

Options for NRHA’s National Rural Age-Friendly Initiative (NRAFI) 2026 May Older Americans Month (OAM) Social Media and Enewsletter Promotion

NRHA’s National Rural Age-Friendly Initiative Celebrates May 2026 Older Americans Month (OAM)

2026 OAM Theme: Champion Your Health

Each May, [Older Americans Month \(OAM\)](#) invites us to recognize not only the contributions of older adults but also the importance of supporting their ability to live healthy and independent lives. Led by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), this national observance serves as a reminder of older adults' experience, resilience, and contribution to the community, as well as our commitment to support older adults through programs, care systems, and policies that promote well-being.

Background Information

This year’s OAM theme, *Champion Your Health*, calls on older adults and the systems that serve them to prioritize prevention, informed decision-making, and whole-person wellness. The theme encourages older adults to be actively involved in managing their health through accessing preventive services, advocating for their needs, or making informed care decisions.

For the one in five older adults living in rural communities, championing health often begins with access.

Through the [National Rural Age-Friendly Initiative \(NRAFI\)](#), which is the [National Rural Health Association’s \(NRHA\)](#) partnership with [The John A. Hartford Foundation \(JAHF\)](#), a growing network of partners is working to ensure that rural older adults are not only seen but are supported with the tools, care models, and community connections they need to thrive.



At the heart of this work are NRAFI's seven core partners: Advancing States, Stratis Health, National Council to Reframing Aging, the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA), the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI), Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU), and the American Heart Association (AHA)—each contributing expertise to strengthen the rural age-friendly ecosystems across rural America. In line with this, the NRAFI partnered with American Society on Aging (ASA) Generation to write an article on [The Evolution and Promise of Age-Friendly Ecosystems in Rural Communities](#). This article highlights the relevance of multisector collaboration in ensuring an [Age-Friendly Ecosystem](#).

Together, these partners are advancing practical, person-centered resources that empower older adults to take charge of their health journey. For example, IHI's "[My Health Checklist](#)", which is an [Age-Friendly Health Systems](#) resource developed with support from The John A. Hartford Foundation, helps older adults and their caregivers prepare for care visits while introducing the [4Ms framework](#)—What Matters, Medication, Mentation, and Mobility. NRHA, AARP, and IHI are expanding this impact by training rural Community Health Workers (CHWs) on the 4MS Framework, through the Community of Practice (CoP) project to bring rural age-friendly care directly into communities and ensure culturally responsive, trusted support at the local level. 3 listicles and 3 videos evolved from the Rural CHWs CoP initiative.

- 1st Listicle: [Ideas for Sharing My Health Checklist with Older Adults and Those Who Support Theme: 01/21/26](#)
- 2nd Listicle: [Nine Opportunities to Advance Patient-Centered Care with My Health Checklist: 02/25/26](#)
- 3rd Listicle: [How My Health Checklist Changes the Conversation for Rural Community Health Workers and the Older Adults in their Care: 03/25/26](#)
- Videos: One NRHA rural CHW (Royalyn Ramos) and one CHW trainer (Janel Lowman) are featured in the videos, sharing their experience with the My Health Checklist. The 3rd video is a compilation video featuring insights from several individuals who have implemented the My Health Checklist. Scroll to the middle of the page to access the videos. <https://www.aarp.org/pri/initiatives/what-matters-to-older-adults/>

In rural areas where access to services can be limited, connection to community-based programs becomes essential. Initiatives such as [Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly \(PACE\)](#), [Meals on Wheels](#), [Dementia care programs](#), and [Palliative care](#) services are helping older adults remain safely in their homes while maintaining independence. The NRAFI promotes all these initiatives.

Transportation and access to care, which are often overlooked but essential, are being addressed through efforts supported by the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) [Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities program](#) and its [Public Transportation Innovation](#) program

Prevention also plays a central role in this year's theme. Resources from organizations such as the [National Council on Aging \(NCOA\)](#) and [Trust for America's Health \(TFAH\)](#) provide evidence-based tools for falls prevention, chronic disease management, and healthy aging. NCOA has developed

an [advocacy toolkit](#) for falls prevention and healthy aging, and this also includes some of [NCOA's Evidence-based Programs](#). TFAH developed the [Healthy Aging Resources Toolkit](#), while the American Heart Association promotes [heart health and lifestyle interventions](#) that empower older adults to reduce risk and improve quality of life.

At the same time, advocacy and education through best practices remain critical to rural healthy aging. The American Society on Aging (ASA), American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), and the Center for Health Care Strategies (CHCS) offer resources that help older adults and caregivers navigate systems, understand their rights, and make informed care decisions. Programs like ASA's [Equity and Justice in Gerontology Professional Certification Program](#) and AARP's [caregiving and livability resources](#) reinforce the importance of equity in aging. The Diverse Elders Coalition (DEC) [caregiver toolkit](#), along with a PBS [Caregiving documentary](#), sheds light on the existing caregiving crisis and provides education on ways to meet the needs of caregivers.

Caregivers and Community Health Workers (CHWs) are fundamental stakeholders and frontline workers who bolster the well-being of older adults. Through the NRAFI, NRHA has partnered with the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA), to train CHWs on the 4Ms framework of age-friendly care. UTA wrote an article about the rural CHWs' in-person and virtual trainings for NRHA's 2024 summer issue of NRHA's Rural Horizons magazine: [Promotoras de salud: Helping community health workers care for older adults](#). NRHA and UTA also wrote a blog about the number of CHWs trained for the in-person training, the training insights, progress made, and lessons learned: [Two years of rural CHW 4Ms training, development, and leadership in Texas](#).

In 2024, as part of the Initiative, NRHA developed a [Compendium of Rural Age-Friendly Best Practices](#). These best practices address care coordination, caregiver support and resources, mental and behavioral health, community programming, CHWs, 4Ms, and state-level priorities for rural older adults. Key initiatives within the compendium are:

- Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) - [Connected Care for Older Adults Program](#), which is a resourceful program designed to support frail older adults in rural areas. CHWs provide comprehensive, patient-centered, age-friendly care by conducting home visits, providing health education, and connecting patients with existing community services.
- Midland Care Connection, with the National PACE Association, established the [Midland Care PACE](#). This program specifically serves older adults across 15 Kansas counties and helps enrollees maintain their independence and safety in their homes and communities. PACE provides holistic care to meet the needs of its enrollees.
- The University of California's [Multisector Plan for Aging](#) (MPA) program, funded by the SCAN Foundation, focuses on improving services and establishing tailored solutions to address the challenges rural older adults face. Rural elders became champions of their own care by contributing to their advocacy and providing data used in the needs assessments that drove strategic planning for cross-sector program development.

Together, these practices, along with many others in the compendium, demonstrated how community partnerships and evidence-based approaches can help rural older adults and their support systems take an active role in their care to achieve healthier and more independent lives.

Behind all of this is a growing recognition: health does not happen in isolation, but it is shaped by policy change.

Policy change cannot be left out when advocating for older adults to champion their health. Due to this, NRHA has developed rural aging policy priorities for the initiative: [NRHA highlights rural aging priorities at Policy Institute](#). Through federal policies and initiatives like the [Rural Health Transformation Program](#) (RHTP), rural older adults can benefit as states incorporate age-friendly initiatives into their implementation. RHTP is a federal program that provides \$50 billion to stabilize and strengthen rural health systems. NRHA has been a leader in tracking how states plan to implement their RHTP funds. NRHA, through the NRAFI in collaboration with [Stratis Health](#) (partner), is advocating for states to integrate age-friendly programs into RHTP implementation.

The NRAFI has produced several articles detailing how States can incorporate rural age-friendly care initiatives into their RHTP implementation, and ASA invited NRHA to write a blog on [Integrating Rural Age-Friendly Care Initiatives into States' RHTP Implementation](#). The NRAFI has also compiled the [RHTP States' Breakdown of Aging Initiatives](#), which is a *living document* and summarizes state initiatives that incorporated activities to support the rural aging population in their RHTP applications. These programs help rural older adults champion their health by supporting their independence and increasing their access to preventive care. Some key initiatives include:

- *Expansion of care models tailored to older adults:*
 - Implementing and expanding access to PACE sites in rural communities. (CT, KS, LA, MA, PA, WV)
- *Chronic disease prevention and wellness:*
 - Alzheimer's and related Dementia, engaging exercises (CT, GA, ID, TN, WA)
 - Lifestyle Medicine 6 pillars for reducing risk (OH)
 - *Home-Based Care Models: Aging in Place*
- *Mobile clinics and Telehealth monitoring* (HI, TN, WV)
 - Transportation (GA)
 - Revenue Strengthening and AAA partnership (MD)
- *Workforce and Caregivers Support, training, development, and sustainability:*
 - CHW's integration into primary care and outreach programs (HI, OR)
 - The hub-and-spoke network to connect specialized clinics with existing neuropsychiatry resources, telehealth, and trained non-clinical staff (TN)
- *Digital Access and Literacy*
 - Technology training (CT)

Additionally, the Initiative and its partners have developed RHTP resources that can help older adults and their care teams make more informed decisions about their wellness.

NRHA and [Stratis Health](#) blog on NRHA's Rural Health Voices Blog: [Incorporating age-friendly strategies into the Rural Health Transformation Program](#).

NRHA, Stratis Health, and six other partners developed the [Rural Healthy Aging Policy and Infrastructure Opportunities and Resources](#) document. This is a living document providing Age-Friendly/RHTP resources and will be revised as new resources become available.

For more NRAFI RHTP aging resources, you can visit NRHA's new NRAFI RHTP Aging Webpage, [Implementing RHTP with a Rural Aging Lens](#), which is within the [National Rural Age-Friendly Initiatives Resources Hub](#). For general NRHA RHTP policy updates, go to: [NRHA RHTP Advocacy Page](#).

Still on policy, NRHA, through the NRAFI, continuously writes policy papers that advocate for rural age-friendly care. Below are the NRAFI 2025 Policy Papers, which include:

- [Community health workers and rural age-friendly care](#)
- [Older Americans Act: Greatest economic and social needs of rural older adults](#)

Authors examine the barriers older adults in rural communities encounter when accessing preventive care and underscore the need for equitable policy solutions. Additional aging policy papers can be accessed through the NRAFI's [Age-Friendly Policy Papers Page](#).

This 2026 Older Americans Month, NRHA and the NRAFI invite rural communities, rural aging organizations, partners, and leaders to continue building systems that empower older adults to *champion their health* through access, prevention, advocacy, education, best practices, and overall policy change to truly reflect what matters most to older adults.

Sample Article from Administration for Community Living – *SRHAs may edit and use the content freely without attribution.*

Celebrating Older Americans Month: Champion Your Health

Celebrated every May, Older Americans Month (OAM) is led by the Administration for Community Living (ACL). Established in 1963, OAM is a time to recognize older Americans' contributions, highlight aging trends, and reaffirm commitments to serving older adults in our communities.

This year's theme, "Champion Your Health," focuses on prevention, wellness, and personal responsibility as cornerstones of healthy aging. It encourages older adults to take an active role in their health — advocating for themselves, accessing preventive care, and making informed decisions that support independence.

[Insert quote from community advocate, organization leader, or expert. Example: “Championing your health is about making daily choices that support your body and mind,” said [spokesperson]. “Small, consistent actions — from preventive care to staying socially connected — can help people maintain their health and independence as they age.”]

This Older Americans Month, communities and individuals alike can take steps to champion health and advance healthy aging.

How can community groups, businesses, and organizations mark OAM?

- Promote OAM through newsletters, meetings, and social media channels.
- Invite community members to share stories and reflections using #ChampionYourHealth.
- Highlight practical tips and trusted resources that support prevention and healthy aging.
- Elevate local programs and events that help older adults stay healthy, active, and engaged.

How can individuals take charge of their health at every age?

- Stay up to date on preventive care and screenings.
- Build and maintain social connections that support emotional well-being.
- Choose nutritious, minimally processed foods.
- Incorporate regular physical activity to maintain strength and mobility.
- Practice daily habits that support mental health and resilience.

[Add local contacts, social media/website links, specific resources, events, etc. here.]

For more information and downloadable materials, visit acl.gov/oam *[or your URL]* and join the conversation using #OlderAmericansMonth.

Chunk (Social Media Graphics) to work with

1. [ACL’s Older Americans Month Social Media’s Page](#)
 - a. [Evergreen covers for X, Facebook, and LinkedIn \(.zip\)](#)
 - b. [Evergreen social media feed images \(.zip\)](#)

NRHA Enewsletter items

1. Each May, [Older Americans Month](#) invites us to recognize the contributions of older adults while supporting their ability to live healthy and independent lives. Led by the Administration for Community Living, this national observance serves as a reminder of older adults' experience, resilience, and contributions to their community, as well as our commitment to support older adults through programs, care systems, and policies that promote well-being.
2. The National Rural Age-Friendly Initiative is a joint effort between the National Rural Health Association and The John A. Hartford Foundation to develop resources, partnerships, and strategies to build age-friendly care for the one in five older adults living in rural geographies. Utilizing a national network of rural health experts, NRHA is implementing the initiative through convenings, communications, educational activities, and community health worker trainings. [Learn more and find out how you can get involved.](#)
3. When it comes to their health, older adults should have their voices heard. But all too often, conversations with health professionals – and even family members – can leave older adults feeling like their concerns were brushed aside. To better empower older patients, combat ageism in the health system, and ultimately improve care, AARP is working with health professionals and partners like NRHA to promote age-friendly health. [Learn how My Health Checklist can help](#) health care providers and older adults focus on what matters.

[This is taken from the AARP/NRHA/IHI Rural CHWs CoP program blog:

<https://www.aarp.org/pri/initiatives/what-matters-to-older-adults/>]

4. More than 20 percent of Americans 65 and older live in rural areas, creating an urgent need for effective policies and programs to address the challenges of aging. Through the National Rural Age-Friendly Initiative supported by The John A. Hartford Foundation, NRHA encourages states to integrate rural age-friendly care initiatives and older adult health priorities into their Rural Health Transformation Program implementation. <https://generations.asaging.org/integrating-rural-age-friendly-care-initiatives-into-states-rhnp-implementation>

NRHA Social Media Pieces

1. My Health Checklist empowers patients to prioritize what matters most while helping community health workers and providers deliver age-friendly, patient-centered care. Read more: <https://www.ihl.org/library/blog/how-my-health-checklist-changes-conversation-rural-community-health-workers-and-older>
 2. May is Older Americans Month! The 2026 theme, #ChampionYourHealth, highlights prevention, wellness, and personal responsibility as cornerstones of healthy aging. Join us in celebrating the resilience and vitality of older adults. #OlderAmericansMonth
 3. This #OlderAmericansMonth, we're encouraging everyone to #ChampionYourHealth! 🙌 Take an active role in managing your health, accessing preventive care, and making informed decisions to support your independence. Learn more at acl.gov/oam
 4. A key piece of #OlderAmericansMonth and the National Rural Age-Friendly Initiative is strengthening the role of community health workers, who are trusted advocates in rural communities, to ensure older adults can age in place. #RuralHealth
<https://www.ruralhealth.us/blogs/2026/03-march/two-years-of-rural-chw-4ms-training-development,-and-leadership-in-texas>
 5. Through the National Rural Age-Friendly Initiative supported by The John A. Hartford Foundation, NRHA encourages states to integrate rural age-friendly care initiatives and older adult health priorities into their #RHTP implementation. Find out how:
<https://generations.asaging.org/integrating-rural-age-friendly-care-initiatives-into-states-rhnp-implementation/> #ruralhealth
- [The John A. Hartford Foundation is @johnahartford on X.]
6. A) Rural community health workers share how using IHI's My Health Checklist changes the conversation and helps them deliver age-friendly, patient-centered care to older adults:
<https://www.ihl.org/library/blog/how-my-health-checklist-changes-conversation-rural-community-health-workers-and-older> #ruralhealth #OlderAmericansMonth
 7. Since 2020, the Mississippi State Department of Health has become a national leader in rural age-friendly public health by prioritizing policies that allow older adults to live full, meaningful lives. Find out how they did it: <https://www.ruralhealth.us/blogs/2025/07/a-lifespan-approach-prioritizing-public-health-for-rural-older-adults> #ruralhealth #OlderAmericansMonth

8. Want to learn more about providing age-friendly care to older adults in your rural community? NRHA’s National Rural Age-Friendly Initiative Resource Hub offers toolkits, literature, replicable best practices, and more:
https://www.ruralhealth.us/programs/center-for-rural-public-population-health/national-rural-age-friendly-initiative?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=21099179409&gbraid=0AAAAAqL6iYssn-FMwTnVhqSdlbNju_v6_&gclid=CjwKCAjwhqfPBhBWEiwAZo196n0Cz2ovmTsuGqaLb1xmLc3I3t7Lz7qXRmqbxVfRv8sHKLx3r-LUhRoCUI0QAvD_BwE #ruralhealth

Sample ACL Social Media Posts

These sample posts amplify key messages and promote engagement throughout Older Americans Month. They align with the 2026 theme, “Champion Your Health,” and are ready to use or tailor. Include #OlderAmericansMonth or #ChampionYourHealth to help your post reach more people.

- Every May, Older Americans Month celebrates the contributions of older adults and reaffirms our commitment to serving them. The 2026 theme, “Champion Your Health,” highlights prevention, wellness, and personal responsibility as cornerstones of healthy aging. [ACL.gov/OAM](https://acl.gov/OAM)
- Have you heard? It’s Older Americans Month! Don’t miss activities and events we have planned — visit our page to learn more and get involved: [URL] #OlderAmericansMonth
- We all have different ways to support our health and well-being. What’s yours? This Older Americans Month, share how you #ChampionYourHealth.
- Physical activity is essential to good health. No matter how you choose to move, daily activity supports strength, balance, and independence. This Older Americans Month and beyond, champion your health by staying active. #ChampionYourHealth
- Championing your health involves being proactive — making healthy choices, staying active, and taking steps to prevent problems before they start. This May, stay engaged in decisions that support long-term health and independence. #OlderAmericansMonth
- Moving more, eating well, and staying socially connected all contribute to overall well-being. At [NAME], we support small, consistent steps that promote lifelong health. #ChampionYourHealth
- Did you know? Many chronic conditions once thought to be a natural part of aging can be prevented or managed through healthy habits like regular checkups, good nutrition, and physical activity. #ChampionYourHealth

- Championing your health includes self-advocacy — speaking up about your needs, understanding your options, and making informed decisions. This Older Americans Month, commit to taking charge of your well-being. #ChampionYourHealth
- Older Americans Month is underway, but there's still time to get involved! Find ideas for activities to do on your own or with your community at [ACL.gov/OAM](https://acl.gov/OAM). #OlderAmericansMonth