

What Do You Mean, I'm Getting Old?

During a job interview, you've likely either heard or asked this classic question:

Where do you see yourself in five or 10 years?

It's a question we still need to ask ourselves continually as we age, whether we haven't yet turned 60, or are closing in on 100 and beyond.

We need to be honest with ourselves and our caregivers as we assess our strengths and weaknesses.

When To Start Planning?

The best time to start planning for successful aging is probably in the past, unless you've been unusually diligent. The second best time? As soon as you can. It's why OFA emphasizes the concept "Get to know us *BEFORE* you need us." It's never too early to start planning, but it can easily become too late.

There are no certainties in making plans, only ways to improve the chances of the best possible outcomes throughout our later lives.

Can't We Just Change the Subject?

We can change the subject as soon as we discover the fountain of youth. Until such time, we all should have an aging plan - but 30% of Americans would just as soon not think about aging at all, according to a healthaffairs.org survey.

Human nature can be frustrating that way, but it doesn't have to be an insurmountable barrier to an honest discussion of our needs as we age. Whether we're the caregiver or the person being cared for - and a person can be both - the discussion starts with the person we see in the mirror.

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A Message from County Executive Sue Serino



Dear Friend:

With the first snow of the season already fallen, I'm thrilled to remind you about a pair of free transportation options we have available you can utilize – not only during winter, but year-round.

If you or someone you care about is an older adult or a veteran living in Dutchess County, GoGo Grandparent and GoGo Veterans can help make getting around a little easier.

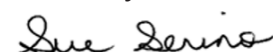
GoGo Grandparent offers free, on-demand rides within Dutchess County for older adults (60+) who aren't on Medicaid and don't have other transportation options. It's perfect for getting to non-emergency medical appointments or visiting loved ones in hospitals or healthcare facilities. You don't need a smartphone app; just a phone call will do. To register, call our Office for the Aging at 845-486-2555.

If you're a veteran, GoGo Veterans gives you two free rides per month to medical appointments, including VA hospitals, and one ride per month for errands like grocery shopping or personal visits. Simply call our Office of Veterans Affairs at 845-486-2060 to sign up.

Both programs use Uber or Lyft drivers, and rides can be scheduled in advance or on the same day.

These services are here to help you stay independent, connected, and supported. You've taken care of so much over the years; now let us help take care of the driving.

Sincerely,



Sue Serino, County Executive

Your Family Needs a Code Word

We've written about the "grandparent scam" many times, and it's a message that bears repeating because scammers are constantly on the hunt for new ways to trick us into parting with money and personal information.

The latest spin on the grandparent scam involves artificial intelligence (AI) to create realistic "deepfakes" of loved ones' voices. That voice on the phone claiming to be your grandson needing bail money can now sound just like your grandson. All a scammer needs is a sample of a voice and they can whip up a lifelike persona.

It's another trick to manipulate your emotions, but there's a simple way to stop the tactic:

Have a code word, something simple but unique that you and close family members can memorize.

If a loved one is legitimately in trouble, the code word can help you decide what to do next. If it's a scammer calling, the AI will be unable to respond to your question with the right answer.

Choosing a Code Word

Bad actors and their AI can learn a lot about you through simple internet searches. When it comes to choosing a code word, don't use something that might be found in a search, like the name of a street you've lived on. Instead, pick something unique to your personality. If you're a Yankees fan, for example, try Yogi or another well-known name.

For Loved Ones With Dementia

Code words might not work for an older adult who has memory issues, but there's a Plan B for that. Modern mobile phones have call-blocking and scam-prevention settings that prevent calls and texts from unknown numbers from getting through, while also screening calls from healthcare providers so that important messages can get through.

A Few Thousand Steps Can Dodge Alzheimer's?

You may already know about the importance of physical activity in reducing the chances of contracting Alzheimer's disease.

One new finding from the Harvard Aging Brain Study (habs.mgh.harvard.edu) is even more encouraging. According to the study, just 3,000-5,000 steps a day can delay cognitive decline by an average of three years. The more steps you get in, the better the results, too. Delay in cognitive decline jumps to seven years in those who get in 5,000-7,500 steps a day.

The study involved older individuals who were not suffering from cognitive impairment at the beginning of the study, despite having elevated levels of amyloid-beta protein in the brain.

Amyloid-beta is a protein fragment that clumps together in the brain, and many researchers believe it's responsible for the pathology of Alzheimer's disease.

THRIVE60+

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Available for free at libraries, OFA Friendship 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.

The Waddle Works: Just Ask OFA's Fall Prevention Penguin

Getting ready for a trip outside this winter? Consider how the penguin does it. They live on the ice year-round and are acclimated to walking on slippery surfaces.

To walk like a penguin, do the following, as demonstrated in the penguin illustrated on this page:

- Bend slightly and walk flat footed
- Keep your center of gravity over your feet as much as possible
- Point your feet out slightly – like a penguin
- Shuffle your feet and take short steps
- Watch where you are stepping
- Concentrate on keeping your balance
- Keep your arms at your sides and hands out of your pockets
- Go slow

See dutchessny.gov/penguin for greater detail.

Penguins don't wear shoes, but we humans need to. For winter walking, find a pair that is:

- Sturdy
- Has good ankle support
- Has slip resistant soles

How To Fall

You can take every safety precaution available and still take a spill. With preparation and practice, you can still reduce the risk of injury in a fall. First things first: Protect your head.

- If you feel yourself beginning to fall, tuck your chin against your chest to prevent your head from hitting the ice or pavement;
- Cradle your arms around your head;
- As you fall, try to fold your body into itself, which helps to decrease the height of the fall;
- As you hit the ground, roll and exhale sharply to tense up your body and allow for it to absorb the impact; and
- Never try breaking a fall by bracing yourself with your hand, as it likely will only result in a sprain or a break.

Take an OFA "A Matter of Balance" Class

Falls are not a normal part of aging, but older adults are at increased risk for a potentially life-changing fall. To reduce that risk, we host eight-week "A Matter of Balance" classes every spring and fall. The classes are taught by volunteer instructors who have taken the class in the past; if you meet that description, we'd love to have you be one of our volunteer instructors. Please reach out to OFA with your questions. We provide all training.

The next classes meet once a week for eight weeks, starting in the late winter or early spring. Because "A Matter of Balance" cannot accept walk-in students, class locations and times are disclosed when an older adult registers for a class.

To reserve a class space for yourself, contact OFA during business hours at **845-486-2555** or ofa@dutchessny.gov.

Visit dutchessny.gov/seniorexercise to find out about other exercise options.



A Few of OFA's Plans for 2026

If you or someone you care for has recently returned from a hospital stay, you may be grateful for the care that was received while at the same time hoping there won't be any return trips for a long time.

At OFA we recognize that hope needs help from good planning to prevent recurring hospital visits. That's what interests us about a Community Needs Assessment completed in 2025 by Nuvance Health. They found one consistent community concern throughout their hospital service area: aging, and related issues like isolation, access to care, transportation, and prevention of falls and injuries.

Spreading the Word (Even More)

In 2026, OFA plans to work to more broadly educate medical staff regarding OFA programs and services. OFA's Ambassador and one OFA Case Manager will be the point of contact for area hospitals, with the goal of including OFA services in discharge planning for older patients who have limited or no supports in the community.

We envision every older adult who spends time in a hospital in Dutchess County receiving OFA information before they head home, so that they and their caregivers can best adapt to any new realities that arise as a result of the condition that required the hospital visit.

More Supports for Caregivers

For the caregivers of Dutchess County's older adults, community resources and support are critical. Watch for enhancements in 2026 in caregiver support groups, respite care services, educational workshops, social adult day services, and resources for working caregivers. Visit dutchessny.gov/ofacaregiver for the latest information that can help caregivers throughout Dutchess County.

Getting Beyond Ageism and Stereotypes

There's no single truth about aging, and we shouldn't accept stereotypes about age that can limit our well-being. That principle applies to people of any age, but especially older adults.

What we're trying to avoid is ageism: the tinge of negativity that often surrounds issues related to aging and caregiving. Sometimes that negativity is self-inflicted, as we don't yet realize what we're capable of as we age.

The reality of aging isn't what it was when the Office for the Aging was founded more than 50 years ago; likewise, our perceptions of aging need to move into the present day as well.

OFA serves an estimated 80,000 adults over age 60 in Dutchess County, and over 40,000 more in the 50-59 age group will join them over the coming decade. The sheer numbers are a strength that an individual older adult may not know they have; and so, they can withdraw from connection with family and community, especially if they feel ostracized because of their age.

On any given day, one of our OFA Friendship Centers could be serving three generations: people in their 60s, people in their 80s, and even the occasional centenarian, each with diverse interests. We do love a good game of bingo, but it's far from the only activity available at our Friendship Centers, where our clients enjoy everything from cooking demonstrations, to art classes, to luncheon outings - and much more.

Meanwhile, thousands of older Dutchess County residents above traditional retirement age are continuing to work; and if our experience is any indication, they're working for the fulfillment employment brings them, as much as they're doing it for extra income. Dutchess County's first Older Adult Skills Fair last July drew so much interest from older adults, another skills fair is planned for 2026. Follow OFA on Facebook at facebook.com/DutchessCountyOFA to get the latest on everything OFA has planned for the new year.

What Do You Mean, I'm Getting Old? (continued)

For Caregivers: "The Talk" Isn't Just One Talk

Thinking of sitting a parent or older loved one down for "the talk?" Think again. An older person may feel cornered or talked down to in such an atmosphere. Remember that they've often been the head of their household for decades. From where they see things, they've done pretty well and can still handle things independently.

If they appear to be in denial of their condition, they may well be putting on a brave face - but even when it comes to older adults who can't or won't recognize their need for assistance, remember that aligning their wishes with their best interests will be a process, not a single conversation.

Stay Mindful, Caregivers

Pay careful attention to what an older person says, without immediate judgment. Offer a range of options for the older adult to consider, including reaching out to the Office for the Aging to learn about available services.

Watch for opportunities to advance the discussion. For example, temporary help at home after a hospitalization or illness can give an older person a chance to get used to having assistance at home. One excellent example: the OFA Home Delivered Meals program, which helps qualifying older adults receive nutritious meals when they are unable to handle shopping trips and/or meal prep at home.

The goal of older adults, caregivers and OFA is the same: to enable older adults to live independently in Dutchess County for as long as it remains safe to do so. The healthaffairs.org survey we mentioned earlier put it wonderfully:

*"This is not about having the death conversation – what you want to happen to you when you die. This is about having the **life** conversation – defining how you want to live in light of changing health needs and daily physical struggles that may emerge as you age."*

Beating the "Blue Monday" Blues

Depending on which news sources you follow, the third or fourth Monday in January is known as "Blue Monday," widely but inaccurately noted as the most depressing day of the year, based on factors like lack of sunlight, cold, New Year's resolutions fizzling out, and holiday shopping debt.

Truth is, "Blue Monday" came about as a result of a British travel agency's marketing gimmick over 20 years ago. And yet the idea does ring true. If nothing else, it's an opportunity to talk about how we can help older adults who are already more prone to loneliness and social isolation.

Depression and loneliness, seasonal or otherwise, can be tricky to spot. We might just feel "a little off." Loneliness? That's something that happens to other people, we tell ourselves. The pandemic is behind us, but maybe we're still unconsciously self-isolating.

January is as good a time as any to take stock of our lifestyle habits. You'll learn more in our January newsletters. Are there simple changes to be made that could bring powerful results? We won't know until we try. In the meantime, here's a "Blue Monday" we like.



OFA Mobile Office Hours

Traveling even part-way across Dutchess County used to be a big deal, not so long ago. The smaller local newspapers of the day would publish columns detailing goings-on in every hamlet in their coverage area, like *“Mr. and Mrs. Howard Smith of Jackson Corners entertained relatives from Poughkeepsie over the holidays.”*

Getting from Poughkeepsie to Jackson Corners was quite the feat in the days before more modern highways through Dutchess County were completed. Some readers may remember the days before there was any such thing as the Taconic State Parkway here.

Today, getting around can sometimes be easier, but not always. It can still be a big deal, because of time, weather, and/or cost issues. That’s why Office for the Aging Ambassador Mary Reedy has been scheduling mobile office hours throughout Dutchess County, where older adults can get in-person answers, in their hometowns, to their questions about aging services issues.

Mobile Office Hours in Your Home Town

We are reaching out to a range of potential host organizations throughout Dutchess County: municipal governments, libraries, civic organizations, senior centers, houses of worship and more - and we’re just getting started.

Want to know when we’re coming to your community? An email to ofa@dutchessny.gov will get you subscribed to OFA’s weekly *Aging News* email blasts, typically delivered weekly on Fridays.

OFA Senior Exercise Classes

Exercise • Tai Chi • Remote Exercise Options
and “A Matter of Balance”

Find out more at
dutchessny.gov/seniorexercise

or call **845-486-2555**

The Centenarian Club Keeps Growing

As of early December 2025, when this newsletter was published, entertainment legend Dick Van Dyke was approaching his 100th birthday (December 13th). We’ve noticed over the years that he’s got a lot in common with our own centenarians: staying physically and mentally active, and maintaining an optimistic outlook regardless of the challenges aging gives him.

We’ll let him say the rest:

No one is genetically miserable. No matter our current circumstances, we all have the capacity for a joyful life.

Boiled down, the things that have kept my life joyful and fulfilling are pretty simple: romance, doing what I love, and a whole lot of laughing.

Also, as I get older I have found that life is more and more a comedy of errors. So if you can’t laugh at yourself, you’ve got big problems.

As seriously as I took it, comedy, singing and dancing were always just my way to feel and express simple pure joy. To this day, I hum through my whole daily routine, I crack jokes and pull pranks and I make my body go rubbery — just for the fun of it.

And as for the future, here’s a little internal checklist I keep handy: What are you going to do today? What do you want tomorrow, next month, next year to look like?

Maybe “laughter is the best medicine” is more than just a cliché, given how many comic entertainers just seem to go on forever, like Dick Van Dyke, Carol Burnett (92), and Mel Brooks (99) - and they’re still making people laugh.

A good laugh certainly can’t hurt. That’s why we add a really corny joke to every weekly OFA Aging News email blast. Email ofa@dutchessny.gov to subscribe.

2025 OFA Senior Prom - Masquerade Ball



Our thanks to The Pines at Poughkeepsie for their support of the prom
2026 Senior Prom (tentative date) - **Monday, October 19th**
Theme: **Hawaiian Luau**

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