

West Hartford LIFE

Therapeutic recreation specialist wants to show you how to exercise your brain and have fun, too

by Tracey Weiss

Who says homework has to be work?

Try a crossword puzzle, a shot at a word search or take a mental trip through the supermarket aisles and recall only foods that begin with the letter "B."

More and more, research shows that exercising one's brain not only keeps memories alive, it's good for an individual's overall health.

Nancy Frede, who is certified in therapeutic recreation, has created several programs that are designed to work the brain, jog memories and make it entertaining at the same time.

Ms. Frede was inspired by the work of local recreation therapist JoAnne Harrison-Becker, who created a whole series of workbooks and exercises for senior citizens.

"I went to school for therapeutic recreation, went to her seminar and thought what she does is awesome," Ms. Frede said.

She's set up her own programs, some on paper, some through computer software a la the game show "Jeopardy," that can be more generic or specifically geared to a certain audience.

For the West Hartford Senior Center, for instance, where she worked first as a volunteer and then part time on staff, she created a crossword puzzle of the streets in West Hartford.

She put together a "Jeopardy" game with categories just related to West Hartford, as well as some about Hartford, where a number of local senior citizens grew up.

"We do game day twice a year," said Ned Skinnon, facility supervisor at the West Senior Center.

"Nancy and Martin Stanwick, another part-time person here, along with Susan Hanson (the director of the branch library at Bishops Corner) put it on. It was a really big hit."

So much so that the center offers a regular Monday class of brain games.

"They're popular. We always have good attendance," Mr. Skinnon said.

"It's preventive medicine," he added.

"It's also good socializing as well as memory exercise. Do the brain fitness and supplement it with physical fitness and you'll be in pretty good shape."

Ms. Frede has also helped Wethersfield Senior Center start up a brain fitness program.

"She put some sessions together for us," said Donna Mattison, the center's coordinator.

"I like the Jeopardy games. They're interactive and the seniors seem to really enjoy it. Nancy is full of creative ideas," she added.

"These are programs that anyone can use," Ms. Frede said.

"I believe they could be implemented by a Girl Scout troop, a person in church, a college student. You could use it as an icebreaker, involve family members or organizations and get people to work together."

Though she's had a number of career changes and small business experience, it was when Ms. Frede was the director of advertising at the Bristol Press that her interest in working with senior citizens really took on new meaning.

"We did senior fairs because the marketplace is so large in the area. These fairs all had educational components. I realized then how much they enjoyed playing games," she said.

"I went back to school in 2009 at Manchester Community College. I really liked researching how to sharpen the brain. In my classes at MCC I was doing research on memory from a socialization point of view."

When she leads a class of senior citizens in brain games, she likes to move from topic to topic.

"It's good for memory. It uses a different part of the brain. It really does help," she said.

"We can do alphabet games, use a shopping list to



Nancy Frede, shown here at a workshop at the West Hartford Senior Center, develops brain games using nostalgia, puzzles, music and more to help senior citizens keep their minds active.

enhance memory, work on naming dog breeds. This is also a generation that loves music and knows things like song titles, actors and actresses, sports."

She also stresses the use of visuals "to recall memories and start conversations."

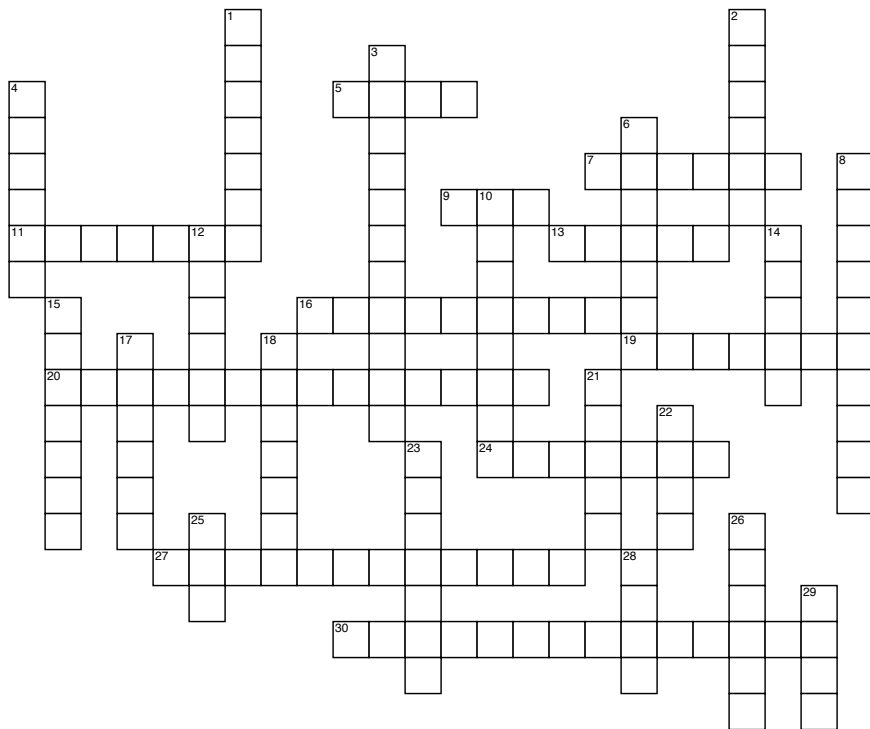
A picture of a menu from Woolworth's lunch counter or of Topo Gigio, a regular guest on Ed Sullivan's TV variety show, can evoke memories and initiate conversations.

"When you're depressed, you get confused. You need assistance," she said.

When they do a brain fitness class "people forget for an hour something is troubling them," Ms. Frede said.

"Someone said to me 'I hadn't laughed or smiled for weeks. It worked.' I believe in it. I think it works. It helps people get back in touch with who they are," Ms. Frede said. **WHL**

TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALL GAME



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ACROSS

- 5 Ball hit out of play
- 7 3rd base hit
- 9 Run batted in
- 11 Texas team
- 13 The tool used by players in the field
- 16 Area over the plate between the knee and torso (2 wds.)
- 19 One player bunts, the other steals home
- 20 This league was founded in the 1870s (2 wds.)
- 24 Round tripper (2 wds.)

- 27 A fly ball that is caught, but scores a run (2 wds.)
- 30 Younger of the two leagues (2 wds.)

DOWN

- 1 New York team
- 2 2nd base hit
- 3 The best teams from each league playing for the championship (2 wds.)
- 4 The man behind the catcher
- 6 Baltimore Team

- 8 Getting two outs in succession (2 wds.)
- 10 The Great Bambino (2 wds.)
- 12 Team located in Boston
- 14 Three white bags on field
- 15 Sticky substance used for better grip (2 wds.)
- 17 Not a ball (pitch)
- 18 Player who teams up with the pitcher on every play
- 21 Ricky Henderson was known for this baseball play
- 22 An infield hit where the

- hitter doesn't swing the bat
- 23 Cy Young
- 25 Wooden stick
- 26 1st base hit
- 28 Not a strike; the other half of base ____
- 29 The other team in NY

WORD BANK: Americanleague, baberuth, ball, bases, bat, bunt, catcher, double, doubleplay, foul, glove, homerun, mets, nationalleague, orioles, pinetar, pitcher, rangers, rbi, redsox, sacrificefly, single, squeeze, steal, strike, strikezone, triple, umpire, worldseries, yankees.

This crossword puzzle, created by therapeutic recreation specialist Nancy Frede, is all about baseball and helps senior citizens to recall memories and sharpen their brains.