

CREEPY OLD MEN

Misha Stallworth, Director of Arts and Culture



In the face of the numerous sexual assault allegations in the news over the past few weeks I am affronted by the fact that the face of this news is that of an “old man.”

Across the stories what is common is that the men who have been accused are not only older but look “older” in the ways we have come to understand age. They have gray hair, their skin is wrinkled, their bodies are not particularly fit and so on. My worry with this is that we start to misappropriate certain behaviors with certain ages especially given that it’s something we already do. If an older man is attracted to a younger person, they are more likely to be looked at as inappropriate. If he flirts or attempts to hit on a younger person, he quickly becomes a “creepy old man” or a potential “sugar daddy.” We see this image all the time in television and movies and we see the response of the older man being berated, made fun of, and or ignored. These are labels that erase the sexuality of men after a certain age—they can no longer be attracted to people or interested in intimacy instead they are reduced to financial sponsors and predators.

What people do and how they hurt one another is not a function of age but of the individual—it’s important that we remember that. It’s essential that as we are bombarded with images that tell us the Dos Equis “Most Interesting Man in the World” is suave, attractive, aging appropriately, and therefore allowed to be

used in sexual messaging we are equally aware of the messages that tell us men who become wrinkled and lose some mobility are no longer allowed to have any sexuality. These messages isolate older people from intimacy and romantic connection not only with people of different ages but also among their peers in age. No one is immune from picking up the de-sexualizing gaze toward older people. However, adults of any age continue to be human and humans overwhelming thrive with access to loving physical touch. We must honor that in ourselves and others. Older men can find women of any age attractive, can have new love across age, can have consensual, nurturing and loving sex lives through relationships or hook ups. Being an older man does not make one a predator.

It is essential at times like these that we are cautious in the conclusions we make and that we do not blindly condemn groups of people for the wrong reasons. Have older men been raised and come of age in times that emphasized disempowerment of women? For sure. Are there likely new lessons about gender dynamics for older men to learn. Yup. But that doesn’t mean that an older man’s sexual appetite is inherently problematic. Ashton Applewhite puts it perfectly in her book *This Chair Rocks: A Manifesto Against Ageism* “people are creeps because they’re creeps, not because they’re over a certain age.” Older people have every right to a consensual sex and love life, so find love where you can and watch out for the creeps.

HAPPENINGS

NEWS FROM THE HANNAN CENTER - SERVING METRO DETROIT SENIORS FOR MORE THAN 90 YEARS

THERE’S NO GOOD TIME FOR THE TALK

Vincent Tilford, Executive Director



During Thanksgiving weekend, I had what I thought was a reasonable conversation with a relative who in so many words told me to mind my own business.

My uncle, who is eighty-one-years-old, lives alone. His wife died many years ago, and his closest blood relative is his niece, my wife. When we were visiting him this past holiday, he proudly showed me some of his home improvements that he had completed – a remodeled bathroom and a basement that he had turned into his “man cave.” Uncle has always been a wiz with his hands, so it was no surprise that he did all of that work.

My problem, and it’s clearly mine and not his, was that while walking the house admiring his handiwork everywhere I looked I saw hazards – a new 32-inch high soaker tub; bathrooms without grab bars, and looming stairways with loose carpeting on the steps and no handrails. When I first visited him in the 1990s, I never thought about these things, but now they seem like death traps, at least for someone who’s isn’t as spry as he used to be. I’ve known him for nearly thirty years and have watched as time has bent his back and carved him into just skin and gristle. Less than five and a half feet tall, he’s a small man who moves a little slower and more gingerly than he did ten years ago (but so do I).

I started the conversation with affirming statements.

“Love the man cave,” I said. “And that’s a sweet remodel that you did to the bathroom.” He nodded. Uncle was never one to show much emotion, but his lips turned up slightly into what I thought was a smile, so I eased into my concerns.

“You know, I had a hard time stepping into and out of your tub. It must be a challenge for you.”

“I manage,” he replied. Not hearing the warning in his voice and figuring that my positive statements had softened him, I plowed ahead.

“Let me put up some grab bars for you before we go. I

could also nail the carpet down on the stairs so that you don’t trip.”

“I don’t need grab bars; I have no problems getting into and out of the tub. And don’t worry about the carpet. I plan to have someone redo it in a couple of weeks.” He left me no openings; still, I laid out my arguments.

“We could take care of it now. It wouldn’t be a problem at all. Accidents are never planned. What if you fall when no one is around, and you can’t move? It could be days before someone checks on you.”

“I understand, but I’m fine.” And then he left the room.

My conversation with my uncle didn’t exactly go as planned, but I don’t regret having it. Talking with your loved ones about aging is hard and sometimes they aren’t receptive. Most of us equate getting older with becoming more frail and sickly. We fear losing our independence or that our health will take a downward spiral the moment we admit to ourselves and others that we need help. However, not talking about it leaves us all vulnerable to emotional, financial and physical stress when a challenging situation arises and decisions have to be made about someone’s care.

Most caregivers and their care recipients whose life-changing events were sudden wish that they had had a plan to handle care sooner when everyone can be a full participant in the conversations about where and how will care be provided. What will it cost and what can we afford? What steps can we take to make it possible to live as long as possible in one’s home? Are there potential family caregivers who can afford the time and emotional energy needed for caregiving? What resources are available to support the caregiver and the recipient?

As we enter the holiday season, we should make plans to talk about our future and long-term care with our family and those who may be part of our care network. There’s never a perfect time to talk about long-term care and planning and it may be uncomfortable. But the cost of not doing so is far higher than any short-term discomfort.

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MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

MLK Breakfast at Greater Grace Church

MONDAY, JANUARY 15th | 9:00AM

Join us at this intergenerational event where we'll honor and discuss the work of Martin Luther King, Jr. Space is limited - Please call 313.833.1300 X14 to register

Zena Baum Workshops

PREVNT

TUESDAY, JANUARY 9 | 12:00PM - 3rd Floor Conference Room

Learn about the different categories of elder abuse, how to recognize signs, factors that contribute, how to report, and resources available following abuse. Please call 313.833.1300 X32 to RSVP

TOP TEN WAYS TO PROTECT YOUR ASSETS, YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY

THURSDAY, JANUARY 25 | 12:00PM - 3rd Floor Conference Room

Learn how to plan ahead to manage your assets and your future. Discover legal options for your retirement plans, your long-term care needs, and how to protect your family's financial future. Please call 313.833.1300 X32 to RSVP

HOLIDAY TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS

Ariel Kennedy, Hannan Center Social Work Intern

While the holidays can be stressful for everyone, they are especially stressful for caregivers. Here are some tips to help you cope with the holiday stress:

ASK FOR HELP - Adding holiday planning on top of your normal daily tasks is a lot. Ask for help from family members or friends. This could be help with cooking the meal, cleaning, or help with caregiving duties. You might also want to look into caregiving help in the form of adult day centers or respite care programs.

SIMPLIFY - You're busy enough in your day-to-day life, there's no reason to go overboard for the holidays! Instead of cooking the whole meal, consider asking people to bring some of the dishes, such as dessert. You might also want to consider having the meal catered. Don't feel pressured to go all out with the decorations or holiday activities. Instead pick a few things that are really important to you and your family and leave the rest out.

START NEW TRADITIONS - Just because

you might not be able to do all of your old traditions doesn't mean that you can't make new ones! If cooking a full meal is too much, start the tradition of eating out at a favorite restaurant, or having a potluck. If going out to a movie theater is too difficult, have everyone gather at your home, or the home of a family member to watch a movie. Finding new traditions can help alleviate the loss of old ones.

MAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF - It's easy to feel overwhelmed during the holidays so make sure to set aside some time for yourself. Whether it's exercising, taking a hot bath, meditation, or catching up on your tv shows, make sure to set some time aside to unwind and take care of yourself.

PLAN AHEAD - Planning ahead will allow you to have more time with your family as well as time for yourself. Take time well before the holiday to plan out your menu and to contact your guests to invite them and let them know if they should bring anything. Having a plan in place will help you see what you may need assistance with and what traditions will be more hassle than they are worth.



AGE OUT LOUD

HIGHLIGHTING OLDER ADULTS WHO DEFY AGING STEREOTYPES AND SHOW THE WORLD THAT HUMAN POTENTIAL CONTINUES AND IN SOME CASES INCREASES WITH AGE

Special congratulations to our Hannan participants who were awardees at the inaugural 70 Over 70 event! The event honors older adults in metro Detroit who have made and continue to

make an impact on our community in the following areas: Art, Changemaker, Civic + Community Leadership, Entrepreneurship, Lifelong Learning, Unsung Hero, and Lifetime Achievement.

Please visit www.70overseventy.com to learn more about the event and read the bios of the Class of 2017.



JULIE BAKER
Lifelong Learning



GRACE BLAKELY
Lifelong Learning



SHIRLEY LOLLES
Art



GABRIELL TURNER
Lifelong Learning



KAYROD GALLERY
HANNAN CENTER

• **SIGHT FEST 2018** •
A FEAST FOR THE EYES

DEC 15 - JAN 19

FREE LEGAL CLINIC

On the third Tuesday of every month, **Neighborhood Legal Services - Elder Law Advocacy Center** hosts a free legal clinic for all Wayne County residents 60 and older. This service is offered in conjunction with Hannan's Zena Baum Senior Service Center and is by appointment only.

To determine if you are eligible for an appointment, please call 313.833.1210

Upcoming legal clinic dates:

- Tuesday, January 16th
- Tuesday, February 20th