

SPOTLIGHT ON SENIORS



Spring
2021

More OFA Drive-Ins and Drive-Thrus On the Way

It's not what we might have expected a year ago while first adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic, but the 2021 Office for the Aging spring and summer calendar of events has more to offer Dutchess County seniors than ever before. The remaining snow will melt, the days will get longer, and when you see daffodils start to bloom, you'll know it won't be long before OFA appears in a community near you, with activities to help seniors stay socially active while remaining physically safe.

We're starting on Friday, March 26th with "Pancakes in the Park," a free drive-through event produced in conjunction with Dutchess County Parks. The county's own Bowdoin Park has a stand of syrup-producing maple trees, and seniors who take part will have the opportunity to enjoy a taste. Interested in going? Space is limited, so check the details on Page 3 for more information.

A successful new idea from 2020 will also return in the spring: drive-in bingo. We're planning on a total of at least five bingo events between the spring and fall, and probably more.



Our 29th annual Senior Picnic program returns in drive-thru form again, starting just before Memorial Day and continuing through the summer. You should receive a reminder card in the mail about six weeks before the picnic serving your community.

As for traditional in-person events, we're cautiously hopeful they can return at some point in 2021, especially as increasing numbers of Dutchess County seniors are vaccinated.

Todd N. Tancredi
Director

A Message from County Executive Marc Molinaro



Friends,

There are over 50,000 seniors in Dutchess County who are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine, and your patience has been extraordinary as we do our best to navigate New York State's cumbersome vaccination process. As of the time this newsletter went to press, the state still controls the process.

New York State has said it will still take many months before every eligible senior can get their shots, but the amount of vaccine available each week has been growing slowly. There's more information about vaccination on Page 5 - but keep in mind that when it comes to vaccinations, we're in a fluid situation. To keep up-to-date, follow Dutchess County Government on social media, as we host weekly Virtual Town Hall forums at www.facebook.com/dutchesscogov.

For those without internet access, weekly vaccination updates can be found by calling the county's COVID-19 hotline:

(845) 486-3555

More information for those without online access can be found during our Telephone Town Hall events. Check Page 3 for the next date and time.

Besides everything they already do for Dutchess County seniors and caregivers, Office for the Aging staff can help seniors without computer access learn about vaccine appointment ability. Reach out, and they'll be there.

Stay safe and healthy,

Marcus J. Molinaro
County Executive

Animatronic Pets Calm Aging, Isolated Seniors

Those who grew up on farms always had animal companions nearby: the sheepdog, the barn cat or house cat, maybe chickens in the yard, along with the customary cows, goats, sheep and other livestock. If you grew up in a city or a suburb, chances are you remember beloved pets from decades ago as well as your current animal companions. We've seen some of you bring them along to Office for the Aging drive-through events. The mutually beneficial relationship between humans and domestic animals is as old as history.

Seniors also benefit from having pets as companions, but with live animals come costs and drawbacks: food, cleanup, and the potential for allergies and damage to furniture. Now, low-maintenance animatronic pets have filled a need for aging, isolated seniors - especially those with Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia.

Animatronic pets are remarkably lifelike, and have demonstrated calming effects for seniors, notably among those who are isolating to keep themselves safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a great deal of preliminary research on the use of social robots, or companion robots, in long-term care facilities. Animatronic pets have been linked to reductions in depression, agitation, loneliness, nursing staff stress, and medication use. While not yet conclusive, the research is a promising sign.

Robots to the Rescue

Robotic animal companions for seniors are a fairly recent development, having first appeared at nursing facilities in Japan in 2009. Hasbro started marketing animatronic pets in the U.S. in 2015, and since then the technology powering the animals has leapt forward like...well, a cat.

New York State ordered 1,100 pets, a few dozen of which were distributed to Dutchess County by the state Office for the Aging (NYSOFA). We're happy to report that initial distribution went well, and we're hoping to receive more. In the meantime, many local and online businesses also sell the robotic pets. We've seen them retailing for about \$130.

Are They Covered By Health Insurance?

Not yet, but the New York Times reported last September that negotiations are underway between the pets' manufacturers and certain Medicare Advantage and Medicaid plans. We'll let you know when we learn more. This would be a great time to subscribe to Dutchess County OFA weekly email newsletters, if you haven't already done so. Visit bit.ly/dutchessdelivery to learn more. You can get updates from OFA and many other county departments.

Can They Be Cleaned?

According to their manufacturers, the robots can be sanitized to prevent viral transmission.

SPOTLIGHT ON SENIORS

Marcus J. Molinaro — County Executive
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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.

Distributed in February, June, September and December, with a Medicare-focused edition in October.

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



County Executive Marc Molinaro,
Dutchess County Parks,
and
Dutchess County Office for the Aging

present

PANCAKES IN THE PARK

Friday, March 26th

11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Bowdoin Park

85 Sheafe Rd., Poughkeepsie

Free with required reservations
Call (845) 486-2555 by March 19th
Space is limited!

Social distancing and masks
both required for pick-up

Some Springtime Successful Aging Tips

Join a gentle exercise program. Contact the Office for the Aging to find out more about our Tai Chi, Senior Exercise and “A Matter of Balance” programs. Remote and socially-distanced options are available.

Put on some good music. Upbeat music can lift you up, while calm music can relax you.

Meditation and prayer can have a powerful effect on a person’s spirit, whether they are looking to simply appreciate life more or connect to something greater.

Try gardening, either at home or in a community garden. Gardening incorporates three keys to successful aging: social engagement, productive activities and exercise. The benefits of gardens are also linked to the restorative properties of nature. Social distancing is easier when you’re outdoors, too.

Dutchess County Government LIVE Telephone Town Hall

with

County Executive Marc Molinaro

Wednesday, March 24th

5:30 - 6:30 p.m.

Call (845) 765-7121

Available whether or not you have
internet access

Also available via Facebook Live at
www.facebook.com/dutchesscogov

2020 BY THE NUMBERS

In conjunction with our community partners and volunteers, the Office for the Aging provided a wide variety of services to the older adults of Dutchess County in 2020:

Overall Service	12,000+ individual seniors served
Home Delivered Meals	174,951 meals delivered to 545 homebound clients
Congregate Meals	12,795 meals at 8 Senior Friendship Centers (pre-pandemic)
Nutrition Education	154 hours of individual nutrition counseling; 37,829 pieces of Nutrition Education material distributed
Nursing/Case Management	805 field visits to community-based, long-term care clients
Legal Services	758 hours of legal service to 61 clients
Home Care	26,552 hours of home care to 281 non-Medicaid clients
Reception	37,409 phone calls and 1,802 walk-ins assisted
Medicare Workshops	Conducted 23 workshops for residents and distributed 3,500 Medicare "Spotlight on Seniors" newsletters
PERS Units	319 Emergency Response Units to non-Medicaid clients
HEAP	1,006 Home Energy Assistance applications processed
Caregiver Support	49 units of workshops, training and support to caregivers
Transportation	9,442 units of transportation to medical appts., shopping
Senior Events	12 drive-thru senior picnics held throughout the county 5 drive-in bingo events held throughout the county 1 holiday "car-a-oke" event with 79 guests 1 drive-thru flu shot clinic with 23 seniors vaccinated
Farmer's Market Coupons	Distributed 1,010 coupon books to low-income seniors
Prescription Drug Collection	408 pounds of outdated medication collected at senior picnics
Intake / NY Connects	1,665 referrals to OFA programs 8,155 contacts with clients, caregivers, professionals, others to offer information, application assistance, and referrals to programs within the county

Basic Questions About The COVID-19 Vaccine

Q: When can I get mine?

A: It is not clear at this point in time when vaccines will be available to everyone, but the educated consensus points to the end of the summer or early fall of this year. It depends on how rapidly vaccine doses can be produced and distributed. In New York, the vaccine distribution process was fully controlled by state government as of March 2021.

Q: Can I catch the virus from the vaccine?

A: No. COVID-19 vaccines are based on messenger RNA (mRNA) and not a complete virus. mRNA can't replicate itself like a full virus can.

Q: Can I get by with just one shot?

A: Not as of early March, although it's better than nothing. The first dose provides only some protection. The second dose acts as a booster, better preparing the immune system to fight infection.

Q: My friend felt "off" after her second shot.

A: Pain at the injection site, fatigue and aches are some of the same reactions that can happen with regular vaccines, like the flu shot you should be getting every year. They're a sign that the body is responding to the vaccine.

Q: So I should still get the flu shot?

A: Absolutely - but you won't be able to get it at the same time as a COVID shot. Get it taken care of at least two weeks before or after other vaccinations.

Q: Once I get both shots, can I skip my mask?

A: Not yet. We do know the vaccine is very effective at preventing illness in those who get two shots, but there's more to learn. We don't yet know if vaccines also prevent viral transmission. That makes it important to continue to wear a mask and socially distance even after getting vaccinated. Studies are continuing, and we hope we'll have more encouraging news soon.

Q: How long will my protection last?

A: We don't know yet. Studies of long-term effectiveness are underway. In the meantime, get the vaccine: it's the safer choice.

Q: What does it cost?

A: It's free; but, if you have insurance/Medicare cards, bring them on the day you're vaccinated.

Q: Who do I talk to about my other questions?

A: The Dutchess County Coronavirus Helpline (**845-486-3555**) is operated by Department of Behavioral & Community Health staffers and volunteers from the Medical Reserve Corps of Dutchess County. It's a great place to start.

(Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Academy of Family Physicians, Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center, Dutchess County Behavioral and Community Health)

COMING THIS SUMMER

Dutchess County Office for the Aging

DRIVE-THRU SENIOR PICNICS

Watch your mailbox this spring and summer for a reminder of the picnic serving your community!

Scam Calls and the COVID-19 Vaccine

Why do I keep getting these robocalls?

You did everything right, or so you think. You put your name on the federal government's Do Not Call list. You've got a robocall-blocking app on your mobile phone and a call-blocker on your landline. So what gives?

The calls are scams, and the best thing you can do is...ignore them.

So how come the government can't fix this?

The scammers are usually based outside the U.S., so they're beyond the reach of Do Not Call laws. Scammers are as sophisticated in reaching potential victims as any marketer would be in reaching customers. They operate auto-dialing programs that can go through thousands of phone numbers in search of victims. Even if they only find one victim among thousands of calls, their operations can still be profitable.

Above all, what phone scammers are looking for is a sign that they've reached an active phone number. If you pick up, they now know your number is active, and they can sell your information to other scammers. You get even more calls.

Uh-oh; I picked up

All is not lost. Just hang up, without saying anything or pushing any buttons, and the scammers might not consider your number active. Remember, they're looking for likely victims and by simply hanging up, you become a less likely victim.

If you have an answering machine or voice mail and use it to screen calls, that works well against scammers. When their autodialers detect an answering system, they generally disconnect and seek out another victim.

Are there COVID-19 vaccine scams?

Lots of them. Scammers follow whatever's making the news, and for the past year the pandemic has been the largest news story by far.

Vaccine distribution throughout New York State is controlled by State government...and nobody else. That means that anybody claiming to have a way to move up the eligibility list is operating a scam.

If you get a call, email or text message requesting payment, it's a scam - don't reply. The vaccine is free, and administration costs are borne by insurers and the government. Also beware of scammers offering you an opportunity to move ahead in the vaccination line for a payment or donation, or offers of money in exchange for providing personal information.

Other scammers are trying to get at your insurance information, so that they can use it to defraud Medicare/Medicaid and private health insurance companies. They may try to trick you into revealing Social Security and/or banking information, claiming that they need your it to verify your eligibility. Do NOT give it to them. It's a scam.

If you make a vaccine or testing appointment online, make sure you're using an official site.

Be aware of scammers pretending to be COVID-19 contact tracers. Legitimate contact tracers will never ask for your Medicare number, financial information, or attempt to set up a COVID-19 test for you and collect payment information for the test.

Any chance at catching these crooks?

When investigators get international cooperation, they can sometimes trace scam attempts back to the source, and your information could play a part in the investigation. On the next page is a clip-and-save Scam Prevention Resources sheet that can be used to report the most common scams. It's also available at www.dutchessny.gov/aging.

Scam Prevention Resources

If you suspect a scam phone call, don't pick up...
...and if you did pick up, **just hang up**

Don't say anything • Don't press any buttons • Don't call them back

If you think you've been scammed, contact your local authorities and financial institutions as necessary, along with these other resources:

Phone Scams, including Contact Tracing Scams

Federal Trade Commission - reportfraud.ftc.gov or 1-877-382-4357

Census Scams

NY Regional Office - 1-800-991-2520 or ois.fraud.reporting@census.gov

COVID-19/Coronavirus Scams

National Center for Disaster Fraud - 1-866-720-5721 or justice.gov/disastercomplaintform

Deed Scams

Dutchess County Clerk - www.dutchessny.gov/countyclerk or (845) 486-2133

Identity Theft - www.identitytheft.gov or 1-877-438-4338

Medicare/Medicaid fraud - 1-800-HHS-TIPS (447-8477)

Medicare Advantage fraud - 1-877-7SAFERX (772-3379)

IRS Scams - www.tigta.gov or 1-800-366-4484

Internet Crime Complaint Center - www.ic3.gov

Social Security Scams - 1-800-269-0271 (10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Eastern time) or oig.ssa.gov

Utility Scams

Central Hudson - (845) 452-2700 (or 800-527-2714 outside the 845 area code)

NYSEG - (800) 572-1131

(TTY: 711 for both Central Hudson and NYSEG)

New York State Attorney General (Poughkeepsie office): (845) 485-3900

New York State Consumer Assistance Hotline: (800) 697-1220

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

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TO:

Help Dutchess County Seniors **Volunteer With OFA**

Home Delivered Meals Drivers • Health Insurance (HIICAP) Counselors •
Clerical Assistance • Outdoor Events Helper (Picnics, Bingo, etc.) •
Exercise, Tai Chi and/or “A Matter of Balance” Leaders

Adults of All Ages and Student Volunteers Welcome

Limited Remote Volunteering Opportunities Available

Contact OFA to Learn More

ofa@dutchessny.gov
(845) 486-2555