

News

# 'Older Americans Month' -- a time to recognize seniors

By Christie Netherton Messenger-Inquirer

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May is Older Americans Month, and it's considered a time to recognize seniors and the roles they play in the community.

The theme for this year's Older Americans Month is "Communities of Strength," which Jennifer Williams, Green River Area Development District aging and senior services director, said is fitting for what seniors and communities have shown over the last year in the face of the pandemic.

This year is also a significant time to honor seniors, Williams said, as many have been isolated and have experienced increased need due to the pandemic.

"We just want to encourage everybody to be mindful of the seniors in their lives, especially as we're still experiencing the pandemic, and make sure that they have what they need and are protected," she said.

Locally, Williams said senior centers in the seven-county GRADD area are working to have fun social events for seniors that are also safe in regards to COVID-19 safety guidelines.

"Pre-COVID, we did a lot more than we've been able to do last year and this year, but we do try to encourage all of our senior centers to have some activities and some special things to try and celebrate Older Americans Month," she said.

Several senior centers, including the Senior Community Center of Owensboro-Daviess County, have held celebrations outdoors with activities like parking lot bingo, live music and health fairs.

Williams said it has been important to ensure senior centers continue following COVID-19 precautions while celebrating Older Americans Month "because they are the most vulnerable population to the COVID virus."

GRADD also distributed donations from the Feed Seniors Now annual food drive last week, Williams said.

With so many community members not being as financially stable this year due to the pandemic in addition to many utilizing grocery pick-up and deliveries rather than shopping in-store, Williams said food donations have been lower this year than in years past.

The food drive did receive significant monetary donations, however, she said.

Additionally, Williams said GRADD hopes to work with seniors centers to have them open back up sometime this summer, as they have been closed since March 2020 when the pandemic hit the region.

"We're hoping to get those open again and get folks back to being active and enjoying each other," she said.

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