

AGING

GOLDEN AGE

Julia Hawkins started running at 100, Now she's going for the gold

Competitive sprinter Julia Hawkins, 101, wearing a flower in her garden.



By Sarah Netter
Special to The Washington Post

It was hot and muggy when Julia Hawkins headed out for a practice sprint on the street in front her house.

She steeled her gaze on the 50-meter mark on the far end of her property line, crouched down in a starting position and took off, clocking in the 50 meters at just over 19 seconds.

Hawkins is 101 years old. Several times a week she's out in front of her Baton Rouge house trying to improve her time. "I just like the feeling of being independent and doing something a

little different and testing myself, trying to get better. I want to please my family is the other thing," Hawkins said. "Having a momma that can do this pleases them, and it pleases me to please them."

She's been fitted for a proper running shoe — New Balance, gray with coral accents. Her sons have measured out the 50 meters in front her house, marking the distance with little white flags tied to the bushes.

Hawkins, a widowed former teacher, was an avid bicyclist for many years, but only took up running after she turned 100. She competed in the qualifying Member State Games last year in Lake Charles, La., the oldest female runner by decades.

"I've got strong legs from bicycling," she said. "I'm always outside and the phone always rings, and I come running in is how I knew I could run."

After her 50-meter qualifying run, her kids surprised Hawkins by signing her up for the 100-meter race.

"I felt like it would be a challenge at my age, and doing the 100 would be neat," Hawkins said, quickly noting that she doesn't practice the 100-meter run nearly as often as the 50 meters. "I don't have that many 100 dashes in me at this age and I don't want to wear them all out before the meet!"

Watching Hawkins bustle around the house and tend to her intricate, sprawling garden — her slight frame stooping to yank out weeds — it's hard to believe she could ever wear out.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SARAH NETTER

When she's not sprinting, Julia Hawkins loves to spend time in her garden.

Julia Hawkins, 101, shown here in her Louisiana neighborhood, will compete in the National Senior Games.

PROTECTION

College students, get to know your health plan

By Dr. Gina Lynem-Walker
For Digital First Media

According to Forbes, many Millennials don't understand how health insurance works, where to apply or what's available to them. Because a large portion of this group is people in their early to mid-20s, it's crucial to educate college students on how to utilize their health coverage during and beyond the school year.

Choose the right plan

Under current health law, young adults can be added to, or remain on, their parents' insurance plan until age 26. For students attending school out of state, many health plans require members to use a network of health-care providers in the geographic area in which the policy is issued. In these instances, the student should consider purchasing an on-campus health plan or obtaining an outside policy.

An on-campus health plan is not a health insurance policy, but is a good source of primary care for students. These plans generally cover the cost of visits to on-campus clinics only and cost around \$100 to \$200 per semester.

Outside policies can be purchased through the private health insurance market. The Affordable Care Act guarantees coverage to anyone who applies for a policy. However, the details of each policy may vary, so young adults should thoroughly review what their specific policy covers.

Prepare the paperwork

To receive appropriate care, students should have the following documentation in a secure and accessible location:

- Copy of Health Insurance Card and Medical Credit Card: Before receiving care, students will need to present their insurance card. A copy of this card can be requested by mail, or obtained virtually through provider apps.
- Health Care Proxy: If a student is injured or unable to communicate health care needs, a health care proxy gives a secondary person the legal authority to provide directions of care to a doctor or health care provider.
- HIPAA Release: This document allows the contents of a student's medical record or health information to be shared with specific individuals, such as parents or guardians. It is required by doctors and hospitals even if a student is on their parents' health insurance plan.

Learn key terms

Knowing the language behind health insurance can be overwhelming, consider reviewing some of these common terms before looking at health care options:

- Premium: A monthly member payment that can vary based on coverage.
- Deductible: The amount paid out-of-pocket for covered medical services before a health insurance plan starts to share in the cost.
- Co-pay: A fixed dollar amount paid for health care services.
- Explanation of Benefits: Documentation that lists what is paid for by an insurance provider, exclusions and any charges owed for services received.

ADDICTION

Study: One in eight U.S. adults alcoholic

By Christopher Ingraham
Of The Washington Post

A new study published in JAMA Psychiatry in August found that the rate of alcohol use disorder, colloquially known as "alcoholism," rose by a shocking 49 percent in the first decade of the 2000s. One in 8 American adults — 12.7 percent of the U.S. population — now meets diagnostic criteria for alcohol use disorder, according to the study.

The study's authors characterize the findings as a serious, overlooked public health crisis, noting alcoholism is a significant driver of mortality from a cornucopia of ailments:

"fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, stroke, liver cirrhosis, several types of cancer and infections, pancreatitis, type 2 diabetes and various injuries."

The study's findings are bolstered by the fact that deaths from a number of these conditions, particularly alcohol-related cirrhosis and hypertension, have risen over the study period.

The CDC estimates that 88,000 people a year die from alcohol-related causes, more than twice the annual death toll of opiate overdose.

The study found rates of alcoholism were higher among

men (16.7 percent), Native Americans (16.6 percent), people below the poverty threshold (14.3 percent), and people living in the Midwest (14.8 percent). Nearly 1 in 4 adults under age 30 (23.4 percent) met the diagnostic criteria for alcoholism.

A different federal survey, the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), has shown that alcohol use disorder rates are lower and falling since 2002. Grant says she's not sure what's behind the discrepancies between the two, but it's difficult to square the declining NSDUH numbers with the rising mortality rates seen in alcohol-

driven conditions like cirrhosis and hypertension.

A separate study looking at differences between the surveys found the NESARC questionnaire used in the current study is a "more sensitive instrument" leading to a "more thorough probing" of the alcohol use disorder criteria.

If the more sensitive data used in the current study is indeed more accurate, there's one final caveat to note: the study's data only go through 2013. If the observed trend continues, the true rate of alcoholism today would be even higher.

What do the researchers think is driving the increase?

NATURAL HEALTH

Holistic practitioner preaches life as a wellness journey

By Debbie Leveski
For Digital First Media

Only cooking food in cast iron, without the use of dairy, gluten, refined sugars, corn and white flours, Valerie Penz, owner of Holistic Health by Valerie, started her wellness journey after the birth of her two children, Noah and Ella.

Even though new babies and sniffles go hand in hand, Penz found herself running in circles from one pediatric specialist to another for her babies' ailments. That was when she started to look for a more holistic way to treat their ailments and to live a healthier life.

"The turning point for me came like a perfect storm — money was running out, there was very little relief in symptoms and my entire identity was managing their procedures, medications and appointments," Penz says.

"I began looking into terms



PHOTO COURTESY OF VALERIE PENZ

Brian and Valerie Penz (from left to right), husband and wife team, Holistic Health by Valerie, introducing themselves at the beginning of a Delicious Holistic Food Class.

such as alternative, holistic and naturopathic medicine and the more I learned, the more I became obsessed with equipping myself with knowledge to make educated decisions for my family," she says.

Today, Penz is a certified holistic nutritional therapist and wellness coach, and she takes pride

in teaching her clients that the body was designed to function using the Earth's resources, why imbalances occur and how to create a life of joy and health.

Penz believes our society is saturated with pills, patches, shakes and supplements making false promises to make you feel better, look younger, have more energy,

think clearer, etc.

"Unfortunately, finding that one right product is just not the answer," she says. "The American way of life has become so detached from God's creation, so grossly altered from its original state that dysfunction is the norm."

Penz says the goal in holistic living is to reject the norm and reconnect with nature for better health and happiness.

"Although traditional doctors are great at diagnosing an ailment, imbalance or disease, they often fall short in healing the root of the problem," she says.

Instead of treating a symptom, holistics promote healing at the source without the dangerous side effects that come with traditional pharmaceuticals, she says, asserting that modern-day packaged foods, sugary drinks and microwave ovens allow toxins to enter our bodies.

Penz believes educating her clients is of utmost importance, for it allows them to make more knowledgeable choices about their lifestyles.

"We all live with disease in our bodies just waiting to be fed so it can grow," she says.

Holistic living is not making time for positive changes, Penz says, it is about swapping out time spent doing damaging activities with those that feed your mind, body and soul. It's about learning to avoid toxins and to reduce stress. And it does not mean giving up picnics, restaurants, camping or dessert.

Penz — who is not a vegan eating only kale and carrots — begins her Delicious Holistic food class by saying, "I love food and I just want to eat!"

"I care about the quality of ingredients on my plate," she says, adding that real food tastes good and does not take all day to prepare.

Holistic Health by Valerie consults with individuals, families and businesses, does seminars on meditation, stress reduction and holistic cooking, and offers evaluations on lifestyle, wellness and household toxins. For more information visit holistichealthbyvalerie.com.