

Hand in Hand...
Linking Lives



Jan/Feb 2025

GOT— GROWING OLDER TOGETHER

570-630-0509 830 Main St. #574 Honesdale, PA 18431 www.growingoldertogether.org

*If you need
something, just ask!*



Sage Sessions: Community Matters

by Greta Knutzen

Whether we like it or not, Barbra Streisand was right, people need people. That is why community matters. It matters in small towns, as we get older, when we need to solve problems, it matters so we can thrive. It always matters.

According to the World Health Organization, some 25% of seniors worldwide are socially isolated. Based on community research, that number is even higher in our rural area. Loneliness may cause a 50% increase in dementia; a 25% increase in an early death; and up to 30% increase in the risk of stroke and heart disease. However, social connection is a source of health, well-being, and economic good. With this evidence and our partner, Growing Older Together, our nonprofit Tusten Social began *Sage Sessions* in April 2023. They were created as a response to the overwhelming need for safe, consistent, accessible opportunities to socialize.

Sage Sessions are tailored for residents 60 years plus and provide an opportunity to meet your neighbors and enjoy a delicious lunch—soup, sandwiches, and yummy baked desserts. You can bring or make a friend, there's no pressure, just fun! *Sage Sessions* take place on the first and third Thursday every month from 1:30-3:30pm in Krause Hall at the Delaware Valley Arts Alliance [DVAA], 37 Main Street, Narrowsburg, NY 12764.

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There's an elevator up those stairs. You can park behind the DVAA. The events and lunch are FREE, no registration is required and anyone from our NY or PA region, is most welcome to join!

Our aim is to continue and grow a supportive and engaging environment where seniors can connect, share experiences, and enjoy each other's company. Whether you want to discuss your favorite novel and start a book club, swap seeds and tips in a gardening circle, or present/attend an art workshop, let us know.

If you have an idea for a group or program or would like to volunteer your time or expertise, we'd love to hear from you. Contact us at: hello@tustensocial.org

Together, we can build lasting bonds and make a difference in one another's lives.

Upcoming Sage Sessions: Jan 16, Feb 6 & 20 (Note no session on Jan 2)
Please email: hello@tustensocial.org to be added to the mailing list and to stay informed about upcoming Sage Sessions.

We look forward to seeing you!



(Greta Knutzen, here with her husband Iggy and dog Maizey, is a former GOT Board Member and cofounder of Tusten Social.)

Bring on the Year of 2025, and All its Potential

by Irene James

What a great opportunity the new year is! It's a chance to appreciate that clean slate it promises. We have time to relax after the busy holiday season and enjoy new horizons. I made a vow to try new things. You can do the same! There are so many possibilities.

Observing the new year with gaiety and positivity is not a recent phenomenon. It dates back 4000 years to ancient Babylon. The New Year was celebrated with an 11-day festival called "Akitu", with religious rituals and promises to gods, the forthcoming rebirth of nature, and essentially marking the origin of New Year resolutions. In our 21st century, we still make resolutions. It is a time to feel energized, to take cleansing deep breaths and savor fresh crisp winter air, which in our region is aplenty. The day may be bright with the snow reflecting, creating a sense of beginnings. The good news is that the winter solstice has passed and the daylight is a smidge longer every day.

January was named for Janus, the Roman god of all beginnings. It gives us 31 days to get into the rhythm of the year 2025 (amazing we are here already isn't it?) February, on the other hand is short, and even shorter every four years when we leap quickly to March. February joined the calendar with January around 700 B.C. and was known as the ancient Roman festival "Lupercalia" that promoted purification, good health and fertility. A precursor to Valentine's Day, it was very raucous, lasting for many days of ritual sacrifices and pagan rites.

There is more to the second month of the year than just the hearts and flowers of Valentine's Day, Groundhog Day's vigil, and patriotism of Presidents' Day. Both early months are punctuated with these well-known holidays like Martin Luther King Day and Presidents' Day but there are also quirky awareness days like National Baking Month, Festival of Sleep Day (January 3rd), National Hot Tea Day (January 12) and National Compliment Day (January 24). In February, there is National Homemade Soup Day (February 4), Random Acts of Kindness Day (February 18) and National Cherry Pie Day (February 20).

As February moves toward March, you may see primroses coming up, among the earliest flowers to bloom, even through the snow. Spring is on the horizon as the world gets busier and the natural hibernation of winter declines. When all is said and done, though, this is a time to recharge. Treat yourself to a new book, order food from somewhere different, try a new recipe (check out our article and recipes in this newsletter about using leftovers to create tasty meals), enjoy the comfort food of grilled cheese sandwiches, homemade soups and chili.

It is also important to take care of yourself, to relax and enjoy quieter pleasures. The Danish call it "*hygge*." It means creating a warm atmosphere and relishing the good things in life with great people. The calming glow of candlelight is *hygge*. Danes advise us at this time of year to "savor favorite foods and snacks with a warm beverage under a cozy comforter, step into extra thick socks and give your toes a cuddle." Sounds very appealing, doesn't it?



And since this is America, one of the sure signs that spring will arrive is that in February, pitchers and catchers kick off spring training for a new baseball season!

(Irene James is a writer and essayist)

How Old is Too Old?

by Marileta Robinson

When should you avoid making a big purchase or trying a new activity because of your age? According to Bette Ann Moskowitz, writing for the blog “The Ethel,” <https://www.aarpethel.com/fulfillment/what-i-finally-did-after-years-of-internal-ageism>, almost never. People who try to discourage you from getting a new pet, learning a new sport, going back to school, or joining a rock band because you’re over 70 (or 80 or 90 or 100) may be suffering from ageism, the tendency to judge a person’s abilities by the year they were born. In fact, you may have a touch of it yourself. It’s easy to catch, when we constantly see older people portrayed as frail and helpless in the media. You may decide that it’s foolish to invest in a new sofa “at your age.” Or a friend may say you shouldn’t get a dog because “you’re too old” to take care of it. Moskowitz concludes: “The more I thought about the issue, the more convinced I was that practicality has (practically) nothing to do with deciding to buy a new sofa or do anything else I want to do, at my age. Contemplating doing new things is, in itself, exciting and aspirational, and actually doing them is a lesson in positivity and success.”

In *Breaking the Age Code*, Dr. Becca Levy shows that beliefs about aging can determine how long and how well people live. People with more positive perceptions of aging perform better on physical and cognitive tests, are more likely to recover from severe disabilities and have stronger memories, among other benefits. In fact, they may live 7.5 years longer than their peers.

One way to combat negative thinking about aging is to check out positive role models. A quick search on the internet provides many inspiring examples of people who believe that “age is just a number.” Here are a few:

Julia Hawkins nicknamed “Hurricane,” was a gold medal-winning sprinter who set a 100-meter dash world record in 2017 at the National Senior Games at the age of 101. She took up running when she turned 100, and at 103 she was an award-winning sprinter. When asked about her longevity, she said, “I just keep busy. I keep moving.” She lived until she was 108.



Dorothy Hoffner made the nightly news in Chicago for sky diving--twice--and may have set the record for the oldest person to jump from a plane. She made her second jump when she was 104. She wasn’t in it for the fame. She said she had enjoyed the first jump so much, she wanted to try it again.



William Shatner became the first 90-year-old and the oldest person to travel into space. On October 13, 2021, the actor who portrayed Star Trek's Captain Kirk boarded Jeff Bezo's Blue Origin Space Shuttle. He worried that he might not survive the hardships, but he took the chance. Blasting off aboard a rocket flight that lasted only ten minutes, Shatner reported it transformed his life forever. Long fascinated with the mysteries and beauty of the cosmos, he said he learned "that the beauty isn't out there, it's down here, with all of us."



Carmen Dell'Orefice is the world's oldest fashion model at 93, and her career has lasted 77 years. Originally from New York City, Dell'Orefice signed her first modeling contract at 15 with Vogue magazine, and has been on the covers of glossy magazines around the world ever since. She was also a muse for artist Salvador Dalí. In 2011 she was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of the Arts London, in recognition of her contribution to the fashion industry.



So clearly, you're only as old as you think you are.

(Marileta Robinson is a writer and Volunteer for Growing Older Together)

The Magic of White-Tailed Deer

by Mary Greene

Many of us might remember the bright moon that happened on November 15, a Super Full Moon (when the moon was closer to Earth than normal.) Although the hunters came out, the deer were very scarce. Temperatures were too warm and the moon too bright for them to safely move around.

White-tailed deer are named for the large, white underside of their tails, which they raise when alarmed or running away (called "flagging"). In spring and summer, they feed upon leaves, aquatic vegetation, fruit, and new growth flowers. As winter closes in, deer will eat woody vegetation like bark, twigs, and buds. They also begin a process of molting, which is triggered by hormonal changes that reflect the changing seasons. The reddish summer coat turns into a faded gray or brown color as their new winter hair begins to grow. The new coat is comprised of two layers, which keeps them warm in sub-freezing temperatures. Deer will often bed down in a favorable "micro-climate" under a spreading pine (which protects from snow) and a warmer prevailing wind.



It is illegal to feed deer in PA and NY, and also not beneficial to their digestive tract. In recent years, biologists are paying attention to Chronic Wasting Disease, a progressive neurological illness that is affecting deer around the country. CWD is contagious, and causes drooling, thinness, disorientation, uncharacteristic behavior, and death. Despite considerable ongoing research, as yet there is no confirmed link to humans. But increasingly, hunters will only eat venison that has been very well cooked. If you observe a deer exhibiting CWD symptoms, report it to your local animal control.

According to Elizabeth Marshall Thomas, author of "*The Hidden Life of Deer*," one identifies deer not by their individual characteristics (they all look alike) but how they appear and disappear in family groups. Not surprisingly, deer have very distinct social societies, and the dominant doe will often lead the way. She has high status, because she is older and bigger, and her offspring will have high status too. She is the leader, and others trust her to keep danger at bay.

The mating season for white-tailed deer, also known as the rut, starts in mid-October and runs through mid-November. It is interesting that the rut of white-tailed deer corresponds with hunting season. The reason is simple: white-tailed deer are known as short-day breeders, meaning day length plays a role in the hormonal balances that drive the rut. This causes an increase in observed movement and allows hunters afield during the peak of breeding season to harvest more deer.

During the rut, does run away from bucks because they are trying to choose the strongest, most dominant buck to mate with, which often involves them fleeing from pursuing bucks while they assess their options. Smart ladies!

While our common white-tailed deer can be garden pests, they are also beautiful, and mysterious, as we watch them interact with our fields and woods, with nature and each other. They can bring us comfort and keep us company all year long.

(Mary Greene is a poet, author and regular contributor to the GOT newsletter)

In Praise of Leftovers

by Shirley Longshore

When you open your refrigerator door and peer inside at dinner time, do you throw up your hands, thinking there's nothing appetizing or interesting to eat. There are plenty of possibilities according to Jacquelyn Ottman, pioneering green marketing expert and advocate for reducing food waste, who advises governments, Fortune 500 companies, and the EPA and USDA. She is the founder of WeHateToWaste.com and the presentation *"Using Them Up: How the World Makes Leftovers Taste Like New."*



Jacquelyn Ottman

Leftovers have gotten a bad rep in recent years--food pushed to the back of the fridge and ignored until it no longer seems edible. Annually Americans throw out some \$2,000 worth of regular food, when much of it is still perfectly edible. This is the equivalent to 30–40% of the total food supply in the US., enough food to feed millions of people.

During Covid, Americans rarely left home and began ordering takeout from restaurants at a much greater rate. That trend stayed with many of us after the pandemic subsided. But we can use leftovers by using a little imagination. Stay-at-home winter months are a great time to be creative about food use. Jacquie encourages us to "challenge ourselves to mix things up, try new things." And hopefully, never again throw out any leftovers. Missing a particular ingredient? Says Jacquie, "Keep an open mind and improvise. Surprise yourself with a substitute that has great results!"

Other cultures use leftovers to make tasty dishes such as chili, grain bowls, spiced up leftover rice. What can combine with tomato paste left in the can and the bunch of celery AND its leaves. Oh, and there are a few carrots and sprigs of parsley, a small piece of salmon. How about a "fridge soup?" Famous chef Jacques Pepin calls that a dish he created from leftovers, see below.

He is not the only chef to join the leftovers bandwagon. Jamie Oliver has a Hodgepodge Leftover Pie. A glorious mixture of all those lovely roast dinner leftovers, enveloped in a smooth, silky sauce and hugged by beautifully crumbly pastry. And Rachel Ray uses leftovers in a Pasta Frittata. Her recipe is also below. There can be substitutions or eliminations in either of these recipes depending on what you have on hand. Feel free to experiment.

"Food is magical and even in the most casual of circumstances," says Jacquie, who believes we should celebrate a meal by "setting a nice table. Light candles. Put on a pleasing outfit. Whenever possible, share it with others. Use it to nourish, bridge, and pass on the love." Leftovers deserve love and appreciation, too.

Jacques Pepin Fridge Soup

Serves 4-6

Ingredients:

Leftover or raw chicken skin, for topping (optional)
Salt and pepper

½ leek
3 scallions
2 carrots
1 onion
1 potato
2 celery ribs
3 mushrooms
1 cup broccoli pieces
2 cups leftover salad
½ cup leftover cooked spinach
½ cup frozen corn
2 quarts chicken stock, or 2 quarts water with 1 tablespoon chicken stock base or bouillon powder mixed in
⅓ cup instant grits
Grated cheese, pats of butter, or drizzle of olive oil, for serving

Preparation:

If using the chicken skin, preheat oven to 400°F. If raw, season with salt. Roast until crisp and browned, 5 to 10 minutes if leftover or 20 to 25 minutes if raw.

Trim all the vegetables, wash and cut into ¾ inch pieces so vegetables are a similar size for even cooking. Place in a pot with the stock and bring to a boil. Cook 15 to 20 minutes, then add the grits, stir and boil for about 10 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve with grated cheese and top with crisp chicken skin.

Pasta Frittata - Rachael Ray

Serves 4

Ready in 20 minutes

Ingredients:

7 large eggs
3 ounces mozzarella cheese, cut into small pieces
½ to ¾ cup of grape tomatoes, halved
½ cup fresh basil leaf, chopped
¼ cup Parmesan cheese, grated
salt and pepper
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
¼ lb leftover cooked pasta (cooked and preferably with sauce)

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 350°F. In a large bowl, beat the eggs. Stir in the mozzarella, tomatoes, basil, and Parmesan; season with salt and pepper.

In a large, oven-proof skillet, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the pasta and cook for 1 minute.

Pour in the egg mixture and cook until the edges begin to harden. Using a spoon or spatula, draw the cooked egg edges toward the center of the pan, letting the raw egg run to the edges of the pan.

Continue until the frittata is almost set, but still a little runny in the middle, about 4 minutes. Transfer to the oven to finish cooking, about 10 minutes. Remove from the oven and let sit for 5 minutes.

Using a rubber spatula, loosen the edges of the frittata. Cut into wedges; serve hot or at room temperature.

(Shirley Longshore is a writer and editor)

Repair Cafes

by Jan Goodwin

Pete Seeger, singer-songwriter and social activist said it best: *“If it can’t be reduced, reused, repaired, rebuilt, refurnished, refinished, resold, recycled or composted, then it should be restricted, redesigned or removed from production.”* In the last 20 years, how many items have you thrown away because they needed to be fixed and you had no idea how to get that done? Tailors, shoe-repairers, knife sharpeners, etc. So many such businesses have disappeared. Instead, we’ve had to learn and accept “built-in obsolescence.” Vacuum cleaners, laptops, etc., no longer last as long as they used to. Their original lifespans have been cut in half or by two-thirds.

I was delighted when I began hearing about Repair Cafes, and Narrowsburg acquired one. Started in 2015 by Jill Padua, a 68-year-old master of many trades, it operates every three months in the Tusten Town Hall basement. In fact, there will be one this February 1st, but if there is bad weather, February 8th, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Jill’s local repair experts are amazing. As many as five tech specialists can repair vacuum cleaners, lamps, and various electronics. A computer expert is available, as are several needlework folk who repair clothing, quilts, even knitwear and crochet, a furniture department, and jewelry repair, even a plant/flower adviser.

“I’ve always been environmentally conscious,” says Jill, who has also been a superb chef and caterer, a graphic artist, even a presenter/producer of concerts. “I’ve never liked to throw anything away. But we live in a throwaway society, one which creates vast amounts of waste.”



Jill Padua, Repair Café Founder & GOT Volunteer



A happy Repair Café customer!

Jill learned about Repair Cafes when Dutch environmentalist Martine Postma started the first one in Amsterdam in 2009. “It was right up my alley,” says Jill. “And because I’d worked in many fields, I knew a lot of people in our area, and many had expertise we could put to use.”

There are now 3,457 Repair Cafés worldwide in 43 countries and 238 in North America. Repair Cafes are free, where people bring broken items to be repaired by volunteer fixers. Like the one in Tusten, financial donations are welcome. These funds go to the local food pantry, along with donated edibles for the food pantry basket.

“Because of the demand, we limit repairs to two items per person,” says Jill. “If you have more, leave a couple in your car, and if there is time, you can bring them.” What can the Repair Café not handle? “We turn away anything labeled ‘smart,” says Jill. “No microwaves. We can repair a broken door handle, or electric cord, but not the inner workings.”

The ever growing trend for Repair Cafes has triggered a new movement—**The Right to Repair**. Fixing items you’ve paid good money for is actively discouraged by many manufacturers, who claim it affects copyright laws, when they really mean their profit. It took a lawsuit for John Deere, one of the world’s largest makers of farming equipment, to agree to give American customers the right to fix their own equipment using cheaper repair options. Lucky for us, we do have local expertise available.

(Jan Goodwin is an award-winning author and journalist and volunteer for GOT)

The GOT Year End Fundraiser was a Success!

Celebrating Art, Music and Neighbors

On Monday, December 2nd, friends and neighbors from across the region came together at the Delaware Valley Arts Alliance in Narrowsburg, NY, to support Growing Older Together at our year-end fundraising event. The evening was enriched by the enchanting performance of local musicians *Little Sparrow*, alongside wine, delicious food, and an exclusive viewing of the DVAA’s *Art in Sixes* exhibit.

The event was a wonderful success, and we are thrilled to share that we met our fundraising goal! Thank you to everyone who attended or donated—your support helps us continue to serve our community and make a meaningful difference in the lives of local seniors.



GOT Co-Founders Barbara Leo & Georgette Pascotto



Colette Ballew & Andrea Henley-Heyn



Mr. & Mrs. Eric Goldstein & Greta Knutzen



Cass Collins & Mary Greene

Your **tax-deductible donation** will go a long way in sustaining GOT as we continue to fulfill our mission: to give residents aged 60 and older who live in Wayne County, PA, western Sullivan County, NY, northern Pike County, PA, and surrounding areas both the practical means and the social connections to live independently in their homes. GOT is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Any amount, large or small, is welcome. Please visit our website and click the **Donate** button, or mail your check to GOT, 830 Main Street #574, Honesdale, PA 18431. Thank you in advance for your support.

Looking to plan your estate or make provisions in your will or beneficiary designations? Making bequests to non-profit organizations like GOT are a great way to ensure your legacy makes an impact in your community, benefitting future generations.

Please help spread the word about the benefits of becoming a member and/or volunteer for GOT. If you know a friend or neighbor who might want to offer a helping hand or might benefit from one, share our phone number, 570-630-0509, and/or our web address:

www.growinggoldertogether.org Thank you!

Growing Older Together is supported in part by generous grants from the Honesdale National Bank Foundation, Sullivan County Legislature, Wayne Memorial Health Foundation, and Wayne County Community Foundation, as well as with support from the following corporate sponsors:

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Growing Older Together collaborates with and is supported by numerous organizations in the area to fulfill our mission, including:

**Delaware Valley Arts Alliance
Tusten Social
The River Reporter
WJFF Radio Catskills
Wayne County Area Agency on Aging
Sullivan County Office of Aging**

Diversity is a Source of Strength, Creativity, and Innovation. Growing Older Together is committed to fostering an environment that welcomes and values every person and respects all identities, cultures, heritages, and abilities.