

**MAR  
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2025**



## NEWS YOU CAN USE

### Fun Facts About Retirement

Retirement can have many meanings. For some, it will be a time to travel and spend time with family members. For others, it will be a time to start a new business or begin a charitable endeavor. Regardless of what approach you intend to take, here are some fun facts about retirement that might surprise you.

Many consider the standard retirement age to be 65. One of the key influencers in arriving at that age was Germany, which initially set its retirement age at 70 and then lowered it to age 65.<sup>1</sup>

Every day between now and the end of the next decade, another 10,000 baby boomers are expected to turn 65. That's roughly one person every eight seconds.<sup>2</sup>

The 65-and-older population is one of the fastest-growing demographics in the United States. In 2022, there were 58 million Americans aged 65 and older. That number is expected to increase to 82 million by 2050.<sup>3</sup>

Ernest Ackerman was the first person to

receive a Social Security benefit. In March 1937, the Cleveland streetcar motorman received a one-time, lump-sum payment of 17¢. Ackerman worked one day under Social Security. He earned \$5 for the day and paid a nickel in payroll taxes. His lump-sum payout was equal to 3.5% of his wages.<sup>4</sup>

Sixty-four percent of retirees depend on Social Security as a major source of their income. The average monthly Social Security retirement benefit as of January 2024 was \$1,907.5,<sup>6</sup>

Centenarians – there are 108,000 of them as of 2024. By 2053, this number is expected to increase to 513,000.<sup>7</sup>

These stats and trends point to one conclusion: The 65-and-older age group is expected to become larger and more influential in the future.

1. SSA.gov, 2024, 2. Genworth.com, 2024, 3. PRB.org, 2024, 4. Social Security Administration, 2024, 6. SSA.gov, 2024, 7. PewResearch.org, January 9, 2024



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## THAT TIME OF YEAR

# Simple Strategies Can Net Big Summer Energy Bill Savings

As spring turns to summer, we seek refuge in the cool confines of our homes. But as your comfort soars, so does the potential for skyrocketing energy bills.

For retirees on a fixed income, this can pose a significant financial burden. However, with a few strategic changes, you can stay cool without breaking the bank.

### SMART COOLING PRACTICES

First, turn your attention to your summer survival plan: your cooling system. Scheduling regular maintenance ensures your air conditioning unit is running at peak efficiency. Replace filters and don't neglect the cleanliness of vents and the integrity of ductwork.

A programmable thermostat may be another solution. Fine-tuning temperature settings to align with your routine can potentially reduce cooling costs up to 10% annually.

### INSULATION IMPROVEMENT

When heat creeps into your home, your cooling system works harder to maintain the desired temperature. Combat this by enhancing your home's insulation. Consider replacing old windows with energy-efficient models. This not only curtails heat gain but could also make you eligible for tax credits under the federal residential energy efficiency property credit.

Weatherstripping and caulking around doors and windows are cost-effective ways to improve energy efficiency.

### NATURAL VENTILATION AND ENERGY CONSERVATION

Natural ventilation is an underused ally in the battle against

high energy bills. By opening windows during the cooler parts of the day and using fans to bolster cross-ventilation, you can greatly reduce reliance on air conditioning.

Ceiling fans are economical to run and effective in maintaining a breezy atmosphere.

### APPLIANCE EFFICIENCY

Appliances are silent contributors to your energy bills. Swapping older models for Energy Star-rated appliances can yield long-term savings. Research available tax credits that could reduce upfront costs of these upgrades.

Mindful use of heat-generating appliances can also help. Run dishwashers at night and grill outdoors instead of using the oven. Both actions reduce your cooling demand, offering relief to your living space and your wallet.

### BENEFITS WITH TAX CREDITS

Don't leave potential savings on the table! Numerous energy-saving home improvements qualify for federal tax incentives. From installing solar panels to upgrading windows, these initiatives can yield substantial financial benefits. For detailed advice on how to maximize these opportunities, consult with a tax professional.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

Take these measures to your financial advisor to see how they fit into your broader monetary landscape.

For further resources and guidance, visit sites such as [energystar.gov](http://energystar.gov) or consult local energy conservation programs.

## Goodwill Getaways

A new travel trend has been catching the attention of adventurers: voluntourism. This mix of volunteering and tourism lets you explore new places while giving back to the community. It's perfect for those who want authentic experiences and a chance to make a difference wherever they go.

Volunteers engage with local communities and experience a mix of languages, traditions and lifestyles. Additionally, host communities benefit from volunteers' skills and resources, aiding sustainable development and enhancing local capabilities while highlighting local challenges. It's all about mutual learning and helping everyone grow.

Before volunteering, do your research — read reviews and testimonials from past participants. Look for programs that are transparent about their fees and operations to ensure ethical engagement



with communities. It's also important to find organizations that involve locals in decision-making so your volunteer work aligns with community needs and desires.

If you're considering voluntourism, start by setting personal goals. Matching your skills and interests with the right volunteer opportunities leads to a more rewarding experience. Being prepared is also crucial. Understanding the local culture and customs makes you a more effective and respectful volunteer. And remember sustainability — focusing on it ensures your contributions continue to benefit the community long after you've headed off to your next adventure.



### HOW TO ...

## Bank on Thanks: How to Practice Gratitude in Your Financial Life

When applied to our financial well-being, gratitude can help shift our focus from scarcity to abundance, fostering a healthier relationship with money and reducing financial stress. So, how do we practice financial gratitude? Here are some easy, practical suggestions for getting started:

**Maintain a Gratitude Journal:** Start writing daily entries about positive financial experiences or achievements. Reflecting on a successful budgeting month or a wise investment decision can reinforce positive financial behaviors.

**Set Financial Goals With Gratitude:** Establish goals that align with your values and recognize past financial successes. For example, you might set a savings goal tied to a long-term dream, appreciating each milestone as progress toward that aspiration.

**Recognize Financial Successes:** Celebrate small financial victories, such as paying off a debt or sticking to a budget, as these achievements build confidence and motivation.



## DOLLARS & SENSE

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# Meaningful Milestones: A Guide to Retirement

Retirement is more than a phase of life — it's a journey with milestones that shape your financial stability and personal fulfillment. Understanding these key moments helps you make smarter decisions as you approach or enjoy retirement.

## PLANNING FOR RETIREMENT

### Understanding Your Retirement Age

Choosing the right time to retire is crucial. At age 50, you can make catch-up annual contributions — \$7,500 to your 401(k) and \$1,000 to your IRA. This helps boost savings and reduce taxable income, laying a solid foundation.

### Creating a Retirement Budget

A clear budget is vital for maintaining your lifestyle. Include all income sources and financial products designed for retirees to stretch your savings effectively.

## FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

### Optimizing Social Security Benefits

Starting Social Security at 62 is an option, but waiting until full retirement age (66-67) or 70 significantly increases payments. Consider your financial needs and health before deciding.

### Investment Strategies for the Golden Years

At 59 ½, penalty-free withdrawals are allowed, but deferring withdrawals lets investments grow tax-deferred. At 73, required minimum distributions (RMDs) begin — plan withdrawals strategically to limit taxes and ensure income stability.

### Tax Implications and Opportunities

Each milestone involves tax considerations. Withdrawals at 59 ½ are taxable, so using tax-efficient strategies is

important. Consult a financial advisor to optimize retirement income and manage liabilities.

## PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

### Reflecting on Career and Life Accomplishments

Retirement is the perfect time to celebrate your career and personal milestones. Documenting your story and sharing with loved ones can bring joy and perspective during this transition.

### Setting New Goals

Retirement offers freedom to explore passions like hobbies, travel or volunteering. Redefine your identity beyond your career by setting meaningful, fulfilling goals.

## LIFESTYLE CHANGES

### Transitioning to a New Lifestyle

Adapting to retirement may involve downsizing or relocating. Choose a community and lifestyle that fit your needs and interests.

### Staying Active and Healthy

Health is key to enjoying retirement. Stay physically active and mentally sharp with activities like walking, yoga, puzzles and learning. A balanced lifestyle promotes well-being and longevity.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

Retirement is a time for freedom and exploration. Planning for these key milestones helps ensure a secure, fulfilling future. Contact us today for personalized advice to optimize your retirement with confidence.

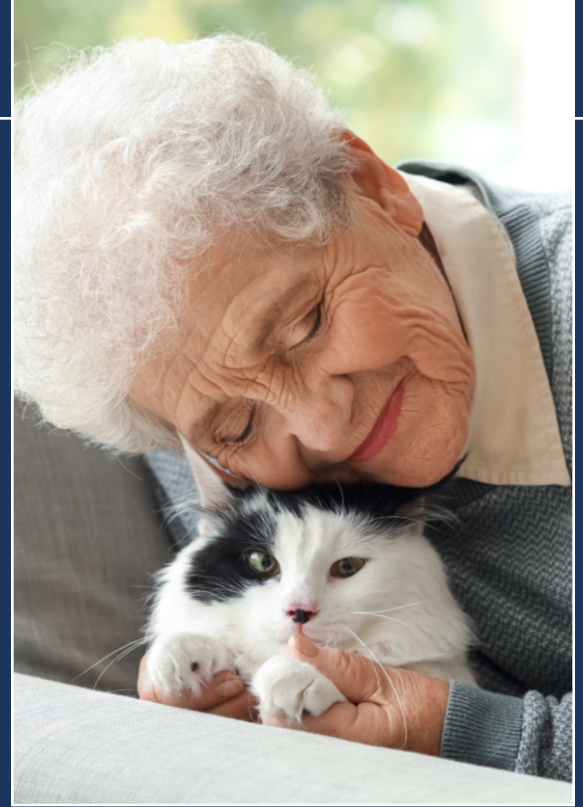
## Furry Friendships: How Animals Can Help Retirees

As we transition into retirement, the social structures that filled our days with interaction — work, parenting, community involvements — often shift, leaving many retirees seeking new ways to connect. Maintaining human connections during retirement is crucial for mental and emotional health. Research suggests retirees with strong social networks experience lower stress, improved happiness and better physical health. Animals can also provide unique opportunities for connection. Whether through a friendly chat with a fellow dog owner at the park or a shared laugh at a cat’s antics, pets spark interactions that might not happen otherwise.

The presence of a pet can significantly reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation, which are particularly common in retirement. Having a pet offers companionship and a listening ear, especially for those living alone. Pets provide purpose and routine, as feeding, walking and caring for them require daily attention and a consistent schedule. This benefits mental health by providing structure to each day and reducing the risk of depression.

Beyond personal pet ownership, engaging with animals as a community activity opens new social doors. Volunteering at animal shelters is a great way to meet like-minded individuals who love animals.

Pet therapy programs where retirees read to or visit with animals are also great for those seeking connection. These programs offer social interaction



and emotional support. For those seeking more physical activity, consider animal yoga classes. Practicing yoga alongside goats, cats or dogs provides a blend of exercise and entertainment, offering fun, lighthearted experiences and opportunities to meet new friends in a relaxed setting.

6	8	3	23	16	14	25
11						10
15						5
7		1				21
2						22
19						18
12	9	24	17	13	20	4

### BRAIN GAMES

## 1 to 25

#### Game Rules

To solve 1 to 25, move the numbers from the outer ring onto the board in the directions of the chevrons. As you place them they must snake together vertically, horizontally or diagonally so they link in sequence from 1 to 25.

# Sprout of the Ordinary

Asparagus, radishes and peas, oh my!  
Tantalize your tastebuds with these  
quick and easy spring salads!



## Asparagus and Radish Spring Salad

### INGREDIENTS:

- Fresh asparagus spears
- Crunchy radishes
- Mixed greens (e.g., arugula, spinach)
- Lemon vinaigrette
- Optional: Feta cheese, toasted almonds

### PREPARATION STEPS:

1. Trim the asparagus and blanch spears until tender-crisp. When cooled, cut into 1-inch pieces.
2. Thinly slice the radishes and toss them and the asparagus with your choice of mixed greens in a large bowl.
3. Drizzle the salad with a zesty lemon vinaigrette and mix gently to incorporate all the flavors.
4. For an added touch of flavor, top the salad with crumbled feta and toasted almonds.

Serve with a side of crusty bread. Feeling fancy?  
Add a sprinkle of fresh dill or mint.

## Pea and Mint Quinoa Salad

### INGREDIENTS:

- Cooked quinoa
- Fresh peas
- Chopped mint leaves
- Cherry tomatoes
- Olive oil and lemon juice dressing

### PREPARATION STEPS:

1. Cook quinoa according to package instructions, then set it aside to cool.
2. Blanch the fresh peas briefly and combine them with the cooled quinoa in a bowl.
3. Add chopped mint leaves and halved cherry tomatoes to the mix.
4. Finish by tossing the salad with a light dressing made of olive oil and lemon juice.

Garnish with toasted pine nuts for a delightful,  
nutty crunch.

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## From Snow to Sow: Sprucing Up Your Soil for Spring

As winter melts away and spring starts to bloom, it's time to give some love to the most important part of your garden — its soil! Getting your soil ready during this transition isn't just a chore; it's a must-do for a thriving garden.


First, you want to check for any winter damage that can cause erosion, compaction and even nutrient depletion. So, stroll through your garden and look for any signs of trouble. Catching these problems early gives you a chance to fix them before you start planting.

Picking the right fertilizers and amendments for your soil is key. Organic fertilizers and natural soil conditioners can do wonders to boost fertility and improve soil structure. Plus, knowing when and how to use them makes a difference in helping your plants get all the nutrients they need to thrive.



Grab a soil pH test kit to check whether your soil is acidic or alkaline — this affects how well your plants can get nutrients. If the pH needs adjusting, do it to help your plants thrive. And don't forget about drainage; consider making raised beds or adding some organic material to keep water from pooling.

Adding organic matter like compost or well-rotted manure is a great way to boost your soil's fertility and support helpful soil organisms. If you can find good-quality organic materials and use them right, you'll turn your soil into a fantastic place for your plants to thrive!

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### RECIPE EASTER DEVILED EGGS

These colorful Easter deviled eggs will add a special touch to your Easter brunch! They're fun to do at baby showers as well. Do some plain white ones to keep everyone happy.

#### INGREDIENTS

- 12 large eggs
- ¼ cup creamy salad dressing (such as Miracle Whip)
- ¼ teaspoon dry mustard
- salt and ground black pepper to taste
- hot sauce
- 4 drops red, blue and green food coloring, or desired amount
- 3 cups water, divided, or as needed

#### HOW TO MAKE IT:

1. Place eggs into a large saucepan; cover with cold water and bring to a boil. Let eggs boil for 3 minutes; turn off heat, cover pot and let eggs cook in hot water for at least 20 minutes. Drain and cover eggs with cold water. Peel cooled eggs.
2. Cut hard-cooked eggs in half lengthwise and remove yolks; mash yolks in a bowl with creamy salad dressing, dry mustard, salt, pepper and hot sauce until smooth.
3. Place red, blue and green food coloring into 3 different bowls and add about 1 cup water to each bowl. Steep 8 egg white halves in each bowl, tinting the egg whites pink, light blue and green. If color is too pale, add more food coloring to bowls. Drain colored egg whites on paper towels.
4. Pipe or spoon egg yolk filling into colored egg white halves; cover and chill before serving, at least 30 minutes.

## BRAIN GAMES

### ANSWER KEY:

6	8	3	23	16	14	25
11	9	10	11	13	14	10
15	8	6	5	12	15	5
7	7	1	4	16	21	21
2	2	3	17	22	20	22
19	25	24	23	18	19	18
12	9	24	17	13	20	4

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## UPCOMING DATES

### MARCH

- 2 Read Across America Day
- 7 Employee Appreciation Day
- 9 Daylight Saving Time
- 17 St. Patrick's Day

### APRIL

- 15 Tax Day
- 20 Easter
- 23 Administrative Professionals' Day