

# THE NEXT CHAPTER NEWS

ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SENIOR SERVICES

APRIL & MAY 2025



## OLDER AMERICANS MONTH 2025

May is Older Americans Month! In 2025, we're celebrating with the theme "Flip the Script on Aging!" Embrace new opportunities, break stereotypes, and show that aging is full of possibilities. Erie County offers exciting programs to keep you active, learning, and engaged—through classes, wellness activities, and social events. Join us in celebrating your experiences, wisdom, and contributions as we redefine aging together!

COUNTY EXECUTIVE  
MARK POLONCARZ

COMMISSIONER  
RANDALL HOAK



It's garden time! Start with easy plants like tomatoes or flowers that don't need much care. Use raised beds or pots so you don't have to bend or be on your knees for too long. Gardening should be fun and easy! Try other outdoor activities too, like walking, watching birds, or enjoying the sunshine!



Spring is a fresh start and a great time to take care of your body and mind. Warmer weather means more chances to go outside, which can make you feel happy and full of energy. But spring also brings pollen, which can cause allergies. Keep windows closed on high-pollen days, wash your hands and clothes after being outside, and ask your doctor for help if needed. Taking care of yourself by moving, relaxing, and spending time with others can help you feel your best. Caregivers, don't forget to take care of yourselves too!

# INFORMATION & ASSISTANCE

## The Senior Companion Program Needs Volunteers!

### Must Be:

55 or older

Income eligible

Resident of Erie County

Contact 716-768-2381

## Case Manager Story Series

Danielle B. has been helping Mrs. X only a short time, since December of 2024. But in that time, she helped Mrs. X through the process of getting homecare services paid for which she needs to help her manage at home. Mrs. X said her Case Manager, Danielle was "a lifesaver! I love her to death". "Danielle is kind, sweet and helped me a lot". Mrs. X also said that she has never received calls back and the follow up from any other agency like she has with Danielle.

## NY Connects Outreaches

We here to help you enroll in benefits and connect you to services you need!

**4/11-** Science Cafe in the Community  
12pm-2pm @ Merriweather Library

**4/12-** Le'Candice Mobile Food Pantry  
11am-2pm @ Northwest Community Center

**4/26-** Say, Yes! School Event 10am-1pm @ Build Community School

**4/30-** Community Options/Benefits Enrollment & HEAP Outreach 10am-2pm @ Resource Council

**5/10-** Say, Yes! School Event 10am-1pm @ Futures Academy

**5/21-** Senior Health & Fitness Fair  
10am-1pm Clarence Town Park Clubhouse

**5/22-** Community Options/Benefits Enrollment & HEAP Outreach 11am-2pm @ Hamburg Senior Center

**5/28-** Say, Yes! School Event 10am-1pm @ Futures Academy

**5/31-** Say, Yes! School Event 10am-1pm @ Build Community School

## HEAP Cooling | Clean and Tune

Program opens April 15th!

Visit the HEAP website at [erie.gov/heap](http://erie.gov/heap) to see when we will be in your neighborhood!

or call our NY Connects Line

716-858-8526

## Caregiver Corner

April is Stress Awareness Month

Caregiving can be stressful. If stress builds up too much, it can harm health, relationships, and feelings. This can lead to burnout—feeling tired, sad, and overwhelmed. When a caregiver burns out, both they and the person they help can suffer. It's important for caregivers to take care of themselves. Signs of burnout may include:

- Anxiety, depression and irritability
- Withdrawal from friends or family
- Neglecting responsibilities
- Getting sick more often than usual
- New or worsening health problems
- Emotional or physical exhaustion

If you are a caregiver feeling stressed and need a break, call today at (716) 858-8526 or email [caregiver@erie.gov](mailto:caregiver@erie.gov).



# What does Case Management mean?

We provide assistance to you and your family

## Services and Programs

**Help in Applying for Benefits and Entitlements** – Case Managers will help you apply for eligible benefit programs, like: HEAP, SNAP, Medicaid

**Home Care Services** – Funding for non-medical services such as *Personal Care Aide 1, 2* or *Consumer Direct Home Care* - (hire a family member, friend, or neighbor to be the aide). CDHC aides are paid \$18.10/hour at minimum.

**Chore Service** - CHORE is light housekeeping in specific “living spaces” around the home. Suggested donation: \$3.00 per hour.

**Mental Health Referrals** - Jewish Family Services (JFS) can provide mental health counseling (in person, at home or over the phone). Senior Services can provide funding for 6 sessions. Suggested donation: \$10 per session.

**Fall Prevention Referrals** – In-home physical therapy for fall prevention. There may be a copay through your health insurance.

**Home Delivered Meals** – Senior Services can provide funding for several meal delivery options. Suggested donation: \$8 per day.

**PERS (Personal Emergency Response Button)** - Can't be a stand-alone service – must go with another service, i.e., meal delivery, home care, SADS. Suggested donation: \$5 per month.

## Our Team

Case Managers provide in-home visits for older adults (60+) to assess their needs and support their families in identifying beneficial services and programs. They assist with applications for benefits and community-based services.

## Our Mission

Helping older adults maintain their independence and quality of life at home.

## Additional Assistance

**Caregiver Resource Center**  
Respite and Services

- Options Counseling
- Social Adult Day
- Overnight Respite
- Non-Medical Home Care
- Caregiver Counseling
- Legal Services
- and more!

**Health Insurance Counseling Program**

Information on Health Insurance, Medigap, Medicare, HMOs and Long-Term Insurance is provided for all ages. Options can also be explored for people without Medicare and Medicaid. Suggested Donation of \$10.



Scenes from our pancake breakfast with the Erie County Parks Department at Cheektowaga to celebrate Maple weekend! Watch out Schiller, Boston, and Tonawanda! We are coming for you next!

# The Dish

Highlights from our Nutrition team

Our very first ever Cooking with SASS cooking series workshop will be held at the Clarence Senior Center on Wednesdays, April 2nd-23rd! Cooking with SASS will feature fun & interactive classes with audience participation & samples! Our first series will introduce easy-to-use cooking appliances such as the Insta Pot, Air Fryer, Crock Pot & Microwave. The East Aurora Senior Center will also be hosting this series beginning on Friday, May 2nd. Call the sign up at one of these locations or check out other upcoming locations in future newsletters!



New vans have been added in Orchard Park, West Seneca, Northwest, and Cheektowaga to help expand transportation services. These additions aim to improve access and convenience, ensuring more people can get where they need to go. Expanding transportation remains a top priority to better serve our community.



To schedule a ride call 716-858-RIDE or 716-858-7433



# Recreation and Wellness

## University Express

Get ready for a season of learning and adventure with Erie County's University Express program! From May through July, enjoy nearly 400 free classes at 28 locations, plus exciting field trips to the Williamsville Planetarium, Burchfield Penney Art Center, and Aurora Theatre. With topics ranging from history to health and even a new instructor from Barcelona's University of Pompeu Fabra, there's something for everyone—catalogs available mid-April!

## Club 99

Club 99 Hits the Dance Floor! Dance to the music and have fun with Club 99!

- Tosh Collins Senior Center – Wednesdays at 10:00 AM
- Hennepin Senior Center – Fridays at 10:00 AM
- Williamstowne Village – Starting Tuesday, April 8th at 10:00 AM

Contact Julie Ruzala at:  
Email: [julie.ruzala@erie.gov](mailto:julie.ruzala@erie.gov)  
Phone: (716) 858-6403

## Aging Mastery

Aging Mastery begins at the Akron Senior Center on April 22nd from 1-2pm!

This 10 class series will assist in developing sustainable behaviors that will lead to improved health, stronger financial security, and increased connectedness to communities

For more information Contact  
716-858-7114

## Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)

We had an amazing time at RSVP Tribute Day, especially with the special surprises from Buffalo Bills legends! April is National Volunteer Month, and we are so grateful for all the dedicated volunteers who make a difference in our community. If you're looking to get involved, new opportunities are available with Make-A-Wish, Kavinoky Theatre, the Naval Park, the History Museum, Buffalo Airport, and more!

Call us at (716) 858-7548 to learn more and start making a difference today!



# FOCUS GROUP

FOR THOSE AGES 60+

COME TALK WITH US ABOUT  
YOUR COMMUNITY!

- HOUSING
- TRANSPORTATION
- COMMUNITY SERVICES
- FINANCES
- MEDICAL SERVICES, ETC.

SNACKS &  
DRINKS  
PROVIDED



**Register Online!**



## PARTNER HIGHLIGHT

Erie County Senior Services is proud to partner with West Side Community Services, a vital resource for older adults in Buffalo. Their Older Adult Program offers a welcoming and inclusive space where older adults can stay active, engaged, and connected.

From fitness and wellness programs to educational workshops, social activities, and nutritious meals, they provide essential services that enhance the well-being of older adults in our community. Even on Bingo Saturdays!

One of their star programs, Café del Sol is a program designed for individuals living with memory loss, along with their caregivers and family members. It provides a judgment-free space where they can interact, rebuild their confidence, and create new memories together.

We thank Crystal, Aileen, and the entire staff and their volunteers for all they do to support our department and the older adults in their community. Their dedication to fostering independence and community spirit makes them an invaluable partner in our shared mission to support and empower seniors across Erie County.

For more information about West Side Community Services visit [wscsbuffalo.org](http://wscsbuffalo.org)





# ERIE COUNTY SENIOR SERVICES

## Stay Fit Dining Program

Nutritious meals provided to promote social interaction and healthy eating

## Club 99 Fitness

**FREE**  
Fitness Classes and programs to enhance balance and mobility

## Case Management

Focused on providing personalized support to help access resources, navigate healthcare, enhance quality of life, and more

## Nutrition Education

Assistance in navigating what nutrients are the best for you and your wallet

## University Express

Lifelong in person and online learning program covering a wide range of topics

## HEAP Assistance

Heating, cooling, and utility, and outreach assistance supporting older adults aging in place

## NY Connects

Live call center providing information and benefits enrollment assistance for all needs

## Health Insurance Counseling

**FREE** unbiased health insurance assistance

## Going Places Transportation

Providing essential and accessible rides for older adults

## RSVP

Retired Senior Volunteer Program through Americorp connecting older adults with their community

## Caregiver Support

Assists those caring for older loved ones, offering resources, education, and respite services to help ease the challenges of caregiving



 **716-858-8526**

 **95 Franklin St Buffalo NY**

 **Erie.gov/seniorservices**