taught me how to appreciate the outdoors. I was not an outdoor person at all. He gets me out the door,” said Colleen.

On his own, Gary likes to visit record stores and browse music selections, while Colleen appreciates the occasional solo shopping session.

Christine Proulx, an associate professor of human development and family sciences at MU, said that couples in older marriages have “a balance of individual and couple pursuits.”

It is good for them to have independence as well, she said. “There’s nothing that says when you get older you have to spend a bunch of time together.”

“At the beginning, we did everything together,” Gary said. “We made every decision together; now, not so much.”

Trust and understanding, as well as allowing room for mistakes to be made has kept the two going over the past four decades of marriage.

“A lot of people like to have a five-year plan or a 10-year plan or whatever, and then they try to make their marriage or a relationship fit

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“You’re gonna make mistakes, but you kinda have to learn. In spite of the mistakes, you keep the song going. Even if you mess up as you’re playing you just have to go back in. It’s very similar to relationships. Tuning is just a part of it.”

- GARY OSTERCAMP
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Barney Sword has more awards than he can find places to put them. Since 1984, Barney Sword has won between 100 and 150 medals and trophies for running in both 5Ks and 10Ks. His favorite is a small trophy from the 2008 Joe Marks Human Race in Columbia, Missouri. It is the award for being the oldest finisher.

“Several years ago, my daughter, my daughter-in-law and wife decorated a small Christmas tree with them,” Sword said about his awards collection. “I’ve sent some to my sisters, and they say they really make great fan pulls, to put on a ceiling fan.”

Sword has always been active, but he...
Whether you have always had the same goals or want to set out on an entirely new course, we can help point you in the right direction. By learning what matters to you, we will work together to develop smart, customized solutions and to help build a strong foundation for your financial future.
Barney Sword runs down Hinkson Creek Trail in Columbia in March. Sword runs on the grass whenever he can follow his doctor’s instructions.

did not begin running races and actively training until he was in his 50s. His first race was 33 years ago when he was 53. He placed 497th of the 499 male finishers.

Now 85, he placed second in his age group last month in the St. Patrick’s 5K Race with a time of 34:09. In the 2016 Missouri Senior Games, he set an age-group record in the 5K road race with a time of 34:35.

He grew up in a small coal-mining town in eastern Kentucky and attended the University of Kentucky to earn a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering and a master’s degree in business administration. After college, he joined the Army and served with the 2nd Armored Division from 1955 to 1957 in Germany, serving in the reserves both before and after. He was discharged with the rank of captain.

Sword then worked for the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs in South Carolina and Nebraska before moving to Columbia with his wife, Billie, in 1974 to work at Truman Veterans’ Hospital as chief engineer. He retired in 1992 and worked for several years as a real estate appraiser. While working at the veterans hospital, he and a group of colleagues began to train and race together. After retirement, he continued to run on his own, often with his daughters, Cindi Woolery, 57, and Anne Kegley, 56.

Last May, the three ran the Jay Dix Challenge to Cure 5K race in Columbia together, and both Sword and Woolery placed first in their age divisions.

“I’m just thrilled to chase ‘em,” he said.

This May, he and Kegley will run the 100th year anniversary 5K in his hometown of Lynch, Kentucky.

He said his most memorable run was the 2015 Welcome Home 5K race in Columbia to benefit the local shelter that serves homeless veterans.

“I believe in supporting veterans and homeless veterans, and that is what they were running for.”

— BARNEY SWORD, on his most memorable run

“I believe in supporting veterans and homeless veterans, and that is what they were running for.”

Sword stopped running 10Ks three to four years ago after his wife told him that he was too old. Now, it’s just 5K races. To train, he runs 3 to 4 miles four mornings a week on the Hinkson Creek Trail.

In October, a memorial bench was added to the trail at mile 2.5 in honor of his wife, who died a year ago. The Swords had been married nearly 57 years. The family held a dedication ceremony last fall after the MU versus Kentucky football game.

Sword said the bench allows him to spend time with his wife each day.

“I seldom run by it,” he said. “I run to it. I always stop and sit and talk to her a while.”
Where to find your ultimate coffee spot in Columbia

Whether you’re looking for a morning cup of joe or an evening pick-me-up, local coffee houses have you covered by Lily Mills

COFFEE ZONE
Location: 11 N. Ninth St.
Hours: 6:30 a.m to 9 p.m. Monday to Saturday; 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday
Atmosphere: Classic Mediterranean.
Food: Wide range of Mediterranean dishes; breakfast foods and sweets also available. The gyro deluxe is popular, along with the fresh hummus.
Busy: Between breakfast and lunch.

FRETBOARD COFFEE
Location: 1013 E. Walnut St.
Hours: 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays; 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday; 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday.
Atmosphere: Cool, industrial hipster.
Popular drinks: Syphon pot coffee (glass beakers makes it look like a science experiment), cold-brew coffee.
Food: Doughnuts and pastries from Harold’s Doughnuts.
Busy: 9 to 11 a.m.

LAKE COFFEE CO.
Location: 24 S. Ninth St.
Hours: 6 a.m. to midnight Monday to Saturday; 6:30 a.m. to midnight Sunday.
Atmosphere: Homey, relaxed.
Food: Sandwiches and pastries.
Busy: Middle of the day.

SHORTWAVE COFFEE
Location: 915 Alley A
Hours: 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. weekdays; 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday.
Atmosphere: Calm, laid-back.
Food: Coffee shakes, lattes.
Busy: 6 to 8 a.m.

THE GRIND COFFEE HOUSE
Location: 4603 John Gary Drive
Hours: 7 a.m. to midnight every day.
Atmosphere: Classy, homey feel.
Food: Light sandwiches, soups and salads; pastries from local businesses, including B&B Bagels and Upper Crust Bakery.
Busy: 7 to 8 p.m.; 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on weekends.

VIDA COFFEE CO.
Location: 812 Hitt St.
Hours: 6:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. weekdays; 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Saturday; 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday
Atmosphere: Quirky, quiet.
Food: Bakery items; pumpkin bread is popular.
Busy: Weekdays from 8 to 10 a.m. and 1 to 3 p.m.

Many chains offer rewards or special offers via apps that can be downloaded for smartphones.

CARIBOU COFFEE
Location: 25 Conley Road; 405 E. Nifong Blvd., inside HyVee
Hours: 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily, both locations.
Food: Sandwiches, wraps, breakfast food.
The breakfast burrito is one of the most popular items on the menu.
Busy: 7 to 8 p.m.; 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on weekends.

DUNN BROS. COFFEE
Location: 1412 Forum Blvd.
Hours: 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. weekdays; 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekends
Food: Breakfast and lunch items, pastries.

KALDI’S COFFEE
Location: 29 S. Ninth St.
Hours: 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. weekdays; 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. weekends.
Food: Ice cream, pastries, breakfast food.

CARIBOU COFFEE
Location: 4603 John Gary Drive
Hours: 7 a.m. to midnight every day.
Atmosphere: Classy, homey feel.
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In a large brick house on Deer Creek Court, Valerie Brown and Martha Geel are laughing about the day they stole a sawhorse barricade.
The two women say they removed it from a pothole and stashed it in the trunk of a car.
“When we stole things, which we did, they were as big as watermelons,” Brown said.
“No, not the Fudgsicles that we hid in Freida’s hood from Wyatt’s,” said Geel, quick to correct her longtime friend.
The two are part of a small group of five Columbia men and women in their early 70s who meet every other week or so to reminisce, swap stories of youthful indiscretion and enjoy one another’s company.
All of them graduated from Hickman High School in 1963 and have managed, amid many moves and marriages, to keep in touch.

From left, Martha Geel, Kenneth Geel, Janet Lasley, Charley Blackmore and Valerie Brown get together in Blackmore’s home April 9 as if they were back in high school. All five friends graduated from Hickman High School together in 1963.

Friendships that last promote health, wellness

A close-knit group of Hickman High School friends has kept in touch over the years. Now, in their early 70s, they reconnect weekly.

Story by Olivia Peterkin // Photos by Monique Woo

In a large brick house on Deer Creek Court, Valerie Brown and Martha Geel are laughing about the day they stole a sawhorse barricade.
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Geel, 71, taught at Ridgeway Elementary School for 19 years before retiring in 2008.

Her husband, Ken, is a certified public accountant for the city, the only one in the bunch who still has a full-time job.

Brown, 71, held several public offices in Sonoma County, California, before retiring in 2012. In the few years afterward, she split time in between California and Columbia to take care of her parents before selling her California home and permanently moving to Columbia in 2015.

Janet Lasley, 72, taught genetics and biology at Hickman High School for 16 years before a brief stint working at Strawberry Hill Farms. Lasley said that she is now “fully retired and lovin’ it.”

Charley Blackmore, 71, is a retired Columbia postal worker who still accepts the occasional DJ gig in his spare time because he believes that when you really love what you do, there’s no need to retire.

“I think the older you get, the more you go back to older friendships,” Blackmore said. “I know it’s pretty interesting to me to get with people that I grew up with and talk about things that happened as far back as we can remember.

“It’s astounding how much you can remember when you get together and have those relationships.”

Lasley credits the internet, particularly social media sites like Facebook, with reuniting the group and keeping them in the loop.

“The internet is what did it because we could have constant feedback and communication. I would say that computers, more than anything else, brought us back together,” she said.

“I would say computers and the reunions that Charley sets up,” Brown said. “I think I’ve only missed one of those.”

Blackmore runs the website for Hickman class reunions, and when he’s not playing music for events around Columbia, he’s working to make sure that all the Kewpie classes past and present have a way to stay connected.

“When we did get connected again, it was like we’d never been apart,” Martha Geel said. “We just started up where we left off.”

It is a common misconception that as people age, they have fewer friends.
“When we did get connected again, it was like we’d never been apart. We just started up where we left off.”

— MARTHA GEEL

and are more likely to only make acquaintances. For many, age is often characterized by negative attributes such as loneliness, decreased mobility and depression. However, research says although older people tend to have smaller friend circles, these relationships tend to be deeper and more meaningful.

“As we grow older, we tend to have fewer friends,” said Jacquelyn Benson, assistant professor at the MU College of Human Environmental Sciences. “People are more socially promiscuous when they’re young, and after about age 25, people are more selective with their time.”

Benson’s research includes intimate relationships later in life. “Their social world is shrinking, but it’s because we get smarter as we get older about how we use our time; we begin to prioritize quality relationships.”

The group finds that in a time in their lives where death is much nearer than it was 50 years ago, it helps to have a shoulder — or four to lean on.

“All of us have lost our parents in the last five years for one reason or another, and that has bound us closer together because everybody understands

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what everybody else is going through,” Lasley said. “None of us goes through a crisis without the rest being there.”

Benson says that a lack of social support, whether it be people who help with instrumental tasks or emotional trials, is associated with loneliness in older adults.

“A lot of people our age are at home doing nothing, and they’re depressed, and they’re lonely,” said Karen Blackmore, Charley’s wife of 17 years.

“We’re really involved in each other’s lives,” said Lasley. “I got married, and it’s not been two years, to a guy I dated for 19 years before he finally talked me into it. They threw a surprise shower for me where everything was back in the ’50s and ’60s. They were there for the wedding, and Valerie filmed it. But you know, it was a big life event, and they just didn’t let it pass by.”

— JANET LASLEY

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Brown, Lasley and Geel, along with a few other women outside of this particular group have been taking trips together for the past 11 years. This year, they are going to visit Portland, Oregon.

Whether it’s through book clubs, shopping trips or political activism, the women make it a point to spend a lot of time together.

“The friends that are connected — at least the women, not so much the guys — are politically, in the same ball park. So when we heard about the big [women’s] march on Saturday a few weeks ago, we all connected, and we met there, and we marched together,” said Lasley.

The men, however, are more likely to connect over sports.

“Other than us getting together and playing golf some, for a while we were getting together once a month for dinners,” said Ken Geel. “When we were in grade school and on up, we used to play sports all the time. We used to go to West Boulevard and play all day long.”

“No, we don’t have that type of
“For me, the value of having this friendship is like no other. I know that with this group, they know all the stuff.”

— VALERIE BROWN

group [like the women], I mean we didn’t back then. It was just everybody for themselves pretty much if you’re a guy,” said Charley Blackmore.

According to a study done in 1983, men are more likely to connect over sports, with women being more likely to discuss topics involving personal and family matters.

“I think all of us work at staying connected and taking care of each other,” said Lasley.

“We have determined that when we get to the age of needing more support in our living circumstances, that we’re going to take the west wing of the Terrace, on the third floor and the doors will just always be opening and shutting” said Martha Geel. The Terrace is a retirement community in Columbia on the Business Loop.

“For me, the value of having this friendship is like no other,” Brown said. “I know that with this group, they know all the stuff.”

“And they’ve got your back,” said Martha Geel.

“And they’ve got your back,” echoed Brown “which is priceless.”

TOP: Janet Lasley practices her solo with a special girls’ choir group in high school in the 1960s.

ABOVE: Ken Geel and Caryl Wood were the Class of 1963’s “Most Versatile Seniors,” according to the 1963 Hickman High School yearbook.

RIGHT: Valerie Brown, right, and Janet Lasley laugh together about a memory from Hickman High School.
THE REV. DR. JANICE DAWSON-THREAT
Lives in: Columbia
Age: 65
Accomplishments: College professor, founder of Grade A Plus Inc., an academic support and enrichment program

Janice Dawson-Threat is the CEO and chairman of Grade A Plus Inc., a non-profit community-based organization that manages two programs for youth. The Grade A Academic Support and Enrichment Program offers one-to-one tutoring support in science, technology, engineering, arts and math for students in grades K through 12 every Tuesday and Thursday with enrichment programs offered on Wednesdays. The organization in 1999 when it was founded as Exellence Plus. In 2016, the organization was renamed, Resources for families who cannot afford to support their children’s educational needs. The program not only provides tutoring for children in the community but also enriches their experiences through dance, swimming and writing activities.

Students’ belongings sit on the chairs that line a wall in the Second Baptist Church. Janice Dawson-Threat, CEO of Grade A Plus, Inc., laughs after attempting to create a rap beat for a student during an after-school tutoring session in February at Second Baptist Church.

Resources for families who cannot afford to support their children’s educational needs.

“Achievers” website: ExpandingOurLegacy.org

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Results from the study show the academic benefits of participating in after-school programs.

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Students’ belongings sit on the chairs that line a wall in the Second Baptist Church. Students’ belongings sit on the chairs that line a wall in the Second Baptist Church.

Central Missouri Area Agency On Aging (CMAAA) wants to help! CMAAA recognizes the importance of having the opportunity to socialize and receive hot nutritious meals. In cooperation with the Columbia Senior Activity Center, we have established a meal ticket program. Anyone 60 years and older is welcome to participate. We are conveniently located on the second floor of the Columbia Senior Activity Center. Meal tickets are available Monday or Thursday between 10am to Noon.

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Matt Davison
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Resources for families who cannot afford to invest in learning opportunities such as museum visits, summer programs, or computer coding. Directions for getting a free meal ticket are in communication, and her doctorate is in education. In 1995, she began working with social workers and government agencies. This change allows for more partnerships and the ability to streamline more support for the children, she said. "MU students and community volunteers serve as tutors. "It is important for these kids to realize that they can get to the college campus one day, and they can be a part of that," she said. "They can become young successful students like the students they are working with." Enrichment leaders are also volunteers from the community. A retired English teacher helps students write their own material, such as books, in a creative writing class. Enrichment leaders will take the students around town to illustrate the stories they will have written. The books will then be printed for the students to share and celebrate their accomplishments. Students’ belongings sit in the Second Baptist Church.

Janice Dawson-Threat, CEO of Grade A Plus, Inc., laughs after attempting to create a rap beat for a student during an after-school tutoring session in February at Second Baptist Church.

“Why can some kids do it and some kids can’t?” she asked. “I’m doing what I can for 20 to 25 kids a year so we can get a building, to obtain a benefactor or an endowment of some kind that will allow us to create a community-based learning center where we can serve 100 or more students a year.”

Janice Dawson-Threat said she has hopes for new programs such as computer coding and other activities. Dawson-Threat and her late husband, the Rev. Wesley G. Threat, founded the organization in 1999 when it was known as For His Glory, Inc. In late 2016, the organization was expanded and restructured to work with social workers and government agencies. This change allows for more partnerships and the ability to streamline more support for the children, she said. "MU students and community volunteers serve as tutors." "It is important for these kids to realize that they can get to the college campus one day, and they can be a part of that," she said. "They can become young successful students like the students they are working with." Enrichment leaders are also volunteers from the community. A retired English teacher helps students write their own material, such as books, in a creative writing class. Enrichment leaders will take the students around town to illustrate the stories they will have written. The books will then be printed for the students to share and celebrate their accomplishments. Students’ belongings sit in the Second Baptist Church.

“We need more people to have great expectations for these children because they can, and they will, do it,” Dawson-Threat said. "They can overcome the adversity, they need access to equity and opportunity, then they can achieve and succeed like so many others." Dawson-Threat grew up and was educated on the south side of Chicago. Her bachelor’s and master’s degrees are in communication, and her doctorate is in education. In 1995, she began working with social workers and government agencies. This change allows for more partnerships and the ability to streamline more support for the children, she said. "MU students and community volunteers serve as tutors." "It is important for these kids to realize that they can get to the college campus one day, and they can be a part of that," she said. "They can become young successful students like the students they are working with." Enrichment leaders are also volunteers from the community. A retired English teacher helps students write their own material, such as books, in a creative writing class. Enrichment leaders will take the students around town to illustrate the stories they will have written. The books will then be printed for the students to share and celebrate their accomplishments. Students’ belongings sit in the Second Baptist Church.

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“Why can some kids do it and some kids can’t?” she asked. “I’m doing what I can for 20 to 25 kids a year so we can get a building, to obtain a benefactor or an endowment of some kind that will allow us to create a community-based learning center where we can serve 100 or more students a year.”

— By Marta Payne

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Jan Swaney, a 60-year-old retired physician and resident of Columbia for more than 30 years, wasn’t always politically active. The outcome of the 2016 presidential election changed her ways.

This year, she became a regular at meetings of the Boone County Democratic community group known as the Muleskinners.

“I always thought that democracy would work if you voted,” Swaney said. “Now I think that if you really believe in something, you need to become an activist.”

Adults over 50 represent the largest voting population in America in local, state and federal elections. They are also among the most politically active U.S. citizens.

According to the United States Elections project, at least 50 percent of adults over 50 have turned out in every election year since 1984. In fact, citizens over 45 have consistently topped the charts in voter-turnout rates for at least the past 33 years.

To put these numbers in perspective, one of the highest voter turnout years in recent history for voters aged 18 to 29 — the 2008 presidential election — had just about 50 percent of young voters showing up at the polls. That same year, 70 percent of voters over 45 cast their ballot.

This contrast in voter turnout among age demographics becomes even more dramatic during non-presidential election years.

In 2010 for example, about 20 percent of young voters between the ages of 18 to 29 participated in local and state elections. Compare this to the 60 percent of adults older than 60, and you get a 40 percent discrepancy in voter attendance.

Marvin Overby, a political science professor at MU, explains why this may be so: “Local elections get almost no coverage, and state elections actually get very little coverage.”

Not nearly as many people are going to turn out for local and statewide elections, and those who do tend to be older, he said.

“We certainly have theories about why that is, but there’s no single cause. Part of it is that older people tend to be more stable. Voting is a habit, and older people by definition have had more time to develop that habit.”

On March 10, the Muleskinners held a public Q&A forum with candidates...