such a relief to know there are knowledgeable experts willing and available to help us with our Medi-



John Wenzlau and Millie Oakeson

care questions. Lee is one of those experts who has devoted a large part of her career to helping people work through the questions of the yearly changes in Medicare benefits. It's important to note the open enrollment period (Oct. 15 through Dec. 7) is the chance for everyone to review their current plan and make changes, if necessary, for next year.

Lee said one of the biggest changes we will see in 2018 is new Medicare cards. These will be issued through the Social Security office beginning in April. The new cards will have a series of numbers and letters instead of your social security number. This is being done to help lessen the identity theft problem. It will be a 21-month process until the system is completely changed over.

Medicare counselors are available to help sort through your personal questions in regards to your Medicare needs for 2018. For more information and to enroll in Medicare, you can call the 24-hour Senior HELP Line at the Area Agency on Aging at 602-264-4357 and ask to speak to a benefits assistance counselor.

For more information on these topics or to ask a question, visit www.successfulaging.info. Tune in 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. every Tuesday to Independent Talk KFNX 1100, as we continue to explore "Successful Aging."

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Community service best punishment for juvenile offenders

Almost every time a juvenile appears in my court, they are ordered to do community service for whatever the charge is. In most cases, it is curfew, or a traffic violation.

It is my opinion that to impress upon the juvenile the importance of following the rules, they need to pay the penalty. I don't believe in penalizing the parents, because the son, or daughter, snuck out of the house past curfew, and making the parents pay a fine.

If the juvenile continues to break the law, then the punishment increases. Most of the juveniles do not have the income to pay the fines and if they borrow the money from Mom or Dad, then they will probably not pay it back.

My solution to holding the juvenile accountable is community service. This is where the juvenile gives back to his or her community by volunteering his time, usually on the

LESSONS FROM THE BENCH



Judge Donald Watts
Manistee Justice Court

weekends. I require the community service to be completed at a local charity, as defined by the Internal Revenue Service. You may have heard it called a 501c (3).

The juvenile is required to come back to court with their parents and show me proof that the correct number of hours were completed.

When they are in the courtroom, I usually ask them, "What did you think about the community service?"

Generally, they tell me how much fun they had. Additionally, when they see how little some people have, it is much easier

for them to appreciate what their parents have provided. Often, I can tell they are just a little more humble than when I first met them.

On some occasions, their parents tell me they stayed with their child and completed the same number of community service hours as their child. Not only did they enjoy it, but it gave them an opportunity to be with their child.

As a judge, I am very aware of "unintended consequences." Usually, I deal with the negative ones. It is so awesome to see positive unintended consequences like "family time."

The last question I usually ask the juvenile is, "Will you continue to volunteer your time?"

The answer is always, "Yes."

Lesson from the bench: Don't wait for an order from the judge to give your time to a worthwhile charity; do it today as a family.

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