THE 50+ Connection
NEWS & EVENTS
Howard County Office on Aging and Independence
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Eating with Others Connects Nutrition and Socialization

For older adults, coming together over a meal can also provide meaningful ways to connect with others. "Our connection to food is deeply personal," says Danielle Clifford-Earles, Nutrition Program Manager for the Office on Aging and Independence (OAI). "It's how we celebrate, how we mourn, how we nurture; it is the core of our communities." OAI has three main objectives for its Nutrition program:

- **Increase access to healthy and nutritious foods…** through ***Let's Do Lunch!*** at 50+ centers; Home Delivered and Medically Tailored Meals; and the Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.
- **Boost nutrition and food literacy…** through cooking demonstrations, nutrition counseling, and education.
- **Bring people together…** over lunch at 50+ centers, volunteering to deliver meals, or learning about heathy eating habits.

Pictured below, OAI's nutrition specialists are the heart and soul of what we do. Let's get to know them!



Pictured, from left: Irma Iribe, Jodi Bargamian, Natasha Taylor, Alex Rhine, Endurance Poku-Maboah, Danielle Clifford-Earles.

Natasha Taylor – East Columbia 50+ Center

Natasha joined OAI staff in October 2025. "My degree is in Business, but I have always worked in healthcare, and interacting with older adults has been a big part of my experience." Through her work with the congregate meal program, Natasha will help ensure meals are both nutritious and responsive to the diverse needs of older adults to support their independence, promote social interactions and healthy living.

Endurance Poku-Maboah – Bain 50+ Center

Endurance is committed to addressing the impact of food insecurity on underserved populations, including older adults. "OAI's nutrition education programs, like Tasty Tidbits, provide practical tips to plan healthy meals using the My Plate food guide," she says. Endurance balances the challenges of an increasing demand for Bain's congregate lunch program with limited funding. "We rely on community donations to offer additional events for older adults like the monthly birthday bash."

Alex Rhine – Elkridge and Glenwood 50+ Centers

"My first job at a family-owned restaurant in Howard County fueled my passion for food and how it connects people," says Alex Rhine. "Being in this service role connects me to the people I see every day. Sometimes just sitting and talking with someone is what matters the most."

From the desk of Calvin Ball, Howard County Executive



In Howard County, households led by residents 65 and older make up more than 16% of our population, according to the most recent Census Data. This number is only expected to rise. Our Commission on Aging (COA) is a 15-member volunteer board that advises me and my office, as well as our Office on Aging and Independence on matters related to Howard County's vital and growing older adult population. Together, we help promote successful aging for older adults in Howard County.

Recently, the AARP Network of Age Friendly States and Communities approved Howard County's Age-Friendly Action Plan 2025-2029. Since the launch of our Age-Friendly initiative in 2019, we opened our state-of-the-art East Columbia 50+ Center. We also initiated the first Housing Opportunities Trust Fund to increase equitable housing options for older residents. Additionally, we implemented a 24/7 caregiver resource via the online portal Trualta, where caregivers can learn how to best care for themselves while caring for loved ones.

Commission meetings are held either in-person at DCRS' Main Offices at 9830 Patuxent Woods Dr., or virtually, on the fourth Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m. For more information on our COA, please visit www.howardcountymd.gov/coa.

Current Commission members represent a variety of age and ethnic groups, have diverse professional backgrounds, and live in different geographical areas of the county, I'm confident these 15 members will continue to inspire a community where older adults are empowered to live with dignity, confidence, and independence.

Jodi Bargamian – Ellicott City 50+ Center

Jodi has worked for OAI since 2008 in a number of roles, raising her awareness of the needs and concerns of older adults. "Some face financial challenges and others are looking for social interaction. Congregate lunches provide a safe and engaging environment for participants," she says. "For some of our members, this is their only hot meal of the day and being a donation-based program helps offset living expenses."

Irma Iribe – North Laurel 50+ Center

With 10+ years of experience, Irma is passionate about culturally responsive nutrition programs. "I like being able to offer nutritious meals to older adults that support their health and well-being. Also, I love learning from them," she says. "It can be challenging to motivate members to make healthier food choices, but I tell them that it's never too late to be the best version of yourself!"

Learn more about OAI's Nutrition Programs at www.howardcountymd.gov/Nutrition.

March Events at Howard County 50+ Centers

History Alive: Elizabeth Cady Stanton

Bain 50+ Center

March 6, 11 a.m. – noon • A01641.600

March is Women's History Month. Join us for lunch and learn to explore the life and work of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, an American writer, activist and champion of the Women's Rights Movement. Free program; lunch is by donation (sign up at the Front Desk).

Understanding Kidney Disease

Bain 50+ Center

March 11, 11 a.m. – noon • A01496.600

Dr. Ritu R. Vyas shares essential facts about kidney health, how it develops, common risk factors, early warning signs, and practical steps to protect your kidneys. Empower yourself to take charge of your kidney health and make informed lifestyle choices.

Eating Healthy on a Budget

Ellicott City 50+ Fitness Center

March 12, noon – 1 p.m. • A02100.601

Are higher grocery prices taking a toll on your wallet? Join Certified Nutritionist and Fitness Coordinator, Sherri Lively, to learn how to navigate the grocery store and your kitchen to get the most bang for your buck when it comes to healthy eating.

Medicare Fraud Busters Bingo

East Columbia 50+ Center • March 11, 1 – 2 p.m. • A04690.600

Glenwood 50+ Center • March 19, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. • A20636.636

The State Health Insurance Program (SHIP) presents SMP Medicare Fraud Bingo! Learn how to spot and prevent Medicare fraud while playing for prizes, enjoying snacks and having fun. Contact SHIP at 410-313-7392 for more information.

Grand Day Out: The Pirate Queen

Ellicott City 50+ Center

March 20, 10 – 11:30 a.m. • A02744.600

Actress and Historian Mary Ann Jung portrays Captain Grace O'Malley of Ireland who commanded an entire fleet of ships and faced down Queen Elizabeth I of England! Learn about all types of ships, how to climb the rigging, explore 16th century history and more. Come dressed as a pirate if you like! Program intended for children aged 6-12 and grandparent or special adult. Cost: $5/person

Howard County
Office on Aging and Independence

9830 Patuxent Woods Drive, Columbia, MD 21046
410-313-6410 (VOICE/RELAY) • www.howardcountymd.gov/aging

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Transit 101: Get There with Confidence

North Laurel 50+ Center

March 26, 1 – 3:30 p.m. • A06655.601

Explore transportation options in Howard County with the Regional Transit Authority (RTA), the Office on Transportation and preview Age-Friendly transportation plans. Tour a bus, discover car-free travel alternatives and connect with experts at resource tables. Light refreshments served.

Wisdom for Your Golden Years

North Laurel 50+ Center

March 27, 10 a.m. – noon • A06612.601

Join us to learn about downsizing and decluttering, senior housing options, real estate resources, financial planning, home care, long-term care insurance, innovative support tools like robotic pets for memory care, and more. Light refreshments served.

Age Wisely with Maryland Access Point (MAP): Explore Howard County Tax Credits

Glenwood 50+ Center • March 12, 10 – 11 a.m. • A03620.602

Elkridge 50+ Center • March 24, 10 – 11 a.m. • A05660.600

East Columbia 50+ Center • March 25, 1 – 2 p.m. • A44608.602



Older adults will gain a better understanding of the various tax credits available to them, from those that reduce property taxes to those that support home modifications. Whether you are looking for financial relief during retirement, ways to reduce housing costs, or help with home accessibility, this program provides clear guidance on the credits and incentives for which you may be eligible. Review the Howard County Aging in Place Credit, Senior Tax Credit and Livable Homes Tax Credit; the Maryland Property Tax Credit, Renter's Tax Credit and Homestead Credit.

