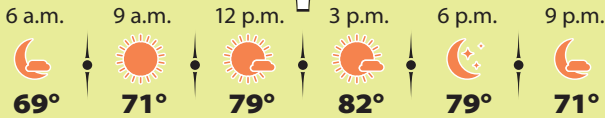




HINTS FROM HELOISE | D5

A reader sounds off on preferences made for in-store pickups versus in-store shopping.



LEAH SHEWMAKER ON FLORIDA | C1

Central Florida offers great destinations for those who love learning about space.



TOP WORLD AND NATION NEWS

LEARNING SETBACKS SHOW COVID'S TOLL ON KIDS, A5

Around the World: Russia rejoins key deal on grain exports. **A2**

Across the Nation: Fed unleashes big rate hike; hints at a pullback. **A3**

In Florida: Gas prices go up after tax 'holiday' ends. **A4**

CAREGIVING NEWS

MISSION OAKS RESIDENTS, STAFF CELEBRATE FALL

The Mission Oaks Assisted Living facility in Oxford hosted a festival with live bluegrass music, pumpkin painting and more. **A14**

SPORTS NEWS

ASTROS TURN IT AROUND, TIE SERIES 2-2

Cristian Javier and Bryan Abreu blank the Philadelphia Phillies and pick up MLB history's second no-hit World Series game. **B1**

LOCAL NEWS

PHILHARMONIC HOSTS CONCERT FUNDRAISER

The Villages Philharmonic Orchestra is partnering with Steinway & Sons to fund a Steinway Model D Concert Grand Piano. **C3**

OUR TOWN | EXPANDING EDUCATION FACILITIES



Rachel Stuart | Daily Sun

Construction workers attend the topping-off ceremony in front of The Tracy Performing Arts Center at the new campus for The Villages High School.

Construction Milestone Reached at New Campus

By GARRETT SHIFLET | Daily Sun Staff Writer

The Villages Charter School's South Campus, the centerpiece of Middleton, is closer to welcoming students into its new buildings. Wharton-Smith Construction Group held a topping off ceremony Wednesday at the future campus of The Villages High School. Hundreds of workers, VCS administration staff, business partners (including VMG Construction and SchenkelShultz Architecture) and members of the Morse family attended the event in the courtyard between the Mark G. Morse Sports Complex and the Tracy Performing Arts Center. "It's an unbelievable project," said Devon Wiechens, vice president of commercial design for The Villages. "This is the largest single project we've done when you consider the K-8 campus and the high school being built at the same time. "It's exciting to

Please See MILESTONE, A8

The Ins and Outs Of Over-the-Counter Hearing Aids

ACCESSIBLE HEALTH CARE

Villages Health director of audiology talks about what to consider when buying an over-the-counter hearing aid.

By LEAH SCHWARTING | Daily Sun Specialty Editor

For the first time, people can buy hearing aids direct from retail stores, which may be trickier than it sounds.

The FDA announced in August it had finalized language for a new category of over the counter hearing aids geared towards adults with mild to moderate hearing impairments.

Under the new rule, which recently took effect, people can buy hearing aids straight from stores and, according to the FDA, they won't need to get a medical exam or a prescription. They also won't need to get a fitting adjustment with an audiologist. "It's definitely good news," said Dr. Al Turri, The Villages



Dr. Al Turri

Please See HEARING, A10

ONLY IN THE VILLAGES

By Leah Shewmaker

Local residents who love cars should clear their calendars, as both classics and brand-new models will be featured at events throughout the month.

The first show features The Villages Thunderbirds club and is from 5 to 8 p.m. Friday at Lake Sumter Landing Market Square.

The Villages Entertainment will host several of these Friday Night Car Shows on the squares, which showcase a charitable partner of the club's choice and bring in vendors and live entertainment for guests to enjoy as they peruse that show's featured models.

Please See CRUISES, A9

HEADLINES & DATELINES

Out of This World Travel



To infinity and beyond! Travel agency Cruise Planners has reserved two capsules scheduled to fly in 2025 and 2027 on SpaceShip Neptune, developed to be the most accessible spacecraft on Earth. The six-hour journey takes eight passengers and a pilot to the edge of space in a pressurized capsule propelled by a SpaceBalloon. SpaceShip Neptune will differ from other spacecraft by being attached and secured to the SpaceBalloon for the entirety of the flight. Other vessels separate mid-flight and transfer to different flight systems. According to Space Perspective, SpaceShip Neptune will be lifted to space by the SpaceBalloon, powered by renewable hydrogen with no rockets and no carbon footprint. Guests won't have the jarring blastoff that is typical of space travel, but instead will ascend steadily at 12 mph, making the experience accessible for anyone who is able to fly with a commercial airline. — The Associated Press

The capsules are designed to keep passengers comfortable and safe during flights.

THE QUINTESSENTIAL ASTRONAUT EXPERIENCE

The interior layout has been designed for comfort. Guests will be able to enjoy the view from the largest windows ever flown to space, with 360-degree visibility and will be able to use a telescope. A high-speed Wi-Fi connection will be available allowing guests to share the experience.



FLORIDA LAUNCH POINT

The first trips will take off from the former Space Shuttle Program landing site at Kennedy Space Center, now run by Space Florida, the state's aerospace economic development agency. Landings will take place in the Gulf of Mexico.

INSIDE

World News	A2
Coast to Coast	A4
Lottery	A4
Opinion	A6-7
Sports	B1
Local News	C1
Weather	C2
Recreation Centers	C8-9
Lifestyle	D1
On The Squares	D3
Comics & Puzzles	D6-8

from the front page

HEARING

Continued from A1

Health director of audiology. “If over the counter hearing aids work for you — in other words, if you have mild to moderate hearing loss and the presets on them meet your needs — it’s going to be a great convenience for patients, and it will reduce costs as well, I hope.”

However, there are a couple of things people should consider before rushing out to buy a hearing aid.

The Daily Sun recently spoke with Turri about the subject.

For some people, fitting a hearing aid themselves can be daunting. What should they know about the process?

Any product worth its salt should have great customer support. So, when you go to the store and you buy one of these, I would hope that the packaging has links to videos.

A big part of your first visit with me, if I fit you with hearing aids, is we spend a lot of time going over insertion, removal, battery insertion, battery charging, reasonable expectations, dos and don’ts, so my hope is the packaging that these things come in have links to websites or YouTube videos, or have a lot of pages with information.

I think what a lot of people are forgetting is hearing aids are more than just sticking something in your ear and having 20/20 hearing. It’s just not the same. There’s a lot of steps involved. So my hope is there’s very good instructions in the packaging

I don’t care how inexpensive these things are; if they’re \$100, \$1,000 or \$2,000. If they don’t work for you then you don’t need to use them and you should get your money back.”

or the patient has access to telephone support. And if they don’t, here’s the great news: The Villages Health has nine doctors of audiology on the team and we’re all versed in this new category of hearing aids. So, if people need help, come see us.

Without a hearing test, is there a risk people may not know what is causing their hearing impairment before they get a hearing aid?

Correct. Is it a hearing loss that can only be assisted by hearing aids, or could it be a medical condition that could be fixed with a pill or with surgery, or simply wax removal? Not everyone who comes to see me

needs a hearing aid. The other issue is, what if there’s other underlying conditions? Let’s say the patients has tinnitus, or vertigo or numbness in their face, and all these things seem like they’re mutually exclusive, but when you put all those symptoms together it could be something more severe or life threatening.

There are going to be a lot of brands out there those with hearing loss have to compare for the first time. What should they look at when comparing them?

I think the biggest thing they should look for is 100% money back guarantee with at least a 30-60 day window, because I don’t care how inexpensive these things are; if they’re \$100, \$1,000 or \$2,000. If they don’t work for you then you don’t need to use them and you should get your money back.

The other thing is, I think if you pay attention to well-known brands — and it’s hard to say because there’s no history here for over the counter products for bigger names. Bose is a name we all know and recognize.

Bose is not selling hearing aids directly, but they’ve developed a product and licensed it to an established online vendor. Sony is partnered with a major hearing aid company. Names like that I know and I trust. They’re not out to hurt people, so they typically have very good patient guarantees.

Specialty Editor Leah Schwarting can be reached at 352-753-1119, ext. 5375, or leah.schwarting@thevillagesmedia.com.

Over-the-Counter Hearing Aids Have Potential Drawbacks

Consumers may not regain the hearing they expected from an over-the-counter hearing aid.

By ELISSA WELLE
Tribune News Service

Soon, millions of Americans will hear better, for less money and at greater convenience.

Beginning this week, over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids will be sold at local stores and online for the first time, making it possible for adults with mild to moderate hearing loss to buy the devices without a prescription.

Major retailers, including Best Buy, Walmart, Walgreens and CVS, were set to begin selling OTC hearing aids on Monday, and smaller pharmacies are likely to follow in the coming months.

This new category of hearing aids was approved by the FDA in August, five years after Congress passed legislation requiring federal regulators to do so. Since then, tech companies have rushed to design cheaper devices for the new market. An estimated 30 million American adults have some hearing loss — but fewer than one-third use hearing aids.

The over-the-counter models are expected to be much cheaper than most

prescription devices. Hearing aids at Walgreens, for example, will cost \$800, while most prescription hearing aids cost thousands of dollars. Medicare and most insurance policies do not cover hearing exams or aids, and a device costing hundreds of dollars may still be out of reach for many consumers.

Yet, less costly hearing aids are welcome news to those who have advocated for lower health care costs. At a news conference earlier this year, Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra called the final FDA ruling a “standout.”

“Get ready, folks,” Becerra said. “You’re going to save a lot of money and we are all going to benefit from that.”

But audiologists and some members of the hard-of-hearing community are skeptical of the ruling, saying consumers may lose money on ill-suited or poorly fitting hearing aids if they do not work with a specialist.

Even worse, consumers may not regain the hearing they expected from an OTC hearing aid, said Leslie Soiles, chief audiologist at the hearing clinic HearingLife. Soiles pointed out the many factors that play into hearing loss, including medical conditions not easily detected with a simple hearing exam.

“We’re asking a consumer to self-diagnose, without any ... understanding of the degree of challenge they may have, or may not have, with their hearing,” Soiles said.

Similar to getting eyeglasses, the ideal situation may be a combination of professional assessment and OTC hearing aids, said Lynne Kinsey, local chapter president of Hearing Loss Association of America, a nonprofit patient support association.

“Some people buy glasses that are too strong, or that aren’t strong enough, and they wear them for a long time,” Kinsey said. “And I imagine this is going to happen with hearing aids.”

First-time hearing aid users should get their hearing checked first, Kinsey said, preferably by an audiologist. The results of a hearing exam, called an audiogram, will show what frequencies are heard and which are missed. Consumers can then see if an OTC hearing aid fits their needs.

Kinsey, who used hearing aids for many years after abrupt hearing loss at the age of 40 and now has two cochlear implants, cautions customers to do their research beforehand and be prepared to try a few before picking one that fits.

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