

FEBRUARY 2024 ACTIVITY CALENDAR

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9:00 Monday Morning Bridge 9:00 One-Day Oil Painting (3rd Monday) 9:30 Chair Yoga 12:00 Beginning Canasta 12:30 Monday Afternoon Bridge 2:00 Chair Yoga 5:00 Monday Night Bingo 5:30 Zumba	9:45 Carolina Line Dancers 10:00 Acrylic Painting Ladies Support (4th Tues.) Veteran's Coffee & Chat (4th Tues.) 11:00 Tai-Chi 12:00 Canasta For Beginners 1:00 Chair Volleyball	9:00 The Sewing Circle 9:30 Chair Yoga 10:00 Beginner Spanish 11:00 Zumba Gold 11:00 Piedmont Rook 12:00 Canasta For Beginners 12:30 Knit Pickers 1:00 Packing Out 2:00 Chair Yoga 2:00 Euchre 10:00 Carolina Singers (1st & 3rd Weds.)	9:30 Chair Volleyball 10:00 Daytime Friends (2nd & 4th Thurs.) 1:00 Thursday Afternoon Bridge 1:00 Mexican Train Dominoes 4:00 Dine-Around (2nd Thurs.)	11:00-12:00 Zumba Gold Center closes at 12:00 pm

NOW THAT WINTER IS OFFICIALLY HERE...



In case of snow, ice, sleet, or freezing rain this winter, call the Neal Center's "Weather Line" to see if we are open, delayed or closed. Call 704/481-7398 and the



information will be updated as conditions change.

Be prepared!

Keep this number handy!



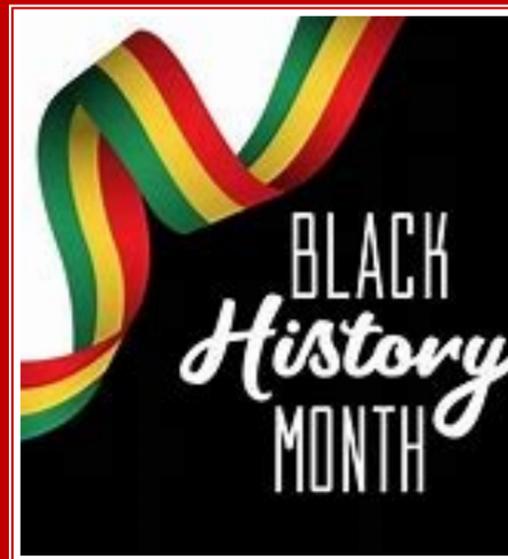
“The Senior Informer” February 2024



Your source of current news and information from The Neal Center,
100 T.R. Harris Drive, Shelby, NC 28150

Something to think about

"It is better to live your own destiny imperfectly than to live an imitation of somebody else's life with perfection."
— Elizabeth Gilbert



From the Executive Director's Desk...

Paulette Putnam, Neal Center Executive Director

Happy Valentines Day,

I love February! Candy, flowers, balloons, cards. Take the time this month to let your special someone know how much you care. That may be your spouse, family member, or pet. We would love to see you at the Senior Center. There's lots of fun things to do. Also, don't forget our Valentine-themed dance on Thursday, February 15, 2024 at 6PM. Tickets are on sale now at the Reception Desk. They are \$6.00 in advance and \$8.00 at the door. Refreshments will be served. Hope to see you this month!

*Paulette Putnam
Executive Director*

Neal Center Staff and Contact Information

Have a question? A specific need? Not sure what to do?

Neal Center main number: 704/482-3488

Paulette Putnam, Executive Dir.

Daniel Dedmon, Program Dir.

Teresia Ladd, Administrative Asst.

Dolores Ashworth, Volunteer Coor.

Heather Ledbetter, Nutrition Coor.

Jane Wright, Administrative Sec.

April Wheatley, Bookkeeper

Betsy Lavender, Housing Coor.

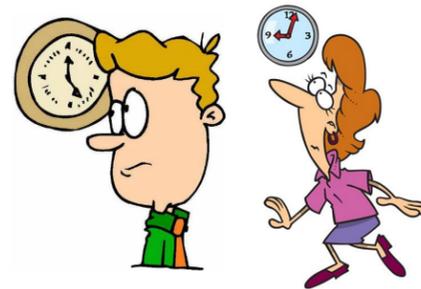
Stephanie Baxter, Housekeeping

What are the hours for the Neal Senior Center?

Monday-Thursday, 8:30am-4:00pm

Friday, 8:30am-12:00pm

**Not sure if the center is open? Call our
"Weather Line" at 704/481-7398!**



Laff-a-Little!



Let's Eat!

Steak & Fries Salad For Two

- 3 Tbls. Sugar
- 2 Tbls. Canola Oil
- 1 to 2 Tbls. Malt Vinegar
- 1-1/2 tsp. Water
- 1 C. Frozen French-Fried Potatoes
- 1/2 lb. Beef Top Sirloin Steak
- 3 C. Iceberg Lettuce, shredded
- 1/3 C. Tomatoes, diced
- 1/4 C. Red Onion, chopped
- 1/2 C. Part-Skim Mozzarella Cheese, shredded



For the dressing, whisk together the first four ingredients and set aside. Cook the potatoes according to package directions. Meanwhile, coat a skillet with non-stick cookware spray and set over medium heat. Add the steak and cook until meat reaches desired doneness, about 5-6 minutes per side (a meat thermometer should register 135 degrees for medium rare and 140 degrees for medium.) Remove from heat and let rest for five minutes before slicing.

Divide lettuce, tomatoes, and onions between two dinner plates. Top with potatoes, steak, and cheese. Drizzle with dressing and serve immediately.

Are you looking for a place to live that's affordable?

Are you at least 62 years of age?

LOOK NO FURTHER!

**West Warren Manor
934 West Warren St.
Shelby, NC 28150**



**SPONSORED BY THE COUNCIL ON
AGING & THE LIONS CLUB
PHONE: 704/480-6786**

**Marion West Housing
110 Philbeck St.
Shelby, NC 28150**



**SPONSORED BY
THE COUNCIL ON AGING
PHONE: 704/482-0030**

**For further information, please contact
Phyllis Hosch, Site Manager, at 704/480-6786 or 704/482-0030.**

LET'S "DINE-AROUND"!

**OUR NEXT GATHERING WILL BE AT
"NEWGRASS BREWING COMPANY", LOCATED AT
213 SOUTH LAFAYETTE ST., SHELBY
ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2024, AT 4:00 PM.**



**IF YOU'RE AGE 50+ AND WOULD LIKE TO JOIN US, PLEASE CONTACT DANIEL DEDMON,
NEAL CENTER PROGRAM DIRECTOR, AT 704/481-7387
NO LATER THAN WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2024, AT 12 NOON.**

**(ALL PARTICIPANTS PAY THEIR OWN WAY. A MINIMUM OF NINE PARTICIPANTS ARE
REQUIRED IN ORDER TO HAVE THE EVENT.)**

**LET'S MEET A NEAL CENTER
VOLUNTEER**



The Neal Senior Center has long been blessed to have volunteers that are “dedicated to the cause”, which is the belief of people throughout the Carolinas. While many of our volunteers are Carolina natives, some are from other parts of the country and take on this same belief with a fierce determination. One particular volunteer, Joanne Magee, hails from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and has also lived in Chicago, Illinois, Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Haymarket, Virginia before settling in North Carolina. Joanne has been volunteering for the Neal Senior Center since 2015, working at the Reception Desk, which she continues to do.

Joanne’s early years took place in Pittsburgh, a steel mill town where she grew up and got her education. She remembers her early years very positively. “One thing I still remember years later are the smells from the steel mill. My Dad worked as a delivery truck driver in downtown Pittsburgh for REA. Dad would take two white shirts with him to work each day. Since his line of work was so dirty, his white shirts would show dirt very quickly, so he would change his shirts when the shirt he was wearing got too badly soiled.” Even though his work kept him on the go, he was still a very devoted family man. “He made sure he was home after work every day”, Joanne added. He also made sure that the family attended Catholic church services each Sunday, where Joanne took part in church activities, including singing in the church’s choir. Joanne is the third of four children and was especially close to her youngest brother. “He was MY baby!”, she said with a laugh. She’s still close to this brother and her sister (her older brother has since passed away.)

After graduating from high school, she immediately starting working for law firms as a legal secretary. She also became active at the local YWCA. She met her first husband at Linden Grove, a popular dance place where the whole building was made of wood. “It was a fun place! We did all of the latest dances of that time, including the Twist, the Cha-Cha, and the line dances!”, she recalls. Before they were married in 1969, they bought their first home at the cost of \$14,500. They also became parents to two boys, which they had 1-1/2 years apart. While her husband worked as a meat cutter for the Kroger grocery chain, Joanne became a “stay-at-home Mom”. But, she still kept her professional skills up to date. “I quit working for six years. During that time, I bought a typewriter and typed papers for local college students and typed wills for attorneys”, she remembered. Once her children began kindergarten, her husband attended college and she returned to working as a legal secretary.

Joanne became a “trailing spouse”, relocating to wherever her husband was transferred. She recalls, “Wherever he went, I went”. Unfortunately, her husband was injured on the job and was forced to go on disability. He chose to return to college at Robert Morris College in Pittsburgh and completed his degree in Accounting and Computers. Around 1994, the family relocated again, this time going to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She continued working at a law firm while her husband was working on computer software. “He helped get the computers ready for Y2K”, she recalled. While in Milwaukee, they had a tandem sea kayak and did a lot of trips up to Lake Superior. They slept on a lot of the islands and explored nature.

Volunteer (con't)

Unfortunately, it was at this point that her marriage ended, but Joanne still made sure her sons had the same type of stable home environment she herself had growing up. Both of her sons married and they, along with their spouses, attended Purdue University, with all four of them majoring in Chemical Engineering. "They all graduated together", she says happily. She added, "I have lovely boys and I'm very proud of them". After the four of them graduated, each couple went to work immediately, relocating in different parts of the country.

Joanne met her current husband, who was a consultant from Australia, while she was working at a local law firm. They dated for about two years, marrying in 2006. She and her new husband relocated to Haymarket, Virginia. Both of them worked and her husband would drive the two of them to work each day. He would drop Joanne off at her workplace, then go to his job. At the end of the day, he would pick her up and they would head for home. "We spent more time in the car than at home", Joanne recalled with a laugh.

It was when they retired in 2014 that Joanne was introduced to North Carolina, but it took some adjustment. "Once we got settled in North Carolina, I needed something to do, because I was bored to death!", she recalled. Joanne knew she had to keep busy, since she was used to that type of schedule. "I got on the computer and Googled every place I could find. This was where I discovered the Neal Center", she remembers. She worked with Neal Center volunteers Lynne Wilson, Judy Henley, and Jean Foster, as they taught her how to manage the Reception Desk. However, it was Roger Wuest that taught her the most. When Joanne began at the center, she knew nobody, but it was Jean that made sure Joanne felt welcome. Joanne recalled, "I remember Jean telling me that first day, 'I'm gonna make you a Southern girl!' She made sure that I was happy being a volunteer", she recalled. They became close friends and still are today.

What are her thoughts about the Neal Center? "I like it", she replied right away. "I miss seeing some of the people when lunch was served here and there were more people gathering together. There's plenty of room for more people to come here", she concluded. In addition to volunteering, Joanne is very active outside the Neal Center. She sees her children and grandchildren at least twice a year. One son now lives in Greensburg, Pennsylvania and the other in St. Paul, Minnesota. Her three grandchildren include Sarah, age 21, Conner, age 20, and Ian, age 18. In her free time, Joanne enjoys swimming at the YMCA, crocheting, reading, and doing housework.

***FUN FACTS:** Joanne is a big supporter for Multiple Sclerosis research and did a lot of MS bike tours, once putting 150 miles on her bike in two days! "Great to meet people and get sponsor money to help find a cure", she added. She also was part of a traveling bowling league, traveling with her team to different sanctioned tournaments throughout the USA. Joanne added, "It was so much fun and if we bowled good, that was a plus!!"*

YOUR GOOD HEALTH

Celebrating Valentine's Day With a Lonely Senior

Valentine's Day is lonely for many seniors, especially those who have lost a spouse. If you have a senior loved one who you suspect may be feeling sad and lonely on Valentine's Day, you can help them find comfort and consolation at this special time. There are many ways to alleviate your aging relative's sadness and encourage them to celebrate the occasion – and remind them that they're loved and appreciated. If you provide care for an elderly loved one, make time on Valentine's Day to do something fun. It doesn't have to be anything fancy or expensive. Here's some suggestions for spending quality time with a senior citizen this Valentine's Day:

*[Buy flowers and arrange a bouquet.](#) If your senior enjoys gardening, wish them Happy Valentine's Day by crafting your own bouquet. Visit a local flower shop or grocery store, purchase a selection of blooms, and bring them home. Lay everything out on the table and work together with your senior to create a stunning hand-crafted arrangement. This activity is more expensive than some of the others on this list but it's absolutely worth the investment.

*[Take a Valentine Day stroll.](#) The month of February is notoriously cold and dark, but if the weather permits, set aside some time on Valentine's Day to get outside and enjoy some fresh air. Visit a local nature preserve and take in some sunshine or stroll around your neighborhood. It's a fun activity that gets your senior outside the house. Plus, it can get their blood pumping and may even improve their attention span and memory.

*[Watch a romantic movie.](#) If your care recipient experiences mobility issues, doing crafts, making a bouquet, or getting outside might not be an option. That's okay! You can still celebrate the holiday by putting on some entertainment. There are hundreds of romances and romantic comedies to choose from, but some classics include: "The Notebook", "When Harry Met Sally", "Grease", "The Wedding Planner", "My Big Fat Greek Wedding", "Singing in the Rain", "Breakfast at Tiffany's" and "Sleepless in Seattle".

*[Take a walk down memory lane.](#) If your senior has Alzheimer's disease or another type of dementia, it can be difficult to connect. Tapping into the various senses may help jog their memory, especially on a holiday like Valentine's Day. For example, you could look through an album of old wedding photos and ask your senior about them. Or, you could play a record they love listening to. If you have access to old love letters or journal entries, consider reading those aloud. Try different things to see what creates a "spark" in your loved one's eyes.

*[Make a scrapbook.](#) Putting together a scrapbook of family photos is an enjoyable activity that will bring back fond memories of past Valentine's Days, birthdays, holidays, and family vacations. It will make your senior loved one reminisce about happy times and will stimulate their memory and emotions in a positive way. You can prepare materials and photos ahead of time, if your aging relative tires quickly. You can spend the entire afternoon going through old pictures, letters, postcards, and other keepsakes. The colorful book of memories you create in the end is sure to become one of your senior's most cherished possessions.

*[Have a day out.](#) Taking your senior loved one out on Valentine's Day is sure to bring them enjoyment and excitement. You can visit a local attraction like a museum or a stately home or just go for a walk in the park. Even better – you can ask your family member if there is anywhere in particular that they'd like to go. Getting out and spending time with loved ones will help your senior focus less on what they've lost and more on what they have now, reminding them that life is good and they are still loved and valued. Bonus tip: If your loved one had a particular Valentine's Day tradition with their spouse, such as visiting a special place or going to a specific restaurant, ask them if they would like to continue the tradition with you or other family members.



Sources:
carewell.com
assistinghandsschaumburg.com

WHAT WILL THEY THINK OF NEXT?

Nutella Hazelnut Spread

We all know that February is the “Valentine” month. When we think of Valentine’s Day, most of us think of chocolate. Let’s take a look at a popular food product flavored with chocolate and hazelnuts that has been popular for nearly 60 years: “Nutella”. “Nutella” is a very much loved spread that had its humble start in Italy and is now marketed world-wide.

Nutella’s history can be traced back to the time of World War II. During that time, markets were dealing with many food shortages, which among them was cocoa. In 1946, an Italian chef named Pietro Ferrero was aware of the shortage and decided to try to improve the situation. He created a paste consisting of hazelnuts and chocolate, which was molded into blocks and was sold. The blocks were first cut into slices and then used between slices of bread, which parents started making for their children. The children began to love the chocolate flavor and the blocks were quite popular in the local markets.

Pietro then had an idea to make these blocks creamier in texture. A creamier texture would help it to spread easily on the bread. He spent days making certain changes to make it creamier like a spread. The resulting product made was then called ‘Supercrema Gianduja’. In 1964, Pietro’s son, Michele, tried to modify his father’s recipe. He wanted to make certain improvements to ensure the finest quality of the spread. This was the first time that a jar mixed with rich cocoa and hazelnuts was made. Pietro’s son gave it a lot of thought and decided to name it ‘Nutella’.

In the following years, Nutella began its journey on becoming a global brand. In 1965, one year after its launch, it took over the German market. Then, it started its expansion over other markets. In 1967, Nutella made its Italian television debut in its first TV commercial, which took over the hearts of Italy. Besides Italy and Germany, Nutella became super popular in France. The children from various countries began to cherish this delicious spread, encouraging Nutella to expand itself in more countries. The brand uses strategic planning for its expansion, conducting deep research before entering any new market. Various factors are considered including checking competitors, market space, availability of raw materials, etc.

Nutella was quite skeptical about entering the markets of Britain. The people’s interest there was too invested in another spread named “Marmite”. But as it’s said, interests can change. Nutella was never a quitter. It created special campaigns, which were specific to the country. At last, it came in Britain’s markets and hereafter outdo “Marmite”. As the brand began to become global, the supply of jars increased. Nutella has various plants around the world for its production, which are located in Canada, Australia, Italy, France, Germany, Russia, and more. The first Nutella plant was established in 1978, in Lithgow, near Sydney. But with increased production, there arose a problem: it was the shortage of hazelnuts. Because Ferrero uses hazelnuts in large amounts, it was quite predictable that they would not always be able to obtain them. The company came up with a patient, yet a fruitful idea, which was to plant their own hazelnut trees. Since the 1990’s, 6.6 million trees have been planted and more plantations are to come. These plantations helped the company avoid a shortage issue, as well as to create trust among the consumers as it ensured the greatest purity.

This delicious mix of chocolate and hazelnuts is now a global product. It is not only the good taste but also the company’s great strategies over the years that have made this brand so huge. It’s now expanded into cookies and snack kits. Nutella is no more just a jar—it is like an emotion now. It is like a cure for loneliness and sorrows for children and teens. Thus, Nutella has created a huge place in people’s hearts. Now, it is like an absolute leader in the market making every other competitor look inferior to it. According to the Guinness Book of World Records, Nutella has also won the title of the ‘Largest Continental Breakfast’, where 27,854 people were gathered to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Nutella.

Sources: Nutella.com, startuptalky.com





**ANNOUNCING A NEW WAY TO BECOME ACTIVE WITH
THE NEAL SENIOR CENTER!
BECOME A “GOLD STAR” DONOR!**

The Neal Senior Center is inviting residents of Cleveland County and former participants of the Gold Card Club, to become new donors of the GOLD STAR. If you're already familiar with our Gold Club here at the center, the Gold Star is very similar to it. The fee to be a Gold Star is \$100 per person and the date of giving begins on January 1, 2024, and ends on December 31, 2024. The center provides activities, educational seminars, classes, dances, car shows, market days, and services, both inside and out, throughout the year! There are too many to mention! You will also have the opportunity to donate to the center in memory of or in honor of someone.

We'll be glad to answer any questions you have! Please contact Jane Wright at the Neal Senior Center at 704/482-3488.



*Sweep your Valentine off their feet
at our Valentine's Dance!*

Neal Senior Center

February 15, 2024

6:00 pm

*Refreshments will be served and sponsored by
Peak Resources.*

Music provided by Union Express

Advance Tickets are \$6 each (Deadline to purchase
advance tickets is Tuesday, February 13 by 3:00 pm).

Tickets will be sold at the door for \$8 each.

A minimum of 50 tickets must be sold in advance to
have the dance.



**“LADIES SUPPORT COFFEE & CHAT”!
ARE INVITING ALL LADIES 50+
TO A SPECIAL MEETING AND LUNCHEON!**

**INVITED GUEST SPEAKER WILL
BE DANIELLE CRAFT, INTAKE/COMMUNITY EDUCATOR,
WITH SENIOR TLC!**

**Ladies age 50+ are invited to “Ladies Support Coffee & Chat”
4th Tuesday each month at the Neal Senior Center
100 TR Harris Drive
Shelby, NC 28150
to be held on Tuesday, February 27, 2024
10:00—12:00 Noon**

Surprise program & Meal provided by Senior TLC

**Call 704-482-3488 to RSVP
by February 22, 2024 by 3:00 PM**

OPTIONS COUNSELING

Options counseling is a service that considers peoples’ needs and preferences and connects them with available resources. It is a process where individuals receive guidance as they make informed choices about potential services and support. Individuals then take the lead in carrying out their personalized Action Plan.

Who qualifies for Information and Options Counseling?

Individuals who are 60 years of age or older or someone acting on behalf of a person who is 60 or older and need information about services or referrals to services.

Options Counseling is a free service and may be helpful to individuals who:

- Do not know how to access long-term services and supports.
- Request transition assistance from one living setting to another
- Lack awareness of existing community resources and supports.
- Want to plan for future long-term support needs.

Individuals may access Options Counseling through Foothills Area Agency on Aging.

For more information, please contact
Care Solutions at (980) 487-4777

**Some haven't participated in the Cleveland
County Senior Games in years!**

ARE YOU ONE OF THEM?



Registration is **NOW UNDERWAY!**

The Senior Games will be held April 8-12, 2024

Take part in many sporting activities, including pickleball, shuffleboard, cornhole, swimming, table tennis, chair volleyball, and a lot more!

To get a registration packet, you may either:

-Come by the Neal Senior Center in person and pick up a registration packet at the Reception Desk.

-Download and print a packet at our website: www.nealseniorcenter.org

-Contact Daniel Dedmon, Cleveland County Senior Games Director at 704/481-7387 or at ddedmon@agingcouncil.org and request that a packet be emailed to you.

Open to seniors age 50 and better! Early registration ends March 8th;
all games registration ends March 15!



Through the Pages of History.....

Remembering Black Entertainers of the Past

There have been many entertainers that were pioneers in their craft in different ways. As we observe "Black History Month", let's look at some of the famous entertainers who paved the way for future generations.



Cicely Tyson: She released *"Just As I Am: A Memoir"* just three days before her death on Jan. 28, 2021 at the age of 96. The outpouring of love and praise for the legendary star was well warranted. The 2020 TV Hall of Fame inductee and *"Cherish the Day"* star captivated audiences with unforgettable roles in *"The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman"*, *"The Women of Brewster Place"*, *"Fried Green Tomatoes"*, *"How to Get Away With Murder"* and more. During the '60s, Tyson became the first black person to star in a primetime drama with her role in the series *"East Side/West Side"*, and the first black actress on the soap opera, *"The Guiding Light"*. In 2018, more than 40 years after her Oscar-nominated role in *"Sounder"*, Tyson became the first black actress to receive an honorary Academy Award.



Sidney Poitier: Long before he became a screen legend, Poitier launched his career in the New York City theater, most famously appearing in the original Broadway production of Lorraine Hansberry's *"A Raisin in the Sun"*. He landed his first major motion picture role in the 1950 drama *"No Way Out"*, where he played the lone black doctor in an all-white hospital. In 1964, Poitier made history as the first black man to win a Best Actor Oscar for *"Lilies of the Field"*. He died on January 6, 2022 at the age of 94.



Harry Belafonte: In 1960, the actor, Calypso singer and activist became the first Black Emmy winner, which he earned for his TV special, *"Tonight With Belafonte"*. Six years before making Emmy history, Belafonte became the first black male Tony Award winner. He also starred in film classics such as *"Carmen Jones"*, *"Island in the Sun"* and *"Uptown Saturday Night"*. He landed a hit single with *"The Banana Boat Song,"* and released the first platinum-selling album by a solo artist. He died on April 25, 2023 at the age of 96.



Hattie McDaniel: Hollywood's first Black Oscar winner's story is one of triumph and tragedy. Aside from being criticized for her Oscar-winning role of "Mammy" in *"Gone With the Wind"*, the film was boycotted over its racist and offensive stereotypes and dialogue, and McDaniel wasn't even allowed at the Atlanta premiere because she was a black woman. McDaniel was forced to sit in the back of the room inside the segregated venue at a small table away from her white cast members during the 12th annual Academy Awards, which were held inside the Ambassador Hotel's Coconut Grove restaurant on Feb. 29, 1940. Nonetheless, McDaniel was elated to win an Oscar, which she called "one of the happiest moments" of her life. After the Oscar win, McDaniel went back to playing maid characters before joining *"The Beulah Show"* and replacing actress-singer Ethel Waters, who quit the series. In 1951, McDaniel suffered a heart attack while filming an episode of the show and was diagnosed with breast cancer that summer. She died on October 26, 1952 at the age of 59. [Source: etonline.com](https://www.etonline.com)



**IF YOU'RE A U.S. VETERAN,
YOU'RE INVITED TO OUR
"VETERAN'S COFFEE & CHAT"
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2024, 10 AM
AT THE NEAL SENIOR CENTER
100 T.R. HARRIS DRIVE, SHELBY**

**A great opportunity to have coffee with other veterans and
discuss the many issues veterans deal with in today's world.**

FREE OF CHARGE....JUST SHOW UP!

ATTENTION SENIORS!

Need to get your taxes done?



The Neal Center's Tax Preparation Service can help....and do it while you wait!

Appointments will begin on **February 1, 2024**

To make a tax preparation appointment, call the Neal Senior Center at **704/482-3488**

Appointments will be scheduled Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 8:30 am-2:30 pm.

In Case You Haven't Heard....

Unknown Facts About Our Presidents

The presidents that have ran our country over the years have had interesting backgrounds. There are things we know about them and things we don't. Since February 19 is President's Day, here's a set of "unknown facts" about some of our U.S. presidents that may surprise you!

- ◆ Before he became our nation's 38th president, Gerald Ford had a side gig as a model. In 1942, shortly after joining the Navy, he landed an uncredited spot on the cover of *Cosmopolitan* in his uniform. Another fun fact? It was during this time that he met and went on to marry a fellow model, Elizabeth Bloomer. She became known to Americans as First Lady Betty Ford.
- ◆ In 1934, Lyndon B. Johnson, then 26, proposed to Claudia Alta "Ladybird" Taylor, 22, on their first date. Though she declined his offer, Johnson continued to woo her from afar, sending his sweetheart 90 letters in the span of about 90 days. Impatient, Johnson traveled from Washington, D.C. to Texas to arrive at her door with an ultimatum—marry me now or forever hold your peace. She accepted his proposal and the \$2.50 engagement ring that came with it, which was purchased at a Sears department store.
- ◆ Warren Harding, our 29th president, loved a game of poker—and apparently, he was a high roller. During one of his bi-weekly poker games, Harding gambled away a set of china that had been in the White House since President Benjamin Harrison's tenure six terms prior. He bet it all on one ill-advised hand.
- ◆ Franklin Pierce was arrested for running over an old woman with his horse. However, in 1853, the court ruled that there was insufficient evidence to convict him and the charges were dropped. Another fun fact: Pierce was the first president to recite his inaugural address from memory. He gave his entire 3,319-word speech without a single notecard.
- ◆ Upon hearing that Lucy, the wife of 19th president Rutherford B. Hayes, was a fan of cats, David B. Sickels, the American counsel in Bangkok, sent the first couple a Siamese cat—which happened to be the first feline of that variety in United States history. The cat arrived in 1879, and Rutherford and Lucy named it "Siam".
- ◆ Though he was unable to read music, Richard Nixon could play five musical instruments: the piano, saxophone, clarinet, accordion, and violin. When he was a child, he would travel 200 miles to study piano under his aunt, who attended the Indianapolis Conservatory of Music. Nixon's musical abilities came in handy when he was running for president: he appeared on an episode of "The Jack Paar Program" in 1963, which helped improve his public image. (Just not enough—he lost that election.) Once he did make it into the White House, he performed for Duke Ellington, as well as on the Grand Ole Opry.
- ◆ After enrolling in a speed-reading course with his wife, Jimmy Carter could read 2,000 words per minute with a 95 percent comprehension rate.
- ◆ In 1958, when he was still a senator, John Fitzgerald Kennedy got into a fender bender in Palm Beach with Larry King, the now-famous TV host. King wrote about the incident in his autobiography, explaining that he had just arrived from Brooklyn and was so taken by the posh Florida town that he took his eyes off the road. Kennedy was not impressed. "How could you?" he yelled. "Early Sunday morning, no traffic, not a cloud in the sky, I'm parked—how could you run into me?" According to King, Kennedy did calm down and promised to drop the whole thing, in exchange for King's vote in the next election.
- ◆ Andrew Jackson once killed a man in a duel.
- ◆ Rutherford B. Hayes was the first president to have a telephone in the White House.

Sources: www.history.com, www.rd.com