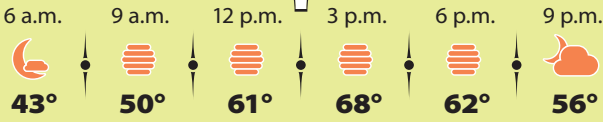




**BEFORE THEY WERE VILLAGERS | C5**  
Terry Hindman lived in Alaska for 50 years and has a collection of Alaskan artifacts.



**MADDIE CUTLER ON GIVING | C1**  
Villages Honor Flight is hosting its first fundraising fashion show of the year Feb. 15.



TOP WORLD AND NATION NEWS

## EUROPE WORKS TO CALM PROTESTING FARMERS, A5

**Around the World:** U.S. identifies group that attacked Jordan base. **A3**

**Across the Nation:** Neuralink gives first brain implant to human. **A14**

**Across the Nation:** U.S., China discuss fighting flow of fentanyl. **A16**

SPORTS NEWS

## CHIEFS LOOK TO BREAK REPEAT NFL TITLE DROUGHT

Kansas City is heading to the Super Bowl hoping to become the first back-to-back NFL champions since the Patriots did so 19 years ago. **B1**

LOCAL NEWS

## VILLAGES HABITAT CLUB REACHES MILESTONE

The Villagers Habitat for Humanity Club held a Truss Day celebration for its current project, marking the raising of a home's roof. **C1**

LOCAL NEWS

## WORSHIP HOUSES HOST CHARITY FASHION SHOWS

Temple Shalom, St. Mark the Evangelist and St. Vincent de Paul are all hosting fashion shows that will benefit area causes. **C3**

OUR TOWN | AMERICAN HEART HEALTH MONTH



Mark Goetz, left, of the Village of LaBelle, and club president Dianne Schultz, of the Village of Caroline, join members of The Villages Running Club last week for a fun run that also enhances cardiovascular health.

Rachel Stuart | Daily Sun

# Quest to Keep Heart Healthy Continues

By VERONICA GALLAGHER | Daily Sun Specialty Editor

Everyone's risk for high cholesterol goes up with age — and with it the risk for heart disease.

There's no better time than February's American Heart Health Month to remember that senior living requires that little extra effort to stay heart healthy, which is feasible with The Villages lifestyle.

"Many patients fail to understand that although they may have been healthy their entire life, as they grow older they may require cardiac care and medications to optimize risk factor reduction," said Dr. Robert Herman, a cardiologist with The Villages Health. "Control of

Please See **HEART, A9**

## WEAR RED ON FRIDAY

Friday marks National Wear Red Day. Dress in red to raise awareness for heart disease, the leading cause of death in the U.S.

## Sumter Ranks Among Highest in State for Graduation Rate

The Sumter County School District and state of Florida saw year-to-year increases in high school graduations.

By GARRETT SHIFLET | Daily Sun Staff Writer

A high school diploma is not a given, it is earned; but students in Sumter County are above the state average when it comes to earning their sheepskin.

The Sumter County School District had a 94.3% graduation rate for the 2022-23 school year, based on data released by the Florida Department of Education. That is well above the Florida state average of 88%.

The Sumter County number is also an improvement from the 93.1% rate during the 2021-2022 school year.

"This data certainly makes me proud to be a small part

of such a dedicated group of professionals educating these kids — and glad the students see the value of that earned diploma," said Rick Shirley, Sumter County Superintendent of Schools. "We are not a 'diploma mill' and our school board believes in high standards for success — so that makes the data even more impressive."

The state's graduation rate is based upon how many students graduate on time within four years of starting ninth grade. It accounts for graduates, non-graduates and dropouts, which can

Please See **GRADUATION, A10**

ONLY IN THE VILLAGES

By Veronica Wernicke

**When Sharon Howard and Lt. Mike Ross pass each other at the Sumter County Sheriff's Office, they ask each other and themselves, "Where are you on your ladder?"**

The ladder is a poster composed of 18 rungs, each labeled with an emotion, and is a visual reminder for law enforcement officers and their staff to constantly check in with themselves and others at their department.

Thanks to a training program started and run by two Villagers, Linda Webb and Randy Friedman, officers across the country are checking in more frequently on their own

Please See **TRAINING, A10**

EXPLORE & EXPERIENCE

OUT & ABOUT IN THE VILLAGES

## Try This Today: Anyone With an Interest in Swimming Can Join VAST

Whether you're a swimming savant or just like to splash around, The Villages Aquatic Swim Team has a spot for you. For more than 20 years, VAST has helped Villagers refine their swimming skills for personal improvement or competition, like Charlene Myszewski, at right, who is a VAST member who has competed in the Florida Senior Games. VAST offers 10 coached workouts weekly at three sports pools — Mulberry Grove, Rohan and Ezell — with certified U.S. Masters Swimming instructors. For more information, visit vastswim.com.

—Greg Hughes, Daily Sun



Bill Mitchell | Daily Sun

IN ENTERTAINMENT

**Have Fun With A Trivia Night at Mystic Ice Cream**  
Find out more, **D1**

**Plus:** Find the lineup of entertainment at the town squares, theaters and beyond, **D3**

AT RECREATION CENTERS

**Happening near you:** From aqua aerobics to Zumba and everything in between, there's fun for everyone, **D4-5**

LOVIN' THE LIFESTYLE

Plan your perfect day in The Villages, **D1**

Recipes	D1
Comics	D6
Puzzles	D7-8
Horoscope	D9
TV Guide	D10
Advice	D11



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## HEART

Continued from A1

risk factors to prevent further cholesterol accumulation is of greater importance as we age.”

The entire month is devoted to spotlighting ways residents can take action and protect themselves against the leading cause of death in the United States. You can even wear red Friday, which is National Wear Red Day, to call more attention for the need to save lives, and promote healthier living.

The major cardiac risk factors for coronary disease include high cholesterol, smoking history, diabetes mellitus, high blood pressure, family history, age and obesity, Herman said, but he offers five key preventive tips to stay heart healthy.

## Exercise

Not getting enough exercise increases the risk of developing conditions that lead to heart disease, such as high cholesterol, diabetes and high blood pressure. But you don’t need to be a marathon runner to reap the heart-healthy benefits of regular exercise. Many resident lifestyle clubs and programs through The Villages Recreation & Parks Department provide excellent options for Villagers looking for a new way to get moving.

“In The Villages there are many exercise programs available for those individuals who may not be able to perform vigorous activity,” Herman said. “A regular exercise activity, no matter how limited, is of value not only for heart health but also to help us maintain muscle tone and balance as we age.”

The CDC recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise every week, plus muscle-strengthening activities at least 2 days a week.

## Eat Right

While it may seem difficult to start, changing your diet is an easy way to help out your heart. Over 70% of U.S. adults are overweight, according to the Center for Disease Control, and compared to other risk factors, a poor diet is easily modified.

“Individuals tend to focus on rapid weight loss through popular diets rather than a long term change in their eating behaviors,” Herman said. “The Mediterranean diet is well recognized as an excellent diet and the American Heart Association has significant information available on-line and in books.”

Part of a heart-healthy diet involves eating a variety of fruit and vegetables, picking the right proteins and limiting sugar and sodium.

Instead of converting to a strict regimen, try starting with a few fruits or vegetables at each meal alongside favorites. The nutrients in both fresh and frozen vegetables can reduce blood pressure and cholesterol and lead to better heart health.

Remember that not all proteins are created equal. Red meat is high in saturated fat, which can increase cholesterol, while eating a diet high sugar and sodium can damage your arteries and unhealthy arteries make your heart work harder.

Legumes, nuts, seeds, fish and seafood are the most beneficial sources of protein, while eggs and poultry also are good choice and do not impact your risk of heart disease.



Rachel Stuart | Daily Sun

**Residents participate in Yoga on the Square at Lake Sumter Landing Market Square. While yoga is a great way to tone and strengthen muscles, it is also a great way to manage stress, which can affect your heart’s health.**

## Quit Smoking

Cigarette smoking, and vaping, greatly increases your risk for heart disease. If you don’t smoke, don’t start. If you do smoke, quitting will lower your risk for heart disease. Your doctor can suggest ways to help you quit.

Tobacco products, over time, impair how blood vessels function and increases the risk for cardiovascular disease. However, if you stop smoking, your risk of coronary heart disease will be halved within a year and will return

to a normal level over time, according to the World Heart Federation.

“Long-term smokers are also at higher risk of cardiac events due to damage to arterial vessels which accelerate cholesterol deposition. For these individuals control of risk factors is particularly important,” Herman said.

## Destress

Managing stress is good for your health and well being. Poor mental health is associated with an increased risk of heart disease and stroke. Stress also may contribute to risk factors of heart disease, such as smoking, overeating and lack of physical activity.

Stress also increases inflammation in your body, which is linked to factors that can harm your heart. Studies have shown the impact of trauma, depression, anxiety, and stress on the body, including stress on the heart.

A study by John Hopkins University found women going through two or more divorces

had a rise in heart attack risk that was similar to that of a smoker or a person with diabetes. The study found a higher heart attack risk in men who’d had multiple divorces too. Even decades after a divorce, relationship stress can leave a powerful imprint on your health.

## Monitor Your Cholesterol and Blood Pressure

You can’t feel high cholesterol or high blood pressure, which is why it is important to get it checked and learn about how to manage it.

Blood levels of cholesterol should be tested at least once every 4 to 6 years. If you have a family history of the condition, you may need to have your cholesterol checked more often.

The American Heart Association recommends home monitoring for all people with high blood pressure.

Consult with your primary care provider regularly to monitor important long-term measurables such as blood

pressure and cholesterol.

Those five steps, along with making sure you start your medical care with an annual exam with your primary care physician, can go along way to maintaining good cardiovascular health.

Veronica Gallagher can be reached at 352-753-1119, ext. 5297 or veronica.gallagher@thevillagesmedia.com.

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