

# Super Seniors News **May 2017 Newsletter**

Dear Friends,

This issue of “Super Seniors News” will be dedicated to “Older Americans Month.”

We will focus on healthy aging and some tips for participating in activities you enjoy, which support healthy aging.

Sincerely,

*Jacquelyn W. Gibson*

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## **May is Older Americans Month**



When Older Americans Month was established in 1963, only 17 million living Americans had reached their 65th birthday. About a third of older Americans lived in poverty and there were few programs to meet their needs. Interest in older Americans and their concerns was growing. At a meeting in April 1963 between President John F. Kennedy and members of the National Council of Citizens; May was designated as “Senior Citizens Month,” the prelude to “Older Americans Month.”

Every President since Kennedy has issued a formal proclamation during or before the month of May asking the entire nation to pay tribute in some way to older persons in their communities. In 1980, President Jimmy Carter’s proclamation changed the name to “Older Americans Month.”

The Administration on Aging, part of the Administration for Community Living, selected “Age Out Loud” as the theme Older Americans Month 2017. The theme is intended to give aging a voice - one that reflects what today’s older adults have to say about aging.

The 2017 theme gives us an opportunity to shine a light on many important issues and trends. More than ever before, older Americans are working longer, trying new things, and engaging in their communities. They're taking charge, striving for wellness, focusing on independence, and advocating for themselves and others. They expect to continue to live their lives to the fullest, and they are insisting on changes that make that possible. What it means to age has changed, and "Older American Month" 2017 is a perfect opportunity to recognize and celebrate what getting older looks like today.

**Participating in Activities**  
**You Enjoy—More than**  
**Just Fun and Games/Tips**  
**from the National Institute on Aging**



There are many things you can do to help yourself age well (exercise and be physically active, make healthy food choices, and don't smoke). But did you know that participating in activities you enjoy may also support healthy aging?

As people get older, they often find themselves spending more time at home alone. The isolation can lead to depression and is not good for your health. If you find yourself spending a lot of time alone, try adding a volunteer or social activity to your routine.

**Benefits of an Active Lifestyle**

Engaging in social and productive activities you enjoy, like taking an art class or becoming a volunteer in your community or at your place of worship, may help your well-being.



**Research tells us that older people with an active lifestyle:**

- Are less likely to develop certain diseases. Participating in hobbies and other social and leisure activities may lower risk for developing some health problems, including dementia.
- Have a longer lifespan. One study showed that older adults who reported taking part in social activities (Such as playing games, belonging to social groups, or traveling or meaningful, productive activities (such as having a paid or unpaid job, or gardening) lived longer than people who did not. Researchers are further exploring this connection.
- Are more happy and less depressed. Studies suggest that older adults who participate in what they believe are meaningful activities, like volunteering in their communities, say they feel happier and more healthy. Researchers found that volunteers reported personal satisfaction from these experiences. They found it improved the volunteers' cognitive and physical health, and lowered the risk of developing disabilities, dependency, and dementia in later life. Research shows that people who are sociable, generous, and goal-oriented may feel more happy and less depressed than other people.
- Are better prepared to cope with loss. Studies suggest that volunteering can help with stress and depression from the death of a spouse.
- May be able to improve their thinking abilities. Another line of research is exploring how participating in creative arts might help people age well (acting course, music or dance). These studies have shown that older adult's memory, comprehension, creativity and problem-solving abilities are improved.

## **Activities to Consider**

There are plenty of places to look for opportunities to get more involved in your community and to be more socially active. Here are some ideas:

### ***Get Out and About***

- Join a senior center and take part in its events and activities
- Go to the theater, a movie, or a sporting event
- Join a group interested in a hobby like knitting, hiking, painting, or wood carving
- Visit friends and family



### ***Learn Something New***

- Take a cooking, art, or computer class
- Learn (or relearn) how to play a musical instrument
- Form or join a book club
- Try yoga, tai chi, or another new physical activity



### ***Become More Active in Your Community***

- Volunteer at a school, library, or hospital
- Join a committee or volunteer for an activity at your place of worship
- Volunteer to run errands for people with disabilities
- Serve meals or organize clothing donations at a place for homeless people
- Sing in a community choral group, or play in a local band or orchestra
- Get a part-time job



### ***Be Physically Active***

- Garden or do yard work
- Go dancing
- Walk or bicycle with a friend or neighbor
- Swim or take a swimming class
- Play with your grandchildren



Everyone has different limits to the amount of time they can spend on social or other activities. What is perfect for one person might be too much for another. Be careful not to take on too much at once. You might start by adding one or two activities to your routine and see how you feel. You can always add more. Remember—participating in activities you enjoy should be fun, not stressful.