

THE THRIVE CHRONICLES



Serving the Thrive Community in Virtual Reality

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The Editor's Corner

by The Three Thriveateers, co-editors

Pat Parker • Ellen Steele •

Vanessa Homedew

Welcome to our third issue of The Thrive Chronicles! This month, we celebrate the people, places, and ideas that make Thrive such a lively community. Meet volunteer Jack Sturm, explore the Thrive Pavilion Learning Center, and discover the fun of our Fun & Games events. You'll also find helpful articles on inflammation, protein, community resources, and technology, along with art, upcoming events, and a little humor. We hope these pages help you learn, connect, and enjoy all that Thrive has to offer.

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★ Volunteer Spotlight

Meet Jack Sturm

BUILDER • CREATOR • COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER

"I tend to gravitate toward needs or openings that I perceive."

JACK STURM



Chicago Roots & Creative Interests

I'm from the Chicago area and live with my wife, Liz (LizKin), in Aurora, Illinois. We have two kids and a 7-month-old grandson!

I'm an engineer and design cabling systems for commercial buildings that support networks and telecommunications. It's apparently part of my DNA - my father was a pole climber and technician for the phone company, and my older brother was an engineer before retiring.

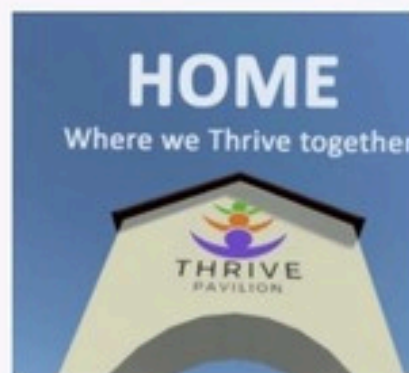
Outside of work, my interests include 3D design, photography, music, travel, and finding ways to combine different skills to make creative things. I spend a lot of time working in Unity and Blender, and I enjoy both the creative and technical sides of building virtual spaces.



Finding Thrive

I think it was Liz who met Donna online first. We joined Thrive nearly two years ago and started going to movies at Popcorn Palace and doing escape rooms. We were both pretty new to VR at the time. Soon after, I started building.

My contributions to Thrive began when I got into some conversations about ideas for an art gallery. I had already built my Museum of Memories, so creating the Thrive Pavilion Community Gallery was right in my wheelhouse.



Continued on the next page >

Building Where There Was a Need

I tend to gravitate toward needs or openings that I perceive. The Thrive Home World was needed as the group migrated to VRChat. The gallery gives members an outlet for their creativity. The Learning Center came from seeing a need for resources to help people learn how to do things in VR.

What I enjoy most initially is considering the group's needs, designing and building a world around them, and trying to make it engaging for both new and experienced VR users. After it's revealed to the group, it's nice to hear how people are enjoying it.

A Builder's Sense of Humor

I'm notorious for making typos, or occasionally making a door you're meant to go through but can't. And sometimes I make a real blunder. An artist had a picture of herself in the gallery, and I overheard a visitor tell her, "Oh, you're so thin!" The artist replied, "Yeah, um... that picture is supposed to be landscape, not portrait" (wide, not narrow). I quietly backed out and fixed it the next day. Apologies!

The Joy of Community

Meeting the members. I enjoy talking with people who have a wide variety of interests, family situations, backgrounds, and locations. Those are the kinds of experiences that traditionally come through travel and being out in the world. "Being" with people in VR opens up another way to share those experiences.

A Positive Impact

Meeting new friends has been the biggest thing. It may sound contrived, but it's true. Talking with people from all over who have similar interests fascinates me. The same is true of meeting people with completely different experiences - even if they happen to live nearby.

Advice for Future Volunteers

Volunteering doesn't necessarily mean filling a predefined role. You can bring the skills and interests you already have - or develop new ones - and find ways to turn them into something the community will enjoy.

I'd also say to keep an eye on how the community changes. Some group interests are forever; others are popular for a while and then taper off. Keep it flexible.

A Lasting Gift to Thrive

Jack's generosity and creativity can be seen throughout Thrive. He built and donated three of our most important gathering spaces: the Thrive Pavilion Home, Thrive Pavilion Learning Center, and Thrive Pavilion Community Gallery. He has also generously contributed his time, talent, and resources to our Fundraising Committee, designing and building the central courtyard and its engraved pavers. Jack is always looking for new ways to make Thrive Pavilion more welcoming, imaginative, and exciting for everyone.



A Word from the Board

- Getting to Know Our Vice President and Secretary



Linda Fisher

Greetings, Thrive members, from LinFislr, your vice president and secretary. It's been my great honor to sit on the board this year and do the gratifying work of ensuring Thrive will prosper and grow. Our structure and framework have provided an organization that, while often imitated, will never be duplicated, and that is due to you, our members.

When asked what Thrive means to me, I immediately think of opportunity. Being part of Thrive gives me, at my advanced age, a chance to use my talents and abilities in a way that I could not do otherwise. I am able to engage in and share things I am passionate about, such as mahjongg, theater, improv, poetry, travel, tai chi, from the comfort of my couch, without the impediments of distance, weather, darkness, fear of falling, and other things that might deter me from engaging in my interests.

But what means most to me is seeing our members enthusiastically sharing what they find meaningful by creating and participating in events, stepping up to onboard new members, or by simply speaking their minds in conversations and bringing their experience as older adults into this brave new world of virtual reality. We all come in with our own abilities and life experiences to make this community the safe and nurturing place that it is, and I look forward to what the future will bring.



Creative Corner

Celebrating the Creativity of Our Community



Two truths folks often learn in life: family matters, and writers should write about what they know. In my case, raised within an ethnically mixed family, so common in that great city by the bay, San Francisco, I very early on developed an interest in Asian-Western relations. Indeed, at twenty-three I set out to hitchhike through Japan, Taiwan and Hong Kong, exploring a passion which eventually resulted in the winning of a PhD in the topic and half a century largely as a college professor. But giving lectures and writing non-fiction historical works were never enough for a fellow with an especially lively imagination. Interestingly, after writing my dissertation about a Frenchman who played a huge role in the modernization of 19th-century China, it was suggested that I revisit the topic through a work of historical fiction, and eventually Tienkuo: The Heavenly Kingdom was born, the first volume of the Sino-American Tales which, over the years, have grown into, at this point, a three-volume family saga of the Downton Abbey/Gilded Age sort of tale, though one that follows a very different family, one rooted in the cultural world somewhere between Shanghai and San Francisco, two cities I know especially well.



**Steven A. Leibo
(Leibo)**



THRIVE FUN & GAMES!

PLAY. CONNECT. COMPETE. HAVE FUN!

By pianofingers

Thrive Fun & Games events provide socialization among Thrive members while enjoying friendly competition in VRChat.

Whether you enjoy trivia, game shows, board games, these events provide a wide variety for members to come out, have fun and get to know each other.

Every other Friday during Fun & Games Testing, members are welcome to come and help test new games that can be used for future events. You are always welcome to come and observe until you are comfortable to join in.



Teamwork, fun and friendly competition — that's Thrive Fun & Games!



★ MEET YOUR HOST ★



pianofingers

“Don't miss out on an opportunity. Drop the fear. Face the challenge. You'll never know until you try.”

🎮 EVENT DETAILS



WHEN:
Every Monday and every other Friday.



THRIVE FUN & GAMES TESTING:
Every other Friday.



WHERE:
VRChat

Games bring people together!



🎮 WHAT TO EXPECT

Trivia, game shows, board games, and more — with a variety of options to keep things fresh and exciting.

Whether you're in it to win, try something new, or just hang out and have fun, there's a place for you here.

All are welcome!
Players, spectators
and cheerleaders!



FRIENDLY
COMPETITION.



BUILD
COMMUNITY.



PLAY
TOGETHER.



THRIVE
TOGETHER.

♥ Community Spotlight

Where Community Comes to Life



Thrive Pavilion Learning Center

Created by Jack Sturm (AuroraJack)

EDITOR'S NOTE This feature was originally planned for one page. But the Learning Center is such an imaginative and intricate world that it called for two. We hope you enjoy this special tour.

The Learning Center is part of a larger effort within Thrive Pavilion to create virtual spaces around what members actually want and need. We have the home world, the community gallery and Tracey Island. This needed its own place.

The philosophy is simple: don't assume the visitor already knows how VR works. Someone shouldn't have to be an experienced VR user in order to learn how to become an experienced VR user.

The idea for the Learning Center came when Meta decided to pull back from Horizon and we all had to make VRChat work for us. After making the Thrive home world, it was time for the Learning Center.

I knew from the beginning that it would have visual tutorial displays that could be used in two ways: solo or socially. As self-explanatory lessons, they help explain the things players often ask about - adjusting their volume, copying someone's avatar, or understanding the difference between an instance and a world.

An entire area is full of tutorials just about VRChat, and for good reason. There are many controls and the menus are extensive. I learned a lot of options that I didn't know about while creating it.

Step-by-step instructions seemed like the right

way to do it. Many displays have a sequence to follow, and following them can remove a player's uncertainty. Because there are so many displays, the whole thing can look a little intimidating. Please view it as my attempt to boost your confidence in VR, not tear it down.

The displays are also used socially as visual aids. Thrive's Education Committee uses the Learning Center to help new members become familiar with the basics of VR and of the group. The displays give them something to review together, just like a classroom.



One of the step-by-step educational kiosks helps visitors learn how to join a VRChat group.



Community Spotlight

Where Community Comes to Life

A World Designed for Learning, Connecting and Exploring



The Learning Center auditorium features a stage and large video screen for presentations, demonstrations and educational programs.

My suggestion is to look at the displays as individual lessons. You can return to them and refresh yourself anytime; they are a resource. I don't recommend trying to consume the whole thing at once.

In addition to VRChat tutorials, there are displays for popular apps such as Walkabout Mini Golf, with a focus on how to connect with friends. Many games and apps have their own tutorials, and friends will help each other. Connecting with others is the key - we often hear new players asking how to do it.

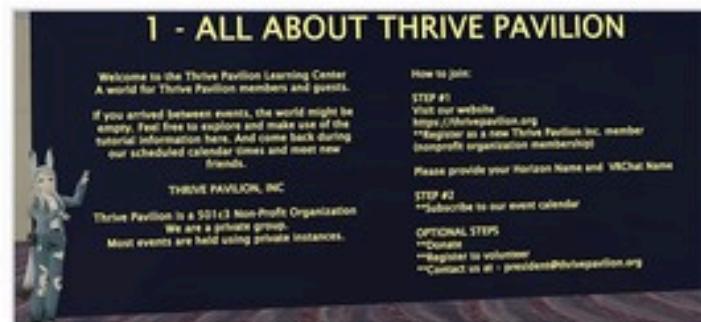
The Learning Center also has a Presentation Hall set up for live instruction and video. In the control room on the side is a video playlist with buttons that can be selected to play content Thrive wanted shown. Feel free to host events and use it!

Two of my favorite things are the city outside the building and the carpet in the tutorial areas. The city is a circular shadowbox of buildings. I added cars and blinking rooftop lights to give it a feeling of life. If you watch long enough, you'll see an airplane in the

distance. It's all for fun. If you ever find your way out into the city, you'll need to watch your step in traffic. Now, how on earth would you get out there?

My other favorite thing is the carpet by the tutorial displays. Convention-center carpeting is always a bit over the edge - fun to look at, but I wouldn't want it at home. Every year while growing up, my dad took my brother and me to the Chicago Auto Show at the convention center. My young self saw that carpet pattern as a signal that I was living it up in the big city. My spirit goes right back to that feeling when I see it, even virtually.

Here's a challenge: Can you find the hidden doorways? There are sections of walls you can walk through to access something. The visible one is the door to the control room - just walk in. Others exist, but they are not so obvious.



A kiosk introduces visitors to Thrive Pavilion and explains how to become involved.

WHEN THE WORLD FIRST OPENED

The secret is out: There's a Thrive Pavilion Learning Center! It's a great addition not only to Thrive, but also to VRChat and a select number of games. Visitors can use easy-to-follow instructions and illustrations to learn a variety of VR-related tasks. Thank you, AuroraJack, and all who contributed. Please take a look and favorite the world!

Health & Wellness

Understanding Inflammation

By Paul Massey



What is inflammation

Inflammation is the immune system's response to infection or injury. In the short term, it summons healing cells, then settles down. Trouble begins when that alarm keeps ringing. Persistent, low-grade inflammation - sometimes called "inflammaging" - can simmer without obvious illness.

Symptoms of inflammation

Acute inflammation is easy to spot: redness, warmth, swelling, pain, reduced movement and sometimes fever. Chronic inflammation is less tidy. Clues may include fatigue, muscle aches, stiff joints, digestive changes, reflux, unexplained weight change, mood changes, balance trouble, or dry eyes and mouth. Because these symptoms have many causes, persistence deserves medical assessment.

What inflammation does

Over time, inflammatory chemicals and oxidative stress can damage cells and blood vessels while weakening repair. Chronic inflammation is linked with atherosclerosis, insulin resistance and diabetes, neurodegeneration, frailty, and declining muscle and joint function. It can disrupt immunity, creating a loop in which inflammation breeds more inflammation and may shorten independent years.

Small daily choices

can quiet the body's alarm.

For more information:

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/topics/inflammation>

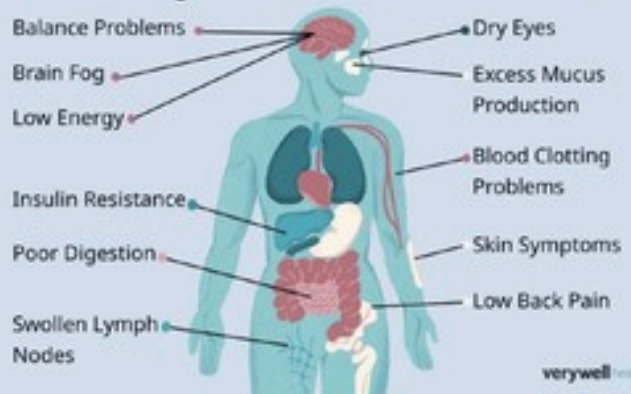
What to do about inflammation

The approach is unglamorous: move daily, sit less, maintain a healthy weight, avoid smoking, limit alcohol, manage stress, protect sleep and maintain oral health. Even 20 minutes of activity helps. A clinician should investigate underlying infection or inflammatory disease. Medicines may be necessary, but older adults should avoid NSAIDs or supplements without advice because side effects and interactions matter.

Foods to combat inflammation

Think eating pattern, not miracle ingredient. Centre meals on colourful vegetables and fruit - berries, citrus, broccoli, kale, spinach, Swiss chard and carrots - plus beans, whole grains and fibre-rich foods that nourish gut bacteria. Add extra-virgin olive oil, avocado, walnuts and almonds; choose salmon or fatty fish for EPA and DHA. These foods provide fibre, omega-3 fats, plant compounds such as polyphenols and carotenoids. Crowd out sugary drinks, refined carbohydrates, fried foods and processed meats. Consistency matters more than perfection.

Possible Signs of Chronic Inflammation





Protein Power: Staying Strong as We Age

By Pat Parker, Retired Dietitian

PRACTICAL FOOD FOR HEALTHY AGING



For years, many of us have been told that older people do not need as much protein as younger people. That is a popular misconception - and it is completely untrue. In fact, as we age, we often need more protein to help preserve muscle, strength and mobility. Too many older adults live on "tea and toast," never realizing that a low-protein diet may be making them more frail. The good news is that a few simple changes can make a real difference.

Why more protein matters

Protein supplies the building blocks our bodies use to maintain muscle, skin, organs and immune defenses. Adequate protein also helps us recover from illness, wounds and surgery.

Aging changes the way muscles respond to food. Older muscle becomes less sensitive to protein - a process called anabolic resistance - so a serving that once seemed adequate may no longer provide a strong enough signal to maintain or rebuild muscle.

Exercise, especially resistance exercise, makes muscles more responsive to the protein we eat. Neither food nor exercise has to be elaborate: regular movement, light weights or resistance bands, and protein-rich meals work together to help protect strength and independence.

How much is enough?

The standard adult recommendation is 0.8 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight. Many experts recommend that healthy older adults aim for 1.0 to 1.2 grams per kilogram - about 0.45 to 0.55 grams per pound - each day. A 150-pound person, for example, would need roughly 68 to 82 grams daily. Active older adults and those recovering from illness may need more.

FOR A 150-POUND ADULT

About 68–82 grams daily

Individual needs may be higher or lower.

Make every meal count

Total daily protein matters most, but spreading it across breakfast, lunch and dinner makes the goal easier to reach and gives muscles several chances to use it. Try to build each meal around a protein source instead of saving nearly all of it for dinner.

Plant proteins can support healthy muscles too, as long as the total amount is adequate and the sources are varied. Whole foods are generally the best place to start, although protein powder can be convenient when appetite or time is limited.

Smart food upgrades

- **Breakfast:** Choose eggs, cottage cheese or Greek yogurt.
- **Soups and sauces:** Stir in beans or lentils.
- **Grains:** Try quinoa or higher-protein whole grains.
- **Quick choices:** Keep tuna, salmon, chicken, tofu or edamame handy.

Berry-Banana Protein Shake



Creamy, naturally sweet and ready in less than five minutes.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 scoop unflavored whey protein powder
- 1 cup milk of your choice
- ½ cup plain Greek yogurt
- 1 frozen banana and ½ cup frozen berries
- 1 tablespoon chia seeds or ground flaxseed
- ½ teaspoon vanilla, if desired

DIRECTIONS

Pour the milk and yogurt into a blender first. Add everything else and blend for 45 to 60 seconds, or until smooth. Depending on the products used, one shake generally supplies more than 30 grams of protein.

If you have kidney disease or another condition requiring dietary restrictions, ask your doctor or dietitian before substantially increasing protein.



Finding the Resources We Need

By Ellen Steele

A CONTINUING SERIES

Where do you get your information, and how has that changed over the last year? Do you use multiple sources? Do you do a Google search? Do you go to your local library and ask the person at the desk? How about your local newspaper? Does it still exist, or is it mostly a rehash of articles you have seen elsewhere?

How many of us get our news and information from Facebook? Facebook is a social platform full of personal opinions - and lots and lots of very talented cats - but it has never been a news organization. When was the last time you used an information clearinghouse? Do those even exist anymore?

~ Finding information we can trust

How do we find information we can trust? How do we do our due diligence to make sure the information we receive is correct? Ask one AI? Ask two? Ask three?

As seniors in this rapidly changing information age, we are really some of the lucky ones. We know how to use modern technology, at least to some extent. But how do we contact Social Security when there is an issue and no one is available to answer the phones?

~ When everyday tasks get complicated

Can you call a taxi if your car doesn't start and you need to get to an appointment? Do taxis still operate, or do you need an app, an account, and online banking just to get one to your door? Are you simply out of luck if you cannot walk out the door by yourself?

What if you suddenly need to sell your house and move somewhere else? How do you change all your utilities, pack everything, and get it from point A to point B? What services are available to you? How do you find them, and what do they cost?

~ Planning before we need help

These are things we all need to understand before we need them. Do you have a list of resources in your area? Where do you find them?

Let's see if we can work on this project together, share what we learn, and build a stronger foundation for our community. In this series of articles, I will highlight resources and ideas that will hopefully give us all a little more security and knowledge.

Most of us are probably on a fixed income, and senior housing is extremely costly. Staying in our own homes is often the most economical avenue - and the one we feel is the best choice - especially if we are lucky enough to have family nearby.

~ Staying safely at home

What steps need to be taken to ensure that we can stay put safely? We know the obvious ones: handrails, shower bars, and perhaps a stairlift to help us go up and down the stairs. But what about the everyday tasks that can suddenly become hazardous?

Mowing the lawn, shoveling snow, climbing a ladder to fix a fan, or changing a light bulb can all become difficult. Even moving a couch or cleaning under a dresser can become an obstacle. Driving can also suddenly become an issue.

~ Start with local resources

Having a handyman or another trusted person to call for help is a good start. Does your town have an Office for the Aging or a senior center?

I recently checked with my local Office for the Aging. It offers a handyman program, nonmedical devices and services to help people remain in their homes, Meals on Wheels, and what appears to be a weekly bus ride to Walmart for shopping and groceries. Most of these services are income-dependent, and Meals on Wheels also has certain eligibility guidelines.

Learning what is available in your area is a simple but important step. It can take a lot of outreach to find the right service or agency to help. However, starting now - before we find ourselves forced to choose between two less-than-ideal situations - seems to be the wisest choice. To be continued...

Wow, can you believe it's pumpkin spice everything again already? Where did the summer go, and where did I stash my sweaters? There are lots of apple festivals and Octoberfests happening everywhere. Do you still have trick-or-treaters stopping by on Halloween? Does everyone remember the cool Halloween birthday world Julie made last year? I wonder what she has up her sleeve for 2026!

Whatever it is, we know it will be fun. Have you ever attended one of Damien's events in Bigscreen? They are always informative, educational, and a lot of fun. Here is what he has coming up this month:

- 10/12 – Lifelong Learning Event: Exploring a large range of topics ranging from world history, travel, science, and perceptual illusions.
- 10/19 – Trivia Challenge: Team competition testing general knowledge.
- 10/26 – Games & Puzzles: Word games and visual puzzle challenges.

While our primary calendar is set, we also have three special pop-up events scheduled:

- October 3rd- Pop-up Disco: join us for music, conversation and dancing
- October 25 and 26th- Whodunit. Directed by LinFisher performed by the Thrive players and set in Thrive MetaCity
- “Storytelling & Public Speaking: an introductory workshop to improve skills and learn

From one another.

By Ellen Steele

Funny Bone





Dews News:
Notes From The Gallery

The Theme For This Month Is:
Animals - Wild or Zoo

Our Featured Artist Is:
Jody Gorran

The Theme For November Is:
Fall Colors

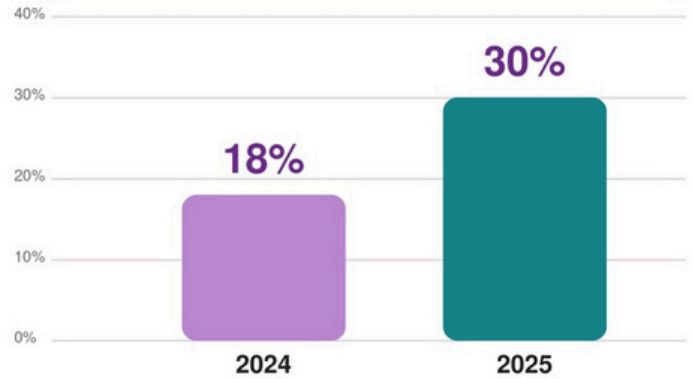
Since Its Opening The Gallery
Has Had **3,485 Visitors**

Did You Know?
Vivian Dorothy Maier
was an American **street photographer** whose work was discovered and recognized after her death. She took more than **150,000 photographs** primarily of the people and architecture of **Chicago, New York City, and Los Angeles**, although she also traveled and photographed around the world.

Tech Tips

AI IS CATCHING ON WITH OLDER ADULTS

Share of adults age 50+ who used artificial intelligence



AI use rose by about two-thirds in one year

Source: AARP Tech Trends survey data reported in 2026



WITH GRATITUDE

Honoring Our 2026 Contributors



Thrive Pavilion extends its heartfelt appreciation to everyone who has contributed so generously this year. Every contribution makes a meaningful difference.

Lisa Ackerson
Michele Allegro
Julie Rizer Chaney
Patricia Delafuente
Jennie Fisher
Linda Fisher
Jody Goran

Steven Leibo
Paul Massey
Pat Ferguson Parker
Jane Reid
Myra Schenkel
Ronda Sims
Amy Temperly

CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2026

Thank you for helping Thrive Pavilion build an even brighter future together.