Sovilines A bi-monthly publication from AuthoraCare Collective

August/September 2021



Dr. Oscar del Portal and his wife, Carmen, have been married for 53 years. [Photo submitted]

I Have Been So Lucky"

Vietnam Veteran Shares His Life's Path

By Jane Gibson

pr. Oscar del Portal was 21 years old when he received orders to go to Vietnam. Trained at Fort Gordon in electronics repair, he was assigned to the U.S. Army's 1st Infantry Division, arriving in 1967 just months before the North Vietnamese and the communist Viet Cong launched a series of surprise attacks known as the Tet Offensive.

"No matter what your rank or assignment," del Portal said, "Vietnam changed you. There was always something to be worried about whether it was bullets whizzing by your head, mortar fire, oppressive heat or torrential rains."

The jungles with their lush, dense undergrowth also held many dangers for soldiers, offering a breeding ground for all manner of wildlife and cover for booby traps and advancing enemies. To combat these challenges, the United States military used an herbicide/defoliating chemical known as Agent Orange which was sprayed by low-flying planes and helicopters to destroy those hiding places.

It would be many years before del Portal and other U.S. servicemen and women would think about Agent Orange again. In fact, for del Portal, it would not be until 2012, the year after he was diagnosed with a high-grade prostate cancer.

After speaking with another Vietnam veteran, he began to wonder if his health had also been impacted by Agent Orange exposure. A consultation with the Veterans Administration (VA) ultimately led them to fully cover the cost of del Portal's treatment and care for his cancer and heart disease. In addition, he was classified as 100 percent disabled and began receiving monthly veteran disability benefits.

More than 58,000 members of the U.S. armed forces died or went missing as a result of the Vietnam War; however, an estimated 2.8 million U.S. veterans were exposed to Agent Orange, some of whom have died. Others have developed serious long-term health issues such as prostate cancer, Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, multiple myeloma, peripheral neuropathy, and Parkinson's disease.



Agent Orange was a "tactical use" herbicide used by the U.S. military during the Vietnam War from 1961 to 1971. [anphucinternational.org]

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CEO Reflection

Constant Support Provides Comfort

Throughout this pandemic there has been so much unknown. And unknowns create uncertainty that we as humans don't like.

Lately, I have made several trips to look at colleges and universities. My eldest is a senior in high school this year. Despite the state of things, it remains certain that he is getting ready to graduate and begin a new chapter in his story.



Kristen Yntema

As I have observed him evaluating

his options and planning his future, it is clear that it has never occurred to him that continuing on his journey is not a certainty. Even as the world continues to wrestle with a pandemic, time marches on and his next chapter is unfolding.

And despite my own feelings, I know I must show up for my kids and meet them where they are, supporting them as they grow and evolve. That role is my certainty regardless of the state of things.

Our AuthoraCare team feels the same way about our service. As part of the fabric of the community, we must go on. Our current environment complicates our work. But just as my son counts on the certainty of my encouragement, patients and families we serve at AuthoraCare count on the certainty of our team's support.

Thanks to the generous contributions of our community, volunteers, and amazing team of caring professionals, we continue to provide life-affirming assistance to those who need us.

If uncertainty creates stress, perhaps these constants can provide comfort.

Kristen Wlither Yutena

Kristen Wither Yntema, MBA, MHSA

President and CEO, AuthoraCare Collective

I Have Been So Lucky

(cont. from cover)

While some Vietnam veterans might feel bitter about the tragic repercussions of Agent Orange, del Portal is not one of them. "In life, I've been so lucky," said del Portal. "In fact, when I was diagnosed with this aggressive prostate cancer in 2011, the doctors said I wasn't likely to live more than four years. So, these past six years have been a bonus, like I've been living on borrowed time."

He has been well-acquainted with the concept of gratitude for borrowed time as far back as his teenage years, living with his family in the chaos of communist Cuba. "I was strong-willed and quick to speak my mind, even though it wasn't safe to do so," he said.

His parents feared their 15-year-old son would be drafted into the Cuban militia or worse. They made the gut-wrenching decision to let del Portal and his 13-year-old brother immigrate to Miami, Florida. Prepared for the worst, the brothers were grateful to be placed together in a loving foster home in Ohio until their father joined, moving them to New Orleans to find work.

There, del Portal graduated from high school while holding down a job. His goal was to become a physician, but before he could even apply to college, he was drafted into the U.S. Army. Three weeks before shipping out to Vietnam, del Portal married Carmen, a beautiful Cuban immigrant, and the love of his life.

It was in a soggy foxhole in Vietnam that del Portal first began bargaining with God about "time." He prayed to live through the war and return to his wife, his angel; to have children, to have 30 good years. In return, he promised to live a meaningful life, to help others in need.

After serving three years in the U.S. Army, del Portal returned to New Orleans, found a job and began college. He was 26 years old by the time he earned his college degree. Sadly, he was too old to apply to medical school based on the admission criteria of that time. Consequently, he pursued pharmacy school and worked in that field until the admission age for medical school changed.

He graduated from Louisiana State University's Medical School in Obstetrics and Gynecology. At age 41, del Portal opened a private practice in East New Orleans, caring for an



Dr. Oscar del Portal and his wife Carmen at a gala benefitting Pendleton Memorial Hospital in East New Orleans. [Photo submitted]

underserved population of women for the next 18 years. After Hurricane Katrina destroyed his clinic, del Portal contracted with the city to direct a group of high-risk clinics in East New Orleans, until his retirement five years later. Just weeks after retirement, he received the news of his aggressive prostate cancer. He got busy orienting his life around another unexpected turn of events.

Speaking in a calm, steady voice, del Portal shared, "I know I won't live much longer." His cancer stopped responding to treatment in March of 2021 and since that time, he has been a patient of AuthoraCare Collective.

"I'm so much weaker now. I struggle to walk so I'm very glad I don't have to go out to see my doctor," del Portal said. "My AuthoraCare team comes right here to the home my wife and I share with my daughter, her husband and their four children. AuthoraCare's support helps all of us feel more comfortable."

"I've been so lucky," he explained. "My parents made great sacrifices so my brother and I could be spared the misery of communism and have the opportunity for a good education and meaningful work."

Smiling he continued, "I've been blessed to be married to the love of my life for more than 53 years and have two children who also pursued healthcare careers. Carmen and I have seven grandchildren who are such a joy and will, no doubt, do their part in making the world a better place."

"I've had a good life," he reflected. "And living on borrowed time has made me pay more attention to everything ... it makes every day a gift."

Visit <u>authoracare.org/whv</u> to learn more about how AuthoraCare supports and cares for veterans and their families through the We Honor Veterans Program.



We Honor Veterans



AuthoraCare Supports 2021 Triad Stand Down

Staff and Volunteers Donate Items for Homeless Veterans

By Linda Ann Fitts

During the month of August, AuthoraCare Collective's We Honor Veterans program hosted a collection for the 2021 Triad Stand Down.

Staff and volunteers donated small items including lip balm, hand sanitizer, gum, rain ponchos, feminine hygiene products and packs of tissue to be used in care packages to be distributed at the event on Sept. 10 at Providence Baptist Church in Greensboro. This important event provides access to needed resources for veterans.

The original Stand Down for homeless veterans was modeled after the Stand Down concept used during the Vietnam War to provide a safe retreat for units returning from combat



Cathy Lohr, Kids Path Volunteer Coordinator, left, and AuthoraCare volunteer Linda Ertel, organize the items donated for the Triad Stand Down project for homeless veterans. [Linda Ann Fitts]



AuthoraCare Collective staff and volunteers donated small items for care packages to be distributed to homeless veterans. [Paul Russ]

operations. At secure base camp areas, troops were able to take care of personal hygiene, get clean uniforms, enjoy warm meals, receive medical and dental care, mail and receive letters, and enjoy the camaraderie of friends in a safe environment. Stand Down afforded battle-weary soldiers the opportunity to renew their spirit, health, and overall sense of well-being.

That is the purpose of the Triad Stand Down for homeless veterans, and achieving those objectives requires a wide range of support services and time. The program is successful because it brings these services to one location, making them more accessible to homeless veterans.

Working with Triad Stand Down provides AuthoraCare Collective the opportunity to collaborate with partnering agencies. More importantly, it is a way we can support veterans and recognize them with the respect and dignity they deserve. We believe it is never too late to thank veterans for their service.

EXPERIENCING JOY THROUGH A LONG JOURNEY OF ILLNESS

Nationally Known Speaker to Present "Power of Knowing" Webinar

By Jane Gibson

Have you ever felt like your healthcare professional was not listening to what mattered most to you, especially when you were anxious or in pain?

Have you watched a chronically or terminally ill loved one be treated like an illness rather than a whole person? If so, register for this webinar and learn how to be a more effective healthcare advocate for yourself or someone you love.

Tiffany Christensen, Vice President of Experience Integration at the Beryl Institute, will be our featured speaker for AuthoraCare Collective's latest Power of Knowing Webinar on Zoom. Empowerment, Humility and Joy through the Long Journey of Illness will be from **noon to** 1 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 29. Empowerment, Humility, and Joy through a Long Journey of Ilness

Wednesday, September 29, 2021 12 - 1:00 p.m.

Register today at authoracare.org/knowing

She decided to set a new course for her life. Her goal was to help other patients and families navigate

the chronic illness maze. Once she was stronger, she



Tiffany Christensen

began volunteering and soon after she wrote her first book, "Sick Girl Speaks."

In 2020, Christensen developed kidney disease. She is once again on a transplant list. While juggling kidney dialysis, she continues her important work at The Beryl Institute, founded in 2010 for the purpose of establishing a global community of practice on improving the patient experience. These days, she is especially encouraged to see healthcare providers everywhere embracing patient-centered care as a

strategy for improving patient outcomes. Christensen and others at The Beryl Institute see healthcare professionals eager to improve their understanding of patients' needs.

"I see myself as an illness ambassador," Christensen said. "I'm offering healthcare professionals a better understanding of what it means to be a patient ... to realize that taking care of a patient's emotional wellbeing is equally as important as their physical well-being."

Power of Knowing webinars are scheduled throughout the year, covering a range of healthcare topics and issues that affect our communities.

"This year's series has focused on healthcare disparities, inclusion, diversity, complicated grief, advanced directives, dementia, caregiving, self-care, the fundamentals of hospice, and the impact of COVID-19 on children and adolescents," said Devin Griffith, VP of Business Development and Innovation.

To register for this event, learn about other upcoming Power of Knowing webinars and virtual workshops, or watch previously aired webinars on demand, visit us at authoracare.org/knowing.

Moderated by Risa Hanau, AuthoraCare's Clinical & Community Educator, participants will learn how Christensen used her personal experience with lifelong chronic illness as a springboard to become a professional patient advocate, a nationally recognized speaker, and the author of three books.

Christensen's story is a powerful one. She was diagnosed with Cystic Fibrosis at six months of age and faced her first serious health challenges and frequent hospitalizations at age 12. By the time she was in college, her health deteriorated to the point she needed a double lung transplant. After what seemed to be a successful surgery, her body, months later, rejected those lungs. Once again, she faced impending death. Thankfully another pair of lungs became available.

During her recovery from that daunting surgery, she watched, as always, the things that went well with her healthcare interactions and the things that didn't. She found herself thinking, "What do patients like me do when they haven't had three decades of experience to draw from?"

What's Happening CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Living After the Loss of a Spouse, Partner or Constant Companion

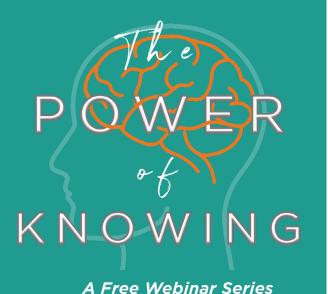
A virtual support group for adults who have lost a spouse, partner, or constant companion

Tuesdays, September 21, 28, October 5, 12, 19 and 26 6 - 7:30 p.m.

Living After the Loss of a Parent

A virtual support group for adults who are grieving the death of a parent Mondays, September 27, October 4, 11, 18, 25 and November 1 6 - 7:30 p.m.

To register and receive information, contact 336.621.5565 or email griefsupport@authoracare.org. Visit authoracare.org for our most current calendar.



Empowerment, Humility, and Joy

Through a Long Journey of Illness

Join us for an interactive, impactful conversation with Tiffany Christensen, VP of Experience Integration at The Beryl Institute. Tiffany has lived with chronic and acute illness since she was born and diagnosed with cystic fibrosis at 6 months of age. Tiffany has also faced end of life prior to her two double lung transplants and when her kidneys failed in 2020. Her story is embedded with lessons about navigating the healthcare system, how illness can be a "teacher," and finding joy in the face of suffering.

Wednesday, September 29, 12 - 1:00 p.m.

Register at authoracare.org/knowing

Now Streaming On Demand at authoracare.org/knowing

Grief and Loss During COVID-19 | Parts 1 & 2

The Benefits of Palliative Care During COVID-19

Advance Care Planning During COVID-19

Diversity & Inclusion Series The Impact of COVID-19 on Children and Teens

Giving Thanks: An Overview of AuthoraCare's Services **Healing Hearts During COVID-19**

Beyond the Casserole: Supporting Grieving Persons

COVID-19 Vaccine: Question. Answers. Concerns

Dementia | Parts 1 & 2

PROJECT COMES FULL-CIRCLE

Decorative Panels to Receive a Facelift

By Charity Apple

Vooden panels with whimsical scenes adorn The Little Boy Fountain Garden at Beacon Place.

These were created in memory of Donna Schultz, a former volunteer at Hospice and Palliative Care of Greensboro (now AuthoraCare Collective), by her family.

Donna served as a volunteer at the front desk at Kids Path as well as a "Busy Bee," creating Memory Bears for Kids Path families, and donating plants from her own garden to the Kids Path Garden.

"She really enjoyed working out there," said Laurie Suggs, Donna's daughter.

When Donna died in 2009, her family wanted to do something to memorialize her. "There was a divider that had become weathered and needed replacing," Laurie said. Laurie and her husband, Rob, worked on the project along with her siblings, Julie Bernstein (husband, Mike); Jay Schultz (wife, Vicki); and David Schultz (wife, Sue), and their children. Their father, Fred, (now deceased) assisted as well.

"We drew the designs and painted. The whole family worked on it. We're DIY (do-it-yourself) people. Our mom would've really liked the fact that all of us worked on it together. Having the family together was really important to her. My mother was an only child so it was



Laurie Suggs, along with her husband, siblings, and now-late father, designed and created the wooden panels in memory of her mother, Donna Schultz.



The sun highlights the wooden panels at The Little Boy Fountain Garden at Beacon Place.

very important that her kids enjoyed each other, that we stayed in touch." Laurie added.

Recently, Horticultural Therapist Sally Cobb contacted Laurie because the wooden panels had become weathered as well.

"I think it's so nice that Sally reached out and gave us the opportunity to do it again," Laurie said. "But our schedules wouldn't allow it."

Mike Evans, a longtime supporter whose mother was cared for at Beacon Place, stepped forward to underwrite the cost of the project. The panels will be revitalized by renowned metal artist Jim Gallucci.

The images, created by Donna's family, will be transferred to vinyl and then affixed to aluminum.

"Those images are going to be colored in to preserve the whimsical artwork," Cobb said. "All of us wanted to honor and memorialize the family's loving gift."

Since the panels will now be made of metal, "we never have to have another big financial investment," said Jane Gibson, Public Support Coordinator.

Laurie said she is grateful that Sally reached out to her about the revitalization project.

"Mom would've really liked the fact that these panels will continue to be there to encourage others," she added.

Editor's Note: A future edition will include photos and more information about the project.

Yntema, Hanau Serve as Conference Presenters

By Charity Apple

Tristen Yntema, President/CEO of AuthoraCare Collective, served as a presenter at the National Association for Home Care & Hospice's Financial Management Conference (NAHC FMC) in Chicago on Aug. 3.

Yntema presented "Developing an Engaged Workforce" alongside Stephanie Johnston, President/CEO of Transcend Strategy Group and Jess Stover, Healthcare Consulting Principal of BlackTree is now SimiTree Healthcare Consulting.

"It was great to learn and share together about the importance of culture, strategy and process. And they are all so incredibly important and must all be present," Yntema said.

The conference offers an opportunity for current and future leaders in home care and hospice care to connect and learn together, according to the NAHC website.

"As an organization we should be incredibly proud of what AuthoraCare stands for and how we have been working together through a pandemic and laserfocused on honoring our mission and keeping everyone safe. We have something pretty special and it is because of the amazing team we have at AuthoraCare."

"It wasn't an accident that we are where we are today. We have been focusing on our culture, our strategy and our processes. I am inspired and honored to share what we have done with others across the country. We have come a long way in less than 24 months and we continue to be such an important part of the fabric of our communities





Kristen Yntema

and those we are honored to serve and to work with every day," she added.

Risa Hanau, Clinical & Community Educator at AuthoraCare, presented "Ethical Dilemmas That Lead to Moral Distress for Care Providers of the Seriously III" on Aug. 30 during The Carolinas Center's 45th annual Hospice & Palliative Care Virtual Pre-Conference. The conference, "Serious Illness Care Transformation: Quality, Partnerships & Equity" was held Aug. 30-31 virtually.

"I love providing ethics training for The Carolinas Center. I learn something from the participants every year," she said. "There was a good diversity of disciplines and this year's participants were active, engaging and there was a lot of shared learning."

Resources and best practice tools were shared throughout the session.

"Her presentation was amazing as always," said Tara Stewart, Event and Education Coordinator for The Carolinas Center.

WE ARE HIRING!

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Entertaining & Informative

Films to Dispel Myths Surrounding Hospice Care

By Charity Apple

uthoraCare Collective is partnering with GDavis Productions of Winston-Salem to raise awareness and dispel the myths and misconceptions about hospice and palliative care specifically amongst African-American communities.

Three 30-minute films are being shot locally and topics include palliative care, hospice care, and family bereavement and caring for a loved one with dementia.

Addressing health disparities is foundational to AuthoraCare's mission to "empower people to be active participants in their care journey, enabling them to live on their own terms through personalized support for mind, body and spirit. Our patients are always the author of their life story."

Statistics show that nationally, African-American communities underutilize hospice care. Research in 2018 found that 8.2 percent of hospice patients admitted were people of color. AuthoraCare's statistics are above the national average. In 2019-20, 22.14 percent of patients admitted on the Greensboro campus and 16.78 percent on the Burlington campus were Black or African-American.

"This project outwardly supports and aligns with the tremendous work that our Inclusion Team started," said Devin Griffith, VP of Business Development and Innovation. "We are raising awareness and doing it through a creative medium - infotainment (information and entertainment)."

The films will focus on how a family copes with their grandmother's and grandfather's health issues. The character also is a veteran, Griffith said, so AuthoraCare's We Honor Veterans program will come into play.

The project will build on "Forget Me Not," a play by Garrett Davis, of GDavis Productions, about an African-American man with early Alzheimer's disease and his family. In 2017, two performances were held at the historic Hiburnian Hall in the Roxbury neighborhood of Boston and were sponsored by the Global Alzheimer's Research Platform Foundation, the US Against Alzheimer's Network and GDavis productions.

Davis has written, directed and produced more than 20 productions. As one of the leading theater companies in the country, it has toured multiple productions for five



Garrett Davis, right, is shown in a scene from "Forget Me Not." [Courtesy of GDavis Productions]

consecutive years. The company's mission is to bring real-life situations, issues and concerns to light in hopes of creating change and improving quality of life for everyone.

"Storytelling is a big part of our culture. Our history is built on stories of triumph, suffering, and heartbreak, which turn out to be stories of victory," said April Herring, Community Education/Outreach Coordinator. "It's a very smart thing that Garrett Davis of GDavis Productions is doing – using films to inform – particularly people of color. Information will be delivered through entertainment in an engaging way."

In the African-American community, taking care of family members is just what you do.

"Most don't identify as caregivers. They see what they're doing as taking care of grandma or their aunts or other loved ones as mothers, sisters, daughters." Herring said. "Not only do we want to bring awareness to what hospice and palliative care is, but we want the caregiver to be brought to light. People who are caring for their loved ones – we want them to walk away with that identification of caregiver."

Dee Curry, Community Liaison on the Burlington and Greensboro campuses, knows all too well the misconceptions about hospice and palliative care. Curry is featured as the AuthoraCare representative.

"In African-American communities, there are always fears about the fact that you get on hospice and you're dead. As a nurse, I have gone into homes and been asked, 'Are you going to be the one to give my mother/father the death shot?' And I've

answered, 'No, that's not what hospice is about. It's about the quality of life. Let experts help you through this process.' I always thank families for allowing me to assist with their loved ones. I always tell them that 'being on hospice is a wonderful way to honor your loved one,'" Curry said. "I am so totally and completely honored to be that person to represent AuthoraCare in this way. This is an amazing way to squash misinformation. I would love to see this go to other hospices and be used as an educational tool for years to come."

Funding for the project has been raised from private donors and grants from the S.J. Edwards Foundation and AARP of North Carolina.

AuthoraCare and GDavis Productions will own recorded video episodes together. Any proceeds from the project will fund AuthoraCare's services.



The three films that AuthoraCare Collective and GDavis
Productions are partnering on will build on "Forget Me Not," a
play by Garrett Davis of GDavis Productions. The cast of "Forget
Me Not" is shown. [Photo courtesy of GDavis Productions]

"This is one of the most exciting things I have ever done," Herring said. "This is such a rich partnership and a great investment not just for African-Americans but all Americans. It is an entertaining and informative venture."

AuthoraCare Represented During AHHC Leadership Conference













April Herring

Devin Griffith

Jeanine Falcon

Joey Honeycutt

Mary Manley

Risa Hanau

By Charity Apple

uthoraCare Collective will be represented during the Association of Home and Hospice Care of North Carolina's (AHHC of NC) 2021 Leadership Conference, Navigating Open Water, Nov. 8-9 at the Holiday Inn Resort at Wrightsville Beach.

Devin Griffith, MPA, MSW, Chair of the AHHC of NC Board of Directors and VP of Business Development and Innovation at AuthoraCare, will serve as moderator for the general session, "Leveraging Our Diversity and Creating Inclusive Environments in Our Organizations, Communities and Beyond." Panelists will include Jeanine M. Falcon, Ed.S., SHRM-SCP, SPHR, and Vice President of Human Resources; Mary Manley, Director of Growth & Provider Relations; April Herring, Community Education/Outreach Coordinator and Faith Community Liaison; and Rev. Joey Honeycutt, bereavement counselor.

The panel will explore how home and hospice care organizations can work together to create more diverse and inclusive environments. Community partnerships and health equity also will be part of this conversation.

Risa Hanau, LCSW, Clinical & Community Educator, will participate in the "Helping All Within Our Community: Transitions of Care Panel Discussion". The dialogue will revolve around various types of care within our communities.

Hanau will participate along with Ken Helmuth, Owner & President of Right at Home of the Triangle; Brittany Kearney, MBA, MA, Community Outreach & Enrollment of PACE of the Southern Piedmont; Scott Lofland, MBA, Vice President of Palliative Medicine of Carolina Caring; Shannon Pointer, MSN, RN, CHPN, VP of Hospice & Palliative Care of AHHC of NC; and Renee Rizzuti, FABC, CEO/President of PACE of the Southern Piedmont.



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Our Mission

AuthoraCare Collective empowers people to be active participants in their care journey, enabling them to live on their own terms through personalized support for mind, body and spirit.

UPCOMING FUNDRAISERS

GREENSBORO ELKS CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT

Friday, September 17 at 11 a.m.

Bryan Park's Player Course, Greensboro, NC

Register to play or consider being a sponsor or silent-auction donor for this great event. It begins with a pre-tournament social and auction held at the Greensboro Elks Lodge at 6 p.m. Thursday, September 16. Tournament day begins with registration and a Putting Contest at 9:30 a.m. The format is Captain's Choice with an 11 a.m. Shotgun start. There will be prizes, a box lunch and fellowship, all for a good cause!

To learn more or register to play, visit greensboroelks.org or call 336.288.5100.

GEARS AND BEERS

Sunday, October 10 at 10 a.m.

The Village Beverage Company 1015 Highway 150 West, Summerfield, NC

This year's ride has a new name and a new venue! Cyclists ride out together at 10 am and can choose a 25, 35 or 54-mile option. The post-ride party at The Village Beverage Company will include delicious food, beverages, beer and live music.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The incorrect date for Gears and Beers was published in the June/July issue of Storylines. The correct date is above.



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Getting Social

Connect with us to stay informed about the latest news, upcoming events and more!





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