

**PETS:** The right companion adds quality of life

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you're fairly active, you may be able to handle a dog that needs lots of play-time and opportunities to run. But if you have mobility or stamina issues, you might want to choose a dog that is content with a few short walks. Some very small dogs may even be able to get all the exercise they need just by running around inside your home.

Smaller dogs are easier to keep under control and are more suitable for seniors living in condos, apartments, or care facilities. Small dogs can fit in your lap, are more portable than larger breeds, won't physically overwhelm you and can be easily groomed in a sink. Keep in mind that some small dogs have lots of nervous energy and try to make up for their diminutive stature with plenty of barking.

Alternatively, docile larger dogs that don't require a lot of maintenance may be a good choice.

Older dogs are better dogs for seniors to adopt than puppies that are super active and tend to chew and nip. Adult dogs are typically already housetrained and well-socialized with people. Mature dogs also tend to be the calmest dogs, with more predictable behavior patterns.

Dogs' temperaments are influenced by the genes they are born with as well as the way they are brought up. While any dog can be raised to be friendly, some breeds are more naturally conditioned to be gentle and welcoming. Beagles, retrievers, poodles, and bulldogs are among the dogs that have the

best temperament.

However, caring for a pet is not to be entered into lightly. It's important for that right pet to be affordable to an older pet parent.

Since many seniors live on limited incomes, it's essential to consider a pet parents ability to pay for their pet's basic needs. Starting expenses include the adoption or purchase costs, spaying or neutering, vaccinations and a crate. Regular expenses will include food, toys, vet visits, medications and the possibility of grooming.

Even though pets are a source of joy for many older adults, the cost of care can be a strain for some seniors. If you're having trouble paying for food, vaccinations, and veterinary care for your pet, there may be low-cost or free resources available in your community. Here's how to find the help you and your pet need.

Kiki Dolson, founder of Furry Friends Foundation (FFF), estimates about 40 percent of the families that the nonprofit organization helps are seniors on fixed incomes.

She noted, "Many live alone and have one or two pets for companionship. By providing their pet's monthly food and other pet supplies it adds extra dollars to their monthly budget. Furry Friends also helps with vaccinations and spay/neuter, all large-cost items for an individual on a fixed income. In that way we can help keep their pets healthy and in their homes."

The Humane Society of the U.S. has a state-by-state list of financial-aid resources for pet owners. With some persistence you can keep your pets in the best possible health, even on a tight budget.



**Fit For Sisters**  
Andrew Loscutoff  
Columnist

**Exercise and fitness for a lifetime**

Exercise was once exclusive to young, ambitious, and driven people striving for beach-body glory. However, in the recent years a monumental shift has transformed gyms, local recreational activity, and racing events like triathlon and trail running. This shift, from young hardbodies to wise grey-haired zealots has shown the potential for human longevity and why exercise is so important.

According to USA Triathlon, the number of Americans age 70 or older who participated in officially sanctioned triathlons (covering races of varying distances) grew 168 percent between 2009 and 2017.

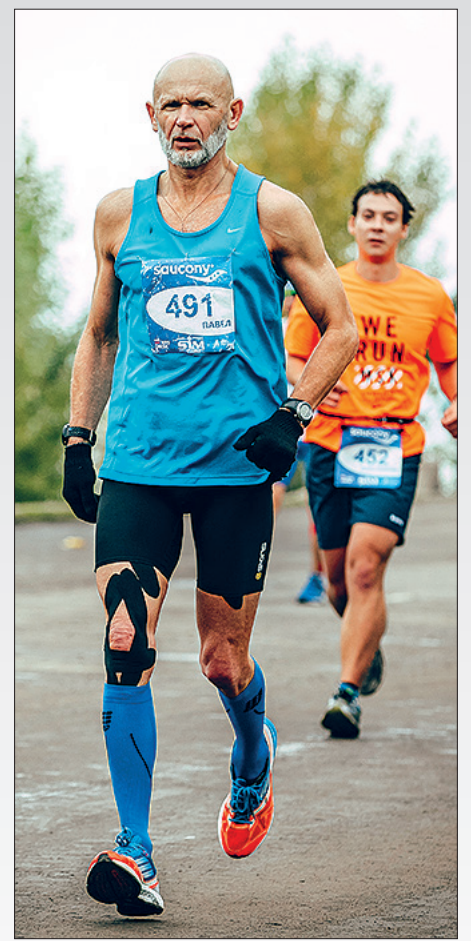
This isn't the only surge in activity: A surprising statistic from runnerclick.com revealed the largest growth in age groups for marathon runners was the 80-99 year old athletes. This is astonishing. Not only this but the fastest recreational runners are the 40- to 49-year-old age groups. When looking at finishing times, the group with the greatest

improvements in average times has been the 50 to 59 age group.

Where are all these late bloomer athletes coming from? There's no doubt that the population is aging; by 2020 20 percent of the total USA population will be 65 or older, but this isn't the end of the story. Our culture is embracing the attitude that exercise is essential for all ages. There are more peers for older adults to train or recreate with, and there are many more events to participate in. Not only this, but the population of retirees seems to be seeking the thrills that were on the back burner during child-rearing years.

It also appears that what once was a stigma of age is no longer prevalent. It is now shown with proper exercise, rehab, and recovery an athlete can play at the elite level into their 40s. Some athletes defy age and continue into their 50s in the recreational elite levels.

Rebecca Rusch, a 50-year-old professional mountain-biker and adventure athlete sums it up in an *Outside*



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*Magazine* article titled: "Rebecca Rusch Never Lets Herself Get Bored": "Endurance sports are like any job — someone who's been at it for 30 years knows more, is more efficient. Even though I'm not the same physically as I was at 25, the experience that I have and the knowledge and strength in my mind that I've accrued... it all offsets the sheer benefits of being 25."

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