

Community

SECTION B

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Aging well at Asbury

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Sue Edwards and Marcella Hayes are considered to be senior citizens, but show no signs of slowing down.

Hayes, 90, and Edwards, 80, were just two of the Asbury Solomons residents featured by Asbury Communities' "What's Age Got to Do With It?" social media campaign, which runs through May and June. The celebration coincided with Older Americans Month, which aims to elevate the conversations about aging today, according to a press release. The campaign uses hashtags including #ActYourAge, #AsburyAging, #WhatsAgeGotToDoWithIt, #AgeOutLoud and #DisruptAging.

"At Asbury, we want to change the way society views aging, retirement communities, and the people who choose to live in them," said Doug Leidig, president and CEO of Asbury Communities in a press release. "Our campaign is designed to help drive an important conversation — that although our physical abilities may change, aging doesn't mean we stop being ourselves. We continue as before, enriched by our experiences. Because, really, what's age got to do with it?"

Edwards knows that if she starts her day out right, everything else will fall into place. At a minimum, Edwards and her husband get some kind of physical activity for an hour each day, beginning with their early morning paper route around Asbury Solomons. The paper route has the couple up at 5:30 a.m. every day to bring newspapers from the ends of driveways in the community to the doors. Edwards chuckles that they didn't get a newspaper route until they were in their 70s. The newspaper route means about a

half an hour each day of early morning walking and bending, she said.

Then, on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, the couple heads to the fitness center for another 45 minutes of exercise on the machines. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, Edwards goes to a balance class, then either aerobics or Zumba, then finishes off with a yoga class. On these days, from 8:30 to 11 a.m., Edwards is on the move.

"If I didn't just do these things in the beginning of the day, the day would just get away from me," she said.

Edwards said staying fit has given her a better quality of life, as she is still able to walk and maneuver stairs. She has seven great-grandchildren, and some have remarked to her that their friends' great-grandparents are either dead or sick but not "pop" and "Grandma Sue."

In addition to all the physical fitness, Edwards is co-president of the Asbury Solomons computer club, is on the Go Green committee, she makes slides for the in-house TV station and writes a column for the Asbury Solomons newspaper.

"It lets me enjoy these later years," Edwards said.

Hayes loves to spend time gardening in both her flower and vegetable gardens. She has two garden plots in the Asbury Solomons community garden and has flower beds behind her cottage. Additionally, she gardens at the Sotterley Plantation in St. Mary's County twice a week, something she does because she says she's "a glutton for punishment."

In order to stay healthy enough to do the physically demanding work of gardening, even with "two bum knees," Hayes keeps fit in the Asbury Solomons fitness center and goes to fitness classes. She's been gardening



STAFF PHOTOS BY SARAH FALLIN

Marcella Hayes, 90, spends her time tending her flower beds behind her cottage at Asbury Solomons and growing vegetables in two garden plots in the Asbury community gardens.



Sue Edwards, 80, works out for at least an hour five days a week.

most of her life, as she grew up on a farm and loved helping her mother in the garden. She even weeded her garden the day she gave birth to one of her sons, she said.

The backbone of her flower garden is day lilies, which she expects will peak at the end of the month. She seldom has to buy produce

because of the yield of her vegetable gardens, even through the winter, frozen berries from the garden fill her freezer. She grows, tomatoes, potatoes, sweet potatoes, egg plants, peas, beans, turnips and even okra.

"I love digging in the dirt. It's the greatest stress reliever in the world. It's relaxing,"

she said. Even though gardening can be physically demanding, she said she doesn't see it as work because she's having fun.

There's also a camaraderie with gardening through the Asbury Solomons garden club. The members exchange plants and ideas. Hayes is the only remaining founding member of the club.

It's especially important as one gets older to eat right and stay active, Hayes said, and gardening accomplishes both by keeping her active and providing her with good food to eat.

"So many people could do so much better if they took care of themselves," Hayes said.

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