

Senior citizens test knowledge

Remember math story problems and when did-what-happen history quizzes? Seven brave seniors at the Mature-Minglers Center in Bloomfield Hills agreed to accept the National Academic Challenge for Senior Citizens.

And surprising to most, their scores were pretty good.

Dottie Stebbins and Ray Keister of Bloomfield Hills, Marilyn Hanning and Charles Cooper of Bloomfield Township, Allyn Pooler of Orchard Lake and Donna Snyder and Terry Sorrentino of Farmington Hills were a little apprehensive but willing to try the very comprehensive tests.

The written tests given in senior centers across the United States during the last two weeks of May were composed of 25 to 50 questions in mathematics, geography and American and world history.

The object of the Challenge for Seniors was to promote group cooperation, conversation and healthy debate.

Questions ranged from the effects of the Crusades during the Middle Ages to the definition of the word "holocaust" to those old math story problems involving the number of trains passing if trains are leaving from opposite stations left every 15 minutes.

Most were multiple-choice (remember multiple guess?) questions and provoked a lot of discussion between participants before an answer was agreed upon.

Cooper and Keister adopted the approach of individually answering the questions and then resolving their differences to come up with one answer.

"There has been a change in terminology since I was in school. It was harder than I thought it would be," said Keister, a former finance officer. Cooper, an engineer, said he came in with an open mind but thought the test didn't need to be as complicated as it was.

Both men disagreed with some test-question formats and were going to check them out with match experts.

The participants had some interesting reasons for selecting their subject. Sorrentino, a former teacher, chose geography because, "That's what I'm least bad at."

The seven were divided into three groups, then sent to different rooms to work on the one-hour timed tests. The two groups of women used the collaboration method, discussing each question first, then pooling their knowledge to come up with an answer.

"We had a few good laughs at ourselves," said Snyder.

"Yes, until we got to (the) Philadelphia (questions)," added Stebbins, a former librarian.

Marian Kraai, program supervisor at Mature Minglers, administered the test and, with the help of the participants, graded them.

Mathematics scores for the Mature Minglers were lowest, in the 50 percent range. Geography, American and world history scores ranged from 70 to 85 percent. Those scores were sent in to the national office. Kraai will receive a report indicating how the center's seniors rated against others in the nation.

"I really am shocked at how difficult the questions are. I showed the tests to my son, who is graduating from high school and he said it was way too hard for him, except the math. My husband agreed it is a pretty tough test," Kraai said.

She plans to use the program again as an intergenerational exercise. Seniors from Lahser and Andover senior high schools honor societies will be teamed with senior citizens to promote renewed learning and cooperation between the two age groups.

"One of the objectives of the test is to promote group cooperation, and I thought it was interesting to see how differently the men and women approached the problems," Kraai said.

She added that the men believed there were errors in the test and they wanted to go over it again. The women, although serious in participation, were more inclined to have fun with the questions.

"Probably the best summation of the experience was Cooper's response to how hard or easy the questions were. 'Rounding the questions was easy. The answers were hard.'"

Album is published every third Monday

The Eccentric Newspapers Monthly Album is published the third Monday of each month and is reserved for residents and former residents of The Eccentric circulation area.

Photos and engagement or wedding announcements are due Tuesday, July 7, for the Monthly Album to be published Monday, July 20.

Engagement announcements will be accepted no later than 45 days prior to the wedding. Wedding announcements must be submitted within 90 days following the wedding. Wedding announcements received past the 60-day deadline will be run only on a space-available basis.

Photos, submitted should be black and white glossy, preferably a vertical shot and 5x7 inches in size. Color photographs can be submitted but will not reproduce as well.

Please put an identifying name and daytime phone number on the back of the photo. Due to the volume of photographs handled, The Eccentric Newspapers is not responsible for any that may be lost or damaged. Photos may be picked up two weeks after publication and will be held for 60 days. If you wish to have the photograph back it should be marked "Hold for pickup." Photos will not be mailed back to families.

Engagement and wedding information forms can be obtained at the newspaper's information desk from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., 805 E. Maple, Birmingham. If you are unable to pick up a form, one will be mailed to you if a self-addressed, stamped envelope is sent to Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham 48069.

Questions should be directed to the information desk receptionist in the Birmingham office at 644-1100.

For information about the Observer Newspapers Monthly Album for residents or former residents of the Observer Newspapers circulation area, contact Rose Butler at the Farmington Observer, 21895 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336, phone 477-5450.

Parents discuss special 'directive'

Q. My parents live in a nursing home in another state. They have called me about something they say is an advanced directive. I'm not certain they have the information straight and would appreciate your explaining exactly what it is.

A. All nursing home residents have the right to complete an advance directive. This is their right to make their own health decisions such as the right to accept or refuse medical treatment. The advance directive is in the form of a written statement and should be signed in advance of any serious illness. It gives the older person the opportunity to tell family, friends and health care professionals about how they wish their medical decisions to be made. The advance directive allows the individual to state his or her health care choices or to name someone to make those choices should the person become unable to make the choices for himself or herself. An advanced directive gives older persons choices. They can say "yes" or "no" to any treatment available, and it is in writing.

There are two common forms of advanced directives. One is living wills and the other is durable powers of attorney specifically for health care. It is important to know, however, that laws differ from state to state regarding the legal choices available and that can legally be honored by health care facilities. In some states, laws may make it advisable to have one advanced directive rather than the other. For example, living wills are not yet legal in Michigan but durable power of attorney for health care decisions is.

The decision as to whether or not to have an advanced directive is totally up to each person. There is no requirement that anyone must have one. Should it be decided to have one, it is wise to notify and give copies to family members, attorneys, physicians, or the person you have named as your proxy or agent. Federal law states that if a person enters a Medicare or Medicaid nursing facility or hospital, receives home health or hospice care from a Medicare or Medicaid provider or is a part of a Medicare or Medicaid certified HMO, you will be asked if you have an advanced directive and to provide a copy for that agency's or organization's files.

As with any other important decision, such as an advanced directive, family, friends, your physician and attorney should be consulted.

The Wayne County Sheriff's Department has several programs designed specifically for older adults dealing with crime-proofing your home, personal safety, and how to recognize con games. Unfortunately, older adults often are the victims of these types of crimes and the Sheriff's Department is concerned with providing information that will help prevent these activities.

In addition, the department has an Ident-Adult program. Officers are available to come to senior organizations and make photo identification cards that also list information about the individual's health and medications. The card also will list an emergency contact person. The Ident-Adult program is sponsored by the Health Alliance Plan. There is no charge for the identification card or for any of the safety programs offered by the Wayne County Sheriff's Department.

For additional information call 224-0618 during normal business hours. There is also an answering machine, and your call will be returned as quickly as possible.

Renee Mahler is a gerontologist and the director of communications and admissions at a Rochester Hills nursing facility. She is a member of the Michigan State Commission on Services to the Aging. Send your questions to her at the Observer & Eccentric, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham 48069.

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