



Transcript: The Library Not Just for Children or Print Books

Barry: Welcome to the Senior Care Corner Radio Show. I'm Barry.

Kathy: And I'm Kathy. Thanks for joining us.

Barry: You'll find us online at SeniorCareCorner.com with solutions, tools and information for families and other caregivers of senior adults.

I think we probably caught some of you by surprise there saying Senior Care Corner Radio Show. We do have many regular listeners I know who are used to having this called "Welcome to Senior Care Corner" and referring to it as the Senior Care Corner podcast. For those of you who are regular listeners, we want to let you know that this is going to be the same show you've had in the past, same format; but we've decided to change the name to Radio Show. As we're reaching out and trying to inform more family caregivers, we've learned that a lot of people don't understand what the word podcast means, that it really is nothing more than an internet based radio show. So we hope that by changing the name, we're able to reach more, we're able to bring more in and gain some more listeners for the show.

With that, we want to go ahead and get started but first, we want to let you know for our feature segment today we're going to be talking about libraries and how they are not just for children and not just for checking out books. Before we get there, Kathy I believe you have some news items?

Kathy: Well every week I do! And here's some more. I brought together some interesting articles that I thought might be important for our caregivers today.

Our first news item:

Is Driving OK with certain age-related blind spots?

A new study finds that older adults with a certain type of blind spot were less likely to see a pedestrian in time to avoid hitting them.

Using a simulator test, people with blind spots often could not respond in time to a hazardous situation. Blind spots at the center of the field of vision or *central field loss* are usually caused by macular degeneration. About 1.75 million people in the United States mostly over 65 years old have this kind of vision loss.

Testing was conducted at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Boston on participants who were asked to drive at least 30 miles per hour on a city course and 60 miles per hour on a country course where pedestrians and road hazards are likely to appear. The hazards were programmed to appear every one per minute on each side of the road. Drivers were then asked to honk if they saw them.



Reaction times of people with blind spots were significantly lower and many did not even see the hazards. These drivers reacted too late to avoid a collision when an obstacle was observed.

Researchers point out that current driving testing in the US only examine acuity, whether you can read letters, not visual impairments. Even with blind spots, elders are able to drive if they are made aware of the reduced field of vision in order to pay attention for any obstacles since oftentimes people aren't aware that they have blind spots. If they are aware, they can make adjustments such as reduced night driving, not using unfamiliar roads or driving in bad weather.

Barry: Well that's very helpful Kathy. I mean, not only do they talk about the impairment but they do suggest a way to overcome it because as we know if somebody really wants to drive, they're going to come up with a reason to drive or simply do it. So let's make it safer for them!

Kathy: Exactly!

Alright, our next news item today:

Early Parkinson's Patients May Suffer Some Symptoms in Silence

Researchers are finding that many patients in the early stages of Parkinson's disease suffer from anxiety, constipation, drooling, sleep difficulty and other problems unrelated to movement.

Because movement difficulties are the hallmark signs of Parkinson's, people with these other symptoms often go undiagnosed. Many times people don't even mention most of these symptoms to their doctors and the doctors don't ask. That's unfortunate, because these symptoms can be treated effectively.

Parkinson's patients studied had an average of eight of the thirty non-motor symptoms while those without Parkinson's had an average of only three. The most common symptoms for Parkinson's patients were drooling, urinary urgency, constipation, anxiety and reduced sense of smell.

Excessive drooling was noted in 56% of Parkinson's patients but only 6% of those without the disease.

Researchers point out that Parkinson's affects many systems in the body even in the earliest stages often affecting their quality of life. They recommend communicating with healthcare professionals about all symptoms so they can be treated.

Barry: Ah, that's very interesting and more important as we move forward and again especially as more people are living longer.

Kathy: Right! It's just important to recognize early signs whether they're apparent to you or not as being related.

Alright our next news item:



Strawberries, Blueberries may cut heart attack risk in women

Eating three or more servings of blueberries and strawberries per week may help women reduce their risk of a heart attack according to researchers. As much as a one third lower risk was recently reported in the Journal of the American Heart Association Circulation.

Blueberries and strawberries contain naturally high levels of a compound known as flavonoids. This is also found in grapes, wine, blackberries, eggplant and other fruits and vegetables. This compound helps arteries to dilate which can counteract the effects of plaque buildup.

Researchers stated that simply adding these foods to your weekly meals can have a significant impact on prevention.

Blueberries and strawberries took the focus for this study due to the fact that they are the most eaten berries in the U S. Researchers feel that other foods containing flavonoids will have similar effects.

Of the 93,600 women studied, there was a 32% reduction in heart attack rate for those who regularly ate those foods compared with those who ate them only monthly or who had an otherwise good intake of fruits and vegetables but not the flavonoid containing varieties.

Barry, I think it's pretty evident that adding a few fresh or frozen berries to your meal seems like an easy thing to do to stay healthy.

Barry: Yes but it's interesting, not only do we have to eat more fruits and vegetables, now you're telling us we need to look for specific ones.

Kathy: The brightly colored eat a rainbow variety!

Barry: Ahh, there you go!

Kathy: Alright, our final news item today:

The EPA Recommends Radon Testing in January

January is national radon action month and the Environmental Protection Agency encourages everyone to test their home for radon.

January is a good month to perform these tests since our windows and doors are closed tightly and we spend more time indoors.

If radon is at unsafe level in our homes it can lead to serious illness. Radon exposure is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States and results in about 21,000 deaths a year.

If radon is detected, simple fixes to a home or building will help reduce health risks.



Radon is a colorless, odorless, and tasteless gas. Testing is the only way to discover if it is present in your home. You can get a test kit in any home improvement center or hardware store at a minimal cost.

Barry, this sounds like another easy way to protect our senior loved ones who may be home alone and other family members.

Barry: I was going to say and ourselves as well, so it's a good point there. Thank you, Kathy. Great news items as always!

As we move onto our feature segment here.

Today we'd like to discuss a topic that really touches on several areas that we address regularly because they're important to seniors and really to us then as family caregivers - - what we meant today is the local public library. Yes, the library. If the image that that brings out in you is one of rows of books found via a big card catalog and librarians who stamp a due date on your books when you write your name on the cards – oh and shush people a lot – it's probably been a while since you've been to the library. It may even have been longer for your senior loved ones. It might be time to check out (no pun intended) your local library again.

Libraries have suffered severe budget cuts across the US as communities struggled with lower tax revenues and really tough allocation decisions. Even with fewer dollars, though, many are making comebacks, benefitting from the combination of technology and creativity on the part of librarians. While the funding cuts have reduced the number of printed books and magazines many can purchase – and forced some to stop purchases altogether – rechanneling part of a smaller budget to digital books, subscriptions and databases allow many libraries to make more resources available to the community even with that smaller budget.

Now, one benefit of dealing with fewer printed books is that library staff members are able to spend more time with patrons than before, even though there are typically fewer staff members and fewer hours open than before because of the budget cuts. That means more time is being spent showing the libraries' customers – as patrons truly are – how to use the digital technology that's available, whether it's to find what they're seeking or even how to “borrow” an eBook and read it on the customer's own reading device or computer.

We have a lot of anecdotal evidence, especially from seniors, about how library use is shifting, evidence that is supported by some recent research from the Pew Internet and American Life Project.

Kathy: While it did support a lot of what we've heard, Barry, I was surprised to hear that Pew research indicate that seniors are the only age group in which less than half reported going to the library or bookmobile in the last year. It probably varies by community, with the libraries in some communities being more of a hub for social activity and community meetings.



While we're talking about libraries, our focus is really on the benefits seniors can receive from the library, so let's talk a little bit about that.

Benefits of the Public Library for Seniors

Barry: Well, Kathy, when we talk about libraries we quickly think of two areas that are often important to happy and healthy aging. Of course, books and reading come immediately to mind and with them the benefits of brain exercise and using one's imagination on brain health as we age.

Kathy: I know we talk a lot about the importance of exercising our brains, at any age but particularly in our older years, but I don't think we can overdo it.

Barry: I agree. There is so much that we can get from reading in many different ways. It's great for those who are aging in place, especially on their own. Yes, it's something you can do when you're alone. Then again, if you're really into a good book, whether fiction or nonfiction, you're not alone but in the world your mind creates from the book.

And not only can the library keep you from being alone in your mind, it provides an opportunity to literally not be alone, as libraries are social hubs in many communities. Many have community rooms that draw formal and informal local gatherings. Even less formally, though, many people simply meet at the library because it's one place that doesn't charge admission to get out of the house, out of the weather and even generally provides a spot for people to catch up with friends, make new friends or even just sit with others while enjoying a book or magazine.

Kathy: But are people still going to the library to look at books? We know eBooks are growing as a way of reading and you mentioned libraries have less money to spend on books.

Barry: That's a great question Kathy. I thought the same thing but Pew learned that borrowing printed books, or at least browsing the shelves, is still by far the most popular activity at libraries. We used to do that from time to time ourselves just to see what new books were out there. Of course, we get a lot of our own books electronically now so it's been a long time since we've browsed at the library. Yes, reading eBooks has become the norm for many of us but less than a third of book readers told Pew they read an eBook in the last year. Now that small number surprised me. While eBooks are growing in popularity they still have not taken over most peoples' reading habits. Combine that with the financial pinch that many have felt the last few years...

Kathy: And many, especially a lot of seniors, feel all the time.

Barry: So true, and that pinch makes the ability to check out books for free a lot more attractive than buying an eBook, not to mention an electronic reader on which to read the eBooks.

That being said, 1 in 5 senior book readers read an eBook in the last year, and that's 75% more than the year before, and that's before the wave of tablet and eReaders purchases during the

recent holiday shopping period. As we learned at CES, those were extremely popular purchases and gifts.

And here a little tangent here, but hopefully not a big one Kathy, catch me if I get too far off base here...

Kathy: Okay!

Barry: I was surprised to learn that a smaller percentage of seniors read a book in the last year than any other age group. Of course, seniors include the widest range of ages of any group, covering everyone from 65 years old on up, but I was of the impression that seniors were among the most active readers at least the ones we've known. Senior book readers, on average at least, read easily the most books of any age group but even that seems from the statistics to be driven by a minority who read a much larger number.

Kathy: I'm sure there are many reasons seniors are less likely to be book readers, including habit, access and even growing vision weakness as we age. What can we as family caregivers do about that?

Barry: Well, some of it may involve libraries but there are steps we can take to make sure our loved ones get what they need to be able to read if they want to do so. Again it's always a matter of their preference; yeah there's a lot of benefits out there for reading but we shouldn't be forcing our loved ones to do something they don't want to. But if they do want to, eReaders are less expensive than before, especially since even the lowest cost tablets provide the ability to read most eBooks. We might be able to help them along by setting them up with an eReaders or installing an app on their tablet or computer and then showing them how they can access eBooks from online stores or from the library. Remember I said computer, for anybody who has a computer and a connection to the internet already, you can read an eBook without getting a special reader, you can simply read it on your computer.

As far as learning how to use these, yeah we can show them how but I recognize that some senior loved ones might be more comfortable with us showing them but others might prefer to learn from a non-family member. I think we learn that in a lot of ways that sometimes it's better, easier to learn from a stranger than somebody you eat dinner with regularly. But if that's the case with your senior loved one, you might be able to find a class or short training session in your community. Sometimes that will be through the local community school, the area agency on aging or a community or senior center. Your library might even offer a training session or even a one on one tutorial as we know some local libraries offer near us. If not, they can probably tell you where you can get a session or of course there's always Googling for more information.

Ahh, I see that familiar look on your face, Kathy. Before you say anything, yes this DOES seem to be a great topic for a Senior Care Corner video tutorial. I'll get that on the to-do list.

Kathy: No need – I already put it on the list for you!

Why would the library help people learn to read eBooks? Isn't that their competition?

Barry: Some may see it that way, Kathy, but I think most don't. As we've seen, the local library doesn't seem to and we keep reading about people who are very helpful. As we've learned, most public libraries also loan eBooks so they would be teaching customers how to use what the library has to offer. Even if they don't, though, I think many library staff members are simply glad to help people read in whatever way makes most sense for each individual reader.

Kathy: Well Barry, what about the waiting lists we've heard about to get popular eBooks from the local library?

Barry: Waiting lists for eBooks does sound counterintuitive to many of us, doesn't it? After all, there is not a physical copy that's checked in and out, but a digital file that can be copied and unlimited number of times. Well, at least we think that might be the case. In reality, book publishers still want to sell eBooks and realize that allowing an unlimited number of checkouts from a single purchase would tend to reduce revenue. Libraries have defined distribution rights, which specify the number of "copies" that they can have checked out at a given time. The reality, then, is that we end up with the same waiting lists for popular eBooks as for the print versions that we've seen, well for how many years?

Kathy: So we end up with libraries pressured to order more copies of popular eBooks and many people will get impatient and buy their own copy, both of which will mean more money to the publishers.

Barry: Yeah, I agree. I can see that system being tweaked over time. Remember, though, it's that revenue that drives many writers to produce many of the books we love and publishers to make them available. And since we plan to publish our own books someday – hopefully sooner rather than later – we would like to see there still being money in it.

No Need to Go to the Library to Go to the Library

One great benefit of eBook lending by libraries – in addition to the price being right for the borrower – is that you don't have to go to the library to, well, go to the library. Sure, there are social benefits from getting out, but getting out isn't convenient or even possible for a number of our senior loved ones and for many of us as family caregivers who are simply too busy to get out or really don't put it high enough on our priority list for ourselves. All that is needed in most cases is an internet connection and simply knowing how to access the library's website.

Kathy: Which we can cover in that video tutorial.

Barry: Yes Kathy, that'll be an important part of the tutorial. If you can get on the waiting list, check out your eBook and even "return" it, all from the comfort of home or wherever you

happen to be, then reading is a whole lot more convenient for more of our senior loved ones - - not to mention for us.

One more thing on eBook lending, while it has nothing to do with libraries, there is another way you might get to read an eBook without needing to buy it. Both Amazon and Barnes & Noble allow lending of eBook titles where the book has not been restricted by the publisher. Take a look at any eBooks you, a friend or family member may have purchased to see if they can be loaned out through the Kindle or Nook reading systems. You might just find that you can get access to that new book a lot sooner than you thought.

Making Reading More Accessible

Kathy: Well Barry, I think we have to remember it might not just be new books of, for reading for enjoyment that we want to think about. Family caregivers can really benefit by getting some how to and support books from their library whether in paper form or eBook form. Just as an aside.

Barry: That's true. And I think it's important to let your library know if you're looking for something they don't have. I imagine quite often more of the popular titles are available, but if you're looking for something just like you would at your supermarket, if they don't have the product you want; let the librarians know that it's something you'd be interested in checking out through them. No guarantee's there, but if you don't ask the answer's always no.

Kathy: So Barry, eBooks are more convenient and make it easier for regular readers to read. What about those who aren't reading now because of a vision loss or other physical limitation?

Barry: Well, Kathy, one nice thing about eBooks is that any of them can be large print and virtually any size needed for individual readers. The zoom feature on readers is one of the things that make eBooks so great, at least in my opinion. And you can generally do that whether it's an eReader, tablet, or even on your computer.

But for those who simply can't or don't want to read a book visually, there is also a great option. Traditionally books on tape or CD were popular, though often expensive. Some libraries have or had a good number of titles in audio format in their collections, but more often the selection was very limited, and some libraries I don't think even carried some at all.

While many eReaders and tablets have the ability to read eBooks aloud, for those who prefer audio formats, there are now electronic versions of spoken books available for purchase and download. Now, I do a lot of driving and have found Audible.com to be a terrific source for many of the latest titles but also older books. Many of the books at Audible have price tags in line with eBooks and can be played easily on smartphones, computers and mp3 players, such as iPods. If your intent is to listen to the books rather than read them visually, this audio book option might be a much better listening experience than the read-aloud function of some eReaders.



Kathy: It's great to hear that books are readily available for seniors and other family members who are unable to read visually. Why don't you put a link to Audible in the show notes, Barry, so people can check it out.

Barry: I'll do that.

That's probably a good place to wrap up this discussion. We'll be back before long with an eBook tutorial because Kathy's going to crack the whip, but in the meantime check out your senior loved one's local library to see if they lend eBooks. You might want to check out your own, if you don't live in the same community, as they might provide access to family member things that aren't offered in their local library.

Kathy: Even libraries in other areas make their collections available to non-residents, sometimes for a small fee, so those might be good to check out too.

Barry: Great point. Thanks for reminding me, Kathy. How about we turn to you now for your quick tip?

Kathy: Alright, today's quick tip is:

Create a Winter Emergency Kit

With the winter weather wrapping itself around our seniors, we think it would be a good idea to have a winter weather emergency kit handy in case of loss of power.

Your emergency kit should include:

1. Warm blankets
2. Non-perishable food and water

(And don't forget a manual can opener so you can open those canned foods)

3. Cat litter or sand for ice on your walkways
4. Battery powdered radio, flashlight and extra batteries
5. First aid kit

Put all these items together in one place where everyone knows where they are kept.

And any other items you might need in your area to keep your senior safe in the event of a winter weather emergency.

Barry: That's a great suggestion Kathy and very timely. I think while everybody does that, as long as you're putting together one, put together two or three. One to keep in your own home



another to give to a neighbor who might want it or be able to give somebody after a storm happens. So thanks, that's a great idea.

Well that's it for this episode of the Senior Care Corner Radio Show. Thank you for joining us. Again check us out online at SeniorCareCorner.com or in Facebook at Senior Care Corner. We'd love to hear your comments and your feedback. And while we're thinking about it, for those who listen to us on iTunes or even if you don't, if you could go over there and go ahead and rate the show and put in comments. We hope you can rate us high. If you can't rate us high, then we'd like to hear about your suggestions. But the more ratings we get the more visible we're going to be to others who go searching on iTunes. And again, the more people we can reach with our show. Well that's it again for this time folks and until we see you again, hope you have a great day!