

Dutchess County Office for the Aging's

AGING NEWS

For the week of March 20

Note: the OFA "Pancakes in the Park" event scheduled for March 23rd is fully booked.

CONTACT OFA AND GET WHAT YOU'RE ENTITLED TO

Low-income older New Yorkers are leaving billions of dollars of federal assistance on the table every year. It's adding extra difficulty to lives that are already difficult, according to the abstract of a new study by the Schwartz Center for Economic Policy Analysis at The New School in New York City.

The study partly blames confusing and burdensome program application processes; stigma around receiving public assistance; and equitable technology necessary to access these benefits, with lack of access being the most significant barrier.

If you've gotten this far and are nodding at the part about confusing

applications because you've been down that road already and gave up, call the Office for the Aging. You don't have to do the paperwork alone. It's our job to help cut through any confusion. Our contact information is at the end of every column.

Paperwork headaches and other obstacles do tend to arise in the three main programs for which many older Dutchess residents aren't yet applying.

MSP AND SNAP AND HEAP, OH MY

First among these three programs is the Medicare Savings Program (MSP), one of the state programs that assists eligible people with Medicare costs. MSPs are state programs that assist you with paying your Medicare Part A and B costs, especially Part B premiums. Again, if you don't know Part A from Part B, OFA is here for you. Our trained, non-sales-oriented counselors can help keep you on the path that's best for you.

Next is SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which aims to reduce food insecurity. There are an estimated 200,000 older New Yorkers who are eligible for SNAP benefits averaging just under \$2,000 a year, who haven't applied. Although an emergency expansion of SNAP benefits recently expired with

the winding down of the COVID public health emergency, the benefits continue at pre-pandemic levels and unused SNAP funds will continue to roll over from one month to the next if each month's benefits are fully used up within the following 274 days (about nine months).

There's also HEAP, the Home Energy Assistance Program. HEAP helps low-income households cover heating and energy costs, with a benefit paid directly to their energy suppliers. The Schwartz Center study found that over 1.2 million eligible New Yorkers - among them, thousands of older adult households - have not applied for HEAP benefits. HEAP enrollees are also automatically enrolled in their gas and electric utilities' discount programs.

We'll conclude with what we've said in many columns: a big part of aging gracefully lies in accepting help gracefully. That's doubly true when the help has been paid for with older adults' own tax dollars.

Golden Living is prepared by the Dutchess County Office for the Aging, 114

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FLU/COVID VACCINES FOR HOMEBOUND DUTCHESS OLDER ADULTS

While the latest influenza and COVID-19 booster shots have been readily available locally, there's one key group of people unable to access them: Dutchess County's homebound older adults.

The Dutchess County Office for the Aging has initiated a new in-home vaccination program for homebound older adults, partnering with Adirondack Health + Wellness. "Homebound" is defined as an individual who is unable to leave home due to physical limitations, cognitive impairment, other chronic conditions, a lack of transportation, visual impairments, and without caregivers available to get the individual in question to a vaccination provider in person.

OFA wants to make sure that homebound older adults and their caregivers know about this program and the essential protections it offers, so that their existing challenges aren't compounded by preventable illness. It can be difficult for homebound individuals to advocate for themselves due to the nature of their conditions, so the total number of Dutchess County older adults who are homebound is uncertain. We do know that we currently serve over 400 homebound older adults every week who are enrolled in our Home Delivered Meals program, and those residents and caregivers are being alerted individually.

In-home vaccinations will be performed by fully vaccinated medical professionals, following all public health safety guidelines.

To schedule vaccinations for flu and/or COVID for a homebound individual who lives in Dutchess, contact OFA at 845-486-2555 during business hours, or email ofa@dutchessny.gov.

FRIENDLY CALLS VOLUNTEERING ORIENTATIONS

(Mon 3/27, Mon 4/3, Tue 4/4)

Demand remains strong for both volunteers and participants in OFA's new Friendly Calls program. If you'd like to participate in the program and can come to an orientation at OFA headquarters in Poughkeepsie (114 Delafield St.) on one of the following dates/times, please contact OFA at 845-486-2555 or ofa@dutchessny.gov. Please contact us ahead of time so that we are sure there'll be space for you. Volunteers must be at least 18 years old.

Monday, March 27th, 10:00 am (only 2 spots left!)

Monday, April 3rd, 10:00am

Tuesday, April 4th, 10:00am

We expect to schedule more orientations during April. Stay tuned for details!

CITIZENS PREPAREDNESS FOR OLDER ADULTS, CAREGIVERS (Tue 3/21, 10am)

The Dutchess County Department of Emergency Response, with the Office for the Aging and Town of Hyde Park, have scheduled a free Citizens Preparedness Training for Older Adults and Caregivers event at Hyde Park Town Hall (4383 Albany Post Rd. (Route 9)), at 10 am on Tuesday, March 21st. Space is limited. Dutchess County residents over age 60 and their caregivers can sign up for this event by contacting the Office for the Aging at 845-486-2555 during business hours.

During the training, participants will learn resources and skills necessary to better prepare for any type of disaster, how to respond accordingly in a disaster, and how to recover as quickly as possible to pre-disaster conditions. Each household will receive a free Citizens Preparedness Response Starter Kit, along with information on Office for the Aging services.

SPRING NEWSLETTER COMING SOON

For those who are not online, we mail quarterly THRIVE60+ newsletters throughout Dutchess County. If you'd like to get on the mailing list or would like to update the address we have on file, call 845-486-2555. The Spring 2023 issue will be distributed soon!

THRIVE60+ will also be published online at www.dutchessny.gov/aging as well and sent to the OFA email distribution list.

If you are available to come to OFA headquarters in Poughkeepsie to help prepare newsletters for mailing to about 2,000 households, please email bjones@dutchessny.gov. We expect to be preparing newsletters during the later half of the week of March 20th, and early in the week of March 27th as necessary.

NYS COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT SURVEY (Last call!)

The New York State Office for the Aging has been conducting a statewide Community Assessment Survey of Older Adults, to better understand the contributions that older adults make to their communities, as well as the needs they have and challenges they experience. Your feedback will help us be sure that OFA policies and programs align with Dutchess County and New York State

residents' values.

You can find the survey here: www.polco.us/nyalbany23. It is intended to be taken by residents aged 60 and up and will only take a few minutes to complete. Survey responses are being accepted until March 30th.

This survey is conducted in partnership with Polco, an online civic engagement platform that enables residents to provide direct input to local government decision-making processes.

Once you have completed the survey, you will be asked to provide your ZIP code to confirm where you live. This allows survey organizers to be sure of hearing from each person only once and to know which general area they live in. Responses will remain anonymous, with information will securely stored on Polco. You will also have the option to provide an email address to Polco, which will only be used to let you know about future surveys from New York State or other public agencies that need your feedback.

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact OFA at 845-486-2555 or email bjones@dutchessny.gov.

Other news:

Managing emotions more effectively [could also help slow aging](#).

Good foods for older adults? Skip to [the end of this article](#). Can't go wrong with berries and sauerkraut, according to this source.

Happy 100th birthday to [WWII codebreaker Ruth Mirsky](#).

This week's birthdays:

3/18: Broadway pianist/composer [John Kander](#) (96)

3/19: R&B singer and pianist [Clarence "Frogman" Henry](#) (86)

3/20: Actor/director [Hal Linden](#) (92)

3/21: Soul singer [Russell Thompkins Jr.](#) (The Stylistics) (72)

3/22: Actor/singer/starship captain [William Shatner](#) (92)

3/23: Singer-songwriter [Chaka Khan](#) (70)

3/24: Fashion designer [Bob Mackie](#) (83)

And now...a Bad Joke:

The past, present and future walked into a bar. It was tense.