



Congress Provides Needed Support for Older Americans

The John A. Hartford Foundation applauds the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act and calls on the public to “Blaze a Trail” for better care during Older Americans Month in May

New York, NY (April 28, 2016) -- May is [Older Americans Month](#), and there is much to celebrate—notably, the recent reauthorization of the [Older Americans Act](#). The John A. Hartford Foundation applauds Congress and President Obama who, on April 19, signed legislation that will keep millions of seniors healthy and independent through the social and nutrition services of the [Administration for Community Living](#) and the aging services network.

"The Older Americans Act is a cornerstone of this country's commitment to care for people who have spent their lives contributing to their families, community, and society and who continue to enrich our lives every day," said Terry Fulmer, PhD, RN, FAAN, President of [The John A. Hartford Foundation](#). "We are pleased that action has been finally been taken to authorize this important law, which provides a lifeline to many older adults and their family caregivers who heroically support them."

This year, the theme for Older Americans Month is “Blaze a Trail,” which emphasizes the ways older adults are reinventing themselves through new work and new passions, engaging their communities, and blazing a trail of positive impact on people of *all* ages.

The John A. Hartford Foundation is offering five ways that anyone, at any age, can celebrate Older Americans Month and the Older Americans Act. Be a trailblazer by engaging with older people in your communities to help them stay healthy and well.

1. Get active and exercise with your older relatives and community residents.

Older adults are becoming more active than ever. Continue to encourage this activity by inviting an older loved one to join as a guest at your gym or find a local fitness class like public Zumba or yoga in the park. Direct your older friends to [Go4Life](#), the National Institute on Aging's online resource for staying active, or find a local Matter of Balance program, one of the Administration for Community Living's [evidence-based falls prevention programs](#).

About 80 percent of older adults have at least one chronic health condition, and staying active is one of the best ways to prevent decline, both physically and cognitively.

2. Help feed the older people in your community.

The Administration for Community Living's nutritional programs helped 2.4 million older adults receive 219 million meals in 2013 in both congregate settings, such as senior centers, or through home delivery programs. These programs welcome volunteers who not only provide warm food, but also warm, friendly personal interactions. Gather your friends, relatives, and other older adults for a trailblazing volunteer experience.

3. Volunteer at a local hospital.

Your local hospital is another place where volunteers are needed, so participate in a program like HELP, the [Hospital Elder Life Program](#). Volunteers are trained to keep older people engaged and mobile in order to reduce the dangerous state of confusion known as delirium that leads to falls, longer hospital stays, and even death. Many emergency departments have volunteer programs focused on older adults, too. If your hospital does not yet have a volunteer program to assist older adults, it may be an opportunity to be a trailblazer in creating one.

4. Show appreciation for your elders, especially older veterans.

Participate in your local Memorial Day events and show gratitude for the past service to the country given by the more than 12 million veterans over the age of 65. If you know older veterans, be sure to point them to the services of the [Department of Veterans Affairs Geriatrics and Extended Care](#) programs. You can even be there when a veteran absolutely needs you the most. The “No Veteran Dies Alone” program uses volunteers to help veterans approaching death by providing a human touch, listening to their stories and being there when others cannot.

5. Help an older adult, by helping their family caregiver.

Over 30 million friends and family members do the [heroic work](#) of providing care to an older loved one who needs assistance, often on a daily basis. Almost half of these caregivers are performing complex medical and nursing tasks and they experience higher rates of stress and depression. You can help through simple offers of assistance – offer to do their shopping or cook them a meal. Give them a break from their care by staying with their older loved one. Lend them an ear or a shoulder, they will appreciate you and be better prepared to care for their older relative or friend.

Everyday older adults are blazing new trails and having a positive influence in our communities. Be a trailblazer yourself by following these simple suggestions for helping older adults stay active, healthy, and engaged.

What is the Older Americans Act?

The Older Americans Act (OAA) was first enacted in 1965 as a result of growing concerns over the lack of community and social systems and services in place to support older Americans. Today, the OAA is the major vehicle for the organization and delivery of social and nutrition services to this group and their caregivers. The OAA is comprised of a multifaceted national network that provides countless services to older adults that include home-delivered and congregate meals, caregiver support, preventive health services, transportation, job training, and elder abuse prevention, to name a few.

The Older Americans Act was last authorized by Congress in 2006 for a period of five years, and has been overdue for reauthorization since 2011. With the 2016 reauthorization, the OAA has been amended to emphasize programs focused on elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation and evidence-based health and wellness programs. The Act has now been extended through 2019.

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About The John A. Hartford Foundation

Founded in 1929 by John and George Hartford of the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company (A & P), The John A. Hartford Foundation, based in New York City, is a private, nonpartisan philanthropy dedicated to improving the care of older adults. Every eight seconds, someone in America turns 65. The

largest-ever generation of older adults is living and working longer, redefining later life, and enriching our communities and society. Comprehensive, coordinated, and continuous care that keeps older adults as healthy as possible is essential to sustaining these valuable contributions. The John A. Hartford Foundation believes that its investments in aging experts and innovations can transform how care is delivered, lowering costs and dramatically improving the health of older adults. Additional information about the Foundation and its programs is available at www.jhartfound.org.

Media Contacts:

Joannie Danieledes

917-539-4924

joannie.danieledes@jhartfound.org

or

Marcus Escobedo

212-832-7788

marcus.escobedo@jhartfound.org