

Dutchess County Office for the Aging's

AGING NEWS

For the week of December 27th

Note: the Office for the Aging and all OFA Senior Friendship Centers are closed on Friday, December 24th and Friday, December 31st, in observance of the national Christmas and New Year's Day holidays. Clients of OFA's Home Delivered Meals program will receive meals in advance of the holidays.

DUTCHESS COUNTY HIGH SPEED INTERNET SURVEY

If you use the internet, you may have more than a passing hunch that the service you're paying for is neither as fast nor as reliable as advertised, even if you're not an advanced internet user.

And if you don't use the internet? For all the services you use every day, reliable internet service is essential to meeting your needs.

Poor internet service is much more than an inconvenience.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, access to services like telemedicine was no longer just a “nice to have” feature for seniors. Telemedicine use experienced years of growth in a few weeks in 2020. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services reported that the number of Medicare fee-for-service beneficiaries using telemedicine jumped from 15,000 at the start of 2020 to over two million by May of that year. From then on, the number of beneficiaries using telemedicine has remained over 750,000: a clear indication telemedicine is here to stay as an essential part of seniors’ health care. Medicare and private insurers have recognized telemedicine’s new role by increasing coverage for telemedicine services – but most internet service providers (ISPs) haven’t risen to the challenge.

Reliable high-speed internet is also key to public safety. Here’s just one example: Advisories and alerts can be sent directly to individuals in the path of a dangerous storm. Those people will be much more likely to receive the alert on a mobile device and act on it than they would’ve been when terrestrial radio was the quickest communication option. But that’s only true if the internet service carrying the advisories is reliable. Somebody involved in an accident in a rural area is in enough danger without having to worry that the responding ambulance

can't find them or communicate with the emergency room because of "dead spots" in coverage.

Poor broadband coverage was a problem before the COVID-19 pandemic. Now it's a crisis.

To meet the challenge of improving broadband coverage in Dutchess County, we first need to measure the extent of the issues – and that's where your help is vital. Visit dutchessny.gov/highspeedinternet and complete a quick survey about internet access at your home or business. If you have questions, email broadband@dutchessny.gov.

If you're not online, your help is also essential. Get a paper version of the survey by contacting Dutchess County Emergency Management at 845-486-2080.

The survey is funded with \$1 million from the Federal Government's American Rescue Plan.

Your participation will help Dutchess County plan the kind of reliable high-speed connectivity that will meet our future needs. We know there are areas of the county that are unserved and underserved by existing broadband, and your input will help demonstrate where needs are greatest.

In related news, we're looking for volunteers who can help seniors learn the basics of technology, focusing on using mobile devices, at our Senior Friendship Centers. Please contact OFA for details.

Golden Living is prepared by the Dutchess County Office for the Aging, 114 Delafield St., Poughkeepsie, New York 12601, telephone 845-486-2555, email: ofa@dutchessny.gov website: www.dutchessny.gov/aging

UTILITY MORATORIUM EXTENDED INTO EARLY 2022

New York State's moratorium on utility service shutoffs during the COVID-19 state of emergency was to have ended on December 21st, but has been briefly extended as follows. The new end dates for the moratorium, as of December 24th, are as follows:

Central Hudson Gas & Electric January 2, 2022

NYS Electric & Gas (NYSEG) January 1, 2022

The state's Emergency Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) Component

will open on January 3rd. Emergency HEAP can help eligible seniors heat their homes during a heat or heat-related emergency.

If you have already used your initial HEAP benefit, you may request a second benefit. For additional information and questions on HEAP qualifications, contact OFA's HEAP division at 845-486-2553 or zserrano@dutchessny.gov.

We expect additional information on updates to the HEAP program by early 2022, so watch next week's Golden Living/Aging News for the latest.

VIRTUAL OFA TAI CHI (Starts Wed 1/12/22)

Seniors looking to stay physically active as well as physically safe in 2022 can sign up for a virtual OFA Tai Chi class. The first session for the class takes place on Wednesday, January 12th. Class time will be provided once registration is accepted.

For more information contact OFA at ofa@dutchessny.gov or 845-486-2555. [Click here for the OFA Senior Exercise page.](#)

“GET SET UP” ONLINE COURSES FOR VETERANS AND OTHER OLDER ADULTS

The New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA) and New York State Division of Veterans’ Services have partnered with GetSetUp — a peer-to-peer online learning community for older adults aged 50 and over — to offer a new series of classes in January and February specifically on Veterans’ benefits.

The new series for Veterans will address myths surrounding Veterans’ benefits, opening doors for Veterans and military families to receive benefits, programs, services, and resources that are available to them by virtue of their service. [Click here to access the series](#), which is available to New Yorkers at no charge using the partner coupon code NYSTATE at login.

The courses include the following topics:

- January 7 – MythBusters! Getting rid of the mythology that has prevented you from getting the Veterans’ benefits that you rightfully earned.
- January 14 – Disability Compensation: How to receive fair compensation for any injuries or illnesses that you received in military service.
- January 21 – VA Health Care: Making your connections with healthcare services from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

- January 28 – Character of Discharge Cases: Righting historical injustices for Veterans regarding the character of discharge.
- February 4 – Focusing on the Family: Benefits, services, and resources for the immediate family members of Veterans.

NYSOFA and the Association on Aging in New York — which represents New York’s 59 AAAs — first teamed up with GetSetUp in May of 2021 as part of a multi-pronged effort to address social isolation in the COVID-19 pandemic. To date, the partnership has connected 54,000 older adults to interactive online classes that help promote physical, mental, and social health. The platform offers more than 2,000 courses/classes and a growing schedule of more than 500 live classes and social programs weekly including: how to use technological devices, exercise and fitness classes, healthy cooking, coping with stress, book clubs, gardening, travel, and more.

All older adults aged 50 and over in New York State can access the complete schedule of courses by visiting [NYSOFA’s GetSetUp Learning Channel](#) and using the partner coupon code NYSTATE.

A new referral feature has been added to the platform, allowing a friend or caregiver to easily sign up a friend remotely to try GetSetUp courses. To do so,

visit www.getsetupfriend.com, select “booking for someone else,” enter an e-mail address or phone number, and create an account using the NYSTATE partnership code. The referral process is a great way to help an older adult relative, friend or neighbor get connected with the platform.

SCAM ALERT – FAKE “SOCIAL SECURITY” CALLS

December is the month phone-scammers try to trick people into revealing personal and banking information, under the guise of giving Social Security recipients their cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) for next year.

That’s not how Social Security does it. They won’t call you, and they definitely won’t threaten you or demand payment in exchange for personal information.

Use this link to report questionable calls or emails from anybody claiming to be from Social Security:

https://oig.ssa.gov/?utm_source=social&utm_medium=facebook&utm_campaign=smt-fraudawareness-22&utm_content=education

For a printable Scam Prevention Resources flyer from OFA, go to www.dutchessny.gov/aging

Other aging news online:

Volunteering – a fantastic way to fight loneliness:

https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/21/well/mind/loneliness-volunteering.html?unlocked_article_code=AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAACEIPuonUktbfqohSIUZAibKUNwj6RiHg_SlxLs6i3v_KiWOUUnNcyOAIBZSN9I3MY6UIZ8c2237TYu59B4IVZa44yP5DbQsqQhO0o5CAIdNafHg88om5BSZphc3DGO02_WKvP2TjdaIgmLC2tkvZPGDuUPHPwDZ2clYe1JhmdV2t3XwOwb6UUblmn4kjgopyQ8xyVjwCZyGVv_L3CB8YONiObhvU7wZeSPgOEHiI3obas-RcBV0UXVHWT3p_4nl-6MdeP74UOaX8LR0mfqnukB22rvCtD45uojT-Jlp4c4Y&smid=url-share

It is unlikely that Social Security office workers will be available for in-person meetings going into 2022, except in rare circumstances:

https://blog.ssa.gov/update-on-our-reentry-plans/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

Human muscle cells are being launched into space for aging research:

<https://phys.org/news/2021-12-human-muscle-cells-space-aging.html>

A 1994 newspaper article with plenty of advice that still works today, especially the part that came from pitcher/philosopher Satchel Paige back in the 50's:

<https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-1994-12-18-1994352014-story.html>

This week in senior birthdays:

12/27: Yankees outfielder/coach Roy White (78)

12/28: Actor/director Denzel Washington (67)

12/29: Actor/producer Ted Danson (74)

12/30: Brooklyn/LA Dodgers Hall of Fame pitcher Sandy Koufax (86)

12/31: Actor/director Anthony Hopkins (84)

1/1: Actor Frank Langella (84)

1/2: World's oldest verified living person Kane Tanaka (Japan) (119)

'Tis better to give a Bad Joke than to receive one...maybe. Here's a few you can use to ring in the New Year.

What is a New Year's resolution? Something that goes in one year and out the other.

What does the little Champagne bottle call his father? Pop!

My New Year's resolution was to read more, so I turned on the subtitles on my TV.

What was the caterpillar's New Year's resolution? To turn over a new leaf.