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**Applies to (check all that apply):**

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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All DHS employees  | <input type="checkbox"/> County Mental Health Directors                  |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> County DD Program Managers    | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):                         |

**Message:** May 2004 is Older Americans Month. This year's theme is "Aging Well, Living Well." This theme emphasizes that Americans are living longer, healthier lives and serves as a prime opportunity to address those issues related to healthy, productive aging.

Promotional materials, including printable flyers, public service announcements, and fact sheets can be obtained from the Administration on Aging Website at [http://www.aoa.gov/press/oam/May\\_2004/Materials\\_Downloads.asp](http://www.aoa.gov/press/oam/May_2004/Materials_Downloads.asp)

The State Unit on Aging hopes that you will join us in celebrating older Americans during the month of May.

*If you have any questions about this information, contact:*

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## Older Americans Month

- **Overview**
- **Strategies & Tool**
- **Useful Resources**

**May 2004**

# AGING WELL LIVING WELL



Older Americans Month is a great opportunity to celebrate older Americans and the valuable contributions they make to their families, communities, and the Nation. In addition, it provides a occasion to highlight issues and programs that affect older Americans and their caregivers.

This guide explains how you and your organization can play an important role in publicizing Older Americans Month, and provides some communication tools you can easily adapt to customize your own message. If your organization already produces and distributes materials to celebrate Older Americans Month, you may still find some useful information in this publicity kit.

The theme of Older Americans Month 2003—"Aging Well, Living Well"—provides the focal point for all related public awareness initiatives.

This promotional guide highlights many national issues affecting older Americans and some of the programs funded through the Older Americans Act and administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging (AoA), working in concert with members of the National Aging Services Network. This kit also provides a national framework for sharing how your organization is helping Older Americans to age and live well.

In the first section of this guide, you'll find tips on promoting Older Americans Month among your constituents. These guidelines show how you can prepare press releases, letters to the editor, op-ed pieces, proclamations, public service announcements (PSAs), and special events that highlight vital programs, rights, and needs of aging citizens.

The second part of the brochure describes what's included in your Older Americans Month kit: a CD-ROM, feature articles, PSAs, fact sheets, informational vignettes, graphics, and a poster designed to promote Older Americans Month. These tools can help you conduct outreach activities in your area.

Using these resources, we can raise awareness and support to improve the lives of older Americans. Celebrate Older Americans Month with us ... and help ensure that Older Americans are "Aging Well, Living Well."

### HOW TO BOOST AWARENESS

Many organizations are more comfortable with providing services like respite care, nutrition, or transportation than with marketing. It is important to do both. To assist you in promoting Older Americans Month, you might enlist the help of local college students majoring in journalism or public relations to help you concentrate inexpensively on promotions. But no matter what approach you take, you can raise awareness of Older Americans Month by taking a few simple steps. The AoA provides the following helpful tips, along with the items in this kit, to get you started. We also suggest additional strategies you may wish to consider.

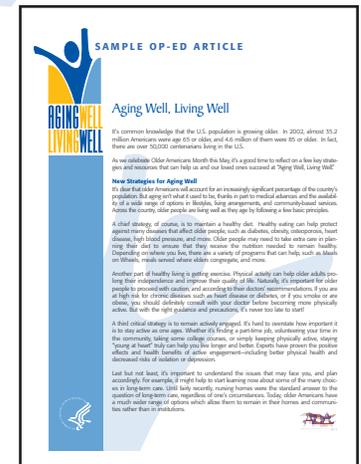
**Get the word out.** Remember the first rule of public relations: The more people you can get to help tell your story, the more effective—and affordable—your efforts will be. Here are some of the best tools you can use to spread your message:

- **Create a buzz** about Older Americans Month with your constituents, including employees, customers, members, and supporters. Starting within your organization is most effective because your own people often are the best conveyers of positive messages. This process can begin easily using your organization's current communications tools, such as newsletters, bulletins, announcement boards, e-mail lists, payroll and invoice statements, direct mail pieces, employee publications, and Web pages. Use some of the stories and short news items provided in this kit for the Older Americans Month content in your current communications

vehicles. During scheduled events, make literature about older Americans available or incorporate the message of "Aging Well, Living Well," into the presentations given. Make sure that your constituents know that May is Older Americans Month.

- **Provide news releases** to alert the media to high-priority events, issues, and initiatives. Make sure to communicate the news value of your event—its urgency, timeliness, and relevance to the community. Answer important questions, such as Who?, What?, Where?, When?, Why?, and How? Include data and quotes from involved individuals. The feature articles included in this kit can be easily customized with local data or references for you to send to media in your area. Provide contacts whom journalists can call to get additional information from your office or other knowledgeable sources. When writing op-ed pieces or letters to an editor for Older Americans Month, focus on the theme's message about the various aspects involved in aging and living well. If the story is about an event your organization is planning, fax the release to news editors and reporters, especially those who have previously covered your organization, about three days before the event.

- **Send letters to the editor and op-ed pieces** to local newspapers and relevant magazines. This will allow you to share information in a way that lets you control the content of your message. For details regarding the number of words or who to send the letter to, refer to the publication itself or call the publication's editorial department. Letters are more likely to be published if they are responding to an aging-related story



that has run in the past day or two. If possible, schedule a meeting with the editorial board to increase the likelihood of getting your issue covered. Writing an opinion editorial, or op-ed, can call attention to specific concerns and recommend solutions to an issue affecting older Americans. When writing op-ed pieces or letters to an editor for Older Americans Month, focus on the theme. Review examples of op-eds that have run recently, follow the publication's rules for length and format, and send your submission to the appropriate editor. A sample op-ed is available on the CD-ROM enclosed in this kit.

■ **Issue public service announcements (PSAs).**

Enlist the broadcast media to reach audiences who may prefer television, cable, or radio. (This kit contains copy for two radio PSAs you can adapt to record your own PSAs.) Contact local broadcasters as soon as possible—since public service program planning often is done far in advance—about running your PSA during Older Americans Month. Explain in a cover letter that the PSA should be run as a community service, promoting awareness of the needs of aging citizens and their caregivers. If you can, link the PSA to a specific event or an issue that is in the news.



■ **Hold a special event** to draw attention to older Americans' issues and showcase important programs, resources, and services. Consider launching an initiative, hosting a ceremony or a banquet, giving awards to volunteers, or recognizing aging citizens who make outstanding contributions to your community. The Older Americans Month theme, "Aging Well, Living Well," provides an excellent backdrop for holding

health promotion and active aging activities. Team with other local partners within the National Aging Services Network and with other organizations that support older Americans, such as the faith and medical communities. Don't forget to work with the local business community. Whenever possible, involve local celebrities or government officials whose presence can make the event more newsworthy. Before the event, invite media to attend it or even co-sponsor the event. When reporters do cover the event, have information and materials ready to help them write about the event in the broader context of Older Americans Month.

■ **Issue a proclamation.** Ask your governor, mayor, or city council members to support Older Americans Month by issuing it. Offer sample text and suggest localizing the national theme by adding the name of your city or county, as in "Hometown, U.S.A.: Aging Well, Living Well." Capitalize on the forum where the proclamation is issued to make connections with community partners, attract media coverage, and heighten public awareness about aging. On the CD-ROM enclosed in this kit is a sample proclamation you can recommend to your local or state government officials.

**Grab the media's attention with a "hook."** As the previous examples suggest, it often is not enough to point out ongoing concerns or important issues. To gain media attention, those concerns and issues must be linked to interesting events, announcements, or news items. You can apply the strategies outlined above to make your organization's work newsworthy. Some of the qualities of news that media executives value include timeliness, uniqueness or rarity, prominence of those involved, consequence or impact, proximity or nearness, and conflict.

Older Americans Month itself provides a hook, a way to make aging-related issues timely. Be sure to weave the Older Americans Month theme and graphic throughout all your outreach efforts in May. But remember, that alone won't do the job. Take the steps necessary to really make news in your community.

**Time it right.** Your publicity efforts will pay off best when your timing allows the media to set aside time, space, and resources to report on your event. For maximum impact, get your message in front of your audience starting in the last week of April. This means organizing your effort months or weeks ahead of time.

When Older Americans Month arrives, time your announcements and events to maintain visibility all month. This will allow the news media and other partners to plan on addressing your issues throughout May.

Give the media what they need. Put yourself in the shoes of your media contacts and anticipate what they need to do their jobs. If you want reporters to cover a local program, for instance, you must provide background data, quotes, and contacts—and show why newspaper readers would want to know about the program.

Sometimes, what journalists need is a reminder. Have someone follow up with each media contact to answer questions and keep Older Americans Month on their minds. After sending a press release, for example, make a phone call or send an e-mail asking whether there are any questions about your story idea and when you might expect to hear back.

Think about the needs of other media contacts, too. You can't rely on any one media outlet to do the whole job. Offer a diverse set of materials that institutions, providers, and others can use immediately—from posters and PSAs to flyers and fact sheets they can use in their own materials. By exploring a variety of approaches, you improve your chances of success.

## HOW TO USE THIS KIT

To help you get the maximum impact from your marketing efforts, the AoA is providing a variety of flexible resources in this kit. Feel free to customize these materials for your community or use them “right out of the box.” Either way, the following items offer a variety of options and formats for attracting media coverage.

This kit features virtually all the materials you need to get started. All the materials in this kit are available on the enclosed CD-ROM.

**Feature Articles.** The five feature articles provided in the kit relate in some way to aging well, living well: utilizing the National Aging Services Network, caregiver health, healthy aging, transportation options, and active aging. With compelling statistics and insights from experts, older persons, and caregivers, these articles offer powerful portraits of the need to address these issues and efforts already underway. These features can be tailored to include local information, quotes, and data.

**Informational Vignettes.** These news briefs, or informational “vignettes,” are suitable for reprint in newsletters or handouts or for e-mail distribution. They are geared to older Americans and their caregivers.

**Fact Sheets.** The fact sheets included in the kit highlight key initiatives of the AoA and other areas of interest to older persons. These fact sheets may supplement materials distributed to the media.

## Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

These PSAs enable you to control the awareness message spread to your community. The kit includes a print PSA that magazines and newspapers might print free of charge. The kit also includes two printed scripts that allow you to record your own 30-second or 15-second PSAs. You could read the PSAs as announcements in your meetings, religious gatherings, or at other events. Give these PSAs to local media and request that they publish or air them as a community service.

**Older, Wiser, Healthier!**

After several years of caring for his wife at home, Bill found the decision to place her in a nursing home. The day he moved in, he felt a strong sense of loss. He was the most difficult and demanding spouse he had ever cared for. The doctor told him that the heart attack was the consequence of neglecting his own health for many years. Bill was the one who had to get up and start an exercise program that included making several miles a week on a morning at the community pool.

Bill has recently received a clean bill of health from his physician. With his new care, he continues several hours a week in the community exercising facility and other projects on the experience of life and exercise.

Bill's story illustrates that it is never too late to establish a healthier lifestyle. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' National Administration on Aging (NIA) recent research has, by following some common-sense guidelines for diet and exercise, old people can still gain to their late-in-life and improve the quality of their lives.

It all begins with getting regular medical care, including checkups. Many doctors recommend routine checkups and an annual flu shot for basic preventive health maintenance.

**How Was Right, Let Us Regained!**

It should not come as a surprise that diet plays an important role in the health of older adults. In fact, healthful eating can help prevent against disease that older people, including diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis, heart disease, high blood pressure, and more. The AOA recommends eight ways to eat better to prevent disease and promote healthful lifestyles:

- Aim for a healthy weight.
- Eat a wide variety of foods.
- Eat more high-fiber foods made from whole grains, beans, and nuts.
- Eat less on meats, fats, and saturated fats.
- Choose a diet that is low in calories, fat, and cholesterol.
- Choose and prepare foods with less salt.
- Eat calcium-rich foods like leafy greens and those for strong bones.
- Drink plenty of beverages and stay hydrated.

There are many reasons why older people might not get the nutrition they need. Some older persons have difficulty in shopping or cannot tolerate certain foods due to new illnesses. Others may live alone and not know how to cook or may be unable to keep the house. To help these older citizens, the Adult Nutrition Program part of Older Americans Resource Services (OARS) has been developed to help them get access to the nutrition information they need to stay healthy and independent.

**FACT SHEET**

**Consumer Direction in Long-Term Care**

**Introduction**  
Consumer direction is a philosophy of long-term care that emphasizes the independence and autonomy of the consumer. The term consumer direction describes programs that are varying levels of choice and control for people who use services or other supports to deal with daily activities. Consumer direction is also known as "self-direction," "consumer choice," or "person-directed choice."

Over the years, the National Aging Services Network has increasingly recognized consumer directed options as their future programs. This effort was a natural outgrowth of its commitment to the philosophy of the Older Americans Act. The National Aging Services Network has supported this philosophy with Older Americans Act programs as well as Medicaid, state waiver and locally financed long-term care programs.

**Why is it important?**  
The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Olmstead decision have made it a legal obligation for governments to provide services. To the most engaged setting appropriate to the needs of qualified individuals with disabilities. The fact is that individuals with disabilities have the same rights through the enforcement of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as everyone else. The United States is committed to comprehensive disability rights for individuals with disabilities.

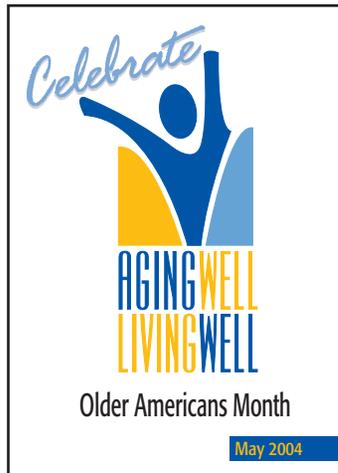
At the same time, the amount of funding directed to home and community-based care continues to be replaced by the amount of funding directed to institutional care.

**Medicaid LTC Expenditures: Institutional vs. Home & Community Based Services**

Year	Institutional	Home & Community Based Services
1990	41%	2%
1995	33%	11%
2000	27%	22%

Source: Medicaid Expenditures on Long-Term Care, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy and Research, 2002.

**Graphics.** You can proudly display the Older Americans Month icon in all print materials you design for local efforts. Use it in any press releases, proclamations, and special events you develop. This attractive graphic, available in various formats, creates an immediately recognizable visual identity that links campaigns to raise awareness nationwide.



**Poster.** The poster serves as an eye-catching reminder of Older Americans Month as well as of the aging citizens, caregivers, service providers, and others we celebrate in May. You're encouraged to hang the poster in a highly visible public place.

#### **OTHER RESOURCES OUTSIDE THE KIT**

**Collaboration.** Collaborating with other organizations can enhance your Older Americans Month efforts. The AoA collaborated with the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations on strategy and content for the Older Americans Month kit. In addition, AoA worked with the Humane Society of the United States, the National Council on the Aging, and the Older Women's League on targeted outreach strategies.

**Web Site.** Finally, don't forget to visit the AoA's Web site ([www.aoa.gov](http://www.aoa.gov)) for additional materials. Information resources dealing with the Older Americans Act, the National Family Caregiver Support Program, the Elderly Nutrition Program, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, state programs and plans, statewide collaboration efforts, health promotion and disease prevention, budget and fiscal information, and a host of other programs and services are available at the click of your mouse.

Taken together, the Web site and other materials featured in this kit comprise a set of powerful tools you can use to grab the attention of community members. The more ways you can find to get the word out, the more likely you are to make an impact.



#### **THANK YOU**

Your contribution to publicizing Older Americans Month in your community is valuable to our national effort. Let us know what you think about this kit by completing the evaluation form enclosed in the kit.



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