

## **Aging Happens: Eight resources for those 'getting older'**

*By Ellen Waldman  
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Here's a portion of a quote from a recent local election mailer: "When you are getting older, or care about someone who is ." The first thing I thought was, "What if we all agreed that we ARE getting older, as is everyone else? What might happen with our preparations for our older lives? And when do we think we're 'getting older?'" I spoke to a family recently whose father was 96 years old, lived alone in his home and still refused having anyone come in to help him as he's "not ready." See what happens? You might never think you're getting older!

I bring this up as I recently co-taught a class at Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI, [inside.sou.edu/olli/index.html](http://inside.sou.edu/olli/index.html)) at Southern Oregon University (SOU). The class ("Let's Talk about Aging: Topics to Consider"), began with the acknowledgment that we are aging, and offered an array of guest speakers and resources. The information also applied to those who might be caring for aging partners or parents as well.

Given that Laura O'Bryon, my colleague, co-teacher and director of Rogue Valley Council Of Governments (RVCOG) Senior and Disability Services (SDS), collected a lot of useful info, it made sense to share some of this with the readers of this column, too.

Senior and Disability Services has many amazing programs available to everyone, and too many people aren't aware of them. Here are eight of these, briefly described, with the best contacts for each one. Some I've written about before, but are definitely worth repeating. In a future column, I will continue to say more about some of the other programs offered through SDS.

The first and maybe the main one to remember is the ADRC, Aging and Disability Resource Connection ([adrcforegon.org/consite/index.php](http://adrcforegon.org/consite/index.php); 541-618-7572). If you keep nothing else handy, hang onto this one. It's the gateway for many other services, resources and options you might require as it relates to the needs and interests of aging people.

Living Well workshops are weekly interactive sessions for managing chronic health problems, chronic pain, or diabetes. ([sohealthyoregon.org](http://sohealthyoregon.org); 541-864-9611). It helps you strategize ways to manage stress, relax, overcome fatigue and frustration, talk with your doctor and more, through six, 2.5 hours of weekly interactive sessions.

Powerful Tools are workshops providing support for family caregivers who are caring for others (same contact info as for Living Well). This workshop will assist with self-care behaviors, management of emotions, and use of community resources. It has the same number of weekly sessions as above.

Food & Friends is our local meals-on-wheels program with home delivered meals to seniors (541-734-9505). There is a simple assessment to determine if you're eligible.

The following are called in-home outreach services. Contact the ADRC above for this help.

Options Counseling is probably one of the most important resources that many people access. It helps those who are faced with making important decisions, for example, moving out of their homes. It also helps with planning for other future needs and the associated costs. This can be accessed by phone, email or in-person. No fee for this service.

Oregon Project Independence (OPI) provides personal care assistance to allow people to remain at home. To those who qualify, they provide home care, meals, etc. OPI costs are on a sliding scale.

Family Caregiver Program provides resources for caregivers, and referrals to other supportive services, including respite care for family and friends who are caregivers. No fee for this service, but donations are accepted.

PEARLS (The Program to Encourage Active and Rewarding Lives for Seniors), a treatment program for seniors with minor or low-grade depression, is managed by Susan Jay Rounds at 541-423-1363. This free program is delivered in the person's own home. It consists of eight visits and four follow-up calls over six to eight months.

In the class at OLLI, attendees commented that these topics were really appreciated, and they also hoped these classes would happen more often. It's interesting that we live in a town where the population of those 50 and above is about 45 percent, yet we still have some difficulty talking about this. It might not be the happy topic, but we've found that given the right setting in which to address this, people are actually very relieved.

Laura and I hope that we can continue to encourage these conversations by empowering people with information.