Hand in Hand...
Linking Lives

GOT– GROWING OLDER TOGETHER

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

Nov/Dec 2026

If you need something, just ask!





A Present of Presence

Many of us invest a great deal of time and effort at the end of the year observing and celebrating the many holidays that cluster in that space. And, of course, that includes gift giving.

I am not a shopper. I never really have been. I like the results of shopping, but not the act itself. The internet has greatly softened my dislike of shopping, since I no longer have to leave home. But the dislike is still there.

That makes gift giving a little more complicated. Yes, there are homemade gifts. I like baking and decorating cookies and giving them away. One year, I canned spiced crabapples from the trees in my yard. The only problem was that the variety of crabapple growing on my trees is miniature, at best. Microscopic is more like it. The color in the jar was lovely, but it was hard to discern what was actually in there. The apples looked more like peppercorns.

I prefer to think of gift giving as a year-round affair. Don't tie it to a single holiday or season. Spread it out. Give something when the impulse strikes. Make it unexpected. And why must it be a "thing"? How about a favor? Doing something nice for someone? Giving someone your time?

A lot of people don't want to ask for anything, including help. I have learned during my time leading Growing Older Together that many prospective members are hesitant to join us because they are uncomfortable asking for help. I understand that. Asking for help can feel like ceding independence or taking a hit to one's pride.

But eventually, many folks do sign up. And they are usually happy they did, particularly when one of our wonderful volunteers shows up to provide a service. What initially felt like accepting help often turns out to be something much more meaningful: a connection with another person.

Perhaps a redefinition of what a "present" really means is in order.

I propose that the present is not what is given, and it is not what is received. The present is the distinct moment in time when the exchange occurs. Two people are there together. They are, quite literally, **present**. And it is their presence in one another's space that becomes the offering. Applying that philosophy to the work we do at GOT, our volunteers are the ultimate gift givers. They give away something extraordinarily personal: their time.

That time can manifest itself in countless ways. It can mean getting a member safely to an important doctor's appointment. It can mean helping with a chore that has become difficult or unsafe. It can mean picking up groceries, fixing a technology problem, tending a garden, or making a simple social call.

And sometimes, the gift is even less tangible.

It is a conversation in the car. A cup of coffee. A laugh. Someone who listens to a story that may have been told before. Someone who notices that the person they came to help seems a little quieter than usual. Someone who shows up—and, for that moment, makes sure another person isn't facing the world alone.

We often talk about what our volunteers *do* for our members. But perhaps an even better way to describe it is what they *give*: their attention, their time, their companionship and, most importantly, their presence.

That is a gift that cannot be ordered online, wrapped in paper or tied with a bow. And unlike most holiday presents, it doesn't have to wait for Christmas.

Sometimes the most meaningful present we can give another person is simply this:

I. Am. Here.

Thomas Cambridge is Executive Director of Growing Older Together

* * *

Sounds of Winter

So often, we hear winter described as the “quiet” season. In some ways, it is. Fairgrounds are empty and still, outdoor farmers’ markets are shuttered, and the noisy neighborhood kids are indoors more often, rather than making a racket in the street.

But winter days are not silent.

We might wake to the ticking of sleet pellets on our windows, but the low, rhythmic, rumbling of the snow plow announces that all’s well after the night’s storm and the world is open to us again. If the driver is close enough, we’ll hear the sleighbell-toned jingling of their tire chains.



If we venture out for an early morning walk in the woods or the park, we may hear bare, ice-coated branches clacking together in the breeze, which also rustles through the oaks that hold onto their brown leaves until spring. Light snow crunches when we step but thick, wet snow squidges under our boots and collapses into slush at the bottom of our footprints.

The Song Sparrows, Eastern Bluebirds, Grackles, Red-winged Blackbirds and Gray Catbirds have flown south for the season but other birds hang around, and, if we walk softly, they’ll cheer us with their calls. There’s the Black-Capped Chickadee’s “chick a dee dee dee” and its sweet “fee bee” whistle. The tufted Titmouse cries, “Peter, peter, peter.” The call of the White-Breasted Nuthatch is nasal “yank yank yank,” sounding like a little toy horn being squeezed repeatedly. The Cardinal’s “cheerily, cheer up, cheer up,” is the opposite of the plaintive, sorrowful “hoo OO oo, oo, oo,” of the mourning dove. Last night’s coating of ice on the puddles crackles when we blunder into them while scanning the branches for the owners of these reliable winter voices.

Later in the morning, as the sun climbs, we might be welcomed home by the regular tapping of water drops on porch railings or metal gutters as the icicles melt. We stamp the snow off of our boots before entering the house—and we always know that a family member has returned or a visitor has arrived when we hear that same distinct sound.

Maybe we’ll hear a late-rising neighbor scraping the sidewalk with their shovel, and the shushing of tires moving through salty slush while we wait for the teapot to whistle or the coffeemaker to gurgle out the last of the brew. Later in the day, we can check on the soup or stew bubbling away on the stove and might light a fire in the hearth as the sun dips low and the chill of evening advances. Its soft crackling and the sharp pops of burning wood warm our souls as well as our toes.

Wrapping paper rustles as we dress up holiday gifts. Christmas carols that we love—and some that we love to hate—are everywhere. Television brings us the cackle of the Grinch, the roar of the Abominable Snowman and the jolly chuckle of Santa Claus. Hanukkah has its own joyful soundtrack—the soft, melodic chanting of blessings, dreidels clattering across tabletops, the faint sizzle when a candle wick first catches fire and familiar songs like *Ma’oz Tzur* or *Hanukkah, Oh Hanukkah* drifting through the house.

Winter nights do live up to the “quiet” description, especially when a blanket of snow absorbs sound, making the whole neighborhood feel muffled. The distant whistle of a train horn carries farther in the sharp, cold air and somehow sounds more melancholy.

Old floorboards speak to us in the cold weather, creaking as we head to bed. As we drift off to sleep, electric baseboards tick-tick-tick or the boiler rumbles to life and soon the steam radiators hiss, then sing their comforting song of warmth.

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

*** * ***

Enough is a Feast – Thoughts of Thanksgiving Reimagined

Remember that lilting children's song "Over the river and through the woods. . ."? I would bet that you are finishing the opening line in your head right now! This year Thanksgiving is November 26, the closest it has been for a while to the December holidays. The next day is the retail extravaganza, Black Friday, which is about as oppositional to the underlying meaning of Thanksgiving as you can imagine!

The "to grandmother's house we go" ending of the song may be a relic of our past. Hosting of Thanksgiving dinner, however traditional and unmovable as it once seemed, with and for your family, is unlikely for many of us. Travel may be difficult and costly, especially as the years pass. Far more telling is how spread out family members are likely to be, geographically distant with busy schedules to handle. It just does not seem practical as we head toward the bigger holiday celebrations.



For many, the solution over the last decade has been Friendsgivings, organized in every imaginable way as "moveable feasts." Hosts can, and do, shift over the years to accommodate the changing lives and lifestyles of so many Americans these days.

But what if you aren't part of either one? A traditional all-family member celebration or an untraditional one, changing every year's gathering and its location? I long ago accepted that a traditional family Thanksgiving with my own family was not in the cards for me. Over the years since, I have seen the day change in ways I might not have anticipated the year before. As we grow older each year around the third Thursday of November, there may be fewer opportunities to celebrate Thanksgiving either way.

Maybe in the past you have been invited to join another family. You may not be eager to do that or health or mobility issues may not allow it. But I believe most of us want to honor the idea of Thanksgiving and all it may mean to each of us individually.

For many people, especially seniors and others without family nearby, it becomes a time where loneliness and solitude can take over. The number of seniors confronted with a solo thanksgiving is surely growing.

I believe that being positive and creative about making this single day of the year one to enjoy. You can begin a new solo tradition for yourself. It can be any number of things: a different meal you prepare yourself, of assorted foods you enjoy. If you are not interested in cooking a meal yourself, you can take advantage of a holiday package at a local restaurant or delicatessen. I have one near me that starts advertising theirs shortly after, or even before, Halloween. Try to think about other solo seniors. You can invite one to join you or suggest eating together locally. It does not have to be dinner. Try breakfast. Not everyone wants turkey.

Take a leisurely car ride along a different route in your neighborhood, noticing new sights--a garden, an unusual home, trees and anything you haven't realized was nearby. Perhaps you have a friend who you know is on their own whom you can approach earlier to suggest that you do it together.

Every local charity or church needs volunteers for the Thanksgiving meals they serve the community. Consider trying it this year. It will be appreciated, not just by the charity itself, but by you.

Trust me!

Most of all, honor your feelings. Allow yourself to be sad or lonely but then like Wendy in *Peter Pan*, to think lovely thoughts of any kind--times past, people you may love and lost over the year.

Then, pick up the phone and reach out. Call loved ones or friends or neighbors you know are also alone. Write an email or a note you can mail the next day. Be grateful for whatever blessings you have.

No doubt it is a hard day for many. It is a singularly American holiday that many of us may have mixed feelings about, but it is all about gratitude and finding some grace in this tumultuous life, especially as we age.

"Enough is a feast" is a traditional Buddhist saying about Thanksgiving. In a few words, it says volumes.

Shirley Longshore is an editor and writer

*** * ***

A Jewish Santa in Lapland

When Bob Corwin was finishing his role as Mr. Bennett in *Pride and Prejudice* in the UK, he could not have guessed what and where his next thespian role would be. No Jane Austen here. For much of November and December that year, Corwin was in the Arctic, portraying the closest thing to a real Santa Claus in Ruka, Lapland, 20 miles south of the Russian border. It came about after he overheard a phone call from the daughter of a friend who was a Santa elf and learned they needed a Santa as well. And so the Jewish thespian whose home is in Somerset, England, decided to give it a go.

“Daylight starts there at that time of year at 11 a.m. and disappears at 2 p.m.,” says Bob who has been Santa in Lapland for those two months for the past four years. “Being on the Arctic circle, you have a very peculiar light. There is an absence of color. It is monochromatic, just various shades of gray and white.” Except of course when the brilliant Northern Lights occur during the aurora season.

In November and December, if it is not snowing, they happen 10 to 15 times a month.

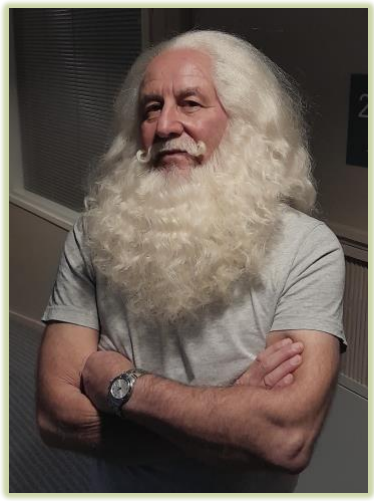
In Ruka, the Aurora Borealis as it is also called, occurs on average every second clear night, usually peaking between 9:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m. At that time, the lights are mostly green or greenish-white, although stronger geomagnetic activity can also produce shades of purple, violet, pink, and red.

“It is a very dry cold, some 5 to 15 Fahrenheit below freezing all the time,” says Bob.

Lapland covers the northern parts of Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Russia, and Ruka is in Finland, a country of 10,000 lakes, all of which are frozen solid, and the countryside is covered in snow. “People are in Michelin-man type padded suits. And every vehicle has studded tires.



Bob’s normal face



His appearance with a Santa beard



In full Santa costume

“I share a marvelous log cabin with another Santa. We have our own individual sauna. In Finland everyone has their own sauna. We did sit outside just once, naked as the Finns do, although we only stayed on the ice for two minutes. Hard core people plunge into the lake.”

For children getting to meet Santa in Lapland, their experiences are so much fuller than lining up to speak to one for a minute in an American shopping mall or department store. They feel the rush of speeding through a pristine Arctic forest on a fast-paced husky sled, guided by expert mushers. They drift gently through snow-covered forest on a romantic reindeer-drawn sleigh. They will even meet Santa’s elves.

“We had one nine-year-old girl who hadn’t been able to speak after suffering brain trauma from an awful car accident when she was five. Doctors couldn’t help her,” says Bob. “I discovered this when I asked what would she like for Christmas? She couldn’t respond and her mother started sobbing: ‘My baby, my baby!’ But then, suddenly after four years of total silence, the child spoke. We were all stunned. She said she wanted an Oasis album by the English rock band, which has sold over over 100 million records worldwide. It was the first time that little girl had spoken in four years. In this job we see miracles. It’s about as real as it can be. It is an honor, a privilege to do it.”

But Bob says this year will probably be his last. His wife Lynda, a former Vogue model, has Parkinson’s and her health is becoming a little worse. “She was diagnosed 20 years ago when we were living in Singapore. Apparently, she is unlikely to develop dementia as some 80% of Parkinson’s patients do, but her tremors are increasing.”

Bob also had his first book published this year *The Priest and the Pigeon*, available on Amazon, an unusual look at science, a field in which he has always been interested. Will he write a book on being a Jewish Santa? He laughed, “Probably not a whole book. More likely it will be a case history or a character in a novel one day.

“Right now, I’m doing volunteer work in London for the *Campaign Against Antisemitism*, an organization that is more than 10 years old. I hope to do public speaking for them. There are only 315,000 Jews in the UK, I’m used to public speaking as a thespian. A lot of people don’t understand what Antisemitism is.”

Jan Goodwin is an award-winning journalist and author and editor of the GOT newsletter.

*** * ***

A Moving Story

On October 18, 2025, I found myself in my car with a carful of last-minute boxes and bundles, my oldest son and co-driver, John, and my cat, Peanut. We were on our way to Livingston, Montana, my new home. Four days later we arrived on the doorstep of my youngest son, Ted, his wife, Amy, and their 2-year-old daughter, Rocky. I took a big breath of fresh Montana air.

This wasn’t the first time I had put down new roots. Because of my dad’s job, I was the new kid in school in just about every state in the Midwest. But when I moved to Honesdale, Pennsylvania, to work at *Highlights Magazine*, it felt as if I were finally home--even more so when I moved to an old farmhouse on a little piece of land in Milanville with apple trees and room for a sunny garden and chickens. I could feel my roots start to grow.



But 37 years later, the house and I were feeling our age. It wasn’t as easy to carry water to the chickens on a winter morning, or to keep the groundhogs out of the garden. When the roof began to leak, I heard the message: this is only going to get more expensive.

At the same time, my wonderful 2-year-old granddaughter, Rocky, was growing up in Montana and I was going to miss the whole thing, except for pictures on my phone. When I got an offer for my house from someone who knew all its problems and still loved it, I made up my mind. I would move to Livingston and make a new life.



I need to insert here that your adult children aren't necessarily going to jump for joy to find you on their doorstep. When Ted and Amy bought a house with a "mother-in-law" apartment, pre-Rocky, they had invited me to move in. The extra rent would be welcome. I didn't realize that having a baby had changed everything. There were more bills to pay and my son wasn't getting as much work as he used to. My daughter-in-law went back to work and needed the extra apartment as an office. Rocky took up most of their time. The last thing they needed was another person to care for in their crowded, busy lives.

On the other hand, I wasn't looking for hovering. I wasn't decrepit. And when I thought about it, the MIL apartment was really too small for me. We talked it over and reached an understanding. I began apartment hunting online. We discussed our boundaries. And it has worked out better than I could have imagined.



Livingston is a small town surrounded by breath-taking mountain peaks and 50 minutes from Yellowstone National Park. It is laid back, friendly, and full of community spirit: there are interesting free workshops through the Senior Center, free public lectures by visiting authors, free open-air concerts at which everyone from grandparents to toddlers dances to the music of a bluegrass band. Volunteer opportunities abound. I have signed up to teach a workshop in tatting (because I don't want to be the only tatter in town) and I help keep the flower gardens at the library weeded. The more I do, the more friends I make.



I found a comfortable apartment in a perfect location: across the street from the library and the post office, a half-block from the movie theater, a five-minute walk from just about anything I need, a ten-minute walk to Sacajawea Park, where I can stroll along the Yellowstone River, and a fifteen-minute walk to visit Amy, Ted, and Rocky. Snuggling with a book and a two-year-old still damp from a bath is pretty great.

Do I miss my little farm and my dear friends and family in Pennsylvania? Of course I do. That's why we have phones--to keep in touch and share photos. Would I do all this again? You bet I would.

Marileta Robinson has written several articles for the GOT newsletter

* * *

The Elderly are Living Witnesses

We are often called “the elderly,” but that quiet label hides a truth most people rarely pause to consider. We are the last living witnesses of a world that no longer exists.

If you look closely, you might notice gray hair, slower steps, or the quiet patience that time alone can teach. But if you truly listen to our stories, you will discover something far more extraordinary. We are not simply older people moving through the final chapters of life. We are the survivors of one of the most breathtaking transformations in human history — a generation that walked from the slow, deliberate rhythm of an analog world into the dizzying speed of a digital one, without ever losing our sense of humanity along the way.



Our journey began in a very different world. Many of us were born in the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s, when the scars of World War II were still fresh across Europe and Asia. The world was slowly learning how to hope again. Cities rose from rubble. Families rebuilt lives after years of uncertainty. Childhood unfolded in ways that would feel almost unrecognizable to younger generations today. Our toys were simple: marbles played in dusty yards, hopscotch drawn on cracked sidewalks, checkers and cards gathered around kitchen tables while the smell of dinner filled the house.

There were no smartphones, no streaming videos, no endless scroll of digital distractions. We built our memories in the real world — with scraped knees, laughter echoing down neighborhood streets, and friendships that formed face to face, without the mediation of screens.

Education looked different too. Our notebooks were filled with handwritten notes carefully copied from chalkboards. Research required patience, long hours in libraries, and stacks of heavy books rather than a quick internet search. Mistakes were corrected with erasers and ink, not with the click of a delete button.

We are the only generation to have experienced an entirely analog childhood and a fully digital adulthood. We remember waiting days — or sometimes weeks — for handwritten letters to arrive in the mail. Communication required patience and anticipation. Today, we can instantly see the face of a loved one across the ocean on a screen small enough to fit in a pocket.

The world changed in ways few could have imagined. Machines that once filled entire rooms now exist on devices lighter than a paperback book. We moved from punch cards and mechanical tools to artificial intelligence and global networks connecting billions of people. And through every shift, we adapted.

Our bodies carry the marks of the times we lived through as well. We grew up during fears of polio and tuberculosis, illnesses that once terrified entire communities before vaccines helped bring them under control. We witnessed the global challenges of pandemics and health crises across decades, including the silence and uncertainty of COVID-19, which reminded the world that resilience is still required in every generation.

Science itself transformed before our eyes. We saw the discovery of the structure of DNA in 1953, the decoding of the human genome at the turn of the century, and the early steps into gene therapy and advanced medicine. Transportation evolved from bicycles and steam engines to electric cars gliding almost silently through city streets.

Few generations have witnessed such sweeping change. Our memories stretch across decades. We have celebrated births, mourned losses, watched friends depart. Those of us who remain share something rare: the experience of standing at the crossroads of history, holding memories from a world that younger generations know only through photographs and stories.

We are living bridges. Our perspective reminds the modern world that progress does not have to erase wisdom. The speed of technology does not have to replace patience, kindness, or reflection. We remember what life felt like before everything moved so fast — and that memory carries quiet lessons worth sharing.

What a life we have lived. What a remarkable story we continue to carry. And if you belong to this generation, take a moment today to look in the mirror and recognize something powerful. You are not simply growing older. You are living history. You are part of a generation that will always remain one of a kind.

Author Anonymous

*** * ***

GOT Welcomes Two New Silver Level Corporate Sponsors

We simply could not fulfill our mission without the generous support of area businesses that believe in the work we do. We are delighted to welcome **Strait Line Roofing** and **Northern Currents Real Estate** as two of GOT's newest Silver-Level Corporate Sponsors.

Strait Line Roofing has been serving our region for more than 30 years and, like GOT, was recognized this past year by readers of *The River Reporter* as a "Best Of" local organization.

Northern Currents Real Estate is a newly opened brokerage in Narrowsburg, NY, operated by longtime area real estate broker **Cathleen Breen**.

We are grateful to both businesses for investing in our mission and in the older adults we serve. Please join us in giving a warm GOT welcome to **Strait Line Roofing and Northern Currents Real Estate** and thanking them for becoming part of our Corporate Sponsorship family!

*** * ***

A Wonderful Way to Celebrate 10 Years!



What a night! On September 25th, a room full of GOT fans, friends, volunteers, members, and supporters gathered at The Central House Resort to celebrate ten years of Growing Older Together—and what a celebration it was! From the hilarious improv antics of Greg Triggs to heartfelt remarks from our founders and current leaders, the evening was filled with laughter, memories, and gratitude.

Add in an excellent dinner, a terrific silent auction, and the incredible generosity of everyone in the room, and we had all the ingredients for a truly memorable evening. Most importantly, the gala raised significant funds to help GOT continue providing the services, connections, and sense of community that help our neighbors age independently and with dignity. Ten years down, and we're just getting started. **Here's to the next ten years of Growing Older Together!**

* * *

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, The John & Helen Villaume 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
Barry Becker / Keller Williams Realty HVU
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
Strait Line Roofing
Northern Currents Real Estate, Cathleen Breen, Broker
Sweetwater Guide Service
Foster Supply Hospitality
John H. Eschenberg, Inc.

BRONZE

Spencer Printing
Delaware Valley Farm & Garden
Stephens Pharmacy
Jeff Bank
Wayne Bank
Settlers Hospitality
Narrowsburg Proper To Go
The River Gallery / The Art of Living

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