

SPOTLIGHT ON SENIORS

Fall
2020

New Ways To Speak Up For Our Seniors

In a typical year, the Office for the Aging would hold two public hearings in the fall to help us understand your concerns and hear your in-person feedback on current services and future plans.

Since 2020 has been anything but typical, the hearings can't be held in person. Instead, we're providing the opportunity to comment on our services and plans here in the *Spotlight on Seniors*. While you can contact us at any time of year to offer your thoughts, this format offers a unique opportunity to bring concerns to the attention of the Office for the Aging, our Advisory Board, and OFA's partners in the community, as we prepare our goals for 2021-22.

If you aren't sure whether your concerns are best addressed by OFA or a different organization, please voice your concerns to us, and we can get you started on the road to answers. If your question is better addressed by a different organization, we can point you in the right direction. It's all part of the process of advocating for yourself, which is a key part of successful aging.

On Pages 4 and 5, you'll find a summary of the Annual Update which we provide to guests at our public hearings. It includes a description of OFA services provided in 2019-20.

Your comments are a key part of our planning for 2021 and the years to come. Comments, questions, suggestions, and answers will be posted in the Winter 2020-21 issue of the *Spotlight on Seniors*. Each issue of the *Spotlight* is posted at www.dutchessny.gov, and copies are made available at public libraries, municipal buildings and senior housing developments throughout Dutchess County. Please contact us if your facility would like a supply.

A Message from County Executive Marcus J. Molinaro



When the COVID-19 pandemic required us to cancel the Office for the Aging's annual summer Senior Picnic program in its traditional sit-down form, we remembered one key component of successful aging - adaptation.

We quickly moved to re-launch the picnic program as a drive-thru venture, with help from several local governments and school districts which were new to the picnic program, in addition to our partners from previous picnic seasons. You'll see pictures from this year's picnics on Page 7 of this issue.

It worked, because we worked together. We were able to serve more seniors than we ever served before. This leaves us in a good position for the 2021 picnic season, regardless of whether we'll be able to return to sit-down gatherings.

*As we move through fall, our adaptation to circumstances continues. Inside this issue, you'll find information on how OFA can help you prepare for this year's Medicare open enrollment season, which begins October 15th. Additionally, OFA's annual Medicare-focused edition of the *Spotlight on Seniors* is due out in early October.*

Unfortunately, large gatherings like October's annual OFA Senior Prom are still prohibited under pandemic restrictions, so once again we're adapting. The prom is being replaced this year by a safely-distanced social occasion - drive-in bingo! There's more about that on Page 3. We're hoping to build on the success of the drive-thru picnics and we'd love to see you again.

Todd N. Tancredi
Director

Marcus J. Molinaro
County Executive

Help Keep Seniors Safe and Healthy: Become An OFA Volunteer Driver

As the temporary New York State expansion of seniors' eligibility for Home Delivered Meals (HDM) benefits enters its eighth month, Office for the Aging staff and volunteers have been tremendously busy delivering meals to homebound seniors every weekday.

All this wouldn't be possible without OFA volunteer drivers who deliver for the HDM program. Before the COVID-19 pandemic began, we were providing daily midday meals to 130 seniors at OFA's eight Senior Friendship Centers, and delivering another 300 meals to homebound seniors. Those numbers skyrocketed when the pandemic began - but OFA volunteers of all ages were able to meet that demand.

Volunteer HDM drivers also serve as eyes and ears on homebound seniors, who are often alone during middays. We train HDM drivers on the correct response if they notice signs of a senior in distress while making a delivery.

Many of our volunteer drivers have since returned to their pre-pandemic jobs, or have gone back to school, but the heightened demand for home delivered meals continues.

Say no more - where do I sign up?

As of late August, OFA was delivering 2,600 meals a week - over 500 every day. That's down somewhat from the number of deliveries we made in the spring, but it's still well beyond pre-pandemic demand. Additionally, the course of the pandemic remains uncertain for the fall and beyond. This would be a great time to step up, if you can.

We work around your availability, so it's fine if you can only commit to one day a week. Contact us at **(845) 486-2555** or ofa@dutchessny.gov and we'll help you through the application process.

Any other volunteer opportunities?

Absolutely. This *Spotlight* was prepared for delivery by clerical volunteers at OFA headquarters in Poughkeepsie. Space is limited because of pandemic restrictions - but if you're able to help on short notice, this could be perfect for you.

Also, we are slowly bringing back many of our senior exercise and "A Matter of Balance" classes. As we re-start, we may need volunteer instructors.

OFA assists four other Dutchess County-based organizations that provide transportation assistance for seniors, as well as other volunteer services. You can contact them directly with inquiries.

Friends of Seniors

www.friendsofseniors.org, (845) 485-1277

North East Community Center

www.neccmillerton.org, (518) 789-4259

Pawling Resource Center

www.pawlingresourcecenter.org, (845) 855-3459

Retired and Senior Volunteer Program

www.dutchesscap.org, (845) 452-5104

SPOTLIGHT ON SENIORS

Marcus J. Molinaro — County Executive
Todd N. Tancredi — Director, Office for the Aging
Brian Jones — Editor, Spotlight on Seniors

Dutchess County Office for the Aging
114 Delafield St., Poughkeepsie NY 12601

(845) 486-2555 / toll free (866) 486-2555

Email: ofa@dutchessny.gov
Web: www.dutchessny.gov/aging

Available for free at libraries, senior centers and municipal buildings throughout Dutchess County.

Five issues published annually, including a Medicare-focused edition in October.

To be added to or removed from our mailing list, call (845) 486-2544 or email bjones@dutchessny.gov.

Medicare Workshops Resume, With Social Distancing

The Office for the Aging's regular series of Medicare classes and workshops was suspended in March when the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, but with Dutchess County gradually reopening we've been working with Adriaance Memorial Library in the City of Poughkeepsie and Boardman Road Library in the Town of Poughkeepsie to hold a series of socially distanced Medicare website workshops. **Reservations are required for all workshops.**

The following daytime classes are scheduled:

- Wednesday, October 28th
- Wednesday, November 25th
- Wednesday, December 23rd

Each of the above workshops begins at 9:30 a.m. at Adriaance Library, 93 Market St. in the City of Poughkeepsie. The library parking lot is around the corner on Noxon St.

There are also two evening classes on the schedule:

- Tuesday, October 27th at Boardman Road Library, 141 Boardman Rd.
- Wednesday, November 18th at Adriaance Library

Both classes take place from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

There is a limit of 6 people in each class due to the need for safe social distancing. It is also mandatory to wear a mask and to use hand sanitizer both before and after using the computer in the class. All class times and venues are subject to change due to the COVID situation at that time.

To make the required reservations, contact the Office for the Aging at **(845) 486-2555**.

Up-to-date event schedules are available on the calendar at www.dutchessny.gov.

FREE Drive-in Bingo

1:00 - 2:30 p.m.

Space limited • Reservations required
(845) 486-2555

Choose one date:

Bowdoin Park, Poughkeepsie
Wednesday, Oct. 14th (rain date Oct. 15th)

Dutchess County Fairgrounds, Rhinebeck
Tuesday, Oct. 20th (rain date Oct. 21st)

Boyce Park, Wingdale
Thursday, Oct. 22nd (rain date Oct. 23rd)

Five Common Myths About Falls

Myth 1: Falls will happen to other people – not me.

About one in three older adults will fall this year. That's about 20,000 Dutchess County seniors.

Myth 2: Falling is inevitable as you get older.

Falling is not a normal part of aging. Strength and balance exercises, managing medications, and checking your home for fall hazards are all steps you can take.

Myth 3: I won't fall if I limit my activity

Just the opposite is true. A lack of physical activity will cause muscles to weaken through lack of use – and that increases your risk of falling. Physical activities help you stay independent, and will improve your strength and range of motion.

Myth 4: I'll just stay home and that'll keep me safe.

Over half of falls happen at home, so check your home for common fall risks like loose throw rugs, poor lighting, and clutter. Adding grab bars and hand rails at strategic locations around the house will be helpful too.

Myth 5: I'm only going to get weaker as I get older.

We do lose muscle as we age, but physical activity can slow that process greatly.

OFA 2021-22 Annual Update Summary

Each year, as part of its planning process and in preparation for its Four Year Plan, the Dutchess County Office for the Aging and its Advisory Board conduct public hearings to obtain comments on services and service needs for senior citizens and their caregivers. The following two pages of this publication provide a summary of current services and plans for 2021-22.

Ordinarily, we would hold in-person public hearings in September and October to gather your input and questions, but since physical safety is of utmost importance during a pandemic, we ask that you offer your input and questions in other ways. Contact us at **845-486-2555**, in writing at **114 Delafield Street, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601** or by email at **ofa@dutchessny.gov**.

Services Provided

A variety of services are provided by the Office for the Aging, both directly and through subcontracts with local providers. Below is a listing of services delivered between April 1, 2019 and March 31, 2020. Services provided through the Annual Update are funded through a combination of Dutchess County funds, federal funds, state funds, client contributions and cost share.

<i>Service</i>	<i>Units of Service</i>	<i>Clients Served</i>
Personal Care	38,551 hours	410
Social Adult Day Care	1,866 hours	11
Case Management	6,771 hours	827
Home Delivered Meals	135,972 meals	650
Congregate Meals	43,952 meals	508
Nutrition Counseling	99 hours	75
Transportation	28,664 trips	202
Legal Services	662 hours	39
Nutrition Education	24,255 items	709
Information & Assistance	28,911 calls	1,983
Outreach	654 contacts	72
In Home Contact & Support	1,722 hours	25
Senior Center Recreation & Education	2,410 sessions	340
Health Promotion	35,078 individuals	310
Personal Emergency Response Systems (PERS)	3,414 months	387
Caregiver Services	123 individuals	95

OFA 2021-22 Annual Update Summary

Client Profiles

Services provided by the Dutchess County Office for the Aging are targeted to those who are most vulnerable. The chart below depicts the demographics of OFA clients receiving non-Medicaid community based long term care, between April 2019 and March 2020.

<i>Target Group</i>	<i>% in clients served</i>
Low Income	38.10%
Age 75+	40.50%
Age 85+	17.60%
Frail/Disabled	38.30%
Living Alone	41.30%
Minority	11.80%

Impact on the Lives of Seniors and Caregivers

Outcome and Client Satisfaction research conducted by the Office for the Aging has found the services offered have a significant impact in assisting seniors to remain independent in the community and in relieving caregiver stress and burden. Clients express a high degree of satisfaction with services provided.

2019-2020 Initiatives and Accomplishments

The Office for the Aging accomplished the following between April 2019 and March 2020:

- Meals distributed by the OFA Home Delivered Meals (HDM) program increased 2% to 136,000 meals served
- Arranged for over 38,000 hours of home care to seniors throughout the County.
- Walk-in clients increased 10% to over 4,700 during 2019.
- OFA's Community Service Workers assist clients with securing appropriate benefits such as Medicaid, the Medicare Savings Program, and other health insurance plans. Hours of service provided in 2019 totaled 2,276 hours supporting 993 clients.
 - OFA's Case Management Unit served an average of 485 clients a month. In addition, through OFA's collaboration with the Alzheimer's Association, the Case Management unit provided 118 Alzheimer's Caregiver Consultations.
 - OFA's Outreach unit helped 2,500 seniors by providing information and assisting them with applications for public benefits, including Medicaid, Medicare Savings Program, and HEAP (Heating Energy Assistance Program).
 - OFA's NY Connects unit made 1,453 referrals to OFA for Homecare, Meals, Energy assistance, Medicare counseling, Nutrition counseling, and assistance with applying for low-income benefits. There were a total of 6,470 contacts made by the unit to assist callers with information, referrals and option counseling.

2021-22 Planned Activities

The COVID pandemic added momentum to a shift in the way older adults obtain information. Older adults are increasingly using technology to connect to news and information, health and wellness resources, and social supports. OFA's primary initiative for 2021-22 will be to provide information regarding OFA programs and services remotely through technology, incorporating goals that are now specific to changes presented during this pandemic, and are applicable for the future. The purchase of tablets, laptops, scanning devices, and monitors, which will allow OFA to interact with seniors remotely will be funded with federal stimulus dollars.

ABA Warns Of Absentee Ballot Scams This Fall

Criminals around the world have adapted to the COVID-19/coronavirus pandemic by re-branding one of the scams they find to be most reliable - false impersonations. They make phone calls, send mail, and design websites that fraudulently impersonate government officials and organizations. The scammers use official-looking documents, threats, and “too good to be true” offers, in hopes of tricking the person on the receiving end into giving up sensitive personal, medical and financial information.

With presidential, congressional, and state legislative elections coming up in November, and governments adapting to conducting elections during a pandemic through greater use of absentee ballots, the American Bar Association (ABA) reports that it's a “perfect storm” for scammers looking to steal seniors' money and personal information.

The letter looks official, but is it?

You go to the mailbox, and inside is a letter that looks like it came from a government elections office. How can you tell the real thing from a scam? In this case, the main red flag will be if the letter asks for payment or personal information. If the letter instructs you to fill out a form with your Social Security number, date of birth, credit-card and/or banking information and so forth...throw it away. This is how swindlers open credit accounts in your name and commit other crimes.

I got an “absentee ballot” I didn't ask for

New York law this year allows voters to request an absentee ballot due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Absentee ballots are *not* being mailed automatically to all voters - you must ask for one. For more information, contact the Dutchess County Board of Elections at **(845) 486-2473** or dutchesselections@dutchessny.gov, or visit elections.dutchessny.gov.

More recommendations from the ABA:

DON'T complete an absentee ballot request or an absentee ballot without confirming that it is legitimate with the Board of Elections.

DON'T trust any offer to expedite the processing of an absentee ballot for a fee. There should never be fees associated with voting.

DON'T trust any phone solicitation to assist or process your absentee ballot.

DO call your local Board of Elections if you need assistance with absentee balloting.

DO report any suspicious mail or solicitations regarding absentee balloting to your local election office.

DO be sure to exercise your right to vote. Your vote makes a difference.

These phone scammers...they don't give up

All mobile phones and most home phones are now equipped with some form of Caller ID, which enables you to see who's on the other end of the line before picking up. Although scammers have been able to “spoof” phone numbers so that they appear to be local, that scammers' route is on the way to being blocked, with advances in call verification technology set to be in full effect by 2021. In the meantime, **don't pick up unless you are 100% sure who's calling.**

But I don't have Caller ID

For those with older phones without Caller ID screens, there's no way of knowing who's on the other end until you pick up. You might not know who's calling, but you can still prepare yourself to hang up the moment you suspect something's “off” about the caller, even a little bit.

Don't get sucked into their stories. Just hang up. Studies of phone scams have found the longer a scammer can keep their victim on the line, the more likely their scam will succeed. So just hang up. You don't have to say anything or press any buttons, and you certainly shouldn't call them back.

2020 Drive-Thru Senior Picnics



**Over 5,000
Seniors Served!**



Special thanks to Platinum picnic sponsors EverCare At Home and Home Energy Solutions

**Dutchess County Office for the Aging
114 Delafield Street, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601**

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
NEWBURGH, NY
PERMIT NO. 17

CURRENT RESIDENT OR

TO:

**2020-21 HEAP (Home Energy Assistance Program)
Season Schedule**

If you received a HEAP benefit in 2019-20 and expect to need HEAP again for the coming winter, applications for the 2020-21 season are arriving in mailboxes, starting in September.

If you did not receive a HEAP benefit in 2019-20, you must wait until November 10th to apply.

Because of COVID-19 precautions for the safety of clients and staff, we are asking that completed HEAP applications be mailed back to the Office for the Aging whenever possible. If we require additional information, an OFA HEAP examiner will contact you.

The New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance has indicated that federally funded stimulus rebates paid directly to individuals related to the 2020 coronavirus pandemic will **not** be counted as income for public assistance, HEAP, and SNAP programs.

For more information
about the
Dutchess County
Office for the Aging,
visit us online at
www.dutchessny.gov/aging

email

ofa@dutchessny.gov

call

**(845) 486-2555
or (866) 486-2555**

or mail

**Dutchess County
Office for the Aging
114 Delafield St.
Poughkeepsie NY 12601**

We're open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Monday through Friday.