

Hand in Hand...
Linking Lives



May/June 2026

GOT—GROWING OLDER TOGETHER

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

*If you need
something, just ask!*



Like a Peony, Life Unfolds

This past winter had me daydreaming more than usual--mainly about warmth, color, and scent. In other words: flowers. And more specifically, my favorite flowers, peonies, which will finally grace my gardens again in the next few weeks. Maybe yours too.

Peonies are generous plants and relatively maintenance-free. As perennials, they return every June, reliably pushing up from the earth as if they had never left. Garden lore says one should divide the tuber clumps every so often to keep them vigorous. I'm sure that's sound advice. But in my case, I confess I have never done it. Some of my peonies were planted more than twenty years ago--exotic varieties with names like peppermint stripe, abalone, and coral, along with the classic purples, pinks, and whites. I ordered them from the same nursery in Wisconsin that Martha Stewart reportedly uses, so they must be the best, right? After all, Martha is the authority on "good things."

Each spring the peony offers a quiet little drama that unfolds over several weeks. First comes the small bud rising confidently on its stem. Then the bud swells into a tight, promising ball--usually accompanied by a few industrious ants crawling across its surface.

(Gardeners will tell you the ants aren't necessary for the bloom, but they seem to enjoy the process.) And finally, almost overnight, the flower opens into its full, extravagant glory.

At that point I find myself wandering among them, appreciating their soft colors and faint, delicious fragrance. But inevitably, my mind begins to drift ahead. I start thinking about the dahlias, which won't bloom for weeks yet. I wonder if there's some new fertilizer or trick I could use to hurry them along. Why do I do this to myself?

Nature offers countless metaphors if we're willing to notice them, and gardens may be among the best teachers. A peony doesn't rush its moment. No amount of prodding will make it bloom faster. I once heard someone say you can't open a rose with a sledgehammer. The same holds true for a peony--and, perhaps, for many things in life.

From Thomas' peony patch



Mary Elizabeth

Candy Stripe

Stellar Charm

Tropicana

The word "unfolding" seems particularly apt. It applies not only to flowers but to anything that has yet to come into being. Relationships, ideas, healing, understanding--these things have their own timing. Patience is less about waiting passively and more about trusting that growth is happening even when we can't yet see the results.

I've noticed that the less I try to control or anticipate outcomes, the more content and serene I tend to feel. That realization didn't arrive quickly. In fact, it took a good deal of living--and a fair amount of impatience--to begin seeing life this way. Perhaps that's one of the quiet gifts that comes with getting older.

As time seems to move faster with age, I've come to appreciate the reminders to slow down. The earth continues its steady turning, the seasons arrive exactly when they should, and the peonies bloom without any encouragement from me.

"Stop and smell the roses," the saying goes. I've never had much luck growing roses in my yard, so I eventually gave up trying. Perhaps my garden was meant to unfold without them.

Or perhaps I simply need to find out where Martha Stewart buys hers.

By Thomas Cambridge, Executive Director of GOT

Between Heaven and Earth: Willow Wisp Farm and Farm Arts Collective

Those of us of the Woodstock generation can recognize that we have all come a long way since 1969. Walmart stocks and successfully sells organic produce. Vegetarian and Vegan diets are an acceptable and marketable option. Tai Chi, yoga, and meditation are now familiar practices for developing a healthy lifestyle. Great! However, the caveat is the distinction between the commercial lingo of a trend and a living invitation to a vision of what a world transformed and committed to peace, nurture, and well-being for everyone could be.

How lucky are we? Very lucky! We have an incredible community of leaders and teachers nurturing vision and change here in our river valley community. One of these centers of creativity and inspiration is the team of Greg Swartz and Tannis Kowalchuk, who together have built a dynamic creative center for farming, art, food, and ecology on 25 acres of river bottom soil in Damascus, PA.



Greg Swartz & Tannis Kowalchuk at Willow Wisp

Like all good things, growing a vision takes time. Greg Swartz, 50, began farming in Sullivan County in 2000 as an apprentice to other organic growers before he and Tannis bought land for their own small organic farm, Willow Wisp, in 2007. Their hard work paid off and eight years later, Willow Wisp Organic Farm moved across the river to their current location at 38 Hickory Lane in Damascus. The larger piece of land allowed the farm to triple its production of nutritious produce and unique cut flower varieties. In addition to growing high-quality food and improving the farm ecosystem, Willow Wisp is committed to showing that a culture of sound care and practice for the land is good business and that farming can and should be a key to economic development in our region.

According to Greg, "Tended with care, our river-bottom soil grows delicious and nutrient-dense produce. As farmers, we take the long view that while growing food, we should always be improving our soil, increasing the farm's biodiversity--above ground and below--and contributing to our community."

In 2018, Tannis, 60, a professional theater artist as well as a farmer, founded the Farm Arts Collective, a nonprofit *agri*-cultural center on the farm. Under her leadership, the Collective is an ensemble of local actors, writers, musicians, and designers who collaborate to create performances, workshops, and unique events year-round. Seasonal meals made fresh from the farm are served after performances. Workshops in cooking, fermentation, and preserving, are offered monthly and unique seasonal food experiences take place all year.

The Farm Arts experience is an eclectic synthesis of sharing food, farming, theater, education, and advocacy for a better, more sustainable world. Tannis describes it this way: "It is a dream come true. It is an opportunity to combine what I love to do most: farm, create powerful theater, cook, eat, and connect with my community. It is a remarkable way to provide nourishment on so many levels--artistically, physically, spiritually--as we work on unique projects and learn from one another."

The Willow Wisp Organic Farm website is: www.willowwisporganic.com

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

* * *

Hepburn always played Hepburn. It was a great part

I interviewed Katharine Hepburn several times. She remained a surprisingly popular cover girl for Ladies' Home Journal during the 1980's. Hepburn, born in 1907, needed and deserved special attention.



She always acted Katharine Hepburn. The nasal upper-class enunciation. The gestures. The tremor. You wondered if she had Parkinson's and hoped she didn't. But no, she claimed, it was familial tremor inherited from Grandfather Hepburn. She wore high necks and loose shirts, flat shoes, her Connecticut country look. We met several times in her Manhattan townhouse, which she had bought in 1931. In the kitchen there was a cartoon hung above the old refrigerator. It showed horses in a field. One, with its head tilted high, was running past two others. The caption read: "She hasn't been herself since they told her she looks like Katharine Hepburn."

She always insisted on feeding me lunch--copious lunches: lamb chops, potatoes, salad, and pudding with heavy cream for dessert. Hard to manage and chew while balancing a notebook and a tape recorder. "Why aren't you eating?" she would ask across the dining room table. "Eat up!" she would insist. I didn't dare leave that second tough little chop unchewed on my plate.

She always said the same things in interviews. She knew her script: that she had lived her life like a man, that you should not blame your parents but blame yourself, that she would have been a terrible mother, that when you fail, you have to get up, go on and try again. She also said she worried that she was really "a terrible bore." And that the audience never really liked her. Only after she played "Coco" on Broadway and received eight standing ovations a week did she begin to believe she had fans. Even though through the years she won four Oscars more than any other performer. She never attended the award ceremony to receive them.

She talked about Spencer Tracy, who was married and whom she loved for many years, only after he had passed away. She was with him when he died but, out of respect for his widow and his son, did not go to his funeral. After his death, she finally called his wife Louise and suggested they might be friends. Mrs. Tracy replied, "I thought you were a rumor." A rumor? Tracy and Hepburn had made nine movies together and been in love for 30 years. In their last movie "Look Who's Coming to Dinner" he seems, both in and out of character, to acknowledge his great love for her. In that scene her eyes brim with tears. She had been his full-time caregiver during the last seven years of his life even while making that movie.

Hepburn was around my mother's age. I told her my mother had once complained that the worst thing about aging was nobody ever calls you and says something nice about you. They only call to say something nice about your children and think that is enough. My mother was complaining about the way you're inevitably ignored when you're old while your need to be noticed never ends. Hepburn thought that was interesting. But while we were talking about aging her phone rang and rang, and her loyal secretary kept relaying messages of invitations. After all, she was Katharine Hepburn.

I once spoke about Hepburn to the television journalist Cynthia McFadden, her great friend and the co-executor of her will. We sat together at a lunch I gave for Helen Mirren, an AARP cover girl, who was a Hepburn admirer. Mirren is pleasantly normal--far less like a star than most, perhaps because she became very famous and popular later in her career.

At the lunch I remember Cynthia said that once she and Hepburn were going to an event together and the guard at the entrance had thought Cynthia, far younger, must have been the celebrity. Hepburn was enraged. So, no matter how famous you are, being ignored when you are old--because you are old--hurts. Even when you're the Great Katharine Hepburn.

Myrna Blyth is the former editor of LHJ and AARP, from myrnablyth@substack.com

* * *

Early Summer Reverie

What a relief it is to see green grass in May after the winter snow has finally melted--and we all know what a winter we just experienced! The months of May and June have a much anticipated positive effect on mood and energy since ancient times when they were named--Maya or Mary, which became May from the ancient Roman tradition and June for the Roman goddess and protector of the Roman state, Juno.

Overall, the early spring months are associated with peace, love and new beginnings. May gives us 31 days to fully appreciate being outside, enjoying new growth of plants and flowers while June, the slightly shorter month, features the summer solstice, the longest day of the year.

In my own life, I never knew why my mother loved both Lily of the Valley and her delicate emerald ring so much. She was born in May of 1909 and named Helen Mae in tribute to her birth month. It took me until my adolescence to comprehend the significance of special flowers and birthstones.

These signify from ages ago the signs of each month of the year--in May's case, the color green and the early blooming of Lily of the Valley.



Blue jays nesting

So many of these touch stones date back to ancient cultures. Sweden's Midsommer celebrates the longest day--the summer solstice--with dancing, singing, lighting of candles and bonfires. Stonehenge in Britain honors the sun's energy and its role in sustaining life. When I was a child in the 1950s in New York City, we celebrated May Day with baskets of flowers given to neighbors and a May Day dance around a pole bedecked with colorful ribbons.

These months are also when many lifetime celebrations happen--weddings, graduations, end of year parties--acknowledging what has happened of importance in people's lives. What a reward the two early summer months grant us after the cold, snowy winter months.

And then there is the poem by James Russell Lowell, a 19th Century American Romantic poet

What is so rare as a day in June?
Then, if ever, come perfect days;
Then Heaven tries earth if it be in tune,
And over it softly her warm ear lays;
Whether we look, or whether we listen,
We hear life murmur, or see it glisten;
Every clod feels a stir of might,
An instinct within it that reaches and towers,
And, groping blindly above it for light,

Climbs to a soul in grass and flowers;
The flush of life may well be seen
Thrilling back over hills and valleys;
The cowslip startles in meadows green,
The buttercup catches the sun in its chalice,
And there's never a leaf nor a blade too mean
To be some happy creature's palace;
The little bird sits at his door in the sun,
Atilt like a blossom among the leaves,
And lets his illumined being o'errun
With the deluge of summer it receives;
His mate feels the eggs beneath her wings,
And the heart in her dumb breast flutters and sings;
He sings to the wide world, and she to her nest,
In the nice ear of Nature which song is the best?

Shirley J. Longshore is an editor and writer

* * *

Seniors Changing Careers

There are many reasons why seniors find themselves changing careers. Ageism in the workplace might force an older worker out of a job. Sometimes the shine wears off retirement and people find themselves bored and restless. Despite their best efforts at saving and planning, others know that Social Security and retirement funds won't make ends meet. Often, part-time positions in a former field are hard to come by and a senior is faced with changing lanes.



Beth DeVrieze as she changes career again

Honesdale, PA resident Beth DeVrieze, 69, has reinvented herself before and is about to do it again. Born and raised in Wilkes-Barre, she spent years sewing for a living. One of her commissions involved making cassocks for the monks at St. Tikhon's Orthodox Monastery in South Canaan, PA. She bought the Honesdale Remnant Shop then acquired the building next to the Turkey Hill on Main Street, where she ran an antiques and upholstery business for 22 years. She and her husband moved to Rileyville, PA, but she returned to Honesdale after the marriage ended.

What got her into upholstery? "My big mouth. A decorator came up to me and asked me if I knew how to upholster because he knew I knew how to sew. And I said, 'Oh, yeah, I know how.' Then I ran home and got some books and learned how to upholster." It was a natural fit for Beth. "My favorite magazine growing up was Architectural Digest," she continues. "So I just had this thing; I had to have nice furniture."

After a divorce she started a successful cleaning business, with 25 clients in the Narrowsburg, Callicoon and Jeffersonville, NY areas. Some of the homes are Airbnbs, one of which she manages. At times she's even helped with customer's decorating decisions.

What does she enjoy most about it? "Being with the people and getting to know them. It became like I was part of their family. Sometimes I'd bring coffee and scones. They looked forward to my coming. One or two helped me [personally] when I needed it. That's the type of client I developed. People who ended up caring about me and I cared about them."

There's a good and bad side to self-employment. "The good is I'm my own boss and I can do what I want." She doesn't have to deal with ageism in the workplace but says, "I do experience ageism in the outside world. It's hard for me anymore to get my point across that I can do things. They make me angry, saying, 'Well, you know you're almost seventy.' The bad part about upholstery was, it was feast or famine. With cleaning, it's that I'm the only one doing all the work. Now, with the new business, making my head wrap around changing, it's a little bit of excitement, fear, you know, can I make the money?"

She's recently broken a foot and is trying to decide how to proceed going forward. Although she might keep a few cleaning clients she's also planning a new venture.

"I'm a light-filled Astrologist. I focus on spirituality and the positive. I also read the zodiac, numerology, Chinese zodiac, Hindu astrology. All they are are tools and you just read them. It's

mainly trying to help people understand and bring people together, teaching people to be kinder to each other.”

Asked if she prefers working to retirement, she’s quick to say, “I can’t retire.” Why? “I’ll live longer. I think my brain stays more active. I also think it’s physically good for me. I’m not sitting here watching QVC and soap operas and probably dying. I can’t imagine doing that. And,” she whispers, “I’m a shop-a-holic.”

Beth’s soon-to-be-active website is <https://turningshadowtolight.co/> She’s also on Facebook. Search Turning Shadow to Light--the Journey. Her email is badvsewingrrl@gmail.com.

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

* * *

Looking for a Housemate- Not a Mate-in Later Life

When Marianne Kilkenny was in her mid-50s, she decided she’d had enough of living and working in Silicon Valley but was not sure what to do next.

She found the answer while reading Joan Medlicott’s novel *The Ladies of Covington Send Their Love* during a visit to Asheville, N.C.

Ms. Kilkenny, then 64, moved to Asheville a year later with a plan to create communities like the fictional one that had captured her attention: three women in their 60s living together in a farmhouse in North Carolina. Today, not only has she succeeded in living that very life, she is also determined to help other women and men arrange shared housing as they grow older, while avoiding some of the potential downsides of such a move.

To that end, she founded an organization called Women for Living in Community, which offers advice, sometimes for a modest fee, to people interested in shared living arrangements.

“We weren’t intended to just go home and turn on the TV,” said Ms. Kilkenny, who is divorced and has no children.

According to a recent survey, the percentage of women 65 and older who choose not to live alone grew to 38 percent in 2025. For men 65 and older, 22 percent live alone.

While men typically remarry at higher rates than women, women are increasingly looking for alternatives to living alone. With housing costs typically a third or more of living expenses for people 55 and older, the desire to share living space is often driven by economics.

“There’s a real uptick in people who need rental income,” said Kirby Dunn, Executive Director of HomeShare Vermont, which has been in the business of helping people find housemates for 30 years.

But equally compelling, and the reason for Ms. Kilkenney's life choice, can be the desire for companionship or the sense of security derived from having a housemate--especially these days, when family members are often far apart.



"Multigenerations used to live together," she says. "Houses have gotten bigger but households have gotten smaller." For people who want to stay in their homes, taking in a tenant--a housemate--can be an option.

But whether one person owns the house, the residents co-own it or all are renters, sharing space requires research and time to find the right combination of people.

Ms. Kilkenney, who is author of *Your Quest for Home*, a book she published through CreateSpace, advises knowing yourself as a

way to find compatible housemates. From a safety and security standpoint, background checks and references are essential. Beyond that, it comes down to how well you can get along in shared space.

"Not everyone can live together well," agreed Ms. Dunn at HomeShare Vermont. "It requires a certain amount of flexibility on both people's part."

Organizations such as the National Shared Housing Resource Center, which lists agencies throughout the country, can help people find others with whom to share space.

"There are issues that can come up in shared housing," Ms. Kilkenney said. A chief one is the ability to continue to pay. She also does what she calls "behavioral interviewing" to reveal potential hidden attitudes or situations that would mean someone is not the right candidate to be a housemate.

For example, where Ms. Kilkenney lives there is a one-year lease with the landlord of the house, with 60 days' notice required for moving out and a written agreement among the housemates. "You need to have an exit strategy," she said. "If this isn't working, what do we need to do so there are no hard feelings afterward?"

"We became fairly independent," she said of herself and many of her contemporaries. "Then, at the end of the day, you're sitting in front of the TV eating your dinner and you realize you would like to have someone say, 'How was your day?' I am no longer fiercely independent. I now can be interdependent and this is by choice."

Adapted by Jan Goodwin from Harriet Edleson, New York Times.

* * *

Across the Ocean, Still in our Hearts: Celebrating Jan Goodwin

Jan Goodwin has been an extraordinary force within Growing Older Together since 2018, generously sharing her time, talent, and warmth in countless ways. As a volunteer, Call Manager, and new member interviewer, she has helped shape the welcoming spirit that defines GOT. And now she begins a new chapter as she returns to her native homeland, the UK. Many of our members will miss the familiar comfort of her English accent during weekly social calls--a simple but deeply meaningful touchpoint that brought connection and care to so many. Fittingly, Jan has been a GOT member herself, embodying the very community she has worked so hard to strengthen. Thankfully, thanks to technology, she will continue her wonderful work as editor of our bi-monthly newsletter from abroad.



Jan Goodwin at the March 19th Sage Session

Before her move back home, Jan treated a record-breaking Sage Session audience to stories from her remarkable career as an award-winning journalist and author. From reporting in conflict zones around the world to interviewing heads of state, and her time at *Ladies' Home Journal* in New York City, her experiences captivated and inspired all who attended. Jan's talent, dedication, and generosity have left a lasting imprint on GOT. While we will miss her dearly, we celebrate this next chapter and send her off with our deepest gratitude and very best wishes!

* * *

GOT Gratefully Welcomes New GOLD Corporate Sponsor – The River Reporter

For years, Growing Older Together has valued its strong community partnership with The River Reporter. From co-hosting a Senior Community Forum in October 2022 to providing us with a platform to share our mission and impact through regular columns, their support has helped amplify our voice across the region.

Most recently, The River Reporter demonstrated its generosity in a new and meaningful way by donating full-page, color advertising to promote our winter fundraiser, the Big GOT Meltdown. We are proud to welcome them as a GOLD-level corporate sponsor. Our sincere thanks to Publisher Laurie Stuart and the entire team for their continued commitment to keeping our community informed, connected, and engaged.

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. We are 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:

GOLD

Annabel Bazante Law, PLLC
Upper Delaware Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
Resorts World Catskills
G5 Insurance
The River Reporter

SILVER

Lake Huntington Automotive
Seminary Hill Cidery
Upper Delaware River Valley Fund
Callicoon Wine Merchant
Bold Gold Media
Liberty Rotary Club
Cochecton Spirits / Cochecton Fire Station
Mountain Laurel Surgery Center

BRONZE

Spencer Printing
Barry Becker / Keller Williams Realty HVU
Delaware Valley Farm & Garden
John H. Eschenberg, Inc
Stephens Pharmacy
Foster Supply Hospitality
Wayne Memorial Hospital
RE/MAX Wayne
Dr. John A. Ridd, DMD
Jeff Bank
Spruce Home Goods
Wayne Bank
Settlers Hospitality
Narrowsburg Proper To Go
The River Gallery / The Art of Living
The Alpine Wurst & Meat House
Precision Eye Group

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 / WJFF Radio Catskills
The Cooperage Project / 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.

Please follow us!



Facebook @Growing Older Together



Instagram @growingoldertogether