

Seniors



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Fun and exercise at the Butler Center

By Jessie Wright
Butler Center director

BUTLER -- Charie Tillman, who works for Southern Cares, was at the center in January. She brought Bingo prizes and called the games for our folks. We appreciate Charie doing this for us, she will be back on Feb. 27th for Bingo.

Tammy Turner will begin the exercises again at the center on Tuesday, Feb. 6. Anyone can join these classes. Call the center if you would like to come. We are so glad to have Tammy, who is the owner of Choctaw Therapy on Riderwood Drive.

We are making plans for our annual Critter Dinner at the center. The tentative date is March 31st. If anyone would like to be part of the entertainment, please call the center or Bernice McIlwain at 205-654-2584.

Birthdays for this month are Betty Melvin and Mae Hampton. Bingo winners for January were Nita Gilbert, Margie Loftis, Jewell Gibson, Bobby Radcliff, Gene Smith, Sue Mosley, Isabelle Lindsey, Claudette Gibson, Mary E. Dukes, Thelma Lewis, J.B. Harrington and Jeanice Pulefoy.

Jeanice has moved to Butler from Meridian, Miss. We are glad to have her with us and hope she enjoys living in Butler.

Senator Richard Shelby will be at the center at 7:30 a.m. on Feb. 10th. Everyone is invited to come.

Mamie Jones is out of the hospital. I hope she is feeling better, we miss Mamie at the center and hope she will be able to come back real soon.

We have missed Mable Jimerson, who had to spend a few days in the hospital. She is back home. Hurry back to see us, Mable!

I had to go to Montgomery for a two-day meeting last week. Thanks to Sue Mosley, Mae Hampton, Charlie Turner, J.F. Barber, and Milton Tyson, everything was taken care of at the center while I was out. We have a great group of volunteers and Sue and Mae are wonderful to take care of things when I am out.

Fiddler's Convention planned

FRANKVILLE -- The 30th Annual "Old Time Fiddler's Convention" at Frankville is scheduled for Saturday April 21 at 5:30 p.m.

The "Old Time Fiddle's Convention" originated in the 1920's as a community event. It has been an annual event since 1977 when W.N. Reynolds Lodge #900 F&AM took up the sponsorship.

The event features an old fashioned pork and chicken barbeque with all the trimmings; a home-made cake sale; music show and a music competition for musicians. It is a community and family oriented event. Alcohol, drugs and offensive behavior are not allowed and will not be tolerated.

A music show for the public will precede the competition. This year's show will feature Wesley Knapp and the Wrangler Band. The music show will begin at 5:30 p.m. and will last until the competition begins at 7:30.

For additional information call 251-847-3993, 251-754-9270 or 251-846-2313.



Bingo!

Choctaw Sun photo by Dan Melvin

Playing at the Butler Senior Center

BUTLER -- Seniors at the Butler Center have lots of activities to keep them busy, including rousing games of Bingo. Emily Dukes took part in a few games at the center recently.

Anxiety and the elderly

By Melissa King, LMFT
Bryan Whitfield Memorial Hospital

DEMOPOLIS -- Age may bring wisdom, but it can also be a time of difficult adjustments that lead to anxiety about the future.

After September 11, Harry had trouble sleeping. He had fought in Korea. The sight of the flames and the World Trade Center coming down and people running through the streets of New York City made him remember his war experiences at age 20, and he was scared and cold and under attack everyday by an enemy he didn't understand. Now it was all coming back. He hoped the feelings would pass. He turned off the television and even quit reading the newspaper.

After three months Harry still wasn't sleeping well. Sometimes days would go by when he would only sleep two hours a night. He felt shaky and fearful. He worried constantly about things that normally wouldn't bother him, like paying his bills, or fixing the door. His whole life began to feel out of control. Then one day when he was driving to the grocery store, he began to have chest pains; sweat poured off him and his muscles got rigid. He was terrified. Harry went to the emergency room where he was carefully checked for a heart attack. But that wasn't the problem at all. Harry was having a panic attack, one of several forms of an Anxiety Disorder.

Feeling anxious for an extended period of time is not a normal part of growing old. But it is an understandable side effect of the stresses that confront most elderly people. Old age is a time when we are faced with the loss of lifelong friends and loved ones. It is also a time that requires changes in lifestyle to accommodate failing health, eyesight or mental capacity. Medical complications and extended illnesses, too, can play a part in anyone's level of happiness and peace of mind. Even in normal times, a significant number of elderly people suffer from debilitating Anxiety Disorders.

With anxiety, a person's ability to function both mentally and physically is affected. For some people with an Anxiety Disorder, even the activities of daily life like shopping and reading a book become impossible. These people are consumed by the constant anxiety that is the result of their illness.

An Anxiety Disorder may take the form of:

Phobias -- an irrational aversion to common objects or situations. A person who is phobic may fear driving over bridges, taking a bath or shaking hands. A phobic person may be afraid to leave home at all.

Panic attacks -- the fight or flight response becomes overwhelming and causes extremely uncomfortable physical responses. A person who has a panic attack may think he or she is actually having a heart attack. There may be difficulty breathing, sweating, muscle tremors, chest pain. In extreme cases the person may hyperventilate and pass out. Panic attacks are not life threatening, but they can make living a normal life impossible. The affected person may do almost anything to avoid a repeat of a panic attack, including avoiding the place where it took place or the situation that triggered it.

Becoming obsessive or compulsive -- getting caught in a "loop" of worry or repetitive activities. Obsessive compulsive behaviors can appear almost comical to an outsider.

Alice felt compelled to shift from foot to foot at least five times before putting the key in her front door. Her grandchildren laughed at her when she did this and she laughed too. But Alice was only putting up a front. The laughter hurt her feelings and made her even more concerned about the behaviors that were beginning to control her life. For someone who suffers with obsessive compulsive behaviors, they are no laughing matter. Anxiety triggers these behaviors because an individual may be so fearful of a situation that magical thinking ensues. "If I wash my hands twenty times before I eat out, I won't have

another panic attack in public," a person might think. In this way, he or she feels some control over fear. Obsessive compulsive behaviors have also been linked to biological deficits that respond to medications.

An Anxiety Disorder in the elderly can be triggered by situations that make anyone feel out of control: war, flying, getting mugged. Or it can be caused by everyday situations that become more difficult because of age-related problems.

The key to overcoming anxiety is to break the cycle of fear by introducing new behaviors, helpful medications, and a compassionate support group of mental health professionals and other elderly persons who suffer from the same disorder.

Anxiety involves long-lasting or recurring emotions and behaviors that interfere with a person's normal activities. If you or someone you know has experienced several of the following signs of anxiety for two weeks or more, professional help should be considered: insomnia, irrational or uncharacteristic rage, bouts of crying, uncharacteristic irritability, preoccupation with and/or inability to solve seemingly minor problems, debilitating and/or obsessive fearfulness about the future, repetitive worrying that is constantly mentioned in conversation, irrational fear responses to everyday situations (like answering the door), overwhelming frustration with simple problems (like opening a jar), physical symptoms include tremors and muscle twitching, un-diagnosable aches and pains, stomach and intestinal problems.

These symptoms are not a result of the normal aging process. They may be an Anxiety Disorder or they may signal other serious illnesses. There are some illnesses, like Alzheimer's, which also affect an individual's emotional and intellectual well-being. What at first appears to be anxiety may turn out to be the first signs of Alzheimer's. Or it may be more appropriately diagnosed as depression. Even hormonal imbalances can mimic the symptoms of Anxiety Disorder. That's why it is

important to get a thorough diagnosis.

The good news is that anxiety, like most emotional and behavioral illnesses, is treatable. If the signs of this illness are recognized and appropriate help is sought, most elderly patients can experience improvement within weeks. The improvement will affect almost every part of the person's life: interest in family and friends, the return of a sense of humor, the ability to plan and carry out activities, return of a comforting sense of control and independence, and even overall physical health.

On the other hand, when anxiety is not treated, the consequences can be tragic. It can so diminish a person's enjoyment of life that suicide becomes a real danger. The loss of independent living can also result, when well-meaning family members believe their loved one is no longer capable of living on his or her own.

Since many seniors accept their symptoms as an inevitable part of aging, they may not seek help. Sometimes a friend or family member has to offer encouragement and support. The elderly may be embarrassed by the stigma of mental illness and ashamed of their symptoms. They may be unwilling or unable to discuss their feelings with a professional.

Finding help for emotional illness is still thought to be a sign of a character flaw by some members of the older generation. Yet nothing could be farther from the truth. Taking the first step is often the hardest part of getting help. Getting help for an emotional illness is a sign of self esteem and courage. After that, as health and well-being begin to return, life becomes interesting and livable again, and you wonder why you waited so long.

For information, for help, for options, call Tombigbee Geriatric Behavioral Health at Bryan Whitfield Memorial Hospital 334-289-2816. We provide the understanding, experience, and hope that will help you overcome and cope with Anxiety Disorders.

Visit the Lisman Center on Tuesdays, Wednesdays

By Lillian Hodge
Lisman Center

LISMAN -- The center is mourning over the death of Sis. Georgia M. Mitchell. She is dead and was buried Friday, February 2, 2007 at the Greater First Baptist Church in Lisman. The center is sending sympathy to all the family. Also our sick and shut in Dr. Howard, Sis. Josephine Chaney and Fannie M. Smith, and Sis Mamie Jones.

The center was closed last week for two days, the manger went to a meeting all is back and doing well.

Let us send sympathy to Mrs. Mary J. Howard she lost a sister that lived in Calif., we are very sorry.

Please attend the service at the center on Tuesday and Wednesday and if you want a meal, please call the center at 398-3842 or Lisman Town Hall 398-3889 and some one will answer.

The church is doing real well I think you can visit us each first and third Sunday at 11 a.m. and Sunday school every Sunday at 9:30 a.m. Rev. Joseph Patterson is the Pastor. We are getting ready for church insurance remember your month in March and report the money. My time in gone.

Heart health tips

By Dr. Douglas Laube
Guest columnist

On February 2, American Heart Month kicked off with National Go Red for Women Day. Americans are encouraged to wear red, and by doing so, to help raise awareness about the number one killer of women.

Heart disease is responsible for more deaths among women -- about 480,000 women every year -- than the next four most common causes of death combined. One in three women will develop heart disease in a lifetime, but many women still do not know they are at risk.

While age and family history play a role in personal susceptibility to heart disease, most of the additional risk factors are modifiable, such as cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes, smoking, and excess weight, exercising for 30 to 60

Go Red, be informed, and make heart health a priority.

For more information, readers may log onto www.goredforwomen.org.

(ED. NOTE: Dr. Laube is President of The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. He will be a guest columnist in the Sun on a regular basis.)