



RECOM

Retired Employees City of Mesa



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RECOM Executive Board

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MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

New Year's Traditions

With the start of the New Year rapidly approaching, thoughts turn to resolutions and other traditions associated with the New Year. But when did these traditions begin and why?



New Year's resolutions date back to the ancient Babylonians as a way to start the new year with a clean slate by returning borrowed items.



The symbol of a baby to represent the birth of the new year began in ancient Greece in 600 B.C.



The first Tournament of Roses Parade was held in 1890 by the Pasadena, California, Valley Hunt Club to celebrate the town's mild winter. In 1895, the Tournament of Roses Association assumed the hosting of the parade.



The kiss shared at midnight comes from the masked balls that have been common throughout history. According to tradition, the masks symbolize evil spirits from the old year and the kiss is the purification into the new year.



Auld Lang Syne was inspired by old Scottish tunes. Robert Burns penned the lyrics.



Cabbage leaves are a symbol of prosperity so the belief was eating cabbage on New Year's Day brought great prosperity for the year.

What about other countries? Here is a sampling of the good luck rituals from around the world.



Grapes are a good luck symbol in Spain. At midnight, the Spanish eat 12 grapes to represent the next 12 months.



Eating lasagna on New Year's Day in Sicily will bring good luck. However, do not eat any other type of noodle as that will bring bad luck.



A whole almond is hidden in rice pudding in Norway. Guaranteed wealth goes to the person whose serving holds the lucky almond.



In Greece, a special bread with a coin buried in the dough. The first slice is for the Christ child, the second for the father of the household and third for the house. If the third slice holds the coin, spring will come early that year.

Source: www.chinatownconnection.com

Happy New Year!!!!

Speaker

Gee, it wasn't planned that way, but sometimes things just work out. The same month we learned that our new vision insurance carrier would be (the much requested) VSP, our speaker was Dr. Benjamin Yanofsky, an optometrist. In fact some of our loyal readers may already know him because he is the partner of Dr. Ron Newth who has been the optometrist of choice for many city employees.

So before we get too bogged down with Christmas things that should have been done, still need to be done and will be attempted but won't get done, here are a few tips from Dr. Yanofsky to keep in mind.

Eye problems to check into:

Dry eye – it's actually a disease and 25% of the country has one form of it or another. You know you have it because your eyes are stinging and your vision is blurry after reading. Hey, in Arizona that's about 40% of us, and that's in large part due to the fact that we're getting older or have high blood pressure, or take meds for high blood pressure. Even anti-depressants can be a cause of dry eye. It's treated with a variety of artificial tears and in really seriously uncomfortable cases with a medical procedure that involves plugging the tear ducts.

Glaucoma – You've all heard about this one. 5% of the population has it and it can lead to loss of sight. The bad thing is, there are no symptoms. It's basically discovered during your regular eye exam. So – New Year's resolution #2 is to

Macular Degeneration – is usually age related and the jury is still out on how much heredity plays a part. In any case, a recent research study suggests eating oily fish with lots of Omega 3 fatty acids helps to reduce the risk of getting it, or the severity of it.

There's an eye test that you can do at home to test for macular degeneration, it's called the Amsler Grid. It involves a card with a black/white grid. If you call Dr. Yanofsky's office (480-833-1434), his staff (Barb or Jan) will send you a copy free of charge or fax it to you. It's also available on-line here's one of many websites where you can download the grid:

<http://www.amd.org/living-with-amd/resources-and-tools/31-amsler-grid.html>

Cataracts – yes they are removed very successfully these days, but reducing the risk of getting them is relatively simple: protect the macula from ultra violet rays by wearing wide brim hats and polarized sunglasses and eat yellow and dark green vegetables.

Carcinoma – basically various cancers around the eye, and the eyelid. Many are discovered during an eye exam because the area around the eye is magnified and examined closely. And AZ has the dubious distinction of being #1 in basal cell carcinomas.

New Technology

Super mild dilating drops – less blurriness after the eye exam. You can drive yourself to the eye appointment and home without endangering yourself and your fellow drivers.

Optomap Retinal Scan – gives a 200 degree view inside the eye for early detection of, and more precise diagnosis of macular degeneration, glaucoma and other serious eye diseases. It's non-invasive, requires no radiation and takes just a second.

Implantable Contact Lenses – the newest alternative to refractive surgery. Your own lens remains in place, reducing the risk of infections and it can be removed if necessary.

Questions

There were quite a few questions from the attendees at the meeting, but the writer couldn't get them all down – because, well you know – her eyes aren't what they used to be. Herewith the questions and answers she managed to write down.

1. What role does genetics play in eye problems? It does play a role in some eye problems, particularly in certain cataracts. However, 80% of cataracts are not due to genetics.

2. Who is a candidate for implantable contact lenses? Who is not?

How long does an implanted lens last? Can you implant them after laser surgery?

Seems it's easier to say who isn't a good candidate, such as people with viral diseases, (like herpes zoster which causes shingles) and those that can't get good vision with glasses. It also gets more complicated with later age due to a greater likelihood of infection.

You need to have had at least 1-2 years of "stable vision" – meaning your prescription hasn't changed – so that an accurate prescription can be made for the lenses and your eyes don't change three months after you've had lenses implanted.

Whether you can implant contact lenses after laser surgery depends on the kind of laser surgery you had. There might have been a thinning of the cornea which wouldn't allow an insert.

3. What is the cause for "holes in the macula" – macular degeneration?

It varies. It's often without any known cause. Ultra Violet exposure such as welders frequently have, or looking into the sun frequently or over a long period of time, can damage the macula.

There are more incidents of MD in people who live close to the equator. Nearsightedness can also be a cause because it pulls on the macula.

The good news about the latter is that early detection and cure of the nearsightedness relieves the stress on the macula.

4. Are there progressive contact lenses.

Yes, and they work better than they did five years ago.

5. Is it useful to get polycarbonate lenses?

Yes, they block out almost 100% of ultra violet rays and they can be tinted for sunglasses and polarized. They can even enhance depth perception.

6. What have been the results of the radial keratotomies performed so frequently 15 years ago?

Not too bad. The expected problems did not develop - especially infections but some problems with dry eyes – which of course can be treated.

7. What is the cause of halos? (Other than being a really, really good person?)

Seriously, seeing halos can be caused by something as simple as dry eyes, having the incorrect lens prescription or inherited corneal dystrophies.

If you want to request a copy of the macular degeneration test card, please call Dr. Yanofsky's office at: **480-833-1434**.

Reports

Membership

Lin Adams reported that she had received many membership renewals and encouraged those that haven't renewed to do so. Those who don't renew will be removed from the roster and will no longer receive the newsletter or informational e-mails.

There was a familiar gesture of the hand across the throat – but we don't think she meant that literally.

Treasurer

Don Miller reported that all the bills from the retirement seminar had been –ah retired—and the coffers were in good shape. Anyone wishing to see actual numbers may ask for them at a monthly meeting or ask Don directly.

Deferred Compensation

As previously mentioned, the City dropped the Blackwood Fund from its portfolio and replaced it with J.P. Morgan Chase High Yield Fund. There were no problems with the switch-over and no resistance from investors.

Here's another reminder for those retirees participating in the Deferred Compensation Program. There are still some of you who have no beneficiary named on your account. Here's the website (www.mesadcp.com) to access your account information to add the beneficiary information.

Here's the website with information about beneficiary designation.

http://dcprovider.com/PDF/cityOfMesa/PT_9375_6_GW_Bene_Desig_Finalv2.pdf

Scott Taylor, the Great West representative, can be reached at (480) 921-2885, toll free (800) 933-9808 (voice mail only) or by email at scott.taylor@gwrs.com.

Program committee

The next membership meeting is on **December 16th** and will be dedicated to our Christmas Social – goodies provided by RECOM.

Please bring an item or two of non-perishable food that we will donate to a food bank.

January 20th, 2010 – Speaker to be arranged

February 17th 2010 – Win Holden, Publisher of Arizona Highways magazine

Announcements

Bill Everson from the Police Department, reported that retired PD personnel can go to the City's Security Office on 6th St. to get a new ID card if they have a permit for carrying concealed weapons.

Because you asked:

Here's a handy list of RECOM Board Members and their email addresses. They are also on the website (www.recomaz.org).

Kathy Barrett, President – galaxy0917@yahoo.com
John Gendron, Vice President - jsgendron@yahoo.com
Lin Adams, Secretary - linjadams@aol.com
Don Miller, Treasurer - donaldjmiller@cox.net
Jo Ferguson, Director - mesaplanner@yahoo.com
Sam Halverson, Director - ks47@cox.com
Peggy Haney – Director peggyhaney@cox.net

The website for VSP (Vision Services Plan) - You can check to see if your current provider is on their list as a non-member. You won't be able to log in as a member until January 1, 2010.

www.vspn.com

Merry Christmas to All