

Hand in Hand...
Linking Lives



May/June 2025

GOT—GROWING OLDER TOGETHER

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

*If you need
something, just ask!*



An Adventure of the Soul

Early this year, I boarded a plane to Costa Rica, embarking on what I now call an "adventure of the soul." This was no ordinary vacation—no sunbathing, no poolside service, no tropical bars or bustling restaurants. Instead, I accepted a good friend's invitation to explore the coastline of this stunning country on horseback and even swim with horses in the Pacific Ocean.

Admittedly, I assumed there would be some creature comforts along the way. But as it turned out, the accommodations were basic at best, and we dined alongside locals, savoring simple yet flavorful meals that always featured rice and beans—yes, even for breakfast. It wasn't the kind of trip I would have planned on my own, but sometimes the unexpected is exactly what the soul needs.

And what an incredible time it was. On the third day of riding, we reached the Nicaraguan border—a surprise that felt like an unexpected gift. Each day offered sweeping, untouched seascapes that seemed to stretch endlessly. This was not the touristy Costa Rica of glossy brochures, and I came to appreciate that deeply.

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As someone who values spirituality, I've long embraced the importance of living in the moment. But saying yes to this trip brought that principle to life in ways I never anticipated. Our hosts were trained in a form of equine therapy centered on mindfulness—a lesson horses embody effortlessly. As "fight or flight" animals, they respond immediately to perceived danger but are just as quick to relax when the threat is gone. They live entirely in the now, unburdened by the past or future.

When offered a therapy session, I said yes, curious but unsure of what to expect. I was led to a steep, muddy hillside in the middle of a downpour to interact with a herd of nine horses. The instructions were simple: no talking, no human pretenses—just be present and connect naturally. Standing there, soaked to the skin, I let go of everything else and simply existed in that moment.

The connection I felt was profound. There's something deeply moving about forming a bond with such powerful, instinctive creatures, and the experience left an impression that will stay with me. I walked away from that hillside feeling lighter, as though my spiritual life had been recalibrated in some inexplicable yet significant way.

As I grow older, I hope to hold tightly to lessons like this one. Living in the moment doesn't just make life easier—it makes it richer, more vibrant, and infinitely more fulfilling.



Thomas atop "Rayo", Guanacaste Province, Costa Rica

(By Thomas Cambridge, Executive Director of GOT)

Why Each Day is a Gift

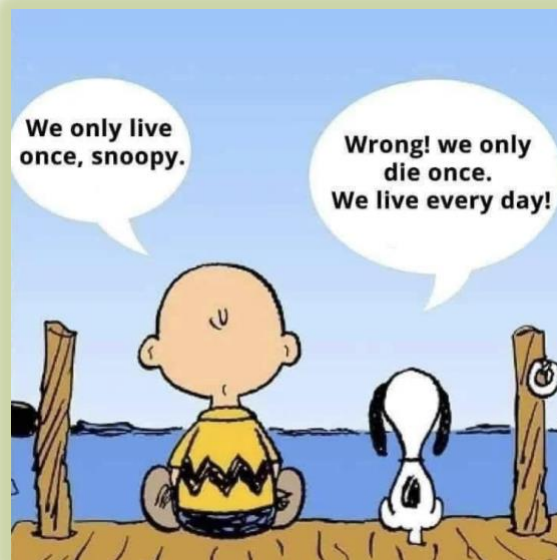
One of the poet Mary Oliver's most famous lines is:

"Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?"

These are powerful words.

Some years ago, when I turned sixty, my eighty-year-old friend said to me, "Aging is a series of losses." What a difference 20 years can make! I smiled sweetly then, but I realize now, that, while at that time, I understood the concept, I did not fathom the reality of what she meant. Now that more than a decade has passed, I have come to appreciate the wisdom in her words as well as Mary Oliver's.

As we grow older, we gradually lose many things we had previously taken for granted--physical strength and vitality, diminishing eyesight and hearing. We lose bone density and height. With loss of physical strength, we have to give up activities we used to enjoy, and reluctantly acknowledge that we need help with chores that we once did easily. We also lose our identity in the wide world—the careers that defined us are behind us, while young people are creating a world that can seem foreign to us. In human terms, loss and change are inevitable. We suffer the illnesses and deaths of family members and friends. A profound lesson came to me when my niece died at the age of 53 and my nephew when he was 63. I mourned their deaths, and when my grief subsided, as it does, I came to fully appreciate the miracle and blessing of each day of my life, days neither of them got to live. What I came to see was that regretting loss robs me of enjoying this moment of life.



Loss opens the door for gain. This is the truth of our existence, the reality of the flow of life. When I was young, I never thought of resisting impermanence and change. I looked ahead with anticipation for whatever might come next. What keeps me from doing that now? Rather than yearning for what was, what can I still do with the body I have now? How can I cultivate patience with my limitations and adapt with them? How can I forge new friendships?

As I thought about this, I have come to more fully appreciate my peers who maintain humor, grace, and engagement with life despite the inevitable losses they have faced and will continue to face. I wondered how to emulate them.

I remember that each day is a gift, despite, and even because of, the inevitability of loss. I find the right way for me at this time in my life is to choose ways to engage fully, connecting with all those around me – helping others, letting go of grievances, continuing to be curious about whatever crosses my path. The most mundane and simple things are sources of joy: a sunrise, birdsong, a delicious meal, music, a good book, a chat with a stranger (who might become a friend), the moon and stars. Nothing big, but in fact miraculous and present in the moment. I always have a choice. How will I live each precious day of my life?

(By Marcia Nehemiah, past president and co-founder of Growing Older Together, and a lay-entrusted Zen teacher of Two Rivers Zen Community. Visit <https://tworiverszen.org>)

Joining the Peace Corps at 80

When I was 80, I joined the Peace Corps, which has no age limit. I thought, Hey, why not! It did sound a bit unusual for someone my age, although those who know me were not too surprised. After much thought (okay, maybe 22 minutes), I applied.

The medical clearance was a horror. They were extra vigilant because of my age. They asked for records about my hip replacement that was so far in the past, the doctors no longer had them. It took a half-dozen conversations to clear that up. My hearing aids really threw them off. Peace Corps (PC): "What will we need to do to take care of your hearing aids?" Me: "Nothing." PC: "What if you don't have electricity on site?" Me: "They are battery-operated." With no Peace Corps age limit, they determined that, given my wisdom acquired over the decades (ha!), I was a good candidate.

My plans posed a challenge for my family. My kids were surprised; they had no idea this was in the future for their old Ma. In the end, as always, my family was supportive of my new adventure.

I left in mid-September for Philadelphia, and joined the other 57 volunteers who would be my cohorts, mostly just out of college. Three days later we were on a 35-hour trip, with three plane changes, to Lesotho, Africa, where I would spend the next two years. A downside: Being the only volunteer over 50 made it challenging in terms of bonding with my travel companions, and talking about our feelings regarding the work we were doing.

I lived with a host family in a 9x14 room containing kitchen, bedroom, living room, office and outside latrine. The neighbors next door had children, so we played together. Soccer is a big deal, and their only ball was made of plastic bags.

The greatest fun was spent with the children from the orphanage. I had coloring books, crayons, blank paper, colored pencils. Aged 18 months to eight, they would come knocking on my door at 6:30 am and say, "Madam, Colors," the only English word the little ones knew. There'd be a dozen children on my stoop coloring. I put up an "art gallery" in the dining room, which thrilled them.

Many of the children were there because either one or both parents had died of AIDS. Mpho, a young local woman, and I, conducted an HIV awareness program. Lesotho has the second largest HIV population per capita in the world. The 12-session program dealt with safe sex, treatment, teaching girls that they can say NO, the consequences of multiple partners, self-esteem, and more.

I did have electricity but no refrigeration. We hauled water in buckets from a tap. It amazed me how little I needed to bathe, wash dishes and clothes.

I hiked 30 minutes uphill on rocky terrain for a "taxi," a big van or a bus. A bus equipped to hold 18 could squeeze in 24, with packages, chickens and more.

Lesotho is a small landlocked and mountainous country in Southern Africa. The sky is incredible—the stars, the milky way, the sunsets and sunrises. The rain—wow. The sound of the thunder and lightning, is beyond description.

In my village, Bua Sono, I was the only white person. It is customary to say hello to everyone you meet on the road—"Lumella, lumella," "Hello, hello." The children were particularly interested in me and would follow me around, wanting to touch my skin and my hair.

While I was there, I went on a Safari, which was awesome. Even more awesome was going to a cheetah reserve to volunteer for the day and I slept in the compound with three of them. They have very big teeth!

Returning home, I missed Lesotho a lot. But I am very glad to be back with my dear family and friends.

(Adapted from an Oldster Substack article by Veta Jacquelin Talmadge)

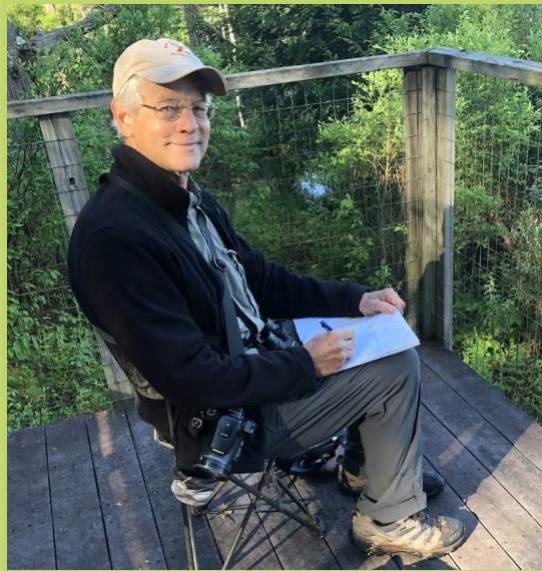
The Healing Power of Wild Places

Time spent in nature restores, comforts and inspires humans. We know it instinctively, and science proves it. Dr. John Harvey's latest book, *Nature's Pathways to Mindfulness*, can help us channel our generic appreciation of the outdoors into something deeper and more beneficial than we've experienced so far.

John, a local naturalist and consulting psychologist, emphasizes that the wonderful thing about nature is that any amount of exposure, no matter how small, even by taking in the views from a window, is helpful, and the benefits are retained even after your excursion into the forest, garden or city park has ended. Nature reveals herself to those who sit and wait. And he says, "This works whether you're tuned in or not." But if you want to go beyond a pleasant stroll or picnic by the lake and experience all that nature has to offer, *Nature's Pathways* can help you chart your course.

Physical advantages include improved cardiovascular health—decreased heart rate, lower blood pressure and respiration rate. With a reduction of cortisol, a stress hormone, our autonomic nervous systems can switch from fight or flight response to the more peaceful rest and digest mode. Mood and emotions improve as negative feelings of anxiety, depression, sadness, compulsion, and aggression fade and positive feelings of happiness, contentment, calmness, gratitude, empathy and compassion increase.

Our cognitive function shifts away from focused, directed attention, which can drain our energy, to involuntary attention, an open, more effortless state that makes us more creative, flexible and resilient. The soft fascination that we experience in nature is spiritually uplifting, inspiring moments of awe, in which we can step outside of our petty problems and feel connected to something greater.



Dr. John Harvey

The goal is mindfulness, a present-centered, open, non-judgmental state of mind, ignoring the past and future and their distractions. Sensory awareness will get you there. Concentrate on everything you see, hear, feel, and smell in your chosen wild spot. John stresses that there is a patch of nature for everyone. If you can't climb, paddle or hike in the wilderness, "Find a bench with a beautiful view." Edge habitat, which is an area where woods and meadow or marsh and field come together, is the best bet for finding creatures to observe, especially if water is nearby. Don't forget to notice colors, shapes and structure of surrounding plants. While preparing to write his earlier book, *The Stillness of the Living Forest*, John chose to spend an hour a week in a familiar "sit spot." If you prefer a walk, that's fine too, but it will work better if you make it a mostly silent, contemplative stroll.

"Nature wants to teach us," John says, comparing it to a student/teacher relationship. "If you offer your time and attention, nature will give you wonderful experiences."

Some phone apps that John recommends are free: Merlin: for identifying birds and their songs, Inaturalist: for plant and animal identification, and PictureThis: a plant/bird/insect ID app, which costs \$29.99 a year. As he says, and this also applies to animals, "A plant named becomes a plant known becomes a friend in nature."

It's spring. Go outside and be refreshed.

(By Dawn McIntyre, author of *The Paper Pirate*, published by Running Wild Press, available on Amazon)

Caregivers Need Care

Just two hours per week is all the time that family caregiver Ayda Beltré devotes to herself. That's on Sundays when she goes to church and must leave her 86-year-old father alone. He is bedridden and has been on oxygen since COVID hit the family. So when she leaves the house to go to church to pray for her father's recovery, it's a roll of the dice that breaks her heart every time.

Approximately 65 million Americans (more than 1 in 4 of the adult population) are family caregivers, according to AARP.

Not surprisingly, women—unsung heroes—make up 75% of caregivers. Typical tasks include: providing medical assistance such as medication management, bathing, dressing. Managing daily activities: cooking, cleaning, shopping, transportation to medical appointments, etc., plus providing emotional support and companionship. Two-thirds also hold down outside jobs while juggling exhausting caregiving responsibilities.

Sixty percent of caregivers report experiencing high levels of stress; 39% have reduced their outside work hours or left their jobs due to caregiving responsibilities. Studies show that 80% of surveyed caregivers found that American companies were more understanding of childcare issues than adult caregiving responsibilities. Yet, the nation's number of older adults 65-plus is projected to surpass the population of children within the next five years.

"As the backbone of America's long-term care system, providing billions of dollars every year in unpaid labor, family caregivers need and deserve greater support from their own employers," says Susan Reinhard, Senior Vice President and Director of AARP Public Policy Institute. But with over 60 percent of family caregivers working either full-time or part-time—and 30 percent living with a child or grandchild—they also need and deserve more assistance from city, state and federal governments.

Being a caregiver for a family member—particularly for someone with substantial needs—is a labor of love. Whether you're caring for a spouse, parent, adult child, grandchild, or another family member, the job has high demands, grueling hours, no pay, little time for yourself, and, in some cases, health risks. "Meeting a loved one's needs can come at the cost of the caregiver's own well-being. While the role can be deeply satisfying, it can also lead to burnout and risks for high blood pressure, fatigue or sleep problems, depression, isolation, significant weight loss or weight gain, heart disease, and even premature death," explains Marie Clouqueur, a geriatric case manager in the Division of Geriatrics at Harvard-affiliated McLean Hospital.

It's important that caregivers get a breather now and then—to exercise, go to doctor appointments, see friends, or simply recharge—to maintain equilibrium and have the strength to continue as a caregiver. The way to do that is with respite care.

Private respite care can be expensive but many nonprofit groups (such as senior centers and religious organizations) offer volunteer respite care services. And there are hundreds of organizations—including federal and state governments, the Veterans Administration, and nonprofits (such as Easterseals)—that offer financial assistance for respite care.

Several government and nonprofit organizations can help you find respite care (and potential funding) that suits your needs. The primary places to call are your state's Lifespan Respite Coalition, your local Area Agency on Aging, and (for veterans) the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Also consider checking out the *Harvard Medical School Caregivers Handbook: A Guide to Caring for the Ill, Elderly, Disabled and Yourself* available on Amazon.com or perhaps at your local library.

(Adapted from reports by AARP, the Harvard Health Letter and the University of Michigan)

The Glorious History of Garlic

Garlic (*Allium sativum*) is a plant native to Central Asia some 10,000 years ago. The earliest evidence of its use dates back 5,000 years in ancient Egyptian and Indian cultures. It was fed to laborers building the pyramids to give them strength and resistance to water-borne diseases. Preserved garlic was even found in the 1,323 BC tomb of Tutankhamun. Ancient medical texts from Egypt, Greece, Rome, China and India prescribed garlic as a tonic, for coughs, skin disease, rheumatism, infections, and even cancer. Cherokee Native Americans used it as a treatment for asthma and scurvy. The ancient Egyptians even swore on garlic cloves while taking oaths.

Today, modern science is exploring garlic's potential for disease prevention and treatment, confirming many of the beliefs of ancient cultures. Garlic has long been known to aid digestive health and boost the immune system. It can assist in regulating the heart and vascular system as well as maintaining healthy cholesterol and blood-sugar levels. Garlic was used to battle plague and cholera in the Middle Ages, and healers would cover their faces with rags soaked in garlic juice before visiting the sick.

A clove of garlic eaten raw can be very fierce. I once knew a woman who snorted raw garlic to rid herself of chronic sinus infections. Not sure I would recommend that, but garlic is certainly a healthy food and a flavor enhancer. Along with love, it is said to be the secret ingredient to every meal. Garlic is essential in dishes as varied as Mediterranean hummus, Italian marinara sauce, and Chinese sesame noodles. It greatly enhances the taste of marinades, stews, vegetables, and sauces, whether finely chopped, roasted whole, sliced thin, or sauteed.



As a root vegetable, the garlic head, or bulb, protected by a papery skin, matures underground at the end of a hardy stalk. It is cold-resistant and can produce in most types of soil. In ancient times, its cultivation was limited to only a few countries in Asia, but today garlic is cultivated worldwide, and features in every cuisine on the planet.

The name "*Allium*" is linked to the ancient Celtic word that meant "monster slayer," confirming the fact that garlic was used to ward off evil spirits, vampires and witches. Many Europeans wore necklaces of fresh cloves, and for added protection, braided bulb stalks were placed around doorways. Dracula, that most famous vampire, could only be deterred by waving around raw garlic which, with its unpleasant fumes, could make him flee.

Garlic is simple to grow. To plant it, break up the head into individual cloves and place each clove, root side down, about two inches into the earth, four inches apart, long enough before first freeze to allow the root to establish. Cover with a thick layer of straw. In early spring, watch for the bright green shoots. Garlic is harvested around late July, as the stalks become brittle and dry. Grab your trowel, dig a circle deep and wide enough around the stalk to loosen the bulb, gently tug on the stalk, and *voila!*

It is best to use bulbs from your summer harvest of that year, or bulbs given to you by a friend or purchased at the farmers market. It is not advisable to plant supermarket garlic for a number of reasons: we don't know if it is organic, where/how it was grown, or how old it is. Garlic will store for months if properly dried. Hang heads and stalks from a ceiling or platform with good air circulation for several weeks until bulbs are hardened off and ready. Then, cut off the stalks. Or, if you are handy, try a garlic braid!

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

We Need Recipes for the GOT Family Cookbook!

The GOT fundraising committee is publishing a cookbook featuring cherished family recipes submitted by our members, volunteers, and extended family and we would love for you to be a part of it.

Food holds a special place in our lives, connecting us to traditions, cultural practices, and the memories of loved ones. Many of us have a favorite dish passed down through generations, one that evokes a sense of comfort and nostalgia. By contributing to this cookbook, you're helping preserve and celebrate the unique culinary heritage of the GOT community, as well as raising funds to assist more seniors in the region.

Recipes are still needed for appetizers, main dishes, soups & salads, baked goods & desserts, and in particular, side dishes. Feel free to submit as many recipes as you like, but we'd be most grateful if you could provide your input by May 16, 2025.

How to Submit Your Recipe

We've made it simple to send in your favorite dishes:

By Email:

1. Use your smartphone to take a photo of the recipe from a cookbook or index card and email it.
2. OR - Type your recipe directly into an email.
3. OR - Scan your recipe and attach the file to an email.
4. Please send all email submissions to got.cookbook@gmail.com

Don't forget to include your comments about the dish—what makes it special to you, or a memory it brings to mind.

Thank you!

Back to Where We Began

Ten years ago, Growing Older Together was born from the compassion and dedication of the Upper Delaware Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, whose members came together to address the growing need for senior support in our region. We are proud to continue this meaningful partnership today. For many years, GOT has been a grateful beneficiary of the annual Bud Rue Memorial Walk for Social Justice, organized by the Fellowship.

On March 19th, GOT Executive Director Thomas Cambridge had the honor of speaking to the UU Fellowship, sharing the progress and impact of our work over the past several years. At the conclusion of the presentation, Thomas was presented with a generous \$1,000 donation—a gift that will help us continue serving seniors in our community. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the UU Fellowship for their ongoing support, generosity, and shared commitment to social justice and care for others.



Jill Padua, Rev. Laurie Stuart, Heidi Finkelberg, Thomas Cambridge, & Tom Rue

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, Moses Taylor 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.