

Hand in Hand...  
Linking Lives



Sep/Oct 2026

## GOT—GROWING OLDER TOGETHER

570-630-0509 830 Main St. #574 Honesdale, PA 18431 [www.growingoldertogether.org](http://www.growingoldertogether.org)

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*If you need  
something, just ask!*

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### ***All in Good Time***

There are some great expressions like, “in the nick of time”, “time is of the essence”, “running out of time”, “lost track of the time”, “make up for lost time”, “all the time in the world” to list just a few of them. They can express either a sense of hurrying or a cool sense of relaxed measure.

My life seems to have a similar dichotomy, of equal measure, a sense of cool relaxation on time or it is slipping through my fingers like the sand of the hour glass. My time is “my own” now that I am retired, giving me a sense of having an abundance of time to spend. I can wake up and leisurely have a cup of coffee or two, play the *New York Times*’ word games, read emails before breakfast. But then all of a sudden it is 10:00 in the morning, I am still in my pajamas, and feeling slightly guilty for having ‘spent’ so much precious time. On other days I wake up, quickly gather my things, and head to the gym where I can spend an hour or two working out, swimming, soaking in the hot tub before I shower and dress again for other activities, like meeting friends for lunch. This glorious leisure is something I could never afford when I was working and so I cherish it now more than anything.



I am trying a new perspective that time can either be wasted or well spent. When I take the time to visit friends or family, workout or cook a lovely meal, I see that as time bringing me joy and well spent. When I get anxious about news items, the weather or other trivial things I have no control over, I now see that as time wasted. I am trying to waste less time as it is not a replenishable resource.

I once read that time seemed to pass slowly when you were a child because you were busy taking all the new experiences and making memories. They went on to explain that time sped up as you age because you were not making new memories but settling into routines so time flies. It is interesting to consider the phenomenon of time flying by or slowing down based on new or old experiences. I have always felt that time passed slower when you were doing something that you were obligated to do, where it flew by when you were having fun.

These days I often lose track of time (in retirement everyday is Saturday), not just in hours but in days, in months and years. I enjoy the fact that life has an unhurried, unstructured component now that it didn't have before when I was working. It took me a while to get into a new rhythm with time that was not scheduled, but have since learned to completely surrender to the floating of time and yet still find enough time to be productive. Things get done, all in good time.

**Colette Ballew is Vice President of Growing Older Together**

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### ***Purpose at Both Ends of the Leash***

At Pattie's Waggin' Tails Senior Sanctuary, we spend our days with senior dogs. The ones with gray faces, slower steps, and stories we may never fully know. We work closely with overcrowded shelters, because seniors are often the first to be euthanized simply because of their age. Others come to us after their owners pass away or enter long-term care, left behind with no one to step in. They arrive a little confused, sometimes a little shut down, but always still full of love.

We are a cageless, free-roam senior dog sanctuary in Tunkhannock, Pennsylvania. Here, dogs live together as a pack, on couches, in beds, underfoot, and everywhere in between. It is not rows of kennels. It is a home. What makes our work truly special is our Senior Citizens for Senior Dogs Forever Foster Program.

We match senior dogs with senior citizens in the community. They give love. We handle the rest, including all veterinary care, medications, and ongoing needs for life. That way, there is no financial stress, just companionship.



One of many stories is Kathy. She lost her husband and then lost her dog. The emptiness in her home was overwhelming, and she found herself slipping into depression. She knew what she needed to do and where to go. She came to Pattie's Waggin' Tails Senior Sanctuary and met the dogs, waiting to see which one she connected with. She found and fell in love with Diego, who gave her a reason to get up again, to care again, and to step back out into the world. She will tell you now that it gave her something to look forward to every day.

Not every dog leaves us, and that is okay, too. Some stay here at the sanctuary for the rest of their lives, especially those with more complex medical or behavioral needs. We often call ourselves a halfway house. Some dogs move on, and some do not. All of them are safe, cared for, and part of the family.

None of this happens alone. It takes a village, including organizations like GOT, our veterinary partners, volunteers, donors, and fellow rescues, to keep saying yes to these dogs. And we will keep saying yes, as long as they need us.

At the end of the day, this is not just about rescue. It is about connection. It is about companionship. It is about having a reason to get up in the morning and someone waiting for you. When you see a senior dog curled up next to their person, both exactly where they are meant to be, you realize this is a purpose at both ends of the leash.

Ask us about our "Senior Citizens for Senior Dogs" Forever Foster Program

Our website: <https://pwtss.org>

**Patricia Rogers is the owner of Patty's Waggin' Tails in Tunkhannock, PA**

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## ***Never Give In – Never Give Up Graduating Medical School at Age 72***

It's never too late to make an early dream come true. This year, Dawn Zuidgeest-Craft, a grandmother of three, graduated from medical school at the impressive age of 72. This, despite raising four children and working as a nurse practitioner for four decades, but her motto all of her life, and one she instilled in her children as they were growing up, is "Never Give Up."

Her journey began when Dawn was seven years old and recovering at home from mono. To help relieve her boredom, she received a gift that shaped the rest of her life: a microscope. She loved inspecting mealworms and leaves underneath the lens so much that her mother, Paula Wesner, predicted then that her daughter would become a doctor. Parents know these things and her mother had it right,



*Dawn Zuidgeest-Craft*

It was no surprise when she grew up that Dawn pursued a career in health care, becoming a nurse practitioner and pediatric educator. She still planned to become a doctor, but she put her goal on hold while she raised two children. Then she remarried and had two more children, delaying her dream again. But she would not be deterred from her original master plan even when it was interrupted by life's changes and contingencies.

When she got divorced and remarried a few years later, she and her new husband decided to have more children. She gave birth to her two youngest when she was 42 and 49 years old. Life may have intervened but she kept the dream alive despite the challenges.

It took a wake-up call in 2020--when her husband narrowly survived a brain hemorrhage--for Zuidgeest-Craft to review her bucket list. At the time, Zuidgeest-Craft's husband, Carl Craft, decided he wanted to make traveling a priority. Zuidgeest-Craft, in her late 60s, said she was going to medical school.

"He thought I was insane," she said, "but he came with me."

By diving into her retirement funds, Zuidgeest-Craft paid for a Caribbean medical school, and enrolled at the St. James School of Medicine in Anguilla, where she was the same age as some of her classmates' grandparents.

There were setbacks; Zuidgeest-Craft considered quitting after failing a biochemistry exam her first year. But despite being four or five decades older than most of her classmates, she bonded with them over morning yoga sessions on the beach and their anxiety about tests. She tutored young students in anatomy and physiology, and hosted movie nights, where she and her husband showed 1980s films. She took on clinical rotations in Chicago, West Virginia and South Texas.

At the end of May, Zuidgeest-Craft, 72, received a doctor of medicine degree as her school's oldest-ever graduate. Now Zuidgeest-Craft has begun her three-year residency with a specialty in family medicine, at Trinity Health Medical Center in Muskegon, Michigan, proving it's never too late to follow one's passion. To graduate medical school and then to start a residency at her age is exceptionally rare.

"I feel alive when I am working in the medical field," she says, adding how energized she feels when she wakes up in the morning, ready for action now that she is doing what she has always wanted.

Even with a full workload, Dr. Dawn Zuidgeest-Craft is already thinking about her next goal: modernizing the medical school curriculum.

**Adapted by Shirley Longshore, editor and writer**



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## ***What We Get to Say: A Conversation with YarnSlinger Greg Triggs***

*"I would rather entertain and hope that people learned something than educate people and hope that they were entertained." Walt Disney*

Greg Triggs has a resume of experiences, skills, and interests that is long, varied, and, at 63, unfinished. His professional life spans four decades of creative work as an actor, director, producer, novelist, playwright, and entrepreneur. He is the founder and Creative Director of Strategic Entertainment, a full-service theatrical production company serving an international clientele.

A resident of Sullivan County since 2012, Greg has worked for his community as a member of the Tusten Town Board since 2021. Currently he serves on the water and sewer committee and as chairperson of the building and maintenance committee and the park and public spaces committee. Most recently, Greg has stepped into the role of director of Yarnslingers, a local collective of writers and storytellers who share their true, first-person stories in live performance at cafes, art studios, libraries, churches, and theaters.

I asked Greg to say a bit more about Yarnslingers. "The group was founded by writer/musician Ramona Jan in 2011," Greg replied. "She believes that everyone has a story worth telling and hearing. This is the credo of Yarnslingers, and it continues to resonate in the Catskills, the Upper Delaware River Valley, and beyond. We are lucky enough to have been supported by a lot of wonderful venues in Sullivan County and then expand our readings to the Tri-County area. We are going to try to perform each month at some venue that will have us. Our shows are free. You can sign up for emails through our website, If someone is interested in joining Yarnslingers, contact me through the website and I can send the criteria and explain the process."



*Greg Triggs*

In addition to a regular schedule of live readings of personal essays, Yarnslingers has just published a book of their stories entitled *This Happened: Yarnslingers Book 1* on Amazon, edited and compiled by Greg. "I'm excited!" he exclaimed. "We have 25 writers represented in the book. We have people from diverse cultures and lifestyles: men, women, married people, single people, people in their 30s, people in their 80s, and everything in between. One of the things I love about Yarnslingers is you're not telling other people how to be. I'm not going to tell anyone how to be left-handed, you know? It really opens things for an audience to hear somebody saying, this is an actual event in my life, not my opinion. That's what is magical about Yarnslingers, that people are articulating the heart of their experience."

Has the writing and performances of Yarnslingers influenced Greg as a writer and performer, as well as impacting the people who come to hear them?

"I think part of aging well is giving yourself permission to do it the way you want to do it, within the circumstances in which you find yourself, and being able to step away from fear," he says. "Once I was leading an exercise that was about trusting your spontaneous voice and an older man seemed to be struggling with the exercise. I started to side coach him and he went, 'No, no, no, no, Greg. I'm not worried about what I have to say. I'm thinking about what I get to say.' What a wonderful way to approach aging. What have I yet to say? What do I get to say? One of the things I love about my performing career is that it is built largely on improvisation, largely about the exploration of possibilities. I think a lot of people make their choices within limitations. I certainly have, but I get more excited about thinking about possibility."

Follow these links to learn more about Greg, his production company Strategic Entertainment, and Yarnslingers:

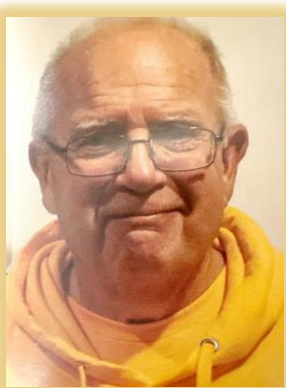
- a) [www.yarnslingers.com/](http://www.yarnslingers.com/)
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- c) [www.gregtriggs.com/](http://www.gregtriggs.com/)

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

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## ***Preventative Vaccines for This Season***

Welcome to Fall!



*James D. Lomax M.D.*

One of the many concerns that many of us have at this time is what types of preventative vaccines we should get this year. Until recently, there was a list of recommended treatments that helps protect us from common respiratory illnesses prevalent during the colder-weather months. COVID-19 was introduced and became part of a wellness approach to protect us getting seriously ill from COVID.

There are now disagreements between various medical professional groups and the government on what vaccines should be available (and paid for by Medicare). It is my experience that health care professionals are slow to change treatment routines that have worked well for patients.

Following is a summary of vaccines commonly used to prevent infections:

### **Influenza vaccines for older adults:**

Flu is a common viral infections that causes chills, fever, sore throat, headaches and muscle aches and coughs.

Seniors risk developing pneumonia that can be fatal. Flu is also very infectious and can spread rapidly through families, nursing homes and hospital wards. Annual flu vaccinations are recommended for anyone over the age of 6 months.

There are special formulations of flu vaccine for older adults. Your doctor will decide what higher dose flu vaccine should be used.

### **RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus)**

This infection usually causes mild cold symptoms, but for high-risk groups, RSV can complicate or cause a worsening of chronic health problems and weakened immune systems. The CDC recommends only a single dose of RSV vaccine for all adults ages 75 and older, and for those ages 50–74 with increased risk of severe RSV illness. It is a one-off vaccination not given annually.

### **COVID-19**

Who can forget the covid infections of 2020 to 2023s and the 1.24 million American deaths that occurred before the vaccine was developed. Today, older adults, even those immunized, are still more likely to get very sick. The CDC recommends patients and doctors stay current with the covid vaccine recommendations.

Because symptoms are similar for flu, RSV and Covid, your doctor may require blood tests to determine which of these is present.

### **Pneumococcal illnesses**

This is a serious infection that causes pneumonia but can be prevented by undergoing immunizations starting at age 50. There are various kinds of pneumococcal vaccines with injection schedules that are different. Like influenza, RSV and Covid-19, pneumococcal vaccines are covered by Medicare, Medicaid and private insurance.

### **Shingles vaccine**

Shingles is caused by the same virus that triggered chickenpox when you were younger. It causes burning, acute shooting pain, and/or worse itching and can be disabling for older adults. The shingles rash is fluid-filled blisters. The Shingrix vaccine is non-live, safe and effective, and is given in two doses, 2 to 6 months apart, to protect seniors against severe long-lasting nerve pain. It is over 90% effective and recommended for adults aged 50 and older and more effective than the older Zostavax version.

### **Other vaccines to consider:**

Most of us are familiar with MMR injections for children. For older adults, we need to know our immune status for measles, mumps, and rubella. Most 60 plus seniors had these diseases from natural infection as children.

Additionally, we need periodic boosters of TDP (tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis/whooping cough) every 10 years regardless of age.

October is an ideal month to see your doctor for getting these vaccinations. It is never too late or too early to take these precautions.

**Jim Lomax MD, and GOT Board Member**

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## ***Between Blue and Gray***



*A serene walk through The Poconos*

The sky can't decide— blue or gray,  
like a quiet thought that stays.  
Mountains rest, steady and wide,  
holding the day with nothing to hide.  
Birds drift by, free in their way,  
just a soft passing through the day.  
The air is sweet— clean and new,  
like the world paused just for you.  
And somewhere between breath and view,  
you remember what simple feels like too.  
Oh, my Mount Pocono!

**Juliet Dunn is a local poet**

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## ***The Real Vet Behind the Global Success of All Creatures Great and Small***

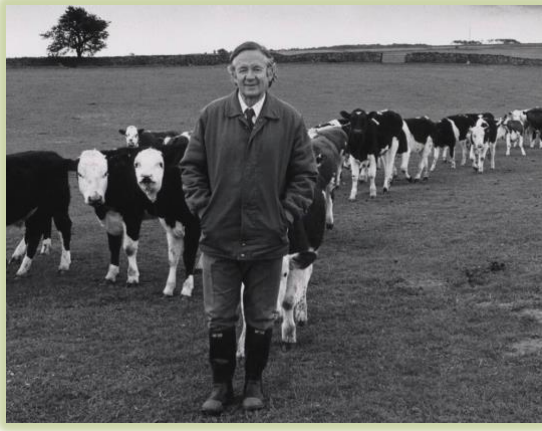
Alf Wight's early ambitions to write a book were sidelined by the long hours demanded of a rural vet. He finally began a manuscript in 1965 after some persuading by his wife. Amazingly, since he had so little free time, he wrote in front of his TV set in the evenings while it was on. "I could thoroughly enjoy the telly and bash away at my typewriter," he said. Publishers turned down his first attempts, but one of their readers suggested he write in first person since the stories were based on real life. Wight eagerly revised his manuscript

Five years later, when he was 54, his first book, *If Only They Could Talk*, was published under the pseudonym James Herriot. The author required another name as the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons' regulations at the time banned vets from any type of advertising. Philosophically, Wight said, "If a farmer calls me with a sick animal, he couldn't care less if I were George Bernard Shaw."

By the late 1970s, James Herriot was becoming a household name, his books selling more than a million copies each. The late Queen Elizabeth II was a fan, and Alf Wight was invited to join Her Majesty for lunch. Over a private meal at Buckingham Palace, she told him his were 'the only books that have made me repeatedly laugh out loud.'

Another royal encounter came in 1979 when Wight was 62. He was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE), placed on the Queen's Honors List for services to literature through his popular books about animals and veterinary life.





Alf Wright

“Throngs of tourists began turning up at our veterinary practice, with queues snaking down the street on the two afternoons our father set aside to sign books,” according to Wight’s son Jim, who later also became a vet and joined his father’s practice. “Dad felt he owed as much to his fans, especially those who had traveled from as far away as the U.S. to see him. While visitors were there to see the real James Herriot, and were often overcome with excitement to meet him, they were also delighted if Donald Sinclair, his boss and partner (better known to them from the TV series as Siegfried) made an appearance.”

The crowds continued. “One day the waiting room was absolutely buzzing, which was good because we needed the income. But Dad said, ‘Don’t get too excited: ‘I’ve counted one hamster, one Jack Russell and 65 Americans tourists.’ Jim added.

For a man who delivered such uplifting stories, and despite his amazing success, Wight battled periods of depression for a while after contracting brucellosis from infected cattle. The disease that can last for months caused him to suffer from recurrent fevers, pain, and physical exhaustion, which severely wore down his physical and mental resilience.

He worked as a vet for a half-century, except for his two-and-a-half years’ military service during WW2, when he trained as a pilot for the RAF. “He never really retired,” his son Jim said. “Into his seventies, he kept coming in, even though he wasn’t taking a penny in pay. He just did it because he loved it.” The veterinary practice is still an ongoing enterprise.

Today, there is a train named “James Herriot,” a British Rail passenger train that departs daily from his birthplace of Sunderland to London King’s Cross, with a call at Thirsk, where he worked as a vet, which is called Darrowby in his books. There is a World of James Herriot Museum in Thirsk, and an annual award from The Humane Society of the USA. There is even a planet named after him: the 4124 Herriot.

By the time he died, at age 78, Wight had sold over 100 million books worldwide that were translated into 36 different languages. They continue to sell and always remain in print. His books have also inspired two successful feature films and the iconic television series *All Creatures Great and Small*, which achieved international acclaim during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

In good news for fans, those loyal and others new to the show, PBS-TV has just officially renewed doing two more Masterpiece seasons.

**Adapted by Jan Goodwin, award-winning author, journalist and editor of the GOT newsletter**

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## The GOT 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala Fundraiser is September 25<sup>th</sup>!



Please join us on **September 25<sup>th</sup>** as Growing Older Together celebrates **10 wonderful years of connecting seniors, volunteers, and community** at our 10th Anniversary Gala at **The Central House Resort in Beach Lake, PA**. Doors open at **5:30 PM**, with a delicious buffet dinner to follow. Our evening will be hosted by the inimitable **Mr. Greg Triggs**, who promises his trademark wit and entertainment, along with some good-natured improv beginning at **6:15 PM**. And because no celebration is complete without music, **Mr. Bob Lohr** will provide the soundtrack for an evening of fun, friendship, and celebration.

We'll also have a **fantastic silent auction**, featuring an enticing collection of merchandise, special treats, and rich experiences generously donated by area businesses, resorts, and friends of GOT. Whether you're coming to celebrate our first decade, support the work we do, enjoy a wonderful evening out, or simply see what Greg and the gang have up their sleeves, this is one evening you won't want to miss. **Come raise a glass to 10 years of Growing Older Together—and help us celebrate the people who have made the journey possible. It promises to be an evening to remember!**

 **DATE:** Friday, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2026

 **TIME:** 5:30PM – 8:00PM

 **LOCATION:** The Central House Resort, 81 Milanville Road, Beach Lake, PA

 **TICKETS:** \$85 per person – must be purchased by September 18<sup>th</sup>

 **GET TICKETS THREE WAYS**

(1) On-line: <https://myrivertickets.com/events/gots-10th-anniversary-gala-9-25-2026>

(2) Will Call: **Send a check for the total, along with your contact info, to:**

Growing Older Together

830 Main Street, #574

Honesdale, PA 18431

(3) **Send us an email** with your request to **growingoldertogether@gmail.com** and someone will contact you to hand deliver your tickets and collect payment.

Please mark your calendar and celebrate with us! All proceeds go to support GOT's mission of serving seniors throughout the region.

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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, 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.growinggoldertogether.org](http://www.growinggoldertogether.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, The John & Helen Villaume 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 / 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!



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