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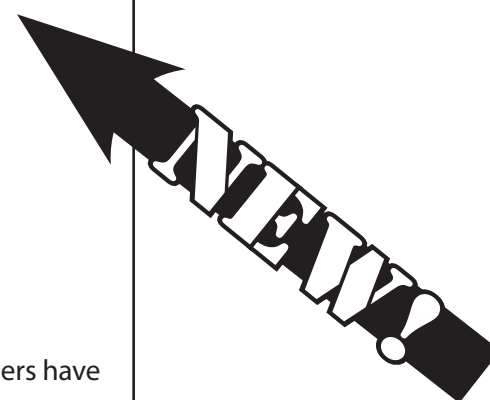


For more than 60 years NAPS has been making the world a better place, with helpful and informative features. With the launch of our new site, **www.mynewstouse.com**, there are new features designed to delight the media, clients and the general public:

- New blogs for media and clients offering advice on best practices for maximizing returns
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- Targeted content for sites that feature videos, audio and other visuals
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- Sign up for alerts, custom content for websites or blogs
- Regional content by state
- Multicultural content for Latino and African American audiences
- 32 news categories to choose from
- PDF archive with over 30k formatted articles

The launch of our new site is just the beginning, as NAPS continues to build on and expand the website and distribution network. Users have been pleased to report that they have enjoyed coming back for more content, more ideas and more options.

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# **HELPFUL** • Safety • Economy • Family Fun *Featurettes* **News to Use** #2814

**NORTH AMERICAN PRECIS SYNDICATE, INC., 100 PARK AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10017**



### Helping Parents Help Their Kids In School

(NAPS)—Here's news about education many parents may be glad to learn: More than 1.5 million students are heading back to school this fall with the help of a private educational choice program, a number that would have been almost unimaginable 30 years ago.

#### The Problem

For years, polling has shown a gap between where parents say they would like their students to learn and where children actually go to school. About 80% of students attend their zip-code assigned school, yet only 35% of parents say this would be their preference if given a choice. Instead, 64% of parents say they would opt for a private school, home education, charter school, or public school in a different area.

#### An Answer

Fortunately for those parents, while they've been busy helping kids with homework, driving to sports practices, and managing the everyday demands of raising kids, lawmakers across the country have been working to give them exactly what they want.

Today, nearly 50% of K-12 students are eligible for one of the country's 75 school choice programs across 34 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico. Nearly 20 of those programs were created since the pandemic disrupted education. Through education savings accounts, vouchers and tax-credit scholarships, families can get financial support for options beyond their assigned public school, including private school tuition, tutoring, special-needs services and other educational expenses.

#### More Good News

Another opportunity is coming in 2027. A new federal tax credit will help generate donations to scholarship-granting organizations that provide scholarships families can use for tuition, tutoring, special-needs services, and other education expenses. More than 83% of students meet the income eligibility requirement, and 30 states have already opted to participate.

The response from families suggests those new options are filling a real demand. Alabama's choice program grew nearly 50% in its second year to over 34,000 students. Idaho's new Parental Choice Tax Credit drew 7,055 applications covering 12,561 students. And with over 100,000 participants, the new education savings account program in Texas is poised to be the nation's largest day-one choice program.



**The school your children returned to this fall doesn't have to be the school they return to next fall—it can be a much better fit for them.**

#### Understanding School Choice

Growth this fast can understandably raise questions. When states make significant changes to something as important as education, especially when public dollars are involved, parents and policymakers should ask whether those policies are working and what they mean for students.

Fortunately, school choice isn't nearly as new as the recent wave of legislation might suggest, and researchers have studied the effect of these programs and their effects for decades.

EdChoice has reviewed the approximately 200 empirical studies examining school choice's effect on such important outcomes as academic achievement, educational attainment, parent satisfaction, fiscal effects, school safety, and more, and 83% of these studies detected positive effects.

Families benefit from having more options because children aren't interchangeable. One may thrive in a large neighborhood school while another needs smaller classes, a different academic approach, specialized services, or a safer environment. Families with financial means have always had more freedom to respond—to move to another neighborhood, pay tuition, or purchase additional help. School choice extends that freedom to families regardless of their ZIP code or income.

For many families, a new school year brings excitement and a fresh start. For others, it may bring renewed concerns about academics, safety or whether a school is simply the right fit.

#### What Parents Can Do

If that's your family, now is the time to learn what options are available. Some school choice programs accept applications during the school year, while others will open enrollment in the coming months for 2027-2028.

#### Learn More

To see what this can mean for your kids, visit at [edchoice.org](http://edchoice.org).

## Community Concerns

### When Federal Programs and Workers are Cut, Main Street Bears the Cost

by Edith Mwangi

(NAPSI)—When a local water system breaks down or a rural school's equipment upgrade stalls, the problem feels strictly local. But behind the scenes, those community improvements often depend on a complex web of federal grants, technical oversight, and agency operations.

We rarely think about the federal pipeline keeping daily life running smoothly—until the pipeline stops working.

In the wake of the Trump administration's chaotic and haphazard cuts to federal programs and the federal workforce since last year, communities across the country have felt the immediate and damaging impact. "Local health coalitions end up spending time chasing down basic information instead of doing the work, time and capacity they don't really have to spare," said Breanne Danner, a former CDC Lead Project Officer who managed nationwide public health grant portfolios. "When you lose your Project Officer, you lose the person who actually knew your program. That institutional relationship doesn't transfer to a generic inbox."

The connection between federal funding and local outcomes often goes unnoticed, which is why the nonpartisan nonprofit Partnership for Public Service works with local news organizations in five states to make it easier to report on how communities are being impacted. The organization's new Resources to Report on Federal Cuts offers a series of state-by-state impact guides covering Colorado, Georgia, Ohio, Texas and Washington.

#### Main Street Under Pressure

Designed as toolkits for local journalists, these resources track local service and funding cuts, legal cases and harms to the public, including:

- **Georgia's Tech Infrastructure:** A freeze on \$18 million in state unemployment IT modernization grants has forced labor officials to delay a critical cloud migration, prolonging reliance on a 43-year-old computer mainframe.
- **Colorado's Local Agriculture:** A \$13.1 million cancellation in local food purchasing funds has disrupted supply chains for rural schools, forcing them to abandon local farmers and revert to national corporate distributors.
- **Ohio's Water Rate Hikes:** A freeze on \$329 million in environmental utility grants, paired with a new rule requiring manual federal review of expenses



over \$50,000, has led municipal water boards to take on local debt to continue water treatment upgrades—resulting in an 18% utility rate increase for residents.

- **Texas's Public Services:** The VA shed roughly 20,000 positions nationwide through attrition, spiking clinical shortages for the state's 1.5 million veterans, while a freeze on \$74 million in hazard-mitigation funding has marooned 11 critical storm drainage projects in hurricane-vulnerable Harris County.

- **Washington's Administrative Flow:** Indian Health Service grant portfolios doubled from 100 to 200 grants per manager following staff transitions, while the dissolution of community conservation nonprofits has left local volunteer groups to handle regional trail upkeep.

#### Go Deeper

The Partnership also offers the Federal Harms Tracker, a suite of resources to help the public track the changes and impacts of federal cuts including its Cost to Your Community mapping tool, and The Cost of Cutting American Science.

#### What You Can Do

Understanding how federal executive policies affect your hometown is the first step toward effective civic engagement. You can voice your perspectives on federal funding choices to your representatives by visiting [House.gov](http://House.gov) and [Senate.gov](http://Senate.gov). To support independent research tools that keep local communities informed, visit the Partnership Support Page.

#### About the Author

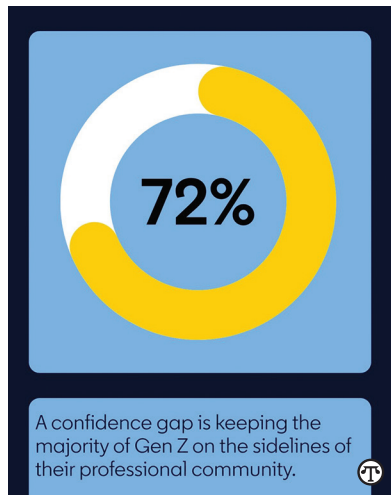
Edith Mwangi is a Journalism and Communications fellow at the Partnership for Public Service, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to building a better government and a stronger democracy.

## 5 Tips for Networking on LinkedIn

(NAPS)—“Networking” has a reputation of being more intimidating than it needs to. Who do you reach out to? What do you say? How do you make a new professional connection without feeling awkward or like you’re asking for something?

Networking doesn’t have to feel this way. However, for many young professionals, figuring out how to get started can be the hardest part.

New LinkedIn research found that a lack of confidence is keeping 72% of Gen Z professionals on the sidelines of their professional community. More than half (53%) say they aren’t sure how to get started building professional connections, with fears of bothering people (37%), being judged (37%) or sounding inauthentic (34%) getting in the way.



That hesitation can make it harder to tap into one of the biggest benefits of having a professional network: learning from other people. A connection can offer advice, share what they’ve learned or point you toward an opportunity you may not have found on your own.

The good news is that people may be more open to those conversations than you think. While many young professionals worry about reaching out, 83% of Millennials and Gen X professionals say they would help someone at the start of their career, even if they didn’t know them.

As AI continues to change how we work and the skills employers need, having people you can turn to for advice, information and new perspectives can make navigating those changes a little easier.

“Gen Z knows these relationships matter, but they aren’t always sure how



to build them,” says LinkedIn Career Expert Catherine Fisher. “Real connections rarely start with a perfectly crafted message or a big ‘networking’ move, but something much smaller. Over time, these small interactions add up.”

So instead of putting pressure on yourself to “network” perfectly, start small. Here are five ways to make building and maintaining professional relationships feel a little more natural.

### 1. Start with what you have in common

Reaching out is a lot less intimidating when you already have an opening. Look for fellow school alumni, or people who share your industry, former employer or even a professional interest.

The Grow tab within the My Network section on LinkedIn can help you discover relevant people you may know or have something in common with, while AI-powered people search lets you search for people using everyday language, like “someone who went to my university and now works in marketing.”

That common ground can help answer the “What do I even say?” question by giving you something specific to reference when you reach out.

### 2. Follow first, connect later

Found someone whose career you admire but don’t actually know? You don’t have to send a connection request right away.

Try following them instead. You can learn from what they share and engage with their content without being connected. If something they post resonates with you, join the conversation in the comments. As you interact more and build rapport over time, you may later decide it

makes sense to send a connection request.

### 3. Keep it low-pressure

Networking doesn’t always have to begin with a direct message. Leaving a thoughtful comment, asking a follow-up question or adding your perspective to a conversation can be another way to maintain relationships with people in your professional community.

Engaging with your network can also lead to more interaction in return. LinkedIn members are almost three times more likely to receive a connection request and almost five times more likely to receive a message if they’ve interacted with a post from someone in their network.

As Fisher says, “Small interactions can be the start of meaningful professional relationships.”

### 4. Don’t wait until you need a favor

The worst time to start building your network? Probably the moment you desperately need one.

Instead, make staying in touch part of your regular routine, and remember that checking in doesn’t always need a big reason. The Catch Up tab within the My Network section on LinkedIn gives you easy conversation starters, like when someone starts a new job or celebrates a work anniversary. Even games on LinkedIn can give you a low-pressure way to reconnect, whether you’re comparing scores, swapping strategies or starting a little friendly competition with a colleague.

Sometimes “Congrats! How’s the new role going?” or kicking off some friendly banter over the day’s puzzle is an easy and fun way to get a conversation going.

### 5. It’s not just a numbers game

Having hundreds of connections doesn’t mean much if you never interact with them. Focus not only on how many people are in your network, but also on nurturing your existing relationships.

Start with one interaction this week. Then another next week. Building a network, and the confidence to use it, happens one relationship at a time. And remember: The person on the other side of that comment, follow or message may be much more willing to help than you expect.

For more advice on navigating work, building professional relationships and making your next career move, subscribe to LinkedIn Career Expert Catherine Fisher’s newsletter on LinkedIn.



## Eight Autumn Outdoor Power Equipment Tips to Avoid Headaches Later

### Prepare for the seasons ahead.

Before the cold and snow hits, get your landscape and power equipment in order.



### When the weather turns harsh, it’s best to be prepared. Here’s how.

(NAPS)—Once the grass gets its final cut and the leaves are handled, it’s time to swap out the lawn mower, blower, and trimmer for the snow thrower, generator, and chainsaw. The Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI) says handling equipment this fall sets the stage for when the weather turns colder.

“A little prep now means less stress—and fewer repair bills—later,” sums up Kris Kiser, President and CEO of OPEI, an international trade association representing manufacturers and suppliers of outdoor power equipment, small engines, battery power systems, portable generators, utility and personal transport vehicles, and golf cars.

#### What To Do

Here are eight quick tips for getting ready for fall equipment storage and winter weather:

**1. Follow the manual.** Review the manufacturer’s guide and follow all safety steps—especially how to shut down equipment quickly. Never disable or remove safety features.

**2. Service before storage.** Do all maintenance as directed by the owner’s manual. Clean, change oil, swap filters, and handle any repairs before parking summer gear. Give winter equipment a once-over, too.

**3. Manage fuel smartly.** Be sure to run tanks empty before storage. For winter equipment, use fresh fuel (most engines run on no more than 10% ethanol), add stabilizer according to manufacturer’s guidelines, and use fuel within 30 days.

**4. Charge and store batteries correctly.** Fully charge batteries, keep them away from metal, and store in a climate-controlled space.

**5. Keep gear sheltered.** Store summer equipment where it’s clean and dry. Keep winter gear handy but out of the weather.

**6. Clear the way.** Make space in the garage or shed now. Remove yard debris, toys, and other hazards from the yard before tree leaf piles or snow hide them.

**7. Be generator-ready.** Stock heavy-duty, outdoor-rated cords long enough to run your generator at a safe distance from the house. Never operate it indoors or near openings.

**8. Keep what’s most important inside.** When operating any outdoor power equipment, kids and pets should be indoors and supervised.

#### Learn More

For more on safety, visit [OPEI.org](https://www.opel.org).

## Did You Know?

(NAPS)—Last year, more than 195,000 Latino blood donors helped save lives and strengthen communities across the country. To help, schedule an appointment using the Red Cross Blood Donor App, call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767), or visit [RedCrossBlood.org](https://www.redcrossblood.org).

The school your children returned to this fall doesn’t have to be the school they return to next fall—it can be a much better fit for them, thanks to school choice programs. Learn more at [edchoice.org](https://www.edchoice.org).

The connection between federal funding and local outcomes often goes unnoticed, which is why the nonpartisan nonprofit Partnership for Public Service works with news organizations to make it easier to report on how communities are being impacted. Learn more at [ourpublicservice.org](https://www.ourpublicservice.org).

As AI continues to change how we work and the skills employers need, having people you can turn to for advice, information and new perspectives can make navigating those changes a little easier. For advice on navigating work, building professional relationships and making your next career move, subscribe to LinkedIn Career Expert Catherine Fisher’s newsletter on LinkedIn.

The Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI) says handling equipment properly this fall sets the stage for when the weather turns colder. Learn more at [OPEI.org](https://www.opel.org).

As people live longer and keep more of their natural teeth, maintaining good oral health becomes an increasingly important part of healthy aging. For information about dental care for seniors, check out the Delta Dental Knowledge



Center: <https://www.DeltaDentalWA.com/Knowledge-Center/Dental-Health-For-Seniors>.

Cigarette butts are, by far, the most littered item in public places. When discarded, they can leak toxic chemicals and threaten the health of wildlife. Learn how you can help at [TobaccoFreeFlorida.com/Get-Involved](https://www.TobaccoFreeFlorida.com/Get-Involved).

This back-to-school season, you can get smart on how to help the next generation grow up free from tobacco and nicotine’s harmful effects. Visit [TobaccoFreeFlorida.com](https://www.TobaccoFreeFlorida.com) or call 1-877-U-CAN-NOW to get started.

When shopping for mattresses, pillows, sofas, upholstered chairs and recliners, youth furniture, cushions, or pet beds, check the directory at [CertiPUR.US](https://www.CertiPUR.US) or consult the CertiPUR-US mobile app to see if the furniture is made with certified foam screened for chemicals that can harm health or contribute to poor indoor air quality. Learn more at [SaferHome.Info](https://www.SaferHome.Info).

It’s a healthy idea to get your annual flu vaccine early in the fall flu season. You can make appointments for yourself and your family by visiting [CVS.com](https://www.CVS.com), [MinuteClinic.com](https://www.MinuteClinic.com) or via the CVS Health app—or you can walk-in to locations nationwide.

# Health News And Notes

## Rooted In Culture And Service: How One Red Cross Employee Went From Advocate To Patient

(NAPS)—For Alexis González, regional communications manager for the American Red Cross, her job gives her the opportunity to serve and work alongside her community every day.

“My work wouldn’t be possible without the support and trust of the people I serve, especially the Latino community,” she says.

“I am the daughter of Mexican parents and was born in Los Angeles. I grew up in a Hispanic community, speaking both Spanish and English and experiencing firsthand what it means to be Latina in the United States. That’s why it’s important to me that people know we are here for everyone,” Alexis says.

### From Donor Advocate To Patient

Last year, Alexis, who spends much of her time raising awareness about the importance of blood donation and is herself a regular donor, faced a medical emergency that required an emergency blood transfusion.

“I was experiencing severe stomach pain. I couldn’t even sit down and was curled up in a fetal position,” Alexis recalls.



“My doctors told me I had three blood clots in the veins connected to my liver, severe anemia, and that I would need two units of blood.

I had never been hospitalized before. I felt overwhelmed and scared. That’s when it hit me that every day, I encourage people to donate blood, and I donate every 56 days myself. But now I was experiencing it from the other side firsthand.”

“Before receiving the blood, I felt awful. I was dizzy and extremely weak. After the transfusion, the color came back to my face, and I no longer felt that weak.”

During her recovery, Alexis told her nurse that she worked for the Red Cross and asked if there was any way to find out where the blood had come from. Two remarkable connections emerged: the nurse’s son was a Red Cross volunteer whom Alexis had met during a training session just two weeks earlier,



**As a trusted advocate in the Latino community, Alexis Gonzalez encouraged blood donation, raised awareness about its lifesaving impact, and helped amplify her community’s voice. Then, a medical emergency showed her firsthand why that mission matters so much.**

and the blood she received had been supplied by the American Red Cross.

“I felt like everything had come full circle. I realized that the work I had done with the Red Cross had impacted me personally, and I can now say from experience that every donation truly reaches someone who needs it.

The two units of blood I received came from two people who took the time to donate, and those donations saved my life.

I know many people in the Latino community are hesitant to donate blood. But I can tell them that their blood is their superpower. By donating blood, they have the power to give life to someone else,” Alexis says.

### Back In The Donor Chair

A few weeks ago, fully recovered, Alexis returned to donate blood and reached an important milestone: her first gallon donated.

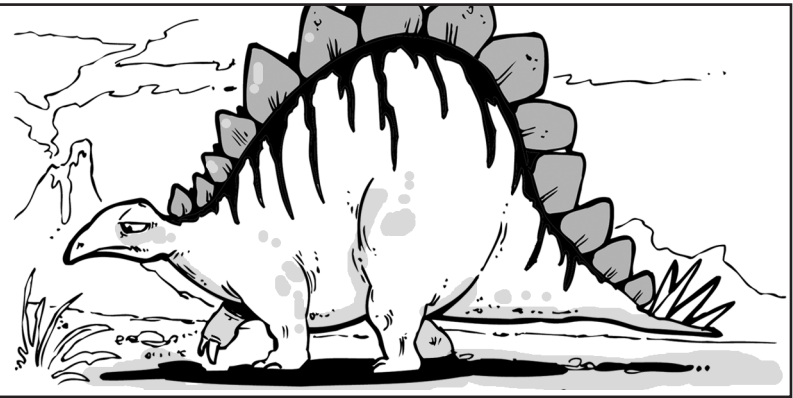
“I feel proud and honored to be able to help someone in need, because we need each other.”

This Hispanic Heritage Month, the Red Cross thanks the more than 195,000 Latino blood donors who gave blood last year. Their generosity helped save lives and strengthen communities across the country. To support our life-saving mission, schedule an appointment using the Red Cross Blood Donor App, call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767), or visit RedCrossBlood.org to find a donation center near you.

Make your appointment today to donate blood, platelets, or AB Elite plasma. As a special thank you, donors will receive a \$15 e-gift card to the merchant of their choice.



San Francisco’s Golden Gate Bridge took 25,000,000 man-hours to build.



The stegosaurus, a large, plant-eating dinosaur, lived about 150 million years ago in what is now the western United States. It had two rows of bony plates shaped like huge arrowheads sticking out of its back.

# Hints For Homeowners

## Before You Turn Up the Heat: What Is Your HVAC System Trying to Tell You?

(NAPS)—When temperatures drop, many homeowners turn on their heating systems, sometimes for the first time in months. That seasonal startup is a good opportunity to pay attention, not just to whether the heat works, but to what your HVAC system may be telling you.

A strange odor, an unusually dirty filter or debris near a register doesn’t necessarily mean your HVAC system needs to be cleaned. However, certain signs may indicate that it is time to have the system professionally inspected.

Here are a few things to watch for as you turn up the heat this fall.

### Dust or Debris Coming from Registers

A small amount of dust around a register is not necessarily unusual. But visible particles blowing from the registers, dark streaks surrounding them or debris collecting shortly after you clean may deserve a closer look.

A professional can look beyond the registers to help determine where the debris is coming from and whether cleaning or another corrective action is warranted.

### Musty or Unusual Odors

It is not uncommon to notice a brief dusty smell when a heating system starts for the first time in the fall. That odor should fade fairly quickly.

A persistent musty, stale or otherwise unusual smell is different. Odors can have several possible sources, and covering them with air fresheners will not address the underlying issue. If the smell continues whenever the system operates, consider having it inspected.

### Signs of Rodents or Insects

Unusual noises, droppings near registers, nesting material or unpleasant odors may indicate that rodents or insects have entered part of the HVAC system.

Because ductwork and other components are often behind walls, above ceilings or in attics and crawl spaces, homeowners may not be able to see the full extent of the problem. Any active infestation should be addressed by a qualified pest-control professional before HVAC cleaning begins.

### Dust and Debris Following Renovations

Home improvement projects can create an enormous amount of fine dust. Drywall sanding, flooring installation, demolition and other construction activities can release particles that travel well beyond the immediate work area.

If registers and returns were not properly protected, or if the HVAC system operated while work was underway, construction debris may have entered the system. An inspection can help determine whether debris has collected inside and whether cleaning is necessary.

### Uneven or Unexplained Airflow

Does one room suddenly feel much warmer or cooler than the others? Is there noticeably less air coming from a particular register?



**Before you turn up the heat this fall, take a moment to look, listen and smell. Your HVAC system may be giving you useful information, and an inspection can help you understand what it means.**

Uneven airflow can have many causes, including closed dampers, blocked registers, damaged or disconnected ductwork, filter problems or issues with other HVAC components. It should not automatically be blamed on dirty ducts.

First, make sure registers are open and not blocked by furniture, rugs or curtains. If the difference persists, an HVAC professional can evaluate the system and identify the cause.

### Filters That Become Dirty Unusually Quickly

Air filters naturally become dirty over time. How often they need to be changed depends on the type of filter, system use, household activities and whether the home has pets.

A filter that becomes heavily loaded much faster than usual, however, may be a clue that something has changed. The filter may be improperly fitted, air may be bypassing it or another condition may be introducing additional debris into the system.

Use the filter type recommended for your HVAC equipment and follow the manufacturer’s replacement guidance. If the rapid buildup continues, consider having the system evaluated.

### Inspect First, Then Decide

None of these signs automatically means your entire HVAC system needs to be cleaned. Odors, dust and airflow changes can have many possible causes.

A professional inspection can help identify the source of the problem, document the condition of the system and determine whether cleaning or another corrective action is appropriate. If cleaning is recommended, ask what parts of the system will be addressed, how the work will be performed and how your home will be protected.

This information comes from Breathing Clean, a consumer resource from NADCA, The HVAC Inspection, Cleaning, and Restoration Association.

### Learn More

Visit [breathingclean.com](http://breathingclean.com) to find a qualified NADCA member company nearby.

# Safety Around The Home

## 7 Lifesaving Furniture Safety Tips

(NAPS)—When buying furniture, consumers look for style and comfort, but it's important to consider safety, too. Here are seven tips to help:

**1. Be aware that popular fabric dressers pose a tip-over risk.** These are the types of dressers with a metal frame and fabric drawers. By law, all clothing storage furniture must be engineered so it won't fall over if kids climb on it or if you open all the drawers at once. Fabric dressers usually are not made to meet this standard and, if they tip over, they can crush small children—or your own feet.

Check SaferProducts.gov to see if your fabric dresser has been recalled. You can follow the instructions for a full refund or report one that has not been recalled.

**2. Check dates and secure furniture.** Check the manufacture date on the back of furniture used to store clothing, including dressers or chests. Beginning in September 2023, those pieces had to meet a strict new stability standard.

Store heavier items down low so taller pieces are not top-heavy. Don't put toys or treats on top of furniture where kids can see but not reach them. New or old, if it has shelves, doors or drawers, anchor it to the wall. Many manufacturers include free anchors, or you can buy anchors. See [www.AnchorIt.gov](http://www.AnchorIt.gov) for advice.

**3. Wall-mount or secure TVs on a sturdy base.** For flat screen TVs, the safest strategy is wall-mounting according to manufacturer instructions.

If you cannot wall-mount your TV, choose a low, sturdy cabinet and secure the TV to the wall or to the furniture with a TV anchor. Never place TVs on furniture not built to hold electronics.

**4. Buy upholstered furniture made with certified foam.** CertiPUR-US® certifies the polyurethane foam used in mattresses and upholstered furniture.

If you choose upholstered furniture made with CertiPUR-US certified foam, you will know the foam has been screened for chemicals that can harm human health or contribute to poor indoor air quality.

If shopping for mattresses, pillows, sofas, upholstered chairs and recliners, youth furniture and play cushions, or



**Keep your family safe at home by heeding these seven hints.**

pet beds, you can check the directory at [CertiPUR.US](http://CertiPUR.US) or consult the CertiPUR-US mobile app while shopping.

**5. Monitor your children around recliners and lift chairs.** Don't let kids play on recliners or fiddle with the buttons or remotes. Return recliners to the upright and closed position when not in use. Know the whereabouts of small children and pets before closing a recliner or lowering a lift chair.

**6. Follow bunk bed safety precautions.** Children under 6 should never use the top bunk. Even older kids should be reminded not to jump from or play on the top bunk. Discourage horseplay and make sure the bunk's ladder or stair is securely fastened.

Bunk beds must have railings on both sides of the top bunk that extend 5 inches or more above the mattress. Decorative finials or extensions of bed posts on the top bunk are not allowed under safety standards, because they can be a strangulation hazard.

**7. Be aware of glass tabletop risks.** Don't let children play on or around glass-top tables and never, ever stand on a glass-top table.

Make sure glass tabletops in your home are made from tempered glass, which is less likely to break. To find out if a glass tabletop is tempered, check the edge or a corner. Most manufacturers mark tempered glass with the word "tempered" or a "T" or stamp it with the code for the glass safety standard, which is ASTM F2813-18.

**Learn More**

You can find further information, at [SaferHome.Info](http://SaferHome.Info).



## The Eye Changes That Come With Age, and the Ones That Don't

(NAPS)—It often starts with a restaurant menu. The type looks smaller than it used to, and the lighting seems dimmer. You hold your phone at arm's length, then a little farther. Eventually you give in and buy a pair of drugstore readers.

For most people, that moment is a normal part of getting older. But it's also a good time to learn which eye changes you can shrug off and which ones you can't. The difference matters more than many people realize. Vision affects much more than whether you can read the fine print. It shapes how safely you move through your home, whether you keep driving, how easily you recognize a friend across the room, and even your mood.

The encouraging news is that losing your sight is not an inevitable part of aging. Many of the conditions that threaten vision can be treated, especially when they're caught early.

**What's normal**

Two changes are so common that most people eventually experience at least one of them.

- **Presbyopia.** This is the reason for those readers. Presbyopia is the gradual loss of the eye's ability to focus on nearby objects. It typically shows up in your 40s or 50s. Books, phone screens, and car dashboards start to blur at close range. It's a nuisance, not a danger, and glasses usually fix it.

- **Dry eye.** With dry eye, the eyes either don't make enough tears, or the tears evaporate too quickly. It can feel like burning or irritation, or like there's sand in your eyes. It can also cause redness and blurry vision. Dry eye is uncomfortable and worth mentioning to an eye care professional, who can discuss over-the-counter and prescription eyedrop options, but it's rarely a threat to your sight.

**Here are the age-related changes you can't ignore**

Some eye diseases that become more common with age require medical at-



**Be wise about your eyes: See an ophthalmologist to keep your vision at its best as you age.**

tention from an ophthalmologist, physicians who specialize in medical and surgical eye care.

Some of them give you clues. **Cataracts** can make the world look cloudy or washed out, and headlights can seem to glare. **Age-related macular degeneration** can make straight lines, like door frames or lines of text, look wavy. **Glaucoma and early diabetic eye disease** are more troubling because they often cause no symptoms at all until damage has already occurred.

That's why ophthalmologists urge you to not wait for symptoms. Any sudden change needs prompt attention. That includes a sudden burst of floaters, flashes of light, a curtain or shadow across your vision, or sudden blurring.

**Why your eyes affect the rest of you**

Good vision does more than help you see clearly. Researchers continue to find that it touches nearly every part of how people live.

- **Your mood.** In the U.S. National Health Interview Survey, adults with visual impairment were more likely to report psychological distress. When it gets hard to see, people often stop going to book club or community events. That withdrawal can lead to isolation and depression.

- **Your balance.** Poor vision makes it harder to notice a curb, a loose rug, or

the last step on a staircase. That raises the risk of falls and injuries, which are a leading threat to independence later in life.

- **Your mind.** Emerging research suggests that healthy vision may also support cognitive well-being as we age. It's another reason to keep up with routine eye exams.

If your vision has already declined, there are ways to stay engaged. Large-print books, magnifiers, transportation services and assistive technologies can help. Asking for help can feel like giving up some independence. Often it's what lets you keep doing the things you love.

**The simplest thing you can do: Get your eyes checked**

The single most effective way to protect your vision is a medical eye exam. This isn't the quick vision screening. It's a full exam with an ophthalmologist, who can spot signs of disease long before you notice anything.

The American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends this schedule for healthy adults:

- Once in your 20s
- Twice in your 30s
- As your ophthalmologist advises in your 40s and beyond
- Every one to two years at 65 and older

You may need exams more often if you have diabetes or a family history of eye disease. Some people in these groups should go once or twice a year, or more.

**If cost is standing in your way**

EyeCare America, a public service program of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, may be able to help. It provides medical eye exams at no out-of-pocket cost for eligible adults 18 and older who are uninsured or underinsured. You can check whether you qualify at [aao.org/eyecare-america](http://aao.org/eyecare-america).

So, the next time you're holding a menu at arm's length, go ahead and buy the readers. Then book your eye exam, too.



## Flu Season Is Here: 3 Steps to Take Now

(NAPS)—Influenza (flu) is nothing to sneeze at. It's a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and sometimes the lungs. There are two main types of flu virus: A and B.

Millions of Americans get the flu every year and thousands are hospitalized because of it.

Some people, particularly those 65 years and older, young children, and people with certain health conditions, are at higher risk of serious flu complications.

**How to Protect Yourself**

There are three things you can do to help keep yourself and your family from getting the flu:

**1. The most important thing is to get a flu shot.**

- **When to get it:** The CDC recommends that you get vaccinated in September or October, before flu season begins, and ideally by the end of October.

- **Why to get a flu shot every year:** Protection from the flu vaccine declines over time and the vaccines are updated to help protect against the most common virus strains that will be circulating during the upcoming season.

- **What does it cost:** Fortunately, flu shots are free through most insurance plans, including Medicare, at most pharmacies. Many CVS pharmacies have special flu vaccines designed for children and others for people over 65. These pharmacies also offer more than 15 other preventive vaccines, including RSV and COVID-19.

- **How to get the vaccine:** You can make appointments for yourself and your fam-



**It's a healthy idea to get your annual flu vaccine early in the fall flu season.**

ily by visiting [CVS.com](http://CVS.com), [MinuteClinic.com](http://MinuteClinic.com) or via the CVS Health app—or you can walk-in to locations nationwide.

**2. Regularly Wash Hands throughout the Day:** Touching everyday items like door handles and other surfaces can be difficult to avoid.

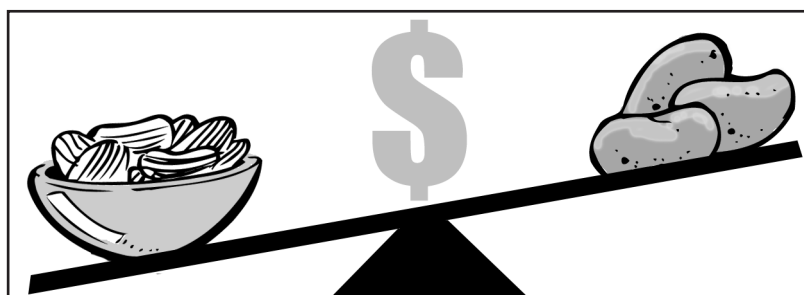
- To help combat the spread of viruses and bacteria, wash your hands regularly (especially after coughing or sneezing) with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds and avoid touching your mouth, eyes, and nose.
- Alcohol-based sanitizers that contain at least 60 percent alcohol can be used when you are on-the-go, and soap and water are not available.

**3. Practice a Healthy Lifestyle:** Healthful habits that can help protect you against the flu and other illnesses include:

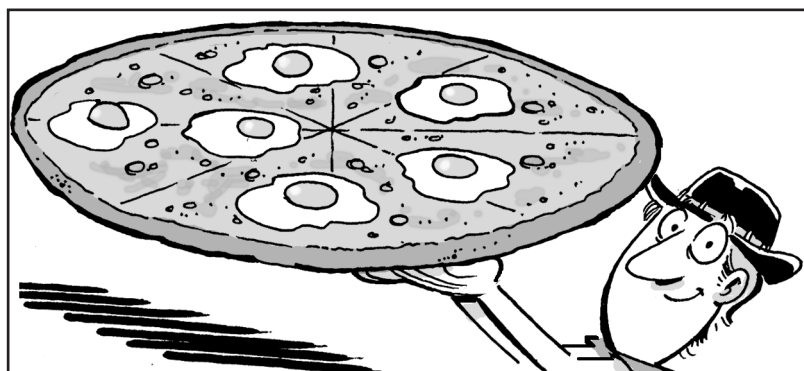
- Getting plenty of sleep
- Being physically active
- Managing stress
- Drinking adequate fluids
- Eating nutritious food

**Learn More**

For further facts on vaccines, visit [www.cvs.com](http://www.cvs.com) or [www.minuteclinic.com](http://www.minuteclinic.com).



**A pound of potato chips can cost up to 200 times more than a pound of the potatoes that were used to make them.**



**In Australia, the No.1 topping for pizza is eggs.**

# Florida News & Notes

## Back to School Is a Season of Learning. For Adults, Too

By Lacoadia Burkes, Acting Bureau Chief, Tobacco Free Florida

(NAPS)—For kids across Florida, back-to-school is a time of change—new teachers, new schedules, new friends. For the adults in these students' lives, this can be a season of learning and growth, too. Parents and caregivers, teachers and staff, coaches and school nurses—you all play a huge role in their health and wellness. This back-to-school season, you can get smart on how to help the next generation grow up free from tobacco and nicotine's harmful effects.

The first lesson is that if you use tobacco or nicotine products, make back-to-school season when you commit to quit. Whether it's after the stress of getting classroom supplies or the moments after carline drop-off, there's probably one cue in your life that's become connected with nicotine. Plan for those moments. If you have a slip-up, learn from it and be even smarter for your next try! Free support is available when you're ready.

You have heard quitting is smart. You may even have tried several times. Quitting isn't just for you, though. Second-hand smoke causes tens of thousands of deaths each year, and parents who smoke are up to four times more likely to have children who smoke. If you are committed to quitting for your health and theirs, Tobacco Free Florida's How to Quit initiative can help. TobaccoFreeFlorida.com/HTQ covers setting a quit date, using free quit aids, talking to a doctor, and building a support system.

A second lesson is to learn how kids will encounter tobacco and nicotine today. It's different from a generation ago. Did you know fewer than 1 in 100 Florida youth currently smoke cigarettes? That's because of dedicated adults like you.

But there are concerning numbers, too: Last year, e-cigarette use among Florida youth ticked up again after several years of decline. This may be because kids are less likely to say the adults in their lives are talking to them about tobacco and nicotine's harmful effects. At Tobacco Free Florida, we urge you to find opportunities to have those conversations in a caring, constructive, and open way.

To get ready for that chat, learn about the new nicotine devices they may encounter in their new friend group, around campus, or on social media. These include things like:

- **Oral nicotine products**—marketed as an alternative to smokeless tobacco. Goes between gums and lip.



**Parents can help protect kids from the dangers of tobacco by not smoking themselves. Fortunately, in Florida, you can get help quitting, says Lacoadia Burkes, Acting Bureau Chief, Tobacco Free Florida.**

- **“Smart” vapes**—feature digital screens, built-in games. Kid-friendly flavors like “merry berry” and “cherry pop.” Digital prizes and Bluetooth connectivity strengthen addiction.
- **Disposable e-cigarettes**—designed for one use only. Addictive, harmful to the environment, easier to conceal than regular cigarettes.
- **Flavored e-cigarettes**—the most common type of e-cigarettes used by youth across Florida and nationwide. Kid-friendly packaging, flavors.
- **“Heat-not-burn” devices**—electronically heat a tobacco stick or capsule. Popular overseas, on the horizon here.

TobaccoFreeFlorida.com/NewNicotineGeneration has more information including sample images of each type of product. School nurses, who often serve as a first line of student health support, can find resources at TobaccoFreeFlorida.com/ChampionsAgainstNicotine.

Once you've “done your homework” about what Florida students will see, the last lesson can be on how to have the conversation that can save a life.

The ride to and from school can be a chance to start the conversation. A billboard you pass or a convenience store ad is a moment to ask what they already know and what they are hearing. A chat after practice can be a time to discuss how tobacco and nicotine harm the heart and lungs. Be patient and remember listening matters as much as talking. Honest information lands harder than scare tactics. One conversation is rarely enough; ongoing is how a message takes hold.

Back to school season is filled with memories, changes, and decisions that can shape a child's future. Caring adults can use this as a time to save lives. Visit TobaccoFreeFlorida.com or call 1-877-U-CAN-NOW to get started.

# Senior Health News

## Healthy Teeth for Life.

### What Older Adults Need to Know

(NAPS)—As people live longer and keep more of their natural teeth, maintaining good oral health becomes an increasingly important part of healthy aging. While oral health problems are not an inevitable part of getting older, changes in health, medications, and physical abilities can affect the teeth and gums. These may include dry mouth, receding gums, and difficulty brushing or cleaning between the teeth.

“Growing older doesn't mean losing your teeth or accepting poor oral health as inevitable,” said Nadia M. Fugate, DMD, Delta Dental of Washington's associate dental director. “With preventive care, good daily oral hygiene and regular dental visits, many people can maintain healthy teeth and gums throughout their lives.”

Because of better dentistry and overall oral health, older adults are retaining their teeth for much longer and that makes preventive and restorative dental care so much more important.

#### Why oral health can change with age

Older adults can face several oral health challenges:

- **Dry mouth:** Some medications reduce saliva production. Saliva helps protect teeth, so dry mouth can increase the risk of cavities, particularly on exposed tooth roots.
- **Root decay:** Receding gums can expose the roots of teeth, which are more vulnerable to decay than enamel.
- **Gum disease:** Plaque buildup can cause inflammation and contribute to gum disease. Certain health conditions, including diabetes, may increase the risk or severity of periodontal disease.
- **Changes in dexterity or mobility:** Arthritis, limited mobility, vision changes or other physical or cognitive challenges can sometimes make brushing and cleaning between teeth more difficult.
- **Changes in health or medications:** Dentists need to know about medical conditions and all medications and supplements a patient takes because they can affect oral health and dental treatment.



**Time doesn't have to stop your smile with proper dental care as you age.**

#### What older adults can do every day

Brush twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and clean between the teeth daily using floss, or a water pick, or floss holder. Regular dental examinations and professional cleanings can help identify oral health concerns early, when they may be easier to manage and treat.

For people experiencing dry mouth, staying hydrated and discussing the problem with a dentist or physician can help. A dentist may also recommend additional fluoride protection for people at increased risk of tooth decay.

#### Talk with your dentist as your health needs change

Most older adults can continue receiving care from their regular dentist. What matters most is keeping your dental team informed about changes in your health, medications and ability to manage daily oral hygiene.

If medical conditions, medications, mobility or cognitive changes begin to affect your oral health or dental care, talk with your dentist. Your dentist can adapt care to your individual needs and, when appropriate, coordinate with other health care professionals or recommend additional resources or specialized care.

Don't hesitate to ask questions or discuss any concerns about comfort, accessibility, medications or changes you've noticed in your mouth. Dental care can be individualized as your needs change over time.

For more information about dental care for seniors, check out the Delta Dental Knowledge Center: <https://www.DeltaDentalWA.com/Knowledge-Center/Dental-Health-For-Seniors>.

*Editors Note: Content is approved for Washington state publications only.*

# Florida News & Notes

## September is Tobacco Free Parks and Beaches Education Month

By Lacoadia Burkes, Acting Bureau Chief, Tobacco Free Florida

(NAPS)—As summer temperatures start to break, it's a good time to focus on how important it is to keep our Florida beaches and parks clean. You may not be surprised to hear that cigarette butts are, by far, the most littered item in public places. When discarded, they can leak toxic chemicals and threaten the health of wildlife. They are also an eyesore and harm tourists' perceptions of our otherwise beautiful and welcoming public lands.

This September, in recognition of Tobacco Free Florida Parks and Beaches Education Month, there will be opportunities around the state to help clean local parks and beaches while sharing information about how toxic tobacco can be to people and the environment.

There are many great reasons to work together to make our shared spaces tobacco free. Cigarettes are not biodegradable, as some think. Each discarded butt introduces plastic, arsenic, tar, lead, ammonia, and more into the environment. Cigarette butts can also be harmful for children or small animals who come in contact with



**Keep Florida free of cigarette butts.**

them. Cities and counties spend millions cleaning them up, and in addition to endangering people and animals they also threaten the tourism activity we all depend on. Other things associated with tobacco—including lighters and e-cigarettes—are also among the most harmful and common items found in park and beach cleanups.

There may be cleanup events happening in your area, offering opportunities to come together as a community and care for the beaches and parks we all enjoy. Visit TobaccoFreeFlorida.com/Get-Involved to see if your county is hosting any events.

Remember, it will take all of us to help keep Florida tobacco free.