

# News Release

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## Recognizing the importance of connection during Older Americans Month

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(Salem, OR) – Established in 1963, Older Americans Month is celebrated every May and is an opportunity to recognize the contributions of older Americans and reaffirm commitments to serving the older adults in our communities. The 2024 Older Americans Month theme is Powered by Connection, which focuses on the profound impact that meaningful connections have on the well-being and health of older adults.

“Social connection plays an important role in the mental, emotional and physical well-being of everyone,” said Nakeshia Knight-Coyle, Director for the Oregon Department of Human Services Offices of Aging and People with Disabilities (APD). “Building inclusive programs that help older adults connect with others in their settings of choice to support their well-being is a top priority for the Office of Aging and People with Disabilities.”

As Governor Tina Kotek’s [proclamation](#) of Older Americans Month says, “Oregon benefits when people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds are welcomed, included, and supported; and We recognize the need to create an Oregon that offers the services and supports older adults may need to make choices about how they age; and We are striving to build age-friendly communities for people ages 0 to 100+ who are included, engaged and can thrive...”

The ODHS Office of Aging and People with Disabilities maintains a number of programs focused on reducing social isolation, promoting healthy aging and fostering connection for older adults in Oregon. Recent accomplishments include:

- APD contracted with [GrandPad](#) to provide free tablets to people who receive Medicaid long-term care services and supports at home. This partnership aims to help older adults overcome social isolation by easily connecting with family and friends. Approximately 375 in-home Medicaid consumers received GrandPads in 2023, with an additional 275 GrandPads distributed at PACE programs throughout the state.

- The Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) of Oregon provides information and referral services and options counseling to help older adults and people with disabilities, regardless of immigration status, find supports that meet their needs and help them connect with others. Through the ADRC's online database of more than 5,000 resources, people can also [search for community support and recreation activities](#) such as volunteer activities, wellness programs and more. People of all ages can also find volunteer opportunities on ODHS' [volunteer webpage](#).
- Oregon's [2023 – 2026 State Plan on Aging](#) focuses on building an Age-Friendly Oregon. The goals of the plan include developing programs that reduce social isolation and feelings of loneliness among older adults, especially those who belong to rural communities or communities that have been socially and economically marginalized.
- Meal sites for older adults throughout the state of Oregon also provide opportunities for older adults to connect with others in their community. Between 2022 and 2023, the federally funded Senior Nutrition Program supplied 572,020 healthy meals for 14,008 people aged 60 and older at 117 meal sites in Oregon. To find a meal site, contact the ADRC of Oregon at 1-855-673-2372 or visit <https://adrcoforegon.org>.
- Councils and commissions under the Office of Aging and People with Disabilities provide opportunities for people to participate in policy and rule development, and shape how programs can best serve older adults in Oregon. The [Aging and Disability Resource Connection \(ADRC\) Advisory Council](#) provides guidance and recommendations on statewide development, expansion, evaluation and quality improvement in services of the ADRC network. The [Governor's Commission on Senior Services](#) works to further the interests of Oregon's older adults by studying programs and budgets of all state agencies that affect older adults and people with disabilities, and recommending plans for delivery of services to older adults.

### **About the Office of Aging and People with Disabilities:**

APD's vision is to ensure Oregon's older adults, people with disabilities and their families experience person-centered services, supports and early interventions that are innovative and help maintain independence, promote safety, wellbeing, honor choice, respect cultural preferences, and uphold dignity.

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