

Dutchess County Office for the Aging's

AGING NEWS

For the week of March 11th

CLUTTER, HOARDING AND SQUALOR (part 1 of 2)

As we approach winter's end, it's common enough for our homes to have become cluttered. That's why spring cleaning is a phenomenon. Soon as it's warm enough, we can bring our warm weather necessities out of storage while packing away the winter gear; and while that's going on is an opportune time to rid ourselves of anything that's outlived its usefulness. We all acquire things that become clutter, but we're able to manage it by donating, selling, recycling, or discarding what we no longer need.

Now imagine a home where the clutter only grows, to the point where living spaces can no longer be used for their intended everyday activities. Simply moving from one room to another becomes a challenge, especially for an older person who may have mobility challenges – and yet the idea of disposing of any of it, or putting a halt to additional acquisitions, causes distress. An individual in situation like this fits the definition of someone with hoarding disorder. Helping

them emerge from a hoarding situation is a delicate task.

DEFINING THE BASIC TERMS

The following are commonly accepted clinical definitions.

Clutter: Possessions are disorganized and may accumulate around living areas.

Collecting: Possessions are part of a larger set of items. Display does not impede active living areas. A typical collection can include things like baseball cards, vinyl records, comic books, dolls, and autographs. Collecting isn't hoarding.

Hoarding: Possessions become unorganized piles. Hoarding becomes a mental illness when it prevents rooms from being used for their intended purpose.

Squalor describes a home that is so unclean and unhygienic that people of a similar culture and background would consider extensive clearing and cleaning essential. Although hoarding and squalor can at times appear similar, they are two different conditions that sometimes overlap.

There are at least a dozen disorders, injuries and diseases that have been documented as leading to hoarding disorder and/or squalor. People with hoarding disorder may not be able to recognize the severity of their condition.

Without addressing the underlying conditions, any cleanups are likely to be only temporary solutions.

YOUR HOT TAKE IS LIKELY TO MISS THE MARK

If you've ever seen a hoarding situation yourself, your first reaction may have fallen along the lines of "What a mess!" or "How come they can't see they're living in filth?" followed by "This needs to be cleaned up right now."

Maybe you cleaned, only to see the hoarding resume.

There are ways to engage with a person with hoarding disorder that are more likely to result in sustained positive results. We'll get into the do's and don'ts of addressing hoarding in older adults in next week's column; in the meantime, if you fear you may have hoarding disorder or care for an older adult in Dutchess County who you fear may have hoarding disorder, reach out to OFA at ofa@dutchessny.gov or call 845-486-2555 during business hours.

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

UPCOMING “FRIENDLY CALLS” ORIENTATIONS

If you’re interested in becoming a volunteer caller for OFA’s “Friendly Calls” program, we have plenty of orientation sessions on the March calendar, and a little bit beyond. Most orientations take place at OFA unless otherwise indicated below. Orientations typically last 40-60 minutes. Pick one, and contact OFA at 845-486-2555 to set up your orientation:

- **Monday, March 11th**, 10am at the Office for the Aging
- **Wednesday, March 13th**, 10am at the Office for the Aging
- **Wednesday, March 20th**, 1:30pm at the Office for the Aging
- **Monday, March 25th**, 10 am at the Office for the Aging

If none of those work with your schedule, contact Friendly Calls Program Manager Linda Edgar at 845-486-2548 or ledgar@dutchessny.gov, and we may be able to work out something that fits your schedule.

If you’re part of a workplace or civic organization that would like an onsite Friendly Calls orientation, contact Linda Edgar as noted in the previous paragraph.

If there's a meeting room with a TV that has an HDMI connection, that's all we need to bring the orientation to you.

FIELD HALL FOUNDATION GRANT FOR OFA "GOGOGRANDPARENT" SERVICES

The Office for the Aging's newest non-emergency medical transportation solution has received a \$25,000 grant from the Field Hall Foundation to build upon its initial success.

OFA has been working with GoGo Technologies (also known as "GoGoGrandparent" and "GoGo") since 2023 to provide a limited number of free, non-emergency medical trips within Dutchess County to qualifying Dutchess County older adults. So far, over 150 Dutchess County older adults have availed themselves of GoGo services, anywhere in Dutchess where a Lyft and/or Uber driver is available.

Full details in [this Dutchess County Government press release](#).

To be eligible for the free rides, prospective riders must be Dutchess County residents over age 60 and must register with OFA before booking any rides. Call OFA at 845-486-2555 or email ofa@dutchessny.gov for details.

Getting ready to register? Have the following information handy:

- name;
- street address, including apartment number, if applicable;
- phone number; and
- contact information of a family member or caregiver who can be notified when the client uses GoGo to schedule a ride.

If special accommodations – wheelchair, walker, service animal, portable oxygen, etc. – are needed, please inform OFA when registering.

SAVE THE DATE – WEDNESDAY, MAY 8TH – CAREGIVER CONFERENCE IN HYDE PARK

Caregivers looking for help on being the best caregiver they can be while maintaining their own well-being will want to set aside **Wednesday, May 8th** for the free annual “Caregiver Conference.” It’ll be held at a new venue this year: the Wallace Center, on the grounds of the Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site in Hyde Park.

Reservations are scheduled to get underway one month before the conference, on April 8th.

The event begins with sign-in at 8:30 a.m. and continues until 2 p.m.

There will be plenty of time for your questions and concerns, and dozens of experts and vendors will be on hand with answers and solutions. A continental breakfast and lunch are included.

The conference is organized by the Office for the Aging, the Alzheimer's Association Hudson Valley Chapter; Hudson Valley Hospice; Parkinson's Disease Support Group of the Mid-Hudson Valley; and community members Cathy Regan and FaLisia Cotten-Swain.

Other news:

March 7th was Social Security's annual "Slam the Scam" Day. Get caught up on common scams related to Social Security, notably [imposter scams](#). Bottom line: **Social Security will NOT cold-call you.** In general, if they need to reach you about your account, they'll do it through the U.S. Mail. They will only call if you've already called them and asked for a call-back.

While Dutchess County won't be in the path of totality for the upcoming April 8th solar eclipse, the skies will get noticeably darker. [Click here for the best times to catch the darkness.](#)

The state attorney general's top ten consumer complaints in New York State for 2023 are led by retail disputes and tenant/landlord issues...and scams. So many scams. [More here.](#)

Norovirus (you know, the one that's called "stomach flu" even though it's not in the influenza family) is on the rise. [Here's how to avoid norovirus](#) and thus its unpleasant symptoms.

When is forgetting something normal, and [when does it become worrisome?](#)

Your brain is doing things [even when you think you're not doing anything.](#)

Fiber supplements: [good for the brain?](#)

Where do potholes come from – [and how can they be avoided?](#)

[How Irish immigrants helped build the Hudson Valley.](#)

This week's birthdays:

3/9: Musician [John Cale](#) (82)

3/10: Actor/martial artist [Chuck Norris](#) (84)

3/11: Journalist [Sam Donaldson](#) (90)

3/12: Mets/Yankees outfielder and drug recovery advocate [Darryl Strawberry](#) (62)

3/13: Singer/songwriter [Neil Sedaka](#) (85)

3/14: Music producer [Quincy Jones](#) (91)

3/15: Bassist/songwriter [Phil Lesh](#) (The Grateful Dead) (84)

And the Bad Joke(s) this week are devoted to Chuck Norris, who celebrates his 84th birthday this week and has his very own Bad Joke genre:

Chuck Norris can dribble a bowling ball.

Chuck Norris counted to infinity... twice.

Chuck Norris doesn't wear a watch. He decides what time it is.

The dinosaurs looked at Chuck Norris the wrong way once. You know what happened to them.

The flu gets a Chuck Norris shot every year.

[More here](#). Read them all because Chuck Norris will know if you didn't.