

National Senior Center Month

Discover your...

Friendships



Health



Purpose



Creativity



Program Guide

Table of Contents

Welcome to National Senior Center Month	3
Connect and Share Your Stories	4
Senior Center Month Checklist	6
Customize the 2023 Poster	7
Educate Elected Officials	8
Programs of Excellence Awards	9
2022 Winners	10
NCOA Initiatives & Resources	10
Falls Prevention Awareness Week	10
Hunger Action Month.	11
Boost Your Budget	11
Older Adult Mental Health Awareness Day	12
Mark Your Calendars	14

This project is supported by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), as part of a \$250,000 financial assistance award, with 75% funding by ACL/HHS and \$83,000 and 25% funded by non-government source(s). The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, ACL/HHS or the U.S. government.



Welcome to National Senior Center Month

Senior Centers: Discover Yours

September 2023

National Senior Center Month, celebrated every year in September, is a wonderful opportunity to showcase your center and market the valuable programs, activities, and services you offer. It's also the perfect time to promote a positive image of aging, highlight how your center improves the lives of local older adults, show your center's importance in the community, and create interest in prospective new participants and collaborative partners.

The National Institute for Senior Center's 2023 theme for National Senior Center Month is Discover Yours. The 10,000+ senior centers in communities and neighborhoods across

the country provide access to information, opportunities, and support to improve the lives of people in their communities as they age. Senior centers have evolved since their beginning in the 1940s, through their inclusion in the Older American's Act in 1973, and up to today. But the mission has remained: to be the local, trusted place in the community that connects people to the programs, services, and opportunities they need to age well. Senior centers work with community partners to provide access to health, economic security, social engagement, purpose, creativity, mobility, nutrition—all in a social and fun environment!

The theme encourages people to come to the senior center—whether they are regulars and, especially, if they have never visited. The theme also encourages older adults to discover their unique interests, talents, and aspirations. It conveys a sense of exploration, self-discovery, and individuality.

At your senior center, you can discover your:

- 1. Empowerment:** "Discover Yours" encourages us to take an active role in exploring new activities, hobbies, and experiences. It emphasizes that it's never too late to try something new and encourages self-discovery.
- 2. Inclusivity:** "Discover Yours" sets the stage for an inclusive environment where people from diverse backgrounds feel encouraged to explore personal interests and find activities that resonate.
- 3. Personal Growth:** "Discover Yours" invites opportunity to focus on personal growth and self-improvement. The theme "Discover Yours" encourages us to tap into our potential, try new things, and uncover hidden talents or passions.
- 4. Community Engagement:** "Discover Yours" fosters a sense of community and camaraderie among people. By encouraging us to discover our individual interests, we can share our experiences with others, sparking conversations and connections within the senior center.

To enhance the theme, you can organize various activities and events that align with the idea of self-discovery and personal exploration. Consider workshops, classes, and outings that allow older adults to explore different wellness activities, social engagement, creativity, and cultural experiences.

Remember to tailor the theme and activities to the specific interests and needs of the seniors at your center. By incorporating their input and creating a vibrant and engaging program, you can make Senior Center Month a memorable and enriching experience for everyone involved.

As you plan, consider the following areas for making connections!

Healthy Aging: In a 2022 NISC survey, respondents indicated that participation in movement and wellness programs was higher than it was before the pandemic. Highlight how your center connects people to aging well through information and opportunities to learn skills and strategies to prevent and manage chronic disease, prevent falls, participate in physical activity and movement classes, boost nutrition, and more. Learn

how senior centers can improve health at www.ncoa.org/article/improving-health-in-senior-centers. Visit NCOA's Center for Healthy Aging at www.ncoa.org/professionals/health/center-for-healthy-aging for more information.

Economic Security: Highlight how your center connects people to greater economic security through information, referrals, and access to benefits and other resources. Learn more about the tools and resources available through NCOA's Center for Benefits Access at www.ncoa.org/article/about-the-center-for-benefits-access. Learn how you can use BenefitsCheckUp® (BenefitsCheckUp.org), a powerful online and newly updated tool to connect older adults and people with disabilities to federal, state, and local benefits.

Generations: Highlight how your center connects all ages through intergenerational programs and activities and by supporting the critical role of grandparents. Check out the intergenerational approach taken by ONEGeneration in Los Angeles, California (<https://ncoa.org/article/senior-center-spotlight-onegeneration-takes-intergenerational-approach-to-meet-community-needs>). Consider offering Grand Connections (<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/4256-grand-connections>), a free, downloadable workshop series especially for grandparents of children under five, whether they're caring for grandchildren part-time or 24/7. For more resources about intergenerational programs, visit Generations United (gu.org). Sept. 11 is Grandparents Day! Plan a special event to celebrate.

Diverse Populations: Highlight how your center welcomes all people, including older adults who identify as LGBTQ:

- Learn how you can better support LGBTQ+ older adults (www.ncoa.org/article/how-can-senior-centers-better-support-lgbtq-older-adults) and check out the novel approach in one state (<https://ncoa.org/article/lgbtq-moveable-senior-center-expanding-to-support-more-older-adults>)
- See how some senior centers connect with their unique communities like the VIDA Senior Center in Washington, D.C. (<https://ncoa.org/article/senior-center-spotlight-vida-senior-centers-elevate-social-justice-and-social-service-for-hispanic-latino-community>), and the Seasoned Survivors Senior Center in Fort Worth, Texas (<https://ncoa.org/article/senior-center-spotlight-seasoned-survivors-senior-center-shows-how-to-support-hiv-positive-older-adults>). And get inspiration from the ways senior centers respond to community need like the Stoughton Area Senior Center (<https://ncoa.org/article/senior-center-spotlight-stoughton-area-senior-center-stays-nimble-to-feed-older-adults>) and provide life-saving access to vaccines like the Senior Friendship Centers. (<https://ncoa.org/article/senior-center-spotlight-senior-friendship-centers-improving-covid-19-and-flu-vaccine-access>).
- NCOA's Center for Healthy Aging has a number of resources on reaching populations, such as people with disabilities (www.ncoa.org/article/resources-engaging-adults-disabilities-evidence-based-programs), veterans (www.ncoa.org/article/tip-sheet-engaging-veterans-evidence-based-programs), and Native elders (www.ncoa.org/article/how-to-customize-marketing-for-programs-in-indigenous-communities).

Digital Connections: Highlight how your center helps older adults with digital exploration, including accessing broadband, gaining skills and confidence in using internet connected devices, and with opportunities to participate in virtual and hybrid programs. Share information about the Affordable Connectivity Program (<https://getinternet.gov/>), a Federal Communications Commission benefit program that helps ensure that households can afford the broadband they need.

Facts about Senior Centers: As you share information about your senior center, you can use our fact sheet at www.ncoa.org/article/get-the-facts-on-senior-centers to support the value and impact of senior centers across the country.



Connect to NISC and the Modernizing Senior Centers Resource Center

- The National Institute of Senior Centers (NISC) is the largest national membership organization dedicated to serving senior center professionals. Free to join, NISC supports senior centers with best practices and innovations in programming, as well as networking and training opportunities. If you are not a member yet, please join NISC today at www.ncoa.org/page/nisc-membership-application. And share the link with your colleagues!
- Senior centers nationwide are at a critical juncture and stand to benefit collectively from NCOA's Modernizing Senior Centers Resource Center (www.ncoa.org/professionals/senior-centers/modernizing-senior-centers-resource-center). Gain the tools and resources necessary to develop and implement programs and services that meet the ever-changing needs of older adults. Download our recent report, *The State of Today's Senior Centers: Successes, Challenges, and Opportunities* (<https://www.ncoa.org/article/the-state-of-todays-senior-centers-successes-challenges-and-opportunities>) for insight into the state of senior centers and how we are helping.

The National Council on Aging thanks the Administration for Community Living (ACL) for their support of the Modernizing Senior Centers Resource Center. Initially funded in September 2021, this three-year Resource Center will help senior centers address their challenges and amplify their successes as they strive to meet the ever-changing needs of older adults. The overarching goal of the new Resource Center is to ensure senior centers have the capacity, tools, and resources necessary to develop and implement programs and services that meet the current and future needs of diverse older adults. This Guide is supported by ACL funding of the Modernizing Senior Centers Resource Center.

Save the Date!

Virtual Senior Center Summit – Connecting Across the Country!

Join us online Sept. 29, 2023 from 1-4 p.m. ET as we celebrate senior centers together! Featuring updates from the Modernizing Senior Centers Resource Center including: insights from *The State of Today's Senior Centers: Successes, Challenges, and Opportunities*; information about resources you can use; and an opportunity for small group networking with your colleagues!

Register here: <https://connect.ncoa.org/products/virtual-senior-center-summit-discover-yours>

Share Your Stories

Senior centers impact the lives of millions of older adults in big and small ways every day. At NCOA, we know the heart of senior centers are the individual participants and their unique stories. These stories are poignant, impactful, and should be told. Whether your center has improved socialization, supported better physical and mental health, increased community involvement, or offered an evidence-based program that's changed the life of an older adult for the better—your senior center has made an impact, and we want to hear about it.

Please visit www.ncoa.org/article/share-your-senior-center-story to share stories about your participants and how your center has positively affected their lives.

You can also share the template available at <https://www.ncoa.org/article/senior-center-success-stories> with your participants so that they can tell their stories. Then send them to us at membership@ncoa.org

National Senior Center Month Checklist

Strategize. How will you bring recognition to your senior center in your community?

Customize the 2023 poster to bring recognition of National Senior Center Month to your center.

Educate your elected officials about the value of your center to the community.

Mix it up. Consider planning a different event each week. Or choose one week out of the month to hold several activities.

Enlist senior center participants. The people who go to your center know best what appeals to their peers. Enlist them to help you create and implement activities.

Use the Publicity Guide to capture awareness and promote community involvement and support for your celebration. The guide offers a step-by-step media plan with timelines and tactics.

Share our videos. SA recent study revealed that senior centers need support in promoting a positive image and generating excitement. Supported by the Administration for Community Living, NCOA has created a series of videos about the many things to discover at senior centers. Show the videos in your center, link to them on your website, and embed them in your materials! Let people know senior centers are the place to *Discover Yours!*



Customize the 2023 Poster

Tailor the National Senior Center Month poster to your center! Add your own photos and contact information. Here's how:



1. Visit <https://ncoa.org/page/national-senior-center-month> and save the poster to your computer.
2. Open the poster
3. Select the bottom right box and upload your logo.
4. Select the box on the bottom left and fill in:
 - a) Senior Center name
 - b) Contact information
 - c) Website

If you customize your poster, please save it as a PDF and share it with us at membership@ncoa.org.



Educate Elected Officials

Educate your elected officials about how public dollars support services and benefits for older adults, caregivers, family members, and the community at large. Senior center staff and participants are well-positioned to explain how limited public investment, along with growing demand, is having a domino effect on programs and services that help older adults remain healthy and independent in their own homes and communities. It's important that Congress understand how older adults and caregivers are being affected by funding and policy decisions. Some ideas:

Tell Your Stories

If your center needs more federal investments, or there are proposed policy decisions that could affect older adults' services or benefits, particularly in response to the pandemic, organize older adults to write stories about what those federal decisions could mean to them and deliver the stories to an elected official, staffer, or candidate for public office. This can help you enlist a member of Congress for support and arm them with real stories for national budget debates. Use our 10 Tips to Harness the Power of Stories at www.ncoa.org/article/10-tips-to-harness-the-power-of-stories for ways to craft message and work with NCOA to get them delivered.

Learn How to Advocate

Our Advocacy Basics resource page at www.ncoa.org/professionals/public-policy/advocacy-basics brings together information on many topics such as best practices for getting an elected official to your events and attending town halls. As you know, much more work needs to be done in response to the pandemic, and you can learn more about plans from Congress and the White House and NCOA priorities on our Public Policy page at www.ncoa.org/professionals/public-policy. Action Center at <https://www.ncoa.org/page/action-center> is a great way to lend your voice to proposed federal legislation.

Champion a National Senior Center Month Proclamation

Ask your mayor or other official to issue a proclamation in honor of National Senior Center Month and build an event around it. A sample proclamation is in the Publicity Guide on page 14 (<https://ncoa.org/page/national-senior-center-month>).

Broadcast Your Message

Invite a local TV or radio station to hold a remote broadcast to highlight your center's work. Enlist participants, community partners, and other key people for interviews about your center's resources and aging issues. Share our videos. Or create your own video to share on social media. See the Publicity Guide for more ideas and a sample media plan.



© Kevin Rose Schultz

Connecting with Best Practices

Every day, senior centers across the country offer an exciting array of programs for older adults. The annual NISC Programs of Excellence Awards honor and promote these outstanding efforts. Read about them at ncoa.org/nisc-programs-of-excellence, and join us throughout the year as winners are highlighted during webinars. Stay tuned for the call for nominations for 2023 Programs of Excellence in January 2024! Share information about your own program of excellence with important stakeholders in your community during Senior Center Month.

Discover NCOA Initiatives

Falls Prevention Awareness Week

September 18 – 22, 2022

Falls Prevention Awareness Week raises awareness about how to prevent falls among older adults. During the week, national, state, and local partners educate the community about the impact of falls, share falls prevention strategies, and advocate for the expansion of evidence-based falls prevention programs.

Top 6 activities for senior centers

1. Develop a falls prevention awareness week campaign: Take advantage of the NCOA Falls Prevention Awareness Week Toolkit at ncoa.org/article/falls-prevention-awareness-week-toolkit to maximize your impact in raising falls prevention awareness in your community this September. These resources include social media graphics, sample social media posts, handouts and flyers for older adults and caregivers, and more.
2. Falls Prevention is a Team Effort: Discover new or strengthen existing connections with those in your community who are involved in falls prevention, including first responders/emergency medical technicians, pharmacists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, podiatrists, nurses, faith-based organizations, hardware stores, and others. Check out and share the interactive infographic posted on www.ncoa.org/article/falls-prevention-is-a-team-effort that shows the important role of senior centers and other community partners in reducing falls among older persons.
3. Share NCOA's Falls Free CheckUp tool: This is a no-cost online screening tool (ncoa.org/fallsfreecheckup) with 12 questions older adults can answer to understand their risk of falls. At the end of the screen, the tool will display a score and actions to take to prevent falls. Older adults can email the results to themselves to share with their health care provider.
4. Host an evidence-based falls prevention program: Engage older adults in a falls prevention class, such as A Matter of Balance or Tai Chi for Arthritis, which have been proven to reduce falls. If your senior center does not offer an evidence-based falls prevention program, partner with your area agency on aging. Learn about evidence-based falls prevention programs at <https://ncoa.org/article/evidence-based-falls-prevention-programs>.
5. Plan an in-person or remote falls prevention health fair: Share educational handouts, connect older adults with community resources and services, and/or demonstrate falls prevention programs or classes via a webinar. Invite local partners to join the health fair and provide risk screens and other resources (<https://www.ncoa.org/article/how-to-plan-a-falls-prevention-event>).
6. Provide falls risk screenings: Collaborate with community health specialists to host virtual falls risk screenings that include vision exams, balance and gait testing, home safety

recommendations, and/or medication reviews. Explore who is part of your falls prevention team (<https://ncoa.org/article/falls-prevention-is-a-team-effort>) and invite them to volunteer their time. Or work with a local university to coordinate student volunteers, such as professional physical therapy, optometry, or pharmacy students.

Hunger Action Month

Senior centers can make a difference in the fight against hunger.

NCOA works with senior centers and other community organizations nationwide to enroll eligible older adults in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly Food Stamps).

SNAP helps seniors stretch their food budget. Yet, SNAP is highly underutilized by older adults, who participate at a much lower rate than the general population.

September is Hunger Action Month. A few ways your senior center can get involved:

1. **Learn:** Find out more about the impossible choices of hunger around your community.
2. **Commit:** Take the pledge to make food a certainty, not a choice.
3. **Speak Up:** Choose to use your voice to create change and help address the hunger issue. Inspire positive action. Send a virtual paper plate with your personal message to Congress.

Sept. 23 is Hunger Action Day

Orange is the color of hunger. This Hunger Action Day, let's stand together by wearing orange, turning our city landmarks orange, and raising our voices all across the country on behalf of the millions of people facing hunger.

Raise awareness in your community

- Adopt your local food pantry — Ask them what they need and how your senior center participants can help. Provide volunteers, hold food drives, and collect needed items.
- Invite older adults in your community to get screened to see if they are eligible for SNAP. Use our free BenefitsCheckUp® tool (benefitscheckup.org) to help seniors find out if they qualify and download their state's application.
- Use our SNAP outreach materials available at www.ncoa.org/article/snap-outreach-enrollment-tools to reach older adults in your community and encourage them to apply for SNAP.
- Download our free customizable flyers, posters, placemats, and brochure and distribute these materials in places where older adults gather.

Boost Your Budget

Public and private benefits are a lifeline to helping low-income people with Medicare age well. But research has shown that there are still many barriers to enrollment in these programs, including knowledge of benefits and how to apply. As a result, millions of older adults are likely eligible for, but not enrolled in, benefits that can save money on health care, prescriptions, food, and more.

Boost Your Budget® is a national campaign every April that unites aging and disability service providers under a common charge to:

- Educate low-income Medicare beneficiaries and their caregivers about the benefits available to improve their health and economic security, and
- Connect individuals to online (like [BenefitsCheckUp.org](https://www.benefitscheckup.org)) and community resources for benefits screening and application assistance.

NCOA welcomes senior centers to use our outreach materials to assist low-income seniors and adults with disabilities to enroll in benefits. You can learn more about how your center can get involved at www.ncoa.org/article/how-senior-centers-can-help-older-adults-save-money. There is no limit on what your organization may do to draw attention to your services. For example, you may wish to:

- Share information about benefits as part of a food drive, health fair, or tax assistance event
- Sponsor a “telethon” at your local radio or TV station
- Run ads in local newspapers or on social media
- Invite media, legislators, and the public to tour your facility and learn about the importance of benefits for your community

Older Adult Mental Health Awareness Day

During the National Older Adult Mental Health Awareness Day Symposium, a full day of sessions dove into how to best meet the mental health needs of older adults. You can watch these sessions and more on-demand by registering for free at connect.ncoa.org/oamhad2023. If you are interested in learning more about the OAMHAD Symposium, please email healthyaging@ncoa.org.

Supporting Caregivers Providing Care to Someone with Mental Illness

There are 60 million Americans who provide unpaid care to someone who has a physical or mental illness. This session took a deep look at what is the impact on the caregiver. Key takeaways: how to better support these caregivers with resources to help them maintain their mental health and care for their care recipients.

Social Cohesion and Intergenerational Connections to Address Social Isolation

Social cohesion and engagement can help improve quality of life and are associated with better mental and emotional health for older adults. This session featured U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy and other esteemed panelists. Key takeaways: details on the national initiatives to support social cohesion as well as intergenerational opportunities as one strategy to address older adult social isolation.

Traumatic Brain Injury and Mental Illness Among Older Adults

Each year, an estimated 40 million older Americans experience a traumatic brain injury (TBI). Older adults who suffer from a TBI are at an increased risk for developing mental health disorders, such as major depression and panic disorder. This session explored how TBIs impact older adults and their mental health.

Medication Concerns for Older Adults with Mental Health Conditions

The session gave an overview of medication safety for older adults and how the use of multiple and inappropriate medications can lead to and/or worsen mental health issues in older adults. A patient advocate gave a touching powerful of her lived experiences, and a senior center discussed current initiatives that educate and empower older adults on safe medication use.

Ways to Support Mental Health at Your Senior Center

During National Senior Center Month, consider enrolling in the Behavioral Health and Aging Certificate program. Through a partnership with Boston University's Center for Aging and Disability Education Research (CADER), all NISC Affiliate members are eligible for special pricing on this five-course online program.

Promote a program your center offers that aims to improve the mental health of older adults. This program could be one focusing on social engagement, peer support, wellness check-ins, physical activity, or a partnership you have with local mental health providers or a formal program like the Do More Feel Better program offered at Hillsborough County, Florida senior centers (<https://ncoa.org/article/senior-center-spotlight-hillsborough-county-senior-centers-are-partners-in-research-to-address-mental-health-concerns-of-older-adults>)

September Holidays and Observances

Visit the following websites for more information around which to build programs and activities and strengthen community connections during Senior Center month.

HEALTH & FITNESS

National Food Safety Month

www.foodsafety.gov/

National Preparedness Month

<https://www.epa.gov/natural-disasters/september-preparedness-month>

National Cholesterol Awareness Month

www.cdc.gov/cholesterol/cholesterol_education_month.htm

Hunger Action Month

www.HungerActionMonth.org

Falls Prevention Awareness Week: Sept. 18-22

<https://www.ncoa.org/article/falls-prevention-awareness-week-toolkit>

National Women's Health & Fitness Day: Sept. 28

www.fitnessday.com/women/index.htm

ENRICHMENT

International Women's Friendship Month

www.kappadelta.org/international-womens-friendship-month/

International Literacy Day: September 8

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/literacy-day>

American Red Cross Home Fire Campaign: Sound the Alarm Save a Life

www.redcross.org/sound-the-alarm.html

National Employ Older Workers Week: Sept. 26-30

www.doleta.gov/Seniors/html_docs/NatEmplOldWkr.cfm

National Voter Registration Day: Sept. 30

www.nationalvoterregistrationday.org/about

FUN ACTIVITIES FOR ALL AGES

Grandparents Day: Sept. 11

<https://www.gu.org/app/uploads/2018/06/Intergenerational-Report-Grandparents-Day-Take-Action-Guide.pdf>

<https://ncoa.org/article/make-every-day-grandparents-day-try-these-wellness-focused-activities-with-your-grandkids>





NationalInstituteOf
SeniorCenters

251 18th Street South, Suite 500
Arlington, VA 22202
571-527-3983
ncoa.org/NISC