



Spotswood
Public Schools

 *Spotswood Office on Aging*
& Senior Resource Center

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Health & Wellness Newsletter



Learning to Grow

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Living through a global pandemic has driven dramatic shifts in our jobs, eating habits, childcare, and even our collective sense of time. Our family, friends, colleagues, and communities have had their lives changed in critical ways that promise to have much longer-lasting effects. This past year has transformed nearly every aspect of our lives.

Sometimes it takes a global pandemic to get us to appreciate our own backyard. Be patient with yourself and your growth, knowing that good things always take time. Give yourself time and space to try things and explore different paths. Don't forget to enjoy the journey too.

Virtually no one has been left untouched after 12 months of such dramatic disruption. A generous dose of empathy and understanding of that truth will make us all stronger as we rebuild and remake our world in the year ahead.

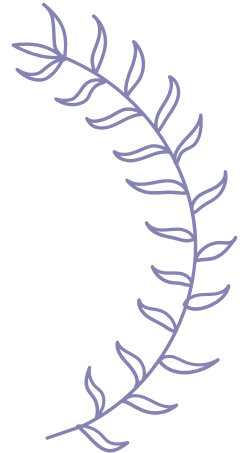
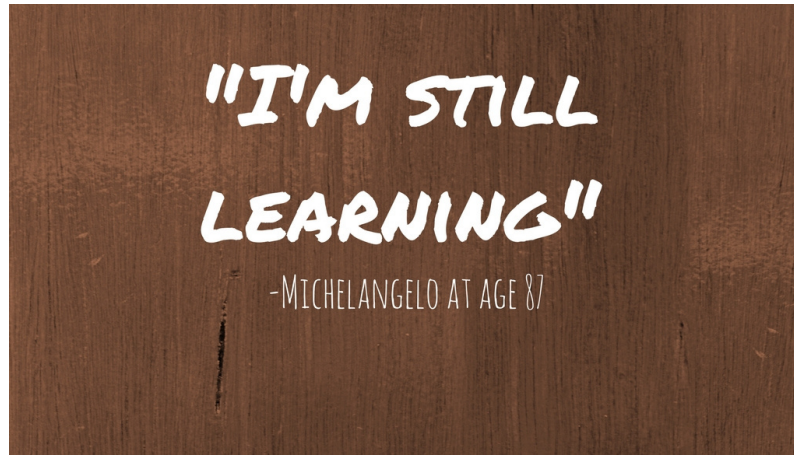
Everything will work out exactly how and when it is supposed to. Have faith in that. Remember every flower must grow through dirt first.

**"Grow
through,
what you go
through."**

"Don't go through life, grow through life." - Eric Butterworth

Welcome to the April 2021 edition of the Health & Wellness Newsletter! Our theme this month is learning to grow! It's in that spirit I thought I would write about being a lifelong learner.

By definition, a lifelong learner is someone who keeps acquiring new skills and capabilities well past their formal education years. Lifelong learning recognizes that not all of our learning comes from a classroom. For example, in childhood, we learn to talk or ride a bike. As an adult, we learn how to use a smartphone or how to cook a new dish.



Here are five steps to get you started on a lifelong learning path:

1. Recognize your own personal interests and goals
2. Make a list of what you would like to learn or be able to do
3. Identify how you would like to get involved and the resources available
4. Schedule the learning goal into your life
5. Make a commitment

Here are some of the types of lifelong learning initiatives that you can engage in:

- Developing a new skill (e.g. sewing, cooking, public speaking, etc)
- Self-taught study (e.g. learning a new language, subscribing to a podcast, etc)
- Learning a new sport or activity (e.g. joining martial arts, learning to ski, learning to exercise, etc)
- Learning to use a new technology (smart devices, new software applications, etc)
- Acquiring new knowledge (taking a self-interest course via online education)

On behalf of Spotswood REC, I hope this April brings you the warmth of spring and the joy of growing and learning throughout your life!

Rich O'Brien

Chairperson

Spotswood REC

Reaching Every Citizen

Celebrating Diversity



April is Diversity Month, a time to recognize and celebrate other cultures and populations. This month, take time to recognize the diversity in your workplace, school, home and community. By celebrating the unique cultures, backgrounds, and traditions of others, we can gain a greater appreciation for the diversity that surrounds us.

Here are some ways to celebrate Diversity Month:

- Host a multicultural movie night.
- Attend a cultural art exhibit, even virtually.
- Play music from around the world.
- Support minority-owned businesses.
- Try a new recipe celebrating a different culture.
- Find a virtual run for a cause that you care about.
- Spend time talking to loved ones about diversity.
- Learn a folk dance.

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I Can't Do That, Yet

By Jennifer Asprocolas
Schoenly School Principal



We have all grown in so many ways since March 2020. We have done things we have never thought possible. If you had told me in March 2019 of the challenges that March 2020 to March 2021 would present, I probably would have told you that I wouldn't be able to handle it. But that's the funny thing about the human spirit: we rise to the challenges ahead of us, and we can rebound faster than Wilt Chamberlain circa 1965.

So, what is the greatest indicator of resilience? Is it strength? Superhuman powers? The answer may surprise you. It doesn't come from the muscles. There's no miracle pill. It actually comes from the brain and it's all about mindset.

There are actually two distinct types of mindsets: a fixed mindset and a growth mindset. Not surprisingly, a fixed mindset is very limiting. It is riddled with avoidance and defeat. On the other hand, a growth mindset is all about embracing challenges as an opportunity to learn and grow. It is recognizing that just because you cannot do something, it only means you cannot do it... yet. It's about believing in yourself and never giving up on your dreams.

So how can you adopt a growth mindset? Encourage one in your child? Sustain one for years to come? Read on for some tips to foster a growth mindset for you and your family:

- **Set goals**

When you set a goal, you recognize that you cannot do something yet, but you have the ability (and desire) to achieve something in the future. Commit to a goal by writing it down and establishing various benchmarks for success. Don't forget to regularly track your progress.

- **Celebrate progress**

Too often we only celebrate successes at the tail end of our efforts. Recognize the victories in the process. The small wins matter too. They will also help motivate you as you take many steps to the eventual goal.

- **Change the narrative**

Your language quite often becomes your thoughts and vice versa. Pay close attention to your language and intervene when necessary. Instead of "I failed at this," say "This gave me an opportunity to learn and grow." Instead of "This is too hard," say, "This may take me some time to do." Instead of "I'm not good at this," say, "I can do anything I put my mind to."

- **Value the "yet"**

Patience truly is a virtue. Sometimes it is hard to be patient. But by focusing on progress and remaining optimistic "can't" just becomes something that isn't happening... yet. Remember that word. Use it. Live it.

So forge forward into spring with that growth mindset and remember... the best is yet to come.

By Chris McLean, MA
Whitsons Culinary Group, Spotswood School District

Learning to Grow...During Covid-19

Getting children interested in gardening while staying at home and maintaining social distancing can be easier than we think, and we do not need to travel very far!

The first sign of Spring can be seen in our backyards. The sight of a yellow daffodil or purple crocus plant bursting through the ground can instantly remind us that things are changing. Whether a bike ride, or walk in the park, gardening reminds us that Spring is a great time of year to start something new.

Recently the students of the Spotswood School District received packets of flower seeds in their lunch bags. (As a reminder, all children 18 years and younger can receive a healthy breakfast and lunch meal at no charge until June 2021.) With the appropriate tools and guidance, children can enjoy "learning to grow" their own gardens or flower beds. Gardening teaches them responsibility, it also allows for children to relax, unwind, and focus on spending time in nature.

So start your gardening...and "learn to grow" a healthy lifestyle and your green thumb!



By Vincent Maldonado
Spotswood High School Senior



Earth Day is likely one of the most overlooked holidays that we practice in modern times. This is because it forces us to focus on what we are doing now and making positive changes for the future. It calls attention to our beautiful world we find around us, and it urges us all to keep it that way for as long as we can. Earth Day is about the future, our future, and making it better for those that live in it.

A group of people driven by this message is the Environmental Club at Spotswood High School. An Earth Day tradition is to attend a yearly Beach Clean-up with Clean Ocean Action. The data from the garbage clean-up is then used to provide statistical evidence to lawmakers trying to keep the ocean clean.

No matter where we're from, we all call Earth home. All it takes to help the planet is the right person, in the right place, at the right time. All it takes is you. Happy Earth Day!

Senior Strength

By Donna Faulkenberry



Spotswood Office on Aging
& Senior Resource Center

Learning to Grow During the Pandemic: Our Seniors Rise Up

Perhaps those hardest hit by COVID-19 are senior citizens. Sadly, many have been lost to the virus or to the isolation it created. Social distancing has prevented companionship (especially for those living alone or in long-term care facilities) and when this started, shopping for essentials like food and medicine was risky or in some cases, impossible. Many weren't tech-savvy or didn't own technology, so getting what was needed - whether supplies or social connection - was a huge challenge.



But resilience is in a senior's DNA. You don't get this far in life without adapting to adversity. And when asked "How have you grown due to the pandemic?", the answers were inspirational.

Getting Back to Basics

Some took the opportunity to cook and bake more, learning new recipes and sharing the results with friends and family. They also did more cleaning and organizing, getting rid of things they no longer used and making their space more usable for what they do use.



Exploring Creativity

Puzzles and coloring were favorite activities, and the work of our knitters and crocheters was exquisite and prolific. Some learned to create masks and provided needed supplies for frontline workers. Our art teacher Carol decided to find a new medium and added pyrography (wood burning) to her resume. The artistic side of our seniors was enhanced with this newfound time to explore and create.



Embracing Technology

"Give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime." This proverb aptly describes how seniors made themselves more computer savvy rather than relying on family members to do everything for them.

- Emails, Facebook, Zoom phone calls, etc. became a new way of communicating and connecting with family and friends. It also motivated seniors to reach out and rekindle old friendships.
- Online shopping became a mainstay for necessities as well as non-essentials.
- Our Yoga instructor Al learned to create yoga videos that were generously posted on YouTube so our members could practice at home.
- Think Pokemon GO is just for kids? Joe, one of our seniors, decided to use the app to get out and, well, play!

The use of technology is probably the most profound example of growth for senior residents during this time.

Staying Healthy

An unintended but welcome side effect of the pandemic - no colds or flu! And with newly acquired computer literacy came online exercise videos, live Zoom fitness seminars, and fitness apps to stay active and healthy.

The Power of Prayer

Many found solace through daily prayer. The ability to watch mass online also made "going to church" infinitely more accessible to everyone and brought comfort to those searching for peace during these difficult times.

Surviving a pandemic while navigating the normal challenges of aging takes unique resourcefulness. Kudos to our seniors for facing the challenges of COVID head-on, turning adversity into opportunity, and taking those mountains they were asked to carry and climbing them instead.

