

# The GOLDEN Years

By Julianne Hale

For many, the phrase “the golden years” conjures up an image of a smiling senior couple holding hands in a pair of Adirondack chairs, sipping coffee and enjoying a beautiful sunrise. But as we all know, life’s many challenges can become even greater as we age. Loss of loved ones, physical pain, memory loss, and limited mobility are just a few of the challenges faced by older adults. The resulting emotional stress can leave some deflated and depressed, significantly hindering their quality of life. Yet while these challenges must be faced, they can be managed. Here are 10 suggestions to help older adults remain happier and healthier while meeting the challenges that come with aging.



## 10 Ways to be Happier & Healthier While Meeting Life’s Challenges



**Embrace Your Feelings.** Don’t ignore them. Struggling with grief over the loss of a loved one? You are not alone. Grief is painful, but it must be felt. Join a support group, visit a counselor, or write down your feelings. Find a way to express yourself so that you can move forward. The inclination to withdraw and retreat may be natural, but it is not healthy.

**Get Involved.** Did you teach Sunday School at church when your kids were young? Were you a regular in a poker game with your friends back in the day? There is no reason to let these activities go. Get involved in your church. Join a dinner party or a book club. Opportunities abound and meaningful friendships await you. You’ve just got to go and find them!

**Adopt a Pet.** One of the greatest things about pets is that they love unconditionally. Visit your local animal shelter and take a look at the dogs and cats. These are animals that need love and attention as much as you do. Start a mutually benefi-

cial relationship with a four-legged friend and bring copious amounts of joy and fulfillment into your life.

**Pick Up a New Hobby.** Or, rediscover an old one. Did you love to paint when you were younger? Was there a musical instrument you always dreamed of playing but never found the time? It’s never too late. Now is the time to rekindle your love for painting, sewing, writing, cooking or playing the piano.

**Get into a Routine of Activity.** Remember that day-timer you used to use? Get it back out. Just because you are retired does not mean you can end all obligations. Set up a lunch date with a friend. Wake up early, enjoy your coffee outside with a newspaper, and take the dog for a walk. Remember Newton’s first law: A body in motion stays in motion, so get your body in motion!

**Volunteer.** Nothing will give you the perspective you need to appreciate your life better than helping someone else out.

### EXPERT ADVICE

#### The Importance of Regular Health Assessment

“Decline in function and loss of independence are NOT an inevitable consequence of aging. Adults surviving into late life do suffer from high rates of chronic illness, both long-standing and newly diagnosed—or undiagnosed. The tricky part about some of these illnesses is that they often develop almost imperceptibly from the perspective of the person involved. The degree to which optimum health can be restored may hinge on how early the condition is discovered. There are many conditions that, when diagnosed and treated, can dramatically restore function and well-being. Therefore, in order to maximize both the quantity and quality of life for older adults, regular health assessment is crucial.”

J. Joy Boggess, M.D., Medical Director, Life Care Center of Ooltewah



## Striding Toward Greater Hope: Cystic Fibrosis

By Heidi Tompkins, Life Care Public Relations

**F**ifteen years ago, Jerome and Vanessa Hammond, a couple in Cleveland, Tenn., became the proud parents of two beautiful twins, Will and Graham.

It was soon evident that something about Will was unusual. He began having recurring respiratory problems and wasn't gaining weight and growing the way his brother was.

At 8 months old, Will went to the hospital with a partially collapsed lung. Doctors ran tests and discovered he had Cystic Fibrosis.

### What is Cystic Fibrosis?

Cystic Fibrosis is not contagious or a result of lifestyle – it's all in the genes.

When both parents carry the defective gene, there is a 25-percent chance their child will be born with CF. Often, the disease passes unseen through many generations of carriers. Until the 1950s, CF didn't even have a name. Today, it is recognized as affecting 30,000 children and adults in the United States, according to the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

CF attacks two different systems in the body: the respiratory and the digestive. The gene prevents sodium chloride from moving through the body, causing mucus to build up. This clogs up the lungs and also stops enzymes from processing food in the pancreas.

An eventually fatal disease, CF can cause frequent lung infections, pneumonia, stunted growth, constipation, swelling of the belly, nasal polyps, difficulty breathing, pancreatic

inflammation, infertility and eventually lung disease or collapse.

"All of a sudden, you're faced with this completely different picture of what his future may be like," said Vanessa Hammond about her son Will.

### Treatment for CF

Children with CF go through a lot of treatment, as Hammond quickly discovered.

CF patients have to take enzymes with each meal to help the nutrients digest. They aim for about twice the recommended calorie intake and supplement their diet with vitamins and extra electrolytes. Snacks and extra toppings often help them get the calories they need.

To keep their lungs clear each day, people with CF often breathe in aerosolized medications and use chest percussion. Will, for example, uses a percussion vest that helps loosen the mucus so he can cough it out.

"He's done that twice a day ever since he's been diagnosed," Vanessa Hammond shared.

Exercise also helps keep CF patients' lungs in better shape.

For Will, playing soccer as a freshman on the Cleveland High School soccer team is a big help.

"All that running keeps his lungs healthy and strong and helps keep the congestion broken up," Vanessa Hammond added.

CF patients have to take extra precautions with germs, too, since it is easier for inhaled germs to get stuck to the mucus in their lungs. Washing hands is critical, as is receiving and having their family members receive the flu shot.

The best thing for CF patients and their families is to connect with a treatment center that specializes in Cystic Fibrosis care, like those supported by the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

In East Tennessee, the specialty centers are Children's Hospital at Erlanger in Chattanooga and the University of Tennessee Medical Center in Knoxville for adults.

For patients who follow their treatments closely, it's possible to live an active life.

"CF doesn't affect your motor function or any cognitive skills," said Vanessa Hammond. "Will has always been very involved. We have just tried to keep everything as normal as possible except that he does his treatments."

### Promising Possibilities

There is currently no cure, but treatments show great promise.

Through treatment of symptoms alone, the average age of survival has increased from 5 to 37 (it was 29 when Will was diagnosed).

A new drug is helping treat not only the symptoms but the root cause.

Will has the G551D mutation of the gene, which affects approximately 4 percent of CF patients. It is this mutation that the drug Kalydeco treats at the cell level, greatly reducing the excess mucus in the body.

The FDA approved the drug last March. Patients like Will take two pills a day, and the effects have been encouraging.

"The doctors just repeated Will's CF test in December, and his levels didn't just decrease a little – they went all the way down to normal," Hammond said. "The doctor called and said, 'If I were reading this test not knowing, I would say this child doesn't have CF.'"

Since he has been on Kalydeco, Will has been enjoying clear breathing and normal weight gain for the first time in his life.

Soon there may be hope for thousands more CF patients. According to Leigh Ellington, development director for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation's East Tennessee branch, another medication went into Phase III clinical trials in February to serve those with the Delta F508 mutation.

"This is more than half of the CF population," Ellington said. "As insulin has done for diabetes, we hope this new drug will give CF patients the control over their disease necessary to live a longer and better quality of life."

### Striding Forward

There are other reasons for optimism when it comes to Cystic Fibrosis.

"We feel blessed that the communities in Chattanooga and Cleveland have really opened their arms to this cause," Ellington said.

At last year's Great Strides walks for CFF, Chattanooga raised \$90,000, with Cleveland raising \$70,000.

"Money buys science, and science saves lives," Ellington said.

"The support of our faith and of our family and friends in the community for us and for Great Strides has been so encouraging," Hammond said. "My hope is that Will will have a long, full and healthy life, a family and the chance that everyone else has."

### Getting Involved

#### Cleveland Great Strides Walk

Saturday, April 13

Lee University - 1120 N Ocoee St.

Registration for the 5k race starts at 7 a.m., with the race starting at 8:30. Walkers can register at 9 a.m., with the walk starting at 10.

#### Chattanooga Great Strides Walk

Sunday, April 21, 2013

McCallie School - 500 Dodds Ave.

Registration begins at 1 p.m., with the walk beginning at 2 p.m. Enjoy live entertainment, kids' activities and more.

To find out how to become involved in advocacy or support, or to learn more about Cystic Fibrosis, contact the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation's Knoxville office at (865) 583-0355.

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### EXPERT ADVICE

#### For Older Adults at Home

“Older adults who are not able to leave their homes can still participate in life. I like to remind them how important it is to leave information about their histories. Start recording things that will be beneficial to your children. Talk about health issues that you have. Leave something behind that your children can hold on to in the years to come.”



Teresa Bryant,  
Executive Director,  
Morning Pointe


Lend a hand at a local food bank, make calls for your favorite charity, participate in a local political campaign, or spend some time with those less fortunate than you. Helping other people with their problems helps you to focus less on your own. Plus, it just feels good.

**Monitor Your Health.** While the thought of adding one more pill to your morning routine may make you want to pull your hair out, taking care of your body is critical to your overall health and happiness. Keep up with your doctor appointments, watch your weight, monitor your diet, and exercise when you can. One more pill can mean the difference between walking or not walking, seeing or not seeing, energy or fatigue.

**Get out!** Spending time outside is good for the mind, body and spirit. Take a walk, do a little gardening or landscaping, or just sit in a comfortable chair in the sun and read. Spending time in nature soothes

and centers us, and allows for the many benefits that a little sunshine and vitamin D can provide.

**Find Your Soul Mate.** It's never too late for love. Studies show people in committed relationships are generally observed to be happier. Don't give up on happiness or sell yourself short by telling yourself you're too old. If you meet someone and see the potential for more than friendship, pursue it. It could be the best decision you ever made!

**Don't Forget to Laugh.** A sense of humor is essential at every stage of life and never more so than in the golden years. Learn to laugh at yourself and challenging circumstances. Think the latest comedy movie is too over-the-top? Give it a shot. You might be surprised. Laugh with your friends often and deeply. It will keep your spirits high, and it's great for your health too! 

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sidewalks, walking trails and golf cart paths. Easy access to 17 acres of parkland and conservation areas, including four lakes and the community center, helps Greenbriar Cove bring serenity to life.

An assisted living facility and Alzheimer's care center on campus provide a full scope of services, truly making Greenbriar Cove the community to call home. Located at 4607 Ooltewah-Ringgold Road, site of the Monroe farm for more than 60 years, Greenbriar Cove proudly upholds the tradition of restful retirement, appreciation for nature and commitment to maintaining the integrity of the land for future generations.



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