

What do we really know about nutrition?

As we mature, there are few things more important than a healthy diet. But dietary advice is a moving target. Earlier this year, the U.S. government reversed yet another major recommendation. It now states that cholesterol is no longer a “nutrient of concern” after decades of warning us it was a major contributor to heart disease.



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Many of my patients are giving up on nutritional advice altogether, just going with what tastes good, or the “everything in moderation” theory. If the “experts” are consistently wrong, who really knows what is a healthy diet?

There are basic wellness-based principles of nutrition that I was taught in chiropractic school over 30 years ago and provide a much better understanding of the topic. A diet based on these principles avoids the constantly shifting advice of “first it’s good for you, then it isn’t.”

The first principle of nutrition is simple: Foods are healthiest in their natural state. Put another way, the more you process a food, the more you reduce its nutritional value. If a food is highly processed, it will become harmful. Think of sugar, which is vital to our bodies in its natural form and is present in many foods. But when it is processed and highly purified, it becomes toxic, leading to diabetes, obesity, and many other health problems.

Remember hydrogenated fats? The medical profession used to recommend them as a “heart healthy” fat. But they are made under unnatural conditions including exposure to chemicals, high heat and pressure. So in my nutrition classes in chiropractic school, we were advised to avoid these fats, based on the principle that the processing likely makes them unhealthy. That turned out to be good advice; studies done years later showed hydrogenated fats to be unhealthy, even a major contributor to heart disease. The medical profession had to reverse their recommendation and is now pushing for these fats to be illegal.

This is the difference between the “reductionist” approach to nutrition, used by modern medical science, and the holistic approach favored by wellness practitioners. The reductionist approach sees food as a relatively simple mix of fuel (sugar and carbs) and isolated nutrients. Any nutritional value lost in the processing of a food can be added back in later in the form of vitamins — highly processed versions of the nutrients made in a factory.

The holistic approach to nutrition it is based on the idea that while foods do have different health-promoting nutrients (the vitamin C in citrus fruits prevents scurvy; liver is rich in iron, to build up blood; and fish tend to be rich in healthy fats), if you try to isolate these nutrients too much, the value is lost. There is more value in an intact, whole food than in any highly refined, concentrated vitamin pill. The healthiest foods are those that retain their nutrients, which means minimal cooking, freezing and additions such as flavorings and preservatives. This is why I recommend avoiding low-fat foods — they are a processed food, with a lot less nutritional value than the original, intact versions.

Even the most basic processing can change foods dramatically. Consider that breakfast favorite, a glass of orange juice. A large glass of orange juice could have up to 50 grams of sugar. Compare that to eating an orange, which has about 12 grams. How many oranges would you eat for breakfast? Typically not more than one. So the simple act of juicing changes the nutrient balance of your breakfast tremendously — there is much less fiber and a lot more sugar. And if the juice is frozen and reconstituted, there is so little vitamin C left they add more back in to restore the levels. You are much better off to stick to the unprocessed whole orange than a glass of fresh squeezed juice, let alone the frozen stuff.

This does not mean you have to eat everything raw and unpro-

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Creativity for enjoyment, health

How an arts program is bolstering social engagement for seniors

BY MEG HASKELL
BDN STAFF

Nancy Roe of Presque Isle insists she has never been the creative type. Even as a self-described “lifelong learner,” the independent, 85-year-old retired librarian said firmly, “I have always stayed away from art classes and craft classes.”

Nonetheless, Roe recently put a caller on hold while she finished gluing together an “explosion book,” a complicated folded-and-glued booklet that pops open to display multiple panels for photos, text or other content. “You can Google it,” she laughed. “I’m making one for my kids for Christmas. They’ll be amazed because they all know their mother is very noncreative.”

The explosion book is just one of several objects Roe learned to make last fall in an eight-week

class taught by Presque Isle artist Pamela Crawford.

The book-making class, offered in connection with Presque Isle’s senior college, was supported and funded in part by the Maine Arts Commission’s Creative Aging program. The program, in its third year, trains Maine artists to lead hands-on art classes for adults 55 and older in community settings, such as senior centers, libraries and assisted-living facilities. It also provides a small stipend for the artists who lead these classes.

Crawford, 65, also of Presque Isle, is one of 15 Maine artists who have completed the free, 12-hour online training program, which is offered by the nonprofit National Center for Creative Aging. Affiliated with George Washington University, the National Council on Aging and the National Endowment for the Arts, NCCA’s initiatives aim to build communi-



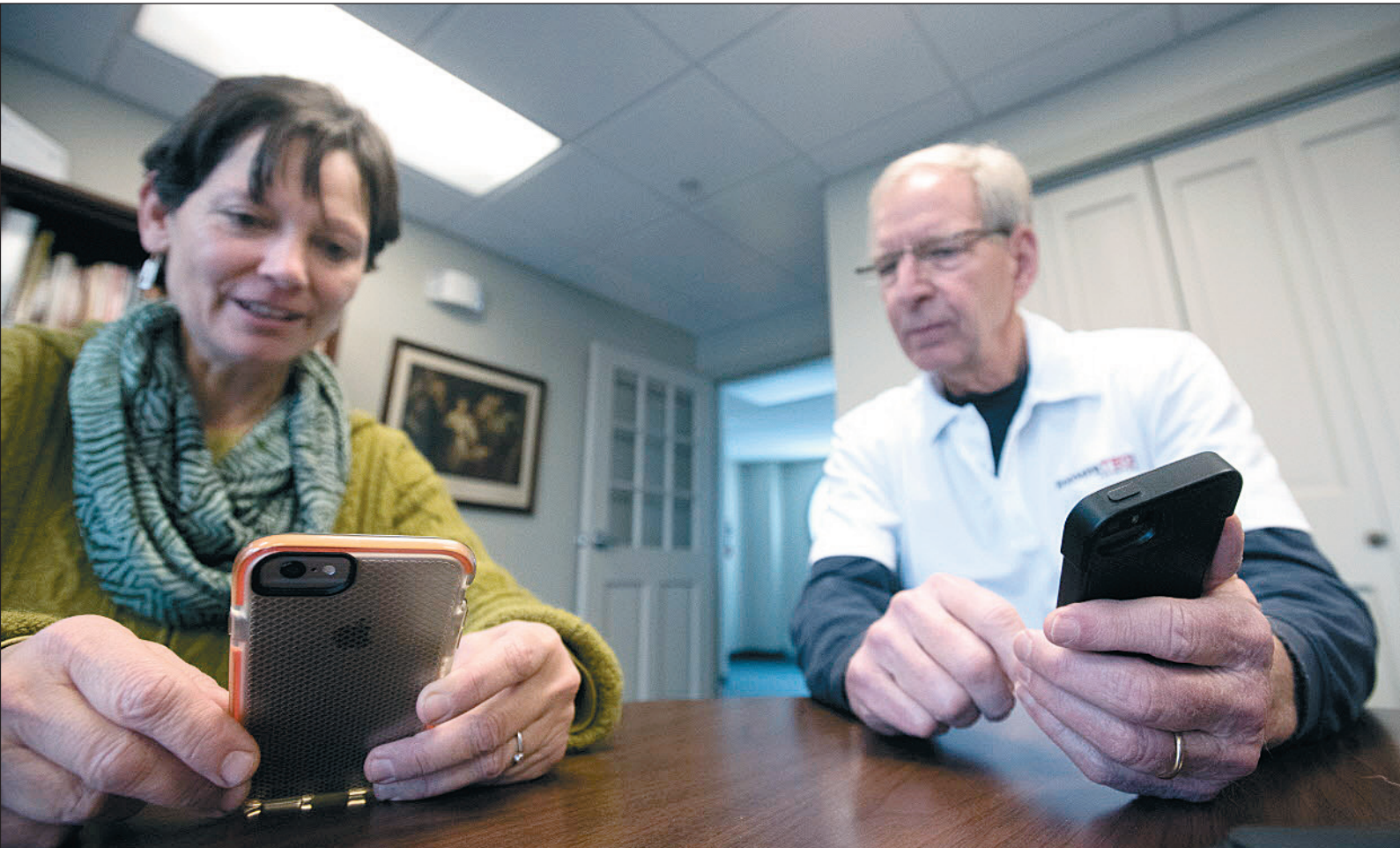
COURTESY OF PAMELA CRAWFORD

Rose Libby (left) and Barbara Pierce explore with stencils, foam stamps and paint at Pamela Crawford’s book-making class in Presque Isle recently.

ty, promote physical and emotional health and support lifelong learning through cultivating creative expression.

“I had become interested in the program as an aging artist myself,” Crawford said. She said the

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GABOR DEGRE | BDN

Ed Brazee, 67, of Orono explains to Stephanie Egenhofer, 53, how to use certain features of her smartphone. Brazee is a co-founder of BoomerTECH Adventures, a business aimed at helping aging Mainers learn about digital devices.

Ushering boomers into the digital age

New Orono company helps tech-wary Mainers stay connected

BY MEG HASKELL
BDN STAFF

For decades, baby boomers have led the way in commerce, entertainment, social responsibility and other essential aspects of American culture. But, says retired educator Ed Brazee, when it comes to using rapidly advancing digital technologies for their personal benefit and enjoyment, many boomers are barely hanging on.

Brazee, 67, of Orono is a co-founder of BoomerTECH Adventures, a year-old business aimed at helping older Mainers get their digital acts together. Whether it’s staying in touch with children and grandchildren, finding destinations in unfamiliar cities, editing smartphone photos or checking Facebook and email while traveling, Brazee said, “there seems to be a business niche for helping baby boomers stay current with technology.”

Often, he said, the most help-

ful guidance for getting comfortable with new smartphones, tablets and computers comes in person, from a fellow boomer like him.

On a recent afternoon, Brazee was working with 53-year-old Stephanie Egenhofer, an administrator at the Church of Universal Fellowship in Orono.

“When I started working here, I realized people were very tech-savvy,” Eganhofer said. “The minister sends out texts all the time and there are always emails I need to respond to, whether I’m in the office or not.”

So she ditched her trusty flip phone in favor of a smartphone that allows her to access her email, conduct online searches and send texts more easily, using the petite QWERTY keyboard screen instead of her old phone’s clunky number pad.

But her new iPhone 6 came with a bewildering array of other capabilities and built-in apps.

“My kids are not around much

anymore,” she said, “so I had to figure out how to use it on my own.”

Under Brazee’s guidance, Egenhofer has learned the basics and is currently branching out, cautiously. She is exploring video calling options like FaceTime and Skype, which allow her to connect with family members in the U.S. and Europe for free. She also is interested in the music app Spotify, so her sons can send her playlists they think she’ll enjoy. She likes an app that tracks her weekly exercise program. And she’s learning to take, edit and organize photos with the phone’s advanced camera options.

Even moderately tech-savvy boomers can Google “How do I set up a Skype connection?” Brazee said. But the sheer number of responses returned on that search query can be overwhelming.

That’s where BoomerTECH Adventures comes in. From customized one-on-one and small-group sessions to a new online iPhone

course currently in development, Brazee and his partners, 68-year-old Jill Spencer, a former high school social studies teacher in Lisbon, and 61-year-old Chris Toy, a former high school principal in Bath, say they have the answers boomers need to make the most of their devices.

Prices start at \$35 per person for a one-hour session. Gift certificates are available.

Brazee, retired from a long career as a professor of education at UMaine, remembers when then-Gov. Angus King proposed the Maine Learning Technology Initiative in 2001, which eventually provided a laptop computer to every middle school student and teacher in the state.

“I was teaching middle school educators at the time,” he recalled, “and I thought, ‘Uh-oh, I really have to get up to speed with this.’” Staying current with technology is still a priority. “The reality is,” he said, “this is the way the world works now.”

Lifetime learning habit pays off in joy and engagement

My attention was caught by a recent Bangor Daily News headline: “Great-grandmother earns bachelor’s degree.” The story originated in the Sun Sentinel, a print and online news outlet in South Florida. It was accompanied by a photo of 89-year-old Betty Reilly, sporting a cap and gown and a smile as bright as the Florida sunshine.

Betty graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English earlier this month from Florida Atlantic University, as I did in 1999 from the University of Maine. And, according to the story, she did it for the same reason I did — to beef up her resume. She was

building on her late-in-life high-school GED, which she earned in 2007 at the age of 80. In my case, the goal was to parlay my two-year degree in nursing, earned in 1984 when I was 30, into a long-delayed four-year degree, and — like Betty — to broaden my job-search options.

But our hard-won diplomas and the lines they added to our resumes were only part of the point. The greater value was in the campus experience itself — the relationships we



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forged, the new ideas we encountered and the day-to-day exhilaration of living in the academic environment.

“I am so happy because of this milestone,” Betty told the Sun Sentinel reporter. “But I’m also a little sad, too. I’d really like to go on and continue my education.”

Her younger classmates, she said, had been “my greatest boosters.”

I read about late-in-life college graduates with interest and pleasure. They remind me of what a good decision it was to go back to school, full-time, in my early 40s. Despite the very real stress of exams, papers and team group projects, of paying for tuition,

books and campus fees, of adapting to new technologies and navigating the bureaucracy of the public university system, that period was among the most richly rewarding and exciting of my life.

So, it was with mixed feelings that I accepted my diploma and headed back into the real world to find a job. Fortunately for me, the work I stumbled into was journalism, which offers daily opportunities to learn something new, interesting and sometimes important about the world I inhabit.

There are many options available to us as we age to keep exploring new ideas, trying new activities and expanding our participation.

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