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KEYS TO LIVING A LONGER, HAPPIER LIFE

What is the secret to living a longer, healthier, happier life? A recent article in the *AARP Bulletin* reviews the answers to this question as provided by Robert Butler, M.D., one of the country's foremost experts on aging. The 83 year-old Butler is the founding director of the National Institute on Aging at the National Institutes of Health. He is a gerontologist, psychiatrist, and Pulitzer Prize-winning author. His advice is founded on sound scientific research and a keen understanding of longevity. Dr. Butler asserts that research clearly shows that a healthy lifestyle can make a big difference in helping people live longer and push back or avoid the onset of chronic illness, lack of mobility, and cognitive decline. Dr. Butler's latest book, *The Longevity Prescription: The 8 Keys to a Long, Healthy Life*, serves as a guide to healthy aging designed to assist readers with living longer and better lives. For example, in his book, Dr. Butler prescribes "cognitive calisthenics" to maintain a healthy brain, preserve mental sharpness, and stave-off dementia. He recommends engaging in activities that challenge one's brain for at least twenty minutes each day, five days a week, gradually increasing the level of challenge over time. He suggests activities such as learning a word a day, reading a book, learning to play an instrument, learning a new language, or pursuing a passion. He also advises increasing human interactions by volunteering, entertaining, or even playing games. Maintaining a healthy brain is just one key to living a longer, happier life. Butler stresses that the other seven keys – nurturing relationships, getting regular sleep, reducing stress, varying social connections, exercising more, eating healthier, and receiving preventative medical care – are just as vital. These suggestions seem like common sense to many, but it's putting them into practice that can be difficult. Dr. Butler's book uses easy-to-follow, step-by-step strategies and checklists to assist readers with getting on the path to a healthier lifestyle.

In his interview with the *AARP Bulletin*, Dr. Butler also offers the following interesting facts on health and longevity:

- Genes account for only about 25% of an individual's health and longevity, while our environment and personal behaviors account for the rest.
- The life expectancy today of the average 65 year-old man is 81 years. The life expectancy of the average 65 year-old woman is 85 years. More than 17% of 65 year-old men and 31% of 65 year-old women are expected to live to 90 years or more.
- Within species like dogs and mice, small body size tends to extend life span, and shorter people are relatively resistant to most forms of cancer, compared with taller people. Shorter people may be relatively long-lived or at least resistant to certain major classes of disease.
- Resveratrol, the ingredient found in blueberries, peanuts, and in the skin of grapes, may help extend life and is ten times more abundant in red wines than whites.
- Aerobic exercise three times a week can reduce eye pressure – a major risk for glaucoma.
- A thirty minute nap a day may reduce heart disease risk by as much as 30%. Longer naps can interfere with good sleep.
- Old age is now perceived as a “time of continuing vitality.” About 44% of Americans over the age of 65 years describe the present as “the best years of my life.”

The attorneys at Oast & Hook can assist clients and their families with their estate, long-term care, veteran's benefits, financial, insurance, and special needs planning.

Ask Allie

O&H: Allie, we've heard that researchers are training dogs to detect cancer in humans. Please tell us about it.

Allie: Sure! A recent *Parade Magazine* article described efforts to train household dogs to detect cancer through human breath samples. Michael McCulloch, Ph.D., director of research for Pine Street Foundation, a non-profit cancer research nonprofit in San Antonio, Texas, discussed results of a study involving five dogs who had been taught to recognize lung and breast cancer from human breath samples. These dogs correctly detected breast cancer 88% of the time and lung cancer with 99% accuracy. These rates compare favorably to results from chest X-rays, CT scans and mammography. Dr. McCulloch said that the experiment's sample size was small, and more testing needs to be done, but scientists have taken the concept more seriously since Pine Street Foundation published its 2006 report. The Foundation researchers are conducting a new study involving dogs and the detection of ovarian cancer. Dr. McCulloch explained that a breath test would be particularly helpful for this type of cancer because “it is difficult to diagnose in early stages and much more difficult to treat in later stages.” To see a video of cancer-sniffing canines at work, see www.parade.com/pinestreet. Sounds like a great idea! Hmmm, maybe they can train cats to do some scientific work with people.... I'll get to work on that. See you next week!

Announcements

Oast & Hook attorney Letha McDowell will speak on the topic of elder law at the monthly meeting of the Norfolk Retired Employees Association from 10:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., Friday, July 30th at the Titustown Recreation Center, 7545 Diven Street, Norfolk, Virginia 23505. For more information on this organization, please visit www.norfolk.gov/retirees.

Oast & Hook is pleased to announce that their new Harbour View office, located at 5806 Harbour View Boulevard, Suffolk, Virginia 23435, will be open as of Monday, July 26.

Distribution of This Newsletter

Oast & Hook encourages you to share this newsletter with anyone who is interested in issues pertaining to the elderly, the disabled and their advocates. The information in this newsletter may be copied and distributed, without charge and without permission, but with appropriate citation to Oast & Hook, P.C. If you are interested in a free subscription to the *Oast & Hook News*, then please e-mail us at mail@oasthook.com, telephone us at 757-399-7506, or fax us at 757-397-1267.

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