

## Food for Thought

**D**id you know that getting adequate food and nutrition can help prevent or delay many chronic diseases and disease-related disabilities? Good nutri-

tion begins with eating healthy meals.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,

Administration on Aging, through the Older Americans Act (OAA), provides for more than 115 million group-setting meals and 142 million home-delivered meals each year to older adults.

Millions of older adults are malnourished, often because they do not take advantage of the programs available to assist them. The OAA Nutrition Program provides nutrition and other services to older people age 60+ throughout the country. There may be a program near you in which you can participate.

Most programs provide five meals a week in group settings as well as home-delivered meals to those who need it. These meals and other nutrition services are provided in a variety of

settings, such as senior centers, schools, and individual homes. Volunteers often deliver meals to homebound persons and spend additional time to check on their

welfare. Other services include nutrition screening, education, counseling, and many other supportive and health services.

## Senior Volunteers Make a Difference

**W**ho says that growing older means resting on your laurels? Older Americans are volunteering in record numbers, according to a 1999 survey sponsored by the Independent Sector. In 1998, a total of 26.4 million older volunteers (age 55+) gave approximately 5.6 billion hours of their time at a value of \$77.2 billion.

Older volunteers are the backbone of home- and community-based services and nutrition programs funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging. Excellent volunteer opportunities abound in these programs. They include opportunities to assist at group meal sites and deliver meals to the homebound, men-

toring school children, repairing and weatherizing homes of low-income and frail older persons, counseling older persons about a variety of topics such as legal and financial concerns, and serving on a Senior Medicare Patrol Project to report waste, fraud, and abuse in health care.



## Legal Assistance for People 60+

**L**egal services can be quite expensive—especially if you are on a limited income, as many senior citizens are. However, legal hot-lines and legal assistance programs funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Aging provide free or low-cost legal assistance to older people who are socially or economically disadvantaged, frail, or at-risk.



Older Americans Acts legal

service providers help with legal problems facing older Americans by offering more than one million hours of assistance a year. AoA-funded legal programs also feature community education sessions about legal questions or problems, provide self-help materials, and refer older people to legal aid offices or to pro-bono or reduced-fee private attorneys who specialize in elder rights protection.

## Staying Active and Engaged

**I**f you think retirement is boring and lonely, think again. More than 10 million older adults are participating in activities at multipurpose senior centers across the nation.

Senior centers provide a source of vital community-based social and nutrition supports that help older adults remain independent in their communities. Some of the programs at senior centers include health, fitness, and wellness programs, meal and nutrition programs, information and assistance, recreational opportunities, transportation services, arts programs, volunteer opportunities, educational opportunities, employment assistance, intergenerational programs, and social and community action opportunities.



## When an Older Person Needs Help

**C**onfused on where to go for information and assistance or to determine whether you and your loved ones qualify for programs available to older Americans? Search no further! The Older Americans Act Information and Assistance Network can help you access social and health services available for older adults across the country.

Sponsored and funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging, this network and its national, state, and local

Information and Assistance components and services partners provide older adults and their caregivers accurate and unbiased information and referral services to help in assessing their needs, in identifying the most appropriate services to meet their needs, and in linking the older persons and caregivers to agencies providing these services.

More than 2,500 information and assistance programs across the country provide direct service to older persons and caregivers through nearly 14 million contacts annually.

## Steps to Healthy Aging



**A**sk people what it means to grow old, and you might hear words like frail, ill, and inactive. But

these conditions describe only a small portion of the nation's older population. For example, only about 5 percent of older Americans live in nursing homes, with the balance living in their own homes or semi-independently.

In fact, by paying attention to such basics as getting enough physical activity, older people can live longer, more independently, and with greater satisfaction than ever before. What's more, they needn't do it on their own. There is a wealth of information available from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging, and many local low-cost programs can help make becoming more physically active easier.

## Caregiver Survival Tips

**F**or people living in more than 22 million households in America, providing unpaid help to an older person who lives in their community has become a reality, according to the 1997 Family Caregiving in the U.S. Survey conducted by the National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP. Often caregivers concentrate totally on providing this informal assistance for the senior and not on themselves—the caregivers.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging (AoA) suggests these survival tips to caregivers:

1. Plan ahead
2. Learn about available resources
3. Take one day at a time
4. Develop contingency plans
5. Accept help
6. Make your health a priority
7. Get enough rest
8. Make time for leisure
9. Be good to yourself
10. Share your feelings with others

The AoA National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP), established through the U.S. Older Americans Act, provides assistance to family caregivers.

## Planning for Your Life Stages

**A**dvancements in medicine, public health, and technology have made it more common for people to live much longer—even beyond 90. Therefore, both younger and older adults have a good reason to anticipate their future by creating a Life Stages Plan that can help them to adapt to their changing needs throughout their entire lifetime.

Creating a Life Stages Plan doesn't just address choices one makes later in life. It should include choices you can make now to help protect your health, build economic security, and secure the right living arrangements. Creating such a plan can help you discover new ways to engage in productive and satisfying activities, including working or volunteering, and can help empower you to be an informed consumer.

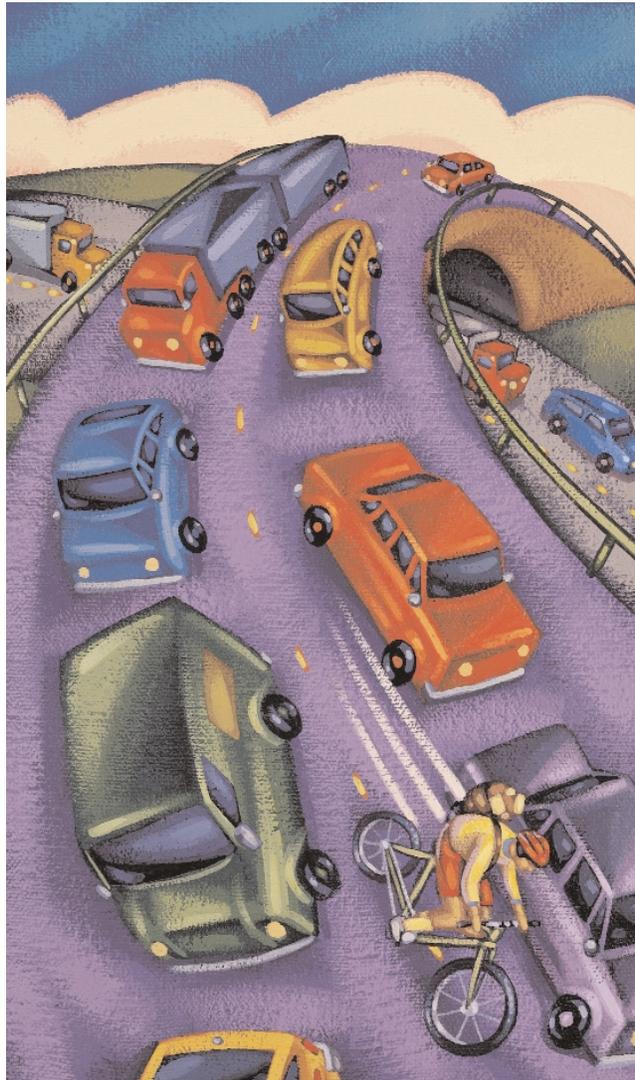


## Where Do You Want to Go?

**W**here do you want to go? The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging (AoA) and the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration are working together to ensure resources are available for older Americans to get where they want and need to go. In January, Assistant Secretary for Aging Josefina G. Carbonell and Federal Transit Administrator Jennifer Dorn signed a Memorandum of Understanding to increase coordination of transportation services for older adults. The Memorandum of Understanding outlines activities in five areas:

1. Public awareness and outreach regarding available transportation services,
2. Data collection and dissemination of promising practices,
3. Technical assistance to states and local communities,
4. Regular collection of stakeholder input, and
5. Local and state transportation plan development

“The overall goal of the collaborative activities is to make it easier for local transportation



providers to serve older people and help them remain independent and participating in their communities,” said Assistant Secretary Carbonell. Administrator Dorn agreed that

common sense transportation solutions are the key to promoting independence and opportunity for older adults.

Through funds made available by the Older Americans Act, AoA provides support for many state and local transportation programs, including older driver education and “demand/response” transportation options like Call-and-Ride, curb-to-curb, door-to-door, and through-the-door services. In FY 2001, approximately 40 million one-way trips were provided to older persons by 2,900 local transportation

providers at a cost of \$69 million. In addition, approximately \$125 million was leveraged by state and area agencies on Aging to further meet the transportation needs of older persons.

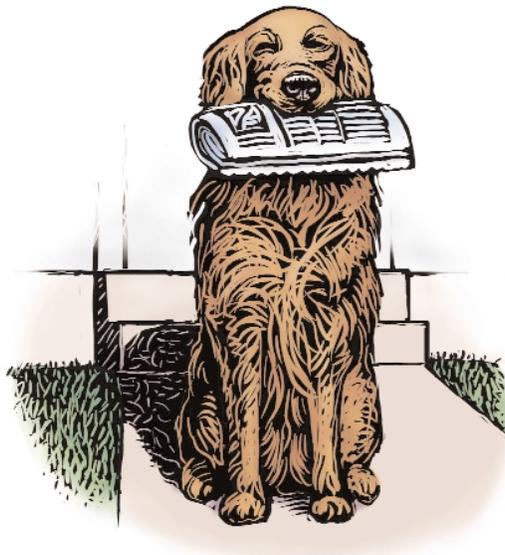
## The Connection Between Elder Abuse and Animal Cruelty

**M**any older Americans are particularly attached to their pets. Companion animals not only play a very important role in the lives of older adults, they also represent important links to the past. Pets also provide comfort, stress relief, humor, attention, protection, and foster social interaction between the elderly and others. This special relationship, however, also makes pets vulnerable to abuse by those who want to exert power and control over an older adult.

“In more than two-thirds of domestic elder abuse cases, the perpetrators are family members—frequently the children or grandchildren of the elderly victim—who may neglect or abuse an elder’s pet as a form of control or retaliation, out of frustration over their caretaking responsibilities, or as a way to extract financial assets from the victim,” says Virginia M. Prevas, Manager of the First Strike campaign, a program of the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS).

Cases of extreme animal neglect may also reflect elder persons’ inability to provide adequate care for themselves and thus indicate the need for assistance.

Domestic elder abuse and animal cruelty can be investigated and stopped—if they come to the attention of authorities such as adult protective services, animal control, the local humane society,



ty, or law enforcement.

There are ways that all of us can help prevent animal cruelty and elder abuse. They include:

- **Become familiar with the signs of elder abuse.** These include physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, abandonment, and financial or material exploitation.
- **Check the physical condition of pets.** Ask about any recent health problems or injuries. Pets are often malnourished in abu-

sive homes; their ribs may be visible, and their food bowls may be empty.

- **Examine the animals’ behavior.** Pets in abusive homes are often frightened, withdrawn, aggressive, or overly protective.
- **Ask questions.** If a pet is suddenly missing or has been moved outside, ask why. Responses to these questions may lead you to discover animal cruelty and give the older person a chance to share concerns or report abuse.
- **Find out who to call in your community if you suspect animal cruelty or elder abuse.** The blue pages in your phone book will include phone numbers for local social service and animal protection agencies.
- **Support legislation to improve animal cruelty and elder abuse laws.**

For more information, contact the HSUS’ First Strike campaign at 1-888-213-0956 or visit the website at [www.hsusfirststrike.org](http://www.hsusfirststrike.org). For a free brochure on the connection between elder abuse and animal cruelty, please e-mail [firststrike@hsus.org](mailto:firststrike@hsus.org).

## Redefining Retirement

**T**urning 60 does not necessarily mean planning to retire soon. Already, more than 4.3 million Americans age 65 and over are in the labor force (working or actively seeking work), according to the report *A Profile of Older Americans: 2002*, published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging. In the future these numbers are likely to increase. The 2002 Staying Ahead of the Curve career study sponsored by AARP found that 69 percent of workers between 45 and 74 plan to continue working in some capacity during their retirement



years. This coincides with the Census Bureau's projection that by 2006, 58 million workers will be over age 45, about 39 percent of the U.S. workforce.

Survey respondents said they work not only for money but also for intangible benefits, such as enjoyment and a sense of purpose. Despite the majority of the respondents feeling optimistic about their own employment, 67 percent have concerns that age discrimination remains a major barrier to their advancement and well-being in the workplace.

Many organizations around the country host job fairs, job placement, special training, and other services to help older Americans secure and maintain part-time and full-time employment.