

Dutchess County Office for the Aging's

## **AGING NEWS**

For the week of December 15

### **AGEISM AMONG FAMILY AND FRIENDS**

*Now wait just a minute here. I may be 80, but I'm still the parent and they're still the child, and who said it was okay to reverse the roles?*

As a parent of adult children, has that thought ever crossed your mind? If you're the adult child, have you well-meaningly crossed a boundary with a parent when they weren't ready for it?

Racism and sexism are no longer acceptable in society, but ageism somehow remains acceptable in many ways. Just look through the greeting card section of any store for all the wisecracks about getting older. There remains a healthy

worldwide market for "anti-aging" products that try to hide the aging process, while not slowing it in the least.

We don't deny that the aging process exists, but ageism gets it all wrong. It's true that the risk for certain chronic diseases and dementia does increase with age; but the health and cognitive function of the overall aging population can remain steady over many years, especially when we practice good nutrition and stay physically and mentally active. A narrative of relentless decline with no positives isn't just false - it's dangerous to all of us.

The truth? Older adults are as likely to offer support as to need it. One look at OFA's hundreds of older volunteers is all you'd need to know. We've had volunteer instructors in our Senior Exercise program in their 90s, and volunteer Home Delivered Meals drivers well into their 80s. Learn more about volunteering with OFA by contacting us at **845-486-2555** or **[ofa@dutchessny.gov](mailto:ofa@dutchessny.gov)**.

**Avoiding "Elderspeak"**

We could easily have been guilty of this form of ageism. Elderspeak implies that the older person being spoken to, often by someone who has good intentions but doesn't know the older person well, needs to be spoken to in childlike tones because the speaker incorrectly assumes the older person is unable to comprehend typical conversation.

Example: *Good morning, sweetie. Are we ready for some breakfast?*

Skip it. What's more, elderspeak doesn't work for older adults with dementia.

One 2009 observational study of nursing care for individuals with dementia found that elderspeak by nursing staff could trigger unwanted behaviors like aggression, withdrawal, vocal outbursts, and wandering. For those who don't cross paths with older adults as often as they could, OFA offers this tip:

Normal conversation is fine. Chances are the older person you're talking to isn't all that different from you. They had more candles on their birthday cake, but that's about it.

## **For Our Younger Readers (Or Anybody, Really)**

Instead of getting to know an older person by what they're able or unable to do, get to know them for who they are.

- Address people by their preferred name
- Use a normal tone at a normal pace
- Speak to other adults as people you're building relationships with
- Ask questions to get to know others more deeply

Sound familiar? They're some of the building blocks of our "Friendly Calls" program. If you'd like to receive "Friendly Calls," or be a volunteer caller, or both, contact us at **845-486-2555** or visit **[dutchessny.gov/friendlycalls](http://dutchessny.gov/friendlycalls)** to learn more.

***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](mailto:ofa@dutchessny.gov) website: [www.dutchessny.gov/aging](http://www.dutchessny.gov/aging)  
Social media: [www.facebook.com/DutchessCountyOFA](https://www.facebook.com/DutchessCountyOFA)***

## **OFA Holiday Hours**

The Office for the Aging and OFA Friendship Centers will be closed for Christmas Day on Thursday, December 25<sup>th</sup>.

Friendship Centers will also be closed on Friday, December 26<sup>th</sup>. The Office for the Aging office in Poughkeepsie will be open for regular weekday hours on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

The Office for the Aging and OFA Friendship Centers will be closed for New Year's Day on Thursday, January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026.

All OFA facilities return to regular weekday schedules on Friday, January 2<sup>nd</sup>.

## **PUT YOUR OLDER ADULT SKILLS TO USE, WITH OFA**

One thing we learned from the massive turnout at Dutchess County's first Older Adult Skills Fair this past July: There are hundreds of older adults in Dutchess County looking for an enriching part-time opportunity that comes with a much-needed financial boost.

The Office for the Aging is looking for candidates for a Substitute Site Manager position at our eight OFA Friendship Centers, with locations in Poughkeepsie, Beacon, Hopewell Junction, Millerton, Pawling, Pleasant Valley, Red Hook, and Wassaic (South Amenia). A typical day for a substitute site manager covers any weekday, from 8:30am-2:30 pm, and includes coordinating with OFA's nutrition coordinator, senior site manager, friendship center staff and volunteers. A background check is required.

Interested? Send an email, with an attached résumé, if possible, to [ofa@dutchessny.com](mailto:ofa@dutchessny.com); or contact Janet Nuccilli at OFA, during business hours at 845-486-2555.

For more information on OFA's Home Delivered Meals and Friendship Center services, visit [www.dutchessny.gov/ofanutrition](http://www.dutchessny.gov/ofanutrition).

## **“HEAP” FUNDS RELEASED FOR WINTER '25-26**

The Regular Benefit component of the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) is open for the 2025-26 season as of Monday, December 1<sup>st</sup>.

HEAP offers financial assistance to eligible households, helping them to heat their homes safely. One regular HEAP benefit is available per year. The

Regular HEAP benefit is scheduled to operate through April 7, 2026, or until funding is exhausted, whichever occurs first.

Regular HEAP benefits for households who pay directly for heat based on actual usage are paid directly to the vendor that supplies the household's primary source of heat.

An emergency HEAP benefit is scheduled to become available on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2026.

For more information, visit [dutchessny.gov/ofaheap](https://dutchessny.gov/ofaheap).

### **If You've Already Applied for HEAP and Been Approved**

You don't need to do anything else. Your HEAP allotment will soon be paid to your heating vendor.

### **If You've Never Heard of HEAP**

Contact OFA at 845-486-2555 if you're a Dutchess County resident over 60 who's not already benefitting from HEAP, especially if you're already qualified for other benefit programs like SNAP.

Eligibility and benefits are based on income, household size, the primary heating source, and whether or not the household has a member who is under age 6, over age 60, or permanently disabled.

### **There's Also EAP – Similar Acronym, Different Program**

New York State's Energy Affordability Program (EAP) provides up to \$500 in annual discounts on energy bills. State officials estimate that 1.5 million households are eligible for the discount but have yet to apply. Contact OFA for details or visit [www.ny.gov/EAP](http://www.ny.gov/EAP).

### **Other news:**

[Happy 100<sup>th</sup> birthday \(Saturday\), Dick Van Dyke!](#)

Longevity supplements are unlikely to supplement longevity...in humans, at any rate. [But for lab animals, maybe.](#)



All those aches and pains that come with aging? [They've been measured](#), and those minor ailments are something your health care providers will need to recognize.

You've read it here before but the message bears repeating: [physical activity is a key part of older adult health strategy](#).

### **This week's birthdays:**

12/12: Singer [Dionne Warwick](#) (86)

12/13: (besides Dick Van Dyke) Musician/actor [Morris Day](#) (68)

12/14: Tennis player [Stan Smith](#) (79)

12/15: Actor [Don Johnson](#) (76)

12/16: Guitarist/singer [Billy Gibbons](#) (ZZ Top) (76)

12/17: Actor/director/screenwriter [Eugene Levy](#) (79)

12/18: Chef/author [Jacques Pépin](#) (90)

**Bad Joke time!**

*Q: What do you call a chicken staring at a head of lettuce?*

A: Chicken sees a salad.