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For Boomers and Beyond

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April Showers Bring May Flowers

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North Atlantic right whale population a strong presence in southern New England

The ocean waters off southern New England continue to see high North Atlantic right whale activity, with the New England Aquarium documenting more than a quarter of the population in the last six weeks.

Scientists in the Aquarium's Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life regularly conduct aerial surveys south of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket to collect data on whales, dolphins, turtles, and other marine species. The team flew six surveys in this area between February 5 and March 18 and photographed more than 115 unique right whales during that period, collaborating with another aerial survey team at the NOAA Northeast Fisheries Science Center to document the aggregation. Right whales can be individually identified through unique markings on their heads called callosities, which are visible in the photographs researchers capture and match to images in the North Atlantic Right Whale Catalog.

On the March 2 survey flight alone, observers sighted over 70 right whales, marking the highest number of individual right whales the New England Aquarium has photographed in a single day since it began survey flights here in 2011. The scientists noted that the whales were likely feeding deep below the surface, which indicates that food may be abundant south of Massachusetts, especially in the Nantucket Shoals area.

"Seeing this many right whales in one area has been incredibly exciting for our team and marks one of the busiest seasons we've ever



Several North Atlantic right whales in a surface active group on Feb. 28, 2026. [Photo courtesy of the New England Aquarium, under NMFS Permit #25739]

had," said Katherine McKenna, an associate scientist on the aerial survey team. "Our recent surveys highlight the Nantucket Shoals as an important habitat for a significant portion of the population."

Most of the documented right whales are adults, which is typical for this time of year in southern New England. Of the 31 adult females seen, 17 are known to be calving females. Among them was "Calvin" (Catalog #2223), a 34-year-old female who the Aquarium sighted last year in the same survey area. Calvin illustrates the resiliency of this critically endangered species: She was orphaned as an eight-month-old calf, has endured eight entanglements in fishing gear, and has given birth to four calves of her own.

Another notable whale seen this past month

is "the Irish whale" who made headlines in 2025. This right whale, who hasn't yet been entered into the North Atlantic Right Whale Catalog, was first sighted in Ireland in 2024 and then again in Cape Cod Bay last year. The most recent sighting marks just one of the few times researchers have ever documented it.

The winter/spring season is the peak time of year for right whale sightings in southern New England waters.

"We have seen right whales in southern New England waters year after year, and they are extremely vulnerable to fishing gear entanglements and vessel strikes," said Orla O'Brien, research scientist in the Aquarium's Anderson Cabot Center who leads the aerial surveys. "This area has seasonal fishing restrictions in place, yet right whales still face risks from vessel strikes without mandatory speed restrictions to protect them."

The Aquarium's February aerial surveys triggered a dynamic management area (DMA) or voluntary slow zone, which urges mariners to slow down to 10 knots or less to prevent collisions with whales, and repeated sightings have extended the DMA. The latest DMA is in effect until March 27, one of several active voluntary slow zones from Massachusetts to Maryland due to right whale sightings. Alongside entanglement in fishing gear, vessel strikes are one of the leading causes of injuries and deaths for this species, which numbers about 380 individuals, making it critical that vessels slow down to the recommended speed. ∞

Psychedelic therapy bills advance on Beacon Hill following testimony from veterans, medical experts

Last month, lawmakers on Massachusetts' Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use and Recovery voted to advance two psychedelic therapy bills, H.4200 and H.2203, signaling growing legislative momentum for patient-centered reform. The bills now head to the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing.

The bills move forward following extensive public testimony organized by Mass Healing, a Massachusetts-based nonprofit building a statewide network for psychedelic education, community support, and policy advocacy. At a November 10 hearing last year, nearly two dozen speakers, primarily volunteers recruited by Mass Healing, testified in support, offering powerful first-hand accounts and expert perspectives on the potential of psychedelic therapy to address PTSD, addiction, and other treatment-resistant conditions.

"I sit before you as a veteran and one of the first women to serve in combat arms positions. I'm also a former social worker and now a policy advocate working at the intersection of trauma and healing," said Rita Graham, former Army officer, Harvard MPP, and Tillman scholar. "I've spent years as a researcher and

a survivor of sexual violence, which is one of the most pervasive, yet ignored wounds of military service. [...] Healing veterans heals communities, and Massachusetts has the opportunity to lead that change."

There was consensus among advocates, including a former Army ranger, a 9/11 first responder, and the director of training and education at Mass General Hospital's psychedelics research program, that psychedelics legislation should prioritize the needs of patients over corporate interests, as emphasized by the chief sponsor of H.4200, Rep. James O'Day, who testified in person.

"As someone in long-term recovery, it's my opinion that any move towards the use of psychedelics in Massachusetts should focus exclusively on mental health and SUD treatment," O'Day said. "And it's important the regulation should be free from the influence of the cannabis and pharmaceutical industries. I humbly thank this committee for taking my testimony and I urge you to prioritize patient care over the profit by advancing this bill with a favorable report."

Advocates also emphasized the need for passage of a bill exploring therapies beyond psilocy-

bin alone, including ibogaine – a plant-derived treatment that appears capable of near-instantaneously eliminating opioid withdrawal symptoms, of particular importance for a state still reeling from the opioid crisis. Preliminary research suggests ibogaine also possesses unique neuro-regenerative properties, capable of relieving a host of psychological and physiological disorders, including PTSD and traumatic brain injury. For this reason, hundreds of Americans – particularly veterans – travel abroad each year to countries such as Mexico, where ibogaine treatment is legally available, like the former U.S. Navy SEALs featured in Netflix's documentary "In Waves and War." Unlike psilocybin, ibogaine is far from FDA approval, and, with a properly regulated pilot program, Massachusetts could not only join Texas and other states rapidly moving to fund ibogaine research, but with its unparalleled biomedical credentials and global partnerships, could become the world leader in ibogaine therapy.

Following the 2024 ballot campaign, Mass Healing has emerged as a leading force in the state's psychedelic policy landscape – connecting advocates, organizing testimony, and coalition building across Massachusetts and nationwide. With multiple bills now advancing and growing legislative engagement, advocates are optimistic that Massachusetts can become a national leader in patient-centered psychedelic care. ∞

The Aging Advantage: Finding the balance between what we want and what we need at home



By Mark Friedman

There is rarely a single moment that tells a family, “Now it’s time to bring in help.” Instead, the need builds quietly – across safety risks, medication complexity, subtle cognitive shifts, and the growing strain of daily life. Most families wait for an event: a fall, a hospitalization, a diagnosis. But those are not starting points. They are outcomes.

Within the Aging Advantage framework, the real question is not when something happens, but “Are we maintaining the right balance between what someone wants and what they need?” because aging well at home depends on two equally important – and often competing – forces, wants and needs.

- The 4Ms framework, which defines wants: What Matters Most, Mentation, Mobility, Medication – centered on goals, preferences, and quality of life.
- The Life Profile, which defines needs: Safety, Medical Condition, Autonomy, Burden of Care, Life Engagement – the realities of sustaining life at home.

Success is not choosing one over the other. It is finding the balance between them.

The Tension: Wants vs. needs. At the heart of every caregiving decision is a tension. A parent may say:

- “I want to stay in my home.”
- “I don’t need help.”
- “I’ve managed this far.”

These are expressions of What Matters Most – identity, independence, control.

At the same time, the Life Profile may be telling a different story:

- Safety risks are increasing
- Medication routines are inconsistent
- Daily tasks are becoming harder
- The burden on the adult child is growing
- Social engagement is shrinking

Neither perspective is wrong. But when wants and needs drift too far apart, the system becomes unstable.

The Adult Child Reality: Carrying the imbalance. For adult children, this imbalance is where the stress lives. You see the risks. You feel the responsibility. But you also want to honor your parent’s wishes. So you compensate:

- You call more often
- You coordinate appointments
- You quietly monitor from a distance
- You step in when things slip

Over time, something shifts.

The Burden of Care – one of the five Life Profile elements – increases, often silently. What began as support becomes management. What felt manageable begins to feel constant. This is where many families get stuck: Trying to preserve wants while absorbing unmet needs. It is not sustainable.

The Parent Perspective: Protecting what matters most. From the parent’s perspective, the equation feels very different. They are not thinking in terms of “risk” or “care models.” They are protecting something deeply personal: Their identity. Their home. Their routines. Their sense of control. When help is introduced too late – or too abruptly – it can feel like a loss. When introduced at the right time, and in the right way, care does something else. It protects what matters most.

This is the critical reframing. Care is not the opposite of independence. It is what allows independence to continue.

The Model: Finding the Balance. An effective Aging Advantage ap-

proach does not prioritize wants over needs – or needs over wants. It integrates them.

Step 1: Define Wants (The 4Ms)

Start with:

- What Matters Most: What does this person want their life to look like?
- Mentation: How are cognition and mood shaping decisions?
- Mobility: What level of mobility supports independence?
- Medication: How does health management support quality of life?
- This defines the desired life.

Step 2: Assess Needs (The Life Profile)

Now evaluate:

- **Safety:** Is the environment and my ability to navigate it safe?
- **Medical Condition:** Are medications and vitals managed reliably?
- **Autonomy (ADLs/IADLs):** Can daily life be sustained independently?
- **Burden of Care:** Who is carrying the load, is it sufficient, and is it sustainable?
- **Life Engagement:** Is there purpose, connection, and structure? This defines the required support.

Step 3: Identify the Gap

Where are wants and needs out of alignment? For example:

- High desire for independence + declining safety
- Strong preference to “manage alone” + increasing medication complexity
- Desire to stay home + rising burden on family
- Wish to remain active + declining engagement

This gap is where risk lives.

Step 4: Close the gap with targeted support

The goal is not to override wants. It is to support them safely.

- Light assistance to reduce fall risk without limiting mobility
- Medication support that maintains control but ensures consistency
- Help with ADLs/IADLs that preserves routine
- Companion care that restores engagement
- Shared responsibility to reduce caregiver burden

This is not all-or-nothing care. It is precision care designed to maintain balance.

The Cost of Waiting: When the gap widens. When families delay, the gap between wants and needs grows, eventually, something gives. A fall forces immediate change. A hospitalization accelerates decline. A crisis removes choice. At that point, decisions are no longer guided by What Matters Most. They are driven by urgency – by crisis. In Aging Advantage terms: Waiting shifts you from balanced design to forced correction.

A simple rule for families. If you are seeing increasing strain in two or more Life Profile areas, and a growing gap between what your parent wants and what they can safely sustain, it is time to act.

Not with full-time care. But with conversation, assessment, and targeted support. Because the best time to introduce care is not when it becomes unavoidable. It is when it can still feel supportive.

The Bottom Line: Balance is the goal. Aging well at home is not about eliminating risk. It is about managing it – without losing what makes life meaningful. The 4Ms define the life someone wants. The Life Profile defines what that life requires. Success is in balancing the two.

When that balance is right:

- Independence lasts longer
- Families feel supported, not overwhelmed
- Seniors feel respected, not managed
- Crises become less frequent – and less severe

The goal is not just to stay at home. It is to stay whole – living a life that reflects both who you are and what you need, supported in a way that makes that possible. If you want to have an Aging Advantage, call for our complementary guide to aging.

About the Author: Mark Friedman is the owner and Chief Education Officer of Senior Helpers Boston and South Shore. Passionate about seniors and healthcare, the goal of his agency is to change the trajectory of aging for his clients and their families first by delivering an exceptional homecare experience in a combination of highly trained and high-touch caregivers, and second by providing education and guidance with and connection to resources and services in the 43 communities his company serves. Contact Mark at MFriedman@SeniorHelpers.com or visit www.SeniorHelpersBoston.com. ∞

Retirement Dreams – or Nightmares

Answering the age-old question: What do you want to do when you grow up?



By **Steven V. Dubin**

It's a strange question to hear after age 60: "What do you want to do when you grow up?"

Most of us thought we had already answered that. We built careers, raised families, paid tuition bills, survived layoffs, learned new technology (sometimes kicking and screaming), and put in more hours than we care to admit. We did what grown-ups do.

And then one day, retirement shows up.

At first, retirement sounds like the reward we've been waiting for. Sleep late. Play golf. Visit the grandkids. Take a trip. Maybe finally organize the garage.

But after the honeymoon phase, many retirees discover something unexpected. Free time is great – but purpose matters, too.

A surprising number of seniors start wondering what the next chapter should look like. Not necessarily another full-time job, but something meaningful. Volunteering. Consulting. Mentoring. Part-time work. Starting a small business. Learning something new. Giving back. Staying relevant. Staying engaged.

In other words, figuring out what we want to do when we grow up ... again.

The challenge is that the world has changed. Technology moves fast. Industries evolve. The rules of work today look very different from the ones many of us started with. That can make the idea of an encore career feel intimidating, even for people with long and successful resumes.

That's why I wanted to let readers know about an upcoming local program designed specifically for people in this stage of life.

A seminar titled "Senior Encore: Planning Your Next Chapter" will be held at the Duxbury Council on Aging, 10 Mayflower Street, on Thursday, April 30 at 11 a.m.

The program will be led by career consultant

Michael Dwyer of Emplana Career, an organization that helps experienced professionals map out what comes next after a long career.

Dwyer's background includes work in both the private and public sectors, along with consulting experience at Ernst & Young and Deloitte Consulting. He also holds a master's degree in management from Salve Regina University. Along with a group of advisors, he developed Emplana Career to help professionals – particularly those in fields such as technology, finance, accounting, law, and professional services – identify practical, realistic paths forward.

The focus isn't on sending retirees back into the grind. It's about helping people use their experience in ways that feel rewarding, flexible, and relevant.

For some, that may mean consulting. For others, volunteering or mentoring. For others, it may mean discovering something entirely new.

The point is that retirement doesn't have to mean the end of the story.

Sometimes it's just the start of a different one.

If you've ever found yourself wondering what comes next, this seminar may be worth attending. Even if you decide the next chapter involves nothing more ambitious than coffee with friends and an occasional afternoon nap, it never hurts to explore the options.

After all, we're never too old to ask the question: What do you want to do when you grow up?

I'd like to hear about it. Contact me at SDubin@PRWorkZone.com and share your thoughts.

About the Author: *Steven V. Dubin is the founder of PR Works, a lightly used public relations firm based in Plymouth which helps small to mid-sized nonprofit organizations and for-profit companies navigate the overwhelming options of advertising. Steve lives in Plymouth with his wife, Wendy. He is a contributing author to "Get Slightly Famous" and "Tricks of the Trade," the complete guide to succeeding in the advice business. He recently authored "PR 101," an E-book. ∞*



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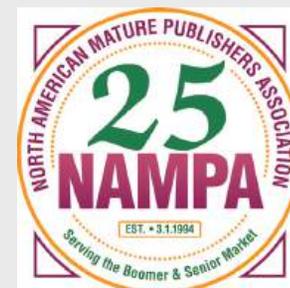
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The Publishers also produce a podcast entitled "My Generation," which covers a wide range of topics of interest to seniors, from dating to downsizing and everything in between. The podcasts air on the 1st and 15th of every month and audio archives can be found at SouthShoreSenior.com and Spotify.

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Emma O'Donoghue: A journey of growth, gratitude, and heart



By Maria Burke, RN, Founder and CEO, Celtic Angels Home Health Care

If Celtic Angels had a story that perfectly reflects growth, resilience, and the power of people helping people, it would look a lot like Emma O'Donoghue's journey.

Born in the Bronx in 1989, Emma's life quickly became one of movement and connection. At just two years old, she moved with her family to Galway, Ireland, before returning to New York at age six. By 12, she was back in Galway again –

eventually making her way to Boston in 2012 at the age of 22. Today, Emma describes her life as the best of both worlds, deeply rooted in both Ireland and America.

Emma joined Celtic Angels in February 2013, initially balancing her role with a part-time waitressing job. She said it's "hard to believe it's been 13 years," – years marked by steady growth, dedication, and an unwavering commitment to the people she serves.

Before settling into life in Boston, Emma built a strong foundation in business and finance, graduating from a Level 5 business administration program at Galway Technical Institute and studying accountancy at Galway Mayo Institute of Technology. Along the way, she worked part-time at a small supermarket called Centra, where she met her husband, Chris.

"That's another story," she laughed.

Upon arriving in Boston, Emma's work ethic kicked into high gear. Her first role was with Restaurant Associates, working in catering for Bain Capital in the John Hancock building. Eager to build a life for herself, she added a second job at Whiskey Priest in the Seaport as a host and waitress. Emma remains deeply grateful for the opportunities, referrals, friendships, and support she received during those early years.

"It's all who you know," she reflected, "and the friends I made from day one are still my friends today."

At Celtic Angels, Emma's career path has been one of continuous evolution. She began as a receptionist, then moved into scheduling coordination, hiring and recruiting, and today serves as an on-call supervisor. What she values most – beyond the incredible team – is the flexibility and trust that allowed her role to grow alongside her life.

"Each stage fit where I was at the time," she said, "and that made all the difference."

When asked what she would say to a young woman considering a career in home health care, Emma doesn't hesitate: "It's a rewarding career – for both the caregiver and the client – and a great starting point for anyone looking to grow in the healthcare field."

What inspires her most? "Every day is different," Emma said. "There's always something new to learn, new people to meet, and so many individuals who inspire me."

In her personal life, inspiration comes from family. "Never take anything for granted. Every day is precious," she said.

Outside of work, Emma treasures time with her husband, Chris, and their two children, McKenna and Padraic. Traveling is a passion – especially trips back to Ireland once or twice a year to visit family and friends – along with exploring new places across the U.S. in between. Most of all, she loves being present for her children, whether cheering them on at activities or simply enjoying time together at home.

Emma O'Donoghue's story is one of gratitude, perseverance, and heart – qualities that reflect not only her personal journey, but the very spirit of Celtic Angels.

About Celtic Angels Inc.: *Celtic Angels Inc. is a trusted provider of high-quality, in-home care services across Massachusetts. Founded and led by Maria Burke, RN, the organization offers companion care, personal care, RN Case Management, and thoughtfully integrated advanced technologies to support individuals living with Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's, and other neurological conditions. ∞*





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SENIOR FITNESS

Simple steps to help you begin your fitness journey this spring



By Rita La Rosa Loud, B.S.

Not everybody is eager to put on sneakers, change into gym clothes then sprint out the door to work out. I get it! Would you believe I was bashful and hesitant to step foot into a gym? But here I am today, hooked on fitness. Apparently other rationales for evading physical activity are: 1. Feeling uncomfortable and out of place, 2. Lack of time, 3. Not having a workout partner, 4. High program cost, or 5. Fearing injury. Perhaps this resonates with you. To overcome similar obstacles, here is a handy checklist of what to look for and how to get started in an exercise program that suits your likes and needs.

How to get started: A checklist

Group fitness programming is an enjoyable and effective way to build new friendships with like-minded individuals while getting fit and staying active.

- Communicate with family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers that you may need encouragement, a motivated workout companion, or assistance with meal planning to support your health and fitness goals.
- Choose exercise classes led by expert instructors who set goals suited to your fitness level and abilities. As a rule, educated fitness trainers hear and comprehend your needs, concerns, and goals.
- Seek professional trainers who stress proper technique, show correct form, and provide modifications that ensure safe and effective workout sessions.
- Set a schedule that tailors well with your present commitments, for example, 30 minutes of exercise two to three times per week.
- Check local YMCAs, senior centers, or community gyms offering senior discounts, household memberships, financial aid, or referral programs to offset program cost.
- Review your current health insurance policy. Many major providers reimburse up to \$150 toward membership; some even offer a wellness allowance for select workout options. If you need help claiming a benefit, contact the provider's customer service department for details of the application process.
- Consult with your primary care provider before signing up or engaging in an exercise class or program.

Set yourself up for success!

To get the most out of your fitness journey, expand your horizons. Experience a variety of life-enhancing physical activities – workout pro-



Group exercise program participants of the Wayne Westcott, Ph.D. Center for Health & Fitness. [Courtesy photo]

grams like resistance training, aerobic exercise, as well as stretch and relaxation movements such as yoga, tai chi, even pool classes, and much more. In addition, assistance given by qualified coaches, certified instructors and personal trainers in association with established health and well-being facilities are available everywhere. They're there for your partaking. Just pack a gym bag, step out the door and give it a go!

To help you get started on your fitness journey, consider participating in our highly supervised adult and older adult group fitness program, coached by our national certified training staff. It includes resistance exercise, aerobic activity, flexibility, balance, and functional training at the Wayne Westcott, Ph.D. Center for Health and Fitness at Quincy College. We are located at Presidents Place, 1250 Hancock St., Quincy. Call 617-405-5978 to tour, inquire about complimentary training and obtain registration procedures. Street parking is available; a parking garage is next to the building.

About the Author: Rita La Rosa Loud holds a B.S. in Exercise Physiology with additional education in Sports Medicine and Athletic Training. She is NASM Certified and has been actively involved in the fitness industry for more than 35 years. She is also an author and writes fitness-related articles for various publications. Currently, she is a fitness researcher and directs the Wayne Westcott, Ph.D. Center for Health and Fitness at Quincy College. She can be reached at 617-405-5978 or by email at Rita.larosaloud@quincycollege.edu.




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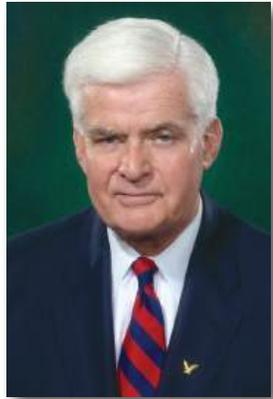
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HOME EQUITY WEALTH MANAGEMENT

Family caregiving, aging in place, and the overlooked role of housing wealth



By George A. Downey

As America's population ages, family caregiving has become a central – and often underappreciated – feature of retirement life. Research summarized by Jonathan Delozier of the Boston College Center for Retirement Research, drawing on recent Pew Research Center findings, highlights both the scale of caregiving and the financial pressures it places on households.

Approximately one in 10 U.S. adults provides care for a parent age 65 or older, with caregiving becoming far more common as parents reach their mid-70s and beyond. Among families affected, caregiving is not limited to occasional help. Most caregivers regularly assist with errands, household upkeep, healthcare coordination, and financial management, and a meaningful share provide ongoing personal care. These responsibilities often persist for years.

The burden of caregiving is not evenly distributed. Women and lower-income households are significantly more likely to assume caregiving roles and are also more likely to report negative impacts on emotional health, physical well-being, finances, and careers. While many caregivers report stronger relationships with the people they help, the broader costs – lost income, higher out-of-pocket expenses, and reduced financial security – are substantial.

At the same time, the research reinforces a clear preference among older adults to age in place. Most Americans over 65 live in their own homes and would prefer to remain there, receiving care at home rather than moving to assisted living or relying entirely on family members. Yet confidence in being able to afford in-home care is limited, particularly given low levels of long-term care insurance coverage.

This gap between preference and financial readiness brings housing wealth into sharper focus. For many older homeowners, home equity represents their largest asset – often exceeding the value of retirement savings. However, it is frequently excluded from financial planning discussions until a crisis forces difficult decisions.

Reverse mortgages, including FHA-insured Home Equity Conversion Mortgages (HECMs) and more recent non-insured proprietary programs are solutions for homeowners age 62 and older to convert a portion of their home equity into accessible funds without requiring monthly mortgage payments. When used appropriately, these funds can help pay for home care, reduce financial stress on family caregivers, or preserve other retirement assets.

As Delozier's analysis suggests, the growing reliance on unpaid family caregivers has meaningful implications for retirement security and public policy. For families planning proactively, integrating housing wealth – alongside savings, pensions, and Social Security – can expand the range of options available to support aging in place while reducing the emotional and financial strain on loved ones.

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A new season is the perfect time for a new start, and to check in on your oral health

By Dr. Qian Lin, DMD
The Toothboss, www.toothboss.com



Spring is a season many of us associate with renewal. We open the windows, spend more time outside, and often take stock of things we may have put off during the colder months. It can also be a good time to check in on something that can

sometimes get overlooked: our oral health.

As the new owner of The Toothboss dental practice in South Weymouth, I've spent the past several weeks getting to know patients and the surrounding community. One thing that stands out immediately is how much people value clear information about their health and the opportunity to make informed decisions about their care.

That's something I believe strongly in as well.

One topic I often discuss with patients, especially adults over 60, is how oral health

changes over time. Many dental issues don't appear suddenly. Instead, they tend to develop gradually and quietly.

For example, mild tooth sensitivity may seem like a minor annoyance. Yet it can sometimes indicate worn enamel, exposed tooth roots, or early decay. Similarly, gums that occasionally bleed when brushing may signal the early stages of gum disease.

Catching these issues early usually makes treatment simpler and more comfortable.

Another factor that becomes more common with age is dry mouth. Many medications, especially those used to treat blood pressure, allergies, or anxiety, can reduce saliva flow. Your saliva plays an important role in protecting your teeth by washing away bacteria and helping neutralize acids in the mouth. When saliva levels drop, the risk of cavities and gum disease increases.

Staying hydrated, maintaining regular dental visits, and discussing medication side effects with both your physician and dentist can help address the dry-mouth issue before it becomes a problem.

Regular dental checkups are also import-

ant for another reason: screening for conditions that become more common later in life. During routine exams, dentists look not only at the teeth but your gums, oral tissues, and jaw. Screenings for oral cancer and advanced gum disease are standard parts of these visits and can be critical for early detection.

Of course, what happens at home matters just as much as what happens in the dental chair. Brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, flossing daily, and maintaining a balanced diet remain some of the most effective ways to protect your teeth.

Many people assume that dental problems are simply a normal part of aging. In reality, with good preventive care and regular monitoring, most adults can maintain healthy teeth and gums throughout their lives.

As someone who is new to the South Shore community, I'm still getting to know many of the people who live here, and I look forward to meeting many more in the months ahead. Taking over The Toothboss practice after Dr. Richard Wolfert's retirement is both an honor and a responsibility I take seriously. My goal is to continue the thoughtful, patient-focused approach that has been a hallmark of the practice for decades.

Part of being patient-focused is bringing in new technologies that improve patient experience. We now use digital scanners for whitening trays, retainers, crown scans, implant scans, bridge scans, night guards, sport guards, and many more. This makes getting pictures of your teeth less uncomfortable than conventional gooey impression material.

If you already have a dentist you trust, that's wonderful. But if you happen to be new to the area, between dentists, or simply looking for a fresh start with your dental care, I would be delighted to meet you. In a way, we can be new together.

Establishing a relationship with a dentist you feel comfortable with makes it much easier to stay on top of preventive care and address small concerns before they become larger ones. And building that relationship is something that happens one conversation – and one visit – at a time.

I look forward to becoming part of this community and helping patients keep their smiles healthy for years to come.

About the Author: Dr. Qian Lin, DMD is the owner of The Toothboss, 1121 Main St., South Weymouth. For more information, call 781-335-0604 or visit www.toothboss.com. ∞

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Responding to 'vicarious grief' of a loved one with compassionate presence helps them heal

By Meghan Fitzpatrick,
Hospice & Palliative Care Representative
Old Colony Hospice & Palliative Care



Recently, a friend sent me an article about something called *vicarious grief*. The phrase was new to me, but the experience was not. It refers to the sorrow we feel when we witness someone

else's loss or suffering. It is a quieter kind of grief, and it does not get talked about very much.

Most of us expect to grieve when we lose someone we love. We know, at least in theory, that heartbreak is part of the bargain we make when we let people matter to us. It is a terrible feeling, but we expect it. This may just be me talking, but vicarious grief is very often unexpected.

I have worked in close proximity to loss for most of my adult life, so I have seen a lot of grief. It comes in many shapes and sizes. I have grieved in a lot of different ways myself. Being a good caregiver breaks your heart sometimes. I have also held space for family members, friends, and professional caregivers as they have grieved a loved one, so I am no stranger to vicarious grief.

It is natural to feel heartbroken holding the hand of a husband saying goodbye to his wife for the last time, or sitting with a son who has just lost his father. It can be devastating to be the friend beside someone whose world has just changed forever, wishing desperately that there

were something you could do to make it better.

In those moments, I often catch myself trying to keep a stiff upper lip. We want to be strong in support of the people we love when they are hurting. We may even find ourselves apologizing for our own emotions, thinking we do not have the right to be as upset as we are. Grief does not follow those kinds of rules.

When we love someone, their pain inevitably reaches us. It echoes through the relationship we share with them. Watching someone you care about suffer can feel almost as unbearable as the loss itself. There is a particular helplessness in witnessing grief. When we lose someone ourselves, there are rituals and expectations that help guide us through it. People bring food. They send cards. They acknowledge the loss.

When the grief belongs primarily to someone else, it can feel harder to claim. The sorrow sits in an uncertain place, somewhere between empathy and heartbreak. People often try to minimize it. They tell themselves they should be the strong one, the supportive one, the steady presence in the room.

The truth is that feeling grief for someone you love is not a failure of strength. It is evidence of connection.

Grief, like joy, is meant to be shared. Truly loving someone means hurting when they hurt. It is proof of our shared human experience.

In hospice, we of-

ten use the term *compassionate presence*. It means showing up for someone's suffering without trying to fix it or rush it along. It means sitting beside them in the reality they are living, even when it is uncomfortable or painful for us. Compassionate presence is not a sterile experience. It asks something of us emotionally. It asks us to open the door to someone else's pain, knowing it may linger in our own hearts for a while.

That is not weakness. That is compassion doing exactly what it was designed to do.

If you have ever felt grief on behalf of someone you love, you are not imagining it. You are not being overly sensitive. You are simply responding to the deep human truth that none of us moves through loss entirely alone. Our lives overlap too much for that. Vicarious grief is real. Give yourself space to feel it and credit for standing with someone else in their pain.

About the Author: *Meghan Fitzpatrick is a business development representative at Old Colony Hospice & Palliative Care. She has a strong background in assisted living and dementia care. She is also a trained support group facilitator for the Alzheimer's Association. Her compassion and knowledge make her a vital part of Old Colony Hospice's outreach efforts. She is a trusted resource in the community, connecting with families, providers, and community partners throughout the region and can be reached at mfitzpatrick@oldcolonyhospice.com. ∞*



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Beep, beep. Paying attention to curb appeal will help you sell your home this spring



By Korey Welch, Owner of Boom Realty and Senior Mortgage Broker, Loan Factory

When it comes time to sell your home, first impressions matter more than ever. Real estate professionals often say buyers decide how they feel about a property before they even walk through the front door. Creating strong curb appeal can help your home stand out in online photos, attract more showings, and even lead to higher offers. With a little effort and smart planning, homeowners can make their property look welcoming, well-cared-for, and move-in ready.

Start with a clean slate. Before adding anything new, make sure the exterior of the home is clean and tidy. Power-wash siding, walkways, decks, and driveways to remove dirt, mildew, and stains that build up over time. Clean windows inside and out so the house looks bright and well maintained. Remove cobwebs, dead plants, and any clutter from the yard, porch, or entryway. A spotless exterior signals to buyers that the home has been cared for.

Freshen up the front door. The front door is the focal point of a home's exterior. A fresh coat of paint can make a dramatic difference. Choose a color that complements the house but still stands out in a tasteful way, such as deep blue, classic red, or charcoal gray. Replace worn hardware, update the house numbers, and make sure the doorbell and lights work. A new wel-

come mat and a simple wreath can add charm without looking cluttered.

Invest in landscaping basics. You don't need an expensive landscape redesign to make a yard look attractive. Mow the lawn regularly, trim bushes, edge the walkway, and remove weeds. Add fresh mulch to garden beds to create a neat, finished appearance. Seasonal flowers in planters or along the front walk provide color and make the home feel lively. If you have large trees, make sure branches are trimmed so the house is clearly visible from the street.

Light it up. Good lighting improves both appearance and safety. Replace burned-out bulbs and consider updating old fixtures with modern, energy-efficient options. Solar pathway lights are an inexpensive way to highlight walkways and landscaping. If buyers drive by in the evening, warm exterior lighting can make the home feel inviting rather than dark and neglected.

Fix the little things buyers notice. Small repairs can have a big impact. Tighten loose railings, fix cracked steps, repair broken shutters, and touch up peeling paint. Make sure the mailbox is straight, the garage door works smoothly, and the driveway is free of large cracks. Buyers often assume that visible small problems mean there may be bigger hidden issues, so taking care of details builds confidence.

Stage the exterior like you would the interior. Think of the front yard and porch as an outdoor living space. A couple of clean chairs, a small table, or a bench can make the home feel welcoming. Keep decorations simple and neutral so buyers can picture themselves living there. Avoid overly personal items, seasonal clutter, or too many ornaments.

Keep it maintained until closing. Once the house is on the market, continue to mow, sweep, and tidy regularly. Showings can be scheduled at any time, and you want the home to look its best every day. Consistent upkeep ensures that the great first impression you worked hard to create stays strong throughout the selling process.

With thoughtful preparation and attention to detail, curb appeal can become one of the most powerful tools for selling your home quickly and at the best possible price.

For more than 25 years, I have been helping sellers list their homes for just a 1% listing commission, saving families tens of thousands of dollars while still providing professional photography, marketing, open houses, and full-service representation. Don't be fooled by the big corporate Kool-Aid-drinking agents trying to get you to pay "big-box store" commission rates to get results. There is a better way to sell, and if interested in how you can sell smarter, I can help.

Selling your house is a significant decision that requires careful consideration of personal preferences, health needs, and financial factors. As a 25-year veteran of both the mortgage and real estate industries, I understand the complexities involved in making these transitions. My goal is to help individuals and families make informed decisions that promote quality of life, independence, and peace of mind throughout the aging journey.

About the Author: *Korey Welch, Owner of Boom Realty and Senior Mortgage Broker (NMLS: 14991) with Loan Factory (NMLS: 320841), is a licensed mortgage broker/real estate broker based in Rockland. For more than two decades, Korey has been helping seniors determine the best fit. For a complimentary consultation, contact him at korey@koreywelch.com, 781-367-3351. If you have questions about building an ADU, navigating local zoning, or how it might affect your property value, I'm always happy to help. As a 25-year veteran of the real estate and mortgage business, I bring deep experience and a personal touch to every conversation. ∞*



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Get involved! Donate your time for good on Earth Day during National Volunteer Month

By Nicole Long, MSW, LICSW,
CEO of Old Colony Elder Services



Earth Day, Wednesday April 22, is a day to raise environmental awareness and take action to preserve and protect our planet.

Ensuring clean air, clean water, and a healthy environment is essential. Everyone has a role to play and can make a difference. There are many

ways to get involved on Earth Day. Attend an event, gain a better understanding about Earth Day, and share that knowledge with others.

Here are more ways to recognize and support Earth Day:

- Plant a vegetable garden. Not only will it provide you with nutritious food, but it will also help to reduce carbon emissions.
- Consider planting native plants in your yard to support bees, butterflies, and songbirds, which are among nature's pollinators.
- Support "sustainable fashion." One way to do this is by choosing clothing made from organic fabrics or natural fibers such as cotton, silk, wool, and linen, as these materials are more environmentally friendly.
- Consider shopping for clothes or household items at thrift and vintage shops. Donate unwanted clothing or other items to a thrift store or to a charity.

- Plant a tree. Trees clean the air while also providing a natural environment for animals and other organisms.
- Choose an alternative to plastic shopping bags, such as cloth or reusable bags.
- Commemorate Earth Day. Enjoy spending some time at a nature preserve, hiking a local trail, or walking along the shoreline.

Volunteer

Did you know? April is National Volunteer Month! Let us honor and celebrate volunteers who help make a difference in the lives of so many and in the communities they serve.

Volunteers generously dedicate their time and effort to make a positive impact in countless ways.

A few examples of volunteer opportunities include:

- Joining a community cleanup event. For example, at a beach cleanup, volunteers remove trash and other debris from the coastline.
- Volunteering to help maintain a hiking trail or wildlife sanctuary.
- Tending a community garden or volunteering at a community farm.

Whether you would like to volun-

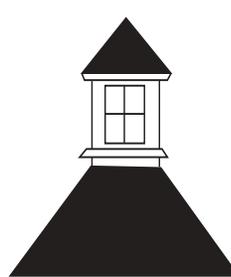
teer on Earth Day or you are seeking other volunteer opportunities, there are all sorts of volunteer opportunities that may fit your lifestyle. Consider becoming one of the 63 million Americans who volunteer each year. To learn more about volunteer opportunities in your community and at OCES, visit ocesma.org/get-involved/volunteer-opportunities.

Source: EarthDay.org, <https://www.earthday.org/action/>

About the Author: Nicole Long is the Chief Executive Officer of Old Colony Elder Services (OCES). Founded in 1974, OCES is a private, non-profit organization proudly serving greater Plymouth County and surrounding communities. OCES is designated as one of 27 Aging Services Access Points (ASAPs) and Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. OCES's mission is to support the independence and dignity of older adults and individuals with disabilities by providing essential information and services that promote healthy and safe living. The agency offers a number of programs to serve older adults, individuals with disabilities, their families and caregivers. For more information call 508-584-1561 or visit www.ocesma.org. ∞



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Parkinson's Awareness Month's 'Mind Over Matter' theme emphasizes a holistic view of care



By Michelle Sonia, President and CEO
Seniors Helping Seniors Boston South Shore

April marks Parkinson's Awareness Month, a time dedicated to increasing understanding, compassion, and support for those living with Parkinson's disease. This year's theme, "Mind Over Matter," shines a powerful and much-needed spotlight on the critical connection between mental health and Parkinson's.

Looking beyond the physical symptoms

Parkinson's is often associated with visible physical symptoms such as tremors, stiffness, and slowed movement. While these are certainly defining aspects of the disease, they are only part of the story. Many individuals living with Parkinson's also experience significant non-motor symptoms, including anxiety, depression, apathy, and cognitive changes.

These mental and emotional challenges can sometimes be just as impactful – if not more so – than the physical symptoms. Yet they are often under-discussed or misunderstood. This is why the 2026 theme, "Mind Over Matter," is so important: it encourages a more holistic view of care that includes both brain and body.

The importance of mental health in Parkinson's care

Living with Parkinson's can be an emotional journey. Changes in independence, daily routines, and physical ability can take a toll on self-esteem and overall well-being. Additionally, the neurological changes caused by the disease itself can directly affect mood and cognition.

Prioritizing mental health is not just beneficial – it is essential. Addressing emotional well-being can:

- Improve quality of life
- Enhance motivation for physical activity and therapy
- Strengthen relationships with caregivers and loved ones
- Support better overall health outcomes

Strategies for supporting "Mind Over Matter"

Supporting mental health in Parkinson's care requires intention and a multi-faceted approach. Some key strategies include:



1. Open conversations: Encouraging honest dialogue about feelings, fears, and challenges helps reduce stigma and isolation. Caregivers and families play a vital role in creating safe spaces for these conversations.

2. Professional support: Mental health professionals, including therapists and neurologists, can provide valuable tools such as counseling, cognitive behavioral therapy, and medication when appropriate.

3. Social connection: Staying connected with others – through support groups, community programs, or even simple social visits – can significantly reduce feelings of loneliness and depression.

4. Physical activity with purpose: Exercise is not only beneficial for mobility, but also for mental health. Activities like walking, yoga, or dance can boost mood and provide a sense of accomplishment.

5. Mindfulness and stress reduction: Practices such as meditation, deep breathing, and relaxation techniques can help manage anxiety and improve emotional resilience.

A community effort: Parkinson's Awareness Month is also a call to action for communities. Whether you are a caregiver, healthcare professional, educator, or neighbor, there are meaningful ways to show support:

- Learn more about Parkinson's and share accurate information
- Check in on individuals and families affected by the disease
- Participate in local events or advocacy efforts
- Promote inclusive and supportive environments

Moving forward with compassion

The "Mind Over Matter" theme reminds us that while Parkinson's affects the body, it also deeply impacts the mind – and both deserve equal care and attention. By recognizing and addressing mental health as a core component of Parkinson's care, we can foster stronger, more compassionate support systems.

This April, let's commit to seeing the whole person behind the diagnosis, uplifting their voice, and ensuring that no one faces Parkinson's alone.

About the Author: Michelle Sonia is the president and CEO of Seniors Helping Seniors Boston South Shore. Michelle grew up in Hanson and lives in Weymouth. She was valedictorian at Notre Dame Academy and holds a bachelor's degree from Harvard University and a master's degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Having worked in management consulting for more than 15 years, she is now excited about making an impact on her community. For more information, visit www.shsbostonsouthshore.com, email info@shsbostonsouthshore.com, or call 781-626-4800. ∞

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Myth or fact? A will is all you need to keep an estate out of the probate process

By Elizabeth A. Caruso, Esq.
Legal Legacy Planning, LLC



Myth or fact? I have a will, so my family is all set and doesn't need any other documents to stay out of probate if I die.

This is a myth!

One of the top questions I get when I start a meeting with a new client is, "I have a will, my family won't have to go to probate, right?" Most people are very surprised to learn that a will actually guarantees that your family will have to go to probate. Many people believe that having a will is enough to ensure their estate is handled smoothly after they pass away. While a will is an important part of any estate plan, it does **not** avoid probate. Understanding the difference between a will and a trust can help families save time, reduce costs, and maintain privacy during an already difficult time.

A will is a document that provides instructions for how your assets should be distributed and who will manage that distri-

bution. It may also designate guardians for minor children. However, because a will only takes effect after death and must be validated by the court, the assets governed by the will generally must go through probate. Probate is the court process of validating a will, paying debts, and distributing assets after someone dies. While probate ensures legal oversight, it can also be time-consuming, costly, and public. In Massachusetts, a probate often takes years to complete. Court fees, legal expenses, and administrative costs can also reduce the value of the estate that ultimately goes to beneficiaries. A properly funded trust, such as a revocable trust, allows assets to pass directly to beneficiaries without going through probate. When assets are titled in the name of the trust during your lifetime, the successor trustee can distribute them according to your instructions after your death without court involvement.

This provides several key benefits:

1. **Avoids probate:** Assets held in the trust transfer without the need for court permission.
2. **Saves time:** Beneficiaries often receive assets much faster.

3. **Reduces costs:** Avoiding probate can minimize legal and court fees.
4. **Maintains privacy:** Unlike probate, trust administration is not a public court process.
5. **Provides continuity:** If you become incapacitated, a successor trustee can manage trust assets without court intervention.

A comprehensive estate plan often includes both a trust and a will. The trust holds and distributes most assets, while the will (often called a "pour-over will") acts as a safety net for any assets not transferred into the trust during your lifetime. Creating a trust is not only about asset distribution; it's about making things easier for the people you care about. By minimizing court involvement and administrative burdens, a trust can help your loved ones focus on what matters most during a difficult time.

If you already have a will, an elder law attorney can review your estate plan to ensure your wishes can be carried out as efficiently as possible.

About the Author: Elizabeth A. Caruso, Esq. is an attorney at Legacy Legal Planning, LLC, in Norwell. She has been practicing estate planning, probate, and elder law on the South Shore for more than a decade. If this article has sparked questions for you, please feel free to reach out via phone 781-971-5900 or email elizabeth@legacylegalplanning.com to schedule a time to discuss your unique situation. ∞



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Recent launch of TrumpRx.gov provides a new choice for prescription savings options

By Patricia Prewitt, My Personal Rx Adviser



The environment for prescription savings is expanding with the launch of TrumpRx.gov in February. Having another place to find savings for prescriptions can be a plus for patients. However, as with any new entity to a market, it's important to understand when it might fit to your own needs, and how it might compare to prices offered with your existing prescription insurance plan.

What is TrumpRx? At its core, it is a federal web directory or link farm portal designed to connect patients with lower cash prices for specific brand-name medications, primarily in the areas of weight loss, diabetes, and fertility. As of March 2026, 43 different medications from five manufacturers are listed on the website. The "most favored nation" prices match the cash pay direct access programs of the participating products on the manufacturer websites.

The site also offers savings coupons, branded for TrumpRx, that function much like those available from savings card platforms like GoodRx, SingleCare, WellRx, Needy Meds, and others. The coupons must be downloaded from the website, and brought to a specific participating pharmacy for that particular product to obtain the discount price.

What else should I know? TrumpRx is designed as a "cash pay" program for patients not using prescription insurance benefits. This means that any money you spend will not count toward your insurance deductible or out-

of-pocket maximum. This is true of other savings card programs. Unlike your neighborhood pharmacy, CostPlusDrugs or AmazonRx, the site is a portal only. No products are dispensed. You will still need a valid prescription.

Prescription plans are widely variable: Specific cost-sharing, copays, coinsurance and plan deductibles require evaluation. For many chronic medical conditions, your traditional prescription plan may offer the best value over the course of a year.

When would I choose to use this new program? If you are uninsured, or your prescription benefits do not cover your medications, this provides another option to compare prices. Remember that savings card prices vary by product, store and even zip code.

For some "lifestyle" drugs, TrumpRx.gov may be useful since many insurance plans exclude them entirely. The website does note that patients with insurance should check what their copay is using prescription insurance as it may be less than the TrumpRx price.

What's the bottom line? While more consumer choices are good, the "best" price for your needed medications depends entirely on your employer-sponsored, private insurance plan, marketplace plan, or the coverage tier for your Medicare Part D plan or Medicare Advantage plan. Consumers should be prepared to do their own cross-referencing between the portal, their current local pharmacy pricing, other savings cards, and direct to patient prices from CostPlusDrugs or AmazonRx.

Healthcare continues to be a rapidly changing environment, and is often confusing for both patients and healthcare providers to navigate.

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only and is not intended as a substitute for advice from a qualified medical professional. The opinions expressed within are those of the author.

About the Author: Patricia Prewitt is a local Massachusetts resident who spent more than 30 years in the pharmaceutical industry. Tricia is a consumer education advocate, and loves helping people find ways to save money on their prescriptions. More information and free resources are available on her website at <https://mypersonal-rxadvisor.com/resources> or call her at 508-507-8840. Favorite Quote: "Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does." – William James ∞

Planning some spring cleaning? Register for household hazardous waste disposal

South Shore Recycling Cooperative member towns will host six household hazardous waste collections this spring. Registration is required to reduce wait times. The addresses and other important event details are revealed on the registration form at <http://bit.ly/Spring26HHW>.

Events will take place from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at these locations:

- **April 11:** Weymouth.
- **April 18:** Plymouth. Also accepting up to six off-rim tires with no fee, and propane tanks and fire extinguishers for a fee
- **May 2:** Hanover/Norwell.
- **May 16:** Hingham. Also accepting up to six off-rim tires with no fee.
- **June 6:** Kingston/Duxbury/Pembroke.
- **June 13:** Scituate/Cohasset. Also accepting propane tanks and fire extinguishers for a fee.

If you have questions after reviewing the registration form, visit <http://bit.ly/ssrch-hw> or call 781-329-8318. HT



Registration open for Project Bread's 58th Annual Walk for Hunger

Registration is now open for Project Bread's Walk for Hunger, the organization's signature community fundraiser and one of Massachusetts' most enduring anti-hunger events, turning compassion into action. Set for Sunday, May 3 on the Boston Common, the one-day celebration will bring together thousands of walkers for a family-friendly three-mile loop featuring food, entertainment, and activities for all ages.

Now in its 58th year, the Walk for Hunger remains a beacon of hope for local families, raising \$1 million to support Project Bread's proven, statewide approach to advancing food security and ensuring access to nutritious food for children and families across Massachusetts.

Like-minded anti-hunger organizations are also invited to participate through Project Bread's co-fundraising program, The Commonwealth. Participating nonprofits can form teams to raise funds for their own missions while contributing to Project Bread's broader statewide impact.

Ready to get involved? Register to walk in-person or virtually, start a personal or team fundraising page, or make a donation at projectbread.org/walk. For more information, email walk@projectbread.org.



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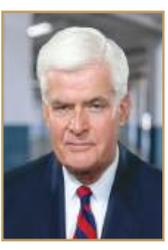
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