Fall 2022

Through the WIRE

LOCAL 26 IBEW-NECA JOINT TRUST FUNDS

Retire With Peace of Mind

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Dear Participant,

The Trust Funds office oversees so many of the benefits you have as members and family members of Local 26 but there are still other benefits you can and should take advantage of, such as vacation. In fact, when you take vacation you are actually doing something good for your health, and your good health is certainly a priority here in the Trust Funds office.

With summer closing out, I hope you were able to take a little time these past few months to unwind, relax and re-charge your inner battery pack. Time spent with family and friends, or even time spent doing things just for yourself, is time well spent—as important as the time you put in on the job. As rewarding as your career is, never forget that you work to live, not live to work. And, we want you to live strong and long!

If you enjoyed a vacation this summer, great; and if not, start planning for one in the months ahead. The holiday season—another opportunity to enjoy family and friends—will be here before you know it. Make time to make memories and make the most out of every benefit you receive as a member of Local 26!

Mike McCarron
Fund Administrator

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Retire? Now? In a Recession?

Yes, you can retire with peace of mind even in this economy.

So you're ready to retire. You've put in the years, built up a robust pension and savings, and want to enjoy a fulfilling retirement. What's stopping you? A pending recession, you say?

"Recession" may be a popular word these days, but it doesn't need to stop you from retiring and enjoying the good life for which you have worked so hard. While a recession is certainly not an easy economic situation to navigate, you can still live out your retirement even in an economic downturn…with the right planning and mindset, of course.

In simple terms, a recession is an economic cycle, just another part of the business cycle according to economists. More specifically a recession is when there is negative economic growth that lasts two consecutive quarters. Other factors that could determine whether the economy is in a recession include rising unemployment and falling retail sales, however, an economy can be in a recession even with just one of these indicators present.

The good news is that since a recession is considered a cycle and cycles are temporary, recessions don't typically last long. Recessions usually only last months, not years like depressions, which also take the economy much longer to recover from and can be felt much deeper. On average, recessions last about 11 months, which seems like a long time when you are living through it but is actually a small window over the course of a lifetime.

Many economic factors can set a recession in motion including a sudden economic shock such as that caused by the Covid-19 pandemic; excessive debt on the part of individuals or businesses like the kind that was the hallmark of the housing bubble of 2006-2007; asset bubbles of other commodities such as currencies, gold or stocks; too much inflation that causes prices to rise to a dangerous level; too much deflation which lowers prices to a point where wages are forced to decline; and technological changes that not only require an adjust- ▶

ment period but also force some professions to become obsolete.

When it comes to understanding a recession, the most important thing to consider is what a recession means to you, the average individual. Recessions can certainly lead to a rise in unemployment and a tighter job market in which to look for employment. Recessions also generally lead to tighter standards for receiving loans for things like cars and mortgages, since recessions see a pattern of more people defaulting on loans due to unemployment. Recessions also typically come with a decline in the investment markets that cause stocks, bonds, and even real estate to lose value. This is, no doubt, why retiring during a recession might seem risky, at best, or downright foolish, at worst. However, retiring during a recession is really no different than retiring during any other economic cycle.

You can visit the My Benefits Center member portal at *www.ewtf.org* to find out what you can expect to receive from your retirement accounts as they currently stand and what you could receive if you decide to work longer.

If you were to retire during an economic boom, you certainly wouldn't start your retirement living with reckless abandon because you know that retirement needs to be viewed through a long lens. That is exactly the mindset to have when retiring during a recession, and how every financial professional would suggest you to experience retirement no matter the state of the economy. Retirement is not intended to be a temporary situation, a "go big or go home while you can" lifestyle, but rather a new permanent way of life for what will hopefully be many, many years.

Retirement in general brings with it a degree of trepidation in transiting to life on a fixed income. A possible recession can complicate those concerns even more. To feel better about your decision to retire, or to decide if the time is even right for you to retire, do some research—research you should be doing even in a robust economy. Education is powerful and comforting.

- Understand what your monthly pension and annuity will provide for you in retirement. You can visit the My Benefits Center member portal at www.ewtf.org to find out what you can expect to receive from your retirement accounts as they currently stand and what you could receive if you decide to work longer. What will your retirement benefits look like if you work an extra year or two versus retiring now?
- Learn more about your Social Security benefits as well. You can find out how much you currently have accrued in Social Security benefits and how those benefits might be affected if you decide to work a few more years. Visit ssa.gov and log in for access to your Social Security earnings history, retirement estimate, disability and survivor benefits and a benefits calculator.
- Consider all of the resources you expect to have in retirement, including outside investment accounts or other revenue-generating means such as real estate.
- Think about whether you might want to work beyond the age in which you are retirement eligible, even if just for a few years. Or, think about whether you might want to work a part-time job in a different field or start a small side career.

- Take an honest look at your health care expenses and estimate what your expenses may be in retirement. More likely than not, your health care needs are only going to increase as you age which means your health care expenses are likely going to increase. The EWTF Health Plan is an extremely comprehensive health plan and fully covers retirees who are not yet eligible for Medicare but there *are* still expenses for which covered members and their spouses are responsible, such as the deductible, the monthly premium and the 20% co-insurance when visiting out-of-network providers. Even Medicare-eligible retirees covered by the Health Plan could be responsible for health care costs if they are not covered by a combination of Medicare and the Health Plan. It's better to overestimate how much you may need to cover your health care costs than be surprised by a bill.
- See if you might be able to lower your living expenses by laying out a budget. Before you hang up your tools, do a trial run at living on a tighter budget and monitor your costs to better understand how much you truly spend in your daily living. Could downsizing your home be right for you and help save you money? Real estate experts suggest renting if you plan to be in a home for less than five years.
- Ensure that you have an emergency fund established to give you the peace of mind to weather all kinds of financial cycles when you no longer have a paycheck coming in.
- Talk with others who have already retired or are planning to retire in the very near future to learn about their experiences and plans for retiring during a recession. Learn how they are navigating or are planning to navigate swings in the economy. An inside perspective on the reality of retirement can be invaluable and help you make the decision of if and when to retire.
- Meet with a financial professional to help answer questions you may have about your financial security in your retirement. Fidelity Investments, which oversees our Individual Account Plan, has advisors available for in-person or phone consultations to help you better understand our annuity account and the markets in general.

Deciding to retire can be in itself a stressful decision; adding to it an uncertain economy paired with inflation can take the joy right out of retirement. However, don't forget that economic cycles are temporary. Think of retirement as your second career, something to be experienced over a long period of time. Just as you may have experienced the uncertainty of high unemployment over the course of your career and came through on the other side, so too can you navigate a potential recession in your retirement…with planning and the right mindset!

How Worried Should I Be About Inflation?

Inflation has become a word no one wants to hear—an ugly word—but it too is actually a normal part of the economy. Simply put, inflation is the rise in prices you have to pay for goods and services, and a little bit of inflation—about two percent—is actually normal, even a good sign that the economy is strong.

However, it's the inflation we are now experiencing, at a 40-year high, that should make us rethink our spending habits. Here are some of the things most affected by today's inflation:

- Used cars and trucks and new cars
- Motor oil and fuel oil
- Lodging (away from home)
- Utility gas service
- Meat, fish and seafood
- Motor vehicle parts and equipment
- Eggs
- Fresh fruits
- Coffee

Choose the Right Person for the Job

Knowing the difference between a financial advisor and a financial planner may be key to helping you achieve your goals.

Financial advisor, financial planner—there is actually a difference between the two and the difference could help you decide which financial professional is right for you.

While the financial services industry is indeed highly regulated, there is actually little oversight on the title financial professionals assign themselves. So what is the difference between the two? The short answer is that a financial advisor focuses on specific, more immediate financial actions such as retirement, investments, taxes or estate planning. A financial planner focuses on clients' bigger picture financial goals providing lifelong planning. What the two have in common is that to be a truly qualified professional in either arena, they will have participated in training courses, earned certain designations and achieved specific levels of workplace experience.

How do you decide which financial professional best suits your needs? First and foremost, before choosing any professional to guide you in financial decisions, it is critical to ensure that he or she is qualified. Just as you would vet a medical provider, an auto mechanic, and, yes, a contractor working in your home, anyone you intend to trust with your financial future should also be highly qualified and carefully researched.

At the very minimum, financial advisors must have certain licenses in order to sell their clients products like mutual funds, annuities and stocks and to conduct business in each state. The Series 6 License enables an advisor to sell clients packaged products such as mutual funds and annuities that are comprised of multiple stocks but does not allow the advisor to sell individual stocks or bonds. The Series 7 License, which is considered the gold standard of investment licenses, enables an advisor to sell every type of investment including stocks, bonds, options and futures and packaged products even without a Series 6 License. The only products not covered by a Series 7 License are real estate and life insurance, which each have their own licenses. The Series 7 License is the most difficult to obtain since it affords an advisor a broad range of products to sell. About four years ago, the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA), which writes rules and enforces laws governing the stock brokerage industry, created another exam—the Securities Industry Essentials (SIE) exam that is now a co-requisite with the Series 7 License exam.

The Series 63 License exam is state specific and required for an advisor to conduct business in each state and the Series 65 License exam is similar but only required if an advisor receives fee-based compensation versus commission-based compensation. The Series 66 License exam combines both the Series 63 and the Series 65 into one exam and is only available to advisors who have already earned their Series 7 License. These licenses are required in addition to the Series 6 and/or Series 7 exams and focus heavily on laws and regulations.

Professionals working as financial planners also carry certain credentials. The gold standard license for the financial planning industry is the Certified Financial Planner (CFP) designation. In addition to passing the CFP exam, a minimum of 6,000 professional financial planning experience hours (or 4,000 as an apprentice) is required to earn the CFP designation. Other designations financial planners earn are Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA), Chartered Financial Consultant (ChFC) and the Certified Investment Management Analyst (CIMA), each of which designate mastery in a different aspect of financial planning.

To blur the lines just a bit, many financial advisors have also earned their financial planning designation, CFP, and some financial planners have also earned their designation to sell stocks, mutual, funds,

It is important that when you search for the right financial professional to help you with your goals, you inquire what certification he or she holds.

etc. by passing the Series 6 and 7 Licensing exams. *However, not every financial advisor has the certification to also be a financial planner and not every financial planner has the certifications to be a financial advisor.* It is important that when you search for the right financial professional to help you with your goals, you inquire what certification he or she holds. A true financial professional should be happy to share his or her expertise and qualifications with potential clients.

There are many online resources available to the general public to research a financial professional's qualifications, experience, education, and, equally as important, their record to see if they have ever received any complaints, violations, or arbitrations filed against them. These databases provide a complete snapshot of an advisor's or planner's career, including the length of time they have been in the business, the number of firms they have worked for, the licenses and certifications they hold, and any negative disclosures on their professional record, which is critically important information to know when choosing a financial professional. It should be a red flag if a financial professional has worked for five different firms in just ten years or if there are complaints filed against him or her.

To research the history of a financial advisor or firm, visit FINRA's BrokerCheck at *www.brokercheck.finra.org* or the Securities and Exchange Commission's Investment Adviser Public Disclosure database at *www.adviserinfo.sec.gov/individual/summary/3096386*. The same background information can be found on financial planners by visiting the CFP Board at *www.cfp.net*.

You should research any investment professional you intend to use with the same scrutiny you would interview a child care provider to care for your newborn baby. Experience, certifications, track record, and even personality, matter when it comes to finding the right person to care for your hard-earned money. There are so many options out there and many resources at your fingertips to help you choose the financial professional who is right for you and your goals. ●

Your Retirement Is in Good Hands

Our trustees and advisors are keeping an especially close eye on our retirement plans in this uncertain market.

When we published the last issue of *Through the Wire*, the stock market was a literal roller coaster for investors, with some investors feeling sick from the ups and down and some trying to avoid facing the ride altogether. Unfortunately, not much has changed with the stock market's volatility. As of now, it's still a bumpy ride but there have been signs of hope with some days of big upswings to counter the many days of dramatic dips we saw throughout the summer.

Similarly, the way in which you should view the financial markets remains the same—with a long-term approach. There is still no need to panic. And, the truth is with the team of professionals we have managing our pension and individual account plans—from the trustees to the financial advisors—there is NEVER really a need to panic.

Our trustees have charged our financial advisors with ensuring that our funds actually perform better than the plans of our peers, no matter the market's volatility. And, that is exactly how they are performing. Our trustees have made it known that having our funds just "stay above water" is not good enough; our funds can and must always outperform other plans in order to best serve our members and their dependents.

With this lofty mission, our trustees and advisors are constantly monitoring our plans and the stocks, bonds and mutual funds in which our plans are invested. Investing in a stock, bond, or mutual fund does not need to be a lifelong commitment and, in fact, it shouldn't be. If an investment is not performing well our fund advisors can replace that investment with a different one as often as necessary. We do not need to hold on to any investment that is just not yielding good results for us. The flexibility of selling and buying different investment products within our plan provides us with a great deal of control over how our plan grows and such buying and selling is what our financial advisors do regularly on behalf of our plan participants.

What's more, our trustees are keenly aware of the unique needs of both our Pension Plan and our Individual Account Plan. Since our Pension Plan is a defined benefit fund whereby our member participants know exactly what they can expect to receive in their retirement, it is critical that our trustees and financial advisors manage this plan in a way focused on the plan's health and longevity. And, our trustees are committed to making sure that our participants receive in retirement all that they worked so hard for throughout their career, all that they expect and have long planned to receive. On the other hand, our Individual Account Plan is a defined contribution plan where a certain retirement distribution is not guaranteed but rather determined by the success of the investment vehicle(s) in which our members are invested. A defined contribution plan puts a lot of responsibility on trustees and advisors to offer a wide range of investment options to suit members' varying tolerance for risk and the length of time they have to invest in the markets. Our trustees and advisors manage our plans with two very different sets of challenges and needs but with one goal in mind—ensuring financial peace of mind for our members

However, if you find trying to understand the stock market too frustrating or even just not that interesting, that's actually ok too. If all of your retirement savings is in our pension and individual account plans, you can rest assured that your retirement is being well cared for and managed by true financial professionals with careful oversight by our trustees. And, if you have additional retirement savings in other investment accounts, ensuring those accounts are also managed by financial professionals, will afford you peace of mind if you would rather focus your attention and interests on other parts of life. Remember, not everyone knows how to perform electrical work and some may have no interest in learning at all, but they know to seek out and trust qualified electrical professionals to serve their best interests. This same idea can be safely applied to investing and your retirement savings. ●

If you do want to know more about investing, there may be no better time than the present to get to know how the markets work. There is certainly no shortage of information and opinion online now about the fluctuating stock markets. A great way to jump into learning more about the markets is by understanding key terms you may hear financial advisors and experts use. After all, the investment markets will seem even more intimidating if you feel like everyone around you is speaking a foreign language. Here are a few key terms you may see or hear repeatedly.

Bull market/bear market: A bull market is an investment market trending upwards and a bear market is an investment market that has experienced prolonged decline.

Dollar cost averaging: This is investing the same amount of money on a regular basis regardless of the price of the investment (stock, bond, mutual fund). Since investors can buy more shares of an investment in a down market and fewer shares in a higher market, dollar cost averaging helps reduce the impact of a volatile market by lowering the average cost per share.

Asset: An asset is any investment that has the potential to generate a profit, such as a stock, bond, mutual fund or real estate.

Volatility: This is the degree to which an asset's price fluctuates over time.

Asset allocation: Asset allocation is when investors balance their portfolios through diversification, mixing assets of different risk levels to minimize overall risk while maximizing reward.

Index: The NASDAQ, the S&P and the Dow Jones are indexes or groupings that measure the performance of stocks, bonds and other assets.

Index Fund: The Fidelity Freedom Funds offered in the Individual Account Plan are index funds, also known as mutual funds, which are grouped together to achieve a goal. Some index funds are grouped to mirror the overall performance of an index such as the S&P and other funds, like the Freedom Funds, are grouped together to generate a certain level of growth by a specific date.

Family members on the health plan can enroll too!

Looking for an easy way to make sure your heart is healthy?

Sign up for Hello Heart for free in seconds at **as.helloheart.com/EWTF** or scan the **QR code** below to enroll:

- Blood pressure, activity and weight **tracking technology**
- Medication **tracking and reminders**
- Access to easy-to-apply **personalized tips** for maintaining a healthy heart
- Auto-imported **lab results** from clinics, with personalized explanations

Instant, **clear explanations** of what your numbers mean

Free, FDA-cleared Bluetooth blood pressure monitor that easily connects to your phone

All members, spouses, and adult dependents (18+) covered by the CVS PBM, as well as retirees, with blood pressure readings of 130/80 mmHg or above or those taking blood pressure medication are eligible to enroll. Each eligible family member should enroll separately.

Hello Heart does not diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease, or act as a substitute for medical care. Contact your doctor if you have questions.

Need help signing up? support@helloheart.com (800) 767-3471, Monday - Friday, 8am-8pm EST.

Social Security UPDATE

Good news for those collecting Social Security. Changes are in store in 2023 for Social Security that will mean more money in recipients' checks. Social Security makes periodic cost of living (COLA) increases but in 2023, the COLA is expected to be substantial, possibly as high as 11.4% due to inflation. That means a retiree who currently receives an average benefit of $1669 per month, could see an additional $190 in their Social Security check with the COLA of 2023. This will be one of the highest COLAs ever made. The Social Security Administration is expected to announce the exact COLA amount in mid-October.

What's more, thanks to the 2023 COLA the maximum monthly Social Security benefit will increase. It currently stands at $4194 per month and is available to those who claimed their first check at age 70 and who earned the maximum wages allowed in the benefits formula for at least 35 years. Although this is a small percentage of benefit recipients, nevertheless this group will see even more money in their Social Security checks next year.

Finally, the threshold will be raised for those who collect Social Security who still want to work part-time. This only applies to those who have not yet hit full retirement age, as those of full retirement age are allowed to work and earn an unlimited amount. The exact threshold increase has not yet been announced

More Zzzs for Kids

California became the first state to mandate later start times for high-school and middle-school children and that law went into effect this year. High school students are not allowed to attend school before 8:30 a.m. and middle school students are not allowed to attend class before 8 a.m.

Steven Lockley, a neuroscientist and associate professor at Harvard Medical School noted that good sleep is vital for alertness and performance and for learning and health. He added that a growth hormone is released during slow wave sleep and could prove to be insufficient in children who don't sleep enough.

Other factors that could affect kids' sleep include electronic device use, caffeine use, overscheduling, workload and stress.

Lockley urges parents to schedule sleep first and everything else around it.

Multivitamins: More Hype than Help?

The U.S. Preventative Services Task Force recently reviewed 84 studies and concluded that multivitamins do not deliver the health benefits most users believe they do—especially delivering little to help prevent heart disease or cancer. Experts believe most people can get the vitamins and nutrients they need from eating a healthy diet and save the money they would have spent on a multivitamin.

There are a few supplements, however, believed to be worth taking. One such supplement is vitamin D which helps regulate the immune system. Women, in particular, may benefit from folic acid, iron and calcium, and people over 50 may benefit from vitamin B12.

If you still want to take a multivitamin, choose one that is close to 100% of the recommended daily allowance (RDA), not 500% of the RDA, and choose one that is designed for your age and gender.

Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in American women; in fact, it's the most common cancer globally as well. What's more, the two most significant risk factors are things completely out of a person's control—age and gender. This is why it is imperative that women be proactive in monitoring their breast health. October is Breast Cancer Awareness month and a good reminder to take control of breast health through an annual checkup and annual mammogram.

Cancer itself is an uncontrolled growth of cells resulting from a mutation in the genes. When cells keep dividing and growing out of control, a tumor forms. Tumors are detected through exams—self exams or doctor's exams—and screenings such as mammography, and are the first sign that further testing is needed to determine if cancer is present. Not all tumors are cancerous (malignant); some are non-cancerous (benign). Breast cancer is exactly as it sounds—cancer found in the breast tissue. Although breast cancer is significantly more common in women, men can and do get breast cancer as well. Of course, like any cancer, breast cancer affects everyone when someone you love is diagnosed with it.

The statistics are compelling.

- **One in eight** women will develop invasive breast cancer over the course of her lifetime.
- About **290,000 new cases** of invasive breast cancer will be diagnosed in 2022 and another **51,000 cases** of non-invasive breast cancer.
- Over **43,000 women** are expected to pass away in 2022 from breast cancer.
- Overall, **Black women** are more likely to die from breast cancer.
- A woman's risk of breast cancer doubles if she has a **first degree relative** (mother, sister, daughter) with breast cancer but 85% of breast cancers occur in women with **no family history** of breast cancer.
- **A mutation** in the BRCA 1 and BRCA 2 genes can be passed down from one's mother or father and the presence of the mutation is a strong indicator of the risk for breast cancer. Women with the BRCA 1 mutation have a **72% lifetime risk** of developing breast cancer and women with the BRCA 2 mutation have a **69% risk**.

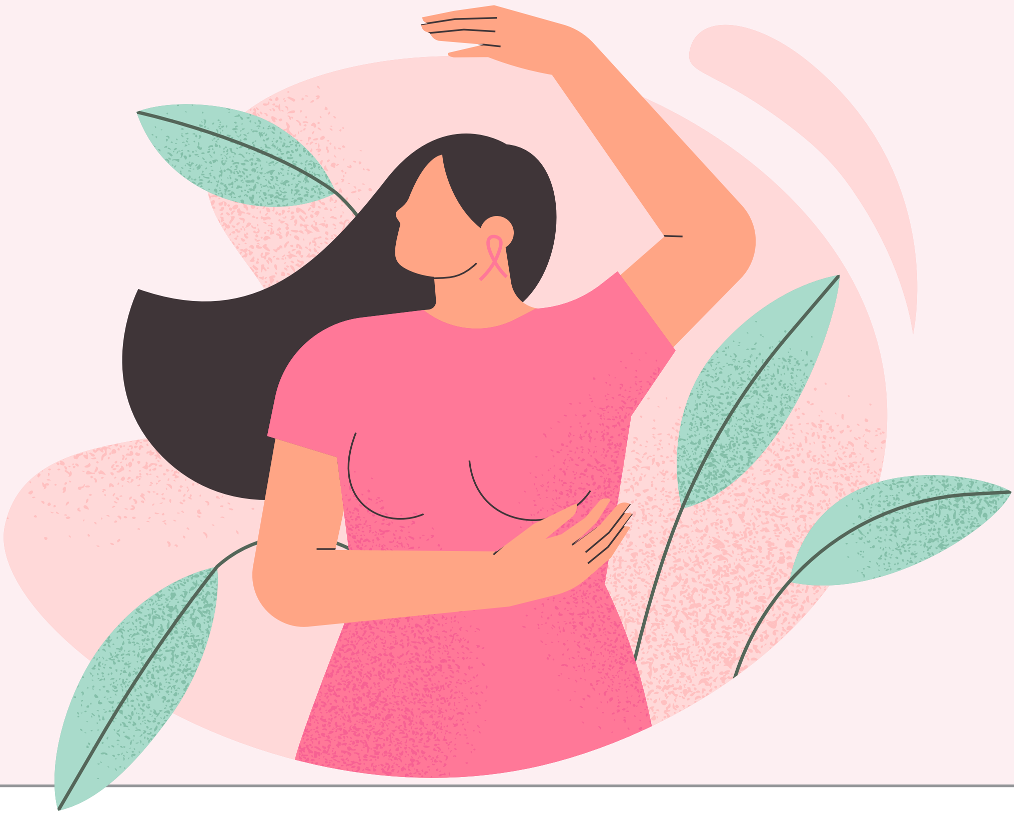
However, some statistics **offer hope** in the fight to put an end to breast cancer—motivation to keep up the vigilance, education, and awareness.

- Death rates from breast cancer **decreased from 2013 to 2018** in women over 50, believed to be the result of medical advances and earlier detection through screening.
- **Mammography** is about 87 percent accurate in diagnosing breast cancer.
- Breast cancer incidence rates in the U.S. began **decreasing in the year 2000**, after increasing from the previous two decades.

There are many myths surrounding breast cancer that can cause confusion between fact and fiction, some less believable than others. No, breast cancer isn't caused by wearing a bra, eating too much sugar, or using antiperspirant. However, some myths can be more dangerous if they are believed.

- **Yes**, you can get breast cancer even without a family history.
- **Yes**, breast cancer can return even after early stage breast cancer (cancer that hasn't moved beyond the breast or underarm lymph nodes) is treated.
- **Yes**, even women under 40 can get breast cancer, and men too. Breast cancer doesn't just happen to middle age and older women.
- **No**, breast cancer can't always be detected by a lump. Breast cancer can be present even without a lump which is why mammograms are invaluable in detecting breast cancer.
- **No**, there isn't a one-size-fits-all approach to treating breast cancer so one patient's experience may be vastly different than another's.
- **No**, mammograms don't always detect breast cancer in its earliest stage—they're not foolproof—but mammography is currently the best tool doctors have and it is highly effective.
- **No**, you can't eliminate the risk of breast cancer just by maintaining a healthy weight, exercising, and limiting alcohol. These are certainly good habits to fall into but regular screenings and self-exams must also be a part of your self-care routine.

In addition to any abnormal lump found in the breast, some other signs of breast cancer can include swelling of all or part of the breast; skin irritation or dimpling; breast pain; nipple pain or nipple turning inward; redness, scaliness or thickening of the nipple or breast skin; nipple discharge other than breast milk; and/or a lump in the underarm area.



Monthly self-breast exams should be an important part of ensuring your breast health but, in addition to checking for lumps, an awareness should also be paid to the above signs and symptoms. If you are unsure how to perform a self-exam, ask your doctor or visit the National Breast Cancer Foundation's website at *www.nationalbreastcancer.org*. In the menu, click on "about breast cancer" and then click on "breast self-exam" for a video explanation.

EWTF participants are extremely fortunate to have comprehensive medical coverage, not just treatment and surgical coverage in the event of a breast cancer diagnosis but coverage that offers proactive screening and annual exams. This kind of coverage helps our participants discover potential cancer at its earliest stage, it's most treatable stage, in order to see the best possible outcome. Mammograms are covered at 100% annually for participants age 35 and over and well-woman visits are covered at 80% after the deductible. Our participants have every opportunity and every resource to take care of their good health and ensure that they can live healthy and long.

The best way to honor breast cancer survivors and those who have lost their life to breast cancer is to do everything you can to stay healthy. Let Breast Cancer Awareness Month be your annual reminder and do it for those you love and those who love you.

Bringing a Pet Home May Be a Dose of Good Medicine

When Covid-19 was first declared a pandemic and it became clear that we were all going to be homebound for quite some time, there was a surge in pet adoptions. In fact, data from the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) notes that one in five households, or about 23 million American households, adopted a pet during the pandemic. With nothing but time, the months waiting out the pandemic were perfect for training and nurturing a new member of the family.

But, what if bringing that new pet home did more than just help pass time? What if that pet actually brought with it health benefits for the whole family? Highly regarded medical organizations, research centers and universities, from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to Indiana University, have found that the impact pets can have on humans include, among other things:

- decreasing blood pressure
- decreasing cholesterol levels and triglyceride levels
- reducing feelings of loneliness, anxiety, stress and PTSD
- increasing self esteem
- improving sleep
- reducing doctor visits
- reducing the likelihood of a heart attack
- increasing physical activity
- increasing connections with other people

And, so many of these health benefits are especially beneficial to seniors!

According to a report by Kaiser Permanente, the brain's reaction when bonding with a pet is similar to the way it responds to bonding with a child. While the bonds between parent and child are indeed deeper than the bonds between owner and pet, nevertheless, the brain releases serotonin, known as the happy hormone; dopamine, known as the pleasure hormone; and oxytocin, known as the love hormone, when you interact with a pet.

The companionship that pets provide has been found to prevent illness and reduce the feelings of isolation and loneliness which can cause depression, anxiety, stress, heart disease and even Alzheimer's Disease. Owning a pet helps people make connections with others as a pet can often be a conversation-starter with neighbors or others in the community. According to a Harvard Health survey, pet owners were 60% more likely to know people in their neighborhood and getting out with their pet was the third most popular way respondents said they met their neighbors.

Meeting others is one way to combat feelings of isolation but having a pet in the home throughout the day can also be particularly helpful at staving of loneliness for those who live by themselves, especially older adults. Pets can also give older adults, who may have a lot of time on their hands, a sense of purpose and structure to their day by attending to the needs of a pet companion. That structure and sense of purpose often translates in older adults to better attention paid to their own needs in the form of better self-care and better nutrition.

The benefits of a furry friend even extend to improved recovery from illness or injury, helping patients keep an optimistic outlook and reducing stress. Having the 24-hour unconditional love and attention from a pet at home when you may not be feeling your best is the ultimate mood booster, keeping such unproductive feelings as anxiety and depression at bay so the body, and mind, can heal faster. In fact, pet therapy is becoming more widely accepted throughout the medical community as a powerful compliment to traditional medical treatments for many health conditions. Animal-assisted therapy uses dogs, in particular, to better recover from and cope with health problems and is being employed more and more at some of the finest medical institutions in the U.S. Such therapy has proven beneficial for patients receiving cancer treatment, living in long-term care facilities, navigating cardiovascular disease, suffering from dementia, living with anxiety, and suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. And, animal therapy has also helped family members of patients feel better and more optimistic as well. The world-renowned Mayo Clinic has more than a dozen registered therapy dogs and handlers in their Mayo Clinic Caring Canines program.

Despite the common misconception that pets can cause allergies, studies are increasingly revealing that children who grow up with a furry pet in their home have a lower risk of developing allergies or asthma. Additionally, children with pets are showing a reduced likelihood of developing eczema and increased immune system chemicals.

Of course, some pets, such as dogs, require exercise which forces those owners to be more active themselves. Increased physical activity can lead to weight loss and improved overall physical health which can include improved cholesterol levels and a reduced risk for heart attack or stroke. Participating in exercising a pet can be a family effort which means the entire family could see improved physical

health just by caring for their furry family member.

Getting a pet should not be a rash decision since pet ownership requires time and financial resources, as well as—potentially—a long term commitment. If you have ever considered getting a pet but were unsure, maybe the health benefits pet owners experience will be a deciding factor for you. Although dogs and cats are the most commonly owned pets, other pets, such as rabbits, birds, reptiles and even fish, can help decrease stress, keep your mind sharp, lower your heart rate and give your day a sense of purpose and structure. Before getting any pet, be realistic about the time you have to give to a pet, choosing one that fits your schedule. Also, be realistic about any mobility issues or physical limitations you may have. A cat that does not need to be walked or a home-bound rabbit, reptile, bird or fish may be a better match for you.

LOCAL 26 IBEW-NECA
Joint Trust Funds
10003 Derekwood Lane, Suite 130
Lanham, MD 20706

RETIREMENT SEMINAR

The Retirement Seminar will be returning in-person this fall! Registration will be limited due to space so be sure to keep your eyes open for a notice coming soon from Local 26.

The Retirement Seminar is a great opportunity to get questions answered for retirees and those nearing retirement. Topics will include the Local 26 Pension, the Indivudal Account Plan with Fidelity, the International Pension and the NEBF Pension.