

Important to keep learning new things, right Alexa?

Alexa; uttering that name is music to my ears — literally. Ever since I was introduced to the Amazon Echo cylindrical object at my daughter's house, I wanted one.

As a result, my son and daughter-in-law presented me with my birthday gift and I've been hooked on listening to smooth jazz music anytime I want without taking the time to shuffle around my old CDs.

With the simple command, "Alexa, play smooth jazz," I receive an instantaneous "reply" of music that plays as long as I want it to.

But that's not the only task the techy-thingy does. Ask it any question and you'll receive a reply. Through a series of apps (with the help of our 16-year-old grandson, Ben) I could receive weather information, calculate the length of a commute, dim the lights in my home and turn on the fan.

Ben just set up Alexa for us after I had little success trying to do it myself. (Why do such devices never come with concise directions for connecting? Another question for Alexa?)

For now, it's one simple command or question at a time and I'm amazed at the plethora of trivia that's entered my brain cells.

Recently, I demonstrated my new device to two teens who were visiting us and it attracted at least 15 minutes of



DOLLY MERRITT

their attention.

"Can it play Ariana Grande?" inquired the 14-year-old.

"Who?" I questioned and then instructed my young friend to ask. She was rewarded with a few seconds of play before she interrupted Alexa — in the middle of playing the first request — to play songs by Justin Bieber.

And so, it began, a deluge of questions from brother and sister asking about sports, pop songs, hip-hop, performers and even requesting jokes, but no bland requests for definitions of difficult words, answers to mathematical problems or bits of history.

At one point, the kids (and I) couldn't stop laughing when Paul, my husband, addressed Alexa as Alexstra and received no reply.

For those without the know-it-all Amazon Echo, you must say the name "A-lex-a" with much precision; otherwise you'll receive no response.

I evoked even more laughter when I couldn't help shouting another question to the black cylinder sitting on my kitchen countertop and it replied in its usual calm GPS-style manner.

All this leads me to ponder the advancement of technology that has permeated our lives — some more than others.

As I struggle to keep from nourishing the never-had-it-before, why-do-I-need-it-now mindset, I remind myself of the importance of learning new things.

I do use my computer every day, maybe not all its capabilities but it has become essential to my writing, emails, Googling and shopping.

A smartphone enables me to text, check on the weather, take photos, email and to do other things I haven't become addicted to.

My old Nook for reading went kaput and now I'm learning what my new Kindle can do.

So, it seems that I'm becoming more dependent on things that never existed not so many years ago. I guess that's progress.

Now, in an ongoing quest for knowledge, rather than look up words in the dictionary, all I need do is ask.

"Alexa, what is the definition of antidisestablishmentarianism," I queried.

"Antidisestablishmentarianism is a noun that describes the opposition of the disestablishment of the Church of England," replied the female voice.

Thank you, Alexa. I can learn so many new things every day. All I've gotta do is remember them.

Dolly Merritt writes from Westminster. She can be contacted via email at dolly827@hotmail.com.

Fairhaven residents produce artwork through Cultivating Creativity program

Staff Report

On June 28, residents of Integrace Fairhaven in Sykesville explored the arts of expressive painting and digital photography in two workshops held at the life plan community. The workshops are part of Fairhaven's 8-week Cultivating Creativity program, which is supported through a \$21,500 grant awarded to Fairhaven in 2016 by Aroha Philanthropies through its national Seeding Vitality Arts initiative.

The goal of the Seeding Vitality Arts programs is to inspire and enable older adults to learn, make and share the arts in ways that are novel, complex and socially engaging. All programs are led by professional teaching artists, and culminate in a public sharing event.

At Fairhaven, 22 Expressive Painting students explored the topic of values in art, analyzed photos and prints using a grayscale, then created an acrylic representation in these tones. The class then employed these skills in planning their own work of art.

Eleven Digital Photography students learned techniques and composition, and explored exposure and reflected light metering. The students' most recent assignment was to capture patriotism in action over the Fourth of July holiday weekend.

"The Cultivating Creativity program has given our community residents a wonderful opportunity to explore their passion and talents for the arts," said Laura Gillen, who is leading the Cultivating Creativity program at Integrace Fairhaven. "We are thrilled to partner with Aroha Philanthropies and join in their nationwide movement to bring joy, connection, improved health and well-being, and a renewed sense of purpose to older people in community and residential settings, while documenting the effectiveness of these programs."

Integrace Fairhaven will be holding two more Cultivating Creativity programs this fall, including the art of creative writing and a final discipline to be chosen by the students.

Integrace oversees a family of retirement communities throughout Maryland, including in Fairhaven.



Fairhaven resident Betsy Bucks participates in an Expressive Painting workshop as part of Integrace Fairhaven's Cultivating Creativity program.

CARROLL COUNTY SENIOR CENTER SCHEDULES FOR JULY 17-21

MOUNT AIRY

703 Ridge Ave., Mount Airy
301-829-2407 or 410-795-1017
Lunch served at 11:45 a.m.

MONDAY
Each Monday: Games, Bridge, Quilting

July 17: Color Me Happy, adult coloring: 1-3 p.m.

July 17: Site Council meeting: 10:30 a.m.

TUESDAY
Each Tuesday: Massage Therapy by appointment, Tai Chi, Better Health & Wellness and games

July 18: Color Me Happy adult coloring: 10:30-11:30 a.m.

July 18: Nutrition Talk with Ann: noon
July 18: Sub Day, must sign up: 11:45 a.m. - MUST sign up for lunch by Tuesday, July 11th no later than 10:00 am

WEDNESDAY
Each Wednesday: Massage Therapy by appointment, Drawing & Painting Class, Better Health & Wellness, Yoga and Mahjong
July 19: Blood pressure screening with Connie: 11:30 a.m.

THURSDAY
Each Thursday: Tap Dancing, Drawing & Painting, Reflexology, Quilting, Itch to Stitch, Arthritis Exercise and Games (pinochle, Mexican Train, Hand & Foot)

FRIDAY
Each Friday: Tai Chi, Bridge and Movie Matinee (except on the second Friday)

July 21: Color Me Happy, adult coloring: 9-11 a.m.

NORTH CARROLL

2328 Hanover Pike, Green-

mount
410-386-3900
Lunch served at noon.

MONDAY
Each Monday: Lunch, Wood-carving, Quilting Bee, Water-color Painting Classes, Fun & Fitness Plus Exercise, Hearts Card Game, Nickel Bingo, Tai Chi I, Beginner Tai Chi, Pickle ball (now at North Carroll High School Gym).

July 17: Kathy's Nutrition Talk: 12:15 p.m.

TUESDAY
Each Tuesday: Lunch, Crochet & Knitting, Silver Sneakers Classic Exercise, Arthritis Foundation Exercise, Seated Yoga, Drama Club, Line Dance, Drawing and Painting Class, Mah Jong, Pinochle.

July 18: Sign up for Sept. 9 American Music Theatre Doo Wop and lunch at Hershey's Farm Restaurant trip: 9 a.m.

WEDNESDAY
Each Wednesday: Lunch, Carroll County Pool League, Arthritis Foundation Exercise, Nickel Bingo, Instrumental Music Lessons, Belly Dance, Zumba Gold Class.

July 19: TLC group; make blankets, hats, etc. for different community groups: 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

THURSDAY
Each Thursday: Lunch, Exercise Class, Pitch Card Game, Pool Tournament, Sing-A Song Singing Group, Stitchers & Thee Needlecrafts, Social Bridge Game, Pinochle Card Game, 500 Card Game, Line Dance, Beaded Jewelry.

FRIDAY
Each Friday: Lunch, Tai Chi Beginners Fan Form, Fun & Fitness Exercise, Tai Chi

Beginners Fan Form, Tai Chi 2, Adult Coloring Group, Pool Tournament, Scrabble Game, Ballroom Dance Instruction, Social Ballroom Dancing.

SOUTH CARROLL

5928 Mineral Hill Road, Eldersburg
410-386-3700
Lunch served at noon.

MONDAY
Each Monday: Art Techniques Class, Quilting Club, Tai Chi-Intermediate, Zumba, Yoga, Nickel Bingo, Bridge

July 17: Farmer Market voucher tickets: 10 a.m.-noon

TUESDAY
Each Tuesday: Arthritis Exercise, Sr. Fun & Fitness, Tap Dancing, Belly Dancing, Painting and Drawing Class, Mah Jong, Penny Bingo, Beginners Pinochle, Tai Chi- Beginners

WEDNESDAY
Each Wednesday: Carroll County Pool League, Penny Bingo, Pinochle, Seated Yoga, Zumba, Country Line Dance, Crafts, Art Workshop, Beginners Pinochle

THURSDAY
Each Thursday: Exercise with Valerie, Tai Chi Beginners, Ceramics Workshop, Art Workshop, Nickel Bingo, Card Making Tai Chi Introduction

FRIDAY
Each Friday: Bonnie's Exercise Class, Penny Bingo, Art Workshop, Domino's, Coloring Fun, HATHA Yoga, Seated Zumba

TANEYTOWN

220 Roberts Mill Road, Taneytown
410-386-2700
Lunch served at 11:30 a.m.

MONDAY
Each Monday: Pinochle, Better Health & Wellness Exercise, Bridge, Cornhole

TUESDAY
Each Tuesday: Study of Man, Massage Therapy (with registered practitioner 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. call 410-984-9027 for appointment)
July 18: Nickel bingo: 12:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY
Each Wednesday: Senior Fun & Fit Exercise, Team Jeopardy, Cards, Arthritis Foundation Exercise

July 19: "Chicken Foot" dominos: noon

THURSDAY
Each Thursday: Sewing & Things, Stay Fit Exercise, Color Me Happy, Canasta
July 20: Site Council meeting: 10:30 a.m.

FRIDAY
Each Friday: Canasta

WESTMINSTER
125 Stoner Ave., Westminster
410-386-3850
Lunch served at 11:30 a.m.

MONDAY
Each Monday: Yoga, Social Needle Crafts & instruction, Country & Party Line Dancing, Ballroom instruction, Social Ballroom Dancing, Carroll County Duplicate Bridge (ACBL Sanctioned, experienced play), Drawing & Painting, Seated Exercise, Walking Indoors

TUESDAY
Each Tuesday: Stained Glass, Thinking Power, Line & Country Dance Practice, Hand-built Pottery, Brain Games, Tai Chi Movement Exercise

WEDNESDAY

Each Wednesday: Stained Glass, Wii Bowling, Yoga, Social Needle Circle, Duplicate Bridge, Canasta, Dance Fitness Exercise, Pickleball, Walking Indoors

July 19: July birthdays lunch; reservations not guaranteed after July 11 RSVP deadline: 11:30 a.m.

July 19: Progressive 500 Cards: 12:45 p.m.

THURSDAY

Each Thursday: Quilting Circle & Smiling with Stitches Linus Project, Line & Country Dance, Pinochle, Carroll County Duplicate Bridge (ACBL Sanctioned, experienced play), Feeling Fit Seated Exercise, Afternoon at the Movies, Stained Glass, Mahjong.

July 20: Nickel bingo: 9-11 a.m.

July 20: Farmer's Market voucher distribution day; must be Carroll County resident over 60 years and present proof of residency: 10 a.m.-noon

FRIDAY
Each Friday: From the Heart Linus Project Needlework Group, Walking Indoors, Wood Shop, Experienced Pinochle, Pickleball

July 21: CCPL Puppet Theater presents "The Three Billy Goats Gruff." All ages welcome, no registration necessary: 12:30 p.m.

Visit www.ccgovernment.carr.org/ccg/aging/centers.asp for more program information.

SENIOR CENTER MENUS

Upcoming lunch menus for most Carroll County senior activities centers are:

July 17: Roast beef eye of round with sauce chassuer, seasoned red potato chunks, cucumber and tomato salad, cinnamon applesauce, whole wheat bread, pineapple juice and milk.

July 18: Special: Sub Day: Assorted Italian cold cut meat and provolone cheese on club roll (lettuce, tomato, onion, mayonnaise, Italian dressing), potato salad, coleslaw, fruit cocktail and milk.

July 19: Cheddar cheeseburger on roll (lettuce, tomato), seasoned spinach, coleslaw, pineapple and milk.

July 20: Poppy seed chicken, rice pilaf, stewed tomatoes, apricot halves, whole grain dinner roll, orange juice and milk.

July 21: Beef stroganoff, whole grain buttered noodles, seasoned waxed beans, mandarin oranges, wheat bread, grape juice and milk.

Upcoming special menus:

July 27: Special: Potato Day: Baked potato, chili con carne, shredded cheddar, fresh spinach with ranch dressing, applesauce and milk.

Menus are subject to change. Meal reservations are required three days in advance, with one week of advance notice needed for special menus. Call for reservations.