



February 6, 2026

If you see an asterisk (*) by an article heading, there is additional information in the [Timely Resources for Readers](#) section of the newsletter.

February is American Heart Month

According to the [American Heart Association](#), heart disease remains the leading cause of death in the United States, and stroke has moved up to the #4 cause of death. Heart disease and stroke accounted for more than 25% of all deaths in 2023 (the most recent year for statistics). Did you know - Our hearts pump about 1 million gallons of blood in a lifetime. Our hearts beat about 100,000 times in one day, and about 35 million times in a year. During an *average* lifetime, the human heart will beat more than 2.5 billion times. There are some [amazing facts](#) about our hearts.

Our Cardiovascular System – What Can Go Wrong?

Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) are a group of disorders of the heart and blood vessels. Numerous things can occur with our cardiovascular system according to the [World Health Organization](#). They include: coronary heart disease, cerebrovascular disease, peripheral arterial disease, rheumatic heart disease, congenital heart disease, and deep vein thrombosis. Cleveland Clinic [offers information](#) on conditions, signs and symptoms, and risks.

What Diseases Exacerbate Cardiovascular Disease?

Our body systems work together, and there are conditions and diseases that can [have an impact](#) on our cardiovascular health. Are you aware that diabetes negatively impacts cardiovascular function? Chronic kidney disease, metabolic disorders, sleep disorders, autoimmune disorders, and infections are other conditions that can affect our cardiovascular health. Other factors may include age, genetics, environment, gender, and mental health. Talk to your primary health care provider about your concerns.

Being Proactive with Heart Health*

What can we do to take better care of our hearts? *Don't smoke or use tobacco. Avoid secondhand smoke. Chemicals in tobacco can damage the heart and blood vessels and lower oxygen in the blood, causing blood pressure and heart rate to increase. *Move or exercise for 30 to 60 minutes daily. *Eat a heart-healthy diet. Consider the [DASH](#) (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet or the [Mediterranean diet](#). *Maintain a healthy weight. *Get [quality sleep](#). Read more at [Strategies to Prevent Heart Disease](#).

Anxiety – What Can You Do?*

To quote "The Crisis" by Thomas Payne, "These are the times that try men's souls". Non-stop news (and a lot of it bad), economic uncertainty, civil unrest, constant anger, constant fear – all of these take a toll on our well-being. We may become hypervigilant, feeling like we are on guard all the time. What can we do to ease some of the angst? *[Identify and challenge the thoughts](#) that make us anxious. *[Reframe](#) the negative thoughts. *Breathe in. Breathe out. (Mindfully.) *Hum if you can't calm your breathing. (Humming can help calm anxiety. [Read how](#).) Anxiety and anxiety disorders have a physiological impact including an [impact on our heart health](#). Work on decreasing your anxiety or your anxiety response for your well-being.



Scams*

Gift card requests

Please be aware that the gift card scam is making the rounds. You receive a text or email from a “trusted person” (who is really a scammer). They ask you to buy gift cards for them as they are unable to get away to make the purchase. They are convincing. The message – at first glance – may look legitimate but check out the address and phone number. Do you recognize them? Read the message. Does it sound like something the “real” person would write? Contact the person using the number or address that you *know* is accurate, and ask. Chances are good someone is trying to scam you.

Winter Weather Scams*

This last week of weather has been really challenging for many. We've had a LOT of snow and the temperatures have been brutal. Be aware of weather scams! You may get a call, email, or text from “your utility company”. Don't respond. If you have doubts, get the company's number or website from your bill, and contact them. Unlicensed contractors or scammers may offer to clean up damage from the storm. The [Federal Trade Commission](#) offers suggestions to help you avoid getting scammed.

Anosognosia: What Is It?

An [article by Emma Heming Willis](#) (wife of Bruce Willis) talked about '[anosognosia](#)' saying that he is “unaware he has frontotemporal dementia...” The Alzheimer's Association defines anosognosia as “a symptom of a neurological condition that prevents a person from recognizing their own impairment”. Caregivers are often frustrated by their loved one's continual 'denial' of a problem and their resistance to accepting help. However, these issues can be attributed to damage to the brain. Not denial but a lack of awareness of the diminished capacity. Anosognosia may be present with dementia such as Alzheimer's disease and Frontotemporal Degeneration or Dementia, or [mental health](#) challenges, as well as other conditions.

Take Care of Your Gas Meter!

We still need to be cautious and vigilant as we face more snow, cold, and possible freezing precipitation. [Columbia Gas](#) recommends that consumers keep their gas meters safe by keeping the meter clear, not piling snow against the meter, and avoid using sharp objects to clear snow around the meter. Intake and exhaust vents need to be kept clear to avoid carbon monoxide buildup. Be cautious with space heaters. Watch placement on rugs and near curtains or bedding to avoid fires.

Avoiding Falls

Falls can result in any kind of bone fracture and / or traumatic brain injuries. [According to the CDC](#), there are about 1 million fall-related hospitalizations among older adults. Hip fractures result in almost 319,000 hospitalizations annually. Falls are the most common cause of traumatic brain injuries. The CDC also reports that falls are the [leading cause of injury-related death](#) among adults 65 and older. [Protect your head!](#) Traumatic brain injuries [can have long-term effects](#) or can result in death. As winter rages on, please pay attention to fall prevention. “[Tips to avoid winter falls](#)” offers some tips to help you be proactive and, hopefully, stay safe!

Seasonal Affective Disorder

Seasonal Affective Disorder or SAD is a type of depression related to changes in the seasons. You may notice that there are changes in your energy level and sleep. You may see a difference in your interest in activities. [Mayo Clinic](#) points out that, although the exact cause is unknown, it could be related to differences in sunlight which affect natural chemicals like serotonin and melatonin. Treatments can include light therapy, medication, and cognitive behavioral therapy.



Income Tax Assistance

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program offers assistance with income tax preparation for individuals who meet [eligibility requirements](#). The local site is the Ohio County Public Library, 52 – 16th Street, Wheeling, WV. Call 304 232-8985 to schedule appointments which *are required*. Do not leave a message, per the website instructions. The process has changed. Tax packets are not available for pick-up. [Go to the website](#) for more instructions, forms, and hours.

Income Tax Deadlines

When are your federal income taxes due? The most common date is for fiscal year filers, which for 2026 is April 15. There are special considerations for some situations. Get more information at “[When to file](#)” for different circumstances. The IRS also offers “[IRS announces first day of 2026 filing season; online tools and resources help with tax filing](#)”. The IRS also offers “[Tax information for seniors & retirees](#)”. This is NOT tax advice. Consult the Internal Revenue Service, your state tax department, your accountant, or other tax professional for advice on filing your taxes!

Making the World a Better Place: Servant Leadership

Last month, our Deeper Dive editor took a look at “Why Do It?”, acknowledging the knowledge and leadership skills that older adults have to share with the world. [The National Society of Leadership and Success](#) notes, “For most of history, leadership was defined by title and wealth. People were born into leadership and led from a hierarchical position. Luckily, theories and practices like servant leadership have proven that anyone can be a leader, and true leaders are rarely defined by title or wealth. In fact, often, the best leaders are those who spend time serving others to empower them, regardless of their status or position.” Read more about *Servant Leadership* in this month’s Deeper Dive coming to your email inbox soon.

Appalachian Outreach

Welcome to Melissa Marco, the new director of Appalachian Outreach. Appalachian Outreach, located at 3900 Wood Street, Wheeling, assists those in need in Ohio, Marshall, and Wetzel counties. (Other areas – call and ask.) AO also has a thrift store that has all sorts of items! They have appliances, furniture, construction supplies, clothing, and other items. Donations are accepted on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 9am – 4pm. Contact the Appalachian Outreach office at 304 238-4312 for more information.

Myasthenia Gravis Support Group

The Support Group will be meeting on February 21 at 1:00 pm. Interested persons with MG or their caregivers may call Jay Adams at 304 780-9274 to register or for information.

Wheeling Parkinson’s Support Group

The Wheeling Parkinson’s Support Group will meet on February 27, 2026 at Family Service Upper Ohio Valley (Ohio County Senior Center), 2200 Main Street, Wheeling WV, at 10:30 am. Our guest speaker will be Casey Peluso, VP of Outreach for the Western PA Parkinson’s Foundation. Parking is available. There are [other Parkinson’s support groups](#) available in the area.



Vaccinations, Boosters, Flu Shots

Talk to your primary health care provider about vaccinations that will benefit you, and check with your insurance plan regarding coverage. This is [the list of recommended vaccinations for adults currently on the CDC website](#). Reports have indicated that those older adults with Medicare who request vaccinations will [still have coverage](#).

Local Adult Services Coalitions

Adult Services Coalitions offer networking and educational opportunities for professionals who serve older adults. Meeting dates, times, and contacts are listed below.

OHIO

Belmont County: 1st Thursday at 11am at Senior Services of Belmont County, akoegler1995@gmail.com

Guernsey County: 3rd Wednesday at 3pm Stacey.clark-frame@altercareonline.net

Jefferson County: 3rd Thursday at 3pm at Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce,
starr.decariarx@gmail.com

Harrison County: 4th Wednesday at 3pm at Cadiz Senior Center Starr.decariarx@gmail.com

WEST VIRGINIA:

Brooke County: 2nd Monday at 2pm at the Brooke County Senior Center Chris Orris at
corris@valleyhospice.org

Ohio County Adult Services Coalition: 3rd Tuesday at 2:00pm at the Ohio County Public Library, 52-16th Street, Wheeling tblanchard@theicgroup.com

Marshall County Senior Coalition: 2nd Weds at 2:30pm at Marshall County Senior Center
corris@valleyhospice.org

Timely Resources for Readers

A Being Proactive with Heart Health*

- [DASH diet sample menus](#)
- ["Comparing DASH and Mediterranean Diets: benefits, differences and ideal fit"](#)

A Anxiety*

- More on [reframing negative thoughts](#)
- [How to Use Cognitive Reframing for Anxiety and Stress](#), Brad Brenner, PhD, Therapy Group of DC
- Read about the [Effects of Anxiety on the Body](#). This article also discusses anxiety disorders.

A Scams*

- Winter Weather Scams - The Federal Trade Commission offers [more tips on avoiding scams](#).

A Avoiding Falls*

- The [West Virginia University Center for Excellence in Disabilities](#) offers a Traumatic Brain Injury program for West Virginians who are dealing with brain injuries.
- Find the [Brain Injury Association](#) in your state.
- [Other resources](#) can be found on the CDC website
- [Learn more about traumatic brain injury](#) diagnosis and treatment

Altenheim Retirement Community

Founded 1891

Our cottages are situated adjacent to our Main House at 1387 National Road, Wheeling

Conveniently located close to medical care, churches, shopping, restaurants, recreation

Offering 8 independent cottages for those who are 65 and older

Two bedroom, two bath, living room, kitchen room, dining room

Stove, refrigerator, dishwasher, microwave, washer and dryer are included

Lawn care, snow removal, general maintenance, general repairs included in monthly rent

Utilities are not included

Pets considered ~ call for our pet policy

We are accepting applications!

Contact George A. Dakovic, Executive Director at gam.dakovic@gmail.com or 304 281-8797



Altenheim Resource Services

Altenheim Resource Services, a division of Altenheim Retirement Community for over 25 years

Empowering older adults, caregivers, & advocates with information on aging, services and resources

Free & confidential information and no geographic limitations

Let us be YOUR GATEWAY TO CARE FOR OLDER ADULTS!

Ann Koegler, M.A., L.S.W., Resource Services Coordinator AKoegler1995@gmail.com

<https://www.altenheimcommunity.com>

Information on Altenheim, Resource Services, calendar of events, blog, and a photo gallery

Contact us at 304 280-8701 with questions about resources and issues concerning older adults and caregiving.

