

These heating tips can keep you warm and safe all winter long



Senior Beat
Carol Higgins Taylor

We’ve had a pretty mild fall so far although I do admit to bumping up my thermostat a few times. And my electric fireplace glows almost every night. Heating a home can be challenging, even with lowered oil prices, especially if the house is drafty and has windows that are not airtight. Nothing like hearing a window rattle when the wind blows. That will send you running for caulking to seal it and plastic to cover it.

For seniors, heating season can be a battle and trying to stay warm is just one more expense. As we age, it is increasingly important however, because hypothermia can set in if the house temps dip too low. We all probably rely on a variety of heating sources to stay toasty. Fireplaces, wood burning stoves and space heaters are popular but each can pose a safety risk. When using a fireplace, use a glass or metal screen in front of the opening to prevent embers or sparks from igniting things nearby. Don’t use excessive amounts of paper to build up a roaring fire because it can quickly get out of hand. And always follow directions on synthetic logs.

Never split one to quicken a fire and don’t burn more than one at a time. Wood stoves are a common choice for heat and are effective but can be risky if not properly installed and maintained. Have the chimney cleaned every year. Kerosene heaters are popular, too, but there is a lot to think about. Proper ventilation is critical lest you succumb to deadly fumes. Invest in carbon monoxide detectors and install around your home, especially near the sleeping areas. These are readily available and just plug into an electrical outlet. And don’t forget to maintain your smoke detectors. Make sure kerosene heaters have an emergency shut off in case they are accidentally knocked over. Be very careful when refilling the heater, never doing it indoors or when the unit is hot. Also, avoid overfilling the tank and use only fuel recommended for that particular heater. For many seniors, space heaters are the sensible solution. I love mine. While these heaters work well, they can be dangerous if not handled properly. Always give three feet of space around all sides of the heater and never place them near anything flammable, such as papers, clothing or bedding. Some questions to ask when buying one: Does it get hot all over or only where the heat comes out? Are there heat-seeking

pets or curious grandchildren that could get burned? Is there an automatic shut-off should it be knocked over? When using an electric heater, be careful of the cord, which could be a tripping hazard and never place it under a rug or let it get “pinched” by anything. Be sure your heater is Underwriters Laboratories (UL) listed. Operate it the exact specifications in the manual. While all these methods of heating your home may be perfectly acceptable, keep in mind that they can be a major contributing factor in residential fires. These suggestions are mostly common sense, but sometimes, especially if in a hurry, it’s easy to “just this once” ignore the obvious, like leaving your

space heater unattended. This is a serious don’t. A little caution goes a long way to ensuring a warm but safe season. And speaking of safety and caution, is your house clearly marked so that emergency crews can find you? If not, think about investing one of the Penobscot County Triad house number signs. They are highly reflective when car lights shine on them, are inexpensive and critical in an emergency when help is trying to find you. Call Eastern Area Agency on Aging at 1-800-432-7812 for more information.

Carol Higgins Taylor is an advocate for seniors and owns a public relations firm in Bangor. Email Higgins Taylor at seniorbeat@gmail.com.

Nurse practitioner, dentists join Bucksport Regional Health Center staff

Three new staff members have joined Bucksport Regional Health Center in the past few weeks, including a nurse practitioner and two pediatric dentists. BRHC announced last week that Family Nurse Practitioner Sara Willey has joined its staff. Willey earned a bachelor’s in nursing from George Mason University in Virginia, and a master’s degree from Husson University in Bangor. In her previous position, Willey worked as a registered nurse in the intensive care unit at the Eastern Maine Medical Center. BRHC also is now working with two part time pediatric dentists to serve the children in the area. Dr. Marcus Wilkerson earned a degree in dentistry from the University of Missouri-Kansas City. He recently was employed by Arkansas Dentistry and Braces, and before that was in pediatric dental residency at Penobscot Community Health Cen-

ter. Wilkerson has made the move back to Maine to begin working with Bucksport Regional Health Center part-time while establishing his own practice. Dr. Terrin Porter earned a degree in dentistry from the University of Missouri Kansas City and did his pediatric dental residency in Alaska. Porter spent two years as an associate dentist for a pediatric dentist and was fully credentialed at the Casper Surgical Center in Casper, Wyoming.

Orono High School teacher given technology award

Shana Goodall, Orono High School social studies teacher, has been selected to receive the Association of Computer Technology Educators of Maine ACHIEVE Award winner. Winners of the award are professionals who effectively apply available technology now. Jim Chasse, school principal at Orono High, called Goodall the Swiss Army knife of technology. She is a certified Common Sense Digital Citizenship educa-

tor, and also helped to found the school’s Red Riot Geek Squad, a club for students who want to learn how to fix computers. The awards were given out on Thursday, Oct. 15, at the Cross Insurance Center in Bangor. For information, go to edline.net.

PICA auction set for Oct. 24 at the Union Street Brick Church

Peace Through Inter-American Community Action, a.k.a. PICA, will hold its 29th annual fundraising auction from 3 to 6 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 24, at the Brick Church on Union Street in Bangor. Items up for bid will include artwork, sweatshop-free clothing, holiday wreaths, pottery, books, yoga and dance lessons, reiki treatment, restaurant and store gift certificates, flowers, food and more. Vendors at the auction will include tamales, bean burritos and other treats. For information or to donate goods for the auction, call Ellen at 947-4203.

UMaine spirituality studies series slated for area churches, centers

The University of Maine Judaic Studies Program will present “Exploring the Sacred, Aging and Wellness” in three different sessions: Sacred Approaches to Aging and Mental Health, 3:30-5 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 22, Arthur Hill Auditorium, Barrows Hall, University of Maine. Sacred Aging and the Role of Elders: an interfaith panel discussion, noon-1:30 p.m. Friday, Oct. 23, The Wilson Center, 67 College Ave. Lunch provided. Program part of the Wilson Center Interfaith Luncheon Series. Sacred Approaches to Health and Wellness, 6:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 24, St. Joseph Healthcare Park, 900 Broadway, Bangor. Refreshments. All talks are free and open to the public. Rabbi Richard F. Adress, D. Min, is founder and director of Jewish Sacred Aging and the website jewishsacredaging.com. This initiative grew out of his work with the

Union for Reform Judaism. As the Specialist for Caring Community and Family Concerns, he advised congregations on becoming “caring communities” seeking a “theology of sacred relationships.” From 2011-15, Rabbi Address was the senior rabbi of Congregation Mkor Shalom in Cherry Hill, NJ, and he now serves as co-chair of the Interfaith Working Group on Spirituality and Diversity for the Coalition to Transform Advanced Care. Rabbi Address created and currently hosts a weekly radio show in the Philadelphia area called “Boomer Generation Radio.” Series is sponsored by: The University of Maine Judaic Studies Program, Cultural Affairs and Distinguished Lecture Series, Office of Research, Center on Aging, Honors College, School of Nursing, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, The Jewish Community Endowment Associates, Congregation Beth El, The Wilson Center, St. Joseph Healthcare. For information, contact clas@maine.edu or call 581-1954.

Penobscot County Soil and Water Conservation banquet planned

The Penobscot County Soil and Water Conservation District will hold its 2015 Banquet from 5:30 to 8 p.m. on Nov. 12, 2015. The banquet will be held at the Penobscot County Conservation Association club house, located at 570 North Main St. in Brewer. This year’s guest speakers are retired Maine Warden John Ford and retired Maine State trooper Mark Nickerson. Ford and Nickerson delight audiences with their hilarious tales of law enforcement in Maine. More information on Ford and Nickerson can be found online at oldcops.com. The evening will also include a buffet dinner, 2015 conservation highlights, door prizes and more; tickets are \$20 per person and can be purchased at the Penobscot County SWCD office, located at 1423 Broadway, Suite 2 in Bangor, Maine. For more information, call Amy at 947-6622 Ext. 3.

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