



DEAR ANNIE

By Annie Lane

Friend or thief?

Dear Annie: I have a very dear friend who is like family. I am 20 years older than she is, and at times I feel more like a surrogate mother than a big sister.

I know she has mental health problems, including anger management, trust issues, obsessive-compulsive disorder and, at times, I think, narcissistic tendencies. But she truly is a good person at heart. I encouraged her to get into therapy, and she has blossomed and grown over this past year. I support her 100% in any way that I can.

She is a single mother who works two jobs. She has three boys, and they are her world. My husband and I take the boys after school while she works her second job because they are like grandchildren to us.

The other day, I was getting ready to make Christmas cookies and thought I was losing my mind. Two of the prepackaged cookie dough packages were missing. The boys saw my bewilderment and informed me that their mom took them to make them cookies the previous week.

Tonight, when I went to make the cookies for our house and church, I discovered that I'm missing a cookie sheet. So, I've been thinking back, and a lot of things have gone missing, and I simply thought that I must not have bought what I thought, or used all of something and not remembered. I have asked her before about things missing or if she "accidentally" picked something up, and she would be honest and return it the next day. Nothing of major value by any means. Simple silly things like a candle or a pair of scissors or hand lotion.

Well, after the incident with the cookie dough, which really upset me, I bought a few bottles of wine to give as gifts, left them in the bag and taped a note on them: "Do Not Touch." When she came by after work to eat and get the boys, she saw this and got upset and was personally offended. My husband says to let it be because we love those boys so much and she's doing so well. We can afford to replace the little things.

I feel that she and I should have a conversation, and I feel her therapist should know.

To be honest, I'm afraid this will end up like our son, who robbed us blind and cut ties with us because we finally had to say enough was enough and file charges. I'm afraid the little things will become larger and the boys will think this behavior is acceptable if we don't stop it now. Please help. — Stuck in Maryland

Dear Stuck in Maryland: You are correct to be concerned for your friend — not because of *what* she is stealing but for the fact that she is stealing from you at all. It shows a lack of trust. The fact that she took a little note and blew it way out of proportion tells me she is feeling guilty about something. As Shakespeare said, "The lady doth protest too much."

If anything, sitting down with your friend and trying to get her professional help is the kindest thing. Make sure when you approach her that it is not with a "got ya" mentality but rather one of concern for her mental health.

— Send your questions for Annie Lane to dearannie@creators.com.

Rising from the ashes: Rotary supports adult education in Jefferson County

The Rotary Club of Charles Town recently showed its support for the community by donating to the Jefferson County Adult Learning Center. This donation comes after a terrible fire in July 2023 destroyed the center's original building in Ranson. The fire caused the devastating loss of important learning materials and resources that help adults in Jefferson County get an education.

Since the fire, the Adult Learning Center has been operating out of Corner Connection in Charles Town. Despite the challenges, the center continues to pursue its mission of helping adults improve their skills and work toward their educational and life goals.

The Rotary Club's donation was made possible thanks to a grant from Rotary District 7360 and funds raised through their annual event, Christmas for Charities. In 2024, this fundraiser celebrated its 15th year. During the most recent event, the club raised \$62,000, which was split between the Adult Center and more than 20 other nonprofits in the area. The event's success was thanks to over 50 local businesses, supporters, and major sponsors including Snyder Environmental Services, Rockwool, Hollywood Casino, WVU Medicine and others.

Since it began, Christmas for Charities has distributed nearly \$550,000 in proceeds to support local communities and global Rotary initiatives.

The Adult Learning Center is critical to Jefferson County. It gives people the chance to improve their reading and writing, find better jobs, grow personally, acquire their GED, obtain work-



Submitted photo

Shown from left are President of the Rotary Club of Charles Town, Chris Cox and Foundation Chair of the Rotary Club of Charles Town, Steve Bittinger and Jefferson County Adult Learning Center Representatives, Vanessa Clay, Jennifer Donaho and Beth Ayling.

place job certifications, take English classes, and participate in citizenship programs. West Virginia's Department of Education reports that more adults are enrolling in these programs, showing how much, they are needed. These programs help people gain the skills they need to succeed in the workforce. The Rotary Club of Charles Town

recognizes how valuable adult education is and how it helps both individuals and the community. By supporting the Adult Learning Center, the club is helping rebuild the center and investing in the future of Jefferson County. PO Box 1265 | Charles Town, WV 25414 | Facebook: @CharlesTownRotary

"We believe in strengthening our community through education and are committed to helping our neighbors recover from this tragedy," said Chris Cox, the Rotary Club's current president. "This donation shows our dedication to making a positive difference in Charles Town and beyond. It also reflects the generosity of the many supporters who make events like Christmas for Charities such a success year after year."

The Rotary Club hopes its contribution will inspire others to support adult education and help rebuild stronger educational programs for adults in need.

If you'd like to learn more about the Jefferson County Adult Learning Center or help support them, visit <https://jeffersonadulteducation.weebly.com/>. Together, with organizations like the Rotary Club of Charles Town, we can help overcome challenges and create opportunities for everyone in the community to succeed.

The Rotary Club of Charles Town is part of Rotary International, the world's first service club. Rotary members, known as Rotarians, work to serve others, promote high ethical standards, and build goodwill and peace worldwide. To join or learn more about the Rotary Club, visit www.rotary-charlestownwv.org.

First neurointerventional surgical procedures performed at Berkeley Medical Center



Submitted photo

Phong Vu, M.D.

MARTINSBURG — The first neurointerventional surgical procedures were performed at WVU Medicine Berkeley Medical Center, marking a significant advancement in the hospital's neurovascular and stroke care capabilities.

Neurointerventional surgery is a specialized field of medicine that uses minimally invasive techniques to diagnose and treat complex conditions affecting the brain, spine, and blood vessels. Guided by advanced imaging technologies, interventional neurologists perform procedures through small incisions, often using catheters to reach and treat affected areas. This approach reduces the need for traditional open surgeries, resulting in shorter recovery times, lower risks of complications, and improved outcomes for patients.

Phong Vu, M.D., an interventional neurologist, suc-

cessfully performed the first two procedures on Jan. 9. The first procedure involved carotid stenting to address severe carotid disease, a major risk factor for stroke. The second was a comprehensive cerebral angiography to assist with pre-surgical planning for a patient with an aneurysm that will soon be treated.

Berkeley Medical Center now offers a full spectrum of neurointerventional services and procedures including acute stroke management, aneurysm treatment, arteriovenous malformation (AVM) and fistula treatment, carotid and vertebral artery procedures, intracranial atherosclerotic disease treatment, spinal interventions, cerebral venous sinus thrombosis (CVST) treatment, treatment of chronic cerebrovascular conditions, head and neck vascular procedures, and inferior petrosal sinus (IPS) sampling.

According to Dr. Vu, the addition of these services enhances the hospital's ability to deliver advanced care and improved outcomes for patients with complex neurovascular conditions.

"The addition of neurointerventional surgery represents a transformative moment for our hospital and our community," Vu said. "We are proud to offer these life-saving procedures close to home, ensuring that our patients have access to the highest quality of care without the need to travel."

In February, Berkeley Medical Center will open a new state-of-the-art neurointerventional radiology suite on the hospital's first floor to serve as home to this new service line.

For more information, visit WVUMedicine.org/Berkeley/.

HINTS FROM HELOISE

READER WRITES IN WITH TWO HINTS

Dear Heloise: I read your column in the Colorado Springs Gazette and have a couple of hints for your readers:

■ Instead of using a sifter (which is hard with arthritic hands), use a whisk.

■ For leftover grease I use a 16-ounce soda bottle and funnel. Make sure the grease is room temperature! Since the bottle has a lid, it's easy to dispose of. — Terry F., in Colorado

SEND A GREAT HINT TO:

Heloise@Heloise.com

MEDICAL SCREENING HOAX

Dear Heloise: I read with great interest a recent column in which K.C., from Ohio, alerted your readers about calls from companies



HINTS FROM HELOISE

By Heloise

that do screening for various inherited conditions. K.C. is correct to be distrustful of such calls.

Genetic testing scams are on the rise across the country. These companies don't just call; they put out advertisements on TV and online. Representatives go to senior centers, health fairs, and even parking lots to convince people to let them take a cheek swab for testing.

Sometimes the tests are called DNA screenings, cancer screenings or hereditary testing, to name a few. They promise that the results will

help you avoid diseases or find the right medications. All they ask for in return is your insurance information or Medicare number for older adults.

While this may sound harmless, in reality, it is dangerous. These companies can steal people's medical identities and falsely bill their insurance/Medicare. Tests ordered under these circumstances are unnecessary and could lead to confusion about someone's health condition.

The Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) helps protect, detect and report possible cases of Medicare fraud, errors and abuse. If your older readers who use Medicare encounter these schemes, they should report them to their local Senior Medicare Patrol at SMPResource.org/Locator or by calling 877-808-2468. — Brandy B.,

An Avid Reader

Brandy, thank you so much for writing in with this important information. — Heloise

STUBBORN JARS

Dear Heloise: Tapping on the stuck lid of a jar is not the best solution to get it open. Instead, get a jar opener at just about any grocery store, home goods store, or hardware store. They are much safer than risking a possible shattering of tiny glass pieces and definitely cheaper than a trip to the emergency room. — Carrie T., Lansing, Michigan

COUPONS

Dear Heloise: My husband loves to go grocery shopping with me because he enjoys finding new things to try. It could be a different bread he never heard of before or a new flavor of ice cream, and this is fine with me.

However, when I went to pay, I pulled out a wad of coupons. My husband whispered, "Put those away!" I asked him why, and he said it was embarrassing because in his view, it made us look poor. (And we most certainly are not.) Well, I still used my coupons, and we saved over \$14 at the grocery store that day.

This amount may not be a king's ransom, but over the course of a year, it adds up. Personally, I think it's sensible to use coupons because manufacturers want people to use their products.

Do other women have this problem with their husbands, or are we just the "weird couple"? — Dorothy C., Orange County, California

Dorothy, this is a very intriguing question! I'd love to know what our readers think. Let us know by writing to Heloise@Heloise.com. — Heloise