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Urvi and Sanjiv Avichal, LTC, USA,
with Dev and Arjun

US FAMILY
HEALTH PLAN

U

fall calendar

SEPTEMBER

★
September is Suicide Prevention Month. Learn more at veteranscrisisline.net

18
Happy Birthday U.S. Air Force!

23
First day of fall

29
Rosh Hashanah begins at sundown

OCTOBER

8
Yom Kippur begins at sundown

13
Happy Birthday U.S. Navy!

14
Columbus Day

31
Halloween

NOVEMBER

3
Daylight Saving Time ends (move clocks back)

10
Happy Birthday U.S. Marine Corps!

11
Veterans Day observed

28
Thanksgiving Day

DECEMBER

7
Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day

21
First day of winter

22
Hanukkah begins at sundown

25
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FITNESS



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US Family Health Plan members choose from a network of over 2,000 civilian primary care providers and thousands of specialists, plus a large network of civilian hospitals.

Who We Are

US Family Health Plan of Southern New England is a Department of Defense TRICARE Prime option, and one of six regional US Family Health Plan programs across the nation. Our large network of civilian doctors, hospitals, and other health providers serves Plan members who live in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and parts of southern New Hampshire and northern Connecticut.

We pride ourselves on friendly, personal service. If you have questions, call us at **1.800.818.8589**. If you're nearby, come visit our headquarters in the historic Brighton Marine building in Brighton, Massachusetts. You can also get to know us better at usfamilyhealth.org or at facebook.com/USFHP.SouthernNewEngland.



Making Time to Wander

“Rest is not idleness, and to lie sometimes on the grass under trees on a summer's day, listening to the murmur of the water, or watching the clouds float across the sky, is by no means a waste of time.”

—John Lubbock, *The Use of Life*

I came across this quote recently and it resonated with me. I have struggled most of my life with trying to strike a balance between the demands of work and expectations of family and my own needs and well-being. As I have grown older, I have increasingly realized that in order to be my best, I need to rest and reflect, and take time to refuel.

One of the things that I have begun doing religiously in the last several years is an evening walk. I have found the benefits of taking half an hour to listen to the rustle of leaves in the trees above my head and the birds singing as the sun begins to set. I appreciate the opportunity to take a deep breath of fresh air and let go of the stresses of the day.

Communing with nature is restorative because it is a reminder of the inherent wonder of our world.

There is beauty in the simple things and in the complexity of our environment as well. Everything in nature is interdependent. The bees and the flowers need each other to produce their rich gifts of honey and fruit. The trees release the oxygen that allows us to breathe.

Although Lubbock wrote over a century ago, his focus on teaching us how to live a life that makes the most of ourselves is relevant today. As summer comes to an end and we ease into autumn, remember the restorative benefits of nature and the marvelous world in which we live. Be sure to stop and smell the autumn roses on your next walk, inspect the moss on the tree bark, and marvel at the constant reconfiguration of the clouds in the sky. It is good for your health and can help make you better at what you aspire to do. ■

Remember the restorative benefits of nature and the marvelous world in which we live.



FOCUS ON
SERVING

Open Season Doesn't Affect Current Members

In 2017, federal legislation created an annual Open Season enrollment period for all TRICARE beneficiaries. For benefits starting January 1, 2020, Open Season will take place from November 11 through December 9, 2019.

If you are now enrolled in US Family Health Plan, you will be automatically re-enrolled in the Plan for the coming year. This means you don't need to do anything during Open Season. However, if you want to change your TRICARE coverage for 2020, you must make this change during Open Season.

You may also make a change to your TRICARE coverage when you experience a Qualifying Life Event (QLE), such as marriage or divorce, retirement, or birth or adoption of a child. For a current list of QLEs, go to tricare.mil/LifeEvents. ■

If You Have Medicare or Other Health Care Coverage

If you have US Family Health Plan and other health care coverage — for example, Medicare or insurance through your employer, it's important to understand which insurance pays first.

If you have Medicare, only US Family Health Plan pays
Members may not use their Medicare benefit for services covered by US Family Health Plan. Health care providers should bill only US Family Health Plan, the primary payer.

Exception for End-Stage Renal Disease
The only exception is for members who have End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD). Medicare is the primary payer for all ESRD-related services.

If you have other health coverage, US Family Health Plan pays last

If you have any health coverage through an employer or a private insurance program, with a very few exceptions, US Family Health Plan pays after that insurance. Your other health coverage processes your claim first. Then you or your doctor file your claim with US Family Health Plan. ■



Coffee and Community at the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke

In June, US Family Health Plan staff members shared conversation, coffee, and healthy snacks with residents of the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke, Massachusetts. We enjoy spending time with these veterans, who honor us with stories of their military service, their families, and their interests.

Our Field Representative Dave Mendoza with former Navy WAVES Althea Simmons and Kathleen Panehal



Getting Dirty with the Kids at Hanscom AFB

We also visited Hanscom AFB to plant seeds with the kids at the Youth Center. By August, the Center's snacks will be supplemented with home-grown tomatoes, radishes, peppers, and herbs.

"Worms! This is a healthy garden! It's beautiful!"
— a young gardener

Armed Forces Night with the Lowell Spinners

We were also among the sponsors of Armed Forces Night with the Lowell Spinners in June. Plan member Shaun Reagan, TSgt, ANG, who returned home in April from a deployment to Afghanistan, attended with his wife Heidi and their children Nicholas, Charlie, and Kyle, and threw out the ceremonial first pitch. The Reagans live in Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

Other Community Events

We were among the sponsors of May's Deck Opening and Family Bowling events, June's Flag Day Run, and July's Slide into Summer event at Naval Station Newport, as well as the June Community Block Party at Hanscom AFB. ■



Ultra-processed Foods

New Reasons to Limit Them

Ultra-processed foods — foods that have had salt, sweeteners, fat, artificial colors, and preservatives added to them — have become staples in many U.S. homes. At the same time, obesity rates have risen sharply. Recent research from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) suggests that there is a connection between these trends.

The study, published in the journal *Cell Metabolism*, showed that eating a diet made up of ultra-processed food drove people to overeat, but not necessarily because of the fat, salt, and sugar in the food. Participants who ate only ultra-processed foods for two weeks gained weight. Participants who ate only unprocessed or minimally processed foods, with the same amount of fat, salt, and sugar, lost weight.

Tests showed that members of the group who ate the ultra-processed foods produced higher levels of ghrelin, a hunger hormone, than did members of the group who ate the unprocessed or minimally processed foods, possibly leading to the weight gain.

Basics

Different nutrition sources provide different definitions of processed foods, but these are the general categories:

Unprocessed and minimally processed foods

Unprocessed foods are foods in their natural state, like fresh fruits, vegetables, and eggs. Minimally processed foods have been altered slightly, usually to make them last longer. Plain bran cereal, whole-grain bread, and milk are examples of minimally processed foods.

Processed foods

Minimally processed and unprocessed foods that have had salt, sugar, or fats added to them in the manufacturing process are generally considered to be processed foods. Processed foods can include packaged pasta, some canned fruits and vegetables, and some cheeses. They usually have two or three ingredients on the label.

Ultra-processed foods

Food that has been through substantial industrial processing has been "ultra-processed." Manufacturers of these foods subject them to several steps to improve shelf life, preserve texture, and heighten flavor. These foods, which usually have five or more ingredients on the label, include:

- potato chips
- packaged cookies and desserts
- jarred sauces
- candy
- most crackers and cereals
- frozen ready-to-eat meals

The upshot

Be sure to check the nutrition label and ingredients list when you shop for food and remember — the less processed a food is, the healthier it is likely to be. Avoid the center aisles of supermarkets, which are hotbeds of processed foods. Stick to the edges, where the meat, dairy, produce, and fish are less processed. ■





Love of Country and Family



US Family Health Plan Members

**Shon Teicheira, SMSgt, USAF (Ret.),
Suk Teicheira, and Ethan Teicheira**

Lowell, Massachusetts

For Shon Teicheira, SMSgt, USAF (Ret.), and Suk Teicheira, love of country and of family are closely bound. The couple's strength is based on hard work, religious faith, patience, and selfless service.

When Shon, a California native, joined the Air Force, he was focused on a career in military law enforcement. "I always wanted to be a cop," he says, "ever since I was a little kid." By the time Teicheira retired in 2016, he had achieved that dream and then some.

He spent the largest part of his military career in a law-enforcement canine unit, deploying to Iraq twice, Saudi Arabia twice, and Qatar. Now he brings his expertise to the civilian world as a Requirements Manager.

The couple met while Shon was stationed in South Korea, and married at Lake Tahoe, which Suk calls their "favorite place," while he was based at Travis AFB in California. By 2009, when Suk was pregnant with their son, Ethan, Shon was at Hanscom AFB, and the couple lived in Lowell, Massachusetts, where they still make their home.

For most of Suk's pregnancy, Shon was deployed. He had two weeks of leave after Ethan's birth, then returned to Iraq. Suk acknowledges the challenges of caring for a baby during a spouse's deployment. "It can be very hard," she says. "But I did this for my husband. He loves his country very much. I did this to support his love for his country."

The Teicheiras worked hard to keep Ethan and Shon connected during Shon's deployments. Ethan had a special doll with a photograph of Shon's face, handmade by a member of the Hanscom community, and a pillowcase also printed with Shon's face. They kept unwashed clothes of Shon's on hand so that Ethan would know Shon's scent. And Shon, like many parents, recorded books while he was deployed so that Suk could play them for Ethan. "It wasn't so much for the story," says Shon, "but so that he would know my voice."

When Ethan, at age two, was diagnosed with autism, it was a shock. "At first," says Suk, "I didn't want to believe it." Soon Early Intervention specialists began working with Ethan, and Suk and Shon took on the painstaking work of bringing out the best in their son. Shon took on special duty at Hanscom's Airman and Family Readiness Center. Serving families with special-needs children became a passion — so much so that Teicheira ran a support group on base for parents of children with special needs until he retired.

At nine, Ethan is energetic and loves swimming and the outdoors — especially visits to the nearby Merrimack River. He delights in his collection of plastic animals and men, which he intently organizes by color and size. After a year in the Lowell Public School System's Dr. Janice Day Adie School, Ethan, who once was nonverbal, now communicates with words.

Shon, ever the advocate, is on the school's advisory board. He and Suk, unstintingly patient, maintain a structured, tranquil home, a testament to their profound love for their extraordinary son. ■



Charles Rollinger, MD, is our Vice President of Medical Management and Quality

Our Care Management Programs

Who They Help, How They Help

At US Family Health Plan, we're lucky to have a close partnership with Tufts Health Plan. Our clinical departments work together to provide members with special programs designed to improve their ability to navigate the health care system. We call these programs our "care management programs." In each program a nurse is available by phone to help the member.

Priority Care

Our Priority Care program is for members with the greatest immediate needs. The program pairs members with a nurse care manager who, after taking into consideration the patient's goals for managing their condition, helps the member learn ways to improve their functioning at home and to care for themselves. The nurse may also identify and coordinate resources in the community that would benefit the member.

Transition to Home

Our Transition to Home program helps members who have recently been in a hospital to transition back to home. After the member returns home, a nurse calls on the phone to review their home-care needs, and to discuss their medications

and follow-up appointments. The nurse can also answer questions about the hospitalization and provide the member with information about their illness.

Supportive Care Management

Members who aren't at high risk of hospitalization but may benefit from a care management program may also be enrolled in our Supportive Care Management program. With this program, members who have needs related to aging or concerns about end-of-life can discuss their care with a nurse. This program can also help members with pediatric issues or issues specific to women's health.

Other Care Management Programs

We also provide care management programs for members with behavioral health needs or substance abuse issues. Any member who has been hospitalized in a psychiatric facility or for substance abuse can work with a behavioral case manager who will help them navigate the health care system and maximize the use of community resources. Caregivers of members with dementia can receive help through the dementia care program.

We provide support for our members throughout their lives, including a pediatric nurse care manager for children who have frequent hospitalizations and a Healthy Birthday program for mothers with high-risk pregnancies.

These programs are most effective when they're coordinated with a primary care provider (PCP). A PCP can call **1.888.766.9818, ext. 53532** to refer a member to a program. If you would like to participate in one of these programs, please talk about it with your PCP. ■



Care managers Mary Ellen Murphy RN, BSN, CCM; Kelly Lyons RN, BSN, CCM; Nancy Johnson, Transition Coordinator; Nicole Baxter RN, BSN; Jamie Martorana RN, BSN, CCM, CHPN; Barbara Thompson RN, CCM; Andrea Murphy RN, BSN, CCM; Fiona Cayer RN, BSN, CCM

Get in Nature

It's Good for You!

Now that the summer heat is behind us, you may feel the urge to spend more time out of doors. If you can, try to make that time in nature.

According to recent research published in the British journal *Scientific Reports*, spending at least 120 minutes a week in nature is associated with good health and well-being. "Outdoors," according to the researchers, means open spaces in and around towns and cities, including parks, canals, and nature areas; the coast and beaches; and the countryside, including farmland, woodland, hills, and rivers.

The results also suggest that it doesn't matter how the 120 minutes is achieved. Long walks on the weekend in a park farther from home yielded the same benefit as shorter visits to parks closer by.

The study didn't try to address why the time in nature had benefits. But the researchers suggested that, based on earlier studies that also showed better health in people exposed to nature, the weekly nature trips may reduce stress levels and the release of the stress hormone cortisol, which affects blood pressure and the immune system.

Benefits for women recently diagnosed with breast cancer

A different study found that women recently diagnosed with breast cancer, after a five-week period of spending 120 minutes a week in nature, scored higher on a group of attention-focused tasks than a control group did. The authors argued that the nature exposure helped the women restore cognitive resources depleted by the stress of their diagnoses and early treatment. ■

Sources:

M. White, et al., "Spending at Least 120 Minutes a Week in Nature Is Associated with Good Health and Well-Being," *Scientific Reports* 9, article number 7730 (2019).

B. Cimprich and D. Ronis, "An Environmental Intervention to Restore Attention in Women Newly Diagnosed with Breast Cancer," *Cancer Nursing* 26, 284-292 (2003).





Talking with Your Teenager

With school back in session, your teenager is likely to be busier than ever. It may be hard to find time to have relaxed discussions about anything — schoolwork, chores, friendships, and healthy living. But it's important to make time to talk.



These tips can help:

- **Be available when your teen is ready to talk.** Right after school, when your teenager may just need to decompress before starting homework, may not be the best time. Some families find that just before bedtime, after studying is done, is a better time to talk.
- **Schedule a regular time for a brief, relaxing activity with your teen.** This could be a card game, baking cookies, or just going for a walk. A scheduled activity provides a built-in window for talking.
- **Avoid starting sentences with “You...” and “You always....”** This can escalate into a confrontation quickly. “It’s important to me that you...” and “Let’s see if we can sort this out...” can be better choices.
- **Don’t lecture your teenager.** Conversations are two-way streets. Getting in the last word is never important. ■

September is Suicide Prevention Month

Suicide is a complex issue, but there are simple steps that anyone can take to support the veterans in their lives who may be in crisis.

Veterans Crisis Line

Remember that the free, confidential Veterans Crisis Line connects veterans in crisis and their loved ones with specially trained U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs responders.



Call
1.800.273.8255 and press 1



Chat online at
VeteransCrisisLine.net



Text
838255

Learn Ways to Help

It can be hard to know how to tell whether a veteran is simply feeling down or is in crisis. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs provides comprehensive, easy-to-navigate materials that can help.

Go to mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/index.asp for online tutorials and expertly prepared articles. A section of the site called **#BeThere** will help you learn how to respond to social media posts that may indicate that a veteran is having thoughts of suicide. ■

Rabies

Wildlife Poses the Greatest Risk

According to the Centers for Disease Control, only 1 percent of rabid animals reported in the U.S. in 2018 were dogs. Today contact with infected bats is the leading cause of human death from rabies in the U.S. To reduce your rabies risk, follow this advice:

- **Leave all wildlife alone**, including injured wildlife. If you find injured wildlife, don't touch it. Call the local authorities.
- **If you're bitten or scratched, or think you may have been bitten or scratched, talk right away with your health care provider** about whether you need post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP). Rabies is 100 percent preventable if PEP is administered before symptoms start.
- **Vaccinate your pets** to protect them and your family. ■



Because Homemade Is Better

With the summer heat fading, you may want to cozy up to a warm stove again. Our field representative Jim Souza, SFC, USA (Ret.), offers his personal take on granola, which is terrific sprinkled on yogurt and berries, or simply spooned up with milk from your cereal bowl.

Don't be afraid to play with this recipe. You may want to substitute chopped dates or dried apricots for the raisins or dried cranberries, or add a little ground ginger or cardamom to the cinnamon, if that's what floats your oats!

Granola Souza

Makes about 9 cups

- 4 cups rolled oats
- 1½ cups oat bran (if you can't find any, add two more cups of rolled oats)
- ½ cup each of sunflower seeds, finely chopped almonds, finely chopped pecans, and finely chopped walnuts
- ½ cup honey
- ½ cup coconut oil
- ¼ cup maple syrup
- 1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1½ teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- 2 cups raisins or dried cranberries



Preheat your oven to 325° F and line two large baking sheets with parchment paper.

Mix the oats, oat bran, sunflower seeds, and chopped nuts in a large bowl.

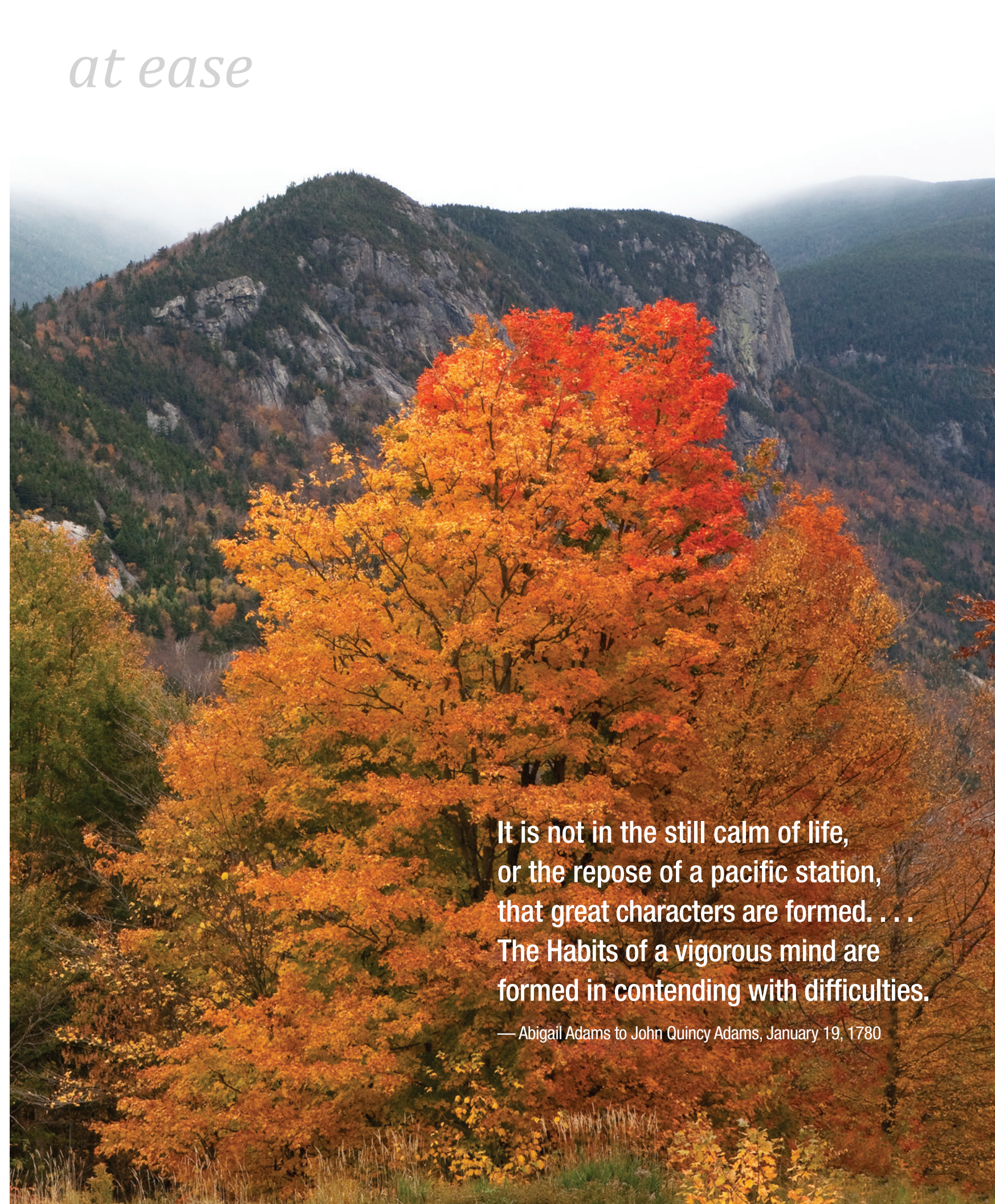
In a medium saucepan, combine all of the remaining ingredients except for the raisins or dried cranberries. Bring the mixture to a boil over medium heat, then pour it over the dry ingredients in the bowl and stir until everything is coated.

Spread the mixture evenly onto the two baking sheets and bake until it's crispy and toasted, which should take about 20 minutes. Stir after 10 minutes.

Cool completely, then stir in the fruit.

Store in an airtight container. ■

at ease



**It is not in the still calm of life,
or the repose of a pacific station,
that great characters are formed. . . .
The Habits of a vigorous mind are
formed in contending with difficulties.**

— Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, January 19, 1780



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thank



This issue marks the seven-year anniversary of U magazine. Since the start, we've welcomed article suggestions from you, our members. And we've responded to your requests — with articles about how referrals work, how to access eye-care benefits, how TRICARE's "Open Season" works, and how to stay as healthy as you can be.

Please keep your suggestions coming. We like to know what's on your mind and what you'd like to learn more about. Write to me at Kerry.Tucker@usfamilyhealth.org.

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