Join a Nonprofit as An Encore Career

SUZANNE ARMSTRONG THRIVED IN THE CORPORATE world, working for American Express and later consulting for Citibank, Deloitte and other behemoths. Her expertise: helping leaders build support for major change in a company’s vision or systems.

Several years ago, Armstrong went through her own transformation. She left big business and now taps her “change leadership” know-how as a consultant for nonprofits, splitting her time between Miami and Toronto.

When the Miami Art Museum was planning to move to a new location and expand its mission in 2012, the museum’s director asked Armstrong, who was a donor, to work with the leadership team to ensure a smooth transition for employees. (The museum changed its name to Pérez Art Museum Miami after the move.) Armstrong also found work at United Way, where she coaches executives at the organization. “I am tremendously fulfilled,” says Armstrong, 69. “It’s great to continue to do the same kind of work—and make a difference.”

For someone at Armstrong’s level of experience, the pay is nominal—about $20 an hour for about 15 to 20 hours a week. She is paid through the South Florida affiliate of ReServe, which places professionals ages 55 and older in part-time positions with nonprofit organizations and government agencies.

Like Armstrong, many baby boomers with long careers in the business world are now eyeing work in
PROTECTED.

Retirement Income Protection
Helping you build a plan for the income you’ll need in retirement.

Life can be unpredictable. That’s why it’s so important to have a plan that can help ensure your income streams are protected from loss. At Fidelity, we’ll help you create a plan that can provide:

• A guaranteed* income stream you can’t outlive
• A predictable income stream in retirement regardless of market conditions
• Flexibility to start receiving income now or at a date in the future

To learn more, go to Fidelity.com/protection or call a Fidelity Representative at 866.338.3685 to talk about your retirement income needs today.

Keep in mind that investing involves risk. The value of your investment will fluctuate over time, and you may gain or lose money.

* Guarantees are subject to the claims-paying ability of the issuing insurance company.

† Access to assets may be restricted or limited.

Fidelity Brokerage Services LLC, Member NYSE, SIPC. © 2016 FMR LLC. All rights reserved.

79225.2.0
the nonprofit sector. About 21 million adults between the ages of 50 and 70 report that they would like to seek jobs that address social needs, particularly in education, health care, human services and the environment, according to a 2014 study by Encore.org and market research firm Penn Schoen Berland.

These second-act, social-impact jobs are known as encore careers, and the survey found that most who seek these jobs want work that will help them feel worthwhile. Facing perhaps decades in retirement, “it’s so incredibly important to make these extra years meaningful, useful and productive,” says Joan Tucker, director of the Encore Transition Program at Pace University, in New York City. The program’s continuing education workshops help boomers figure out how to create a purposeful retirement.

Use a Service That Finds the Right Fit

An excellent way to enter the encore market is by enrolling in a program that matches older professionals with high-level nonprofit work. The jobs are usually for part-time and short-term projects, but they sometimes lead to permanent work at the organization. Or, by making contacts and building their nonprofit bona fides, participants increase the odds of finding social-impact work elsewhere.

A leader is the Encore Fellowships program. In 2016, the program, part of Encore.org, placed about 800 professionals in nonprofit organizations, up from about 200 in 2013.

Fellows earn a stipend of $20,000 to $25,000 for an assignment of about 1,000 hours, either part-time for a year or full-time for about six months. Depending on their expertise, fellows may develop marketing materials, build data-management systems, generate additional funding streams or create new performance measurements. The jobs “are not stuffing envelopes or serving meals at a church,” says Jim Emerman, executive vice president of Encore.org. “They speak to the higher-level needs of the organizations.” (To learn more about fellowships, go to Encore.org.)

Jonathan Reuman, a human resources executive, took a one-year assignment in October 2014 with Horizons for Homeless Children, in Roxbury, Mass., which provides early education to homeless children and support services to their families. ESC of New England, a member of Encore.org’s Fellowships network, set up Reuman’s placement.

Reuman, 61, who lives in Newton, Mass., spent most of his career as an HR executive with companies and large nonprofits that employed thousands. Although the nonprofits’ missions were admirable, Reuman no longer wanted to work grueling hours or climb the achievement ladder. “It was just burnout—I wanted more of the seeding of the heart and soul,” he says.

Horizons, which employs about 100 people, had just hired a new chief executive officer, Reuman says, and “she wanted someone with gray hair to challenge the organization’s thinking a bit.” He used his human resources skills to coach the top executives.

After his Horizons stint, Reuman decided to return to large nonprofits but at a slower pace, working as a part-time management consultant for a nonprofit that delivers services at more than 120 locations in Massachusetts to people with disabilities and mental health issues. “I’m at a point in my life where my goal is to pay more attention to my family and myself and contribute to my church and community,” he says.

Like the Encore Fellowships program, ReServe (www.reserveinc.org) links older workers and nonprofits. Professionals work an average of 13 months in the New York City area, the Mid-Atlantic region, Boston or South Florida.

At ReServe South Florida, the jobs vary. One retired architect worked with a museum to make it more accessible, and another participant filled in as a
into the experience, maturity and passion of would-be encore careerists. The groups work closely with nonprofits to ensure the placements are a good fit.

Nonprofits that use encore professionals report they are pleased. Many former business executives helped improve service delivery, launch new programs and increase revenue, according to a 2014 Encore.org survey of 103 supervisors who used Encore Fellows, ReServists and retirees from other placement groups.

Just as nonprofits are wary of hiring older adults from the corporate world, some former business execs may suffer from “culture shock” when they move to the nonprofit environment, says Nora Hannah, chief executive officer emeritus of Experience Matters (www.experiencemattersaz.org), in Phoenix, Ariz., which places professionals in paid and volunteer positions at agencies and social-impact organizations. Hannah recalls one individual who was frustrated that he had to go through many channels to get his ideas approved. “He was used to getting his recommended improvements implemented immediately,” she says.

**Build Your Skills: Take a Course or Volunteer**

If you want to go it on your own, be prepared to spend many months figuring out the kind of encore career you want to pursue, expanding your network of contacts and burnishing your credentials.

You can seek one-on-one guidance from a life coach who specializes in retirement planning. Also, you may be able to find a local program by checking Encore.org’s list of network organizations, which promote social-impact jobs for older adults.

At Pace’s Encore Transition Program, which started in 2013 and costs $795, participants have included executives in advertising and financial services, physicians, accountants, lawyers and engineers, says Tucker, the director. The average age of participants is 61.

During three four-hour workshops, participants listen to guest speakers who have successfully shifted from corporate work to social-purpose careers. Nonprofit executives discuss their staffing needs. A life coach helps students identify goals and skills that can apply to nonprofit careers. The program also provides tips on writing résumés, researching nonprofit job opportunities and using social media to market oneself. “We are not a job-placement program, but a program for the exploration of opportunities,” Tucker says.

Tucker says participants learn that their marketable skills go beyond the jobs they hold. “Maybe they mentored someone or became involved in a local commu-
nity organization,” she says. “They may have a rich set of skills that emanate from their experiences.”

Constance Harris was looking for a career change when she took Tucker’s first workshop in 2013. Harris was an employment lawyer, and her last job was as a human resources executive at a large bank. Harris says she spent a lot of time working on employee-termination agreements during a bank merger and later during the 2008 financial downturn. “It was just too distressing,” says Harris, who is now 70. “It’s nice to work on Wall Street and get bonuses, but it was not enough.”

After 22 years at the bank, Harris resigned in 2009. She knew she wanted to do something with a social purpose but did not know what path that would take. With a master’s degree in library science, Harris volunteered as assistant to the director of volunteer services at the renowned Morgan Library & Museum, in New York City. Then she heard of the Pace course. “I was comforted that there were like-minded people who were struggling with their own identity when they left the workforce,” she says. For now, Harris’s encore job is as a part-time employee of the Pace program, assisting Tucker as an instructor, editor and legal aide.

In the Boston area, retirees and those approaching retirement can take a group seminar run by Discovering What’s Next, which is part of ESC Consulting. A facilitator running the Discovering Your Encore seminar helps participants look at various pieces of the “encore puzzle,” says Susan Ogle, who runs many of these sessions. What are your favorite causes or passions? Music, the environment? What are your strengths? Planning, teaching, writing? Would you like an operations position, such as in fund-raising or human resources, or would you prefer working directly with, say, children or the homeless? Do you want to volunteer or get paid? Local community groups sponsor the seminars for free.

A former management-training executive, Ogle directs participants to fill out worksheets and break into pairs to bounce off ideas. Those who want to continue the encore process can speak by phone with a “transition navigator,” who will offer guidance on finding work. Besides running workshops, Ogle is one of 150 volunteer consultants for ESC, which sends small teams of retired executives to advise nonprofits on marketing, finance and other management issues.

If you cannot attend a workshop, Discovering What’s Next sells two $15 online books that include worksheets, tips and resources for finding the right encore match (go to www.escne.org/discovering-whats-next).

For additional training, many community colleges and university continuing education programs offer courses aimed at nonprofit work, such as grant-writing, fund-raising and volunteer management. Some community colleges offer programs in alcohol and drug counseling, child development, art therapy and gerontology.

Also try volunteering to gain more experience and expand your network. “You can test the waters, learn the issues, try out different things and see what makes you feel jazzed,” says Marci Alboher, vice president of marketing and communications at Encore.org and author of The Encore Career Handbook (Workman, $16). The book includes resources and tips for finding work in social-impact endeavors.

If you have skills that could be in high demand, meet with executives at a nonprofit or two and offer consulting services at no cost. CatchaFire.org matches professionals with nonprofits that need help with short-term projects, such as fund-raising and annual-report writing. People with professional experience offer consulting services through the Executive Service Corps Affiliate Network (www.escus.org). And Experience Matters’ Service by Design places professionals with nonprofits for short-term pro bono projects.

You can check out other volunteer websites to find opportunities. They include VolunteerMatch.org, CreatetheGood.org and HandsOnNetwork.org.

To further expand your network, attend public events conducted by nonprofits in fields that interest you, whether it be the environment or criminal justice. Target your LinkedIn network for possible contacts. Invite friends in the nonprofit sector to meet for coffee—and then ask them to spread the word.

Look at job boards specializing in nonprofits. They include Idealist.org, WorkforGood.org, the Chronicle of Philanthropy’s job site (www.philanthropy.com/jobsearch) and the Foundation Center’s Philanthropy News Digest (www.philanthropynewsdigest.org/jobs).

Think about any skills that could be valuable to a nonprofit. You will need to tailor your résumé and cover letter to highlight skills that may not be evident from your corporate credentials.

Take the retired Intel engineer who won an Encore Fellowship sponsored by his former employer. “Most nonprofits don’t need electrical engineers, but his passion was music and playing the guitar,” says Experience Matters’ Hannah, which placed the fellow with a music conservatory. Combining his engineering and musical skills, he built recording studios that music students now use to make the recordings they need for their college applications. K SUSAN B. GARLAND
IT’S ONE OF THE THORNIEST QUESTIONS RETIREESE FACE: How much can you safely spend each year? And once you’ve figured that out, which accounts should you tap first, how do you minimize taxes, and how do you keep your remaining portfolio in balance?

A new generation of online advisory services promises to help retirees answer these questions and, in some cases, manage the whole drawdown process. Like existing “robo advisers,” these services rely on software to generate automated advice. Some also offer access to human advisers. But unlike most established robo advisers, the services are aimed squarely at retirees.

Although there’s plenty of retirement-planning advice available online, most of it focuses on how to accumulate a nest egg, not spend it down. And the drawdown advice that is available often makes simplistic assumptions, such as expecting that your spending will remain constant each year in retirement.

The new online services take a more sophisticated approach, aiming to design drawdown strategies tailored to a retiree’s personal goals, life expectancy and spending needs. They can help coordinate the many sources of income a typical retiree receives—including Social Security, investment income and required minimum distributions—to form a tax-efficient drawdown plan. In many cases, you can take advantage of these services while keeping your money in your current investments. On the down side, the services tend to be pricier than the existing robo advisers, which often charge 0.25% of assets or less. The firms say their fees are justified by the more complex services they deliver.

Income Strategy (www.incomestrategy.com). The Income Strategy software aims to make retirees’ assets last as long as possible by coordinating spending plans with Social Security, taxes, Roth IRA conversions and other factors. Currently, Income Strategy offers one-year access to the software, a personalized drawdown strategy report, a recommended Social Security claiming strategy and up to two hours with a financial professional for $500.

Early this year, Income Strategy will offer two new services, says William Meyer, managing principal. For retirees who want to manage their own money, the firm will offer not only access to the software but also specific trade recommendations to help draw down assets efficiently. The fee will be about $20 a month.

For retirees who want professional money management, Income Strategy will build a portfolio of exchange-traded funds and manage the whole drawdown process—sending cash to the client and rebalancing the portfolio. The annual fee for this service will be about 0.5% of assets under management, Meyer says.

True Link (www.truelinkfinancial.com). This robo adviser for retirees, launched late last year, helps implement a “bucket” strategy, with specific assets set aside for each year of retirement. Money you need this year might be held in money-market or high-interest checking accounts, while money you need five years from now can go into defined-maturity bond funds maturing in five years, says Kai Stinchcombe, chief executive officer of True Link. Underlying investments include ETFs and bond ladders, and the fee is 0.87% annually.

The site also offers a free tool that recommends a monthly withdrawal amount and asset-allocation plan based on a user’s age, gender and portfolio size.

United Income (www.unitedincome.com). This service, which will become publicly available in mid 2017, aims to offer highly personalized drawdown plans. United Income will help retirees build portfolios of bond ladders, deferred annuities and other investments; tell them which accounts to tap first; and send them a regular retirement paycheck.

Instead of assuming spending will remain constant throughout retirement, the service will create a personalized spending forecast based on your gender, education level and other demographic information. Women, for example, “tend to look a lot more frugal relative to men,” says Matt Fellowes, chief executive officer and founder of financial-advice firm Hello-Wallet. United Income will also rely on demographic data, along with personal health information, to generate personalized life-span estimates. Fees are not yet disclosed.

MANAGING YOUR FINANCES

Automate Your Spend-Down Plan

ELEANOR LAISE
With so many ETF and mutual fund choices available, picking the best ones for your portfolio isn’t always easy. Vanguard offers more than 170 funds in its family alone. But not all funds are right for every investor. Not only do you need to choose the right mix of funds to diversify and balance your portfolio, you also need to be able to choose between funds that may appear deceptively similar.

I urge you to seize control of your financial destiny right NOW by making sure the wisest, most astute, HUNGRIEST managers are making you the most money with your every penny.

Are YOU ready to make 2017 your most lucrative year yet at Vanguard?

Like millions of Americans, I love The Vanguard Group’s family of low-cost funds and ETFs.

However, Vanguard’s popularity comes with an extremely dangerous downside. Vanguard is GIGANTIC. With an estimated 14,000 employees … 170+ mutual funds and ETFs … 7,300 institutional clients … and over $3 trillion in assets worldwide.

It’s way too easy for little guys — those with, say, $500,000 or less invested — to get overlooked or simply ignored.

I honestly believe up to 95% of Vanguard’s offerings are disappointingly average (at best) … even downright inferior.

On any given day, only 5% of Vanguard’s funds are good enough to earn my AAA++, gold-standard rating. That’s where MY money is — and it’s where YOURS should be, too.

Now is the time to make one or two minor adjustments — to set yourself up for MAJOR profits in 2017

First things first.

Vanguard doesn’t own me … pay me … or call the shots.

27 Priceless Tips, Tricks, Secrets and Loopholes that Vanguard Doesn’t Want You to Know!

• How to avoid a costly trap for tax-conscious investors
• Don’t be blinded by dazzling ‘5-star’ ratings
• GICs suitable for savers, not investors
• Why you should NOT buy just prior to the distribution date
• The truth about loads
• Why there’s no such thing as ‘minimum additional investments’
• How to get into a ‘closed’ fund
• DANGER: Know how much your fund could drop?
• Beware these risky funds
• How to NOT get double-taxed

Learn all 27 Big Secrets, details in your FREE REPORT!

Yes, I sing Vanguard’s praises when it’s justified…

But I’m quick to snap at their heels when they go astray.

As a longstanding Vanguard investor myself, it’s my duty, as well as my right, to demand answers to the hard questions, whether Vanguard likes them or not.

It’s up to me to blow these stories wide open.

Oh yes, and to alert folks like YOU about how to allocate your money in the best possible way — for MAXIMUM profits.

27 Priceless Vanguard Secrets! — Yours FREE

This little treasure is essentially my Little Black Book of Vanguard Secrets I’ve discovered over the years… This in-depth report is chock full of all the tips, hints and tactics for making double the profits with Vanguard.

Plus, you’ll get handy cheat sheets, like an alphabetical list of Vanguard funds as well as important phone numbers and addresses, from my ‘little black book.’

The Ultimate Answer Book

There’s one secret that I don’t need to tell you: Vanguard is the best place for your money. The low fees, excellent returns and the variety of mutual funds available all make Vanguard a terrific choice. But there are some ins and outs, some hints, tips and secrets that will make your investing with Vanguard even better.

If you’re interested in doubling your profits on every dollar invested with Vanguard, you’ll want to read this special report from beginning to end.

You’ll get all the tools you need to become far wealthier and wiser. Order your FREE copy today!

Here’s how to get it!

Call 1-866-507-2939 and mention code VZ9162 or fill out and return the attached postage-paid card and we’ll email your free investing report to you. Or download it immediately at www.adviseronline.com/priceless.

• Dan is America’s leading expert on investing in Vanguard mutual funds and has helped tens of thousands of Vanguard investors choose their funds wisely.

• Dubbed the “Vanguard Gumshoe” by Forbes magazine, he’s won the industry’s “Financial Advisory” award.

• Dan previously spent almost a decade writing about personal finance for U.S. News & World Report and Fortune magazines. He’s also written for The New York Times and other national publications.
DELA YED-RETIREMENT CREDITS TO BOOST SOCIAL
Security benefits accrue month by month after you reach full retirement age, which is 66 for those born between 1943 and 1954. If you rack up the maximum allowed by waiting until age 70, your first check will deliver the full power of those credits added to your benefit. But if you claim before age 70, you may be disappointed when you see the size of the first check deposited in your bank account. It won’t include the full power of the credits you have earned.

But your disappointment won’t last forever. Here’s what’s going on.

Every month after full retirement age that you postpone receiving benefits earns you a credit of 2/3 of 1% of your benefit. That works out to the 8%-a-year boost that you hear so much about. The credits begin the month you hit full retirement age and end no later than the month before you hit age 70. Beneficiaries with a full retirement age of 66 can earn a maximum boost of 32%.

If you wait until you rack up the entire 32%, you’ll get the full credit for the boost in your first check at age 70. But what if waiting to age 70 no longer fits your plan? Perhaps you thought you’d keep working but decided or were forced to quit, or maybe a significant health problem cropped up. No matter what the reason, whenever you claim you’ll get the delayed credits earned up to that point—eventually.

Let’s say you decide at age 68 to take your benefit, cashing in on 16% in earned delayed credits. If your full benefit is $2,000 a month, you might expect your first check to be worth $2,320 (plus annual cost-of-living adjustments). But it won’t be.

Cutting your delay short means some of your credits won’t kick in until later. The credits aren’t built into benefits until the January after the credits are earned, if you claim before age 70.

**Taking a Delayed Benefit Early**

When you take your boosted benefit in your late sixties, all credits earned in previous calendar years will be included in your first check, but credits earned in the current year won’t count until the next January. Say your birthday is February 14, 1948, and you decide to take your benefit in June 2017, when you are well into your 69th year. You will have earned delayed credits from February 2014 through May 2017. But that first check (and the remainder of your checks in 2017) will only include delayed credits from February 2014 through December 2016. The remaining credits you earn from January 2017 through May 2017 will be added to your benefit paid in January 2018—a delay of about half a year.

The earlier you claim in the year, the longer the delay. “That does not automatically mean you should wait,” says Jim Blair, a former district manager for an Ohio Social Security office and a partner at Premier Social Security Consulting, in Sharonville, Ohio. “Other circumstances may dictate taking benefits earlier.”

But if you want to shorten that delay in getting your final credits (and capture extra credits), claim late in the year. For instance, if you start a boosted benefit in December and you earned nearly three years’ worth of credits, your first payout would include the first two years’ worth of credits. You’d then only have to wait a month for your remaining delayed credits to show up in your benefit check.

Don’t let these complications blur the value of delaying your claim. Social Security is an inflation-adjusted income stream that can’t be outlived. And, the bigger the initial benefit, the better, if you or a spouse are expected to live a long time. For couples, the higher earner’s benefit lasts the lifetime of the surviving spouse. Increasing the size of the benefit that remains for the survivor can help mitigate the loss of the smaller benefit, which disappears at the death of the first spouse. Singles who can afford to delay until age 70 can lay a secure foundation of guaranteed income if they live well into their eighties or nineties. For more on claiming benefits, see “Find Your Best Benefits Strategy” in the January issue. **K Rachel L. Sheedy**
TAXES

Protect Tax Refund
By Filing Early

KEVIN BROWN MAY BE EVERY HONEST TAXPAYER’S worst nightmare. At least he was before authorities put an end to the massive identity theft and tax refund fraud ring he ran for years out of his barbershop. Just before Christmas last year, Brown was sentenced to 135 months in prison.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, Brown and his cohort claimed at least $20 million in phony refunds over eight years, often in the names of people whose identities had been stolen, including many elderly taxpayers and people in assisted-living facilities. “He and his many co-conspirators falsified tax returns in the names of some of the most vulnerable members of our society,” said Channing D. Phillips, U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia. In addition to being sent to the slammer for more than a decade, Brown was ordered to pay more than $4.5 million in restitution to the IRS.

While Brown is out of the refund-stealing business, there are plenty of other crooks who’d love to get their hands on your tax refund. The IRS, state tax officials and tax-preparation software makers are battling hard against them, and with some success. In the first nine months of 2016, the number of taxpayers filing affidavits saying they had been victimized fell by 50%. Still, nearly a quarter of a million of your fellow citizens reported they were victims of tax-related identity theft.

Fortunately, the key to the fraudsters’ success also points to how you can protect yourself. The IRS says that refund thieves typically file their fake returns early in the filing season so the IRS gets the phony forms before legitimate taxpayers have time to file their returns. So, one of the best ways to protect your refund is to file as soon as possible.

The IRS began accepting 2016 electronic returns and processing paper ones on January 23, 2017. The closer you are to the front of the line, the safer your money will be. That means you need to collect your tax documents—your W-2, your 1099s and so forth—as soon as they begin arriving in the mail. Pull together receipts and other information for your itemized deductions and tax credits, too.

Once you have everything you need, fire up your tax-prep software or grab your pen to complete your return, or schedule time with your accountant, enrolled agent or other preparer. Need extra incentive? Not only will filing as soon as possible protect against fraud, but you’ll also get your money back sooner rather than later.

The stakes are high. In 2016, the IRS sent out about $320 billion in tax refunds to nearly 111 million taxpayers. The average refund was $2,857. We expect the numbers to be similar for 2016 returns filed in 2017.

New Efforts to Combat Fraud

As you work on your return, you may come across the IRS’s latest effort to combat fraud. The government is expanding a test of a way to verify the authenticity of W-2 data. One of the keys to fraud is that the IRS issues most tax refunds before it receives its copies of W-2 forms showing wages received and the amount of taxes withheld. That’s great for getting honest taxpayers their money back as soon as possible. It’s not so great at stopping crooks who make up the numbers on returns they file based on stolen Social Security numbers.

This year, however, about 50 million W-2 forms will include a special 16-digit verification code. If you use tax software, you’ll probably be prompted to enter the code. It is not used for returns prepared by hand. Also, if you e-file this year, you’ll need to enter your 2015 adjusted gross income to verify your identity.

But, there’s an even better way than early filing to fight fraud: Don’t overpay your taxes in the first place. If a crook claims a fake refund in your name—but you actually owe money with your return—you won’t have to fight to get your money back. The IRS might be out, but you won’t be. Whether you have taxes withheld from a paycheck, Social Security benefits or other sources of income, or make quarterly estimated tax payments, try to match your payments in 2017 to what you’ll actually owe for the year.

K KEVIN McCORMALLY
reported owning individual stocks, and 64% say they own mutual funds. Individual bonds are held by 35% of investors, and annuities by 33%. Only 22% own exchange-traded funds; 15% own real estate investment trusts, options, private placements or structured notes; and 12% own commodities or futures.

Tweet alert. Stock market app Trigger Finance, which tracks movements in the markets, has created an alert to notify you when President Trump tweets about a publicly traded stock. In recent weeks, when Trump tweeted about big companies such as Boeing and General Motors, the companies’ share prices dipped temporarily. The app also lets you set up other types of triggers, such as alerts about earnings reports and the release of economic indicators. The app can be downloaded in Apple’s App store; the firm says an Android version is coming soon.

TAXES

Extra time. As we note on page 9, the 2017 filing season began on January 23 and it’s a good idea to file early to fight fraudsters. But if you are a die-hard procrastinator, you’re in luck: You get three extra days to file your tax return. April 15 falls on a Saturday, and the following Monday is a legal holiday in the District of Columbia. Thus, the 2017 federal filing deadline is Tuesday, April 18.

Mileage. The standard mileage rates have fallen for 2017. The rate for business miles driven is 53.5 cents per mile, down from 54 cents in 2016. The rate for miles driven for medical or moving purposes is 17 cents per mile, two cents less than 2016’s rate. The rate for miles driven in service of charitable organizations remains unchanged at 14 cents per mile. Instead of the standard rates, you can opt to calculate the actual costs of using your vehicle.

RETIREMENT ACCOUNTS

First RMD. If you turned 70½ in 2016, you must make your first required minimum distribution from your retirement accounts. The deadline for your first RMD is April 1. For all subsequent RMDs, the distributions must be taken by December 31. If you postponed your 2016 distribution until this year, you’ll also need to take your 2017 RMD by the end of 2017.

Exceptions chart. If you tap a traditional IRA or 401(k) account before you hit age 59½, you are typically subject to a 10% early-withdrawal penalty. But there are exceptions to protect your pocketbook. The IRS has a nifty chart showing

---

INVESTING

Excess trading. The Securities and Exchange Commission has issued an investor alert to help investors determine if excessive trading is occurring in their brokerage accounts and what to do if you suspect it is, such as complaining to the brokerage firm and the SEC or the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority. Read the alert at Investor.gov.

Who owns what. Stocks are the most popular investment held by U.S. investors, according to a survey by the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority Investor Education Foundation (www.finrafoundation.org). Seventy-four percent of households reported owning individual stocks, and 64% say they own mutual funds. Individual bonds are held by 35% of investors, and annuities by 33%. Only 22% own exchange-traded funds; 15% own real estate investment trusts, options, private placements or structured notes; and 12% own commodities or futures.

---

TAX TIP

Contribute to IRA for 2016

The calendar may have flipped to 2017, but you still have time to make IRA contributions for 2016 and lower your tax tab for last year. Thanks to the extended tax filing deadline, you can make a 2016 IRA contribution as late as April 18 this year.

You can contribute up to $6,500 to a traditional IRA for 2016 if you were at least 50 years old by the end of last year. (Younger taxpayers have a $5,500 contribution cap.)

If you are married and only one spouse is still earning income, the working spouse can contribute up to the max to his or her own IRA and to an IRA for the spouse. The worker’s earnings from wages for 2016 have to be large enough to cover both contributions.

Consider getting a jump-start on both funding your tax shelter and cutting your 2017 tax tab by making your 2017 IRA contributions early in the year. (The same limits apply for 2017 as for 2016.)

---
situations in which the penalty will be waived. Find “Exceptions to Tax on Early Distributions” at IRS.gov.

BANKING

■ Rates up. The Federal Reserve’s December rate hike is starting to show in deposit account rates. For the first time in the past year, five account categories have had rate increases in the same month, according to DepositAccounts.com. Average rates were up slightly for savings, checking, rewards checking, one-year certificate of deposit and five-year CD accounts. The highest average rate increase was that for one-year CDs; that average rate increased by 1.7%, from 0.488% in December to 0.496% in January. The Fed is expected to raise interest rates several times in 2017.

SOCIAL SECURITY

■ Cost-cutting. To save money, the Social Security Administration is suspending sending paper benefit estimate statements to those under age 60. Paper statements will only go to those who are older, not getting benefits and don’t have a My Social Security online account. To get electronic statements at any age, sign up for an online account at www.socialsecurity.gov.

■ Claiming tools. The Social Security Administration discovered a problem when it analyzed its Retirement Estimator and five other free online claiming tools: Even when inputting the same information, a user can get varying results because each tool has different underlying assumptions, such as different inflation rates or using a full retirement age of 67 versus 66. For more details, including how each tool works and its advantages and limitations, read the report at www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/rsnotes/rsn2016-03.html.

ESTATE PLANNING

■ Inherited IRAs. The Financial Industry Regulatory Authority has a new alert detailing what investors need to know about inherited IRAs. In addition to looking at the complex rules, the alert offers tips to help the ownership transition go smoothly. For more information, go to www.finra.org/investors/alerts/inherited-iras-what-you-need-know.

ONLINE ACCESS

■ Freebie. Subscribers can sign up for free electronic access at KiplingerRetirement.com. You’ll get the current issue days before the print copy, plus access to back issues and annual indexes.
Tax on Bond Interest
Thirty years ago, my wife and I bought $30,000 worth of series EE savings bonds. They reached their final maturity in 2016 with a total value of about $135,000. We haven’t cashed the bonds because I was hoping to delay reporting the interest until we were in a lower tax bracket. I’ve been told we must report the $105,000 of interest on our 2016 return, whether we cashed the bonds or not. Is that true?

Sorry, but yes. The law requires that you include the interest in your income for the year the bonds reach final maturity, which is 30 years after the issue date. With electronic EE bonds in a TreasuryDirect account, the government automatically redeems bonds at final maturity. With paper bonds like yours, you have to redeem them to get your money back. (You should do so as soon as possible because the bonds’ value has maxed out.) In either case, the year of final maturity is the year in which taxes are due. Not only will the income likely kick you into a higher tax bracket, but it could also trigger a surcharge on your 2018 Medicare premiums, because 2016 tax-return data is used to figure that surcharge.

Social Security Survivor Benefits
My husband just passed away. Can I file for his Social Security? I am 54. He was 74.

Please accept our condolences. At 54, you can qualify for Social Security survivor benefits only if you are disabled or are caring for a child who is under age 16 or disabled and receiving benefits. Otherwise, you must wait until you are at least age 60. If you claim survivor benefits before your full retirement age, you’ll get less than if you wait until full retirement age.

Social Security Do-Over
If I take Social Security at age 62 and then pay back the benefits within 12 months to erase the penalty for claiming early, is it true I get to keep the interest I earned while I had the money?

Yes, but don’t get too excited. Prior to 2010, when Social Security imposed the 12-month limit for withdrawing an application and repaying benefits, it was often advised that people who didn’t need the money use this “do over” procedure to get what amounted to an interest-free loan from the government. If you claimed benefits at 62 and repaid them at 66, you might be playing with $100,000 or more of “house money.” The 12-month window restricts that opportunity. Also, note that if you receive benefits in one calendar year and pay them back in the next, you’ll likely have to pay tax on the benefits in year one. You can recoup the tax, but it’s complicated.

Inherited Roth IRA Withdrawals
Can my adult children inherit my Roth IRA and enjoy tax-free withdrawals?

Yes. That’s one of the great things about Roths. Unlike traditional IRAs, from which withdrawals by heirs are fully taxable, as long as five years have passed since you opened your first Roth IRA, your heirs can withdraw 100% of the funds with no tax or penalty, regardless of their age. If less time has passed, all contributions and rollovers can be withdrawn tax- and penalty-free. But if your heirs dip into earnings (which come out last), that amount will be taxed. If they delay tapping the earnings until five years have passed since the account was open, the earnings will be tax-free, too. Note that although you don’t have to take required minimum distributions from the Roth, your heirs will have to take RMDs starting the year after your death.

Tax-Free Home-Sale Profit
After my dad died last year, I discovered that he owned the family home outright. My mom wasn’t on the deed. Does that mean Mom doesn’t get to exclude the home-sale profit from tax because she didn’t own and live in the house for two of the five years before the sale?

No. Although the law requires both spouses to have lived in the house for two of five years before the sale in order to take as much as $500,000 of profit tax-free, only one spouse needs to meet the two-of-five-year ownership test. Since your dad was the sole owner of the house, the entire tax basis is stepped up to the home’s value on the day he died. So, only appreciation after his death is considered profit. If your mom sells within two years of your father’s death, she can exclude up to $500,000 of profit. K
WHEN THE PRICE OF A STOCK CLIMBS, THE YIELD
delivered by its dividend falls. So as the Dow Jones
industrial average strives to hit 20,000, rising stock
prices make it harder for income investors to find at-
tractive dividend payers. Indeed, the current average
dividend yield on Standard & Poor’s 500-stock index
is just 2.1%, down from 2.3% a year ago. For retirees
dependent on investment income, a 2.1% yield won’t
even keep up with the 2.4% inflation Kiplinger expects
in 2017.

Reaching for high yields usually means taking
greater risks. A too-good-to-be-true yield can be a red
flag about a company’s financial health and a warning
that the dividend may not be sustainable. That’s why
dependable, high-quality stocks with above-average
dividend yields are such important components of a
retirement portfolio. Here are four great companies
that we think fit the bill, and each is paying about twice
the average yield of the blue-chip S&P 500.

■ AT&T. The telecommunications services sector is
well-known for dividends, thanks in large part to
AT&T. The company has paid uninterrupted dividends
since 1984 and has raised its payout annually for more
than three decades. AT&T’s yield is the highest in Stan-
dard & Poor’s 500-stock index.

Although phone service remains AT&T’s core busi-
ness, the company is moving aggressively into pay-TV
and content production with acquisitions such as
DirecTV and a pending deal to buy Time Warner, an entertainment
giant whose lineup includes CNN, HBO and the Warner Brothers
movie studio. Analysts aren’t
counting on the deal going through—at least not without
some modifications—because of antitrust issues. But even with-
out it, AT&T’s profits should still rise by about 5% in 2017, and the
company’s strong free cash flow (cash profits, minus the capital ex-
penditures needed to maintain the business) should support its next
dividend hike.

■ Ford Motor. U.S. auto sales set a
record in 2016, but the prospect
of leaner times ahead has weighed on shares of Ford.
The stock price fell 14% in 2016 (a key to today’s high
dividend yield), and the market is treating Ford—with a
price-earnings ratio of just 7, compared with 17 for the
S&P 500—as if profits will fall off a cliff. That shouldn’t
be the case. Although car sales are forecast to decline
in 2017, they are still expected to remain close to record
levels.

■ General Motors. As with Ford, the case for investing
in General Motors comes down to generous dividends
and a bargain-priced stock. Only about three dozen
stocks in the S&P 500 possess yields of more than 4%. 
Even with the high payout, GM distributed just 25% of its profits as dividends in the third quarter of 2016,
compared with an average of just over 40% for S&P
500 companies. That indicates ample room to cover
and even hike payouts in the future. Analysts see
earnings per share dipping from $6 in 2016 to $5.80
this year. But with a P/E of 6, GM’s stock already
reflects the expected earnings decline—and maybe
then some.

■ Verizon Communications. Verizon has paid uninter-
rupted dividends since its name changed from Bell
Atlantic in 2000. It can also claim 10 straight years
of dividend growth. But the company offers more than
an income stream. It is repositioning itself for a world
in which mobile content is ubiquitous and digital ads
are moneymakers. It purchased AOL for its digital-
advertising technology in 2015
and currently has an agree-
ment to buy Yahoo. That deal
may not go through, partly be-
cause of Yahoo’s disclosure of a
massive data theft impacting
more than 1 billion accounts.
But Verizon is raking
in cash from its mobile busi-
ness, Fios service and other
sources. Earnings per share
should climb 3.6% in 2017.
Throw in a 4.4% dividend yield
and you could scoop up total
returns close to 8% over the
next year if the stock keeps
pace with profit growth
as expected. K DAN BURROWS
For retirees with bond-heavy portfolios, 2016 came to an unsettling end.

The bonds that many retirees see as their safest holdings—Treasuries and high-quality municipals—sold off sharply after the U.S. presidential election. Expectations that the incoming Trump administration will boost infrastructure spending and cut taxes sparked inflation fears, and the 10-year U.S. Treasury yield jumped from 1.8% before the election to about 2.4% at the end of November. (Bond prices and yields move in opposite directions.) More pain came in December, as the Federal Reserve raised interest rates and central bankers signaled that they may hike rates three times in 2017.

Strategists see more bumps in the road ahead. If the new administration cuts taxes as expected, demand could cool for muni bonds, which are exempt from federal and most state and local taxes. And after a year in which the U.S. election and the United Kingdom’s vote to leave the European Union rocked the markets, upcoming elections in France and Germany promise more political uncertainty.

Although strategists don’t see bonds crashing this year, investors need to buckle their seatbelts. “This year it will be pretty volatile—more volatile than last year,” says George Rusnak, co-head of global fixed income strategy at Wells Fargo. Retirees need to guard their bond holdings against higher rates and inflation while squeezing out a decent yield—a tall order when many parts of the bond market look expensive.

For those who have been lulled by the 35-year bull market in bonds, the recent upheaval is a wake-up call. The plain-vanilla bond holdings that form the core of many retirees’ portfolios, those that hew closely to the Bloomberg Barclays U.S. Aggregate Bond index, appear poised for some pain. Over the past decade, the duration—or interest-rate sensitivity—of the aggregate index has increased roughly 33%, in part because U.S. Treasuries have accounted for a growing share of the index, according to Litman Gregory Asset Management. The index yield, meanwhile, has dropped more than 50% over the same period, to about 2.6%. Returns on the index “will be pretty paltry going forward,” says Jack Chee, senior research analyst at Litman Gregory.

Your first step to prepare your bond portfolio for 2017: Rein in the interest-rate sensitivity of your core bond holdings. Expectations for higher economic growth and inflation this year mean that rate increases will be led by longer-maturity bonds, says Jeffrey Rosenberg, chief fixed-income strategist at BlackRock. Bonds maturing in two to five years are “a good strategy” for shortening duration, Rosenberg says.

Vanguard Short-Term Investment-Grade fund (symbol VFSTX) invests largely in high-quality corporate bonds, and its holdings have an average maturity of about three years. Another option: DoubleLine Total Return Bond fund (DLTNX), which invests largely in mortgage-backed securities. It has a duration of just 2.6 years, compared with more than five years for the typical aggregate bond index fund. (A fund with a duration of five years will lose roughly 5% if interest rates rise by one percentage point.)

With inflation expectations ticking up, investors should also consider swapping some of their conventional Treasury holdings for Treasury inflation-protected securities, Rosenberg says. TIPS’ principal increases with inflation. While TIPS
funds tend to have longer duration, Rosenberg says he is comfortable with that because he expects a large proportion of 2017’s rate increases to be driven by rising inflation expectations. Investors looking for less volatility can opt for a short-term TIPS fund such as Vanguard Short-Term Inflation-Protected Securities Index (VTIPX), which has a duration of 2.5 years.

Although it may be tempting to juice your yield with lower-quality bonds, strategists urge caution. “Junk” bonds—high-yield bonds issued by companies with lower credit quality—were the best-performing fixed-income sector in 2016, with a 17% return. At today’s prices, though, strategists say investors aren’t getting paid for the risks they’re taking in these bonds.

Opportunity in Munis

One area of the bond market that does look like a relative bargain right now: muni bonds. Investors beat up these bonds after the election, on the assumption that tax cuts would dampen their appeal. But the sell-off looks overdone, says John Miller, co-head of fixed income at Nuveen Asset Management. The ratio of high-quality muni yields to Treasury yields, which usually stands around 85%, had climbed to about 100% as of mid January. “That looks unusually cheap,” Miller says.

What’s more, the proposed changes to corporate and individual tax rates may well be scaled back. If the top tax bracket falls to 33%—from today’s 43.4%—higher-income investors would still get an after-tax advantage from holding munis even if the historic gap between tax-free and taxable yields is restored.

Investors should focus on high-quality muni funds that don’t load up on interest-rate risk. Fidelity Intermediate Municipal Income (FLTMX) and T. Rowe Price Tax-Free Short-Intermediate (PRFSX) tend to avoid the riskier sectors of the muni market.

Looking overseas, developed-markets bonds don’t generate much excitement among strategists, as interest rates remain relatively low. Emerging-markets bonds offer more yield, but a stronger U.S. dollar makes it tougher for borrowers to pay back dollar-denominated debt.

Rather than pick through the fringes of the fixed-income market yourself, you can opt for a go-anywhere bond fund that has the flexibility to shift in and out of non-U.S.-dollar debt, junk bonds and other holdings. Looomis Sayles Bond fund (LSBRIX), which can invest up to 35% of assets in high-yield bonds and up to 20% in stocks, has used such flexibility to build a strong long-term track record. K ELEANOR LAISE

YOUR HEALTH

An ER Designed for Older Patients

THE EMERGENCY ROOM WAS PACKED ONE NIGHT A couple of years ago when Marilyn Riffkin visited Holy Cross Hospital, in Silver Spring, Md., suffering from diverticulitis. She expected to wait for hours. But five minutes later, Riffkin was taken to an ER designed for non-trauma patients ages 65 and older.

Riffkin, 71, was the only patient. The nurse gave her a hot water bottle to ease the pain and hooked her up to an intravenous antibiotic. After Riffkin returned home, the ER called to see how she was doing. “They treated me like a gem,” she says.

Older adults account for 15% of all ER visits, and that share is sure to grow as the population ages. A study at one hospital found its geriatric ER reduced admissions of older persons, who federal data show are much more likely than younger patients to be admitted.

Holy Cross Hospital’s senior emergency room opened in 2009, the first of about 90 hospitals to build a geriatric ER. During a recent tour, Dr. James Del Vecchio, medical director and chairman of emergency services for Holy Cross Health, showed off the ER’s features.

The eight treatment bays are separated by walls rather than curtains, to provide quiet and privacy. Mattresses are thick, and the phones have large numbers. The walls are painted a calming cream and soft brown—Del Vecchio says he learned the pale blue he originally wanted tends to look dirty to aging retinas.

Del Vecchio pointed to the floor, made of a non-slick wood alternative. “Hospital floors are usually white and shiny,” he says. “But shiny looks wet, and when patients think the floor is wet, they’re more likely to fall.”
Acute Care Units for Seniors

Here’s a sobering statistic: One-third to one-half of patients older than age 70 who land in the hospital with an acute illness or injury leave more disabled than when they arrived. This is true even if they recover from the medical condition that sent them there, research shows. Many patients who may have been independent before will need help with walking, dressing and other activities when they go home.

Older patients are less likely than younger ones to bounce back from a stint in the hospital, in part because they may suffer from several chronic conditions. To help prevent the functional decline of geriatric patients, between 100 and 200 hospitals nationwide have opened Acute Care for Elders (ACE) units.

The ACE unit at the University of Alabama at Birmingham’s hospital is typical. Patients are treated by an interdisciplinary team that includes a geriatrician, nurse, social worker, dietitian, physical therapist, pharmacist and psychologist.

All new patients are tested for physical function and cognitive impairment. Even a mild cognition issue can lead to confusion and agitation after the addition of new medications, interrupted sleep, poor eating habits and days in bed. The delirium that may follow can result in permanent decline, says Dr. Kellie Flood, a geriatrician who directed the establishment of the 26-bed ACE unit at UAB in 2008.

At UAB’s unit, all the rooms are private, promoting a peaceful environment. The staff monitors medications for debilitating interactions. Patients who are able eat their meals in a chair, not in bed. Volunteers help with range-of-motion exercises. A “move and groove” music program, as well as card games and Sudoku, keep patients physically and mentally active.

Patients also do a lot of walking. “If a person was walking before coming in, the patient needs to be walking as much as possible in the hospital,” says Flood, director of clinical programs of the UAB’s Division of Gerontology, Geriatrics and Palliative Care.

A 2010 study found that patients who stayed in the Birmingham hospital’s ACE unit had lower 30-day readmission rates than older patients treated in the hospital’s regular acute-care unit. A study of another hospital’s ACE unit showed that its patients had shorter hospital stays than other older patients.

For design help, Holy Cross and other hospitals turned to the Erickson School, which offers programs in aging services at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. Using the latest research in geriatrics, Erickson focused in part on fostering communication between the staff, who are trained in geriatric care, and patients, who are often disoriented, says Judah Ronch, Erickson’s dean. The soothing environment helps reduce anxiety. “Stress can impair memory, and anything that promotes comfort improves rapport and the accuracy of information,” such as a patient remembering when she last took medication, Ronch says.

Targeting the Health Needs of Seniors

All patients are screened for cognitive impairment and abuse. They’re also tested for fall risk: Broken bones or a poor gait could be signs of an undiagnosed physical condition or obstacles at home. And if someone is taking many medications, the hospital pharmacist will check for harmful interactions.

Del Vecchio recalls one female patient whose daughter was about to place her mother in a nursing home because she was always groggy. The ER ruled out a stroke and sepsis when the pharmacist found the woman’s physician had increased a medication for nerve pain. The hospital cut back the dosage. “The great news was that she woke up,” Del Vecchio says, though her pain notched up a bit.

The medical staff recognizes that older patients often show different symptoms than younger patients for the same disease. For example, a person older than age 80 who is having a heart attack may not have chest pains but instead appear weak or fatigued. “Ill-defined symptoms could represent a more serious issue,” says Del Vecchio.

Over the years, Holy Cross’s geriatric ER has reduced the number of older patients who return within 72 hours. Del Vecchio says a big reason is the discharge process. Marcy Smith, the ER's geriatric social worker, calls each patient the day after discharge to make sure prescriptions have been filled and an appointment with a doctor scheduled. If not, Smith will arrange to have the medication delivered or call the doctor herself.

Smith will also coordinate home care, the delivery of supplies to the patient or admission to a nursing facility. And for patients who have fallen at home, Smith may call on an expert to check for loose extension cords or other hazards. “We can set up whatever services that are appropriate, even before they are out of the ER,” Smith says.
INSIDER INTERVIEW

A Nudge Toward a Better Retirement

When it comes to making financial decisions, we’d all like to be perfectly rational. Alas, we’re human: We procrastinate, we are hypersensitive to losses, and we allow emotions to sway our decisions. Those traits may cause us to delay saving for retirement or hold on to a losing stock that we should have dumped years ago.

Behavioral economists such as Shlomo Benartzi, professor and co-chair of the behavioral decision-making group at the University of California Los Angeles Anderson School of Management, study the psychological issues that can undermine our decision-making and try to minimize their impact or even turn them to our advantage. In this lightly edited conversation with Senior Editor Eleanor Laise, Benartzi shared his thoughts on how behavioral economics can improve the lives of retirees.

The typical retiree’s drawdown plan allows for the same level of spending year after year. You’ve suggested this may not be the best approach. Why is that?
► When consumption is smooth, people tend to habituate to their level of consumption. Research suggests that we can get more happiness from our retirement dollars when the amount we spend is varied over time.

How can retirees tweak their drawdown strategies to maximize their happiness—and minimize anxiety about running out of money?
► It’s important for financial advisers to work with clients so that their drawdown approach reflects their own individual preferences. For instance, surveys show that many people prefer a retirement drawdown with an upward slope, or gradually increasing their spending amounts. They like saving the best for last. Interestingly, this approach can also help people deal with the anxiety of running out of money, since they are spending less early in retirement.

You’ve also suggested retirees could use a “spike” approach, spending larger amounts for short periods. What are the benefits of that?
► The temporary increase in spending helps people escape the trap of habituation. They appreciate the additional spending precisely because it’s temporary. And the brief nature of the increase ensures that it won’t have a negative impact on their long-term finances. It’s not too late to live like a rich person, even if it’s only for a single month every year.

If retirees allow their annual spending to bounce up and down, how should they tame the risk of running out of money?
► It’s all about making a sustainable financial plan and following it. While this might sound like a daunting task, new digital tools and interventions make it rather easy. For instance, I’m currently developing a NudgeBot that can offer people personalized advice based on their adherence to a given spending plan. Sometimes, the NudgeBot reminds you to take your grandkids to Disneyland—you’ve got a luxury month coming up. And sometimes it’s going to remind you to get a drip coffee instead of a latte at Starbucks, because you’ve been exceeding your monthly spend.

Are there other ways that digital “nudges” can be used to improve the lives of retirees?
► One area I’m currently working on involves just-in-time financial education. In a pilot study that Yaron Levi of the University of Southern California and I conducted with users of [online financial-advice service] Personal Capital, we found that giving them easy access to their financial accounts via a smartphone app led to a reduction in discretionary spending around 15%. That’s a huge behavioral shift.

We need to develop and test digital interventions that can help everyone follow a sustainable spending and saving plan. Many of these solutions involve personalization, a digital tool that has already been widely adopted by successful technology companies, such as Netflix and Amazon. It’s time for the financial industry to catch up. K
But on a riverboat, you see the scenic little towns, the fields, the people, the markets, all the local life.”

Many of the hottest river destinations are in Europe, along the Seine, Rhone and Rhine, but Mississippi River tours are also more sought after these days, says Carolyn Spencer Brown, editor of CruiseCritic.com. “These trips are appealing to people who want to reconnect with American history,” she says.

Here are a few sample itineraries:

Viking’s “Rhine Getaway” sails between Amsterdam and Basel, with stops in Germany, France and the Netherlands. The eight-day trip starts at $1,699 per person. (Go to www.vikingrivercruises.com.)

Tauck’s “Christmas Markets Along the Rhine,” in Germany and France, stops in seven cities, including Aachen and Colmar. The eight-day trip starts at $2,690 a person. (Visit www.tauck.com.)

Road Scholar’s “The Best of the Mississippi” is a ride aboard a steam-powered paddlewheel riverboat that goes from New Orleans to Memphis for 11 days. It starts at $4,495 per person and includes stops in Natchez and Vicksburg. (Go to www.roadscholar.org.)

Shopping for a River Cruise

When looking for a cruise, keep these tips in mind.

■ Figure out your travel style. Don’t start your research by price. Instead, figure out what’s important to you, says Brown. If nightlife and eating at fine restaurants are key, find a boat that docks overnight or leaves port late.

■ Look for seasonal bargains. Often, you can get a better price at the beginning and at the end of the season, Bell says. European boats go into dry dock after Christmas until March, so there are good values in late March and early April, and in late November and December. Bell also says that July is a harder time to sell riverboat trips because of crowds and more expensive airfares, so Road Scholar uses its riverboats for family trips in July and August, with special rates for children.

■ Compare apples to apples. “All inclusive” has different meanings depending on the company, says Chrissy O’Keeffe, a Tauck brand manager. Tauck’s pricing includes the cost of all shore excursions and tips. Compare included amenities: For instance, Tauck has a 24/7 open bar policy on the ship. Look at the quality of the hotels for the land portion and at the caliber of activities. “Is it a boiler-plate museum tour,” says O’Keeffe, “or a dinner with dancing at a private castle?”

■ Consider mobility issues. Getting on and off the boat may require using stairs or steep gangways. Not all boats have elevators to every deck. K BETH BROPHY

SUSAN BLISS, 71, AND HER HUSBAND, JERRY WITT, 82, of Portland, Ore., usually go on “strenuous” hiking and biking vacations. But to celebrate their 25th anniversary, last May they took their first riverboat trip—an AMA Waterways Danube seven-day cruise, plus three nights on land in Prague, that sailed from Bavaria to Budapest, through Vienna, Salzburg and Bratislava.

The couple loved it. “You can see a lot of places in a short time,” says Bliss, a retired museum publicist. Highlights of their time on the boat included vegan meals that the chef whipped up just for Bliss and local wines served by the knowledgeable wine steward.

Many travelers are discovering the joy of river cruises. “In 2005, about 144,000 North Americans took a river cruise; by 2015, that number was 497,000,” says Richard Marnell, senior vice president of marketing for Viking Cruises, whose fleet has grown to 61 vessels.

Road Scholar had a “huge surge” in travelers taking riverboat trips, up 20% a year in 2015 and 2016, and expected to grow 20% in 2017, says JoAnn Bell, Road Scholar’s vice president of programming. The company sends about 3,000 passengers a year on about 60 riverboat trips in Europe, Southeast Asia and South America, plus on two ships plying the Mississippi River.

Why the gain in popularity? Riverboats are more intimate than ocean cruises; the boats are small enough—carrying only about 160 or fewer people—to navigate the bridges and locks of the cities along the way. All the major cities in Europe are on rivers, and when travelers disembark, they are conveniently situated for sightseeing. There’s no need to shlep luggage around.

“It’s my number-one way to see Europe,” says Road Scholar’s Bell. “On an ocean trip, you just see water.
Perfect Choice HD Ultra™ is simple to use, hard to see and easy to afford…

Invention of the Year
PERSONAL SOUND AMPLIFICATION PRODUCT (PSAP)

IT’S NOT A HEARING AID

Perfect Choice HD Ultra™ is NOT a hearing aid. It is a Personal Sound Amplification Product (PSAP). Hearing aids can only be sold by an audiologist or a licensed hearing instrument specialist following hearing tests and fitting appointments. Once the audiologist had you tested and fitted, you would have to pay as much as $5000 for the product.

The designers of the Perfect Choice HD Ultra™ have moved the tiny but powerful speaker to the end of the hearing tube, so it is closer to the eardrum, giving you more volume and clarity. It features dual microphones that focus on voices for better conversational listening. It also automatically senses noisy or quiet environments and suppresses background noise, so sounds and conversations are easier to hear and understand.

The unit is small and lightweight enough to hide behind your ear… only you’ll know you have it on. It’s comfortable and won’t make you feel like you have something stuck in your ear.

Try it for yourself with our exclusive home trial. This remarkable product has been designed with the finest micro-digital components on the market today. Thanks to the efforts of a doctor who leads a renowned hearing institute, it’s manufactured in an efficient production process that makes it available at an affordable price. Call now, and you’ll find out why so many satisfied seniors are now enjoying their Perfect Choice HD Ultra, hearing their grandchildren and what the world has to say. Call today, and be sure to ask about our special discounts for Seniors and Military personnel.

Call now toll free for our lowest price ever.
Please mention promotional code 105358.
1-877-708-2728
1998 Ruffin Mill Road,
Colonial Heights, VA 23834

Perfect Choice HD Ultra™ is simple to use, hard to see and easy to afford…

It’s Better

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMFORT</th>
<th>Less than 1 ounce</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOUND QUALITY</td>
<td>Excellent: Optimized for speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FITTING REQUIRED?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONE-ON-ONE SETUP</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENIOR AND MILITARY DISCOUNTS</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NEW Speaker in ear design for power and clarity!
WHY BE AVERAGE? STAND OUT.
GO WAY BEYOND AVERAGE WITH OUR CONSISTENTLY GREAT RATES.

Choose Synchrony Bank and enjoy award-winning rates—well above the national average—along with the safety of FDIC insurance and the rewards of our Perks program. Whatever you’re working forward to, why settle for average? With Synchrony Bank, you can count on more.

What are you working forward to?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Earn 3X the national average* on a 12-Month CD.</th>
<th>Earn 8X the national average* on a High Yield Savings Account.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Image of a leaf on a rock]</td>
<td>![Image of a leaf on a rock]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.25% APY*</td>
<td>1.05% APY*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$2,000 minimum opening deposit</td>
<td>no minimum balance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Visit us at synchronybank.com or call 1-800-753-6592.

*Annual Percentage Yields (APYs) are accurate as of 1/1/17 and subject to change at any time without notice. Fees may reduce earnings. Visit synchronybank.com for current rates, terms and account requirements. One is apply to personal accounts only.

CDs: A minimum of $2,000 is required. Open a CD and must be deposited in a single transaction. A penalty may be imposed for early withdrawals. After maturity, if you choose to rollover your CD, you will earn the base rate of interest in effect at that time.

HIGH YIELD SAVINGS: Rates are variable and subject to change any time without notice after the accounts opened. No minimum opening deposit required.

NATIONAL AVERAGE: National Average APYs are based on specific product types of top 50 U.S. banks (ranked by total deposits) provided by Informa Research Services, Inc. as of 1/1/17. CD Rates: Average APYs are based on certificate of deposit accounts of $25,000. High Yield Savings Rates: Average APYs are based on High Yield Savings Accounts of $10,000. Although the information provided by Informa Research Services, Inc. has been obtained from the various institutions, accuracy cannot be guaranteed.

FDIC INSURANCE: FDIC insurance up to $250,000 per depositor, per insured bank, for each ownership category.

©2017 Synchrony Bank