

*Hand in Hand...
Linking Lives*



Sept / Oct 2024

GOT — GROWING OLDER TOGETHER

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

*If you need
something, just ask!*



Growing Older Together – As We All Are

by Diane Yaddow

Growing Older Together...is a great name for this organization! I've become older since I joined! My health is not improving, but there is so much work to be done. It won't be long--I'm now 74--before I will need a lot of services in the future.

I hear from so many of our members about how wonderfully our volunteers treat them. Many of our volunteers sign up for the same member time and time again.

I'm the President, member, call manager and volunteer! I do what I can to help the organization continue to grow. We are always looking for more members and volunteers. Can you think of anyone who can use GOT's services or would like to volunteer? Just give us a call at: 570-630-0509!

I volunteered for over 28 years with the Victims' Intervention Program and now several years with Growing Older Together. It is very satisfying work. I enjoy taking our members to doctor's appointments, getting to know them and I'm so happy to help. I take a book or magazine to read while I need to wait for the member. Or I just may take a few minutes of "me" time, since we rarely get enough of that. But when I do, it is time to sit back and relax with my little pooch Penny!

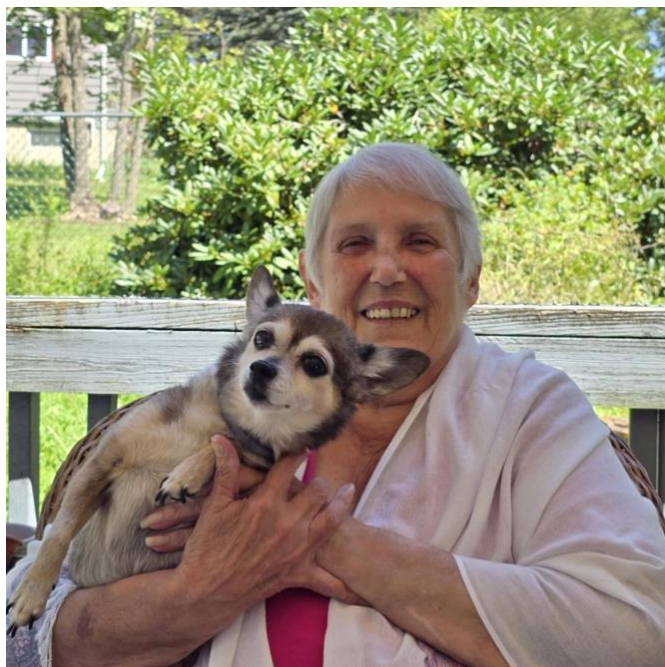
I've also begun volunteering at The Wayne Communities Food Alliance (WCFA), a Wayne County grassroots group of volunteers working to get local, healthy food to people who need it. For more information, call: 570-253-5711.

Currently, 1 in 11 seniors (age 60 and older) face hunger in the U.S. "Food insecurity is so closely tied to health, which becomes especially critical as we age.

"Addressing food insecurity among seniors would help reduce chronic health conditions and could result in healthier communities overall," says Linda Nageotte, Feeding America president and CEO. "The size of the aging population in America is growing each year and we must work together to ensure seniors have access to the food they need to thrive."

In 2022, the most recent statistic, food insecurity among seniors climbed 25% over the prior year, a stunning increase. To learn more about senior hunger, go to: feedingamerica.org.

GOT is helping in any way it can to make our life as seniors together better. Join us to add your energy and fellowship to our efforts, 570-630-0509!



(Diane Yaddow, here with her dog Penny, is President of the Board of Growing Older Together.)

From Survival to a Thriving Life

by Marileta Robinson

Dorothea Szczesniak is a survivor. At the age of nine, she fled from Germany to Belgium with her parents and younger sister and what little they could carry to escape persecution by the Nazis. But the safety they found in Belgium ended when the Germans invaded. A Belgian friend helped them hide in the boarding house where she lived, the two sisters staying upstairs next to the woman's apartment and the parents staying downstairs. The girls could not go out to attend school, so they studied at home.

But one day the German Gestapo came to the house and arrested Dorothea's parents. When they came upstairs to find the girls, their friend's quick thinking and courage saved their lives. "These are my grandchildren," the woman told the officers. "They are late for school!" She shoved school bags into the girls' hands and pushed them out the door. The Gestapo believed her and allowed the girls to walk out of the house, past their parents, whom they never saw again. Dorothea learned later that her parents died at Auschwitz, an extermination camp in Poland.

Dorothea was 16 when Belgium was liberated by the Americans and British. At last, she and her sister were free to live their lives. Dorothea found a job, studied voice at the Conservatory of Brussels, and met her future husband while auditioning for a singing position. They emigrated to the United States and in 1985 found their way to a serene house in the countryside near Honesdale and raised a family.

Dorothea, now 95, has told this story before. As a Holocaust survivor, she has shared her experiences at the Teen Symposium in Scranton and at local schools. Steven Spielberg wrote a personal letter to thank her for contributing her story to the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Museum. But Dorothea likes to stress that she is not just a survivor. She lives with a positive attitude, and contributes what she can to others, including sharing her beautiful voice. "I feel grateful every day," she told me. "If I felt bitter, if I took the good things that happen for granted, then I would allow the Nazis to ruin my life twice."

She is a long-time and beloved member of the Congregation Beth Israel, 615 Court Street, Honesdale, which this year celebrates its 175th anniversary. Just 1,200 square feet, it is believed to be the country's smallest synagogue, and is the only one in the country with a steeple, designed as it was by church architects of its day.

Having survived many obstacles, the historic Congregation Beth Israel is the oldest continually operating synagogue in America still in its original building, and descendants of three of the original eleven families are still involved with the congregation.

Like its synagogue, the congregation of Beth Israel is small, but according to Rabbi Elliott Kleinman, "There's a communitarian nature that's extraordinary. When someone is sick, we're all concerned. When someone celebrates, we're all applauding. Whether you're here every week, once a month, or one week a year, we all know and care for each other." When I asked Rabbi Kleinman about Dorothea Szczesniak, who had been a soloist for many years at Beth Israel and now sings with the congregation, he said, "Her singing is out of this world. I always look forward to hearing her at the service."



Dorothea Szczesniak



Congregation Beth-Israel – Honesdale, PA

(Marileta Robinson is a GOT volunteer living in Milanville, Pennsylvania.)

Americans May Not See Eye to Eye, But We Can Still Talk Heart to Heart

by Jan Goodwin

Our local WJFF Radio Catskill has partnered with StoryCorps, the national nonprofit dedicated to helping us believe in each other by highlighting the humanity in us all, one story at a time, as part of the One Small Step project. Radio Catskill is one of seven public radio stations across the country this year selected to bring strangers with different worldviews or political beliefs together for a conversation—not to debate, but to get to know each other as people. And Radio Catskill has invited GOT members, volunteers, and supporters to join this important initiative.

“Millions of dollars are being made by the media and social media by making people scared and angry,” said Melissa Valesquez, One Small Step’s associate director. “This program gives people the chance not to be so fearful and remember we all have shared values, that both sides want our children to be safe, our homes to be safe.”

The first participants to meet on the Radio Catskill program are extremely different. Hasidic Rabbi Joseph Kolakowski, 40, of Congregation Beth Sinai Synagogue, White Lake, NY, is also a chaplain at the State Correctional Institution at Waymart, PA. When he applied to be on the program, which will air this fall, he described himself as a 10, the highest conservative ranking. He was partnered with Dayna Halprin, 34, described as a 1, or most liberal. “I’m very leftist and also non-binary, trans,” Dayna said. “I became involved in the program to combat the waves of hate encouraged by the mainstream media. It felt really appropriate going into this election cycle to remember that we are all neighbors; we are all connected.”

The rabbi thought that Dayna, a farm to table chef, was more surprised by him. “I’m a registered Republican and happy with Trump, although I was offended when he criticized Israel. I’m both political and religious, but nonetheless, I’m open minded.” He also pointed out that Jewish law accepts non-binary people and understands there to be six genders.

Both wondered if the philosophy behind One Small Step, based on studies by Yale University, could also help with much larger issues such as the current violence in Ukraine or Gaza. “Could it help us achieve peace?” asks the rabbi. “Jews and Muslims have a lot in common. I’m hopeful more dialogue could be productive, but it will take much time and effort.”



Rabbi Joseph Kolakowski



Dayna Halprin

Dayna and the rabbi both believe One Small Step would certainly be helpful where the conflicts between Republicans and Democrats are concerned. Dayna says, “The Jewish concept of *Tikkun Olam*--repairing the world--is one of my guiding principles.”

Audio recordings of each interview are archived at the Library of Congress. If you have an interest in participating as an interviewee, WJFF Radio Catskills is looking to fill the interview schedule as soon as possible. Please visit the following website, where you can sign up to be considered:

<https://wjffradio.org/take-one-small-step-upstate-ny-nepa-with-radio-catskill-and-storycorps/>

Be a part of history!

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

The Magic of Honey Bees

by Mary Greene

Honey is one of the most common products in supermarkets, health food stores and in our pantries. It is also the oldest recorded sweetener in human history.

This golden, luscious elixir has been referenced in the records of ancient human societies, including the Egyptians, Romans and Greeks. Honey was used in cakes to placate the gods and mixed with cheese to create the first “cheesecakes.”

With the arrival of Christianity, the uses of honey expanded to include using beeswax to make candles, a practice that survives to this day. During the Renaissance, as sugar became more available, honey lost its key spot as a sweetener, but bees were still thought to have special powers.

Honey has enjoyed a return to popularity as a healthy alternative to cane sugar, just as honey bee populations around the world are threatened by climate change and pesticide use. There are as many types of honey as there are plants and flowers. Did you know that there is a blueberry bee? They are perfectly adapted to pollinate native and commercial blueberry crops.

Honey bees remain mysterious because of their unique society. A hive contains one fertile “queen bee” and several thousand female “worker bees,” which have different tasks during their lifetimes. Young workers tend “the brood” inside the hive, as well as the queen. As they mature, workers will build honeycomb and ventilate the hive. The oldest bees forage for pollen, guard the hive and act as coroners, removing dead bees from the hive. During the summer season, worker bees live an average of six weeks (in winter, longer). Queens can live up to two years.

Male bees, known as “drones,” exist only to pass the colony's genes on to the next generation by mating with queens from other colonies. Drones are ejected from the hive in late autumn, dying from exposure and the inability to protect or feed themselves, and do not reappear in the hive until late spring when they are produced from unfertilized eggs laid by the queen the season before.

The “waggle bee dance” might be the most incredible feat of all among the common honey bee. By performing this dance, successful “forager bees” can share information about direction, distance of nectar, water sources, or new nest-site locations.



Honey has many uses beyond sweetening your slice of toast in the morning. A tablespoon of honey each morning is thought to be a local allergies preventative, and honey can also be used as an antibiotic for simple cuts or scrapes. A tea of lemon and honey is used to combat sore throats and colds. Manuka honey, produced in New Zealand and Australia and available worldwide, is known to have particular healing properties for pain and inflammation.

Have you ever noticed a bee asleep in a flower? They will take naps this way, as a break from their busy lives. Also, astoundingly, many native bees in North America are solitary, living alone and not in a hive or nest. These bees use flowers and plants, like sunflowers, as a refuge from the weather and as a quiet and safe place to sleep at night.

For more information about bees and how to protect them, visit thebeeconservancy.org.

(Mary Green is a poet, author, and frequent contributor to the GOT newsletter.)

Journeying Through Grief

by Shirley J. Longshore

Pete was this annoying preteen boy in my Sunday school class who teased me relentlessly. He obviously likes you, the teacher told me. I didn't buy it then. Fast forward to 1967 when we married and continued a loving close partnership that began with a first date in 1960.

Pete passed away last year at just 77 after contracting a shockingly fast moving illness. Losing a spouse in whatever way it happens is devastating. The grieving process is agonizing. With my world turned upside down and the prospect of living on my own for the first time in decades, I sought ways to help me deal with my confused and powerful emotions. As seniors, do any of us escape the loss of partners, family members, beloved friends--a bereavement that threatens to upend us over and over again.

There is no lack of excellent books with guidance and information about all the aspects of this journey. Mourning has its own timeline. Although one needs some solitary times "to sit with your grief," it is important not to feel isolated, even as hard as it can be to reach out. The dynamics in relationships, both family and friends, shift, sometimes in surprising ways.

We have a natural need to talk about the one we lost. In her book, *Healing After Loss*, Martha Hickman observes that "The retelling of the day grounds the event in the real world and helps us believe the terrible truth." It is important to find a group where you can talk about your sorrow openly. I joined a church related one where the participants had experienced deaths of loved ones over different time spans from one year up to 16.

According to the American Psychological Association, research shows that most people are helped to recover from loss through the passage of time if they have social support and healthy habits. Although your friends are helpful, making new ones is a way to expand your world and offer new opportunities for healing through volunteering. Make a schedule of activities to engage your mind, body and spirit.



Shirley J. Longshore and her husband Pete holding their second grandchild, Jaromir, then aged 18 months.

Exercise is critical to your physical and mental well-being along with those connections you can make that way. Walking (maybe find a walking partner), swimming (water aerobics is great), yoga, Pilates, whatever keeps you moving every day and gives you ways to meet other human beings! But pace yourself. When we are grieving, there is a tendency to have lower immunity. Take it from me. Within the first year after Pete's death, I suffered a pelvic fracture of undetermined cause that took months to heal.

Slowly picking up the pieces in these ways will help your recovery. For one thing, they will help you realize you are not alone and there is a way to heal. Streisand put it in a song, a simple truth: "People need people." Especially when you are mourning, this is a key factor. And remember, there is no "normal" time period for someone to grieve.

(Shirley J. Longshore is a writer and new widow.)

GOT Volunteers – We Appreciate You!

by Thomas Cambridge

Over the past twelve months GOT has been fortunate to experience a 20% growth in our volunteer force, bringing our total number to almost 75 dedicated team members. We cannot fulfill our mission without these committed individuals, so on June 18th, all were invited to a Volunteer Appreciation Party at the home of Tom & Maryann Haberthur, in Milanville, PA. Despite the warm afternoon, there was a good turnout and everyone enjoyed the stunning setting on the banks of the Delaware River, delicious food and drink, and for many, a dip in Tom and Maryann's saltwater swimming pool!

Volunteer Coordinator Colette Ballew handed out several awards and recognition prizes, and we had a special visitor – GOT's founder Carol Rocklin, who expressed some words of gratitude to our volunteers. Everyone agreed, we will do it again next summer!



A little shade to escape the bright sun



GOT Founder Carol Rocklin, 95, and Board President Diane Yadow

(Thomas Cambridge is Executive Director of GOT)

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 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 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.