Our Voice

Fall 2025



Welcome to the Naperville Senior Task Force's (STF) quarterly newsletter: *Our Voice*. The STF enhances quality of life for Naperville seniors through supportive independent living, promotion of their health and well-being, education opportunities and recognition of their self-worth and community belonging. Please visit naperville.il.us/seniortaskforce for information and updates, and follow us on Facebook. Thank you!



From left: Mayor Scott Wehrli with Senior of the Year (SOY) winner Margaret Rusch; Senior Task Force SOY Co-chair Tahiti Weaver, SOY winners Ted Mazurski and Margaret Rusch, and SOY Co-Chair Bonnie Hilton; Mayor Wehrli recognizes award winner Ted Mazurski at an October City Council meeting.

2025 Senior of the Year Award Winners

By Gwenn Lloyd

Senior Task Force Co-chair

The Naperville Senior Task Force (STF) was established in 2014 to advocate for seniors in the community. One of the goals of the STF is to identify and promote positive aspects of aging.

The Senior of the Year Award (SOY) honors individuals who are "hidden jewels" of the community. They are seniors age 65+ doing selfless acts that benefit others and make life better in Naperville. A man and a woman are selected annually and awarded with a plaque by the mayor at a City Council meeting. The inaugural SOY award was Aug. 21, 2018. Nine Naperville residents will have been honored through 2025.

On Oct. 7, Ted Mazurski and Margaret Rusch were recognized as Naperville's Senior of the Year winners for 2025. Let us introduce them to you using the words of their

nominators:

Ted Mazurski's dedication to his country, his community and his family has spanned a lifetime. He enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps 54 years ago and was placed on select embassy duty, protecting presidents and diplomats on the security detail team while they were abroad. Upon his discharge in 1977, Ted worked to raise a family. He has been involved with the Knights of Columbus (fourth degree member); the DuPage Conservation Foundation River Sweep; the Boy Scouts of America; and the Naperville Police, Citizens and Fire academies. He served as Lieutenant with the Naperville Emergency Management Agency and is currently involved with the Naperville Community Radio Watch.

Margaret Rusch has lived in Naperville since 1994. While raising her family, she used her skills as a former market research analyst to pursue her passion for leadership and community service. Margaret is the current president of the Naperville Newcomers and Neighbors Club and is involved in community interactions with many area businesses and organizations. She interacts with the Naperville Area Chamber of Commerce, Naper Settlement's Naper Nights, and area scholarship programs with 360 Youth Services and Loaves and Fishes. Additionally, she leads volunteers and community initiatives connected with Feed My Starving Children, K9s for Veterans and Little Friends, to name just a few.

How lucky we are to have these two Naperville residents as our neighbors!



Be Proactive — Not Fearful — to Prevent Falls

By Arlene Orr Senior Task Force Member

Fall (no pun intended) is about to hit Naperville, and September was National Falls Prevention Month. Did you know that, according to the National Council on Aging, more than 75% of falls take place inside or near the home? The good news: Many falls can be prevented with a few practical steps.

Start with a health check-up with your physician. Reviews of medications, hearing tests and vision tests are all helpful to determine your risk level. It is imperative to notify your physician if you have had a past fall as this is also a risk factor.

Staying active and keeping moving are crucial for fall prevention because muscle weakness is a top predictor of fall risk. Regular physical activity strengthens muscles, improves balance and boosts confidence. Always check with your physician before starting a new routine.

Home safety is critical. Remove tripping hazards such as rugs and clutter. Install grab bars near tubs and toilets. Store everyday things within easy reach. Use assistive devices if needed (even inside your home), such as canes and walkers. Ensure handrails are in place on stairs and make sure your home is well-lit.

And finally, wear the right shoes. Choose supportive, non-slip shoes. Floppy slippers or socks on smooth floors could make for an accident waiting to happen.

Preventing falls is about being proactive, not fearful. Having a good prevention plan will see you striding confidently through fall and every season beyond!

Fall Prevention Education Seminar Available

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's STEADI (Stopping Elderly Accidents, Deaths & Injuries) program addresses how consequential falls are in older adults. One in four older adults falls each year in the United States. The STEADI program is built on research about falls and how to prevent them.

A Senior Task Force member recently completed training to facilitate the STEADI program and will provide general information about falls, education and tools for caregivers and family, and resources to help prevent falls. If your organization is interested in the free seminar, please contact aorrpresentations@gmail.com.



Silver CPR Classes Taking Place in November

One of the most successful recurring programs offered through the Naperville Senior Task Force is the quarterly Silver CPR class. Classes are free to participants and taught in a relaxed setting by Naperville Fire Department paramedics. Participants learn about the lifesaving skills of basic CPR, the use of an automatic external defibrillator and choking intervention.

Classes are scheduled for 10 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 12, at the A. George and Patricia Pradel Safety Town of Naperville, 1320 Aurora Ave. Space is limited to 25 participants per class.

To register, click on the link for the class that best fits your schedule:

10 a.m. on Nov. 12 12:30 p.m. on Nov. 12



The Constructive Corner: Things To Do, Discover and Digest

City of Naperville Public Libraries — for a full listing of events go to: www.naperville-lib.org.

Excel for Beginners

4 to 5:30 p.m. on Monday, Oct. 27 Computer Classroom, 95th Street Library

During this beginner-friendly introduction to Microsoft Excel, you'll learn how to format data, adjust cells, and navigate basic Excel functions to help you work more efficiently with spreadsheets. **No registration is required, but space is limited to the first 10 participants.**

Excel Intermediate

4 to 5:30 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 3 Computer Classroom, 95th Street Library

Take your Excel skills to the next level! Practice using Excel features to calculate formulas, analyze trends, and apply formatting to spreadsheets. No registration is required, but space is limited to the first 10 participants.

Genealogy Basics: Vital Records 10 to 11 a.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 4 Coworking Space, Nichols Library

Curious about tracing your family tree or uncovering vital records? Join our librarians for a hands-on workshop designed to introduce you to the world of genealogy and the tools to get you started.

Staying Safe Online

6:30 to 8 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 4 Meeting Room A/B, 95th Street Library

Scammers are getting smarter. Stay one step ahead and learn how to spot red flags, protect your personal information, and confidently handle suspicious texts and calls.

Organizing for the Holidays

7 to 8 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 4 Online

Feeling the holiday stress? Discover simple ways to embrace the festive spirit and stay organized to keep your celebrations joyful and clutter-free. *Registration required. This program will be presented via Zoom. Use the link below to register through Zoom directly, and an email containing the link to join will automatically be emailed to you. Click here to register.

Trivia Night

6:30 to 8:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 5 Meeting Room A/B, 95th Street Library

Put your trivia skills to the test in an exciting night of fun and knowledge! Join us as we challenge you with questions across a wide range of topics. You can compete individually or as part of a team. No registration is required, but space is limited to the first 75 participants.

Out of this World Book Club

7 to 8 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 5 Program Room, Naper Boulevard Library

Explore the wild world of science fiction and fantasy in this supernatural book club! Whether you're a longtime fan or new to the genre, this club offers a fun space to discuss your favorite reads and discover new ones. This month we will be discussing "Blood Over Bright Haven" by M.L. Wang.

Singing Bird and Native American Women in Illinois

1 to 2 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 6 Meeting Room A/B, 95th Street Library

Step into the overlooked stories of Native women in Illinois in this powerful experience. Led by Kim, dressed in her traditional regalia, learn about remarkable figures like Singing Bird (Blackhawk's wife) and Hononegah, their daily lives, and their lasting impact. Through native language, music, and hands-on opportunities, you'll gain a deeper appreciation for "The Hidden Half" of history.

Share and Share Alike: The Rules of Privacy

7 to 8:15 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 6

Online

Researching family history doesn't require giving up personal privacy. As genealogists, we must balance our curiosity with responsibility. In this program presented by Judy Russell, we'll learn what it means to follow both legal requirements and ethical guidelines when we share the stories and information we uncover about others and ourselves. *Registration required. This program will be presented via Zoom. Register below through Zoom directly. An email containing the link to join will automatically be emailed once registration is complete. Click here to register.

Excel Advanced

4 to 5:30 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 10 Computer Classroom, 95th Street Library

Advance your Excel knowledge as you learn how to set up pivot tables to organize data effectively, create informative charts, and use key functions like VLOOKUP to streamline your work. No registration is required, but space is limited to the first 10 participants.

Cookbook Club

7 to 8 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 12 Meeting Room C, 95th Street Library

Love to cook? Join us for a monthly Cookbook Club, where you cook (and eat) at home then share your culinary adventures with fellow food enthusiasts at the library! Pick a cookbook related to our monthly theme, cook at least one recipe from it, then come ready to share your experience at the meeting. Bon appétit!

This month's theme is Thanksgiving. Looking for recommendations? Visit our **website** for a list of suggested titles!

No One Ever Sees Indians: Native Americans in Media 7 to 8 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 18 Online

Join Illinois Humanities Road Scholar Ernest M. Whiteman III for a powerful talk on Native American portrayals in media and how these images stretch back in history and shape public views. Ernest will dive into the difference between lived cultural experience and outsider stereotypes, revealing how media has long painted a misleading picture of Native peoples and their stories. *Registration required. This program will be presented via Zoom. Use the link below to register through Zoom directly, and an email containing the link to join will automatically be emailed to you. Click here to register.

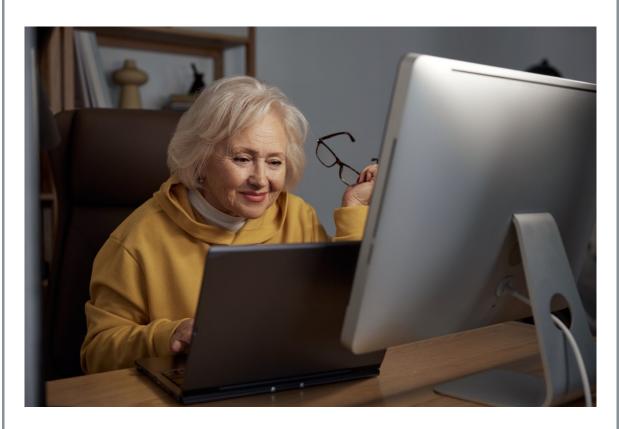
The Life of Walt Disney

1 to 2 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 20 Meeting Room A/B, 95th Street Library

Walt Disney was more than just the creator of Mickey Mouse. He was a dreamer, pioneer and storyteller who forever changed entertainment. But who was the man behind the magic? Join us for a journey through Walt's life, exploring the experiences that shaped him and the iconic creations that made him a beloved legend.

Books for Seniors

- "The Storied Life of A.J. Fikry," by Gabrielle Zevin. A touching story about a grumpy bookstore owner whose life is transformed by an unexpected arrival, this novel celebrates the power of books and community.
- "A Walk in the Woods," by Bill Bryson. A humorous and insightful account of the author's attempt to hike the Appalachian Trail, filled with fascinating details about the trail and its history.
- "The Light We Lost," by Jill Santopolo. A poignant love story that explores the choices we make and the impact they have on our lives. It's a touching narrative about love, loss, and the journey of finding oneself.



Staying Connected is Key to Healthy Aging

By Dr. Nuzhat Chalisa Senior Task Force Member

As we grow older, staying physically healthy often takes center stage. Regular check-ups, medications and exercise plans dominate much of the conversation around aging. However, an equally important, yet often overlooked, aspect of healthy aging is social connection. In fact, mounting research shows that social isolation and loneliness pose serious risks to physical and mental health, especially among older adults.

The Hidden Health Risks of Loneliness

Human beings are social creatures. Our connection to others enables us to survive and thrive. Yet, as we age, many of us are alone more often than when we were younger, leaving us vulnerable to social isolation and loneliness

According to the U.S. Surgeon General and recent reports from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, prolonged loneliness can be as harmful as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day. It's associated with increased risks of heart disease, stroke, cognitive decline, depression, and even premature death. For older adults, who may face mobility limitations, the loss of a spouse or relocation away from friends and family, the risk of social disconnection only increases with age.

What makes this even more concerning is that loneliness often feeds into a cycle of worsening health. People who feel lonely are less likely to engage in health-promoting behaviors like physical activity, healthy eating, or attending medical appointments, all of which are essential for aging well.

Healthy Aging Starts with Staying Connected

Social isolation and loneliness are not inevitable parts of aging. The good news is there are simple, meaningful ways to combat them. Here are a few healthy aging tips that can help foster social connection and emotional well-being:

Prioritize social activities. Make time for regular connection. Whether it's a

weekly phone call with a friend, attending a faith service, or joining a local book club, consistent social interaction can help stave off feelings of loneliness.

- Use technology to stay in touch. For those with mobility issues or family living far away, video calls, emails, and even social media can bridge the distance.
 Community centers and libraries often offer free classes to help older adults get comfortable with these tools.
- Volunteer or join community groups. Engaging with others through shared
 interests or causes provides a sense of purpose and belonging. Many older adults
 find great joy and connection in mentoring, tutoring, or participating in local senior
 or intergenerational programs.
- Working for a social cause or purpose with others who share your values and are trusted partners puts you in contact with others and helps develop a greater sense of community.
- Take care of mental health. If feelings of loneliness persist, consider speaking with a healthcare provider or therapist. There is no shame in needing help.
- Move together. Physical activity not only supports bodily health, but also
 encourages social connection. Group walks, dance classes, or gentle yoga
 sessions offer dual benefits for body and mind.

Loneliness is more than just a feeling! It is a public health concern that deserves our attention. By nurturing social bonds and creating opportunities for connection, we can support both the emotional and physical health of older adults. After all, healthy aging is not just about adding years to life, it's about adding life to those years.



Loneliness vs. Depression in Seniors: Understanding the Difference

By Shazia Khan Senior Task Force Member As we age, life shifts in ways that can be both beautiful and bittersweet. Retirement may free up time, but it can also mean losing the daily connections that came with work. Children and grandchildren may live far away. Health concerns may limit outings or hobbies. For many seniors, these changes bring feelings of loneliness. But sometimes what feels like loneliness is depression — or loneliness that can slowly turn into depression if it isn't addressed.

The two are closely related but not the same. Learning to recognize the difference matters — for ourselves, for our loved ones, and for the quality of our later years.

What is Loneliness?

Loneliness is the **emotional discomfort of disconnection**. It isn't simply being alone; some people enjoy solitude. It's feeling unseen, unvalued, or cut off. For example:

- A senior who eats most meals alone might feel a longing for shared conversation.
- Someone who has outlived a spouse may miss the daily companionship they once had.
- Even in a full house, a person might feel lonely if they don't feel heard or understood.

Loneliness affects more than just emotions. Studies show that chronic loneliness can increase stress, weaken the immune system, and even impact heart health. The encouraging news is that loneliness can be eased by building or rekindling meaningful connections — through friends, family, community groups, or simply reaching out for a chat.

What is Depression?

Depression, by contrast, is a **medical condition that alters mood, energy, and thinking**. While loneliness may come and go depending on circumstances, depression tends to linger and can overshadow every part of life.

Some signs of depression include:

- Persistent sadness, emptiness, or irritability
- · Loss of interest in once-loved activities
- Changes in appetite or weight
- Trouble concentrating or remembering things
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or hopelessness

Unlike loneliness, depression doesn't usually lift after a good visit or phone call. It may require treatment, whether that's counseling, medication or therapy. The important point is that depression is not a normal part of aging — it is treatable, and seniors can absolutely recover.

How the Two Intertwine

Loneliness and depression often walk hand-in-hand. Someone who feels isolated for a long period may slide into depression. On the other hand, someone who is depressed may stop socializing, which increases loneliness. That's why it's so important to pay attention to changes in mood and behavior.

I remember speaking with a woman who had recently lost her husband. At first, she described herself as "just lonely." She missed having coffee together each morning and hearing his voice in the house. But after a few months, she noticed she no longer wanted to attend her weekly knitting group, something she used to enjoy. Her sleep became restless, and she started skipping meals. What began as loneliness had quietly become depression.

What Can Help?

- **Stay connected.** Make a routine of phone calls, video chats or visits. Even short conversations can lift spirits.
- **Join groups.** Senior centers, book clubs, exercise classes or faith communities provide companionship and purpose.
- **Keep moving.** Gentle exercise, like walking or chair yoga, not only improves physical health but also boosts mood.

- **Seek professional support.** If sadness or disinterest lasts more than two weeks, talk to a doctor or counselor. Asking for help is a sign of strength.
- **Find purpose.** Volunteering, mentoring, or teaching skills like cooking or sewing can create a renewed sense of value and contribution.
- Care for body and mind. Eating well, keeping a sleep routine and engaging the mind with puzzles, reading, or music all support emotional health.

A Personal Note

One senior once told me, "I don't mind being alone, but I do mind being lonely." That distinction has stayed with me. Being alone can be peaceful and restorative. But being lonely can weigh heavy on the heart. And when loneliness turns into depression, it's even heavier.

The important thing to remember is this: Neither loneliness nor depression are personal failings. They are signals that something in life needs more care, more connection, more attention. And both can be addressed.

If you or someone you care about is struggling, don't dismiss it as "just getting older." Growing older should mean more than surviving — it should mean living with connection, purpose, and joy. With the right support, seniors can have not only long lives, but also fulfilling ones.



12 Ways to Stay Socially Connected on a Budget

By Edward C. Baig

AARP (Published June 27, 2022/Updated May 30, 2025) Edited by Gwenn Lloyd, Senior Task Force Co-chair

Staying close to family and friends is often vital to aging well and living a long, meaningful life. People who connect socially are generally healthier, happier and better able to confront whatever obstacles are thrown their way, reports show.

Just as you might start an exercise routine to reduce blood pressure, you can create a healthy social life by reaching out to friends, volunteering or joining in-person events. Here are 12 low-cost ideas to strengthen your social connections.

- 1. **Organize a reunion.** Reach out on social media or through alumni groups to former school or workplace chums. Family reunions, large or small, fit the bill, too.
- 2. **Take a trip.** Where have you always wanted to go? Now may be the time to take that trip, budget and health permitting. If <u>you're into genealogy</u>, perhaps the trip you take is to follow your ancestral roots.
- 3. **Volunteer.** Seek volunteer opportunities at charitable organizations and grassroots events. And if you're crazy about animals, <u>volunteer at a shelter</u>. Frequent volunteering up to four hours per week slows aging, particularly among retired people, according to a 2025 study in *Social Science & Medicine*.
- 4. **Walk your dog.** If you are able, <u>caring for a pet</u> will not only provide loving companionship at home but will also afford you the chance to meet other people who adore their own furry family members.
- 5. **Visit a house of worship.** Even if you aren't particularly religious, joining a church or synagogue provides a solid sense of community. Participating in social events, after-service coffee hours and volunteer opportunities gives you a chance to connect
- 6. **Seek** <u>intergenerational connections</u>. Young and old can learn from one another. In 20 cities across the country, volunteers 50 and older help young readers become great readers.
- 7. Talk to strangers. Never mind that you were long ago taught not to talk to strangers. *Tiny Habits* author BJ Fogg suggests visiting a park at the same time each day. If comfortable, strike up a conversation with folks who appear approachable. If you don't feel comfortable talking to strangers, try engaging more deeply with acquaintances by asking them about a book or TV show they would recommend.
- 8. **Play games.** Invite neighbors over for a game night. Put out some snacks and bring out Clue, Scrabble or <u>Wits & Wagers</u>, an update on the popular Trivial Pursuit game.
- 9. Host a cocktail party. Nick Gray, author of "The 2-Hour Cocktail Party: How to Build Big Relationships With Small Gatherings," recommends hosting a <u>casual cocktail party</u>, complete with name tags, reminder messages and a little bit of structure to break the ice. One theme Gray recommends for a party: a book swap. You and your guests put books you no longer want on a table, free for anyone to pick up. But it's less about books and more about the inevitable mingling that occurs.
- 10. **Share your hobby.** Think of the activities you enjoy most; perhaps you like <u>gardening</u>, painting or <u>pickleball</u>. Set up supplies and invite others to spend an afternoon together.
- 11. **Take a class.** Make a list of the things you have always wanted to learn more about. Then poke around to find a <u>free class online</u> or at a local community college or university.
- 12. **Rent out a spare room**. If you're a widow, retiree or an empty nester, the house you enjoyed with your family can feel awfully barren. Consider renting out a spare room for a few months to an exchange student, summer intern or a recent graduate from your alma mater who might be starting a job in your area.



Discover the Power of Senior Centers: Your Best Friend is Waiting for You!

Feeling isolated or disconnected? You're not alone and there's a great way to change that! Senior centers offer countless opportunities to explore new hobbies, join interest groups, and connect with others in your community.

Whether it's painting, gardening, cooking, or joining a book club, exercise class, or walking group, these activities can lift your spirits, keep you active, and give you something to look forward to. Best of all, they bring people together. By sharing experiences and pursuing interests alongside others, you'll find support, companionship, and meaningful friendships.

A senior center is a welcoming community where you can stay engaged, discover new passions, and feel connected. Take the first step and explore what your local senior center has to offer, you might be surprised at how much joy and connection you'll find!

AgeGuide partners with senior centers across Northeastern Illinois, to find one near you, visit www.AgeGuide.org or call (800) 528-2000.



Whether it's a family dinner, a gathering with friends, or a community feast, sharing a meal fosters connection and strengthens bonds. Mealtimes bring people together, encouraging conversation, empathy, and shared experiences. They nourish both body and soul, offering a place to laugh, reflect, and build lasting memories.

That's the heart behind *Community Starts with Connection*, a regional campaign in partnership with our region's health Departments, to combat social isolation and promote meaningful engagement for everyone. One program at the center of this initiative is our Community Dining Program, which offers more than just nutritious food.

It's a welcoming space where older adults can:

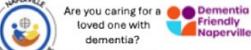
- Enjoy healthy, delicious meals
- ✓ Meet new people and share stories
- Feel a sense of belonging and support
- Participate at no cost for adults 60+

Whether you're looking to expand your social circle, try something new, or simply enjoy a good meal—you belong here.

Find a dining site near you: agequide.org/senior-nutrition-programs

Want to talk to someone? Call us at (800) 528-2000

Together, we can make mealtimes meaningful—because connection isn't just nice, it's necessary.



Friendly Naperville

The Naperville Senior Task Force's Dementia Friendly Initiative hosts the following:

Memory Cafés

A social gathering of individuals living with dementia and their care partners

The First Tuesday of the month

1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Fort Hill Activity Center, 20 Fort Hill Drive Naperville, IL 60540

The Second Tuesday of the month

2:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

95th Street Library, 3015 Cedar Glade Drive Naperville, IL 60564

Dementia Caregiver Support Groups

Develop a support system Learn about community resources

The Fourth Tuesday of the month

1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Naperville Public Library

95th Street Library, 3015 Cedar Glade Drive Naperville, IL 60564

The Third Thursday of the month

3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Alfred Rubin Community Center, Room 201 305 W. Jackson Ave Naperville, IL 60540

For more information or to register email:

DementiaFriendlyNaperville+info@gmail.com



About us

Free Expert Knowledge

How to Contact Us

SHIP is a free counseling service provided by the Illinois Department on Aging.

SHIP does not sell or solicit Medicare insurance.

SHIP is not a Medicare insurance plan.

SHIP trains volunteer counselors throughout the State of Illinois to provide one-on-one help with your insurance.



SHIP volunteer counselors provide you with information you need to make educated decisions about your insurance. SHIP counselors can answer questions about:

- Medicare
- Medicare Supplement Insurance
- Medicare Advantage Plans
 - ➤ HMOs
 - ➤ PPOs
 - ➤ PFFS
- Prescription Drug Coverage through Medicare and other sources
 - ➤ Extra Help from Social Security for prescription drug costs
- Long-term Care Insurance
- Medicare Claims and Appeals
- Medicare Beneficiary Rights and Guarantees

SHIP provides a toll-free number for your convenience.

1-800-252-8966

A SHIP counselor is waiting for your call today.



Call us and let our counselors assist you with your health insurance questions.

You may be referred to a SHIP sponsored site in your area for more personal assistance. Sign up for the STF *Our Voice* quarterly newsletter by registering for the City's eNews at naperville.il.us/enews. Don't forget to check the "Senior Newsletter: Our Voice" box!

Disclaimer: The distribution of this information does not imply Naperville Senior Task Force or City of Naperville endorsement.

City of Naperville | 400 S. Eagle Street | Naperville, IL 60540 US

<u>Unsubscribe</u> | <u>Update Profile</u> | <u>Constant Contact Data Notice</u>

