

## Preserving Independence As We Age

You may have lived the following situation: Mom fell over the winter; and while she recovered and is getting around her home okay, there are a few situations where she's putting her foot down.

*"I don't want those grab bars in my house. They look medical."*

From the caregiver's perspective, the grab bars are an obviously necessary safety measure to prevent another fall - but that's not how Mom may see it.

Caregivers may see Mom as "stubborn" in refusing to have safety measures installed, but maybe she has a point. Few of us want to live in a home that resembles a hospital, no matter how safe.

The question for us to ask, both as caregivers and older adults, is not so much "How do we keep older people in their homes for longer?" but rather "How do we design our homes to adapt as we age?"

It's an issue for all of us, not only older people. For example: Think of a young parent trying to guide or carry a toddler into the house while also carrying grocery bags. A lever door handle would be as much a help for that parent and child as it would be for an older person with arthritis who has trouble with doorknobs.

This is why we at OFA emphasize the importance of preparing our homes through all phases of life, rather than scrambling for solutions after a crisis. Adaptation does have costs, but so does doing nothing and hoping for the best.

At [dutchessny.gov/fallprevention](https://dutchessny.gov/fallprevention), we offer a checklist of the many free and low-cost ways we can make our homes safer. For those with longer-term housing questions, reach out to OFA to help you explore your options.

### A Message from County Executive Sue Serino



*Dear Friends,*

*We're seeing signs of spring everywhere: warmer weather, melting snow...and, of course, the first "When's my Summer Picnic?" questions.*

*You'll find save-the-date details on Summer Picnics on Page 6 of this newsletter. The Office for the Aging opens picnic reservations on May 1st, and tens of thousands of older-adult households in Dutchess County will each receive a reminder postcard for their community's picnic. The picnics tend to reach full capacity quickly, and you can make a reservation without having received a reminder card.*

*Never been to an OFA picnic? The picnics have been OFA's top calling card for over 30 years, and for good reason. Imagine being able to find information on multiple issues important to you, all in one place, on the same day, close to your home - with lunch, live music, and an opportunity to get together with friends and neighbors. Many of your local elected officials, including yours truly, will be at your community's picnic to hear your concerns in person.*

*OFA volunteers are key to the success of our picnic program. Thanks to our volunteers, lunch for hundreds at each picnic is served in less than half an hour, and cleaned up just as quickly. To help our older adults enjoy their picnic experience, contact OFA at [ofa@dutchessny.gov](mailto:ofa@dutchessny.gov) or 845-486-2555.*

*We'll see you at the picnics this summer!*



Sue Serino, County Executive

## What Do Scammers Want From Us, Anyway?

Maybe you're reading the print version of this newsletter because you don't use computer technology and don't see the point of learning it at your age. You've done just fine all your life reading the printed word on paper, paying with cash, using paper checks to take care of the bills and so forth, so what's the problem?

Maybe you don't have much money to begin with. Nothing to steal = no problems, you might assume.

Or maybe you *are* a technology user because of the convenience it offers, but you "don't trust artificial intelligence," and not using AI means you're safe from scammers, so the reasoning goes.

The problem with these lines of reasoning is that the cat is already out of the bag. Technology, including AI, is intertwined in our lives, whether or not we wanted it. Avoiding technology only makes it easier for scammers to target us. Your information can be stolen from your banks, doctors, credit card companies, insurers both public and private, in addition to being available publicly.

We don't have to be tech experts to protect ourselves, but we *do* need to keep ourselves informed enough to be proactive in protecting ourselves.

### Scammers Keep Learning And Improving

If it wasn't for the nature of their business being crime, scammers would make excellent business role models. They continually refine necessary business skills like marketing, customer relationships, and revenue processing, all the while adapting quickly to new market demands. Scams have paid off handsomely for scammers. If there was a nation called "Scamland" that all the world's cybercriminals and scammers called home, experts estimate its gross domestic product would be larger than every nation on earth except the U.S. and China, at over \$10 trillion a year and growing.

At that size, you might think they consider an older person on a fixed income to be small potatoes. But scammers wouldn't be targeting you if you didn't have something they needed to further their goals: your personal information.

### Treat Your Personal Info Like Cash

The key to stopping scams before they can get started - is you. Your Social Security number, Medicare and insurance IDs, credit card numbers, and other personally identifiable information can be used to steal your money or open new accounts in your name - without your knowledge or approval. That's why scammers will try to trip you up, using fear and "too good to be true" offers to get you to lower your guard.

Scammers are relentless and can even fool security experts, so your wisest first move is not to engage with any unexpected, unsolicited attempts to contact you.

See more at [dutchessny.gov/scamprevention](https://dutchessny.gov/scamprevention) .

## THRIVE60+

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

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

## Five Free, Easy Ways To Stay Sharp As You Age

Ever wonder why some older adults seem “fit as a fiddle” as they approach age 100, while others fade decades sooner? It’s not complicated - and not only is it *not* pricey, you may even find yourself saving money.

Let’s make this even easier. Pick any one of the five options below to get started, and add the others one by one whenever you feel comfortable that you’ll be able to sustain them. Consistency is the key, not perfection. The brain responds to what we repeat, so let’s repeat the simple actions that have proven effective in countless studies:

### 1. A Nice Morning Walk, Preferably Outdoors

Not jogging, running, or “going for the burn.” A simple walk covers what older adults need most from physical activity: an increase in brain blood flow, reduced inflammation, better sleep, and lower blood pressure. On days when the weather’s not fit for outdoor activity, taking care of household chores fills the bill nicely. OFA also offers a remote “SAIL” (Staying Active and Independent for Life) exercise option.

See [dutchessny.gov/seniorexercise](http://dutchessny.gov/seniorexercise) or contact OFA for additional options, including our exercise and tai chi classes and “A Matter of Balance” fall prevention program.

### 2. Actual Conversations

In-person if you can manage it, over the phone if you can’t. What’s unique about the act of conversation is that it requires cognitive processing that can’t be duplicated in texts or emails. And you thought all you were doing was chatting with a neighbor at the grocery store, but you were doing so much more. Conversation reduces dementia risk and prevents depression. If you’re looking for people to talk to, OFA offers our “Friendly Calls” program to participants and volunteer callers alike, to facilitate these essential conversations. It’s a time commitment of 20-30 minutes per week, once a

week, for eight weeks. To find out more, contact OFA “Friendly Calls” coordinator Linda Edgar at [ledgar@dutchessny.gov](mailto:ledgar@dutchessny.gov) of 845-486-2548.

### 3. Learn Something New Every Week

Anything that requires you to concentrate will work here: a recipe, a new game or puzzle, a documentary, new technology, a book, you name it. Keeping the brain busy and stimulated builds cognitive reserve, creates new neural connections, and delays cognitive decline.

### 4. Get 7-9 Hours of Sleep Every Night

The key to the best possible sleep is to stay on the same daily pattern, weekdays and weekends alike. During sound sleep, your brain “flushes” itself of toxic waste products, reduces inflammation, and consolidates memories.

And don’t feel guilty about naps. According to an American Geriatrics Society study, an afternoon nap of 30 to 90 minutes appears to have brain benefits, although problems with cognition may arise with longer naps.

### 5. Eat mostly plants

Eat a diet consisting of fruits and vegetables, beans, fish, and olive oil for the most part, keeping processed foods to a minimum. OFA’s Division of Nutrition Services provides a wealth of useful information to get yourself into an aging-friendly regimen.

Visit [dutchessny.gov/ofanutrition](http://dutchessny.gov/ofanutrition) or contact OFA to find out about nutrition counseling options and much more.

### It’s A Long-Term Commitment

There’s no need to obsess over complicated longevity protocols, supplements beyond simple Vitamins D and/or B12 as prescribed by your doctor, or whatever the latest industry hype claims.

Slow and steady wins this race!

## OFA Friendship Centers: Beyond Bingo

The eight OFA Friendship Centers have a lot to offer, presenting great opportunities for physical, mental, and social fitness for older adults throughout Dutchess County. Learn something new, rediscover a favorite craft, enjoy a nutritious lunch, and meet plenty of new friends!

### Friendship Center Locations and Hours

Beacon - 1 Forrestal Heights, Beacon  
845-838-4871 • 10a-2p Mon-Fri

City of Poughkeepsie - 114 Delafield St,  
Poughkeepsie  
845-486-2564 • 9a-2p Mon-Fri

East Fishkill - 890 NY 82, Hopewell Junction  
(East Fishkill Community Center)  
845-226-3605 • 10a-2p Mon-Fri

Millerton - 28 Century Blvd., Millerton  
(NorthEast-Millerton Library Annex)  
518-789-3081 • 10a-2p Mon-Thu

Pawling - 154 Charles Colman Blvd., Pawling  
(Town Hall Annex)  
845-855-9308 • 10a-2p Tue-Thu

Red Hook - 59 Fisk St., Red Hook  
(Red Hook Community Center)  
845-475-1129 • 10a-2p Mon-Fri

South Amenia - 229 South Amenia Rd., Wassaic  
(First Presbyterian Church)  
845-373-4305 • 10a-2p Mon-Thu

Tri-Town  
1576 Main St. (US 44), Pleasant Valley  
(First Presbyterian Church)  
845-275-8565 • 10a-2p Mon-Thu



A "Senior Park Palette" class at the Poughkeepsie Friendship Center, presented with help from Dutchess County Parks



Jenga! - but supersized - at the Beacon Friendship Center



During a Tri-Town Friendship Center outing to the Walkway over the Hudson

## Are You “Eligible but Unenrolled?”

It’s often the people who need aging services the most who find it hardest to access them. Sometimes it’s the real concern about the unknown that’s the barrier to an older adult’s initial request for assistance. Sometimes it’s the perception that by asking for help, they’re losing independence.

To which we’d say: how independent are any of us? Unless we’re building our own homes, locating our own water and energy supplies, growing our own food and so forth, we all depend on each other in countless ways. An older adult who reaches out to OFA isn’t losing independence - they’re embracing interdependence. Any time OFA helps an individual connect to the services they need, and everything clicks, it’s just as much a satisfying experience for us as it is for the people being helped.

### About The Chart On This Page

In governmental language, OFA is known as an “Area Agency on Aging” (AAA); but, according to the 2024 University of Michigan poll cited for the chart, over two-thirds of Americans are unaware of their local AAA’s existence. Even if a larger percentage of Dutchess County older adults are aware of OFA’s existence, that still leaves thousands who could be

helped with critical needs, but haven’t reached out yet. A similar gap remains for older adults and access to objective health insurance counseling. All 50 states operate a State Health Insurance Assistance Program. In New York, it goes by the acronym HIICAP (Health Insurance Information, Counseling and Assistance Program), and it’s available throughout the year in Dutchess County by contacting OFA. Visit [dutchessny.gov/hiicap](https://dutchessny.gov/hiicap) to find out more.

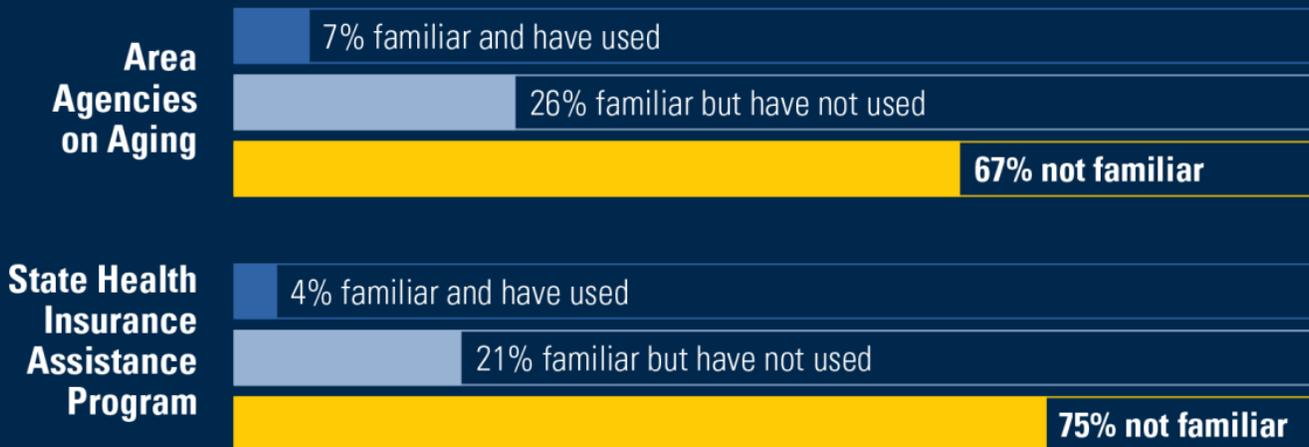
The National Council on Aging’s most recent Benefits Participation Map ([ncoa.org](https://ncoa.org)) estimates that over 3,500 adults over 65 in Dutchess County have not applied for SNAP (formerly known as food stamps) despite being eligible. Over 2,800 are eligible to participate, but not enrolled in, the Medicare Savings Program (MSP).

### To The Unenrolled, A Message

*This is YOUR money.* Don’t leave it on the table. You’ve been paying taxes all your lives, after all. If the prospect of paperwork worries you, helping you navigate those waters is part of OFA’s role.

If you’re worried about a language barrier, OFA is ready to help. Our Language Line service is available to help older adults discuss their needs in the language they feel most comfortable using.

## Familiarity with Services for Older Adults AMONG ADULTS AGE 50 AND OLDER



Source: University of Michigan National Poll on Healthy Aging, June 2024

# “When I retire, I’ll have time to give back.”

OFA has just the volunteering opportunities you’ve been looking for!

Home Delivered Meals Drivers*	Clerical
“Friendly Calls” Program	Events and Picnic Crew
Central Kitchen Help	Friendship Center Assistance
Exercise, Tai Chi and “A Matter of Balance”	Health Insurance Counselors

We provide all instruction

Find out more at [dutchessny.gov/ofavolunteer](https://dutchessny.gov/ofavolunteer) or call **845-486-2555**

\* Mileage reimbursement available for drivers who use their own vehicles

## County Executive Sue Serino and the Office for the Aging present

### FREE Summer Picnics for Older Adults

*Live Music • Great Food • Rain or Shine*

*Space Is Limited • Carpooling Suggested*

**Reservations Required - Opening Friday, May 1st**

All 2026 picnics take place on Wednesdays

Never been to an OFA picnic? See [dutchessny.gov/ofapicnics](https://dutchessny.gov/ofapicnics) for 2025 highlights

Date	For Older Residents of	Date	For Older Residents of
May 27	Amenia, Dover, Pawling, Union Vale	July 15	North East, Pine Plains, Stanford, Washington
June 3	Fishkill	July 22	Wappinger
June 10	Milan, Red Hook, Rhinebeck	July 29	Pleasant Valley
June 17	Clinton, Hyde Park	August 12	City of Poughkeepsie
June 24	Town of Poughkeepsie	August 19	Beekman, LaGrange
July 8	Beacon	August 26	East Fishkill

*Presented with support from The Pines at Poughkeepsie and Central Hudson*

## Planning for Older Drivers Becoming Non-Drivers

If you've been concerned about a loved one's driving skills, or your own, it's essential to have a plan to meet transportation needs when the time comes to give up the keys for good.

### It's Not An Easy Conversation To Have

Driving equals independence, especially for older adults; and their insistence on continuing to drive isn't necessarily driven by an inability to accurately evaluate their own skills. According to a Journal of the American Geriatrics Society study, giving up the keys nearly doubles the symptoms of depression for older adults, and it may also increase declines in physical and mental health. That makes it crucial to plan for what comes next.

### Beginning The Plan

Whether it's your own driving you're concerned about, or a loved one's, the questions stay the same:

- *Where do you drive on a regular basis? Where else do you drive, though less often? Consider the general time of day the driving takes place, how long is typically spent on the road, and the typical level of traffic congestion. A mile on Route 9 through the heart of Poughkeepsie is a whole different experience than a mile on a country road in Verbank, for example.*
- *What are the transportation options in your area? This is where OFA can be a great help, connecting you to the transportation options that apply best to your individual situation. Contact OFA to learn more:*

**845-486-2555** or [ofa@dutchessny.gov](mailto:ofa@dutchessny.gov)

### The Non-Driver New York State ID

A non-driver ID is a photo ID card for someone who does not drive. A person of any age can get a non-driver ID card. You must apply in a DMV office. Visit [dmv.ny.gov/non-driver-id-card](http://dmv.ny.gov/non-driver-id-card) for the full list of requirements and application fee information.

In Dutchess County, there are DMV facilities in Beacon, Millbrook and Wappinger, along with the main DMV office on the ground floor of the Dutchess County Office Building at 22 Market St. in the City of Poughkeepsie.

See [dutchessny.gov/dmv](http://dutchessny.gov/dmv) or call **845-486-2130** for information on DMV reservations, walk-in hours, and locations.

### On "Retiring from Driving"

Giving up driving doesn't have to happen all at once. Older drivers are often among the safest on the road, often because they've already reduced their time spent driving. Maybe they avoid driving at night or driving in bad weather, and choose destinations for errands like shopping that are closer to home.

Sometimes the main roads we've driven for decades have grown beyond recognition, to the point where we're no longer comfortable there. Familiarizing yourself with alternate routes can reduce angst and might even save some time.

### Technology Can Be Your Friend

For caregivers who can't keep 24/7 watch over an older person, installing location trackers like the Apple AirTag can help with peace of mind. Other devices monitor both a vehicle's location as well as its speed.



### OFA SENIOR EXERCISE PROGRAMS

Exercise • Tai Chi • A Matter of Balance

845-486-2555 or [ofa@dutchessny.gov](mailto:ofa@dutchessny.gov) for  
registration info

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

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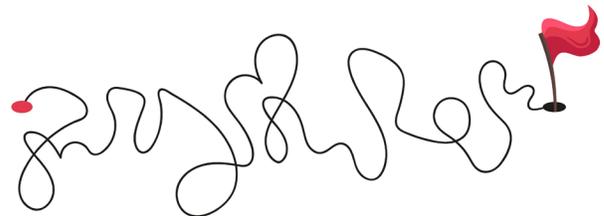
CURRENT RESIDENT OR

TO:

**MY PLAN**



**REAL LIFE**



Need help getting your aging plan straightened out...  
...with less running around?

Talk to OFA Ambassador Mary Reedy. She hosts Mobile Office Hours all over Dutchess County, including communities near you!

To find out where she's headed next, drop us a line at [ofa@dutchessny.gov](mailto:ofa@dutchessny.gov) and you'll be subscribed to our weekly Aging News email newsletters.

