

Hand in Hand...
Linking Lives



Jan/Feb 2026

GOT—GROWING OLDER TOGETHER

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

*If you need
something, just ask!*



Looking Ahead to 2026 with Optimism, Dignity, and Empowerment

As we welcome a new year, I find myself reflecting on the importance of mindfulness and intentionality in all that we do. I've never been one to make New Year's resolutions, but this year I've set one for myself that feels both personal and necessary: to take my time in everything I do.

I've noticed a tendency to rush through daily tasks—skimming emails, moving quickly from one responsibility to the next, and often failing to pause long enough to fully absorb a message or express acknowledgment. I'm not entirely sure where this "need to rush" comes from, but I recognize it as a habit worth changing. Perhaps it's one of the many lessons that come with growing older—the reminder that slowing down allows us to engage more deeply and appreciate life's moments more fully.

Each day presents both challenges and opportunities for growth. Embracing them with patience and gratitude has become an important part of my journey. I am deeply thankful for the respect, dignity, and kindness of everyone I encounter. I am especially grateful for Growing Older Together—for our remarkable members, devoted volunteers, dedicated board members, and the many individuals whose commitment and compassion make our mission possible.



The beginning of a new year is more than a celebration of change; it is an invitation to honor, uplift, and invest in the lives of those who have paved the way for generations to come. As we step into 2026, may we do so with optimism, dignity, and a shared sense of empowerment.

Bring it on, 2026—I'm ready for you!

Diane Yadow is President of Growing Older Together

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Want to be Happy? Be Grateful

Gratitude. It's everywhere: best-selling authors write about it, mental health professionals prescribe it, *YouTube* yogis chant about it. T-shirts, coffee mugs, and tote bags make our closets and shelves burst and sag with *Gratitude*.



Brother David Steindl-Rast, a Benedictine monk who has devoted much of his 99-years of life traveling the world studying religion, is convinced that gratitude is a universal spiritual experience and is essential to all human life. "It is not happiness that makes us grateful, but gratitude that makes us happy," says Brother Rast.

Yet I, for one, am sometimes weary of being told to feel *grateful*. Sometimes, even with all the comforts and blessings given to me, I am not in a thankful and appreciative state of mind. Sometimes I am angry, jealous, fearful, contemptuous, selfish, lazy... just like everyone else, of course. What I have learned, so far, is that maintaining an abiding and conscious attitude of gratitude for my life and all that encompasses it is mental and emotional work that takes time and careful, deliberate practice to develop.

What exactly are those behaviors--those practices--that cultivate a good and happy life and give honest experiential depth and clarity to the notion of gratitude?

Of course, there is the teaching of Jesus, who says without any qualifications: "*Do for others what you wish to be done for you.*"

The advice in the Yoga Sutras of Pantanjali regarding appropriate behavior for a happy life is also brief and to the point: *“By cultivating friendliness in the presence of happiness, compassion in the presence of suffering, joy in the presence of virtue, and indifference toward wrong-doing, the mind becomes calm and lucid. (YS 1:33).*

In Buddhism this is sometimes referred to as Metta, loving kindness, extended to all sentient beings, regardless of one’s likes or dislikes for particular individuals. Metta signifies friendship and non-violence as well as a strong wish for the happiness of others, a caring for another independent of all self-interest. The strength of this feeling is not limited to or by family, religion, or social class. Indeed, Metta is a practice of warmheartedness that permits one’s generosity and kindness to be applied to all beings and, as a consequence, one finds true happiness in another person’s happiness, no matter who the individual is. * <https://buddhism-guide.com>

There does not appear in any of these teachings a specific admonishment to feel grateful. It does appear that the choices that matter most in cultivating a harmonious world and personal equanimity are the interactions we have with one another.

What we may think and how we might feel moment to moment is hard to predict, even harder to control. Gratitude, in the most practical sense, may not be so much a consistent belief or emotion as it is a quality embedded in the deliberate, mindful interactions of daily living. If we make it our practice and behavior to create those circumstances and connections in which people (including ourselves) find it possible to be happy and appreciative, would this be a sustainable and tangible means of living in a state of gratitude? Would cultivating warmheartedness as a consistent, even insistent response to an often troubled and troubling world be what the hands and face of gratitude look like in action?

Gratitude in this sense could be understood as an openness and generosity of spirit in the actions we choose that transcends the whims of our emotional weather and vicissitudes of our daily experiences.

Here is a link to an interesting and beautiful website, *Gratitude.org*, dedicated to grateful living as an engaged mindfulness practice that is specific, measurable, mutual, and transformative at every level of experience: <https://gratefulness.org>

*<https://buddhism-guide.com>

Liz Huntington is a poet and editor of Rising Lake Press, an independent publishing project situated in the foothills of the Southern Catskills.

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One Woman’s Path to Longevity

Dressed in a loose-fitting striped cotton top and pants, her short white hair a tad wild, Charlotte Chopin assumed the position she has held for 40 years, called her students to attention and began guiding them through stretches, encouraging them to follow her lead. Her feet firmly planted on the ground, she effortlessly demonstrated a series of poses.

To a newcomer, Ms. Chopin's slight build and reserved demeanor might initially be mistaken for frailty. Then they'd watch her do a series of warrior poses--her arms stick straight, her form effortlessly flowing from one posture to the next.

Now 102 years old, Ms. Chopin has taught yoga in Léré, a French village in the Loire region since 1982. Her studio, painted a soothing peach, is housed in a former police station with former jail cells converted to changing rooms. Her students are local women, ranging in age from 35 to 60.

In recent years, Ms. Chopin has become something of a celebrity in France. Last year, she was awarded a civilian honor for being an outstanding ambassador for yoga. Since then, she has received a steady stream of requests for interviews and appearances. One of her four children, Claude Chopin, a former physical therapist and skilled yogi himself, has become her de facto manager.

Ms. Chopin makes no claims to be a wellness guru, nor does she have a burning desire to preach about her approach to life. But people keep asking for her secrets to aging well.

A plaque in her home reads: "Happiness is not about having everything you want, but loving what you have," which seems to define her approach to life. Ms. Chopin didn't try yoga until she was 50, at the encouragement of a friend as a break from housework. She started teaching a decade later to avoid boredom when she moved to her small town.

She says yoga has offered her serenity. That's about as philosophical as Ms. Chopin will get about her practice--or her extraordinary longevity. She attributes the latter to good luck. "I don't have too many problems," she says. "And I have an activity that I like." It's also one that she can't imagine living without.

Two and a half years ago, shortly after Ms. Chopin turned 100, she fainted while driving home from yoga class. She crashed her car and broke her breastbone. Three months later, she was not only back behind the wheel but also teaching yoga again.

When asked if she felt like she was 102, she belly-laughed, then answered carefully: "Only in the morning." But after her usual breakfast of coffee, toast with butter and honey or jam and sometimes a spoonful of jelly by itself, "I'm back on track--I feel good," she said. ("When we were children, she often said that breakfast was the best moment of her day," Claude added. "It is still the case.")

What has sustained her the most, both in her yoga practice and her life, are her students and the social support they provide. This jibes with research suggesting that people who defy norms of aging place a high value on social relationships. Watching his mother remain so social has influenced his own approach to aging. "She loves people," he says, and "she's easy with her contact with others." He aspires to the same.



Charlotte in a yoga pose

In class, Ms. Chopin walks around the room, correcting students' form and urging them to push further. Ms. Chopin's students describe their teacher as a "perfectionist" but always encouraging. "She makes me want to grow old," one student says.

Ms. Chopin has slowed down as she's moved further into her 100s. While she used to do yoga daily, she now only practices during the three classes she teaches each week. She can't do all of the poses anymore. She ruled out handstands a few years ago.

But she can still touch her toes, and she moves with the steadiness of someone decades younger. "I always give my classes the same way. The poses are the poses."

That routine might just be her secret.

Adapted from the NYTimes by Shirley J. Longshore, editor and writer

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Looking Back at a Life Well-Lived

Just before turning 90, a woman finally wrote down what she'd been meaning to say for years: "I'll be 90 next Thursday. I never married. Never moved away. I've lived on this same quiet street for nearly six decades--long enough to know which neighbors return your sugar, and which return it half-used."



I was always the quiet one, the one who made the tea. I never liked being the center of attention. I left that to others.

But I remember a time when I thought I might live in Paris. I had a pen pal there when I was 19--Jacques, I think his name was. He used to write poems on onion-skin paper. I kept his letters for years, though I never replied after the third one. I told myself I was too sensible for all that.

Life didn't sweep me up. It came in gentle waves: Tuesday bridge nights, church bazaars, shared biscuits with my brother Emmet. There were no grand roles to play--only small, steady acts. And that was enough.

At 55, I started sketching. Just charcoal outlines at first--apples, lamp posts, the corner of my kitchen sink. I wasn't any good, but I liked how the silence felt when I drew.

At 65, I grew brave enough to say 'no' to things I didn't want--like volunteering to host a friend's candlelight suppers. That, I tell you, was a true act of courage.

At 70, I learned to drink wine without spilling it. I also began reading detective novels in bed. Sometimes I'd stay up past midnight with a flashlight under the covers, like a child again.

At 80, I forgave myself. For being shy. For being cautious. For not chasing the life I once dreamed of--because somewhere along the way, I discovered a quieter kind of contentment.

And now, at nearly 90, I look at my garden--the one I've planted, season by season, without ever needing applause--and I feel at peace. The camellias bloom as if they've never heard of disappointment. The roses lean toward the sun like they still believe in love.

If I could tell you one more thing, it would be this: A quiet life is not a wasted one.

Not everyone needs to dazzle. Some of us are here to observe gently, to offer biscuits and warm smiles, to clap for others without needing the spotlight.

There's beauty in not being the loudest voice in the room.

There's a quiet power in showing up every day, being kind, and not needing the world to notice. With warmth and a steady hand holding the teacup."

Anonymous

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BREAD

Your grandma's bread has 4 ingredients, bread today has over 30 ingredients. Her food had 0 synthetic additives, food today has 5,000. Her food had 0% glyphosate, a herbicide, the active ingredient in Roundup, 80% of food today has it. Chronic disease was rare in her day, now 6 in 10 adults live with one. The food changed, our health changed. Clean up our food, clean up our health.

Source *harvestsavvy.com*

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Why Seniors Should Not be Afraid of Technology

In the 1960s, a teacher asked her class to imagine how many changes a person born in 1900 had witnessed—airplane travel, medical advancements, a phone in every home, TV, interstate highways buzzing with automobiles. But people then, have nothing on us today.

While many seniors became familiar with computers and the internet because of workplace responsibilities, nothing about constantly evolving technology is intuitive for those of us born before the 1980s. We tend to know specific things we have learned but struggle when a new problem arises.

“I have streaming services at home, but couldn’t figure out how to use the ones at the Air BnB while on vacation,” a 76-year-old man admits. “My cell phone seems to have a mind of its own,” a senior woman complains. “I appreciate the connectivity but I want to be in charge, not at the mercy of my device.”



According to studies, 73% of people over 65 now have internet access at home, and 61% actively use it. More than half own tablets, and 62% use smartphones. Yet 37% of older adults report that limited digital skills hinder their ability to use new technology effectively. Sadly, nearly 25% of seniors have thrown in the towel and do not use the internet at all.

Marie, 69, ditched computers and the internet when she retired several years ago. She tolerates a cell phone but can’t text, despite feeling isolated from younger friends and grandchildren who prefer texts to phone conversations. Many others have no desire to be left behind, and want to seek expert help when a tech puzzle has them stumped.

The Western Sullivan Public Library System hosts free 30-minute private tech support sessions from 1:00 and 3:30 pm once a month at each of their branches: Tusten (Narrowsburg) on Mondays; Jeffersonville on Tuesdays; and Callicoon on Wednesdays. Please register online at : <https://wsplonline.libcal.com/appointments/> These libraries also hold free group tech classes once a month between 11 am and 12 pm on the above mentioned days. Call the library you wish to attend to make sure it has not been postponed because of holidays or weather.

Wayne County libraries have similar programs, check with your specific branch for dates and times.

Sullivan library tech advisor Dale Blagrove says he enjoys helping seniors grasp information that eluded and frustrated them because it gives him a feeling of giving back. One of the most common troubles seniors have is related to the fear of scams on their phone or PC, he says. For others, basic navigation of the internet can seem overwhelming. Some seniors are afraid that they’ll break their device if they don’t use it correctly.

“Seniors can feel it’s a burden to ask for tech help, so it’s easier to give up,” says Blagrove. But it’s valuable to be able to organize family photos, interact with medical professionals, or experience the convenience of banking online. “You don’t need to know it all, just the small components that relate to you,” he adds. “As people learn different pieces at their own pace their mindset changes and they become open to learning more.”

Blagrove advises to focus on enjoyable uses for technology, rather than on the stressful parts, like navigating the Social Security website. “As people learn about tech, it helps them engage with the younger generations. You don’t need to focus on technology, but the relationship you’re having with your grandchild.

“Someone came in today with an issue and I had a couple of choices,” he continues. “I could either fix the issue for them and send them on their way, or teach them to do it.” Guiding the person to the Sent folder in their email program revealed the message they’d been searching for. “For me, that’s the fun part because I do get to see a lot of light bulbs going off.”

“The program is a huge thing. You’re with people and having shared experiences,” Blagrove stresses. “You’re not dumb. Others are having the same problems you’re having.”

By Dawn McIntyre, author of the book *The Paper Pirate*, available on Amazon.com

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Rethinking Life Before Reaching 80

The inevitable happened--your 80th birthday came and went. Family and friends rallied around you with congratulations on this life milestone. There are gifts, some useful, most not.

It is a time of celebration for a day or two but the reality is that at 80 years old and up, many of the much older generation is thinking about how life might be different. A survey of people in their 80s, 90s and 100s asked for thoughts on the things they worried about when they were younger and what they now regret about them. This is what they said:

They wish they didn’t care what people thought about them. One said that during her teenage years, “I suppose it mattered to me what people thought about me.” While this was a worry of hers during her younger days, it became less of a concern as she got older. “Sometimes people don’t like you, and there’s really nothing you can do about it,” she explained.

Many respondents wish they didn’t stress so much about the outcome of situations. When asked what he thinks young people should worry about less, one 80-year-old musician says he now feels that: “If you go to the result before you went through the process, it’s just something that’s in your imagination--it’s not connected to reality.”

“Instead of overthinking a situation or allowing your negativity to prevent you from doing something, just show up.”

They wish they didn’t worry about being bored when they retired. One 87-year-old, who had co-owned a business with her husband, said she worried a lot: “I was very stressed about what I would do with myself all day long. But it seems like the days fly by.” The couple said they stay busy and social by seeing former staff, former clients, friends, artists and people young and old.

Some wish they didn’t care so much about their appearance. One woman says she stopped thinking about whether she was dressed right or looked okay. As time went on, she learned that appearance actually wasn’t that important. “As long as I was well groomed, my appearance didn’t matter,” she said. What really mattered “was what I did--and I set out to actively redirect my life. I took myself to law school and began to live my life away from appearances.”

They wish people didn’t bother worrying about getting back at someone. One 82-year-old man said he wasn’t much of a worrier at any point in his life, but he does see many folks around him worry about one thing that’s a waste of time: revenge.

“It is better to ignore insults or slights or even an unsolicited call. You’ll live longer if you do that. And avoid extra stress for your heart and gut.”

For many people, worrying seemed a waste of time.

One 87-year-old man said that instead of worrying about a situation, he did research so he could make necessary and informed changes. He also prays when he’s worried.

“Worrying just creates distraction,” he said. “Get the ants out of your head--just concentrate on the real things, not what might happen. I can easily push it aside and remind himself that what I’m concerned about isn’t true or isn’t that big of a deal.” Not everything is a catastrophe as we might have thought in our younger years.

Perhaps his final comment says it the best, “If I have a negative thought, I will tell myself, ‘Jerry, you’re a good-looking old man and you should have confidence,’ and it helps me help myself.”

Adapted from HuffPost by Shirley J. Longshore, editor and writer

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Growing Older Together Awarded \$2,000 Grant



Cathy Fitzpatrick, Frank Caputo & Laura Ducceschi of Scranton Area Foundation with Thomas Cambridge (right center)

We are delighted to share that Growing Older Together has received a \$2,000 grant from the **Robert H. Spitz Foundation** to support our marketing and growth strategies for 2026. GOT’s Executive Director Thomas Cambridge accepted the award on December 16 at the Scranton Area Community Foundation, which administers the Robert H. Spitz Foundation.

This generous support will help us expand awareness of our services and strengthen our efforts to help older adults age safely and independently in their own homes.

The Scranton Area Community Foundation has served as the administrator of the Robert H. Spitz Foundation since 2016. Established in 2015 through the estate of Robert H. Spitz, the Foundation is a tax-exempt private foundation dedicated to supporting initiatives and programs that benefit residents of Lackawanna County and Northeastern Pennsylvania. To date, the Robert H. Spitz Foundation has awarded more than \$6 million in funding to projects that strengthen and enrich the region.

We are deeply grateful to the Robert H. Spitz Foundation and the Scranton Area Community Foundation for their continued investment in our mission and in the well-being of seniors across Northeastern Pennsylvania.

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.growingoldertogether.org Thank you!

Growing Older Together is supported in part by generous grants from the Honesdale National Bank Foundation, Moses Taylor Foundation, Robert H. Spitz 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.

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