

**About our  
Organization:**

HomePorts, a cooperative for life care at home, has been incorporated by the State of Maryland began operation in October 2008.

Certified as a non-profit organization, the mission of HomePorts is to identify, monitor and ensure access to a wide range of services that help members remain comfortably in their own homes as they age.

For information about membership, call 443-480-0940 or email [info@homeports.org](mailto:info@homeports.org) or visit us on the Web at: [www.homeports.org](http://www.homeports.org)

If you know of someone in the greater Kent County area who might benefit from being a member of HomePorts, or you are interested for yourself, please call us at 443-480-0940, or email [info@homeports.org](mailto:info@homeports.org) and we will be happy to be in touch with more information.

## LOUISE O'BRIEN TAKES THE HELM

When the HomePorts Board of Directors decided late last summer that the program it had been building toward for several years was ready to go "live", there was only one big question left: Who was going to be the voice at the other end of the phone when people called 443-480-0940?

It would have been fiscally irresponsible at that point to hire a full-time executive director, not knowing how quickly the

organization would grow, yet someone was needed on a full-time basis to support members who had questions and needs.



Enter board member Louise O'Brien who not only agreed

to do the job for six months, but to do it on a volunteer basis as well!

HomePorts could not be more fortunate than to have Louise at the helm. She is used to juggling many tasks at once, having raised seven children and then, as they moved on to college, returned to college herself to complete two different degrees in the field of nursing, the career she had put on hold

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## Washington College's SIFE Students

### Work With HomePorts

Washington College's student organization *SIFE (Students in Free Enterprise)\** has undertaken a community service project with HomePorts. A team of *SIFE's* business management majors are working with the HomePorts board to develop formal operating business and marketing plans. This current project continues the entrepreneurial relationship between HomePorts and *SIFE* during which a detailed market research study was completed for HomePorts' early planning

effort eighteen months ago and which was described in *SIFE's* 2007-2008 Annual Report.



Megan Jasion, *SIFE* President, is shown above (right) with Muriel Cole, Vice President of HomePorts, discussing marketing outreach on a recent

Saturday morning in Fountain Park at the HomePorts information table at the Farmers Market.

\* *SIFE* is an undergraduate business-related student organization active in the United States and 46 other countries, with over 1500 universities participating. Its mission is to mobilize students to make a difference in their communities while developing skills to become socially responsible business leaders across the globe.

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# Health and Fitness (This section is for increased health awareness only and should not be a substitute for advice from your own physician.)

## For Your Health



### TELL ME, DOCTOR, WHY DOES MY THUMB HURT SO MUCH???????

*By Ladd Rutherford*

Ladd Rutherford is a graduate of Stanford University and the University of Illinois College of Medicine and completed an orthopedic residency and fellowship in hand surgery at the University of California San Diego. He practiced hand surgery in Bozeman, MT, for 21 years before retiring to Chestertown with his wife, Bonnie, in 2004. He is a member of the HomePorts Board of Directors.

Studies have shown that nearly everyone will have X-ray evidence of arthritis involving a small joint at the base of the

thumb by the time they are eighty. Fortunately, only a small fraction of those with arthritis will experience enough pain and disability to need surgery.

The trapeziometacarpal joint links a small bone (trapezium) with the thumb metacarpal (that's the third bone from the tip of the thumb). It is a part of the wonderful system that allows the thumb to roll out of the plane of the palm and face the fingers.

Symptoms caused by arthritis are typically intermittent, waxing and waning with no apparent pattern. When the pain is mild, any over the counter pain reliever might be all you need. A number of

years ago, physicians tended to recommend aspirin or another non-steroidal anti-inflammatory agent, believing that there was benefit to reducing the inflammation itself, rather than just reducing the pain. It is generally recognized that nothing we prescribe can influence the natural history of this condition, so acetaminophen, if tolerated, is a good place to start.

Severe flares can often be treated with a steroid injection with good results, and splinting is often used in the short term. For the unlucky few whose comfort and function can't be maintained with this approach, surgical options can be considered. ◇◇◇



## We are What We Eat

### 'Smart Choices' Food Labels Are Coming

Beginning by late spring or summer of this year, you may notice a new food label, called "Smart Choice", on the *front* of some packaged goods.

Foods eligible for the "Smart Choice" symbol must meet certain nutritional standards. They cannot contain too much of nutrients that should be limited in the diet, such as total fat, saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, added sugars, and sodium. In addition, they must contain nutrients such as calcium,

potassium, fiber, magnesium, vitamins A, C, and E or food groups such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat or fat-free dairy.

To make it easier for consumers to compare products, the Smart Choice labels will also display calories per serving and the number of servings per container. These new labels should reduce the need to sift through labels that vary from company to company.

At this time, the Smart Choice program, which was coordinated by the nonprofit Keystone group, is not mandatory, so food companies are free to participate (or not) as they choose.

Companies likely to participate in the Smart Choice program include Coca-Cola, ConAgra Foods, General Mills, Kellogg, Kraft Foods, Pepsico, Unilever U.S., and Wal-Mart. Nestle is considering participating in the program.

## Fit as a Fiddle

### BUILDING YOUR BRAIN POWER

Physical fitness buffs have had science on their side for decades, but information about keeping our brains fit has been a more recent focus of interest. Most of us know that crossword puzzles and SuDoKu are good ways to, in effect, "take our brains to the gym,"

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Dollars and \$ense will return in the Spring issue – hopefully with some happy news!

# LOUISE O'BRIEN TAKES THE HELM

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while the children were growing up.

Although she and her husband had lived in Washington, D.C., for more than 42 years, she chose to move to the Eastern Shore after she was widowed to be closer to the towns where many of her children are now living.

Since moving to Chestertown in 2001, Louise has been active in a number of community organizations. For five years she ran the local Ride to Recovery Program, a volunteer transport service sponsored by the American Cancer Society

for cancer patients who must travel to Easton, Annapolis, or other distant points to receive chemotherapy treatments. She also served for five years as a member of the local hospital ethics committee, drawing on her training and experience as a nurse.

As she talks about her work with the members of HomePorts, it becomes absolutely clear that Louise is the right person for the job. "I love getting to know people and hearing their life stories," she says. "I learn so much from them and admire what they have done with their lives."

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# Safety First!

Although 84% of the over-50 population would like to remain in their own homes, only 16% have modified them for safety or comfort, according to AARP. Among changes to consider as one grows older are the following:

- widening doorways and hallways to accommodate family members who may rely on wheelchairs for mobility
- making items in kitchen cabinets easier to get at through the installation of sliding shelves and lazy Susans
- attaching hand railings to both sides of stairs to ensure safe travel in either direction
- installing a barrier-free shower in the bathroom which doesn't require stepping up into the shower; "grab bars" inside the shower will also add to bathing safety
- replacing old, round doorknobs that can be painful for arthritic hands to manage with lever style handles

HomePorts has copies of the **AARP HOME FIT GUIDE**. If you would like to request a copy, please call 443-480-0940. For those who have had a home safety assessment and would like to implement any recommendations for home modifications, remember that our list of cooperating vendors includes reputable handypersons and contractors. When making arrangements with a vendor, be sure to ask for a written statement of the work to be completed and the price to be paid for it before the work actually begins. ◇◇◇

## Health and Fitness (This section is for increased health awareness only and should not be a substitute for advice from your own physician.)

## VOLUNTEERS ON THE MOVE ASSIST HOMEPORTS MEMBERS

### Fit as a Fiddle

(Cont'd from page 2)

but an even more active way to engage our gray matter is to create little mind challenges for ourselves from the activities and reading material that cross our paths each day.

Here's an example of how this works. Let's say you subscribe to the Kent County News, read through it each week, and then put in your recycle bin. Next week, just for fun, take a pen and a piece of paper when you've finished reading,

and write down some of the things you learned from the articles. What was the cartoon about -- and was it funny? Pick a name from the paper and see how many words you can find inside it; for example, in "Hemstock" you might find "stock, hem, tock, hock, mock, shock" and so on.

Another "do it yourself" mental exercise is to check your powers of recall. You could make a grocery list for use later in the day and then see whether you can recreate it (without looking!) an hour or so later. You could

try to name all the stores on Cross Street in downtown Chestertown between High and Cannon Streets and then see how well you did the next time you go shopping. You get the idea; instead of waiting for the puzzles to come to you, you make up your own as you go along.

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More than 40 men and women in the Kent County community have volunteered to be part of the HomePorts network ready to help members with the small tasks of everyday life, and seven of them have already answered the call to do just that. The most common need so far has been for transportation assistance, but volunteers stand ready to assist with needs that range from pet care to computer help. Members can request volunteer assistance by calling 443-480-0940.

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# Emergency Light Bulbs

Available for Free

An everyday porch light that becomes a flashing signal in emergencies is currently available for free to HomePorts members. The bulb looks and acts like an ordinary clear bulb, but when the switch that controls it is flicked up and down several times, it becomes a flashing signal that can help responders find your home in an emergency. To request one of these bulbs and a volunteer to help install and demonstrate it, call the HomePorts number, 443-480-0940.



## 2009 Green Programs for the Public

by the Neighbors-for-Neighborhoods Group in cooperation with Chestertown Goes Green

The Neighbors-for-Neighborhoods Association is planning a monthly one-hour program featuring speakers on green topics. All events will be in the Town Hall meeting room from 7:30-8:30 p.m. and are open to the public.

**January 15** – “All About Rain Barrels” with Liz Starkey, owner of Kingstown Farm, Home, and Garden: an opportunity to learn options for a rain barrel, order one for early spring delivery (ordering is optional), and hear about other green garden practices

**February 11** – “Affordable Solar Energy for the Home” with Roy Mears and son, local builders and renovators of historic homes. Learn about making home modifications for better energy efficiency.

**March 3** – “Sustainable Gardening” with Bob Bell, President of Bell Design, Inc. Learn about regional native plants, proper plant selection, water management, and the most important green garden practices. Originally from Easton, Bell is a landscape architect who has appeared on HGTV’s “Curb Appeal”.

**April-23** – “Gardens and Native Plants” with Liz Starkey and horticulturists from Kingstown Farm, Home, and Garden

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