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Living within our means—with style!

By Juliana Harris

Computers

I wish I had a dollar for every time I've heard a friend say, "Oh, I don't need a computer. The kids gave me one for Christmas, but I never use it."

If I took all those dollars and put them in my money market savings account, I could afford that walking tour of Cornwall I've been dreaming about. And, speaking of that savings account, I'm sure I don't have to tell you to invest in the 401K being offered by your employer, do I? When such a wonderful perk was offered to me, I had 4 percent of my salary removed before I ever saw my paycheck; that money was matched. If you haven't already done so, learn what your employer is offering and take advantage of it *now!*

Retired? No problem. Capital One is currently offering 5 percent interest on its money market account, with no \$1,000 initial deposit required. I have a set amount of dollars automatically transferred from my checking account to the money market account every month. It doesn't hurt a bit, and brings that Cornwall trip closer.

Of course I couldn't have this slight-of-hand transfer take place if I didn't bank electronically, which brings us to our topic for the month. Do you suffer from computer dread? It's a common affliction among older adults, and it's absurd! My sister, for example, uses a computer every day at work. But when she goes home, she passes the laptop her daughter gave her and keeps right on going.

"I'm not very good at using the computer," is her explanation. Does this sound familiar?

Even if you don't want to go to the expense of buying a computer and paying for Internet service, you can go to the library seven days a week and log on to one of its screens at no cost. Many libraries even give classes to make computer-phobes feel more at home.

When I was without a computer for six months, I went to the library daily to check my e-mail. (I was somewhat alarmed by the toothless fellow at the computer next to me who appeared to be trolling for soul mates on Match.com, but it was a good lesson: When it comes to computer dating, caveat emptor!)

If you do decide to take the plunge and buy a computer, you can be encouraged by the fact that prices are going down constantly. As far as Internet providers go, AT&T and Time Warner, among others, offer excellent package deals. You can get phone, cable, and Internet service all on one bill for under \$100/month. You can get very good advice from the folks at the computer store about fulfilling your needs in line with your budget.

Once you start using the Internet, you'll be hooked. It's a great way to stay in touch with family and friends and a great resource for solving the *New York Times* crossword puzzle (especially that fiendish Saturday puzzle; OK, so I cheat a little.) You can answer medical

questions, look up old high-school classmates, and locate recipes. Instant information is at your fingertips.

Are you convinced yet? Why not stop in at the library and take a test drive. Kansas residents near Johnson County have a magnificent resource in SenCom, the Senior Computer Users Group of Greater Kansas City. Call 913-206-7017, e-mail jocoseniors@comcast.net, or visit www.kcsenior.net. That could be your first adventure on the library computer!

Juliana Harris is an actress/singer/writer who formerly lived in Kansas City and has moved to Connecticut to be near family.

Tomato and Broccoli Team Up to Fight Cancer

If you believe adding steamed broccoli to your diet will help ward off cancer, you might be right. Studies funded by the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) have shown that a diet rich in phytochemicals (found in broccoli, among other vegetables) is potent against cancer. However, a recent study funded by AICR takes this benefit a step further by showing that certain food combinations may be even better as *a team* in fighting cancer.

Specifically, the laboratory study showed that the combination of tomatoes and broccoli in the diet was more effective at slowing the growth of prostate tumors than either food alone. Curiously, these foods together demonstrated themselves as more effective in treating cancer than a popular prostate cancer drug. Scientists theorize that broccoli and tomatoes are more powerful as a team in fighting cancer because they have different cancer-fighting properties that together bolster protection better than either fruit or vegetables alone.

Up until now, the study of diet and cancer prevention has mostly involved researchers isolating foods and figuring out what makes them powerful agents against cancer. But as more and more studies get published, researchers are discovering a more complicated interaction of phytochemicals, vitamins, and minerals in the body when foods are combined. The interactions among these elements may catalyze the entire cancer-fighting process.

Although the tomato-broccoli study is very promising, the authors point out that the findings really show the importance of eating a diet rich in a *variety* of plant based food as a means of boosting protection against cancer.

Source:

The American Institute for Cancer Research, *AICR Ever Green, Ever Healthy -April 2007*

Making Medicare make sense

By Julie R. Brookhart

Q: What is the Web site called MyMedicare.gov?

A: The Web site, MyMedicare.gov, is an online way to get personalized Medicare information. Currently, 1.3 million people with Medicare and caregivers are registered to create a personalized online tool to manage their Medicare benefits. If you provide your e-mail address when you register, Medicare will e-mail your user ID and a temporary password right away. When you log in, you will be prompted to change your password to protect your personal information. Once online, you can do the following on this site:

- Track your health care claims.
- Check your Part B deductible status.
- View your eligibility information.
- Track your use of preventive services.
- Find your Medicare health or prescription plan.
- Search for a new plan and track your drug costs.

The tool allows you to keep all your Medicare information in one convenient place. For example, you may want to see when a claim gets paid by Medicare, or you may want to track how much you've spent out-of-pocket toward your \$131 Part B deductible (what you pay each year before Medicare begins to pay its share).

MyMedicare.gov can even track which Medicare preventive services you have used each year, and remind you of services you haven't used even though you are eligible for them. For example, Medicare covers preventive services such as mammograms, prostate cancer screenings, and flu shots. On mymedicare.gov, you will receive reminders about taking advantage of those benefits.

There is also a "My Drug Costs" tab to organize and track your prescription drug costs and spending.

MyMedicare.gov now includes:

- A glossary of the terms used by Medicare on the site.
- A Spanish version of MyMedicare.gov.
- Easier viewing of your Medicare claims online.
- A printer-friendly format for your claims.

For more information about Medicare, visit www.medicare.gov or call 800-633-4227, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. TTY users may call 877-486-2048. You may also contact Senior Health Insurance Counseling for Kansas (SHICK) for free help with your Medicare options or questions at 800-860-5260.

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