



## THE NEWS FROM TOY'S DESK

*At last, we have a light at the end of the long black tunnel of COVID. Vaccines are being produced and administered, although with 350 million in this country and 8 billion worldwide, it is going to be a long process to vaccinate everyone. As I write this, fewer than 5 million Americans have had their shots. We are a strong people, and as we move towards that light, we also must be a patient people.*

*The pandemic will get much worse before it starts getting better. We are going into the most dangerous period of contagion of this disease, with a new strain much more contagious than the current one. So, with our focus on that light, we must continue to be vigilant.*



*Toy's dog Henry,  
with grandson  
Hunter*

### SENIOR ACTIVITY CENTER

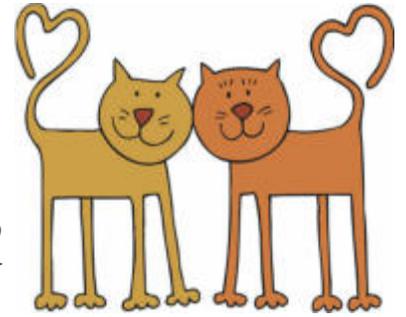
1301 East Tom Green, Brenham TX 77833  
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**The Margaret E. Blizzard Senior Activity Center** is a project of the Washington County Healthy Living Association, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, Toy Kurtz

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT, Connie Cadenhead

*Everyone is weary of this isolation, of not seeing friends and family for such a long time. Some of us may choose to carefully start being more inventive. If*



*you want to set designated days to meet a few people for cards, games, etc., you need a way to ensure that everyone feels safe. A great many folks are doing that by setting up small social "pods."*

*These pods need to be kept small, only 4 to 6 trustworthy people, chosen carefully from your close friends and family. Each pod member must take the same safeguards and be honest with the others when they have to be broken. If one member of the pod should have to break a safeguard—for example, to go to a doctor's appointment—then that person must inform the others and isolate from the pod for at least 10 days. That is the only way the safety of everyone in the pod can be assured.*

*Buckle down my friends during this deep winter. Get a vaccine if and when you can, and be ready to burst forward as part of the circle of life this coming spring, still healthy and strong.*

*Toy*

**The Senior Center and Resale Shop are CLOSED until further notice due to the pandemic.**

### The Brenham Blast:

#### NOW AND THEN

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EXECUTIVE EDITOR, Toy Kurtz

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Thank you! . . . Pastor Mark Groves (left) and Board President Butch Bugaj (right) present WCHLA's Connie Cadenhead with the check for a grant from the Christ Lutheran Church Foundation.



The Cat & Peanut

Carol Montgomery  
1930-2020

Senior Center friend, donor, and volunteer

**HISTORY BUFFS . . . ONLINE TALKS FROM WINEDALE**  
**February 16, Noon**—Researching Your German-Texas Ancestry through the Texas General Land Office, Kevin Klaus  
**March 16, Noon**—Houston's Gulf Hotel Fire, Bradley Hutchison  
 For Zoom links, email [tricia.blakistone@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:tricia.blakistone@austin.utexas.edu)

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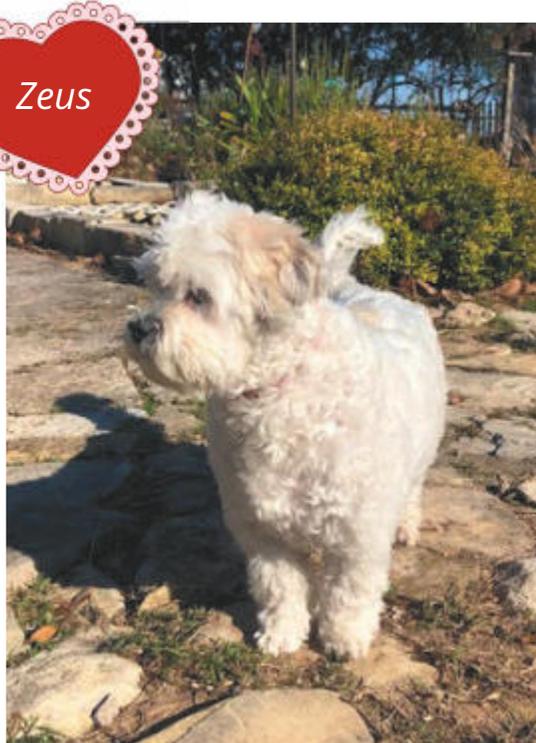
## THE JOYS AND BENEFITS OF HAVING PETS

Any pet owner can attest to how much life can be enriched by “owning” some type of pet. Often, though, it becomes very clear who actually “owns” whom! As hard as we try to train them, they usually have us very well trained!

Our little dog Zeus proves this every day. We are given a 30-minute window each day to provide his dinner. At precisely 4:30pm, he picks up his bowl, follows us around the house, and drops it (very loudly) at our feet until we meet his demand!

Most animals manage to make their feelings known. My mother had a parrot named Polly. There were 2 relatives she did not like, and when she heard them enter our house, she'd screech, “Go away!” I'm not sure who taught her that but none of us ever let those relatives know she was talking to them!

Turtles are amazing escape artists. Ours, Franklin, fled the safety of her pond twice, for months. She returned both times and immediately went to the feeding spot in her pond, staring up at us, waiting to be fed! Her third escape attempt failed when we found her at



the top of a 4-foot fence she had vertically scaled. Her wanderings stopped when we figured out how to outsmart her—but it took us about 5 years to learn that she is not a he. Hence the name!

Then there's our duck, Naughty. He rules the backyard, fearing no one and intimidating everyone! Our now deceased Black Lab Retriever was scared to death of him. Naughty definitely keeps it lively, although puppy Rosie now gives him a run for it!

Like so many others, we've been life-long pet owners. Each and every one, regardless of the species, have distinct personalities and ways to communicate. They have given us countless hours of entertainment, but more importantly they are loyal companions.

The benefits of having a pet are immeasurable. The most reputable scientific evidence supports that. Numerous studies have proven that pets can help your mental and physical well-being.

The Mayo Clinic research concluded that pets help humans in many ways, including:

- \* Improved immune system
- \* Lower blood pressure
- \* Lower cholesterol
- \* Reduced anxiety and depression
- \* Reduced loneliness
- \* Improved pain management
- \* Improved sense of purpose
- \* Opportunities for socialization

Multiple studies show that seniors, especially,



can benefit greatly by having a pet. As we age, loneliness, anxiety and depression are common for those who have lost a spouse and live alone. And after retirement, structure and routine are particularly important. Pets can offer us a sense of purpose and a daily routine that can stave off those feelings of depression or a lack of meaning in our lives. They offer unconditional love, loyalty, companionship—and humor! As the studies show, pets can significantly improve our physical well-being and emotional balance. A Mayo Clinic study concluded that “Dogs are a heart’s best friend.”

BUT! It is crucial to get the right pet for your particular circumstances. Some pets can be expensive. Some can be very physically demanding; they could even cause injuries. A rambunctious puppy may not be the best choice for many seniors. Adopting an older, less active, perhaps smaller breed of dog would be better. Opting

for a low-maintenance pet, and one that’s more “chill” might be best. Cats, birds, ducks, turtles and even fish can provide many of the benefits without the risks. It’s important to know what you can handle and match your own personality and abilities with that of the pet you’re considering.

Maybe it’s time for you to consider adopting an animal! The right pet can enrich your life and make you happier and healthier!

~ Debbie Mackey



*Debbie Mackey is not only an animal lover. She’s also a volunteer at the Senior Center, and she owns and operates her own business, Cat Spring Candles.*

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## GEORGE GRAHAM VEST TRIBUTE TO THE DOG

C. 1855

*George Graham Vest (1830-1904) served as U.S. Senator from Missouri from 1879 to 1903 and became one of the leading orators and debaters of his time. This delightful speech is from an earlier period in his life when he practiced law in Missouri. It was given in court while representing a man who sued another for the killing of his dog. During the trial, Vest ignored the testimony, and when his turn came to present a summation to the jury, he made the following speech and won the case.*

Gentlemen of the Jury: The best friend a man has in the world may turn against him and become his enemy. His son or daughter that he has reared with loving care may prove ungrateful. Those who are nearest and dearest to us, those whom we trust with our happiness and

our good name may become traitors to their faith. The money that a man has, he may lose. It flies away from him, perhaps when he needs it most. A man's reputation may be sacrificed in a moment of ill-considered action. The people who are prone to fall on their knees to do us honor when success is with us, may be the first to throw the stone of malice when failure settles its cloud upon our heads.

The one absolutely unselfish friend that man can have in this selfish world, the one that never deserts him, the one that never proves ungrateful or treacherous is his dog. A man's dog stands by him in prosperity and in poverty, in health and in sickness. He will sleep on the cold ground, where the wintry winds blow and the snow drives fiercely, if only he may be near his master's side. He will kiss the hand that has no food to offer. He will lick the wounds and

sores that come in encounters with the roughness of the world. He guards the sleep of his pauper master as if he were a prince. When all other friends desert, he remains. When riches take wings, and reputation falls to pieces, he is as constant in his love as the sun in its journey through the heavens.

If fortune drives the master forth, an outcast in the world, friendless and homeless, the faithful dog asks no higher privilege than that of accompanying him, to guard him against danger, to fight against his enemies. And when the last scene of all comes, and death takes his master in its embrace and his body is laid away in the cold ground, no matter if all other friends pursue their way, there by the graveside will the noble dog be found, his head between his paws, his eyes sad, but open in alert watchfulness, faithful and true even in death.

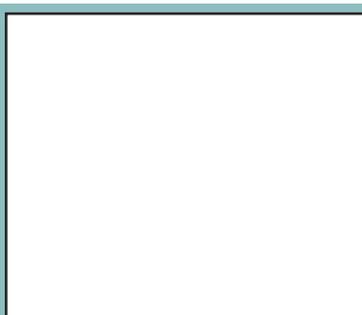
~ George Graham Vest



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*Carol Doersom  
with her foster  
cat, Blake*

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\* [facebook.com/groups/wcma2013](https://facebook.com/groups/wcma2013)

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## AN ORAL HISTORY FROM ONE OF OUR SENIORS

Ms. Ellen Wallace was eating lunch at the Senior Center and I cornered her for a little funny . . . Ms. Ellen is seventy-two and looks no older than fifty-five to me. She shared a story about her little poodle, La Monte. Seems Ms. Ellen was going to bake a cake for the church cake walk or bake sale.



*Margo Ramsden  
& Mike Doll's  
dog, Pepper*

Anyway, Ms. Ellen finished her fresh apple cake and placed it on the table to cool. It was a pretty cake baked in a bundt pan. She was busy doing something else and La Monte decided he would be her taste tester. So, he took a bite right out of it. She got a good laugh and went to work baking another cake. And would you believe? When she turned it out to cool on the same table, the same little doggie took another bite from the new cake. He figured if he did such a good job on the first one, that he would oblige her again with his expertise at taste testing. Ms. Ellen decided to donate money to the church and let her teenagers eat the two dog bitten cakes. I think this would be for La Monte the day he had his cake and ate it, too. What a sport you were Ms. Ellen.

~ Linda Fontenont

An excerpt from  
*The Forever Young Cookbook, Vol. II*  
Available from the Senior Center

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