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Volume 7 • Issue 12

# iCareOkeechobee

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**Cold Showers:**  
*Beneficial or  
Just a Trend?*

**How to  
Raise a  
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## FROM THE EDITOR

By ANGEL CHAVEZ

### Merry Christmas 2023

There is a wonderful expectation in the air for the celebration of The Son of Man born at Bethlehem. Around the world Christmas is well known and active. However, there is a greater expectation in heaven waiting the Son of Man to be born in every human heart. Only then we can expect things to change in this world. WE MUST ECHO APOSTLE PAUL'S PRAYER; "My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you,..." *Galatians 4:19*

IF WE CAREFULLY LISTEN, OUR HEART WILL CAPTURE THE MARVELS DEADS OF HEAVEN AND WE WILL RESPOND IN HUMBLY OBEDIENCE: "The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!"

Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."... Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?"

And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God... For with God nothing will be impossible."

Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her...

FAITH IS LIKE BREATHING, EVERYONE MUST DO HIS/ HER OWN BREATHING, AND LEARNING TO LISTENING FROM ON HIGH IS THE BEGINNING.

"And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!' But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord."

And Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior..." *Luke 1:27-48*

Yes, Jesus the Savior of the world was conceived by The Holy Spirit on Mary's womb while she was a virgin, But, later after Jesus's resurrection, Jesus was born in Mary's heart, just as Jesus was born on everyone who receives Him.

"He [JESUS] was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." *John 1:10-13*

A NEW NATURE IS THE SOLUTION FOR ALL THE PROBLEMS OF MEN, NOTHING ELSE WILL DO IT.

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# RAISING A THANKFUL CHILD

By Julie A. Riess - naeyc.org

**A**s we enter this holiday season, we may find ourselves reflecting more often on how to raise a thankful child. At first glance, parents might think about how to teach the social scripts of thank you. Should a 2-year-old be forced to say thank you to Grandma for a gift? Should a 4-year-old sign a thank you note for a birthday present? Should a 6-year-old show appreciation for a large helping of spinach and cranberry sauce on his or her Thanksgiving plate?



Parents often have the best intentions of raising a thankful child as part of their parental job descriptions. We tend to use the social graces of please and thank you as one index of raising

a “good kid.” Indeed, manners such as these are important tools for getting along and working together with others in our society.

Even young children can be taught to say please and thank you. Giving them prompts (“What do you say?”), withholding the requested item (“You can’t have the cookie unless I hear the magic words”), and modeling (“Could you please pass the juice?”) are ways to encourage learning these manners. But is learning to say thank you the same as being thankful?

Think about something in the past year for which you are thankful. Is it a person, place, or thing? an event? a state of being? Did you say thank you? How did you express your gratitude? Did it feel sincere or more like satisfying a social grace?

The development of morality is marked in part by the emergence of the moral emotions such as shame, pride, guilt, embarrassment, and empathy. As these emotions develop, they allow children to feel a response in relationship to their own actions toward others. The emotional feedback contributes to that sense of sincerity.

Our gut reactions may highlight a comparison of manners vs. morals. While both reflect an aspect of how we treat others, children can use manners just by learning a script. The problem in learning scripts for manners for a child too young or separated from meaning is that children satisfy the social grace without experiencing the emotional response or acting upon their own intent. For example, 4-year-old Beth runs to greet her grandmother. “Thanks, Grandma!” she says, grabbing the present

out of her grandmother’s hand. She opens the box to find six pairs of white socks. Crestfallen, she says, “Thank you, Grandma, for my socks.” Beth’s first thanks is genuine appreciation for receiving a present, but her second thank you is the script that she is supposed to say.

Teaching manners is a fine art of modeling but not always the making of meaning. Raising thankful children is a fine art of helping them make their own meaning. Maybe it is a crumpled, crayon-scribbled card. Maybe it is a fresh bouquet of dandelions (and a few other weeds) from the back yard or local park. Maybe it is just a warm hug after a cold ice cream treat.

Children express some sense of thankfulness and desire to be appreciated all the time. It is our role as parents to model appreciation and reflect those genuine feelings back to the child. With a warm smile and a sincere voice, we can say, “Thank you for my beautiful card. I can tell you worked hard on it. You used so many different colors! It makes me feel really good and happy inside. I’m going to put it up right here on the refrigerator so our whole family can enjoy it.”

Thankfulness also emerges from children raised with the Golden Rule: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Like adults, children need to be exposed to genuine appreciation and to feel appreciated.

Many years ago on our family vacation, my 8-year-old daughter saved some of her carnival money and schemed a way to buy me a small candle and matching stand. The gift brought tears to my eyes, and we both knew our appreciation was genuine. And yes, I said thank you. ♦







## From the Sheriff

by NOEL E. STEPHEN  
Okeechobee County  
okeesherriff.org

## Happy Holiday Season

I hope this article finds everyone healthy and safe. As I enter my 37th year in law enforcement here in Okeechobee County, I understand that this time of year can be stressful mentally and financially for many inside our community.

This article helps alleviate additional worries and helps keep you as a consumer or business owner from having the additional stress of having your identity or funds stolen due to lackluster security measures while shopping.

Black Friday and Cyber Monday are powerhouse shopping events that can propel sales and consumer engagement. Yet, a pressing concern for online retailers lurks amid the commerce frenzy: safeguarding customer identities.

In this article, I'll share key strategies that combine technology like multifactor authentication (MFA) and biometrics (fingerprints) with savvy user education to keep your online customers free from identity fraud during what has come to be the ultimate shopping experience.

Implement multifactor authentication (MFA) for customer transactions.

By now, most online shoppers are accustomed to some MFA and come to expect it when completing a purchase. MFA combines two or more authentication factors to enhance security. These factors include:

- Something the user knows: passwords, PINs, security questions.
- Something the user has: mobile app-generated codes, smart cards, hardware tokens.
- Something the user is: biometrics like fingerprints, facial recognition or voice recognition.

MFA significantly increases security by requiring multiple verification forms, making it much harder for attackers to gain unauthorized access. It provides a robust and secure authentication method, enhancing online security and protecting shopper's accounts from unauthorized access.

The high security due to multiple layers of verification and the fact that it can be customized to balance security and user experience are essential factors in keeping online shoppers safe. Still, some users may find the initial setup might be perceived as a hassle. The trick here is to implement a solution that protects the customer's identity while providing an easy, satisfying user experience to prevent empty carts. In short, make sure MFA is easy but secure.

Leverage biometric authentication (fingerprint scanner) for enhanced security

As part of MFA or a stand-alone verification tool, biometrics provide an elite level of security. For verification, biometric



## From the Mayor

by DOWLING WATFORD  
City of Okeechobee  
cityofokeechobee.com

## Merry Christmas!

As we approach the holiday season, I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving, and I would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. There are many events in the community during this time of the year and I encourage you to attend as many as you can.

The Christmas season starts with the annual lighting of the City Christmas Tree and lights on November 28 at 5:30pm in City Hall Park. The lighting ceremony has become a holiday tradition and, as I call it, our Hallmark movie moment. In addition to the school children singing Christmas songs, Santa makes his trip from the North Pole to help participate in the countdown to light the lights. He is available after the ceremony for pictures with the children in the City Hall lobby. He will also be in the City Hall lobby for pictures on Nov. 29 & 30 and Dec. 5, 6, and 7 from 6:00-8:00 pm.

On Dec. 9, MainStreet will sponsor the annual Christmas Festival and Lighted Christmas parade. The Festival runs all day in Flager Park with crafts, food, and entertainment. Then at 6:00 pm, the parade kicks off with the largest parade of the year with marching groups, lighted floats, and Santa. After the parade, Santa will be in the bandstand in Flager Park for pictures sponsored by the Kiwanis Club of Okeechobee. Santa will also be in the bandstand Dec. 18-23, from 6:00-7:30 for pictures. The pictures are free with donations accepted. Santa Claus will also tour the City on the City float several evenings.

He will be in the NW and NE sections on Dec 12, SE section on Dec 13, and SW section on Dec 14. For those who like to "ring in the New Year", Healthy Start is celebrating their 30th anniversary with their "Under the Stars Gala" on Dec. 31 at the beautiful Ever After Farms. Of, course the big event for December will be Christmas day when we celebrate the birth of Jesus. **Merry Christmas! ♦**



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# CAN YOU DIE FROM LAUGHTER?

Is there any truth to the phrase “I’m dying of laughter”?

livescience.com.com

A side-splitting joke might spur, between tears and gasps for air, the age-old exclamation: “I’m dying of laughter!” Although the expression is an obvious exaggeration, is there any truth behind it? Can people actually die of laughter?

Although it’s highly unlikely, it’s technically possible — and there have been documented cases of laughter-related deaths in the past, doctors told Live Science.

There are a few ways laughter could trigger a negative effect on the body. One of the most vulnerable of these pathways is via the heart. In rare cases, an especially hearty chuckle can cause something called “laughter-induced syncope,” a condition that causes a person’s blood pressure to drop rapidly during an exaggerated laugh. This triggers a heightened response from the autonomic nervous system — the network of nerves that regulates involuntary physiological processes — leading to a temporary dip in the amount of blood that flows to the brain, which can result in a loss of consciousness.

“When you laugh, you’re moving your chest up and down, and it changes the pressure in the thoracic cavity [chest] and it can affect what’s called the vagus nerve,” which carries signals between the brain and most of the internal organs, Dr. Todd Cohen, chief of cardiology and director of medical device innovation at the New York Institute of Technology, told Live Science. “It can cause you to become lightheaded, [or] even — very, very, very rarely — pass out, especially when it’s very exaggerated.”

The first documented case of laughter-induced syncope was in 1997, when a 62-year-old patient with hypertension and other heart-related issues fainted multiple times while roaring with laughter at the television show “Seinfeld,” leading to the condition’s nickname “the Seinfeld syncope.”

The patient did not die from the condition, and this type of syncope usually just causes a person to pass out for less than a few minutes before coming to, Cohen said. Although it is technically possible for laughter-induced syncope to cause the heart to stop, the bigger risk from these fainting spells is that they could happen in dangerous situations, he added.

“It is possible that somebody can have this condition [and] fall and hit their head, or fall down a flight of stairs, or fall off the subway terminal into a train and die,” he said, stressing that it’s incredibly unlikely.

In other cases, laughter can affect the amount of air that gets to the heart, lungs and brain. For example, high emotions, such as deep amusement, can increase breathing rates and trigger flares of asthma symptoms, which can be further exacerbated by the unusual breathing associated with laughter. In a 2009 study,

researchers surveyed 105 patients with asthma and found that more than 40% experienced laughter-induced asthma. In severe cases, asthma attacks can be fatal if someone does not have access to their inhaler.

In theory, laughter could also trigger a sudden spasm of the vocal cords — a condition known as a laryngospasm — or asphyxiation if a person does not get enough oxygen between laughs. But chances of these causes of death are slim, according to Dr. Megan Kamath, a cardiologist at UCLA Health and an assistant clinical professor of medicine at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA.

“While there have been reported cases of death from laughter due to asphyxiation or cardiac arrest, it remains an overall unlikely cause of death for healthy individuals,” she told Live Science in an email.

In fact, laughter is harmless — or even beneficial — to your health in the vast majority of situations, Cohen said.

“I think laughter and humor can help [patients] going forward with their condition and put a different perspective on their medical problem and keep them more present in the moments and enjoying life,” he said.

Studies show that laughter can reduce anxiety by significantly lowering a person’s levels of the stress hormone cortisol while increasing the release of dopamine, the brain’s “feel-good” chemical. Additionally, laughing could help increase oxygen flow throughout the body and reduce inflammation in patients with coronary artery disease, according to a not-yet-peer-reviewed study presented at the European Society of Cardiology in Amsterdam in August.

“I believe laughter is the best medicine, and it’s very unlikely to kill someone — but it’s theoretically possible,” Cohen said. ♦





## Achieving Operational Excellence through Tech

Achieving operational excellence through technology can be a daunting task for any organization. With the ever-changing demands of today's business world, it is essential to stay ahead of the curve by utilizing the most up-to-date technology. Implementing the right tools and processes can help organizations streamline their operations, increase efficiency, and reduce costs. In this article, we'll discuss best practices for leveraging technology to achieve operational excellence.

First, businesses should consider automation. Automating manual processes is one of the most effective ways to improve operational efficiency. Automation can reduce time consuming tasks, reduce human errors, and enable employees to focus on higher value activities. Automation can also help businesses better manage their data, as well as enable better decision making.

Second, organizations should look into using analytics to improve their operations. Analytics can provide valuable insights into customer behavior, sales trends, and other key performance indicators. By leveraging data driven insights, businesses can make more informed decisions, leading to improved operational efficiency.

Third, businesses should consider investing in cloud computing. Cloud computing is a great way to reduce costs and improve scalability. Cloud computing can also enable businesses to quickly deploy new applications and services, helping them stay competitive. Additionally, cloud computing can help businesses better manage their operations by providing real-time insights into operations.

Finally, organizations should look into using artificial intelligence (AI). AI can help automate and optimize processes, reduce costs, and improve customer service. AI can also help businesses make better decisions by providing valuable insights into customer behavior and trends.

By leveraging technology to achieve operational excellence, organizations can increase efficiency, reduce costs, and improve customer satisfaction. Automation, analytics, cloud computing, and AI can all be powerful tools for improving operational efficiency. By taking advantage of the right tools and processes, businesses can streamline their operations, stay competitive, and gain a competitive edge. ♦



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# HYPERTENSION

## Eating the right diet to lower high blood pressure

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**Hypertension** - more commonly known as high blood pressure - is one of the most common diseases in industrialised countries. 40% of people over the age of 25 are affected by the disease, which, in turn, is a major risk factor for cardiovascular and renal diseases. A plant-based diet is suitable for both the prevention and treatment of hypertension.

### The cardiovascular system

The cardiovascular system is one of the most important organ systems in the human body. It allows blood to distribute all necessary nutrients, hormones, the oxygen we breathe, and many other chemical compounds from and to all cells and organs in the body. In this way, it also helps with regulating, stabilising, and maintaining body temperature and pH, as well as fighting diseases. The cardiovascular system consists of the blood, heart, and blood vessels. Blood pressure is one of the body's key vital signs and describes the pressure of the circulating blood on the walls of the blood vessels. Normal blood pressure is considered to be less than 120/80 mmHg.

### Systolic and diastolic blood pressure

The muscle activity of the heart can be divided into two phases: in the systolic phase, blood is pumped from the heart chambers into the body's and the lungs' circulatory system; in the diastolic phase, the heart chambers fill with blood again. Both phases of muscle activity can be mapped using a blood pressure monitor. The first reading indicates the maximum pressure the heart exerts when it beats (systolic). Diastolic blood pressure refers to the pressure in the arteries between heartbeats.

### What is hypertension?

Hypertension is a cardiovascular disease. High blood pressure is defined as systolic blood pressure above 130 mmHg or diastolic blood pressure above 80 mmHg. Blood pressure is commonly measured in millimetres of mercury (mmHg). Depending on the cause of the disease, a distinction is made between primary (essential) and secondary (symptomatic) hypertension. About 90% of all patients suffer from primary hypertension, which – unlike secondary

*continued next page*





hypertension – is not caused by another underlying disease.

### Classification of Hypertension

High blood pressure is divided into one of two categories, depending on the severity of the condition. It should be taken into account that systolic blood pressure increases with age. The reason for this is that the elastic walls of our blood vessels become more rigid as we grow older. If blood pressure values are elevated (that is, above 120/80 mmHg) there is a high risk of hypertension developing. Values above 130/80 mmHg, meaning systolic blood pressure higher than 130 and diastolic pressure of more than 80, are considered to be the markers of high blood pressure.

### Frequency of hypertension

Hypertension, also called ‘the silent killer’, often develops slowly and is sometimes asymptomatic. Worldwide, four out of 10 adults over the age of 25 are affected by arterial hypertension – high blood pressure in the arteries. According to the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) study, hypertension is the second most common risk factor for premature death worldwide. The World Hypertension League (WHL) estimates that approximately 10% of 2016’s global healthcare costs were due to high blood pressure and its complications. In low and middle-income countries, the treatment of people with high blood pressure could save 4.7 million lives over the course of a decade.

### Effects and symptoms of hypertension

Hypertension poses several health risks. It is estimated that the risk of dying from cardiovascular disease doubles with every 20 mmHg added to systolic blood pressure or every 10 mmHg increase in diastolic blood pressure. The increased pressure on the arteries can lead to them becoming damaged or constricted. This, in turn, can be a risk factor for arteriosclerosis. In addition, aneurysms (bulges in the arterial walls) may develop. In the worst-case scenario, an aneurysm will tear and cause internal bleeding. People suffering from high blood pressure are also at greater risk of vascular dementia, strokes, nerve damage to the eyes, and sexual dysfunction. Additionally, hypertension is also considered one of the most common causes of kidney failure, since high blood pressure can damage the kidneys’ small blood vessels, preventing waste products from being expelled.

### Causes of Hypertension

Diet and lifestyle have a major influence on the development of hypertension. In addition to genetic predisposition and pre-existing conditions such as diabetes mellitus type 2 and kidney disease, a high consumption of alcohol, tobacco, salt, and saturated fatty acids play a role as risk factors. On the other hand,

regular exercise, a body weight in the ideal range, and an adequate supply of potassium can reduce blood pressure. A well-planned diet can therefore guard against the development of hypertension and be used to treat the condition.

### Hypertension and animal products

Several studies have shown that there is a correlation between the consumption of red meat and high blood pressure. In addition to foods containing large amounts of saturated fatty acids, a high consumption of sodium, salt, or cholesterol also has a negative effect on blood pressure. Processed animal products, in particular, such as cheese, sausage, other meat products, and ready meals, are often very rich in salt, fat, and cholesterol.

### Vegetarians and vegans are less likely to suffer from high blood pressure

According to several studies, people who follow vegetarian diets have lower blood pressure levels compared to people who eat meat. Some studies have shown that a high potassium intake, as found in a balanced, plant-based diet, lowers hypertension. Sources of potassium include fruit, vegetables, and pulses. Since potassium also has a physiologically antagonistic effect on sodium, increasing potassium intake in one’s diet can lower blood pressure. Magnesium and calcium also have a positive effect on high blood pressure. Both are found in green leafy vegetables, such as spinach, as well as in legumes, nuts, seeds, and whole grains.

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# BUILDING MUSCLE AFTER 60



Sure, you may not be able to lift as much weight as you could in your 20s (unless you make this a focal point of your daily routine), but that doesn't mean you can't build muscle after 60.

Building muscle after 60 is not as difficult as you might think. The key is to focus on quality over quantity.

In this article, we'll break down the science behind building muscle after 60, including how long it takes, how to eat for muscle growth, and which exercises to include in your routine.

But first, let's debunk the myth that only younger people can build muscle.

## Can You Build Muscle at Any Age?

It's a common misconception that you can't build muscle after 60. The truth is, you can continue to build muscle at any age - it just might take a little longer than it did when you were in your 20s or 30s. It's never too late to get in shape - even if you're 60 or older.

A recent study from the University of Birmingham showed that resistance exercises could help you build muscle even if you've never worked out before.

The study compared eight "untrained older male" participants between 60 and 80 years old with seven "older male athletes" in the same age range who consistently trained for two decades.

The results? Both groups could build muscle equally.

The key is to be patient and consistent with your workouts. You might not see results as quickly as you did when you were younger, but with time and dedication, you can still make gains. After all, building muscle is more about lifestyle choices than anything else.

In a nutshell, as long as you're eating right and staying active, you can continue to build muscle mass well into your 60s and beyond. With a little consistency and patience, you'll be on your way to a stronger, healthier you.

## How to Build Muscle After 60

### #1 Set Realistic Goals

If you're over 60 and looking to start a muscle-building journey, it's important to set attainable and specific goals.

Maybe you want to gain a certain amount of weight, improve your overall body composition, or lift a specific amount of weight. It's essential to have clear goals in mind to keep you motivated and focused.

Before you dive into a workout routine, start by testing your fitness levels. Our article can help you set more effective and realistic goals and establish a baseline for where you currently stand.

*continued next page*



## #2 Design a Workout Plan

Creating a workout plan that aligns with your fitness goals is essential for success. It's like mapping out a journey - you need to know where you're going, how you'll get there, and what you'll need along the way.

### Choose Your Exercises

The best exercises to strengthen your muscles after 60 are the same exercises that are effective for building muscle at any age. And the fastest way to build muscle is through strength training and primarily compound movements like squats, deadlifts, and presses.

These exercises work multiple muscle groups at once and help you build strength and size quickly. They should be the foundation of your workout routine.

Apart from strength training, here are a few other types of exercise that can help you get in shape after 60:

- Swimming - a great low-impact workout that is easy on the joints. It's also an excellent way to build muscle since it works all of the major muscle groups
- Tai Chi - a form of martial arts that emphasizes slow, deliberate movements. It's often described as "meditation in motion" and is known for its many health benefits, including muscle-building
- Yoga - another low-impact workout that is easy on the joints while increasing flexibility and strength

Ultimately, the exercises you choose will depend on your fitness goals and capabilities. And once you've picked the best ones, you have to decide how many reps you want to do...

### Decide on the Number of Repetitions

How many repetitions (reps) you perform, and at what weight, influences the results you'll see:

- 1-5 Reps - Boosting Strength: Lifting in the 1-5 rep range? You're on the road to building strength.
- 6-12 Reps - Building Muscle: If you're doing 6-12 reps, you're in the zone for muscle growth.
- 12-20 Reps - Enhancing Muscular Endurance: Moving into the 12-20 rep range? You're working on muscular endurance.

Aim for 3-5 sets per exercise, with rest times of about 60 to 90 seconds between sets.

But remember, everyone's fitness level and goals are different. If you're just starting out, you may need to start with fewer reps and gradually increase as your strength improves. Listen to your body and adjust accordingly.

## #3 Eat for Muscle Growth

As you age, your nutritional needs change. After 60, your body becomes less efficient at using protein to build muscle. Which is why it's important to eat foods that are high in protein, such as lean meats, fish, nuts, and seeds.

And to build muscle, you need to stay in a caloric surplus. In other words, you need to eat more calories than your body burns in a day.

The best way to ensure you're getting enough calories is to track your intake and count your macros. This means tracking the number of grams of protein, carbohydrates, and fat you're eating each day.

*continued page 21*

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# ARE COLD SHOWERS ACTUALLY BENEFICIAL OR JUST ANOTHER SOCIAL MEDIA TREND?

Source: [texashealth.org](http://texashealth.org)

**T**here are few things in life as comforting and therapeutic as a nice hot shower. It's not very often that you hear someone exclaim, "I can't wait to go home and take an ice-cold shower!" However, that seems to be the newest trend hitting social media, with celebrities, influencers, athletes and regular folks alike touting the benefits. But is there actually any merit to it or is this just another passing trend?

## What are the Benefits?

Cold showers have been a part of various cultures and traditions for centuries, and there are several purported benefits of taking cold showers. While some of these claims may be exaggerated, research suggests that cold showers can have a range of benefits for both physical and mental health.

### Circulation and Muscle Soreness

One of the most well-known benefits of cold showers is their ability to boost circulation and reduce inflammation. When you plunge into a body of water, it causes your blood vessels to constrict. When blood vessels contract, they push blood toward your organs. Directing blood toward your organs supplies the blood with more oxygen and nutrients.

Then, once you get out of the cold water, your blood vessels open up, allowing oxygen- and nutrient-rich blood to return to your tissues to help remove waste products, such as lactic acid buildup, that could delay healing if left to sit in the muscles. This can be especially helpful for people with conditions like arthritis or muscle soreness.

Although there is debate among researchers, studies indicate that athletes who soak in cold water for short periods of time after exercise have less muscle soreness later on. This is often referred to as cold water therapy.

A small study conducted in 2011 found that cyclists who completed intense training sessions had decreased soreness after they were immersed in cold water for 10 minutes.

Additionally, a 2016 study showed that athletes who soaked in a pool of cold water (54°F to 59°F) reported less muscle soreness than those who did not participate in cold water therapy after exercising.

### Hair and Skin

Cold showers can also be beneficial for your skin and hair. Hot water can strip your skin and hair of natural oils, leading to dryness and irritation. Cold water, on the other hand, can help preserve these natural oils, which can help keep hair and skin moisturized and healthy.



Cold water can also help improve the appearance of hair by making it look shinier and less frizzy. This is because cold water helps to seal the hair cuticle, which can prevent moisture loss and damage.

Additionally, cold water can help tighten the skin and reduce the appearance of pores, making skin look smoother and more even. It can also help reduce inflammation and puffiness, which can be especially beneficial if you suffer with sensitive or acne-prone skin.

### Mental Health

While there has been a lot of debate, it is said that cold showers have been shown to have a positive impact on mental health. The shock of cold water can trigger the release of endorphins, which can help reduce feelings of stress and anxiety. Researchers in one study found that short, twice-daily cold showers decreased depressive symptoms. However, it should be noted that none of the participants in this study had been diagnosed with depression, only reported having depressive feelings.

Cold showers may also improve alertness and focus by way of increasing cortisol levels. Cortisol is a hormone that is released by the body in response to stress. It helps to regulate various bodily functions, including blood sugar levels, metabolism, and immune response. Cold showers can help increase cortisol levels because they stimulate the sympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for the body's "fight or flight" response. This response can increase heart rate, blood pressure, and cortisol levels in the body, all of which can help improve alertness and focus.

In addition, cold showers can also help increase alertness by causing the body to release adrenaline, which is another hormone that is associated with the "fight or flight" response. Adrenaline can help increase heart rate, blood pressure, and respiratory rate, all of which can help improve mental alertness and focus.

### Immune System

Cold water therapy can also potentially provide several benefits to the immune system.

In one study, researchers tested whether people could voluntarily influence their own immune response by practicing meditation, deep breathing, and cold water immersion techniques.

*continued page 18*



## hypertension cont.

According to a study published by Harvard Medical School in 2016, an increase in the intake of plant protein was associated with a lower mortality rate, especially cardiovascular mortality. “Substitution of plant protein for animal protein, especially from processed red meat, may confer a substantial health benefit. Therefore, public health recommendations should focus on improvement of protein sources”, the researchers concluded. A systematic review of 32 prospective cohort studies came to the same conclusion.

The high consumption of animal-based products is one of the main causes of widespread lifestyle diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. These diseases, as well as high blood pressure, can all be managed and even avoided by following a more plant-based diet that is less calorie dense and lower in saturated fats, salt, and refined sugars. Food from plants contains no dietary cholesterol and provides a plethora of vitamins, minerals, fibre, and secondary plant compounds, all of which

play an important role in sustaining human health.

### ProVeg tips for the prevention and therapy of hypertension

Hypertension can be treated and counteracted with a healthy diet and lifestyle:

- Eat a diet rich in fruit and vegetables, particularly those containing high levels of potassium and magnesium.
- Try to choose plant-based protein.
- Reduce the intake of saturated fatty acids and cholesterol. Instead, aim for a higher amount of monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fatty acids.
- Switch to a plant-based diet.
- Reduce salt consumption.
- Avoid cigarettes and alcohol as far as possible.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Engage in sufficient physical activity.

Should blood pressure reach stage 1 and it is not possible to reduce it to the desired extent with a change in diet and lifestyle, medication should be administered by a doctor. ♦



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## Funeral Home & Crematory

### **Hello Matt. Please tell our readers about yourself.**

My name is Matthew Paul Buxton and am the owner/operator of the Buxton and Bass Okeechobee Funeral Home and Crematory. We are a full-service funeral home with an onsite crematory. We also offer laser engraving, monuments, full cemetery care, jewelry, and pre-arranging of funeral services.

Upon moving to Okeechobee in 1980, I attended the original Grace Christian School, now known as Okeechobee Christian Academy, until 7th grade. I then went through the public-school system and graduated from Okeechobee High School in 1993. Straight from high school, I went to the University of Florida, only to make my way to St. Petersburg Junior College (now St. Petersburg College) and obtained my license to become a funeral director in 1996.

Over the years, I have tried to be an active member of our community through many avenues, from the Okeechobee County

Planning and Zoning Board, various clubs in the past, Hospice of Okeechobee board of directors, Fraternal Order of the Police Shop with a Cop, and a four time Past Master of the Okeechobee Masonic Lodge #237.

I take great pride in my community involvement and when the opportunity arises a good, long cross country/continent motorcycle is the best way to recharge the mental batteries.

My wife Antoinette and I married in May 2022 and collectively we have three children, Armando Rodriguez, Morgan Buxton Berggren and Dayton Buxton.

### **Why are you so passionate about your profession?**

What I love the most is serving and sharing. I have been blessed beyond measure and giving back in different ways brings me a lot of warmth and peace.





The average funeral director may have one role to meet with families, or they may perform the embalming, but I am fortunate in that I can do many of those tasks and so much more. I am a licensed funeral director and embalmer, but I can also go into my shop and engrave monuments, make my glass cremation jewelry, or work with the laser machines.

I have laser engravers from AP Lazer with the capability of not only engraving stock urns but making my own line of urns, along with so many other possibilities.

With so many different things going on, it is the logistics of accomplishing things that I find enjoyable.



#### What are the pains for the future or Buxton & Bass?

Looking to the future, I see many paths to take over time. There maybe some prospects for branching out around the lake with more funeral homes, expanding different product lines with the laser engraving, expanding to pets, and my daughter Morgan is soon to finish college with a degree in Mortuary Science and becoming a licensed funeral director. Morgan has a burning passion for the role she plays here and I am very blessed to have her here with me and is very reminiscent of my dad and I. Antoinette and I also stay busy with community fundraising events and attempting to travel and see some more of the world. After so long, it is certainly nice to have a true friend, confidant, and companion in life to share in it all.

**Connect with Matt for any of your needs. Call 863.763.1994 or visit him at Buxton and Bass Funeral Home, 400 N. Parrott Ave, Okeechobee, FL 34972.**

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**cold showers** cont.

When study participants were exposed to a bacterial infection, it was found that the group that used these techniques had fewer symptoms. Their bodies produced more anti-inflammatory chemicals and fewer pro-inflammatory cytokines in response to the infection.

That being said, it's important to note that researchers felt the breathing techniques were more influential than the cold water immersion. But they credited cold water with building up a kind of resistance to stress over time since exposure to cold water can also help stimulate the production of white blood cells, which are a key component of the immune system.

**Weight Loss**

Last, but not least, one of the biggest claims influencers make in favor of cold water therapy is focused on the potential for increased weight loss due to increasing your calorie-burning capacity.

Although more research is needed to determine whether cold water therapy can help with weight loss, some studies have shown that immersion in cold water can speed up your metabolic rate. This is the rate at which your body uses energy and burns calories and is often referred to as your metabolism.

Cold water therapy can help stimulate your metabolism because when the body is exposed to cold, it must work harder to maintain its core temperature, which can

then increase energy expenditure.

While a 2009 research review concluded that brief immersions (5 minutes) in water less than 59°F did increase metabolism, there haven't been any large studies proving that repeated icy plunges result in significant weight loss.

**How to Try Cold Water Therapy**

If you're still interested in giving cold water therapy a try, there are a few ways you can go about it effectively and safely:

- **Try warm-to-cold showers:** This can be a great place to start if you're a bit concerned about tolerating cold water for a long time. Start with warm water and, after a few minutes, gradually drop the temperature until you get to the desired temperature.
- **Skip the warmup and go straight to a cold shower:** If you're a rip-the-band-aid-off kind of person, you can skip the previously mentioned tip. This may be especially helpful and feel refreshing if you've just finished working out.
- **Take a cold plunge:** Many gyms and fitness centers these days have a cold plunge "pool" which can look a bit like a hot tub - minus the hot water. If yours doesn't, or you don't have access to a gym, make your own by adding ice to water in your tub or a large bucket until the temperature is between 50°F and 59°F. You can safely stay submerged for about 10 to 15 minutes and still reap the benefits.

- **Consider a short swim in cold waters:** This can be in a natural body of water or a swimming pool.

Overall, it is important to start slowly and gradually increase the duration and intensity of cold water therapy over time. To be safe, you should consult with your healthcare provider prior to trying out cold water therapy, especially if you have a history of heart issues and/or circulation issues. It is also important to listen to your body and stop if you experience any discomfort or adverse effects.

After using cold water therapy, it is important to warm up the body slowly to avoid any potential shock to the system. This can be done by using a warm blanket or towel, getting out of your wet clothes and drying off, drinking a warm beverage, finding a warm place to sit down or engaging in light exercise. While a warm shower is fine, avoid taking a hot shower in order to avoid a sudden change in blood flow that could cause you to pass out.

You should also never participate in cold water therapy on your own. Always have someone nearby to observe your condition.

While cold showers may not be a magic cure-all, there is evidence to suggest that they can have benefits for both physical and mental health. As with any health practice, it's important to listen to your body and consult with a healthcare professional if you have any concerns. ♦

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## The Seasonal Six

by PAULINE FORSHEE, RDN LDN  
Joy Rising Nutrition  
[www.joyrisingnutrition.com](http://www.joyrisingnutrition.com)



The holiday season is upon us and added calories are a part of season. To avoid the Seasonal Six, the typical six-pound weight gain this time of year, and still enjoy the holidays remember a few simple guidelines: **Stay well hydrated, avoid excessive alcohol and punch, do not skip meals, make snacks count and honor your hunger.**

When we are well hydrated we are able to better read our body's natural hunger cues and will consume less. The average adult needs approximately 64 fluid ounces each day. Consume fluids that are lower in calories and less added sugars. Try replacing 12 or 16 oz cans and bottles with the smaller 7.5 oz cans. This is an easy way to avoid the Seasonal Six.

This holiday season, keep in mind the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommendation of one alcoholic drink a day for women and two for men. Many excess calories are consumed through alcohol.

The temptation to skip meals and bank calories is something I often hear. Unfortunately, we tend to over consume foods that are high in calories but low in nutrition when we do this. When we skip meals our blood glucose level drops and then we become grouchy, dizzy, or just plain out of sorts because our brain runs on glucose. Let's face it when that food headache shows up we eat the first thing in sight!

How do we combat the urge to skip meals? By realizing the importance of balance and nutrition for both the brain and body. It is better to eat three meals and one or two balanced snacks or six small meals throughout the day. Breakfast can be as simple as a balanced nutritional shake and a piece of fruit or a lean protein, cheese, and veggie sandwich on whole grain bread.

Another wonderful way to prevent the Seasonal Six is to make snacks count throughout the day. If you are a follower of my articles you know by now I am a firm believer in a bowl of fruit by the door. Grab and go fruit is an excellent way to increase antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals. In addition to grab and go fruit, try having a bowl of nuts visible. Nuts provide excellent protein, healthy fats, and several different vitamins and minerals. Nut butters with celery, fruit, rice cakes, or crackers are tasty snacks as well.

Still looking for more ideas? There are several great websites such as the National Institute of Health: [niddk.nih.gov](http://niddk.nih.gov) or The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: [eatright.org](http://eatright.org). Still can't find yummy, healthy snacks? Check out The American Heart Association: [recipes.heart.org](http://recipes.heart.org), DaVita: [davita.com](http://davita.com) or Cornerstone for Care: [diabeteseducation.novocare.com](http://diabeteseducation.novocare.com).

Finally, it is important to honor our hunger. We all have our favorite holiday foods, for me it's sweet potato pie! Remember moderation in all things. Honor your hunger, embrace the love of the season, and extend grace to yourself.

**I wish you all a blessed and peaceful holiday season. ♦**



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W. Pauline Forshee, RDN, LDN

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## U.S. CONSTITUTION

by DR. BRENDA MacMENAMIN, DCE  
Professor, Christian Leadership University

# Mary Bartlett, a Founding Mother

Mary Bartlett was one of ten children born to Joseph Bartlett, and she was married to her cousin, Josiah Bartlett... He was a rising young physician at the time, in New Hampshire... Mary Bartlett was then twenty-four years old, an amiable girl, well grown and, for the times, well educated. For the next ten years, her life was that of the wife of a popular and prosperous young country doctor.

Josiah served Governor Wentworth in several positions of wealth and honor until he was elected delegate to a general congress to be held in Philadelphia. This brought down upon him the wrath of Governor Wentworth and his Tory adherents. His appointment as Justice of the Peace was revoked and his commission as Colonel of militia was taken from him. Soon afterward his house was set on fire and burned to the ground, after he had received warning to cease his pernicious activity.

During all this period, Mary Bartlett had been the closest friend and counsellor of her husband. Just as he had consulted her over his troubles as a young physician, helping to bear the home burdens of his patients and personal friends in their little community, so now he consulted her about the greater troubles and dangers that menaced the country. And always she was the true helpmeet, always the ready and sympathetic friend and judicious adviser. Her patriotism was as ardent as his and burned with as steady a flame, and when their home lay in ruins and the family were driven to seek shelter and safety elsewhere, she took their numerous brood and retired to their little farm, which she managed thereafter, leaving him free to devote himself almost entirely to the public business... In all her letters to her husband and her children, there is not one word of regret at his course or pity for herself, left alone to bear the double duties incumbent upon her; no complaints, only a spirit of loving, helpful sympathy in all his acts.

When Mrs. Bartlett died, her death was a great blow to her husband, who was at the time Chief Justice... He declined re-election and died shortly afterward... broken down, according to his own declaration, by grief and the double duties and responsibilities imposed upon him since her death.

Their eight children served well in their footsteps. ♦

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## build muscle after 60 cont.

But tracking your protein intake is by far the most vital aspect of your muscle-building journey.

Even if you increase your daily protein intake by 0.3 g/kg, you'll see benefits in body recomposition and lean muscle mass.

Another important factor is to also focus on eating quality foods. This means avoiding processed foods and eating plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. These nutrient-rich foods will not only help you build muscle, but improve your overall health.

### #4 Prioritize Rest & Recovery

Building muscle after 60 takes more than just pushing yourself at the gym and eating right. It's also about giving your body the rest it needs to recharge and rebuild.

Your body, like a well-oiled machine, needs time to recover from workouts. When you exercise, you create microscopic tears in your muscles. Resting allows these tears to heal, which in turn makes your muscles stronger.

The golden rule of thumb here is to give your body plenty of time to adapt and repair itself. According to research, the optimal rest period for those over the age of 50 is between 48-72 hours.

Plus, due to increased fatigue and damage caused by exercise, along with a slower repair rate post-exercise, older adults tend to have a more extended recovery period compared to younger individuals.

But this doesn't mean you have to be completely inactive during these rest periods. Gentle activities like walking, stretching, or yoga can keep you moving without putting undue stress on your muscles.

Just listen to your body and take it one day at a time. On that note, you really do have to put in the work every day...

### #5 Stay Consistent

Consistency. It's a nine-letter word that packs a punch, especially when it comes to fitness. Let's break it down.

Consistency isn't about being perfect or pushing yourself to extremes. It's about showing up for yourself regularly. Whether that's a morning walk, an afternoon yoga session, or an evening at the gym, the goal is to move your body regularly.

Here's the deal: consistency creates momentum. Each workout builds on the last, driving you forward. And the more you stick to your routine, the easier it becomes. It's like a snowball rolling downhill — it starts small, but as it keeps rolling, the momentum makes it grow bigger and faster.

And let's be clear: progress may seem slow. And that's okay. You didn't reach retirement in a day, right? The same goes for fitness.

It's a journey, not a race. The key is to keep going, even when it feels tough.

### How Long Does It Take to Build Muscle After 60?

The simple answer to the question is that it depends. Building muscle after 60 can take anywhere from a few weeks to several months, depending on your starting point and how dedicated you are to working out.

A recent study found that even 94-year-olds can build muscle and reap the benefits of strength training. In the study, the participants were older adults between the ages of 83 and 94 — in

just 12 weeks of weight training three times a week, they were able to increase thigh muscle size by 3.4% on average.

And, of course, other factors play their parts, too. For instance, health experts from Midss also suggest some plant-based supplements that benefit your overall health along the journey. Plus, you need to include ample recovery time.

All in all, to build muscle after 60, you need to be committed to working out regularly and eating a healthy diet. Ultimately, if you're dedicated to building muscle, you can start noticing results in as little as a few weeks.

### Stay Fit As You Age

As you age, it becomes more important to stay fit.

You may find that building muscle is a bit harder than when you were younger, but with the right approach, it's definitely possible. Just try to follow the steps we outlined:

- #1 Set realistic goals - treat your fitness journey like a marathon, not a sprint, so dream big, but start small
- #2 Design a workout plan - tailor your workout plan to your abilities and goals
- #3 Eat for muscle growth - your body needs the right fuel - protein, healthy fats, and slow-release carbs are your best friends on this journey
- #4 Prioritize rest & recovery - rest isn't laziness, it's necessary because your muscles grow stronger during these breaks
- #5 Stay consistent - Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither is muscle

*continued page 23*

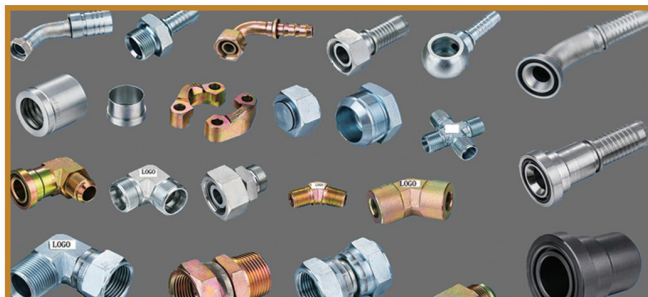


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# Seniors Dealing with Loneliness During the Holidays



There is a lot of pressure on people to enjoy themselves during the holidays. The reality, however, is that many people feel increasingly isolated and unhappy during this season of goodwill, and elders can have an especially hard time.

While aging can bring wisdom and experience, there are inevitable losses that even the healthiest seniors face. Loved ones and friends fall ill and pass away. Energy and mobility levels often decrease, resulting in feelings of lost independence and opportunities. Neighborhoods change over time, leaving even those well enough to remain in their own homes feeling lonely. The focus on family, friends and togetherness during this time of year can actually bring melancholy feelings to the forefront.

If you believe that your parent, spouse, friend or neighbor may be depressed, there are steps that you can take to help lift their spirits. You are probably busy with your own holiday preparations, but it's important to remember what the holiday season is truly about. Simplifying

some of your plans will allow you to focus on what really matters: the important people in your life. Use these ideas to brighten up a loved one's winter season.

## TIPS TO ENHANCE A SENIOR'S HOLIDAY EXPERIENCE

1. Make a point of actively listening when they want to talk, even if the discussion is negative. An honest and empathetic conversation can help them process what is bothering them, whether they are mourning a loss or coming to terms with new challenges in their life. It may also reveal why they are feeling down and help you devise other ways to lift their spirits.

2. Remind them how important they are as a part of your life, your family members' lives and these annual holiday celebrations. They may feel useless or burdensome if they cannot contribute to or fully participate in the festivities like they used to. Encourage them to do what they are capable of, and be especially careful not to act like what you do for them is a duty. Show them they are loved.

3. Over the years, holiday cards often bring bad news and diminish in quantity. I used to sit

with my mom when she opened her cards, because so many of them brought news of illness or death. She was also keenly aware of the people she didn't hear from. Be gentle with your loved ones if these annual greetings are an important tradition of theirs. If possible, ask other family members and friends to contribute a simple card, photograph or drawing to help keep the senior's seasonal mail more upbeat. My mom needed this connection with her life-long friends, so I helped her write her outgoing cards each year as well.

4. Help them see that you are trying to simplify your holiday plans to focus on the real meaning of these celebrations. Let them know you are trying to ignore the increasing hype over the food, gifts, decorations and parties in order to focus on the people and values that you cherish. Remind them that they taught you the importance of family and friendship, and thank them for that.

5. If a senior is in a long-term care facility, check with the activities director and local schools or extracurricular programs to see if they can arrange for

*continued page 28*





**build muscle after 60** cont.

We've looked at some of the best ways to build muscle after 60, and while every person is different, these exercises and tips should help get you started.

Keep in mind that building muscle takes time — don't expect results overnight. But if you stick to a consistent routine and eat healthy foods, you'll definitely see some progress. And, more importantly, you'll feel better.

**Building Muscle After 60 FAQ**

Is too much protein bad for seniors?

Overdoing it with protein can put extra stress on your kidneys, especially if there are pre-existing kidney conditions. Now, if you're in good health, upping your protein intake to 2 g/kg of body weight can be completely safe.

But balance is the key. Not too little, not too much — just right! Before making any changes to your diet, have a chat with your healthcare provider or dietitian. They'll help you figure out exactly how much protein is right for you.

Why am I losing muscle mass?

Muscle loss after 60 is a common concern and it's due to a process called sarcopenia. This natural part of aging can start as early as our 30s, and it tends to speed up after 60. But don't worry, you can reverse this.

Strength training and proper nutrition are two effective ways to slow this process down. Think of them as your road map and fuel for this journey. They'll help you maintain your muscle mass and keep you feeling strong and energetic well into your 60s and beyond — just remember to be consistent.

What age do you stop building muscle?

Muscle building doesn't have an expiration date. With consistent strength training and the right nutrition, it's possible to build and maintain muscle at any age. ♦



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## dealing with loneliness cont.



children to visit with or even perform for the residents. New activities and interactions with younger generations can be very uplifting for an elder who is in physical or emotional pain. If possible, take the senior out to school programs and games, especially if they feature younger family members.

6. Check with your loved one's religious organization to see if they can offer social and/or spiritual support. For example, the Stephen Ministry is a program offered by many Christian churches that provides one-on-one support to those who are having difficulties in life. Many churches can arrange for a congregant or leader to visit a senior in need at home or in a facility. Just having someone to talk to can go a long way toward relieving depression.

7. Help them add decorative touches to their home or room in the long-term care facility. Ensure that they do not present a safety hazard and try to decorate in stages to prolong the fun and give them something to look forward to. Many seniors enjoy reflecting on past holidays as they unpack cherished decorations, so be sure to listen to their stories and ask about special items.

8. Cook traditional baked goods or treats with your loved one, if possible. If they reside in an assisted living facility or nursing home, bring treats on your visits for your elder to enjoy and share with their friends.

9. Call your elder's friends and see if they would be able to come to a small holiday gathering. One year, I was able to use a small conference room at the nursing home to host a New Year's Eve party for my parents and their friends. They loved it.

Keep in mind that it doesn't have to be on a particular holiday or a large or expensive shindig. Realizing that the people they care about came out to spend time with them is priceless for an elder. Just be wary of large or loud groups if your loved one has dementia. Parties can be disorienting and upsetting for them.

10. Make their dinner table special. Whether your loved ones live at home or in a facility, try to make their dining table festive with some appropriate colors, themes and seasonal flavors.

11. The most important thing you can do with a senior to make them feel loved and included this season is to spend time with them. Look at family photos, watch home videos or holiday movies, listen to seasonal music, or do crafts together. Regardless of what you decide to do together, any time you can spare is a precious gift.

Do what you can to help your aging loved one feel involved and get into the holiday spirit without stressing yourself beyond your limits. If you put too much on your plate, it is likely that neither you nor your loved ones will enjoy the festivities nearly as much. Your best efforts are good enough. ♦

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## Happy Holidays cont.

authentication uses an individual's unique physical or behavioral traits like fingerprints, facial recognition, or voice recognition. Biometrics can significantly reduce the risk of fraud and identity theft, as it is challenging for attackers to replicate or steal a person's biometric data. Biometric authentication is quick and efficient, enabling rapid shopper verification without the need to remember and input passwords or PINS.

Many mobile devices and laptops have built-in biometric sensors that can be used for secure authentication, making it a convenient option for online shoppers. This option can offer high security while being quick and convenient for users, reducing friction in the authentication process.

To successfully implement biometrics, companies must be aware of the privacy concerns regarding the storage and use of biometric data. They must also understand that biometric data can sometimes be "spoofed," although this is rare and requires significant effort.

Offer secure connectivity through virtual private networks (VPNs)

The digital landscape also calls for secure connectivity, especially during high-traffic shopping events. Virtual private networks (VPNs) are an important part of providing this security, as they encrypt the data transmitted between the user's device and the server, making it highly secure and protecting it from potential eavesdropping and other cyber threats.

All data transmitted between the user's device and the VPN server is encrypted, ensuring it remains indecipherable and secure even if intercepted.

Educate customers on regular monitoring of financial statements

Empowerment through knowledge is key to a resilient security posture. Advising customers to monitor financial statements regularly is one way to instill a sense of vigilance and proactiveness.

Awareness and prompt action against suspicious activity are the core of responsible identity protection. Provide them with specific tips.

- Set up alerts: Advise customers to set up alerts for any transactions made on their accounts to be notified promptly.
- Regularly review statements: Encourage customers to review their bank and credit card statements weekly or monthly to ensure all transactions are legitimate.
- Report suspicious activity: Instruct customers to report suspicious or unauthorized transactions to their financial institution immediately. By encouraging this practice, businesses demonstrate their dedication to a secure Black Friday and a lasting, secure customer relationship.

Advocate for responsible personal information sharing

Finally, businesses should educate customers on sharing only what's necessary for a transaction and validating website authenticity before divulging any personal details. This approach underscores your commitment to responsible data handling and reassures customers of their safety within your online store. As Black Friday and Cyber Monday approach, the confluence of

*continued page 30*

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# Discover the Charm of Okeechobee

by JOHN GORMAN

**N**estled in the heart of Florida, Okeechobee is a hidden gem that often goes unnoticed among the state's more popular destinations. While many people flock to the coastal cities or theme park meccas, Okeechobee offers a unique blend of tranquility, natural beauty, and community spirit that makes it a compelling choice for those seeking a different pace of life. In this article, we'll explore the reasons why you should consider living in Okeechobee, from its serene landscapes and recreational opportunities to its welcoming community and affordable living.

## Natural Beauty and Outdoor Recreation

One of the standout features of Okeechobee is its stunning natural beauty. The city is situated on the northern shore of Lake Okeechobee, the largest freshwater lake in Florida. The lake spans over 730 square miles, offering residents unparalleled access to water-based activities such as fishing, boating, and kayaking. Whether you're an outdoor enthusiast or simply enjoy the serenity of nature, Okeechobee provides a picturesque backdrop for a variety of recreational pursuits.

The surrounding landscapes also boast numerous parks and wildlife reserves, inviting residents to explore the diverse flora and fauna native to the region. The Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park, located just a short drive away, is a haven for birdwatchers and stargazers alike, with its expansive grasslands and dark skies providing an unspoiled view of the cosmos.

## Small-Town Charm and Community Spirit

Okeechobee exudes small-town charm and a tight-knit community spirit that can be hard to find in larger urban areas. The city's friendly atmosphere is palpable, with residents often engaging in community events and supporting local businesses. Regular festivals, farmers' markets, and community gatherings contribute to a sense of camaraderie, making it easy to forge connections and establish a sense of belonging.

In Okeechobee, you're not just a face in the crowd; you're a valued member of a community that cares. Neighbors look out for one another, creating an environment where friendships flourish and a helping hand is always extended. This sense of community is especially appealing for those seeking a more personal and connected lifestyle.

## Affordable Living

Compared to many other Florida cities, Okeechobee offers a more affordable cost of living. Housing prices are generally lower, making it an attractive option for individuals and families looking to invest in real estate without breaking the bank. Whether you prefer a waterfront property with a view of Lake Okeechobee or a cozy home in a residential neighborhood, you'll likely find a range of options that suit your budget.

In addition to affordable housing, everyday expenses, including groceries, transportation, and utilities, are generally more

*continued next page*





budget-friendly in Okeechobee than in some of the state's larger metropolitan areas. This financial relief allows residents to enjoy a comfortable standard of living without sacrificing quality.

### Economic Opportunities

While Okeechobee may be known for its natural beauty and small-town charm, it also offers economic opportunities for residents. The city's economy is diverse, with sectors such as agriculture, tourism, and retail playing significant roles. The presence of Lake Okeechobee contributes to a thriving fishing and boating industry, providing employment opportunities for those with a passion for the outdoors.

Additionally, Okeechobee's strategic location in central Florida makes it accessible to larger metropolitan areas, opening up employment possibilities for those who may need to commute for work. The combination of a diverse local economy and proximity to larger job markets makes Okeechobee an attractive destination for individuals seeking a balance between career opportunities and a relaxed lifestyle.

### Educational and Healthcare Facilities

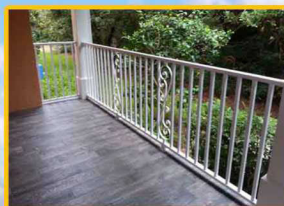
For families considering a move to Okeechobee, the city boasts a range of educational and healthcare facilities to meet the needs of residents. Local schools provide a solid education foundation, and the sense of community extends to educational institutions, fostering a supportive environment for students.

Healthcare services are also readily available, ensuring that residents have access to quality medical care. Okeechobee's healthcare facilities cater to various needs, from routine check-ups to specialized treatments, contributing to the overall well-being and peace of mind of those who call the city home.

In the midst of Florida's bustling cities and tourist hotspots, Okeechobee stands as a serene retreat that offers a unique combination of natural beauty, community spirit, affordability, economic opportunities, and essential services. Whether you're drawn to the prospect of lakeside living, small-town charm, or a more relaxed lifestyle, Okeechobee has something to offer for everyone. Consider making the move to this hidden gem, and discover the joys of life in Okeechobee, Florida. ♦

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# Understanding the Surge in Auto Insurance Rates in Florida

For drivers in the Sunshine State, the recent surge in auto insurance rates has become a cause for concern. Florida, with its vibrant cities, picturesque landscapes, and diverse roadways, is experiencing an unsettling trend as auto insurance premiums continue to climb. In this article, we will delve into the factors behind the rise in auto insurance rates in Florida, examining the complexities of the insurance landscape and shedding light on the challenges faced by both insurers and policyholders.

## 1. High Incidence of Accidents and Claims:

Florida's roads are no stranger to accidents, and the state consistently ranks among the highest in the nation for traffic incidents. Factors such as population density, diverse weather conditions, and a mix of urban and rural roads contribute to a high frequency of accidents. The increased number of claims and payouts by insurance companies inevitably translates into higher premiums for Florida drivers.

## 2. Uninsured Motorists:

Florida has one of the highest rates of uninsured motorists in the United States. The Insurance Research Council estimates that almost one in four Florida drivers may be on the road without insurance. When uninsured drivers are involved in accidents, the financial burden often falls on insured motorists and their insurance providers, leading to increased costs for the entire pool of policyholders.

## 3. No-Fault Insurance System:

Florida operates under a no-fault insurance system, which requires drivers to carry Personal Injury Protection (PIP) coverage. While designed to streamline the claims process and reduce litigation, the system has faced challenges, including fraudulent claims and abuse. Efforts to reform the no-fault system have been ongoing, but the complexities involved contribute to a landscape where insurance companies must carefully navigate to balance costs and coverage.

## 4. Catastrophic Weather Events:

As a state susceptible to hurricanes and tropical storms, Florida faces the added challenge of catastrophic weather events. Not only do these events result in a spike in claims for property damage, but they also contribute to a rise in auto insurance rates. The extensive damage caused by hurricanes can lead to increased costs for repairs and replacement of vehicles, prompting insurers to adjust premiums to cover these potential future expenses.

## 5. Rising Repair Costs and Medical Expenses:

The cost of vehicle repairs and medical expenses has been steadily rising across the country, and Florida is no exception. Modern vehicles are equipped with advanced technology and safety features, which, while beneficial, also make repairs more expensive. Additionally, the cost of medical care and rehabilitation has increased over the years, influencing the amount insurers must pay out for bodily injury claims and contributing to the overall upward trend in auto insurance rates.

## 6. Fraudulent Activity:

Florida has gained notoriety for being a hotspot for insurance fraud, particularly in the realm of staged accidents and exaggerated claims. Fraudulent activity places an additional financial burden on insurance companies, who, in turn, pass on these costs to policyholders through higher premiums. The battle against insurance fraud is ongoing, with law enforcement and insurers working together to address this issue and mitigate its impact on rates.

## 7. Legal Environment and Litigation Costs:

The legal environment in Florida also plays a role in the rising auto insurance rates. The state has a higher frequency of lawsuits related to auto accidents, and the cost of litigation, including legal fees and settlements, contributes to the overall expenses incurred by insurance companies. Efforts to reform the legal system and address litigation costs are part of ongoing discussions to find a balance that benefits both insurers and policyholders.

## 8. Market Competition and Profitability:

While the factors mentioned above contribute to the rising cost of providing auto insurance in Florida, it's essential to consider the insurance market's competitive nature. Insurers must balance the need for profitability with the desire to offer competitive rates to attract and retain customers. When faced with increasing costs and a challenging claims environment, insurers may adjust rates to maintain financial stability and ensure they can meet their obligations to policyholders.

*continued next page*







### Conclusion:

The surge in auto insurance rates in Florida is a complex issue influenced by a combination of factors ranging from high accident rates and uninsured motorists to catastrophic weather events and rising repair costs. As the state grapples with these challenges, it is crucial for policymakers, insurance companies, and consumers to work collaboratively to find solutions that strike a balance between affordability and comprehensive coverage.

Efforts to reform the no-fault insurance system, combat insurance fraud, and address the legal environment are steps in the right direction. Additionally, exploring ways to enhance road safety, reduce accident frequency, and encourage responsible driving behavior can contribute to a more sustainable and affordable auto insurance landscape in Florida.

In navigating the complexities of the insurance market, Florida residents may find value in staying informed about the factors influencing rate increases, shopping around for competitive quotes, and exploring available discounts and coverage options. By fostering a transparent dialogue among stakeholders and implementing targeted reforms, Florida can strive to create a more stable and affordable auto insurance environment for its drivers in the years to come. ♦

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Brennan Eye Care is proud to have served Okeechobee for over 40 years. As a Second generation optometrist, Dr. Christine Brennan Bishop is delighted to be providing quality eye exams to the families of our great community for the past 15 years. Dr. Bishop has been the owner of the practice since the summer of 2018. She continues to serve Okeechobee with the company's family motto of "Quality Eye Care you can Trust!"

Dr. Brennan recently retired to spend more time with his grandchildren; along with more time to go fishing and hunting. Everyone knows Dr Brennan enjoys telling a good fish or hunting story. He has been serving the community and surrounding area for many decades and has passed that passion of serving, to his daughter.

Dr. Christine Bishop has been the president of the Treasure Coast Optometric Society for the past 10 years, which provides indigent eye care to our poorest residents. She is Vice President of the Health Council of SouthEast Florida, appointed by Okeechobee County Commission, to serve on this board and to represent Okeechobee in the five county coalition. Dr. Bishop is also the Membership Chair for the Okeechobee Chamber of Commerce.

Dr. Bishop has a passion for education and the children in our community. In August of 2022, she was elected to the Okeechobee County School Board and presently serves as the President of the Education Foundation of Okeechobee. Dr Bishop's most favorite activities are spending time with her husband and three beautiful daughters, along with serving at More 2 Life Church in Okeechobee. When you ask Dr. Bishop, how does she balance family, work, and community service? Her gentle smile and kind demeanor replies with a shrug saying "We are only given one life and my desire is to serve my family and community as Christ does, with love."

Dr. Bishop has also begun lecturing around the state of Florida to her colleagues, using her real life experience and knowledge to provide insightful continuing education hours to fellow optometrists. She is thankful that through the years Brennan Eye Care has continued to offer the newest technology with a personalized small-town feel and she continues to strive to have you feeling like family when you walk in the door. You will leave knowing you have had the most thorough and comprehensive eye examination presently available to Optometrists today.

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**from the Editor** cont.

God the Father is waiting for Jesus to be born in everyone's heart. Jesus paid the debt of all men in the cross to give everyone a new start. A life with a resurrected Jesus in our heart, is the only nature that qualifies everyone to enter Heaven's realm.

It will help us all if we learn from young Mary in dealing with God's messenger:

A) We must know that with God nothing is impossible.

B) Be humble and respond to God as she did: "Let it be to me according to your word."

C) Then and only then, you will be able to rejoice and say: My soul magnifies the lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. "JOY solid and eternal is available to you, only if Jesus owns you". Quoted by Clifford Stuart, who loves the Lord.

## A Christmas Prayer for the whole world:

Lord, I do believe that Jesus of Nazareth took my place in the Cross. Lord, I am sorry for all my sins against you and against my own life, please forgive me. I believe Jesus was raised on the third day for my justification. Jesus, I receive you as my Lord and Savior. God gives me a new heart and eternal life. Your Holy blood cleanses me, delivers me, and heals my body right now and now my name is written in the Book of Life, guaranteed by the following written law: "That if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." *Romans 10:9-10* ♦

**If you made this prayer, email me today at:**

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## Happy Holidays

 cont.

commerce and tech presents an opportune moment to elevate our commitment to customer identity protection.

Implementing these strategic measures - MFA and biometrics, secure connectivity, vigilant financial monitoring, and responsible information sharing - can help to combine cutting-edge tech with a user-centric approach. In doing so, we fortify customer trust and define a safer digital landscape for commerce.

I end this by offering everyone free RIF (scan block technology) credit card holders that will protect credit/debit cards from remote scanning technology. These card holders are a small token from your Okeechobee County Sheriff, enhancing another portion of theft protection. They can be picked up at 504 NW 4th St, Okeechobee, Florida, 34974. Administration Offices are open 8 am-5 pm daily. Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays from my family to yours. - Sheriff Noel E. Stephen ♦

**Jack Nash, Sergeant - Community Liaison**

iCareCommunity Magazine is a Lighthouse to happiness, a Lighthouse alone the shoreline of life helping rescue the perishing... *Clifford Huston - Sewall's Point, Stuart, FL*





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