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NEWS RELEASE

May is Older Americans Month

May has been designated Older Americans Month. America's seniors provide an example for younger generations, and during Older Americans Month, we reflect on the many contributions they have made and continue to make to our community. Started in 1963 by President Kennedy, the observance of Older Americans Month has become an annual tradition.

Older Americans are the fastest-growing age group. Today, New York is home to more than 2.5 million men and women over the age of 65 - more than 13 percent of all New Yorkers - and that proportion is projected to double in the next 20 years.

Older New Yorkers make up about one-eighth of our citizenry, but they make up fully one-third of all hospitalizations. So it's crucial that we do everything we can to take care of the health needs of our older citizens, and that we help people stay healthier longer.

There are a number of health issues that seniors need to be concerned with in order to stay healthy. Healthy eating, regular physical activity, and the avoidance of tobacco remain important. And routine screenings are increasingly important as we age, including mammograms, prostate exams, Pap tests, colonoscopies, and cholesterol checks. Seniors also need to get annual flu shots and periodic pneumonia vaccinations.

New York State has a state agency - the State Office for the Aging (SOFA) - dedicated to serving the needs of our older residents. SOFA administers a variety of federal projects under the Older Americans Act, as well as a variety of State-funded programs which also serve the elderly. These programs give preference to elderly people with the greatest economic or social need, and place special emphasis on meeting the needs of low-income minority elderly.

The majority of SOFA programs and services are administered through 59 local offices which serve each county, New York City, the St. Regis Mohawk Indian Reservation and the Seneca Nation of Indians. For a complete list of local SOFA offices, go to <http://www.aging.ny.gov/NYSOFA/LocalOffices.cfm> or call 1-800-342-9871.

We also commend the Federal, State, local and tribal organizations, service and health care providers, caregivers, and volunteers who dedicate their time and talents to our seniors. The Otsego County Health Department encourages all citizens to honor our elders, to care for those in need, and to reaffirm our community's commitment to older Americans during Older Americans Month, and throughout the year.

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