

New Year, New You

FARRAGUTPRESS WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2026 • 1C

A Tasty Tool

AI is transforming nutrition, dietetics

If you're looking to be healthier in the New Year, technology may be able to help in some ways. Along with its revolutionary — and frustrating — aspects within social media, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been transformative within dietetics and nutrition.

This technology has assisted dietitians in their work and helped individuals in chronic disease management. Some specific examples of AI include machine learning, natural language processing, deep learning and computer vision to name a few; however, generative AI — such as ChatGPT — and now AI agents are quickly catching up.

In a 2025 piece by Qina, each of these technologies were examined to showcase how each one can impact nutrition.

Machine learning can learn or predict from personal data, offering recommendations by matching needs, preferences and goals to a product.

Natural language processing is a technology that can support food-logging by voice. Users can describe what they have eaten during the day or after a meal and



the technology can recognize what you said and match that to a food and portion size in their database.

Deep learning can recognize patterns from a range of data, such as sleep, food, stress, wearables (such as an Apple Watch), online surveys and sensors to be able to provide personalized recommendations or predictions.

Computer vision is used in technologies that can identify what's on your plate and match the ingredients or meal to a food database. It is also used in face scanning tools.

Generative AI can create new information, such as text and images from existing datasets. For example, it can create a new recipe by combining the taste preferences of a user from a wide range of recipes.

Finally, AI agents can take charge of entire tasks by understanding and using available data. For example, an AI agent can develop an entire eating and exercise plan for the week by looking at your diary, eating habits and wearable data and provide you with real-time feedback when you are going off-track.

Notably, local dietitians have noted ChatGPT specifically can be helpful for

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Family-wide exercise: the perfect combo for all ages

For many families, work schedules and school commitments dominate the calendar. Throw in the lure of digital entertainment, and it's easy for families to drift apart physically and emotionally.

Exercising as a family cuts through the noise, building physical and emotional bonds while helping people connect as a unit.

This is especially important for children ages 6 and older, who should get at least an hour of moderate to vigorous exercise every day, according to heart.org. This will help them maintain a healthy weight and keep their hearts, brains and bodies healthy.

The activities don't have to be com-

plicated, either. Whether it's shooting baskets, playing pickleball or going on a family hike or bike ride, family-wide exercise brings positive mental and physical results that the whole group can appreciate.

A piece by Princeton Sports and Family Medicine noted these activities offer a chance to engage in deeper conversations, encourage each other and celebrate family members' achievements.

They also create a sense of unity and cooperation, teaching important life skills along the way. Moreover, a 2022 survey by OnePoll found that, of 2,000 parents with kids between ages of 0



A father and son play a cup-stacking game inside the gym at Farragut Community Center.

Photo submitted

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Staying young at heart

West Knox County Senior Center is hidden fitness resource for Farragut area seniors

Seniors living in West Knoxville have a hidden jewel resource for fitness in Farragut.

West Knox County Senior Center, below Farragut Community Center at 239 Jamestown Blvd., has classes, programs, clubs and activities to help residents stay young at heart at a more affordable cost.

"One of the things, when you look at our newsletter, is we offer a variety of wellness classes and health and fitness classes ... for different levels, for instance, for those just starting out or just coming out of rehab," center coordinator Darrell Gooding said. "I would like to think that we offer something for you. Or, if you're more advanced and would like something more challenging, we have that as well."

For example, one class, a Balance 101 class, the center had a few months ago "was such a success we want to do it again at least twice this coming year," he said. "We have a few exercises classes that focus on either maintaining or improving balance, but I was talking to Lisa Maxwell, our health and fitness coordinator, and said one of the things I would like to have is a Balance 101 class, just start out with the absolute basics for those individuals being discharged from rehab or their physician said you need to find something very simple."

He added the class incorporates exercises people can do at home.

"Lisa came up with a five- or a six-week class," Gooding said. "It met for one hour on Mondays. I knew it would be well-attended, but I didn't know it would be the success it was."

"I think [Maxwell] loved it, too, and was surprised at the turnout," he said. "My intent was to get individuals who really needed basic balance exercises they could do on their own in their homes and also become more self-confident enough that they could graduate up to another exercise class like chair



Tammy Cheek

Farragut and other area seniors 50 and older don't have to join a gym to stay fit. West Knox County Senior Center, 239 Jamestown Blvd., has a fitness room, where they can work out for free. Lynn Rose works out on a recumbent bike and husband David Rose uses a multi-purpose weight machine for his fitness routine.

yoga or SAIL."

Gooding explained SAIL stands for "Stay Active and Independent for Life."

For people who are just beginning and do not feel confident enough to take a regular yoga class, the center offers chair yoga.

"And one of the things I got into more last year and want to continue are classes on basic wellness," he said. "I think that's very important as well. That's what I'm hoping to offer more of this year."

"And, we have a workout/fitness room that individuals who are 50 or older are welcome to use," Gooding

added. "The only thing we request of from people who use this room is go through a fitness orientation just to learn how to use the equipment safely."

"They are more than welcome to come in and work out when the center is open and to work with Lisa Maxwell and putting together an exercise regime or put together some health and wellness goals," he said.

"Basically, our gym is for all members who are here at our center," Maxwell said. "They can use it between the

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Shop Farragut to host annual Health and Wellness Expo

On Sunday, Feb. 1, Shop Farragut will welcome patrons for the 6th annual Health and Fitness Expo at the Farragut Community Center.

It will take place from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. and will feature a wide-ranging list of guest speakers, various presentations and entertainment throughout the center, according to Shop Farragut executive director Vic Scott.

The event is geared toward encouraging healthier lifestyles for people in the Farragut community, and it will be sponsored by Citizens Bank and Tenova Healthcare.

"Oftentimes, you see people trying to make lifestyle and health changes in January after they get through the holidays," Scott said. "We feel like people have their own push through December and into January to create good habits, so we feel like this is a good way to put a cap on that month and remind people that Farragut and its businesses care about the community's wellness."

"We want to get these businesses in front of the community so they know where they can go to access those resources."

As far as logistics, the large classroom will feature hearing testing conducted by two different companies, Beltone Hearing Center and HearingLife.

The smaller classroom will feature speaking engagements beginning at 1:30 p.m. and taking place at 2:30, 3:30 and 4:30 p.m. that day.

Speakers will include two different doctors from Tenova at 1:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m.

At 1:30, Dr. Drew Daniels will speak on the management and understanding of coronary artery disease, while

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Family

From page 1C

and 18, 83 percent of parents said they have the most fun when they spend time with their kids, and 80 percent noted that they want to inspire their children to try more physical activities.

An August 2025 piece by Human Kinetics reinforced this belief, detailing an overarching theme behind family-wide exercise.

"Parents can positively influence children's physical activity by positive role modeling and rules and restrictions around outdoor play and screen time, being active with them (coparticipation), and providing material and moral support," the article stated.

The piece continued in stating that parents and children bidirectionally influence each other's health behaviors, including physical activity.

Therefore, when a parent exercises, the child feels more compelled to do so, and vice versa.

"Family-based interventions can be central in developing and sustaining healthy movement behaviors as children spend much time at home with parents/guardians and siblings," the journal read. "There is consistent positive evidence that parental factors, family support and a supportive home environment can promote physical activity among young children."

These patterns have been reflected locally, too. At the Farragut Community Center, activities such as volleyball, pickleball and basketball are available for families to come together at different points in the week.

Colby Church, the program director, has seen the impact of family-wide ex-

ercise firsthand.

And he noted the impact for kids goes far beyond their physical health, as it also brings a newfound confidence for many children.

"When you do things as a family, I feel like you get more participation from the kids and they are more integrated," Church said. "A lot of parents drop their kids off for our programs, and when they're by themselves, they are scared or nervous. But when you integrate the kids and the parents, it gives the sense a new sense of confidence to go compete and play with other kids."

The effects have been especially noticeable for kids who may have otherwise been glued to a screen or other form of entertainment.

"It's a comfortable space for them to have fun," Church said. "We've seen kids that are not really into athletics or fitness, but when they get a taste of it, they end up coming back and are consistent."

Aside from the community center in Farragut, there are also plenty of family exercise options at the Davis Family YMCA on South Northshore Drive and Covenant Health Fitness Center on Kingston Pike near Pellissippi Parkway.

As noted, the method does not have to be complicated or expensive. It can even be productive for chores around the house, such as raking leaves together — or even a group snowball fight now that the weather is especially chilly.

The main aspect is to reinforce family bonds while becoming healthier as individuals and as a group.

~ Jake Nichols

dishes, possible hidden ingredients and user consistency in photographing meals, according to an October 2025 piece titled, "Artificial Intelligence in Nutrition and Dietetics: A Comprehensive Review of Current Research."

The review stated that, when compared with the work of real dietitians, the app displayed moderate agreement — though there are several other potential tools that lacked the same validation.

Still, so long as people are aware of pitfalls, this technology can keep users accountable with their meals.

"Bringing awareness to foods you're eating has a benefit on its own, even if it's not 100 percent accurate," Cameron said. "It keeps you mindful about what you're putting in your body and helps identify inconsistencies."

Cameron reinforced the benefits of working with a registered dietitian, noting that visits are often covered as preventive care with no out-of-pocket cost.

As far as AI's impact on nutrition, the need for human oversight remains present. "It can serve as a tool," Cameron said, "but shouldn't be your framework for health."

~ Jake Nichols

shape and not hit our goals when we don't have somebody there holding us accountable."

Browning's training with a team was what "kind of what got me into this [business] in the first place," he said. "I started training at Johnny Long's Training Academy in 2011, and it was this type of training (what he offers at Browning Performance).

Browning Performance has flexible class schedules with an app in which patrons can schedule their classes.

For more information, call 865-850-5175 or email to reesebrowning15@gmail.com

~ Tammy Cheek

Browning

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lot of people get more out of it because there are other people here with them.

"And, they get to know if they come to a certain group time pretty regularly, they get to know people pretty well, become friends," Browning said, adding sometimes that friendship extends outside of the gym.

And, if somebody misses a few sessions in a row and comes back, another patron will ask, "Where have you been?"

"That accountability aspect is huge," he said. "A lot of times, I feel we get out of the routine; we get more out of

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Senior

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hours of 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

"My services are the fitness training aspects," she explained. "I usually will do a brief interview with [prospective participants] and ask them about their limitations, if they had hip or knee replacements, then we work from there on their deficits."

"We've got great machines for it," Maxwell said. "We have a heavy equipment machine here, and I also do a lot of legwork with some bands ... it works out really nice."

Along with fitness training, she is a geriatric nurse with 25 years of experience with geriatric patients.

"It's second nature for me because I have been doing it for so many years," Maxwell said. "I enjoy bringing positivity in their life ... I always make them have a goal."

When seniors achieve that goal, "they feel so much better and have more confidence," she said. "Age is not a limitation."

While use of the fitness room is free, as was Maxwell's Balance 101 class, there is small fee to participate in other exercise classes.

"Usually the instructors determine the fees," Gooding said.

For example, Yang-style tai chi has a fee of \$3 for each class attended, payable to the teacher, and the SAIL exercise class is \$4 per each class attended, also payable to the teacher.

A strength and balance class for active aging, held Jan. 5, was offered by Jimmy Dabney of Black Dog Fitness as a one-time offering.

It offered "a brief talk on how to increase strength and balance mobility, maintain independence and reduce fall risk," Dabney told Gooding.

Gooding said Dabney also guided the

Expo

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the 2:30 slot will feature Dr. Christopher DeLange, who will address how to improve metabolic health to maximize one's quality of life.

The 3:30 slot will be filled by attorney Carolyn Levy Gilliam on the topic of wills and estates, and the 4:30 slot will feature Knox Stretch.

The center stage will also be utilized for the first time with multiple pre-

group through some low-impact exercise classes, which could be done seated or standing, and some take-home tips. There was no charge to participate in that class.

Another class, health and safety readiness, was provided Jan. 9 to cover practical life skills to practice in the event of an emergency or to be ready for an emergency.

"The topic of each class is going to be different in that one," Gooding said, adding it is running for six weeks.

"They are using a curriculum that is sponsored by the East Tennessee Medical Reserve Corps," he said. "What if there is a flood, an electrical outage, a tornado? Where's your emergency medical phone numbers, especially if you lose cell (power)?" he asked. "How do you get your medication filled? What do you need to put in an emergency go bag [if you have to stay with a relative for a few days]?"

"We also have pickleball, which is free," he said. "We even have pickleball lessons for people who want to learn how to play." "We also have a universal tai chi class, and that is \$2 for each class you attend," Gooding said. "Again, that's payable directly to the teacher."

He pointed out the offerings at the Farragut center are not just for Farragut residents.

"If you live in the area and are 50 years or older, you are more than welcome to come," Gooding said. "We have some seniors who come from Blount County, some from Loudon and even some from Anderson [County].

"It's a good place for them to meet up with their friends and develop friendships," he said.

For more information on the senior center, call 865-288-7805 or visit www.knoxcounty.org/seniors

~ Tammy Cheek

sentations geared toward fashion and physical wellness.

Pure Barre will be the first demonstration at 2 p.m. with J.C. Penney following at 3 p.m. and Jazzerce at 4 p.m.

"It's going to be a little different since we haven't had access to the stage before," Scott added, "so we are excited to be able to do that and showcase so many options for people in the community."

~ Jake Nichols

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A father and daughter do yoga together inside the gymnasium at the Farragut Community Center.

Photo submitted

Goal setting tips for children

Help your child set goals this year with these tips from East Tennessee Children's Hospital.

1. Set a SMART goal.

- Specific: Plan effectively with specific targets in mind.
- Measurable: Track your progress and reevaluate along the way.
- Attainable: Set realistic goals that are challenging but achievable. Here are examples depending on your child's age: I'm going to read 10 books this year. I'm going to score above 90 percent on every spelling test. I'm going to complete three chores each week. I'm going to better my mile time.
- Relevant: Ensure the goal serves a relevant purpose.
- Time: Specify a deadline, monitor progress and reevaluate.

2. Keep your child motivated.

If they're falling behind on their goal, talk to them about how they can manage their time to get back on track. Adjust the goal as needed to

keep it positive but still an appropriate challenge for your child.

Give a reward for completing tasks. Make sure the reward is not too big and something they can earn over time. (Ex: A small allowance for completing chores.) Screen time can be a great reward if limited. Not all screen time is created equal. (Ex: Quality time with family watching a movie versus scrolling on an app for hours.) Avoid using food as a reward.

3. Track their goal.

Some ideas for tracking include: buy or create a calendar and mark the days the task(s) is completed; create a fundraising thermometer, so your child can fill in the thermometer as they complete tasks; build a chore chart that lists all the tasks your child wants to complete, so they can check them off as they go; create a visual tracker that has a start and finish. (Ex: A car moves along the road as your child completes tasks to finish the road trip.)

~ Submitted by East Tennessee Children's Hospital

EXERCISE WORD FIND

Find the hidden words in the puzzle.

RUN	YOGA	LIFT
WEIGHTS	WALK	JUMP
SWIM	DANCE	GYM
CLIMB	STRETCH	JOG

B	N	Y	J	O	P	L	F	R	S	N	W
E	R	U	L	R	O	K	B	J	U	M	P
W	U	A	Y	D	X	U	W	Q	I	F	G
H	N	J	B	Y	O	G	A	T	V	S	N
E	T	W	M	H	D	E	L	I	F	T	O
S	G	E	H	E	V	J	K	Y	O	R	L
A	S	I	G	Y	L	N	E	M	I	E	D
J	O	G	H	F	C	W	B	S	J	T	M
F	I	H	J	I	L	O	D	A	N	C	E
G	A	T	Y	X	I	K	T	W	A	H	U
H	P	S	W	I	M	A	G	Y	M	O	K
T	I	Z	M	G	B	E	S	I	H	J	Y

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Math Blocks

Fill in the missing blocks with numbers between 0-20. The numbers in each row add up to the totals on the right. The numbers in each column add up to the totals on the bottom.

	4		13
9	0		17
	10	2	18

21 14 13



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