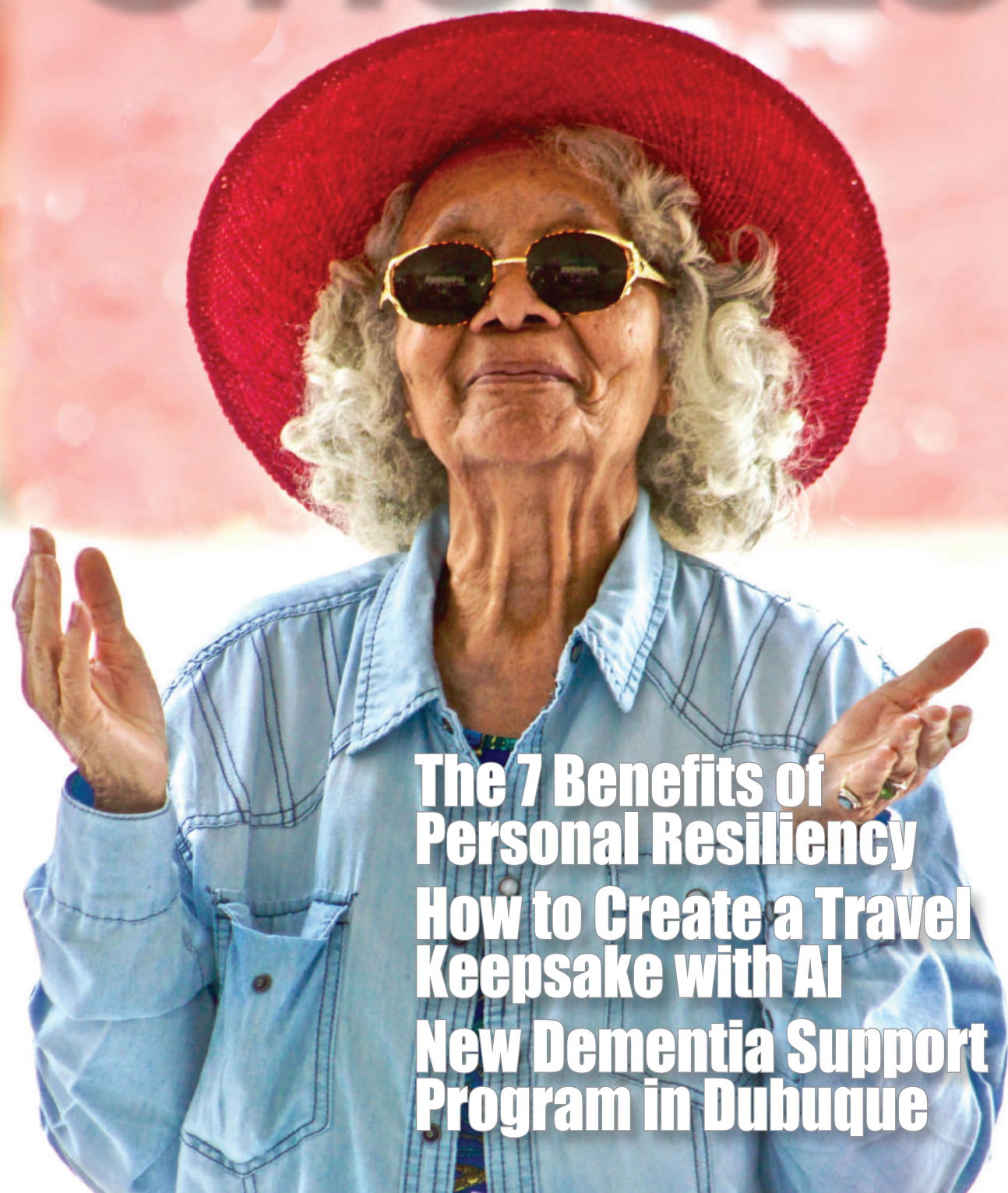


*For Fifty Plus*

JUNE 2025

# CHOICES



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*Taking Flight Light as a Feather sculpture in Oklahoma- City. Photo by Nick Thomas*

# For Fifty Plus CHOICES

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# How to Create a Travel Keepsake with Assistance from AI

by Dr. Carolee Duckworth

*In our journey together exploring artificial intelligence, we've discovered that AI isn't just a futuristic concept but a present-day tool that can enhance our lives. We've set up our Claude accounts, practiced conversing with AI, and even used it to plan a personalized dream vacation. Now, let's take the next exciting step... a full project, a treasured travel keepsake using AI to produce such an impressive result you will surprise yourself.*

**F**or this first venture, you will create a trip book that captures not just photos, but the stories, feelings, companions, connections, and discoveries that made your trip so enriching. You'll experience how much more fun and fulfill-



ing this process can be when you use AI assistance to stimulate, enhance and inspire you throughout the project. And you'll learn that the key to working with AI is knowing how to have productive conversations with your digital assistants.

### *Plan Your Travel Keepsake*

Before diving into AI tools, take some time to plan your project:

- Select a trip you have tak-

en to be the focus of this first trip book. Or use the trip you planned with Claude the article published in the CHOICES For Fifty Plus April issue.

- Decide what to include. The most compelling travel keepsakes combine photos with personal stories, interesting facts about locations, and your emotional reactions to experiences.

- Choose an organization method. You might organize chronologically (day by day) or thematically (favorite restaurants, most beautiful views, memorable encounters). Either approach works well—choose what best tells your story.

- Identify 5-7 key moments. While you are likely to have dozens of memories, focusing on a handful of highlights will keep your project manageable. These might include a spectacular sunset, a chance encounter with a local, or a meal you'll never forget.

- Select your best photos. Quality matters more than quantity. Choose 10-15 sharp, well-composed images that evoke strong memories and emotions. Include a mix of landscapes, people, and details.

### *Use Claude to Enhance Your Travel Stories*

Claude excels at helping transform basic memories into engaging narratives. Here's how to use this AI assistant effectively:

Provide context first. Begin

your conversation by telling Claude about your trip and what you hope to create. For example:

"Hi Claude! I recently spent 5 days in Barcelona, Spain. I'm creating a travel keepsake book and would like your help crafting descriptions and stories about my experiences. I especially enjoyed the architecture, food markets, and evening walks along the beach."

*Ask for specific assistance.  
Claude can help in many ways:*

- **Enhance descriptions:** Share your basic memories and ask Claude to help make them more vivid. "I visited Sagrada Familia on Tuesday morning. The sunlight through the stained glass was colorful. Can you help me describe this experience more vividly?"

- **Add context:** Claude can provide historical or cultural background to enrich your stories. "Can you provide some interesting historical context about the Gothic Quarter that I could include alongside my photos?"

- **Capture emotions:** Ask Claude to help articulate feelings that might be hard to put into words. "I felt overwhelmed standing in Plaza Catalunya. Can you help me express the feeling of being in such a bustling, historic space?"

- **Create transitions:** Claude can help connect different parts of your story smoothly. "I need a good transition between

my section on Barcelona's beaches and the food markets. Can you suggest something?"

Remember, Claude doesn't replace your memories, it helps you express them more eloquently. Always review and personalize Claude's suggestions to maintain your authentic voice.

*Edit Your Content in Word*

Once you've gathered content with Claude's help, organize it in Microsoft Word. Start by creating a simple structure with headings for each section of your trip, then paste the relevant content from your Claude conversations underneath.

Format your document for readability by choosing a clean,

readable font like Calibri or Georgia at 11-12 points. Add subheadings to break up longer sections and consider using italics for personal reflections that add an intimate touch.

Review your content carefully, looking for repetitive phrases, awkward transitions, or anything that doesn't sound authentic to your voice. Make edits to ensure the writing truly represents your experiences and personality.

Remember to save your work regularly by creating a dedicated folder for your project and using descriptive filenames such as "Barcelona\_Trip\_Draft\_April2025.docx" to keep

everything organized.

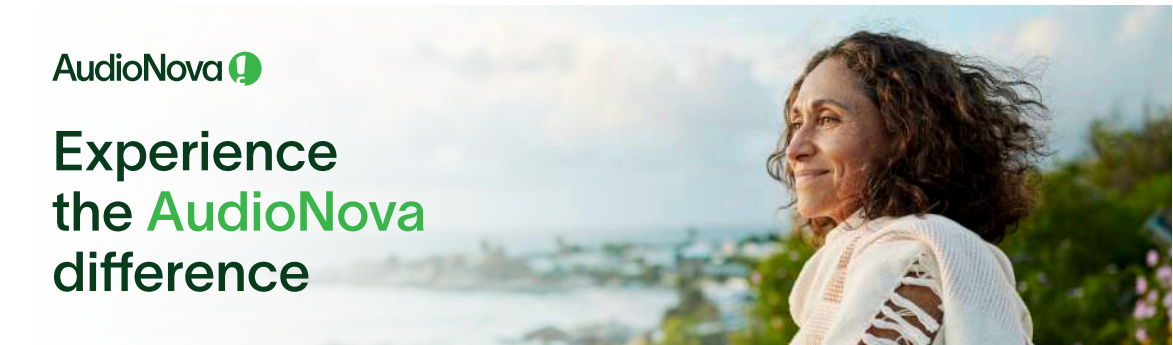
*Look Ahead*

In our next article, "Use Luminar AI to Enhance Your Travel Photos," we'll take a dive into the AI-assisted photo enhancement process. You'll discover how this powerful, yet user-friendly, AI tool can transform your ordinary travel snapshots into stunning visual stories that truly capture what you experienced. We'll walk through exactly what Luminar AI can do, provide a simple step-by-step guide to using it, and show how it can even improve your photography skills for future trips.

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session—not just for you, but for everyone with whom you share it. Through this project, you’re not only preserving memories but also mastering valuable digital skills that will serve you in many future projects.

*Carolee Duckworth’s unique blend of technology insight, travel expertise, and understanding of retirement life and living makes her a leading voice in helping retirees embrace new adventures, both in the real world and the digital realm. Her upcoming book, “AI for Seniors: Embracing AI, Lifelong Learning & Discovery after 60” will be available on Amazon Fall of 2025. ❖*





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# HOW TO NAVIGATE THE FINANCIAL CHALLENGES OF ASSISTED LIVING

healthcare expenses and other care requirements. This forward-thinking approach provides confidence as you make decisions along the way.

## INSURANCE OPTIONS

Many Assisted Living Facilities vary in how they can accept payment. Companies that are private pay may primarily accept private funding but can also work with Long-Term Care Insurance plans or support from the Veterans' Administration for those with a service connection. Some facilities will accept Medicaid, but there may be other details about those places that make it less appealing (i.e. a shared room instead of private). Finding the best facility for you and your financial situation may take time and that is another reason to know your options before the need becomes critical.

## FUNDING STREAMS

Retirement accounts, including 401(k)s and IRAs, often serve as primary funding sources. However, a comprehensive understanding of withdrawal tax implications is crucial. Investment portfolios, such as stocks and bonds, can be liquidated, but professional financial guidance is recommended. Real estate assets, including home sales, reverse mortgages, and home equity lines of credit (HELOCs), present viable options, albeit with varying degrees of complexity and risk. Life insurance policies, through settle-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

by Alison Vanderpool

## EARLY ASSESSMENT

The transition to assisted living represents a significant life change, often accompanied by many financial considerations. As we age, proactive planning can help ensure a seamless and secure transition. This article outlines some tips for preparing for the financial realities of assisted living, emphasizing early planning, informed decision-making and professional guidance.

The key to effective financial planning lies in early assessment. Know your options and start the search early! Begin by meticulously researching the costs of assisted living in your desired location, acknowledging geographical region, facility amenities, and levels of care. It is essential to have a thorough understanding of your savings, investments, retirement accounts, real estate, and life insurance policies. At the same time, consider future



ments, accelerated death benefits, or conversions, can also provide valuable financial resources. Furthermore, the potential benefits available to Veterans and their surviving spouses should be thoroughly investigated.

**PROFESSIONAL GUIDANCE**

Financial advisors can construct personalized plans, manage investments, and optimize income streams, while elder law attorneys can provide invaluable counsel on estate planning, Medicaid eligibility, and asset protection. Tax professionals offer critical insights into the tax implications of various financial strategies. Work with professionals to ensure you know exactly how



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

your finances will support you.

**FAMILY INVOLVEMENT**

Open and transparent communication with family members regarding financial plans and expectations is imperative. Collaborative planning, potentially involving shared financial contributions or other forms of support, fosters a sense of shared responsibility. Ensuring that necessary legal documents, such as powers of attorney and healthcare directives, are in place safeguard

your interests and facilitate informed decision-making.

By adopting a proactive and informed approach, seniors and their families can navigate the financial complexities of assisted living with confidence, ensuring a comfortable and secure future.

*Alison Vanderpool is the Director of Sales & Marketing at Ahva Living of East Dubuque. She can be reached at [admissions@alofeastdubuque.com](mailto:admissions@alofeastdubuque.com) or 563.451.2379. ❖*



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# How and why to Choose a Medicare Advisor

by Stefan Johnson

**M**edicare is a crucial aspect of healthcare for millions of Americans, but navigating its complexities can be overwhelming. With multiple plans, supplemental coverage options, and frequent policy changes, finding the right Medicare plan can feel like a daunting task. This is where a Medicare advisor (also called a Medicare Professional, Agent, Broker, etc.) can be helpful. A knowledgeable advisor can help you understand your options and choose the best plan for your needs. But how do you select the right one?

## *Why You Need a Medicare Advisor*

Medicare is not a one-size-fits-all program. There are multiple parts—Original Medicare (Part A and B), Medicare Advantage (Part C), Prescription Drug Plans (Part D), and Medicare Supplement Plans (Medigap). And here in the Tri-States region, many seniors have the option of choosing a Cost Plan. Each option has different costs, benefits, and coverage rules. A Medicare advisor helps by:

- Clarifying the differences between Medicare plans

- Assessing your individual healthcare needs
- Comparing costs and coverage options
- Identifying potential savings opportunities
- Ensuring you enroll in a plan that fits your budget and lifestyle
- Helping you to sign up for the chosen plan(s)
- Providing post-enrollment service

Some people choose to guide themselves through countless Medicare options... but a Medicare professional has (typically) spent hundreds, or even thousands, of hours learning, studying, helping, and servicing Medicare products. It would take a long time to learn all that a good Medicare advisor knows.

## *How much Does a Medicare Advisor Charge?*

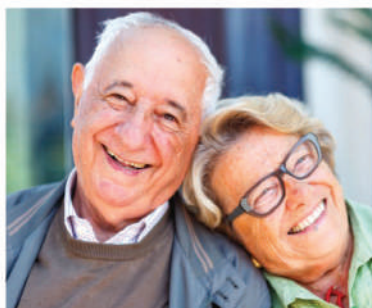
The majority of Medicare Advisors in the Tri-States area do not charge for their advising services. Instead, they are normally compensated by the companies that they represent. It might be helpful to know that you do NOT save money by doing it yourself in Medicare. You pay the same whether you work with a Medicare professional/advisor or sign up on your own.

## *Key Qualities to Look for in a Medicare Professional*

**Experience and Expertise**

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A knowledgeable Medicare advisor should have several years of experience in the field. They should be well-versed in different Medicare plans, enrollment periods, and coverage options. Ask potential advisors about their background, certifications, and how long they have been helping clients with Medicare.

**Independent vs. Captive Agents**

Medicare advisors generally fall into three categories:

**Independent advisors (brokers)** work with multiple insurance companies and can offer a broad range of plan options. These professionals can show multiple company’s products to the client.

**Captive advisors (agents)** represent only one insurance company and can only offer plans from that provider.

Some people are associated with a **government program** which helps people think through the options; these advisors are not licensed and do not help people with the sign-up process.

**Licensing and Certifications**

Ensure that the advisor is properly licensed in your state and has any relevant certifications and licensing, including:

- AHIP (America’s Health Insurance Plans) certification
- State-specific health insurance licenses

**Transparency and Ethics**

A trustworthy Medicare advisor should be upfront about how they are compensated. Most advisors earn commissions from insurance companies, but ethical advisors will prioritize your needs over fi-

nancial incentives. A good advisor will be happy to answer your questions about his or her compensation. Avoid advisors who push you toward a specific plan without explaining why it is the best choice for you.

**Availability and Customer Support**

Medicare needs change over time, and you may have questions throughout the year. Choose an advisor who is accessible, responsive, and willing to assist you beyond the initial enrollment process. And every fall, you should be in contact with your Medicare advisor, to make sure that your current plan is still the best option for you. Plans change, and your needs change and as a result, changes need to be considered

during the Annual Enrollment Period each year, which is October 15-December 7.

*Steps to Choosing the Right Medicare Advisor*

**Step 1: Identify Your Needs**

Before meeting with an advisor, assess your healthcare needs. Consider:

- Your current medications and whether they are covered under different Part D plans
- Your preferred doctors and hospitals and whether they are in-network for Medicare Advantage or Cost plans
- Your budget and what you can afford in premiums, deductibles, and out-of-pocket costs
- The importance of issues such as cost, flexibility, choice of doctors, and health care



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## **Step 2: Research Potential Advisors**

Create a shortlist of Medicare advisors based on recommendations from:

- Friends, family, or healthcare providers
- Online reviews and ratings
- Local senior centers or Medicare resources

## **Step 3: Ask the Right Questions**

When interviewing potential advisors, ask:

- How long have you been working as a Medicare advisor?
- Do you work with multiple insurance companies or just one?
- Can you explain the differences between Original Medicare, Medicare Advantage, Cost Plans, and Medigap?
- What is your process for helping clients find the best plan?
- Are you available for questions throughout the year, or just during enrollment periods?
- Do you provide annual reviews for your clients?

## **Step 4: Evaluate Their Approach**

A good Medicare advisor

should take the time to understand your unique situation. Beware of advisors who:

- Use high-pressure sales tactics
- Rush you into a decision
- Fail to explain key details of different plans

## **Step 5: Check Their Credentials**

Verify their licensing through your state's Department of Insurance website. Confirm any certifications and look for disciplinary actions or complaints.

## **Step 6: Make an Informed Decision**

After meeting with multiple advisors, compare their recommendations and choose the one who best aligns with your needs. Ensure they provide clear explanations and have your best interests in mind.

### *Red Flags to Avoid*

Be cautious of Medicare advisors who:

Claim they are from Medicare (Medicare does not employ individual advisors)

Guarantee specific rates or benefits without reviewing your details

Charge high upfront fees

for consultations (most reputable advisors offer free consultations)

Pressure you to sign up for a plan immediately

## **Conclusion**

Choosing the right Medicare advisor is a critical step in securing the best healthcare coverage for your needs. By doing thorough research, asking the right questions, and ensuring your advisor has the right credentials and ethics, you can confidently navigate Medicare and find a plan that works for you. With the right guidance, Medicare can become a manageable and beneficial resource rather than an overwhelming challenge.

*Stefan Johnson helps people choose Medicare Advantage, Supplement, Cost, and Prescription Drug plans. He is licensed in Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Minnesota and represents several companies providing Medicare-related products. He can be reached at 563-581-9341 or [sj@retiringease.com](mailto:sj@retiringease.com).*

*Comments on this article can be sent to [comments@julienjournal.com](mailto:comments@julienjournal.com). ♦*

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# New Dementia Support Program in Dubuque

by Elizabeth Kunde

*A new Medicare program for individuals living with dementia will be available to Dubuque families beginning July 1, 2025. The GUIDE (Guiding an Improved Dementia Experience) Program will provide support and case management for individuals with a dementia diagnosis who are living at home. The goals of the program are to improve the quality of life for both people with dementia and their unpaid caregivers and to help people with dementia to remain safe in their homes for longer by preventing or delaying the need for nursing home care.*

**A**s of 2023, approximately 6.7 million Americans over age 65 are living with dementia. The Centers for Disease Control and Pre-

vention expect the number of diagnoses to more than double by 2060. This disease presents challenges for individuals living with the disease, their caregiv-

ers, and health care systems.

People with dementia often have multiple chronic conditions and receive fragmented care, leading to high rates of hospitalization and emergency visits. This is costly for individuals and families, Medicare, and health care systems. For caregivers, the challenges of managing health care, providing constant support, and handling the behavioral and psychological symptoms of de-



mentia can present significant mental, physical, emotional, and financial hardships. To help address the unique needs of this population, CMS created the GUIDE model program.

GUIDE has three main goals: improve the quality of life for people living with dementia, enhance support for caregivers of people living with dementia, and help people remain in their homes and communities longer. The program addresses nine care domains to achieve these goals: comprehensive assessment, care planning, 24/7 access to a helpline, ongoing monitoring support, care coordination and transitional care management, referral and coordination of services and sup-

ports, medication management and reconciliation, caregiver education and support, and respite services.

Program participants will work with a nurse GUIDE Care Navigator throughout their participation in the program. They will help coordinate, educate, and provide support in the nine care domains as individuals progress through the dementia journey.

To be eligible for GUIDE Model services, individuals must meet the following criteria: a beneficiary has a diagnosis of dementia confirmed by a clinician, is living at home or in an independent or assisted living community, has Medicare as their primary payer, is en-

rolled in Medicare Parts A and B and not enrolled in a Medicare Advantage plan, and is not enrolled in Medicare hospice benefit. The program is fully covered by Medicare and is available at no cost to eligible participants.

*Participants can apply at Stonehill for the GUIDE Model beginning July 1. Enrollment begins with an assessment appointment with Stonehill's GUIDE Care Navigator. Additional information is available at 563.557.7180 or [Stonehill-dubq.com/how-we-care/GUIDE](http://Stonehill-dubq.com/how-we-care/GUIDE).*

*Elizabeth Kunde is the Executive Director of Strategy and Compliance at Stonehill Communities. ❖*



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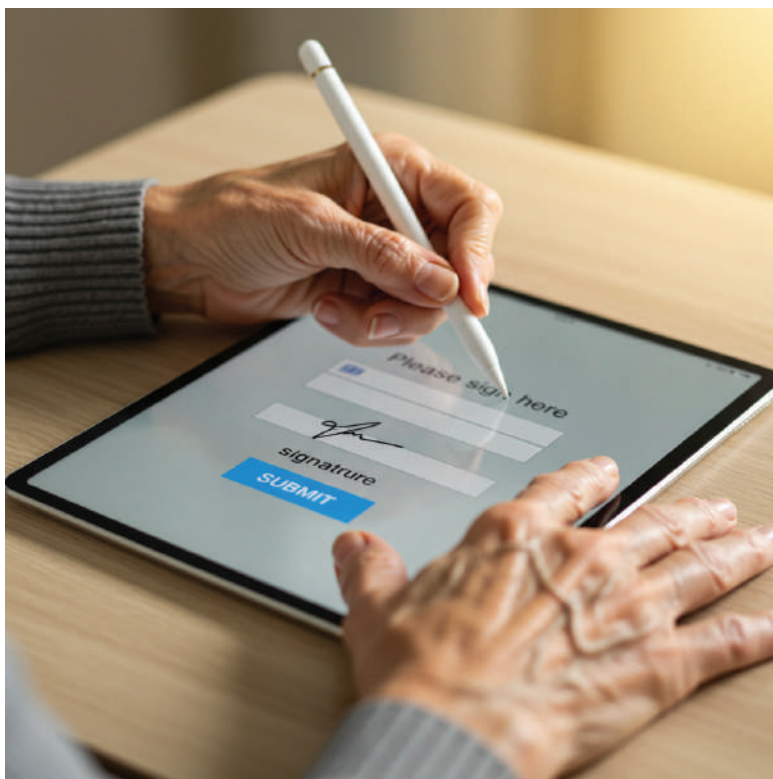
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# Just Sign Here! How to Navigate Digital Forms in our Daily Lives

by Alison Vanderpool

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Digital paperwork has revolutionized data collection across industries, offering significant advantages over traditional paper-based methods. Digital forms boost efficiency by automating data entry, minimizing errors associated with paper forms and handwritten documents. Features like validation rules and required fields enhance accuracy, ensuring complete and correctly formatted information. Money is saved by avoiding printing, storage, and postage. Accessibility is improved as forms can be completed online from various devices, enhancing convenience for both creators and respondents. Digital data management allows for easier organization, search, and anal-

ysis, leading to better insights and decision-making. Faster turnaround times are achieved through automation and faster communication. But are they safe?

Security and safety are a top priority for digital forms, especially when handling sensitive data. Reputable providers implement measures to ensure the information stays confidential. Secure servers with firewalls keep data safe. Access controls, passwords, passcodes, and multi-factor authentication prevent unauthorized access.

Digital forms find diverse applications in our everyday lives. In real estate, they streamline processes like writing an offer, verifying results of an inspection, and signing agreements

with realtors. Companies like DocuSign, Dotloop, and Adobe Sign offer secure platforms for these transactions. Healthcare utilizes digital forms for patient registration, medical history, and appointment scheduling, with HIPAA-compliant options from providers like Jotform. The legal field employs digital forms for client intake, agreements, and witness statements, often integrated with practice management software like LawToolBox and Clio Manage, ensuring secure handling of confidential information.

It is important we recognize the names of reputable sources so we can better spot scam attempts. Digital forms, designed for convenience, can be used to disguise scams. Scammers create forms mimicking



legitimate websites, requesting sensitive information like login credentials or financial details under false pretenses such as account verification or prize claims. These forms often incorporate official-looking logos and language to appear authentic, preying on users' trust. By exploiting the ease of online interactions, scammers can distribute these forms widely, making it crucial

for individuals to question any form requesting personal data and verify its legitimacy before submission to avoid falling victim to phishing or other fraudulent schemes.

If you still prefer to store your paper forms in a folder or filing system, that's okay! Often digital forms can be downloaded, saved, and printed, as you please. It is important that you're able to access important documents, however they are presented as the technology world continues to advance! If you ever question a document, attachment, or link you are sent, please call the company or provider to verify before submitting any information.

Digital forms offer substantial

benefits in efficiency, accuracy, cost, and accessibility. Advanced security measures ensure data safety and compliance. Their application across industries we all utilize like real estate, healthcare, and law, means we will all be exposed to digital forms and should understand how they are accessed and managed. Ensuring you're using a safe and reputable service will let us take advantage of digital forms while ensuring your data is safe.

*Alison Vanderpool, M.S.Ed. is a Realtor with EPIQUE Realty. She can be contacted at 815-275-5114, [AlisonVanderpool@epique.me](mailto:AlisonVanderpool@epique.me). You can visit her Facebook page at [Facebook.com/yourkey2access](https://www.facebook.com/yourkey2access). ❖*



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# Volunteer Laura Roussell Advocates for Trees and More

by Tracey Rush

*In 2019, the day after Laura Roussell retired from Black Hills Energy after 30 years, she registered to run for City Council of Ward 2. "I had a clear path to do something. I saw it as a chance to serve and give back to my community," said Laura.*

Roussell was born and raised in Dubuque, graduating from Senior High School and earning her BA and MBA from Clarke University. Her three siblings and their families still live in Dubuque as well. Serving the community runs in the family. Laura's younger sister, Ann Lorenz, is the Community Outreach Director of the Lantern Center in Dubuque. Said Ann, "I've always been so proud of Laura. I admire her and all that she has done to make our community a better place. She is a beacon of joy and optimism."

Laura credits her years of being a Girl Scout for instilling in her the joy of serving others. "That's what Girl Scouts do – they serve their community," said Roussell. "If you look at successful women in high places, many of them were Girl Scouts, such as CPOs, corporate leaders, and elected officials. In Girl Scouts, you learn how to be a leader."

While being a City Council member is not a volunteer position, Roussell has a long history of serving. She

helped write the Northeast Iowa School of Music's business plan. "It was the capstone project for my MBA." She served on the NISOM board for many years. She is past president of the Dubuque Kiwanis Club and was a member for many years.

Laura and her husband Jon are members of Westminster Presbyterian Church, where

she has served on the Missions Team, the Sessions Board (the leadership team), and still helps with the hunger outreach with the drive-through food giveaways that serve 100-200 families.

The Reverend Dr. Marsha Wilfong, retired pastor, has worked with Roussell both at Westminster and the board of Northeast Iowa School of Music. "Laura is gracious, committed, dependable, and a joy to work with," said Wilfong.

One of her current boards is



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED BY TRACEY RUSH

Laura Roussell with one of her two Cavalier King Charles Spaniels.

HACAP (Hawkeye Area Community Action Program) a local community action agency (formerly Operation New View). HACAP serves the community by “lifting people out of poverty, improving the lives of the vulnerable through HeadStart, heating assistance, food needs, housing, fans in summer, etc.” Said Roussell, who has served on that board for 30 years.

Roussell’s pride and joy is being the Founder and Executive Director of Dubuque Trees Forever. “When I worked at Black Hills, I could see the social, economic and environmental benefits of trees. I helped to administer the program and caught the passion of what trees do for the community and I wanted to

do it in my own community. BH has a grant program and now instead of giving out the money, I’m asking for it and I know how to ask. It’s great fun!”

As a council member, Laura currently serves on the Dubuque Main Street and Greater Dubuque Development Corp boards. According to Roussell, “Those organizations are the nuts and bolts of the business community – those businesses that are here or want to come here.”

One of her favorite jobs as a board member of Dubuque Main Street is working at the token booth at the Farmers Market. “People from all over are so impressed with what

Dubuque has to offer.”

In what little spare time she has, Jon and Laura enjoy Saturday night game night with friends, working in her garden, and walking their two Cavalier King Charles Spaniels (mother and son). For twenty years, Laura played violin in the Dubuque Symphony and now performs in church on occasion.

When asked if she any words of wisdom and encouragement for other retirees who are looking for ways to volunteer in the community, Laura said, “There will be a time in our lives when we can’t do all the things we’d like to do, so make the most of it while you can.” ❖



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## THE 7 BENEFITS OF PERSONAL RESILIENCY by Dr. Richard Houston

**R**esearch published in the Journal of Geriatric Nursing reports that resilient adults enjoy significant benefits including:

- stronger adaptive coping ability
- fewer chronic health conditions
- more independence in daily

living skills

- lower incidence of depression
- lower frequency of hopelessness
- more physically active daily habits, and,
- increased lifespan longevity.

That's an impressive menu of benefits.

Is resilience hard-wired? How

can adults develop a more resilient character and begin to enjoy the benefits cited?

No doubt some people seem to have a more resilient personal constitution than others. But let's start with someone who has a strong desire to build a more resilient personality.





We start with a Japanese cultural ethic called wabi sabi. An overview of Japanese culture featured a fifth-generation ceramic artist spinning a small

vase on his pottery wheel. It was completely perfect. At the very end of the video clip, the artist took a small chisel and nicked the surface of the spinning vase creating an obvious scar in the finished vase. He was making a 'wabi sabi' statement. Life is imperfect and we need to regard our imperfections as an integral part of our lives.

Resilient people expect to encounter obstacles and experience setbacks. Anyone who climbs learning curves knows that the early stages of ascending a new learning curve can be very challenging. It's natural to feel like you don't know anything. Mistakes are made in abundance and one's patience

is tested repeatedly.

Adults over 50 frequently find the frustration of climbing new learning curves to be humbling enough that they may avoid the experience. This is a mistake. Settling into familiar routines with no new challenges does not stretch our neural circuits. Research with middle-aged adults who repeat the same work routines year in, and year out suggest that risk of cognitive decline is much greater than for peers whose brain is constantly challenged.

Reversals and setbacks should be regarded as learning opportunities. Yes, failures, even on a small scale, are disappointing. People with a growth mindset are willing to endure the emotional distress and relish the new experience as a learning opportunity.

Resilient people cultivate self-compassion skills. Most of us can show great compassion for close friends who experience setbacks. We console, sympathize and proffer support and encouragement. Yet, when we experience similar reversals, our compassion can frequently morph into self-criticism. Resilient folks are skilled at maintaining the same supportive voice in helping digest the disappointment and refocus on the end goals. People with 'joie de vivre' know that new learning involves the frustration associated with stepping in potholes.

How we interpret the setbacks or reversal is a critical-

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ly important skill. Adults with a so-called 'fixed mindset' are prone to interpret a failed initiative as a sign that we're obtuse or insufficiently clever. Students with a fixed mindset avoid challenging tasks for fear of being 'exposed' as losers.

Resilient people maintain a

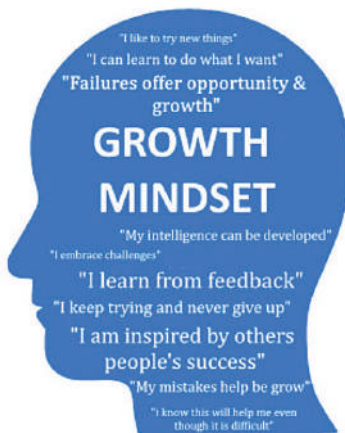
positive self-narrative. Through difficult times, they remain optimistic in a realistic way. Their self-narratives acknowledge the emotional challenges associated with setbacks but maintain a focus on end goals and consistently reach for a reservoir of grit and determination

to surmount obstacles.

The tangible benefits of sustaining a resilient outlook on life are well worth the effort to practice skills described in this overview. Think of yourself as an 'emergent resilient' character and build skills to enhance your resilience.

*Dr. Richard Houston is an active and curious 'senior' who strives to get outdoors for a brisk walk daily. He is a graduate of Brown University and earned advanced degrees at Clark University. He was licensed by the Massachusetts Board of Psychology in the early 1980's. Check out his web site at Senior-Psych.com where readers can find his contact information. ♦*

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# Take a Hike! To Skydance Bridge, Oklahoma City

by Nick Thomas

**W**ith over 90 miles of trails weaving through the area, Oklahoma City's numerous parks are a haven for walkers, joggers, and hikers alike. One must-see landmark for visitors – day or night – is the iconic Skydance Bridge.

Arriving late in the afternoon, our destination was the 380-foot-long pedestrian Skydance Bridge that spans I-40 and connects the north (40-acre) and south (30-acre) portions of the park. Opened in 2012, the state bird also inspired the bridge's design with its striking V-shaped steel sculpture towering nearly 200 feet above the walkway, resembling the flycatcher's distinctive forked tail feathers.

We continued through the park and surrounding area waiting for sunset since the bridge is es-

pecially stunning when lit by LED lights during the evening. But there was no shortage of dazzling sights to fill the remaining daylight hours, including a walk around a lake with surrounding trees teeming with colorful chirping birds. Rental pedal boats, canoes, and kayaks glided slowly over the water as their occupants absorbed the relaxing view dominated by Oklahoma City's tallest building. The sleek 50-story Devon Tower, also completed in 2012, is a skyline scene stealer with its reflective glass exterior.

Myriad Botanical Gardens, just a couple of blocks north of the park off Reno Street, was intriguing. Since originally conceived by city leaders in the late 1960s, the 17-acre plot most recently underwent an \$11 million renovation in 2022 and features immaculate landscaping, a children's garden, a restaurant area, fountains, sculptures, and the dazzling Crystal Bridge Tropical Conservatory encased in a shell of over 3,000 translucent acrylic panels housing an impressive exotic plant collection.

The "Taking Flight: Light as a Feather" art piece, installed two years ago at the north end of Scissortail Park, was a delightful surprise find. The 6-ton 31-foot-tall metal sculpture is the artist's vision of a delicately curved feather gently floating earthward. Stunning any time – and especially at night when fiber optic lights illuminate its intricate details – the sculpture truly comes to life just prior to sunset when we happened to walk past. As the sun hung in the darkening sky behind the sculpture, its dying rays filtered through the figure highlighting the steel bars comprising the feather's ribs, offering an inspiring picture-perfect moment we were lucky to experience.

For many visitors, however, the star of Scissortail Park will be the illuminated Skydance Bridge straddling the busy Interstate below. The remotely controlled lights, programmable for holidays and special events, displayed a vibrant deep blue glow during our visit, dramatically highlighting the structure's sweeping design. But the color varies from night to night. When viewed from the bridge's south end and set against the backdrop of city lights, it was the perfect conclusion to our 2-mile urban nature walk around Oklahoma City. ❖

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