

Boston Seniority

Age Strong Commission

City of Boston

Mayor Michelle Wu

Age My Way! p.16-23



May 2022
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Free Publication



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p. 4



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In This Issue...

We celebrate Older Americans Month (OAM) each May. OAM is a time to acknowledge the contributions of past and current older persons in our country. In this issue, we focus on the theme of Aging My Way, which is an opportunity for all of us to explore the many ways older adults can remain in and be involved with their communities. See pages 16 and 23, for more information.



Boston Seniority

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Michelle Wu
Mayor

Emily K. Shea
Commissioner

Ami Bennitt
Director of Communications

Martha Rios
Editor and Photographer

Andrew Higginbottom
*Staff Assistant
Writer and Photographer*

City Hall Plaza-Room 271
Boston, MA 02201

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Stay Connected with the Age Strong Commission:



Main number: (617) 635-4366



Website: boston.gov/age-strong
Email: agestrong@boston.gov



Facebook: @AgeStrongBos



Twitter: @AgeStrongBos

Do you have a story to share?
We want to hear from you!

Email us at BostonSeniority@boston.gov



From the Mayor's Desk

Hello Boston!

Welcome to the May 2022 issue of Boston Seniority Magazine.

Spring is in the air! The sun is shining, flowers are blooming, and Bostonians are filling our city with the sounds of life and laughter.

May is Older Americans Month and this year's theme is "Age My Way." It's about aging in place, and keeping older adults in their homes and in their communities. It recognizes the diverse experiences of our older residents, that you each have unique needs and preferences. Inside this issue, you'll meet a few of Boston's older adults and they'll share their perspectives on "Age My Way."

May is also Mental Health Awareness Month. Our mental health contributes to our overall health, so it's important to know the signs of depression, anxiety, and dementia. In many cases, staying connected to our loved ones and to resources and services are key factors in maintaining our mental health.

Of course, May is also Asian and Pacific Islander American Heritage Month. It's a time to celebrate the incredible accomplishments and contributions of the APIA community. The Boston Public Library has compiled a list of books by artful and talented authors that reflect the community's beauty and diversity. You can check some of these books out online or take in the sun on a walk to your nearby branch!

Read on for some useful tips as well as a highlight of upcoming events geared toward our older adults.

I'm looking forward to seeing you at coffee hours in our parks this spring!

Sincerely,

Michelle Wu

Michelle Wu
Mayor of Boston



▶ Book Picks

BPL Staff Book Picks

Source: Boston Public Library

May is Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month – a celebration of Asians and Pacific Islanders in the United States. While no one book (or even hundreds of books!) could fully reflect the diversity of the Asian American experience, we hope that this selection of recent releases will highlight current Asian American representation in print.

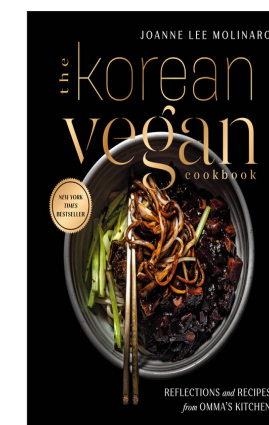


Heart of Fire

by Mazie K. Hirono

Memoir. Hirono, the first Asian American woman in the US Senate, chronicles her early years of poverty as a poor immigrant in Hawaii and her five decades rising through

the political ranks in the state and federal levels.

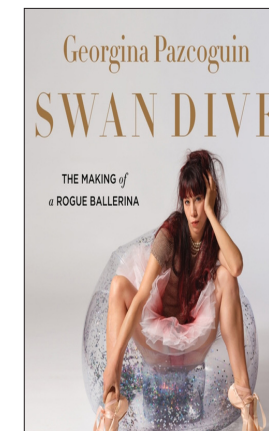


The Korean Vegan Cookbook

by Joanne Lee Molinaro

Food Writing. Traditional and reimagined Korean recipes alongside nostalgic reflections by a first generation Korean American

vegan lawyer.



Swan Dive

by Georgina Pazcoguin

Memoir. NYC Ballet's first Asian American soloist gives readers an honest look at the world of elite ballet, without downplaying either her love for the art form or the traumas

and microaggressions she has faced as a professional ballerina.

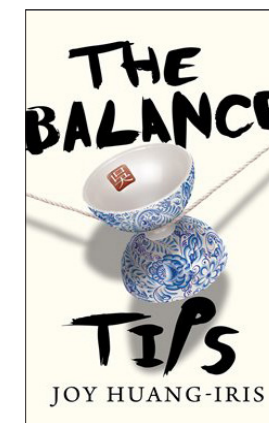


Imagine Us, The Swarm

by Muriel Leung

Poetry & Art. In lyrical explorations that play with the physicality of text and space on the page, Leung writes of migration, memory, xenophobia, familial history, and the body—its limits and

the possibility of collective strength as a swarm.



The Balance Tips

by Joy Huang-Iris

Fiction. When 25-year-old Fay Goodson, a queer, multiracial woman, loses her Taiwanese grandfather, her grandmother moves to America, forcing Fay, her mother, and her aunt to confront unsettling truths

about their family and each other.



For more titles or BPL info, visit bpl.org or call 617-536-5400.

MAY
ASIAN
AMERICAN
AND PACIFIC
ISLANDER
HERITAGE MONTH

Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month is recognized during the month of May in the United States and honors the contributions and influence of Asian Americans and Pacific Islander Americans to the history, culture, and achievements. It was originally passed into the legislature in 1992.

During Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month, communities celebrate the achievements and contributions of Asian and Pacific Americans with community festivals, government-sponsored activities and educational activities for students.

The Boston Public Library has curated a list of AAPI books for children, teens, and adults. To learn more, visit: bpl.bibliocommons.com

WGBH TV has produced a 3-part film series called Asian Americans, offering perspective on a history, told through intimate personal stories. To learn more, visit: wgbh.org/asian-pacific-american-heritage-month

Bunker Hill Community College is a Title III Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution, designated by the U.S. Department of Education. They have many educational, cultural, and social programs on deck in May. To learn more, visit: bhcc.edu/aapimonth/

► Legal Matters

Getting Our Ducks in a Row:
Legal Planning for Older Adults
How is a Living Will different
from a Traditional Will?

As we age, it's important to think through and decide how we want to manage decisions regarding our healthcare and belongings. There are a handful of documents older adults can create and file with the state to make our wishes known, and followed. These are called advanced directives and include Healthcare Proxy, Living Will, Power of Attorney, and others.

A Living Will concerns your healthcare. It is a written document stating whether you do or don't want your death artificially prolonged if you have a terminal illness, injury, or if your death is imminent and the medical treatment you are receiving is prolonging the dying process. It can also state whether medication should be used to alleviate pain and suffering.

Massachusetts is one of only three states that recognizes Healthcare Proxies, but does not recognize Living Wills. However, Living Wills are still useful because they guide Healthcare Agents and physicians about the types of choices a person would make.



Unlike the living will, a better known document called the will or last will and testament, is one's written declaration of how he/she wants his/her assets distributed after his/her death. The laws surrounding the validity of wills are unique to each state. Therefore, a will must be executed in accordance with the laws of the state in which it is executed.

To learn more about living wills and other planning documents call the Senior Legal Helpline at 800-342-5297.

Frauds to Watch Out For

Source: AARP



Criminals are constantly coming up with new cons. Here’s a closer look at scams becoming more common, along with expert advice on avoiding them.

Google Voice Scam

Let’s say you’ve posted a notice online — an item for sale or a plea to find a lost pet — and included your phone number. A crook will call you, feign interest, but want to first verify that YOU aren’t a scammer. They’ll send a verification code from Google Voice and ask you to read it back. However, they’re setting up a Google Voice account in your name, pretending to be you, hiding their footprint from law enforcement. Never share verification codes.

Rental Assistance Cons

As eviction bans expire, renters should be on the lookout for rental assistance scams. Over 583,000 older adults were behind on rent in 2021, opening the door for scammers to impersonate government or nonprofit employees, requesting personal info and money up front for applications. Only apply to legit rental assistance programs run by government or nonprofit organizations, like Boston’s Office of Housing Stability’s rental relief fund.

Local Tax Impostors

Scammers impersonate law enforcement and tax collection agencies to get you to share personal information or send money to “settle your tax debt.” They may threaten to revoke your driver’s license or passport. Some pretend to offer state tax relief. Ignore such calls and emails. Real tax agencies, from the IRS to your town tax collector, do business by mail and won’t ask you for passwords, bank account or credit card info.

‘Favor for a Friend’ Gift Cards

You get an email from a friend asking for a favor. She’s having trouble with a credit card and can’t buy the gift card she needs for a birthday present. Will you buy the card and call her with the numbers on the back? She’ll pay you back. But this favor’s really a fraud, with an impostor making the request. If you do as told, you’ll never see the money again, as gift cards aren’t protected like debit/credit cards. Target, Google Play, Apple, eBay and Walmart are the top cards used by scammers.

AARP’s Fraud Watch Network can help you spot and avoid scams. For more information, call their toll-free fraud helpline at 877-908-3360 or visit aarp.org

Older Adults & the Benefits of Pets *By Pat Kelleher*

You might not be able to tell when you first meet her that Cathy MacLaury is a self-professed “political junkie”—until she mentions her beloved cat: Barack. Yes, that’s Barack. MacLaury, who moved to Boston 41 years ago, shares her Fenway apartment with Barack and especially during these past few years of forced isolation, Barack has proven to be perfect company. “I don’t know what I would have done without him,” she says. Prior to COVID restrictions, she would frequent the Peterborough Senior Center up to three times a week. “During COVID, I did my civic duty supporting local restaurants with Uber eats and occasionally attended Zoom gatherings,” she says “but Barack was my constant companion.”

The relationship between older people and animals can be special. In April, that was on full display at the Veronica B. Smith Senior Center which hosted a “meet and pet” animal session, much to the delight of those in attendance. Paul Wong, a regular there, says his Brighton apartment won’t allow pets, so getting time with the baby goats, bunnies, and chickens (from Animal Affairs of Rehoboth) was just the pick-me-up he needed. Studies have shown that the very presence of animals can help reduce the anxiety, agitation, and depression that can be side effects of loneliness and even dementia.

Alleviating feelings of loneliness and reducing isolation among older adults



Cathy MacLaury & Barack

Paul Wong at VBS with Baby Goat



Noelle Cryts, Joanne Burrill, & Cecilia Kabachus with pets

A PetPal volunteer

is the core mission of Boston-based FriendshipWorks. Their visiting PetPals Program is designed to do just that. After all, who can resist a wagging tail or a purring kitten?

Their pet volunteers visit older adults, mostly in local nursing homes. PetPals volunteers and their animals are carefully screened for temperament and how to ensure the best possible experience for human and animal volunteers. According to Program Director Alyssa Gocinski, they have several pet volunteers who are older adults, and they are always looking for more. To become a volunteer call PetPals at 617-482-1510.

Bus Buddy Chronicles

AmeriCorps Volunteers teach older adults how to use the MBTA



Age Strong recently produced the Bus Buddy Chronicles, a 3-part video series showing older adult Bus Buddy volunteers teaching older adults how to navigate public transportation in Boston. A screening event was held at the Veronica B. Smith Senior Center in Brighton, with director Dominga Martin and Bus Buddies in attendance.

Over 3 short videos, a group of 3 older adult women from Dorchester and Mattapan, learn how to use the bus, trolley, and subways by trained AmeriCorps RSVP volunteer Richard Lovell (from Mattapan). They learn about the subway and bus systems and how to buy, load, and use Charlie Cards.

As part of their travels, they stop to meet artist Rob Stull at the Fenway Art Walk to discuss his mural, hip-hop music, and art. Then they travel to the Museum of Fine Arts to meet artist Euka Holmes for a private tour of her exhibition Paper Stories, Layered Dream.

Bus Buddy volunteers go through a formal

two-day training with the MBTA. Training includes a classroom component followed by hands-on practice on the transport lines. Once trained, the volunteers are matched with Boston older adults and ride with them until they feel confident to ride independently.

“Working with seniors in our community,” says Bus Buddy Chronicles producer/director Dominga Martin, “was very special. Teaching them how to navigate the MBTA was useful--but also encouraging them to get out of the house and explore cultural sights in Boston, was inspiring, especially with the isolation caused by the pandemic and winter cold.

The video series will air on Boston City TV and Boston Neighborhood Network TV, as well as on boston.gov/agestrong. Bus Buddy Chronicles was made in partnership with the MBTA and with support from AmeriCorps. Boston residents interested in either becoming a Bus Buddy volunteer or learning how to use the MBTA should contact Boston’s Age Strong Commission at 617-635-4366.

Senior Companion Volunteer Profile: Rosamond Howard

By Pat Kelleher

For Rosamond Howard, being a Senior Companion Volunteer is a lot about giving, but also a little about getting back. A volunteer since 2017, the Dorchester resident has assisted older adults across Boston with everything from grocery shopping to getting out for a walk in the park—to just sitting and talking.

“It’s rewarding because the clients are so grateful,” Rosamond says, “but it also makes me feel better about myself.” Although she has 2 adult children, 5 grandchildren, and 2 great grandchildren, Howard lives alone. Being a Senior Companion, she says, gets her out of the house when she might not otherwise.

She speaks fondly of a past client, Ms. M., who lived alone in the North End. At age 100, Ms. M. didn’t get out much, but on every visit, Rosamond accompanied her to the North End Food Hall where they ate lunch and just enjoyed being part of the lively neighborhood. Rosamond didn’t mind that she took 2 trains and a bus to get to Ms. M.

One of her current clients lives closer, but has different needs. “Mr. R.



suffers from social anxiety,” says Rosamond, “so with him it’s either getting out to sit on a local bench or occasionally accompanying him to a medical appointment.” Getting to know the clients’ needs and interests is an important part of the work, she says. “Good listening skills help a lot.”

Joseph Goncalves, who runs Boston’s Age Strong Commission’s Volunteer Unit, applauds Rosamond as “among the most dedicated, kind, and caring volunteers.” With 50 Senior Companions now enrolled and more than 120 clients, Joseph says they continue to recruit among Bostonians 55+. Volunteers serve 5 to 20 hours a week. All that’s needed is a warm heart and a desire to be of service, just like Rosamond Howard.

▶ Did you Know?
May Awareness

National Osteoporosis Awareness and Prevention Month

Source: Bone Health and Osteoporosis Foundation

Osteoporosis is a condition characterized by low bone density. People with low bone density stand a greater chance of fracture. Older adults are at greater risk from falls, which can lead to bone fracture.

Through Osteoporosis Awareness and Prevention Month, older adults are encouraged to learn about risk factors and preventative measures to promote healthy bones like sufficient calcium and vitamin D intake and doing bone healthy exercises.

Osteoporosis is more common in women

than in men; approximately 80% of osteoporosis cases are in women. Teenage girls are encouraged to build strong bones while developing, by eating foods high in calcium and vitamin D, eating fruits and vegetables every day, and regular exercise.

During mid-adult life women are encouraged to talk to their doctors, learn about preventing osteoporosis, and increasing bone density.

For more information on National Osteoporosis Awareness Month, visit bonehealthandosteoporosis.org

National Blood Pressure Awareness Month

Source: Centers for Disease and Control Prevention

High blood pressure affects 1 in 3 Americans — and it's the third leading cause of death in the U.S. Due to a tendency to show either minor, or even no symptoms at all, high blood pressure has earned the nickname "the silent killer." Knowledge of one's high blood pressure — and then taking action — greatly reduces possible health problems. Speak with your doctor, and try these tips:

Check your blood pressure

Around 120 over 80 is considered the range for normal blood pressure. If it's higher, consult with your doctor. He/she may suggest simple lifestyle changes like diet and exercise, or depending on the situation, he/she may suggest medication.

Get moving

One of the best ways to maintain healthy blood pressure is through exercise. A walk, bike ride, swim, jog, or any other aerobic activity will help keep your blood pressure low, and your body healthy.

Adjust your diet

Eating a diet that is rich in whole grains, fruits, vegetables and low-fat dairy products — while avoiding sodium, saturated fat, and cholesterol can lower your blood pressure significantly.

For more information, visit cdc.gov/bloodpressure

Healthy Vision Month *Source: Centers for Disease and Control Prevention*

May is Healthy Vision Month! Taking care of your eyes should be a priority, like eating well and getting physical activity. To keep your eyes healthy, get an annual comprehensive dilated eye exam to check for common vision problems and eye diseases. It's the best way to find out if you need glasses or contacts, or are in the early stages of any eye-related diseases.

Some eye conditions can cause vision loss and even blindness. These include:

- Cataracts, a clouding of the eye
- Diabetic retinopathy, causing damage to the blood vessels in the back of the eye
- Glaucoma, damage to the optic nerve
- Age-related macular degeneration, which gradually affects central vision

Taking care of your eyes also may benefit your overall health. People with vision problems are more likely than those

with good vision to have diabetes, poor hearing, heart problems, high blood pressure, lower back pain and strokes, as well as have increased risk for falls, injury and depression. Among people aged 65 and older, 54.2 percent of those who are blind and 41.7 percent of those with impaired vision say their overall health is fair or poor. Just 21.5 percent of older Americans without vision problems reported fair to poor health. For more information on Healthy Vision month, visit cdc.gov/visionhealth



May Happenings: Get Out and About in Boston!

* Please note not all events are free and are subject to change

MAY

18

Lower Mills Arts & Crafts
Time: 3:00 pm - 4:00 pm
Location: BPL - Lower Mills Branch, 27 Richmond St., Dorchester **Contact Info:** Elise, 617-298-7841

MAY

19

Poetry Open Mic Night w/ Skoot Mosby & Stratusfier
Time: 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm
Location: BPL - Grove Hall Branch, 41 Geneva Ave, Dorchester **Contact Info:** Kate, 617-427-3337

MAY

20

Boston's National Bike to Work Day Festival
Time: 7:00 am - 9:00 am
Location: Downtown Crossing, Boston
Contact Info: 617-635-4680

MAY

21

Traditions of Chinese Acrobatics: A Performance Featuring Li Liu
Time: 10:00 am - 11:00 am
Location: BPL - Honan-Allston Branch, 300 North Harvard St., Allston **Contact Info:** Registration required - Hope, 617-787-6313

MAY

23

East Boston Tai Chi
Time: 1:30 pm - 2:30 pm
Location: BPL - East Boston Branch, 365 Bremen St., East Boston **Contact Info:** Margaret, 617-569-0271

MAY

24

Knitting/Crochet Circle
Time: 11:00 am - 1:00 pm
Location: BPL - Roslindale Branch, 4246 Washington St., Roslindale **Contact Info:** 617-323-2343

MAY

26

"City As Canvas: Above the Free Walls" Film Screening & Director Q&A
Time: 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm
Location: BPL - Jamaica Plain Branch, 30 South St., Jamaica Plain **Contact Info:** Shane, 617-524-2053

MAY

28

Dance Workshop: Latino Genres
Time: 11:00 am - 12:30 pm
Location: BPL - East Boston Branch, 365 Bremen St., East Boston **Contact Info:** Diana, 617-569-0271

MAY

31

Older Adults' Chair Yoga
Time: 11:00 am - 12:00 pm
Location: BPL - Codman Square Branch, 690 Washington St., Dorchester **Contact Info:** 617-859-2129

" Life does not have to be perfect to be wonderful."

- Annette Funicello

Reminder...

Mayor Wu's 2022 Neighborhood Coffee Hours 9:30 am - 10:30 am

- **Wednesday, May 18**
Ramler Park - 130 Peterborough St., Fenway/Kenmore
- **Friday, May 20**
Billings Field - 369 LaGrange St., West Roxbury
- **Wednesday, May 25**
Commonwealth Avenue Mall (Arlington St. entrance)
15 Commonwealth Ave., Back Bay
- **Friday, May 27**
Garvey Playground - 995 Morrissey Blvd, Dorchester

*Dates and times are subject to change

Consult social media for weather cancellations:
Facebook: @bostonparksdepartment
Twitter: @bostonparksdept
617-635-4505
boston.gov/parks

AGE MY WAY!



Older Americans Month is a time we celebrate the important role older adults play in our lives and communities. Older adults have built resilience and strength over their lives through successes, failures, joys, and difficulties. Their stories and contributions help to support and inspire others.

Aging can reveal opportunities and open new paths of understanding about ourselves and the world around us. Like with most things, aging can be what you make it. In this issue of Boston Seniority, we highlighted the importance of Older Americans Month and wanted you to share with us how you are “Aging Your Way.”

-Boston Seniority Team

MAY IS OLDER AMERICANS MONTH

Source: Administration for Community Living (ACL)

Historically, Older Americans Month has been a time to acknowledge the contributions of past and current older persons to our country, in particular, those who defended our country. Every President since Kennedy has issued a formal proclamation during or before the month of May inviting the entire nation to pay tribute, in some way, to older persons in their communities. Communities acknowledge Older Americans Month in a variety of ways, including is celebrated through ceremonies, events, fairs, parades, and forums.

Older adults play vital, positive roles in our communities – as family members, friends, mentors, volunteers, civic leaders, members of the workforce, and more. This year’s Older Americans Month theme is “age my way,” acknowledging that each older adult is unique, and that there’s no “right” way to age.

“Age My Way” focuses on older adults aging in their communities, living independently for as long as possible, and participating in ways they choose. While “Age My Way” can be different for each person, here are common things everyone can consider:

- **Planning:** think about what you will want/need in the future, from home or community-based services to community activities that interest you.

- **Engagement:** get/stay involved and contribute to your community through work, volunteer, and/or civic participation opportunities.

- **Access:** make home improvements and modifications, use assistive technologies, and customize supports to help you better age in place.

- **Connection:** maintain social activities and relationships to combat social isolation and stay connected to your community.

Diverse communities are strong communities. Ensuring that older adults remain involved and included in our communities for as long as possible benefits everyone.



OLDER ADULTS SHARE HOW THEY ARE "AGING THEIR WAY."

Sarah Freeman, 71, Jamaica Plain

"One of my greatest joys has been getting involved in local community organizations and activities. I want to have a purpose larger than myself – and to make a positive difference. Local improvement efforts can be very gratifying, whether it's a once a year park clean-up, occasional tree plantings, ongoing efforts for ped/bike improvements, community meetings, volunteering to help local non-profit organizations – the opportunities are endless! Sometimes things move slowly, and the results may not always go your way, but part of the reward is getting to know your neighbors, trying to understand many different perspectives, and then working together to find solutions."



Patricia "Pat" Kelleher, 67, South Boston

How do you stay involved and contribute to your community as you age?

"I am beginning to figure that out. I just retired after 25 years of working in homecare and I remain naturally attached to causes in that space. I serve on the volunteer planning committee for VNA Care/Boston and their annual fundraiser. And, since writing is a passion, I hope to continue volunteering with *Boston Seniority* magazine, connecting me to many Boston neighborhoods. Without a five-day work commitment, I'm more able to connect with causes and interests."



What advice would you give other retired Bostonians to stay involved in their communities?

"As newly retired myself, I'd like that advice, too! I'm starting with volunteering for smaller one-time things before committing to a more regular capacity. The recent beach and neighborhood clean up is an example. I'm glad group gatherings are returning as I look forward to attending book readings and lectures at libraries and bookstores."



Pat Kelleher was a reporter and editor for Boston Seniority from 1981-1985.

Smiler Haynes, 88, Dorchester

"I live by Muhammad Ali's quote 'service to others is the rent we pay for our room here on earth.' To other older adults, I would say to do all the good you can, for all the people you can, in every way you can, as long as you can. Make someone happy even if you are isolated. You will feel better for it. Make phone calls, send a card or a text message. Reach out to others."





CELEBRATE OLDER AMERICANS MONTH

There are so many ways to engage and contribute within your City of Boston community. Some of those ways include volunteering with the Age Strong Commission or connecting with fellow residents at community events. Throughout the City, older adults continue to age their way.

Boston Seniority wants to hear from you. How are you aging your way? We want to

highlight the many ways older adults can remain in and be involved with their communities.

Fill out the next page and share it with us by emailing bostonseniority@boston.gov or mail it to us at:

Boston Seniority
1 City Hall Square, Rm 271
Boston, MA 02201



"AGE MY WAY"

NAME:

AGE:

NEIGHBORHOOD:

PLANNING:

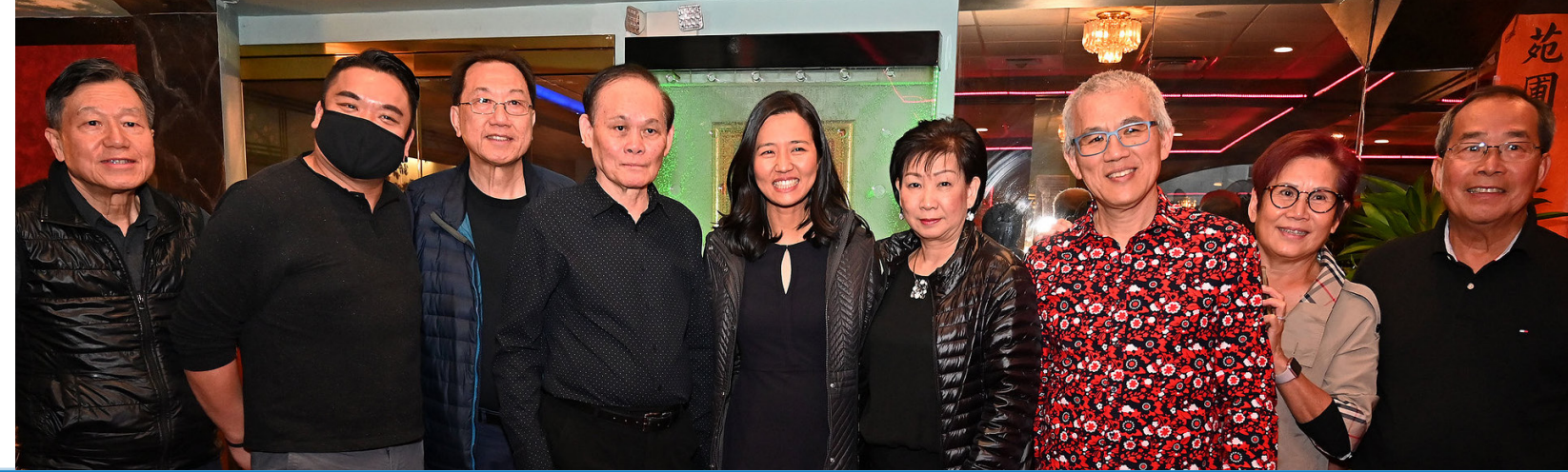
ENGAGEMENT:

ACCESS:

CONNECTION:

► In Boston, we Age Strong.

As part of the City's Human Services cabinet, The Age Strong Commission's mission is to enhance your life with meaningful programs, resources, and connections so we can live and age strong together in Boston.



We can help with:

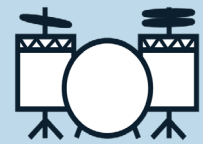
Call us for more details at 617-635-4366.



Access to Information and Benefits:

Our Community Advocates connect older adults to a comprehensive array of resources, benefits, and information. We can:

- Assist with applications for public benefits like Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and fuel assistance.
- Ease the process of applying for, and receiving, Medicare benefits.
- Assist older adults in accessing several tax relief exemptions and programs like the Elderly Exemption 41C, Senior Circuit Breaker Tax Credit, and others.
- Assist older adults with navigating systems including the aging network and city services.



Outreach and Engagement:

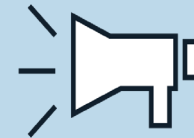
The Commission organizes many **in person and virtual** events and programs throughout the year.



Transportation:

We are committed to helping older adults continue to lead independent lives by connecting them to transportation resources. We offer:

- Free wheelchair-accessible shuttles that provide door-to-door service for non-emergency doctor's appointments. Call 617-635-3000 for more information.
- Taxi Coupons at discounted rates.



Volunteer Opportunities:

We operate volunteer programs that impact our work across the city:

- *RSVP* matches seniors with valuable volunteer opportunities in Boston.
- The *Senior Companion Program* matches seniors with homebound persons who need assistance and companionship.
- *Senior Greeters* volunteer their time to greet guests of City Hall.
- *Senior Property Tax Work-Off Program*: Qualified senior homeowners may work-off up to \$1,500 on their property tax bill by volunteering for a City agency.



Housing:

The Age Strong Commission works to ensure that older adults are able to find and maintain housing. We can:

- Assist with housing applications.
- Connect older adults with other City and community agencies that can provide resources for home repair and other challenging situations like hoarding.
- Provide mediation and court advocacy.



Alzheimer's and Caregiver Support:

Know that you are not alone; we are here to support you. We:

- Host Memory Cafés, places where individuals experiencing memory loss and their caretakers can meet in a safe, social environment.
- Provide referrals and offer workshops, training, and support groups for those who are supporting an older loved one.

Maintaining Positive Mental Health

By Andrew Higginbottom, Age Strong, Staff Assistant

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel and act and can determine how we make choices, relate to others and even how we handle stress.

It is estimated that one in five people age 55 years+ experience some type of mental health condition. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the most common are anxiety, severe cognitive impairment, and mood disorders.

Many factors can contribute to mental health challenges, including genes, brain chemistry, family history, personal relationships, violence, abuse, substance use, finances, living situations, and overall health. If you or someone you know lives with mental health problems, you may notice some changes.

Here are some warning signs when mental health is affecting someone's life:

- Pulling away from people
- Stopping usual activities
- Diet or sleeping changes
- Severe mood swings
- The inability to perform daily tasks

Tips to Maintain Positive Mental Health

Tip 1

Connect with others



Tip 2

Be physically active



Tip 3

Get professional help if needed



Tip 4

Help others



Tip 5

Get enough sleep



Tip 6

Develop coping skills



Did you know?

May is Mental Health Awareness Month.

How do you get help?

► Many people with mental health problems can get better. There is help available. The Boston Public Health Commission is involved in a variety of efforts to remove the stigma associated with mental health and to provide services and resources to improve the social and emotional wellness of everyone in Boston.

► To read more about the services available to individuals and families in Boston, contact:

Boston Public Health Commission
617-534-5395
Bphc.org

► Mental Health Q&A with Boston Senior Home Care

By Andrew Higginbottom, Age Strong, Staff Assistant

Help is Available

Many people with mental health challenges can get better. Help is available. The Elder Mental Health Outreach Team at Ethos is a flexible behavioral health program for those 60+, focused on improving the mental well-being of each person. Social workers and master level social work interns assist older adults with immediate needs as well as provide long-term support. EMHOT members meet with older adults to establish trusting relationships and provide services including assessing needs, in-home visits, counseling, therapy, accessing community-based services, and more. To learn more call 617-477-6919 or visit ethocare.org.

Caregivers Struggle Too...

One of the Age Strong Commission's partners, Boston Senior Home Care, which provides direct care service to Boston's older adults, knows that caregivers often struggle with mental health, too. Caring for a loved one strains even the most resilient people. If you're a caregiver, you can take steps to preserve your own mental health and well-being.



Boston Seniority magazine interviewed Abigail Swanson, caregiver advisor at Boston Senior Home Care.

Can you tell us about Boston Senior Home Care's caregiver program?

Boston Senior Home Care is a nonprofit Aging Services Access Point (ASAP) serving Boston's older adults and those with disabilities. Since 1974, we've committed to supporting and enriching the lives of those we serve.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, we realized that caregivers also needed services and support, more than ever. As each caregiving journey is unique, we customized our caregiver support program based on individual needs and preferences. Today, our Caregiver Solutions program empowers all caregivers – those providing multigenerational care, helping a spouse or older adult, or grandparents raising grandchildren - with ongoing support, information, and resources.

Our goal is to ensure that caregivers have tools to balance providing exceptional care, also ensuring their own needs are met. Through Covid, our caregiver counseling and support groups have become very popular.

What services and programs does Boston Senior Home Care offer?

We provide case management, care planning, social services, and support for those who wish to remain at home and in the community, but require assistance. The

majority of those we serve are over 60. We also provide programs and education for older adults and caregivers on maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Conversations about end of life care is one of our specialties. We want older adults and their caregivers, as well as their support network of family and friends, to feel supported by trained professionals as they move through the stages of life and the challenges they often face.

What are some ways/tips for maintaining positive mental health for caregivers?

Having a positive outlook on life is vitally important. Caring for someone needing help with daily living activities can have a significant impact on a caregiver's mental health. But, there are many resources available that can help caregivers maintain a healthy lifestyle while boosting their emotional wellbeing.

Caregivers can learn stress reduction techniques like meditation, yoga, and Tai Chi. Wellbeing includes getting proper rest and nutrition, as well as regular exercise. Caregivers need time off to recharge—to read a book, take a hot bath or visit with friends. Caregivers, too, can seek counseling, talk to a trusted friend or clergy. Identifying and acknowledging feelings is helpful.

What are your responsibilities in your role? Why did you enter this type of work?

I am a licensed clinical social worker and



serve as a Caregiver Advisor. I provide guidance to family caregivers of older adults by developing creative solutions to meet their unique needs. We provide a needs assessment and counseling, including caregiver support groups. I help caregivers to develop coping skills and self-care techniques, and provide access to community resources and support.

The role of the family caregiver is often deeply rewarding, yet it can also be deeply challenging. I am amazed by family caregivers who provide extraordinary care for their loved ones while also balancing work, family, and other responsibilities. I became a Caregiver Advisor at Boston Senior Home Care because caregivers are vital to keeping older adults at home, independent, and in the community. Through our support, the goal is to empower individuals and families with the tools to succeed.



Sign-Up Today

Check out the latest Age Strong Weekly Digest! We include events for older adults, volunteer opportunities, and much more. Sign-up for the weekly newsletter and read more at boston.gov/departments/age-strong-commission/age-strong-commission-weekly-digest.

Boston's Age Strong Commission Weekly Digest
 March 7 - March 13, 2022
 Information & opportunities for Boston's older adults

FREE TAX SERVICES
 Over 180,000 taxpayers served
 Over \$320 million dollars returned directly to taxpayers' pockets

ALL ABOARD
 Starting Tuesday, March 1, the 23, 28 and 29 MBTA buses will be fare-free for two years.

WEEKLY DIGEST Table of Contents

- Free Tax Services
- Events March 7- March 13
- Citizenship Day
- Write Your Story
- Immigration Consultations

Stay Connected to Age Strong:
 City Hall, Room 271
 1 City Hall Square
 Boston, MA 02201
 617-635-4366
agestrong@boston.gov
boston.gov/agestrong

City of Boston

Seen Around Town



Transportation for Older Bostonians

The Age Strong Commission offers 3 different transportation supports for older adults in Boston.

Age Strong Shuttle

Boston's Age Strong Commission offers free shuttle transportation to medical appointments and grocery shopping for Boston's older adults 60+, Monday through Friday, 8am-4pm. Most shuttles are wheelchair accessible. Please call in advance to schedule at 617-635-3000.

Discounted Taxi Coupons

Age Strong sells a limited number of discounted taxi coupons to Boston's older residents age 65+ and those with disabilities. Coupons are valid for taxis licensed by the City of Boston and may be purchased in person at the Age Strong Commission, Room 271 City Hall, 1 City Hall Square in Boston, 9am-5pm. Please show ID proving Boston residency. Please pay with cash. Each coupon book costs \$5 (worth \$10). Coupons don't expire. For a limited time, each residents may buy 4 books/month. Visit boston.gov/agestrong for a list of sites where taxi coupons may be purchased.

Bus Buddy Program

Through its AmeriCorps Seniors program, Age Strong trains folks 55+ to become Bus Buddies, volunteers who help older adults navigate public transportation. Those interested in becoming Bus Buddies or wanting training by Bus Buddies volunteers may call Age Strong at 617-635-4366.



*"Laughter is the sound
of the soul dancing."*

-Jarod Kintz

