

Hand in Hand...  
Linking Lives



March/April 2024

# GOT — GROWING OLDER TOGETHER

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*If you need  
something, just  
ask!*

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## MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

### *Sage Sessions: Why We Gather, and A Call to Action*

*By Greta Knutzen*

Fostering community through social connection is at the heart of Tusten Social's mission. A local nonprofit established in 2023, we partner with other nonprofit organizations and businesses for all people in our community to have the best opportunities to enjoy life and do well in society—and make sure no one is left out or excluded—most especially our seniors!

Did you know that **according to the World Health Organization** some 25 percent of seniors worldwide are socially isolated? We think that number is even higher in our rural area based on community feedback from our work with the *River Reporter's* Let Talk seniors' listening sessions held in 2022. The health risks of social isolation and loneliness are alarming: up to 50 percent increase in risk of developing dementia; up to 25 percent increase in an early death; up to 30 percent increase in the risk of stroke and cardiovascular

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disease. Fortunately there's a growing body of evidence that proves that social connection is a source of health, well-being, and economic good.

With all of this evidence in mind and with our amazing partner, Growing Older Together, we initiated Sage Sessions in April 2023, created as a response to the overwhelming need for safe, consistent, accessible opportunities to socialize—particularly missing as we emerged from the pandemic.

Sage Sessions are specifically tailored for residents 60 years + and provide you with an opportunity to meet your neighbors and enjoy delicious food. You can bring a friend, make a friend, there is no pressure, just fun! Sage Sessions take place on the first and third Tuesday every month from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at **Bridge Street Bakehouse**, 7 Erie Ave, Narrowsburg (in the Narrowsburg Union building). The events are free to attend, no registration is required, and anyone from Tusten and the surrounding area in either NY or PA, is most welcome to join.

We need your participation in creating vibrant social groups for local seniors. If you're seeking companionship, stimulating activities, and new friendships, this is the perfect opportunity you've been looking for. 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 novels 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 would love to hear from you at [hello@tustensocial.org](mailto:hello@tustensocial.org) to explore how we can help bring your ideas to others and continue our mission to build community through social connection.

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

Sage Sessions will be held on March 5 and 19, April 2 and 16. Please sign up to receive our newsletter at [www.tustensocial.org](http://www.tustensocial.org) to stay informed about upcoming Sage Sessions.

We look forward to seeing you!

*[Greta Knutzen, serves on the Growing Older Together Board of Directors as secretary and is cofounder of Tusten Social, a local nonprofit organization.]*



## ***YOU ARE NEVER TOO OLD FOR LOVE***

*By Jan Goodwin*

After Pearl Hausmann's husband died when she was 75, she knew she would never remarry. "I was too old to be a bride again," she said. Pearl had married at 17, had five children, was divorced once, and widowed twice. But when Ralph Huebner, a man she knew from church, asked her to go for a walk after Sunday service on a beautiful July day, she was happy to do so. "I love to walk," she said, "so does he, and that first time, we went to Ten Mile River, a beautiful spot near the Upper Delaware Valley, just 10 miles from our church, Beach Lake United Methodist Church." Those after-Sunday walks became a habit both enjoyed.

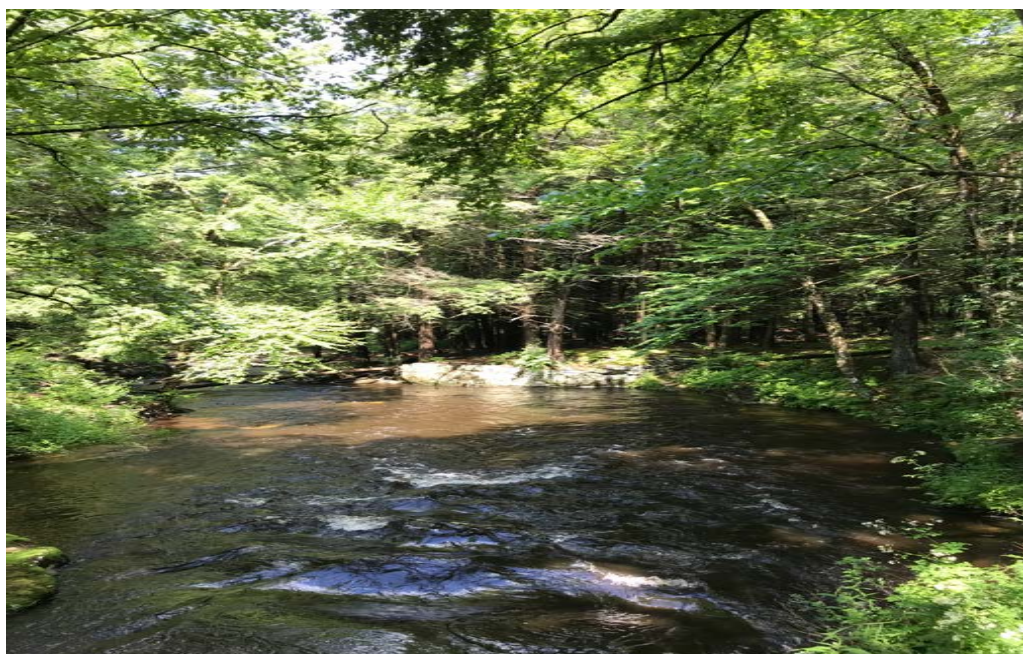
Ralph, a former state trooper, a chaplain for the Sullivan County American Legion, and now a Lay Reader at his church, has also outlived two wives and is the father of three, although his oldest son Timothy died in 2019 of a fast-moving brain tumor. Having been married for 47 years to his first wife and ten to his second, Ralph, like Pearl, never thought he would marry again. But a few months after those post-church-service walks, he surprised Pearl by suggesting they go together to Jennings Jewelers in Honesdale. He wanted to look at diamonds, he told the store assistant. "Is he asking you to marry him?" the assistant whispered to Pearl. "No, I don't think so," Pearl replied. "Maybe a friendship ring."

But surprising the Jennings' employees and three other customers in the store, Ralph, then 81, got down on his left knee and proposed to Pearl in front of everyone. "Say yes, say yes, say yes!" encouraged an excited and stunned assistant. An equally stunned Pearl, then 82, did exactly that. On March 1st, 2018, Pearl Hausmann became Pearl Huebner.

Married six years this March, Pearl, now 88, and Ralph, 87, couldn't be happier. They both love each other's wicked sense of humor. "Pearl wouldn't never have made it with my family without it," grinned Ralph. "When we were all at the Three Wishes Restaurant celebrating our anniversary, the group of us was very noisy from laughing so much. We got moved to another table." Today, the couple share 15 grandchildren and 20 great-grandchildren aged from 24 years to 12 months. "We never fight. He's very caring," said Pearl.

"I'm still training her," said Ralph. "It took me a long time to show her I will always help her put coat on, and make her wait a few seconds so I can open the door to the car for her. I tell her it is because I honor, respect, and love her. We have a twenty-year contract," he said with a smile. "When we are 102 and 101, we will renew it."

*[Jan Goodwin is an award-winning journalist and author, and a member and volunteer of GOT.]*



*Photo by Marcia Nehemiah*

## **BLUE AND GREEN**

*By Marcia Nehemiah*

Scientists from Washington State University have found that older adults who live near green and blue spaces experience more positive mental health than those who don't. Green space is defined as public parks, community gardens, and cemeteries. Blue spaces are environments—either natural or human made—that feature water and are accessible to people, such as rivers, lakes, ponds, and fountains.

The researchers gathered data from more than 42,000 people aged 65 and older who lived in urban areas of Washington state between 2011 and 2019. Their findings indicate that having just ten percent more green space, green canopy, and trails in a person's residential ZIP code is associated with a decrease in serious psychological distress: that is, mental health problems that require treatment, and interfere with and limit activities of daily living.

Adithya Vegaraju, a medical student in the Washington State University Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine, believes that **this study** is among the first to assess the effects of blue and green spaces on older adults living in the US.

Older individuals are especially vulnerable to mental health issues such as depression and anxiety which can increase one's risk of cognitive decline and dementia. They are "more resistant to medical interventions or talk therapy, which are the go-to treatments for these conditions," said Vegaraju. He said that more study is needed to definitely determine if exposure to green or blue spaces could help prevent, delay, or even treat poor mental health in older adults.

Green and blue spaces encourage physical activity which can reduce the risk of poor mental health by providing inviting environments for walking, biking, canoeing, swimming, to name a few outdoor activities.

Here in the Upper Delaware region, we are fortunate to have access to an abundance of green and blue spaces such as in-town parks, canal trails, eagle watch locations along the Delaware River, nature preserves, and sanctuaries. Now that spring is just around the corner, it's the perfect time to take a walk, or simply sit and take in the beauty of these therapeutic outdoor spaces.

*[Marcia Nehemiah is a GOT member and volunteer.]*



*Pexels Photo by Leigh Patrick*

## **FESTIVE COOKIE EXTRAVAGANZA**

In the spirit of spreading holiday cheer, GOT recently hosted its second annual holiday party, and this year's theme was nothing short of sweet delight – cookies! We invited our wonderful community members to share their delightful delicacies, and we received some good ones. Enjoy!

### **Chocolate "Truffles"**

from Colette Ballew

- 1 pkg (8 oz.) room-temperature cream cheese
- 3 TBSP cocoa (baking cocoa)
- 1 TBSP powdered sugar
- ½ cup crushed nuts (pecans, hazelnuts, or walnuts) OR
- ½ cup of dark unsweetened powdered cocoa

Mix cream cheese with cocoa and sugar until all is well blended (no white streaks). Refrigerate for about 30 minutes or until firm enough to handle. Shape into small round balls and roll into the nuts or powdered cocoa as a coating. Store cold until ready to serve.

### **Gluten-Free Peanut Butter Cookies**

from Colette Ballew and Jane Luchsinger

- 1 cup of peanut butter
- ¾ cup of sugar (mix white/brown)
- 1 egg
- ½ tsp baking soda
- ¼ tsp salt
- 1 cup chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Mix all ingredients together, shape into small balls and place on cookie sheet. Bake for 12-14 minutes.

### **Traditional Mexican Wedding Cake Cookies**

from Colette Ballew

- 1 cup softened butter
- ½ cup powdered sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 2 ¼ cups flour
- ¼ tsp salt
- ¾ chopped nuts (walnuts or pecans)
- ½ cup chocolate chips (optional)
- ¼ cup powdered sugar for rolling cookies in after baking

Cream together sugar and butter until light and fluffy. Stir in vanilla. Whisk together flour and salt. Gradually add to sugar and butter mixture. Mix well.

Add nuts and chocolate chips. Chill dough if too soft to form small round balls.

Place on a cookie sheet covered with parchment paper. Bake at 400 degrees for 10-12 minutes or cookies start to turn golden brown. Remove from oven and let cool slightly. Roll a few at a time in powdered sugar to cover them. Serve, or store in airtight container.

### **Cuccidati - Fig cookies**

from Colette Ballew (Original recipe from Sally Whalen)

Filling: To be truly authentic, this filling must be made several days to one week in advance, adding the coffee to make it paste-like.

½ lb. dried figs, stems removed, chopped into small pieces

½ lb. nuts and raisins, dates, or other dried fruit of choice

½ cup honey

½ cup maple syrup

¼ cup brewed coffee - adding in increments

¼ cup chocolate chips (optional)

Dough:

2 cups of flour

4 TBSP of butter, shortening, or coconut oil

2 TBSP (heaping) powdered sugar

½ cup lukewarm water

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Whisk flour and sugar together in a bowl, then add butter, shortening, or coconut oil and mix slowly until ingredients are combined. Add water, spoonfuls at a time, until the mixture creates a dough-like ball. Let sit for at least 10 minutes. Roll out like a pie crust on a surface where you can cut it in strips and then squares. Fill the squares with filling and pinch two corners together making a bowtie shape or a small cannoli. Place cookies on baking sheet and bake for 25-30 minutes.

Other Options: use fig fruit spread from a jar and add raisins or craisins, nuts and coffee (honey and maple syrup not needed as fruit spreads are already sweetened). Use any fruit spread that you like, for example: blueberry, apricot, and black raspberry make nice fillings.

Yield: 32 cookies of 1½" size.

### **Christmas Wreath Cookies**

from Tommy Cambridge

1 stick butter

30 large marshmallows

1 tsp. green food color  
4 cups cornflakes

Melt butter in a double boiler. Add marshmallows and stir until melted. Add food coloring and corn flakes and stir gently and thoroughly. Keep contents warm. With a spoon, scoop out a cookie size amount and place on a cookie sheet or piece of waxed paper.

Sprinkle immediately with red hots or festive jimmies.

Makes about 20, depending on how small or large you make them.

### **Macaroons**

from Heidi Finkelberg

One package of Baker's sweetened coconut (about 5 cups)

1½ cups of granulated or confectioner's sugar

3 egg whites

2 tsp vanilla

Two pinches of salt

Preheat the oven to 350.

Mix ingredients with a spatula or your hands (more fun).

Wet your hands with cold water and make small piles of the mixture and place them ½ to 1 inch apart on two cookie sheets covered in parchment paper. Bake for 18-22 minutes until golden brown.

Cool for ½ hour before serving. Store in a plastic container and refrigerate for up to a week.

Yield: 20-24 macaroons

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## *JUST FOR LAUGHS...*

Me: Sobbing my heart out, "I can't see you anymore ... I'm not going to let you hurt me again." Trainer: "It was one sit-up."

Do you ever get up in the morning, look in the mirror and think "That can't be accurate."

I'm on two diets. I wasn't getting enough food on one.

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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, 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 mail your check to GOT, 830 Main Street #574, Honesdale, PA 18431. Thank you in advance for your support.

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.com](http://www.growingoldertogether.com). Thank you!

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Growing Older Together is supported in part by generous grants from the 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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## *COMMUNITY PARTNERS*

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

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### 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.