

Resources

The Area Agency on Aging & Disabilities of Southwest Washington's Caregiver Corner

Have fun in the sun through local programs

By Patti Atkins

As we transition to a sunshine-filled summer, we're eager to reintroduce ourselves to nature. It's also a great time to meet new people and form social connections, which are important throughout life, but even more important as we age.

Sunlight is a great source of vitamin D, which can help fight osteoporosis, anxiety and depression. Vitamin D also boosts the immune system and improves brain health. Getting outside for a brief period should be a priority for all aging adults — especially those fighting memory diseases.

If you or older loved ones plan to be outside at any time, wear sun protection. Sunscreen, sunglasses and protective clothing will help protect the eyes and skin. Additionally, our bodies lose fluids more quickly as the temperature rises, so be sure to stay hydrated.

Stay safe and cool this summer, but don't forget to have fun!

A few opportunities to get outdoors include the following.

- **Vancouver Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services** offers festivals, special community events, and outdoor concerts and movies throughout the summer months. Visit <https://www.cityofvancouver.us/government/department/parks-recreation-and-cultural-services/special-events-in-vancouver/>.
- Vancouver Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services also has programs for older adults, including 50 and Better Afternoon Dances on Tuesdays and Fridays at the Luepke Center and Forever Young Hikes for people of various skill levels. Visit <https://www.cityofvancouver.us/government/department/parks-recreation-and-cultural-services/recreation-activities/>.
- HOPE Dementia Support offers three great series of events this summer, Meet Me at the Movies, Meet Me at the Museum and Meet Me at the Wildlife Refuge. All are designed to benefit those living with dementia and their care partners and families, but all are welcome. Visit <https://hopedementia-support.org/>.
- Farmers markets are a great way to meet new people and shop for nutritious, fresh food. Markets are located statewide; to find one near you, visit <https://wafarmersmarkets.org/washingtonfarmersmarketdirectory/>.
- Water-based activities such as swimming and water aerobics help us beat the heat and stay fit at the same time. Such activities are low impact, which is of benefit to those with arthritis or stiff joints. Water exercises can also increase bone density and muscle mass to help with flexibility and reduction of pain. Firstenburg Community Center and Marshall Community Center have pools and water aero-

bics. View schedules and register at <https://www.cityofvancouver.us/government/department/parks-recreation-and-cultural-services/recreation-activities/>.

- FVRL libraries have passes to attractions and museums that you can check out with your library card (which is free!), as well as art shows, speakers and much more! Visit: <https://www.fvrl.org/>.

Last but not least, summer isn't complete without ice cream! An ice cream social is a great way to engage with others while cooling off with a sweet treat. Need another excuse? National Ice Cream Day is July 21. Just be sure to consider any dietary restrictions before indulging.

Patti Atkins, APR, is the communications coordinator for the Area Agency on Aging & Disabilities of Southwest Washington (www.HelpingElders.org). To learn more about the importance of strengthening your connections and relationships, visit <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeand-style/2024/jan/29/us-surgeon-general-vivek-murthy-loneliness-mental-health-epidemic-social-media>.

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