

Barry: Welcome to Senior Care Corner. I'm Barry...

Kathy: ...and I'm Kathy. Thank you for joining us.

Barry: You'll find us online at SeniorCareCorner.com with solutions, tools, and information for families, caregivers, and others who care for and about senior adults.

Well, we're moving into a new year Kathy, a lot of excitement here for us. We've just gone through some redesign on the website that we feel really good about and we've got big plans for the New Year.

One of the big things in our new year is our annual visit to the Consumer Electronics Show, for our feature segment today we're going to talk about why we think it's important not just to us, but to our listeners. And why that technology is important. But before we get there, Kathy, you've got some news items for us, right?

Kathy: I do. I have several interesting items to share. As caregivers we are all striving to be long, life long learners to improve the life of our senior loved ones. And bringing these items to you, I hope, increases your knowledge. So here we go.

The first news item: states expect less money to help with heating bills. Several states have reduced the rate of heating aid benefits and more cuts may be on the horizon as Congress considers cutting more than \$1 billion from the budget of the Low Income Energy Assistance Program. This government program helped nearly 9 million people with their home heating expenses.

For seniors on a fixed income, rising household expenses including heating may lead to negative consequences if seniors are forced to choose between food and heat. This program provides cash grants to income eligible homeowners or renters, to help pay for home heating. We'll have a link to this program in our show notes (<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/liheap/>) and if you or your family can assist your senior with the cost of heating to help offset the rising cost combined with the lower budget this year, the gift of a warm house can pay benefits by helping your seniors stay healthy and happy this winter. You or your senior may also want to contact their utility company to inquire if payment assistance is available.

Ok, our second news item: broken arms are among boomers most likely to rise this year. The emergency rooms have become overcrowded with boomers suffering from broken arms. That number is projected to increase by as much as 1/3 by 2030.

The humerus bone in the upper arm was broken 370,000 times in 2008.

Barry: Boy that must be one sore arm.

Kathy: (laughs) Yea. The number of women over 40 and men over 60 years showed the greatest increase. A fracture of the proximal or upper part of the arm is most commonly

associated with falls. Women suffered these breaks more than twice as often as men. Osteoporosis raises the likelihood of bone fractures during a fall. 88% of upper arm fractures were a result of falls.

Prevention and treatment of osteoporosis, as well as prevention of falls, especially in the home; were strongly recommended by these researchers.

Alright, our third news item today is the MAYO clinic was named for science's top 10 achievement this year. One of the top 10 groundbreaking scientific achievements this year was the MAYO clinic's study on aging, selected by editors of Science. This study was the first to eliminate the effects of aging in mice and was published in "Nature" in November.

The study revealed that age related disorders could be delayed or prevented by eliminating the so-called "deadbeat cells" that were no longer dividing. The mice didn't live longer but they lived better than the untreated mice. It's hoped that this knowledge will help us live healthier more vital lives.

Barry: Wonder what would come out of that eventually?

Kathy: I think we'll see a lot more on the horizon with that particular sphere of research.

Alright, our last and final news item today is non fried fish might help ward off Alzheimer's. Older fish eaters have larger brain volume; eating broiled or baked fish as little as once a week may boost brain power and reduce the risk of mild cognitive impairment according to a recent brain scan research study. 260 healthy elder individuals were tracked for 10 years.

Eating fish, but not fried, has been found to strengthen areas of the brain by preserving grey matter. Parts of the brain responsible for memory often impaired by Alzheimer's disease were increased. Those people with larger brain volumes were shown to have a five fold reduction within five years of their brain scans.

No benefit was seen with fried fish consumption. Researchers stress that eating fish once a week is a small but important lifestyle change; it is not seen as a direct cause but one part of a healthy lifestyle.

Barry: That's interesting. Maybe the consumption of fish will go up, especially with other meats getting so expensive.

Kathy: Hmmm.

Barry: Well, thanks Kathy, appreciate those news items. Again folks, you'll see links in the show notes for some of those stories.

Now it's time to move on to our feature segment. As I mentioned earlier, as we're recording this it's the beginning of the new year. While many folks are working on, or maybe already

breaking, resolutions or watching football (sometimes both) we at Senior Care Corner are preparing for our trip to the Consumer Electronics Show. Each year we have people ask us why we feel it's important to go. Heck, Kathy asks me every year when we take a look at the budget for the trip. But we feel it's important to us, because we see it as important to YOU; you who are those working to improve the health, safety and enjoyment of senior loved ones as they live their lives.

Now why is technology important to our senior loved ones and thus to us? We continue to hear from individuals and read reports, and studies and surveys all indicating that seniors and adults of all ages want to live in their homes and their communities as long as they can. Now given were many are financially today and the high cost of moving into a senior living facility, staying at home may well be the only way that many seniors will be able to live they way they want to, live the lives that they want to live.

Kathy: Well for many of us, the thought of aging parents and grandparents living alone is very scary, especially for those of us that might be living far away or have our own families to worry about and just cant be there to give the care that we want to give. Those homes in which they've lived for years or even the downsized home they've moved into probably won't keep up with their needs as they get nearer and into their elder years. Technology, some of which is currently available, much of which is still ahead of us, can make those homes more accommodating to seniors and their elderly residents.

“But seniors and technology?” That's something we hear from a number of people in their doubting voices. For every note and comment that we get from readers and our community members telling us that their senior loved ones enjoy and benefit from technology we also hear someone certain that THEIR loved ones just wouldn't be interested and just wouldn't get involved with it. You might want to give them a real chance before assuming that would be the case. We see SO many people sitting in nursing homes using a laptop computer, emailing their loved ones, doing their banking, or using an MP3 player and whose family members just can't believe it. Even IF your senior loved one just isn't into technology, or think their not into it, there are many things ready now or coming along that might improve their lives without them having to as much as touch a mouse or type a web address.

Barry: Well you know Kathy, one example of just that is a technology that can help senior loved ones even if they don't want to deal with technology and that's [Presto](#), which we've discussed previously because we really just fell in love this product when we first saw it at an earlier Consumer Electronics Show. Presto is a mailbox slash printer that goes in your loved one's home and a mail service that forwards emails to the mailbox. It lets you sent what you want your loved one to see without them having to turn on or log into a computer. You can send letters, pictures, and so many things.

Kathy: So there's no password to remember or forget.

Barry: No, it simply prints out in their home and all they have to do is pick up the paper. We think it's a great idea for those situations in which a computer is simply out of the question for whatever reason.

Now that's just one example but there are many more. We will be making a list at the show and tell you about them. We are hoping we can get some of the makers to tell you themselves so we can play it for you.

Kathy: While huge crowds will be around all the 3D TVs, gaming and other cutting edge computer electronic displays, as they were last year, we'll be spending our time focusing on technology such as:

- Devices that can help seniors remember to take their medications at the right times each day – and take the right medications that they're supposed to at the time they're supposed to.
- Computers and peripherals tailored to meet the needs of seniors and others with challenges to their eyesight or manual dexterity for whatever reason
- Smart home technology, which might make you think of the Jetsons if you are of certain age but we're talking about such things as:
 - Being able to monitor and adjust heating and air condition temperatures in your loved ones home even from a distance
 - Receiving notification if your loved one who's developing Alzheimer's or already is in the early stages has left the house and nobody else was around to join him and then go off wandering
 - There are many more applications, some of which haven't even been considered yet
- Also the latest in mobile communications, with so many seniors using smartphones and tablet computers, and the apps that not only provide valuable information but can include games that can help maintain brain health

Barry: That's true Kathy. I mean there are those in so many existing and upcoming technologies targeted to audiences other than seniors, where we're going to be looking for applications that can improve the lives of seniors. That's one of my most fun parts of the show, finding things out there that aren't target to seniors but we really think can be made useful for those applications.

Kathy: Like Sherlock Holmes.

Barry: (laughs) yes. Basically get to look at all the cool tech toys of today and get a peek at those of tomorrow. That's not what really keeps us going back to the Consumer Electronics Show, though, as much as the conferences within the show, I mean that's where a lot of the information is shared.

One of the two most important conferences in our opinion, at CES is Silvers Summit; which bills itself as “the premier conference where technology meets the needs of an aging society.” Boy that is a cool line, I think. But it is targeted at companies to tell them how to meet the needs of an older audience and thus profit from doing so, but we see the beneficiaries really being our senior loved ones and us as their family members. Why do I say that? Well they’re selling technology companies on developing products and services that best meet our needs. That’s what the benefit is.

One aspect of Silvers Summit is a showcase for new technology highlighting those who have products that enrich an aging demographic, those who provide solutions to the problems we and our senior loved ones are facing or will face. Products like the Presto mail service we mentioned earlier.

The program lists 20 exhibitors in the Silvers Summit technology zone, the area targeting silvers with their products. Among those are the Aging Technology Alliance, or AgeTek, which typically includes several smaller but innovative companies who might not be there on their own. I mean after all the Consumer Electronics Show is a big show, its expensive to participate if you’re a company, so I think it’s great that AgeTek brings together a number of companies that might not be able to do it otherwise. Now also among those there are a couple of companies whose products we have highlighted before, Telikin, who offers a touch screen computer targeted to the needs of seniors and GrandCare Systems, a top tech system for those who want to remain in their homes. I mean, we’re both looking forward to meeting with Laura Mitchell of GrandCare, who you will recall we interviewed in an earlier podcast.

Kathy: That’s right. Now Silvers Summit is also a conference that targets those leaders in the technology industry who want to learn the secrets of reaching out and capturing the silvers market (remember that the audience for CES is the industry, not directly consumers).

It’s a training ground where companies the best way to sell to us? Maybe, but not in the way you might think. What they are doing is talking about how to offer products that meet the needs of silvers and thus will be attractive to us when looking to meet our needs and those of our senior loved ones.

The panelists in the conference will talk about what is going on with the development of smart homes and communities, helping innovators target where they can provide new technology to meet the needs of seniors in the context of the new infrastructure being developed.

There will be a discussion of the universal design movement. This is based on the concept of developing products that meet the needs of all ages in a home rather than just a select market – or more important, developing products that fit seniors as well as the younger markets who might be the primary targets today. Remember in our larger family, multi-family homes, we have to have situations and infrastructure in our homes that can be used by the grandchildren, and the adults, and the seniors.

This is something we have been seeing for a while. There are many products out there that are seen as being for a younger audience that are already perfectly suited and of interest to boomers and seniors. Right now the marketing strategies and channels are aiming for the younger customers but both companies and older consumers can benefit from the products being targeted at them as well.

Another aspect on which we've reported in the past is the application of these technologies. As we saw last year at the CES, many smart home technologies are targeted to the desires for convenience and security of younger adults and their families while those same technologies can be utilized by seniors, their families, and caregivers to make it possible for those seniors to stay in their homes longer.

Barry: You know Kathy a third aspect of universal design that I find particularly interesting, is how a product can be made maybe just a bit differently to be useful to a broader range of consumers. For example, a slightly larger screen might make a device useful to those whose eyesight isn't what it once was. That's another aspect that people just ought to consider especially when they are designing those products upfront.

Now one thing that's really asked there is; how do you get companies interested in making or targeting products to these seniors – yes, of course, you do it by showing them how they can make money. Hey, if they make money giving us what we and our senior loved ones need then everyone wins, right? You know, let's be realistic, if they don't think they can make money developing and marketing products that meet seniors needs, then we simply won't get those products.

Kathy: So, we will really be a voice and some input into what we feel seniors need from these companies.

Barry: Absolutely. There will be a panel at Silvers Summit talking about just that – how companies can gain customers and then keep them by providing the older audience customer service that they are demanding.

All of this is why we are covering Silvers Summit and why we think it is important to you. And that's why it's become important to us.

Kathy: So Barry, one of the other conferences that are part of the Consumer Electronics Show that we see as a key focus for us, not just to seniors but to younger generations as well is the Digital Health. Like Silvers Summit, Digital Health is a section of the show floor with exhibitors aligned along with a health theme, but for us the conference sessions are more interesting. Some of the topics that will, they'll be addressing there within the conference are:

- How patients are consumers and how it can push digital healthcare to new heights.

- How they're making health data intelligible for the consumer, which will be important to us as making our data electronic, makes it available for us to see as well. Digital health data will also be important to long distance caregivers, who will be able to take a more active role in assuring senior loved ones receive the care they need because they'll actually be able to see the electronic health record. One other way that we can connect our seniors with their doctors and their caregivers is with the use of these eHealth applications.
- How technology can change the outcomes of diabetes and obesity specifically through these eHealth applications, your doctor can actually track your senior's diabetes and their blood sugar levels without having to have an office visit. And you can also see their records.
- Another way we are particularly looking forward to seeing, especially me as a dietitian, is a discussion of the connected kitchen and how it can lead to more healthy eating and therefore a way to manage chronic disease.
- A session to which we are really looking forward will discuss managing the health of the aging population and how technology can help meet the growing need for services and more of our population is older and demands more from the health care system.

Barry: If Kathy and I are excited just thinking about these conferences well – we are! It's really some great information out there that we hope to get ourselves and bring back to you.

Besides these specific conferences with topics clearly applicable to seniors and to us as family members and caregivers, we are looking forward to other conferences at the Consumer Electronic Show as well, where companies will be talking about technology that might not be targeted to seniors but can certainly be beneficial to this in the industry parlance "market segment".

We know most of you can't be there at the Consumer Electronics Show, so we will be your eyes and ears, bringing you back pictures, words, and hopefully information that you can use to help the seniors in your life live better lives.

Kathy: So we encourage you along in the next few weeks to go ahead and check out our website, so you can actually see the pictures and hear the words that we're going to be bringing to you.

Barry: Great idea Kathy.

Well, that's our feature segment for today. And before we go back to planning our trip to the Consumer Electronics Show, Kathy you've got a quick tip for us?

Kathy: I do. Today's quick tip is: health officials offer tips for health of seniors during the winter. The first tip is: seniors need to get their flu vaccines. Flu season runs through April and it's not too late to get your vaccine. Our second tip is: check your senior's furnace for proper

functioning and safety. A carbon monoxide detector may be a healthy addition to their home. The third tip is: dress in layers to keep them warm. Set your senior's thermostat above 65 degrees. Number four: drink plenty of water each day. And the last tip? Keep extra medication on hand as well as nonperishable foods in case of storms this winter.

Barry: Well multi-part quick tip. That's really a bonus to start the year. Thanks Kathy.

We want to thank all of you for joining us and hope that everyone has a terrific New Year! And you can help make our year more effective and make us more effective in service you if you'll stop by and leave a comment on our website, again SeniorCareCorner.com or check us out on [Facebook at Senior Care Corner](#) and leave us a thought there on our page. Well whatever you do, we hope you have a terrific year and until next time we hope you have a great day. Thank you very much.