

SPRING 2026

Family Matters

A MAGAZINE FOR SENIORS, CAREGIVERS, AND PROVIDERS





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Spring is in the air. Can you feel it?

Whether it's wildflowers brightening the hillsides or cherry blossoms lining the streets, something is quietly shifting. The rains are giving way to sunnier days, the air feels lighter, and the world feels a little more inviting. Spring just has a way of reminding us to step outside, breathe a little deeper, and reconnect with the world around us.

This season also brings us something to celebrate. We are honored to share that Family Matters has earned both the 2026 Best of Home Care® Provider of Choice and Employer of Choice awards. Thank you to our incredible team and amazing families who make our work possible. This recognition truly belongs to you.

Every day, we see how important movement and fresh air can be. Staying active supports our physical health and lifts our mood, sharpens the mind, and strengthens social connection. And the best part is, it doesn't have to be complicated. A stroll through a garden or a picnic at your favorite park are ways to enjoy the season.

Spring is less about doing more, and more about enjoying what is possible. Whether you are a senior, a family member, or a caregiver, I encourage you to look for small adventures this season. Try something new with a trusted companion by your side.

As always, our team is here to support you with compassion and care.

Sincerely,

Jacob Laffen
Co-Founder & CEO
Family Matters In-Home Care



Moving Forward:

Simple Ways to Stay Active and Independent

Mobility challenges affect roughly 35% of people in their 70s and the majority of adults over 85.

The research is in, and here's the encouraging news: movement matters, and every little bit counts. A short walk, a gentle stretching routine, or a chair-based exercise can all contribute to stronger muscles, better balance, and a greater sense of wellbeing. You don't need a gym membership to reap the benefits of staying active. Small, consistent movement woven into everyday life is what makes the real difference.

Here are some ways to get started:

Start Where You Are Whether you are fully mobile, use a cane, or rely on a wheelchair, there's a form of movement that can work for you. Chair-based exercises, gentle stretching, and seated yoga are very effective for building strength and improving balance without putting stress on joints. Even simple movements can help maintain the muscle strength needed for everyday tasks like standing, reaching, and walking safely.

Take It Outside Fresh air and natural surroundings add something extra to any routine. A stroll along a paved path, time in a garden, or a visit to an accessible park all count. Many communities offer wheelchair-friendly trails, raised garden beds, and even beach wheelchairs for those who want to feel the sand.



Balance and Strength Two of the most important things older adults can work on are balance and lower body strength, both of which directly reduce the risk of falls. They can both be improved with gentle effort. Toe and ankle exercises done while seated, standing with support, or walking short distances all contribute.

The Mind-Body Connection

Staying active does more than protect the body. It nourishes the whole person. Research shows a strong connection between regular movement and improved mood, sharper thinking, and a reduced risk of depression and isolation. When we feel steadier on our feet and more confident getting around, we naturally engage more with the world around us. Those moments of connection are not small things. They are the heart of a life well lived.

Whatever your starting point, the most important step is simply the next one. Small and steady always wins.

Throughout this issue, you will find gentle, accessible ideas for embracing movement this spring and throughout the year.

Spring Green Smoothie

Sunshine in a To-Go Cup

This smoothie takes just minutes to make, travels easily in a sealed cup or thermos, and delivers a wonderful boost of vitamins and natural energy. Best of all, the spinach blends so smoothly you will barely know it is there, just a beautiful green color to remind you of springtime.



What You Need:

- 1 ripe banana (pro tip: frozen adds extra creaminess)
- 1 cup fresh spinach
- ½ cup almond milk, or milk of your choice
- ½ cup frozen pineapple chunks

Instructions:

Add the spinach and almond milk to your blender first. This helps the greens blend smoothly without any chunks. Add the banana and frozen pineapple on top. Blend on high until completely smooth and creamy. If it is too thick, add a splash more milk. If too thin, toss in a few ice cubes and blend again.

Pour into your favorite cup and enjoy at home or on the go!

BRINGING THE OUTSIDE IN

LET'S MAKE PAPER-COVERED KEEPSAKE JARS

There is something satisfying about turning a piece of trash into something beautiful. This craft requires no experience and very little expense. Plus, creating something with your hands can help reduce stress, sharpen focus, and bring a quiet sense of calm and accomplishment.



What you Need:

- Empty tin cans or glass jars
- Wallpaper scraps, wrapping paper, or decorative paper
- Mod Podge, hot glue, or double-sided tape
- Scissors and sandpaper or a metal file

Instructions:

Clean and dry your jars/cans, removing all labels. Smooth any sharp edges with sandpaper or a file. Measure and cut your paper to fit, leaving a slight overlap at the seam. Apply glue, wrap snugly, and smooth out any bubbles. Seal with Mod Podge and finish with ribbon, twine, or dried flowers.

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Once complete, your jar makes the perfect home for treasures gathered on your spring adventures. Fill with candles and plants picked up at your favorite farmers market, wildflowers from a morning walk, stones from a favorite path, or dried leaves saved from a day outdoors. Tuck in sprigs of lavender for a fragrant touch or simply display them as a sweet reminder of time well spent outside.

Want to learn more about the benefits of creative activities for older adults? Visit: familymattershc.com/art-therapy-for-aging-seniors.

WAKING UP YOUR TOES

A Small Step Toward Better Balance

Being active and mobile starts with feeling steady. Stability starts from the ground up, and believe it or not, your toes play a leading role.

When you walk, your weight shifts forward onto the ball of your foot before you push off into the next step. Your big toe carries a significant portion of that weight with every stride. When it becomes stiff, weak, or painful, the effects can travel upward, influencing your knees, hips, and lower back as well.

Research on fall prevention consistently shows that foot strength and ankle mobility are closely tied to balance and stability. Strong, mobile toes help you feel the ground beneath you and respond more quickly to uneven surfaces. That means greater confidence every time you head out the door.

Here are three gentle ways to give your toes a little daily attention.

Simple Foot Roll Sit in a sturdy chair and place a tennis ball under one foot. Slowly roll it from the base of your toes to your heel, pausing on any tight spots. Continue for about one minute, then switch feet. This gently awakens the muscles along the sole of the foot.

Toe Stretch and Wiggle Cross one ankle over the opposite knee. Gently separate your toes with your fingers, wiggle them, circle them, and lightly pull each one to lengthen it. Hold for a few slow breaths, then switch sides.

Supported Heel Lift Stand behind a sturdy chair and hold the back for support. Press evenly through the ball of your foot and gently lift your heels, focusing on pressing through the big toe mound. Lower slowly and repeat five to eight times.

Your toes may be small, but they are mighty. A little daily care goes a long way toward helping you stay steady, active, and ready to enjoy everything this beautiful season has to offer.



Carol's Corner

Family Matters' founder Carol Pardue-Spears stays in close touch with our caregivers and clients to make sure everyone is well cared for. Here, she answers some of the most frequent questions our clients ask.



Q:

*My mom uses a wheelchair.
Can she still stay active?*

A. Being in a wheelchair doesn't mean movement has to stop. There are many ways to stay active and engaged. Wheelchair yoga is a gentle place to start and can make a real difference in how your mom feels, both physically and emotionally. It can be done right from her chair and at her own pace. Joining a class, whether in person or online, is another option that adds a social element to the experience.

Regular movement helps improve flexibility, strengthen muscles, support better posture, and boost circulation. It can also ease pain, reduce stress, and bring a sense of calm and wellbeing.

Here are a few simple moves to try together:

Seated Cat-Cow: Inhale, tilt the hips forward and lift the chest proudly.



Exhale, gently round the back and lower the chin. Repeat a few times.

Gentle Seated Twist: Place one hand on the armrest and rotate the torso to one side, then the other. Move only as far as is comfortable.

Shoulder Rolls and Overhead Reach: Lift both arms overhead on an inhale, then lower on the exhale. Follow with slow shoulder rolls to release tension.

Leg Lifts: Lift one leg at a time to gently engage the core and hips. Even small movements add up over time.

Keeping sessions short is perfectly fine, even 10 minutes a day can bring meaningful benefits.

Consider joining your mom! It's a lovely way to connect, plus it's good for you too!



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Get Out & About Resources: Adventures for Every Ability

Trails, Parks, and Accessible Paths

- 👁️ AllTrails: alltrails.com
- 👁️ Disabled Hikers: disabledhikers.com
- 👁️ California State Parks: parks.ca.gov

Public Gardens

- 👁️ www.publicgardens.org (Scroll down and click on "Find A Garden")

Farmers Markets

- 👁️ California Farmers Market: www.cafarmersmkts.com

Activities, Fitness, & Events

- 👁️ National Institute on Aging: nia.nih.gov
- 👁️ SilverSneakers: silversneakers.com