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Inside Aging

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of the Pennsylvania Department of Aging

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Focus On *Aging News*

Community Conversation: How the Commonwealth is Working to Reshape the Way We Think and Talk about Senior Community Centers







The panel, moderated by Hannah Albers, director of program development, National Center to Reframe Aging, included Aging Secretary Jason Kavulich; Patricia D'Antonio, executive director,

National Center to Reframe Aging; Renee Cunningham, president, PA Association of Senior Centers and executive director, Center in the Park; project advisory committee member Jeff Miller.

The conversation highlighted lessons learned throughout the project and answered questions from a packed room of engaged older adults.

Senior community centers provide regular opportunities for connection, activity, and access to resources that are key to healthy aging. However, research from the "Reframing Communications About Senior Community Centers in Pennsylvania" project reports that they are often underrecognized for what they are: vibrant community centers that older adults can use to stay active and independent.

One of the priorities of Aging Our Way, PA, Pennsylvania's strategic plan launched by the Shapiro Administration, is to strengthen awareness, engagement and investment in our 400+ senior community centers. Secretary Kavulich led a panel of national and community experts to discuss the project's recommendations and practical "how-to" guidance for applying these approaches in senior centers across Pennsylvania.

Center in the Park in Philadelphia hosted a Community Conversation centered on how the Commonwealth is working to reshape the way Pennsylvanians think and talk about SCCs.

"Senior community centers have a huge role to play in the future of aging in Pennsylvania, which is why we forged a national partnership to explore how we can best support them," said Secretary Kavulich. "Senior community centers are vibrant social hubs where active older adults find what we all need at every age – friendship, activities, support and a sense of belonging."

The project produced recommendations and practical "how-to" guidance for applying these approaches in senior centers across Pennsylvania.

More on Reframing Communication About Senior Community Centers

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Shapiro Administration Pilots Evidence-Based Program in Berks, Chester, Lawrence, and Lehigh Counties to Lower Number of Fatal Overdoses Among PA's Older Adults





As the older adult population in Pennsylvania continues to grow, so does the incidence of substance use challenges and overdose. In 2024, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Health's most recent data, nearly 600 Pennsylvanians aged 55 and older died from an overdose – accounting for 18 percent of all overdoses – in Pennsylvania that year.

In June, PDA joined Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP) in Lawrence County to announce the launch of the Wellness Initiative for Senior Education (WISE), a national evidence-based substance use prevention and wellness program that addresses the risks specific to older adults related to substance use.

The program will pilot with area agencies on aging (AAA) in four counties throughout 2026: Berks, Chester, Lawrence, and Lehigh counties. During this pilot period, more than 100 older adults are expected to attend WISE sessions in their respective county.

"During the development *of Aging Our Way, PA,* Pennsylvania's 10-year strategic plan for aging, we heard directly from older adults, caregivers, and direct care workers about an issue that doesn't get talked about: behavioral health and substance use challenges among older adults. We heard clearly

from older adults that they need more accessible prevention, education, and community-based supports tailored to their unique needs," said PDA Secretary Jason Kavulich. "Thanks to our partnership with Secretary Davis-Jones and the team at DDAP, our WISE pilot is a model for how Pennsylvania can lead in supporting healthy, safe, and connected aging."

"Lawrence County has historically had one of the highest overdose rates in Pennsylvania, and we are seeing this concern increase among older adults," said Lawrence County Area Agency on Aging Administrator Amy Cervone. "WISE helps older adults better understand how the body changes with age and how prescription and non-prescription medications can affect health, safety, and overall well-being. Many older adults in our community have questions about medication impacts and side effects. Through this program, participants will gain practical tools to make positive life choices and feel more in control of their lives."

PDA thanks Challenges: Options In Aging (Lawrence County Area Agency on Aging) for hosting this event and all of older adults and local leaders for their participation.

Learn More about the Wellness Initiative for Senior Education

The Foster Grandparent Program of Central PA Celebrates 60 Years with Flower Power









The Foster Grandparent Program of Central PA marked its 60th anniversary with a 60’s theme at their annual recognition event, honoring volunteers for their years of service, recruitment efforts, and those who have logged 1,500 hours or more!

Secretary Kavulich and the PDA team were honored to join in celebrating the time, love, guidance and wisdom these older adults share with younger generations through this amazing program.

PDA and Partners Mark World Elder Abuse Awareness Day with Live Events and Learning Opportunities

PDA and state and community partners observed June 15 – World Elder Abuse Awareness Day – with multiple events and conversations to promote a better understanding of the abuse, neglect, and exploitation experienced by older adults and to encourage communities to take action to protect older individuals' rights and well-being.

On the Air: Aging Together – Justice for All



PDA played a key role in a statewide broadcast centered on protecting older Pennsylvanians from the growing crime of financial exploitation and preventing other forms of elder abuse. *Aging Together — Justice for All* aired statewide on PBS stations June 15, and featured a conversation connecting policymakers, advocates and older adults to discuss ways to strengthen the systems and community networks that keep older adults safe.

Sponsored by AARP Pennsylvania and the Moses Taylor Foundation and produced by WVIA-TV, the program led off with a special message from Governor Josh Shapiro and featured a four-member panel moderated by WVIA anchor Julie Sidoni with a live studio audience. This panel included Secretary of Aging Jason Kavulich and leadership from the AARP, Office of Attorney General and Office of Elder Justice in the Courts.

- View the program on-demand.
- Learn more about PDA's partnership with public broadcasting.

Online: Office of Elder Justice in the Courts Panel



PDA joined the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts' (AOPC) Office of Elder Justice in the Courts (OEJC) for a recorded panel discussion featuring experts affiliated with Pennsylvania's Advisory Council on Elder Justice in the Courts. The video, "Elder Abuse: Financial Exploitation and How Pennsylvanians Can Stay Safe," launched on OEJC's website in recognition of WEAAD.

In addition to PDA, panelists and speakers represent AARP Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General, the Pennsylvania Department of Banking and Securities, the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas, SeniorLAW Center, and the OEJC/AOPC. The video informs the public about scams and financial exploitation, including what to look for, how to avoid, how to respond if victimized, where and how to report, and more.

In Chester County with SeniorLAW Center





Participants included Karen Buck, Esq., executive director, SeniorLAW Center; Kelly Miehl, deputy director, Chester County Department of Aging Services; Roseanne Milanes, Esq., director of guardianship, grandfamilies, and victim services, SeniorLAW Center; Susan Nolen, Esq., supervising attorney, guardianship, grandfamilies and victim services, SeniorLAW Center; Elizabeth A. Schneider, Esq., chief deputy attorney general, Elder Exploitation Section; and Christine Zaccarelli, Esq., chief executive officer, Crime Victims' Center of Chester County

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In Chester County, Secretary Jason Kavulich served as keynote speaker for “A Conversation in Recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day," presented by SeniorLAW Center. In his remarks, Secretary Kavulich highlighted Pennsylvania’s investments to modernize and improve protections for older adults.

The event provided older adults with practical information on support, safety, and care resources available in Chester County and across Pennsylvania; highlighted statewide and local efforts to prevent elder abuse and prosecute exploitation; and connected attendees to community resources through vendor tables and take-home materials.

Around PA: Clearfield, Lackawanna, Somerset

PDA Aging Services Regional Representatives Dana Ehrhart, Nicole White ad Jamey Wise participated in WEAAD events in Lackawanna, Clearfield and Chester counties, respectively. In Somerset County, PDA Aging Services Regional Representative Cody Inman attended an Elder Justice Seminar and moderated a table discussion with local leaders and advocates.

PDA Travels Northwest PA to Launch Programs, Build Partnerships and Listen



PDA recently traveled across northwestern Pennsylvania, meeting with the dedicated professionals, volunteers, local leaders, and community partners who work every day to improve the lives of older Pennsylvanians. Our team had the opportunity to:

- Meet with Greater Erie Community Action Committee (GECAC) leadership and their team members to hear their feedback on what is working and their ideas on what can be done differently; listening to the care managers in the field and talking to them about their ideas, experiences and what they truly need to keep serving old adults.

- Visit with the Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine (LECOM) for a warm welcome from Dr. Lin, faculty, and staff. The campus tour showcased LECOM's nationally recognized commitment to educating the next generation of healthcare professionals and preparing the workforce equipped to meet the complex needs of Pennsylvania's growing older adult population while advancing person-centered, compassionate care.

- Join the Erie Community Foundation for a thoughtful conversation on innovative philanthropy ideas and community collaborations. We talked about the importance of strong local partnerships in supporting older adults and advancing creative solutions to respond to the needs of residents.
- Visit the John F. Kennedy Senior Center, where we celebrated their $106,275 Senior Center Grant, which will help modernize the facility and ensure it remains a safe and vibrant place for older adults for years to come.
- Meet with the Forest County Commissioners to discuss how we can continue strengthening services and supports for older adults through collaboration.
- Launch the Wellness Initiative for Senior Education (WISE) alongside Dr. Latika Davis-Jones, Secretary of the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs, in Lawrence County. This evidence-based pilot program will help older adults better understand medication, safety, healthy aging, stress management, and substance use prevention, while reducing stigma and strengthening community wellness.
- Visit Union-Snyder Area Agency on Aging to congratulate and celebrate the retirement of an outstanding leader in the Pennsylvania Aging Network as Holly Kyle prepares for the next journey after nearly four decades of selfless service.


MARJORIE SULLIVAN
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT
EMILY GRANDE
MARKETING COORDINATOR



One of the great reminders of this trip is that aging services are about people, not programs. Every conversation, every partnership, and every visit reaffirmed that meaningful progress happens when we listen to our communities and work together toward shared goals. Thank you to everyone who welcomed our team.

Celebrating Independence and Community Connection


leinlife



As we celebrated America's 250th Anniversary, PDA was honored to join the community at KleinLife in Philadelphia for their Independence Day Community Celebration.

Thank you to executive director Andre Krug and the entire team for the warm welcome and opportunity to tour their incredible campus, learn about the intergenerational programs and services they provide, and spend time with the dedicated team. KleinLife exemplifies the power of community by creating a place where older adults, families, and young people can connect, thrive, and build lasting relationships.





Update on *Legislation*

Legislation

SB 738 (Gebhard) – Addressing Financial Exploitation in the Older Adult Protective Services Act (OAPSA)

- Voted, as amended, out of the Senate Banking and Insurance Committee.
- Received first consideration in the Senate on June 30, 2026.

Committee Action: House

The House Aging and Older Adult Services Committee convened on June 16, 2026, to hold a joint informational meeting with the House Human Services Committee on In Lieu of Services. Testifiers included:

- The Department of Human Services
- PA Health and Wellness
- UPMC
- Pennsylvania Assisted Living Association (PALA)

Pennsylvania Department of Aging

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