



AGE FRIENDLY SACO

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Age Friendly Saco's mission "A Community for a Lifetime," is to promote active aging by optimizing opportunities for health, engagement, and safety, while removing barriers that prevent our citizens from remaining in their homes as they age. FMI contact Jean Saunders, Director.



**December 2023 Newsletter
Community Matters!**

**Serving the community
of Saco since 2016**

**Consider joining us as a volunteer!
SHARE YOUR GIFT!**

SPOTLIGHT: JEAN SAUNDERS

I am originally from the small mill town of Winslow, Maine where I grew up and graduated from Winslow High School. I come from a large French-Canadian family as my mother comes from a family of 15. I learned early on the value of hard work as my parents placed a high value on a strong work ethic and education. My father never had the opportunity to go beyond the 8th grade in school but demonstrated every day the value of hard work. One of my first jobs in high school was as a caretaker of a small cemetery in Winslow with my father. It was hard work, especially learning the art of digging a grave by hand. (No machinery back in those days!) .

During my senior year in high school, I was able to go to the Waterville Vocational-Technical school and became a certified nursing assistant by the end of my senior year. This allowed me to work in a hospital setting as I pursued a 2-year Associate's nursing degree at the University of Maine, Augusta. As an RN I continued to work as a nurse while pursuing a BSN at the University of New Hampshire. While working as a nurse I became very interested in the field of public health and pursued a dual Master's degree program at Columbia University and obtained a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) as well as a Master of Public Health (MPH) in the field of Health Administration.

I was able to complete an administrative fellowship at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center and later was the Asst . Director of Nursing at Long Island Jewish Medical Center in Queens, NY. After a stint in NY, I was anxious to return to my home state of Maine and in 1990 had the opportunity to return to Maine Medical Center as the Clinical Projects Manager. Much of my time in administration was building new programs, helping to create new delivery of care models as well as managing many different departments.

My husband ,David and I have been married 32 years and have 3 young adult children. We have lived in Saco for the past 21 years. My husband owns an electronics manufacturing facility, Saunders Electronics, in South Portland.

After our children were on their own, I was looking for a volunteer opportunity to become involved with and started volunteering for the Town of Yarmouth. They were in the process of becoming an Age Friendly community. Through this volunteer opportunity I learned about the World Health Organization's development of helping communities become more age friendly in response to the changing age demographic and the need to create systems and supports in communities to help older residents stay in their homes as they age. I approached the incoming Mayor of Saco at that time, Ron Michaud, and asked him if he would be interested in making Saco an age friendly community. Mayor Michaud took the lead in finding community members to serve on a Steering Committee to move this process forward . In the 6 years that Age Friendly Saco has been active we have seen tremendous growth in services offered and programming. This is only possible because of the dedicated volunteers that serve in so many different capacities, be it helping to staff our office, deliver food boxes, make monthly meals at the Elks Club, participate as a volunteer driver, there are so many different roles as well as something for everyone that chooses to join in as a volunteer. Age Friendly Saco is a community within a community, working to help our residents connect with resources, maintain their healthcare by providing access to healthcare appointments as well as engaged in their community by helping to create opportunities for socialization as well and maintain their independence by providing transportation options.

At this time of year, we are thankful for our army of volunteers and all that they have done and continue to do to support their neighbors. We are neighbors helping neighbors and we are creating a more livable community for all. Through the work of our volunteers, we can say that we are truly making Saco a Community for a lifetime by providing the supports and services our residents need to stay in their home community and for that we are all most grateful!

THANK YOU TO OUR DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS!

Best wishes for a Happy Holiday Season and a joyous New Year.

All the best, Jean



NEW TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

On October 23, 2023, Age Friendly Saco launched its SACO MOBILITY SHUTTLE. The Shuttle provides door-to-door transportation to Saco Residents aged 60 years of age or older for groceries, daily living needs, library, and other locations. The Shuttle provides regularly scheduled stops to Walmart, Market Basket, Target, Hannaford and Shaws. We will also provide scheduled transportation to Saco Main Street businesses, Saco Transportation Center, Dyer Library, Saco Community Center, Saco Sport & Fitness, YMCA, Saco Food Pantry and Election Polls. Currently, the Shuttle runs Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8 AM to 1 PM. As ridership gains, we plan to expand our days and hours. During the initial rollout phase, shuttle services will be free. A 48-hour notice is required to schedule a seat on the Shuttle. Shuttle riders must be independently mobile and must be able to embark and disembark without assistance into a passenger van with steps. For more information or to schedule a ride, call the Age Friendly Saco Mobility Shuttle at (207) 710-8527.



SENIOR TAX SAVINGS PROGRAMS

Tax filing time will be approaching soon. In order to take advantage of property tax savings programs such as the Homestead Exemption, Property Tax Fairness Credit and the Saco Senior Tax Assistance Program, it is necessary to file a Maine 1040 form, even if you don't owe any tax or are no longer required to file. You only need to apply once for the Homestead Exemption but the other programs require yearly application.

AARP's Tax Aide workshops will begin in January, and offer free same day completion and filing of taxes, including the ME 1040 form. These workshops are offered at different locations and dates, which will be posted in early January. The tax savings programs require that the ME 1040 is filed no later than April 1, so it is suggested you schedule an appointment early. The workshops are popular and fill quickly. We will have the workshop information posted in the AFS office in early January. You can also call AARP 207-518-8579 in January, and follow the prompts for a call back.

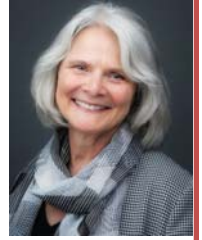
Please call our office at 207-710-5029 for any questions about the savings programs or workshops.



Wed., Dec. 13, 2023 - 10-11:30 a.m.

2nd floor Café meeting space
Saco Mill #4- 120 Main St., Saco
(beside Pacifico Restaurant)

Dr. Susan Wehry Age Friendly Saco will offer its Dec. Coffee & Conversation with a presentation on the aging brain. Dr. Wehry will share ways you (or family and friends you know) can stay healthy, reduce risk, and live well with dementia. She will also provide an overview of 'dementia worry' or the anxiety one might have after receiving a potential dementia diagnosis. Dr. Wehry is a board-certified geriatric psychiatrist with almost 40 years of experience. She is the director of AgingME, a Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP), to create a more age-friendly health system.



Senior Luncheon program, sponsored by Age Friendly Saco is a great success. Volunteers prepare and cook the meals, with dessert, in the onsite kitchen. The freshest ingredients are used to insure nutritious and balanced meals. Meals are free, although contributions to Age Friendly Saco are appreciated!

Our next meal is December 7, 2023 at the Elks Club in Saco 68 Ocean Park Road, Saco. ****Pre-registration is required****

Doors open at 11:30, meals served around 12:00

A warm thankyou goes out to Saco Elks club for letting Age Friendly Saco use their facility at no charge!!

KNOX HOMEBOX: A GREAT CHRISTMAS GIFT

Age Friendly Saco is supporting a program to install KNOX boxes to Saco's elderly population. KNOX boxes are a metal box, secured to the home on or near the front door. Inside the box is the key to that home. Saco's First Responders are the only authority with a master key to the KNOX box. In an emergency, where perhaps the home occupant is unable to let First Responders into the home, First Responders now have access to the house key, which is inside the KNOX box. Force entry would be eliminated.

The KNOX boxes are \$200 each and most of Saco's elderly residents need help with the purchase. Age Friendly Saco and Saco Fire Department would do the installation.



”Journeying Together: Connecting Hearts, One Ride at a Time”

In the heart of our community lies a lifeline of compassion and support, where every ride is not just a journey from point A to B, but a testament to the bonds we forge and the lives we touch. Here at the Age-Friendly Saco Medical Transportation Program, our dedicated volunteers and cherished passengers travel together, sharing experiences and developing heartfelt connections.

“We are very proud of Saco for valuing the older residents in our community, recognizing a need, and implementing programs to improve one’s quality of life. It is very rewarding to be involved in a program that provides a practical service and support.”

Marilyn, Volunteer Driver

For volunteers like Marilyn and her husband Gerry, the decision to join this initiative stemmed from a desire to do more than just provide transportation. It was about becoming an integral part of the lives of our community’s cherished older residents. Offering not just a ride, but companionship and a listening ear. Marilyn and Gerry are senior citizens who volunteer as a team. When asked about why they decided to become volunteer drivers, they were proud to share they have the time and enjoy meeting people. They also expressed it has been quite an eye-opening experience learning that there is such a great need for rides to medical appointments for older residents. There have been instances whereby, a particular person touched their hearts and just needed someone for support while facing challenging medical conditions.

Providing transportation is not only important but valued by the rider. Meet Rebecca, one of the many appreciative family members who has benefited from the Medical Transportation Program.

“I work full-time and I am the only family member living in the area near my mom, so I very much appreciate it when she can get a reliable ride to a medical appointment. It prevents me from having to take a half or full day off from work.”

Rebecca, Daughter of a Rider

For Rebecca’s mother and countless others, these rides signify far more than mere mobility. They signify a bridge to the outside world, connecting them to social interaction, medical attention, and special moments otherwise missed.

This service not only supports the physical well-being of the older adults but also eases the emotional strain on their families, offering peace of mind knowing that their loved ones can access necessary healthcare without facing transportation barriers. Ultimately, this program fosters a sense of community support by ensuring that older adults receive the care they need while lessening the stress and worries of their families.

Through shared laughter, stories exchanged, and heartfelt conversations, the connections formed within the confines of a car transcend mere transportation; they become pillars of strength, support, and companionship.

“When having repeat passengers, you form a bond of friendship and they feel safe with you.” - David, Volunteer Driver

Volunteer drivers like David understand the significance of each journey. It’s not just about reaching a destination...it’s about brightening someone’s day and making sure that every rider feels valued and cared for throughout the ride.

Within these vehicles that travel the streets, a vibrant community blossoms—a community woven together by compassion, empathy, and the shared goal of ensuring that no older adult feels isolated or disconnected.

Invaluable connections define our Medical Transportation Program. Because here at Age-Friendly Saco, every ride is a testament to the power of human connection and every journey is a chapter in a story of compassion and support.

If you would like to join our team of volunteer drivers or you need a ride to medical appointments, please call 207-200-7668.



Wishing you and your loved ones a joyous Christmas filled with warmth and laughter, and a New Year abundant with good health and happiness. May the festive season bring you moments of love and cherished memories. Cheers to a wonderful holiday season and a prosperous New Year !

