

THE 50+ Connection

NEWS and EVENTS from the
Howard County Office on Aging and Independence

A Publication of the Department of Community Resources and Services

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Celebrating Occupational Therapy Month

Occupational Therapy is a health care profession which helps people across their lifespan participate in the things they want and need to do through the therapeutic use of everyday activities, or occupations (AOTA.org). For more than 30 years, occupational therapists (OTs) and certified occupational therapy assistants (COTAs) throughout the Office on Aging and Independence (OAI) have supported healthy aging for Howard County residents, with a client-centered approach to care. Available services include home modifications; caregiver education and training; durable medical equipment; and a structured, four-hour social day program.

OAI's Community Living Program (CLP) provides Howard County residents with resources and referrals to service providers for home modifications as well as home safety assessments and assistive devices so they can continue living in the community. Carly Shilling, an OT with the CLP, explains that the process begins by taking a close look at the individual, their environment, and their occupations, and results in a multi-faceted approach to enhance safety and quality of life.

Shilling shared the recent experience of Kathryn, a 70-year-old caregiver who was struggling to assist her loved one with bathing. "The task not only felt overwhelming, it put both of them at risk for injury," Shilling said. "Our recommendations included installing grab bars, a shower seat and a hand-held shower, which gave Kathryn and her loved one the confidence they needed to feel safe."

Promoting safety and independence when engaging in daily occupations is an essential part of the aging in place process. "Older adults who are experiencing a decline in function may benefit from intervention and training to create a safer and more functional environment," said CLP's Andrea Bryant. Training future OTs is also important; in addition to the CLP, OAI's Connections Social Day Program, Supportive Services for Older Adults Program, and the Loan Closet have all been fieldwork sites for occupational therapy students from CCBC, Towson University, Thomas Jefferson and Ithaca Colleges.

Loan Closet Manager Mary Becker often tells students that occupational therapy encompasses much more than just providing a piece of equipment. "As an OT, my goal is to empower individuals to embrace their changing needs so they can live their life each day doing what is most important to them. Problem solving is the hallmark of our profession," says Becker. That's why the Loan Closet not only accepts and refurbishes donated durable medical equipment, it connects an individual's need to appropriate adaptive equipment, provides instruction as to its use, and makes referrals to other resources in the community.

"When an illness, accident or normal aging impact a person's ability to do what they want to do, an occupational therapist can serve as a bridge during the transition from a medical setting back to the community," says Becker. "Navigating resources can be confusing, so we start by addressing their immediate concerns. But we also become a life-long resource for residents as their needs change."



A Message from Howard County Executive Calvin Ball



This month, as we welcome warmer weather and spring showers, is the perfect time to venture out, make new connections, or reconnect with old friends.

Our 50+ Centers are open and welcoming back residents for meals, activities, classes and more. Over the last year, we preserved more green space in Savage and added new bocce and croquet courts at Blandair Park. I encourage you to get outside, shake off the winter, and enjoy this time with family and friends.

We recently marked two years since the start of the pandemic, a somber anniversary, but a reminder too of how far we have come. Howard County has the highest vaccination rate in Maryland — a testament to our community's efforts to keep one another safe. Part of our success is due to this collective response, so be sure to get your COVID-19 booster if you haven't already.

The past two years have been difficult, and I know that for many of our residents the isolation and time away from others has been especially challenging. I encourage you to continue to look out for one another — invite friends for a day out to walk around one of our parks, join a pickleball league, or learn a new skill. Howard County is a vibrant community with a wide range of amenities to offer — now is the perfect time to take advantage of them as you embrace the renewing spirit of spring.

Wishing you all a happy and healthy month ahead.



Through a community-wide collaborative effort, Howard County residents are able to receive durable medical equipment at no cost. In that continued spirit, we ask that you consider donating items back to The Loan Closet of Howard County when no longer needed. **TWO convenient ways to make returns and donations:**

1) ALPHA RIDGE LANDFILL LOAN CLOSET SHED

Alpha Ridge Landfill, 2350 Marriottsville Road, Marriottsville 21104
Open Monday through Saturday 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

2) THE LOAN CLOSET LOADING DOCK

Located in rear of our equipment distribution site: (see address below)
Donations and Returns: 9:00 am to 4:00 pm • BY APPOINTMENT ONLY



7125 Riverwood Drive, Suite D1
Columbia, MD 21046

410-313-0363 (VOICE/RELAY)

www.howardcountymd.gov/loancloset

Healthcare Decisions Day — April 16, 2022

On April 16, **National Healthcare Decisions Day**, all Americans are encouraged to ensure that their future healthcare choices are known and protected. The observance reminds us that it is important to make these decisions known, regardless of age or current health.

An advance directive is a legal document that tells healthcare providers who it is that you wish to make medical decisions for you and what treatments you want or do not want, if you are not able to express what you want for yourself.

There are many ways to create an advanced directive; the process does not take long, and it is generally free. Online, visit <https://speakeasyhoward.org/> or download "Maryland Advance Directive: Planning for Future Health Care Decisions" at <https://bit.ly/2MYwr4z>.

Completed directives can be uploaded to the SpeakEasy Howard website, or you can contact the Advanced Planning Coordinator at Howard County General Hospital at 443-518-6684 to have the document uploaded to your medical record.



Living Well Chronic Disease Self-Management

Do you need help managing
your chronic conditions?

Living Well workshops are designed for individuals living with, or individuals caring for someone with one or more chronic conditions, such as heart disease, diabetes, obesity, chronic pain, or arthritis. Participants meet once a week for six weeks to discuss techniques to handle pain and fatigue; as well as learn about nutrition, appropriate exercise, communication skills, stress management, and setting goals. The small group setting helps adults become stronger and better educated to manage ongoing health conditions.

I really enjoyed the class! It was informative and the instructors were very knowledgeable and answered all the questions I had. I now feel more confident planning for my diabetic treatment. A class like this is a great benefit for anyone diagnosed with prediabetes or diabetes. — MAYME GRANT

Living Well programs are offered through a collaboration of the Howard County Health Department, Howard County Office on Aging and Independence, and Howard County General Hospital. For a list of upcoming programs, visit www.hcgh.org/events.
For more information, or to register for one of the workshops listed below (times TBD), contact Akasha Dotson at adotson@howardcountymd.gov or 410-313-3507 (voice/relay).

Six Thursdays • May 5 – June 9 • Virtual Classes via Webex
Six Fridays • May 13 – June 17 • North Laurel 50+ Center
Six Wednesdays • June 15 – July 20 • Elkridge 50+ Center

DEMENTIA Live®

An interactive experience that immerses participants into life with dementia resulting in a deeper understanding of what it's like to live with a cognitive impairment and sensory change.

2022 SCHEDULE

VIRTUAL AND IN-PERSON PROGRAMS

Monday, April 11 • 2:00 pm

VIRTUAL PROGRAM — REGISTRANTS WILL BE SENT LOG-IN DETAILS PRIOR TO EVENT

Wednesday, May 11 • 6:00 pm

IN PERSON EVENT TO BE HELD ON SITE AT
Howard County Office on Aging and Independence
9830 Patuxent Woods Drive, Columbia 21046

SPACE IS LIMITED!

To register for Dementia Live®,
call 410-313-5917.

TO REGISTER OR FOR MORE INFORMATION

EMILY LECLERCQ

410-313-5917 (VOICE/RELAY)

map@howardcountymd.gov • www.howardcountymd.gov/aging

DEMENTIA Live®

*"Because it's frightening to care for
someone you don't understand"*



DCRS Salutes Those Who Are "Doing Good"

Whether online, at the office, or the local food bank; whether with a vote, a voice, or a wallet – doing good comes in many forms, and we recognize and celebrate them all.

— POINTSOFLIGHT.ORG

April is National Volunteer Month, a time to shine the spotlight on the people whose commitment to "doing good" helps meet the needs of those who live, work and play every day in Howard County. **The Department of Community Resources and Services wants to give our volunteers a big THANK YOU shout-out!**

Thank you for...

- generously sharing your time, and giving without asking for anything in return;
- making an impact by using your skills and knowledge to address challenges;
- demonstrating through everyday actions that every voice deserves to be heard;
- sharing your passion for service to inspire future generations of volunteers.

Join us! Visit www.hocovolunteer.org to find a volunteer opportunity near you!

Do You Qualify for Property Tax Credits?

Maryland Access Point (MAP) of Howard County — the information and assistance arm of the Howard County Office on Aging and Independence (OAI) — can assist eligible residents to apply for one of the county's property tax credit programs. Go to www.howardcountymd.gov/finance/tax-credit-central for a full list of the credits, applications and requirements. Most applications have a deadline of October 1, 2022. MAP information specialists are available **by appointment** to help with the application process at OAI's offices at 9830 Patuxent Woods Drive (Columbia 21046), or at any of its six 50+ Centers.

For additional information or to schedule an appointment, contact MAP at 410-313-1234 (voice/relay).



Howard County

Office on Aging & Independence

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This publication is available in alternate formats upon request. To join the subscriber list, go to <https://bit.ly/3o4GAee>.

9830 Patuxent Woods Drive, Columbia, MD 21046

410-313-6410 (VOICE/RELAY) • www.howardcountymd.gov/aging

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