

*50+ Living our best lives now and in the future!*

## Busting Stereotypes about Life After Sixty

**F**orget the stereotypes about older women who become less interesting after a certain age. Ever active at sixty-eight, Wakeling is a fitness enthusiast, an occasional thrill-seeker, an enthusiastic traveler, a grandmother and great-grandmother, a lover of family, a long-time volunteer, and a spiritually focused individual.



### Choosing Her Own Avenues for Staying Fit

While still in her early fifties, Wakeling and her daughter took rock climbing lessons. “I really loved the climbing, but the ropes were a pain! I discovered bouldering, which is indoor climbing up to 18 feet or so with no ropes and done all on your own—which suited me much better. I used to do it every week before Covid. Afterward, when I went back, I realized that at 68, it probably wasn’t a good idea to fall, even though there was a mat. So, I retired from bouldering.”

Wakeling now enjoys pickleball. “The women that

talked to me about playing. I took Cormac (one of her thirteen-year-old twin grandsons), and we took our first lesson. I began playing there last summer and continued at an indoor pickleball club after the rains started.”

Enjoying a new challenge, Wakeling discovered, “Pickleball is unlike any other sport I have played, though it is a hybrid of tennis and ping pong. It is extremely fast-paced and fun! It’s not only fun but fulfilling on many levels. I could go on for pages here, but I am making myself stop! I play with a wide variety of new friends, and we get courts together to play. I absolutely love playing with my over 65 friends, men and women. We women get together more and more each week to play. As the days are nicer, we plan on playing on outdoor courts in different areas and our indoor club.”

### A Wee Bit of Thrill Seeking

Ever thought about skydiving or ziplining? Wakeling has done both. “I had always wanted to skydive and decided a few years ago to make it my Mother’s Day gift to myself.



*Ben James (R) with Debi*

My son-in-law, Ben James, was the only family member who wanted to try it with me.” While her

husband, Tom, daughter, Marki, and grandsons watched, “Ben and I were flown up 2 ½ miles, and then, while sitting on the floor by the door opening, we jumped! It was other-worldly. We saw nine mountains. We heard the kids hooting as we landed, and we had videos. Marki and Tom were not as enthusiastic, just thankful we returned alive.”

Wakeling has enjoyed ziplining, indoor flying “in an air chute, horseback riding on the beach, paintball, kayaking, water trampolining, paddleboarding, hiking, biking, and just hanging out” with people she cares about. In June, she traveled to Costa Rica with her daughter Marki, her son-in-law Ben, Mia, one of her other daughters, and three grandchildren.



*Marki (R), Debi, and Mia*

Highlights included “ziplining, rope swings, suspension bridges, and savoring traditional Costa Rican food.”

### **A Traveling Woman**

Since dating her husband, Tom, in the late 1990s, the Wakelings have visited Ireland, France, England, Spain, China, Canada, and Mexico. Debi also visited Rwanda years ago to visit a child she was sponsoring and to help lead a vacation Bible study for 400 children.”

### **A Long History of Volunteerism**

Years ago, when her mother was in a memory care center, Wakeling started “bringing hundreds of plants to fill the beds and containers in the patio area for residents. We made it a fun affair,” allowing residents to help plant if they wished to do so.”

“I’ve always had a heart for the poor,” for older adults and those who have suffered from mental illnesses. While still working, Wakeling spent time

on Fridays at Portland Rescue Mission, where she taught a class for women at Shepherd’s Door for years. She also provided training and served in outreach for homeless teens.

While at Shepherd’s Door, Wakeling began working on a project involving housing for low-income single-room occupancy buildings. This project eventually became known as ‘Debi’s Mission.’ Her first homeless ‘hotel’ building housed 105 people from their 20s to their 80s—all living in poverty. “I was able to start by visiting the rooms” of individuals over sixty” —often individuals who were not in good health and without family.

### **Family Focused**

“I love spending time with my husband Tom, my kids, and my grandkids. To know fully and to be fully known is a very special gift. And to have those that we love the most want to spend their time and lives together is the most precious gift. As a family, we have traveled together to Disneyland, Hawaii, Leavenworth, Cannon Beach, and frequent trips to Marki and Ben’s lake house at Fish Hawk Lake.”

### **For Relaxation**

“To be honest, I live a bit of a monastic life in a very modern world. I make sure that my life is couched in quiet and peace, from the way I begin my days to the way that I end them. My days are frequently very full, but always full of very good things! Still, I need my quiet and solitude to center myself and maintain my balance.”

### **Advice for Others**

“Listen very carefully, both to the voice of God and to your very own, true voice. As Thomas Merton said, “We are living in a world that is absolutely transparent, and God is shining through it all the time.”

## Keeping Active to Stay Healthy

“Physical activity—particularly when it is moderate-intensity and raises your heart rate—is known to reduce the risk of a number of diseases, including heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and cancer.”

## Spirituality, Religion, and Healthy Aging

Literature on positive aging suggests that a sense of spirituality and religious participation can benefit healthy aging. A study examining the role of spirituality and religion in positive aging states, “Religion is often seen as a public and outward form of expression” with shared beliefs, practices, and accepted behavioral rules, “whereas spirituality is generally seen as something inward and personal.” Whether tied to or separate from religious beliefs and practices, spirituality often involves a “sense of connectedness and purpose.”

As spirituality is a topic that others have mentioned in earlier newsletters, I asked some contributors to share their thoughts about having a spiritual practice or what spirituality means to them.

A friend had a beautiful translucent green stone shaped like a mushroom top on her mantle. I asked where she got it. In her spiritual search, she was walking along the beach and prayed for a sign that there is a God. Two steps later, she saw the stone peeking out of the sand. I asked if she thought God put it there with his fire finger. She said, “No, it was probably there for thousands of years. I just had to open my eyes.”

“That’s When I started to open my eyes.”

--Dr. Emery Smith

Go slow. Say Hello.  
Listen. Ponder. Enjoy it all.  
All is connected.

– Pamela Woods

For me, spirituality is an ever-evolving concept with two constants. The first constant is that I must make an effort to seek a benevolent power that is greater than myself. This journey leads me to feel awe, wonder, and a perspective showing that my concerns are microscopic in relation to the vast and abundant universe. The second is interconnectedness, seeing that this power is within each of us and hearing him/her/it/them being expressed through others. Interconnectedness affirms life. Research clearly has shown that a life of purpose improves our emotional well-being and longevity.

--Jeff Nesler

I am in awe of someone who confidently says, “I am a spiritual person”; I appreciate those whose religious faith provides them with a way to act with kindness and without malice. Neither spiritual nor religious, I try to live each day in the hope that after I’m gone (whatever that might mean!), my “memory may be a blessing.”

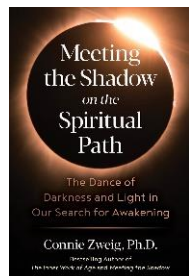
--Nancy Nowak

Spirituality is our human connection to all things evoking wonder and awe. It transcends all beliefs and is what links us to a greater whole.

Susan Rochester

## A Compelling Summer Read: *Meeting the Shadow on the Spiritual Path*

I recently read Dr. Connie Zweig’s latest book, *Meeting the Shadow on the Spiritual Path*. I believe this work is especially relevant in a chaotic world that may prompt more people to seek truth and connection with something larger than themselves. It is also a time when some charismatic clergy, spiritual, and political leaders may use their power to exploit others for personal gain. Zweig’s book provides valuable insights and guidance.



### Zweig’s Summary of Her Book

“Within each of us is a spiritual longing that prompts us to unite with something greater than



ourselves. Yet, no matter the spiritual path we choose, we inevitably encounter our own shadow. This guide explores how to use spiritual shadow work to recover from spiritual betrayal and move from disillusionment to inspiration, from spiritual naivete to spiritual maturity.”

Connie Zweig, Ph.D., a retired psychotherapist and former executive editor at Jeremy P. Tarcher Publishing, is co-author of *Meeting the Shadow and Romancing the Shadow* and author of the bestseller *The Inner Work of Age: Shifting from Role to Soul* and a novel, *A Moth to the Flame: The Life of the Sufi Poet Rumi*. She has been practicing and teaching meditation for more than 50 years.

From a 2021 [article](#) in *Work, Aging, and Retirement*, the authors propose that “the likelihood of people aging successfully is enhanced by routinely engaging in habitually repeated, enjoyable actions (henceforth, “rituals”) that cultivate their personal resources in the physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual domains.”

### A Promising Care Alternative

Environmental (ECO) Gerontologist [Monica Eastway, M.S.](#), is the creator and founder of Eco-Generation Park, a model that brings people together in caring farming communities; it is “elder-centered, intergenerational, and resident-sustained.” Eastway’s mission is to “raise awareness and inspire all ages to bring care outdoors and grow nature-connectedness.”



### Differences and Advantages

“Since Eco Generation Park is a live/work/learn community, rents vary, though the estimated monthly rate will range from \$400-\$2,500 depending on housing type and support needs. One of the significant differences and advantages of our model is that we are age-integrated, and less than

10% of residents have high support needs. There is an overflow of carers. We are still on course to break ground with the pilot community in 2024.” To learn more, visit Eastway’s [website](#).

### Untangling Insurance and Medicare Options: Engaging Speaker Available to Inform Audiences in Oregon

[Cindy Eastman](#) is available to speak with Oregon groups about options for health insurance, Medicare, short-term and long-term care insurance, and supplemental plans such as dental, vision, hearing, and related topics. She is licensed in five states as a health/life insurance agent with HealthMarkets. She is exceptionally knowledgeable and qualified to share essential, unbiased information and facts in an engaging way.



Prior to her work in the insurance industry, Eastman was an educator, a financial advisor, and a retirement specialist. In the past, she had also done stand-up comedy and served in leadership roles for Toastmasters; not surprisingly, she also took home a few trophies for Best in Humor and Best in Tall Tales.

If your group or organization would like Cindy to provide a lively, informative presentation about health and life insurance options, call her at 541-733-8383 or email her at [ceastman@healthmarkets.com](mailto:ceastman@healthmarkets.com) to schedule a speaking event.

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