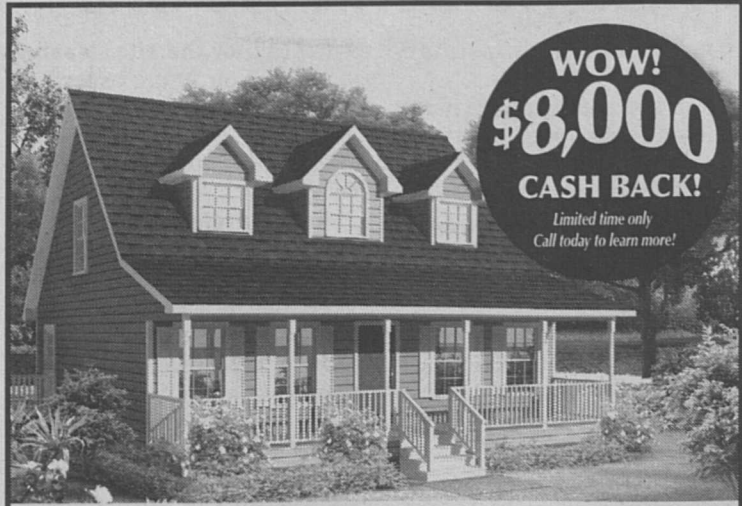




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How Furry Friends Can Boost Your Health

There are many therapeutic benefits to pet ownership. It's been well documented that a furry friend can reduce your blood pressure and therapy dogs are used in hospitals nationwide to help patients heal.

While the relationship between people and animals has been widely heralded, now comes word that scientists are finding new ways our favorite furry creatures can influence our health in the long term.

"As helpful as a loving animal can be at the end of a long work day, researchers worldwide are seeing how they might literally be life-savers in developing treatments for diseases," notes Lisa Peterson, spokesperson for the American Kennel Club.

Considering the genetic make-up of humans and canines are roughly 85 percent similar and there are around 400 diseases that plague both species, scientists have found an uncanny connection between animal and human health.

Now they're finding how the health of purebred dogs can directly affect that of humans.

The American Kennel Club Canine Health Foundation has been at the forefront of this medical research, having awarded \$24 million in research grants since 1995.

One of the foremost studies of this sort involves research that isolated the gene responsible for night blindness in briard dogs.

Researchers found that the same gene caused Leber Con-

genital Amaurosis, a childhood-onset disease that causes blindness in early adulthood when not treated.

Thanks to this research, gene therapy now has been developed to treat young people with the disease.

This kind of connection between canine and human disease is not unprecedented. Scientists have also isolated a gene in dogs that not only causes a specific canine spinal disease but also Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease, in humans.

Because of this discovery there is now hope the disease in dog will assist human research.

It's not just the more obscure illnesses or circumstances making canine research invaluable.

Cancer is one major area where canine cancer research has correlated directly to human research, leading to much hope.

As with humans, cancer in dogs occurs spontaneously, is not an induced disease, and the lifetime risk of cancer in humans and dogs is similar.

Of course, people and dogs share the same environment, and therefore are exposed to comparable risk factors.

And the natural history of most cancers and their response to treatment are comparable between both species.

But what's most promising is that medical researchers can move faster when studying cancer in dogs, because the chronology of cancer is adapted to dogs' shorter lifespans.

For example, the disease in dogs becomes apparent within 10 years instead of 60 in humans. So, success or failure of treatments can be measured within two years among dogs instead of at least five for humans.

"Dogs age faster than humans," says Peterson. "By researching diseases in them, they can guard humans against certain illnesses."

For more information about the AKC Canine Health Foundation, visit www.caninehealthfoundation.org.

With additional research by responsible breeders and organizations, there's no telling what human conditions can be aided by our furry friends.

Seniors Stand Up To The H1N1 Flu

It's easily been the hot-button medical story of the past year, but the H1N1 (also known as Swine Flu) pandemic has seen some interesting statistics when it comes to who must be treated.

Considered a high-risk group with most large-scale health-scapes, seniors somehow have bucked the trend and shown impressive resiliency against the pandemic.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention even has listed them near the bottom of the H1N1 vaccine priority list.

Last spring, when parents and children alike expressed their fears of the growing Swine Flu scare and pharmaceutical companies rushed to distribute a vaccine, the CDC released its findings showing that seniors over 60 years of age had a surprising advantage in the fight against the disease.

The CDC found that 64 percent of Swine Flu cases occurred amongst five- to 24-year-olds.

But in a surprising and unexplained twist, only one percent of flu patients were 65 years or older.

Original speculation was that H1N1 simply hadn't reached the senior community yet, but the reasoning behind these numbers could be far more scientific.

Medical experts now believe that by being exposed to countless seasonal flu vaccines over the course of their lives, seniors may actually have built up something of an immunity to the virus.

That concept and the numbers backing it up have compelled the CDC to put seniors at the bottom of the priority list for the H1N1 vaccine, which primarily has been topped by children and pregnant women.

Of course, before opting not to get vaccinated or to get the vaccine, be sure to consult your doctor, as everyone's medical status and condition is different.

The CDC encourages seniors to get their regular flu shots and has made this vaccine available to those of an advanced age, but it looks as if the elderly may have accrued a whole new kind of wisdom when it comes to battling Swine Flu.



Enjoying the children's area at the Wintermann Library are Casey and Luisa McClelland.

The library has recently added two new children's computers, a decorative rug and 3 new chairs for the children to enjoy.

Casey is shown trying out one of the new touch screen Early Learning Literacy Stations loaded with over 50 educational games for children age 8 - age 11. Bring your child by and if you have a library card and computer card, you will be able to sign in on one of the stations for your child.

If you don't have a library card, you can get one by bringing in a photo ID (Driver's License) and two items with your name and address on them. The library is available for everyone to enjoy!



New Web Sites Tell The Real Stories Of Historic Sites

Nineteen new web sites featuring the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) historic properties are now active, highlighting the unique stories of these real places from Texas' past.

The web sites are an upgrade from the previous single web pages to full, stand-alone web sites.

From frontier forts to Civil War battlegrounds to stoic mansions, these new web sites provide educational and interpretational information that heighten the visitor experience and open a window on these significant moments in our state's history.

Each web site reflects a tailored and memorable look that is enhanced by vivid photographs of each property.

Utilize the sites' event calendars before planning your trip and to keep up with special celebrations.

Visit Share Your Story to tell us about your site visit and to read about the real encounters of others.

Refer to the FAQs to get your questions answered before you start your trip, and check out the historic sites blog link to stay connected to all of your favorite historic properties.

Direct links to the THC's Texas Heritage Trails Program guides visitors to more regional attractions near the 19 historic properties.

Keep checking back as the web sites will continue to incorporate additional features in the future, such as video and podcasts.

To explore the 19 new web sites visit www.texas-historic-sites.com and select a historic property.

For more information on the THC's historic sites contact the Historic Sites Division at 512.463.7948.

Over 60? Tips To Help Extend Your Body's Warranty

Many experts have shared their conclusions about how cable television and the Internet have kept countless Americans on their hind legs for longer periods of time. While all this has been going on, scientists have been discovering the most about health and exercise.

What it comes down to is this: there are fewer and fewer excuses for letting your body run its course without exercise. For seniors, in particular, exercise has been linked to reduced risk for such ailments as prostate cancer, osteoporosis, heart disease and stroke, among others.

Indeed, with one out of six men confronting prostate cancer at some point in life, the Prostate Cancer Foundation recently released a new "Nutrition, Exercise, and Prostate Cancer" guide, a series of new strategies that help stem the development and progression of prostate cancer.

Visit www.pcf.org to order or download a free copy of the guide.

The key is combining exercise with a diet rich in fruits and vegetables and low in processed sugars and refined carbohydrates.

A new study from Dr. Stephen Freedland at Duke and the Durham Veterans Affairs Hospital also underscores the impact regular exercise has in protecting men from prostate cancer, while also making the disease less aggressive.

More than anything else, the combination of diet and exercise

looks to be a strong pre-emptive step against many ailments.

With breast cancer a similarly daunting disease among women, healthy options unsurprisingly have been linked to lifestyle, particularly exercise and nutrition.

With as little as four hours of exercise a week and a low-fat diet, the risk of breast cancer can be lessened. Abstaining from drinking alcohol has also been shown to decrease the risk of breast cancer.

And there are plenty of ailments that plague both older men and women that can be helped by exercise.

Among them is osteoporosis, which affects the bone density of people as they age. By focusing on exercises that have a direct impact on the skeleton, like basketball or jumping jacks, the symptoms of osteoporosis can be avoided.

New research also shows it's never too late for seniors to become active. Even those afflicted with Type 2 diabetes can help turn things around with an exercise regimen. And it's well-known that exercise can help strengthen arteries and potentially reduce the risk of heart attacks and strokes.

Of course, before starting any diet or exercise program, seniors should consult their doctors.

But when it comes to health, a small series of simple lifestyle changes can help extend your body's warranty, making a world of difference in your golden years.

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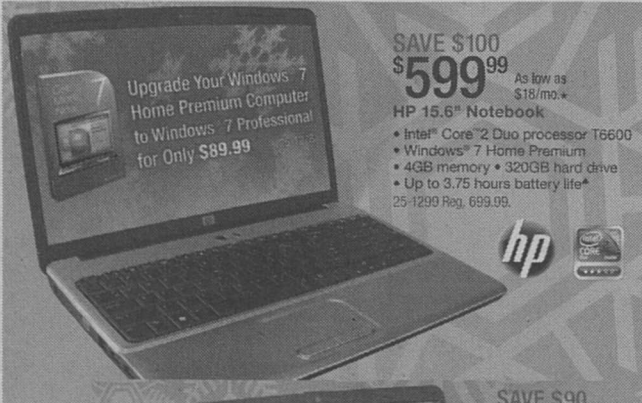
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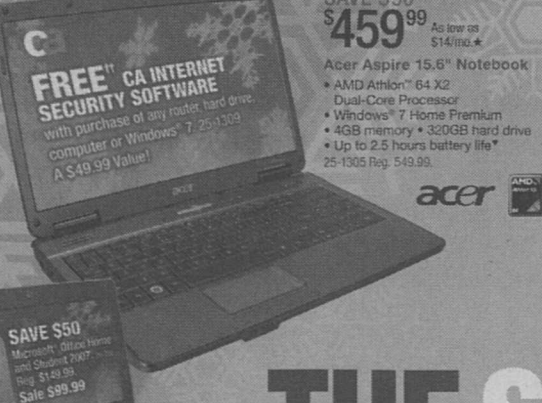
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